

## **220216-4 Deu 19, Refuge Cities, Removing Landmarks, Witnesses for Sin & False Accusers–CThurman**

In chapter 18 there were three major points:

- The Levite's part and place of his service.

Under this we considered the altars that would be built around the land of Canaan. Prior to Israel's descent into Egypt altars were built and sacrifices offered by anyone. Once Israel is delivered from Egypt their sacrifices must be brought to tabernacle to be offered upon the brazen altar. When Israel enters into Canaan it seems that altars will be built in and around their cities, and there the Levites shall offer in behalf of the Israelites. Aaron's sons would continue ministering around the tabernacle for some time. Once Solomon's Temple is built it seems that these altars will cease from the land, or should cease anyway, and all sacrifices offered at the Temple.

- Learning not the way of the heathen.

Israel was not to learn to do after the nations in enquiring of the LORD. That is an abomination to the LORD. Israel was to be perfect. which they could be in these two ways: put away the practices of the heathen and they obeyed the word of God. They were not sinless, but they were perfect.

- That Prophet was to be heard.

The LORD said that He would send to them a Prophet of prophets. This Prophet was to be heard, obeyed. Israel was told that the prophet that presumed to speak in the name of the LORD shall die. And the LORD told them how to tell a true prophet from a false prophet.

Chapter 19 touches on four things: cities of refuge, removing a neighbor's landmark, minimum witnesses for testifying, and the controversy of a false witness.

## Chapter 19

### Cities of Refuge (vss.1-13)

**1 ¶ When the LORD thy God hath cut off the nations, whose land the LORD thy God giveth thee, and thou succeedest them, and dwellest in their cities, and in their houses;**

*and shalt possess it, the verb שָׂרַשׁ, yah-rash, tss. to possess, to succeed, to enjoy, to inherit, etc.; cf. Due.17.14, and shalt possess it; Deu.19.1, and thou succeedest; Due. 26.1, and possesses it; Deu.30.5, possessed, and though shalt possess it; Deu.31.3, and thou shalt possess them.*

**2 Thou shalt separate three cities for thee in the midst of thy land, which the LORD thy God giveth thee to possess it.**

**3 Thou shalt prepare thee a way, and divide the coasts of thy land,**

*shalt prepare, Hiphil (causative act.) fut. of the verb כִּוֵּן, koon, tss. to establish, to prepare, to fashion, to fit, to ready, to stand, to direct, to set forth, to right, etc.*

*coasts, a masc. noun גְּבוּל, g'-vool, tss. border, coast (v.3), bound, landmark (v.14), space, limit.*

Israel was to make a way, a route that would lead to each city.

**which the LORD thy God giveth thee to inherit, into three parts, that every slayer may flee thither.**

*slayer, Qal part. Poel, of the verb רָצַח, ra-tzach, tss. to kill, to slay, to murder, to put to death, to be a manslayer, to be a slayer, to be a murderer; cf. Ex. 20.13, the 6<sup>th</sup> Commandment, Nu.35.6, 11, 12, 16-19, 21, 25-28, 30, 31; Deu.4.42; 19.3, 4, 6; 22.26; Jos.20.3, 5, 6; 21.13, 21, 27, 32, 38.*

**4 And this is the case of the slayer, which shall flee thither, that he may live:**  
matter

*case*, דָּבָר, dah-vahr, a masc. noun, tss. *a speech, a word, a thing, sake, matter (v.15), any such (v.20), errand, manner, commandments, etc.*

Now to define the kind of slayer shall find refuge in one of these cities.

