

## Numbers 35

Verses 1 - 5

Now the Lord spoke to Moses in the plains of Moab, by the Jordan *opposite* Jericho, saying, <sup>2</sup>“Command the sons of Israel that they give to the Levites from the inheritance of their possession cities to live in; and you shall give to the Levites pasture lands around the cities. <sup>3</sup>The cities shall be theirs to live in; and their pasture lands shall be for their cattle and for their equipment and for all their *other* animals. <sup>4</sup>“The pasture lands of the cities which you are to give to the Levites *shall extend* from the wall of the city outward a thousand cubits around. <sup>5</sup>You shall also 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, with the city in the center. This shall become theirs as pasture lands for the cities.

**Command the sons of Israel that they give to the Levites from the inheritance of their possession cities to live in; and you shall give to the Levites pasture lands around the cities**

This was done so each tribe had Levites' dwelling among them.

The Levites would be available to teach them the law, serve as judges, and maintain the cities of refuge.

Of course their principal role included their work in the Tabernacle, assisting the priests in numerous ways, also performing construction and maintenance for the Tabernacle, and serving as guards. This was done on a rotational basis so they were able to maintain a regular presence in their local community.

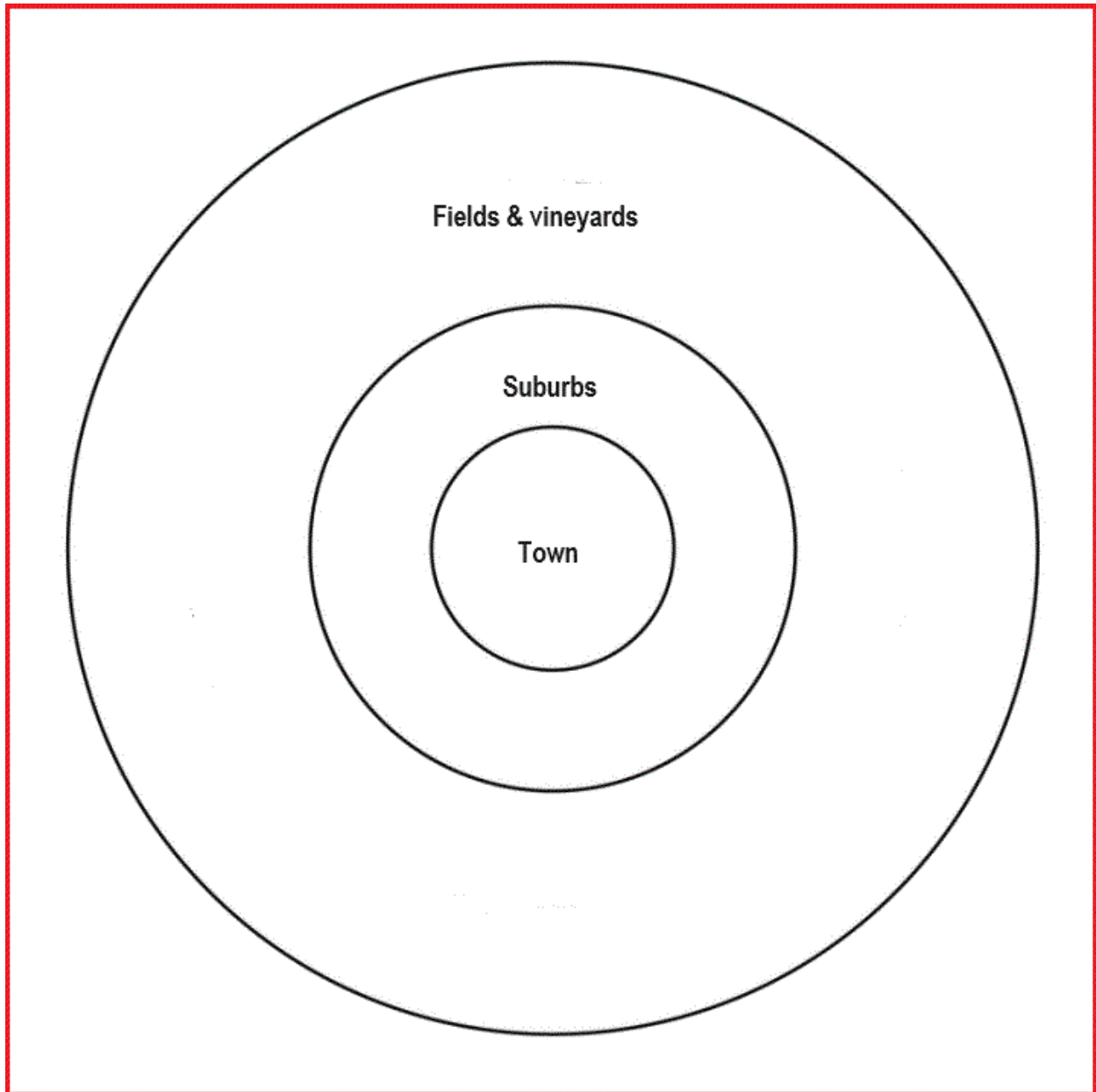
**The pasture lands of the cities which you are to give to the Levites *shall extend* from the wall of the city outward a thousand cubits around**

