

Numbers 35 - Levitical Cities & Cities of Refuge

III. Preparation of the second generation on the plains of Moab to enter Canaan (Num 26:1—36:13)

(2) Preparation for conquest of the land (Num 31:1—36:13)

(G) Special cities (Num 35:1-34)

(a) Levitical cities (35:1-8)

(b) Cities of refuge (35:9-34)

Numbers 35

(G) Special cities (Num 35:1-34)

(a) Levitical cities (35:1-8)

1 Now the LORD spoke to Moses in the plains of Moab, by the Jordan *opposite* Jericho, saying,

1 Now the LORD spoke to Moses in the plains of Moab by the Jordan *opposite* Jericho, saying,

1 The LORD told Moses in the wilderness of Moab, beside the Jordan River near Jericho,

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

2 "Command the sons of Israel that they give to the Levites from the inheritance of their possession cities to live in; and you shall give to the Levites pasture lands around the cities.

2 "Command the sons of Israel that they give to the Levites from the inheritance of their possession cities to live in; and you shall give to the Levites pasture lands around the cities.

2 "Instruct the Israelis to set aside a portion of their inheritance for the descendants of Levi to live in, along with grazing land surrounding their towns.

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.

3 The cities shall be theirs to live in; and their pasture lands shall be for their cattle and for their equipment and for all their *other* animals.

3 The cities shall be theirs to live in; and their pasture lands shall be for their cattle and for their herds and for all their beasts.

3 The towns are to be reserved for their dwelling places and the grazing lands are to be reserved for their cattle, livestock, and all their animals.

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.

4 "The pasture lands of the cities which you are to give to the Levites *shall extend* from the wall of the city outward a thousand cubits around.

4 "The pasture lands of the cities which you shall give to the Levites *shall extend* from the wall of the city outward a thousand cubits around.

4 The grazing lands that you are to reserve for use by the descendants of Levi are to extend 1,000 cubits from the walls of the town.

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.

5 You shall also 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, with the city in the center. This shall become theirs as pasture lands for the cities.

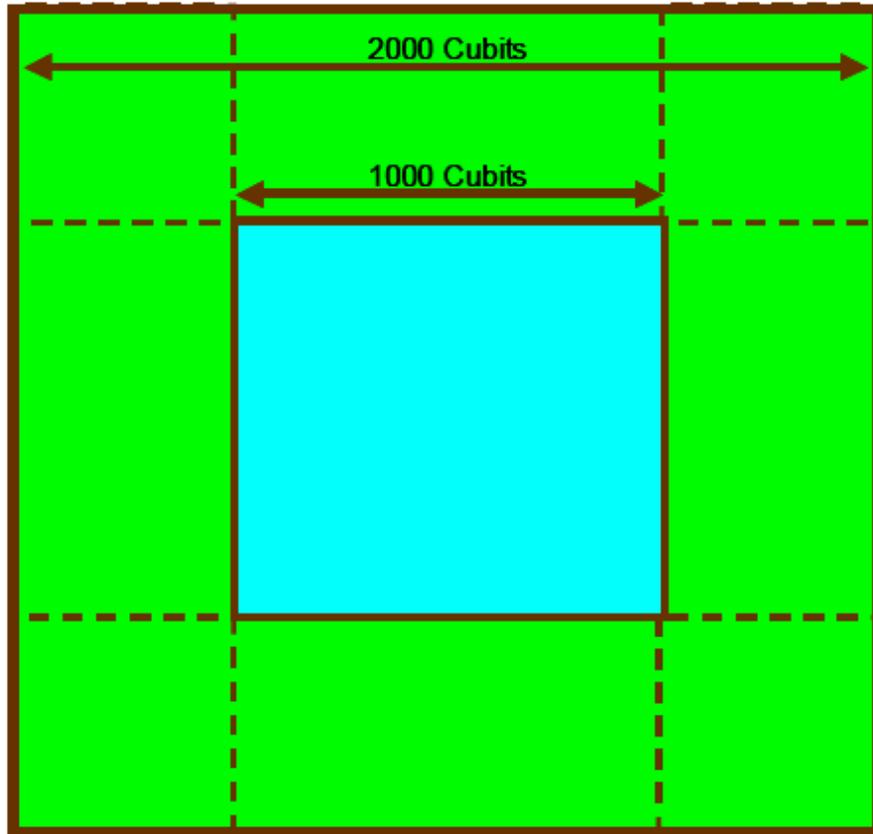
5 You shall also measure outside the city on the east side two thousand cubits, and on the south side two thousand cubits, and on the west side two thousand cubits, and on the north side two thousand cubits, with the city in the center. This shall become theirs as pasture lands for the cities.

5 You are to measure from outside the wall of the town on the east side 2,000 cubits, on the south side 2,000 cubits, on the west side 2,000 cubits, and on the north side 2,000 cubits, with the town placed at the center. This reserved area is to serve as grazing land for their towns.

