

# Numbers 35 Commentary

PREVIOUS Numbers: Journey to God's Rest-Land by Irving Jensen- used by permission

NEXT

Source: Ryrie Study Bible

THE BOOK OF NUMBERS "Wilderness Wandering"								
WALKING Numbers 1-12			WANDERING Numbers 13-25			WAITING Numbers 26-36		
Counting & Camping Nu 1-4	Cleansing & Congregation Nu 5-8	Carping & Complaining Nu 9-12	12 Spies & Death in Desert Nu 13-16	<a href="#">Aaron</a> & Levites in Wilderness Nu 17-18	Serpent of Brass & Story of Balaam Nu 21-25	Second Census 7 Laws of Israel Nu 26-30	Last Days of Moses as Leader Nu 31-33	Sections, Sanctuaries & Settlements Nu 34-36
Law & Order			Rebellion & Disorder			New Laws for the New Order		
Old Generation			Tragic Transition			New Generation		
Preparation for the Journey: Moving Out			Participation in the Journey: Moving On			Prize at end of the Journey: Moving In		
At Sinai <a href="#">Mt Sinai</a>			To <a href="#">Moab</a> <a href="#">Mt Hor</a>			At <a href="#">Moab</a> <a href="#">Mt Nebo</a>		
En Route to <a href="#">Kadesh</a> (Mt Sinai)			En Route to Nowhere ( <a href="#">Wilderness</a> )			En Route to <a href="#">Canaan</a> (Plains of Moab)		
A Few Weeks to 2 Months			38 years, 3 months, 10 days			A Few Months		
Christ in Numbers = Our "Lifted-up One" (Nu 21:9, cp Jn 3:14-15)								
Author: <a href="#">Moses</a>								

**Numbers 35:1** Now the LORD spoke to Moses in the plains of Moab by the Jordan opposite Jericho, saying,

- Nu 22:1 Nu 26:63 Nu 31:12 Nu 33:50 Nu 36:13
- [Numbers 35 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## Related Passages (plains of Moab):

Numbers 22:1 Then the sons of Israel journeyed, and camped in the **plains of Moab** beyond the Jordan opposite Jericho.

Numbers 26:63 These are those who were numbered by Moses and Eleazar the priest, who numbered the sons of Israel in **the plains of Moab** by the Jordan at Jericho.

Numbers 31:12 They brought the captives and the prey and the spoil to Moses, and to Eleazar the priest and to the congregation of the sons of Israel, to the camp at the **plains of Moab**, which are by the Jordan opposite Jericho.

Numbers 33:50 Then the LORD spoke to Moses in the plains of Moab by the Jordan opposite Jericho, saying,

Numbers 36:13 These are the commandments and the ordinances which the LORD commanded to the sons of Israel through Moses in the plains of Moab by the Jordan opposite Jericho.

## Journey to Canaan

(see Plains of Moab at top of map) ([Source](#))

## CAMPED ON THE PLAINS OF MOAB

**Now the LORD spoke to Moses in the plains of Moab by the Jordan opposite Jericho, saying-** Here God gives details of (1) the 48 Levitical Cities in Nu 35:1-8 and (2) the subgroup of Six Cities of Refuge in Nu 35:9-34.

**Gilbrant** - We are not told how long Israel camped on the "Plains of Moab," but it was quite a while. This was the base for the conquest of Transjordan. Here final preparations were made for the invasion of Canaan. During this time, Moses gave his great addresses recorded in the Book of Deuteronomy, and here the transfer of power from Moses to Joshua was accomplished as Joshua was commissioned before all the people. (Complete Biblical Library Commentary)

**Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological and Ecclesiastical Literature - Plains of Moab** - (עֲרֵבוֹת מוֹאָב, Arboth' Moab', Deserts of Moab), a plain east of the Jordan, opposite Jericho (Numbers 22:1; Numbers 26:13; Joshua 13:32), where the Israelites under Moses pitched their encampment on their way into 'Canaan (Numbers 31:12; Numbers 33:48 sq.; Deuteronomy 1:1; Deuteronomy 1:5), in the vicinity of Nebo (Deuteronomy 34:1; Deuteronomy 34:8). It is the level spot in the great depression of the Ghar into which Wady Hesban opens, between Wadys Kefrein and Jerifeh, a part of it being called the Valley of Shettim (q.v.). It then belonged to the Amorites (Numbers 21:22 sq.), but earlier to the Moabites; whence it had its name. In the division of the country it fell to the Gadites and Reubenites (Numbers 32:33 sq.; Joshua 13:32).

**Plains of Moab** - 12 - Num. 22:1; Num. 26:3; Num. 26:63; Num. 31:12; Num. 33:48; Num. 33:49; Num. 33:50; Num. 35:1; Num. 36:13; Deut. 34:1; Deut. 34:8; Jos. 13:32

**Matthew Henry - Verses 1-8.** The cities of the priests and Levites were not only to accommodate them, but to place them, as religious teachers, in several parts of the land. For though the typical service of the tabernacle or temple was only in one place, the preaching of the word of God, and prayer and praise, were not thus confined. These cities were to be given out of each tribe. Each thus made a grateful acknowledgement to God. Each tribe had the benefit of the Levites dwelling amongst them, to teach them the knowledge of the Lord; thus no parts of the country were left to sit in darkness. The gospel provides that he who is taught in the word, should communicate to him that teaches, in all good things, Galatians 6:6. We are to free God's ministers from distracting cares, and to leave them at leisure for the duties of their station; so that they may be wholly employed therein, and avail themselves of every opportunity, by acts of kindness, to gain the good-will of the people, and to draw their attention.

**Numbers 35:2 "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.**

- Lev 25:32,33 Jos 14:3,4 Joshua 21:2-42 Eze 45:1-8 48:8,22 1Co 9:10-14
- [Numbers 35 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### Related Passages (no land inheritance for the Levites)

Numbers 18:24+ "For the tithe of the sons of Israel, which they offer as an offering to the LORD, I have given to the Levites for an inheritance; therefore I have said concerning them, **'They shall have no inheritance among the sons of Israel.'**"

Deuteronomy 10:9 Therefore, **Levi does not have a portion or inheritance with his brothers; the LORD is his inheritance**, just as the LORD your God spoke to him.

Numbers 18:20+ Then the LORD said to Aaron, **"You shall have no inheritance in their land** nor own any portion among them; **I am your portion and your inheritance** among the sons of Israel ([See note below](#)).

Deuteronomy 12:12 "And you shall rejoice before the LORD your God, you and your sons and daughters, your male and female servants, and **the Levite who is within your gates, since he has no portion or inheritance with you.**

Deuteronomy 14:27 "Also you shall not neglect the Levite who is in your town, for **he has no portion or inheritance among you.**

Joshua 14:3-4 For Moses had given the inheritance of the two tribes and the half-tribe beyond the Jordan; but **he did not give an inheritance to the Levites among them** 4 For the sons of Joseph were two tribes, Manasseh and Ephraim, and **they did not give a portion to the Levites in the land, except cities to live in,**

with their pasture lands for their livestock and for their property.

Levitical Cities (**Green Dot**) and Cities of Refuge (**Red Square**) - click to enlarge  
From Holman Bible Atlas (available for purchase in [digital](#) or [Hardcover](#))  
© 1998 B&H Publishing Group used by permission.  
Please do not reproduce.

## **GOD'S GRACIOUS PROVISIONS FOR HIS SERVANTS THE LEVITES**

**Command the sons of Israel that they give to the Levites from the inheritance of their possession cities to live in-** This was a privilege for the tribes to be able to give to the Levites, who ministered for them to Yahweh. Do we see our giving to God as a privilege or a duty ("I gotta give my tithe!") ?As shown in the Related Passages above, the Levites had no land inheritance, but had the best inheritance, Yahweh stating that He was their inheritance! In this passage, God does allot them cities for they had to have a place to live! Joshua 21:1-45 records the execution of this command after the conquest of Canaan has taken place. From the map above it is clear that the cities of the Levites are spread north to south and east to west (although the specific location of some of the cities is not known today).

**Warren Wiersbe** has an interesting note that "After their conquest of Canaan, the Jews changed the names of many of the cities." (Be Counted) This makes sense because undoubtedly many of the Canaanite names had allusions to their abominable gods/practices! This was part of exterminating the dangerous leavening influence of the godless pagans.

**Gilbrant** - So they were to have cities scattered among the other tribes with a little pastureland around them. Part of the idea of scattering the Levites throughout Israel was doubtless that these men, who would serve by turn at the central shrine, would be able to instruct the people all over the nation in their duties to God and in the teachings of Israel's faith. The people were to be reached in their homes. (Complete Biblical Library Commentary)

**And you shall give to the Levites pasture lands around the cities-** This provision allows the Levites to take care of livestock as described in the next verse.

For the details of provisions for the Levites see Joshua 21:1-45.

---

**Question:** [How was God Himself the inheritance of the Levites?](#)

**Answer:** Deuteronomy 18:1–2 says that the Levites had a very special inheritance from God: "The Levitical priests—indeed, the whole tribe of Levi—are to have no allotment or inheritance with Israel. They shall live on the food offerings presented to the Lord, for that is their inheritance. They shall have no inheritance among their fellow Israelites; the Lord is their inheritance, as he promised them." The other tribes of Israel received a land inheritance in Canaan, but the Levites received no land. Instead, the Levites were given certain cities within the other tribes' territories.

The Levites' inheritance was God Himself in the sense that they were the ones chosen to oversee the worship of the entire nation of Israel. The Levites were responsible for the tabernacle and its implements as well as overseeing the sacrifices and offerings of the people.

The priests were provided for through their service. Deuteronomy 18:3–4 offers a summary of the Law's provisions: "This is the share due the priests from the people who sacrifice a bull or a sheep: the shoulder, the internal organs and the meat from the head. You are to give them the firstfruits of your grain, new wine and olive oil, and the first wool from the shearing of your sheep."

The fuller explanation of this teaching is found in Numbers 18. "I give to the Levites all the tithes in Israel as their inheritance in return for the work they do while serving at the tent of meeting. . . . They will receive no inheritance among the Israelites. Instead, I give to the Levites as their inheritance the tithes that the Israelites present as an offering to the Lord. That is why I said concerning them: 'They will have no inheritance among the Israelites'" (verses 21, 23–24).

God was the unique inheritance to the Levites. He was the focus of their service, the source of their sustenance, and the significance of their calling. Their inheritance included cities, daily food, and a constant vocation, but it did not include the same type of land inheritance given to the other tribes of Israel. [GotQuestions.org](http://GotQuestions.org)

**Numbers 35:3** "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.

- Jos 21:11 2Ch 11:14 Eze 45:2
- [Numbers 35 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## CITIES FOR LEVITES PASTURE FOR CATTLE

**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** - The Levites would have acquired their flocks and herds through the collection of tithes and offerings from the Israelites (Nu 18:21-32).

**Numbers 35:4 "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.**

NET Numbers 35:4 The grazing lands around the towns that you will give to the Levites must extend to a distance of 500 yards from the town wall.

NLT Numbers 35:4 The pastureland assigned to the Levites around these towns will extend 1,500 feet from the town walls in every direction.

ESV Numbers 35:4 The pasturelands of the cities, which you shall give to the Levites, shall reach from the wall of the city outward a thousand cubits all around.

NIV Numbers 35:4 "The pasturelands around the towns that you give the Levites will extend out fifteen hundred feet from the town wall.

- [Numbers 35 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## EXTENT OF THE PASTURES GIVEN TO LEVITES

**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** - "The standard cubit in the OT is assumed by most authorities to be about eighteen inches (45 cm) in length, so this would be a distance of 1,500 feet or 500 yards (675 meters). " (NET Note)

**Numbers 35:5 "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.**

- [Numbers 35 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Currid's Model Accounting for 1000 and 2000

**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.**

**Currid** - In my opinion, the proper solution (DIFFERENCE BETWEEN 1000 IN V4 AND 2000 IN V5) was first proposed by the thirteenth-century rabbi [Ramban](#) and followed by modern scholars like Milgrom. It states that the perimeter of the pasture lands is a square and not a circle. A Levitical city and its pasture lands would look like this diagram. As an aside, the figure of 2000 cubits becomes later rabbinic law to limit the distance that a person may walk outside a city on the Sabbath. (EPSC-Nu)

**NET NOTE** - The precise nature of the layout described here is not altogether clear. V. 4 speaks of the distance from the wall as being 500 yards (1000 CUBITS); v. 5, however, describes measurements of 1,000 yards (2000 CUBITS). Various proposals have been made in order to harmonize vv. 4 and 5. P. J. Budd, Numbers (WBC), 376, makes the following suggestion: "It may be best to assume that the cubits of the Levitical pasture lands are cubit frontages of land—in other words on each side of the city there was a block of land with a frontage of two thousand cubits (v 5), and a depth of 1000 cubits (v 4)." (SEE CURRID'S DIAGRAM ABOVE)

**Numbers 35:6 "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.**

- **the six cities of refuge** Nu 35:13,14 De 4:41-43 Jos 20:2-9 Josh 21:3,13,21,27,32,36,38 Ps 9:9 Ps 62:7,8 142:4,5 Isa 4:6 Mt 11:28 Heb 6:18
- Charles Feinberg - [Cities of Refuge - Part 1](#); [Cities of Refuge - Part 2](#) - journal articles
- [Numbers 35 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**Related Passages** (Cities of Refuge - See map below for the 6 cities of refuge marked by **red squares**):

Joshua 20:2-9 "Speak to the sons of Israel, saying, 'Designate the **cities of refuge**, of which I spoke to you through Moses, 3 that the manslayer who kills any person unintentionally, without premeditation, may flee there, and they shall become your **refuge from the avenger of blood**. 4 'He shall flee to one of these cities, and shall stand at the entrance of the gate of the city and state his case in the hearing of the elders of that city; and they shall take him into the city to them and give him a place, so that he may dwell among them. 5'Now if the avenger of blood pursues him, then they shall not deliver the manslayer into his hand, because he struck his neighbor without premeditation and did not hate him beforehand. 6'He shall dwell in that city until he stands before the congregation for judgment, until the death of the one who is high priest in those days. Then the manslayer shall return to his own city and to his own house, to the city from which he fled.'" 7 So they set apart (1) **Kedesh** in Galilee in the hill country of Naphtali and (2) **Shechem** in the hill country of Ephraim, and (3) **Kiriath-arba (that is, Hebron)** in the hill country of Judah. 8 Beyond the Jordan east of Jericho, they designated (4) **Bezer** in the wilderness on the plain from the tribe of Reuben, and (5) **Ramoth** in Gilead from the tribe of Gad, and (6) **Golan** in Bashan from the tribe of Manasseh. 9 These were the appointed cities for all the sons of Israel and for the stranger who sojourns among them, that whoever kills any person unintentionally may flee there, and not die by the hand of the avenger of blood until he stands before the congregation.

Levitical Cities (**Green Dot**) and Cities of Refuge (**Red Square**) - click to enlarge  
From Holman Bible Atlas (available for purchase in [digital](#) or [hardcover](#))  
© 1998 B&H Publishing Group used by permission.  
Please do not reproduce.

## **CITIES FOR THE LEVITES FOR REFUGE AND RESIDENCE**

**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** - See the [passages in Joshua 20 above](#) for details regarding the names of the six **cities of refuge** as protection from the blood avenger. [Go to](#) Nu 35:11 for continuation of discussion of cities of refuge. The names of these cities were Kedesh, Shechem, and Hebron on the west side of the Jordan, and Golan, Ramoth, and Bezer on the east side as shown on the map above with the cities of refuge marked by **red squares**. Close observation shows that these 6 cities were spread throughout the land in such a way that a manslayer in any part of the land would not have to travel too far to reach one of these cities of refuge. This is another manifestation of the wisdom, mercy and grace of our Great God! See another delineation of the 6 cities of refuge in Joshua 21:3,13,21,27,32,36,38.

These six cities were a beautiful expression of the mercy and grace of God.

-- Rod Mattoon

A **manslayer** needed protection because there were no police and no jails to hold him safely before a trial. The only protection against a blood avenger was provided by **the six cities of refuge**. The issue of course is that not every death would be a murder, but some deaths would be the result of accidents. In this way a man not guilty of premeditated murder would not be wronged killed to avenge an accidental death.

**Jensen** has an interesting remark on the **cities of refuge** as "a constant reminder of the intimate relationship of God's written law and the workings of His grace, six of the Levite cities were designated as places of refuge for a manslayer fleeing from his avenger (35:6), fleeing, as it were, into a city of God to plead His mercy. The marriage of God's righteousness and grace is vividly demonstrated in the reason and provision for cities of refuge which the Israelites were to designate in the new land."

**Rod Mattoon** explains that "The city of refuge was to protect this individual accused of manslaughter from the goel-hadam, the avenger of blood. In the Middle East, the tribal members had the responsibility to punish any wrong done to the clan. Though accidental, the nearest male relative was duty-bound to avenge the blood or death of a family member. He was the goel-hadam, the

reclaimer of the blood and the one who demanded restitution of blood. By executing a person who killed or shed blood of someone of the clan, he would bring back the honor of the family. This is why the avenger hotly pursued the manslayer. An example of this situation is seen in the life of King Saul. When Saul broke his covenant with the Gibeonites and slaughtered many of them, David determined to correct the injustice and asked them the price of restitution. Saul was already dead, so the Gibeonites asked for seven of Saul's sons to be delivered to them for execution. David fulfilled their request. The honor of the Gibeonites was reclaimed and justice was served. With this background and the mind-set of the goel, a refugee had to quickly get to one of the six cities of refuge for protection before the blood avenger caught up with him and could legally kill him based on "an eye for an eye and tooth for tooth." Inside the city was safety, security, and serenity. Outside the city was death, despair, doom, and destruction. Delay was dangerous and disastrous. Debating or arguing would mean death. To hesitate would render escape hopeless. Fighting back and fussing would be foolish. The refugee must flee! There was no safety on the way, or being almost there. The manslayer could die on the steps entering the city." (Numbers Commentary)

**NET NOTE on manslayer** - The "manslayer" is the verb "to kill" in a participial form, providing the subject of the clause. The verb means "to kill"; it can mean accidental killing, premeditated killing, or capital punishment. The clause uses the infinitive to express purpose or result: "to flee there the manslayer," means "so that the manslayer may flee there."

**Refuge (04733)(miqlat)** means asylum and every use refers to the cities of refuge, a city where a person guilty of manslaughter could flee and find protection from the blood avenger (the kinsman of the dead person who seeks to extract vengeance for his or her death).

**TWOT** says "It should be distinguished from maḥseh, a place of refuge for man and/or animals, mānôš, a place of escape to which one flees, and mîsgāb, a place which is strong or high and, hence, inaccessible."

