

THE WORLD TO COME

What is 'The World to Come'? When is it? Where is it?

The View of Rambam

Rambam, Hilchot Teshuvah 8:8

זה שקראו אותו חכמים העולם הבא, לא מפני שאינו מצוי עתה וזה העולם אובד ואחר כך יבוא אותו העולם. אין הדבר כן, אלא הרי הוא מצוי ועומד, שנאמר "מה רב טובך, אשר צפנת ליראיך" (תהילים לא, כ). ולא קראוהו העולם הבא, אלא מפני שאותן החיים באין לו לאדם אחר חיי העולם הזה, שאנו קיימין בו בגוף ונפש, וזה הוא הנמצא לכל אדם בראשונה.

"That which the Sages referred to as the World To Come, is not because it is not in existence now and that it will follow after this world is destroyed, for such is not the case. The World to Come does exist, as it is written, 'O how great is Your goodness, which You have prepared for those who fear You'. It was called the World to Come only because life there comes to one only after life in this world, where we exist in a body-soul combination, which is how men exist first."

Ra'avad notes that Rambam's description of the World to Come seems to refute the wealth of sources that indicate that the World to Come refers to a future state in which departed souls will return to resurrected bodies here in this world (see class on Resurrection). However, Kesef Mishna explains that the difference is merely semantic; each agrees that Resurrection will occur in the future; they differ only whether this is called the World to Come. Ra'avad maintains that the World to Come refers to Resurrection, while according to Rambam the term World to Come refers to an intermediary phase otherwise known as the World of Souls (*Olam HaNeshamot*), and Garden of Eden (*Gan Eden*). It is from there that every soul departs when it descends into a body, and it is to there that the soul returns when it leaves at death. It is a type of spiritual repository where souls receive partial reward before being resurrected.

Ramban, Sha'ar HaGemul, explains that Rambam nevertheless differs regarding what occurs after resurrection:

אבל יראה מכוונת הרב ז"ל, שהעולם הבא אצלו משמש לכל עולמי הנפשות ולכל המגיע עליהן לעדי עד. והנה יאמין באמת, שתחיית המתים, שהוא עיקר מעיקרי התורה, הכוונה בו שתשוב הנפש לגוף ברצון הבורא יתברך, ויצאו הנשמות מן העולם הבא וישבו לגוף בימי תחיית המתים, ויתעדנו האנשים ההם הזוכים בטובת העולם הזה בימות המשיח ויזכו בו למעלה עליונה ממעלתם הראשונה, אבל אחרי כן יגזור הרב ז"ל מיתה על המשיח ועל דורו, ויהיו נפשותיהם בטוב העולם הבא, בלא גוף, כמו שהיו מתחילה, במעלה גדולה ממנה, שזכו לה במצוות שעשו בזמן התחייה, וזה יתקיים להם לנצח.

"The intention of Rambam seems to be that the term 'World to Come' means all of the worlds of the souls and whatever they attain in eternity. Thus he believes that during the resurrection of the dead, which is one of the fundamental principles of the Torah, the soul will return to the body by the will of the Creator. The souls at that time will leave the World of souls and return to their bodies at the time of resurrection....Afterwards Rambam

presages death for the Messiah and his generation. Their souls will then continue to exist in the goodness of the World to Come in their original state without the body...This will sustain them forever."

According to Rambam, even Resurrection will be a transient stage. After Resurrection, the body eventually will die again, and the soul will return to the World to Come, i.e., to the World of Souls to receive its eternal, complete reward (Treatise on Resurrection, ch. 4). The reason for this is that spiritual rewards will be loftier when awarded to a soul that is detached from the limitations of a physical body, as in the World of Souls.

The View of the Other Major Authorities

Ramban, Sha'ar HaGemul

כי שכר הנפשות וקיומם בעולם הנשמות נקרא לרבותינו גן עדן, ופעמים קורין אותו עלייה וישיבה של מעלה. ואחרי כן יבואו ימי המשיח, והוא מכלל העולם הזה. ובסופם יהא יום הדין ותחיית המתים, שהוא השכר הכולל הגוף והנפש, והוא העיקר הגדול שהוא תקוות כל מקוה להקב"ה, והוא העולם הבא, שבו ישוב הגוף כמו הנפש, והנפש תדבק בדעת עליון בהדבקה בגן עדן עולם הנשמות, ותתעלה בהשגה גדולה ממנה, ויהיה קיום הכל לעדי עד ולנצח נצחים.

"The reward of the souls and their existence in the World of souls is called Gan Eden by our Rabbis....After the World of souls will come the era of the Messiah, which is a part of this world. At the conclusion thereof, the great judgment and the resurrection of the dead will occur. This is the recompense which includes the body and soul. This...is the World to Come, in which the body will become like the soul and the soul will be cleaving to the knowledge of the Most High just as it adhered to it in the Gan Eden of the World of Souls. Now, however, it will be elevated to an even greater degree and the existence of all will be forever and ever."

Like Rambam, the other commentators maintain that after death meritorious souls abide in the World of Souls. However, they are of the opinion that this is not yet the World to Come. Upon the future Resurrection, which is the onset of the World to Come, these meritorious souls will be finally clothed in a body. It is in that state of body/soul unification that the souls are granted their ultimate reward. The World to Come, then, refers to the era of the Resurrection, which will be the final phase of reward for both soul and body. The reason for this is since the body plays a role in earning the reward, Divine Justice requires that the body also be rewarded for its role in helping perfect the soul. Later we shall see how this difference of opinions results in practical differences regarding what life will be like in 'The World to Come'. But first, let's examine who will merit getting there:

Who Will Merit the World to Come?

