

# Intersection of Identities in Personal Stories about Reincarnation in the Druze Community in Israel

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## *Abstract*

Belief in reincarnation in the Druze community exceeds the bounds of the official religion, and its personal story gains significance among the secular community members. Though this belief is responsible for marking the boundaries of religious, national, and gender identity, and serves as a cohesive and comforting social factor, it also raises social and psychological tensions among families and individuals who find themselves living a double life story. This study attempts to investigate these aspects among the Druze society by analyzing a collection of personal stories of men and women about their experiences of reincarnation, which I collected from members of the Druze community in Israel. These stories are called among the Druze “alnutq” / النطق (speaking), a concept that expresses the soul's ability to recall and talk about its past life in the previous incarnation. By collecting the stories from people mentioned in the previous incarnation, I concluded that they are saturated with internal tensions and provoke objections, and their acceptance is almost always controversial. At the same time, the stories, the beliefs, and the values they are based on have a role in maintaining the borders and organization of the Druze community.

*Keywords:* “alnutq”, community, identity, incarnation, reincarnation, religion, tuqya.

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 *The Druze in the Middle East*

Unlike other minority groups in the Middle East, the Druze minority has maintained its relatively stable and consolidated social character for nearly a thousand years. The reasons for this are attributed to the foundations of the Druze religion, which since 1042 has not allowed foreigners to join it, not even through intermarriage. Besides the geographical conditions of the Druze settlement areas have made it difficult for foreigners to reach them, and thus, strengthened their separatism.

The Druze minority in the Middle East is concentrated in three neighboring countries: Syria, Lebanon, and Israel, but today there are quite large communities of Druze living abroad including in the United States, Canada, and Australia. An estimate of the size of the Druze population is about one million in the Middle East. About half a million in Syria and about four hundred thousand in Lebanon (Halabi, 2002: 19).

### *1.2 The Druze in Israel*

It is not possible to accurately determine the date of the Druze settlement in the Land of Israel since the information we have is insufficient. There are two conflicting traditions in this regard. According to the first, the Druze have lived in Israel since the establishment of their religion in 1037. According to the second, which is accepted to this day as a more proven historical tradition, the Druze settlement in Israel began only in the 15<sup>th</sup> century (Falah, 1983: 16).

Upon establishing the State of Israel, about 14,500<sup>1</sup> Druze lived in Israel. In 1957, the Druze in Israel was officially recognized as a religious community, which they were not granted in any other country. Since that year they have served in the IDF under the compulsory law service.

#### *The Druze population*

Today, the Druze population in Israel is concentrated in two large villages on Mount Carmel: Daliat al-Carmel and Osfiya, which have become established cities over time, as well as three blocks that include 16 villages in the Western, Central, and Upper Galilee. Some of the villages are also inhabited by Christians, and some by Christians and Muslims alike (Falah 1983: 15).

The Druze population in Israel is estimated at 120,000, and they constitute about 2% of the country's population. In terms of language, the Druze speak Arabic like the Arab Muslims and Christians. Even though the Druze population in Israel is considered by many to be a religious minority within an ethnic-Muslim minority, Israeli law defines the Druze as a separate unique community (Rabah 2003: 14). Most Druze in Israel define themselves as Arabs (71%) and the rest define themselves as Druze or Druze-Arabs (Nissan 2010).

Towards the end of the 19th century, and especially at the beginning of the 20th century, social changes began to take place among the Druze community in Israel, including changes in the fields of employment and cultural changes that were caused by the processes of modernization (Shakib, 1989: 225-233) (Galily, Schwartz, Gurstein, Abu-Jama & Khalid, 2018).

#### *The Druze question of identity*

Questions about the identity of the Druze community in Israel arose in the early 50s, and over time they have even intensified until they turned into issues of disputes that still storm the community to this day.

These issues relate to two central tension axes that characterize the Druze identity in Israel: One tension axis concerns the community's loyalty to the Druze religion in the face of secularization and modernization trends, and the other tension axis relates to the community's loyalty to the Israeli state despite its connection to the competing Arab nationalism.

