



# How Your Soul's Contract Is Guiding Your Life

BY JOANNE DiMAGGIO

*For each soul, each entity, CONSTANTLY meets self. And if each soul would but understand, those hardships, which are accredited much to others, are caused most by self. KNOW that in those you are meeting THYSELF! (845-4)*

**Why am I here?** This is a question I hear often in my past-life research and regression practice, especially now as we continue to navigate the urgent challenges escalated in 2020. But that's not all I hear. In the thirty-three years I've been doing this sacred work, people tend to assign a lot of blame to others for the wrongs in their lives. Whenever someone laments, "It's all my parents' fault," I recall Edgar Cayce's frequent use of the phrase "meeting self," because I know that each of us has carefully planned our lives to correspond to the lessons our soul needs for growth.

With that in mind, how *do* you discover the origin of the karmic issues you are working on in this life? How can you identify members of your soul family and understand their role in helping your soul's growth? How will you define your soul's unique mission in this time and place, and find the answer to *Why am I here?* One way those answers can be found is through past-life and life-between-lives exploration.

Until a few years ago, I had not delved into life-between-lives regression therapy, but I knew of Dr. Michael Newton, a leading expert in this area. I studied Dr. Newton's books, as well as what other renowned past-life professionals had written on the subject, and to my surprise, some of what I read did not align with the Cayce teachings. The more I read, the more discrepancies I found. I often think of myself as a reporter for the universe, so like any good reporter and truth seeker, I wanted to see for myself. To do that, I decided to conduct a life-between-lives research study of my own. What I learned became the basis of my book *I Did It to Myself . . . Again! New Life-Between-Lives Case Studies Show How Your Soul's Contract Is Guiding Your Life* (Balboa Press, 2020).

I enlisted volunteers from A.R.E., Unity ministries, and other like-minded organizations for my research project and

conducted a three-hour session with each volunteer that was divided into two parts: a past-life regression followed by a life-between-lives session. I began with a past-life regression for a very good reason. I have always resonated with the analogy of Earth as a school and each soul here as a student with a specific curriculum for that semester, or life. Remembering what courses we signed up for helps us choose the circumstances and tools we need to resolve certain karmic issues. To identify their issues, my volunteers and I went on a hunt for the past life that was having the most impact on their current life. Sometimes that took us thousands of years into the past; 25 percent in my study group went back to lives before 1000 AD, including one that went back to Atlantis. In each case, the soul held back issues from that life as "unfinished business" until it found the right time and place to deal with them. Many lifetimes played out between that particular life and their current life, but none of those lives presented the optimal conditions to resolve that karma. Until this life.

Like any good detective, I worked with my research volunteers to follow the clues from a previous life that would shed light on that unfinished business. One of the biggest clues often came in the form of the soul's last thoughts at the moment of death in that all-important past life; those thoughts became the foundation upon which their current life was built. For example, those who were thinking at their last breath, *I should have loved more*, or *I should have done more*, or *I wasn't kind enough*, found themselves learning to love more, do more, or be kinder in this life.

My research project had many goals, but the one I was most curious about was whether everyone experienced death in the same way. My premise was that if the 25 strangers I was working with all described the process of dying in much

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the same way, couldn't we expect our dying process to be like theirs? And if it was a pleasant experience, wouldn't that help to relieve our fear of dying? “Pleasant,” it turned out, was exactly how nearly everyone in my study described their dying, saying it was a gentle, painless, and positive experience. Even those who suffered a traumatic death said that their soul left the body before the physical death occurred. This was the case with Mark, for example, a 74-year-old attorney who went back to a life as an African woman enslaved on a Georgia plantation in the 1800s. When she was whipped to death for repeatedly resisting her owner's advances, Mark reported that her soul left her body before her death, thus escaping the pain of a torturous demise. Others in the project who were subjected to painful deaths said that they, too, left their bodies before their physical death.

Once a soul detached from its body, the journey into the afterlife was described as a “shift of frequency,” as if caught up in a “swirling energy.” Nearly everyone experienced a sense of flying or floating, seeing vivid colors and beams of white light racing by as they traveled from Earth to their spirit home.

### Welcome Home

Once they arrived, what they did not see was St. Peter greeting them at the pearly gates! While 52 percent of my study participants did see a gateway or an entry portal as their first point of contact, those who did not see a “welcome station” reported that there was a path they instinctively knew to follow or a physical structure to enter. A full 88 percent of the study participants were greeted by a primary guide, who served as their escort while they were in spirit; the other 12 percent said that no one was there to welcome them, and also that this was fine with them. “I'm not inclined to stop there,” said Winny, a 60-year-old massage therapist who had revisited an 1820 life in the British Isles. “I could go in through the gateway, but I can also move on to what's beyond the gateway and not waste time. I know where to go. I've done this plenty of times.”

