

Maimonides: The 13 Principles and the Resurrection of the Dead

Maimonides, in his commentary on the Mishnah, compiles what he refers to as the Shloshah-Asar Ikkarim, the Thirteen Articles of Faith, compiled from Judaism's 613 commandments found in the Torah.

The Thirteen Articles of Jewish faith are as follows:

1. Belief in the existence of the Creator, be He Blessed, who is perfect in every manner of existence and is the Primary Cause of all that exists. 2. The belief in G-d's absolute and unparalleled unity. 3. The belief in G-d's incorporeality, nor that He will be affected by any physical occurrences, such as movement, or rest, or dwelling. 4. The belief in G-d's eternity. 5. The imperative to worship Him exclusively and no foreign false gods. 6. The belief that G-d communicates with man through prophecy. 7. The belief that the prophecy of Moses our teacher has priority. 8. The belief in the divine origin of the Torah. 9. The belief in the immutability of the Torah. 10. The belief in divine omniscience and providence. 11. The belief in divine reward and retribution. 12. The belief in the arrival of the Messiah and the messianic era. 13. The belief in the resurrection of the dead.

It is the custom of many congregations to recite the Thirteen Articles, in a slightly more poetic form, beginning with the words Ani Maamin - "I believe" - every day after the morning prayers in the synagogue.

In his commentary on the Mishnah (Sanhedrin, chap. 10), Maimonides refers to these thirteen principles of faith as "the fundamental truths of our religion and its very foundations."

The following is from the book:

The Wolf Shall Lie With the Lamb, authored by Rabbi Shmuel Boteach (Oxford University) Printed by Jason Aronson Press, Montvale, NJ

In this essay Rabbi Boteach discusses the 13th Principle.

The thirteenth and final principle of Maimonides' Fundamental Articles of Jewish faith is the belief in the resurrection of the dead.

Jewish writings stipulate that forty years after the coming of the Messiah there will be a resurrection of the dead, and all who are lying in dust will rise to new life.

(Concerning great tzaddikim, saintly men, it is written that they will rise immediately after the Messiah's arrival).

Perhaps due to the natural human disposition to reject such a radical concept, Maimonides goes to great length to emphasize its importance:

"Resurrection of the dead is one of the fundamental principles in the Torah of our master Moses.

"There is neither Jewish faith nor any attachment to the Jewish faith, for an individual who does not believe in this" (Introduction to Perek Helek).

In his Mishneh Torah, too, Maimonides concludes that both the one who denies the concept of resurrection of the dead or the one who denies the coming of the Messiah are among those who have forfeited their share in Olam Haba - the Hereafter (Mishneh Torah Hilkhos Teshuvah 3:6).

Because Maimonides dealt summarily with the question of resurrection, and did not elaborate upon it as he did in regard to the other Articles of Faith, there were those among his contemporaries who criticized him for this summary treatment of this important topic.

In order to dispel all doubts concerning his stand on this important question, Maimonides wrote, some twenty-five years later, his Treatise on the Resurrection of the Dead, in which he reiterates unequivocally that belief in Techiyat Hameitim is an integral and indispensable principle of Torah faith.

Whereupon, Maimonides cites two verses in Daniel concerning this matter, as follows:

"In truth, this Resurrection [principle], which entails the return of the soul to the body after death, was already mentioned, in no uncertain terms, by Daniel.

"Thus, he says, 'And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake. ...' And the Angel said to Daniel, 'But you, go to the end of all flesh and rest; and stand in your lot at the end of the days.' [Daniel 12:2-13]

Observing that he can not do much more in this essay than reiterate that which he already stated in his commentary on the Mishnah, Maimonides writes:

"And I will state that the resurrection of the dead - which is widely known and recognized among our people, which is accepted by all groups among us, which is mentioned on numerous occasions in the tefillot, Aggadot, and supplications that were composed by the Prophets and the great Sages, who fill the pages of the Talmud and the Midrashim - refers to the return of the soul to the body after it had departed.

"Concerning this, there has never been heard any disagreement in our nation, nor does it have any [allegorical] interpretation [other than its literal meaning]. Nor is it permissible to rely upon any individual who believes otherwise."

Further on in this essay, the Maimonides concludes with a similar observation:

"In conclusion, we have been informed prophetically [concerning Techiyat Hameitim], whether on one or on many occasions, and it has been mentioned countless times by Sages of Israel, both of earlier and of recent times, and it

has become widely publicized in our nation, and there is universal consensus concerning this, that the human soul will return to the body. And this is the proper approach concerning the resurrection of the dead."

