

# *MORE SEED & BREAD, ISSUE NO. 296*

## **WHAT DID JOSIAH CREATE?**

By Andrew Brown

The fires of Molech burned deep in the hearts of the idolatrous Israelites. They were told not to take on the gods of the nations or to act like them, yet this wicked addiction corrupted the nation of Israel. The Lord said, **Any man from the sons of Israel or from the aliens sojourning in Israel who gives any of his offspring to Molech, shall surely be put to death; the people of the land shall stone him with stones. I will set My face against that man and will cut him off from among his people** (Lev. 20:2-3). (Most verses are from the *New American Standard Bible* version.)

King Hezekiah was likely a surviving Molech child. Scripture exposes his father, **Moreover, he burnt incense in the valley of Ben-hinnom and burned his sons in the fire, according to the abominations of the nations whom the LORD had driven out before the sons of Israel** (2 Chron. 28:3). Ahaz sacrificed multiple sons to Molech. This horrendous practice was probably a child running through blazing fire. Making it through or not would signify Molech's pleasure or dissatisfaction. Manasseh's idolatry was also rampant prior to his conversion. **He made his sons pass through the fire in the valley of Ben-hinnom...**(2 Chron. 33:6). If not for Amon's short reign and life, Josiah might have been put through the fire.

The Bible reveals the specific location for many of these fire runs. A valley that was quite beautiful in its day is referred to as the valley of Benhinnom (Heb: *ge ben Hinnom*). Early on, this valley was owned by a man named Hinnom who then gave it to his son. It is mentioned in Joshua's distribution of the land to Judah. **Then the border went up the valley of Benhinnom to the slope of the Jebusite on the south (that is, Jerusalem); and the border went up to the top of the mountain which is before the valley of Hinnom to the west** (Josh. 15:8). This valley's location is on the outskirts of Jerusalem at the border of Judah and Benjamin. The idolatrous heart must have thought this lush valley's beauty could grab the attention of a false god. Such an Israelite must not have had a heart towards God for this was not His

designated place and far from the style of worship that the true Creator Jehovah had given His people in the law.

The valley of Ben-Hinnom is not the only name for this famous valley near Jerusalem. It is also called Topheth, the name of a particular altar found there. God speaks with great disapproval toward this idolatrous stage declaring, **They have built the high places of Topheth, which is in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire, which I did not command, and it did not come into My mind** (Jer. 7:31). Here the Lord links Topheth and Hinnom together.

King Josiah grew up with a passion for the true God. He may have realized that his wicked father's premature death spared his life from the Hinnom fires. Josiah started his reign as a child, only 8 years old. In the twelfth year of his reign he started to purge Judah from their idolatry. Scripture does not reveal what ignited Josiah's passion for reform. Could it have been a converted King Manasseh telling the young boy about how he led Israel into idolatry, but could not turn Israel back to God? Did he tell the boy how he would do it all over if he had a second chance to serve the living and true God? Regardless, Josiah grew up with a strong desire to destroy idolatry.

After he read from the book of Moses, Josiah began his great reform. The temple was cleansed. He removed the worship of Baal, Asherah, and the starry host. He killed the idolatrous priests and cult prostitutes. Josiah was a whirlwind in removing idolatry. As Scripture says, **He makes the winds His messengers, flaming fire His ministers** (Psa. 104:4). Josiah's reforms blazed from the high places to the surrounding area. **He also defiled Topheth, which is in the valley of the son of Hinnom, that no man might make his son or his daughter pass through the fire for Molech** (2 Kings 23:10).

The picture of what this defilement entailed comes from other places that he defiled. There, **He broke in pieces the sacred pillars and cut down the Asherim and filled their places with human bones** (2 Kings 23:14). Josiah took bones from their graves and burned them on the altars (2 Kings 23:16). He did the same when he defiled beautiful Topheth.

Defilement with bones was a certain method. All Israelites would run away from such a place to prevent becoming unclean. It was ingrained into Israelites' minds from their youth that worshipping in such a dirty place would be unfathomable. **He that touches the dead body** (soul) (Heb: *muth* = dead; *nephesh* soul) **of**

**any man shall be unclean for seven days** (Num. 19:11, *KJV*). The LORD emphatically repeats the law, **Whosoever touches the dead body (soul) of any man that is dead, and purifieth not himself, defileth the tabernacle of the LORD; and that soul shall be cut off from Israel** (Num. 19:13, *KJV*). Touching dead bones was an absolute negative to any Israelite regardless of whom he worshipped. Young Josiah was wise to this and used it to eliminate idol worship at these sites. Never again would anybody worship the "god" Molech in the now contemptible valley of Ben-Hinnom.

After Josiah, idolatry returned in different locations setting the stage for Babylon's war with Jerusalem. These Israelites had done that which **did not come into My mind. Therefore, behold, days are coming, declares the LORD, when it will no longer be called Topheth, or the valley of the son of Hinnom, but the valley of the Slaughter; for they will bury in Topheth because there is no other place** (Jer. 7:31-32). The LORD reveals another dreadful fate for this valley giving it yet another name: "the Valley of Slaughter."

Numerous passages describe the desolate use for the valley after Babylon came to town as the sword of the Lord taking vengeance on the idolatrous Israelites...**They will bring out the bones...of the inhabitants of Jerusalem from their graves. They will spread them out to the sun, the moon and to all the host of heaven, which they have loved and which they have served...They will not be...buried; they will be as dung on the face of the ground** (Jer. 8:1-2). When Babylon came, the many dead bodies were added to the now defiled valley. Instead of beauty it would remain a place of putrid mess for carrion birds. This is a sad fate for those who did not make the Lord their refuge...**Just so will I break this people and this city, even as one breaks a potter's vessel, which cannot again be repaired; and they will bury in Topheth because there is no other place for burial** (Jer. 19:11). The graveyards were full and Hinnom was a burial heap.

Scripture brings this valley into the New Testament. Greek texts have it as Gehenna by way of the Hebrew *ge ben Hinnom*. This occurs 12 times in the New Testament, 11 straight from the lips of the Lord Jesus as He referred to this valley known in English as *Gehenna*. It is translated "hell" each time. By the time of the Lord's days on earth, *Gehenna* had morphed from a graveyard to a trash disposal dump for Jerusalem and surrounding districts. Fires would burn there, as is common in dumps today.

Israelites were careful to only throw entirely useless items into their trash heaps. Some of the vilest criminals were tossed dead into *Gehenna*, without

proper burial to add disgrace to their punishment. When our Lord referenced *Gehenna*, He used the known trash dump to bring understanding to the future disposal of worthless men. **If your right eye makes you stumble, tear it out and throw it from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to be thrown into hell (*Gehenna*)** (Matt. 5:29). He also rebuked the elite scribes and Pharisees warning that their conduct represented those who belong in this place. **Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you travel around on sea and land to make one proselyte; and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son (representative) of hell (*Gehenna*) as yourselves** (Matt. 23:15).

**Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul, but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell (*Gehenna*)** (Matt. 10:28). Here, the Author of Life reveals His plans to completely dispose of the worthless ones. The gospel of Luke offers an extra detail; **fear the One who, after He has killed, has authority to cast into hell (*Gehenna*)** (Luke 12:5). The Lord reveals that after the judgment men are cast into *Gehenna* dead. It is the final destination of the wicked, leaving them with a known reputation of disgrace.

The book of Revelation calls the future disposal place for dead men who are not found worthy to experience the gift of life the "lake of fire." Being thrown into the "lake of fire" is referred to as the "second death." After resurrection, those who are found unworthy of life will experience the second death and be tossed into the lake of fire, or *Gehenna*. Jesus questioned the Pharisees, **How will you escape the sentence of hell (*Gehenna*)?** (Matt. 23:33). If you do not accept the free gift of the Lord, you cannot escape. **For the wages of sin is death but the gift of God is eternal (*aionian*) life through Christ Jesus our Lord** (Rom. 6:23, KJV). The only "exceptions" to this are mentioned in Revelation. The beast, false prophet, and Satan are all said to be **thrown alive into the lake of fire which burns with brimstone** (Rev. 19:20, 20:10).

So did Josiah create hell? Absolutely not! He defiled an idol-worshipping valley that became a garbage disposal, which is mistranslated "hell" (along with two other words). The Lord Jesus referred to this place as a future disposal of the wicked dead. Did our translators create the idea of hell into our Bibles? Somewhere else than in the mind of the Lord, an idea was created of a place for live fire torture and this erroneous fable was read into the mistranslated words. This is worse than the Molech fire runs!

To be certain, the common idea of "hell" has been created, and is not the result of careful Bible study tracing out definitions for Scripture's terms by Scriptural use. The final New Testament verse where *Gehenna* is found presents the fate of such unscriptural misconceptions, **The tongue is a fire, the very world of iniquity; the tongue is set among our members as that which defiles the entire body, and sets on fire the course of our life, and is set on fire by hell (*Gehenna*)** (James 3:6). Let the reader not be found promoting worthless doctrines that should be thrown into a trash heap, but let us, like Josiah, read Scripture and smash down the idolatry of false beliefs.

The SEED & BREAD Bible-study leaflets are published as often as time and means permit and are sent free to all names on THE WORD OF TRUTH MINISTRY mailing list. Send us your name. There will be no obligation, solicitation or visitation. Additional copies of any issue available on request.

MORE SEED & BREAD, ISSUE NO. 295, Published March 2014