



## מסעי *Massei* Journeys

[Numbers 33.1](#)—36.13 / [Jeremiah 2.4-28](#), 3.4, 4.1-2

**Wanderings** [Numbers 33](#) gives a recounting of all the 42 places **ישראל** *Yisra'el* Israel camps during 40 years in the wilderness. Some visits were very short, but one lasted 19 years. In verses 51-56, God warns them that they must drive out the inhabitants of the Land they are going into, destroy their idols, and tear down the high places. If not, God will do to **ישראל** what he plans to do to those nations, because the sin will continue. In fact, God twice kicks His people out of their homes and burns down their Temple to emphasize His hatred of sin. When they repent, they are welcomed back.




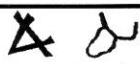


**Cities of Refuge** [Numbers 35](#) tells how six cities of the Levites will be set aside as cities of refuge. This was first suggested in [Exodus 21.12-13](#), that a murderer shall be put to death, but if the death is unintentional, then the killer will be given a place to flee. Moses retells this command in [Deuteronomy 19](#). Before that, in [Deuteronomy 4.41-43](#), Moses sets aside three of these cities, **Bezer, Ramoth, and Golan**, on the east side of the Jordan. In [Joshua 20.1-9](#), these three cities are affirmed and three more are added on the west side of the Jordan, **Kadesh, Shechem, and Hebron**.

If a man kills another, he can flee to a city of refuge to escape the dead man's avenger, if the death is accidental. If innocent, he would have to stay inside the city until the trial determines whether the killer acted with malice and should be put to death or is innocent. An innocent man may stay inside the city until the death of the high priest, and then he can leave. Going outside the city before then makes him fair game for the avenger of blood. Tradition says that many families of men in the cities of refuge were praying for the death of the high priest so that their loved one could come home!



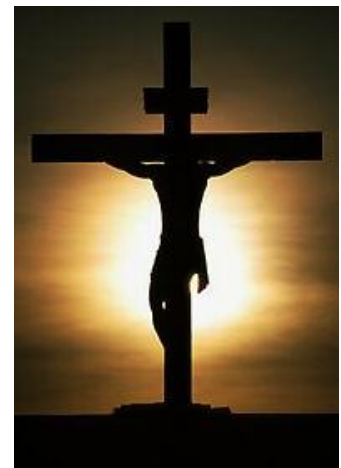
**ישוע** *Yeshua* Jesus/Salvation is our city of refuge. In the illustration, **תורה** *Torah* Law/Instruction, which is perfect, but deadly when combined with our flesh, is chasing the guilty sinner with the sword of condemnation. But the sinner is running into Christ, where there is no condemnation. “The Name of **יהוה** *YHVH* the LORD is a strong tower; the righteous run to it and are safe,” [Proverbs 18.10](#). To go one step further, **ישוע** our High Priest died and now sits by the Father in heaven. So we are free to keep **תורה**, God's perfect commands, without the sting of death and condemnation, [Hebrews 2.14-15](#).

**Revenger of Blood** [Numbers 35.19](#) names the redeemer/kinsman-redeemer/avenger as the גאל *ga'al*. In the ancient picture language, the letters of גאל looked differently than they do now and they still carry an important meaning today:

3		GIMEL ג		CAMEL g
			to lift up, pride, animal	
1		ALEF א		OX, BULL (vowel)
			strength, leader, first	
12		LAMED ל		CATTLE GOAD l
			control, authority, the tongue	



The last two letters spell אל *el* God, which itself means א strong ל authority, and the first letter ג means to lift up. When God is lifted up, we have redemption. In [Numbers 21.4-9](#), Moses makes a serpent of brass and lifts it up for the people to look at. When they do, they are saved from death by the serpents in the desert. In [John 3.14](#), ישוע *Yeshua* tells Nicodemus that as Moses lifted up that serpent, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, and everyone who believes in Him will have eternal life.



ישוע *Yeshua* in [Matthew 23.39](#) warns that ישראל *Yisra'el* will not see Him again until they say, “Blessed is He who comes in the Name of the Lord.” Since the time of ישוע *Yeshua*, the Gospel has been traveling westward. First it changed the near east, Europe, and Africa, then the New World, and now Asia has some of the largest churches in the world. On its journey, the Gospel is returning to the Mideast. We hope at some point soon all ישראל *Yisra'el* will say, “Blessed is He who comes in the Name of the Lord!”

In many verses such as [Deuteronomy 32.35](#), God is the avenger who will punish sin. Jonathan Edwards used this verse as the basis for his terrifying sermon, [Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God](#). We all choose whether we run in vain from God and His judgment, or seek the only forgiveness He offers in ישוע *Yeshua*.

*“The bow of God's wrath is bent, and the arrow made ready on the string, and justice bends the arrow at your heart, and strains the bow, and it is nothing but the mere pleasure of God, and that of an angry God, without any promise or obligation at all, that keeps the arrow one moment from being made drunk with your blood.”*

**National Revenger** God is also the גאל of the nation of ישראל. [Psalm 79.7-13](#) describes ישראל calling out for God to avenge the shedding of the blood of His servants. [Numbers 35.33](#) says that the only way to cleanse bloodshed is by the blood of the guilty one. Since Egypt, nations have been pursuing ישראל to destroy it. Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Greece, Rome, and Nazi Germany have come and gone. Islam is still breathing threats to wipe ישראל “off the map.” In fact, Islam may be the legs of iron in the vision of [Daniel 2](#). For 2,000 years, the Church has interpreted the legs of iron to be Rome and the feet mixed with clay to be an offshoot of Rome. Just recently, Joel Richardson has given good reasons why Islam is probably this last kingdom. First, the legs are iron because they crush. Rome didn’t crush those it conquered, it helped. It let cultures keep their gods and language and customs while building better infrastructure. And Rome was always primarily west of Babylon, Persia, and Greece, though it did hold Babylon for a few months.



I had an opportunity to share this with a Muslim. I asked him if he knew of a world power besides Rome which took all the area that held Babylon, Persia, and Greece, plus more, and crushed those nations it conquered changing their gods, languages, and customs. He just smiled in recognition. But another fascinating argument for the last kingdom being Islam is found in [Daniel 2.41 and 43](#). There the people of this last kingdom before God takes over are described as ערב *arav* mixed. The letter ב, if pronounced “b” instead of “v,” makes these people Arab! And as iron does not mix with clay, neither do these people mingle with the seed of men. They remain separate, as can be seen today in the Mideast, Africa, Asia, Europe, and America.

Whether or not this last nation is actually Islam, all the nations of the world will be forgotten when the Rock strikes the feet of the statue and creates a Kingdom which shall never be destroyed. In [Revelation 14.19-20](#), God’s wrath sheds a lot of blood in destroying those who try to destroy ישראל. In [Revelation 19.19-21](#), the beast and the false prophet are thrown into the lake of fire. Finally, Satan, the murderer from the beginning, [John 8.44](#), joins them in the lake of fire in [Revelation 20.10](#).



### Golan, Shechem, and Hebron

Of the six cities of refuge, I've been to three with my son Nathanael when he was 15. Golan is the area of the modern Golan Heights. When Syria had possession of it, they would shoot rockets down onto **ישראל** whenever they felt like it. Now that **ישראל** has possession, it has advance warning of a Syrian attack.

Shechem is currently the Palestinian city of Nablus, a city of chaos and a source of terror—we didn't go into it, we just looked. The IDF occasionally goes into Shechem to root out terror cells. And terrorists sneak out to attack nearby settlements and IDF positions. In 2011, some terrorists broke into neighboring Itamar and murdered a family. We rode in a bulletproof bus when visiting the area near Shechem in 2004.

Hebron, where Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah, and Jacob and Leah are buried, contains a population of about 130,000 Palestinians, 530 Jews, and a few Christians. It's ironic to think of Hebron as a city of refuge, where Jews live with their backs to the wall. There's a constant IDF presence, as seen here. Yet even though the residents have had neighbors killed in the middle of the night in their beds by terrorists, they have a calm assurance that they are living exactly where God wants them to be—fulfilling the biblical command to possess the Land. A woman in Hebron told us, "You've seen the very core of **ישראל** today."



