



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 Vayeira 5781 – Self Service

Parshas Vayeira tells the story of Avraham Avinu, who immediately following his bris milah, sat outside in the blistering heat, waiting to welcome guests. Finally, three angels dressed as Arab nomads passed by, and Avraham invites them in and prepares a festive meal for them.

However, there was one detail which Avraham did not do perfectly. The passuk says, (18:4) “Let a little water be brought, bathe your feet and recline under the tree.” The words, “Let water be brought” imply that Avraham does not bring the water himself, but rather he sent his servant. Rashi explains, that Hashem decided that since he only served water to his guests with a servant, so too, Hashem will quench the thirst of Avraham’s children in the desert, with a servant.

Why is it so bad if a servant serves the water?

Rabbi Chaim Follman, the second grade rebbe in Yeshiva of South Shore for several decades, told me the following story.

“Back in the 1950s, I began my career as a rebbe in Rabbi Binyamin Kamenetzky’s new yeshiva - the Yeshiva of South Shore. The yeshiva was housed in an old mansion on Oak St. in Woodmere, but as they outgrew it, they needed an alternate location for some classes. My second grade class was hosted by Congregation Shaarei Tefilla in Far Rockaway. This arrangement worked out well for every day except Sunday, when Shaarei needed his classroom for their Sunday Talmud Torah.

“Every Sunday, my would squeeze into a small room in the Oak St. location which was used as a coffee room during the week, since it was too small to be an actual classroom. The room was lightly littered with some remnants of refreshments, which was manageable, but the table, soiled sticky with spilled coffee and sugar, was not.

“I approached Rav Kamenetzky and asked him that when the custodian cleans the rooms, if he make sure to clean up the mess left in the coffee room as well, and to pay extra attention to the coffee spills. Rabbi Kamenetzky readily agreed.

“Many Sundays later, I entered my “classroom” a few minutes early, and I was shocked by what I saw. I wanted to dig a hole and bury myself! There was Rav Kamenetzky, cleaning the table himself!”

My grandfather, Rav Binyamin Kamenetzky zt”l would often repeat the message of the Chofetz Chaim. True, there is nothing terribly wrong with sending a messenger to do a chessed. But when the recipient of the chessed is a heavenly angel, the chessed must be performed on an upgraded level.

Yes, Avraham did not know that they were angels, but his actions were still an insufficient display of the honor and respect that angels deserve.

When one realizes who is serving, whether an angel, an angelic human being, or even one who teaches Torah to angelic children, no servant can do as good a job as one’s own self.

Good Shabbos!

Rabbi Shmuel Kamenetzky is the Director of Advancement at Yeshiva of South Shore - 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.