

SEFER DANIEL
By Rav Yaakov Medan

Shiur #25: Chapter 14b
On the Resurrection of the Dead (continued)

2. The importance of faith in the Resurrection

We now arrive at our central question: if the Resurrection is not mentioned explicitly anywhere in the Torah, and if it has no significance in terms of our everyday actions, since they have no effect on its occurrence or timing, then why is faith in the Resurrection so important – to the point that the Rambam writes that "there is no [Jewish] faith, nor any connection with the Jewish people, for someone who does not believe in it"? *Chazal*, too, speak out with surprising severity against anyone who does not believe in the Resurrection, denying him a place in the World to Come (*Sanhedrin* 10:1). Why is it not sufficient that we believe in the eternity of the soul in the World of the souls? Why is it so critical that we believe in the Resurrection of the dead and the connection between the soul and the body?

It is clear from the beginning of *Sefer Bereishit* that God created the world without any need for death. The original plan and purpose of the Garden of Eden was to allow eternal life in the shade of the Divine Presence. The serpent, and all that it represents, wanted something different. It wanted to bring down the world in general, and mankind in particular, to the abyss of rebellion and sin, to the darkness of distance from God and – following from these – to death. A superficial reading of the opening chapters of *Bereishit* seems to suggest that the serpent was successful in its quest: man fell into sin, rebellion, and death, and there is no longer any possibility of transcending death and the severance from God's original plan for Creation. God's plan receded to the ethereal heights of theory, and is no longer part of the world of action and realization.

In the early chapters of *Bereishit* there is a clear connection between death and sin: First, Adam was warned that on the day he ate of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge he would die; he ate of its fruit and was expelled from the Garden so that he would not eat from the Tree of Life and live forever. Later, the sin of the generation of the Flood led not only to the destruction of the physical world, but also to a shortening of man's life by about a half. Adam, and each of the generations that followed, lived nearly a thousand years. The descendants of Shem, whose lifespan is discussed in the text (*Bereishit* 11), lived between four and five hundred years.

The Torah goes on to tell us that in the generation of Peleg, the earth was divided. If we look at the years that people lived, we see that in his time the average

lifespan was still very long, but after the sin of the Tower it was once again halved. The generations after Peleg lived for less than 250 years.

The connection between sin and death is also clear in the verses at the end of *Kohelet*:

Rejoice, young man, in your youth; and let your heart cheer you in the days of your youth; walk in the ways of your heart and in the sight of your eyes - but know that for all these things God will bring you to judgment... Remember then your Creator in the days of your youth, before the evil days come and years will arrive when you will say: "I have no pleasure in them." (*Kohelet* 11:9-12:1)

Let us imagine for a moment the thoughts of a 200-year-old man living prior to the Flood, surrounded by people who were alive for almost 1000 years. What would cause him to think about mending his ways and the need to bend his heart to God, if he had no way of imagining the day of death? The shadow of death that comes after sin is meant to cause a person to repent and mend his ways while still alive. But the existence of this shadow of death is not an absolute requirement – just as the existence of sin is not a necessity.

A person who denies the Resurrection is saying, in effect, that the serpent and Satan have defeated God; they have irreparably distorted His plan. Evil has defeated goodness; goodness no longer reigns.

One who believes in the Resurrection, on the other hand, believes that the seeming victory of evil over God's plan in creating the world is merely temporary. God will eventually reveal His might and restore the world to what it was supposed to be before the serpent tempted Chava and Adam – a world of a Tree of Life that precedes, in every way, the Tree of Knowledge.

3. The function of the Resurrection

From *Chazal's* teaching above it seems that not everyone in the world will arise at the time of the Resurrection; this destiny awaits only those who believe in it.^[1] However, it would appear that this is not the only precondition. Wicked people who believe in the Resurrection will not necessarily participate in it. This makes sense: if someone does evil in God's eyes, even if he believes in the Resurrection – in what way does he deserve it?

This idea is expressed explicitly by *Chazal*:

R. Elazar said: Any person who is of selfish spirit, will not be awakened in the Resurrection, as it is written: "Awaken and rejoice, those who dwell in the dust." The verse does not say, "those who lie [*shokhvei*] in the dust," but rather, "those who dwell [*shokhnei*] in the dust" – meaning, those who are neighbors of the dust [i.e., humble] during their lifetime. (*Sota* 5a)

We find in *Bereishit Rabba* (*parsha* 13):

The Resurrection is for Israel [alone], while this [rainfall] is for Israel as well as the other nations.

The Rambam (in his introduction to *Perek Chelek*) maintains:

The Resurrection is for the righteous, while this [rainfall] is for the righteous as well as the wicked.^[2]

The same idea arises from R. Sa'adia Gaon's *Emunot Ve-De'ot, ma'amar* 7, the *Tosafot* in *Rosh ha-Shana* (16b), and other sources. Ramban, in *Sha'ar Ha-Gemul* in his *Torat Ha-Adam*, also raises the seemingly logical and well-known idea that only those who do that which is good and upright in the eyes of God will awaken at the time of the Resurrection. All of these *Rishonim* understand the Resurrection as the final reward which God gives to those who believe in Him, who perform His word, and who follow Him in their hearts.

