

ZERO

by Rabbi Label Lam

And he said, "I am Avraham's servant. (Breishis 24:34)

Why was Avraham's servant Eliezer worthy of so much "airtime"? After all he was from Canaan which who was cursed. Avraham would not even accept his daughter as a match for his son Yitzchok. Yet the Torah expends ink for all time, records the actions of this otherwise insignificant this otherwise insignificant fellow. What did he do that that was so great? What was his secret?

We used to have an intermittent Shabbos guest, a convert to Judaism. I have not seen him for a long while now. He was a quiet fellow and he owned a taxi car. That's what he did for a living. We never spoke much about his work or the week. It was his job, and it was Shabbos! However, I do remember him getting very animated and emotional when he was speaking about a former employment situation.

It seems that before he moved to Monsey, he used to live in Toronto. There he was a driver too but one of great significance. With great pride he told us that he was the personal driver of the famous Joe Tanenbaum obm, one of the greatest benefactors of Jewish causes and Torah institutions in the last few decades. Many buildings throughout the United States, Canada, and Israel bear his name, and more was done without his name being associated. He quietly changed the shape and the contour off many thousands of lives with the business deals he did and the bridges he built, and with the charity he gave. This fellow was bursting with pride that he had been his personal driver for many years.

Why was he so filled with good feeling for those driving episodes? Driving is driving. Turn the key, press the gas, and go! What's the great wisdom or insight required to drive a car? Why was this driving any different than the driving he was doing now?

The answer is that when he drove Joe Tanenbaum he understood that world shaking decisions were being made while he sat dutiful curbside. His role as an assistant to someone who was shaping history also put him in an historical role too, and he realized it!

If you can't get the ball into the basket, get it to someone who can and get an assist! Servicing a Talmud scholar is a way of cleaving to G-d, because helping him get to the Beis Midrash is a profound role as well, especially for someone who himself does not know how to learn. What was the greatness of Eliezer the Servant of Avraham? What was his point of wisdom? The Talmud defines the wise man as one who recognizes his place. (Tamid)

What's so wise about that? US educator and writer Laurence J. Peter, wrote, in "The Peter Principle" a cynical but true statement! "Everyone rises to their level of incompetence." Many a good salesman got promoted to become a poor sales manager, or a great teacher can be elevated to a bad administrator. Eliezer knew and accepted his role as a servant to Avraham. He himself was from a cursed lineage. His greatest accomplishment of coming closer to HASHEM could best be achieved by assisting Avraham. The submission to that single reality, the surrender to helping Avraham cause earned him a noble place in the constellation of greatness.

He was like a window that only needs to remain clean to let the sun light in. The more invisible he becomes, paradoxically, the more important he is! Perhaps the most telling point in the whole tale of Eliezer is that in this entire portion dedicated to his loyal service, his name is not mentioned even once. He was, or he made himself to be a zero, but the zero went and parked him-self next to a "one" that would make a ten. Now that's a super situation for a **zero**. DvarTorah, Copyright © 2007 by Rabbi Label Lam and Torah.org.