**Whoso killeth his neighbour ignorantly, whom he hated not in time past;**

*killeth*, Hiphil (causative act.) fut. of the Hebrew verb נָכַח, nah-kah, **v.4, killeth, v.6, slay, v.11, smite, to punish, to beat.**

*ignorantly*, a Hebrew fem. noun דַּעַת, dah-[g]ath, tss. *knowledge, witting, cunning, -norantly*; with a prefixed part. בְּלִי, bi-b'-lee, the prefixed *un-[aware, wittingly], ig-[norantly]*

*hate*, שָׂנֵא, sah-neh, a verb tss. *to hate, to be enemy, to be odious.*

*in time past*, a combination of the Hebrew adverbs תְּמוֹל, t'-mōhl, tss. *before, yesterday, heretofore* & שְׁלֹשָׁם, shil-shōhm, tss. *before, heretofore, three days*; together tss. *in time past* or lit. *since the third day, or yesterday.*

So the kind of slayer which may flee to one of these three cities in Canaan is one that unknowingly, ignorantly caused the death of another. In other words the cause of death was accidental; it was not his purpose to kill, he was not motivated by hatred. What is hatred but murder in the heart.

'Hate is murder without opportunity.' *Floyd L. King, May 10, 2011*

*1Jo 3:15 Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.*

The slayer is defined clearly as having caused an accidental death:

*Ex.21.13 And if a man lie not in wait, but God deliver him into his hand; then I will appoint thee a place whither he shall flee. (This death might have been the cause of the person, but not purpose; where it was purposed by God.)*

*Nu 35:11 Then ye shall appoint you cities to be cities of refuge for you; that the slayer may flee thither, which killeth any person at unawares.*

...

*15 ... that every one that killeth any person unawares may flee thither.*

...

*22 (reading this below) ... without enmity ... without laying of wait ... seeing him not ... not his enemy, neither sought his harm ...*

*Jos 20:3 ... the slayer that killeth any person unawares and unwittingly ...*

...

*9 ...whoso killeth any person at unawares ...*

Then what follows are examples of such accidental deaths.

***5 As when a man goeth into the wood with his neighbour to hew wood, and his hand fetcheth a stroke with the axe to cut down the tree,***

***and the head slippeth from the helve,***  
iron [head] looses, casts out handle

*head, masc. noun בַּרְזֶל, bar-zel, tss. iron (73), head (1 [Deu.19.5]),  
axe head (1 [2Ki.6.5]).*

*slips, Qal pret. of the verb נָשַׁל, tss. to cast, to cast out, to put out, to drive, to loose; 7.1, 22; 19.5, slippeth; 28.40*

*helve*, masc. noun הַלְוֵה, [g]ehtz, tss. *tree, wood, timber, helve*; *helve* in English means the handle, the haft.

***and lighteth upon his neighbour, that he die; he shall flee unto one of those cities, and live:***

*Nu.35.22 But if he thrust him suddenly without enmity, or have cast upon him any thing without laying of wait,  
23 Or with any stone, wherewith a man may die, seeing him not, and cast it upon him, that he die, and was not his enemy, neither sought his harm ...*

***6 Lest the avenger of the blood pursue the slayer, while his heart is hot,***

[wrath] is conceived to his heart.

*is hot*, Qal fut. of the Hebrew verb חָמַם, yah-cham, tss. *to conceive, to get heat, to be hot, to be warm.*

***and overtake him, because the way is long, and slay him; whereas he was not worthy of death, inasmuch as he hated him not in time past.***

***7 Wherefore I command thee, saying, Thou shalt separate three cities for thee.***

***8 And if the LORD thy God enlarge thy coast, as he hath sworn unto thy fathers, and give thee all the land which he promised to give unto thy fathers;***

***9 If thou shalt keep all these commandments to do them, which I command thee this day, to love the LORD thy God, and to walk ever in his ways; then shalt thou add three cities more for thee, beside these three:***

When Israel came into the plains of Moab Reuben, Gad, and one-half of the tribe of Manasseh desired for their land allotment the land on the eastern side of the Jordan River. This land they had taken from Sihon, king of Heshbon and Og, king of Bashan. It was a land for cattle and they had cattle. (cf. Nu.32.4; Due.3.19) It was agreed that they could have this land only after their warriors first crossed over the Jordan River with their brethren to help them take possession of Canaan. Then they may have this land for their own. (cf. Nu.32.33) As a result this would give Israel 3 more cities of refuge, a total of six, 3 on either side of the Jordan River. These

cities would be located in the northern, central and southern parts of the land.

