

Jehovah Nissi

See verse by verse exposition of Exodus 17:8-16 for a more in depth study.

JEHOVAH NISSI - THE LORD OUR BANNER

EXPOSITION OF EXODUS 17:8-16

See Main Table Jehovah Nissi: The LORD Our Banner

Exodus 17:8 Then Amalek came and fought against Israel at Rephidim.

- For context see - Exodus 17:1-7

Nathan Stone reminds us that "Only a few weeks had elapsed from the time the children of Israel left Marah, the place of bitter waters, till they reached Rephidim, the scene of Jehovah's revelation of Himself to them as Jehovah-nissi, Jehovah my banner. At Marah, we will recall, in healing the bitter waters of that place, He had revealed Himself as **Jehovah Rapha** (Jehovah Rophe), Jehovah Who heals, the One Who alone has the remedy for the sins of mankind, the balm for the sorrows and sufferings of His people; Who has sweetened the bitter waters of human misery and death through Christ, the Tree of life and the sweet and living waters. The children of Israel had gone from Marah to Elim, the place of refreshing and rest (Ex15:27). From there they journeyed to the wilderness of Sin (Ex 16) where they murmured against Moses because there was no food, and where they longed for the fleshpots of Egypt. There, Jehovah appeared in the cloud of glory and began to feed them with the wilderness manna. Then they came to Rephidim where there was no water (Ex 17). At Marah the waters were bitter. Here there was no water at all. Hunger is difficult and discouraging enough to bear, but the sufferings and torments of thirst are unbearable. Their murmurings and threatenings against Moses were rather a tempting of Jehovah. They doubted God. Forgotten, the marvelous passage of the Red Sea and the drowning of Pharaoh and his hosts; forgotten, the miraculous healing of Marah's waters! Ignoring the coming down of the manna from heaven, they questioned God's goodness and even His presence. "Is the Lord among us, or not?" they said. And there from the rock in Horeb, that rock which Paul tells us was Christ (1 Cor. 10:4), Jehovah caused waters to spring forth to quench the multitude's thirst. Then came the experience which occasioned Jehovah's revelation of Himself to His people as Jehovah Nissi. Israel discovered that perhaps there were worse enemies than even hunger and thirst. They now learned that their pathway was to be contested and barred by implacable human foes." ([Names of God](#))

Through the circumstances Israel had just experienced (Exodus 17:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7) they had **learned** how God provided water (and food in Ex 16 "manna"). Israel's "learning" however was at best incomplete for they continued to grumble and quarrel with God even after clearly and indisputably seeing Jehovah's gracious hand of provision for their every essential need...but don't I likewise as a blood bought, heaven bound believer often manifest the same forgetful, ungrateful spirit? And yet despite these great lessons from God, Israel had not yet experienced individual combat in [warfare](#).

Two observations are worth commenting upon...

- (1) "[Rephidim](#)" means "**rests**" (plural). One cannot take this too far but it does at least raise the thought that we are often most vulnerable when everything seems calm and restful. The point is that our enemy never sleeps and we too must remain ever vigilant and on guard...even when we "rest"!
- (2) The verb "**fought**" is translated in the Septuagint (Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament) with the verb [polemeo](#) meaning to make war or fight and is in the imperfect tense. You say "so what?" The point is that the imperfect tense conveys the picture of a repeated action, and thus one begins to understand that the Amalekites were attacking over and over again.

God Himself had fought for them when Pharaoh's army pursued them, backing them up against the Red Sea. At that "battle" they were instructed to

"stand by and see the salvation of Jehovah which He will accomplish for you today...Jehovah will fight for you

while you keep silent." ([Ex 14:13-14](#)) ([offsite commentary](#))

Although one must use considerable caution in interpreting "[Type](#)" (Click for well done discussion of **types** in ISBE - see also Approach to Interpretation of God's Word for caveats) (cf Paul's use of [tipos](#) in [1 Corinthians 10:6 and 10:11](#)) in the OT, there is a consensus among most conservative expositors that the [Amalekites](#) ([Torrey's Topic - Amalekites](#)) are representative of all evil forces opposed to God's people throughout all the ages.

And in the light of NT teaching, those enemies are most "conveniently" grouped into **3 categories**:

(1) The "FLESH" which is the "Sin principle" (see study of **sarx** as the evil disposition) that every human born has inherited (Ro 5:12 -note) theologians call it "inherent sin") from Adam (every human born has inherited the deadly "Sin virus" from Adam and we pass on this "Sin virus" to all our offspring) which in turn produces in them the desire and propensity to commit personal sins. In other words, "**Sin**" (singular and in the original Greek in Romans usually modified with the definite article "the" = **the Sin**) is the power of sin to rule over man (Ro 6:1, 2, 3 -see **notes** Romans 6:1; 6:2; 6:3).

Personal "**sins**" (plural) are the outworking of the power in thoughts, words and deeds = sins that are committed. For a believer the **Flesh** or "**Sin principle**" has been rendered inoperative when we were **crucified with Christ** (Ro 6:6, 7, Gal 2:20 -see notes Ro 6:6; 7; Ga 2:20) releasing us from the power that **Sin** as a principle or ruling force once had in our lives. The practical import of this truth is that believers have been delivered from the power of **Sin** (Ro 6:7, 11, 12, 13, 14 -see notes Ro 6:7; Ro 6:11; 12; 13; 14) and now have the ability to say "No" to the "lusts (strong desires) of the flesh". And yet the **Flesh** does remain in "latent" form in our physical bodies and is still capable of rearing its ugly "Amalekite-like" head to wage war against us (Ro 6:12, 13, 8:13-see **notes** Ro 6:12; 13; 8:13).

Paul emphasizes this perpetual (until our glorification - Hallelujah!) struggle in Galatians 5:17 (note) teaching us that the "**Flesh** sets (present tense = continuously) its desire against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh, for these are (present tense = continuously) in opposition (literally lined up face to face against!) to one another so that you may not do the things that you please (or that you "continuously desire" = present tense). (notes)

Peter also reminds us that understand that we are "**Aliens** (parepidemois) and [strangers](#)" on earth and as such must continually "**abstain** (Gk means hold oneself away from ~ put some separation between) from fleshly lusts, which (continually = present tense) wage war (see word study on strateuomai related to English "strategy" or "**stratagem**" = trick in war for deceiving and outwitting the enemy! - meditate on this verse now with these added insights) against the soul." (see **note** 1 Peter 2:11)

One should be able to see the parallel between these NT truths and Ex17:16 which teaches that "the LORD will have war against Amalek from **generation to generation**."

And beloved, if the *Amalekites* war against God, they will also continuously carry out war against His children ([Jn 1:12](#)).

(2) The "[WORLD](#)" represents sum total of the thoughts, ideas and actions that are opposed to God, which continually suppress His truth in unrighteousness and which influence and drive all men and women still "dead in their trespasses and sins" (Eph 2:1, 2, 3 - see **notes** Ep 2:1; 2; 3, cp 1Jn 2:15, 16, 17, Ga 6:14).

WORLD ([kosmos, aion](#)) (click word study on aion) in this sense does not refer to the literal physical creation but to the world's system of values and way of doing things -- these put pressure on each person to try to get them to conform to the world's way (Ro 12:2 -note). The unregenerate person either consciously or unconsciously is controlled by the values and attitudes of this world and behaves accordingly. The leader of this "**WORLD**" is [Satan](#) for John teaches us that "whole world lies in the power of the evil one." (1Jn 5:19). See Piper's comment on "world")

(3) The third "Amalekite" who continuously wages war against God and His children from generation to generation is

"the great dragon...the serpent of old who is called the devil (see diabolos) and Satan, who (continuously) deceives (planao) the whole world" ((Rev 12:9+).

As believers we have been "delivered (see rhuomai) from the domain (exousia = right and might) of darkness and transferred...to the kingdom of His beloved Son" (Col 1:13+)

And so as we study this section on warfare, let us keep in mind that "these things happened to them (**srael**) as an example, (tipos) and they were written for our [instruction](#) (click discussion of verb form), upon whom the ends of the ages have come" (1Cor 10:6,11)

Paul adds that if any one of us thinks he or she can stand in our own strength against the "Amalekites" then we need to [take heed](#) lest (we) fall." (1Cor 10:12)

Thus Israel had to learn in warfare that even though they were to personally "fight the good fight of faith", victory was found ONLY in Jehovah Nissi, the LORD our Banner, their rallying point. This is the same lesson all believers must learn (and re-learn), lest we become overwhelmed and dismayed by the "**Amalekites**" who attack unfairly, unexpectedly and unremittingly! Also keep in mind that every "physical battle" is but a picture and manifestation of the underlying eternal spiritual struggle between good and evil. Israel's physical enemy in this battle was the **Amalekites** who were descendants of Esau's grandson, **Amalek** (Ge 36:12). They were nomads in the desert south of Canaan (1Sa 15:7; 27:8) who because they **did not fear God** (Dt 25:18) attacked God's people Israel. Their mode of attack was from the rear, assaulting the stragglers (Dt 25:17, 18, 19 Nu 24:20) who were "faint and weary".

I don't know what your experience is but when I am tired and weary that is often the very time that the "*Amalekites*" mount their "sniper" attacks. This is why Jesus warned His disciples, commanding them to "(present tense = continuously) keep watching (click in depth discussion of gregoreuo) and praying that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak." ([Mt 26:41](#)).

In a similar way Peter also warned us to "Be of sober spirit, be on the alert Your adversary the devil, prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. But resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world. And after you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you." (see **notes** 1 Peter 5:8; 5:9; 5:10).

