

Jewish thoughts on resurrection

Resurrection of the dead — *t'chiyat hameitim* in Hebrew — is a core doctrine of traditional Jewish theology. Traditional Jews believe that during the Messianic Age, the temple will be rebuilt in Jerusalem, the Jewish people ingathered from the far corners of the earth and the bodies of the dead will be brought back to life and reunited with their souls. It is not entirely clear whether only Jews, or all people, are expected to be resurrected at this time.

This belief — distinct from, though connected to, the belief in the immortality of the soul — is mentioned explicitly only twice in the Hebrew Bible, in the books of Isaiah and Daniel, though hints of it are extrapolated from other biblical sources. The medieval philosopher Maimonides includes it as one of his 13 principles of the Jewish faith, and the **Mishnah states that those who don't believe in resurrection "have no share in the world to come."** [Mishnah Sanhedrin 10:1] **And One who says: There is no resurrection of the dead derived from the Torah, and one who says: The Torah did not originate from Heaven, and an *epikoros*, who treats Torah scholars and the Torah that they teach with contempt**

The Amidah prayer recited thrice daily by traditional Jews includes a blessing praising God as the resurrector of the dead.

The resurrection doctrine is fleshed out in a variety of rabbinic sources. Among the ideas associated with it is the belief that during the messianic age the dead will be brought back to life in Israel. According to the Talmud, all bodies not already in Israel will be rolled through underground tunnels to the holy land. Avoiding this process, which is said to be spiritually painful, is one reason some Jews choose to be buried in Israel.

At least two talmudic sources note that the righteous will be brought back from the dead wearing the clothing in which they were buried. .

According to the Jewish mystical tradition, souls can be reincarnated in different bodies if those souls have not completed their missions on earth. At the time of the resurrection, the individual soul will be split among the various bodies it once inhabited, and the portion of the soul whose mission was completed in a particular body will return to that body.

The doctrine of resurrection has proved controversial throughout Jewish history. Maimonides wrote in his *Mishneh Torah* that the idea that the Messiah will revive dead bodies is something that "fools" say. However, when critics charged that he denied resurrection, he penned a scathing essay in which he emphatically argued that he did in fact believe in resurrection.

Rabbi Neil Gillman, author of *The Death of Death*, has suggested that the reason the Amidah includes a reference to resurrection — and mentions it multiple times just in that one blessing — may be in response to those who contested this belief in the first century BCE when the prayer was being formulated

Centuries later, the Reform movement, in its Pittsburgh Platform of 1885, rejected entirely the idea of resurrection, saying it was "not rooted in Judaism." (The platform did assert a belief in the immortality of the soul.) The movement removed the Amidah resurrection blessing from their liturgy until 2007 when, with the release of its new prayer book *Mishkan T'filah*, it reinstated the blessing — a move some attributed to Reform's larger turn toward traditionalism and a growing comfort with liturgical metaphor.

Among Orthodox Jews, belief in the resurrection is still generally understood as a literal prophecy that will come to fruition when the messiah comes.