

The New Testament Use of Γέεννα: Its Historical Background and It's Significance for the Doctrine of Eternal Punishment

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Introduction

This paper proposes to offer a serious analysis of the New Testament usage of γέεννα (*geenna*) with regard to its theological significance for the doctrine of eternal punishment. Included will be a discussion of the Old Testament background of the word and the subsequent speculative development it received in the Apocryphal, Apocalyptic, and Rabbinical literature of the Intertestamental period. Of the two theses of this paper, the first is that an understanding of this development and the current connotation of γέεννα for the Jews to whom Jesus preached is critical to forming a correct interpretation of his teaching on the subject. The second thesis is that the New Testament, specifically Jesus, does in fact use γέεννα as the name of the place of eternal punishment for the wicked.

It is to be observed that a severe limitation will be imposed on the treatment given here. Γέεννα occurs only twelve times in the New Testament,¹ and the exegesis will be limited to those passages. However, everyone grants--even annihilationists--that other passages refer to γέεννα even though the word is not used. Notable among these are Matthew 25:31-46 and the "lake of fire" passages in Revelation (19:20; 20:10-15; 21:8). Thus, on any theological theory, whatever γέεννα is and whatever the results of being cast into it are, those same facts are being taught by Jesus in Matthew 25. And clearly the γέεννα του πυρος is identical with the λιμνη του πυρος in Revelation. Much additional data is given in these other portions of Scripture, and any thorough defense of the historic, orthodox doctrine of the conscious and eternal punishment of the wicked should make use of them. But this paper is not intended to be a complete defense of eternal punishment; it is essentially a word study of γέεννα.

This present paper, however, may also be interpreted in another way. It is conceived by the author as a polemic against the Watchtower attack on this doctrine as it focuses on the word γέεννα. The

¹ See below under section III.

zealous Witnesses are wont to point out the fact that γέεννα etymologically refers to the Valley of Hinnom south of Jerusalem, and thus, by providing a few impressive pictures or maps, they attempt to shake the faith of the orthodox church member who thinks he has been taught that it meant "Hell". In actuality, this bit of Watchtower sophistry backfires as the following paper will demonstrate.

I. The Old Testament Background of Γέεννα

Γέεννα, according to Jeremias,² is the Greek form for the Aramaic גֵּי הַנָּמ (gê Hinnām or Valley of Hinnam) which in turn is equivalent to the Hebrew גֵּי הַנְּוֹם (gê Hinnōm or the Valley of Hinnōm, used in Josh. 15:8; 18:16). This Hebrew word is itself an abbreviation for either גֵּי בְּנֵי הַנָּמ (gê ben-Hinnōm or Valley of the Son of Hinnom, also used in Josh 15:8; 18:16) or גֵּי בְּנֵי הַנְּוֹם (gê b^enê-Hinnom or Valley of the Sons of Hinnom, used in II Kgs. 23:10). Hinnom is apparently a proper name, though who he may have been is unknown. Perhaps, suggests S. Barabas,³ he was the original Jebusite owner of the valley (cf. Josh. 15:63).

The first mention of the Valley of Hinnom is Joshua 15:8 and 18:16 where it is said to have served as part of the boundary between the inheritance of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin. However, the location of the valley is a matter of debate. To quote Barabas again:

The location of the valley has been much disputed. All three of the valleys around Jerusalem have been identified with it--the Kidron to the E, the Tyropoeon in the center, and the Wadi er-Rababi on the W. Early Jewish, Christian, and Mohammedan writers identified it with Kidron, but scarcely anyone does so today. Since the Tyropoean [sic] valley was incorporated within the city walls before the time of Manasseh, it is extremely unlikely that it could have been the place of the sacrifice of children, which must have been done outside the walls (2 Kings 21:10-15).

2 Joachim Jeremias, "Γέεννα," *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. by Gerhard Kittel, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1965), I, p. 657.

3 S. Barabas, "Hinnom, Valley of," *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, ed. by Merrill C. Tenney (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1975), III, p. 160.

The Wadi er-Rababi location has the best support. It begins W of the Jaffa gate, turns S c. a third of a mile, and gradually curves E to join the Kidron valley.⁴

It is not necessary for the purposes of this paper to enter further into the issue of location. The majority opinion stated above is acceptable as a base upon which to continue.⁵

The next mention of the Valley of Hinnom in the Old Testament accounts for the development of its infamous notoriety. In II Chronicles 28:3 Ahaz is said to have burned his children as sacrifices in this valley, presumably to the Semitic deity Molech (*cf.* Lev. 18:21; 20:1-5; Jer. 32:35).⁶ Hinnom is again mentioned in II Chronicles 33:6. After a revival under Hezekiah, the fires of Hinnom were kindled once more by Manasseh, the wicked grandson of Ahaz.

At some point during these idolatrous practices, a high place⁷ known as Tophet⁸ was erected for the sacrifice of children to Molech. Who directed its erection is not known. It had to have been prior to the defeat of Assyria in II Chronicles 32:20-22, however, for the notoriety of Tophet had just prior to that defeat already grown to such an extent that Isaiah could predict it using imagery taken from

4 *Ibid.*

5 One of the alternative positions is argued by James Fyfe, *The Hereafter* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1890), pp. 122-126.

6 No doubt the Canaanites were the first to practice child sacrifice around Jerusalem before the occupation of the land by Israel (see Ps. 106:34-39). Moreover, it is also probable that Solomon was the first to allow such sacrifices to Molech within Israel, though it is not stated whether or not the high place (see footnote 7) he built for this god was in Hinnom (I Kgs. 11:6-8).

7 A "high place" (בָּמָה, *bamah*) was an idolatrous shrine erected on the summit of a hill--the word coming from a root not found in the O.T. meaning *to be high--* containing an altar, a male deity stone monolith or obelisk (*massebah*) having phallic associations, and a female deity wooden stump or pole pillar (*asherah*) which the KJV erroneously translated "grove" or "groves".

