

INVESTING IN ANOTHER JEW

by Rabbi Shlomo Jarcaig

When Yaakov (Jacob) blessed his sons before his death, he made reference to the partnership between Yissachar and Zevulun. He blessed Zevulun (Beraishis/Genesis 49:13) that he would dwell by the seashores where his commerce would enable him to provide for Yissachar, who would spend his time studying Torah.

The Medrash (Yalkut Shimoni 161) teaches us that since Zevulun facilitated Yissachar's Torah study, he was entitled to an equal share of its reward in the World to Come. Why is this so? If Zevulun could earn a large sum of money with comparatively less effort than that exerted by Yissachar in his Torah study, why should Zevulun still be considered an equal partner rather than a secondary one? Similarly, the Talmud (Brachos 17a), expounding on the concept that women merit a greater portion in the World to Come than do men, asks how women merit that portion. The Talmud answers that they earn this reward by taking their children to the synagogue to study and encouraging and enabling their husbands to study. But women are obviously no less capable of performing their own mitzvos than men; why do they gain their reward through others? And why does that yield them a greater portion?

A person's act of selfless giving of himself to facilitate the growth of someone else is greater in G-d's eyes than his striving for his own personal growth. The investment of a significant period of time and effort to study Torah is very precious to G-d, but at the same time the student experiences the joys of Torah study as well as the growth from the acquired knowledge and character refinement. But a person who supports the study of another - whether he invests money, energy or love - does not experience the pleasure and does not grow from the insights, but he gives of himself in this same mitzvah nonetheless. Thus, Zevulun, like the loving wife and mother, earns an equal share of the reward for Yissachar's Torah study.

Have a Good Shabbos!

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