

## And a murderer shall flee there, one who takes a life unintentionally...for he must dwell in his city of refuge until the death of the Kohen Gadol. (35:11,28)

Had the *Kohen Gadol* prayed with greater devotion, had he entreated Hashem to arrange that fatal accidents not occur during his tenure as *Kohen Gadol*, they might not have happened. *Chazal* tell us that the *Kohen Gadol's* mother supplied the unintentional murderers with food and clothing, so that they would not pray for her son's premature death. It seems difficult to accept that food and clothing would take precedence over one's liberty. One has only to ask a person who has been incarcerated for an extended period of time, to determine whether food and clothing would be an acceptable trade for his liberty.

Yet, we see that *Chazal* attribute success to the *Kohen Gadol's* mother's strategy. Why did it work? **Horav Meir Bergman, Shlita**, gives a penetrating answer based upon the foundation of prayer. Prayer has the ability to stretch the boundaries of nature; it is a vehicle for engendering miracles. This is only true if the prayer emanates from the innermost recesses of the heart, when it is an expression of one's inner being, his real essence. For prayer to have the ability to transcend the laws of nature, it must be real; it must have integrity; it must be from the heart.

When the *Kohen Gadol's* mother benefitted the unintentional murderer, she knew that ultimately the exiles would be compelled to demonstrate their gratitude to her. Once this debt of gratitude was ingrained in their psyche, they would no longer be able to pray wholeheartedly for their deliverance. They would always think to themselves, "How can I pray for the *Kohen Gadol's* death, if his mother has been so kind to me?" Indeed, a heart whose allegiances are divided cannot achieve a significant response through prayer. The *Kohen Gadol* really had very little to fear.