

# JUST AS PROMISED

*by Rabbi Label Lam*

Now it came to pass when Yosef came to his brothers, that they stripped Yosef of his shirt, of the fine woolen coat which was upon him. And they took him and cast him into the pit; now the pit was empty there was no water in it. (Breishis 37:23-24)

now the pit was empty-there was no water in it: Since it says: "now the pit was empty," do I not know that there was no water in it? For what purpose did the Torah write, "there was no water in it" ? [To inform us that] there was no water in it, but there were snakes and scorpions in it. now the pit was empty-there was no water in it: Since it says: "now the pit was empty," do I not know that there was no water in it? For what purpose did the Torah write, "there was no water in it" ? [To inform us that] there was no water in it, but there were snakes and scorpions in it. [From Shab. 22a, Chag. 3a]

Yosef is stripped of his special coat by his own brothers and he is tossed into a pit surrounded by snakes and scorpions. What might we presume he is thinking at that very moment? It would be hard for to know exactly but I think I have a very good idea.

More than 28 years ago my wife and I were flooded out of our basement honeymoon apartment by hurricane Gloria which slammed against the eastern seaboard of the United States. My newlywed bride was extremely nauseous and we were essentially homeless which is well within the spirit of the holiday of Sukkos. We needed a serious dose of spiritual courage so we made our way to visit someone who was known as the Tzadik of Monsey, Rabbi Mordechai Schwab ztl.

He listened with perfect concentration as we wove our tale of woe. After we had finished and he expressed his empathy, he repeated a few time, "Reish Lamed (#230) in Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim", "A person should accustom himself to say, 'All the Merciful One does, He does for the good!'" It doesn't mean he even has to understand how it's for the good at that moment but the required is to be in the habit of saying those words when applicable. Then Rabbi Schwab punctuated our encounter with the following stunning statement: "There's a promise that whoever says this, that "All the Merciful One does, He does for the good!" will live to see the good that comes out of the situation. He then pointed to picture of his family that had escaped a Europe on fire with anti-Semitism.

I always wondered and I regretted having never asked about the source of this promise. Who says? Not that I question it even a little in sober moments but it would be more than nice to know! After a little cogitation I do believe that I have discovered the source of the source of the promise.

Last year when "Gam Zu L'Tova"- this too is for the good" was our Pitgam HaShevua (phrase that pays) in school, one of the Rebbes helped the repetition of the statement 101 times, as is our custom, with a really catchy tune. It wasn't the standard Uncle Moishy bouncy version. Rather it was to the tune of Gum zali zali zali gum zali zali." with an English refrain, "This too is for the good!" It's really catchy. Destined to be an all-time hit!

In a spontaneous lesson of song and serious Torah **a son of his old age: Heb. - בן זקנים, for he was born to him in his old age (Pirkei d'Rabbi Eliezer, ch. 38). Onkelos rendered: for he was a wise son to him. Whatever he had learned from Shem and Eber he gave over to him. Another explanation: for his (Joseph's) features (זיו איקונין) resembled his own (those of Jacob). [From Gen. Rabbah 84:8]**, I began to retell the story of the trials and tribulations of Yosef's life's journey with that Talmudic chorus echoing in the background. "Gam zu l'tova!"

Yosef tells his brothers his dreams and again and they see him more and more as an egotist and a danger. What must he be saying? "This too is for the good!" His brothers strip him of his special coat and toss him into a snake and scorpion filled pit. What must he be saying to himself? "This too is for the good!" He is pulled out and transported to Egypt in a spice caravan to be sold as a slave. What must he be saying to himself? "This too is for the good!" He is falsely accused with trumped up charges and tossed into prison in Egypt. What must he be saying? "This too is for the good!" He is forgotten about by the butler whose dream he had interpreted, his last and best earthly hope! What must he be saying? "This too is for the good!"

After two long years he is suddenly delivered from jail to interpret Pharaoh's dream and forestall a world famine and to save his family. All his brothers and father are ultimately dependent upon Yosef which was the thrust of his own original dream. It all came true. The family was spared and HASHEM's plan of bringing the Children of Israel to Egypt was furthered, and hey, it all turned good, **just as promised**. DvarTorah, Copyright © 2007 by Rabbi Label Lam and [Torah.org](https://torah.org).