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✦ GILGULIM: HOW TO FIGURE OUT YOUR TAFKID (PART 2) ✦



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ROSH HAYESHIVA, YESHIVAS TIFERES AVIGDOR  
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# PARSHAS EIKEV



HARAV YISROEL BROG, SHLITA | ROSH HAYESHIVA, YESHIVAS TIFERES AVIGDOR

SHIUR PRESENTED IN 5765

## CONTINUATION OF THE DISCUSSION ON GILGULIM

Welcome everybody to this evening *shiur*. We want to express our thanks to Hakadosh Baruch Hu for enabling us to teach about His wonderful Torah, about His wonderful ways to His children, and we hope to raise the level of our relationship with Hakadosh Baruch Hu, our commitment to Him, and our appreciation of who we are, what we are, and where we are heading.

Last week, we began discussing the subject of *gilgulim*, of reincarnation. This is a subject that most people are intrigued by. This is a subject that most people wonder about. It's a subject that gives us insight and understanding of how this world and the next world work. One of the greatest challenges that the *yetzer hara* presents to the Jewish people is our lack of understanding of difficulties that are presented either to us as individuals, to our nation, or to people at large. There are many, many people who use the excuse of the Holocaust, or other tragedies that they have read about or have seen or heard about as an excuse of why they reject their Judaism. And that's a pity. And the understanding of this subject in the light of *gilgul* can help us greatly.

### WHAT BECAME OF VASHTI AND ACHASHVEROSH?

Every one of us is familiar with the story of Purim. One of the central figures was Haman. He was *the* central figure. The story starts off with Vashti, the famous queen of Achashverosh. Now, Talmud Yerushalmi, records the following story (Ritva, Yoma 9a)<sup>1</sup>. There was a certain Jew who owned a cow and he came to a situation where he had no money and he was forced to sell his cow. He sold it to a non-Jew. And then Shabbos came and the non-Jew wanted to use the cow to plow his field and the cow refused to plow on Shabbos. He was beating his cow with his whip to get it to move. The stubborn cow wouldn't move. This guy said, "I've heard of stubborn mules but I've never heard of stubborn cows." The cow wouldn't budge. So the non-Jew came back to the owner and said, "You know, I've got a problem with your cow. It doesn't work on Shabbos." So the former owner of the cow went over to the cow and whispered in his ear the following message, "Until now, you were in my possession but now that I sold you to this new owner, you have to plow for him, because now your new owner is a non-Jew and he is allowed to use you." And from that time on, the cow began to work on Shabbos.

The *goy* went out of his mind. Completely out of his mind. "He's talking to a cow?! He's giving him a whole *shmuz*, a whole *shiur*, about Shabbos?!" So the *goy* converted.

Now the seller received a nickname because of that. They called him "ben Torosa". "Torosa" is the Aramaic word for cow. So this man was known as the "son of a cow."

And indeed there is a famous rabbi in the Talmud named Rabbi Yochanan ben Torosa, the "son of the cow." What kind of name is that? But the reason why they called him that

<sup>1</sup> ר' יוחנן בן תורתא. אמרו בירושלמי שנקרא בן על שם שמכר פרתו לגוי ולא רצתה לחרוש בשבת עד שהלך ולחש לה באגוז.

was because of this story with the cow.

Now, most of us read these stories and we take our little intellect and our little intelligence and our even-less comprehension and we say, “Oh, it’s a comic? The *gemara* is a comic book? This is called the holy Torah?! It’s a cute story, you know what I mean? It’s in Disney World, *lehavdil elef havdalos*. What kind of place does it have in the *gemara*?” And I could see people saying to me, “Oh, you believe this story, rabbi? Eh, I don’t believe this story. I have a little more comprehension than you do.”

