
THE WORLD TO COME: PART II

How Can I Secure a Front Row Ticket?

In the first Morasha class on the World to Come, we saw that life after death is fundamental to Jewish thought. We presented the two phases of life after death: the transition of the soul into the World of the Souls, and the return of the soul to the body during the Resurrection. We discussed the concept of the World to Come as a place where one enjoys the level of personal perfection and closeness to God that one achieved in this world.

In this second class we will discuss how each person can earn a share in the World to Come. Finally, we will address why explicit mention of the World to Come is omitted from the Written Torah.

In this class we will address the following questions:

- ∞ What can we do to ensure that we get a place in the World to Come?
- ∞ Do non-Jews have a place in the World to Come?
- ∞ Why is there no explicit mention of the World to Come in the Torah?

Class Outline:

- Section I. How to Earn a Share in the World to Come
 - Part A. Mitzvah Observance
 - Part B. Torah Study
 - Part C. Specific Acts Rewarded in the World to Come
 - Part D. Good Character
 - Part E. Core Beliefs and Attitudes
 - Part F. Non-Jews

- Section II. Why Is There No Explicit Mention in the Torah?
 - Part A. It's Obvious
 - Part B. Trivialization
 - Part C. Correct Motivation
 - Part D. Falsifiability

SECTION I. HOW TO EARN A SHARE IN THE WORLD TO COME

Some people focus strictly on life on this planet and do not entertain the concept of life after death, or a soul world. In the following case, the *New York Times* buried a time capsule at the turn of the millennium filled with memorabilia from our civilization for those in the year 3,000 to look back on us, much the same as we look back on those from the Year 1,000:

Who – or what – will open the Times capsule a thousand years hence? Correct predictions are considered the ultimate test of the hard sciences like physics and chemistry. For those of us in the so-called soft sciences – like historians, evolutionary biologists, and stock-market investors – our predictions are constantly derailed by independent variables and the impact of unpredictable events like assassinations or asteroid collisions ... Today, for the first time in human history, we could all be done in at once by a nuclear war, an environmental catastrophe, an epidemic that flashes around the globe or some entirely unforeseeable calamity. Even so, while prediction may be difficult, it is possible to sketch out several alternative scenarios about who will open the capsule.

New Yorkers

The simplest scenario is one of business as usual, one that assumes that there will be no worldwide disaster to undermine civilization. In that case, I confidently predict the continuing primacy of the same underlying geographic factors that made the United States and Europe the powers of the present world. Those factors are their large areas, environmental diversity and resilience, rich natural resources, relatively stable climates, historical inheritance, and efficient population concentrations – of which New York, site of the Times Capsule, remains the foremost manifestation.

New Zealanders

What could halt business as usual? One obvious possibility is a nuclear war ... Nuclear conflict, for all its horror, might not kill everybody. Still, bombs or fallout might destroy every big city on every continent. The only targets that no one will bother to bomb are remote oceanic islands. Their populations will most likely survive, but they will face a problem: almost all of those remote islands are formed of volcanic lava or coral; they are completely without metal deposits. Perhaps there will be enough salvageable scrap metal, but if not, the island populations could, imaginably, relapse into the Stone Age. Only New Zealand has metal deposits and is sufficiently large and populous to retain books and knowledge of metal technology. Whoever those post-nuclear New Zealanders are, it is they who in this scenario would eventually visit the bombed-out and lifeless continents, poke around in the ruins and discover and open the Times Capsule.

Japanese

There is another type of catastrophe, even more likely to halt business as usual. Already, today, we live amid an accelerating environmental calamity as we destroy the world's remaining natural forests, wetlands and fisheries, pollute its air, soil, and water and approach the limits of our planet's photosynthetic capacity. It already seems likely that all the accessible supplies of fresh water will before long bump up against the needs of the growing world population – even if that growth rate continues to slow. The way things are going now, we may not have many decades left to get our environmental act together. If we fail, then most of the world, including not only the continents but also New Zealand and other habitable islands, could come to resemble barren Somalia today.

Over the last several thousand years, humans have already exhausted the world's major shallow iron and copper deposits, which stone-tool users of the remote past dug up to develop metal tools. The remaining major ore deposits are deep, and their extraction requires high technology far beyond the organizational capacity of

scattered and stateless human groups to reinvent. With only salvage metal on hand, much of humanity would be reduced to the state of hunter-gatherers. Who, in that case, would be best off? That's another no-brainer: it would be the same ones who were already best off in the Neolithic era.

Living in the world's most productive temperate environment of high rainfall, fertile volcanic soils and mild climate, the Japanese led the world's hunter-gatherers millenniums ago as early developers of pottery and permanent villages. For those same reasons, Japanese hunter-gatherers would be likely to once again lead the world's hunter-gatherers in 3,000. Like stone-tool-using Polynesians of the past, those Stone Age Japanese would build oceangoing canoes, venture across the seas, reach New York and stumble across the Times Capsule. (From Jared Diamond, *To Whom It May Concern*, www.nytimes.com, December 5, 1999.)

A civilization whose goal is to reach some distant future date must consider which factors such as natural resources, technology, and survival skills best prepares it to do so. However, Judaism's conception of the World to Come has nothing to do with calendar years, which only exist in this world. In contrast, preparing for the World to Come – a dynamic eternal existence beyond this world – is not dependent on such factors. Rather, the ability to reach the World to Come is accomplished by involvement in such pursuits as perfecting one's character, helping others, studying Torah, and performing the mitzvot. And the Talmud relates that this is the potential for every Jew:

1. **Talmud Bavli (Babylonian Talmud) Sanhedrin 90a – The default position of every Jew is that he will have life in the World to Come.**

All Israel have a portion in the World to Come.

כל ישראל יש להם חלק לעולם הבא.

