

## ***Gilgulim – Part 5 – JewishClarity.com***

### **The Reality of *Gilgulim* and “*Tzadik v’Ra lo, Rasha v’Tov lo*” (the classical issue of the righteous who appear to suffer and the wicked who seem to prosper).**

**A)** The ***Bahir***, a ***medrash*** attributed to the first century sage, Rebbe Nechuniah ben Hakanah and quoted by **Rabbeinu Bachya** (*Devarim* 25:9), used reincarnation to address the classic question of theodicy — Why bad things happen to good people, and vice versa: Why is there a righteous person to whom good things happen, while [another] righteous person has bad things happen to him? This is because the [latter] righteous person did bad in a previous [life], and is now experiencing the consequences. What is this like? A person planted a vineyard and hoped to grow grapes, but instead, sour grapes grew... When he saw that his planting was not successful, he tore it up and planted it again. (*Bahir* 195).

**B)** The ***Ramban*** explains the topic of *Tzadik v’Ra lo, Rasha v’Tov lo* at length, and how the approach of *gilgulei neshamot* gives a complete answer to this issue. He wrote: There is a matter which pains the hearts and anguishes the thoughts, and it alone has drawn masses in all of the generations to complete heresy. It is the perception of warped justice and *Tzadik v’Ra lo, Rasha v’Tov lo* in the world. People will ask — Why is the path of these [evil] people smooth [and easy], and why do these righteous appear to be lost?

An entire book was devoted to it called *Sefer Iyov*. It was written because this matter goes to the root of *emunah* and the foundation of the Torah. There in the book, Iyov is asking all that is difficult emotionally with this issue, and he needs a complete answer.

While the Ramban writes that it is possible to explain every case of *tzadik v’ra lo* as having a few *aveirot*, and every example of *rasha v’tov lo* as involving a few *ma’asim tovim* (good deeds), *Sefer Iyov* is not dealing with these types of situations. It is rather presenting Iyov as a *tzadik gammur* (completely righteous person) without any transgressions, and where the difficulties [seem to] have come upon him for no reason. In fact, his Creator testifies about Iyov that there is no person like him in the entire world, a simple and straight G-d fearing person who turned away from evil.

In order to resolve the question of *Tzadik v’Ra lo, Rasha v’Tov lo* with a *tzadik gammur* [like Iyov] who never transgressed, the Ramban explains: In this matter there is a great secret among the secrets of the Torah...which was given over to the experts of Torah and the *Kabalah*. Included within this is the *Sod Ha’Ibur* (i.e., *gilgulei neshamot*) which the Sages passed down to their reliable students. And this is [actually] the answer which Elihu gives [to address] the complaints of Iyov.

From the time that Iyov heard these words of Elihu he did not open his mouth to respond. This shows that [Iyov] accepted his words, and this approach was satisfactory for his questions, since he received it with silence. As a result, Iyov felt regret, and returned to his Creator in *teshuva*, since he understood from the words of Elihu that what he said to him was proper and acceptable. And it is the ultimate grasp that a person can have with this issue, which will leave no difficulties in the mind of a person afterwards. (*Hakdamah to Sefer Iyov, Ma’amad HaNosaf*, pg. 177–178).

**C) *Rabeinu Bachya*— *Kad HaKemach*— *Hashgacha*:** What did Hashem do in His kindness? One's *nefesh* will reincarnate into a body and return there like it was originally... [Iyov] did not transgress at all from the day that he was born. The *yissurim* came upon him as a result of his earlier transgressions [from his previous lifetime] for which he had deserved to be destroyed.

This concept explains the difficulty of *Tzadik v'Ra lo* (the righteous that appear to suffer unjustly), and removes the difficulty entirely without leaving any doubt. The issue of *Rasha v'Tov lo* (the wicked that appear to prosper unjustly) can also be learned from this, or can simply be seen as a *chessed* (kindness) from Hashem [i.e., towards the *rasha*]. It appears that Iyov did not respond at all once he heard this concept [of *gilgulim*] from Elihu. This was a new idea to him. He accepted these words, and felt that this approach was sufficient for his questions, and he received them with silence.

