

## Dear Friends,

The goal of Torah Learning Project is to give you a study experience that is both intriguing and uniquely satisfying. We invest much time and effort to ensure that your learning gives you a deep sense of personal fulfillment and leaves you wanting more.

In order to achieve this, we have created a dynamic, original curriculum that features:

- Thought-provoking issues
- Helpful, informative synopses
- Materials for 40 minutes of study
- Clear, easily understandable language and layout
- Challenging questions to consider at the end of each lesson

Our sincere aspiration is that your learning leaves you with a distinct sense of personal enrichment and a desire to continue growing in your studies.

We look forward to making many more rewarding learning experiences available to you in the future.

Sincerely,

Rabbi Yehoshua Werde  
Director

Chavrusa Sushi is a coordinated network of creative learning programs geared toward the young working Chabad Professional. For comments, questions, or requests to join the Chavrusa Sushi Network, please email [Director@Torahlp.com](mailto:Director@Torahlp.com)

Visit us on the web at [Torahonthego.com](http://Torahonthego.com)

ב"ה



# Lesson Outline

- » Who am I?
- » Where is Zeideh?
- » The Real You
- » What is the relationship between the body and the soul?
- » What is a soul made of?
- » How did the soul come to be?
- » A Part of Hashem
- » A Part of His Essence
- » The Extremes of the Human Condition
- » Wonder of Wonders: Combining Body and Soul
- » The Lever
- » How Do the Body and Soul to Work Together?
- » The Five Levels of the Soul
- » Three Soul Levels—Three Parts of the Night
- » The Soul Sees
- » Reincarnation and the Soul's Purpose
- » An Entire Lifetime To Do A Favor for Another
- » The Value of Time

# The Soul

People have long pondered the question of identity. Who am I? What makes me unique? What gives me my identity? Scientists have been puzzled by the question of life. While they can study the physical biology of human body, the question of what powers and animates the body? What is the difference between a live and dead corpse? It is not just that one is healthier than the other. Something major takes place at the time of death, and we know that to be the departure of the soul from the body.

Someone once said “You don’t have a soul. You are a soul. You have a body.”

We are our neshamos, but how much do we know about what a neshamah is? We’ve never seen a neshamah, yet we experience one all the time—whether we’re conscious of it or not. The purpose of this booklet is to introduce ourselves to our neshamah, what it is, what it does, and what it can mean to us.

## Who am I?

*Shmuos Vesipurim vol. 1 p. 53*

*The Alter Rebbe was once holding his grandson, the Tzemach Tzedek, in his lap. Young Menachem Mendel was sitting contentedly stroking his grandfather’s beard, murmuring “Zeideh, Zeideh.”*

*“That is not Zeideh,” the Alter Rebbe teased, “That is Zeideh’s beard. Where is Zeideh?”*

*The young Tzemach Tzedek put his hands on the Alter Rebbe's head. "This is Zeideh!" he exclaimed.*

*"No. That is Zeideh's head. Where is Zeideh?"*

*The same conversation repeated itself when the Tzemach Tzedek touched the Alter Rebbe's eyes, hands and chest.*

*The Tzemach Tzedek got up off his saintly grandfather's lap and hid behind the door. Suddenly, he shrieked, "Zeideh! Zeideh!" The Alter Rebbe turned to him and with concern in his voice asked, "what happened, my dear?"*

*"Aha! There is Zeideh," the young Tzemach Tzedek triumphantly answered.*

## **The Real You**

What is a soul? Or, better yet, who are you? What are you made of? If you were to remove everything external to who you are, what would remain?

