

Parashat Korach

Past Life Regression and Korach's Soul Rectification

The Soul's Journey toward Ultimate Repair

Sometimes things happen between people that are difficult to understand. The intensity of our own reactions and feelings may be unfathomable even to ourselves. Regular therapy does not go deep enough to unravel the mysteries of our lives' suffering, interpersonal conflicts, tests and tribulations. Would any therapist have been able to alleviate Korach of his passionate jealousy toward Moshe and Aharon whom were chosen for greater leadership than him? Was there then no hope for Korach to rectify himself and overcome his jealousy to become happy with this lot in life? Even when we are unable to pass the tests that Hashem sends us in life for our soul rectification, we always receive another chance to rectify it, whether in this lifetime or in the next. Often, the unresolved issues are passed on to the next generation who then get a chance to bring about ultimate retroactive repair (Arizal, *Sha'ar HaMitzvot*, *Parashat Yitro*). Arizal teaches that our soul reincarnates until it has rectified the Ten Sefirot of each of the three first soul levels: Neshamah, Ruach and Nefesh. Learning about the cosmic journey of the soul helps us gain awareness of the spiritual levels between Heaven and Earth. Being mindful of these levels enables us to transcend the physical bounds of the moment and detach from our current obsession so that we gain clarity and greater perspective. Furthermore, the topic of soul-reincarnation inspires us with the awe of G-d and the deepest yearning for rectifying our own souls through Torah and Mitzvot. I have always been attracted to the mystical realms and especially fascinated by the topic of soul reincarnations. Over the years, I have researched the reincarnations of women in the Bible and am mind boggled by Arizal's teachings which reveal the linguistic parallels between characters in the Torah who are reincarnations of each other. Yet, only recently did I, myself, experience and become enthralled with past life regressions. By meditating, I was able to journey back to prior reincarnations. Through this, I gained more clarity of recent conflicts with specific people in my life, than I believe could ever be achieved by a lifetime of therapy.

Crying from the Depths of the Hole in My Heart

About a year ago, I tried past life regression through a free recording offered by Hay House. It was very powerful and affected me deeply. I never got a chance to write down the different steps, so I thought that I had forgotten how to do it- until the other night, when I was so greatly bothered by an emotional conflict with a person very dear to me that I was unable to sleep. For a long time, I couldn't understand where the person was coming from. She seemed so cold and unloving, that I felt harshly rejected. Yet, at the same time, I felt her love in other ways. I also couldn't understand myself, as to why I reacted so strongly and went into such a state of literally mourning. I cried myself to sleep every single night for many months. The fact that she was not there for me when I needed her the most, still didn't explain why this caused me to cry for hours every day for more than half a year, until I was unable to go on with my life. I couldn't understand my deep need for compassion, especially from this person. I asked myself, where is this deep hole in my heart that needs to be filled up coming from?

Meditating My Way Back to Past Life Regression

So, on this particular night, instead of tossing and turning in my bed, I asked Hashem to take me back to a prior life that could shed light on my overreaction. I used the technique I had learned through the recording by Mira Kelley. I started meditating by breathing and feeling lifted above time and space, seeing the globe of the world become smaller and smaller, and visualizing being carried by angel wings to a faraway place and time. Then, I was gradually seeing the globe getting bigger and bigger before gently landing on a particular place looking down at my feet to see what I was wearing. I saw myself as a barefoot child, perhaps 10-12 years old trying to keep myself alive in a river. I wish I could tell you more but it is all too personal and not suitable for this forum. What I can share is that I returned from my past life regression with a deep understanding of my own reactions and that of the other person involved. Amazingly, my heartache was totally gone. I no longer had this deep need for compassion and the hole in my heart was completely healed. My past life experience brought me the perspective which allowed me to let go of the pain of being personally rejected. It was because I could now understand so deeply where the other person was coming from and how part of her rectification was to act the way she did, that I was able to release my personal pain.

