



THE RABBI BINYAMIN KAMENETZKY
TORAH LEGACY FOUNDATION
לזכרון של הרב בנימין קמנצקי זצ"ל

אמרי בנימן

דברי תורה, מחשבה וסיפורים מאתרו 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*

Dedicated for a z'chus refuah sheleima for Reuvain ben Malka
By Neil Wallin & Eve Goldberg & Family

5780 - Parshas Nasso – Hard Working

Parshas Nasso begins as Hashem commands Moshe to count the tribe of Levi, and to instruct them of their sacred work in the Mishkan. The passuk tells us, (4:24) “And this is the work of the Gershonite families: to work and to carry.” The Torah is referring to the work of the Gershonite family of the Tribe of Levi who were tasked with the holy work of carrying the curtains which surrounded the Mishkan and courtyard.

But perhaps there is a hidden message to us, tucked away in Moshe’s instruction to the Gershonites

Rabbi Yechiel Spero, in his classic book, “Rav Gifter” (Artscroll, 2011) tells this story about the Rosh Yeshiva of Telshe.

On a fundraising trip to Mexico, Rav Gifter tried to meet with a particular wealthy man. After much effort, Rav Gifter was finally able to procure a meeting very early in the morning, before traditional work hours began. When he entered the man's office, he was shocked to see that the man was already doing business on the phone. Seeing his guest, the man apologized, saying, "I'm so sorry, I just don't have time to talk to you now."

Rav Gifter replied, “Let's not talk about money. I want to ask you a question. At first, I came to your house to see you there. I saw your beautiful mansion. But you are here at work so early in the morning. When do you have time to enjoy your beautiful house, if you are always so taken up with your business?”

The Jew looked at Rav Gifter, barely comprehending the question. “Rebbi,” he began, “the house is not for me. I have nothing from it, as you can see, I spend my time at work. My house is for my wife and children.

“I’ll tell you why,” he continued. “If you want to be successful in business, you must be totally immersed in your business!”

Rav Gifter responded excitedly, “You don’t have to give me any money! You taught me something more valuable than money! I have received a lesson that I can convey to my talmidim!”

The rosh hayeshivah returned from his trip to Mexico with some additional funding for the yeshivah. More importantly, he repeated the mantra of the wealthy man from Mexico for the rest of his life! “If you want to be successful in business, you have to be totally immersed! Our business is Torah, and if you want to be successful in your learning, you must be totally immersed in Torah!”

My grandfather, Rav Binyamin Kamenetzky zt”l would often use his homiletic way of analyzing a passuk to teach, and this time he did as well. The word “Gershuni – Gershonites” contains the root “ger – a stranger.” The Torah is hinting to a Jew’s status in this world. We are but strangers here – with a mission and purpose. We are not here for the long term, and we certainly cannot view this world as an opportunity for respite. We are here to “work and to carry.”

Our sages often identifies Torah scholars in two dimensions with two diverse adjectives. (“Sinai and Oker Harim”) (Brachos 64a). Sinai refers to one who attains vast “Sinai-like” knowledge of Torah. An “Oker Harim” the uprooter of mountains, is one who is takes the knowledge of Mount Sinai, and uproots it, through extracting the most complex and intricate analyses of the Torah. An Oker Harim must delve into a Talmudic passage, and lecture for hours quoting sources from all over the Torah, while questioning, answering and challenging their reasoning. To achieve this status, one must work. He must put in the effort and the hours, and exert tremendous concentration and self-discipline.

A “Sinai” is a Talmudic sage who has a great breadth of knowledge of the entire Torah. He can answer every question, quote any passage, and can explain any saying of the gemara. To achieve this status, he must “carry.” He must spend the time to learn a lot, and must be diligent to review what he has learned.

The Torah is telling us that a man’s task is to be a Gershonite! Be a stranger, whose sole purpose is to “work and carry”!

Through the difficult times the past few months, many of us have found more hours in our long days away from our regular workplaces. I was heartened to hear from friends and acquaintances how they utilized these extra hours to “work and carry,” and accept new challenges in Torah study, reach greater heights in their Torah knowledge – and advance down their path of “Sinai and Oker Harim.”

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.