

All instances of sheol in the Old Testament

## Sheol

### Going down to...

Jacob is not anticipating descending into an afterlife but joining his son in death. There was no returning from sheol for Job. It is the opposite of life - death.

**“No, I shall go down to Sheol to my son, mourning.” Thus his father wept for him.” (Genesis 37:35, ESV)**

**“As the cloud fades and vanishes, so he who goes down to Sheol does not come up;” (Job 7:9, ESV)**

**“The path of life leads upward for the prudent, that he may turn away from Sheol beneath.” (Proverbs 15:24, ESV)**

### Person (including body) in sheol

It is not some disembodied soul/spirit but the whole person who goes to sheol. As Genesis 2:7 teaches. Humans are not bodies containing a soul/spirit but people made from the constituent elements of the earth (dust) and brought to life by the breath of God resulting in man being a nephesh/soul.

**“...and the ground opens its mouth and swallows them up with all that belongs to them, and they go down alive into Sheol...” (Numbers 16:30, ESV)**

**“So they and all that belonged to them went down alive into Sheol, and the earth closed over them, and they perished from the midst of the assembly.” (Numbers 16:33, ESV)**

#### 'Gray hairs/head'

**“...you would bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to Sheol.” (Genesis 42:38; 44:29, 31, ESV)**

**“Act therefore according to your wisdom, but do not let his gray head go down to Sheol in peace.” (1 Kings 2:6, 9, ESV)**

**“Oh that you would hide me in Sheol, that you would conceal me until your wrath be past, that you would appoint me a set time, and remember me!” (Job 14:13, ESV)**

**“They spend their days in prosperity, and in peace they go down to Sheol.” (Job 21:13, ESV)**

**“Drought and heat snatch away the snow waters; so does Sheol those who have sinned.” (Job 24:19, ESV)**

**“For my soul is full of troubles, and my life draws near to Sheol.” (Psalm 88:3, ESV)**

**“If you strike him with the rod, you will save his soul from Sheol.” (Proverbs 23:14, ESV)**

### Deep

Heaven is high and the place and source of life from God. Sheol is deep, the state of being dead and buried. It is underground.

**“For a fire is kindled by my anger, and it burns to the depths of Sheol, devours the earth and its increase, and sets on fire the foundations of the mountains.” (Deuteronomy 32:22, ESV)**

**“It is higher than heaven—what can you do? Deeper than Sheol—what can you know?” (Job 11:8, ESV)**

**“Ask a sign of the LORD your God; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven.” (Isaiah 7:11, ESV)**

### Poetic couplets (1st line means same as 2nd)

In Hebrew poetry often the meaning of the first line is repeated in the second.

#### Darkness

Job 17:13

Sheol is resting in darkness for Job.

If I hope for Sheol as my house  
if I make my bed in darkness

#### Abaddon

Sheol is equated with abaddon - ruin, destruction, decay.

Job 26:6

Sheol is naked before God  
and Abaddon has no covering

#### Death

Sheol is equated with death. It is the state of being dead.

2 Samuel 22:6

the cords of Sheol entangled me  
the snares of death confronted me

1 Samuel 2:6

Sheol is death while life is resurrection.

The LORD kills and brings to life  
he brings down to Sheol and raises up

Psalms 6:5

Sheol is quiet and inactive.

For in death there is no remembrance of you  
in Sheol who will give you praise?

Psalms 18:5

the cords of Sheol entangled me  
the snares of death confronted me

Psalms 49:14

Sheol consumes the form, it decays the person. It is not a place but the state of death.

Like sheep they are appointed for Sheol  
Their form shall be consumed in Sheol  
death shall be their shepherd  
with no place to dwell

Psalms 55:15

Let death steal over them  
let them go down to Sheol alive

Psalms 89:48

Man and his soul are one and the same.

What man can live and never see death  
Who can deliver his soul from the power of Sheol

Psalms 116:3

The snares of death encompassed me  
the pangs of Sheol laid hold on me

Proverbs 5:5

Her feet go down to death  
her steps follow the path to Sheol

Proverbs 7:27

Her house is the way to Sheol  
going down to the chambers of death

## Sheol

Song of Solomon 8:6

...for love is strong as **death**  
jealousy is fierce as **sheol** Isaiah 28:15, 18

We have made a covenant with **death**  
your covenant with **death** will be annulled  
with **Sheol** we have an agreement...  
your agreement with **Sheol** will not stand...  
Isaiah 38:18

Sheol is silent. It is death and the grave.

