



Akin to the best-selling books by author Brian Weiss (including “Many Lives, Many Masters”), “Through 7 Lives: The Gift Of My Soul” postulates that it is possible to have recall on past lives. Based on past life hypnotherapy sessions and a number of ‘connections’ with different parts of the world, renowned music historian, author, producer and singer David Nathan has written the compelling tale of six characters whose life challenges have common themes – including betrayal and jealousy – that ‘bleed’ into his own 20th and 21st century existence and the intersections between all seven lifetimes.

Even for readers for whom the premise of reincarnation has no validity, the fascinating stories of Egyptian pharaoh Smenkhare (an acknowledged historical figure), Nepalese Buddhist monk Norbu, Cambodian concubine Ponnleu, Haitian voodoo priest Houngan, West African prince-turned-slave Touvalou, Mississippi blues singer Beulah Parker and his own life, makes “Through 7 Lives: The Gift Of My Soul” a page-turner...”

THROUGH 7 LIVES - THE GIFT OF MY SOUL

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FOREWORD

What do Smenkhare, an almost forgotten Egyptian Pharaoh, considered a footnote to history; the Buddhist monk Norbu, living in a monastery in the shadows of the Himalayas in Nepal; Ponnleu, a favoured Cambodian concubine at the court of a Khmer prince at Angkor Wat; Houngan, a vengeful voodoo priest in Haiti known for his interest in the darker side of the ancient tradition; Touvalou, a young prince from Dahomey and heir to the throne, sold into slavery by his jealous older brother who spends the rest of his life in America; Beulah Parker, a plump blues singer from Mississippi, raised in a brothel who dies as an addict without achieving the success she sought; and David Nathan, a pre-eminent historian in the world of 20th century soul music have In common? One life....

Through a series of 'flashbacks,' a poem written spontaneously in 1978, past life hypnotherapy and a meeting with two prominent experts in the world of reincarnation, renowned music journalist and author David Nathan 'discovered' his connection to six previous incarnations. When he examined his 20th century life, he found amazing links.

Referencing Smenkhare....

A deep passion for the 18th Dynasty in Egypt in his mid-20's led to a 1984 visit to the site of the city built by King Akhnaten and his Queen Nefertiti in the Egyptian desert prompting him to burst into sobbing tears of recognition.

Referencing Norbu....

When David returned to live in Britain after 34 years in the US, he found himself consistently drawn to people from South Asia for the first time in his life, evoking connection to the cultures of the region. For years, David found himself attracted to Buddhism (while not actually practising it) and his support for the charity Save The Children resulting in sponsoring children in Nepal...

Referencing Ponnleu....

When he was eight, David saw the film "The King & I" and was entranced by the opening scene depicting Bangkok with its golden temples and palaces. His fascination led him to perform a Siamese temple dance at school at the age of nine! At age 13, he had developed a strange and deep fascination for the temples at Angkor Wat and when a friend had brought him back a lotus leaf from a pond at Angkor in 2005, his friend had a 'flash' about David – and the words 'concubine' at the same time!

Referencing Houngan....

From an early age, David had a fascination with witches and skeletons. After meeting the legendary Nina Simone (for whom he had formed the first British fan club as a teenager in 1965), his interest in voodoo developed to the point where he read avidly about the subject and attempted to visit Haiti. A trip to Jamaica in 2001 forced David to have a psychic 'exorcism' after he returned to Los Angeles in the wake of a 'psychic' attack prompted by his visit to the home of Annie Palmer, the infamous

'White Witch of Jamaica' who had been trained in voodoo and killed slaves after having sex with them.

Referencing Touvalou....

During his teen years, David's hobby was collecting the names of ambassadors from all over the world; he was particularly fascinated by the French-speaking countries in West Africa (such as Mali, Guinea, Mauritania, Togo and Dahomey) and he developed a great rapport with one particular diplomat, the press attache at the Senegalese embassy (who would go on to become that country's ambassador to the US) which led to a desire to visit Senegal - and particularly the island of Goree where people were kept before being transported into slavery on the other side of the Atlantic. David's first trip to New Orleans in the late '70s was mind-blowing: a boat ride on the Mississippi brought up a flood of emotions as references were made to the plantations on the other side of the river...

Referencing Beulah....

