



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*

Parshas Va'eira 5781 – Salty Treatment

Parshas Va'eira begins in the thick of the harsh labor in Egypt. The passuk tells us, (6:5) “And also I have heard the cries of the Jews... and I remembered my treaty.”

The gemara (Brachos 5a) tells us, “Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish said, The word ‘covenant’ is used with regard to salt, and the word ‘covenant’ is used with regard to afflictions. The word covenant is used with regard to salt, as it is written: “The salt of the covenant with Hashem should not be excluded from your meal-offering” (Vayikra 2:13). And the word ‘covenant’ is used with regard to afflictions, as it is written: “These are the words of the covenant” (Devarim 28:69). Just as, in the covenant mentioned with regard to salt, the salt sweetens the taste of the meat and renders it edible, so too in the covenant mentioned with regard to suffering, the suffering cleanses a person’s transgressions” Yes, one can understand the lesson from the comparison. But there are so many concepts to which to compare suffering. Why salt?

Rav Dovid Trenk, zt"l, was a veteran mechanch who truly loved each and every talmid. The book ‘Just Love Them, recently written by Rabbi Yisroel Besser and recently published by Artscroll, tells this story.

There was a high school boy in Yeshiva of Adelphia, where Rabbi Trenk was the Menahel, who made a grave mistake – worthy of him being asked to leave the yeshiva. The boy felt terrible about what he did, but the decision stood; he had to go home. He was so nervous about his father would do to him when he got home, that he could not even bring himself to tell his parents about his punishment.

Rabbi Trenk offered to drive the boy home to Brooklyn. Throughout the entire hour-long drove, the boy sat in the back of the car crying and muttering to himself, “My father is going to kill me. My father is really going to kill me!”

When they arrived at his home, Rabbi Trenk instructed the boy to get out of the car and sit on the front steps of his house. The boy did as he was told.

Rabbi Trenk then opened his window and called out to his dear talmid. “Ok. You listened. You went home. Now get back into the car, and let’s go back to yeshiva before your father realizes!”

My grandfather, Rav Binyamin Kamenetzky zt"l would repeat the following from Rav Menachem Mendel of Rimanov zt"l. Salt has a unique characteristic. It is essential for taste. As any experienced chef knows, salt brings out the hidden flavor, and marries together all the flavors of the food. But if overused, no matter how delectable the rest of the ingredients, the food will be completely inedible.

Hashem created the concept of suffering in the same manner. Suffering brings a Jew to repentance. He realizes that Hashem is bringing hardship upon him to remind him about His existence and His everyday part in our lives - which man oftentimes forgets.

But everything has a measure. Hashem Himself knows what a man can handle, and too much suffering is also no good. Hence, Hashem compares His convenient about suffering to His covenant of salt. They both need moderation. When Hashem heard their cries – He knew they hit the limit – and He remembered His treaty.

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.