

***Gilgulim* – Part 2 – JewishClarity.com**

The *Guf* (Body) and the *Neshama* (Soul)

The starting point with the topic of *gilgul* is to understand the relationship between the *guf* (body) and the *neshama* (soul). The essence of a human being is really the spiritual component which we refer to as the soul; the body is simply its physical clothing. The fact that they are able to stay connected is remarkable. The *Rema* (*Orach Chaim* 6:1) explained that this is the *pli'ah* (wonder) which is being referred to in the *bracha* (blessing) of *Asher Yatzar*. (*Mishnat HaGilgulim*, pg. 371).

Rav Dessler expressed this centrality of the soul to a person very succinctly: “*Ratzon ha'adam hu mahuto* — The will and desire of a person is his essence.” He wrote that even the death of the body doesn't change this essential inner quality of a person. For example, one whose life was empty and attached to illusions will remain attached to these very same illusions even when he has separated from his physical body. Based on a *Gemara* in *Brachot* discussing the soul of a woman who had died but was still very interested in what was happening in the world, we see that the feeling [and desire for] honor remained within her exactly as it had been in *Olam Ha'zeh* (this world). (*Michtav M'Eliyahu, Chelek Bet, Yamim Nora'im*, pg. 62).

The Nature of the Soul

The soul has five different aspects. Their order from bottom to top is: *Nefesh, Ruach, Neshama, Chaya*, and *Yechida* — although, even within a single one of these aspects, there are countless additional levels. (*Sha'ar HaGilgulim*, chap. 1).

When a person is created for the **first** time, his *nefesh* enters him to facilitate his bodily functions working properly. If his actions are appropriate, his *ruach* will enter him after he becomes 13 years old. And if his actions continue to be good, his *neshama* will then enter him when he turns 20. (*Sha'ar HaGilgulim*, chap. 2) Although most people barely acquire the lower level of *nefesh*, the potential exists for a person to access all three levels of the soul. One will continue to reincarnate until he does, or history runs out of time. As the *Gemara* (*Sanhedrin* 98a) states, there is a final time for the arrival of *Mashiach*. (Rabbi Winston, *Fundamentals of Reincarnation*, pg. 59).

A person who has acquired the level of *ruach* is one for whom speech is sacred. This person will not have much difficulty in abstaining from base actions. His struggle will rather be to perfect the way he speaks, avoiding transgressions such as negative speech about others. Or, it might be to *daven* (pray) better. The level up from *ruach* is *neshama*, which corresponds to the level of *machshava*, or conscious thought. This means to think before one acts or speaks, and to have self-awareness. (Rabbi Winston, *Fundamentals of Reincarnation*, pg. 52).

The *nefesh, ruach, and neshama* of a person all contain 613 parts (what are referred to as 248 “limbs” and 365 “tendons”). The souls can actually divide into an unlimited number of roots, which can each contain unlimited numbers of sparks. Whichever sparks were not rectified within one *gilgul* will return in a future *gilgul* to become rectified, while those which were already rectified will not need to reincarnate. Rather they will ascend and remain on the level befitting them. Therefore, they will no longer be able to become blemished in any way by future *gilgulim*. (*Sha'ar HaGilgulim*, chap. 14, 21).

Once one has rectified all three aspects of *nefesh, ruach, and neshama*, he will be considered to be an *adam shaleim* (complete person). He will no longer need to reincarnate for his own sake. (*Sha'ar HaGilgulim*, chap. 2) There are cases, however, where he may need to reincarnate for the sake of others. (Rabbi Winston, *Fundamentals of Reincarnation*).

It is generally impossible for a regular *gilgul* (i.e., past one's initial creation) to acquire a *nefesh*, then a *ruach*, and finally a *neshamah*, all in the same lifetime. Aside from a special procedure, which is beyond our ability today, once one has completely rectified his *nefesh*, he will be able to receive and rectify his *ruach* only once he has died and returned in a new *gilgul*. And he will need to die and return once again, in yet another *gilgul*, to be able to receive and rectify his *neshama*. (*Sha'ar HaGilgulim*, chap. 7).

Rav Chaim Vital explains that this is a remarkable explanation for **why some completely righteous people die young**. Since they completely rectified their *nefesh* after only a few years, but were unable to receive and rectify their *ruach* within that very same lifetime, they ended up dying early. Their *nefesh* had no need to be detained in this world, and their death is what actually allowed, first their *ruach*, and then their *neshama*, to be rectified through their subsequent *gilgulim*. (*Sha'ar HaGilgulim*, chap. 7).

All of this is in the case of a regular *gilgul*. If, however, the *gilgul* comes through the process of *yibum*, where a brother-in-law marries his former sister-in-law following the death of his brother, it seems that all three, the *nefesh*, *ruach*, and *neshamah*, or at least the *nefesh* and *ruach* will be able to be rectified together within the same lifetime. (*Sha'ar HaGilgulim*, chap. 3).

While new *aveirot* during subsequent *gilgulim* can not damage those aspects of the soul which were already rectified, they will increase what needs to be repaired within whichever section of the soul one is currently trying to repair. This could ultimately require many more *gilgulim* until one is able to achieve a complete *tikun*. (*Sha'ar HaGilgulim*, chap. 11).

The *chet* of Adam in *Gan Eden* damaged most of the sparks of his soul. The goal of the later generations is to rectify them.

The next step with understanding *gilgul* is to recognize what happened with Adam HaRishon (the first man). The soul of Adam HaRishon, prior to the *chet* of the *Eitz HaDa'at Tov v'Ra*, (tree of the knowledge of good and evil) incorporated all the souls that have ever come into the world, and which will continue to do so, until the time of *Mashiach*. (*Sha'ar HaGilgulim*, chap. 12) As a consequence of this *chet*, all of these souls became “blemished.” It is this *chet* and blemish which created the need for rectification, and therefore, reincarnation. (*Sha'ar HaGilgulim*, chap. 3).

When Adam violated the Divine command against eating, not only did he not perfect Creation, he damaged much of it. (*Drushei Olam HaTohu*, *Chelek* 1, *Ma'amar HaKlali*, *Os* 4) He also damaged most of the *nitzotzot* (sparks) of his soul, causing them to become mixed with the *klippot* (literally translated as “peels” — the spiritual barriers between us and Hashem). In every generation, some of these sparks leave and come to this world to become rectified through *gilgulim*. *Mashiach* will come only once this process of *tikun* is finished. (***Avoda Zara* 5a**; Rabbi Winston, *Fundamentals of Reincarnation*, pg. 57).

Various Details of *Gilgulim*: *Techiat HaMeitim*, *Kareit*, *Tzadik* vs. *Rasha*

A commonly asked question about *gilgulim* is — Which of the many bodies that the soul inhabited, in its various *gilgulim*, is the one that it will be resurrected with at the end of history, during *Techiat HaMeitim* (the resurrection of the dead)? The answer is that every body will be resurrected with whichever sparks it was able to repair, unless the *gilgul* of one particular body did the type of *aveirah* which is so terrible that it would actually block the soul from resurrecting. And in the case of *yibum*, specifically, virtually all of the accomplishment of the soul will be considered to have occurred from the point of the *yibum* and onward. (*Sha'ar HaGilgulim*, chap. 4; *Mishnat HaGilgulim*, pp. 386–7).

As an example, a first body will resurrect with the 40 percent of the *nefesh* that was rectified in its lifetime, a second body (and first *gilgul*) with the 40 percent rectified in it, while a third body (and second *gilgul*) will receive the remaining 20 percent which it rectified. Therefore, during the time of resurrection (*Techiat HaMeitim*), many bodies will coexist while possessing sections of the same original soul. (*Sha'ar HaGilgulim*, chap. 4).

What happens to a person who commits a transgression for which the punishment is *kareit*, meaning to be cut off from the Jewish people?

According to *Sha'ar HaGilgulim* (chap. 11), *kareit* does not affect the soul as much as it does the body. The body will be completely destroyed in such a case, while the soul will reincarnate into a new body, with which it will be associated during *Techiat HaMeitim*. It will, however, have a diminished degree of pleasure there since it will be aware that it is not in its own natural place. (Rabbi Winston, Fundamentals of Reincarnation).

