

We are at least 45 days into Israel's wandering in the wilderness. We have seen God defeat their enemy in the Red Sea. We've seen several tests, bitter water, hunger, and a repeat of the test of thirst. We've seen God's patience with the people and provision and unfailing love for them. And we've also seen a number of illustrations of Jesus in foreshadowing events that would help future generations understand that God's plan has always been the same. (Isaiah 46:9-10)

God told Moses that there was a reason that they had to go the round about way through the wilderness instead of up the Way of Horus along the Sea. The reason was that they would face war and would become afraid and turn back. (Exodus 13:17) The nation was not battle hardened, and that route would have brought them against some of Egypt's military outposts.

As they journeyed, it was only natural that the weaker people would lag behind. The elderly or families with very young, and herds with numerous baby animals would tend to be toward the rear. Because the weak were in the rear, it was the most vulnerable part of the column. (1Samuel 15:2)

A local people called Amalekites took advantage of this and raided the rear of the camp. Listen to how Moses later described it. Deuteronomy 25:17-18 (ESV) <sup>17</sup> *"Remember what Amalek did to you on the way as you came out of Egypt, <sup>18</sup> how he attacked you on the way when you were faint and weary, and cut off your tail, those who were lagging behind you, and he did not fear God.* God had previously told Israel that nations would hear of what He did to Egypt and stand back as Israel passed. (Exodus 15:16) But the passage I just read tells us that the Amalekites did not fear God.

The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom. (Proverbs 1:7) If you think you can get away with something and God won't see it or hold you accountable, you are a fool. The Amalekites were fools. The fool says in his heart, "There is no God!" (Psalm 14:1)

They are descended from Esau and have the same temporal mindset that Esau had. (Genesis 36:12; Numbers 24:20) They thought they could raid the weak part of the camp of Israel and gain a few spoils of war like slaves, herds, and stolen goods. **The fool lives for this life only.** He or she thinks that if they can gain this world's goods, regardless of how they do it, regardless if it is unethical or evil, they are better off. Their shortsighted perspective is focused on the temporal pleasures of this life and denies any eternal consequence. That was Amalek, and for that reason they are a symbol of the flesh nature of man.

**Commented [Paul Wall1]:** Isaiah 46:9-10 (ESV)  
9 remember the former things of old; for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me, 10 declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, 'My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose,'

**Commented [Paul Wall2]:** Exodus 13:17 (ESV)  
17 When Pharaoh let the people go, God did not lead them by way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near. For God said, "Lest the people change their minds when they see war and return to Egypt."

**Commented [Paul Wall3]:** 2 This is what the LORD Almighty says: 'I will punish the Amalekites for what they did to Israel when they waylaid them as they came up from Egypt.'

**Commented [Paul Wall4]:** Exodus 15:16 (ESV)  
16 Terror and dread fall upon them; because of the greatness of your arm, they are still as a stone, till your people, O LORD, pass by, till the people pass by whom you have purchased.

**Commented [Paul Wall5]:** Proverbs 1:7 (ESV)  
7 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction.

**Commented [Paul Wall6]:** Psalm 14:1 (ESV)  
1 TO THE CHOIRMASTER. OF DAVID. The fool says in his heart, "There is no God." They are corrupt, they do abominable deeds, there is none who does good.

**Commented [Paul Wall7]:** Genesis 36:12 (ESV)  
12 (Timna was a concubine of Eliphaz, Esau's son; she bore Amalek to Eliphaz.) These are the sons of Adah, Esau's wife.

**Commented [Paul Wall8]:** Numbers 24:20 (ESV)  
20 Then he looked on Amalek and took up his discourse and said, "Amalek was the first among the nations, but its end is utter destruction."

*<sup>8</sup> Then Amalek came and fought with Israel at Rephidim. <sup>9</sup> So Moses said to Joshua, "Choose for us men, and go out and fight with Amalek. Tomorrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the staff of God in my hand."* Given Moses description in Deuteronomy, I think Amalek fought a kind of guerilla warfare. Moses had to send an army after them to engage them head on. Apparently, God had given Moses instructions as to how to deal with these marauders.

