

CHAPTER 35

INTRODUCTION TO NUMBERS 35

Though the tribe of Levi had no part in the division of the land, yet cities out of the several tribes are here ordered to be given them to dwell in, to the number of forty eight, (^{<0480E>}Numbers 35:1-8), six of which were to be cities of refuge, (^{<0480B>}Numbers 35:9-15), but not for wilful murderers, in whatsoever way they might kill a man, (^{<04816>}Numbers 35:16-21), but for such who had killed a man unawares, (^{<04822>}Numbers 35:22-24), and several rules are given relating to such persons, (^{<04825>}Numbers 35:25-29), but no satisfaction was to be taken in case of murder, nor to excuse a person's return to his own house before the death of the high priest, who had fled to a city of refuge, that so the land might not be defiled, (^{<04830>}Numbers 35:30-34).

Ver. 1. *And the Lord spake to Moses*, etc.] After he had described the borders of the land, and given instructions about the division of it among the several tribes, and named the persons that should be concerned in parting and putting it into the possession of the Israelites, he makes a provision for the Levites; for though they had no inheritance in the land as a tribe, yet it was proper they should have cities and houses to dwell in; for it would not be suitable that they should be always about the tabernacle, as they were in the wilderness; and it is concerning this the Lord is said to speak to Moses,

in the plains of Moab by Jordan, near Jericho: where the Israelites now were, and had been for some time:

saying; as follows.

Ver. 2. *Command the children of Israel*, etc.] All the tribes of them; it is not a bare instruction that is given them, much less a mere request that is made to them, or something proposed, and left to their option whether they would agree to it or not; but it is strictly enjoined them by the Lord, who had given them freely all they should possess, and who had a right to all they had, and to whom they were in duty and gratitude bound to do his will and pleasure: the order is,

that they give unto the Levites, of the inheritance of their possession, cities to dwell in; which was but reasonable and requisite, that the ministers of God, and the assistants of the priests, and who did the service of the congregation, that they should have, habitations for them and their families, as well as food and raiment was provided for them in another way:

and ye shall give also unto the Levites suburbs for the cities round about them; which were partly for ornament to their cities, and partly for their health, that they might have air, and not be too closely confined within the walls of their cities; and also for convenience, that they have room for their cattle, and places to lay up the increase of their fields, as after suggested. Jarchi says, that a suburb was a space and place parted without the city, round about, for the beauty of it; but they were not allowed to build there an house (i.e. to dwell in), nor to plant a vineyard, nor to sow seed; other ground is after provided for such uses.

Ver. 3. *And cities shall they have to dwell in*, etc.] For them and their families, and indeed for nothing else, they having no trades nor worldly business to carry on in them:

and the suburbs of them shall be for their cattle; for stables and stalls to put them up in, and for barns and storehouses to lay in provender for them:

and for their goods; where to bestow them, as the increase of their fields, oliveyards, and vineyards, (see ^{<D28>}Luke 12:18,19)

and for all their beasts; or living creatures; or “for their whole life”^{f501}; or livelihood, whatsoever was for the support of it; the Targum of Jonathan adds, by way of explanation, for all their necessities; and so Jarchi.

Ver. 4. *And the suburbs of the cities which ye shall give unto the Levites*, etc.] The dimensions and bounds of them were not left to the Israelites, to give what ground they pleased for this purpose, but were fixed to what length they should be: these

[shall reach] from the walls of the city, and outward, a thousand cubits round about; which was half a sabbath day’s journey, and pretty near half a mile, which all around a city must contain a considerable quantity of ground, if the city was of any size, as it is certain that some of them given them at least were.

Ver. 5. *And ye shall measure from without the city on the east side two thousand cubits*, etc.] Before only 1000 cubits were ordered to be

measured, and now 2000, even 2000 more, which were to be added to the other, and to begin where they ended. The first 1000 were for their cattle and goods, these 2000 for their gardens, orchards, fields, and vineyards; and so the Jewish writers understand it. Jarchi observes, that 1000 cubits are ordered, and after that 2000; and asks, how is this? or how is it to be reconciled? to which he answers, 2000 are put to them round about, and of them the 1000 innermost are for suburbs, and the outermost (i.e. the 2000) are for fields and vineyards; and with this agrees the Misnah^{f502}, from whence he seems to have taken it; and the same was to be on every other side of the city, south, west, and north, as follows:

