**Feminine and Personal Aspects in R. Joseph Angelet’s Doctrine of *Gilgul* and *Ibur***

Ruth Kara-Ivanov Kaniel[[1]](#footnote--1)

A belief in the transmigration of souls provides a response to the fear of death and a certain level of calm to a person facing his or her own end. If we return to this world – even in a different form – then we can presumably complete that which we left unfinished or amend the damage we caused in our current lives. Unlike the belief that death means the extinction of the self, belief in return allows for the possibility of repair and change. At the same time, as Gershom Scholem notes, the doctrine of transmigration challenges the notion of an individual self discernible from another:

The Kabbalists addressed a weighty question: What exactly is the basis of the individual identity of a person? Such a question arises especially from the doctrine of *gilgul*, which seems to raise doubts about the singularity, in both nature and time, of the individual personality [… What is] the essence that defines one’s individual existence and preserves one’s individual identity throughout the iterations of one’s soul? […] Ibn Latif was still unaware of the teachings, already widespread among the circles of Kabbalists, stating that every person possesses a unique imaginal foundation that persists throughout the person’s many lives.[[2]](#footnote-0)

According to Scholem, the supernal image, one’s spiritual twin, acts as a buffer against the assimilation of the individual into the collective of souls that occurs in the process of *gilgul*. Within each person there is preserved a core of individuality that defines his particular and unique existence in this life. The concept of this individual core is developed in tandem with the kabbalists’ collectivist notion of the unity of souls, which even includes theories of shared soul parts and the transmigration of souls from one body to another – ideas developed on the basis of the rabbinic principle that “All of Israel is responsible for one another,” which can be creatively read as “intermixed” with one another.[[3]](#footnote-1) The spiritual journey of the individual, his characteristics and his actions, sew his or her astral garment, woven in a unique way from the particulars of one’s personal biography.

 In addition, we may respond to Scholem’s challenge and suggest that the doctrine of *gilgul* specifically seeks to broaden the concept of the self. Without challenging the existence of the individual whose particular life has a beginning and an end, it nevertheless points to a greater self that changes its form across many lifetimes. According to this approach, one’s life does not begin with one’s physical birth and does not end with the death of one’s body, but rather persists through a continuing divine and earthly existence. In the personal dimension, *gilgul* is expressed in its relationships with future generations, and the way in which the parts of the father and mother are remade within their offspring, just as, on the mythical level, the images of Adam and Eve reincarnate within every person. In the divine dimension, however, *gilgul* finds expression in the way in which human images are woven into the divine schema and identified with the *sefirot*. Within the dynamic of the interrelationships of the *sefirot*, one’s individual story is reborn again and again, for while one’s life does indeed end, the *sefirah* continues to exist.[[4]](#footnote-2) At times the divine and human planes intersect, as in the case of the soul of Moses, which is reincarnated in the righteous of every generation, or the reincarnation of King David as the resurrected messiah who takes on the face of the Shekhinah, as discussed in various sources in kabbalistic literature.

This approach is based on the idea that when various selfhoods can exist in parallel, a person is able to live in greater personal freedom. The mythical and collectivist awareness, which includes the reconstruction of primal archetypes of the heroes and heroines of the Jewish people and the possibility of the soul’s passage from one body to another or the joining of multiple souls in one body, does not erase the borders of a particular life. A person is granted freedom of choice even when primal stories of his biological and spiritual ancestors repeat – willingly or not – according to the principle of “the return of the repressed” on the individual and collective levels.

In this article, which treats personal and feminine aspects of *gilgul* in the thought of R. Joseph Angelet, I suggest that the feminine aspect of divinity plays a central role in the transformation of souls and bodies, the erasure of sin and its rectification through reincarnation, due to the erotic and child-bearing nature of the Shekhinah and the heroines who represent Her in the Zoharic literature and among the Castilian kabbalists. Another role of no less importance is played by the maternal *sefirah* of Binah, referred to as Return or Repentance, since only through the merit of Her unique relationship to the Shekhinah as daughter can the worlds and souls ascend the theosophic ladder.[[5]](#footnote-3)

As I suggested in my book *Human Throes*, whether *gilgul* is defined as a situation in which multiple souls find a home in one body or in which sparks gather together over multiple reincarnations, the totality of these phenomena relate to the desire to blur the boundary between the I and the not-I. These teachings posit experiences of the *unio mysti* type, that is, absorption within the divine and within the other, which echo the symbiotic dyad of mother and child. For good reason is *gilgul* sometimes referred to as “enrobement.” *Gilgul* marks a birth in various levels of being, which are not based on a sharp distinction between nothingness and being but rather on the fluidity of past and future, and the gradual revelation, in which one garment after another is added to the chain of being. This revelation passes through the body and soul of the Shekhinah as mother, in which she aids in the rectification of the particular individual, in order to hasten the redemption and the rectification of the supernal worlds. Likewise is *gilgul* understood as an intermediary to a second birth as an expression of the desire to be born anew in rectified form, not only as an individual but also as a family and a collective, through the purification of the divine world effected by human acts.

A soul is enwombed within another body just as a baby is enwombed within its mother, as alluded to many times through various expressions of “the mystery of *ibur*” appearing since the beginning of Kabbalah, as a metaphor of the journey of the soul and its passage from potentiality to actuality. Indeed, in a series of articles Moshe Idel discussed the differences in the development of the doctrine of *gilgul* and *ibur* in early Kabbalah, and posited important distinctions in vertical models of the *ibur* of the Shekhinah by the *sefirot* above Her, and their juxtaposition to the doctrine of levirate marriage and individual reincarnation, which usually exists on the horizontal plane.[[6]](#footnote-4) However, in the literature of the Zohar and its contemporaries it is difficult to distinguish between the two models.[[7]](#footnote-5) So, as we will see, the mystery of *ibur* is connected in the writings of Angelet to the intradivine dynamic between Shekhinah and Binah as well as to that between the souls of the righteous below and the womb of the Shekhinah above. The result is a more complex paradigm in which heavenly and earthly processes are joined and in which the terms *ibur* and *gilgul* are used interchangeably.

Furthermore, the unique conception of the author relies on the idea that human action governs the family relations of the *sefirot*, especially Malkhut, from whose womb people are born and to whom they will return. As such, we may say that every reincarnation reenacts and adds to the primordial narrative or, in Freud’s terms, creates a new “family romance.”[[8]](#footnote-6) Every reincarnation returns through time to the original couple, whose joining is the basis of human existence for all future generations. If, as I will suggest, people do indeed constitute a part of the “divine family,” then variations of the doctrine of metempsychosis reveal an additional aspect of theogony [*Θεογονία*], that is, the formation of the worlds and the birth of divinity. What’s more, the doctrine of *gilgul* reveals knowledge from the primordial womb and “prenatal” states of the divine being, from which emanate, ascend, and descend the human being. This doctrine posits the possibility of combining multiple souls within a single body in an attempt to form a “multiple self” that exists in dialogue with all generations. As such it expresses the human narrative ability, for without the life story of the individual there is no meaning to the way in which an individual reincarnates and lives again through other beings, both human and divine. The composition of a person, who is made up of the parts of his soul and the deeds of his fellow, allows for a thick narrative in which the lives of the *sefirot* and the human characters are intermixed.

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In his work *Twenty-four Secrets*, R. Joseph Angelet discusses *gilgul* and *ibur* in three separate treatises: “The Secret Reason for *Gilgul*,” “The Secret of *Ibur*,” and “The Secret of Regular *Ibur*.” This is not the place to address the connections between these treatises and the work as a whole, which as I have suggested was composed between the completion of his earlier work (*Qupat ha-Rohkelin*, 1311) and his later one (*Livnat ha-Sapir u-Peirush le-Sha’arei Orah*, 1325-1327). Below I will discuss, as much as the current space allows, the literary motifs and feminine symbols found in these three treatises; I plan to dedicate a more extensive treatment in the forthcoming critical edition being prepared by Leore Sachs Shmueli, Iris Felix, and me. I wish to extend my deep gratitude to them for our shared conversations, out of which this article developed.

In general, we may say that “The Secret of *Ibur*” discusses the fate of *the human soul* and the ways in which the individual soul is combined with the “West,” that is, the Shekhinah. This treatise addresses the individual who does not always understand the events of his life (and death) as effecting expiation of his sins, and so Angelet opens his discussion by stating, “Man is created for good, and he is given time, through reincarnation, to return to the fullness of that good.”[[9]](#footnote-7) In contrast, “The Secret of Regular *Ibur*” treats the *gilgul* of the *Shekhinah* through the monthly and yearly phases of the moon and her *ibur* by the other *sefirot*, as well as Her relationship to the forces of evil, the idea of repentance occurring throughout the processes of emanation and creation and at the start of each lunar cycle. This secret is articulated through a strikingly mythic language, and is based on the rabbinic legend of the shrinking of the moon as well as on the relationships between the brothers Jacob and Esau and the sisters Rachel and Leah, which reflect the dynamic of the *sefirot*. Last, “The Secret Reason of *Gilgul*” (appearing in the first third of *Twenty-Four Secrets*) presents a historical and theological overview, at the center of which is *the nationalist conception of Israel*, which undergoes cycles of life and death, expiation and repentance. The author provides a birds-eye view of the *nation* and its relation to the movement of the *sefirot*, individual souls, supernal worlds, and the chain of generations, all according to the principle of “the secret of the generation that turns like a sphere.” The result is a multigenerational view of the cyclical cosmic motion anchored in the Shekhinah, the lynch pin joining heaven and earth.

In these treatises Angelet makes eclectic use of the terms *gilgul* and *ibur* and integrates otherwise separate concepts: premortem and postmortem metempsychotic processes; the *ibur* of the Shekhinah within the other *sefirot* as well as within the souls of the righteous; individual reincarnation and collective or generational reincarnation, in parallel with the exile of both the soul and the nation; the recreation of bodies and souls within multiple generations; and earthly figures who reincarnate within the Shekhinah and merit eternal life.

Angelet’s intentional shift from the individual to the collective and his integration of human attributes with sefirotic ones is evident from the opening line of each of these treatises, in which the orthographic root *glgl* or transmigrate also carries an additional meaning: the moon *mitgalgelet* (passes through cyclical phases), a person is allowed *lehitgalgel* (to reincarnate), and the generation *mitgalgelet* (turns like a sphere).[[10]](#footnote-8) The same terms, concepts, and Biblical proof texts appear throughout the three treatises, joining the journey of the individual soul to that of the unified souls of all Israel: conceptions of expiation and repentance, poverty and suffering, death, exile, ascent and descent, tarrying in the West, atonement, the diminishing of the moon and its movement through phases of waxing and waning, the desire for eternal life and for access to the supernal will and the sublime realms above Binah. Likewise, Angelet’s dual use of the term *ibur* reflects his attempts in these three treatises to integrate various traditions: the understanding of pregnancy and the giving of one’s child to the “Other” that also emerges from the womb, as well as an emphasis on the need to return to the womb of the Shekhinah or the “West” (in “The Secret of *Ibur*” and “The Secret Reason of *Gilgul*”); the link between *ibur* and sin and anger, appearing in various treatises; the motif of extinction in “The Secret of Regular *Ibur*” (“the power of the supernal Goat is entirely spiritual extinction in the fire of Gevurah, and it returns and is renewed within the power of the Will until the time of extinction”) as well as in the other two treatises, in the description of God, who “is conceived” within the leaders and the righteous of the generation (“The Secret of *Ibur*”) – perhaps an allusion to the weighty public role taken on by the author, who identifies with Moses, writing, “I have another hidden secret, understood from the verse “And God was conceived within me on your account”[[11]](#footnote-9) – and in the description of the punishment of the generation as transmigration through the Shekhinah, the Mother who not only loves but also chastises in her role as the destroying angel and the earthly court[[12]](#footnote-10) and is here identified with the darkness and twilight of the West[[13]](#footnote-11) (“The Secret Reason of *Gilgul*”).

The reader is likely to be led astray by Angelet’s citation-filled hermeneutic. Gershom Scholem and Isaiah Tishby have already characterized the author as a “Zoharic imitator” who wrote in the Aramaic of the Zoharic literature in order to have his work included within that corpus. In our article “*Eisa de-Savil Eisa*” Iris Felix and I sought to contest this assumption, arguing that had the author intended to adopt and imitate the style and content of the *Zohar*, he would not have marked his citations with such phrases as “Thus far [the language of the *Zohar*],” “and it seems to me,” and “and its meaning is.”[[14]](#footnote-12) Below I suggest that we must proceed with caution whenever we encounter one of Angelet’s citations from rabbinic or Zoharic sources. As we will see in one of the examples below, while prima facie the author cites a well-trodden text and its classical interpretation, he in fact upends the meaning of the rabbinic legend about the waxing and waning of the moon and provides his own innovative and mystical interpretation of their words.