I would like for us to consider the sovereignty of God in the matter. They did not go one way to face a more sophisticated and better-equipped army, but they did face these people who were a better match for them. This was a way of teaching battle to the fighting men of Israel. God doesn't give us more than we can handle. (1Corinthians 10:13) Neither does He always expect us to just sit back and watch like He had them do at the Red Sea. (Exodus 14:13) **God is training us little by little.**

The same is true in the spiritual realm. He gives us those tests that won't overwhelm us but will teach us and help us grow. You can be sure that God will never give you a test that will defeat you if you will look to Him. That is the point of this encounter. It is a different situation with a unique solution, but the answer is the same. Look to God. They had just learned that lesson in this very place as God provided manna and quail. Now, will they look to God and listen to His word as they face an enemy in battle? (Deuteronomy 8:3)

Moses is going to take the rod of God to a hilltop where the soldiers can see him. In his hands is that symbol of the authority of Almighty God, the rod of God. Some have speculated that it may have been ornamented with some shiny objects which would make it more visible, and that is why it is referred to later as a signal pole or banner.

Moses took Aaron his brother and a man named Hur with him. Hur is Hebrew equivalent of "Whitey". It was a common name. Josephus tells us that he was Miriam's husband.

We don't know if the LORD commanded them to come along or if Moses just had the good sense to bring along some assistants. There are some things we should do alone and there are others that wisdom would dictate the need for assistance.

Joshua was to muster an army in one day. This is the first we read of Joshua. He is half the age of Moses and may have already been a natural leader preparing men to protect their family and herds. (Joshua 14:7) The Scripture tells us that they went up from Egypt armed, so they do have weaponry. (Exodus 13:18)

*<sup>10</sup> So Joshua did as Moses told him, and fought with Amalek, while Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill.* Sword and shield battles were often won or lost dependent on who tired or lost hope first. As soon as someone turned to

**Commented [Paul Wall9]:** 1 Corinthians 10:13 (ESV) 13 No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.

**Commented [Paul Wall10]:** Exodus 14:13 (ESV) 13 And Moses said to the people, "Fear not, stand firm, and see the salvation of the LORD, which he will work for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall never see again.

**Commented [Paul Wall11]:** Deuteronomy 8:3 (ESV) 3 And he humbled you and let you hunger and fed you with manna, which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that he might make you know that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD.

**Commented [Paul Wall12]:** Joshua 14:7 (ESV) 7 I was forty years old when Moses the servant of the LORD sent me from Kadesh-barnea to spy out the land, and I brought him word again as it was in my heart.

**Commented [Paul Wall13]:** Exodus 13:18 (ESV) 18 But God led the people around by the way of the wilderness toward the Red Sea. And the people of Israel went up out of the land of Egypt equipped for battle.

run, they were exposed to sword and arrow. Once a few fell, others would frighten and turn. Battles were often one-sided massacres depending on who turned to run first.

Moses presence on the hill with the rod of God as an ensign was assurance for the novice warriors of Israel. It would remind them of the defeat of Egypt with that same rod. It would remind them that God fought for them. (Exodus 14:14)

*11 Whenever Moses held up his hand, Israel prevailed, and whenever he lowered his hand, Amalek prevailed.* Some believed that this was a picture of Moses interceding in prayer and is a lesson in persevering in prayer. Though that is a valid lesson, I don't think that is the main message of this passage.

The lesson here is first and foremost that we look to God to be our strength. Secondly it is that we often need the help of the people of God because of the weakness of the flesh. (Proverbs 24:6) That lesson will be reinforced in the next chapter. We are physical beings that get weary. As Moses arms tired and the rod was lowered, the soldiers below lost sight of the rod and would get discouraged. When it was raised again they encouraged themselves with the memories that rod invoked. If their eyes were not on the sign of God's presence with them, they would have been the first to turn and would have been defeated.

*12 But Moses' hands grew weary, so they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat on it, while Aaron and Hur held up his hands, one on one side, and the other on the other side. So his hands were steady until the going down of the sun.* Aaron and Hur may not have known why they had come, but it didn't take them long to figure it out. They were there to help Moses do what God had called him to do. (Proverbs 27:10) They were the physical strength behind Moses' obedience. Moses couldn't obey on his own. God and Moses both knew that. That is why Aaron and Hur were called.

Most tasks the Lord assigns us are carried out with an Aaron and Hur The church worship service relies on numerous people, the elders, the worship team, the office administrator, the deaconesses, Children's church teachers, intercessors, and greeters. . I had help from two different couples proofreading my books. **The lone ranger jobs are the exception rather than the rule.**

When we receive the tabernacle we'll need Aarons and Hurs from every church that are willing to help. Later in the Scriptures, David will declare that all people should share in the reward that comes from the effort, frontline people and those who stay behind. (1Samuel 30:24-25) From the preacher to the technical person at the soundboard, everyone shares the reward because together they make it possible.

**Commented [Paul Wall14]:** Exodus 14:14 (ESV)  
14 The LORD will fight for you, and you have only to be silent."

**Commented [Paul Wall15]:** Proverbs 24:6 (ESV)  
6 for by wise guidance you can wage your war, and in abundance of counselors there is victory.

