



RABBI SHALOM

ROSNER

Rav Kehilla, Nofei HaShemesh
Maggid Shiur, Daf Yomi, OU.org
Senior Ra"m, Kerem B'Yavneh

Yearning to Fulfill Mitzvot

עם לְבָנוּ נָגַדְתִּי וְאֶחָר עֵד עָמְדָה

I have sojourned with Laban, and I have tarried until now. (Bereshit 32:5)

Yaakov sends messengers to greet Esav and requests that they communicate specific information to him. Based on the pasuk above, Rashi explains the content of the message:

גַּרְתִּי בְּגִמְטָרִיא תְּרִי"ג, כְּלוּמַר עִם לָבוֹן הִרְשַׁע גַּרְתִּי וְתַר"ג

מִצְוֹת שִׁמְרָתִי וְלֹא לִמְדַתִּי מִמַּעֲשֵׂיו הִרְעִים

Garti has the numerical value of 613. That is to say: I lived with the wicked Lavan, but I kept the 613 commandments.

It seems a bit of a stretch for Yaakov to claim that he fulfilled all 613 mitzvot. He was not able to perform *mitzvot hatluyot ba'aretz* while in *chutz la'aretz* (teruma, ma'aser etc). Hazal even highlight elsewhere that Yaakov feared Esav would have the upper hand since Esav fulfilled the mitzva of *kibbud av v'em*, while Yaakov was unable to do so for the past 20 years! So how can Yaakov make a statement that he kept *taryag mitzvot* when it is impossible for him to have done so?

Some commentators suggest that although one cannot actually perform a mitzva, by learning about the mitzva, it is as if one has fulfilled the mitzva. The

Chatam Sofer offers an alternative suggestion. The term attributed to Yaakov is *taryag mitzvot shamarti*. The word *shamarti* may be understood to mean “to perform” or “to keep”. However, in several other contexts the root *shamar* has a different implication. In next week’s parsha after Yosef reveals his dreams to his brothers, the Torah tells us: וְאָבִיו שָׁמַר אֶת־הַדְּבָר –but his father *awaited* the matter. The Chatam Sofer explains that Yaakov **waited with anticipation** for Yosef’s dream to become reality.

The Chatam Sofer interprets the word “*shamar*” in a similar fashion in another context as well. The Torah dictates: וּשְׁמַרוּ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־הַשַּׁבָּת – the literal translation may be that “*Bnei Yisrael shall keep (observe) the Shabbat*”. The Chatam Sofer interprets the word “*v’shamru*” to reflect that all week long we are to **yearn with anticipation** for the Shabbat to arrive.

When Yaakov is attributed with stating “*taryag mitzvot shamarti*”, the intention is that although he could not fulfill all 613 commandments, he **yearned with anticipation** the day he would be able to perform the mitzvot that he was unable to currently fulfill.

We ought to experience the same thirst and enthusiasm when performing mitzvot. To yearn for those mitzvot that we are yet unable to fulfill and to appreciate and be excited when we engage in mitzvot.

On Chanuka we will recite the bracha of “she’hechyanu, v’keyemanu, v’hegiyanu lazman hazeh”. We express our gratitude for being given the opportunity to partake in the mitzva of lighting the menorah. Yaakov yearned to fulfill all of the mitzvot. May we be careful not to engage in mitzvot out of routine and be able to experience excitement and enthusiasm while performing each and every mitzva. ■

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