GILGUL NESHAMOS HAMURCHAV

The Expanded Book of the Reincarnation of Souls

BY

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Second edition, with additions and corrections

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Gilgul Neshamos HaMurchav: The Expanded Book of the Reincarnation of Souls

By HaRav Yosef Shabtai Shani. Translated from the second Hebrew edition, with additions and corrections (Yerushalayim, 5774). A companion to *A Ladder Set on the Earth*.

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Translator's Note

This translation follows the second Hebrew edition of *Gilgul Neshamos HaMurchav*. The author's own voice, including his first-person accounts, has been preserved. Hebrew and Aramaic terms in common use in the Torah world are left in transliteration and italicized; they are defined in the Glossary at the back of the book. The author's source references appear as footnotes; notes added by the translator are marked "—Trans."

One term deserves mention at the outset. The author uses the Hebrew word *guf*, ordinarily "body," in a special sense: a subtle, intermediate body that clothes the soul and is distinct from the physical body of flesh. Where that meaning is intended, the word is left as *guf*.

The Concept of Gilgul

1

The belief in *gilgul neshamos* was given to the Jewish people through Avraham Avinu and Moshe Rabbeinu, who received it through prophecy,[1] and it was widespread among them as something clear and certain. Some two thousand years ago, Philo of Alexandria wrote an explanation of the belief in *gilgul* to answer the Greeks, who mocked the Jews for holding it.[2] Josephus Flavius, too, writes explicitly that the Pharisees, who made up most of the nation, believed in *gilgul*.[3]

The Mishnah does not mention this belief explicitly, since it has no direct bearing on the matters discussed there. Perhaps, too, after the destruction of the Beis HaMikdash, the hardships of exile kept part of the nation from understanding these matters properly. This knowledge could lead shallow people away from belief in *techiyas hameisim*. It could lead them to suicide, reasoning that since they would return to this world in any case, they had nothing to lose. Or it could lead them to escape from reality and from responsibility for their lives, since they would explain everything that happened to them as payment for their deeds in a previous *gilgul*. Such people would forfeit their world through a mistake, through a shortsighted

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[1] The Ari explained it at length in his *Sha'ar HaGilgulim*.

[2] See *Ta'am LaShad*, Livorno edition (photo-offset, Jerusalem), p. 200; see also the volume *Philo*, ch. 7, p. 253.

[3] *The Jewish War*, book 2, ch. 8. In book 7, ch. 6, he mentions the phenomenon of the *dybbuk* as something well known.

grasp of free choice, of reward and punishment, and of how these relate to *gilgul*.

Nevertheless, the Mishnah does contain a hint: a statement that can only be explained through the belief in *gilgul*. These are the words of the Tanna: "Whoever neglects the Torah out of wealth will in the end neglect it out of poverty."[4] This seems far removed from reality. The Tanna lived among ordinary people and saw men who neglected Torah and still died wealthy, yet he said with full confidence that whoever neglects it out of wealth will end by neglecting it out of poverty. He was hinting that such a person, though he died rich, will return in another *gilgul*. This time he will want to learn, with an immense longing for Torah study, but his poverty and need will prevent him. We meet such people all around us: people who truly suffer because, under the crushing burden of earning a living, they have no free time to learn.

The Talmud does state the matter of *gilgul* explicitly, but its intent was not understood, because people did not understand what the *guf* is. This is the wording of the Talmud: "Hakadosh Baruch Hu brings the soul, casts it into the *guf*, and judges them together."[5] Since we "know" that the body lies buried and that the soul is not cast back into it so that they can suffer together, the Talmud's words remained obscure. The Talmud states plainly that just as body and soul sinned together, they are judged and pay for their evil deeds together. Yet no one imagined that this referred to *gilgul*, because "apparently" that was impossible: it is not the same body. In our own day, however, it has been shown scientifically that the very same *guf* that died is the one that returns in *gilgul*, as will be explained. It appears that Chazal meant their words literally, and that they anticipated science by at least two thousand years in understanding the nature of the *guf*.

The explanation is as follows. According to Kabbalah, even dust has a *nefesh hadomemes*, an "inanimate soul," that holds it together as a clod, a boulder, a stone, and the like. This soul, too, has knowledge and will, for all the works of Creation were created with knowledge.[6] As the verse says,

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[4] Avos 4:9.

[5] Sanhedrin 91a.

[6] Rosh Hashanah 11a.

"For the stone shall cry out from the wall."[7] It seems that this refers to the electronic structure that gives matter its proper form. To this are added the *nefesh hatzome'ach*, the "vegetative soul," and the *nefesh hachai*, the "animal soul." Together the three form the force that animates the *guf* and the soul of an animal; this is why the word *guf* is made up of three letters, corresponding to these three souls.[8] The *guf* is also the vessel for the *nefesh hamaskeles*, the "intellectual soul," which dwells upon them and which the Torah calls *ha'adam*; and upon that dwells the *nefesh Elokis*, the "divine soul," which the Torah calls *Adam*.

This *guf* is composed of three elements, fire, air, and water, which come from the seed of the male, together with the fourth element, earth, which comes from the female side in the formation of the person. After death, the three parts that come from the male accompany the soul to *Olam Haba* or to its next *gilgul*, while the part that comes from the female remains with the body in the grave until *techiyas hameisim*, through which the body will rise again. In the language of the Zohar this part is called *havla d'garmei*, "the breath of the bones," because it holds the bones together so that they do not crumble and preserves the form of the skeleton. This is also the part that takes part in raising the *ov* and in séances. If a grave were opened during a séance, the *guf* would be seen blurred, and this causes the soul of the deceased great anguish.[9]

It is this *guf* that develops the seed and turns it into flesh. From it the physical body is formed with all its parts, since the *guf* gives the body its shape and sets each limb in its place. It is the garment of the *nefesh hamaskeles*, which is spiritual and cannot attach to a physical body except through this intermediate *guf*. And because the *guf* senses and feels, and is a significant partner in a person's conduct, reward and punishment apply to it as well. It has now become clear that in *gilgul* this *guf* of the deceased returns and forms the new body, and that every birthmark is a place where the *guf*

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[7] Chavakuk 2:11.

[8] For an explanation of this subject, see my book *Bris Yosef*, in the essay "Judaism and Mysticism."

[9] *Sefer Chassidim*.

was injured in its previous *gilgul*.[10] There are people born with a large birthmark low on the abdomen, at the very spot where they underwent an appendectomy in their previous *gilgul*.

Consider also the statement of the Talmud:[11] "Since the day the Beis HaMikdash was destroyed, although the four death penalties of *beis din* have ceased, the judgment of the four death penalties has not ceased. One who is liable to stoning either falls from a roof or is trampled by a wild animal. One who is liable to burning either falls into a fire or is bitten by a snake. One who is liable to beheading is either handed over to the government or set upon by bandits. One who is liable to strangulation either drowns in a river or dies of *askara* (bronchitis)." Did this sage never see *mechallelei Shabbos*, or others liable to death under *halachah*, die peacefully in their beds? How could he say something that reality seems to contradict, unless he meant that the same sinner returns in another *gilgul* and pays for his sins with an unnatural death? Likewise, the world is full of upright, good, and righteous people who died strange deaths in the prime of life. The Ramban explains that Iyov was comforted when he understood that he was suffering because of sins from his previous *gilgul*, and that the entire story of Rus, Machlon, Kilyon, and Boaz is built on *gilgul neshamos*.[12]

The Talmud says further:[13] "Hashem said to Moshe: A righteous man, son of a righteous man, is righteous and it goes well with him. A righteous man, son of a wicked man, is righteous and it goes badly with him. A wicked man, son of a righteous man, is wicked and it goes well with him. A wicked man, son of a wicked man, is wicked and it goes badly with him." At first glance these words contradict what we see, but the intent is that a person's previous *gilgul* is called the "father" of the present one, and the present *gilgul* is its "son." A person who has returned in *gilgul* to repair his

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[10] One of the first to note this was Professor Ian Stevenson of the Department of Psychiatry at the University of Virginia School of Medicine, in his book *Twenty Cases Suggestive of Reincarnation*. In the *gilgulim* that I have deciphered, too, I have clearly seen how injuries reappeared in the next *gilgul* as birthmarks at the site of the injury, as I will relate below.

[11] Kesubos 30a.

[12] In his commentary on the Torah, *parashas* Vayeshev, and in his commentary on Megillas Rus.

[13] Brachos 7a.

deeds, and who lives a life of suffering even though his deeds are now upright, suffers as atonement for the sins he committed in his previous *gilgul*. Such a person is called "a righteous man, son of a wicked man." All the more so if his deeds are evil in this *gilgul* too; he is then called "a wicked man, son of a wicked man."

If a person was righteous in his deeds but did not fulfill the whole mission for which he came, his soul is born again in conditions and surroundings that allow it to reach the level it once held, and from there it must strive to rise further through its own efforts. Since it has not returned to the world because of punishment, it is treated like a soul coming into the world for the first time and is given a good and blessed physical life, with health and livelihood. If it continues along the path of its previous *gilgul*, Chazal call it "a righteous man, son of a righteous man"; if it spoils its deeds, it is called "a wicked man, son of a righteous man."

I remember that in my youth there was an unmarried young man who was burned over most of his body by boiling oil, and the doctors gave up hope for his life. His mother went to Rabbi Yitzchak Kaduri zt"l to ask why this had happened to her son and how he might be saved, and he told her to come back the next day. The next day he told her that he had been shown in a dream that in a previous *gilgul* this young man had lived with his mother-in-law, a sin whose punishment under Torah law is burning, and that he had now come back to repair it by dying of his burns. She immediately ran to my teacher and rebbi, Rabbi Yehudah Tzadka zt"l, the *rosh yeshivah* of Porat Yosef, and told him what Rabbi Kaduri had said. When he heard this, he went with her to the young man's bedside and said to him: "Know that you are being punished for your sin with your mother-in-law in a previous *gilgul*. Confess this sin right away, and accept upon yourself that if you recover, you will make a *tikkun* for your soul with fasts and prayers." The young man did so. He confessed in tears and accepted upon himself complete *teshuvah* for all his sins, and for this sin in particular. Two days later his wounds closed over, and he recovered.

The belief in *gilgul*, which, as we said, originates with Avraham Avinu a"h, was passed on by him to all who heeded his teaching, including all his sons. But while to his son Yitzchak he transmitted all the secrets of Divinity and the mysteries of the soul, to the sons of Keturah he revealed only the hidden matters of the soul and its transformations, and he sent them away

to the lands of the Far East.[14] There they spread these teachings, *gilgul* among them, which is why Hindu beliefs about the soul and *gilgul* match, in many details, the Kabbalah we possess. Other ancient peoples believed that the soul survives after death, but not all of them came to recognize *gilgul*. Only in recent decades has the matter been proven and become the common heritage of many.[15]

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[14] Bereishis 25:6, and Rashi there. It seems likely that the highest caste, called Brahmins, descends from the seed of Avraham, and that the root of their name is "Avrahamin."

[15] Among the first was Edgar Cayce of New York. [Cayce lived in Kentucky and Virginia Beach.—Trans.] Dozens of books have been written about him. Some thirty thousand cases of healing, prophecy, dream interpretation, perception of the hidden, and vision of the distant past, along with thousands of *gilgul* accounts of astonishing accuracy, were produced by him while in a self-induced hypnotic trance. Thousands of transcripts of his sessions are preserved in archives in Virginia Beach and have been studied by psychologists, physicians, and scientists. More recently, people have begun to be hypnotized and taken back to the state before their birth and to their lives in a previous *gilgul*. The first of these was Morey Bernstein of London [Bernstein was American.—Trans.]; see his book *The Search for Bridey Murphy*. See also the book by C. G. Jung (a disciple of Freud, the father of psychoanalysis), *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*; the 1968 article in the widely read Italian daily *Corriere della Sera* about the child prodigy Antonio Morabito, who at two years old had an astonishing knowledge of the geography of the entire globe, and which concluded that this could only be reincarnation; the book by Professor Ian Stevenson of the Department of Psychiatry at the University of Virginia, *Twenty Cases Suggestive of Reincarnation* (1965), which presents instructive cases from Alaska and elsewhere demonstrating *gilgul* scientifically; and the German parapsychological quarterly *Grenzgebiete der Wissenschaft* ("Frontiers of Science"). Incidentally, I will add that Freud's discovery, that anxiety disorders stem from a person's subconscious having been imprinted by extraordinary events, was already stated in *Sefer HaGilgulim* by the Ari of Tzefas, who added that extraordinary events in a previous *gilgul* also affect the present one. Thus his disciple Rabbi Chaim Vital would tremble all over whenever he saw knives, because in his previous *gilgul* he had been murdered with knives. The Druze cherish the belief in *gilgul* and live by it. Many of them know details of their previous *gilgul*, meet their former families, and give them accurate details about their past. See further the article by Mrs. M. Klausner, "The Druze and *Gilgul Neshamos*." Further examples. (1) Some years ago an electrician was brought to the clinic of Dr. Cosanilla in Rome. He had been struck by an electric shock and was considered clinically dead for three hours. After treatment by the "counter-current" method, he revived and said with a sigh of relief, "How good that I woke up. I had a terrible dream." Dr. Cosanilla rec-

orded his account as follows: "I remember that the moment I touched the high-voltage wire, I felt as though I was surrounded by flames. In that second my whole life passed before my eyes. Suddenly I found myself at home. My wife was serving lunch, and the children were sitting around the table. I spoke to them, but they did not hear me and ignored my presence completely. This made me very angry. With one sweep I threw the plates onto the floor. I took down a picture hanging on the wall and threw that to the ground too. I left the house in a rage, and I do not know how it happened, but suddenly I found myself here. I noticed my body lying on the operating table. The sight frightened me so much that I woke up. I am sure that it was all a nightmare." Dr. Cosanilla, who is also a parapsychologist, understood that this was no dream, and that during the three hours in which the man was considered clinically dead he had been beyond the boundary of life. To verify this, he got into his car and raced to the man's home. The electrician's wife, who did not yet know of her husband's accident, confirmed that two hours earlier the plates had suddenly flown off the table and a large picture had fallen from the wall. (2) The case of the girl Shanti Devi of New Delhi, which became famous in the 1930s, was examined meticulously by researchers and drew international press coverage. She was a healthy, mischievous girl, but when she turned five, for no reason at all, she began speaking about a small, remote town called Mathura, hundreds of miles away. At first her parents paid no attention to her "chatter," but when she began describing her life in Mathura, her husband and son, and a box of jewels she had hidden before her "death," the worried parents turned to doctors, who decided to examine the case thoroughly. Without revealing anything to the girl, they traveled with her to Mathura, where she had never been. As they approached the town, Shanti excitedly began pointing out buildings and road signs, and she led them through the town center and winding alleys to the northern quarter, an upscale neighborhood. With mounting excitement she knocked on the door of one of the villas. The servant who opened it was astonished to hear the strange little girl call him by name and ask to see the master of the house and his son. The man, in his forties, at first refused to believe that this five-year-old, whom he had never seen, was his wife who had died five years earlier. But he and his son could not withstand the flood of details Shanti told them. What finally convinced them, as well as the doctors and clergy accompanying her, that there was no explanation other than *gilgul* was the jewelry box. During her lifetime her husband had bought her many jewels, which she kept in a costly box hidden in a place known only to her. Because she had died suddenly without revealing the hiding place, her husband and son had never found the gems. How great was their astonishment when the strange little girl walked confidently to the bedroom, moved the armchair, and with a pair of scissors pried up a large floor tile, beneath which the box of gems came to light. (3) Mr. Battista and his wife lived in Rome with their little daughter Blanche and employed a Swiss nanny to care for her. The nan-

I should point out that the belief in *gilgul* is not stated explicitly in Tanach, the Talmud, or the Midrashim of Chazal; it is explicit only in the Zohar. And although the Zohar is ancient (it was written by the disciples of the Tanna Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai), it came to light only about eight hundred years ago. As a result, some of the *chachmei Yisrael* questioned the book's authenticity and contents. Although they had heard of *gilgul* through oral tradition, they were unsure of it, and suggested that perhaps after a person's death his *nefesh*, *ruach*, and *neshamah* are judged only in the upper worlds. But when the greatest of the *mekubalim* of Tzefas, the Ari, arose some four hundred years ago and confirmed the book, its author, and its contents, the doubters fell silent.

Among the *chachmei Yisrael* who doubted this belief was Rabbi Yehudah Aryeh of Modena, who published a large work on the subject called *Ari Nohem*, "The Roaring Lion," in which he roared like a lion stalking its prey at those who believe in *gilgul*. At the end of his life, however, he came to believe in it. Once, while treating a sick six-month-old child (the rabbi was also a physician, licensed by the universities of Italy), the infant suddenly sat up, recited the verse *Shema Yisrael*, and died. The rabbi was shaken. How

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ny taught the girl French and sang her French songs, one of which was the child's favorite. Blanche died young of diphtheria. Three years after her death, Mrs. Battista became pregnant. In her fourth month she had an experience that was half dream, half vision. She said she was fully awake when Blanche suddenly appeared before her and announced in her childish voice, "Mama, I'm coming back." When the baby was born, she was named after her older sister. When the second Blanche was six, something unusual happened. Here is the father's testimony as published in *The Rebirth of the Problem*: "My wife and I were sitting in the room when suddenly the sound of a lullaby reached us from Blanche's room. We went in and found her sitting and singing, cheerfully and with a distinct French accent, the very lullaby the first Blanche had loved so much. We froze in astonishment. My wife had never sung that tune, and nowhere else in Rome could the girl have heard the song, which was known only to villagers of the French canton of Switzerland. 'Who taught you this song?' I asked Blanche. 'Nobody. I just know it,' she answered, and went on singing it happily. I do not know what conclusions the researchers will reach. I can only swear that the details I have given are true and describe exactly what happened. The conclusion I draw is that the dead come back in order to be among us." Here the father's account ends.

could an infant know how to say this? He did not rest until he reached the conclusion that compels one to accept *gilgul neshamos*.[16]

2

When the Jewish people received the Torah at Sinai, they became an *am segulah*, a "treasured nation,"[17] inheriting the *nefesh Elokis*. This potential does not by itself make them wise or refined; it does so only when it shines within them. That happens only when they engage in Torah and fulfill its *mitzvos*. Until then it lies dormant within them, unfelt and without any influence at all. This is why there are Jews who behave like the worst of the nations: even their *nefesh hamaskeles* has not yet been repaired, let alone their *nefesh Elokis*. But when these levels shine in a person, they refine and elevate him, and he merits spiritual perceptions that ordinary souls cannot reach. In the future, when all the souls of Israel are refined, it will be said, "Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy."[18]

These levels do not shine in a person all at once, but part by part, according to his merit. The more he rises through his deeds, the more parts he merits, until he attains all of them in full.

Gentiles possess the *nefesh hamaskeles*, and through their spiritual soul they can advance up to a certain limit by keeping the seven *mitzvos* commanded to the descendants of Noach. One who keeps them is called a *chassid umos ha'olam*, a "righteous gentile," of whom Chazal said that he has a share in *Olam Haba*,[19] and he receives his portion according to the level of his soul.[20] If such a soul reaches the limit of what it can attain, it can join the inheritance of Hashem and convert in accordance with *halachah*. Then, at the moment of immersion in the *mikveh* and of a sincere, wholehearted *kabbalas ol mitzvos*, the *nefesh Elokis* given to Israel comes to rest upon it. If it

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[16] Chida, *Shem HaGedolim*.

[17] Shemos 19:5.

[18] Yoel 3:1.

[19] Rambam, *Hilchos Teshuvah*, ch. 3.

[20] He enjoys it in a world bordering on the imaginary; see below, in the story of the Chofetz Chaim and the *dybbuk* of the *poritz*.

then keeps the 613 *mitzvos* and rises through them, it can reach even the level of the prophets; indeed, Ovadiah the prophet was a convert.[21]

Gilgul applies to the souls of all human beings, gentile and Jew alike, because every soul must repair its flaws, its errors, and the damage it has caused. If it did not repair them while in the body, it must repair them after it leaves the body. One of the means of repair is to give the sinner another opportunity to correct his deeds by returning him to this world in another *gilgul*.

