

WORTHY OF A "ZECHUS TORAH"

by Rabbi Label Lam

*And Zevulun shall dwell by the seashores. He shall be at the ship's harbor, and his end is at Sidon.
(Breishis 49:13)*

Zevulun will engage in commerce (therefore he will be constantly at the harbor which is by the sea) and provide food for the Tribe of Yissachar while they are engaged in the study of Torah. (Rashi)

Zevulun and Yissachar are to have a symbiotic relationship. One is to work and journey and trade while the other stays put and devotes his energies to learning. This is already a famous arrangement. To the undiscerning eye though it may appear unfair. One man does all the hard work traveling the world to make money while the other is anchored to the pursuit of wisdom. Is that a just arrangement?

Recently I heard the following story about Reb Elchonon Wasserman ztl. He came to the United States from Europe before the 2nd World War to collect money to support his Yeshiva in Baronovitch. He was staying in Williamsburg, Brooklyn. Someone told him about a successful Jewish clothing manufacturer in Manhattan that had many hundreds of workers but refused to give charity. Reb Elchonon took up the challenge of going to visit this businessman.

When he arrived at the workplace he was given a less than warm reception. The boss finally welcomed him into his office and anticipating the request for money, he curtly questioned him about why he had come. Reb Elchonon stood in full stature (he was a tall man) and showed him where a button on his jacket had become loose. The man was stunned and relieved and so immediately he called over one of his workers from the coat manufacturing division and they ended up securing all the buttons on the Rabbi's coat. Reb Elchonon graciously thanked them and he left.

A short while later it dawned on this businessman the oddity of that visit. He called for Reb Elchonon and asked him, "Did you really come all the way from Williamsburg just get a few buttons sewn on your jacket?" Reb Elchonon responded frankly, "No! I came from Baronovitch!" "Are you telling me", the manufacturer wondered, "that you came all the way from Europe just to have a those few buttons put on your jacket?" Reb Elchonon answered with a strong question, "Are you telling me that your soul made the long journey down to this world, a much longer distance, only to sew buttons on coats?" The words penetrated the man's heart and sent Reb Elchonon back with a handsome

donation.

What happened here? Was it just that Reb Elchonon in his brilliance had managed to push the right buttons or maybe there's another explanation as well.

The Talmud in Brochos makes the following almost paradoxical statement; "It is greater to service (assist) a Talmud Scholar more than even learning from him!" Perhaps we can appreciate that the Mitzvah of "cleaving to G-d" is fulfilled by doing business with or in any way helping out a Talmud scholar. That way he can get back to and devote his talent and time to what he does best, Torah Learning! In the grand scheme of things, and even in sports we can easily understand that the one who serves up the ball for a score gets an assist, and so it is with everyone who lends a hand in the team process. It's great when everyone knowing his or her specialty plays their critical role in getting the big job done.

With a simple swipe of a pen a wealthy person can easily earn almost unlimited Torah wealth.. Unfortunately not everyone has what's called a "Zechus Torah"-The Merit of Torah. Just as one needs a light to find a light in a blackout, one needs a Torah Merit to earn a Torah Merit. Maybe Reb Elchonon was giving this business that first opportunity by sewing on the buttons and then he became **worthy of a "Zechus Torah"!**

DvarTorah, Copyright © 2007 by Rabbi Label Lam and Torah.org.