Exactly how big that “portion” will be essentially depends on our connection to Torah and mitzvot, and the extent to which we refine our character and help others, a sampling of which is illustrated below.

PART A. MITZVAH OBSERVANCE

The mitzvot (generally translated as commandments) were given by God to the Jewish people as the comprehensive framework within which to live a Jewish life, and enable each person to build a personal, meaningful relationship with God. The mitzvot are the means by which we can emulate God, develop and refine our character, strengthen Jewish belief, and infuse every action with purpose. (See the Morasha class, *The Mitzvot and Why They are Detailed*).

1. **Rabbi Osher Chaim Levene, Set in Stone, p. 31, Targum – Each mitzvah we fulfill intrinsically connects us with God.**

Judaism is not as much a religion as it is a relationship. It is only through mitzvah observance that man can build a deep, enduring, and meaningful relationship with God ...

That a mitzvah is the very process of forging the bond [with God] is contained within the very word מצוה, “commandment,” closely related to the word צוותא, meaning a “connection” or a “binding.”

2. **Talmud Bavli, Sotah 3b – One's mitzvot accompanies him to the World to Come.**

Rabbi Yonatan says, “If one performs a mitzvah in this world, it precedes him into the World to Come, as the verse states: “His righteousness will go before him” (Yeshayahu/Isaiah 58:8).”

א"ר יונתן כל העושה מצוה אחת בעוה"ז מקדמתו והולכת לפניו לעוה"ב שנאמר (ישעיהו נח) וְהָלַךְ לְפָנָי צְדָקָה.

3. Talmud Bavli, Avodah Zarah 4b– Mitzvot testify on our behalf in the World to Come.

Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi said, “All mitzvot that the Jewish people perform in this world will come and testify for them in the World to Come.”

אמר ריב"ל כל מצות שישראל עושין בעולם הזה באות ומעידות אותם לעוה"ב.

4. Rav Yosef Albo, Sefer HaIkarim 4:40 – Observing the mitzvot, unlike any other system of law, offers eternal life.

“And you shall observe My statutes and My ordinances, which man shall do and thereby live” [Vayikra/Leviticus 18:5]. This is without a doubt referring to the individualized spiritual reward that each person will receive, as follows: God ordered each person to observe His statutes and ordinances even though it would involve more effort than observing the laws of the land of Egypt or Canaan [i.e. some form of modern, secular law].

Even though the laws of Egypt and Canaan successfully maintained those societies, nevertheless they did not offer the individual true life – eternal existence for the soul – such as that which the laws of God offer. This is what it means when it says, “And you shall observe My statutes and ordinances, etc.” It means to say that you should observe them even though it may be difficult to do so because they have an additional virtue not found in any other system of law, for [besides benefitting society] they also benefit the individual by bringing him life in the World to Come. This is what it means when it says, “Which man should do and thereby live” – something not true of any other legal system.

ושמרתם את חקותי ואת משפטי אשר יעשה אותם האדם וחי בהם, וזה בלי ספק ידבר על השכר הרוחני הפרטי לכל אחד ואחד על זה הדרך, כי הוא היה מזהירים שישמרו חקיו ומשפטיו אף על פי שיהיה בהם טורח יותר מבשמירת חקי ארץ מצרים וחקי ארץ כנען,

ואף על פי שבשמירת חקי ארץ מצרים וחקי ארץ כנען היו מצליחין כללי האומות ההן, מכל מקום לא היה מגיע בהם אל היחיד עיקר שלמותו שהוא החיים הנצחיים לנפש כמו שיגיע במשפטי השם יתברך, וזהו שאמר ושמרתם את חקותי ואת משפטי וגו', כלומר שמרו אותם אף אם יש טורח בשמירתם, שיש להם יתרון ומעלה על זולתם, כי החקים הללו הם מועילים אל היחיד גם כן להביאו לחיי העולם הבא, וזהו אמרו אשר יעשה אותם האדם וחי בהם, מה שאין כן בשאר חקי האומות ההן.

5. Rabbi Chaim Volozhin, Ruach Chaim 4:15 – Like an entrance ticket, mitzvot determine whether one may enter and precisely where one will “sit” in the World to Come.

“This world is compared to a corridor that leads into a hall. Prepare yourself in the corridor so that you can enter the banquet hall” [Pirkei Avot/Ethics of the Fathers 4:16] – It is well-known, as our Sages have stated in many places, that the mitzvot a person performs in this world are the very reward that a person makes for *himself*. That reward is experienced as the pleasure of delighting in the radiance of the Divine Presence. The greater the person, the closer the proximity to God, and the greater the true delight. Bringing oneself close to God is achieved through Torah study and doing mitzvot.

העולם הזה דומה לפרוזדור [בפני העולם הבא התקן עצמך בפרוזדור כדי שתכנס לטרקלין]. ידוע מה שאמרו בכמה מקומות כי כל מעשי האדם במצות הם ששכרו והוא בעצמו עושה לו השכר. והנה השכר הוא להתענג על ה' בנועם זיו השכינה. והיותר גדול מתקרב יותר ומחיצתו לפנים ממחיצת חבריו וזהו העונג האמיתי. ועל ידי התורה והמצות מתקרב הוא יותר.

Each of the 613 mitzvot corresponds to one of man's limbs or sinews. [When a mitzvah is performed, its parallel "spiritual" limb is clothed in a spiritual garment] so the more one is dressed the closer he may come to his Creator and delight in His Presence. Hence, man makes his clothing in order to be able to enter [the banquet hall] and receive his reward: the better dressed the further he will go. But if a person shows up unclothed, the guards will not let him enter at all. However, when he is properly dressed, he has the seal of the King and will be shown to his appropriate place.

