
פרשת וישלח

פרק ל פסוק ה

וַיְצַו אֶתֶם לֵאמֹר כֹּה תֹאמְרוּן לְאֹדְנִי לַעֲשׂוֹ כֹּה אָמַר עֲבָדְךָ יַעֲקֹב עִם־לָבָן גֵּרְתִּי וְאָחַר
עַד־עֲפָתָה:

רש"י

גֵּרְתִּי. לֹא נַעֲשִׂיתִי שׁוֹר וְחָשׁוּב אֶלְא גֵר, אֵינְךָ כְּדַאי לְשִׁנוּא אוֹתִי עַל בְּרַכַּת אָבִיךָ שֶׁבִּרְכַּנִּי
”הָיָה גְבִיר לְאַחִיךָ”, שֶׁהָרִי לֹא נִתְקַיְּמָה בִּי. דְּבָר אַחֵר, ”גֵּרְתִּי” בְּגִימָטְרִיא תְּרִי”ג,
כְּלוּמַר, עִם לָבָן הִרְשַׁע גֵּרְתִּי וְתְּרִי”ג מִצְוֹת שְׁמַרְתִּי וְלֹא לְמַדְתִּי מִמַּעֲשֵׂיו הָרָעִים:

מושג

תְּרִי”ג מִצְוֹת שְׁמַרְתִּי וְלֹא לְמַדְתִּי מִמַּעֲשֵׂיו הָרָעִים.

Translation:

I kept the 613 mitzvos, and I did not learn from (Lavan's) evil ways.

Explanation:

Yaakov Aveinu is relaying a message to Eisav, letting him know that even though he had lived with Lavan for the past 20 years, he had still kept all the Mitzvos and not learned from Lavan's evil ways. Eisav might have thought that due to Lavan's influence, Yaakov had slipped in his Mitzvah observance and could be attacked¹, Yaakov was letting him know that this was not the case².

Looking in the Pasuk:

The Chazal which Rashi quotes is bothered by the word גֵּרְתִּי, which means to live as a stranger. (From the shoshon - Much the same way we call a stranger a גֵּר). Wouldn't the word שְׂכֵנִי or יֹשְׁבֵי be more appropriate? Did Yaakov live as a stranger in Lavan's house? Chazal answer that indeed Yaakov was a stranger in Lavan's house in that he rejected Lavan's lifestyle of deceit and evil. He was therefore a גֵּר, and can truthfully say גֵּרְתִּי, in that he kept the ³ מצוות.

Musag Learning Outcomes:

Know: Meaning of the word גֵּר.

Understand: Correlation between Mitzvah observance and protection from Eisav.

Think: Verb usage and how it affects deeper meaning.

1 See note #1

2 See note #2

3 See note #3

NOTES

1. For Yitzchok had told Eisav **וְעַל־סִרְבְּךָ תִּהְיֶה וְאֶת־אֲחִיךָ תַעֲבֹד וְהָיָה כְּאִשֶׁר תִּרְיֶד וּפְרַקְתָּ עָלָיו מֵעַל צְנֹאֲרֶךָ**, thus the blessings would only apply if Yaakov kept the Mitzvos.

2. Rashi's first explanation, from the Tanchumah Yashan (see Midrash in footnote #4), comments that Yaakov was telling Eisav that he was a lowly **גר** and that the blessings of Yitzchok had not come true. Eisav therefore had no need to hate him. Rashi thus explains:

a. why Yaakov used the word **גרתי** and also

b. why Yaakov opened his message to Eisav with these words, **עם לבן גרתי** (for why would Eisav care where Yaakov had spent the last 20 years?).

Rashi's second explanation, from the Midrash Aggadah, answers using a **גימטריא**, the letters of **גרתי** and **תרי"ג** being the same. Since Rashi's first explanation dealt with both questions (why use the word **גרתי** and why would Eisav care) it is assumed that Rashi's second explanation also came to answer both questions. We therefore explain that saying I kept the Mitzvos, was Yaakov's way of telling Eisav that he was not spiritually weak.

The **שפתי חכמים** quotes the **מהרש"ל** who sees the two explanations of Rashi as complementing each other. For after telling Eisav that the **ברכות** had not come true, Eisav might have thought that Yaakov did not merit the **ברכות** because he was lax in his Mitzvah observance. Yaakov thus told Eisav that this was not the case! Yaakov, according to the **מהרש"ל**, is telling Eisav that there is no reason to hate him since the **ברכות** had not come true, but that even so he was not weak spiritually and could not be attacked.

The **כלי יקר** also understands that the two Midrashim complement each other⁴, but explains differently. The **כלי יקר** asks how Yaakov could be stating that his father's blessings had not been effective⁵? He explains that Yaakov was conveying to Eisav that his 'stealing' of the blessings had not been successful. Rather, since his father originally thought to give the blessing to Eisav, the blessing would remain with Eisav. And his proof was the fact that he had kept all the Mitzvos and yet he was still a lowly **גר**! The fact that the blessings did not seem to come true proved that they were meant for, and would remain with, Eisav. The explanation of the **כלי יקר** can be proven from the wording of the Midrash in which Yaakov does not say **לא נתקיימו**, they were not fulfilled, but rather says **לא הגיעני**, they did not reach me. This was his way of telling Eisav that they obviously were not meant for me but for Eisav!

(See also the text of the Midrash explaining **ויהי לי שור וחמור**)

3. It is unlikely that the Midrash was just making a play on the word **גרתי**. Rather it was pointing to the fact that the word **גר** meaning stranger could also mean a spiritual stranger. The play on words of **גרתי** and **תרי"ג** clearly conveys this idea.

4. Questions for further discussion:

a. How did Yaakov keep the **מצות תרי"ג** even before the Torah was given?

b. If Yaakov was so sure that he had kept the Mitzvos and merited Hashem's protection, why did he split up his camp out of concern that Eisav would be able to destroy part of his family?

4 From the fact that Rashi introduced the second Midrash with the words **דבר אחר**, he sees Rashi as not agreeing with this contention, rather sees the two Midrashim as different answers.

5 The wording of the Midrash Tanchuma (Yashan) strengthens this question:

עם לבן גרתי: לא הגיעני אחת מן הברכות שברכני אביך, אביך ברכני ויתן לך האלקים מטל השמים ומשמני הארץ, ואני אין בידי אחת מהם, אלא "ויהי לי שור וחמור צאן" שאינו לא מן השמים ולא מן הארץ, כלום אתה שונא אותי אלא בשביל הברכות עדין לא הגיעני אפילו אחת