

WARFARE

RAMOTH

GOLAN

BEZER

CAPITAL PUNISHMENT

sea of galilee

# CITIES

# OF

HEBRON

SHECHEM

# REFUGE

KEDESH

HOMICIDE

JOFFA

ACCO

MURDER

MEDITERRANEAN SEA

"THE CITIES OF REFUGE"  
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In the fields of Moab, encamped by the Jordan, opposite Jericho, God spoke the last words to Moses. God discussed these issues with Moses:

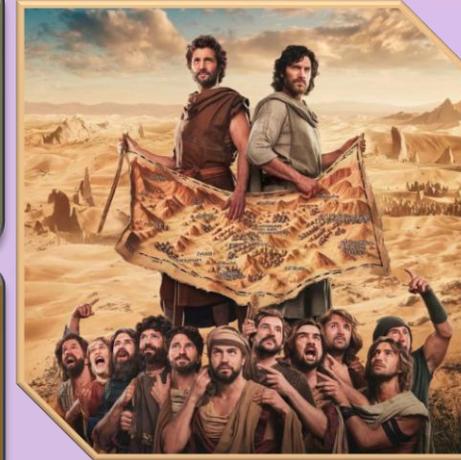
They must expel all its inhabitants from the country and destroy all the idols and molten images that they have. Demolish all their pagan shrines (Numbers 33:50-56)

The limits of the land they were going to own. (Numbers 34:1-15)

The names of the people who were going to distribute the land: the priest Eleazar; Joshua son of Nun; and a chief from each tribe (Numbers 34:16-29)

The cities where the Levites were to live, along with grazing land for their livestock. (Numbers 35:1-8)

The six cities of refuge. (Numbers 35:9-34)





The Levites were distributed in 48 cities among all the tribes of Israel.

This ensured that all the Israelites would be instructed by the Levites who dwelt in their midst.

The Levites were set up to be examples of faithfulness and holiness. They inculcated in the people religious values and the knowledge of the true God.



