



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*

Parshas Mishpatim 5781 – Charity Begins Alone

Among the many monetary laws discussed in Parshas Mishpatim, the Torah gives guidelines on lending money. The passuk tells us, “If you lend money to My people, to the poor among you, do not act toward them as a creditor; exact no interest from them.”

Interestingly, the Torah uses the word, “Imach - with you” in the singular, referring to one person, lending to one person, rather than “Imachem” –the plural version.

Similarly, in Tehillim, the passuk says (106:3) “Happy are those who act justly, who do right at all times.” Again, the passuk uses the singular word. “Oseh tzedakah – who do tzedakah” rather than the plural word, “Osim tzedakah.”

Since the Torah, and the passuk in Tehillim are talking to the entire Jewish nation, it is a bit alarming that the passuk uses the singular word. Why is that?

Mrs. Friedman (name has been changed) a recent widow, came to Yeshiva of South Shore back in the 1970s to enroll her son in yeshiva. After the initial interview, Rav Binyamin Kamenetzky zt"l accepted the boy happily.

“Rabbi Kamenetzky,” Mrs. Friedman said, hesitantly. “I have to admit. I don’t have a job. My husband passed away with no savings. I simply cannot afford to pay tuition.”

Rav Kamenetzky, with his warm and open heart, replied, “Don’t worry for a moment. You do not have to pay a dime!”

“But wait!” He continued, “You mentioned that you don’t have a job. We have a job open in the yeshiva. Can you be our secretary?”

Mrs. Friedman was overjoyed and accepted the position, which sustained her and her family with pride, over the next few years.

My grandfather, Rav Binyamin Kamenetzky, zt"l quoted the Ksav Sofer, Rav Avraham Shmuel Binyamin Sofer zt"l, rosh yeshiva of the Pressburgh Yeshiva, and son of the Chasam Sofer zt". Generally, mitzvos are best performed in public. The more people who hear and are inspired to follow in the ways of the righteous, the better.

Tzedakah however, is not that way. When a poor man comes for a donation, or a fellow in need comes for a loan, keep it singular.

The passuk which starts “Happy are those who act justly,” ends, “who do right at all times.” A mitzvah which is done for publicity and fanfare, are oftentimes driven by public spectacles and ceremonies. But these public events don’t happen all the time, thereby those mitzvos may not be performed without those settings.

One who does the mitzvah of tzedakah in its purest form – privately, when no one is looking, can truly does tzedakah at all times – precisely the Torah’s directive.

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.