

Reincarnation in Today's Science and Kabbalah

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According to 21st century science our universe was born 13.7 billion years ago. In only a few hundred million years, the first stars were formed from condensing giant clouds of hydrogen gas. Most of these stars were very large and thus very hot. They converted the hydrogen into helium and energy, and then collapsed and exploded in supernovas that created heavier atoms like oxygen, iron and potassium.

The second generation of stars were formed from gas clouds that contained these heavy atoms and thus could also form planets. Recently astronomers have discovered over 2,000 stars with planets and now think that most second and third generation stars have solar systems. Within the next decade or two, planets with life will be discovered. Our planet formed about 4.5 billion years ago; and the first living creatures formed within a few hundred million years after planet Earth cooled down.

The heavier atoms in the bodies of all living things were created in cosmic events like supernovas; and have been recycled over and over for billions of years. Many of the genetic DNA molecules in our bodies have also been recycled for hundreds of millions of generations, through thousands of different species. More recently, the molecules of the human genome have been recycled through 2-3,000 generations of Homo Sapiens. All individuals are unique recombinations of basic elements that have been recycling for millions of generations. This is true for all forms of matter and also for all forms of energy. $E = mc^2$ means that matter and energy can only be recycled and transformed; but cannot be destroyed.

Thus, the death of an individual only ends the life of that unique individual. The molecules of each individual are recycled into other life forms like worms or grass. The DNA of that individual, if he or she had children, are recombined to make new individuals who will have some of the same genetically influenced personality and character traits of that individual's parents and grandparents.

In addition, some of a childless person's individual genes can be passed down by siblings who had shared them with him or her. Thus, the Kabbalah's concept of Gilgul, the recycling of mind/soul/personalities, is part of a larger recycling of particles of matter and energy found throughout nature.

Unlike Buddhism and Hinduism, Kabbalah does not teach that reincarnation (gilgul) occurs over the course of millions of years to millions of different sentient species. According to Kabbalah, only the mind/soul/personalities of self conscious moral creatures like human beings reincarnate; and they reincarnate only when they have not fulfilled in their own lifetime the purpose of their creation. Since Judaism is an optimistic religion, most Kabbalists teach that most people can accomplish their life's purpose in one or two lifetimes.

A few mind/souls may take 3-5 lifetimes or more. The bright mind/souls of great religious figures like Moses or Miriam can turn into dozens of sparks that can each reincarnate several times. The tragic mind/souls of Jews whose children have been cut off from the Jewish people, either through persecution or conversion to another religion, will reincarnate as one of their own no longer Jewish descendants. These descendant mind/souls will seek to return to the Jewish people. A majority of people who end up converting (or reverting) to Judaism and the Jewish people have Jewish mind/souls from one of their own ancestors.

Every human on earth has 8 great grandparents and 16 great great grandparents. Each of these 24 individuals contributes an equal amount of genetic material to their descendants. Nevertheless, brothers or sisters who share the same 24 ancestors do not have identical genomes. Unless they are identical twins their physical, mental and personality traits always differ, sometimes greatly, from siblings who share the same physical genetic heritage. This difference is the result of the unique physical combination of genes that occurs at conception; and the unique mind/soul that is formed in the body sometime during the later half of the second trimester.

Every year many hundreds of people find out that one or two of their 24 ancestors might have been Jewish.. For most of them this discovery is an interesting fact of little significance. For many of them it might be an embarrassment to be ignored. But for some of them it becomes a life changing discovery. They feel drawn to Jewish people and seek to learn about Jewish music, food, literature, culture and religion. They feel more and more attached in some mysterious way to the Holocaust and the struggle of Israel to live in peace in the Middle East. Many of these people eventually are led to become Jewish either by formal conversion or by informal reversion within Reform synagogues.

According to a mystical 14th century Jewish Kabbalistic teaching found in Sefer HaPliyah, those people who do feel this powerful attraction to Jewish things and Jewish people, have Jewish mind/souls that are reincarnations (gilgulim) of one of their own Jewish ancestors from 3-7 generations in the past. That explains why they react to the discovery of some Jewish heritage in such a unusual way. It also explains why some people who do not even know that they have Jewish ancestors follow a similar path; and only discover a Jewish ancestor years after they have returned to the Jewish people.

The Hebrew word for reincarnation is Gilgul which means recycling. Prior to scientific discoveries in genetics and DNA studies almost all people in the east believed that all people are born with new souls. Now we know that all the elements of our bodies, including our brains, have been recycled countless times. Yet we all are new because the recycling always results in a new recombination. The Jewish mystical tradition of Gilgul claims that many people are born with a soul that has lived on this planet before.

Most people do not reincarnate after their life on this earth is over. Most people who end up becoming Jewish, especially now, after the Jewish people have experienced several generations of assimilation, marriage to non-Jews, hiding from anti-Semitism and outright genocide, are descendants of people whose children or grandchildren, in one way

or another, were cut off from the Jewish People. Among their non-Jewish descendants a few will inherit a Jewish soul that will seek to return to the Jewish people. A special few of those who are drawn to join the Jewish people are descendants of non-Jewish people who tried to rescue Jews during the Holocaust.

For example, Nelly Altenburger, a non-Jewish 12 year old girl born in Sao Paulo Brazil, reads two books by Nobel Prize Laureate Yiddish writer Isaac Bashevis Singer and feels "I have found my people". A few years later Nelly converts to Judaism, goes to a University, majors in Hebrew Language and Literature and becomes a teacher in a Jewish Day School. Now Nelly is the Rabbi of a synagogue in Danbury, Connecticut. A Jewish soul has returned home. There are thousands of biographies like this, but most of them do not end up becoming a rabbi.

If you think you might have an ancestor who was Jewish, but no one in your family seems to know, you can use a introspective personality and character test to give you some hints.

1- Do you like to ask questions especially about religion? But when you asked them as a child, you were told faith is a gift from God and you shouldn't question it. This never satisfied you, although others didn't question it.

2- The trinity never made any sense to you even as a young child. You prayed to God the father more easily and more frequently than Jesus, the son of God, even though you were told to pray to Jesus. You never could believe that people who didn't believe in Jesus couldn't go to Heaven.

3- On first learning of the Holocaust you reacted more emotionally than your friends or other members of your family. You feel some sense of connection with the Jewish struggle to defend Israel.

4- You have an attraction to Jewish people, or to Judaism and Jewish culture. You have always been more open to people who were culturally, nationally or religiously different from your own family, than your friends or class mates.

If you answer yes to three of these four items you probably have Jewish ancestors. Many, but not all, people who answer yes to all four items will be interested in learning more about their Jewish roots. If you become very interested in studying Judaism you might have a Jewish soul. According to Jewish mystical teachings (Kabbalah), many (not all) people reincarnate at least once after they die.

This is especially true for Jews who died and had no Jewish children who survived them (Sefer HaPliyah). Their souls reincarnate in one of their non-Jewish descendants who is drawn to: Jewish things, Jewish people and Judaism. If the following item also applies to you, you certainly have a Jewish soul.

5- When you start to learn about Judaism: the ideas and values seem reasonable to you;

the traditions and heritage are very attractive to you; and the non-Jews around you as well as you yourself, are surprised when you slowly come to feel that you are coming home. For most converts to Judaism an attraction to Jews as individuals, as families, or as a historical community that has survived many severe challenges for over 3,000 years, is a more important factor than particular religious beliefs. This is another sign of a Jewish soul returning home.

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