והמצוות הם תרי"ג לבושים לבוש לכל אבר וגיד מהרמ"ח אברים ושם"ה גידים וכשהיא מלובשת כולה מתקרבת יותר לקונה ותתענג. אם כן הרי האדם עושה לעצמו הלבוש למען יוכל לכונום לקבל השכר... ומי שמלובש כולו עולה למעלה, ומבלעדי לבושים השוערים והשומרים שם אין מניחין לעלות ערטלאי. וכשנתלבש בלבושים הם לו כחותם המלך, ויניחוהו השומרים עד מקום מדריגתו.

PART B. TORAH STUDY

Torah is the blueprint for the world and its study is the foundation for the entirety of Jewish life. Torah is the wisdom of God that is revealed to man. Therefore its study brings us to the World to Come. The Jewish people experience heartfelt joy in appreciating the connection it provides to God and the wisdom we gain from its study. As Rabbi Yitzchak Berkovits from the Jerusalem Kollel asks, "What nation do you know that dances with its books? Which scientists do you know who dance with their books?" In this context we can appreciate the following story.

One night, the Sanzer Rav, author of the Divrei Chaim, was on his way to the mikvah. As he passed the house where his friend Reb Isaac was lodging, the sound of a voice teaching Torah wafted out into the cold night air. When he heard how Reb Isaac was teaching, the Sanzer Rav stopped in his tracks, settled himself in the doorway, and for a full hour he stood in front of the closed door listening to the Torah class. Meanwhile, the snow swirled around him, blown in great gusts by the strong wind, and the Rav's beard became coated with frost. The Rav did not realize that his frozen beard had become stuck to the doorknob in front of him. When the members of the Rav's family realized that he had not come home yet, they went out to look for him and found him standing outside, with his beard stuck to the doorknob. They immediately brought hot water and carefully poured it over the frozen beard to thaw the ice and free the Rav from where he stood.

"What could I do?" asked the Rav rhetorically. "I heard the voice of Torah, and followed my heart in its direction. Believe me, even if they had opened the gates of Gan Eden to me at that moment, and bid me enter, I would not have left my place ..." (See Avot [4:17], "One hour of teshuvah and good deeds in this world is worth more than an entire life in the World to Come.") (From Glimpses of Greatness, Rabbi David Koppelman, Moznaim Publishers, p. 117.)

1. Pirkei Avot 2:7 – Effort to learn Torah is rewarded in the World to Come.

If a person acquires a good name, he does so for himself [i.e. he enjoys it in this world – Tosafot Yom Tov]. But if he acquires Torah, he acquires life in the World to Come.

קנה שם טוב, קנה לו לעצמו; קנה לו דברי תורה, קנה לו חיי העולם הבא.

2. Talmud Bavli, Niddah 73a – Learning Torah guarantees a place in the World to Come.

It was taught in the house of Eliyahu: Anyone who studies Torah law every day is guaranteed

תנא דבי אליהו כל השונה הלכות בכל יום מובטח לו שהוא בן עולם הבא שנאמר (חבקוק ג) הליכות עולם

a place in the World to Come, as the verse states: “The ways of the world are His” [Habakkuk 3:6]. Do not read it as *halichot* (ways) but rather as *halachot* (laws).

לו אל תקרי הליכות אלא הלכות.

3. Talmud Bavli, Chagigah 12b – God will be kind to those who studied Torah.

Reish Lakish said, “Each person who is involved with Torah in this world, which is similar to night, God will grace him with kindness in the World to Come, which is similar to day, as the verse states: “By the day the Lord gives His merciful command, and by night His song is with me” [Tehillim/Psalms 42:9].

אמר ר' ל כל העוסק בתורה בעוה"ז שהוא דומה ללילה הקב"ה מושך עליו חוט של חסד לעוה"ב שהוא דומה ליום שנאמר יומם יצוה ה' חסדו ובלילה שירה עמי.

4. Talmud Bavli, Bava Metzia 85b – Those who exert themselves in Torah study will experience freedom in the World to Come.

What is meant by, “The small and great are there [in the World to Come] and the servant is free from his master” [Iyov/Job 3:19]?

It means that he who humbles himself [lit. makes himself *small*] for the sake of the Torah in this world will be *great* in the next, and he who makes himself a *servant* to the study of the Torah in this world will be *free* in the next.

אמר ליה ר' ירמיה לר' זירא מאי דכתיב (איוב ג) "קטן וגדול שם הוא ועבד חפשי מאדניו"??...

כל המקטין עצמו על דברי תורה בעוה"ז נעשה גדול לעוה"ב, וכל המשים עצמו כעבד על דברי תורה בעוה"ז נעשה חפשי לעוה"ב.

5. Talmud Bavli, Sanhedrin 92a – One who teaches Torah here will teach it there too.

Rav Sheshet said, “Anyone who teaches Torah in this world will merit teaching it in the World to Come.”

אמר רב ששת כל המלמד תורה בעוה"ז זוכה ומלמדה לעולם הבא.

6. Talmud Bavli, Eruvin 54b – Teaching Torah with dedication, care, and unending patience earns a place in the World to Come.

Rav Preida had a student to whom he would have to repeat the lesson four hundred times before he understood it. One day Rav Preida needed to rush out to perform a mitzvah [immediately after the class]. Rav Preida taught him [four hundred times], but the student could not understand it. He asked, “Why is today different?” [The student] replied, “From the time they said to you that there is a mitzvah which you must do [afterwards] my mind became confused – I kept thinking that you would leave at any minute.” [Rav Preida] said, “Calm your mind and let me teach you again.” He repeated it another four hundred times.

