



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

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*

5780 - Parshas Vayigash - Put "Ability" into Responsibility

In Parshas Vayigash, Yosef reveals himself to his brothers. After an emotional reunion, he tells them something fascinating, yet perplexing, "And now, do not be distressed, nor reproach yourselves for having sold me here, for it was to be a provider that G-d sent me ahead of you."

What a remarkable statement. One would think that Yosef would use this opportunity to demand an apology from his brothers for the terrible actions they took against him. Yet, just the opposite happened. Yosef sensed that his brothers were embarrassed, ashamed, and full of remorse for having sold him. He then takes initiative and appeases them.

Why did he do that?

My grandfather, Rav Binyamin Kamenetzky zt"l, told the following story.

The daughter of Rav Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld zt"l, Rav of Yerushalayim a century ago, walked into the courtyard in front of their home and saw her father leaning over into a well. She watched as her father drew a small amount of water, enough for a child to hold, and handed it to a boy. He and leaned back into the well to repeat the process. The child ran off to his house, poured the small amount of water into a large barrel, and ran back to the well to retrieve the next small pitcher from the great Sage.

This unusual scene repeated itself a few times before she finally built up courage to ask her father what he is doing. "What will people say about you?" she asked him. "You are the Rav of Yerushalayim! Why are you taking time and using so much effort to draw water for this child?"

The Rav was not impressed. "I noticed that this child was trying to draw water from this well," he began. "He was leaning in to reach the pail, and he almost fell in! His father is laying ill, and his mother just gave birth. He needs this water for his parents."

"What people on the street will say, I am not worried."

"But I am worried that in Heaven, they will say, 'A child's life is in danger, and only a few feet away, the Rav of Yerushalayim is eating breakfast and learning Torah in peace!'"

Rav Binyamin zt"l would often repeat the explanation offered by Rav Yerucham Levovitz zt"l. True, Yosef could have pointed a finger at his brother for their mistake. But Yosef knew better. He knew that no one grows from blaming others. He took responsibility himself.

Yosef felt that maybe he was to blame, for inciting his brothers with bringing their evil reports to his father. Maybe he was to blame for his ending up in Egypt, and for that, he comforted his brothers.

It was this same sense of responsibility which enabled him to feed an entire nation, and ultimately, the entire civilized world.

When one thinks larger than himself, he is able to unload tension and shoulder great responsibilities.

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.