

210617-4 Nu 35, The Forty-two & Six Cities for the Levites –CThurman

In ch. 34 the LORD marked out the boundaries of the land of Canaan from the easternmost boundary of the Dead Sea to the west up Kadesh-Meribah then up to the river of Egypt which forms the rest of the boundary up to the Mediterranean Sea. From here the Mediterranean Sea forms Israel's western border to the north until you come to see either the mountains of Lebanon or Mt. Hermon in the distance in the east. The north boundary will come east until you arrive to the foothills of either of these mountains. From here the eastern boundary descends east side of the Sea of Chinnereth, or Sea of Galilee. This boundary continues along the eastern bank of the Jordan River until reaching the northernmost tip of the Dead Sea. This is the boundary of Canaan. This land is to be the possession of the nine and one-half tribes of Israel. Remember that three and one-half of the tribes shall have their land grant on the eastern side of the Jordan River, where Israel is presently located. (cf. Deu. 32) Then the LORD chose two men to divide the land to these tribes; Eleazar, who was appointed high priest at the death of his father Aaron, and Joshua the son of Nun, of the tribe of Ephraim. Furthermore, the LORD appointed ten princes, one from each of these nine and one-half tribes to distribute their allotment of land among their families.

48 Cities & Their Suburbs Dedicated to the Levites (vss. 1-8)

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

The plains of Moab describe the place, but not the possession of Moab. Moab lost this land to the Amorites and Israel took possession of it when they came into this area. (cf. Nu. 21.13, 25, 26, 31; 22.1)

2 Command the children of Israel, that they give unto the Levites of the inheritance of their possession cities to dwell in;

cities, of the Hebrew fem. noun גֵּרָה, geer, and tss. *city* (1071), and *town* (7).

Simple statement: You (Israel) give cities, of your inheritance and possession, to the Levites to dwell in.

and ye shall give also unto the Levites suburbs for the cities round about them.

suburbs, מִגְרָשׁ, mig-rahsh, a masc. noun tss. suburbs, the cast out (1); the English suburb, from sub- near + urbs city; there is the urban area which is the city, and the suburbs (or outreaching, open areas).

3 And the cities shall they have to dwell in; and the suburbs of them shall be for their cattle, and for their goods, and for all their beasts.

living things

goods, Hebrew masc. noun רְכוּשׁ, r'-koosh, tss. substance, goods, riches.

beasts, the Hebrew adj. חַי, chay, tss. life, living (water, things, creatures), beast, raw (flesh).

Cities are defined as the place where the Levites should dwell, and the suburbs where they shall keep their livestock and substance.

What the LORD now commands pertains to all twelve tribes on either side of the Jordan River. Because the Levitical priesthood has no land grant Israel was to designate where Levites may live and the land adjacent to those cities to help them in the support of their livelihood. (cf. Ez.44.15, 28)

4 And the suburbs of the cities, which ye shall give unto the Levites, shall reach from the wall of the city and outward a thousand cubits round about.

Measuring from the wall of a city and out 1,000 cubits (or 1,500 feet) was the area to be given to the Levites.

5 And 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, and on the north side two thousand cubits; and the city shall be in the midst: this shall be to them the suburbs of the cities.

This seems to say beginning to measure from the easternmost point measure 2,000 cubits. And do this for each side. Each parcel of land on each side of the city will measure 1,000 x 2,000 cubits.

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.

refuge, מִקְלָט, miq-laht, an Hebrew masc. noun which is always tss. *refuge* and always with reference to the *city of refuge*.

manslayer, the Hebrew verb רָצַח, ra-tzach, tss. *to kill, to slay, to murder, to put to death, the slayer, the manslayer, a murderer.*

Of the 48 cities Israel shall give to the Levites to dwell in six of these shall be cities of refuge. The purpose for these cities of refuge is to give the manslayer a place of shelter from anyone that might seek to revenge the blood of the dead. But also it serves to keep the land clear of the shedding of innocent blood. (cf. v.33)

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.

Now, the way that this is stated, why it was not stated outright that there would be forty-eight cities given to the Levites is so that we might understand that of these there shall be six dedicated as refuge cities. Otherwise it might be thought that forty-two cities were the Levites and six were for manslaughter. But every city of refuge is a city of the Levites.

The number 48 seems to represent sojourning or dwelling-place. Interesting things notice that involve the number 48 are:

- The number of times Passover is used in the O.T. with its Hebrew, פֶּסַח, is exactly 48.
- The number of boards in the tabernacle construction are 48.
- The Hebrew and the English words, קֶרֶשׁ, qeh-res, and *boards*, respectively, are found in Exodus 48 times in relation to the tabernacle, 50 times in the O.T.