A gentile soul that returns in *gilgul* will not enter the body of a Jew, because it has no capacity to receive the *nefesh Elokis* and has no need of it for its repair. But a Jew who committed sins that defiled his soul and cut it off from the holiness and distinction given to Israel will return as a gentile. He will then need to cleanse his defiled soul and awaken it to convert and return to the holiness from which it was hewn. If he succeeds, then after his death he goes on to the light of life like any Jew. If he does not succeed in returning to holiness, he will be reincarnated as a gentile several times and undergo severe suffering of body and soul to atone for his deeds. Afterward he will return in a Jewish *gilgul* to fulfill the *mitzvos* before his soul returns to its place in the world that is entirely good.

The *levush hanefesh*, the garment of the soul, comes from the person's present parents. They give him life through the power of their own soul-garments, which clothe the seed and take part in forming it anew, and so the child receives his soul-garment from theirs. This is what makes a person a Kohen, a Levi, or a Yisrael. Even if he was a Kohen in his previous *gilgul*, since his garment now comes from Yisrael parents, he is a Yisrael: he may marry a divorcée and may become *tamei* through contact with the dead. And even if he was a Yisrael in his last *gilgul*, if he is born to a Kohen father, his garment has received the lights of the *kehunah*, and he may not marry a divorcée or become *tamei* through the dead.

When a Jew comes back in *gilgul* as a gentile, his garment now comes with the participation of the soul of his gentile mother, who possesses only a *nefesh hamaskeles*. Therefore only the *nefesh hamaskeles* that was in him returns to his body, and his status is that of a gentile, with no share or portion in the Jewish people until he converts in accordance with *halachah*. Then, at

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[21] See Rashi on Ovadiah 1:1.

the moment of immersion in the *mikveh* for the sake of true conversion, the *nefesh Elokis* that was once in him will rest upon him again.

While still in his mother's womb, a reincarnated person remembers his previous *gilgul*. The process of birth weakens this memory but does not erase it entirely. In his first years a child says things connected to his previous *gilgul*, which the people around him hear as the nonsense of an imaginative child. Gradually, as he grows and becomes attached to the people around him, the memory of his previous *gilgul* is pushed below the threshold of consciousness, and he "forgets" it. Still, many of a person's habits are carried out unconsciously, out of a connection to his previous *gilgul*. Even those born with sexual deviations and the like have them as a result of a habit of that sin in a previous *gilgul*, which became second nature to the soul. This is why they are drawn to the same habit: they have now come to repair it by avoiding the sin at all costs.

The process of birth is deliberately arranged by Heaven so that a person's present development will push the memory of his previous *gilgul* into the subconscious. In this way he acts in his new *gilgul* with complete free choice. If he remembered his previous *gilgul* and understood that he had returned to repair his deeds, his choice would no longer be complete, and deeds not done out of full choice and will have no value.

Heaven arranges circumstances and tests for him, so that if he stands up to his *yetzer* and does not sin, his sins are atoned for *middah k'neged middah*. Alternatively, sufferings are brought upon him, *middah k'neged middah*, to match the pleasures of the sins he committed in his previous *gilgul*.

Knowing about *gilgul* resolves many questions and apparent contradictions in matters of faith: individual reward and punishment, the suffering of the righteous, and the tranquility of the wicked. Almost all of us are *gilgulim* of souls that were once in this world, and we have come to repair what we did wrong in that time, both toward Hashem and toward people who have also come back with us in *gilgul*.

Know that Iyov's suffering, the loss of his children and his property and the afflictions of his body, falls under the category of *kares* stated in the Torah. He received this punishment for the sin of *niddah* that he committed in his previous *gilgul*. *Kares* is not only in *Olam Haba* after death; it also occurs in this world, sometimes while the person is still in his body and sometimes in another *gilgul*. If people knew that *kares* means that through a sin a per-

son may lose his children, his health, his property and the enterprise he built with his ten fingers, or all of them together, they would leap to the heavens rather than commit any sin. Because people do not know this, they sin like complete fools. Yet this is the truth. People cry out, "We prayed, we gave *tzedakah*, we kept the *mitzvos*; why do we suffer?" They do not understand that their suffering is only a small part of the punishment for a single *kares* they have incurred. If a person understands that he is suffering because of his sins and does *teshuvah*, the sufferings decreed upon him will be lightened in proportion to the greatness of his *teshuvah*.

Although every Jew is obligated to keep all 613 *mitzvos*, transgressors are not all treated alike. A soul that has not committed a similar sin in one of its earlier *gilgulim* is not necessarily punished for it right away. Often Heaven waits a long time for it to do *teshuvah*; sometimes Heaven waits for it its entire life. If it does not repent, it is punished in *Olam Haba* with harsh and bitter suffering of the soul, or in another *gilgul*. For sins it already committed in a previous *gilgul*, however, it is punished immediately as well, in addition to the punishments Above. This is why we see two people commit the same sin, and one is punished with the full severity of the law while the other suffers no harm at all. The first already committed this sin in his previous *gilgul*; for the second, this is the first *gilgul* in which he has committed it, and Heaven is showing him patience in case he returns.

3

Reward in *Olam Haba* is apportioned according to the different levels of the soul. The *nefesh*, which is close to the body in its sensations and desires, will be in the lower Gan Eden, where it will enjoy pleasures akin to those of the body: beautiful scenery, pleasant fragrances, and the like, combined with lofty spiritual content. The *ruach* and the *neshamah* will dwell in the upper Gan Eden, each in its own place according to its level, and will enjoy spiritual pleasures bound up with pure understanding. These pleasures of the upper and lower Gardens of Eden are real, not products of the imagination.

At *techiyas hameisim*, which is the ultimate purpose, they will all return and be clothed in their former body, which will once again be covered with skin, flesh, and sinews. All the learning and spiritual delight that each part acquired in Gan Eden will be stored and concentrated in the person's mind when he rises, so that he can make use of that knowledge as he wishes.

Then, since he will be in a body that includes all three levels together, they will be able, through concentrated thought, to leave the body together for a time, return to delight in the Gardens of Eden as they wish, and come back to the body as they please. The body will be the base from which they go out and to which they return, since only in it can all three levels unite.

After separating from the body, the sinful soul is judged through several forms of punishment, whose purpose is to refine and purify it, not merely to exact revenge. These sufferings are given to the soul to cleanse it and prepare it for another return to this world in a human *gilgul*. When it enters a human body and mends its ways, it will enter its place in Gan Eden.

Even *tzaddikim* sometimes return in *gilgul*: to complete a *mitzvah* they did not manage to perform, to add to their good deeds, to guide people on the good and upright path, to help broken hearts, and the like.[22]

For certain sins, before the soul is reincarnated in a human body to improve its deeds, it must wander through the air of the world for a set period. It has no rest or repose. It is harried and driven from place to place, while *malachei chabalah* pursue it and strike it, causing it terrible anguish. This is what is called *kaf hakela*, "the hollow of the sling." Of this Avigayil said to Dovid HaMelech: "May my lord's soul be bound up in the bundle of life with Hashem your God, and may He sling away the souls of your enemies as from the hollow of a sling."[23] Such a soul longs, and sometimes manages, to enter the body of a living person; this is what people call a *dybbuk*.[24] At other times it comes in the *gilgul* of an animal. The soul then suffers from being imprisoned in a body that does not suit its upright human form, and from the degradation of having become an animal. Every physical suffering the animal undergoes, the human soul dwelling within it feels, as any person

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[22] Zohar, Vayikra 88; and *Sha'ar HaGilgulim*, Introduction 8.

[23] Shmuel I 25:29.

[24] See *Minchas Yehudah* by Rabbi Yehudah Fatiya zt"l, in his discussion of the "speaking spirits." Know, too, that some patients in mental hospitals are not mentally ill at all but are under the compulsion of a *dybbuk* that has entered them. Their families, seeing their strange behavior, assumed they were mentally ill and turned to doctors who understand nothing of the matter. They were referred to hospitals, where they are sedated with drugs and reduced to broken vessels. Thus the phenomenon of the *dybbuk* exists in our day, but it lies buried in hospitals instead of being treated properly.

or animal whose soul is tormented by the pains of its body. What is more, it remembers its previous *gilgul* and that it was once human; it is revolted by the food and habits of animals, and its death is better than its life.[25]

Another form of punishment is what the prophet calls *Tofteh*[26] and what Chazal call *Gehinnom*. It includes many levels of suffering and purification, and each level is called a *mador*, a "compartment." Some are judged there for a very long time, until they return to this world in another *gilgul*. There are also compartments for those who are judged there for a fixed period, to cleanse them of the remaining residue of their sins, after which they go directly to their proper place in Gan Eden.

These punishments are inflicted on the soul and on this *guf*, which is close in its sensations to the physical body, is part of it, and reacts exactly as it would while attached to it. It is not a physical punishment made of consuming flame, but a spiritual fire, matched in its blend of material and spiritual to the level of the soul. The soul suffers from it more severely and painfully than the physical body feels physical fire. Indeed, even a living person's suffering is not only physical but chiefly spiritual, since it is the soul dwelling in his body that feels the pain and distress. When part of the soul withdraws from a limb, that limb becomes paralyzed and feels no pain at all. Yet the greatest suffering in the body is mild compared with the suffering of the soul stripped of the body, because the body dulls and restrains the intensity of the soul's suffering to just one sixtieth.

Clearly, all this applies only when a person dies in his wickedness. But if he regrets the evil he has done, his sin is forgiven; he returns and is healed.

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[25] The Ari, greatest of the *mekubalim*, wrote in *Sha'ar HaGilgulim* that one who feeds *neveilos* to Jews is reincarnated in the leaf of a tree. His punishment is that the wind strikes that leaf and turns it this way and that, giving him no rest; when his allotted time is up, the leaf is torn from the tree, withers, and falls to the ground, which for him is like actual death. One who shed blood (committed premeditated murder) is reincarnated in water. One who lives with a married woman is reincarnated in a millstone or in a donkey. A man who lies with a man and dies without *teshuvah* will come back as a hyrax or a hare (*Sha'ar HaGilgulim*, Introduction 22). And a Jew who lives with a gentile woman and dies without *teshuvah* will come back as a dog (*Sha'ar Ruach HaKodesh*, *Tikkun* 20).

[26] See Yeshayahu 30:33; Brachos 57b; and Zohar, *parashas* Pekudei.

Of this the prophet said: "For I do not desire the death of the wicked, but that he turn from his way and live."

4

The kinds of souls are many and varied, because their source is the ten *sefiros* that Hakadosh Baruch Hu created at the foundation of Creation as the root of all the spiritual and physical worlds. Each of these ten *sefiros* is itself composed of ten, and each of those of ten, and so on without end. These *sefiros* combine in various compounds, producing a great many forms, and each form is the root of a soul. In fact, no two souls are identical, and therefore they are not identical in the purpose for which they come into this world. Each soul has something that sets it apart from all others, both while it is in the body and in the expanse of the *Ein Sof*.

The souls were created before the creation of this world, and this world was created so that they would enter bodies and need physical things such as food, drink, marriage, housing, and the like, and so be placed in a position of choice. On one side are the body and the animating soul, which draw them toward these pleasures even when they are forbidden. On another is the *nefesh hamaskeles*, which wants these things to sustain the body and the human race. And there is the *nefesh Elokis*, which wants these things in harmony with the *mitzvos* of the Creator. Just as a person who chases after and is swept away by the desires of this world sins, so too a person who withdraws from the affairs of this world altogether, who does not marry, or who abstains from healthy foods and neglects the health of his body, sins. It is through their choices that the souls acquire their spiritual standing.

The longer a person lives in this world, the world of choice, and serves his Creator, the more he rises and the greater the reward stored up for him, both in *Olam Haba* and after *techiyas hameisim*. As the verse says: "How great is Your goodness, which You have stored away for those who fear You."[27] The state and level at which he stands at the moment of death are fixed for him for all eternity and cannot be changed,[28] and "one who toiled on *erev Shabbos* will eat on Shabbos."[29] This is why the sages did not want to die

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[27] Tehillim 31:20.

[28] *Sha'ar Ruach HaKodesh*, Introduction 5.

[29] Avodah Zarah 3a.

and leave this world, and prayed for more time in it. And this is why they said: "Better one hour of *teshuvah* and good deeds in this world than all the life of *Olam Haba*; and better one hour of contentment in *Olam Haba* than all the life of this world."[30]

Once souls have reached their place in *Olam Haba* and beheld the pleasantness of Hashem, their appetite grows, and they long to attain levels they did not manage to reach during their lifetimes. This is especially so when they see their fellows who achieved more, and their envy grows: "each one is burned by the canopy of his fellow,"[31] and "the envy of scholars increases wisdom."[32] Some are willing to return in another *gilgul* in order to be in the world of choice and advance and rise in level, risking all they have attained for the chance to rise higher still.

5

As we have said, every soul is built from a compound of several *sefiros*, but it is not built as a single piece. It is divided into a great many "links," each made of three parts of *sefiros*. Each link can act on its own like an ordinary soul and operate the body with all its limbs and sinews, with no outward difference between that body and one operated by a complete soul. The difference is significant, however, in spiritual quality and in the capacity to grasp the secrets of Divinity and Creation and the ways of Hashem's governance and providence in all the worlds. The more links a soul has, the greater its power of spiritual vision.

When a person comes into the world for the first time, he is born with the potential to receive a complete soul with all its links, as a single unit living in his body and experiencing all the events and deeds of his life. If his deeds were worthy, then on leaving the body it merits the loftiest levels in Gan Eden, of which it is said: "No eye has seen, Elokim, besides You, what He will do for one who waits for Him."[33] If his deeds were partly good and partly flawed, and the flaw can be repaired through punishments Above that refine and illuminate the soul, then when it completes this process of

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[30] Avos 4:17.

[31] Bava Basra 75a.

[32] Bava Basra 21a.

[33] Yeshayahu 64:3.

repair it enters its proper place in Gan Eden. But if its flaws require another *gilgul*, the soul splits. The parts that were illuminated by its good deeds separate and become a smaller soul, with fewer links, which at some stage will enter Gan Eden in a place suited to the level and quality of the soul at its present size. At *techiyas hameisim* the same body will rise together with that part of the soul that was meritorious and shone within it. The other parts of the soul, which did not merit to shine, and all the more so the parts that were damaged by negative deeds, join with the unrepaired parts of one or two other souls of the same root[34] and return together to this world in another *gilgul* as a single large soul. When it leaves the body again, it is judged as before: the repaired parts form a soul of their own, and the remaining links return.

In general, the parts illuminated by good deeds do not return in *gilgul*. The exceptions are one who lent or borrowed with interest,[35] one who denied *techiyas hameisim*, one who denied that the Torah is from Heaven, one who mocked *talmidei chachamim*, and one who engaged with books of heresy and apostasy.[36] If someone committed any of these sins and did not do *teshuvah* before his death, his body will not rise at *techiyas hameisim* but will be lost and destroyed, and all the parts of his soul, including the good ones, return to the world in another *gilgul*.

From this we can understand that the more a person succeeds in repairing, and the more parts he merits, the greater his perception and vision of the eternal light of life and of spiritual delight, and after *techiyas hameisim* his perception and prophecy will be higher still. This is what the verse says of that time: "And they shall all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest,"[37] "as the waters cover the sea." That is, after *techiyas hameisim* all souls will know the spiritual truths, and at a superficial glance they will all seem alike, just as the sea looks flat and level from the outside. But just as the sea has different depths, so there will be differences among them in their levels

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[34] *Sha'ar HaGilgulim*, Introductions 11 and 14.

[35] Tosafos, Bava Metzia, s.v. *Tashich*; *Kenesses HaGedolah* in the name of the Rokeach and the Kol Bo; and the *Shulchan Aruch* of the Baal HaTanya.

[36] Mishnah, Sanhedrin 90a, and the Gemara there.

[37] Yirmiyahu 31:33; Yeshayahu 11:9.

of perception and understanding, greatness and elevation, according to the quality of each soul.

6

To illustrate what has been said, I will now add several stories in which I, the writer, was personally involved.

The Story of the Cat

IN MY YOUTH I lived in the home of my grandfather, the *tzaddik* Chacham Menachem Menashe zt"l, author of the *sefer Ahavas Chaim* on the Torah. When I was seventeen, despite my learning in *yeshivah*, I would sometimes play ball with a boy from the neighborhood while Grandfather went out on Shabbos to give *derashos* in several *shuls*. Once Grandfather came home and found me playing. "What is this?" he asked. I loved my grandfather and was ashamed before him; to me he was a man of gold, with a compassionate heart. I put down the ball and went home with him.

That week, on Thursday, he came over to me and said, "Do me a favor. Take this letter to Chacham Tefilon in Yaffo. It is very important to me to get an answer from him."

Chacham Tefilon was a painter who lived on Eliezer Street near Shabazi Street in Yaffo. My grandfather, my father, and my uncle were devoted friends of his and knew his true worth. Among several families of Turkish origin in Tel Aviv who revered my grandfather, he was regarded as a *tzaddik nistar*, and people turned to him for *berachos* and advice. He looked like an utterly simple man, and I was not impressed by him. But Grandfather asked me to go, so I took the letter and went. Grandfather had written the letter in Turkish so that I would not understand it; apparently it said something like, "My grandson is going off the path. Take care of him."

The trip from Yerushalayim to Yaffo took about two hours. I arrived around two-thirty in the afternoon and found him sitting on a couch, wearing a flat cap. "Grandfather sent you a letter," I said, "and he is waiting for an answer." After he read it, he said, "Come, sit next to me." When I sat down, he began telling me stories about *gilgulim*. I remember him telling me

that abroad he had had a neighbor who used to shave with a razor. He kept rebuking him that it is forbidden to shave with a razor, and the neighbor would mock him. "One day," he told me, "I was walking down Allenby Street in Tel Aviv, and I saw a donkey break away from its owner and run toward me." (This was about fifty years ago, when animals and carts still wandered the streets of Yaffo and Allenby as a matter of course.) "The donkey came up to me and said, 'Listen, I am your neighbor from Turkey. Make a *tikkun* for me.' In front of everyone I slapped him and said, 'When I rebuked you, you mocked me. I will not give you a *tikkun*. Go find your *tikkun* elsewhere.'"

He told me stories like these about all kinds of *gilgulim*: about IDF soldiers who had been killed before their families knew, before the army had informed them, and who came to ask him to let their families know. These things carried me out of reality altogether, into an entirely different world of imagination, and I did not believe him. His words went in one ear and out the other, and he noticed.

Suddenly a cat came in. This did not surprise me. On my way in I had passed through a large yard full of ducks, chickens, and cats in front of the one-story house, and it is perfectly natural for cats to come in from the yard; if you are used to them and talk to them, they understand you. So I paid no attention. The cat began to meow. He said to her, "Go, and come back in half an hour." She left. He asked me what time it was, and I told him it was exactly three o'clock. He went on telling me about souls, the departed, and *gilgulim*. Suddenly the cat returned. Again he asked me the time, and I said it was exactly three-thirty. "You see?" he said. "She came back after half an hour. Give me a few minutes with her." "Take your time," I said. She stood facing him, propped up on her front paws, her head turned toward his, meowing. I heard her meowing and noticed that she was moving her head the way a person does when speaking. I was stunned. When she finished, she remained standing, waiting for an answer. He sank into thought with his eyes closed, and I felt that he was not present. After a few minutes that seemed like an eternity, he opened his eyes and said to her, "Go. Everything has been repaired." And she left.

"Do you talk to cats?" I asked him. "No," he said. "This is a seventeen-year-old girl who sewed on Shabbos and was reincarnated in a cat, and she came to ask for a *tikkun*." "What happened?" I asked. He answered, "The

cat has already died. The soul is already Above. I can see her up there, giving a judgment and accounting for other matters."

We had heard no screech of brakes and no noise of any kind. I ran outside at once and saw her at the corner of Shabazi Street, about two hundred meters from his house, crushed; a truck had run her over. I recognized her by the white stripe on her back. I came back completely shaken. He saw my face and said, "Go and tell your grandfather that everything is fine."

