

# going in deeper: the prison

the messiah's descent and the yom kippur conquest of sheol

to understand the victory of yahusha ha'mashiach, we must first understand the prison he conquered. the tanakh paints a consistent picture: sheol is the universal prison of death, a confined realm where all the dead, righteous and wicked, were held captive. the new testament reveals this prison was not just a metaphor, but a real place our messiah entered, shattered, and plundered, fulfilling the ultimate pattern of yom kippur. this was not a distant spiritual theory, but a concrete event with immediate consequences for the generation that witnessed it.

## 1. the tanakh's prison: sheol, the captive realm

the hebrew scriptures describe sheol with the vocabulary of a prison.

- **the pit and the grave:**
  - [tehillim \(psalm\) 30:3](#): "yhvh, you brought up my soul from sheol; you restored me to life from among those who go down to the pit."
  - [yeshayahu \(isaiah\) 38:17-18](#): "...you have delivered my life from the pit of destruction... for sheol cannot thank you; death cannot praise you; those who go down to the pit cannot hope for your faithfulness."
- **the bars of confinement:**
  - [iyov \(job\) 17:16](#): "will it go down to the bars of sheol? shall we descend together into the dust?"
  - [yonah \(jonah\) 2:6](#): "i went down to the land whose bars closed upon me forever; yet you brought up my life from the pit, o yhvh my elohiym."
- **the gathering place of all:**
  - [yechezqel \(ezekiel\) 32](#): this entire chapter lists the armies of nations "laid to rest" in sheol.
  - [tehillim \(psalm\) 89:48](#): "what man can live and never see death? who can deliver his soul from the power of sheol?"

crucially, the righteous were also there, awaiting redemption. within sheol, there was a place of comfort for them, known in the new testament as "abraham's bosom."

- **ya'akov (jacob)'s expectation:**
  - [beresheet \(genesis\) 37:35](#): "no, i shall go down to sheol to my son, mourning."
- **the hope of redemption from sheol:**
  - [iyov \(job\) 19:25-27](#): "i know that my go'el (redeemer) lives... after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh i shall see elohiym."
  - **a note on the body:** job's hope points to a new body. in hebrew, there is a profound distinction: the mortal body is **owr with an ayin (עור), meaning "skin" or**

**"physical hide."** the immortal, glorified body is **owr with an aleph (אור), meaning "light."** job looked forward to the day he would exchange his perishing owr (ayin) for an everlasting body of owr (aleph); a body of light.

→ **hosea 13:14:** "shall i ransom them from the power of sheol? shall i redeem them from death?"

➤ **the prophecy of the prison's opening:**

→ **yeshayahu (isaiah) 61:1:** "the spirit of yhvh is upon me... to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound."

the "prison" is sheol, a realm with a place of comfort for the righteous ("abraham's bosom") and a place of torment for the wicked, yet both sides were behind the same bars of death, awaiting the final verdict.

## **2. the prophetic strategy: the seed and the strongman**

the plan for this prison-break was prophesied from the beginning.

➤ **the call to all mankind: the crushed serpent:**

→ **beresheet (genesis) 3:15:** "i will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring (seed) and her offspring (seed); he shall crush your head, and you shall bruise his heel."

this was a call to all humanity, born of the woman, to overcome the serpent. yet, as romans 3:10-12 confirms, "there is no one righteous, not even one... no one who does good." all fell short. the call went unanswered, until one man, the perfect "seed of the woman," lived up to it: yahusha ha'mashiach. he alone was the promised seed who would finally crush the serpent's head. this is the blindness of the jehudim: they look for a messiah but do not see that he is the one who fulfilled the call we all failed.

➤ **the strategy declared: binding the strongman:**

→ **mattityahu (matthew) 12:28-29:** "if i cast out demons by the spirit of elohiym, then the kingdom of elohiym has come upon you. how can someone enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man? then he may plunder his house."

→ **yeshayahu (isaiah) 49:24-25** "shall the prey be taken from the mighty, or the captives of a tyrant be delivered? but thus says yhvh: 'even the captives of the mighty shall be taken, and the prey of the tyrant be delivered, for i will contend with those who contend with you, and i will save your children.'"

yahusha identifies his mission: to bind the "strong man" (ha'satan) who holds the "goods" (humanity) captive in his "house" (the domain of sin and death, sheol).

➤ **the prophecy of the conquering king:**

→ **tehillim (psalm) 68:18:** "you ascended on high, you led captivity captive; you received gifts among men..."

this king would first descend to lead the captives out, then ascend.

### 3. the historical fulfillment: shattering the gates

the moment of messiah's death was the moment the prison was shattered.

