חסידות

From the Chassidic Courts

PIASECZNO · TOLDOT, ESH KODESH

Why does G-d give twice?

Esh Kodesh

The Esh Kodesh reads Yitzchak's blessing "May G-d give you" (with Rashi's gloss "He will give, and again He will give") as two stages of divine kindness: first giving even to one who has not yet earned it, and then returning to reward the person's service. He adds a second reading, drawing on the Gemara's (Kiddushin 2b) principle that the owner of a lost object searches for it, so that G-d seeks out those who are so lost in suffering that they no longer recognize themselves, and gives again to bring them back and redeem them. AI SUMMARY

"And may G-d give you." Rashi comments: "He will give, and again He will give." The difficulty is well known. Since it says "may He give," this already implies constant giving, so why did it need to say "and again give"? When one person blesses another with a livelihood, must he say, "May Hashem give you a livelihood, and again give you a livelihood"? Surely when he says, "May Hashem give you a livelihood," the meaning of the blessing is that He will always give him.

But when one person gives money to another, if he had not received from him beforehand, he is the giver. If, however, the present recipient had earlier given money to the present giver, then the one giving now is only returning what he received before.

Therefore we must indeed serve Him, blessed be He, not in order to receive a reward. But when a Jew serves Hashem and a reward is due him according to his deeds, the reward that Hashem, blessed be He, gives him is a repayment for what he did before Him. It is different when He, blessed be He, gives him all good even before he has acted. Then, to one who is unworthy, He is the Giver.

This is what Yitzchak blessed Yaakov: "And may He give..." Rashi explains: at first "He will give," even if the Jew has not acted and is not worthy. Afterward, "He will again give," meaning that He, blessed be He, is the One who returns and gives, that is, He repays the person for his service.

For how could a person act and serve Hashem properly while in his troubles, G-d save us? Only when Hashem gives at the outset, that is, even when the person is unworthy, can it afterward be in the aspect of "returning and giving," as above.

It is also possible that this is the meaning of the verse, "And those who were lost in the land of Assyria and those cast away in the land of Egypt will come." There is an aspect of the lost and an aspect of the cast away. One who is cast away has merely been driven from his place to a distant place, but he is still recognizable and visible. One who is lost, however, has been lost, and is neither seen nor recognizable.

For now the troubles have increased so much, and the elders of Israel simply relate that because of them people are not recognizable even outwardly. From the multitude of persecutions and sufferings, too hard to bear and impossible to imagine, they are not recognizable even inwardly, until the person himself loses himself [in Yiddish: er farliert zikh] and does not recognize himself. He remembers how he felt a year ago on Shabbat, and on weekdays before prayer and during prayer and so on, and now

he is trampled and crushed. He no longer feels whether he is a Jew, a human being, or a beast with no capacity to feel at all.

This is the aspect of the lost: "and the lost will come."

But the Gemara says (Kiddushin 2b), "The owner of a lost item seeks after his lost item." When the lost item cannot be seen or recognized, its owner searches after it, to find it, lift it up, and bring it to himself. Now HaKadosh Baruch Hu (the Holy One, blessed be He) is the Owner of our lost item. Therefore Yitzchak blessed Yaakov our forefather with the words "He will give." This applies not only when the Jew is seen and recognizable, but also to the lost, who are neither seen nor recognizable. "And again He will give" means that the Owner of the lost item will come back for us to find us, give us all good, bring us back to Him, blessed be He, and redeem us with a redemption and ransom of our bodies and our souls, with abundant mercy and good salvations.

