DEAD, ABODE OF THE. Several terms are used to denote the abode of the dead in the Hebrew Bible, and they often occur in parallelism to one another. The most common is *šĕʾôl*. Both *šĕʾôl* and *māwet*, "Death" are often used in Hebrew to refer to the realm of death as well as to the personified chthonic power behind death and all that is associated with it. See MOT. Hebrew *ʾereṣ* is simply "earth" yet, as with Ug *ʾarṣ* and Akk *erṣetu*, it too can designate the netherworld. The words *šaḥat* and *bôr* both refer to the abode of the dead as the "Pit." Hebrew *ʾăbaddôn* is another poetic name for the underworld usually translated "Perdition" or "(place of) Destruction."

Several terms are used to describe the abode of the dead in the NT as well. The word *hadēs* most commonly translates *šĕʾôl* in the LXX and is used ten times in the NT. It shares many of the physical characteristics of Sheol, and it too can designate either the underworld or the personified lord of the underworld. The NT also refers to the abode of the dead as the "Abyss" (*abussos*). 2 Pet 2:4 mentions Tartaros, which is well known from Greek mythology for its great depth. GEHENNA is also used to describe the eschatological hell of fire where the ungodly are punished after death.

A. Etymology of Sheol
B. Sheol in the Hebrew Bible
    1. Depiction of the Place Sheol
    2. Personification of Sheol
    3. The Inhabitants of Sheol
C. Other Designations for the Abode of the Dead
D. Hades In the New Testament

A. Etymology of Sheol

Sheol is the most common word used in the Hebrew Bible to refer to the abode of the dead, occurring some 66 times (including repointing MT's *šĕʾālâ* in Isa 7:11 to *šĕʾōlâ* following the reading *eis hadēn* in Aquila, Symmachus, Theodotion, and most commentators). Interestingly, Sheol is not found in any of the cognate languages. There is no description of any extrabiblical myths about Sheol as we have with other chthonic figures mentioned in the Hebrew Bible such as Mot and Reshep. There is an extrabiblical reference to *šĕʾôl* in Cowley's Aramaic papyri #71 (*CAP* 180–81; cf. Sir 41:4 and Yadin 1965: 41).

Because of the significance of *šĕʾôl* there has been a long history of scholarly debate concerning its etymology with suggestions ranging far and wide. No proposal has met with unanimous consensus. The following are just a few of the etymologies which have been advocated. A more nearly complete list may be found in Spronk (1986: 66–67).

(1) Delitzsch suggested a putative Akk *šuʾālu* meaning "underworld" (1881: 121; 1886: 145 n. 2) and was followed by many (e.g., Jastrow 1897: 165–70; Gunkel 1895: 154; and others; cf. Tromp 1969: 21). The Akkadian has been misanalyzed (see the critiques of Jensen 1890; Heidel 1949: 173 and esp. von Soden 1970), and thus this widely held proposal should be abandoned.

(2) Jensen (1890: 131) pointed out the equation *ši-la-an = e-reb* ᵈ*UTU-ši* and connected biblical *šĕʾôl* with the descent of Šamaš, the sun (deity), into the underworld (cf. *AHW* 1235). This proposal is far from certain and was even retracted at a later time by Jensen himself. This need

not detract from the large role which the sun deity (e.g., Šamaš in Mesopotamia and Šapšu at Ugarit) played in underworld activities and the cult of the dead (see Lewis 1989: 35–46).

(3) Albright (1918: 209) noted how etymologists were handling *šĕʾôl* "somewhat gingerly" ever since Delitzsch's "unlucky adventure with an assumed *šuʾālu*." At first Albright (1918: 209–10) played it safe by looking to Akk *šaʾālu*, "to ask," "to decide," and thus *šĕʾôl* would be equivalent to "a place of decision (of fates)." Later however, Albright (1926: 151–52; cf. Baumgartner 1946: 233–35) was himself more adventurous, looking to Akk *šuʾara* to illuminate biblical *šĕʾôl* (supposing the interchange of *r* and *l*). According to Albright's view *šuʾara* would be a modified form of *šubaru/subartu*, which is associated with the Tammuz cult and equated with Ḫubur, the river of the netherworld (cf. Gelb 1944: 92–98; *CAD* Ḫ 219; *AHW* 352 s.v. *ḫubur*). This, too, is strained, and later we find Albright (1956: 257) embracing yet another analysis of *šĕʾôl*, namely, the place of ordeal/examination arising out of a forensic context (see (5) below).