8 Tophet, תֹּפֶת, has an uncertain etymology. At least three possibilities have been proposed: (1) It is derived from *toph* or *drum* and has reference to the drums used to drown the screams of the children offered alive to Molech in the fires. (2) The derivation might also be from *tuth* meaning *to spit*, signifying the contempt with which the shrine was viewed (*cf.* Job 17:6). This view, however, seems highly unlikely since there is no evidence the idolators themselves had not named it. Or (3) Tophet may be derived from *tophleh*, a word of Assyrio-Persian origin meaning *contempt* or *place of burning*. This last view is probably correct. See "Tophet," *Unger's Bible Dictionary* (3rd ed.: Chicago, Moody Press, 1973), p. 1109; James Fyfe, *op. cit.*, pp. 131,132; *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*, ed. by Brown, Driver, and Briggs (Oxford: Clarendon, 1952), p. 1075; W. White, Jr., "Tophet," *Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, V, p. 779.

this shrine (Isa. 30:27-33, esp. vs. 33). Also known is the fact that Tophet was in Hinnom: it was "Tophet which is in the valley of the children of Hinnom" that Josiah during the reformation of 621 defiled (II Kgs. 23:10). By burning the bones of the idolatrous priests on the altar (II Chr. 34:5) and spreading other bones about the area (II Kgs. 23:13,14), he hoped to forever make the place ceremonially unclean and therefore unfit for the abhorrent practices of the cult.

Concerning this juncture in the history of Hinnom and subsequent events, there is disagreement among the scholars. Some say that after its defilement by Josiah the valley became a city dump where fires were kept continually burning to consume the refuse.⁹ Others agree that that actually occurred but place the time of such a use after the exile.¹⁰ This latter view is consistent with the comment of Rabbi Kimchi (c. 1200 A.D.).¹¹ However, still others argue that no fires were ever burning in Hinnom except those to Molech.¹² According to the research of the present writer, the second view should be accepted: sometime after the defilement by Josiah, and probably after the exile, Hinnom, or part of it, became the place where refuse and perhaps bodies of criminals were burned by perpetual fires, fueled no doubt with sulfur ("brimstone").

One problem complicating the above discussion is the fact that at some point after the death of Josiah, the worship of Molech at Tophet in Hinnom was evidently revived. That such was the case is evidenced first by the prophecies of Jeremiah. In 7:31-34 and 19:1-6 he predicts that as a result of the abominations perpetrated at Tophet, it will in the future be called the Valley of Slaughter. The reference is probably to the final destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar.¹³ The second line of evidence is the fact that both Jehoahaz and Jehoiakim are said to have sinned "according to all that his fathers had done" (II Kgs. 23:32,37). And in the case of Jehoiakim, "the sins of Manasseh" are specifically mentioned (II Kgs. 24:3).¹⁴ The third line of evidence is that according to Ezekiel

9 *E.g., Unger's Bible Dictionary*, p. 484.

10 *E.g., R.E. Davis, "Γέεννα," Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, II, p. 671; W. White, Jr., *loc. cit.*

11 "Gehinnom was a despised place into which were thrown garbage and dead bodies, and a fire was there perpetually to burn filth and bones. Therefore, parabolically, the judgment of the impious was called Gehenna." (Quoted by Fyfe, *op. cit.*, p. 126).

12 See the argument by Fyfe, *op. cit.*, pp. 126, 127 where he also quotes other scholars in support of his position.

13 Mordecai I. Soloff, "Gehinnom," *The Universal Jewish Encyclopedia*, ed. by Isaac Landman (New York: Ktav Publishing House, 1969), IV, p. 520.

14 Both Unger, *op. cit.*, p. 416, and S. R. Driver, "Gehenna," *A Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. by James Hastings (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1903), II, p. 119, claim

20:30-32 child sacrifice was again practiced shortly before the Babylonian captivity (*cf.* also Jer. 11:10-13). Now the problem with the reinstatement of idolatrous worship at Tophet is this: How can the valley be serving as a receptacle of the city's refuse, which was kept continually burning, and at the same time serve as the location of the shrine? Fyfe, who denies that Hinnom ever became a city dump, raises this question as a problem for those who accept Kimchi's statement.¹⁵ However, the majority position¹⁶--*i.e.*, that it did become the cesspool of the city--in the second version presented above eliminates the problem. As Fyfe himself admits, after the captivity the last vestiges of idolatrous tendencies had finally been rooted out of the Jews. Therefore, they looked upon Hinnom "with horror, as the scene of the evil deeds that brought upon their land and nation all the great and terrible calamities..."¹⁷ Thus they would be quite prone to begin dumping their garbage on that spot once used in the worship of Molech.

The last mention of the Valley of Hinnom is in Nehemiah 11:30, an apparently neutral reference reminiscent of Joshua 15:8 and 18:6. But there are some verses which, though they do not specifically mention the Valley of Hinnom, are generally assumed to refer to it. Many feel, for example, that since this place had become so notorious by Jeremiah's time, he could simply refer to it as the "valley" in 31:40 (see also 2:23).¹⁸ Also, several passages in Isaiah possibly make use of language allusive of Tophet and the activities perpetrated in Hinnom: 31:9; 33:11,14; 50:11.¹⁹

Special note, however, needs to be taken of Isaiah 66:24 due to the quotation of it by Christ in his discussion of γέεννα in Mark 9. To what does Isaiah have reference here? Premillennarians generally

that worship at Tophet was revived specifically under Jehoiakim, but neither offers any proof.

¹⁵*Op. cit.*, pp. 143,144.

¹⁶That it is a majority who hold this view is concluded on the following evidences: (1) the statement by Driver in *Hastings (loc. cit.)* implies that his investigations indicated it a majority view; (2) the view is accepted by Davis (*loc. cit.*) in the most recent scholarly encyclopedia on the Bible; (3) all the sources examined by the present writer--except Fyfe--accept the view.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, p. 145.

¹⁸See, for instance, S. R. Driver, *loc. cit.*

¹⁹That such allusions were actually in the mind of Isaiah is least certain about 33:11,14 and 50:11. Concerning 31:9, E. J. Young writes, "It may be that there is a particular allusion to Tophet as the furnace of God's wrath wherein the enemies will suffer the flames of vengeance. Of this, however, one cannot be certain. What is clear is that the fire and the furnace belong to the Lord and they are present in Jerusalem, ready to consume the enemies." The alternative suggestion he makes is that the reference is to the fire burning continually upon the altar in the Temple. See *The Book of Isaiah* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1969), II, p. 383.

take Isaiah 66:10-24 to be a prophetic description of the eschatological kingdom set up by Christ at his return.²⁰ Therefore, what Isaiah must have in mind in part a of 66:24 is the scene following the great battle near Jerusalem at the Second Advent (Zech. 12:1-9; 14:1-4; Rev. 19:17-20).²¹ It is conceivable too that such a scene will continue to exist throughout the millennial kingdom as is perhaps suggested first of all by the reading of verses 23 and 24 together. But in addition, as both Walvoord and Pentecost point out,²² rebellion during the kingdom will be judged instantly with death (see Ps. 2:9; 72:1-4; Isa. 11:4; 29:20,21; 65:20; Zech. 14:16-21), and both men suggest that Isaiah 66:24 is descriptive also of the end of these rebels. In any case, it seems evident that Isaiah refers to literal, physical corpses.²³