David's love and lifelong passion for the music of African-Americans began when he first heard the voice of Bessie Smith as a child – and his penchant for the blues stylings of such greats as Nina Simone, Esther Phillips and – through some of her early work – Aretha Franklin became apparent during his teen years. While never exposed to the music of Billie Holiday, his awareness of her began with her death in 1959; David subsequently borrowed her autobiography 'Lady Sings The Blues' from the local library and never took it back... Years later, on his first trip to the Crescent City, David was walking in the French quarter and saw what he thought was 'blood' on the ground – which literally disappeared the second time he looked! As the story of Beulah unfolded on the pages of 'Through 7 Lives,' David began to understand why...

The connections...

David dedicated his life work to promoting the artists and those who created the globally popular art form known as 'soul music' and his affinity for a culture which he was not born into led to years of living in the U.S., singing in black church choirs and developing a reputation as a soul music expert and historian. No surprise, perhaps, given his 'connection' to Houngan, Touvalou and Beulah, three of his recalled lives...

Are all of the references in David Nathan's lives merely coincidences that connect him to Egypt, Nepal, Cambodia, Haiti, Dahomey (Benin)/Senegal) and the Southern states of the U.S.A. mere coincidences? Maybe. Or are they links from six lives intersecting and completing themselves in one? You may judge for yourself as you read the stories of Smenkhare, Norbu, Ponnleu, Houngan, Touvalou, Beulah and David himself...

PRELUDE – CHILDREN OF THE NIGHT

...**Smenkhare** ('Vigorous is the Soul of Re - Holy of Forms') was aghast. He had never felt so alone, so completely alone. In the wake of the mysterious disappearance – and he suspected, demise – of his beloved Akhy (the term of endearment he used to describe his brother, the great Pharaoh Akhnaten, the acknowledged first monotheist in recorded history), he had been left to take on the responsibility of a kingdom in turmoil. So-called friends and supporters were nowhere to be found. He wandered out beyond the palace walls as midnight approached, praying that someone would come to ease the desperate loneliness that enveloped his very soul...

...**Norbu** ("Jewel") walked slowly along the rough hewn track that precariously led up the bleak mountainside to the monastery. From the days when his family had decreed and determined that his life would be spent in the company of fellow monks all those years before, Norbu had accepted his lot, dealing with his own worldly temptations and falls from grace. Dreams of being a carpenter, of building wonderful palaces for the King were summarily dismissed leaving the youth to ponder the emptiness of his existence. Emptiness, he contemplated, was indeed the clear objective for every young man who entered the priesthood, emptiness of the mind, the loss of desire. And yet, and yet....Norbu's emptiness was lodged in a memory of another time and place where the desert sands stretched out forever beyond the horizon. His soul, he reflected, would forever seek relief from the crushing separation he felt from the love of another, knowing it would never be...

...**Ponnleu** ("Illumination") stared into the pond outside the temple. Life had seemed so glorious when she first entered the household of Prince Lompong Racha, the powerful heir to the vast Khmer kingdom when she initially enjoyed the nightly attention of the handsome prince before a tragic incident altered both of their lives forever. While it seemed like she was living a fairytale-like existence, Ponnleu was painfully aware of the loss of freedom that came with it and as she looked at the lotus leaves floating in the water, she wondered what it would be like to move so easily through life without the confines of being a virtual slave to a prince...

Houngan was stunned. Rare were the moments when he could stop and consider the truth about his life. It was, he knew, pre-determined. His predilection for the darker side of the ancient tradition of voodoo had resulted in some twists and turns during his life including his face-to-face encounter with one of the enemies of Toussaint L'Ouverture, the leader who would instigate the Haitian revolution for freedom from the French colonialists. While much of his life had been spent in rage and he had impacted the lives of many on the island with potions and spells, as he stared into the lapping blue water of the Caribbean, Houngan was aware perhaps for the first time of the desperate separation he felt from humanity...

... **Touvalou** wept. A stranger in a strange land, unable to speak to anyone. Even those who had also somehow survived the dreadful days and cold cold nights below deck as the wretched ship tossed and turned in its journey through the turbulent waters of the ocean came from other parts of the very same continent from which he had been taken. No one spoke the same language, not even the same dialect and Touvalou had quickly learned that any attempt to communicate with the white men who were his captors would likely result in immediate death. While other African men bore some resemblance in skin colour and build, Touvalou was forced to use sign language to communicate with them, aware that they knew nothing of his regal background. In the still of the night, he silently remembered his youth at the court of his father, the King of Dahomey, the pomp

and ceremony, the grandeur, the feeling that his destiny would unfold as the proud leader of a strong nation. He felt the deep pang of unfiltered alienation from all he had known. He was, he knew, alone...