On the one hand, the Druze in Israel strive to maintain their unique Druze identity in terms of religion, faith, tradition, and customs; to preserve and even develop the community's connection to the Arab population in Israel and to the culture with which they share language and customs, such as the family structure, the clan, clothing, food, music and more (Halabi, 2006: 24-25).

On the other hand, against the background of the tension that has always prevailed between the Druze and the Muslims, the Druze in Israel expresses an ideological and cultural closeness to the Jewish religion and the Jews. This closeness relies on similarities between the two religions, such as the connection between the important prophets of both religions: Moses and Jethro (Prophet "Shuaib" in the Koran), or the similarity between the national narrative of the Jews and that of the Druze.

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<sup>1</sup> The Druze population in Israel – a collection of data on the holiday of the prophet Shuaib. [www.cbs.gov.il](http://www.cbs.gov.il).

Among parts of the Druze community, there is a desire to develop and strengthen their Israeli identity. This aspiration is expressed in the fact that the Druze who declare their loyalty to the State of Israel are willing to integrate into the military service and seek for themselves social equality. This is in addition to their belief in separate religious definitions and cultural connections to the Muslim religion.

The Government of Israel, which grants members of the community judicial autonomy and a recognized legal status, responded to the requests of the Druze and gave them unique self-determination and institutional validity by applying the IDF draft law, recognizing the Druze society as an independent religious community in 1957, and establishing a Druze religious council, and Druze religious courts. In 1962, there was even a change in the registration of residents, and some of the Druze were registered as a nation (Rabah, 2003: 26).

This reflects the desire among the members of the community to establish their status by presenting their heritage and explaining it. Researchers such as Makarem (1966), Firro (1979), Blank (1985), Shakib (1989), Ben-Dor (1992), Falah (2000), and Tali (2001), contributed to their work to get to know the Druze community and a thorough understanding of its identity. This research work also stems from a personal drive to study and expand the discussion of Druze folklore, a discussion that has received almost no academic attention.

#### *The Druze belief in reincarnation*

The belief in reincarnation in the Druze community is called “*Taqammuss/التقمص*” in Arabic, which means that the human soul “wears” a new “*qamis/shirt/ body*”, and the body serves as a kind of “*qamis*” (garment/shirt) that holds the soul/ *قميص للنفس أو الروح*.

This belief reflects and expresses the main principles of religion and community, such as “the love and preservation of the brothers”, which means that every Druze must take care of their community, since reincarnation may be a time for any Druze family to meet with their neighbor or member of the community in the framework of their next incarnation (Falah, 1983: 15).

According to the Druze belief, humanity was created with a certain number of souls, and this number is constant and does not increase or decrease. The soul passes only to humans and not to animals or plants (Tali, 2001: 121; Granot, 1982: 29-28) and thus, the soul receives its reparation. There is no transition of the soul between the genders – a soul that abandons a male body will enter a male body, and a soul that deserts a female will enter a female body (Makarem, 1966: 122). Moreover, a Druze remains a Druze, that is, only he who has accepted *Madhahb al-Tawhid* *مذهب التوحيد* (“The Doctrine / Religion of Monotheism”) can be reborn as a Druze (Halabi, 2006: 17).

Thus, this belief maintains the order of society and the boundaries of Druze identity, and the personal stories about it may reflect the tensions that Druze society faces every day, tensions arising from its competing affinities to the Arab world and Israeli society, tradition, and modernity.

Belief in reincarnation is accompanied by another belief among the Druze, which is not anchored in the religious books, and it is not known when it began to be widespread. Yet, it is common, and it is related to “*Alnutq*” – the ability to remember and talk about the previous incarnation.

Already here, religious, and social tension is emerging, because the Druze religion is as stated “secret,” and therefore, it is not acceptable to speak of the “*Alnutq*” experience, which exposes one of the principles of the Druze faith and life. From here, this belief can be linked to the fields of “popular religion” and Druze folklore.

Yoder (1974: 14) defines “popular religion” as a religion that embodies the “cultural popular dimension of religion”, which includes its additional interpretations, influences, and external practices. Popular religion is therefore the total sum of the religious views and behaviors that characterize individuals and not just a collective within a complex society and coexists alongside the activities of the official religious institutions.