רבי פרידא הוה ליה ההוא תלמידא דהוה תני ליה ארבע מאה זימני וגמר יומא חד בעייה למלתא דמצוה תנא ליה ולא גמר א"ל האידנא מאי שנא א"ל מדההיא שעתא דא"ל למר איכא מילתא דמצוה אסחאי לדעתאי וכל שעתא אמינא השתא קאי מר השתא קאי מר א"ל הב דעתך ואתני לך הדר תנא ליה ד' מאה זימני [אחריני]

A voice came out of Heaven and said, “Would you prefer to have another four hundred years added to your life [as reward] or that you and your whole generation should merit the World to Come?” He replied, “That I and my generation merit the World to Come.” God said to them, “Give him both [rewards].”

נפקא בת קלא וא"ל ניהא ליך דליספו לך ד' מאה שני
או דתיזכו את ודרך לעלמא דאתי אמר דניזכו אנא
ודרי לעלמא דאתי אמר להן הקב"ה תנו לו זו וזו.

PART C. SPECIFIC ACTS REWARDED IN THE WORLD TO COME

Until now we have spoken only generally about earning a place in the World to Come through the observance of mitzvot and by studying and teaching Torah. But are there specific mitzvot or deeds that one may employ to increase his share in the World to Come?

1. Talmud Yerushalmi (Jerusalem Talmud), Peah 1:1 (3a) – Giving *tzedakah* (charity) pays off in the World to Come.

King Munbaz gave away all his money to the poor. His relatives sent him messages saying, “Your ancestors added to what they had, but you have given away what is yours and what belongs to your ancestors.” He replied, “I have done better than them – they stored it on earth, but I have stored it in Heaven ... My ancestors put it in storehouses that do not earn interest; I have placed it in a storehouse that gives interest ... My ancestors stored it in a place where it could be stolen, but I stored it in a place where it cannot be stolen ... My ancestors saved money, but I saved lives ... My ancestors saved for others, but I saved for myself ... My ancestors saved in this world, but I saved for the World to Come.”

מונבז המלך עמד ובזבז כל נכסיו לעניים שלחו לו
קרוביו ואמרו לו אבותיך הוסיפו על שלהן ועל של
אבותיהן ואתה ביזבזתה את שלך ואת של אבותיך א"ל
כל שכן אבותי גזזו בארץ ואני גזזתי בשמים... אבותי
גזזו אוצרות שאין עושין פירות ואני גזזתי אוצרות שהן
עושין פירות... אבותי גזזו במקום שהיד שולטת בו
ואני גזזתי במקום שאין היד שולטת בו... אבותי גזזו
ממון ואני גזזתי נפשות... אבותי גזזו לאחרים ואני גזזתי
לעצמי... אבותי גזזו בעולם הזה ואני גזזתי לעולם הבא.

The following case illustrates the results of investing one's time and efforts to assist those in need:

As well as being an esteemed sage, Rabbi Chaim Tzanzer of Brode was a great, caring person who would personally go door-to-door, collecting money for charitable causes. One such time, he was trying to raise money for a prominent businessman who had fallen on hard times and was in dire need of assistance. Rabbi Tzanzer approached Mr. Nellstein (name changed), a well-to-do member of the community, and asked him for a donation. Mr. Nellstein seemed interested in the cause, and invited Rabbi Tzanzer to sit down and make himself comfortable.

“Who is this person for whom you are collecting?” he asked.

“I cannot reveal his name,” responded Rabbi Tzanzer. “You must trust me when I tell you that he is a fine, prominent man.” This did not seem to satisfy Mr. Nellstein's curiosity.

“I believe you,” answered Mr. Nellstein, “and I am willing to donate \$1,000. Just tell me his name.”

Rabbi Tzanzer shifted his position in the chair. “The person for whom I am collecting used to give huge sums

to tzedakah. Now his business is failing and he is in need of immediate assistance. How dare I shame him by revealing his name?"

Mr. Nellstein became more insistent. "I will give you half the sum you need if you reveal his identity to me. I promise to keep it a secret."

"I appreciate your generosity," said Rabbi Tsanzer, "but the honor of this unfortunate man is too precious to me. Even if you give me the whole sum at once, I will not reveal his name. I would rather go door-to-door for the next week and collect small amounts than compromise his trust." Mr. Nellstein looked down, and when he raised his head again there were tears in his eyes. "Rabbi," he said in a strangled voice, "I, too, am in great trouble. Due to a string of unfortunate decisions and circumstances, I have lost my entire fortune. I've been afraid to confide in anyone because, were word of this to get out, my creditors would overwhelm me and my shame would be unbearable. I do not have the means to live from day to day, let alone to repay my debts. Rabbi," he said imploringly, "I see that you are eminently trustworthy, and my secret will be safe with you. I must confess that I need financial help, but am too ashamed to go peddling, or collecting on my own behalf."

Rabbi Tsanzer listened to his recital with sympathy and respect, and promised to help the unfortunate man. Two weeks later, Rabbi Tsanzer once again was collecting funds for a prominent businessman who had lost all his money. He succeeded in helping Mr. Nellstein get back on his feet, with no one the wiser regarding his plight, his reputation as a successful businessman untarnished. (From Glimpses of Greatness, Rabbi David Koppelman, Moznaim Publishers, p. 60-61.)

2. Talmud Bavli, Ketubot 111a – Living or even walking in the Land of Israel demonstrates that one will also live in the World to Come.

Rabbi Yirmiya bar Abba said in the name of Rabbi Yochanan, "Anyone who walks four cubits in the Land of Israel is guaranteed a place in the World to Come."

א"ר ירמיה בר אבא א"ר יוחנן כל המהלך ארבע אמות בארץ ישראל מובטח לו שהוא בן העולם הבא.

PART D. GOOD CHARACTER

Refining one's character and treating others with respect leads to the World to Come.

1. Talmud Bavli, Tamid 32a, with Rashi – Being humble is a strategy for earning a place in the World to Come.

He [Alexander of Macedonia] asked them [the Sages of the South], "What should a person do to live [in the World to Come]?" They replied "Kill himself" [i.e. diminish himself]. "And what should a person do to die?" "Awaken himself" [i.e. glorify himself and become arrogant].