**Sheol** does not thank you  
**death** does not praise you  
those who go down to the **pit** do not hope for your faithfulness  
Habakkuk 2:5  
His greed is as wide as **Sheol** like **death** he has never  
enough

### Grave/tomb

Psalm 16:10

Soul/nephesh and person are one and the same. Sheol is corruption/decay, the grave.

For you will not abandon **my soul** to Sheol  
or let your **holy one** see corruption.

Psalm 30:3

My soul = me. That is, the whole person.

.....you have brought up **my soul** from Sheol  
you restored **me** to life from among those who go down to the pit  
Proverbs 1:12  
...like Sheol let us swallow them alive, and whole  
like those who go down to the pit

### Rescue from

Psalm 49:15

My soul = me. That is, the whole person.

God will ransom **my soul** from the power of Sheol  
for he will receive **me** Psalm 86:13

My soul = me. That is, the whole person.

...great is your steadfast love toward **me**  
you have delivered **my soul** from the depths of Sheol

### The Wicked

Wickedness brings death.

**“The wicked shall return to Sheol, all the nations that forget God.” (Psalm 9:17, ESV)**

**“...let the wicked be put to shame; let them go silently to Sheol.” (Psalm 31:17, ESV)**

**“Therefore Sheol has enlarged its appetite and opened its mouth beyond measure, and the nobility of Jerusalem and her multitude will go down, her revelers and he who exults in her.” (Isaiah 5:14, ESV)**

**“You journeyed to the king with oil and multiplied your perfumes; you sent your envoys far off, and sent down even to Sheol.” (Isaiah 57:9, ESV)**

Sheol

### **Grave/tomb**

Sheol is the state of being dead and relates to the grave/tomb.

#### **Psalm 139:8**

One rests in sheol.

If I make my bed in Sheol

**“As when one plows and breaks up the earth, so shall our bones be scattered at the mouth of Sheol.” (Psalm 141:7, ESV)**

**“But he does not know that the dead are there, that her guests are in the depths of Sheol.” (Proverbs 9:18, ESV)**

**“Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might, for there is no work or thought or knowledge or wisdom in Sheol, to which you are going.” (Ecclesiastes 9:10, ESV)**

#### **King of Babylon**

Isaiah 14:9

Sheol is 'awakened'. The impotent dead await.

Sheol beneath is stirred up to meet you when you come  
it wakes up the shades/rephaim to greet you  
it raises from their thrones all who were kings of the nations  
Isaiah 14:11

It is a resting place of maggots and worms - the grave.

Your pomp is brought down to Sheol  
maggots are laid as a bed beneath you  
worms are your covers

Isaiah 14:15

Sheol is the pit, the grave.

you are brought down to Sheol  
to the far reaches of the pit

#### **Gates**

“I said, In the middle of my days I must depart; I am consigned to the gates of Sheol (at death's door) for the rest of my years.” (Isaiah 38:10, ESV)

#### **Ezekiel 31:14–17**

All this is in order that no trees by the waters may grow to towering height... they are all given over to death, to the earth below, among the sons of man, with those who go down to the pit. “Thus says the Lord GOD: On the day the cedar went down to Sheol I caused mourning; I closed the deep over it, and restrained its rivers, and many waters were stopped. I clothed Lebanon in gloom for it, and all the trees of the field fainted because of it. I made the nations quake at the sound of its fall, when I cast it down to Sheol with those who go down to the pit... They also went down to Sheol with it, to those who are slain by the sword; yes, those who were its arm, who lived under its shadow among the nations.

The trees die and go to the earth below, to the place of dead humans, the pit/grave/sheol.

#### **Ezekiel 32:21**

The mighty chiefs shall speak of them, with their helpers, out of the midst of Sheol: ‘They have come down, they lie still, the uncircumcised, slain by the sword.

In sheol dead 'lie still'.

#### **Jonah 2:2**

I called out to the LORD, out of my distress, and he answered me; out of the belly of Sheol I cried, and you heard my voice

Sheol

Jonah likens the confines of the fish's belly with sheol/pit, the grave. The fish's regurgitation of Jonah is an analogy to being raised from the dead.

“For you cast me into the deep” (Jonah 2:3, ESV)

“The waters closed in over me to take my life (soul of death)... (Jonah 2:5, ESV)

“...you brought up my life from the pit, O Lord my God.” (Jonah 2:6, ESV)

### **Abaddon/destruction**

Sheol is the place of destruction, ruin and decay.

**“Sheol and Abaddon lie open before the LORD...” (Proverbs 15:11, ESV)**

**“Sheol and Abaddon are never satisfied...” (Proverbs 27:20, ESV)**

**“Sheol, the barren womb, the land never satisfied with water, and the fire that never says, “Enough.”” (Proverbs 30:16, ESV)**