

THE CITIES OF REFUGE

Heb 6:18-20 “That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have **FLED FOR REFUGE** to lay hold upon the hope set before us: Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even **JESUS**, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec”

Num 35:1 And the LORD spake unto Moses in the plains of Moab by Jordan near Jericho, saying

Jos 20:1-2 The LORD also spake unto Joshua, saying, Speak to the children of Israel, saying, Appoint out for you cities of refuge, whereof I spake unto you by the hand of Moses:

This Law given by Moses was fulfilled by Joshua—Law and Grace: According to the “shadow” and “substance” this commandment was given to Moses, but it was not fulfilled until Joshua. The Law manifested sin, and Christ provided forgiveness of sin.

The Law manifested sin. Christ provided forgiveness. We cannot dismiss the proper order to emphasize the latter over the former.

1Joh 1:9 “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness”

Pro 28:13 “He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but *whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy*”

- The Law was a schoolmaster until appearing and manifestation of Jesus Christ (Gal 3:24-25). The Law manifested sin as exceedingly sinful (Rom 7). Thus, Christ redeemed men from the condemnation of the Law (Gal 3:13), blotting out of the ordinances that were contrary to us (Col 2:13-17).
- While so doing, Christ fulfilled the Law and Prophets (Mat 5:17); elevating the “letter” of the Law to manifesting the “spirit” of it (Rom 7:6; 2Cor 3:6). Thus, responsibility is higher under Christ (Heb 2:1-5; 10:28-29; 12:25).
- Christ did not make void, but established the Law in its true spirit (Rom 3:31). This formed the prophetic parable of the Cities of Refuge

Numbers 35— “the parable of the Cities of Refuge” HPM, Expositor

Num 35:1 And the LORD spake unto Moses in the plains of Moab by Jordan *near* Jericho, saying,
Num 35:2 Command the children of Israel, that they give unto *the Levites* of the inheritance of their possession *cities to dwell in*; and ye shall give *also* unto the Levites suburbs for the cities round about them.

This Law begins with the “Cities of refuge” being among the “Levites.”

Who were the Levites?

Because they remained faithful when Moses tarried in the Mount (Exo 32), they were appointed to the status of “firstborn” (Num 3:12). They had no lot of inheritance, but were scattered among the other tribes (Num 18:23); encamping round about the tabernacle (Num 1:50). They were not a part of the general census (Num 1:46), and **THUS** represent the seed of Abraham, whom no man can number, the firstborn & priesthood of faithful.

THE LEVITES—TEACHERS OF THE SCRIPTURES IN ISRAEL

2Chr 17:8-9 “With them he sent Levites... priests. And they taught in Judah, and had the book of the law of the LORD with them, and went about throughout all the cities of Judah, and taught the people”

2Chr 30:22 “And Hezekiah spake comfortably unto all the Levites that taught the good knowledge of the LORD” (2Chr 15:3; Lev 10)

2Chr 35:2-3 “He set the priests in their charges, and encouraged them to the service of the house of the LORD, And said unto the Levites that taught all Israel...”

- **This is critical. The cities of refuge were located where the Levites dwelt; teaching the Law, which manifested sin, and therefore, providing the remedy. This process cannot be circumvented. Refuge is not merely an emotional process, but one of necessary education.**

Rom 7:7 “I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet”

1Cor 15:56 “The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law”

Rom 3:20 “For by the law is the knowledge of sin”

Num 35:5 Ye shall measure from without the city on the east side *two thousand cubits*, and on the south side *two thousand cubits*, and on the west side *two thousand cubits*...the city in the midst.

Num 35:6 And among the cities which ye shall give unto the Levites *there shall be six cities for refuge*, which ye shall appoint for the manslayer, that he may flee thither: *and to them ye shall add forty and two cities*.

Amazing Witness of Numbers

Note the borders of the city” “*2,000 cubits*” (remember this principle: distance of the city).