... **Beulah** swigged another bottle of rum. Drink had become her occasional companion since the day her family had thrown her out of the tiny shack in the backwoods of Mississippi, her mother accusing her of seducing her own father through her years serving the madam Faye in a local brothel and on to her years in New Orleans with William, the man who had shaped her very destiny turning her into a working blues singer. Beulah thought back to the first time she had heard the sad sad cry of the blues, the soul's ancient wail which found expression through Beulah, who knew lonely was always going to be her best friend...

... **David** didn't expect the flood of tears. The phone call alerting him that Angel, the man who had arrived in his life twelve years earlier – originally as the semi-clad photo on a card he received for his 48th birthday – was gone brought a pang of deep pain that left him stunned. Oh, the adventures, being with the highest paid Latino escort in L.A., first as his client, then as his business partner, then friend and finally lover flashed before his eyes like a Hollywood movie in 3D, full of high drama, laughter and love. So many sweet and sour memories of insanity somehow laced with a deep and timeless connection that bore no relationship to logic, two star-crossed lovers destined to meet and renew a contract made so many thousands of years before. David had spent a lifetime looking for love: his very soul cried in the night fearing an inner knowing that he might never know the feeling again. An emptiness filled his heart...

CHAPTER 1 – BEGINNINGS

Smenkhare's birth was unexpected. His brother Akhnaten was surprised when even the forceful and strident Tiye, his mother - not known for displays of outward emotion – began sobbing as she told her imperious husband, the feared pharaoh Amenhotep III that she was of child. Tiye was on the verge of being at an age when the delivery of a child even under the careful preparations necessary for the birth of a member of the royal family was deemed dangerous. How could this have been, she pondered?

Like her father and grandfather before him, like all men of lineage, Tiye knew that it was the prerogative of the king to have many wives, often mere teenagers who would be summoned into the royal chambers in the dark of the night to satisfy the whim of a pharaoh, who was – as everyone knew – a god in human form. Jealously could play no part in her role as queen, even though she hated to see the young and beautiful women who caught the attention of her leering husband time after time as they travelled throughout the kingdom. But it mattered not: somehow, on some night when Amenhotep sought the comfort of the familiarity of his wife's still-voluptuous, inviting body, she had surrendered, momentarily forgetting the young and studly slaves who served her own lusty appetite on those secret afternoons when the pharaoh was away, imagining instead that it was a handsome Nubian pleasuring her rather than her husband, now large of belly and slow to rise...

But truth was truth and Smenkhare, whose birth was long and arduous for the middle-aged queen foretelling a future that might indeed itself be troubled, arrived with all the attendant celebration that always accompanied the arrival of new prince. This was his first incarnation in human form and as his soul prepared to enter the body of Tiye, he knew on a deep inner level he would face a myriad of emotions and feelings that could only be experienced as a human – the deepest love and the worst betrayal include. Only the fates knew how his life would unfold, how he would father a son whose name would resonate through distant centuries while he himself would be a footnote to history, forgotten in the wide expansion of desert sands that would all but engulf the memory of his existence...

Norbu's birth had been predicted. In the village of Ragani, just miles from the monastery that would become his lifelong surrounding, the news of his impending arrival had been whispered in hushed conversations after the wise man from Kathmandu had visited Norbu's parents unexpectedly one autumn afternoon. Norbu's father Mitesh ("one of few desires") had built a reputation beyond the village for his skill as a carpenter, helping indeed to construct some of the half-a-dozen monasteries that dotted the nearby slopes of the vast range of bleak mountains that made Nepal a country seldom visited by outsiders other than those from neighbouring lands like Bhutan, Sikkim and Tibet. His mother, Dhanya ("grateful"), a quiet woman who loved to sew and make clothing that protected her fellow villagers from the blustery winds and cold nights that were the norm for all the inhabitants of the region, faced her first pregnancy with fortitude and quiet expectation. The sudden arrival of the wise man who had travelled for days from Kathmandu initially frightened her but once Dhanya and Mitesh welcomed their surprise guest into their humble abode, she was anxious to learn of the nature of his visit.