However, from a simple reading of the text in *Daniel*, it seems that everyone^[3] – including the wicked – will awaken for the great Day of Judgment; some will be given eternal life, while others will be sentenced to eternal shame and abhorrence:

And the masses of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awaken, some to eternal life, and others to shame and everlasting contempt. (*Daniel* 12:2)

We find this image once again at the beginning of the *beraita* of Beit Shammai and Beit Hillel, in *Rosh Ha-Shana* 16b-17a:

Beit Shammai say: There are three groups on the Day of Judgment. One is composed of the completely righteous; one of the completely wicked; and one of the in-between. The completely righteous are inscribed and sealed on the spot for eternal life. The completely wicked are inscribed and sealed on the spot for Gehennom, as it is written, “And the masses of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awaken, some to eternal life, and others to shame and everlasting contempt.”

Those who are in-between descend to Gehennom... and they shall scream, and rise up again, as it is written: “And I shall bring a third of them through fire, and shall refine them as silver is refined, and try them as gold is tried. And they shall call upon My Name, and I shall answer them...”

Those of Israel who sin with their body, and those of the nations who sin with their body descend to Gehennom and are judged there for twelve months. After twelve months, their body is consumed and their soul is burned, and the wind

scatters them under the feet of the righteous, as it is written; "You shall tread down the wicked, who shall be like ashes under your feet."

But the deniers and the informers and the apostates and heretics who denied the Torah and denied the Resurrection and separated themselves from the ways of the community, and those who imposed their fear in the land of the living, and who sinned and caused the many to sin – such as Yerav'am ben Nevat and his like – they shall descend to Gehennom, and be judged there for generation after generation, as it is written: "They shall go forth and see the carcasses of the people who sinned against Me..." Gehennom will be consumed, but they shall not be consumed...

And this indeed is the conclusion of Ramban and of Ritva in *Massekhet Rosh Ha-shana* 16b. This tells us that the Resurrection is not just the reward; it is itself the great Day of Judgment. Here the question arises: every person is judged for his actions immediately upon his death; what need is there, then, for the additional Day of Judgment that Daniel is talking about here?

Let us preface our answer with a few words about the judgment that comes when a person dies. The sources for this in *Chazal* are numerous. The best known among them is the *mishna* in *Avot*:

... And do not let your evil inclination assure you that the grave is your refuge, for it was against your will that you were created, against your will that you were born, against your will that you live, against your will that you will die, and against your will you will stand in judgment before the King of kings, the Holy One, blessed be He." (*Avot* 4:29).

In *Tanakh*, the clearest sources concerning the Day of Judgment are to be found in *Kohelet*:

For every matter has its time and judgment, for the evil of man is great upon him... There is no man with power over the wind to restrain the wind; nor power over the day of death; and there is no discharge in war; nor shall wickedness deliver him that is given to it. (*Kohelet* 8:6-8)

The verses here teach that a person has no control over the day of death, and on that day he does not have the power to hold back the spirit of life within himself. He will die when God decrees for him to die, and his wickedness will not help him escape the judgment that awaits him when he is dead.

Once again, in the concluding verses of *Kohelet*:

And the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns to God Who gave it... The end of the matter, all having been heard: fear God, and keep His commandments; for this is the whole of man. For God shall bring every work into

judgment concerning every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil. (*Kohelet* 12:7, 13-14)

Here again, the reference is to the judgment that follows the day of death.

(To be continued)

Translated by Kaeren Fish

[1] See, for example, *Sanhedrin* 10:1 and *gemara Sanhedrin* 90-91.

[2] On the basis of this view, according to which the discrimination between Israel and the other nations is made because of their actions, the Rambam also explains the prohibition of returning a lost article to a gentile: it is permitted – and sometimes even mandatory – to return it to him if he is not included in the category of the wicked (see *Laws of Stealing and Lost Articles* 11:3).

If we understand the *midrash* literally, meaning that non-Jews do not merit resurrection, and add to this the understanding of those *Rishonim* who disagree with the Rambam and maintain that the opposite of resurrection is not ceasing to exist but rather "an abhorrence to all flesh," in the words of *Yeshayahu* (66:24; we shall discuss this later on), then we have trouble understanding R. Moshe Mendelssohn's question in his letter to R. Yaakov Emden, his contemporary: "To me this seems exceptionally harsh. Have all the dwellers of the ground, from the east to the west – all except us – descended to the abyss and become an abhorrence to all flesh?... What shall the nations do, upon whom the light of Torah has not cast its illumination?... Is it with some complaint, heaven forefend, that God comes to His creatures to annihilate them and erase their name, while they have done nothing wrong? Can this be called proper logic?"

Mendelssohn writes this concerning the Rambam's statement in the *Laws of Kings*: "But if he committed them on the basis of an intellectual decision, then he is not a 'resident stranger', nor one of the righteous of the nations of the world, nor one of their sages" (the exact version states, "but rather one of their sages," which cancels his question – as he himself writes.) However, in the *gemara* further on it is stated that only the sinners of the nations of the world will be punished at the time of the Resurrection.

I found the interesting quote from Mendelssohn in an article by Y. Ben-David, "*Al Chassidei Umot ha-Olam be-Shitat ha-Rambam*" (unpublished).

[3] This, to my mind, is the meaning of the words, "And the masses (*ve-rabim*) of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awaken". Similarly, we read concerning Mordekhai that he was "accepted by his many (*le-rov*) brethren" (*Esther* 10:3); although *Chazal* conclude that he was accepted by most but not all (*Megilla* 16b), the simple reading of the text suggests that he was popular amongst his numerous Jewish brethren, as in the phrase referring to Haman, in which he recounts "his glorious riches and the multitude (*ve-rov*) of his children" (*Esther* 5:11). The *Ritva* (*Rosh Ha-shana* 17a) suggests a different explanation; see ad loc.