אמר להן מה יעביד איניש ויחיה אמרו ליה ימית עצמו (ישפיל את עצמו) מה יעביד איניש וימות יחיה את עצמו (יגבה את עצמו).

2. Rabbeinu Yona, Shaarei Teshuvah 2:17 – Deadening oneself to the desires of this world leads to life in the World to Come.

How hard is death for the person who does not divorce the desires of this world from his soul until death separates him from them! Our Sages

וכמה קשה המות למי שלא הפריד תאות העולם מנפשו עד אשר יפרידנה המות! ואמרו רבותינו זכרונם לברכה במסכת דרך ארץ: רצונך שלא תמות? מות עד

have said in tractate Derech Eretz, “Is it your desire not to die? Then die so that you do not die.” That is, one who wishes his day of death to lead to eternal life will resolve that since he is destined to leave this world and his bodily desires, and, in the end, to despise and reject them, he will abandon them in his lifetime and make use of this world only in the service of God. Then his day of death will lead to life without end.

שלא תמות! ביאור הענין: הרוצה שיהיה לו יום המות לחיי עד, ידבר אל לבו אחרי אשר סופו לעזוב את האדמה ולהניח חפצי הגוף ובאחריתו ישתמם ויטשם, יעזבם בחיים, ולא ישתמש באדמה רק לעבודת הבורא יתעלה, ואז יהיה לו יום המות לחיים שאין להם הפסק.

3. **Rabbi Eliyahu Dessler, Strive for Truth, Vol. III, p. 215 – Orienting oneself toward spiritual values ensures that one will earn a share in the World to Come.**

“If your wish is not to die, die before you die” [Shaarei Teshuvah 2:17]. The meaning of this epigram is that if you wish to live in the true life of the spirit, die to those false desires which deflect you from that goal. Try to acquire in this world something of the outlook you will inevitably have when you pass over to another state.

4. **Talmud Bavli, Sanhedrin 88b – Humility and modesty are rewarded in the World to Come.**

They sent word from Israel, “Who is destined for the World to Come? He who is meek, humble, bows upon entering and upon going out, and who constantly learns Torah without claiming merit for it.”

שלחו מתם איזהו בן העולם הבא ענוותן ושפל ברוך שייף עייל שייף ונפיק וגרים באורייתא תדירא ולא מחזיק טיבותא לנפשיה.

PART E. CORE BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES

The Rambam (Maimonides) codified thirteen core beliefs that summarize the essence of Judaism. Believing in these principles, listed in source 2 below, brings a person to the World of Come.

1. **Rambam, Commentary on the Mishnah, Sanhedrin 10:1 – Belief in the Thirteen Principles of Faith makes one worthy of the World to Come.**

When a person believes fully and genuinely in all the [Thirteen Principles of Faith], he is considered part of the Jewish people and it is obligatory to love him, to have mercy on him, and to relate to him according to all the mitzvot that God has commanded concerning interpersonal relationships of love and brotherhood; and he has a share in the World to Come.

וכאשר יהיו קיימים לאדם כל היסודות הללו ואמונתו בהם אמתית, הרי הוא נכנס בכלל ישראל, וחובה לאהבו ולחמול עליו וכל מה שצוה ה' אותנו זה על זה מן האהבה והאחווה ויש לו חלק.

2. Rambam, Thirteen Principles of Faith – The Thirteen Principles are part of the daily liturgy; and each principle is preceded by the affirmation, “I believe with complete faith that ...”

1. ... the Creator, Blessed is His Name, creates and guides all creatures, and that He alone made, makes, and will make everything.
2. ... He alone is our God, Who was, Who is, and Who always will be.
3. ... He is not physical and is not affected by physical phenomena, and that there is no comparison whatsoever to Him.
4. ... He is the very first and the very last.
5. ... to Him alone is it proper to pray and it is not proper to pray to any other.
6. ... all the words of the prophets are true.
7. ... the prophecy of Moshe Rabbeinu (Moses), peace be upon him, was true, and that he was the father of the prophets – both those who preceded him and those who followed him.
8. ... the entire Torah now in our hands is the same one that was given to Moshe Rabbeinu, peace be upon him.
9. ... this Torah will not be exchanged nor will there be another Torah from the Creator, Blessed is His Name.
10. ... He knows all the deeds of human beings and their thoughts, as it is said, “He fashions their hearts all together, He comprehends all their deeds.”
11. ... He rewards with good those who observe His commandments, and punishes those who violate His commandments.
12. I believe with complete faith in the coming of the Messiah, and even though he may delay, nevertheless, I anticipate every day that he will come.
13. ... there will be a Resurrection of the Dead whenever the Creator wills it, Blessed is His Name and exalted in His Mention forever and for all eternity.

