THE SIGNIFICANCE AND MEANING OF THE NAMES OF THE CITIES OF REFUGE
Joshua 20: 7-8  As you know Hebrew names have a distinct meaning.

And so it is with the NAMES OF THE CITIES OF REFUGE which speak of what the believer has in Christ. There is much significance to be observed in the names of these cities with application to Christ our refuge.

Individually each name shows forth some particular feature of the character of Christ, but when the definition of each of the names of the 6 cities of refuge are put together and taken as a whole, they illustrate the sufficiency of Christ in his work in providing Refuge to meet all of the need of all His people.

Let us examine how each of those city names portray Christ's refuge offered for us to lay hold of every day, every hour, and every moment of our lives.
1. Kadesh - means a "holy place" or “righteousness” - Isa. 64:4; 2 Cor. 5:21.
   Jesus is the refuge for the unclean/unholy!

2. Shechem - means “shoulder” - which is the place of strength (Isaiah 9:7) and of safety (Luke 15:5)—reminds us that under the government of Christ the believer finds security.
   Jesus is the refuge for the weary one lost in the wilderness of sin.

3. Hebron - means “fellowship” and through Christ believers are brought into the fellowship with the Father and with Christ Jesus our Lord.- 1 John 1:7
   Jesus is the refuge for the lonely sinner in need of a home.

4. Bezer - means "stronghold" or “fortress” - a fortified place” and “The Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble” (Nahum 1:7); therefore “I will say of the Lord He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in Him will I trust” (Psalm 41:2).
   Jesus is the refuge for the helpless sinner, and a strong-hold to all those that trust in him.

5. Ramoth - means "exalted" or “heights” - Eph. 2:6 for Him hath God exalted with his own right hand .......and in Him we are elevated above the world, made to sit in heavenly places so has he exalted us also.
   Jesus is the refuge for the wretched hopeless sinner!

6. Golan - means “joy” or "exultation” through Him “we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Romans 5:11).”.......can also be "separated."1 Peter 1:8
   Jesus is the refuge for the downcast, for in him all the saints are justified, and shall glory.

Let us now expand on these names.
1 KEDESH means "Holy", a "holy place" or “righteousness,”

Jesus is "The Holy One" of God, who is made unto the believer sanctification as well as righteousness (1 Corinthians 1:30), so KEDESH suggests that in the Redeemer we have a sanctuary of holiness.

He is the refuge for the unclean/unholy.

Because of the holiness of the Lord Jesus Christ is the only hope of the sinful.

Not one stain of sin polluted His holy human nature. Jesus never could have saved us—unless He had been "glorious in holiness."

If He had had one sin in Him—you and I would be lost forever!

KEDESH reminds us that when we come to Christ, He gives us His righteousness and forgives all our sins (2 Cor 5:21, Col. 2:13).

KEDESH reminds us that the unrighteous can only find refuge in the righteousness of God.

KEDESH reminds us that the finished work on the accursed tree affords a holy hiding-place, for only there are the unclean made holy, and only He who is clean can cleanse.

Angels in heaven, as they cast their crowns at His feet, cry, "Holy! holy! holy!" (Isaiah 6:3)

Devils on earth were compelled to exclaim, "We know you who you are—the HOLY ONE of God!" (Mark 1:24)

Jewish priests, as they spoke of Him of old by types, took "a lamb without blemish." (Ex. 12:5)

Jewish prophets, as they spoke of Him in their predictions, called Him "The Righteous (or HOLY) Branch." (Jer. 23:5)

Apostles, as they wrote about Him, said "He was HOLY, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners." (Hebrews 7:26)

When He was Himself on earth, He could challenge His bitterest foes, "Who among you can convict Me of sin?" (John 8:46)

And when He came down, soon after His ascension, from His throne in the skies, we find Him proclaiming as His name, "The HOLY One, the True One!" (Revelation 3:7)

When our anointed "City of Refuge" was conspired against by Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, Peter referred to Him as "The HOLY Child Jesus." (Acts 4:27)
2- SHECHEM means “shoulder,” – and portrays Jesus as ‘the place of strength (Isaiah 9:7) and of safety (Luke 15:5)

It reminds us that under the government of Christ the believer finds security, and that we find in Christ a resting place, and a friend on whom we can lay our burdens, as Jesus is the refuge for the weary. (Matt. 11:28; Luke 15:5)

When we consider Jesus –our Shechem, our Refuge, we think of Him who bore the sin of a guilty world upon His shoulder in the past on the cross, for "Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows!" (Isaiah 53:4).

All the sins of all His people—Jesus bore forever away! Jesus, alone could have carried such an awful load and burden as this.

Jesus, alone was "able to save unto the uttermost." (Hebrews 7:25) for no other one but Jesus is our only "sure foundation". (Isaiah 28:16)

We think of Him now also as the true SHECHEM who sits at God's right hand.

The whole world is upheld by Him as taught in Colossians! All Christians are continually upheld by Him! The poorest, the weakest, the humblest believer—are on the shoulders of Jesus.

He is bearing the weight of us all; loving us all, attending to us all, interceding for us all. He provides all our food and clothing, health and strength, friends and home—all are gifts from Him! Every tear we shed, every sorrow and trial, He knows about it, as He bears us on his shoulder!“

Soon He will return to earth to rein in glory and "The government will be upon His SHOULDER." (Isaiah 9:6)

SHECHEM reminds us also of the New Testament picture of Jesus, the good great and gracious Shepherd, in Luke 15:5 carrying a poor wandering silly sick sheep that had gone astray on the dark mountains back to the fold on His shoulder.

The Bible teaches that the Shepherd went after that lost sheep; and when He had found it, He laid it on His SHOULDERS, rejoicing. (Luke 15:5)

Just as the tired sheep found refuge safety and rest upon on the shoulder of the good Shepherd, the Lord Jesus is the strong Savior, who continues to bear our burden upon His shoulder.

As David said in an hour of trouble, "I am poor and needy, yet the Lord carries me on his heart!" (Psalm 40:17)

For us who have fled to our SHECHEM, we can say in sweet confidence, "I will lie down in peace and sleep, for you alone, O LORD, will keep me safe," (Psalm 4:8) because He who is our "Keeper" says of us, "I give them eternal life, and they will never perish—ever! No one will snatch them out of My hand!" (John 10:28)

What perfect security and safety we have in Jesus
3-HEBRON means "fellowship" or "friendship," suggesting our fellowship with God in Christ, and also our fellowship with other believers.

The Lord Jesus Christ is the refuge for the homeless, and the only real Hebron for the soul. There is no fellowship with the Father except through Him.

Christ has brought guilty man into fellowship with God. and made us to be members of the great heavenly family, and nothing can separate us from a lasting fellowship with him, and we can say "Truly our FELLOWSHIP is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ!" (I John 1:3)

Because of our sin—we had forfeited this fellowship, and had not made God our friend—but our enemy! (James 4:4, Romans 5:10, Colossians 1:21.)

We were cut off from fellowship with all that is holy and happy and God could hold no fellowship with us due to our rebellion against our Creator. But Jesus bridged the wide gulf which separated men from God.

He is the ladder that was let down to sinful people from heaven so that fallen man could be raised up to hold "fellowship" with God?

JESUS is the true HEBRON because he has "reconciled things on earth and things in heaven," (Col. 1:20) He has "raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places." (Ephesians 2:6) We who were once "afar off" have been "brought near by the blood of Christ." (Ephesians 2:13)
• 4 Bezer means “a fortified place” or "stronghold," or ROCK. Jesus is the believer's BEZER.
• We can "Trust in the LORD always, for the LORD GOD is the eternal Rock!" (Isaiah 26:4)
• He is the true ROCK OF AGES. The sinner is in danger everywhere else—but in Jesus he is safe. He is invited to "turn to the STRONGHOLD" and once within its gates, "though an army encamps against him," he need "fear no evil“ because “The Lord is good, a strong hold in the day of trouble" (Nahum 1:7); therefore “I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in Him will I trust” (Psalm 91:2).
• Jesus is a Stronghold for all who truly flee to Him. He combines the majesty of Deity—with the tenderness of man. If He had been the great God alone, you might have been overawed at the thought of going to Him. But the prophet Isaiah say of this true BEZER? "A MAN shall be as a hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest." (Isaiah 32:2)
• If you have fled for refuge to our Bezer, seated within its secure bulwarks you can joyfully exclaim, "The LORD is my rock, my fortress, and my savior; my God is my rock, in whom I find protection. He is my shield, the strength of my salvation, and my stronghold!" (Psalm 18:2)
• Jesus, our Stronghold is for us, and stronger than any earthly castle, so we can sing, "The name of the Lord is a strong tower! The righteous runs into it—and is safe!" (Proverbs 18:10)
• We can flee to our true BEZER in the time of affliction, and dry our tears and sing, "The Lord is a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble. Those who know Your name trust in You because You have not abandoned those who seek You, Lord!" (Psalm 9:9, 10)
• Jesus is a Stronghold against Death, the King of terrors and Terror of kings, but we can shout in triumph from our Divine shelter, "O death, where is your sting? Thanks be to God, who gives me the victory through the Lord Jesus Christ!" (1 Corinthians 15:55)
5 RAMOTH means “height” or “exaltation” and reminds us that believers are elevated above the world, and made to sit in heavenly places (Ephesians 2:4-10).