Releasing Pain through Gaining Perspective

In trying to understand how it could be that just a short fleeting glimpse of a prior reincarnation, lasting less than a minute, can cause such a cathartic experience I came up with the following explanation. Great pain, whether physical or emotional, fills every fiber of our being and makes it nearly impossible to detach from our personal situation to gain a greater perspective. You can't tell someone who feels like she is being stabbed with a knife, "Just let go of the pain. No one can hurt you, unless you allow them. Any pain that you feel is your own problem. Don't expect anything from anyone else." Suffering great pain causes us to see only one small point – perhaps just one pixel – one drop in the ocean of the situation. On the other hand, a true vision from a new angle lifts us up from our personal quandary and from the fixation with our own pain. We learn to understand that whatever the other person did to us, they were driven to doing in dealing with their own problems and not as a personal assault on ourselves. It no longer matters whether the person actually wronged us or not, as long as we understand how her reactions are spurred by her own internal struggle rather than being directed at us. This principle is also the secret of the mitzvah to judge others with the benefit of the doubt (*Vayikra* 19:15). This is one of the hardest mitzvot to practice because it is so difficult to detach from our personal hurt and allow ourselves to perceive the matter from the other person's perspective. It is very difficult for anyone from the outside- whether a therapist, family member or a friend- to lift us out of our pain by trying to help us gain a new vantage point. Yet, a past life regression shows us a new perspective from the inside – from our own personal experience in a prior lifetime. When we experience a different place within our soul, we no longer have to be stuck within the suffering of our current situation.

Korach's Jealousy Derived from the Jealousy of the First Brother in the World

There are many Jewish sources dealing with soul reincarnation, called *gilgul haneshamot* – literally the recycling or transmigration of souls, to be found in the *Zohar* and especially in the writings of the Arizal, not only in his well-known book *Sha'ar HaGilgulim* – *The Gate of Reincarnations*, but also in his commentary on the Torah. I have gleaned a few insights from several of his books

regarding Korach's reincarnations mainly from *Sefer HaLikutim, Parashat Korach and Sha'ar HaPesukim, Parashat Bereishit* 4. According to the Arizal, Korach's jealousy of Moshe was so deep because it emanated from the jealousy of the very first brother in the world. Korach was a soul reincarnation from Kayin, while Moshe was the reincarnation of Hevel, his brother. Allusions to these soul-incarnations are found through several parallels between their stories through identical numerical values and similar language, as I will share with you regarding Korach and his first incarnation as Kayin.

Parallels between Kayin and Korach His Soul Reincarnation

The root of Kayin's jealousy was that Hashem didn't accept his offering:

ספר בראשית פרק ד (ה) וְאֵל קַיִן וְאֵל מִנְחָתוֹ לֹא שָׁעָה וַיַּחַר לְקַיִן מְאֹד וַיִּפְּלוּ פָנָיו:

"But unto Kayin and to his offering He did not show favor. Thus Kayin felt very upset, and his countenance fell" (*Bereishit* 4:5).

Similarly, Hashem did not accept the offering of Korach when he and his congregation were offering incense on their firepans to test whether Hashem would choose their offering or that of Moshe and Aharon:

במדבר טז (יח) וַיִּקְחוּ אִישׁ מִחֲתָתוֹ וַיִּתְּנוּ עֲלֵיהֶם אֵשׁ וַיִּשִּׂימוּ עֲלֵיהֶם קִטְרֶת וַיַּעֲמְדוּ פֶתַח אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד וּמֹשֶׁה וְאַהֲרֹן:

"They took every man his firepan, and put fire in them, and laid incense thereon, and stood at the door of the tent of meeting with Moshe and Aharon" (*Bamidbar* 16:18).

Arizal explains that Kayin's soul split into three simultaneous reincarnations: His neshamah reincarnated in Yitro, his Ruach in Korach and his Nefesh in the Mitzri (Egyptian) that Moshe killed. The initials of these three יתרו/Yitro, קרח/Korach and מצרי/Mitzri is the acronym of יקם/yakam, which means 'rose up.' This is the exact same word used when Kayin "rose up" to kill Hevel:

ספר בראשית פרק ד (ט) ...וַיָּקָם קַיִן אֶל הֶבֶל אָחִיו וַיַּהַרְגֵהוּ:

"Kayin rose up against Hevel his brother and killed him" (*Bereishit* 4:9).

This same word וַיָּקָם/vayakam – "he rose" is furthermore used to describe Korach's revolt:

ספר במדבר פרק טז (ב) וַיָּקָמוּ לִפְנֵי מֹשֶׁה... (במדבר 16:2)

Arizal also notes a further interesting connection. The name מֹשֶׁה/Moshe has the numerical value of 345. This includes the 37 sparks of הֶבֶל/Hevel – his numerical value- as well as 308 additional evil sparks, which were all rectified within Moshe. These are the sparks of Kayin, which were reincarnated in קרח/Korach whose numerical value is likewise 308. Moshe's prayer on behalf of the congregation of Israel alludes to the fact that Moshe was the reincarnation of Hevel:

ספר במדבר פרק טז (כב) ...אֵל אֱלֹהֵי הָרוּחוֹת לְכָל בָּשָׂר הָאִישׁ אֶחָד יַחֲטֵא וְעַל כָּל הָעֵדָה תִּקְצֹף:

"O G-d, the G-d of spirits (haruchot of all (l'kol) flesh (basar), shall one man sin and You will get angry with the entire congregation?" (*Bamidbar* 16:22).