On the east of the Jordan River the three cities of refuge were Bezer (of the Reubenites), Ramoth in Gilead (of the Gadites), and Golan in Bashan (of the Manassites) (cf. Deu.4.41-43; Jos.20.8)

On the west of the Jordan River the cities of refuge were Kadeah in Galilee (in mount Naphtali), Shechem (in mount Ephraim) and Kirjatharba or Hebron (in the mountain of Judah). (cf. Jos.20.7)

These 6 cities were part of another 42 that the LORD commanded Israel give to the Levites.

*Nu.35.6 And among the cities which ye shall give unto the Levites there shall be six cities for refuge, which ye shall appoint for the manslayer, that he may flee thither: and to them ye shall add forty and two cities.*

...

*14 Ye shall give three cities on this side Jordan (the east side of the River), and three cities shall ye give in the land of Canaan (on the west side), which shall be cities of refuge.*

*15 These six cities shall be a refuge, both for the children of Israel, and for the stranger, and for the sojourner among them ...*

***10 That innocent blood be not shed in thy land, which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance, and so blood be upon thee.***

(thee: Israel)

The city of refuge prevents the shedding of innocent blood in the land.

Once the accidental death has occurred the person must immediately flee to one of these cities for refuge. When he arrives he must announce himself at the gates of that city and to the elders there. This being done they will admit him into their care and defense against the revenger of blood until the matter is judged.

*Jos 20:4 And when he that doth flee unto one of those cities shall stand at the entering of the gate of the city, and shall declare his cause in the ears of the elders of that city, they shall take him into the city unto them, and give him a place, that he may dwell among them.  
5 And if the avenger of blood pursue after him, then they shall not deliver the slayer up into his hand; because he smote his neighbour unwittingly, and hated him not beforetime.*

The man is safe until the time of judgment. And if his innocence is maintained he is safe from the avenger of blood for as long as he remains in this city.

*Nu.35.26 But if the slayer shall at any time come without the border of the city of his refuge, whither he was fled;  
27 And the revenger of blood find him without the borders of the city of his refuge, and the revenger of blood kill the slayer; he shall not be guilty of blood:  
28 Because he should have remained in the city of his refuge until the death of the high priest: but after the death of the high priest the slayer shall return into the land of his possession.*

Only after the death of the high priest may he safely leave this city.

*Nu.35.25 ... and he shall abide in it unto the death of the high priest, which was anointed with the holy oil.*

*Jos.20.6 And he shall dwell in that city, until he stand before the congregation for judgment, and until the death of the high priest that shall be in those days: then shall the slayer return, and come unto his own city, and unto his own house, unto the city from whence he fled.*

**11 But if any man hate his neighbour, and lie in wait for him, and rise up against him, and smite him mortally that he die, and fleeth into one of these cities:**

**12 Then the elders of his city shall send and fetch him thence, and deliver him into the hand of the avenger of blood, that he may die.**

**13 Thine eye shall not pity him, but thou shalt put away**

eradicate

*So thou shalt put away, Piel (Intensive act.) pret. verb of בָּעַר, bah-[g]ar, tss. to burn, to kindle, to heat (and the idea is to consume as with a fire), to feed, to waste, to eat, to eat up, to take away, to put away; so, 'to eradicate'; Deu.13.5; 17.7, 12; 19.13, 19; 21.9, 21; 22.21, 22, 24; 24.7; 26.13, 14.*

***the guilt of innocent blood from Israel, that it may go well with thee.***

*So thou shalt put away, Piel (Intensive act.) pret. verb of בָּעַר, bah-[g]ar, tss. to burn, to kindle, to heat (and the idea is to consume as with a fire), to feed, to waste, to eat, to eat up, to take away, to put away; so, 'to eradicate'; Deu.13.5; 17.7, 12; 19.13, 19; 21.9, 21; 22.21, 22, 24; 24.7; 26.13, 14.*

But there is no refuge for the one that sets out to purposely kill another.

