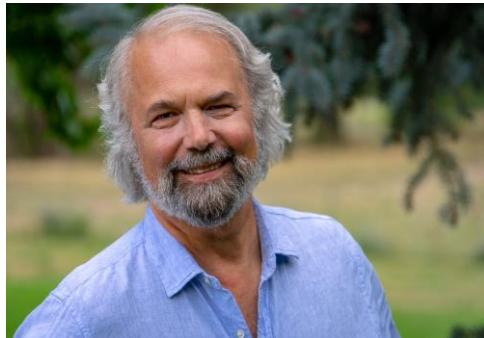


# PROPHESY OVER THE DRY BONES

PULSE OF SPIRIT  
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**DAVID KARCHERE** is a speaker and workshop leader who assists people to renew their *Primal Spirituality*—an experience that virtually all human beings know at birth, and that ideally grows as they mature.

This week, a Bible story came to mind, and I went and looked it up and researched the story behind the story. I was deeply moved, because it was relevant to my own life and to the work that we are doing. The story is found in the Book of Ezekiel, the prophet, chapter 37.

Ezekiel was the one who saw the wheels within wheels, *way up in the middle of the air*. And he is the one who told the story of the Valley of Dry Bones, which is what came to mind.

Here is a little bit of background on the story. Israel split in ancient times. There was a civil war that pitted the Southern Tribes against the Northern Tribes. Eventually, the Assyrians forcibly relocated the Northern Tribes, more or less never to be seen again. The Babylonians captured the Southern Tribes and carried them off into captivity in present-day Iraq in around 600 BC. The temple that Solomon had built in Jerusalem was ransacked and destroyed.

You can imagine how traumatic it would be for any country or culture to be forcibly taken from their homeland and exiled in a foreign land. In this case, it was a glorious, sacred culture that had fallen a long way from its height. There was the magnificent temple that Solomon had built, supported by countries surrounding Israel. And then there was corruption that crept into the culture, a civil war, and then, finally, their exile to Babylon. The name Babylon, particularly in the West, has a bad name. It goes back to this episode in history.

The first part of the Book of Ezekiel tells of him as a priest in the city of Babylon by the River Chebar, agonizing over what happened and trying to understand it. I'm not going to read that part, but if you want to read his meditations in the opening chapters of the book, I invite you to do so.

Later in the book, he allows a vision for the future to come through him. And that is what the story of the dry bones is all about. It is spoken of

as prophesying over the dry bones. Another way to say this is that he was *praying* over the dry bones—praying over the possibilities for his people.

What are the dry bones? Bones are essential for the structure of the human body. We would be flopping around without them. They are the underlying structure. But here, the implication is that the valley is full of *just* bones. It is a valley of dry bones that do not have the flesh and sinew on them.

So here is something inert—an underlying structure, a pattern, for all human beings. But so often it is a potential that is unrealized. Those are the dry bones. And so, he was praying or prophesying over the dry bones, bringing a spiritual activation to a hidden potential to bring that potential alive, to bring flesh on the bones.

I will read the story, so you will hear it for yourself and make of it what you will. It is couched as a dialogue between Ezekiel and the Lord God.

*The hand of the Lord was upon me, and carried me out in the spirit of the Lord, and set me down in the midst of the valley which was full of bones,*

*And caused me to pass by them, round about: and behold, there were very many in the open valley; and, lo, they were very dry.*

*And he said unto me, Son of man, can these bones live?*

—Ezekiel 37:1–3

*Son of man*—an interesting expression. Somebody translated it as *earthling*. Its use emphasizes that this is a conversation between the Transcendent Divine and a human being, born of human beings.

*And he said unto me, Son of man, can these bones live? And I answered, O Lord God, thou knowest.*

*Again he said unto me, Prophesy upon these bones, and say unto them, O ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord.*

—Ezekiel 37:3–4

I've always puzzled over that. In the dialogue, you have the Lord asking Ezekiel, *Can these bones live?* And his answer seems to be, *Don't ask me. You know.* You might take it as being fresh with God. But you could also see it as a confession of faith, meaning that *if you know it can be done, it will be done.* That is another way to understand what is being said—that it is an expression of faith.

*Thus saith the Lord God unto these bones, behold, I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live:*

*And I will lay sinews upon you, and will bring up flesh upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and ye shall live; and ye shall know that I am the Lord.*

*So I prophesied as I was commanded: and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and behold, a shaking, and the bones came together, bone to his bone.*

*And when I beheld, lo, the sinews and the flesh came up upon them, and the skin covered them above: but there was no breath in them.*

*Then said he unto me, Prophesy unto the wind, prophesy, son of man, and say to the wind, Thus saith the Lord God; Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live.*

*So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army.*

*Then he said unto me, Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel: behold, they say, Our bones are dried, and our hope is lost: we are cut off for our parts.*

*Therefore prophesy and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God; Behold, O my people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel.*

*And ye shall know that I am the Lord, when I have opened your graves, O my people, and brought you up out of your graves.*

*And shall put my spirit in you, and ye shall live, and I shall place you in your own land: then shall ye know that I the Lord have spoken It, and performed it, saith the Lord.*

—Ezekiel 37:5–14

There are all kinds of things going on here, coming up out of graves and everything else. These are not the graves of a cemetery with dead bodies in them. These are the graves of not being fully alive, living an unfulfilled life, having lost the pride of being a citizen of one's own kingdom, as you can imagine for a people who were exiled from their homeland. So this is a calling to life.