(4) In 1946 and again in 1956 Koehler reacted against those looking for the etymology of *šĕʾôl* among Akkadian words and asserted that *šĕʾôl* is "a good simple Hebrew word." In *urhebräisch*, says Koehler, "there could have existed an ancient form **šĕʾô*, which is no longer extant" to which was added "the epenthetic final consonant *l*" resulting in the word *šĕʾôl*. Accordingly, concluded Koehler, *šĕʾôl* may be derived from the root *šʾh* (cf. nouns *šāʾôn, šĕʾiyyâ, šēʾt*) and may denote a desolate or devastated place, which is best translated by "No Land" (*Unland*) designating a world "where are found shadowiness, decay, remoteness from God: Nothingness" (1956: 19–20; cf. KB, 935).

(5) The most plausible etymology for *šĕʾôl* is also the most obvious and the least strained, i.e., to derive it from the verb *šʾl*, "to ask, inquire." This proposal has been suggested on and off through the years with slightly different nuances. A. Jeremias (1887: 62, 109) suggested "Ort der Endscheidung/Ein (for)derung," yet this has not been adopted by many scholars. More likely are the following theses. Jastrow (1897: 169–70; cf. 1900: 82–105) and others (König 1933: 474; *IDB* 1: 787–88) suggested a place of inquiry referring to the practice of necromancy. Jastrow (1900: 89–92) found 28 times where *šʾl* is used of consulting oracles including references to consulting the spirits of the dead in Deut 18:11 and 1 Chr 10:13. Oppenheim (1956: 221–23) has argued that *šʾl* could also have the technical sense referring to necromancy in the story about Saul and the necromancer at Endor (1 Sam 28:6) and compares the roles of the *šāʾiltu*-priestess in Akkadian (cf. Lewis 1989: 104–17). One could also compare the use of *šʾl* in connection with the *tĕrāpîm* (Ezek 21:26), which van der Toorn (fc.) and others have connected to ancestral cults (cf. Akk *eṭemmē šaʾālu*, "to consult the spirits of the dead").

As mentioned in (2) above, Albright's last understanding of the etymology of *šĕʾôl* emphasized the underlying forensic aspect of the root *šʾl*. McCarter's (1973: 407–8) study of the river ordeal in ancient Israel concluded likewise that *šĕʾôl* may have originally meant "the place of interrogation." Finally, compare Rosenberg (1980: 8–12), who has provided the most detailed study of *šĕʾôl* to date. She too emphasizes the forensic aspect of the imagery underlying the use of *šĕʾôl* and suggests "a semantic development from inquire call to account punish."

B. Sheol in the Hebrew Bible

1. Depiction of the Place Sheol. We have few descriptive details of Sheol in comparison to the elaborate depictions of the underworld found in Egyptian and Mesopotamiam literature (Rosenberg 1980: 166–67). One thinks immediately of the Egyptian "guide books" for the dead

in the underworld (*dat/duat*), which lead the dead through various gates, portals, and caverns. The Mesopotamian story about the descent of Isthar into the netherworld describes the entrants' journey to "the land of no return" (*māt la târi*), which is a place "bereft of light where their sustenance is dust and their food is clay." Gates and guardian gatekeepers are common to both traditions. For a discussion of the various names for the underworld in Mesopotamia, see Tallqvist (1934).

