

Inyonei

# MOSHIACH AND GEULAH

ב"ה

## MATAN TORAH—REVELATION OF MOSHIACH THEIR SOULS FLEW OUT, RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD

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The holiday of Shavuos celebrates *Matan Torah*—the Giving of the Torah to the Jewish nation. This event put into the hands of the Jewish people in every generation the power to bring the entire world to its ultimate state of fulfillment—the coming of Moshiach and the Resurrection of the Dead.

Not only was the ability to accomplish this given to us at that time, but the very experience of *Matan Torah* itself was a foretaste of what will be with the coming of Moshiach and the Resurrection of the Dead. The Jews experienced a revelation of G-dliness that literally nullified them out of existence—their souls flew out of their bodies. Hashem then resurrected

them with the dew of Torah which in the future will be used to resurrect the dead.

By examining what occurred at the glorious event of *Matan Torah*, we can better understand what will occur to us with the coming of Moshiach and the Resurrection of the Dead that will occur at that time, may it happen immediately. What is the nature of the body after the Resurrection of the Dead—physical or spiritual or both or something else?

By examining the sources we can also gain insight into the nature of the famous dispute between the Rambam and the Ramban as to whether life in a resurrected body is eternal or temporary.

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## ***MATAN TORAH—REVELATION OF MOSHIACH THEIR SOULS FLEW OUT, RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD***

### **I. The Lower World: A Place to Reveal the Light**

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If G-d gives life, why is there death? If the ultimate purpose is revelation of Divine light, why is there darkness? Why did Israel have to descend to Egypt before being taken out to receive the Torah?

This world is itself a concealment of G-dliness. *Matan Torah*—the giving of the Torah—represents the revelation of G-dliness in the world, the shining of the light out of the darkness. This revelation of G-dliness is the ultimate purpose of the world, the fulfillment of Hashem’s desire for a dwelling place—a revelation of His essence—in the lowest places.

In Chapter 36 of Tanya, the Alter Rebbe addresses this issue. He explains that in order to create this world, a place of darkness, Hashem concealed His light behind many garments. It is this concealment which allows for the lower worlds to exist, for if Hashem’s light were fully revealed it would nullify these worlds out of existence. It follows that with the coming of Moshiach and the revelation of Hashem’s light these worlds and the beings that dwell in them will be nullified out of existence. If so, it would seem that there would be no point in creating them in the first place!

Explains the Alter Rebbe, this is the reason for the giving of the Torah:

For this reason the Holy One, blessed be He, gave Israel the Torah, which is called ‘might’ and ‘strength’ and as our Sages say, that G-d gives *tzaddikim* the strength to receive their reward in the Time to Come, so that their existence should not be nullified within the Divine light that we reveal itself in the Time to Come without any covering.

The darkness allows the Jews to labor in Torah, which provides the strength to withstand the revelation of the future without being completely nullified. By fulfilling the 613 mitzvos of the Torah, we garb the 613 limbs of our body in Hashem’s will and wisdom which is en-clothed in the “commandments of the King”. This makes it possible to exist in the World to Come, when Hashem’s Divine light will be revealed and

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fied in the Time to  
Come”***

nullify all concealments. When this level of revelation occurred at *Matan Torah*, it had a tremendous effect on the Jews and “their souls flew out [of their bodies].”<sup>1</sup>

## II. Their Souls Flew Out

Our Sages tell us that with each Divine utterance of the Ten Commandments, “their souls flew out [of their bodies] and it is only that the Holy One returned them with the Dew which in the Time to Come He will use to resurrect the dead.”<sup>2</sup> In fact, had they not sinned with the Golden Calf (after they began to doubt whether Moshe Rabbeinu would return from his ascent into the cloud), Israel would have remained in that condition—completely free from the Evil Inclination, free from the Angel of Death.<sup>3</sup> Not only that, but when Hashem returned their neshomas to their bodies, the bodies were like the body as it was before the sin of the Tree of Knowledge—the level of the body at the Resurrection of the Dead.

What caused their souls to leave them was the level of nullification, *bittul*, that resulted from the intense revelations of G-dliness. The result was that their bodies were purified of the pollution of the primordial snake—*paska zuhamasan*. The Alter Rebbe describes it that “the Children of Israel were completely refined from the materiality of their bodies.”<sup>4</sup> According to the Ohr Hachayim Hakadosh, this returned the Divine Image, the *Tzelem Elokim*, to its original state, the state in which man was formed.<sup>5</sup> The Rebbe Rashab explains that all this occurred as a result of “the revelation of the essence of the soul.”<sup>6</sup>

**“the Children of Israel were completely refined from the materiality of their bodies”**

Although the departure of the soul resulted in a nullification of the body and subsequently a resurrection, the commentaries indicate that they did not die in the simple sense. It is stated in the *sefer Shoshan Sodos* that “They did not

**“their Intellectual Soul separated from the body”**

die the death of the body, only that their Intellectual Soul flew from them; meanwhile the body was alive with their Animal Soul and they remained like sleepers.”<sup>7</sup> Similarly, *Sefer Hakana* writes that “the Intellectual Soul separated from the body and they remained sleeping.”<sup>8</sup>

The Intellectual Soul is the source of our worldly consciousness which perceives the reality of the world. When it is en clothed in the Animal Soul, it is in a state of exile—unable to perceive G-dliness and thus drawn after the material pleasures experienced by the Animal Soul. In this state, the conscious-

ness of the person is, sadly, the consciousness of the Animal Soul in the body. However, at *Matan Torah* the Intellectual Soul of Israel became nullified to the G-dly soul. This caused the Intellectual Soul to cease being in exile within the Animal Soul and instead to unify and ascend with the G-dly soul, leaving the Animal Soul alone in the material body, as quoted above from Shoshan Sodos. This is the ultimate state of *Klois Hanefesh*—the expiration of the soul resulting from its overwhelming love for Hashem. The consciousness of the Children of Israel, which derives from the Intellectual Soul, ceased its connection with the Animal Soul in the body—called “death”—and united with the Divine reality experienced by the G-dly soul.

We can understand, then, that this situation of “their souls flew out” is not something negative—quite to the contrary. As the Rebbe states: this is “something which testifies to the fact that they arrived at the completion of the *Avodah* [service of Hashem] as a soul in a body (and therefore ‘their souls flew out’).”<sup>9</sup>

### III. Arise, Those Who Dwell in the Dust

There is a common misperception that the Resurrection of the Dead means the return of the soul to the body as we recognize it externally. The popular image of cemeteries filled with revived corpses climbing out of coffins dressed in their burial shrouds, dusting off the dirt of the grave is based on a simplified reading of the words of our sages; but after having merited the revelations of Chassidus, our conception of “rising from the dust” must reflect a deeper understanding.

To begin with, although we think that those buried in the cemetery are the ones dwelling in the dust, the deeper meaning of the concept is that it actually applies to *us*—we who are alive in this world right now. To explain: the soul’s work is accomplished over numerous lifetimes, called *gilgulim*. The soul is reincarnated into different bodies over different lifetimes in order to complete the task of refining sparks. This world, including the body of man in this world, was created from the dust. As the verse states: “you are from the dust and to the dust you shall return”.<sup>10</sup> “Arise and sing those who dwell in the dust.”<sup>10</sup>

**“the verse ‘to the dust you shall return’ means that a soul will reincarnate from body to body”**

Thus it is that we, who are presently in a state of *gilgul* (from the root *gilul*, meaning “dung”), are the ones who are in the dust, meaning a body that was created from the dust of this world. “Returning to the dust” really refers to the cycle

of reincarnation: “the verse ‘to the dust you shall return’ is the secret of *gilgul*, that a soul will reincarnate from dust to dust meaning from body to body and he will die and return and die.”<sup>12</sup>

Based on this, we can understand the meaning of the Zohar: “This is why tzadikim that maintain the Covenant do not return to their dust, which is the skin of the snake which was created from dust.”<sup>13</sup>

Directly to the point is the explanation of Rabbeinu Bachya:

**“you should not misunderstand that bodies will rise up to exist with flesh and blood and sinews and bones like we have now”**

The bodily state [of the Time to Come] is not like we are now. Although we will not return to the dust ever, you should not misunderstand this to mean that the bodies will rise up to exist with flesh and blood with sinews and bones like we have now. Rather, they will merit to exalted levels, but to their dust they will never return.<sup>14</sup>

The Resurrection of the Dead is not a *restoration* of the lowly body of this world. Rather, it is an *elevation* of the essential body—after it has been cleansed of all the impurity of the sin of the Tree of Knowledge.

