

Gilgulim – Part 4 – JewishClarity.com

Gilgul b'Domeim (Inanimate), Tzomei'ach (Plant), Chai (Animal), and Medaber (Person)

Rav Chaim Vital wrote: On many occasions, I have been with my teacher [the Arizal], while walking in a field, when he would say to me – A person called such-and-such was righteous and a *Talmid Chacham* (Torah Scholar), but because of a transgression that he committed in his lifetime, he reincarnated into this rock, or into this plant, or something like that... While he never knew the person, after investigating the deceased, we found his words to be accurate and true. (*Sha'ar HaGilgulim*, chap. 22).

The rectification process is not necessarily straightforward. Past *aveirot* can be so severe that a person cannot yet reincarnate as a human being. Instead, he or she may need to reincarnate as an animal, vegetation, or something inanimate like a rock. Bilaam the *rasha*, for example, had power in his mouth and was able to curse people. He ended up reincarnating into a rock, the level of the inanimate, to atone for what he had done with his mouth. (*Sha'ar HaGilgulim*, chap. 22).

The **Chafetz Chaim** wrote: We need to realize that when a person steals or hurts someone, not only will the tainted money be taken from him in the end, but every aspect of pain that he caused to the one he stole from [or hurt] will also be given back to him with an exact correspondence. (*S'fat Tamim*, Chap. 4).

The **Chafetz Chaim** also spoke about frightening consequences involving *gilgulim*: Be aware of what is written by the *Mekubalim* (Kabalists) and brought in the **Sefer Chareidim** (chapter 7) —

A *ba'al lashon hara* (**habitual** gossip) will reincarnate after death as a dog. And, similarly, one that regularly eats *treif* (non-kosher) meat or feeds it to Jews. This is hinted at in the Torah. Between the prohibition against eating *treif* and speaking *lashon hara* it says — “*I'kelev tashlichun oto* — give it (i.e. the *trief* meat) to a dog.” The *Mekubalim* point out that, although one who reincarnated as a person will have no recollection or awareness of his previous lifetime, one who is reincarnated into an animal or a bird, **will** be aware of his previous lifetime. He will feel pain and anguish on how he could have fallen from a human being to an animal. Every person should, therefore, be frightened, and his heart should tremble, while he is still alive, and has the ability to make choices, and to recognize his Creator. He can then gain an atonement for his *aveirot* (transgressions) and turn G-d's wrath away from him. (*Shmirat HaLashon, Chelek Aleph, Sha'ar haZechira, Perek Tet*).

The Talmud explains that Divine judgment is always measure-for-measure (*Sanhedrin* 90a). This means that a person's reincarnations will be based upon the *aveirot* which he or she committed in their previous lifetime. All of the *aveirot* must be eliminated because G-d overlooks nothing. He is perfect in His actions, and all of His ways are with judgment. (Rabbi Winston, Fundamentals of Reincarnation).

Tikun into a Person vs. into a Domeim, Tzomei'ach, or Chai

One that reincarnates into a **person**, gets a *tikun* through completing *mitzvot* and rectifying the damage of his *aveirot*. How then can one achieve *tikun* (rectification) as a rock, plant, or animal, if he will thereby be unable to fulfill *mitzvot*? The *tikun* with *gilgul* as a *domeim* (inanimate), *tzomei'ach* (vegetation), or *chai* (animal) is not *mitzvot*, but rather *yissurim* for the *nefesh*, as a prisoner, in difficulty and suffering, in this *gilgul*. (*Mishnat HaGilgulim*, pg. 409).

Other elements which add to the anguish of these *gilgulim*

First of all, an **announcer** will constantly be announcing his *aveirah* and *onesh* throughout this reincarnation.

Secondly, a **shoteir** (a type of a policeman or enforcer) will administer the *onesh* that is fitting for this *gilgul*. When he reincarnates, for example, into water, then this enforcer will stand over him to constantly submerge him under the water at every moment, for the time period set for him.

And, finally, for the majority of *gilgulim*, and those getting an *onesh*, there is a **Beit Din** (court) which will judge him. This *onesh* may also change from time to time, according to the ruling and the judgment that is fitting. (*Sha'ar HaGilgulim*, chap. 22).

