

You shall designate cities for yourselves... and a murderer shall flee there – one who takes a life unintentionally. (35:11)

The *Arei Miklat*, Cities of Refuge, served as home to two groups of Jews: *Shevet Levi*, the spiritual exemplars of our nation; and the *rotzeach b'shogeg*, one who committed unintentional murder. The relationship between these two groups seems to be a bit of a stretch. They are quite the opposite of one another. The *Bostoner Rebbe*, *zl*, was one of the founders of the *baal teshuvah* movement in this country. The *Rebbe* was called to address the annual Agudath Israel convention. He used his time at the podium as an opportunity to exhort observant Jews to reach out to their not-yet-observant brothers and sisters. Many of his addresses were later published in the Jewish Observer. I take the liberty of citing various passages from his addresses which will conclude with an explanation of why the *rotzeach b'shogeg* was remanded to live together with *Shevet Levi*, specifically, as the nation's spiritual role models. They should share their community with people who were spiritually distant from them.

“We are faced with a generation of young people who lack the knowledge and understanding of what living Jewish means, and we must declare ourselves partners in their guilt... They have ignored Judaism because of misconceptions, a lack of interest, and their own struggle for identity and meaning in life... It is our responsibility to give them the spirit and pride in being a Jew (which we have)...

“We are often too preoccupied with our own growth and spiritual problems to spare time and attention for others. This must not deter us from providing the necessary help to the stranger or, even at times, to our children who desperately need our attention. The *Amshinover Rebbe*, *zl*, pointed out that even one who had committed unintentional murder had a place where he could go and be welcomed: the *Arei Miklat*. Who lived in these cities? They were home to *Shevet Levi*, whose very lives were dedicated to the service of Hashem. It was their duty to help those who had committed such a terrible deed and to provide housing for them. How much more so does the obligation rest upon us to help our fellow Jews who are desperately in search of the truth?” (The *Rebbe* gave this speech at the *Knessiah Gedolah* in Yerushalayim in 1980! How much more relevant it is today when we see so many of our brothers and sisters drowning in the murky waters of life outside the Torah camp.)