

“And may G-d give you of the dew of the heavens and of the fatness of the earth.” (27:28)

Rashi notes that at the outset of the text of the blessings the *pasuk* begins with the conjunction *vav*, which means “and,” a word which is not consistent with the commencement of blessings. He cites the *Midrash* which states that this implies a continuous repetitive action, as if to say, “May G-d grant you the following blessing over and over again.” The question is obvious and well-known. When the Torah says, *V’yiten lecha*, “and may G-d give you,” it already implies constant giving. If so, why do we need *Rashi’s* comment of *yachzor v’yiten*, “He will then return and give again”? When one is blessed with abundance, it is not necessary to say, “May G-d give you abundance – and may G-d give you abundance – again”, because it is obvious that consistency is part of the blessing.

The *Piasczesner Rebbe, z.l.*, gives two answers to this question. First, he explains the meaning of “giving.” When a person gives his friend money for the first time, then he is indeed the giver. If, however, the recipient had previously given the money to the giver who is presently giving it back, then the giver is only returning what he had previously received.

We worship Hashem out of devotion to Him – not for reward or personal gain. Nonetheless, when a Jew serves Hashem, he warrants a reward, which he will certainly receive. Hence, the reward Hashem gives him is in return for his devotion to Him. If, however, Hashem were to confer repeated reward upon one who is not deserving of reward, then He is really the giver.

When Yitzchak blessed Yaakov, he said, *V’yiten lecha*, “And may (G-d) give you.” This means that first Hashem will give – even if the Jew is not deserving of this reward. Then, “He will return and give you again.” At this time, Hashem is giving in return for what the person has already given through his worship. The *Rebbe* adds that this is only right, since, after all, how can anyone properly worship Hashem amidst pain and suffering, unless Hashem has already given first? It is only when Hashem gives to the “undeserving” Jew that afterwards the giving can be on a level of reciprocity. The point is especially clear when we note that this homily was delivered amidst the anguish of the concentration camp, to the broken shards of humanity that still remained.

In an alternative exegesis, the *Rebbe* once again takes into consideration the pain and deprivation that had regrettably become a way of life for the European Jew. He cites the *pasuk* in *Yeshaya 27:13*, “They will come those who are lost (*ovdim*) in the land of Ashur, and those who are outcast (*nidachim*) in the land of Egypt.” There are people who are really *ovdim*, lost, and there are those who are simply *nidachim*, outcast. The *nidach*, outcast person, has merely been displaced, exiled from his home to another place, but he can still be noticed and recognized. Not so the one who is lost. He is neither visible nor recognizable.

In speaking to his “congregation” of *tzibrochoneh Yidden*, broken Jews, the *Rebbe* made reference

to their current situation, in which Jewish men had their beards and *payos* shorn off, becoming externally unrecognizable as Jews. As the terrible persecutions and tortures beyond description persisted, it became apparent that they were losing their inner fortitude, also becoming internally unrecognizable as Jews. Indeed, in such terrible circumstances, a person may lose himself completely, to the point that he does not even recognize himself at all. The *Rebbe's* words in *Yiddish* were, *Ehr farlikt zich a'lien*, "He loses himself." No longer can he remember how he felt on *Shabbos* a year ago, or how he felt during the week when he prayed to Hashem. The emotional and spiritual elation that he experienced when he communed with the Almighty had become something far-removed from his current situation. He had been stepped upon and crushed until he no longer retained any sensitivity regarding his Jewishness. Indeed, he no longer knew if he was a human being or an animal. This is the level of being truly lost and absent.

This form of psychic disintegration was something which many of the ghetto's inhabitants experienced. The *Rebbe* explains that the term *ovdim*, lost, refers not to the spatial but to the psychological dimension. When the *Rebbe* spoke these words, they conveyed a message of hope. People realized that they were not alone in what they were experiencing. By identifying the syndrome, it became easier to attempt to ameliorate it.

He concluded with a message of hope and faith in Hashem. In the *Talmud Kiddushin 2b*, *Chazal* say, "The loser must return in search of his lost article." When something is truly lost when it cannot be seen or recognized, its owner returns to search for it, to locate it, to bring it back to him.

Hashem is our owner, and we are His lost articles. He will search for us and find us. He will reinstate us and give us everything that is good. This is the meaning of Yitzchak's blessing. Hashem will give not only when the Jew is visible and recognizable, but also when he is lost, when he is neither discernible nor identifiable as a Jew. At such times, Hashem will "return" and give again. The Owner of the *aveidah*, lost object, will return to search for us and find us. He will shower us with good and bring us close to Him as He redeems us with great compassion.

To the broken and tormented Jew of the Holocaust, Yitzchak's blessing signaled hope. It was a clarion call that reverberated throughout his entire soul. It gave him reason to want to live. He knew that whatever happened, he would be going "home." Perhaps this homily extends far beyond the era of the Holocaust, even to the contemporary Jew who has strayed so far that he is also "lost," the "invisible" Jew who no longer identifies with his people. Can one become more lost than that?