

Maamarei Mordechai

הסבר לפי ממש פשוט

Parshas Naso – 5783

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וַיִּקְרִיבוּ נְשִׂאֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל רְאֵשֵׁי בֵּית אֲבוֹתָם הֵם נְשִׂאֵי הַמִּטָּה הֵם הַעֲמֻדִים עַל־הַפְּקָדִים:

“And the chieftains of Yisroel came close, heads of their fathers’ households, they that were presidents of the tribes, they that would stand over the counting.” (Bamidbar 7:2).

This pasuk refers to the chieftains and their role with the counting of Bnei Yisroel. However, the counting took place in the second month of the second year. (Bamidbar 1:1). This pasuk took place a month earlier. Moshe completed the Mishkan the first day of the first month of the second year. בְּיוֹם־הַקִּדְשׁ הָרִאשׁוֹן בְּאֶחָד לַחֹדֶשׁ תְּלִים אֶת־מִשְׁכְּנוֹ “On the first day of the first month, he erected the mishkan of the Ohel Moed.” Shmos 40:2. Why is our pasuk mentioning the count, that technically, did not happen yet?

The tribal chiefs brought six carts and twelve oxen. (Bamidbar 7:3). Hashem told Moshe to accept these gifts. (Ibid 7:5). He gave two carts and four oxen to the Gershon family (ibid 7:7) and four carts and eight oxen to the Merari family (ibid 7:8). By both it says וּלְבְנֵי קָהָת לֹא נָתַן כִּי־עֲבֹדַת הַקִּדְשׁ “according to the requirements of their service.” “And to the Kahas family he did not give because their service was holy, they carried on their shoulders.” (Ibid 7:9). It is obvious that Kahan got nothing because the six carts and twelve oxen were already divided amongst Gershon and Merari. There was nothing left to give. Yet, the Torah specifically mentioned they got nothing, and the reason: their service required them to carry on their shoulders.

Each Levi family had a service. Gershon was responsible for “the covering of the Mishkan, the entrance screen, the hangings of the enclosure, and the cords.” (Ibid 3:25-26). Kahas was responsible for carrying “the aron, shulchan, menorah, the mizbeichos, holy vessels, and the screen.” Ibid 3:31. Merari had the heavier lifting, including “the kerashim, its bars, posts, sockets, and furnishings.” Ibid 3:36. These services were given out when the family was counted. While the Torah already gave the information, chronologically, the Levi families did not yet know. Therefore, at the time of these gifts the members of Gershon and Merari would not understand them. The Kehas family may not have understood why they were left out.

The princes of the tribes gave two gifts. When understanding these gifts and their purpose, the Torah will illuminate the connection between the chieftains and their position, and how they relate to the fact that they stood over the counting. The first gift was wagons and oxen. The second gift was korban offerings. “And the chieftains brought close dedications to dedicate the mizbeach with it, and the chieftains brought close their offerings before the mizbeach.” (Ibid 7:10).

The first gifts only benefited Gershon and Merari. They were to be the ones that would be designated to carry the heavy objects of the Mishkan and Ohel Moed. Kehas would carry everything by shoulder. Therefore, the second gift was brought. This

second gift benefited the Kehas family. They were responsible for all sacred vessels. (Ibid 4:15). They also carried the mizbeichos. Therefore, bringing offerings benefited them because the vessels they were responsible for would be used.

The chieftains mentioned here are mentioned in Bamidbar 1 by the census as well. They were the ones that would assist the census takers. The Torah introduces them and says, "And these are the names of the men that will stand with you." (Ibid 1:5). The purpose of this census was to evaluate the strengths for war. (Ibid 1:3). These same men are mentioned in connection to the encampment around the Ohel Moed. (Bamidbar 2:2). The Levis are also counted for the same reason, their ability to serve in the Mishkan. (Ibid 3:7). The Mishkan was the spiritual power and center of the camp, and the legions were physical warriors powered by that spiritual center.

The Torah is not in order. It could have finished up the dedication of the Mishkan and mizbeach in sefer Vayikra. Instead, it chose to interrupt that chronology with the census. This is because it is important to know the purpose of the Mishkan. It is more than a sanctuary where Hashem dwells amongst Beni Yisroel. It is also the center of the camp, the focal point of all the encampments, and the strength for war. These men were dedicated as chieftains and those that would aid in counting Bnei Yisroel because of what they did. First the Torah introduces their importance. They were legionaries. Then the Torah teaches the reason for their importance. "These are the names of the men." Instead of saying "these men" it says "names." This is because the Torah puts a premium on a persons' value based on his name. They were not just chieftains, they had names and intrinsic importance.

The special gesture they did to earn such distinction is to give two gifts that were given in special ways. First, each gift was a joint gift. The wagons were "one wagon per two chieftains." (Ibid 7:3). This means they joined together and planned with other tribes. The other gift was a dedication to the mizbeach that perfectly matched each other. Every chieftain gave the exact same korban. Such a show of unification earned them status as presidents of their tribe and legionaries of those fit for war. Second, they made sure that each of the Levi families benefitted. When they saw that Kehas was left out they offered their second gift of korbanos, that would benefit the Kehas family. This, too, was a special intrinsic value that made them fit to be chieftains and leaders.

"And the chieftains of Yisroel brought close." They had the foresight to know that wagons would aid in carrying Hashem's movable abode.

"Heads of their fathers' household." Best fit to represent the families.

"They who are the presidents of the tribes." These men showed their value in taking the initiative not to show off with their gift but to approach the other chieftains so they can plan joint gifts. They formed the *achdus* of Yisroel.

"They who would stand over the counting." It was because of their act here that earned them the responsibility and honor over there. Their unified gift and working with each other earned them the name to be leaders and to be responsible for counting Hashem's precious nation.