

There's More to the Story (Cities of Refuge)

Verses about the cities of refuge:

- Numbers 35:6-34, Deuteronomy 19:1-13, Joshua 20:1-9

The Levites did not have their own inheritance of land to settle in due to being the priestly family. There were to be given isolated areas of land within the other family's allotments of land as to be a presence in all the lands since they were priests. (Joshua 13:14) (Joshua 18:7)(Deuteronomy 18:1-2). Therefore, the Levites were given 48 cities to live in throughout Israel from other tribes' land. Out of the 48 total cities, 6 of those were specifically designated as cities of refuge (Numbers 35:6-7). Three of the 6 cities of refuge were east of the Jordan and three were west of the Jordan. The cities were located so that everyone in Israel would be no more than a day's journey away,

Cities of refuge: (Joshua 20:7-8)

1. Hebron "fellowship"
2. Shechem "strong shoulder"
3. Golan "enclosure for captives"
4. Kedesh "sanctuary, holy place"
5. Ramoth "heights, uplifted"
6. Bezer "fortress"

Purpose of the cities of refuge: Numbers 35

- The cities of refuge were designated Levitical cities where anyone of unintentionally killing someone (manslaughter) could flee and find refuge from the avenger of blood until a trial was established.
- If someone killed someone intentionally, death was the sentence, and the avenger of blood would be the one who would seek and bring about the death (Numbers 35:16-21) (Exodus 21:12-24).
- Once the individual arrived at the gate of a city of refuge, there would be a trial set up and if the individual was found innocent of intentional murder, they were allowed to stay in the city of refuge and was protected from the avenger of blood (a close relative who was to seek punishment of the killer). They were protected from the avenger of blood as long as they were not found guilty of intentional murder and as long as they stayed in a city of refuge. If they were found to be guilty, they would be forced out of the city of refuge to be at the mercy of the avenger of blood.
- The individual would stay in the city of refuge until the death of the high priest.
- Justice was not overlooked as the death of the high priest would serve to pay the price or penalty that would have been required for crime they had committed.
- After the death of the high priest, the individual would be free.
- These cities of refuge were not limited to only for Israel, but a place of refuge for the sojourner and aliens.
 - Hebrews 2:17 For this reason he had to be made like them, fully human in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people.
 - Hebrews 4:14-16 Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has ascended into heaven,^[a] Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. ¹⁵ For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin. ¹⁶ Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.
 - Hebrews 7:25-28 Therefore he is able to save completely^[a] those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them.²⁶ Such a high priest truly meets our need—one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens. ²⁷ Unlike the other high priests, he does not need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people. He sacrificed for their sins once for all when he offered Himself. For the law appoints as high priests men in all their weakness; but the oath, which came after the law, appointed the Son, who has been made perfect forever.

Verses on God as our refuge:

Psalm 46:1 *God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.*

Proverbs 18:10 *The name of the Lord is a fortified tower; the righteous run to it and are safe.*

Psalm 2:12 *Kiss his son, or he will be angry and your way will lead to your destruction, for his wrath can flare up in a moment. Blessed are all who take refuge in him.*

Psalm 5:11 *But let all who take refuge in you be glad; let them ever sing for joy. Spread your protection over them, that those who love your name may rejoice in you.*

Psalm 18:2 *The Lord is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield^[a] and the horn^[b] of my salvation, my stronghold.*

Psalm 34:22 *The Lord will rescue his servants; no one who takes refuge in him will be condemned.*

Psalm 61:3-4 *For you have been my refuge, a strong tower against the foe ⁴I long to dwell in your tent forever and take refuge in the shelter of your wings.^[a]*

Psalm 62:7 *My salvation and my honor depend on God^[a]; he is my mighty rock, my refuge.*

Psalm 91:2 *I will say of the Lord, "He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust."*

Psalm 94:22 *But the Lord has become my fortress, and my God the rock in whom I take refuge.*

- **Hebrews 6:13-20** For when God made the promise to Abraham, since He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself, ¹⁴ saying, "I will surely bless you and I will surely multiply you." ¹⁵ And so, having patiently waited, he obtained the promise. ¹⁶ For men swear by ^[d] one greater *than themselves*, and with them an oath *given* as confirmation is an end of every dispute. ¹⁷ ^[e] In the same way God, desiring even more to show to the heirs of the promise the unchangeableness of His purpose, ^[f] interposed with an oath, ¹⁸ so that by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have ^[g] taken refuge would have strong encouragement to take hold of the hope set before us. ¹⁹ ^[h] This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, a *hope* both sure and steadfast and one which enters ^[i] within the veil, ²⁰ where Jesus has entered as a forerunner for us, having become a high priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.

Fulfilled in Christ:

*We are all guilty of sin and legally we stand before Christ condemned (**Romans 3:19-20**). God is the avenger who will bring about judgment and wrath on the Last Day. However, there is an escape for as there was for those fleeing to a city of refuge. Those who realize their sin and guilt which comes through regeneration run to Christ as He is the only escape as He is our only refuge. Those who run to Christ and take refuge in Him are set free by His death as He is the true anointed (the Christ) High Priest. His death is what pays our debt, allows us freedom, and results in no condemnation although we were guilty (simul Justus et peccator). Just as the cities of refuge were available to sojourns and aliens the gospel is extended to the Gentiles. All those who have not taken refuge in Christ will one day face the full wrath, fury, and vengeance of God. We as Christians have a refuge in our High Priest that we ran to for refuge, rescues, and atonement and have the privilege to run to every single second of the day in prayer and in His Word! This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, Christ is our refuge!*

There's more to the story!!!