**Commented [Paul Wall16]:** Proverbs 27:10 (ESV)  
10 Do not forsake your friend and your father's friend, and do not go to your brother's house in the day of your calamity. Better is a neighbor who is near than a brother who is far away.

**Commented [Paul Wall17]:** 1 Samuel 30:24-25 (ESV)  
24 Who would listen to you in this matter? For as his share is who goes down into the battle, so shall his share be who stays by the baggage. They shall share alike."  
25 And he made it a statute and a rule for Israel from that day forward to this day.

God seems to delight in cooperative efforts. That is one reason He has blessed the churches in Sedona. We are more than willing to work together and help one another. Look at the Trinity! The Father gives the plan, the Son carries it out, and the Holy Spirit illuminates what the Son did. God even uses us to share His love with others. God blesses us when we work together for His glory. (Psalm 133:1)

*<sup>13</sup> And Joshua overwhelmed Amalek and his people with the sword.* This means the army under Joshua's command prevailed. "Amalek and his people" sounds like the leader of the enemy was named after his ancestor Amalek. Sometimes a leader's name will be passed down to each successive leader.

*<sup>14</sup> Then the LORD said to Moses, "Write this as a memorial in a book and recite it in the ears of Joshua, that I will utterly blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven."* Was this a special scroll or just a reminder that when the record was written to be sure to include this? The verse does indicate that Moses knew that Joshua would be his successor. God would see that the Amalekites eventually became extinct. Saul and David did inflict the final blows on the Amalekites almost 400 years later. (1Samuel 30:17)

*<sup>15</sup> And Moses built an altar and called the name of it, The LORD is my banner,* Altars of stone were built to worship the LORD after a significant encounter. We've seen that with Noah (Genesis 8:20) and with Abraham (Genesis 12:7-8), Isaac and Jacob (Genesis 26:25; 35:7).

The translation "banner" is probably incorrect in this verse. It later became used in that manner, but at this time **the word was used of a signal pole around which an army would rally for instruction.** The rod (*nes*) was something like a flagpole. Since the rod of God represented the authority of God, Moses was saying that the rod represented God. JHWH is my rallying rod. He is the One we Israelites gather around for our war briefing. He is where we go for our battle tactics and instructions.

*<sup>16</sup> saying, "A hand upon the throne of the LORD! The LORD will have war with Amalek from generation to generation."* The translation here is also in question. NIV "for hands were lifted to the throne of the Lord" point one to think Moses meant it was his prayers that won the battle. That, however, is not the case. ESV has a better translation here, "A hand upon the throne of the LORD!" It can be understood in two different ways. One is that God's hand is on His throne swearing by His throne that He will have war with Amalek for generations to come, or that Moses' hands were on the pole that symbolized the throne of God, the authority of God. The latter would point to the sovereignty of God in winning the battle. Moses' hand was on the symbol of the throne, meaning God was right there with them.

**Commented [Paul Wall18]:** Psalm 133:1 (ESV)  
1 A SONG OF ASCENTS. OF DAVID. Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity!

**Commented [Paul Wall19]:** 1 Samuel 30:17 (ESV)  
17 And David struck them down from twilight until the evening of the next day, and not a man of them escaped, except four hundred young men, who mounted camels and fled.

**Commented [Paul Wall20]:** Genesis 8:20 (ESV)  
20 Then Noah built an altar to the LORD and took some of every clean animal and some of every clean bird and offered burnt offerings on the altar.

**Commented [Paul Wall21]:** Genesis 12:7-8 (ESV)  
7 Then the LORD appeared to Abram and said, "To your offspring I will give this land." So he built there an altar to the LORD, who had appeared to him.  
8 From there he moved to the hill country on the east of Bethel and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east. And there he built an altar to the LORD and called upon the name of the LORD.

**Commented [Paul Wall22]:** Genesis 26:25 (ESV)  
25 So he built an altar there and called upon the name of the LORD and pitched his tent there. And there Isaac's servants dug a well.

**Commented [Paul Wall23]:** Genesis 35:7 (ESV)  
7 and there he built an altar and called the place El-bethel, because there God had revealed himself to him when he fled from his brother.

The passage has revealed another name of God and therefore something of God we should remember. He is **JHWH Nissi**! Like Israel, we will face battles in life. God allows them. He guides us to them. He plans that we not face too much at one time. He uses them to train us to look to Him.

Here, in another test, they did look to God, to the authority that staff represented. You could say this was one of the great moments of the wilderness wandering, because they followed through on the last lesson. They learned to listen to God and look to Him. They believed that His authority could conquer their enemy.

