

## **Ezekiel 37 and its fulfillment**

The vision of the dry bones is a general picture of the restoration of Israel by the prophet Ezekiel, initially about their returning from captivity but also looking forward to the days of Messiah. But it is much more - a prophesy that is fulfilled in the events surrounding the resurrection of Jesus.

It involves a look at the relationship between “dew” and events surrounding Jesus’ resurrection, and the timing of certain Passover readings.

The key fact is that the ancient Jewish sages chose Ezekiel 37:1-14 as the Haftarah reading for Shabbat Chol HaMoed, the weekly Sabbath if it fell during the “intermediate days” of the Festival of Unleavened Bread.

Passover was considered eight days long, beginning with the Passover ceremony on the 14th of Nisan, followed by the “chagigah” festive peace offerings the following day, which marked the start of the seven-day Feast of Unleavened Bread. The “chagigah” was considered a sabbath with no work. The middle five days were called Chol Hamoed or “intermediate” days. So Passover itself and the first and last day of the Festival Unleavened Bread were all considered Sabbaths.

The Jewish day begins as sunset. According to Alfred Edersheim in “The Temple,” Jesus’ celebrated Passover with his disciples on Nisan 14 in the evening, and was arrested and tried that night, then was crucified the next day (still Nisan 14 by Jewish reckoning).

## **John 18:28 Misunderstood**

A misunderstood passage - John 18:28 - says the Jewish officials who brought Jesus before Pilate could not enter the governor’s palace so as not to be ritually defiled by Gentiles, so they could “eat the Passover.” This refers to the festive meal called the chagigah for the first day of the Festival Unleavened Bread, which included the peace offerings offered on that day, *not* the Passover ceremony. John uses the term Passover because the “Passover” was considered to include the whole 8-day period, according to Josephus.

See **Leviticus 23:4-14** about instituting the Passover, the Feast of Unleavened Bread and the First Fruits Offering.

The priests were instructed to wave the First Fruits Offering “on the morrow after the sabbath.” What sabbath? This refers to the sabbath of the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread - the “chagigah” - discussed in the two previous verses (not the weekly sabbath).

Thus, the priests were cutting the sheaves as Jesus was being brought down off the cross. The First Fruits wave offering was performed in the temple sometime during the day that Jesus rose from the dead.

But there was a regular weekly sabbath during this period.

**Matthew 28:1** - "Now after the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb."

During the weekly Sabbath, Jesus was in the grave. He was resurrected the next night, possibly at midnight, ("It came to pass at midnight..." as said in the Passover Haggadah) leading up to the dawn of the first day of the week (a Sunday) when Mary and the others come to the grave.

So Shabbat Chol HaMoed (the intervening Sabbath) would have been the Sabbath when Jesus was in the grave.

Depending on how one reckons the chronology of Jesus' passion week, the first Sabbath to fall within the seven days of Unleavened Bread is the anniversary of Jesus' sojourn in the grave.

Jesus resurrected on the third day

"In the future Messiah will put Satan to utter shame and cast him into Gehenna" (Pesikta R. 161b) and "death will be pulled up by its roots out of the world," as it is said (Isaiah 35:8) 'He will swallow up death forever'(Arugat ha-Vosem, I, p.262) "And how do we know that the Judgment will take place on the third day? For it is said (Hosea 6:2) "After two days He will revive us, on the third day He will raise us up." (Midrash Wa-Yosha, p. 56)

### **The 'Dew of Resurrection' and the month of Nisan**

See "The Chumash: Book of Haftaros," page 148 - <http://buff.ly/2p7ELAQ>

Remember that the Rabbis insist that the ashes of the ram that took the place of Isaac in the sacrifice were considered as the ashes of Isaac, so that Abraham could say, "the ram is my son, actually."

"When Abraham bound his son Isaac on the altar, and slew him and burned him, the lad was reduced to ashes, and his ashes were cast on Mount Moriah; then the Holy One, blessed be He, brought down life-giving dew and revived him. That is why David said, "Like Hermon dew which descends." This is a reference to the dew which the Holy One, blessed be He, revived Father Isaac. Whereupon the ministering angels proceeded to say: Blessed be He who quickens the dead." (Shibbole ha-Leket and other Midrash)

Dew forms at night, as atmospheric water vapor condenses to form small droplets on the surface. It seems almost miraculous because its formation is imperceptible.

