



From the desk of
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עיר התורה שקרובה אליך

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OHR

Parashat Chukat

HAMELECH

Hashem Does Not Withhold Reward From an Individual

Our Sages Statement Concerning Why Moshe Was Afraid of Og

In *Masechet Niddah* [61a], our Sages state, “ ‘And Hashem said to Moshe, ‘Do not fear.’ Let us see, Sichon and Og were brothers ... Why was Moshe afraid of Og but not of Sichon? Said R’ Shimon bar Yochai: From the answer of that *tzaddik*, you know what was in his heart. Moshe said, ‘Maybe the merit of Avraham Avinu will stand in his merit.’ This is as the *pasuk* states, ‘And the escapee came and told Avram the *Ivri*.’ Rebbi Yochanan said: This is Og who escaped from the generation of the flood.” This is also cited in Rashi.

Question:

The *Daat Zekeinim* of the *Baalei Tosafot* [*Bamidbar* 21:34] asks why Moshe was afraid of Og’s merit of helping Avraham. After all, they say, Og’s intentions were wicked, as he wished for Avraham to die so that he could take Sarah as a wife. This is similarly stated in the *Midrash Rabbah* [*Lech Lecha* 42:8], which states that Og’s intentions in helping Lot were not for the sake of Heaven; rather, he wished for Avraham to die so that he could marry Sarah. Therefore, Hashem told him that for the footsteps he took in order to save Lot, he will be rewarded with long life. However, because he intended for the demise of Avraham the *tzaddik*, Og will ultimately see hundreds of thousands of Avraham’s descendants, and will ultimately meet his end through them. This is as the *pasuk* states, “And Hashem said ‘Do not fear him, for into your hand I have placed him.’”

There is Great Reward for Every Action and Deed

We are accustomed to thinking that for an individual to receive reward for a mitzvah, he must perform a perfect mitzvah with the utmost exactitude and dedication. But if he does anything less, we think that there is no value to his deeds. However, this is not so; rather, praiseworthy is one who performs any mitzvah, for he will merit a share in the World to Come. This is as it states in *Masechet Shabbat* [63a] in the name of R’ Chaninah bar Idi, that if one performs a mitzvah, he will not hear bad tidings. Additionally, R’ Asi, and some Rebbi Chaninah, say that even if *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* issues a decree, he can annul it. Similarly the Rambam writes that any good that results from a deed he performs, even the most minute, whether a result of his speech or his deed, even if his intentions were not for the sake of Heaven, Hashem does not withhold reward. He will also be rewarded for every bit of good that he does from amidst an evil act. Therefore an individual should not weaken in his resolve to perform mitzvot to the greatest extent that he is able to. Nor should he get discouraged over the fact that he cannot perform a mitzvah perfectly, for this is only the advice of the *yetzer hara*. For whatever good he does, even if it is only incidentally caused through his deeds or word, his reward is very great. Therefore it is the obligation of an individual and especially the weak individual to say, “I am mighty,” and he should not make light of any good action that he does for his friend – even the



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smallest of the small. This is because you do not know the reward for mitzvot. For every good word that a man says to his friend or to his wife and family – he will be rewarded for it. All the more so, each time he helps someone and performs an act of kindness, his reward is boundless, as we will explain shortly. Even though he cannot do everything perfectly, he should do whatever he can.

Reward Even For a Small Mitzvah

The *Daat Zekeinim* of the *Baalei Tosafot* answer that since the rescue of Lot came about because of his deed, Moshe had what to fear. This is as we find in *Perek Chelek* in *Masechet Sanhedrin*, that in the merit of the 42 sacrificial offerings offered up by Balak, Rut descended from him. This is despite the fact that Balak only offered the sacrifices with intent to curse the Jewish Nation." We learn a great principle from the *Baalei Tosafot* regarding Hashem's providence over man. Even if an individual performs a wicked deed, but there is, nevertheless, a segment of good in what he has done, Hashem differentiates between the good and the bad, and the individual receives reward for the good that he did. This is despite the fact that his entire intention was bad, similar to Og who had absolutely no intention in benefitting Avraham by informing him that Lot had been captured. Rather, it was only to marry Sarah if Avraham would be killed. But since, in actuality, Lot was saved because of the information he gave Avraham, he merited a long life of hundreds of years. This was to the extent that Moshe Rabbeinu feared that this deed would stand in Og's merit and that he would fall to Og, until *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* guaranteed him that he had

nothing to fear. This is all to teach us just to what extent every good act he does accrues boundless reward.

