



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 Vayeishev/Chanukah 5781 – Fountain of Youth

Parshas Vayeishev tells the sad saga of Yosef – how his brothers sold him to Egypt. The parsha begins, (3:2) “At seventeen years of age, Yosef tended the flocks with his brothers, he is a lad to the sons of his father’s wives Bilhah and Zilpah.” Interestingly, the Torah uses the word “na’ar” – lad, when describing him in contrast to the sons of Bilhah. Why is that? Furthermore, the Torah begins the verse in past tense, “Yosef tended the flocks...,” but then switches to present tense, “He is a lad...” Why the switch?

In Artscroll’s recently published biography of Rav Dovid Trenk zt”l, Just Love Them, Rabbi Yisroel Besser writes how Rav Dovid told of his father’s unwavering and constantly renewed battle for the holiness of Shabbos.

“My father owned a dry goods store on Orchard Street on the Lower East Side. It was obviously closed on Shabbos, but open illegally on Sunday. The “Blue Laws” of those times did not permit businesses to be opened on Sundays. Stores that violated those laws were ticketed and fined. In the neighborhood where my father’s store was located, there were many other store owners who were also closed on Shabbos and open on Sunday. The officer who issued the summonses reached each store only once in two years. The fine was relatively minimal, from \$3.00 to \$5.00, a worthwhile investment to have one’s store opened every Sunday for two years. The violators would pay the price and go on with business as usual.

“My father dealt with this quite differently. He would take off a full day from work to be present in court for the judge to hear his case. He would invariably read from an English version of the Chumash the verses that say to “work for six days and rest on the Sabbath.” It was an impressive performance that made its impact on all those present.”

And thus, Rabbi Trenk’s father constantly strengthened his belief and his faith in the holy Shabbos.

My grandfather, Rav Binyamin Kamenetzky, zt”l quoted the great tzaddik, Rav Aharon of Karlin who explained. Dovid Hamelech tells us in Tehillim, (103:5) “Tischadesh kanesher ni’uroichi” – “Your youth is renewed like the eagle’s.” The word “na’ar,” which in this verse is used in the context, “ni’uroichi - Your youth” is always accompanied with renewal. Youthfulness means to constantly renew and refresh, and those who practice as such, feel the positive effects of youth. Yosef was the prototypical fighter. He went through extremely difficult challenges - with his brothers, the wife of Potiphar, jail time, and ultimately as the leader of the idol-saturated most powerful country in the world. Yosef could not be successful had he just been a youthful “na’ar” when he was young. His entire life was filled with youth and vigor, and it had to be that way. Hence, when the Torah wrote about his youth, it was not a past. It was present and constant.

Chanukah is the holiday when we add another light each day. The Gemara tells us that we only add in holiness, and never subtract. In order to gain momentum in our everlasting quest for youthfulness and strength, in our fight against the Greeks and all they represent in today’s world, (refer to your local rabbi’s sermon to determine what that may be) we must constantly renew, refresh, and add oil to our spiritual flame.

It’s worth the effort to fight a constant fight against the forces of evil - with renewed energy and youthfulness – because we know that we will win.

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.