**Miqlat** - 20x in 20v all rendered refuge - Num. 35:6; Num. 35:11; Num. 35:12; Num. 35:13; Num. 35:14; Num. 35:15; Num. 35:25; Num. 35:26; Num. 35:27; Num. 35:28; Num. 35:32; Jos. 20:2; Jos. 20:3; Jos. 21:13; Jos. 21:21; Jos. 21:27; Jos. 21:32; Jos. 21:38; 1 Chr. 6:57; 1 Chr. 6:67

**And in addition to them you shall give forty-two cities** - The Levites were to be granted a total inheritance of 48 cities spread throughout the land. The Levites would have served (at least in theory) as reminders to the sons of Israel of the continual need for pursuit of holiness and reverential fear of the LORD.

---

#### Related Resources:

- Charles Feinberg - [Cities of Refuge - Part 1](#); [Cities of Refuge - Part 2](#)- journal articles
- International Standard Bible Encyclopedia [Refuge, Cities of](#)
- Holman Bible Dictionary [Cities of Refuge](#)
- Kitto Biblical Cyclopedia [Cities of Refuge](#)
- McClintock and Strong's Bible Encyclopedia [City of Refuge](#)
- The Jewish Encyclopedia [Cities of Refuge](#)

---

#### Torrey's Topic - Cities of Refuge

- Design of Exodus 21:13; Numbers 35:11; Joshua 20:3
- Names &c of Deuteronomy 4:41-43; Joshua 20:7,8

#### REQUIRED TO BE

- Easy of access Deuteronomy 19:3; Isaiah 62:10
- Open to all manslayers Joshua 20:4
- Strangers might take advantage of Numbers 35:15

#### THOSE ADMITTED TO

- Were put on their trial Numbers 35:12,24
- Not protected outside of Numbers 35:26,27
- Obligated to remain in, until the high priest's death Numbers 35:25,28
- Afforded no asylum to murderers Exodus 21:14; Numbers 35:16-21

#### ILLUSTRATIVE

- Of Christ Psalm 91:2; Isaiah 25:4
- Of the hope of the gospel Hebrews 6:18
- (The way to,) of Christ Isaiah 35:8; John 14:6

## James Smith Handfuls of Purpose - THE CITIES OF REFUGE Numbers 35

“The child that to its mother clings  
Lies not all safely on her breast  
Till she her arms around it flings,  
Sweetly caressing and caressed.  
Ev’n so, my God, Thy mighty arms,  
Not aught of mine, shield me from harms.”

Doubtless the apostle had these cities of refuge in his mind when he wrote these words in Hebrews 6: “We have a strong consolation who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us.” So the cities of refuge are typical of the hope set before us in Jesus Christ. “A man shall be an hiding place.” As such they were—

**1. Appointed by God.** “The Lord spake unto Moses, saying,” &c. (Nu 35:1). Him hath God exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour (Acts 5:31). “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” A prophet chosen out of the people.

**2. In charge of the Levites** (Nu 35:6). The Levites had charge of the holy things in connection with the worship of God, and may represent the ambassadors for Christ, into whose hands the Gospel of salvation has been committed, as taught in 2 Corinthians 5:20.

**3. Set apart for manslayers.** “Which ye shall appoint for the man slayers” (Nu 35:6). O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself—a manslayer. The man who commits sin is a manslayer. All have sinned, all are in need of a place of refuge. How many are killing themselves unwittingly?

**4. To be entered in haste.** “That he may flee thither” (Nu 35:6). There is great danger in delay. Death may overtake the sinner before he reaches the refuge that is in Christ. Escape for thy life. Behold, now is the accepted time. I flee to Thee to hide me. (2 Cor 6:2)

**5. A protection against a lawful avenger.** “Cities for refuge from the avenger” (Nu 35:12). The avenger of the murdered one had the authority of God to kill the murderer outside the cities of refuge. The avenger fitly represents the law (Ro 7:9), which cannot save, but has power to kill. By the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified.

**6. In convenient places.** “Three cities on this side of Jordan, and three in the land of Canaan” (Nu 35:14). Within easy reach of all, and were located in conspicuous spots, so that they might be easily seen at the distance. The Gospel of Christ is to be preached to every creature. “Wisdom crieth without, she uttereth her voice in the streets, she crieth in the chief places of concourse” (Pr 1:20–26). “Behold the Lamb of God” (John 1:29).

**7. Open for all.** “For every one that killeth any person” (Nu 35:15). The stranger as well as the children of Israel had the privilege of the refuge. The salvation of Christ is offered to all. There is room enough in this atoning death for every guilty, trusting soul. If any man thirst let him come unto Me. By Me if any man enter in he shall be saved.

**8. For all those who were sorry for their deeds These cities afforded no shelter to the wilful murderer.** “He shall surely be put to death” (Nu 35:16). They were appointed for those who had killed unawares, and the man who had killed his neighbour unawares would certainly be a very sorrowful man. The death of Christ, apart from repentance and faith, cannot shelter the guilty soul. Repent, and believe the Gospel.

**9. Places of justice and judgment.** “The congregation shall judge between the slayer and the avenger of blood, according to these judgments” (Nu 35:24). There is a very solemn thought here. To become our refuge Christ must take our place. The just judgments of God were meted out to Him, and the question of sin eternally settled. So that He is now a just God and a Saviour. “I have betrothed thee unto Me in righteousness” (Hosea 2:19).

**10. Abiding places for the slayer.** “He shall abide in it unto the death of the high priest.” This is a precious thought. The life of the slayer who had fled to the city for refuge was henceforth connected with the life of the high priest, who was anointed with the holy oil (Nu 35:25). As long as the high priest lived, he lived in the place of safety. As long as Christ our Great High Priest lives, we shall live by Him. Because I live, ye shall live also (Jn 14:19). Abide in Me (Jn 15:4). The language of David is very beautiful in this connection. “Abide thou with me, fear not; for he that seeketh my life, seeketh thy life; but with me thou shalt be in safeguard” (1



**Numbers 35:7 "All the cities which you shall give to the Levites shall be forty-eight cities, together with their pasture lands.**

- Jos 21:3-42 1Ch 6:54-81
- [Numbers 35 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## FORTY-EIGHT CITIES FOR THE LEVITES

**All the cities which you shall give to the Levites shall be forty-eight cities, together with their pasture lands-** The principle is clear that the spiritual servants of Yahweh were wholly dependent on Him for their provisions.

**THOUGHT** - How profitable it would be for us as His NT priests (1 Pe 2:9+, Rev 1:6±, Rev 5:10±) to continually see ourselves as wholly dependent on our Holy God not just for our "daily bread" but our "daily breath!" Ro 11:36+ says it perfectly "For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen." Or as David says "The LORD is the Portion of my inheritance and my Cup; You support my lot. The lines have fallen to me in pleasant places; Indeed, my heritage is beautiful to me." (Ps 16:5-6). As [Spurgeon](#) says "We, too (LIKE JESUS OF WHOM THIS PSALM SPEAKS), can make our boast in the Lord; He is the meat and the drink of our souls. He is our portion, supplying all our necessities, and our cup yielding royal luxuries; our cup in this life, and our inheritance in the life to come. As children of the Father Who is in heaven, we inherit, by virtue of our joint heirship with Jesus, all the riches of the covenant of grace; and the portion which falls to us sets upon our table the bread of heaven and the new wine of the kingdom. Who would not be satisfied with such dainty diet? Our shallow cup of sorrow we may well drain with resignation, since the deep cup of love stands side by side with it, and will never be empty." Indeed, can we not agree with the psalmist's query "Whom have I in heaven but You? And besides You, I desire nothing on earth. My flesh and my heart may fail, But God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever." (Ps 73:25-26)

**Pulpit Commentary** - The Levites numbered nearly 50,000 souls (see Nu 26:62 = just the males, not the wives), so that each Levitical city would have an average population of about 1000 to start with. There seems no sufficient reason for supposing that they shared their towns with men of the surrounding tribe. Even if the provision made for their habitation was excessive at first (which does not appear), yet their rate of increase should have been exceptionally high, inasmuch as they were not liable to military service.

**Numbers 35:8 "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."**

- **possession:** Ge 49:7 Ex 32:28,29 De 33:8-11 Jos 21:3
- from them: Nu 26:54 33:54 Ex 16:18 2Co 8:13,14
- [Numbers 35 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## PROPORTIONATE GIVING OF CITIES

**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** - This is straightforward. The bigger tribes had bigger land allocations and thus were required to give more cities to the Levites (and vice versa for the smaller tribes with smaller land allocations). The location of Levites throughout the land of all 12 tribes would be tangible and practical reminders to the tribes of their continual need to pursue righteousness and holiness in keeping with Exodus 19:4-5+

Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be **My own possession among all the peoples**, for all the earth is Mine; and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a **holy nation.** These are the words that you (MOSES) shall speak to the sons of Israel."



**Pulpit Commentary** - What seems to be a general rule of proportionate giving is laid down here, but it was not carried out, and it is not easy to see how it could have been. From the large combined territory of Judah and Simeon nine cities were indeed surrendered (Joshua 21:1-45), but all the rest, great and small, gave up four apiece, except Naphtali, which gave up three only. As the territory of Naphtali was apparently large in proportion to its numbers, this was probably for no other reason than that the tribe stood last on the list.

**Numbers 35:9** Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,

- [Numbers 35 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying** - Yahweh will now give details regarding the cities of refuge in Nu 35:9-29.

**Matthew Henry - Verses 9-34.** To show plainly the abhorrence of murder, and to provide the more effectually for the punishment of the murderer, the nearest relation of the deceased, under the title of avenger of blood, (or the redeemer of blood,) in notorious cases, might pursue, and execute vengeance. A distinction is made, not between sudden anger and malice aforethought, both which are the crime of murder; but between intentionally striking a man with any weapon likely to cause death, and an unintentional blow. In the latter case alone, the city of refuge afforded protection. Murder in all its forms, and under all disguises, pollutes a land. Alas! that so many murders, under the name of duels, prize-fights, etc. should pass unpunished. There were six cities of refuge; one or other might be reached in less than a day's journey from any part of the land. To these, man-slayers might flee for refuge, and be safe, till they had a fair trial. If acquitted from the charge, they were protected from the avenger of blood; yet they must continue within the bounds of the city till the death of the high priest. **Thus we are reminded that the death of the great High Priest is the only means whereby sins are pardoned, and sinners set at liberty.** These cities are plainly alluded to, both in the Old and New Testament, we cannot doubt the typical character of their appointment. Turn ye to the strong hold, ye prisoners of hope, saith the voice of mercy, Zechariah 9:12, alluding to the city of refuge. The writer of Hebrews describes the strong consolation of fleeing for refuge to the hope set before us, in a passage always applied to the gracious appointment of the cities of refuge, Hebrews 6:18. The rich mercies of salvation, through Christ, prefigured by these cities, demand our regard.

1. **Did the ancient city rear its towers of safety on high?** See Christ raised up on the cross; and is he not exalted at the right hand of his Father, to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and remission of sins?
2. Does not the highway of salvation, resemble the **smooth and plain path to the city of refuge?** Survey the path that leads to the Redeemer. Is there any stumbling-block to be found therein, except that which an evil heart of unbelief supplies for its own fall?
3. **Waymarks were set up pointing to the city.** And is it not the office of the ministers of the gospel to direct sinners to Him?
4. **The gate of the city stood open night and day.** Has not Christ declared, Him that cometh unto me I will in nowise cast out?
5. **The city of refuge afforded support to every one who entered its walls.** Those who have reached the refuge, may live by faith on Him whose flesh is meat indeed, and whose blood is drink indeed.
6. **The city was a refuge for all.** In the gospel there is no respect of persons. That soul lives not which deserves not Divine wrath; that soul lives not which may not in simple faith hope for salvation and life eternal, through the Son of God.

**Numbers 35:10** "Speak to the sons of Israel and say to them, 'When you cross the Jordan into the land of Canaan,

- Nu 34:2 Lev 14:34 25:2 De 12:9 19:1,2
- [Numbers 35 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**"WHEN" NOT "IF"  
YOU CROSS!**

**Speak to the sons of Israel and say to them, 'When you cross the Jordan into the land of Canaan-** Not **IF** you cross, but **WHEN** you cross, just as in Nu 33:51+ "Speak to the sons of Israel and say to them, **WHEN** you cross over the Jordan...." And again in Numbers 34:2+ "Command the sons of Israel and say to them, '**WHEN** you enter the land of Canaan...." They will cross because Jehovah says they will cross. We will cross over from death in this body, to life eternal because God says it and that settles it!

**When you cross** is used 7x in the OT and all are related to Israel crossing over the Jordan into the Promised Land. Note especially the repetition in some of Moses' last words in Deuteronomy, which is just before Israel actually does cross over. Last words are

**Numbers 35:11 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.**

- **you shall select for yourselves** . Nu 35:6 Jos 20:2
- **unintentionally** Nu 35:22,23 Ex 21:13 Dt 4:42 Dt 19:4-5
- Charles Feinberg - [Cities of Refuge - Part 1](#); [Cities of Refuge - Part 2](#)- journal articles
- [Numbers 35 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passages:

Dt 4:41-42+ Then Moses set apart **three cities across the Jordan to the east**, that a manslayer might flee there, who unintentionally slew his neighbor without having enmity toward him in time past; and by fleeing to one of these cities he might live:

Deuteronomy 19:4-5+ "Now this is the case of the manslayer who may flee there and live: when he kills his friend unintentionally, not hating him previously— 5 as when a man goes into the forest with his friend to cut wood, and his hand swings the axe to cut down the tree, and the iron head slips off the handle and strikes his friend so that he dies—he may flee to one of these cities and live;

**Then** - THEN answers to WHEN of the previous passage and marks a progression or sequence.

**You shall select for yourselves cities to be your cities of refuge, that the manslayer who has killed any person unintentionally may flee there** - The cities of refuge were situated three on the eastern (Dt 4:41) and three on the western side of Jordan (Josh 20:7). The importance of the **cities of refuge** is that the blood avenger (goel or kinsman) had the right to avenge the death of his kin by slaying the one who caused the death wherever he found him. Thus the appointment of these cities of asylum was a divinely ordained humane institution for the protection of involuntary homicide, similar to what we commonly call [manslaughter](#) today.

**Manslayer** (murder)([07523](#)) **ratsach** means to murder or slay, all 47 uses (in 40v) speaking of one human being killing another and never of a person killing an animal. Ratsach is never employed in contexts of war, capital punishment, or self-defense. The taking of a human life is the primary concept behind this word. The first use is in the commandment "Thou shalt not kill." (Ex 20:13) **Ratsach** refers to premeditated murder (Deut. 5:17; 1 Kgs. 21:19; Jer. 7:9), accidental killing (Nu. 35:11; Josh. 20:3), an act of revenge (Nu 35:27) and death from animal attack (Pr. 22:13). "Provocatively, Hosea refers to the lewdness of the priests that led people astray as being equal to murder (Hos. 6:9)." (Baker) Ratsach is a key word in Numbers 35 occurring 14x - Num. 35:6; Num. 35:11; Num. 35:12; Num. 35:16; Num. 35:17; Num. 35:18; Num. 35:19; Num. 35:21; Num. 35:25; Num. 35:26; Num. 35:27; Num. 35:28; Num. 35:30; Num. 35:31;

**Unintentionally** ([07684](#))(**shegagah** from **shagag** = to go astray, commit sin or error) a mistake, unintentional wrong, accidental error, accidental an inadvertent transgression, error, ignorance. The primary meaning is an inadvertent error performed in the daily routine of life that ranged from a slip of the tongue (Eccl. 5:6); to accidental manslaughter (Nu 35:11, 15; Josh. 20:3, 9)

**Gilbrant** - The error/sin which is described could have occurred in Israel's worship, for the instructions about the sacrifices were to be followed carefully. Failure to do so, if unintentional, could be atoned for by the priest. A proper attitude when presenting an offering by fire and a sin offering atoned for this kind of error (Num. 15:25). If something holy was inadvertently eaten, the offending person had to restore the lost offering and add a penalty of one-fifth (Lev. 22:14). Breaking a law or committing a general offense had to be dealt with (cf. Num. 35:11; Josh. 20:3). This term was among words used to describe errors by rulers (Ecc. 10:5).(Complete Biblical Library Hebrew-English Dictionary)

**Shegagah** - 19x in 18v - error(5), mistake(1), unintentionally(14). - Lev. 4:2; Lev. 4:22; Lev. 4:27; Lev. 5:15; Lev. 5:18; Lev. 22:14; Num. 15:24; Num. 15:25; Num. 15:26; Num. 15:27; Num. 15:28; Num. 15:29; Num. 35:11; Num. 35:15; Jos. 20:3; Jos. 20:9; Eccl. 5:6; Eccl. 10:5

**Wiersbe** - Jesus Christ is our "city of refuge" (Heb. 6:18). When we trust Him, our sins are all forgiven and judgment is past (Rom. 8:1). Salvation is not probation. If the fugitive left the city, he was in danger of death. In Jesus Christ, we have eternal life (John 5:24). Our High Priest will never die; therefore, we are saved eternally (Heb. 7:23–28). (WWBC)

**Rod Mattoon** has an interesting explanation (some of his details are extra-biblical) that "Because of the importance of the cities, several conditions were met. The cities were spread out throughout the land where residents would be within a day's journey. They were placed on hills where they could be easily seen. They were for all men whether Jew or Gentile. The access to the cities were to be as easy as possible. The Sanhedrin was responsible to maintain the roads to these cities. The roads had to be free from any stumbling blocks, obstacles, or anything that would hurt the feet. Bridges were to be at least 32 cubits (48 feet) wide. Large signs were erected on every corner with the words miklac which means "**refuge**." The sign had to be large enough so they could be easily seen or read if in hot pursuit or flight. Two law students were placed on the route to accompany a fleeing refugee to the city in the event a blood avenger should catch up with the refugee. The lawyers would try to pacify the goel until there was a legal investigation. The gates of the cities were always open and attended 24 hours a day by men whose duty was to receive fugitives. The doors were always unlocked at night even in war time. Most gates of the cities were locked at night. The fugitive upon arrival would plead his case to the elders for a trial. He would be taken in and would be provided with shelter and food. The trial was usually within days. He would be judged by at least 23 officials. This was the amount needed for a guilty verdict. If the fugitive was found guilty of intentional murder, he was turned over to the blood avenger for execution. Bribes were not allowed (**ED: AND NEITHER WAS RANSOM PAYMENT**). If the fugitive was found innocent of the charges of premeditated murder, the fugitive could live only in the city of refuge until the death of the High Priest. He could then return home. If the fugitive died in the city, the bones were turned over to the family upon the death of the High Priest. If the fugitive was confined to the city, he was assigned convenient habitation, rent free. If he knew no trade, he was taught a trade for self-support. The mother of the High Priest would help feed and clothe this unfortunate victim so that they might not be impatient and pray for the death of their son (High Priest), upon whose death the fugitive's liberty and property were restored." (Numbers Commentary)

**Cities of Refuge** were a foreshadowing of the refuge we find in Christ...

Psalms 91:2 I will say to the LORD, **'My refuge** and my fortress, My God, in whom I trust!"

