

## He shall flee to one of these cities and live. (19:5)

The purpose of the city of refuge was to protect the inadvertent murderer from the wrath of the *goel ha'dam*, redeemer/close relative, who seeks to avenge the death of his relative. The word *v'chai*, "and live," has a powerful connotation. *Chazal* teach (*Makkos* 10b), "If a student goes into exile, his *rebbe* goes with him; if a *rebbe* goes into exile, his *yeshivah* goes with him. *Avid lei midi d'tihevei lei chiyussa*, "Provide him with arrangements that will enable him to live."

Apparently, another *rebbe* would not suffice. The inadvertent murderer requires his personal *rebbe* from whom he had been learning until the tragedy which exiled him took place. A *rebbe* is everything to a Torah student. Torah is life, and to study Torah from someone other than his *rebbe* means diminished life. The Torah says that he must maintain the same quality of life that he has had until now. Furthermore, when the *rebbe* joins the student in exile, he does not go alone. His other students in the *yeshivah* will follow him, since he is the source of their life. This is a tall order and much to demand from both the *rebbe* and his students. This is the degree of relationship that (should) exist(s) between a *talmid*, student, and his *rebbe*. It is his life.

Clearly, not all of us have such a relationship with our *rebbeim* – but we should. The Torah sees this as a required relationship in order to achieve true success in Torah. When Torah is one's source of life, and his *rebbe* serves as the lifeline to that source, his learning is tantamount to breathing. *Horav Aharon Leib Shteinman, Shlita*, relates that he heard from *Horav Simchah Zelig Riger, zl*, who claimed that the following incident was an accepted tradition attributed to *Horav Chaim Volozhiner, zl*, primary disciple of the *Gaon, zl, m'Vilna*. When the *Gaon* died, there was within the body of one of the Vilna's Jews a *gilgul*, transmigrated soul, who suddenly began to shriek that he must leave. Apparently, there was too much *kedushah*, holiness, in the "air," since all of the *Tannaim*, *Amoraim*, *Gaonim* and *Rishonim*, whose works and commentary the *Gaon* had spent his life studying, had come to accompany his soul to *Gan Eden*. Such was the *Gaon's* relationship with the Torah that he learned.

On a more recent note, *Horav Yehoshua Shiff, zl*, student of *Horav Shlomo Heyman, zl*, *Rosh Yeshivah* of Torah Vodaath, who had first served as *Rosh Yeshivah*, Rameilles, Vilna, related that he was in the room shortly before his *rebbe's* holy soul returned to its Heavenly source. An hour before his passing, the *Rosh Yeshivah* declared, "Bring a chair. *Rav Akiva Eiger* has arrived." A few moments went by and he said, "Bring another chair, *Rav Chaim Ozer Grodzenski* has come." The *Rosh Yeshivah*, who moments earlier was so close to death, perked up, and his eyes began to shine. His *rebbeim* had come to escort him "Home." (While *Rav Akiva Eiger* was not his *rebbe*, the *Rosh Yeshivah* had spent much of his Torah career studying and elucidating the words of *Rav Akiva Eiger*. *Rav Chaim Ozer* was the *Nasi*, President, of the Rameilles *Yeshivah* and had handpicked *Rav Shlomo* to be its *Rosh Yeshivah*.)

**Horav Baruch Sorotzkin, zl**, feels that had the *rebbe* been more conscientious in his nurturing of the student/inadvertent murderer, the tragedy might have been averted, and he would thus not

have to join him in exile. *Chaza!* explain that nothing occurs in a vacuum, and an inadvertent act is actually a repeat performance of something that occurred at an earlier time, but without witnesses to see the unintentional act. Furthermore, the victim was someone who had earlier premeditated killing someone covertly. In order that these two covert perpetrators receive their due, Hashem manipulated circumstances such that the unintentional murderer, whose act had heretofore been enshrouded, kills the intentional murderer by accident, in the presence of witnesses. One goes to exile; the other is executed. Having said this, we observe that the “student” has a history, a pathology that predisposes him to commit the unthinkable under a cloak of ambiguity. Does anybody know for certain that it was an accident? Only Hashem knows man’s true motivation and intention. There are varied degrees of unintentional, ranging from pure accident to surreptitious negligence. One who values life is meticulous in his concern for it and vigilant that he do nothing to shorten the life of another human being.

This student must have exhibited “tendencies” at an early age, a proclivity for not respecting the welfare of another. As a student with shortcomings, the *rebbe* should have been more astute in inculcating in him proper values. Apparently, he did not. Thus, he accompanies his student into exile, because he played somewhat of a secondary role in this tragic episode. Perhaps this is why the rest of the *yeshivah* is also exiled. The other students were aware that one of their own was having a problem. They should have helped him. Apparently, they did not at that time. Now, they will have to help.