

## Joshua 20/21

Cities of Refuge Study [https://www.blueletterbible.org/comm/guzik\\_david/study-guide/joshua/joshua-20.cfm](https://www.blueletterbible.org/comm/guzik_david/study-guide/joshua/joshua-20.cfm)

v.1-3 <sup>1</sup> The LORD also spoke to Joshua, saying, <sup>2</sup> “Speak to the children of Israel, saying: Appoint for yourselves cities of refuge, of which I spoke to you through Moses (Numbers 35) Moses instructed the appointment of six cities for refuge that the slayer who kills a person accidentally or unintentionally may flee there; and they shall be your refuge from the avenger of blood.

Sanctuary cities were to be put into place so a refugee would have a place to escape to.

A refugee or Asylum (H4733) was someone that had a reasonable fear of receiving severe persecution (H2026a); or if they are in genuine form danger.

v.4: And when he flees to one of those cities and stands at the entrance of the gate of the city and declares his case in the hearing of the elders of that city, they shall take him into the city as one of them, and give him a place, that he may dwell among them.

Asylum seekers plead their case to the elders at the gate for admittance. Being admitted, there is a requirement for the city to provide a place to live.

**Fun fact:** Why does Heaven have gates? Why is it so fortified; And why are Angel's guarding them? It is interesting to me because gates are for entering and leaving, which means to me that there are an entering and a leaving of heaven but there seems to be a checkpoint at the gate. Rev 21:12; In Revelation 22:14, notice that it states who is allowed to enter or leave, hint... it's those that are in the Lambs Book of Life!

Notice how God has a process! He is organized and detailed, giving specific instructions. He doesn't just move or operate sporadically, there is a process just as moving into the gifts of the Spirit. It's just name it and it comes to pass. The design is sequential. Seek first the Kingdom (Have the right heart having the right motivation - righteousness) Matt 6:33, Hear and Believe then faith comes (trust in him to accomplish), then an action to carry out through His direction/Word/ by the Holy Spirit. John 5:24, Roman 10:17, Luke 8:12

How we plead before God for forgiveness of wrongdoings and God provides, within us, the assurance /trust that we are safe with Him.

v.5 Then if the avenger of blood pursues him, they shall not deliver the slayer into his hand, because he struck his neighbor unintentionally, but did not hate him beforehand.

In Proverbs 15:18, there is a clear distinction between intentional and unintentional.

We are to remain calm in our security in God. It allows us to present our sinfulness to our advocate, Jesus, with a contrite heart so that we may be cleansed from our sin.

v.6 And he shall dwell in that city until he stands before the congregation for judgment, and until the death of the one who is high priest in those days. Then the slayer may return and come to his own city and his own house, to the city from which he fled.

God gives wisdom in the approach for a trial. He assigns a congregation which says there must be evidence that supports the testimony of the family and asylum seeker. This eliminates any schemes which could benefit those impacted because of the act producing revenge or vengeance. Matthew 18:20

v.7 So they appointed Kedesh in Galilee, in the mountains of Naphtali, Shechem in the mountains of Ephraim, and Kirjath Arba (which is Hebron) in the mountains of Judah.

Kedesh: Jos 12:22; Judges 4:6; It was assigned to the Gershonite Levites 1 Chron 6:71-72,76.

v.8 And on the other side of the Jordan, by Jericho eastward, they assigned Bezer in the wilderness on the plain, from the tribe of Reuben, Ramoth in Gilead, from the tribe of Gad, and Golan in Bashan, from the tribe of Manasseh.

v.9 These were the cities appointed for all the children of Israel and for the stranger who dwelt among them, that whoever killed a person accidentally might flee there, and not die by the hand of the avenger of blood until he stood before the congregation.

### **Just a Thought**

The responsibilities of the church were always outlined by God in the bible. These sanctuary cities were examples of how to deal with people who were displaced from the norms to preserve their life and others who have been involved in bad situations such as violence. From my perspective, the church has lost its opportunity to change lives through providing services that were never intended to be run by institutions other than Christ's church. This kind of direct involvement by the church would have been hugely felt by the public.