In his book about immortality and the soul, *If You Were God*, Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan prompts the reader to question who he is once everything else has been stripped away:

*Aryeh Kaplan, If You Were God*

*Look at your hand. What do you see?*

*A part of your body, an appendage made of bone*

*and sinew covered with flesh and skin. It is filled with nerves, blood vessels and lymph ducts, which run through it and connect it to your body, making it part of you.*

*You can open and close your hand. It obeys every command that your mind sends to it. It is yours, a part of you. But what are you? Who is the real you? What happens when you tell your hand to open and close? How does your mind will it to obey its commands?*

*Now point a finger at yourself. If you are an average person, you will point a finger at your chest. You think of yourself as your body. But is your body the real you?*

*Not too long ago, a person could consider his own body an integral part of himself. You were your body, and your body was you. But this is no longer the case. Scientific progress has changed the entire concept of human personality and identity.*

*Heart transplants are now an almost commonplace occurrence. They do not even make the news anymore. A man can live with another person's heart beating in his breast. If we would ask such a man to point to himself, would he point at his heart? Is this transplanted heart really part of him? Is the heart that beats within your breast the real you? Or*

*is it something else entirely?...*

*The real you is not your body or brain, but the information contained in your brain – your memories, personality traits and thought patterns.*

*What happens, then, when a person dies?*

*We know that the body ceases to function. The brain becomes inert, and the physical man is dead. But what happens to the real you – the human personality? What happens to all this information – the memories, thought patterns and personality traits? When a book is burned, its contents are no longer available. When a computer is smashed, the information within it is also destroyed. Does the same thing happen when a man dies? Is the mind and personality irretrievably lost?*

*We know that God is omniscient. He knows all and does not forget. God knows every thought and memory that exists within our brains. There is no bit of information that escapes His knowledge.*

*So, what is it that happens when a man dies?*

*The Bible speaks of immortality of the soul (Ecclesiastes 12:7): “The dust returns to the dust as it were, but the spirit returns to God Who gave it.” That means that there is a part of a man that is eternal, that lives beyond the lifetime of the physical*

body.

*God created human beings as composite creatures, consisting of a physical body and a spiritual soul. Both of these parts of a person are creations of God. The difference between them is that the body withers and dies, while the soul lives on forever, housing a person's consciousness and his identity.*

### **What is the relationship between the body and the soul?**

Human beings, like all creatures, are comprised of both a body and a soul. What is the relationship between the two? The Zohar explains that the person is the soul, and the body is merely a garment that clothes the soul:

*Zohar 2:75b–76a*

אי הכי, האדם מהו? אי תימא דאינו אלא עור ובשר ועצמות וגידים, לאו הכי, דהא ודאי האדם לאו איהו אלא נשמתא. ואלין דקאמר, עור ובשר עצמות וגידים, כלהו לא הוו אלא מלבושא בלחודוי, מאנין אינון דבר נש ולא אינון אדם.

*What then is the human? Merely skin, flesh, bones, and sinews? No, the essence of the human is the soul; the skin, flesh, bones and sinews are but an outward covering, mere garments, but they are not the human.*

### **What is a soul made of?**

The Rambam explains that a soul is not comprised of the

same earthly materials that all other creations consist of, therefore following the rule that all things that are composed eventually decompose, the body is destined to decompose as it is comprised of the four elements of fire, wind, water, and earth; whereas the soul exists forever since it is a spiritual being that is not composed of these:

*Rambam, Yesodei Hatorah 4:9*

אין צורת הנפש הזאת מחוברת מן היסודות כדי שתפרד להם...אלא מאת ה' מן השמים היא. לפיכך כשיפרד הגולם שהוא מחובר מן היסודות...לא תכרת הצורה הזאת...ועומדת לעולם ולעולמי עולמים.

*The form of this soul is not a combination of the physical elements [fire, wind, water, and earth], into which it will ultimately decompose.... Rather, it is from Hashem, from heaven.*

*Therefore, when the matter of the body, which is a combination of the fundamental elements, decomposes...this form [of the soul] does not cease to be.... Rather, it exists forever.*

### **How did the soul come to be?**

In Bereishis, it describes man's creation in the following manner:

*Bereishis 2:7*

וַיִּצְרֶה אֱלֹהִים אֶת הָאָדָם עָפָר מִן הָאֲדָמָה וַיִּפֹּחַ בְּאַפָּיו נִשְׁמַת חַיִּים וַיְהִי הָאָדָם לְנֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה

*And Hashem formed man of soil from the earth,*

*and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.*

While the body was formed out of material substance, the soul came to be from the Divine breath. What does this tell us about what the neshamah is?

