

For he must dwell in his city of refuge until the death of the Kohen Gadol. (35:28)

Rashi explains that the *Kohen Gadol's* passing is connected to the unintentional murderer's freedom, because as the generation's primary spiritual leader, he should have prayed that accidental fatalities not occur during his watch. *Chazal* teach that the mothers of the *Kohanim Gedolim* would bring food to the unintentional murderers as their way of petitioning them not to pray for the premature death of their son. Why was it the *Kohen Gadol's* mother who brought food to the inmates? Why not the *Kohen Gadol* himself? After all, it was his life that was on the block.

In his commentary to the *Mishnah*, the **Tiferes Yisrael** offers two answers. First, it was below the dignity of the *Kohen Gadol* to bring food. It would make it appear as if he feared the inmate, lending support to the premise that, had he been more circumspect and prayed with greater intensity, the accidental tragedy would not have occurred. Thus, to preserve the dignity of the *Kohen Gadol*, he personally did not interact with the unintentional murderer. His mother, however, had boundless love for her son. She would go to the ends of the world to protect him and prolong his life.

Second, if the unintentional murderer were receiving care packages from the *Kohen Gadol*, every down and out poor man would claim that he killed unintentionally and present himself at the gates of the city of refuge to seek asylum. If his mother was bringing the goodies, he would fear that, due to her advanced age, she would have very little time left to do this. The poor man was taking quite a chance. The *Kohen Gadol's* mother might pass away, and her son could serve for many more years. The poor man would not be ready to take such a chance. It would be a disaster for him to be stuck in the *Ir Miklat*, city of refuge.

Another question should be addressed. What about the *Kohen Gadol's* wife? Did she not care about her husband's life? Perhaps we might suggest that the *Kohen Gadol's* mother had a personal investment in her son. He quite possibly was a *Kohen Gadol*, having reached this exalted status as a result of his mother's exemplary modesty. *Chazal* teach that *Kimchis* merited seeing her seven sons become *Kohanim Gedolim*. When queried how she merited such *nachas*, spiritual satisfaction, she replied that even the beams within her home had never seen her hair exposed. She exemplified the epitome of dignity. It is consistent with the *pasuk* in *Sefer Tehillim* 45:14, *Kol kevudah bas melech penimah, mi'mishbetzos zahav levushah*, "The dignity of a princess is in her modesty, and her garment is made of gold embroidery." A woman of such outstanding modesty deserves children who will wear the golden vestments of the *Kohen Gadol*.

The *Kohen Gadol* was the product of the unique dignity of his mother. She made him. It, therefore, is reasonable that the bond of filial love which exists between mother and son supersedes any other love – even that of a wife for her husband. Therefore, it was the mother who "charged" herself with sustaining the inmates in the city of refuge.

Apparently, the prayers of these unintentional murderers had great efficacy, if the mothers went out of their way to keep them happy. Why? Imagine, on one side we have all of *Klal Yisrael* praying for the *Kohen Gadol's* longevity. This included the *gedolei Yisrael*, the nation's spiritual leaders, members of the *Sanhedrin* and all of the *Kohanim*. The *Kohen Gadol* himself must have also prayed that he live. Yet, we see that the prayer of the unintentional murderer can overpower the prayers of everyone else. How?

Horav Yaakov Galinsky, zl, offers a powerful insight which should give us all something to consider. The murderer prayed with greater intensity, because his freedom depended on it. When a person prays like his life depends on it, he is answered! This man knew that, as long as the *Kohen Gadol* lived, he would be stuck in this city. He must get out. He was climbing the walls. This motivated his prayer. When we pray to Hashem for salvation, it must be with the feeling that we understand that there is absolutely no other recourse. Hashem is not the last resort; He is the only resort.

If the unintentional murderer's prayer has such efficacy, why should a good meal, a few cookies, some dessert, change his mind and make him suddenly comfortable in the city of refuge? *Rav Galinsky* explains that this is the power of *negios*, vested interests. Once he receives a good meal, he has been bribed, such that the intensity accompanying his prayer has been cooled. When the passion is no longer vibrant, neither is the prayer.