

# Numbers 35:12

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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.

## Analysis

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The cities of refuge shall be 'for refuge from the avenger; that the manslayer die not, until he stand before the congregation in judgment.' The Hebrew 'goel' (avenger/kinsman-redeemer) was the deceased's nearest relative responsible for exacting justice. Cities of refuge protected accidental killers from vengeance, balancing justice with mercy. The requirement to 'stand before the congregation' ensured legal process, not mob justice. This system foreshadows Christ as our refuge - we flee to Him from justice we deserve. In Him, we find asylum from wrath, protected until standing before divine judgment where Christ's blood speaks better things than Abel's (Heb 12:24).

## Historical Context

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Six cities of refuge were designated - three in Canaan, three in Transjordan (Josh 20:7-8), ensuring accessibility from anywhere in Israel. Roads to these cities were well-maintained with clear signage. The manslayer ran to the nearest city, where elders heard his case (Josh 20:4-5). If deemed accidental (versus murder), he remained there until the high priest's death, when he could return home safely (v.25-28). The high priest's death releasing the manslayer typified Christ's death freeing believers from condemnation. The system demonstrated God's concern for both justice (punishing murderers) and mercy (protecting accidental killers).

## Related Passages

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**Revelation 20:12** — Judgment according to deeds

**Romans 2:1** — Judging others

**Psalms 19:1** — Heavens declare God's glory

**Colossians 1:16** — All things created through Christ

## Study Questions

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1. Have you fled to Christ as your refuge from the justice your sins deserve?
2. How does the high priest's death releasing the manslayer help you understand Christ's death securing your freedom from condemnation?

## Interlinear Text

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וְהָיָה H1961	לְכֶם H0	וְהָיָה H5892	לְכֶם H5892	וְהָיָה H5892	וְהָיָה H5892
		And they shall be unto you cities	for refuge	from the avenger	
			H4733	H1350	
וְהָיָה H3808	וְהָיָה H4191	וְהָיָה H7523	וְהָיָה H5704	וְהָיָה H5975	וְהָיָה H6440
die	that the manslayer	not until he stand	before		
וְהָיָה H5712	וְהָיָה H4941	וְהָיָה H5712	וְהָיָה H4941	וְהָיָה H5712	וְהָיָה H4941
the congregation	in judgment				

## Additional Cross-References

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**Deuteronomy 19:6** (Parallel theme): Lest the avenger of the blood pursue the slayer, while his heart is hot, and overtake him, because the way is long, and slay him; whereas he was not worthy of death, inasmuch as he hated him not in time past.