### **A Part of Hashem**

The Arizal understood from this that the neshamah is a part of Hashem:

*Lekutei Torah of the Arizal, Bereishis*

כי הנשמה חלק אלוך ממעל

*The soul is a part of Hashem from above.*

### **A Part of His Essence**

In Tanya, after explaining that the neshamah is an actual part of Hashem, the Alter Rebbe takes this a step further to explain that, not only do we understand from this posuk that the neshamah is derived from Elokus, but that it is sourced in Hashem's innermost Essence:

*Tanya Ch. 2*

"ויפח באפיו נשמת חיים"... וכמ"ש בזוהר מאן דנפח מתוכיה נפח פ" מתוכיותו ומפנימיותו שתוכיות ופנימיות החיות שבאדם מוציא בנפיהתו בכח

*"And He [Hashem] breathed into his nostrils a soul of life (Bereishis 2:7)...." It is written in the Zohar, "He who blows, blows from within him," that is to*

*say, from his inwardness and his innermost being. For it is of one's inward and innermost vitality that a person emits through blowing with force.*

Obviously, “breath” and “blowing” are human activities that do not apply to Hashem. Why then does the Torah use this form of expression?

The Alter Rebbe understands this metaphor to mean that just like when a person blows he does so from the innermost parts of his being, similarly, the neshamah emanates from the innermost essence of Hashem.

### **The Extremes of the Human Condition**

Man is a curious creation. On the one hand, he is created as a lowly bodily form from the dust of the earth, and on the other, he is created from highest heights of the heavens:

*Rashi, ibid.*

עשאו מן העליונים ומן התחתונים גוף מן התחתונים ונשמה מן העליונים.

*[Hashem] fashioned him from the upper and lower spheres – the body from the lower spheres and the soul from the upper spheres.*

### **Wonder of Wonders: Combining Body and Soul**

Now this is no simple feat to combine the highest spiritual form with a lowly physical body. In fact, it is a most wondrous feat:

שמפליא לעשות במה ששומר רוח האדם בקרבו, וקושר דבר רוחני  
בדבר גשמי.

*[Hashem] “performs wonders” in that He sustains the human soul within him [in a body] and binds a spiritual entity with a physical one.*

If you think about it, combining a spiritual substance like a soul with a physical substance like a body, should be impossible. Consider it using other terms. If you were asked to add a mathematical equation as an ingredient in an apple pie, how would you go about completing such a task? And we’re not talking about the notation of the equation (the way it’s written on a piece of paper), where talking about taking the actual conceptual equation and using it as a physical ingredient. As absurd as it may sound, that is a lot simpler than the feat Hashem accomplishes when he combines the spiritual soul in a physical body (as the soul is even less physical than a mathematical equation).

What is the point of putting a spiritual soul in a physical body?

### **The Lever**

Why would Hashem want to send a part of Himself to experience such a lowly experience such as being in a body. Okay, let it get a glimpse of this world, but why must it be comprised of something so lowly as a body?

The following analogy brought the by Alter Rebbe in *Torah Or*, sheds some light on the purpose of sending the soul to live within such a lowly substance:

מה שגופו היה דומם דוקא הוא כי היות ידוע דהאדם הוא תכלית הבריאה והיינו להיות הוא מעלה הנצוצות שנפלו בדצ"ח ע"י שנטפלים לצרכיו לחם לאכול ובגד ללבוש והוא יש בו דעת לעבוד את ה' כו'. ועד"מ כשצריכים להגביה איזה דבר מן הארץ ע"י כלי ההגבהה הנקרא ליווע"ר צריכים לאחוז בחלקים התחתונים שבו דוקא כמו בהגבהת כותלי בית שצריכים להתחיל להגביה הקורה התחתון דוקא ואז ממילא יוגבהו גם העליונים הימנו. משא"כ אם היה מתחיל מאמצע הכותל לא היה מגביה התחתונים. כמו"כ נשמת האדם נתלבשה בגוף שמבחי' דומם היותר תחתון מכולם ויעלה אותו וממילא יתעל' גם הצומח שהוא למעלה מדומם

*The human body was created from the lowest element, the inanimate. The reason for this is that the human carries out the ultimate purpose of creation. This purpose is the elevation of sparks of G-dliness that have descended into our world. We achieve this elevation through utilizing the various aspects of this world, for example, eating food and wearing clothes. And then the person serves G-d, and this service is made possible through the material objects of this world.*