- 48 times in the O.T. the Hebrew, טַבַּעַת, tab-ba-[g]ath, is found, which is translated *ring*.

The Levites have no land appointed to them, only these cities to dwell in and these suburbs for the most part to stow their livestock.

In Jos.21.4-8 we find that when the Levites came to Eleazar and Joshua to receive their cities they received from Israel these:

| | |
|---|-----------|
| <u>To Kohath and the sons of Aaron –</u> | |
| Judah, Simeon & Benjamin gave | 13 cities |
| Ephraim, Dan & ½ tribe of Manasseh gave | 10 |
| (This ½ tribe of Manasseh is located on the west of Jordan) | |
| <u>To Gershon–</u> | |
| Issachar, Asher, Naphtali & ½ tribe of Manasseh gave | 13 |
| (This ½ tribe of Manasseh is located on the east of Jordan) | |
| <u>To Merari–</u> | |
| Reuben, Gad & Zebulon gave | <u>12</u> |
| Total number of cities | 48 |

All of the cities are named in Jos. 21.9-42.

8 And the cities which ye shall give shall be of the possession of the children of Israel:

The Levites shall receive no city that is not a part of Palestine.

from them that have many ye shall give many; but from them that have few ye shall give few: every one shall give of his cities unto the Levites according to his inheritance which he inheriteth.

When Israel comes to possess the land the tribes whose possession contains many cities in it shall give more cities than those tribes whose land contains less cities. These will give few. But they shall all give some.

The purpose for the Six Cities of Refuge (vss. 9-34),

9 ¶ And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,

10 Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye be come over Jordan into the land of Canaan;

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.

through ignorance.

unawares, שְׁגָגָה, sh'-ga-gah, a fem. noun tss. by, in or through ignorance, unwittingly, unawares, and error.

So, the cause of this death was not purposeful.

12 And they shall be unto you cities for refuge from the avenger;

avenger, Qal part. of the verb גָּאַל, gah-al, tss. to redeem, to be a near kinsman or next of kin, to ransom, to perform the part of a kinsman, a revenger, an avenger, to be a redeemer, to be a ransom; so, one who would 'redeem for the blood that was shed.'

that the manslayer die not, until he stand before the congregation in judgment.

13 And of these cities which ye shall give six cities shall ye have for refuge.

14 Ye shall give three cities on this side Jordan, and three cities shall ye give in the land of Canaan, which shall be cities of refuge.

The land on the west of the Jordan River shall give three cities of refuge. (cf. Deu.19.1-3) If the two and one-half tribes on the east side keep their word there will be three cities on that side as well. (cf. Deu.19.8) These cities are located in the south, in the middle, and in the north so that the manslayer may come here as quickly as he can to seek protection from the revenger of blood. Those cities are named in Jos.20.7, 8: on west of Jordan is Kadesh (north at the top of the Jordan River Valley) of Galilee, Shechem of Ephraim, and Hebron (central Judah) of Judah; on the east of Jordan is Bezer (Heshbon) of Reuben, Ramoth-Gilead of Gad, and Golan (Bashan) of Manasseh.

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.

So these refuge cities were to prevent the shedding of innocent blood of all men.

Examples of Purposeful Deaths

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.

To smite with an instrument of iron *so that he die* is a purposeful act to commit murder. The murderer must be put to death.

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.

Again, to smite by throwing a stone *wherewith (by which) he may die* was a purposeful act to commit murder. The murderer must be put to death.

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.

And again, a purposeful act to commit murder. The murderer must be put to death.

19 The revenger of blood himself shall slay the murderer: when he meeteth him, he shall slay him.

shall slay, מוֹת, mooth, Hiphil (causative act.) fut., *to slay, to kill, to destroy*; so to be the cause of death. **Twice in this verse, shall slay.**

In this case the revenger (verb, נָקַד, the redeemer) of blood would seek immediate satisfaction for the blood that is shed, because of the purposeful death by the manslayer because his heart is hot. (Due. 19.6)

Examples of Purposeful Deaths (cont.)

20 But if he thrust him of hatred, or hurl at him by laying of wait,
[the manslayer]

that he die;

21 Or in enmity smite him with his hand, that he die: he that smote him shall surely be put to death; for he is a murderer:

Again, noting the purpose of the manslayer to commit murder. He must be put to death.

the revenger of blood shall slay the murderer, when he meeteth him.