**Pressure to Violate תורה** The world tends to think that **ישראל** needs to get out of the “Occupied Territories” or “West Bank,” actually the biblical Lands Judah and Samaria. But the partition granted **ישראל** by the UN in 1948 was, and still is, indefensible. For example, **ישראל** had a narrow road through the mountains to get supplies from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem and the convoys were attacked continuously. Since the 1967 War, **ישראל** possesses those mountains and the whole Land is much more secure. [Leviticus 25.23](#) says that, contrary to what the world thinks, the Land of **ישראל** may not be sold permanently since it doesn’t belong to the people of **ישראל**. The Land belongs to God. And so there is division between the secular and the religious in **ישראל** over whether or not to sell or cede Land to Palestinians, such as the release of Gaza in 2005.



**Borders and Warnings Numbers 34** outlines God’s intended borders for the Land of **ישראל**. This map is one interpretation and you can see that it’s much larger than **ישראל** possesses today. Generally, the western border is the Nile (if this is what is meant by “the River of Egypt”) and the eastern border is the Euphrates. It’s interesting to read different opinions about these borders. The opinions vary, some hoping that **ישראל** gets it, others sure that **ישראל** is trying to destroy the world.

One objection to the flag of **ישראל** is the two blue stripes, believed to represent the Nile and Euphrates borders, thus declaring Jewish aggression. We, like **ישראל**, have a decision to make—do we fear God or man? [Deuteronomy 32.8](#) says that God gave the nations their inheritances based on the number of the children of **ישראל**. That’s like a parent who decides which rooms in the new house go to which kids. The world is God’s and it’s His decision who lives where. In [Deuteronomy 19.14](#), Moses warns against moving a neighbor’s landmark, repeated in [Proverbs 23.10-11](#). [Zephaniah 2.8-11](#) warns what will befall Moab and Ammon because they threaten the borders of **ישראל**.



**Return to the Almond Tree** God tells the prophet in [Jeremiah 1.9-12](#) that Jeremiah has authority over kingdoms and nations. In [verse 11](#), God shows Jeremiah a שקד *shaqed* almond tree, reminiscent of Aaron's rod that budded in [Numbers 17.16-26](#). God says that He will שקד *shaqad* be alert/be sleepless/watch over His Word to perform it. Most Hebrew words are a three-consonant root. As a general rule, words that share the root are related in significance. So God is linking the authority demonstrated by Aaron's rod that budded, the almond tree in Jeremiah's vision, and His promise to watch over His word to perform it. The שקד is a warning in Jeremiah's prophecy of impending judgment against Jerusalem and Judah for sin. The שקד is a sort of canary early-warning system for us. Today we, too, need to שקד over God's Word.



God continues to charge in [Jeremiah 2.4-9](#) that neither the people nor the priests seek Him, and yet God will ריב *riyb* strive/contend/plead with us! God says in [Jeremiah 3.12-17](#) that if we שוב *shoov* return/turn back, He will be merciful. This doesn't sound like the harsh, angry God of the Old Testament we so often hear about.

We need to ידע *yada* know/acknowledge/declare our sin. ידע is made of יד *yad* hand (touch) and עין *ayin* eye (sight). So we know and acknowledge by touching and seeing. If we ידע our sin, then God will give us His knowledge and understanding. We will call Jerusalem the throne of יהוה and sin no more.

Borders matter to God: the borders of ישראל and Jerusalem, and the borders between sin and obedience. If we שוב, God will forgive and bless.

Glossary, in order of appearance:

מסעי	<i>Massei</i>	Journeys
ישראל	<i>Yisra'el</i>	Israel
תורה	<i>Torah</i>	Law/Instruction/first 5 Books of the Bible
יהוה	<i>YHVH</i>	the LORD
גאל	<i>ga'al</i>	redeemer/kinsman-redeemer/avenger
אל	<i>el</i>	God/strong authority
א	<i>alef</i>	strong
ל	<i>lamed</i>	authority
ג	<i>gimel</i>	lift up
ערב	<i>arav</i>	mixed/ or sounds like Arab
ב	<i>bet</i>	b or v sound
שקד	<i>shaqed</i>	almond tree
שקד	<i>shaqad</i>	be alert/be sleepless/watch over
ריב	<i>riyb</i>	strive/contend/plead
שוב	<i>shoov</i>	return/turn back
ידע	<i>yada</i>	know/acknowledge/declare
יד	<i>yad</i>	hand (touch)
ע	<i>ayin</i>	eye (sight)