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.

Levitical Township

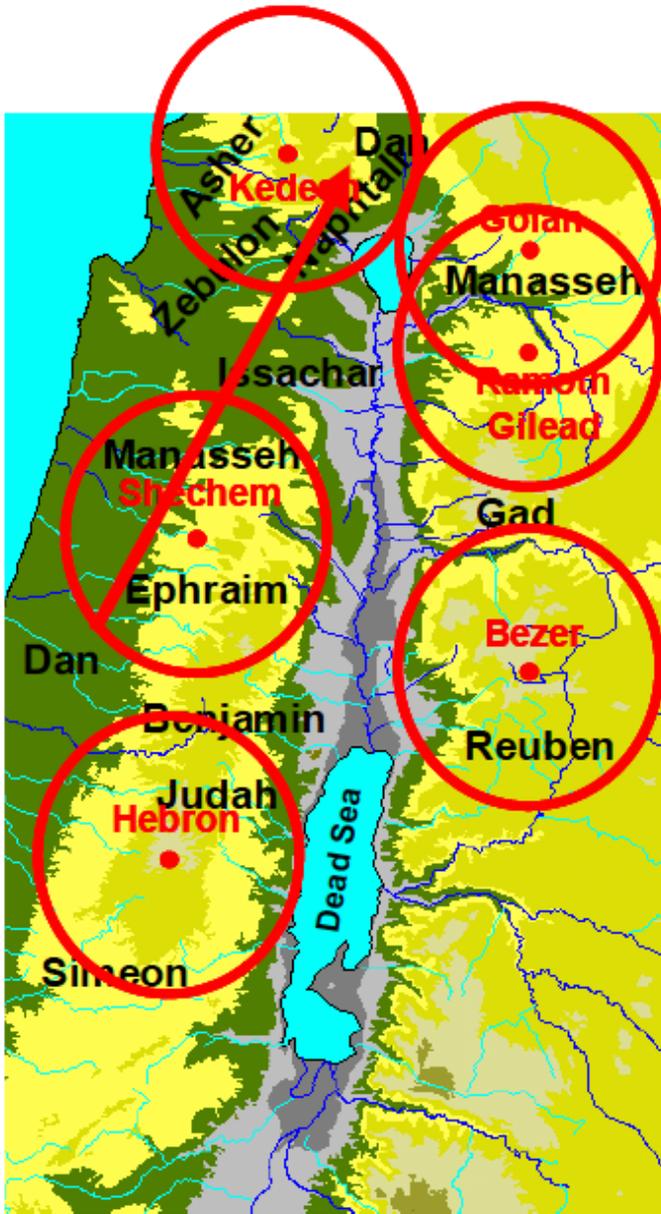
Levitical Township



1000 cubits ~ 1500 ft. The surrounding "suburbs" were for nominal farming and husbandry.

The Cities of Refuge

There were no prisons or police force in ancient Israel...



Division of the Land

- Levites were assigned 48 cities: Six of which were designated "Cities of Refuge"
- The Tribes were allocated their portions by casting lots.

6 The cities which you shall give to the Levites *shall be* the six cities of refuge, which you shall provide for the one who commits manslaughter to flee to; and in addition to them you shall give forty-two cities.

6 The cities which you shall give to the Levites *shall be* the six cities of refuge, which you shall give for the manslayer to flee to; and in addition to them you shall give forty-two cities.

6 You are to set aside six towns of refuge from the towns that you will be giving to the descendants of Levi, where someone who kills a human being may run for shelter. In addition, give them 42 other towns.

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.

7 The total *number* of the cities which you are to give to the Levites *shall be* forty-eight cities, together with their pasture lands.

7 All the cities which you shall give to the Levites *shall be* forty-eight cities, together with their pasture lands.

7 The total number of towns that you are to give to the descendants of Levi is to be 48 towns, including grazing lands surrounding these towns.

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.

8 As for the cities which you shall give *them* from the possession of the sons of Israel, you shall take more from the larger, and you shall take fewer from the smaller; each shall give some of his cities to the Levites in proportion to his inheritance which he possesses."

8 As for the cities which you shall give from the possession of the sons of Israel, you shall take more from the larger and you shall take less from the smaller; each shall give some of his cities to the Levites in proportion to his possession which he inherits."

8 You are to apportion the towns that you will be giving the Israelis according to the relative size of the tribe. Take a larger portion from those larger in number and a lesser portion from those fewer in number. Each is to set aside towns for the descendants of Levi proportional to the size of their inheritance that they receive."

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

(b) Cities of refuge (35:9-34)

9 Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,

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9 Then the LORD told Moses,

9 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,

10 "Speak to the sons of Israel and say to them, 'When you cross the Jordan into the land of Canaan,

10 "Speak to the sons of Israel and say to them, 'When you cross the Jordan into the land of Canaan,

10 "Tell the Israelis that when they have crossed the Jordan River into the land of Canaan,

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

11 then you shall select for yourselves cities to be your cities of refuge, so that the one who commits manslaughter *by* killing a person unintentionally may flee there.

11 then you shall select for yourselves cities to be your cities of refuge, that the manslayer who has killed any person unintentionally may flee there.

11 they are to designate some towns of refuge so that anyone who kills someone inadvertently may flee there.

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.

12 The cities shall serve you as a refuge from the avenger, so that the one who commits manslaughter does not die until he stands before the congregation for trial.

12 The cities shall be to you as a refuge from the avenger, so that the manslayer will not die until he stands before the congregation for trial.

12 They are to serve as cities of refuge from a blood avenger in order to keep the inadvertent killer from dying until he has stood trial in the presence of the community.

12 And they shall be unto you cities for refuge from the avenger; that the mans layer die not, until he stand before the congregation in judgment.

13 So the cities which you are to provide shall be six cities of refuge for you.

13 The cities which you are to give shall be your six cities of refuge.

13 You are to set aside six towns of refuge.

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

14 You shall provide three cities across the Jordan, and three cities in the land of Canaan; they are to be cities of refuge.

14 You shall give three cities across the Jordan and three cities in the land of Canaan; they are to be cities of refuge.

14 Appoint three towns this side of the Jordan River and three towns in the land of Canaan to serve as the towns of 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.

15 These six cities shall be a refuge for the sons of Israel, for the stranger, and for the foreign resident among them; so that anyone who kills a person unintentionally may flee there.

15 These six cities shall be for refuge for the sons of Israel, and for the alien and for the sojourner among them; that anyone who kills a person unintentionally may flee there.

15 that is, places of refuge for the Israelis, the resident alien, and any travelers among them. Anyone who kills a person inadvertently may flee there."

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.

16 'But if he struck him with an iron object, so that he died, he is a murderer; the murderer must be put to death.

16 'But if he struck him down with an iron object, so that he died, he is a murderer; the murderer shall surely be put to death.

16 "Whoever uses an iron implement to kill someone is to be adjudged a murderer, and that murderer is certainly to be put to death.

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.

17 And if he struck him with a stone in the hand, by which he would die, and *as a result* he did die, he is a murderer; the murderer must be put to death.

17 If he struck him down with a stone in the hand, by which he will die, and *as a result* he died, he is a murderer; the murderer shall surely be put to death.

17 Furthermore, whoever uses a stone implement to kill someone is to be adjudged a murderer, and that murderer is certainly to 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.

18 Or *if* he struck him with a wooden object in the hand, by which he would die, and *as a result* he did die, he is a murderer; the murderer must be put to death.

18 Or if he struck him with a wooden object in the hand, by which he might die, and *as a result* he died, he is a murderer; the murderer shall surely be put to death.

18 Also, whoever uses a wooden implement to kill someone with it is to be adjudged a murderer, and that murderer is certainly to 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.

19 The blood avenger himself shall put the murderer to death; he himself shall put him to death when he meets him.

19 The blood avenger himself shall put the murderer to death; he shall put him to death when he meets him.

19 The blood avenger himself is to execute the murderer. When he meets him, the blood avenger is to put him to death.

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

20 Now if he pushed him in hatred, or he threw *something* at him with malicious intent, and *as a result* he died,

20 If he pushed him of hatred, or threw something at him lying in wait and *as a result* he died,

20 If the killer shoved his victim out of hatred, or hurled something at him while waiting in ambush so that he died,

20 But if he thrust him of hatred, or hurl at him by laying of wait, that he die;

21 or *if* he struck him with his hand with hostility, and *as a result* he died, the one who struck him must be put to death; he is a murderer. The blood avenger shall put the murderer to death when he meets him.

21 or if he struck him down with his hand in enmity, and *as a result* he died, the one who struck him shall surely be put to death, he is a murderer; the blood avenger shall put the murderer to death when he meets him.

21 or if he struck him with his hand out of hatred so that he died, then the killer is certainly to be put to death for murder. The avenger of blood is to put him to death when he meets him."

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

22 'But if he pushed him suddenly, without hostility, or threw any object at him without malicious intent,

22 'But if he pushed him suddenly without enmity, or threw something at him without lying in wait,

22 "But if he pushed him suddenly without hatred, or if he hurled something in his direction without waiting in ambush,

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

23 or had any deadly stone, and without looking he dropped *it* on him so that he died, while he was not his enemy nor was he seeking to harm him,

23 or with any deadly object of stone, and without seeing it dropped on him so that he died, while he was not his enemy nor seeking his injury,

23 or if he hit him with a stone carelessly so that he was fatally injured, though he isn't his enemy and he wasn't seeking to commit evil against him,

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:

24 then the congregation shall judge between the one who fatally struck *the victim* and the blood avenger in accordance with these ordinances.

24 then the congregation shall judge between the slayer and the blood avenger according to these ordinances.

24 then the community is to judge between the inadvertent killer and the blood avenger, following these ordinances.

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

- The Hebrew word *rasah* means a personal killing, but includes what we would call premeditated murder, manslaughter, and even accidental homicides

— This passage makes it clear that God expects His people to examine intent in the case of a homicide

— Killings involving hostility are to be treated very differently than those which are the result of accidents

— The passage makes it very clear that hostile intent must be established by witnesses before anyone can be put to death, and that it is necessary to have more than one witness (v30)

25 And the congregation shall save the one who committed manslaughter from the hand of the blood avenger, and the congregation shall return him to his city of refuge to which he fled; and he shall live in it until the death of the high priest who was anointed with the holy oil.

25 The congregation shall deliver the manslayer from the hand of the blood avenger, and the congregation shall restore him to his city of refuge to which he fled; and he shall live in it until the death of the high priest who was anointed with the holy oil.

25 The community is to release the inadvertent killer from the blood avenger and return him to the town of refuge where he had fled. He is to live there until the High Priest dies, who will have anointed him with holy oil.

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.

- There was no police force in ancient Israel

- A close relative thus became responsible to serve as the "avenger of blood" and execute the divine sentence on a murderer

- The cities of refuge were necessary, lest an angry relative take revenge on a person who killed a loved one inadvertently

- This wise and humane system not only protected the innocent, but also secured Israel from the dangerous rounds of blood feuds common in many societies

26 But if at any time he goes beyond the border of his city of refuge to which he flees,

26 But if the manslayer at any time goes beyond the border of his city of refuge to which he may flee,

26 But if the inadvertent killer leaves the town of refuge where he had fled

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 blood avenger finds him outside the border of his city of refuge, and the blood avenger kills him, he will not be guilty of bloodshed,

27 and the blood avenger finds him outside the border of his city of refuge, and the blood avenger kills the manslayer, he will not be guilty of blood

27 and the blood avenger finds him outside the town of refuge where he had fled and kills him, the blood avenger is not to be found guilty of murder.

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 his city of refuge until the death of the high priest. But after the death of the high priest the one who committed manslaughter may return to the land of his property.

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 shall return to the land of his possession.

28 The inadvertent killer is to live in the town of refuge until the High Priest dies. After the death of the High Priest, the inadvertent killer is to return to the land of his inheritance.

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.

29 'These things shall be a statutory ordinance for you throughout your generations in all your dwelling places.

29 'These things shall be for a statutory ordinance to you throughout your generations in all your dwellings.

29 These are to be the statutes and ordinances for you throughout all your generations, regardless of where you live."

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

30 'If anyone kills a person, the murderer shall be put to death on the testimony of witnesses, but no person shall be put to death on the testimony of *only* one witness.

30 'If anyone kills a person, the murderer shall be put to death at the evidence of witnesses, but no person shall be put to death on the testimony of one witness.

30 "Every murderer of a human being is to be executed only according to testimony given by multiple witnesses. A single witness is not to result in a death sentence.

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.

31 Moreover, you shall not accept a ransom for the life of a murderer who is condemned to death, but he must be put to death.

31 Moreover, you shall not take ransom for the life of a murderer who is guilty of death, but he shall surely be put to death.

31 You are to receive no ransom for the life of a killer who is guilty of murder; instead, he is to die.

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.

- The demand for capital punishment in the case of murder is intended to uphold the value of life.

- Only a society which requires the murderer be put to death shows a proper respect for the sanctity of human life.

32 And you shall not accept a ransom for one who has fled to his city of refuge, so that he may return to live in the land before the death of the priest.

32 You shall not take ransom for him who has fled to his city of refuge, that he may return to live in the land before the death of the priest.

32 You are not to receive payment of a ransom for someone who had fled to a town of refuge but then left to live in his homeland before the death of the high priest.

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.

33 So you shall not defile the land in which you *live*; 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 the one who shed it.

33 So you shall not pollute the land in which you are; for blood pollutes the land and no expiation can be made for the land for the blood that is shed on it, except by the blood of him who shed it.

33 You are not to pollute the land where you live, because blood defiles the land, and the land cannot atone for blood that has been spilled on it, except through the blood of the one who spilled it.

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.

34 So you shall not defile the land in which you live, in the midst of which I dwell; for I the LORD am dwelling in the midst of the sons of Israel."

34 You shall not defile the land in which you live, in the midst of which I dwell; for I the LORD am dwelling in the midst of the sons of Israel."

34 You are not to defile the land where you will be living, because I'm living among you. I am the LORD, who lives in Israel."

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