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Everything is in Hashem's Hands

The other week I came across a fascinating book on my coffee table that I haven't seen before. It's called *Zoom* by Istvan Banyai. It's a 64-page storybook without any words. Each page zooms out one level from the previous page. The effect is of a movie camera panning backward, faster and farther away.

The first page is red, then on the next page we see the red crest of a rooster, followed by the rooster sitting on a fence on the next page. Then children peering out of a widow at the rooster on the fence followed by a view through the front door of the house to see the children. The next page is an aerial view of all of the houses in their village, then of a girl playing with her village toy set, who were all on a picture on the cover of a magazine held by a boy sitting on a lounge chair next to a pool on a cruise ship which was part of an advertisement on the side of a bus on a TV show watched by a cowboy who was at the center of an Arizona stamp. The stamp was on a letter held by a Tribal Chief on a beach in Australia seen by the pilot of a prop plane viewed against the backdrop of planet Earth which looks like a spec from farther out in space.

When we think we're seeing reality in front of us, there's always a deeper level to consider.

In our parsha, Vayechi, it seemed to Yosef's brothers that with Yaakov's death Yosef's attitude toward them had changed. They felt that Yosef was revealing a lingering animosity toward them, and they feared that he would avenge himself against them for having sold him. But they were wrong.

Yosef reassured his brothers, saying that he could not harm them even if he wanted to –

– וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵהֶם יוֹסֵף אֶל־תִּירְאוּ כִּי הִתְחַת אֱלֹקִים אֲנִי: וְאַתֶּם חֲשַׁבְתֶּם עָלַי רָעָה אֱלֹקִים חֲשַׁבָה לְטוֹבָה...

But Yosef said to them, "Fear not, for am I instead of G-d? Although you intended me harm, G-d intended it for good..." (Bereishis 50:19-20).

Rashi explains that Yosef is asking a rhetorical question. If Hashem would not permit them – a large group of righteous people – to harm him, how could he as an individual succeed in harming them?

When speaking to his brothers, what Yosef meant, says the Be'er Yitzchak, is that it's all in Hashem's hands: "Just as you intended to harm me, but Hashem made things work out to my benefit, so too, I do not have the power to harm you against His will."

The Sforno states that it was not for Yosef to judge his brothers or to judge Hashem's decrees. How can Yosef punish Hashem's agents? For certainly the brothers were agents of Hashem. Yosef reassures his brothers that he would never punish them for an act which Hashem utilized for the fulfillment of His Divine plan.

The Chasam Sofer writes that succinctly, forcefully, Yosef comforted his brothers, suggesting that a human being may choose to be an emissary of mercy, but justice, suggested by using Hashem's name *Elokim*, is only dispensed by Hashem.

David HaMelech says in Tehillim (118:6), ה' לִי לֹא אֵירָא מִהַיְעָשָׂה לִי אָדָם: – *Hashem is with me, I have no fear. What can man do to me?*

The Bais HaLevi understands this verse explaining it that *because* I am not afraid when danger lurks, *therefore* no one can cause me any harm. The merit of our bitachon will protect us.

The students of the Novardok Yeshivas around the beginning of the twentieth century were known for their humility, courage, and bitachon. When confronted by soldiers during wartime, they would stand confidently when guns were pointed at their chests, and without flinching would calmly say to the soldiers, “You can’t squeeze that trigger unless Hashem wills it.”

During World War I, the Alter of Novardok, Rav Yosef Yoizel Horowitz, was making havdalah for the yeshiva when the thunder of cannon fire filled the room. Everyone dropped to the floor from fright, but Rav Yosef Yoizel remained standing with the cup in his hand. Not a drop of wine spilled. His hands didn’t tremble. His followers watched him, astounded that he had such trust in Hashem that he could hold the cup perfectly still in these circumstances.

This is the level that Rav Chaim of Volozhin was speaking about when someone believes there is no power other than Hashem. He puts himself inside of a protective bubble and he can’t be harmed because he realizes there is no power other than Hashem.

A person with that type of emunah is described in the *Yoshev Biseter*. It says – even if a person is in a fierce battle and a thousand people were killed on one side of him and ten thousand on the other, the opposing army will not be able to touch him because he understands there is no opposing army, it’s really only Hashem. And that’s what creates his protective bubble.

Yosef told his brothers, אַל־תִּירָאוּ – *Fear not* – you are in Hashem’s hands, not mine. Never fear people, they’re just puppets.

If we would live our lives with this understanding, how much more relaxed would we be? Wherever we are, we are all in Hashem’s hands. And He knows what’s best for us. And He’ll only do what’s best for us.

Rabbi David Ashear in his Living Emunah email ([#464](#)) writes that one of the Ramban’s students was on his deathbed and moments before he left the world the Ramban put a *kamia* (amulet) in his hand and said, “When you go up to *shamayim* there’s a place called *Kissot L’Mishpat* and there you will find the *Shechinah*. This *kamia* will allow you to enter. I want you to ask Hashem many difficult questions that I have on the way that He deals with us as well as why you are dying so young.”

The student came back to the Ramban in a dream and said, “The *kamia* that you gave me allowed me to pass through every single gate. But when I got to where you said, I couldn’t ask your questions because they weren’t questions anymore.”

From here it is so clear that all of Hashem’s ways are just and done with *chessed* (kindness) and *rachamim* (mercy).

Somebody who has emunah can already begin to feel the joy of the future right now. Somebody who believes that everything is controlled by Hashem and that He is always doing the best thing for you, can remove his fears and worries now. So much stress comes from fearing other people and what they can do to harm us.

The Rashbam notes that Yosef's brothers were the unwitting agents of Hashem and they were therefore not to blame. Hashem had planned that it should all be for the good.

The Gemara in Brachos (60b) states that a person should always be accustomed to say: Whatever Hashem does, He does for the best.

The Nesivos Shalom teaches that we know Hashem is *Kulo Tov*, entirely good, and so bestows only goodness upon His creations. As such, even what may appear to us as severe hardship is, at its core, only kindness and goodness. This is the Torah's overall perspective on the matter of misfortune.

A poignant illustration of this concept is the well-known incident involving Rabbi Akiva:

Rabbi Akiva was traveling along the way and arrived at a certain town in which he sought lodgings, but they refused to accommodate him. He declared, "Whatever Hashem does is for the best." He went and slept in a field. Among his accompanying possessions were a rooster, donkey, and lamp. A wind extinguished his lamp, a cat ate his rooster, and a lion ate the donkey. After suffering these losses, Rabbi Akiva declared, "Whatever Hashem does is for the best." That very night, an army came and captured the townspeople. (Brachos 60b).

Rabbi Akiva's faith remained firm throughout and he was able to perceive how each misfortune was truthfully a great blessing. As Rashi explains, any of his items could have alerted the soldiers to his presence. They could have seen him by his light and the noises emitted by his animals would have caught their attention. What initially may have appeared as a tribulation was, in reality, a manifestation of invaluable kindness.

Let's think about that in our modern world. Imagine a man, Abe, is having the worst day:

Abe wakes up and is about to have his favorite bowl of cereal, but his three-year-old knocked over the carton of milk which spilled out on the floor leaving none left. Then at work, Abe called out to hold the elevator, but the two people inside it didn't wait for him and let the doors close. Going to the café for lunch Abe was in a big rush, but the sandwich guy got his order all wrong and the manager stepped in to make it a second time correctly, delaying Abe even more. On his way home, Abe was stuck behind a stalled garbage truck and was redirected to take a longer detour home. Once Abe settles in to relax after dinner, he takes out his new foot bath he got for Chanukah and set it up, but it wouldn't turn on.

Abe's frustrated and dejected. He glumly whispers to Hashem, "Why are you doing this to me?"

Now, imagine Hashem answers as follows: Abe, I love you more than you could possibly know. Let Me tell you what I protected you from today.

The milk you wanted at breakfast was spoiled. I had your son spill it on the floor, so you would not have an upset stomach all day. I let the doors close on the elevator because the two people inside were speaking terrible *lashon harah* and I wanted to spare you from hearing it. The first sandwich maker at the café had a cold, so I had the manager make your sandwich a second time for you not to catch a cold. I put the stalled garbage truck on your route and you took a

detour home because on the next block a large tree was about to fall into the street at the exact moment you would have driven by that spot. And your foot bath didn't work because the manufacturer in China used a faulty wire and if you put your feet in the water with the bad wire and turned it on, you would have been badly injured.

Everything is in Hashem's hands and He only does what's best for us.

Rabbi David Ashear writes in his Living Emunah email ([#1543](#)) that nobody has any control to harm us. We are completely *b'yad* Hashem – in Hashem's hands. Rabbi Menashe Reisman quoted from Rav Yaakov Moshe Panett who brings down the Arizal who said, even though there are only four letters to the *Shem Havaya* of Hashem (*yud-kay-vav-kay*), each one of those letters correspond to a different book of the Five Books of the Torah. How is that possible? The fifth book is represented by the *kutzo shel yud*, the tip of the letter *yud*, which is so holy that it cannot be contained in a regular letter. And that tip corresponds to the Sefer Bereishis, the first of the Chumashim. Klal Yisrael are also the *kutzo shel yud*. We are Hashem's prized possession. We should have in mind how precious we are to Hashem and that He is with us with every move that we make. We are totally under His control. Nobody else has any effect on us.

This Shabbos is called *Shabbos Chazak* – the Shabbos of Reinforcement – because of the custom of declaring, *Chazak, Chazak, V'nischazaik* – Be strong, be strong, and may we be strengthened – at the conclusion of the Torah reading in acknowledgment of the completion of Sefer Bereishis.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe says that the awareness nurtured by the reading of Vayechi generates strength. When a Yid knows he has been granted a heritage of life expressed through a connection with the Torah, and that there will come a time when this connection will blossom, he will acquire the inner strength to confront the challenges presented by his environment.

Klal Yisrael are called *מאמינים בני מאמינים* – *believers, the children of believers*. We are naturally *ba'alei emunah* – it's in our DNA. However, things could happen which might make a person question his emunah. Things could happen that might even contradict his emunah. But we should never get thrown off by a lack of understanding. There's always a deeper reason.

The Ramchal says, especially now in the End of Days, our *nisayon* (test) is to be able to accept the will of Hashem *b'temimus* (wholeheartedly). We need to say to ourselves that Hashem had a very good reason to do what He did and I'm going to accept it whatever it was. Anytime anything happens in life that seems hard for us to understand, when we can't imagine that Hashem would do such a thing, *that* is when we should stop ourselves and recognize that now we have a golden opportunity to accept the will of Hashem *b'temimus*. To say, we don't understand, but we know Hashem has the greatest reason for what He's doing.

Imagine living a life of recognizing that everything Hashem does is good. How would that feel?

Is there one issue you've been upset about, sad over, or frustrated with that you can reconsider and say that everything is in Hashem's hands and there must be a deeper reason that this is good for me and that this happened for my benefit?

Shabbat Shalom and wishing you a week ahead of seeing the good in everything Hashem does.