Alongside the difficulty of exploring the main tenets of a secret religion and society that consistently protects its borders, the issue of “Alnutq” has been explored in the Western world in various contexts (Tali, 2001; Dwairy, 2006). Scholars such as Nabwani (2004: 80-81) and Hassoun (2003: 71) referred to the phenomenon of “Alnutq” as the embodiment of divine justice since it is impossible to judge and convict a person by his behavior during a single life course.

Some other scholars have investigated cases of recollection and speech such as Stevenson (2013), who has studied the issue of reincarnation around the world, including among the Druze, and has documented 20 cases in the Druze community.

So far, the researchers have dealt with describing the place of faith as part of the Druze religion and some of its recurring characteristics, but not in its cultural and psychological roles and its contribution to the search and marking of identity boundaries – topics that I would like to discuss and present in this article.

## 2. The purpose and significance of this study

The *purpose* of this study is to investigate one of the most important issues for the Druze community, namely, their “belief in reincarnation.” The *significance* of the study lies in its treatment of the Druze belief in reincarnation in a scientific way by relying on meeting people who have lived through this experience.

Before conducting the practical stage of interviews, the researcher had read many studies written by Druze and non-Druze researchers, who focused in their works on the belief of “Alnutq” and reincarnations such as the book by Raja Said Faraj: *Reincarnation* (2006) and Akram Hassoun’s book: *Reincarnation in the Druze Vision* (2003). However, these books do not deal with the folkloric analysis of the stories, which is based on a comparative study of these traditions in their cultural, literary, and psychological context, as this study does. The collection and study of traditions may illuminate new aspects of the Druze identity in Israel and may even help the Druze community better understand and contain the social tensions which it faces.

The reincarnated people and their amazing stories are closely related to the Druze religion and to the belief in reincarnation, the foundation of the Druze religion. The stories also play an important role in establishing the identity of the Druze community and maintaining its borders and in the struggle for the social and political status of the community within Israeli society.

## 3. Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative approach that uses a questionnaire to get results about the quality of the attitudes of the participants.

### 3.1 *The participants*

The participants are a group of interviewees, whose ages range from 15-45, and they come from all kinds of people. Most interviewees defined themselves as secular or traditional, but not religious, even if they maintained a traditional lifestyle.

### 3.2 Procedure

The writer of the article conducted *fieldwork* in which she recorded her interviews with people who had experienced recollection of information, events, and facts from a previous life (incarnation).<sup>2</sup>

During the interviews, the participants of the “Alnutq” (speaking) event were asked to talk about the previous incarnation. The interviews were fully transcribed, but the research mainly relates to the personal stories, which were taken out of the whole life story.

### 3.3 Data analysis

The data that were collected from the recorded interviews constitute folkloric stories, which were analyzed through a comparative study of the traditions in their cultural, literary, and psychological context. The stories can shed light on new aspects of the Druze identity in Israel and may even help the Druze community better understand and contain the social tensions it faces. Three basic concepts should be clarified, which will be used in the following discussion.<sup>3</sup>

## 4. Discussion of the personal stories

*The personal story* is legitimate, and it is desirable to first be solved as a story for everything. The creation of a personal story involves a process of constant choice, to reach the seemingly final version of the representation of the narrator’s life. The personal story is an instrument that defines one’s identity to reach the seemingly final version of the representation of the narrator’s life. In the process, the story undergoes a process of changes.

As said before, the personal story is an identity-defining mechanism. The author of the story reflects on his life and reassembles a multi-faceted identity that is cast into textual materials. The author of the story reflects on his life and reassembles a multi-faceted identity that is cast into textual materials. The personal story usually has a recipient, so, it can be seen as a dialogic delivery device of how the narrator perceives himself and the world, and how the world responds to his/her creation.

Zava-Elran (2002: 69) notes in her essay “The Personal Story as a Rescue from Forgetfulness” that the detailed personal story expresses the voice of the furbished individual in the community. He fulfills the need to perpetuate events in their collective cultural context, on the one hand, but from the individual perspective of the narrator, on the other.