I returned to Yerushalayim, and on the way I had plenty of time to think about what I had seen and to absorb it. When I arrived, I went to my parents' house. They had a wide yard at the entrance, and as I came in I saw two cats standing face to face, making groaning sounds rather than meows, one standing by the other's head and groaning as though the two were speaking to each other. Still under the impression of the cat in Yaffo, I said, "Ribbono shel Olam, these must be *gilgulim*!" I stood and recited chapter 91 of Tehillim, *Yoshev b'seser elyon*, which is known as a special chapter for all kinds of things beyond nature. When I finished the chapter, one cat died and the other ran away. I was utterly terrified.

From then on I gave up the ball games and that friend, and I advanced in my learning.

The Young Woman Who Became Disabled

ONE DAY A WOMAN came to me: Mrs. V., a young woman disabled in both legs and confined to a wheelchair. She wanted to know why fate had betrayed her and why she had not yet found a man to her liking. She had met many men, but after one short meeting none of them ever came back to ask after her, and she sat alone and embittered. Seeing her grief and her damaged health, I felt sorry for her and agreed to do a *she'elas chalom*[38] to learn why she was suffering.

In my dream I found myself looking through the window of a home where a Jewish couple sat at supper with their son and two daughters. As I studied their faces, I noticed that the younger daughter, about eighteen years old, resembled Mrs. V., and I understood that I was seeing her in her previous *gilgul*. She finished eating before everyone else and went out of the house into the darkness of the night, to the edge of a city park. There she met a young gentile and had a friendly conversation with him. The young man asked her to leave her family and her people and go away with him, and she promised she would do so at one of their next meetings.

Again I found myself looking through the window of her home at suppertime. This time, when she finished eating, she stood up and announced that she had a friend and wanted her parents' consent to marry him. Her sister pointed out that he was not Jewish, and when the mother heard this, she fainted on the spot. The father, who understood what was happening, ran to revive his wife, while her sister and brother stayed behind to reason

[38] A *she'elas chalom* is a prayer said before sleep, asking to be answered in a dream regarding the question being asked.

with her: to keep her from this foolish step and have pity on their miserable parents and on her own defiled soul. But their words were in vain. Without answering, she turned her back on them and walked to the city park, where the "knight of her dreams" was waiting. She fell into his arms and went off with him.

Again I saw in my dream that I was standing before their house of worship, watching her arrive there with the gentile to marry him in that place of impurity. Opposite it I saw her parents and her brother sitting on the ground in *shivah*, weeping over her spiritual death and her severance from her people and her God.

The next day Mrs. V. came back to hear what I had to say. I told her, "Before I tell you my dream, I want to ask you two things that will help me confirm its interpretation. First, when was the injury that left your legs paralyzed? Second, what is your relationship with your family like?" She wept and told me that when she was about eighteen, she had needed back surgery, and as a result her legs were paralyzed. Until then her relationship with her family, her mother and ten brothers and sisters, had been perfectly normal. She had never known her father, who died when she was about three. But when she came home from the surgery in a wheelchair, her mother would not let her into the house and drove her away, saying that Elokim had punished her for her loose relationships with her friends, and that she no longer wished to recognize her as her daughter. In her distress she turned to her older brother, hoping to find shelter with him until he could persuade their mother to let her back home. But he rejected her with contempt and told her that the entire family had agreed to shun her and keep away from her because of her immoral conduct with her friends. When she saw that all her appeals came back empty, she went to the home of a girlfriend, who took her in and helped her rebuild her life. Ever since then, on Yom Tov, when her whole family gathers to celebrate together, she has had to go to a hotel for a group Seder so as not to sit alone and eat her heart out in despair and loneliness.

I said to her, "What you have told me matches the answer I received in the dream. All the deeds of Elokim are *middah k'neged middah*. Because in your previous *gilgul* you had a forbidden love with a gentile, in this *gilgul* the warmth and love you long for have been withheld from you. The legs that walked into that house of impurity are now paralyzed. And just as you cut

your ties with your family, so in this *gilgul* your family has cut its ties with you. You must get up and confess before the Creator of the world, plead for your poor soul that betrayed her God and her people, and ask for pardon, forgiveness, and atonement. If you return to Him truly and wholeheartedly, your *teshuvah* will be accepted, for Hashem our God is gracious and compassionate and abundantly forgiving, and He will improve your lot."

Gilgul Neshamos in Chicago

SHE SAT ACROSS FROM me with a tear on her cheek, and her pained gaze cried out to Hashem: "My God, why have You done this to me? Where are Your mercy and kindness for a wretched soul like me, who came to take shelter beneath Your wings?" And I did not know how to comfort her.

I had heard her story from a rabbi in Chicago, who sent her to me after he had despaired of consoling her over her terrible tragedy. Although I told him that I did not know how to comfort her and that it was a pity for her to be disappointed, he insisted and sent her anyway. Now here she was in a Jewish school in Queens, New York, waiting for a word of comfort for her deep grief and for an answer to her doubts about the justice of Hashem's ways in our world. These are the details of the story.

In the winter of 5752, while I was in New York, a rabbi from Chicago telephoned to ask me to see a woman from his community. She was in a crisis of faith and in deep pain over a tragedy that had befallen her and cast a heavy shadow over the whole community.

This rabbi had come up with a wonderful idea for bringing estranged Jews closer to *Yiddishkeit*: he gave lectures and classes on psychology and child-rearing. Most of those who came were Jewish women far removed from any spark of *Yiddishkeit*. As he lectured, he wove in genuine content about the essence of life and the soul, and he influenced some of them to keep Torah and *mitzvos*. Among these women was a young woman who had been raised in a completely secular American home. She had married a gentile and had a son, who was six years old when she began attending the lectures. Little by little she was influenced by what the rabbi taught about the

Torah and its content. She began asking deep questions and receiving satisfying answers, and as a result she started keeping *mitzvos*.

After a few months, when she had grown stronger on her path, she asked her gentile husband to learn the *mitzvos* of Judaism and convert. He replied that as soon as she began keeping *mitzvos*, he understood that the day would come when she would demand that he convert. Since then he had made up his mind that when she reached that point, he would propose a divorce and a complete separation, even from the child, who would stay with her, on condition that she release him from child support and any other obligations. And so it was done.

Immediately after the divorce, the mother enrolled the child in the rabbi's community Talmud Torah, and she became one of the community's activists. As the boy grew over the years, he showed interest in and a desire for learning *limudei kodesh* and a devotion to keeping Torah and *mitzvos*. When he approached bar mitzvah age, since his birthday fell on the Seventeenth of Tammuz, a fast day of mourning over the destruction of Yerushalayim, a lavish bar mitzvah celebration was planned for the days after Tishah B'Av. But "Many are the plans in a man's heart, but the counsel of Hashem, that shall stand." On the Seventeenth of Tammuz, the day he became obligated in *mitzvos*, the boy put on *tefillin* in *shul* and was called up to the Torah. When he finished *davening*, he set out for his mother's house but never arrived. A truck struck him and took his life.

Needless to say, the entire community was devastated by his tragic death, and the bereaved mother nearly lost her mind from the magnitude of her loss. The tragedy began to raise questions in her mind about the justice and righteousness of Heaven: how could Heaven do such a thing to her, despite her sincere *teshuvah* and all she had sacrificed for *Yiddishkeit* and its *mitzvos*? Was this the reward for *teshuvah*? Her questions did harm to those who heard them. Almost automatically they took her side against the *Beis Din shel Maalah* and began to wonder whether "chance" had caused this, and whether a person's "fate" simply drives him along while the *Beis Din shel Maalah* ignores his good deeds and his conduct.

Almost every evening the mother would come to the rabbi's house with complaints and demands about Divine justice, weeping over her bitter luck. The rabbi would sit with her for a long time, patiently calming, encouraging, and comforting her. But when this had gone on for about two years

after the tragedy, it weighed so heavily on the rabbi and his household that their family life was nearly destroyed. They felt helpless: they could not help her, nor could they stop her from coming and repeating her complaints over and over without end. When the rabbi heard that I was in New York, he immediately asked me to see what could be done to calm the woman and restore peace to his home and his community. Although I answered that I did not know how to help and that she would only be more disappointed by false hopes from meeting me, he sent her to me.

Now she sat with a pained look, waiting to hear what I had to say. I told her: "Look, there is no doubt that this case is connected to the *gilgulim* of you and your son. If we knew the story, we would recognize that the Creator is 'a God of faithfulness without injustice; righteous and upright is He.' But I am not sure I have the means to discover the secret of the matter. I hope that, for the sake of the community's peace and of your *teshuvah*, Heaven will help us find the reason and the Divine justice in it. But know that even if no reason for this terrible event is found, that takes nothing away from the justice of the *Beis Din shel Maalah*. It may be that part of your *tikkun* is precisely to be denied this knowledge, to increase your pain and your test. I will try to go out into the past and find the reason. You will listen and write down every word I say, so that we can reflect on it afterward. Perhaps Hashem will send us the answer."

I stood in prayer before the Creator, may He be blessed, asking Him to open my eyes to the meaning of the matter and to show everyone "that Hashem is righteous, His judgment is just, and all His ways are truth." When I finished, I sat facing her with my eyes closed. After a few minutes of concentration I began to see visions while awake, and as if in a dream I found myself in Yerushalayim near the entrance known today as Shechem Gate, walking along the street known today as HaGai Street. But this was Yerushalayim fully built, when the entrance was in the same place. The street was one of the city's main thoroughfares, connecting the new city outside the wall (Beis Zeisa) and the Antonia Fortress in the north with the lower city in the south, by way of the foot of the western side of Har HaBayis (the Valley of the Cheesemakers). I walked along this street with the beautiful, towering buildings of Yerushalayim on either side.

It was early afternoon, and the street was flooded with blazing summer sun. No one could be seen except a short Jewish soldier walking with a

helmet on his head and a long sword in his hand, and I followed behind him. The soldier stopped beside a particularly impressive house on the right side of the street (roughly opposite today's Via Dolorosa). Its entire front was made of green glass bottles fastened together, forming a magnificent fence around the courtyard before the building. The soldier opened the courtyard gate and went in, and I followed him. Instead of turning left to the steps leading up to the building's entrance, he turned right and went down the steps to a cellar, where an old woman was hiding. He broke open the cellar door and demanded that she give him food, for he was hungry. I understood at once that this was the time of the Roman siege of Yerushalayim. The old woman had a few handfuls of barley hidden in the ground, and she was afraid he would discover her hiding place and leave her to starve. She began to cry and protest that she too was hungry and had nothing to give him. When he began rummaging through her belongings and poking at the walls, she feared he would find her cache, and to get rid of him she said: "Look, I have nothing to give you. But I will tell you that in the Beis HaMikdash, in the Holy Courtyard, there are jars full of sanctified figs. There you can eat to your heart's content." When the soldier heard this, he left her alone, saying, "If you have lied to me, I will come back here and cut you to pieces with my sword." He set off at once toward the Beis HaMikdash, and I followed him. We entered Har HaBayis by the southern entrance, and suddenly I saw before me the Beis HaMikdash standing in all its glory. I followed him into the Courtyard of the Kohanim and saw one Kohen standing alone beside the Mizbe'ach (at the corner adjoining the north side), praying. I noticed the priestly garments he wore and recalled that the Tannaim dispute whether the sash of an ordinary Kohen was made of linen alone or had a flower of woolen threads embroidered on it. I saw that his sash was made of white linen with a bright red flower (apparently of *tola'as shani* wool) embroidered on the front, above his navel. I also looked at his headdress, which resembled the caps worn by dwarfs.

The soldier paid no attention to any of this. He turned to the northern side of the courtyard, where two clay jars stood, each a meter high, with the letter *tav* written on them in black ink (to indicate that they held *terumah*, produce permitted only to Kohanim, to be eaten in purity). He pulled the stopper from one of the jars, took out a handful of honey-sweet figs, ate them on the spot, and went on his way.

Suddenly I saw myself standing in the early morning on the northern wall of Yerushalayim (roughly opposite today's Salah ed-Din Street) among Jewish soldiers defending the wall, and the soldier who had eaten the *terumah* was among them. Beyond the wall stood thousands of Romans along the entire length of the northern wall, doing nothing. Suddenly one of the Romans threw a rope ladder that caught on the top of the wall, and within minutes the Romans began climbing it in droves. Hand-to-hand fighting broke out atop the wall, the men hurling each other off the wall to the outside. I understood that I was seeing the historic moment of the original Seventeenth of Tammuz, when the wall was breached by the Roman enemy. I saw a Roman officer approach the Jewish soldier who had eaten the *terumah* and push him off the top of the wall to its outer base. The soldier fell on his head and died of a fractured skull.

Suddenly I found myself walking through the alleys of a European city, I did not know which, and I saw a young gentile whose face resembled the Jewish soldier's. I understood that this was his *gilgul*, come back now as a gentile to repair his ugly deeds. These included eating *terumah*, which is forbidden to a Yisrael, and desecrating the holy Beis HaMikdash by entering the Holy Courtyard while *tamei*, armed, and wearing shoes. His *tikkun* was to return as a gentile, find his way to *Yiddishkeit*, come back to it, and live in holiness and purity. But he did not do so. Instead I saw him with his gentile wife and their little son.

As I saw all of this, I described it to the woman, and she wrote down my words. When I came back to myself, I remembered the entire story (even now, as I write these lines, it all stands before my eyes), and I saw that the mother's face resembled the face of the old woman I had seen in the cellar in Yerushalayim. I said to her, "Think back. Your son had a birthmark on his head, just above the skin of the skull, and another mark on his back below the left shoulder. These two are the marks of the injuries from his fall off the wall of Yerushalayim (for all our birthmarks and blemishes are records of injuries to our previous *guf*)." When she confirmed what I said, I explained it to her:

"Know that your son is that Jewish soldier, and you are the old woman in the cellar who sent him to trample on holiness and desecrate it by eating *terumah*, which was forbidden to him as a Yisrael. Even had he been a Kohen it would have been forbidden to him, because he was *tamei*, and *terumah*

must be eaten by Kohanim in purity. Because he ate it, he became liable to death at the hands of Heaven, and so he was killed on the wall of Yerushalayim. And because he was killed on the Seventeenth of Tammuz, he came back to the world to repair his deeds on the Seventeenth of Tammuz as well. The gentile by whom you had this son is the gentile son of the Jewish soldier in his second *gilgul*. Had you been an observant Jewish woman, keeping Torah and *mitzvos*, you would have had to be taken by force by this gentile in order to bring into the world the *tikkun* of the soldier for whose sin and death you were responsible. But since you knew nothing of the Torah and its *mitzvos*, you lived with him of your own free will.

"Now the circle has closed. You came back to repair your deeds and sins from the time of the Beis HaMikdash, and perhaps from *gilgulim* before and after it as well. Among the other things you had to repair was to bring back into the world the person whose ruin you caused, and to raise him on the path of *tikkun*. And that is what you did. You brought the Jewish soldier back through his gentile son from his second *gilgul*, for only through him could he return to this world. This time you repaired him by raising him in the right way. His complete *tikkun* came when, on the very day he became a man fully obligated in *mitzvos*, he put on holy *tefillin* and recited with them *Shema Yisrael*, which is accepting the yoke of the kingdom of Heaven of one's own free will, and went up and read from the Torah. Amid *mitzvah*, prayer, and holiness he returned to his spiritual world. And you still have life ahead of you to repair what you damaged in this *gilgul* and in the ones before it, until your soul returns to its Maker pure and clean."

Gilgul Neshamos in Brooklyn

IN THE WINTER OF 5753, two women came to my office in New York. One was Mrs. G. Waldman, about sixty-five, whom I knew from previous visits. With her was Mrs. P., a woman of about forty-two. Mrs. G. said to me, "Rabbi, see if you can help Mrs. P. I have known her since she was born, and I can vouch for the truth of everything she says." Then Mrs. P. began. She told me that she was born the youngest child of parents who were *yirei Shamayim* in Williamsburg, Brooklyn. When her father heard of her birth, he declared, "Well, the *shiksa* has arrived," and it was as though the whole family decided among themselves that this girl was hated and cast out. She felt the hatred pouring out of them and out of the way they treated her.

When she was six, her parents made her wash the dishes for the whole family. On Friday nights a small, exhausted child had to stay up until late at night washing the dishes of the family and of all their guests. When she was about ten, her father told her that the family did not love her, that he was not willing to let her eat at his table for free, and that she must pay for all her expenses out of her own money. Every day after school she had to go to a list of addresses prepared for her, to work as a babysitter or to wash dishes and carpets. Each evening she handed the money she earned to her father, who immediately gave it to her brothers to buy candy, while she watched and her eyes pined.

When she was nearly eighteen, her father called her in and said: "You know that we all hate you. I kept you at home against my will only so that you would not go out into the street and fall into bad ways. Now, *baruch Hashem*, you are grown, and I have decided to send you out of my house into the world. But so that you do not sink into immorality, I have found

you a hired *chasan*, and in two weeks you will marry him. From the money you earned I saved a sum and rented you an apartment, with several months' rent paid in advance. From the *chuppah* you will go straight to your apartment. You know how to work hard and earn money; you will support your husband and your home. Your mother will teach you the *halachos* a married woman needs to know. Goodbye, and do not let us see you again." She was glad of the "good news" that at last she would be free of the house of her tormentors, and she did not care who the young man was or what he did.

She met the young man for the first time in her life under the *chuppah*. The entire "ceremony" took a few minutes. She wore an ordinary dress, and there was a *minyan*, one bottle of wine, and one cake. After the wedding she left with her husband for the rented apartment, but not before her father warned her never to dare contact the family again, come what may.

She entered her new home with a heart full of hope, but her daily routine went more or less like this. His Honor would get up around noon, open the refrigerator, eat whatever he found, and lounge about until she came home from work. Then he would beat her "only" a little, and she would give him a few dollars to leave her alone. He would go out to the bar to drink himself drunk, come home at midnight, beat her, and do as he pleased with her without the slightest regard for the laws of *taharas hamishpachah*, and then sleep until noon the next day, and so on, over and over. This went on seven days a week, Shabbos included, except that on Shabbos she came home from *shul* earlier, and though she was Shabbos-observant, she gave him money to go drink and leave her in peace. A month after the wedding she became pregnant, and nine months later she gave birth to a son. But the baby changed nothing at home; everything went on as before. On the day of the *bris*, her father came with a *mohel*, who circumcised the child. Some months later she became pregnant again, and then she decided that the situation was no longer bearable. She left the house and the neighborhood, rented an apartment in Boro Park, and turned to a social worker to help her get out of her situation. The court granted her an American divorce, custody of her son and of the unborn child, and a restraining order keeping her husband away from her home.

One evening while she was at home, her husband appeared at her door, perfectly calm. When she reached for the phone to call the police, he said:

"No need. I'm leaving already. I only came to tell you that according to the Torah you are still married and still an *eishes ish*, and my revenge for your leaving me is to leave you an *agunah* for the rest of your life. Goodbye."

"Today I am forty-two," she told me, "and for all these years I have been alone, and I am still an *eishes ish*. But that is not yet the pain I came about. That is only the candy. Now I am getting to the real pain." And she continued her story.

She gave birth to a daughter and raised her son and daughter alone, cut off from her own family and from her husband's. She worked hard to raise them with love and devotion, and the children returned her love and warmth, which compensated her for her loneliness and her chained state.

One day, when her son was twelve and a half and her daughter just over eleven, her father appeared at her house and said: "True, you are not my daughter, but my grandchildren are my grandchildren, and I have come to take them to raise." When she refused to hand them over, he decided that what he could not take by force he would take by cunning. In measured, calculated words he said: "Look, my poor grandchildren have no family on either side. All I want is to give them the warmth of a family: a grandfather, a grandmother, uncles and aunts. I will take them to *shul* on Shabbos and raise them in *mitzvos*, which you have neither the strength nor the means to do." After thinking it over, out of true love for her children and with only their good in mind, she agreed. She said to them, "Here is your grandfather. Go to him for Shabbos, and if you like it there, it can become a regular thing." The children spent Shabbos with their grandfather and the whole family and enjoyed themselves greatly, for they found warmth, love, and gifts. Gladly they began going to their grandfather's house every Shabbos, and so the brainwashing against their mother began, slowly seeping into them.

