

חומש הפקודים

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The Netziv, in his *hakdoma* to *Sefer Bamidbar*, questions why, with all of the marvelous events that transpired in *Sefer Bamidbar*, did *Chazal* choose to call it חומש הפקודים? It is true that Bnei Yisroel are counted twice, once in Parshas Bamidbar and again in Parshas Pinchas, but why is that such an important issue? The Netziv explains that these two censuses, the former being that of the *Dor Yotzei Mitzrayim* and the latter that of the *Dor Ba'ei Ha'aretz*, delineate the change that Bnei Yisroel underwent from one generation to the other. The *sefer* is called חומש הפקודים because it is these two censuses that point out the remarkable change that occurred.

At the same time, in דא"ר שמואל בר נחמן א"ר יונתן חצבה the gemara says מסכת שבת דף קטז. in עמודיה שבעה (משלי ט, אלו שבעה ספרי תורה), that in fact there are seven *sefarim* in the Torah. What we refer to as *Sefer Bamidbar* is really three *sefarim*: the first is the section from the beginning of *Parshas Bamidbar* until "ויהי בנסוע הארון" in *Parshas Beha'alos'cha*, the second is that *parsha* of ויהי בנסוע, and the third is the rest of "*Bamidbar*." The explanation of this is that the first *sefer* describes the *Dor Yotzei Mitzrayim*. This is the generation that accepted the Torah and lived with the majesty described in that first *sefer*. The third *sefer* discusses all of the issues that occurred after *Bnei Yisroel* left *Har Sinai* (*Meraglim*, etc.) and affected change in *Klal Yisroel*. The census in *Parshas Pinchas* reflects those changes.

All of this needs tremendous elucidation. For the purpose of our discussion, we will only deal with the first *sefer* and explain why all of the items discussed therein fit this description of *Dor Yotzei Mitzrayim* with all of its majesty.

To begin, the census of *Klal Yisroel* in *Parshas Bamidbar* in order of the *Degalim* with their respective flags and the *Mishkan* (surrounded by *Machane Leviya*) being the center of it all symbolizes the *Maaseh Merkava*. It was as if Hashem established that *Klal Yisroel* should reflect *Palmalya Shel Maalo* in how they lived. This is what this *sefer* is all about- describing the majesty of *Dor Yotzei Mitzrayim*. With this, it is easy to understand how the *sefer* begins with the encampment of *Klal Yisroel* and goes into the Kohen and Levi families and their respective roles of *avodah*. It is all part and parcel of the *kedusha* and *avodah* of this elevated generation. Then, after *avodas halevi'im* is described fully in *Parshas Naso*, the Torah continues with *kedushas hamachanos* and those who are sent out of the different *machanos* depending on their condition. This theme continues on with *Chanukas HaLevi'im*, *Chanukas HaNesi'im*, *Birkas Kohanim* and even how announcements were made in the camp and how *Klal Yisroel* traveled.

However, the question arises as to how the topics of *Sotah* and *Nazir* fit into this theme. If this is the *sefer* that describes the dignity and grandeur of *Klal Yisroel*, why do they belong here? There is an extraordinary *limud* from this. Why does שמ"י say ימחה ברוך הוא in the *Sotah* process? In the *avodah* of testing and either punishing or vindicating the suspected wife, why does Hashem command that His name (along with those *pesukim*) be erased into the מי המרים המארימים? What is the reason that it is better to erase His name to solve this issue?

Part of the *gadlus* of *Klal Yisroel* that is described in this *sefer* is that the construct of the *machanos* was for the promotion of *achdus*. This *achdus* meant that each *shevet* had its own personal quality to add to the nation. We see this from the fact that every *Nasi* brought the same

exact *korban* but the *Midrash* goes out of its way to describe repeatedly that each *Nasi* had his own *kavana* for his *korban* even as it was the same as everyone else's. This shows that one facet of the beauty of *Klal Yisroel* was its unity through its diversity. Indeed, each *shevet* had something special to offer and add to the *Klal*, but that promoted the *achdus* of the nation as they all brought the same *korban* together.

The single most dangerous threat to *achdus* is חשד. Suspicion is the most destructive issue that can happen in any situation. While it is true that the *Sotah* was warned by her husband and violated that *kinui*, it is still not clear whether any *aveirah* occurred between her and the other man. However, enough was done to create suspicion. Suspicion, being the greatest vulnerability possible to *achdus*, compels חשד to say, 'I cannot leave that possibility open. חשד is so devastating that it's worth even erasing My name to vanquish it.' But the concept is deeper still. While it is true that if the *Sotah* is guilty it will kill her, if she was not guilty it isn't enough that she doesn't die. The *posuk* states (במדבר ה, כח) ונקתה ונזרעה זרע, that she will have superlative children. This is because the only way חשד will be destroyed completely is for her to have absolutely incredible children.

The reason for *Parshas haSotah* to appear in this *sefer* is because the רבונו של עולם wants to teach us that when we have *achdus*, be it in our family or in all of *Klal Yisroel*, the most devastating issue that we must fight the most is חשד. And if, חס ושלום, the suspicion deteriorated into something even worse, then that shows there to be something quite missing from the *kedusha* of *Klal Yisroel*.

Immediately following this is the *parsha* of *Nazir*. If one was ever exposed, חס וחלילה, to a situation of רואה סוטה בקלקולה, of seeing a *Sotah* guilty, one must be יזיר עצמו מן היין. Just seeing that a *bayis* was destroyed by *zenus* behooves one to undertake something to combat it. We cannot just accept it as part of life because, רחמנא לצלן, whatever we see has an effect on us. We live in a world with so many crazy things going on and so much הפקרות we must be cognizant that it can have an effect on us. The Torah is telling us that if we want to protect and shield ourselves from the negative effects, we must take extreme measures. Even though יין ישמח לבב אנוש, it can also cause one to be lax and therefore we must be over-vigilant about it.

This *sefer* describes *Klal Yisroel* at its peak state of *kedusha*. Indeed, the *Dor Yotzei Mitzrayim* lived a supernatural existence. Their clothing grew with them, they ate the *mon* and had no need for a digestive track- their physical existence was sustained spiritually. Therefore, Hashem wanted to teach us that when holding by this lofty level of existence, the arrival of a level of suspicion puts the whole existence at risk. It is then so important to get rid of the suspicion that Hashem instructs us to erase His name as part of the process. If the suspicion is proven true, we then must have the appropriate response. And if she is vindicated, Hashem gives her extraordinary children.

[*Birchas Kohanim* also belongs in this *sefer* as it is most appropriate for the Kohanim to bring the blessing of Hashem down to us when we are in such an elevated state of *kedusha v'tahara*.]

All of the topics discussed in this *sefer* either describe the majesty and level of *kedusha* that *Klal Yisroel* had in that generation, or instruct us how to maintain that level and avoid that which can come to destroy it- חשד.

In our lives too, we must take note to always avoid חשד. If one has suspicion on his friend, it must be confronted. It is better to know for certain that a mistake was made than to have the cloud of suspicion suspended over them. Suspicion is much more destructive than knowledge of something untoward having happened. At the same time, if the suspicion is proven to be false, it brings an even greater level of *shalom*.