A key point with *gilgulim* is that a person cannot receive a complete *onesh* for having transgressed with his physical body, until he himself exists physically, with a *guf* and a *neshama* together. Then he will be able to bear and feel the pain fully, and thus atone for his *aveirot* (*Sanhedrin* 91a,b). And, according to the extent of his *aveirah* will be the way in which he reincarnates, as a vegetable, or as an animal, etc. (*Sha'ar HaGilgulim*, chap. 22; *Mishnat HaGilgulim*, pg. 410–411).

Gilgul Is a Terrible Anguish for the Soul

While *gilgul* is a tremendous *chessed* from Hashem, which gives people another chance in this world, the Arizal stressed that it is not fitting to rely on *gilgul* to fix one's actions. (*Mishnat HaGilgulim*, pg. 398). And it is important to know that the whole process of *gilgul* causes great anguish to a person. The **Bris Yitzchak** wrote that the *onesh* of *gilgul* is worse than all other *onshim* — enormously worse than all of the *yissurim* of Lyov. (*Mishnat HaGilgulim*, pg. 394).

The **Pele Yo'etz** spelled this out very graphically:

The difficulty of *gilgul* is *mar me'od mimaves* (much more bitter than death), and even greater than all of the pain of *Gehenom*, since one's soul could reincarnate into *domeim*, *tzomei'ach*, *chai*, or *medaber*. And worst of all, one could reincarnate into *minim shonim* (strange things), as is discussed in the *Sifrei HaMekubalim*. And this can be even for *aveirot* (transgressions) that appear to be trivial, and many people disregard.

The hair will stand on end and the *nefesh* will scream out from the pain, since it is so difficult for the *nefesh* to reincarnate into *domeim*, *tzomei'ach*, all kinds of animals, birds, or fish, both pure and impure, and all that swarm on the ground. And although one that has reincarnated into a person won't remember his previous existence, when one has been reincarnated as a *domeim*, *tzomei'ach*, or *chai*, he **will** remember that he was once great and significant, and that his soul is now very lowly.

It has already been written, and we have also heard terrifying stories from different *gilgulim* which were given permission to reveal [secrets] in the ears of the living in a dream. And particularly to the Arizal, who had divine images shown to him. He saw thousands and tens of thousands that were crying and begging for him to help them find some peace for their souls. These types of things, the living should take to heart, and imagine oneself as if this would happen to him.

Stages of *Tikun* for *Gilgul b'Domeim* (Inanimate), *Tzomei'ach* (Plant), *Chai* (Animal), and *M'dabeir* (Person)

Those who reincarnate into these non-human *gilgulim* remain in that state for a set time until the *aveirah* that caused this reincarnation has been rectified. When this time ends, he will ascend and reincarnate into the next higher level of *gilgul*. The process of *tikun* for these *gilgulim* is generally one level at a time. For example, one that had reincarnated into a *domeim* will then be able to reincarnate as a *tzomei'ach*. After another period of time, he will become a *gilgul* in an animal, then an *ibur* in a person, and eventually a complete *gilgul* in a person. Only after all of this, will the rectification finally be complete. (*Sha'ar HaGilgulim*, chap. 22).

Times for Ascending

There are specific seasons of the year when the various *gilgulim* are able to ascend from the inanimate, plant, etc. and become rectified. As it says in *Kohelet* (3:1): "*Lakol zman v'eit l'chal cheifitz tachat haShamayim* — Everything has an appointed season, and there is a time for every matter under Heaven."

Ascending from the **inanimate** and reincarnating **into vegetation** can occur only during the four middle months of the year: *Av*, *Elul*, *Tishrei* and *Cheshvan*. If the time set for one to ascend is not complete during these four months, he will have to wait for these four months in a subsequent year.

The time of elevation from **vegetation to animal** is the first four months: *Nissan*, *Iyar*, *Sivan* and *Tammuz*. The time of elevation from **animal to human** is the last four months: *Kislev*, *Tevet*, *Shevat* and *Adar*.

Ascending Multiple Levels – *Tikun* through eating

Eating with proper *kavanah*, especially a *tzadik* and a *talmid chacham*, can repair a soul which had reincarnated into some food. As a result of the deeds and *mitzvot* that a *tzadik* performs through eating and other activities, he has the ability to distill out a portion [of the Holy Sparks within it], from the level of the inanimate, and elevate them up to the level of vegetation. Afterwards, they could be lifted to the level of living animals, and finally to the level of humans.

