

## **Dvar Torah** by **Rabbi Chanoch Yeres**

to his community at

Beit Knesset Beit Yisrael, Yemin Moshe

*Graciously shared with PhiloTorah*

"And Yaakov was very afraid" (32:8). As Yaakov was preparing to meet his brother Eisav, his demeanor of fear and trepidation is described to us in the Torah. Why should Yaakov be so terrified of Eisav? He had been promised safety and security by G-d on his travel. The Vilna Gaon (The G"RA) explains this issue by delving into the Mitzva of "Dwelling in the Land of Israel" -

The Gaon continued by comparing this Mitzva to the Mitzva of Brit Mila which was bestowed to Avraham for all following "future" generations. Rabbi A. Schoen develops this idea by analyzing the Midrash (B'reishit Rabba) which sheds light on Yaakov's inner fears. Yaakov said "All these years Eisav dwelled in the Land of Israel. Perhaps Eisav with, a more powerful stance against me, for he has lived in the land longer than me?"

The question arises on these fears of Yaakov. If we are not commanded to "Dwell in the Land of Israel" since the days of Avraham, why then should Yaakov be afraid that Eisav would have been protected by keeping this Mitzva? After all, if someone keeps a

Mitzva that was not commanded to him, it will not serve to protect him. Therefore, we learn from this something very clear. The command given to Avraham of LECH L'CHA MEI-ARTZECHA - Leave your land, is being applied to all "future" generations, not just to Avraham himself. There is an obligation on all of us to leave our birthplace and dwell in Israel, the home of your forefathers.

According to the Vilna Gaon, this is exactly why Yaakov was filled with dread before meeting Eisav. Eisav would be protected by having kept the Mitzva of "Dwelling in the Land of Israel", since he too was descendent of Avraham. Perhaps, that is why, according to the Midrash, even though Yaakov testified of himself that he "Sojourn with Lavan and kept all the Mitzvot", he was still petrified of this one Mitzva of "Dwelling in the Land". One must conclude that this Mitzva seems to weigh heavily on all those who maintain it, even someone who is not Jewish, like Eisav. Fulfilling this command seems to outweigh even a righteous individual fulfilling many other Mitzvot, like Yaakov. Dwelling in the Land of Israel by an Israelite seems to find special favor in the eyes of G-d, even if one takes other commandments lightly. It is stated in the Yalkut Shimoni Eicha

that G-d says:

"I wish My nation Israel would dwell  
in the Land of Israel, even if they  
defile it." 