In Deut 25:17-19, just before the 2nd generation of Israelites from Egypt enters the promised land, Moses reminds them that when the LORD gives them rest from their enemies, they are to completely blot out the memory of Amalek and that this command is not optional! In a similar vein, believers likewise cannot strike a truce with any of the "*Amalekites*", Satan, the world (Jas 4:4, 1Jn 2:15, 16, 17) or our flesh (1Pe 2:11-note; Gal 5:17-note). When there is compromise with SIN ("*Amalekites*") by God's people, SIN begins its insidious work to corrupt and ultimately to destroy (see relationship between sins and outcome of battles in Nu 14:42, 43, 44, 45, [Jdg 6:1, 2, 3, 4-note](#)). The *Amalekites* must always be utterly blotted out. We must not deal lightly with the presence of sins in our life (Heb 12:1, 2-note v1; note v2).

Sadly many often quote [1Jn 1:9](#): "*If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness*" as if it were little more than a "*spiritual band-aid*" and then turn right around and immediately commit that sin again. We can be tempted to think that these personal sins are small (cf to the "little foxes" in Song 2:15 and see [Our Daily Bread "Tiny Evils, Big Fall"](#)) and that they really do not impact our lives and that we have a "*forgiveness credit card*" that lets us commit sins with impunity and without consequences. But we forget that our sins grieve the heart (cf Ge 6:3, 5,6, Ps 78:40, Ezek 6:9, Lk 19:41, 42, Acts 7:51, Eph 4:30-note, Is 63:10, Heb 3:17-note) of a thrice Holy God and they negate our spiritual victory and disturb our inner peace (see above - study [Numbers 14](#) and [Jdg 6](#) - see notes for effect of sin on war with Amalekites). Our sins are like a silent but potentially deadly malignant tumor -- once the cancer gain a foothold, it begins to metastasize to other parts of the body and ultimately brings death to the body. The best cure for aggressive cancer is total obliteration of the cancer cells -- to "*utterly blot them out*".

And so we began to appreciate the severity and seriousness of God's command to Israel to

blot out the memory of the Amalek from under heaven in (Dt 25:19),

noting that in (Ex 17:14) it is God Who says

I will utterly blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven.

These seemingly contradictory verses remind us that in spiritual warfare, we are responsible for our part of the "blotting out" process, but it is ultimately our **Jehovah Nissi** Who gives the victory. Paul reflects on this mysterious interaction of **man's responsibility** and **God's sovereignty** in (Php 2:12, 13 - see **notes** Php 2:12; 13) exhorting us as believers to

(present imperative = command to continually) **work out** (our) salvation with fear and trembling, (How? Why?) for (introduces explanation) it is God who is at work (energeo = energizing) in (us), both to will (He even gives us the "want to" because our old nature does not "want to!") and to work (energeo) for His good pleasure."

(Click for a schematic depiction of this important spiritual principle)

As Puritan **John Owen** wrote "Kill sin or it be killing you." (see John Piper's sermon [How to Kill Sin, Part 2'](#)) (See also John Owen's classic treatise [Mortification of Sin in Believers](#))

The Old Sin Nature Is a Unredeemable "Beast"

An illustration of the deadliness of sin comes from the tragic tale that began with a frantic 911 call from a woman who could only state that she needed help because she was being killed. When the police arrived, they found a bloody knife beside her lifeless body

on the kitchen floor. Blood was spattered across the room, yet when the police examined the body, they found to their amazement not a single cut or puncture wound. The only evidence on her body was a large mark across her chest and neck. They then noticed a trail of blood leading into the next room. Following the blood they found a dying boa constrictor.

The woman had apparently raised the snake as a pet. On this particular day, the snake had apparently wrapped itself around the woman as she prepared food in the kitchen. For whatever reason, she had allowed the snake to entwine her body. Once the muscular snake began to constrict itself, the woman had apparently sensed the danger. In a panic, she had grabbed a knife and began to slash away. She managed to mortally wound the snake, but she was killed in the process.

This story is an incredible example of the **power of Sin** in our lives. We often take subtle compromises into our lives like an innocent pet. We think we can handle the snake without any real risk. Although we hear stories about the destruction of other people, we rationalize that they were simply weak. We can handle it! We think we know how far we can go. Thus we deal with sin flippantly and lightly. (from Hemphill, K: [The Names of God](#)) (cf the similar story of [Tiny Evils, Big Fall](#))

Then Amalek came and fought against Israel at Rephidim.

Who is Amalek?

Amalek apparently means "dweller in a valley". For more detail see the [ISBE article](#).

Moses records the first mention of **Amalek** (and it is assumed for purposes of the present discussion that this same Amalek is the father of the "Amalekites" although some dispute this interpretation)...

"Timna was a concubine of Esau's son Eliphaz and she bore Amalek to Eliphaz. These are the sons of Esau's wife Adah." ([Genesis 36:12](#))

Thus the Amalekites were direct descendants of Isaac. Yet they became the persistent and hereditary enemies of Israel (Jacob), a thorn in their flesh, and a constant menace to their spiritual and national life.

Balaam says that...

"**Amalek** was the first of the nations, but his end shall be destruction." ([Numbers 24:20](#))

As the first nation to attack the newly redeemed Israel (and thus typical of all who later hated God's people), the Amalekites received the full impact of God's curse upon

"the one who [curses](#) you I will [curse](#)." ([Genesis 12:3](#)) (Summary of Abrahamic Covenant)

The Amalekites were a numerous and powerful people. It might have been expected that, as closely related to Israel as they were, they would have afforded help instead of opposition. Yet they opposed Israel in a most mean and cowardly way

Expositor's Bible adds this explanatory note...

"The Amalekites lived in the desert, south of Canaan around Kadesh ([Genesis 14:7](#)), otherwise known as the northern part of the Negev (Numbers 13:29, 14:25, 43). Amalek was the son of Eliphaz (Esau's eldest boy) by a concubine named Timna (Genesis 36:12) and became a "clan" or "chief" in the tribe of Esau (Genesis 36:15). Thus the Amalekites were distant cousins to the Israelites. **There is every possibility that they had known about the promise of the land of Canaan that had been given to Esau's twin brother, Jacob; therefore, they should not have felt any threat to their interests in the Negev had this promise been remembered and taken seriously. After all, the promise was to be a means of blessing Amalek along with all the other nations** ([Genesis 12:3](#)) if only they, like Abraham, would have believed. Instead they "came" (wayyabo') and attacked Israel at Rephidim--some distance south of the north-central district of the Sinai where they lived. Amalek's assault on Israel drew the anger of God on two counts: (1) they failed to recognize the hand and plan of God in Israel's life and destiny (even the farther-removed Canaanites of Jericho had been given plenty to think about when they heard about the Exodus-- Joshua 2:10); and (2) the first targets of their warfare were the sick, aged, and tired of Israel who lagged behind the line of march (Deut 25:17-19). Thus Amalek became the "first among the nations" (Numbers 24:20)--in this case, to attack Israel. They are placed in juxtaposition with another group of Gentiles in the next chapter (Jethro's Midianites) who believed in Israel's God. These two chapters illustrate two kingdoms and two responses to the grace of God from the Gentile world." ([Gaebelein, F, Editor: Expositor's Bible Commentary OT 7 Volume Set: Books:](#)

During the period of the judges, the Amalekites joined forces with the Ammonites and the Moabites to capture Jericho (Jdg 3:12,13-note).

Later the Amalekites joined the Midianites and the people of the East in harassing the Israelites, and this evil coalition comprised a force

"in the valley as numerous as locusts". (Jdg 7:12-note)

Certainly too many Amalekites for Gideon's army of 300 but not too many for Jehovah Who cannot lie and Who promised

"I will deliver you with the 300 men" (Jdg 7:7-note) "lest Israel become boastful, saying, 'My own power has delivered me.'" (Jdg 7:2-note).

And so Gideon and his band of 300 defeated the Amalekites in the Valley of [Jezreel](#) ("*God sows*" or "*God scatters*") (Jdg 6:3-note, Jdg 6:33-note; 7:12-22-notes), once again graphically illustrating the importance of *man's responsibility* and *God's sovereignty* (Click schematic) in achieving victory over the "*Amalekites*".

Despite the defeat, Amalek still had not faced the crushing judgment that the Lord had foretold to Moses ([Ex 17:14-16](#)). That task was assigned to Saul to "**utterly destroy**" the Amalekites...

Thus says **Jehovah Sabaoth, LORD of hosts (of armies)**, 'I will punish Amalek for what he did to Israel, how he set himself against him on the way while he was coming up from Egypt. Now go and strike Amalek and utterly destroy all that he has, and do not spare him; but put to death both man and woman, child and infant, ox and sheep, camel and donkey. ([1Sa 15:2-3](#)).

Saul attacked and chased the enemy from the land, but he failed in his mission by sparing the Amalekite king Agag (see discussion of one of Agag's apparent descendants below) and by holding on to some of the spoils of battle (1Sa 15:6, 7, 8, 9).

As a result of Saul's partial obedience which was in reality complete disobedience (in contrast to the unquestioning, complete obedience of Joshua in Exodus 17), Saul was told that the Lord would tear the kingdom from him and give it to "*his neighbor who is better than you*". (1Sa 15:10-33,28). Saul killed himself when he fell on his sword (1 Sa 31:4) but in a bitter and ironic twist an Amalekite reported to David that he had killed Saul (2Sa 1:8,13). It appears that the Amalekite's story is a fabrication for the first Samuel passage makes it clear that "Saul took his sword and fell on it". Perhaps the Amalekite sought recognition or reward from David by claiming to have slain Saul.

