

# CHAPTER 3:4 HUMANKIND

by Rabbi Yaakov Feldman

## *Derech Hashem* - The Way of G-d 1:3:4

There was to be a fundamental difference between our worldly experience and our Afterlife one <sup>1</sup> -- between the environment in which we struggle toward growth and perfection known as *Olam Haze* ("this world"), and the one in which we reap the fruits of our labors known as *Olam Haba* ("The World to Come") <sup>2</sup>.

This world would need to be set-up in such a way that the inner struggle between the soul and the body <sup>3</sup> could go on. That way materiality wouldn't automatically hold sway over spirituality; and spirituality wouldn't automatically dominate materiality. And while the latter would seem to be a good thing <sup>4</sup> it actually isn't, given that our goal of achieving spiritual perfection and drawing close to G-d on our own would be thwarted <sup>5</sup>. And The World to Come needed to be the environment in which spirituality does indeed hold sway over materiality <sup>6</sup>.

Notes:

<sup>1</sup> As we indicated in note 3 to 1:3:1 above, we're talking here about the ideal -- the reality in place before Adam and Eve sinned. The equation was altered and the delicate balance of power between spirit and matter shifted after that, as we'll see.

<sup>2</sup> In fact, there are two usages of the term "The World to Come" in the tradition. The first one, championed by Rambam (Maimonides), is used to depict the place the soul goes to after death for reward or punishment (*Hilchot Teshuvah* Ch. 8); while the second, as used by Ramban (Nachmanides), is the place that (nearly) all will go to after the Messianic Era, the Great Day of Judgment, and the Resurrection of the Dead for eternal reward (*Sha'ar HaGemul*). Both can be termed the Afterlife.

Since death and reward and punishment hadn't yet entered into the picture, as we're talking about the time before Adam and Eve sinned, as indicated above, the term *Olam Haba* discussed *here* is clearly the one that Ramban addressed.

See *Da'at Tevunot* 88 for a full discussion of the stages in which the body and the soul respectively

hold sway; also see *Da'at Tevunot* 126. And see 1:3:10, 13 below.

<sup>3</sup> Ramchal characterizes the soul here as (the seat of) "reason" as he did in 1:3:2.

<sup>4</sup> Since it would allow us to arrive at spiritual perfection effortlessly and quickly.

<sup>5</sup> So it would detract from our freedom of choice and cheapen our spirituality in the end.

<sup>6</sup> Ramchal adds an interesting remark at the end. He depicts this world as a place "with the sort of *natural* laws that humanity would need" there, and The World to Come as the place "with the sort of laws that humanity would need" there, without saying what kind of laws or ways there'd be there (though he's clearly referring to *supernatural* laws).

In essence, that says that each world has its own way of being and environment. The point is that the Afterlife will not simply be an extension of this world with the sorts of causes and effects we're used to: it will be utterly different. We alluded to that in our remark above that "there was to be a fundamental difference between our worldly experience and our Afterlife one".

---

Rabbi Yaakov Feldman has translated and commented upon "The Gates of Repentance", "The Path of the Just", and "The Duties of the Heart" (Jason Aronson Publishers). His works are available in bookstores and in various locations on the Web.