*Nu.35.16 And if he smite him with an instrument of iron, so that he die, he is a murderer: the murderer shall surely be put to death.*

*17 And if he smite him with throwing a stone, wherewith he may die, and he die, he is a murderer: the murderer shall surely be put to death.*

*18 Or if he smite him with an hand weapon of wood, wherewith he may die, and he die, he is a murderer: the murderer shall surely be put to death.*

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

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

*21 Or in enmity smite him with his hand, that he die: he that smote him shall surely be put to death; for he is a murderer: the revenger of blood shall slay the murderer, when he meeteth him.*

Cities of refuge do not apply to actions in behalf of authority: soldiers in time of war, law enforcement, judicial executions, self-defense against unlawful acts committed against another, i.e., robbery, thefts.

No satisfaction to disannul the law regarding the cities of refuge. This rule cannot be circumvented by any means.

*Deu.35.32 And ye shall take no satisfaction for him that is fled to the city of his refuge, that he should come again to dwell in the land, until the death of the priest.*

*33 So 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.*

Removing a Neighbor's Landmark (v.14)

**14 ¶ Thou shalt not remove thy neighbour's landmark, which they of old time have set in thine inheritance, which thou shalt inherit in the land that the LORD thy God giveth thee to possess it.**

*remove, Hiphil (causative act.) fut. of the Hebrew verb גָּבַל, tss. to depart away, to take, to remove, to take hold, to turn away.*

*landmark, a masc. noun גְּבוּל, g'-vool, tss. border, coast (v.3), bound, landmark, space, limit.*

*inheritance, a fem. noun נַחֲלָה, na-cha-lah, tss. inheritance, possession, heritage.*

Other texts which concern removing the landmark of one's inheritance. It is stealing the inheritance of another.

*De 27:17 Cursed be he that removeth his neighbour's landmark. And all the people shall say, Amen.*

*Pr 22:28 Remove not the ancient landmark, which thy fathers have set.*

*Pr 23:10 Remove not the old landmark; and enter not into the fields of the fatherless:*

11 *For their redeemer is mighty; he shall plead their cause with thee.*

Eleazar and Joshua shall take one prince of each tribe and appoint the tribes allotment of land. Once the land allotments have been appointed the borders of them should not be moved.

Larger tribes receive more land, and smaller tribes receive less land:

*Nu.26.52 ¶ And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,*

*53 Unto these (v. 51, 601,730 men of war from the ages of 20 and up that were able for war.) the land shall be divided for an inheritance according to the number of names.*

*54 To many thou shalt give the more inheritance, and to few thou shalt give the less inheritance: to every one shall his inheritance be given according to those that were numbered of him.*

*55 Notwithstanding the land shall be divided by lot: according to the names of the tribes of their fathers they shall inherit.*

*56 According to the lot shall the possession thereof be divided between many and few.*

*Nu.34.13 And Moses commanded the children of Israel, saying, This is the land which ye shall inherit by lot, which the LORD commanded to give unto the nine tribes, and to the half tribe:*

*14 For the tribe of the children of Reuben according to the house of their fathers, and the tribe of the children of Gad according to the house of their fathers, have received their inheritance; and half the tribe of Manasseh have received their inheritance:*

*15 The two tribes and the half tribe have received their inheritance on this side Jordan near Jericho eastward, toward the sunrising.*

*16 ¶ And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,*

*17 These are the names of the men which shall divide the land unto you: Eleazar the priest, and Joshua the son of Nun.*

*18 And ye shall take one prince of every tribe, to divide the land by inheritance.*

...