and on the south side two thousand cubits, and on the west side two thousand cubits, and on the north side two thousand cubits; which, added to the other 1000 all around, must make a large circumference of land:

and the city shall be in the midst; in the midst of the circuit of three thousand cubits all around, so that it must stand very pleasant and convenient:

this shall be to them the suburbs of the cities; such a quantity of ground, consisting of so many cubits, shall be assigned to every city; the suburbs or glebe land to a Levite's city, on the four sides were four squares, and each square consisted of seventy six acres, one rood, twenty perches, and eighty square feet; all the four squares amounting to three hundred and five acres, two roods, one perch, besides fifty seven feet square, according to Bishop Cumberland.

Ver. 6. *And among the cities which ye shall give unto the Levites*, etc.] The number of which is not yet expressed, but is afterwards: there shall be

six cities for refuge; a sort of asylums, of which there were many among the Heathens, perhaps in imitation of these, for persons to have recourse to for safety, when in danger of life: the Septuagint render the words, "cities of flight"^{f503}; or to flee unto, which certainly was the use of them: to this the apostle alludes when he speaks of some that fled for refuge, to lay hold on the hope set before them, (^{<3068>}Hebrews 6:18), the word^{f504} used for refuge signifies "gathering or receiving", for here persons in distress gathered or betook themselves; and here they were received, retained,

protected, and sheltered: what and where these six cities were to be, and were, is after shown:

which ye shall appoint for the manslayer; not for any and everyone, not for one that killed a man presumptuously and purposely, through enmity and malice, but for one that did it ignorantly, unawares, and without design:

that he may flee thither; with all haste, after the commission of the fact; and, to facilitate his flight, and that he might have no interruption in it, the sanhedrim were obliged to prepare the ways to the cities of refuge, and to make them fit and large; and they removed everything that might cause him to stumble; and they did not leave in the way neither an hillock, nor a dale, nor a river but they made a bridge over it, that nothing might retard him that fled thither, as it is said;

thou shalt prepare thee a way; (^{f505}Deuteronomy 19:3) and the breadth of the way to the cities of refuge was not less than thirty two cubits; and at the parting of ways (on posts erected) were written, “refuge, refuge”, so that the slayer might know (the way) and turn there (as this directed him): and on the fifteenth of Adar or February, they met every year, to take care of this business ^{f505}; and they also appointed two disciples of the wise men, or two studious and understanding persons, to accompany him, not so much for the direction of the way, as lest the avenger of blood should meet with him, and slay him in the way; and who were to talk to him, and persuade him not to do it, suggesting to him that it was not done designedly, but unawares, and that it would be a bad thing to kill a man for what he did not intend to do, and which was done without any malice or enmity to the person killed, and with such like words to cool and appease the avenger ^{f506}:

and to them ye shall add forty two cities; according to the Jewish writers these also were cities of refuge; for so they say ^{f507},

“all the cities of the Levites receive or are refuges, every one of them is a city of refuge, as it is said, “and to them ye shall add”, etc. the Scripture makes them all alike for refuge: what difference is there between cities of refuge, which are separated for refuge, and the rest of the cities of the Levites? the gates of the cities of refuge receive, whether according to knowledge or not, (which Mr. Selden ^{f508} interprets, whether the inhabitants will or not; but the sense of

Maimonides elsewhere ^{f509}, and of other writers, is plainly this, whether according to the knowledge and intention of the manslayer or not, whether he knows it to be a city of refuge or :not, and whether he purposely came thither for safety or not,) and he that enters into them is safe; but the rest of the cities of the Levites do not receive, but according to knowledge (when the manslayer knowingly and designedly came thither for shelter); and a manslayer that dwells in a city of refuge gives no more for his house, but he that dwells in the other cities of the Levites gives more (or pays for it) to the owner of the house;”

but though this is their unanimous opinion, it rather seems, according to the letter of the Scripture, that only six were cities of refuge, and the rest were for the Levites to dwell in by themselves.

Ver. 7. *So all the cities which ye shall give to the Levites shall be forty eight cities*, etc.] Of these forty eight cities, their names, and what tribes they were in, and which of them were particularly cities of refuge, an account is given in (^{<f210>}Joshua 21:10-37):

them shall ye give, with their suburbs; according to the dimensions before prescribed.

