

# Deuteronomy 4:41

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Then Moses severed three cities on this side Jordan toward the sunrising;

## Analysis

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**Then Moses severed three cities on this side Jordan toward the sunrising.**

The narrative shifts abruptly from exhortation to action. The verb *yavdil* (יָבַדִּיל, 'severed/set apart') indicates formal consecration for a specific purpose. Moses does not merely designate but actively separates these cities for their sacred function. The phrase *mizrechah shamesh* (מִזְרְחָה שֶׁשֶׁשׁ, 'toward the rising sun') locates them east of the Jordan—Transjordan territory already conquered.

This practical legislation follows theological discourse, demonstrating that doctrine must produce ethics. Moses moves seamlessly from teaching about God's character to establishing institutions that reflect it. The cities of refuge embody divine justice and mercy in civic structure. God cares not only about worship but about how societies handle accidental death, blood guilt, and communal responsibility.

The timing is significant: Moses establishes these cities before his death, ensuring the eastern tribes have legal protection equal to what western tribes will eventually receive (Joshua 20). Even though Moses cannot enter Canaan, he faithfully completes every task within his reach. Leadership means doing what you can, where you are, with what time remains. Moses models finishing well despite personal disappointment.

## Historical Context

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Moses establishes three cities of refuge on the east side of the Jordan—territory already conquered from Sihon and Og (Deuteronomy 2-3). This action occurred on the plains of Moab around 1406 BC, before crossing into Canaan proper. These cities fulfilled the law given earlier (Numbers 35:9-15) and demonstrated God's concern for justice.

## Related Passages

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**John 15:13** — Greatest form of love

**1 John 4:8** — God is love

## Study Questions

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1. How does Moses' transition from theological teaching to practical legislation model the relationship between doctrine and ethics?
2. What tasks within your reach should you complete faithfully, even if you cannot accomplish everything you hoped?

## Interlinear Text

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אֶזְרָא	יָבַד יֵל	מֹשֶׁה	שָׁלֹשׁ	עָרֵי	בְּעַרְבֵי	בְּיַרְדֵּן	מִזְרְחָהּ
H227	severed H914	Then Moses H4872	three H7969	cities H5892	on this side H5676	Jordan H3383	H4217
וְשָׁמָּה:							
toward the sunrising H8121							

## Additional Cross-References

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**Numbers 35:6** (Parallel theme): 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.

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