Later in Israel's history, the Amalekites who escaped from Saul (1Sa 15:7) were smitten by David...

And David slaughtered them from the twilight until the evening of the next day; and not a man of them escaped, except four hundred young men who rode on camels and fled. (1Sa 30:17)

The Amalekites who escaped from David were destroyed by the descendants of Simeon in the days of King Hezekiah (circa 715-686AD) when 500 men from the tribe of Simeon defeated the Amalekites and dispossessed them from their land...

they destroyed the remnant of the Amalekites who escaped, and have lived there to this day.([1Chr 4:43](#)).

For additional thoughts on the Amalekites see Spurgeon's sermon entitled (War with Amalek). For an excellent Scriptural summary of the **Amalekites** see

Torrey's Topic Amalekites

Descent of - Genesis 36:12,16

CHARACTER of

- Wicked - 1 Samuel 15:18
- Oppressive - Judges 10:12
- Warlike and Cruel - 1 Samuel 15:33
- Governed by Kings - 1 Samuel 15:20,32
- A powerful and influential nation - Numbers 24:7

- Possessed cities - 1 Samuel 15:5

COUNTRY of

- In the south of Canaan - Nu 13:29; 1Sa 27:8
- Extended from Havilah to Shur - 1Sa 15:7
- Was the scene of ancient warfare - Ge 14:7
- Part of the Kenites dwelt amongst - 1Sa 15:6
- Were the first to oppose Israel - Ex 17:8
- Discomfited at Rephidim through the intercession of Moses - Ex 17:9, 10, 11, 12, 13
- Doomed to utter destruction for opposing Israel - Ex 17:14,16; Dt 25:19
- Their utter destruction foretold - Nu 24:20
- Presumption of Israel punished by - Nu 14:45
- United with Eglon against Israel - Jdg 3:13
- Part of their possessions taken by Ephraim - Jdg 5:14; 12:15
- With Midian, oppressed Israel - Jdg 6:3, 4, 5
- Overcome by Gideon - Jdg 6:33,34; 7:21,22

SAUL

- Overcame, and delivered Israel - 1Sa 14:48
- Commissioned to destroy - 1Sa 15:1, 2, 3
- Massacred - 1Sa 15:4, 5, 6, 7, 8
- Condemned for not utterly destroying - 1Sa 15:9-26; 28:18
- Agag, king of, slain by Samuel - 1Sa 15:32,33
- Invaded by David - 1Sa 27:8,9
- Pillaged and burned Ziklag - 1Sa 30:1,2
- Pursued and slain by David - 1Sa 30:10-20
- Spoil taken from, consecrated - 2Sa 8:11,12
- Confederated against Israel - Ps 83:7
- Remnant of, completely destroyed during the reign of Hezekiah - 1Chr 4:41, 42, 43

What are the potential consequences of failing to blot out the Amalekites?

One other possible consequence of Saul's failure to blot out the Amalekites occurred some 600 years later. As an aside someone in describing the deceitful nature of sin has said that...

Sin will take you farther than you ever meant to stray
 ...will keep you longer than you ever thought you'd stay
 ...and will cost you more than you ever dreamed you have to pay!

In the book of Esther (written about 465BC, Saul having begun his reign about 1050BC over 500 years earlier) [Haman](#) is described as an offspring of an **Agagite** (Esther 3:1,10+, Esther 8:3,5+, Esther 9:24+) (remember Saul originally spared **Agag**, king of the Amalekites) and many authorities feel that Haman therefore possibly represents a descendant of the Amalekites. He certainly manifested an "*Amalekite-like*" hatred for the Jews, conspiring to have them totally obliterated as a race (for proper context read the entire wonderful story of God's faithfulness to His covenant promises in the [book of Esther](#)). As you can read in Esther Haman's plot was foiled (ultimately by God) and he was hanged on the very gallows he sought to hang his arch rival, the Jew Mordecai. (Esther 9:25+). Thus the Jews were preserved and the line of Messiah was kept intact.

In celebration of this victory over Haman, the Jews called these days **Purim** after the name of **Pur**. ("**pur**" = lot; see Esther 3:7+) And because of the instructions in this letter, both what they had seen in this regard and what had happened to them, the Jews established and made a custom for themselves, and for their descendants, and for all those who allied themselves with them, so that they should not fail to celebrate these two days according to their regulation, and according to their appointed time annually. So these days were to be remembered and celebrated throughout every generation, every family, every province, and every city; and these days of Purim were not to fail from among the Jews, or their memory fade from their descendants." (Esther 9:26-28+).

Rabbinical commentators see this conflict with Haman and the Jews (cf the bitter rivalry of Esau and Jacob) as the historic struggle of the Jewish people with Gentile enemies whose unreasoning hatred persists for thousands of years. The Jews begin the celebration of PURIM with a fast on the 13th day of the month (Esther 9:31+), commemorating the date on which Haman's evil

decree was issued (Esther 3:12+). The Jews attend the synagogue for the public reading of the Book of Esther. Whenever **'Haman'** is mentioned, the entire congregation cries out, "May he be accursed!" or "May his name perish!" (sounds like "blotted out" doesn't it?) Children bring a special Purim rattle called a "gregar" and use it to make noise every time they hear Haman's name read. On the morning of the 14th day of the month, the Jews again go to the synagogue, where the Esther story is read again and the congregation engages in prayer. The story about Moses and the Amalekites (Ex 17:8-16) is also read. Then the celebrants go home to a festive holiday meal with gifts and special foods, and the celebrating continues on the next day. They also send gifts and food to the poor and needy so that everybody can rejoice together. The name "**Purim**" is the plural of the Babylonian word **pur** which means "**lot**", thus the festival's name originates from Haman's casting of lots to determine the day when the Jews would be destroyed (Esther 3:7+). Note the emphasis among modern day Jews on teaching the children the meaning of Purim so that the message of the feast would not be lost in future generations.

As **Warren Wiersbe** notes "It's sad when a nation (or a church) forgets its heroes and the providential events that have kept it alive. How easy it is for a new generation to come along and take for granted the blessings that previous generations struggled and sacrificed to attain! The Jews didn't make that mistake but established the Feast of Purim to remind their children year after year that God had saved Israel from destruction. There's nothing wrong with meaningful [tradition](#). The church is always one generation short of extinction; and if we don't pass on to our children and grandchildren what God has done for us and our fathers, the church will die of apathy and ignorance. "Come, you children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of Jehovah" (Ps 34:11). It's when tradition gradually becomes traditionalism that we get into trouble. Theologian Jaroslav Pelikan said, "Tradition is the living faith of the dead; traditionalism is the dead faith of the living."

Note this principle is commanded by God Himself in (Ex 17:14). Ray Stedman has some thought provoking comments on Queen Esther and Haman in a sermon entitled "[The Price of Survival](#)" ([Click](#) for 9 instructive, practical sermons on Esther by Ray Stedman).

Exodus 17:9 So Moses said to Joshua, "Choose men for us, and go out, fight against Amalek. Tomorrow I will station myself on the top of the hill with the staff of God in my hand."

Back again to Exodus 17 we find that Moses faced with a mortal enemy, responded quickly, giving commands and instructions to his trusted servant Joshua.

THOUGHT - When we are confronted by sudden, unexpected attack from our mortal enemies, the world, the flesh and the devil, do we respond by quickly seeking our "Joshua", our Jesus?

Through trials and tests Israel had experienced in the first 3 months in the desert (Ex 15:22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 16:1-36, 17:1-7, etc), the people were learning how God was their Provider of the necessities for life, but now Israel had to learn through the testing of war that the battle was the LORD's and that He alone could defeat Israel's enemies. Their part was to trust and obey, for there is no other way to be "happy" in Jesus but to "Trust and Obey".

JOSHUA means "Jehovah is salvation" or "Jehovah is Help" and the Septuagint translates the Hebrew with the Greek word "[Iesous](#)" the NT word for "Jesus". Joshua was from the tribe of Ephraim. Exodus 17:9 marks the first mention of Joshua in Scripture. He would have been about 45 years of age and had served as Moses' aide-de-camp (Ex 24:13, Ex 33:11; Ex 32:17; Josh 1:1). To be most accurate, it should be noted that at this time Joshua's name was still [Hoshea](#), (variously defined as "to give deliverance or help" or as "salvation") which later was changed to Joshua at [Kadesh](#) (Kadesh-Barnea) just before the 12 spies were sent on a reconnaissance mission into the promised land of Canaan ("Moses called Hoshea the son of Nun, Joshua" in [Nu 13:16](#)). We know that Joshua was a man of faith, for he and Caleb were the only two of the twelve spies who brought back an encouraging report of the promised land they were sent to spy out.

This field training against the Amalekites was undoubtedly preparation for Joshua as he led the Israelites against the pagan enemies in Canaan. Even as God had trained Moses for his work, He was now training Joshua to succeed him.

THOUGHT - What is God training you for right now? Do the trials seem to never end, to be without an obvious purpose? Could it be that God is training you in and through the trial? (cf Jas 1:2, 3, 4,12) God does not waste the obstacles in our lives but desires that we might see them as opportunities to grow in grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord." ([1Cor 15:58](#))

CHOOSE MEN FOR US: This is a command to take a keen look and make a careful, well-thought out choice. Why would such discernment be necessary? At this stage, Israel could hardly be described as a seasoned fighting force. It is interesting to note that the Septuagint (LXX) adds the adjective "[dunatos](#)" ([1415](#)) (mighty, powerful, strong, possessing inherent ability to perform some

task, able to bear calamities and trials with fortitude and patience) as a **qualification for the men Joshua is to choose**.. "choose mighty men for us".