This difficult concept requires enormous elaboration and discussion, not to mention an outlining of its many facets and stages.

Notwithstanding this general need, there are two specific questions that immediately spring to mind:

First, what makes the belief in the resurrection of the dead a cardinal article of Jewish faith?

The entire Torah is true, but not all the articles of the Torah are considered to be a cardinal principles of Jewish belief.

When something is enumerated among the cardinal Articles of Faith, the implication is that it forms a foundation, a pillar that supports the entire structure of Judaism.

What, then, is so incredibly important about the belief in the resurrection of the dead that ALL of Judaism rests upon it?

Second, the very concept of the resurrection of the dead seems odd. Why is it necessary for a soul that has frolicked in the Garden of Eden for thousands of years to suddenly be torn from that wonderful abode and re-enter a physical body and repeat living on earth.

Kabbalistic literature devotes much time to describing how the souls in the Garden of Eden are constantly elevating themselves to higher and higher levels in their knowledge of G-d.

The Talmud (Berakhot 64a) finds a scriptural proof for this concept: "The righteous have no peace, not in this world and not in the world to come, as it is written, 'They ascend from strength to strength' (Psalm 84)."

What this means is that there are elevations on a daily basis for the soul where it enjoys a greater and higher revelation of G-dliness.

An ascendance of much higher magnitude is enjoyed on each anniversary of the day of the passing of the soul, known as Yahrzeit. The following year the soul rises even higher.

Based on this insight, the sublimity of G-dly revelation enjoyed by the souls of our forefathers Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, for example, and similarly those of Moses and the great prophets, the authors of the Mishnah and the Talmud, whose souls have been in the Garden of Eden for thousands of years, can be instantly appreciated.

Why, then, is it necessary for these souls to suddenly leave this exceptional abode and return to this world in a physical body?

Practically speaking, it appears that resurrection of the dead is part of the reward promised by G-d for the observance of the Torah and its commandments.

It would appear that this reward subdivides into two categories:

One in the Garden of Eden, when the souls are separated from their bodies, and the other on earth, when the soul is once again en clothed in the body.

The resurrection of the dead comes after the souls have already dwelled in the Garden of Eden; they must leave the Garden of Eden in order to be re-enclothed in the body.

We must conclude that the latter reward, in the form of the resurrection of the dead, is far greater than that of the Garden of Eden.

If this were not the case, then the resurrection of the dead would be more like a punishment rather than a reward. But what kind of a reward is this?

What could a soul possibly enjoy more on earth, trapped in a physical shell, more than the G-dliness in the Garden of Eden.

How, in truth, is the resurrection of the dead to be considered a reward at all?

There are those who explain that the purpose of the resurrection of the dead is to provide reward, not for the soul, but for the body.

Just as the soul has its own special place where it is rewarded in the Garden of Eden in its natural environment and habitat from which it was originally extracted, so too the body must return to its domain, where it too can be rewarded with the pleasures in which it delights.

And being that a reward must always be qualitatively similar to its cause, the body must be returned together with the soul to the place where it earned the reward in the first place.

We find a similar thought expressed in the Talmud, where it relates how the body complains to G-d that it should not be punished since it was due to the soul that it sins.

After all, without the soul the body is a lifeless mass.

Likewise, the soul complains that it is the body that caused it to sin, for only after it materializes in the body can it commit a sin at all.

The Talmud then uses an anecdote to describe how the Al-mighty settles this dispute:

"A king chose two guardians to protect his garden. One was blind and the other a midget. What did they do? The blind man put the midget on his shoulders and through this they were able to eat all the fruits of the garden.

"The king returned, furious, and questioned them as to what had happened to his fruit.

"Each one explained to the king how he could not have eaten the fruits on his own due to his own deficiency.

"What did the king then do?

"He put the stout man on top of the blind man and judged them as one" (Sanhedrin 91 a,b).

So, too, says the Talmud, "G-d brings the soul, puts it into the body, and judges them together as one."

Now, if this is said concerning punishment, it must also be the case concerning reward.

Thus, if G-d wishes to reward the body, it must be done the way the body once existed, synthesized together with the soul.

The resurrection of the dead is necessary to reward the body.

In truth, however, this explanation is insufficient.