Mishnah, Sanhedrin 11:1, 90a

כל ישראל יש להם חלק לעולם הבא שנאמר "ועמך כולם צדיקים לעולם יירשו ארץ נצר מטעי מעשה ידי להתפאר" (ישעיהו ס). ואלו שאין להם חלק לעולם הבא: האומר אין תחיית המתים מן התורה ואין תורה מן השמים ואפיקורוס ר"ע אומר אף הקורא בספרים החיצונים...אבא שאול אומר אף ההוגה את השם באותיותיו.

“Every Jew has a share in the World to Come. As in, ‘And your people will all be righteous, for ever shall they possess the land, the sprout of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may glorify Myself’ (Is. 9:21). The following have no share in the World to Come: He who says there is no allusion in the Torah to Resurrection, and he who says that the Torah was not given by Heaven, and a heretic. R’ Akiva says, even one who reads books of external wisdom...Abba Shaul says, even one who pronounces the Holy Name as it’s written.”

This Mishna seems self-contradictory. It first states that all Jews have a portion in the World to Come, and then it enumerates those who don’t.

Is there then no hope for those who have transgressed? Rambam elucidates:

Rambam, Hilchot Teshuvah 3:14

במה דברים אמורים שכל אחד מאלו אין לו חלק לעולם הבא, בשמת בלא תשובה. אבל אם שב מרשעו, ומת והוא בעל תשובה, הרי זה מבני העולם הבא, שאין לך דבר שעומד בפני התשובה. אפילו כפר בעיקר כל ימיו, ובאחרונה שב, יש לו חלק לעולם הבא שנאמר “שלוש שלום לרחוק ולקרוב, אמר ה' ורפאתיו” (ישעיהו נז, יט). כל הרשעים והפושעים והמשומדים וכיוצא בהן שחזרו בתשובה, בין בגלוי בין שחזרו במטמונייות, מקבלין אותן שנאמר “שובו בנים שובבים” (ירמיהו ג, יד; ירמיהו ג, כב). אף על פי שעדיין שובב הוא, שהרי בסתר בלבד חוזר ולא בגלוי, מקבלין אותו בתשובה.

“When does the statement that such an individual does not have a share in the World to Come apply? When he dies without having repented. However, if he repents of his wickedness and dies a penitent, he will be of those admitted to the World to Come, for nothing can stand in the way of penitence. Even if he denied G-d’s existence all his days but repented at the end, he has a share in the World to Come. This is implied by the verse, ‘Peace, peace, to the distant and the near, declares G-d, and I shall heal him’ (Is. 57:19). Any wicked person, sinner or apostate who repents, whether overtly or in private, is accepted. This is implied by the verse, ‘Return, wayward children’ (Jer. 3:22). Even though he is still wayward since he repents only in private and not overtly, still his penitence is accepted.”

What of Those Who Do Not Repent?

The following sources describe ways through which one may merit the World to Come even if he didn’t repent during his lifetime:

Sanhedrin 104a

ברא מזכי אבא...

“A righteous son (or daughter) may provide merit for a father (or mother) [to be admitted to the World to Come].”

Sometimes a parent can also benefit the child:

Sotah 10b

וירגז המלך ויעל על עליית השער ויבך וכה אמר בלכתו בני אבשלום בני בני [אבשלום] מי יתן מותי אני תחתיך אבשלום בני בני והמלך לאט את פניו ויזעק המלך קול גדול בני אבשלום אבשלום בני בני (שמואל ב יט). הני תמניא 'בני' למה? שבעה דאסקיה משבעה מדורי גיהנם, ואידך...דאייתה לעלמא דאתי.

*“And [David] trembled, and he went up to the upper chamber of the gate, and wept; and he said as he went, “O’ my **son** Avshalom [who was wicked], my **son**, my **son** Avshalom! Would I have died in your stead, O’ Avshalom my **son**, my **son**... And the king covered his face, and the king cried with loud voice: ‘O’ my **son** Avshalom, O’ Avshalom, my **son**, my **son**!” (II Samuel 19:1,5). Why did David say ‘my son’ eight times? Seven to bring him up through the seven chambers of gehinom and the last was to bring him to the World to Come.”*

A person can even benefit a non-relative:

Chagigah 15b

נפק אחר לתרבות רעה. נפק אשכח זונה תבעה. אמרה ליה ולאן אלישע בן אבויה את? עקר פוגלא ממישרא בשבת ויהב לה, אמרה אחר הוא!...כי נח נפשיה דאחר אמרי...לא מידן לידייניה משום דעסק באורייתא ולא לעלמא דאתי ליתי משום דחטא. אמר ר"מ מוטב דלידייניה וליתי לעלמא דאתי מתי אמות ואעלה עשן מקברו. כי נח נפשיה דר' מאיר סליק קוטרא מקבריה דאחר. אמר ר' יוחנן גבורתא למיקלא רביה...אמר מתי אמות ואכבה עשן מקברו. כי נח נפשיה דר' יוחנן פסק קוטרא מקבריה דאחר.

