

# Exodus 17 Commentary

PREVIOUS

NEXT

CLICK VERSE

To go directly to that verse

[Exodus 17:1](#)

[Exodus 17:2](#)

[Exodus 17:3](#)

[Exodus 17:4](#)

[Exodus 17:5](#)

[Exodus 17:6](#)

[Exodus 17:7](#)

[Exodus 17:8](#)

[Exodus 17:9](#)

[Exodus 17:10](#)

[Exodus 17:11](#)

[Exodus 17:12](#)

[Exodus 17:13](#)

[Exodus 17:14](#)

[Exodus 17:15](#)

[Exodus 17:16](#)

Irving Jensen ([Online](#)) - Used by Permission  
 Click to Enlarge  
[View Chuck Swindoll's chart of Exodus.](#)

Summary Chart of The Book of Exodus									
DELIVERANCE FROM OPPRESSION					PREPARATION FOR WORSHIP				
Redemption from Egypt Ex 1:1-18:27					Revelation from God Ex 19:1-40:38				
Getting Israel Out of Egypt					Getting Egypt Out of Israel!				
Narration					Legislation				
Birth of Moses Ex 1-2	Call of Moses Ex 3-6	Conflict with Pharaoh Ex 7-10	Exodus from Egypt Ex 11-12	Red Sea Crossed Ex 13-15	Journey To Sinai Ex 16-18	Law Given Ex 19-24	Tent Plan Ex 25-31	Idol Worship Ex 32-34	Tent Built Ex 35-40
Subjection			Redemption		Instruction				
Suffering and Liberation of People of God			Guidance of God		Worship of God				
Moses and Burdens of Israel		Pharaoh and Plagues Upon Egypt		Red Sea Deliverance	Wilderness Provision	Sinai Instructions			
Bondage and Oppression			Deliverance and Provision		Law Pattern and Construction				
Israel in Egypt Ex 1:1-13:16			Israel to Sinai Ex 13:17-18:27		Israel at Sinai Ex 19:1-40:38				
God's People Enduring Bondage			God's Grace Revealed in Redemption		God's Glory Manifested in Worship				

<b>Egypt</b> <b>430 Years</b> (15% of Exodus)			<b>Wilderness</b> <b>2 Months</b> (30% of Exodus)			<b>Mt Sinai</b> <b>10 Months</b> (55% of Exodus)		
<b>From</b>								<b>To</b>
<b>Groaning</b>								<b>Glory!</b>

[Jensen's Survey of the Old Testament - online](#)

[Click to Enlarge](#)

[Click for Excellent Map of Route of the Exodus](#)

[Click another Exodus from Egypt](#)

[Click for Events during the Sojourn at Kadesh-Barnea](#)

GENESIS	EXODUS
human effort and failure	divine power and triumph
word of promise	work of fulfillment
a people chosen	a people called
God's electing mercy	God's electing manner
revelation of nationality	realization of nationality

SUMMARY OF THE PENTATEUCH  
(from Believer's Study Bible)

**Exodus 17:1 Then all the congregation of the sons of Israel journeyed by stages from the wilderness of Sin, according to the command of the LORD, and camped at Rephidim, and there was no water for the people to drink.**

NET Exodus 17:1 The whole community of the Israelites traveled on their journey from the Desert of Sin according to the LORD's instruction, and they pitched camp in Rephidim. Now there was no water for the people to drink.

NLT Exodus 17:1 At the LORD's command, the whole community of Israel left the wilderness of Sin and moved from place to place. Eventually they camped at Rephidim, but there was no water there for the people to drink.

KJV Exodus 17:1 And all the congregation of the children of Israel journeyed from the wilderness of Sin, after their journeys, according to the commandment of the LORD, and pitched in Rephidim: and there was no water for the people to drink.

ESV Exodus 17:1 All the congregation of the people of Israel moved on from the wilderness of Sin by stages, according to the commandment of the LORD, and camped at Rephidim, but there was no water for the people to drink.

NIV Exodus 17:1 The whole Israelite community set out from the Desert of Sin, traveling from place to place as the LORD commanded. They camped at Rephidim, but there was no water for the people to drink.

- **Sin:** Ex 16:1 Nu 33:12-14
- **Rephidim:** Ex 17:8 19:2
- Exodus 17 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries



Wilderness of Sin (Red Marker) - Rephidim to Southwest  
Click to Enlarge

## A NO WATER TEST AT "RESTING PLACES"

**Rephidim** has the plural ending ("-im") and means something like "resting places." For context keep in mind they depart from the area in which manna and quail are first given to them, that is, the Wilderness of Sin.

Exodus 17 records two additional provisions by God for His people (1) water (Ex 17:1-7) and (2) victory over the enemy (Ex 17:8-16). God was demonstrating to the nation that He is capable not only of **nourishing** and **protecting** His people. These situations present us with a third narrative on the Lord's provision for Israel's needs in the desert and sadly a third grumbling episode!

**NET Note** - This is the famous story telling how the people rebelled against Yahweh when they thirsted, saying that Moses had brought them out into the wilderness to kill them by thirst, and how Moses with the staff brought water from the rock. As a result of this the name was called Massa and Meribah because of the testing and the striving. It was a challenge to Moses' leadership as well as a test of Yahweh's presence. The narrative in its present form serves an important point in the argument of the book. The story turns on the gracious provision of God who can give his people water when there is none available. The narrative is structured to show how the people strove. Thus, the story intertwines God's free flowing grace (ED: PUN OF WATER FLOWING FROM ROCK) with the sad memory of Israel's sins. The passage can be divided into three parts: the situation and the complaint (Ex 17:1-3), the cry and the miracle (Ex 17:4-6), and the commemoration by naming (Ex 17:7).

**Warren Wiersbe** introduces this section with the title "**Another Test**" (Ex 17:1-7). - You never solve your problems by blaming other people. Israel's real problem was unbelief and a desire to go back to the old life. Every difficulty you meet is an opportunity for testing yourself and trusting your Lord, for going forward or going backward. The rock pictures Jesus Christ who was smitten for us (1 Cor. 10:4) that we might have the living water of the Holy Spirit within (John 7:37-39+). (Wiersbe adds) "Israel had a long way to go before they would qualify as a godly nation. So far, every new trial they experienced only brought out the worst in them." (The Bible Exposition Commentary – Pentateuch)

**Rod Mattoon** - Since their departure from Egypt, the Hebrews have faced several trials. They needed to learn that their extremities were God's opportunities. A Blocking Sea was parted (ED: God [sovereignly](#) hardened Pharaoh's heart to pursue Israel - Ex 14:4-10, 16-20, 21, 22, 23-30, 31). Bitter water was purified (ED: Ex 15:22, 23, 24, 25, 26 = [Jehovah Rapha = The LORD your Healer](#)). Bread from Heaven was provided for their hunger (ED: Ex 16:3-30, 31). God has enrolled His people into the **School of Hard Knocks** to knock off the rough edges in their lives. Their classes are in **Faith 101**, and **Trials & Tribulations 401**. So far, they are not making very good grades. They are not learning their lessons well. Are you? God's people are faced again with another assignment, another trial and problem. They are running on empty.

**Wiersbe** - The congregation had thirsted before (Ex 15:22+) and God had met their needs, but, like people today, they forgot God's mercy. After all, if they were in the place of God's leading, it was His responsibility to take care of them. The people criticized Moses and murmured against God, a sin about which we are warned in 1 Cor. 10:1-12. They were actually "tempting (testing) the Lord" by their attitude, for they were saying that God did not care and that He would not help them. They were trying His patience by their repeated complaints. (Wiersbe Expository Outlines of the Old Testament)

**Then all the congregation of the sons of Israel journeyed by stages from the wilderness of Sin**([Wikipedia article](#); [See Map](#) - mentioned 4x = Ex 16:1, 17:1, Nu 33:11, 12) - They did not just pack up and make one major trip to Mount Sinai; they moved and camped at various places. In these stages Israel had "a pillar of cloud by day to lead them on the way, and in a pillar of fire by night to give them light, that they might travel by day and by night", which was a manifestation of God's [Shekinah glory](#) (Ex 13:21, 22+). In Ex 14:19+ the pillar is identified with God Himself, Moses recording that "The **Angel of God** (Whom I believe was the preincarnate Christ - see [Angel of the LORD](#)), who had been going before the camp of Israel, moved and went behind them; and the pillar of cloud moved from before them and stood behind them." God had freed them from slavery and now was guiding them to the inheritance He had prepared for Israel, the same pattern He uses in our lives beloved. Are you letting Him guide you as the hymn writer says "[Out of my bondage, sorrow, and night, Jesus, I come!](#) Jesus, I come! Into Thy freedom, gladness, and light, Jesus, I come to Thee!" Jehovah gave Israel these visible signs, just as He has given us His visible Word to show us the way as we trust and obey, for there is no other way to be happy in Jesus than to trust and obey!

**THOUGHT** - Just as He did for Israel, God still guides our **Starts** and our **Stops**! (especially if we yield to His Spirit). So now as believers we have the Spirit of Christ within us to lead us, Paul writing that "all who are **being led** ([present tense](#) = continually; [passive voice](#) = we must choose to yield to His leading =divine passive) led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God" (Ro 8:14+) and "if you **are led** ([present tense](#) = continually; [passive voice](#) again = divine passive) by the Spirit, you are not under the Law." (Gal 5:18+). In need of God's guidance today? Confess any known sins that might quench the Spirit (1 Th 5:19+) or grieve the Spirit (Eph 4:30+) Then take a moment and sing the great hymn [Guide me, O Thou great Jehovah](#) as your earnest prayer to God..

Guide me, O Thou great Jehovah,  
Pilgrim through this barren land.  
I am weak, but Thou art mighty;  
Hold me with Thy powerful hand.  
Bread of heaven, Bread of heaven,  
Feed me now and evermore;  
Feed me now and evermore.

Open now the crystal fountain,  
Whence the healing waters flow;  
**Let the fire and cloudy pillar**  
**Lead me all my journey through.**  
Strong Deliverer, Strong Deliverer,  
Be Thou still my Strength and Shield.  
Be Thou still my Strength and Shield.

When I tread the verge of Jordan,  
Bid my anxious fears subside; "  
Bear me thro' the swelling current,  
Land me safe on Canaan's side;  
Songs of praises, songs of praises  
I will ever give to Thee,  
I will ever give to Thee.

**NET Note on journeyed by stages** - Since the verb form (and therefore the derived noun) essentially means to pull up the tent pegs and move along, this verse would be saying that they traveled by stages, or, from place to place.

**Stages** (04550)(**massa** from **nasa** = to pull out tent pegs, break camp) breaking camp, a pulling up, setting out, a journey. The main idea of **massa** is that of a group of people gathering up movable property (perhaps with the picture of pulling out tent stakes) and setting out for a new geographical location. This is a permanent move of the household and property, as opposed to travel in general. It can denote the seasonal cyclic travel of pastoral nomads or the movement of a more sedentary population.

**Massa** - 12x in 11v - journey(1), journeys(7), order of march(1), set(2), stages(1). Gen. 13:3; Ex 17:1; Ex 40:36; Ex. 40:38; Nu 10:2; Nu 10:6; Nu 10:12; Nu 10:28; Nu 33:1; Nu 33:2; Dt. 10:11

**According to the command of the LORD**- In Ex 15:22 it says "Moses led Israel" but led there carries the sense of "caused" so there stop at Marah was no accident. Men's extremities are God's opportunities -- to show Himself faithful, good and kind to His creatures. Here it says command of the LORD, not at the **command** of Moses, their leader. Not after a vote of the elders. But based

on the wisdom of Jehovah, period! Literally this reads "at the mouth of Yahweh." (Septuagint has [rhema](#) for **command**). The text does not tell us exactly how this command was manifest -- was it an audible voice or was it the leading of the pillar by day and fire by night? Either way the Israelites were clearly directed here by the LORD. God led them to **Rephidim**, and knew along what was going to happen - so it is with our lives as well. Some of the places to which God brings us in our journey are difficult (even places that are named "rests" as was [Rephidim!](#)) Israel was truly following the leading of God.

**THOUGHT** - While all Israel clearly was not saved, here we see an important principle in their lives, one we all do well to imitate and emulate. Paul alludes to this in Ro 8:14<sup>+</sup> writing that "all who are (continually) being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God." In Galatians he says "t if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law.." (Gal 5:18+) Who is your leader in your day to day journey by stages?

**And camped at Rephidim** - Note that **Rephidim** was near the wilderness of Sinai as discerned from Exodus 19:2 ("they set out from **Rephidim**, they came to the **wilderness of Sinai**") and Nu 33:15 ("journeyed from **Rephidim** and camped in the **wilderness of Sinai**") and the **Horeb** (Sinai) range of mountains as noted in Ex 17:6 "I will stand before you there on the rock at**Horeb**."

We know from a more detailed itinerary in Numbers 33 that Israel also camped at Dophkah and Alush before they camped at Rephidim

They journeyed from the wilderness of Sin and camped at **Dophkah**. 13 They journeyed from **Dophkah** and camped at **Alush**. 14 They journeyed from **Alush** and camped at **Rephidim**; now it was there that the people had no water to drink. (Nu 33:12-14)

**Mattoon** has an interesting note - Notice the meaning of these three places. They remind us of the deeds of a baker as he prepares his bread. In this case, a Divine Baker. **Dophkah** = to knock or beat. **Alush** = to knead as dough. **Rephidim** = to spread out, to rest or support. God wanted **Rephidim** to be a place of rest and resting in His care. Beloved true rest comes from within and it is a gift from the Lord...As a baker prepares pies, bread, cakes, or cookies, God was preparing His people for the sweetness of His blessings. When the baker prepares to cook, he will pound the dough, knead it, roll it out flat and cut it. It is interesting to note that before the Hebrews arrived at Rephidim they went to Dophkah, then Alush, and then Rephidim. ([Treasures from Exodus, Volume 2](#))

In [providentially](#) presenting Israel with a "no water test" God's design was to wean them of every earthly dependence, to teach them to trust Him, but sadly their response was one of murmuring and of questioning the faithfulness of God. In Deuteronomy Moses writes

"He led you through the great and terrible wilderness, with its fiery serpents and scorpions and **thirsty ground where there was no water**; He brought water for you out of the Rock of flint. (Dt 8:15)

**Rephidim** ([07508](#))(**rephidim**) means resting place or camping place and was a station in the wilderness between the Wilderness of Sin and the Wilderness of Sinai. Rephidim has been variously identified with the locations Wadi Refayid and [Wadi Feiran](#), but this is speculation.

**Rephidim** - 5x in OT - Exod. 17:1; Exod. 17:8; Exod. 19:2; Num. 33:14; Num. 33:15

#### **Related Resources:**

- Wikipedia on [Rephidim](#)

**F B Meyer** wrote - IF you essay to lead men, you will sooner or later come to a**Rephidim**. We are distinctly told that it was according to the commandment of the Lord that the children of Israel journeyed by stages from the wilderness of Sin, and pitched in Rephidim. The character of the worker is as dear to God as the work he is doing; and no pains must be spared by the Divine Artificer to complete the design to which He has set his hand. Do not be surprised then, Christian worker, if you find yourself landed in Rephidim. There are lessons to be learnt there of incalculable worth. (See the full chapter in [Moses: Servant of God](#))

### **A NO WATER TEST**

At Marah there was at least water for God to sweeten, but now the people see no water anywhere! Note that they are in the will of God in the sense they journeyed where He led.

One can be in the center of His will and still be in the center of a trial!

**And there was no water for the people to drink** - We do not want to underestimate their situation -- this is a serious trial to be in a

desert and have no water. At Marah (Ex. 15:23+), the waters were bitter - they learned that they must trust the **healing power** of the LORD (Ex 15:26+) ([Jehovah Rapha: \(Jehovah Rophe\) The LORD our Healer](#)). At Rephidim, there was no water at all, and they must learn to trust the provision of the Lord for their needs. This was not an accident as if God had made a mistake in leading them by the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night! (THOUGHT - Aren't we all just like Israel many times? God is clearly leading us step by step and yet in our self-centeredness we are sadly blind to His "pillars of fire"! No, this was God purposefully, [providentially](#) directing Israel into a difficult, trying situation. And why was He doing this? One reason was that they would come to understand His power and provision in times of need or stress. This is a lesson we all need to learn and so clearly sometimes God allows testing circumstances in our life so that He might test us. How do we respond? Do we respond like Israel did when tested with bitter water, no food and now no water? Undoubtedly Israel was parched after journeying by stages in a relatively arid land. When I visited Israel, they warned you to stay hydrated lest you be adversely affected by dehydration and heat.

**Trapp** - "Thirst is the more eager appetite, so they are more eager and earnest for water than they were for bread."

**THOUGHT** - If we fail to learn the lessons of our trials, the Lord leads us to face more trials until we develop the character that God wants us to have and purge the sinfulness from our lives. If you have problems with people, the Lord may want to teach you lessons in patience, forgiveness, loving the unlovely, and overcoming anger and bitterness. If you have problems with money, He may be trying to teach you lessons in faith, trust, dependence upon God, and in tithing. If you have problems with your health, lessons in prayer and the fact that the Lord is our healer may need to be learned. If you have problems with failure, the Lord may be trying to help you overcome pride, develop humility, patience, and learn the importance of organization and hard work. (Mattoon)

**Steven Cole** - **Why did God directly lead Israel to another place of no water?"** The answer is: For the same reason He brings us into places of **need**: so that **we will call upon Him in our weakness** and **He will be glorified when He delivers us**. The Lord says (Ps. 50:15), "Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I shall rescue you, and you will honor Me." So if you're in a place of trouble, before you do anything else, **call upon the Lord**. If you've been grumbling, confess that to the Lord and ask Him to be glorified through the trial that you're in. This incident of Israel's grumbling at Massah ("test") and Meribah ("quarrel") is mentioned in Psalm 95:7-11. Hebrews 3:7-11<sup>+</sup> cites those verses and adds (Heb. 3:12<sup>+</sup>), "Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God." **Grumbling** stems from "an evil, unbelieving heart." Unbelief tests or tries the Lord (Exod. 17:7; Ps. 95:9). In spite of His many mercies, when problems arise, unbelief challenges God by asking (Exod. 17:7), "Is the Lord among us, or not?" In other words, unbelief asks, "If God is really here and cares about me, how can He let this happen?" Unbelief doubts God's sovereignty, His power, His wisdom, and His love. It removes God from His rightful place as judge and puts Him on trial, while I judge Him, questioning His ways of dealing with me! It stems from the pride of thinking that I know better than God what would be best for me. Be on guard against grumbling against the Lord!

**ILLUSTRATION OF TESTING** - **Dr. A.T. Pierson** once wrote, "In a paper mill what a contrast between the heap of filthy rags at one end and the pure and spotless white paper at the other! What a trial the rags go through before they emerge in this new form! Torn to pieces and ground to pulp, bleached with chloride of lime 'til all stains are removed, washed over and over; submitted to another bleaching by the action of chlorine and alum; washed again, 'til the pulp is white as cream or snowflakes! Caught upon a wire cylinder, after the severe shaking by the Fourdrinier process which crosses the fibers and gives compactness and firmness to the fabric; and then passed between and around the hot surfaces which makes the paper smooth and even -- how like the Divine discipline by which our filthiness is cleansed away; how like the tribulation out of which all come up who have washed their robes and made them white in the Blood of the Lamb!"

God wants us all to heed the charge of James that we might grow in Christ-likeness..

**Consider** ([aorist imperative](#) = A COMMAND - only way we can truly obey is by relying on [the Holy Spirit](#)) it ALL JOY (NOT "SOME" JOY BUT "ALL JOY! -- JUST TRY DOING THIS IN RELIANCE ON YOUR NATURAL STRENGTH - YOU MUST RELY ON HIS SUPERNATURAL ENABLEMENT OF THE SPIRIT OF GOD), my brethren, when you encounter various trials, 3 knowing that the **testing of your faith** produces endurance. 4 And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. (James 1:2-4<sup>+</sup>)

---

**INTRODUCTORY ILLUSTRATION** - Back when I was a boy growing up there were times when I wanted something that I really had no way of getting myself. I was going to school and did not have a job, except in the summer to pick blueberries for my parents, which helped pay for school clothes. Now I played sports in High School. When you play sports you don't have much time to work a job, so when I would want something I would typically make my request known to my parents. For example, I wanted a school class ring, which I still have to this day. My parents graciously provided the means whereby I could get that class ring. They did that for every one of their children. Now the thing that bothers me is that when I was growing up, I did not realize how much they were

protecting us and providing for us. They were not only meeting our needs, but many times our wants. I told my parents I loved them on many occasions, but I don't recall ever telling my father thank you for working and providing for me. I regret that! Because I have come to understand how much he did for us now, but now he is with the Lord. The problem with Israel is that she has never come to realize how much God has done for her. Just days after parting the Red Sea, the people of this nation were complaining against Moses and against God. They were not thankful people and they were not trusting people. God used a series of episodes in her history to try to bring her to the place where she would finally realize He is the one caring for her. In fact, this is the point here. This is the lesson Israel needed to learn and so do we.

**WHEN WE ARE FOLLOWING THE LEADING OF GOD, WE WILL SOMETIMES EXPERIENCE THINGS THAT WILL FORCE US TO PRAY TO GOD AND TRUST GOD SO THAT WE WILL LEARN HE IS THE ONE WHO IS PROTECTING US AND PROVIDING FOR US; AND ISRAEL IS AN EXAMPLE OF TOTAL FAILURE .** Don't be fooled into thinking we would never be as foolish as Israel, because frankly we are. In many ways, the story of God's nation is the story of God's individual.(David Thompson - [Sermon](#))

**Exodus 17:2 Therefore the people quarreled with Moses and said, "Give us water that we may drink." And Moses said to them, "Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you test the LORD?"**

Currid - So the people quarrelled with Moses and they said, 'Give us water to drink and we will drink.' And Moses said to them, 'Why are you quarrelling with me? Why are you testing Yahweh?'

NET Exodus 17:2 So the people contended with Moses, and they said, "Give us water to drink!" Moses said to them, "Why do you contend with me? Why do you test the LORD?"

NLT Exodus 17:2 So once more the people complained against Moses. "Give us water to drink!" they demanded."Quiet!" Moses replied. "Why are you complaining against me? And why are you testing the LORD?"

KJV Exodus 17:2 Wherefore the people did chide with Moses, and said, Give us water that we may drink. And Moses said unto them, Why chide ye with me? wherefore do ye tempt the LORD?

ESV Exodus 17:2 Therefore the people quarreled with Moses and said, "Give us water to drink." And Moses said to them, "Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you test the LORD?"

NIV Exodus 17:2 So they quarreled with Moses and said, "Give us water to drink." Moses replied, "Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you put the LORD to the test?"

- **people quarreled with Moses:** Ex 5:21 14:11,12 15:24 16:2,3 Nu 11:4-6 14:2 20:3-5 21:5
- **Give us water that we may drink** Ge 30:1,2 1Sa 8:6 Lu 15:12
- **Why do you test the LORD:** Ex 17:7 16:2 Nu 14:22 De 6:16 Ps 78:18,41,56 95:9 106:14 Isa 7:12 Mal 3:15 Mt 4:7 16:1-3 Lu 4:12 Ac 5:9 15:10 1Co 10:9 Heb 3:9
- Exodus 17 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## **HERE WE GO AGAIN! ISRAEL CONTENDS!**

**Contend** means to strive in opposition against another, to strive in controversy, to argue earnestly, to dispute with.

In fairness to Israel, this was a real problem and they were justified in their concern. The question is what do we do with our "concern?" Do we turn it into contention with God or do we cry out to God?

**Therefore** - [Term of conclusion](#). Always ask what is being concluded? In this case it is straightforward. The problem of **no water** concluded (so to speak) in the people beginning to quarrel with their leader. Israel does not like where God has led her because she cannot see any physical drinking water. She has completely forgotten about the Word of God and the work of God. She has forgotten His previous power and provision and protection! When you forget the goodness of God in the past, you are a set up for grumbling and stumbling in the future. It is good to begin each day with an attitude of gratitude to our Great God! Israel forgets God and therefore when the test comes Israel grumbles against Moses and quarrels with Moses. (Ex 17:2-3). The test itself is neutral. It is ordained by God to refine the hearts of His people. But every test comes like a double edged sword, one side cuts to heal, the other cuts to hurt. And so every test can become a temptation to evil if our heart is not right with the LORD. How are you doing with the tests the LORD is allowing into your life (remember He is sovereign which means He is full, total control!!)?

Clearly the nation of Israel had failed the first "water test" at [Marah](#) ("bitter"), so God gives them another "water test."

**The people quarreled with Moses and said, "Give us water that we may drink."** - **Give** is an imperative = They are commanding their commander! Here the Israelites' reaction is a fruit of their rank unbelief, their failure to trust in Jehovah and His man Moses. **Quarreled** is in the imperfect tense (in both Hebrew and Greek) which means that over and over the Israelites angrily railed away at Moses. The Greek verb is [loidoreo](#) which in the [imperfect tense](#) means they were repeatedly hurling verbal abuse at Moses, shouting insults again and again! One can almost hear their ranting and raging, working themselves up in a frenzy like a riotous mob (ready to throw stones)!

The idea also may be that they kept bringing a charge against him (almost like one would in a legal case)! Moses' fear of being stoned gives us a clue as to the intensity of the quarrel with Moses! Think about this for a moment. What had just transpired in Ex 15:22-26+? They had grumbled at Moses because the water was bitter! And Moses interceded and God supernaturally sweetened the water. And what did they learn about God (or what should they have learned)? **He is their healer. He is [Jehovah Rapha](#).** Either the heat had affected their memory and given them amnesia (I am jesting of course) or they had a heart problem, a faith problem, a gratitude problem (I am not jesting here - see the diagnosis of their heart problem by the psalmist in Ps 95:8 and Ps 95:10). And it is amazing that even though Moses was clearly the one who interceded for them and the one who God used to graciously "heal" the water, they viciously attack him again! After all they have seen the Lord do, they are absolutely without excuse! The heart of Israel's problem in quarreling over water, was the problem with their hearts, which had not come to trust in Jehovah!

**THOUGHT** - Frankly, when we as believers begin quarreling or complaining over some circumstance or something we think the Lord should provide for us, we are acting just like Israel and showing our failure to trust in the Lord with all our heart (Pr 3:5-6). Instead of complaining, quarreling or grumbling, we should manifest an attitude of contentment and gratitude, giving thanks in all things (1 Th 5:18+). See also [Christian Contentment](#) and [Contentment-Devotional](#).

#### **David Thompson -**

They had already been through this and they saw God wonderfully supply their needs. You would think that they would have all learned their lesson. After they had crossed the Red Sea, they came to a place called Marah (Ex 15:23) and there was no good, fresh water to drink. We may recall that the people started grumbling and God had Moses throw some tree into the water and it became good water (Ex 15:26). God entered into a legal pact with Israel and said as long as you obey Me and follow Me, I will take care of you and provide for you (Ex 15:26). Israel had completely forgotten about the promises of God and the provisions of God. So here we are again. Israel needs water. You would have thought they would say well, God provided it before and He will provide it again. But this is another test Israel will fail. God will give His people many opportunities to get it right. No matter what the issue, God will present multiple opportunities to learn the lesson. In Israel's case, she failed every time, all the time. Warren Wiersbe said, "every difficulty God permits us to encounter will become either a test that can make us better or a temptation that can make us worse" (Be Delivered, p. 104). It will be our response that will determine which it will be. ([Sermon](#))

**John Hannah** feels "This was worse than their murmurings of distrust at Marah (Ex 15:24) or in the Desert of Sin (Ex 16:2), for here they even quarreled with Moses (Ex 17:2) and were about to stone him (Ex 17:4)." (The Bible Knowledge Commentary)

**Wiersbe** says they were quarrelling with Moses "Because their hearts were still in Egypt! They were guilty of ingratitude and unbelief, wanting to go back to the old life; and as a result, they again failed to pass the test." (Ibid)

**Tony Merida** - They demanded water to drink. We do this when we make demands on God at home or in the church, insisting that He work on our terms. There are times we must wait on the Lord patiently. (Exalting Jesus in Exodus)

**ESV Study** note observes that "After experiencing the plagues, the crossing of the Red Sea, and the Lord's provision of both water (Ex 15:25, 27) and food (Ex 16:13-14), the people of Israel show a hardness of heart like Pharaoh and the Egyptians, which is precisely how Ps 95:7-9 describes these events." (ESV Study Bible, The: English Standard Version)

**David Thompson - The Israelites had a faith in God that said unless we can see it right now, we don't believe it and we won't believe it.** Now let's remember Paul in 1 Corinthians 10:6,11; these things are given as examples to us because we are just like Israel. We see God provide things and do good things for us time and time again and then something comes up and we doubt God and fret and start grumbling and stop trusting. In verse 2, Moses said, "why are you quarreling with me?" "Why do you test the LORD?" He is reminding the Israelites that again they have fallen into the same rut in that they are complaining against God because Moses was simply following the direction of God. Now by this point in their relationship with God, Israel should have known God never has let us down. When we were backed up against the Red Sea, God delivered us. When we were without food, God provided for us. They should have reasoned now that we are out of water we know God will take care of that, too. But that is not how these people responded. ([Sermon](#))



**Quarreled** (07378)(**riyb**) means to strive, plead, contend, conduct a lawsuit, make a charge. It is interesting that most uses of this verb have a legal setting, such as when someone feels wronged and accuses another of breaking an agreement or going against the community standards in some way. **In the present context it is as if the nation is bringing a legal case against Moses, contending with him as one would do in a lawsuit.** It is interesting that **riyb** is a prominent word in the prophets' declarations describing God's litigation against Israel! Here they are doing the litigating so speak against His leader and thus against God. **Riyb** is the origin of the related noun (**riv/rib/riyb**) which described disputes like the one between Jacob and Laban (Ge 13:7-8; Ge 26:20-21; Ge 31:36). Later in Exodus **riyb** describes interpersonal conflict that might lead to blows between two men (Ex 21:18).

It is also notable that **riyb** forms the basis of the name **Meribah** ([see note below](#)) used in Ex 17:7. So the name of the place "Meribah" was a wordplay on strive or quarrel

The [Septuagint \(Lxx\)](#) translates **riyb** with the verb **loidoreo** which means to rail at someone, to revile them and thus depicts the Israelites as hurling verbal abuse (can even mean curse, speak evil) at Moses. The [imperfect tense](#) indicates they were reviling him again and again, over and over. Imagine how Moses must have felt!

## **QUARRELING WITH MOSES IS TESTING THE LORD**

**And Moses said to them, "Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you test the LORD?"** - We discover in Ex 17:7 that one aspect of their "test" was their question "Is the LORD among us, or not?" They were quarreling with Moses who was the intermediary with God, but their real problem was with Moses' God!

Israel was in essence putting God on trial for abandoning them and breaking His promises (which of course was totally untrue).

**Guzik** - When we have a problem it is much easier to blame someone than to think through the problem carefully and spiritually. In this situation Israel could have thought, "We are in a desert; it's not surprising there isn't much water here. We need to look to God to meet this need." Instead they blamed Moses and did nothing to help the problem.

**R C Sproul** comments that "Even though they murmured against Moses directly, they called God into question because Moses was God's representative on earth. What folly was this! The God who had delivered them from Egypt, parted the Red Sea, made the bitter waters sweet, and provided quail and manna had certainly proved His faithfulness. His word alone should have been sufficient. Yet the Israelites called His faithfulness into question. We learn from this how distrustful is the human heart. Despite the many ways God has cared for us, protected us, and delivered us, we still doubt Him."

There is an interesting play on words in Moses' question about Israel testing the LORD. The verb **nacah/nasah** is used 5x in Exodus, 3 times to describe God's testing of Israel and here in Exodus 17 twice of them testing God!. Here are the three uses of God testing Israel...

Exodus 15:25+ Then (WHEN PEOPLE GRUMBLED OVER BITTER WATER - Ex 15:23-24) he cried out to the LORD, and the LORD showed him a tree; and he threw it into the waters, and the waters became sweet. There He made for them a statute and regulation, and there He (JEHOVAH) **tested** them.

Exodus 16:4+ Then the LORD said to Moses, "Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a day's portion every day, that I **may test** them, (HERE IS THE PURPOSE OF THE TEST) whether or not they will walk in My instruction.

Exodus 20:20+ Moses said to the people, "Do not be afraid; for God has come in order **to test** you, and in order (THERE WAS PURPOSE TO THE TEST) that the fear of Him may remain with you, so that you may not sin."

This is the same verb used once in Numbers of Israel testing God one time too many with the consequence that they would not enter the promised land

Surely all the men who have seen My glory and My signs which I performed in Egypt and in the wilderness, yet have **put Me to the test nacah/nasah** these ten times and have not listened to My voice, shall by no means see the land which I swore to their fathers, nor shall any of those who spurned Me see it. (Nu 14:22-23)

**Test** (tempt) (05254)(**nacah/nasah**) in most OT uses has idea of testing or proving quality of someone or something and doing so often through adversity or hardship. As the following context makes clear (note "to

see," lit., "to know," in 3:4), the purpose of this divine test was to determine if Israel was truly loyal. An examination of parallel passages shows that such divine tests were designed to reveal otherwise hidden character qualities. Testing which shows what someone is really like generally involves difficulty or hardship.

**Nacah/nasah** in Ex 17:2 is translated in the Septuagint with the verb **peirazo** which in this context is clearly used in a bad sense reflecting the ill intent of Israel to try God Himself, His virtue, His attributes, His goodness, His grace, etc. The **present tense** indicates this was Israel's continual reaction towards the tests God had sent! Interestingly, **peirazo** is the same verb used to describe the temptation of Jesus in the Wilderness where "for forty days, (HE WAS) **being tempted** by the devil." (Lk 4:2+) In a very real sense, the children of Israel were essentially doing the devil's work here in Exodus 17 by testing Jehovah!

**THOUGHT** - Temptations and trials are two sides of the same coin, PEIRAZO conveys both ideas (compare idea of "test" in James 1:2+ with a idea of "temptation" in James 1:13+) in short, all that goes to furnish a test of character. The trials may come from God (or under His permissive will from Satan) and will either to make us better or make us worse depending on our attitude/response to the test. If we are like Israel, and we grumble and quarrel because of the test, then the test will fail to bring about the spiritual growth God desires us to experience. On the other hand if we "trust and obey" and let God have His way, we will experience spiritual growth from the trial as explained in James 1:2-4+ = "**Consider** it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various **trials**, 3 knowing that the **testing** of your faith produces endurance. 4 And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing (MATURING IN YOUR FAITH)."

In a sermon titled "**Faith Tested and Crowned**," **Alexander Maclaren** distinguished between **being tempted** and **being tried**. He said that "the former word conveys the idea of appealing to the worst part of man, with the wish that he may yield and do the wrong. The latter means an appeal to the better part of man, with the desire that he should stand." "**Temptation** says, 'Do this pleasant thing; do not be hindered by the fact that it is wrong.' **Trial** or proving says, 'Do this right and noble thing; do not be hindered by the fact that it is painful.'"

Satan **tempts** us to bring out the **worst** in us;  
God **tests** us to bring out the **best** in us.

**Gilbrant** - As for Rephidim itself, this was an oasis somewhat less water-fed than Elim, but apparently enjoying a water table high enough to maintain palm trees of considerable size even to this day, even though there were no open springs. The name Rephidim is related to the root raphad, which in Sabeian Arabic means "terraces," derived from the idea of "support"—quite appropriate for an area where rain water had to be carefully conserved. The long journey from the Wadi Gharandel (Elim) to the Wadi Feiran, not far from Jebel Musa (the traditional site of Mt. Sinai), must have resulted in distressing thirst, even though the morning dew with its manna may have relieved this problem to a certain extent. At any rate, with their characteristic petulance, the Hebrew multitude fell into anxious self-pity, and lodged bitter complaint to Moses and Aaron. Each new trial of faith found them easily despondent and in deep discouragement. They had not yet learned as people of faith to look away from their problems to their divine Problem Solver. Sadly enough, this proved to be their behavior pattern all the way from Sinai to Kadesh-Barnea (Num. 14). Unfortunately also, it is all too frequent a reaction on the part of Christians today, for we tend to lose our confidence in God when new difficulties confront us, and we forget how faithfully the Lord has brought us through our trials of the past. Thus we miss the blessing which He intends for us as we go through testing and affliction. (The Complete Biblical Library – Exodus)

The Psalms record Israel's testing of the Lord...

Psalm 78:41 Again and again they **tempted** God, And pained the Holy One of Israel.

Psalm 78:56 Yet they **tempted** and rebelled against the Most High God And did not keep His testimonies,

Psalm 95:9 "When your fathers tested Me, They **tried** Me, though they had seen My work.

Psalm 106:14 But craved intensely in the wilderness, And **tempted** God in the desert.

**John Currid** - When Satan tempts Jesus to throw himself off the temple to see if God would be faithful and truly save him as he promised (Matt. 4:5-7+), Jesus answers by quoting Deuteronomy 6:16: 'You shall not put the LORD your God to the test, as you tested him at Massah.' Jesus is being tempted to commit the same sin into which Israel fell when they were tested in the wilderness. Jesus, however, does not fail, as Israel failed, but remains true, obedient and faithful to God....Attempts to use Moses at Massah/Meribah as a model for ministry today are not very successful. That is not the point of the story, and many of these studies easily slip into allegorical teaching. (A Study Commentary on Exodus)

---

**Exodus 17:3 But the people thirsted there for water; and they grumbled against Moses and said, "Why, now, have you brought us up from Egypt, to kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst?"**

Currid - But the people were thirsty for water there. So the people grumbled against Moses. And they said, 'Why did you bring us up out of Egypt to kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst?'

NET Exodus 17:3 But the people were very thirsty there for water, and they murmured against Moses and said, "Why in the world did you bring us up out of Egypt— to kill us and our children and our cattle with thirst?"

NLT Exodus 17:3 But tormented by thirst, they continued to argue with Moses. "Why did you bring us out of Egypt? Are you trying to kill us, our children, and our livestock with thirst?"

KJV Exodus 17:3 And the people thirsted there for water; and the people murmured against Moses, and said, Wherefore is this that thou hast brought us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our cattle with thirst?

ESV Exodus 17:3 But the people thirsted there for water, and the people grumbled against Moses and said, "Why did you bring us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst?"

- **Why, now, have you brought us up from Egypt** - Ex 16:3
- Exodus 17 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### **FAILURE TO FULFILL FLESHLY DESIRES LEADS TO EXAGGERATION**

**But the people thirsted there for water** - What does this say about their focus? Self! What should have been their focus? Jehovah and His past provisions in their time of need. But fallen flesh focuses first on the "big I." (And remember Israel's reactions are just an ugly picture of our depraved flesh, yes, even present in those who have been born again!) This is why they grumbled against and quarreled with Moses. There was no water and they wanted water. Self wants what it wants when it wants it!

**F B Meyer** - Hunger is bad enough to bear, but it affects only one organ of the body, whereas thirst sets the whole being on fire. It mounts to the brain and burns like fever in the blood. The little children were drooping like flowers; the cattle were on the verge of exhaustion, and lay panting on the ground. The scouts searched everywhere for water in vain, and came back with but one report, that there was no water anywhere to be found. (Exodus Commentary)

**David Thompson** - According to verse 3, they started making up a crazy scenario that Moses had brought them out of Egypt to kill them and their children and their livestock with thirst. How bizarre is that? Do you really believe God delivered Israel from Egypt to take them to the wilderness so they could all die of thirst? This is theological lunacy. When people are out of fellowship with God, they typically end up saying and doing things that do not make anything better. In fact, they make things worse. God is leading these people to a land flowing with milk and honey, but before He would take them into that land, they needed to learn an important lesson; we can always depend on God. Before God pours out His ultimate blessings on His people, He wants them to learn this very important lesson. ([Sermon](#))

**Robert Rayburn** - Southerners say, "There ain't much education in the second kick of a mule." That is, if you didn't learn the first time you are likely too dense to learn it the second.

**Recall the first time Israel grumbled against Moses** (although "grumble" is not actually used that was the effect) after Pharaoh responded to Moses' appeal to let Israel go by intensifying the pressure on the Hebrew workers.

When they (HEBREWS APPEALING TO PHARAOH TO LESSEN THE LOAD) left Pharaoh's presence, they met Moses and Aaron as they were waiting for them. They said to them, "**May the LORD look upon you and judge you, for you have made us odious in Pharaoh's sight and in the sight of his servants, to put a sword in their hand to kill us.**" (NOTE MOSES "REFLEX" WAS CRY OUT!) Then Moses returned to the LORD and said, "O Lord, why have You brought harm to this people? Why did You ever send me? (Ex 5:20-22+)

**They grumbled/complained against Moses again at the Red Sea** and this time when Moses cried out, the LORD told him to "move out!"

As Pharaoh drew near, the sons of Israel looked, and behold, the Egyptians were marching after them, and they became very frightened; so the sons of Israel cried out to the LORD. 11 **Then they said to Moses, "Is it because there were no graves in Egypt that you have taken us away to die in the wilderness? Why**

**have you dealt with us in this way, bringing us out of Egypt? 12 "Is this not the word that we spoke to you in Egypt, saying, 'Leave us alone that we may serve the Egyptians'? For it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness."** 13 But Moses said to the people, "Do not fear! Stand by and see the salvation of the LORD which He will accomplish for you today; for the Egyptians whom you have seen today, you will never see them again forever. 14 "The LORD will fight for you while you keep silent." 15 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Why are you crying out to Me? Tell the sons of Israel to go forward. (Ex 14:10-15+)

**And they grumbled against Moses** - Or "Murmured". So just as with the first divine "water test" "the people **grumbled** at Moses, saying, "What shall we drink?" (Exodus 15:24+) The pattern of complaining is developing among the people of Israel (cf Ex. 14:11-12; Ex 15:24; Ex 16:2-3, 7, 12; Ex 17:3) Is this not a trap we all fall into and yet Paul gives us a clear command in the New Testament. But in the following passages notice first Paul gives us the **provision of power** which will enable us to obey the command and he also gives us a **motivation** we should seek to obey this command.

**THE PROVISION/POWER** - So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, **work out** ([present imperative](#) - including obeying the command in Phil 2:14) your salvation with fear and trembling; 13 for (EXPLAINS HOW IT IS EVEN POSSIBLE TO WORK OUT OUR SALVATION) it is God Who is at work in you (THE HOLY SPIRIT CONTINUALLY SUPERNATURALLY ENERGIZING), both to will (HE GIVES US THE DESIRE) and to work (HE GIVES US THE POWER TO WORK) for His good pleasure. (Phil 2:12+, Phil 2:13NLT+)

**THE COMMAND** - **Do** ([present imperative](#) - only possible as we rely on Phil 2:13NLT+. It is **IM**-possible, but is **HIM**-possible!) **ALL** (no exceptions!) things **without grumbling** ([goggusmos](#)) or **disputing** ([dialogismos](#))(Phil 2:14+)

**THE MOTIVATION** - So that you will prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as **lights in the world**, (HOW DO WE SHINE IN CONTEXT? NOT GRUMBLING IN SITUATIONS MOST PEOPLE WOULD GRUMBLE - THEY WILL SEE IT AND WONDER "HOW CAN HE/SHE KEEP FROM GRUMBLING?!) (Phil 2:15+, cf Mt 5:14-16+)

**Tony Merida** - They questioned God's protection (Ex 17:3). They asked why God brought them out of Egypt. Was it to watch them die? We do this when we accuse God of trying to harm us in our trial. We should remember that He has brought us through a greater exodus; He is worthy of total trust. (Ibid)

**Matthew Henry** wrote that "Ungoverned passions, provoked by the crossing of unbridled appetites, sometimes make men guilty of the greatest absurdities, and act like madmen, that cast firebrands, arrows, and death, among their best friends."

**Grumbled** (**murmured**)([03885](#))(**lun**) is a word that has two meanings that are very different. Here in Exodus 17:3 the meaning is clearly grumble or murmur ([see below](#) for the 15 uses of **lun** translated with the sense of grumble in NAS). See Gilbrant's discussion below of **lun** with the meaning of grumble. The other sense of this word is to lodge, spend the night, abide ([see those uses here](#)).

**Gilbrant's note on lun** with the meaning of **grumble/murmur** - The Hebrew verb **lûn** means "to murmur." In the Niphal, the verb carries the thought of being "obstinate" or "stubborn," from the idea of "remaining" or "persisting" in a negative sense. Hence, there is a resultant definition of "grumbling" or "complaining." The contexts of the occurrences of **lûn** in Exodus cover the period between the parting of the Red Sea and the receiving of the Ten Commandments. Even after witnessing the plagues and the destruction of Pharaoh's army, the former slaves "**murmured**" against Moses because they were without water for three days and because the **water found at Marah was bitter** (Ex 15:24). Two and one-half months after their exodus from bondage, the people again grumbled against Moses and Aaron, because food was scarce. They wished that they had never left Egypt, saying, "We sat around pots of meat and ate all the food we wanted" (Ex 16:3NIV). God heard their murmuring and sent manna, but Moses rebuked the people, saying, "Your murmurings are not against us, but against the Lord" (Ex 16:8). The pattern of unbelief and murmuring thus continued. Having arrived at the southern border of Canaan, Moses sent twelve men to spy out the Promised Land. In spite of the miraculous guidance, provision, protection and presence of the Lord, unbelief prevailed. After ten of the spies gave a negative report, the Israelites shouted and wept all night, again grumbling against Moses and Aaron, even threatening to stone both of them (Nu 14:1ff, 10). God's response was more severe. Because Moses and Aaron interceded for the Lord to be merciful with the rebellious people, God forgave them; however, no one who participated in this rebellion entered the Promised Land. God referred to those who murmured as "an evil

congregation" (Nu 14:27). ([Complete Biblical Library Greek-English Dictionary](#))

**Zodhiates'** note on **lun** with the meaning of **lodge** - A verb meaning to lodge, to tarry. It means to rest, to tarry, to stay, often overnight. Persons may spend the night or lodge somewhere (Gen. 19:2; 24:23, 25, 54; 28:11). It is used figuratively of righteousness lodging permanently in Zion (Isa. 1:21); and of evil thoughts taking residence in the city of Jerusalem (Jer. 4:14). It is used of weeping coming to "lodge" in the evening (Ps. 30:5[6]). It describes the secure, peaceful rest of one living close to the Lord (Ps. 91:1). Used with 'ayin (<H5869>, eye) as subject, it has the sense of to set on, to look upon (Job 17:2). Job notes that his error originates and remains in him (Job 19:4). It indicates a wise person's proper existence, abiding among the wise (Prov. 15:31). It takes on the sense of resting or sleeping when one fears the Lord (Prov. 19:23). Something may remain through the night (Ex. 23:18; Lev. 19:13; Jer. 4:14); or stay the night (Job 39:28). It is used of a dead body remaining in a tree overnight (Deut. 21:23). (The Complete Word Study Dictionary – Old Testament)

The **Septuagint** translates **lun** with the verb **gogguzo** which means to **murmur**, **mutter**, make complaining remarks or noises under one's breath. **Gogguzo** is an **onomatopoeic** word derived from the sound made when murmuring or muttering in a low and indistinct voice with the idea of complaint.

**Lun** (uses in NAS with meaning to grumble) 15x in 14v - growl(1), grumble(4), grumbled(7), grumbling(2), making(1). Ex 15:24; Ex 16:2; Ex 16:7; Ex 16:8; Ex 17:3; Nu 14:2; Nu 14:27; Nu 14:29; Nu 14:36; Nu 16:11; Nu 16:41; Nu 17:5; Jos. 9:18; Ps. 59:15

**Lun** (87 uses in 79v in KJV with predominant meaning = to lodge and less frequent meaning = to grumble) - KJV translates it - lodge 33, murmur 14, ... the night 14, abide 7, remain 6, tarry 2, lodge in 2, continue 1, dwell 1, endure 1, grudge 1, left 1, lie 1, variant 3; 87 Gen. 19:2; Gen. 24:23; Gen. 24:25; Gen. 24:54; Gen. 28:11; Gen. 31:54; Gen. 32:13; Gen. 32:21; Exod. 15:24; Exod. 16:2; Exod. 16:7; Exod. 16:8; Exod. 17:3; Exod. 23:18; Exod. 34:25; Lev. 19:13; Num. 14:2; Num. 14:27; Num. 14:29; Num. 14:36; Num. 16:11; Num. 16:41; Num. 17:5; Num. 22:8; Deut. 16:4; Deut. 21:23; Jos. 3:1; Jos. 4:3; Jos. 6:11; Jos. 8:9; Jos. 9:18; Jdg. 18:2; Jdg. 19:4; Jdg. 19:6; Jdg. 19:7; Jdg. 19:9; Jdg. 19:10; Jdg. 19:11; Jdg. 19:13; Jdg. 19:15; Jdg. 19:20; Jdg. 20:4; Ruth 1:16; Ruth 3:13; 2 Sam. 12:16; 2 Sam. 17:8; 2 Sam. 17:16; 2 Sam. 19:7; 1 Ki. 19:9; 1 Chr. 9:27; Neh. 4:22; Neh. 13:20; Neh. 13:21; Job 17:2; Job 19:4; Job 24:7; Job 29:19; Job 31:32; Job 39:9; Job 39:28; Job 41:22; Ps. 25:13; Ps. 30:5; Ps. 49:12; Ps. 55:7; Ps. 59:15; Ps. 91:1; Prov. 15:31; Prov. 19:23; Cant. 1:13; Cant. 7:11; Isa. 1:21; Isa. 21:13; Isa. 65:4; Jer. 4:14; Jer. 14:8; Joel 1:13; Zeph. 2:14; Zech. 5:4

**And said, "Why, now, have you brought us up from Egypt, to kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst?"**- This is a ridiculous, illogical exaggeration. Saved by the blood of the Passover Lamb and by the closing of the Red Sea on the Egyptians just so they could die in the desert! They clearly do not have a clue about God's purpose in saving them. They go from quarreling and grumbling to becoming completely unreasonable in their accusations. They have been provided water and food just a few weeks earlier (and the manna is still present every morning to remind them of the faithfulness of God!) and yet they make the ludicrous claim that Moses sought to kill them!

I like **Rod Mattoon's** description of the people

"The heads of the Hebrews were inflamed with irrationality. Their hearts were flaming with fury against Moses. Their hands were clutching stones, ready to be hurled like fast balls at any moment. Their circumstances were in control of them and emotionally they were out of control. They were suffering a panic attack and a temper tantrum at the same time and they chided Moses....When you are waterless in wilderness, do you blame others for your problems or do you cry out to God? Men have a spiritual thirst for pardon, holiness, and salvation. Learning won't satisfy this thirst. Riches or pleasure won't satisfy it either. Only the Lord Jesus Christ can quench the longing in your heart. (see John 4:14<sup>+</sup>). (Mattoon's from Exodus, Volume 2)

---

### **Exodus 17:1-3 Give 'Em A Brake by Dr. Woodrow Kroll**

Where highway construction is taking place, a sign frequently will be posted that reads, "Give 'Em a Brake." This has a double message: one is to slow down, and the other is to spare the workers from injuries caused by carelessness. Highway workers do their job under hazardous conditions and we need to give them a "brake."

The same sign could have been posted outside the tents of Aaron and Moses. Time after time the people of Israel rushed into judgment against their leaders until finally, here at Rephidim, they were ready to stone Moses to death (v. 4). Only God's intervention prevented a tragedy. Without question, these people needed to give Moses a break.

This sign would fit equally well in front of the homes of many pastors and other church leaders. A study by Leadership Journal and Christianity Today, Inc., found that **22.8 percent** of pastors have been fired or forced to leave their churches at least once in their career, and one in four of these has experienced this more than once. Sixty-two percent of the discharged pastors said the church that let them go was a "repeat offender" and had fired at least one previous pastor. Isn't it time we gave a break to those called of God to lead His church?

Be very careful when tempted to be critical of your pastor or other church leaders. You may find yourself not only opposing them but God as well. Slow down before passing judgment, sincerely check your motives, and make sure there is a sound, biblical reason for your complaint and not simply a personality issue. More often than not, what you need to do is "give 'em a brake."

Pastors need your grace, not your gripes.

---

### Exodus 17:1-7 A Bad Habit

They tempted the Lord, saying, "Is the Lord among us or not?" —Exodus 17:7

Most people have a bad habit or two. Some habits are just irritating, such as talking too much or too fast. Others are much more serious.

Consider, for example, the bad habit developed by the people of ancient Israel. They had just been delivered from slavery (Exodus 14:30), and they ought to have been thankful. Instead, they started to complain to Moses and Aaron, "Oh, that we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt!" (Ex 16:3).

We read in Exodus 17 that their complaining escalated into a quarrel. In reality, their complaint was with God, but they picked a fight with Moses because he was the leader. They said, "Why is it you have brought us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst?" (v.3). The people even began questioning if God was really with them (v.7). Yet He always met their needs.

If we're honest, we would have to admit that we sometimes complain when God isn't coming through for us the way we want. We accuse Him of being absent or disinterested. But when our heart is concerned with God's purposes rather than our own, we will be patient and trust Him to provide all that we need. Then we won't develop the bad habit of complaining. By Albert Lee ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Those Christians who with thankful hearts  
Praise God throughout the day  
Won't tend to grumble and complain  
When things don't go their way.  
—Branon

To conquer the habit of complaining, count your blessings.

---

### Getting a Grip on Gratitude

Would they have enough if all the fish in the sea were caught for them? Numbers 11:22

Today's Scripture & Insight: Numbers 11:1–11

The years of weariness caused by chronic pain and frustrations with my limited mobility had finally caught up with me. In my discontent, I became demanding and ungrateful. I began complaining about my husband's caregiving skills. I griped about the way he cleaned the house. Even though he's the best cook I know, I fussed about the lack of variety in our meals. When he finally shared that my grumbling hurt his feelings, I was resentful. He had no idea what I was going through. Eventually, God helped me see my wrongs, and I asked my husband and the Lord for forgiveness.

Longing for different circumstances can lead to complaining, and even a form of relationship damaging self-centeredness. The Israelites were familiar with this dilemma. **It seems they were never satisfied and always griping about God's provision** (Exodus 17:1–3). Even though the Lord cared for His people in the wilderness by sending them "bread from heaven" (16:4), they began craving other food (Numbers 11:4). Instead of rejoicing over the daily miracles of God's faithful and loving care, the Israelites wanted something more, something better, something different, or even something they used to have (vv. 4–6). They took out their frustrations on Moses (vv. 10–14).

Trusting God's goodness and faithfulness can help us get a good grip on gratitude. Today we can thank Him for the countless ways He cares for us. By: Xochitl Dixon

For more, read [Cultivating a Heart of Contentment](#)

Grateful praise satisfies us and pleases God.

**Exodus 17:4 So Moses cried out to the LORD, saying, "What shall I do to this people? A little more and they will stone me."**

NET Exodus 17:4 Then Moses cried out to the LORD, "What will I do with this people?— a little more and they will stone me!"

NLT Exodus 17:4 Then Moses cried out to the LORD, "What should I do with these people? They are ready to stone me!"

ESV Exodus 17:4 So Moses cried to the LORD, "What shall I do with this people? They are almost ready to stone me."

LXE Exodus 17:4 And Moses cried to the Lord, saying, What shall I do to this people? yet a little while and they will stone me.

KJV Exodus 17:4 And Moses cried unto the LORD, saying, What shall I do unto this people? they be almost ready to stone me.

NIV Exodus 17:4 Then Moses cried out to the LORD, "What am I to do with these people? They are almost ready to stone me."

- **So Moses cried out to the LORD:** Ex 14:15 15:25 Nu 11:11
- **A little more and they will stone me:** Nu 14:10 16:19 1Sa 30:6 Joh 8:59 10:31 Ac 7:50 14:19
- Exodus 17 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### **MOSES' REFLEX REACTION WAS GENUFLEXION**

To [genuflect](#) means to touch one knee to the ground as in an act of worship

Moses choose to cry out to Jehovah, not to contend with the Jews, which would have been the temptation of his (and my) flesh! I probably would have (unrighteously) yelled "Shut your mouths, you ingrates! Get a grip!"

This passage might be subtitled "How do your respond when in danger of being stoned?" Moses gives us a good pattern - CRY OUT! It is interesting that when Stephen was being stoned, he cried out to the Lord (Acts 7:59, 60+)

**THOUGHT** - Are you being railed against, verbally abused, being treated with contempt, etc, etc? THEN may I suggest you practice the "Moses Method," and CRY OUT to your Heavenly Father. If you need some encouragement, listen to this great old Maranatha chorus "[CRY OUT](#)"...and then...CRY OUT! Notice also what Moses DID NOT DO - He did not return evil for evil. He put into practice what Paul calls all of God's children to practice...

Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. Respect what is right in the sight of all men. 18If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men. 19 Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, "VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY," says the Lord. 20"BUT IF YOUR ENEMY IS HUNGRY, FEED HIM, AND IF HE IS THIRSTY, GIVE HIM A DRINK; FOR IN SO DOING YOU WILL HEAP BURNING COALS ON HIS HEAD." 21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. (Ro 12:17-21<sup>+</sup>)

**So** - This word introduces a "conclusion." Moses could have said "Lord get 'em." But that was not the response of this humble man.

A **F B Meyer** once said "when we have reached the end of self, we have got to the beginning of God." And Moses went to "the beginning of God," in prayer to God.

**Walter Kaiser** remarked that "One of Moses' most characteristic and praiseworthy traits was that he took his difficulties to the Lord (Ex 17:4; Ex 15:25; Ex 32:30; Ex 33:8; Nu11:2, 11; Nu 12:13; Nu 14:13, 19 et al.)."

Moses faith in Jehovah was based on his past bitter water trial when he cried out (same verb as here - [tsaaq](#)) and to have the LORD

prescribe him a tree to sweeten the bitter water. (Exodus 15:25+)

**J Ligon Duncan** - because of the seriousness of his circumstances, Moses has just as much cause to be tempted to distrust God as the Israelites do. His life is on the line, but his response is **prayer**. His response is **trust**. His response is to resort to God.

**Moses cried out to the LORD** - This is the pattern we should imitate when unexpected trouble comes. Go to the Lord first. We discover in Ex 17:5 that Moses also had some trusted men he could have gone to for counsel (the elders of Israel), but he went first to the Lord and so should we beloved.

**THOUGHT** - To whom do you go when trouble knocks at your door? It is so easy to forget that we have a friend that sticks closer than a brother and who can give us guidance when trouble comes. We need to remember (and internalize) the promise of our Lord Jesus "**Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.**" (Mt 28:20) When trouble comes, go to Jesus first! It was undoubtedly this assurance that gave Moses the strength and confidence to lead a rebellious people during the wilderness wandering.

Moses as noted virtually always had the same response when confronted with difficult, obstacles, challenges etc. He turned to the Lord and asked for guidance illustrates. All trusting Christian in the hour of trial and uncertainty of how to respond would do well to follow Moses' example. Centuries later James summarized Moses' response this way "But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him (James 1:5+).

**Cried out (06817)(tsaaq)** means to cry out and occurs nearly fifty times in the Qal with the sense of crying out for help and consolation from suffering or injustice (e.g., 2 Ki. 8:3, 5; Job 19:7; Isa. 42:2). God heard the blood of Abel, which cried out from the ground for justice (Ge 4:10). **Tsaaq** is frequently used to express the kinds of prayers directed to God in the midst of a desperate crisis. Moses faced numerous difficult situations and would often cry out in desperation to the Lord for direction and strength.

The **Septuagint = LXX** translates **tsaaq** here in Ex 17:4 with the great verb **boao** (from **boé 995**) which means raise a cry, call or shout of joy, pain, etc, with unusually high volume. In several of the NT uses (many more in **Septuagint = LXX** uses - Moses in Ex 8:12, Ex 14:15, Nu 12:13) crying out was in the context of one seeking help or assistance.

**THOUGHT** - Would it be said of us when we pass on - when confronted with an obstacle, difficulty or problem, our reflex reaction was to "take it to the Lord in prayer!" Prayer ultimately expresses dependence on God and confidence (trust) in God. And Moses' dependence undoubtedly had a great deal to do with the fact that "the man Moses was very humble, more than any man who was on the face of the earth." (Nu 12:3)

**Mattoon** explains that "Moses in this situation responded properly to the problem. He called out to God for directions. Moses has been learning to trust God and will continue to need to learn. May we learn the same lessons as he learned. Beloved, remember the Lord will not allow anything in your life that you cannot handle. "No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it. " (1 Cor 10:13) **Warren Wiersbe** put it this way, "When God permits His children to go through the furnace of affliction, He keeps His eye on the clock and His hand on the thermostat." An old seaman said, "In fierce storms we can do but one thing. There is only one way (to survive); we must put the ship in a certain position and keep her there." Commenting on this idea, Richard Fuller wrote: "This, Christian, is what you must do. Sometimes, like Paul, you can see neither sun nor stars, and no small tempest lies on you. Reason cannot help you. Past experiences give you no light. Only a single course is left. You must stay upon the Lord; and come what may -- winds, waves, cross seas, thunder, lightning, frowning rocks, roaring breakers -- no matter what, you must lash yourself to the helm and hold fast your confidence in God's faithfulness and His everlasting love in Christ Jesus." Christ is to be the pilot of our lives. Beloved, if you are waterless in the wilderness, running on empty, or on the verge of a panic attack, the Lord has allowed this in your life to teach you that He can supply your every need no matter what circumstances you are in right now. ([Treasures from Exodus, Volume 2](#))

**Saying, "What shall I do to this people? A little more and they will stone me."**- ESV, NIV = "they are almost ready to stone me." Moses is not exaggerating, for the situation is a clear and present danger. This is the first mention of stoning a person in Scripture. Stoning is a horrible way to die.

**J Vernon McGee** - About this time Moses was probably ready to turn his job over to somebody else

**Mattoon** - Stoning was the last stage of rejection of a leader in Israel. These folks were stoned = David at Ziglag, Adoram at Shechem, Jesus (John 10:31). I believe they may have thrown rocks at the Lord during the crucifixion process. This was a common custom of that day. Stephen (Acts 7:58+), Paul (Acts 14:19+).([Treasures from Exodus, Volume 2](#))

**David Thompson** - Sometimes leaders are forced into situations in which the only thing they can do is cry out to God. Moses has



nowhere else to turn. His only recourse is to cry out to God. Now Moses was not the kind of man to embellish the truth. So when he says to the Lord there is a danger here of me being “stoned,” you can be certain that was, in fact, a real possible threat. Moses did not know what to do. He never wanted this job in the first place and now that he had it, he is leading a group of people who are criticizing, complaining and threatening him. Stoning was the normal way people who were a threat were killed. Even recognized leaders were not above being stoned (Num. 14:10; 1 Sa 30:6; Jn 8:59; Acts 5:26; 7:58; 14:19). Stoning was a legitimate form of legal punishment. **Moses truly believed that he was on the verge of being stoned.** The people charged him with trying to starve them to death and now they were charging him with trying to kill them by thirst. Moses was in a real bind and people were in a panic and Moses needed God’s help and so he did exactly what he should do—**he cried out to God.** Now in some respects, Moses’ emotions are getting the best of him, just as Israel’s emotions are getting the best of them. **Both have temporarily forgotten the protection of God and both have temporarily forgotten the provisions of God.** To not trust in God is a form of rebellion and this lack of trust is a rebellion that is remembered in all of Scripture pertaining to Israel (Nu 20:13, 24; 27:14; Dt. 6:16; 9:22; 33:8; Ps. 81:7; 95:8; 106:32), but also pertaining to Moses and Aaron (Nu 27:14; 20:24; Deut. 32:51; Ps. 106:32). We may remember that God told Moses that he would lead the people of Israel back to a specific spot to worship Him (Ex. 3:12+). Moses was not back to that spot yet and he should have realized these people can threaten me all they want, but the fact is they cannot kill me because God is leading me. But even though this is a lapse of faith in Moses, he is doing the right thing by crying out to God. ([Sermon](#))

**Gotquestions** explains that "**Stoning** is a method of execution during which a group of people, usually peers of the guilty party, throws stones at the condemned person until he or she dies. Death by stoning was prescribed in the Old Testament Law as a punishment for various sins. Both animals and people could be the subjects of stoning (Exodus 21:28), and stoning seems to have been associated with sins that caused irreparable damage to the spiritual or ceremonial purity of a person or an animal. Some sins that resulted in stoning in the Old Testament were murder (Leviticus 24:17), idolatry (Deuteronomy 17:2–5), approaching near to Mount Sinai while the presence of God was there (Exodus 19:12–13), practicing necromancy or the occult (Leviticus 20:27), and blaspheming the name of the Lord (Leviticus 24:16). Stoning was probably the punishment for various types of sexual sin, as well (Deuteronomy 22:24); the related passages in Leviticus 20 do not specify the method of execution, only that the guilty party was to be “put to death.” The Mosaic Law specified that, before anyone could be put to death by stoning, there had to be a trial, and at least two witnesses had to testify: “On the testimony of two or three witnesses a person is to be put to death, but no one is to be put to death on the testimony of only one witness” (Deuteronomy 17:6). Those witnesses “must be the first in putting that person to death, and then the hands of all the people” (verse 7). In other words, those who testified against the condemned person in court had to cast the first stone. Examples of stonings in the Old Testament are the deaths of Achan and his family (Joshua 7:25) and Naboth, who was condemned by false witnesses (1 Kings 21). (See full article [What does the Bible say about stoning?](#))

**Exodus 17:5 Then the LORD said to Moses, “Pass before the people and take with you some of the elders of Israel; and take in your hand your staff with which you struck the Nile, and go.**

NET Exodus 17:5 The LORD said to Moses, "Go over before the people; take with you some of the elders of Israel and take in your hand your staff with which you struck the Nile and go.

NLT Exodus 17:5 The LORD said to Moses, "Walk out in front of the people. Take your staff, the one you used when you struck the water of the Nile, and call some of the elders of Israel to join you.

KJV Exodus 17:5 And the LORD said unto Moses, Go on before the people, and take with thee of the elders of Israel; and thy rod, wherewith thou smotest the river, take in thine hand, and go.

ESV Exodus 17:5 And the LORD said to Moses, "Pass on before the people, taking with you some of the elders of Israel, and take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile, and go.

NIV Exodus 17:5 The LORD answered Moses, "Walk on ahead of the people. Take with you some of the elders of Israel and take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile, and go.

- **Pass before the people and take with you some of the elders of Israel** Eze 2:6 Ac 20:23,24
- **take in your hand your staff with which you struck the Nile** Ex 7:19,20 Nu 20:8-11
- Exodus 17 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### THE STAFF -- SYMBOL OF GOD'S POWER

**Then the LORD said to Moses** - Moses is not reading this in a Bible. He is hearing it spoken by the One Who wrote the Bible! Like three staccato commands - pass...take...take.

**Pass before the people** - The NIV has a good translation = "Walk on ahead of the people." Jehovah commands Moses to be going on ahead of the congregation into the wilderness. The Septuagint verb is proporeuomai which means to go on before (used of the Angel of God Who had been going before the camp Ex 14:19+).

**And take with you some of the elders of Israel** - We are not told whether the **elders** were in the grumbling group or trusted God to perform another miracle. Their presence is important because they are mentioned not only in this verse but in Ex 17:6. **Elders** (Heb = [zagen](#); Lxx = [presbuteros](#)) were mentioned in Ex 3:16+ and here clearly their function would be to serve as witnesses because this miraculous event would not take place in front of the congregation but further away in the wilderness of Horeb. The elders would testify about the miracle.

**Elders** in Exodus - Ex. 3:16; Ex. 3:18; Ex 4:29; Ex 10:9; Ex 12:21; Ex17:5; Ex 17:6; Ex 18:12; Ex 19:7; Ex 24:1; Ex 24:9; Ex 24:14;

**HCSB** has an interesting note that "The instruction to take some of the elders fits the thought that the Israelite "complaining" had become a quasi-official legal case." (HCSB Study Bible)

**Bush** suggests the elders were to accompany Moses because "the mass of the people had rendered themselves unworthy of being the spectators of such a glorious miracle."

**Constable** - By using his **staff** Moses proved that God was still enabling him to perform miracles as he had done in Egypt. The elders apparently accompanied Moses as representatives of the people since the whole nation could not get close enough to witness the miracle.

**Steven Cole** adds that the **staff** "showed both the elders and the people that the power was not in Moses, but came from the Lord. Moses was just the man whom God used."

**And take in your hand your staff with which you struck the Nile, and go** - Notice Jehovah encourages Moses. How? He does not just say "take the staff" but the very one with which you "**struck the Nile**"! Jehovah is reminding Moses with this detail that His power was sufficient before in an "abundant water" situation and it will be sufficient in this "no water" situation. Think about this for a moment. Moses is in an arid desert. There is no water. There is probably not a cloud in the sky. It is hot and dry! And God is about to tell him to go strike a rock in the waterless desert. So to prepare Moses for to take this "leap of faith" God encourages Moses' faith. How? We know that faith comes by **hearing** (the reminder of "the staff with which you struck the Nile") and **hearing by the Word of Christ** (Jehovah literally speaks the Word in Moses' hearing). (Ro 10:17<sup>±</sup>).

**Bush** has an interesting note regarding the command to take the **staff** - We hear the voice of God commanding his servant to take the ominous rod with which he had bruised and broken Egypt, and we anticipate that it is now to be an instrument of inflicting some fearful chastisement upon his guilty people. We can scarce repress an inward shudder in anticipation of the sequel. But how speedily are our apprehensions calmed? The rod is to be assumed for a purpose of mercy and not of wrath. It is to smite, not a sinful people, but a flinty rock. It is to draw forth, not a stream of blood from the heart of the offender, but a stream of water to cool his tongue, and to restore his fainting frame. How involuntary the exclamation, 'Surely, O Lord, Thy thoughts are not our thoughts, Nor are our ways Thy ways!' (Isaiah 55:8)

**Exodus 17:6 "Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock at Horeb; and you shall strike the rock, and water will come out of it, that the people may drink." And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel.**

NET Exodus 17:6 I will be standing before you there on the rock in Horeb, and you will strike the rock, and water will come out of it so that the people may drink." And Moses did so in plain view of the elders of Israel.

NLT Exodus 17:6 I will stand before you on the rock at Mount Sinai. Strike the rock, and water will come gushing out. Then the people will be able to drink." So Moses struck the rock as he was told, and water gushed out as the elders looked on.

KJV Exodus 17:6 Behold, I will stand before thee there upon the rock in Horeb; and thou shalt smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink. And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel.

ESV Exodus 17:6 Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock at Horeb, and you shall strike the rock, and water shall come out of it, and the people will drink." And Moses did so, in the sight of the elders of Israel.

NIV Exodus 17:6 I will stand there before you by the rock at Horeb. Strike the rock, and water will come out of

it for the people to drink." So Moses did this in the sight of the elders of Israel.

- **I will stand before you there on the rock** : Ex 16:10
- **at Horeb**: Ex 3:1-5
- Exodus 17 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Dore Woodcut  
Moses Striking the Rock

||

## STRIKING THE ROCK AT HOREB

We could also entitle this passage "Grace to Grumblers!" And there is no divine rebuke! In Exodus 16:3-4, when the people complained about no food in the wilderness, without rebuke God graciously promised to rain bread from heaven on them. Aren't we glad God gives grumblers grace!

**Behold** ([02009](#)) ([hinneh](#)) is an interjection meaning look, pay attention, and directs our mind to the text, imploring the reader to give it special attention. In short, the Spirit is trying to arrest our attention! And so **hinneh** is used as an exclamation of vivid immediacy (e.g., read Ge 6:13)! **Spurgeon** reminds us that "**Behold** is a word of wonder; it is intended to excite admiration. Wherever you see it hung out in Scripture, it is like an ancient sign-board, signifying that there are rich wares within, or like the hands which solid readers have observed in the margin of the older Puritanic books, drawing attention to something particularly worthy of observation." I would add, **behold** is like a divine highlighter, a divine underlining of an especially striking or important text. It says in effect "Listen up, all ye who would be wise in the ways of Jehovah!"

**I will stand before you there on the rock at Horeb** - The basic meaning of **Horeb** (see more below) is *desolate*! God addresses the question of the faithless Israelites before they even ask it in Ex 17:7 "**Is the LORD among us, or not?**" He is not only present in the pillars of smoke and fire but now present by His very presence. Little wonder that the first word was "**Behold!**" Jehovah Himself would literally stand on the rock! Did Moses and Israel actually see Him or a manifestation of His presence? Was it the pillar they saw? While we will have to wait until Heaven to know for sure, it is certainly possible. However, the text does not say, but clearly He stood on the rock, so this would qualify as a Theophany, and I personally think it was a Christophany, a manifestation of the preincarnate Christ (See study of [Angel of the LORD](#)). This scene in some ways reminds me of the scene in Judges 2:1-2+ "Now the [Angel of the LORD](#) came up from Gilgal to Bochim. And he said, "I brought you up out of Egypt and led you into the land which I have sworn to your fathers; and I said, 'I will never break My covenant with you. And as for you, you shall make no covenant with the inhabitants of this land; you shall tear down their altars.' But you have not obeyed Me; what is this you have done?" In both scenes Israel was essentially expressing disobedience to Yahweh and so Yahweh makes a personal appearance (the details as we said are uncertain).

This miracle demonstrated that God did not bring them out to the wilderness to kill them and that He was indeed with them.

**NET Note** - The presence of Yahweh at this **rock** enabled Paul to develop a midrashic lesson, an analogical application: Christ was present with Israel to provide water for them in the wilderness. So this was a Christophany. But Paul takes it a step further to equate the rock with Christ, for just as it was struck to produce water, so Christ would be struck to produce rivers of living water. The provision of bread to eat and water to drink provided for Paul a ready analogy to the provisions of Christ in the gospel (1 Cor 10:4)

**ESV Study Note on I will stand before you there** - The Lord's presence presumably was manifested in the pillar of cloud (see Ex 13:21-22), providing protection for Moses from the quarreling people of Israel, but also as a demonstration of God's power, producing fear and awe among the people. The trustworthiness of God's promise to provide for his people is dramatically demonstrated, as Moses obeys God's command to strike the rock and the Lord provides water for his people. In light of God's promise to stand there "on the rock," some interpreters see a close identification between the presence of God and the rock itself.

**The Reformation Study Bible on I will stand before you there** - An astonishing statement. Man stands before God, not God before man (Deut. 19:17; 25:1-3; 17:8-13). In this trial God takes the place of the accused, standing in the dock.

God is described as the **Rock** in Deuteronomy, all the same Hebrew noun ([tsur](#)) as used in Exodus 17:6...

Deuteronomy 32:4 "The **Rock!** His work is perfect, For all His ways are just; A God of faithfulness and without injustice, Righteous and upright is He.

Deuteronomy 32:15 "But Jeshurun grew fat and kicked— You are grown fat, thick, and sleek— Then he forsook God who made him, And scorned the **Rock** of his salvation.

Deuteronomy 32:18 "You neglected the **Rock** who begot you, And forgot the God who gave you birth.

Deuteronomy 32:31 "Indeed their rock is not like our **Rock**, Even our enemies themselves judge this.

**On the rock at Horeb** - The phrase **rock at Horeb** can be confusing because normally "Horeb" is linked with Mount Sinai. Even the NLT paraphrases it "the rock at Mount Sinai" which is a misleading translation. This event did not occur at the same place the giving of the Ten Commandments took place. And yet Horeb was almost assuredly in that same region. Read Dr Yamauchi's comment below as it helps us resolve the confusion. The point is that this **rock** was in the region of **Horeb**, but not actually at Mount Horeb (Sinai).

**Edwin Yamauchi** notes that "In some passages **Horeb** seems to designate **an area larger than Mount Sinai** (Deut. 4:10; Deut. 9:8; Deut. 18:16). Moses struck the rock in the **region of Horeb** (Exodus 17:6), but **not on Mount Sinai** which the Israelites did not reach until later (Exodus 19:1)." (Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament)

**Horeb** (02722) (choreb from **charab** = to parch) is related to the noun horeb which means dryness, drought, heat, desolation and here it refers to the geographic location. Called the "Mountain of God" in Ex 3:1. The Lord made a covenant with Israel at Horeb (Dt 5:2, Dt 29:1). Israel "made a calf in Horeb And worshiped a molten image." (Ps 196:19) **Yamauchi** adds **Horeb** is "An alternative name for Mount Sinai, derived from ḥārab and signifying a desolate region. It occurs seventeen times, including nine times in Deuteronomy. The documentary hypothesis suggests that this name for the mountain of God is characteristic of D and E (Exodus 3:1; Exodus 17:6; Exodus 33:6), while Sinai is used in the J and P sections (see, however, Deut. 33:2)." (TWOT)

**Horeb** - 17v - Ex 3:1; Ex 17:6; Ex 33:6; Dt. 1:2; Dt. 1:6; Dt. 1:19; Dt. 4:10; Dt. 4:15; Dt. 5:2; Dt. 9:8; Dt. 18:16; Dt. 29:1; 1 Ki. 8:9; 1 Ki. 19:8; 2 Chr. 5:10; Ps. 106:19; Mal. 4:4. Below are most of the uses from Deuteronomy.