But the Rema MiPano writes the following.<sup>2</sup> That story did not make it into the *gemara* just because it was a cow story. He explains that this cow was a *gilgul*. It was a reincarnation of Vashti, the original queen, the wife of Achashverosh. And the Talmud tells us that she was notorious for being evil. She would force Jewish girls to work on Shabbos (Megillah 12b). When they would refuse, she would personally beat them. So now, she was reincarnated into this cow. And she refused to go to work on Shabbos in order to correct what she did. And that chassid who owned the cow, knew what this cow was about and he understood this wasn’t just a regular cow. He didn’t think he had a trained monkey. He understood this cow was a *neshamah* and he really didn’t want to have benefit from it. He didn’t want anything to do with it because he didn’t want to have anything to do with Vashti, so therefore he sold it. And he whispered into her ear what he did. And the *goy* who converted, who was the buyer – he was a *gilgul* of Achashverosh, he was a reincarnation of Achashverosh. And then she had a *tikun*. That was her correction.

You have to understand, these stories are not just *stam* stories. You can’t go talk to any cow. Don’t try it. You go whisper to a cow in her ear, and you might get her tail give a swish on your head. First of all, even if the cow were a *gilgul*, it wouldn’t want to be talked to by you. That’s the first thing. He would want to be addressed by some holy soul. Second of all, not every cow is a *gilgul*.

Let me tell you the following story. We have all heard interesting stories. Today there are daily bloggers of weird stories from around the world. Imagine reading the following story: A dog, a pit bull, was walking down the street and there was a lady walking down the street too, carrying the groceries. And all of a sudden, the pit bull pulled away from its owner, and attacked the woman and it tore her to pieces. Then the son of the woman heard his mother screaming for help. He came rushing out of the house with a big stick, and he broke this dog into pieces. But it was too late for the mother. Is this a story that is unheard of in our lives? I’ve heard stories like this. The famous case in California, was such a case. There are all kinds of stories.

## JUSTICE IN THE TIME OF THE RAMAK

Let me tell you about a story that happened in the times of the holy Ramak (R’ Moshe Cordovero, 1522-1570), one of the contemporaries of the Arizal (1534-1572), who writes it in his *sefer*.

He said, one day there something transpired that shook everyone up. A woman was attacked by a wild dog, and ripped to pieces. Her son came and killed the dog and a short while later, the son died. Everybody was talking. It was a crazy story. He says, *ve’eineinu ra’u*, our eyes saw this story and we knew exactly what it was all about. This nice lady,

<sup>2</sup> ושתי נתגלגלה בהיא פרה שמכר אותו חסיד ולא היתה רוצה לחרוש בשבת היא ושתי כי היא היתה רוצה שיעשו בנות ישראל מלאכה בשבת ואותו חסיד היה מכירה כדי שלא להנאותה גם כן מכרה ולחש באונה כמו שלחש אליהו לב' פרים ואותו גוי המתגיר על זה הוא אחשורוש ואו היה תיקונה (גלגולי שממות לרמ"ע מפאנו, אות ו')

a very sweet woman, happened to have been disloyal to her husband. She was a married woman and she had been disloyal. The adulterer then died, and he came back into this world as a reincarnation of a dog. His job then was to mete out punishment to the woman with whom he lived. So he attacked her in the street and he put her to death. Then the son of the adulterer who was born from that union, came and killed the dog, who really was the soul of his father. He punished the adulterer. Then Hashem, in his kindness to rid the world of *mamzeirim* (a mamzer is somebody who is born from an adulterous union. Not from somebody who is not married; somebody who is born from a married woman. *Mamzeirim* are not allowed to marry into the Jewish people). So Hakadosh Baruch Hu did a kindness and took this person out of the world. The Ramak says, the people around were amazed at what happened. He said only a few individuals knew the *emes*. He says, "What I'm testifying to you is something which I beheld with my own eyes."

### A TRAGIC SHIDDUCH STORY THAT SHOOK THE CITY OF TZFAS

Another amazing story. In the second half of the 16th century, there was a rabbi who headed a *yeshivah* in Tzfas. His name was Rabbi Avraham Angel (Galanti) (d. 1588). He was a talmid of both the Ramak and, later, the Arizal. He had a wife who was a big *tzaddeikes*, a very righteous woman. And they had one daughter, a very special girl. One day, the rabbi's wife, this *tzaddeikes*, takes ill. And before long, she is on her deathbed. Right before this woman dies, she calls her husband and she says, "My dear husband, Avraham, we have one daughter. Please see to it that she marries a great scholar so that it will be a *nachas* for me in the next world." The woman died. After 30 days passed, the husband got to work trying to find a *shidduch* for his daughter. He picked the best from among his students to go out with his daughter. But whoever he brought, the daughter said no.