“Acher [the disparaging name by which the rabbi in this story came to be called] became a heretic. He went out, found a prostitute and hired her. She said to him, Aren’t you R’ Elisha ben Avuya? He uprooted a turnip from the ground on the Sabbath [a Torah prohibition] and gave it to her. She said, You are someone else (acher)...When Acher died it was said [from above]: Let him not be brought into judgment...because he has studied Torah, but let him not be admitted to the World to Come because he sinned. R’ Meir said: It would better if he would be brought to judgment and punished, and then admitted to the World to Come. Would that when I die, smoke should go up from his grave (i.e., that he should be able to initiate his judgment). When R’ Meir died, smoke went up from the grave of Acher. R’ Yochanan said (sarcastically): A mighty deed it was to consign his teacher to the flames...Would that when I die, the smoke will stop from his grave (i.e., that he should be able to effect his elevation to the World to Come). When R’ Yochanan died, the smoke ceased from the grave of Acher.”

Note: While R’ Meir was a student of Acher, and he may have been able to increase merit for his rabbi in so far as a student is like a son, R’ Yochanan was neither a relative or a disciple of Acher, and yet he was able effect his entrance to the World to Come. Tosafot in Chagiga explains that one of the reasons Acher became a sinner was that when his mother was pregnant with him, she was overpowered by the smell of meat of an idolatrous sacrifice that she ate. Interestingly, R’ Yochanan’s mother also ate such meat before he was born (Yoma 82b) yet he grew up righteous. What might be the significance of this as far as R’ Yochanan’s effecting atonement for Acher?

The fact that R' Yochanan had a similar negative influence but maintained his righteousness might serve as an accusation against R' Meir. It was necessary that R' Yochanan himself, then, intervene on R' Meir's behalf.

The following illustrates how good and pious deeds of the living can be of tremendous benefit to the soul of the deceased, particularly if performed by the children of the deceased. This, in fact, is the source for a mourner's leading prayer services and saying *kaddish*.

Kala Rabati, ch. 2

רבי עקיבא נפק להווא אתרא, אשכחיה להווא גברא דהוי דרי טונא אכתפיה ולא הוה מצי לסגויי ביה והוה צוח ומתאנח. א"ל מאי עבידתיך? א"ל לא שבקנא איסורא דלא עבידנא בההיא עלמא ועכשו איכא נטורין עילוון ולא שבקין לי דאינוח. א"ל רבי עקיבא שבקת ברא? א"ל בחייך לא תשהין דדחילנא ממלאכי דמחו לי בפולסי דנורא ואמרין לי אמאי לא תיתי בפריע. א"ל אימא לי מאי דקא מנחת. א"ל שבקית אתתא מעברתא. אזל ר' עקיבא עאל לההיא מדינתא אמר להו בריה דפלוני היכא ליה? אמרו ליה יעקר זכרו דההוא שחיק עצמות. א"ל אמאי? אמרו ליה ההוא ליסטים אכל אינשי ומצער בריתא ולא עוד אלא שבא על נערה המאורסה ביום הכפורים. אזל לביתיה אשכח אתתיה מעוברתא נטרה עד דילדה אזל מהליה. לכי גדל אוקמיה בבי כנישתא לברוכי בקהל. לימים אזל ר' עקיבא להווא אתרא, איתחזי ליה א"ל תנוח דעתך שהנחת את דעתך.

"Rabbi Akiva went to a certain place where he found [the soul of] a person who was carrying a load on his shoulders but was having a hard time walking with it and was screaming and groaning. He said to him, 'What have you done?' He replied, 'There wasn't a sin I didn't transgress and now there are watchmen over me and they don't let me rest.' Rabbi Akiva asked him, 'Did you leave over a son?' He replied, 'By your life, don't delay me [because of your questions] for I am in dread of the angels that hit me with rays of fire and they say to me, 'go faster'! He asked [again], 'Who did you leave behind?' He replied, 'I left behind a pregnant wife.' Rabbi Akiva went to the place [of the deceased]. He asked them, 'Where is the son of such and such a person?' They replied, 'May his memory be blotted out and his bones crushed.' He asked, 'Why?' They replied, 'He was a bandit who destroyed people and distressed the populace. In addition he had illicit relations with a betrothed girl on Yom Kippur.' He went to the home of the pregnant woman and waited until she gave birth. He circumcised [the son] and when he grew older he set him up in the synagogue to pray for the congregation. Some time later Rabbi Akiva went to the place [where he had originally seen the soul]. He appeared to him and told him, 'May your mind be put at ease for you have put my mind at ease'."

Note: We have seen above that repentance during one's lifetime, or meritorious acts on account of the deceased even after death, benefit and elevate the soul to the World to Come. However, even if a departed soul did not undergo this elevation, there is still hope. It is possible (according to most commentators), that the World to Come mentioned in the Mishnah refers to the Resurrection, the return of the soul into a resurrected body. When the Mishnah says that all Israel have a share in the World to Come, it refers to the soul of every Jew, but not necessarily the body of each Jew. Meaning: all souls will eventually be resurrected including the souls of the wicked, even if not all bodies will be resurrected. The body of a person who was wicked in one reincarnation may not be resurrected; instead, his soul will be resurrected in a body from one of its other reincarnations (see more on this idea below regarding *karet*).

Karet and the World to Come

Some transgressions are so severe, that the soul is spiritually cut off, a punishment called *karet*.

