

## ***Gilgulim* – Part 1 – JewishClarity.com**

### **What Is *Gilgul*?**

The Hebrew term for “reincarnation” is “*gilgul*,” like the word “*galgal*,” which means “wheel.” A soul in a body can go from birth to death, and to birth again, through a cycle involving reincarnation. Reincarnation allows a person to accomplish a degree of rectification in his next life which he failed to achieve in his previous one. If one dies before reaching his highest level of soul possible, he can continuously reincarnate to complete his *tikun* until he succeeds, or *Mashiach* comes. (Rabbi Pinchas Winston — Fundamentals of Reincarnation, pg. 55; Reincarnation Clarified, pg.3)

The **Ramchal** discussed this in ***Derech Hashem*** (2:3-10):

There is an important principle in terms of how Hashem supervises this world, and which is arranged by the upper wisdom to increase our likelihood of success. A single soul can come to this world a number of times in different bodies. It will then be able to repair [in its current existence] what had been damaged in its previous one, or to perfect whatever had not been rectified [previously]. The soul will then be evaluated after these different *gilgulim*, and its judgment will be based on everything which occurred with all of the *gilgulim*. It is possible that what occurs to a person that reincarnated will be the result of what his soul did in its previous existence. There are many details in the concept of *gilgulim*, as to how one is judged in one *gilgul*, and how this judgment depends upon previous *gilgulim*. The essential point, however, is that everything is true and straight.

### **Some Famous Reincarnations**

Hevel reincarnated into several important historical individuals. First his soul reincarnated into Sheis, Adam's and Chava's third son, 130 years later (*Bereshit* 4:25), and then into Moshe Rabbeinu an additional 2,238 years later. (*Sha'ar HaGilgulim*, chap. 29).

There is a tradition that the Messianic Era will not begin until all of the reincarnations of Hevel are complete. This means that Moshe Rabbeinu will reincarnate in every generation to remove souls from their impurity. And the soul of Moshe Rabbeinu himself will [ultimately] reincarnate into the body of *Moshiach*. (*Drushei Olam HaTohu*, *Drush Aitz HaDa'at* 11).

A part of Kayin's soul went to the Egyptian who was killed by Moshe Rabbeinu. This rectified it and caused it to go to Yitro, who converted that very day. Besides Yitro, Kayin's soul also reincarnated into Korach, who later rebelled against Moshe Rabbeinu (*Bamidbar* 15:1).

Terach, Avraham's father, reincarnated into and was rectified through the afflictions of Iyov. (Rabbi Winston, Reincarnation clarified, pp.15,16).

### **Why should one learn about *gilgulim*?**

**Rabbi Pinchas Winston**, the translator of *Sha'ar HaGilgulim*, explained: The most important point in life is personal *tikun*, or rectification. There is really nothing else that matters, and this will become crystal clear to every one of us on our final day of judgment.

Too many people are unaware of this. They simply live from day to day, without any clear purpose or understanding of what the opportunity of life actually is. Consequently, people are born and later die, having accomplished very little in terms of personal rectification. Many do not even think in such terms and avoid situations which are spiritually challenging, thinking that nothing has been lost. This is tragically incorrect. (Rabbi Winston, Fundamentals of Reincarnation – 213, 214)

Being aware of the principles of *gilgulim* (reincarnation) will help us to live more meaningful lives, and to achieve personal rectification. In addition, they put the events of history, past and present, personal and national, into perspective, allowing people to learn from past mistakes and to be better prepared for the future. It also helps us to better appreciate other people, and how they act.

King David, however, points out an essential prerequisite for the topic of *gilgulim* — “*Sod Hashem l'rei'av* — The secrets of G-d [are] to those who fear Him.” While learning secular subjects requires only accessing information and trying to comprehend its meaning, to know the “secrets of G-d,” which are the basis of the topic of *gilgulim*, one must also have fear of G-d. (Rabbi Winston, Introduction to *Sha'ar HaGilgulim*).

The ***Pele Yo'etz (Gilgul)*** wrote: *Emunat hagilgul* (belief in reincarnation) will awaken a person who wants to pay attention to *yirat Hashem* (fear of G-d) and to [have] *yirat ha'onesh* (fear of consequences).