One of our greatest enemies is the flesh, our old nature! We drag it around with us like a dead corpse, but it is always ready to resurrect itself and take our life over if we will just listen to it for a moment. Like Amelek, it is opportunistic. It takes advantage of our weaknesses. It probes for any opening in which it can come in and rob our soul. It aims to steal our righteousness, our joy, and our peace. It would take us captive, if possible, to serve it again. (Romans 6:4)

All of us have weaknesses. All of us come under attack. It can be anger, or lust, or greed or any number of fleshly weaknesses that he attacks. We need a rally point. We need a place to go where we can look and be encouraged. JHWH is the pole, the banner to which we turn. (Isaiah 51:5)

Isaiah predicted that banner would be Jesus. Isaiah 11:10 (ESV) <sup>10</sup> *In that day the root of Jesse, who shall stand as a signal (NIV- banner Hebrew - nes) for the peoples—of him shall the nations inquire, and his resting place shall be glorious.* Jesus has become the rallying pole for those who have received His salvation, and isn't His rest glorious. We run there to inquire of Him exactly how to resist the flesh, and we have found rest for our souls.

And just as Moses clung to the rod that represented the throne of God, brothers and sisters, **we cling to another pole, the cross of Calvary**. In clinging to the cross we cling to the Throne of God, for it was God's sovereign power and authority that caused Jesus to be the sacrifice for our sins. (Isaiah 53:4) That pole is lifted high and draws us all to Jesus. (John 12:32 ; In John 3:14-15, Jesus referred to Numbers 21:8 that uses the same Hebrew word *nes* to describe the cross.) It is there we see the love that flows from the throne of God. It is there that we know Amalek – the flesh, will be defeated. God is at war with it in every generation.

We know we can't fight the battle alone. If we don't look to the pole, if we don't remind ourselves that He wins His battles and nothing is too hard for Him, if we look at our own ability, the flesh begins to take the upper hand. But then we look back to the cross and we know, no power on earth or in hell can stop Him. I am

**Commented [Paul Wall24]:** Romans 6:4 (ESV)  
4 We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

**Commented [Paul Wall25]:** Isaiah 51:5 (ESV)  
5 My righteousness draws near, my salvation has gone out, and my arms will judge the peoples; the coastlands hope for me, and for my arm they wait.

**Commented [Paul Wall26]:** Isaiah 53:4 (ESV)  
4 Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted.

**Commented [Paul Wall27]:** John 12:32 (ESV)  
32 And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself."

**Commented [Paul Wall28]:** John 3:14-15 (ESV)  
14 And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up,  
15 that whoever believes in him may have eternal life."

**Commented [Paul Wall29]:** Numbers 21:8 (ESV)  
8 And the LORD said to Moses, "Make a fiery serpent and set it on a pole, and everyone who is bitten, when he sees it, shall live."

His chosen child and He is my Almighty God. He will perfect that which concerns me. (Psalm 138:8) He will finish the work He began. (Philippians 1:6) I will stand on the other shore and see Him face to face and the work will be complete. Amalek will be annihilated once and for all. His evil marauding will come to an end. The trumpet will sound and the work will be done! Hallelujah! (1John 3:2)

Remember, we will be at war until that day comes, but God has promised to be at war with Amalek too. And God has promised that Amalek's days will come to an end! So fight on! Stand firm! But most of all, keep your eyes on the rally pole, our banner, the cross that represents God's final sovereign victory. (Hebrews 12:2) When your eyes are fixed there, you will find you are fighting with His strength. You will not give in to fear or forget that His authority is supreme. With that courage, you will not turn and run, but will march on to victory by the grace of God! (1Thessalonians 5:23-24)

#### Questions

- 1 Why is Amalek foolish?
- 2 What was their evil tactic?
- 3 What were the Israelites learning?
- 4 Why was sight of the rod important for the soldiers?
- 5 Why didn't Moses do this alone?
- 6 What did God promise to do to Amalek?
- 7 Why did Moses build an altar?
- 8 What is the new name of God?
- 9 How can we relate to it?
- 10 What is our *nes*?

**Commented [Paul Wall30]:** Psalm 138:8 (ESV)  
8 The LORD will fulfill his purpose for me; your steadfast love, O LORD, endures forever. Do not forsake the work of your hands.

**Commented [Paul Wall31]:** Philippians 1:5-6 (ESV)  
5 because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now.  
6 And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

**Commented [Paul Wall32]:** 1 John 3:2 (ESV)  
2 Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is.

**Commented [Paul Wall33]:** Hebrews 12:2 (ESV)  
2 looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

**Commented [Paul Wall34]:** 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24 (ESV)  
23 Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.  
24 He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it.