On the other hand, there are cogent reasons for concluding that in part b Isaiah is no longer thinking of physical or natural realities. First, both worms and fire cannot operate simultaneously on the same body. Second, and even more significant, neither a worm nor fire, even if operating separately on any given body, can effect its work on a body indefinitely. Therefore, worms and fire become symbols or figures--figures taken from the natural realm--of forces operative in the spiritual realm. But upon what do they operate? Surely not the "carcasses", for it has been concluded that they are physical corpses and that the forces of worms and fire could not operate upon them in the manner described. The nearest noun to "their" is "men", and a general rule of syntax is that the nearest noun is the antecedent to the pronoun. Thus, it is "the worm" and "the fire" of "the men" which will not cease operation: they will not cease their operation on *the men* slain as transgressors and whose carcasses remain (though not indefinitely) outside Jerusalem. This verse is an evident instance of the doctrine of eternal punishment in the Old Testament.²⁴

As further confirmation that eternal punishment--consisting of some kind of force which is in the spiritual realm as acute in producing torment as the figures are in the physical realm--is in the mind of

²⁰ See, e.g., *The New Scofield Reference Bible*, ed. by E. Schuyler English (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), pp. 768,769.

²¹ Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset, and David Brown, *Commentary Practical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible* (Nashville, The Southwestern Company, 1968), p. 595.

²² John F. Walvoord, *The Millennial Kingdom* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1972), p. 302; J. Dwight Pentecost, *Things to Come* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1973), p. 503.

²³ Fyfe, *op. cit.*, pp. 140-142, tries to argue that פֶּגֶר (*peger*, corpse or carcass) can here be descriptive of living, indestructible bodies. His argument, however, is not compelling. See Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *op. cit.*, p. 803.

²⁴ Even S. R. Driver (*loc. cit.*) states that this verse teaches eternal punishment. He, of course, attributes it to an Intertestamental addition to Isaiah.

Isaiah, compare Daniel 12:2. The various exegetical questions in this verse need not be discussed here.²⁵ It is sufficient to observe that some will be raised²⁶ "to shame and everlasting contempt". The Hebrew word for "contempt" here (**דְּרֵאוֹן**) is used only twice in the Old Testament: Daniel 12:2 and Isaiah 66:24 ("abhorrence", RSV). It is the strongest word in Hebrew for *abomination*.²⁷ Thus, if Daniel 12:2 refers to eternal punishment, and even liberal scholars see this teaching in the verse,²⁸ then Isaiah likely speaks of the same doctrine.

If, then, Isaiah 66:24b is a reference to eternal punishment, what, it might be asked, is the relationship between the two parts of the verse? "They [the righteous] shall go forth [from Jerusalem, vs. 13] and look upon the carcasses of the men that have transgressed against me, *for* their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be

quenched." Delitzsch comments that **רָאָה בְּ** ("look") "always denotes a fixed, lingering look directed to any object; here it is connected with the grateful feeling of satisfaction at the righteous acts of God and their own gracious deliverance."²⁹ Thus, it seems best to connect the "for" with the "looking": the righteous will look upon the carcasses of the transgressors with a feeling of satisfaction in the righteousness of God *because* ("for") these "men" are suffering eternal punishment.

The final question to be raised concerning Isaiah 66:24, at least prior to the discussion of Mark 9 given in section III, is this: Is there a reference to the Valley of Hinnom in the verse? Virtually every source examined by this writer answers in the affirmative.³⁰ However, it is important to observe the exact sense in which Hinnom may be seen here. Some appear to see in the figures of "worm" and

25 See, for example, Robert D. Culver, *Daniel and the Latter Days* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1954), pp. 172-176.

26 The present writer has no doubt that this passage speaks of physical resurrection. Compare the strange analysis--coming from a dispensationalist!--that A. C. Gaebelein gives it, *The Prophet Daniel* (New York: Our Hope, 1911), p. 200.

27 Franz Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Prophecies of Isaiah*, trans. by James Martin (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1949), II, p. 516.

28 Again compare Driver, *loc. cit.* In fact, so clearly do these two verses teach eternal punishment that the liberal critics use them as an argument for the post-exilic authorship of the respective portions of each book. See the refutation of this line of argument by Gleason L. Archer, *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction* (2nd ed.; Chicago: Moody Press, 1974), pp. 394-403.

29 *Loc. cit.* Compare, however, E. J. Young, *op. cit.*, III, p. 537.

30 See, e.g., S. Barabas, *op. cit.*, p. 161.

"fire" a reference to Hinnom as the city dump, the worms and the fire continually consuming the refuse.³¹ However, such cannot be the case: Isaiah wrote before Hinnom ever became a dump, even if it became one immediately following Josiah's defilement of Tophet.³² Is it possible that the figure of fire comes, not from Hinnom as a burning city dump, but from Tophet as a place of sacrifice to Molech? But if so, where does the figure of the worm fit in? This writer does not believe that Isaiah 66:24 can be connected with Hinnom in any way through the figures of worm or fire. Undying worms probably symbolize an eternal process of corruption or putrefaction (cf. Ex. 16:20 where the same Hebrew word is used);³³ unquenchable fire probably symbolizes the infliction of torment.³⁴ As stated before, the effect of the spiritual forces symbolized by these physical forces are in every way as acute for the wicked in the eternal state as they are upon people in their present state.

What, then, is the connection between this verse and the Valley of Hinnom? If the above understanding of corpses is correct, namely that they are the dead from the great battle outside Jerusalem at the Second Advent, they with little doubt will occupy, among other possible places, this valley.³⁵ It will again, this time in an eschatological sense, live up to its name, "The Valley of Slaughter". It is to be noted, however, that there is a second, though indirect, connection that Isaiah 66:24 sustains to the Valley of Hinnom. Explication of this second sense must await the discussion of Mark 9.

II. γέεννα in the Intertestament Period

The introduction stated that the first thesis in the argument of this paper is that the connotation of γέεννα among the Jews to whom Christ preached is critically important for an understanding of his teaching about it. This contention will be developed in the next section. It is proposed here to establish what that connotation was and comment

31 This position is apparently held by Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown, *loc. cit.*, Young, *loc. cit.*, and D. Edmund Hiebert, *Mark: A Portrait of the Servant* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1974), p. 233.