We need to be concerned that perhaps in the previous *gilgul* there was much impurity and wrongdoing, and we will need to fix what was corrupted. We should, therefore, do a lot of *mitzvot*, *ma'asim tovim* (good deeds), and actions to atone for this.

And particularly in these generations, in which the *Mekubalim* have revealed to us that most people are from previous *gilgulim*, it is only a tiny number that are brand-new souls that are coming to this world for the very first time. For this reason, it is fitting for us to humble our hearts since we are so lacking, and we don't know what we really are, and what we are coming to repair, as it was previously, in the time of the Arizal.

When we look into the *Sifrei HaMekubalim* (books of *Kabalah*), which speak about the matters of *gilgulim*, with discerning eyes and hearts that understand, we will declare — “*Mah rabu ma'asecha Hashem* — How great are Your works, Hashem!” How wondrous is Your love towards us, where You have arranged that no one should ever be pushed away.

**Rabbi David Zauderer** explains: The concept of reincarnation is the key to understanding many of the events that happen in our lives, and many of the people with whom we cross paths during our soul's journey here on earth. [Of course,] if we knew exactly the things which we had done in a previous incarnation, then we would better understand the things that are happening to us in this life.

While we are not privy to the knowledge of what we went through in previous lives, to know [specifically] what it is that we need to rectify this time around, just the knowledge that our soul was here before, albeit in a different body — and that we came back to this world to fix something, is an important piece of information that can have a great impact on what we do during our time here on earth. ([http://www.torchweb.org/torah\\_detail.php?id=249](http://www.torchweb.org/torah_detail.php?id=249), ***Parshas Ki Tisa (Parah) 5773 Come Again? Reincarnation in Judaism***).

**The Ramban discussed this in *Sha'ar HaGemul* (# 81, 83, 84, 85, 124, 125):**

Although there are principles [in terms of how Hashem runs the world] which we can understand ...there are still *tzadikim gemurim* (completely righteous people) who [seem to be] afflicted not according to these principles, and there are *resha'im gemurim* (completely evil people) who [seem to be] sitting in peace and quiet in the world... How is it possible that Hashem would allow this?

There is no real answer to this matter in terms of the understanding of people, but only according to Hashem... The matter is hidden, and can be understood only by Hashem Himself. Even so,

and with all that is hidden with this issue, there is still the secret that was passed down to the men of Torah and the *Kabalah*. It is hinted at in the words of our Rabbis and included in the *Sod Halbur* (concept of *gilgul*) which the Sages passed down to their students who were worthy.

One may ask — “Since aspects of justice are hidden and [therefore] we [ultimately] need to believe that G-d is the true Judge Who only does justice, why do we need to bother, and why should we learn the various explanations and secrets that were hinted at? Why can't we simply rely entirely on the final conclusion [that some aspects of *yissurim* will always be beyond our understanding] and that G-d will never deviate or ignore any aspect of the judgment?”

This is the claim of fools who despise wisdom. We benefit enormously from this learning which gives us wisdom and an understanding of G-d and His ways. And whether we end up gaining clarity or find that it is hidden from us, this will help our *emunah* (belief) and *bitachon* (trust) in G-d much more than those who never even tried. We will come to appreciate the hidden aspects of the judgment and recognize that they are all correct and just.

This attempt to know and understand the truth and justice of G-d's judgments as best we can, will settle our mind, and is the obligation of everyone who wants to serve G-d with love and fear... And certainly with the secret factor [of *gilgul neshamot*] no questions will remain, and there will be no doubts at all. And if one wants to place his complete understanding on this [secret of *gilgul*], he can, since this approach is sufficient for [appreciating] how the creation operates.

Rabbi Winston points out that the actual text of *Sha'ar HaGilgulim* is not that long, relatively speaking. The Hebrew version of *Sha'ar HaGilgulim* is less than 200 pages. It's somewhat straightforward approach to a not-so-straightforward topic can be very deceiving. Perhaps this is why the Arizal refers to the various sections of *Sha'ar HaGilgulim* as *hakdamot* (introductions), and not chapters. Apparently, whatever he wrote there is only a small introduction to a much longer discussion. (Rabbi Winston — Fundamentals of Reincarnation, pp. 213– 214; Introduction to *Sha'ar HaGilgulim*).

### Is *gilgul* an accepted Torah concept?

The **Gaon HaMaharahlbach**, Chief Rabbi of Jerusalem, wrote that there were two groups in his time (1483–1545) when it came to the topic of *gilgulim*. The philosophers, whose belief was based on their intellect alone, had a difficulty with accepting the concept of *gilgulim*.

But there was a second very large group [of scholars] that did believe in *gilgulim*. They all wrote that this was true and addressed the classical question of *tzadik v'ra lo* (the appearance of the righteous that suffer). He wrote that we must follow this latter group with no objections or doubts at all. (*Mishnat HaGilgulim*, Rav Boaz Shalom, pg. 32).

While there are many hints to *gilgulim*, there is nothing explicit in the Torah, *Talmud*, *Medrash*, or early *Ma'amrei Chazal* (writings of our Sages of blessed memory).

Two verses in *Kohelet* strongly hint at *gilgulim*: “*Dor holeich v'dor ba* — A generation goes and a generation **comes** (i.e., in *gilgulim*)” (1:4), and “*Mah sh'haya hu sh'yiheyeh, u'mah she'na'asah hu sh'yei'aseh* — What was is what **will be**, and what happened is what **will happen**” (i.e., through *gilgulim*)” (1:9).

There are, however, a number of **Medrashim** in the *Sefer HaBahir*, attributed to the first-century sage, Rebbe Nechunya ben HaKaneh, which speak about *gilgulim* explicitly. (*Bahir* 122, 155, 184, 185, and 195).

Reincarnation is cited by many of the most **authoritative classical biblical commentators**, including the **Ramban** (*Bereshit* 38:8, *Iyov* 33:30), **Ohr HaChayim** (*Bereshit* 1:26), **Recanti** (*Bereshit* 34:1), **Rabbeinu Bachya** (*Bereshit* 4:25, *Bereshit* Chap. 38, *Devarim* 33:6), and the **Malbim** (*Rut* 3:4, 4:15), as well as the **Maharsha** (*Niddah* 30b), the **Baal Shem Tov**, the **Vilna Gaon**, (*Sefer Yonah*, and many other places), the **Ohr Somayach** (*Hilchot Teshuva* 5), the **Chafetz Chaim** (*Mishnah Berurah* 23:5, *Sha'ar HaTzion* 622:6), and the **Steipler Gaon** (*Chayei Olam*). (Rabbi Yaakov Astor, *Soul Searching*, Targum Press).

**Rav Yaakov Emden**, in his commentary on the *siddur* (prayer book), addressed the question of how we can say the sections of the *viduy* on Yom Kippur where we are certain we didn't violate those particular *aveirot* (transgressions). One of the answers he gives is: "*al derech sod* (in terms of the secret), our *kavana* (intention) is also to include our previous *gilgulim*."

Reincarnation is, of course, mentioned in numerous places throughout the classical texts of Jewish mysticism, particularly the **Zohar** (1:131a, 186b, 2:94a, 97a, 2:99b, 100a, 105b, 106a, 3:88b, 215a, 216a; *Tikunei Zohar* 6 (22b, 23b), 21 (56a), 26 (72a), 31 (76b), 32 (76b), 40 (81a), 69 (100b, 103a, 111a, 114b, 115a, 116b), 70 (124b, 126a, 133a, 134a, 137b, 138b); *Zohar Chadash* 33c, 59a–c, 107a; *Ruth* 89a) (Rabbi Yaakov Astor, *Soul Searching*).

The **Chayei Adam** speaks about *gilgulim* within his exhortation to be very careful to avoid *sheim Shamayim l'vatalah* (taking G-d's Name in vain) (*Chelek Aleph, Klal Hei, S'eif Aleph*), and also within his explanations of the *viduy* of Yom Kippur. (*Hilchot Shabbat u'Moadim, Klal Kuf Mem Gimmel*).