*29 These are they whom the LORD commanded to divide the inheritance unto the children of Israel in the land of Canaan.*

*Jos.14.1 ¶ And these are the countries which the children of Israel inherited in the land of Canaan, which Eleazar the priest, and Joshua the son of Nun, and the heads of the fathers of the tribes of the children of Israel, distributed for inheritance to them.*

*2 By lot was their inheritance, as the LORD commanded by the hand of Moses, for the nine tribes, and for the half tribe.*

*3 For Moses had given the inheritance of two tribes and an half tribe on the other side Jordan: but unto the Levites he gave none inheritance among them.*

Removing the landmark was a very serious offense to the LORD. Later the princes of Judah would receive the wrath of God for this crime.

*Hos.5.10 The princes of Judah were like them that remove the bound (לְבִיָּהּ, g'-voel, landmark): therefore I will pour out my wrath upon them like water.*

#### Minimum Witnesses for Testifying (vss.15)

**15 One witness shall not rise up against a man for any iniquity, or for any sin, in any sin that he sinneth: at the mouth of two witnesses, or at the mouth of three witnesses, shall the matter be established.**

*Nu.35.30 Whoso killeth any person, the murderer shall be put to death by the mouth of witnesses: but one witness shall not testify against any person to cause him to die.*

*De 17:6 At the mouth of two witnesses, or three witnesses, shall he that is worthy of death be put to death; but at the mouth of one witness he shall not be put to death.*

#### Settling the Controversy of a False Witness (vss.16-21)

**16 If a false witness rise up against any man to testify against him wrong, cruel**

*false witness*, עֵד־הַמָּס, **עֵד**, a masc. noun always tss. *witness*; and the masc. noun **חָמָס**, *chah-mas*, is tss. *violence, wrong, cruel, false, injustice*.

**that which is wrong;**  
rebellious

*wrong*, סָרַח, **סָרַח**, sah-rah, a fem. noun, tss. *to turn away, wrong, revolt, rebellion*.

**17 Then both the men, between whom the controversy is,**  
contention

*controversy*, רִיב, **רִיב**, reev, a masc. noun tss. *a strife, a controversy, a cause, a suit, a pleading, a contention, an adversary*.

**shall stand before the LORD,** **before the priests and the judges,**  
which standing is as

*Deu.1.16 And I charged your judges at that time, saying, Hear the causes between your brethren, and judge righteously between every man and his brother, and the stranger that is with him.*

*17 Ye shall not respect persons in judgment; but ye shall hear the small as well as the great; ye shall not be afraid of the face of man; for the judgment is God's: and the cause that is too hard for you, bring it unto me, and I will hear it.*

(cf. Ex.12.12; 15.11; 21.6; 22.8, 9; Nu.33.4; Ps.82.6-8; Jn.10.34-36; )

**which shall be in those days;**

Perhaps the controversy begins in the lower court of the city officials, then if too difficult to resolve locally, it could be brought to highest court in the land. (cf. Deu.16.18; 17.8) But these priests and judges represent the LORD in judgment. If appeal is made to the highest court that ruling is final. (cf. Deu.17.11, 12)

**18 And the judges shall make diligent inquisition:**

or, inquire thoroughly

*diligent*, Hiphil (causative act.) infin. of the verb יָטַב, tss. *to be well, to please, to be content, to be merry, to accept, to find favour, to be diligent, to be thorough.*,

*inquisition*, Qal pret. verb of דָּרַשׁ, dah-rash, tss. *to seek, to enquire, to require.*

**and, behold, if the witness be a false witness, and hath testified falsely against his brother;**

*false*, שֶׁקֶר, she-qer, masc. noun tss. *vain, false, falsely, lying, wrongfully, deceit, feignedly.*

**19 Then shall ye do unto him, as he had thought**  
[judges] [false witness] devised, imagined

*had thought*, Qal pret. of the verb זָמַם, zah-mam, tss. *to think, to devise, to think evil, to consider (Pv.31.16), to purpose, to imagine, to plot.*

