

The CHASSIDUS PERSPECTIVE with Reb Yoel Kahn



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A JEW'S ESSENTIAL VALUE

Pirkei Avos is preceded by the Mishnah, "*Kol yisrael yesh lahem chelek le'olam haba*"—every Jew will merit a portion in *olam haba*.

Olam haba can refer to one of two things: *gan eden* or *techiyas hameisim*. The *olam haba* of our Mishnah is *techiyas hameisim*. This is evidenced from the Gemara, which explains why those who deny *techiyas hameisim* will not merit *olam haba* (as the Mishnah continues to say): "Being that he denied the existence of *techiyas hameisim*, he will in turn be denied a portion in it." From this we see that the *olam haba* of our Mishnah is *techiyas hameisim*. And regarding *techiyas hameisim* the Mishnah says that "all Jews have a portion in *olam haba*," although this is not necessarily the case with regard to *gan eden*.

The Mishnah proves this statement from the *possuk*, "*Ve'ameich kulam tzadikim*": "Your nation are all *tzadikim*; they shall inherit the land—i.e., *olam haba*—forever. They are the branch of My planting, the work of My hands, in which I take pride."

The order of the *possuk* seems difficult to understand. It begins by describing the greatness of the Jewish nation, continues with the reward they will receive, and then returns to describe their value once more. Shouldn't the *possuk* have grouped both sections describing the Jews' value together, and only then proceeded to state their reward?

TWO TYPES OF REWARD

Techiyas hameisim will feature much higher levels of G-dly revelation than *gan eden*. This is clear from the fact that souls who have spent thousands of years in *gan eden* will be resurrected. One would not dare to say that their resurrection will consist of a descent in their status! Seemingly, a soul unrestricted by a body should be able to grasp much more than a soul found within a body. So how is it that *techiyas hameisim*, which is higher than *gan eden*, will be characterized by souls clothed in bodies? And why is it that not everyone merits *gan eden*, yet every Jew has a portion in *techiyas hameisim*?

The two rewards of *gan eden* and *techiyas hameisim* correspond, respectively, to the study of Torah and the fulfillment of mitzvos.

Gan eden is the time when a person merits to plumb the true depths of what he has studied in this world. He "takes" what he has learnt with him to *gan eden*, where he is granted the ability to grasp its inner meaning. Similarly, when a person fulfills a mitzvah, he elicits tremendous *giluyim*. Although presently he cannot feel them, ultimately, during the era of *techiyas hameisim*, he will merit to see what he has accomplished.

This explains why *gan eden* is a place where souls are found without physical bodies, while *techiyas hameisim* is a time when souls will reenter their bodies. The majority of mitzvos are physical actions that are performed with the body, while Torah study is more of a spiritual pursuit, connected primarily with

the soul. Accordingly, the reward for mitzvos will be received by souls clothed in bodies, while the reward for Torah is given to souls without bodies.

This also explains why everyone will merit *techiyas hameisim*, while not all receive the reward of *gan eden*. When it comes to Torah study, some individuals study more, some less, and

others, not at all. But regarding mitzvos Chazal say that "even sinners are full of mitzvos like a pomegranate," and the Rebbe explains this to mean that the mitzvos permeate their entire existence ("*melei'im mitzvos*"), leaving no part unaffected. Therefore, all Jews will merit *techiyas hameisim*, the reward for performing mitzvos.

"Even sinners are full of mitzvos like a pomegranate." Mitzvos permeate their entire existence, leaving no part unaffected.

GREATER THAN GAN EDEN

Techiyas hameisim is greater than *gan eden*, because mitzvos, which are the Divine Will, represent a higher level than Torah, Hashem's wisdom.

There is a fundamental difference between *understanding* an intellectual concept and *desiring* something. An idea is an entity that is separate from the actual person; it existed before he understood it as well. For this reason, two people can understand the same idea, because it is not associated with their individual existence.

Desiring, on the other hand, means that the person *himself* is drawn to the desired entity. This pull and draw is not a separate entity he happens to feel; it is part and parcel of the person himself. Therefore, when two people desire an item, it is not the same desire. Reuven's desire and Shimon's desire are distinct, because they represent the attraction of two unique individuals toward that thing.

Similarly (*lehavdil*), mitzvos are higher than Torah, and as a result, *techiyas hameisim* will be greater than *gan eden*. This is why *gan eden* precedes *techiyas hameisim*, because the lower level must be experienced before we can proceed to the next.

However, there is yet a third, higher level that surpasses the previous two: the essential value of a Jew.

JEWISH TREASURE

The Midrash states: "Two entities preceded the creation of the world: Torah and Yisroel. However, I do not know which one came first. But since Torah states, 'Speak to the Bnei Yisroel,' 'Command the Bnei Yisroel,' I know that Yisroel came first."

The Midrash is not merely discussing chronology. Since Torah's goal and purpose is to instruct Jews how to act, it must be that Bnei Yisroel are essentially higher than Torah.

This concept is expressed in the *possuk*, "You will be to Me as a *segulah*," which Rashi translates to mean "the treasures of kings."

Each kingdom possesses various types of wealth. One category includes the capital stored away in the event additional resources will be needed, such as in the case of hunger or another incident. These assets are meant to be used. Another category consists of the precious stones set into the king's crown. These gems are far too precious to be spent. However, they, too, serve a purpose: to increase the king's beauty in the eyes of those who behold him.

But then there is a third category: "the treasures of kings." These

treasures are not there to be used, or even to be shown to others. They themselves are the purpose; their virtue lies in the fact that the king has them, and nothing more.

Similarly, the value of a Jew is deeper than the fact that he learns Torah and fulfills mitzvos. We are Hashem's "treasure," and we have an intrinsic value just by virtue of the fact that we exist. However, left alone, this tremendous value is concealed. Torah and mitzvos were given to reveal our inherent qualities and bring them to the fore.

"IN WHICH I TAKE PRIDE"

We can now understand the meaning of the *possuk* cited in the Mishnah.

According to the simple meaning, this *possuk* is proof that all Jews will inherit *olam haba*. But it actually also provides an explanation as to *why* all Jews will merit *techiyas hameisim*. Why is it that "they will inherit the land"? Because "your nation

are all *tzaddikim*." Mitzvos are called "*tzedakah*," and a *tzaddik* is one who performs mitzvos (*tzedakah*). So since all Jews are *tzaddikim*, meaning that they all perform mitzvos, they will all merit *techiyas hameisim*.

But then the Mishnah continues with something deeper. Once we achieve

the revelation of the Divine Will during *techiyas hameisim*, an even more profound level can be revealed—the essential value of a Jew, the fact that we are "the branch of My planting, the work of My hands, in which I take pride."

For further study, see the *maamar L'havin Inyan Techiyas Hameisim* 5746

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