

Cities of Refuge

Good morning, saints! Today is January 31, 2016, and I want to wish you a Happy New Year – a little late, but at my age, it's good to remember it at all.

SLIDE: I've opened today's presentation in the Book of Numbers with a quote from the Epistle to the Hebrews: "So that we...who have fled for Refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us." It was written to Jewish Christians, who obviously would understand the reference to *Refuge*. That's the main topic today, but there are several others.

SLIDE: Today we'll look at: <Click>

- 1) **2nd Census** of the people
- 2) Manner in which territory in the **Promised Land will be allocated** among the tribes,
- 3) **Levite Cities of Refuge**, and
- 4) Concept of the **Blood Avenger**.

This is actually the 34th presentation in a series that began in March 2012, so we've been at it off-and-on for 4 years as the schedule permits. Wow! Some of you have sat thru many of the 33 sessions – perhaps out of politeness and Christian charity rather than because of my sparkling voice – and I greatly appreciate that.

2nd Census, Division of the Land, Levite Cities

Take a look at these topics: a CENSUS – a long list of names and numbers, a LAND DISTRIBUTION scheme, CITIES OF REFUGE that no longer function as such, and the AVENGER OF BLOOD, which is one aspect of what we know as the Kinsman Redeemer. Other than the Kinsman-Redeemer, **probably none of these topics seem of any relevance to us?** Historically interesting, perhaps, but appropriate for a Sunday message? **Why do I get into them?**

- Because there are *theological implications* to these concepts.

But before we get into this, I want to start off with another question:

SLIDE: WHY STUDY THE BIBLE?¹

No doubt, most of us would intellectually agree that Bible study IS necessary, so this may seem odd to raise this question.

But why STUDY the Bible? Most of us do READ the Bible, but there is a great deal of difference between reading and STUDYING.

- Reading is something we can do in a *leisurely* way, something that can be done strictly for entertainment in a casual manner. But *study* suggests labor, thought, prayer, serious and diligent work.

¹ Insights on this topic are from R.C. Sproul, *Knowing Scripture*, InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove Illinois, 1977, chapter 1

2nd Census, Division of the Land, Levite Cities

Many Christians do not study the Bible, or if they do, it's only half-heartedly – **and I put myself in that category all too often.**

This neglect of common sense has resulted in much confusion and hurt in churches today – *especially* in **charismatic churches**. We see many prominent teachers and leaders – seemingly likable people – **rely on emotion and their false dreams & false prophecies rather than God's Word.** They have a scorning attitude toward doctrine and theology. They puff themselves up with unjustifiable titles of prophets and apostles – spokesmen and women of God – and then they spew all types of Scriptural error and corruption. They get away with this because the churches rely on their *sincerity* rather than investigating the truthfulness of their message thru study and the Holy Spirit.

Paul said that the scripture were written for our benefit.² So, WHY don't we study the Bible more diligently? Well, there are several reasons that people commonly offer:

- Some say that it is too difficult to understand, its literary style confusing and the content is often somewhat boring.
- Others say that what happened in the OLD Covenant is not relevant to us today in the NEW Covenant.
 - How does the life of Abraham or Moses or David, who lived so long ago and so far away, relate to us?

² Romans 15:4

2nd Census, Division of the Land, Levite Cities

Probably the most pervasive excuse I find is the belief that “*I don’t need to study the Scripture because I can rely on the Holy Spirit for guidance*”. Does the Holy Spirit give guidance? Yes. If something *feels* right, is it *always* the Holy Spirit? No.³ We are commanded to test everything by Scripture and hold fast only to what is true.⁴

Countless times I have heard Christians say, “*Why do I need to study doctrine or theology when all I need to know is Jesus?*”

- In reality, I see that as an excuse for laziness, I’m sorry to say. It is taking God’s grace for granted.

When someone says to me “*I don’t need to study the Word for doctrine and theology because I have Jesus*”, my immediate reply is: “OK – Who is Jesus?”

- Is He God in human flesh or a created being like the JW’s claim?
- Did He physically rise from the dead or was it just His spirit?
- Was He born of a virgin?”

As soon as we BEGIN to answer, we are involved in doctrine and theology. No Christian can avoid doctrine. Every Christian is a

³ Ex: 2 Samuel 7. Nathan relied on emotion before consulting God in agreeing that David should build the temple.

⁴ 1 Thessalonians 5:21

2nd Census, Division of the Land, Levite Cities

theologian. Perhaps not a theologian in the technical or professional sense, but a theologian nevertheless.

The issue for Christians is NOT whether we are going to be theologians; it is about whether we are going to be GOOD theologians or BAD ones. A good theologian is one whose actions and positions on issues and life are formed by the Word of God, not by what “*seems right in my own eyes.*”

Now, I will admit that reading thru a long list of OT names and numbers or and details of now-defunct ceremonial procedures isn't the most riveting task in the world. But the lives of Abraham and Moses and David DO relate to our lives because WE HAVE A COMMON DENOMINATOR – **both we and they are dealing with the VERY SAME GOD!** Though their life settings are different from ours, their struggles with faith are very much like ours, and Who God Is and His expectations of us have not changed!

So, I want to start off this New Year with an encouragement to STUDY – not just READ – but to STUDY the Bible. I could try to *persuade* you to do this because of its many benefits of personal education and fulfillment. I could say that the study of the Bible would probably be the most fulfilling and rewarding experience of your life – and it is. I could cite numerous reasons why you would benefit from a serious study of Scripture – such as keeping you out of trouble and falling for such hogwash as the prosperity gospel. I

2nd Census, Division of the Land, Levite Cities

could even ask the elders to give a reward of \$10 for each book you read.

- *“But ultimately the main reason why we should study the Bible is because IT IS OUR DUTY.”*

Remember when Jesus was asked the question: *what is the greatest commandment?* He answered by quoting a passage from In Deuteronomy Chapter 6:

“Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one! And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.”⁵ (vv. 4–5).

Most of us are familiar with these words. But what follows in the VERY NEXT VERSE?

“And these words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart; and you shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up. And you shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontals on your forehead. And you shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates. (vv. 6–9)

Here, God COMMANDS that his Word be taught so diligently that it penetrates the heart. Repeated discussion is the order of the day, every day. The call to bind on the hand, the forehead, the doorpost and gate makes it clear that God is saying that the job must be done by whatever method it takes.

⁵ Verses 4-5

2nd Census, Division of the Land, Levite Cities

- *If the Bible were the most boring book in the world, dull, uninteresting and seemingly irrelevant, it would STILL be our duty to study it.*
- *If it's literary style is sometimes awkward and confusing, the duty remains.*
- *We live as human beings under an obligation by divine mandate to study diligently God's Word.*
- *A duty is not an option. If we have not yet begun to respond to that duty, then we need to ask God to forgive us and to resolve to do our duty from this day forth.”⁶*

Is everyone OK? I'm talking to myself as much as to anyone here.

OK – let's move on and see if any of those topics I mentioned have any application to us. In Numbers chapter 26, preparations are underway to finally enter into the Promised Land. God now instructs Moses to take a Census of the people.

⁶ Sproul, *Knowing Scripture*, page 28

2nd Census, Division of the Land, Levite Cities

SLIDE: 2nd CENSUS COMMANDED

"After the plague, the Lord said to Moses and Eleazar son of Aaron, the priest, 'Take a census of the whole Israelite community by families—all those twenty years old or more who are able to serve in the army of Israel.' " Numbers 26:1-2

This is actually the 2nd Census. You may remember that approximately 38 years ago, God had instructed Moses to take a census shortly before the Israelites departed Mt. Sinai. The purpose of this census was the same – to number the men between the ages of 20 and 60, **men who would be in the army. So, this was healthy men of fighting age.**

SLIDE: 2nd CENSUS RESULT

Here is the comparison of the two different censuses.

<click> The 1st census found the number of men from 20 to 60 years of age to be 603,550. The 2nd census showed that similar age group to now number 601,730, a decrease of 1,820 over the 38-year period.

The text notes about the 2nd census: "Not one of them was among those counted by Moses and Aaron the priest when they counted the Israelites in the Desert of Sinai (1st Census). For the Lord had told those Israelites they would surely die in the wilderness, **and**

2nd Census, Division of the Land, Levite Cities

not one of them was left except Caleb son of Jephunneh and Joshua son of Nun.” Numbers 26:64–65

The wandering about all those years was God-ordained. You will remember the incident at Kadesh-Barnea when the Israelites did not believe God’s promise of victory and refused to go into the land of Canaan. Consequently, God decreed that all those men of military age would die in the wilderness – except for Caleb and Joshua, who did believe Him. So, out of 603,550 men who answered the Army’s roll call at Sinai, only 2 could answer “PRESENT” on the Plains of Moab. 603,548 had died.

Now – let me dispel a popular **myth about these 38+ years in the wilderness**. You undoubtedly have heard the phrase that the Hebrews *“went around the mountain for 40 years in order to get it right”*. Well – that makes for a good sermon illustration but that’s **NOT** the reason they were out there! **They were out there until God’s punishment for disbelief at Kadesh-Barnea was fulfilled.**

- They were out there until the 600,000+ men of the disbelieving army died off.
- The 2nd generation of Israelites on the plains of Moab are in a similar situation – they’re waiting for Moses to die before THEY enter Canaan.

2nd Census, Division of the Land, Levite Cities

But there are STILL just over 600,000 men of fighting age. Give each one a wife and perhaps several kids, we're talking about 3 million people now poised on the doorstep of the Promised Land. No wonder the king of Moab had been nervous at this vast camp.

We can see that some tribes had increased in population and some lost over those 38+ years:

SLIDE: 2nd CENSUS RESULT#2

One of the remarkable things here is that the tribe of Simeon has shrunk by **37,100** men of military age. This a **60% decrease** in size. We can see by the chart the Manasseh had the largest population increase, amounting to more than 60% during those 40 years. In the 1st census, Simeon had been the 3rd largest tribe; now it is the smallest.

- **Why did Simeon fare so poorly?** No doubt the Lord's hand guided the increases and decreases, but just as certain is that Simeon probably was impacted most by the plague God sent on account of idolatry. We'll get to how this plays out in the distribution of territory in a minute.
- **Why did Manasseh fare so well?** We just don't know.

2nd Census, Division of the Land, Levite Cities

SLIDE: WHERE'S LEVI?

<Click> You will notice that the listing of the 12 tribes here for the army does NOT include the tribe of Levi. It has: Reuben, Simeon, Gad, Judah, Issachar, Zebulun, Ephraim, Manasseh, Benjamin, Dan, Asher and Naphtali. But, Levi WAS a son of Jacob and the Levites were a tribe – **Moses was a Levite!**

➤ **So... Where's Levi?**

Well, it's been awhile since we discussed this, so let's revisit this very important issue.

SLIDE LEVI ADOPTED AWAY.

At Mt. Sinai, the Levites rallied to YHWH during the incident of the golden calf and YHWH subsequently **ADOPTED** the Tribe of LEVI **AWAY** from Israel (Jacob) as His Own special possession⁷ – just like Jacob did when he adopted Joseph's two sons.

- From that time forward, the Levites would NOT be included under the phrase *“the 12 tribes of Israel”*. They were separate, *holy unto the Lord*.
- They would have a *separate census...*
- They would NOT serve in the army but rather at the tabernacle, and...

⁷ Exodus 32

2nd Census, Division of the Land, Levite Cities

- And, since they were NOT included in the army, Levites were not under the ruling imposed by God for unfaithfulness at Kadesh-Barnea, which was to die in the wilderness. We tend to think that all Israelite men were under God's ban, but the tribe of Levi was excluded since they were not in the army that refused to go into Canaan the 1st time. Remember, both Moses and Aaron STILL had their tickets to the Promised Land 30+ years later until Moses disobediently hit the rock twice.
- Levites would be allotted living space in the Promised land in an *entirely different manner* than the other tribes. They would not receive land as an inheritance, *they would receive small cities* scattered among the tribes – will get to this in a minute.
- So, whenever you hear this phrase “*the 12 tribes of Israel*” in a text *after* Mt. Sinai, **it no longer applies to the Levites!**

Sounds strange, doesn't it. But it is true. The tribe of Levi has been removed as a tribe of Israel and is now the tribe of God so to speak.

In deciphering what happens from here forward in the Bible, it is important that we recognize and understand the impact of this separateness of Levi because it applies to our separateness also.

OK...

2nd Census, Division of the Land, Levite Cities

SLIDE: ALLOTMENT OF THE LAND

The Israelites are poised to enter the Promised Land of Canaan. The land was called the ‘Promised Land’ because God had promised it to Abraham and his descendant’s way back in Genesis.

"On that day, God made a covenant with Abram, saying: "To your descendants I have given this land, from the river of Egypt as far as the great river the Euphrates. The land of the Kenites, Kenizites, Kadmonites; the Chitties, Perizites, Refaim; the Emorites, Canaanites, Gigashites and Yevusites." ⁸

"And I will give to you and to your descendants after you, the land of your temporary residence, all the land of Canaan as an **eternal possession** and I will be a God to them." Genesis 17:8

God promised that He would give the land of Israel to the Jewish people as an eternal possession. God confirmed it at least 55 times with an oath and stated at least 12 times that the covenant was everlasting. The Promise is finally about to come true as the Israelites camp on the Plains of Moab.

In Numbers chapter 34, God lays out the precise boundaries of the Land that the Israelites are expected to conquer:

⁸ Genesis 15:18-21

2nd Census, Division of the Land, Levite Cities

"The Lord said to Moses, "Command the Israelites and say to them: 'When you enter Canaan, the land that will be allotted to you as an inheritance is to have **these boundaries**:

"Your southern side will include some of the Desert of Zin along the border of Edom. Your southern boundary will start in the east from the southern end of the Dead Sea, 4 cross south of Scorpion Pass, continue on to Zin and go south of Kadesh Barnea. Then it will go to Hazar Addar and over to Azmon, where it will turn, join the Wadi of Egypt and end at the Mediterranean Sea.

"Your western boundary will be the coast of the Mediterranean Sea. This will be your boundary on the west.

"For your northern boundary, run a line from the Mediterranean Sea to Mount Hor and from Mount Hor to Lebo Hamath. Then the boundary will go to Zedad, continue to Ziphron and end at Hazar Enan. This will be your boundary on the north."

"For your eastern boundary, run a line from Hazar Enan to Shepham. The boundary will go down from Shepham to Riblah on the east side of Ain and continue along the slopes east of the Sea of Galilee. Then the boundary will go down along the Jordan and end at the Dead Sea.

"This will be your land, with its boundaries on every side."

Genesis 34:1-10

2nd Census, Division of the Land, Levite Cities

SLIDE MAP OF THE MODERN STATE OF ISRAEL.

Here's a map of the modern State of Israel I'll not get into the details here, but generally, the Biblical boundaries are larger, extending a bit further north and south than today's boundaries of Israel.

<click> The Jordan River is still the eastern boundary and the Mediterranean Sea the western boundary.

<click> You can see that the contested WEST BANK today is squarely within the land promised to Abraham.

<click> The GAZA STRIP⁹ was within the Biblical boundary but control of it was complicated because it was occupied by the Philistines, who were not Canaanites.

<click> The GOLAN HEIGHTS in modern-day Syria are clearly within the boundary.

SLIDE: Q: "WHY WAS ABRAHAM PROMISED LAND THAT BELONGED TO OTHERS?"

A question occasionally comes up today that often generates a heated argument.

- **"WHY WAS ABRAHAM PROMISED LAND THAT BELONGED TO OTHERS?"**

⁹ Its original inhabitants were a group of people known as the Avvites (Deuteronomy 2;23; Joshua 13:3).

2nd Census, Division of the Land, Levite Cities

It was the land of the Canaanites, right? So, how could God promise land to Abraham that was owned by the Canaanites? And, the State of Israel today is occupying Palestinian land, aren't they? After all, it is called 'Palestine'.

- Questions like these on this issue, or other issues such as abortion and so on, required Biblical answers. This is where Bible study becomes valuable. These questions appear to raise valid points in the mind of people **ONLY BECAUSE** of a lack of Biblical principles.

So, in beginning to answer the questions like this about the current land of Israel, I start with another question: **“What worldview are we to employ when answering questions? Are we to try to answer questions according to the worldview of our current culture, or are we to take God's opinion as guidance?”**

<SLIDE> RASHI

Actually, the question on the screen about who has the right to the land was foreseen by a famous Rabbi in the **11th century** called Rashi.¹⁰ In his commentary on the Torah, he poses a question on the very FIRST sentence in the Bible: “In the beginning of God's creation of the heavens and the earth...”

¹⁰ Shlomo Yitzchak; the acronym 'Rashi' is from the Hebrew: **RA**bbi **SH**lomo **I**tzhaki),

2nd Census, Division of the Land, Levite Cities

- Rashi asks: “Now, for what reason did He (God) commence with ‘*In the beginning?*’”¹¹

If the Bible is a book of theology for the JEWS, why didn't God begin with the creation of the Jewish nation in Egypt and go immediately to the story of Exodus? After all, it's in the Book of Exodus where the Jews become a nation and receive the Torah.

<SLIDE> Rashi then answers his own question:

“For if the nations of the world should say to Israel, ‘You are robbers, for you conquered by force the lands of the seven nations [of Canaan],’ they will reply, ‘The entire earth belongs to the Holy One, blessed be He; He created it (this we learn from the story of the Creation) and gave it to whomever He deemed proper. When He wished, He gave it to them, and when He wished, He took it away from them and gave it to us.’”

- Rashi argues that God began the Bible with “*in the beginning*” because – in the future – the nations of the world will say to the Jewish people: “*you are thieves*” – you have stolen the land from the Canaanite nations.

Rashi – writing over 1000 years ago, FORESAW the eventual return of the Jews to the Promised Land because of God's promises. He

¹¹ *The Complete Jewish Bible with Rashi Commentary, Bereishit Genesis, Chapter 1 verse 1,*
<http://www.chabad.org/>

2nd Census, Division of the Land, Levite Cities

therefore states his opinion that God begins the Bible by declaring that He created the heavens and the earth, therefore, the land was HIS. God is telling the world: *"I am the Creator of the Universe. Everything is mine. I choose to give the Land of Israel to the Jewish people."*¹²

Virtually every nation in the world bases its claim to its land on *conquest*. However, the State of Israel should always base their claim on God's PROMISE. God GAVE the Jewish people the Land of Israel. This is a moral claim because God is God and – by definition – everything He does is moral and just. When people ignore that reality, the only claim the modern State of Israel can make is it is stronger and was able to win all its wars with the Arabs.

LUNCHTIME DISCUSSION

I once listened to a lunchtime discussion – a debate really – at work over who has rights to the land of Israel. The debate was somewhat lopsided because the person arguing *against* the Jewish right had a degree in history – he was citing the 1917 Balfour Declaration which provided for the establishment of a Jewish homeland in Palestine as illegitimate, as well as the fact that the Jews hadn't been in Palestine in any great numbers for almost 1900 years, etc. And, since there was no one present who felt

¹² Ibid.

2nd Census, Division of the Land, Levite Cities

comfortable to academically dispute his position, he pretty much had the floor to himself.

- After a while, I piped up and made the simple observation that **the Jews have the right to the land because the land was God's and He gave it to them.**

The person with the history degree looked stunned and didn't have an answer. The argument was over.

You see, on this issue, we should not accept the basic **PREMISE** of the question – that the land was the property of **OTHER PEOPLE**. **It was NOT – it is God's property.**

- In the case of the Canaanites, it is true that originally the Canaanites **OCCUPIED** the land, but did they “OWN” the land? **NO.**

Psalm 24:1 states: “The earth is the LORD's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it”.

All Land is God's land. He *owns the cattle on a thousand hills*.¹³ In a real sense, everything we possess – even our very breath – is just borrowed from Him.

The Canaanites DID NOT OWN the land; God did. They *possessed* the land at one time with God's permission, and now He was going to repossess the land because of their sin.

¹³ Psalm 50:10

2nd Census, Division of the Land, Levite Cities

- Think in terms of getting an automobile loan from the bank (or from **Lyle**); you can continue to POSSESS the car *as long as you keep to the terms of the contract*. If you repeatedly fail to keep the contract and show no signs of changing, the bank (or Lyle) has every right to **RE**POSSESS the car and give it to another.

God had been very patient with the Canaanites. You may remember that Abraham did not inherit the land *immediately* after God's promise to him. In Genesis 15:16, the Lord gives Abraham a timeframe for the transfer of the land, as well as a *moral* reason for doing it:

"In the fourth generation your descendants will come back here, **for the sin of the Amorites has not yet reached its full measure.**"

God does not punish that people until its measure of evildoing was complete. It took 400 years, but there comes a time when the sins of a people are "complete", and that is the time for decisive judgment. God was going to take back the land and turned it over to Israel.

At the edge of the Promised Land, Moses told the children of Abraham,

"After the Lord your God has forced those nations out ahead of you, **don't say to yourself**, "The Lord brought me here to take this

2nd Census, Division of the Land, Levite Cities

land **because I am so good.**" No! It is **because these nations are evil** that the Lord will force them out ahead of you."¹⁴

The appointed instrument of God's judgment was the army of Israel. God did the destroying. It was by the hand of Israel, but it was the judgment of God. **So, God will REPOSSESS the land and give it to Abraham's descendants.**

AND the Canaanites THEY KNEW IT! Remember Rahab the Canaanite innkeeper (and possible prostitute) who hid the two spies that Joshua sent to Jericho? Here's the text in Joshua chapter 2:

Before the spies lay down for the night, she (Rahab) went up on the roof and said to them, "I know that **the Lord has given you this land** and that a great fear of you has fallen on us, so that all who live in this country are melting in fear because of you."¹⁵

➤ THE MISSION

Israel had a mission – prepare the way for the Messiah! This is crucial to understanding *what's happening today*. The Jews were given the land *because of their mission*. **If they neglect the mission, they lose the land until they come to their senses, and then He brings them back.** This lesson was repeated SEVERAL TIMES in Jewish history. The Jewish people will *only* live and *prosper* in their

¹⁴ Deuteronomy 9:4

¹⁵ Joshua 2:8-9

2nd Census, Division of the Land, Levite Cities

homeland if they are in God's Plan and carry on the mission of Abraham.¹⁶

- The fact that the Jews are back again in the land after almost 2000 years of exile and that the State of Israel is prospering today is a sign **that their presence is somehow part of God's ongoing plan for the eventual – hopefully soon – RETURN of the Messiah.**

SLIDE: THE RULES FOR THE ALLOTMENT OF LAND

OK. The territory of the Promised Land of Canaan will be divided among the 12 Tribes that comprise the Army – which as you remember *doesn't* include the Tribe of Levi. We'll get to the Levites in a moment.

Two Criteria for dividing the land¹⁷:

1. Territory proportionate to size of Tribe
2. Within a tribe's area, the individual clans of that tribe would receive their land chosen by lot.

SLIDE: COLUMBIA COUNTY OTTERBECK TRIBE

So, let's say that NYS is the Promised Land and it is to be divided according to Tribal population. Let's say that the Otterbeck Tribe

¹⁶ Deuteronomy 11: 13-17

¹⁷ Numbers 26 (52-56)

2nd Census, Division of the Land, Levite Cities

gets Columbia County. The County is then given to the various Otterbeck clans by lot.

<Click> The Tribal leader picks first, and he suspiciously draws lot #1 along the northern portion of the county. Now – The Tribal leader is the clan leader who is the **MOST INFLUENTIAL** but usually the **GRUMPIEST** person among all the clan leaders.

<Click> – so lot#1 obviously falls to Jon Otterbeck. This is good because he likes to live furthest north.

<Click> – the next lot is along the western side of Route 9, and it falls to the Scace clan. Within this portion, we find the famous **SCACE FACTORY**.

<Click> – the third lot falls to the Mom and Pop clan, and it includes the nicest **golf course** in the county for **RANK AMATEURS**.

<Click> – the 4th lot falls to the Kline clan. This very nice land is along the eastern boundary of the tribal area and includes a lot of steep hills – which is where we get the **phrase “a steep in-Kline”**.

<Click> – and the final section is allotted to the Hamm clan; given that it includes the largest city in the area, which tends to attract vice, the territory belong to the clan with the **LEAST KOSHER NAME** will serve as a warning.

2nd Census, Division of the Land, Levite Cities

OK – that’s the basic division of the territory among the 12 tribes. Now, as I mentioned, the LEVITES don’t get any territory as inheritance because the PRIVILEGE of serving in the tabernacle and later the temple is their inheritance.¹⁸

- SO, WHERE DO THE LEVITES LIVE?

<click>: THE LEVITES

Numbers chapter 35:6–8 says,

“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.”

The Levites were to live in 48 cities SCATTERED about the land for their use, in fulfillment of Jacob’s prophecy about **Levi**: “I will divide them (Levi and Simeon) in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel!”¹⁹ We’ll see how SIMEON would be affected in a moment.

¹⁸ Numbers 18:20, Joshua 18:7

¹⁹ Genesis 49:7

2nd Census, Division of the Land, Levite Cities

SLIDE: BOUNDARIES OF LEVITE CITY

Each city was surrounded by a reasonable amount of common land in which to raise animals and crops.²⁰ The number of Levite cities within each tribal area varies according to the population of the tribe, but every tribe received at least one city for Levites. The Levites were not the sole possessors or occupiers of these cities – they were simply allowed to live in them and have fields to pasture their herds. These cities did not cease to belong to the tribes within which they were located.²¹ The house of a Levite could not be sold forever and the Levites always retained the right of redemption.²²

The Levites supported themselves thru crafts, farming and they received a small portion of the annual tithe given to the priesthood.²³

Many of the judges of the land were Levites, and in the time of Ezra, they were the sole members of the Sanhedrin.²⁴ Most medical services were in their care.²⁵ They were professional singers and

²⁰ There are at least three different interpretations of the boundaries in Numbers 35:4-5. The slide uses Rashi's version, with is the "middle" estimate. Estimates as high as four square miles of land belonged to each Levitical city. Association for Scriptural Knowledge, *The Levites Place in Society*, <http://www.askelm.com/tithing/thi008.htm>

²¹ Holman Bible Dictionary, *Levitical Cities*

²² Leviticus 25:32-34

²³ Only when Levites attended the service of the Tabernacle (whether on a full-time or part-time basis) was the tithe expected to support them (Deuteronomy 18:6–8).

²⁴ Deuteronomy 17:8–9; 21:5; 1 Chronicles 23:4; 2 Chronicles 19:8; Ezekiel 44:15, 24

²⁵ Leviticus 13:2, 14:2; Luke 17:14

2nd Census, Division of the Land, Levite Cities

musicians,²⁶ served as scribes and librarians²⁷, as well as foremen of construction projects.²⁸

Remember Jacob's prophecy about the Levites being scattered? This is **EXACTLY** what happened – they were scattered across the land in 48 cities.

Q: But... WHY were Levite Cities scattered among the tribes rather than having them more concentrated LIKE WHAT HAPPENED TO SIMEON?

Because God was using this scattering as something good. Because *once* the tribes had moved to their own territories in Canaan, they would no longer be camped around the tabernacle. People might begin to forget Him and the Torah, so having Levites scattered in 48 cities throughout Canaan would keep them in close proximity to the people, and thus they would teach them about God's laws and lead them in worshipping Him. "They shall teach Jacob Your judgments, and Israel Your law."²⁹

➤ **Levi had the BLESSED place of teaching Israel the word of God.**

²⁶ 1 Chronicles 25:1–31; 2 Chronicles 5:12; 34:12

²⁷ 2 Chronicles 34:13

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Deuteronomy 33:8-11

2nd Census, Division of the Land, Levite Cities

DIVIDED KINGDOM ISSUES – POOR JEWS?

The Levites would face a real financial hardship about 500 years later. After the death of Solomon, the nation of Israel split into two independent kingdoms, because of the issue of taxation.

1. Northern portion became the Kingdom of Ephraim³⁰ and included 10 tribes and the majority of the Levites.³¹
2. Southern portion was the Kingdom of Judah; it included the tribes of Judah and Benjamin³² as well as **13 of the 48 Levite cities, and ALL the cities in Judah's kingdom were dedicated for use by sons of Aaron (i.e.; priests).**³³ **Jerusalem and the temple were located in this Kingdom.**

The hardship for the Levites arose when King Jeroboam of the Northern Kingdom decided that having the Temple in the Southern Kingdom was psychologically and financially draining on his people. So, he determined to provide places of worship within his own boundaries, and he set up **two golden calves** to be worshipped, one in Bethel and the other in Dan.³⁴ Since all the priests were located in the southern kingdom, and since Jeroboam knew that the priests would remain loyal to Yahweh, he chose to appoint priests of his own to perform in these idolatrous places. Rather than remain in

³⁰ Ephraim was the largest tribe in the north and the first king of the Northern Kingdom was from Ephraim. The Northern Kingdom is also called by its more common name “the Kingdom of Israel”.

³¹ 1 Kings 11:29-35. The “10 tribes” notion probably counted the tribe of Manasseh twice, since they were in two separate territories.

³² 1 Kings 12:21. The Tribe of Simeon had been absorbed into Judah by this time.

³³ Joshua 21:4. Four were in the tribe of Benjamin, eight in Judah and one (Ashan) which was originally in the Tribe of Simeon's area

³⁴ 1 Kgs 12:28-29

2nd Census, Division of the Land, Levite Cities

the northern kingdom, Levites and many godly people migrated south to the Kingdom of Judah.³⁵

Talk about a refugee problem! The southern kingdom now had to absorb migrant Levites from the 35 cities of the Northern Kingdom – and without any significant expansion of boundaries. There are only so many architects that you need, and the small tithes upon which they supplemented their everyday wages would now be substantially redirected to the northern places of worship.

Many Levites were under hard financial stresses. **This is a reason why Levites were sometimes called the “POOR JEWS”.**

SLIDE: DISPOSITION OF THE TRIBES

Here’s a map showing the final distribution of the land that were settled by the 12 tribes *when all was said and done*.

You will note that **SIMEON**, once the 3rd largest but now the smallest and weakest of the Tribes, received land **INSIDE** of Judah – which may have been for its protection.³⁶ It is the **ONLY** Tribe that doesn’t abut another tribe. And historically, the **Tribe of Simeon will be absorbed by Judah** and fade from having a separate land, being scattered throughout the other tribes – partly due to marriages.

So, what could seem to many as irrelevant and boring details in the Bible – that the Levites would have no territory but be scattered

³⁵ 2 Chronicles 11:14

³⁶ Joshua 19:1-9

2nd Census, Division of the Land, Levite Cities

in 48 cities and **now Simeon's** greatly diminished size would cause it to eventually be absorbed by the Tribe of Judah – these details again serve to ENCOURAGE US that God's prophecies and promises are true and can be trusted!

SLIDE: DISPOSITION OF THE TRIBES #2

I say that this map shows the final distribution of the 12 tribes "*after all was said and done*" – because a problem arose before the final disposition was agreed upon. Before crossing into Canaan and conquering the land, a strange request is made by the tribes of Reuben and Gad, as you can see on the map:

<click> Here is the River Jordan, and Canaan.

This is the PROMISED LAND – **WEST** of the Jordan River.

<click> But the Tribes of REUBEN and GAD and eventually ½ of the tribe of Manasseh ask Moses to be allowed to settle on the land EAST of the Jordan River, which is **OUTSIDE** of Canaan, the Promised Land.

"The Reubenites and Gadites, who had very large herds and flocks, saw that the lands of Jazer and Gilead were **suitable for livestock**. 2 So they came to Moses and Eleazar the priest and to the leaders of the community, and said, 3 "Ataroth, Dibon, Jazer, Nimrah, Heshbon, Elealeh, Sebam, Nebo and Beon— 4 the land the Lord subdued before the people of Israel—**are suitable for livestock, and your servants have livestock**. 5 If we have found

2nd Census, Division of the Land, Levite Cities

favor in your eyes," they said, "let this land be given to your servants as our possession. Do not make us cross the Jordan."

Numbers 32:1–5

The land on the East Bank of the Jordan River (present-day Jordan) was famous for its pasture land. This land had already been conquered by Israel as detailed in Numbers 21 (I skipped this at the time). Israel had been challenged by two Amorite kings who were thought to be brothers, one named **Sihon** and another named **Og**, the king of Bashan. Remember Bill reading about God's loving kindness in Psalm 136 and coming across the name 'Og'?

"to him who struck down great kings,
His love endures forever. and killed mighty kings—
His love endures forever.

Sihon king of the Amorites

His love endures forever.

and Og king of Bashan—

His love endures forever.

and gave their land as an inheritance,

His love endures forever.

an inheritance to his servant Israel.

His love endures forever."

Well – that's this guy. According to Deuteronomy, Og was the last of a race of giants called the Rephaim; his bed was 12 feet long and four feet wide.³⁷

³⁷ Deuteronomy 3:11

2nd Census, Division of the Land, Levite Cities

The tribes of Reuben and Gad are joined by ½ of the **Tribe of Manasseh** – the Scripture does not tell us why.

REPLAY OF KADESH BARNEA?

Moses is furious at Reuben and Gad's request to live outside of the Promised Land because they think the land is better there!

"Moses said to the Gadites and Reubenites, "Should your fellow Israelites go to war while you sit here? Why do you discourage the Israelites from crossing over into the land the Lord has given them? **This is what your fathers did when I sent them from Kadesh Barnea** to look over the land. After they went up to the Valley of Eshkol and viewed the land, they discouraged the Israelites from entering the land the Lord had given them. The Lord's anger was aroused that day and he swore this oath: 'Because they have not followed me wholeheartedly, not one of those who were twenty years old or more when they came up out of Egypt will see the land I promised on oath to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob—not one except Caleb son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite and Joshua son of Nun, for they followed the Lord wholeheartedly.' The Lord's anger burned against Israel and he made them wander in the wilderness forty years, until the whole generation of those who had done evil in his sight was gone."

Numbers 32: 6-13

Moses compares the request to live outside of the Promised Land to the rebellion at Kadesh-Barnea. The entire nation is again put in mortal jeopardy, this time by 2 ½ tribes. In effect, they're refusing

2nd Census, Division of the Land, Levite Cities

to enter the **Promised Land**. Remember that Kadesh Barnes's rebellion was what kept them in the wilderness for these last 38 years. The request demonstrated once more that the younger generation was as sinful as the older one.

"Moses says: And here you are, a brood of sinners, **standing in the place of your fathers** and making the Lord even more angry with Israel. If you turn away from following him, he will again leave all this people in the wilderness, and you will be the cause of their destruction." 14-15

The descendants of Gad and Reuben responded, 'We will do whatever God has told us. We will cross over as a special force to the land of Canaan, and we shall then have our permanent hereditary property on [this] side of the Jordan.' (Numbers 32:31-32)

Terms and conditions are worked out to satisfy both sides: Fighting men from the 2 ½ tribes will cross over to spearhead the conquest of the Promised Land, and only after the conquest is completed will they return to the lush grazing land they have chosen outside of Israel proper.

The 2nd generation would enter the Promised Land, **NOT because they were worthy but because God is holy and extends grace to sinners.**

2nd Census, Division of the Land, Levite Cities

SLIDE: CITIES OF REFUGE

As I said, the Levites received 48 cities scattered throughout the land in which to live. Six of these cities were designated as **cities of refuge** – three cities to the east of the Jordan and, later, three more within the land of Israel itself.³⁸

“... select some towns to be your cities of refuge, to which a person who has killed someone **accidentally** may flee. They will be places of refuge from the avenger, so that anyone accused of murder may not die before they stand trial before the assembly.”

Numbers 35:11–12

Cities of refuge were cities where people who had committed homicide could flee and find protection until their case was heard by a court of law.

EXAMPLE: Let's say that Jack Petrosky is walking under a ladder, and Budd Hamm, who is standing on the ladder, drops his hammer, accidentally killing Jack. Even though an accident, a member of Jack's family, called the 'goel hadam' (Blood-Redeemer), has the **RESPONSIBILITY** to avenge his death. So Budd runs away to a city of refuge, which provides temporary safety until a trial can be held. **If the Blood Avenger catches him *before* he reaches the city of refuge, Budd can be killed with complete freedom.**

³⁸ Numbers 35:14

2nd Census, Division of the Land, Levite Cities

If he made it to a city of refuge, that person would be held there – or escorted under armed guard back to his original city – where he would be tried by an assembly of Levites.

- If he was found *guilty* of ‘murder’ (*ratsach* *ratshaw*) – *deliberate killing* – he was sentenced to death and usually handed over to the victim’s “blood redeemer” for execution.³⁹
- If found innocent – if the death happened by accident, with neither deliberation nor malice – then the person had to STAY in the city of refuge “*until the death of the High priest.*”⁴⁰ As I said, if found outside of the city, the one who had killed – even unintentionally – could himself be legally killed by the blood redeemer without guilt.⁴¹ I’ll get into *why* in a minute.

Again, it didn’t matter whether the homicide was deliberate or accidental – the person ran for his life to a city of refuge until the trial.⁴²

³⁹ Deuteronomy 19:12-13, “the killer shall be sent for by the town elders, be brought back from the city, and be handed over to the avenger of blood to die. Show no pity. You must purge from Israel the guilt of shedding innocent blood, so that it may go well with you.”

⁴⁰ Numbers 35:38

⁴¹ Numbers 35:27

⁴² Unless, of course, the action was justified under the Torah, such as in war or the execution of a criminal for a capital offense or in response to God’s instructions (e.g.; Phineas’ killing of Zimri and Cozbi).

2nd Census, Division of the Land, Levite Cities

EXILE

But make no mistake, the city of refuge was no luxury resort. A City of Refuge was a MINIMUM SECURITY PRISON!⁴³ In essence, the person is being **EXILED from his home and land**.

The notion of EXILE for KILLING was the very first human punishment mentioned in the Torah.

- It was imposed on Adam for “killing” all of us by eating from the Tree of Knowledge. He was exiled from the Garden.

Cain suffered exile for the *inadvertent murder* of his brother Able.⁴⁴ It is usually considered “inadvertent” in Judaism because Cain probably did not know that you could kill a human being, who would have been seen by Cain as mostly a spiritual entity. But, even though his killing may have been *inadvertent*, Cain was left vulnerable to an avenger and he knew it:

"Cain said to God, 'Today you are **driving me from the land**, and I will be hidden from your presence; I will be a restless wanderer on the earth, and **whoever finds me will kill me.**'" Genesis 4:13-14

Since there were no Cities of Refuge back then, God substituted the famous mark of Cain: "And God placed a mark upon Cain, so that none that meet him might kill him." (vs 15)

⁴³ MATOT-MASEI: The Blood Avenger and the Cities of Refuge, July 14, 2009, Chabad.org

⁴⁴ Alpha Beta Academy, *Parshat Shoftim: The Line Between Murder And Apathy*.

2nd Census, Division of the Land, Levite Cities

SLIDE: SANCTUARY CITIES WOLVES

Now, some people today claim that **Sanctuary Cities** in this country are just like the OT Cities of Refuge. “*Sanctuary city*” is a term that is applied by some to cities in the United States or Canada that have policies designed to not prosecute illegal aliens. The term generally applies to cities that do not allow municipal funds or resources to be used to enforce federal immigration laws, usually by not allowing police or municipal employees to inquire about an individual's immigration status and thus potentially past criminal activity.

- **By the way – Albany is a *de facto* sanctuary city.**⁴⁵

But, there’s a world of difference between Cities of Refuge and Sanctuary Cities! A Biblical city of refuge was a place of temporary safety while **AWAITING TRIAL**. It was a place for the accused to find refuge from vigilantes, **NOT a place for the guilty to find refuge from justice**. It was **NOT** a place for the GUILTY to hide. It was not a place for lawbreakers to escape justice altogether.

But sanctuary cities of today are exactly places to escape justice. They are cities that give refuge and shelter to known lawbreakers like Juan Francisco Lopez–Sanchez who killed Kathryn Steinle in San Francisco last July (2015). When he committed this latest crime, Sanchez had been deported five times and his rap

⁴⁵ Albany, NY Council 7/26/2009 adopted “don't ask” policy – this is a non-binding resolution that directs police not to ask one’s immigration status.

2nd Census, Division of the Land, Levite Cities

sheet already included seven felony convictions in four different states. Now you can add a murder charge to the list.

Sanctuary cities of today reward lawbreakers instead of punishing them and thus they *pervert* justice and the rule of law.

- Anyone who tries to liken them with Biblical cities of refuge is – at best – ignorant of Scripture on this matter; and at worst, they are guilty of conscious deception.

SLIDE: AVENGER TEXT

READ: “But if the manslayer at any time goes beyond the border of his city of refuge to which he may flee, 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 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.” Numbers 35:26–28

DEATH OF THE HIGH PRIEST

The text states that the exile must stay in the city of refuge **UNTIL THE DEATH OF THE HIGH PRIEST**. Let me repeat that – exile must stay in the city of refuge UNTIL THE DEATH OF THE HIGH PRIEST.

2nd Census, Division of the Land, Levite Cities

What a strange thing. The ONLY way a manslayer can have his guilt before the Lord atoned for is for the High Priest to pay for it with his own life. The death of the High Priest becomes the God-accepted atonement for the perpetrator. **Sound vaguely familiar??? Christ our High Priest died for us.**

The text also states that if the exiled person voluntarily LEAVES the city before the death of the high priest, the avenger of blood can kill him and not be guilty of murder. *“He has no blood on his hands.”* In other words, the blood avenger is guiltless of spilling blood because he KILLED A SPIRITUALLY DEAD PERSON. A dead person has no blood.⁴⁶ **The one who did the original killing is considered dead until atonement is made – and that happens ONLY when the high priest dies.**

NOW – IMAGINE THIS HISTORICAL BUT SOMEWHAT HUMOROUS SCENE: *“An old woman walks along the road, carrying heavy parcels and leading a donkey laden with pots of savory food. She is on her way to the city, where she’ll dispense the food to the locals.*

*This old woman is none other than **the mother of the High Priest**, and she’s walking to a city of refuge, a city to which a person flees if he’s killed someone. **Why is the mother of the High Priest bringing food to these murderers?”**⁴⁷*

⁴⁶ Rashi’s commentary on Numbers chapter 35 verse 27, http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9963/jewish/Chapter-35.htm#showrashi=true

⁴⁷ Cities of Refuge Demystified, Chabad.org

2nd Census, Division of the Land, Levite Cities

- Because the person exiled in the city of refuge often came to realize that there is a rather large personal advantage to himself for a High Priest to die AS SOON AS POSSIBLE!

The exile might actually start to PRAY for the High Priest to die so that he could return to his family and resume a normal life. So, it is recorded in Jewish commentary that mothers of High Priests would often send food and gifts to these exiles so that they would be CONTENT enough in their asylum and thus not pray for the *premature* death of their son.⁴⁸

- Somewhat humorous to us, but no doubt it was not humorous to them.

Q: Why did the Lord ALLOW a blood avenger?

Probably because of the deep-rooted attachment in the Middle Eastern culture for the system of the blood revenge by the nearest relative. God acted wisely in this, as He does in all things. Blood revenge was so ingrained in their psyche that He found it prudent to accommodate it in a manner that **tempered it greatly**. The Law made it almost impossible that a man should be killed unless he were really a murderer, for a person could flee to a city of refuge and be assured a fair trial and subsequent sanctuary if found innocent of intentional murder. The Levites kept the paths to the

⁴⁸ Makkot, Chapter 2, Mishnah 6

2nd Census, Division of the Land, Levite Cities

cities of refuge in good position and well signed, so a person could easily find refuge.

Another Q: Why this Exile if the killing was ACCIDENTAL?

Life is always a serious issue in Jewish law, so even the unintentional taking of life carried a penalty with it – being banished to a city of refuge.

In our culture, if someone does something *accidentally*, there is no real blame attached unless it was thru gross neglect. **But, that is NOT the Biblical viewpoint.**

- If RED PAINT is spilled on a white rug, it makes no difference to the whiteness of the rug if the spill was intentional or accidental.

Sin against a Holy God is still sin, intentional or not. As we saw in an earlier presentation, the Levitical system was set up to cover unintentional transgressions of the law. An intentional transgression had no atonement under the normal sacrifices.

A LIFE of a person made in God's image is of cosmic importance.

- This point is so overlooked in our culture today concerning **ABORTION**. The killing of the unborn child has **SPIRITUAL IMPACTS** *far beyond* what we realize. It is a **TAR BABY** that

2nd Census, Division of the Land, Levite Cities

spiritually impacts the mother, the doctors, the nurses – everyone involved. And it impacts our nation. There are approximately 700,000 abortions annually in the U.S.⁴⁹ It took the Amorites 400 years before their sin was full and God changed ownership⁵⁰ – I wonder how far from full is our country's cup today.

By the way, if anyone here has had an abortion, or somehow participated in one by virtue of your occupation, don't despair – Jesus IS STILL a Refuge and He will never reject a repentant heart.

SLIDE: UNFORGIVEN MOVIE

There is a scene in the Clint Eastwood movie **UNFORGIVEN** that expresses the essence of this cosmic aspect. Eastwood plays William Money, an old gunfighter/killer for hire who has come out of retirement for one last job to avenge the scarring of a woman by cowboys. After the killing, he's talking to his young partner who is remorseful and ashamed.

Click> Will Munny (Eastwood) says: "It's a hell of a thing, killing a man. Take away all he's got and all he's ever gonna have."

- Taking away all a person has and all they ever *would* have had is the prerogative of God alone.

⁴⁹ Center for Disease Control and Prevention, Data and Statistics 2012
http://www.cdc.gov/reproductivehealth/data_stats/

⁵⁰ Genesis 15:16

2nd Census, Division of the Land, Levite Cities

His partner (the Schofield Kid) tries to cover his shame and says:
“Yeah, well, I guess they had it coming.”

Will Munny (Eastwood): “We all got it coming, kid.”⁵¹

SLIDE: *We all got it coming kid.*

SLIDE: CHRIST OUR REFUGE

APPLICATION⁵²

I opened today’s presentation with a quote from the Epistle to the Hebrews: “So that we...who have fled for Refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us.” It was written to Jewish Christians, who obviously understood the reference to Refuge, and now we do also.

There are many things in the OT are types and symbols of Christ. The Cities of Refuge are *somewhat* of a type of Christ, but they do NOT FULLY represent the work of our Lord.

- Because He is not a refuge provided *only* for men who are *innocent*, but **ALSO for men who are guilty**—not only for those

⁵¹ <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0105695/quotes>

⁵² Some thoughts generated by C.H. Spurgeon, *The Sinner’s Refuge*, Sermon No. 2621

2nd Census, Division of the Land, Levite Cities

who have *accidentally* transgressed, but also for those who have *willfully* gone astray!

Christ came into the world to save **all** of us who have transgressed against Divine Commandments – *intentionally or not*.

The **counterpart of the blood avenger** in our lives is **the Law of God**. Before a person accepts Christ as Savior, the Law of God is the blood-avenger that is on our trail! We transgressed — we *killed* God's Commandments — and so the Law of God is the avenger of blood.

Pride is part of the human condition, and so all of us tend to think we're morally better than we actually are – *I don't break any serious commandments by intention, I don't kill or steal or worship idols; I'm basically a good person, so I'll OK?* Right? That's dangerous wishful thinking. **The Biblical truth is that *intention* doesn't matter why comparing your holiness against the holiness of God.**

- All sin – intentional or not – sins against the holiness of God.

Before Christ was my savior, I was a ***spiritually dead person being pursued by the avenger but didn't know it until the Holy Spirit touched me.***

My personal holiness – and your personal holiness – is like filthy rags in His presence.

2nd Census, Division of the Land, Levite Cities

- **“We all got it coming, kid.”**

Picture a man running toward the city of refuge with the avenger close behind him and catching up. The city gave protection simply because it was the place Divinely-appointed for shelter. We saw that it had open land around it beyond its walls, two thousand cubits were given for grazing land and for fields and vineyards. The man is running and reaches the outlying edge the city’s border – and the avenger stops. He knows there’s no use going any further after his prey, not because the city walls are strong, nor because the gates are barred, nor because an army stands outside to resist, but because God has said the man shall be safe here. **Divine appointment was what made the city of refuge secure!**

No sooner did the man reach these OUTSKIRTS of the city, he was safe—*it was not necessary for him to get within the walls – he did that later*, but the outskirts, themselves, were sufficient protection.

- And, if you do **BUT TOUCH THE HEM OF CHRIST’S GARMENT**, you shall be made whole!⁵³ If you do lay hold of Him with “faith as a grain of mustard seed,” with faith which is very feeble, you are safe!

There are two basic choices in life”

⁵³ Luke 8:44

2nd Census, Division of the Land, Levite Cities

1. Face the avenger of blood, or
2. Flee to the Place of Refuge

Jesus is the ONLY way of salvation! The curse of the Law of God cannot touch us there, Satan cannot not harm us, God's vengeance will 'Pass Over' us. The Blood of Christ shields everyone "who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us" in the Gospel!⁵⁴

Amen.

⁵⁴ Hebrews 6:18