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[Home](#) > Tefillah - 041 Believing In Resurrection

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Death, Sleep and the Future Resurrection

ומקיים אמונתו לשיני עפר - We express in Shemoneh Esrei our belief that Hashem will awaken the dead in the future, those who are “asleep in the earth.” We believe in the future resurrection of the dead, which is one of our 13 principle beliefs.

Those who died are referred to as those who “sleep” in the earth - שיני עפר. Chazal say that sleep is a sixtieth of death. But those who are dead are described as those who are “sleeping” in the ground.

The curse of death was that man’s body returns to the earth after he dies. Besides for the fact that the body is buried in the earth, it also “sleeps” in the earth, until it is resurrected in the future. What does it mean that the body “sleeps” in the earth?

Those who are resurrected in the future are those who were never really “dead” in the first place - they were merely “asleep” in the ground until they were revived. When a person goes to sleep, it’s a temporary kind of death, as Chazal explain that sleep is a sixtieth of death.

If someone doesn’t believe in the future resurrection, Chazal say that he doesn’t get up in the future. Such a person is truly “dead” in the future. Someone who believed in the future resurrection, by contrast, will be revived in the future, and he was merely “asleep” in the ground until then. When a person believes in the future revival, his death is merely a state of “sleep”, not death.

Nighttime was given to us to go to sleep. What keeps us alive as we go to sleep? In essence, learning Torah can keep us alive at night if we learn it at night, because we are commanded to learn Torah both by day and by night. But we all have to go to sleep, as we know from the Rambam, that every person needs his sleep. So what keeps us alive when we go to sleep at night?

Our *emunah* is what keeps us alive. “*And the righteous shall live by his faith.*” When we are “dead” - when we are asleep - we can be “alive”, because our *emunah* keeps us alive. Those who get up in the future will become alive again, because their *emunah* in the future resurrection is the very power that will revive them back to life. This is the depth of why those who don’t believe in the future resurrection won’t merit to be resurrected, while those who did believe in the resurrection will merit to be resurrected.

The Two Parts To Having Emunah in Hashem

The basic level of our *emunah* is to believe that Hashem runs our life. The second part of our *emunah*

is to believe that Hashem can take us out of any situation in life - since Hashem is running everything, every last detail, without exception. Without having this *emunah* - or when this *emunah* is only intellectual and not yet in one's **heart** - a person doesn't feel that Hashem is with him, and that is a deathlike kind of existence. Being connected with Hashem is a life; when a person isn't connected with Hashem in his life, his life is death.

When a person goes to sleep and his soul leaves his body, he is kept alive with the belief that Hashem keeps him alive. When this *emunah* is active in one's life, a person receives his life-sustaining energy throughout the day as well.

A person also needs *emunah* regarding his future so that Hashem can take him out of any situation. Not only do we believe in our general future - that Hashem will bring the redemption - but that He can take us out of our own personal future "situations". We believe in the general resurrection which will be in the future - and we also must have *emunah* that Hashem can give us life, now, in our own personal life. It is written, '*And Your faith at nights*' - even when we are going through "night", a time of darkness in our life, our *emunah* in Hashem can take us out of all darkness.

This is the depth of believing in the future resurrection. Not only must we believe that Hashem will revive the dead in the future, but that Hashem can take you out of your current situation. These are the two parts to our *emunah* in the resurrection which have great ramifications in our life. When we have *emunah* (in our *daas*/awareness of the *lev*/heart) that Hashem can always uplift us from wherever we are, we can soar to greatness.

Emunah That We Can Reach High Levels

There are many rungs in our ladder of growth which the Sage Rabbi Pinchas ben Yair lists [which is the outline of *sefer Mesillas Yesharim*]. We start with *zehirus* (watchfulness) *zerizus* (zeal), *nekiyus* (cleanliness) etc. all the way until *techiyas hameisim* (revival of the dead) and *ruach hakodesh*. Is there anyone who believes he can get to the top of the ladder of growth, to get to *techiyas hameisim*? People are skeptical. But the key is to access the depth of our *emunah* in *techiyas hameisim*. When we believe in the deeper meaning of *techiyas hameisim* - when we believe that Hashem can take us and lift us up beyond our current situation - then we will be able to get there!

A person takes a look at these spiritual levels and immediately despairs: "How do you reach '*taharah*' (purity) these days, in an impure world like this?"

But we must believe, with all the depths of our soul, that we can get to the highest levels of spiritual growth. If the Sage Rabbi Pinchas Yair tells us that these are the steps in our ladder of growth, then we can do it. We just need to firmly believe that we can do it.

