

## Family: A Journey of the Soul

### Joanna Browne

Families are the cell blocks of society; the kinsfolk to which we are drawn in order to begin our journey of experience.

We all have our origins in the world of Divinity (Azilut) and the figure of Divine Glory within this world is the Primordial Being (Adam Kadmon) from which we are called forth. It is these deepest origins that predispose us to our particular destiny and fate. Tradition says that each spark from this world of pure light cries "I am" as it enters time (Beriah/Creation).

Creation is where the sparks from the Primordial Being are differentiated into cells in the created Adam. All humanity is held in this world and male and female are merged in one being within this world of essences. Descending to the next world of Formation we see the first family. Male and female, the archetypal mother and father separated into two complimentary psyches. The feminine psyche is receptive, discriminating and understanding and one of her symbols is the moon, crescent and full; reflective, and ruler of the night. The masculine psyche is active, expansive and wise, often symbolised by the sun, radiant and powerful. True individuation is when both the masculine and feminine archetypes are integrated in one human being.

Before the final descent into matter, these male and female souls gather in the Treasure House of Souls. Here, groups of like mind and interest assemble in order to carry out a particular task. There is often a strange familiarity between members of a family or friends and a recognition that is very deep.

At conception when the sperm and the egg are joined, all the worlds are brought together and within the very core of this embryo is the DNA molecule; the cosmic, creative level in the physical world. At the moment of conception nothing is visible physically, yet within that cluster of first cells are the principles of all that is to manifest. While making love, some couples perceive the image of the soul about to be born. This image is already in existence and the body fills out this form as it grows.

In the womb, the developing embryo swims in fluid as it transits between the watery, formative world and the physical body that is being made and the little being develops through the stages of vegetable and animal to human. The soul may hover over the foetus and often does not fully fuse with the physical body until birth. Some souls do not enter at all; they retreat and a still birth results.

The female vessel holds the creative, formative and making processes and birth is precisely timed as the wheels of the planets move to the moment for that soul to be incarnated, regardless of induction procedures or premature births. The elders and friends in the upper worlds watch over the soul during this transition as at such a time the forces at play are very powerful, both light and dark. Friends who have witnessed birth have seen an almost impenetrable dome over the scene and a shaft of blue light. These friends and companions draw together on both sides of the divide between heaven and earth.

Very often, babies are born with the residual imprint of their last life and appear as "little old men", or "little old women", some content and some disturbed. After a few days this look disappears and they take on the appearance of small babies.

Soon after birth, the soul's memory of the other worlds starts to fade. For the first few days there is a door to heaven which is left ajar and a certain quality of light pervades the room. In my experience the boundaries between the worlds became translucent and the Presence of the upper worlds transformed the room. This memory dims as the demands of physical life take over. Each soul is tailor made for that particular family in order for relationships to be worked out and experienced by both parents and children. An old saying goes, "the child is the secret interior of the parent", and this is so true, as the child triggers deep complexes within the mother and father.

In the early days the new body, confined and dependent, requires nourishment and the mother is the first one to give this in the form of milk, warmth and comfort. This stage is a continuation of the womb and there is little sense of separation between mother and baby. This nourishment on a physical and psychological level is very far reaching and those who do not receive it have work to do within themselves later in life to heal that loss.

The baby has very strong sensual experiences and begins to put together a picture of the world. This is where the mother helps the child to fulfil his or her needs and helps to control the powerful instinctual urges. When the needs of each stage are not met there is a tendency to seek their fulfilment at a deep subconscious level later in life.

During the ages of 1-7 the child develops an ego which is virtually unformed at birth. This is a process of building up impressions on the screen of consciousness that reflect the inner and outer worlds. In childhood, the imagination within often merges with outer images and the differences are blurred. If the parents enter into their child's imaginative world rather than deny its existence, the child is more secure in its inner life. However old the soul is it must go through these stages of development and learn to operate in the physical world. It needs to learn skills; how to think and experience different moods and feelings. During this time, the values of the family are very influential.

The family is the first workshop and is the vessel that holds the developing child and nurtures it. It is a unit for growth or destruction and here the child learns to accommodate others and experience passions of love and hate. The soul always has choices and has its own level of maturity regardless of physical age. Very deep and profound decisions can be made early on that affect the whole of life. For instance, "I am a victim and that's how I get what I want in life", or "I will never trust anyone".

Between the ages of about 7-14 come school days. The child is now developing on the structural side of the Tree and using conceptual skills, such as reading, writing and language, and the development of rational abilities. The child experiments and investigates at this age; plays with fire, (literally and allegorically) asks many questions and collects conkers, stones, candles and all kinds of objects.