#### **D) Reishit Chachmah:**

Many remarkable things occur that are difficult to understand, and to see how they are just and straight, particularly when they are not a result of people's actions or choices. [Many of] these can only be resolved, understood, and clarified through the approach of *gilgul neshamot*. This will clarify to a person that the *darkei hashgacha* (how Hashem supervises the world) [makes sense] down to the depths. In addition, we find that the *darkei hashgacha* is built and oriented so that there is a complete correspondence between the reincarnating soul and the social context he is returning to. In other words, there is a connection between the person undergoing *yissurim* as a result of his previous existence, and the people all around him [in this current existence], who also need to go through this particular difficulty. Hashem gathers them all together in order that the judgments of Hashem will be true and just together. Also, through this principle, many puzzling cases which are difficult to understand can come to a resolution and clarity. This will allow people to see the depth and straightness of the judgments of the *darkei hashgacha*. (*Sha'ar HaYirah*, chapter 13, *b'sheim HaRamak*).

**E)** This point was also stated explicitly in the words of Rav Yaakov Emden (*Migdal Oz, Beit Middot, Aliyat HaYirah, Ganzach* 19): In truth, nothing is able to settle the hearts of people in terms of the difficulties of the *tzadikim* besides a belief in *gilgul*, which is very helpful for the confused. The early ones recommended [for us to say] what was said by Iyov — [Even if] I am not fitting to be judged with [these] *yissurim*, I may have transgressed in my previous body, and that is why I am [now] being afflicted. (*Ma'amad HaNosaf*, pg. 179).

**F) Ba'al Shem Tov** on the Torah: The **Zohar** explains the verse at the beginning of *Parshat Mishpatim* — “These are the *mishpatim* (laws) you should place before them” as — These are the arrangements of *gilgulei neshamot*.

We can see this in terms of judgment. If a person knows with certainty that he was correct in a case in *Beit Din* (court), but he was [still] obligated to pay, this should not be difficult for him. The Torah is a Torah of truth, and its ways are pleasant. The truth of the Torah, and the pleasantness of its ways is that he was probably obligated to this person in a previous *gilgul*, and now he is being obligated to pay to fulfill this [past] obligation. And the person that is taking his money now with deceit will need to give a judgment for this in the future. (*Ma'amad HaNosaf*, pg. 172).

**G). Pele Yo'etz:** *Emunat hagilgul* (belief in reincarnation) will help a person to understand that the judgments of Hashem are true... Then he won't complain about Hashem's qualities, as many in the nation are accustomed to do. When difficult *yissurim* come upon them, they open their mouths upwards and demand — “*Ribono shel Olam* (Master of the Universe)! What is my crime? What is my transgression? Are my *aveirot* greater than those of the whole world? Why have you done this to your servant?”

If, however, they had wisdom, they would understand that — “*HaTzur tamim pa'alo, ki kal drachav mishpat. Keil emunah, v'ein avel, Tzadik v'Yashar Hu* – The Rock (Hashem) is complete [in His] actions, since all of [His] ways are just. G-d is faithful, with no corruption, He is righteous and straight.”

He gives a person [exactly] what he deserves. And if His [G-d's] actions don't appear to be pure and straight in this current *gilgul*, then these *yissurim* [must be] because of previous *gilgulim*. It is known that the *Mekubalim* have revealed to us that the *yissurim* of Iyov, [even] while he was complete, straight, G-d fearing, and had turned from evil, were obligated upon him because of his previous *gilgul* as Terach, the father of Avraham.

*Gilgulim* [also] help us to understand difficult *yissurim* that afflict small children and infants, and children who die [who can't possibly have any *aveirot* at all]. As a result of the *aveirot* [of their previous *gilgulim*], Hashem arranged for this, to repair what had been damaged. He also found this [particular] father and mother to be redeemed through the pain that they felt through their child's death.

H). **Son of the *Chafetz Chaim***: We (i.e., my father, the *Chafetz Chaim*, and myself) would sometimes speak about [what seem to be] deviations in the world according to our human perspective, and the topic of *Tzadik v'Ra Lo*, where [*tzadikim*] were afflicted... He (i.e., my father, the *Chafetz Chaim*) would answer me that, according to the secret of *gilgul*, which is explained in the early *Sifrei HaMekubalim*, there is nothing strange about it. And this is also hinted at in verses from Iyov and *Kohelet*. (*Dugmah m'Darkei Avi* #21).