Instead of being a place of safety and security, these programs, driven by monetary interest, do not provide spiritual support. This is a job for the church, to ensure accountability and healing and a fruitful life from a biblical standard.

## Joshua 21

### Who were the Levites:

Why were they chosen to lead God's tabernacle and temple.

It is because they zealously and violently defended the covenant.

Exodus 32:25-27,28-29

- Moses smashed the 10 commandments b/c the Israelites were out of control
- Moses says whoever is on the Lord's side come to me
- Levites gathered around Moses.
- Then the Levites slayed those who were not on the Lord's side regardless of who they were!
- Consecrate yourselves today to the Lord. (**Ordained for the service of the Lord!**)
- Those who chose the Lord, a blessing was bestowed because they chose the Lord and not family.
- These are the people who are dedicated to the Lord because of their fervent zeal and violence in their defense of the Mosaic covenant.

Numbers 25:6 is another example. (Not noted)

Although today, we are not violent towards others, but let God be our avenger, yet we battle in the Spirit of God against those that oppose the people of God zealously. Some of the things we zealously oppose:

- Greed
- Sin and immorality.
- Legalists / Works Based Theology

### Terms throughout Joshua Chapter 21

**Inheritance:** Numbers 35:1-5

**Common-Land:** Lev 25:32-34

**A city of refuge for the slayer:** Joshua 20,21

Cities of Refuge: The establishment of the cities of refuge emphasizes God's commitment to justice and mercy. The provision of asylum until fair trial underscores the value God places on human life and due process. It teaches us that in our society, we should be careful to distinguish between intentional harm and unfortunate accidents, extending mercy whenever appropriate.

**Kadesh**– in Naphtali, **Shechem**– in West Manasseh, **Hebron**- in Judah, **Golan**– in East Manasseh, **Ramoth** – Gilead in Gad, **Bezer**– in Rueben

Commonalities about the cities: The roads leading to the six cities were well maintained in order to ensure a smooth passage for fugitives. Additionally, clearly marked signposts were found at crossroads which read **Miklat** meaning "Refuge." the roads were very broad . . . smooth and level, in order that the fugitive might not be hindered . . ." (1906 Jewish Encyclopedia)



v.1 Joshua 1:1

The Levites: at the gates Duet (12:12,18,14:27,16:11, 18:6)

Their responsibilities: Minister and Lead as led by God (Numbers 1:50); to console (Acts 4:36)

Their portions: Duet. 26:12,13

Their duties:

The Levites were assistants to the priests and served various religious functions in the tabernacle and temple.

They helped transport the tabernacle during the Exodus, assisted the priests with sacrifices, taught the law, cared for the tabernacle furnishings, provided temple music and served as gatekeepers and judges.

- **Consecration and Divine Service:** Num 8:5-22
- **Living off Tithes Instead of Inheritance:** Lev 27:30-33, Num 18:21-24

The Levites would then present a tenth of these offerings as an offering to God (Numbers 18:26-28). Church should tithe!

- **Transporting the Tabernacle: (Num 1:47-53)**
- **Assisting the Priests (1 Chr 23:24-32; Num 3:5-9)**
- **Providing Temple Music: (1 Chr 15:16-24)**
- **Teaching and Interpreting the Law (Deut 33:8-11)**  
Levites would preserve the law, copy Scripture texts, promote obedience to the covenant among Israelites, and settle disputes regarding the Torah.
- **Guarding the Tabernacle and Temple: Num 1:53**  
Gatekeepers specifically monitored entryways and secured the temple compound perimeter (1 Chronicles 26:1-19). They searched containers, contributed to pest control, and even assisted with financial accounting for gifts given to the Lord's house (2 Chronicles 31:11-18).

**God continually reaffirms his Word by His Word (Num 33:53)**

v.44 God gave them rest all around: (Jos 1:13, 15, 11:23)

v.45 Not a Word of any good thing did not come to pass. (Num 23:19, 1 Kings 8:56)