

Psalm 46:1-2
(NKJV)

- (1) God is our refuge and strength,
A very present help in trouble.
- (2) Therefore we will not fear,
Even though the earth be removed,
And though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea;

Wisdom Point: There are two great truths about a refuge. Everyone needs a refuge; and everyone has a refuge. The problem is that many times we have a refuge of our own making and we don't turn to God.

Numbers 35:9-28
(NKJV - emphasis and clarity added)

- (9) Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,
- (10) "Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: 'When you cross the Jordan into the land of Canaan,
- (11) then *you shall appoint cities to be cities of refuge for you, that the manslayer who kills any person accidentally may flee there.*
- (12) They shall be cities of refuge for you from *the avenger (the dead man's nearest relative)*, that the manslayer may not die until he stands before the congregation in judgment.
- (13) And of the cities which you give, you shall have six cities of refuge.
- (14) You shall appoint three cities on this side of the Jordan, and three cities you shall appoint in the land of Canaan, which will be cities of refuge.
- (15) *These six cities shall be for refuge for the children of Israel, for the stranger, and for the sojourner among them, that anyone who kills a person accidentally may flee there.*
- (16) 'But if he strikes him with an iron implement, so that he dies, he is a murderer; the murderer shall surely be put to death. If he struck him down with a stone in the hand, by which one could die, and he does die, he is a murderer; the murderer shall surely be put to death.
- (17) And if he strikes him with a stone in the hand, by which one could die, and he does die, he is a murderer; the murderer shall surely be put to death.
- (18) Or if he strikes him with a wooden hand weapon, by which one could die, and he does die, he is a murderer; the murderer shall surely be put to death.
- (19) The avenger of blood himself shall put the murderer to death; when he meets him, he shall put him to death.
- (20) If he pushes him out of hatred or, while lying in wait, hurls something at him so that he dies,
- (21) or in enmity he strikes him with his hand so that he dies, the one who struck him shall surely be put to death. He is a murderer. The avenger of blood shall put the murderer to death when he meets him.
- (22) 'However, if he pushes him suddenly without enmity, or throws anything at him without lying in wait,

- (23) or uses a stone, by which a man could die, throwing it at him without seeing him, so that he dies, while he was not his enemy or seeking his harm,
- (24) then the congregation shall judge between the manslayer and the avenger of blood according to these judgments.
- (25) So the congregation shall deliver the manslayer from the hand of *the avenger of blood (the dead man's nearest relative)*, and the congregation shall return him to the city of refuge where he had fled, and he shall remain there until the death of the high priest who was anointed with the holy oil.
- (26) *But if the manslayer at any time goes outside the limits of the city of refuge where he fled,*
- (27) and the avenger of blood finds him outside the limits of his city of refuge, and the avenger of blood kills the manslayer, he shall not be guilty of blood,

Wisdom Point: In strategically establishing the cities of refuge it assured that every person had equal access to refuge and God's grace.

Wisdom Point: The reason that both Leviticus and Numbers are so detailed is because God was teaching His people how to live as people who had been set free from slavery. God is concerned about every detail of their life, and He is concerned about every detail of your life! He gave us detailed laws so that we could live in harmony with each other.

THERE ARE TWO RULES FOR REFUGE:

I. Refuge is for the righteous.

Definition: According to the bible, righteousness has to do with right standing before God, rather than right acting. All of us are sinners and everyone of us can have right standing before God because of the finished work of Christ.

A. When we persist in sin, we are leaving the city of refuge. We are going out on our own and it is then that we get into trouble.

1. Using tithing as an illustration of where people often pursue their own will rather than God's:

Matthew 23:23 -- "What sorrow awaits you teachers of religious law and you Pharisees. Hypocrites! For you are careful to tithe even the tiniest income from your herb gardens, but you ignore the more important aspects of the law—justice, mercy, and faith. *You should tithe, yes*, but do not neglect the more important things. (NLT - emphasis added)

Malachi 3:10-11
(NKJV - emphasis and clarity added)

(10) *Bring all the tithes (the tenth) into the storehouse*, that there may be food in My house, and try Me now in this," Says the LORD of hosts, "If I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you such blessing that there will not be room enough to receive it.

- (11) *"And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, so that he will not destroy the fruit of your ground, nor shall the vine fail to bear fruit for you in the field,"* says the LORD of hosts;

II. Refuge is not for the rebellious.

Isaiah 48:22 -- "There is no peace," says the LORD, "for the wicked." (NKJV)

A. The Lord is the avenger.

Romans 12:19b -- "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord. (NKJV)

B. Satan is the re-venge.

Wisdom Point: Remember that Satan is a false comforter, a counterfeit counselor, and the accuser of the brethren.

2 Corinthians 11:14b -- Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. (NIV)

Revelation 12:10 -- Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, "Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for *the accuser of our brethren (Satan)*, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down. (NKJV - emphasis and clarity added)

Wisdom Point: Remember that if you're running away from God, God is running after you! He wants to catch you and bring you back into the refuge before the false avenger (the re-venge) catches you and tries to kill you!

Isaiah 30:15-16
(NKJV - clarity added)

- (15) For thus says the Lord GOD, the Holy One of Israel: "In returning (*to Me*) and rest (*in the refuge*) you shall be saved; in quietness and confidence shall be your strength." But you would not,
- (16) And you said, "No, for we will flee on horses"— Therefore you shall flee! And, "We will ride on swift horses"— Therefore those who pursue you shall be swift!

Isaiah 30:15-16
(MSG)

GOD, the Master, The Holy of Israel, has this solemn counsel: "Your salvation requires you to turn back to me and stop your silly efforts to save yourselves. Your strength will come from settling down in complete dependence on me— The very thing you've been unwilling to do. You've said, 'Nothing doing! We'll rush off on horseback!' You'll rush off, all right! Just not far enough! You've said, 'We'll ride off on fast horses!' Do you think your pursuers ride old nags?"

Psalm 46:1 -- *God is our refuge and strength*, a very present help in trouble. (NKJV - emphasis added)

Psalm 24:3-5
(NKJV - clarity added)

- (3) Who may ascend (*go up*) into the hill (*the high, safe place*) of the LORD? Or who may stand in His holy place?
- (4) He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who has not lifted up his soul to an idol, nor sworn deceitfully.
- (5) He shall receive blessing (*protection, rest, comfort*) from the LORD, and righteousness from the God of his salvation.

Definitions: Clean hands refers to how I treat other people. Pure heart refers to how I treat myself. And, not having an idol or swearing deceitfully has to do with how I treat God.

Wisdom Point: You can't have a good relationship with God and treat people badly.

Word Meaning: The word that is translated as avenger in Numbers 35:12, 25 and 27 is the Hebrew word *ga'al*. It is found 104 times in the Old Testament and the only places where it is translated as avenger are found in those passages that deal with the cities of refuge. There are 12 times where this word is translated as avenger. The other 92 times the word is translated as redeemer. It is the main Hebrew word that is used for redeemer. (In the book of Ruth it is translated as "kinsman redeemer.")

Wisdom Point: The One who has the right to execute judgment on you actually became your Redeemer. Your Judge is the One who died in your place!