

בס"ד  
א' אב תשע"ט  
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## פרשת מסעי

One of the most famous *mitzvos* in this week's parsha is the 484th one, which commands for the designation of *arei miklat*, which are cities of refuge for an inadvertent murderer. This is the 484th *mitzvah* recorded in the Torah, and interestingly enough, 484 is also the *gematria* of המשפטים, as well as גאולת דם and רודף צדק. One question that is often asked regarding this *mitzvah* is, "Why does the death of the Kohen Gadol free the accidental murderer from the *ir miklat*?"

Rashi offers a classic answer<sup>1</sup> that the Kohen Gadol causes the Shechinah to rest on Am Yisrael, which in turn leads to אריכות ימים for the people, while the murderer causes the Shechinah to withdraw from Am Yisrael, and consequently shortens the lives of the nation. This means that the murderer is not worthy of standing before the Kohen Gadol,<sup>2</sup> and therefore he cannot be in the Kohen Gadol's presence until the Kohen Gadol has passed away.

Another interesting answer that Rashi gives is from a Gemara in Makkos,<sup>3</sup> which says that the Kohen Gadol should have prayed that there will be no accidental murders, and there is tremendous symbolism in his passing.<sup>4</sup>

The Ralbag adds that the death of Tzadikim will serve as an atonement for the sins of the generation, and the Kohen Gadol's connection to these sins means that his death will repair these acts of שוגג.

Something interesting to note is that technically the murderer and the Kohen Gadol are both people of moral innocence and pure intent. However, after committing this act, the murderer now has a guilty conscience, and must literally run away from his sin. Perhaps Klal Yisrael's spiritual plate is cleansed to a certain extent once the Kohen Gadol ascends to שמים after his death, because once he is rewarded for all the good that he accumulated over the course of his extraordinary life, people who unintentionally committed acts of malice (like the unintentional murderer) can breathe more easily. This acts as a literal conscience-clearer, and for the Kohen Gadol, it is one last act of service that he can perform for Bnei Yisrael, a fitting ending for a person that has devoted their life to purifying the nation.

<sup>1</sup> רש"י במדבר לה:כה ד"ה עד מות הכהן הגדול

<sup>2</sup> ספרי מעסי כ

<sup>3</sup> מכות יא.

<sup>4</sup> "שהיה להן לבקש רחמים על דורן ולא בקשו"