

IT'S THE LAW!

by Rabbi Yaakov Menken

*"Zevulun will settle by the seashore... Yissocher is a bony donkey, lying between the borders."
[49:13-14]*

Rashi explains that Zevulun will live near shipping ports, engaging in business and providing sustenance to Yissocher - for the latter will be studying Torah. "This is what Moshe said, 'Zevulun, be happy as you go out, and Yissocher, in your tents.' [Dev. 33:18] Zevulun goes out and does business, while Yissocher studies Torah in the tents."

What sort of study is involved? Rashi says, "A bony donkey" - A donkey with prominent bones. He carries the yoke of Torah like a strong donkey which is carrying a heavy load."

The yoke of Torah is just that - a heavy responsibility and obligation. Those who truly study it not merely full-time, but "day and night," are recognized by the Torah as deserving of our support.

The Chofetz Chaim, Rabbi Yisrael Kagan, explains that HaShem created the world knowing that it was impossible for the entire nation to be engaged only in Torah study, and that it would also be necessary to engage in "the ways of the world." Therefore, when dividing the land of Israel among the tribes, He suggested to us the necessary partnership between Yissocher and Zevulun.

Each one fills a unique and necessary purpose: Yissocher loved Torah study, so much so that the tribe produced 200 heads of the *Sanhedrin*, the nation of Israel's Supreme Court, and they taught Torah to all of Israel. Zevulun was heavily involved with business, so they could not dedicate themselves to Torah in this fashion - but they supported and sustained their brothers in the tribe of Yissocher, giving them whatever they needed.

In Jewish thought, we know that our primary purpose is the pursuit of our spirituality and the study of Torah. But one person cannot do everything alone. Yissocher and Zevulun _together_ are considered "the pillars of the world." And this even has ramifications within Jewish law: the *Shulchan Aruch*, the Code of Jewish law, says [*Yoreh Deah* 246] that "one who does not know how to learn himself, or is very involved with business and finds it difficult to learn, is obligated to support those who study Torah. And it will be considered for him as if he studied Torah himself."

Imagine! If someone is involved in business, but helps support Torah study, it is "considered for him as if he studied Torah himself!" By law!

Text Copyright © 1996 Rabbi Yaakov Menken and Project Genesis, Inc.
The author is the Director of Project Genesis.