

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

Simply, Yaakov *Avinu* was concerned about the potential for Eisav to harm him and his family. *Rashi* explains that Yaakov was afraid that he would be killed. He was also distressed that he would be victorious in the ensuing battle and kill others in the process. The *Ralbag* comments that since distress is a stronger form of fear than fright, the prospect of killing another human being was more upsetting than the risk that he himself might be killed. This demonstrates the remarkable virtue of Yaakov *Avinu*.

In the *Talmud Berachos 4A*, *Chazal* explain that Yaakov's fear emanated from a concern that "*she'ma yigrom ha'cheit*," perhaps he had sinned and consequently had forfeited Hashem's protection. What sin could he have committed? *Targum Yonasan* explains that Yaakov felt he was lax in the *mitzvah* of *Kibud Av v'Eim*, since he had been separated from his parents during his sojourn with Lavan. During this time Eisav was living at home and observing this *mitzvah* in the appropriate manner. Yet, Yaakov did not neglect the *mitzvah*. He just was unable to perform it, since he was not at home. Could he have forfeited Hashem's protection for this reason?

The common translation of the word "*cheit*" is sin. *Horav Mordechai Gifter, Shlita*, cites *Rashi* in the *Navi Melachim 1, 1:21* in which he defines the word *cheit* as a deficiency, a shortcoming or an imperfection. This sheds light on the concept of sin. Sin is an imperfection on the *neshamah*, soul, a blemish that causes a defect in the purity of the soul. Therefore, if one has not committed a sin, but has neglected to perform a specific *mitzvah* which someone else performed in his place, he is considered to be blemished in respect to the other person. While we may not consider this to be a sin, the Heavenly perspective views this as a deficiency.

Yaakov certainly had not committed any sins. He was concerned, however, that Eisav had performed *Kibud Av v'Eim* while he had not. He was deficient in comparison to Eisav. We do not know the value of each individual *mitzvah*. The Heavenly Tribunal has a different manner for evaluating the significance of each *mitzvah*. Yaakov was concerned about his deficiency in this single *mitzvah* which Eisav had performed to a greater degree than he had. In his eyes this was a *cheit*, a blemish in his spiritual character.

Horav Gifter cites the *Ramban* who says that in order to merit eternal life in *Olam Habah*, one must perform at least one *mitzvah* properly with total devotion, *l'shem mitzvah*, for the sake of the *mitzvah*, with no manifest personal motives or vested interests. He must perform this *mitzvah* with love for the Almighty and a desire to do His will. Hashem has, therefore, granted us a multitude of *mitzvos*. While he intends for us to observe all of them, we will at least observe one correctly. It behooves us to approach *mitzvah* observance with the utmost care. We cannot determine which *mitzvah* will gain us entrance into *Olam Habah*.