Joshua's assignment was to muster a task force and this was part of Joshua's being groomed for military leadership in Israel. This implies that **to be a leader** one must have the ability to discern those qualities in others that will be of value in completing the task at hand (in this case war).

AND GO OUT, FIGHT - Both of these Hebrew verbs are in the imperative or in other words they are commands.

AGAINST AMALEK: Given Amalek's lineage from Esau, in a sense this battle was a renewal of the age old rivalry between Jacob and Esau (Ge 25:27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, Ge 27:41). Joshua was called to fight in the valley and Moses would be on the hill. Notice that this unusual strategy met with no *grumbling* or *disputing* from Joshua (See discussion of doing all things without grumbling in Php 2:14 [see note]).

THOUGHT - Would I have been so trusting and so obedient, especially given the unorthodox nature of the "strategy"?

In these seemingly small details we begin to learn much about the heart of this one name Joshau, who is living up to his great name which means "Jehovah is salvation".

TOMORROW I WILL STATION MYSELF ON THE TOP OF THE HILL WITH THE STAFF OF GOD ("staff of Elohim") IN MY HAND:

Joshua in the valley and Moses on the hill - Once again we see the principle that weaves throughout testaments, both old and new, the principle that...

**Divine sovereignty and human responsibility
are inextricably, mysteriously linked in carrying out the will of God.**

The staff of God (click to study other references to Moses' staff) represents the second time this phrase is used (Ex 4:20) and the last mention of the ROD/STAFF in Exodus (cf Nu 20:8, 9). The staff was not a "magic wand" but was clearly a symbol or sign of the presence of God's power over evil, over nature, and over every circumstance however seemingly hopeless.

Most (but not all) commentators have said that Moses on the hill was **apicture of intercession**, which certainly could have been the case but if one restricts themselves to "Sola Scriptura", the text does not definitely specify that Moses was interceding. Nevertheless, in view of his past experiences of crying out to God in times of crisis (cf Exodus 8:12, 17:4, 32:11, 12, 13, 30, Nu 11:2, 12:3, 14:13, 17, 21:7, Dt 9:26), it would seem quite unlikely that he was on the hilltop simply observing the battle and not interceding. Someone has well said that it takes **intercession** on the mountain as well as **intervention** in the valley for God's people to win the victory.

**The army of the Lord is most often victorious
when it marches forward "on its knees".**

The Christian missionary martyr **Jim Elliot** added "That saint who advance on his knees never retreats".

In summary, Israel had stood still and watched God defeat Pharaoh's forces, representing the most powerful army in the world, but in this battle Israel was called upon to enter the battle themselves and trust Jehovah for the victory (cf 1 Jn 5:4-5+).

John MacArthur comments: "It (the rod) became, therefore, the symbol of God's personal and powerful involvement, with Moses' outstretched arms perhaps signifying an appeal to God. The ebb and flow of battle in correlation with Moses' uplifted or drooping arms imparted more than psychological encouragement as the soldiers looked up to their leader on the hilltop, and more than Moses' interceding for them. It demonstrated and acknowledged their having to depend upon God for victory in battle and not upon their own strength and zeal. It also confirmed the position of Moses both in relation to God and the nation's well-being and safety. They had angrily chided him for their problems, but God confirmed his appointment as leader."

Net Bible Notes add "In Exodus so far the rod of God is the token of the power of God. When Moses used it, God demonstrated His power. To use the rod of God was to say that God did it. To fight without the rod was to face defeat. Using the rod of God was a way of submitting to and depending on the power of God in all areas of life."

Moses by raising the staff in his hand was clearly showing that he looked for victory to God alone and that he did not trust in his (or Joshua and his soldiers) "*arm of flesh*." Through Moses' rod, the "staff of God", Jehovah showed Himself to be Israel's strength and

sufficiency before the evil Pharaoh and at the Red Sea (with the enemy in "hot pursuit" and by all visible evidence, no way of escape for Israel) and now Elohim again worked to show His power and **the absolute necessity of total dependence on Him**. Because of his obedience and dependence upon Elohim, Joshua prevailed and in so doing he learned valuable truth about God and about the requirements for he who will be "a vessel for honor, sanctified, useful to the Master, prepared for every good work." (2 Ti 2:21+)

If we like Joshua will maintain a teachable, obedient, dependent spirit in our battles with the "Amalekites", we too will learn much about the ways of God and about ourselves.

Ken Hemphill comments on the "**staff of God**": "It was not simply Moses' dramatic and visible posture on the hilltop that inspired confidence in his troops; it was THE ROD OF GOD HELD ALOFT THAT BROUGHT THEM VICTORY. Though the rod was likely nothing more than a SHEPHERD'S STAFF, God had used it as an object lesson to show Moses His power to accomplish His work. Back in Exodus 4, when God called Moses to lead Israel out of captivity, and Moses objected that no one would believe him or listen to what he had to say, God asked what he had in his hand. It was his shepherd's staff. God then instructed him to throw the staff on the ground, whereupon it became a serpent. The Lord then instructed Moses to take the serpent by the tail and once he did, it again became a staff. This staff was to be used as a sign that the God of Israel had appeared to Moses (Ex 4:5). When Moses obeyed God and departed for Egypt, he took the staff of God with him (Ex 4:20). From this point forward, this simple staff became the rod of God, which Moses used to effect various plagues in Egypt and the striking of the rock that provided water for the thirsting Israelites in the wilderness (Ex 17:5, 6). It is this same rod that is now called "THE LORD IS MY BANNER." This visible symbol was intended to illustrate graphically to all of Israel's warriors that the VICTORY OVER AMALEK BELONGED TO GOD. Israel could do nothing in themselves to defeat the Amalekites, but UNDER THE BANNER OF THE LORD, VICTORY WAS ASSURED." (from Hemphill, K: [The Names of God](#))

Exodus 17:10 And Joshua did as Moses told him, and fought against Amalek; and Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill.

AND JOSHUA DID AS MOSES TOLD HIM: Don't go by this phrase too quickly. Meditate on the cross references (Joshua 1:7, 8-note, Josh 1:11;12, 15) and ponder the significance of what Moses is recording about Joshua's character. **Obedience** is the "secret" for success and blessing in the spiritual life and in (spiritual) warfare. Are you being defeated by your "spiritual enemies" (whether the world, the flesh ~ indwelling SIN NATURE inherited from Adam or the devil)?

If so, then consider praying the prayer of David, the man after God's own heart (Ps 139:23, 24, Ps 51:10, 11, 12).

Remember that unconfessed sin in a believer's life gives Satan (really his minions) an opportunity (a toe hold or foot hold in our lives). (Eph 4:26, 47 -See **notes** Ep 4:26; 27)

Revival and renewal begins with reflection and repentance.

The writer of Hebrews warns us of the passing pleasures (Heb 11:25) and subtle deceit of our indwelling SIN nature (Heb 3:12, 13 - see **notes** He 3:12, 13, cf Song 2:15) so let us be quick to repent and seek the times of refreshing (Acts 3:19, 20) and be diligent to enter His rest (He 4:11, 12, 13 -see **notes** He 4:11; 12; 13).

Victory for the Christian today is not found in individual ingenuity but an INDIVIDUAL, our "*obedient Joshua*" (our Jesus, compare He 5:8, 9 - notes He 5:8; 9, 1John 5:4, 5) and our victory in Christ is contingent upon walking in the light (1Jn 1:6, 7, 8 cf Col 1:12,13-note, 2Cor 7:1-[notes](#), 1Jn 2:28, 3:2, 3, 2Pe 3:11-note; 2Pe 3:14-note), being surrendered to the Commander-in-chief's will (Ro 12:1-note, Ro 12:2-note, cf 1Cor 6:19, 20, Lk 22:42, John 4:34, 5:30).

AND FOUGHT AGAINST AMALEK: To be sure "*the battle is the LORD's*" (1Sa 17:47, 14:6, 2Chr 20:15, 16, 17, Ps 46:11, Zech 4:6, Pr 21:31 Ro 8:31,37) but as has been mentioned several times in these notes saints are responsible to "*fight the good fight of faith*" (1Ti 6:12). (2Ti 2:3,4 - See discussion of "Good Soldier" 2 Timothy 2:3-4)

The armies of Israel would fight with normal combat techniques, but the victory was assured because of God's power on His people's behalf. Therefore in the final analysis "*victory belongs to the LORD.*" (Pr 21:31).

J. Vernon McGee writes: Esau was a picture of the [flesh](#). As Israel could not overcome Amalek by their own efforts, neither can you nor I overcome the flesh by our own efforts. The flesh wars against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh. Paul explains it in Galatians 5:17 (notes), "For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please" This is the picture we have in the wilderness as Israel and Amalek war against each other." ([McGee, J V: Thru the Bible Commentary: Thomas Nelson](#))

Exodus 17:11 So it came about when Moses held his hand up, that Israel prevailed, and when he let his hand down, Amalek prevailed.

SO IT CAME ABOUT WHEN MOSES HELD HIS HAND UP THAT ISRAEL PREVAILED:

In Exodus so far the **rod of God** is the token of the **power of God**. When Moses used it, God demonstrated His power. To use the **rod of God** was to say that God did it. To fight without the rod was to face defeat. Using the rod of God was a way of submitting to and depending on the power of God in all areas of life. Israel's strength lay only in a continuous appeal to (and dependence on) the Lord's power as they fought. Moses upheld hands represent a symbol of appeal to God for help and enablement.