To have this *emunah* really requires *bittul hadaas* (to nullify our regular intellect) on our part. People who hear these words might think, "This speaker doesn't understand. He doesn't realize what this generation is about. He doesn't realize what kind of impure world we live in, that it's simply impossible for us these days to reach such high levels such as *techiyas hameisim*..."

But Hashem said, "*I am Hashem, and I do not change.*" Hashem's existence never changes; He "was, is, and always will be." Just as He was with the Avos and with all the souls of every *tzaddik* in every generation, so is He with anyone who searches for Him. "*He is close to those who call out to Him in truth.*" (Tehillim: 145). It doesn't matter what time we live in; we can always connect with Hashem, as long as we truly search to be close to Him, and then He will be with us.

The revival of the dead is not just an event that will happen in the future. By having *emunah* in the resurrection, it can affect you even today. Our logic doesn't agree with this, of course. Our logic tells

us that it's simply impossible these days to reach high spiritual levels, such as meriting your own personal *techiyas hameisim*. Our logic is telling us to remain satisfied with just "a little" Torah, "a little" Tefillah, "a little *emes*" in your life. **No!** Our souls need to aspire for perfection! Search for the truth, as the *Mesillas Yesharim* says in the beginning. If we only listen to our rational logic, we will give up, but if we have *emunah* - which goes higher than our logic - we can believe that we have a *neshamah*, which is pure, which is a "piece of Hashem."

Believe in this - truly believe in it, and not just superficially. If you really believe you are a *neshamah*, you will be able to reach the highest rung of the spiritual ladder.

If you constantly live with this belief, you will be able to withstand even your lowliest and worst situations. Not even death will stop you, because you will be able to believe firmly that you will come out of death one day in the future, with *techiyas hameisim*. But this will only work if you truly believe that Hashem can take you out of any situation and help you succeed in any situation.

Leaving A Sleepy Mind Through Emunah

The Vilna Gaon says that when a person sleeps, his imagination takes over. When the soul leaves the body, the holy thoughts of the body leave with it, so imagination takes over instead. That is the definition of sleep - it is a situation of imagination taking over. Thus, imagination is whenever we are "asleep."

Even when a person is physically awake, he can be asleep, if he's not using his power of thought enough. Most people are sleeping as they are awake! This is why there is a great lack of *daas* in today's times. It is because most people are asleep even as they are awake - their whole day is being spent in their imagination!

The more we get in touch with our *neshamah*, which contains our power of holy thought, the more we can overcome the imagination and start being more "awake" to the reality, which is to have *emunah* in Hashem. We must have *emunah* that the light of our *neshamah* can be revealed, which will enable us to soar to the highest levels. We must believe that we have a *neshamah* in us, and that it can transcend all of our human limits, no matter what situation we are found in.

So we need to have *emunah* in Hashem, and in addition, we need to believe that we are a *neshamah*. Believe that there is a *neshamah* (and it resides in your brain).

How Emunah Affects Our Torah Learning

Of course, we also need to learn Torah and fix our *middos* too, besides having *emunah*. I don't mean to negate this, but the more we have *emunah*, the more the light of our *neshamah* will shine, and this will have a direct result on our Torah learning and *middos*.

This is what separates a Jew from a non-Jew - a Jew has a *neshamah*. Otherwise, a non-Jew sitting down to learn Torah can understand it just as much as a Jew can. What's the difference between a Jew sitting down to learn and a non-Jew who sits down to learn Torah? It is because a Jew has a *neshamah* - thus, a Jew's Torah learning is a whole different kind of understanding in the Torah. This helps us understand how revealing our *neshamah* changes the way we learn Torah.

You should know that even most people who are sitting and learning Torah all day are only using their regular intellect to learn Torah, and they aren't in touch with the higher intellect of their *neshamah*. The intellect we start out with in life is not the same kind of intellect that our *neshamah* has. The intellect we start out with in life is a mind that is physical. Only our *neshamah* can access the true understanding of the Torah - the Torah that is *Torah Ohr*, a "Torah of light".

If we have *emunah* that Hashem can take us out of any situation, we will receive *siyata d'shamaya* to reveal our *neshamah*, and then our entire Torah learning will look different.

May we merit to reach the kind of Torah that is *Torah Ohr*, the understanding in Torah that comes when we access our *neshamah*. This is the true meaning of **ומקיים אמונתו לשיני עפר** - those who merit to become truly "resurrected."

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