

# DIVINE DIVINE PROVIDENCE

*by Rabbi Pinchas Winston*

**In life, some of** the smallest events can have the biggest consequences. One of the best examples is in this week's parsha, when Moshe Rabbeinu hits the rock. Had he NOT he would have lived to enter Eretz Yisroel, become Moshiach, and saved the ENTIRE world.

Someone was ejected from a private party, and the Second Temple was destroyed (Gittin 56a). When Shlomo HaMelech married the daughter of Pharaoh, he set in motion the destruction of the first AND second Temples. In more recent times, a SINGLE political assassination led to World War I.

How many times in history have people said, "If I had known what would have followed, I would never have done it in the first place?" How many times have people thought that doing this or that wouldn't impact anybody and ended up negatively impacting EVERYONE?

No wonder the rabbis have defined a wise person as someone who sees a current event in terms of its potential future ramifications (Tamid 32a). When it comes to making money or fighting wars, people do this because the consequences of failure are obvious and often irreversible. The wise man does this at ALL times, even when the potential impacts are not so obvious.

Even just learning how to think before you speak is a valuable asset. We've all been there when someone "innocently" says something controversial, making others wonder, "What were they thinking when they said that? Didn't they realize that saying it would anger someone?"

Part of the problem is that people react differently to different things. So, we can say or do something because it doesn't bother us not knowing, or forgetting, that it can bother others. "Wow, I had no idea they would react like that!" is not such an uncommon second thought. It takes a wise person to think, "This may not bother me, but maybe it will annoy someone else."

There is another important factor in all of this: Divine Providence. The Talmud says that God puts merit worthy people into merit worthy situations, and guilty people into guilty situations. This is a "pairing" process that goes on in life that brings together the offensive and the offended.

In other words, when God sees that someone is not careful about what they say or do, and is likely to say something offensive, he brings him or her together with someone who needs to be offended, as far as God is concerned. "Perfect Storms" are not random, by Divinely orchestrated.

The famous example of this is in the Talmud. A person who murdered accidentally was supposed to

live in a special city for accidental murders, as prescribed by the Torah. If someone killed with intention, he was supposed to be put to death by the Sanhedrin if he was properly warned and witnessed.

What happened if both an accidental and intentional murderer went free because no one witnessed their despicable acts? The Talmud says that Divine Providence arranged that both showed up at the same place at the same time. In this instance, the unintentional killer accidentally murders the intentional killer before witnesses. This forces the former into exile and the latter is killed.

This would mean that the rock incident in this week's parsha was prearranged by Heaven, which is the way it kind of feels.

"If only they hadn't angered Moshe Rabbeinu liked that . . ."

"If only Moshe Rabbeinu had not called them out like that . . ."

"If only . . ."

Not quite. We know from Rashi at the end of Parashas Shemos that Moshe Rabbeinu was destined to die in the desert. True, it may have only been a prediction of what was going to happen in this week's parsha. It seems from Rashi however that it was also in response to Moshe's questioning of God back in Egypt.

Then there is the other problem of being ready for the Messianic Era. It says that Avraham was NOT allowed to slaughter Yitzchak because it would have ushered in the Messianic Era. The world wasn't ready for it yet. Bar Kochba might have been Moshiach, had the generation been worthy of redemption. Events at the rock might have transpired differently had Moshe's generation been worthy of him being Moshiach.

The bottom line is, no one just HAPPENS to be at the moment or place of good or bad. It may seem that we just happened to be there, especially when we could have been somewhere else. But that's the whole point. We weren't, and we have to wonder why.

Or, maybe would could have been there, but for some reason we weren't. Either we missed out on being part of something good, or something bad. We have to be grateful to God about the former, and question ourselves about the latter. Fortunately, I had an experience of the former this week, and not the latter, and only realized now as I write.

My son had to be away from home for the week, leaving his wife and baby on their own. This created an opportunity for my wife and I to drive out and bring dinner to her, which always mean locally renting a car for the night.

Once we are renting a car, we usually use it to go to the Kotel the next morning and doven sunrise. We go once a week, and it is an expensive taxi ride because taking a bus at that time in the morning is never feasible in the winter time and impossible in the summer when "neitz" is REALLY early.

We've done it several times already and it works great.

This time we both became sick two days before. This caused us to cancel our dinner plans with our daughter-in-law. As a result, it negated the need for a car rental, forcing us to take a taxi to the Kotel at 4:10 in the morning instead.

The drive to the Kotel was as smooth as it always is at that time in the morning, until we got Jaffa Gate. There, the gate was closed and the car ahead of us could not proceed, blocking us as well. As it turned out, it was the end of the Arab holiday of Ramadan, and the police were not allowing personal cars into the Old City.

Once the person ahead of us accepted his fate, "encouraged" by our taxi driver, he left and the gate opened up for our taxi. We continued on our way, and made it to the Kotel on time for the start of the minyan. As we drove through the Old City, our driver said to us, "It was a good thing you didn't rent a car this time. You would not have been able to get into the Old City if you had!"

And that would have been a problem. It would have meant parking outside the Old City somewhere and walking in. Had that been the case, we would have probably been late for the neitz minyan which for me, since I doven neitz everyday, would have been a halachic issue.

We still have our colds (I'm sneezing as I write). But at least having my cold allowed me to make minyan on time at the Kotel, b"H. It was probably in my wife's merit, but I was glad to tag along.