

## And a murderer shall flee the one who takes a life unintentionally. (35:11)

The word *rotze'ach*, murderer, followed by *makeh nefesh*, one who takes a life, is seemingly redundant. Why does the Torah repeat itself? *Horav Chaim Toito, Shlita*, employs the following story as a means for distinguishing between the two terms. A devout, G-d-fearing Jew lived in a small village not far from Sanz. He earned a living by using his house as an inn and restaurant. It was a lucrative business. One day, a poor man dressed in tattered clothes appeared at his inn. Being a kind-hearted man, the innkeeper gave this man a decent, nourishing meal, after which he took out some money and gave it to him. The poor man refused the donation. Thinking that it was too paltry a sum to cover the poor man's needs, the innkeeper doubled his donation. The poor man explained, "I do not require your financial assistance. I am, *baruch Hashem*, quite wealthy and not in the need of money."

Obviously, the innkeeper was taken aback. The man clearly appeared destitute. He certainly did not dress like a wealthy man. He ate his meal in a manner that indicated that his last meal had been some time ago. "Let me explain," he began. "I live in *Fist* (a suburb of *Premishlan*) where I own fields, vineyards, and a number of businesses. Let it suffice that I am quite comfortable. A few years ago, a considerable amount of money was missing from my house. Immediate suspicion was focused on an orphan girl who had been working for me as a maid. I brought her to the judge in the community, where she was put under corporeal pressure in order to obtain a confession. She suffered beatings, but remained adamant in her claim of innocence. As a result of the beatings she sustained, she became ill and succumbed to her illness.

"Two weeks after the girl's passing, the lost money was discovered. Apparently, it had been misplaced. I realized that I was guilty of *chosheid b'k'sheirim*, wrongful suspicion, which inadvertently led to the untimely death of a poor orphan girl. I was miserable. In my attempt to seek atonement and learn what was the proper form of *teshuvah*, I traveled to the *tzaddik, Horav Meir, zl, m'Premishlan*.

"The *Rebbe* told me to choose one of three punishments: to die immediately, which would allow me to enter *Olam Habba*, the World to Come; to be gravely ill for three years; or to go into *galus*, exile, as one who is guilty of *retzichah b'shogeg*. I was unable to cope – neither with immediate death, painful illness, or banishment to a life of exile. I bid the *Rebbe*, 'Good day,' and left.

"Two weeks passed, and I developed a headache. At first, it was a dull ache, but, after a few days, it became devastatingly painful, preventing me from functioning. My family sent for a doctor, who, after giving me a thorough check up, said that I had no hope. My body was shutting down. He was at a loss to prevent the illness from advancing further. He gave me a few days to live. I felt that this was the work of the saintly *Premishlaner*, who had selected death as my atonement. I immediately dispatched a letter to the *Rebbe* asking for his blessing that I regain my strength. I would then

travel to Premishlan to meet with him once again.

“When I entered the holy *Rebbe*’s home, he said, ‘You have time to die, and, veritably, you have already been ill. I select for you the punishment of exile. However, I will teach you the meaning of exile. First of all, whatever you have with you – clothes, money – you will leave with me. I will give you old tattered clothes to wear. You should always be on the move. In other words, never sleep in the same place two nights in a row. Never beg for food. If someone gives you – good; if not, you will just have to wait. No donations. Only if someone gives you a meal out of the goodness of his heart may you partake. You may not return for three years, except, once each year, you may come to the outskirts of the city and request that your wife bring you the books to your business to determine if you are losing money. Only if you are in sad financial shape may you end your exile prematurely. I guarantee you, however, that this will not be the case. You will do well, despite your absence. All your travels must be on foot. After three years, you will return to me, and I will return all of your belongings to you.”

”I accepted the *Rebbe*’s guidelines and his blessings and set out on my imposed exile. Two years passed, and I discovered that the saintly *Premishlaner* has passed from this world. I did not know what to do. I heard that a holy *Rebbe* is in the city of Sanz (*Horav Chaim, zl*). It is to him that I am now traveling. Perhaps he can guide me concerning what to do.”

When the innkeeper heard the incredible story, he elected to accompany the man to Sanz in order to find out the end of the story. They waited in the home of the *Sanzer* to be greeted with, “You shall go home by way of Premishlan, stop at the grave of the *Premishlaner* and inform him that the *Rebbe* of Sanz has determined that two years of exile are sufficient punishment, since you did not in any way deviate from his guidelines. Your *mesiras nefesh*, self-sacrifice, in seeking atonement earned your place among the worthy penitents.”

Wonderful, inspirational story – with a frightening message. One does not have to commit murder with his two hands in order to be deserving of *galus*. Even if his inadvertent error caused another Jew to suffer and succumb – he is guilty. He must be exiled. This is to what the Torah is alluding when it writes *rotzeach b’shogeg* – an unintentional murder and *makeh nefesh*, one who takes a life. There is the individual who might use his hands – direct action – albeit unintentionally, to murder a person. There is also the *makeh nefesh*, who does not outright use his hands, but, by virtue of his actions – or inactions – brings about a person’s untimely death. He is also included. It goes without saying that the latter is much more frightening, and a situation concerning which we must be constantly vigilant.