Isaiah 25:4 For You have been a defense for the helpless, A defense for the needy in his distress, **A refuge from the storm**, a shade from the heat; For the breath of the ruthless is like a rain storm against a wall.

Hebrews 6:18 so that by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, **we who have taken refuge** would have strong encouragement to take hold of the hope set before us.

---

#### **G Campbell Morgan - Num. 35:11**

The provision of these cities of refuge was a proof of the mercy and justice of God. These people were naturally fierce and vindictive. The law of God had made life sacred, and the punishment of taking it had been solemnly declared in the words: "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed." Yet it was quite possible that in connection with the taking of human life there might be extenuating circumstances. For premeditated murder there was no forgiveness, and for the murderer in such case, no city of refuge was provided. For killing in haste, under sudden impulse of passion, such provision was made. These cities were not provided that men might evade justice, but that justice might be ensured. It is quite possible to do unjust things in the name of justice. It was against such a possibility that these cities were provided. Further, the fact that a man-slayer reached one of these cities did not ensure him against enquiry and investigation. It provided for the possibility thereof, and indeed made it obligatory. Thus the man had an opportunity of explanation, and the nation the certainty of just action. The wrong of taking human life was marked in the case of the man-slayer who was not found worthy of the death-penalty, in that it was provided that he must remain in the city until the death of the high priest. It is a wonderful illustration of the strict and impartial justice of God in all His dealings with sin. While it cannot be excused, the sinner is never punished unjustly.

---

#### **Question: [What were the cities of refuge in the Old Testament?](#)**

**Answer:** The cities of refuge were part of the distribution of the Promised Land among the twelve tribes of Israel. Only one tribe, the Levites, was not given land to develop. Instead, they were to be the priests of the Lord and the overseers of the tabernacle and all its rites and furnishings. Only the Levites could carry and set up the tabernacle (Numbers 2:5-13). As the Levites were to have no territorial domain allocated to them like the other tribes in the conquest of Canaan, they were to be distributed throughout the land in certain cities appropriated to their use. Part of their inheritance consisted of forty-eight cities spread throughout the land (Numbers 35:6-7). Of these forty-eight cities, six were designated as cities of refuge. The cities were Kedesh, Shechem, Hebron, Bezer, Ramoth, and Golan (Joshua 20:7-8).

The Mosaic Law stated that anyone who committed a murder was to be put to death (Exodus 21:14). But for unintentional deaths, God set aside these cities to which the murderer could flee for refuge (Exodus 21:13). He would be safe from the [avenger](#)—the family member charged with avenging the victim's death (Numbers 35:19)—until the case could go to trial. The congregation would judge to find if the attacker acted unintentionally. If he did, he would return to the city of refuge and live there safely until the death of

the high priest who was in office at the time of the trial, at which point he could return to his property. If the attacker left the city of refuge before the death of the high priest, however, the avenger would have the right to kill him (Numbers 35:24-28).

The establishment of those privileged sanctuaries among the cities of the Levites is probably traceable to the idea that the Levites would be the most suitable and impartial judges, that their presence and counsels might calm or restrain the stormy passions of the blood avenger. By their consecration as priests, the Levites were mediators between the Israelites and God. As such, they would have been gifted to calmly mediate between the attacker and the victim's family, ensuring that no further bloodshed would occur.

The cities of refuge are types of Christ, in whom sinners find a refuge from the destroyer of our souls. Just as the guilty person sought refuge in the cities set up for that purpose, we flee to Christ for refuge from sin (Hebrews 6:18). We run to Christ to escape the danger we are in from the curse and condemnation of the law, from of the wrath of God, and from an eternity in hell. Only Christ provides refuge from these things, and it is to Him alone that we must run. Just as the cities were open to all who fled to them for safety, it is Christ who provides safety to all who come to Him for refuge from sin and its punishment. [GotQuestions.org](http://GotQuestions.org)

---

**Spurgeon - THE SINNER'S REFUGE Numbers 35:11** - YOU are aware that the principle of blood-revenge is a deep-seated one in the Eastern mind. From, the earliest ages, it was always the custom with the Orientals, when a man was murdered, or slain without malice aforethought, for the nearest relative, his heir, or any person related to him, to take revenge for him upon the person who, either intentionally or unintentionally, was the means of his death. This revenge was a very special thing to the Oriental mind. The avenger of blood would hunt his victim for forty years,—ay, until he died, if he was not able to reach him before,—and would be on his track all his life, that he might slay him. It was not necessary that the man-slayer should have any trial before a judge; his victim was dead, and if the one who killed him was not put to death, it was reckoned among some tribes to be legitimate to kill his father, or indeed any member of his tribe; and until someone in that tribe was put to death, as a revenge for the man who had been slain, by accident or otherwise, a deadly feud existed between the two clans, which never could be quenched except by blood.

Now, when the Lord gave to the Jews this law concerning the cities of refuge, he took advantage of their deep-rooted love towards the system of the revenge of blood by the nearest relative; and God acted wisely in this, as he has done in all things. There are two matters mentioned in Scripture which I do not believe God ever approved, but which, finding they were deep-seated, he did not forbid to the Jews. One was polygamy; the practice of marrying many wives had become so established that, though God abhorred, it, yet he permitted it to the Jews, because he foresaw that they would inevitably have broken the commandment if he had made an ordinance that they should have but one wife. It was the same with this matter of blood-revenge; it was so firmly fixed in the mind of the people that God, instead of refusing to the Jews what they regarded as the privilege of taking vengeance upon their fellows, enacted a law which rendered it almost impossible that a man should be killed, unless he were really a murderer; for he appointed six cities, at convenient distances, so that, when one man killed another by accident, and so committed homicide, he might at once flee to one of these cities; and though he might have to remain there all his life, yet the avenger of blood could never touch him, if he were innocent. He would have a fair trial; but even if he were found innocent, he must stay within the city, into which the avenger of blood could not by any possibility come. If he went out of the city, the avenger might kill him. He was therefore to suffer perpetual banishment, even for causing death accidentally, in order that it might be seen how much God regarded the rights of blood, and how fearful a thing it is to put a man to death in any way. You see, dear friends, that this prevented the likelihood of anyone being killed who was not guilty of murder; for, as soon as one man struck another to the ground by accident, by a stone, or any other means, he fled to the city of refuge. He had a start of the pursuer; and if he arrived there first, he was secure and safe.

I wish to use this custom of the Jews, as a metaphor and type, to set forth the salvation of men through Jesus Christ our Lord. I shall give you, first, an explanation; and, then, an exhortation.

#### **I. I SHALL ATTEMPT AN EXPLANATION OF THIS TYPE.**

Note, first, the person for whom the city of refuge was provided. It was not a place of shelter for the wilful murderer; if he fled there, he must be dragged out of it, and given up to the avenger, after a fair trial; and the avenger of death was to kill him, and so have blood for blood, and life for life. But, in case of accident, when one man had slain another, without malice aforethought, and had therefore only committed homicide, the man fleeing there was perfectly safe.

Here, however, the type does not adequately represent the work of our Lord Jesus Christ; **he is not a refuge provided for men who are innocent, but for men who are guilty,—not for those who have accidentally transgressed, but for those who have wilfully gone astray.** Our Saviour has come into the world to save, not those who have by mistake and error committed sin, but those who have fearfully transgressed against well-known Divine commandments, and who have followed the sinful dictates of their own free-will, their own perversity leading them to rebel against God.

Note, next, the avenger of blood. In explaining this portion of the type, I must, of course, take every part of the figure. The avenger of blood, I have said, was usually the next of kin to the one who had been slain; but I believe any other member of the family was held to be competent to act as the avenger. If, for instance, my brother had been killed, it would have been my duty, as the first of the

family, to avenge his blood, if possible, there and then,—to go after the murderer, or the man who had accidentally caused his death, and to put him to death at once. If I could not do that, it would be my business, and that of my father, and, indeed, of every male member of the family, to hunt and pursue that man, until God should deliver him into our hand, so that we might put him to death. I mean not that it is our duty now, but it would have been so regarded under the old Jewish dispensation. It was allowed, by the Mosaic law, that those who were of the kith and kin of the man killed, should be the avengers of his blood.

We find the counterpart of this type, for the sinner, in the law of God. **Sinner, the law of God is the blood-avenger that is on your track!** You have wilfully transgressed, you have, as it were, killed God's commandments, you have trampled them under your foot; the law is the avenger of blood, it is after you, and it will have you in its grasp ere long; condemnation is hanging over your head now, and it shall surely overtake you. Though it may not reach you in this life, yet, in the world to come, the avenger of blood, the Moses, the law of the Lord, shall execute vengeance upon you, and you shall be utterly destroyed.

But, further, there was a city of refuge provided under the law; nay, more, there were six cities of refuge, in order that one of them might be at a convenient distance from any part of the country. Now, there are not six Christs; there is but one; but there is a Christ everywhere. "The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."

The city of refuge was a priestly city,—a city of the Levites; and it afforded protection for life to the manslayer. He might never go out of it till the death of the then reigning high priest; after which he might go free, without being touched by the avenger of blood. But, during the time of his sojourn there, he was housed and fed gratuitously; everything was provided for him, and he was kept entirely safe. And I would have you mark that he was safe in this city, not because of its walls, or bolts, or bars, but simply because it was the place divinely appointed for shelter. Do you see the man running towards it? The avenger is after him, fast and furious; the manslayer has just reached the borders of the city; in a moment, the avenger halts; he knows it is of no use going any further after him, not because the city walls are strong, nor because the gates are barred, nor because an army standeth without to resist, but because God hath said the man shall be safe as soon as he has crossed the border, and has come into the suburbs of the city. **Divine appointment was the only thing which made the city of refuge secure. Now, beloved, our Lord Jesus Christ is the divinely-appointed way of salvation; whosoever amongst us shall make haste from our sins, and fly to Christ, being convinced of our guilt, and helped by God's Spirit to enter that road, shall, without doubt, find absolute and eternal security. The curse of the law shall not touch us, Satan shall not harm us, vengeance shall not reach us, for the Divine appointment, stronger than gates of iron or brass, shieldeth every one of us "who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us" in the gospel.**

The city of refuge, I must have you note, too, had round it suburbs of a very great extent. Two thousand cubits were allowed for grazing land for the cattle of the priests, and a thousand cubits within these for fields and vineyards. Now, no sooner did the man reach the suburbs of the city, than he was safe; it was not necessary for him to get within the walls, but the outskirts themselves were sufficient protection. Learn, hence, that if ye do but touch the hem of Christ's garment, ye shall be made whole; if ye do but lay hold of him with "faith as a grain of mustard seed," with faith which is very feeble, but is truly a living principle, you are safe.

"A little genuine grace ensures  
The death of all our sins."

Get anywhere within the borders of the city of refuge, and thou art at once and for ever secure from the avenger.

We have some interesting particulars, also, with regard to the distance of these cities from the habitations of men in ancient Judæa. **It is said that, wherever the crime of homicide might be committed by any man, he might get to a city of refuge within half a day; and, verily, beloved, it is no great distance from a guilty sinner to the sheltering breast of Christ.** It is but a simple renunciation of our own powers, and a laying hold of Christ, to be our All-in-all, that is required, in order to our being found within the city of refuge. Then, with regard to the roads to the city, we are told that they were strictly preserved in good order. Every river was bridged; as far as possible, the road was made level, and every obstruction removed, so that the man who fled might find an easy passage to the city. Once a year, the elders of the city went along the route to see that it was in proper repair, and to provide, as far as they could, that nothing might occur, through the breaking down of bridges, or the stopping up of the highway, to impede the flight of any manslayer, and cause him to be overtaken and killed. Wherever there were by-roads and turnings, there were fixed up sign-posts, with this word plainly visible upon them, "**Refuge,**"—"Refuge"—pointing out the way in which the man should fly, if he wished to reach the city. There were two people always kept on the road, so that, in case the avenger of blood should overtake a man, they might intercept him, and entreat him to stay his hand, until the man had reached the city, lest haply innocent blood should be shed, without a fair trial, and so the avenger himself should be proved guilty of murder; for the risk, of course, was upon the head of the avenger, if he put one to death who did not deserve to die.

Now, beloved, I think this is a picture of the road to Christ Jesus. It is no roundabout road of the law; it is no obeying this, that, and

the other command; it is a straight road: "Believe, and live." It is a road so hard, that no self-righteous man will ever tread it; but it is a road so easy, that every man, who knows himself to be a sinner, may by it find his way to Christ, and his way to heaven. And lest any should be mistaken, God has set me and my brethren in the ministry, to be like hand-posts in the way, to point poor sinners to Jesus; and we desire ever to have on our lips the cry,

**"Refuge! Refuge! REFUGE!"**

**Sinner, that is the way;**

**walk thou therein, and thou shalt be saved.**

I think I have thus given the explanation of the type. Christ is the true City of Refuge, and he preserves all those who flee to him for mercy; he does that because he is the divinely-appointed Saviour, able to save unto the uttermost all them that come unto God by him.

**II. Now, in the second place, I HAVE TO GIVE AN EXHORTATION** (Click for full message on The Sinner's Refuge)

**Numbers 35:12 '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.'**

- **the avenger:** Nu 35:19,25-27 De 19:6 Jos 20:3-6,9 2Sa 14:7
- **until he stand:** Nu 35:24 De 19:11,12 Jos 20:4-6
- [Numbers 35 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### **Avenger of Blood**

**The cities shall be to you as a refuge from the avenger**([goel/ga'al](#)) - The city would provide a safe asylum from the nearest kinsman who sought to take revenge.

**THOUGHT** - The question arises as to how this applies to NT believers. I'm glad you asked! The short answer is that in the Garden of Eden Satan murdered Adam (Jn 8:44) and since that fateful day all mankind has in effect been murdered, born dead in our trespasses and sins (Ro 5:12+, Eph 2:1+). We were in need of a blood avenger, a near kinsman to avenge our murder. Jesus Christ became a Man that He might become our Kinsman-Redeemer (see Table depicting Jesus as our Kinsman-Redeemer), but not only did He become our Kinsman-Redeemer but He also became our **Blood Avenger** (See [discussion below](#))

**Guzik** - In the ancient culture of Israel, it was not left entirely up to the government to avenge a murder. Each extended family had a recognized avenger who would ensure that one who murdered a family member would likewise be killed. This practice was based upon a correct understanding of Genesis 9:6: Whoever shed's man's blood, by man his blood shall be shed; for in the image of God, God made man.

**So that** - Always be alert to this term of purpose. In this context is clearly giving us the purpose for God's establishment of cities of refuge so that the manslayer would be safe from a relative taking his life.

**The manslayer will not die until he stands before the congregation for trial**(see Nu 35:22-24) - The manslayer would be tried to determine if the death he caused was accidental or intentional. As reiterated in the following passages, if the death was intentional, the man would be found guilty of murder and be punished with death.

Joshua 20:4-6 gives more detailed regarding the trial of the manslayer...

'He shall flee to one of these cities, and shall stand at the entrance of the gate of the city and state his case in the hearing of the elders of that city; and they shall take him into the city to them and give him a place, so that he may dwell among them. 5'Now if the avenger of blood pursues him, then they shall not deliver the manslayer into his hand, because he struck his neighbor without premeditation and did not hate him beforehand. 6'He shall dwell in that city until he stands before the congregation for judgment, until the death of the one who is high priest in those days. Then the manslayer shall return to his own city and to his own house, to the city from which he fled.'

**C H MacKintosh** - Whether Reuben and Gad were right or wrong in settling east of that significant boundary, God in His mercy would not leave the slayer without a refuge from the avenger of blood. On the contrary, like Himself, He ordained that those cities which were designed as a merciful provision for the slayer should be so situated that wherever there was need of a shelter that



shelter might be near at hand. There was always a city within reach of any who might be exposed to the sword of the avenger. **This was worthy of our God. If any slayer happened to fall into the hands of the avenger of blood, it was not for want of refuge near at hand, but because he had failed to avail himself of it.** All necessary provision was made; the cities were named, and well defined, and publicly known. Every thing was made as plain, as simple, and as easy as possible. Such was God's gracious way. No doubt, the slayer was responsible to put forth all his energy to reach the sacred precincts; and no doubt he would. It is not at all likely that any one would be so blind or so infatuated as to fold his arms, in cool indifference, and say, "*If I am fated to escape, I shall escape; my efforts are not needed: if I am not fated to escape, I cannot escape; my efforts are of no use.*" We cannot fancy a manslayer using such silly language, or being guilty of such blind [fatuity](#) as this. He knew too well that if the avenger could but lay his hand upon him, all such notions would be of small account. There was but the one thing to be done, and that was, to escape for his life—to flee from impending judgment—to find his safe abode within the gates of the city of refuge. Once there, he could breathe freely. No evil could overtake him there. The moment he crossed the threshold of the gate, he was as safe as God's provision could make him. If a hair of his head could be touched within the bounds of the city, it could but be a dishonor and a reproach upon the ordinance of God. True, he had to keep close; he dared not venture outside the gate. Within, he was perfectly safe; without, he was thoroughly exposed. He could not even visit his friends; he was an exile from his father's house; he was a prisoner of hope. Absent from the home of his heart's affections, he waited for the death of the high-priest, which was to set him perfectly free and restore him, once more, to his inheritance and to his people.

**Henry Morris** - the avenger. The "avenger" (Hebrew *gaal*, also translated "kinsman" or "redeemer") acted under the authority of Genesis 9:6, seeking to avenge the death of a near kinsman (Hebrews 6:18).

**Avenger** ([01350](#)) see note below on [goel/ga'al](#).

#### Related Resources:

- Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible [Avenger of Blood](#)
- Morrish Bible Dictionary [Avenger. Avenger of Blood](#)
- 1911 Encyclopedia Britannica [Avenger of Blood](#)
- McClintock and Strong's Bible Encyclopedia [Avenger of Blood](#)
- The Jewish Encyclopedia [Avenger of Blood](#)

---

#### Question: [What is an avenger of blood in the Bible?](#)

**Answer:** In the Bible, an **avenger of blood** is a person legally responsible for carrying out [vengeance](#) when a family member has been unlawfully killed or murdered. The avenger of blood is usually the nearest male relative of the murdered person. This family executioner seeks justice by killing the individual responsible for the death of his relative.

