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SHAVUOT



613 Mitzvot – or 913?

“But they shall not come and look as the Holy Objects are covered, lest they die.” (Bamidbar 4:20)

The Sefer HaChinuch writes that Parshat Bamidbar does not contain any of the 613 Mitzvot of the Torah.

The Baal Halachot Gadolot disputes the words of the Sefer HaChinuch and says that Bamidbar does have one Mitzvah, the verse cited above. This verse prohibits the Levi'im from staring at the utensils of the Mishkan as they were being wrapped by the Kohanim in preparation for transport. Once the Holy Objects were properly covered, it was the task of the Levi'im to load them on their shoulders and carry them to the next station in the *midbar*.

The Rambam in Sefer HaMitzvot says that the count of the 613 Mitzvot of the Torah includes only those that were relevant and

applicable forever. Mitzvot that were one time occurrences, or short term for the *midbar*, were not included. Had they been, there would be almost 300 additional Mitzvot besides the 613 Mitzvot! Thus, Rambam agrees with Sefer HaChinuch that there are no Mitzvot in Parshat Bamidbar because the prohibition of the Levites from staring at the utensils of the Mishkan was only applicable in the *midbar* therefore making it a temporary Mitzvah.

Rambam bases his opinion on the Talmud, Makos 23b, which quotes the pasuk “The Torah that Moshe commanded us is the heritage of the congregation of Yaacov.” (Devarim 33:4)

The gematria of the word Torah is 611, the number of Mitzvot that Moshe himself taught Israel after the nation had heard the first two of the Ten Commandments from Hashem Himself, thus making a total of 613.

Since the Mitzvot are described as the heritage of the Congregation of Yaacov, it stands to reason that the 613 Mitzvot are not one time events, but permanent ones that apply forever.

This would exclude the prohibition cited in the verse above, which was applicable only during the forty years of the generation of the *midbar*. ■

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