

Masse Numbers - Bamidbar (33.1-36.13)

These are the journeys of the Israelites who had left Egypt under the leadership of Moses and Aaron. Moses recorded their path that God commanded and all their stops. The Israelites left Ra'meses (Egypt) on the 15th day of the 1st month. On the day after the Passover, the Israelites left triumphantly before the eyes of the Egyptians. They left Ra'meses and camped in huts of Sukkoth. All the camps are listed in order.

Now in the West Plains of Moab, God said to Moses. "Speak to the Israelites and say, 'When you cross into the land of Canaan, you must drive out the people who live there and destroy all their idols, symbols and places of worship. Clear out the land since it is to you that I have given this land to live. If you do not drive these idolaters out, then those left behind will become like a thorn in your side, causing you troubles and spurring My anger.' Moses is to teach them the rules of dividing the land of Canaan based on a family size and to describe the exact borders of it." The leaders from each tribe who will parcel out of the land are named. The Israelites are to give the Levite tribe who are responsible for God's Tent of Appointed Meeting, land for residences and suburbs. "In addition, you shall make safe cities. These cities of refuge shall be a safe place for people who murder until that person has been judged innocent or guilty. There shall be 6 safe cities, 3 on this side of the Jordan and 3 in the land Canaan."

Moses tells the people about God's specific laws about murder. "If one murders out of hatred, the murdered shall be put to death. This murderer may only be punished by death if at least two witnesses can verify the murderer. No-one may be killed on the words of only a single witness. If a murderer is about to die, let them. Never accept a bribe to keep the murderer alive.

Now if a death occurs without hatred or desire to hurt, then the killer is to be taken to one of the safe cities. If the killer leaves the safe city, then the killer is no longer protected from those who seek revenge. This is the law of justice for all time in your land." The Moses says to the Israelites, "God says that you are not to turn the promised land into a place of sins and lies and injustice. Keep the promised land pure for God is watching the Children of Israel."

After the giving of these laws on murder, some relatives of the daughters of Zelophchad ask what happens to the daughter's inherited land when they get married? Moses answered, "These daughters must marry someone in the family of their father's tribe so that no inheritance shall pass from one tribe to another." These are some of the laws that the Lord commanded the Israelites, through Moses, on the steps of Moab, at the Jordan near Jericho.

Question: 1) Why is it important to always have two witnesses before judging someone innocent or guilty of a sin? 2) How do you like the idea of safe cities? 3) Do you believe that people who murder out of hatred should be put to death? Why or why not? **Illustration Ideas:** a murderer who kills in hate...someone who kills by accident...two witnesses telling the judge about the murder...a safe city...the daughters of Zelophchad getting married....