Rambam explains the concept of *karet*:

Rambam, Hilchot Teshuvah 8:1

הטובה הצפונה לצדיקים, היא חיי העולם הבא... ופרעון הרשעים הוא שלא יזכו לחיים אלו, אלא ייכרתו וימותו. וכל מי שאינו זוכה לחיים אלו, הוא המת שאינו חווה לעולם, אלא נכרת ברשעו, ואובד כבהמה. וזה הוא 'הכרת' הכתוב בתורה, שנאמר 'היכרת תיכרת הנפש ההיא' (במדבר טו, לא). מפי השמועה למדו 'היכרת' בעולם הזה, 'תיכרת' לחיי העולם הבא. כלומר שאותה הנפש שפרשה מן הגוף בעולם הזה אינה זוכה לחיי העולם הבא, אלא גם מן העולם הבא נכרתה.

"The good that is preserved for the righteous is life in the World to Come... The retribution of the wicked is that they will not merit this life, but will be cut off and will die. Whoever does not merit this life is truly dead and will not live forever, but will be cut off in his wickedness and perish like a beast. This is the karet of which the Torah writes, 'That soul shall surely be cut off [hikaret tikaret]' (Nu. 15:31). The oral tradition explains: 'hikaret' means that the soul will be cut off in this world; 'tikaret' means that it will be cut off in the World to Come. A soul that is separated as such from the body in this world does not merit the life of the World to Come. Rather, even in the World to Come it is cut off."

Can there be any hope for such souls to merit the World to Come?

The Kabbalists offer two possibilities:

1. *Karet* is only on the level of soul called *nefesh*. The soul is comprised of five levels: *nefesh, ruach, neshamah, chayah, yechidah* (see course on the soul). Only the level of *nefesh* is affected by *karet* - excision. In the most extreme case, the *nefesh* will be separated from the other levels of soul until it is rectified and re-united with them in the World to Come. (Nefesh HaChaim I:1)

2. *Karet* is only on one reincarnation. According to most commentators, the World to Come mentioned in the Mishnah refers to Resurrection, the return of the soul into a resurrected body. When the Mishnah says that all Israel have a share in the World to Come, it refers to the soul of every Jew, but not necessarily the body of each Jew. A body of a certain reincarnation of the soul may be cut off and excluded from the World to Come, but the soul will be present there in the resurrection of a different body, that of another of the soul's reincarnations. (Arizal, Likkutei Torah, Parshat Bo; Sefer HaLikkutim, Parshat Lech Lecha; Sefer HaGilgulim, ch. 6.)

Life in the World to Come

The Blessing upon Awakening to the World to Come

Zohar III, 267b

כל עצמותי תאמרנה יי מי כמוך...האי קרא דוד אמריה ברוחא דקודשא. כל עצמותי תאמרנה, וכי מאן חמא גרמי דאמרו שירתא? אלא האי קרא בזמנא דקודשא בריך הוא זמין לאחייא מתייא, וזמין קודשא בריך הוא לאתקנא גרמי, ולקרבא כל חד וחד לאתרייהו, דכתיב ו'ותקרבו עצמות עצם אל עצמו'. וכתוב 'ועצמותיך יחליץ'. כדין זמינן אינון למימר שירתא. מאי שירתא אמרי? יי מי כמוך'.

“All my bones shall say, G-d, who is like You...” (Psalms 35:10). David said that verse by Divine Inspiration. ‘All my bones shall say’. Who has seen bones reciting songs of praise? This verse refers to the time the Holy One, blessed be He, will resurrect the dead. And the Holy One, blessed be He, will fix the bones and draw each to its place as it is written, ‘and the bones came together, bone to its bone’ (Ez. 37:7), and ‘make strong your bones’ (Is. 58:11). Then they will sing praise. What will they sing? ‘G-d, who is like You?’”

This teaches that at the time of the future Resurrection, the revived will praise G-d. The following suggest that there is a specific blessing to be recited upon returning to life:

Pirkei d’Rabbi Eliezer, ch. 31

רבי יהודה אומר, כיון שהגיע החרב על צווארו, פרחה ויצאה נשמתו של יצחק. כיון שהשמיע קולו מבין שני הקרובים אמר 'אל תשלח ידך אל הנער'. חזרה הנפש לגופו והתירו ועמד על רגליו. וידע יצחק תחיית המתים מן התורה שכל המתים עתידים להחיות. באותה השעה, פתח ואמר, "ברוך אתה ה' מחייה המתים".

“Rabbi Yehuda says, When the knife reached Isaac’s throat, his soul flew up and departed. When his voice was heard from between the Cherubim, G-d said, ‘Don’t put your hand to the lad’. His soul returned to his body, Abraham released him and he stood on his feet. Then Isaac knew of resurrection from the Torah, that all of the dead would in the future come to life. At that moment he declared: ‘Blessed are You... who resurrects the dead’.”

Similarly, consider the following:

Berachot 58b

אמר ריב"ל הרואה את חבירו לאחר שלשים יום אומר 'ברוך שהחיינו וקיימנו והגיענו לזמן הזה'; לאחר י"ב חדש אומר 'ברוך מחייה המתים'.

“Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi said, one who sees his friend after thirty days recites, ‘Blessed are You who has kept us alive, sustained us and brought us to this occasion’; after twelve months he recites, ‘Blessed are You who resurrects the dead’.”

