



Sensitivity

Exile. A terrible punishment. One who kills a fellow Jew accidentally must flee to an *Ir Miklat* (Refuge City). He is isolated from family, friends, and familiar surroundings. In the days before telephones and mass transportation, this was a traumatic up-rooting of one's whole life. He does not belong to the society in the *Ir Miklat*. He did not grow up there. His farm (which was his livelihood) was not there.

How do the residents of the *Ir Miklat* look upon him? Is he a stranger in a strange land, forever condemned to being a foreigner among the natives? Hardly. He is not alone. Other Jews had no portion in the Land of Israel. The Levim had no farms. Their only source of livelihood was the gifts of *maaser* that they received from their fellow Jews. They lived in *Arei Leviah* (Levite cities). The Keli Yakar (Bamidbar 35:6) explains that these *Arei Leviah* were the *Arei Miklat* (refuge cities). The exiles could feel comfortable there because they were among other "strangers" who had no land.

Of course, the Levim would not embarrass the exiles by reminding them of their fate. As the Gemora states, "Do not tell your friend about faults that both of you share" (Bava Metzia 59b). If you tell him that he is a stranger, he will say that you are also a stranger because you own no land. Therefore, we see that the exiles were saved the embarrassment of being reminded that they were strangers.

Kinderlach . . .

"Imma, Chaya was sent to the principal because she talked loudly in class." Upon hearing this, Chaya begins to cry. The mother takes Dov aside to speak to him privately. "Dov, I am glad that you told me about Chaya. However, in the future, please tell me in private. You have embarrassed her in front of the family." *Kinderlach*, do you see how the Torah worries about the feelings of the exile? Even someone who killed a Jew accidentally should not suffer embarrassment. How much more so our friends, classmates, neighbors, and family members.

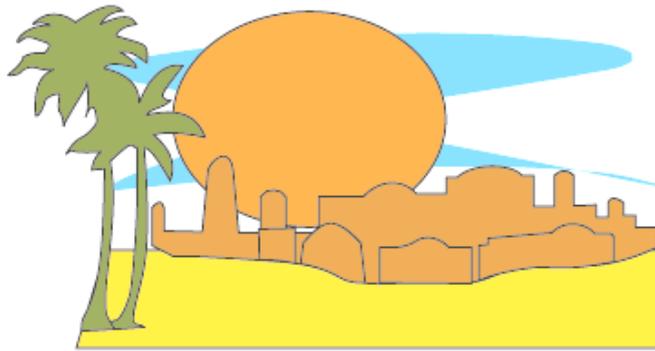
Selfish Flattery

"Here comes the head of the department," M. Cohen thought to himself. "I can strike up a conversation with him. Then he can see how capable I am. That will increase my chances for a promotion."

"How are you Mr. Jones? How are things going in the marketing department?"

"Not so well, Mr. Cohen. We have a lot of 'dead weight' around here. Mr. Schwartz, in public relations, comes late every day, takes long breaks, and goes home early."

"Oh no," thought Mr. Cohen. "He is speaking *loshon hora*. What shall I do? Perhaps I should just walk away. Maybe I will put my fingers in my ears. Better yet, I should tell him to stop. How can I do



any of those things? Mr. Jones is the head of the marketing department. Doing any of these things will insult him. Then I will never get a promotion."

And so, Mr. Cohen just stood quietly and nodded his head as Mr. Jones spoke *loshon hora*.

"And you shall not flatter" (Bamidbar 35:33). The Ramban and the Sifrei explain that this verse is warning against flattering an evil person for your own selfish interests. By flattering his wicked deeds, you encourage him to do more evil. The Chofetz Chaim zt"l adds that there is a huge punishment for this sin. Because it defiles the Holy Land, it will ultimately result in exile.

Kinderlach . . .

It is good to tell others good things about themselves. We all need recognition and appreciation. However, the praise must be sincere and from the heart. More impor-

tantly, it must be said for the good of the listener. This shows true caring and brings people closer together. *Insincere, self-serving flattery is just opposite. Kinderlach*, make sure that your compliments come from the heart, and not just the lips.

Justice

How long must the accidental killer remain in exile in *Ir Miklat*? He must stay there until the Kohen Godol dies. This is one of the strangest *halochos* (laws) in the entire Torah. One person can arrive the day before the Kohen Godol dies, and his sentence will be only one day. Another may be there for thirty years before he is freed. If the Kohen Godol is a young man, the exiles may be there for life. Where is the justice in this?

Rav Ovadiah Sforno relates that there are different levels of negligence in accidental homicide. One killer may be absolutely blameless. Another may be extremely negligent to the point of almost wanting the victim to die. Who knows a person's intentions? Only Hashem. He metes out the punishment accordingly. The blameless man gets a short term in *Ir Miklat*. However, the greater degrees of negligence get progressively longer terms.

Hashem knows the sublime justice in this halacha.

Kinderlach . . .

"Chani, why are you crying?" "The teacher took away my test paper before I was finished." "Why?" "She said that I was talking to my neighbor." "Chani, you know that you cannot talk during a test." "But I wasn't talking. The other girl was. The teacher heard the wrong girl." "Chani, I am going to call the teacher to hear her side of the story. However, you should realize that she may not give your test back and you will have to accept that." "But it's just not fair, Imma." "Hashem is fair in every way, Chani. Perhaps another time you talked during class and were not caught. Everything that Hashem does is for our good." "Imma, you always are so positive about everything." "Boruch Hashem, Chani."