In the summer months of Tammuz and Av, most Jewish children in New York leave the city because of the oppressive humidity and go to summer camps in the surrounding mountains. The mother had saved ten thousand dollars from various jobs, and she sent her children to summer camp, paying five thousand dollars for each, and visited them twice a week. One day she came to her son's camp and could not find him. She asked the director about him, and he told her: "Three days ago your brother came to visit him and took him for a half-hour walk, and he hasn't brought him

back. We weren't worried, because we knew he was in good hands." The mother panicked and drove like a madwoman to her daughter's camp, and the story repeated itself: a brother and his wife had taken the girl and had not brought her back. In a state of utter confusion she drove straight to her brother's house, pounded on the door, and cried out, "Where are the children?" Her brother opened the window and said: "Lady, there are better places to cry than my house. Go to the Kosel, or at least to a *shul*, and cry there. Your children don't interest me. Please leave." And he closed the window. The mother went to the police and filed a complaint. She was told to wait patiently; the matter would be dealt with. There is no need to describe her suffering over those weeks, as she was haunted by wild imaginings about her children, who had been her whole world and had vanished.

One day the police contacted her and asked her to appear in court on a certain date. When she arrived, she found the camp directors there, along with her brother and sister-in-law in handcuffs. After she gave her testimony, the judge ordered them held until they revealed where the children were. Two days later her brother asked a policeman to bring him before the judge, saying that he wanted to confess. He told the judge that he had smuggled the children to Sunderland, in England, where there are good and prestigious *chareidi* boarding schools for children their age.

The judge ordered all of them to remain in custody except the sister-in-law, who was to fly to England and bring the children back. The police informed the mother which flight the children would be on. She did not sleep all night, busily preparing and cooking for her children, who were at last coming home to her.

When the children came off the plane, she ran to hug and kiss them, but her son pushed her away and said: "*Shiksa!* Why did you bring us back from a fine five-star school to your boring, gloomy house? You didn't do it out of love for us, only out of your own selfishness. If you loved us, you would have come to visit us in England and left us there to learn in wonderful conditions." Stunned, the mother turned to her daughter, who had hidden behind her aunt and would not speak to her mother at all. The mother realized that her sister-in-law had thoroughly brainwashed them all the way back, and thought that the children would gradually calm down. She put them in her car and drove home. But the children went only as far as the yard and said to her: "The law forces us to come this far and no further. We

won't go into your house, and we won't eat your food, only Grandfather's food and our uncles'. You are a *shiksa*, and we don't love you." No matter how hard the mother tried to show her love and her joy at their return, they dug in their heels and refused to budge. For several hours the mother stood outside with her children, until she broke down and called her father to bring food for them. Her father, full of vigor, arrived in his car without any food and said to her: "My grandchildren are hungry. I'm taking them to my house to eat. They know the way back, but I won't throw them out of my house if they want to stay. Don't call, because we won't answer. If the children want to, they'll contact you." The children jumped happily into their grandfather's car and drove off to his house. The mother called several times, and each time she identified herself, they hung up on her. The children never called her at all. The mother went on with her life in double pain and aching loneliness, a life that was no life, with no one to support or sustain her. Yet she held on to her faith in the Creator of the world, pleading and praying to Him to return her children and her happiness to her.

One day, on Thirteenth Avenue in Boro Park, she met an acquaintance who said, "Mrs. P., you know that tomorrow your son is bringing his son into the covenant of Avraham Avinu?" Stunned, the mother asked, "My son is married?" It turned out that her son had married with great pomp and splendor and had a son, and the *bris* would take place the next day in Williamsburg, in the *shul* on Lee Avenue. She took matters into her own hands and went to the *bris*. Her sister-in-law saw her, snatched the *sheitel* off her head, and threw it outside, and with the help of several friends they drove her out of the place. From a distance she saw her son, his wife, and the baby walking to the *bris*.

When she finished her story, she turned to me and said: "Rabbi, my son and my daughter are married. I do not know my daughter-in-law or my son-in-law, and I do not know how many grandchildren I have. I would gladly kill myself, but I know that 'one who takes his own life has no share in *Olam Haba*,' so I barely go on with my miserable life. Can you help me?"

Throughout her story I sat and wept, shaken to the depths of my soul by what she had lived through, and so I agreed to look into why such heavy suffering had been decreed upon her. I found that in a previous *gilgul* in Europe she had been a Jewish girl who ran away from her parents' home and married her gentile neighbor. Her parents sat *shivah* for her and cut off all

contact with her forever. She was happy in the gentile's arms; he loved her and gave her love and devotion. She bore him a son and a daughter, who were Jewish according to *halachah*, and she raised them as complete gentiles. I saw her die as a happy old woman with curly white hair, her son and the gentile surrounding her with love and song, and she breathed her last smiling on the couch.

Now she had come back to straighten what she had made crooked. Her present parents and family were *gilgulim* of her family of that time, who had also come back, each for his own *tikkun*. That is why, in their subconscious, they harbored a bottomless hatred toward her, even though they were hospitable people who practiced *tzedakah* and kindness toward others. That is why her father blurted out at her birth, "The *shiksa* has arrived," without understanding the meaning of his words. And since all the ways of Hakadosh Baruch Hu are *middah k'neged middah*, her life was full of suffering. For every sigh of relief and contentment she had from the gentile's love, she now needed a sigh of pain and a groan over the lack of a husband's love. Her children, whom she had raised as gentiles, she had brought back in *gilgul*, but she had no merit to raise them as Jews. And it was decreed that until the day of her death she would be alone, in pain and suffering, to repair her having been happy and content in her forbidden love with the gentile.

When I told her the reason, she wept and said, "Is there no *tikkun* for me?" I took out the *sefer Sdei Tapuchim* and showed her how to do the *tikkun* for a woman who was with a gentile. I told her to do this *tikkun* every week for a full year, except on Yom Tov, and that I hoped she would then be granted atonement and reach peace and rest.

Three months later, as I was walking on Sixteenth Avenue in Boro Park, I met Mrs. G. Waldman, who said: "Rabbi, do you know what happened? Mrs. P. did the *tikkun* every week as you told her. After the eighth *tikkun*, just as she was washing her hands for bread, the phone rang. It was her son, and he said, 'Mother, my sister and I are sorry we cut ourselves off from you. I'm calling from a pay phone on the corner of your street, and I'm coming to set things right.' The mother was so shaken she could not eat. A few moments later her son appeared, hugged and kissed her, begged her forgiveness, and drove her to his home, where her daughter was waiting with her husband and daughter. The circle closed when they arranged that she would spend one Shabbos at her son's home and the next at her daugh-

ter's." My hair stood on end when I heard this good news, and I was overcome. Then Mrs. G. asked me, "What will be with Mrs. P.'s being an *agunah*?" I told her that Mrs. P. should continue the *tikkun* for the rest of the year, and then one of two things would happen: either her husband would change his mind and divorce her with a proper *get* according to the law of Moshe and Yisrael, or he would die and make way. Mrs. G. moved out of the area, and Mrs. P. did not come back after the year was over, from which I conclude that her *agunah* situation was resolved as well.

Gilgul Neshamos in Toronto

AFTER A LECTURE I gave on *gilgul neshamos* in Toronto, Canada, I returned to my hosts' home accompanied by several people from the lecture who wanted to speak with me about personal matters. When we arrived, I went into an inner room with one of them to discuss his matter, while the others waited in the large room. Suddenly a Hebrew-speaking woman of about forty-five came in, weeping and begging to be allowed to see me without waiting her turn. Those waiting understood how she felt and agreed. As soon as I finished with the man I was speaking to, she came in, began to cry aloud, and told me her painful story.

She had been a young Israeli woman living in Tel Aviv when she met a gentile Canadian volunteer and began going out with him. Her secular way of life, the product of her education in the Israeli "state" school system, which not only failed to give her any Jewish values but did the opposite, did not stop her from wanting to marry him as he was. But her "traditional" parents asked her not to marry him unless he converted. Out of her great love for her parents she did not want to cause them grief, so she persuaded him to undergo a quick conversion that would obligate him to nothing, just to put her parents' minds at ease. He took a short, rushed conversion course, at the end of which he received a "conversion certificate." It meant nothing to either of them, since he had no intention of keeping the laws of Judaism, and the entire declaration of accepting the *mitzvos* and the immersion in the *mikveh* were one big performance. (As with many conversions carried out by the rabbis of the state establishment and its institutions, there are very many converts who remain gentiles in status, because their conversion does not meet the requirements of *halachah*.) When he came out of the

beis din with the coveted certificate, the two of them went to a non-kosher restaurant.

After their marriage he found work, and a son was born to them. When she became pregnant again, he lost his job. Because of the financial pressure they moved to Canada, where his well-to-do parents brought him into their business, and they prospered.

In Toronto she gave birth to a daughter. Right after the birth, bitter quarrels broke out between them, and with his family's help he moved to a separate apartment and took their son, whom he loved dearly, with him. Using his family's large fortune he brought a civil divorce case against her and, through fraudulent claims, also won custody of the boy. He left the girl with her, since he had never bonded with her at all. He married a gentile woman and for years prevented her from visiting her son. Despite court orders allowing her visits, the gentile wife kept the boy from going out to see her with all sorts of strange excuses, and all her efforts to see her son failed. What is more, over the years the boy developed leukemia. Then, on medical advice that she not be allowed to see him lest the excitement destabilize his condition, the court issued an order forbidding her to meet with her son. Meanwhile the boy's condition had worsened, and he was near death. Her only wish was to see her son and be near him in his last days. Perhaps I could help her in some way?

I answered that there was no doubt this situation was connected to a previous *gilgul*, and that if we managed to learn the secret of the matter, perhaps we would also find a solution. I asked her to come back the next day with another person, and I would try to find the reason. When she came the next day, she and her friend sat down beside the table, and I stood in prayer before the Creator of the world, asking that for the sake of His mercy He open my eyes to know what in this woman's previous *gilgul* had caused her present suffering. I sat facing her with my eyes closed, in a state of relaxation, which allows the soul to go partly out of the body and, in that state, to view this woman's past.

Suddenly I found myself in the center of Budapest, watching a crowd of Jews who had been brought there and fenced in with barbed wire. An SS soldier stood at the gate of the fence, sorting the crowd: who would stay, and who would be sent immediately to the crematoria in Poland. Among the crowd I saw a girl of about eighteen who resembled the woman before

me, standing in line for the selection with her parents. Her parents were sent at once to the crematoria, and she remained there with thousands of others who were to be sent to labor camps. After dark I saw her crawl under the barbed fence, and though she was cut, she got through. Under cover of darkness she ran toward the large city buildings across the way, entered one of them, and began climbing the stairs as though seized by panic. On one of the upper floors she knocked on a door. When a young man opened it, she begged for his help, and he said to her, "I am willing to give you shelter on condition that you submit to my demands." She agreed. The next day he obtained an "Aryan" certificate for her, with which she could move about the streets as a non-Jew, go shopping, and function as an ordinary housewife. Immediately she made her way to the Jewish homes whose residents had been taken away, and in one of them she found a dark-skinned baby whose parents had been forced to abandon him when they were seized for the concentration camps. He was still alive, though he had not eaten for two days. She brought him to the gentile's home and fed him. The child found favor in the gentile's eyes, and he agreed to adopt him. The next day she passed a house where Jews hiding from the Germans had been caught during the great selection, and inside she found a fair-skinned baby girl. She took her as well to adopt, and although the gentile was not enthusiastic about the idea, he let her.

A few months later a quarrel broke out between her and the gentile. He shouted at her, "Filthy Jewess, now your end has come!" and called the Gestapo to take her as a Jew in hiding. When the Gestapo came for her, she resisted. They dragged her by the hair into the courtyard and shot her in the left side of the abdomen, and she bled to death.

Suddenly I found myself in another place, bathed in sunshine and dense with green trees with very broad leaves, and in the middle of it a great bonfire of wood. And here she was again, a girl of eighteen, being led with her parents to the pyre by a group of Dominican friars, with a priest in a three-cornered hat walking at their head. I understood that I was in Spain several hundred years ago. Her family had been caught as *anusim*, Jews who kept their Judaism in secret, and had been condemned by the Inquisition to burn. I saw her parents (who did not look like her parents in Hungary; these were entirely different people) stand before the pyre. The priest told them that if they agreed to profess Christianity, their sentence would be

lightened and reconsidered. With great fortitude they cried out, *Shema Yisrael, Hashem Elokeinu, Hashem Echad*, and were thrown at once into the fire. I saw how within minutes the tongues of flame licked at their bodies, and I even smelled the stench of burning flesh.

As she stood watching the horrifying scene unfolding before her parents, that same priest came over to her (his face matched remarkably that of the young man who had taken her into his home in Hungary and in the end handed her over to the Gestapo) and said, "It is a pity for a girl of eighteen to be burned at the stake. Perhaps you would prefer to enter a convent." She agreed and went with him. I looked again at the pyre and heard the sound of bones cracking in the fire. I was horrified and cried out, "I cannot bear to see this! I am going back to the body!" In an instant I opened my eyes and found her and her friend sitting and listening intently.

I said to her: "Now everything is clear. Hundreds of years ago, when you were part of a family of *anusim* in Spain, while your parents sanctified Hashem's Name and died as holy martyrs, you abandoned your soul in order to save yourself. For hundreds of years after your death you suffered harsh and bitter punishments Above, until you were sent back in *gilgul* to face the test again, in Hungary. That very same priest was reincarnated again to test you, and Heaven brought you straight to his door. You should have refused his help and risked death *al kiddush Hashem*, but you abandoned your soul a second time and betrayed your people and your God. None of this saved you; you were killed without having withstood the test. But because you were nevertheless killed for being Jewish, after a time you were sent back into the world for yet another test: the volunteer, whose appearance you have now recognized as exactly like the young man from Budapest and the priest from Spain. Once again you were tested through him, and once again you failed. Your son is dark-skinned because he is the *gilgul* of the dark-skinned baby you saved in Budapest; just as that man loved him then, he is attached to him now too. Your daughter is fair because she is the *gilgul* of the baby girl you found there, to whom the gentile did not become attached then, and his attitude toward her is cool now as well. This suffering of yours, being separated from your child while he is dangerously ill, is the pain corresponding to your cutting yourself off, as a young woman, from your parents and your faith, even though you had seen

in the death of those holy martyrs how you betrayed the God of the world for whom they gave their lives."

When I finished, she responded: "Everything you said, including your description of the gentile's appearance and the color of the children's skin, is exactly right. What is more, although my parents are originally from Persia, whenever I hear the Spanish language I melt with longing for it; it is so dear to me. When I hear a song in Spanish, I stand as though hypnotized. And on top of that, at the age of eighteen I was brutally raped on Allenby Street in Tel Aviv. Your words have persuaded me to strengthen myself in the Creator of the world and to accept His harsh decree. From now on I will pray to Him in supplication; perhaps He will be gracious to me and hear my voice."

Gilgul Neshamos in New York

ABOUT THIRTY YEARS AGO I was a guest in New York on Friday night, and at the table sat an older couple with their two daughters. The younger daughter was smiling and full of joy, while the older one, about thirty, was very sad. After the meal, when the girls had left the table, the mother turned to me and asked what she should do about her older daughter, who was still single: a girl with *yiras Shamayim*, a teacher, a *tzaddeikes*, for whom *shidduchim* simply were not working out. She had been engaged in the past and had broken it off when the young man's true character became clear to her, and ever since then everyone who heard she had once been engaged ran from her. Now her younger sister was engaged and had just gone out to meet her *chasan*, while the older one sat upstairs crying her eyes out. She had said outright that she would not let her sister get married; it would happen only over her dead body. The parents did not know what to do. I said to the mother, "It is good that you told me this now, on Friday night before bed; this is the right time. I will try to do a *she'elas chalom* tonight, and perhaps by morning I will have an answer." I did a *she'elas chalom* and received the answer that in her previous *gilgul* she had sinned with a gentile, and therefore it had been decreed that she suffer alone all her life, *middah k'neged middah*, for the forbidden love she had had.

In the morning I called the girl over and said to her: "Look, in your previous *gilgul* you sinned with a gentile, and that is why Heaven has held you back. It is an accounting of *middah k'neged middah*. If you want to get married, do the *tikkun* for a woman who was with a gentile (following the order of the *tikkun* in the *sefer Sdei Tapuchim*)." On *Motza'ei Shabbos* I left and went home.

Three months later, when I was in Eretz Yisrael, the phone rang. When I picked up the receiver, I heard her in the background, screaming and crying, and her brother said to me: "We are taking my sister to the *chuppah* right now, and the older one is lying across the doorway, not letting her out, screaming bitterly that her sister cannot possibly get married before her." I asked for her to be put on the phone and asked her, "Did you do the *tikkun* I told you about?" She said she had. "If so," I told her, "get up, get dressed, and go to the wedding. I hope you will find your *chasan* there." I persuaded her. She got up, got dressed, and went to the wedding. The *chasan*'s closest friend, his *shushvin*, a young man of twenty-five, saw her and could not take his eyes off her. They met the next day, and a short time later they were married, and they are happy to this day. When I came to Miami Beach for a visit, she came with her husband and their young children to greet me, glowing with happiness.

Tzaddik Hashem B'chol Derachav

A FEW YEARS AGO, while I was in the United States, two acquaintances of mine came to me for advice. They had been led astray by a swindler and were caught in a financial entanglement. These are the details of the story.

Mr. A. ran an investment company. He invested his clients' money in real estate and in loans at interest to non-Jews. One day a gentile who owned property approached him for a loan of five million dollars, to be repaid with ten million dollars in interest, as follows: after one year he would repay the five-million-dollar principal in full; after another year he would pay five million dollars in interest; and after a third year another five million in interest. As security for the entire debt he would mortgage all the properties he owned, valued at twenty million dollars. He presented original documents showing that these properties were registered in his name at the government land offices, and a check at the government property registry confirmed it.

Mr. A. was enthusiastic about the deal. He had two million dollars of his investors' money on hand, and he approached a friend of his, a lawyer, and suggested that he invest three million dollars in the deal in return for sixty percent of the profit. The lawyer jumped at the tempting offer and handed him three million dollars: one million of his own money, and two million from trust funds he was holding until the end of his clients' court case. He reasoned that he could see to it that the case dragged on for more than a year, by which time the three-million-dollar principal would be repaid to him, and he could put the two million back in the trust account without anyone noticing the embezzlement.

A few months after the loan was made, the borrower informed them that he had gone bankrupt and could not pay them anything. Mr. A. was delighted, because he thought he would now be able to recover the loan and the interest quickly from the mortgaged properties. To his astonishment, he discovered that he had fallen victim to a swindler. In the few days between the proposal and the checking of all the mortgage documents, on the one hand, and the actual disbursement of the loan, on the other, the borrower and his wife had gone to court and presented a divorce agreement. In it the wife consented to the divorce on condition that all the husband's properties pass to her, and the husband agreed. As soon as the judge signed the agreement, the properties were transferred to her name. The loan was actually disbursed after the properties had passed into her sole ownership, so there was nothing from which to collect the debt. The fault was the lender's, for not checking the ownership again at the time the loan was disbursed and relying on the check he had made a few days earlier.

A long time had passed since the loan. The investors were demanding their money from Mr. A., and there was reason to fear violence against him and his family. The lawyer's embezzlement had been discovered, and he had been questioned by the police. Besides losing his license to practice law, he faced a trial in which the penalty for embezzlement was confiscation of all his property and ten years in prison. They did not know how to get out of their predicament.

I agreed to look into their matter through a *she'elas chalom* on Friday night, and asked them to come back after Shabbos. (Today I no longer use this at all, because I was punished from Heaven for using it, even though the answers I received were correct.)

In answer to my question, I was shown both of them in a dream, in their previous *gilgul*, as a pair of swindlers: the lawyer was the planner, and the investor carried out the plans. They would arrive in a city where no one knew them, rent a luxurious furnished apartment for a few months, and pay in advance so that the landlord would suspect nothing. Then they would put the apartment up for sale at half its value. They told everyone who came that if he paid ten percent of the price on the spot, they would sign a contract with him and wait while he checked the ownership and the building's status at the proper offices. Many fools, carried away by the apartment and its bargain price, signed the contract immediately so as not to miss the

opportunity. In this way they pocketed several times the apartment's price. To top it off, they sold the apartment's contents at a discount as well, and vanished in good time to the site of their next fraud. Now they had come to pay for their deeds. Hashem had brought them together to a single inn and delivered them into the hands of a swindler like themselves, and from now on they would have to suffer grinding poverty and other afflictions for the *tikkun* of their souls, *middah k'neged middah*.