1. אני מאמין באמונה שלמה, שהבורא יתברך שמו הוא בורא ומנהיג לכל הברואים, והוא לבדו עשה ועושה ויעשה לכל המעשים.
2. אני מאמין באמונה שלמה, שהבורא יתברך שמו הוא יחיד ואין יחידות כמוהו בשום פנים, והוא לבדו אלהינו, היה הוה ויהיה.
3. אני מאמין באמונה שלמה, שהבורא יתברך שמו אינו גוף, ולא ישיגהו משיגי הגוף, ואין לו שום דמיון כלל.
4. אני מאמין באמונה שלמה, שהבורא יתברך שמו הוא ראשון והוא אחרון.
5. אני מאמין באמונה שלמה, שהבורא יתברך שמו לו לבדו ראוי להתפלל, ואין לזולתו ראוי להתפלל.
6. אני מאמין באמונה שלמה, שכל דברי נביאים אמת.
7. אני מאמין באמונה שלמה, שנבואת משה רבנו עליו השלום היתה אמתית, ושהוא היה אב לנביאים, לקודמים לפניו ולבאים אחריו.
8. אני מאמין באמונה שלמה, שכל התורה המצויה עתה בידנו היא הנתונה למשה רבנו עליו השלום.
9. אני מאמין באמונה שלמה, שזאת התורה לא תהא מחלפת ולא תהא תורה אחרת מאת הבורא יתברך שמו.
10. אני מאמין באמונה שלמה, שהבורא יתברך שמו יודע כל מעשה בני אדם וכל מחשבותם, שנאמר: היצר יחד לבם, המבין אל כל מעשיהם.
11. אני מאמין באמונה שלמה, שהבורא יתברך שמו גומל טוב לשומרי מצותיו ומעניש לעוברי מצותיו.
12. אני מאמין באמונה שלמה, בביאת המשיח, ואף על פי שיתמהמה, עם כל זה אחכה לו בכל יום שיבוא.
13. אני מאמין באמונה שלמה, שתהיה תחית המתים בעת שיעלה רצון מאת הבורא יתברך שמו ויתעלה זכרו לעד ולנצח נצחים.

PART F. NON-JEWS

Unlike most other religions, Judaism does not claim that one must convert in order to be eligible for life in the World to Come. According to Meiri and Rambam, the way for a non-Jew to earn his share in the World to Come is by observing those commandments that are relevant to him, namely the Seven Noahide Laws.

The Talmud (Sanhedrin 56a) enumerates these Laws as follows: to refrain from blasphemy, idolatry, adultery, bloodshed, robbery, and eating flesh cut from a living animal, and to establish a legal system.

1. Talmud Bavli, Avodah Zarah 10b – A moral non-Jew has a place in the World to Come.

He [the Roman Caesar Antoninus] asked him [Rabbi Yehudah HaNasi]: “Will I have a share in the World to Come?” He replied “Yes.” “But doesn’t the verse state: ‘There will be no remnant of the house of Eisav’? [Ovadia 1:18]” “This only refers to one who acts like Eisav” [i.e. who follows in his evil ways].

א"ל אתינא לעלמא דאתי א"ל אין א"ל והכתיב
(עובדיה א) לא יהיה שריד לבית עשו בעושה מעשה
עשו.

2. Rambam, Hilchot Melachim (Laws of Kings) 8:11 – A non-Jew must keep the Noahide Laws for the right reasons.

Anyone who accepts upon himself and carefully observes the Seven Noahide Laws is considered to be one of the righteous gentiles and has a portion in the World to Come. But that is on condition that he accepts to abide by these laws because they were commanded by God in the Torah, and taught to us by Moshe ... But a non-Jew who follows these laws merely for logical reasons is neither one of the righteous of the nations nor one of their wise men.

כל המקבל שבע מצות ונוהר לעשותן הרי זה מחסידי
אומות העולם, ויש לו חלק לעולם הבא, והוא שיקבל
אותן ויעשה אותן מפני שצוה בהן הקב"ה בתורה,
והודיענו על ידי משה רבינו ... אבל אם עשאו מפני
הכרע הדעת אין זה גר תושב, ואינו מחסידי אומות
העולם, ולא מחכמיהם.

KEY THEMES OF SECTION I:

- ⌘ Every Jew starts out with the opportunity to receive eternal life in the World to Come. The quality of that life is determined by how we live here. The main currency of the World to Come is mitzvah observance and a connection to the Torah.
- ⌘ However, certain acts, such as giving charity and being in the Land of Israel, are particularly potent ways to earn a share in the World to Come. Additionally, developing good character traits and clarifying one’s philosophical beliefs grants one a portion in the World to Come.
- ⌘ Even non-Jews will earn eternal life through fulfilling the Noahide commandments.

SECTION II. WHY IS THERE NO EXPLICIT MENTION IN THE TORAH?

As we pointed out in the first Morasha class on the World to Come, the Torah only hints to the existence of an afterlife, yet makes no explicit statements about it. Many of the classical commentators have been bothered by the obvious omission of something so central to Jewish thought. Why doesn't the Torah explicitly mention spiritual reward for observing mitzvot or reveal the ultimate purpose of God's Creation?

By exploring a few of the answers, we will find that the Torah tells us much more about the World to Come simply by being quiet about the subject.

PART A. IT'S OBVIOUS

There is a basic principle that the Talmud applies when deriving information from the Torah: if the principle is logical, then it does not need to be located in an actual Biblical verse. This principle applies to the reward of the World to Come.

1. **Rabbi Sa'adiah Gaon, Emunot ve-Deot, 9:2 – Logic dictates that there is reward in a World to Come.**

One may wonder why the Torah makes no mention of reward other than in this-worldly terms? ... One explanation for this is that since the reward in the World to Come is something that reason can demonstrate, the Torah did not mention much about it, as is the case with many mitzvot. For example, God did not explicitly command Adam not to murder, commit adultery, or steal because these things are demanded by the dictates of reason. Rather, He told him not to eat from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil because that was not so intellectually obvious. So too, the Torah did not speak about ultimate reward, but rather relied upon the logic that necessitates it.

ואם יאמר אומר, הן לא נמצא מזה שזוכר בתורה מן הגמול, כי אם בעולם הזה בלבד? ... אחת מהנהגה, שגמול העולם הבא מפני שאין עומדין עליו כי אם בשכל כאשר בארנו, לא זכרתהו התורה כי אם בקצרה, כאשר עשתה בויצו יי' אלהים על האדם לאמר, ולא אמרה, אנכי יי' אלקיך לא תרצח לא תנאף לא תגנוב, כי השכל מורה על כל אלה, אבל הראתה ומעין הדעת טוב ורע לא תאכל, מפני שאין השכל מורה עליו. וכן לא הזכירה הגמול האחר, בעבור שסמכה על השכל שיוורה עליו.