This passage contains a reference to the whole house of Israel. In introducing this, I said how there were two kingdoms, the Northern

Kingdom and the Southern Kingdom. There was a split that happened in a civil war. But here, what is being foreseen is the whole house of Israel—in other words, the whole nation.

This is historical, but I would not be speaking about it on a Sunday morning if it were just historical. I say this is us, us as humanity, and us as this ministry. This is our story that is being told.

There is something natural to each of us as a human being and as part of humankind—we are one people who have experienced a split from each other. That split shows itself in all kinds of ways, east and west, north and south—a split maybe defined by political parties, religion, belief, color, and culture. There is a breaking apart. And so, what we are left with is some semblance of our true pattern of oneness—the dry bones.

The dry bones are an underlying reality of who we are together, and who each of us is as a human being. And yet that's not a realized experience.

The underlying reality is inert in human experience. It is not as if there is *no* flesh on the bones in our case, just as in that case, I am sure. Maybe for dramatic effect, the story was told that all the bones in the valley were very dry, all these bones. Yes, there is some flesh around, but there is also a lot of dry bones—unrealized potential.

And so, the spirit within all people individually and within us all as humankind has a remedy, the remedy brought here by the one named as *the Lord*. *The Lord* is the Lord of us all as humankind—the sovereign spirit within humanity. That sovereign spirit says, *Prophecy on these bones.*

In other words, become aware of the yet invisible potential within all people and within us

together as humanity, and activate that potential by doing something that was called prophesying. Another way to say this is, *Pray over those bones*. You have within you the power of prayer, the power of prophecy—the power to activate the hidden potential.

Hearing that, Ezekiel's response is, *If you say so*. We are being told through this story, *We have that power. Use it. Speak the word of the Presence, the Spirit that is within us all*. That Presence, that Spirit, has the power of activation.

There is so much that we could do that is less than that, that is good, that is virtuous, but is less than that activation. And what I say is there have to be some of us who become aware of the dry bones—of the hidden potential, of the underlying framework, the underlying pattern of who each of us is as a human being and who we all are together as humankind.

Seeing that picture, the contrast is stark. It is as stark as the picture portrayed here—a valley of dry bones. The vision of who we are as humanity with flesh on our bones and the breath of life breathed into us is a stark contrast to the state of humanity now. When you begin to have a vision of what we are meant to be and what is possible to us, and you look at what is happening now in the world—in our lives individually, but collectively also—you see the sad state of dry bones.

If there is no contrast—if you have no vision of potential but only see the state of world culture, then the current reality is awful. You might look at what goes on in the world and think, *This is abhorrent*. But when you see it next to the potential, it is enough to take your breath away. If you see that picture, you could well ask, *What do I do?* You could try your best to be a good

person, attempt some kind of self-improvement, or follow your spiritual practice, whatever that might be. All those things can be great. We cannot fault any of them. And yet somewhere along the line, don't some of us need to have a vision of the dry bones and the potential for flesh to come on them? Don't some of us have to have the long view of who we are to become, who we are meant to be together, and then go about the business of activating that potential in ourselves and other people?

I feel that urge. Let's do this. Let's do it together. And let's do it now. Let's put the flesh on the bones of who we are. Let's get on with it. And let's set the trajectory for what we are meant to be and the fulfillment of who we are as a human being and who we are together as humankind. Let's set the trajectory for that. Let's not be taking baby steps. We could take those baby steps forever and never get to that fulfillment.

So let's set our course. Let's see the potential, see where we're going, and set *that* course. And let's not be deterred or discouraged by the dry bones around us. Let's not be discouraged by what's happening in our culture near and far. Let's not battle with what is happening in the culture. Do you want to battle with dry bones? Will we ever get to where we are ultimately headed by battling with the dry bones?

Here in the story of Ezekiel, he was not being told to go fight with Nebuchadnezzar, who was the Babylonian king. By the way, Ezekiel was a contemporary of the prophet Daniel. They both were carried away in captivity, first Daniel and then Ezekiel. So, they were contemporaries without a whole lot to do with each other, it would seem.

So there is the biblical story, and my view of its relevance. I could not believe it when I started to read it. I was familiar with the story. You may be too. There are Christian spirituals that celebrate the story, and perhaps a general understanding of the significance of it. There was for me. But when I began to read these words, they leapt off the page. And I thought, *That's my life. That's our life. That's us.*

How much would change if we approached our own lives and what we are doing together with this perspective? I'm not particularly speaking about the story itself or even the symbolism of the story. But what if we approached our lives and what we are doing together with that long view of what we are meant to be and who we are in reality together? Let's put flesh on that. Let's make that real between us. Let's live that. And let's bring that spiritual activation of the dry bones.

Do you believe you have it in you? Ezekiel's answer to that was, *You know. If you say I do, I do. I think we need people who say, I know. I believe I have it within me to bring that activating power to my own life, to other people, to the world in which I live. I*

*am that activating power.* That power is spoken of here as *the word of the Lord and the breath of life.*

That word, *word*, has many implications. It implies meaning—words bring meaning. So we have the power to bring meaning and universal intelligence. This is the intelligence and the meaning that comes from who we are at our core—that reality of Being that is inside all people, that is One.

It is individualized through each of us, for sure, but this is who we are at the highest level as humankind—the word of that Reality, that Presence, that Being—is what has the power of activation. Because that Presence is in us, the word of that Presence is in us. And therefore, we each have the power of that word to give—the vibration of it, the activation of it.

Let us prophesy over the dry bones.

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