



אמרי בנימן

דברי תורה, מחשבה וסיפורים מאוצרו של
הגאון רב בנימן קמנצקי זצ"ל

*A Dvar Torah from the writings of Rav Binyamin Kamenetzky zt"l,
transcribed by his grandson, Rabbi Shmuel Kamenetzky*

Parshas Lech Lecha 5781 – A Ransom No

After the battle of the four kings against the five, Avram emerged victorious. The king of Sedom offered Avram the spoils of war, which would have made him immensely wealthy. Avram replied, “I swear to Hashem, Most High, Creator of heaven and Earth, I will not take so much as a thread or a sandal strap of what is yours; you shall not say, ‘It is I who made Avram rich.’”

Why does Avram emphasis so much that he is swearing to Hashem “Most High, Creator of heaven and Earth?” Understandably, he did not want to take the spoils, but why does he swear, and why with a full description of Hashem’s greatness?

Velvel, a simple Polish Jew at the turn of the 19th Century, planned a trip from his home in Biolystok, Poland, to his Rebbe in Lublin, during the dead of winter. He hired a wagon to travel the 150 mile route, and set out. Although he was prepared with food and drink, he relied on the driver’s expertise to get him to his destination.

As they trekked through the snow covered roads, they came to an intersection. Velvel’s heart sank, as he realized that neither he, nor the driver knew which way to go! Should they continue straight, or turn right? Maybe they should turn left? They both searched for a road sign which would point them in the right direction, but could not find one.

Velvel frantically started digging in the snow, in desperate search for a road sign. Finally, his almost-frostbitten hand stuck something hard, and together with the wagon driver, they lifted the buried sign out of the snow.

As Velvel looked at the road sign with four arrows and four cities, he was still confused. He did not know which direction the sign should be facing! There was an arrow pointing to Lublin, but he did not know in which direction the sign should be planted!

Finally, he came up with the solution. He knew that he was coming from Bialystok. He simply planted the sign with the arrow pointing to Bialystok in the right direction, and now he knew that Lublin’s arrow was facing Lublin!

My grandfather, Rav Binyamin Kamenetzky zt”l would often repeat the teaching of Rav Simcha Zissel Ziv zt”l, known as the “Alter of Kelm.” Many people think that they will not be affected by money. They accept large gifts from various corrupt people, and assume that they will not be influenced. But in the end, their views become warped, and start leaning towards their new and exciting source of income.

Avram was just the opposite. He knew where he came from, and therefore, he knew where he was going. And he knew that money – even a thread or a shoelace – can corrupt his vision and his mission. So he passed on the deal. But not before swearing to Hashem “Most High, Creator of heaven and Earth.” Because as long as he remembered where we come from, we cannot be bought, not with a shoelace, and not with a king’s ransom.

Good Shabbos!

Rabbi Shmuel Kamenetzky is the Director of Advancement at Yeshiva of South Shore - ישיבה תורת חיים -בית בנימן. He is currently compiling the vast storehouse of all the Torah thoughts from his grandfather. If you have any stories to share from his grandfather, you can email him at skamenetzky@yoss.org.