

Day 181 - FRIDAY: June 16th

Numbers 35

Numbers 35:1-34 NKJV

And the LORD spoke to Moses in the plains of Moab by the Jordan across from Jericho, saying: "Command the children of Israel that they give the Levites cities to dwell in from the inheritance of their possession, and you shall also give the Levites common-land around the cities. They shall have the cities to dwell in; and their common-land shall be for their cattle, for their herds, and for all their animals. The common-land of the cities which you will give the Levites shall extend from the wall of the city outward a thousand cubits all around. And you shall measure outside the city on the east side two thousand cubits, on the south side two thousand cubits, on the west side two thousand cubits, and on the north side two thousand cubits. The city shall be in the middle. This shall belong to them as common-land for the cities. "Now among the cities which you will give to the Levites you shall appoint six cities of refuge, to which a manslayer may flee. And to these you shall add forty-two cities. So all the cities you will give to the Levites shall be forty-eight; these you shall give with their common-land. And the cities which you will give shall be from the possession of the children of Israel; from the larger tribe you shall give many, from the smaller you shall give few. Each shall give some of its cities to the Levites, in proportion to the inheritance that each receives." Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: 'When you cross the Jordan into the land of Canaan, then you shall appoint cities to be cities of refuge for you, that the manslayer who kills any person accidentally may flee there. They shall be cities of refuge for

you from the avenger, that the manslayer may not die until he stands before the congregation in judgment. And of the cities which you give, you shall have six cities of refuge. You shall appoint three cities on this side of the Jordan, and three cities you shall appoint in the land of Canaan, which will be cities of refuge. These six cities shall be for refuge for the children of Israel, for the stranger, and for the sojourner among them, that anyone who kills a person accidentally may flee there. 'But if he strikes him with an iron implement, so that he dies, he is a murderer; the murderer shall surely be put to death. And if he strikes him with a stone in the hand, by which one could die, and he does die, he is a murderer; the murderer shall surely be put to death. Or if he strikes him with a wooden hand weapon, by which one could die, and he does die, he is a murderer; the murderer shall surely be put to death. The avenger of blood himself shall put the murderer to death; when he meets him, he shall put him to death. If he pushes him out of hatred or, while lying in wait, hurls something at him so that he dies, or in enmity he strikes him with his hand so that he dies, the one who struck him shall surely be put to death. He is a murderer. The avenger of blood shall put the murderer to death when he meets him. 'However, if he pushes him suddenly without enmity, or throws anything at him without lying in wait, or uses a stone, by which a man could die, throwing it at him without seeing him, so that he dies, while he was not his enemy or seeking his harm, then the congregation shall judge between the manslayer and the avenger of blood according to these judgments. So the congregation shall deliver the manslayer from the hand of the avenger of blood, and the congregation shall return him to the city of refuge where he had fled, and he shall remain there until the death of the high priest who was anointed with the holy oil. But if the manslayer at any time goes outside the limits of the city of refuge where he fled, and the avenger of blood finds him outside the limits of his city of refuge,

and the avenger of blood kills the manslayer, he shall not be guilty of blood, 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 may return to the land of his possession. 'And these things shall be a statute of judgment to you throughout your generations in all your dwellings. Whoever kills a person, the murderer shall be put to death on the testimony of witnesses; but one witness is not sufficient testimony against a person for the death penalty. Moreover you shall take no ransom for the life of a murderer who is guilty of death, but he shall surely be put to death. And you shall take no ransom for him who has fled to his city of refuge, that he may return to dwell in the land before the death of the priest. 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. Therefore do not defile the land which you inhabit, in the midst of which I dwell; for I the LORD dwell among the children of Israel.' "

Daily Deep Dive:

The UCG reading program states: "Why are the Levites in a category all to themselves? The answer is that they are not to make their living off the land, but, rather, from their service to God and the rest of the nation. And this requires an element of faith—that God will inspire the other tribes to fulfill their responsibility in supplying the Levites' needs. Each of the tribes of Israel is to provide cities for the Levites' living quarters, as well as surrounding countryside for their animals. The Levites, of whom there were 23,000

males, are assigned to 48 cities, each about the size of a football stadium surrounded by around 750 acres of "common-land." That may sound large by today's standards, but the entire land area for all the Levites amounted to approximately 36,000 acres out of a total of more than five million acres for all Israel.

