

## יִזְחָר

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# YISSACHAR AND ZEVULUN

In both Yaakov *Avinu's* and Moshe *Rabbeinu's* blessings, we find Zevulun preceding Yissachar (*Bereishis* 49:13, *Devarim* 33:18), although he was born after Yissachar. The *Zohar* (*Devarim* 33:18) poses the question that Yissachar, who was *Klal Yisrael's* Torah leader, should have been listed before Zevulun, for Torah takes precedence over everything else. The answer lies in the financial contract in which Zevulun supported Yissachar's Torah learning. The *Zohar* explains that this arrangement gave Zevulun the merit of being listed first. He who supports Torah merits both *Olom Hazeh* and *Olom Haba*. Zevulun had *Olom Hazeh* because he had the wealth obtained from his mercantile trade and he also merited the reward of *Olom Haba*. This does not imply that Zevulun did not learn Torah on his own, for he certainly did learn Torah; his special merit, however, was due to the fact that he

withheld bread from his mouth, while providing for the mouth of Yissachar  
(*Zohar, Devarim* 33:18).

This is indicated by Yaakov's use of the word "*chof*" — "shore" — twice, "sea shore...shore for ships"); the first *chof* indicates *Olom Hazeh*, and the second *chof* indicates *Olom Haba* (*Zohar, ibid.*).

The *Sifri* (*Devarim* 33:10) offers another glimpse into the unique role of Zevulun. He was entrusted with the task of attracting the nations of the world to Judaism. In their commercial endeavors, the merchants of the world had to visit Zevulun's territory. Once they were in *Eretz Yisrael*, they then proceeded to visit Yirushalayim, where they became impressed with Judaism and asked to be converted. Zevulun was responsible for the initial contact with the nations.

Zevulun's prosperity is ordained in Moshe's blessing:

כִּי שָׁפַע יַמִּים יִינָקוּ וְשָׁפְנֵי טְמוּנֵי הַיָּם

They shall suck the abundance of the seas, and the hidden treasures of the sands  
(*Devarim* 33:19).

The *Gemara* (*Megillah* 6•) indicates that their wealth came from the capture of the *chilazon*, from commerce in tunny fish, and from the manufacture of white glass from the sands of the sea shore. It is obvious that the good fortune of Zevulun was linked to the seas. As mentioned earlier, (page 35) the seas represent the great nemesis of mankind. The earth was at first covered with water, and Hashem had to forcibly make room for man. Adam *Harishon* had dominion over all aspects of creation, but not over the seas (and fish). The *Olom Hazeh* merit of Zevulun is now much more profound; of all humanity he seemed to be the closest to having dominion over the seas, for the sea was his blessing in life.

It is thus startling to discover that Zevulun registered dissatisfaction with his lot to Hashem (*Megillah 6•*). Zevulun complained,

לאחיי נתת להם שדות וכרמים... ולי נתת ימים ונהרות

To my brothers You have given fields and vineyards... and to me You have given lakes and rivers.

With all his wealth and potential power in the service of Hashem, why was he unsatisfied; why did he complain? The Maharsha (*Megillah 6•*) puts it all in perspective by pointing out that both Yissachar and Zevulun shared the same territories, but only Zevulun registered a complaint. Yissachar were *ba'alei Torah*, so they were satisfied with their lot in life, although they chose not to involve themselves in mundane labor. Zevulun, who was appointed to harvest the seas both physically and spiritually, did not fully comprehend his assigned duties. He did not have a deep enough understanding of his role because he lacked depth in his personal Torah learning. Perhaps if he had been a *ba'al Torah*, as described by the Maharsha, he would have understood his assigned lot of utilizing the physical to perfect the spiritual, but due to this short-coming, he could not complete the task of Adam *Harishon*.

Although Yissachar reached the greatest heights in Torah, he, too, did not complete the task of Adam *Harishon*. Yissachar confined himself solely to the spiritual realm; he did not occupy himself with the mundane. To emulate Adam *Harishon*, it was necessary to be involved on both the physical and spiritual levels. The Rambam (*Pirkei Avos 1:10*) interprets the *pasuk*

ויקח ה' אלקים את האדם וינחהו בגן עדן לעבדה ולשמרה

And Hashem took the man, and put him in the Garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it (*Bereishis 2:15*),

to indicate Adam's involvement with worldly endeavors. Thus, as there are two sides of a coin, there are dual roles to be played by the heir to Adam *Harishon's* task. Excellence in Torah exertion is requisite, but involvement with the physical world is also necessary.

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