

SICHA SUMMARY

Likkutei Sichos, Vol. 29

Shoftim, Sicha 2

The Context:

In his introduction to Mishneh Torah, Rambam enumerates the 613 mitzvos of the Torah, yet he does not number the seven Rabbinic mitzvos. After his count of the Biblical mitzvos, he simply says: “There are also other commandments that were instituted after the giving of the Torah. They were established by the Prophets and Sages and disseminated throughout Israel, for example, the reading of the Megillah, lighting a Chanukah lamp, fasting on Tish’ah b’Av, setting up eruvin, and washing one’s hands in preparation for prayer and eating.” Why does he not count the Rabbinic mitzvos in the same manner as the Biblical?

The Explanation:

The mitzvos of the Torah were given by G-d and can never be altered, added to, or subtracted. The Rabbinic mitzvos, however, are not a fixed number. The Torah empowers a legitimate court to enact

mitzvos or preventative measures as it sees fit. Practically, the Jewish community has accepted the rulings of the Talmud as final, and no court that is universally accepted as authoritative has risen since. But theoretically, the number of Rabbinic mitzvos is not fixed since such a court can technically arise, as we anticipate it will in the Messianic era. Furthermore, Rambam maintains that even in the current era, if the rabbis of the Land of Israel reinstitute authentic semicha, new laws or mitzvos can again be enacted. Therefore, he does not enumerate the Rabbinic mitzvos in his introductions, since they were not given as a fixed number.

Parenthetically, it is known that the combined numbers of the Biblical and Rabbinic mitzvos have the gematriya of 620 which spells the word “keser — crown,” alluding to the “Crown of Torah.” But the fact that Heaven arranged for this to be the case does not detract from the technical, legal possibility of an increase in the number of Rabbinic Mitzvos.