When they came back, I told them my dream. I said that nothing could be done about the money: since they could not return what they had stolen, they would have to live in poverty in this *gilgul*. But the afflictions and the prison sentence were for the sin they had committed against Hashem through these acts, and they could turn to Him and ask His forgiveness; then at least they would be spared the afflictions decreed upon them. I gave the lawyer an order of *tikkun* and *teshuvah* for acts of fraud, including a fast day, and he did everything required. I told him I believed that through this he would be spared the prison sentence the law prescribed. And indeed, at his trial the judge ruled that after the bank received the mortgage money, the rest of his property would go toward repaying his debt to his clients, ordered him to pay an additional thousand dollars a month toward his debts, and sent him home. When the prosecutor asked for ten years in prison, the judge said, "I am not sending him to prison. It is enough that his license has been revoked and his property taken." When the prosecutor said, "That is not up to you; the law requires you to put him in jail," the judge answered, "If you don't like the verdict, appeal it." Several years have passed since then. The lawyer barely makes a living from other work, but he did not go to prison, because his *tikkun* was accepted.

Gilgul Neshamos in Paris

ON ONE OF MY trips to France I received people who came to consult me on various matters. Among them was a man who closed the door behind him, sat down, and said to me in a whisper: "I don't have any problem. I came to tell you that right after me in line is a relative of mine who has been living with a gentile woman for several years. Do a *mitzvah* and separate them." When he left, a young man of about twenty-five named A. came in and told me that he suffered from a severe skin disease on his legs that the best doctors had been unable to cure, and he asked for my advice.

I told him that I hoped, *b'ezras Hashem*, the disease would spread and reach his *bris milah* as well. The young man was alarmed and said, "Why are you cursing me?" I said to him, "Because you sleep with a gentile woman and defile the holy covenant in a place of impurity, and the disease will spread until you are no longer able to sin." He recoiled in astonishment. Thinking that *ruach hakodesh* rested upon me and had made me a seer of hidden things, he began to stammer and asked how I had discovered his secret. I answered at once that I had heard it from the man who came in before him. (I did not think of exploiting his excitement and letting him feel that I knew hidden things in order to save him from sin, for that would be a form of falsehood, and the Torah says, "Keep far from a false matter," which means that one must keep away even from anything bordering on falsehood. One who lies takes the Satan as his partner, and with such a partner it is impossible to profit in any way; such profit ends in loss, doubled and redoubled. And one who lies in order to bring people back to *teshuvah*, even if at first they return because of his words, will see them leave

the faith in the end and fall to a lower place than where they were before they returned.)

When he heard my answer he calmed down and began to argue that we live in the twentieth century, all people are equal, and what matters is the heart; that her heart was more upright and decent than that of many Jewish women he knew; that she gave *tzedakah* and fasted with him on Yom Kippur, and so on.

I told him that the *mitzvos* of *tzedakah* and fasting on Yom Kippur are like the salt put on meat to draw out its blood and make it fit to eat. For kosher meat it helps. But pork, however much salt you put on it to make it kosher, is still forbidden to eat. He should not confuse himself with false imaginings: a gentile woman is a gentile woman, and the matter is absolutely forbidden. When I saw that the young man was honest and that only his desires and the glitter of this world were leading him away from his good sense and his faith, I said to him: "Suppose I prove to you that even in our day there is Elokim, and there is *din* and a *Dayan* who forbade the gentile woman with a grave prohibition, and that the Torah of Moshe is true. What will you say then?" He answered, "I will leave her and do *teshuvah*. But it can't be proven, and I'm not interested in philosophy."

I asked him to show me a picture of the gentile woman. He took her photograph (a passport photo) out of his wallet at once and showed it to me. I gazed at her image and asked her name, and he told me it was Z. I said to him, "If you want to know the truth in a clear and convincing way, without any philosophy, come this Friday and we will meet at the *mikveh*. Then, *b'ezras Hashem*, within a day you may discover, convincingly, who you are, who she is, and the nature of the bond between you from a previous *gilgul*." He agreed at once.

On Friday we met at the *mikveh*. I asked him to immerse several times, and while he immersed I concentrated on the necessary *kavanos*. When he finished, I told him that *b'ezras Hashem* I hoped to receive an answer from Heaven about him that night, and that since I would be spending Shabbos in a nearby town, he should come to me on Sunday and see the truth for himself.

The young man said he did not have the patience to wait until Sunday and would come to the nearby town the next day to hear the answer. I told him I was not willing to have him desecrate Shabbos, least of all on my ac-

count, and that he would have to wait until Sunday. He said he was prepared to stay in the town from Friday evening until *Motza'ei Shabbos* if only he could get an interesting answer sooner, and that he had a religious friend in that town with whom he could stay over Shabbos. I said I agreed, on condition that I see him with his friend in *shul* that evening at *davening*. And indeed, at Maariv in that town the young man and his friend arrived. After *davening* his friend told me that the young man was his guest for all of Shabbos and that both of them would come to Shacharis the next morning.

On Friday night before going to sleep, I prayed to the Creator of the world to show me in a dream who this young man was, who this gentile woman was, and what the connection between them was. I added that I was not asking to know this for the sake of honor or reward, but in order to save a lost Jewish soul from descending into the pit, and asked Him to please help me in this great matter.

I slept, and I saw in my dream that I was on the summit of Har Gerizim. In the valley on one side lay the city of Shechem, and in the valley on the other side of the mountain was a village. In the village a man of about fifty whose face resembled the young man's (in all of a person's *gilgulim* his face looks similar, because the form of the face is the form of the soul, and the soul is one) was picking vegetables from his garden and loading them onto a cart to sell in the market of Shechem. I looked at the vegetables and noticed that only the produce of ancient Eretz Yisrael grew in his garden, such as lettuce, spinach, garlic, onions, and the like. Vegetables such as corn and tomatoes, which were brought to the land many years later, were not there. I understood that I was several hundred years back in time.

While I was still standing on the heights of the mountain, I saw him arrive in the city and sell his produce to various housewives. Among them came a married Jewish woman, her body and head modestly covered and only her face showing, whose face resembled that of the gentile woman Z. When she reached his stall, she captured his heart, and his mind began to plot how to catch her in his net. While she was choosing vegetables, he told her that if she bought a double quantity from him, he would be glad to deliver it to her home after closing his stall. She took the bait, and after choosing a generous quantity of vegetables she showed him the way to her house. When he arrived at her home and delivered the goods, he promised that

whenever she bought such a quantity, he would bring her purchase to her house. She thanked him for his "kind heart" and did as he said.

Still standing on the mountain heights in my dream, I saw him arrive at her house with produce. When he stood in the middle of the courtyard and noticed that no one was home but her, he told her he was thirsty and asked whether he might have a cup of water. I saw her go to a large jar standing in the corner of the courtyard, pour a cup of water, and hand it to him. He sat on a stone in her courtyard and drank the water slowly. As he drank, he tossed her words of affection and complimented her beauty. With these words he touched a very sensitive point in her life, for her husband had never once complimented her. His words watered her soul, which thirsted for words of warmth, and led her to open her heart to him. He took advantage of this, and with his smooth tongue he drew her on until they fell into sin. During the act, afraid that someone might suddenly come in, he bit her finger and she pulled his leg. On several occasions the two of them fell into this sin, both tense with fear of being discovered, and each time he bit her finger and she pulled his leg.

Suddenly I found myself walking along a long street in Europe, with large tenement buildings on the right and a large open canal on the left. As I walked, I stopped beside a large building, opened its door, and found myself in a clothing-weaving factory where several women were weaving cloth on hand-operated looms (before electricity was invented). The foreman was a young Jewish man whose face resembled Mr. A.'s. I understood that I was now seeing the young man in another *gilgul*, hundreds of years after the previous one, years in which he had been in the *kaf hakela* and in the *gilgul* of an animal. Suddenly a young gentile girl came in and asked him for work. Her face resembled that of the Jewish woman with whom he had sinned in his previous *gilgul* (and of the gentile woman Z. with whom he is now). I understood that after years of punishment in the *kaf hakela*, with terrible suffering for her sin, she had come back to the world as a gentile. Her task was to awaken, seek the truth, convert, and return to the source from which she was hewn; and among other things, both of them were to be tested to see whether they would fall into sin together again.

When he saw her, his heart skipped a beat, and his soul was drawn to her inexplicably. He immediately had one of the workers get up and seated the girl in her place, and he showed her how to weave on the machine.

When he came back a little later to see her work, he saw that it was spoiled and understood that she was not suited for the job. But rather than give her up, he offered her work as a clerk in his office. And so the two of them became close friends and then a steady couple, who lived together and sinned together, while subconsciously, without knowing why, during the sin he bit her finger and she pulled his leg.

Among other things I saw the two of them riding together in a carriage drawn by four horses. One of the horses went wild and overturned the carriage. He managed to jump out unhurt, while she fell under the carriage and suffered a deep gash along her leg.

Suddenly I found myself in present-day Paris, standing in a square and looking into a café. I saw two young Jewish men of about twenty sitting and talking, and the face of one of them resembled the young man's. I understood that I was about four years back in time, seeing A. in his present *gilgul*. Suddenly two young English gentile women came in and sat down for tea. When I looked at them, I saw that the face of one of them resembled the Jewish woman from Shechem and the gentile girl from Europe; she was the gentile woman Z. with whom he is now involved. I also understood that her companion was not merely a friend, but that the two of them had no interest in men and lived together as a couple, *Hashem yatzileinu*. Yet the moment the young man raised his eyes and looked at her, she too raised her eyes and looked at him, and their hearts were drawn to each other like magnets. Without a moment's hesitation he asked her to go out with him, and without batting an eyelid she left her companion and walked out arm in arm with him. Since then, for about four years, they have been together. I saw that during the sin she pulls his leg and he bites her finger, without either of them being aware of what they are doing. I also saw that along her leg there is a long, stripe-shaped birthmark, at the place where the scar of her injury had been in her previous *gilgul*, when the carriage crushed her.

The young man and his friend came to Shacharis. After *davening*, the young man came over to me, extremely tense, and asked whether I had anything to tell him. I answered that I certainly had a detailed answer for him, but that first I wanted to ask him a few questions. "Do you really love her?" He answered, "Of course." I asked him, "If so, why is it that every time you sin, you bite her finger? Is that love?" He recoiled at my question and said, "Who told you that? She can't have told you; she's in Oxford, England,

right now, visiting her parents, and no outsider knows about it." I said to him, "You know what she does in England besides visiting her family: she keeps up a special relationship with her friend, and she is incapable of being with any man in her life except you." The young man was thunderstruck. I went on immediately and asked, "Why, when you are together, does she pull your leg like a madwoman? You have sinned with other women too, and you never bit any of them, and none of them pulled your leg." Before he could recover, I asked him, "Are you aware that she has a long birthmark running down her leg?" The young man lost all composure and asked, "How do you know all this?" I asked him whether he confirmed these details, and he answered, "It's all true and certain. And once, in the middle of the act, I bit her finger so hard that I had to take her for medical treatment."

While he sat there taut and strained, I told him what I had been shown in that night's dream: that the two of them had now come back once more to repair their deeds, and that this itself was one of the Creator's kindnesses, for "no one is banished from Him forever." But instead of repairing, the two of them were spoiling, and for the sake of their present pleasure there was no end to their punishment and to what awaited them, if not in this world then certainly in *Olam Haba* and in further *gilgulim*. I told him that poverty was already his lot, and that he was reduced to living on her handouts, something that deeply humiliated him. I also told him that her task was to come to know *Yiddishkeit* and convert, since a Jewish soul dwelt within her that must return to the source from which it was hewn. But even if she converted, she would be forbidden to him, because he had come to suffer in his love for her without being with her, not even in holiness and purity, in order to repair his deeds with her when she was a married woman. And if he recognized the justice and truth of my words, he had no choice but to be honest with himself and return in complete *teshuvah* to the Creator of the world and to His *mitzvos*, *asher kideshanu b'mitzvosav v'tzivanu*.

The young man replied that after so many proofs, which explained what went on in their subconscious when they were together and the meaning of the mark on her leg, he had no way out but to admit the truth and return to it, and that he would keep this very Shabbos according to *halachah*. I told him to come back to me the following week, and I would show him the path of *teshuvah*.

A few days later the young man returned, still holding to his *teshuvah* with all his heart and soul. Despite his deep and powerful love for the gentile woman, the solid proofs, and the knowledge that one cannot run from the truth and that ignoring it for a time ends in stumbling and ruin, had done their work. We decided that the best thing was for him to uproot himself from France and move to Yerushalayim. Since he had no relatives or acquaintances there, I agreed that he would come to me, eat at my table, and sleep in the rooms of the Institute for Jewish Awareness, Sha'ar Yosef, which I direct. He needed a month to wind up his affairs and business in France before making *aliyah*.

That week Z. came back from England to their shared apartment in Paris. He received her with great joy and immediately told her everything that had happened to him from the time he met me until that moment. When she saw that he was sincere, she said to him: "Look, I love you, and as a man only you. I have no inclination toward other men. I give you my blessing on your new path. Tomorrow I am going back to my parents' home in England, but please keep in touch with me by letter." With tears in his eyes and a loving, broken heart, he agreed. That night they both slept in the same apartment, and despite his desire and his love he conquered his *yetzer* and did not come near her, out of fear of Hashem and the splendor of His majesty. The next morning he accompanied her to the train station, and there he broke down completely and parted from her in tears of pain and deep sorrow. As they parted, she said to him, "I left you a farewell letter under the pillow in the bedroom. Goodbye, and farewell." With a broken, aching heart he went back to the apartment and opened the letter. In it he found several hundred pounds sterling and several thousand French francs, along with these words: "My dearest, you know that my heart is with you, and so I have left you all the money my parents gave me for this period. I know you need it to pay the debts on the apartment and your other debts, and for your journey to another land. Remember that I remain faithful in my love to one man only, and that is you. Whenever you want to come back to me, I am waiting for you." Her letter tore at his heart, and the temptation to go back to her was great and painful; he very nearly did. But the truth of which he had been convinced, and the knowledge that he had returned in so many *gilgulim* to repair this, and that who knew whether this

was not his last chance, stood against it. In his distress he turned to me for strength and encouragement.

I told him something like this: "I understand your pain well. But the Jewish people was given tremendous strength of soul to withstand tests, to the point of *mesirus nefesh*, of casting one's life aside for the sake of Hashem and His Torah. And the greater the sorrow and the pain, the greater the *tikkun* for your soul." A few weeks later he came to me in Yerushalayim. He stayed in my home and slept at the Institute for Jewish Awareness under my direction. During the day he learned and worked, but every night he got up after midnight and sat weeping over his fate and his love, repeating her name again and again and talking to her photograph.

She sent him a letter every few days, and he answered with letters of his own. I assume he also telephoned her from time to time, though I did not hear this from him, since I made a point of not prying into his affairs with her.

After several weeks he came to me utterly broken and shattered, asked for his documents, which he had left with me, and told me he could not bear it any longer and was going back to France. I gave him his documents, added some of my own money, and asked only that before any step he wanted to take, he wait one more day and not act with the rashness of a moment of crisis.

The next day he came back and returned the documents and the money to me. He told me that after a hard and tormented sleepless night he had decided that it would be a pity to lose his life and his share in *Olam Haba* yet again because of a forbidden love, and that he had decided to devote himself more to work and learning, which would cool the flame of his love.

After a period of learning and working, and of close correspondence with her, he met a fine girl with *yiras Shamayim* through his work. Before they married, he told her about his love for the gentile woman and the letters between them, and said that time had done its work, that he was now open to his new love for her, and that it was strong enough for a complete and successful marriage. Seeing his sincerity and honesty, the girl agreed to marry him, and together they established a loving, kosher home in Eretz Yisrael.

About twenty-five years have passed between then and the writing of these lines. Mr. A. lives in Eretz Yisrael with his wife and family. Over time

the correspondence with Z. dwindled. A few years ago, when he was visiting France with his wife, he invited Z. to a meeting with his wife's consent. He introduced his wife to her and asked her to convert for the sake of her soul's *tikkun*, with no connection to him, but she refused. There is still a place in his heart for his love for her, but his *yiras Shamayim* comes before his wisdom, and the Torah is in his heart. Every day he says with *kavanah* the prayer: "Blessed is our God, who created us for His glory, separated us from those who go astray, and gave us the Torah of truth."

The Story of the Dog

A FEW YEARS AGO a family from somewhere in Eretz Yisrael came to me with an astonishing story about their late father z"l, a man who had kept Torah and *mitzvos*. He had passed away and left sons and daughters, all unmarried, who went on living together with their mother. About a year after his passing, one of the sons heard that a certain man's dog had given birth to a litter of puppies and that the man was willing to give them to anyone prepared to raise them. For some reason the son felt a strong urge to raise one of these puppies. He went to the man, chose the puppy he liked best, and brought it home to his mother's house to raise.

The dog grew quickly, and within a few months it stood about a meter tall. During that time the son went through a crisis at work. In his low spirits, whenever he came home and gave the dog its food, the dog would try to hug him, and in return he would beat it and take out all his frustrations on it.

One night one of the daughters dreamed that the dog stood before her, and suddenly its head turned into the head of a man who looked like her father. He spoke to her and said: "My daughter, I am the one reincarnated in this dog. Tell your brother not to hit me, because all my bones ache from his blows. And tell your mother that instead of dog food she should make me meat patties, the way I loved them when I was alive as a man, because I am sick of this disgusting dog food." In the morning the daughter got up and went to work without giving the dream another thought. She assumed it was impossible for a person to come back in *gilgul*, let alone as a dog; it was nothing but an empty dream and a trick of the imagination.

About a week later a neighbor, who had been on good terms with the deceased, had a similar dream. The dog appeared to him, and its head changed into the head of the deceased, who said: "Look, I am suffering from my son, who beats me to vent his nerves, and from the food they give me. The suffering I endure as a dog is enough; let them not add to it. I came in a dream to my daughter and asked her to tell my son to stop hitting me, and to tell my wife to make me the meat patties I loved to eat when I was alive as a man, because I am sick of dog food. But my daughter paid no attention to what I said, so I have turned to you to go to my son and my wife with this request."

The neighbor got up early in the morning, and on his way to work he stopped at the house of the deceased and told the son, the dog's owner, about his dream. "Wait," said the son, "and I'll check whether your dream is true." He went into the other room, woke his sister, and asked her whether she had dreamed about Father in the past few days. She answered, "I had a silly dream," and told him what it was. Trembling and frightened, he turned to the neighbor and said, "It seems the dream is true. My sister really did see my father in a dream, and he told her exactly what he told you in yours."

That same day the rest of the brothers were called in, and they came to ask my opinion. I answered that the dream seemed to be true, but that when I had an opportunity I would come and look into the matter more closely.

When I came, I found the mother, the son, and the dog in the yard. I told the son that I wanted to ask the dog a few questions, and he answered, "Please." The dog stood facing me, the son beside him and the mother behind him. I asked him, "Are you so-and-so?" The dog tried to answer me in human speech but could do no more than rasp in his throat. Then the dog grew agitated and began to jump around. I said to him, "Calm down. You can't speak the way we do. But answer by nodding your head: are you so-and-so?" He nodded his head downward, as if to say, "Yes, I am." When I asked whether he was a dog, or a dog the son of a dog, he did not answer at all. He remained standing and facing me, as though he did not understand the question. I tried again: "I will spell out my question. After the dog was born, was your soul placed into this body?" He shook his head from side to side, as if to say no. I asked again, "Was your soul placed into the seed of

the dog from which this dog was formed, so that you are a dog, the son of a dog?" He nodded his head downward, as if to say yes. When I asked, "When you were a man, did you have relations with a gentile woman, and is that why you are being punished with this suffering?" he did not answer. Instead he turned his head back toward where his wife was standing and then turned his face to me again, as if to say: *I cannot answer you in front of her.* Then I asked him, "Do you want a *tikkun* for your soul?" and he answered yes with his head.