### **The concept of *gilgul* can also be relevant for an entire generation**

Included within the concept of *gilgul* is that it can occur not only for individuals, but also for an entire generation. The reincarnated generation will then be given difficult challenges and *yissurim* in order to be able to repair what the earlier generation had damaged. The Arizal brings the example of the generation of the Tower of Babel that were the reincarnation of the generation of the Flood. Another example of this is brought by the *Shomer Emunim* (*Ma'amar Hashgacha Pratit*, Chapter 11). He explains that the majority of the generation of *Ikvut d'Meshicha* (the birth pangs of the *Mashiach*) are those who have undergone many different *gilgulim* without having repaired themselves yet. Hashem, therefore, in His great mercy and kindness, arranged many difficult challenges and *yissurim* in order for these different souls to achieve perfection, and not to be permanently rejected. (*HaMeimad HaNosaf*, page 172).

### **Final Thoughts (Based on the Concept of *Gilgulim*)**

***Chafetz Chaim*** (in *Sha'ar HaTzion* 622:6) — The *Maftir* for *Mincha* of Yom Kippur is *Sefer Yona* which speaks about *teshuva* and the impossibility of running away from Hashem. The *Chafetz Chaim* explains the message that this contains:

People often think about giving up on themselves, since they [imagine] that they are incapable of fixing themselves in any way at all. Therefore, they constantly behave in a certain manner, and [figure] that if Hashem is going to decree that they die [in any case], then they will [simply] die. This, however, is a mistake, since in the end, whatever Hashem wants [one] to repair with his soul, he will be forced to repair. He may need to return multiple times to this world but [eventually] he will be compelled to do this repair, [even] against his will. If so, why should he undergo all the difficulty of death, enduring *chibut hakever* (the anguish following death) and all the other suffering, [only] to return [to this world] once again?

The proof of this is from [the prophet] Yona. Hashem wanted him to go [to Ninveh] and prophesize [to them]. Yona refused and fled to the ocean, a place where the *Shechina* (Divine Presence) would not [be able to] rest on him and allow him to have prophesy. He was then submerged in the ocean, swallowed by a fish, and was in its stomach for a number of days. It certainly appeared that he would never end up fulfilling the words of Hashem. But we see that the will of Hashem was ultimately fulfilled, and he did deliver the prophesy [to Ninveh].

The same is true with the situation of [every] person, as it says in *Pirkei Avot* (4:29) — “*V'al yavtichacha yitz'r'cha* (And don't allow your [negative] inclination to assure or fool you) *sheha'sh'ol beit manot lach* (that the grave will be a place of refuge/escape for you); *she'al kar'chacha atah notzar* (because against your will you are formed), *v'al kar'chacha atah nolak* (and against your will you are born).”

The **Reishit Chachmah** writes similarly, that we should realize that the majority of souls in his generation were *gilgulim* which came to repair what had **not** been perfected previously. If we leave the world without rectifying what we came here for, then all of our work and effort in this world will be wasted, and we may then need to return additional times until it is finally repaired. (*Sha'ar HaYirah*, chapter 13).

The **Chidushei HaRim** also spells this point out: Whatever Hashem wants from each of us has to occur, if not in *Olam Ha'zeh* (this world), then past this world, through *Gehenom* and *gilgulim*. If so, it is [certainly] better if it will be through what we want, and not against our will, through coercion. (*Chidushei HaRim al haTorah – Likutim – Shin Ayin Aleph – Rav Yitzchak Meir m'Gur*).

**Rav Reisman** pointed out (from the Alshich, *Kli Yakar*, and Rabeinu Bachaya) that *Shmuel II* 14:14 is the source in *Tanach* for *gilgulei neshamot* — “*Ki mot namut* — we may die many times,” “*v'lo yisah Elokim... l'vilti nidach mimenu nidach* — but there is no *neshama* which Hashem destroys and makes totally disappear.” Hashem gives every *neshama* a chance, again and again, to fix itself. While there may be some specific individuals with no *cheilek* in *Olam Haba*, virtually everyone is going to make it.

How can this be? The answer is that *neshamot* come back, again and again, as *gilgulim* until they have finally achieved a *tikun*. Hashem arranges that every Jew will eventually come back. Rav Tzadok says that this is the meaning of *Magen David*, the main *nevuah* of the life of David HaMelech. *Magen Avraham* was a promise to Avraham that the *klal* of *Klal Yisrael* would never disappear. *Magen David* is a promise of “*l'vilti nidach mimenu nidach*,” which means that every member of the Jewish people will ultimately succeed in life and eternity.

G-d willing, the awareness of *gilgulim* should help us to recognize that the purpose of our lives is personal *tikun*, or rectification. It should motivate us to use every interaction as an opportunity to improve ourselves and those around us. And, finally, the awareness that Hashem never gives up on us, should motivate us never to give up on ourselves as well.

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

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