Deuteronomy 1:2 It is eleven days' journey from **Horeb** by the way of Mount Seir to Kadesh-barnea.

Deuteronomy 1:6 "The LORD our God spoke to us at **Horeb**, saying, 'You have stayed long enough at this mountain.

Deuteronomy 1:19 "Then we set out from **Horeb**, and went through all that great and terrible wilderness which you saw on the way to the hill country of the Amorites, just as the LORD our God had commanded us; and we came to Kadesh-barnea.

Deuteronomy 4:10 "Remember the day you stood before the LORD your God at **Horeb**, when the LORD said to me, 'Assemble the people to Me, that I may let them hear My words so they may learn to fear Me all the days they live on the earth, and that they may teach their children.'

Deuteronomy 4:15 "So **watch** yourselves carefully, since you did not see any form on the day the LORD spoke to you at **Horeb** from the midst of the fire,

Deuteronomy 5:2 "The LORD our God made a covenant with us at **Horeb**.

Deuteronomy 9:8 "Even at **Horeb** you provoked the LORD to wrath, and the LORD was so angry with you that He would have destroyed you.

Deuteronomy 18:16 "This is according to all that you asked of the LORD your God in **Horeb** on the day of the assembly, saying, 'Let me not hear again the voice of the LORD my God, let me not see this great fire anymore, or I will die.'

Deuteronomy 29:1 These are the words of the covenant which the LORD commanded Moses to make with the sons of Israel in the land of Moab, besides the covenant which He had made with them at **Horeb**.

**Gilbrant on Horeb**- Mount Horeb, which is an alternative name for Mount Sinai, is derived from a Hebrew root that means "devastation" (HED #2817). The name probably denotes "a desolate place." Mount Horeb was the location of many significant events in the history of the nation of Israel. Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law, Jethro, at Horeb when the burning bush caught his attention (Exo. 3:1). Later, after Moses had triumphantly delivered Israel from their slavery to the Egyptians, the Israelites made a golden idol in the shape of a calf to worship by Mount Horeb (33:6). Not long after, the Law was given at Horeb (Mal. 4:4; Deut. 4:10). Centuries later, the Lord spoke to Elijah in a cave at Horeb (1 Ki. 19:8f). The theological significance of events which took place on this mountain is enormous. It is a place of divine revelation, where the Creator of the universe sought to reveal himself to his people. The revelations to Moses here, of the personal name of Yahweh and of the Covenant, are two of the most significant events in the history of humanity. The irony of this desolate area being the place where the living God revealed himself to living humans is rich. Scholars are uncertain of the exact location of Mount Horeb. Deuteronomy 1:2 states that the mountain is an eleven-day's journey from Kadesh-Barnea. This description tends to support a location in Sinai. However, dozens of locales have been proposed. The oldest traditions (fourth century A.D.) place Horeb at Jebel Musa in the Sinai

Peninsula. Edwin Yamauchi gives four possible locations for Mount Horeb: a mountain in Midian called al-Hrob; Jebel el-Halal, thirty miles west of Kadesh-Barnea; Sinn Bishr, thirty miles southeast of Suez; and one of three different peaks in Sinai (TWOT, 1:319). ([Complete Biblical Library Greek-English Dictionary](#))

## THE ROCK WAS CHRIST

**And you shall strike the rock** - In Exodus Moses struck the life giving waters of the Nile turning them into blood which resulted in death (Ex 7:20, 21). In "striking contrast" in Exodus 17 Moses was instructed to take the same staff and strike the barren Rock in the wilderness bringing forth life giving waters to Israel! Paul in his description of Israel in their 40 years of wilderness wanderings, explained that "all drank the same spiritual drink, for they were drinking from a spiritual **rock** which followed them; and the **rock** was Christ." (1Cor 10:4) Did you see the verb "**followed**"? What is the picture? Thereafter for the next 40 years, wherever Israel went in the dry, arid wilderness, they were never without water for Christ cared for them.

**THOUGHT** - May we be conscious of His daily presence with us and in us through His Spirit as we travel this world in our pilgrim journey "as aliens and strangers." (cf Mt 28:20 "I, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.")

**Strike** is the common Hebrew verb [nakah](#) (used over 450x) and is translated in the Septuagint with the verb [patasso](#) which means to strike down or slay as when one inflicts a heavy or fatal blow. Jesus used [patasso](#) in the description of His coming crucifixion in Mt 26:31, Mk 14:27 (quoting Zech 13:7+). Clearly the striking of the Rock speaks of Christ's death on the Cross. This same verb [nakah](#) is used in another "no water" situation described in Numbers 20:1-13 which occurred in the [wilderness of Zin](#) in the northern half of the Negev ([map](#)) and should be distinguished from the striking of the Rock at Rephidim in Exodus 17. **Keep the chronological context in mind in the "no water" event in Numbers 20.** There is an interval of 37 years between Nu 19:22 and Nu 20:1 as Numbers 20:1-22:1 records the beginning of the transition from the old generation to the new generation. They are back at **Kadesh** (see [location in Wilderness of Zin](#)). They had been here almost thirty-eight years before (Dt 1:19) and now they were back again. Thirty-eight years of wandering, going nowhere.

Then the sons of Israel, the whole congregation, came to the [wilderness of Zin](#) ([see location on southern part of this map](#)) in the first month; and the people stayed at **Kadesh** (Where they had begun their wilderness wanderings in Nu 13:26). Now Miriam died there and was buried there (Miriam represents the first generation, her death symbolizing that the old generation would not enter Canaan). **2 There was no water for the congregation**, and they assembled themselves against Moses and Aaron. **3** The people thus **contended** (exactly how the first generation of Israel responded to the no water test in Exodus 17. **Contended** is the same verb used in Ex 17:2 = [riyb](#); Lxx = [loidoreo](#) in the [imperfect tense](#) = again and again, over and over) with Moses and spoke, saying, "If only we had perished when our brothers perished before the LORD! **4** "Why then have you brought the LORD'S assembly into this wilderness, for us and our beasts to die here? (Same thing the first generation had accused Moses of in Ex 17:3!) **5** "Why have you made us come up from Egypt, to bring us in to this wretched place? It is not a place of grain or figs or vines or pomegranates, nor is there water to drink." **6** Then Moses and Aaron came in from the presence of the assembly to the doorway of the tent of meeting and fell on their faces. Then the glory of the LORD appeared to them; **7** and the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, **8** "**Take the rod** (same rod used by Moses to perform previous miracles Ex. 7:19-21; Ex 14:16; Ex 17:5-6); and you and your brother Aaron assemble the congregation and **speak to the rock** before their eyes, that it may yield its water. You shall thus bring forth water for them out of the rock and let the congregation and their beasts drink." **9** So Moses took the rod from before the LORD, just as He had commanded him; **10** and Moses and Aaron gathered the assembly before the rock. And he said to them, "Listen now, you rebels; shall we bring forth water for you out of this rock?" (Instead of speaking to the rock, Moses spoke to the people, accusing them of being rebels against God) **11** **Then Moses lifted up his hand and struck** (same verb as Ex 17:6 - Heb = [nakah](#); Lxx = [patasso](#)) **the rock twice with his rod; and water came forth abundantly, and the congregation and their beasts drank.** **12** But the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, "Because you have not believed Me, to treat Me as holy in the sight of the sons of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land which I have given them." **13** Those were the waters of Meribah (Distinct from the [Meribah](#) of Exodus 17:7+), because the sons of Israel contended with the LORD, and He proved Himself holy among them. (Numbers 20:1-13)

**Mattoon** asks "Why was Moses to speak to the rock in Numbers 20? Why was he disciplined severely and not allowed into the Promised Land? Remember that the rock is a picture of Jesus Christ. Moses was to speak to the rock because it had been already smitten. Jesus needed only to die once for the sins of the world. His

work was complete on the cross.

John 19:30—When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.

Romans 6:9-10.. Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. [10] For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God.

Hebrews 9:26—For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself

Hebrews 9:28—So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.

Hebrews 10:10—By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

Jesus arose from the grave and ascended to Heaven after His resurrection. He is at the right hand of His Father and dwells on high.

Hebrews 10:12—But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God;

The resurrected picture of the ascension of Christ is seen in the words for "rock" in these two chapters. In Exodus 17, the word "rock" (**tsur**) means "boulder" but in Numbers 20, a different word for "rock" (**sela'** from root meaning "lofty") is used. It means "a lofty, elevated rock." Thank God we serve a living, risen, elevated Savior. Because He is alive, we can "go on." This was God's message to Moses in verse five. Go on! This is His message throughout the entire Bible. God forward for Christ (1 Corinthians 15:58) ([Treasures from Exodus, Volume 2](#))

**Reformation Study Bible on strike the Rock** - Moses lifts the rod of judgment and strikes the rock on which God stands and with which He is symbolically identified. God is not guilty, but He bears the judgment.

The same verb for **strike** (**nakah**) is used to two other **Messianic prophetic passages** . The fact that these two prophecies both refer to Christ's crucifixion and both use the same verb "strike" would add support to the thought that Moses' striking the rock foreshadowed the crucifixion of Christ. Just something to meditate on....

Note that the **Rock** in the desert (like our Savior Christ Jesus) gave forth no life giving water until it was struck or smitten. By the same token our Lord Jesus could not become our Savior unless He too was smitten.

Exodus 17:5-6 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Pass before the people and take with you some of the elders of Israel; and take in your hand your staff with which you **struck** (Heb = **nakah**) the Nile, and go. 6 "Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock at Horeb; and you **shall strike** ( Heb = **nakah**; Lxx = **patasso**) the rock (1 Cor 10:4 = "the rock was Christ."), and water will come out of it, that the people may drink." And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel.

**(1) MESSIANIC PROPHECY #1** - Isaiah writes

"Surely our griefs He Himself bore, and our sorrows He carried; yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, **smitten** (**nakah**) of God, and afflicted." (Isa 53:4+)

**(2) MESSIANIC PROPHECY #2- Zechariah** uses the same Hebrew verb (**nakah**) in his declaration to "

**Strike** (command - Heb = **nakah**; Lxx = **patasso**) the Shepherd (the Messiah) that the sheep may be scattered." (Zechariah 13:7+)

**This passage in Zechariah 13:7 was quoted by Jesus in Mt 26:31** (also Mk 14:27) clearly referring to His Crucifixion...

Then (AFTER CELEBRATING PASSOVER) Jesus said to them (HIS DISCIPLES), "You will all fall away because of Me this night, for it is written, **I WILL STRIKE DOWN** (**patasso**) THE SHEPHERD, AND THE SHEEP OF THE FLOCK SHALL BE SCATTERED.'

**F B Meyer** on water out of a rock - This is strange! A rock would seem the last place to choose for the storage of water. But God's cupboards are in very unlikely places.

- Ravens bring food.
- The Prime Minister of Egypt gives corn.

- Cyrus lets go the people of Israel from Babylon.
- The Jordan heals the leper.
- Meal makes poisoned pottage wholesome.
- Wood makes iron swim.
- A Samaritan binds up the wounds and saves the life of the pillaged traveler.
- Joseph of Arimathea buries the sacred body in his own new tomb.

**The rock** - As discussed below this act illustrates great spiritual truths about Jesus Christ our Rock of Salvation! Perhaps your heart is faint or you are weary as you read this note. If so take a moment and ask the Spirit to speak to you, to comfort you, to teach you as you read a few of the passages in the Psalms that refer to our **Rock**...

Psalm 18:2 The LORD is my **rock** and my fortress and my deliverer, My God, my **rock**, in whom I take refuge; My shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.

Psalm 18:31 For who is God, but the LORD? And who is a **rock**, except our God,

- [God my Rock](#)
- [God is Our Rock](#)

Psalm 18:46 The LORD lives, and blessed be my **rock**; And exalted be the God of my salvation,

Psalm 19:14 Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart Be acceptable in Your sight, O LORD, my **rock** and my Redeemer.

Psalms 27:5 For in the day of trouble He will conceal me in His tabernacle; In the secret place of His tent He will hide me; He will lift me up on a **rock**.

Psalm 28:1 A Psalm of David. To You, O LORD, I call; My **rock**, do not be deaf to me, For if You are silent to me, I will become like those who go down to the pit.

Psalm 31:2 Incline Your ear to me, rescue me quickly; Be to me a **rock** of strength, A stronghold to save me.

Psalm 61:2 From the end of the earth I call to You when my heart is faint; Lead me to the **rock** that is higher than I.

- [Play Song](#) or [this one](#) or [this one \(my favorite\)](#)

Psalm 62:2 He only is my **rock** and my salvation, My stronghold; I shall not be greatly shaken.

- [Rock of My Salvation](#)
- [Rock of My Salvation](#) - another version

Psalm 62:6 He only is my **rock** and my salvation, My stronghold; I shall not be shaken.

Psalm 62:7 On God my salvation and my glory rest; The **rock** of my strength, my refuge is in God.

Psalm 71:3 Be to me a **rock** of habitation to which I may continually come; You have given commandment to save me, For You are my rock and my fortress.

Psalm 78:35 And they remembered that God was their **rock**, And the Most High God their Redeemer.

Psalm 89:26 "He will cry to Me, 'You are my Father, My God, and the **rock** of my salvation.'

Psalm 92:15 To declare that the LORD is upright; He is my **rock**, and there is no unrighteousness in Him.

Psalm 94:22 But the LORD has been my stronghold, And my God the **rock** of my refuge.

Psalm 95:1 O come, let us sing for joy to the LORD, Let us shout joyfully to the **rock** of our salvation.

Psalm 144:1 A Psalm of David. Blessed be the LORD, my **rock**, Who trains my hands for war, And my fingers for battle;

**Spurgeon** says we are to note that the **Rock** "must be smitten in a peculiar manner; it must be smitten with the rod of the lawgiver, or else no water will come forth." Notice also that although the staff was actually in Moses' hand, the psalmist writes that it was Jehovah Who "split the rocks in the wilderness, and gave them abundant drink like the ocean depths. He brought forth streams also from the rock, and caused waters to run down like rivers." (Ps 78:15-16, see also Ps 105:41; Ps 114:8) And so the same staff that

was used to bring **judgment** to the Egyptians, was also used to **foreshadow the judgment** with which God would smite His own Son!

**Spurgeon** adds that "Our Saviour, Jesus Christ, was smitten with the sword of the lawgiver on earth (Moses), and by the rod of his great Father, the Lawgiver in Heaven. None but Moses might smite the rock, for he was king in Jeshurun. So was it with our Saviour. It is true that the Roman nailed him to the tree; it is true that the Jew dragged him to death; but it is equally true that it was his Father who did it all. It is a great fact that man slew the Saviour, but it is a greater fact that God slew him, too. Who was it said, 'Awake, O sword, against my Shepherd, and against the man that is my Fellow'? The prophet tells us, when he adds, 'Saith the Lord.' (Zech 13:7+, quoted by Jesus in Mt 26:31, Mk 14:27). It was God Who delivered up his Son for us, and Who will now also with Him freely give us all things. Christ would have been no Redeemer unless His Father had smitten Him. There would have been no acceptable sacrifice, even if the Jew had dragged Him to death, or the Roman had pierced His side, unless the Father's scourge had fallen on His shoulders, and unless the Father's sword had found a sheath in His blessed heart. It was the sword of the Lawgiver that smote Jesus Christ, and made Him our acceptable sacrifice. Believer, take a view of this great fact; it will help thee most solemnly to adore both God the Father and God the Son. Remember, it was the Father who smote the Saviour; and it was the Son who bore the Father's stroke. It was not the cruel Roman lash, it was not the crown of thorns, it was not the nails alone that made Christ the Saviour; it was the great fact that made him cry, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' It was not Pilate and it was not Herod that put him to death as our Saviour; they put him to death as a reputed malefactor; but it was God who gave him up to die for us. His Father said, 'Take him, and let him die.' It was from Heaven that the death-warrant came; it was by God that the blow was struck; and if it had not been from the Father, we should all have been condemned. It was necessary that the rod of the Lawgiver should smite this Rock of Ages, to bring out from it plenteous streams of water, which should cause pardon and peace to flow out to dying souls."

And so just as Moses struck the rock to provide life-giving water for the people to drink, so God struck the Rock of our salvation in Crucifixion. **In NT terms the living water made available by the striking of our Rock of Ages is the gift of Holy Spirit - the life giving, ever fresh, sufficient supply of the Spirit.** On the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles, Jesus "cried out, saying, "If any man is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water.'"But this He spoke of the Spirit, Whom those who believed in Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified. (John 7:37-39+, cp Jn 4:10+, Jn 6:63).

In sum we see that there could be no Pentecost without Calvary, no living, gushing waters without the smiting of our Rock Christ Jesus. And so in both the Old and the New Testament we see God's great and gracious invitation to drink from Christ the Smitten Rock. Isaiah writes "Ho! Every one who thirsts, come to the waters." (Isa 55:1+) John closes with a similar invitation "The Spirit and the bride say, "Come." And let the one who hears say, "Come." And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost." (Revelation 22:17+) Are you thirsty (spiritually)? Are you willing to come to the Rock, the only Source of living water? The words of Horatius Bonar's hymn beautifully testify of Christ our Smitten Rock and the Living Waters that flowed forth His pierced side on Calvary's Cross...

[I Heard The Voice of Jesus say](#) ,

"Behold, I freely give  
The living water; thirsty one  
Stoop down and drink and live."  
I came to Jesus and I drank  
Of that life-giving stream;  
My thirst was quenched, my soul revived,  
And now I live in Him.

[Another Version by Michael Card](#)

**THOUGHT** - Will you drink, appropriating the spiritual nourishment by faith? What "desert" are you walking through in this season of your life? We all experience those dry, desert times in our spiritual life. May God grant us grace to recall the eternal truth that our Christ our Rock poured forth streams in the desert for Israel and He does the same for us, His beloved, for He is the same, yesterday, today and tomorrow (Heb 13:8+).

**[Rock of Ages, cleft for me,](#)**

Let me hide myself in Thee;  
Let the water and the blood,  
From Thy riven side which flowed,  
Be of sin the double cure,  
Cleanse me from its guilt and pow'r.

Nothing in my hands I bring



Simply to Thy Cross I cling  
Naked come to Thee for dress  
Helpless, look to Thee for grace  
To Thy fountain, Lord I fly  
Wash me Savior or I die.

At Mt Horeb (Mt Sinai), God gave the Law. When Christ our Rock was smitten on the Mount of Calvary, He took the curse of the Law upon Himself as our substitute. And after He was glorified He gave us His Spirit. The Rock was struck on the Cross, not symbolically by the rod of Moses, but fully and truly by the wrath of the Father, and as a result we were given, not the **LAND** of Israel, but a **LIFE** forever with God. **Matthew** records that when "Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up His spirit...the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom, and the earth shook; and the rocks were split." (Mt 27:50-51) The **writer of Hebrews** says that as new covenant believers "have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh." (Heb 10:19-20<sup>±</sup>)

**John MacArthur:** The Jews had a popular legend, still known and believed by many in Paul's day, that the actual rock that Moses struck followed Israel throughout her wilderness travels, providing water wherever they went. I believe the apostle may have been alluding to this legend, saying, "Yes, a rock did follow Israel in the wilderness. But it was not a physical rock that provided merely physical water. It was a spiritual rock (not petros a large boulder but petra a massive rock cliff), the Messiah (the Hebrew term for Christ) whom you have long awaited, who was with our fathers even then."...That supernatural rock protected and sustained His people and would not allow them to perish. Old Testament believers did not have the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, but even during the Exodus they had the sustaining presence of the preexistent Messiah, the preincarnate Christ, caring for and fulfilling the needs of His people. (1 Corinthians Commentary)

O Everlasting Rock,  
Sole Refuge in distress,  
My Fort when foes assail and mock,  
My Rest in weariness!  
-H. Bonar

**Warren Wiersbe** adds that "The rock pictures Jesus Christ who was smitten for us (1 Cor. 10:4) that we might have the living water of the Holy Spirit within (John 7:37-39<sup>±</sup>). He was smitten on the cross that the Spirit of life might be given to save and satisfy thirsty sinners. In the Bible, water for cleansing symbolizes the Word of God (John 13:1-17; Jn 15:3); water for drinking represents the Spirit of God (John 7:37-38<sup>±</sup>). The people could not live without water, nor can we live today without the water of life (John 4:13-14<sup>±</sup>; Jn 7:37-39<sup>±</sup>). **This Rock is Christ (1 Cor. 10:4), and the smiting of the Rock speaks of Christ's death on the cross, where He felt the rod of the curse of the law.** (It was this same rod, you will recall, that turned into a serpent, Ex. 4:2-3, and that helped to bring the plagues on Egypt.) **The order here is wonderful:** in Exodus 16 we have the manna, illustrating Christ's coming to earth; in Exodus 17 we see the smiting of the rock, which pictures His death on the cross. The water is a symbol of the Holy Spirit, who was given after Christ had been glorified (John 7:37-39<sup>±</sup>). (from With the Word Bible Commentary and Wiersbe's Expository Outlines of the Old Testament)

#### Related Resource:

- Many of the preceding notes are from [Christ Our Rock](#) - see that topic for much longer discussion

**Rock** (06697)(**tsur**) is used a few times to describe a literal rock (usually a large rock or boulder), but the figurative uses are more common and usually descriptive of Jehovah. **Tsur** in this verse is translated in the Septuagint with the Greek word **petra**. Here are all the uses of **tsur** in the Pentateuch - Exod. 17:6; Ex 33:21; Ex 33:22; Nu 23:9; Dt. 8:15; Dt. 32:4; Dt. 32:13; Dt. 32:15; Dt. 32:18; Dt. 32:30; Dt. 32:31; Dt. 32:37

O safe to the Rock that is higher than I  
My soul in its conflicts and sorrows would fly;  
So sinful, so weary -- Thine, Thine would I be;  
Thou blest "Rock of Ages," I'm hiding in Thee.  
- Cushing

**WATER FROM THE ROCK  
WHO WAS CHRIST**

**And water will come out of it, that the people may drink-** It is easy to read this too fast. Water out of a rock! There is no natural explanation. This is clear evidence of the supernatural power of God. It should have stunned and awoken the nation of Israel out of their indifference toward Jehovah and it should have the same effect on the slumbering church in America!

**THOUGHT** - I am reminded of Paul's exhortation to the church at Ephesus = "But all things become visible when they are exposed by the light, for everything that becomes visible is light. For this reason it says, **"Awake** ([present imperative](#)) sleeper, And arise from the dead, And Christ will shine on you." (Eph 5:13-14+) And then Jesus' words to the church at Ephesus one generation later "But I have this against you, that you have left your first love. Therefore **remember** ([present imperative](#)) from where you have fallen, and **repent** ([aorist imperative](#)) and do the deeds you did at first; or else I am coming to you and will remove your lampstand out of its place—unless you repent." (Rev 2:4-5+)

The psalmist records...

He opened a rock, and water gushed out; it flowed like a stream in the desert. (in the dry places like a river) (Ps 105:41)

**Spurgeon** - With Moses' rod and his own word he cleft the rock in the desert, and forth leaped abundant floods for their drinking where they had feared to die of thirst. **From most unlikely sources the all-sufficient God can supply his people's needs**; hard rocks become springing fountains at the Lord's command. "They ran in the dry places like a river": so that those at a distance from the rock could stoop down and refresh themselves, and the stream flowed on, so that in future journeyings they were supplied. The desert sand would naturally swallow up the streams, and yet it did not so, the refreshing river ran "in the dry places." **We know that the rock set forth our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom there flows a fountain of living waters which shall never be exhausted till the last pilgrim has crossed the Jordan and entered Canaan.**

**Comment** - The same verb for opened here in Ps 105:41 is used in Zechariah 13:1+ "In that day (RETURN OF MESSIAH, REDEMPTION OF REMNANT OF ISRAEL) a fountain **will be opened** for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for impurity."

**Reformation Study Bible** on **water** - The ultimate reference is to the water of life that flows from the throne of God (Zech. 13:1; Zech 14:8+ = [ED: THIS WILL BE IN THE [MESSIANIC KINGDOM](#)]; Ezek. 47:1-12 = [ED: THE [MILLENNIAL TEMPLE](#)]). Jesus offers this water where it was symbolically poured out in the temple at the feast (John 7:37), and John notes the water that flowed from His pierced side on the Cross (John 19:34; cf. Jn 7:38+).

Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. 38 "He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, **'From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.'**" 39 But this He spoke of the Spirit, Whom those who believed in Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified (THE IMPLICATION BEING THAT HE HAD TO BE CRUCIFIED). (John 7:37+, Jn 7:38+, Jn 7:39+)

**And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel-** Don't read this too quickly. Moses is instructed by Yahweh to strike a dry rock. He was as human as we are, so surely the thought must have crossed his mind "What will the people think if nothing happens?" At least that is what most of us would have thought. But Moses action of obedience reflects his firm faith in God's promise and in so doing sets a standard for every saint of every age. Of course Moses had a foundation for his faith, for God had performed similar miracles before. Specifically we read of the staff and water in Exodus 7:19-20+

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Say to Aaron, **Take your staff and stretch out your hand over the waters** of Egypt, over their rivers, over their streams, and over their pools, and over all their reservoirs of water, that they may become blood; and there will be blood throughout all the land of Egypt, both in vessels of wood and in vessels of stone." 20 So Moses and Aaron (NOTE IT WAS A JOINT EFFORT) did even as the LORD had commanded. And he (MOSES) lifted up the staff and struck the water that was in the Nile, in the sight of Pharaoh and in the sight of his servants, and all the water that was in the Nile was turned to blood.

**David Thompson** - God tells Moses exactly what he should do. (Ex 17:5-6) God had a plan for Moses and His Word reveals it. **Two things critical to determining the will of God—prayer and God's Word:**

**Action #1** - Moses is to pass before the people . Ex 17:5a The language means that Moses is to take off walking by the people and in front of the people. Moses needed to be at the head of the people. God wanted these people to realize "this is My man."

**Action #2** - Moses is to take some of the elders of Israel with him. Ex 17:5b What is stressed here is that some of the elders were to go with him, obviously not all of the elders. These elders would be witnesses of what God would do and would be able to tell the people about the great provisions of God.

**Action #3** - Moses is to take his staff in his hand. Ex 17:5c This is the same staff that was used to strike the Nile and it became blood. Now it would strike a rock and it would become water. That staff in the hands of Moses was able, by the power of God, to do some great things.

**Action #4** - God will stand before Moses on the rock at Horeb. Ex 17:6a The name Horeb is another name for Mt. Sinai (Ex. 3:1). There are a large number of rocks located at the base of this mountain, but there was obviously a special rock there that featured the presence of God that Moses was to strike.

**Action #5** - Moses is to strike the rock and water will come out and the people may drink.

Ex 17:6b God was about to perform another amazing miracle. Moses was to strike the rock, which was not the normal place one would find water and it would yield so much water that all the men, women, children and livestock could drink to their heart's content. So these people who had seen God send plagues, part a sea, destroy enemies, provide food and water were about to see another spectacular provision of God. At the end of Ex 17:6, Moses did so in the sight of the elders and every one of those elders could testify as to what they saw God do.

Think for a moment about the amazing grace of God. His people are grumbling and complaining and disbelieving and God graciously provides for His people anyway. There is no question that, according to Paul, this event concerning the rock is illustrative of Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 10:4). He is the rock that was struck and just as this rock was struck for unworthy people, so was He. The end result of striking the rock was the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, as a result of accomplished redemption so that people would not perish. Dr. C. I. Scofield said this episode in Exodus is illustrative of the entire life under grace (Ex. 17:6). The rock is struck for unworthy people. The life that is offered is free, unearned, abundant, near and available. All one must do to be saved from death is reach out by faith and partake of the grace that is offered. ([Sermon](#))

**NET Note** - The reader has many questions when studying this passage (Ex 17:6) – why water from a rock, why Horeb, why strike the rock when later only speak to it, why recall the Nile miracles, etc. B. Jacob (Exodus, 479–80) says that all these are answered when it is recalled that they were putting God to the test. **So water from the rock, the most impossible thing, cleared up the question of his power. Doing it at Horeb was significant because there Moses was called and told he would bring them to this place.** Since they had doubted God was in their midst, He would not do this miracle in the camp, but would have Moses lead the elders out to Horeb....And striking the rock recalled striking the Nile; there it brought death to Egypt, but here it brought life to Israel. There could be little further doubting that God was with them and able to provide for them.

In the second giving of the Law in Deuteronomy Moses made reference to this "aqueous miracle" declaring

"He led you through the great and terrible wilderness, with its fiery serpents and scorpions and thirsty ground where there was no water; He brought water for you out of the rock of flint. (Dt 8:15)

**Creationist Henry Morris** comments "Critics are repeatedly confounded when they try to explain the many miracles of the Exodus on a naturalistic basis. This was a uniquely significant period in world history, and God was once again revealing Himself as the world's Creator, miraculously creating bread and water in the desert for a whole generation of Israelites. Moses was not a gifted "water witch" able to locate an underground stream of water, but God's prophet. God created a river of water that followed their itinerary throughout the forty years of wandering, "for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ" (1 Corinthians 10:4).

God did not give Israel water from the rock to promote the use of mineral water; He took common water and gave it uncommon symbolism. Every drop should have pointed Israel to the everlasting Water of Life.

Asaph alludes to this rock striking, water gushing event...

Ps 78:20 (cf Neh. 9:15; Isa. 48:21) (THIS IS ISRAEL SPEAKING) "Behold, He struck the rock so that waters gushed out, And streams were overflowing; Can He give bread also? Will He provide meat for His people?"

**Spurgeon** - They admit what he had done, and yet, with **superabundant folly and insolence**, demand further proofs of his omnipotence. "Can he give bread also? can he provide flesh for his people?" As if the manna were nothing, as if animal food alone was true nourishment for men. If they had argued, "can he not give flesh?" the argument would have been reasonable, but they ran into insanity; when, having seen many marvels of omnipotence, they dared to insinuate that other things were beyond the divine power.

Yet, in this also, we have imitated their senseless conduct. Each new difficulty has excited fresh incredulity. We are still fools and slow of heart to believe our God, and this is a fault to be bemoaned with deepest penitence. For this cause the Lord is often wroth with us and chastens us sorely; for unbelief has in it a degree of provocation of the highest kind.

#### Related Resources:

- [Christ Our Rock](#)
- [Christ The Rock of Ages](#)
- [Christ The Rock of Our Salvation](#)
- [Christ The Smitten Rock](#)
- [Christ Our Rock of Refuge-Pt 1](#)
- [Christ Our Rock of Refuge-Pt 2](#)
- [Christ the Stone](#) - play Michael Card's powerful song [Scandalon](#)
- God's Name A Strong Tower
- [The Name of God](#)
- [The Rock of our Salvation -William S Plumer \(1867\)](#)

#### Sing this great old Maranatha chorus entitled...

##### **THE ROCK OF MY SALVATION**

You are the Rock of MY Salvation

You are the Strength of my life.

You are MY Hope and MY Inspiration

Lord, unto You will I cry.

I believe in You, I believe in You

For Your faithful love to me

You have been MY Help in time of Need

Lord, unto You will I cleave.

---

#### **C I Scofield's Comment** - The rock, type of life through the Spirit by grace:

(1) Christ the Rock (1 Cor. 10:4).

(2) The people utterly unworthy (Ex. 17:2; Eph. 2:1–6).

(3) Characteristics of life through grace:

(a) free (John 4:10; Rom. 6:23; Eph. 2:8);

(b) abundant (Ro 5:20; Ps. 105:41; John 3:16);

(c) near (Ro 10:8);

(d) the people had only to take (Isa. 55:1).

The smitten-rock aspect of the death of Christ looks toward the outpouring of the Holy Spirit as a result of accomplished redemption, rather than toward our guilt. It is the affirmative side of John 3:16. "Not perish" speaks of atoning blood; "but have" speaks of life bestowed.

---

**Wiersbe** - You never solve your problems by blaming other people. Israel's real problem was unbelief and a desire to go back to the old life. Every difficulty you meet is an opportunity for testing yourself and trusting your Lord, for going forward or going backward. The rock pictures Jesus Christ who was smitten for us (1 Cor. 10:4) that we might have the living water of the Holy Spirit within (John 7:37–39). (With the Word)

---

#### **Exodus 17:5-6 Water From the Rock by Dr. Woodrow Kroll**

And the Lord said to Moses, "Go on before the people, and take with you some of the elders of Israel. Also take in your hand your rod with which you struck the river, and go. Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock in Horeb; and you shall strike the rock, and water will come out of it, that the people may drink." And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel.

**Water From the Rock** - The importance of water can never be underestimated. Sixty percent of a lean, adult body is composed of water. A person can fast from food for 40 days or longer, but the human body can go only for about 7 days without water even under ideal circumstances.

It's no wonder, then, that the Israelites were getting desperate. The wilderness was far from ideal. It was a hot, desert-like stretch of land dotted with huge rocks but little vegetation. Without water they would quickly perish. So God instructed Moses to strike a rock, and out of this flinty hardness flowed sufficient water to meet the needs of all the people and their livestock.

The Bible writers later saw this rock as a symbol of Christ (1 Cor. 10:4). In the midst of a sin-parched life, Christ offers a well of living water that never runs dry, no matter how often we drink from it.

Have you received Christ as your Savior? If not, trust Jesus today and you will never thirst again. If you want eternal water, come to Jesus who said, "Whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life" (John 4:14).

The world offers a cistern; Christ offers a well.

---

**Our Daily Homily - F B Meyer** - I will stand before thee upon the rock in Horeb, and thou shalt smite the rock.

Here is a beautiful example of the co-operation between God and his servants in providing for the needs of his people. Clearly the smiting of the rock was a very small item in this incident, the main consideration was what God was doing in the heart of the earth. But the two wrought together: Moses in the eyes of the people, God in hidden depths. Similarly we are fellow-workers with God.

One of the greatest revelations that can come to any Christian worker is the realization that in every act of Christian ministry there are two agents, God and man: that God does not need to be implored to help us, but wants us to help Him; that our part is the very unimportant and subsidiary one of smiting the rock, whilst his is the Divine and all important part of making the waters flow.

Did Moses go to the rock that day weighted with care, his brow furrowed with the anxiety of furnishing a river of which his people might drink? Certainly not; he had only to smite: God would do all the rest, and had pledged Himself to it. So, Christian worker, you have been worrying as though the whole weight of God's inheritance were upon you, but you are greatly mistaken; smiting is very easy work.

In every congregation and religious gathering the Holy Spirit is present, eager to glorify Christ, and to pour out rivers of living water for thirsty men; believe this. See that you are spiritually in a right condition, that He may be able to ally you with Himself. Keep reckoning on Him to do his share; and when the river is flowing, be sure not to take the praise.

"We are workers together with God."

---

### **Exodus 17:1-7 Life to All Who Drink by Theodore Epp**

The water flowing from the rock indicates the provision for life. The psalmist said, "Behold, he smote the rock, that the waters gushed out, and the streams overflowed" (Ps. 78:20).

The smitten rock pointed to the smitten Christ who paid the penalty of sin. The gushing streams of water picture the gracious supply of life through the Holy Spirit.

God smote His Son and raised Him from the dead, thereby sending forth the life-giving stream, but man must come and drink.

Although Jesus Christ has paid the penalty of sin for all (1 John 2:2), only those who personally receive Him as Saviour have forgiveness of sin and eternal life (John 1:12; 5:24).

When God provides, He provides abundantly. When God provided water for the Israelites, the psalmist said, "He opened the rock, and the waters gushed out; they ran in the dry places like a river" (Ps 105:41).

Concerning the life that the Lord Jesus Christ provides, He said, "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" (John 10:10).

This coincides with the way Jesus compared the Spirit to the abundance of running water (John 4:14; 7:37,38). So the rock in the wilderness prefigured Jesus Christ.

"But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life" (John 4:14).

---

## Exodus 17:1-7 Desert Pete

The word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith. —Hebrews 4:2

In the 1960s, the Kingston Trio released a song called “Desert Pete.” The ballad tells of a thirsty cowboy who is crossing the desert and finds a hand pump. Next to it, Desert Pete has left a note urging the reader not to drink from the jar hidden there but to use its contents to prime the pump.

The cowboy resists the temptation to drink and uses the water as the note instructs. In reward for his obedience, he receives an abundance of cold, satisfying water. Had he not acted in faith, he would have had only a jar of unsatisfying, warm water to drink.

This reminds me of Israel's journey through the wilderness. When their thirst became overwhelming (Ex. 17:1-7), Moses sought the Lord. He was told to strike the rock of Horeb with his staff. Moses believed and obeyed, and water gushed from the stone.

Sadly, Israel would not consistently follow Moses' example of faith. Ultimately, “the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith” (Heb. 4:2).

Sometimes life can seem like an arid desert. But God can quench our spiritual thirst in the most unlikely circumstances. When by faith we believe the promises of God's Word, we can experience rivers of living water and grace for our daily needs. By Dennis Fisher ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Drink deep of God's goodness, His faithfulness too,  
Leave no room for doubting and fear;  
His Word is the water of life pure and true,  
Refreshing and cooling and clear.  
—Hess

Only Jesus, the Living Water, can satisfy our thirst for God.

---

## Fellow Workers -

We are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, you are God's building. —1 Corinthians 3:9

When the time came for Moses to strike the rock in the desert to get water for the thirsty Israelites, his part was very small—just strike the rock. Anyone in Israel could have done it. The main thing was what God was doing in the heart of the earth to provide a bountiful river of water.

But the two worked together: Moses before the people; God in the hidden depths of the earth. Moses and God were fellow workers.

There are always two agents in every fruitful work: willing workers and a faithful God. The human part is to do whatever God has asked us to do—we are to strike the rock. God's work is to make the water flow.

Was Moses weighed down with anxiety that day as he approached the rock, thinking that he might fail? I doubt it. He had only to follow the Lord in obedience. God had promised to do the rest. And Moses had seen God work mighty miracles in the past.

Are you anxious about the task God has given you to do today? Do you believe that everything depends on you? Just strike the rock. God is working in secret to pour out rivers of water for every man, woman and child. And when living waters begin to flow, praise Him. David H. Roper ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Just do your part and He'll do His.

“APART FROM ME, YOU CAN DO NOTHING.” —JESUS  
John 15:5

---

## THE SMITTEN ROCK Exodus 17:1–7 - James Smith

Paul says, “That Rock was Christ” (1 Cor. 10:4). So the type is clear. This was a rock in a wilderness, Christ is a rock in a weary land (Isa. 32:2). A rock speaks of shelter, safety, durability, strength. A careful examination of this portion reveals—

### I. A Condition of Desperate Need.

1. THEY DWELT IN A BARREN PLACE. “There was no water” (v. 1). This world of itself can never supply the wants of a human soul. All its cisterns are broken. Separated from the Cross of Christ, our abode is in “waste places.” The rebellious dwell in a dry land

(Psa. 68:6).