Nathan Stone explains that "It was the rod of God's mighty hand and outstretched arm, the rod of the Elohim. How significant is this use of the name denoting His creative glory, might, and sovereignty, the general name of God, the name especially used in relationship to the nations (represented here by Amalek) as distinguished from Jehovah in relationship especially to Israel! Then it is the Elohim here, with the definite article, the only Elohim, denoting that whether Amalek acknowledged it or not, He was God. It is this rod, as the banner of God, which brought the victory. ([Names of God](#))

AND WHEN HE LET HIS HAND DOWN AMALEK PREVAILED: As discussed above commentators, ancient and modern, almost unanimously consider this act of Moses an act of prayer (although to reiterate it is not specifically stated and so we must be Bereans). In any event, these changes in Moses' posture express an attitude of dependence upon God that determined the outcome of the battle and served to demonstrate the reality of this dependence to all of Israel's warriors. God had provided manna from heaven and water from the rock; now He provides deliverance from enemies.

Nathan Stone asks "What was the meaning then of Amalek's success when it was lowered and Israel's success when it was raised? It was to sharply emphasize and deeply impress upon Israel's warring soldiers and her watching, anxious host that upon God alone depended and to Him belonged the victory; that under His raised banner victory was always assured. No matter what the odds, then, for in Moses' own words five should chase a hundred and a hundred should chase ten thousand ([Lv 26:8](#)). That rod was the symbol and pledge of His presence and power and working." ([Names of God](#))

Alfred Edersheim - "This holding up of Moses' hands has been generally regarded as symbolical of prayer. But if that were all, it would be difficult to understand why it was absolutely needful to success that his hands should be always upheld, so that when they drooped, merely from bodily weariness, Amalek should have immediately prevailed. Moreover, it leaves unexplained the holding up of the rod towards heaven. In view of this difficulty it has been suggested by a recent commentator, that the object of holding up the hands was not prayer, but the uplifting of the God-given, wonder-working rod, as the banner of God, to which, while it waved above them, and only so long, Israel owed their victory. With this agrees the name of the memorial-altar, which Moses reared to perpetuate the event—Jehovah-nissi, "the Lord my banner." But neither does this explanation quite meet the statements of Scripture. Rather would we combine both the views mentioned. The rod which Moses held up was the banner of God—the symbol and the pledge of His presence and working; and he held it up, not over Israel, nor yet over their enemies, but towards heaven in prayer, to bring down that promised help in their actual contest. And so it ever is: Amalek opposes the advance of Israel; Israel must fight, but the victory is God's; Israel holds the rod of almighty power in the hand of faith; but that rod must ever be uplifted toward heaven in present application for the blessing secured by covenant-promise."

Exodus 17:12 But Moses' hands were heavy. Then they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat on it; and Aaron and Hur supported his hands, one on one side and one on the other. Thus his hands were steady until the sun set.

AND AARON AND HUR SUPPORTED (literally "*grasped securely*") HIS HANDS, ONE ON ONE SIDE AND ONE ON THE OTHER

- Isa 35:3 2Co 1:11 Php 1:19 1Th 5:25 Heb 12:12 Pr 27:17 Eccl 4:9, 10, 11, 12, Ro 15:30, 31, 32):

God's leaders have always depended on others to support them in their work. Today the church is a living dynamic body (Ep 1:22, 23, 4:4, 4:12 -See **notes** Ep 1:22; 23; 4:4; 4:12; Col 1:24-note) (not a dead static building, an organism not an organization) and **IF** the "**Aaron's**" and the "**Hur's**" in the body are poor stewards (1Pe 4:10-note) and fail to utilize their spiritual gifts (1Co 12:4,7,11,18, Ro 12:3ff-notes), both the "common good" (1Co 12:7-note) of the body of Christ and the "glory of God" (1Pe 4:10, 11-see notes 1Pe 4:10; 11) will be adversely affected (and this may account for why the "Amalekites [have] prevailed" in so many churches).

Hur is mentioned for the first time and is mentioned again with Aaron in Exodus 24:14, where Moses placed both of them in charge of the camp while he and Joshua went up into the mountain of God.

If you are a leader or potential leader (and the truth is that we all are "*leaders*" to someone in our life) these truths in Exodus teach us that God's leaders depend on others to support them in their work. Moses like Paul centuries later (see Ro 16 and comments on all those who "helped hold up" Paul's hands in ministry) recognized that he could not carry out his ministry alone. Leaders are made more effective by those who help them.

In Proverbs 27:17 Solomon reminds us that as "Iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another."

In Ecclesiastes 4:9, 10, 11, 12 Solomon declares that...

Two are better than one because they have a good return for their labor. For if either of them falls, the one will lift up his companion. But woe to the one who falls when there is not another to lift him up. Furthermore, if two lie down together they keep warm, but how can one be warm alone? And if one can overpower him who is alone, two can resist him. A cord of three strands is not quickly torn apart.

The great apostle Paul never ministered alone. He shared his first leadership opportunity in the church at Antioch with four other men, and throughout the following years of his missionary travels, he always had companions. The only time we find him alone in Acts is for a brief period in Athens ([Acts 17- notes](#)).

THUS HIS HANDS WERE STEADY UNTIL THE SUN SET - This is first use of "**steady**" in Bible, which is interesting because not infrequently the first use of a word in Scripture lays the groundwork for subsequent uses.

Steady is the Hebrew word ['emuwnah](#) which is used 48x in NASB and is most often translated "**faithfulness**" as for example in the description of God our Rock in (Deut 32:4 -- Click here for Scripture chain & chart - would make a great Sunday School series). So here in the description of Moses' "steady hands" and his "steady supporters" we have a great word picture of faithfulness -- that which is firm, steady, reliable, dependable.

As the **Net Bible** notes

"There may be a double entendre here; on the one hand it simply says that his hands were stayed so that Israel might win, but on the other hand it is portraying Moses as steady, firm, reliable, faithful. The point is that whatever God commissioned as the means of the agency of power--- to Moses a rod, to the Christians the Spirit --- the people of God had to know that the victory came from God alone"

The **faith** and **perseverance** of this tired but true triad represent a clear illustration of the truth stated in (He 6:11, 12-see notesHe 6:11; 12) by which the saints of all ages are to lay hold of God's promises and ultimately His victory over "the Amalekites". Joshua learned this lesson and at the command of Jehovah performed almost an identical role for his army taking Ai as Moses had done for Joshua ([Joshua 8:18](#))

"Then Jehovah said to Joshua, '[Stretch](#) out the [javelin](#) that is in your hand toward Ai, for I will give it into your hand.'" So Joshua [stretched](#) out (same Hebrew verb used repeatedly of Moses' outstretched staff in Exodus) the javelin that was in his hand toward the city....26 For Joshua did not withdraw his hand with which he stretched out the javelin UNTIL he had utterly destroyed all the inhabitants of Ai."

So as long as Joshua's javelin was stretched out Israel was victorious, eventually blotting out Ai. Let us learn the basic spiritual warfare principle that Joshua had learned so well -- that is, that strength and success in battle against God's foes lay not in the "*arm of flesh*" (2 Chr 32:8) but in a constant and complete dependence upon Jehovah's power.

Expositor's Bible Commentary notes that the staff raised in Moses' hand "was not merely for psychological effect to inspire the troops every time they glanced up the hill (S.R. Hirsch, *The Pentateuch: Exodus 2d ed.* [Gateshead, Eng.: Judaica, 1973], 2:233). Nor does the text specifically claim that Moses prayed while his hands were raised (the more traditional explanation). Rather, Moses' outstretched arms primarily symbolized his appeal to God. He had commanded Moses on previous occasions, "Stretch out your hand" (*neteh 'eth -yadeka*) with the staff (Ex 9:22, 23; 10:12, 13; 14:16). Yet in Ex 10:21, 22 only the hand was stretched out. This staff was no magic wand. Like all OT institutions, the external and visible symbol meant nothing unless (1) it was divinely appointed and (2) the obedient use of the external form was accompanied by the internal and invisible motions of the heart and spirit of a man. Thus the prophetic-symbolic action of the constantly upraised hands did signal the fervent prayers of the heart of Moses as he witnessed the battle. As Bush aptly remarks, "The whole narrative ... conclusively shows that God designed to teach Israel that the hand of Moses, with whom [Israel] had just been chiding, contributed more to their safety than their own hands; his rod more than their weapons." Finally the lengthy battle came to an end, with Joshua as victor." ([Gaebelein, F. Editor: Expositor's Bible Commentary OT 7 Volume Set: Books: Zondervan Publishing](#))

It is also interesting that even as Moses built an altar after the victory, Joshua likewise built an altar ([Josh 8:30](#)) and

"wrote there on the stones a copy of the law of Moses, which he had written, in the presence of the sons of Israel" ([Josh 8:34](#)).

Exodus 17:13 So Joshua overwhelmed Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword.

SO JOSHUA OVERWHELMED (Mowed down (RSV) disabled, weakened, prostrated, Septuagint = "put to flight, routed") The verb "**overwhelmed**" is used elsewhere to describe how man dies and is powerless (Job 14:10; Isa 14:12).

