



Not in Our Hands

"Paraoh commanded his entire nation saying, 'You shall throw every son that is born into the river, and every daughter shall live.'" (Shemos 1:22). Rashi informs us that even the Mitzri boys were drowned. Why did Paroh issue such a cruel edict? His astrologers informed him that the savior of Israel was born that day. However, they did not know if he was a Jew or a Mitzri. They saw that in the end he would be stricken by water. Therefore, Paroh decreed that all boys shall be thrown into the river.

The ways of Divine Providence are astounding! Not only did Paroh not succeed in drowning Moshe Rabbeinu, but also the very river itself brought the infant's basket to Batya his daughter. She then brought Moshe to her father's house, and he was raised in the royal palace! Irony of ironies; years later, Paroh saw the very same boy that he raised bring plagues of destruction upon his land.

The Steipler shares an insight into this parasha in his sefer, Bircas Peretz. A man has many thoughts and plans to carry out his will. However, they are not able to change Divine Providence one iota. A person's fate for the year is decreed on Rosh Hashanah. All of his *hishtadlus* (efforts) will not alter that decree. Only *tefillah* (prayer), *teshuvah* (correcting sins), and spiritual merits can help him. If the *hishtadlus* appears successful, it is due to a good decree from Above. On the other hand, if the decree is negative, the very plans that he places his faith in can turn against him. This was Paroh's unfortunate fate.

The Steipler then mentions another villain who tried to wipe out the Jewish nation – Haman. He had a plan to kill all of the Jews on the thirteenth of Adar. That very same day turned out to be the day of victory for the Jews! He planned to hang Mordechai on a gallows, and irony of ironies, he was hung on the same gallows. This all demonstrates that we are in Hashem's hands. If He Wills something to happen, none of our plans can stop it.

Parashas Shemos is the beginning of an eight-week period, ending just before Purim Katan, called *Shovavim Tat*. The words are an acronym of the first letters of the parshios of these eight weeks. The word *shovavim* also refers to a person who is wandering off the track. These weeks of *Shovavim* are a time of *teshuvah*

for the Jewish people. "*Shuvu bonim shovavim*," "Return O wayward sons." We can use the Steipler's insight as a powerful tool for *teshuvah*. If we live with the realization that our fate is in Hashem's Hands, then we will turn to Him for everything that we need. We will do His Will with a complete heart. Let us use these weeks of *Shovavim Tat*, beginning with Paroh, and ending with a prelude to Purim, to return to Hashem. "*Shuvu bonim shovavim!*"

Kinderlach . . .
We would all like to see our plans succeed. Teshuva is the key. The Mishna gives us an insight into how it works. "Do His Will as you would do your own will, so that He may do your will just as He does His Will" (Pirkei Avos 2:4). Teshuva is returning to Hashem by doing His Will. You want to fulfill His commandments. Therefore, His Will becomes your will. Your plans are His plans. Therefore, He will do your will because you are pleasing Him. He will make your plans succeed. There is only one agenda – Ratson Hashem. May well all merit to fulfill it.



Be Happy for Him

"Yaakov, I have great news for you."
 "What is it, Avi?"
 "I was just accepted into the top *shiur* (class) of the Yeshiva."
 "Avi that is wonderful! I am truly happy for you."
 "Yaakov, I always enjoy telling you good news."
 "I always enjoy hearing good news, Avi. Especially news about people's successes."
 "That is precisely why I enjoy telling you. What is your secret, Yaakov? How are you so happy for other people?"
 "Why shouldn't I be happy, Avi? Hashem has blessed a person with success. That makes him happy. He wants to share his

happiness with others. I give him pleasure by joining in his happiness. Also, Hashem shows His love by granting him success. Shouldn't I love someone who Hashem loves?"

"You have the right attitude, Yaakov. Not everyone thinks so positively. Some people are jealous."

"That is an *aveyra* (sin) which is listed in the Aseres HaDibros. On the other hand, being happy with another person's accomplishments is a mitzvah. Rav Shmuel Hominer, in his sefer Eved Hamelech points out the source from this week's parasha."

"Really? Where?"

"Hashem says, 'He (Aharon) is going out to meet you (Moshe) and when he sees you he will rejoice his heart' (Shemos 4:14). Rashi comments that one might have thought that Aharon would be resentful that Moshe rose to greatness. After all, he was the younger brother. He also fled Mitzraim 68 years before, leaving his older brother Aharon to shoulder the burden of leading the people. Quite the contrary! Aharon rejoiced in his heart. Not just a superficial happiness. For this mitzvah, he merited to wear the *choshen* (breastplate) on his heart. Rav Hominer relates that we are commanded to be happy and have a good heart for our friend's good fortune and accomplishments. Therefore Avi, I am doing a mitzvah every time that I am happy for another person."

"Yaakov, may you merit many more mitzvos."

Kinderlach . . .
Did your friend just get a good grade in his test? Be happy for him! Did the neighbor just have a baby? Rejoice together! Did your sister just get a new Shabbos dress? Enjoy her happiness! Sharing people's good fortunes makes them even happier. And it gives you a big mitzvah. Which should make you happy. And of course we know that our mitzvos make Hashem happy. So, join in and make everyone happy!

- Parasha Questions
- Which houses did Hashem make for the midwives? (Rashi 1:21)
 - Why did Moshe's mother put the pitch on the outside of the basket? (Rashi 2:3)
 - Who was in charge of Paroh's house? (Rashi 2:11)
 - How did Yisro know that Moshe was a descendant of Yaakov? (Rashi 2:20)
 - What was the staff that became a snake hinting to? (Rashi 4:3)