R' Hai Ga'on has testified to an oral tradition that the final resurrection of the dead will occur in the month of Nisan (Tur, Orach Chaim 490) And more specifically, in Passover

season. Why?

The Talmud (in Sanhedrin 90b) has a quotation from Queen Cleopatra: "I know that the dead will be revived, as it is written, 'And they will sprout forth from the city like the grass from the ground' (Psalm 72:16). The month of Nisan (originally called Abib) is called the "month of Spring" (Exodus 13:4) Abib means "spring" in Hebrew.

Furthermore, Passover is the time the prayer for dew is recited. Grass will sprout even without rain, when only dew is found. "The treasure houses of dew are opened" on Passover (Pirkei s'Rabbi Eliezer) And God will carry out the resurrection by means of dew (Shabbos 85b)

The Jewish Sages believed the first day of Passover "was destined from Creation as the time for dew to fall."

"By means of the "dew of resurrection" the dead will be aroused from their sleep" (Yer. Ber. v. 9b; Ta'an. i. 63d, with reference to Isa. 26:19; Hag. 12b. with reference to Ps. 68:10 [A. V. 9]).

**Isaiah 26:19** - "Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust: for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead."

"In the sixth heaven, Makon, there are treasuries of hurtful dews and of beneficial dewdrops" (Hag. 12b). "Between Pesah and Shabu'ot a prayer is offered that God may preserve the people from the hurtful dews" (Lev. R. xxviii., with reference to Jer. v. 24).

But the "dew of the Resurrection" is also stored up in 'Arabot, the highest heaven (Hag. 12b). By this dew the dead are revived (Yer. Ber. v. 9b; Yer. Ta'an. i. 63d, with reference to Isa. 26:19).

Dew miraculously turned into Manna:

**Exodus 16:13-14** - "...and in the morning there was a layer of dew around the camp. When the layer of dew evaporated, behold, on the surface of the wilderness there was a fine flake-like thing, fine as the frost on the ground."

**Numbers 11:9** - "When the dew fell on the camp at night, the manna would fall with it."

Dew is associated with the giving of the law at Sinai:

**Psalm 68:8-9** - "The earth shook, the heavens also dropped at the presence of God: even Sinai itself was moved at the presence of God, the God of Israel. Thou, O God, didst send a plentiful rain, whereby thou didst confirm thine inheritance, when it was weary."

“Dropped” is “nataph” which means “to drop, drip, distil, prophesy, preach” and fits with the fine dew drops of Torah doctrine. So dew and “plentiful rain” are both referenced here.

Indeed, in Hag. 12b, Ps. 68:10 (9) is referred to: "Thou didst send a plentiful rain to revive thine inheritance." This verse is construed to allude to an incident at the giving of the Law on Mount Sinai. "When God appeared amidst the trembling of the earth on Sinai, life fled from the people of Israel and from all the living people in the land of Israel; and the angels said: 'Dost Thou desire to give Thy Law unto the dead or unto the living?' Then God dropped the dew of Resurrection upon all, and they revived."

In other words, the giving of the Law caused everyone to die. The dew of resurrection revived them.

The Prayer for Dew and the liturgical poetry of the 7th-century (or earlier) poet Rabbi Eleazar Ha-Kallir for the first day of Passover contains many allusions to the dew of Resurrection.

— <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/5156-dew>

**Hosea 14:6-7** - "I will be as dew for Israel. He will blossom like the lily, And he will take root like the cedars of Lebanon."

**Zechariah 8:12** - "For there will be peace for the seed: the vine will yield its fruit, the land will yield its produce and the heavens will give their dew; and I will cause the remnant of this people to inherit all these things."

**Proverbs 3:19-20** - "The LORD by wisdom founded the earth, By understanding He established the heavens. By His knowledge the deeps were broken up And the skies drip with dew."

**Psalms 110:3** - "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning: thou hast the dew of thy youth."

### **The Passover Prayer for Dew (Tefilat Tal)**

“Give us dew to favor Your land, grant us a blessing of Your joy. Make us strong with plentiful grain and wine. Restore Jerusalem, Your delight, as flowers are renewed by dew.

“Let this be a good year for dew, crowned with proud and beautiful fruit. May the city of Jerusalem, once empty, be turned into a crown that sparkles like the dew.

“May dew fall upon the blessed land. Fill us with heaven’s finest blessings. May a light come out of the darkness to draw Israel to You as a root finds water from dew.