I went out to get an iron chain and a shofar. When I had them, I came back and found the son and the dog waiting for me in the yard. I gave the chain to the son and said, "Tie your father's legs." At first the dog resisted, so I said to him, "So-and-so, this is part of the *tikkun* you need," and he gave up both his legs to be tied. Once he was tied, he lay on the ground with his face turned upward, watching to see what I would do. I put my hand under his head and began reciting several chapters of Tehillim, passages from the Zohar, and prayers that can help in a soul's *tikkun*. The whole time I was reciting, the dog lay there looking at me and weeping without a sound, his tears flowing freely. It was very painful to see his tears and understand his suffering. When I finished, I blew the shofar and waited to see him die, but nothing happened. I was disappointed, and I said to his son: "Unfortunately, the *tikkun* has not been accepted. Had it been accepted, the dog would have died and your father's soul would have gone back on high. I do not know how else to help him. Turn to Rabbi so-and-so, whom I know to be a man of truth who understands these matters, and follow his advice."

Now convinced that the dog was their father's *gilgul*, the family began hugging and kissing the dog and feeding him meat as he wished. A few days later they received an answer from that rabbi, who confirmed that this was indeed their father's *gilgul* and said the dog should be taken to a frontier settlement. They took him to a suitable place and came now and then to visit him and feed him meat. Not long afterward, they came to visit and could not find him, and from then on every trace of him vanished.

Yesh Din V'Yesh Dayan

LAST YEAR I WAS a guest in a *chareidi* moshav which is defined in *halachah* as a frontier settlement, where it is permitted to keep dogs for guarding. My host had an Armenian dog, young in age, large of build, and robust in health.

On Friday night I stood facing him and said: "Ribbono shel Olam, I am reciting a chapter of Tehillim so that if this dog is the *gilgul* of a Jew who sinned, this chapter will be for the elevation and *tikkun* of his soul; and if he is an ordinary dog or the *gilgul* of a gentile, may this chapter of Tehillim be *l'iluy nishmas* the departed of Israel." I recited chapter 91 of Tehillim, beginning with *Vihi no'am* and continuing *Yoshev b'seser elyon*. At once the dog, who was lying opposite me, became serious. Suddenly he lifted his face toward heaven and moved his lips as though whispering a prayer without making a sound. I thought I was imagining it.

The next day, on Shabbos, for no apparent reason he came down with a simple infection and received medical treatment. That week he died, and the Jewish soul within him, now repaired of the sin for which it had come in the *gilgul* of a dog, returned to its rest.

Rabbi Avraham Ades zt"l and the Mekubal's Son

One of the *mekubalim* had a young son who lay sick for years with terrible suffering, I believe from tuberculosis, which had no cure at the time. From lying in bed so long he had developed bedsores.

Once the holy *mekubal* Rabbi Avraham Ades zt"l came to see him on some matter. As he came in, he heard the young man weeping in his suffering and crying out, "Ribbono shel Olam, why are You punishing me? I am not yet twenty, and the *Beis Din shel Maalah* does not punish before twenty!" and the like. Rabbi Ades's heart broke within him at this. He went into the young man's room, looked at him, and said to the father: "This son of yours came into the world to suffer this because in his previous *gilgul* he was a *melamed* in a Talmud Torah who beat his students harshly, and he caused them, when they grew up, to refrain from sending their own sons to a Talmud Torah. But I see how heavy his suffering is, and I will pray for his *tikkun*." He immediately stood in prayer. When he finished, he said to the father, "Tonight at midnight your son will be repaired." And at midnight the son passed away to the life of *Olam Haba*.

Gilgul Neshamos in Iraq

The great *gaon* and godly *mekubal* Rabbi Yehudah Fatiya zt"l wrote the following in his *sefer Minchas Yehudah*:

In the year 5679, on the fifth of Av, I was staying in the village of Ba'quba, and I went to the home of Moshe Shasha HaKohen hy"v to console him on the death of his only son, Menashe, who had been killed the week before by gentiles who tried to steal his money. They did not manage to steal anything. Moshe Shasha has no other son or daughter, and Menashe, who was killed, left no son or daughter either.

When I came into Moshe Shasha's home, he and his wife wept, for they are old, about seventy years of age, and they asked me: "Perhaps you can tell us the reason Menashe was killed. And if he was liable for a killing in a previous *gilgul*, what have we done wrong, that we have suffered all this great pain?" I said to them, "When I return in peace to the city of Bavel, I will look into the *sefarim* and send you an answer."

On Tishah B'Av I dozed off and saw a young man who had left the city of Bavel with a hundred gold dinars in hand to trade with, in order to support his elderly parents. When he came to Ba'quba, he rented a room at an inn. An old man there sensed that the young man had gold dinars and wanted to steal them from him. But since he was weak and could not do it himself, he revealed the secret to another thief, a young Jew, and they agreed between them that the young one would do the stealing while the old man kept watch for him and received a share of the loot. At night, while the young man slept, the two thieves came. The young one opened the door, and before anything else he plunged a knife into the heart of the sleeping young man and spilled his blood. But while he was searching for

the dinars, a large caravan arrived at the inn. The thieves feared for their lives and fled, taking nothing.

At daybreak the young man was found dead, and no one knew who had killed him. They buried him and sent the dinars to his parents in Bavel. This young man had been the only son of his father and mother, and had supported them in their old age.

After the young man was buried, his soul went up to the *Beis Din shel Maalah* and demanded his blood from the murderer and from the old man. Their sentence was that as they had done, so would be done to them: the murderer would be killed but his money would not be taken; he would support the old age of his father and mother; and he would leave no offspring after him. After the old thief died, they reincarnated him as the aforementioned Moshe Shasha, who was not blessed with a child until he was fifty years old.

When he was fifty, he traveled with his wife to the village of Ba'quba and they lodged at that very inn, in the very room where the young man had been killed. That night the *Beis Din shel Maalah* summoned the murdered young man and said to him, "The time has come for the soul of the murderer to be born into the world. Do you forgive him or not?" He said, "I do not forgive him at all." They said to him, "If so, go down and stand at the door of the room where you were killed." The murdered man went down and stood there until that old man was with his wife. The soul of the murderer came, and it was afraid and trembled to enter that drop. The murdered man stood up, struck it, and said to it, "Wicked one, enter this drop to receive your punishment." Against that soul's will, it entered the drop. And that is Menashe, son of Moshe Shasha, who was killed by the gentiles, and from whom they took no money at all.

All these things were shown to me before my eyes, not merely told to me, as though I were standing and watching everything that happened from beginning to end. And I wrote all this to the village of Ba'quba, to Rabbi Moshe Shasha, as an answer to his question.

Gilgul Neshamos in the Time of the Baal Shem Tov zt"l

ON A STORMY DAY, when a terrible cold gripped the streets, a poor man came in to the Baal Shem Tov weeping and said, "Rebbe, pray for me that I may die, for I am weary of my life." When the Rebbe asked how a believing Jew, a *ben Torah*, could speak this way, he answered: "For several days there has been no coal in my hut for heat, and the little food we had is gone from my house. I am sickly and cannot do manual labor. My wife and children ask for bread, and I have none to give them. I cannot bear to watch their suffering any longer. Let me die rather than see their misery." The Rebbe gave him a sum of money to provide for his household's needs in food and clothing, and asked him to come back the next day.

When the poor man returned the next day, the Rebbe asked him to travel to a certain city and find out the particulars of a certain rich man there, and bring back word. The poor man traveled to that city and asked about the rich man, but people answered that they did not know any such person. He decided to go home. As he was leaving the city, he met a group of old men and asked them about the rich man. When they heard the name, they began to curse and revile him. When he asked why they hated him so, they answered: "That rich man died more than forty years ago. He was a very wealthy man who built his fortune by robbing the poor and from the groans of the destitute. Among other things, he would approach people who owned large, fine houses and entice them to take an interest-free loan from him, with the house pledged as security. When the time came and they could not pay, he would obtain a court order, throw them out of their

homes with their children into the snow and the cold, take the house in payment of the debt, and rent it out to the highest bidder."

The poor man was astonished and could not understand the point of his errand. But when he came before the Rebbe and told him what the old men had said, the Rebbe called out to him: "Did you hear what they said about your deeds in your previous *gilgul*? And your children, who are suffering now, are the *gilgulim* of your servants, who did your bidding and cruelly threw those poor people out of their homes for the sake of money. So what more do you have to complain about, regarding your poverty and the way Hashem, may He be blessed, conducts your life?"

The Widow and the Orange

RABBI Y. S. SHLIT"A told a story he heard from a woman whom he knows personally to be trustworthy in everything she says, and level-headed and sensible. This is what happened.

This woman had been widowed. On the *shloshim* she traveled with her children to the cemetery to say Mishnayos and Kaddish, as is customary. When they finished, one of her sons drove her home in his car. On the way she said to him, "Take me to my friend's house, and when I am done there I will walk home." Since the street was one-way, her son stopped on the opposite side of the road, across from her friend's house. Because of the traffic she waited to cross. Suddenly a truck loaded with oranges went by, and as it drove, one orange fell onto the road and rolled toward her. For a moment she wanted to pick it up, but she was embarrassed to do so in front of the passersby, lest she look like a beggar, and she went up to her friend's house without picking it up.

When she came out of her friend's house, she saw that the orange was still lying at the edge of the sidewalk. She picked it up and put it in her bag. When she got home, she began to peel it to eat it, and without any advance notice her sons and daughters came to visit her. She peeled the orange in front of them and said: "This orange waited for me in the street for more than half an hour, and not one person touched it. Who knows what soul is reincarnated in it, waiting for its *tikkun*? Please, each of you take a segment and make the *berachah borei pri ha'eitz* with great *kavanah*, to bring about the *tikkun* of the soul reincarnated in this orange." She did so, and they followed her.

When she went to rest, she fell asleep and saw her husband standing before her, smiling. He said to her: "My soul was reincarnated in that orange. Had you not brought about my *tikkun*, I would have had to undergo harsh sufferings. But in the merit of your making a *berachah*, you and our children, over the orange in which I was reincarnated, I was repaired and spared those sufferings." And he thanked her for the great kindness she had done for him.

The Poritz Who Came as a Dybbuk

I HEARD THIS STORY from a very reliable man, who heard it from HaGaon Rabbi Eliyahu Lopian zt"l, a disciple of the holy Chofetz Chaim, who was present when it happened.

It was early morning, and Rabbi Yisrael HaKohen zt"l (known as the Chofetz Chaim, after his *sefer*) was sitting with his students, absorbed in their learning. Suddenly the door opened, and one of the townspeople appeared on the threshold in a panic. With tears in his eyes he told them that his wife had fainted and fallen to the floor. When he tried to revive her, he heard a man's voice speaking fluent Polish come out of her mouth, asking him to call the "Rabbin" Yisrael, because he had something to tell him. The voice had repeated the request several times. So he had hurried to the Rav to ask him to come to his home, hear what the *dybbuk* had to say, and if possible drive it out of his wife's body.

The Rav agreed and set out with several of his students, among them Rabbi Eliyahu Lopian, who tells the story, and they went to the woman's home. When the Rav came in, the *dybbuk* began speaking from the woman's throat, her lips motionless and her mouth open. He said that he was the soul of a gentile who had owned vast estates in Poland (what is commonly called a *poritz*), leased out to hundreds of people, among them many Jewish families. He had dealt with all of them in a brotherly and gentle way. When they could not pay the rent, he waived it, and he supported families that had fallen into poverty out of his own money, so that his name was blessed by everyone.

The steward of his household was a Jew named Moshe who lived nearby. Every Shabbos the *poritz* used to come to Moshe's home and eat the

Shabbos meal with him, because he loved the *cholent* prepared for that meal. In this way a special friendship developed between him and Moshe.

The spirit went on: "From time to time, when I came to eat at Moshe's, I liked to tease him. I would ask him, 'According to your religion, do I, as a gentile, have a share in *Olam Haba*?' He would answer that he thought I did, because of the many acts of kindness I had done and the many families I had set on their feet and saved from the shame of hunger; surely my reward would not be withheld. Then I would ask him, 'And you, Moshe, do you have a share in *Olam Haba*?' He would answer, 'I don't know. My sins are more numerous than the hairs on my head, and I don't know how my judgment will come out.' I would mock him and say, 'You are a Jew, and you will go to Gehinnom; I am a gentile, and by your own words I will merit *Olam Haba*. The world is upside down: I have it good in both worlds, and you will have it bad in both.' He would sigh, roll his eyes heavenward, and say, '*Hashem yerachem*.'

"Then came the day when I went the way of all the earth and died. The moment my soul left my body, I found myself in a dark tunnel with a ray of light at its end. I floated toward the light and found myself in an indefinable place flooded with light, which I have no words to describe. As I stood there bewildered and wondering, a figure I cannot describe came near and said to me: 'Because you showed great kindness to people and gave them much good, your judgment is to delight in every good thing. What is your request? I will grant it.' I asked that everything I had had in the lower world be given to me: broad fields, a splendid palace, carriages drawn by the finest horses, the best foods, and the pleasures of the flesh I had known. It answered that all my wishes would be granted. I also asked that when the day of my friend Moshe's judgment came, I be called to see it, and it answered that it agreed to this as well. At once they placed my soul in the world of imagination, and I found myself enjoying all the good things of this world, just as I had asked, and even more. And so it went for a long time.

"About six months ago, while I was enjoying myself among the fruit trees in my gardens, I found myself again in that place flooded with light, and the same figure came to me and said: 'Your friend Moshe has now returned his soul and stands for righteous judgment. I have come to fulfill your request and show you his judgment.' I found myself in another place, lit in shades of light blue and pink, and Moshe stood for judgment before a

beis din of three rabbis, shaking and trembling all over. After a while the three opened their mouths and said that he could not enter his place in Gan Eden until he had undergone six months of purification in Gehinnom. When Moshe heard this, he burst into heartrending sobs, and at once several figures dressed in black appeared and took him away with them.

"I was horrified, and I asked the figure that had brought me to see his judgment to show me his reward as well, even for just a moment. It answered that it agreed to this too. At once it returned me to the world of imagination, and I found myself enjoying my blossoming gardens until I forgot about Moshe and his judgment.

"This morning I found myself once again in that same place flooded with light, and again that figure came toward me and said: 'Today Moshe has reached his place in Gan Eden, and you have been granted permission to look upon Moshe and his reward for one moment only, after which you will return to your estates and your desires.' It took me to a place I have no words to describe, and I saw Moshe sitting alone, with no estates or horses, no gardens or lawns, and his face shining like the sun. I understood within myself that he was gazing upon and contemplating spiritual matters beyond my understanding, and enjoying a spiritual delight that cannot be expressed in terms of human appetites. I delighted in seeing him in his glory, his soul full of happiness and spiritual fulfillment, and I understood that all my desires and pleasures are as nothing compared with the pleasures of the spirit in which Moshe found himself, and that I could never attain them.

"After a brief moment I found myself in the place flooded with light, with the figure beside me saying: 'I have kept everything I promised you. Now return and enjoy your estates until the end of all flesh.' I begged it to give me at least one more moment to see Moshe and delight in the radiance of his face, but it said to me: 'You have no permission. No gentile soul before you has ever seen the good stored away for His people Israel. Let what you have seen be enough for you, and return to your estates.' I wept and pleaded, and asked that all the kindnesses I had done for the Jews stand by me now to grant my request, so that I might delight again in the radiance of Moshe's face. Then the figure turned to me and said: 'It is true that you have no power to go back and see him. But since there are still righteous Jews in the world below who bless you when they remember the kindnesses you did for them, I am willing to show you Moshe in his place once more,

on one condition: that you agree to go down to the lowly world, enter a human body, and tell His people Israel what you have seen. Then, through their being stirred to hold fast to the *mitzvos* of their faith, you will be able to receive your request for one more moment.'

"And so, Rabbi, I entered the body of this woman only in order to tell what I have seen. I turned to you because, as I came down here, I saw the light breaking forth and rising from your body, and I knew that if I told it to you, I would receive my request. All the more so since the house is full of people who have gathered to hear my words. Now I am going to gaze upon the radiance of my friend Moshe's face for one more moment, before I return to my desires and pleasures, whose poor worth I now understand."

When he finished, the woman opened her eyes and sat up like any other person. The holy Chofetz Chaim asked his students to tell future generations what their eyes had seen and their ears had heard. And when the Nazi axe fell upon the Jewish people in Europe, Rabbi Eliyahu, one of his teacher's choicest disciples, who had been present at the event, a brand plucked from the fire, merited to go up to Eretz HaKodesh and fulfill his teacher's charge by telling this story to his own students.

Gilgul Neshamos in Egypt

HE SAT SILENTLY OVER his Gemara, his heart elsewhere. All his friends had married, and only he remained alone and solitary in the world of Hakadosh Baruch Hu. Now they had all left the *beis midrash* of the *yeshivah*, each to his home and family. And he: where would he go?

He was an only son, born to his parents in their old age, and when they died he was left with no one to redeem or support him. True, his rebbi saw to all his needs, but a wife is from Hashem, and his *mazal* was slow in coming.

In his distress he began to pray to the Creator of the world, Father of orphans, to have mercy on him and save him. While he was still pouring out his whispered prayer with tears and supplications, a Jew came in with a letter in his hand and asked him his name. When he saw that it matched the name of the addressee, he handed him the letter and said: "I am from Egypt, and I have come to your city of Tzefas to merit seeing the light of the face of the holy *mekubal* Rabbi Yitzchak, the holy Ari, whose good name is known far and wide, and to receive his *berachah*. As I was setting out, your uncle, your mother's brother, met me and said, 'Since you are traveling to Tzefas, please carry this letter of mine to my relative who learns in the great *yeshivah* there, and I will pay you for your trouble.' I arrived in the city and sat down to eat my meal, but my stomach would give me no rest until I had carried out my errand. Now I will go back to my lodging, for I am tired." When he had gone, the young man opened the letter and found written in it that his cousin was about to be married in the capital city of Cairo, that he was invited to come and share in their *simchah*, and that his uncle would pay all the expenses of his journey.

The young man was torn over whether to accept his uncle's invitation. He said to himself, "I will go to the holy Rabbi Yitzchak, and he will show me the way." He came to the Rav and asked him: "Rebbi, show me the way I should go, for to You I lift up my soul. Should I travel to Egypt, or stay where I am? I know that it is forbidden to leave Eretz Yisrael without need, all the more so to go to Egypt, which is forbidden for all time. But perhaps *meshaneh makom meshaneh mazal*, and I will find there a wife after my own heart." The Rav answered him: "Go in peace, and may Hashem make your way succeed; you will find there a wife after your own heart." The young man took courage and asked again: "My teacher and my rebbi, answer me, please, in your great kindness: will I return to Eretz HaKodesh?" The Rav answered: "At the end of six months of marriage you will return to Eretz HaKodesh with a dowry of six thousand dinars in your hand. Do not ask me anything more, for hidden things belong to Hashem our God, and I have told you this only to hasten you on your way to Egypt."

The young man joined the caravan going down to Egypt and came to Egypt. His uncle received him lovingly and said to him: "Stay with me as long as you like, and if I can help you in your affairs, I will gladly do so, for you are my own flesh and blood." And he stayed with him.

On the day the guests gathered for the wedding of his uncle's daughter and her *chasan*, the young man came along with them. The men sat on one side and the women opposite. The young man raised his eyes and saw among the women a girl full of grace. From the first moment his eyes fell on her, she captured his heart and all his senses. His soul was stirred within him, the noise and commotion around him faded away, and all the thoughts of his heart were turned toward the girl. Each time he raised his eyes to look at her, he noticed that her eyes too were lifted toward him and that she was looking at him. He would lower his eyes to the ground, and when he raised them again, she would see that his eyes were turned toward her and lower her own gaze.

The young man could not restrain himself. He called his uncle over and said: "Tell me, whose daughter is this girl? I desire her. If the matter is from Hashem, I will take her as my wife, and we will find life and contentment." His uncle said, "Is she not the daughter of Rabbi Yaakov the merchant? *B'ezras Hashem*, tomorrow I will speak with him about you. But a wife is from Hashem, and it is the counsel of Hashem that will stand."

