

## Notes on Joshua 20

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### G. Appointment of Cities of Refuge

Verses 1-6

1. Explain the purpose of the cities of refuge. List other *passages* about them.

#### *God commands Joshua to appoint cities of refuge*

In Num. 35 God had instructed Moses about the cities of refuge. They were to be cities where a manslayer could flee if he had accidentally killed another person. These cities are discussed further in Ex. 21:13; Num. 35:22-25; Deut. 19:1-13.

According to Num. 35, if anyone accidentally killed another person, he could flee to the city of refuge. Eventually his case would be tried. If a person killed a man by striking him with an iron implement or with a stone or a wooden weapon in his hand, then he would be considered a murderer, and murderers must be put to death. The same would apply if he shoved the man because he hated him, or if he were to lie in wait and throw something at him and kill him. Or it would apply if he just struck the man with his hand because he hates him. All such cases were considered murder.

The sentence of death would be carried out by the avenger of blood. See Num. 35:21,24,27; Deut. 19:6,12. The avenger of blood was a near kinsman (see NKJV footnote). If he found the murderer outside the city of refuge, he could kill him.

On the other hand, suppose a man suddenly pushed a man without any hatred toward him, or suppose he threw something without lying in wait, or suppose he threw a stone without seeing the man, yet the man was not an enemy and there was no intent to harm. These cases were considered "accidental" (cf. Ex. 21:12-14). The congregation must make a judgment in the case to determine whether or not the man was guilty of murder.

If the death was determined to be accidental, then the congregation should return him to the city of refuge to deliver or save him from death at the hand of the avenger of blood. He must remain in that city, not going outside the city limits till the death of the anointed high priest.

If the manslayer were to venture outside the city limits, and if the avenger of blood caught him there, the avenger could kill him without himself being guilty of murder. The manslayer would then be responsible for his own death, since he should have stayed in the city.

When the high priest died, however, the manslayer would be free to leave the city of refuge and return to his home without danger.

Verses 7-9

2. Name the cities of refuge that were appointed (see MAP).

#### *The cities appointed*

There were to be three cities on each side of the Jordan, a total of six altogether. They were scattered throughout the territory Israel held so that, no matter where a man killed another man, he could flee to a city that was relatively close. So three were on the west of Jordan and three on the east, spaced out across the land.

The three appointed on the west were Kedesh in Galilee, in the mountains of Naphtali, Shechem in the mountains of Ephraim, and Kirjath Arba (Hebron) in the mountains of Judah. The three east of Jordan were assigned Bezer in the tribe of Reuben, Ramoth in Gilead, from the tribe of Gad, and Golan in Bashan, from the tribe of Manasseh. (See MAP.)-

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