As we noted in the critical edition of *Twenty-four Secrets*, Angelet cites a variety of eclectic sources on the topics of *gilgul* and *ibur*, such as the *Bahir* and the kabbalists of Gerona and Castile, and does not share at all in the opinion of Nahmanides, who casts the subject as esoteric in the extreme. Angelet’s three treatises are based on sources from the early Kabbalah: “The Secret of *Ibur*” cites several Bahiric traditions on *gilgul* and understands *ibur* in the sense of wrath (*evrah*, with which it shares its lexical root), an idea that first appears in R. Azriel’s commentary on the Rosh Hashannah liturgy, recently published by Oded Porat.[[15]](#footnote-13)

It is notable, too, that in two of the three treatises discussing *gilgul* and *ibur* the author mentions one of his teachers: in “The Secret of *Ibur*” he cites the words of “my teacher,” and in “The Secret Reason of *Gilgul*” he alludes to teachings in the name of his mysterious teacher R.Y.S.; neither of these figures has been positively identified. Presently I will attempt to discern the sources of Angelet’s teachings on *gilgul* and address two possibilities for the identity of “my teacher” and “R.Y.S.” (which I hope to discuss more extensively elsewhere).

**Angelet’s Sources and Teachers in his Treatises on the Secrets of *Ibur* and *Gilgul***

Castilian Kabbalah posits a variety of eclectic approaches to the mysteries of *ibur* and *gilgul* that integrate horizontal models of *gilgul* of individual souls with vertical models of the *ibur* of the Shekhinah. Furthermore, among the contemporaries and successors of the Zohar, the shroud of secrecy that had previously shrouded these topics is lifted, as exemplified by the transition from Shem Tov ibn Gaon to his student Angelet. Ibn Gaon’s obscurantism is obvious in his discussion in *Keter Shem Tov*:

I cannot hint at the ancient tradition we have received on this matter, for it would require lengthy discussion. And there is a great and profound secret there, on which depends the essence of Faith and Truth, and one who has received this tradition can answer any question about the matter and lead those who have gone astray back to a correct understanding, and he will understand the death of the ten martyrs and their judgment, and the matter of Er and Onan and Pinhas and Nadav and Avihu, as well as Abel. And I have already hinted at every one of these matters and I have provided an answer to the one who asked about it, praise be to God. I can only explain it orally, according to the question and the understanding of the one who asks it.[[16]](#footnote-14)

His approach is consistent with the position of Nahmanides, according to which it is permissible to reveal these secrets only to a faithful student, and so, as Idel notes, in the tradition of R. Solomon ibn Aderet and Ibn Gaon these secrets are discussed only in whispers: “Since the master has concealed the matter, we have no authority to reveal it except mouth to mouth [orally]. But I will offer a hint based on what has been written in truth regarding the matter of Abel.”[[17]](#footnote-15)

*“My Teacher”*

Angelet apparently alludes to Ibn Gaon’s discussion of the secret of Abel’s reincarnations in “The Secret of *Ibur,*” where he refers to the words of his teacher: “And it is for this purpose, for when will he merit such a great and pure sanctity as this, that he is fitting to enjoy the good delight, that he may be sanctified by this Crown in the World to Come. *These are the words of my teacher*, may the memory of the righteous be a blessing.”[[18]](#footnote-16) The context for this reference is the conception of *gilgul* as divine grace, as stated in the opening of the treatise: “man is born for good, and *he is given time to reincarnate and to return to the fullness of that good three times*.” The references to the sanctification of the Crown and entrance into the World to Come seem to point to the affinity between the two feminine *sefirot* of Shekhinah and Binah, which are both referred to as Repentance and which hold the key to the methods of *gilgul*, as I will explain below.

It is worth emphasizing that, according to Ibn Gaon’s understanding, *it is in the third reincarnation that the essence of rectification occurs*, as it completes the processes begun in the previous lives. Ibn Gaon is explicit on this account in *Keter Shem Tov*, where he comments on the words of Nahmanides:

A very great secret is known to be found in the story of Abel, for the secret of *ibur* in the third [reincarnation] is the greatest, for one may return up to three times, as it is written, “Unto the third and fourth [generations]” and “Truly, God will do all these things two or three times to a man” … and God incarnated in Moses, too, as alluded to by the verse, “And God incarnated in me,” and so Moses received the Torah, for he was fit and suitable for it.[[19]](#footnote-17)

The cited tradition describes the murdered Abel as being reincarnated first as Seth, then as Moses, and finally as the third messiah, a sequence alluded to in Moses’ own name, the three Hebrew letters of which are interpreted as the initials of Messiah, Seth, and Abel.[[20]](#footnote-18)

A parallel position is expressed in the *Zohar*’s interpretation of the verse from Ecclesiastes “Then I accounted those who have died more fortunate than those who are still living”:

For these are on a higher level than those. Who are these? Those who have died and received their punishment three times, who are called refined silver, for they have passed through the fire three times, and the dross has been purged from them, and they have been purified and cleansed.[[21]](#footnote-19)

On this passage R. Haim Yosef David Azulai comments, “This means that those who are reincarnated are more beloved than those new souls that have never been in the world before.”[[22]](#footnote-20)

Such a position is part of a polemic with the *Bahir* regarding the superiority of the new soul of the messiah and of the “pure seed” that comes from the East over the admixed seed that comes from the West:

It is written, “And from the East I shall bring your seed” – [when Israel is righteous before God I will bring your seed] and create a new seed for you, and when Israel is wicked [I will bring your seed] from the seed that has already come into the world, as it is written, “A generation goes and a generation comes,” which teaches that it has already come. What is the meaning of “And from the West I shall gather you”? From that attribute that inclines continually to the West. And why is it called West (*ma’arav*)? Because there all the seed mixes (*mit’arev*). To what can we compare the matter? To the son of a king, who had a beautiful and modest bride in his room, and he would take [great] riches from his father’s house and bring them to her, and she would take all of it and conceal it and mix it all together until the end of days. He asked to see what he had gathered, as it is written, “And from the West [i.e., the mixture] I shall gather you.” And what is the father’s house? Of this it is written, “And from the East I shall bring your seed,” which teaches us that he brings it from the East and sows it in the West, and later he gathers what he has sown.[[23]](#footnote-21)

The image of the king’s daughter as the one who “would take all of it and conceal it and mix it all together” bears a paradoxical sexual meaning, juxtaposing concealment and modesty with mixing and joining together. According to the *Bahir*, seed is considered “new” when it passes through the womb of the Shekhinah, while the “old” seed, which is presumably of lesser worth, is the product of her own handiwork. Thus, we may say that the new souls are not connected to the Shekhinah, while the old ones undergo a transformation with her help.

