

And now: it was not you who sent me here, but G-d. (45:8)

Veritably, on the surface, to the unlearned reader, it appears that the brothers catalyzed Yosef's descent into Egypt. Yosef underscores the fallacy of such a viewpoint. Hashem pulls the strings; He manipulates events from behind the scene. We think that we are in charge, but we must be aware that we are not. We might make decisions, but Hashem's Will stands and is always executed. Hashem wanted the Jewish People to go down to Egypt as part of His Divine Plan. Thus, he manipulated events in such a manner that Yosef was the first to go down, with Yaakov *Avinu* and the rest of the family to follow.

When a person has the good fortune to look back, to employ hindsight as a perspective on how to discern events, he is granted an enviable opportunity on seeing the *Yad Hashem*, Hand of G-d, at work, guiding the events around him toward a specific goal. We then realize that man is unable to lift up his finger without it having been originally decreed by Hashem. This is neither the place nor the forum for entering into a deep philosophical discussion concerning cause and effect. Let it suffice to say that Hashem is in control. If we would only open our eyes, we would see that man is nothing more than a puppet with the strings being controlled by the Master.

It was the summer of 2001, and a Jewish businessman from America went to *Eretz Yisrael* for a number of business meetings. Prior to starting the workday, he decided to stop at a nearby restaurant on King George Street to have brunch. He was annoyed to see that there was a fairly sizable line of customers waiting in line ahead of him. As he waited, he constantly kept glancing at his watch, while making little noises with his mouth expressing his impatience. A number of times he began to leave his place in line, only to return immediately, in the hope that it would now move faster.

Suddenly, the man in front of him turned around and said, "You seem to be in a hurry. I am not. Why not switch places with me? It does not bother me to wait another five minutes." The man was at first surprised that someone would give up his place in line, but then he figured, who was he to complain? He readily and thankfully accepted his place in line. As soon as he received his breakfast, he sat down to eat quickly – and left the restaurant.

The businessperson walked about 200 feet, when he heard a loud bang. He turned around to see the Sbarro Restaurant, where he had moments earlier been having breakfast, engulfed in flames. This was the infamous Sbarro Restaurant terrorist bombing that snuffed out the lives of fifteen Jewish souls and left hundreds of others injured, some seriously. It took a few moments for the enormity of the tragedy to settle into his mind, and, even more so, that the Jew who had changed places with him was probably a victim – in his place! Yes, he should have been having a meal at that moment. By trading places with him, the kind man possibly paid the ultimate price.

He immediately went searching through the rubble, following the first responders as they searched for victims. It took the American businessman two days of searching, visiting all the hospitals until

he finally found the kind man. He lay in a hospital bed seriously injured, accompanied by his adult son.

“Your father saved my life!” he began. He followed up with the son, relating to him the entire story about how his father had changed places with him. As tears rolled down his face, the American businessman took out his business card and said, “I am a successful businessman in America. My offices are located on the 101st floor of the Twin Towers. I am returning home; this is my number. If there is anything I can do whatsoever to help your family, please let me know. Trust me. You gave me my life. I would like to help you.”

Three weeks later, the American businessman received a call from the man’s son. Apparently, his father’s injuries required surgery that was beyond what could be provided for him in *Eretz Yisrael*. He required a specific surgery which was performed proficiently in Boston. Could their newly-acquired American friend help? Within a few hours it was all arranged – from start to finish. Surgery was scheduled for mid-September, and he would meet them in Kennedy Airport when they landed and be with them from there throughout the process.

On Tuesday, September 11, 2001, the American benefactor left his office on the 101st floor of the Twin Towers at 8:00A.M. At 8:31, the first plane that took down the Twin Towers struck the 93rd floor. The Yerushalmi Jew had twice been the catalyst for saving the American businessman’s life. We are all puppets on the world stage with roles in the play called “life.” Hashem pulls the strings.