

## **I have sojourned with Lavan and have lingered until now.**

*Rashi* cites the *Midrash* which emphasizes that the numerical value of the word "*garti*," "*I have sojourned*," is 613, corresponding to the number of *mitzvos* Hashem gave to the Jewish People. Hence, Yaakov implied to Eisav, "Though I have sojourned with Lavan, I have observed the *Taryag mitzvos* and have not learned from his evil ways." Yaakov stood firm and unafraid of Eisav, his spiritual level intact. Yaakov's comment to Eisav seems redundant. Certainly, if he had the fortitude to observe all 613 *mitzvos*, he surely did not mimic any of Lavan's negative actions!

*Horav Zaidel Epstein, Shlita*, infers from here that it is possible for one to be totally observant, keep all of the *mitzvos*, yet still be an "Eisav" in his everyday actions and demeanor. In the beginning of *Parashas Kedoshim* the *Ramban* refers to such an individual as a "*naval birshus ha Torah*," degenerate with the permission of the *Torah*. Such a person observes the letter of the law, the technical requirements and practices, while acceding to self-indulgence, gluttony and debauchery. The *Torah* demands that a Jew sanctify himself in every area of life's endeavor. Yaakov *Avinu* did not only observe *mitzvos*; the *mitzvos* shaped his entire perspective of life.