When the child moves to the dynamic side of the Tree and embarks on adolescence at the ages of about 14-21 a whole new process begins. The inner Tree of the child swings between the two pillars. The family, if they can, hold the transforming child and help to contain the excessive fluctuations between elation and depression. The feelings that arise are very passionate and relationships are intense for the child and sometimes agony for the parents. Here is the beginning of the generation gap.

This is the time when family stability is of great importance. If the mother and father can practice understanding with discipline and wisdom with mercy, the vessel of the family can contain and hold the instability of the soul to allow transformation and from personal experience the hand of Providence works overtime during these days of youth.

As the years go by, the soul begins to awaken to the world around, questioning and exploring ideas. The soul is seeking itself and longing to break away from the confines of the family and society. This is a time of strong feelings and devotions and young men and women seek each other out looking for the perfect partner. The young girl has the ideal boy in her unconscious and the young man the girl of his dreams. When these images are projected out onto a person men and women fall in love. However, when the reality of the situation becomes apparent and the partner does not live up to the projection, both sides may be disappointed.

Each person seeks out his or her partner, but true soul mates are not common and therefore many couples meet in order to work out past relationships. When two souls begin to individuate and recognise what joins them together, there is the possibility of conscious work for humanity. If a true marriage takes place and children are born, family life becomes the workshop of all the souls involved. The teaching is consciously passed on to the children in everyday life and conversation and the parents try to live out what they know.

To reach the Self much hard work and struggle takes place in order to break free of the domination of the ego with all its delusions, fantasies and desires to keep the routines and patterns of the past.

Getting to know oneself means knowing the truth and that includes talents and gifts as much as shortcomings but for most people, the demands of the material world and the desires of the moment are strong enough to keep them from discovering the truths about themselves.

If a degree of individuation is reached, souls seek out like-minded companions and these may not belong in their physical family. By moving away there is an opportunity for both child and the parents to grow, but more often than not, the parents hold onto their image of the child and cannot let them be who they really are.

Individuals incarnating about the same time may find each other and come together in order to carry out a particular job or form a school of the soul. They are called upon to operate within the world; to hold the light within the densest level of materiality, while holding the contact with the Work in creation. This is not by any means easy for often there are within the group family those who are jealous, envious and in competition with others. Many will fall away from the Work. Satan, or the Tester, checks the strength of the soul and within this family there are tests of loyalty and honesty and relationships have to stand the test of truth. Choices made at this time have a very deep effect on the person's life.

Young adulthood is the time when most people do their parenting. Being a parent requires a great deal of discrimination; setting boundaries and structures and deciding what is acceptable behaviour. For the right balance in family life, mercy is needed, but the emphasis at this time is on discrimination. This is important as children need safe boundaries within which to develop. However, excessive structure can be oppressive and restrictive and leave no room for creativity. In the most extreme cases the child grows up physically but still cannot leave home, held there by the security of the structures. Too much freedom on the other hand can be just as destructive, allowing so much expansion so that the child grows insecure.

Late middle-age is the time for grand parenting and at this stage the right pillar of the Tree is emphasised. People of this age have experienced many things and do not have the immediate responsibility of the family and as such are often able to be more objective in outlook.

As the soul grows older there is time to contemplate life and the soul has a perspective with memories of events and feelings from many years. This is the time when experiences of a lifetime can be passed on to the next generation. For some there is a resistance to growing old and a fear of change, especially death. For others there comes a synthesis of their experiences in life and a time to review family relationships.

When death comes, the soul returns to the upper worlds. The imagery of birth and death is very similar; the tunnel with a light at the end and a yearning to be in the light. Almost all accounts of near-death experiences recount the sense of relief at being released from the confines of the body and the longing to go forward to the next world. For some, however, the time is not right and they return to the body to finish a job on earth. For those who have completed their stay, however young, the body is vacated and the soul is received on the other side, just as it is mourned on earth. It is said that the righteous die gently, like a hair being removed from a bowl of milk, but those who resist facing themselves will find death more difficult.

If we see the next world in the context of "As Above, So Below," we observe that according to their life and consciousness so souls find their level after death. Those who continue to insist on breaking the laws of life and taking no responsibility for their deeds will find themselves faced with the truth of their lives and held in hell until they are able to perceive what they have done. Repentance is always possible.

After death, each soul finds its level and reflects on a lifetime on earth. They are shown the truth of their lives and meet their companions. Some may have jobs to do on a discarnate level and others return to continue their evolution on earth, placed in another family suitable for their further development in another era of time.

For a few truly integrated souls a very specific job is given. These beings have worked over many lifetimes and have a

unified vessel for the Divine consciousness and possess a particular radiance. They are at the final stage of this journey and may return to teach and show the way to younger souls who wish to evolve.

Each one of us is at a different stage in this journey with its many initiations. Most of us still have a long way to go, but there is one certainty, the grace and providence of God on every step of the way if we choose to see.

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