Whereas it may suffice in explaining why the soul must leave the Garden of Eden and again be reenclosed in the body, it does nothing to solve our second dilemma, namely, how it is possible that the reward for the soul enclothed in the body on this earth should be greater than its spiritual reward in the Garden of Eden.

On the contrary, from this explanation, it seems that the whole purpose of the resurrection of the dead is to reward the body without any consideration for its effects on the soul.

The resurrection of the dead is one of those concepts that best illustrates the superiority of the physical body over the soul.

Although superficially the body seems not only subordinate but almost humiliatingly perverse in comparison to the purity, spirituality, and G-dliness of the soul, the truth is that the body has far greater virtue than the soul.

Therefore, so that the supremacy of the body over the soul be revealed in the messianic era, representing the culmination of the whole creative process, the soul will be forced to be reenclothed in the body.

In this way too, the soul will be able to benefit and share the lofty attributes of the physical body.

The knowledge of the body being superior to the soul is not surprising.

The very fact that the soul is forced to leave G-d's environment and be enclothed in a body against its will is proof of the fact that it stands to gain from the experience.

One should not underestimate the enormous decline and humiliation felt by the soul to when it is forced into the body.

An illustration of just how great a descent this really is may be obtained from the morning prayers.

Almost immediately upon awakening we state, "My G-d, the soul that You have given within me is pure. You have created it, You have formed it, You have breathed it into me and preserve it within me."

A question that is posed concerning this passage is:

If it is true that there is a whole procedure through which the soul comes into being, as the prayer implies, "You have created it, You have formed it, You have breathed it," why then do the words "it is pure" proceed "You have created it"? How could it be pure before it existed?

The explanation given is that "You have created it" is a reference to the soul the way it exists after it has already entered the first created, albeit, spiritual world, known as Olam Habriyah, through which it must pass before it can descend further and reach the physical world.

In other words, one should not believe that before the soul is "created" that it did not exist.

Before it even began its descent through the spiritual hierarchy, the soul lingered in the highest of worlds, Olam Haatzilut, the world of emanation, a world whose makeup is not a creation of G-d, but an extension of Him.

Kabbalah speaks of four "worlds," with only one actually being physical, namely, the bottom one, Olam Haasiyah.

The three higher worlds, in order - Atzilut, Briyah, and Yetzirah - are all G-dly, but in a different degree.

The highest of all the worlds, Olam Haatzilut, bears its name because it is not considered to be a "created world." Rather, it is a world of "emanation."

It is still an emanation, rather than a creation of G-d.

As such, it is still technically considered to be part of the G-dhead.

The world of Briyah, though, bears its name because it is the beginning of something that is disconnected from the G-dhead, or created. It is thus infinitely lower than Atzilut, although it is still a spiritual world.

This is the reason why the soul is referred to as being pure. It stands at the very highest plateau, higher than anything created.

It is only after it is obligated to descend that the soul must take a quantum leap downward and reemerge in the created world.

It is then that it is referred to as being a created entity.

In the Hebrew language, the word bara, "created," a verb used in Scriptures exclusively with reference to divine activity, is explained by the commentators as referring to producing something out of nothing (yesh me'ayin), creation ex nihilo.

As the Ramban comments, "There is no expression in Hebrew for producing something from nothing other than the word bara, 'created.'"

Thus, the word 'created' symbolizes an object that is now unattached to G-d, since it is brought into existence as something from nothing.

Thus, the magnitude of descent for the soul can be appreciated.

The Talmud expresses it aptly: "The soul descends from a high mountain to a deep pit" (Hagigah).

Why is this necessary?

Why must the soul fall from such unimaginable heights?

The answer is that this descent is for the purpose of a much greater ascent, later.

Through the soul descending into the body and experiencing the tension and turmoil of being in constant battle with the evil inclination, it merits a much higher ascent.

The soul must fight for the human organism to conform with the guidelines of G-dly law amid the conniving of the animal soul to frustrate its plans.

But the struggle bears fruit - the soul is able to ascend to an infinitely higher level than that where it existed previously.

To illustrate the concept of a descent for the purpose of a later ascent, when the waters of a river flow without any obstruction, they flow smoothly, calmly, and without great force.

But when one puts an obstruction in the path of the flowing water, such as a large stone or tree trunk, the first consequence is that the flow of the water is stalled and sometimes stopped completely.

It may even appear further down river that the stream has completely dried up.

So strong is the water at this point that it will even pull the stone along with it and it will appear as if there had never been an obstacle in its path.