This is all because the once lowly, despised, rejected, crucified and brutally slain Jesus is now “exalted to be a Prince and a Savior!"

Having been exalted on the cross as a suffering Savior, He is now exalted on the throne as a glorious King at the Father's right hand!

"God has highly EXALTED Him" (Phil. 2:9;) and given Him a name which is above every name.

JESUS is exalted in heaven—and exalted by all the glorious family of heaven. He is high and lifted up.

Now Angels exalt Him—seraphs adore Him—saints praise Him—the Church on earth magnifies Him—and the Church redeemed in heaven will magnify and exalt Him forever and ever!

How sweet for us to think that we have exalted on the highest throne of the universe—an unchanging Savior, and an ever-living, never-dying Friend!

When we are downcast, and feeling hopeless in this world, we can look up, and enthrone Him in our heart, as Lord of all, and let him lift us up.

We can exalt Him in everything: in our thoughts, in our words, in our deeds, until the day we shall be caught up together in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air!
6 Golan means “exultation” or “joy,” and “we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Romans 5:11).

Jesus is truly the GOLAN of His people; we may have many other joys—but He is our "chief joy" because we would have not one true joy had it not been for Him.

The world would be to us a "valley of Baca," (weeping,) had not Jesus died for our sins, and saved our souls.

Well did the angel say, when he came to the plains of Bethlehem to announce the Savior's birth, "Behold, I bring you good tidings of GREAT JOY!"

Our great City of Refuge, has said "These things have I spoken unto you, that my JOY might remain in you, and that your JOY might be full." (John 15:11)

If we love, serve and follow Him now, we will come at last to the true Golan, in His glorious presence above, and "REJOICE evermore!“ There is not one step the Christian takes—but Jesus is GOLAN to him— his "joy."

He was straying, as a lost sheep on the dark mountains, in search of peace—Jesus found him, and said, "Your sins are all forgiven!" —and he is joyful at that.

He was wandering as a prodigal, far from his Father's house—Jesus brought him to his lost home—and he is joyful at that.

He has to travel a long and dreary journey before he reaches his true home in heaven—Jesus gives him His arm to lean upon; and he "goes on his way rejoicing."

We have many fiery trials—Jesus tells us not to think these "strange," but rather to "rejoice," inasmuch as He is "partaker with Him in his sufferings." (1 Peter 4:12, 13)

We have, at last, to walk through the dark Valley of death—Jesus meets us there, and we see "the King in His beauty," and the land that is yet "afar off" and, believing, "he rejoices with joy unspeakable and full of glory." (1 Peter 1:8)

When Jesus beholds us from His throne in judgment, His blessed words of welcome will be "Enter into the JOY of your Lord!" (Matt. 25:21) And when, as a ransomed one, we enter the bliss of eternal glory, we will shout, "In Your presence, O Savior God, is fullness of JOY!"

There is so much more as we examine the similarities and differences between the cities of refuge and Christ our refuge.

Christ is portrayed by the cities of refuge but He is so much better!

We have fled to Jesus Christ, and He is our eternal refuge.

As our High Priest, He will never die (Heb. 7:23-25); and we have eternal salvation.

No avenger can touch us, because He has already died and arisen from the dead.