Differences between the *gilgulim* of a *Tzadik* and a *Rasha*

A *rasha* (evil person) is given only three *gilgulim* (i.e., four different lifetimes) to rectify his *nefesh*. If he has not accomplished rectification by the third *gilgul*, he will be cut off completely. A *tzadik* (righteous person), however, can have a thousand *gilgulim* to rectify his *nefesh*. What is the essential quality which separates a *tzadik* from a *rasha* in terms of *gilgulim*? The one who did no rectification at all is called evil, while the one that even began to rectify his *nefesh* is called righteous. Therefore, as long as one began this process of rectification, even a small amount, he will not be cut off. Rather he will be able to continue for even a thousand *gilgulim*, if necessary. It seems that this is only relevant for the rectification of the *nefesh*. When it comes to the *ruach* and the *neshama*, which come from a much more elevated place, the person will certainly be given as many *gilgulim* as he will need to rectify them. (Ramak; *Sha'ar HaGilgulim*, chap. 4; *Mishnat HaGilgulim*, pp. 383–5).

One who does not complete his rectification during one *gilgul* will need to return in another *gilgul*, even if he is only missing something small. All of the benefit of the Torah he learns and the *mitzvot* which he does in this new *gilgul* will then go to the previous body where he had accomplished the majority of what he needed to do. And the completed *nefesh* will be resurrected with the body of that earlier *gilgul*. (*Sha'ar HaGilgulim*, chap. 4).

One may return in a *gilgul* immediately after burial, and sometimes only after some or many years (Ramak). *Gilgul* can even occur after one has had some degree of purification in *Gehehom*. One will not, however, return in a *gilgul* once one has entered *Gan Eden*, unless it is for the sake of benefiting the entire generation. (*Chessed I'Avraham*; *Mishnat HaGilgulim*, pg. 374).

Ibur* and *Gilgul* in Terms of *Tzadik* vs. *Rasha

There is also a concept known as an *ibur* (embedded soul), in which the *nefesh* or *ruach* of someone that had passed away becomes implanted within a host person **during** the lifetime of this host. The *ibur* from this guest soul can have one of two goals:

1. To benefit the host, to help to purify him and bring him to life in *Olam Haba*. If, however, this improvement doesn't happen, then the *ibur* will eventually leave and return to the upper place. In this case, the guest *nefesh* won't feel any of the *yissurim* (difficulties) that the host is going through.
2. To benefit the guest *nefesh* (*ibur*) itself. The guest *nefesh* will benefit from the help which it (the guest) is giving to the host with the *mitzvot* and *tikun* of the host. This *ibur* within the host will

benefit when the host does *mitzvot*, but will not be harmed if the host transgresses. This *ibur* to help the guest *nefesh* will only happen from when the host is at least 13 years old and fully able to do *mitzvot*. This guest *nefesh* will feel the *yissurim* that occur to the *guf* of the host, exactly as much as the *nefesh* of the host person itself does. (*Sha'ar HaGilgulim*, chap. 5).

An example of an *ibur* for the sake of the guest *nefesh* can be someone who never did the mitzvah of divorce, or a non-Kohen who was unable to perform the *mitzvot* unique to *Kohanim*. He can accomplish this through coming back as an *ibur* in someone about to undergo a divorce, or in a *Kohen* who is going to perform a *Kohen*-type mitzvah. (*Sha'ar HaGilgulim*, chap. 11; *Mishnat HaGilgulim*, pg. 390).

While an *ibur* is able to both come and go during the lifetime of the host, it will sometimes remain within the host body for the rest of its life, as long as the host person maintains the level of merit that brought it in the first place. Should that be the case, there is an additional and remarkable benefit for the host soul that goes way beyond its life in this world.

Should a person merit to keep his *ibur* until he himself leaves this world, and the guest soul is destined for a higher level in *Olam Haba* than the host soul, this guest soul can actually elevate the host soul to its higher level. The host person will then find himself on a level in the World-to-Come he could never have hoped to achieve with his personal soul alone. (Rabbi Winston, *Fundamentals of Reincarnation*).