Note the cities: “*six cities of for refuge*” Six is the number of flesh. Man created the sixth day (Gen 1:31); the number of the man is six hundred three score and six (Rev 13:18)

Note the cities could be expanded by “*forty and two*”: the number associated with the generation that rejected Christ (Mat 1:17). Also, spiritual drought (Jam 5:17; Luk 4:25).

Luke 21:22 “days of vengeance”

Num 35:6 And among the cities which ye shall give unto the Levites *there shall be six cities for refuge*, which ye shall appoint for the manslayer, that he may flee thither: and to them ye shall add forty and two cities. (Jos 21:41)

Num 35:7 So ALL THE CITIES which ye shall give to the Levites *shall be forty and eight cities: them shall ye give* with their suburbs

Seven reps. completion, as the body of Christ; the ecclesia (Rev 1-3). But the Lampstand, the ecclesia, is specifically noted for having “six branches” with one “shaft” in the midst (Exo 25:31-40; 37:17-18). Thus, it is not precisely noted by the number “seven,” but the one “shaft,” plus “six” branches made up of three on each side (sacrifice: Jew/Gentile); and thereby, “seven.” Therefore, it is according to Scriptural principles that fundamental addition is applied to bring us to Bible principles.

Cities of Refuge foundation is “six” (flesh, sin), but expanded to make 48 is Six multiplied by Eight (48). Cutting off of the flesh (Gen 17:12; 21:4)

Num 35:9 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,
Num 35:10 Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, *When ye be come over Jordan into the land of Canaan;*

Deu 19:2-3 *Thou shalt prepare thee a way, and *divide the coasts of thy land, which the LORD thy God giveth thee to inherit, into three parts, that every slayer may flee thither ***evenly spread***

Jordan—where the Lord himself was baptized (Joh 1:28; Mat 3:6), and where Israel passed from Moses into Joshua (1Cor 10 cf. Heb 4). Thus, “refuge” was only available for those baptized into Christ! The old man of the flesh must be confessed and cut off to find forgiveness (Rom 6).

Prepare thee a way—a specific path was established that led to refuge. John Baptist came to “prepare the way” (Mat 3:3); and Christ is called “the way, the truth and the life” (Joh 14:6). *The “way” was prepared by the Law taught by the Levites (Act 24:14) see Acts 16:17; 18:25-26.*

Num 35:11 Then ye shall *appoint you cities to be cities of refuge for you*; that the slayer may flee thither, which killeth any person *at unawares*. **Mg. "by error"**

Deu 19:4 And this *is* the case of the slayer, which shall flee thither, that he may live: Whoso killeth *his neighbour ignorantly, whom he hated not in time past*;

Accident—though not deliberate, like “sins of ignorance” (Lev 4), the offense had to be acknowledged, because “death” was the result. Thus, SIN is personified as the “avenger” in pursuit to bring man to death; making all in need of refuge!

Ignorantly—*by accident*: a metaphor for SIN. The word *sin/chata* means to “miss” a mark, and translated such (Jud 20:16).

Rom 7:14-20 “for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I”

“Sin... bringeth forth death” Jam 1:15

“the sting of death is sin” 1Cor 15:56

“wages of sin is death” Rom 6:23

“sin hath reigned unto death” Rom 5:21

Flee—used throughout; means to literally *run for your life!* We are told to “flee fornication”; “flee idolatry”; “resist the devil and he will flee from you”; “flee youthful lusts”; “flee” the burning desire for riches—(1Cor 10:14; 6:18; Jam 4:7; 1Tim 6:11; 2Tim 2:22)

Deu 19:6 Lest the AVENGER OF THE BLOOD *PURSUE the slayer, *while his heart is hot, and overtake him, BECAUSE THE WAY IS LONG, and slay him;* whereas he *was* not worthy of death, inasmuch as he hated him not in time past.

***TO RUN AFTER**

Avenger of blood—sin personified as mortality for those who do not actively pursue refuge from the wages of sin, which is death.

Way is Long—there can be no resting on our laurels, or passive approach to sin and the Truth. The “heart is hot” indicates urgency.