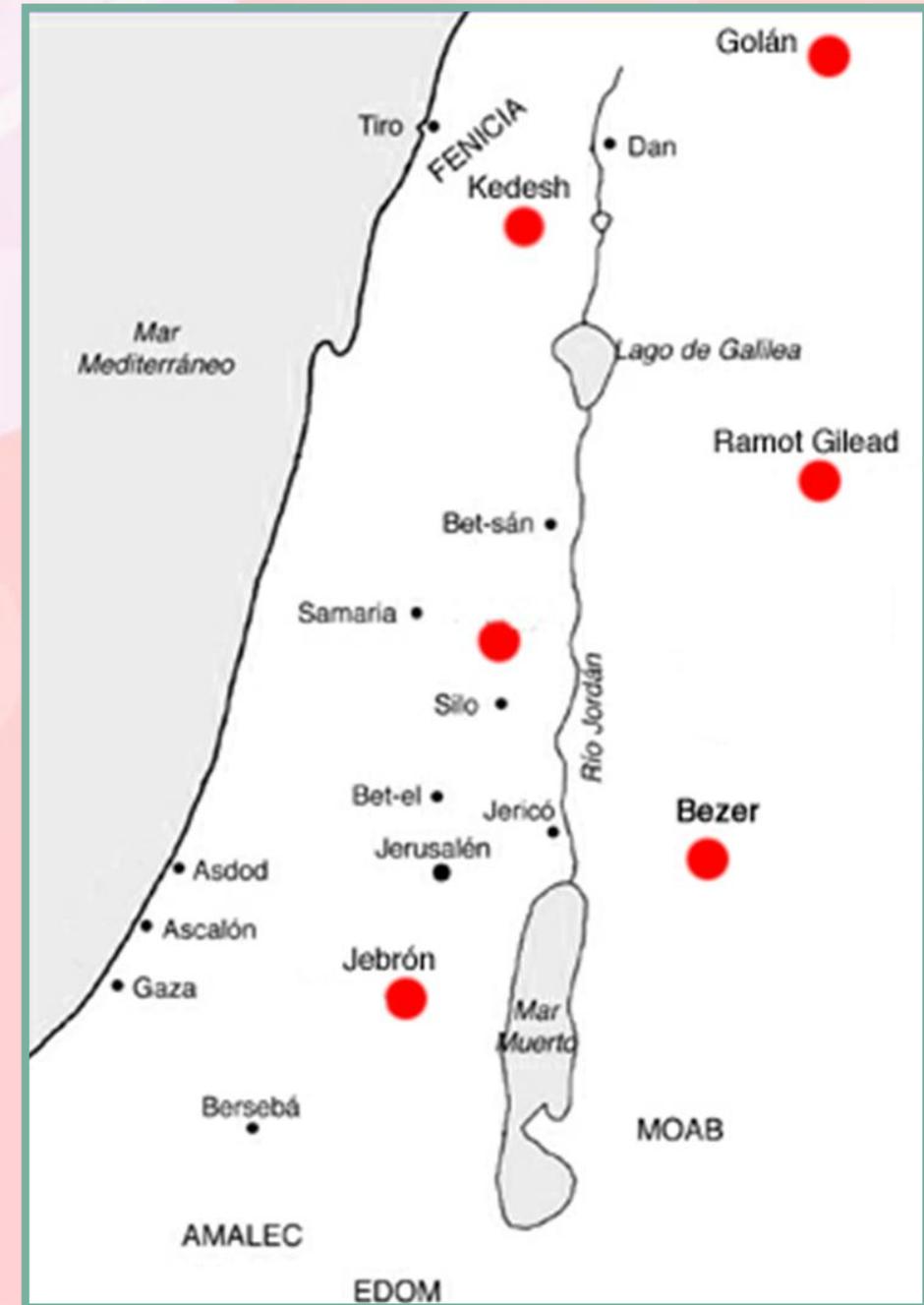
**LEVITICAL CITIES AND CITIES OF REFUGE**  
*JOSH. 20-21.*

- Levitical city
- Levitical city (uncertain location)
- City of refuge
- Other city
- ▲ Mountain peak



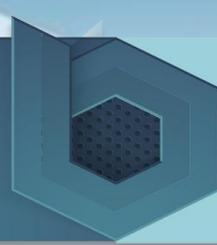
**Of the cities of the Levites, six of them were designated as "cities of refuge":**

**Moses designated three cities of refuge to the west: Bezer, Ramoth-Gilead, and Golan. Deuteronomy 4:41-43**  
**Joshua designated three cities of refuge to the east: Kedesh of Naphtali, Shechem, and Hebron. Joshua 20**





## THE CITIES OF REFUGE



# BEZER

Joshua 21:34-36

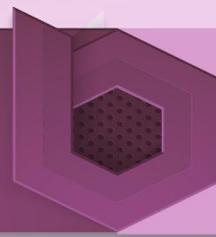
It was assigned to the Merarites in Reuben's territory and later designated as a city of refuge.

It was taken by Moab and fortified by King Masa in the time of King Omri of Israel (885-874 B.C.), according to a Moabite stone erected by Masa. The translation of a fragment of the stone reads: "I am Mesah, son of Chemosh, king of Moab, the Dibonite. My father reigned over Moab 30 years, and I reigned after my father. And I stopped Chemosh at Qorjah, because he saved me from all kings and made me triumph over my enemies. Omri, king of Israel, had oppressed Moab for many days... And Omri had occupied the land of Medeba, and Israel lived in it his days and half of the days of his son, 40 years... Now the men of Gad had lived in the land of Ataroth of old, and the king of Israel had built Ataroth for them, but I fought against the city and took it, and smote all the people of the city... And Chemosh said to me, 'Go, take Nebo from Israel,' and I went by night and fought against him from dawn until noon, and I took it... And I took from there the vessels of YHWH (Yahweh) and dragged them before Chemosh... I built Bezer because it was in ruins.

