

**The Mosaic Prophet:
The Divinely Commissioned Agent of Righteousness in Israel**

Deuteronomy 19:1-13
Veritas Class; February 16, 2014

Introduction

A. Two Opening Questions:

1. How did we get here?
2. Where are we going?

B. The Key Verse: 16:20: “Righteousness, righteousness you shall pursue.”

C. The Context of 19:1-13:

Pursuing Covenant Righteousness in Matters of Life and Death (19:1-21:9)

- a. Righteousness in Cases of Manslaughter (and Greed) (19:1-13)
- b. Righteousness in Courts of Law (19:15-21)
- c. Righteousness in Military Engagement (20:1-20)
- d. Righteousness in the Face of an Unsolved Crime (21:1-9)

D. Righteousness in Cases of Manslaughter (19:1-13)

1. The Background to the Passage

- a. The authorization of humans to execute murderers. (Exodus 21:12-14)
- b. The Provision for the “Avenger of Blood” (*gō’ēl ha-dām*)
- c. The Provision of Asylum Towns (Numbers 35:6-34)

2. The Structure of the Passage

Theme: The Provision of Asylum for Innocent Manslaughter (vv. 1-13)

- a. The Nature of the Provision (vv. 1-3)
- b. The Need for the Provision (vv. 4-7, 9)
- c. The Expansion of the Provision (vv. 8, 10-13)

3. The Style of the Passage

4. The Themes of the Passage

- a. The Sanctity of Human Life
- b. The Sanctity of the Land

5. The Historical Context of the Passage

- a. Within months or weeks of having received the prescriptions in Numbers 35.
- b. After the victory over the Amorite kings east of the Jordan (4:41-43).
- c. Before the conquest of the land (Joshua 20:7-8)

Interpretation: The Provision of Asylum for Innocent Manslaughter (vv. 1-13)

A. The Nature of the Provision (vv. 1-3)

1. The Context (v. 1)

2. The Required Actions (vv. 2-3b)

- a. Designate three towns as asylum towns in the heartland of the territory that YHWH is giving them (v. 2).
- b. Establish the routes to these towns (v. 3a).
- c. Divide the territory into three parts (v. 3b)

3. The Purpose (v. 3c)

B. The Need for the Provision (vv. 4-7, 10)

1. The Announcement (v. 4)

2. The Primary Case (vv. 5-7, 10)

a. The Unfortunate Incident (v. 5)

b. The Problem (v. 6)

The Functions of the *gō'ēl* in Israel

(1) Ensure that the hereditary property of the clan never passes out of the clan (Lev 25:25-30).

(2) Maintain the freedom of individuals within the clan by buying back those who have sold themselves into slavery because of poverty (Lev 27:47-55).

(3) Receive restitution money on behalf of a deceased victim of a crime (Num 5:8).

(4) Ensure that justice is served in a lawsuit involving a relative (Job 19:25; Ps 119:154; Jer 50:34).

(5) Secure the integrity of the family as a levir, marrying a childless widow of a deceased person, and providing the deceased with a survivor (Ruth 3:13; cf. Deut 25:5-10).

(6) Track down and execute murderers of near relatives.

c. The Solution: Asylum Towns (v. 7)

d. The Rationale (v. 10)

(1) To prevent shedding of innocent blood.

(2) To maintain the purity of the land.

3. The Secondary Case (vv. 11-13)

a. The Nature of the Criminal's Action (v. 11)

b. The Prescribed Response to the Criminal's Action (vv. 12-13a)

c. The Rationale for the Response to the Criminal's Action (v. 13b)

C. The Expansion of the Provision (vv. 8-9)