

Then he shall flee to one of these cities and live. (4:42)

The *Rambam* (*Hilchos Rotzeiach* 8:1) writes: “When a Torah scholar is exiled to an *ir miklat*, city of refuge, his *rebbe* is exiled together with him. This is derived from the *pasuk*, *Devarim* 19:5, ‘He shall flee to one of these cities and he shall live’ (similar to the *pasuk* above 4:42). Implied, the idea is that everything necessary for his life must be provided for him. Therefore, a scholar must be provided with his teacher, for the life of one who possesses knowledge without Torah study is considered to be death.” The *Rambam* follows in line with *Chazal* (*Makkos* 10a) who teach that every provision vital to the life of the unintentional murderer must be furnished for him.

The *Pnei Menachem* (*Gerrer Rebbe, zl*) cites *Chazal* (*Taanis* 23a) who say, O’ *chavrusa*, O’ *missusa*, “Either friendship or death (as one who has no friends is better off dead). (*Chazal* relate the story concerning *Choni Ha’Maagal* who appeared after being gone (sleeping) for an extended period (seventy years). When he entered the *bais hamedrash* no one recognized him. Thus, he was not accorded the respect a sage of his caliber deserved. Then, he prayed for mercy and died. *Rava* said, ‘This explains the saying, Either friendship or death.’ Based upon this *Chazal*, we derive that a friend is as critical as a *rebbe*. Why is the unintentional murderer’s friend also not sent with him to the *ir miklat* (as is his *rebbe*)?”

The *Rebbe* offers a penetrating insight into (what should be) the human condition. A friend should choose on his own to accompany the unintentional murderer to the city of refuge. A friend does not stand on ceremony waiting to be commanded to go. He goes on his own. This is the meaning of friendship: A *chaver*, friend (the word is derived from *chibur*, bond/connected). The relationship between good friends is an inseparable bond (or should be).

Horav Chaim Walkin, zl, relates in the name of his father, *Horav Shmuel David, zl*, a question and insight concerning *Iyov*, as he endured his challenges confronting tragedy. *Iyov* was tested first with losing his wealth, then all his children. He accepted Hashem’s edict, realizing that whatever he heretofore had was a gift, a manifestation of Hashem’s mercy. He suffered greatly, but it was not yet over. Could he cling steadfastly to his faith if he is personally subjected to excruciating suffering? He did.

Iyov had three friends who stood by him throughout his losses. People enjoy associating with a wealthy man. They are, however, far and few to be found when he comes on hard times. *Iyov*’s three friends came to comfort him, to offer him solace and friendship. They cared about – and empathized with – him. This was the message they conveyed.

The question is obvious: *Satan* was given license to test *Iyov*. Hashem showed *Satan* that whatever he threw at *Iyov*, it would not impugn his unshakable faith. Why did he not take away his friends? Why allow *Iyov* to have a support system upon whom he could rely? *Rav Walkin* explained that the purpose of the afflictions was to see how much suffering *Iyov* could sustain. The loss of his friends was not merely suffering – it was death! A person needs friends – not necessarily many, but

a few, even only one who is always there for him. Otherwise, his life is missing its vitality, its spirit. A friend is not simply an associate. He is a critical part of his life.