

The Share of the Ones Who Guarded the Baggage

Aryeh Leib Thorne Toren · 22 October 2026

This week's Torah portion has a scene every manager should read twice.

Avram has just won a war he never wanted. Four kings had raided the cities of the plain and carried off his nephew Lot. Avram took his household, chased them north and brought everyone home, people and property alike.

The king of Sodom meets him on the way back with an offer: "Give me the souls, and the possessions take for yourself" (Bereishit 14:21). It's a fair deal by any standard of the time. The rescuer keeps the loot.

Avram turns it down, and not politely. "Neither from a thread to a shoe strap ... that you should not say, 'I have made Abram wealthy'" (14:23). He won't take a thread from a man whose name would then be on his success. Rashi explains why: G-d had already promised to bless him (12:2). Avram knows where his wealth comes from, and he won't let Sodom take the credit.

Then comes the part that's easy to miss. In the same breath, Avram makes an exception. His allies Aner, Eshkol and Mamre "shall take their share" (14:24).

Rashi explains that Avram's own men went into the battle, while Aner and his companions "stayed with the luggage to guard it." They never fought, and Avram insists they get paid anyway. Generations later, King David made it law for Israel's army: "as the share of him who goes down into battle, so is the share of him who stays with the luggage; they shall share alike" (I Samuel 30:24). Rashi says David learned it from Avram.

So the man who will not take a shoelace for himself goes to the mat for the people who watched the gear.

I grew up in Pittsburgh, where every crew knew who really kept the line running. The man on the furnace got the photo in the paper. The man who kept the cranes greased, the woman who balanced the books and the night watchman who made sure nothing walked off got the paycheck if they were lucky, and the credit almost never.

Avram's rule is simple, and most of us break it every week:

- Don't take credit, or money, from someone who will then claim he made you.
- Make sure the people who guarded the baggage get their share, out loud and in full.

The first rule keeps you free. The second keeps you honest. Together they're a whole theory of leadership in two verses.

Right after this scene, G-d tells Avram, "Fear not ... your reward is exceedingly great" (15:1). The man who refused the thread lost nothing by it.

This week, find your Aner, Eshkol and Mamre: the colleague who covered the phones, the spouse who held the house together, the friend who kept the gear safe while you were out front. Name them. Give them their share.

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