Gershom Scholem notes that this passage of the *Bahir* reveals a messianic and eschatological view.[[24]](#footnote-22) To this I would add that the metaphor of the bride hides an incestuous element, which reinforces the connection between the king’s daughter and her brother, the king’s son (as we find in the passage that follows it, “A parable of a king who married his daughter to his son”) as well as the connection between the daughter and her father (“whenever the daughter needed her father or the father needed his daughter, they would embrace through the window”).[[25]](#footnote-23)

Angelet’s approach, following Ibn Gaon and others, alludes to the opposite position, which *emphasizes the necessity of the involvement of the Shekhinah in the process of* gilgul*, not only ex post facto but ex ante*. While, according to the *Bahir*, when Israel is righteous there is no need to pass the seed through the daughter’s room/womb, the conception of Abel’s reincarnation as the messiah testifies to the critical need for the West (*ma’arav*) and the mixing (*mit’arev*) of the seed, even if there is an aspect of sin, incest, and impurity. Furthermore, the parable deals with death, alluded to by the phrase “end of days.” Angelet appears to add a third possibility of constant mixing even in the lifetime of a person, such that *gilgul* is not limited to a postmortem process or an eschatological one.

I would argue that Angelet reinforces the tradition of his teacher Ibn Gaon in order to challenge the two fundamental conceptions of the *Bahir*, the first of which speaks of a thousand reincarnations as opposed to three, and the second of which stresses the superiority of the new soul over reincarnated and admixed souls. While other kabbalists also contested the *Bahir*’s stance, Ibn Gaon’s unique emphasis on the superiority of the third reincarnation aids Angelet in reinforcing his messianic self-understanding, alluded to by his remark that “I have another hidden secret, understood from the verse ‘And God was conceived within me on your account’.” The description of Moses’ soul as reincarnating in the righteous of all future generations is a common theme of the author of *Tiqqunei Zohar*, who was writing at the same time as Angelet. In the statements of Isaac Luria we find an open identification with Moses as the reincarnation of Abel who rectifies his own murder from a previous lifetime. Angelet, too, may very well have identified as one who bears responsibility for the sins of his generation and compensates for them[[26]](#footnote-24)…

It is worth noting that the understanding of *gilgul* as a means of rectification of the generation and as a responsibility borne by the leader of that generation echoes throughout the *Zohar*’s discussions of the mystery of levirate marriage and *gilgul* in the chain of messiahs, which emphasize the conception of *gilgul* not as a means of punishment but as a means to hasten redemption. This motif was adopted and intensified in Safedian Kabbalah, which focuses on *gilgul* as a means of rectification both personal and cosmic.[[27]](#footnote-25) Counter to Gershom Scholem’s statement that “Just as bodies are in Galut, so also there is inward *Galut for souls. And Galut of souls is transmigration*,”[[28]](#footnote-26) according to Ibn Gaon and Angelet *gilgul* offers the opposite possibility – not exile of the soul but rather its rectification and ultimate return. Indeed, the *sefirah* of Binah, which represents the ascent effected by *gilgul*, is referred to countless times in the literature of the *Zohar* and the Castilian Kabbalah as “Repentance/Returning” and “Source of Life,” terms that were later applied to the Shekhinah as well.[[29]](#footnote-27) In the final section of the paper I will discuss the connections between *gilgul* and repenting/returning in light of the presentations of Rachel and Leah in Angelet’s treatises. Presently I will turn to the matter of identifying Angelet’s mysterious teacher, “R.Y.S.”

**R.Y.S.**

I would suggest that in “The Secret Reason of *Gilgul*” Angelet’s words are meant to allude to R. Joseph Ashkenazi [ha-Arokh], who is mentioned – as Iris Felix notes – by name in *Sefer Qupat ha-Rokhelin*.[[30]](#footnote-28) In “The Secret Reason of *Gilgul*” Angelet writes,

whoever did not merit to ascend to the world of eternity returns to the West until he should provide a guarantor (*arev*). Understand this. *And according to R.Y.S. [this means] until he is refined “as one smelts silver”* “so that no one may be kept banished,” and in visions “for die, we will die” – die in this world, and we will die in the World to Come.[[31]](#footnote-29)

In R. Joseph Ashkenazi’s commentary on *Sefer Yetzirah* (misattributed to R. Avraham ben David), the author, in his discussion of all transient things, mentions *gilgul* and *ibur* repeatedly. Later in his commentary, however, when describing the “ten *sefirot* of nothingness” found at the height of the sefirotic schema, he writes,

Regarding Hokhmah and Binah, the instruction is to “discern,” that is, you must discern and purify and contemplate the end and the root of Gedulah and Gevurah, how their root was in Hokhmah and Binah, *for discernment and smelting have one meaning, and that is to purify and clarify, as it is stated, “I will smelt them as one smelts silver* and discern them as one discerns gold.” So [*Sefer Yetzirah*] says “discern them,” meaning in the emanation that is drawn down into Hokhmah and Binah, and likewise Gedulah and Gevurah, how their root was in Hokhmah and Binah.[[32]](#footnote-30)

In order to understand Angelet’s use of R.Y.S.’s words, we should point out that in the continuation of the discussion Angelet challenges the interpretation of Nahmanides and, as we note in *Twenty-Four Secrets*, he opposes the reading of “die, we will die” as referring to absolute spiritual excision, interpreting the phrase instead as poverty and blindness, the purpose of which is to soften the punishment of sin, without which a person would lose his portion in the World to Come. For Angelet, death is a metaphor for such states as poverty and suffering, connected with tarrying in the West and identification with the periods of darkness of the Shekhinah.

Contrary to these approaches, R.Y.S. – if indeed the reference is to R. Joseph Ashkenazi – speaks of ascent to Hokhmah and Binah as the sources of Hesed and Gevurah and as means to the ascent of the individual. Even if Ashkenazi does not address *gilgul* in this passage of his commentary, he describes a process of refining the soul through ascent to the upper *sefirot*: “discern them and investigate them and clarify the matter fully, and seat the Maker on His foundation.”

Although Angelet frequently challenges R.Y.S. in *Twenty-Four Secrets*, it is evident that he respects his opinions, citing him on eight different occasions in that work. In “The Secret Reason of *Gilgul*” Angelet carries on a polemic with two fronts, insisting on the centrality of the Shekhinah as a refining fire in which a person achieves rectification even before his final death (contra Nahmanides) and without ascending to the upper *sefirot* (contra R.Y.S.). Thus does the treatise close with the words, “And Israel has found nothing better than poverty, which takes the place of death, from which they escape, repenting and returning and meriting the World to Come.” I would suggest that Angelet uses the term poverty to refer to the Shekhinah, placing her at the center of the salvific process and the ascent to Binah, the World to Come.

