

Exegetical Notes, Deuteronomy 19:1-21  
**“Sanctuary Cities, Moving Boundaries, Malicious Witnesses”**

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**For notes on Sanctuary Cities (Deuteronomy 19:1-13) see notes on Deuteronomy 4:41-43 and Numbers 35:6-34.**

**Verse 14**

***Do not move your neighbor’s boundary stone set up by your predecessors in the inheritance you receive in the land the LORD your God is giving you to possess.***

- Boundary stones are the stones set at the corners to mark off whose property is whose. Moving them is the same as stealing. The commandments forbid such behavior. “Thou shall not steal. Thou shall not covet.” Exodus 20:15 and 20:17.

**Verse 15**

***One witness is not enough to convict anyone accused of any crime or offense they may have committed. A matter must be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.***

- More than one witness is required to determine a person’s guilt in a court of law. There must be two or three witnesses to the crime for the person to be declared guilty.

**Verses 16-21**

***If a malicious witness takes the stand to accuse someone of a crime,<sup>17</sup> the two people involved in the dispute must stand in the presence of the LORD before the priests and the judges who are in office at the time.<sup>18</sup> The judges must make a thorough investigation, and if the witness proves to be a liar, giving false testimony against a fellow Israelite,<sup>19</sup> then do to the false witness as that witness intended to do to the other party. You must purge the evil from among you.<sup>20</sup> The rest of the people will hear of this and be afraid, and never again will such an evil thing be done among you.<sup>21</sup> Show no pity: life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot.***

- Although the Law warns against such behavior (see Exodus 20:16), it is possible for witnesses to agree to accuse someone of a crime which they did not commit. Persons who do so are here called “malicious witnesses” because they act from selfish motives to achieve a dishonest purpose. This is malicious behavior, behavior which is designed to hurt an innocent person for dishonest gain.
- To prevent this from happening, all the parties involved must stand before the judge(s) to be examined. The judges are charged to investigate the matter thoroughly to determine if the witnesses are telling the truth or lying.
- If it is determined that the witnesses are not telling the truth but are acting maliciously, they are to receive against them the judgment they sought against the one they falsely accused. In other words, whatever they hoped to gain by their false testimony they lose.
- The reasons for handling the matter this way are threefold: 1.) It will purge evil from among the people of Israel; 2.) The rest of the people will hear of it and be afraid to bring false accusations; 3.) Such a thing will not be done again among the Hebrews.
- NO PITY is to be shown! Pity will only encourage evil people to act in an evil way.

(These exegetical notes are the foundational study for the sermon entitled *Sanctuary Cities, Moving Boundaries, Malicious Witnesses*. They have been prepared by the Reverend Doctor Charles H. Jensen, Senior Pastor at Cornerstone Fellowship, Coatesville Pennsylvania. All rights are reserved by Dr. Jensen and *Cornerstone Fellowship*.)