

CHAPTER 3:10 HUMANKIND

by Rabbi Yaakov Feldman

Derech Hashem - The Way of G-d 1:3:10

Thus, true reward ¹ will come about after the Resurrection of the Dead, and after the world would have been undone and redone -- when body and soul would have been reunited, after the soul would have purified the body, and when both could then enjoy the great goodness of that reward ². Not everyone there would enjoy the same degree of reward, though, even when there. The more one struggled in this world to grow and perfect himself, the greater would his reward (and experience there) be ³. Since those efforts would determine the degree to which his body (and its associated aspects) would have been purified by his soul ⁴, and would also determine how "close they (i.e., body and soul in combination) would merit drawing to G-d, to basking in the light of His countenance, and to enjoying His true goodness" as Ramchal words it ⁵.

Notes:

¹ As opposed to the relatively short-term reward in the Afterlife (see 1:3:3 above and 1:3:11 just below).

² The idea that perfection will only be achieved when both body and soul experience The World to Come is accepted by the great majority of Traditional thinkers, including but not limited to *Emunot v'De'ot* 7:8; *Ra'avad* on *Hilchot Teshuvah* 8:2; *Torat HaAdam* at end of *Sha'ar HaGemul*; *Yam Ramah*, *Chiddushei HaRan*, and *Bartinuro* on *Sanhedrin* 10:1; etc. Also see *Sanhedrin* 91a, *Zohar* 1:114a, 3:216a, and *Tikkunei Zohar* 10b.

But see Rambam who argues that the ultimate reward will be enjoyed by the soul alone and that the Resurrection of the Dead will be impermanent in *Hilchot Teshuvah* 8:2, *Moreh Nevuchim* 2:27, and *Iggeret Teshiyat HaMeitim*. Also see *Kuzari* 1:115, 3:20-21; *Chovot HaLevovot* 4:4:6; *Ikkurim* 4:30, 33; *Ohr HaShem* 3:4:2; etc.

³ This principal is enunciated at quite a number of points in the Tradition. See for example *Baba Batra* 75a, *Vayikra Rabbah* 30:2, *Pirkei Avot* 5:23, T.Y. *Chagigah* 2:1, *Midrash Tehillim* 11:7, *Sifri* (10) on Deuteronomy 1:10, *Emunot v'De'ot* 9:7, *Sefer Chassidim* 166, 365, etc.

Also see 2:2:7 below, and *Messilat Yescharim* Ch. 4.

The point is underscored because one might think that all would be equal and conjoined by that point, when all sins would have been expunged by death and the experience of Gehennom, but that's not actually so. There will always be distinctions between one soul and another.

That also speaks to the existence of individuality in death and thereafter, and it underscores the idea that everyone will not meld and lose his or her personality and separate selfness (as some fear and others contend).

⁴ It's important to realize that not only will the body itself be purified by the soul, but the personality, inclinations, etc. associated with the person inhabiting that body will also be purified.

There's another important point to be made here. The soul had a "life" -- i.e., a presence, purpose, and wherewithal -- even before it entered the body. And it enjoyed a high degree of intrinsic perfection and brilliance then. That perfection was already powerful enough to transform the combination of body and soul into a superhuman entity. Nonetheless, G-d saw to it that the soul's intrinsic perfection be suppressed, and that it not accomplish its goal -- yet. That is, before the World to Come.

As such, the soul had to stay in place, if you will, and sit silently and alone by the waysides before it could enter a body, until its time would come, when it would indeed be allowed to express itself fully, and nothing and no one would hold it back. That's when it will enter the body in all its glory and might, and will immediately begin to purify it. It would be the moment that the soul had been waiting for, for so very long, which it had been honed for, which it could finally experience.

⁵ ... so movingly. As, nothing would be as splendid or wondrous to the righteous than "drawing to G-d,... basking in the light of His countenance, and ... enjoying His true goodness"!

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