

ADVANCE
A Study in the Book of Joshua
Joshua Chapter 20 - Cities of Refuge
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Joshua 20:1-9 NLT

Historical Context:

First mentions of Cities of Refuge:

- 1.) Numbers 35:9-15
- 2.) Deuteronomy 4:41-43

Cities of Refuge are:

- Western Side of Jordan (Canaan)
 - Kedesh (in Galilee, Naphtali)
 - Shechem (in Mount Ephraim)
 - Hebron (in Judah)
- Eastern Side of Jordan
 - Bezer (in the wilderness, Reuben)
 - Ramoth (in Gilead, Gad)
 - Golan (in Bashan, Manasseh)

Quicks Facts:

- Strategically located throughout the land
 - Less than a days walk from anywhere in the region
 - Roads were clearly marked and maintained
- Run by the Levites
 - Teaching the law
 - Administering justice
 - Guarding Holiness
- Refuge for All - Cities of Refuge were for
 - Israelites
 - Foreigners living among them
 - Sojourners passing through

Things to Consider:

- Cities of Refuge are a Divine Strategy not a human Construct that reveals
 - God values human life
 - God restrains vengeance
 - God provides safety for the vulnerable
 - God's desire to slow down wrath
 - God's desire to protect the innocent
 - God's heart to uphold justice through community

Cities of Refuge and the Mercy of God:

- Oxford Dictionary Definition of Mercy
 - *"Compassion or forgiveness shown toward someone whom it is within one's power to punish or harm."*
- In Hebrew and Greek forms the word Mercy shows up over 400 times

Three Hebrew Words for Mercy:

- **Rachamim (Rah - khah - meem)**
 - Shares the same root as Rechem which means womb
- Imagery Implies
 - Deep intimacy
 - All encompassing protection
 - Complete shelter and safety
 - Unconditional and nurturing love
 - Plural form indicates a sense of ever-flowing faithfulness
- First Mention
 - Exodus 34:6
 - "The Lord passed before him and proclaimed, "The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful (Rachamim) and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness"
- God's Mercy
 - Protects
 - Nurtures
 - Covers
 - Surrounds

- **Chesed or Hessed**

- Mercy that is steadfast, faithful and enduring
- Imagery Implies
 - Convent
 - Faithfulness that sticks around
 - Mercy that does not expire with failure
- Most mentioned
 - Psalm 136:1-9 (EHV)
- God's Mercy spans:
 - Creation
 - Time
 - History
 - Eternity
 - Ephesians 1:4

- **Chemlah**
 - Mercy that moves quickly to rescue
- Imagery Implies
 - Deep, active pity
 - Mercy that cannot delay
 - Compassion that intervenes
- First Mention
 - Genesis 19:16
 - Rooted in the word chamal - Pharaoh's daughter bringing Moses out of the water
- God's Mercy is
 - Intentional
 - Decisive
 - Without hesitation
 - Actively pursues

Cities of Refuge Point to Jesus

- We are protected from condemnation
- We are hidden from the avenger - the enemy
- We are covered by the blood of the lamb
- We are hidden in Christ
- We are safe in His refuge
- We are redeemed

- We are His
- Jesus pulled us out
- Jesus saved us from destruction
- Jesus has given us refuge
- Jesus mercy stepped in
- Jesus gave himself for us
- Jesus washed away our sins
- Jesus interceeds for us now

Romans 8:31-39 - Message

So, What Now?

- **Responding to God**
 - Rachamim mercy calls us to rest because it surrounds us
 - Chesed mercy calls us to worship because it stays with us no matter what
 - Chemlah mercy calls us to follow because it saves us
- **Responding to Others**
 - Refuge was never meant to end with us
 - Mercy received is mercy reflected
 - Matthew 5:7
- **Extending Rachamim Mercy**
 - Guard the reputation of those around you
 - Protect the hearts of those weaker than you
 - Surround people with the love of Jesus
 - Take up the cause of the widow, the orphan and those in prison
- **Extending Chesed Mercy**
 - Be a faithful friend
 - Love others deeply and fruitfully
 - Extend love even when its costly
 - Build belonging wherever you go
- **Extending Chemlah Mercy**
 - Feel the urgency of a world needing Jesus
 - Don't ignore the Holy Spirit's voice
 - Be quick to help others
 - Be proactive - look for opportunities to help