An *ibur* can actually be a great soul from the past. (*Sha'ar HaGilgulim*, chap. 2) This is the *sod* (secret) of what the Sages have written in the *medrashim*, and specifically *Medrash Shmuel*: There is not a generation in which there is not someone like Avraham, Yitzchak, Yaakov, Moshe, Shmuel, etc. An *ibur* can even occur, in some cases, while the one giving the *ibur* is still alive, as happened with David, who was an *ibur* within Yehonasan. (*Sha'ar HaGilgulim*, chap. 2; *Mishnat HaGilgulim*, pg. 381).

Not only could an *ibur* for good have one of two possible goals — to rectify itself or to help to rectify the host person; the soul of a *rasha* could also become an *ibur* for one of two different reasons. It could be for the sake of the *ibur*, if the host person is a *tzadik* who will help to rectify this *ibur* soul of the *rasha*. Or it could actually be to negatively influence the host person, if the host is a *rasha*. In this case, the evil guest soul will reinforce the evil of the host, until this evil host person is destroyed from the world, G-d forbid. (*Sha'ar HaGilgulim*, chap. 22; *Mishnat HaGilgulim*, pg. 383).

Another *ibur* case would be if one person caused a second one to do an *aveirah*. The one who actually **did** the transgression may need to return in a *gilgul* to rectify what he did, while the one who **caused** this *aveirah* will have to return as an *ibur* within him to help this rectification to occur. This would even be in a case where the one who caused the *aveirah* did not violate it himself. And once the *aveirah* is fixed, the *ibur* will then be able to leave him. (*Sha'ar HaGilgulim*, chap. 11; *Mishnat HaGilgulim*, pg. 383).

It is actually possible for there to be as many as three different *gilgulim* (i.e., from the time of birth) or three separate *iburim* (i.e., during one's lifetime) that enter a single host body, besides the *nefesh* of the host himself. (*Sha'ar HaGilgulim*, chap. 32).

The Reality of *Gilgul* is Virtually Universal

There is almost no one in the world who can escape *gilgulim*, even great *tzadikim* and *talmidei chachamim* (Torah scholars). Since their lofty Torah will shield them from the fires of *Gehenom*, they will specifically need to reincarnate in this world to eliminate any *aveirah* they committed, as

the verse (*Kohelet* 7:20) says: “For there is no *tzadik* in the world who does good but does not [ever] transgress.” (*Sha'ar HaGilgulim*, chap. 22).

Even a *tzadik*, who is ready to ascend to great heights in *Olam Haba*, may initially be given an *onesh* (penalty), either involving *gilgulim* or something in the upper realm, to keep him out of *Gan Eden* for a certain period of time. This will eliminate his more severe *aveirot*, after which time he may be able to make it into the first level of *Olam Haba*. Before he goes to a higher level, however, he may need to return to receive some additional *onesh* to eliminate *aveirot* that were lighter than the first ones.

And finally, he may be brought back for even more of an *onesh* for unfulfilled specific details of the *mitzvot*, after which time he can elevate to the true area fitting for him. He may, therefore, require many different *gilgulim* to atone for and to rectify all of his *aveirot*. (*Sha'ar HaGilgulim*, chap. 22).

Reshayim (Evil People) Go Straight to Gehenom and Avoid Gilgulim

Paradoxically, it is actually the *resha'im* (evil people) that may end up avoiding *gilgulim*. They will enter *Gehenom* and receive their *onesh* there to atone for their *aveirot*, for a period of twelve months. One could, therefore, imagine that it is a better situation for the *rasha*, who can go straight to *Gehenom* and clear up all of his *aveirot* right away, than for the *tzadik* who may need to return to this world in many different *gilgulim*.

