

THE BIG BOOK OF REINCARNATION

By Roy Stemman

Excerpt from Chapter 20: "Best Evidence for Rebirth"

During my visits to Lebanon it was inevitable that I would encounter cases that had their past-life roots in the various bloody conflicts that have afflicted that country over the past four decades. The story behind one that particularly impressed me is encapsulated in a photograph I took of an elderly man, wearing a white Druze tarbush (fez) and sporting a long white beard, with a pretty young girl seated on the arm of his chair, her hand resting affectionately on his arm. Ask someone to write a caption for this image and they are most likely to suggest that it shows a granddaughter visiting her grandfather. The truth is startlingly different. My picture, both families believe, shows Ajaj Eid and his *wife* Safa (now reborn as **Haneen Al-Arum**, a bus driver's daughter). Safa's life had come to an abrupt end on 17 January, 1984, when the 16-inch guns of US battleship *New Jersey* began shelling the Druze positions in the Chouf mountains above Beirut. The much-loved mother of five, a schoolteacher who taught Arabic, followed her husband out of their home to warn him to be careful, after he went to help a neighbor whose curtains had caught fire after an explosion. Still able to recall that day, Haneen – who was 11 years old when I met her at the spot where Safa's life ended – told me what happened next. 'There was more shelling and a piece of shell hit my neck and I died.'

As soon as she could speak, after her rebirth as Haneen, three years later, she began calling for her son, Riad. She told her parents, 'I am Safa', adding that she was from Bchamoun and the Eid family. In a culture that accepts reincarnation, many go in search of family members that might have been reborn, and Shahira, one of Safa

Eid's daughters, was no exception. She learned of three young girls who might be her mother's reincarnation, one of whom was Haneen. When they met and she asked the young girl, 'Do you recognize me?' Haneen replied 'You are Shahira, my daughter,' and they hugged and kissed. I saw for myself how very close Haneen was to all the family members when I accompanied her to the Eid home. When first taken there by car, I learned, Haneen had pointed immediately to the house where the curtains had caught fire, as she stepped from the car. Shahira, still testing Haneen to be sure she was her mother's reincarnation, started to walk up some stairs as if heading for the family home, but the young girl corrected her, pointing down the hill, instead. Shahira changed direction and entered the first gate. 'This is not our house,' Haneen protested. When they reached the right house, she remarked that the front had changed. This was absolutely right because in the same shelling that had taken her life, the house was damaged and her son, Riad, had decided to reposition the steps when it was rebuilt. At the front door, Shahira rang the bell and a woman answered. 'This is Layla, Riad's wife,' Haneen announced. Correct, again, as was her identification of Riad, who was sitting inside with a friend, and her observation that her husband, Ajaj, now had a beard – he had not grown one when she was Safa. Riad asked Haneen to describe the layout of the home, which she did to his satisfaction, and then when he took her around she stopped at a display cabinet and remarked that she had hidden money in the lower compartment for Layla. She was clearly disappointed to see it had now gone. In fact, Layla confirmed to Riad that she had found it and removed it. Layla also had a test question for Haneen: 'Is that where you kept your gold?' she asked, referring to the compartment. 'I never had gold,' Haneen responded. Safa and Ajaj were Druze sheikhs and, as religious people, did not have jewelry.