*The personal story* therefore reflects the unique world of the narrator and the cultural and moral world he assimilated during his life and became an inseparable part of his identity (see also Rosen, 1994: 13). These tensions join the tensions of other designers, who characterize the furbished who are recorded in this study, who are affected by changes in the social organization of the Druze society, and the double life story of a person who remembers his previous life and talks about it.

The personal story here – the story of the soul’s previous life, and its integration into the present story of life – grows as a part of a certain life history, from which it can be explained

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<sup>2</sup> The names of the people who tell their stories of “reincarnation” will only be given in initials, in order to maintain their privacy, and the reference here is to Alnutq – the ability to remember the previous incarnation and talk about it.

<sup>3</sup> This article was written according to the research work I am writing, under the supervision of Dr. Tzefi Zava-Elran.

(Zava-Elran 2002: 75). Through it, the interviewees reorganize their lives in a way that reflects their beliefs, and their religious, ideological, social, and personal beliefs and perceptions.

With the formulation of a sense of identity, a new view is created toward the persona, which provides a continuous inner feeling of the personal and stabilizes values and goals. Personal stories and “double” stories as stories of reincarnation often involve searching for identity, clarification of social tensions, and formation of subjective and individual voice design. In this context, the Druze identity is characterized by having a dynamic changing identity that reflects challenges of various kinds.

As for the *subjects of the stories* in the study, all of them are also religious-based belief narratives based on Druze belief in reincarnation. These stories are usually based on popular beliefs that are prevalent in the periphery of religious life, such as belief in characters and supernatural cases, and are often in tension with the main representatives of the official religion (Yoder, 1974: 8).

At the same time, it is important to note that from the point of view of the interviewees, the memory and experience of the previous life as part of the current life are in line with their identity and religious belief: “*I was born a Druze and I will die a Druze and will return, far it be!*” one of the interviewees repeated and stated several times.” This is a clear example of the strong affinity for the Druze community as a religious community, an affinity that transcends the limitations of the body, time, and place. In the story added in the body of the article, one can also find faith in miracle cases. In other words, the foundations of the Druze religion and the faith of the narrators, as well as the narrative traditions that they convey, are part of a single identity, even if complex.

## 5. Analysis of the stories

The analysis of the stories is based on the contextual school of folklore research, which is based on the concept of the “speech event” as an artistic communication that takes place between a narrator and an audience. I will refer to the embodiment of tensions that characterize the Druze society in the stories, and to the embodiment of tensions that are related to the specific biographical context of the story and the specific speech events in which I participated (Ben-Amos, 1973; Hazan-Rokam & Alexander, 2000; Dundes, 1964).

The analysis is also based on comparing parallel narratives about reincarnation, from those I recorded and from those I found in the research literature and Israeli Folktale Archive. The comparison is based on the structure and characteristics of the story, on the identification of binary opposites and their role in the construction of the world and the narrative message (Lévi-Strauss, 1975), on the use of the narrator by rhetorical and performative means (Hazan-Rokam, 1988; Alexander & Govrin, 1985), and the use of language and accent – exchange of codes (Held, 2009) and their role.

In the following words, I will briefly discuss an example from my interviews based on the structure of the story and its narrative foundations, the use of the narrator an expression, particularly in the body and objects, in language, in the design of space and time, and binary opposites.

### 5.1 *Between the narrator and the story*

#### *The biographical, cultural and social context of the personal story*

The narrators that I interviewed in the study represent a random selection from within the research population, and naturally, there was no uniformity in the level of their education,

their age, their fields of occupation, and more. However, I did find a common denominator in their religious beliefs and their connection to the Druze society, even though all the narrators are secular. This matter is essential in principle, because reincarnation is one of the principles of the Druze faith and life, and the choice to take part in its revelation, and to talk about it despite the opposition of the clerics testifies to the common need for narrators to define the borders of identity. The stories that were collected in the framework of the study are an element that further strengthens their connection to the Druze community, and this belief in reincarnation, as the narrators have reported, makes the members of the community members of one large family. For the narrator, the interview therefore provides an opportunity to tell his story under conditions that he largely determines.

Another important parameter in the relation of the narrator to the story is the degree of readiness for exposure in terms of gender and age. Gender has had a big impact on participation.