The **Chafetz Chaim** speaks about *gilgulim* in the **Mishnah Berurah** (23:5) when discussing the *issur* (prohibition) of *lo'eg l'rash* (mocking the dead) — A man should tuck his *tzitzit* in so they won't be visible when walking within four *amos* of a *kever* (grave) — "even with the *kever* of a *katan* (young child) because of *lo'eg l'rash* (mocking the dead), perhaps this is the soul of an adult."

Even many of the great minds of the Western world acknowledged and/or espoused some form of belief in reincarnation — Plato, Pythagorus, Voltaire ("After all, it is no more surprising to be born twice than it is to be born once"), Benjamin Franklin, Schopenhauer, Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, Thoreau, Emerson, Walt Whitman, and Mark Twain. (Reincarnation & Jewish Tradition, aish.com, Rabbi Yaakov Astor).

**On the other side of this debate, there were some early authorities who held that *gilgul* was not an accepted Torah concept.**

**Rav Sa'adia Gaon** (10th century) rejected the concept of *gilgulim*. He had received no tradition to support it, and was not convinced by the arguments for it — "I have found some people called Jews who believe in *gilgul*... They think that Reuven's spirit could enter Shimon, and then Levi, and then Yehudah. Some, or perhaps most of them, believe that a human soul may enter an animal, or the spirit of an animal could enter a human. There is much foolishness and confusion with this." (*Emunot v'Deyot* 6:8).

**Rav Chasdai Crescas** (14th century) and **Rav Yosef Albo** (15th century) both also argued against reincarnation. (*Or Hashem* 4:7; *Sefer Ha'Ikarim* 4:29) (What's the Jewish View on Reincarnation and Past Views? Rabbi Gil Student, December 21, 2016).

The **Rashash** wrote a short, six word, comment suggesting that a *Gemara* in **Baba Metziah** (107a) was a **slight** contradiction to those who believe in *gilgul*: "*M'kan stirah k'tzat l'ba'alei de'ah hagilgul* — From here there is a **slight contradiction** to the believers in *gilgul*." (*HaGa'hot v'Chidushei HaRaShash*).

**Rav Moshe Shternbuch** wrote that many scholars strongly disagreed with him, and held that we should not argue on the secret of *gilgul*, since it was accepted from the Arizal, the Gra, and all those who studied the *Kabalah*. (*Ta'am v'Da'at, Ki Tavo, Amud Kuf Pei Aleph*).

**Rav Chaim Kanievsky** even suggested that this particular comment may not actually have been written by the Rashash. (*Derech Sicha, Ki Tavo, Amud Taf Reish Vav*).

### ***Gilgul* Is a Tremendous Chessed**

*Gilgul* gives us the chance to fix all that was either damaged or not completed in our previous existence or existences. And whatever we were able to rectify beforehand is protected from being damaged again. Very appropriately, the *gematria* of *gilgul*, which is 72, is the same as for *chessed*. (*Megillat Amukot, Parshat Pinchas, Drush Hei*).

## ***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 *Gehennom*. 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 l'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).

## **Gilgulim – Part 3 – JewishClarity.com**

### **Various Reasons for Gilgulim**

**First** is to rectify a transgression which this person did. In this case, the new *gilgul* could definitely transgress, since it originally had done so. A dramatic example would be if one had, G-d forbid, murdered someone. The *nefesh* of the one that had been killed could end up coming back in a *gilgul* as the son or the grandson of the murderer. Giving life to the soul of the one that he had killed, and all of the effort to raise him, would then be the *tikun* for having ended his life in his

previous existence. Alternatively, if one had stolen from someone and never done *teshuva*, he and his victim could both return in *gilgulim* to give the thief the opportunity to pay the money back.

**Second** would be for a person to reincarnate in order to fill in some mitzvah which he had never done. In this case, the new *gilgul* is unlikely to transgress.

**Third** would be to guide and to rectify others. In this case, the new *gilgul* will have some special degree of protection to help him to avoid transgressing.

**Fourth** is to return in a *gilgul* to marry one's soul mate, according to their *shoresh neshama* (soul root). (*Sha'ar HaGilgulim*, chap. 8).

## Reincarnation and Marriage

Our Rabbis have explained, in the beginning of the *Gemara Sotah*, that there is a first and second *zivug* (pairing of husband and wife). The explanation of the first and second *zivug* is not according to the simple understanding, because in many cases, the second *zivug* can actually be better than the first one.

