



Two Kinds of Cities: Cities for the Levites & Cities of Refuge November 17, 2018

Numbers 35:1-34 (NKJV)

Cities for the Levites

¹ And the LORD spoke to Moses in the plains of Moab by the Jordan across from Jericho, saying: ² “Command the children of Israel that they give the Levites cities to dwell in from the inheritance of their possession, and you shall *also* give the Levites common-land around the cities. ³ They shall have the cities to dwell in; and their common-land shall be for their cattle, for their herds, and for all their animals. ⁴ The common-land of the cities which you will give the Levites shall extend from the wall of the city outward a thousand cubits all around. ⁵ And you shall measure outside the city on the east side two thousand cubits, on the south side two thousand cubits, on the west side two thousand cubits, and on the north side two thousand cubits. The city *shall be* in the middle. This shall belong to them as **common-land** for the cities.

⁶ “Now among the cities which you will give to the Levites *you shall appoint* six cities of refuge, to which a **manslayer** may flee. And to these you shall add forty-two cities. ⁷ So all the cities you will give to the Levites shall be forty-eight; these *you shall give* with their common-land. ⁸ And the cities which you will give *shall be* from the possession of the children of Israel; from the larger *tribe* you shall give many, from the smaller you shall give few. Each shall give some of its cities to the Levites, in proportion to the inheritance that each receives.”

Cities of Refuge

⁹ Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ¹⁰ “Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: ‘When you cross the Jordan into the land of Canaan, ¹¹ then you shall appoint cities to be cities of refuge for you, that the **manslayer** who kills any person accidentally may flee there. ¹² They shall be cities of refuge for you from the avenger, that

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Notes

the **manslayer** may not die until he stands before the congregation in judgment. ¹³ And of the cities which you give, you shall have six cities of refuge. ¹⁴ You shall appoint three cities on this side of the Jordan, and three cities you shall appoint in the land of Canaan, *which* will be cities of refuge. ¹⁵ These six cities shall be for refuge for the children of Israel, for the stranger, and for the sojourner among them, that anyone who kills a person **accidentally** may flee there.

¹⁶ 'But if he strikes him with an **iron implement**, so that he dies, he *is* a **murderer**; the murderer shall surely be put to death. ¹⁷ And if he strikes him with a **stone in the hand**, by which one could die, and he does die, he *is* a **murderer**; the **murderer** shall surely be put to death. ¹⁸ Or *if* he strikes him with a **wooden hand weapon**, by which one could die, and he does die, he *is* a **murderer**; the **murderer** shall surely be put to death. ¹⁹ The avenger of blood himself shall put the **murderer** to death; when he meets him, he shall put him to death. ²⁰ If he **pushes him out of hatred** or, while **lying in wait**, **hurls something at him so that he dies**, ²¹ or **in enmity he strikes him with his hand** so that he dies, the one who struck *him* shall surely be put to death. He *is* a **murderer**. The avenger of blood shall put the murderer to death when he meets him.

²² 'However, if he pushes him suddenly **without enmity**, or throws anything at him **without lying in wait**, ²³ or uses a stone, by which a man could die, throwing *it* at him **without seeing him**, so that he dies, while he was **not his enemy** or **seeking his harm**, ²⁴ then the **congregation shall judge** between the manslayer and the avenger of blood according to these judgments. ²⁵ So the congregation shall **deliver the manslayer from the hand of the avenger of blood**, and the congregation shall **return him to the city of refuge** where he had fled, and he shall remain there **until the death of the high priest** who was anointed with the holy oil. ²⁶ But if the **manslayer** at any time goes outside the limits of the city of refuge where he fled, ²⁷ and the avenger of blood finds him outside the limits of his city of refuge, and the avenger of blood **kills the manslayer**, he shall not be guilty of blood, ²⁸ because he should have remained in his city of refuge until the death of the high priest. But **after the death of the high priest** the **manslayer** may return to the land of his possession.

