The Afterlife

□□□ □□□□□ □□□ □□□ ,□□□ □□□□□ □□□□□ □□□□□□ □□□□□□ □□□ □□□ □□□
It is better a moment of Teshuba (repentance) and good deeds in this life, than the whole life of the world to come.
Pirqe Abot 4:17
The 13th Principle, which is the last one of the 13 principles of Jewish faith, is our belief in Tehiyat haMetim, the resurrection of the dead (not to be confused with reincarnation).
Let's explain what this principle is about, following Maimonides.
Tehiyat haMetim is an indisputable belief in Judaism, i.e., there is no debate among the rabbis about it. It is mentioned in the books of the prophets, in the Talmud, in the Midrashim and it was introduced by our sages into the second blessing of the Amida, which we recite 3 times a day.
Tehiyat haMetim means that in the future, in the messianic age, body and soul will be back together as they were before death. Maimonides explains that this does not mean that men will not die anymore, men will live longer, but will still be mortal. Maimonides also explains that Tehiyat haMetim should not be interpreted metaphorically.
Now, to understand how this is going to happen, i.e., how the bodies will resurrect, is an idea beyond our power of visualization and imagination.
One of the most interesting things Maimonides says about the resurrection is that it will not happen for everyone but only for the Tsadiqim, the righteous people.
Maimonides learns this from a Midrash that says that sometimes divine reward benefits the righteous and the wicked simultaneously. The Midrash mentions "rain" as an example of this type of blessing, because it makes no distinction between the field of the righteous and the field of the wicked. However, explains the Midrash, we have the case of Tehiyat haMetim, which is an example of a "selective reward", because it will only apply to the Tsadiqim.
Why only to the Tsadiqim?
Clarifying this point will help us to better understand the reason for Tehiyat haMetim.
Our main goal in life as Jews is to get closer to HaShem

(□ □□□□□), learning about Him as much as we can, and obeying His will. For that, to connect with God, we study and we observe His Tora. The Tsadiqim are the righteous people who dedicate their lives entirely to this purpose, and don't get dragged away from it by material distractions.

When we die, our souls or *neshamot* come to the Presence of God. In the World to Come every soul perceives God's presence at the level it has reached in this earthly life. Ironically, in the next world we enjoy the Presence of Hashem, but we cannot grow or develop anymore the level of that perception. So our understanding of God in the World to Come depends on our understanding of God in this life. And that is why it is reasonable that the Tsadiq, the righteous, who knows what the mission in life is, be granted an additional opportunity to connect with God again in this world, and reaching thus a higher lever in the world to Come. But a wicked person, a totally materialistic person, who is dedicated only to pursue material pleasures, distractions, money, image, and the immediate satisfaction of his physical pleasures, what would he do with that extra "life"? Keep pursuing the satisfaction of his material impulses?

As the Midrash mentions, for Maimonides Tehiyat haMetim, like rain, is considered a reward for the righteous, an additional opportunity to grow, NOT an opportunity to correct or repair what a wicked man did wrong …. As it is explained in the very important Mishna of Pirqe Abot that we quoted above, the opportunity to repair, and repent—the Teshuba— has its place in this earthly life, in the same dimension we have the opportunity to do good deeds. (It is scary to think that this short life has so much importance, right?)

To understand a little better this idea, consider the following example, "similar" to Tehiyat haMetim. Imagine a 80 years old man, who is being offered the elixir of youth to return to be 17-years-old. Now, ask him, what would you do with your life if you would be 17 years old again? If he says, "Well, now that I know what is important in life, if I would have another chance, I'll try to strengthen my relationship with God", this man, for Maimonides, would qualify for Tehiyat haMetim.

□□□□ □□ □□ □□□□□ □□□ □"□□