In the example cited here in my attempt to identify R.Y.S., as well as in the example cited above in the similar attempt to identify “my teacher,” Angelet consistently stresses the primary and positive role of the Shekhinah in the process of *gilgul*. In both treatises Angelet claims that the soul can be renewed by ascending to the heights of the sefirotic schema only after passing through the *sefirah* of Malkhut, or by descending to the lower world that is admixed with the Shekhinah, where the soul can live through multiple reincarnations of poverty, blindness, and suffering. The source of these ideas seems to be the introduction of the commentary to *Sefer Yetzirah*, where R. Yosef Ashkenazi focuses on the inherently cyclical nature of human existence, in keeping with the principle of transience.[[33]](#footnote-31)

Ashkenazi writes,

When every one of you understands and returns to his homeward path, then you will know that you will be born in the mystery of *ibur* and renewed as a new creation, and your days will be many. The Sun (Tiferet) and the Moon (Ateret), from whom comes the light of darkness and every event and loss, that is to say, the law of all transient things, will both pass through the sphere of the Name of YHVH in the Name of Adonai. So when the soul has reached the limit of its adventures, which is the semicircle above the earth, the movement having reached its end in the one-hundred and eighty degrees [of a semicircle], *from there he will descend to death or poverty or some other suffering*. But in the law of transient things and from there onwards you will see and understand *it is bound to complete the circle and return to its homeward path*. And so it will be made clear to you that in his return to this world in the form of vegetative life you will be born in the law of transient things and your days will be many according to the power of vegetative life.

I would suggest that Joseph Angelet, who shared a name with R. Joseph Ashkenazi, was influenced by R.Y.S.’s doctrine of the soul’s ascent with its emphasis on the Shekhinah and its role as the metaphorical lynch pin, as signaled by the references to “his homeward path” and the image of the Shekhinah as the center line of a circle or sphere. The image of the arc of 180 degrees lies at the heart of “The Secret Reason of *Gilgul*” and its discussion of the “generation that turns like a sphere,” a theme on which I will elaborate in the following section.

In conclusion, I would suggest that even though Angelet contests certain points of R.Y.S.’s arguments, he apparently agrees with him in his definition of the secret of *ibur* and *gilgul* as pertaining not necessarily to literal death or transmigration from one body to another but as the totality of movement from one level to another and one state to another. Such an understanding is at the core of Ashkenazi’s commentary, which refers to the possibility of transformation as “the secret of exchanges”:

When the children take strength and take hold of the LORD their King, then “they will grow up in the open,”[[34]](#footnote-32) that is, they will grow and multiply in the secret of *ibur*. How so? From inanimate to vegetable, and from vegetable to animal, and from animal to the face of a man, and from the face of a man to levels even higher. Then, when they take hold of the LORD and His commandments, they will escape from the narrow spaces, in which they were sentenced to spiritual excision, and they will be sentenced in exchange for the excised, and they will not return to them.

***Gilgul* and the Feminine Divine**

*“And the next day her belly is between her teeth”: The Cyclical Nature of the Shekhinah*

As we noted in our edition of *Twenty-Four Secrets*, in his explanation of the secret of *ibur* Angelet makes use of a well-known Talmudic expression about the moon, which was connected in the Kabbalah to the figure of the Shekhinah pregnant with the souls of the righteous.[[35]](#footnote-33) In rabbinic literature, the term *ibur* refers to the sanctification of the new month and appears most frequently in the context of the struggle against false witnesses. The Mishnah compares the full moon to a pregnant woman, and in response to two witnesses who said “We saw it in its [anticipated] time, and on the night of its fullness [*ibur*] we did not see it,” R. Dosa ben Hurkynus replies caustically, “They are false witnesses. How can they testify that a woman gave birth and the next day her belly is between her teeth?”[[36]](#footnote-34)

The use of the phrase “her belly is between her teeth” to describe a fetus on the verge of being born is perplexing, but in any case the vulgarity of R. Dosa ben Hurkynus’ language is evident, and is presumably intended to drive away the false witnesses.[[37]](#footnote-35) The thrust of his words is that it is impossible for a woman to give birth and then return to being pregnant.

I would suggest that Angelet applies the legal and logical thinking of the rabbis to the mystical and metaphysical realms, declaring that although such a feat is impossible for a flesh and blood woman, it is not for the Shekhinah:

They said in the last chapter of Tractate Ketubot that man is born for good, and he is given time to reincarnate and to return to the fullness of that good three times, and this is the *ibur* of the moon, of which they said “her belly is between her teeth.” For it is fitting that “no one be kept banished” but rather everyone should rather merit the hidden good.[[38]](#footnote-36)

Angelet in fact subverts the charge of false testimony by claiming that, since the Shekhinah can always return to its state of fullness or *ibur*, the souls that pass through her can also merit such a rectification over the course of their lives as well as after their deaths. So the author describes a reversible process of ascent and rectification. While for the rabbis “her belly is between her teeth” is an expression of derision or a declaration of false testimony, for Angelet it is given new meaning, becoming specifically an affirmation of truth: an individual does indeed reincarnate three times, that is, he is born and returns again to his mother’s womb, and is born yet again. While Angelet’s treatment of the mythos of the sanctification of the month relies on rabbinic conceptions, he reverses their original meaning and adds a distinctively mystical overtone.

*“And you shall be for me a mother and a sister”:* Gilgul *in the Shekhinah and Binah*

According to the *Zohar*, the commandment to “honor your father and mother” applies not only to the human realm but also to the divine one, specifically to the relationships between the *sefirot* of Tiferet and Malkhut and their parents, Hokhmah and Binah. The *Zohar* alludes to the idea developed in Lurianic Kabbalah that we mortals stand in sibling relationship to Tiferet and Malkhut, who emerged as did we from the womb of the supernal mother:

Zeir [Tiferet] and his consort [Malkhut] are the two elder siblings, and all the pure souls that emerge from the supernal coupling of the Father and Mother are the siblings of Zeir and his consort, and this is the secret of “for the sake of my brothers and friends,” for the Holy One, blessed be He, calls Israel brothers and friends… However, Zeir and his consort are the elder siblings, to whom we owe honor, and when Zeir and his consort were emanated and emerged from the innards of the Mother, the root of that spirit remained in the Mother.[[39]](#footnote-37)

Throughout *Twenty-Four Secrets* Angelet describes humanity as the child of the Shekhinah, especially when engaged in the process of repentance, return, and expiation through the mercy of the *sefirah* of Malkhut. The term *teshuvah* (repentance/return) stands at the center of two of the treatises discussing human acts, “The Secret Reason of *Gilgul*” and “The Secret of *Ibur*.” The Secret Reason of *Gilgul*” concludes with the words, “They said that the Holy One, blessed be He, searched through all the attributes and did not find any so beneficial for Israel as poverty, for it takes the place of death, from which they escape, repenting and returning and meriting the World to Come.” In “The Secret of Regular *Ibur*” Esau is sacrificed by the supernal High Priest: “And the Prince of Hesed, the High Priest, brings the image of the Goat, the great Prince who had been called Samasel, who defends the wicked Esau, and sacrifices him on the altar that stands before Repentance.”