One day, the father saw the girl was being just a little bit picky, as they call it. It was ridiculous. No one was good enough for her. So the father sat down and asked her, "Why are you refusing? I'm bringing you good boys. You're not saying they are not nice. You just say, 'I don't want.' Can you explain to me what the story is here?" She said, "Yes, I'll tell you the story. My mother has been coming to me in a dream and she told me in very strong terms, that I should get married to a certain boy in your *yeshivah* that you would never ever think of setting me up with." So the father says, "Who is this boy?" She said, "The boy is originally from Spain. He comes from a family of the Marranos who got lost and destroyed in Spain." This boy made his way to Tzfas and they didn't know anything about his family. They didn't know who his father was, or who his mother was. He was not an outstanding scholar. He had a hard time. He lacked the basic education because of his background. He was a nice person, but the *rosh yeshivah* never dreamed that he was going to be the husband of his great daughter.

So the *rosh yeshivah* was shocked. He said, "How often did your mother come to you?" She said, "Almost every night. Whenever you get me a *shidduch*, she tells me: 'Say no to this. There is only one *shidduch* for you.'" So the father said, "I believe it, because your mother came to me also. But I just said to her that is a ridiculous thing. How can I let my daughter marry this *bachur*? He is a nice boy but has no *shaychus*. It's not for you." Nu, they didn't know what to do. So they decided, they are going to go ask the Arizal. The Arizal was living in Tzfas at that time and they went to him. The Ari Hakadosh said, "You should know that your daughter and that young man are



soulmates. They are the true *bashert* and they must go through this marriage for the correction of their souls. And besides that,” he told the father, “this boy has nothing. He has no money, he has no family. I want you to give him every penny you own as a dowry. Write him over everything. Whatever you own.”

That’s a ridiculous request to make of someone. I mean, tell him to support them, assist them - Ok. But to write over everything you own?!

So the father said, “Okay.” What could the father do? They got married. They made the *chasunah*. The daughter became pregnant and they were all happy. And then she went into labor and while she was in labor she died and the child died also in the womb. The father, with all his *tzaar* that he went through with his wife, now he also lost his daughter and his only grandchild, he lost everything in the world. He was obviously *tzubrochen*. He was broken to pieces. But he said, “Listen, I know Hashem has a reason.” So he was lucky, the Arizal was still living. He went to the Arizal again. And he said, “Rabbeinu, can you explain this to me? You told me they should get married. You told me this was the *tikun*. You set me up here. What is going on?”

So the Arizal calmed him down. The man was understandably a little distraught. The Arizal told him the following story. Once upon a time, there was a couple that got married and then the *shidduch* didn’t work out. They didn’t like each other anymore. They fell out. It’s normal if people don’t like each other, each one tries to make the other one be the evil one. He is tough, she is a witch, she’s this, he’s that. It’s her fault, his fault. He did it, she did it. Over and over. Nu. One day, the woman came to the rabbi and said, “Rabbi, my husband is an abuser.” If you want to get somebody into trouble, you’ve got to say they are an abuser.

Anyway, the girl went to the rabbi and said, “Rabbi, my husband beat me. He said, “Really? Do you have any signs?” “Yeah, I was pregnant and I lost the child.” “That’s bad. A *frum* man, a young man, should attack his wife and kick her in the stomach and *mamash* cause her to lose the baby?!” That was it. The rabbi called the young man in and the rabbi said, “Give your wife a *get* right now. You’ve got to pay her all kinds of money.” He made him leave the marriage empty-handed and he told the guy, “You are wicked, you are evil. Your actions are unforgivable.” And he told the guy, “Get out of town.” He drove him out of town. And the woman went on with her life.

The *emes* was, the woman herself knocked her stomach and she killed her child. But she understood, if she would say somebody beat her, they would say, “Prove it. Show what you have.” You know what I mean? So she killed her own child. And then she blamed her husband. And that rabbi believed her. Who wouldn’t believe such a story? Who would think a lady would make up such a story?! And he didn’t investigate it properly and he cleaned the guy out. They each went through their life.

