



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 - Parsha Bereishis - Heart

Parshas Bereishis begins yet another cycle of Torah learning. As we concluded the holiday of Succos, and with it the entire period of Elul, the Holy Yomim Tovim, Succos, and of course, Simchas Torah, we read Parshas Bereishis, symbolizing a new beginning.

The word "Bereishis - In the beginning" seems to mean more than just the beginning of the world. The Torah is hinting something more to us.

The first letter of the Torah is a "beis" and last letter of the Torah is a "lamed." Together, they spell "lev" - "heart". What message is the Torah hinting with this?

I recently heard the following story in the name of Rav Ephraim Shapiro, Rav of Congregation Shaarey Tefilah of North Miami Beach.

A young woman who had made Aliyah from France to Israel, was desperately searching for a shidduch, a partner in marriage. Her friend suggested that she see Rav Yissachor Meir, the Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshivat Hanegev in Netivot, and she happily obliged. Being that she did not understand Hebrew, she spoke to the Rosh Yeshiva through an interpreter.

Rav Meir heard her plight, and with a caring heart, instructed her to say certain chapters of tehillim every day. He specified to her, in his native Hebrew, to say "Kapital yud gimmel, kapital chof, kapital kuf chof aleph, kapital kuf lamed," using the word "kapital", the Yiddish term commonly used when referring to chapters in tehillim. She readily agreed to do so, thanked the Rav, and left.

Only a few weeks later, she met the perfect man, and became engaged. She excitedly told her friend the good news along with her entire episode with the Rosh Yeshiva, but her friend was a bit surprised. "I don't understand. You don't know how to read Hebrew! How did you say those chapters of Tehillim?"

The woman looked puzzled, as if she did not understand the problem. "The Rav told me to say a special prayer every day, and I did exactly that! Every day, I picked up a book of Tehillim, and held it close to my heart. Then, with complete concentration and devotion, I said his special prayer. It goes like this, "Kapital yud gimmel, kapital chof, kapital kuf chof aleph, kapital kuf lamed!"

My grandfather, Rav Binyamin Kamenetzky zt"l noted a fascinating insight. The two letters preceding the letters "lamed" and "beis" are an "aleph" and a "chof" - spelling the word "ach" - meaning "only" or "but." "Ach" in Hebrew is always used as an exclusionary word, noting something missing or excluded.

The two letter following the letters "lamed" and "beis," which spell "lev," are the letters "mem" and "gimmel," spelling the Hebrew word "gam" - "also". "Also" is obviously inclusionary, connoting an addition or an inclusion. Our Sages teach us "Echad hamarbeh, v'echad hama'amit, ubilvad sheyihei libo lashamayim." "Whether one does more, or whether one does less, if only his heart is loyal to Hashem in heaven."

The Torah, with the first and last words, is teaching us a fascinating lesson. One can be at the beginning of a long road of spirituality, knowing nothing yet but the first word of the Torah, or one can be at the end of a long journey, having studied the entire Torah, yet that is not what is most important.

His heart and his loyalty to Hashem, is what will ultimately propel him to a spiritual high.

Whether one's actions are an "ach" or a "gam," what is in between those letters, the "lev" will ultimately define his essence.

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.