AMALEK AND HIS PEOPLE WITH THE EDGE OF THE SWORD: It is not stated that he gained the victory because of his striving, ingenuity or courage (all of which doubtless were present). Joshua gained the victory because **Jehovah-nissi granted him the victory** and this truth we must all likewise remember. Even though we are beneficiaries of victories over the "Amalekites" (flesh, the world and the devil) and even often are credited with those victories, the victory ultimately belongs to the Lord...we would not have "overwhelmed" them unless the Lord had been on our side.

Paul expresses a similar thought in these verses "Not that we are adequate in ourselves to consider anything as coming from ourselves, but **our adequacy is from God**" (2Cor 3:5) and "in all these things **we overwhelmingly conquer THROUGH Him** Who loved us." (Ro 8:37-see **note** Ro 8:37).

The Jewish NT paraphrases (Romans 8:37+) as "No, in all these things we are **superconquerors**, through the one who has loved us."

Vine's says literally this phrase in (Romans 8:37+) is "we are **hyper-conquerors**," i.e., we are pre-eminently victorious" **IN** and **THROUGH CHRIST**.

Francis Schaeffer echoes this truth noting that "God was teaching these people a serious lesson in their first warfare, and no one was to learn it better than Joshua the general. In the midst of battle, is one to fight? Yes. To be a good general? Yes. But when everything is done, the power is to be understood as God's, not man's." And all God's people said "Amen!"

Another aspect of God's training of Joshua was that he was able to serve under Moses and observe that humble man's commitment to Jehovah and Jehovah's unwavering commitment to Moses. God reaffirmed this same unwavering commitment to Joshua some 40 years later telling him that: "No man will be able to stand before you all the days of your life. Just as I have been with Moses, I will be with you; I will not fail you or forsake you." (Joshua 1:5).

THOUGHT - Each of us needs a relationship with a "Moses" (or a "Paul") who can serve as our model. We each need to see in others both faithfulness to God and God's faithfulness to them. Who is your Moses or Paul beloved?

Future leaders need to learn how to wait on (trust) the Lord (Isa 40:31). Often their followers don't always see as far as they see or have the faith that they have. The vision of future victory is what motivates a true leader (cf Heb 11:1, 2, 8, 9, 10, 13, 14, 15, 16) but, as we saw in Exodus 16, Israel, too often was looking back to the **appeal of the world** and not forward toward **the promises of God**.

An interesting observation is that the first victory by Israel in battle was over the Amalekites but their first defeat in battle was also at the hands of the Amalekites (Nu 14:39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45). For insight into how to gain the victory over "the Amalekites" in our life you might want to do a simple inductive Bible study comparing these two accounts. Why was their overwhelming victory in one setting and utter defeat in another setting against the same enemy? Dear saint, may the Spirit of God open the eyes of your heart, so that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe.

Exodus 17:14 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Write this in a book as a memorial, and recite it to Joshua, that I will utterly blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven."

THEN THE LORD SAID TO MOSES WRITE THIS IN A BOOK AS A MEMORIAL (reminder) (1Sa 12:24):

- See article on [Memorial](#)

This is the first reference to writing an official record in a scroll or book. This particular "entry" was to be especially for the purpose of

remembering the victory in the very first battle in which they nationally engaged (of the memorial in Ex 12:14

"Now this day [LORD's Passover] will be a memorial to you, and you shall celebrate it as a feast to the LORD; throughout your generations you are to celebrate it as a permanent ordinance.").

The truth that God alone grants victory over one's enemies was as important for Israel to know as the fact that God alone was to be their source of food or water in the desert. And so too the church corporate and individual believers need to recall these foundational truths to mind.

The battle against the Amalekites was not won by Israel's cunning or might but by the Lord's strength. The written word was to be a continual reminder of this fact even as the Bible today is to be to us a "memorial" of God's strength, sufficiency and ultimate triumph over all evil (be it flesh, world or devil). How important therefore to saturate our minds with the truth about Jehovah Nissi.

THOUGHT - Do you write down "memorials" commemorating God's faithfulness - His Hand in those things He has done in your life so that in years to come you might look back and be reminded of His faithfulness? And just as importantly that you might be able to pass on to your children that they might see in "real life" the faithfulness of God to watch over His children.

AND RECITE IT TO JOSHUA - Literally in Hebrew "recite" means "to put in the ear". The KJV is translates it as to "rehearse it in the ears of Joshua". Young's Literal is the most literal translating it "set it in the ears of Joshua".

The defeat of the Amalekites was something God wanted Joshua to remember. Why? **John Calvin** reflects on the value of memorials explaining "lest he should faint under the many difficulties which awaited him. For nothing could better support him with invincible firmness than the recollection of this history, from whence he might be assured that the people would ever be victorious under the auspices of God." And the same holds true in your life, child of the Living God.

As Moses' "assistant" for many years (Joshua 24:13), Joshua stayed with his master and served him faithfully. God's pattern for leadership is summarized in (Mt 25:21 "*His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful slave; you were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things, enter into the joy of your master.'*"), and that pattern remains the same -- when we prove ourselves faithful as servants over a few things, then God can make us "rulers" over many things. Joshua was able to give orders because he had learned how to take orders. Have you?

THAT I WILL UTTERLY BLOT OUT THE MEMORY OF AMALEK FROM UNDER HEAVEN

- Deut 25:19, Nu 24:20, 1Sa15:2, 3

God in a somber "I Will" declaration predicts Amalek's final, complete and utter demise.

Amalek, a descendant of Esau, as discussed above is a picture of the flesh, the evil, corrupt, Adamic nature of man interminably bent on rebellion against God and His people. As Israel could not overcome Amalek by their own efforts, neither can you nor I overcome the flesh by our own efforts in this battle which is from "generation to generation" (Gal 5:17-note, 1Pe 2:11).

The very strong and graphic Hebrew word "**utterly blot out**" (**machah**) ([4229](#)) is used 35 times in the NASB, the first time in [Genesis 6:7](#) in God's famous decree upon the sinful world...

"Jehovah said, "I will **blot out** man whom I have created from the face of the land."

There are 2 other uses of "machah" in Exodus, where we find Moses speaking after Israel has sinned against God by forming an idolatrous golden calf...

"But now, if Thou wilt, forgive their sin and if not, please **blot me out** from Thy book which Thou hast written!" and Jehovah said to Moses, "Whoever has sinned against Me, I will **blot him out** of My book." ([Ex 32:32-33](#))

Referring again to the Amalekites God instructs His people...

"you shall **blot out** (machah) the memory of Amalek from under heaven; you must not forget". ([Dt 25:19](#))

David uses "machah" twice in one of his most famous Psalms in which he appeals to God...

"According to the greatness of Thy compassion **blot out** my transgressions...Hide Thy face from my sins and **blot out** all my iniquities." ([Psalms 51:1,9](#))

And finally to help you get a sense for the meaning of this strong Hebrew verb machah, observe three picturesque uses in one

verse in which God is prophesying certain judgment upon faithless Jerusalem...

"And I will stretch over Jerusalem the line of Samaria and the plummet of the house of Ahab, and I will wipe Jerusalem as one wipes a dish, wiping it and turning it upside down." (2Ki 21:13)

Note that the Septuagint (LXX) translates "machah" with the Greek verb **exaleipho** (1813) (derived from **ek** =out + **aleipho** = wipe) which literally means to wash or wipe out completely. The picture is to cause something to cease by obliterating all evidence.

As you have observed the uses of machah, you now have a good sense for what God will do to Amalek and what He commands Israel to do to them in (Deut 25:19). As mentioned earlier, again we see God's sovereignty over Amalek juxtaposed with man's responsibility to blot out Amalek.

Now apply this truth to the "Amalekites" in your life. In this life we will never be able to completely wipe out "the world, the flesh or the devil" but we are called to continually "fight the good fight of faith" (1Ti 1:18,6:18, 2Ti 4:7-note) knowing that in eternity future God will completely **blot out** all of the "Amalekites" forever. Hallelujah!

Exodus 17:15 And Moses: built an altar, and named it The LORD is My Banner;

AND MOSES BUILT AN ALTAR (cf Noah, Abram, Isaac in Ge 8:20; 12:7; 26:25; 33:20; 35:1):

See article on [Altar](#)

Compare similar action by Jacob building an altar and naming it "**EI-Elohe-Israel**" (Ge 33:20), the "**mighty God of Israel**".

The **ALTAR** became an anthropomorphism (an interpretation of what is not human or personal in terms of human or personal characteristics) for God. Note that when Israel murmured and failed God, the name commemorated the incident or the outcome of their failure (Ex 17:7 [Ex 17:1-7]). When they were blessed with success, the naming praised God.

As **Sammy Tippit** an evangelist from San Antonio, Texas writes

Our banner must not be our ministries, our denominations, our programs or our methods. Our banner must be Jehovah - Nissi. Moses built an altar and called it Jehovah - Nissi. Perhaps you need to build an altar in your heart and call it Jehovah - Nissi. Allow Him to be your rallying point. He alone gives victory. If you find yourself discouraged in the midst of spiritual battles, then you will always be able to return to that altar and find the source of victory." (If you would like to catalyze the reigniting of the "fire" on the altar of your heart, see **Fire in Your Heart by Sammy Tippit**)

Calvin echoes this thought that Moses gave God the glory (not himself, not Joshua, not Israel's valiant warriors), so that Israel who might have been

"inflated by their good success, should not boast of their own strength, but glory only in God."