When a man is in this world for the first time, his soul mate will be born with him. When it comes time to marry her, it will be quick and easy. If, however, he committed an *aveirah* that required him to reincarnate, and his soul mate also reincarnated for his sake, when it comes time for him to marry her, it will only be after much difficulty. Since he returned because of an *aveirah*, there are accusing Angels who want to prevent him from her, causing them to fight. This is the situation where it says — “It is as difficult to pair them as *Kriat Yam Suf* (the splitting of the sea).” While she is his real soul mate, since they were already paired in a former life, now in this *gilgul*, it is considered to be the second pairing.

This will explain why sometimes a man marries a woman quickly, and without any difficulty or fighting, and sometimes he does not marry her unless they go through much arguing, until they are married. Only after they are married do they achieve peace and tranquility, indicating that she is indeed his soul mate, but that this is the second pairing. If she was not his soul mate, there would not be peace [even] after he had married her. (*Sha'ar HaGilgulim*, chap. 20).

Some will reincarnate and not yet meet their soul mate until a later lifetime. Others may have already been married to their soul mate, but, forced to reincarnate because of an *aveirah*, they lost the merit to be married to their soul mate in their next reincarnation. (*Sha'ar HaGilgulim*, chap. 8).

In a case where a man did not merit to marry his soul mate during his **first** lifetime, but instead married someone else, he will end up closer to this woman than to all the other women in the world. If he then returns in a *gilgul* as a result of his transgressions, he will return with this other woman, even though she was not his actual soul mate. This shows that it is possible to be happily and productively married to someone other than one's true soul mate. (*Sha'ar HaGilgulim*, ch. 8).

## How to Avoid Needing to Return in a *Gilgul*

*Tikun* (rectification) is achieved through learning Torah and doing *mitzvot*. (*Sha'ar HaGilgulim*, chap. 11) The higher the level of Torah learning and *mitzvot* that one does, the greater his *tikun* will be. (*Sha'ar HaGilgulim*, chap. 16,18).

Anyone with a new soul must fulfill all 613 *mitzvot*. The 248 positive *mitzvot* correspond to 248 spiritual “limbs,” and the 365 negative *mitzvot* correspond to 365 spiritual “tendons.” Each

mitzvah, therefore, impacts and rectifies a different part of a person's spiritual being. (*Sha'ar HaGilgulim*, chap. 16).

### The 248 positive *mitzvot* can be divided into different categories

A) The first are those *mitzvot* which one **can and must fulfill**, like *tzitzit* or *tefillin*. One will need to return in a *gilgul*, even many times, until one completes them all. Only those *mitzvot* which he did not yet fulfill in one *gilgul* will be necessary for him to make up in a subsequent *gilgul*. However, since he will be susceptible to transgressing in these *gilgulim*, any *aveirot* which he commits will need to be rectified, and this rectification can itself necessitate many further *gilgulim*.

B) Some *mitzvot* can only be fulfilled during specific time periods. An example would be when there is no *Beit HaMikdash* (Temple), and *korbanot* (offerings) can not be brought. One will only reincarnate to fulfill them once the *Beit HaMikdash* has been rebuilt.

C) Other *mitzvot* are only relevant for people in **certain situations**. This would include a farmer who can and must separate *terumot* and *ma'aserot* from his crops, or one that sends away the mother bird before taking her eggs if he happens to come across a bird's nest. While these situations may not be relevant for many people, it is certainly possible for one to change his circumstance in order to then be able to fulfill these *mitzvot*. While one will need to reincarnate until all of these have been fulfilled, in this *gilgul*, one will be protected from transgressing.

D) There are also *mitzvot* which are only possible for people in **certain life situations**, like *pidyon haben* (if one's firstborn child is a boy, as well as other requirements), *yibum* or *chalitzah* (if, G-d forbid, one's brother dies childless), and giving a *get* (divorce). These situations are completely independent of us. They depend upon external factors over which we have no control. One will need to reincarnate to fulfill these only if one could (and, therefore, should) have originally done them, but did not do them. Otherwise, it will be sufficient for him to temporarily return in an *ibur* with someone that is about to fulfill them, after which he will return to his place above fully rectified.