From the narrator chart, I managed to record only three female narrators, and this reflects the fact that the Druze community is a conservative and patriarchal-style community. Women traditionally do not participate in such initiatives, which come from outside the community, and they have a role in representing them. Second, the age has also been affected. The narrator belongs to different age groups. There is a young age group and there is an older age group, and the influence is evident in the speech ability, the quantity, and the type of memories. The young narrators had a limited vocabulary, and their stories were characterized by short, and local references.

Of course, the stories reflected the unique world of each interviewee, male or female, and emphasized the complex identity of the “Alnutq” (speech) seeking to bridge both worlds: Past and present.

Before discussing the *structure of the story*, I will present the essence of the plot and the details of the narrator, which I would like to discuss here, with a concise reference to examples from other stories.

### 5.2 Elements of the plot story

*The female interviewee* says that she remembered her previous incarnation at a relatively late age when she was 15. She said she was married, a mother who had two children; her husband was a military man, and during the war, he had to leave the house to take part in the war. Since it was a time when there was no media available, he had to come home from time to time and demand safety for his wife and children. The last time, the enemy followed him, and while he was at home, soldiers came and killed him.

*The female narrator* and the children were forced to flee with the help of friends and immigrate to the United States, where they tried to adjust and live a normal life. The son found a job helped his mother and set up a business for her that she named after her husband.

*The female narrator, A.*, is fifteen years old from Galilee, a high school student, who was born in a secular family, to a mother who was a housewife and a father who works in the local council. The family is relatively small, and both parents have a high school education. The interview was recorded continuously in Arabic after a preliminary meeting with the interviewee at a high school where she is studying. The conversation throughout the meeting was relaxed and the interviewee expressed a sense of trust and partnership: “It’s a good thing you’re a Druze because you’ll understand me and understand what I’ve been through.” Although we did not have an early acquaintance, everything took place as if we had been acquainted with each other and we had a friendly relationship.

### *Common plot elements*

Most of the stories are based on a template that includes three components: Crisis, followed by recalling and revealing details of the past life, a complication or a difficulty that is related to this life, and acceptance of the situation. These steps are parallel to the plot parts of Labov (1975): Beginning, Middle, and End, and they may also include an extract, an orientation, a complicated action, an evaluation, a result or a resolution, and a coda.<sup>4</sup>

Most of the interviewees talk about the background from which they came and present significant selected moments in their lives. These are mainly the first years when they began to talk about the ages of 2-5, a period that is characterized by the declaration of the “alnutq,” awakening of memory while detailing the “conditions” in which the memory of the previous incarnation awakens. Often, the recollection begins with a dream when one of the family members, especially the mother, dreams of a particular person, who sends a message to him and informs him that he will soon come to see him, or in another case, when the narrator sees in a dream a character related to his previous life and hints at the coming events. After that, the restoration of the life story sometimes involves searching for the previous family members, of course, if they have discovered who they are and if they can be contacted. By providing this information, the listener is already inserted in the opening statement or the opening paragraph to the intensification of the events. Thus, for example, in the story of H. from the village of Daliat al-Carmel, the story begins with the sentence: “It all started when I was on our porch here at home, and my wife was walking down the street and I recognized and ran to my mother; I was a little boy, and I told her that this woman was my wife.” That’s how the narrator aroused my attention and curiosity and then told me about what happened next.

Many of the stories do not have long openings and therefore all the details described are important. In most stories, the exposition is characterized by time, space, the main characters, and the relationships between them.

Most of the narrators indicate that when they remembered; they were encouraged by the family members in the current incarnation and were recognized by the family members from the previous life, and then physical contact was created between the two families, and they raised more details. At this point, stability takes place in the story.

This is even though personal stories do not always end in a balance like folk stories, and they are echoed by the difficulties and the unintelligible in the story.

This is even though personal stories do not always end in a balance like folk stories, and in them, difficulties and unintelligible parts are echoed. Besides, some of the stories I recorded did not end in balance, but in many questions, marks relating to the identity of the interviewee, many difficulties in dealing with the cause of death from the previous incarnation, or the inability to contact the previous family. In the attached story of interviewee A., the conclusion was characterized by balance, acceptance of the situation, and the desire to search for family members from the previous incarnation.