The resolution of this is that Hashem, Who is all-knowing, understands that if this *rasha* returns in *gilgulim*, he will likely add to his *aveirot*, and they will become more and more numerous than his *mitzvot*. Therefore, once the *rasha* has done the minimal number of *mitzvot* that he needs for a basic rectification of his *nefesh*, Hashem will remove him from the world and place him into *Gehenom*. This is a kindness, which will clear him of his *aveirot* while leaving his few *mitzvot* intact. For a *tzadik*, however, whose *mitzvot* are greater than his *aveirot*, his *aveirot* can be eliminated through *yissurim* during *gilgulim*, while his *mitzvot* will likely keep increasing. (*Sha'ar HaGilgulim*, chap. 4).

Gilgul vs. Gehenom

The **Reishit Chachma** (*Sha'ar HaYirah*, chap. 13), in the name of his Rebbe, the Ramak, discussed the fundamental difference between the process of *gilgul neshamot* and the *tikunim* that can happen in *Gehenom*. He explained that if some *mitzvot* were never done properly, the soul will need to return to complete them. This requires *gilgul*, since *Gehenom* is only able to purify, not to fill in what is lacking. And even in terms of repair and purification, *gilgul* can accomplish much more than what can be purified in *Gehenom*.

As a *mashal* (analogy), imagine a person with terrible afflictions on his body which can either be healed through a long and difficult therapy, or much more quickly with an amputation. While *gilgul* may take an entire new lifetime or lifetimes, it does give the soul the possibility of a complete healing; *Gehenom* is much faster, but it heals the “afflictions” with a type of amputation.

The **Reishit Chachma** also wrote that a person may [spiritually] damage a limb to such a degree that, if he goes straight to *Gehenom*, he will end up losing it and remain crippled [eternally] in *Gan Eden*. He may, therefore, need to return to this world in a *gilgul* to repair the damage. This may, however, entail being crippled in *this* world in that very limb that had been [spiritually] damaged in his previous existence. (*Sha'ar HaYirah*, chap. 13; *Ma'amad HaNosaf*, pp. 163–4).

Dybuk

There are, however, some very wicked people who don't even merit to enter *Gehenom* after their deaths to eliminate their *aveirot*. Their souls will, therefore, need to go from one bad place to another in strange *gilgulim* until their *aveirot* have been partially rectified, so they can then enter *Gehenom* for twelve months to atone completely. There is no set time for this. Sometimes these *gilgulim* (prior to *Gehenom*) can continue for 20 years, or 100, or 1000 years, depending on the extent of the *aveirot* they initially did in this world. (*Sha'ar HaGilgulim*, chap. 22).

Some of the souls of *reshayim* (evil people) who did not merit to enter *Gehenom* can occasionally enter the bodies of living people and speak about the torment they are enduring after having died, *Rachmana litzlan* (G-d should save us). This is called a *dybuk* (one that clings). After taking over the body of this living person, possibly as the result of an *aveirah* that this host person himself or herself committed, they usually require a *talmid chacham* (Torah scholar) to perform some type of a *tikun* (repair) on their behalf before they will completely leave the host body. (*Sha'ar HaGilgulim*, chap. 22, 41).

Men vs. Women, Jews vs. Non-Jews with Gilgul

Rav Chaim Vital wrote in *Sha'ar HaGilgulim* (chap. 9) that the reality of *gilgulim* applies to men more commonly than to women. Women, who have no obligation to learn Torah, may be able to cleanse their transgressions in *Gehenom*, and will often have no need to reincarnate. Another factor for this gender difference is that women are exempt from most time-bound positive *mitzvot*. (*Mishnat HaGilgulim*, pg. 405).

Women will, however, return in *gilgulim* if they had not completed *mitzvot* which they were obligated to do, in order to marry their soul-mate, or through an *ibur* which could then become an actual *gilgul*. (*Mishnat HaGilgulim*, pp. 403–5). Some say that *gilgulim* are only for Jews. Others hold that even non-Jews could become *gilgulim*. And a third opinion is that non-Jews could sometimes become *gilgulim*, but only for a maximum of three times. Jews, on the other hand, have no limit to the number of their *gilgulim* as long as they are not evil. (*Mishnat HaGilgulim*, pp. 406–7).

This should be *I'zechut ul'iluy nishmat Ruchama Rivka, a"h, bat Asher Zevulun*