

## Yaakov became very frightened, and it distressed him. (32:8)

*Rashi* explains the dual fears that Yaakov *Avinu* experienced. He was frightened that he would be killed, and he was distressed that, in the course of the battle, he might kill “*acheirim*,” others. Notably, Yaakov had greater fear concerning the harm he might inflict on others than the harm by which he might be victimized. Apparently, our Patriarch never heard of “collateral damage,” a term which has regrettably been popularized in contemporary society. People’s lives have no value, they are secondary to a higher cause. Some make it; some do not. That is collateral damage. We cannot have it all. Someone will suffer. The Jewish nation has a contrasting perspective which values every human life, thus maintaining a very dim view of the sorry excuse of collateral damage.

Let us return to *Rashi*’s original statement. Yaakov feared killing *acheirim*. Who are the others? Why use this word? Why not simply say that Yaakov feared killing Eisav’s men? In the *Sefer Peninim Yekarim*, we find a homiletic explanation quoted from the *Imrei Noam* and attributed to **Horav Shmuel, zl, m’Ostrovitze**, a disciple of the *Koznitzer Maggid*. When Moshe *Rabbeinu* was about to kill the Egyptian who was hurting the Jew, the Torah says, *Va’yaar ki ein ish*, “He saw there was no man...” “and he slew the Egyptian” (*Shemos* 12:2). *Rashi* comments that Moshe was not concerned with who might find out. If a Jew is being struck by an Egyptian, one neither asks questions, nor is he concerned that he might get into trouble for helping a Jew. We do what is right. *Rashi* explains that Moshe saw prophetically that no future convert would descend from the Egyptian assailant. We see Moshe was not taking chances. If there was a possibility of a Jew descending from this Egyptian, Moshe would have desisted and not intervened by inflicting mortal harm on the Egyptian.

Yaakov *Avinu* had a similar concern. In the *Talmud Gitten* 56a, we learn that Nero Caesar converted to Judaism. He was the progenitor of the distinguished *Tanna* Rabbi Meir. Nero was a descendant of Eisav. Thus, Rabbi Meir actually descended from Eisav. The *Talmud Horayos* 13b states that Rabbi Meir also went by the name *Acheirim*. He was a student of Elisha *ben Avuyah*, the *Tanna* turned apostate, who was later referred to as *Acher*, the “other one.” After *Acher* left the fold, Rabbi Meir continued his relationship with him, feeling that he could distinguish between that which was *halachically* correct and that which was not. The sages did not agree with his choice of teacher; therefore, they referred to Rabbi Meir as *Acheirim*, “Others.” Whenever we find a *halachic* decision being rendered by *Acheirim*, it is a reference to Rabbi Meir.

With this idea in mind, we understand Yaakov’s fear if he were to succeed in killing Eisav. If Eisav died, so did the potential for *Acheirim*. Without Eisav, there would have been no Rabbi Meir. This was one piece of collateral damage that the Patriarch could not ignore.