Similarly, we find that the Torah instructs us, "Do not abominate an Egyptian, because you were a sojourner in his land." This is something that astounds all those who read it. Is it possible that a Jew is required not to abominate the Egyptians, who oppressed the Jews totally for their own benefit, just because we dwelled in their land? However, the Torah is teaching us that we must gain the perspective that is learned from the *parashah*. Hashem differentiates between good and bad and does not withhold reward. So too, even though the Jews only served the Egyptian's purposes by living in Egypt, they, nevertheless, lived there and must recognize that.

Similarly, we find that our Sages teach us about the raven [*Midrash Rabbah Noach* 5:8]. Our Sages teach that when Noach sent the raven to see if the land was dry, it returned and said, "From all the animals, beasts, and birds that are here, you specifically send me?" Noach replied, "Why does the world need you? It needs you not for food and not to be a sacrificial offering." The Midrash continues that Hashem said that in the future the world will need the raven. For in the time of Eliyahu HaNavi it will be the ravens that supply Eliyahu with bread and meat, both by day and night. We see from here that because of one positive act the raven would perform in the future, it was worthwhile to sustain it.

Torah Thought From the *Shevet Mussar*

The author of the classic work, *Shevet Mussar*, in his *sefer* entitled *Aggadat Eliyahu* [*Pe'ah* 1:1], writes that this applies even if an individual



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performs a *sin* from which results a *mitzvah*. Even though It is clear that the Heavenly Tribunal would not consider his act a *mitzvah*, nevertheless, Hashem, Who is abundantly merciful considers that *mitzvah* that resulted from his sin as if he actually intended to perform the *mitzvah*! Therefore, Moshe feared Og even though his intentions were sinful, as were Balak's who offered sacrifices with evil intentions, but was rewarded, as stated above.

According to this, he explains the *pasuk* in *Tehillim* [62], "And to You Hashem is the kindness, for You pay man according to his deeds." It is a kindness of Hashem that He pays man for a *mitzvah* that resulted from his sin. "According to his deeds" – i.e., as if he actually intended to perform a good deed.

An Individual Merited a Large Funeral Because of Good that Resulted From His Deed

The *sefer Me'am Loez* cites the *sefer Shte'i Yadot* [pg. 48] as saying that there were two pious individuals who were sitting and learning Torah in Ashkelon. One of them passed away, and very few people attended his funeral. Afterwards, the son of the customs official passed away, and very many people attended his funeral. Furthermore, the entire city closed their stores and attended the funeral. The pious man was distressed and said, "My friend was a very pious man, and yet, he was not honored appropriately." He was told in a dream, "Do not investigate the matter, because Hashem certainly repays each individual according to his merit. Know that this pious man committed a sin in his lifetime. One time, he

donned *tefillin shel rosh* before donning the *tefillin shel yad*. Heaven therefore paid him back by not allowing him to be honored. This way it atoned for him, because he had not committed any other sin. However the son of the customs official was a very wicked individual, and in his entire life he only did one *mitzvah*. One time, he made a feast for the friend of the customs official, but guests did not come. In order that the food he prepared should not spoil, he stood up and distributed it to the poor. There are those who say that when he was walking on the way, a loaf of bread fell from his sack. A pauper came and picked it up, but the man did not say anything, as not to embarrass him. He therefore merited a large funeral."

Words of Mussar

We have learned about the benefit of each good action, even the most minute. This is the intention of the *Tanna* in *Avot* who states that one should run to even a "minor" *mitzvah*, because you do not know the reward of *mitzvot*. Sometimes from a *mitzvah* like a small act of kindness, for example, one can merit a great salvation. Furthermore, even if his intention was evil, Heaven forbid, but nevertheless, good resulted from it, he still accrues great reward. If Og, Balak, and the Egyptians received reward for the good that resulted from their evil actions, certainly every individual who intends to benefit his surroundings, whether it be with speech or action, receives boundless reward.

Shabbat Shalom,
 Rav Mordechai Malka