*In order to lift something properly, one needs to place their grip below the entire object. We see this clearly with a lever, which is placed totally under the object one wishes to lift. So too, the material that G-d used to create man was of the lowest form, so that man could successfully lift it back to its source.*



When you need to lift a heavy object, a lever can help you lighten the load. A lever works by getting under the object, allowing you to lift it by pushing down on it (using gravity instead of sheer lift) which makes lifting it much easier. However, in order to use a lever, you need to get the lever under the lowest-most part of the object you wish to lift.

The Alter Rebbe uses this analogy to illustrate why the body was created from the lowest realm, the realm of the inanimate. Hashem entrusted us with the task of elevating the world to return it to its source. For this, Hashem placed us in a body comprised of the lowest elements of creation so we would be able to elevate creation from the bottom up.

By elevating our body with its desires, we succeed in elevating all of creation with it.

## **How Do the Body and Soul to Work Together?**

In a maamar from the early years of the Rebbe's nesius, the Rebbe outlines what our Avodah is in navigating these very different parts of our being:

*Maamar Ani L'Dodi V'Dodi Li 5712*

הנשמה יש בה טבע העליון, כמאמר רוח האדם העולה היא למעלה, וטבע הגוף הוא טבע הירידה, רוח הבהמה היורדת היא למטה, ותכלית הכוונה היא שיהי' חיבור הנשמה והגוף, וזהו כאשר פועלים בכל אחד מהם שיהי' היפך טבעו, שבנשמה שהיא בטבע העליון תהי' עבודה בדרך ירידה והמשכה ובגוף שהוא בטבע הירידה יהי' ענין דעליון. ולכן ניתנו ב' דרכי העבודה מלמטה למעלה ומלמעלה למטה שהם תפילה ותורה.

*The soul has a tendency to be drawn upwards, as the saying “the spirit of man ascends upwards,” whereas the nature of the body is to be drawn downwards, “the spirit of the animal descends downwards.”*

*The ultimate intention is that there should be a connection of soul and body. This happens when one makes each of them to go against its nature. That the soul—which has a tendency to be drawn upwards—there should be avodah in the direction of descent, to draw it down, and in the body—which has a tendency to descend—there should be an ascent.*

*For this reason, two directions in avodah were given—upwards and downwards—which are the services of davening and of studying Torah.*

As we have learned, our bodies and souls are very different entities. How do we work with both our body and our soul? If we focus on spiritual activities, we may be working with our soul, but we are ignoring our body, and if we work on refining our body, we are ignoring the soul.

This, explains the Rebbe, is why Hashem gave us two very different directions in our avodas Hashem. One direction—the direction of ascent—is meant to elevate the body. Whereas the other direction is meant to give the soul physical expression in the body.

When we daven, we work with the body to refine and

elevate it, bringing it closer to a recognition of the soul's love of Hashem. Whereas, when we learn Torah and perform mitzvos, we take a lofty concept that only the soul can relate to and give it expression in concepts that the physical mind can understand and in actions that the body is able to perform.

Our Avodah is therefore two-fold, to cause both the body and soul to go against their natures so they find a middleground where they can meet.

## The Five Levels of the Soul

*Bereishis Rabbah 14:11*

חמשה שמות נקראו לה, נפש, רוח, נשמה, יחידה, חיה

*The soul is called by five names: Nefesh, Ruach, Neshamah, Yechidah, Chayah.*

Chassidus refers to the same five levels following a different order for the final two, listing Chayah before Yechidah.

The first three refer to levels that are consciously experienced within the body. The final two levels transcend the body:

- 1) NEFESH: This is the lowest, most basic, and functional level of the soul. It is what allows our bodies to function and be animated.
- 2) RUACH: This level of the soul is what powers our energy level and feelings. You can be tired (i.e., not energetic) and still function. It also governs our moods and feelings (love, fear etc.).
- 3) NESHAMAH: This part of the soul governs our higher,

intellectual faculties. It is what makes us sharp and discerning. You can have strong feelings and feel all energetic, but not have a crisp, clear mind to think straight.