The name "BEZER" means "Fortress". The Bible teaches us to seek God as our city of refuge, a strength that will help us in our daily walk: "The Lord God is my strength, and he will make my feet like hinds' feet, and he will make me to walk upon mine high places." (Habakkuk, 3:19)



## THE CITIES OF REFUGE



## RAMOTH OF GILEAD

Joshua 21:38

It is also called Mizpah. Chosen as a city of refuge for the Merarites from among the cities of Gad. Joshua, 21:38

It was the home of Judge Jephthah who, by the imprudence of his vow, caused the death of his own daughter. God wanted this city to be a refuge for unintentional murderers, however, Jephthah committed voluntary manslaughter in it. God's plans are different from those of men! Judges, 11:32, 34.

It was an important city in Solomon's time.

Here Ahab died willingly ignoring the message that God gave him through the prophet Malachi. When a murderer took refuge in this city and, during the trial, was found guilty, he had to die. This was the case with Ahab and Jehoram, who, found guilty by God, met their deaths in this city (despite Ahab's attempts to prevent it). 1 Kings, 22:29, 34-35.

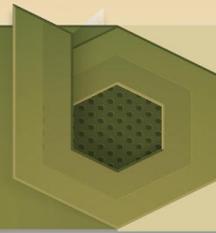
Here Jehoram, the son of Ahab, the last king of the house of Ahab, was mortally wounded. 2 Kings, 8:28.

Here also the next king of Israel was anointed, Jehu, who destroyed the house of Ahab according to the prophecy of Elijah. 2 Kings, 9:1-4.

The name of this city means "Heights" (Ramot) or "Watchtower" (Mizpah). Just as the watchman watched from the height of his tower so that the city would be protected, God is our watchman who constantly watches to protect us. **"He rules with his power forever; his eyes watch over the nations; the rebels will not lift up their heads" (Psalm 66:7)**



## THE CITIES OF REFUGE



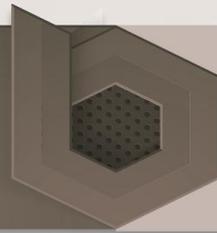
# GOLAN

Joshua 21:27

- City of the half-tribe of Manasseh assigned to the Gershonites as a city of refuge. Joshua 21:27.
- It gave the name to the small country of GAULANITIS, often mentioned by Josephus, between Mount Hermon and the Yarmek River. Provisionally, the ancient site is identified with present-day Salem el-Jçlân, about 27 km east of the Sea of Galilee, at the latitude of Tiberias, near Nahr el-Allân, a northern tributary of the Yarmouk.
- Its name means "Captive" or "Banished". God welcomes the exiles into their cities of refuge and will welcome us, who have no inheritance on this earth. "Jehovah rebuilds Jerusalem; the exiles of Israel he gathers" (Psalm 147:2)



## THE CITIES OF REFUGE



## KEDESH NEPHTALI

Joshua 21:32

Assigned to the Gershonites from among the cities of Naphtali as a city of refuge. Joshua 21:32.

It was the home of Barak and witnessed the battle of Deborah and Barak against Sisera. In his fields Sisera met his death at the hands of Jael. Unlike Ahab, in this city of refuge God delivered the innocent from certain death. Judges, 4:6-10.

The city was conquered by Tiglath-Pileser III and its inhabitants exiled forever. 2 Kings, 15:29.

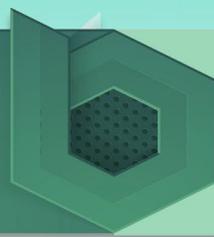
History tells us how this city was recovered by Jonathan Maccabee: "Then Jonathan heard that some of Demetrius' generals were at Kedesh in Galilee with a large number of troops with the intention of diverting him from his enterprise... and taking possession of the city, he put a garrison in it" (1 Maccabees, 11:63, 66)

It is currently known by the name of TELL QADES, 11 km north of Azor.

The name KEDESH means "Holy Place". We can always, like Jonah, find refuge by approaching the holy place where God dwells. "When my soul was fainting in me, I remembered the Lord, and my prayer came to you in your holy temple" (Jonah, 2:7)



# THE CITIES OF REFUGE



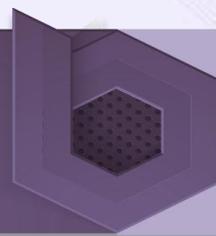
## SHECHEM

Joshua 21:21

- Assigned to the Kohathites from among the cities of Ephraim as a city of refuge. Joshua 21:21.
- Abram's first encampment in Canaan and also the first altar he built were there. Genesis, 12:5-7.
- Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob dwelt there. Jacob bought a piece of land there. Genesis, 33:18, 19
- In this city Simeon and Levi avenged their sister Dinah by killing a large part of its population.
- At Shechem, located between Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim, blessings and curses were read. Joshua, 8:33-34.
- There Joshua gathered the people to say goodbye. He erected a column as a monument and concluded the division of the land of Canaan. The monument that Joshua erected has been found by archaeologists. Joshua, 24:1; 24: 25-28
- Joseph's bones were buried in this same place. Joshua, 24:32.
- With the support of the city, Abimelech, son of Gideon, was proclaimed king and killed his 70 brothers. Then Abimelech destroyed the city. It was really shameful the action of this city of refuge that, instead of helping the unintentional murderer, encourages a man to kill his 70 brothers in cold blood. Its inhabitants did not find refuge in their own city and the avenger overtook them. Judges, 9:4-6.
- Rehoboam was rejected by Israel in this city and Jeroboam used it as his capital for a time. 1 Kings, 12:1-4.
- It was a major city among the Samaritans until it was recovered by John Hyrcanus.
- The Caesar Flavius Vespasian spent a night in it and, in his honor, it was renamed FLAVIA NEAPOLIS (Flavius' new city).
- Nowadays it is called Nablus, 11 km from Samaria.
- Shechem means "Shoulder." When we do not even have the strength to reach the city of refuge of our God, He Himself takes the initiative and, taking us on His shoulders, leads us home. "What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it? And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing." (Luke 15:4-5)



