



אמרי בנימן

דברי תורה, מחשבה וסיפורים מאנצרו 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 Mikeitz 5781 – Unlikely Priority

As the last lights of Chanukah 5781 flicker and fade, I will share a thought on both Chanukah and Parshas Mikeitz.

The Gemara tells us (Shabbos 23b) that if one is destitute and has but one candle on Friday of Chanukah, he light Shabbos candles, and not light the menorah.

The purpose of the Shabbos candles is to bring peace into one's home -to enjoy his Shabbos meal with his family. The Chanukah candles however, are meant to publicize the miracle. As the Gemara (Shabbos 22b) tells us, "It is testimony to mankind that the Shechina (divine presence) rests among the Jews." Therefore, the Chanukah lights are specifically prohibited from deriving pleasure from them.

The Gemara reasons that it is essential that one enjoy a peaceful Shabbos together with his wife and family, and even more important than celebrating the Chanukah miracle.

Why is that? Shouldn't the Chanukah miracle take precedence over a family meal?

The Satmar Rebbe, Rav Yoel Teitelbaum zt"l, miraculously escape the inferno of Europe and rebuilt a large congregation in America. He taught a daily gemara class to a group of survivors who lost their family, each one in a different stage of rebuilding his life.

Before he began the class, he would spend a few minutes talking with them, "Yaakov, how is your new job going?" "Chaim, were you able to secure a loan to open your store?"

"Moshe – I have a shidduch for you, and I'd love to discuss it after the class." This was the pre-shiur chatter every day.

One day, one attendee was getting edgy from the Rebbe's seemingly idle talk, as he wanted to start learning already. The Rebbe, sensing his discomfort, said to him, "The Gemara is holy and important. But in our case, our physical needs are also important. They are Daf Alef in Gemara! We are finishing up Daf Alef, and then we will start Daf Beis!" (Each Tractate in Gemara begins with "Daf Beis" – age 2, rather than Page 1)

My grandfather Rav Binaymin Kamenetzky zt"l quoted the answer of his father Rav Yaakov zt"l printed in his sefer Emes L'Yaakov.

In Parshas Mikeitz, Yosef hatzaddik is called up from his prison cell by Pharoh. Pharoh demands that he interpret his dreams, which he does with amazing success. But first, Yosef says, "Not I! Hashem will answer Pharoh's welfare." Throughout his entire conversation with Pharoh, he reiterates this theme, until Pharoh himself is forced to admit "Could we find another like him, a man in whom is the spirit of G-d?"

Through his wisdom, Yosef brought Pharoh to the point of the greatest Kiddush Hashem – Sanctification of the Name of Hashem, when he recognizes himself that Hashem is in charge.

Yes, the Chanukah candles are holy. But the Shabbos candles can intertwine both the physical and spiritual worlds, by taking a festive meal, and elevating it through the holiness of Shabbos. This, hints the Gemarah, is the epitome of sanctifying the name of Hashem in this world.

Elevating a physical event, such as a lavish meal, can make Hashem's name holy, easier than the lighting menorah itself – representing a testimony of Hashem in this world. Thus, the shabbos candles take precedence.

Good Shabbos!

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