Interestingly, it is specifically the obstacle that brings about the terrible strength and fury of the water after a brief interlude in its flow.

This same principle applies to the soul.

It is remarkably the descent of the soul onto earth that brings in its wake the strengthening of its power and heightening of its spiritual acclaim.

The impediments to holiness faced in this world, the concealment and hiddenness of the G-dly that forces the soul to break through the darkness, serves to develop the full infinite potential of the soul so that it rises even above its standing in heaven.

Tapping into hidden reservoirs of strength, fortitude, and stamina, the soul flicks aside the obstruction that the world poses to G-dliness.

Another example of descent for the sake of ascent is the exile in which we find ourselves today.

Exile is not a punishment for the Jewish people's misdeeds.

Rather, the exile is only a preparation for the great revelations of the messianic era ahead.

It is specifically through the trials and ordeals of exile that the Jew musters within himself high spiritual qualities he never knew himself to possess.

Certainly in Temple times the Jew was not called upon to unearth and reveal such deep-seated devotion and commitment in remaining observant and united with his G-d.

Anyone who doubted G-d's sovereignty over the world could go to the Temple and see ten daily miracles.

There was no room for doubt.

To be sure, those generations had their own tests.

But exchanging Judaism for materialism and craving acceptance by their non-Jewish neighbors were not among them.

Today when Jews find themselves in Gentile lands, their thirst for G-dliness is heightened, and they are able to awaken greater strength to fulfill mitzvot and enhance their ability to draw nearer to G-d.

This will be better understood by way of yet another analogy.

When a person finds himself in the desert or similar circumstances without water, his thirst for water is much greater than someone in the city where water is abundant, even if objectively both of them have drunk the same amount of water that day.

The very fact that the individual in the city can drink at any time he so desires causes his mind not to worry or think about water.

But the person who is wandering through the desert knows that even if he wishes to drink, there is no water to be found.

Because of this, he thinks about the water, constantly making him more and more thirsty.

The same is true during the times of the exile when G-dliness is difficult to come by and the world's moral and ethical standards are on the decline.

This causes the individual to thirst for G-dly revelation and yearn for more holiness in his life.

There is a fascinating modern-day Jewish development.

Thousands of people are returning to Jewish observance and struggling to bring more G-dliness into their lives.

What is so interesting about this phenomenon is its cause.

Rabbi Joseph Isaac Schneersohn of Lubavitch discusses the phenomenon of the baal Teshuvah (returnee) and asks what causes him to return?

Could it be because of his sudden appreciation for the values of Judaism or that he thought Judaism would bring holiness into his life?

Neither of these reasons can be accurate.

After all, this is someone who in most cases has not grown up with Jewish observance.

From whence shall he appreciate it?

The Rebbe concludes that he is not running to Judaism (which he does not know), but rather he is running away from where he is.

It is not that Judaism may be attractive, but that he recognizes that his present situation is devoid of holiness and removed from G-dliness.

It is a sense of emptiness and despair in his life and a lack of meaning that motivates the returnee to run to G-d.

This phenomenon could only happen in our times, where there is such a poverty of overt G-dliness.

The way in which to overcome the darkness of the exile is to devote oneself tirelessly to bringing the Messiah.

When one does so, one does not feel exile as this shady and awesome presence looming over him.

Rather, the feeling is that one's whole being and purpose of one's existence is to pursue this path in life, to dispel the darkness from the earth. This brings a person to feel that he is in control of his own destiny and truly free, rather than a prisoner of the exile.

This was the inner meaning of the famous statement by Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi in Ethics of the Fathers, where he states, "[It is stated in Scripture, 'the tablets were the work of G-d and the writing was the writing of G-d, harut (engraved) on the tablets.' Do not read harut (engraved) but rather heirut (freedom) for there is no free man except one who occupies himself with the study of Torah" (Ethics of the Fathers 6:2).

The meaning of this statement is that one who sees G-d's unity encompassing all of existence will be liberated from the exile and the dominion of the animal soul, which lead man to feel that he is distant from G-d.

Therefore, through a true appreciation of the G-d's all-encompassing unity, and one's unique place within the scheme of things, one comes to know his true self.

The self which is "always and united and attached to You [G-d]" (Prayer liturgy for Sukkot - Hoshannot).

But all of the above is only one side of the explanation of the virtue acquired by the soul in its descent to our world.

