Eternal Reward: A Parable

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A righteous person dies and the soul is brought before the Heavenly tribunal. The Almighty, seeing that this person had lived an exemplary life, gives options.

“In light of your righteousness, you may choose the section of heaven in which to spend eternity. You may opt for your soul to dwell among the great sages of Israel, the finest Torah scholars of all generations.

“I do not choose this.”

Somewhat surprised, the Almighty then offers: “Your soul may dwell among the righteous rulers of the world, those who led their people with honesty and humility.”

“I do not choose this.”

A third offer: “Your soul may dwell among the famous philanthropists who piously shared their wealth with the poor, who financed great institutions for the betterment of humanity.”

“I do not choose this.”

A fourth offer: “Your soul may dwell among famous, brilliant, respected people of all nations who lived righteously.”

“I do not choose this.”

The Almighty then said: “I have offered you wonderful choices and you have rejected them. Where then would you like your soul to dwell for eternity?”

“I would like my soul to be with my parents and grandparents.”

“But they were simple people. They were not scholars; they were not powerful; they were not rich; they were not famous. They were quiet souls who lived quiet lives. I am offering your soul to be in the presence of the souls of much greater people.”

“I would like my soul to be with my parents and grandparents. They lived pure and good lives. They maintained Torah in the face of many obstacles. They did not hurt anyone. They sacrificed greatly to live as pious Jews. They were abused and cheated and disdained; but their faith was strong. Without my parents and grandparents and the millions of other anonymous quiet souls who kept the flame of Judaism alive over all the generations, I would not have been able to live my life as I did. I would like my soul to be with them.”

The Almighty smiled. “You have chosen wisely. It is precisely their section of heaven that is the highest and most blessed. It is precisely due to your parents and grandparents and the millions of other quiet pious souls that I have not given up entirely on humanity.”

And the soul of the righteous person was bound up in eternal life, along with the souls of parents, grandparents and the millions of other quiet pious souls who sustain God’s hope for humanity.