➤ **the cosmic sign:**

→ **mattityahu (matthew) 27:51-53:** "and behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth shook, and the rocks were split; and the tombs were opened; and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised; and coming out of the tombs after his resurrection they entered the set-apart city and appeared to many."

this is legal, cosmic evidence:

**3.1 the torn veil:** the way into the true heavenly set-apart place was opened. our high priest was entering. but what did he bring? not literal blood, for the life (nephesh) of the flesh is in the blood (vayikra/leviticus 17:11). blood represents a life given. he presented his sinless life as a witness before the father. no man can die for another's guilt, as mosheh tried and was denied (shemot/exodus 32:32-33). the torah is clear: **"fathers shall not be put to death for the children, nor shall children be put to death for the fathers; every man shall be put to death for his own sin" (2 kings 14:6);** each person dies for their own sin. we also read in: **yirmeyahu (jeremiah) 31:30 "but each one shall die for his own crookedness – whoever eats sour grapes, his teeth shall be blunted."**

yahusha did not "take our punishment" as a layer. he died because of our sins, as the ultimate righteous victim. his death exposes our abomination, our collective guilt in shedding innocent blood, and gives us time to repent. his life, however, is what saves us.

➤ **romans 5:10:** "for if while we were enemies we were reconciled to elohiym by the death of his son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by his life."

we are reconciled by his death that exposes sin, but we are saved by his life, his ongoing ministry as our eternal high priest.

**3.2 the opened tombs:** the "bars of sheol" (jonah 2:6) were shattered. the prison doors were blown off.

**3.3. the resurrected saints:** these are the "host of captives" from psalm 68:18! they are the tangible proof that isaiah 61:1 was fulfilled. the messiah had plundered the strongman's house. this event was the powerful, first-fruits guarantee of a greater harvest to come within that very generation. yahusha had promised the end of the age would come with great power, and that **"this generation will not pass away until all these things take place" (mattityahu/matthew 24:34).** the resurrection of these saints was a down-payment on that promise, a sign that the power of death was broken and the age to come was breaking in.

## 4. the descent: proclaiming victory in the prison

where did he go between his death and resurrection?

- **the prophecy of his soul in sheol:**
  - **tehillim (psalm) 16:10:** "for you will not abandon my soul to sheol; nor will you allow your set-apart one to undergo decay."
- **the sign of yonah:**
  - **mattityahu (matthew) 12:40:** "for just as yonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the sea monster, so will the son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." (a clear idiom for sheol).
- **the apostolic testimony:**
  - **kepha (1 peter) 3:18-20:** "the messiah... being put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit; in which also he went and made proclamation to the spirits now in prison (sheol / grave)..."
  - **ephesians 4:8-10:** "when he ascended on high, he led captive a host of captives... now this, 'he ascended,' what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower parts of the earth?"

he descended to the prison - sheol.

## 5. the yom kippur fulfillment: the high priest and the three offerings

this entire event is the ultimate yom kippur (leviticus 16). the key is to see yahusha not as one of the goats, but as the high priest who ministers the entire service.

- **the defilement:**
  - **bamidbar (numbers) 35:33-34:** "so you shall not pollute the land in which you are; for blood pollutes the land... for i yhvh am dwelling in the midst of the people of yashar'el."
- the land was defiled by the innocent blood shed because of the strongman's influence.
- **the bull: the high priest's qualification**
  - **vayikra (leviticus) 16:11:** "and aharon shall bring the bull of the sin offering, which is for himself, and shall make atonement for himself, and for his house..."
  - this represents **yahusha's own sinless life and death**. he was the spotless, obedient sacrifice that qualified himself as the clean high priest. he did not need to atone for his own sin, but his life was the offering that sanctified him to enter the heavenly set-apart place on our behalf. this cleansed the true heavenly tabernacle from the defilement caused by human sin.
- **the two goats: the high priest's ministry**
- after offering the bull for himself, the high priest presents the two goats before yhvh.

5.1. **the goat le yhvh (for yhvh):** this is the goat upon which the lot "for yhvh" falls. it is slain, and its blood is brought into the set-apart place to make atonement for the people. this represents **the righteous captives ("the souls under the altar") from abel to zechariah.** their lives, though righteous, were still held captive in the prison of sheol. the blood of this goat signifies their redeemed lives being presented before elohiym, atoning for the corporate guilt of the land. through his ministry as high priest, yahusha presented them before the father, and they received their white robes.

**luqas (luke) 11:50-51** 'so that the blood of all the prophets which was shed from the foundation of the world **shall be required of this generation, from the blood of hebel to the blood of zekaryah** who perished between the slaughter-place and the dwelling place. yes, i say to you, it shall be required of this generation.'

5.2. **the goat le azazel (for azazel):** this is the live goat upon which the high priest lays the sins of the people, and it is led away into the wilderness to bear their iniquities to a solitary land. this represents the unrighteous strongman and his seed, the "adversaries" from cain to the rebellious spirits of genesis 6. this is not a sacrifice for atonement, but a ritual of removal.

➤ **the cosmic fulfillment: the proclamation**

➤ in his descent, yahusha, our high priest, did not offer the "spirits in prison" a second chance. the **"proclamation" (1 peter 3:19)** was the high priest's official act: he went to the realm of the dead and **pronounced judgement upon the strongman (the azazel-figure)**, laying the full weight of the defilement he caused back upon him, and casting him out. he then applied the benefits of his priestly work to the yhvh goat, leading the righteous captives out.