And eventually, they all came to the heavenly court. They all arrived at the pearly gates, as they called them. Hakadosh Baruch Hu, in the *beis din shel maaleh*, judged all three of them. And Hashem *paskened* that the rabbi, the husband and the wife all have to come back to the world again. And this is going to be the *gzar din*. The woman would be killed by her child, because she took her child’s life. Now her child would take her away. She killed an innocent child for no reason, just to get her way. The husband would come down to this world this time and he’s going to enjoy *nachas*, for all those years that he suffered from her. That *rav* is going to come down again to this world and he’s going

to be this woman's father. He's going to pay through his nose, and he is going to have to endure financial and emotional *tzaros* for for all the *tzaros* he caused this young man financially and emotionally.

So the Arizal says to Rav Angel (Galanti), "Nu, isn't it an amazing story?" He said, "Let me tell you something. You are the one who came back – this story is the story of your life." He says, "Your daughter and that *chassan* were the couple that came to you in a previous lifetime. And in the measure that they measured out, they got back what they deserved." This is what you must know.

### THE IMPORTANCE OF DOING TESHUVAH TO AVOID GILGUL

I read this story over and over. When we hear such stories, when we hear about tragedies – we ask "Why? What? When?" We hear about something terrible someone did and we say, "Where is Hashem? He's letting him get away with murder." There is nothing in the world that is given away for free. You have to understand that. This is what the story of *gilgul* is about. Every one of us has exhibited behaviors – good ones and bad ones. And you decided, "Eh, it was not that bad." I'm sure that wife thought it wasn't the worst thing either. "Eh, it was a child, an abortion, *nisht gefערלאך, ahin, aher.*" A person has to know, there is no such thing. You took somebody's life, a child's life. That's on your hands. You must do *teshuvah*. You must do *teshuvah* for such an action! If a person did something wrong, he has to do *teshuvah*. He thinks if he forgot about it and no one knows about it, so then, "I'm scot-free." But there is no such thing as scot-free!

### R' CHAIM VITAL - A TZADDIK IN A GILGUL

If you take a look at the work of the Rambam, Maimonides, his famous work is called the *Yad Hachazaka* on Jewish law. The Rambam wrote many works, but his main work is on the law of the whole Torah.<sup>3</sup> One of the two famous commentators on the Rambam is R' Yosef Karo. He was the author of the *Kesef Mishneh* (aside from Beis Yosef and Shulchan Aruch). And then the other commentator was the *Maggid Mishneh*.

The *Maggid Mishneh's* name was R' Chaim Vidal (c. 1360), spelled with a *daled*, with a "d." The Arizal's star pupil was named R' Chaim Vital (1543-1620) with a "t." In the Hebrew language, the sounds "T" and "D" are interchangeable. And R' Chaim Vital said, "My *rebbe*, the Arizal, told me the following story. He said, "He (the Arizal) came to the world to make sure I am corrected, I finish my job. Hopefully I will." He said, "Your name is the same as the *Maggid Mishneh* who lived five generations ago, just with a switch of a *daled*." And he told him the following.

"After you died as the *Maggid Mishneh*, since you were on a very high level, you had to come back again to this world because you once made a mistake regarding Shabbos. You came back in a man named R' Shaul from Trisk. After that, you came back as somebody named Rabbi Yehoshua Suriano, and he was a wealthy man. He lived until an old age and was very charitable. Then you came back in a *gilgul* as a *bachur* named Avraham and you died by your *bar mitzvah*. And this is the next time you came back, as R' Chaim Vital."

R' Chaim Vital writes at length what his *rebbe* told him why he came back every time. What he did in his first *gilgul*. What he did in the second *gilgul*. And he was told that the reason why he died at age thirteen in the previous lifetime was not because of

<sup>3</sup> Ed. note: this shiur was given to a mostly non-observant audience.

anything he did in that lifetime but because of what he did in the previous one when he was very charitable, he once knowingly ate *chelev*. The Torah says, those who eat *chelev* die young. It says it in the Torah in black and white. A person sometimes thinks he can beat the system, but Hashem has different plans, and when it says a person is going to die young or live a short life, it doesn't necessarily have to be in this lifetime. We think everything that has to happen will happen in this lifetime. It can happen during the next lifetime. The Arizal explained that now he came back as R' Chaim Vital to fix himself up with *teshuvah*.

