

And you shall prepare for yourselves cities of refuge. (35:11)

The *Torah* instructs us to designate Cities of Refuge to protect the inadvertent killer from the relatives of the deceased. *Horav Mordechai Gifter, Shlita*, notes that the *Torah* does not use the term "*zimun*," to prepare, but rather uses "*hikrisem*," a word related to "*mikreh*," which alludes to an event occurring by chance, without forethought or preparation. *Horav Gifter* feels that the *Torah* is conveying a profound message to us. Violence is foreign to the Jew. If we hear that a Jew has committed a violent act, we must realize that this act represents the antithesis of the *Torah's* perspective of society. We are not permitted for one moment to think that violence is a part of society. If it occurs, it is a "*mikreh*," an unprepared, unplanned incident which is totally foreign to our *Torah*-dictated culture. Violence is not a Jewish theme.

Indeed, the culture that surrounds us, the secular society in which we live, has spewed forth such violence that it is difficult to record in a *Torah*-oriented paper. We must, however, realize that what goes on around us is not necessarily representative of us. Our *Torah* should shape our personality, governing our perspective on life.

Eisav is the archetype of violence. He was a warrior who preyed upon everything that was weaker than he. He venerated violence - he embodied it. The sons of Yaakov were foreign to Eisav's lifestyle. When Yaakov reproved Shimon and Levi, prior to his death, for their part in destroying the city of Shechem, he said, "*Shimon and Levi are a pair, 'klei chamas mecheiroseihem,' the instruments of violence are their habitation.*" (Bereishis 49:5). This means that they are defined by their violent deed. Chazal offer another interpretation of "*mecheiroseihem*," based upon the root word "*machor*," to sell. Yaakov told his sons that they had stolen their weapons of violence, because - by right and by nature - these tools of violence had belonged to Eisav, the one who sold his *bechorah*, birthright. *Klei chamas*, tools of violence, instruments for committing destruction, belong to Eisav, the son who sold eternity for a bowl of materialism. When a Jew acts in a manner appropriate to Eisav, it should be viewed as "*v'hikrisem*," an isolated, foreign incident which is not typical of his character and culture.