

Numbers 35:32

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And ye shall take no satisfaction for him that is fled to the city of his refuge, that he should come again to dwell in the land, until the death of the priest.

Analysis

And ye shall take no satisfaction for him that is fled to the city of his refuge (כֹּפֶר, kofer)—no ransom, bribe, or monetary payment could substitute for exile or death. The Hebrew kofer (from kafar, 'to cover, atone') meant a substitutionary payment, prohibited here because life's value transcends economics (Psalm 49:7-8: 'None can by any means redeem his brother').

That he should come again to dwell in the land, until the death of the priest—even the wealthy manslayer couldn't buy early release. Only the high priest's death secured freedom, pointing to Christ's unrepeatable atonement (Hebrews 9:12: 'by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption'). Salvation cannot be purchased; it was purchased.

Historical Context

In contrast to Israel's prohibition on kofer for homicide, surrounding cultures (Hittite, Babylonian) allowed monetary compensation for manslaughter. Israel's absolute standard—no ransom for blood—reflected the uniqueness of humans as God's image-bearers (Genesis 9:6), whose lives are invaluable.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

1 John 4:8 — God is love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. Why did God prohibit ransom (kofer) for manslayers—what does this teach about the inestimable value of human life?
2. How does the prohibition against purchasing early release point to the truth that salvation cannot be earned or bought but only received through Christ's substitutionary death?

Interlinear Text

וְלֹא	תִּקְחָ וְ	כִּפָּר	לָנוּ וְ	אֶל	עַיִר
H3808	And ye shall take	no satisfaction	for him that is fled	H413	to the city
	H3947	H3724	H5127		H5892
מִקְלָט וְ	לָשׁוּב	לִשְׁבֹּת	בְּאֶרֶץ	עַד	מֵוָת
of his refuge	that he should come again	to dwell	in the land	H5704	until the death
H4733	H7725	H3427	H776		H4194
הַכֹּהֵן:					
of the priest					
H3548					