“May You bless our food with dew. May we enjoy plenty with nothing lacking. Grant the wish of the people that followed You through the desert like sheep – with dew.

“You are Adonai our God, who causes the wind to blow and the dew to fall.

“For blessing and not for curse. Amen.

“For life and not for death. Amen.

“For plenty and not for lack. Amen.”

(Also, read P. 493 in New Union Prayer Book).

Why is this prayer recited on the first day of Passover? A Midrash (Pirkei D'Rebbe Eliezer 32) states that on the first day of Pesach, Isaac blessed Jacob and asked God to grant him “the dew of heaven.”

**Genesis 27:28** - “Therefore God give thee of the dew of heaven, and the fatness of the earth, and plenty of corn and wine”

In fact, the "Prayer for Dew" is recited every day in the morning prayer service from the first day of Passover until "Shemini Atzeret", which is the day after the harvest festival of Sukkot (Tabernacles) in the fall season.

According to later Ashkenazi custom, Shabbat Chol HaMoed was also the day designated for reading the Song of Solomon, and it mentions dew.

**Song of Solomon 5:2** - “Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled: for my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night.”

Also, In the Psalms of Ascent sung on Passover, **Psalms 133** equates the dew with the blessing of eternal life : “Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments; As the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore.”

Another passage relates dew to the teachings of Torah:

**Deuteronomy 32:2** - “My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distill as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass”

Tal (dew) is made up of the first letters of the phrase "Tov Lamed" which can be translated as "Teach goodness." This is what Messiah will do.

Commenting on this, the Talmud notes that dew drops are smaller than rain drops, and permeate the ground. “So you permeate yourself with words of Torah, lest you forget them.” (Sifre Deut., Ha'azinu, 306, f 131b)

All other Passover readings are connected to the day that they are read, and their themes recur on that day every year. The resurrection is not a recurring theme but a singular event not connected with a particular time. So the Ezekiel 37 reading was chosen for Shabbat Chol HaMoed because sometimes passover has no Shabbat Chol HaMoed (as when the day of passover itself falls on a Sabbath). So it is not time-bound. (Sichas Acharon Shel Pesach 5739, par. 9).

Rashi explains that the month Aviv comes from the Hebrew word of "eebeha" (Heb. אֵיבָה), literally translated as "greenness," and means the month in which the grain fills out in its "greenness." It also contains within it the Hebrew word av (Heb. אב), literally translated as "father," meaning it is the first ("father") of months and earliest month to ripen fruits.

(See "When is the Jewish Month Abib?" - <http://buff.ly/2p7QXBs>)

### **Ezekiel 37 pictures a re-creation as well as resurrection**

The Ezekiel passage was not simply about resurrecting the dry bones; he was reenacting the formation and creation of Adam. It was a re-creation.

The same "Spirit" that hovered over the earth in the first moments of creation (see Genesis 1:2) carried Ezekiel to the valley of bones. The bodies were complete but they lacked the "Spirit," just as the body of the Primal Man Adam had been formed, but needed breath, "and He blew into his nostrils the soul of life." (**Genesis 2:7**)

(From theFoundatioStone.org <http://buff.ly/2oZAtsW>)

### **Graves Opened, Breathing the Holy Spirit**

Each aspect of the prophecy of Ezekiel 37 is shown to be fulfilled in New Testament events.

**Ezekiel 37:12** - "Therefore prophesy and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, O my people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel."

**Matthew 27:52-53** - "And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, And came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many."

**Ezekiel 37:5** - "Thus saith the Lord GOD unto these bones; Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live."

**John 20:22** - "And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost:"

This was the life-giving Spirit, as reflected at the creation of Adam:

**Genesis 2:7** - "And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul."

A new race was created, infused not just with life, but with eternal life.

(The baptism in the Spirit would take place at Pentecost, for power and ability. The Talmud references the dew of resurrection also dropping (dripping) at the giving of the law at Pentecost (see above). In fact, the Passover and Pentecost festivals were considered to be one, bound together by the counting of the omer

The final and complete fulfillment of all this will be at the Resurrection and the Last Judgment at the consummation of history.

Other references:

**Ezekiel 37:11** - "all the house of Israel" is the same phrase used by Paul in Romans 11:26 - "And so all Israel shall be saved..."

Also See "The Crucifixion and Resurrection of Christ by the Light of Tradition"  
<http://buff.ly/2ocFZes>