Richard Matheson's book-turned-movie, *What Dreams May Come*, had many intriguing descriptions of the afterlife. One was the concept that your spirit home—the place

that served as home base while you were in spirit—could be whatever you wanted it to be. This proved to be true in my study as well. Nearly everyone commented that they could create whatever they wanted just by thinking about it. Sara, a 51-year old university professor who had a life in 863 AD China, described her spirit home as a simple cabin in a fruit orchard. “I just need to think about what fruit I want, and it manifests,” she said. Many recreated things familiar to them on Earth, such as a marble table one woman had in her living room, or for another woman, it was the home she had in her former neighborhood.

When it came time to do the work needed to prepare for the next life, 84 percent of the participants said the first thing they did was engage in a debriefing session with their primary guide. After being welcomed home, the guide answered any questions the soul asked, offering a compassionate explanation for why certain things happened in the life just concluded. In essence, the guide gave the soul a pat on the back for a job well done or comfort if that was what the soul needed.

### A Council of Elders

The real work came when the 25 volunteers recalled entering a council chamber to meet with the Elders, a group of wise beings and ascended masters who represent authority in the spirit world. Craig R. Lundahl, PhD, and Harold A. Widdison, PhD, writing in *The Eternal Journey: How Near-Death Experiences Illuminate Our Earthly Lives*, describe the meeting with the elders as “an incredibly vivid, full-color, three-dimensional, instantaneous, panoramic review of every single thing that they have ever done, thought, or said in their lives. In this review people see not only every action they have ever done but also the effects of these actions upon others . . . The judgment that occurs during the life review is a judgment that comes from within. No court, judge, or jury is required.”

This latter comment addresses a common misconception that the Elders are a board of judges. Not true. The Elders are loving and nonjudgmental. They know exactly what each soul is working on—the good, the bad, and the ugly. Their purpose is to help each soul identify its karmic issues and attributes

and devise a plan for the next life in which the karma can be resolved. Joel L. Whitton and Joe Fisher, authors of *Life Between Life*, state that the Elders are “mindful of the soul's karmic debts and its need for specific lessons, give wide-ranging counsel . . . [Their] recommendations are made according to what the soul needs, not what it wants.”

The Elders review our “spiritual report card,” just as guidance counselors do in school, to see what courses we've passed, need to repeat, or haven't signed up for yet. Most appear as ordinary men and women of all ages, while others take on the form of animals, whimsical characters, or nature spirits. Unlike Dr. Newton's research findings, in which none of his subjects saw biblical characters on their council, many in my study described having such luminaries as Jesus, Mother Mary, Mary Magdalene, Moses, and the Archangels Michael and Raphael on their dais.

Edgar Cayce said that every soul has a job to do and a reason for being here. “The purpose of each soul's manifestation is to be not only good but good for something.” (843-3) By the time a soul completes its work with the Elders, identifying the karmic issues and attributes it will bring into its next life, it knows exactly what its mission will be. It states its ideal, defined by Cayce as being something beyond and above us, toward which we build. It is the standard by which we measure everything in our life—our soul's GPS you might say. With that in mind, those in my study stated their purpose without hesitation, everything from “to be a teacher of peace” to “to help guide others in their healing.”

### Our Soul Family

Here's a comforting thought. No one is ever alone in the afterlife. Members of our soul family are waiting to greet us and discuss how they can be of service in the next life. Because we travel together as a pod, our soul cluster group remains in our circle from one life to the next. We change gender and the roles we play from life to life—for example, your mother today could have been your husband in a prior life—but the essence of that soul remains as it's always been. That's why you so often hear, “She (or he) feels so familiar to me.”

Cayce said: “We meet few people by chance, but all are opportunities in one experience or another. We are due them or they are due us certain considerations.” (3246-1) For that reason, the value of knowing members of your soul family cannot be understated. They know you on a profound level and are well versed in your karmic issues and that of the group as a whole. They decide to come into your life to assist you with your soul's growth, while working on karmic issues of their own. At some point in your relationship, they will present the very issues you are working on, and—there's no doubt about it—that can be a very painful experience. For instance, if your issue is acceptance and approval, they will not offer you an ounce of acceptance or approval. And why? To help you understand that acceptance and approval come from within and from above, not from outside validation. That's your lesson.

One of the most important decisions we make while in spirit is the selection of our parents. This surprises many, since it's our parents who often take the brunt of our blame for the woes in our lives. Ironically, we're the ones who choose our parents because of what they and they alone will provide us in terms of the environment we're born into (socio-economic, racial, religious, etc.) and the other opportunities for growth they will provide. But keep in mind, although they are physically responsible for our getting here and fill a karmic agreement to challenge or inspire us, the rest is on us. Cayce said that each soul has its own purpose, other than what parents may try to impose.