The way is long, and thus a need for continual determined effort:

“Let us *lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us*”—Heb

12:1

Num 35:12 And they shall be unto you cities for refuge from the avenger; that the manslayer die not, *until he stand before *the congregation in judgment. *the ecclesia*

Jos 20:4 And when he that doth flee unto one of those cities shall stand at the entering of the gate of the city, *and shall declare his cause in the ears of the elders of that city,* they shall take him into the city unto them, and give him a place, *that he may dwell among them.*

Elders—by sound doctrine taught from elders the ecclesias were established and strengthened in the Truth (Act 14:21-23; 15:2 cf. 16:4-5; Tit 1:5...etc).

- Elders are those who labor in Word and Doctrine (1Tim 5:17-19)
- Elders are able to correct false teaching (Tit 1:5-9)
- Elders are a living example of endurance (1Tim 3:1-7; Tit 1-2)

Stand before congregation—He may dwell among them—those who confess their condition as sinners, which results in death become one among the ecclesia dwelling in the “city of refuge.”

Num 35:15 These six cities shall be a refuge, *both for the children of Israel, and for the stranger, and for the sojourner among them*: that every one that killeth any person **unawares* may flee thither. **by accident*

Refuge for All—refuge was to be provided for all those “in Israel.”

“What then? are we better *than* they? No, in no wise: for we have before proved *both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin*. As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one” Rom 3:9-11

Num 35:20 “But if he thrust him *of hatred*...he that smote *him* shall surely be put to death; *for he is a murderer*: the revenger of blood shall slay the *murderer*, ***WHEN HE MEETETH HIM**”

****those who show no mercy will receive no mercy—Luke 6:36-37***

Hatred and Murder—these are equal under the New Covenant: 1John 3:14-15 “The that loveth not his brother *abideth in death*. Whosoever *hateth his brother is a murderer*: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him” (Mat 5:20-26; 1Joh 4:1-21)

Num 35:16 And if he smite him with *an instrument of iron*, so that he die, he is a murderer: the **murderer** shall surely be put to death.

Num 35:17 And if he smite him with *throwing a stone*, wherewith he may die, and he die, he is a **murderer**: the murderer shall surely be put to death.

Num 35:18 Or *if he smite him with an hand weapon of wood*, wherewith he may die, and he die, he is a **murderer**: the murderer shall surely be put to death.

Iron—specifically used in Scripture to rep, false religion (Dan 2; 4; 7; 1Tim 4:1-3).

Brethren cannot permit false doctrine, that leads men to death

Stone—used under the Law for condemning the guilty. It reps. death without mercy (Heb 10:28), and those that demand such from others will receive the same (Jam 2:13; Mat 6:14-15).

Wood—human nature (Mar 8:24). Jesus hanged on a tree (1Pet 2:24; Act 10:39; Joh 3:14); human nature is weak (Rom 8:3; Mat 26:41). God remembers our “frame” and we must do the same (Psa 103:10-18)

Num 35:22 But if he thrust him suddenly *without enmity*, or have cast upon him any thing *without laying of wait*,

Num 35:23 Or with any stone, wherewith a man may die, seeing *him* not, and cast *it* upon him, that he die, *and was not his enemy, neither sought his harm:*

Num 35:24 Then *the congregation shall judge between the slayer and the revenger of blood according to these judgments:*

Without enmity—different than murder, this is “manslaughter” or unintentional death resulting from accident, but not premeditation. The apostle warns “be ye angry and sin not” (Eph 4:26).

Congregation To Judge—the ecclesia must “judge” certain situations of “sin.” Immorality had to be judged (1Cor 5-6); also matters of false teaching (1Tim 1:18-20); as well as idleness (2The 3:8-15). “Deliver unto Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme.” *The plea is presented to the “congregation” (ecclesia), who all appreciate and have themselves acknowledged that sin brings forth death!*

Num 35:25 And the congregation shall deliver the slayer out of the hand of the revenger of blood, and the congregation shall restore him to the city of his refuge, whither he was fled: and he shall abide in it unto the death of the high priest, which was anointed with the holy oil.

Congregation—Heb “feminine” and equivalent to Gk. “ecclesia.”
Abide in City of Refuge—after the slayer acknowledges the doctrine of *sin and death*, he enters in among them. *He does not return to his former life! His spared life is now identified with the “death of the high priest.”*

➤ The death of the high priest—Christ (Heb 9:11)—provided mercy and life to the repentant.

Those provided refuge “walk in newness of life” (Rom 6:4)—“live not henceforth unto themselves” (2Cor 5:15)—“put off concerning the former conversation” (Eph 4:21)—“deny themselves and take up the cross” (Mar 8:34)—“put off the body of the sins of the flesh” (Col 2:11)! Baptism changes our way of life.

Num 35:26 But if the slayer shall *at any time come without the border of the city of his refuge, whither he was fled;*
Num 35:27 And the revenger of blood *find him without the borders of the city of his refuge,* and the revenger of blood kill the slayer; he shall not be guilty of blood:

Borders—the principles of the Atonement do have limitations or boundaries. The provided mercy can be lost by inappropriate action!

Jud 1:4-5 “Certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ. I will therefore put you in remembrance, though ye once knew this, how that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed them that believed not”

It is a subtle mindset: we know we sin, continually; yet we know there is a provided covering. Rom 6:1 “shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid” Although “called to liberty,” we cannot use liberty “for an occasion to the flesh” Gal 5:13. see Tit 2:11-12; Heb 10:26

□ “The term *Avenger of Blood* in Hebrew is *Gael*. The same word is rendered ‘Redeemer’ in other places (Job 19:25; Psa. 19:14; 78:35 etc.)”—*HPM, Expositor*

➤ **Avenger—trans. “redeemer” 18x— “redeem” 50x**

Rev 6:10 “And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and *avenge our blood* on them that dwell on the earth?”

- Flood waters saved Noah, destroyed all others (1Pet 3:20-22)
- Red Sea provided salvation to Israel, death to Egyptians (Exo 14).
- Christ will come to reward some with everlasting life, and others with everlasting condemnation (2The 1:9).

2Co 2:14-16 “Now thanks *be* unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place. *For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: To the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life.*”

Num 35:28 Because *he should have remained in the city of his refuge until the death of the high priest*: but after the death of the high priest the slayer shall *return into the land of his possession*.

Remained in the city of his refuge until the death of the high priest—a distance of “2,000” cubits (v.5). The same as the Ark went before the children of Israel into the Land under Joshua (Jos 3:4). Thus, the death of the high priest liberates men to take up their inheritance (Heb 4; Col 3:24). This requires faith and patience.

- **The full benefits of the “death of the high priest” will not be realized until there is a change of nature; because “flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God” (1Cor 15:50).**

Mat 26:29 “I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom”

Heb 3:12-14 “For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end” (Col 1:12)

Num 35:31 Moreover ye shall *take no satisfaction for the life of a murderer,*

WHICH IS GUILTY OF

DEATH: but he shall be surely put to death.

Num 35:32 And ye shall *take no satisfaction for him that is fled to the city of his refuge,* that he should come again to dwell in the land, until the DEATH OF THE PRIEST.

No satisfaction—the Truth is not about vain glory of men! The ecclesia is often ruined by the pride of men gloating over the failure of another.

Pro 24:17-18 “Rejoice not when thine enemy falleth, and let not thine heart be glad when he stumbleth: Lest the LORD see it, and it displease him, and he turn away his wrath from him”

Pro 17:5 “He that is glad at calamities shall not be unpunished” (Job 31:39; Psa 35:13)

- It must be noted that the Hebrew word “satisfaction” is *kopher* which means “to cover.” Thus, there is also a very strong warning not to cover over blatant sin, even by the closes of family members of friends (Deu 13).