2. THEIR SOULS WERE THIRSTY. “The people thirsted” (v. 3). When the thirst came the barrenness of the land was felt. When the Spirit of conviction and dearth takes possession of the soul, then the emptiness of the world’s pleasure wells is realised. This water of satisfaction cannot be got by digging; such work is worthless. Blessed are they that thirst after righteousness.

## **II. An Unexpected Source of Supply.** “There shall come out water” (v. 6).

1. IT CAME FROM A ROCK. Worldly wisdom could not by searching find out this method. Men can more easily expect fire from a rock. “Can any good thing come out of Nazareth” (John 1:46). My ways are not as your ways, saith the Lord (Isa. 55:8).

2. IT CAME FROM A GOD-POSSESSED ROCK. “will stand upon the rock” (v. 6). Pause and think of this. How very suggestive of the great Incarnation. God was in Christ (2 Cor. 5:19). The rock in Horeb of itself could do nothing, but God in the rock could do anything. The rock represents the human nature of the Lord Jesus, God on the rock, His divine power and Godhead. The source of our salvation is in God, the channel of communication is Jesus. He is “both Lord and Christ” (Acts 2:36).

## **III. An Unlikely Means Used.**

1. THE ROCK WAS TO BE SMITTEN. “Thou shalt smite the rock” (v. 6). This thought never originated in the heart of man, that salvation could be brought forth by smiting the anointed of God. “But He was wounded for our transgressions, with His stripes we are healed” (Isa. 53:5). The sword must awake against the man that was God’s fellow. Oh, worship the Lord!

2. THE ROCK WAS TO BE SMITTEN WITH A ROD. “Thy rod, wherewith thou smotest the river, take in thine hand” (v. 5). This was the rod of judgment that turned the river into blood, and the sign of God’s authority and power. “It pleased the Lord to bruise Him; HE hath put Him to grief” (Isa. 53:10). Concerning the sufferings of Christ we may truly say, “This is the Lord’s doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes” (Psa. 118:23).

## **IV. A Merciful Provision Made.**

1. THE SUPPLY WAS ABUNDANT. “The waters gushed out, and the streams overflowed” (Ps 78:18–20). “They did all drink the same spiritual drink.” When Christ, our Rock, was smitten, “forthwith came there out blood and water,” emblems of a full salvation, atonement, and cleansing. “We have redemption through His blood,” and cleansing through the washing of the Word. “Whosoever will may come and take of the water of life freely” (Rev. 22:17).

2. THE SUPPLY WAS FREE. “Ho, everyone that thirsteth, come ye” (Isa. 55:1). It was “without money and without price.” Thirst is the only condition, but it is indispensable to the enjoyment of the God-given waters of salvation. The apostle declares that the spiritual rock “followed them.” The Salvation of God in Christ is not only perfect in its character, but continuous in its application. The power of His atoning blood still follows the generations of men. Let us thank God that this saving rock has followed us. It is following you—drink and live! (Handfuls of Purpose)

---

## **GOD MY ROCK - A E Phillips**

IN A WORLD of uncertainty and instability, nothing can be more precious than knowing and believing that God is one’s Rock. He only is the Rock, Ps. 18:31; 62:2. No other foundation is laid, 1 Cor. 3:11, for our souls’ salvation, and for faith to build upon, Mt 7:24. The world has its bogus rock-foundations, but “their rock is not as our Rock”; eventually this will be admitted by our enemies, Dt. 32:31. On their rock is the subtle serpent who can persuade his dupes that incohesive sand is solid rock, Pr. 30:19, but God will lay bare such a foundation, Mic. 1:6.

Our Rock is our fortress, saving us from the assaults of our enemies, Ps 18:2–3, and causing us to stand upon the Rock while He makes all His goodness panoramically to pass before our souls, Ex 33:19–23. This is mercy from first to last. In the fearsome gales, we hide in the cleft of the rock, His hand covering us with warmth and tenderness, Ex. 33:22. In perplexity, it is well to utter our questionings to God, who is the Rock higher than we, Ps 42:9; 61:2. Then our hearts will confess, “He only is my Rock ... I shall not be greatly moved”, Ps 62:2.

Paul sees the Rock smitten in the wilderness as prefiguring Christ: “that Rock was Christ”, 1Cor. 10:4; Ex 17:6. It was consequent on the Lord’s being smitten for our sins, and being glorified, that the streams of the Spirit’s blessing came to us, John 7:39. Of the wilderness rock it is testified that “He opened the rock, and waters gushed out” as streams, Ps 105:41; 78:16. Of the Spirit’s effusion, it is asserted that He was poured forth, Acts 2:17–18, 33; 10:45; Titus 3:6. What fruitfulness is brought into the life, when the Spirit is allowed to minister Christ to the heart, Gal. 5:22. Yea, what sweetness is found in the Rock which is Christ, Ps 81:16. On the Rock, the Son of the living God, confessed by those who believe in Him, His church is founded, Matt. 16:16–18, so “Unto you therefore which believe he (the Stone) is precious”, 1 Pet. 2:7. (Day by Day in the Psalms)

**Exodus 17:7 He named the place Massah and Meribah because of the quarrel of the sons of Israel, and because they tested the LORD, saying, “Is the LORD among us, or not?”**

NET Exodus 17:7 He called the name of the place Massah and Meribah, because of the contending of the Israelites and because of their testing the LORD, saying, "Is the LORD among us or not?"

NLT Exodus 17:7 Moses named the place Massah (which means "test") and Meribah (which means "arguing") because the people of Israel argued with Moses and tested the LORD by saying, "Is the LORD here with us or not?"

KJV Exodus 17:7 And he called the name of the place Massah, and Meribah, because of the chiding of the children of Israel, and because they tempted the LORD, saying, Is the LORD among us, or not?

ESV Exodus 17:7 And he called the name of the place Massah and Meribah, because of the quarreling of the people of Israel, and because they tested the LORD by saying, "Is the LORD among us or not?"

NIV Exodus 17:7 And he called the place Massah and Meribah because the Israelites quarreled and because they tested the LORD saying, "Is the LORD among us or not?"

- **He named the place Massah:** Temptation, Nu 20:13 De 9:22
- **Meribah:** Chiding or Strife, Ex 17:2 Ps 81:7
- **because of the quarrel of the sons of Israel** Ex 17:2
- **because they tested the LORD:** Ps 95:8 Heb 3:8,9
- **Is the LORD among us, or not** Ex 34:9 De 31:17 Jos 22:31 Isa 12:6 Mic 3:11 Joh 1:14 Ac 7:37-39
- Exodus 17 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## MOSES NAMES THE PLACE MASSAH AND MERIBAH

Note one place with two names! This is very unusual and surely was to be a double reminder to Israel of the sin against Jehovah at Rephidim. In his final instructions before they entered the promised land Moses warned the congregation "'You shall not put the LORD your God to the **test** (nasah), as you tested Him at Massah.'" (Dt 6:16)

**He named the place Massah and Meribah because of the quarrel of the sons of Israel-** The names speak of the sinful, rebellious acts of Israel. Names were very important in the OT and undoubtedly Moses wanted the people to hear these names and be reminded of their rebellious hearts, ultimately with the hope that such faithless actions would be avoided in the future (e.g., Moses alluded to Massah by name in his farewell address to the generation of Israel that would enter the promised land of Canaan - Dt 6:16, Dt 9:22, Dt 33:8). Unfortunately Israel did not do well at remembering because some 37 years later as the second generation was preparing to enter Canaan, they had another "no water" test at Kadesh (first was at Rephidim) and they failed again, so the place was called **Meribah of Kadesh** (cf Nu 27:14, Dt 32:51)! Memorial names don't work if we don't remember them and/or don't act in obedience!

As [described below](#) **quarrel** can even mean a **lawsuit**. Imagine Israel bringing a "**lawsuit**" against the One "Who is to judge the living and the dead!" (2 Ti 4:1<sup>+</sup>)

**Wiersbe** - The Jews had not yet learned that God tests His people in the everyday experiences of life. He uses the difficult experiences of life to strengthen our faith and mature our character. But Israel's faith in God was very weak, for they thought their God had led them to a place where He couldn't care for them! The trouble with the Israelites was that they had hard hearts that wouldn't submit to the Lord, so they rebelled against His will. (The Bible Exposition Commentary – Pentateuch)

**HCSB Study Bible** says "The name **Massah** is closely related to the verb translated "tested," and the name **Meribah** is cognate to the verb translated complained (see Ps 95:8-9). So the new name was something like "**Testing and Complaint**" or "**Quarrelsome Trial**." The Israelites' question expressed their impatience with what they considered unsatisfactory performance."

**Massah** (04532)(**massah** from **nasah** = to test by trial, to prove) means testing. The [Septuagint \(Lxx\)](#) translates the proper name with the noun **peirasmos** which **BDAG** defines as "an attempt to learn the nature or character of something." Sadly, Israel was not sincerely seeking to learn the nature or character of God, but to put His character to their test!

**Massah** - 5x in OT.

Exodus 17:7 He named the place Massah and Meribah because of the quarrel of the sons of Israel, and because they tested the LORD, saying, "Is the LORD among us, or not?"

Deuteronomy 6:16 "You shall not put the LORD your God to the test, as you tested Him at **Massah**.

Deuteronomy 9:22 "Again at Taberah and at **Massah** and at Kibroth-hattaavah you provoked the LORD to



wrath.

Deuteronomy 33:8 (Of Levi he said, "Let Your Thummim and Your Urim belong to Your godly man, Whom You proved at **Massah**, With whom You contended at the waters of Meribah;

Psalm 95:8 Do not harden your hearts, as at Meribah, As in the day of **Massah** in the wilderness, (See [Spurgeon's note below](#))

**David Thompson** - The Hebrew word "**Massah**" means testing, trial, temptation. The Hebrew word "**Meribah**" means protest, quarrel, contention and strife. Why did Moses use two names? Probably the answer is because Moses is recognizing the depth of the rebellion of the nation Israel. Time and time again God provided for Israel in pure grace, and time and time again she protested against the provision. Think for a moment about the contention and strife that she has had with Jesus Christ for over 2000 years. God provided for her salvation and she totally rejects it. These Israelites were beginning to develop a pattern of not trusting God. They were developing a pattern of failing tests and contending against God. This attitude is still operative and never was that more evidenced than when Jesus Christ came to Israel as her King/Savior. Israel's track record is one of not submitting to God. ([Sermon](#))

**Meribah** (04809)(**meribah** from **riyb** = to strive, contend) means place of strife or quarreling. This name is used of two places, both sites of Moses' striking a rock, the first being at the beginning of the 40 years of wandering and at the foot of Mount Horeb (Sinai) (Ex 13:7, Nu 20:13, Nu 20:24) and the second place also called Meribah (Meribah of **Kadesh** or Meribah-**Kadesh** - [see notes above](#) on Nu 20:1-13) in the [desert of Zin](#) near **Kadesh**, ([map](#)) near the end of the 40 years of wilderness wandering when Moses disobeyed God and instead of speaking to the rock (Nu 20:8), in anger struck the rock twice. Because of Moses' disobedience at Meribah-Kadesh God said he would not enter the promised land (Aaron was also included in this punishment - Nu 20:24). The [Septuagint \(Lxx\)](#) translates the proper name Meribah in Ex 17:7 with the noun **loidoreo** (not found in NT but related to verb [loidoreo](#)) which means railing or abuse.

**Meribah** - 11x in the OT -

Exodus 17:7 He named the place Massah and **Meribah** because of the quarrel of the sons of Israel, and because they tested the LORD, saying, "Is the LORD among us, or not?"

Numbers 20:13 ([see context](#) of Nu 20:1-13 above) Those were the waters of **Meribah**, because the sons of Israel contended with the LORD, and He proved Himself holy among them.

Numbers 20:24 "Aaron will be gathered to his people; for he shall not enter the land which I have given to the sons of Israel, because you rebelled against My command at the waters of **Meribah**.

Numbers 27:14 for in the wilderness of Zin, during the strife of the congregation, you rebelled against My command to treat Me as holy before their eyes at the water." (These are the waters of **Meribah of Kadesh** in the wilderness of Zin.)

Deuteronomy 32:51 because you broke faith with Me in the midst of the sons of Israel at the waters of **Meribah-kadesh**, in the wilderness of Zin, because you did not treat Me as holy in the midst of the sons of Israel.

Deuteronomy 33:8 Of Levi he said, "Let Your Thummim and Your Urim belong to Your godly man, Whom You proved at Massah, With whom You contended at the waters of **Meribah**;

Psalm 81:7 "You called in trouble and I rescued you; I answered you in the hiding place of thunder; I proved you at the waters of **Meribah**. Selah.

**Spurgeon** - God heard his people's cries in Egypt, and at the Red Sea: this ought to have bound them to him. Since God does not forsake us in our need, we ought never to forsake him at any time. When our hearts wander from God, our answered prayers cry "shame" upon us. "I answered thee in the secret place of thunder." Out of the cloud the Lord sent forth tempest upon the foes of his chosen. That cloud was his secret pavilion, within it he hung up his weapons of war, his javelins of lightning, his trumpet of thunder; forth from that pavilion he came and overthrew the foe that his own elect might be secure. "I proved thee at the waters of Meribah." They had proved him and found him faithful, he afterwards proved them in return. Precious things are tested, therefore Israel's loyalty to her King was put to trial, and, alas, it failed lamentably. The God who was adored one day for his goodness was reviled the next, when the people for a moment felt the pangs of hunger and thirst. The story of Israel is only our own history in another shape. God has heard us, delivered us, liberated us, and too often our unbelief makes the wretched return of mistrust, murmuring, and rebellion. Great is our sin; great is the mercy of our God: let us reflect upon both, and pause a while. "Selah." Hurried reading is of little benefit; to sit down a while and meditate is very profitable.

Psalm 95:8 Do not harden your hearts, as at **Meribah**, As in the day of Massah in the wilderness,

**Spurgeon** - If ye will hear, learn to fear also. The sea and the land obey him, do not prove more obstinate than they!

“Yield to his love who round you now  
The bands of a man would cast.”

We cannot soften our hearts, but we can harden them, and the consequences will be fatal. To-day is too good a day to be profaned by the hardening of our hearts against our own mercies. While mercy reigns let not obduracy rebel. “As in the provocation, and as in the day of temptation in the wilderness” (or, “like Meribah, like the day of Massah in the wilderness”). Be not wilfully, wantonly, repeatedly, obstinately rebellious. Let the example of that unhappy generation serve as a beacon to you; do not repeat the offences which have already more than enough provoked the Lord. God remembers men’s sins, and the more memorably so when they are committed by a favoured people, against frequent warnings, in defiance of terrible judgments, and in the midst of superlative mercies; such sins write their record in marble. Reader, this verse is for you, for you even if you can say, “He is our God, and we are the people of his pasture.” Do not seek to turn aside the edge of the warning; thou hast good need of it, give good heed to it.

As far as they could do so they tempted God to change his usual way, and to do their sinful bidding, and though he cannot be tempted of evil, and will never yield to wicked requests, yet their intent was the same, and their guilt was none the less. God’s way is perfect, and when we would have him alter it to please us, we are guilty of tempting him; and the fact that we do so in vain, while it magnifies the Lord’s holiness, by no means excuses our guilt. We are in most danger of this sin in times of need, for then it is that we are apt to fall into unbelief, and to demand a change in those arrangements of providence which are the transcript of perfect holiness and infinite wisdom. Not to acquiesce in the will of God is virtually to tempt him to alter his plans to suit our imperfect views of how the universe should be governed. “Proved me.” They put the Lord to needless tests, demanding new miracles, fresh interpositions, and renewed tokens of his presence. Do not we also peevishly require frequent signs of the Lord’s love other than those which every hour supplies? Are we not prone to demand specialities, with the alternative secretly offered in our hearts, that if they do not come at our bidding we will disbelieve? True, the Lord is very condescending, and frequently grants us marvellous evidences of his power, but we ought not to require them. Steady faith is due to one who is so constantly kind. After so many proofs of his love, we are ungrateful to wish to prove him again, unless it be in those ways of his own appointing, in which he has said, “Prove me now.” If we were for ever testing the love of our wife or husband, and remained unconvinced after years of faithfulness, we should wear out the utmost human patience. Friendship only flourishes in the atmosphere of confidence, suspicion is deadly to it: shall the Lord God, true and immutable, be day after day suspected by his own people? Will not this provoke him to anger? “And saw my work.” They tested him again and again, throughout forty years, though each time his work was conclusive evidence of his faithfulness. Nothing could convince them for long.

“They saw his wonders wrought,  
And then his praise they sung;  
But soon his works of pow’r forgot,  
And murmur’d with their tongue.  
“Now they believe his word,  
While rocks with rivers flow;  
Now with their lusts provoke the Lord,  
And he reduce’d them low.”

Fickleness is bound up in the heart of man, unbelief is our besetting sin; we must for ever be seeing, or we waver in our believing. This is no mean offence, and will bring with it no small punishment. (Treasury of David)

Psalm 106:32 They also provoked Him to wrath at the waters of **Meribah**, So that it went hard with Moses on their account;

**Spurgeon** - Will they never have done? The scene changes, but the sin continues. Aforetime they had mutinied about water when prayer would soon have turned the desert into a standing pool, but now they

do it again after their former experience of the divine goodness. This made the sin a double, yea a sevenfold offence, and caused the anger of the Lord to be the more intense. "So that it went ill with Moses for their sakes." Moses was at last wearied out, and began to grow angry with them, and utterly hopeless of their ever improving; can we wonder at it, for he was man and not God? After forty years bearing with them the meek man's temper gave way, and he called them rebels, and showed unhallowed anger; and therefore he was not permitted to enter the land which he desired to inherit. Truly, he had a sight of the goodly country from the top of Pisgah, but entrance was denied him, and thus it went ill with him. It was their sin which angered him, but he had to bear the consequences; however clear it may be that others are more guilty than ourselves, we should always remember that this will not screen us, but every man must bear his own burden.

Ezekiel 47:19 "The south side toward the south shall extend from Tamar as far as the waters of **Meribath-kadesh**, to the brook of Egypt and to the Great Sea. This is the south side toward the south.

Ezekiel 48:28 "And beside the border of Gad, at the south side toward the south, the border shall be from Tamar to the waters of **Meribath-kadesh**, to the brook of Egypt, to the Great Sea.

**Quarrel** (dispute, contention) (7379) (**riv/rib/riyb** from verb **riyb** = to strive, contend, conduct a lawsuit) is masculine noun meaning a strife, a controversy, a contention. The primary idea of this noun is that of a quarrel or dispute. The verb can describe striving in physical combat but it is an easy transition to verbal combat, a quarrel and to legal-judicial significance. "In poetic parallel it appears with words for justification, pleading a cause, chastisement, punishment. Psalm 43:1 is striking in this regard and merits full examination by the expositor. Interestingly **rīb** "strife," is in contrast with **shalwâ** "quietness" (Proverbs 17:1)." (TWOT)

The [Septuagint \(Lxx\)](#) translates **riv/rib/riyb** in Ex 17:7 with the word **loidoria** (only in 1 Pe 3:9+) which describes verbal abuse intended to injure someone's reputation (slander). It is "speech that is highly insulting, abuse, reproach, reviling." (BDAG).

**Baker** on **riv/rib/riyb** - It appears in reference to an argument over land-use rights (Gen. 13:7); the logical dispute the Lord has with sinners (Jer. 25:31); any general state of contention between individuals (Prov. 20:3); the clamoring of people for station or possessions (2 Sam. 22:44); and open hostilities with an enemy (Jdg. 12:2). Israel is commanded not to pervert justice in a lawsuit (Ex. 23:2). Similarly, the word is used in a legal sense to refer to an argument or case made in one's defense (Dt. 21:5; Pr. 18:17; Mic. 7:9). (Complete Word Study Dictionary – Old Testament)

**Gilbrant** - Like the verb it comes from the verb **rîv/rib/riyb** the noun **rîv**, "lawsuit," "contention," is used of various conflicts among people. For example, Prov. 20:3 applies **rîv** to describe a quarrel; David uses it of attacks directed at him (Ps. 55:9); and the Book of Judges employs it to refer to war between two peoples (Judg. 12:2). It can also be used to denote strife among herdsmen (Gen. 13:7) and strife that is parallel to violence (Ps. 55:9). Though **rîv** can refer to the complaining or arguing of people (Exo. 17:7), it is most often used specifically of a legal argument. Job calls for his accuser to establish his indictment (31:35). Disputes or court cases in general are referred to in Deut. 25:1 and 2 Sam. 15:2, 4. The noun and the verb are used of covenant lawsuits God brings against his people, Israel, according to the prophets (Hos. 12:2; Mic. 6:2). In his mercy, the Lord takes up Israel's cause (Isa. 34:8) and the cause of the helpless (Prov. 23:11). Therefore, David called upon Him to rise to his defense (Ps. 35:23). ([Complete Biblical Library Greek-English Dictionary](#))

**Rib/riyb** - 61v - adversary(1), case(11), cause(9), complaint(2), contend(1), contention(1), contentions(3), controversy(1), dispute(11), disputes(1), indictment(1), lawsuit(1), plea(1), plead his case(1), quarrel(2), strife(13), suit(2).

Gen. 13:7; Exod. 17:7; Exod. 23:2; Exod. 23:3; Exod. 23:6; Deut. 1:12; Deut. 17:8; Deut. 19:17; Deut. 21:5; Deut. 25:1; Jdg. 12:2; 1 Sam. 24:15; 1 Sam. 25:39; 2 Sam. 15:2; 2 Sam. 15:4; 2 Sam. 22:44; 2 Chr. 19:8; 2 Chr. 19:10; Job 13:6; Job 29:16; Job 31:13; Job 31:35; Job 33:19; Ps. 18:43; Ps. 31:20; Ps. 35:23; Ps. 43:1; Ps. 55:9; Ps. 74:22; Ps. 119:154; Prov. 15:18; Prov. 17:1; Prov. 17:14; Prov. 18:6; Prov. 18:17; Prov. 20:3; Prov. 22:23; Prov. 23:11; Prov. 25:9; Prov. 26:17; Prov. 26:21; Prov. 30:33; Isa. 1:23; Isa. 34:8; Isa. 41:11; Isa. 41:21; Isa. 58:4; Jer. 11:20; Jer. 15:10; Jer. 20:12; Jer. 25:31; Jer. 50:34; Jer. 51:36; Lam. 3:36; Lam. 3:58; Ezek. 44:24; Hos. 4:1; Hos. 12:2; Mic. 6:2; Mic. 7:9; Hab. 1:3

**And because they tested the LORD** - Jehovah had tested Israel in Exodus 15:25 and Exodus 16:4 but now they test Him (Ex 17:2, 7). The irony is that it was actually ISRAEL who Yahweh was testing by bringing them into this no water situation!

There is one acceptable **test** God invites in Malachi 3:10+, but here in exodus Israel testing of Jehovah is an unacceptable kind of testing. Why is it unacceptable? Because it was driven by their **doubt** in God's ability to provide and their doubt led to a demand that

God give them water (they said Moses but it was directly ultimately to God) in order to prove Himself to them, even though as the psalmist says "they had seen (His) work." (Ps 95:9) As noted below the verb for **tested** is [nacah/nasah](#) and it is translated in the [Septuagint \(Lxx\)](#) with [peirazo](#) (see note above), the [present tense](#) indicating they **repeatedly tested Jehovah!** AND it proved to be a costly mistake. The Psalmist records that the result of Israel's unbelief was a hardened heart...

**Do not harden your hearts**, as at Meribah, As in the day of Massah in the wilderness, "When your fathers **tested** ([nacah/nasah](#); Lxx - [peirazo](#)) Me, They **tried** ([bachan](#); Lxx = [dokimazo](#)) Me, though they had seen My work. 10 "For forty years I loathed that generation, And said they are a people who err in their heart, And they do not know My ways. "Therefore I swore in My anger, Truly they shall not enter into My rest." (Ps 95:9-11)

**Related Resource:**

- [What are the causes and solutions for a hardened heart? | GotQuestions.org](#)

The writer of Hebrews quotes from Psalm 95 giving a somber warning to the Hebrews who were considering Christ and yet being drawn back to the works based religious rituals of Judaism...

**DO NOT HARDEN** ([skleruno](#) functioning as a command) YOUR HEARTS AS WHEN THEY PROVOKED ME, AS IN THE DAY OF **TRIAL** ([peirasmos](#)) IN THE WILDERNESS, WHERE YOUR FATHERS **TRIED (TESTED - peirazo)** Me BY TESTING Me, AND SAW MY WORKS FOR FORTY YEARS. 10 "THEREFORE I WAS ANGRY WITH THIS GENERATION, AND SAID, 'THEY ALWAYS GO ASTRAY IN THEIR HEART, AND THEY DID NOT KNOW MY WAYS'; 11 AS I SWORE IN MY WRATH, '**THEY SHALL NOT ENTER MY REST.**' (AND THIS GENERATION DID NOT ENTER THE PROMISED LAND)" (Hebrews 3:8-11<sup>+</sup>, see the relationship vital between **disobedience** and **unbelief** in Hebrews 3:18,19<sup>+</sup>)

**Note** on Heb 3:8 quoting Ps 95:8 - The Hebrew in Ps. 95:8 has "**Meribah**" and "**Massah**." The [Septuagint \(Lxx\)](#) gives these proper names as "the rebellion" and "the trial." The author of Hebrews does the same.

**Tested** (tempt) ([05254](#)) See preceding discussion of this Hebrew word [nacah/nasah](#) which is translated again in the [Septuagint \(Lxx\)](#) with [peirazo](#) in the [present tense](#) depicting their habitual practice of testing Jehovah. '

So again they question God's grace, His goodness (see God's goodness) and even His presence.

**Let's summarize how Israel tested Yahweh by looking that the 3 statements they made:**

1. Ex 17:2 , "**Give us water that we may drink.**" (QUESTIONED HIS PROVISION)
2. Ex 17:3 "**Why, now, have you brought us up from Egypt, to kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst?**" (QUESTIONED HIS PROTECTION AND/OR HIS PURPOSE)
3. Ex 17:7 "**Is the LORD among us, or not?**" (QUESTION HIS PRESENCE)

**ALL THREE POINTS REFLECT THEIR LACK OF FAITH AND TRUST IN JEHOVAH!** And this faulty faith was in the face of overwhelming evidence of Yahweh's (1) provision (Daily manna), (2) protection/purpose (Red Sea salvation) and (3) presence (Pillar of cloud)

As Ryken asks "How many times was God going to have to prove himself to these people? He was guiding them day and night, feeding them manna six days out of seven, and still they wondered whether he was there for them. Their unbelief was unbelievable! God's people were suffering from a kind of spiritual amnesia. Their memory trouble made them forget the provision, the protection, and the presence of God. In the words of the psalmist, "they soon forgot what he had done" (Ps 106:13a; cf. Ps 95:9). And as a result of their forgetfulness, they committed the great sin of complaining. This suggests one obvious remedy for our own discontent, which is to remember what God has done for us. When we are in need, we should recount all the ways that he has met our needs for food and shelter, for work and play, for love and friendship. We should rehearse the times when he protected us, sparing us from physical danger or from the consequences of our own folly. And we should revisit the places where he was close to us. God is our provider and protector, our ever-present help in trouble. If we remember this, we will be able to trust him without grumbling or complaining." (Ibid)

**Saying, "Is the LORD among us, or not?"** - Answer? Of course He was among them. Every day they would see the [Shekinah glory cloud](#) (pillar of fire or smoke), which would give a vivid visual reminder that Jehovah was in their midst. Their question is self-centered, selfish, irrational, ill-founded, faithless [palaver](#) for they had repeatedly seen tangible miraculous, manifestations reflecting the goodness and grace of the LORD God Almighty! Israel was acting more like a petulant fleshly children than like children of the Most High God which they actually were.

**Rod Mattoon** does a masterful job of alliteration (note the "P" words) in his comment that "God's people have seen the *plagues* of Egypt, the *parting* of the Red Sea, the *pillar* of cloud and fire, the *purification* of bitter waters, and the *provision* of manna. Still they are perplexed, pessimistic, paganistic, and peevish. They questioned, "Is the Lord among us?" They were suffering from doubt of God's presence, providence, and promises." (Ibid)

**Wiersbe** - On the map of our lives, how many places ought to be named "Testing and Quarreling" because of the way we've complained about our circumstances and failed to trust God? It's one thing to sit comfortably in church and sing "All the way my Savior leads me, what have I to ask beside?" and quite something else to be confronted with distress and disappointment and meekly say, "Not my will but Thine be done." Corrie ten Boom used to say, "Don't bother to give God instructions; just report for duty." (Ibid)

**Phillip Ryken** - This is something else we have seen before: All our dissatisfaction shows that we are disappointed with God. To put it another way, all our complaints go straight to the top, where God rules the universe by his sovereign power. Whatever the reason for our discontent, what it really shows is that we are not satisfied with what God has given us. This is a great sin. It is not wrong to take our troubles to God, talking them over with him in prayer. In fact, the Bible encourages us to be honest about our doubts and difficulties. But God does not accept open revolt against his holy will or the refusal to trust in his perfect word. (PW-Ex)

**G Campbell Morgan** - There are two things to be specially noted here. The first is the nature of the suggestion made by the people; and the second is the effect which is produced upon God. As to the first. Under stress of an immediate lack, these people doubted the one fact of which they had overwhelming evidence. The whole of the experiences through which they had passed, and which had brought them where they were, were directly due to the presence and power of God. Had He not been with them, they had yet been in slavery. **Yet, lack of water made them either question that fact, or imagine that God had abandoned them.** To us it seems utterly unreasonable, and yet it is of constant recurrence. The question persists. **In hours of lack, of stress, of difficulty, we are constantly prone to imagine that God has left us, or even to imagine that we have been wrong for believing that He has ever been with us. It is not only unworthy, it is wicked.** This is shown by the language used to describe the effect produced upon God—"they tempted Jehovah"; that is, they gave Him cause to abandon them, as they suggested that perchance He had done so. Necessarily the statement is an attempt to express a Divine truth through human analogy. He provided for them, but that was wholly of His mercy and grace. Such questioning of God merits punishment. They tempted God, even though He was not moved to such response as they deserved. **We should ever strive against the suggestion that He can act in any way which contradicts our past experiences of His presence and power.**

---

**Question:** "[What does it mean to test God?](#)"

**Answer:** In the Bible, there are examples of both an acceptable and unacceptable kind of testing God. It's acceptable to "test" God in regard to tithes and offerings, for example, but unacceptable when the test is rooted in doubt.

Malachi 3:10+ says, "Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. **Test** (a command) me in this," says the Lord Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it." This is the only situation given in the Bible in which God tells His people to "**test**" Him. Interestingly, the Hebrew word used for "**test**" in this verse is [bachan/bahan](#), which means "to examine, scrutinize, or prove (as in gold, persons, or the heart - e.g., Job 23:10+)." Just as gold is "tested" with fire to prove its quality, God invites Israel to **test** Him in tithes and offerings and see that He proves His faithfulness in response.

There is another Hebrew word for "**test**" used elsewhere in the Bible. [Nacah/nasah](#) means "to put to the test, try, or tempt." It is used in Deuteronomy 6:16, where God commands Israel to not test Him: "Do not put the Lord your God to the test as you did at Massah."

This second, unacceptable kind of testing is when **doubt** leads us to **demand** something of God to prove Himself to us. Jesus quoted Deuteronomy 6:16 ("You shall not put the LORD your God to the test, as you tested Him at Massah.") in the wilderness, in response to one of Satan's temptations.

"The devil took Him to the holy city and had Him stand on the highest point of the temple. 'If you are the Son of God,' he said, 'throw Yourself down. For it is written: "He will command His angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that You will not strike Your foot against a stone." Jesus answered him, 'It is also written: "**Do not put the Lord your God to the test**"' (Matthew 4:7-10+).

Essentially, the devil was telling Jesus to "**prove**" God's Word was true by forcing God's hand—if Jesus was in peril, God would have to save Him. **Jesus refused to test God in such a way.** We are to accept God's Word by faith, without requiring a sign (see Luke 11:29+). God's promises are there for us when we need them, **BUT** to manipulate situations in an attempt to coerce God into fulfilling His promises is evil.

The occasion where the Israelites tested God at Massah is found in Exodus 17. As God was leading Moses and His people toward the Promised Land, they camped at a place where there was no water (**ED**: "A TEST" FROM THE LORD!). The Israelites' immediate reaction was to grumble against God and quarrel with Moses (Exodus 17:1–3). Their lack of trust in God to take care of them is evident in their accusations toward Moses: "They said, 'Why did you bring us up out of Egypt to make us and our children and livestock die of thirst?'" (Exodus 17:3). The Israelites were obviously in a situation where they needed God to intervene. The point at which they tested God, though, is when doubt and fear overtook them and they came to the conclusion that God had abandoned them (see Exodus 17:7). They questioned God's reliability because He was not meeting their expectations.

The difference between these two kinds of testing God is faith. "Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and the assurance about what we do not see" (Hebrews 11:1+). The Israelites at Massah tested God because they lacked faith in Him. The Israelites in Malachi's day were invited to test God because they had faith in Him.

Faith, by definition, takes risk. When true faith is present, obedience follows. It is that faith-inspired action of obedience that God loves. As seen in the example of Israel's tithes and offerings, when we give out of our faith in who God is, He proves Himself to be faithful. By contrast, when we view God through our doubt and demand something of Him as a way of determining whether or not He can be trusted, we're in danger of testing God (see Mark 8:11–12). (Source - [Gotquestions.org](http://Gotquestions.org))

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

Amplified: Then came Amalek [descendants of Esau] and fought with Israel at Rephidim.

NET Exodus 17:8 Amalek came and attacked Israel in Rephidim.

NLT Exodus 17:8 While the people of Israel were still at Rephidim, the warriors of Amalek attacked them.

KJV Exodus 17:8 Then came Amalek, and fought with Israel in Rephidim.

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

NIV Exodus 17:8 The Amalekites came and attacked the Israelites at Rephidim.

- Ge 36:12,16; Numbers 24:20; Deut 25:17; 1 Sa 15:2; 30:1; Ps 83:7
- Exodus 17 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## EMANCIPATED ISRAEL'S FIRST BATTLE

**J Vernon McGee** - During their wilderness march the Israelites ran into the **Amalekites**, who represent the **flesh** in Scripture. This experience is yet another lesson we would do well to learn.

**John Currid** points out that "This section has a lot in common with the previous incident (17:1–7). Both accounts are based at Rephidim; a great test or period of suffering occurs in both stories; the rod of God plays a significant role in each; Yahweh intervenes to save his people both times."

In a sermon entitled [Victory over the Flesh](#), (listen to 36' message) pastor [Adrian Rogers](#) used the story in Exodus 17 as an illustration of the truth in Galatian 5:16-17+ and we will also discuss a similar application below.

**Then - Then** is often used in the Bible as a "time sensitive" conjunction (see **expressions of time**) and marks a succession of time - thus the idea is "at that time" or "after that" or "next". It behooves the good **inductive student** to always stop and **interrogate** the text, asking for example "What time is it?", noting what is succeeding what. As you practice this "technique", you are developing a "questioning mindset" which (1) slows you down to savor the sweetness of the Word of God which is like honey, (2) allows you to actually [meditate on the passage](#), the benefits of which are incalculable (Joshua 1:8-note, Ps 1:2-note, Ps 1:3-note).

First, **where** does the enemy attack? Ironically the name of the place, Rephidim, means "rests" (plural)! There is no true "rest" in the spiritual war with Satan, because the enemy never rests (cf 1 Pe 5:8+, Job 1:7ff).

Second, when is "**Then**?" When does Amalek attack? After the blessing then the battle! After the LORD had performed a miracle. "The blessing of the Lord is often immediately followed by a battle with the enemy!" (Anonymous)

**Rod Mattoon** -- "The attack occurred about two months after the Exodus, toward the end of May or early in

June, when the Bedouins leave the lower plains in order to find pasture for their flocks on the cooler heights. The approach of the Israelites to Sinai would of course attract notice, and no cause of warfare is more common than a dispute for the right of pasturage. The Amalekites were at that time the most powerful race in the Peninsula. Here they took their position as the chief of the pagans. They were also the first among the pagans who attacked God's people. This is the first attack out of Egypt and it will contain significant lessons for us as Christians."

This is a crucial battle. Why? Recall Ex 13:17 where we learned about the potential impact early contact with war might have on the young nation. Moses wrote "Now when Pharaoh had let the people go, God did not lead them by the way of the land of the Philistines, even though it was near; for God said, **"The people might change their minds when they see war, and return to Egypt."** Had the Israelites been defeated at such an early stage on their journey, they may have become so discouraged that they would have turned around and gone back to Egypt.

**Amalek came and fought against Israel at Rephidim** ([see previous discussion](#)) - **Amalek** was the grandson of Esau (son of Isaac) as we learn in Genesis 36:15-16. The Amalekites were a nomadic tribe in the region of the [Negev](#) ([map](#); [images](#)). **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" (cp Mt 26:41±, Mk 14:38)!

The verb **fought** (Hebrew = [lacham](#)) is translated in the Septuagint 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](#) (in both Hebrew and Greek) conveys the picture of a repeated action, and thus one begins to understand that the **Amalekites** were carrying out unprovoked attacks against Israel and doing so in a cowardly, despicable way described by Moses in his later account in Deuteronomy....

Remember (cf "memorial" in Ex 17:14+) what Amalek did to you along the way when you came out from Egypt, how he met you along the way and **attacked** (Hebrew - imperfect tense) **among you all the stragglers at your rear when you were faint and weary**; and he did not fear God. Therefore it shall come about when the LORD your God has given you rest from all your surrounding enemies, in the land which the LORD your God gives you as an inheritance to possess, you shall blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven; you must not forget. (Dt 25:17-19)

**Adam Clarke** - In the most treacherous and dastardly manner; for they came at the rear of the camp... The baggage, no doubt, was the object of their avarice; but finding the women, children, aged and infirm persons, behind with the baggage, they smote them and took away their spoils."

**Lockyer** - By guerilla warfare, there was a deliberate effort to defeat God's purpose at the very outset when Israel was most feeble, having recently come out of bondage (Deuteronomy 25:17, 18). No wonder God caused Israel to be victorious! On so many occasions, Israel proved that the battle was not theirs but God's. The numerical and material strength of contending hosts counted for nothing. God gave the victory.

