

Mishlei 11-08

Substitution

Key Concepts

In Segment 11-06 we have seen how a good person can be rescued from a potential misfortune. We have also seen that there is a balance in the way Hashem administers the world so that when good people are saved, the adversity that they avoided is applied to bad people who deserve it. This principle of substitution can occur in many ways, one of which is the Purim story, when Mordechai was saved and Haman effectively took his place.

Exploring Mishlei

(ח) צַדִּיק מִצָּרָה נִחְלָץ וַיָּבֵא רָשָׁע תַּחְתָּיו:

(8) A tzadik eluded distress and a rasha came and took his place.

A good person may escape a misfortune by resisting the temptation of committing an offense for which he would have been punished. A *rasha* then comes forward of his own volition to commit the offense, thinking to gain by it, but then suffering the very fate which the *tzadik* avoided. This is what happened when Shaul commanded Avner to destroy the innocent Kohanim of Nov. He refused and Doeg took his place (I *Shmuel* 22:18).

Learning Mishlei

(ח) צַדִּיק מִצָּרָה נִחְלָץ

וַיָּבֵא רָשָׁע תַּחְתָּיו:

By making the right choice, **a tzadik eluded a distress** – צַדִּיק מִצָּרָה נִחְלָץ **and a rasha came to take his place** – וַיָּבֵא רָשָׁע תַּחְתָּיו by making the wrong choice.

Additional Insights

A series of insights illuminating this proverb are presented below. The numbers identifying the insights refer to the listing of sources at the end of the segment.

(1) The downfall of the *rasha* is directly related to the *tzadik* being saved from a Heavenly judgment that had been issued against the *tzadik* but was

aborted. To maintain the cosmic balance of Heavenly judgments, the *rasha* becomes subject to that judgment in payment for his own sins.

(2) When a *tzadik* is saved from danger through his own merit (*zechus*), that *zechus* is shared by all people in the vicinity, even *resha'im*. The enlightened *rasha* is the one who realizes the debt of gratitude and comes to pay his respects to the *tzadik*.

(3) When a *rasha* has in mind to harm a *tzadik* but his plan is foiled, not only is the *tzadik* saved, the *rasha* suffers that very same fate.

(4) When a *tzadik* resists the temptation of committing a crime and a *rasha* comes forward to commit that very crime, the *rasha* will take his place and suffer the penalty that the *tzadik* escaped.

Sources

The primary sources used for the additional insights illuminating this segment are listed below.

(3) - חנוך לנער, מלבי"ם

(4) - רשר"ה, דעת סופרים

(1) - רש"י, מצודות, הגר"א

(2) - אבן יחייא

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