A regular *talmid chacham* has the ability to elevate a *nefesh* one level, i.e., from an animal to a person. A *talmid chacham* involved with the *Zohar* and secrets can elevate a *nefesh* two different levels, like from a plant up to a person.

And a *talmid chacham hamufla b'chachmat ha'emet b'shrasha* (Torah scholar filled with the wisdom of the truth to its source) — can even elevate a *nefesh* all three levels at one time, from inanimate all of the way up to man. (*Sha'ar HaGilgulim*, chap. 22).

Conversely, a *rasha* or an *am ha'aretz* could actually be hurt by the soul of a *rasha* who had been reincarnated into some food. This might explain how someone could suddenly abandon being religious. (*Mishnat HaGilgulim*, pg. 412–413).

An *am ha'aretz* will not be able to repair a reincarnated *nefesh*, even at a higher level like an animal. It is, therefore, *assur* for an *am ha'aretz* to eat meat on a weekday. (***Pesachim* 49b**).

We should try to eat our food with sanctity and with *brachot*, to repair it and to extract sparks and souls reincarnated into it. And not, G-d forbid, to make the *nefesh* inside even more blemished, which could end up leading us in a negative direction as well. (*Mishnat HaGilgulim*, pg. 412–415).

Levels within *Gilgulim* of Animals

For more elevated souls that transgressed, the highest level of *gilgul* is in a fish which doesn't need the pain of *shechita* (kosher slaughtering). The next level down are *gilgulim* in birds, which are permissible to eat with *shechita* of the majority of just one of the two *simanim* (i.e., either the trachea or the esophagus), which is like a half-*shechita*. After this are *gilgulim* in animals, which are permissible to eat only with a full *shechita* of the majority of both *simanim*.

Then there are *gilgulim* of *tzomei'ach* and *domeim*. And the lowest level of all, which is destruction with no hope at all, is *gilgulim* into insects. (*Mishnat HaGilgulim*, pg. 416–7).

The Arizal said to his students: Know and believe clearly that people with *chutzpah* and no shame were *gilgulim* of animals or *tamei* (non-kosher) birds. They have no *busha* (shame), and simply follow after their initial [animalistic] training. He also said that most people in his generation were reincarnations of animals. (*Mishnat HaGilgulim*, pg. 417–418).

Remembering One's Previous *Gilgulim*

Not remembering our previous *gilgulim*, once we have reincarnated as people, is actually a *chessed* from Hashem. If we did remember, we would know exactly what we need to repair during our lifetime. This would effectively eliminate our free will, since we would feel compelled to do lots of *mitzvot*. This would also fundamentally change our relationships.

An obvious example would be the case mentioned previously, where the soul of a murderer was reincarnated with the soul of the victim as his son. It is easy to appreciate the difficulty that this would pose for both this father and son to have anything approaching a normal relationship if they actually had this awareness.

Another example would be if one saw his soul mate from his previous *gilgul* currently married to someone else in this present *gilgul*. How could the life of either of them ever be tranquil with this knowledge? (Ramak; *Mishnat HaGilgulim*, pg. 422).

In addition, the ***Pri Megadim*** (*Magid*, 3:246) wrote that if one had done very bad things in his previous lifetime, then this memory could make him depressed, which could lead him to possibly repeat this bad behavior. And, conversely, if he had done much good previously, and needed only a little bit more to perfect himself, then this awareness could easily cause him to become complacent. (*Shome'ah Tefillah*, Rav Yeshau Braver).

The ***Pele Yo'etz***, however, points out that the single exception to this, with *gilgulim* into people, is the case of *yibum*:

Although we don't know and don't recognize our previous *gilgulim*, there is one case [with a *gilgul* into a person] which we do know from the holy *Zohar*. If one dies without children, and his wife is taken [by her former brother-in-law] in *yibum*, the first boy that will be born will himself be the actual soul of the deceased brother/husband who died childless. His brother will [now] be his father, and his wife will [now] be his mother. It would, therefore, be appropriate for his father, friends, and those who knew the deceased to tell this son the faults [of the deceased] which they knew, to help this son to fix them as much as he can.

***Simanim* (signs) which tell us what to fix from our previous existence**

If one has a great desire to perform a particular mitzvah, that may be exactly what his *nefesh* was missing beforehand, and he is here to perfect (Gra on *Mishlei* 14:25, Ramak, *Sheim m'Shmuel* in

the name of the Arizal). One should, therefore, not hold back in his performance of this mitzvah. Rather he should do it completely, with all of its aspects and details, despite the fact that there may be many obstacles in the way. (*Mishnat HaGilgulim*, pg. 400–402; *Shevet Mussar*).