32 Of course, when one starts talking about "trito-Isaiah" writing in post-exilic times, it is possible to hold that the imagery lying behind 66:24 is indeed the city dump in Hinnom. This view is taken by C. Ryder Smith, *The Bible Doctrine of the Hereafter* (London: The Epworth Press, 1958), p. 129.

33 Compare, however, the argument by Fyfe that the figure comes from the pain worms can bring when infecting a living person (*op. cit.*, pp. 140-158).

34 Refer to the excellent discussion of the extensive metaphorical use of fire in the Scripture by Fyfe, *op. cit.*, pp. 133-140.

35 Examples of scholars who take the geographical location of the corpses to be the Valley of Hinnom are E. J. Young, *op. cit.*, III, p. 537; S. Barabas, *loc. cit.*, Mordecai I. Soloff, *op. cit.*, p. 520; Joachin Jeremias, *op. cit.*, p. 658.

briefly on how it originated.

What γέεννα meant to the Jews of Christ's day was simply this: "In the first century B.C., this name came to be used in a metaphorical sense, to denote the place of fiery torment believed to be reserved for the wicked either immediately after death or ultimately after the Last Judgment."³⁶ This fact is incontestable and is acknowledged by both Jewish and Christian scholars.³⁷ The question now to be addressed is how γέεννα came to acquire this usage. Both the Jews of the first century and everyone today realize that literally and

etymologically γέεννα or גֵּיהֵנוֹם denoted a geographical location just outside Jerusalem.³⁸ That fact is not at issue at all. The question is how and why did the name of this valley come to be applied by the Jews to the place of fiery torment reserved, as they believed, for the wicked.

Two distinct questions, however, must be carefully dissociated: how the Jews came to believe in the existence of such a place of punishment for the wicked and how the geographical name *Valley of Hinnom* or γέεννα came to be used metaphorically for the name of this place.

Concerning the *first* question, it has been argued above in section I that the doctrine of eternal punishment is in the Old Testament itself: Isaiah 66:24 and Daniel 12:2; it is not a new doctrine of Judaism developed for the first time in the post-exilic era. And it is to be noted that the former passage contains all three elements usually associated with this doctrine: that there will be future punishment for the wicked, that it is appropriate to describe this punishment under the figure of fire, and that its duration will be endless. Quite apart, however, from any independent exegesis of the Old Testament, it is clear from the Intertestamental literature

36 T. H. Gaster, "Gehenna," *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. by George Arthur Buttrick (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1962), II, p. 361.

37 Every Bible dictionary and encyclopedia examined by this writer asserted this historical fact: *Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, *Hasting's Dictionary of the Bible*, *Kittel's Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, *Smith's Dictionary of the Bible*, and *Interpreter's* mentioned in note 36. Of particular interest are the Jewish sources: Mordecai I. Soloff, *op. cit.*, pp. 520, 521; Ludwig Blau, "Gehenna," *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, ed. by Isidore Singer (New York: Funk and Wagnalls Company, 1921), V, p. 582. And no less a respected authority in all fields of knowledge, the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, has the following: "Gehenna, in Jewish thought of the New Testament period, was the place set aside for the punishment of the wicked, both those condemned for a maximum of 12 months and those doomed to everlasting torment." (See "Gehenna," *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc., 1969), X, p. 49.

38 It was not left for Jehovah's Witnesses to discover or point out this fact.

itself that this doctrine was believed by the Jews to be present in the Old Testament. For example, the writer of the Apocryphal book of Judith obviously believed Isaiah 66:24 taught it: "Woe to the nations that rise up against my race: the Lord Almighty will take vengeance of them in the day of judgment, to put fire and worms in their flesh; and they shall weep and feel their pain for ever" (Judith 16:17).³⁹ Therefore, the belief of Intertestamental Judaism in eternal, fiery torment extensively described in the Apocryphal and Apocalyptic literature of the time, was based on and found its origin in the Old Testament--or at least how those Jews interpreted the Old Testament. (See as other examples IV Maccabees 10:15; 12:12; 13:15.)

Concerning the *second* question, the association of the Valley of Hinnom with the place of punishment took place in two successive stages.⁴⁰ The earlier stage took the literal Valley of Hinnom itself as the place of punishment. Davis⁴¹ proposes three possible reasons for this belief: (1) it may have been due to the former abominations perpetrated in this valley through the worship of Molech; (2) it may be a reflection of Jeremiah's prophecies that the valley would become--and to the post-exilic Jews had once become--a Valley of Slaughter; or (3) it may have arisen from the present detestable state of Hinnom as the city dump and receptacle of unclean things. Rabbi Kimchi in 1200 A.D., of course, explicitly states the third option as the reason (see footnote 11). But whatever the real historical reason, the identification of Hinnom as the place of punishment was made.

The book of I Enoch is the earliest⁴² example of this identification. The place of punishment is described as a fiery abyss (90:26), a furnace of fire (98:3, the same phrase used by Christ at Matt. 13:42,50), and a bottomless fiery pit (109:1-4). No doubt Hinnom appeared this way to the writer. Moreover, I Enoch 27:1-3 speaks of "this accursed valley" as the place of judgment which, similar to Jeremiah 31:40, refers in all likelihood to Hinnom. Finally, the smell of sulfur is associated with "that burning valley" in I Enoch

39 All quotations from the Apocryphal or Apocalyptic writings, unless otherwise noted, are taken from *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament in English*, ed. by R. H. Charles (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1913).

40 See the articles by R. E. Davis and Mordecai I. Soloff (footnotes 10 and 13). Most of the material for the remainder of this section, if not otherwise noted, comes from these articles.

41 R. E. Davis, *loc. cit.*

42 So claimed by Davis, *ibid.* This paper will not enter into a discussion of the dates of the Apocryphal and Apocalyptic literature. Not only are questions of this nature deemed irrelevant for the argument here, but the field is highly specialized and beyond the expertise of the author. The introductions in the two volumes by Charles (footnote 39) contain extensive treatment of these and related issues, though from a decidedly liberal bias.

67:6,7 to make the identification almost certain.⁴³

The second stage again finds *Valley of Hinnom* or γέεννα used as the name of the place of punishment, but now that place was no longer considered the literal valley itself. As documented at the beginning of this section, γέεννα came to be regularly used metaphorically for the place of punishment reserved for the wicked, that place of fiery torment, though separate from the geographical valley outside Jerusalem. This stage represents the point in time at which Christ appears on the scene.