Mosaic Law allowed vengeance killings carried out by an avenger of blood: "The avenger of blood shall put the murderer to death; when the avenger comes upon the murderer, the avenger shall put the murderer to death" ([Numbers 35:19](#); see also [26–27](#) and [Deuteronomy 19:11–12](#)). If a family member was murdered, it became the duty of the avenger of blood to restore justice to the family and the land by pursuing and ultimately carrying out the [death penalty](#) on the person responsible. This Old Testament law is rooted in God's requirement of a life for a life in cases of murder: "And I will require the blood of anyone who takes another person's life. If a wild animal kills a person, it must die. And anyone who murders a fellow human must die. If anyone takes a human life, that person's life will also be taken by human hands. For God made human beings in his own image" ([Genesis 9:5–6](#), NLT).

The word translated "avenge," in Hebrew, is related to the word for "redeem," "reclaim," or "restore." As a representative of God and the family, the avenger of blood "redeemed" or "reclaimed" the blood of the relative by killing the original blood-shedder. An avenger of blood was to act only in cases of deliberate murder or the unlawful taking of an innocent life. Intent is a necessary element of murder. Six examples of intentional homicide are outlined in [Numbers 35:16–21](#). The avenger of blood was not given license to act in instances of accidental manslaughter.

The Mosaic Law regulated the actions of the avenger of blood by providing [cities of refuge](#) for the accused. An individual who committed manslaughter, or the unintentional and accidental killing of a person, could find sanctuary in any of the six designated cities of refuge throughout the land of Israel ([Numbers 35:10–15](#), [22–25](#); [Deuteronomy 19:4–6](#); [Joshua 20:1–6](#)). In these towns, the avenger of blood's quarry was legally protected and guaranteed a fair trial.

Gideon became the avenger of blood for his brothers who had been murdered on Mount Tabor by the Midianite kings Zebah and Zalmunna ([Judges 8:18–21](#)). Joab avenged the blood of his brother Asahel ([2 Samuel 3:27–30](#)). The men of Gibeon avenged the deaths of their countrymen at the hands of Saul by executing seven of the king's sons ([2 Samuel 21:1–9](#)). The avenger of blood concept also figures into the account of King Amaziah, who put to death the officials who had assassinated his father ([2 Kings 14:5–](#)



6). The story of the Tekoite woman involved a plea for King David to stop the actions of the avenger of blood (2 Samuel 14:8–11).

In the New Testament, the apostle Paul instructs, “Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God’s wrath, for it is written: ‘It is mine to avenge; I will repay,’ says the Lord” (Romans 12:17–19).

Scripture promises that God will punish evildoers (1 Thessalonians 4:6). God has also appointed government authorities to execute vengeance on His behalf: “The government is God’s servant working for your good. But if you do what is wrong, you should be afraid. The government has the right to carry out the death sentence. It is God’s servant, an avenger to execute God’s anger on anyone who does what is wrong” (Romans 13:4, GWT).

Ultimately, the Lord is the Restorer and Redeemer of His people (Isaiah 41:14). In several places in Scripture, God is portrayed as the avenger of blood: “Rejoice, you nations, with his people, for he will avenge the blood of his servants; he will take vengeance on his enemies and make atonement for his land and people” (Deuteronomy 32:43; see also Judges 9:23–24; 2 Kings 9:7; Psalm 9:12; 79:10; Revelation 6:10; 19:2). [GotQuestions.org](http://GotQuestions.org)

### Numbers 35:13 'The cities which you are to give shall be your six cities of refuge.

- **six cities:** Nu 35:6
- Charles Feinberg - [Cities of Refuge - Part 1](#); [Cities of Refuge - Part 2](#)- journal articles
- [Numbers 35 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**The cities which you are to give shall be your six cities of refuge-** Six cities, as described in the next verse, 3 on the west and 3 on the east of the Jordan and distributed throughout the land in such a way that a man guilty of causing another's death by accident would easily be able to reach a city and be safe from the relative of the dead person, the so-called blood avenger.

### Numbers 35:14 'You shall give three cities across the Jordan and three cities in the land of Canaan; they are to be cities of refuge.

- **three cities:** De 4:41-43 Dt 19:8-10 Jos 20:7-9
- [Numbers 35 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## THREE EAST & THREE WEST - DIVINE PROVISION OF READY REFUGE!

**You shall give three cities across the Jordan-** Moses records them in Dt 4:41-43 "Then Moses set apart **three cities across the Jordan to the east**, 42 that a manslayer might flee there, who unintentionally slew his neighbor without having enmity toward him in time past; and by fleeing to one of these cities he might live: 43 [Bezer](#) in the wilderness on the plateau for the Reubenites, and [Ramoth](#) in Gilead for the Gadites, and [Golan](#) in Bashan for the Manassites." Joshua 20:8 also records these 3 cities - "Beyond the Jordan east of Jericho, they designated Bezer in the wilderness on the plain from the tribe of Reuben, and Ramoth in Gilead from the tribe of Gad, and Golan in Bashan from the tribe of Manasseh."

**and three cities in the land of Canaan; they are to be cities of refuge-** Joshua records three cities west of the Jordan - "So they set apart [Kedesh](#) in Galilee in the hill country of Naphtali and [Shechem](#) in the hill country of Ephraim, and [Kiriath-arba](#) (that is, [Hebron](#)) in the hill country of Judah." (Joshua 20:7)

Deuteronomy 19:3 tells that the roads were to be maintained for the manslayer - "You shall prepare the roads for yourself, and divide into three parts the territory of your land which the LORD your God will give you as a possession, so that any manslayer may flee there.

### Numbers 35:15 '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.

- Nu 15:16 Ex 12:49 Lev 24:22 Ro 3:29 Ga 3:28

- [Numbers 35 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## PURPOSE OF THE CITIES OF REFUGE

**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** - Notice the Scripture is clear that the city of refuge was a place of safety for one who accidentally killed another person.

**Currid** - The manslayer stands in judgement before the congregation; in Deuteronomy 19:11–12, it is the elders of the manslayer's home city who determine final judgement. If the manslayer is judged guilty of intentional, deliberate homicide, then he will be handed over to the blood avenger for the punishment to be carried out. The laws of refuge apply not only to native Israelites, but also to the 'sojourner' and the 'one who dwells' among the Israelites. (EPSC-Nu)

**Guzik** - This, if properly understood and applied, could be an effective deterrent to murder and not a bad institution. Yet, the system had a fatal weakness: What if a death was accidental, yet difficult to prove that it was accidental?. We can picture the situation easily: Two men work together, chopping down trees, when one man swings an ax and the ax head flies off, striking the other man in the head and instantly killing him. The surviving man had good reason to believe the avenger of blood from the dead man's family would track him down and kill him, believing the death was murder.. Therefore, such a man could flee to a city of refuge—an appointed Levitical city, where he could stay, safe from the avenger of blood, until the issue was settled and he could leave the city of refuge safely.

**Unintentionally** (07684) see above on [shegagah](#)

**Numbers 35:16 '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.'**

- **if he smite (KJV):** Nu 35:22-24 De 19:11-13
- **the:** Nu 35:30-33 Ge 9:5,6 Ex 21:12-14 Lev 24:17
- [Numbers 35 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## MURDERER WITH IRON RECEIVES DEATH PENALTY

**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**  
The cities of refuge did not provide safety for a murderer, only for a manslayer.

---

**C H Mackintosh** applies this truth of the safety of the cities of refuge somewhat prophetically to the nation of Israel, who he sees as the "manslayer," not the "murderer!" This is an interesting analysis with which I cannot disagree.

He writes "that this beautiful ordinance had special reference to Israel. They have killed the Prince of Life; but the question is, As which are they viewed by God? as the **murderer**, or as the **slayer**? If the former, there is no refuge—no hope. No murderer could be sheltered within the city of refuge. (Josh 20:1-6)....with respect to the murderer, the law was rigid and unbending—"The murderer shall surely be put to death. The revenger of blood himself shall slay the murderer, when he meeteth him" (Nu 35:19KJV, cf Nu 35:21). Israel, then, through the marvelous grace of God, will be treated as a slayer and not as a murderer. "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." (Lk 23:34+) These potent words ascended to the ear and to the heart of the God of Israel. They were heard and answered; nor are we to suppose that the answer was exhausted in its application on the day of Pentecost. No; it still holds good, and its efficacy will be illustrated in the future history of the house of Israel. That people are now under God's keeping. They are exiles from the land and the home of their fathers; but the time is coming when they shall be restored to their own land, not by the death of the High-Priest—blessed be His deathless name! He can never die—but He will leave His present position, and come forth, in a new character, as the Royal Priest, to sit upon His throne. Then shall the exile return to his long-lost home and his forfeited inheritance. But not till then, else it would be ignoring the fact that they killed the Prince of Life, which were impossible. The man-slayer must remain out of his possession until the appointed time; but he is not to be treated as a murderer, because he did it unwittingly. "**I obtained mercy,**" says the Apostle Paul, speaking as a pattern to Israel, "**because I did it ignorantly in unbelief.**" (1 Ti

1:13) “And now, brethren,” says Peter, “**I know that you acted in ignorance, just as your rulers did also**” (Acts 3:17+). These passages, together with the precious intercession of the slain One (Lk 23:34+), do, in the most distinct manner, place **Israel on the ground of the manslayer, and not on the ground of the murderer**. God has provided a refuge and a shelter for His much-loved people, and in due time they shall return to their long-lost dwellings, in that land which Jehovah gave as a gift to Abraham His friend forever.

**Such we believe to be the true interpretation of the ordinance of the city of refuge. Were we to view it as bearing upon the case of a sinner taking refuge in Christ, it could only be in a very exceptional way, inasmuch as we should find ourselves surrounded, on all hands, by points of contrast, rather than by points of similarity.**

For in the first place, the man-slayer in the city of refuge was not exempt from judgment, as we learn from Joshua 20:6; but for the believer in Jesus there is and can be no judgment, for the simplest of all reasons, that Christ has borne the judgment instead.

Again, there was a possibility of the slayer’s falling into the hands of the avenger if he ventured outside the gates of the city. The believer in Jesus can never perish; he is as safe as the Saviour Himself.

Finally, as regards the slayer, it was a question of temporal safety and life in this world: as regards the believer in Jesus, it is a question of eternal salvation and life everlasting in the world to come. In fact, in almost every particular, it is striking contrast rather than similarity.

**One grand point there is common to both, and that is, the point of exposure to imminent danger, and the urgent need of fleeing for refuge.** If it would have been wild folly on the part of the slayer to linger or hesitate for a moment, until he found himself safely lodged in the city of refuge, it is surely still wilder folly, yea, the very height of madness, on the part of the sinner, to linger or hesitate in coming to Christ. The avenger might perhaps fail to lay hold on the slayer even though he were not in the city, but judgment must overtake the sinner out of Christ. There is no possibility of escape, if there is the thickness of a gold leaf between the soul and Christ. Solemn thought!

**May it have its due weight in the heart of the reader who is yet in his sins. May he find no rest—not one moment’s rest—until he has fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before him in the gospel. Judgment impends—sure, certain, solemn judgment. It is not only that the avenger may come, but judgment must come upon all who are out of Christ.**

O unconverted, thoughtless, careless reader—should this volume fall into the hands of such—hear the warning voice! Flee for thy life! Tarry not, we entreat thee! Delay is madness. Every moment is precious. You know not the hour in the which you may be cut down, and consigned to that place in the which not a single ray of hope, not even the faintest glimmer, can ever visit you—the place of eternal night, eternal woe, eternal torment—the place of a deathless worm and an unquenchable flame. Beloved friend, do let us entreat thee to come now, just as thou art, to Jesus, who stands with open arms and loving heart, ready to receive thee, to shelter, to save, and to bless, according to all the love of His heart and the perfect efficacy of His name and His sacrifice. May God the Holy Spirit, by His own resistless energy, lead thee, just now, to come. “Come unto Me,” says the loving Lord and Saviour, “all ye that labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.” Precious words! May they fall, with divine power, upon many a weary heart!

**Numbers 35:17 '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.**

- throwing a stone (KJV): Heb. a stone of the hand, Ex 21:18
- [Numbers 35 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## **MURDERER WITH STONE RECEIVES DEATH PENALTY**

**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.**

**Numbers 35:18 '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.**

- [Numbers 35 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## **MURDERER WITH WOOD RECEIVES DEATH PENALTY**

**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.**

**Numbers 35:19 'The blood avenger himself shall put the murderer to death; he shall put him to death when he meets him.**

- Nu 35:12,21,24,27 De 19:6,12 Jos 20:3,5
- [Numbers 35 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### **Related Passages:**

Deuteronomy 19:4-13+ ("Now this is the case of the manslayer who may flee there and live: when he kills his friend unintentionally, not hating him previously— 5 as when a man goes into the forest with his friend to cut wood, and his hand swings the axe to cut down the tree, and the iron head slips off the handle and strikes his friend so that he dies—he may flee to one of these cities and live; 6 otherwise the **avenger of blood** might pursue the manslayer in the heat of his anger, and overtake him, because the way is long, and take his life, though he was not deserving of death, since he had not hated him previously. 7 "Therefore, I command you, saying, 'You shall set aside three cities for yourself.' 8 "If the LORD your God enlarges your territory, just as He has sworn to your fathers, and gives you all the land which He promised to give your fathers— 9 if you carefully observe all this commandment which I command you today, to love the LORD your God, and to walk in His ways always—then you shall add three more cities for yourself, besides these three. 10 "So innocent blood will not be shed in the midst of your land which the LORD your God gives you as an inheritance, and bloodguiltiness be on you. 11 "But if there is a man who hates his neighbor and lies in wait for him and rises up against him and strikes him so that he dies, and he flees to one of these cities, 12 then the elders of his city shall send and take him from there and deliver him into the hand of the avenger of blood, that he may die. 13 "You shall not pity him, but you shall purge the blood of the innocent from Israel, that it may go well with you.

## **BLOOD AVENGER - GO'EL HADDAM AVENGER OF MURDER**

**The blood avenger himself shall put the murderer to death; he shall put him to death when he meets him-** The basis for the avenging of blood is found in Genesis 9:5-6 "Surely I will require your lifeblood; from every beast I will require it. And from every man, from every man's brother I will require the life of man. 6 "**Whoever sheds man's blood, By man his blood shall be shed,** For in the image of God He made man."

What is forbidden in Exodus 20:13 is the recognized **crime of murder**, and what is permitted in Numbers 35 is the recognized **responsibility of capital punishment**

-- Norman Geisler

**NET NOTE** - The participle גוֹ'עַל (go'el) is the one who protects the family by seeking vengeance for a crime. This is the same verb used for levirate marriages and other related customs.

Two modes of execution were specified in the Mosaic Law:

- 1). Death at the hand of the blood avenger (Nu 35:19, 26, 27; Dt 19:11-12)
- 2). Death by stoning (Ex 21:29; Lv 20:2, 27; Nu 15:32-36; Dt. 13:6-10; 17:2-5; 21:18-21; 22:13-21), neither of which would have been as painless as present-day methods.

**Avenger** (01350) ([goel/ga'al](#)) The main word is the verb **gaal** (01350). **Goel** (01350) is the active

participle of the verb **gaal** and conveys a primary sense of “restored to an original state”. A Goel therefore was one who not only delivered but who effected restoration to an original state. The **Goel** is to do the part of a kinsman and thus to redeem their kin from difficulty or danger by the payment of a price.

**B D B** - A primitive root, to *redeem* (according to the Oriental law of kinship), that is, to *be the next of kin* (and as such to *buy back* a relative's property, *marry* his widow, etc.)

**Goel** - Gen. 48:16; Exod. 6:6; Exod. 15:13; Lev. 25:25; Lev. 25:26; Lev. 25:30; Lev. 25:33; Lev. 25:48; Lev. 25:49; Lev. 25:54; Lev. 27:13; Lev. 27:15; Lev. 27:19; Lev. 27:20; Lev. 27:27; Lev. 27:28; Lev. 27:31; Lev. 27:33; Num. 5:8; Num. 35:12; Num. 35:19; Num. 35:21; Num. 35:24; Num. 35:25; Num. 35:27; Deut. 19:6; Deut. 19:12; Jos. 20:3; Jos. 20:5; Jos. 20:9; Ruth 2:20; Ruth 3:9; Ruth 3:12; Ruth 3:13; Ruth 4:1; Ruth 4:3; Ruth 4:4; Ruth 4:6; Ruth 4:8; Ruth 4:14; 2 Sam. 14:11; 1 Ki. 16:11; Job 3:5; Job 19:25; Ps. 19:14; Ps. 69:18; Ps. 72:14; Ps. 74:2; Ps. 77:15; Ps. 78:35; Ps. 103:4; Ps. 106:10; Ps. 107:2; Ps. 119:154; Prov. 23:11; Isa. 35:9; Isa. 41:14; Isa. 43:1; Isa. 43:14; Isa. 44:6; Isa. 44:22; Isa. 44:23; Isa. 44:24; Isa. 47:4; Isa. 48:17; Isa. 48:20; Isa. 49:7; Isa. 49:26; Isa. 51:10; Isa. 52:3; Isa. 52:9; Isa. 54:5; Isa. 54:8; Isa. 59:20; Isa. 60:16; Isa. 62:12; Isa. 63:9; Isa. 63:16; Jer. 31:11; Jer. 50:34; Lam. 3:58; Hos. 13:14; Mic. 4:10

**Anchor Bible Dictionary** has an interesting note - The “blood avenger” was literally “**taker back of the blood,**” that is, a redeemer with a specialized function. The killing of one clan member was construed by the remaining members not only as a shedding of the group's blood (de Vaux 1965:11) but as misappropriation of blood which properly belonged to the entire group. The responsibility of the blood avenger was to win back that misappropriated blood by killing the original blood shedder (Daube 1969:123–24). Although blood vengeance for a relative slain in battle was not justified (2 Sam 3:27–30), return of other blood was required by the clan (Heb *mišpāhâ*), or by an agent acting on its behalf even when both slayer and victim were clan members (2 Sam 14:6–7). It appears that the rise of the monarchy limited blood vengeance in that the king could, in effect, pardon the slayer by restraining the avenger of blood (2 Sam 14:5–11).

**Blood Avenger - Hastings Dictionary** - The practice of blood-revenge has been very widely spread among societies in a certain stage of civilization, where there has been no central authority to enforce law and order, and where the certainty of retaliation has been the only guarantee for security of life. Among the Semites the custom was in full force from the earliest times, and it is still the only spring of order in Arabia. It depends for its maintenance upon the solidarity of the clan or tribe. All the members of the tribe, whatever may be the immediate parental relationship, are counted as being of one blood; a wrong done to one is a wrong done to all, to be avenged if necessary by all the offended clan upon all the clan of the offender. The phrase used by the Arabs is, ‘Our blood has been shed.’ Of the form of blood-revenge that involved the whole clan or tribe in the murder of a single individual there are still traces in the OT (Joshua 7:24 , 2 Kings 9:25 ). Naturally, however, the duty of avenging the shedding of blood fell primarily upon him who was nearest of kin to the slaughtered man. This next of kin was called the *gā'āšî* . The word in Hebrew law was used in a wide sense for him whose duty it was to redeem the property or the person of an impoverished or enslaved relative ( Leviticus 25:26; Leviticus 25:47-49 , Ruth 4:1 ff.), but it came to be used specially of the man who had to perform this most tragic duty of kinship. The steady effort of Hebrew law was to limit this ancient custom so as to ensure that a blood feud should not perpetuate itself to the ruin of a whole clan, and that deliberate murder and accidental homicide should not come under the same penalty. It is possible to trace with some definiteness the progress of this sentiment by which the *gā'āšî* was gradually transformed from being the irresponsible murderer of a possibly blameless manslayer to being practically the executioner of a carefully considered sentence passed by the community.

**Watson's Biblical & Theological Dictionary Avenger of Blood** - He who prosecuted the manslayer under the law was called the avenger of blood, and had a right to slay the person, if he found him without a city of refuge.

---

**Jewish Encyclopedia** - (Hebrew "go'el"): The Hebrew name for the clansman, "next of kin," upon whom devolved the duties: (1) of avenging, on the person of the murderer, the blood of a murdered kinsman—in this capacity the more specific term "go'el ha-dam" (blood-avenger) was generally used—and (2) of redeeming the property or the person of a relative that had fallen into debt.

### **Among Primitive Peoples.**

(1) Among primitive peoples of low political development—such as the ancient Greeks, Germans, and Slavs, some North American tribes, the modern Sicilians, Corsicans, and Arabs—the clan or family had to assume the right to protect itself. One of the most important clan duties then was plainly for the nearest of kin to hunt down and carry out the death-penalty on a person that had slain a member of the sept or family. That this idea of family retribution—which even to-day is by no means extinct in some comparatively civilized communities—was also current among the ancient Hebrews may be seen from Genesis 27:45, where the existence of the custom is clearly taken for granted. It appears, furthermore, from Joshua 7:24, and 2 Kings 9:26, that, in the most primitive period, such a vendetta was extended to the entire family of the murderer, as is still the custom among the desert Bedouins. The Hebrew

religious justification for the system of family blood-revenge was undoubtedly the firm belief that God, in order to insure the sacredness of human life, had Himself fixed the death penalty for murder (Genesis 9:5 et seq.; Leviticus 24:17). In the earliest times blood-money was not accepted either for murder or for excusable homicide. Such a payment would have made the land "polluted by blood" (Numbers 35:31 et seq.). Unavenged blood "cried out" for vengeance to God (Genesis 4:10; Isaiah 26:21; Ezekiel 24:7 et seq.; Job 16:18). The Avenger of Blood, then, was regarded as the representative, not only of the murdered man's family, but of Yhwh Himself, who was the highest avenger (Psalms 9:13 [A. V. 12]).

### **Modification of the System.**

Such a stern system, however, could not, of course, survive unmodified after the community had begun to advance from the purely savage state. Abuses of the privilege of blood-revenge must have soon become evident to the tribal chiefs, as one finds in Exodus 21:12 (compare Genesis 9:6) that the commonly accepted formula that a life must be given for a life is modified by a careful legal distinction between wilful murder and accidental manslaughter. In order to establish a case of wilful murder, it must be shown that weapons or implements commonly devoted to slaughter were used, and that a personal hatred existed between the slayer and his victim (Exodus 21:12; compare Numbers 35:16; and Deuteronomy 19:4). The law enumerates three exceptions to this general principle: (a) The slaying of a thief caught at night in flagrante delicto is not punishable at all; but if he is captured by day there is blood-guilt which, however, is not liable to the blood-revenge (Exodus 22 et seq.). (b) If a bull gored a human being to death, the punishment was visited upon the animal, which was killed by stoning. Its flesh in such a case might not be eaten. If gross contributory negligence could be proved on the part of the animal's owner, he was liable only for blood-money (Exodus 21:28). (c) Where the master kills his slave, the offense is punishable only when the latter dies at once, and then probably not by the death-penalty, as some of the rabbinical writers thought (Exodus 21:23).

### **Six Cities of Refuge.**

The later codes develop at some length the very just distinction between wilful murder and accidental homicide (see see MURDER). Six CITIES OF REFUGE were appointed for the purpose of affording an asylum to the homicide, where he might be secure from the hand of the avenger (Deuteronomy 19:12) until the elders of the community of which the accused was a member should decide whether the murder was intentional or accidental (Numbers 35:9-34; Deuteronomy 19:1-13; Joshua 20). According to the later procedure, at least two witnesses were necessary to establish a case of wilful murder (Numbers 35:30; Deuteronomy 19:15). In case, however, it was not possible to apprehend the murderer or manslayer, the adjudication might take place and a verdict be rendered in his absence.

It appears from Joshua 20:4 that the elders of the city of refuge chosen by the slayer had the right to decide as to whether he should be permitted to have a temporary asylum or not. If the case were simply one of unintentional manslaughter the slayer was immediately accorded the right of asylum in the city of refuge, where he had to remain until the death of the reigning high priest (Numbers 35:25), whose death, in ancient Hebrew law, marked the end of a legal period of limitation (Numbers 35; Deuteronomy 19; Joshua 20). If the "go'el ha-dam" were to find the slayer of his kinsman outside the limits of the city of refuge, he had the right to kill him at sight.

### **The Family Executioner.**

In a case in which the verdict against the slayer was one of wilful murder, the murderer incurred the blood-revenge without any restrictions. If he were already in a city of refuge, the elders of his own city were obliged to fetch him thence by force if necessary, and to deliver him formally to the Avenger of Blood, who thus became little more than a family executioner (Deuteronomy 19:11 et seq.).

Two very important restrictions should here be noticed: (a) Although the entire family or gens to which the murdered man belonged were theoretically entitled to demand the blood-revenge (2 Samuel 14:7), still, in the practice of later times, only one member—for example, the next of kin, who was also legal heir—might assume the duty of carrying it out. According to the later Jewish tradition, when there was no heir, the court had the right to assume the position of the "go'el." (b) The law expressly states that the blood-revenge was applicable only to the person of the guilty man and not to the members of his family as well (Deuteronomy 24:16; compare 2 Kings 14:6). This is a most significant advance on the primitive savage custom that involved two gentes in a ceaseless feud. Anent this advance, it is interesting to note that, in the time of the kings, the king himself, as the highest judicial authority, was entitled to control the course of the blood-revenge (2 Samuel 14:8 et seq.).

It is difficult to decide exactly how long the custom of blood-revenge by the "go'el" remained in vogue among the Hebrews. According to 2 Chronicles 19:10; Deuteronomy 17:8, the law of Jehoshaphat demanded that all intricate legal cases should come before the new court of justice at Jerusalem. It is not probable, however, that this regulation curtailed the rights of the "go'el ha-dam," which must have continued in force as long as there was an independent Israelitish state. Of course, under the Romans, the right of blood revenge had ceased (John 18:31).

## The Redeemer of His Kinsmen.

(2) As indicated above, the term "go'el" had also a secondary meaning. From the idea of one carrying out the sentence of justice in the case of blood-shed, the word came to denote the kinsman whose duty it was to redeem the property and person of a relative who, having fallen into debt, was compelled to sell either his land or himself as a slave to satisfy his creditors (compare Leviticus 25:25,47-49). It would appear from Jeremiah 32:8-12 that the "go'el" had the right to the refusal of such property before it was put up for public sale, and also the right to redeem it after it had been sold (Ruth).

From the Book of Ruth (4:5) it would appear that the duty of the nearest of kin to marry the widow of his relative in case of the latter's dying without issue was included in the obligations resting upon the "go'el"; but inasmuch as the term is not used in the passage in Deut. (25:8-10) in which this institution is referred to—the obligation resting upon the brother to marry his deceased brother's widow—the testimony of so late a production as Ruth can not be pressed. The usage in the book may not be legally accurate.

From this idea of the human "go'el" as a redeemer of his kinsmen in their troubles, there are to be found many allusions to Yhwh as the Divine Go'el, redeeming His people from their woes (compare Exodus 6:6, 15:13; Psalms 74:2), and of the people themselves becoming the "redeemed" ones of Yhwh (Psalms 107:2; Isaiah 62:12). The reference to God as the "go'el" and as the one who would "redeem" His people was applicable to the relationship between Yhwh and Israel in the exilic period, when the people actually looked to their God to restore their land for them, as the impoverished individual looked to his kinsman to secure a restoration of his patrimony. Hence, of thirty-three passages in which "go'el" (as a noun or verb) is applied to God, nineteen occur in the exilic (and post-exilic) sections of Isaiah—the preacher par excellence of "restoration"—for example, in 48:20, 49:26, 52:9, 62:12, etc. See ASYLUM; see CITIES OF REFUGE; JOB; MURDER J. Jr. J. D. P.

### Bibliography:

- A. H. Post, Studien zur Entwicklungsgeschichte des Familienrechts, 1890, pp. 113-137;
- W. R. Smith, Kinship and Marriage in Early Arabia, pp. 22 et seq., 38, 47, 52 et seq.;
- idem, Religion of the Semites, 2d ed., pp. 32 et seq., 272 et seq., 420;
- Nowack, Lehrbuch der Hebr. Archäologie, , ch. , 1894;
- Kohler, Zur Lehre von dër Blutrache, 1885;
- Bissell, The Law of Asylum in Israel, 1884;
- Jastrow, Avenger, Kinsman, and Redeemer in the O. T., in The Independent, Aug. 27, 1896;
- Benzinger, Hebräische Archäologie, p. 335.

---

**Norman Geisler - When Critics Ask** - NUMBERS 35:19—Why did God permit avenging blood and yet forbid murder?

**PROBLEM:** God forbade murder (Ex. 20:13). Yet here He says, "The avenger of blood himself shall put the murderer to death; when he meets him, he shall put him to death."

**SOLUTION:** First of all, this was not an act of murder, but an act of capital punishment which God had ordained before the law (Gen. 9:6), and Moses had reaffirmed it under the Law (Ex. 21:12). Further, notice that it was only to be done to a "murderer," not simply to anyone. Also, the avenger had to be the nearest male relative of the one who was murdered, not just anyone who wished to take justice in his own hands. In short, what is forbidden in Exodus 20 is the recognized crime of murder, and what is permitted in Numbers 35 is the recognized responsibility of capital punishment. These are not in conflict.

---

### Nave's Topical - Avenger of Blood

- Premosaic Genesis 9:5,6
- Cain fears Genesis 4:14,15
- Lamech fears Genesis 4:24
- Law concerning, set aside. by David 2 Samuel 14:4-11
- SCRIPTURES RELATING TO Genesis 9:5,6; Numbers 35:19-29; Deuteronomy 19:4-13; Joshua 20:1-9

---

### Numbers 35:20 'If he pushed him of hatred, or threw something at him lying in wait and as a result he died,

- **If he pushed him:** Ge 4:5,8 2Sa 3:27 13:22,28,29 20:10 1Ki 2:5,6,31-33 Pr 26:24 Pr 28:17 Lu 4:29
- **lying in wait:** Ex 21:14 De 19:11 1Sa 18:10,11,25 19:9-12 20:1 23:7-9 24:11 Ps 10:7-10 11:2 35:7,8 57:4-6 Pr 1:18,19 Mk 6:19,24-26 Ac 20:3 23:21



- [Numbers 35 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## MORE DETAILS CALLING FOR DEATH PENALTY

**If he pushed him of hatred, or threw something at him lying in wait and as a result he died,-** Note the focus is on the intent (hatred, lying in wait - premeditated).

**Numbers 35:21 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.**

- [Numbers 35 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**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.**

---

**Walter Kaiser - Hard Sayings** - Nu 35:21 No Ransom for a Murderer?

Of the crimes punishable by death under Old Testament law, was it possible to obtain compensation for damages through some type of substitutionary restitution in every case except first-degree, premeditated murder? If so, why was this crime singled out for special treatment? Were not the other crimes as serious? If they were not, why did they carry such a stiff sanction—the death penalty?

The key text in this discussion must be Numbers 35:31, “Do not accept a ransom [substitute] for the life of a murderer, who deserves to die. He must surely be put to death.”

There are sixteen crimes that called for the death penalty in the Old Testament: kidnapping, adultery, homosexuality, incest, bestiality, incorrigible delinquency in a child, striking or cursing parents, offering a human sacrifice, false prophecy, blasphemy, profaning the sabbath, sacrificing to false gods, magic and divination, unchastity, the rape of a betrothed virgin, and premeditated murder. In each case, where the evidence was clear and beyond a reasonable doubt, the death penalty was demanded.

One major distinction was drawn, however, between the penalty for premeditated murder and penalties for the other fifteen crimes on this list. Only in the case where someone had lain in wait to kill with malice and forethought does Scripture specify that the officials were forbidden to take a ransom.

The word ransom comes from a root meaning “substitute.” The only fair inference from Numbers 35:31, then, is that perpetrators of any of the other fifteen capital crimes could escape death by offering a proper ransom or substitute. In those fifteen cases, the death penalty served to mark the seriousness of the crime. It is important, however, to note that only God could say which crimes might have their sanctions lessened.

Some have contended that this argument is an argument from silence, and therefore fallacious. But the alternative to this argument from silence (which has venerable precedent in rabbinic and Protestant commentary) would require upholding the death penalty for all sixteen crimes as valid to our present day. And if death is the only proper punishment for these crimes even in the present day, why did the apostle Paul not make any reference to it, especially when he had specific occasion to do so when he dealt with the case of incest in 1 Corinthians 5? Why did Paul recommend church discipline rather than capital punishment for the offending mother and son?

I am not arguing here that the penalties of the Old Testament are too severe or that the New Testament is more “urbane” and “cultured.” Some have properly noted that even Hebrews 2:2 says that “every violation and disobedience received its just [or appropriate] punishment.” In fact, too many people misunderstand the talion (“tooth-for-a-tooth”) principle (Ex 21:23–25). It is simply a “life-for-life” stereotype expression that worked out in actual practice to this: Make the punishment fit the crime; don’t try to profit from or trade on calamity.

Since the taking of life involved deep disregard for God and for the creatures made in his image, Genesis 9:6 makes it clear that the only way the state and society could preserve the rights, dignity and worth of all humanity was to offer the life of the proven first-degree murderer back to God. That is why this one capital offense remained when the others were allowed the option of a “ransom” or “substitute.”

**Numbers 35:22 'But if he pushed him suddenly without enmity, or threw something at him without lying in wait,**

- Nu 35:11 Ex 21:13 De 19:5 Jos 20:3,5
- [Numbers 35 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### **THE KEY: WITHOUT ENMITY**

**But if he pushed him suddenly without enmity, or threw something at him without lying in wait-** The key caveats are **without enmity** and **without lying in wait** (not premeditated).

**Daily Walk - INSIGHT** Cities of Refuge, Savior of Refuge (Numbers 35:32) For the murderer of the innocent, there was no refuge from death. But for the accidental manslayer, six cities would later be designated as places of protection (Joshua 20). Notice the parallels between these cities of refuge in the Old Testament, and the Savior of refuge in the New Testament—both were of divine origin, necessary to save from death, accessible to all, and all-sufficient for salvation.

**Numbers 35:23 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,**

- [Numbers 35 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**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** - Again the key to unintentional is without seeing it dropped, not his enemy and not seeking injury. If any of those were present they would indicate that he was guilty of a willful crime and should be punished for murder.

**Numbers 35:24 then the congregation shall judge between the slayer and the blood avenger according to these ordinances.**

- Nu 35:12 Jos 20:6
- [Numbers 35 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**then the congregation shall judge between the slayer and the blood avenger according to these ordinances-** The ordinances are described in Nu 35:20-23. The congregation makes renders the verdict based on the preceding ordinances.

**Currid** - The court of the assembly is to decide the fate of the manslayer on the basis of intent: '... judgement is to be made on the point of intentionality.' In other words, was the killing an accidental homicide or a deliberate murder? The examples provided in these verses underscore the lack of forethought by the killer: the killings happened 'suddenly' or 'unknowingly'. Also there is a lack of malice on the part of the killer. These are unintentional killings. (EPSC-Nu)

**Numbers 35:25 '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.**

- abide in it (KJV): Nu 35:28 Jos 20:6 Ro 3:24-26 Eph 2:16-18 Heb 4:14-16 7:25-28 Heb 9:12-15 10:19-22
- anointed (KJV): Ex 29:7 Lev 4:3 8:12 21:10
- [Numbers 35 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### **MANSLAYER DELIVERED FROM BLOOD AVENGER**

**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** - If he is found not guilty of murder, the man is rescued from the blood avenger, restored and allowed to live in the city until the high priest dies.

**Rod Mattoon** on the application of these OT shadows of the **death of the high priest** - The death of the High Priest secured the full and final deliverance. His death freed the fugitive from the sentence, for the High Priest's death became a propitiation for the offense. Christ is our High Priest. His death was the appeasement, satisfaction, or propitiation for our sins.

1 John 2:2+—and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world.

Christ is our city of refuge who preserves all that flee to Him for mercy. He is the divinely appointed Savior who is able to save to the uttermost, all who come to God by Him.

Hebrews 6:18-20+—so that by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, **we who have taken refuge** would have strong encouragement to take hold of the hope set before us. 19 This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, a hope both sure and steadfast and one which enters within the veil, 20 where Jesus has entered as a forerunner for us, having become a high priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.

---

### **F B Meyer - Numbers 35:25, 28, 32 The Death of the High Priest.**

One after another they passed away. They were not able to continue by reason of death. Their offices, and garments, and ministry, passed from each in turn, as from Aaron, whom Moses stripped with his own hands on Nebo. But their death only brings into greater prominence the encouraging contrast in the case of our blessed Lord, who ever liveth, and hath, therefore, an unchangeable priesthood.

Christ ever lives: what an encouragement to the penitent! — All that He ever was, He is; all that He ever did for others, He is willing to do for thee. The records of his earthly life, with his tenderness for those who were out of the way, are leaves and specimen pages of the diary of his life. Therefore, there need be no hesitation in applying to Him.

