

Deuteronomy 21:2

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Then thy elders and thy judges shall come forth, and they shall measure unto the cities which are round about him that is slain:

Analysis

Then thy elders and thy judges shall come forth, and they shall measure unto the cities which are round about him that is slain. The measuring determines which city bears primary responsibility for the ritual cleansing. Geographical proximity indicates which community should have provided protection and pursued justice.

The involvement of elders and thy judges indicates official legal action, not private response. Community leadership must investigate and take responsibility, demonstrating that justice is communal obligation requiring authorized oversight.

The careful measuring unto the cities shows precision in determining responsibility. God's law is not arbitrary but proportional - the nearest city bears greatest accountability for safety in their region.

This teaches that proximity creates responsibility. Those nearest to evil have special obligation to prevent it, address it, and make restitution when it occurs in their sphere of influence.

Historical Context

City elders served as local government and judicial authority in ancient Israel. They were responsible for maintaining order, administering justice, and

representing the community in legal and religious matters.

The measuring procedure would have been public, ensuring transparency in determining which city bore responsibility for the ritual.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. What does official involvement of elders and judges teach about corporate responsibility for justice?
2. How does proximity to evil create special obligation to address it?
3. Why is precision in assigning responsibility important rather than diffusing it generally?
4. What modern applications exist for the principle that communities bear responsibility for evil in their sphere?
5. How does public procedure ensure accountability and prevent arbitrary assignment of responsibility?

Interlinear Text

וַיֵּצֵא וְ	זִקְנֵי יִבְ	וְשֹׁפְטֵי יִבְ	וַיִּדְדוּ	אֶל
shall come forth	Then thy elders	and thy judges	and they shall measure	H413
H3318	H2205	H8199	H4058	
הָ עָרֵי יִם	אֲשֶׁר	סְבִיבָתָהּ	הַחֲלָל:	
unto the cities	H834	which are round about	him that is slain	
H5892		H5439	H2491	
