

QUESTION: Who are the hyraxes, and why are they mentioned as one of the four creatures known for their wisdom in Proverbs 30:26?

ANSWER: The hyrax, also known as the rock hyrax, dassie, or cony, is a small animal that closely resembles a rabbit. It is mentioned several times in the Bible, notably for its wisdom and the way it lives despite its physical weakness.

For example:

Leviticus 11:4 (NIV): "There are some that only chew the cud or only have a divided hoof, but you must not eat them: the camel, though it chews the cud, but does not have a divided hoof, is unclean for you. 5 The hyrax, though it chews the cud, does not have a divided hoof; it is unclean for you."

In this passage, the hyrax is listed among animals that are considered unclean under the Mosaic Law due to its physical characteristics—chewing cud but not having a divided hoof. The importance of this distinction is that it shows the law's guidelines

for cleanliness and spiritual symbolism. The clean and unclean animals often represented purity and impurity in the Old Testament, emphasizing God's holiness and the need for His people to be set apart.

Psalm 104:18 (NIV): "The high hills are a refuge for the wild goats, and the crags are a refuge for the hyraxes."

This verse reflects the natural habitat of the hyrax—high, rocky places. The "crag" or "rock" are where the hyraxes find shelter and protection, a metaphor for safety and refuge. The psalmist uses this reference to express God's creation, where even the smallest creatures have a place to live in God's designed order of the world.

Proverbs 30:24-26 (NIV): "There are four things that are small on the earth, yet they are exceedingly wise:

25 The ants are a people not strong, yet they store up their food in the summer;

26 The hyraxes are a feeble folk, yet they make their homes in the rocks."

Here, the hyrax is part of a list of creatures with great wisdom, even though they are small and weak. The wisdom of the hyrax is not in physical strength or speed but in its knowledge of where to find safety. In this passage, the hyrax's wisdom is in its ability to build its home in the rocks, which is a natural defense mechanism against predators. Theologically, this demonstrates how God, in His wisdom, created animals with instincts that teach us valuable lessons about reliance on strong foundations.

Theological Significance of the Hyrax's Wisdom

The reason the hyrax is considered wise is due to its behavior in the face of weakness. Hyraxes are small, timid creatures that cannot outrun predators or fight back. Despite their vulnerabilities, they instinctively build their homes in rocky places, where they find protection. This can be seen as a symbol of wisdom in the Bible, where wisdom is often depicted as seeking refuge in God, the ultimate Rock (Psalm 18:2).

Psalm 18:2 (NIV): "The Lord is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge."

Theologically, this passage points us to God as the Rock of our salvation, the place where we can find safety and security, just as the hyrax finds refuge in the rocks. The hyrax's instinct to seek shelter in the rocks serves as a powerful reminder for believers to seek refuge in God, who is our Rock and our place of safety. In a world full of dangers and uncertainties, the wisdom of the hyrax invites us to build our lives on the solid foundation of Christ.

1 Corinthians 10:4 (NIV): "For they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ."

In the New Testament, the Apostle Paul references Christ as the spiritual rock, linking the Old Testament understanding of God as the Rock to the person of Jesus Christ. Jesus is our ultimate place of refuge. Just as the hyrax finds safety in the rock, we, as believers, are called to build our lives on the unshakable foundation of Christ.

The Lesson for Us

Now, the question is: what about us? Will we fail to learn from the wisdom of the hyrax?

Where is our safety? Have we built our lives on a strong foundation, or are we building on shifting sand? In the Bible, Jesus tells a parable about wise and foolish builders.

Matthew 7:24-27 (NIV):

“Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock.

The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock.

But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand.

The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.”

In this passage, Jesus compares those who build their lives on His teachings to wise builders who establish their homes on solid rock. Those who ignore His teachings and build their lives on unstable foundations are likened to foolish builders whose houses collapse when troubles come. Theologically, Jesus is teaching us that our lives must be rooted in Him—He is the Rock. When we

rely on His Word and foundation, we are secure. But without Him, we are vulnerable.

Conclusion

It would be strange indeed if we, as humans, fail to learn from the wisdom of a small, timid animal like the hyrax. Despite its physical weaknesses, it shows incredible wisdom by seeking safety in the rocks. Likewise, we are called to seek refuge in God, our true Rock, who offers us protection, stability, and eternal security.

Shalom.

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