



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 Bo 5781 – By The Light of the Moon

Parshas Bo contains the first mitzvah that the entire nation was commanded – the mitzvah of sanctifying the new month. Hashem tells Moshe (Shmos 12:2) “This month shall mark for you the beginning of the months; it shall be the first of the months of the year for you.” The Jews are commanded in the mitzvah of “kiddush hachodesh” – creating Rosh Chodesh - a new Jewish month by the sighting of the new moon.

The Jewish calendar is based on a 354-day lunar year, with the new moon marking the beginning of a new month. The secular calendar is based on a 365-day solar year, aligned perfectly with the seasons.

There are many interpretations and explanations from our Sages as to how the Jews are compared to the moon, and perhaps we can add an additional insight.

My grandfather, Rav Binyamin Kamenetzky, arrived as a teenager from Lithuania to Canada, and immediately traveled to study in yeshivos in New York and Baltimore. After his marriage in 1938 to the daughter of the Ostrov Kalushiner rebbe of the Bronx, he settled near his father in law. One Chol Hamoed Succos in the early 1940s, he took a trip with his new wife to see some of the sights of suburban New York, and enjoy a change of scenery. They took a subway out of the city and switched to the LIRR. As they traveled onto Long Island, they were impressed by the country-like landscape, with beautiful neighborhoods graced by wide, tree-lined streets and large homes resting on sprawling properties. At one particular stop, they decided to get off and take a stroll in the local neighborhood. They got off at the Lynbrook station, but as they dismounted the train, they were shocked.

A large sign stared at them, hanging on the fence as if warning every passerby, “Welcome to Lynbrook. No Jews or Dogs Allowed”!

Immediately, they turned around, and headed back to their more comfortable and welcoming, bustling Jewish neighborhood in the Bronx.

It was only a decade and a half later that Rav Binyamin relocated to Long Island. By Divine guidance, he answered that warning on that sign, and he laid the foundation for what is today one of the largest Jewish neighborhoods in the country.

Today, the Jews are not only welcome in Long Island, but we have built tens of shuls, boys and girls yeshivos, community Torah Centers, and many many other Jewish institutions. The community continues to grow and thrive and practice Torah and Mitzvos – just a stone’s throw from Lynbrook.

My grandfather, Rav Binyamin Kamenetzky, zt”l quoted the sefer Ta’am V’daas, written by Rav Moshe Sternbuch shlit”a, a prominent Rav and posek in Yerushalayim.

The sun is a natural source of the energy. The moon however, has no light of its own. It merely reflects the ‘behind the scenes’ light of the sun – and shines it on Earth. G-d-fearing Jews know that no occurrence on this world happens on its own, or has the power to control anything on its own.

Circumstances do not cause results; rather, Hashem creates the result, and orchestrates circumstances to see them through. Hashem carries out his plan, and the circumstances are merely a reflection of Hashem’s plan.

Every month, we are reminded of this lesson. For just as the moon does not create its own light - is merely a reflection of the real source of light, we are reminded that all occurrences on Earth are merely circumstances reflecting the will of Hashem.

The circumstances do not wield the power, they are only part of the plan.

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.