If one recites this blessing upon reuniting with friends he hasn't seen for twelve months, all the more so it should apply upon reuniting with loved ones after death and resurrection.

Judgment in the World to Come (Nishmat Chaim 1:17)

Ramban in Sefer HaGemul maintains that there are three periods of judgment: 1] Each year on Rosh Hashanah when every person is judged regarding life, health and wealth. 2] Upon death when the soul is judged to heaven or *gehinom*. 3] At Resurrection, the day of Great Judgment. The first is the judgment of the body alone, the second of the soul alone and the third of the body and soul together. This opinion is based on many sources which refer to a "Great Day of Judgment", and the idea that ultimate reward or punishment should be meted out to the body and soul together.

However, Abarbanel in Ma'ayanei HaYeshuah 8:7 argues that since everyone is judged during their life in the physical world and then afterward in the spiritual world, there is no reason to judge those who merit Resurrection. All necessary judgment has already taken place. Therefore, he posits, any reference to a great Day of Judgment after the Resurrection, refers to a day of punishment and revenge against the wicked, and against the evil nations who persecuted the Jews.

The Arizal agrees that once a soul has already won atonement by experiencing Yom Kippur, suffering, and reincarnation, there is no reason that it should be judged further on a Day of Judgment – and this includes all Jews. Rather, references to the Day of Judgment speak of the judgment to meted out to the nations of the world.

Nishmat Chaim concludes by saying that the Great Day of Judgment should apply to all mankind, non-Jew and Jew alike. If so, what Jew will be judged at that time since every body and soul has already been judged in the realm appropriate to it? He answers that the judgment after the Resurrection will be for those who died somewhat prior to Resurrection and whose judgment had therefore not been completed.

Impurity from Death upon Coming to Life in the World to Come

Niddah 69b,70b

שאלו אנשי אלכסנדריא את רבי יהושע בן חנינא...מתים לעתיד לבא צריכין הזאה שלישי ושביעי או אין צריכין? אמר להן לכשיחיו נחכם להן. איכא דאמרי לכשיבא משה רבינו עמהם.

"The men of Alexandria asked R' Yehoshua ben Chananyah...Will the resurrected dead need to be sprinkled [with the purifying waters of the Red Heifer (Nu. 19:1-22)] on the third and seventh day, or not? He replied, When they are resurrected we shall go into the matter. Others say [that he replied], When Moses will come with them."

Maharsha explains that it is clear that if the resurrected will be impure, it is not because of their prior state of death - a disintegrated body loses its impurity and is therefore resurrected in purity. Rather the question is regarding those people who came in contact with the dead while they were alive but were not purified before their own death. Will they need to be sprinkled when they are resurrected on account of the soul becoming impure upon contact with the dead while they were alive? R' Yehoshua ben Chananya answers that the soul does not become impure upon contact with the dead – the body does. Therefore, once the original body has dissolved, no impurity is transferred to the new body and no purification is required.

Chatam Sofer (Yoreh Deah 337, 'vehenei'), however, is not certain that the impurity of death fully departs from a decayed body. While it is clear that impurity certainly departs from whatever has disintegrated, the question is regarding the *luz* bone that does not decay (see class on Resurrection). If this means that it remains in tact until shortly before resurrection, but then even it fully returns to dust before resurrection such that the body will be completely new, then the resurrected body will be pure. If, however, the *luz* remains in tact through resurrection such that it becomes part of the reconstructed body, its contact with the new body may render it impure. R' Yehoshua ben Chananya answers that the doubt will be clarified at resurrection when we actually see what happens.

Aruch LaNer (Nida 70b) argues that even if the entire body, including the *luz*, will be completely disintegrated before resurrection, there still exists the possibility that the new body will be impure. This depends on how the body comes to life. If the body is assembled bone by bone, sinew by sinew, etc. and only at the very end will the soul infuse the completed body such that all parts come to life together all at once, the body will be pure. However, if each part comes to life as it is assembled, the body, which is in the process of coming to life, will continually come in contact with dead parts as they are being assembled before they themselves come to life. In which case the new body will be impure. R' Yehoshua ben Chananya answers that the doubt will be clarified at resurrection when we actually see what happens.

Overpopulation in the World to Come

R' Sa'adiah Gaon (Emunot VeDeot, Ma'amar 7:8) makes a calculation that in the World to Come, the world will be extensive enough to accommodate all the people who ever lived that will be resurrected.

R' Ya'akov Emden (Siddur Beit Ya'akov, Ma'amadot Friday, 'Pru u'rvu') argues that these calculations don't work. Rather just as in the past G-d miraculously made provision for many people in a limited space, such as when millions of pilgrims entered Jerusalem and the Holy Temple during the festivals, or that the relatively small Land of Israel was able to house a disproportionately large population, so too the earth will miraculously accommodate all its resurrected inhabitants.

Pirkei Avot 5:5

עשרה ניסים נעשו לאבותינו בבית המקדש...עומדים צפופים ומשתחוים רווחים.

"Ten miracles were performed for our ancestors in the holy Temple...when the people stood they were crowded, but when they prostrated themselves they had ample space."

This is referring to the fact that throngs of pilgrims gathered in the Temple on the festivals and Yom Kippur, filling it to capacity. Yet miraculously, even though there was not enough room to stand, each person had ample room to prostrate himself and confess his sins or recite private prayers without being overheard by his neighbor.

