

# Joshua 20:5

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And if the avenger of blood pursue after him, then they shall not deliver the slayer up into his hand; because he smote his neighbour unwittingly, and hated him not beforetime.

## Analysis

**And if the avenger of blood pursue after him, then they shall not deliver the slayer up into his hand; because he smote his neighbour unwittingly—**  
The go'el ha-dam (גּאֵל הַדָּם, 'avenger of blood') was the victim's nearest kinsman, obligated to exact justice. But cities of refuge protect those who killed **unwittingly** (bishgagah, בִּשְׁגָגָה, 'in error/without intent'). **And hated him not beforetime** proves no malice existed.

Intent matters to God. Accidental sin differs from presumptuous sin (Numbers 15:27-31). Christ's blood provides refuge from the consequences we deserve, but we must flee to Him. The avenger cannot breach the refuge—Satan cannot pluck believers from Christ's hand (John 10:28-29).

## Historical Context

The go'el (redeemer/avenger) had dual roles: redeeming family property and avenging family blood. This kinsman-redeemer concept prefigures Christ who redeems us from sin's slavery and death's penalty (Ephesians 1:7, Galatians 3:13).

## Related Passages

**1 John 4:8** — God is love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

## Study Questions

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1. How does distinguishing accidental from intentional sin reflect God's justice and mercy?
2. In what ways does Christ function as both refuge and kinsman-redeemer?

## Interlinear Text

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וְאֵלֶּא	אֶתְּנָא	פְּנֵם	לְאַתְּ	אֶתְּנָא	וְאֵלֶּא
H3808	H310	H1818	H1350	H7291	H3588
pursue	And if the avenger	of blood	after		
רֹא	אַתְּ	בְּרַאֲצָתָךְ	בַּיִדְךָ	כִּי	בָּבִלִּי
H5462	H853	H7523	H3027	H3588	H1097
him then they shall not deliver		the slayer	up into his hand		unwittingly
עָתָה	אַתְּ	רְעֵה	וְלֹא	וְלֹא	לֹא
H1847	H853	H7453	H3808	H1931	H0
because he smote		his neighbour	and hated		
מִתְּמַמָּה	שְׁלַשׁ-וּמָן				
H8543	H8032				
him not beforetime					

## Additional Cross-References

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**Numbers 35:12** (Parallel theme): And they shall be unto you cities for refuge from the avenger; that the manslayer die not, until he stand before the congregation in judgment.