Ver. 8. *And the cities which ye shall give shall be of the possession of the children of Israel*, etc.] What shall fall by lot for their inheritance, and they shall be possessed of; and though they are, shall not refuse, nor grudge to give them, according to the direction of God, whose the land is, they holding it under him:

from [them that have] many ye shall give many, but from [them that have] few ye shall give few; which rule was observed; for out of Judah, whose lot was large, and out of Simeon, whose inheritance was within that of Judah, because it was so large, nine cities were given, whereas out of the other tribes only four cities out of each were given, and out of one of them but three, (see ^{<f210>}Joshua 21:1-45),

everyone shall give of his cities unto the Levites, according to his inheritance which he inheriteth; and the Levites, being thus dispersed among the several tribes, were of great advantage to them, to instruct them in the knowledge of divine things; so that though hereby Jacob’s curse on this tribe had its fulfilment, that it should be divided in Jacob, and scattered

in Israel, yet that became a blessing to the rest of the tribes; (see ~~440~~Genesis 49:7).

Ver. 9. *And the Lord spake unto Moses*, etc.] At the same time, or he continued his speech unto him:

saying: as follows.

Ver. 10. *Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them*, etc.] Now, directly:

when ye come over Jordan into the land of Canaan; as they quickly would, being now very near it, and of which there was the utmost certainty, since the Lord had promised to bring them over that river, and put them in possession of that land.

Ver. 11. *Then ye shall appoint your cities to be cities of refuge for you*, etc.] And, according to the Jewish writers ^{f510}, these were neither to be made large nor little, but middling; and they appointed them where there were markets and fairs, at which goods were to be sold; and where there was plenty of water, and a multitude of people; and where there were but few, they fetched others from other places; and they neither made nets for hunting, nor twisted ropes in them, nor sold any warlike instruments, lest the avenger of blood should use himself to come thither, under pretence of buying such things, and kill the manslayer:

that the slayer may flee thither, which killeth any person at unawares; or through error ^{f511}, or mistake, not on purpose, with design, or through malice and enmity, as is afterwards more largely explained.

Ver. 12. *And they shall be unto you cities of refuge from the avenger*, etc.] Or near kinsman; for as the right of redemption of an estate that was mortgaged belonged to such an one, so of revenging the blood of any one that was killed:

that the manslayer die not; by the hand of the avenger, who in the heat of his passion would, could he come at him, fall upon him, and slay him, to avenge the death of his relation on him:

until he stand before the congregation in judgment; before the court of judicature, to be examined, tried, and judged, whether the murder was committed knowingly and willingly, or whether through mistake and at unawares: this was done either before the court of judicature in the city of

refuge, who took cognizance of such cases directly, that they might know whom to harbour and protect, and whom not; or before the court in the place where the act was committed: interpreters are divided about this; and Calmet^{f512} is of opinion that he was examined in both courts, first more strictly in the city of refuge, and then more slightly in the place where it was done, which is not improbable; however, this seems manifest from (~~485~~)Numbers 35:25), that the court where it was committed had power to fetch him from the city of refuge, and set him before them, and examine into the case; and, if an innocent person, restored him to the city of refuge, whither he had fled.

Ver. 13. *And of these cities which ye shall give*, etc.] Of the forty eight cities they were to give to the Levites, (~~487~~)Numbers 35:7),

six cities shall ye have for refuge; which, I think, makes it clear, that not all the forty eight cities were for refuge, only six of them.

Ver. 14. *Ye shall give three cites on this side Jordan*, etc.] Which were Bezer in the wilderness, 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, (~~488~~)Joshua 20:8),

and three cities shall ye give in the land of Canaan: which were Kadesh in Galilee, in Mount Naphtali; Shechem in Mount Ephraim; and Kirjatharba, or Hebron, in the mountain of Judah, (~~489~~)Joshua 20:7)

