

**Joshua 20:1 ¶ The LORD also spake unto Joshua, saying,  
Joshua 20:2 Speak to the children of Israel, saying, Appoint out for you cities of refuge, whereof I spake unto you by the hand of Moses:  
Joshua 20:3 That the slayer that killeth *any* person unawares *and* unwittingly may flee thither: and they shall be your refuge from the avenger of blood.**

In this chapter we are told about the cities chosen as cities of refuge. The LORD had commanded through Moses that such cities be designated to provide a safe place of refuge for someone who accidentally killed someone.

**Joshua 20:4 And when he that doth flee unto one of those cities shall stand at the entering of the gate of the city, and shall declare his cause in the ears of the elders of that city, they shall take him into the city unto them, and give him a place, that he may dwell among them.**

**Joshua 20:5 And if the avenger of blood pursue after him, then they shall not deliver the slayer up into his hand; because he smote his neighbour unwittingly, and hated him not beforetime.**

**Joshua 20:6 And he shall dwell in that city, until he stand before the congregation for judgment, *and* until the death of the high priest that shall be in those days: then shall the slayer return, and come unto his own city, and unto his own house, unto the city from whence he fled.**

One who fled to a city of refuge was to declare his case to the elders at the gate of the city. They were to take him in and provide protection against the avenger of blood until he could stand trial. The guidelines were provided in Numbers.

*Numbers 35:30–33 “Whoever kills a person, the murderer shall be put to death on the testimony of witnesses; but one witness is not sufficient testimony against a person for the death penalty. Moreover you shall take no ransom for the life of a murderer who is guilty of death, but he shall surely be put to death. And you shall take no ransom for him who has fled to his city of refuge, that he may return to dwell in the land before the death of the priest. So you shall not pollute the land where you are; for blood defiles the land, and no atonement can be made for the land, for the blood that is shed on it, except by the blood of him who shed it.”*

Significant in the killer’s defense is the fact that the killing was not intentional and that there was no history of hate between him and his victim. He was to remain in the city and given protection until standing trial. If cleared of intentional murder, he was to stay in the city of refuge until the death of the high priest. Only then could he safely return to his home from which he had fled.

**Joshua 20:7 ¶ And they appointed Kedesh in Galilee in mount Naphtali, and Shechem in mount Ephraim, and Kirjatharba, which *is* Hebron, in the mountain of Judah.**

**Joshua 20:8 And on the other side Jordan by Jericho eastward, they assigned Bezer in the wilderness upon the plain out of the tribe of Reuben, and Ramoth in Gilead out of the tribe of Gad, and Golan in Bashan out of the tribe of Manasseh.**

**Joshua 20:9 These were the cities appointed for all the children of Israel, and**

**for the stranger that sojourneth among them, that whosoever killeth *any* person at unawares might flee thither, and not die by the hand of the avenger of blood, until he stood before the congregation.**

The following cities were chosen as cities of refuge:

- Kedesh in Galilee in mount Naphtali
- Shechem in mount Ephraim
- Kirjatharba or Hebron in the mountain of Judah
- Bezer, east of Jordan in the wilderness plain of Reuben
- Ramoth, east of Jordan in Gilead in Gad
- Golan, east of Jordan in Bashan in Manasseh

We learned in our study of Numbers that these were to be cities possessed by the Levites.

*Numbers 35:6 "And among the cities which ye shall give unto the Levites there shall be six cities for refuge, which ye shall appoint for the manslayer, that he may flee thither...."*

These cities were chosen because of their locations. They were located so as to provide a place that would allow one in need of its protection to be able to reach it ahead of the one seeking vengeance. The three on the west side of Jordan were Kedesh in the north, Shechem in the center and Hebron in the south. The cities east of Jordan included Bezer in the south, Ramoth in the center and Golan in the north.

It is noted again in verse nine that these cities were for the benefit of Jew and foreigner alike.

Guzik made a great comparison between the cities of refuge and Jesus.

Points of similarity between the cities of refuge and our refuge in Jesus.

- Both Jesus and the cities of refuge are within easy reach of the needy person; they were of no use unless someone could get to the place of refuge.
- Both Jesus and the cities of refuge are open to all, not just the Israelite; no one needs to fear that they would be turned away from their place of refuge in their time of need.
- Both Jesus and the cities of refuge became a place where the one in need would live; you didn't come to a city of refuge in time of need just to look around.
- Both Jesus and the cities of refuge are the only alternative for the one in need; without this specific protection, they will be destroyed.
- Both Jesus and the cities of refuge provide protection only within their boundaries; to go outside means death.

A crucial distinction between the cities of refuge and our refuge in Jesus.

- The cities of refuge only helped the *innocent*, but the *guilty* can come to Jesus and find refuge.