

A SHORT VORT | BY RABBI CHANUCH YERES

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“Then Yaakov was greatly afraid” (32:8)

ויירא יעקב מאד (לב:ח)

What was Yaakov afraid of while preparing his encounter with Eisav?

The Midrash Rabbah points out that Yaakov was very concerned that Eisav, a descendant of Avraham, was fulfilling the Divine command of living in Israel, whilst Yaakov lived abroad.

Rabbi Shmuel Mohilever (1824-1898, Founders of Hovevei Zion Movement) asks a question: Why was Yaakov fearful of Eisav’s one Mitzvah of living in Israel when he (Yaakov) lived with Lavan and “Garti (lived)” in numerical value equals 613 (Rashi), postulating that Yaakov fulfilled all the 613 commandments?

From here you can see how the Mitzvah of “Dwelling in the Land of Israel”, even if fulfilled by a non-Jew, can rival a righteous Jew’s fulfillment of many mitzvot. How much more so, a Jewish person who accomplishes the command of Living in Eretz Yisrael himself is cherished by the Holy One Above. As the Yalkut Shimoni (3) quotes: “G-d says if only my people would settle the land of Israel, even if they would cause impurity to it.”

Shabbat Shalom