

# More Refuge Cities When Moshiach Comes?

Adapted by Chaim Miller; From the teachings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe

When G-d, your G-d, will expand your borders, as He swore to your forefathers, and He gives you the entire land which He told your forefathers He would give, as a result of your safeguarding and observing all these commandments which I am commanding you today—to love G-d, your G-d, and to walk in His ways for all time: You should add for yourself three more cities, in addition to these three, so that innocent blood will not be shed within your land which G-d, your G-d, is giving you for an inheritance, and you will be responsible for his blood.

-- Devarim 19:8-10

## Classic Questions

**Does the Torah suggest that the victim of an accidental murder *should* have his blood avenged? (v. 6)**

**Sifri:** It is a mitzvah for the avenger of the blood to chase and kill the accidental murderer.

**Rambam:** If he [the accidental murderer] intentionally leaves the city of refuge he is allowing his own death, for the avenger of the blood is permitted to kill him (Laws of a Murderer and the Protection of Life 5:10).

**When will the three further cities be added? (v. 8-10)**

**Rambam:** In the days of King Mashiach, three additional [Cities of Refuge] will be added (ibid. 8:10).

**Minchas Chinuch:** This is a scriptural decree. Logically there will not be a need for Cities of Refuge in the future, as then there will be only peace, truth and good (mitzvah 520).

**Alshich:** The cities might be used to provide refuge for acts committed before the Redemption.

## The Rebbe's Teachings

**Cities of Refuge in the Future (v. 8-10)**

The Torah promises: "When G-d, your G-d, will expand your borders... and He gives you the entire land... You should add for yourself three more cities, in addition to these three, so that innocent blood will not be shed within your land which G-d, your G-d, is giving you for an inheritance, and you will be responsible for his blood" (v. 8-10).

But why should there be a need for Cities of Refuge in the Messianic Era at all? Surely, in that time, there will not be any murder, neither by Jew nor gentile, as the verse promises, "One nation will not lift a sword at

another" ([Isaiah 2:4](#))? True, the main function of these cities is to act as a refuge for accidental murderers, but even accidental murder will not occur in the future, as we are promised that evil will be eliminated.

Minchas Chinuch argues that this is a supra-rational decree of scripture, but this explanation is difficult to accept since a "scriptural decree" would be written without any rationale. In our case, however, the Torah does give the reason for the three new cities: "so that innocent blood will not be shed within your land which G-d, your G-d, is giving you for an inheritance" (v. 10).

We could argue, as [Alshich](#) suggests, that the cities will function as a refuge for accidental murders that took place prior to the Redemption, in the time of exile. And since these murderers might well be spread over an extended geographical area when the Redemption begins, there will be a need for a large number of Cities of Refuge.

However, this only explains how there could be an accidental murderer. The problem still remains: how could there be a vengeful relative? Once evil desires cease to exist, the desire for revenge should also disappear, so there appears to be no purpose in providing Cities of Refuge in the future.

According to Sifri, this problem does not arise, since Sifri maintains that it is a command of the Torah to avenge the blood of the deceased. The relative's motivation is then not revenge, but rather the desire to perform a mitzvah, which will certainly exist in the future.

Rambam, however, does not accept this argument, because he maintains that the relative's vengeance is only an option, not an obligation (see above). Therefore, in an era when there will be no jealousy and "the whole world will be occupied with the knowledge of G-d," why should one man seek vengeance from another when there is no mitzvah to do so, even if it is permitted?

We might argue that the cities will exist in the future for a spiritual purpose, merely as an atonement, but that there will be no need for refuge from avengers of the blood. However, this cannot be the case, since the Torah clearly states that the cities will exist to avoid actual spilling of blood (v. 10).

Furthermore, if the cities were only sites of atonement and did not provide actual havens of escape, then there would be no need for additional cities to make the escape route shorter.

## **The Explanation**

When the Torah presents the possibility of avenging the blood of the deceased, it is not providing an outlet for man's vicious nature. If the accidental murderer did not deserve the death penalty, the Torah would not permit his execution. Rather, the concept of "avenging the blood" provides a method by which the Torah itself exacts the death penalty.

In other words, the death penalty can be administered in one of three ways:

1. Capital punishment which is carried out by the court, with witnesses and a prior warning of the defendant.

2. In certain cases, the Torah prescribes a punishment of "death at the hands of Heaven."
  
3. In our case, the death penalty of an accidental murderer is to be administered not by a court, or by Heaven, but by the relatives—similar to the case of Pinchas, who was not directly commanded to kill Zimri, but nevertheless fulfilled G-d's will by doing so (see Rashi, [Bamidbar 25:7](#)).

Therefore, even according to Rambam, who rules that avenging the blood is optional, the "vengeance" has a logic within the Torah system of atonement, and is not mere personal vengeance. The relative's act is therefore not incompatible with the Messianic Era, and creates the need for Cities of Refuge to protect those who killed accidentally before Mashiach arrived.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 24, p. 107ff.)

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Based on the teachings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson of righteous memory; adapted by Chaim Miller.

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The Chumash incorporates a flowing English translation of the Torah which is loyal to the commentary of Rashi and includes 'Classic questions' that are drawn from a range of commentators and are then ingeniously brought together by the teachings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, of righteous memory.

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