In “The Secret of *Ibur*” the author discusses wicked rulers and false prophets who prevented the people from repenting and so are punished most severely: “The false prophets who led many to sin are not allowed to repent… and since [Menashe] caused many to stumble, he was not granted repentance to merit the World to Come.” According to this reading, Repentance is the path by which one merits eternal life and enters the World to Come, from which we can derive that *gilgul*, which allows for repentance, is an ascent to the World of Life.

As a conclusion to my analysis of the personal aspects of R. Joseph Angelet’s doctrine of *gilgul*, I will discuss two feminine figures that in his thought represent the process of repentance in the journey of the soul: Rachel and Leah, identified respectively as the *sefirot* of Malkhut and Binah.

These two heroines symbolize central figures in the divine schema. Aside from their identity as sisters, in the daring symbolism of the theosophic Kabbalah Leah and Rachel are also identified as mother and daughter (!), as the *Zohar* states explicitly:

Jacob, who was perfected, brought love into two worlds, as we explained. Other men who do the same reveal forbidden nakedness above and below, causing strife between the two worlds and causing separation. This is the meaning of “*Do not marry a sister as a rival,” for they will strive with each other*. And if you should cite the verse “*Marry Rachel her sister*,” surely it is so. *For all the desires of the lower world are only in order to become like the higher world and inherit ones’ place*… If even Jacob did not completely satisfy them as is befitting, other men will only cause strife and separation and reveal the forbidden nakedness of all, the nakedness above and below. And within this mystery lies the mystery of forbidden relationships, *the ban on marrying a mother and her daughter*, *and it is all one mystery. Who is this? They are called sisters, because they dwell in love and sisterhood and intimacy and contentment.* And they are called mother and daughter. Whoever reveals their nakedness has no portion in the World to Come and has no portion in Faith.[[40]](#footnote-38)

In this passage Jacob, the central pillar of heaven and earth, manages to overcome the severe ban on the marriage of a man to both a mother and her daughter – that is, Leah as the *sefirah* of Binah and Rachel as her daughter, the Shekhinah – a feat which no other man could hope to accomplish.

To fully understand Angelet’s words cited in “The Secret of Regular *Ibur*” from the letter of R. Yehushiel, I will elaborate below on the relationship between the two sisters Leah and Rachel and the way in which the *Zohar* explains the rupture that formed between them.

Angelet writes,

There are times decreed upon the attribute of mercy, seven days before the sighting of the moon, to wage war with Samael and his forces for having diminished the Moon. And the Goat challenges the Warrior out of jealousy over such a beautiful woman as the Moon… And the Prince of Hesed, the High Priest, brings the image of the Goat, the great Prince who had been called Samasel, who defends the wicked Esau, and sacrifices him *on the altar that stands before Repentance* on the day of the new moon, and then the [divine] will is appeased and made content. And the emanation that is lacking from the Glory, which appears as a punishment for the diminishing of the Moon, multiplies and grows full, and this is the image of atonement through the sacrifice of the Goat.

While noting the stridently mythic treatment of atonement and the battle between good and evil as symbolized by the twins Jacob and Esau – who complement the two sisters Rachel and Leah, who are themselves tantamount to twins[[41]](#footnote-39) – I would like to focus on Angelet’s efforts to join the New Moon sacrifice to the secret of *gilgul*.

I would suggest that Angelet, like the *Zohar*, hints that the individual who suffers for the expiation of sins in life and after death becomes the sibling and the son of the Shekhinah and Binah. This dual position allows the mortal (unlike an angel) to merit eternal life through the ascent to the sefirotic schema. The condition of the process of *gilgul* occurs in the world of Repentance, one of the primary names for Binah, and afterwards passes to Malkhut.[[42]](#footnote-40) The connection of the two sisters is summarized in the role of the altar “that stands before Repentance” in light of the well-known rabbinic statement that nothing can stand before it.[[43]](#footnote-41)

The tragic verse “*And God saw that Leah was despised*” received a strikingly original interpretation in the Zohar, which reads “despised” as hidden, covered, and inaccessible – yet posits her as Jacob’s final goal and indeed his very purpose. Such a reading reveals the weakness of the man in failing to understand the fullness of his soul’s journey and its true meaning. Jacob is captivated by Rachel’s beauty; Rachel is the revealed world, identified with the *sefirah* of Malkhut, while Leah is the higher world, linked with the *sefirah* of Binah. Only when Jacob succeeds in traversing the world of Rachel can he arrive at Leah, also dubbed the World of Freedom, the Jubilee, and Repentance/Return, does he complete his journey.[[44]](#footnote-42) At first, Jacob sees Rachel as a “romantic toy,” to use the words of R. Adin Steinsaltz in his book *Women in the Bible* (which raised the ire of many).[[45]](#footnote-43)

In its description, the Zohar leaves room for the feelings of jealousy between the two women but also ameliorates it by shifting the jealousy from the earthly dimension to the divine one. Since the Shekhinah represents “the House of Israel” and her weeping the despised state of the Children of Israel, the *Zohar* describes a state of divine need and a crisis of faith that can only be resolved by the female protagonist of the story.

As we saw above in the Zoharic passage about Jacob’s marriage to both sisters, here the *Zohar* radically portrays Leah and Rachel as mother and daughter and upends the forbidden act of marrying them both, presenting it as a virtuous act. *This being the case, I would suggest that the Zoharic project in its entirety seeks to join the two worlds and to bring peace between the two sisters, without ignoring their differences and their antipathies, by reinterpreting the tension between them that has existed since the original Biblical narrative*. In this process the kabbalists did not suffice with exegesis. Following in the footsteps of the *Zohar*, in 16th century Safed they developed the ritual of *Tiqqun Hatzot*, the first part of which is dubbed the *Tiqqun* of Rachel and the second the *Tiqqun* of Leah.[[46]](#footnote-44) Thus does a nightly vigil, as an inspiration to repentance and an expression of daily ritualized *gilgul*, attempt to mend the ancient rend torn between the two heroines.

Countless Zoharic passages seek to draw the upper and lower worlds closer together through the joining of Binah and the Shekhinah. The mother emanates the daughter and loans her clothing and jewelry (as described in the *Zohar*’s introduction[[47]](#footnote-45)); the mother cleanses the *sefirot* as the Shekhinah cleanses and nourishes the souls and the lower worlds.