Torrey's Topic Altars

- Designed for sacrifice -Exodus 20:24
- To be made of earth, or unhewn stone -Exodus 20:24,25; Deuteronomy 27:5,6
- Of brick, hateful to God -Isa 65:3
- Natural rocks sometimes used as -Judges 6:19, 20, 21; 13:19,20
- Were not to have steps up to them -Exodus 20:26
- For idolatrous worship, often erected on roofs of houses -2 Kings 23:12; Jeremiah 19:13; 32:29
- Idolaters planted groves near -Judges 6:30; 1 Kings 16:32,33; 2 Kings 21:3
- The Jews not to plant groves near -Deuteronomy 16:21
- For idolatrous worship, to be destroyed -Exodus 34:13; Deuteronomy 7:5
- Probable origin of inscriptions on -Deuteronomy 27:8

MENTIONED IN SCRIPTURE

- Of Noah -Genesis 8:20
- Of Abraham -Genesis 12:7,8; 13:18; 22:9
- Of Isaac -Genesis 26:25
- Of Jacob -Genesis 33:20; 35:1,3,7
- Of Moses -Exodus 17:15; 24:4
- Of Balaam -Numbers 23:1,14,29
- Of Joshua -Joshua 8:30,31
- Of the temple of Solomon -2 Chronicles 4:1,19
- Of the second temple -Ezra 3:2,3
- Of Reubenites, etc, east of Jordan -Joshua 22:10
- Of Gideon -Judges 6:26,27
- Of the people of Israel -Judges 21:4
- Of Samuel -1 Samuel 7:17
- Of David -2 Samuel 24:21,25
- Of Jeroboam at Bethel -1 Kings 12:33
- Of Ahaz -2 Kings 16:10-12
- Of the Athenians -Acts 17:23

For burnt-offering -Exodus 27:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8

For incense -Exodus 30:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6

Protection afforded by -1 Kings 1:50,51

Afforded no protection to murderers -Exodus 21:14; 1 Kings 2:18-34

AND NAMED IT THE LORD IS MY BANNER(ensign, standard, flag) (Jehovah-Nissi) (

cp Isa 11:10,12 where **signal** = **Banner** = **Messiah**):

This is the only use of this specific name Jehovah Nissi in Scripture.

Note also that Moses names the altar rather than God (cf Ge 22:14 where Abraham names Mt Moriah "Jehovah jireh"). The idea expressed seems to be that Jehovah Himself is the rallying point for His people. We have our victory not through our own efforts but through Christ alone (Jn 16:33; 1Jn 2:13, 14; 5:4, 5). When the Israelites fought the Amalekites at Rephidim, Moses held up his hand, thus becoming a living banner symbolizing God's presence to help His people win the victory. The Hebrew word translated "**Banner**" is related to the word translated "**standard**" in (Nu 21:8, 9) and is used for the "**pole**" on which the bronze serpent was placed, this banner providing a picture of Jesus lifted up on the Cross to heal from the "bite of the serpent" (Jn 3:14,15) having being made sin for us (2Cor 5:21). Tragically what was meant to be a symbol to point to the God Who alone heals in the Messiah's fully satisfactory (propitiatory) death on Calvary, soon became an idolatrous image that the people ironically named **Nehushtan** ("a mere piece of brass" or a "worthless piece of bronze") even sinking to such a level of depravity as to offer incense to the "worthless piece of brass"! This pagan practice of idolatrous "standard" worship lasted for 760 years until Hezekiah broke into pieces by Hezekiah:

He removed the high places and broke down the sacred pillars and cut down the Asherah. He also broke in pieces the bronze serpent that Moses had made, for until those days the sons of Israel burned incense to it; and it was called **Nehushtan**. (2Kings 18:4)

Since the word **Banner** today suggests cloth, the connection with the Hebrew understanding may be missed. For example, in ancient times, a spear could serve as a **standard** in battle, with or without bits of cloth tied to it. Later, a **staff** might have a device on it to mark the rallying point for troops. In the ancient world, these were sometimes images or signs of the gods.

Moses' staff is the ensign to which Joshua's army could look and that symbolized God's saving power. Moses declares that God Himself is the Standard, the Ensign of His people.

The Septuagint (LXX) has an interesting Greek phrase **kurios mou kataphuge** to translate the name **Jehovah nissi**. This Greek phrase is literally the **Lord my Refuge** (my safe retreat, my sure refuge). This same Greek word, **kataphuge**, (which is not found in NT) is used 19 times in the Septuagint translation of the OT and most of these uses refer to God Himself. And so we see kataphuge used to translate the following descriptions of God...

- **fortress** (Ps 18:2, Ps 31:3, Ps 71:3, Ps 91:2, Ps 144:2)
- **hiding place** (Ps 32:7)
- **refuge** (2Sa 22:3, Ps 46:1, Ps 59:16, Jer 16:19)
- **stronghold** (Ps 9:9)
- **dwelling place** (Ps 90:1)

Here is a devotional note on "Jehovah Nissi" from "**God is Enough**":

Nothing is more abundantly proved in the Bible than that the Lord will fight for us if we will let Him. All He asks of us is to be still and let Him fight for us. This is the only sort of spiritual conflict that is ever successful. But we are very slow to learn this. When temptations come, instead of handing the battle over to the Lord we summon all our forces to fight them ourselves. We believe, perhaps, that the Lord is somewhere near, and if the worst comes to worst, He will step in to help us. But for the most part we feel that we ourselves and we only must do all the fighting. Our method of fighting consists generally in a series of repentings, resolutions and promises, weary struggles for victory, and then failing again—over and over. Each time we tell ourselves that now at last we will have the victory, and each time we fail even worse than before. This may go on for weeks, months, or even years, and no real or permanent deliverance ever comes. God has told us to cease from our own efforts and hand our battles over to Him.

In Israel's first battle with the Amalekites war was waged as instructed by Moses (Joshua on ground/Moses on hill) and God granted victory. In Israel's second recorded battle the enemy was again the Amalekites but this time their efforts brought a disastrous defeat. What was the difference? As alluded to in the devotional when we attempt the battle in our own strength as Israel did the passage below we too will be defeated.

In [Numbers 14](#), we read that in an expression of their unbelief, Israel refused to go into the promised land. Then we read of their response upon hearing God's decree ('Surely you shall not come into the land in which I swore to settle you, except Caleb the son of Jephunneh and Joshua the son of Nun' Numbers 14:30):

In the morning, however, they rose up early and went up to the ridge of the hill country, saying, "Here we are; we have indeed sinned, but we will go up to the place which the LORD has promised." But Moses said, "Why then are you transgressing the commandment of the LORD, when it will not succeed? "Do not go up, lest you be struck down before your enemies, for the LORD is not among you. "For the Amalekites and the Canaanites will be there in front of you, and you will fall by the sword, inasmuch as you have turned back from following the LORD. And the LORD will not be with you." But they went up heedlessly to the ridge of the hill country; neither the ark of the covenant of the LORD nor Moses left the camp. Then the Amalekites and the Canaanites who lived in that hill country came down, and struck them and beat them down as far as Hormah. ([Numbers 14:40-45](#))

The Theological Wordbook of the OT adds the following note on the meaning of the 20 OT uses of the Hebrew word for "**BANNER**" = "**NES**" ("nicci") (signal pole, standard, ensign, banner, sign, sail, warning):

"In the OT, *nēs* generally means a rallying point or standard which drew people together for some common action or for the communication of important information. This usually happened on a high or conspicuous place within the camp or community. There, a signal pole, sometimes with an ensign attached, could be raised as a point of focus or object of hope....People would rally together around a *nēs* for various purposes, one of the most important being the gathering of troops for war. The prophetic materials particularly emphasize this use of the standard. Isa 5:26 pictures God raising a standard among the nations, signaling Assyrian warriors for muster against sinful Israel. The trumpet was often used as a war alarm to summon soldiers around the *nēs*." ([Harris, R. L., Harris, R. L., Archer, G. L., & Waltke, B. K. Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament Moody Press](#))

Jeremiah says, "Set up a **standard** on the earth, blow the trumpet among the nations for war against her" ([Jer 51:27](#); [see also](#) Jer 4:21; Isa 18:3).

The **standard** was usually raised on a mountain or other high place (Isa 13:2; 18:3; 30:17). There, public proclamations could be made (Jer 50:2). Soldiers deserting the **standard** in panic (Isa 31:9) signaled defeat. When a **standard** was raised toward a city, it was a sign for its residents to "flee for safety" before the attack (cf. Jer 4:6)....The word *nēs* is also used in the prophets in connection with the return to Zion.

An **ensign** is to be raised over the nations (Isa 62:10) and they will bring the sons and daughters of Zion back to her (Isa 49:22). It is not surprising that Isaiah, the Christological prophet par excellence, personifies **nēs**. He says "in that day the root of Jesse shall

stand as an **ensign** to the peoples; him shall the nations seek" (Isa 11:10; 11:12). So Israel's Messianic king will be lifted up (cf. Jn 3:14; Phil 2:9-note) that all men might rally around him.

The Pentateuch employs **nēs** four times. When the Amalekites were defeated (Ex 17:15), Moses built an altar to commemorate the victory. Realizing that the Lord was the Banner around which Israel had rallied, he called the altar "Jehovah nissi" (the lord is my banner). Later on in the wilderness, Moses lifted up among the people a bronze serpent set upon a pole (**nēs**) (Nu 21:8, 9). This rallying point of healing and life became a fitting object-lesson of something greater to come (cf. Jn 3:14, 15). **nēs** is also employed in Numbers in the sense of "**sign**" or "**warning**" (Nu 26:10)."

