

Kabbalistically, mercy represents the concept of time. Time is defined as the distance between cause and effect; the separation between action and reaction; the space between deed and dividend; the span between a person's behavior and the inevitable repercussion; the divide between crime and consequence. Within this gap, it is hoped that a person becomes enlightened to the senselessness of negative ways, and recognizes the rewards of spiritual growth and positive, unselfish behavior. Time, however, can cause us to mistakenly believe that goodness goes unrewarded, while the wicked go unpunished. Yet time merely creates a delay - a window of opportunity in which our free will can earn us fulfillment, transformation, and recognition of the cause-and-effect principle that is at work in our world. Without time, a person would be instantly punished the moment he sinned. The wicked would be obliterated the moment they transgressed. They would lose the opportunity to change their ways and partake of the endless fulfillment in the World to Come. Mercy [time] is awarded to the wicked on the merit of the righteous who love humanity unconditionally. Awareness and a deeper understanding of mercy and the cause-and-effect principle are aroused within us through the merit of the righteous, whose spiritual power surges through this passage.

Zohar - Vayeshev - Verses 205-207

תָּא סוּזי, בְּכֹל אֲמַר דְּצַדִּיקָא אֲזֵלִי, קוּדְשָׁא בְּרִיךְ הוּא נְטִיר לֹון, וְלֹא שְׁבִיק לֹון, דְּוֹד אָמַר, גַּם כִּי אֵלֶךְ בְּגִיָּא צִלְמוֹת
לֹא אֵירָא רַע כִּי אֲתָה עִמָּדִי שְׁבִטָךְ וּמִשְׁעֲנֵתְךָ וּגו', בְּכֹל אֲמַר דְּצַדִּיקָא אֲזֵלִי, שְׁכִינְתָא אֲזֵלָא עִמָּהוֹן, וְלֹא שְׁבִיק
לֹון.

Come and behold, wherever the Righteous go, the Holy One, blessed be He, protects them and never abandons them. As David said, "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff" (Tehilim 23:4). For wherever the righteous go, the Shechinah never leaves them.

יוֹסֵף אֲזֵל בְּגִיָּא צִלְמוֹת, וְנִסְתֵּי לִיהּ לְמִצְרַיִם, שְׁכִינְתָא הוּת עִמִּיהּ, הֵה"ד, וַיְהִי ה' אֵת יוֹסֵף, וַיְבָרֵךְ דְּכֹתָן עִמִּיהּ
שְׁכִינְתָא, בְּכֹל מַה דְּכֹה עֲבִיד, כֹּה מְצִלַּח בִּידֵיהּ, דְּאִפִּילוּ מֵאֵי דְכֹה בִּידֵיהּ, וְכֹה תִבְעֵ לִיהּ מֵאֵרִיָּה בְּגוֹנָא
אֲסָרָא, כֹּה מִתְהַפֵּךְ בִּידֵיהּ, לְהוּא גּוֹנָא דְרַעוּתָא דְמֵאֵרִיָּה כֹה רַעֵי בִיהּ, כִּד"א וַיֵּרָא אֲדוֹנָיו כִּי ה' אִתּוֹ וְכֹל
אֲשֶׁר הוּא עוֹשֶׂה ה' מְצִלִים בְּיָדוֹ, מְצִלִים בְּיָדוֹ וּדְאִי, כִּי ה' אִתּוֹ.

When Joseph walked the valley of the shadow of death and was brought down to Egypt, the Shechinah was with him, as it is written, "And Hashem was with Joseph" (Beresheet 39:2). Because the Shechinah was with him, whatever he did in his hand prospered. If he had something in his hand, but his master asked for something else, what was in his hand would turn into that which his master wanted, as it is written, "And his master saw that Hashem was with him, and that Hashem made all that he did prosper in his hand" (Ibid. 3). Assuredly, it "did prosper in his hand," for Hashem was with him.

תָּא סוּזי, וַיַּדַּע אֲדוֹנָיו כִּי ה' אִתּוֹ לֹא כְתִיב, אֲלֵא וַיֵּרָא אֲדוֹנָיו, דְּהֵא בְעֵינֵי כֹה חֲמִי, עוֹבְדָא דְנִסִּין בְּכֹל יוֹמָא,
דְּקוּדְשָׁא בְּרִיךְ הוּא עֲבִיד בִּידֵיהּ, וְעַל דָּא וַיִּבְרַךְ ה' אֵת בֵּית הַמִּצְרִי בְּגַלְל יוֹסֵף. קוּדְשָׁא בְּרִיךְ הוּא נְטִיר לֹון
לְצַדִּיקָא, וַיְבָרֵךְ לֹון לְרַשִּׁיעֵיא, דְּהֵא רַשִּׁיעֵיא מִתְבָּרְכִין בְּגִיָּהוֹן דְּצַדִּיקָא. כְּגוֹנָא דָא, כְּתִיב וַיִּבְרַךְ ה' אֵת
בֵּית עוֹבֵד אֲדוֹם הַגִּבְיָ בַעְבֹר אֲרוֹן הָאֱלֹקִים.

Come and behold, it is not written, 'And his master knew that Hashem was with him,' but rather "And his master saw." THIS TEACHES US THAT he saw with his own eyes the miracles that the Holy One, blessed be He, performed by His hand. Therefore, "Hashem blessed the Egyptian house for Joseph's sake" (Beresheet 39:5). The Holy One, blessed be He, preserves the righteous. For their sakes, He also protects the wicked as they are blessed for the sake of the righteous. This is said in the verse, "Hashem has blessed the house of Oved Edom...because of the ark of Elohim" (II Shmuel 6:12).