



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 Vayeitzei 5781 – Sleeping in

Parshas Vayeitzei tells the story of Yaakov Avinu, who after spending 14 years in the yeshiva of Eiver, stops at Mount Moriah, goes to sleep, and dreams of angels ascending and descending a ladder. The Midrash tell us that the angels ascended to heaven and saw the image of Yaakov's face on the heavenly throne, and then came down and saw him asleep.

When Yaakov wakes up, he says (28:16) "Surely Hashem is present in this place, and I did not know it!" Rashi explains, "I did not know. However, if I would have known, I would not have slept."

Yaakov felt that he defiled this holy place (the future site of the Beis Hamikdash) by sleeping there. But what practical application does Yaakov Avinu's declaration have?

***The Netziv, Rabbi Naftali Tzvi Yehuda Berlin zt"l, lived in Lithuania a few hundred years ago, and was the most famous rabbi of his generation. He headed the famous yeshiva in the city of Voluzhin, where he had approximately 10,000 students. He wrote commentaries on all parts of the Torah, and once when he'd published a particularly difficult work, called "HaEmek Shayla," he called together his family and students for a special celebration, where he told them the following story: "When I was a child, I never paid attention in cheder. I was lazy and did not want to concentrate. Then one day when I was 11 years old, I came home and heard my parents talking. My father was explaining how he'd spoken to my rebbe and together they'd concluded that I'd never amount to anything in terms of scholarship. So, my father explained, he was arranging to enroll me as an apprentice shoemaker as soon as I became Bar Mitzvah.***

***"I was so shocked by this conversation that I ran to my parents and exclaimed: 'I'm sorry I've been so negligent with my studies. Please give me one more chance to prove that I'm a good student.' And from that day onward, I applied myself to the study of Torah with tremendous vigor and dedication. Since then I have not wasted a moment and it is that devotion which has enabled me to write the commentary which we are celebrating today."***

***Then the Netziv continued: "But just imagine what would have happened had I not overheard my parents' conversation. I'd probably have ended up as a shoemaker. And I'd have been a pretty good shoemaker! But think of what would have happened at the end of my life when I'd get up to the Heavenly Court and they'd ask me: 'Naftali, show us what you've done with your life.' And I'd proudly show them my beautiful shoes: the fine workmanship, the quality leather and the exquisite design.***

***"And then they'd ask me: 'But Naftali, where are your talmidim? Where is your masterful work – the "HaEmek Shayla"?' I would then be stunned – not even knowing what they are talking about!***

***"That is why I am celebrating tonight – for the opportunity Hashem gave me to realize my potential!"***

My grandfather, Rav Binyamin Kamenetzky zt"l explains. When a person's neshama (soul) arrives in Heaven after he or she passes away, it's very possible that it will see its own image near the Heavenly Throne! Only then will the soul realize what he or she could have accomplished in this world.

Yet during the many years of the neshama's journey, it spent time in a human body who "slept" through his entire opportunity to realize his or her potential. Yes, their image could really have been next to the Heavenly Throne! The neshama will then exclaim "If I would have known what I could have been, I would not have slept!"

One's days and years are precious. Everyone has a potential to take a place next to the Heavenly Throne! Yet the only way to get there is to work towards it in this world – in this lifetime. Don't sleep in!

**Good Shabbos!**

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