



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

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*

Sponsored by Mr. and Mrs. Berel Daskal
in memory of
R' Dovid Tzvi ben R' Dov Mordechai
ר' דוד צבי בן ר' דוב מרדכי ז"ל

Parshas Bereishis 5781 – Wrong or Light

“And Hashem saw the light and it was good.” This passuk is perhaps one of the most well known in Parshas Bereishis, yet it only sheds lights on the end result. Hashem created light, and He saw that it was good.

The Midrash (Rabbah 2:5) tells us the backstory.

“R’ Abahu said - from the beginning of the creation of the world the Holy One saw the actions of the righteous and the actions of the wicked. “The earth was astonishingly empty...” (1:2) these are the actions of the wicked, “And God said, Let there be light...” (1:3) these are the actions of the righteous. But I don’t know which one of them He desired, the actions of these or the actions of those. Since it is written “And Hashem saw the light that it was good...” (1:4). He desires the actions of the righteous and not the actions of the wicked.”

The question jumps off the page. What was Hashem’s dilemma? Why would Hashem desire the actions of the wicked ones in place of the righteous ones?

An old classmate of mine in Yeshiva of South Shore recently told me the following story which happened almost three decades ago.

Zevi, a particularly wild boy in fifth grade of Yeshiva of South Shore, was having a tough day. After a scuffle with a friend in the yard during recess, Zevi slugged him in the face and ran away. He ran back into the building and bolted down the hallway, through the beis medrash, towards his classroom. As he was nearing the safe haven of his classroom, he crashed right into the arm of the Menahel, Rav Chanina Herzberg zt"l. Rabbi Herzberg, with his impressive stature and built frame, watched Zevi’s mini marathon from afar, and held out his arm to halt the Zevi’s wild streak.

After the initial shock of being caught running the halls, Zevi followed Rabbi Herzberg’s instructions to join him in his office and hear his consequence.

Rabbi Herzberg sat Zevi down, and with a stern face, looked the boy in the eyes, and asked, “Do you know what I saw you do?”

Zevi fought to find words to answer over his embarrassment, and finally mustered up the energy to respond meekly, “I was running in the halls.”

Rabbi Herzberg wasn’t finished. “But do you know what else I saw?”

Zevi shrugged his shoulders.

“I saw that as you ran through the door of the beis medrash, you slowed down a bit to kiss the mezuzah.”

“You have such a good heart, and you have a real feeling for mitzvos. I want you to focus on that, and that will be your path to becoming a better person.”

My grandfather, Rav Binyamin Kamenetzky zt"l explained in the name of the “Chozeh” of Lublin, in his sefer, Divrei Emes. Let’s take a look at Noach – who did not pray for the salvation of the wicked in his generation, as opposed to Avraham who did. Noach believed that Hashem’s name would be glorified in the world by Him punishing those who rebel against him. Avraham, on the other hand, knew that Hashem’s real will was to do kindness with his creations, and allow them opportunities to repent and live.

This, in the words of the Midrash, was precisely the conflict as Hashem created light. Does Hashem desire to punish the actions of the wicked, and thereby sanctifying His name, or does Hashem rather lean towards the tzaddikim, who implore him to extend his kindness, and leave the door open for man to repent and live.

“And Hashem saw the light that it was good.” The world as we know it today stands with that “light” – the light of Hashem’s chessed to all His children.

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@yooss.org.