



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*

5779 - Parshas Bechukosai - Don't Miss the Boat!

Parshas Bechukosai contains the "tochecha," the curses which G-d promises upon the Jews, lest they not observe the Torah and its laws. As Hashem always does, He prefaces the curses with blessing. The parsha begins, "If in my laws, you will follow..." then there will be abundant blessing.

Rashi explains that the words, "If in my laws you follow..." mean that the Jews toil in Torah learning. Conversely, later in the parsha, Rashi explain the words which precede the curses **"If in my laws you do not follow..." to mean that the Jews do not toil in Torah learning.** At this point, the Torah is not referring to the consequence of the Jews not keeping the mitzvos, but rather these curses are a consequence for not learning Torah.

Later on in the parsha, after the Torah describes terrible suffering of the Jews along with the destruction of the Land of Israel, the passuk tells us, "Then, (after these curses are fulfilled) the land will be appeased of its Sabbaticals..." **Rashi explains that these punishments of the tochecha are a result of not keeping the shemitta** -the Sabbatical year in which we are forbidden to work the fields in Israel.

The question is, how can this be a punishment for desecrating the shemitta? **Did Rashi not explain earlier that these punishments are brought from G-d for a lack of Torah learning?**

Frank, the manager of a large logistics firm on the East Coast, called over Larry, the new hire, one Monday morning. "Larry," he barked. "Here's your assignment. We have a trailer that's got to get to L.A. this Friday to make it onto a ship at the port. Make sure to get there on time, and be careful when you drive. No tickets, and no accidents! Also, make sure to lock the trailer when you stop. Last week we had a robbery in one of our trailers in Nebraska! Are you ready to go?"

Larry, excited for his first big cross-country drive, accepted his mission. He set out carefully, being mindful of his boss's instructions. But as the week passed, he realized that he underestimated the distance to his destination. He was dejected and horrified when he arrived at the port a mere few hours after the ship left.

Soon, his spirits were up, as he realized that out of his entire job detail, he only missed one line item! Eagerly, he called his boss. He heard his boss's voice as he picked up, "Hi Larry! Did you get it done? Did you get the goods on the ship?" Larry already had his answer prepared. "Yes boss! I did almost the entire job exactly as you instructed! I made sure to drive carefully and within the speed limit. No tickets and no accidents! And in case you were wondering, not a single item was stolen! I kept that trailer under lock and key the entire time!"

My grandfather would repeat the answer of his father, HaRav Yaakov Kamenetzky zt"l. Shemitta is a Sabbatical year. The Talmud teaches us that just as the weekly Shabbos, a day spent away from work, was given in order that we spend our time learning Torah, **so too G-d commanded us to rest once every seven years, and spend the time learning and engaging in Torah Study.**

In the event that the Jews did not use the years of Shmitta properly by learning and growing in Torah, but they rather just took the time off to relax, then they did not keep the shmitta! **Yes, they refrained from work, but they missed the main objective.** Hence, the Torah declares that after the punishments of the tochecha, the land will finally be appeased of its shemitta, **because the shmitta was not observed properly!**

There are many laws and mitzvos that we must keep. But we can't forget about the ultimate goal - to grow as Jews by learning the Torah. If we don't focus on our main job, but rather spend our time avoiding the obstacles, then we may have missed the boat!

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.