

Cities Of Refuge-
Cities of Rest

Joshua 20:1-6, 21:1-3, 21:43-45

Then the LORD said to Joshua, “Say to the people of Israel, ‘Appoint the cities of refuge, of which I spoke to you through Moses, that the manslayer who strikes any person without intent or unknowingly may flee there. They shall be for you a refuge from the avenger of blood. He shall flee to one of these cities and shall stand at the entrance

of the gate of the city and explain his case to the elders of that city. Then they shall take him into the city and give him a place, and he shall remain with them. And if the avenger of blood pursues him, they shall not give up the manslayer into his hand, because he struck his neighbor unknowingly, and did not hate him in the past. And he shall remain in that city until

he has stood before the congregation for judgment, until the death of him who is high priest at the time. Then the manslayer may return to his own town and his own home, to the town from which he fled.”

Then the heads of the fathers' houses of the Levites came to Eleazar the priest and to Joshua the son of Nun and to the heads of

the fathers' houses of the tribes of the people of Israel. And they said to them at Shiloh in the land of Canaan, "The LORD commanded through Moses that we be given cities to dwell in, along with their pasturelands for our livestock." So by command of the LORD the people of Israel gave to the Levites the following cities and pasturelands out of their inheritance.

Thus the LORD gave to Israel all the land that he swore to give to their fathers. And they took possession of it, and they settled there. And the LORD gave them rest on every side just as he had sworn to their fathers. Not one of all their enemies had withstood them, for the LORD had given all their enemies into their hands.

Not one word of all the good promises that
the LORD had made to the house of Israel
had failed; all came to pass.

Then the LORD said to Joshua, “Say to the people of Israel, ‘Appoint the **cities of refuge**, of which I **spoke to you through Moses**, that the manslayer who strikes any person without intent or unknowingly may flee there.’”

Numbers 35:9-11

And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,
“Speak to the people of Israel and say to them, When you cross the Jordan into the land of Canaan, then you shall select cities to be cities of refuge for you, that the manslayer who kills any person without intent may flee there.

Deuteronomy 19:4-5

If anyone kills his neighbor unintentionally without having hated him in the past—as when someone goes into the forest with his neighbor to cut wood, and his hand swings the axe to cut down a tree, and the head slips from the handle and strikes his neighbor so that he dies—he may flee to one of these cities and live,

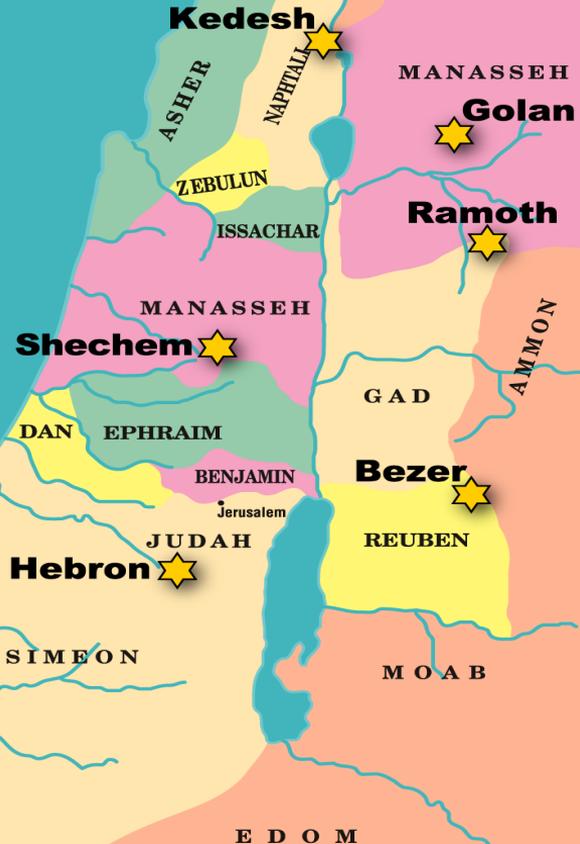
This shows that the biblical legislation did make distinctions in degrees of guilt and that God's law was sensitive to motives and intent of the heart, in providing more lenient treatment for what modern criminal codes call “manslaughter” (as opposed to premeditated murder).