[which] shall be cities of refuge; the three on the other side Jordan, the Jews say, were separated by Moses, and the three in the land of Canaan by Joshua, but not one of them was a refuge until they were all separated^{f513}: it may seem strange that there should be as many in the two tribes and a half on the other side Jordan, as in the nine tribes and a half in the land of Canaan; let it be observed, what the Jewish writers, say^{f514}, Moses separated three cities beyond Jordan, and opposite them Joshua separated three in the land of Canaan; and they were like two rows in a vineyard, Hebron in Judea was opposite Bezer in the wilderness; Shechem in Mount Ephraim was opposite Ramoth in Gilead; Kadesh in Mount Naphtali was opposite Golan in Bashan; and the three were so disposed, that there was as much space from the south (of the land of Israel) to Hebron as from Hebron to Shechem; and as much from Hebron to Shechem as from Shechem to Kadesh; and as much from Shechem to Kadesh as from Kadesh to the north beyond Jordan; and it should be known that the land

of the tribes beyond Jordan extended in length as far as the land of Canaan, and was equal to it, running along it; so that those in the land of Canaan could soon and easily get over Jordan to the cities of refuge there, if there was occasion; besides, there is a direction given, that if their coast should be enlarged, they were to add three cities more in the land of Canaan, (⁴⁸⁹⁸Deuteronomy 19:8), hence the Jews have a notion, that in the days of the Messiah those three cities will be added ^{f515}; but the Messiah is come already, and is the antitype of them all.

Ver. 15. *These six cities shall be a refuge both for the children of Israel and for the stranger*, etc.] For an Israelite, and a proselyte of righteousness, one that embraced the Jewish religion, and in all things conformed to it, and to whom there was but one law in things civil and religious:

and for the sojourner among you; the proselyte of the gate, who renounced idolatry, and observed the commands of the sons of Noah, but in other things did not comply with the Jewish ceremonies, yet had the benefit of the cities of refuge equally with the other; though the Jews say ^{f516}, such a proselyte or sojourner had only this privilege, who slew a proselyte, but not if he slew an Israelite; but for this distinction there is no foundation in the text:

that everyone that killeth any person unawares may flee thither; whether an Israelite, or a proselyte of righteousness or of the gate.

Ver. 16. *And if he smite him with an instrument of iron, so that he die*, etc.] As with an hatchet, hammer, sword, knife, etc.

he is a murderer; the instrument used by him, and with which he smote, shows that he had a bad design, and intended to kill, or he would never have smitten a man with such an instrument:

the murderer shall surely be put to death; be condemned to death, and be executed, by the order of the civil magistrate, according to the law in (⁴⁰⁰⁶Genesis 9:6) and not be allowed the benefit of a city of refuge.

Ver. 17. *And if he smite him with throwing a stone*, etc.] “Or with a stone of the hand” ^{f517}, which the Jews interpret of a stone so big as to fill a man’s hand, and so

wherewith he may die; at whom it is thrown; is sufficient to cause his death, if struck with it; so the Targum of Jonathan paraphrases it of a

“stone of fulness of hands, which is sufficient that a man may die with it,”

or be killed by it:

and he die; by the blow he receives from it, either immediately or in a short time after:

he is a murderer, and the murderer shall surely be put to death; as in the above case.

Ver. 18. *Or if he smote him with an hand weapon of wood*, etc.] A stick, or staff, or club:

wherewith he may die, and he die; which is sufficient to kill a man, as the same Targum explains it; and a man dies with the blow that is given him by it:

he is a murderer, and the murderer shall surely be put to death; no pardon given him, or the benefit of the city of refuge allowed him.

Ver. 19. *The revenger of blood himself shall slay the murderer*, etc.] Not only shall have power to do it, but, as it seems, should be obliged to do it; be the executioner of the murderer; but not before his case has been heard, examined, tried, and judged; wherefore the Targum of Jonathan adds,

“in judgment,”

that is, as Onkelos explains it,

“when he is condemned by judgment,”

the court of judicature:

when he meeteth him he shall slay him; the first opportunity he has, even though, as Jarchi says, if he meets him in the midst of one of the cities of refuge, and no judgment is passed on him.

Ver. 20. *But if he thrust him of hatred*, etc.] Or, “and if”^{f518}, since the Scripture is still speaking of such that shall die for murder, though in another instance, without having the privilege of a city of refuge; if he thrusts him with a sword or knife, or rather, since, if anything of that kind

is included in the first instance of smiting with an instrument of iron, push him down from an high place, as Aben Ezra; so the men of Nazareth intended to have dispatched Christ in that way, (~~409~~Luke 4:29)

or hurl at him by lying in wait, that he die; as a bowing wall, as the same writer instances in, push down that upon him as he passes along, lying in wait for him; or throws anything at him, with an intention to kill him, and does; or casts down anything upon him, a large stone, or anything else, by which he dies.