These are things we have to be aware of. A person shouldn't make any mistakes in their hashkafah regarding why things happen in the world.

The Arizal explained to R' Chaim Vital, "I'll give you a proof. You have an obsession in a certain area." R' Chaim Vital was a rabbi and he dealt with the kashrus of meat, and every butcher cuts out the *chelev* part of an animal before they sell it. "Whenever you get meat and you have to devein it (*nikkur*) and you cut out the *chelev*, you'll notice you cut out twice as much as any other rabbi in our city. And you'll notice that in this city, the other people are always mocking you: "Why are you throwing out good meat?" Why do you think you have that obsession? You think you're just a nervous person? No. It's because this is what caused your life to be shortened, and in your subconscious, you are aware of it."

### DISORDERS? A OPPORTUNITY TO WAKE UP AND FIX SOMETHING

People shouldn't think that nervous disorders, obsessive-compulsive behavior comes about for no reason. Some people wash their hands intensely. I once saw a young man. I said, "Young man, did you ever think why you go through this?" He said, "I'm just trying to hide it from people. I don't want anybody to know about it." I said, "Yeah, but did you ever think about why you do it?" He said, "Doctors say you can't cure it. You have to train yourself, work on yourself, this and that." I said, "I have an *eitzah* for you. Learn the *halachos* of *netilas yadayim*. Learn the *halachos* of washing your hands." I said, "You're a *frum* person. It's not uncommon for somebody to take this law lightly. The Talmud says that people who take this law lightly, even if they perceive it as a small thing, it could have echoes and future consequences." I said, "Learn the *halachos* and become scrupulous in them." He called me up six months later to tell me that he doesn't do it anymore. I say use your obsession. I don't know for sure, but try to find something, maybe you did something wrong with your hands.

People who are nervous about certain situations, it doesn't just happen. Is it a condition? Let's say, someone's mother was scared and she didn't feed him right, or the lighting in the house wasn't good so he is scared of nighttime. All this is *narishkeit*. The real meaning is, you've been through something in your life. This is part of your history. You have no idea how many times you have come back again and again. And a person has to know there is a cause for what is happening in his life.

### MAKING A TIKKUN THROUGH SHECHITA AND/OR EATING

A person can come back in the form of an animal. It's very common. People come back in the form of an animal. And if they are *zocheh*, what happens is, they get slaughtered for *kosher* food and they're eaten by somebody who is a *tzaddik* and they're eaten on Shabbos or on Yom Tov. And they get their *tikun*. If *chas veshalom* they're eaten by a *rasha*, or if they're not slaughtered properly, they can't get their *tikkun*.



There's a very interesting thing. The *sefarim* say that when you slaughter an animal, you have to slaughter the animal with a very sharp knife (without the slightest nick in the knife) to minimize the pain of the animal. You think a little nick will make a difference? But the *sefarim* say that the reason is because you want to enable the *neshamah*, the soul that has become reincarnated into this animal, to go out easily. Even though the slaughter is for its benefit, when it goes out in a difficult way, it causes unnecessary *tzaar* and pain.

I once saw a story brought down in a very good source. During the bullfighting in Spain, there was a certain bull that was outstanding, and known for its viciousness. It was a prize bull. One night, a young man has a dream and his father comes to him in a dream and says, "My dear child, I'm suffering terribly. You know that famous bull? My *neshamah* is in that bull. I am subject to torture all day long. It's no picnic and eventually they are going to kill me and I'm not going to have my *tikun*, my correction. Please do whatever it takes to buy that bull. Any money that I left you, spend all of it. Whatever it takes, get your hands on that bull. Slaughter it by a *kosher shochet* and distribute the meat to poor Jews and to scholars. Then I'll have my *tikun*."

A person should not take this kind of story lightheartedly.

### HAVING MERCY ON A PERSON IN A GILGUL

There is a famous story in the Talmud (Bava Metzia 85a) which we also don't understand, that the Arizal explains in this fashion, too. One of the great figures in the Talmud was somebody known as Rabbeinu Hakadosh. Rabbi. He was the one who compiled the *mishnah*. The *gemara* tells us that one day he was walking past a market place and suddenly a cow came running up to him, an animal that was awaiting slaughter, and it buried its head in his robes, as if to be saved. And he said to the animal, "*Leich*, go back, *ki lekach notzarta*, this is what you were created for."

The *gemara* says that from that day on, for the next thirteen years, Rabbi's life was living *gehinnom*. Blood came out of him, pus oozed out of him, he suffered from his teeth, he suffered from his bones, he suffered from leprosy. It was *geferlach*. And the Talmud says that they told him, "It says that you have to behave with *verachamav al kol maasav*, you have to have mercy on all things even a calf that is going to be slaughtered because that was the correction it needed."

So everybody always asks, is that the kind of punishment you get? He didn't slam the cow. He just told him, "Go, for that you were created." What was the big *avlah*, what was the big wrong here?

And the *teretz* is, this animal was not just another animal. It had in it the *neshamah*, the soul of a Jew. And when the person saw Rabbi, he came running to Rabbi. The animal ran over to Rabbi and he said to Rabbi, "Please be *mesaken* my *neshamah*. You have the ability to be *mesaken* my *neshamah*." *Tzaddikim* have the ability to correct souls.

R' Chatzkel Levenstein (1885-1974) who was the *mashgiach* in the Mir and later on in Ponevezh testified, "I was present by the Chofetz Chaim (1838-1933) and numerous souls were bothering him and beseeching him to correct them." Unbelievable! So with Rabbi, that was a soul who needed correction. You know what Rabbi said to him? "Go back to get slaughtered because that is your judgment. The *gzar din* in *shamayim* was made on you to be slaughtered." Because Rabbi didn't have mercy on this *rasha*, on

this soul of a human being that was inside this animal, that is why Rebbi was held responsible. It wasn't about having mercy on a cow. We don't save cows. We don't believe in animal rights and leaving cows to live for the next 50 years. Their purpose is to serve mankind, to feed mankind. But human beings, that is an understandable case for having mercy. It sheds a little more light onto the story.

### GILGULIM IN SPAIN, IN THE CANTONISTS

These stories go on and you read the stories in the Torah. So many stories in the Torah that are difficult to understand. There was the story of the Cantonists. One of the most horrible stories. Jewish children in Russia were often conscripted in the army as young as eight or nine years old, for 25 years. During these 25 years of service in the Russian army, many were tortured and forced to give up their Judaism. All the worst things possible. And then they came out. Most of them came out broken and shattered.

So they once asked the Chofetz Chaim. What is this? Kids eight or nine years old! I mean, such a horrendous way. They used to come down the street and kidnap kids, rip them away from their parents. Their parents didn't know anything about it. This was horrendous. You know what the Chofetz Chaim said? "These are souls that are left over from the time of the Judges (Shoftim). During the era of the Judges, there were people who served the idol called Baal. (One of the most famous idols was the Baal). And Hashem brought about in Spain the auto-da-fe (an Inquisition-era practice of public punishment, typically ritual execution) and the people who were burned alive in Spain, were from those people who used all their energy to burn false idols for idolatry. And there are still a couple leftover and this is their *tikun*."

Of course we don't understand this. We look at everything in the world with such "tiny little eyes." We can't see. It's not possible to see. But hopefully this shiur will shed a little light on this topic.

"I Would Have Had to Come Back as a Barking Dog"

Let me tell you a story with the Vilna Gaon (1720-1797) that is extremely enlightening. This story is written by the Chofetz Chaim himself in one of his books. The Gaon of Vilna, who lived in the 1700s, accepted upon himself during a certain period in his life to go into exile. He went incognito, and traveled with nothing, so no one would know who he was. Big *tzaddikim* had such a custom of putting themselves through this.

So one time, on his trips, he needed to travel from one place to another place. So he hired a wagon and the wagon driver happened to be a *yid*. On the way, the horse went off the road and it went into a garden that was bordering the road and did some damage in the garden. When the *goy* who owned the place realized the damage had been done, he came running to the wagon and tried to hold it up. He wanted compensation. The wagon driver started beating his horse and he took off, and he left the Vilna Gaon waiting there. Nu. The *goy* was so angry that he started to beat the Vilna Gaon, and he forgot about the wagon, forgot about the horse. He decided the Vilna Gaon was a good replacement for the horse.

