**Deuteronomy 19-21** – Feb 23rd

Cities of Refuge

**19**When the Lord your God has destroyed the nations whose land he is giving you, and when you have driven them out and settled in their towns and houses, **2**then set aside for yourselves three (3) cities in the land the Lord your God is giving you to possess. **3**Determine the distances involved and divide into three parts the land the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance, so that a person who kills someone may flee for refuge to one of these cities.

**4**This is the rule concerning anyone who kills a person and flees there for safety -anyone who kills a neighbor unintentionally, without malice aforethought. **5**For instance, a man may go into the forest with his neighbor to cut wood, and as he swings his ax to fell a tree, the head may fly off and hit his neighbor and kill him. That man may flee to one of these cities and save his life. **6**Otherwise, the avenger of blood might pursue him in a rage, overtake him if the distance is too great, and kill him even though he is not deserving of death, since he did it to his neighbor without malice aforethought. **7**This is why I command you to set aside for yourselves three cities.

**8**If the Lord your God enlarges your territory, as He promised on oath to your ancestors, and gives you the whole land He promised them, **9**because you carefully follow all these laws I command you today - to love the Lord your God and to walk always in obedience to Him - then you are to set aside three more cities. **10**Do this so that innocent blood will not be shed in your land, which the Lord your God is giving you as your inheritance, and so that you will not be guilty of bloodshed.

**11**But if out of hate someone lies in wait, assaults and kills a neighbor, and then flees to one of these cities, **12**the killer shall be sent for by the town elders, be brought back from the city, and be handed over to the avenger of blood to die.**13**Show no pity. You must purge from Israel the guilt of shedding innocent blood, so that it may go well with you.

**14**Do not move your neighbor’s boundary stone set up by your predecessors in the inheritance you receive in the land the Lord your God is giving you to possess.

Witnesses

**15**One witness is not enough to convict anyone accused of any crime or offense they may have committed. A matter must be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.

**16**If a malicious witness takes the stand to accuse someone of a crime, **17**the two people involved in the dispute must stand in the presence of the Lord before the priests and the judges who are in office at the time. **18**The judges must make a thorough investigation, and if the witness proves to be a liar, giving false testimony against a fellow Israelite, **19**then do to the false witness as that witness intended to do to the other party. You must purge the evil from among you. **20**The rest of the people will hear of this and be afraid, and never again will such an evil thing be done among you. **21**Show no pity: life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot.

Going to War

**20**When you go to war against your enemies and see horses and chariots and an army greater than yours, do not be afraid of them, because the Lord your God, who brought you up out of Egypt, will be with you. **2**When you are about to go into battle, the priest shall come forward and address the army. **3**He shall say: “Hear, Israel: Today you are going into battle against your enemies. Do not be fainthearted or afraid; do not panic or be terrified by them. **4**For the Lord your God is the one who goes with you to fight for you against your enemies to give you victory.”

**5**The officers shall say to the army: “Has anyone built a new house and not yet begun to live in it? Let him go home, or he may die in battle and someone else may begin to live in it. **6**Has anyone planted a vineyard and not begun to enjoy it? Let him go home, or he may die in battle and someone else enjoy it. **7**Has anyone become pledged to a woman and not married her? Let him go home, or he may die in battle and someone else marry her.” **8**Then the officers shall add, “Is anyone afraid or fainthearted? Let him go home so that his fellow soldiers will not become disheartened too.” **9**When the officers have finished speaking to the army, they shall appoint commanders over it.

**10**When you march up to attack a city, make its people an offer of peace. **11**If they accept and open their gates, all the people in it shall be subject to forced labor and shall work for you. **12**If they refuse to make peace and they engage you in battle, lay siege to that city. **13**When the Lord your God delivers it into your hand, put to the sword all the men in it. **14**As for the women, the children, the livestock and everything else in the city, you may take these as plunder for yourselves. And you may use the plunder the Lord your God gives you from your enemies. **15**This is how you are to treat all the cities that are at a distance from you and do not belong to the nations nearby.

**16**However, in the cities of the nations the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance, do not leave alive anything that breathes. **17**Completely destroythem -the Hittites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites - as the Lord your God has commanded you. **18**Otherwise, they will teach you to follow all the detestable things they do in worshiping their gods, and you will sin against the Lord your God. **19**When you lay siege to a city for a long time, fighting against it to capture it, do not destroy its trees by putting an ax to them, because you can eat their fruit. Do not cut them down. Are the trees people, that you should besiege them? **20**However, you may cut down trees that you know are not fruit trees and use them to build siege works until the city at war with you falls.

Atonement for an Unsolved Murder

**21**If someone is found slain, lying in a field in the land the Lord your God is giving you to possess, and it is not known who the killer was, **2**your elders and judges shall go out and measure the distance from the body to the neighboring towns. **3**Then the elders of the town nearest the body shall take a heifer that has never been worked and has never worn a yoke **4**and lead it down to a valley that has not been plowed or planted and where there is a flowing stream. There in the valley they are to break the heifer’s neck. **5**The Levitical priests shall step forward, for the Lord your God has chosen them to minister and to pronounce blessings in the name of the Lord and to decide all cases of dispute and assault. **6**Then all the elders of the town nearest the body shall wash their hands over the heifer whose neck was broken in the valley, **7**and they shall declare: “Our hands did not shed this blood, nor did our eyes see it done. **8**Accept this atonement for your people Israel, whom you have redeemed, Lord, and do not hold your people guilty of the blood of an innocent person.” Then the bloodshed will be atoned for, **9**and you will have purged from yourselves the guilt of shedding innocent blood, since you have done what is right in the eyes of the Lord.

Marrying a Captive Woman

**10**When you go to war against your enemies and the Lord your God delivers them into your hands and you take captives, **11**if you notice among the captives a beautiful woman and are attracted to her, you may take her as your wife. **12**Bring her into your home and have her shave her head, trim her nails **13**and put aside the clothes she was wearing when captured. After she has lived in your house and mourned her father and mother for a full month, then you may go to her and be her husband and she shall be your wife. **14**If you are not pleased with her, let her go wherever she wishes. You must not sell her or treat her as a slave, since you have dishonored her.

The Right of the Firstborn

**15**If a man has two wives, and he loves one but not the other, and both bear him sons but the firstborn is the son of the wife he does not love, **16**when he wills his property to his sons, he must not give the rights of the firstborn to the son of the wife he loves in preference to his actual firstborn, the son of the wife he does not love. **17**He must acknowledge the son of his unloved wife as the firstborn by giving him a double share of all he has. That son is the first sign of his father’s strength. The right of the firstborn belongs to him.

A Rebellious Son

**18**If someone has a stubborn and rebellious son who does not obey his father and mother and will not listen to them when they discipline him, **19**his father and mother shall take hold of him and bring him to the elders at the gate of his town. **20**They shall say to the elders, “This son of ours is stubborn and rebellious. He will not obey us. He is a glutton and a drunkard.” **21**Then all the men of his town are to stone him to death. You must purge the evil from among you. All Israel will hear of it and be afraid.

Various Laws

**22**If someone guilty of a capital offense is put to death and their body is exposed on a pole, **23**you must not leave the body hanging on the pole overnight. Be sure to bury it that same day, because anyone who is hung on a pole is under God’s curse. You must not desecrate the land the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance.