



אמרי בנימן

דברי תורה, מחשבה וסיפורים מאת רב בנימן קמנצקי זצ"ל
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 Ki Saitzei - Forget We Not

Parshas Ki Saitzei contains the unique mitzvah of remembering the evil that Amalek did to us. Earlier, in Parshas Beshalach, the Torah tells us how Amalek ambushed us, a tired and weak nation that had just escaped Egypt. Hashem commands us to erase their memory. Now, Hashem commands us to remember the story. The passuk says, (25:18-19) “Remember what Amalek did to you on your journey, after you left Egypt... You shall blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven. *Do not forget.*” Why do we need two commandments – “Remember” and “Do not forget”? What additional directive is added with the words “Do not forget”? After all, if one must remember, of course he must not forget.

My friend Rabbi Moshe Rackove writes this story in his new book, The Power of Patience, illustrating how Hashem sometimes waits years before punishing someone for an evil deed. Jakub, a popular wagon driver in the town of Radin, died in a most gruesome way, shaking everybody up. He was bitten by a rabid dog, poisoned by its venom. As a result, he went insane, howling like a mad dog until he died a slow, painful death. The townspeople were in shock, and came to the Chofetz Chaim for some understanding of this tragedy.

The Chofetz Chaim reminded everyone of an episode which occurred decades earlier. Jakub rented a cottage to a poor widow and her orphaned child. As much as she tried, Jakub’s tenant was unable to pay the rent. She begged him to allow her to live in the home throughout the winter, promising that she’d pay back all the rent in the spring. But Jakub did not agree, and threatened her that if she does not come up with the money, he will throw her out. A few weeks passed, and the widow still did not have the money. Jakub had enough. He climbed up and collapsed his own cottage’s thatched roof, making the cottage uninhabitable even for the two poor, ravaged souls. The widow and her child were forced to spend the rest of the winter braving the elements in the street, without a roof over their head. The Chofetz Chaim explained to the assembled. “How can someone act in such a cruel manner to a widow and orphan and not get punished for it? It was only after some decades that the people of Radin finally witnessed the fulfillment of the pasukim Shemos (22:21-23) “You shall not ill-treat any widow or orphan. If you do mistreat them, I will heed their outcry as soon as they cry out to Me, and My anger shall blaze forth ... and your own wives shall become widows and your children orphans.”

My grandfather Rav Binyamin Kamenetzky zt"l would quote the answer given by the “Sar Sholom,” the first Rebbe of Belz. When something is in front of you, it’s easy to remember. However, once the situation has passed, and circumstances change, it’s easy to forget. When the Torah writes, the word “Remember” it is referring to periods in history when the Jews had the upper hand and had the ability to fulfill the command of erasing the name of Amalek. However, that will not always be the case. Time will pass, and the Jews will, at times, be the underdog in the world. But the command remains, “Do not forget!” Targum Yonasan explains, “Even until the days of the Moshiach you should not forget.” Even when history turns against the Jews and we are no longer in a position to fight the fight, we should still not forget.

For when we hold in our mission in our memory, we will ultimately win the fight.

Good Shabbos!

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