In addition to the Apocryphal and Apocalyptic literature, there is one other Jewish source of information on the doctrine of the punishment of the wicked: the Midrashim and the Talmudic writings. For lack of a better name, one can profitably follow Soloff⁴⁴ calling this massive collection the *Rabbinical literature*.⁴⁵ Altogether there are four general periods comprehended in this literature spanning the time from 400 B.C. to 500 A.D.⁴⁶ (1) The period of the *Sopherim*, the earliest group of scribes, from the fifth to the third century B.C. They began with Ezra, the greatest of all scribes, and their accomplishment was the production of a standardized text of the Hebrew Scriptures. The function of scribe, however, continued beyond this period, and the scribes during Jesus' time were accordingly recognized as the custodians of the biblical text. (2) The period of the *Zugoth*, or pairs, from the second to the first century B.C. Each generation had a pair of textual scholars, the "president" and "vice-president" of the Great Sanhedrin. The two most important were Hillel and Shammai just prior to the time of Christ. (3) The period

43 The Jews, of course, had a vivid imagination, especially the Apocalyptic writers, and some of the descriptions of the place of punishment go far beyond the real Valley of Hinnom and the biblical revelation from which the doctrine of eternal punishment grew. One reads the following, for example, in II Enoch 10:1-6: "And those two men led me up onto the Northern side, and showed me there a terrible place, and there were all manner of tortures in that place: cruel darkness and unilluminated gloom, and there is no light there, but murky fire constantly flameth aloft, and there is a fiery river coming forth, and that whole place is everywhere fire, and everywhere there is frost and ice, thirst and shivering, while the bonds are very cruel, and the angels fearful and merciless, bearing angry weapons, merciless torture..."

44 *Loc. cit.*

45 Strictly speaking, the specific office of rabbinite did not develop until after the destruction of the Temple in 70 A.D. However, from the time of Ezra on, there had been gradually emerging in Israel a scholarly elite. These as early as Gamaliel I (first half of the first century A.D.) were often called rabbis. See Hirschel Revel, "Rabbi and Rabbinite," *The Universal Jewish Encyclopedia*, IX, pp. 48-52; also Merrill C. Tenney, *New Testament Survey* (2nd ed.; Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1965), pp. 108, 109.

46 From 500 to 950 A.D., a fifth period followed from which the final form of the Old Testament, the Masoretic Text, came. This summary of Jewish Rabbinical history was taken from Archer, *op. cit.*, pp. 61-63.

of the *Tannaim*, or teachers, from the death of Hillel until after 200 A.D. These would include the religious leaders of Jesus' time. (4) The period of the *Amoraim*, or debaters, from about 220 until 500 A.D. The teachings produced during these periods, beginning mostly with the second period, were originally preserved orally. But later committed to writing, this great mass of tradition is for the most part contained within two works, the Midrashim and Talmud.

The Midrashim, or text interpretations, were collected in written form between 100 B.C. and 300 A.D. It consisted of the Halakah, a commentary on the Torah deducing from its laws binding instructions constructed to fit particular contemporary situations, and the Haggadah, a homiletical and devotional commentary on the entire Old Testament. The Talmud, which also contained two parts, was collected between 100 and 500 A.D. The first part, the Mishnah, was completely compiled by 200 A.D. and contained the teachings of the Tannaim. The second, the Gemara, was essentially a commentary on the Mishnah produced by the Amoraim.

The Midrashim and Talmudic literature have much to say about the doctrine of the punishment of the wicked, and it falls basically within the second stage of development: that is, the place of punishment is called by the name *Valley of Hinnom*, or γέεννα, but it is not identified with the geographical valley outside Jerusalem-- though the literature does state that many rabbis believed one of three entrances to γέεννα was located in the real valley. Now the rabbis believed in retribution in γέεννα as much as any of the writers of the Apocryphal and Apocalyptic literature. But there were differences. The authors of these latter works did not grade the wicked: men were either good or bad. And their stay in the torment of γέεννα was eternal. The rabbis, on the other hand, did not take such a strong position. A good illustration is seen in the two chief leaders of the Zugoth period who lived just prior to the ministry of Christ (roughly 30 B.C. to 10 A.D.), Hillel and Shammai. Shammai and the school he originated took the comparatively stern stand. Mankind was divided into three groups:⁴⁷ (1) the righteous who immediately upon death enter into eternal life; (2) the wicked who upon death enter the torments of γέεννα for eternity; and (3) an intermediate class of people for whom their stay in γέεννα is temporary and purgatorial in nature. Hillel and the school he originated took the position that no one would spend more than 12 months in γέεννα. Most would be freed prior to this limit; only the most wicked sinners would endure the torments for the full period, and after its duration they would be completely annihilated.

⁴⁷ See the discussion by Harry Buis, *The Doctrine of Eternal Punishment* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1957), p. 25.

The rabbinic literature also contains many fanciful details concerning γέεννα, but they are not of importance here.⁴⁸ What is significant to observe, however, is that throughout this entire body of literature, spanning both sides of the life of Christ, γέεννα connoted the place of fiery torment where the wicked are punished. The Apocryphal and Apocalyptic writers saw the punishment in γέεννα as eternal; the rabbis believed release was possible. With which group Jesus agreed will be discussed in the next section. But both groups called this place of punishment γέεννα.

One more historical situation may be profitably described as part of the backdrop for Jesus' teaching. What were the attitudes of the Sadducees and Pharisees toward γέεννα? According to Josephus,⁴⁹ the Sadducees rejected both the concept of heaven and γέεννα. The Pharisees, on the other hand, regarded γέεννα as an everlasting prison in which the wicked will remain after death. This fact will have important ramifications in section III to follow.

After much historical intrigue, it will perhaps serve to restate the basic point of this whole section: the word γέεννα, by the time Jesus begins his ministry, was used to refer to the place of punishment where the wicked will experience conscious, fiery torment. This fact is simply a matter of history. The quotation from the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* given in footnote 37 may be repeated with profit here: "Gehenna, in Jewish thought of the New Testament period, was the place set aside for the punishment of the wicked, both those condemned for a maximum of 12 months and those doomed to everlasting torment."

III. Exegesis of the New Testament Passages Using Γέεννα

As stated in the introduction, the New Testament uses γέεννα twelve times: Matthew 5:22,29,30; 10:28; 18:9; 23:15,33; Mark 9:43,45,47; Luke 12:5; James 3:6. Of these, Matthew 23:15,33 and James 3:6 do not contribute any useful information pertinent to the question of the relation of γέεννα to the orthodox Christian doctrine of eternal punishment. The remaining passages will now be examined in turn.