Translation: translated by AI (anthropic/claude-sonnet-5.5)

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The Esh Kodesh explains, drawing on the Gemara's statement in the name of Rabbi Meir (Chagigah 15b), that the Shechinah (the Divine Presence) feels the distress of even a single individual, because she represents the particular and the singular, while the Holy One, blessed be He, as tiferet (beauty, harmony), represents the collective. Building on this, he explains that Yitzchak's blessings, intended for Esav but in truth given to Yaakov, were arranged from Heaven so that the blessing would reach individuals as well as the collective, which is why Rashi's reading of "And G-d shall give you" as "He will give, and give again" reflects a need to bless each person separately. AI SUMMARY

"May G-d give you," etc. We must understand at least a little, according to our limited intellect, what is hinted at by the fact that it was arranged from Heaven that the blessings with which our patriarch Yitzchak would bless our patriarch Yaakov would come with the thought of blessing Esav.

But the Gemara says (Chagigah 15b) in the name of Rabbi Meir: When a person is in distress, what does the Shechinah say? "I am lighter than my head," etc. Let us understand why it says "when a person," etc., and not "when Israel," as is stated in other places. Also, why the question "what does it say"? Who says that it says anything, and why does it say it? It was already said in the name of HaKadosh Baruch Hu (the Holy One, blessed be He), "I am with him in distress," and it does not say that He utters some statement, and it is not relevant to ask in what language He says it.

But Rabbi Meir says this on the verse "a hanged person is a curse of G-d," that is, even about an individual in distress. For "I am with him in distress" could have been said only of the collective of Israel when it is in distress, as Chazal (our Sages) taught in the midrash (a homiletical teaching) that this is why He was revealed to Moshe Rabbeinu in the bush: because "I am with him in distress," for then all the people were in distress. But here Rabbi Meir says that even when one single Jew is in distress, like this verse, "a hanged person is a curse of G-d," which refers to an individual who was hanged, the Shechinah also suffers because of it.

And this is what the Shechinah says. HaKadosh Baruch Hu, who is the aspect of Havayah, tiferet, is the aspect of the collective of Israel, for tiferet is mercy, the aspect of a collective that includes chesed (lovingkindness) and gevurah (strength, severity). The Shechinah, however, who is malchut (sovereignty, kingship), although she is the aspect of Knesset Yisrael (the Community of Israel), nevertheless also alludes to individuals, for all separation, reckoning, and number are in the aspect of malchut, as is known. Therefore, even about a private person who serves Hashem, she says to HaKadosh Baruch Hu, that is, to the aspect of tiferet,

"Look at this son who has come to You," as is known. That is, not only the collective is good, but this individual too is a tzaddik (righteous one).

Rabbi Meir hints with this that not only when the entire collective is in distress, but even the distress of a private person ascends on high. For this one was killed and that one died, G-d save us, from his troubles, and this one's mind and heart and entire body weakened from his troubles. "What difference is it whether he killed all of it or killed half of it?" For although the collective of Israel endures, nevertheless the individual who died, him and his life are lost, and until the resurrection of the dead his life has been cut off, G-d save us. This is why it uses the expression "when a person is in distress," as they said in Sanhedrin (38a), "A single person was created": even for the distress of a single person the Shechinah says, etc. And it is specifically the Shechinah who speaks about the particular and the individual, since in her is the aspect of the particular and the singular, as above.

Likewise, when Yitzchak wished to bless Yaakov, it is known that Rashi, in Parashat Vayigash on the verse "all the souls," etc., says in the name of the midrash: Esav had six souls, etc., in the plural, and Yaakov seventy, and yet Scripture calls them "one soul." That is, in truth all Israel are always included as one, because they have one soul of holiness. Therefore, had he blessed Yaakov alone, he would have blessed only the collective of Israel. But His will, may He be blessed, was that the individual and particular body of Israel be blessed as well. Therefore He, may He be blessed, arranged that Yitzchak's thought would be to bless Esav, who is separation and many souls, while in truth he would bless Yaakov. Thereby, when he blessed Yaakov, he blessed the particulars and individuals as well.

And this is "And G-d shall give you," on which Rashi comments: "He will give, and give again." According to the above, had he blessed only the collective, one giving would have sufficed. But when he blessed the individuals as well, then He must give and give again to this one, and afterward to that one, and so to each one, [now] this need and afterward that need.

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