Christ ever lives: what a blessing to the saint! — “I am He that liveth.” He bent over his fainting apostle, and said in effect, You remember what I was when you leant on my bosom, followed Me to the shore on which I had prepared your repast, and assured you of my never-altering affection. I am all that still; through death I have come to a life which can never decay; because I live, ye shall live also. Let us rest our souls on this sweet word — from his heart there will ever stream to us rivers of incorruptible life. Let us keep all the channels of our being open towards the fountain of eternal life, that there may be no stint or restraint to our reception.

Christ ever lives: what a warning to the Church! — There is no need, therefore, of the human priest to transact matters between man and God. The Son is Priest and King in his own house, in the power of an endless life; and human mediators are no more necessary than flickering night-lights at noon.

---

### **Numbers 35:26 'But if the manslayer at any time goes beyond the border of his city of refuge to which he may flee,**

- After the manslayer had been received into the city of refuge, the avenger of blood could only act as prosecutor; and the magistrates, in the presence of the people, were appointed to decide the cause according to the rules here laid down. Probably the accused person was tried at or near the place where the deceased had been slain, and where evidence could most easily be brought: and in case he was acquitted by the decision of the judges, and with the approbation of the people, he was conveyed back to the city of refuge, where he was protected as a kind of prisoner at large, till the death of the high priest; when the public loss, and the grief occasioned by it, might be supposed to swallow up all personal regrets and resentments: and then he was permitted to return to his house and estate. But if, in the mean while, he ventured to leave the city, and the avenger met him and slew him, he was supposed to merit his doom by thus neglecting the appointment of God for his preservation, and the avenger must not be punished. This shews that in other cases, if the avenger slew an innocent man on surmise, he was liable to the punishment of a murderer; but if, by the testimony of two credible witnesses, the man who had fled to the city of refuge was adjudged guilty, he must without fail be put to death.
- [Numbers 35 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**MANSLAYER PROTECTED  
ONLY IN CITY OF REFUGE**

**But if the manslayer at any time goes beyond the border of his city of refuge to which he may flee-** A manslayer cannot leave

the city of refuge until the high priest dies. To do so would be foolish, for the blood avenger would be fully justified in killing him.

**Numbers 35:27 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**

- he shall not be guilty of blood: , Ex 22:2 De 19:6,10
- [Numbers 35 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### **MANSLAYER OUTSIDE CITY OF REFUGE CAN BE PUT TO DEATH**

**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** (Heb. no blood shall be to him) - This statement clears the blood avenger of all guilt if he kills a manslayer who has been foolish enough to leave the city of refuge.

**Numbers 35:28 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.**

- he should: Joh 15:4-6 Ac 11:23 27:31 Heb 3:14 6:4-8 10:26-30,39
- after the death: Heb 9:11,12,15-17
- [Numbers 35 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### **AFTER THE HIGH PRIEST DIES**

**because he should have remained in his city of refuge until the death of the high priest**- This simply reiterates how foolish it would be to leave the place of safety.

**But after the death of the high priest the manslayer shall return to the land of his possession**- The implication is that the blood avenger now can no longer legally kill the manslayer.

**Currid** - **The death of the high priest** signals an amnesty: the manslayer may return home and the avenger of blood is released from his obligation of vengeance. Noordtjij argues that this death of the chief religious official signifies the end of an old era and a dawning of a new one. Noth sees the act as parallel to the amnesty granted to prisoners at the accession of a new king. Others (Harrison, Numbers: An Exegetical Commentary, p. 422. Cf. R. D. Cole, Numbers, p. 554.) go further by interpreting the death as a form of expiation; as Harrison states, "The death of the high priest was interpreted as an atonement for the offence of manslaughter." (EPSC-Nu)

**MacDonald** - The death of the high priest brought freedom to those who had escaped to the cities of refuge. They could no longer be harmed by the avenger of blood. The death of our Great High Priest frees us from the condemning demands of the Law. How foolish this stipulation would be if one failed to see in it a symbol of the work of our Lord at the Cross! As for the symbolic teaching, the people of Israel are the manslayer, having put the Messiah to death. Yet they did it ignorantly (Acts 3:17+). The Lord Jesus prayed, "they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34+). Just as the manslayer was displaced from his own home and had to live in the city of refuge, so Israel has been living in exile ever since. The nation's complete restoration to its possession will take place, not at the death of the Great High Priest (for He can never die), but when He comes to reign.

**Merrill Unger** adds an interesting note about the cities of refuge - "According to the rabbis, in order to aid the fugitive it was the business of the Sanhedrin to keep the roads leading to the cities of refuge in the best possible repair. No hills were left, every river was bridged, and the road itself was to be at least thirty-two cubits broad. At every turn were guideposts bearing the word **Refuge**; and two students of the law were appointed to accompany the fleeing man, to pacify, if possible, the avenger, should he overtake the fugitive." (Unger's Bible Dictionary)

**Numbers 35:29 'These things shall be for a statutory ordinance to you throughout your generations in all your dwellings.**

- Nu 27:1,11
- [Numbers 35 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**These things shall be for a statutory ordinance to you throughout your generations in all your dwellings** -These laws are binding and permanently in force in the Promised Land.

**Numbers 35:30** '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.'

- De 17:6-7 19:15 Mt 18:16 Joh 8:17,18 2Co 13:1 1Ti 5:19 Heb 10:28 Rev 11:3
- [Numbers 35 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## **DEATH PENALTY ONLY WITH WITNESSES**

**If anyone kills a person, the murderer shall be put to death at the evidence of witnesses-** Capital punishment was the decree for a murderer and there were no alternatives.

**Currid** - If the evidence of two or more witnesses is sound and the manslayer is convicted, then 'the manslayer shall be executed'. The latter clause has a cognate syntax, so that it literally reads, 'the manslayer shall be man-slain', or 'the killer shall be killed'; this is an emphatic and poignant way to reflect ironic justice. This means that the punishment for the crime is found within the crime itself. (EPSC-Nu)

**But no person shall be put to death on the testimony of one witness** - At least two witnesses must testify in a capital crime. They did not have to be eyewitnesses, but had to be independent witnesses who were aware of circumstantial evidence that was sufficient to find the person guilty of murder (see notes below). Note the witnesses must be reputable (see 1 Kings 21:10-13). "Ancient Near-Eastern law generally agrees with this statute." (Currid)

### **Related Passages:**

Deuteronomy 17:6 says "On the evidence of two witnesses or three witnesses, he who is to die shall be put to death; he shall not be put to death on the evidence of one witness."

Deuteronomy 19:15 adds "A single witness shall not rise up against a man on account of any iniquity or any sin which he has committed; on the evidence of two or three witnesses a matter shall be confirmed."

---

**Norman Geisler - When Critics Ask** - NUMBERS 35:30—Does the need for two witnesses mean that it is wrong to condemn someone on other evidence?

**PROBLEM:** According to Numbers 35:30, a man accused of murder could be convicted and condemned on the testimony of two witnesses, but not on the testimony of only one witness. However, the great majority of crimes are not committed in the open for people to witness. Does this make it wrong to convict and condemn someone on the basis of other evidence when there have been no eyewitnesses?

**SOLUTION:** It would be wrong to assume that the Hebrew word translated "witness" (ed), is exactly equivalent to the English usage. Leviticus 5:1 gives a good example of the wider range of use of this Hebrew word: "If a person sins in hearing the utterance of an oath, and is a witness, whether he has seen or known of the matter—if he does not tell it, he bears guilt." In this verse, the same Hebrew word translated "witness" refers to someone who has either seen or known of a matter. According to the Mosaic Law, then, there were two types of witnesses who could offer testimony to the guilt of an individual. One was an eyewitness, the other was one who, though not an eyewitness, could provide testimony to the identity of the offender. This verse does not make it wrong to convict a person on evidence that is other than direct eyewitness evidence. Further, the OT writer did not have in view, nor intend to exclude, such modern things as fingerprints and audio and video tapes.

---

**Gleason Archer - Does Numbers 35:30 make it wrong to condemn a murderer to death on mere circumstantial evidence?**

Numbers 35:30 says,

"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" (NASB).

Similarly we read in Deuteronomy 17:6:

“On the evidence of two witnesses or three witnesses, he who is to die shall be put to death; he shall not be put to death on the evidence of one witness” (NASB).

If the term “**witness**” (‘ēd) means only an **eyewitness** of the crime while it was actually being committed, this would seem to restrict the imposition of the death penalty to those comparatively rare instances where the murderer committed homicide in full view of the public. This might mean that less than 10 percent of the cases of the violations of the sixth commandment could lawfully be brought to trial and result in the achievement of justice. Yet the real thrust of the laws against first-degree murder was that the murderer should surely be brought to trial and executed. Nothing less than “life for life” was allowed under the Torah (cf. Ex 21:23; Dt. 19:21).

Although some other legal systems (such as the Hittite Code) allowed for the **payment of blood-money** as an alternative to the **death penalty**, this was expressly forbidden by the law of God. Numbers 35:31 states:

“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” (NASB).

Verse 33 goes on to say,

“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” (NASB).

The seriousness of an unsolved murder for the welfare of the district in which it occurred was such that Deuteronomy 21 required a solemn inquest to be held when it could not immediately be discovered who was guilty of the crime. Dt 21:3–8 specify:

“It shall be that the city which is nearest to the slain man, that is, the elders of that city, shall take a heifer of the herd, which has not been worked and which has not pulled in a yoke; 4 and the elders of that city shall bring the heifer down to a valley with running water, which has not been plowed or sown, and shall break the heifer’s neck there in the valley. 5 “Then the priests, the sons of Levi, shall come near, for the LORD your God has chosen them to serve Him and to bless in the name of the LORD; and every dispute and every assault shall be settled by them. 6 “All the elders of that city which is nearest to the slain man shall wash their hands over the heifer whose neck was broken in the valley; 7 and they shall answer and say, **‘Our hands did not shed this blood, nor did our eyes see it. 8 ‘Forgive Your people Israel whom You have redeemed, O LORD, and do not place the guilt of innocent blood in the midst of Your people Israel.’** And the bloodguiltiness shall be forgiven them.

This passage makes it clear that murder was a very heinous offense in the eyes of God, rather than a crime to be so lightly regarded as to be punishable perhaps one time out of ten (on the technicality that two men had not actually seen the killer strike the blow).

**There is a far wider implication that results from this restrictive interpretation: the two-witnesses requirement applies not only to homicide cases but to any other crime for which a suspect could be brought to trial.** Deuteronomy 19:15 says,

“A single witness shall not rise up against a man on account of any iniquity or any sin which he has committed; on the evidence of two or three witnesses a matter shall be confirmed” (NASB).

This two-witnesses rule therefore applies to theft, fraud, adultery (which is seldom performed in public view), embezzlement, or any other offense for which a man might be subject to criminal process. Every criminal guilty of any of these offenses would therefore get off scot-free if he had taken the prudent measure of committing his crime where two people did not happen to be watching him. It is safe to say that neither ancient Israel nor any other system of jurisprudence known to man could effectively function under such a restriction as that.

How then are we to understand this requirement for two or more witnesses in the prosecution of an accused suspect? The answer is found in a study of the actual usage of the term ‘ēd (“witness”) as employed in the Hebrew Scriptures. In Leviticus 5:1 we read,

“Now if a person sins, after he hears a public adjuration to testify, when he is a witness, **whether he has seen or otherwise known**, if he does not tell it, then he will bear his guilt” (NASB).

**This verse clearly establishes that there are two kinds of witnesses who may offer testimony in a criminal process: those who have seen the crime actually being committed, and those who, though not eyewitnesses, have seen some evidence relative to the identity of the offender.** One who has found a written death-threat, for example, or who has heard the accused express a desire or intention to kill, rob, or rape the victim, would be acceptable as a witness within this definition of ‘ēd (one who has pertinent knowledge concerning the crime even though he has not actually seen it being committed).

A slightly different use of 'ēd is found in the law of responsibility for a missing animal that has been entrusted to the care of another, as Exodus 22:13:

“If it is all torn to pieces [i.e., by some predatory beast], let him bring it as evidence (‘ēḏ); he shall not make restitution for what has been torn to pieces” (NASB).

Here then the lacerated corpse of the sheep or donkey, or whatever it may have been, will serve as a **witness** to the fact that the animal was killed without any fault on the part of the caretaker. Yet that corpse could hardly be described as an eye-witness! Similarly, also, documents or memorial stones may serve as a **witness** (‘ed)—such as the gal-‘ēḏ that Jacob and Laban erected at the spot where Laban had overtaken his fleeing son-in-law, and they had finally come to a covenant agreement toward each other (Gen. 31:46–49). Both gal-‘ēḏ (which gave rise to the name of “Gilead” for the whole region) and Laban’s Aramaic equivalent, yegar šāhadūtā’, signified “stone-pile of witness.” Yet in these lifeless stones we can hardly find a **visual observer**.

Along the same line are references to written documents, which serve as a “witness” (‘ēḏ, or its feminine form, ‘ēḏāh) to the contract or covenant into which the contractual parties have entered. Thus Joshua 24:25–26 quotes Joshua himself as referring to the stone (or stela) that he had erected at Shechem, on which the words of their covenant commitment to Yahweh had been inscribed; he says of it in v.27:

“Behold, this stone shall be for a witness against us, for it has heard all the words of the LORD which he spoke to us; thus it shall be for a witness against you, lest you deny your God” (NASB).

The inscribed stela was certainly not an eyewitness (even though it is poetically represented as an auditor to the ceremony), but rather it served as a document in evidence.

We conclude, therefore, that concrete objects and written documents may be entered into evidence before a court hearing as valid testimony in any kind of a criminal process, whether or not a capital offense is involved. This falls more or less in line with the different types of evidence received in criminal cases even in our modern courts, and so there is no contravention of biblical principles in allowing such testimony, even though only one actual eyewitness may be found, or none at all. Each witness called to the stand is asked to testify only of matters within his personal observation and experience, and this satisfies the specifications of an ‘ēḏ in a perfectly adequate fashion according to actual biblical usage. (For further discussion, see article on John 8:11.) (NIEBD)

**Numbers 35:31 '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.**

- Moreover (KJV): Ge 9:5,6 Ex 21:14 De 19:11-13 2Sa 12:13 1Ki 2:28-34 Ps 51:14
- guilty of death (KJV): Heb. faulty to die
- [Numbers 35 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passages:

Exodus 21:14 “If, however, a man acts presumptuously toward his neighbor, so as to kill him craftily, you are to take him even from My altar, that he may die.

Deuteronomy 19:11-13 “But if there is a man who hates his neighbor and lies in wait for him and rises up against him and strikes him so that he dies, and he flees to one of these cities, 12 then the elders of his city shall send and take him from there and **deliver him into the hand of the avenger of blood, that he may die** 13 “You shall not pity him, but you shall purge the blood of the innocent from Israel, that it may go well with you.

**DAVID’S MURDER** - 2 Samuel 12:13 Then David said to Nathan, “I have sinned against the LORD.” And Nathan said to David, “**The LORD also has taken away your sin; you shall not die.**”

**MOSES’ MURDER** – Ex 2:12 So he looked this way and that, and when he saw there was no one around, he struck down the Egyptian and hid him in the sand. 13 He went out the next day, and behold, two Hebrews were fighting with each other; and he said to the offender, “Why are you striking your companion?” 14 But he said, “Who made you a prince or a judge over us? Are you intending to kill me as you killed the Egyptian?” Then Moses was afraid and said, “Surely the matter has become known.”

**NO RANSOM AVAILABLE**



## FOR MURDERER

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- Pagan nations allows "blood money" to be paid in lieu of the death penalty, but God allows no such practice.

**Numbers 35:32 '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.**

- Acts 4:12 Ga 2:21 Gal 3:10-13,22 Rev 5:9
- [Numbers 35 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## NO RANSOM FOR A MANSLAYER

**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.**

**TSK note on manslaying fleeing the avenger** -The region east of Jordan was nearly as long as that on the west, and therefore three cities were appointed in each division. One or other of these cities would be within half a day's journey of every part of the land; and as it would rarely happen that the avenger of blood would be on the spot, and none had a right to assault or detain the manslayer, at least if no malicious intention was manifest, the unhappy men would, therefore, get the start of their adversaries, and very few of them be overtaken before they gained the place of refuge. But then they must forsake their families, employments, most important interests, and dearest comforts; and they must neither loiter nor yield to weariness, nor regard difficulties, nor slacken their pace, till they had got safe within the walls of the city. The Jewish writers inform us, that to afford every facility to those who thus fled for their life, the road to these cities was always preserved in good repair; and way-posts, upon which was inscribed REFUGE were placed wherever needful, that they might not so much as hesitate for a moment.

**Numbers 35:33 '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.**

BGT Numbers 35:33 κα ο μ φονοκτον σητε τ ν γ ν ε ς ν με ς κατοικε τε τ γ ρ α μα το το φονοκτονε τ ν γ ν  
κα ο κ ξιλασθ σεται γ π το α ματος το κχυθ ντος π α τ ς λλ π το α ματος το κχ οντος

NET Numbers 35:33 "You must not pollute the land where you live, for blood defiles the land, and the land cannot be cleansed of the blood that is shed there, except by the blood of the person who shed it.

NLT Numbers 35:33 This will ensure that the land where you live will not be polluted, for murder pollutes the land. And no sacrifice except the execution of the murderer can purify the land from murder.

ESV Numbers 35:33 You shall not pollute the land in which you live, for blood pollutes the land, and no atonement can be made for the land for the blood that is shed in it, except by the blood of the one who shed it.

NIV Numbers 35:33 " 'Do not pollute the land where you are. Bloodshed pollutes the land, and atonement cannot be made for the land on which blood has been shed, except by the blood of the one who shed it.

KJV Numbers 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.

YLT Numbers 35:33 'And ye profane not the land which ye are in, for blood profaneth the land; as to the land, it is not pardoned for blood which is shed in it except by the blood of him who sheddeth it;

LXE Numbers 35:33 So shall ye not pollute with murder the land in which ye dwell; for this blood pollutes the land, and the land shall not be purged from the blood shed upon it, but by the blood of him that shed it.

ASV Numbers 35:33 So ye shall not pollute the land wherein ye are: for blood, it polluteth the land; and no expiation can be made for the land for the blood that is shed therein, but by the blood of him that shed it.

CSB Numbers 35:33 "Do not defile the land where you are, for bloodshed defiles the land, and there can be no atonement for the land because of the blood that is shed on it, except by the blood of the person who shed

it.

NKJ Numbers 35:33 `So you shall not pollute the land where you are; 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 him who shed it.

NRS Numbers 35:33 You shall not pollute the land in which you live; for blood pollutes the land, and no expiation can be made for the land, for the blood that is shed in it, except by the blood of the one who shed it.

NAB Numbers 35:33 You shall not desecrate the land where you live. Since bloodshed desecrates the land, the land can have no atonement for the blood shed on it except through the blood of him who shed it.