The young man went back to his uncle's house with his spirit in turmoil, and his sleep fled from him. He wept and said: "Please, Hashem my God, Father of orphans and Judge of widows, hear my prayer, have mercy on me, and give me this girl as my wife, for my thoughts are in confusion and my heart has gone captive after her. Say 'Enough!' to my troubles and to my loneliness." He prayed and wept at length until he fell asleep.

The next day at noon his uncle came, sat down with him, and said: "Now I know that you were called by Hashem to come to my daughter's wedding so that you might find your happiness. Know that when I spoke with the girl's father, he told me that she too had asked about you and wishes to enter into marriage with you. Her father said that his daughter's wish makes him glad, but he sets one condition: that you continue to toil in Torah study, and all your needs will be his responsibility. This is besides a dowry of six thousand dinars that he will give you at the *chuppah*. But your home will be here in the capital, Cairo, and you must undertake never to take her anywhere else at all." The young man accepted the condition and thanked Hashem, saying, "I thank You, for You have answered me and become my salvation. This is the day Hashem has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it."

They met at her father's house and spoke together, and from moment to moment their love grew stronger. They entered into the covenant of marriage, and their love blossomed until they could not bear to be apart even for a brief moment. He sat at home learning and delighting in her company, and he left the house alone only to *daven*. Every morning, when he came home from *davening*, his wife prepared breakfast, and they sat down to eat together, their joy and love still as fresh as on their wedding day. The days lengthened and the months passed, and their love and joy did not fade or weaken in the least.

At the end of six months, he got up one morning as usual and went to *daven*. When he came back, he found that his wife had not gotten up as she usually did. He said to himself, "It is only chance," quietly opened the door, and saw that she was asleep in her bed. He said, "I won't disturb her. Let her sleep a little longer and regain her strength." But after several hours, when he saw that she still had not gotten up, he went to wake her, and found that her body was as cold as ice. He understood that she had died in her sleep, and he let out great and bitter cries. His neighbors and acquaint-

ances gathered, and the lamenting and weeping were great. Everyone left their work and went to do her the final kindness, to bring her to her eternal rest and bury her in accordance with *halachah* and custom, and he too went with them, broken and crushed.

When the seven days of mourning had passed, he went to his father-in-law and said to him: "You knew our love, how wonderful it was. Now my sorrow is as great as my love was, and I can no longer find my place in this city. Let me go back to Tzefas, to my Torah and my *yeshivah*, where I will find rest and comfort from my grief. And here is the money of her dowry; take it back, for it is yours." Her father wept and said to him: "I know that you are a *tzaddik* and that your ways are upright, and your love was 'hedged about with lilies.' Go to Tzefas, as you have chosen. When you get there, go to the holy Rabbi Yitzchak and ask him why, and for what reason, Elokim has done this to us, and bring me back his answer. As for her dowry, it is surely yours. I know it was my daughter's wish that you should benefit from the money, in return for the joy you gave her in her life. Take it and go, and may Elokim be with you."

The man took leave of his father-in-law and came to Tzefas. He went to Rabbi Yitzchak and said to him: "I have always known that you are a holy *ish Elokim* and that your words are entirely trustworthy. But now it is bitter, bitter for me, for the hand of Hashem has gone out against me, and everything you said has befallen me. Here I am, back in Tzefas after six months of marriage, with a dowry of six thousand dinars in my bag. Where shall I turn now, and where shall I go? And why has this happened to me?"

The Rav said to him: "Give honor to the God of Israel, for He is the God of truth, 'a God of faithfulness without injustice; righteous and upright is He.' He repays a man according to his deeds and rewards him according to his ways. Now listen closely to my words, and let your spirit be settled.

"Many years ago there were two partners whose grocery store earned enough to support both their families in dignity, though they never became wealthy. One of them had children, while the other had a barren wife who had never borne a child. The barren woman envied her neighbor for having merited children while her own womb was dry as wood. She said to her husband, 'Know that your partner steals from the common funds when no one is looking.' Her husband silenced her, saying, 'My partner is honest and upright in all his ways. Why do you blacken his name?' But she said to him:

'Look, our profits are divided equally, yet I cannot make our share last the whole month properly, though there are only the two of us. Your partner supports a family with several children on the same sum we have. How can that be? It can only be that when no one is looking, he slips some of the income into his pocket to support his household.' The husband did not believe his wife, but her words seeped into him slowly like poison, until he began to doubt his partner's honesty.

"One day, as they were going over their accounts, he stood up and rebuked his partner, saying, 'You are a thief.' The partner was deeply hurt and said to his friend, 'If you call me a thief, I want to end the partnership. Give me my share, and we will part ways.' His friend said to him: 'It is true that we must part. But three parts of the merchandise and the profits are mine, and you will receive only a quarter, because through your thefts you have already taken more than your share of the property.' They argued at length and came before the Rav, who ruled: 'As long as there are no witnesses and no proof of his thefts, he is entitled to half the property.' They divided the property in two, and each went his own way. But the barren woman's envy had not yet subsided, and she incited her husband to take revenge on his partner for his thefts by informing on him to the government for evading taxes. He did so. The king's officers came and arrested him. He was held about six months until his trial, and his sentence was a fine of six thousand Egyptian dinars.

"The days went by, and both of them died. Their souls went up before the *Beis Din shel Maalah*, and each was judged according to his deeds and his ways. It was decreed that one should return to his world and repair the wrong he had done in his dealings with Elokim and with man through his failings in deed. And it was decreed that the other should return and repair the terrible wrong he had committed by handing his fellow over to the authorities. Now, you are the partner who came to repair the deeds you spoiled in your previous *gilgul*. And the wife whom Hashem placed in your arms was your former partner, who gave you six months of joy in return for the six months of suffering in prison he caused you in the previous *gilgul*. The dowry is the sum he made you lose and pay to the gentiles. When she had completed what was incumbent upon her, she returned to the *Beis Din shel Maalah* to stand judgment for her other deeds. But you still have a long life ahead of you in which to repair what you spoiled. Now do not fear and

do not be dismayed. Sit and occupy yourself with the Torah of Hashem, and soon you will find a wife after your own heart and build a faithful home, for honor and for glory."

The Man Who Stole the Menorah of the Beis HaMikdash

ABOUT TWENTY-FIVE YEARS AGO a man from the center of the country came to me in Yerushalayim, broken and in pain. He told me that he had run a small business which suddenly, for no logical reason, grew enormously. Within a few months it reached a turnover of several million shekels, with large profits, which he also put back into the business. His debts to the tax authorities reached a million shekels, and before he managed to pay them, the wheel turned against him and he lost all his money. The customers who for six months had pounced on his merchandise and bought it at any price stopped coming altogether. On the strength of his booming trade he had ordered a large quantity of goods from Italy and from manufacturers in Israel, and he was stuck with all of it. He became entangled in bitter lawsuits with the manufacturers, and besides the fortune he paid his lawyers, he lost every case and sank into poverty, down to his last crust of bread. When he could not pay the rent on his apartment, he and his family were thrown into the street, and he had to take out loans to rent another one. His situation was such that every few months he was evicted for nonpayment, rented another apartment, and paid the first month, knowing that after another month without paying he would be thrown out again. On top of this, the tax authorities garnished his child allowances, and he did not even have milk for his baby son. The grocers in his neighborhood also stopped giving him credit, and his situation was desperate.

I advised him to move to Yerushalayim, where rents were cheaper at the time, and I showed him how to obtain loans from *gemachim* for this purpose, on easy repayment terms and of course without interest. From then

until today I have been raising *tzedakah* for needy families who are too modest to ask for help, to help them with their ongoing expenses such as monthly rent or a mortgage and various other payments. Besides this I keep another small fund for those who cannot manage to buy basic food and Shabbos needs. After checking that what he told me was true, I added him to the list of those we support. His situation was such that, in addition to the general expenses partly covered by the large fund and the help from the small fund at the end of every week, his wife would come as early as the beginning of the week asking for extra help to buy bread and milk for the little children. Not every month did the fund have enough for the needy, and there were times when I could barely keep the small fund going. Meanwhile he went on wandering every few months from apartment to apartment, which in itself causes great suffering.

In the meantime this man became my student and came regularly to my *shiurim*. Several times he asked me to find the spiritual cause of his suffering, and I did not know what to answer him. Finally I said to him, "Come to me on Purim, when I have had some wine, and ask me then. I hope the Purim wine will reveal the cause." The explanation is this. The secret of Purim is that the great light of the six days of Creation rests on this day upon a person who hears the Megillah as it should be heard, without missing a single letter; who, right after Shacharis, fulfills the *mitzvos* of *mishloach manos* and *matanos la'evyonim*; and who, at the proper time after the Megillah reading, sits down to the Purim *seudah* and drinks wine to fulfill the *mitzvah* of drinking "until he cannot tell the difference between 'cursed is Haman' and 'blessed is Mordechai.'" Such a person puts aside the intellect and the reasoning mind that limit the soul to seeing and sensing only through the five senses, and he becomes connected to the great light that shines on this day, so that his soul can see past, present, and future as a disembodied soul. Since my students and I made a point of fulfilling this *mitzvah* together in my home, I asked him to come and try this opportunity.

On Purim, during the *seudah*, he came. When he saw that the drinking had already clouded everyone's minds and words of Torah were pouring from the participants in holy fervor, he turned to me and asked why he was suffering. I looked at him and saw him, some two thousand years ago, carrying the Menorah out of the Beis HaMikdash. I said to him: "You are the

gilgul of Yosi Meshisa, who stole the Menorah from the Beis HaMikdash.[39] Your *tikkun* is to go to Rome, to the Colosseum, and recite Tehillim and certain passages of the Zohar *l'iluy nishmas* the Jews who were killed there, torn apart by the lions. From there go on to a cave about two hundred meters from the Arch of Titus, *yemach shemo*, and recite *Patach Eliyahu* there and Kaddish without a *minyan*. That is the place where, when Shlomo married Pharaoh's daughter, the angel Gavriel planted the reed around which a sandbank formed, from which Rome grew. Have in mind to nullify the *kelipah* of Rome. From there go and stand opposite a church that faces a first-aid station" (and I described the place to him), "and recite the entire Tehillim, *Patach Eliyahu*, *Sifra DiTzniusa*, and the *Idra Rabba* and *Idra Zuta*, with the intention of drawing out all the holy sparks that fell there and returning them to their root. At Minchah take upon yourself a fast from sunset until the following evening. On the second day go to the Vatican." I described to him a small, square courtyard in front of a doorway sealed with stones, and told him that this doorway leads to the place where the vessels of the Beis HaMikdash are kept, except for the Menorah, which is sunk in the Tiber River (I do not know whether all of it or part of it). He was to recite the entire Tehillim there twice, because this hastens the *geulah*. I warned him that while he was saying Tehillim, a priest would come and say hello to him, and that he must not answer, *chas v'shalom*, because it would not be a human being but the Satan himself, who would make him interrupt his Tehillim in the middle and ruin his *tikkun*. "The following morning go outside Rome, past a railway station" (whose location I described to him), "and recite *Shiras HaYam*, *Shiras HaBe'er*, *Shiras Devorah*, and more. Through this you will repair the Menorah and complete your *tikkun*."

That year Purim in Yerushalayim fell on Monday, and the next morning, Tuesday, the man appeared and asked to fly to Rome and do the *tikkun*. I went with him at once to the travel agent and bought him a plane ticket leaving Wednesday morning and returning Friday. I also gave him five hundred dollars for expenses there: transportation, food, lodging, and above all telephone calls. I asked him to call me from the moment he entered the Colosseum, before every step he took, so that I could take part in his work

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[39] As related in Bereishis Rabbah, *parashas* Toldos, on the verse "and he smelled the fragrance of his garments" (Bereishis 27:27).

from my home in Yerushalayim, and also so that I would know he was all right, for I understood that he was going into a spiritual battle fateful for him and for the Jewish people.

On Wednesday before noon he took off for Rome. Although I knew him to be a precise and responsible person, he did not call me all day. By nightfall I was worried about him, and I called the embassy in Rome to ask about him and whether anything unusual had happened to an Israeli tourist. They told me they knew nothing. On Thursday I asked the travel agent to contact El Al in Rome and ask them to update me on anything they knew about him. And indeed, at four in the afternoon I received a call from El Al in Rome saying that he had come to their office, asked that I not worry, and said he would call that night. A heavy weight was lifted from me. In the evening he called and told me that as soon as he arrived at the Colosseum, two young men attacked him and robbed him of all his money. Nevertheless, he carried out the entire order. When he finished, he turned to the Jews there who sell souvenirs and received donations and bus fare to get from place to place, and he carried out the whole order exactly as required. At night he slept on the sidewalk. During the day he went to the Vatican and found the place I had described. In the middle of his Tehillim he heard a voice say hello to him, and he answered automatically. Then he opened his eyes and saw that it was a priest, but what was done could not be undone. He finished the Tehillim and went looking for a way to contact me and ask what to do. He found a Jew who ran a guesthouse and agreed to let him call Israel free of charge at night, when calls are cheaper. I told him not to go to the Tiber and not to take any risks after the mistake he had made, but to come home as planned. He came back on Friday, and on Shabbos he told me the whole story in detail. I told him that although the *tikkun* had not been carried out as required, I assumed that part of it had been accomplished, and time would tell.

Two weeks later he had a meeting with the tax authorities, and miraculously they agreed to forgive his million-shekel debt and canceled the garnishment of his child allowances, a small but significant rescue. A few days later a building contractor approached him and said: "I know you have no housing and move from apartment to apartment every few months, and I have a good offer for you. I built a building in a religious neighborhood in Yerushalayim, closed off the shops on the ground floor, and turned them

into a storeroom with a bathroom. I no longer need it, and I am willing to sell it to you, together with the land, for thirty-six thousand dollars. It is a spacious storeroom where you can live with your whole family. I know your situation, and I am willing to take a few thousand dollars up front and spread the rest over two years in installments." He bought the place after raising loans from his relatives for the down payment, and he connected to the stairwell's electricity and water in return for an agreement to pay in full. When he read the fine print of the purchase contract and the land registry deed, it emerged that the shops' land was attached to part of the roof, which had also been transferred to his ownership. When he drew the contractor's attention to this detail, the contractor was astonished and said, "If I had noticed this before the sale, I would have sold it all for a much higher price. But now that you've bought it, your *mazal* has made you a profit. I'm finished with the building." He sold the roof section to a neighbor, used the proceeds to pay his debts, and built three rooms on the spot. After some proceedings at the municipality, Heaven helped him and he received a "Form 4" occupancy certificate, which approved his official connection to the electricity and water grid. From then on he was free of the nightmare of changing apartments and paying rent. Although he works at odd jobs for his livelihood and has married off some of his children, he is still poor and does not know from day to day what he will eat. He accepts the decree of Heaven willingly, knowing why and for what he suffers, and he looks to the mercy of Heaven.

The Ring and the Mikveh

IN THE YEARS 5732 to 5735, a Dr. B. came from England every year. He had tremendous psychic powers and practiced seeing hidden things: by holding an object and concentrating on it, he could tell everything connected with its past from the time it was made. He would appear at the Student House in Yerushalayim and demonstrate his powers for a fee. One of those years, I took the wedding ring of my late mother z"l, who had passed away about two years earlier, and had it immersed in a kosher *mikveh* used by women for purification from *niddah*. Then I went with one of my students to Dr. B.'s performance.

I made sure to be among the first, so that he would concentrate on the ring and I could see whether he could tell its past, or whether the waters of the *mikveh* would erase the ring's past, as I understood from the writings of Kabbalah should happen. I was the third of those who came early to hand their objects to Dr. B. and hear their history. The first was a young woman who handed in a gold necklace, the second was a young woman who handed in a sweater, and the third was my mother's ring. After me there were several more people who handed in objects; I do not know what they were.

When it was time to begin, Dr. B. came in and stood on a stage with a table in front of him, on which the objects were laid out in the order they had been handed in. He took the necklace in his hand, and after concentrating for several minutes he began to speak: "This necklace was handed in by a young lady who looks like this and this. She received it as a gift from her boyfriend, a soldier in uniform who looks like this and this, who received it from his previous girlfriend, who looks like this and this." At this point the young woman who had handed in the necklace, who matched his descrip-

tion, suddenly stood up, slapped the uniformed soldier sitting beside her, and began shouting, "How dare you give me a necklace you got from your ex-girlfriend!" The description of the soldier matched Dr. B.'s words as well.

Next Dr. B. moved on to the sweater. He concentrated on it for several minutes and said: "This sweater was handed in by a young lady who looks like this and this. She received it from her mother, who knitted it for her with warmth and love when she was ill with gout and confined to a wheelchair." The young woman stood up to take back the sweater, confirming Dr. B.'s words, and with tears in her eyes she told how her mother had died of that illness after knitting the sweater for her.

Then Dr. B. moved on to my mother's ring. After several minutes of concentration he opened his eyes, looked at the ring with open eyes, and began to say: "I see a used wedding ring. But I cannot tell you any details, not about the person who handed it in, because it is not his" (the ring had passed to my sister), "and not about its owner, because this ring has gone through a process that erased its entire past, in a way I do not know." I immediately jumped up onto the stage, took the ring from his hand, waved it before everyone present, and said: "Friends, this ring was immersed in a kosher *mikveh* according to *halachah*. See the power of the *mikveh*, and why the Torah commanded a woman to immerse in it to purify herself." And before the astonished audience, I turned and left.

Shelo Asanu K'Goyei HaAratzos

I HEREBY TESTIFY THAT about twenty-five years ago I met a Mrs. T., a granddaughter of one of the Yerushalayim *mekubalim* of two generations earlier, whom she never had the merit of knowing. In her youth she had gone to America and become a devoted disciple and admirer of the guru "Babaji." Every year she came to Israel to lecture on the teachings of this fraud, and on each annual tour she managed to persuade dozens of Israelis to believe in the "guru's" divinity. Among them were "intellectuals" and "men of the spirit" who did not know the God of Israel and His Torah, and who had no interest at all in the faith for whose sake their own grandparents had thrown themselves into the fire pits of the Inquisition and the pyres of Europe with *Shema Yisrael, Hashem Elokeinu, Hashem Echad* on their lips. Instead they thirstily drank in the stories Mrs. T. told about the guru "Babaji," who was never born at all but grew by himself out of the light in a dark cave in order to show humanity the way. She persuaded them to fly to the United States to see his "wondrous" face and be perfumed by his stench. Through her sister's son, who had returned to authentic *Yiddishkeit* through me, she came to me and told me of the miracles and wonders of her god: how he had created himself, and how he helps his faithful reach "longed-for bliss."

From what she said, I understood that this was a fraud with magical and telepathic powers, through which he managed to deceive people and enslave them to his will. I said to her: "How can you believe in vanity and chasing after wind? Your power as a Jewish woman, a daughter of the chosen people, is greater than his, and you have it in your power to strip your

god of all his powers." I gave her the *sefer Sha'arei Gan Eden*[40] and a Tehillim, and said to her: "When you get to America, wait until your monthly cycle is over. Then cleanse yourself well and count seven clean days, free of any drop of blood, during which you must refrain from marital relations with your husband. On the eighth night go to a kosher *mikveh* and immerse seven times. When you come home, do not sleep all night. Read whatever books of Tanach you like, and at midnight read in this *sefer* the passages I have marked for you. In the morning go to your god and say before him the last verse of chapter 90 of Tehillim and all of chapter 91, seven times forward and seven times from the end to the beginning, and we will see whose power is greater."

A year later she came back, returned the *sefarim*, and told me she had done everything as instructed. In the morning she stood facing the "guru" while he was speaking to about two hundred people and began reciting the chapter of Tehillim. Suddenly the "eternally serene guru" lost his eternal divine serenity, and to the astonishment of everyone present he shouted at her, "What are you doing there? You're disturbing me!" and drove her out. The next day she came back and stood facing him, hidden behind a group of people so that he would not notice her, and began reciting the chapter of Tehillim. Before she could finish the seventh time backward, he collapsed and died. I said to her, "You have seen whose power is greater. Why do you not return to your people and to your God, who is truly great and awesome?" She answered that she believed he had been elevated by the Tehillim, and that she was waiting for him to come back and create himself anew.

Such is the power of brainwashing: where there is brainwashing, there is no reason. People see the truth, and it does not help. This is why Kabbalah marks Pesach as the festival of wisdom and knowledge, and part of the purpose of the plagues of Egypt was to rouse the masses from the Egyptian brainwashing.

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[40] Composed in Spain by Rabbi Yosef Gikatilla about eight hundred years ago. [The work commonly published under this title is by Rabbi Yaakov Koppel Lifshitz of Mezritch (18th century); Rabbi Yosef Gikatilla's best-known work is *Sha'arei Orah*.—Trans.]

The conclusion that emerges from all that has been said: Moshe is true and his Torah is true, and whoever fulfills it reaches the main purpose of Creation, eternal life.

"The end of the matter, when all has been heard: fear Elokim and keep His commandments, for this is the whole of man."

Teshuvah: The Broker Who Was Saved from Prison

A FEW YEARS AGO a Jew of about forty came to me in New York, an observant Jew and even a *ben Torah*. He told me that he had a real estate brokerage office which until a few years earlier had brought him a great deal of money. But because of the severe slump in that field in the United States, he had not closed a single deal in several years and had used up all his savings. Worse, he had been caught concealing a hundred thousand dollars from American income tax, and a case had been brought against him. When he turned to a lawyer, the lawyer told him, "If you give me fifty thousand dollars, I will try to see that you serve only two years in prison, and you will repay the money with interest and indexation in installments." "I cannot pay even that," he said, "and I am at my wits' end."

I asked him for his date of birth, and he told me that he was born in Cheshvan, under the *mazal* of *Akrav*, Scorpio. I told him that the *Tikkunei Zohar*[41] states explicitly that those born under the *mazal* of *Akrav* must be especially careful about the sin of wasting seed, because the word *akrav* is made of the letters of *akar* plus a *beis*, the first *beis* of *Bereishis*, and its meaning alludes to this grave sin. He told me that this could not be, since he had never committed that sin. I asked him whether he and his wife used contraception, and he said that he used condoms. I said to him: "Don't you know that this is an outright sin of wasting seed, since you are putting your seed into a bag in the trash? This is the grave sin that has withheld your livelihood and brought you to trial. So first of all stop this sin, and afterward do

[41] *Tikkun* 21.

a *tikkun* for the past, and I hope Hashem will help and everything will work out." He said he was not prepared to stop using condoms, because his wife was not willing to use any other form of contraception, and he had no choice. I answered, "In that case, there is nothing I can do for you." A week later the man came back with his face to the ground and told me that, having no alternative, he and his wife had decided to use another method of contraception permitted by *halachah*, and that he was ready to stop this sin and make amends for it.

I gave him the *sefer Sdei Tapuchim* and told him to do the *tikkun* for the sin of wasting seed four times, and also to be careful to say *Krias Shema al hamitah*, in the hope that everything would work out. A month later he came back to me sour and angry: he had done the *tikkun* four times, and nothing had budged. I told him that perhaps his *teshuvah* had not yet been accepted, and he should do four more *tikkunim*. (Each *tikkun* includes a fast and a *pidyon taanis*.)

Two months later he came to me, still grim-faced, and said, "I did another four *tikkunim*, and I still have no livelihood at all." I said to him, "I don't believe you that eight *tikkunim* accomplished nothing." Then he said: "Well, yes. One day after the sixth *tikkun*, the investigations department of the Internal Revenue Service called me in. I was terrified, because I have no lawyer and didn't know what to do. I went to see them, and the head of the investigations department said to me, 'Listen, yesterday we sat over your file and decided that if you sign here that you will not commit a similar offense for ten years, the file will be closed.' And the file really was closed, without their even asking me to pay the money I had concealed. Nobody I tell this to believes me, because such a thing has never been heard of, but it is true. But that doesn't comfort me, because I still have no livelihood." I answered him: "Fool! Look at the kindness of the Creator. What a lawyer was not willing to promise you for fifty thousand dollars, the Creator did for you in six *tikkunim*, and you are still complaining? Do four more *tikkunim*, until Heaven has mercy on you." After four more *tikkunim* he came back to me, angry again, saying the situation still had not improved. It was true that he had closed one deal that brought him forty thousand dollars, but he would receive it in ten monthly payments, which was not enough to cover his current expenses. I said to him: "If the first swallow has begun to show itself, continue with another four *tikkunim* until Heaven has mercy. You are a

talmid chacham who sank into this sin up to his nose, and your *tikkun* needs to be continued."

One day he came back to me smiling and said: "I did another four *tikkunim*. After the sixteenth *tikkun*, although my office is still at a standstill, I got two well-paying jobs, one as rabbi of a *shul* and the other as a psychologist in a public school, *baruch Hashem*."

I have more stories of this kind in my bag, but this is not the place to tell them. I have brought these stories as an illustration of the kind of *tikkun* that helps a person who is suffering because of sins in this *gilgul* or in a previous one.

Know that *teshuvah* is good in every case and every matter, but it has levels. For example, take a person who is presented with an opportunity to commit a sin he has committed before. It is within his power to do it, and he holds back and does not do it because of his *teshuvah*, not out of fear and not for lack of strength. Suppose he had once been with a woman in sin, and some time later he again has the chance to be alone with her and do with her as he wishes; he still loves her and is still physically vigorous, and the circumstances of place and time are the same as at the time of the sin; and he withdraws and does not sin, out of fear of Hashem and the splendor of His majesty. Such a person is a complete *ba'al teshuvah*. This is what Shlomo meant when he said, "Remember your Creator in the days of your youth." If he returns only in his old age, when it is no longer possible for him to do what he used to do, then even though his *teshuvah* is not of the highest kind, it helps him, and he is a *ba'al teshuvah*. Even if he sinned all his days and did *teshuvah* on the day of his death, dying in his *teshuvah*, all his sins are forgiven, for since he remembered his Creator and returned before he died, he is forgiven.

His stains are cleansed according to the level of his *teshuvah* and the sufferings that come after it. For one who repents on the day of his death, his stains are weakened, and he is spared the *kaf hakela*, which is harsh and bitter suffering beyond measure. But he may need to undergo other, lighter punishments, both to cleanse his stains and to bring back the holy sparks of his soul that he cast into the hands of the forces of evil and the *kelipah*. One who has done complete *teshuvah* and lives in his *teshuvah*, but did not do the *tikkun* that takes the place of suffering, gains atonement through the sufferings that come upon him in this world after his *teshuvah*. But if he did the

tikkun and raised the sparks to their root, through the *tikkunim* that our masters the *mekubalim* revealed to us, with their order, their details, their fasts, and their redemptions, then he has cleansed his soul and will merit the life of *Olam Haba* according to the degree of purity and refinement of his soul.

It was about this that Yechezkel the prophet prophesied in chapter 18, saying, "And when the wicked man turns from the wickedness he has done": this is the *teshuvah* of *viduy* and regret. "And does justice and righteousness": this is the resolution for the future, keeping the Torah and doing the *mitzvos*. "He shall keep his soul alive": in *Olam Haba*, after he has paid in this world the sufferings required along with his *teshuvah*, or after he comes in another *gilgul* to cleanse the stain that remains despite his *teshuvah*. "Because he considered and turned away from all the transgressions he committed": this is the *teshuvah* of *tikkun* and fasting. "He shall surely live": in *Olam Haba*. "He shall not die": a second time, whether through sufferings in this world, for suffering is likened to death, or through returning in another *gilgul*. The prophet then explained the difference and its cause, saying, "Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, each according to his ways, says Hashem Elokim." The meaning of "Hashem Elokim" is mercy within judgment. The mercy is that even a person who returned with all his heart but did not do the *tikkun* and did not suffer in this world has his *teshuvah* accepted nonetheless. He is spared the harsh and bitter punishments and *gilgulim* he would otherwise have had to bear for many years to be cleansed. We do not say that because he did not raise the sparks he cast down, he remains lost until the sparks are raised. The need to raise the sparks, however, since they were not raised through *tikkun* and fasting (or *pidyon taanis*), remains, and he will have to suffer in order to raise them, either through sufferings in this world, or in Gehinnom, or in another *gilgul* as a human being.

"Return": through *viduy* and regret. "And turn back from all your transgressions": all the sparks of your soul that you cast into the *kelipah*. "So that they shall not be a stumbling block of iniquity for you": these fallen sparks. "Cast away from yourselves all your transgressions": through *tikkun*. "Which you have transgressed against": in that you brought sparks of holiness down to the *kelipos* and caused the *kelipos* to cling to them. "And make yourselves a new heart and a new spirit": for through *tikkun* you will be

clean of every stain and blemish, truly like new. "Why should you die, O house of Israel?": in another *gilgul*, if you do not return the sparks through *tikkun* and fasting (or *pidyon taanis*), or through the sufferings that will come upon you in this world. "For I do not desire the death of the one who dies": it does not say "the death of the wicked," but "the death of the one who dies," meaning the death of a person in another *gilgul* after he has already died once, without the *tikkun*, or without the sufferings that were meant to come upon him and did not come. "Says Hashem Elokim": merciful in judgment, and repairing you according to the measure of your *teshuvah*. "Return": the sparks to their root through *tikkun*. "And live": eternal life, without need for any punishment or suffering in this world or for any further *gilgul*, but straight to the life of *Olam Haba*.

Glossary

agunah A "chained" woman, whose husband has left her without a *get* and who therefore cannot remarry.

a"h Abbreviation of *alav hashalom*, "may peace be upon him," said after the name of one who has passed away.

Akrav The zodiac sign of Scorpio; also the Hebrew word for scorpion.

aliyah Immigration to Eretz Yisrael (literally, "going up").

am segulah "Treasured nation"; the Torah's description of the Jewish people (Shemos 19:5).

anusim Jews forced to convert, who continued to keep Judaism in secret; especially those of Spain and Portugal under the Inquisition.

Ari, the Rabbi Yitzchak Luria (1534–1572) of Tzefas, the foremost master of Kabbalah, whose teachings were recorded by his disciple Rabbi Chaim Vital.

asher kideshanu b'mitzvosav v'tzivanu "Who has sanctified us with His *mitzvos* and commanded us"; a phrase from the text of the *berachos* over *mitzvos*.

askara A fatal disease of the throat mentioned in the Talmud, usually identified as croup or diphtheria.

ba'al teshuvah A penitent; one who has returned to Hashem through *teshuvah*.

baruch Hashem "Blessed is Hashem"; an expression of thanks.

beis din A rabbinical court.

Beis Din shel Maalah The Heavenly Court.

Beis HaMikdash The Holy Temple in Yerushalayim.

beis midrash A study hall for Torah learning.

ben Torah A person devoted to Torah learning and observance.

berachah (pl. berachos) A blessing.

b'ezras Hashem "With the help of Hashem."

borei pri ha'eitz "Who creates the fruit of the tree"; the *berachah* recited before eating fruit.

bris (bris milah) Circumcision; the covenant of Avraham Avinu.

Chacham "Sage"; a title for rabbis in Sephardi communities.

chachmei Yisrael The Torah sages of the Jewish people.

chareidi Strictly Torah-observant; ultra-Orthodox.

chas v'shalom "Heaven forbid."

chasan A bridegroom.

chassid umos ha'olam A righteous gentile, who keeps the seven Noahide *mitzvos*.

Chazal Acronym for *chachameinu zichronam livrachah*, "our Sages of blessed memory"; the Sages of the Mishnah and Talmud.

cholent A hot stew kept warm from Friday and eaten at the Shabbos-day meal.

chuppah The wedding canopy; by extension, the wedding ceremony.

daven, davening To pray; prayer.

Dayan Judge; *Yesh din v'yesh Dayan*, "there is judgment and there is a Judge," i.e., the world is not without Divine justice.

derashah (pl. derashos) A public sermon or Torah discourse.

dybbuk The soul of a deceased person that has entered and taken hold of the body of a living person.

Ein Sof "The Infinite"; in Kabbalah, Hashem as He is beyond all definition.

eishes ish A married woman.

Elokim A Name of Hashem, denoting His attribute of strict justice.

erev Shabbos Friday; the day before Shabbos.

Gan Eden Paradise; the abode of righteous souls after death, divided into a lower and an upper Gan Eden.

gaon An outstanding Torah scholar; a title of honor.

Gehinnom The place where souls are purified through punishment after death.

gemach (pl. gemachim) A free-loan fund or charitable lending society.

get A bill of divorce according to *halachah*.

geulah The final Redemption.

gilgul (pl. gilgulim) Reincarnation; also, a soul's particular incarnation, or the person in whom a soul is reincarnated.

gilgul neshamos The reincarnation of souls; the doctrine of *gilgul*.

guf Literally "body." In this book, a subtle, intermediate body that clothes the soul, distinct from the physical body of flesh.

Hakadosh Baruch Hu "The Holy One, Blessed is He"; a Name of Hashem.

halachah (pl. halachos) Jewish law; an individual law.

Hashem "The Name"; the way the Tetragrammaton is referred to in speech and writing.

Hashem yatzileinu "May Hashem save us"; said on mentioning something sinful or terrible.

Hashem yerachem "May Hashem have mercy."

havla d'garmei "The breath of the bones"; in the Zohar, the part of the soul that remains with the body in the grave.

hy"v Abbreviation of *Hashem yishmerehu v'yechayehu*, "may Hashem protect him and grant him life," said after the name of a living person.

ish Elokim "Man of Elokim"; a holy man, a prophet or *tzaddik*.

kabbalas ol mitzvos Acceptance of the obligation to keep the *mitzvos*, an essential element of conversion.

kaf hakela "The hollow of the sling"; a punishment in which a soul is hurled about through the world without rest.

kares "Cutting off"; a severe Divine punishment stated in the Torah for certain sins.

kavanah (pl. kavanos) Concentration and intent in prayer or a *mitzvah*; in Kabbalah, specific meditations.

kehunah The priesthood.

kelipah (pl. kelipos) "Husk" or "shell"; in Kabbalah, the forces of impurity that conceal and draw from holiness.

Kohen (pl. Kohanim) A descendant of Aharon, member of the priestly family; distinct from a Levi and a Yisrael.

Krias Shema al hamitah The *Shema* and accompanying prayers recited at bedtime.

levush hanefesh "The garment of the soul."

l'iluy nishmas "For the elevation of the soul of" a departed person.

limudei kodesh Torah studies.

mador A compartment or level of Gehinnom.

malachei chabalah Angels of destruction; agents of punishment.

matanos la'evyonim Gifts to the poor, one of the *mitzvos* of Purim.

mazal Fortune, destiny; also a sign of the zodiac.

mechallelei Shabbos Those who desecrate Shabbos.

mekubal (pl. mekubalim) A master of Kabbalah.

melamed A teacher of young children in a Talmud Torah.

meshaneh makom meshaneh mazal "One who changes his place changes his fortune" (Rosh Hashanah 16b).

mesirus nefesh Self-sacrifice; devotion to the point of giving up one's life.

middah k'neged middah "Measure for measure"; Divine retribution that corresponds to the deed.

mikveh A ritual bath used for purification.

minyan A quorum of ten men required for communal prayer.

mishloach manos Gifts of food sent to friends on Purim.

mitzvah (pl. mitzvos) A commandment of the Torah; a good deed.

mohel One who performs circumcision.

Motza'ei Shabbos Saturday night, after Shabbos ends.

nefesh Elokis The "divine soul" unique to the Jewish people.

nefesh hachai The "animal soul," the life force of living creatures.

nefesh hadomemes The "inanimate soul" that holds inanimate matter together.

nefesh hamaskeles The "intellectual soul," the rational soul shared by all human beings.

nefesh hatzome'ach The "vegetative soul," the life force of plants.

nefesh, ruach, neshamah The three main levels of the human soul, from lowest to highest.

neveilos Meat of animals that were not slaughtered according to *halachah*.

niddah A woman in the state of ritual impurity associated with menstruation; also, the prohibition of marital relations during that time.

Olam Haba The World to Come.

ov A form of necromancy forbidden by the Torah.

parashah (parashas) A weekly Torah portion.

pidyon taanis Redemption of a fast through a charitable donation.

poritz A Polish landowner or nobleman.

Ribbono shel Olam "Master of the World"; a form of addressing Hashem.

rosh yeshivah The head of a *yeshivah*.

ruach hakodesh Divine inspiration.

sefer (pl. sefarim) A holy book; a book of Torah learning.

sefiros In Kabbalah, the ten Divine attributes through which Hashem created and conducts the worlds.

seudah A festive meal, especially the Purim meal.

she'elas chalom A "dream question": a prayer said before sleep asking for an answer in a dream.

sheitel A wig worn by a married woman to cover her hair.

Shelo asanu k'goyei ha'aratzos "For He has not made us like the nations of the lands"; from the *Aleinu* prayer.

Shema Yisrael, Hashem Elokeinu, Hashem Echad "Hear, O Israel, Hashem is our God, Hashem is One"; the declaration of Jewish faith (Devarim 6:4).

shidduchim Marriage matches.

shiksa A derogatory Yiddish term for a gentile woman.

shiur (pl. shiurim) A Torah class or lecture.

shivah The seven-day mourning period after the death of a close relative.

shloshim The thirtieth day after a death, and the mourning period ending then.

shul Synagogue.

shushvin The groom's attendant or best man.

simchah A joyous occasion, such as a wedding.

taharas hamishpachah "Family purity"; the laws of *niddah* governing marital life.

talmid chacham (pl. talmidei chachamim) A Torah scholar.

tamei Ritually impure.

Tanna (pl. Tannaim) A Sage of the Mishnah.

tav The last letter of the Hebrew alphabet.

techiyas hameisim The resurrection of the dead.

tefillin Phylacteries; small leather boxes containing Torah passages, worn during weekday morning prayers.

terumah The portion of produce given to a Kohen, which may be eaten only by Kohanim in a state of purity.

teshuvah Repentance; returning to Hashem.

tikkun (pl. tikkunim) Rectification or repair of the soul; also a set order of prayers, fasts, and acts performed to bring it about.

Tofteh A Scriptural name for Gehinnom (Yeshayahu 30:33).

tola'as shani A crimson dye used for wool in the Beis HaMikdash.

tzaddik (pl. tzaddikim; fem. tzaddeikes) A righteous person.

Tzaddik Hashem b'chol derachav "Hashem is righteous in all His ways" (Tehillim 145:17).

tzaddik nistar A hidden *tzaddik*, whose greatness is concealed from the world.

tzedakah Charity.

viduy Verbal confession of sin, part of *teshuvah*.

Vihi no'am "May the pleasantness of Hashem be upon us"; the last verse of Tehillim chapter 90, customarily recited before chapter 91.

yemach shemo "May his name be erased"; said after the name of an enemy of the Jewish people.

Yesh din v'yesh Dayan "There is judgment, and there is a Judge."

yeshivah An academy of Torah study.

yetzer The *yetzer hara*, the evil inclination.

Yiddishkeit Judaism; a Jewish way of life.

yiras Shamayim Fear of Heaven. One who possesses it is *yerei Shamayim* (pl. *yirei Shamayim*).

Yoshev b'seser elyon "He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High"; the opening words of Tehillim chapter 91.

zikui harabim Bringing merit to the public, especially by spreading Torah and good deeds.

z"l Abbreviation of *zichrono livrachah*, "of blessed memory."

zt"l Abbreviation of *zecher tzaddik livrachah*, "may the memory of the righteous be a blessing."



Gilgul neshamos, the return of a soul to this world to repair what it damaged and finish what it left undone, is hinted at in the words of Chazal and set out in the Zohar and the writings of the Ari. In this book HaRav Yosef Shani explains what they teach, and then tells the stories: most of them he saw and heard himself, the rest he received from trustworthy witnesses and from the sefarim of earlier gedolim. Souls came back in Chicago, Brooklyn, Toronto and Paris, in Iraq and in Egypt; a cat and a dog were more than they seemed; a poritz returned as a dybbuk.

Through all of them runs one truth: nothing that happens to a person is by chance. Tzaddik Hashem b'chol derachav. What seems hard in one life is often the tikkun of another, and Hashem's judgment is exact, and full of mercy.

A companion to A Ladder Set on the Earth
Translated from the Hebrew

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