



אמרי בנימן

דברי תורה, מחשבה וסיפורים מאת רב בנימן קמנצקי זצ"ל
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

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“A fool’s heart is to his left,” says the passuk in Koheles/Ecclesiastes (10:2). Midrash Rabbah explains that Shlomo Hamelech, is referring to the shevatim of Gad and Reuvein, who, in Parshas Matos, made a unique request of Moshe Rabbeinu. They wanted to inherit their portion, not in the land of Israel itself, but in the Transjordan territories of Moav.

When they posed their request to Moshe, they said, “We will build sheepfolds for our flocks, and cities for our children.” Their first concern was their possessions, and their secondary concern was their children. Hashem responded to their inquiry with a strong statement, “You cherished your belongings more than your children; Your life will not bear blessing.”

Certainly they erred. However, belongings are important. If they would not be able to sustain their cattle, they would not survive there. Why then were the children of gad and Reuvein chastised?

A wealthy American businessman travelled to Europe at the turn of the twentieth century. In his travels, he went to Radin to visit the holy sage, Rav Yisrael Meir Kagan, zt”l, known as the “Chofetz Chaim,” to receive his blessing.

Upon entering the Chofetz Chaim’s home, a small wooden bungalow, with no external appeal, the businessman immediately noticed the blaring lack of proper furnishings. The table at which the leader of the Jewish people sat, was rickety and worn, and was complimented by mismatched chairs and benches.

The businessman was awestruck. “Is this the home of the Chofetz Chaim?” he wondered. “Is this how he lives? The Chofetz Chaim is undoubtedly the leader of the entire Jewish world, and from this house, he disseminates the words of Hashem to His chosen people! Surely he should live in a more comfortable and honorable home!”

After talking for a short time to the Chofetz Chaim and receiving his blessing, the man paused, “Can I ask the Rav a question,” he began. “Where is all your furniture?”

The Chofetz Chaim looked at the man sympathetically, and responded, “And where is yours? All you have is a briefcase!”

Somewhat startled by the response, the businessman said, “I am only passing through. I don’t live here. There is no need for me to bring all my furniture with me!”

The Chofetz Chaim replied “I, too, am only passing through. I am not here to stay. I also don’t need to have furniture!”

My grandfather, Rav Binyamin Kamenetzky, zt”l explained, that life is about priorities. When priorities are aligned, Hashem bestows His blessings.

True, it is important to feed cattle and earn a livelihood, but we must all remember our primary focus. Do we live to earn, or earn to live? The path to blessing is to prioritize properly. When the children of Gad and Reuvein mentioned their cattle before their children, they misaligned their values, resulting in Hashem removing His blessings from them.

Align your values with those of Hashem, and He will send you His blessings.

Good Shabbos!

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