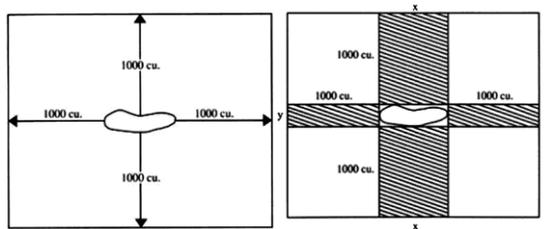
²⁹ 'And these *things* shall be a statute of judgment to you throughout your generations in all your dwellings. ³⁰ Whoever kills a person, the **murderer** shall be **put to death** on the testimony of witnesses; but one witness is not *sufficient* testimony against a

person for the death *penalty*.³¹ 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.³² 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.³³ 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.³⁴ Therefore do not defile the land which you inhabit, in the midst of which I dwell; for **I the LORD dwell among the children of Israel.**' ”

Introduction:
I. The cities for the Levites (Num. 35:1-8).

A. How many cities did the Levites get (Num. 35:7 & Josh. 21)?

B. How big were the Levitical cities (Num. 35:4-5)?


II. The cities of refuge (Num. 35:9-15; Josh. 20:7-8).

Joshua 20:7-8 (NKJV) – ⁷ So they appointed **Kedesh** in Galilee, in the mountains of Naphtali, **Shechem** in the mountains of Ephraim, and **Kirjath Arba** (which *is* **Hebron**) in the mountains of Judah.

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



III. Who flees to the city of refuge (Num. 35:11, 15)?

- Manslayers / Murderers – [*ratsach*] 20 times in Num. 35 – manslayer, murderer, put to death, and kills.
- Accidental murders (Num. 35:11 & 15).
- Citizens and foreigners.
 - NKJV – “the stranger and for the sojourner”
 - TLV – “the outsider and the visitor in their midst”
 - NIV – “aliens and any other people living among them”
 - Message – “any occasional visitors or guests”

Joshua 20:9 (NKJV) – These were the cities appointed **for all the children of Israel and for the stranger who dwelt among them**, that whoever killed a person accidentally might flee there, and not die by the hand of the avenger of blood until he stood before the congregation.

IV. Who is not eligible for this protection (Num. 35:16-18)?

Guilt is determined by murderer’s intention (Num. 35:16-18 & 22-24).

A. Intentionality determined by the means of murder (Num. 35:16-24).

B. Intentionality determined by a national court (Num. 35:24).

V. What options did the national court have (Num. 35:24-25)?

VI. What did the city of refuge protect the murderer from (Num. 35:12, 19, 21, 24-25 & 27)?

The city of refuge protected the murderer from the “**avenger of blood**” (*go’el ha-dam*, גֹּאֵל הַדָּם).

Who is the “avenger of blood” (*go’el ha-dam*, גֹּאֵל הַדָּם).

Leviticus 25:47-49 (NKJV) – ⁴⁷ ‘Now if a sojourner or stranger close to you becomes rich, and *one of your brethren who dwells* by him becomes poor, and sells himself to the stranger or sojourner close to you, or to a member of the stranger’s family, ⁴⁸ after he is sold he may be redeemed again. One of his **brothers** may redeem him; ⁴⁹ or his **uncle** or his **uncle’s son** may redeem him; or *anyone* who is near of kin to him in his family may redeem him; or if he is able he may redeem himself.

Blood guilt is a serious thing in the Bible.

- To Rahab – Joshua 2:19 .
- Solomon ordered Joab’s execution for committing murder – 1 Kings 2:32-33.
- The watchman and blood guilt – Ezekiel 33:5-6.
- Paul told the leaders of the Church at Ephesus – Acts 20:26-28.

The Blood **Avenger** (go’el ha-dam) is the **Kinsman-Redeemer** (go’el). The word for avenger and redeemer is the same word: *go’el*.

Jesus is our redeemer.

There are 3 Greek words for redeemer.

1. The word for redeem in Revelation 5:9 is *agorazo* means to go to the market [*agora*] and *to pay the price for a slave*.

Revelation 5:9-10 (NKJV)

⁹ And they sang a new song, saying:

“You are worthy to take the scroll,

And to open its seals;

For You were slain,

And have **redeemed us to God by Your blood**

Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation,

¹⁰ And have made us kings and priests to our God;

And we shall reign on the earth.”