**Matthew Poole** suggests "The ground of the quarrel was the prosecution of the old hatred of Esau against Jacob, and the revenging of themselves and their father upon the posterity of Jacob; for which they thought this the fittest season, they being now great and potent people (Nu 24:20), and Israel now weak, and unarmed, and dispirited with long servitude."

**BACKGROUND ON THE AMALEKITES** - LeBron Matthews summarizes the Amalekites - A nomadic tribe of formidable people that first attacked the Israelites after the Exodus at Rephidim. Descendants of Amalek, the grandson of Esau (Genesis 36:12), they inhabited the desolate wasteland of the northeast Sinai peninsula and the Negeb. They were the first to attack Israel after the Exodus (Numbers 24:20). Israel won the initial battle (Exodus 17:8-16), but later was driven back into the Sinai wilderness by a coalition of Amalekites and Canaanites (Numbers 14:39-45). Thereafter the Amalekites waged a barbaric guerrilla war against Israel (Deuteronomy 25:17-19). Fighting continued after Israel settled in Canaan. Because of their atrocities, God commanded Saul to exterminate the Amalekites (1 Samuel 15:2-3). Saul disobeyed, and the Amalekites were not defeated completely until late in the eighth century B.C. (1 Chronicles 4:43). No archaeological data concerning the Amalekites has been discovered to date. See also Exodus and Negeb. ([Holman Bible Dictionary](#))

**Amalek** apparently means "dweller in a valley". **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 enemies of Israel (Jacob), a thorn in their flesh, and a constant menace to their spiritual and national life. **Balaam** ([see note](#)) 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)

**Expositor's Bible** says "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 (Dt 25:17-19). Thus Amalek became the "first among the nations" (Nu 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 Ex 18:1-2ff) who believed in Israel's God (Ex 18:9-12). These two chapters illustrate two kingdoms (Amalek and Midian) and two responses to the grace of God from the Gentile world." ([Gaebelein, F. Editor: Expositor's Bible Commentary](#))

During the period of the judges, the **Amalekites** joined forces with the Ammonites and the Moabites to capture Jericho (Jdg 3:12,13+). 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+) There were too many Amalekites for Gideon's army of 300 but not too many for Jehovah Who had promised Gideon "I will deliver you with the 300 men" (Jdg 7:7+) "lest Israel become boastful, saying, 'My own power has delivered me.'" (Jdg 7:2+). And so Gideon and his band of 300 defeated the Amalekites in the [Valley of Jezreel](#) ("God sows" or "God scatters" - future site of the gathering of the armies at Armageddon - Rev 16:16+) (Jdg 6:3+, Jdg 6:33+; Jdg 7:12-22+), once again graphically illustrating the importance of **man's responsibility** and **God's sovereignty** in achieving victory over the "Amalekites". Despite this defeat by Gideon, Amalek still had not faced the crushing judgment that the Lord had foretold to Moses (Ex 17:14, 15, 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 consequence of Saul sparing Agag](#)) and by holding on to some of the spoils of battle (1Sa 15:6-9). 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) ([Why is obedience better than sacrifice?](#)). Saul killed himself when he fell on his sword (1Sa 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 Amalekites' 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 715-686 BC) when 500 men from [the tribe of Simeon](#) defeated the Amalekites and dispossessed them from their land and "destroyed the remnant of the Amalekites who escaped, and have lived there to this day." (1Chr 4:43).

**MacArthur** adds that "Another branch of the Amalekite family tree had appeared in Persia, represented by Haman, who attempted to exterminate the Jews (Esther 3:1ff)." (MacArthur Study Bible)

For additional thoughts on the **Amalekites** see Spurgeon's sermon entitled (War with Amalek).

#### Related Resources:

- [Who was Haman the Agagite?](#)
- [Who were the Amalekites?](#)
- American Tract Society [Amalekites](#)
- Bridgeway Bible Dictionary [Amalekites](#)
- Easton's Bible Dictionary [Amalekite](#)



- Fausset Bible Dictionary [Amalekites](#)
- Holman Bible Dictionary [Amalekite](#)
- Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible [Amalek, Amalekites](#)
- Morrish Bible Dictionary [Amalek, Amalekites](#)
- Watson's Theological Dictionary [Amalekites](#)
- 1911 Encyclopedia Britannica [Amalekites](#)
- International Standard Bible Encyclopedia [Amalek; Amalekite](#)
- Kitto Biblical Cyclopedia [Amalekites](#)
- The Nuttall Encyclopedia [Amalekites](#)
- The Jewish Encyclopedia [Amalek, Amalekites](#)
- Nave Topical Bible [Amalekites](#)

## CONSEQUENCES OF SPARING THE AMALEKITE AGAG

One other consequence of Saul's failure to blot out the Amalekites occurred some 600 years later. In the **book of Esther** (written about 465BC, Saul having begun his reign about 1050 BC over 500 years earlier) **Haman** is described as an offspring of an **Agagite** (Esther 3:1,10+, Esther 8:3,5+, 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](#) ([see note](#)) after the name of **Pur**. ("**pur**" = lot [[Pur](#)]; 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 thirteenth 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 (Exodus 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?](#) ([see note](#)) 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+ - **Ed note**: Have you ever prayed "Lord, teach me the fear of Jehovah? Consider making this a prayer as you ponder the spiritual fruit that such a prayer will surely yield considering God's promise in 1 Jn 5:15,16+ - Pr 1:7, 9:10, Job 28:28, Eccl 12:13, 14, Ps 111:10+; Ps

25:14<sup>±</sup>, etc). 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. (from his commentary long 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 (Be committed. An Old Testament Study. Ruth and Esther. Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books)

#### Related Resources:

- [Who was Haman the Agagite?](#)
- [What is the Feast of Purim?](#)

Note this principle is commanded by God Himself in (Ex 17:14). **Pastor Ray Stedman** has some thought provoking comments on Queen Esther and Haman in a sermon entitled [The Price of Survival](#). See also Ray Stedman's nine part sermon series on Esther:

<a href="#">A Pair of Queens</a>	Esther 1 - 2
<a href="#">The Struggle for Power</a>	Esther 3
<a href="#">Good Grief</a>	Esther 4
<a href="#">Soul and Spirit</a>	Esther 5
<a href="#">The Price of Survival</a>	Esther 6
<a href="#">Haman's Last Supper</a>	Esther 7
<a href="#">The Law of the Spirit</a>	Esther 8
<a href="#">The Sweet Taste of Victory</a>	Esther 9:1-15
<a href="#">A Day to Remember</a>	Esther 9:17-10:3

---

#### Exodus 17:8 When Life Isn't Fair by Dr. Woodrow Kroll

Now Amalek came and fought with Israel in Rephidim.

Chris was a young father of four. He had grown up in a Christian home, received Christ as his Savior at a young age, lived a healthy lifestyle and demonstrated a consistent Christian testimony. It was a complete shock when he was diagnosed with cancer. There was no reason for this to happen...except that life isn't fair.

The Israelites also found themselves being treated unfairly. For no apparent reason, a nomadic tribe known as the Amalekites chose to attack them. They had no quarrel with these people, yet for the next several hundred years, off and on, Israel was the object of the Amalekites' hatred and harassment. Life isn't fair.

Fortunately, we have a sovereign God who is able to overrule all circumstances (Rom. 8:28). After three years of treatments, Chris finally recovered. Israel eventually destroyed the Amalekites. Life is not fair, but God is. Sooner or later, God will see that justice is served. It may not be as soon as we would like; it may not be in the way we expect; but God will never be unfair. David declared, "Upon the wicked He will rain coals, fire and brimstone and a burning wind; this shall be the portion of their cup" (Ps. 11:6).

Perhaps you also are experiencing unfair treatment. It might be a coworker who delights in making life difficult for you. It may be a health problem that is keeping you from reaching your fullest potential. Maybe it's an automobile the garage has "fixed" a dozen times, and yet it still doesn't run right. Trust God with your situation. Be patient and let Him work out a solution to your predicament. You may find life unfair, but God never is.

Life is not fair, but God is.

**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."

Amplified: And Moses said to Joshua, Choose us out men and go out, fight with Amalek. Tomorrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in my hand.

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

NLT Exodus 17:9 Moses commanded Joshua, "Choose some men to go out and fight the army of Amalek for us. Tomorrow, I will stand at the top of the hill, holding the staff of God in my hand."

KJV Exodus 17:9 And Moses said unto Joshua, Choose us out men, and go out, fight with Amalek: to morrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in mine hand.

ESV Exodus 17:9 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."

NIV Exodus 17:9 Moses said to Joshua, "Choose some of our men and go out to fight the Amalekites. Tomorrow I will stand on top of the hill with the staff of God in my hands."

- Numbers 31:3,4
- **The staff** - Ex 4:2,20
- Exodus 17 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- See Joshua - Portrait of the Man God Uses

Joshua Fighting Amalekites in Exodus 17

## JOSHUA TO FIGHT MOSES TO SIT

**Choose men for us and go out, fight against Amalek** - **Choose** is a command to take a keen look and make a careful, well-thought out choice, in this context choosing men who were capable of fighting. Why would such discernment be necessary? At this stage, Israel could hardly be described as a seasoned fighting force., for Israel had lived hundreds of years as slaves in Egypt. And when the Egyptians came to destroy them, God fought and they watched in amazement! Morgan in fact says that ""In their first movement God led them in such a way as to avoid the possibility of war (Ex 13:17). Now they were involved in war." So the "odds" of finding battle ready Israelis was basically "zero" which would have weighed the balance of power even more in Amalekites favor. The Septuagint adds the adjective [dunatos](#) (mighty, possessing inherent ability to perform some task - i.e., in this case to fight) as a **qualification for the men Joshua is to choose..**"choose mighty men for us".

Joshua's assignment was to muster a task force. Clearly this was part of God's way of grooming Joshua to be the future military leader of Israel as they entered the promised land where warfare would be necessary to possess their possessions. To be a leader Joshua needed the ability to discern qualities in others that would be of value in completing the task (in this case war).

What principle do we see in this request? Moses is "mentoring" or better discipling Joshua, preparing him to take over as leader of Israel. A mentor/disciple maker is a "trusted counselor or guide" who comes alongside not to control, but to advise and to serve as a source of wisdom and counsel gently guiding one through the obstacles of the Christian life. The Church today needs to heed the command of Jesus to make disciples ([aorist imperative](#) - Just do it!!!) (Mt 28:19+). Paul was a the spiritual father to such young men as Timothy and Titus, both of whom he referred to as "sons" and in the classic Pauline passage on making disciples exhorted young Timothy "You therefore, my son, **be strong** ([present imperative](#) = continually be enabled by the Spirit Who dispenses) the grace that is in Christ Jesus. The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, **entrust** ([aorist imperative](#) - Just do it!!!) these to faithful ([pistos](#) - trustworthy) men who will be able ([hikanos](#) = meet the standard) to teach others also. (2 Ti 2:1-2+)

**THOUGHT** - Dear reader, if you a mature believer, perhaps you need to find someone to disciple Or if you are a new Christian, you would be well advised to seek out the companionship of a believer who demonstrates by the fruit in his life that he has a dynamic relationship with Christ. This has always been God's pattern for Spiritual Leadership 101. What a dynamic body the Church of Jesus Christ would be if all the "Moses" sought out the "Joshuas" to mentor and disciple. In short, every Christian should either be mentored or be a mentor (disciple maker). How are you doing?

### Related Resources:

- [Make Disciples 1](#)
- [Make Disciples 2 - Begins study of Five Most Important Passages for Believers](#)

- [Make Disciples 3 - Chart comparing Filled with the Spirit and the Word](#)
- [Make Disciples 4](#)
- [Make Disciples 5](#)
- [Make Disciples 6](#)
- [Make Disciples 7](#)
- [Make Disciples 8](#)

Back again to Exodus 17 we find that when Moses was faced with a deadly enemy, he 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?

**Ligon Duncan** makes an excellent observation and application -

Now, in this passage if you look at verse 9 you'll note that unlike at the Red Sea, God instructs the people to play an active role in their own defense. At the Red Sea, the people of God were to **stand still and see the salvation of the Lord** (Ex 14:13+) Here at Rephidim the people are to have an appointed army to respond to the Amalekites and they themselves must be faithful in defending Israel against the attackers. Isn't it interesting how even in the Pentateuch, even in the Torah, even in the first five books of the Bible, **there is a nice balance between the active and the passive elements of the believing life**. There is the **passive element** of depending upon the Lord, trusting in the Lord, resting in the Lord, watching the Lord work, depending on His power, and there is the **active element** of doing the responsible things that God calls us to do. Both of those elements are part of healthy Christian growth. If you have a totally passive approach to the Christian's life, you'll be in "*the let go and let God*" camp (**ED**: A better and balanced "camp" is "*Let God and let's go*"). You will sort of sit in the pew and see what He's going to do. If you're in the totally active camp, then you will have a hard time trusting on Him to do it and you will be trying to figure out the way you are going to do it for Him. There is a balance in the Christian life between depending on God and on acting in accordance with those things He has called us to do, and you see that balance even here as the children of Israel are called to play an active roll in their own defense. ([Sermon](#))

**Joshua** means "Jehovah is salvation" or "Jehovah is Help" and the Septuagint translates the Hebrew with [Iesous](#) the NT word for **Jesus**. Ex 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, 33:11; 32:17; Josh 1:1). It should be noted that at this time in Israel's sojourn Joshua's name was still [Hoshea](#), (variously defined as "to give deliverance or help" or as "salvation") and was later changed to Joshua at [Kadesh](#) (Kadesh-Barnea) just before the 12 spies were sent on a reconnaissance mission into the promised land of Canaan (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 remembering that you are His workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works which He prepared beforehand that you should walk in them (Eph 2:10<sub>±</sub>)? 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 1:2-4,12+) 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** (present imperative = command to make this our lifestyle attitude to be) steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord. (1Co 15:58<sub>±</sub>)

**Adam Clarke** on **Joshua** - Both in the Septuagint and Greek Testament he is called Jesus: the name signifies Saviour; and he is allowed to have been a very expressive type of our blessed Lord. He fought with and conquered the enemies of his people, brought them into the promised land, and divided it to them by lot. The parallel between him and the Saviour of the world is too evident to require pointing out."

**Related Resource:**

- [Who was Joshua in the Bible?](#)
- Easton's Bible Dictionary [Joshua](#)

- Fausset Bible Dictionary [Joshua](#)
- Holman Bible Dictionary [Joshua](#)
- Hitchcock Bible Names [Joshua](#)
- Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible [Joshua](#)
- Hastings' Dictionary of the NT [Joshua](#)
- Hawker's Poor Man's Dictionary [Joshua](#)
- Whyte's Bible Characters [Joshua](#)
- Wilson's Bible Types [Joshua](#)
- Watson's Theological Dictionary [Joshua](#)
- International Standard Bible Encyclopedia [Joshua \(3\)](#) [Joshua \(2\)](#) [Joshua \(1\)](#)
- Kitto Biblical Cyclopaedia [Joshua](#)

**Go out...fight** - Both of these Hebrew verbs are imperatives indicating that they are not suggestions but commands.

Given Amalek's lineage from Esau, in a sense this battle was a renewal of the age old rivalry between **Jacob and Esau** (Ge 25:27-34, 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 Joshua, 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 in my hand**- Joshua in the valley and Moses on the hill. We see here a principle that weaves through both testaments, the principle of **Divine sovereignty** and **human responsibility**. God's part and our part are inextricably, mysteriously linked. It is interesting that in Exodus 17:5 Jehovah told Moses "to take in your hand your staff."

**Walter Kaiser** explains it this way - He was to muster an army to fight against the Amalekites while Moses, with the staff of God in his hand, would stand on top of one of the nearby hills overlooking the plain. Both elements were to be operating: (1) **the sword in Joshua's hand** and (2) **the staff (symbol of divine intervention) in Moses' hand**. Once again **divine sovereignty** and **human responsibility** were linked in carrying out the will of God. (The Expositor's Bible Commentary)

**Related Resource:**

- ["Paradoxical Principle of 100% Dependent and 100% Responsible" \(100/100\)](#)

**Ligon Duncan** sets the context - Now consider this situation. You're going into armed combat for the first time with former slaves with no military training against experienced desert dwellers on their own turf. Your people are completely untested and their morale has been exceeding low for the last six weeks to two months. Your number one guy is on a hillside with a stick. Do you like those odds? That is the circumstance that the Lord has placed His people in deliberately, because God is positioning His people to learn something about Him and consequently to depend on Him more. We see, in other words, even in this passage the wise providential hand of God at work. ([Sermon](#))

**John MacArthur on the staff of God** - It became 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.

---

**Ken Hemphill comments on the "staff of God": THE LORD IS MY BANNER** - 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.

You might be surprised, as I was, to find a simple staff depicted as a banner. A banner in ancient times was not always a flag, as we think of a banner today. Often it was a bare staff with a shiny metal ornament that would glisten in the sun. In fact, the word translated BANNER means "to glisten." In Psalm 74:4, the psalmist speaks of the enemy setting up their standards or banners in their camp as a sign of victory.

"Thine adversaries have roared in the midst of Thy meeting place  
They have set up their own standards for signs."

In Psalm 60:4-6, we have a wonderful picture of God's protection and deliverance under the imagery of a banner:

Thou has given a banner to those who fear Thee,  
That it may be displayed because of the truth,  
That Thy beloved may be delivered,  
Save with Thy right hand, and answer us!

When we understand that Jehovah has become our Banner, we can come under Him for our victory.

This banner in the hand of Moses was a visible image of the protection and the power of God, who would provide the victory over Amalek. The Israelites were to understand that their victory was a miracle provided by Jehovah. . ([The Names of God](#))

---

### **Exodus 17:9 The Mentor by Dr. Woodrow Kroll**

And Moses said to Joshua, "Choose us some men and go out, fight with Amalek. Tomorrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in my hand."

Webster defines a mentor as a "trusted counselor or guide." He comes alongside you not to control, but to advise. He is a source of wisdom and counsel. He does not live your life for you, but gently guides you through the potholes and the obstacles so that you can live successfully.

Mentoring may be a new concept for many Christians today, but it's an old idea rooted in biblical tradition. Moses acted as a mentor to Joshua. He advised and trained this young man in all areas of life until, when it was time to receive the mantle of leadership, Joshua was ready.

The Church today needs to return to the practice of mentoring (ED: WHILE I AGREE WITH THE PRINCIPLE, I WISH WE WOULD CALL IT **MAKING DISCIPLES**. THAT IS THE SPECIFIC COMMAND JESUS GAVE US IN HIS GREAT COMMISSION IN Mt 28:19+. AND ACTUALLY THE WORD *MENTOR* IS NOT FOUND IN THE BIBLE. I CHECKED ALL THE MOST POPULAR TRANSLATIONS). Paul was a mentor to such young men as Timothy and Titus, whom he called "sons" (1 Tim. 1:2,18; 2 Tim. 2:1; Titus 1:4). To the senior women of the church he commanded, "the older women likewise, that they . . . admonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed" (Titus 2:3-5).

If you are mature in the faith, find someone of the same gender who would be interested in learning from your experiences. If you are a new Christian, seek out the companionship of a believer who demonstrates by the fruit in his life that he has a dynamic relationship with Christ and then seek his counsel. This is God's plan for leadership training. Every Christian should either be mentored or be a mentor.

In helping others, we help ourselves.

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

Amplified: So Joshua did as Moses said and fought with Amalek; and Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the

hilltop. ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

NET Exodus 17:10 So Joshua fought against Amalek just as Moses had instructed him; and Moses and Aaron and Hur went up to the top of the hill.

NLT Exodus 17:10 So Joshua did what Moses had commanded and fought the army of Amalek. Meanwhile, Moses, Aaron, and Hur climbed to the top of a nearby hill.

KJV Exodus 17:10 So Joshua did as Moses had said to him, and fought with Amalek: and Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill.

ESV Exodus 17:10 So Joshua did as Moses told him, and fought with Amalek, while Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill.

NIV Exodus 17:10 So Joshua fought the Amalekites as Moses had ordered, and Moses, Aaron and Hur went to the top of the hill.

- Joshua 11:15; Matthew 28:20; John 2:5; 15:14
- Exodus 17 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- See Joshua - Portrait of the Man God Uses

Aaron & Hur Hold Moses' Hands  
Click to Enlarge

## OBEDIENCE THE SECRET OF SUCCESS

**And Joshua did as Moses told him** - This is the first mention of Joshua in the Bible. Note his immediate obedience. **Obedience** is the "secret" for success and blessing in the spiritual life and in (spiritual) warfare.

**THOUGHT** - Are you being defeated by your "spiritual enemies" the [world](#), the [flesh](#) and the [devil](#). Are you being obedient? Are you "keeping short accounts" quickly confessing your sins?

**And fought against Amalek** - As alluded to above "the battle is the LORD's" (1Sa 17:47, 14:6, 2Chr 20:15, 16, 17, Ps 46:11, Zec 4:6, Pr 21:31 Ro 8:31+, Ro 8:37+) but saints are responsible to "*fight the good fight of faith*" (1Ti 6:12+). (See Good Soldier 2Ti 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).

**Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill** - This would allow them to see the battle and for the Israelites to see their leader and specifically to see his hands uplifted holding the **staff of God**. (see [discussion of helping hand](#)).

**Walter Kaiser on Hur** - Josephus (Antiquities III, 54 [ii.4]) preserves a Jewish tradition that Hur was the husband of Moses' sister, Miriam."

**J Ligon Duncan** has some very "Berean like" (Acts 17:11+) interpretative remarks ...

Now tons, tons of ink have been spilled by commentators attempting to explain **the significance of Moses holding this staff aloft**. Let me give you an example of six suggestions that have been given by the commentators.

(1) Many of the old devotional commentators speak of this as a representation of prayer. Moses is on the hillside praying and so often times their sermons will be about the prevailing power of prayer. I don't want to denigrate that in any way though I do want to mention that most of the day Moses is sitting and you will find no examples of praying seated in the Old Testament, except possibly one reference to the King of Israel. Other than that you always pray standing in the Old Testament, so that may weigh against that particular interpretation.

(2) Others have suggested that the staff is a sign of general military advance. It's sort of like the general commander lifting up his hat and signaling the armies forward. Again, this doesn't make sense. Moses' job on the mountain isn't a military job, that's Joshua's job. Moses has already ceded that responsibility to Joshua.

(3) Other commentators say that it's the sign of Moses putting Amalek under a curse with the staff of God.

(4) Others suggest that it's the focusing of mysterious magical powers on Israel in order to make them able to defeat the Amalekites. But we pointed out all along that the staff itself, God has made abundantly clear, has

absolutely no mystical, mysterious, magical powers or properties. It is the physical representation of the activity of God. It's not a magic staff. It's not like a wizard's wand that he's going to do great things with.

(5) Fifth, some have indicated that the staff is a sign of the presence of God and when it goes out of sight, the people lose sight of the presence of God, and others have suggest that it's a symbol of encouragement to the Israelite army and there are other interpretations as well.

(6) Without getting lost in the trees of suggestion, let's look at the big picture, let's look at the forest. The general significance of what Moses is doing here is crystal clear. Notice that there is one common denominator between this story and the previous story in Exodus 17. What is it? The rod, the staff, the staff of God. That is the one common denominator. Do you remember the rod had been used to do what? To strike the rock and bring forth the water at Rephidim. Now, once again the rod is center stage. In fact it is so center stage because Moses has been removed from the thick of the battle to the hillside so that the rod itself becomes the focus of Israel.

Secondly, notice that when the rod is held up Israel wins, and when the rod comes down, Israel is losing. **So it's pretty clear that God wants our focus of attention to be on the rod.** (ED: AMEN TO THIS STATEMENT!) Once you've decided that, then all you have to do is ask, "What's the message?" If He wants me to look at the rod and think about that, then what's the message that He wants me to get? Again it's very, very clear. **The rod, he's already taught you, is both a symbol of the presence and power of God** It is the physical sign of the might that God wields on behalf of Israel. So the point is that it is God who is fighting for Israel. His power is going to be more important than theirs, and thus He is the one that they should depend on for victory, and the one to whom they should give the glory.

On the one hand, they might be tempted to despair, given their odds, given their morale, given their lack of training, given their inexperience, all the things were against them, they might have been tempted to despair. On the other hand, after winning this victory, they might have been tempted to think, "Hey, we're pretty good." Do you remember those songs in the sixties where the singers used to start the songs by telling you how cool they were? Maybe you don't remember those. Do you remember Archie Bell and the Drells? Do you remember the beginning to *Tighten Up*? "Hello, I'm Archie Bell and these are the Drells from Houston Texas, and we not only sing good, but we dance just as good as we walk." I mean, they are celebrating themselves. Well, the Israelites may well have been ready to celebrate themselves after this victory, and the whole point is, "You didn't do this. I did. I'm the one who gives victory. I'm the one who has the power and I'm the one to whom you are to give the glory."

The very next phrase you see in Ex 17:12 beautifully highlights the power of God. Why? Moses' hands are heavy. He's on the hillside, he can't even keep his hands up and so they have to contrive the rock and the assistance to keep the hands up in the air. What better way can you think of to emphasis the sole power of God? Not even Israel's exalted leader was the source of strength and victory, God was.

But again, even in verse 12 we see that balanced emphasis on human activity. This time it's Aaron and Hur giving Moses a place to sit and holding up his arm. Israel must be faithful, Israel must do her part. She must be faithful in response to God, but God will supply the power and the result you will see in verse 13, where Joshua mops up the Amalekites and God clearly gave the victory and deserved the credit.

What's the lesson? Israel must learn dependence on the Lord for victory, for those who will worship the Lord aright, must worship Him in faith, and if your dependence is not on the Lord, you can't worship the Lord in faith. My friends, that's a lesson for us. That's not just a lesson for the Israelites. We can't worship God unless we worship Him by faith. We can't worship God if we are not in utter dependence on Him. If we are not depending on Him, then we can't worship Him because He called on us to depend on Him. He only wants worshipers who worship Him in spirit and in truth. So, if we are going to worship Him, we have to worship Him in faith. ([The Lord is My Banner](#))

#### Related Resources:

- [Who was Hur in the Bible? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [Who was Aaron in the Bible?](#)
- Baker Evangelical Dictionary [Aaron](#)
- Easton's Bible Dictionary [Aaron](#)
- Fausset Bible Dictionary [Aaron](#)
- Holman Bible Dictionary [Aaron](#)



- Hitchcock Bible Names [Aaron](#)
- Whyte's Bible Characters [Aaron](#)
- Wilson's Bible Types [Aaron](#)
- Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible [Aaron](#)
- Hastings' Dictionary of the NT [Aaron](#)
- International Standard Bible Encyclopedia [Aaron](#)
- Kitto Biblical Cyclopedia [Aaron](#)
- Easton's Bible Dictionary [Hur](#)
- Fausset Bible Dictionary [Hur](#)
- Holman Bible Dictionary [Hur](#)
- Hitchcock Bible Names [Hur](#)
- Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible [Hur](#)
- International Standard Bible Encyclopedia [Hur](#)
- McClintock and Strong's Bible Encyclopedia [Hur](#)
- The Jewish Encyclopedia [Hur](#)

### **Exodus 17:8-16 INVISIBLE SUPPORT**

So it was, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed --Exodus 17:11

Prison guards couldn't understand how Irina Ratushinskaya could be so joyful. She was cold, sick, and hungry in a cruel Soviet prison camp. But Irina says she understands how: People were praying for her.

Irina is convinced that she and other prisoners experienced God's presence like "the sense of delicious warmth in a freezing land" because Christians all around the world were asking God to help them. After she was set free, Irina wrote a poem to express her gratitude to God and fellow believers. She included the words, "My dear ones, thank you all."

In our Scripture lesson we see that the Israelites prevailed over the superior Amalekite army when Moses lifted his staff toward heaven -- a symbol of intercessory prayer. His praying on the hill, possibly unseen by the Israelites, gave them the invisible support they needed.

Sick, suffering, sorrowing people cannot see their fellow believers who are praying for them. But many people have told me they are amazed at the sense of God's presence in their affliction, and they know this to be the result of the prayers of their friends.

May we faithfully intercede for those who are struggling. Let's be a source of invisible support. --Herbert Vander Lugt ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Support for people who're in need  
 Comes when we pray and intercede;  
 God's strength is given to His own  
 When we go to the Father's throne.  
 --Sper

God's intervention is often the result of our intercession.

**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. (NASB: Lockman)**

Amplified: When Moses held up his hand, Israel prevailed; and when he lowered his hand, Amalek prevailed. ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

NET Exodus 17:11 Whenever Moses would raise his hands, then Israel prevailed, but whenever he would rest his hands, then Amalek prevailed.

NLT Exodus 17:11 As long as Moses held up the staff in his hand, the Israelites had the advantage. But whenever he dropped his hand, the Amalekites gained the advantage.

KJV Exodus 17:11 And it came to pass, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed: and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed.

ESV Exodus 17:11 Whenever Moses held up his hand, Israel prevailed, and whenever he lowered his hand, Amalek prevailed.

NIV Exodus 17:11 As long as Moses held up his hands, the Israelites were winning, but whenever he lowered his hands, the Amalekites were winning.

- Ps 56:9; Luke 18:1; 1 Ti 2:8; James 5:16
- Exodus 17 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- See Joshua - Portrait of the Man God Uses

## VICTORY COMES FROM THE LORD

**So it came about when Moses held his hand up, that Israel prevailed** - Note the phrase **held his hand up** indicating one hand (**hand** is singular in the Hebrew text), undoubtedly the one holding the rod or staff of God.

**THOUGHT** - In Exodus so far the **staff of God** is the token of the **power of God**. When Moses used it, God demonstrated His power. To use the **staff of God** was to say that God did it. To fight without the rod was to face defeat. For more detailed discussion of the significance of Moses holding up his hand and Israel prevailing click [discussion of helping hand](#).

To use the rod of God was to say that God did it; to fight without the rod was to face defeat.

-- NET Note

In Israel's first battle with Egypt at the Red Sea, we see that the **uplifted staff in the hand of Moses** was the key to Israel's victory just as it is here with the Amalekites! In both battles the uplifted staff was clearly a symbol of the power of Jehovah.

First Moses divided the sea so that the sons of Israel could go through on dry land = "As for you, **lift up your staff and stretch out your hand over the sea and divide it**, and the sons of Israel shall go through the midst of the sea on dry land.....**Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea**; and the LORD swept the sea back by a strong east wind all night and turned the sea into dry land, so the waters were divided. (Ex 14:16, 21+).

Then as the Egyptians came into the divided sea pursuing Israel, "the LORD said to Moses, **Stretch out your hand** over the sea so that the waters may come back over the Egyptians, over their chariots and their horsemen. So Moses **stretched out his hand** over the sea, and the sea returned to its normal state at daybreak, while the Egyptians were fleeing right into it; then **the LORD overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea.**" (Ex 14:26-27+)

The **Net Bible Notes** explains that "This short passage (Exodus 17:8-16) gives the first account of Israel's holy wars. The war effort and Moses' holding up his hands go side by side until the victory is won and commemorated. **Many have used this as an example of intercessory prayer—but the passage makes no such mention.** 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. ([Net Bible Notes](#))

**Matthew Poole** on **Moses held his hand up** - This gesture, though fervent prayer was doubtless joined with it, **seems not to have been the gesture of praying**, which is the lifting up of both hands, but of an ensign-bearer, or of one ready to smite his enemies. However this was only a sign whereby Moses strengthened his faith, and quickened his prayers, and heightened the courage of the soldiers below, and protested that he expected victory not from the skill and prowess of his army, but from the assistance of God (see [discussion of helping hand](#)).

**And when he let his hand down, Amalek prevailed** - Note again it does not say hands down but **hand down**. It is singular, not plural. Regarding the interpretation of the hands up and down, most commentators consider Moses' hand up as indicative of prayer. But the text does not definitively state Moses cried out (as for example in Ex 17:4). Now, I would agree that Moses was surely praying for victory, as Moses "reflex reaction" in trials was to immediately go to the Lord. **But did Moses stop praying when he let his hand down which resulted in Amalek prevailing?** That hardly seems likely. He could pray just as effectively with his hand down as with it lifted up. So Moses' hand and rod of God being raised seems to be related to something else other than prayer (see [discussion of helping hand](#)).

"Trust in Providence and keep your powder dry"

-- Oliver Cromwell to his soldiers

**Matthew Poole** has an interesting suggestion that "When he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed; God so dispensing His favour, that the honour of the day and victory might be wholly ascribed to the rod and power of God, not to Israel."

**Janzen** writes that "The raised hands of Moses have been interpreted as a gesture of prayer, but **there is no indication of that in the text**. Their position, rather than any words uttered by Moses, is decisive. Childs's suggestion that they are "the instruments of mediating power" seems a better view. It might strike us as magical, but it underscores the importance of God's choice of Moses as His instrument, over against any contribution on Moses' own part, including prayer. The support of Moses' hands by Aaron and Hur makes the same point; they do not raise their own hands, but support those of Moses." (Believer's Church Bible Commentary - Exodus)

**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 (Lev 26:8). That rod was the symbol and pledge of His presence and power and working. ([Names of God](#))

**Alfred Edersheim** also questions the common interpretation of Moses' raised hands signifying prayer writing that **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 OTHER WORDS DID IT HAVE NO PURPOSE?). 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.

**David Thompson** makes a great application - According to Ex 17:11, **when Moses held up his hand, Israel prevailed, and when Moses lowered his hand, Amalek prevailed**. Now the point of this is as long as the staff of God was held up high, there was victory, but when the staff of God was lowered, there was defeat. I think there is a great principle here for us. **As long as the Word of God is held up high, which Word elevates God, there will be victory; but when the Word of God is lowered there will be defeat.** ([Sermon](#))

**THOUGHT** - I love Pastor Thompson's application but would add to it. In the greatest section of the Bible on Spiritual Warfare in Ephesians 6:10-18, we encounter one primary offensive weapon (prayer is the other in Eph 6:18), the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God (Eph 6:17+). So restating Thompson's excellent application we could say as long as the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God is held up high (and held firmly or fast), which elevates God, there will be victory; but when the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God is lowered and its value demeaned there will surely be spiritual defeat.

---

### **Exodus 17:11-12 A Little Help From Your Friends by Dr. Woodrow Kroll**

Few things of importance come easy. Noah Webster worked 36 years on his dictionary, while Gibbon labored 26 years on his Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire. When Milton was writing Paradise Lost, he rose at 4:00 every morning to begin work. Plato wrote the first sentence of the Republic nine times before it was acceptable to him.

In the midst of challenging circumstances, it's wonderful to have friends who will come along and give their help. Moses experienced such a blessing. The conflict with the Amalekites was a key battle. If the Israelites were defeated at such an early stage on their journey, they likely would become so discouraged that they would turn around and go back to Egypt. Victory was essential, but it wouldn't come easy. The Israelites were winning only when Moses held up his hands in prayer. After hours in this position, however, his arms began to tire and defeat seemed a real possibility. That was when Aaron and Hur stepped in. With a little help from his friends, Moses was able to keep his hands held up until the enemy was thoroughly defeated.

Prayer is the key to victory, but it's also hard work. Often our spirits, if not our hands, grow weary and we face the potential of defeat. That's when we need other believers like Aaron and Hur to step in and lend their strength to our efforts. Praying with friends gives us

renewed vigor.

Be sensitive to the opportunities to respond as Aaron and Hur did. Maybe there is someone today who needs you to lend your prayers to his efforts. God will lead you to that person; just make yourself available. Your strength may be essential for his victory.

Victory is never won alone.

---

## Invisible Support

Read: Exodus 17:8-16

So it was, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed. —Exodus 17:11

Prison guards couldn't understand how Irina Ratushinskaya could be so joyful. She was cold, sick, and hungry in a cruel Soviet prison camp. But Irina says she understands how: People were praying for her.

Irina is convinced that she and other prisoners experienced God's presence like "the sense of delicious warmth in a freezing land" because Christians all around the world were asking God to help them. After she was set free, Irina wrote a poem to express her gratitude to God and fellow believers. She included the words, "My dear ones, thank you all."

In our Scripture lesson we see that the Israelites prevailed over the superior Amalekite army when Moses lifted his staff toward heaven—a symbol of intercessory prayer. His praying on the hill, possibly unseen by the Israelites, gave them the invisible support they needed.

Sick, suffering, sorrowing people cannot see their fellow believers who are praying for them. But many people have told me they are amazed at the sense of God's presence in their affliction, and they know this to be the result of the prayers of their friends.

May we faithfully intercede for those who are struggling. Let's be a source of invisible support. By Herbert Vander Lugt [Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#)

Support for people who're in need  
Comes when we pray and intercede;  
God's strength is given to His own  
When we go to the Father's throne.  
—Sper

God's intervention is often the result of our intercession.

**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.**

Amplified: But Moses' hands were heavy and grew weary. So [the other men] took a stone and put it under him and he sat on it. Then Aaron and Hur held up his hands, one on one side and one on the other side; so his hands were steady until the going down of the sun.

NET Exodus 17:12 When the hands of Moses became heavy, they took a stone and put it under him, and Aaron and Hur held up his hands, one on one side and one on the other, and so his hands were steady until the sun went down.

NLT Exodus 17:12 Moses' arms soon became so tired he could no longer hold them up. So Aaron and Hur found a stone for him to sit on. Then they stood on each side of Moses, holding up his hands. So his hands held steady until sunset.

KJV Exodus 17:12 But Moses' hands were heavy; and they took a stone, and put it under him, and he sat thereon; and Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands, the one on the one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun.

ESV Exodus 17:12 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.

NIV Exodus 17:12 When Moses' hands grew tired, they took a stone and put it under him and he sat on it.

Aaron and Hur held his hands up--one on one side, one on the other--so that his hands remained steady till sunset.

- Ps 35:3, Isa 35:3 2Co 1:11 Php 1:19 1Th 5:25 Heb 12:12 Pr 27:17 Eccl 4:9-12, Ro 15:30-32
- Exodus 17 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- See Joshua - Portrait of the Man God Uses

## A HELPING HAND

Note that while this passage states "Moses' **hands** (PLURAL) were heavy," the preceding text (Ex 17:11) states when "Moses held his **hand** (SINGULAR) up, that Israel prevailed, and when he let his **hand** (HEBREW = SINGULAR) down, Amalek prevailed." This is apparently before Aaron and Hur began to help hold And what was in his **hand**? Ex 17:9 Moses said "the staff of God in my **hand** (HEBREW = SINGULAR)." So what is the point? The picture shows two hands raised but before Aaron and Hur helped him, the focus is on one **hand** with the **staff of God**. Moses could have switched the **staff of God** from one hand to the other (and he may have done so but the text does not say), but he would still have become tired (remember he is about 80!). While this is somewhat conjectural, it is in keeping with the Biblical text. The point was not Moses' **hand** (or hands) raised which was important, but **what was in his raised hand, the staff of God**. It is so easy to focus on both of Moses' hands raised and say they were raised in prayer and Aaron and Hur were helping intercede and conclude that prayer was primarily what led to Israel prevailing over Amalek. But that does not make good sense, because Moses could have continued praying with lowered hands (which he probably did). Also the Israelites in the valley could not "see" Moses praying. **But what they could see was the uplifted staff**. And this is what God wanted them to see. And when they were able to see it lifted up they had victory not because of a "psychological" effect but because of a supernatural effect! When they could not see it lifted up Amalek prevailed, again because God withdrew His power. And so the **staff of God** was symbolic or representative of the power of God! Keep in mind that even though they had been very rebellious and disobedient, Israel knew the **staff of God** had been intimately associated with the manifest power of God. In other words, Israel had witnessed God's power in action when Moses lifted up the **staff of God**!

