

Numbers 35:26

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But if the slayer shall at any time come without the border of the city of his refuge, whither he was fled;

Analysis

But if the slayer shall at any time come without the border of the city of his refuge—the asylum was geographically bounded. Stepping outside, even momentarily, forfeited protection. The manslayer's safety depended entirely on remaining within prescribed limits, just as our spiritual security depends on abiding in Christ (John 15:4: 'Abide in me, and I in you').

The severity of this boundary underscores the seriousness of sanctuary. The city wasn't a prison—residents could move freely within—but leaving meant facing the go'el ha-dam without legal protection. Grace has boundaries; presuming upon it brings peril.

Historical Context

The six cities of refuge were substantial Levitical cities (Joshua 21), not mere outposts. Residents could work, worship, and live normally—but never leave. Archaeological evidence from Hebron and Shechem shows these were thriving urban centers where manslayers could build meaningful lives while exiled.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. What does the strict boundary of the refuge city teach about the limits of God's protective grace for those who willfully stray?
2. How does the requirement to remain within the city's border illustrate Jesus's command to 'abide in Me' (John 15:4-6)?

Interlinear Text

וְאֵם	וְאֵם	וְאֵם	וְאֵם	בְּרֵאֵב	אַתָּה	גַּבּוֹל	עַיר
H518	come	come	come	But if the slayer	H853	without the border	of the city
H3318		H3318		H7523		H1366	H5892

מִקְלָט	וְאֵשֶׁר	בְּרֵאֵב	שָׁמְהָה
of his refuge	of his refuge	whither he was fled	H8033
H4733	H834	H5127	

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