Sheol is typically depicted as a place to which one "goes down" (*yrd*; e.g., Num 16:30; Job 7:9; Isa 57:9; cf. Isa 29:4; Ps 88:3–4; *KTU 1.161.21–22*; 1.5.6.24–25; CAD A2: 216 s.v. *arādu*). It represents the lowest place imaginable (Deut 32:22; Isa 7:11) often used in contrast with the highest heavens (Amos 9:2; Ps 139:8; Job 11:8). To emphasize further the depth of Sheol we also find *šĕʾôl*, as well as *ʾereṣ* and *bôr* (see C below), modified by *taḥtît/taḥtiyyôt* (e.g., Deut 32:32; Ps 86:13; Ezek 31:14–18), usually translated "the lowest parts of the underworld." Sheol is often associated with various water images (Tromp 1969: 59–66). The best example of this imagery can be found in Jonah 2:3–6, which couples *šĕʾôl* with numerous terms for the chaotic waters including Sea (*yām/yammîm*), River (*nāhār*), breakers (*mišbārîm*), waves (*gallîm*), waters (*mayîm*), and the deep (*tĕhôm*) (see Cross 1983: 159–67). Rosenberg (1980: 102–69) has noted the stereotypical fixed formulas employed in such passages (e.g., Jonah 2:3–6; Pss 42:8; 69:2–3, 15–16; 88:7–8). Building on the analysis of the river ordeal by McCarter (1973: 403–12) and Frymer-Kensky (1977), Rosenberg proposed that the water imagery has more to say about divine judgment than about an actual description of the locale of *šĕʾôl*. Rosenberg's contributions to understanding the forensic context of *šĕʾôl* are many. Yet the crossing of water as part of one's travel to the underworld is too persistent in the ANE not to be underlying the imagery of biblical Sheol to some degree, even if the water imagery is used primarily in forensic contexts. Compare *ḫubur* in Akkadian (CAD Ḫ, 219), which is a designation for both the place of the river ordeal and the netherworld.

The gates of Sheol are mentioned several times in the Hebrew Bible (Isa 38:10; Pss 9:14—Eng 9:13; 107:18; Job 38:17; cf. Jer 15:7). As mentioned above, gates and guardian gatekeepers are prominent in the Egyptian and Mesopotamian conceptions of the netherworld. The same concept continues in later Jewish (Wis 16:13; *3 Macc.* 5:51) and Christian (Matt 16:18; cf. Rev 1:18) literature. Similarly, Jonah 2:7—Eng 2:6 describes the "bars" (*bĕrîḥîm*) of the underworld (cf. Job 38:10; the common translation "bars of Sheol" in Job 17:16 [cf. RSV] is doubtful). Both of these images have to do with the imprisoning power of Sheol and its impassable nature, which prevents escape. Compare Job 7:9, *yôrēd šĕʾôl lōʾ yaʿaleh*, "he who goes down to Sheol does not come up" and the Akkadian description of the netherworld as *māt la târi*, "the land of no return." See also BELIAL. Compare also the ropes and snares of Sheol/Death (2 Sam 22:6 = Ps 18:5–6—Eng 18:4–5).

Darkness is a key characteristic of netherworlds (Held 1973: 179 n. 53), and this holds true for Sheol as well. It occurs in parallelism with *ḥōšek*, "darkness" (Job 17:13; cf. Lam 3:6; Job 18:18) as does *ʾereṣ*, "underworld" (Pss 88:13; 143:3). One of the etymologies proposed above would see *šĕʾôl* as the place where one engages in necromancy. If this etymology is valid, it would be significant to note that necromantic rituals regularly took place at night (1 Sam 28:8; Isa 45:18–19; 65:4), the time during which it was thought appropriate to consult those who live in darkness (Lewis 1989: 12, 114, 142–43, 160). Sheol is also characterized by dust (Job 17:16; 21:26; Ps 7:6–

Eng Ps 7:5; cf. Gen 3:19) and quite often silence (Pss 31:17–18; 94:17; 115:17; Isa 47:5; cf. Allegro 1968: 82–84; Ps 28:1).

Sheol is intimately connected with the grave, although the degree to which it is identified with the grave has been debated. On one extreme we have those who see the grave behind every reference to Sheol, while on the other extreme Sheol and the grave are kept totally separate. An example of the former view is that of Harris, who has repeatedly emphasized (1961, 1980, 1986) that Sheol always means simply "grave" and never "underworld." The problem, notes Harris (1980: 892), "is the theological one." "Does the OT teach, in contradiction to the NT, that all men after death go to a dark and dismal place where the dead know nothing and are cut off from God?" The fact that "both good men (Jacob, Gen 37:35) and bad men (Korah, Dathan, etc., Num 16:30) go there" presents insurmountable difficulties. If Sheol does not mean simply "grave," asserts Harris, then all we are left with is the early Church's inadequate notion of a *limbus patrum* (1986: 59; 1980: 892). The weakness of Harris' view is his lack of any appreciation for the solidarity and shared legacy which the biblical authors had in common with their ANE environment (Harris does not cite any extrabiblical literature from either Mesopotamia, Ugarit, or Egypt). There are other ways of addressing the difficulties which lie behind the question of who goes down to Sheol (see B.3 below).

Of a less extreme nature is Pedersen (1926: 461–62), who asserts that Sheol is the netherworld, but:

> The ideas of the grave and of Sheol cannot be separated … The dead are at the same time in the grave and in Sheol … Sheol is the entirety into which all graves are merged … Sheol should be the sum of the graves … The "Ur"-grave we might call Sheol … Where there is grave, there is Sheol, and where there is Sheol, there is grave.

Heidel (1949: 170–91) also demonstrates how Sheol refers to the underworld as well as the grave.

An example of the other end of the spectrum is Rosenberg (1980: 168–69), who argues that Pedersen and others have been too influenced by the extrabiblical material which describes the grave as forming "a veritable continuum with the underworld." "The concept of the grave and of Sheol or its semantic equivalents," remarks Rosenberg, "were consistently kept apart … no concept of 'Ur' grave is attested in the Bible." Sheol in this view is simply the underworld.

2. Personification of Sheol. In the Hebrew Bible the word for death (*māwet/môt*) often refers to the realm of death as well as to death personified (see MOT). The same can be said of Sheol. Zimmerli (1983: 152) comments that "the lack of the article in all the occurrences [of Sheol] in the OT would certainly suggest that the word still had something of the ring of a proper name about it." There seems to have been a fluidity between Sheol/Death as a person and a locality. We might mention a similar notion in Mesopotamia where *ḫubur* and *irkallu* are used as both a term for the netherworld and as a name of a deity (CAD Ḫ, 219; I, 178; see Hades discussion below). Sheol, like Death, is described in the Hebrew Bible as having an insatiable appetite (Isa 5:14; Hab 2:5; Prov 27:20; 30:15b–16) which is remarkably reminiscent of Mot's voracious appetite in *CTA* 5.1.19–20; 5.2.2–4. Compare also the swallowing imagery used of Sheol (Prov 1:12; cf. Ps 141:7). Isaiah 25:8 plays on this imagery and turns the tables by having Yahweh swallow up Death forever.

Twice in Hos 13:14 Yahweh is described as ransoming Ephraim from the grasp of personified Sheol and Death (Andersen and Freedman, *Hosea* AB, 639–40). In Isa 14:9 Sheol seems to be the personified monarch of the kingdom of the dead, who rouses the shades of the dead to greet the tyrant of Babylon. Compare also Isa 28:15, 18, where the leaders are accused of making covenants with Sheol//Death (Irwin 1977: 26–29).

Ancient Near Eastern names contain theophoric elements and thus many scholars (e.g., Parker *IDBSup*, 224; cf. Westermann 1984: 328–29; Sarna, *Genesis* JPS, 36) analyze the personal name Methushael in Gen 4:18 as "Man of [the god] Sheol." Others, however (e.g., Cassuto 1961: 233; Speiser, *Genesis* AB, 36; *HALAT*, 618), would analyze Methushael as "man of god/El." See also METHUSHAEL.

3. The Inhabitants of Sheol. The denizens of Sheol are called the REPHAIM. A great deal of literature has been written on the nature of the Rephaim especially since the publication of Ugaritic texts where they are mentioned extensively (*CTA* 20–22 = *Ugaritica* V and *KTU 1.161*). See (*IDBSup*, 739) and L'Heureux (1979) for bibliography. On *KTU* 1.161, a funerary liturgy which invokes the Rephaim, see Lewis 1989: 5–46.

