

THE EVENTUAL GOOD

by Rabbi Label Lam

And now don't be distressed or angry with yourselves for having sold me here, for it was to be a provider that G-d sent me ahead of you...And so G-d has sent me ahead of you to insure your survival in the land and to sustain you for a momentous deliverance. And now it was not you who sent me here but G-d... (Breishis 45:5-8)

I wonder when it was that Joseph came to realize fully that everything that happened to him was for a greater good. Was it when he was in the pit begging for his life? Was it when he was finally released from prison and elevated to Viceroy of Egypt? Was it when he was witnessing the unfolding of events that spelled the fulfillment of his prophetic dreams? It would be nice to know!

While in South Africa I met a young couple that was very much involved in bringing people to their home for Torah classes. They had not always been observant. In fact they started as reluctant participant and because of a particular incident accelerated unexpectedly. The husband who is a talented architect and builder was for years being nudged to get involved with building a badly needed Mikvah/Ritual Bath, but he refused again and again. The appeals grew stronger and more frequent. "It's a big Mitzvah!" they would claim, but he was hardly interested in Mitzvos. Eventually they wore him down. He agreed. Plans were drawn up and the day of groundbreaking arrived.

It was the first day on the work site. Initial actions were underway when something devastating occurred. Four armed bandits armed with machine guns drove off with his brand new car. He was grief stricken and angry too. Here he was doing "a Big Mitzvah" and look what happened! It left an awful taste in his mouth.

A month later he received a call from his sister who lived in Israel. She had become fully observant and moved there years earlier. His sister insisted on knowing if everything was alright with the family. She probed suspiciously as if she was aware of something concrete but there was nothing of any consequence to report. She revealed that she had had a frightening and repetitive dream that something horrific happened to a family member.

That morning she urged her husband to approach one of the great rabbis whose eyes, as a doctor, he had treated and seek some advice. Reluctant but dutifully he called upon a local sage who oddly led him to an open closet. He said, "What can we do? Let us give a kiss to the Tzitzis of the Chazon

Ish." They did, and then he offered his blessing that all should be well.

Upon further examination it became known that she had had the premonition the night prior to, and they were kissing the Tzitzis at the actual time of the calamitous car theft. He understood that he had misunderstood what had happened. It struck him that he might have lost more than a car that day. He should be grateful and not regretful that he was involved in a "Big Mitzvah"

It is written in the Shulchan Aruch, Ch. 230 "One should accustom himself to say, 'Everything the Merciful One does He does for the good!'" It doesn't say that you need to feel it at the time but rather one should be habituated to saying it. I once heard from Rabbi Mordachai Schwab ztl., that if one makes this verbal declaration as prescribed, there is a promise that he will live to see the good that comes from the situation. I regret not having asked him the source at the time.

What looks and feels like a "bad" play may actually be a case of missing information. In a different frame the same scene makes great sense. Though, from the pits it seems nothing could ever ease the pain but, declaring "it is for the good" keeps us in the searching mode for the eventual good. Text Copyright © 2004 by Rabbi Label Lam and [Torah.org](https://torah.org).