

"Note on the Rendering and Connection of Daniel 12:2"

I do not doubt that the right translation of this verse is what has been given above: "And many from among the sleepers of the dust of the earth shall awake; these shall be unto everlasting life; but those (the rest of the sleepers, those who do not awake at this time) shall be unto shame and everlasting contempt." The word which in our Authorized version is twice rendered "some" is never repeated in any other passage in the Hebrew Bible in the sense of taking up distributively any general class which had been previously mentioned. This is enough, I believe, to warrant our applying its first occurrence here to the whole of the many who awake, and the second to the mass of the sleepers, those who do not awake at this time. It is clearly not a general resurrection. It is "*many from among.*" And it is only by taking the words in this sense that we gain any information as to what becomes of those who continue to sleep in the dust of the earth.¹

This passage has been understood by the Jewish commentators in the sense that I have stated. Of course, these men with the veil on their hearts are no guides as to the use of the Old Testament, but they are helps as to the grammatical and lexicographical value of sentences and words. Two of the rabbis who commented on this prophet were Saadiah Haggaoon (in the tenth century of our era) and Aben Ezra (in the twelfth). The latter of these was a writer of peculiar abilities and accuracy of mind. He explains the verse in the following manner:

And many:] The Gaon [i.e. R. Saadiah, whom he often quotes] says, that its interpretation is, *those who shall awake shall be unto everlasting life, and those who shall not awake shall be unto shame unto everlasting contempt*; just like, "*and they shall be a contempt*" [Isa. lxvi. 26, where the English version has *an abhorring*], and the word is the same, and its interpretation is *shame* [the word which, in the plural, preceded in Dan. xii. 2]. And the Gaon says that "*many are [here] the few [or the lesser number]; just like "and many brought gifts" (2 Chron. xxxii. 23); and "many of the people of the land became Jews" (Esther viii. 17); and "many will entreat the favour of a prince" (Prov. xix. 6). And the sense, according to my judgment, is that the righteous, who died in the captivities, shall live at the coming of the Redeemer, because of them it is written, "as the days of a tree are the days of my people" (Isa. lxv. 22). And then shall they feast on Leviathan, and on Ziz [a fabulous bird], and on Behemoth. And they shall die a second time, and they shall live in the resurrection of the dead, when they are in the world to come, where they shall neither eat nor drink, but shall be lightened with the brightness of the Shechinah; and he said that thus is the interpretation of "and thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days", with which the book concludes.*

These, then, are the sentiments of Aben Ezra, in which he connects his own opinions with those of R. Saadiah. As to the rendering of the words, he is an authority in favor of the translation which I have given. His grammatical explanation of the force of words is by no means affected by his Jewish exposition. Although he applies the first resurrection to Israel only, and gives it a thoroughly *carnal* character, yet he distinctly recognizes a first and second resurrection, although his doctrine as to this is directly contradictory to that of our Lord and His apostles--so much so, as to make it probable that the same notions had been current among the Pharisees even in our Lord's days. Aben Ezra says that the dead of Israel who shall rise shall die again, and rise again

¹ This translation is given as undoubtedly correct in Gerard Kerkherdere's *Prodromus Danielicus*.

at the general resurrection. Our Lord says, "They which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry nor are given in marriage; *neither can they die any more*; for they are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection" (Luke 20:35,36). "It is raised in incorruption." "It is raised a spiritual Body." "This corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality" (1 Cor. 15). "Blessed and holy is he that has part in the first resurrection; on such the second death shall have no power" (Rev. 20).

These are the truths which God has vouchsafed that we should know. But still in all their ignorance the Jewish teachers did hold two resurrections, one of the just, whom they confined to Israel, and the other, the only one in which the unjust should rise at all. To suppose that "everlasting life" was as limited as the "days of a tree" was a proof of but little apprehension of the exactitude of Scripture. It is marvelous [surprising], [that] with the words of Scripture before them--mentioning "everlasting life--they could have thought that the participants in the first resurrection could die again. Had they known Christ's resurrection they *could* not have thus erred.