### **Three Soul Levels—Three Parts of the Night**

These three levels are described by the Maharsha as three levels of existence at three different parts of the night:

*Chidushei Agados Maharsha, Berachos 3a*

בחלקי נפש האדם שהם ג' כוחות קראום טבעית חיונית ושכלית ובעלי הקבלה קראום נפש רוח ונשמה...הלילה שבתחלתו האדם בא ממלאכתו ועסקיו שבכל יום והוא טרוד בהם...אדם בא מן השדה כו' וזה הזמן הוא כולו מפעולת נפש הטבעית הנמשך אחר החומר של אדם...ובאמצעות של הלילה דרוב עולם הם ישנים על מטתם ואין פועל בהם רק נפש החיונית הרוחנית בעת השינה כמה שכתוב בידך אפקיד רוחי וגו'...ושליש האחרון מן הלילה שכבר גמר האדם שינתו והוא מנוח ומרגוע...ושכל האדם זך אז לתורה ולתפלה שהם פעולות נפש השכלית הנשמה שבו.

*In the parts of the soul of man which are three forces called the natural, the vital, and the intelligent; the Kabbalists refer to them as Nefesh, Ruach, and Neshamah...At the beginning of the night, a person comes [home] tired from his daily work and dealings...man arrives from the field etc. This time is entirely a function of the natural [Nefesh] soul which is man's drive for materiality...in the middle of the night when most of the world are in bed sleeping and only the spiritual, vital [Ruach] soul functions within them during sleep as it is*

*written “in your hands I place my [Ruach] soul”  
[a posuk we say before retiring to bed at night]  
(Psalms 31:6)...and the last third of the night, when  
man is finished sleeping and is rested and calm...  
and the mind of man is then clear to study and  
pray, which are [higher] functions of the intelligent  
[Neshamah] soul within him.*

Explaining the three parts of the night mentioned in the first mishnah in Berachos, the Maharsha explains that during these three times, a person primarily functions using a different function of the soul. He describes a person who comes home after a long day of work. When he arrives home, he is tired, drained from physical exertion. He has no energy [ruach] and cannot think clearly [neshamah]; his existence at this time is a purely functional one [nefesh]; he is alive and his body parts function (albeit without much energy). When a person sleeps, he regains his energy [ruach]. This is why we say before we sleep: בידך אפקיד רוחי “In Your hand I deposit my Ruach.” And when he awakes, his neshamah—his higher, intellectual faculties—are clear. In the morning we thank Hashem in Modeh Ani שהחזרת בי נשמתי for returning our “neshamah” function to us that enables us to think clearly, to daven and study Torah.

4) CHAYAH: This part of the soul is our life-force that is outside of the body (you cannot point to any one part of the body as the place where you are alive).

## **The Soul Sees**

It is also our eye in the sky - sometimes we sense certain things but are not quite clear what the sensation is and what it

means, as the Gemarah relates:

*Sanhedrin 93b-94a*

וראיתי אני דניאל לבדי את המראה והאנשים אשר היו עמי לא ראו את המראה אבל חרדה גדולה נפלה עליהם ויברחו בהחבא והאנשים אשר היו עמי לא ראו את המראה ומאן נינהו אנשים אמר רבי ירמיה ואיתמא ר' חייא בר אבא זה חגי זכריה ומלאכי אינהו עדיפי מיניה ואיהו עדיף מנייהו אינהו עדיפי מיניה דאינהו נביאי ואיהו לאו נביא ואיהו עדיף מנייהו דאיהו חזא ואינהו לא חזו וכי מאחר דלא חזו מאי טעמא איבעות אע"ג דאינהו לא חזו מידי מזליהו חזי אמר רבינא ש"מ האי מאן דמבעית אף על גב דאיהו לא חזי מזליה חזי

