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

The law providing the *rotzeach b'shogeg*, unintentional murderer, with a city of refuge to protect his life both physically and emotionally is a lesson for us regarding the Torah's sensitivity to a person's emotional well-being. Someone who causes the death of a fellow Jew is laden with awful guilt. Veritably, it was not premeditated, but, at the end of the day, a life was taken; a family was left bereft of an important member. This tragic episode affected many lives. The unintentional murderer cannot change what happened; he cannot make it right. He is down, depressed, disgraced. Now he has a place to go, a place where he will be among members of *Shevet* Levi, compassionate Jews whose primary focus in life is spiritual advancement and outreach. The Torah seems to be going out of its way to provide for this murderer's needs. Why? He is, after all, a murderer – albeit unintentional. He was selected to be Hashem's agent to end a life. It is almost as if we are bending over backwards to mollify him.

There is more. The Torah writes: *Tachin lecha ha'derech*; "Prepare the way for yourself" (Ibid. 19:2). The Torah asks that signposts be erected at critical junctures in order to guide the murderer, so that he reach the city of refuge in a timely and safe manner. Furthermore, following the signs will circumvent the need for asking directions, thereby revealing who he is and what he has done. The Torah understands the man's guilt and his shame. If it can in some way mitigate his emotional distress, it will do so. All this is fine and well, but why? This man committed unintentional murder, but murder no less. We seem to be so concerned with his embarrassment. What about the victim's family? They, too, will now have to endure a life of self-conscious discomfiture since they are no longer like everyone else.

The unintentional murderer has two paths before him. He can accept the past with great remorse, and – with equally great resolve and fortitude – focus on the future, change his ways which led to his error, and move closer to Hashem. This is the positive approach that he should take, one that will not ameliorate the past, but will save him and make him a better person. The other route is one in which he delves constantly on the past, with remorse infringing on every aspect of his life, not allowing his mind to relax and gather itself together. At times, one's remorse can be more destructive than the action for which he is remorseful. He becomes so obsessed with regret that he can no longer function. It does not alter the past – what happened, happened. All it achieves is the creation of another victim.

Educator – and parents as educators – are those who inspire, guide and give a student hope. They should not fall into the trap of rebuking a child in such a manner that it destroys his sense of hope, his sense of future. Remorse is vital, its importance cannot be overemphasized, but not if it destroys a person and leaves him with no sense of hope and direction for the future.

This is why the Torah goes out of its way to mitigate and ameliorate the violent act of the *rotzeach b'shogeg*. He cannot take back what he did, but he should not have to pay the ultimate price for his error. He must be encouraged to move on, strengthen himself and alter his life.