

## “...אנכי מגן לך שכרך הרבה מאד” הרב צבי קרקואר

In this week's *parsha*, after Avraham Avinu defeated the ארבע מלכים, HaKadosh Boruch Hu came to him to reassure him. The *posuk* says Hashem came to him in a *nevua* and said, “אל-תירא אברהם אנכי מגן לך שכרך הרבה” (בראשית טו, א) מאד. One *pshat* in “אנכי מגן לך” is that Avraham was worried that others would attack him after he defeated the ארבע מלכים, and therefore Hashem told him that He would protect him. It seems that the question on this *pshat* would be that anyone else would be too afraid to start up with Avraham Avinu right after he destroyed the powerful kings. Therefore, Rashi a different *pshat* in “אנכי מגן לך”. Rashi learns that Hashem is telling Avraham that he will not be punished for all the people he killed in the war. Additionally, that which Avraham was afraid about not receiving reward, Hashem tells him, “שכרך הרבה מאד”. Meaning, that when the *posuk* starts off by saying “אל-תירא אברהם”, Avraham was afraid that he used up all his *zechusim* with the great נס that HaKadosh Boruch Hu made for him to beat the ארבע מלכים. It is to that which Hashem reassures him, “שכרך הרבה מאד”.

The question becomes that if Avraham was afraid about losing his שכר and that is why HaKadosh Boruch Hu tells him “שכרך הרבה מאד”, why does HaKadosh Boruch Hu also have to be מבטיח him that He will protect him? Maybe we can answer with a Rabbeinu Yonah. In שערי תשובה העיקר החמשה עשר, he quotes “לחז”ל that “עבירה” מכבה מצוה. When a person does an *aveira*, not only does he get punished for doing so but he also forfeits reward he would have received for *mitzvos* he had done. Therefore, it is important for a person to *teshuva*, not only to avoid the punishment, but to also remove the *aveira* in order to be מקבל שכר for the מעשים טובים he has accomplished. Perhaps over here as well, Avraham Avinu was worried that not only did he use up שכר with the great נס, but perhaps there was some *aveira* as well during the war that would impede upon him receiving שכר for his מעשים טובים. It is because of this that HaKadosh Boruch Hu reassures him by protecting him from any negative ramifications of killing the ארבע מלכים as well as promising him the שכר for all of his מעשים טובים.

The question is that the *posuk* would then imply that there was something wrong about Avraham Avinu killing the soldiers and the kings that required HaKadosh Boruch Hu's protection. What did Avraham Avinu do wrong? The Rambam, Rabbeinu Yonah, and other Rishonim understand that this מלחמה was one of Avraham's עשרה נסיונות. If he wouldn't have fought them, he would have a חסרון in not accomplishing all of the נסיונות. More so, the Midrash Rabbah brings down that he was afraid that there were actual *tzadikim* in the armies of the ארבע מלכים who did not deserve to be killed by him, and HaKadosh Boruch Hu told him that they were all *reshaim* deserving to be killed. What, then, is the issue over here that Avraham Avinu needs a special הבטחה of protection for it?

An additional layer to this is that the Taz brings down a difference between the *דין רודף* and a soldier in battle. By a *רודף*, the *din* is that if a person can stop the would-be killer by merely wounding him or incapacitating him, he must do that instead of killing him. When a soldier is in battle, there is no such limitation in defeating the enemy. One is fully sanctioned to kill the enemy he is facing during battle. Again, why does HaKadosh Boruch Hu give Avraham Avinu the special *הבטחה* of protection?

To understand this, perhaps we can bring a famous Or Hachaim Hakadosh from the *parsha* of *עיר הנידחת*. In *Parshas Re'eh*, by the *mitzvah* of wiping out and destroying an *עיר הנידחת*, the *posuk* says, "...ונתן לך רחמים..." In *Parshas Re'eh*, by the *mitzvah* of wiping out and destroying an *עיר הנידחת*, the *posuk* says, "...ונתן לך רחמים, ורחמך והרבך..." (דברים יג, יח). This is what HaKadosh Boruch Hu will give to Klal Yisroel who just obliterated an *עיר הנידחת*. The Or Hachaim explains even though they have accomplished a big *mitzvah* by doing this, nonetheless, the act of destroying and killing has a negative effect on a person. This is like the Sefer HaChinuch who explains the reason we have so many *מצות מעשיות זכר ליציאת מצרים* is because *אדם נפעל כפי פעולותיו*, and when a person does actions they always have an influence on him. ממילא, *zugt* the Or Hachaim Hakadosh, even though there is a *mitzvah* to destroy an *עיר הנידחת*, it could still have a negative influence upon a person. That is why HaKadosh Boruch Hu is מבטיח that not only will obliterated an *עיר הנידחת* not have a negative effect on Klal Yisroel's *מדת הרחמים*, but even more, HaKadosh Boruch Hu will give us *שכר* that we will become even bigger בעלי רחמים.

Perhaps we can say that this was also the concern of Avraham Avinu. Even though destroying the *ארבע מלכים* was one of the *נסינות*, עשרה נסינות, still he was afraid that his unique *מדת החסד* was effected negatively in doing so. It is to this concern that HaKadosh Boruch Hu tells Avraham not to worry, *אנכי מגן לך* from the repercussions on his psyche for performing such a task by protecting Avraham's *מדת החסד*. Not only that, but *שכר הרבה מאד* for overcoming your *מדת החסד*. [Maybe the *ניסיון* was specifically overcoming his *מדת חסד* in destroying them] HaKadosh Boruch Hu is מבטיח him that He will enhance Avraham's sensitivity for *חסד* as *שכר* for overcoming this *ניסיון*.

Perhaps we can now understand the *המשך הפסוקים* in the following way. Avraham Avinu tells HaKadosh Boruch Hu, "מה תתן לי ואנכי הולך ערירי..." - what am I getting? I don't have any children. Avraham Avinu says that yes, HaKadosh Boruch preserved and augmented his *מדת החסד*, but what good is it if he has no offspring to pass it on to? His heir apparent was Eliezer, a *כנעני*, whom we know have a proclivity to be *מושחתים*. To that, HaKadosh Boruch Hu tells him, "...לא יירשך זה כי אם אשר יצא ממעריך הוא יירשך..." - Avraham, you will have a son and descendants and they will inherit you and your *מדת החסד*, your heightened sensitivity for *חסד* which came from *אנכי מגן לך שכר הרבה מאד*.