For example, in Ex 7:20 the text says Moses "**lifted up** the **staff** and struck the water that was in the Nile, **in the sight** of Pharaoh and **in the sight** of his servants, and all the water that was in the Nile was turned to blood." In other words the **staff** was clearly visible and was the symbol of the supernatural power of God, even to the pagans.

Then again in Exodus 14 we read a similar pattern with an added twist

As for you (MOSES - NOTE THAT GOD FIRST DESCRIBES MOSES' RESPONSIBILITY), **lift up your staff** (AGAIN THIS WOULD MAKE THE STAFF CLEARLY VISIBLE TO BOTH THE EGYPTIANS AND THE ISRAELITES) and stretch out your hand (SO STAFF IN ONE UPLIFTED HAND AND OTHER HAND ALSO UPLIFTED) over the sea and divide it, and the sons of Israel shall go through the midst of the sea on dry land. 17 (NOW GOD DESCRIBES HIS PART) "As for Me, behold, I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians so that they will go in after them; and **I will be honored** through Pharaoh and all his army, through his chariots and his horsemen. 18 "Then **the Egyptians will know that I am the LORD**, when I am honored through Pharaoh, through his chariots and his horsemen." (Ex 14:16-18)

So what pattern do you see when the Egyptians sought to attack and destroy the nation of Israel? Moses raised the **staff of God** and his other hand, and God gave Israel the victory over the Egyptians. The result was (1) God was honored and (2) even the pagans would know God was the true LORD. One other point worth noting is that Israel had just had an experience with the "power" of the "staff of God" for in Ex 17:5-6 we read

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Pass before the people and take with you some of the elders of Israel; and take in your hand your staff with which you struck the Nile, and go. "Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock at Horeb; and you shall strike the rock, and water will come out of it, that the people may drink." And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel.

So you can easily imagine some or many of the Israelites in the valley seeing the same staff of God in Moses hands remembering what had just recently been accomplished with this staff - water from a rock! Now there is a powerful enemy that needs to be smitten. But when Moses' hand holding the staff declined, so did the fortunes of the Israelites. God was teaching His rebellious children another lesson about Himself and about His power and His sufficiency in adverse circumstances!

Now fast forward to Exodus 17:8-16, keeping in mind that Israel had questioned Moses' leadership and even God's presence asking "**Is the LORD among us, or not?**" (Ex 17:7). So what does God do? In the very next verse He allows (or sends) the Amalekites to

attack Israel (even as He had hardened the Egyptians' hearts to attack Israel before they could escape). Then God invokes the same pattern of the **uplifted staff by Moses** symbolizing **God's presence and power**, while on the valley below God gave Israel the victory over a mighty Amalekite adversary. Israel had now seen **the uplifted staff** symbolic of God's power at the Red Sea (they may not have been by the Nile and witnessed the miracle in Ex 7:20) and in both potentially devastating situations Israel had seen it was God's power (as **symbolized by the raised staff**) and this power was mediated through God's man, Moses. Moses was once again clearly shown to be God's leader of Israel as they prepared for the 40 year journey in the wilderness.

To reiterate, when Moses hands got heavy and he could not hold the **staff of God** in the sight of Israel, God allowed Amalek to prevail. Israel would have seen that it was the staff that symbolized God's power for victory and they like the Egyptians in Exodus 14:18 would have come to know **I am the Lord** and God would be **honored** by this demonstration of His power. So the answer to their question "**Is the LORD among us or not?**" is a resounding "YES, HE IS PRESENT!"

The **uplifted staff** functioned as a **banner** much like ancient armies would carry before them as an [ensign](#) when they went into battle. In this battle with the Amalekites, Moses in effect held the banner before Israel. And in this context the banner was symbolic of Jehovah Himself, Jehovah Nissi, the LORD our Banner. This Name would (should) serve to remind Israel of Jehovah's presence and power for victory over their adversaries!

**Janzen** agrees adding that "What is clear is the answer to the question, **Is Yahweh among us or not?** Not only is Yahweh there, but Yahweh Alone assures Israel's life, and that life is mediated through Moses. This is the same Moses whom the Israelites have charged with fraudulent claims leading to their death (Ex 17:3), and who has almost been executed by stoning (Ex 17:1–7). **Now he has been shown more clearly than before (Ex 14:10–18; Ex 15:25; Ex 16:28) to be the One Who stands between Israel and death.** This mediator role of Moses will be developed further in Exodus 19; 20; 32–34. For now, all opposition to Moses appears to have been overcome; Exodus 18 will show him as a leader in full control. (Believer's Church Bible Commentary - Exodus)

**Matthew Poole** comments on **Moses' hands** - Not that both hands were erected (lifted up) and joined (clasped) together, which was not a fit posture for one holding a rod in his hand; but that Moses shifted the rod out of one hand into the other when the former was weary, and that **Aaron** and **Hur** did each of them with both hands hold up that hand which was next to them, successively, that they also might relieve one the other.

**Expositor's Bible Commentary** adds that the **staff of God** raised in the hand of Moses "was not merely for psychological effect to inspire the troops every time they glanced up the hill..... **Nor does the text specifically claim that Moses prayed while his hands were raised** (the more traditional explanation)....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 (STAFF OF GOD) more than their weapons.**" ([Expositor's Bible Commentary](#))

Here's an example of the genre of comments that favor prayer as the main teaching of Exodus 17:8-16 -

"This amazing passage shows us that life or death for Israel depended on the prayers of one man....Aaron and Hur came alongside Moses and literally held his hands up in prayer. They helped him and partnered with him in intercession. Their help was successful." (Guzik - I highly respect him and quote him often but he does not even touch on the significance of the staff of God which is surprising).

**Adam Clarke** pushes the limits with this comment on Moses - "Several of the fathers consider Moses, with his stretched-out hands, as a figure of Christ on the cross, suffering for mankind, and getting a complete victory over sin and Satan."

**But Moses' hands were heavy** - Clearly he was standing as implied by next clause. Standing with hands over one's head becomes tiring very quickly. And remember that in one of the hands Moses held the staff/rod.

**Then they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat on it** - Remember Moses is not a "spring chicken" at this time (about 80 yo). So even in this spiritual exercise his human limitations intervened, and at age 74 (2020) I can personally identify with Moses' state. When I go to a worship service, I find myself becoming tired standing after two or three songs!

**And Aaron and Hur supported his hands, one on one side and one on the other** - **Supported** is literally "grasped securely." Many writers say their physical support was tantamount to their support in prayers. That's possible but is not clearly stated. It seems that the most reasonable interpretation is they held up Moses' hands because he was tired. Of course they could have been praying for him, for Joshua and for Israel, but the primary meaning is literal support for his hands.

**THOUGHT** - Clearly this picture is applicable to the body of Christ. God's leaders thankfully usually recognize their need to depend on others to support them in their work, but sadly many pastors are burning out (80% will

not be in ministry 10 yr later!) apparently because they are relying on themselves (See Excellent articles on [Pastor Burnout](#)). Today the church is a living dynamic body (Ep 1:22, 23+, Ep 4:4+, Eph 4:12+; Col 1:24+) (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 (cf 1 Pe 4:10-11+) and fail to utilize their spiritual gifts (1Co 12:4,7,11,18, Ro 12:3-8), both the "common good" (1Cor 12:7) of the body of Christ and the "glory of God" (1Pe 4:10, 11+) will be adversely affected (and this may account for why the "*Amalekites* [have too often] *prevailed*" in so many churches).

**Hur** is mentioned for the first time and is mentioned again when while he and Joshua went up into the mountain of God

But to the elders he said, "Wait here for us until we return to you. And behold, **Aaron and Hur** are with you; whoever has a legal matter, let him approach them." (Exodus 24:14)

#### Related Resources:

- [Who was Hur in the Bible?](#)
- [Who was Aaron in the Bible?](#)

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 4:9–12 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 - Acts 17- notes).

## STEADY HANDS

**Thus** - That is, with the help of his friends his hands which had given out from heaviness were lifted up so that the **staff of God** would be visible to Israel and Israel would prevail.

**David Thompson** draws an astute conclusion on the fact that it was Moses' hands that were held up - Now it was Moses hands that had to be lifted up. Aaron's hands would not give victory. Hur's hands would not give victory. It had to be the hands of Moses. God was showing these men and the military and the entire nation that you do not have victory without My chosen leader. ([Sermon](#))

**His hands were steady until the sun set** - This time phrase **until the sun set** suggests the battle raged all day long. So once Aaron and Hur came on the scene Moses was able to hold high the "banner" of the Lord, the staff of God so that the Israelis could see it as they fought in the valley. And as they saw the staff of God remain visible in Moses' steady hands, they also were aware that they were prevailing over the Amalekites. As discussed above, Israel knew the staff of God had been associated with the power of God, and this was affirmation of that truth and of the truth that God was with them, God was for them and God would give the victory. One is reminded of the phrase **THE BATTLE IS THE LORD'S**, as recorded in Scripture

**(IN THE FACE OF THE ADVERSARY GOLIATH, DAVID DECLARED)** "This day the LORD will deliver you up into my hands, and I will strike you down and remove your head from you. And I will give the dead bodies of the army of the Philistines this day to the birds of the sky and the wild beasts of the earth, that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel, (cf Ex 14:17-18) 47 and that all this assembly may know that the LORD does not deliver by sword or by spear; for **the battle is the LORD'S** and He will give you into our hands." 48 Then it happened when the Philistine rose and came and drew near to meet David, that David ran quickly toward the battle line to meet the Philistine. 49 And David put his hand into his bag and took from it a stone and slung it, and struck the Philistine on his forehead. And the stone sank into his forehead, so that he fell on his face to the ground. (1 Sa 17:46-49)

And he (**THE PROPHET JAHAZIEL - 2 Chr 20:13**) said, "Listen, all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem

and King Jehoshaphat: thus says the LORD to you, 'Do not fear or be dismayed because of this great multitude, for **the battle is not yours but God's**. 16 'Tomorrow go down against them. Behold, they will come up by the ascent of Ziz, and you will find them at the end of the valley in front of the wilderness of Jeruel. 17 'You need not fight in this battle; station yourselves, **stand and see the salvation of the LORD** on your behalf, O Judah and Jerusalem.' Do not fear or be dismayed; tomorrow go out to face them, for the LORD is with you." 18 Jehoshaphat bowed his head with his face to the ground, and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem fell down before the LORD, worshiping the LORD.(2 Chr 20:15-18)

Imagine sitting and holding your hands up for an entire day! Even if you had support, this would be a challenge. I love this picture -- yes they **were heavy** but they **were steady!** This is first use of **steady** ([emunah](#)) in Bible, which is interesting because not infrequently the first use of a word in Scripture lays the groundwork for subsequent uses.

**Steady** (0530)([emunah](#) from **aman** = to confirm or support) is a noun which means firmness, steadfastness, fidelity, truth, faithfulness, trustworthiness, a condition of being dependable. The root idea is certainty or firmness.

**Emunah** - 48x translated in NAS as faith(1), faithful(3), faithfully(8), faithfulness(25), honestly(1), responsibility(1), stability(1), steady(1), trust(2), truth(5). Note that **emunah** is most often translated "**faithfulness**" as in Dt 32:4 = "**The Rock!** His work is perfect, For all His ways are just; A God of **faithfulness**." So here in the description of Moses' "steady hands" and his "steady supporters" we have a great illustration of **faithfulness** -- that which is firm, steady, reliable, dependable.

Ex. 17:12; Dt. 32:4; 1 Sa 26:23; 2 Ki. 12:15; 22:7; 1 Chr. 9:22, 26, 31; 2 Chr. 19:9; 31:12, 15, 18; 34:12; Ps. 33:4; 36:5; 37:3; 40:10; 88:11; 89:1f, 5, 8, 24, 33, 49; 92:2; 96:13; 98:3; 100:5; 119:30, 75, 86, 90, 138; 143:1; Prov. 12:17, 22; 28:20; Isa. 11:5; 25:1; 33:6; 59:4; Jer. 5:1, 3; 7:28; 9:3; Lam. 3:23; Hos. 2:20; Hab. 2:4

The [Septuagint \(Lxx\)](#) translates **steady** in Ex 17:12 with the verb [sterizo](#) (from **histemi** = to stand as in 1 Pe 5:12+ = stand firm) and it is actually used twice in this verse, first to translate "**supported**" (Heb = [tamak](#)) and then to translate **were steady** ([emunah](#)). **Sterizo** means to make firm or solid, to set fast, to fix firmly in a place, to establish by making firm or stable, and figuratively to cause one to be inwardly firm or committed and strengthened. The basic idea is that of stabilizing Moses by providing a support, so that his hands would not totter. Barclay adds that **stērízō** means to make as solid as granite. **Sterizo** is used figuratively in James 5:8+ "strengthen (**sterizo**) your heart" and there is no doubt that the physical strengthening from Aaron and Hur did strengthen Moses' heart to remain "steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord." (1 Cor 15:58+)

The **Net Bible** comments that "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, 12notes) 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** ([natah](#)) 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 [natah](#) repeatedly used of Moses' outstretched staff/hand in Exodus - Ex 7:19, Ex 8:5, 6, 16, Ex 9:22, 23, Ex 10:12, 13, 21, 22, Ex 14:16, 21, 26, 27) 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." (Joshua 8:18, 26+)

**COMMENT** - 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. It is also interesting that even as Moses built an altar after the victory, Joshua likewise built an altar (Joshua 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." (Joshua 8:34+).

---

**C H Spurgeon** (who like most commentators associates the uplifted hands with prayer) offers the following devotional thoughts on this passage...

Exodus 17:12 Spurgeon - Morning and Evening- "And his hands were steady until the going down of the sun."  
— Exodus 17:12



So mighty was the prayer of Moses, that all depended upon it. The petitions of Moses discomfited the enemy more than the fighting of Joshua. Yet both were needed. No, in the soul's conflict, force and fervour, decision and devotion, valour and vehemence, must join their forces, and all will be well. You must wrestle with your sin, but the major part of the wrestling must be done alone in private with God. Prayer, like Moses', holds up the token of the covenant before the Lord. The rod was the emblem of God's working with Moses, the symbol of God's government in Israel. Learn, O pleading saint, to hold up the promise and the oath of God before him. The Lord cannot deny his own declarations. Hold up the rod of promise, and have what you will.

Moses grew weary, and then his friends assisted him. When at any time your prayer flags, let faith support one hand, and let holy hope uplift the other, and prayer seating itself upon the stone of Israel, the rock of our salvation, will persevere and prevail. Beware of faintness in devotion; if Moses felt it, who can escape? It is far easier to fight with sin in public, than to pray against it in private. It is remarked that Joshua never grew weary in the fighting, but Moses did grow weary in the praying; the more spiritual an exercise, the more difficult it is for flesh and blood to maintain it. Let us cry, then, for special strength, and may the Spirit of God, who helpeth our infirmities, as he allowed help to Moses, enable us like him to continue with our hands steady "until the going down of the sun;" till the evening of life is over; till we shall come to the rising of a better sun in the land where prayer is swallowed up in praise.

---

### **Exodus 17:12 A Helping Hand " and Aaron and Hur held up his hands" Exodus 17:12**

Exodus 17 records a most interesting experience in the life of Moses. As long as his hands, grasping the rod of God, were up-held, Joshua and the Israelites prevailed against the Amalekites. As the battle progressed, however, Moses' hands became so heavy that he could no longer retain his posture. Aaron and Hur then held his hands up for him, and victory was achieved.

Even as Moses needed the assistance of Aaron and Hur, so today those called to spiritual leadership need the undergirding of the people to whom they minister. I am thinking especially of pastors. I don't know of another work so demanding, discouraging, and fraught with potential pitfalls. These men need our support and encouragement. By the way, how long has it been since you took your pastor's hand and verbally expressed your gratitude for his ministry? A word properly timed will be, in effect, "holding up his hands," and will help to assure spiritual victory in your church.

A terrible fire was raging, and many attempts were being made to save a child who stood at a top window frantically waving and calling for help. One man, braver than the rest, put forth a last bold endeavor to rescue the boy. Sensing the almost impossible odds, and fearing he might fail, someone in the crowd cried, "Cheer him, cheer him!" The people caught the words and shouted loudly. Inspired and encouraged by their support, the man doubled his efforts and rescued the child from the flames.

Do you know any Christian worker who is similarly trying by all means in his power to snatch "brands from the burning," and to save immortal souls? Cheer him, and then see how your kind sympathy helps him to work on with fresh courage and renewed energy.

Why not make this "appreciation week" for your pastor? Encourage him, "cheer him"! ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

O "hold up the hands" of the worker for Christ,  
Encourage his soul by your prayer;  
A handclasp, a smile, or a word of good cheer,  
Will help him life's burdens to bear.  
— G. W.

Wouldn't it be fine if all those who point a critical finger would hold out a helping hand instead?

---

In 1989, paraplegic Mark Wellman climbed the sheer granite face of Yosemite's El Capitan. On the last day of his climb, The Fresno Bee ran a picture of Wellman being carried triumphantly on the shoulders of climbing companion Mike Corbett. The caption read, "Paraplegic and partner prove no wall is too high to climb." What the story did not say is that in helping Wellman scale El Capitan once, Corbett had to make that difficult, demanding ascent three times!

Today's Bible reading focuses on Moses, whose upheld hands brought God's help in a crucial battle. But don't forget Aaron and Hur. They had to climb the same mountain themselves, and their support of Moses' arms took time, strength, and commitment on their part. The principle is this: People who serve the Lord "behind the scenes" often pay a higher price than those who are in the center of public attention. —D. C. Egnor ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

**We need each other if we are to do what God wants us to do.**

---

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

Amplified: And Joshua mowed down and disabled Amalek and his people with the sword. ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

NET Exodus 17:13 So Joshua destroyed Amalek and his army with the sword.

NLT Exodus 17:13 As a result, Joshua overwhelmed the army of Amalek in battle.

KJV Exodus 17:13 And Joshua discomfited Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword.

ESV Exodus 17:13 And Joshua overwhelmed Amalek and his people with the sword.

NIV Exodus 17:13 So Joshua overcame the Amalekite army with the sword.

- Joshua 10:28,32,37,42; 11:12
- Exodus 17 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- See Joshua - Portrait of the Man God Uses

**So Joshua overwhelmed Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword** - Notice the phrase **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).

Notice that the text gives **Joshua** the credit for the victory. **David Thompson** adds "By the time the sun went down, God had given Israel a total and complete victory over the Amalekites. It is interesting to observe that the text gives military credit to Joshua. This is perfectly consistent with the point of the context. God gives victories but He uses certain people to gain those victories. Often times a military leader gets credit for victory. Norman Schwarzkopf, Jr., was the four-star general credited with the victory that destroyed the Iraqi Army and liberated Kuwait in 1991. General Douglas MacArthur was the five-star general that was credited with the victory that beat the Japanese in 1945. These men did serve their countries honorably. But Joshua is named because he is God's general. His victory was due to his connection to God." ([Sermon](#))

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 is a truth we must all continually remember. Even though we are beneficiaries of victories over the "Amalekites" (the [world](#), the [flesh](#) 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.

The horse is prepared for the day of battle, But victory belongs to the LORD. (Pr 21:31)

Victory comes from you, O LORD. May you bless your people. Interlude (Ps 3:8NLT)

But the salvation of the righteous is from the LORD; He is their strength in time of trouble. (Ps 37:39)

Our God is a God who delivers; the LORD, the sovereign Lord, can rescue from death. (Ps 68:20NET)

**Paul** expresses a similar thought in the following passages...

Not that we are adequate in ourselves to consider anything as coming from ourselves, but **our adequacy is from God** (2 Cor 3:5+)

in all these things **we overwhelmingly conquer through Him** Who loved us. (Ro 8:37+).

**Comment** - 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." (ED: 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+, Heb 11:8, 9, 10+, Heb 11:13, 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 14:39-45+). 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."**

Amplified: And the Lord said to Moses, Write this for a memorial in the book and rehearse it in the ears of Joshua, that I will utterly blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under the heavens.

NET Exodus 17:14 The LORD said to Moses, "Write this as a memorial in the book, and rehearse it in Joshua's hearing; for I will surely wipe out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven.

NLT Exodus 17:14 After the victory, the LORD instructed Moses, "Write this down on a scroll as a permanent reminder, and read it aloud to Joshua: I will erase the memory of Amalek from under heaven."

KJV Exodus 17:14 And the LORD said unto Moses, Write this for a memorial in a book, and rehearse it in the ears of Joshua: for I will utterly put out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven.

ESV Exodus 17:14 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."

NIV Exodus 17:14 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Write this on a scroll as something to be remembered and make sure that Joshua hears it, because I will completely blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven."

- 1Sa 12:24, Ex 12:14; 13:9; 34:27; Deut 31:9; Joshua 4:7; Job 19:23; Haggai 2:2,3
- Nu 24:20; Deut 25:17, 18, 19; 1Sa 15:2,3,7,8,18; 1 Sa 27:8,9; 30:1,17; 2 Sa 1:1, 8-16; 8:12; 1Chr 4:43; Ezra 9:14
- **Memory** - Job 18:17; Ps 9:6; Proverbs 10:7
- Joshua 1:7, 8
- Exodus 17 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## **A MEMORIAL OF DIVINE RETRIBUTION FOR AMALEK**

**Then the LORD said to Moses, "Write this in a book as a memorial** (reminder) - 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 (cf the memorial in Ex 12)

Exodus 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.

Several passages refer to Moses writing (so much for the skeptics who say writing was not even known in Moses' day! In fact writing was known for over 1000 years before the time of Moses!

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."

Exodus 24:4-7 Moses **wrote down** all the words of the LORD. Then he arose early in the morning, and built an altar at the foot of the mountain with twelve pillars for the twelve tribes of Israel. 5 He sent young men of the sons of Israel, and they offered burnt offerings and sacrificed young bulls as peace offerings to the LORD. 6 Moses took half of the blood and put it in basins, and the other half of the blood he sprinkled on the altar. 7 Then he took the book of the covenant and read it in the hearing of the people; and they said, "All that the LORD has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient!"

Exodus 34:27 Then the LORD said to Moses, "**Write** down these words, for in accordance with these words I have made a covenant with you and with Israel."

Numbers 33:1-2 These are the journeys of the sons of Israel, by which they came out from the land of Egypt by their armies, under the leadership of Moses and Aaron. 2 Moses **recorded** their starting places according to their journeys by the command of the LORD, and these are their journeys according to their starting places.

Deuteronomy 31:9 So Moses **wrote** this law and gave it to the priests, the sons of Levi who carried the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and to all the elders of Israel.

Deuteronomy 31:24 It came about, when Moses finished **writing** the words of this law in a book until they were complete,

**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.

**David Thompson** - God wanted truth written and truth communicated to Joshua about the fact that God promises He will utterly wipe out the Amalekites. Now it is clear that Moses is the writer of what God wanted. In fact, C. I. Scofield said this verse proves that Moses was the author of the first five books of the Bible, a point that was never questioned until the 1700's (Exodus 17:14 note, Moses As Author, p. 112). Now there has been a debate over whether or not Moses wrote a specific book containing this data or whether this is referring to what is stated here in the inspired book of Exodus. The noun "book" is articular in Hebrew, which leads me to conclude this is the inspired written Scripture. Joshua was going to wear many hats in God's history. He was a leader and a warrior. He was to take in truth about God and one of the things he was responsible to remember was that God prophetically promised in writing that He would utterly destroy the Amalekites. Joshua himself would die before this happened. It would be Saul and David that would ultimately "decimate Amalek." They would be the ones who would finish this assignment and fulfill this prophecy. Now this is a key prediction against a foreign nation. Foreign nations, as they relate to Israel, would be very wise to take a look at this prediction because it did literally come true. When God makes a prophetic prediction about nations, those predictions will come true. There is a scary prediction that is made near the end of the O.T. about the nations. In Haggai 2:6-9 God predicts that there will be a time in history when He will shake the heavens, earth, sea and dry land and "all the nations" to the point that they will take their wealth to Israel. In that same book God promises to "overthrow the thrones of the kingdoms and destroy the power of the kingdoms of the nations" and He will kill all national powers against Israel (Haggai 2:22). **Nations would be very wise to become Israel's friend, because God promises serious consequences to one who is Israel's enemy.** ([Sermon](#))

If you are like me you are prone to forget things, including the good things that God has done for you. Oh, how quickly I forget an answer to prayer, a divine deliverance, or even divine discipline. Abraham Lincoln observed about his own generation

We have been the recipients of the choicest bounties of heaven. We have grown in numbers, wealth, and power, as no other nation has ever grown. But we have forgotten God. We have forgotten the gracious hand which preserved us in peace and which multiplied, and enriched, and strengthened us.

What was God's antidote for forgetfulness? He instructed Moses to write a memorial describing what had taken place in the battle against the Amalekites. This memorial was to be read to Joshua, the future leader of Israel, so he would be sure to remember as well. Moses did write it down in The Book and thus God's victory over the Amalekites became a source of encouragement for Christians throughout the millennia. Dearly beloved, are you keeping a written account of the good things God has done for you? Perhaps you need to begin a spiritual diary. Perhaps you might place some memorial in your yard, such as a tree which would be a constant reminder to you and your children. You might place a rock in your back yard and write the date of the event on it. Here's the point -- our memory's are short, but God's goodness is everlasting and we need to do something to aid our remembrance of God's blessings. Then next time you feel downcast or discouraged, or you even wonder whether the Almighty God really cares for you personally, look at the tree you planted, the rock you placed or the journal you wrote in and refresh your memory. As someone has well said the weakest ink is stronger than the greatest memory!

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 those things God has done in your life so that in years to come you might look back and be reminded of His faithfulness?

**And recite it to Joshua, that I will utterly blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven-** Regarding the **memory of Amalek** when a person dies they are usually soon forgotten. David affirms this general truth writing "I am forgotten as a dead man, out of mind." (Ps 31:12) In addition the grave (Ps 88:11) is called "the land of forgetfulness." (Ps 88:12)

**Recite** in Hebrew means "to put in the ear". The KJV translates it as to "rehearse it in the ears of Joshua" and Young's Literal has "set it in the ears of Joshua". Compare to his advice in Joshua 1:8 "This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success."

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.

**THOUGHT** - Joshua was able to give orders because he had learned how to take orders. Have you?

God in a somber "**I Will**" declaration predicts Amalek's final, complete and utter demise. Amalek, a descendant of Esau, as discussed below 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" (1 Pe 2:11+; Gal 5:17+).

**Guzik** - Amalek had a special guilt and shame in their attack against Israel.

- Amalek had the shame of being the first nation to make war against Israel.
- Amalek had the shame of going out of their way to attack Israel.
- Amalek had the shame of actually fighting against God.

**Blot out** (wipe) ([04229](#)) (**[machah](#)**) means to twipe, to wipe out and is often connected with divine judgment as with God wiping out all life in the flood (Ge 6:7, Ge 7:23); Amalek (Ex 17:14+), destroying Jerusalem (2 Ki 21:13); threatening to wipe out Israel's name (Dt. 9:14). Ps. 51:1 = "blot out my transgressions"; Ps. 51:9 = "blot out all my iniquities." Ps 69:28 = " May they **be blotted out** of the book of life."

The **Septuagint (Lxx)** translates **[machah](#)** most often (all reference below that are in **bold font**) with the verb **[exaleipho](#)** means literally to completely wipe off. Literally **[exaleipho](#)** means to remove by wiping off, as when a blackboard is erased. **The picture is to cause something to cease by obliterating all evidence.** (Don't confuse this **[annihilation](#)** - no created soul will be annihilated. They will spend eternity in heaven or hell!) The word was applied to the process of obliterating writing on any material. Some of the uses in Scripture retain this literal meaning but most uses speak of a figurative blotting out or wiping off. The idea in all the uses is to cause something to cease by obliterating or eliminating any evidence. Twice in the Revelation God promises He will **wipe away** every tear. A number of uses in both OT (Septuagint) and the NT use this verb to describe the blotting out or wiping away of sins. **Exaleipho** was used by Thucydides of whitewashing a wall.

In Genesis 6:7 in God's famous decree upon the sinful world (which shows how strong God feels about Amalek!) - "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." (Ps 51:1+, Ps 51:9+)

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)

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+) knowing that in eternity future God will completely **blot out** all of the "Amalekites" forever. Hallelujah!

**J Ligon Duncan** addresses the Lord's charge to **blot out the Amalekites** - Now I want to say two things about this. First of all, this is not a petty, vindictive act of God, it's a reflection of God's just judgment. The Amalekites had done something that was odious in God's sight. They had attacked weak, straggly noncombatants in an act of war and God was enraged by it. Secondly, this judgment that God has brought against the Amalekites, gives a picture of God's final judgment intruded into the experience of Israel going into the land of Canaan for the first time, but not for the last. From this time all the way through the book of Joshua, over and over, it will be indicated that God's judgment against the occupants of the land who resist Israel is a final picture of God's judgment. It's a pre-picturing of God's final judgment against the wicked, those who are not His people. So He's giving us a picture of the dispensation of final justice. Let me say one more thing about this. I think there is a parallel, I think there is an inferential social application of this truth today to the matter of terrorism. I think you're seeing God's attitude towards terrorism reflected in His anger towards the Amalekites. Let me quote to you a very helpful quote from Dr. Benjamin Netanyahu, who gave his testimony before the US congress. *"Terrorism is a crime against humanity. We must consider the terrorists enemies of mankind to be given no quarter and no consideration from their propitiated grievances. If we believe to distinguish between acts of terror justifying some and repudiating others based on sympathy based on this and that cause, we will lose the moral clarity that is so essential for victory. This clarity is what enabled America and Britain to root out piracy in the nineteenth century. This same clarity enabled the allies to root out the Nazism in the twentieth century. They did not look for the root cause of piracy, or the root cause of Nazism, because they knew that some acts are evil in and of themselves and do not deserve any consideration or understanding. They did not ask whether Hitler was right about the alleged wrong done to Germany at Versailles. That, they left to the historians. For the leaders of the western alliance, nothing justified Nazism, nothing. We must be equally clear cut today. Nothing justifies terrorism, nothing. Terrorism is defined neither by the identity of its perpetrators, nor by the case they espouse, rather it is defined by the nature of the act. Terrorism is the deliberate attack on innocent civilians."* That is what we have right here, in this passage. The attack of the Amalekites against civilian stragglers at the end of the host of Israel and it meets with God's decisive judgment. ([The Lord is My Banner](#))

#### Related Resource:

- [Is God cruel?](#)

---

#### Exodus 17:14 Write It Down by Dr. Woodrow Kroll

Have you noticed how prone to forget we humans are? Abraham Lincoln observed about his own generation, "We have been the recipients of the choicest bounties of heaven. We have grown in numbers, wealth, and power, as no other nation has ever grown. But we have forgotten God. We have forgotten the gracious hand which preserved us in peace and which multiplied, and enriched, and strengthened us."

God recognized that people have the habit of forgetting, so He instructed Moses to write down in a book what had taken place in the battle against the Amalekites. Furthermore, this was to be read to Joshua, the future leader of Israel, so he would be sure to remember as well. This victory would become a source of encouragement for Christians throughout history--all because it was written down.

**Are you keeping a written account of the good things God has done for you?**

**Is there a record of the victories that God has brought about in your life?**

Some people keep a daily spiritual diary; others record only special events. But in some fashion God's blessings need to be committed to something more dependable than our faulty memories.

When you're feeling discouraged, or perhaps even wondering if God loves you, take out your journal and refresh your memory. The entries in your journal can be a continuing source of encouragement for you. In addition, take the opportunity to share with your children or grandchildren what God has done for you. The God who has dealt with you so graciously in the past is the same God who wants to work in their lives as well.

The weakest ink is stronger than the greatest memory.

## Exodus 17:15 And Moses built an altar, and named it The LORD is My Banner [\(NASB: Lockman\)](#)

Amplified: And Moses built an altar and called the name of it, The Lord is my Banner; [\(Amplified Bible - Lockman\)](#)

BGT Exodus 17:15 κα κοδ μησεν Μωυς ς θυσιαστ ριον κυρ κα πων μασεν τ νομα ατο κ ρι ς μου καταφυγ

NET Exodus 17:15 Moses built an altar, and he called it "The LORD is my Banner,"

LXE Exodus 17:15 And Moses built an altar to the Lord, and called the name of it, The Lord my Refuge.

NLT Exodus 17:15 Moses built an altar there and named it Yahweh-nissi (which means "the LORD is my banner").

KJV Exodus 17:15 And Moses built an altar, and called the name of it Jehovahnissi:

ESV Exodus 17:15 And Moses built an altar and called the name of it, The LORD Is My Banner,

NIV Exodus 17:15 Moses built an altar and called it The LORD is my Banner.

- **Built an altar** (cf Noah, Abram, Isaac) Ge 8:20; 12:7; 26:25; 33:20; Ge 35:1
- Isaiah 11:10,12 where signal = banner = Messiah
- **Study** of Jehovah Nissi
- Exodus 17 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### JEHOVAH NISSI: THE LORD IS MY BANNER

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

**And Moses built an altar** - A sign of worship to Jehovah. 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.

**Built an altar** - phrase occurs 12 times in the ESV - Ge 8:20; Ge 12:8; Ge 13:18; 26:25; 35:7; Ex 17:15; 24:4; 32:5; Jos. 8:30; Jdg 6:24; 1Sam. 14:35; 1Ki. 18:32

**And named it The LORD is My Banner** - The Hebrew Name is **Jehovah Nissi** the only mention of this Name in Scripture.

**J Ligon Duncan** says that "The rod of the Lord was the **banner** of Israel in that day in order to draw attention to the power of God. Every believer needs to remember God's power and every believer needs to remember God's judgment. We must also remember the coming judgment, according to Jesus, will be meted out by Him. Take your hymnals in hand and look with me briefly at hymn 318. This is the great hymn of Wesley and Cennick, *Lo' He comes with clouds descending*. It's a hymn about the second coming and it's the one hymn in our hymnal about the second coming which focuses on the judgment of the Lord Jesus Christ. Yes, *Joy To The World* mentions the phrases, but this hymn focuses on the truth. "Lo! He comes with clouds descending, once for favored sinners slain; thousand saints attending swell the triumph of His train. Alleluia! Alleluia! God appears on earth to reign. Every eye shall now behold Him, robed in dreadful majesty; those who set at naught and sold Him, pierced, and nailed Him to the tree, deeply wailing, deeply wailing, shall the true Messiah see. Every island, sea, and mountain, heaven and earth, shall flee away; all who hate Him must, confounded, hear the trump proclaim the day: Come to judgment! Come to judgment! Come to judgment, come away! Now Redemption long expected see in solemn pomp appear! All His saints by man rejected, now shall meet Him in the air. Alleluia! Alleluia! See the day of God appear!" The Lord Jesus Christ will come again to mete out the judgment of God in a final display of His

power. ([The Lord is My Banner](#))

**David Thompson** - Moses decided to name this altar—"Jehovah is my Banner" or "Jehovah is my Signal Pole." The point is Jehovah is the one who gave this victory. The signal pole was a statement that God would destroy the Amalekites who waged war with Israel. It would take a couple of generations, but God would do exactly what He promised He would do. ([Sermon](#))

**Banner** ([05251](#))([nec/nes](#)) means a banner, an ensign, a standard, a signal pole (wood pole which was visible when raised - Nu 21:8), a signal (non-verbal communication - Nu 26:10, Jer 4:6), a sail (for a boat - Isa 33:23). **Nec/nes** served as a rallying point or standard which drew people together for some common action for or for the communication of important information. The **banner** could be an ornamental piece of cloth on the end of a staff or pole as a leader's signal. Usually the signal was placed on a high place in the camp. **Nēs** is used in the sense of **sign** or **warning** where the destruction of Korah and his family in a sense became a "banner" which warned against similar rebellious behavior! (Nu 26:10). Later in the wilderness journey, Moses lifted up a **bronze serpent** on a pole (**nēs**) (Nu 21:8, 9) (See [excursus on bronze serpent](#)).

**Banner** - 21 times in the OT - banner(2), distinguishing mark(1), sail(1), signal(4), standard(12), warning(1).

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

Numbers 21:8 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Make a fiery serpent, and set it on a **standard**; and it shall come about, that everyone who is bitten, when he looks at it, he will live."

Numbers 21:9 ( And Moses made a bronze serpent and set it on the **standard**; and it came about, that if a serpent bit any man, when he looked to the bronze serpent, he lived.

Numbers 26:10 and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up along with Korah, when that company died, when the fire devoured 250 men, so that they became a **warning**.

Psalms 60:4 You have given a **banner** to those who fear You, That it may be displayed because of the truth. Selah.

Isaiah 5:26 He will also lift up a **standard** to the distant nation, And will whistle for it from the ends of the earth; And behold, it will come with speed swiftly.

Isaiah 11:10+ Then in that day The nations will resort to the root of Jesse, Who will stand as a **signal** for the peoples; And His resting place will be glorious.

Isaiah 11:12+ And He will lift up a **standard** for the nations And assemble the banished ones of Israel, And will gather the dispersed of Judah From the four corners of the earth.

Isaiah 13:2+ Lift up a **standard** on the bare hill, Raise your voice to them, Wave the hand that they may enter the doors of the nobles.

Isaiah 18:3 All you inhabitants of the world and dwellers on earth, As soon as a **standard** is raised on the mountains, you will see it, And as soon as the trumpet is blown, you will hear it.

Isaiah 30:17 One thousand will flee at the threat of one man; You will flee at the threat of five, Until you are left as a flag on a mountain top And as a **signal** on a hill.

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; 1 Jn 2:13, 14<sup>±</sup>; 1 Jn 5:4, 5<sup>±</sup>). In this regard it is notable that in **Isaiah 11:10+** the **signal** pole ([nec/nes](#)) stands for (is a metaphor if you will) the Messiah Who was raised (pun intended) to give hope to the Gentiles. Hallelujah! Amen.

