



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

אמרי בנימן

דברי תורה, מחשבה וסיפורים מאת צדו 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*

## **5780 - Parshas Shelach - Wise Guys and Wise Spies**

Parshas Shelach tell the tragic story of the twelve spies who went to scout out the Land of Israel before the Jews entered. They had ulterior motives, and looked for the bad in the land. They returned with an unflattering report, resulting in (almost) the entire Jewish Nation crying and fulfilling their own prophecy of a national day of mourning (Tish'a B'av). Thus began the saga of the Jews' forty year trek in the desert. Yet in the haftorah, we read a different story of spies. When Yehoshua sent spies into Israel before he led the Jews in, they did their mission faithfully. They successfully fulfilled their mission, the Jews successfully entered into the Land of Israel and conquered the nations within it. Why did one story of spies end well, while the other ended in tragedy?

***My grandfather Rav Binyamin Kamenetzky zt"l, was extremely devoted to his talmidim, and he selected men who shared his mission to join him in his mission. Rav Chanina Herzberg zt"l, longtime Menahel of Yeshiva of South Shore, was a selfless mechanech who truly cared for the welfare of every talmid in the yeshiva.***

***A few decades ago, before the age of automatic thermostats, there was a particularly harsh winter. The temperatures were frigid, and the subpar heating system in the yeshiva took a few hours to warm the rooms. Rav Herzberg, with great mesiras nefesh, arose at 4:00am, drove to the yeshiva and walked toward the office in the cold, dark building, to turn on the heat to warm the building for the boys' arrival.***

***Imagine his shock when he saw the figure of a man sitting and learning by a desk in the lit office. When he approached him, he realized that it was none other than the Rosh Yeshiva himself - Rav Binyamin Kamenetzky!***

***"Rebbe!" he exclaimed, "What are you doing here? It's four in the morning!"***

***Rav Binyamin looked surprised at his question. "It's so cold outside, and I want the building to be warm for the boys. I came in early to turn on the heat!"***

My grandfather Rav Binyamin Kamenetzky zt"l explained. In Sefer Yehoshua, the pesukim do not identify the spies by name. Rather, the passuk refers to them as simply "the men." But in Parshas Shelach, the Torah deliberately identifies each spy by name.

When Yehoshua's spies went on their mission, the passuk tells us "And Yehoshua sent two men... secretly saying." The Hebrew word "chorush" is used for "secretly," yet it also means "pottery." Rashi tells us that the men disguised themselves as potters. The Sfas Emes delves deeper.

Pottery is made from dirt, a worthless item. Only with its usage - after it is formed, does it gain value. Yehoshua's spies acted the same way. They remained nameless, as insignificant men, only considering themselves valuable in their mission the sought to accomplish.

Moshe's spies were just the opposite. They had their own names, and retained their own identities. They were the leaders of the tribes, and feared losing their positions had the Jews entered the Land of Israel. Since they went on this mission with themselves at the forefront of the minds, they failed.

To be successful in public service - you must take yourself out of the picture, and devote yourself selflessly to your cause. Be like the wise spies, and not the wise guys!

**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](mailto:skamenetzky@yoss.org).*