

221026-4 Jos 20, 21, Appointment of the Cities of Refuge & Levites' Cities— CThurman

Well we have tested your resolve to continue gathering with the saints in the midweek service by putting you through the chapters (chs.13-19) that give details of the borders of the twelve tribes of Israel land on both sides of the Jordan River. This is good information for us as we continue in our study of the Scriptures.

In chapters 20 and 21 are the appointment of the six cities of refuge and the cities the tribes are to dedicate to the children of Levi, which are Kohath, Gershon, and Merari.

Chapter 20

1 ¶ *The LORD also spake unto Joshua, saying,*

This is very likely a continuation of what the LORD said to Joshua beginning in chapter 13, *the LORD said unto him ...*. Chapter 14-19 is the undertaking of what the LORD said, which was to distribute the land to remaining ten tribes that were receiving land in Canaan. But also at that time evidently the LORD commanded Joshua to appoint which cities will be for *refuge*.

2 *Speak to the children of Israel, saying, Appoint out for you cities of refuge, whereof I spake unto you by the hand of Moses:*

The city of refuge is first alluded to in Ex.21.12, 13, 14.

Ex.21.12 ¶ He that smiteth a man, so that he die, shall be surely put to death.

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.

Nu.35.6 commands Israel to dedicate six cities as cities of refuge.

Nu.35.6 And among the (48 total [v.7]) 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.

The idea is that Israel should finish dedicating the other three cities of refuge on the western side of the Jordan River. Moses had already dedicated the three cities on the east of the Jordan River.

Deu.4.41 ¶ Then Moses severed three cities on this side Jordan toward the sunrising;

42 That the slayer might flee thither, which should kill his neighbour unawares, and hated him not in times past; and that fleeing unto one of these cities he might live:

43 Namely, Bezer in the wilderness, in the plain country, of the Reubenites; and Ramoth in Gilead, of the Gadites; and Golan in Bashan, of the Manassites.

3 That the slayer

purpose for these cities (whether an Israelite, a stranger or a traveler [Nu.35.14])

that killeth any person unawares and unwittingly may flee thither: and they shall be your refuge from the avenger of blood.

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.

The person seeking refuge declares the reason for his seeking refuge from the avenger of blood, and is received into the city.

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.

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
(and if innocent of murder)

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.

No matter how blood is shed God must be satisfied. Whether the blood is purposefully or accidentally shed God demands satisfaction for that blood shed.

Ge 9:6 Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man.

For lack of satisfaction the land, the earth becomes polluted and subject to judgment to cleanse the land of blood-guiltiness. God begins to judge the land, which works to destroy the people from off the land.

*Ps.106.37 Yea, they sacrificed their sons and their daughters unto devils,
38 And shed innocent blood, even the blood of their sons and of their daughters, whom they sacrificed unto the idols of Canaan: and the land was polluted with blood.
39 Thus were they defiled with their own works, and went a whoring with their own inventions.
40 Therefore was the wrath of the LORD kindled against his people, insomuch that he abhorred his own inheritance.*

In the case of murder God only accepts the blood of the murderer for the innocent blood that he shed. (cf. Ge.9.6 above, *Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed...*)

Even in the case of accidental death the only satisfaction for that blood shed is either the life of the one that caused the accidental death or to remain in the city of refuge for as long as that High Priest is alive.

Nu.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.

34 Defile not therefore the land which ye shall inhabit, wherein I dwell: for I the LORD dwell among the children of Israel.

The high priest stood as one that bore the judgment for the sins of the people before God.

He10.11 And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins ...

Ex 28:30 And thou shalt put in the breastplate of judgment the Urim and the Thummim; and they shall be upon Aaron's heart, when he goeth in before the LORD: and Aaron shall bear the judgment of the children of Israel upon his heart before the LORD continually.

When the high priest dies the issue of the guiltiness for bloodshed is gone.

**7 ¶ And they appointed ¹Kedesh in Galilee in mount Naphtali, and ²Shechem in mount Ephraim, and ³Kirjatharba, which is Hebron, in the mountain of Judah.
8 And on the other side Jordan by Jericho eastward, they assigned ⁴Bezer in the wilderness upon the plain out of the tribe of Reuben, and ⁵Ramoth in Gilead out of the tribe of Gad, and ⁶Golan in Bashan out of the tribe of Manasseh.
9 These were the cities appointed for all the children of Israel, and for the stranger that sojourneth among them, that whosoever killeth any person at unawares might flee thither, and not die by the hand of the avenger of blood, until he stood before the congregation.**

(See these Scriptures which tell of the cities of refuge: Ex.21.12, 13; Nu.35.6, 11-19; Deu.19.1-13; 1Chr.6.57, 67, only a couple of the cities are called 'cities of refuge.')

Chapter 21

The six cities of refuge are cities that Israel gave to the Levites. There remain forty-two cities more to be given 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.

7 So all the cities which ye shall give to the Levites shall be forty and eight cities: them shall ye give

1 ¶ Then came near the heads of the fathers of the Levites unto Eleazar the priest, and unto Joshua the son of Nun, and unto the heads of the fathers of the tribes of the children of Israel;

2 And they spake unto them at Shiloh in the land of Canaan, saying, The LORD commanded by the hand of Moses to give us cities to dwell in, with the suburbs thereof for our cattle.

As already given in the previous chapter there are three cities of refuge on both sides of the River Jordan. On each side a city of refuge will be located in the north, in the center, and in the south of the land. So, these six cities are part of the whole number of cities Israel is to dedicate to the Levites; six cities of refuge, 42 more cities, totaling 48 cities where the LORD's servants are salted throughout the land of Israel.

By suburbs (Hebrew **מִגְרָשׁ**, mig-rash, tss. *suburb* (110), *the cast out* (1) is meant a certain area that lies beyond the walls of the city. This is explained in Nu.35.1-5.

Nu.35.1 ¶ And the LORD spake unto Moses in the plains of Moab by Jordan near Jericho, saying,

2 Command the children of Israel, that they give unto the Levites of the inheritance of their possession cities to dwell in; and ye shall give also unto the Levites suburbs for the cities round about them.

3 And the cities shall they have to dwell in; and the suburbs of them shall be for their cattle, and for their goods, and for all their beasts.

4 And the suburbs of the cities, which ye shall give unto the Levites, shall reach from the wall of the city and outward a thousand cubits round about.

5 And ye shall measure from without the city on the east side two thousand cubits, and on the south side two thousand cubits, and on the west side two thousand cubits, and on the north side two thousand cubits; and the city shall be in the midst: this shall be to them the suburbs of the cities.

The Levites receive these cities plus almost one-mile of property outside the walls of the city.

3 And the children of Israel gave unto the Levites out of their inheritance, at the commandment of the LORD, these cities and their suburbs.

Kohathites

4 And the lot came out for the families of the Kohathites: and the children of Aaron the priest, which were of the Levites, had by lot out of the tribe of Judah, and out of the tribe of Simeon, and out of the tribe of Benjamin, thirteen cities.

The sons of Levi are three.

Ge 46:11 And the sons of Levi; Gershon, Kohath, and Merari.

These three sons shall receive of the children Israel a total of 48 cities. The first of these sons described as receiving cities is Kohath. But the LORD separated in Kohath the sons of Aaron to special service around the altar of the LORD. Because of this the Kohathites *of the sons of Aaron* receive the first cities.

Ex 6:18 And the sons of Kohath; Amram (who fathered Miriam, Aaron, and Moses), and Izhar, and Hebron, and Uzziel: and the years of the life of Kohath were an hundred thirty and three years.

The children of Aaron receive their thirteen cities in Judah, Simeon, and Benjamin.

5 And the rest of the children of Kohath had by lot out of the families of the tribe of Ephraim, and out of the tribe of Dan, and out of the half tribe of Manasseh, ten cities.

The *rest* of the children of Kohath are Izhar, Hebron, and Uzziel. They received cities in Ephraim, Dan (not in the north, but next to Ephraim), and the one-half tribe of Manasseh on the west of the River Jordan.

So altogether the Kohathites received 23 cities in the south up north to the south side of the Valley of Jezreel.

Gershonites

6 And the children of Gershon had by lot out of the families of the tribe of Issachar, and out of the tribe of Asher, and out of the tribe of Naphtali, and out of the half tribe of Manasseh in Bashan, thirteen cities.

The Gershonites received a total of 13 cities located in Issachar, Asher, Naphtali and the one-half tribe of Manasseh located in the eastern side of the River Jordan.

Merari

7 The children of Merari by their families had out of the tribe of Reuben, and out of the tribe of Gad, and out of the tribe of Zebulun, twelve cities.

The Merarites received a total of 12 cities located in the plains of Moab on the eastern side of the River Jordan, up to Gilead, then crossing over to Canaan, having cities also in Zebulun.

8 And the children of Israel gave by lot unto the Levites these cities with their suburbs, as the LORD commanded by the hand of Moses.

Describing the cities belonging to the sons of Aaron (of the Kohathites)

**9 ¶ And they gave out of the tribe of the children of Judah, and out of the tribe of the children of Simeon, these cities which are here mentioned by name,
10 Which the children of Aaron, being of the families of the Kohathites, who were of the children of Levi, had: for theirs was the first lot.**

11 And they gave them the city of Arba the father of Anak, which city is Hebron, in the hill country of Judah, with the suburbs thereof round about it.

12 But the fields of the city, and the villages thereof, gave they to Caleb the son of Jephunneh for his possession.

13 Thus they gave to the children of Aaron the priest Hebron with her suburbs, to be a city of refuge for the slayer;

The city is designated Canaan's southern city of refuge on the west side of the River Jordan.

and Libnah with her suburbs,

Perhaps about 12 miles east, southeast of Ashdod.

14 And Jattir with her suburbs, and Eshtemoa with her suburbs,

Eshtemoa is southwest of Hebron and Jattir is southwest of Eshtemoa.

15 And Holon with her suburbs, and Debir with her suburbs,

Holon is about 11 mi. north, northwest of Hebron, and Debir, I take to be in Simeon's lot rather than the city of Debir located in Benjamin's lot. So this Debir due south of Holon about 27 miles, and about 5 mi. is northwest of Eshtemoa.

16 And Ain with her suburbs, and Juttah with her suburbs, and Bethshemesh with her suburbs; nine cities out of those two tribes.

Ain (Enrimmon [?]) is west of Jattir about 10 miles. Juttah is about 6 mi. north of Eshtemoa. There are at least three cities named Bethshemesh. This particular one appears to be about 7 miles north of Holon.

Those two tribes: of Judah and Simeon the Levites received nine cities.

17 And out of the tribe of Benjamin, Gibeon with her suburbs, Geba with her suburbs,

Gibeon is about 5 mi. northwest of Jerusalem. And Geba, about 5 miles northeast of Gibeon.

18 Anathoth with her suburbs, and Almon with her suburbs; four cities.

Anathoth, the city of Jeremiah the prophet (Jer.29.27) is about 3 mi. south of Geba, and Almon just above Geba.

Of the tribe of Benjamin the Levites received four cities.

19 All the cities of the children of Aaron, the priests, were thirteen cities with their suburbs.

Of Judah, Simeon and Benjamin combined the Levites received thirteen cities.

Describing the cities belonging to the remainder of the sons of Kohath

20 And the families of the children of Kohath, the Levites which remained of the children of Kohath,

So, the rest of the Kohathites refers to Izhar, Hebron, and Uzziel (cf. Ex.6.18). Those of Amram (Aaron's sons) received their cities.

even they had the cities of their lot out of the tribe of Ephraim.

21 For they gave them Shechem with her suburbs in mount Ephraim, to be a city of refuge for the slayer;

The city is designated to be Canaan's centrally located city of refuge on the west side of the River Jordan.

and Gezer with her suburbs,

Gezer appears to be located at the southwest corner of the land allotted to Ephraim being about 12 mi. due west of the city of Gibeon.

22 And Kibzaim with her suburbs, and Bethhoron with her suburbs; four cities.

The location of the city of Kibzaim is unknown. Both the upper and the nether cities of Bethhoron are Ephraim's. Not sure to which Bethhoron this refers.

Of the tribe of Ephraim the Levites received four cities.

23 And out of the tribe of Dan,

This reference to Dan is to the land bordering the M. Sea west of Ephraim.

***Eltekeh with her suburbs, Gibbethon with her suburbs,
24 Aijalon with her suburbs, Gathrimmon with her suburbs; four cities.***

Eltekeh, a city located located on a major river that drains into the M. Sea, and about 12 mi. north of Ashdod. Southeast of Eltekeh about 7 mi. is Gibbethon. Then Gathrimmon is Dan's most northern city on the River Kanah.

These cities in Dan might have been dedicated to Ishar, Hebron, and Uzziel but when they took possession of them is unknown. This was much of the land of Dan that the Amorites drove Dan from and into the mountains. Remember, it was for this reason that Dan went far north to Leshem (Laish) and took land here next to Naphtali.

Of the tribe of Dan the Levites received four cities.

***25 And out of the half tribe of Manasseh, Tanach with her suburbs, and
Gathrimmon with her suburbs; two cities.***

Tanach, perhaps the same as Taanach, is centrally located in Manasseh's allotment on the west of the River Jordan. It is on the west side of the River Kishon. And of the city of Gathrimmon there appears to be another city of this name, but where it is in Manasseh is unknown.

Of the half tribe of Manasseh on the W. the Levites received two cities.

26 All the cities were ten with their suburbs for the families of the children of Kohath that remained.

So all the cities the Kohathites received of six tribes (Judah, Simeon, Benjamin, Ephraim, Dan, and the ½ tribe of Manasseh) are 23.

Describing the cities belonging to the sons of Gershon

27 And unto the children of Gershon, of the families of the Levites, out of the other half tribe of Manasseh they gave Golan in Bashan with her suburbs, to be a city of refuge for the slayer; and Beeshterah with her suburbs; two cities.

On the eastern side of the River Jordan, in the north is Golon. Golon is about 15 mi. east of the Sea of Galilee.

28 And out of the tribe of Issachar, Kishon with her suburbs, Dabareh with her suburbs,

29 Jarmuth with her suburbs, Engannim with her suburbs; four cities.

Back to the land of Canaan Kishon perhaps is a city located on the River Kishon that forms Issachar's western border, and Jarmuth is located on the tribe's eastern border.

Of the half tribe of Manasseh on the east and Issachar on the west the Levites received six cities.

30 And out of the tribe of Asher, Mishal with her suburbs, Abdon with her suburbs,

31 Helkath with her suburbs, and Rehob with her suburbs; four cities.

There's a question about where the city of Rehob is located in Asher, both possibilities are on a river, as is Abdon. Helkath is about 10 mi. up the River Kishon.

Of the tribe of Asher the Levites received four cities.

32 And out of the tribe of Naphtali, Kedesh in Galilee with her suburbs, to be a city of refuge for the slayer; and Hammothdor with her suburbs, and Kartan with her suburbs; three cities.

Kedesh is designated Canaan's city of refuge in the north. It is located on Naphtali's eastern border.

Of the tribe of Naphtali the Levites received three cities.

33 All the cities of the Gershonites according to their families were thirteen cities with their suburbs.

So all the cities the Gershonites received of four tribes (½ tribe of Manasseh on the E., Issachar, Asher, Naphtali) are 13.

Describing the cities belonging to the sons of Merari

34 And unto the families of the children of Merari, the rest of the Levites, out of the tribe of Zebulun, Jokneam with her suburbs, and Kartah with her suburbs,

Jokneam, west of the River Kishon below Helkath.

35 Dimnah with her suburbs, Nahalal with her suburbs; four cities.

Of the tribe of Zebulun the Levites received four cities.

36 And out of the tribe of Reuben, Bezer with her suburbs, and Jahazah with her suburbs,

The one city of refuge not given in this account or in the parallel account of 1Chr. 6.78 is that which was to be located in the south among the cities of the tribe of Reuben on the east side of the River Jordan. But all six cities of refuge were stated in the previous chapter. And in Reuben that city was Bezer. (see also Deu.4.43)

Jos.20.8 And on the other side Jordan by Jericho eastward, they assigned Bezer in the wilderness upon the plain out of the tribe of

Reuben, and Ramoth in Gilead out of the tribe of Gad, and Golan in Bashan out of the tribe of Manasseh.

The Septuagint (Greek) version of the OT reads:

Jos.21.36 And beyond Jordan over against Jericho, out of the tribe of Ruben, the city of refuge for the slayer, Bosor in the wilderness; Miso and its suburbs ...

Bezer is about 5 mi. east of Heshbon.

37 Kedemoth with her suburbs, and Mephaath with her suburbs; four cities.

Reuben's lot is the south land on the eastern side of the River Jordan. Bezer (perhaps Bozrah) is in the northeast and Kedemoth in the south.

Of the tribe of Reuben the Levites received four cities.

38 And out of the tribe of Gad,

Gad's allotment is above Reuben on the E. of Jordan.

Ramoth in Gilead with her suburbs, to be a city of refuge for the slayer;

Ramoth is designated a city of refuge located in the center of the eastern land of Israel.

and Mahanaim with her suburbs,

Mahanaim is located just south of the River Jabbok.

39 Heshbon with her suburbs, Jazer with her suburbs; four cities in all.

Heshbon, Gad's city in the south, and Jazer about 11 mi. south of Mahanaim.

40 *So all the cities for the children of Merari by their families, which were remaining of the families of the Levites, were by their lot twelve cities.*

So all the cities the Merarites received of four tribes (Naphtali, Zebulon, Reuben, Gad) are 12.

41 *All the cities of the Levites within the possession of the children of Israel were forty and eight cities with their suburbs.*

The children of Kohath, sons of Aaron received	13 cities.
The rest of the sons of Kohath received	10 cities.
The sons of Gershon received	13 cities.
<u>The sons of Merari received</u>	<u>12 cities.</u>
Total	48 cities.

In the beginning of the wilderness sojourn the LORD has numbered the Levites from the ages of one month and upwards at 23,000. Averaged across each city would be just over 477 per city excluding the woman and daughters.

42 *These cities were every one with their suburbs round about them: thus were all these cities.*

43 ¶ *And the LORD gave unto Israel all the land which he sware to give unto their fathers; and they possessed it, and dwelt therein.*

44 *And the LORD gave them rest round about, according to all that he sware unto their fathers: and there stood not a man of all their enemies before them; the LORD delivered all their enemies into their hand.*

45 *There failed not ought of any good thing which the LORD had spoken unto the house of Israel; all came to pass.*

This last paragraph, vss. 43-45, should be understood in light of the chapter which follows. The greater part of the conflict was complete and the time is come to dismiss the warriors to turn to their families and to their cities. This was a major success; the LORD had blessed their efforts immensely, though there remained work to be done. Israel had nothing to begin with, and now they essentially possess that the LORD promised to their fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