*“And I, Daniel, alone saw the vision; whereas the men who were with me did not see the vision; yet, a great fear fell upon them, and they fled into hiding” (Daniel 10:7). “And the men who were with me did not see the vision” Now who were these men? R’ Yirmiya said, some say R’ Chiya Bar Abba: They were Chaggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. They were superior to him and he was superior to them. They were superior to him in that they were prophets, whereas he was not a prophet. He was superior to them in that he saw the vision whereas they did not see it. Now if they did not see the vision, why were they frightened? Even though they did not see anything, their mazal did see. Ravina commented: Learn from this that when someone becomes frightened [for no apparent reason] even though he has not seen [the cause of his fear] his mazal has*

*seen it.*

Chassidus adds that Chaya is the part of the neshama that is the source of our belief in Hashem. The expression is “seeing is believing,” and for someone to believe something, he needs to have seen it. As Jews we believe in Hashem, not in blind faith, but because our neshamah sees Elokus. This takes place at the level of yechidah. And while we might not be conscious of this vision, we do sense that it is true.

5) YECHIDAH: This is the essence of our neshamah as it is one with Hashem’s essence. This is not perceived by the body at all, except once a year on Yom Kippur when we experience our essential connection with Hashem at this level.

## **Reincarnation and the Soul’s Purpose**

The neshamah comes down into this world with a specific mission to accomplish. Contrary to popular thinking, that mission is no secret.

What is that mission? And what happens when that mission is not accomplished? The Alter Rebbe explains in—of all places—Shulchan Aruch Hilchos Talmud Torah:

*Shulchan Aruch Harav Hilchos Talmud Torah 1:4*

אמרו חכמי האמת שכל נפש מישראל צריכה לבא בגלגולים רבים עד שתקיים כל התרי”ג מצות במעשה דבור ומחשבה ודיבור ומחשבה הוא לימוד הלכותיהן על דרך שאמרו חכמים על פסוק זאת תורת החטאת וגו’ שכל העוסק בתורת חטאת כאילו כו’

ועוד אמרו חכמי האמת שכל נפש צריכה לתיקונה לעסוק בפרד”ם כפי מה שהיא יכולה להשיג ולידע וכל מי שיכול להשיג ולידע הרבה ונתעצל ולא השיג וידע אלא מעט צריך לבא בגלגול עד שישגיג וידע

כל מה שאפשר לנשמתו להשיג מידיעת התורה הן בפשטי ההלכות  
הן ברמזים ודרשות וסודות כי כל מה שנשמתו יכולה להשיג ולידע  
מידיעת התורה זהו תיקון שלימותה ואי אפשר לה להתתקן ולהשתלם  
בצרור החיים את ה' במקורה אשר הוצבה משם בלתי ידיעה זו  
ולכן אמרו חכמים אשרי מי שבא לכאן ותלמודו בידו כדי שלא יצטרך  
לבא בגלגול לעולם הזה:

*The Sages of the true [wisdom] taught that every soul must return in many reincarnations until it fulfills all 613 mitzvos in action, speech, and thought. Speech and thought refer to the study of its laws, as the sages taught on the verse “this is the law of the sin offering” that whoever studies the laws of the sin offering, it is considered as if he has sacrificed a sin offering.*

*The Sages of the true [wisdom] also taught that in order to perfect itself, every soul must engage in all the parts [of the Torah] according to its capacity to comprehend and perceive. Any person with the potential to comprehend and perceive much, but due to laziness comprehended and perceived only little, must reincarnate until he comprehends and perceives everything that his soul can comprehend and perceive in the knowledge of the Torah. This includes the Peshat [simple meaning of] the laws, the Remez [hinted meaning], the Drush [interpretive, analytical meaning], and the Sod [mystical meaning]. For whatever the soul can*

*comprehend and perceive in the knowledge of the Torah achieves its perfection. It cannot reach perfection in the Bond of Life—Hashem in the Source from which it was hewn—without this knowledge.*

*Therefore our Sages declared: “Happy is he who arrives here [to Gan Eden in the spiritual realms] with his knowledge in hand,” so that he will not have to reincarnate and [descend] again to this [material] world.*

The Alter Rebbe explains that the purpose of the neshamah’s coming into this world is to fulfill all of the mitzvos on three levels: 1) thought 2) speech and 3) action. Until the soul completes this mission, it must return to the world and reincarnate into a different body and live another lifetime until it complete this.

