

I have sojourned with Lavan. (32:5)

Yaakov *Avinu's* message to Eisav, *Im Lavan garti*, is the focus of much commentary.

After all, does Eisav really care about Yaakov's past lodging? He is interested in only one thing: exacting revenge against his brother for cheating him out of his rightful blessings. This was Eisav's perception. Yaakov's message does not seem to align with Eisav's complaint and mission focused on revenge. *Rashi* cites *Chazal* who render *garti*, I sojourned/lodged, in two different ways: "I have not become the great prince which you perceive was the intent of the blessings. I am still Yaakov, merely a *ger*, alien. You need not hate me for receiving the *b'rachos*, because obviously they did not do much for me." Second, *garti* is used for its *gimatria*, numerical equivalent, which is 613. Yaakov intimated to Eisav that, although he had spent time in the corrupt, idolatrous environment of Lavan, it did not impugn his spiritual convictions. He observed all 613 *mitzvos*. This was a message to Eisav that Yaakov's righteousness was still intact. To recap: Yaakov told Eisav not to be concerned about the fact that he received the *b'rachos*, rather than Eisav, because: a) They did not really change his status. Apparently, Eisav thought Yaakov would become eminently successful, powerful and famous. Yaakov replied that nothing of the sort, no transformation of any kind had taken place. Thus, he had no reason to hate him; and b.) He was still the same Yaakov. Lavan did not change him from *yeshivah bachur* to corrupt swindler. This may all be fine concerning Yaakov, but does Eisav really care if Yaakov was famous or deeply religious? He had lost the blessings which he feels could have benefitted him. In his warped mind, he had every reason to seek vengeance.

In a lengthy *shmuess*, ethical discourse, *Horav Dovid Povarsky, zl*, explains (based upon various *Chazal*) that the concepts of *Olam Ha'zeh*, this world and *Olam Habba*, the world-to-come, are two disparate entities which are totally unlike one another. We think that when one performs *mitzvos* and good deeds in this world, he will incur Heavenly reward in the world to come. In other words, *Olam Habba* is a reward for a spiritually meaningful *olam hazeh*.

It is not like that; rather, living a life of *Taryag Mitzvos*, adhering to all 613 *mitzvos*, builds one's *olam habba*. In other words, this world and the next are one in the sense that an

individual's *Olam Habba* is built and created by his *Olam Hazeh*. It is not a reward, but one and the same. One who does not perform *mitzvos* in this world has no next world, because, for him, it does not exist. He must create it.

Thus, one's life in this world is lived for the future, not the present. We have no present, only future, because every achievement in the present creates and builds one's future *Olam Habba*. When Yitzchak blessed Yaakov, *Havei gvir l'achecha*, "Be a lord to your kinsman" (*Bereishis* 27:29), Yaakov thought only of *Olam Habba*, because achievement in this world is measured by the *Olam Habba* he creates. Perhaps a fitting analogy would be two carpenters who are building a house. One works for a foreman, who will pay him, and, with that

money, the carpenter will be able to purchase his home. The other carpenter works for himself.

Therefore, he is building his own home, which he will move into upon completion.

This is what Yaakov meant in his message to Eisav, *Im Lavan garti*, "According to your idea of the meaning of being *g'vir l'achecha*, lord over your kinsman, I did not succeed. I have nothing in this world to show that I have achieved anything. I do not live in the present. I live for the future.

Therefore, by observing the 613 *mitzvos* while in Lavan's home, I built my *Olam Habba*. I took nothing from you, because the blessing of *hevei g'vir l'achecha* was meant for *Olam Habba*, which was the focus of my sojourn with Lavan. Eisav, you can have the present. I toil in the future. We are not on the same page."

The obvious question posed by the *Rosh 'yeshivah* is: Where do we stand? What are our priorities? Are we building our *Olam Ha'zeh*, or do we realize that our focus should be on our *Olam Habba* and that every positive activity builds our future? When we lose focus, however, we are creating flaws in our *Olam Habba*.