From the divine perspective, the reconciliation of the worlds can be effected from above to below or from below to above, but we are dealing with the journey of the mystic, identified with Jacob and the *sefirah* of Tiferet, and he can only reach Leah through Rachel.[[48]](#footnote-46) This process requires time and effort; Jacob must become Israel, that is, become upright and virtuous. According to the earliest kabbalists and after them the *Zohar*, this refers to mediating between his grandfather and his father, such that the mercy of Abraham and the strict judgment of Isaac is transformed into the compassion and truth of Jacob. Without achieving the fusion of both forces, the two sisters cannot join together in either the world above or below.

In the kabbalistic reading, Rachel is not a diminished figure but rather the stronger sister and the one with agency, who seeks to conciliate her sister, to hide under her bed, and at the same time she does not spare her voice, crying out for her sons and even standing up to God to fight for them, as we see in both the Midrash and the *Zohar*.

We may now return to Angelet’s doctrine of *gilgul* and its affinity with the concept of repentance and return. As we saw, Angelet’s conception of *gilgul*, influenced by Ibn Gaon and Ashkenazi, focuses on the possibility of the final rectification in the third reincarnation and in the ascent from one *sefirah* to the next, the completion of the 180 degrees, until one returns to “the homeward path.” Death is not a condition of *gilgul* and suffering is not the focus but the means to ascend in repentance.

The process of repentance and return as it plays out within the relationship between Rachel and Leah in “The Secret of Regular *Ibur*” reveals that the primary intention is to unite the daughter and mother, the younger sister to the elder. A Jungian reading of the convoluted narrative recounted by the *Zohar* and Angelet portrays an individual come face to face with his own shadow with whom he must reconcile, as Rachel and Leah each represent the shadow of the other and await reconciliation.[[49]](#footnote-47) In order to work with one’s shadow, one must develop practical strategies derived from the body and the gendered, theosophical, and personal story. In Angelet’s thought, *gilgul* becomes a spiritual tool for effecting repentance and a means to joining the maternal figures of Rachel and Leah, representing the birth of the twelve tribes and so all of Israel, through the mercy of the Shekhinah and Binah. The *sefirot* continue to give birth to one another, with the help of man, who rectifies himself and reincarnates for his own benefit: “For man is created for good, and he is given time, through reincarnation, to return to the fullness of that good” (“The Secret of *Ibur*”).

**Conclusion**

The rupture between the two sisters haunts Angelet and in “The Secret of *Ibur*” he attempts to show that the ritual of the New Moon is an eternal and ongoing means to their reconciliation, to the joining of above and below, heaven and earth. According to the radical legend in the Babylonian Talmud, every New Moon God requests, “Bring an atoning sacrifice for Me for having diminished the moon.”[[50]](#footnote-48) The day of the New Moon is a day of repentance directed specifically toward the female figure. What’s more, according to the Midrash, God Himself requires repentance and atonement, which can only come with the aid of the feminine forces or the human quality representing the feminine aspect. The author seems to hint that the *gilgul* of the individual aids the *gilgul* of the *sefirot* and raises one to the next until their ascent and rectification in the unified schema is complete.

In this article I have analyzed a number of feminine elements in R. Joseph Angelet’s doctrine of *gilgul* in light of the roles played by the *sefirot* of Binah and Shekhinah, especially in childbirth. At the same time, since the earliest traditions of *gilgul*, this doctrine has been connected not only with birth but also death, sin, and punishment. The Shekhinah is understood as threatening and deadly, as in the verse, “Her feet go down to death”[[51]](#footnote-49); she frequently represents the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, the eating of which caused Adam to lose eternity and access to the Tree of Life.

A unique element in the connection between birth and death finds expression in the Zoharic doctrines of *gilgul* and levirate marriage as articulated in the section *Saba de-Mishpatim*: Adam, who refused to procreate, returns and reincarnates as the son of his former mate. He remains a baby sheltering under the wings of mother Binah and never makes use of his manhood and his potential fatherhood. In the face of this lack of life and against death, this man represents eternal birth and the continuation of the self, as one eternally held in the passage between the Shekhinah and Binah. This paradigm too may have influenced Angelet, who sought to emphasize the elements of life hidden within *gilgul* over those of death and punishment.