God instructs Moses to appoint six of the Levite cities to be cities of refuge. When someone is murdered, members of the victimized family may choose an "avenger of blood"—a single individual—from among themselves to execute the murderer. The city of refuge provides asylum for anyone who fears the dead person's relatives will seek revenge before there can be a fair trial—as well as for those cleared of murder in a trial and found guilty of accidental death, or manslaughter. The congregation is to judge between these two situations, whether the crime was strictly accidental or if it was murder (Numbers 35:24). If deemed murder, the offender is put to death. If manslaughter, the killer is delivered to one of the six cities of refuge, there to remain until the death of the high priest—at which time he may leave a free man. But if he leaves the city of refuge before that, the avenger of blood will be allowed to kill him and remain guiltless. It may sound harsh to us today to think

that someone who killed another person by accident could himself be legally killed by the victim's relative. Yet in practical fact it demonstrates the high value God places on human life and that God holds everyone responsible for his or her actions. We all have a serious responsibility to be sure that our actions never harm or injure others, because under God's legal system a person's carelessness could bring a severe—and possibly fatal—penalty.

Furthermore, God made some concessions to human weakness in the legal system He gave to the Israelites—realizing that they were a carnally motivated people (compare Matthew 19:8). These, in fact, can serve to demonstrate God's wisdom. Consider the appointment of an avenger of blood. Human nature, God knew quite well, demanded revenge. Without rules governing the exacting of it in situations such as that just described, family or tribal warfare could have broken out like the Hatfields and McCoys of American history, with no end to the bloodshed that defiles the land (Numbers 35:33). God said, "You must not defile the land where you are going to live, for I [will] live there myself. I am the Lord, who lives among the people of Israel" (verse 34, NLT)." [END]

Verses 4 & 5 – Regarding the difference in verses 4 & 5 between a thousand cubits and two thousand cubits, here is what Adam Clarke’s commentary states, and the conclusions align also with John Gill’s commentary:

“Commentators have been much puzzled with the accounts in these two verses. In Num_35:4 the measure is said to be 1,000 cubits from the wall; in Num_35:5 the measure is said to be 2,000 from without the city. It is likely these two measures mean the same thing; at least so it was understood by the Septuagint and Coptic, who have *δισχιλίους πήχεις*, 2,000 cubits, in the fourth, as well as in the fifth verse; but this reading of the Septuagint and Coptic is not acknowledged by any other of the ancient versions, nor by any of the MSS. collated by Kennicott and De Rossi. We must seek therefore for some other method of reconciling this apparently contradictory account. Sundry modes have been proposed by commentators, which appear to me, in general, to require full as much explanation as the text itself. Maimonides is the only one intelligible on the subject. “The suburbs,” says he, “of the cities are expressed in the law to be 3,000 cubits on every side from the wall of the city and outwards. The first thousand cubits are the suburbs, and the 2,000, which they

measured without the suburbs, were for fields and vineyards.” The whole, therefore, of the city, suburbs, fields, and vineyards, may be represented by the diagram.”
[END]

Verse 6 – The word translated as “Manslayer” in the NKJV is the same word translated as “murder” in Exodus 20:13 (“You shall not murder”). This same Hebrew word continues to be used throughout this chapter. However, verse 11 tells us that this “murder” is not on purpose, it’s accidental. The Hebrew word for “accidental” is the same Hebrew word we’ve seen used for “inadvertent/ignorant sin” (compare Leviticus 4:2, 22, 27, 5:15, 18, 22:14).

Verse 12 – The Hebrew word translated here as “avenger” is the same that is commonly translated as “redeem/redeemer/kinsman redeemer”.

Verse 18 – The Hebrew word translated as “weapon” in this verse is the same word translated as “implement” in verse 16.

Verse 21 – It says here “he is a murder”. Again, this is the same Hebrew word as verse 6. The point is about whether

there is the intention to harm versus an accident that results in death.

Verse 25 – Ellicott’s commentary states the following:

“Although the death which had been occasioned was accidental, not intentional, nevertheless the shedding of blood demanded expiation. The manslayer was, therefore, required to remain an exile from his own home until the death of the high priest who had been anointed with the holy oil. As the high priest, by reason of the anointing with the holy oil, became qualified to act as the representative of the nation, and in that capacity acted as their mediator on the great day of atonement, so the death of the high priest assumed a symbolical or representative character, and became a type of that of the great High Priest who, through the eternal Spirit, offered Himself without spot to God, and who by His death made a propitiation for the sins of the world. Thus, as by the death of the Jewish high priest a typical atonement was made for the sin of the Israelitish manslayer, and he was restored thereupon to “the land of his possession” amongst his brethren...” [END]

Verse 30 – This is a principle repeated throughout the Bible: One witness is not enough. It's too easy for one person to miss see, miss understand, etc..., or even have their own agenda. A matter is established by multiple witnesses.

Verse 31 – How often in our world can the wealthy buy themselves out of their sins, mistakes, etc... God didn't allow the wealthy to buy themselves out of the punishment of murder.

Verse 32 – God is consistent. Even if it's accidental, that person also couldn't buy themselves out of the law. The law was the law. You can't buy your way to something different.