Matthew 5:22,29,30. This mention of γέεννα by Christ in the Sermon on the Mount is its first occurrence in the New Testament. That γέεννα is associated with judgment may be concluded from verse 22, though whether this judgment is the final judgment is not here

⁴⁸Both the articles by Soloff, *loc. cit.*, and Blau, *op. cit.*, pp. 582-584, relate many of these theories.

⁴⁹Summarized in Soloff, *loc. cit.* In Josephus, see *Antiquities*, book 18, chap. 1; *Jewish War*, book 2, chap. 8.

specified. It should also be noted that the full phrase is την γέενναν του πυρος, the γέεννα of fire. The added phrase του πυρος is certainly in complete harmony with the connotation of γέεννα for Jesus' listeners as described in the last section. Verses 29 and 30 contain the idea of judgment too, but they contribute the additional piece of information that γέεννα is of such a nature that a body (σωμα) may be cast into (εις) it.

Matthew 10:28 and Luke 12:5. Here again is the idea that a body may be cast into γέεννα. But so also may the soul (ψυχη). It is not necessary for the purposes of this paper to assert anything more concerning the use of σωμα and ψυχη in this verse than that the *whole person* may be cast into γέεννα. The important question, however, raised by Matthew 10:28 is this: What are the results of being cast into γέεννα? According to the KJV, the person is "destroyed". Thus, annihilationists argue that this verse supports their position.⁵⁰ An extended discussion must therefore be given here.

The word rendered "destroy is απολεσαι, a 1st aorist active indicative of απολλυμι. Απολλυμι occurs 92 times in the New Testament⁵¹ and never means *annihilate*. Arndt and Gingrich⁵² exhaust its usage under the following categories. *Active voice.* (a) *Ruin, destroy.* (1) Used impersonally. I Corinthians 1:19: "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise." The idea is *ruin* or *bring to nought*. (2) Used personally. Romans 14:15: "Destroy not him with thy meat." *Ruin* here implies a violation or undoing of the Christian conscience.⁵³ Clearly, neither the weaker brother nor his conscience are annihilated when the stronger Christian eats meat. But that weaker brother's Christian life or conscience may be *ruined* or *rendered ineffectual*. Matthew 2:23: "Herod will seek the young child to destroy him." Here, according to Arndt and Gingrich, is an

⁵⁰ "Since God destroys soul and body in γέεννα, this is conclusive proof that γέεννα, or the valley of the son of Hinnom, is a picture or symbol of complete annihilation, and not of eternal torment." *Let God Be True* (2nd ed.; Brooklyn: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, 1952), p. 97. See also J. H. Leckie, *The World to Come and Final Destiny* (2nd ed.; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1922), pp. 113,114.

⁵¹ Matthew 2:13; 5:29,30; 8:25; 9:17; 10:6,28,39(2),42; 12:14; 15:24; 16:25(2); 18:11,14; 21:41; 22:7; 26:52; 27:20; Mark 1:24; 2:22; 3:6; 4:38; 8:35(2); 9:22,41; 11:18; 12:9; Luke 4:34; 5:37; 6:9; 8:24; 9:24(2); 19:10,47; 20:16; 21:18; John 3:15,16; 6:12,27,39; 10:10,28; 11:50; 12:25; 17:12; 18:9,14; Acts 5:37; Romans 2:12; 14:15; I Corinthians 1:18,19; 8:11; 19:9,10; 15:18; II Corinthians 2:15; 4:3,9; II Thessalonians 2:10; Hebrews 1:11; James 1:11; 4:12; I Peter 1:7; II Peter 3:6,9; II John 8; Jude 5,11. *The Englishman's Greek Concordance of the New Testament* (9th ed.; London: Samuel Bagster and Sons, 1903), p. 74.

⁵² William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), p. 94.

⁵³ See John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans*, Vol. II (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1971), pp. 190-192.

example of a frequent use of απολλυμι: *to kill* or *to put to death*. As a synonym for αποκτεινω, it is simply a *general* term for killing with no theological or philosophical overtones at all. An entire argument would be needed to support the idea that in dying one is annihilated;⁵⁴ the words themselves carry no such idea intrinsically. (b) *Lose*. Απολλυμι often means nothing more than *to lose* and is so used of the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the lost son in Luke 15. Luke 9:24: "Whosoever shall lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it." If απολλυμι means annihilation, then this passage teaches that the saved are annihilated! *Middle voice*. (a) *Be destroyed, ruined*. (1) Used of things. Matthew 9:17: "The wineskins break...and the wineskins perish." The wineskins "perish" in that they become useless; by breaking they are ruined, not annihilated. (2) Used of persons. Matthew 8:25: "We perish!" The storm was severe, and the disciples were not calmly announcing their philosophical conclusions about the nature of death. (b) *Be lost*. John 6:12: "Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost." The food filling the twelve baskets would not have been annihilated had it been left ungathered; it would have been lost or wasted.⁵⁵

The above classification of the meanings of απολλυμι in the New Testament was taken from the most authoritative Greek lexicon. In the entire range of meaning it *never* means *annihilate*. Whatever the usage in Matthew 10:28, it will have to fit in one of the above categories. The question of which category will be held temporarily in abeyance until several other γέεννα passages are considered. This discussion, however, has not demonstrated that annihilation might not, in fact, be the ultimate result of being cast into γέεννα. For example, it is conceivable that in γέεννα a person might be *lost* in the sense of or as a result of being annihilated. But this passage by itself does not in any way imply annihilation by its use of απολλυμι.

Matthew 18:9. Verses 8 and 9 of Matthew 18 must be read in parallel:

8. If thy hand...offend thee,
cut it off...

It is better for thee to enter into life...maimed than...to
be cast into ***everlasting fire***.

9. If thine eye offend thee,
pluck it out...

⁵⁴ Matthew 10:28 itself, however, forbids validity to any such argument, for killing the body does not kill the person, much less annihilate the person.

⁵⁵ See also the discussion of απολλυμι by Anthony A. Hoekema, *The Four Major Cults* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1972), pp. 360-365.

It is better for thee to enter into life with one eye,
than...to be cast into γέεννα.

It is obvious that γέεννα is set in *parallel* with "everlasting fire" (το πυρ το αωνιον). Note also that within each verse "life" (ζωη) is set in contrast to both "everlasting fire" and γέεννα. Whatever else may be concluded from these verses, the use of ζωη and αωνιον (neuter form of the adjective αωνιος, cognate of the noun αων) clearly imply that the judgment involving γέεννα is eschatological or final. Being cast into γέεννα is the opposite of entering into "the life" (the article is present) of the eschaton. But this point need not be further belabored. To this author's knowledge, no school of annihilationism denies the eschatological nature of this judgment.

In exegeting this passage, the first task is to establish the meaning of αωνιος. Annihilationists are divided on this question. Older annihilationism of the last century at times attempted to argue that αωνιος, being related to αων, implies punishment only for an "age" and not for eternity.⁵⁶ However, the two contemporary schools of annihilationism, Seventh-day Adventism and Jehovah's Witnesses, both accept the meaning of *eternal* for αωνιος.⁵⁷ Therefore, an extended argument will not be given in this paper. It will be sufficient to say that according to Arndt and Gingrich,⁵⁸ αωνιος when used of future time means *without end*.⁵⁹

What, now, may be concluded from Matthew 18:8,9? Here again the word πυρ ("fire") is used with γέεννα. And it is everlasting πυρ: το πυρ το αωνιον, "the fire the eternal" or "the eternal fire". The equation is clear: γέεννα = the eternal fire. Whether or not the punishment inflicted by γέεννα will be everlasting or instantaneous annihilation has yet to be determined. But two observations are made

56 See William Shepherd Allen's review of this effort in *The Teaching of Christ with Respect to the Future Punishment of the Wicked* (2nd ed.; Manchester: J Brook & Company, 1904), pp. 28-30.

57 *Questions on Doctrine* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1957), pp. 539-543; *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures* (Brooklyn: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, 1961), at Matthew 18:8; 25:46; II Thessalonians 1:9; etc.

58 *Op. cit.*, pp. 27,28.

59 A classical argument for this meaning may be found in William G. T. Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology*, Vol. II (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, n.d.), pp. 682-689. C. Ryder Smith, *op. cit.*, pp. 96-103, discusses αων and αωνιος in relation to their Hebrew counterparts and their use in the LXX. See also William Shepherd Allen, *op. cit.*, pp. 59,60; Fyfe, *op. cit.*, pp. 332-347; E. B. Pusey, *What is of Faith as to Everlasting Punishment* (3rd ed.; Oxford: James Parker & Co., 1881), pp. 38-50. An analysis which discusses the use of αων and αωνιος in Plato, Philo, and Apocalyptic literature is given by J. H. Leckie, *The World to Come and Final Destiny*, *op. cit.*, pp. 346-352.

at this juncture. First, since γέεννα is appositional with το πυρ το αιωνιον, there will forever be a γέεννα του πυρος to inflict punishment. Second, the language of Jesus here about eternal fire strongly suggests the then current notion among the Jews that γέεννα is the place where the wicked experience conscious torment. He appears to be using the word the same way everyone else was.

Mark 9:43,45,47. This section, from verses 42 to 48 is the most important passage for the argument in this paper. It is actually parallel to Matthew 18:8,9, and so the same contrast is seen between entering into η ζων and being cast into γέεννα. However, a significant amount of additional information is given by Mark.⁶⁰

From verse 43 to verse 48 there are three appositional phrases:

43. εις την γεενναν
εις το πυρ το ασβεστον
45. εις την γεενναν⁶¹
47,48. εις την γεενναν
οπου--
ο σκληροξ αυτων ου τελευτα
και το πυρ ου σβεννυται

Verse 43 categorically equates η γέεννα and το πυρ ου σβεννυται: γέεννα = the fire the inextinguishable. Thus, what was said at Matthew 18:8,9 may be repeated here: there will throughout all eternity be a γέεννα του πυρος, and the use of this equation without any qualification strongly suggests Jesus' approbation on the contemporary concept of punishment in a γέεννα πυρος as the phrase was used by the Jews of his day.

Verses 47 and 48, however, are especially important and culminate the argument. The γέεννα του πυρος is described in terms of Isaiah 66:24. This fact alone is very significant in light of Judith 16:17. But the detailed exegesis renders impossible any annihilationist interpretation.

The quotation, with the exception of a change from the future passive to the present passive of σβεννυμι, is identical to the LXX. Again it is stated that the fire is eternal: it is not extinguished--ου σβεννυται. But another idea is added, namely that their worm will

⁶⁰Verses 44 and 46 are almost certainly additions to the original text, and the analysis presented here will proceed on that basis. But just as certain is the authenticity of verse 48. See Hiebert, *op. cit.*, p. 233 and footnotes 9 and 11 of *The Greek New Testament* (2nd ed.; Stuttgart: United Bible Societies, 1968), p. 162.

⁶¹It is quite probable that εις το πυρ το ασβεστον is not repeated in verse 45. See footnote 10, *The Greek New Testament, op. cit.*, p. 162.

not die. Τελευτα is from τελευτω and means *come to an end*, almost always in the sense of *dying*.⁶² The worm (ο σκωληξ) will never come to an end. Now both the worm and the fire are the forces or instruments of punishment, or at least are symbolic of the instruments of punishment. The crucial question concerning them is this: Do these instruments of punishment inflict their punishment instantaneously, resulting in annihilation? Do they inflict punishment for a period of 12 months? Or is the infliction eternal as are the instruments themselves? The genitive pronoun answers the question: ο σκωληξ αυτων never dies, *their* worm never dies. Since the worm here is the instrument of punishment, "their worm never dies" is equivalent to *their punishment never ends*.

Christ is careful not to say the worm, but 'their worm,' ο σκωληξ αυτων, so as to prevent all possible evasion or mistake; for if He had simply said, the worm; man would have tried to fritter away the great truth He obviously meant to convey, by saying that though the worm might not die, the sufferer might possibly do so, or become unconscious of his pain. The insertion of this word αυτων, 'their,' leaves, however, no possibility of doubt, as to the terrible truth Christ intended to convey.⁶³

Another point is made by the passage: ο σκωληξ αυτων ου τελευτα is appositional with το πυρ ου σβεννυται. The question raised at Matthew 18:8,9 can now be answered. The fire of γέεννα is eternal, not merely to always have a place of punishment available, but rather specifically to eternally punish those cast therein. States Hoekema: "'Their worm dieth not.' When this clause is followed by the words, 'the fire is not quenched,' it is obvious that this is so because the fire continues to punish *them*."⁶⁴

Now did Christ use the words of Isaiah 66:24 in the same sense as Isaiah? It was argued in section I of this paper that Isaiah meant to teach a state of eternal punishment. That argument, resting as it did only on the Old Testament, may possibly be resisted. However, that Christ taught eternal punishment here in this passage is certain. The hermeneutics of the present writer will not allow him to conclude that Christ used Isaiah's words in a different sense than Isaiah did. Therefore, the New Testament analysis given here is added evidence and, in fact, confirmation of the interpretation placed upon the words by an examination of the Old Testament alone. It is now possible to see the second sense, mentioned in section I, in which Isaiah 66:24 refers to the Valley of Hinnom. This valley,

62 Arndt and Gingrich, *op. cit.*, p. 818.

63 William Shepherd Allen, *op. cit.*, p. 34.

64 Anthony A. Hoekema, *op. cit.*, p. 363.

as has been shown in section II, became in the Intertestamental period a symbol of Hell and eternal punishment. But that is precisely the subject taught in Isaiah 66:24. Thus, indirectly the Valley of Hinnom is brought back into the verse. The process is essentially eisegesis, not exegesis.