Regarding the “death of the High Priest” releasing a man to return to his inheritance, Bro. HP Mansfield notes:

- **“This is a very important provision, pointing directly to Christ, the anti-type. His death provided the means of liberation to those who were related to death and sought the protection available in the promised Redeemer. *In Gal. 3:23 Paul reasons: ‘before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith that should afterwards be revealed.’ The Mosaic Covenant acted as a City of Refuge. It pointed the way to life without providing it. The death of the Redeemer (foreshadowed by the High Priest) was needed for that. Meanwhile those under it ‘were shut in unto the Law.’ until the death of the High Priest, the Lord Jesus Christ, who freed them from the curse of the Law.*”—Expositor**

Enacting this doctrine, the Law concerning the Cities of Refuge was given by Moses, but not available until the people entered the Land under Joshua; because the cities were only in the Land of Promise.

Heb 9:15 “And for this cause (Christ) is the mediator of the new testament, **THAT BY MEANS OF DEATH, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, THEY WHICH ARE CALLED MIGHT RECEIVE THE PROMISE OF ETERNAL INHERITANCE**”

Jos 20:1-4 “The LORD also *spake unto Joshua*, saying, *Speak to the children of Israel, saying, Appoint out for you cities of refuge, whereof I spake unto you by the hand of Moses: That the slayer that killeth any person unawares and unwittingly may flee thither: and they shall be your refuge from the avenger of blood*”

Jos 21:13 “Thus they gave to the children of Aaron the priest Hebron with her suburbs, to be a city of refuge for the slayer...”

Jos 21:21 “For they gave them Shechem with her suburbs in mount Ephraim, to be a city of refuge for the slayer... etc.”

- **Though foreshadowed by Moses in Numbers, the Law was not implemented until the Greater Joshua brought inheritance.**

Num 35:33 *So ye shall not pollute the land wherein ye are: for blood it defileth the land: and the land cannot be cleansed of the blood that is shed therein, but by the blood of him that shed it.*

Num 35:34 *Defile not therefore the land which ye shall inhabit, wherein I dwell: for *I the LORD dwell among the children of Israel.*

***see Tabernacle notes: Exo 25:8**

Pollute the Land—Israel was “vomited out” of the Land (Lev 18:25), because “they defiled it by their own way and their own doings” (Eze 36:17): idolatry and immortality (Psa 106:35-38). It was “defiled under the inhabitants thereof, because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinances, and broken the everlasting covenant” (Isa 24:5 cf. Jer 16:18).

Israel “had lost the savour” of “salt” of the covenant (Num 18:19) and therefore was not “fit for the land” and was “cast out” in AD 70 and “trodden under the foot of men” (Luke 14:34-35; Mat 5:13).

Inheritance of the Land is based upon obedience (Lev 18:24-28); as it will be in the Kingdom Age. Thus, “evildoers shall be cut off,” but “the righteous shall inherit the land” (Psa 37:9-11, 29; Isa 60:21; Mat 5:5)

THE PARABLE OF THE CITIES OF REFUGE

The murderer, or deliberate destroyer of God's life was to be put to death; but involuntary killing, or the accidental homicide who sought protection in a City of Refuge would be delivered from the Avenger if on investigation his claim was considered valid. However, he had to remain a prisoner in the City until the death of the High Priest when he was forgiven his crime.

This provision of the Law illustrated the principle of redemption in the Redeemer promised from the beginning (Gen. 3:15). The Israelite, brought into relationship with Yahweh through the Mosaic Covenant based upon the Law, discovered that through the weakness of the flesh (Rom. 8:3) the Law did not lead to life but was as the Avenger of Blood (see Rom. 7:10-14), threatening death. He had to seek a City of Refuge which typified the protection granted in the promised Redeemer (Gen. 3:15). Hence the Law became as a "schoolmaster leading to Christ" (Gal. 3:24), that those motivated thereby "might be justified by faith". A man of faith, therefore, was taught to look forward to the death of one who could provide complete liberty. Christ taught the Jews of his day that "the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32), whilst, at the same time warning them that to cultivate the lusts of the flesh was to act the part of a murderer (John 8:44). For the involuntary sinner there is protection and ultimate liberty through his death (Gal. 5:1). Many facets of the plan of redemption are revealed in the significant and important provisions of the Law relating to the Cities of Refuge.