What the Gaon should have done was to tell the *goy*, "Excuse me, I'm not the wagon driver. I'm just the passenger. I didn't do this to you." He didn't say one time

that he is not at fault and that the fault lies with the wagon driver. He should have said something. What would we say? “It wasn’t me! I was a passenger in the car. The driver fell asleep – he was talking on his cellphone and he fell asleep and his car went over the side of the road and it ran into your hedges. What do you want from me?!” But instead he was *mechazek* himself, he strengthened himself, and didn’t say a word. Now, the *goy* wanted the Vilna Gaon to pay for the damage. The Vilna Gaon didn’t have money, so the *goy* kept on beating him, and the Vilna Gaon didn’t say anything. After a while, when the Vilna Gaon related this story, somebody asked him, “Why didn’t you say something? Why didn’t you save yourself? Why did you sit there in silence and take the suffering?” He said, “I didn’t open my mouth to make myself righteous because if I would have opened my mouth and put the blame on that wagon driver, I would have been considered as a *malshin*, a snitch, someone who gives over a Jew into a non-Jew’s hand.” (Not being a *malshin* is one of the *yesodos*, the basics of Yiddishkeit). “Not only that, after my death I would have been forced to come back into this world as a reincarnation, a barking dog, which is the punishment of people who relate *lashon hara*. All my Torah and all my *mitzvos* would not have helped.”

The Chofetz Chaim writes, “I heard this story from the *gaon hatzaddik* the Chosen Yehoshua (R’ Yehoshua Heller, 1814-1880) who heard it from R’ Dovid Tevel (1794-1861), the Nachalas Dovid, who heard it from his rebbi’s mouth, R’ Chaim Volozhin (1749-1821), who was the star student of the Vilna Gaon.

You know what we think? “Eh, we’ll ‘bark’ at somebody. That guy did it, go get that guy. We’ll throw somebody to the dogs. Anything to save my back.” You don’t realize, Hashem puts you in a situation. Here is a person who takes another person to court. You know what he thinks? “Let him learn a lesson. I’ll teach him a lesson in court!” And you think you throw somebody to the dogs and you feel good about yourself because you can’t handle it. In a rough world, people are pushed sometimes. But *chas veshalom*, you have to know, you have to come back to this world. *Oy vey*, you want to come back to this world again and have to play with these kind of people again? What do you need it for? That is what a person has to understand.

This is where we are going to end today. Later on we will discuss a very important Vilna Gaon, of how one can actually figure out what he came to this world for to correct. Why did he come back as a reincarnation? How a person can determine that from certain conditions that exist in his lifetime, from certain behavior, personality traits that he has. We are going to maybe shed some more light on this subject and hopefully we will get a better understanding and we will grow closer to Hashem and we will realize the kindness that Hashem has truly bestowed upon each and every one of us.

And we will realize Hashem’s amazing patience that he has had with us and our families. We will come to think that maybe I have not been such a committed, sincere Jew. Maybe I have not reciprocated in the relationship with Hashem like it is expected of me and hopefully we will get cracking on it to do a better job, to live up to our responsibilities and *im yirtze Hashem* then we will be *zocheh* to a wonderful, gut, *gebentched* new year.

## THE BOTTOM LINE

The above, riveting stories about gilgulim have given us a small glimpse into a world of *din* and the *Daayan*, where the necessary punishments, and ultimately, requisite *tikkunim* of *neshamos* and souls are brought about with a laser-like meticulousness and precision. However, above all perhaps, when we see or hear such stories, we should see the tremendous chesed from Hashem in all that transpires behind the scenes, which, to the naked eye almost always looks tragic and incomprehensible - especially when "bad things happen to good people." To even consider for a moment that the souls of Vashti and Achashverosh - the quintessential *resha'im* - should be offered a chance of a *tikkun*, ought to help us *mechazek* ourselves that Hashem is guiding all of us to fulfill our ultimate purpose in this world. It should also give us a powerful resolve to focus on fulfilling our unique roles and to lovingly embrace the tremendous gift of *teshuva* to help us avoid the unnecessary heartaches.

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