The following source explicitly compares an example of this with resurrection:

Tanchuma, Parshat Tzav, sec. 12

"ואת כל העדה הקהלה". אמר לו להיכן? אמר לו "אל פתח אוהל מועד". אמר לו משה, רבונו של עולם, שישים ריבו אנשים ושישים ריבו בחורים, היאך אני יכול להעמידם אל פתח אוהל מועד, ואינו אלא בית סאתים? אמר לו הקב"ה, ועל דבר זה אתה תמה...ואף לעתיד לבוא ככה אני עושה בציון, כל אותם האוכלוסין מן אדם הראשון עד שיחיו המתים, היכן הם עומדים? והם עתידים לומר "צר לי המקום גשה לי ואשבה" (ישעי' מט:כ). מה אני עושה להם? אני מרחיבה שנאמר "הרחיבי מקום אוהלך" (שם נד:ב).

"[G-d commanded Moses], 'Convene the entire congregation'. Moses asked Him, Where? 'At the entrance to the Tent of Meeting'. Moses said, Master of the Universe, 600,000 men and 600,000 youths, how can I possibly gather at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting which is a plot of land that is only big enough to yield two se'ah [a small quantity] of grain? And G-d replied, About this you wonder?...So too, in time to come, will I do the same in Zion: All the world's population from Adam until the Resurrection [this suggests that non-Jews will be resurrected], where will they stand? And they will come and complain, 'The place is too narrow for me; move over for me so that I will dwell' (Is. 49:20). What will I do for them? I will broaden it for them. As it says, 'Widen the place of your tent' (Is. 54:2)."

Eating and Drinking in the World to Come

Berachot 17a

מרגלא בפומיה דרב: לא כעולם הזה העולם הבא. העולם הבא אין בו לא אכילה ולא שתיה ולא פריה ורביה ולא משא ומתן ולא קנאה ולא שנאה ולא תחרות אלא צדיקים יושבין ועטרותיהם בראשיהם ונהנים מזיו השכינה.

"A pearl in the mouth of Rav: The World to Come will not be like this world. In the World to Come, there will be no eating nor drinking nor procreation nor business nor envy nor hatred nor competition; rather, the righteous will sit with their crowns on their heads and delight in the radiance of the Divine Presence."

It is from the preceding source that Rambam identifies the World to Come with what is commonly referred to as the World of Souls. He explains his reasoning in his Treatise on Resurrection (ch. 4): If the World to Come as described above is referring to the era of resurrection, it is absurd to consider that G-d would create a body equipped to perform physical functions such as digestion and reproduction in an era in which they will not be needed. Rather, the World to Come heretofore described must be a dimension in which the soul resides without the body. Rambam spells this out further in the following source:

Rambam, Hilchot Teshuvah 8:2

העולם הבא אין בו גוף וגויה אלא נפשות הצדיקים בלבד בלא גוף כמלאכי השרת. הואיל ואין בו גויות אין בו לא אכילה ולא שתייה ולא דבר מכל הדברים שגופות בני אדם צריכין להן בעולם הזה ולא יארע דבר בו מן הדברים שמארעין לגופות בעולם הזה כגון ישיבה ועמידה ושינה ומיתה ועצב ושחוק וכיוצא בהן...הרי נתברר לך שאין שם גוף לפי שאין שם אכילה ושתייה. וזה שאמרו צדיקים יושבין דרך חידה אמרו כלומר הצדיקים מצויין שם בלא עמל ובלא יגיעה. וכן זה שאמרו עטרותיהן בראשיהן כלומר דעת שידעו שבגללה זכו לחיי העולם הבא מצויה עמהן והיא העטרה שלהן... ומהו זהו שאמרו נהנין מזיו שכינה? שידועים ומשיגין מאמתת הקב"ה מה שאינם יודעים והם בגוף האפל השפל.

“In the World to Come there is no body but rather souls of the righteous without bodies, like the ministering angels. Since there are no bodies, there is no eating, drinking, nor any of the things which men’s bodies need in this world. Nor will anything occur there which happens to bodies in this world such as standing, sitting, sleeping, dying, pain, frivolity, etc...This demonstrates that there is no body there, since there is no eating or drinking. When the Sages said that the righteous sit, they meant it figuratively i.e., the righteous reside there without work or exertion. Similarly, when they said that the righteous have crowns on their heads, they meant that the knowledge on account of which they merited the World to Come accompanies them and is their crown...And what is meant by what they said, ‘they benefit from the radiance of the Divine Presence’? They know and understand the truth of G-d in a way that they couldn’t while in a dark and lowly body.”

Since Rambam posits that it is inconceivable that G-d would resurrect a physical body without its engaging in bodily functions, it is evident that he maintains that in the Era of the Resurrection, there will be eating, drinking and so on. However, recall that we have seen according to Rambam, that Resurrection will be a transient stage. For after Resurrection the body will again die, and the soul will return to the World to Come, i.e., to the World of Souls. The reasoning is that spiritual reward would be loftier if awarded to a soul that is detached from the limitations of a physical body, as in the World of Souls.