Ilana Rozen (1994: 87), who divides in her research personal stories into groups, distinguishes, among other things, between stories controlled by the narrator and which are characterized by a broadsheet, a logical order of events, dates, and place names, and between stories that often evade the control of the narrator, and which are characterized by a relatively short sheet, in accepting contradictions and in the presence of issues and events charged on the side of their camouflage, or suppression or absence from the text.

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<sup>4</sup> Each story has a different length and unique characteristics, such as extensions, other climaxes in the story and more, but in this context, I want to discuss stories together.



The stories I have recorded are of two models. The story of A. is “controlled” by her. It has a structured and logical order of events, dates and timelines, names of places, and a message of religious values – to believe in reincarnation and to maintain the connection to the previous identity. This issue is shared by some of the stories that were collected in the “באסע” (*Base*) and also by the stories collected by Faraj (2006).

There were also unintelligible stories, but fewer. These were by the young narrators. These stories were characterized by jumps in the order of events. For example, in the story of Y. from Kufr Yassif village: The story begins with his visit to Horefish village, continues with a story about a dream he had before he even remembered a previous incarnation, and only then in response to the question: “Was that the first time you remembered?” He chose to speak about his mother who asked him why he loved the other mother more. It is likely that the stories of this young age group were not told much and did not come together as the stories of the older age group.

### *Design of space and time*

#### *Space*

The reference to space and place in stories is interesting and important because it reflects a social situation and sometimes also a spiritual one. In all the stories, the central place where everything begins is the home, which is described in brief or detail. In the attached story, the narrator describes the place through the feelings he evoked in it.

This story and another story “Alnutq” take place in two central spaces: In this incarnation, the space is the tombs of the prophets, and the very fact that the (she-) narrator visited the tombs of prophets emphasizes that belief in holiness is a central thing to the community consciousness and the religious practices that accompany it. The second space is the home in Syria, in a small Druze village. Although this is a hostile country from an Israeli point of view and living under the shadow of war, the narrator excitedly describes her life and talks about her husband and the circumstances of their acquaintance.

In this passage, her facial expressions changed, and her tone of voice changed because, despite the shaking experience, it was probably a good memory. Immigration to the United States is remembered without specifying how it happened and when exactly. The avoidance of eye contact at this stage and various cues have led me to speculate that migration in the incarnation was illegal.

Just like this example, most of the recorded stories begin in the space of the house or near the house, and then the memory and events that lead to the transition to the second space and the continuation of the plot. After the description of the house and the moment of remembrance, the narrator can move to the second space, which is characterized by difficulties related both to the previous life circumstances and to the acceptance of the story in the present.

An important and interesting aspect that is reflected in the story is that the house becomes a place of lack of belonging and doubt and undermines the sense of identity of the narrator. These feelings drive the narrator to seek an answer to the problem of identity in the second space, which characterizes the previous incarnation.

We can see that in most of the narrators, there is no detailed description of the house, and there are no expansions, but when they talk about the other space, they expand, or detail things related to it. So, for example, in the story of H. from Daliat al-Carmel, the house is described briefly: “It all started when I was on the porch at our home...” But when the narrator begins to describe his home in a previous life, he expands: “There was a basket in the house where we used to put pens. We had an unsafe staircase in our house, and the children always fell because of it.” Thus, the narrator establishes the credibility of the story and anchors his experience with tangible details.

### *Time*

The design of time in the story is anchored in both collective and personal events. So, for instance, in the attached story, interviewee A. talks about two periods of time: this incarnation is about the period of preparation for the holiday of the Sacrificing Day – an important period among the members of the community from a religious perspective, because this period, which is called the “Ten-Day-Nights” period of fasting and praying. In this period, they also donate a lot to those in need. The circumstances of the commemoration thus indicate the Druze culture and customs of the community.

The second period of the previous incarnation is the 80s to the 20th century, a period in which Syria suffered from wars, and the Druze community in particular suffered persecution from Muslims, mainly because of the support of the members of the community at the time to President Assad. However, the story does not mention or describe the details of the war: Who is the enemy and what kind of war it is exactly. The she-narrator only mentions that her husband was murdered by the enemy. This passage was characterized by the seconds of silence that also testify to the nature of the society that tells, who maintains the commandment of “al-Tuqia / التقيية” (self-guarding), according to which, hiding the truth is allowed to protect the members of the community and the believers from hostile Muslims and/or Christians. Because of the war and persecution, the family built a cubicle underground to hide during wars. It is presumed that the trauma of persecution and the murder of her husband in front of her eyes caused the narrator to avoid talking about her circumstances. Whether one way or another, the two central timelines in the story tie the narrator to the Druze community and strengthen her historical connection to it.

### *The conflicting elements of the story*

The personal stories I recorded are often based on a system of binary opposites (according to Levi-Strauss, 1975). The binary opposites common to the stories I recorded are the contrasts between life-death, past-present, religious-secular, or modern, young-old, women-men. The attached story evokes a lot of tension, resulting from the comparison between the two incarnations. At the beginning of the story, when the (she-) narrator notes that everything began during the holiday preparations, the contrast between illness and cure and science and religion arises. When she went to the doctor for treatment, this did not work, so she had to seek help from the prophets.

Two main characters in the interviewee’s life embody another set of fundamental opposites: between a secular figure outside the family and a religious figure inside the family. On the one hand, she describes the educator who is not religious, and she is portrayed as an inclusive and supportive figure. On the other hand, she describes the religious aunt who did not agree to let her tell what she had gone through. She also prevented a structure, which also recalls a previous life, to talk and talk about his previous life. This tension between secularism and religion is also connected to the tension between the official religious leaders, who are always trying to prevent those who are mentioned in their incarnation from telling and sharing.

The third tension is between generations. When the interviewee was asked to answer the question: “How was the reaction in your environment? Parents, relatives, and school?” She noted that at first, it was difficult for her in school, the students (the younger generation) ridiculed her until the educator (representing the older generation) intervened and helped her. Then her classmates began to accept her, and even try to help her in search of the previous family members. The members of the older generation support this case and help more than the narrator’s contemporaries.

A fourth tension is between genders. In the first part, the character of the husband is a key figure that protects the family. After his disappearance, the figure of the son appears, taking the place of the father. He protects his mother and makes decisions for her: “My son didn’t agree

that I go to work.” Dependence on men reflects the patriarchal nature of Druze society – the woman usually depends on her husband; he protects the land and the family honor.

The Narrator tries to resolve these tensions using her role as a mother: She didn't break down after her husband's death; she started a business and took care of her sons, after adjusting to a new and foreign environment. This is also evident in the stories of other women in Faraj (2006), Hasson (2003), and in ״אָס״ (I will travel). Women cling to their role as mothers and in the areas of female occupation in the Druze society such as cooking, to bridge times, spaces of life, and personal destinies.

It is important to note that there are clear differences between the genders – there are certain types of behavior and hobbies that are constant for men and unique behavior that is legitimate for women! Here too, the story maintains a certain “social order” – gender-specific.

In conclusion, the story has a religious character because in the infrastructure, the idea is embodied, and the high power forces the rules.

In the two parts of the plot, which are connected to the two life cycles of the narrator, is the motive of accepting God's decree and belief in the uniqueness of the community character. In the background, there is a glimpse into the history of the Druze, who are constantly at war with their neighbors, especially the Muslims (Dana, 1998: 33). The main purpose of the story from the point of view of the woman-interviewee is to expose her identity and bridge between two worlds of the past and the present.

#### *Use of language and accent*

The language of the stories is considered one of the keys to deciphering the means of expression of the narrating society. Heled (2009: 308) notes that according to Fishman, language is content, and the medium is at least partially the message. Even in the stories I recorded, language is a personal expression of a reality that has a profound emotional significance. The narrator in the attached story combined expressions and concepts from her previous incarnation, and in this case, from English, when she mentioned the names of foods she had prepared in her previous incarnation, and she still remembers them. Other interviewees usually used this purpose in Hebrew, mixed with Arabic, and even dialects of different villages, which linked them to the villages from which they came in a previous incarnation. For example, the proverb that the narrator V from Kfar Rama said, when he referred to his homeland in a previous incarnation, life – Syria: “The roots of the love of homeland are rooted in faith.” This is a Syrian and Lebanese proverb. Heled (2009: 68-69) focuses on her article: “Mother, Madre, or Mama?”