BANNER - in the International Standard Bible Encyclopedia

BANNER - ban'-er (ENSIGN, STANDARDS): The English word "banner" is from *banderia*, Low Latin, meaning a banner (compare *bandum*, Latin, which meant first a "band," an organized military troop, and then a "flag"). It has come to mean a flag, or standard, carried at the head of a military band or body, to indicate the line of march, or the rallying point, and it is now applied, in its more extended significance, to royal, national, or ecclesiastical "banners" also. We find it applied sometimes to a streamer on the end of a lance, such as is used by the Arab sheik today. "Banner" occurs in the following significant Old Testament passages:

(1) in the singular, "Lift ye up a banner upon the high mountain" (Isa 13:2 the King James Version); "a banner to them that fear thee" (Ps 60:4); and

(2) in the plur., "In the name of our God we will set up our banner" (Ps 20:5); "terrible as an army with banner" (Song 6:4).

1. Military Ensigns among the Hebrews:

The Hebrews, it would seem, like the Assyrians, the Egyptians, and other ancient nations, had military ensigns. As bearing upon this question, a very significant passage is that found in Nu 2:2: "The children of Israel shall encamp every man by his own standard, with the ensigns of their fathers' houses." "Standard-bearer" in Isa 10:18 the King James Version, "They shall be as when a standard-bearer fainteth," is not a case in point, but is to be rendered as in the Revised Version, margin, "as when a sick man pineth away."

In this noted passage a distinction seems intentionally made (another view is held by some) between "the ensigns of their fathers' houses" (literally, "signs"; compare Ps 74:4, where the reference is thought by some today to be to the standards of Antiochus' army), and "the standards" of the four great divisions of the Hebrew tribes in the wilderness (compare the "banner" of Song 2:4 and 6:4,10).

2. A Distinction with a Difference:

The relation of these to the "standard" of Nu 21:8 f (Hebrew *nec*, the King James Version and the Revised Version (British and American) "standard") is by no means clear. The word *nec*, here translated "standard," seems to have meant at first a pole set up on an eminence as a signal for mustering troops (compare "mast" Isa 30:17 the English Revised Version, margin). But it occurs frequently in the prophets both in this literal and original sense, and in the figurative or derived sense of a rallying point for God's people (see Isa 5:26; 11:10; Jer 4:21 and elsewhere). Here the rendering in English Versions of the Bible alternates between "ensign" and "banner".-George B. Eager

Exodus 17:16 and he said, "The LORD has sworn; the LORD will have war against Amalek from generation to generation."

The difficulty of the Hebrew text permits an alternative translation: "a hand is upon/toward/against the throne/banner of Yahweh," This gives the sense of supplication, or of taking an oath.

Contextually, the significance is clear, whatever the translation adopted: The ongoing problem with Amalek was not merely one nation hostile toward another, it was a war between God and Amalek, and thus between God's people and Amalek. The Lord here declares perpetual war against Amalek and the Book of Esther ([see above](#)) relates the last recorded battle in that war (see also 1Sa 15:32; 30:1-10; 1Chr 4:43). It is interesting that "Israel My Glory" (published by the Friends of Israel Ministry) lists this altercation with the Amalekites as the one of the first examples of "anti-Semitism" in Scripture.

Francis Schaeffer has this interesting insight on the fact that it was Jehovah Who would have war against Amalek explaining that this "indicates that the Amalekites understood something of the fact that they were fighting not only against the Israelites, but also

against the God who stood behind the Israelites. One can question how much knowledge they had, but their actions remind me of 20th-century men who understand that what they are really fighting against is at least the concept of the Judeo-Christian religion and the culture which was based upon it.

In summary, as alluded to several times in this study of Jehovah Nissi, the phrase "war against Amalek from generation to generation" is a picture of the ongoing warfare every redeemed sinner experiences with his or her "Amalekite", especially the flesh nature, part of the process referred to as sanctification. (Click for an explanation of the relationship between salvation, sanctification and glorification)

Paul alludes to this struggle explaining that

the **flesh** (like an Amalekite continually) sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh for these are (continually) in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please. (Gal 5:17+)

Peter exhorts us to prepare for a lifelong war writing...

"Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers (adopt the mindset of an alien) to (continually) abstain from fleshly lusts, which (continually) wage war (Greek word here gives us our English "strategize" -- does this give you a picture of the assaults waged by your indwelling sin nature?) against the soul." (see note 1 Peter 2:11)

BE KILLING SIN OR IT BE KILLING YOU

The great Puritan theologian **John Owen** covered the topic of our life long war against sin in his treatise [Mortification of Sin in Believers](#) writing that

Mortification abates [sin's] force, but doth not change its nature. Grace changeth the nature of man, but nothing can change the nature of sin....Destroyed it may be, it shall be, but cured it cannot be....If it be not overcome and destroyed, it will overcome and destroy the soul. And herein lies no small part of its power....It is never quiet, [whether it is] conquering [or] conquered. **Do you mortify; do you make it your daily work?** be always at it whilst you live; cease not a day from this work; be killing sin or it will be killing you.

Every honest Christian will testify that becoming a believer does not erase the tendency to sin and that there is a constant need to **blot out the Amalekites**. The new (and old) believer still derives pleasure from sin (Heb 11:25^{note}). We all continue to struggle with sinful desires. Those evil predispositions and habits are so deeply ingrained in the flesh nature that we continue **spiritual warfare** against them even into old age! Only glorification sets us totally, gloriously free from the presence and pleasure of sin! But in the meantime, all genuine believers are capable of temporarily (but not **habitually**) falling into appalling, shameful sins. The truth is, we each commit sins daily. Our thoughts are not what they ought to be. Our time is often wasted on frivolous and worldly pursuits as the Amalekites maraud our poorly protected "stragglers in the rear". And our hearts may even grow cold to the things of God. Why does all this happen if sin's dominion is broken?

We do not have time or space to deal with this critical topic in this discussion of Jehovah-nissi, but for those who have the time we would refer you to the more extensive treatment of this critical subject in a multipart paper entitled, [The Actual Practice of Mortification](#) by **Greg Herrick** based on the original work (which is somewhat more difficult to read because of the archaic English) by **John Owens**, [Of the Mortification of Sin in Believers](#) (aka "blotting out the Amalekites")

RELATED RESOURCES ON SPIRITUAL WARFARE

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- Ephesians 6:10
- Ephesians 6:11
- Ephesians 6:12
- Ephesians 6:13
- Ephesians 6:14
- Ephesians 6:15

- Ephesians 6:16
- Ephesians 6:17
- Ephesians 6:18

RESISTING THE ROARING LION

- Exposition of 1Peter 5:8
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- Ephesians 6:14: SPIRITUAL WARFARE, PT 3
- Ephesians 6:15-16 SPIRITUAL WARFARE, PT 4
- Ephesians 6:17: SPIRITUAL WARFARE, PT 5
- Ephesians 6:12-13 SPIRITUAL WARFARE, PT 6
- Ephesians 6:18: SPIRITUAL WARFARE, PT 7

THE METAPHOR OF THE CHRISTIAN SOLDIER

- Soldier Illustrations
- Exposition of 2 Timothy 2:3-4
- Three Kinds of Soldiers - Ten Principles of Warfare
- Roman Soldier by Edward Gibbon (Decline & Fall of Roman Empire)
- The Roman Soldier - Description from Jewish Historian Josephus
- A Few Soldier Stories and Sermons

John Piper - excellent material on general subject of mortification of sin, etc

- [The Chief Design of My Life: Mortification and Universal Holiness](#)
- [When the "Want To" and the "Ought To" Don't Match](#)
- [Hope-Giving Promises for Triumph over Sin](#)
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John Walvoord's Exposition on Sin

- [Thirty-Three Words for Sin in the NT - Pt 1](#)
- [Thirty-Three Words for Sin in the NT - Pt 2](#)
- [Thirty-Three Words for Sin in the NT - Pt 3](#)

Tiny Evils, Big Fall

Dead flies putrefy the perfumer's ointment...

so does a little folly to one respected for wisdom and honor. --Eccl 10:1

It started as a seedling on the slopes of the Colorado Rockies some 500 years ago. For centuries it had stood tall, enduring violent winds, lightning strikes, blizzards, even avalanches. Now, however, the once-towering tree is just a mound of decaying wood.

What caused its demise? A horde of beetles had attacked it, gnawing away until that skyscraper of nature surrendered to those tiny pests and toppled over.

That's also the tragic story of many Christians. For long years they stood tall for God. They resisted temptations, weathered crises, and were bold in the strength divinely provided. But little sins began to eat away at their lives--little lies, little compromises with greed or lust, sins that gradually eroded their character. And suddenly they fell.

Song 2:15 states, "Catch us the foxes, the little foxes that spoil the vines." This colorful Old Testament verse should sound a loud alarm in our consciences. We must not tolerate the little evils that eat away at the roots of our lives. Otherwise, our once-strong witness for Christ will become a silenced casualty of sin. Let's confess those "tiny" evils to God now, before they lead to a big fall. --
Vernon C Grounds ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Nothing between, like worldly pleasure,
Habits of life, though harmless they seem,
Must not my heart from Him ever sever--
He is my all! There's nothing between. --Tindley

A big fall begins with a little stumble.

Similar Illustration - It was reported recently that an enormous pine tree in the mountains of Colorado had fallen victim to a pine beetle and died. According to locals, up to that point the tree was thought to be indestructible. It had survived fourteen lightning strikes and many years of Colorado winters, including avalanches and fires. But it was eventually brought down from within by a tiny insect that did its work silently. Compare the effect of "secret sin" in our heart. If you have one (or several), confess them to the Lord and seek His gift of repentance, that you might not be brought down by years of this sin "gnawing" at your soul.