

YISRO

Perceptions • Shevat 17 5785 • February 25 2025 • Issue #2084

Does Judaism believe in reincarnation? Those who quote Saadia Gaon say no. But it is hard to imagine how, if he had a copy of the *Zohar*, which had yet to be published, because it speaks about *gilgulim* extensively at the beginning of *Parashas Mishpatim*.

Certainly had the *Gaon* lived in the *Arizal's* time, he would have changed his opinion. *Sba'ar HaGilgulim* and *Seder HaGilgulim*, two versions of the *Arizal's* teachings on the topic from two of his students, provide explicit and exquisite details on reincarnation. How could such a great Torah leader question such a central concept in Judaism? It's a different discussion for a different time.

What is relevant now is, how Yisro alluded to Moshe *Rabbeinu* how he was the *gilgul* of Kayin, the murderous brother of Hevel who had reincarnated into Moshe. So, on a *Pshat* level, Yisro's arrival was the reunion of a father-in-law and son-in-law, but on the level of *Sod*, it was the happy reunion of two long lost brothers.

Where is this alluded to in the verse? When Yisro announces himself with the words, "*Ani chosenecha Yisro—I am your father-in-law, Yisro*" (*Shemos* 18:6). The first letters of each of the words—*Aleph-Ches-Yud*—spell *achi*—my brother," as if to say to Moshe, "If you won't come out because I'm only your father-in-law, come out and greet me as the reincarnation of your brother!"

Wait. It gets better. Yisro's daughter, Tzipporah, who was Moshe's wife, was also Hevel's twin sister, at least after reincarnation. As the *Midrash* explains, Kayin killed his brother for Hevel's twin sister, of which he had one more than Kayin. In those very distant and rather unusual days of human history, sisters became wives, giving Hevel two and Kayin only one. Perhaps that added fuel to the jealousy Kayin felt after God rejected his sacrifice.

When Yisro gave his daughter Tzipporah to Moshe as a wife, it was Kayin making amends for his actions by returning Hevel's twin sister. And he could do that, because Yisro "inherited" Kayin's level of *Neshamah* which was always good. It was

Kayin's levels of *Nefesh* and *Ruach* that required rectification. The former had gone to the Egyptian that Moshe had killed back in *Parashas Shemos*, and the latter went later to Korach. Killing the Egyptian with a Name of God, the Arizal explains, rectified the *Nefesh*, and when Korach was swallowed up by the earth the *Ruach* had its rectification as well.

Hevel's soul has had quite the journey as well. His life was short but the path of his soul has been long and spans all of history: In fact:

Once all the souls will have been separated out completely then *Adam d'Klipah*, which is the waste, will not need to be removed through [some kind of] action, because on its own it will collapse and be absorbed [to the point] of not being visible or present, since holiness, which is life [itself], will become separated from the spiritual waste which is called death. [The *Klipos*] will no longer have any life at all and will disappear like smoke, as it says, "*Death will be extinct forever*" (*Yeshayahu* 25:8). They will not become extinct, however, until all of the souls will have been separated out. Thus, the initials of [the Hebrew words of] "*Death will be extinct forever*" are the letters of "Hevel" (*Heb-Bais-Lamed*) to hint that [this will not occur] until all of the reincarnations of Hevel are completed, which are happening by Moshe *Rabbeinu* reincarnating in every generation to separate out the souls from among the waste. When this has occurred then Moshiach will come and death will be extinct forever. (*Sba'ar HaGilgulim*, Introduction 20)

I know, I know, there is a lot of *kabbalah* in this that needs explanation, which I provide in my translation of *Sba'ar HaGilgulim*. But, as fascinating as it is, it is not necessary to understand, to make the point we're making now, which is that you can't outrun biblical history. Atheists, agnostics, and bible believing folk are all in the same historic boat, know it or not, like it or not. We might consider history to be a function of current politics and modern technology, but the backdrop of all of that is as old as man himself.

And why not? It's the same earth, isn't it? It's the same Creation. As Shlomo *HaMelech* said, "*There is nothing new under the sun*," just what we know of it from generation to generation. No matter how advanced mankind becomes, it will always be within a closed reality of Creation that we share with every generation to have ever lived, or will live.

Thus, as Moshe *Rabbeinu* and the entire Jewish nation readied themselves for one of the most spectacular historic events since Creation, Yisro showing up with his daughter and hinting to his reincarnated past reminds all of us that the Present is just the Past reinventing itself. So when people look at history today and ask, "Is there anything biblical about this?" the answer is, how can there not be?

Shaarnun Productions, Thirtysix.org's Israeli counterpart is now affiliated with Nedarim Plus. This means you can contribute through Nedarim Plus using an Israeli credit card and online or through your local Nedarim Plus point of contribution in your *shul*. For more details, write to pinchasw@shaarnun.org.

Check out my new *Haggadah, b"H*, called "The Wise Son Says." You can see it here: <https://www.shaarnunproductions.org/>. *Pesach* is closing in on us fast, *b"H*. Available on Amazon.