#### **IV. Resurrection of the Dead—Ultimate Bodily Life**

Now we can understand that the body after the Resurrection of the Dead is not like the body we experience now, which is a lowly garment made from the dust of this world. But what will the body of the Time to Come be like? The Rebbe Rashab describes it as follows:

In the Time to Come there will be souls in bodies, but the bodies will not be physical in the same way as the physical bodies of the present...they will not be material.<sup>15</sup>

We find a similar description in the writings of the Maharal:

In the World to Come man will not be material and physical like he is in this world, but will be on the level of angels who are removed from physicality.<sup>16</sup>

With all this, Chassidus emphasizes that the body of Resurrection of the Dead is the *same body*, and not a new body (reflecting the opinion of the Zohar, as opposed to Pirkei d’Rabbi Eliezer). The same body in essence, but not as we know it, because we know it as it is after the sin of the Tree of Knowledge,

***“the body will be refined, not like it is now where the body is in the ultimate state of physicality”***

sunken in the dust of this world. Explains the Mit-teler Rebbe: “It is certain that the dead will live, meaning the same body as now...just that the body will be refined and not like it is now where the body is in the ultimate state of physicality.”<sup>17</sup> He describes the future state as being “absolute separation from the physical, thus there is no eating or drinking at all...like Moshe on the mountain that he didn’t eat at all and he was alive and existing 40 days.”<sup>18</sup>

The body of the future will be, on the one hand, the very same body we live in now—it will be the familiar sense of self, the essence of our personal identity which we currently possess. Yet it will be something new: the pollution and impurity will be removed, giving the body an “upgrade” to a level of existence that far surpasses our experience in this world.

The Rebbe Rayatz explains as follows:

At the Resurrection of the Dead the souls will rise in bodies, and these bodies will also be physical but not from birth from mother and father, but rather from the dew of Resurrection, which means He will cover them with skin and flesh, like the bones that Yechezkiel revived...<sup>19</sup>

It states in the book of Yechezkiel, in the famous section about the “dry bones”, that Yechezkiel the prophet is instructed by Hashem to speak to the bones and say that “I [Hashem] will lay sinews upon you, and I will make flesh grow over you and cover you with skin and put breath into you, and you will live.”<sup>20</sup> This is the model for the Resurrection of the Dead, that instead of flesh and sinews and skin that come from physical parents, the bodies will be formed by Hashem Himself. Continues the Rebbe Rayatz:

...even though there will be a physical body, it will be brought into being by the Holy One...thus they will be completely holy and pure bodies, like the body of Adam Harishon [the first man] who was the formation of G-d’s hands...that his body was completely refined and pure like light.<sup>19</sup>

(Beyond even the level of Adam Harishon: “souls will arise in bodies ...they will be completely pure and holy bodies...even higher than Adam Harishon.”<sup>21</sup>) This level of refined and pure physicality was the state of the Jewish people at the time of

***“souls will arise in bodies ...they will be completely pure and holy bodies...even higher than Adam Harishon”***

*Matan Torah*, and we would have remained that way were it not for the sin of the Golden Calf. As the Alter Rebbe writes in Tanya, “the sin caused them and the world to become physicalized until the time of the End.”<sup>22</sup>

At Matan Torah only Israel held at this level of refinement, however in the Time to Come the entire world will be refined and elevated from its coarse physicality that derives from the admixture of *klipos*. The Mitteler Rebbe explains as follows:

At the Resurrection of the Dead there will be spiritual elevations for the physical world, meaning that physicality will be removed from all things. Man now is physical, but at the Resurrection of the Dead he will be spiritual...because the essence from the bones of the dead dwelling in the dust will be covered with skin and flesh and will live anew with the spirit of life...<sup>23</sup>

From the explanations of Chassidus that we have seen above, we begin to understand how the Resurrection of the Dead means a new perspective on the terms “physical” and “spiritual”.

## V. The World of Resurrection—Rambam *and* Ramban

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At this point we can perhaps venture<sup>24</sup> a possible resolution to the famous dispute between the Rambam and the Ramban: is the ultimate existence a neshoma encloded in a body or a neshoma without a body?

According to the Rambam<sup>25</sup>, “in the world to come, there is no body or physical form, only the souls of the righteous alone, without a body, like the ministering angels.” The Ramban writes that he and the Rambam agree on all details of resurrection, with the exception that the Rambam “gives a limited duration to the resurrection, and [he asserts] that everything will return to the world of souls...however we assert that those who are resurrected will live eternally.”<sup>26</sup> As often stated, Chassidus and *Primiyus HaTorah* follow the opinion of the Ramban.

We could suggest that the difference is one of perspective: the Rambam writes from the perspective of *Nigleh*, the revealed plane of the Torah. From this perspective the term “body” refers to the external aspect of the body which is revealed to our physical eyes *as they are presently in this world*. According to what we have learned above, this aspect will indeed cease to exist—“physicality will be removed from all things”. At the same time the *essence* of the body, its internal dimension, remains, elevated to levels that are

beyond the definition of physicality as it stands now. The body will exist forever, but the *materiality* of the body as we know it will cease. For, according to the Rambam's perspective, the ministering angels exist without a body; yet according to Chassidus angels do possess a body, one which is similar to the way our body will be after the Resurrection.

We find a hint to this in the Rebbe's explanation about how the bodies after the Resurrection of the Dead will be so elevated and purified that these bodies will be able to live in Gan Eden, just as Adam Harishon did.<sup>27</sup> Gan Eden is, from our vantage point of this world a "world of souls"—the place that according to the Rambam we will exist eternally *without* bodies. Indeed, the lowly garment of dust that we call a body in this world does not exist there; but the pure, refined, and holy body of the Time to Come can and will exist there!

**יתזי אדוננו מורנו ורבינו מלך המשיח לעולם ועד!**

**לזכות נשיא דורנו, מה"מ—שיתגלה לעינינו תומ"י ממש!**

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**לע"נ הרב יעקב יצחק בן הרב משה מנחם, ז"ל  
נפטר ח"י תמוז, ה'תשס"א**

## REFERENCES

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| <p>1) Israel could not endure this level of <i>bitul</i> because they had not yet become vessels for it. Through the labor of building the Mishkan (fulfilling Torah and Mitzvos) the Jewish people become proper vessels to exist on this level (Tanya, ch. 34, and other places).</p> <p>2) Shabbos 88b.</p> <p>3) Rebbe Maharash, Hemshech V'Kacha 5637, ch. 18.</p> <p>4) Maamarim 5569, p. 233.</p> <p>5) Ohr Hachayim on Shemos 20:17.</p> <p>6) Hemshech Ayin Bais, II:740.</p> <p>7) Shoshan Sodos, ch. 35.</p> <p>8) Sefer Hakana, "Sod Birkas Hamapil".</p> <p>9) Lech Lecha 5752, section B.</p> <p>10) Bereishis, 3:19.</p> <p>11) Yeshaya, 26:19.</p> <p>12) Shelah, parshas Mishpatim.</p> <p>13) Tikunei Zohar, Hakdama 10b.</p> <p>14) Rabbeinu Bachya, Shulchan Shel Arba, 4<sup>th</sup> Gate.</p> <p>15) Hemshech Ayin Bais, p. 685.</p> | <p>16) Netzach Yisroel, ch. 42.</p> <p>17) Mitteler Rebbe, Hanachos – 5577, p. 182.</p> <p>18) Mitteler Rebbe, Maamorim Vayikra B, Lag B'Omer, p. 687.</p> <p>19) Maamorim of the Rebbe Rayatz 5711, p.207.</p> <p>20) Yechezkiel 37:6.</p> <p>21) Lag B'Omer 5740.</p> <p>22) Tanya, ch. 36.</p> <p>23) Ohr Hatorah, Bereishis, p. 782.</p> <p>24) In the spirit of the Rebbe's sicha of Shavuot 5751: "...each individual should endeavor to develop new Torah concepts, and also, to publish them...even if they are not totally sure that the new concepts are 100% accurate..."</p> <p>25) Hilchos Tshuva 8:2, Maamar Techiyas Hameisim, ch. 4.</p> <p>26) Shaar HaGemul, end.</p> <p>27) Sichas of 15 Menachem Av, 5743 (Hisvaduyos 5743, p.1875).</p> |
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