A great deal of attention has also been paid to the nature of those who go to Sheol. It has commonly been asserted that Sheol in the Hebrew Bible is the place where all the dead, both righteous (Jacob and Samuel being given as prime examples) and wicked, eventually reside (e.g., Gray, *Kings* OTL, 102; Pedersen 1926: 461–62; cf. Harris cited above in B.1). Other see Sheol as the habitation of the wicked only. Thus Heidel (1949: 184–91) asserts that "there is no passage which proves that *Shĕʾôl* was ever employed as a designation for the gathering-place of the departed spirits of the godly." Similarly Rosenberg (1980: 178–252) proposes that Sheol is associated with the concept of premature or "evil death," which was distinguished from the common fate of all humans. On the other hand, "natural death is accompanied by unification with kin, and Sheol is never mentioned" in these contexts. The place where one is "gathered to his/her kin" is never specified says Rosenberg, yet "it is never jointly mentioned with Sheol." "Evil death … results in delegation to Sheol, which is never described as an ancestral meeting place." Rosenberg does not go as far as Heidel, and she admits that in some contexts Sheol may connote the meeting place of all the dead (cf. Ps 89:49—Eng 89:48). Nevertheless, its most common usage is a place for the wicked.

Another pertinent question is whether those who resided in the underworld could be consulted through necromancy. It is commonly asserted that there was no cult of the dead in ancient Israel because such practices were expressly forbidden (Deut 18:11) and, furthermore, "the dead know nothing" (Qoh 9:4–6, 10; cf. Job 7:9; 14:21). Yet the Wisdom tradition is not consistent with other texts which show that the dead were in fact consulted (e.g., 1 Samuel 28; cf. the designation of the spirits of the dead as *yiddĕʿōnî* < *ydʿ*, "to know"). While the Yahwism which became normative may have been resolute in its condemnation of cults of the dead, such practices were carried out in some forms of popular religion in ancient Israelite society (see ANCESTOR WORSHIP; Lewis 1989).

C. Other Designations for the Abode of the Dead

While the most common word to designate the abode of the dead in the Hebrew Bible is *šĕʾôl*, numerous other terms were also employed as semantic equivalents (cf. Tromp 1969: 23–128 for a complete list of various suggestions all of which cannot be substantiated). Often these

terms are used in parallelism with *šĕʾôl*. They are found in contexts similar to those used of *šĕʾôl*, including similar phraseology and imagery. Heb *māwet*, "Death," like *šĕʾôl*, is often used to refer to the realm of death (Ps 6:6—Eng 6:5; Prov 7:27) as well as to the personified chthonic power behind death and to all that is associated with it such as disease, sterility, drought, etc. (Hab 2:5; Job 18:13–14; 28:22; Isa 28:15, 18; Hos 13:14; Ps 49:15; Cant 8:6). See MOT for a description of the Canaanite deity of death and the underworld who goes by the same name. Heb *ʾereṣ* is simply "earth" yet, as with Ug *ʾarṣ* and Akk *erṣetu*, it too can designate the netherworld (*HALAT*, 88; CAD E: 310–11; *AHW* 245 s.v. *erṣetu*; Tromp 1969: 7, 23–46; Rosenberg 1980: 29–52; Tallqvist 1934: 8–11). Like *šĕʾôl, ʾereṣ* is also modified by *taḥtît/taḥtiyyôt* (cf. Zimmerli 1983: 39) to denote the depths of the netherworld. Hebrew *šaḥat* (e.g., Ps 16:10; Job 17:13–14; Isa 38:17–18; Jonah 2:3–7) and *bôr* (e.g., Isa 5:14; 38:18; Ezek 31:16; Pss 30:4—Eng 30:3; 88:4–5—Eng 88:3–4; Prov 1:12) both refer to the abode of the dead as the "Pit." (See Tromp 1969: 66–71; Rosenberg 1980: 53–89; and esp. Held 1973: 173–90, which includes a detailed analysis of the etymology of *šaḥat*) Another poetic name for the underworld is *ʾăbaddôn*, usually translated "Perdition" or "(place of) Destruction" <*ʾbd*, "to perish" (Job 26:6; 28:22; 31:12; Ps 88:12—Eng 88:11; Prov 15:11; 27:20). The personification of Abaddon (cf. Job 28:22, where Abaddon and Death are speakers) leads to the notion of a destroying angel (*ʾapolluōn* in Greek) of the abyss (Rev 9:11). See also APOLLYON. In rabbinic literature Abaddon comes to designate the place of punishment and damnation = Gehinnom. See also ABADDON.