NJB Numbers 35:33 Do not profane the country you live in. Blood profanes the country and, for the country, the only expiation for the blood shed in it is the blood of the man who shed it.

GWN Numbers 35:33 "You must not pollute the land where you live. Murder is what pollutes the land. The land where a murder was committed can never make peace with the LORD except through the death of the murderer.

- **you shall not pollute the land** : Lev 18:25 De 21:1-8,23 2Ki 23:26 24:4 Ps 106:28 Isa 26:21 Eze 22:24-27 Ho 4:2,3 Mic 4:11 Mt 23:31-35 Lu 11:50,51
- the land cannot be cleansed (KJV): Heb. there can be no expiation for the land
- [Numbers 35 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passage:

Leviticus 18:25 (SEE Lev 18:19-24 - SEXUAL PERVERSION/IMMORALITY) 'For**the land has become defiled**, therefore I have brought its punishment upon it, so the land has spewed out its inhabitants (CANAANITES PERVERSIONS WERE UNSPEAKABLY EVIL AND THEY WERE "SPEWED OUT" - THINK OF AMERICA WHICH IS THE LEADING NATION IN THE WORLD FOR PORNOGRAPHY! WOE!).

James 1:27+ Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself **unstained** (UNPOLLUTED) by the world.

### **SHED BLOOD POLLUTES LAND ONLY SHED BLOOD CAN ATONE**

**So you shall not pollute (chaneph) the land in which you are; for blood pollutes (chaneph) 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** - The Hebrew word for **pollute** and **pollutes** (see below) are translated in the Lxx with **phonoktoneo** which means to defile with murder or pollute with blood and is also used in Ps 106:38. The only expiation or atonement for the land was the shed blood of the murderer. (cf "life for life" Ex 21:23, Lev 24:18).

**Milgrom** - The Hebrew verb ḥ-n-f means "be corrupt, polluted," especially when it refers to the land, as in Isaiah 24:9, Jeremiah 3:1, 2, 9, and Psalms 106:38. The Holy Land (like the Israelites) must observe its Sabbaths (Lev. 25:2, 5; Lev 26:34–35) and is polluted by bloodshed, idolatry, and incest (Ezek. 36:17–18) until it vomits out its inhabitants (Lev. 18:28). The notion that illicit bloodshed pollutes the land so that it does not yield its fruit is attested in the oldest sources (Gen. 4:10–12; 2 Sam. 21:1). Jubilees 21:19 expressly warns Israel not to allow compensation for murder lest the (unredeemed) blood of the slain pollute the earth.

**Currid** - Unrequited blood profanes the land so that it needs to be cleansed; atonement is necessary. And atonement demands the blood of the one who had shed blood.

**Nahmanides** - The Presence of the Lord cannot abide in a land that is unclean because the blood of innocents has been shed unless it is expiated by the blood of him who shed it. Vv. 31–32 warned us not to take bribes from killers; now we are cautioned that we must not "warp the land" by applying special treatment to anyone because of their status or their power, even without money changing hands. The more warped our behavior, the more we cause the land to treat its inhabitants in a warped way.

**Expiation** (make no ransom) ([03722](#))(**kapar**) means to make atonement, to make reconciliation (to reconcile), to purge, to make propitiation (to propitiate), to pacify, to cancel. There are two main ideas regarding the meaning of **kapar** - (1) **Kapar** means to cover over sin (2) A number of resources however favor the idea that **kapar** means to wipe away.

**Polluted** ([02610](#))(**chaneph**) means to be defiled, to be profane, to pollute, to corrupt, to be godless. "This word most often appears in association with the defilement of the land, suggesting a tainting not by active

commission but by passive contact with those committing sin." (Baker) **Chaneph** denotes the pollution of the land through the shedding of blood (Nu. 35:33); through divorce (Jer. 3:1); and through breaking God's covenant (Isa. 24:5). The earth was "defiled" by the sins of Judah in the prophecy of Isaiah (Isa 24:5) and false prophets and priests were "profane" in Judah near the time of their exile to Babylon (Jer. 23:11). The land was considered "polluted" when adultery and wanton immorality were practiced. (Jer 3:1) The land "polluted" (Ps 106:38; Jer. 3:1, 9) as a result of sacrifice to idols and gross immorality. Baker adds that "Two notable exceptions to this linkage with the land further intensify the notion that the primary meaning is one of passive contamination. In Jeremiah, the Lord declared that the prophets and the priests were corrupted, seemingly by their association with the people's sin (Jer. 23:11)." (CWSD) Breaking of marriage vows to marry another precludes a return to the first mate; in the same way a favored people who drifted back and forth between devotion to idols and the Lord, pollutes the land (Jeremiah 3:1). The Hiphil stem describes the pollution of land. The murderer who had shed innocent blood was regarded as polluting the land (Numbers 35:33).

**Only 8x in the Bible** - completely polluted(1), pollute(1), polluted(6), pollutes(1), turn to godlessness(1).

Numbers 35:33 '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.

Psalms 106:37-38 They even sacrificed their sons and their daughters to the demons, And shed innocent blood, The blood of their sons and their daughters, Whom they sacrificed to the idols of Canaan; And the land was polluted with the blood.

**Spurgeon** - This was being snared indeed; they were spell bound by the cruel superstition, and were carried so far as even to become murderers of their own children, in honour of the most detestable deities, which were rather devils than gods. "And shed innocent blood." The poor little ones whom they put to death in sacrifice had not been partakers of their sin, and God looked with the utmost indignation upon the murder of the innocent. "Even the blood of their sons and of their daughters, whom they sacrificed unto the idols of Canaan." Who knows how far evil will go? It drove men to be unnatural as well as ungodly. Had they but thought for a moment, they must have seen that a deity who could be pleased with the blood of babes spilt by their own sires could not be a deity at all, but must be a demon, worthy to be detested and not adored. How could they prefer such service to that of Jehovah? Did he tear their babes from their bosoms and smile at their death throes? Men will sooner wear the iron yoke of Satan than carry the pleasant burden of the Lord; does not this prove to a demonstration the deep depravity of their hearts? If man be not totally depraved, what worse would he do if he were? Does not this verse describe the ne plus ultra of iniquity?

**And the land was polluted with blood.** The promised land, the holy land, which was the glory of all lands, for God was there, was defiled with the reeking gore of innocent babes, and by the blood red hands of their parents, who slew them in order to pay homage to devils (ED: WOE! WONDER WHAT SPURGEON WOULD SAY ABOUT ABORTION?). Alas! alas! What vexation was this to the spirit of the Lord.

Isaiah 24:5 The earth is also **polluted** by its inhabitants, for they transgressed laws, violated statutes, broke the everlasting covenant.

**Comment:** Transgression of laws, violation of statutes and the breaking of the covenant, all pollute the land.

Jeremiah 3:1 God says, "If a husband divorces his wife And she goes from him And belongs to another man, Will he still return to her? Will not that land **be completely polluted**? But you are a harlot with many lovers; Yet you turn to Me," declares the LORD.

Jeremiah 3:2 "Lift up your eyes to the bare heights and see; Where have you not been violated? By the roads you have sat for them Like an Arab in the desert, And **you have polluted** a land With your harlotry and with your wickedness.

**Comment** - The evidence of immorality and other gross wickedness of the Canaanite fertility cult was to be seen on every hilltop in the land, thus polluting it.

Jeremiah 3:9 "Because of the lightness of her harlotry, **she polluted the land** and committed adultery with stones and trees.

Jeremiah 23:11 "For both prophet and priest **are polluted**; Even in My house I have found their wickedness," declares the LORD.

**Comment** - Their evil actions were to be found even in the house of the Lord and their pollution polluted the temple

Daniel 11:32 "By smooth words **he will turn to godlessness** those who act wickedly toward the covenant, but the people who know their God will display strength and take action.

Micah 4:11 "And now many nations have been assembled against you Who (ISRAEL) say, 'Let **her be polluted**, And let our eyes gloat over Zion.'

**Comment** - Because of many sins Zion was in danger of God's discipline by being polluted by pagan nations

**Numbers 35:34 '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.'**"

- **You shall not defile:** Nu 5:3 Lev 20:24-26
- **in the midst of which I dwell** Ps 135:21 Isa 57:15 Ho 9:3 2Co 6:16,17 Rev 21:3,27
- **I the LORD am dwelling in the midst of the sons of Israel** Nu 5:3 Ex 25:8 Ex 29:45,46 1Ki 6:13 Ps 132:14 Isa 8:12
- [Numbers 35 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### **Related Passages - (Applies this to NT believers)**

2 Corinthians 6:16; 17 Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said, "I WILL DWELL IN THEM AND WALK AMONG THEM; AND I WILL BE THEIR GOD, AND THEY SHALL BE MY PEOPLE. 17 "Therefore, **COME OUT FROM THEIR MIDST AND BE SEPARATE**," says the Lord. "AND **DO NOT TOUCH** WHAT IS UNCLEAN; And I will welcome you.

Exodus 25:8 "Let them construct a sanctuary for Me, that I may dwell among them.

Exodus 29:45-46 "I will dwell among the sons of Israel and will be their God. 46 "They shall know that I am the LORD their God who brought them out of the land of Egypt, that I might dwell among them; I am the LORD their God.

### **THE REASON LAND IS NOT TO BE DEFILED - GOD IS THERE!**

**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 - Defile** is tame which means to be made unclean. This is the second reason that murder must be punished. As stated above, it pollutes the land and that leads to this explanation. God is holy and cannot dwell in a polluted, defiled land.

**MacArthur** - Though murder and inadvertent killing polluted the land, murder was atoned for by the death of the murderer. Failure to observe these principles would make the Land unclean. If the whole Land became unclean, then the Lord would no longer be able to dwell in their midst. (MSB)

**Defile** (make unclean) ([02930](#)) **tame** means to become unclean or make unclean. To become ceremonially unclean. To defile oneself (Hos 5:3, 6:10, Ezek 20:30). A wife defiles herself by adultery (Nu 5:13, Jer 2:23 = speaks of Israel as God's wife who had defiled herself by her spiritual adultery with idols!, Ezek 23:13 = refers to Judah and in context to the 10 Northern tribes - both had defiled themselves). To defile (violate) a girl (Ge 34:5), a woman (Ezek 18:6)

The **Septuagint (Lxx)** translates **tame** here in Nu 35:34 with the verb **miaino**, means literally to dye with another color. As used in the NT figuratively **miaino** describes a mind and conscience that is morally contaminated, corrupted, tainted, tinged and polluted (Titus 1:15-[note](#) = "**defiled** and unbelieving"). In a ceremonial or cultic sense **miaino** means to defile, profane, desecrate, make unclean or to become unacceptable. To **defile** something is to sully (damage the purity or integrity of), mar (impair the appearance of; disfigure) or spoil it. Jude uses **miaino** in a physical and a moral sense of the one's flesh defiled by licentiousness and so to corrupt morally. (Jude 1:8-[note](#))

**Tame** - 141v - Gen. 34:5; Gen. 34:13; Gen. 34:27; Lev. 5:3; Lev. 11:24; Lev. 11:25; Lev. 11:26; Lev. 11:27; Lev. 11:28; Lev. 11:31; Lev. 11:32; Lev. 11:33; Lev. 11:34; Lev. 11:35; Lev. 11:36; Lev. 11:39; Lev. 11:40; Lev. 11:43; Lev. 11:44; Lev. 12:2; Lev. 12:5; Lev. 13:3; Lev. 13:8; Lev. 13:11; Lev. 13:14; Lev. 13:15; Lev. 13:20; Lev. 13:22; Lev. 13:25; Lev. 13:27; Lev. 13:30; Lev. 13:44; Lev. 13:46; Lev. 13:59; Lev. 14:36; Lev. 14:46; Lev. 15:4; Lev. 15:5; Lev. 15:6; Lev. 15:7; Lev. 15:8; Lev. 15:9; Lev. 15:10; Lev. 15:11; Lev. 15:16; Lev. 15:17; Lev. 15:18; Lev. 15:19; Lev. 15:20; Lev. 15:21; Lev. 15:22; Lev. 15:23; Lev. 15:24; Lev. 15:27; Lev. 15:31; Lev. 15:32; Lev. 17:15; Lev. 18:20; Lev. 18:23; Lev. 18:24; Lev. 18:25; Lev. 18:27; Lev. 18:28; Lev. 18:30; Lev. 19:31; Lev. 20:3; Lev. 20:25; Lev. 21:1; Lev. 21:3; Lev. 21:4; Lev. 21:11; Lev. 22:5; Lev. 22:6; Lev. 22:8; Num. 5:3; Num. 5:13; Num. 5:14; Num. 5:20; Num. 5:27; Num. 5:28; Num. 5:29; Num. 6:7; Num. 6:9; Num. 6:12; Num. 19:7; Num. 19:8; Num. 19:10; Num. 19:11; Num. 19:13; Num. 19:14; Num. 19:16; Num. 19:20; Num. 19:21; Num. 19:22; Num. 35:34; Deut. 21:23; Deut. 24:4; 2 Ki. 23:8; 2 Ki. 23:10; 2 Ki. 23:13; 2 Ki. 23:16; 2 Chr. 36:14; Ps. 79:1; Ps. 106:39; Isa. 30:22; Jer. 2:7; Jer. 2:23; Jer. 7:30; Jer. 32:34; Ezek. 4:14; Ezek. 5:11; Ezek. 9:7; Ezek. 14:11; Ezek. 18:6; Ezek. 18:11; Ezek. 18:15; Ezek. 20:7; Ezek. 20:18; Ezek. 20:26; Ezek. 20:30; Ezek. 20:31; Ezek. 20:43; Ezek. 22:3; Ezek. 22:4; Ezek. 22:11; Ezek. 23:7; Ezek. 23:13; Ezek. 23:17; Ezek. 23:30; Ezek. 23:38; Ezek. 33:26; Ezek. 36:17; Ezek. 36:18; Ezek. 37:23; Ezek. 43:7; Ezek. 43:8; Ezek. 44:25; Hos. 5:3; Hos. 6:10; Hos. 9:4; Hag. 2:13

## JESUS CHRIST OUR GOEL OUR BLOOD AVENGER

- In Hebrew = goel haddam

As outlined in the table (click), Jesus Christ is the NT fulfillment of the OT shadow of the **Kinsman Redeemer** as portrayed by Boaz in the book of Ruth. In the NT we learn that our Kinsman Redeemer will redeem and restore all that man lost when Adam sinned in the Garden of Eden and will avenge Adam's "murder" at that time, as described below.

### What happened as a result of man's fall in the Garden?

When Adam and Eve sinned in that garden they became slaves to the power of **Sin**. (Ro 6:16+)

### What else happened in the Garden?

Adam and Eve were "murdered"! You may never have thought of their "death" in the Garden as "murder", but God called it that in the NT. They were alive but when they sinned they died spiritually and from that time on they were dead in their trespasses and sins (Ge 2:17, Ro 5:12+, Eph 2:1+). In John 8:43 we learn that Jesus turns to the Jewish religious leaders and asks them...

Why do you not understand what I am saying? (And before they can answer Jesus explains that...) It is because you cannot hear My word. You are of your father the Devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a **MURDERER FROM THE BEGINNING**, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature; for he is a liar, and the father of lies."

So Jesus calls Satan a murderer and the time phrase "in the beginning" carries us back to Genesis 3. God's promise of death was fulfilled to the letter (as it always is - both the positive and negative promises) when Adam and Eve sinned (Ge 2:17).

### What was God's original intention for Adam and Eve in regard to the earth?

## CREATED TO BE KINGS!

The **writer of Hebrews** confirms God's original plan for man writing...

"THOU HAST MADE HIM FOR A LITTLE WHILE LOWER THAN THE ANGELS; THOU HAST CROWNED HIM WITH GLORY AND HONOR, AND HAST APPOINTED HIM OVER THE WORKS OF THY HANDS; THOU HAST PUT ALL THINGS IN SUBJECTION UNDER HIS FEET (dominion over all -Ge 1:26,28+)." For in subjecting all things to him, He left nothing that is not subject to him. But now we do not yet see all things

subjected to him. (He 2:7+, He 2:8+)

**Comment:** While some interpret this passage as referring to **Jesus**, the context favors this as a reference to **man** (notice that He 2:9-note opens with a contrast "**but we...**" and clearly refers to Jesus. Note also the context of the original source -- Ps 8:4, 5, 6, especially verse 4). The writer of Hebrews points out that man is not, as evolutionists foolishly reason, "a little higher than the apes," but rather "a little lower than the angels." The Psalmist refers to God's purpose in creating man with his original destiny being to reign as master over all nature. The verb *stephanoo* means to crown with honor and indeed when God created Adam and Eve sinless, pure and innocent, He bestowed on them honor and glory. When they sinned they lost their regal rule. Someday, this honor and the right to rule over the earth will be restored but not until Jesus our Kinsman Redeemer completes His work of redemption and restoration of creation.

**KJV Bible Commentary:** This Psalm (Heb 2:7, 8 quotes Psalm 8:5, 6) **does not speak** both of man and Christ; it is **not messianic**. The **son of man** is not to be distinguished from **man**. The phrases are merely an example of the common synonymous parallelism in Hebrew poetry. "Hence this passage was not regarded as a messianic prediction by Jewish teachers, but as a description of what God intended man to be" (Kent, p. 53). God made man a little lower than the angels. ([KJV Bible Commentary](#))

**William MacDonald:** (1) Ps 8:5 refers to man's unfallen state; (2) Heb 2:7 pictures man's fallen state; (3) Heb 2:9 denotes Christ's human and unglorified state (cf. Heb 2:7-9). (Borrow [Believer's Bible Commentary](#))

**Kenneth Wuest** commenting on Hebrews 2:7-8: Adam was therefore made for a little time lower than the angels. In his position as the federal head of the race, in his unfallen state, God crowned him with glory and honor. This is a picture of Adam in the paradise of Eden, before he sinned...The position of Adam as the federal head of the human race, his control of the animal kingdom through love, all spoke of his exalted position. And he was given honor and glory in view of it... (He 2:8) God put all things in subjection to Adam. He was the head of the human race, the lord of the earth. Even the animal kingdom was in subjection to him. But now comes a sad note. The words, "But now we see not yet all things put under him," point to the fact that Adam through his fall into sin, lost the dominion he had before enjoyed. He was no longer master of himself. He had become a fallen creature, with a totally depraved nature. He was a slave to sin. The animal kingdom was subservient to him not now through affection but fear. The ground, instead of yielding only good things, now produced also thorns, weeds, and other harmful things. Extremes of heat and cold, poisonous reptiles, earthquakes, typhoons, hurricanes, all conspired to make his life a constant battle to survive. He had lost the dominion over all these things. But now, in the midst of this dark picture of man's lost dominion, the writer (in He 2:9) calls our attention to a bright beam of light that pierces the surrounding gloom. It is Jesus. ([Hebrews - Wuest's word studies from the Greek New Testament excellent](#))

**John MacArthur:** Did you know that God's original design destiny for man was that man is to be the king of the earth? And that everything in existence was to be in subjection to man...God originally intended that man in innocence was king over the undefiled earth. It also tells us here that he was created a little lower than the angels, so the chain of command is God, angels, man, and earth...It was not that man was lower than angels in the sense of importance to God. It was only that man was lower than angels in the sense that He was physical and angels were spiritual. (See his full discussion of [The Rediscovery of Man's Lost Destiny](#))

**Richard Phillips** commenting on He 2:8 writes: the author points out how thorough mankind's dominion was: "Now in putting everything in subjection to him, he left nothing outside his control." Such was the lordship man was given over all the creation. Yet, the writer points out, this is not the situation we currently enjoy: "At present, we do not yet see everything in subjection to him." Here is a statement of the problem of our race—the problem of dominion lost. What God intended for man in creation is not what we see at present. What an understatement! As we look around, the Bible says, it certainly doesn't appear as if man has everything under control!...

