

I have sojourned with Lavan and have lingered until now. (32:5)

Rashi explains Yaakov *Avinu's* comment concerning his stay with Lavan. "I did not become a dignitary or a notable, but a mere sojourner. Thus, it does not befit you to hate me, because our father's blessing, *Hevei g'vir l'achecha*, 'Be a lord to your brothers,' has not been fulfilled in me." In other words, "Eisav, if you are upset concerning the *brachos* that I received, do not be, because they were not fulfilled." Alternatively, *Rashi* says, the *gematria*, numerical equivalent, of *garti* is *taryag*, 613, as if to say, "I have sojourned with Lavan, yet I have observed all 613 *mitzvos*. He had no negative effect on me, for I did not learn from his evil actions."

I am presenting two explanations, which, on the surface are not connected to one another. *Horav Dovid Povarsky, zl*, (*Yishmeru Daas*) feels that they are definitely connected. Yaakov *Avinu* left home with considerable wealth, but when he arrived in Charan, he was penniless (compliments of Elifaz, son of Eisav). Yet, Yaakov presently was a very wealthy man. Indeed, it is obvious from the "gift" he sent to Eisav that he had much more where this came from. Eisav might think that all this bounty was the result of the blessings of Yitzchak *Avinu* which Yaakov purloined. To this, our Patriarch responded, "Eisav, do not become anxious. This wealth had nothing to do with our father's blessing. This wealth is my reward for living with the evil Lavan and emerging spiritually unscathed. Hashem rewarded my devotion to Him and my continued observance of His *mitzvos*. All of this is because, *Lo lamaditi mimaasav ha'raim*; 'I was not influenced by his evil actions.'"

Interestingly, when Eisav came to confront Yaakov, he was accompanied by an army of four hundred soldiers. In the end, he parted from Yaakov with a kiss and an embrace. What transpired? Eisav realized that Yaakov was right.

The *Rosh Yeshivah* closes with a sobering thought. Yaakov *Avinu* merited this extraordinary reward because Lavan had not adversely influenced him. While we do not necessarily have dealings with the Lavans of our world, do we ever come in contact with someone whose standards of observance are beneath ours, someone who does not maintain strict standards of Torah and *tefillah* and can, in some instances, leave us with questions? Why not come a little later to *shul*? Is it bad if I miss one day here and there? Is it so bad if I do not have a *chavrusa*, study partner, or attend some kind of *shiur*? By ignoring our less than spiritually-conducive surroundings and plowing forward with our way of life, we resist the subtle influences and gain merit.