

The Hebrew Corner

Laws concerning the killing of people have been established not only to protect people from harm, but also to prevent the public from taking the law into their own hands through vigilante action.

In the text of the Tanach, clearly God was concerned about one family whose love one was killed from seeking vengeance, and so the following provision was established (Numbers 35:9-34):

“And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye be come over Jordan into the land of Canaan; Then ye shall appoint you cities to be cities of refuge for you; that the slayer may flee thither, which killeth any person at unawares. And they shall be unto you cities for refuge from the avenger; that the manslayer die not, until he stand before the congregation in judgment. And of these cities which ye shall give six cities shall ye have for refuge. Ye shall give three cities on this side Jordan, and three cities shall ye give in the land of Canaan, which shall be cities of refuge. These six cities shall be a refuge, both for the children of Israel, and for the stranger, and for the sojourner among them: that every one that killeth any person unawares may flee thither. And if he smite him with an instrument of iron, so that he die, he is a murderer: the murderer shall surely be put to death. And if he smite him with throwing a stone, wherewith he may die, and he die, he is a murderer: the murderer shall surely be put to death. Or if he smite him with an hand weapon of wood, wherewith he may die, and he die, he is a murderer: the murderer shall surely be put to death. The revenger of blood himself shall slay the murderer: when he meeteth him, he

shall slay him. But if he thrust him of hatred, or hurl at him by laying of wait, that he die; Or in enmity smite him with his hand, that he die: he that smote him shall surely be put to death; for he is a murderer: the revenger of blood shall slay the murderer, when he meeteth him. But if he thrust him suddenly without enmity, or have cast upon him any thing without laying of wait, Or with any stone, wherewith a man may die, seeing him not, and cast it upon him, that he die, and was not his enemy, neither sought his harm: Then the congregation shall judge between the slayer and the revenger of blood according to these judgments: And the congregation shall deliver the slayer out of the hand of the revenger of blood, and the congregation shall restore him to the city of his refuge, whither he was fled: and he shall abide in it unto the death of the high priest, which was anointed with the holy oil. But if the slayer shall at any time come without the border of the city of his refuge, whither he was fled; And the revenger of blood find him without the borders of the city of his refuge, and the revenger of blood kill the slayer; he shall not be guilty of blood: Because he should have remained in the city of his refuge until the death of the high priest: but after the death of the high priest the slayer shall return into the land of his possession. So these things shall be for a statute of judgment unto you throughout your generations in all your dwellings. Whoso killeth any person, the murderer shall be put to death by the mouth of witnesses: but one witness shall not testify against any person to cause him to die. Moreover ye shall take no satisfaction for the life of a murderer, which is guilty of death: but he shall be surely put to death. And ye shall take no satisfaction for him that is fled to the city of his refuge, that he should come again to dwell in the land, until the death of the priest. So ye shall not pollute the land wherein ye are: for blood it defileth the land: and the land cannot

be cleansed of the blood that is shed therein, but by the blood of him that shed it. Defile not therefore the land which ye shall inhabit, wherein I dwell: for I the Lord dwell among the children of Israel.”

So God ordained that cities of refuge be set up, to provide a place that a person who killed another accidentally could flee to, and be protected. City in Hebrew is eer (עיר, EER) and refuge is miqlat (מקלט, mik-LAHT), so that cities of refuge in Hebrew is (ערי מקלט, ah-RAY mihk-LAHT). The flight of the person who killed another was not without condition. The person was required to come before the congregation to be judged, and if found guilty of murder, to be put to death by the avenger (presumably the closest family member). If the individual was found innocent, he was allowed to flee to one of the cities of refuge, but was not allowed to come outside the borders of the city until the death of the high priest.

The reader may be wondering what the purpose for waiting until the death of the high priest was. One apparent benefit of this was to allow a cooling off period for the family that lost the family member, allowing them time, in some cases a long time for them to come to terms with the loss of the love one, so that they would be less likely to want engage in a violent act against the manslayer. In addition to this is a prophetic element, which will be discussed next.

Priest in Hebrew is cohen (כהן, coh-HAYN). High priest in Hebrew is cohen gadol (כהן גדול, coh-HAYN gah-DOHL). In this country, many Jewish people, have the last name Cohen, and since the Levites were the tribe of priests, an inherited last name of Cohen identifies the person as not only a Jew, but also a member of the tribe of Levi. From the passage above, the high priest had to be anointed. Anoint

in Hebrew is mashach (מָשַׁח, mah-SHACH), to anoint or smear with a liquid. In this case the liquid was to be holy oil. From this word is derived mashiach (מָשִׁיחַ, mah-SHEE-ahch), which means Messiah or the anointed one. To demonstrate the connection of this to prophecy, consider the following passage (Hebrews 5:1-10):

“For every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins: Who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way; for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity. And by reason hereof he ought, as for the people, so also for himself, to offer for sins. And no man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron. So also Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest; but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son, to day have I begotten thee. As he saith also in another place, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec. Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared; Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him; Called of God an high priest after the order of Melchisedec.”

Therefore Jesus, our Yeshua, was made high priest by God, and provides a perfect refuge for those who trust in him. Was he Messiah, the anointed one? The following passage confirms that he was anointed (Matthew 26: 6-13):

“Now when Jesus was in Bethany, in the house of Simon the leper,

“There came unto him a woman having an alabaster box of very precious ointment, and poured it on his head, as he sat at meat. But when his disciples saw it, they had indignation, saying, To what purpose is this waste? For this ointment might have been sold for much, and given to the poor. When Jesus understood it, he said unto them, Why trouble ye the woman? for she hath wrought a good work upon me. For ye have the poor always with you; but me ye have not always. For in that she hath poured this ointment on my body, she did it for my burial. Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her.”

The picture is complete. Yeshua, whose name means salvation, is the perfect high priest, anointed with a precious ointment for his burial after his death on the cross. Then by the death of this high priest, and his subsequent resurrection, all mankind who trust in him are now free from judgment due to their sinful nature. So we see that fleeing of the manslayer to the city of refuge, until the death of the anointed high priest, was both symbolic and prophetic of the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross, and the redemption available to all mankind as a result.

I pray that any of you reading this that have not previously accepted Jesus as your personal Messiah and savior, would do so, that you may have the experience of no longer being a slave to your sins, but be free to live your lives the way God intended for you, which is the perfect way. May your month be full of blessings.