The wise man, dressed in the robe associated with the court of the king, wasted no time in telling Norbu's parents that he would be a 'special' child whose life would be spent in service to others, deemed the greatest calling any Nepalese could hope for, other than to be a warrior defending the

isolated kingdom from invasion from warmongering lands to the north and south. To have a son in service to others, Norbu's parents knew meant a great sacrifice for them: in an instant, the realization that their unborn son would likely spend his entire life in a monastery ended dreams of grandchildren and the continuation of the family name – unless Dhanya gave birth to another son not 'chosen' for a similar high honour. The wise man had been dispatched to their home with a specific message: their son would, he said, be wilful, obstinate and rebellious. He was bringing in karma from another lifetime in which he had felt betrayed and abandoned by those around him. He would not take kindly to the idea that he had been 'chosen' for a life as a monk, albeit a monk whose dedication to helping the poor and service would make him renowned throughout the land. He would, the wise man said, be angry when told of the instructions being given to his parents by a stranger that at the onset of puberty, he must leave the family home, leave any desire for an ordinary life and head to the monastery situated many miles from the village, on the slopes of one of Nepal's highest mountains. He would resist, try to run away, become defiant. Yet, the wise man continued, he must be made to see that his destiny was already determined and any attempt to resist his predetermined path would produce dire results for his health and happiness.

Norbu's parents greeted the news with a mixture of elation and despair. They were simple people, schooled in the ways of Buddha from infancy and they understood well that being 'chosen' for the priesthood was something only granted to a special few. While it was traditional for young men to enter the many monasteries and temples that dotted the entire Nepalese landscape for a short period of time during their adolescence, it was inherently understood that they would return to their families to pursue work as farmers, carpenters, merchants or warriors. The idea of a life dedicated to solitude, service and detachment was one that few ever contemplated and that a wise man had travelled over days to share with Norbu's parents his predicted destiny was something they knew they must embrace...

Ponnleu's impending arrival in the small Cambodian town had no particular significance for her parents, their families or neighbours. Consistently giving birth to an entire brood of children was Bopha's lot in life, it was fulfilment of her duty as a woman and as the obedient wife of Veasna ("opportunity, good fortune") who worked arduously by day in the vast rice fields that provided the sustenance for the Khmer population and then at night, as a guard at the royal king's palace at Angkor. It mattered not to the couple whether Bopha ('flower') gave birth to a boy or girl. The boy would be useful in supporting the family in helping her husband in the fields; the girl someone she could train in the art of temple dancing, something she herself had been schooled in by her mother before her. This would be the couple's fifth child and of no special significance in Khmer traditions, simply another mouth to feed; secretly, Bopha hoped her next offspring would be a boy since male children would either be chosen to enter the Buddhist priesthood from an early age or begin learning a trade that could add to the family's meagre income.

As she got closer to the inevitable pain that accompanied every birth – for constant pregnancies never made the experience any less comfortable – Bopha pondered her own very existence. How had she ended up this way - when her own mother had trained her in the art of pleasuring men in hopes that she would gain the attention of a member of the Khmer court, or at the very least, one of the famed and well paid warriors who kept the country safe from the threat of invasion from neighbouring states like Siam, Laos and even Burma – was, Bopha considered, her fate. Somehow, rather than find favour at the all-powerful court, she was simply a vehicle for the production of more

children and while she loved Veasna for his constant optimism, she felt saddened that her life had become so, so ordinary. Maybe a baby girl could – as a young woman – fulfil on Bopha’s own unfulfilled dreams...

Touvalou’s birth seemed to have been blessed, born the seventh son of a seventh son. In the ancient traditions of Dahomey and in the voodoo practices that were dominant throughout the kingdom, the number seven had great significance and it was said that ‘seventh son’ men were anointed, a special gift from the Gods. There were others who declared that rather than good fortune, the seventh son whose father had also been a seventh son would in fact have a life of bad luck and misfortune. Touvalou’s parents preferred the school of thought that suggested their offspring would face a blessed life; after all to be born at a time when the country was thriving – even though there were those who condemned the royal sanctioning of the selling of young men and women to the white traders from Europe – would mean that in time, Touvalou would ascend the throne of a nation already considered rich in comparison to its neighbours. Unlike the more difficult birth of his younger brother, Dako, Touvalou’s delivery by the royal midwife was easy and news that the now-middle-aged King Efosa and Queen Ehizokie were now parents of another son quickly spread throughout the land as priests offered sacrifices in his honour. The royal soothsayer, Agba however was concerned: on examining the tiny infant for the first time, he noticed a birthmark on this forehead that alarmed him. Agba had only seen such a mark once before and he was reluctant to tell the rulers of a kingdom growing in wealth and stature that the new prince might have what he was almost sure would be a doomed life, that events he could foresee would alter his fate dramatically, that the smiling baby Touvalou would one day find himself in shackles...

Houngan was born into a long line of practitioners of voodoo that had its genesis in West Africa, two centuries before his birth. It was inevitable that from a young age, he would also be inducted into the ways of the all-powerful priests and priestesses who virtually controlled the population of Haiti, more from fear than anything else. While it was true that there was ‘good’ magic that the learned men and women could create through a series of spells and incantations bringing luck and fortune to those willing to pay for the services of the priests and priestesses, it was the darker side of the practice that kept the poor masses whose descendants were only but a generation or two removed from their African ancestors enslaved. Houngan’s birth itself was celebrated by his parents, Atabie (“mother of the Sky God”) and Elice (“Lord is my God”) - both revered and high in the pecking order of Haiti’s voodoo hierarchy – for he was their first son. It had been foretold that he would become one of the island’s most powerful purveyors of the voodoo traditions, evoking the names of Damballah-Weydo (the giver of life) and the fearsome Baron Samedi (the master of the dead) in an instant to ensure his sway over the people of Cap Haitien, his family home. A large baby at birth with a noticeable birthmark (a indent in his forehead between his eyes), his parents noticed that – unlike the offspring of their peers – Houngan had what seemed like an inherent malevolent look in his eyes from the time they first opened as if he came into the world with a predetermined plan...

Beulah was not exactly expected. Millie and Joe Parker struggled to make ends meet in the tiny town on the outskirts of Natchez, Mississippi that had been their home since they met as starry-eyed teenagers picking cotton in the surrounding fields. Marriage was inevitable once Millie became pregnant with her first daughter, Ida Mae and within a year, she and Joe had added a son, David Lee. Both had agreed that the challenges of bringing up a family in poverty was enough of a deterrent to

any more Parker children so when Millie began to put on weight, she hoped it was simply because of her desire to find comfort by eating raw sugar cane, easily available as one of the main crops harvested in the area. It soon became apparent that it wasn't sugar cane that was the cause – but rather the good sweet loving that Joe gave Millie at least two or three times a week, when he wasn't bedding other women. Joe's reputation as a skilful lover was widely known throughout the town and while Millie tried to deny it, she knew when she married him that he could never be a one-woman man. Joe didn't greet the news of a third pregnancy well, accusing Millie of doing nothing to protect herself from once again becoming a mother. It mattered not: a child was on the way and the strict religious beliefs that Millie had adopted from her own mother prevented her from considering the kind of 'accident' she knew other women underwent to terminate a pregnancy. So it was on a long Friday the 13th night in January 1912 that Millie gave birth to a chubby baby. The baby's loud cries seemed like a warning sign to Millie: both Ida Mae and David Lee were easy births, babies who made little noise to announce their earthly arrival. This girl wants to be heard, Millie thought, as she finally fell asleep after the eight hours of labour had sapped her strength. Lord, she prayed, please make her a peaceful child! But Beulah Jean Parker would be nothing but quiet and peaceful as Millie and Joe would quickly discover...

David's was a difficult birth for his mother Frances. Bearing her first child at the age of 37 was considered at the time, late in life. All of her sisters had given birth at much younger ages and for Frances, it was more of a duty and obligation than a joy. The same held true of her marriage to Mark, whom she had wed the year before when he was 36. It was more a case of neither wanting to be left on the shelf than a matter of true love as became apparent through the 25 years they spent together before Mark, a London fish fryer with a good reputation in his trade, finally left to live with Sadie, the Irish woman with whom he had been having an affair since 1963. As Mark would reveal to David much later in life, Frances wasn't keen on sex: after the birth of David's sister Sylvia four years after his, she had stopped having any physical content with Mark. The lack of intimacy between the pair did not bode well for the emotional health of either of their children: that both would spend many years single was hardly a surprise, given the consistent lack of harmony between their parents, growing up in Kilburn in North-West London. As it was, Frances went into labour on February 14 and both she and Mark were happy that their first offspring might be a 'Valentine's Day' baby. But it wasn't to be: bringing with him lifetimes of challenge, David's soul was more than a little reluctant to experience being human once more.

More than eight hours after the painful contractions that heralded his return in a new incarnation, Frances delivered David Peter Nathan at exactly 2:15am on February 15, 1948 – when – as astrologers later revealed, every single planet was in retrograde, moving backwards. That nugget of knowledge hardly surprised him when he learned it: clearing karma from six previous challenging existences was not going to be easy, his spiritual guides, the Polynesian warrior Sandara and the Greek priest Pythagoras, had suggested and would require true fortitude and faith. Perhaps David's first cry, resembling the wail of the blues singer who had died just 15 years earlier in a car crash in Mississippi, was an indicator of what he would face...

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