➤ the scriptures reveal a profound pattern in this judgment: the righteous are a ransom for the wicked, and the wicked for the righteous.

→ **tehillim (psalm) 58:10:** "the righteous one will rejoice when he sees the vengeance; he will wash his feet in the blood of the wicked."

→ **mishlei (proverbs) 21:18:** "the wicked is a ransom for the righteous, and the treacherous will be in the place of the upright."

➤ the unrighteous strongman was defeated, judged, and bound, his authority over death broken. the rebellious spirits were cast back down to the earth, their final destination being the lake of fire prepared for them.

**revelation 12:7-9:** "and there was war in heaven: michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, and prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. **and the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the devil, and satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.**"

**revelation 12:3-4:** "and there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold **a great red dragon... and his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth...**"

revelation 19:20: "and the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him... these both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone."

revelation 20:10: "and the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever."

revelation 20:14-15: "and death and hell (hades) were cast into the lake of fire. this is the second death. and whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire."

## 6. the completed victory and our high priest

the work is finished.

- **the strongman bound:** yahusha, the faithful seed, crushed the serpent's head.
- **the prison plundered:** he entered sheol, shattered its gates, and led the captives out.
- **the keys obtained:**
  - ➔ revelation 1:18: "i am he that lives, and was dead; and, behold, i am alive for evermore, and have the keys of hell (hades) and of death."
- **the promise of his imminent return:**
  - ➔ having conquered the prison, yahusha now possesses all authority. he promised his disciples that he would come in judgment upon the corrupt system of that age, and that he would do so soon, with speed, and within their generation. he told them, "**behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him**" (revelation 1:7), and assured them that "**the time is near**" (revelation 1:3). this was not a delay of millennia, but an imminent, swift act of judgment and redemption.
- **the hope of the faithful: not sleeping in sheol:**
  - ➔ this victory over the prison fundamentally altered the hope of the believer. because the messiah conquered sheol, death is no longer a long "sleep" in the dust. the apostle paul, writing to that generation, revealed a mystery: "**behold, i tell you a mystery. we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed**" (1 corinthians 15:51). and again, "**then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the master in the air**" (1 thessalonians 4:17). the promise was that some of them would "not sleep"; meaning they would not taste death and wait in sheol; but would be transformed and gathered to him at his coming. this was the powerful, imminent hope made possible because the prison had already been conquered.
- **the skin ripped:**
  - ➔ iyov (job) 4:19-21: "how much more those who dwell in houses of clay, whose foundation is in the dust, who are crushed before the moth! between morning and

evening they are broken in pieces; they perish forever without anyone regarding it. is not their tent-cord plucked up within them? they die, and that without wisdom."

the "skin" or "tent" (the **owr with an ayin**) of our mortal flesh is ripped in two on the day we die. this is the consequence of sin we all face. but yahusha, having conquered the prison of sheol, has become the door for us to a new tent, **a new body of owr with an aleph - a body of light**. the hope of not "sleeping" is the hope of bypassing sheol entirely, receiving that new body in the twinkling of an eye.

➤ **our eternal high priest:**

➤ how does he minister now? not with literal blood, but as the door and mediator of our prayers.

➔ **chizayon (revelation) 8:3-4**: "another angel came... with a golden censer... and the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the set-apart ones, went up before elohiym from the hand of the angel."

the angels carry our prayers, supplications, and repentance to the door of the heavenly tabernacle. yahusha, as the door-keeper and high priest, is the one who presents them. he is the one mediator (1 timothy 2:5). he himself declared, **"i am the way, the truth, and the life; no one comes to the father except through me" (john 14:6)**. we enter through that one door: him - if we were obedient, building our house on the rock of his fathers words, which he spoke.

## **conclusion: the prison from beresheet to revelation**

the prison is conquered. the sequence is complete. the proof is the empty tomb and the resurrected saints. the promise was fulfilled to that generation: he came in judgment on the old system, with the clouds of heaven, with speed. the faithful were gathered to him, and the hope of not "sleeping" in sheol became a reality for his covenant people.

➤ **luke 11:51**: "...from the blood of abel to the blood of zechariah..." the pattern is complete.

## **and so, the final picture is painted:**

➤ **chizayon (revelation) 22:14-15**: "blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter by the gates into the city. outside are the dogs and the sorcerers and the immoral persons and the murderers and the idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices lying."

the "gates" are now open. the "city" is the restored garden, the third heaven. "outside" is this current earth, the realm of the "outside," which will be purified by fire. the prison of sheol is emptied of its righteous captives. the choice is now before us: to enter the city through the one door, yahusha ha'mashiach, by living a life of obedient faith, or to remain outside.

**the victory is won. the prison is open. the high priest is waiting. enter in.**