Mitzvos are fulfilled in thought and speech when one learns the halachos of that mitzvah. Therefore, it is possible to fulfill the mitzvah of bringing a korban nowadays by learning its laws, as ones soul may have brought a korban in a previous reincarnation during the time of the Beis Hamikdash but never learned the halachos, so now, by learning the halachos, one completes that mitzvah on the level of thought and speech.

Moreover, the Alter Rebbe explains that in addition to completing all of the mitzvos, every soul must study all of Torah to the maximum capacity of the person’s ability to understand and comprehend. If one failed to reach their full potential in Torah study, their soul must return in additional

reincarnations until this is achieved—something to keep in mind when considering how much time to devote to Torah study!

### **An Entire Lifetime To Do A Favor for Another**

This explains why a soul could descend into this world to achieve only one particular mission:

*Hayom Yom 5 Iyar*

רבינו הזקן קבל מר' [בי] מרדכי הצדיק ששמע מהבעש"ט [מהבעל שם טוב]: עם קומט אראפ א נשמה אויף דער וועלט און לעבט אפ זיבעציג אכציג יאהר, צוליב טאן א אידען א טובה בגשמיות ובפרט אין רוחניות.

*The Alter Rebbe received the following teaching from the tzadik Reb Mordechai, who had heard it from the Baal Shem Tov: A soul may descend to this world and live seventy or eighty years, in order to do a Jew a material favor, and certainly a spiritual one.*

There is a well-known story in which the Baal Shem Tov promised a child to a childless couple, however, the child passed away at a young age. The Baal Shem Tov explained to the heartbroken couple that in a previous incarnation, the child's soul was born to a non-Jewish king and had converted to Judaism, but missed out on the opportunity of being raised by a Jewish mother, in a Jewish home. This is why it came back to this world to complete that which it was missing.

When a person is confronted with the prospect of doing a favor for another, he should think to himself that it is possible

that his soul descended into this world for many a lifetime in order to complete all of the mitzvos in thought, speech, and action; and this mitzvah could be the one that completes that soul's mission in this world.

## The Value of Time

Once we appreciate that we are first and foremost a soul and that we have been sent to this earth with a mission to fulfill, all of a sudden, our priorities change. No longer is the goal of amassing wealth of interest, what is of interest, is utilizing our limited time here in this world to the fullest to achieve our mission. This is summed up nicely in this famous Jewish saying:

*Sefer HaChaim*

אדם דואג על איבוד דמיו ואינו דואג על איבוד ימיו דמיו אינם עוזרים  
ימיו אינם חוזרים

*People worry about the loss of a dime, and not about the loss of their time. Their money will cut them no slack, and their days will never come back.*

Or, as expressed in Hayom Yom:

*Hayom Yom, 17 Cheshvan*

מ'דארף היטען דעם זמן...יעדער זמן, יעדער טאג וואס גייט אוועק, איז  
דאס ניט נאר א טאג נאר א ענין אין לעבען...

*Time must be guarded . . . Every bit of time, every day that passes, is not just a day but an entire life's theme.*

## Take-Aways

- » First and foremost, we are a soul
- » The soul is Elokus that emanates from Hashem's essence
- » The soul was placed in a body, created of the lowest possible substance (inanimate matter) for the purpose of elevating this world from the bottom up
- » Because the body and soul are so incompatible, it is considered a "wonderous miracle" that they can co-exist
- » Our avodah is to run against the nature of our soul and body, to give physical expression to our soul (that seeks to return to its source) and to refine and elevate our body (that is naturally driven to material things)
- » The soul has five levels: 1) Nefesh-the functional, 2) Ruach-one's energy and feelings, 3) Neshamah-higher intellectual abilities, 4) Chayah-the body's life-source and source of a person's faith, the part that sees Elokus 5) Yechidah-the essence of the soul that is one with Hashem's essence.
- » The soul's mission is to learn all of Torah to the full extent of its comprehension and to keep all of the mitzvos. If a soul doesn't complete this in one lifetime, it keeps coming back until it completes the remaining parts of the mission (even if there is only one - e.g., to do a favor for another).
- » Time is of essence, we shouldn't worry about physical pursuits, and rather utilize our time to fulfill our soul's mission.