

Deuteronomy 19:2

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Thou shalt separate three cities for thee in the midst of thy land, which the LORD thy God giveth thee to possess it.

Analysis

Thou shalt separate three cities for thee in the midst of thy land, which the LORD thy God giveth thee to possess it. Cities of refuge demonstrate God's mercy alongside His justice. While requiring punishment for intentional murder, He provides protection for accidental manslaughter, balancing justice with compassion.

The command to separate three cities indicates deliberate setting apart for special purpose. These cities functioned differently from others, dedicated to preserving innocent life from revenge killing. God institutes structures protecting the vulnerable from vigilante justice.

Placement in the midst of thy land ensured accessibility - refuge cities strategically located so every region had nearby protection. God's mercy must be accessible to those who need it, not confined to remote locations requiring impossible journeys.

This system foreshadows Christ as our refuge from divine justice. Those who flee to Him find protection from the wrath we deserve, covered by His substitutionary atonement.

Historical Context

Joshua established six cities of refuge total - three west of Jordan (Deuteronomy 19 refers to these) and three east of Jordan. These provided sanctuary for

unintentional killers until trial could determine guilt or innocence.

The cities were Levitical cities, ensuring priests could instruct fugitives and maintain justice. This combined mercy with proper legal process.

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. How do cities of refuge demonstrate the balance between God's justice and mercy?
2. What does strategic placement of refuge cities teach about God's accessible mercy?
3. How does the city of refuge system foreshadow Christ as refuge from divine wrath?
4. Why was it important that refuge be available quickly without requiring impossible journeys?
5. What does location of refuge cities in Levitical cities teach about combining mercy with legal justice?

Interlinear Text

שָׁלֹשׁ	עָרֵי יָם	תִּבְדֹּל יָל	לָּךְ	בֵּית וְךָ	אֶרְצְךָ
three	cities	Thou shalt separate	H0	for thee in the midst	of thy land
H7969	H5892	H914		H8432	H776
אֲשֶׁר	יְהוָה	אֱלֹהֶיךָ	נָתַן	לָּךְ	לְרִשְׁתָּהּ:
H834	which the LORD	thy God	giveth	H0	thee to possess
	H3068	H430	H5414		H3423

Additional Cross-References

Exodus 21:13 (References God): 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.

Hebrews 6:18 (References God): That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: