



"HOW TO AFFECT ANOTHER JEW"

Farbrenge – 19 Kislev, 5741-1980

At the very beginning of this week's portion we are told that "Yaakov sent emissaries." To whom did he send them? "To his brother Esau, in the land of Se'ir." What were they to say? "I've lived with Lavan, and I have tarried until now."

Rashi focuses on the words "I've lived with Lavan," and explains that the word "*garti*," I've lived, has the numerical value of 613. Yaakov was telling his emissaries to inform Esau that "I have lived with Lavan," and yet "I did not learn from his ways, and I kept all 613 commandments."

Many commentators ask: Yaakov is sending a message to Esau, he should be saying something conciliatory to affect Esau, much as he sent him presents "so that I may find favor in your eyes," similar to many other details which he transmitted through his messengers.

Yet, his very first declaration to Esau was "I have lived with Lavan, but still I have kept all 613 commandments!" The Talmud explains that Esau had the classification of a "rebellious Jew" —he was a Jew, but he acted contrary to the way a Jew should act.

The lesson from this is: Some people mistakenly believe that when one wants to bring a Jew closer to greater observance, it is necessary to compromise and let some aspects of Judaism fall by the wayside, attempting to find favor in the other's eyes, and thereby influence him.

We see, however, that just the opposite is true: When one approaches a Jew, no matter who he may be, and tells him "I kept all 613 commandments," I am keeping Judaism fully and completely...

And not only is he not ashamed of it, but to the contrary: His emissary —and "a person's emissary is as the person himself" — begins with the statement, that not only is he not ashamed of his Judaism, and not only does he adhere to its precepts when he is hidden in his own private space, but rather even when "I lived with Lavan," wherever he may be, even in a place where "I have lived," he is a stranger in a strange land he is not ashamed of his Judaism, but rather he announces and proclaims that he observes all of the commandments that G-d has given him.

Yaakov knew very well how to have a positive effect on Esau.

Furthermore: Torah recorded this as a lesson for every Jew, teaching him how to speak to another Jew. There is no doubt that he wants to do him a favor and help him. The way to do so is not by telling him "you are not behaving like a Jew, but you must be a little better."



Rather, he must tell him the truth. We belong to a nation of Jews, each of whom is a "believer, son of believers," and therefore keeps all 613 commandments. Only then does the other person trust him; that he isn't hiding or making compromises or trying to sell him, but rather he is telling him the truth — that he is a "believer, son of believers."

When we do so we are assured, that since he is a Jew, and Maimonides rules that every Jew, no matter what the circumstances, truly desires to keep all 613 Mitzvot. It is just that sometimes "his inclination coerces him." However, that's not his true self; even when coerced by the Evil Inclination, he himself has still "kept the 613 commandments."

This is the way one must speak to another Jew: heart to heart, telling him who he really is: Yaakov's grandson, who has inherited the Torah of Moshe in its entirety. Thus, when Yaakov's great-grandson tries talking to another Jew, he certainly wants to do him a favor and help him to improve.

The very start of such an attempt must be that "I have kept the 613 commandments," because this is the very essence of a Jew, as mentioned by Maimonides.

When one does so, he is successful, as related in the continuation of Vayishlach. Ultimately even the Jew who was acting like Esau is transformed, until he "hugs him and kisses him," and "they cry," and they reach the greatest love and friendship possible.

