



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*

5779 - Parshas Emor - Hold the Reins!

In an uncoincidental occurrence, **Parshas Emor discusses a mitzvah which we are in the midst of performing.** The Torah tells us, "And you shall count for yourselves... from the day after you bring the omer... seven complete weeks." The counting of the Omer, the seven weeks between the Holidays of Pesach and Shavuos, is a count-up to our receiving the Torah, some fifty days after the beginning of Pesach. Yet when the Torah mentions this counting, it uses the word, "The counting of the Omer"

What exactly is the Omer? **The Korban Omer is the flour offering from barley, animal fodder.** Most flour offerings are brought from wheat. Why is this specific offering from barley? Furthermore, **why did the Torah name this mitzvah after this unique offering of barley?**

My grandfather, Rav Binyamin Kamenetzky zt"l would explain this with a story.

On his way to Vilna, a kindhearted wagon driver saw a man walking on the side of the road. "Where are you headed?" he asked, "To Vilna" the weary traveler answered. "Come inside for a free ride!" the wagon driver offered. "I'm headed to Vilna anyway." As the traveler accepted his offer and climbed into the wagon, the wagon driver asked him, "All I ask is one favor. I'm very tired from travelling for so long. Can you please sit in my seat and take the reins while I go to the back and take a nap?" The traveler agreed and they travelled to Vilna together, the traveler at the reins, and the wagon driver asleep in the back.

When they arrived in Vilna, the wagon driver woke up, thanked his passenger, and asked him to hand over the reins and disembark. He was shocked when the passenger refused. "What are you talking about?" he replied brazenly. "This is my wagon, my horse and my reins. Please get out of my wagon!" "Excuse me!" replied the real wagon driver. "I am the wagon driver, and YOU are the passenger! Get out of MY wagon!"

After this exchange went on for a few minutes, the wagon driver managed to schlep the passenger to the local Rav. After each stood in front of the Rav, each one claiming to be the real wagon driver, the Rav looked sadly at the wagon driver and told him, "I understand that you may be the real wagon driver. But what can I tell you? You have nothing to show for yourself. You handed him over the reins. As long as HE is holding the reins, HE is the wagon driver!"

Rav Binyamin Kamenetzky zt"l would quote the The Chidushei Harim, the Gerrer Rebbe, Rav Yitzchok Meir Alter zt"l, to explain. Barley is fodder for animals. When we begin counting towards receiving the Torah, **we are on a low level, similar to the animalistic nature rooted deep within us.**

On Shavuos, the Holiday when we actually receive the Torah, we bring the sacrifice of **the "Two Breads," made from quality wheat flour, fit for humans.** The Torah is teaching us that although we may be on the lowest level when we begin counting, but during the days of sefiras haomer, we must count up and grow in our spiritual level, until we reach the proper level.

For although humans have both animalistic and spiritual forces, each trying to gain control of the reins, **we can't ever give up control.** We must make certain that our human side is victorious, in order that we can continue our path to spirituality.

Although there may sometimes be a struggle, **we must always hold the reins!**

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.