Again the revenger (verb, לִקְדֹּשׁ, the redeemer) of blood would seek immediate satisfaction for the blood that is shed, because of the purposeful death by the manslayer because his heart is hot. (Due. 19.6) But the problem is that the avenger of blood will seek immediate satisfactory for the blood shed EVEN IF THE MANSLAYER HAD NO ILL INTENT. So to prevent this ...

Examples of Accidental Deaths

22 But if he thrust him suddenly without enmity,
[the manslayer] [no evil intent]

or have cast upon him any thing without laying of wait,

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:

This is an accidental death. This understands that the manslayer fled to one of these cities of refuge ...

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

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.

26 But if the slayer shall at any time come without the border of the city of his refuge, whither he was fled;

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:

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.

So, the revenger (verb, לָקַח, the redeemer) of blood would seek immediate satisfaction of the blood that was shed whether or not the act was an accident because his heart is hot. (Deu. 19.6)

So the LORD gave to Israel these cities of refuge in order to protect the manslayer. At death the manslayer should have fled quickly to a city of refuge closest to him, stand at the entering in of the gate and declare to the elders in it the reason for seeking refuge there. The city is obligated to receive him and protect him from the avenger of blood until a determination by the congregation has been made concerning his guilt or innocence. I would imagine some kind of a house arrest might set in place until time for trial. If guilty the manslayer is handed over to the avenger of blood to die for murder. If not guilty of murder he is sentence to remain in the city of refuge until the death of the high priest. Then the manslayer may return to his possession. But if he ventures out of the city and the avenger of blood find him and kill him there shall no blood be shed for the manslayer's death because he should have remained in the city. (cf. Jos.20.4)

29 So these things shall be for a statute of judgment unto you throughout your generations in all your dwellings.

Read Deu.19.1-13; Jos.20.1-9. These provide more information so that we have the right idea for the establishment of cities of refuge.

30 Whoso killeth any person, the murderer shall be put to death by the mouth of witnesses: but one witness shall not testify against any person to cause him to die.

De 17:6 At the mouth of two witnesses, or three witnesses, shall he that is worthy of death be put to death; but at the mouth of one witness he shall not be put to death.

Due.19.15 One witness shall not rise up against a man for any iniquity, or for any sin, in any sin that he sinneth: at the mouth of two witnesses, or at the mouth of three witnesses, shall the matter be established.

31 Moreover ye shall take no satisfaction for the life of a murderer,

satisfaction, an Hebrew masc. noun כִּפָּר, kōh'-pher, tss. a pitch covering, a sum of money, a ransom, a satisfaction, a bribe; see v.33, for the verb כָּפַר, kah-phar.

which is guilty of death: but he shall be surely put to death.

No matter who it is, there is no satisfaction for the murderer except to put him to death. This is what God says. This is His moral law upon mankind.

Ge 9:5 And surely your blood of your lives will I require; at the hand of every beast will I require it, and at the hand of man; at the hand of every man's brother will I require the life of man.

6 Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man.

Mt 19:18 ...Thou shalt do no murder ... Ex 20:13 Thou shalt not kill.

Ex 21:23 ... thou shalt give life for life ...

There is no satisfaction. No amount of money, public service, restitution, expressions of remorse; there is no satisfaction for murder but to remove the life of the offender from the earth.

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.

Perhaps some for good or evil would try to circumvent the commandment of the LORD give the manslayer lease to return to his own possession before the death of the high priest. There is no satisfaction that will allow this. Taking satisfaction pollutes the land.

33 So ye shall not pollute the land wherein ye are: for blood it defileth the land:
corrupt corrupts

pollute & defile are of the Hebrew Hiphil (causative act.) fut. verb
הִנְחִיף, [g]ha-nehph', tss. *to defile, to profane, to pollute, to corrupt.*

and the land cannot be cleansed of the blood that is shed therein,

can ... be cleansed, Hebrew Paul (intensive passive) fut. of the verb
כִּפַּר, kah-phar, tss. *to atone, to purge, to be merciful, to reconcile, to
pacify, to reconcile, to appease, to pardon, to forgive, to disannul, to
be cleansed; see v.31, 32, satisfaction, for the noun כִּפָּר, kōh'-pher.*

but by the blood of him that shed it.

