

Mishlei 11-08

Substitution

Key Concepts

In Segment 11-05 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

(8) A tzadik eluded distress — צַדִּיק מִצָּרָה נִחְלָץ —
and a rasha came — וַיָּבֵא רָשָׁע —
in his place — תַּחְתָּיו

Additional Insights

(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. (רש"י, מצודות, הגר"א)

(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*. (אבן יחייא)

(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. (חנוך לנער, מלבי"ם)

(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. (רשר"ה, דעת סופרים)