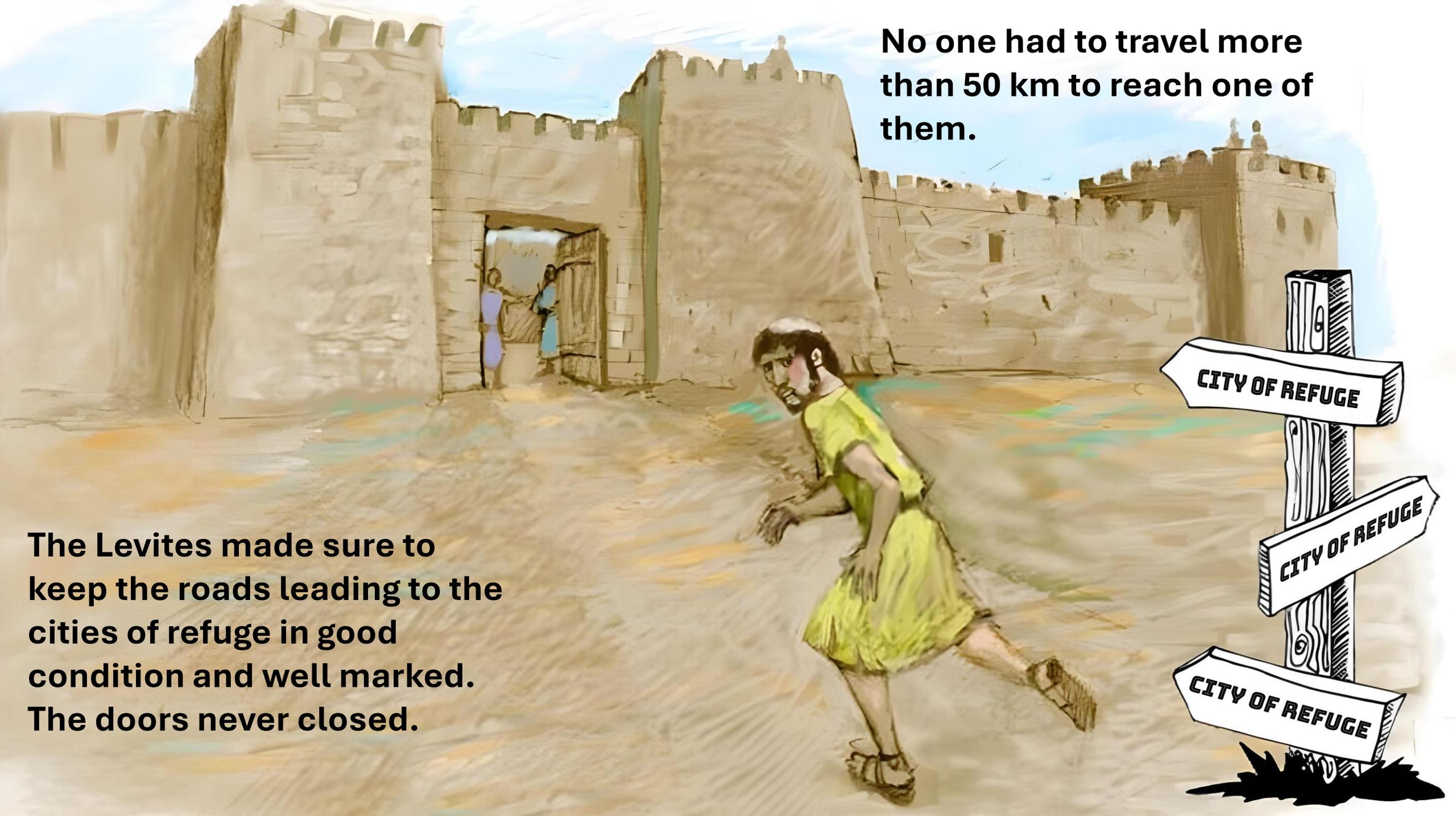
## THE CITIES OF REFUGE



## HEBRON

Joshua 21:11-13

- It was conquered by Caleb. Judges, 1:20.
- It was given to the Kohathites from among the cities of Judah as a city of refuge. Caleb was left with the city's countryside and its villages. Joshua 21:11-13.
- Originally, it was called Kiryat-Arba, which means "City of Arba". Arba was the father of Anach. Joshua, 14:15.
- It was inhabited by Abram. Genesis, 13:18.
- Sara died there. Genesis, 23:2.
- Abraham acquired the cave of Machpelah to bury Sarah. It was Abraham's only inheritance in the land of Canaan. Genesis, 23:10.
- The Anakites, inhabitants of Hebron, were giants who frightened the spies sent by Moses. Numbers, 13:33.
- David reigned in Hebron seven and a half years before he reigned over all Israel. 1 Kings, 2:11.
- Absalom also proclaimed himself king in Hebron. 2 Samuel, 15:10.
- It was fortified by Rehoboam but later fell into the hands of the Edomites.
- Judas Maccabeus reconquered it for Israel.
- Its current name is EL-KHALIL, which means "Friend of God", in memory of Abraham and is located 30 km from Jerusalem.
- HEBRON means "Place of the Covenant," reminding us that God will never forget the covenant He has made with us. "For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee." (Isaiah, 54:10)



**No one had to travel more than 50 km to reach one of them.**

**The Levites made sure to keep the roads leading to the cities of refuge in good condition and well marked. The doors never closed.**

**These six cities of refuge were for those who caused an accidental death. If this happened, the one who had caused the death had to flee to the nearest city of refuge.**

**Being a Levite city, he could be judged impartially, as the Levites were well versed in God's law. They were also in charge of calming or stopping the violent avenger of blood.**

**The avenger of blood was a relative of the deceased who was to avenge his death. While the murderer was in the city of refuge, the avenger could not touch him. But, if he left the city, he could kill him.**

**In the cities of refuge, a fair trial was held. If the alleged murderer was guilty, he was executed, he could not save his life.**

**If he was innocent, he was to remain in that city under Levitical protection and subject to the high priest.**

**When the high priest died, the murderer could return free to his city, and the avenger could no longer kill him.**



**Numbers 35**

## WHAT IS OUR "CITY OF REFUGE"?

"The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms" (Deuteronomy 33:27)

"Thou art my hiding place; thou shalt preserve me from trouble; thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance. " (Psalm 32:7)

"The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge." (Psalm 46:7,)

Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations." (Psalm 90:1)



# WHY SHOULD WE GO TO OUR "CITY OF REFUGE"?

"For all have sinned, and  
come short of the glory  
of God" (Romans 3:23)

"Yet I am the Lord thy God from the  
land of Egypt, and thou shalt know no  
god but me: for there is no saviour  
beside me." (Hosea 13:4)



# WHAT DO WE GET WHEN WE ENTER OUR "CITY OF REFUGE"?



"There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." (Romans 8:1)

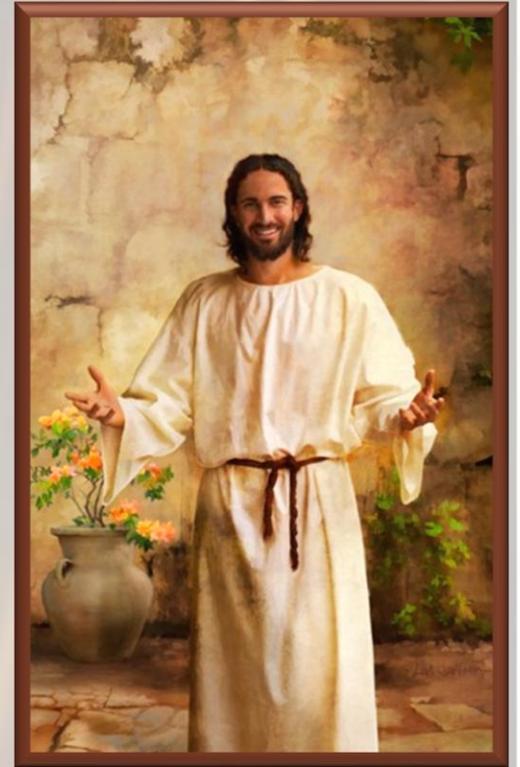
"That... we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us:" (Hebrews 6:18)

**We, like the murderers in Israel, also have a city of refuge to escape from: Christ. But there is one who is willing to prevent us from reaching our city of refuge in every possible way. Satan is the avenger, the one who demands that justice be done and that we die guilty.**

**And all of us, whether we admit it or not, are guilty of at least one death: that of Jesus. He died on the cross because of our sins. Even if we don't believe in Him, He died for us.**

**We come to Christ to escape the danger of the curse; of the condemnation of the law; of the wrath of God; and eternal death.**

**Satan will destroy us if we don't get to the city of refuge in time. We must come to Christ without delay. With Him we will be in the only city of refuge. God only sets one condition: not to leave the city. Do not turn away from Him, do not abandon Him voluntarily. He says, "He that endureth to the end shall be saved."**



**When the judgment is over, if we have accepted the Lord, we will live in that city of refuge "until the death of the high priest." But this time, our high priest is one who never dies:**

**"Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec." (Hebrews 6:19-20)**

**Christ offers security to all who come to Him for refuge. There are many who have already come to Him and accepted Him as their refuge... have you done it yet?**

RUN TO  
THE  
CITY  
OF  
REFUGE,  
JESUS

