



In our parsha we read of cities of refuge to be set up once the people conquered and settled the land (D'varim 19:1-10), cities designated for individuals who unintentionally killed another, so that they could flee the wrath of an avenger. As already commanded (Bamidbar 35:9-34), three such cities were to be established on the east and west side of the Jordan, respectively.

In this parsha, however, the Torah adds an unexpected element, namely: "When Hashem will broaden your boundary, as he swore to your forefathers... [and] when you observe this entire commandment... to love Hashem and to walk in His way all the years, then you shall add three more cities."

Now, Hashem had spoken to Avraham of ten nations to be conquered. And following Ramban, Yehoshua was able to conquer seven nations for which Bnei Yisrael were worthy. But they had yet to conquer the territories of the Keinites, Kenizites and the Kadmonites, thus to acquire all the promised regions of the original covenant.

Oh! - But these gains and the consequent expansion of the cities of refuge were (and remain) conditional on our expressing unreserved and continuous loyalty to Hashem. So we can, with the Ramban, but paraphrase the prophet Yirmiyahu (32:39-40). We can but look forward to the day when Hashem will induce his people to have one heart and one direction, to fear Him all their days, and those of their offspring, and to the day when Hashem will carve out a new covenant, such that we will no longer be removed from Him. **MP**