

# SOULER MUSINGS

*by Rabbi Naftali Reich*

One of the issues that always seems to pique the interest and curiosity of my students in the introductory level at Ohr Somayach is the subject of gilgulim, the transmigration of souls. Whenever the subject is broached, even on a peripheral level, it inevitably triggers an avalanche of queries. Why the need for gilgul? Is it true that some sinners are reincarnated into animals? How many times are our souls recycled? If one marries a second time, which soul is one destined to live with for eternity in the next world?

I immediately put out a disclaimer, telling my students that these esoteric matters are beyond our comprehension and it is preferable not to delve into them too deeply. Yet it is too difficult to steer the discussion away from such a thought-provoking subject.

In Megilas Rus however, we do get a faint glimpse of the sublime heavenly pathway that Hashem prepares for all souls, enabling them to realize their ultimate mission and destiny.

On its simplest level, Megilas Rus is a gripping and inspiring narrative. The nation's leader Elimelech, a grandson of Nachson and a scion of the kingly tribe of Judah, had abandoned his coreligionists in their hour of need. During a famine in the holy land, he moved with his wife, Naomi, and sons, Machlon and Kilyon, to neighboring Moav, to protect his wealth. He was punished severely for his grievous sin. The two daughters of Eglon, King of Moav, Rus and Orpah, were attracted to his sons' noble bearing and good character and in short order they married. Tragedy strikes the family, however, with the demise of Elimelech, the loss of his wealth and the tragic passing of both of his sons. It seems that Elimelech's illustrious family's lineage had been abruptly aborted, with the souls of Machlon and Kilyon unable to perpetuate their rich legacy for eternity.

The narrative continues with the Moabite women accompanying Naomi, their righteous mother-in-law, towards the border of Israel. When Naomi exhorts them to return, Rus cannot bring herself to part from her. Her unconditional brace of Naomi is in effect an unconditional embrace of Torah and Mitzvos, and the nascent spark of spirituality that had lain dormant in her ancestor Lot was thus ignited.

We know that with every union between man and woman, a bonding of souls takes place. Machlon's neshama is embedded deep within Rus and it falls to Boaz, the redeemer, to perform the mitzvah of yibum and provide solace and tikun to Machlon's soul. Elimelech's legacy and that of his family, is thus redeemed. From the union of Boaz and Rus emerge the soul of King David and the ultimate

redeemer, the Melech Hamoshiach.

Perhaps, the most inspiring part of the entire narrative is its underlying message: No Jew Shall be Left Behind. Even those who have wandered far away from their ancestral moorings will be redeemed by the Melech Hamoshiach, a scion of Judah who will unite us as one and re-bond us together to our Father in heaven.

The means Dovid Hamelech used to achieve were often cryptic and seemingly controversial. The Talmud tells us that we should not be deluded into reading the narrative of Dovid and his seemingly illicit encounter with Bassheva on a superficial level. "Whoever says Dovid sinned," explains the Gemora "is in completely error." King David consorted with Bassheva in order to teach future generations the power of Teshuva. Similarly, the Talmud in Sanhedrin teaches us that King David wished to serve idols, in order to go through the process of repentance and to redeem even those souls that have strayed from G-d, denying his existence and rebelling against His very being.

Like Elimelech and Machlon, we all trace our lineage back to our Patriarch Jacob; we all have royal blood flowing in our veins. It will only be a matter of time before our souls will also experience their elevation and reconnection at the end of time, to be suffused with the light of the Shechinah and bonded forever with our Divine source.

Wishing you a wonderful Shabbos and an inspiring Kabbolas HaTorah,

Sincerely,

Rabbi Naftali Reich

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