E) One must run after the mitzvah of procreation to try to fulfill it. In terms of *gilgul*, this is the strictest of all the *mitzvot*. Normally, with a *gilgul* because of missing *mitzvot*, each body from every *gilgul* will arise and live again, at the time of *Techiat HaMeitim* (the resurrection of the dead) with whichever sparks of the soul were rectified through the *mitzvot* performed in that particular body. Here it depends:

1. If one never had children, but the *gilgul* which followed it did have children, then all of the sparks which this first person had rectified in this *guf* will ultimately be transferred to the *gilgul* which followed it.
2. If, however, this person without children did have children in a previous *gilgul*, then this body will keep whichever sparks it itself rectified.
3. And if this person without children was a *talmid chacham* (Torah scholar) and a *tzadik*, who had been married, it will also be able to resurrect by itself, since the main *toldot* (offspring) of a person are their Torah and *mitzvot*.

F) The mitzvah of *Talmud Torah* (learning Torah) is considered equal to all of the 613 *mitzvot*. There are four levels of learning Torah, which are known as *PaRDeS* — *P'shat* (the **simple** surface explanation), *Remez* (**hints** to deeper levels of understanding), *Drush* (**elucidation**), and *Sod* (the **secret** of the *Kabalah*). One must work hard in all of them as much as he can, including seeking out a teacher who can teach them to him. If he ends up lacking any of these four aspects, relative to what he could have grasped, he will need to reincarnate to be able to accomplish them.

The rectification of the *ruach* comes from learning Torah properly and for its own sake, particularly the *Mishnah* and *Talmud*. The rectification of the *neshama* depends upon the knowledge of secrets (i.e., the *Kabalah*) and inner Torah mysteries from the wisdom of the *Zohar*. However, even one who does a mitzvah or learns Torah without these ideal intentions will be able to rectify the *nefesh* and *ruach* on a lower level.

It is also important to know that a person needs to fulfill all of the 613 *mitzvot* in action, speech, and thought. One who has not performed all of them on **all** three of these levels will have to reincarnate until he has done so. In addition, whichever *mitzvot* happen to be more related to the root of one's own soul, one will need to complete to a greater degree. (*Sha'ar HaGilgulim*, ch. 11).

### **Suggestions for Completing *Mitzvot* Beyond our Grasp**

In terms of completing those *mitzvot* which are currently beyond our grasp, one could help another person, both physically and/or financially, who **is** capable of doing them. This will be especially helpful when this other person has *kavanah* (intention) to do these *mitzvot* for all of the Jewish people. One could also have *kavanah* when doing any mitzvah, to merit to be able to do all of the other ones, since all of the *mitzvot* are connected.

One should be particularly careful and excited with those *mitzvot* which *Chazal* (our Sages of blessed memory) tell us are equal to all of the others, like *tzitzit*, Shabbat, etc. And one should try very hard to fulfill both the first and the last mitzvah in the Torah — *p'ru u'revu* (be fruitful and multiply) with *kedusha* (sanctity), and to write a *sefer Torah*. (*Mishnat HaGilgulim*, pg. 425).

### **The 365 Prohibitions and *Tikun***

The Ramak, *Zohar*, *Reishit Chachmah* (*Sha'ar Anavah* 5:40), Gra, and the *Chafetz Chaim* (*S'fat Tamim*, Chap. 4) all wrote that one of the primary *aveirot* which causes people to return as a *gilgul* is *gezel* (stealing), in order for the thief to be able to return what was stolen, to either the person or his descendants. (*Mishnat HaGilgulim*, pg. 393; *Shome'ah Tefillah*, Rav Yeshau Braver). In any case where one is reincarnating because of an *aveirah*, he will not have any special protection from transgressing in this new *gilgul*.

The best way to avoid needing to return in a *gilgul* is, of course, to do *teshuva* while still alive, and rectify whatever damage one caused. If one gets a new name and a new place through the *teshuva* process, as the Rambam describes in *Hilchot Teshuva* (2:4), he won't need to then have this happen through returning in a *gilgul*.

## ***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 *neschama* 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 *Iyov*. (*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.

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### **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... I'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 “*I'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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