

CHAPTER 4: THE DIVINE MERIT-SYSTEM □ PART 2

by Rabbi Yaakov Feldman

We're taught that reality will be thoroughly altered at a certain point in time. Things will shift, and both we and the universe as a whole will enter an utterly other realm known as The World to Come. This will not be the Messianic Era, which will actually appear full-flower beforehand and be followed by the resurrection of the dead; nor is it the Afterlife, which we'll discuss later.

As glorious and astounding as the Afterlife, the Messianic Era, and the resurrection of the dead will be, none of that will be The World to Come which will be a whole other order of things. It will be a supernatural dominion in which body and soul will hold sway in tandem and G-d's presence will be manifest in all its glory, as we'll also see.

It in fact is the sphere of being that the prophet was alluding to by saying, "Since the beginning of the world men have not heard, nor perceived by ear, nor has the eye seen, O G-d, beside You, what (You) have prepared for him that waits for Him" (Isaiah 64:4). It's also termed "G- d's mountain"(Psalms 24:3), "The site of His holiness" (Ibid.), "The holy way" (Isaiah 35:8), "G-d's courtyards" (Psalms 92:14), "G-d's pleasantness" (Ibid. 27:4), "G-d's tent" (Ibid. 15:1), "G-d's palace" (Ibid. 5:8), "G-d's house" (Ibid.), and "G-d's gate" (Ibid. 118:20) (see Hilchot Teshuvah 8:2). Suffice it to say for our purposes though that it will be the realm of ultimate reward.

For while some will be rewarded in the here-and-now for their goodness with health, wealth, family, spiritual satisfaction and the like, others will not. Some will be blessed with the equivalent of all that in the Afterlife. And others yet will more fully bask in the glories of The World to Come thanks to their righteousness in this life. It depends on the quality of the deeds done here and the role those deeds had played in the great scheme of things as only G-d can determine.

Nonetheless, as Ramchal puts it, "the main reward is the true good that the righteous will enjoy in The World to Come". And conversely, the most awful penalty is being denied entry into it.

The point is that while reward is certain, its locale is very variable and for good reason.

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.