

out knowing," that is, by mistake or accident, with no intention of killing. The distinction between the wilful murderer and the accidental slayer is carefully drawn in Num. 35 : 16-24; Deut. 19 : 4-13. *Unto you for a refuge* (Rev. Ver.); but only for the unintentional manslayer. One who had killed another intentionally was to be punished by death, Num. 35 : 31, 32. *From the avenger of blood*. Amongst all the Semitic nations, that is, those descended from Shem (Gen. 10 : 1), to whom the Hebrews belonged, the nearest relation of a murdered man, called the "goel", inherited his property, and had laid on him by custom the duty of avenging his death. This was certainly not a desirable method of administering justice; but it was so firmly established that it could not readily be changed. The provision of the cities of refuge was to regulate it, so as to protect innocent victims of the system, and especially those who had unfortunately slain any one by accident, without hatred or malice, until they had had a fair trial. The practical effect of this was to secure a trial for all manslaughterers, even the most guilty, before being punished.

II. The Manslayer's Protection, 4-6a.

Vs. 4. *He shall flee* (Rev. Ver.); pursued by the enraged avenger. *Stand at the gate*; in the public square, near the city gates, used as a place for meetings and trials at law (compare Ruth 4 : 1, 2). *Declare his cause*; state his case. *The elders*; the magistrates. The manslayer must show to their satisfaction that the killing had been purely accidental. *Give him a place*; receive him, care for him, and assign him a residence if they were convinced by his statement.

Vs. 5, 6a. *Avenger of blood pursue*; doing what it was held to be his duty to do. *Not deliver the slayer up*; but keep him securely until he should have a fair trial, at which he and the avenger of blood would be brought face to face and each receive a just hearing. *Before the congregation*; that is, the local court representing the people of the city. It is not stated where the trial was to take place, but probably it was in the City of Refuge, so that these cities would become the centres of justice for the trial of the more serious forms of crime. In the event of the

manslayer being found guilty of murder, he would be put to death, probably by stoning, in which execution the avenger would have a part, but would not act alone.

III. The Manslayer's Privilege, 6b-9.

Vs. 6b-9. If innocent of wilful murder, the manslayer was to reside in the City of Refuge, where alone he would be safe, *until the death of the high priest*, when he was allowed to return home, and any attempt to molest him would be punished as a fresh crime. *And they appointed*, etc. The six cities chosen were selected so as to have three on each side of the Jordan, and were so distributed that hardly any place in the country would be more than thirty miles from one of them. It was required by Deut. 19 : 3, that roads should be built to these cities. Later Jewish writings give regulations for keeping the roads in good condition and well marked with guide posts, so that the fugitive might have a better chance to escape being overtaken by the avenger. (See also HOME STUDY QUARTERLY, Oriental Sidelight.)

The inhabitants are said to have made it a point to treat the innocent manslaughterers confided to them with special consideration, providing them the means of earning a livelihood. The family of the high priest also showed them special kindness, lest they should pray for his death to hasten their release. Cities of Refuge are not again referred to in the subsequent scripture history, and we do not know when they ceased to be needed, owing to the rise of a better system of law.

Light from the East

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REFUGE—Amongst wandering tribes where there was no settled means of justice, when a man was killed either by accident or design, his nearest male relative was bound to pursue the slayer to the death. Thus interminable blood feuds arose, and to counteract this evil there was developed the right of asylum, possessed by certain holy places from which the fugitive could not be dragged. In Greece, the right of asylum for ill-treated slaves and criminals was possessed by the Altar of Pity in the market place, the Thes-eum and a number of other sanctuaries.