D. Hades In the New Testament

In the LXX *šĕʾôl* is most commonly translated *hadēs*. As with Sheol and its semantic equivalents, Hades can either refer to the underworld or be personified. The description of Hades parallels that of Sheol above (B.1). As with Sheol, Hades is a place to which one goes down, and it too represents the lowest depths in contrast to the highest heavens (Matt 11:23; Luke 10:15). Hades has the familar "gates" (Matt 16:18) which are prominent in the netherworlds of ANE and Greek mythology. Compare especially the mention of "keys of Death and Hades" in Rev 1:18.

In Greek mythology (*Iliad* 15.188; cf. Nilsson 1955: 452–56; Burkert 1985: 194–200) Hades occurs as the proper name of the gatekeeper/god of the netherworld. The netherworld was called the "house of Hades" and eventually simply Hades. Likewise in the NT Hades occurs in personified form (Rev 6:8). Death and Hades give up the dead and are then thrown into the lake of fire in Rev 20:13–14.

The question of who resides in Hades is just as acute a problem as it is for Sheol (see discussion above). Most scholars affirm that changes in the understandings of retribution and immortality, most likely through the influence of Persian and Hellenistic thought, resulted in different eternal abodes for the righteous and the wicked (cf. *1 Enoch* 22). The abode of the wicked dead comes to be a place for punishment and torment; the abode of the righteous dead comes to be a place of happiness and bliss. The development of both these concepts is notably absent from the Hebrew Bible. According to Jeremias (*TDNT* 1:147–49) Hades sometimes denotes the abode of both the godly and the wicked (Luke 16:23; Acts 2:27, 31; cf. *Ant* 18.14; *JW* 2.163). At other times (1 Pet 3:19; cf. *JW* 3.375) it appears to be a designation of the abode only of the ungodly, with the righteous residing in paradise or some similar environment (Luke 16:9; 23:43; cf. 2 Cor 5:8; Phil 1:23; Heb 12:22; Rev 6:9; 7:9). Where Hades denotes the abode of all the dead, it is described as a temporary holding place until the resurrection, when Hades gives

up its dead (Rev 20:13). This is further underscored by the demarcation between Hades and GEHENNA, which is used to describe the eschatological hell of fire where the ungodly will be punished after death (Matt 5:22). There is one place, however, where Hades is described as a place of torment (Luke 16:23). Yet in contrast to much of later Christian literture, the "torments of hell" are not elaborated upon in the NT.

The underworld is also described in the NT as the "Abyss" (*abussos*), often translated "Bottomless Pit" (Luke 8:31; Rom 10:7; Rev 9:1–2, 11; 11:7; 17:18; 20:1, 3; see Jeremias, *TDNT* 1:9–10). In 2 Pet 2:4 mention is made of casting rebel angels into Tartarus. In classical Greek mythology murky Tartarus was said to be as far below Hades as earth is below the heavens, so much so that an anvil could fall for nine days and nights until it reached it. Tartarus is described as a prison with gates, and it too is personified (Homer *Iliad* 8.13–16; Hesiod *Theog.* 713–35).

Hades plays an essential role in Christian theology. Hades cannot prevail over the Church (Matt 16:18) because Christ holds the keys to Death and Hades (Rev 1:18). Compare Isa 25:8, above, where Yahweh swallows Death (Mot) forever. In fact, those who die are sometimes thought not to be in Hades but are rather united with Christ (Luke 23:43; Phil 1:23; 2 Cor 5:8). The description of the descent of Christ into Hades and his preaching to the spirits of the dead (1 Pet 3:18–20; 4:6) led to the doctrine of Christ's *descensus* (Selwyn 1947: 337–62).

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