– David M. Howard



Cities of Refuge

Scale of Miles
0 10 20 30 40



6 of 48 Levitical cities are designated as sanctuaries.

3 are on each side of the Jordan insure that there is always one within safe distance

They shall be for you a refuge from **the
avenger of blood.**

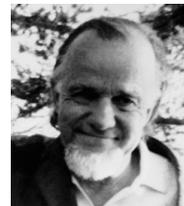
Numbers 35:19-21

The avenger of blood shall himself put the murderer to death; when he meets him, he shall put him to death. And if he pushed him out of hatred or hurled something at him, lying in wait, so that he died...then he who struck the blow shall be put to death. He is a murderer. The avenger of blood shall put the murderer to death when he meets him.

He shall flee to one of these cities and shall stand at the entrance of the gate of the city and **explain his case to the elders** of that city. Then they shall take him into the city and give him a place, and he shall remain with them.

The cities of refuge were levitical cities, that is, they had something to do with God. Unlike modern man, the people of the Old Testament and of Christian communities after the Reformation did not view civil law as basically sociological. To them it was not founded primarily on a social contract. It was ultimately related to the existence and character of God.

– Francis Schaeffer



And they said to them at Shiloh in the land of Canaan, “The LORD commanded through Moses that **we be given cities to dwell in**, along with their pasturelands for our livestock.”

The Distribution of Levitical cities

Joshua 20-21

Mediterranean Sea
(Great Sea)

- (21:9-19) 13 KENIATHITE CITIES
- (21:20-26) 10 KENIATHITE CITIES (OTHER)
- (21:27-33) 13 GERASHONITE CITIES
- (21:34-40) 12 MERARITE CITIES

- A TOTAL OF 48 LEVITICAL CITIES.

- CITIES OF REFUGE
- OTHER LEVITICAL CITIES
- EXACT LOCATION OF MANY NOT KNOWN

"I will disperse them in Jacob, And scatter them in Israel" (Genesis 49:7).



Deuteronomy 33:8-10
 And of Levi he said, ...for they observed your word and kept your covenant.
They shall teach Jacob your rules and Israel your law; they shall put incense before you and whole burnt offerings on your altar.

The Levites were appointed as a kind of guardians in every district to retain the people in the pure worship of God. This seems to be the reason for stating so carefully how many cities they obtained. They were everywhere to keep watch, and preserve the purity of sacred rites unimpaired.

– John Calvin



And they said to them at Shiloh in the land of Canaan, “The LORD commanded through Moses that we be given cities to dwell in, along with their **pasturelands for our livestock.**”

But though one might say the Levites performed spiritual functions, they had very earthly needs- houses to live in, pastures to sustain livestock. There is a given earthiness about all of life. That is no less true for those sometimes dubbed, in a quasi-technical sense, “God’s servants.”

– Dale Ralph Davis



Thus the LORD gave to Israel all the land that he swore to give to their fathers. And they took possession of it, and they settled there. **And the LORD gave them rest** on every side just as he had sworn to their fathers. Not one of all their enemies had withstood them, for the LORD had given all their enemies into their hands.

And he shall remain in that city until he has stood before the congregation for judgment, **until the death of him who is high priest** at the time.

Only the high priest's death can release can the offender from his banishment and bring him home again: a remarkable picture of what our 'merciful and faithful high priest' (Heb 2:7) has done for us.

– Dale Ralph Davis



Jesus Is Our City Of Refuge

We find safety from those who would seek to do us harm.

John 10:27-28 My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand.

He is always near to us, making him our ever-present help in time of need!

Psalm 145:18 The LORD is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth.

The way to Christ is short: it is but a simple renunciation of self and a laying hold of Him to be our all in all.

– A. W. Pink



Jesus Is Our City Of Rest

We receive Christ as our greatest inheritance.

Psalm 73:25 Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you.

In Him alone we enter our true rest from all work.

Hebrews 4:8-10 For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken of another day later on. So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God, for whoever has entered God's rest has also rested from his works as God did from his.