

Joshua 20 : 1-9—Memory Verses, 1-4.

Golden Text—God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.—Ps. 46 : 1.



1 The LORD also spake unto Josh'ua, saying,

2 Speak to the children of Israel, saying, Appoint out for you cities of refuge, wherof I spake unto you by the hand of Mo'ses :

3 That the slayer that killeth *any* person unawares *and* unwittingly may flee thither : and they shall be your refuge from the avenger of blood.

4 And when he that doth flee unto one of those cities shall stand at the entering of the gate of the city, and shall declare his cause in the ears of the elders of that city, they shall take him into the city unto them, and give him a place, that he may dwell among them.

5 And if the avenger of blood pursue after him, then they shall not deliver the slayer up into his hand ; because he smote his neighbour unwittingly, and hated him not beforetime.

6 And he shall dwell in that city, until he stand before the congregation for judgment, *and* until the death of the high priest that shall be in those days : then shall the slayer

return, and come unto his own city, and unto his own house, unto the city from whence he fled.

7 And they appointed Ke'desh in Gal'ilee in mount Naph'tali, and Shech'em in mount Eph'raim, and Kir'jath-ar'ba, which is He'bron, in the mountain of Ju'dah.

8 And on the other side Jor'dan by Jer'icho eastward, they assigned Be'zer in the wilderness upon the plain out of the tribe of Reu'ben, and Ra'moth in Gil'ead out of the tribe of Gad, and Go'lan in Ba'shan out of the tribe of Mannas'seh.

9 These were the cities appointed for all the children of Is'rael, and for the stranger that sojourneth among them, that whosoever killeth *any* person at unawares might flee thither, and not die by the hand of the avenger of blood, until he stood before the congregation.

THE LESSON RETOLD

It was the custom among the Israelites that if one man should kill another, the dead man's nearest relative, who was then called his avenger, should pursue after the murderer and kill him in return for the evil he had done.

This manner of punishing had often led to much trouble, for sometimes a man who had taken away the life of another, merely by accident or mistake, was punished just as severely as if he had planned to do wrong.

In this way, if a man was working with another in the woods and his axe slipped and killed his companion, he must pay for it with his life. If one man ran over another in the dark and so injured him that he died, the brother or cousin or whoever

might then be his avenger might kill the one who had done such a deed, without mercy.

Now the Lord was not willing that the children of Israel should carry this unfair and cruel rule into their new country, and in the wilderness He had told Moses that in Canaan a way of escape should be found for the man who had killed another by mistake or accident.

So when the new land was being divided, the Lord told Joshua to set apart six cities to be called "Cities of Refuge," three of them on one side of Jordan and three on the other, and so placed that it would be easy for a man fleeing to get to one or another of them from any part of Canaan.