Ver. 21. *Or in enmity smite him with his hand, that he die*, etc.] Give him a blow with his fist, on some part of his body where life is most in danger, and which issues in death:

he that smote him shall surely be put to death, for he is a murderer; and therefore, according to the original law, ought to die, without reprieve or pardon; and notwithstanding this law made for cities of refuge, which were to be denied him:

the revenger of blood shall slay the murderer when he meeteth him: that is, when he is condemned, as both the Targums of Onkelos and Jonathan interpret it, after a hearing and trial of his case.

Ver. 22. *But if he thrust him suddenly, without enmity*, etc.] Push him from a precipice, before he is aware, without any malicious design against his life, but merely through accident:

or have cast upon him anything; from the top of a house, or from a building he is pulling down, or pushes a bowing wall upon him, not knowing that he is passing by it:

and without lying of wait: or having contrived to do it, just as he goes along, or in any other similar way.

Ver. 23. *Or with any stone wherewith a man may die*, etc.] Which is sufficient to kill a man, if thrown at him:

seeing him not; and so without intention: the Jews^{f519} from hence gather, that a blind man is to be acquitted and dismissed, and not banished and so stands in no need of a city of refuge; though others say he is to be banished, and needs it, and ought to have the privilege of it:

and cast it upon him that he die; casting, it upon another account, and with another view, but yet falling upon a man, it kills him;

and was not his enemy, neither sought him harm; it was never known that they were at variance, or that the slayer had ever by any overt act discovered any malice and enmity against the deceased, by word or deed, or ever sought to do him any injury, either to his person or property.

Ver. 24. *Then the congregation*, etc.] That is, the court of judicature, assembled together to hear and try this cause:

shall judge between the slayer and the revenger of blood; shall hear what both have to say, and pass sentence:

according to these judgments; these judicial laws and rules of judgment before delivered, exemplified in various cases.

Ver. 25. *And the congregation shall deliver the slayer out of the hand of the avenger of blood*, etc.] Put him under the care of proper persons, to conduct him to one of the cities of refuge, or put him in the way to it; and restrain the avenger of blood from pursuing him, until such time that it may be judged he is safe arrived there:

and the congregation shall restore him to the city of refuge, whither he was fled; so that it seems by this, when one had been guilty of manslaughter, and fled to one of the cities of refuge, he might be taken from thence and had before a court of justice, and there take his trial; and if it appeared that the fact was committed by him, ignorantly, unawares, and without design, then he was returned to his city of refuge; but, if otherwise, he was put to death, notwithstanding he had fled thither; and so it is said in the Misnah^{f520}, that

“at first, or formerly, one that killed another ignorantly or presumptuously, they sent him before to one of the cities of refuge, and the sanhedrim sent and fetched him from thence: he who was condemned to death by the court, they slew him; he that was not condemned was dismissed; he that was condemned to banishment they returned him to his place, according to (⁰⁴⁸²⁵Numbers 35:25).”

and he shall abide in it, unto the death of the high priest, which was anointed with the holy oil: and then he was to be set at liberty, and return to his house and family and have his former possessions and honours, if he

had any, restored unto him, the commission or warrant for his detainer there ceasing, being made void by the death of the high priest; who was the prince of the priests and Levites, to whom those cities belonged, and so under his jurisdiction: or so it was ordered, because such was the general mourning for such a public loss as an high priest, that all private revenges would subside, and the cause of them be buried, in grief and forgetfulness; though, no doubt, this had a respect to something which will be hereafter taken notice of: the Jews say^{f521}, that the mothers of the priests used to supply with a sufficient quantity of food and raiment such who fled to the cities of refuge, that they might not pray for the death of their sons; and according to them, a man's case was very bad when there was no high priest; for so they write^{f522}

“he whose cause is finished (or his case determined in a court of judicature), and there is no high priest; and he that slays an high priest, or an high priest slays another, he never goes out, no not so much as to bear testimony in any cause, and even in what the congregation has need of him, but there are his dwelling, his death, and his burial.”