Roger J. Woolger, PhD, author of *Other Lives, Other Selves: A Jungian Psychotherapist Discovers Past Lives*, put it this way: “The incoming child is drawn to certain mothers and fathers not so much out of choice—many of us arrive with distinct reluctance—but because the uncertainties, hopes, fears, and squabbles of certain parents will effectively restimulate old karmic residues within the unborn child's unconscious psyche.”

Often both parents have been with us in a prior lifetime, and together we work on karmic residue from that life. Other times, they come as a “package deal,” and you feel a karmic connection to one but not the other. And of course, sometimes,

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as Cayce said, it’s just as much about what lessons we can provide them: “The help that they may give, and the help ye may give.” (1442-1)

As I mentioned earlier, the interaction between a soul and its biological parents, as well as between the soul and members of its extended soul family, can feel frustrating and cruel at times. However, when we come to understand the lesson we chose to take on, it becomes easier to understand the dynamics



between our soul and those closest to us. This understanding often fosters a greater sense of forgiveness and appreciation for what each soul brings to the other. As Cayce said, “Count thy friends as the greatest of thy opportunities . . . Yet there are obligations, there are duties that are combined with such associations . . .” (1709-3)

Do we incarnate into the same biological family we had in a prior life? While many cultures believe that deceased relatives return to the same biological family, this may actually be rare and in some ways is counter to the advancement of that soul. Dr. Newton wrote: “The former bodies we had in prior lives are almost never genetically related to our current family.” Edgar Cayce said: “You have inherited most from yourself, not from family!” (1233-1) So sorry. It will likely take more than a swab of your cheek to discover your soul’s lineage!

Just as nothing in the universe is random, selecting the

body we will occupy in the next life is not a random process. Bodies are selected for the challenges or privileges they bring, and our choice of gender weighs heavily on that choice. While each body has layers of male and female qualities, Newton’s research concluded that we lean toward one gender about 75 percent of the time. Cayce said: “Sex change is more from desire than from physical earth incarnation’s influence—see?” (311-3) Your decision to come back male or female depends on what you want to accomplish. Many in my study indicated they wanted to be female so they could experience childbirth. Others wanted a strong and powerful male body. Still others had a fondness for their previous body and wanted one similar to it in size and features.

Before returning to Earth, souls are given memory triggers—those intangible impressions on our soul that are there to remind us of a prior lifetime and the souls who shared that life with us. The most common memory trigger is déjà vu—the inexplicable feeling of having been somewhere before or having known someone before, but not clearly remembering. Memory triggers are embedded in any number of everyday experiences. You may have a love of certain places and time periods—for example, as a child, I loved the eighteenth century. Perhaps you have a longing to live in the mountains or near the sea. Maybe certain music whisks you away to another time. The scent of lavender or the sound of the wind in the trees may bring up images you can’t explain. Memory triggers are designed to rekindle memories of the lifetime we’re working on now, so they are a valuable tool to jump-start us on the way to spiritual evolution.

You might think that when our between-lives work is complete, we eagerly return to Earth, but that wasn’t the case with my research subjects. Only 60 percent had a strong desire to return; 24 percent had a moderate desire to come back; and 16 percent were downright resistant to the idea. But in the end, they all acknowledged the need to complete a few more courses in this school we call Earth, and after revisiting their pre-life planning session, they finally knew why. 🌀



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**“As a longtime student of the Cayce readings, I am comfortable with the idea that souls bond together through time and space and reconnect in many different ways. The readings Cayce gave to families created through adoption confirmed this idea.”**

# Love Makes a Family: On Parenting and Adoption

BY CAROL SUE JANES

**M**Y HUSBAND, FRANCIS, AND I began our lives as parents by stepping onto an airplane rather than into a hospital. We traveled halfway around the world from the US to arrive in China on a snowy February night. The city of Nanjing was still filled with lighted decorations from the extended Chinese New Year celebrations. The next morning, caregivers brought our new daughter to our hotel room, after their own long car ride from the orphanage, where Elizabeth had been living for her first two years. In that moment our daughter became more than our heartfelt dream and more than a photo in the adoption portfolio: she was now right in front of us—a real, amazing, precious human life.

We had wondered what this moment would be like. We would be strangers in our daughter’s life—what would that be like for her? Would a child experiencing such an enormous change be upset, angry, withdrawn, scared? In that unforgettable moment when we first met Elizabeth, I instead sensed we each felt strongly that we belonged together. When she first settled easily into my arms and stayed comfortably and firmly planted there, I sensed a mutual feeling of