It may seem hardly needful to make a remark on the opinion that passages such as this relate only to temporal deliverance or something of the kind. "Sleepers in the dust of the earth" is a fitting designation of those who sleep the sleep of death, whose bodies are returned to dust of the ground. If such words were used to denote persons suffering from oppression and thoroughly degraded, it could only be by a figure taken from the appearance and condition of the dead. But if such a figure were supposed, what would be the import of the "everlasting life" to which the sleepers awake? Could there be such a thing as earthly, temporal deliverance to *everlasting* life? This alone shows the impossibility of thus limiting the meaning of the passage. But, besides this distinct point, it may well be asked, if the language of this verse be not declaratory of a resurrection of the dead, actual and literal, is there any passage of Scripture at all which speaks of such a thing as a resurrection? Where, at least, can it be found in the Old Testament? And yet we *know* that it is taught there, else how could our Lord have reproved the Sadducees for their ignorance of *the Scriptures*?² That the Old Testament as well as the New does teach the resurrection of the dead is evident to every one who simply receives the words of Scripture according to their force. Had not the Jews learned this doctrine from God's written Revelation, how could they have known it at all? Even the Samaritans, who have only the Pentateuch as of divine authority, believe in the resurrection, and they prove it from Deuteronomy 32:39: "I kill, and I *make alive*." This is to them a sufficient warrant for believing that God will raise the dead.

But when we proceed further and examine the writings of the prophets, we find statements

2 "We know from other parts of Scripture, that all the righteous dead will then awake to life--'LIFE' and not '*awake*' being the word which implies the possession and exercise of the power of resurrection-being. The souls of the departed saints, whilst in a disembodied state, although in Paradise, and perfectly conscious of their blessing, are not in the exercise of the *functions* of life--those functions requiring the presence of the body. Hence, our Lord in his reply to the Sadducees, who denied the resurrection of the body, proves it by saying, that, if there were no resurrection, God would not be called the God of Abraham; for that He is not the God of the dead, but of the living. The *soul* of Abraham is now consciously receiving blessings *from* God--but Abraham will not be able to live *unto* God, until he again receives his body, and in this sense is still regarded as dead, not as living. So, also, the departed wicked are not represented in Scripture as living, although their souls exist in torment. Hence, it is said, 'the rest of the dead lived not' (οὐκ ἔζησαν) until the thousand years were finished,--'live' being here used, not in the sense of '*exist*', but as denoting the exercise of the functions of life. Man, therefore, is not said to live, i.e. in the sense of exercising the functions of life, either when he is dispossessed of his body, or when, having his body he is placed in the second death." -- *Prospects of the Ten Kingdoms*, Third Ed, by B. W. Newton, p. 194.

sufficiently explicit, in which, however, it seems as if a well-known truth were mentioned. And this doctrine of resurrection presents to us a point of connection between *our* hopes and those of Daniel's people. Just as their restoration and blessing shall tell of the grace and redemption of Jesus their Messiah, so shall *our* resurrection and heavenly glory speak of the efficacy of all that has been wrought by the same Saviour. They will see "the Church of the first-born" entering into *heavenly* blessing, while they receive that which is *earthly*; but even then the heavenly things will tell them of the hopes before them. If it is as "children of God" that the Church receives its higher blessings, it shall then be true of Israel that they too are *children*. They shall call God *Father*, and no more turn away from Him. To them pertains the *adoption*. If the sharers in the first resurrection receive their heavenly portion as *heirs*, then the same inheritance is that which redeemed Israel may expect, for they are then made children; and the revealed statement is ever true in divine things--"if children, then *heirs*."

The Spirit of God leads our minds, in Scripture, to connect our resurrection with Israel's blessing. Thus in the chapter of resurrection we read: "when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put in immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory." Thus the resurrection of those who are "Christ's at his *coming*" is authoritatively declared to be at the same epoch as the fulfillment of an Old Testament promise. If we turn to Isaiah 25, the place where this "saying" is "written," we find that it is in the midst of a description of the restored blessing of Israel in earthly things that the promise is introduced which is a point of hope to *our* souls.

The first resurrection *only* is spoken of in 1 Corinthians 15; the *saved* and no others are mentioned. The *order* of the resurrection is told us in verses 23, 24: first, "Christ the first-fruits"; second, "afterwards they that are Christ's at his coming" (all the family of faith); third, "Then comes the end," the time of the general resurrection. "Then" is not here, as in verse 54, equivalent to "at that time," but wholly a different word indicating *successional order*. The rest of the dead live not till the *close* of Christ's millennial reign.

Note: All brackets in Aben Ezra's quotation are original.