When one witnesses the injustice of this world, when the wicked prosper and the righteous suffer, it only makes sense that there exists another world where all will be justified. In the following source, we see the example of the Patriarchs who seemingly went unrewarded for their deeds, unless one considers that they will be rewarded in the World to Come.

2. **Kli Yakar, Vayikra 26:12 – In what way were the forefathers rewarded more than any other people in history? They were rewarded in the World to Come.**

We can see with our own eyes how great God's love was for our forefathers, Avraham (Abraham), Yitzchak (Isaac), and Yaakov (Yaakov). Now, if their achievements in this world were all that they achieved, then what would be the advantage

...שראינו בעינינו כמה גדלה חיבת ה' אל אבותינו אברהם יצחק ויעקב. ואילו היתה הצלחתם בעולם הזה סוף הצלחתם אם כן מה יתרון היה לאברהם על נמרוד הרשע כי זה מלך בכיפה ואברהם היה נע ונד כל הימים מתהלך מאהל אל אהל מגוי אל גוי,

of Avraham over the wicked Nimrod, for he was king of a vast domain while Avraham wandered his whole life from one tent to the next, from one nation to the next.

So too, when it comes to Yitzchak and Yaakov we have no idea what their true reward was. Even if we factor in the reward given to their descendants [i.e. the Land of Israel], the question remains: of what good was such a reward to them since others would inevitably inherit their land when they die and they will leave this world with no recompense for all their labor? And even if you point to the Jewish people's inhabitation of the Land on the whole, nevertheless, even in times of peace, how is it any better than any of the other nations who succeed and rule as they do on much greater territory than do the Jewish people?

Rather, it must be that the great good hidden away for the righteous [in the World to Come] is the real reward of the forefathers, and likewise for all their descendants, for they have all kept the same Torah.

וכן יצחק ויעקב לא ידענו מה היה להם מן השכר האמיתי כי אם זה השכר המיועד לזרעם הוא סוף שכרם מה כשרון לבעליו כי אחרי מותם ינחלו זרעם את הארץ והמה יצאו מן העולם ריקם מכל עמלם, ואפילו לישראל נוחלי הארץ מה יתרון להם אפילו בזמן השלוח על כל מלכי הארץ אשר צלחו ומלכו בעולם כמותם ומקצתם יותר מהמה,

אין זה כי אם שרב טוב הצפון לצדיקים הוא חלקם ונחלתם של האבות ושל כל תולדותיהם כיוצא בהם כי תורה אחת לכלם:

PART B. TRIVIALIZATION

Rabbi Mordechai Becher tells the story of the time he came home with a big folding table packaged in a square box on top of his car. His three-year-old son came out to greet him and when he saw the box, exclaimed, "Abba, big pizza!"

We can only describe things within the bounds of the conceptual and linguistic categories familiar to our experience. Since we lack the vocabulary to describe the World to Come, the Torah omitted talking about it for fear of trivializing this very deep concept.

1. Talmud Bavli, Berachot 34b – No mind can fathom the World to Come.

Rabbi Chiya bar Abba also said in the name of Rabbi Yochanan, "All the prophets prophesied only for the days of the Messiah, but as for the World to Come, 'No eye has seen it, God, besides You' (Yeshayahu 64:3)."

ואמר רבי חייא בר אבא אמר רבי יוחנן: כל הנביאים כולן לא נתנבאו אלא לימות המשיח, אבל לעולם הבא - אין לא ראתה אלהים זולתך. (ישעיהו סד:ג)

2. Rambam, Hilchot Teshuvah (Laws of Repentance) 8:6-7 – Any comparison to the pleasures of this world would cheapen the World to Come.

The great goodness which the soul experiences in the World to Come is beyond any means of

הטובה הגדולה שתהיה בה הנפש בעולם הבא אין שום דרך בעולם הזה להשיגה ולידע אותה, שאין אנו יודעים

comprehension in this world. In this world we know only the physical pleasures to which we are tied, but that goodness [in the World to Come] is exceedingly good, and has no rating when compared to the pleasures of this world, except figuratively.

The earlier Sages have already made it known that it is beyond one's capabilities to comprehend the goodness of the World to Come at all, and that one cannot know its greatness, beauty and very essence; only the Holy One, Blessed Be He, can understand it. All the good things which the prophets prophesied to Israel are only physical pleasures from which they will benefit in the days of the Messiah and when the monarchy has been returned to Israel. The goodness of the World to Come, however, has no limit or size, and was not discussed by the prophets so as not to cheapen it by comparison.

בעולם הזה אלא טובת הגוף ולה אנו מתאוין אבל אותה הטובה גדולה עד מאד ואין לה ערך בטובות העולם הזה אלא דרך משל

...כבר הודיעונו החכמים הראשונים שטובת העולם הבא אין כח באדם להשיגה על בוריה ואין יודע גדלה ויפיה ועצמה אלא הקב"ה לבדו, ושכל הטובות שמתנבאים בהם הנביאים לישראל אינן אלא לדברים שבגוף שנהנין בהן ישראל לימות המשיח בזמן שתשוב הממשלה לישראל אבל טובת חיי העולם הבא אין לה ערך ודמיון ולא דמוה הנביאים כדי שלא יפחתו אותה בדמיון.

3. **Ibn Ezra, Devarim (Deuteronomy) 32:39 – The World to Come is too deep a concept to be mentioned in the Torah.**

Rabbeinu Hai [Gaon] says that the Torah did not need to speak explicitly about the subject of the World to Come because it was something taken for granted in the ancient world. But I say that the Torah was given to everyone, not just to an individual [generation]. Rather, [the reason the Torah omits it] is because no one understands it, for it is a very deep matter indeed.