**You shall also measure outside the city two thousand cubits; this shall become theirs as pasture lands for the cities.**

1000 cubits equals 500 yards

2000 more cubits equals 1000 yards

See pic 3505



When you read the text it is difficult to see any difference between the 500 yards that immediately surrounds the city and the 1,000 yards that extends beyond the 500 yards.

But it is logical there had to be some difference or it would simply say 1500 yards.

The Mishnah, a collection of early oral interpretations of the scriptures that was compiled about AD 200, says the 1000 innermost are for suburbs, and the outermost 2000 are for fields and vineyards.

Verses 6 - 8

<sup>6</sup> The cities which you shall give to the Levites *shall be* the six cities of refuge, which you shall provide for the one who commits manslaughter to flee to; and in addition to them you shall give forty-two cities. <sup>7</sup> The total *number* of the cities which you are to give to the Levites *shall be* forty-eight cities, together with their pasture lands. <sup>8</sup> As for the cities which you shall give *them* from the possession of the sons of Israel, you shall take more from the larger, and you shall take fewer from the smaller; each shall give some of his cities to the Levites in proportion to his inheritance which he possesses.”

The cities which you shall give to the Levites *shall be* the six cities of refuge, which you shall provide for the one who commits manslaughter to flee to

See Map 3510



Three cities of refuge were east of the Jordan

BEZER, RAMOTH-GILEAD, and GOLAN

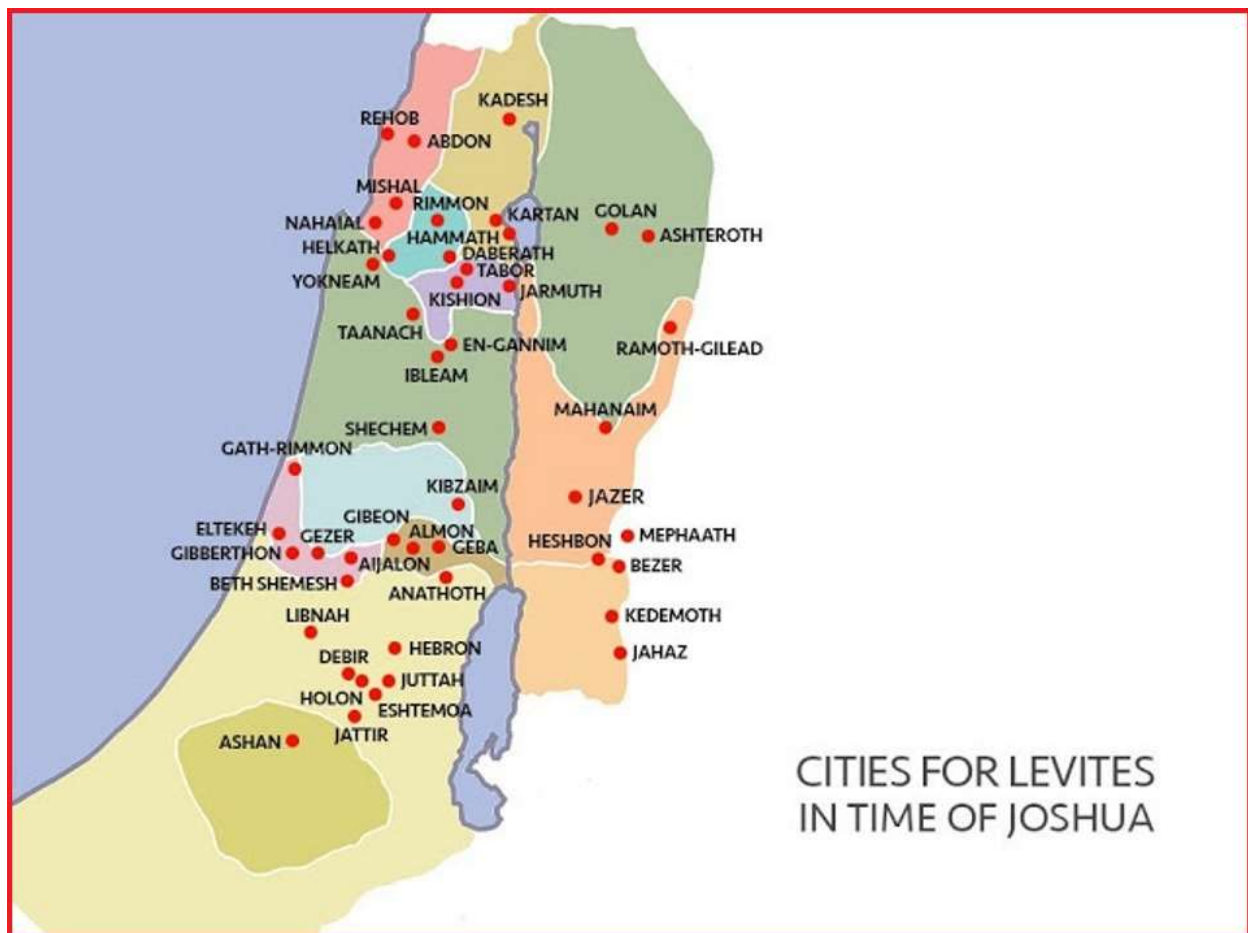
Three were west of the Jordan

KEDESH, SHECHEM, and HEBRON

One of them could be reached in a day's journey from anywhere in Palestine

**The total *number* of the cities which you are to give to the Levites *shall be* forty-eight cities. You shall take more from the larger, and you shall take fewer from the smaller**

See Map 3515



All of the tribes had 4 towns except Judah/Simeon which had 9 and Naphtali had 3

See map 3520



Verses 9 – 15

<sup>9</sup> Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, <sup>10</sup> “Speak to the sons of Israel and say to them, ‘When you cross the Jordan into the land of Canaan, <sup>11</sup> then you shall select for yourselves cities to be your cities of refuge, so that the one who commits manslaughter *by* killing a person unintentionally may flee there. <sup>12</sup> The cities shall serve you as a refuge from the avenger, so that the one who commits manslaughter does not die until he stands before the congregation for trial. <sup>13</sup> So the cities which you are to provide shall be six cities of refuge for you. <sup>14</sup> You shall provide three cities across the Jordan, and three cities in the land of Canaan; they are to be cities of refuge. <sup>15</sup> These six cities shall be a refuge for the sons of Israel, for the stranger, and for the foreign resident among them; so that anyone who kills a person unintentionally may flee there.

**Select for yourselves cities of refuge, so that the one who commits manslaughter by killing a person unintentionally may flee there so he does not die until he stands before the congregation for trial.**

These cities of refuge protected people who had **unintentionally** killed someone.

They needed to be protected from the near-kinsman of the victim because that person was The Avenger of Blood

The near-kinsman had a number of responsibilities

1. To buy a kinsman out of slavery
2. To buy property to keep it from passing out of his family
3. The brother of a deceased man was obliged to marry his brother's widow
4. Collect debts owed to the deceased
5. Be the avenger of Blood

If the person committed unintentional manslaughter he was confined to the area of the city of refuge until the death of the high priest.

If they declared the person guilty of murder then he was given over to the next of kin

Verses 16 – 21

**<sup>16</sup> ‘But if he struck him with an iron object, so that he died, he is a murderer; the murderer must be put to death. <sup>17</sup> And if he struck him with a stone in the hand, by which he would die, and *as a result* he did die, he is a murderer; the murderer must be put to death. <sup>18</sup> Or *if* he struck him with a wooden object in the hand, by which he would die, and *as a result* he did die, he is a murderer; the murderer must be put to death. <sup>19</sup> The blood avenger himself shall put the murderer to death; he himself shall put him to death when he meets him. <sup>20</sup> Now if he pushed him in hatred, or he threw *something* at him with malicious intent, and *as a result* he died, <sup>21</sup> or *if* he struck him with his hand with hostility, and *as a result* he died, the one who struck him must be put to death; he is a murderer. The blood avenger shall put the murderer to death when he meets him.**

**If he struck him with a stone or wooden object in the hand**

**If he struck him with his hand with hostility**

**Or threw *something* at him with malicious intent**

**If he pushed him in hatred**

All of these situations brought the death penalty because there was intent to either harm or kill someone and the person died from his actions.

See pic 3525

**Numbers 35:16 – 21**

<sup>16</sup> But if he struck him with an iron object, so that he died, he is a murderer; the murderer must be put to death.

<sup>17</sup> And if he struck him with a stone in the hand, by which he would die, and *as a result* he did die, he is a murderer; the murderer must be put to death.

<sup>18</sup> Or *if* he struck him with a wooden object in the hand, by which he would die, and *as a result* he did die, he is a murderer; the murderer must be put to death.

<sup>19</sup> The blood avenger himself shall put the murderer to death; he himself shall put him to death when he meets him.

<sup>20</sup> Now if he pushed him in hatred, or he threw *something* at him with malicious intent, and *as a result* he died,

<sup>21</sup> or *if* he struck him with his hand with hostility, and *as a result* he died, the one who struck him must be put to death; he is a murderer. The blood avenger shall put the murderer to death when he meets him.

The death penalty is stated 7 times.

This was not a new law.

See Genesis 9:6

The global flood occurred in 3098 BC, 1652 years before the giving of the law.



Verses 22 – 28

<sup>22</sup> **‘But if he pushed him suddenly, without hostility, or threw any object at him without malicious intent, <sup>23</sup> or had any deadly stone, and without looking he dropped *it* on him so that he died, while he was not his enemy nor was he seeking to harm him, <sup>24</sup> then the congregation shall judge between the one who fatally struck *the victim* and the blood avenger in accordance with these ordinances. <sup>25</sup> And the congregation shall save the one who committed manslaughter from the hand of the blood avenger, and the congregation shall return him to his city of refuge to which he fled; and he shall live in it until the death of the high priest who was anointed with the holy oil. <sup>26</sup> But if at any time he goes beyond the border of his city of refuge to which he flees, <sup>27</sup> and the blood avenger finds him outside the border of his city of refuge, and the blood avenger kills him, he will not be guilty of bloodshed, <sup>28</sup> 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 one who committed manslaughter may return to the land of his property.**

**‘But if he pushed him suddenly, without hostility,  
Or threw any object at him without malicious intent,  
he was not his enemy nor was he seeking to harm him**

This person would not be guilty of premeditated murder because he did not intent to either harm or kill the person

**And the congregation shall save the one who committed manslaughter from the hand of the blood avenger, and the congregation shall return him to his city of refuge to which he fled; and he shall live in it until the death of the high priest who was anointed with the holy oil**

This saved the offender from the death penalty but he was forced to live in the city of Refuge until the death of the High Priest.

We can also see how the judicial system worked

The man fled to a city of refuge when he killed the victim but he was brought back to his home town for the trial.

When he was found to be innocent of premeditated murder he was returned to the city of refuge that he had fled to.



During the time of David, Abner died at the hands of Joab because he failed to follow the law concerning the requirement that he stay in the city of refuge.

Abner sought refuge from Joab after the slaying of Asahel, one of Joab's brothers, in self-defense.

Joab maneuvered Abner across the city line and quickly killed him by thrusting a sword through his heart!

See 2 Sam 2

Verses 29 - 35

**<sup>29</sup> 'These things shall be a statutory ordinance for you throughout your generations in all your dwelling places. <sup>30</sup> 'If anyone kills a person, the murderer shall be put to death on the testimony of witnesses, but no person shall be put to death on the testimony of *only* one witness. <sup>31</sup> Moreover, you shall not accept a ransom for the life of a murderer who is condemned to death, but he must be put to death. <sup>32</sup> And you shall not accept a ransom for one who has fled to his city of refuge, so that he may return to live in the land before the death of the priest. <sup>33</sup> So you shall not defile the land in which you *live*; 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 the one who shed it. <sup>34</sup> So you shall not defile the land in which you live, in the midst of which I dwell; for I the Lord am dwelling in the midst of the sons of Israel.'**"

***If anyone kills a person, the murderer shall be put to death on the testimony of witnesses, but no person shall be put to death on the testimony of *only* one witness.***

England incorporated this law into their system of justice in 829 AD (2300 years later)

**Moreover, you shall not accept a ransom for the life of a murderer who is condemned to death, but he must be put to death.**

God excluded the payment of money to avoid death because it would corrupt justice.

The rich could go free and the poor would die.

**And you shall not accept a ransom for one who has fled to his city of refuge, so that he may return to live in the land before the death of the priest.**

This was not allowed because the rich man could use his wealth to return home while the poor man was forced to stay in the city of refuge.

**So you shall not defile the land in which you live, in the midst of which I dwell; for I the Lord am dwelling in the midst of the sons of Israel.**

This is why all believers should be holy.