**to have done unto his brother: so shalt thou put the evil away**  
[Israel] eradicate the evil

*put ... away*, Piel (intensive act.) pret. of the verb בָּעַר, bah-[g]ar, tss. *to burn, to kindle, to heat (and the idea is to consume as with a fire), to feed, to waste, to eat, to eat up, to take away, to put away; so, 'to eradicate'; Deu.13.5; 17.7, 12; 19.13, 19; 21.9, 21; 22.21, 22, 24; 24.7; 26.13, 14.*

**from among you.**

To be clear, this is not vengeance or retribution. This is a sentence that is passed upon the guilty by the judge.

**20 And those which remain shall hear, and fear, and shall henceforth commit no more any such evil among you.**

**21 And thine eye shall not pity; but life shall go for life,**  
[the judges] spare [to pay]

*shall pity, חַיִּים, choos, a verb tss. to pity, to spare, to regard.*

**eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand**  
[shall go to pay] [shall go to pay] [shall go to pay]

**for hand, foot for foot.**  
[shall go to pay]

This law provides for a judicial settling of contentions between two brethren; specifically the resolution of a false accusation.

‘In neither the O.T. nor the N.T. is a man entitled to take vengeance. That is a matter which must be left to God.’ *The Interpreter’s Bible*, vol. 2, p.455

This assumes that the priests and judges are able to judge a righteous verdict. But whatever the verdict is it is final, right or wrong. To reject the verdict of the judge was punishable by death. (cf. Deu.17.11, 12) I could imagine that not every instance of false accusations required the court to become involved, but in some cases this was probably unavoidable. Perhaps this is part of what our Lord Jesus refers to in Mt.5.38-42:

*Mt.5.38 ¶ Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth:*

Remember, in our OT text this was the sentence of the judge and not personal retribution. And under this rule it was quite possible that the Israelite could suffer wrongfully by the false accuser. But vengeance or personal retribution is set aside.

*39 But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil:*

That is, do not resist the man that has done us harm. (Gill) In the OT text it was harm through false accusation, it might be removing his neighbor's landmark. In no instance were they to render *evil for evil*; and neither are we. (cf. Ro.12.17; 1Th.5.15; 1Pe.3.9)

*but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.* (Unrighteous judgments of those in authority.)

*Jn.18.22 And when he had thus spoken, one of the officers which stood by struck Jesus with the palm of his hand, saying, Answerest thou the high priest so?*

*23 Jesus answered him, If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil: but if well, why smitest thou me?*

*Ac.23.2 And the high priest Ananias commanded them that stood by him to smite him on the mouth.*

*3 Then said Paul unto him, God shall smite thee, thou whited wall: for sittest thou to judge me after the law, and commandest me to be smitten contrary to the law?*

*40 And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also.*

Rather than entering into a litigious broil trying to find a judge that might make a righteous judgment.

*41 And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain.*

Rather resisting authority comply for peace.

*42 Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away.*

'We must not render evil for evil, or repay him in the same way; see #Jas 5:6. Not but that a man may lawfully defend himself, and endeavour to secure himself from injuries; and may appear to the civil magistrate for redress of grievances; but he is not to make use of private revenge. As if a man should pluck out one of his eyes, he must not in revenge pluck out one of his; or should he strike out one of his teeth, he must not use him in the same manner; but patiently bear the affront, or seek for satisfaction in another way.' *Exposition of the Old & New Testaments*, vol.7, p.50, John Gill

*Jas 5:6 Ye [rich men, v.1] have condemned and killed the just; and he doth not resist you.*

It was no different for the child of God then as it is for the child of God today, we are not to avenge ourselves for injustices suffered. That belongs to the LORD. He will repay. (Deu.32.35) Until then,

*Ro.12.19 Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.*

*20 Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head.*

*21 Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.*

*1Pe.4.19 Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator.*