ורבינו האי ז"ל אמר, כי לא הוצרך הכתוב לפרש דבר העולם הבא, כי היה ידוע בהעתקה. ולפי דעתי, שהתורה נתנה לכל, לא לאחד לבדו. ודבר העולם הבא לא יבינו אחד מני אלף, כי עמוק הוא.

4. **Rabbi Mordechai Becher, Gateway to Judaism, p. 63 – The dangers of oversimplification.**

The World to Come is purely spiritual, but it is impossible for us to describe it without resorting to metaphors from our physical world. These metaphors easily take on the character of reality in people's minds, so that the more Olam Haba is described the further it is diminished by our finite imagination. You can see the disastrous results of oversimplification and metaphors by observing the popular western notions of Heaven and Hell with their respective scenes of angels strumming harps and devils with pitchforks!

PART C. CORRECT MOTIVATION

The Torah did not mention the World to Come because we are not supposed to keep Torah and do mitzvot for the sake of receiving reward; we must do them simply because God says so.

1. Pirkei Avot 1:3 – One should not serve God in order to receive reward.

Antignos of Socho received the tradition from Shimon the Righteous. He would say, “Do not be as servants who serve their master for the sake of reward. Rather, be as servants who serve their master not for the sake of reward. And the fear of Heaven should be upon you.”

אנטיגנוס איש סוכו קבל משמעון הצדיק הוא היה
אומר אל תהיו כעבדים המשמשין את הרב על מנת
לקבל פרס אלא הוּו כעבדים המשמשין את הרב שלא
על מנת לקבל פרס ויהי מורא שמים עליכם:

2. Maharal, Tiferet Yisrael, Ch. 58 – Mention of the World to Come would be sending the wrong message.

Had reward been written in the Torah, it would have wrongly implied that a person should serve God in order to receive that reward – and that would be out of the question. Therefore, the Torah does not mention the World to Come, for it would have implied that one is to serve God for the sake of receiving reward, and that is not so.

כי איך אפשר לומר שיהיה נזכר בתורה שום שכר
כאילו אמר שיעבוד האדם בוראו בשביל השכר ודבר
זה אין ראוי לומר כלל ולפיכך לא נזכר בתורה עולם
הבא שהיה משמע לעבוד השם יתברך על מנת לקבל
פרס ואין זה ראוי.

PART D. FALSIFIABILITY

In science, a theory is deemed “unscientific” if it is not falsifiable. That is, if the theory is compatible with all possible observations then there is no way of constructing an experiment to either prove or disprove the truth of the theory. Similarly, as evidenced in the next source, Jewish philosophers have argued that promising a reward that no one could ever verify does not lend credence to the Torah.

1. Maharal, Tiferet Yisrael, Ch. 58 – “Torah” is not a matter of speculation.

It is only fitting that the words of the Torah be clear and recognizable to the eye, so as not to erroneously compare it to any other religion that promises a reward that is uncertain and outside the realm of experience. Something that is outside of man’s experience and is uncertain is not fit to be called “Torah” because anyone could claim that the reward is this or that. Therefore, the Torah only promised physical things [like peace and prosperity], things that are clear and apparent. But it would not be right for the Torah to mention a spiritual reward that would have to be taken on faith alone.

...ראוי לתורה שיהיו דבריה מבוררים ונכרים לחוש
העין עד שלא תוכל לדמות לה אחד מן הדתות
שמבטיחים שכר עולם הבא דבר בלתי מבורר ובלתי
ידוע לחוש, אבל דבר הבלתי ידוע לאדם והם בלתי
מבוררים אין ראוי שיכנסו בגדר התורה כיון שכל
אחד יוכל לומר שבשכר תורה זאת יגיע לכם כך וכך,
ובשביל כך זכרה התורה הטוב הגופני במה שהוא דבר
נראה וברור, ואין ראוי להזכיר בתורה שכר רוחני שאינו
מבורר לאדם והוא צריך להאמין.

KEY THEMES OF SECTION II:

- ⌘ Considering the centrality of belief in the World to Come in Jewish thought, it is surprising to find that the Torah says nothing of it explicitly. Nevertheless, there are specific reasons for this. First of all, the Jewish understanding of a just God contrasted with the obvious injustice of this world necessitates the existence of a World to Come where all will be justified. Furthermore, any

attempt to describe spiritual reward in physical terms can do nothing but cheapen it. And besides, the focus of life should be a relationship with God, not awaiting reward in another life.

- ∞ The Torah further avoided any mention of a spiritual reward because this could detract from the Torah's credibility, since no one can verify something that occurs outside the realm of our experience. The Torah therefore only promises things like peace and prosperity, a claim that we can attest to with our own experience.

CLASS SUMMARY:

WHAT CAN WE DO TO ENSURE THAT WE GET A PLACE IN THE WORLD TO COME?

Every Jewish person has a share in the World to Come. The size of that share depends on:

1. His quantity and quality of mitzvah performance (including giving charity and being in the Land of Israel)
2. The study and teaching of Torah, and supporting those who are learning it
3. Developing good character traits, especially humility, modesty, and self-control
4. Understanding and knowing the Thirteen Principles of Belief

DO NON-JEWS HAVE A PLACE IN THE WORLD TO COME?

Yes, if they fulfill the Seven Noahide mitzvot.

WHY IS THERE NO EXPLICIT MENTION OF THE WORLD TO COME IN THE TORAH?

There are a number of reasons:

1. The existence of the World to Come is obvious, since how else do we reconcile the fact that many righteous individuals suffer?
2. It was omitted from the Torah so that it should not be oversimplified or cheapened.
3. The focus of life should be a relationship with God, not awaiting reward in another life.
4. Since no one has been there, claims as to the true nature of the World to Come are easily falsifiable and therefore are to be avoided.

ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDED READING & SOURCES

SECTION III.

Commentaries of Abarbanel and Kli Yakar, Vayikra 26:12

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