The question may also be raised as to how literal the fire and worms are to be taken. This question was addressed under the discussion of Isaiah 66:24, and the answer is the same. Commenting specifically on Mark 9, Hoekema says,

Much is made by both Seventh-day Adventists and Jehovah's Witnesses of the figurative nature of the descriptions of the punishment of the wicked found in the New Testament. To be sure, these descriptions are figurative and symbolic, but the figures are intended to convey meaning. Though we cannot apply every detail of these figures literally, we must accept the teaching they are intended to convey, namely, that the punishment of the wicked will be everlasting.⁶⁵

Now that the New Testament passages using γέεννα have been discussed, two outstanding questions raised earlier may be answered. First, what is the precise meaning of απολλυμι when used with reference to eternal punishment in γέεννα? Again Hoekema in his scholarly analysis of this doctrine provides the answer: "*Apollumi* when used of the ultimate destiny of the wicked means everlasting perdition, a perdition consisting of endless loss of fellowship with God, which is at the same time a state of endless torment or pain."⁶⁶ And he goes on to explain that this definition is fully consistent with the meanings previously given in the summary taken from Arndt and Gingrich. For example, one might say to be destroyed or to perish in the sense of everlasting perdition means to be rendered *permanently* useless in analysis with the case of the wineskins. Or, to perish forever may emphasize being *permanently* lost and out of fellowship with God in analogy with the lost coin.

This section may be concluded by considering the second question: What is the relationship between Jesus' usage of γέεννα and the meaning it had acquired among the Jews by the time he arrived on the scene? The first point to be made in answer is this: the interpreter should assume that Jesus used the word in the same sense that everyone else at that time was using it. An exception to this rule can be allowed only in the face of overwhelming exegetical evidence that Jesus explicitly distinguishes his usage from the current usage.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 365.

There is not a single clue in the New Testament that he made such a distinction. On the contrary, his every use of γέεννα recorded therein matches popular usage: the γέεννα of fire (Matt. 5:22), the everlasting fire (Matt. 18:8), and the fire that shall never be quenched (Mk. 9:43). These expressions agree exactly with similar descriptions in the Apocalyptic literature with which his hearers were quite familiar. But the climax of the argument is that Christ quotes Isaiah 66:24 in the same way that Judith 16:17 quotes it.

Another important point may be observed. Jesus never minced words in his condemnation of the Sadducees and Pharisees. But though he corrected the Sadducees on their erroneous eschatology (Matt. 19:23-33), he never corrected the Pharisees in their understanding of γέεννα, which, according to Josephus (footnote 49) was used by them as the name of the place of eternal, conscious torment for the wicked. On the contrary, in Christ's severest denunciation of the Pharisees (Matt. 23:13-33), he twice used this very word (vss. 15 and 33) to describe *their* fate.

But is one to assume, therefore, that Christ placed his approbation on all the imaginative descriptions of γέεννα found in the Intertestamental literature? Christ does not comment on those aspects; he merely affirms what is already in the Old Testament and what was, in fact, carried into the literature of the time: (1) there is a place of punishment reserved for the wicked (and everyone called this place γέεννα); (2) the torment in this place is in some sense analogous to that produced by fire in the body; and (3) the duration of confinement is forever. One cannot assume from silence an affirmation of the more detailed embellishments found in the current literature, especially the Rabbinical writings.

IV. A Critique of the Watchtower Analysis of Γέεννα

This paper will close with a brief refutation of chapter 13 in *Is This Life All There Is?* The choice of this particular Watchtower discussion was made because it is the most recent analysis of γέεννα coming from the Society.

After quoting all 12 texts using the word γέεννα, the anonymous author claims "that, while these texts associate fire with Gehenna, none of them speak of any conscious existence, any suffering, after death." Actually, as documented in this paper, the Jews to whom Jesus was preaching used γέεννα to refer to the place of conscious punishment. And as argued above, so far from Jesus' use demanding other than the usual meaning, his phrases coincide with such contemporary usage. The alternate claim proffered by the Watchtower,

based on Matthew 10:28, is that γέεννα "destroys" the person, implying annihilation. However, απολλυμι means no such thing, as demonstrated at length in this paper.

In the discussion of Mark 9:48 the writer further claims, "His words evidently allude to the fact that fires burned continually at the city dump....Where the fire did not reach, worms or maggots would breed and feed on what was not consumed by fire." No, Christ did not allude to this city dump at all; he quoted Isaiah 66:24, and Isaiah wrote long before Tophet was defiled much less before it became a city dump. Christ interpreted Isaiah exactly as this paper did in section I and as the writer of Judith did at 16:17. At the end of the Watchtower author's discussion of this portion of Scripture, he repeats the old argument that the worms, not the one judged, live on. This contention also has been answered above by noticing the word αυτων.

Jeremiah's prophecy (19:6,7), the next passage cited, is irrelevant to the whole discussion. As already mentioned in section I, it predicts the slaughter at the fall of Jerusalem to Nebuchadnezzar.

The unknown author begins his closing section with these words: "In keeping with the Biblical evidence, then, Gehenna or the Valley of Hinnom, could appropriately serve as a symbol of destruction but not of conscious fiery torment." The historical evidence that the Jews to whom Christ spoke in fact used γέεννα as the name of a place of conscious, fiery torment is incontrovertible. And the biblical evidence, so far from depicting Christ *distinguishing* his meaning from theirs, points in exactly the opposite direction.

No one at all familiar with the historical background of the New Testament or who troubles to do some careful Greek exegesis will have any problem with the superficial arguments of the Watchtower presented in this chapter.

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