Thus man—created by God as his image-bearer, crowned with glory and honor and dominion—became subject to God's curse even to the point of death. That curse marks mankind even now, with all its frustration and futility. Far from reigning over the creation, each and every one of us instead will return to the dust from which we came. This is the problem of mankind: Paradise lost, and with it the dominion and blessing offered by God. This is the problem of history—the basic problem set forth at the beginning of the Bible—the answer to which is unfolded in all the rest of Scripture. God's creation of mankind, recorded in

Genesis 1:26 and poetically celebrated in Psalm 8, has been spoiled by Adam's sin and the resulting curse of death...When we see that man's fall into sin and death is the great problem of history, it is easier to see the focus of God's redemptive work in the achievement of Jesus Christ...

On one hand there is man, captured in the darkness of his Paradise lost. Then onto the stage God sends his own Son (He 2:9), the New Man and Second Adam. He is the answer both to man's problem and to the problem of history. He is the great, the last, the only hope of a dying race; in him is the fulfillment not only of man's promised destiny but of God's plan as set forth in Psalm 8. History has become his story. Jesus is the new Adam of the new creation; what Adam lost he has regained. All who are found in him through faith will partake of the new humanity's reclaimed glory and honor and dominion. "We see Jesus." This is the aim of the book of Hebrews from start to finish, to show us Jesus as the Answer, the One who reclaims what mankind was created to be and to do. (Reformed Expository Commentary – Hebrews)

And so we observe that **Adam and Eve** lost their crown and their right to rule over the earth, which had been God's original intention before sin entered the world...

Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them **rule (have dominion, subdue, prevail)** over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." And God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. And God blessed them; and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and **rule (have dominion, subdue, prevail)** over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky, and over every living thing that moves on the earth." (Genesis 1:26, 27, 28)

## **MURDER IN THE GARDEN!**

And thus before the Fall of man, the earth was under the dominion of Adam and Eve, but Satan crept in the perfect environment and craftily deceived them, tempting them to commit sin, and in effect (to use Jesus' words) "**murdered**" them "**in the beginning**". (Ge 3:1-6+). Having accomplished his goal, Satan, the great usurper, became the ruler, the prince over the world (Eph 2:2+)

In the temptation of Christ we read...

And he (Devil) led Him (Jesus) up and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the devil said to Him, "I will give You all this **domain (exousia = the right and the might)** and its glory; **for it has been handed over to me**, and I give it to whomever I wish. (Luke 4:5,6+)

**Comment:** Notice that Jesus does not dispute Satan's claim as ruler over all the kingdoms of the earth. As discussed below Satan's rule is **temporary** and will be terminated by our Kinsman Redeemer, who fulfills His obligation as the Avenger of Blood.

Other passages refer to **Satan's present dominion over the whole world**...

We know that we are of God, and the **whole world** lies in *the power* ("the power" not in the original Greek but implied by the context) of the evil one (implying Satan, cp 2Co 4:4+). (1Jn 5:19+)

(Paul was given the gospel to take to the Gentiles) to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the **dominion (exousia = the right and the might)** of Satan (Satan has been given **temporary** rule over fallen man and the entire world) to God, in order that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me.' (Acts 26:18+)

## **SIN AFFECTED ALL CREATION**

Paul explains the effect of Adam's sin on the whole of creation noting that...

the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God (describing the believer's future glorified state that follows the time of the **Rapture** and the believer's change in the twinkling of an eye). For we know that **the whole creation** groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now (birth pains speak of a "delivery", in context this is the time when Creation will be



redeemed by the Kinsman Redeemer) And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the **redemption** (apolutrosis [word study]) of our body. (Ro 8:20, 21+, Ro 8:22, 23+)

**Comment:** We who have been redeemed by the blood of Jesus, our Kinsman Redeemer, are awaiting a future redemption which culminates when we receive our **glorified bodies (glorification)** an event sometimes referred to as **future tense salvation** (see Three Tenses of Salvation) (See similar truth taught in 1Pe1:5+, 1Pe 1:13+, Ro 8:30+). At the time of this "future redemption" believers will finally be freed even from the presence of **Sin** .

The divine curse on the ground (Ge 3:17+) extends through the entire created cosmos, not just the earth inhabited by man. And so we find that the creation is now travailing like a woman about to deliver a child. The "ETA" or delivery date of a glorious new age is intimately linked with the revealing of the redeemed children of God in glory.

And so creation is groaning and suffering, awaiting the glorious day when man receives back his crown and his right to rule!

### Let's review -- What did man lose when Adam sinned?

The answer can be summarized as....

**(1) The land and the right to rule the land.**

**(2) His life** -- He died and was murdered by Satan (Jn 8:44, Ge 2:16, 17)!

**(3) His freedom** -- Men became enslaved to sin and Satan and in so doing lost their freedom.

Jesus by becoming our Kinsman Redeemer (Goel) effectively and forever "reverses" every one of these losses!

### Review - How did Jesus become our Kinsman Redeemer?

As outlined in the table (click), Jesus became our **Kinsman** by emptying "Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men and being found in appearance as a man." (Phil 2:7+, Php 2:8+) As the perfect God-Man He was now able to relate to men, meeting the qualifications (becoming a "kinsman") to provide the payment for our redemption. He had the desire to redeem us (Ro 5:8+). He had the adequate means to pay for the redemption price (1Pe 1:18, 19+), a payment He accomplished on Calvary His death on Calvary, in which He gave "Himself for us, that He might **redeem** us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds." (Titus 2:14+) His precious blood also paid the price to bring about the redemption of Creation including the land (the earth) over which sinful man had forfeited rule.

We see Jesus beginning His **redemption of the land** in Revelation first taking the "book" or scroll from God the Father. This is described in more detail below.

### What is the relationship of the Kinsman-Redeemer to the Avenger of Blood?

In the OT, the **Kinsman-Redeemer** would also function as the **Avenger of Blood** (Blood Avenger) under certain circumstances, Moses recording that...

The blood avenger himself shall put the murderer to death; he shall put him to death when he meets him. (Nu 35:19+, see Nu 35:20-27).

Under this law, when someone intentionally put another person to death, the slain person's kinsman would have the right to put the murderer to death. Note that the Avenger of Blood is not also committing an act of murder, but an act of capital punishment which God, a principle God had established before the Law was given (Ge 9:6), and which Moses reaffirmed under the Law (Ex 21:12+). What is forbidden in Exodus 20:13+ is the crime of murder, and what is permitted in Numbers 35:19ff is the responsibility of the Avenger of Blood to carry out capital punishment.

### We allude to the "crime against man" earlier, but who murdered Adam and Eve (and in so doing the entire human race)?

The **Serpent of Old, Satan**, for as **Jesus** explained...

the devil...was a **murderer** from the **beginning** (beginning of time = the Garden of Eden), and does not stand in the truth (implying that the "weapon" he used to "murder" us was "the lie" - see below) (Jn 8:44)

### What was the lie?

Indeed, has God said, 'You shall not eat from any tree of the garden'? (Placing Doubt about God's Word in her mind)...And the serpent said to the woman, "You surely shall not die! (Directly contradicting God's Word) For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil (Brought God's goodness into question)." (Ge 3:1, 4, 5+)

So in the book of beginnings, we can see that the Devil became our murderer and also the usurper, who took man's ordained role to rule over the earth. In a sense Satan became a "temporary squatter" for although he was given the right and the might over the whole earth, this dominion was to be temporary and he did not receive the "title deed" (see below) of the earth. As we discover in Revelation 5 Jesus functioning as our Kinsman Redeemer receives the "title deed" of the earth and as our Blood Avenger, He avenges our murder by Satan in Revelation 20.

### What is the Scroll (biblion) in Revelation 5 and what role does it play in the redemption and restoration of the world?

Although there is not uniform agreement regarding the meaning of the **scroll**, most conservative literal interpreters of the Revelation (e.g., John MacArthur, Warren Wiersbe, Henry Morris - The Revelation Record) hold that the **scroll** represents the the "Title Deed" to the earth.

Revelation 5+ records what John saw...

And I saw in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne a **book (scroll)** written inside and on the back, sealed up with seven seals. 2 And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the **book (scroll)** and to break its seals?" 3 And no one in heaven, or on the earth, or under the earth, was able to open the **book (scroll)**, or to look into it. 4 And I began to weep greatly, because no one was found **worthy (axios [word study])** to open the **book (scroll)**, or to look into it; 5 and one of the elders said to me, "Stop weeping; behold, the Lion that is from the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, **has overcome (nikao [word study])** in the **perfect tense** = ) so as to open the **book (scroll)** and **its seven seals.**" 6 And I saw between the throne (with the four living creatures) and the elders a Lamb standing, as if **slain (perfect tense = past completed action [The Crucifixion]** with continuing results/effect, speaks of the permanence of His past slaying, and it testified to by His scars, His marks of the new covenant, an unbreakable, eternal covenant), having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God, sent out into all the earth. 7 And He came, and He took it out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne.

The description of Jesus' "as if slain" needs to be further examined because of the beautiful picture it paints of the **Passover Lamb**, our **Kinsman Redeemer**....

In **Isaiah** the Lion of the tribe of Judah declares...

"Behold, I have inscribed you on the palms of My hands..." (Isaiah 49:16+)

**Dave Guzik** writes (and I agree) that...

This has obvious and beautiful fulfillment in the nail-scarred hands of Jesus.

**John** records this description of the **resurrection body** of Jesus...

So when it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and when the doors were shut where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in their midst and said to them, "Peace be with you." And when He had said this, He **showed them both His hands** and His side. The disciples then rejoiced when they saw the Lord. (Jn 20:19-20)

Compare the response of "**doubting**" **Thomas**...

But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came. 25 The other disciples therefore were saying to him, "We have seen the Lord!" But he said to them, "Unless I shall see in His hands **the imprint of the nails**, and put my finger **into the place of the nails**, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe." 26 And after eight days again His disciples were inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors having been shut, and stood in their midst, and said, "Peace be with you." 27 Then He said to Thomas, "Reach here your finger, and see My hands; and reach here your hand, and put it into My side; and be not unbelieving, but believing." 28 Thomas answered and said to Him, "My Lord and my God!" 29 Jesus said to him, "Because you have seen Me, have you believed? Blessed are they who did not see, and yet believed." (Jn 10:25-29).

[A Debtor to Mercy](#)

—Original words by Augustus M. Toplady  
music and alt. words by Bob Kauflin

My name from the palms of His hands  
A debtor to mercy alone  
Of covenant mercy I sing  
I come with Your righteousness on  
My humble offering to bring  
The judgments of Your holy law  
With me can have nothing to do  
My Savior's obedience and blood  
Hide all my transgressions  
From view

The work which Your goodness began  
The arm of Your strength will complete  
Your promise is yes and amen  
And never was forfeited yet  
The future or things that are now  
No power below or above  
Can make You Your purpose forego  
Or sever my soul from Your love

My name from the palms of Your hands  
Eternity will not erase  
Impressed on Your heart it remains  
In marks of indelible grace  
Yes I, to the end will endure  
Until I bow down at Your throne  
Forever and always secure  
Forever and always secure  
Forever and always secure  
A debtor to mercy alone

### What transpires when our "worthy" Kinsman Redeemer breaks the seal and opens the Seven Sealed Scroll?

As the Lamb broke the first seal of the Seven Sealed Scroll, He set in motion the sequential events through the seven seals, the seven trumpets and the seven bowl judgments, which culminate in the kingdom of this world becoming the kingdom of our Christ.

### What about the redemption of the land that had been temporarily given to Satan?

Jesus becomes the **REDEEMER OF THE LAND** that had been "sold to another". In the OT God provided the year of **Jubilee** every 50 years, and at this time the slaves were to be set free and the land returned to its original owner (cp Lev 25:10, 13, 39, 40, 41, 53, 54+), these events in a sense pre-figuring the return of the land to mankind who had forfeited it when Adam sinned. To be sure, the Jews were excited in the **year of Jubilee**. But we as blood bought, heaven bound believers have a "Jubilee" coming like no one has ever seen because we have a **KINSMAN REDEEMER** that is going to take the scroll out of the hand of Him Who sits on the throne and He is going to break the seals which lead to the trumpets, the seventh culminating in the Kingdom of this world becoming the Kingdom of His Christ. John alludes to this glorious of restoration of the land...

And they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy art Thou to take the book, and to break its seals; for Thou wast slain, and didst **purchase (agorazo [word study])** for God with Thy blood (a picture of redemption) men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation. And Thou hast made them to be a kingdom (Adam relinquished his rule, but the Last Adam [1Co 15:45], our Redeemer, restores rule to the redeemed) and priests to our God; and **they will reign upon the earth.**" (Rev 5:9+, Rev 5:10+)

Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power (all who are overcomers - see 1Jn 5:4, 5 = all believers), but they will be priests of God and of

Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years. (Rev 20:6-[note](#))

### By Christ Redeemed, in Christ Restored

We keep the memory adored,  
And show the death of our dear Lord,  
Until He come, Until He come.

The "land" redeemed by the precious blood of our Kinsman Redeemer and returned to men and women who have been reborn by placing their faith in their Redeemer. Then our Kinsman Redeemer fulfills one final role of Avenging our blood, by punishing our murderer Satan.

### And what happens to the "great dragon...the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world"?

After describing the glorious period of 1000 years (**Millennium**) in which Satan is bound (Rev 20:1, Rev 20:2, Rev 20:3), John describes his brief "unleashing" and his final punishment...

And when the thousand years are completed, Satan will be released from his prison, 8 and will come out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together for the war; the number of them is like the sand of the seashore. 9 And they came up on the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city, and fire came down from heaven and devoured them. 10 And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever. (Rev 20:7-[note](#), Rev 20:8-[note](#), Rev 20:9-[note](#), Rev 20:10-[note](#))

**Comment:** The devil is finally and eternally cast into the lake of fire, where the worm dies not and the fire is not quenched. This is the destination for all who fail to believe in Messiah as their Redeemer, but it was not originally prepared for man but for the devil and his angels (Mt 25:41)

So Jesus our **KINSMAN-REDEEMER** has also become our **BLOOD AVENGER**.

## THE SEVENTH TRUMPET WILL SOUND

**John** writes these fitting words...

And the seventh angel sounded; and there arose loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdom of the world **has become** (prophetic aorist - see comment) the kingdom of our Lord, and of His Christ; and He will reign forever and ever." 16 And the twenty-four elders, who sit on their thrones before God, fell on their faces and worshiped God, 17 saying, "We give Thee thanks, O Lord God, the Almighty, who art and who wast, because Thou hast taken Thy great power and hast begun to reign. 18 "And the nations were enraged, and Thy wrath came, and the time came for the dead to be judged, and the time to give their reward to Thy bond-servants the prophets and to the saints and to those who fear Thy name, the small and the great, and to destroy those who destroy the earth." (Rev 11:15-18<sup>+</sup>)

**Comment:** **Garland** explains that "**has become**" is the "prophetic aorist". The event is so certain in the sounding of the seventh angel that it is treated as if already past. However, the kingdom will not have arrived in totality until all seven bowl judgments are poured forth (Rev. 16:17<sup>+</sup>) and the King Himself returns to earth to defeat the armies of the nations (Isa. 63:1-6<sup>+</sup>; Zec. 12:1-9<sup>+</sup>; Zech 14:1-8<sup>+</sup>; Rev. 19:11-21<sup>+</sup>).

**John MacArthur** explains: The sounding of the 7th trumpet marks a significant milestone in the book of Revelation. It sets in motion the final events leading up to the return of the Lord Jesus Christ and the establishment of His earthly millennial kingdom. Rev 10:7 expresses the finality of the seventh trumpet: "In the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, then the mystery of God is finished, as He preached to His servants the prophets." That mystery is the full revelation of the consummation of God's plan. It was prophesied by the Old Testament preachers, but its fullness was never revealed until the book of Revelation.

The seventh trumpet sets in motion the final consummation of God's redemptive plan for the present universe. During its tenure will come the final fury of the Day of the Lord judgments (Rev 16:1-21), the final harvest of judgment on earth (Re 11:18; 16:19), and the Lamb's defeat of the kings of the earth (Rev

17:12-18), culminating in the final, climactic triumph of Christ at Armageddon (Re 19:11-21). The sounding of the seventh trumpet signals God's answer to the prayer, "Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven" (Mt 6:10). That answer sweeps through Rev 12:1-22:21 as God finishes His mighty work of **reclaiming creation from the usurper, Satan**...Though its effects on earth were delayed (as with the seventh seal; Rev 8:2, 3, 4, 5), there was an immediate response in heaven when the seventh angel sounded his (7th) trumpet...That dramatic proclamation is obviously connected to the effects of the seventh trumpet. There is unrestrained joy that the power of Satan is to be forever broken, and Jesus Christ is to reign supreme as King of kings and Lord of lords. With the defeat of the usurper, the question of sovereignty over the world will be forever settled. What Jesus refused to take on Satan's terms (cf. Lk 4:5-8+) He will take on His own terms. Heaven rejoices that the long rebellion of the world against God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ is about to end. **The setting up of Christ's long-awaited kingdom** (Ed: See discussion of **Millennium 2** and **Millennium 3**) **is the apex of redemptive history.** ([Macarthur J. Revelation 1-11](#), and [Revelation 12-22. Moody](#)) (Bolding added)

**WORTHY IS THE LAMB!  
BREAK YOUR SEALS!  
LET THE FOUR RIDERS  
OF THE APOCALYPSE COME FORTH!  
LET THY KINGDOM COME!  
AMEN!**