In contrast, we saw that the other major authorities maintain that after death all souls abide in the World of Souls until the Resurrection. At that time they are clothed in bodies, and together the body and soul receive their ultimate, complete reward. The reason is that since the body enabled the soul to earn its eternal reward, Divine Providence dictates that the body’s reward also be eternal. Accordingly, they are of the opinion that after resurrection (which to them is the World to Come) even though the souls will be reinvested into bodies, there will be no eating and drinking. In this lies the novelty of Rav’s teaching: For if he was simply referring to the World of Souls, it is obvious that there is no eating, drinking etc. Rather, Rav intends to teach that after Resurrection, the body will be elevated to the level of the soul and will not need physical nourishment but will be sustained by spiritual sources. This is similar to Moses on Mt. Sinai when he didn’t eat for 40 days. (Rav Sa’adiah Gaon in Emunot VeDeot, end of sec. 47 and sec. 49; Ramban, end of Sha’ar HeGemul).

Married Life in the World to Come

Will a newly resurrected husband and his wife need to be remarried, or does the original marriage bond continue?

Rabbi Yosef Chaim of Baghdad (Rav Pa’alim, Vol. II, Sod Yesharim, ch. 2) says that death and decay completely severs and dissolves the physical connection between husband and wife. This suggests that a new marriage will have to be contracted between them after Resurrection.

What about a woman who was married twice? After Resurrection, will she be married to the first husband or the last?

There may be a distinction between whether she was a widow or a divorcee by her first husband before marrying the latter.

Regarding a widow who remarried, Sefer HaNitzachon (in Anaf Yosef, Sanhedrin, 128) is of the opinion that she will return to the second. The reason is that if she returns to the first

husband, it is similar to remarrying his divorcee after she married someone else, which is forbidden: "When a man marries a wife and...it happens that she does not find favor in his eyes...and he writes for her a bill of divorce...and she leaves his house and goes and marries another man, If the latter husband...writes her a bill of divorce...and sends her away from his house, or if the latter husband...dies. Her first husband...who sent her away, may not take her again to be his wife, since she was known by another man" (Deut. 24:1-4).

However, as mentioned above, Rav Pa'alim posits that death entirely dissolves the physical connection between husband and wife. Therefore, he argues, while a husband could not remarry his divorcee if she married afterward – that is only in that lifetime. But after death and resurrection, when the physical connection between her and the second husband has been completely severed, she can return to her first husband. And even though death dissolves the physical connection with first husband as well, such that we might ask why should she marry the first any more than the second, or for that matter, why marry either? According to Kabbalah, even though death terminates the physical connection with both, in the World of Souls she remains spiritually connected to the first, not the second, and therefore upon resurrection she should marry the first:

Zohar I, 21b

כי יעקב מית, גופיה אעלו ליה בארעא קדישא...משה לא האי [לא גופו] ולא האי [ולא עצמותיו]. אמאי? אלא יעקב בעלה קדמאה דמטרוניתא הוה. מית יעקב, אזדווגא ביה במשה. ובעוד דהוה משה בהאי עלמא, מני לה כדקא יאות, ואיהו בעלה תניינא...[כשמת] משה הוה לבר ולא עאל תמן, לא גופיה ולא גרמוי. אלא עאלת שכינתא בארעא בתר דמית משה, ואתהדרת לבעלה קדמאה, ודאי איהו יעקב. מכאן נוקבא דאתנסיבת בתרין, בהווא עלמא אהדרת לקדמאה. משה הוה לבר, כיון דבעלה קדמאה הוה בארעא.

"When Jacob died, his body was buried in the Holy Land...But for Moses, no part of his body was buried in the Holy Land. Why? Because Jacob was the first husband of the Queen [the Divine Presence], but after Jacob died, she mated with Moses. While Moses was in this world, he visited her as was proper and he became her second husband...[But when he died], Moses remained outside, neither his body nor his bones entered the Land. Instead, the Shechinah entered the Holy Land after Moses died and she returned to her first husband, who was Jacob. From this we learn that a woman who was married to two men [in this world], in the World to Come she shall return to her first husband. Moses was buried outside because her first husband [Jacob] was in the Holy Land [and a woman remains with her first husband]."

Regarding a divorcee who remarries, all agree that after resurrection she will marry the second husband. Since Sefer HaNitzachon maintains this regarding a widow, when the first couple's marriage terminated in divorce, all the more so she should marry the second. Rav Pa'alim would also agree that divorce severs the spiritual connection with her first husband in the World of Souls, in which case she would remain spiritually connected with the second and therefore be married to him after Resurrection.

Will there be physical intimacy and procreation between husband and wife after the Resurrection?

Recalling Rambam's opinion that G-d will not resurrect the soul in a body with no physical purpose, from which Rambam derives that there will be eating and drinking after

resurrection, the same will apply for all bodily functions (in Iggeret Teiman, his letter to the Jews of Yemen). However, according to the opinion of Ramban and others, that the body will be elevated to the level of soul and will not partake of physical needs, the answer is no.

Torah and Mitzvoth in the World to Come

The Written Torah

Rambam, Hilchot Yesodei HaTorah 9:1

דבר ברור ומפורש בתורה, שהיא מצוה עומדת לעולם ולעולמי עולמים. אין לה לא שינוי, ולא גירעון ולא תוספת, שנאמר "את כל הדבר, אשר אנוכי מצווה אתכם, אותו תשמרו, לעשות. לא תוסף עליו, ולא תגרע ממנו" (דברים יג,א). ונאמר "והנגלות לנו ולבנינו, עד עולם לעשות, את כל דברי התורה הזאת" (דברים כט,כח). הא למדת שכל דברי תורה, מצווין לנו לעשותן עד עולם.

"It is clear and explicit in the Torah, that the Torah is an eternal commandment; it is not subject to change nor subtraction nor addition. As in, "Everything that I command, you shall be careful to do it. You shall neither add to it, nor subtract from it" (Deut. 13:1). And, "The hidden things belong to the Lord, our G-d, but the revealed things apply to us and to our children forever that we must fulfill all the words of this Torah" (Deut. 29:28). Behold you learn that the entire Torah, we are commanded to keep forever."

Compare this with the following:

Rambam, Hilchot Megillah 2:18

כל ספרי הנביאים וכל הכתובים, עתידין ליבטל לימות המשיח, חוץ ממגילת אסתר הרי היא קיימת - כחמישה חומשי תורה, וכהלכות של תורה שבעל פה, שאינן בטילין, לעולם.

"All the books of the prophets and all the Holy Writings will be dissolved in the days of Mashiach, except for the Book of Esther, which will remain - like the Five Books of the Moses and like the legal rulings of the Oral Law, which will never be revoked."

The reason for the distinction between the Torah and the other books of the bible is that all the words of the prophets are intended either to reinforce adherence to the laws given through Moses in the Torah or to admonish people for negligence. In the Messianic era, when the law given through Moses is fully observed, there will be no more need for the words of the prophets. In addition, even the laws derived from the Prophets and the Writings are based on the Torah, and in the Messianic era we will be able to understand how to derive these laws directly from the Torah (Jerusalem Talmud, Megilla 1:5, Mareh HaPanim).

The Oral Tradition

From the fact that Rambam emphasizes that the legal rulings of the Oral Law will not be revoked, it is clear that all the exegesis and debate of the Oral Tradition will be abrogated and only the clearly defined laws will remain. This is because our comprehension of the Torah will be so clear, and our understanding of ethical and spiritual matters so pristine, that we will not need the extra explanatory information in the Oral Tradition. Thus all that

will remain from the pre-Messianic Oral Tradition will be the actual laws, without the surrounding exegesis.

Mitzvot

Opinion that Mitzvot will not apply:

Niddah 61b

ת"ר בגד שאבד בו כלאים...עושה ממנו תכריכין למת. אמר רב יוסף זאת אומרת מצות בטלות לעתיד לבא...א"ר יוחנן אפילו לקוברו, ור' יוחנן לטעמיה דא"ר יוחנן מאי דכתיב (תהילים פח) 'במתים חפשי'! כיון שמת אדם, נעשה חפשי מן המצות.

"The rabbis taught, a garment that has kilayim [i.e., a prohibited mixture of wool and linen]...may be used for shrouds for the dead. R' Yochanan clarified that this applies even for the burial. Rav Yosef deduced: This means that the mitzvot will no longer apply in time to come [otherwise the resurrected would be wearing forbidden garments]... And in this R' Yochanan is consistent with his own teachings, for R' Yochanan taught: What is meant by the verse, 'free among the dead' (Psalms 88)? Once a man dies, he is free from fulfilling the mitzvot."

Aruch L'Ner (Niddah 61b) notes that this seems to contradict the following teaching of R' Yochanan which suggests that that the mitzvot will apply even after resurrection, namely the giving of tithes to the priests:

Sanhedrin 90b

א"ר יוחנן, מניין לתחיית המתים מן התורה? שנאמר (במדבר יח) 'ונתתם ממנו [את] תרומת ה' לאהרן הכהן' וכי אהרן לעולם קיים, והלא לא נכנס לארץ ישראל שנותנין לו תרומה! אלא מלמד שעתיד לחיות וישראל נותנין לו תרומה. מכאן לתחיית המתים מן התורה.

"R' Yochanan said, How is Resurrection deduced from the Torah? It is written, 'Of [these tithes] you shall give G-d's heave-offering to Aaron the priest' (Nu. 18:28). But would Aaron live forever? After all, he did not enter the Land of Israel and thereby make it possible that terumah be given to him! Rather, this teaches that he will ultimately be resurrected, and the Jewish people will give him terumah."

Aruch L'Ner resolves this apparent contradiction based on the notion that Moses and Aaron will be resurrected early upon the arrival of *Mashiach* (see class on Resurrection). At that time, mitzvot will still apply. However once the general resurrection takes place, the mitzvot will no longer apply, therefore the dead may be buried in shrouds of forbidden mixtures. According to this opinion, the Messianic era will comprise two distinct periods. In the first period after *Mashiach* arrives, the whole of Torah law will still be in force and the mitzvot will be fully observed. From the time of the Resurrection, the mitzvot will no longer be in force.

But what of the principle mentioned above that all Torah laws are everlasting? The following source indicates that they will last until the time of the Resurrection:

Eruvin 22a

א"ר יהושע בן לוי מאי דכתיב (דברים ז) 'אשר אנכי מצוך היום לעשותם? היום לעשותם ולא למחר לעשותם? היום לעשותם למחר לקבל שכרם.

"R' Yehoshua ben Levi said, what is the meaning of the verse, 'which I command you today to do' (Deut 7:11)? [Rhetorically], Today to do, tomorrow not to do? [Rather], It means that the time to do the commandments is today, [while in this world, but not tomorrow] when you shall reap the reward i.e., in the World to Come."

According to this, the mitzvot are a means of refining and elevating the world, and once this has been achieved in the period of the Resurrection, they have no further function.