1. \* My thanks go to my friends and partners Iris Felix, Leore Sachs Shmueli, Andrea Gondos, and Biti Roi, as well as to my teachers, Yehuda Liebes, Bracha Sack, Ronit Meroz and Moshe Idel. This article is dedicated to my dear mother-in-law, Malkah Kaniel, who taught me much about generosity and giving, as it says, “One should always request mercy regarding this condition [of poverty], for if he does not come to it, his son will, and if his son does not, his grandson will, ‘for due to this thing’ (Deut 15:10). A tanna from the school of R. Ishmael taught, ‘It is a wheel that turns in the world.’ (b Shabbat 151b). [↑](#footnote-ref--1)
2. Gershom Scholem, *Pirqei Yesod be-Havanat ha-Qabbalah u-Smaleihah*, 358. [↑](#footnote-ref-0)
3. See Bracha Sack, Be-Sha’arei ha-Qabbalah shel R. Moshe Qordovero, 205-213; my paper; Lawrence Fine; Jeffrey Cohen. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
4. As I suggested in my article “*Ha-Avot veha-Imahot ke-Sefirot*.” [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
5. For additional feminine aspects of his thought see the discussion by Felix on the commandment of building a *sukkah*, in a halakhic context (??); Yonatan ben-Arosh discusses the description of the feminine in the Ineffable Name that “sought to overcome the female force” (??) [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
6. Moshe Idel, “*Peirushim le-Sod ha-Ibur be-Qabalat Qatalonia be-Meah ha-13 u-Mashmautam le-Havanatah shel ha-Qabalah be-Reishitah ule-Hitpathutah*,” *Da’at* 72 (2012): 45-49; Ibid., *Da’at* 73, 44-46. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
7. Yehuda Liebes noted this in his 1988 article, “*Keitzad Nithaber Sefer ha-Zohar*,” and other scholars have expanded upon the topic over the years; see Liebes, “*Keitzad Nithaber Sefer ha-Zohar*,” *Sefer ha-Zohar ve-Doro* 3 (1989): 71-72. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
8. family romance, 1909 [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
9. *Twenty-Four Secrets*, *Kabbalah* 50 ?? [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
10. These appear in the opening lines of “The Secret of Regular *Ibur*,” “The Secret of *Ibur*,” and “The Secret Reason of *Gilgul*,” respectively. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
11. This reading also reveals Angelet’s understanding of the Biblical punishment of *karet* (spiritual excision), which is similar to that found in Bahaye’s comment on this verse: “According to the *peshat* meaning: I am filled with wrath because of your complaints… And that which is called “the secret of *ibur*” because of the power of the generations, for it calls the generations from the beginning, for it is pregnant (*me’ubar*) with the inner power, and because everyone who reincarnates will do so from the power of the generations, and so “the secret of *ibur*” is called the power of the generations, and also because *ibur* comes from the word *ribua* (square)…*and also because he will not pass (*over*) from his family*.” [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
12. Compare *Sod ha-Miqrah veha-Pegiah*, where the Shekhinah is called an “evil woman” and identified with the sword, the plague, and the avenging scourge. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
13. In a mélange of Biblical, kabbalistic, and halakhic sources, he writes: “If they did not merit, then ‘out of the West (*ma’arav*) I will gather you’ [Isa 43:5] … and whoever did not merit to ascend to the world of eternity (Netzah) returns to the West until he should provide a guarantor (*arev*).” As we point out in the critical edition, this passage is derived from the Bahir: “You will understand this from the secret of the wheel (*galgal*), which continuously returns to its place until it has completed its motion, and if it has not achieved its goal in one cycle it returns a second time and a third.” [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
14. Iris Felix and Ruth Kara, “*Eisa de-Savil Eisa: Gibusho ha-Sifruti shel Sefer ha-Zohar le-Or Qeta Zohari Lo Yadua u-Tzemihat Parshanut ha-Zohar be-Reishit ha-Meah ha-14,*” *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought* 24 (2015), 157-200, esp. 170-171, no. 29; 191-200. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
15. Oded Porat, “*Mehabrot R. Azriel*,” *Kabbalah* 59 (2020): 83 and the notes on 85. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
16. Shem Tov ibn Gaon, ms Paris 774, 112b; cited by Moshe Idel, “*Peirushim le-Sod ha-Ibur*,”40. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
17. Ibn Gaon, ms Paris 774, 82a; Idel, “*Peirushim le-Sod ha-Ibur*,” 36-37. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
18. “The Secret of *Ibur*,” *Kabbalah* 50 ?? [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
19. *Keter Shem Tov*, in *Sefer Amudei ha-Qabbalah* (Jerusalem, 2001), 13, citing Ex 20:5, Job 33:29, and Deut 3:26. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
20. *Mem*, *Shin*, and *Heh* in the name Moshe stand for *mashiah*, *Shet*, and *Havel*. In similar fashion, the name Adam is read as Adam, David, and Messiah. See *Iqronim* ?? [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
21. *Zohar* III, 182b (*Huqat*), citing Ecc 4:2. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
22. *Nitzutzei Orot*, §2, on *Zohar* III, 182b (*Huqat*). [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
23. *Sefer ha-Bahir*, §104-105; Daniel Abrams, ed., *Sefer ha-Bahir al pi Kitvei ha-Yad ha-Qedumim* (Los Angeles: Cherub Press, 1994), 187-189. For a preliminary discussion of the affinity between this text and Angelet’s “The Secret Reason of *Gilgul*,” *Kabbalah* 50, note 163, ?? [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
24. Scholem, *Pirqei Yesod*, 314, no. 14. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
25. *Sefer ha-Bahir*, §3; Abrams, ed., *Sefer ha-Bahir*, 119; §43-45, Abrams, ed., *Sefer ha-Bahir*, 141-143. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
26. Luria, too, identifies with Moses as one who carries another’s soul within him… leader of the generation, the messiah who reincarnates within the righteous of every generation [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
27. Lawrence Fine [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
28. *Devarim be-Go* [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
29. Tishbi; my chapter, Hillel [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
30. Felix, Peraqim, 32. See *Quppat ha-Reukhlin* 44a, “*Shamati mi-R.Y. Ashkenazi*.” I hope to elaborate on the possibility of identifying R.Y.S. with R. Yosef Ashkenazi elsewhere. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
31. Citing Zech 13:9 and II Sam 14:14. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
32. *Pseudo-Ra’avad le-Sefer Yetzirah* (Jerusalem 1962, following Warsaw 1884), 24a on *Sefer Yetzirah* I:4, citing Zech. 13:9. The text of *Sefer Yetzirah* reads, “ten sefirot of nothingess, ten and not nine, ten and not eleven, understand with wisdom and be wise in understanding, discern them and investigate them and clarify the matter fully, and seat the Maker on His foundation.” [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
33. R. Asher ben David refers to the process of *gilgul* as *hithalfut*, which we might translate as “replacement” but which shares its lexical root with *hiluf*, which means both “replacement” and “transience.” See Scholem, ?? [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
34. Job 39:4. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
35. *Kabbalah* 50, notes 217-230?? [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
36. m Rosh Hashannah, 2:10. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
37. This is likely an echo of the Latin phrase vagina dentate and in keeping with Rashi’s comment on b Niddah 41, “there are curls of flesh inside the womb that are like teeth,” and likewise the phrase “chamber of teeth” (y Yevamot 35:1). Liebes suggests that the source is the root *shin-nun-nun*, meaning the place of urination, a root that appears in Isa 36:12 (where the text is written as *shineihem* but is read as the euphemistic *mei raglayim*). [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
38. Citing II Sam 34:7. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
39. *Sha’ar ha-Kavvanot, Derushei Qeriat Shema* 6. The *Bahir* already alluded to the idea that Tiferet and Hesed are brothers. Regarding the application of the commandment to honor parents to Hokhmah and Binah, see *Zohar* II, 90a. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
40. *Zohar* II, 126b (*Terumah*). [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
41. Along with Iris Felix and Leore Sachs Shmueli, I elaborate on this theme in our edition of *Twenty-Four Secrets*. See?? [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
42. Isaiah Tishby, *Mishnat ha-Zohar*, 735-744; Jeremy Brown, “Distilling Depths from Darkness: Forgiveness and Repentance in Medieval Iberian Jewish Mysticism 12th–13th Centuries” (PhD diss., New York University, 2015); and my book on David, in the chapter on David as a penitent, 65-74. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
43. y Peah 1:5; Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, Laws of Repentance, 3:14. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
44. *Zohar* I, 154a-b, citing Gen 29:31. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
45. Adin Steinsaltz, *Nashim ba-Miqra* (Tel Aviv 1984), 53-64. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
46. See Moshe Hallamish, “*Tiqqun Hatzot ve-Gilgulo ad Emtza ha-Meah ha-Sheva-Esreh*,” Derekh Sefer (Jerusalem, 2021), 107-150. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
47. *Zohar* I, 2a. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
48. “Come and see: Leah gave birth to six sons and one daughter, as is fitting, for six sides stand around her, and these six sons and one daughter emerged from a supernal mystery. Rachel gave birth to two righteous men, as is fitting, for she is the *Shemitah* year, and she dwells between two righteous men forever, as it is written, ‘The righteous men shall inherit the Earth” (*Zohar* I, 153a-b). [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
49. Tamar Kron, *We, Adam and Eve*, 97. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
50. b *Hullin* 60b. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
51. Prov 5:5. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)