2. The second word for redeem is found in Galatians 3:13. It is *exagorazo*. It means *to redeem out of the marketplace*.

Galatians 3:13-14 (NKJV) – ¹³ Christ has **redeemed** us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is

written, “*Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree*”), ¹⁴ that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

3. The third word for redeem is found in Titus 2:14 and 1 Peter 1:18. The word is *lutroo*. It means *to liberate* or *to set free*.

Titus 2:14 (NKJV) – who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself *His* own special people, zealous for good works.

1 Peter 1:18-19 (NKJV) – ¹⁸ knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, *like* silver or gold, from your aimless conduct *received* by tradition from your fathers, ¹⁹ but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.

The Kinsman-Redeemer also appears 21 times in 10 verses of Ruth (2:20; 3:9, 12, 13; 4:1, 3, 4, 6, 8, 14).

Ruth 3:9-19 (NKJV) – ⁹ And he [Boaz] said, “Who *are* you?” So she answered, “I *am* Ruth, your maidservant. Take your maidservant under your wing, for you are a close relative.”¹⁰ Then he said, “Blessed *are* you of the LORD, my daughter! For you have shown more kindness at the end than at the beginning, in that you did not go after young men, whether poor or rich. ¹¹ And now, my daughter, do not fear. I will do for you all that you request, for all the people of my town know that you *are* a virtuous woman. ¹² Now it is true that I *am* a close relative; however, there is a relative closer than I. ¹³ Stay this night, and in the morning it shall be *that* if he will perform the duty of a close relative for you—good; let him do it. But if he does not want to perform the duty for you, then I will perform the duty for you, as the LORD lives! Lie down until morning.”

The *go’el* appears ten times in Leviticus 25 (context is Year of Jubilee & Sabbatical Year).

Possession – Leviticus 25:25-26 (NKJV) – ²⁵ ‘If one of your brethren becomes poor, and has sold *some* of his possession, and if his redeeming relative comes to redeem it, then he may redeem what his brother sold. ²⁶ Or if the man has no one to redeem it, but he himself becomes able to redeem it.

House in a city – Leviticus 25:30 (NKJV) – But if it is not **redeemed** within the space of a full year, then the house in the walled city shall belong permanently to him who bought it, throughout his generations. It shall not be released in the Jubilee.

House – Leviticus 25:33 (NKJV) – And if a man **purchases** a house from the Levites, then the house that was sold in the city of his possession shall be released in the Jubilee; for the houses in the cities of the Levites *are* their possession among the children of Israel.

Slavery – Leviticus 25:48-49 (NKJV) – ⁴⁸ after he is sold he may be **redeemed** again. One of his brothers may redeem him; ⁴⁹ or his uncle or his uncle's son may **redeem** him; or *anyone* who is near of kin to him in his family may **redeem** him; or if he is able he may redeem himself.

Slavery – Leviticus 25:54 (NKJV) – And if he is not **redeemed** in these *years*, then he shall be released in the Year of Jubilee—he and his children with him.

God's people live inside our City of Refuge.

- “In Christ.” 87 times from Acts – Revelation. (84 times by Paul)
- “In Him” is used 55 times from Acts – Revelation (25 times by Paul)
- “In Jesus” is used 9 times from Acts – Revelation. (7 times by Paul)

Ephesians 1:1 (NKJV) – Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, To the saints who are in Ephesus, and faithful **in Christ Jesus**:

Jesus is our city of refuge.

When could the murderer leave the city (Num. 35:25, 28)?

**You were captive in the city of refuge. The High Priest has died.
You are now free.**

John 5:22 (NKJV) – **For the Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son.**

VII. What happened to the murderer who left the city of refuge (Num. 35:27)?

VIII. Is the Tabernacle altar or the Temple a place of asylum?

- The Temple did not provide asylum – Solomon had Benaiah execute Joab next to the altar in the Temple. (1 Kings 2:28-35)
- God had the Levites guard the ark and execute would-be intruders. (Numbers 4:15)

IX. Why does God care so much about murder – and even about accidental murder (Num. 35:33-34)?

A. Blood pollutes the land (Num. 35:33).

B. God dwells in the land (Num. 35:34).

Conclusion: