

*Gam Zu L'Tova!* It's a common refrain, usually said regarding another's predicament. In fact, it is an explicit *halacha* stated in *Shulchan Aruch*: One should always be accustomed to say, "All that the Merciful One does is for the good." But what does this mean? We know Hashem's love for His children is endless, however, does He not punish at times? The simple explanation is that punishment too is for the good, however a look at the words of the *Maharal* explaining the Gemara regarding the concept of *Gam Zu L'Tova* shed a completely different light on this topic.

The Gemara (*Tanis 21a*) relates the famous story of *Nachum Ish Gam Zu*: *Why did they call him Nachum of Gam Zu? The reason is that with regard to any matter that occurred to him, he would say: This too is for the good (Gam Zu L'Tova). Once, the Jews wished to send a gift to the house of the emperor. They said: Who should go and present this gift? Let Nachum of Gam Zu go, as he is accustomed to miracles. They sent with him a chest full of jewels and pearls, and he went and spent the night in a certain inn. During the night, the residents of the inn arose and took all of the precious jewels and pearls from the chest and filled it with earth. The next day, when he saw what had happened, Nachum of Gam Zu said: This too is for the good. When he arrived at the emperor's palace, they opened the chest and saw that it was filled with earth. The emperor wished to put all the Jewish emissaries to death. He said: The Jews are mocking me. Nachum of Gam Zu said: This too is for the good. Elijah the Prophet came and appeared before the emperor as one of his ministers. He said to the emperor: Perhaps this earth is from the earth of their father Abraham. When he threw earth, it turned into swords, and when he threw stubble, it turned into arrows...There was one province that the emperor was unable to conquer. They took some of this earth, tested it by throwing it at their enemies, and conquered that province. When the emperor saw that this earth indeed had miraculous powers, his servants entered his treasury and filled Nachum of Gam Zu's chest with precious jewels and pearls and sent him off with great honor. When Nachum of Gam Zu came to spend the night at that same inn, the residents said to him: What did you bring with you to the emperor that he bestowed upon you such great honor? He said to them: That which I took from here, I brought there. When they heard this, the residents of the inn thought that the soil upon which their house stood had miraculous powers. They tore down their inn and brought the soil underneath to the emperor's palace. They said to him: That earth that was brought here was from our property...The emperor tested the inn's soil in battle, and it was not found to have miraculous powers, and he had these residents of the inn put to death.*

The *Maharal* (*Nesivos Olam, Nesiv HaBitachon 1*) explains that this indeed is the power of *bitachon*. Even if Hashem had set into motion a series of events in order to punish *Klal Yisroel*, when *Nachum Ish Gam Zu* trusted in Hashem that it would end up being for the good then, "Through the *bitachon* it turned into complete good, for *bitachon* is limitless and Hashem can make it good...and all this is because He is One and All-powerful and therefore from complete bad, He can make complete good!"

We see that according to the *Maharal*, *Gam Zu L'Tova* doesn't simply mean that everything Hashem does, though it may be bitter, it is still for the ultimate good, rather it means it is for the present and tangible good we can actually see in this world. How is this possible? Doesn't Hashem sometimes meet out punishment? True, however, "Through the *bitachon* it turned into complete good." So, in reality *Gam Zu L'Tova* means this too. Though Hashem may have sent it as a punishment, through my *bitachon* in Him it will turn into good! In the here and now!

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Priority-1