YEHOSHUA

Chapters 20-21

& *Tazria-Metzora*

Now that the Land is portioned out, the cities that will go to the Levites are designated. First among them are the arei hamiqlat (the "cities of refuge"). Three of the six cities had been established under Moses' leadership, and the last three are established here by Joshua. The Cities of Refuge were the places to which the unintentional "killer" (not a murderer) could humbly flee to find refuge and where he remained until he or the High Priest died. They were Levitical cities where the Torah was constantly taught. Spiritually, the Cities of Refuge represent the places the deformed, unintentional "killer" parts of ourselves must be placed and brought under control until we die—since our High Priest, Yeshua, will never die. They are the places in ourselves most influenced by Torah.

Joshua Discussion Questions:

1. In what ways does the "manslayer" benefit from fleeing to a city of refuge?

2. In what ways do the manslayer's family and the people of his community and tribe benefit from him fleeing to a city of refuge?

3. Why would God allow for unintentional killing to go seemingly unpunished?

4. What are the things in your heart and mind that need to be brought under control so that they do not continue to unintentionally "kill"?

5. What are your cities of refuge?

Torah Discussion Questions:

6. Describe how it is that contracting *tzara'at* is a "blessing in disguise," an act of God's graciousness.

7. What is the practical upshot of being ritually impure, and why does this not apply to us at the moment today? What do the Sages teach about the root at issue regarding ritual impurity (why do certain things make one ritually unclean)?

8. How are we being prepared in this Torah portion, in the month of Iyar in general, and during the whole counting of the Omer for receiving the Torah at Shavuot? What small thing can we do each day beyond counting the Omer to help prepare our hearts and minds for this new revelation of Torah?