Ultimately, this explanation is incomplete because it fails to recognize the virtue of the body and material existence.

On the contrary, this explanation dwells on the obstruction that the physical poses to spirituality and its concealment of G-dliness.

The physical serves to enhance G-dliness precisely because it obstructs it, as in the example of the stone in the river.

Accordingly, the virtue gained by the soul by being in the body has nothing to do with the virtue of the body, but rather with its unG-dliness.

Only a deep and proper understanding of the resurrection of the dead will teach one the virtue of the physical realm and the body over the spiritual realm.

The resurrection of the dead comes only after the soul has already been involved with the body for a lifetime.

Whatever gains or virtue it could possibly have received from the body, be it from the body's positive or negative aspects, it must have already received.

The resurrection of the dead is also after the soul has reentered the Garden of Eden, enjoying an infinitely higher now level of spirituality than it did before its descent.

Here, too, it whatever attributes that are to be had in the Garden of Eden.

Yet notwithstanding this, it is still necessary for the soul to again descend from its high standing in Eden and reinvest itself in the body.

This could only mean that the physical body, while in the physical world, can give something to the soul which the Garden of Eden and the highest spiritual worlds cannot.

The physical world possesses an incredibly strong G-dly presence, far higher than the G-dly life-force that sustains the nonmaterial worlds.

The reason is simple: the spiritual worlds are worlds of light.

In them G-d's radiance and splendor shine visibly.

From an analogy of the sun, we can appreciate that the sun comprises two disparate concepts: a luminary, and the light.

They are not the same.

While the light of the sun may extend to the entire solar system and the closer one is to the sun, the greater the heat and the more intense the rays, nonetheless, none of this light, no matter how close to the sun it may be, can be put into a box.

Why?

Because it is only light and is not source independent.

It is an extension, but not the essence of the sun.

The same standard applies to the spiritual worlds.

Because of their proximity to G-d, they are indeed lofty and holy.

Nevertheless, they are merely a ray, an extension of G-d's light.

They have none of G-d's essence.

It is like the difference between the scent of an object and the object itself. The spiritual worlds are mere fragrance, they possess no tangible essence.

But our physical world is not a world of light.

It is a world of essence.

The reason is simple: This world was not brought into being through G-d radiating His light, but through G-d calling it forth from nothingness into a created reality.

The ability to create something from nothing can only be done by G-d, Who is infinite.

The very concept is inconceivable to the limited human mind.

Thus, this world is a part not only of G-d's light, which of course shines naturally, but from an infinite creative act that involved G-d's deepest and most personal faculties.

Insofar as G-d must constantly re-create the world in order to keep it in existence, as explained earlier, the very material of the world, what sustains it and what it is, in truth is G-d's essence.

Our world emanates from G-d's deepest, most inner Self.

There is nothing closer to Him.

In our time though, G-d's sustaining life force is hidden.

In the future, however, at the time of the resurrection of the dead in the messianic epoch it will be revealed for all to see.

One can only imagine what such revelation will bring.

But one thing is clear.

It will be infinitely higher than any revelation in the world thus far, or any other experience that the soul could have experienced in the Garden of Eden.

The messianic era will also not be a world of light.

The essence of G-d that comprises our world will be seen.

This is the reason for the belief in the resurrection of the dead being counted amongst the Principle Articles of Jewish faith.

Rabbi Shneur Zalman explains in the Tanya (chap. 37) that the purpose of the descent of the soul to earth is not really for the soul's advantage, the notion traditionally held in the Kabbalah.

After all, the soul is not so bad off in the Garden of Eden.

And although it too benefits from its descent, it would have been happy to remain right where it was. The real purpose for the descent of the soul into the body, is the refinement and elevation of the body in its physical condition.

The purpose of the Torah and mitzvot is to bring G-dliness into an otherwise unG-dly world, thus consecrating all material existence.

While it is true that this descent also benefits the soul it is still not its principal purpose.

The same is true of the entire creative process.

It is not the physical world that is created to serve the spiritual worlds.

Rather, all the spiritual worlds were created only for the purpose of facilitating the development and nurturing of G-dliness in the physical world and ultimately executing G-d's wish of creating a dwelling place for Himself in the lowest of all possible worlds.

As explained above, this itself is accomplished through every mitzvah that refines a certain portion of the physical world.

And through the cumulative activities of thousands of generations, we complete the polishing of the world until it is ready for the messianic redemption.

