

## **Our hands did not shed this blood and our eyes did not see. (21:7)**

Obviously, we would never imagine the elders of the city being guilty of shedding innocent blood. *Rashi* explains that this means that they did not see him, permitting him to leave without food and accompaniment. The elders are not referring only to themselves. They speak as representatives of the entire community when they say: We did not ignore this Jew. **Horav Avraham Yoffen, zl**, notes the gravity of this statement. They are saying that every member- bar none - of this community, from the most distinguished and noble to the most common citizen, fulfilled his obligation to care and give assistance to this stranger. Even if one person were to shirk his responsibility and ignore the stranger, the entire city carries the onus of guilt!

How compelling is this statement! The responsibility of the leaders of the community is awesome. When they speak for the community they know that everyone fulfilled his obligation. How? How do they know that everyone has carried out his responsibility? A true *Torah* leader is sensitive to his community. If a member of his community is not acting appropriately, he should sense it within himself, because the community is a reflection of its leadership. The success or failure of the community progresses from the top to the bottom.