

Jewish Encyclopedia

Immortality of the Soul: <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/8092-immortality-of-the-soul>

“The belief that the soul continues its existence after the dissolution of the body is a matter of philosophical or theological speculation rather than of simple faith, and is accordingly nowhere expressly taught in Holy Scripture. As long as the soul was conceived to be merely a breath,¹ and inseparably connected, if not identified, with the life-blood,² no real substance could be ascribed to it. As soon as the spirit or breath of God³ which was believed to keep body and soul together, both in man and in beast,⁴ is taken away⁵ or returns to God,⁶ the soul goes down to Sheol or Hades, there to lead a shadowy existence without life and consciousness.⁷ The belief in a continuous life of the soul, which underlies primitive Ancestor Worship and the rites of necromancy, practiced also in ancient Israel,⁸ was discouraged and suppressed by prophet and lawgiver as antagonistic to the belief in YHWH, the God of life, the Ruler of heaven and earth, whose reign was not extended over Sheol until post-exilic times.”⁹

“As a matter of fact, eternal life was ascribed exclusively to God, and to celestial beings who “eat of the tree of life and live forever,”¹⁰ whereas man by being driven out of the Garden of Eden was deprived of the opportunity of eating the food of immortality.”¹¹

“The belief in the immortality of the soul came to the Jews from contact with Greek thought and chiefly through the philosophy of Plato, its principal exponent, who was led to it through Orphic and Eleusinian mysteries in which Babylonian and Egyptian views were strangely blended.”

“Certain it is that the Pharisaic belief in resurrection had not even a name for the immortality of the soul. For them, man was made for two worlds, the world that now is, and the world to come, where life does not end in death.”

Pharisees: <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/12087-pharisees>

“The Pharisees, who yielded to the temporary powers and enjoined the people to pray for the government,¹² waited nevertheless for the Kingdom of God, consoling themselves in the meantime with the spiritual freedom granted by the study of the Law.¹³ ... Josephus¹⁴ carefully avoids mentioning the most essential doctrine of the Pharisees, the Messianic hope, which the Sadducees did not share with them. ... But it was not the immortality of the soul which the Pharisees believed in, as Josephus puts it, but the resurrection of the body as expressed in the liturgy,¹⁵ and this formed part of their Messianic hope.¹⁶ In contradistinction to the Sadducees, who were satisfied with the political life committed to their own power as the ruling dynasty, the Pharisees represented the views and hopes of the people. The same was the case with regard to the belief in angels and demons.”

¹ “nefesh”; “neshamah”; compare “anima”

² Gen. ix. 4, comp. iv. 11; Lev. xvii. 11; see “Soul”

³ “nishmat” or “ruah hayyim”

⁴ Gen. ii. 7, vi. 17, vii. 22; Job xxvii. 3

⁵ Ps. cxlvi. 4

⁶ Eccl. xii. 7; Job xxxiv. 14

⁷ Job xiv. 21; Ps. vi. 6 [A. V. 5], cxv. 17; Isa. xxxviii. 18; Eccl. ix. 5, 10

⁸ I Sam. xxviii. 13 et seq.; Isa. viii. 19; see Necromancy

⁹ Ps. xvi. 10, xlix. 16, cxxxix. 8.

¹⁰ Gen. iii. 22, Hebr.

¹¹ See Roscher, “Lexikon der Griechischen und Römischen Mythologie,” s.v. “Ambrosia”

¹² Abot iii. 2

¹³ Abot vi. 2

¹⁴ “B. J.” ii. 8, § 14; “Ant.” xiii. 5, § 9; xviii. 1, § 3

¹⁵ See Resurrection

¹⁶ See Eschatology