Then in that day ([Millennium](#).) The nations will resort to the root of Jesse, Who will stand as a signal for the peoples; And His resting place will be glorious. (Isa 11:10)

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 (these are from the NASB)...

- **fortress** (Ps 18:2, Ps 31:3, Ps 71:3, Ps 91:2, Ps 144:2)
- **hiding place** (Ps 32:7)



- **refuge** (2 Sam 22:3, Ps 46:1, Ps 59:16, Jer 16:19)
- **stronghold** (Ps 9:9)
- **dwelling place** (Ps 90:1)

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.

**Comment** - 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 [see description of his character Nu 14:24] 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; cf. 11:12). So Israel's Messianic king will be lifted up (cf. Jn 3:14; Phil 2:9) that all men might rally around him.

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.

**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."

---

**Illustration** - Queen Elizabeth II of England has three royal residences (Buckingham Palace, Windsor Castle and the Palace of Holyrood) plus two private homes. This could be confusing for those who want to find her except for one important fact: the queen's banner always flies over whichever residence she is currently occupying. If her banner of blue and gold is on the flagpole, the queen is sure to be present. In the same way Moses built an altar and named it Jehovah Nissi so that all would know that the King was in residence. Perhaps you are going through difficult circumstances. Or perhaps you have just come out of a time of trial. Regardless of the circumstances, we need to ask ourselves whether we are "flying the banner" of the LORD so that others know the King is present. Moses built a memorial to remind everyone that God was in residence with His people Israel and that He had not abandoned in the midst of the attacks of the Amalekites. Generation after generation could look up and see this altar, Jehovah Nissi, and recall that even as the Lord was present with Israel in the battle against the Amalekites, He was still present in their midst. In the same way, believers today should raise the Lord's banner, no matter how difficult their circumstances, knowing that He is the same yesterday, today and tomorrow and He will not abandon His presence in their midst, even though circumstances might suggest otherwise. Paul testified to this truth writing to Timothy explaining that...

At my first defense no one supported me, but all deserted me; may it not be counted against them. **But the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me**, in order that through me the proclamation might be fully accomplished, and that all the Gentiles might hear; and I was delivered out of the lion's mouth. (2 Ti 4:16-17+)

**THOUGHT** - Is your testimony like that of Moses and Paul? Is it obvious to others that Jesus is in residence in your life? Make sure that His flag, colored with faith, hope and love, flies high over the castle of your life. It's a privilege to fly that banner but it is a shame not to. If the King is in residence, be sure to fly His flag.

---

**JEHOVAH NISSI – THE LORD OUR BANNER IN EXODUS 17** – How important is it that we know God's Names (~ His character, His attributes)? Solomon writes that "The NAME of the LORD is a strong tower. The righteous runs... into it and is safe (Literally "lifted high" = pictures the trial or affliction as still occurring, but of the one who by grace thru faith makes a conscious choice to "run" into [trust, believe] the strong refuge of His Name, as "safe" in but above the storm. PTL!) (Pr 18:10±) Corollary: If we truly know His character as revealed in His Names, we will be more likely to "run" into His Name. In Ex 17:8 "Amalek came and fought against Israel at Rephidim (Hebrew = Rests!!)." Note that God in His [sovereignty](#) allowed the attack (think about the "attacks" in your life). Prior to this time God had fought ALL the battles, but now He is seeking to teach Israel how to fight the enemy. Sometimes God allows tests/trials in our life that we might learn better how to fight our enemies (the world, the flesh, the devil) "knowing that the testing of our faith produces endurance ("hanging in there" when circumstances are difficult – Not a passive acceptance but strong fortitude [enabled by the Spirit] in the face of opposition or difficulty) (James 1:3-note) Read Exodus 17:8-16 for how God gave Israel victory (note the balance – Man's RESPONSIBILITY [Our effort] = Ex 17:9-10, 13 & God's PROVISION [His power] = Ex 17:11). In Ex 17:15 after the victory Moses gave glory to God by building an altar & worshipping "JEHOVAH NISSI" (The LORD is my Banner). The BANNER (Nissi) is a standard that bears the colors by which a military unit is identified & behind which troops rally. So when Moses said "Jehovah Nissi", he proclaimed this great Name as a memorial saying in essence "I rally behind Jehovah. It is on Him I will fix MY EYES. It is He Whom I will follow."

WHERE ARE YOUR EYES FIXED DEAR CHRIST FOLLOWER?...

Are they fixed on the things above or are they fixed on the things that are on this earth? (Col 3:1-2± Heb 12:2±)

It is notable that the phrase "**MY EYES**" is repeatedly used in the Psalms...

- "MY EYES are continually toward the LORD (my responsibility), for He will pluck my feet out of the net (God's power)." (Ps 25:15)
- "I will set no worthless (Hebrew = belial -2Cor 6:15) thing before MY EYES; I hate the work of those who fall away; It shall not fasten (Hebrew = dabaq = stick like glue! Joined together – of man "cleaving" to his wife in Ge 2:24!) its grip on me." (Ps 101:3)
- "Open MY EYES (We need the Holy Spirit's enablement to grasp spiritual truth in the Holy Word), that I may behold wonderful things from Thy law." (Ps 119:18)
- "Turn away MY EYES from looking at vanity & revive me in Thy ways." (Ps 119:37)

- “MY EYES fail with longing for Thy Word” (Ps 119:82-SN)
- “MY EYES fail with longing for Thy salvation & for Thy righteous Word.” (Ps 119:123)
- “MY EYES anticipate the night watches, that I may meditate on Thy Word.” (Ps 119:148)
- “MY EYES are toward Thee, O GOD, the Lord. In Thee I take refuge (cp Pr 18:10). Do not leave me defenseless.” (Ps 141:8)
- “I Will lift up MY EYES to the mountains. From whence shall my help come? My help comes from the LORD (from Jehovah Nissi), Who made heaven & earth.” (Ps 121:1-2)

#### Related Resources:

- American Church Dictionary [Banners](#)
- Easton's Bible Dictionary [Banner](#)
- Fausset Bible Dictionary [Banner](#)
- Holman Bible Dictionary [Banner](#)
- Hawker's Poor Man's Dictionary [Banner](#)
- Smith Bible Dictionary [Banner](#)
- Wilson's Bible Types [Banner](#)
- Watson's Theological Dictionary [Banner](#)
- International Standard Bible Encyclopedia [Banner](#)
- McClintock and Strong's Bible Encyclopedia [Banners](#)

#### Question: "[What is the meaning of Jehovah-Nissi?](#)"

**Answer:** Jehovah-Nissi (more properly Yahweh-Nissi) means “the Lord is our banner” in Hebrew. The name Jehovah-Nissi appears only once in the Bible, in Exodus 17:15. Moses, after the children of Israel defeated the Amalekites, built an altar and named it Jehovah-Nissi.

The background of the name Jehovah-Nissi involves the Israelites’ wandering in the desert after leaving their bondage in Egypt. Along the way, they were attacked by the Amalekites, a powerful and warlike group of nomads. As the battle commenced, Moses stood on the top of a hill where he could see the armies below him. He held in his hand the “rod of God”—the same rod with which he had struck a rock to bring forth water for the people in the desert (Exodus 17:5–6).

The battle was an unusual one: “As long as Moses held up his hands, the Israelites were winning, but whenever he lowered his hands, the Amalekites were winning” (Exodus 17:11). As Moses’ arms grew weary, they had to be supported by his brother, Aaron, and a man named Hur. At sunset, Israel defeated the Amalekites (verses 12–13). After the battle, Moses built an altar and named it Jehovah-Nissi, “the Lord is my banner.”

The strange way in which the battle was won left no doubt as to who was responsible for the victory. Only as the rod of God was held aloft did the Israelites prevail. The battle was not won by military might or superior battle plans; it was won by the power of God. “The battle is the Lord’s” (1 Samuel 17:47).

The hands and rod of Moses were held up in the same way that soldiers hold up their flags in the time of battle. As these flags bear the insignia of their country, the soldiers are said to fight under that banner. The Israelites fought under the direction of God, Jehovah-Nissi. It was under the Lord’s banner and with His aid they fought, and in His name and strength they conquered.

It is safe to assume that, as Moses held up the rod of God, he was praying for the success of the Israelite troops below him. Moses’ lifting up of the rod can thus be seen as a picture of intercessory prayer. “The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective” (James 5:16). Moses’ weariness, evidenced by the lowering of his hands, illustrates the truth that “the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak” (Mark 14:38). The naming of the altar Jehovah-Nissi is a reminder to believers of every era that we can only be victorious as we honor the name of the Lord and rally to Him as our Banner. (Source: [Gotquestions.org](#))

#### **Kenneth Hemphill - Jehovah Nissi** (The Name of God)

As we continue to follow the wilderness journey of the people of God, we travel to Rephidim. The people of Israel are confronted by the descendants of Amalek. The Amalekites often represent the power of evil in Scripture. Israel is forced to go to war against this more powerful and organized army. Moses, as commander-in-chief, stations himself on top of the hill with the rod of God in his hand. The Bible tells us that when he held the rod aloft, Israel prevailed, but when he let his arm down, Amalek prevailed. With the assistance of Aaron and Hur, Moses was able to keep his hands steady until the sun set and Joshua and his army prevailed.

Moses built an altar at that place and named it Jehovah Nissi, the Lord is my Banner.

We briefly looked at another banner held aloft by Moses. In Numbers 21, we find the children of Israel in a difficult predicament. They are being bitten by venomous snakes. The people cry out to Moses to ask God to remove the serpents from them. God instructs Moses to make a bronze serpent and place it on a standard and to instruct the people that if they look upon the standard after being bitten, they would live. Obviously, there was no healing power in a piece of bronze on a stick. Their rescue came from the Lord, who instructed them to look in faith to Him for their redemption.

Jesus used this story in His interview with Nicodemus in John 3. " `And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; that whoever believes, may in Him have eternal life— (John 3:14-15).

In our minds the serpent has always represented evil. In the Garden of Eden, we find the cursing of the serpent who tempts Eve. We find it somewhat objectionable that Jesus likens His death on the cross to the lifting up of the serpent in the wilderness. But isn't that precisely the point of the cross? Paul tells us that He who knew no sin became sin that we might be the righteousness of God in Him (2 Cor. 5:21).

- Jesus became the ultimate Banner of deliverance and victory.
- You can call upon God as Jehovah Nissi, your Banner of victory, as you enter the realm of spiritual conflict on a daily basis.
- When you come under attack by others, you need not defend yourself, but stand under the Banner of Jehovah Nissi.
- When you find yourself struggling with temptation and the power of evil, stand under Jehovah Nissi.

---

### Courage: Jehovah Nissi

"Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil" (Ps. 23:4). This courage that conquers our fears comes from Jehovah Nissi, "The LORD My Banner."

Fear often comes when we face the unknown, or feel overwhelmed by opposing forces. The small boy, afraid of the dark, wants his mother to go upstairs with him when he goes to bed. A man walking down a dark road at night wants a companion. Many other fears beset us. But when we know Jehovah Nissi, The LORD My Banner, we can walk with courage and the confidence of victory.

**The phrase, Jehovah Nissi, was a battle term. The soldier who became separated from his outfit in conflict needed to be able to find his army's battle staff or flag flying above the conflict. He could rally to the flag and not fight alone.** Hence, Jehovah Nissi, The LORD My Banner.

This title was revealed when Israel went to battle with Amalek. This was Israel's first fight after escaping from Egypt. Throughout the Old Testament, Israel had a continuing war with Amalek. Joshua led the troops into battle at Rephidim, while Moses stood on top of a hill with the rod of God in his hand. As long as Moses held up his hands (in prayer?) Israel prevailed; but "When he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed" (Exod. 17:11). When Moses' hands became tired, Aaron and Hur held his hands up so he could continue to intercede. As a result, Joshua won the day. "And Moses built an altar, and called the name of it Jehovah-nissi" (v. 15). This is another name given to God by man. The LORD My Banner means, "the LORD that prevaieth." Even though men fought the battle, God gave the victory.

Amalek serves as a symbol for the flesh in the Old Testament. Even today, Christians battle the flesh, struggling with their old nature. It is God who gives us the victory in this battle, too—a victory that is already guaranteed because of the death of Jesus Christ on the cross. Yet the Bible teaches that the Christian must wrestle, run and fight. The Christian can serve the Lord with complete confidence about the outcome of the battle, because Jehovah Nissi, The LORD My Banner, will prevail. (My Father's Names - Elmer Towns)

---

### Jehovah-Nissi - Robert Neighbour

"And Moses built an altar, and called the name of it Jehovah-nissi; (the Lord my banner)" (Exod. 17:15).

Exodus 17:8-15. Amalek was fighting with Israel in Rephidim. Moses said unto Joshua, "Choose us out men, and go out, fight with Amalek; to morrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in my hand." Joshua fulfilled Moses' orders and while he fought, Moses held up his hand and Israel prevailed.

"But Moses' hands were heavy; and they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat thereon; and Aaron and Hur stayed up his hand's, the one on the one side, and the other on the other side, and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun."

Thus it was that Joshua overcame Amalek. Moses, however, took no credit to himself, for the wonderful victory. **He knew that his uplifted hands, signified only "Jehovah-nissi," the Lord our banner.**

We, too, have a conflict. We are wrestling against principalities and powers, against the world rulers of this darkness, and against

hosts of wicked spirits in the air. Facing such an array as this, who dares to go forth to the battle in his own strength? Were it not for the fact that the Lord is with us, we would soon be defeated.

When the armies of England wavered in battle, some one cried: "Bulcher is coming with reinforcements." Immediately the tide of battle turned, under the inspiration of Bulcher's aid, and the armies of England were victorious. And what inspiration should we have, as we hear our Princely Leader say: "All authority is given unto Me in Heaven and on earth. Go, \* \* **and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the age.**"

Who is there but is thrilled when "Old Glory" is swung to the breeze. What wonderful achievements have been wrought, what victories obtained under the waving stars and stripes. But Christians have another banner — "Jehovah-nissi." Let us rally to our standard. Never let us see His glory dragging in the dust.

"Up rose old Barbara Fritchie, then,  
Bowed with her threescore years and ten,  
Bravest of all in Frederic Town,  
She took up the flag that the men hauled down.  
In her little window the staff she set,  
To show that one heart was loyal yet.  
Up the street came the soldiers' tread,  
Stonewall Jackson riding ahead,  
Under his slouched hat, left and right,  
He looked — The old flag met his sight.  
Halt! The nut-brown ranks stood fast.  
Fire! Out broke the rifle blast.  
It broke the window with many a gash,  
It severed the banner, in seam and sash,  
But quick as it fell from its broken staff  
Dame Barbara snatched the silken scarf;  
She leaned far out of the window sill,  
And shook it forth with a royal will.  
'Shoot, if you will, my old grey head  
But spare my country's flag,' she said."

No one need marvel that Stonewall Jackson is reputed to have said:

"Who touches a hair of that old, grey head,  
Dies like a dog — March on, he said."

If Barbara Fritchie held forth the flag she loved, shall any of us, who name the name of Jesus Christ, fail to wave the Blood-stained banner of Calvary's Cross?

## BRONZE SERPENT ANOTHER "DIVINE BANNER"

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. We encounter another "divine banner" so to speak that brought "victory" (so to speak) over death. In Numbers 21 the Israelites were again complaining and God answered their complaints by sending fiery serpents which led to another "divine banner"...

The people spoke against God and Moses, "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and we loathe this miserable food." 6 The LORD sent fiery serpents among the people and they bit the people, so that many people of Israel died. 7 So the people came to Moses and said, "We have sinned (FOR ONCE THEY WERE ABSOLUTELY HONEST!), because we have spoken against the LORD and you; intercede with the LORD, that He may remove the serpents from us." And Moses interceded for the people 8 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Make a fiery serpent, and set it on a **standard** ([nec/nes](#)); and it shall come about, that everyone who is bitten, when he looks at it, he will live." 9 And Moses made a bronze serpent and set it on the standard ([nec/nes](#)); and it came about, that if a serpent

bit any man, when he looked to the bronze serpent, he lived. Nu 21:8-9

This banner or pole in Numbers 21 was a foreshadowing of Jesus being lifted up on the pole of the Cross to provide healing. All who had suffered the deadly "bite of the serpent" (Genesis 3:1-24+, Romans 5:12+) and who looked to Him would be saved. Jesus declared

As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; so that whoever believes will in Him have eternal life. "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. (Jn 3:14-16)

So just as the Israelites who looked to the lifted up bronze serpent did not die, all who look at Jesus will live eternally. The Lord was lifted up on the "pole" to and made sin for all who would believe on him (2 Cor 5:21+). In Isaiah 45:22 the Lord declares

**Look** unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else.

**Comment** - C H Spurgeon was saved by looking to Jesus based on this verse in Isaiah and he was forever healed of the deadly bite of the old Serpent. ([Spurgeon's Testimony](#))

Tragically what was meant to be a symbol to point to Jesus' substitutionary 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 demolished it...

"He (HEZEKIAH) 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**." (2 Kings 18:4)

#### Related Resources:

- American Tract Society [Nehushtan](#)
- Easton's Bible Dictionary [Nehushtan](#)
- Fausset Bible Dictionary [Nehushtan](#)
- Holman Bible Dictionary [Nehushtan](#)
- Hitchcock Bible Names [Nehushtan](#)
- Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible [Nehushtan](#)
- International Standard Bible Encyclopedia [Nehushtan](#)
- McClintock and Strong's Bible Encyclopedia [Nehushtan](#)
- The Nuttall Encyclopedia [Nehushtan](#)
- The Jewish Encyclopedia [Nehushtan](#)

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

Amplified: And he said, Because [theirs] is a hand against the throne of the Lord, the Lord will have war with Amalek from generation to generation. ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

NET Exodus 17:16 for he said, "For a hand was lifted up to the throne of the LORD— that the LORD will have war with Amalek from generation to generation."

NLT Exodus 17:16 He said, "They have raised their fist against the LORD's throne, so now the LORD will be at war with Amalek generation after generation."

KJV Exodus 17:16 For he said, Because the LORD hath sworn that the LORD will have war with Amalek from generation to generation.

ESV Exodus 17:16 saying, "A hand upon the throne of the LORD! The LORD will have war with Amalek from generation to generation."

NIV Exodus 17:16 He said, "For hands were lifted up to the throne of the LORD. The LORD will be at war against the Amalekites from generation to generation."

- **The Lord has sworn** Isa 66:1 Ac 7:49
- **will have war:** Ps 21:8-11

- Exodus 17 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## JEHOVAH'S OATH CONTINUAL WAR WITH AMALEK

**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).

**Guzik** has a good summary of the generations of the Amalekites -

Balaam prophesied of their ruin (Numbers 24:20)

Hundreds of years later, Saul fought against them (1 Samuel 14:48)

God then commanded Saul to continue the fight against Amalek, to bring complete judgment upon them for their ancient sin against Israel (1 Samuel 15:1-7)

In partial obedience to God, Saul fought against the Amalekites and routed them, but kept their king alive (and presumably others) while also enriching himself in the battle (1 Samuel 15:7-9)

The failure to obey God in regard to Amalek was the primary act of disobedience that cost Saul the throne (1 Samuel 15:2-9 and 1 Samuel 28:18)

The Amalekites existed after this, so we know Saul did not complete the work God gave to him (1 Samuel 27:8, 30:17; 2 Samuel 8:12)

There are some indications that this work was completed in the late days of the divided monarchy under Hezekiah (1 Chronicles 4:41-43), but it is possible that some descendants of the Amalekites remained (such as Haman in Esther 3:1)

**David Thompson** on the phrase **the LORD will have war against Amalek** - Isn't it interesting that verse 16 says, "the LORD will have war." God's people need to understand this about God; He is a warrior and He expects His people to be good soldiers in the war He wants fought (cf 2 Ti 2:3-4+, 1 Ti 6:12+, 2 Ti 4:7+). ([Sermon](#))

### Related Resources:

- Exposition of 2 Timothy 2:3-4
- Soldier Illustrations
- 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

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."

**J Vernon McGee** - There are three important things to remember. First, God is going to get rid of Amalek. In other words, God is going to get rid of the old nature. Secondly, the Lord will never compromise with the old nature. He will have war with Amalek from generation to generation. The third important item is that this constant conflict will go on as long as we live in this life. The flesh and the spirit will always war against each other. Only the Holy Spirit of God can give us victory. We need to recognize this fact.

Reader! while you and I pause over the relation of Israel's unaccountable conduct, and from the part we bear in this wonderful history, feeling the same sources of unbelief, disobedience and murmuring, in ourselves, as we behold in them, which are the sad consequences of a fallen nature; may we seek grace to avoid their sin, that we may not come under their reproaches. But as we have authority to conclude that all these things happened unto them for our example, may a gracious GOD afford us these improvements from them, lest while we think we stand we are found to fall. But above all other improvements from the perusal of this chapter, oh! let me leave everything to contemplate the view it gives me of the LORD JESUS CHRIST. In the smitten rock, may my soul lose sight of everything but JESUS. May my eye gaze with wonder and delight on what I there discover, until the ever-flowing, over-flowing stream fills my ravished heart. Dearest and ever-blessed JESUS! do thou both supply me now, and follow me through the whole of this wilderness state, as thou didst the church of old; making glad the city of our GOD in all ages. May I behold thee as the stone smitten by the rod of Moses, answering all the demands of GOD'S righteous laws for me, and flowing both in atoning and regenerating supplies for all the wants of my soul. And oh! do thou, who alone canst smite the rocky heart of sinners, and convert the flinty stone into a fountain of waters, subdue all the stubbornness of my nature. Conquer and subdue in me and for me all the Amalekites of my salvation. Work in me both to will and to do of thy good pleasure, until grace comes to be consummated in glory, and my poor faculties are all brought into a state suited to the everlasting employment, of singing praises to GOD and the LAMB.

## AMALEK EXODUS 17

### ■ Arthur W Pink

One thing that impresses the writer more and more in his studies in and meditations upon the contents of this book of Exodus is the wonderful variety and the comprehensive range of truth covered by its typical teachings. Not only do its leading events and prominent characters foreshadow that which is spiritual and Divine, but even the smallest details have a profound significance. Moses is a type of Christ, Pharaoh of Satan, Egypt of the world. Israel groaning in bondage pictures the sinner in his native misery. Israel delivered from their cruel task-masters speaks of our redemption. Their journey across the wilderness points to the path of faith and trial which we are called on to walk. And now we are to see that the history of Israel also adumbrated the conflict between the two natures in the believer.

Our previous studies have already shown us that the experiences of Israel in the wilderness were a series of trials, real testing of faith. Now we are to see another aspect of the Christian's life strikingly set forth: Israel were called upon to do some fighting. It is very striking indeed to note the occasion of this, the stage at which it occurred in Israel's history. Not only is there a wondrous variety and comprehensiveness about the typical teachings of this second book of scripture, but the order in which they are given equally displays the Divine hand of their Author.

In our last article we contemplated the smiting of the rock, from which flowed the stream of water and of which all the people drank. This, as we saw, typified the smiting of our blessed Savior by the hand of Divine justice, and the consequent gift of the Holy Spirit to those who are His. But after the Holy Spirit comes to take up His abode within the believer, after a new and holy nature of His creating has been implanted, a strange conflict is experienced, something hitherto unknown. As we read in Gal. 5:17, "The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other." It is this which the Scripture to be before us so accurately depicts.

The typical scene which we are about to study is of great practical importance. Ignorance of what it sets forth, the truth which it illustrates, has resulted in great loss and has been responsible for untold distress in many souls. How many a one has thought, and how many have been taught, that when a sinner receives Christ as his Savior, that God will change his heart, and that henceforth he will be complete victor over sin. But "a change of heart" is nowhere spoken of in Scripture. God never changes anything. The old is set aside or destroyed, and something altogether new is created or introduced by Him. It is thus with the Christian. The Christian is one who has been "born again," and the new birth is neither the removal of anything from a man, nor the changing of anything within; but the impartation of something new to him. The new birth is the reception of a new nature: "that which is born of the Spirit, is Spirit" (John 3:6).

At the new birth a spiritual, Divine nature is communicated to us, This new nature is created by the Holy Spirit; the "seed" (1 John 3:9) used is the Word of God. (1 Pet. 1:23). This explains John 3:5; "Born of water and of the Spirit." The "water" is the emblem of the pure and refreshing Word of God (cf. Eph. 5:26). This is what is in view, typically, in the first half of Ex. 17. But when the new nature is communicated by God to the one born again, the old sinful nature remains, and remains unchanged till death or the coming of Christ, when it will be destroyed, for then "this corruptible shall put on incorruption" (1 Cor. 15:53). In the Christian, then, in every Christian, there are two natures: one sinful, the other sinless; one born of the flesh, the other born of God. These two



natures differ from each other in origin, in character, in disposition and in the activities they produce. They have nothing in common. They are opposed to each other. This is what is in view, typically in the second half of Ex. 17.

The two natures in the Christian are illustrated in the life of Abraham. He had two sons: Ishmael and Isaac. The former represents that which is "born of the flesh;" the latter, that which is "born of the Spirit." Ishmael was born according to the common order of nature. Isaac was not. Isaac was born as the result of a miracle. God supernaturally quickened both Abraham and Sarah. when the one had passed the age of begetting and the other was too old to bear children. Ishmael, born first, was of "the bond-woman"; Isaac of the "freewoman" (Gal. 4:22). But after Isaac entered the household of Abraham, there was a conflict: "And Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian which she had born unto Abraham, mocking." (Gen. 21:9). That what we have just heard said about the two sons of Abraham is no fanciful or strained interpretation of ours, will be seen by a reference to Gal. 4:29, where the Spirit (if God has told us, "But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit even so it is now.")

The two natures in the Christian are also illustrated in the life of Isaac's son, Jacob. Jacob had two names: one which he received from his earthly parents and one which he received from God. The Lord called him "Israel" (Gen. 32:28). From that point onwards the history of Jacob—Israel presents a series of strange paradoxes. His life exhibited a dual personality. At one moment we see him trusting God with implicit confidence, at another we behold him giving way to an evil heart of unbelief. If the student will read carefully through chapters 33 to 49 of Genesis he will notice how that sometimes the Holy Spirit refers to the patriarch as "Jacob," at other times as "Israel." When "Jacob" is referred to it is the activities of the old nature which are in view, when "Israel" is mentioned it is the fruits of the new nature which are evidenced. For example: when Joseph's brethren returned to their father from Egypt and told him that his favorite son was yet alive and was now governor over all the land of Egypt, we are told, "And Jacob's heart fainted for he believed them not" (45:26). But "They told him all the words of Joseph, which he had said unto them; and when he saw the wagons which Joseph had sent to carry him, the spirit of Jacob their father revived: And Israel said, it is enough; Joseph my son is yet alive" (45:28)! It is blessed to note the closing words concerning him: "When Jacob had made an end of commanding his sons, he gathered up his feet into the bed. and yielded up the spirit...and the physicians embalmed Israel" (49:33; 50:2)! "Jacob" died; "Israel" was embalmed. At death only the new nature will be preserved!

But that which we particularly emphasize here is, that during the Christian's life on earth there is a conflict between the two natures. Just as Ishmael "persecuted" Isaac, and just as the Jacob-nature frequently set aside the Isaac-nature, so it is in the Christian: "the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other; so that ye cannot do the things that ye would." (Gal. 5:17). What, then, is the remedy? Is there no way by which the flesh may be subdued? Has God made no provision for the believer to walk in the spirit so that he may not fulfill the lusts of the flesh? Certainly He has; and absence of victory is due entirely to our failure to use the means of grace which God has put in our hands. What these are, and how the victory should be gained are clearly set forth in our type.

"Then came Amalek, and fought with Israel in Rephidim" (17:8). In the light of Gen. 21:25; 25:19, 20; Ex. 2:17; Num. 20:19; Judges 5:11, where we learn that the possession of water (wells, etc.) was frequently a bone of contention among the ancients, it is evident that the spread of the news that a river of water war, now gushing from the rock in Rephidim, caused the Amalekites to attempt to gain possession. To do this meant they must first disposes, Israel; hence their attack.

The first thing to note here is the identity of Israel's enemy. It was Amalek. "Amalek" signifies "Warlike," apt name for that whose lusts ever war against the soul" (1 Peter 2:11). Amalek was the grandson of Esau (Gen. 36:12): 'Who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright, and when he would have inherited the blessing was rejected, is thus surely a representative of the 'old man'"(F.W.G.). Very striking in this connection is the prophetic word of Balsam: "And when he looked for Amalek, he took up his parable, and said, Amalek was the first of the nations that warred against Israel : but his latter end shall be that he perish forever" (Num. 24:20). The character of Amalek comes out plainly in the words of Moses concerning him at a later date—"He feared not God" (Deut. 25:17, 18) such is "the flesh."

The second thing to be noted is the time when Amalek made his assault upon Israel: "then came Amalek and fought with Israel." The Holy Spirit has called our attention to the time when this occurred. It was when Moses smote the rock and the waters were given. Then. for the first time, Israel was called upon to do some fighting—contrast 13:17. They had done no fighting in the house of bondage, nor had the Lord called upon them to fight the Egyptians at the Red Sea. But now that that which typified the Holy Spirit had been given, their warfare commenced—, yea, it was that which typified the Holy Spirit that caused the Amalekites to attack Israel! Wonderfully accurate is the type.

It is not until the Christian has been made partaker of the Divine nature (2 Peter 1:4) that the inward conflict begins. Previous to the new birth, he was dead in trespasses and sins; and therefore quite insensible to the claims of God's holiness. Until the Holy Spirit begins to shed abroad His light upon our wicked hearts, we do not realize the depths and power of the evil within us. Often times the believer is astounded by the discovery of the tendencies and desires within him, which he never knew before were there. The religious professor knows nothing of the conflict between the two natures nor of the abiding .ense of inward corruption which this

experience conveys. The unregenerate man is entirely under the dominion of the flesh, he serves its lusts, he does its will. The “flesh” does not fight its subjects; it rules over them. But as soon as we receive the new nature the conflict begins.

It is striking to note that it was not Israel who attacked Amalek, but Amalek that attacked Israel. The new nature in the believer delights to feed upon the Word, to commune with God, and be engaged with spiritual things. But the flesh will not let him live in peace. The Devil delights to rob the believer of his joy, and works upon the flesh to accomplish his fendish designs. The antitype is in perfect accord. Note how that in Gal. 5:17 it is first said that “The flesh lusteth against the spirit,” and not vice versa.

Next, let us note carefully the record of how Israel engaged Amalek in fight: “And Moses said unto Joshua, Choose us out men, and go out, fight with Amalek; tomorrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in mine hand. So Joshua did as Moses had said to him, and fought with Amalek; and Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill. And it came to pass, when Moses held up his hand that Israel prevailed, and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed, But Moses hands were heavy: and they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat thereon; and Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands, the one on one side and the other on the other side, and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun. And Joshua discomfited Amalek and his people with the edge of his sword” (vv. 9–13).

There is considerable difference of opinion among the commentators concerning the typical application of the above scripture. Some regard Moses at the top of the hill with hands uplifted toward heaven as the figure of Christ Interceding for us on High. But that cannot be. And this for two reasons: Moses was accompanied by Aaron and Hur; furthermore, his hands grew heavy. It is grossly dishonoring to the perfect Word of God to say that the type is imperfect at this point—far better to confess our Ignorance than to cast such reflections upon the Scriptures. Others regard Joshua as the type of Christ in this incident, but that cannot be, because Israel did not gain a complete victory over Amalek. Rather is it evident that the respective actions of Moses and Joshua point out the provisions which God has made for us to combat the flesh.

The first thing to note here is that Israel’s success against Amalek was determined by the uplifted hand of Moses: “And it came to pass, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed; and when he let down his hand Amalek prevailed” (v. 11). The significance of Moses’ attitude is clearly defined in several scriptures. The uplifted hand was emblematic of prayer, the supplicating of God: “Hear the voice of my supplications, when I cry unto Thee, when I lift up my hands toward Thy holy oracle” (Ps. 28:2); “I will therefore that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting” (1 Tim. 2:8).

Second, observe that “Moses’ hands grew heavy.” Here is where the real and beautiful accuracy of our type is to be seen. How soon we grow weary of supplicating God! “Men ought always in pray and not to faint” (Luke 18:1), said our Lord. But how sadly we fall. How quickly our hearts get “heavy” And as soon as we lose the spirit of dependency upon God the flesh prevails.

Third, but Moses was not left to himself. Blessed it is to mark this. Aaron and Hur were with him, and “Stayed up his hands, the one on one side and the other on the other side.” Here again we discover the beautiful accuracy of our type. Surely there is no difficulty in interpreting this detail. Aaron was the head of Israel’s priesthood, and so speaks plainly of our great High Priest. “Hur” means “light”—the emblem of Divine holiness, and so points to the Holy Spirit of God. Thus God in His grace has fully provided for us. Supported on either side, both the earthly and the heavenly. “Likewise the Spirit also, helpeth our infirmities. For we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit Himself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered” (Rom. 8:26); this is on the earthly side. “And another angel (Christ as “the Messenger of the Covenant”) came and stood at the altar having a golden censer; and there was given unto Him much incense, that He would offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne” (Rev. 8:3): this is on the heavenly side Christ receiving our supplications and offering them to, God, as accompanied by the sweet fragrance of His own perfections.

Fourth, the typical picture is completed for us by what is said in v. 13: “And Joshua discomfited Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword.” The “sword” here points to the Holy Scriptures (see Heb. 4:12). It is not by prayer alone that we can fight the flesh. The Word, too, is needed. Said the Psalmist, “Thy Word have I hid in mine heart that I might not sin against Thee” (Ps. 119:11).

Some may object to what we have just said above about the Christian fighting the flesh. We are not unmindful of Rom. 6:11 and 2 Tim. 2:22 and much that has been written thereon. But there are scriptures which present other phases of our responsibility. There is a fight to be fought (see 1 Tim. 6:12; 2 Tim. 4:7 etc.). And this fight has to do with the flesh. Said the Apostle. “So fight I, not as one that beateth the air; but I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection” (1 Cor. 9:26; 27).

Another thing which is important to note here is this fact that Amalek was not destroyed or completely vanquished on this occasion. We only read that “Joshua discomfited Amalek.” Here too, the type is in perfect accord with the antitype. There is no way of destroying or eradicating the evil nature within us. Though discomfited it still survives. Why, it may be asked, does God permit the evil nature to remain in us? Many answers may be given, among them these. That we may obtain a deeper and personal realization of the awful havoc which sin has wrought in man, the total depravity of our beings, and thereby appreciate the more the marvelous grace which has saved such Hell-deserving wretches. That we may be humbled before God and made more dependent upon Him.

That we may appropriate to ourselves His all-sufficient grace and learn that His strength is made perfect in our weakness. That we may appreciate the more His keeping power, for left to ourselves, with such a stink of iniquity within, we should surely perish.

A very helpful word and one which we do well to take to heart, is found in Deut. 25:17, 18: "Remember what Amalek did unto thee by the way, when ye were come forth out of Egypt: How he met thee by the way and smote the hindmost of thee, even all that were feeble behind thee, when thou wast faint and weary; and he feared. not God." How this should stir us up to watchfulness! It was the "hindmost"—those farthest away from their leader—that were smitten. The flesh cannot smite us while we are walking in close communion with God! And note that it was when Israel were "faint and weary" that Amalek came down upon them. This too is a warning word. What is the remedy against faintness? This: "He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might He increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fail; But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk, and not faint" (Isa. 40:30, 31).

Very blessed are the closing words of Ex. 17: "And the Lord said unto Moses, Write this for a memorial in a book, and rehearse it in the ears of Joshua; for I will utterly put out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven. And Moses built an altar, and called the name of it Jehovah-Nissi; For he said, Because the Lord hath sworn that the Lord will have war with Amalek from generation to generation" (vv. 14–16). God here promised that in the end He would utterly annihilate Amalek. In the confident assurance of faith Moses anticipated God's final victory by erecting an altar and calling it "The Lord, our Banner." How blessed to know that at the end the Savior shall "change our vile body, that it may be fashioned live unto His glorious body according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself." (Phil. 3:21).

## AMALEKITES A PICTURE OF OUR FLESH

Although one must use considerable caution in interpreting [Types](#) (See related discussion - Typology ; see also Approach to Interpretation of God's Word for caveats) (cf Paul's use of [tupos](#) in 1 Corinthians 10:6, 10:11) in the OT, there is a consensus among most conservative expositors that the [Amalekites](#) can be considered as 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 [world](#), (2) the [flesh](#) and (3) the [devil](#).

**Dr John MacArthur** writes that "The **Amalekites** are a perfect illustration of the **sin** that remains in the believer's life." (for [full discussion see below](#)).

And so as we study Exodus 17 which records literal warfare between Israel and the Amalekites, let us keep in mind that Paul taught in 1 Corinthians 10

Now these things (see 1Co 10:1-10) happened as **examples** ([tupos](#) = "of the types given by God as an indication of the future, in the form of persons or things" = BDAG) for us, so that we would not crave evil things as they also craved...(11) Now these things happened to them (Israel) as an **example** (typikos = typologically, typically, as an example or warning) and they were written for our **instruction** ([nouthesia](#) = teaching, admonition, warning, ethical and corrective instruction in regard to belief or behavior) 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** (present imperative = command to continually beware, calls for dependence on [the Holy Spirit to obey](#)) lest (we) fall. (1Cor 10:12)

**Rod Mattoon** adds that "This conflict between **Israel and Amalek** is a **or picture of the inward battle that Christians face every day**. It is the battle between our flesh and the Spirit of God. Amalek means "a people that exhausts or consumes." The Amalekites are a picture of the sinful desires of our flesh that consume, destroy, and exhaust us like a person trying to free themselves from the bondage of a rope."....Beloved, our flesh will always oppose us, but need not oppress us. It will ever conflict, but need not conquer. It will constantly harass and hassle, but need not hinder or harness us because of the power of the Holy Spirit Who indwells every believer. (AMEN!) Through the Holy Spirit we can get victory over our flesh."

## THE FLESH

**1) The "FLESH"** (sarx ) is the "**Sin principle**" that every human born has "inherited" from Adam (Ro 5:12+). In medical terms every

human born has inherited the deadly "Sin virus" from Adam and we pass on this "Sin virus" to all our offspring. In other words, "**Sin**" (singular and in the original Greek text in Romans 6-8 is usually modified with the definite article "the" = **the Sin**) is personified as a harsh King or Slave master that exercises the rule over our hearts, tempting us to obey its lusts (strong desires) to commit sins of thought, word and deed (Ro 6:1-3+). That describes the dreadful condition of every unbeliever - slaves to **Sin**. And so they commit personal **sins** (plural) in obedience to the commands **Sin** which relentlessly attacks our thoughts again and again (like the Amalekites did the nation of Israel), continually tempting us to commit sins.