34 Defile not therefore the land which ye shall inhabit,
Make not unclean

defile, the Hebrew Piel (intensive act.) fut. verb טַמֵּא, tah-mey, tss. *to
defile, to pollute, to make unclean.*

wherein I dwell: for I the LORD dwell among the children of Israel.

*Lev.18.24 Defile not ye yourselves in any of these things: for in all these the
nations are defiled which I cast out before you:*

*25 And the land is defiled: therefore I do visit the iniquity thereof upon it,
and the land itself vomiteth out her inhabitants.*

*26 Ye shall therefore keep my statutes and my judgments, and shall not
commit any of these abominations; neither any of your own nation, nor any
stranger that sojourneth among you:*

*27 (For all these abominations have the men of the land done, which were
before you, and the land is defiled;)*

*28 That the land spue not you out also, when ye defile it, as it spued out the
nations that were before you.*

*29 For whosoever shall commit any of these abominations, even the souls
that commit them shall be cut off from among their people.*

30 Therefore shall ye keep mine ordinance, that ye commit not any one of these abominable customs, which were committed before you, and that ye defile not yourselves therein: I am the LORD your God.

Forty-eight cities were to be given to the Levites (Aaron, Kohath, Gershon, and Merari) Of these forty-eight cities six were to be places of refuge to prevent the defiling the land with the shedding of the blood of them that had accidentally killed another, whether he be an Israelite, stranger, or sojourner in the land. No satisfaction was acceptable for murder or for the early release of the manslayer that had sought refuge in one of these six cities. For Israel to fail to keep the word of the LORD would be to bring corruption upon the land. Then the LORD would move begin to come against them as He had moved against the nations that were before them and cast them out.

Deu.4.5 Behold, I (Moses) have taught you statutes and judgments, even as the LORD my God commanded me, that ye should do so in the land whither ye go to possess it.

6 Keep therefore and do them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations, which shall hear all these statutes, and say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.

7 For what nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them, as the LORD our God is in all things that we call upon him for?

8 And what nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day?

9 Only take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life: but teach them thy sons, and thy sons' sons;

...

16 Lest ye corrupt yourselves ...

26 I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that ye shall soon utterly perish from off the land whereunto ye go over Jordan to possess it; ye shall not prolong your days upon it, but shall utterly be destroyed.

27 And the LORD shall scatter you among the nations, and ye shall be left few in number among the heathen, whither the LORD shall lead you.

And so it has been for them Israel to this day. Israel has been cast away for a time. But when it shall turn to the Lord (cf. 2Co.3.16) He shall come to them and they will see Him and know that He is the Christ of God. (Zec.12.10) They will have this land!

Now, what about some application of this to us, the people of God? The city of refuge is a city for the priests of God. It is a type for the people of God *abiding* in Him. This is the place for His saints, the holy ones of God. This is the place for those whose lives are devoted to the service of Christ. In this text as long as the high priest lives he stands between them and the avenger of blood. So for us Christ is an intercessor to God. He is High Priest *over the house of God ... who ever liveth to make intercession for us to God.* (cf. He. 10.21; 7.25) The avenger of blood, the Law cannot touch us to bring us into condemnation. We are in the safe haven. Christ is the safe haven for all them that put their trust in Him. This is no place for them that live *presumptuously*: the murderer, the fornicator, the adulterer, the drunkard, the covetous, the liar, the thief. No, this place is for the ABIDER! Yes, once we were as they, BUT NOT NO MORE! Those who purposely live so have no place in this city of refuge. This is not a refuge for them! Some might pretend to take their refuge in this beautiful city but they shall be cast out where the avenger of blood will find them, all that they possess shall be lost, and their lives taken from the earth. (cf. 1Co.3.15; 11.30) Though the people of God, if they live in a manner unworthy of His name, it is written, *'The Lord shall judge His people.* (He.10.30) This city is a refuge for them of whom it is clear that no one *shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect?* (Ro.8.33) In this place not only do these that remain here know that Christ paid their sin-debt but for them He is their quiet place, their refuge their eternal haven. Finally, how this city of refuge is so like that eternal city of which the apostle John wrote of in Re.21.2; 22.14, 15.

Re.21.2 And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

...

22.14 Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.

15 For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie.

There should be little doubt but that to abide in Him now will lead to abiding in that place then. Eternity on the new earth is presently incomprehensible as to all that it brings, but more so the prospect of being in that city. Live for Christ. Abide in Him by treasuring His precious word. By Jesus Christ this will be our lot, our inheritance, our everlasting inheritance. (Jn.14.2; He.11.10; 1Pe.1.4)