

Righteousness Demonstrated in Respect for Human Life
Deuteronomy 19:1-13
Veritas Class; March 2, 2014

Interpretation: 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, 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)
- 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 (v. 11)

- a. The Nature of the Criminal's Action (v. 11)
 - (1) He lies in wait for his neighbor;
 - (2) He jumps up against him;
 - (3) He delivers a fatal blow;
 - (4) He flees to one of the towns of asylum.
- b. The Prescribed Response to the Criminal's Action (vv. 12-13a)
 - (1) The Prescribed Action (v. 12)
 - The elders from the man's home town shall go after him.
 - They shall hand him over to the avenger of blood.
 - He must execute him.
 - (2) The Prescribed Disposition (v. 13a) The "No-Pity Formula"
7:16 13:8 19:13 19:21 25:11-12
- c. The Rationale for the Response to the Criminal's Action (v. 13b)

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

1. The Occasion
 - a. The Presupposed Divine Action (v. 8)
 - b. The Presupposed Human Action (v. 9a)
2. The Required Action (v. 9c)

To what extent did the Israelites listen to Moses' instructions here?

1. After the land was conquered they set aside six asylum towns (Josh 20:7-8)
2. While later narratives are silent on the asylum towns, the notion of asylum survived, albeit in different form: 1 Kings 1:50-53 1 Kings 2:28-34

Do Christians need to keep this policy?

God's people recognize that:

1. Righteousness is not demonstrated in the abstract, but in obedience to God and in respect for those who are created as his images.
2. Righteousness is demonstrated in uncompromising respect for human life, which extends to those who inadvertently cause another's death.
3. Righteousness demands that we not let sentimentality interfere with the administration of justice toward the guilty.
4. Righteousness is demonstrated in "love." Hatred is an unrighteous disposition of the heart and rage is her ugly sister.
5. Righteousness recognizes the importance of community, both at the domestic and at the wider level, and especially in the administration of justice

An Instructional Fragment on the Sanctity of Property (Deuteronomy 19:14)

1. Links to the preceding ordinance on the sanctity of life

- a. Lexical
 - (1) The term *gěbûl* (border, territory) vv. 3, 8, 14
 - (2) The term *naħălâ* (grant of land, patrimony) vv. 10, 14
- b. Theological: the land as a sacred and inviolable gift from YHWH (vv. 1, 2, 10)
- c. Literary Contextual: In the Decalogue the right to life statement is followed by right to property statement (5:17-17)

2. Extra-biblical Information: A Babylonian Boundary Stone

3. Other Texts

Genesis 31:51-53
Deuteronomy 27:17
Proverbs 22:28
Proverbs 23:10
Job 24:1-11

4. Significance

- a. The Location of this Fragment
- b. The Prophetic Perspective: Isaiah 5:8

5. The Afterlife of the Principle (?): 1 Kings 21:1-24: Ahab and Naboth

6. The Relevance of this Ordinance for Us