Arizal moreover explains that the reason why Korach and his congregation were swallowed up by the earth was to atone for the blood of Hevel which cried out from the earth. Therefore the same form of the word earth – הָאָדָמָה/HaAdama is used in both instances:

ספר בראשית פרק ד (י) וַיֹּאמֶר מֶה עָשִׂיתָ קוֹל דְּמֵי אָחִיךָ צֹעֲקִים אֵלַי מִן הָאֲדָמָה:

“He said: ‘What have you done? The voice of your brother’s blood cries to Me from the earth (הָאֲדָמָה/*HaAdama*)’” (*Bereshit* 4:10).

ספר במדבר פרק טז (ל) וְאִם בְּרִיאָה יִבְרָא הָשֵׁם וּפִצְתָהּ הָאֲדָמָה אֶת פִּיהָ וּבָלְעָה אֹתָם...

“But if Hashem makes a new thing, and the earth (הָאֲדָמָה/*HaAdama*) opens her mouth, and swallows them up...” (*Bamidbar* 16:30).

Rectification through the Sons of Korach

So how does understanding that Korach is the reincarnation of Kayin help Korach gain rectification? Having failed the test of overcoming his reoccurring jealousy was he then doomed to eternal damnation? Everyone must eventually reach their rectification. Korach’s rectification was enacted through his sons. King David wrote eleven *Tehillim* (Psalms) in tribute to the sons of Korach each beginning with “For the conductor; Maskhil of the sons of Korach.” Who were these sons of Korach that somehow survived the swallowing mouth of the earth, and why would David sing praises to them?

Rashi explains that three of the sons of Korach, including Elkana, the father of Shemuel, the prophet, at first supported their father’s dispute with Moshe, but later, repented. Therefore, when the earth opened its mouth and swallowed up the sinners, a safe space for Korach’s sons remained inside of the mouth of the earth, as it states, “the sons of Korach didn’t die” (*Babylonian Talmud, Megillah* 14a). There, they recited songs in praise of Hashem for saving them. David *HaMelech* recaptured these songs in his *Tehillim*. The teshuvah of Korach’s sons was so intense that not only did they distance themselves from the dispute with Moshe, they moreover cleaved to Moshe and Aharon and thereby merited that Shemuel the prophet descended from them, as it states:

ספר תהילים פרק צט (ו) מֹשֶׁה וְאַהֲרֹן בְּכֹהֲנָיו וְשִׁמְשׁוֹאֵל בֶּקְרָאִי שְׁמוֹ קְרָאִים אֶל הָשֵׁם וְהוּא יַעֲנֵם:

“Moshe and Aharon among His priests, and Shemuel among them that call upon His name, did call upon Hashem and He answered them” (*Tehillim* 99:6); (*Imrei Emet, Parashat Korach*).

In the Merit of His Grandson, Shemuel the Prophet

Shemuel the Prophet was considered the equal to Moshe and Aharon (*Zohar Chadash* 43b). He furthermore included both Moshe’s devotion to the Divine, and Aharon’s dedication to pursue peace between people. When Chana prayed, “Hashem kills and revives; He brings down to the grave, and brings up” (*I Shmuel* 2:6), she prayed for Korach to rise up from the grave after the coming of Mashiach in the merit of Shemuel (*Emek HaMelech* 16:35). Arizal explains that the good spark of Korach reincarnated in his grandson, Shemuel (*Sha’ar HaPesukim, Bereishit* 4), who was instrumental in establishing the Kingdom of David, which brought unity among Israel. Shmuel was the one who, together with David, made the plans for the Temple in which the Kohanim and Levi’im worshipped in unison. Thus, Korach’s grandson Shemuel rectified Korach’s dispute and dissention and will ultimately bring about Korach’s revival from the dead. If the wicked Korach, who challenged Moshe’s leadership and instigated dispute, will ultimately become rectified, how can we despair of achieving our final soul rectification?