

HOW ABOUT AN APPLE TREE, AN ORANGE TREES AND A FEW PEACH TREES?

PARSHAS VAYISHLACH

A king wanted to have an orchard, so he asked his servants to plant trees. He told them that he would pay them more money for certain trees. However, he did not tell them for which trees he would pay more. Thus, he was assured that the servants would plant all types of trees and that he would have a beautiful orchard. Had the king told his servants for which trees he would pay more money, then they would have only planted those trees. Then, the king's orchard would be lacking the beauty of having a variety of trees. Similarly, Had Hashem stated clearly the reward for each positive mitzvah then people would concentrate on performing the "major" mitzvos. They would ignore the "lesser" mitzvos (Rashi on Pirkei Avos 2:2)

Yaakov and his family had left Lavan's house. They were on their way back to Eretz Yisroel to the house of Yitzchak. Yaakov sent messengers to Esav, bringing gifts to Esav. The messengers also told

Esav that Yaakov was returning. Esav's response was to gather an army of 400 men to fight Yaakov. When Yaakov heard about Esav's preparations for battle, he *"was very frightened, and distressed"* (Bereishis 32:8)."

Why was Yaakov afraid? Why didn't Yaakov rely on Hashem's earlier promise of protection? The **Talmud** (Brachos 4A) says that Yaakov was concerned lest a sin that he may have committed may have caused him to forfeit Hashem's promise of protection.

*"Yaakov was very frightened, and distressed....
(Bereishis 32:8)"*

Targum Yonasan explains the "sin" that Yaakov was afraid he had committed. For twenty years Yaakov had not performed the mitzvah of *kibud av*, he had not shown honor to his father during

the years that he was away at Lavan's house. **Rabbi Mordechai Gifter zt"l** (Pirkei Torah) says, that Yaakov did not actually transgress the mitzvah of *kibbud av*. Rather, he was merely unable to perform it. If Yaakov did not actually sin, why was he fearful?

Rav Gifter zt"l says that the word חטין normally translated as "sin". However, **Rashi** (Melachim I 1:21) says that it means "a deficiency". When one sins, it damages his soul, rendering it incomplete. True, Yaakov

did not actually transgress any *mitzvos*. However, he was lacking in the mitzvah of *kibud av*. Yaakov was lacking in only one *mitzvah* but that was the very mitzvah that Esav possessed.

Da'as Zekanim offers a second alternative that Yaakov was lacking in the mitzvah of

living in Eretz Yisroel, something which Esav had (at least for more years than Yaakov).

We learn in **Pirkei Avos** (2:1) that the reward for each mitzvah is unknown. Thus, Yaakov was concerned lest the lack of this single mitzvah which Esav possessed, would result in his losing Hashem's protection against Esav.

Since we do not know the reward for mitzvos, we should never take any mitzvah lightly. That mitzvah could very well be the one that will grant us eternal life in the World to Come.

(based on insights by Rabbi Mordechai Gifter zt"l)

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