

Fear not, Avram, I am a shield for you. Your reward shall be very great. (15:1)

The words, “Your reward shall be very great,” imply that not only is a reward waiting for Avraham *Avinu*, but the reward that had normally been stored away on his behalf was not diminished as a result of the miracles which were wrought for him. Why is this? Yaakov *Avinu* feared that his *z’chusim*, merits, would be diminished as a result of Hashem’s saving him from Eisav’s reach. Why should Avraham be different? Indeed, is this not what reward is all about?

Horav Yisrael Salanter, zl, quoted by *Horav Boruch Dov Povarsky, Shlita*, compares this world to an upscale restaurant in which the food prices are commensurate with the surrounding ambience. A cup of coffee in a greasy drive-in will certainly be more economical than a cup of coffee served on china at a table, in a luxurious, carpeted dining room with beautiful paintings on the wall, accompanied by soft music piped in through a superior sound system. Everything costs money. It might be the very same cup of coffee, but once it is served amid luxury, the price rises.

Our world is a fancy restaurant which offers us every ambience to accompany our enjoyment. We must remember that the luxury does not come cheap. It costs, and we must pay. The more we enjoy, the more we pay. Therefore, *tzaddikim*, righteous people, who seem relegated to a life of frugality and are sustained on the bare minimum, are actually benefitting greatly. By sufficing with less, they gain more, because their reward/merit account has not diminished.

One exception exists to the “coffee in the upscale restaurant pricing” rule: the waiters. Someone who works at the establishment eats whatever he wants for free. Workers do not pay. Furthermore, nothing is deducted from their pay. It is usually one of the perks of employment. This is what Hashem intimated to Avraham (explains the *Ponovezher Rosh Yeshivah*): You have nothing to worry about. You are a company man. As a result of your extraordinary humility, you might consider yourself to be a guest who pays dearly for the food and other pleasures he receives. You are wrong. As a man on a mission to elevate the glory of Heaven and teach a pagan world about monotheism, you are assisting in maintaining My world. You will not lose as a result of your material enjoyment.

Rav Yisrael teaches that in order for one to pass through this world and not have the benefits that he experiences have a depreciating effect on his merit account, he should become a company man and do whatever is in his power to raise the glory of Heaven, to reach out to Jews and bring them under the *kanfei ha’Shechinah*, the ways of the Divine Presence.