חסידות

From the Chassidic Courts

MEZHIBUZH · BA'AL SHEM TOV, VAYERA

Why is a person who prays for another answered first?

Ba'al Shem Tov

Drawing on the Talmud (Bava Kamma 92a), the Ba'al Shem Tov explains why one who prays for his fellow is answered first: all suffering consists of dinim (judgments) that can be sweetened only at their root, so the one praying must first raise the gevurot and dinim to their source, and only afterward draw down the blessing for the sick person. Since a sufferer cannot lift his own dinim while his daat and mochin are taken from him, another person's prayer is a great mitzvah, and the Zohar's teaching that dinim emerge from Binah explains where they are rectified. AI SUMMARY

"And Hashem remembered Sarah as He had said," vegomer (etc.) (Genesis 21:1). Our Rabbis, of blessed memory, taught (Bava Kamma 92a) that whoever asks for mercy on behalf of his fellow, while himself needing that same thing, is answered first. Well known is their saying, of blessed memory (Moed Katan 16b), on the verse "The righteous one rules, in the fear of God" (II Samuel 23:3): "Who rules over Me? The tzaddik (righteous one). The Holy One, blessed be He, decrees a decree, and the tzaddik nullifies it." How, then, does he nullify the decree of Hashem, blessed be He?

The matter is as follows. All evils and sufferings are dinim (judgments, severities), and dinim are sweetened only at their root. It is stated in the holy Zohar (Terumah 175b; Acharei Mot 65a): "From the side of Binah (understanding), dinim emerge." The tzaddik raises all the dinim to Binah, and there they are rectified at their root.

According to this, we must understand why the tzaddik cannot do this for himself. That is, when he is suffering, why can he not raise the dinim to Binah as described? Even though our Rabbis, of blessed memory, said (Berachot 5b), "A prisoner cannot free himself from prison," we must still understand why this is so. The reason is that he can do this only with daat (knowledge). How could he do it when his daat and his mochin (expanded consciousness) are taken from him? Therefore he cannot help himself at all. For this reason it is a great mitzvah for others to pray on his behalf and to raise the dinim, as described.

To understand how the dinim are rectified at their root, and also what is meant by the expression "from its side dinim emerge": there are fifty gates of Binah. The forty-nine gates are called "sides," and there is the place from which the dinim come forth, etc. But in the fiftieth gate, which is called Ayin, there is complete mercy, and there is no din at all. Therefore when the dinim are raised to the gate of Ayin, they are rectified. This accords with the saying of the Ba'al Shem Tov, whose soul is in the treasuries on high: with something that has no surface, breaking does not apply.

Therefore the Ba'al Shem Tov, whose soul is in the treasuries on high, spoke about the saying of our Rabbis, of blessed memory, that one who prays for his fellow is answered first. We must understand why he is answered specifically first. The matter is that one who prays for his fellow must raise the gevurot (strengths, severities) and the dinim to their root, as described. If so, the one who prays is there

first, and only afterward does he draw down the answer for the sick person as well. Therefore he is answered first, etc. (Me'or Einayim, Parashat Naso).

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