Once a person believes in Jesus Christ, his or her relation to the old harsh King **Sin** changes. This spiritual "emancipation" by Christ is summarized by Paul in Romans 6, a chapter that calls for our repeated re-reading and studying. Paul writes "that our old self (our old sinful selves) was **crucified with Him** (Christ), in order that our body of sin might be done away with (rendered inoperative, but still present in our body), so that we would no longer be slaves to sin for he who has died is freed from sin." (Ro 6:6, 7+) So believers are liberated from the dominion of King **Sin** and the **Flesh** or "**Sin principle**" has been rendered inoperative when we were crucified with Christ.

Believers are now under grace and are indwelt by and empowered by the Spirit and thus possess the supernatural ability to say "**No**" to the "lusts (epithumia) of the flesh". Now here is where the trouble comes! The power of Sin, the power of the Flesh, has been rendered inoperative, but the presence of Sin (and the Flesh) has not been eradicated. Therefore Sin or the **Flesh** remains in in latent (so to speak) from in our body, continually "lurking," continually looking for an opportunity to launch an "Amalekite-like" attack on our heart and mind. And yet now believers have the power to fight the flesh, but this fight is a "joint effort." We must make a conscious choice to fight the strong desires/temptations that come at us from the Sin/Flesh, but we can ONLY do this successfully by continual dependence on the Holy Spirit. Paul says it this way in Romans 8:13 "by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live." Did you observe our part? "You are putting to death the deeds." And what was God's part? "By the Spirit." We are 100% responsible to kill the sinful deeds which Sin/Flesh tempts us to commit, but we are 100% dependent on the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit to successfully kill the sinful deeds. Does that make sense? For more explanation of this vital principle which I fear many believers have never been taught or do not fully understand see "[Paradoxical Principle of 100% Dependent and 100% Responsible](#)" (100/100).

If this is new information, I would suggest going back through the Romans passages, even reading them in different versions and asking the Spirit to lead you into all truth, remembering that the first article in the Christian's spiritual armor is described in Ephesians 6:14, Paul commanding us to "**Stand firm** ([aorist imperative](#) a command calling for us to rely on [the Holy Spirit to obey](#)) therefore, HAVING GIRDED YOUR LOINS WITH **TRUTH**." So it is critically important for you to have firm grasp of this incredible truth of what happened to you the moment you believed in Christ and were at that time "vicariously" crucified with Him.

The practical import of this truth is that believers have been now delivered from the power of **Sin**

Even so **consider** ([logizomai](#) in [present imperative](#) - Daily "add up" the truths in Ro 6:1-10 which tell us what happened when we were crucified with Christ. Continually obey - only possible as we are supernaturally enabled by the Spirit) yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus. (Ro 6:11±)

Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts, 13 and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. 14 For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace. (Ro 6:12-14+).

In Romans 8 Paul gives what [Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones](#) referred to as the most important passage in the Bible in regard to our daily growth in Christ-likeness...

for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if BY THE SPIRIT (GOD'S PART = HIS ENABLING POWER) you (YOUR PART = DAILY CHOICE - GOD WON'T FORCE YOU! SEE [100/100](#)) are PUTTING TO DEATH (present tense, [active voice](#) = VOLITIONAL CHOICE, CHOICE OF YOUR WILL - SEE Php 2:13NLT BELOW) the deeds of the body, you will live. 14 For all who are being led by the Spirit of God (HOW? BY PUTTING TO DEATH THE DEEDS OF THE BODY BY HIS POWER), these are sons of God. (Romans 8:13-14±)

**Comment** - [Listen to Dr Lloyd-Jones' sermons](#) on Romans 8:13 found on this page (there is also one on the previous page - see link to go to previous page at the bottom)

**Paul** emphasizes this **on going** daily war with our "Amalekite-like" flesh in Galatians 5:17 (notes) teaching us that the

**Flesh** sets (present tense = continuously) its desire ([epithumeo](#) - strong desire) against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh, for these are (present tense = continuously) in opposition ([antikeimai](#) - literally lined up face to face against!) to one another (Why? What is the result?) **so that** you may not do the things that you please

(or that you "continuously desire" = present tense). (Ga 5:17+)

The key verses in all the Bible for daily victory in this continual battle with our "Amalekite" flesh are the following passages (**Beloved I would strong memorizing the passage above and those below so that you might be enabled by the Spirit to meditate on them frequently/daily!**)

But I say, **walk** ([present imperative](#) - Continually obey - only possible as we are filled) by the Spirit, and you will not (ABSOLUTE NEGATION) carry out the desire of the flesh. (Galatians 5:16-See commentary)

And to continually obey Paul's command we need to be continually empowered/enabled by the Spirit (yes, it is a bit mysterious that we cannot walk by the Spirit unless we are filled with the Spirit)

And **do not get drunk** ([present imperative with a negative](#)) with wine, for that is dissipation, but **be filled** ([present imperative](#) - Continually yield that you may be controlled) with the Spirit, (Eph 5:18+):

- [See discussion of the Need for the Holy Spirit to obey NT commands](#) (or "How to Keep All 1642 Commandments in the New Testament!")
- [Filled with His Spirit/Richly Indwelt with His Word](#) - Chart Comparing Ephesians 5:18ff and Col 3:16+ "Let the word of Christ richly dwell ([present imperative](#) - Continually) within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God."

The preceding passages about being daily filled and daily walking in the power of the Spirit are vital elements in your [progressive sanctification](#) as the Spirit continually transforms you from the inside out!

But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord (DAILY BEHOLDING THE WORD IS THE BEST WAY TO SEE HIS GLORY), are being transformed ([metamorphoo](#) - LIKE A SPIRITUAL CATERPILLAR TO A BEAUTIFUL CHRIST-LIKE "BUTTERFLY" - present tense = IT IS A PROCESS, [passive voice](#) = WE MUST YIELD TO HIM) into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit. (2 Cor 3:18+)

You may be saying, that all sounds great, but I don't have the desire to work out my salvation. Paul has the antidote for apathy...

So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, **work out** ([present imperative](#) - A COMMAND TO DAILY PURSUE [progressive sanctification](#)) your salvation with fear and trembling; (Phil 2:12+)

**FOR** (TERM OF EXPLANATION - EXPLAINS HOW TO WORK OUT YOUR SALVATION) God is working (present tense = CONTINUALLY) in you (THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST IN YOUR), (CONTINUALLY) giving you the DESIRE (I CALL IT THE "WANT TO" BECAUSE MY OLD FLESH DOES NOT "WANT TO!") and the POWER to do what pleases Him (PLEASING OUR FATHER - OUR ULTIMATE GOAL EACH DAY!). (Phil 2:13NLT+)

Peter reminds us why we must be continually on guard, continually vigilant, continually filled with the Holy Spirit

**Aliens** (*parepidemois*) and **strangers** (*parepidemos*) on earth we must continually (present tense) **abstain** (*apechomal* - hold ourselves away from these lusts = put some separation between us and lusts which calls for continual reliance on [the Holy Spirit to carry this out](#)) from fleshly lusts (*epithumia*), which (continually = present tense) wage war (*strateuomai* English "strategy" = trick in war for deceiving and outwitting the enemy! - [memorize](#) so you can [meditate on this verse](#) with these added insights) against the soul. (1 Peter 2:11+)

One should be able to see the parallel between these NT truths and Exodus 17:16 which teaches that "the LORD (Jehovah) 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 who are in covenant with Him (Jn 1:12+).

Ultimately when you are **filled with** and **walking by the Spirit**, you are **walking the same way Jesus walked** when He walked on earth, giving us the perfect example of how to live this Christian life. That is why Paul commanded the all to often "fleshly" believers in the church at Corinth to "**Be** ([present imperative](#) - Continually) imitators of me, (HERE IS THE KEY PHRASE) **just as I also am of Christ.**" (1 Corinthians 11:1+) Paul had learned to walk like Jesus walked! John gave a similar exhortation that "the one who says he abides (present tense) in Him ([IN CHRIST](#)) ought himself to walk (present tense) **in the same manner as He (JESUS) walked.** (1 John 2:6+) Peter summed up Jesus' entire 3 year ministry in a way that makes it clear Jesus **continually depended on and was enabled by the Spirit** explaining that "you yourselves know the thing which took place throughout all Judea, starting from Galilee, after the baptism which John proclaimed. (SPIRIT COMING ON HIM INAUGURATED HIS MINISTRY - Lk 3:22+) You know of Jesus of Nazareth, how God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power (cf EVENT IMMEDIATELY AFTER HIS BAPTISM = Lk 4:1+,

Lk 4:14+, Lk 4:18+, etc), and how He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him. (Acts 10:37-38+)

- [The Holy Spirit-Walking Like Jesus Walked!](#)

#### Related Resources:

- [Make Disciples 1](#)
- [Make Disciples 2 - Begins study of Five Most Important Passages for Believers](#)
- [Make Disciples 3 - Chart comparing Filled with the Spirit and the Word](#)
- [Make Disciples 4](#)
- [Make Disciples 5](#)
- [Make Disciples 6](#)
- [Make Disciples 7](#)
- [Make Disciples 8](#)

**Dr John MacArthur** writes that "The **Amalekites** are a perfect illustration of the sin that remains in the believer's life. That sin—already utterly defeated at the cross—must be dealt with ruthlessly and hacked to pieces, or it will revive and continue to plunder and pillage his heart and sap his spiritual strength. He cannot be merciful with his Agag, or indwelling sin will turn and try to devour him. In fact, the sin remaining in Christians often becomes more fiercely determined after the gospel initially overthrows it. Scripture commands believers to deal with their sin by putting it to death: "Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry: for which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience." (Col 3:5–6KJV). They cannot obey partially or half-heartedly as they seek to eliminate sin from their lives. They cannot stop while the task remains incomplete. Sins, like Amalekites, have a way of escaping the slaughter, breeding, reviving, regrouping, and launching new and unexpected assaults on their victims' most vulnerable areas. **Strike Sin at Its Head.** **John Owen** wrote, "*He that is appointed to kill an enemy, if he leave striking before the other ceases living, doth but half his work.*" Christians must be always at the task of mortifying sin. They may slaughter a whole tribe of Amalekites, but if they deliberately permit one Agag to escape, God will not be pleased with their efforts. The **flesh** is very subtle and deceptive. A particular sin may leave the believer alone for awhile to make him think he is rid of it. But it can come back with a hellish fury if he is not on guard. Sin perpetually stalks him; he must be continually mortifying it. This is a duty he cannot rest from until he rests in glory. Give sin an inch, it will take a mile. If it can gain a footing in Christians' lives, it will send forth roots and grow like **kudzu**. It will use them and abuse them and inflict as much disaster as possible. **Owen** wrote,

*"Every unclean thought or glance would be adultery if it could; every covetous desire would be oppression, every thought of unbelief would be atheism, might it grow to its head....It proceeds toward its height by degrees, making good the ground it hath got by hardness.... Now nothing can prevent this but mortification; that withers the root and strikes at the head of sin every hour, so that whatever it aims at it is crossed in. There is not the best saint in the world but, if he should give over this duty, would fall into as many cursed sins as ever did any of his kind." Later, he added, "Sin sets itself against every act of holiness, and against every degree we grow to. Let not that man think he makes any progress in holiness while he walks not over the bellies of his lusts."*

Christians are not ignorant of Satan's devices, the apostle declares (2 Cor 2:11). Neither should they be naive about the subtleties of their own flesh. When Agag comes to them cheerfully, saying, "*Surely the bitterness of death is past*" (1 Sam 15:32) or when he wants to make friends and declare an end to hostilities—that is when it is most imperative to turn on him and cut him ruthlessly to pieces before the Lord.

**(1) Sin is not mortified when it is merely covered up** A Christian can hide his sin from the sight of others, but that is not the same as mortification. If a sin has simply been papered over with hypocrisy, what good is there in that? If conscience has only been daubed, Christians are in a much more dangerous state than before. "He who conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will find compassion" (Prov 28:13). You have not done your duty with regard to your sin until you have confessed and forsaken it.

**(2) Sin is not mortified when it is only internalized** If you forsake the outward practice of some evil, yet continue to ruminate on the memory of that sin's pleasures, beware. You may have moved your sin into the privacy of your imagination, where it is known only to you and to God, but that sin has not been mortified. If anything, it has become more deadly by being married to pretended righteousness. Jesus rebuked the Pharisees for this very thing. They avoided murder, but tolerated hate. They refrained from fornication, but

indulged in lustful thoughts. Jesus declared them worthy of eternal hell (Matt 5:21–28).

**(3) Sin is not mortified when it is exchanged for another sin** What good is it to trade the lust of the flesh for the lust of the eyes? That lust has not been mortified; it has only changed form. Puritan Thomas Fuller said, “Some think themselves improved in piety, because they have left prodigality and reel into covetousness.” If you succumb to this tactic, your heart is in danger of being hardened by the deceitfulness of sin (Heb 3:13).

**(4) Sin is not mortified until the conscience has been appeased** The goal is “love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith” (1 Tim 1:5). As long as the conscience remains defiled, it affects a Christian’s testimony.

Sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence; and **keep a good conscience** so that in the thing in which you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame” (1 Pet 3:15–16, emphasis added). Part of the process of mortification is to work through the issue of guilt. Those who attempt to evade guilt for sin have not properly confessed their sin; therefore they cannot be cleansed and fully forgiven.

**If you want to mortify sin**, John Owen wrote, “*Load thy conscience with the guilt of it.*” Contrary to the popular wisdom today, he believed the pangs of guilt were a natural and healthy consequence of wrongdoing. “*Be ashamed,*” he wrote, for he saw shame as an advantage in the mortification of sin. He correctly understood Paul’s meaning in 2 Cor 7:10: “The sorrow that is according to the will of God produces a repentance without regret.” Those who give a nod of the head to their guilt, claim the promise of forgiveness, quickly reassure themselves, and then think no more of their wrongdoing are subjecting themselves to the heart-hardening deceit of sin—especially when the sin threatens to become a habit. Let sorrow do its full work in your heart to produce a deep, honest repentance, and those sins will be severely weakened.

**(5) Sin is not mortified when it is merely repressed.** Some people use diversions to avoid dealing with their sin. They try to drown their conscience with alcohol or drown out their guilt with entertainment and other distractions. When temptation surfaces, they do not give a biblical answer, as Jesus did (Matt 4:4, 7, 10). Instead they seek a fleshly escape route. Of this tendency Martyn Lloyd-Jones said,

*“If you merely repress a temptation or this first motion of sin within you, it will probably come up again still more strongly. To that extent I agree with the modern psychology. Repression is always bad. “Well, what do you do?” asks someone. I answer: When you feel that first motion of sin, just pull yourself up and say, “Of course I am not having any dealings with this at all.” Expose the thing and say, “This is evil, this is vileness, this is the thing that drove the first man out of Paradise.” Pull it out, look at it, denounce it, hate it for what it is; then you have really dealt with it. You must not merely push it back in a spirit of fear, and in a timorous manner. Bring it out, expose it, and analyse it; and then denounce it for what it is until you hate it.”*

That is sound advice. **Christians should deal with their sin courageously, striking at its head. Subduing it a little bit is not enough. They need to exterminate it, hack it in pieces—seek by the means of grace and the power of the Spirit to wring the deadly life from it.**

It is a lifelong task, in which progress will always be only gradual. That may make the fight seem daunting at first. But as soon as Christians set themselves to the work, they discover that sin shall not be master over them, for they are under grace (Rom 6:14). That means it is God who is at work in them both to will and to work for His good pleasure (Phil 2:13). And having begun His good work in them, He “will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus” (Phil 1:6). ([Mortification of Sin](#) Master’s Seminary Journal, 1994)

## THE WORLD

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” (Ep 2:1, 2-note, Ep 2:3 -note).

**World (kosmos - word study ; aion - word study)** in the context of spiritual warfare does not refer to the literal physical creation but to the world’s system of values and way of doing things -- these anti-god influences seek to coerce believers to conform to the world corrupt view (Ro 12:2-note). The unregenerate person (non-believer) is either consciously or unconsciously controlled by the values and attitudes of this anti-god world view and behaves accordingly - in rebellion to God. The leader of this **world** is [Satan](#) as

John teaches in his first epistle writing that the "whole world lies in the power of the evil one." (1Jn 5:19).

**John Piper** describes our war with the fallen Satanically controlled godless world system

We must cultivate the mindset of exiles. What this does mainly is sober us up and wake us up so that we don't drift with the world and take for granted that the way the world thinks and acts is the best way. We don't assume that what is on TV is helpful to the soul; we don't assume that the priorities of advertisers is helpful to the soul; we don't assume that the strategies and values of business and industry are helpful to the soul. We don't assume that any of this glorifies God. We stop and we think and we consult the Wisdom of our own country, heaven, and we don't assume that the conventional wisdom of this age is God's wisdom. We get our bearings from God in his word. When you see yourself as an alien and an exile with your citizenship in heaven, and God as your only Sovereign, you stop drifting with the current of the day. You ponder what is good for the soul and what honors God in everything: food, cars, videos, bathing suits, birth control, driving speeds, bed times, financial savings, education for the children, unreached peoples, famine, refugee camps, sports, death, and everything else. Aliens get their cue from God and not the world." (Read the full sermon [The War Against the Soul and the Glory of God](#))

## THE DEVIL

**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 (diabolos) and Satan, who (continuously) deceives (planao) the whole world" (Re 12:9+).

As believers it is vital to understand that we have been

delivered (rhuomai) from the domain (exousia = right and might y) of darkness and transferred...to the kingdom of His beloved Son (Col 1:13+)

In Acts 26:18 Jesus instructed Paul to take the Gospel to the Gentiles...

to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me.' (Acts 26:18+)

Thus Israel had to learn in warfare that even though they were to personally "fight the good fight of faith" (1Ti 6:12), victory (cp parallel passages regarding Divine victory - 2Sa 23:10, 11, 12; 1Chr 11:14; Ps 44:2-[note](#), Ps 144:10-[note](#), Pr 21:31, Ps 20:7-[note](#)) is found only in trust and obedience to Jehovah, in context specifically designated as 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, cp Ge 20:11, Ps 36:1-[note](#); Ro 3:18-note) 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" (ponder this point!).

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 imperative = continuously) **keep watching** (click discussion of gregoreuo) and **praying** (present imperative = continuously) that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak. (Mt 26:41+).

**Comment** - See discussion of our absolute need [for the Holy Spirit to obey these two NT commands](#) ("How to Keep All 1642 Commandments in the New Testament!")

In a similar way Peter also warned us to

**"Be of sober spirit** (aorist imperative = Do this now! It's urgent! Only possible by depending on the [Holy Spirit to obey](#)), **be on the alert** (aorist imperative = Do this now! It's urgent! Only possible by depending on the [Holy Spirit to obey](#)). Your adversary the devil, prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. But **resist** (aorist imperative = Do this now! It's urgent! Only possible by depending on the [Holy Spirit to obey](#)) 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." (1 Pe 5:8-10+).

In Deut 25:17, 18, 19, just before the second generation of Israelites from Egypt entered the promised land, Moses reminded them that when the LORD gave them rest from their enemies, they were to completely blot out the memory of **Amalek** and that this is a command and 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; Ga 5:16-note; Gal 5:17-note). When there is compromise with SIN ("*Amalekites*") by God's people, SIN begins its deadly, often insidious work (cp description of sin in He 3:13-note) 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+). The *Amalekites* must always be utterly blotted out. We must not deal lightly with the presence of sins in our life (He 12:1, 2- see notes He12:1; 2).

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 a "*spiritual band-aid*" but 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, Ezek 6:9, Ep 4:30, Heb 3:17) 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 echoes this mysterious interaction of man's responsibility and God's sovereignty in (Phil 2:12, 13-see **notes** Php 2:12; 13) exhorting us as believers to

work out (present imperative = command to continually work at this task... in reliance upon the Holy Spirit in us [see next portion of verse] and God's provision of amazing, life transforming grace) (our) salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who is at work in (us), both to will and to work 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.**" (Owen's classic treatise [Of the Mortification of Sin in Believers- The Necessity, Nature and Means of It](#) is highly recommended -- it is a bit difficult to read through the old English but the reward is worth it!) And remember that God never calls us to do something He has not first equipped us to accomplish.

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](#))

As alluded to several times 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*", the flesh nature, part of the process referred to as sanctification. (Click for an explanation of the relationship between salvation, sanctification and glorification). Every believer has 3 mortal enemies the [world](#), the [flesh](#) and the [devil](#). Of these three only the flesh lives within our "temple!"

**Paul** alludes to this struggle explaining that "the **flesh** (like an "Amalekite") sets (present tense - continually sets) its desire against

the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh for these are (present tense - continually) in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please." (Galatians 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 (present tense - continually - THE ONLY WAY TO ACCOMPLISH THIS PUSHING AWAY IS BY JETTISONING SELF RELIANCE AND [RELYING WHOLLY ON THE HOLY SPIRIT](#) TO GIVE YOU THE DESIRE AND THE POWER! - cf Php 2:13NLT+) abstain from fleshly lusts (DESIRES THAT ARISE FROM OUR FALLEN SINFUL FLESH), which (present tense - continually) wage war (Greek word [strateuomai](#) gives us our English "strategize" -- does this give you a picture of the assaults waged by your indwelling sin nature? IT IS AN INSIDE JOB AND THUS NECESSITATES AN "INSIDE SOLUTION!" - THE INDWELLING HOLY SPIRIT!) against the soul." (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 "Of the 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." ([Of the Mortification of Sin in Believers- The Necessity, Nature and Means of It](#))

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+). 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")



### THE LITTLE FOXES

In Song of Solomon we read "Catch the foxes for us, The little foxes that are ruining the vineyards, While our vineyards are in blossom." ([Song 2:15+](#)).

One application equates the "little foxes" with "little" sins. This begs the question - are any sins really "little?" And "How does your garden grow?" (from nursery rhyme "[Mary, Mary, Quite Contrary](#)")

A man was walking down a hill in the woods when he stepped on a little twig. The twig rolled and he fell. As he got up and went on his way, he thought to himself "If that had been a big log, I would have seen it and climbed over. There would have been far less likelihood of my falling, for I would have been aware of the danger." The very fact that the twig was so small was what made it so

dangerous.

In our daily spiritual walk, we are continually being tempted and continually in danger of being carried away and enticed by our own lusts and if we give in the result is sin (James 1:14-15<sup>+</sup>). The devil is a tempter and he cleverly places little temptations (like little twigs) that so easily entangle us (cf Hebrews 12:2<sup>+</sup>) and defeat us. His "little twigs" are generally more effective than "big logs" partly because they are so often unnoticed and partly because even if we do notice them, we consider them too small to really make a significant difference in our spiritual walk. In short we too often fail to heed Jesus' commands to "Keep watching and praying that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." (Mt 26:41<sup>+</sup>)

Application - Beware of the "little foxes," those temptations that seem so trivial and minimal as to easily escape our notice. Remember that it was only a "little thing," (one bite of a forbidden fruit) through which "sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned." (Ro 5:12<sup>+</sup>)

As Puritan **John Owen** wisely asked "Do you mortify? (read Colossians 3:5<sup>+</sup>) 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." (See under point #1 - [Of the Mortification of Sin](#))

And the good news is that we are not left to ourselves to kill sin but as Paul instructed "By the Spirit (God's provision of supernatural power) put to death (Our responsibility) the deeds of the body and you will live." (Ro 8:13<sup>+</sup>). **Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones** once said this was the "most important statement in regard to sanctification" in the entire New Testament. (see link to sermon below).

Vice is a monster of so frightful [mien](#) (manner)

As to be hated needs but to be seen,  
Yet seen too oft, familiar with her face,  
We, first endure, then pity, then embrace.  
-- Alexander Pope - Essay on Man

Sins are like circles in the water when a stone is thrown into it - one produces another. When anger was in Cain's heart (Ge 4:6-7), murder was not far off (Ge 4:8).

So let us "encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called "Today," so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin." (Hebrews 3:13<sup>+</sup>)

#### Related Resources:

- [Are You Entangled?](#)
- [Deceitfulness of Sin](#)
- [Backsliding](#)
- [Backsliding-Quotes, Devotionals, Illustrations](#)
- [Commentary on Romans 8:12-13](#)
- [What is mortification of sin / the flesh?;](#)
- [What does it mean that the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak?;](#)
- [What is the flesh?;](#)
- [What is the enemy within?; What is the sin nature?](#)
- [The Way of Sanctification - Romans 8:12-13](#) - D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones - Mp3
- [Sin and the Christian - Romans 8:12-13](#) - D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones - Mp3
- [Sin and the Body - Romans 8:12-13](#) - D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones - Mp3
- [Of the Mortification of Sin in Believers](#) - John Owen
- [Of the Mortification of Sin in Believers](#) - Greg Herrick
- [Mortification of Sin](#) - Master's Seminary Journal: Volume 5: #1, Spring, 1994 - John MacArthur

---

#### Tiny Evils, Big Fall

Read: Ecclesiastes 9:16-10:10

Dead flies putrefy the perfumer's ointment, . . . so does a little folly o one respected for wisdom and honor. —  
Ecclesiastes 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 of Solomon 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. By Vernon 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.

---

**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.

---

**SIN IS LIKE A BOA CONSTRICTOR!** - Are you being deceived by sin and tolerating it like a **pet**? If you are, then you need to remember the fate of the man with the **pet boa constrictor** (Do a Google search - use the following three words in your search keeping the quotation marks as written >> "pet boa" killed). After 15 years of living with his owner, one day the "pet boa" would not let its "owner" out of its grip resulting in the owner's tragic death. Wild animals remain wild and so does **Sin**. Do not be deceived (Stop being deceived)!

---

A slight sore, neglected, may prove of fatal consequence, and so may a slight sin slighted and left unrepented of. --Matthew Henry

The way of sin is downhill. A man cannot stop himself when he will.--Matthew Henry

---

**No Small Deviations in God's Economy!** - In St. Louis there is a railroad switchyard. One particular switch begins with just the thinnest piece of steel to direct a train away from one main track to another. If you were to follow those two tracks, however, you would find that one ends in San Francisco, the other in New York. Sin is like that. Just a small deviation from God's standards can place us far afield from our intended destination. Don't be deceived by the world, flesh or devil who say "It's no big deal!" Wrong! (Sin seeks to rule over us and to kill us = Ps 19:13-[note](#), [See [Spurgeon's comment - scroll down](#)] Ps 119:133+, 1Jn 5:16+)

---

**SIN'S POWER** - Dr. J. Wilbur Chapman told of a distinguished minister, Dr. Howard, from Australia who preached very strongly on the subject of sin. After the service, one of the church officers came to counsel with him in the study. "Dr. Howard," he said, "we don't want you to talk as openly as you do about man's guilt and corruption, because if our boys and girls hear you discussing that subject they will more easily become sinners. Call it a mistake if you will, but do not speak so plainly about sin. "The minister took down a small bottle and showing it to the visitor said, "You see that label? It says strychnine -- and underneath in bold, red letters the word 'Poison!' Do you know, man, what you are asking me to do? You are suggesting that I change the label. Suppose I do, and paste over it the words, 'Essence of Peppermint'; don't you see what might happen? Someone would use it, not knowing the danger involved, and would certainly die. So it is, too, with the matter of sin. The milder you make your label, the more dangerous you make your poison!" (Source Unknown)

---

**Entanglement by the Cords of one's own Sin** - Not long after a wealthy contractor had finished building the Tombs prison in New York, he was found guilty of forgery and sentenced to several years in the prison he had built! As he was escorted into a cell of his own making, the contractor said, "I never dreamed when I built this prison that I would be an inmate one day." (cp Nu 32:23, Pr 5:22 - [See Captured by Iniquity and Held by Cords of one's own Sin - A Study](#))

---

**The Danger of "Small Sins" Illustrated** - Imagine all the obstacles a person might have to overcome if he were to walk from New

York City to San Francisco. One man who accomplished this rare achievement mentioned a rather surprising difficulty when asked to tell of his biggest hurdle. He said that the toughest part of the trip wasn't traversing the steep slopes of the mountains or crossing hot, dry, barren stretches of desert. Instead, he said, "The thing that came the closest to defeating me was the sand in my shoes." - Our Daily Bread.

---

**Slavery to Sin** - Radio personality Paul Harvey tells the story of how an Eskimo kills a wolf. The account is grisly, yet it offers fresh insight into the consuming, self-destructive nature of sin. "First, the Eskimo coats his knife blade with animal blood and allows it to freeze. Then he adds another layer of blood, and another, until the blade is completely concealed by frozen blood. "Next, the hunter fixes his knife in the ground with the blade up. When a wolf follows his sensitive nose to the source of the scent and discovers the bait, he licks it, tasting the fresh frozen blood. He begins to lick faster, more and more vigorously, lapping the blade until the keen edge is bare. Feverishly now, harder and harder the wolf licks the blade in the arctic night. So great becomes his craving for blood that the wolf does not notice the razor-sharp sting of the naked blade on his own tongue, nor does he recognize the instant at which his insatiable thirst is being satisfied by his OWN warm blood. His carnivorous appetite just craves more--until the dawn finds him dead in the snow!" It is a fearful thing that people can be "consumed by their own lusts." Only God's grace keeps us from the wolf's fate. - Chris T. Zwingelberg.

---

**Attraction to Sin** - Several years ago our family visited Niagara Falls. It was spring, and ice was rushing down the river. As I viewed the large blocks of ice flowing toward the falls, I could see that there were carcasses of dead fish embedded in the ice. Gulls by the score were riding down the river feeding on the fish. As they came to the brink of the falls, their wings would go out, and they would escape from the falls. I watched one gull which seemed to delay and wondered when it would leave. It was engrossed in the carcass of a fish, and when it finally came to the brink of the falls, out went its powerful wings. The bird flapped and flapped and even lifted the ice out of the water, and I thought it would escape. But it had delayed too long so that its claws had frozen into the ice. The weight of the ice was too great, and the gull plunged into the abyss. The material possessions of this world can entrap us if we become too attached to them. They will take us to our destruction if we cannot give them up. And as Sweeting observed, "Oh, the danger of delay!" - George Sweeting

Sin will take you farther than you ever thought you'd stray  
Sin will leave you so lost, you think you'll never find your way  
Sin will keep you longer than you ever thought you'd stay  
Sin will cost you more than you ever thought you'd pay

## TWENTY REASONS NOT TO SIN!

Just for "fun" take a moment to review the following list of **20 reasons not to commit sins** (hamartano)...

1. A little sin leads to more sin.
2. Sin invites the discipline of God.
3. The time spent in my sin is forever wasted.
4. My sin never pleases but always grieves the God Who loves me.
5. My sin places a greater burden on my spiritual leaders.
6. In time, sin always brings heaviness to my heart.
7. Others, including my family, suffer consequences due to my sin.
8. My sin makes the enemies of God rejoice.
9. Sin deceives me into believing I have gained when in reality I have lost.
10. Sin may keep me from qualifying for spiritual leadership.
11. The supposed benefits of sin will never outweigh the consequences of disobedience.
12. Repenting of sin is a painful process.
13. My sin may influence others to sin.
14. My sin may keep others from knowing Christ.

15. Sin makes light of the Cross, upon which Christ died for the very purpose of taking away my sin.
16. It is impossible to sin and follow the Spirit at the same time.
17. Others more earnest than I have been destroyed by just such sins.
18. God chooses not to hear the prayers of those who cherish their sin ([Ps 66:18](#)).
19. My unwillingness to reject this sin now grants it authority over me greater than I understand.
20. I promised God He would be the Lord of my life. (Source unknown)

**THE HOLY WAR.**  
**Exodus 17:8-16.**  
**JAMES SMITH**

If, like the children of Israel, we have been delivered from bondage and separated unto God, we may also expect to be attacked by the enemy (John 15:20). The hindermost and weak and feeble ones are sure to suffer first (Deuteronomy 25:18). Borderland Christians get much buffeting; beware of the lusts that lie in ambush (1 Samuel 15:2), the Diabolonians, as Bunyan calls the lusts that lodge in wall (flesh) of Man-soul. They are the sworn enemies of the Spirit of Christ. As an illustration of the Christian's spiritual conflict, let us notice—

I. Amalek, or, the Pilgrim's Foe. Well may we ask—

1. Who was He? Amalek has not a very honorable pedigree. He is the offspring of Esau, the brother of Jacob (closely connected), who sold his birthright for a mess of pottage, "being carnal," and so is a type of the flesh. Amalek, like that which is carnal, was the first of the nations, but, like the flesh, he is doomed to perish (Numbers 24:20). "That which is bone of the flesh is flesh" (John 3:6).
2. When Came He? He did not annoy them until they got to Rephidim (resting places), and had drank of the smitten rock. "That Rock was Christ." The Christless know nothing about the conflict between flesh and spirit, the world loves its own. The onslaught took place while Israel was resting. The unguarded moments of inactivity are fit opportunities for the Amalek lusts of the flesh.

II. Joshua, or the Fight of Faith. The lusts which war against the soul are overcome through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 7:25).

1. The Means of Faith. "Joshua chose out men" (v. 9). Faith must have something to work by—faith which works by love. The believers' chosen ones are the Blood, the Spirit, and the Word. These are the Christian's "three mighties." Put on the whole armor of God, take the shield of faith.
2. The Work of Faith. "Joshua went out and fought" (v. 10). Hope waits, love submits, faith actively presses on, it is the aggressive grace that attacks and wins the fight. "Fight the good fight of faith" (1 Timothy 6:12). "I will show you my faith by my works" (James 2:18).

III. Moses, or the Spirit of Prayer. Every "over-comer" constantly maintains a twofold attitude, the upward and the outward.

1. Towards God. There is the steady, uplifted hands of unwavering faith (1 John 5:4). It is the upward look of the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man. This holy privilege and power is within the reach of all, who, like Moses, stands on the hill-top of communion with God.
2. Toward the Enemy. There must be fearless and unyielding determination. While the hands were uplifted Joshua prevailed. The source of overcoming power is in God. It is communicated to and through those who are in living sympathetic touch with Him. "If you abide in Me, and My word abide in you, you shall ask what you will, and it shall be done" (John 15:7). "When I cry unto You, then shall mine enemies turn back" (Psalm 56:9).

IV. Aaron and Hur, or the Promises of God. How often the precious promises of God have acted the part of Aaron and Hur to our feeble intercessions.

1. The Promises are Strong. "They stayed up his hands" (v. 12). The supplicating hands of Moses soon grow weary. The time of definite prayer is a testing time. It is here we feel most intensely our utter weakness and the need of supporting promises. "Take with you words," the supporting, unfailing words of Him who cannot lie.

Lean your arm of feeble prayer upon His sure Word of promise.

2. The Promises are Steady. "And his hands were steady" (v. 12). Unsteady hands will not receive much from the Lord (James 1:6, 7). The promises of God never tremble. We may have weary and shaky hands, but we have an unshaking God who faints not, neither is weary (Isaiah 40:28, 29). "He gives power to the faint." "Uphold me with Your free Spirit." Steady and sure wins the day. God's promise to Abraham wrought in him unstaggering faith. Keep steadily trusting and your God will keep steadily conquering. "I will trust and not be afraid" (Isaiah 12:2).

## RELATED RESOURCES on Spiritual Warfare and Mortification of Sin

See **Exposition on Spiritual Warfare**

- 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
- Exposition of 1Peter 5:9

**Wayne Barber on Spiritual Warfare**

- EPHESIANS 6:10-18 BY WAYNE BARBER PT 1 of 7

**John Owen**

- [Mortification of Sin in Believers \(eBook\)](#) - updated to modern English (Epub, Mobi, Pdf formats)

**John MacArthur**

- [How To Kill Sin in your Life](#) - John MacArthur
- [Mortification of Sin - 20 page paper](#) - John MacArthur (Excellent summary of how to kill sin)

**Greg Herrick** - "Of the Mortification of Sin in Believers" - An Outline, Exposition and Summary

- [1. John Owen—His Life and Work](#)
- [2. A Look at Romans 8:13](#)
- [3. Even the "Best of Us" Are Called to Mortify Sin](#)
- [4. The Life Giving Spirit Authors the Work of Mortification](#)
- [5. Power in the Christian Life Depends on Mortification](#)
- [6. To Mortify Sin—Negatively Considered](#)
- [7. To Mortify Sin—Positively Considered](#)
- [8. General Rule #1: A Man Must Be A Believer](#)
- [9. General Rule #2: There Must Be Universal Sincerity of Obedience](#)
- [10. Particular Direction #1: Consider Dangerous Symptoms Attending Sin](#)

- [11. Particular Direction #2: Get A Clear Sense of the Guilt of Sin](#)
- [12. Particular Direction #3-7: Guilt, Disposition, and Desire for Deliverance](#)
- [13. Particular Direction #8: Meditate on God's Greatness](#)
- [14. Particular Direction #9: How to Have Peace](#)
- [15. The Actual Practice of Mortification](#)

### Sinclair Ferguson

- [How to Mortify Sin](#)

### 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](#)
- [Kill Sin with the Word of God](#)
- [A Passion for Purity Vs Passive Prayers](#)
- [How to Kill Sin, Part 1](#)
- [How to Kill Sin, Part 2](#)
- [How to Kill Sin, Part 3](#)
- [How Dead People do Battle with Sin](#)
- [The War Within: Flesh Vs. Spirit](#)
- [Why and How We Walk According to the Spirit](#)
- [How the Spirit Does What the Law Could Not Do](#)

**ILLUSTRATION** - During the 1982 Falkland Islands conflict, the British Royal Navy felt that its ships were safe from attack because of a sophisticated defense system that identified enemy missiles and shot them down. Attack after attack was repelled with no damage to a British ship. Then the unexpected happened. The 3,500-ton destroyer HMS Sheffield was sunk by a single missile fired from an Argentine fighter jet. Later, an investigation revealed that the Sheffield's defenses did pick up the incoming missile, correctly identifying it as a French-made Exocet. But the computer was programmed to ignore Exocets as friendly. So the ship was sunk by a missile it saw coming and could have destroyed.

Christians who want to have a pure heart and mind in our impure society are like battleships floating on the open sea. Constant bombardments of sensual missiles are fired our way every day. If our heart, our defense system, allows missiles that we should avoid to penetrate our mind and soul, we're in big trouble. Spiritually, we will begin to sink. Guard your heart. Realize the Lord is examining your will, your heart, your motives.

PREVIOUS

NEXT