

THROUGH THICK AND THIN

by Rabbi Dovid Green

"The sacred offerings of every individual will be his. Each man who will give to the Kohein (dedicated servant of G-d) it shall be his" (Numbers 5:10). This passage is intentionally written so it can be understood in more than one way. One simple explanation is that although one is obligated to give of his possessions to the Kohein, he may nevertheless retain the right to choose which Kohein he will give it to. No particular Kohein has a claim on those gifts. That is an aspect of that gift which remains the givers, even though he gives it away in the end.

The work Yalkut Lekach Tov brings a beautiful thought which is hinted to this verse in the name of the Chofetz Chaim.

A man whom we will call Reuben was a servant of the king. He was once summoned before the king to give an accounting of his actions, which had failed to meet the high standards expected of him. He was gripped with fear. "Who can help me?" he wondered. Reuben had three friends. Shimon, was his closest and dearest friend. Reuben loved Shimon, and it seemed to Reuben that the feelings were mutual. Levi was another friend of his. He was also quite a close and dependable friend. Yehudah was his third friend. He was not really a good friend, rather somewhat of an acquaintance to whom Reuben never felt very close.

Reuben ran to Shimon. He told him everything. He begged Shimon to come with him to his audience with the king. "Perhaps you can stand in my defense". "I'm sorry," replied Shimon, "but I can't help you." Reuben was devastated. "Maybe Levi can help me," he thought hopefully. "I'll be happy to escort you to the palace gates," said Levi, "but no further." Disappointed, Reuben said "I'll go to Yehudah. What choice do I have left? The worst he can do is refuse like the others." To Reuben's great surprise Yehudah agreed. "I'm willing to go with you, and do everything I can to defend you before the king," said he.

As the story goes, Shimon stayed home. Levi went as far as the palace gates, as he had promised, and Yehudah went in with Reuben to his audience before the king. Reuben's accounting did not win him favor from the king, as he had feared, and Yehudah bravely defended him. He won the day, and saved Reuben's name and his neck.

This story analogizes the path which all humankind follows. Eventually we are all called back for our audience before The King of Kings. It is truly a fearful thought, for we must account for the way we spent our lives. We look for tools with which to defend ourselves. Who can stand up for us in the

face of this profound dilemma? We'll run to Shimon. Shimon represents our material wealth. We often feel that wealth is our best friend, our helper, and our security, which will stand for us under all circumstances. After all, we reason, we dedicated our entire lives to Shimon. But to our dismay, Shimon will not accompany us along this path.

We run to Levi. Levi represents our families, our loved ones, our dear friends. Maybe they won't leave us in our time of trouble. They try their best, they cry for us and they even escort us till the edge of the grave, but in the end, they too leave us to ourselves. They come as far as the gates, but no further.

We turn to Yehudah. Yehuda represents our Torah study and our good deeds. We never really thought he was our best friend who would stay with us through thick and thin. It's too bad though, because if we had known how good a friend he was, we would have cultivated the friendship, and become much better acquainted.

THE ONLY THINGS WE TAKE WITH US ARE OUR TORAH AND MITZVOS. WE LEAVE EVERYTHING ELSE BEHIND!!! They are our defense because they are testimony to our loyalty to "The King." The more we accumulate, obviously, the better it is for us. This is something which must dominate our attitudes on a daily basis. This gives us a clear perspective about the importance of everything else we run after as if our lives depended on it.

A destitute man once set out on a journey to find his fortune. Leaving his wife and family he promised to return with the means to support them with dignity. He found his way to a faraway place, and he began doing business. He found that milk was in short supply, in demand, and expensive. He became a dairy farmer, met with great success, and soon became a man of means. His response to one of his wife's sad letters of woe was that he was immediately setting out for home with great wealth. He decided that since milk was such a profitable commodity, that he would exchange all of his wealth for milk and transport it back home. At the very last minute before his departure a friend of his prevailed upon him to invest in some gold and silver and some precious stones to bring as a gift to his wife.

Needless to say, when he arrived home the stench which exuded from the barrels of milk was more than a person could bear, and consequently all of the man's wealth was gone. "For this you stayed away for so many years?" cried his wife. "Isn't there anything left which can raise us out of our terrible poverty? How will we ever marry off our children?" The poor man was beside himself. All of the time he invested, and all of the wealth he had amassed gone in one fell swoop! Then the man remembered the valuables which he had purchased before he left for home. He sold them, and managed to eke out a living for several years.

We come down to this world, and we engage in "business". We dedicate the majority of our lives first preparing, and then working to amass wealth, as here in this world the importance of material wealth is so emphasized. Torah and its observance is relatively much less expensive. These are viewed as

things of little value here in this world. One way or another we still usually manage to put together a small portfolio of this commodity.

When we arrive home - when our time here is up - what will we bring with us? What will the bulk of the "merchandise" smell like when we arrive there? Imagine the disappointment... What will we "live" on there? Only those words of Torah which we spoke; only the prayers which we said; only the coins which we gave away for truly worthy charitable causes will be ours; and the smile which we brought to the face of that troubled soul, and so on and so forth.

This is a deeper meaning of the aforementioned passage. "The one who gives...it shall be his." It shall truly be his - a thing of eternally lasting value. If you're an investor - and we all are - and you're looking for something good to invest in these unpredictable times, this may be just the thing you're looking for.

Good Shabbos!

Text Copyright © 2000 [Rabbi Dovid Green](#) and **[Project Genesis, Inc.](#)**