This may explain the fact that some of the Rabbis in the Talmud (***Shabbat 118b***) were more careful with one particular mitzvah than the others. This is also true with character traits — each one selected a specific trait to refine for himself. (*Sefer HaGilgulim*, chap. 16; *Shevet Mussar*).

The Arizal even explained one's preference for learning as a *siman* that this area may not have been completed beforehand. He suggested that one should, therefore, ignore anyone that may discourage him from focusing on this particular area of study. (*Mishnat HaGilgulim*, pg. 400–402).

Conversely, an *aveirah* in which we stumble frequently, or have a strong desire to violate, even if we have not actually transgressed it, may be exactly what we came back to this world to repair (Gra on Yona, chap. 3,4; *Tiferes Shlomo, Parshat Nitzavim*). Perhaps this *aveirah* left an impression on our *nefesh* and we are, therefore, drawn after the ingrained habits of our previous *gilgul*. (*Mishnat HaGilgulim*, pg. 400–402; *B'Chemdas Yamim; Shome'ah Tefillah* — Rav Yeshau Braver).

While one will have no conscious recollection of past reincarnations, he may have a “sense” of it on a sub-conscious level. As the *Gemara (Megillah 3a)* puts this — It is possible that one's “*mazel* saw this, even though he himself did not see it.” (*Sefer HaGilgulim*, chap. 22).

Which transgressions cause which *gilgulim* into *Domeim, Tzomei'ach, or Chai?*

Based on the teachings from the Arizal, Rav Chaim Vital (*Sha'ar HaGilgulim*, chap. 22) spells out, in very great detail and specificity, which transgressions cause which *gilgulim* into *domeim, tzomei'ach, or chai*. A few examples:

Someone who feeds improperly slaughtered meat to Jews will reincarnate as a leaf on a tree, which is vegetation. His *onesh* (penalty) will be for the wind to constantly “hit” him, making him move back and forth with no rest. This will continue until he is finally detached, and falls to the ground to wither and decompose. This will be like an actual death for him, since he will be cut off and uprooted from the world. This process could then be repeated a number of times. There are various cases which reincarnate into water, which is considered to be in the category of vegetation.

Someone who spills blood in this world will reincarnate as water. His *onesh* will be to be put under a shower of water, where the water will constantly flow onto him. He will want to get up but the water will keep forcing him down every moment. He will have no rest and will continually swirl around in the place of the current. Likewise, anyone meant to die by strangulation, but who was not punished by a *Beit Din*, will reincarnate into water and experience being strangled over and over again. Someone who does not recite blessings of pleasure, or disgraces the washing of the hands, will also reincarnate into water.

Every spring, pit, river or *mikveh* has countless *gilgulim* contained within it. One should be sure to only drink this water with cupped hands to avoid swallowing a *gilgul*. One should also be very careful with the *bracha* (blessing) before drinking water from a spring, to hopefully prevent this. Once spring water is in the house, there should be no more concern. But it still might be a good idea to spill off a bit before drinking it, even inside the house. (*Mishnat HaGilgulim*, pg. 432–433).

A leader who is haughty towards the community, and one who speaks inappropriately, reincarnates as a bee which has these two traits. Those who engage in illicit relations reincarnate

into very specific things, mostly various animals, depending on the nature and type of those relations.

A man who constantly gazes at women forbidden to him will reincarnate as a white vulture called a *ra'ah* which can see farther than other birds, since this man was engaging in a type of illicit relations with his eyes. (***Pele Yo'etz***; *Mishnat HaGilgulim*, pg. 429).

One who violates *mitzvot l'hach'is* (as an act of rebellion towards G-d) reincarnates as an animal like a monkey or a cat. (*Nishmat Chaim* 4:13; *Mishnat HaGilgulim*, pg. 430). The *Mekubalim* explain that fish are never offered up on the altar because they have the souls of *tzadikim* reincarnated into them. They, therefore, don't need to be burnt in the fire on the altar like a *korban* (offering), rather just be eaten by a proper person. (*Mishnat HaGilgulim*, pg. 438).

The key point we need to remember is that **all of these terrible consequences will occur only when one did not do *teshuva*** for their transgressions.

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