Ver. 26. *But if the slayer shall at any time come without the border of the city of his refuge*, etc.] Which seems to be the three thousand cubits assigned to every city of the Levites, and so to the cities of refuge; and which, according to the Jewish writers, were a refuge, as the city itself; and it is said^{f523},

“he, that kills a man there, is killed for him, but though the border is a refuge, the slayer does not dwell in it, as it is said. (⁻⁰⁸⁵⁵Numbers 35:25), “he shall abide in it”, but not in its borders:”

whither he was fled; on account of manslaughter.

Ver. 27. *And the revenger of blood find him without the borders of the city of his refuge*, etc.] Without the suburbs, fields, and vineyards belonging to it:

and the revenger of blood kill the slayer; being exasperated against him, and to avenge the blood of his relation on him:

he shall not be guilty of blood; or be reckoned murderer, or die for it.

Ver. 28. *Because he should have remained in the city of his refuge until the death of the high priest*, etc.] Nothing could give him his liberty but his death; so that though this was a merciful provision made in such cases for such persons, and was a considerable benefit and privilege, yet it carried in it some appearance of a punishment; since such a person was confined within the boundaries of one of the cities of refuge as long as the high priest lived; and this was done to make persons cautious how they were any way accessory to the death of another, though without design:

but after the death of the high priest the slayer shall return into the land of his possession; to that part of the land, and to that tribe to which he belonged, to his house and family, and to his possessions and inheritances, whatever he had, and to all the honours and privileges he before enjoyed, and under no danger from the avenger of blood henceforward: a custom somewhat like this has prevailed in some parts of Africa, as Leo Africanus^{f524} relates, that if a man happened to kill another, all the friends of the deceased conspired to kill him, but if they could not effect it, then the guilty person was proclaimed an exile from the city, for the whole space of seven years; and at the expiration of the whole seven years, when he returned from his exile, the chief men of the city invited him to a feast, and so he was restored to his liberty: temples, groves, altars, and statues, were common among other nations for asylums or refuges, but whole cities very rarely with the ancients; it seems there were some^{f525}.

Ver. 29. *So these things shall be for a statute of judgment unto you*, etc.] A judicial law, according to which they were to proceed in all the above cases:

throughout your generations in all your dwellings; throughout all ages, as long as they dwelt in the land of Canaan, even unto the times of the Messiah, in whom the things figured hereby had their accomplishment: the cities of refuge were types of Christ: hence a divine person, even the Messiah, is often spoken of as the refuge of his people, (~~3009~~ Psalm 9:9 46:1,7 62:7,8) with which compare (~~3068~~ Hebrews 6:18) these were places to flee to, as the word is rendered by the Greek version; to Christ sensible sinners flee for shelter and safety, which supposes danger in themselves from the law and justice of God; a sense of that danger which makes them flee from wrath to come; a view of Christ, as a place of refuge, and that no other but he will serve their purpose, and therefore make all the haste and speed they can unto him. The word properly signifies cities of gathering, or

of reception. There was a gathering of the elect of God to Christ at his death; and there is another at effectual calling, which is an act of God's grace, and a distinguishing one, when souls gather to Christ as their Saviour for righteousness, peace, pardon, rest, and everlasting life; and when Christ receives them, though sinners, into his arms, and into his heart, and into open fellowship with him, so as to dwell in him, where they dwell pleasantly and safely; he receives them into his house here, and into heaven hereafter; and by, and in Christ, those that flee to him, and are received by him, are retained and preserved from Satan, law, hell and death. The cities of refuge were of God's appointing; so Christ, as a Saviour, and rock of refuge to his people, is appointed and foreordained of God; they were well known for refuges, as the Lord is in the places of Zion; they were open for all, at all times, as Christ is for all sinners, even the chief of sinners, Jews or Gentiles; they are all one in Christ, the Israelite, and the stranger and sojourner; all impediments were removed out of the way of them, and plain directions to them given, as are in the Gospel, and by the ministers of it; and there is always room in Christ for such that flee to him, as there was in those cities; and being in him, they are safe from the curse and condemnation of the law, from wrath to come, and from the second death; and their redemption and atonement, peace and reconciliation, liberty, life and salvation, are owing to the death of Christ, their high priest. Abendana^{f526} observes, that the death of the high priest atoned for the offence (of manslaughter), which was the reason the manslayer continued in the city of refuge till his death, and then was released: however, certain it is, that the death of Christ, our high priest, atones for every sin of those that flee to him, and by which they are reconciled to God. In some things there is a difference between these cities of refuge and Christ; they were six, he but one; they were for such only who shed blood ignorantly, he for such that were enemies to him, and lived in malice towards others, and guilty of the most enormous crimes: to be in these cities of refuge was a kind of exile and imprisonment, but they that are in Christ are freemen; it was possible that such might die that were in them, and at most were only delivered from temporal death, but they that flee to Christ for refuge are saved with an everlasting salvation.

Ver. 30. *Whoso killeth any person*, etc.] Willingly, and through enmity and malice:

the murderer shall be put to death by the mouth of two witnesses; which is repeated partly to show, that this law concerning the cities of refuge was

not designed to screen a murderer, who was guilty through malice prepense; and partly for the sake of what is added to it, that two witnesses are required in such a case, where a man's life is at stake, to prove the fact against him; which shows how careful the Lord is, and men should be, of the lives of his creatures, that no man suffer wrongfully; which is repeated again and again, that it might be observed, (see ^{<5776>}Deuteronomy 17:6 19:15) but one witness shall not testify against any person, to cause him to die; which looks as if in other cases, in pecuniary matters, and the like, where life is not concerned, one witness may be sufficient; though it is always best and safest to have more if they can be had, that at the mouth of two or three witnesses everything may be established, (^{<5915>}Deuteronomy 19:15 ^{<0816>}Matthew 18:16).

Ver. 31. *Moreover, ye shall take no satisfaction for the life of a murderer,* etc.] Though he would give all his wealth and substance, all his estates and possessions, and whatever he is worth in the world; for all that a man has he will give for his life; but these are not to be taken, nor anything, and everything his friends may offer for him; all is to be rejected, the life of such a man is not to be saved on any consideration:

which is guilty of death; as he is who kills a man willingly and purposely; but one may be guilty of killing another, and yet not be deserving of death, when it is done ignorantly and accidentally with respect to him, for which reason this clause is added: but he shall be surely put to death; by the order of the civil magistrate; and if this is not done either through want of evidence, or the fault of the judge, or the criminal clemency of the chief governor, God sooner or later will take vengeance on such a person.

Ver. 32. *Moreover, ye shall take no satisfaction for him that is fled to the city of his refuge,* etc.] Though for killing a man unawares:

that he should come again to dwell in the land, until the death of the priest; the high priest; such a man's liberty was not to be purchased with money, nor even his life to be bought off, should he be taken without his city; a great ransom could not deliver him from the avenger, because he was guilty of this law, which so wisely and mercifully provided for him; and consequently guilty also of great ingratitude to God, as well as of a breach of his law, and of disrespect to his high priest, under whom he was protected.

Ver. 33. *So ye shall not pollute the land wherein ye are*, etc.] The land of Canaan, as it had been by the old inhabitants of it, by idolatry, adultery, and murder:

for blood it defileth the land: the shedding of innocent blood defiles a nation, and the inhabitants of it, brings guilt thereon, and subjects to punishment:

and the land cannot be cleansed of the blood that is shed therein, but by the blood of him that shed it; or “there can be no expiation”^{f527}, or “atonement made” for it in any other way; the blood of the murderer is required at his hands, and nothing short of it will satisfy law and justice, (see ~~Gen~~Genesis 9:6).

Ver. 34. *Defile not therefore the land which ye shall inherit*, etc.] By the commission of such atrocious crimes, or suffering them to go unpunished, or by taking a compensation for the life of the guilty person:

wherein I dwell; which is added to strengthen the exhortation, and as giving a reason why care should be taken not to pollute it, because the Holy God dwells there; as he did in the tabernacle erected for him, and in such a peculiar manner as he did not in other lands:

for I the Lord dwell among the children of Israel; he now dwelt among them as their God, and their King; his tent or tabernacle being pitched in the midst of the camps of Israel; and so he would continue to dwell among them when they were come to the land of Canaan, so long as they observed his laws, statutes, and ordinances; and therefore it behoved them to be careful that they did not pollute themselves and their land, and cause him to depart from them.