It is THIS knowledge that gives the individual the comfort and excitement in going about his daily religious obligations.

He understands that he is working toward a glorious time and that his every activity plays an indispensable role. He understands that he is literally bringing G-d into his world.

But amid this sense of comfort, a discomfiting and devastating thought sends a shock to the system.

What good is it, one asks oneself, this ongoing elevation and sublimation of the body, when one day, in the not-too-distant future, the body will die and decay, reverting to dust and nothingness?

Why labor seventy or eighty years in the refining and raising the body to a higher state of being when in the final analysis the body is insignificant and transient?

At least the soul goes to heaven.

But the body goes to the grave!

Moreover, it seems that the ephemeral nature of life and the body is wholly part of what the body is.

The Torah itself attests to the need of the body to return to the dust from whence it issued. "Dust you are, and to dust shall you return" (Genesis 2:19). The very essence of the body is evanescent, and by virtue of its natural condition it dies and decays.

Therefore, even while the body is alive, it is not a "real" existence in the Torah definition of the word, for the Torah equates all transitory existence with illusion and deceit.

This is derived from the Talmud in its discussion of the waters that were allowed to be used for ritual purification in a mikvah.

Generally speaking, the water had to be drawn from a living spring.

Among the water sources that were not to be used the Talmud lists a "deceitful" river, mayim hamekhazvot.

What exactly is a deceptive river?

The Talmud defines it as any river whose waters cease their flow even once in seven years.

The water's cessation indicates that this is not a living spring, a real river.

And although now indeed it is flowing, its present state deceives the eye. It is not a "living spring," but a false and lifeless illusion.

Now, if something that expires is deceptive and valueless, what good is there in spending a lifetime in illuminating the body?

Notwithstanding man's actions, it will revert to its previous darkness.

This realization can be the cause of immense frustration and suck out the very life from the Jew who is dedicated to the purification of the body.

It also serves to detract from one's understanding of the entire purpose for creation and the giving of the Torah.

Hence, it is here that we can appreciate the central importance occupied in Judaism by the belief in the belief in the resurrection of the dead.

The belief in the resurrection of the dead expresses the absolute truth that the expiration and corrosion of the body is but only a temporary phenomenon.

The truth of the matter is that the body is a very sublime entity, in fact an eternal one.

Rabbi Shneur Zalman explains in the Tanya (chap 49) that the Torah statement of G-d having "chosen us from every other nation and tongue" (Daily Morning Prayers) applies to the body which "bears in its corporal state a identical resemblance to the bodies of the nations of the world" (Tanya, chap. 49).

G-d did not chooses the Jewish soul at Sinai, but the Jewish body.

What Rabbi Shneur Zalman means to say with this radical pronouncement is this: One cannot contend that the element of the Jew chosen by G-d is the soul, for what kind of choice could there possibly be with a soul.

The nature of real choice is that it can only exist amongst identical, or at the very least, extremely similar objects.

If one is told to choose between a pile of ashes and a pile of gold, is there really a choice?

Must one enter into any conscious or even subconscious to determine which one should select?

Real choice exists only where the objects to be chosen are alike.

Thus, the quality of "chosen" possessed by the Jewish must pertain to the body and not the Jewish soul.

For the Jewish soul, by virtue of its inordinately high spiritual character, made a choice between it and another spiritual form impossible.

The Jewish soul is said to be a part of G-d Himself.

What choice could there be?

What emerges from this proof is that the body is the possessor of sublime virtue and is the chosen of G-d.

G-d's choice has lent to it the quality of permanence.

G-d chose the body not for seventy or eighty years, but for all time. And although the body may die and disintegrate, this is only a provisional state.

In the messianic epoch the body will once again rise in the resurrection and will exist for ever and ever.

The belief in the resurrection of the dead forms a basic foundation of the Jewish faith.

Thanks to this belief, one knows that the physical body, to which one dedicates one's entire effort in Torah and mitzvot, and for whose elevation one toils eighty or ninety years, is an eternal entity.

One's struggle on behalf of the body will never be in vein.

The body dies temporarily, only to reawaken to everlasting eternal life.

As the famous principle of Talmudic law teaches, "Any change that reverts back to its original condition is not considered to be a change at all" (Bava Kamma 67a; Sukkah 30b).

Thus, the ongoing battle to purify, refine, and uplift the body and all of material existence has an eternal result.

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Printed by Jason Aronson Press, Montvale, NJ