

פרשת שופטים

. וענו ואמרו ידינו לא שפכו את הדם הזה [כאז]

When performing the מצוה of ערופה, עגלה ערופה, the זקנים say that they were not the killers of the dead person. זקני בית דין questions, is it possible that anyone would suspect the זקני בית דין of committing murder? Why then, is it necessary for them to refute this ridiculous accusation? Says רש"י, they are not referring to actually killing him, rather giving him the proper accompaniment out of the city. The פסוק, however, refers to the failure to not accompanying him as שפיכת דמים, murder, as if to imply that they were responsible for his death. How do we understand this? Why does a lack of לוויה, accompaniment, make them liable as if they themselves killed him?

The Alter of Kelm (quoted in ס' דרכי מוסר עה"ת) explains, that accompanying someone shows that you care and are concerned for that person. Escorting them out, even when they are no longer in your domain, demonstrates these feelings of care and concern. Had they displayed such feelings toward him and accompanied him out of the city, that would have been מחזק him, and given him the courage and emotional strength to stand up and fend off his attackers. In this situation where he was not able to protect himself and was killed, there was a possibility that it was from a lack of חייוק. Therefore the elders of the city had to state that they were not at fault at all and he was not killed due to a lack of חייוק on their part.

We see from here the great אחריות, responsibility and care one must have towards his fellow Jew. The people of the city, and ultimately its elders and leaders, have an obligation to make sure that anyone who enters its city limits is required to be cared for and receive חייוק that will help him even after he leaves. It is a message for us in our בחיבור, our interaction with our fellow Jew. כל ישראל ערבים זה לזה, we are all responsible for one another and if a friend, neighbor or anyone in our community is in need, we should make sure that their needs are met. In this זכות may we be זוכה that if we ourselves need a ישועה, Hashem will come to our assistance.

Have a good Shabbos.

Rabbi Yitzchok Davis

Kollel Merkaz Hatorah Beverly Hills, CA

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