

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

Rashi explains that Yaakov was frightened that he would be killed, and he was distressed that, in his efforts to protect his family, he might kill *acheirim*, others. What did Yaakov fear? He had every reason to defend himself against Eisav. The *Melei HaOmer* explains that Yaakov purchased the firstborn birthright from Eisav for the express purpose that the *avodah*, service, in the *Bais HaMikdash* would be conducted by *bechorim*, firstborn, and he would be a *b'chor*. However, if he would kill Eisav – even by right – he could no longer serve. A *Kohen* that kills someone, even *b'shogeig*, unintentionally, may no longer serve in the *Bais HaMikdash*. This is what disconcerted our Patriarch.

Horav Naftali Maryles (nineteenth century *Rav* of Litovisk) asks why *Rashi* adds that Yaakov feared killing *acheirim*, others? His basic fear was Eisav – not anyone else. He cites *Chazal* (*Gittin* 56A) who relate that Ceasar Nero ultimately converted. The famous *Tanna*, Rabbi Meir, student of Rabbi Akiva, was one of his descendants. The Romans, of whom Nero was a Ceasar, were descendants of Eisav/ Edom. Thus, *Rashi* writes that Yaakov feared killing Eisav, which would prevent the birth of Rabbi Meir who was called *Acheirim*. *Chazal* (*Horayos* 14) explain that the *Mishnah* often refers to Rabbi Meir as *Acheirim*, because *Rebbe* (Yehudah *HaNasi*), the redactor of the *Mishnah*, did not want to refer to Rabbi Meir by name, since he had attempted to unseat *Rebbe's* father, *Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel*, from his position as *Nasi*.