In the phenomenon of exchanging codes. A code is a type of language used to communicate in a particular group. It brings the words of Gomperetz, who identified the phenomenon of code exchange as an element of contrast or collision. This is not only a clash between two modes of speech belonging to different syntactic systems, but also between two paths of discourse that reflect an internal conflict between polarized emotional positions.

Integration of languages and dialects as ‘codes’, may tell how blurred the interviewees' integration and identity are, and even divided. This aspect ties them to more than one group. This aspect may also reflect another tension that is characteristic of the Druze community, namely, the tension between the community and the state: To what extent the language of the state expresses the narrators, and how much they must adopt other languages and dialects to tell their story.

Language also refers to the way things are told, namely, direct speech, the use of quotes, images, and metaphors, what use the narrator makes in his voice (high, low, loud, etc.), and body gestures. The woman-narrator here and other narrators whom I interviewed used their voices. When they spoke of the moment of death, their voice was sharp and firm, and when they

spoke of family members from the previous incarnation, their voice was characterized by a low, calm tone.

#### *Use of body and objects*

Integration of objects in the stories also performs a function of validation. The literal reconstruction of life becomes a part of life itself through the objects that validate the story and the identity of the narrator who creates it (Held: 310). In most stories, the “Natiq” (speaker) already at his first meeting at his home or with one of his previous family members speaks of a particular object that he had hidden in a previous incarnation and/or identifies an object.

In one of the interviews I recorded, the narrator mentioned *N.* from Moghar village, that the first thing he looked for in the room when he visited was the hunting vessel he had, and in another story (Faraj, 2006: 47), the interviewee noted that he remembered his military weapon. It can be observed that men had “masculine” objects, compared to women who in most cases were remembered as people who were central in their lives like a husband or a child, or in the operation of some machine that was used for the narrator in a central role in her life, such as a sewing machine.

According to Bar-Yitzhaq (1981), the subject of reincarnation as a belief, experience, and story is thus connected on one side to one’s religion and society (as a potential family member of each member of the Druze society in Israel and abroad), and sometimes it is his only connection to this society.

## 6. Conclusion

Belief in reincarnation in the Druze community exceeds the bounds of official religion, and the personal story about it is held precisely among the members of the secular community. This belief is responsible for marking the boundaries of religious, national, gender, and other identity, and for crossing other boundaries, such as time and place boundaries.

This belief is responsible for marking the boundaries of religious, national, gender and other identity, and for crossing other boundaries, such as time and place boundaries. It serves as a cohesive and comforting social factor, but it also engulfs social and psychological tensions among families and individuals who find themselves living a double life story. Against this background, contextual and comparative examination of the phenomenon may provide explanations for popular beliefs, behaviors, and expressions among members of the Druze community and understand the foundations of its identity, as reflected in the folklore.

The personal story of the genre with which I deal is first a personal expression, and second, the social perceptions of their creator, come to complete their perception of their Ego/ I itself. Thus, indirectly, we learn from these perceptions of the communities and societies that create the stories, but it is the “I” who is at the center of the popular work that stands in front of us in this article.

Finally, I quote Franz Rosenzweig,<sup>5</sup> who saw in the personal experience a point of origin and a fundamental principle of philosophical thought, reflecting this position. His words

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<sup>5</sup> Rosenzweig, F (1921). *Star of Redemption*. Translated from German by Y. Amir, Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, p. 51. In an article by M. Heled (טשר"י). “Tongue, object, place: Personal stories of Spanish-Jewish popular Narrators speaking Jewish-Spanish (Ladino) as identity glasses.” *Judaism - Issues, Pieces, Faces, Identities*, Beersheba: Published by Ben-Gurion University Press, pp. 305-334.

shed light on this research, on which this study is based, and on the questions of identity that are derived from it.

“And so is man-made, not any man, but a certain man in his privacy, a Master of Philosophy [...] Man in the absolute privacy of his being in the reality defined by first name and family name, has deviated from the world which he knew himself as a thinking world, has deviated from the rule of philosophy. The human being's experience is his experience in his privacy.”

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