

Exodus 17:9-18

The children of Israel are now refreshed by the flowing waters at Horeb/Sinai. Behind them was hunger and thirst. Ahead of them is the Promised Land. In between these 2 stops, God gave them Manna and water that we now understand as the True Bread and Water of Everlasting Life: this is Jesus, the Promised Seed that was birthed in the Land promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob many years before.

The second half of Chapter 17 involves a war with the Amalekites. This happened in Rephidim on the way to Sinai.

Why did the Amalekites come against Israel? Simply put, they were evil. Their tribe was named after a grandson of Esau (Eliphaz) and his concubine, Timna who named him Amalek. **Josephus, the historian**, calls him “illegitimate”. He also wrote the following:

The name of the Hebrews began to be everywhere renowned, and rumors about them ran abroad. This made the inhabitants of those countries to be in no small fear. Accordingly they sent ambassadors to one another, and exhorted one another to defend themselves, and to endeavor to destroy these men. Those that induced the rest to do so, were such as inhabited Gabolitis and Petra. They were called *Amalekites*, and were the most warlike of the nations that lived thereabout; and whose kings exhorted one another, and their neighbors, to go to this war against the Hebrews; telling them that an army of strangers, and such a one as had run away from slavery under the Egyptians, lay in wait to ruin them;

In modern parlance, we'd say that Amalek was a real “piece of work”.

(Exodus 17:8) Now Amalek came and fought with Israel in Rephidim.

While the exact location is not known, Rephidim appears on the maps I saw as being before Horeb. This account is “historical” but also important. God fought against the Egyptians but now, the Israelites engage in battle. Most agree that the Israelites were not “battle-ready”, that is, they were unprepared for such an attack.

Moses wrote about in Deuteronomy 25

Deuteronomy 25:16-19 For all who do such things, all who behave unrighteously, *are* an abomination to the LORD your God. (17) "Remember what Amalek did to you on the way as you were coming out of Egypt, (18) how he met you on the way and attacked your rear ranks, all the stragglers at your rear, when you *were* tired and weary; and he did not fear God. (19) Therefore it shall be, when the LORD your God has given you rest from your enemies all around, in the land which the LORD your God is giving you to possess *as* an inheritance, *that* you will blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven. You shall not forget.

With any large group of travelers, the aged, the children and the weakest, tend to drift towards the rear. Amalek took advantage of this and started his attack there. Plus, it would have

struck fear in the hearts of the people.

(Exodus 17:9) 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.”

This rod of God was aptly named. It was used by Moses, but it certainly was God’s special sign of His power, judgment, and justice.

The NKJV and other translators added the word “**some**” and some others added the word “**mighty**”, including the Septuagint. I suppose they felt the need to show how a small but mighty band of men could defeat the warrior Amalekites. That was totally unnecessary! Besides, it was God who defeated them using the swords of Joshua and his men.

This was the first time Joshua is mentioned in the Bible. Joshua will soon become the right-hand man of Moses and by the end of the Book, he will be Moses’ successor.

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

(Exodus 17:11) And so it was, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed; and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed.

(Exodus 17:12) But Moses' hands *became* heavy; so 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 the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun.

Moses understood what he needed to do. He went to the top of a nearby hill to observe the battle. He took his brother Aaron and his brother-in-law Hur. Moses lifted up the rod and the Israelites prevailed. But if he let down the rod, the Amalekites prevailed. Moses grew tired and Aaron and Hur moved a large stone for him to sit on and then they lifted up Moses hands. His hands remained so until the sun began to set.

(Exodus 17:13) So Joshua defeated Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword. (Exodus 17:14) Then the LORD said to Moses, “Write this *for* a memorial in the book and recount *it* in the hearing of Joshua, that I will utterly blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven.”

(Exodus 17:15) And Moses built an altar and called its name, The-LORD-Is-My-Banner; (Exodus 17:16) for he said, “Because the LORD has sworn: the LORD *will have* war with Amalek from generation to generation.”

Joshua defeated Amalek. The LORD tells Moses that this event needs to be memorialized in “the book” (this does not mean that Moses was writing the Torah (the five Books of Moses) at this time. But to recount it to Joshua may be a “hint” at Joshua being his successor (and that a reminder of this event would be important for his subsequent entry into the Promised Land). The LORD tells him even though Joshua defeated Amalek today, He will, in the future, wipe out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven!

Moses builds an altar and calls it “Adonai Nissi”, the LORD is my Banner. Banners were used by armies to identify themselves as fighting under a specific tribe or nation. The Israelites fought under the authority and power of God and didn’t even need a real banner to distinguish themselves. God did that for them!

Note: **the LORD will have war with Amalek from generation to generation**, until it is utterly destroyed by God. We witness this throughout the history of God's people:

1. Balaam's final oracle recorded in Numbers 24:20
Then he looked on Amalek, and he took up his oracle and said: "**Amalek was first among the nations, But shall be last until he perishes.**"
2. Saul's disobedience to the LORD and Samuel!
 - a. 1 Samuel 15:3 (3) Now go and attack Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and do not spare them. But kill both man and woman, infant and nursing child, ox and sheep, camel and donkey.' "
 - b. 1 Samuel 15:9 But Saul and the people spared Agag and the best of the sheep, the oxen, the fatlings, the lambs, and all that was good, and were unwilling to utterly destroy them. But everything despised and worthless, that they utterly destroyed.
 - c. 1 Samuel 15:22-23 So Samuel said: "Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, As in obeying the voice of the LORD? **Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, And to heed than the fat of rams. (23) For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, And stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, He also has rejected you from being king.**"
3. General Biblical history:

Agag has 5 sons who managed to escape. This keep the tribe alive and they continued to harass and plunder the Israelites in successive generations that spanned hundreds of years. Two of David's wives were captured in Ziklag when the Amalekites raided the village. David and his men defeated the Amalekites and rescued all the hostages. A few hundred Amalekites escaped, however. Much later, during the reign of King Hezekiah, a group of Simeonites "killed the remaining Amalekites" who had been living in the hill country of Seir. This was recorded in 1 Chronicles 4:42–43.

The last mention of the Amalekites is found in the book of Esther where Haman the Agagite, a descendant of the Amalekite king **Agag**, connives to have all the Jews in Persia annihilated by order of King Xerxes. God saved the Jews in Persia, however, and Haman, his sons, and the rest of Israel's enemies were destroyed instead (Esther 9:5–10).

What we read in Exodus 17 was Israel's first battle with its enemies. It was to set the methodology for all future wars including the one that a young Jewish boy had with a 9-foot man called Goliath:

1 Samuel 17:46-47 This day the LORD will deliver you into my hand, and I will strike you and take your head from you. And this day I will give the carcasses of the camp of the Philistines to the birds of the air and the wild beasts of the earth, that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel. **(47)** Then all this assembly shall know that the LORD does not save with sword and spear; **for the battle is the LORD's, and He will give you into our hands.**"

And, from Zechariah we read:

"This *is* the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: 'Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,' Says the LORD of hosts. (**Zechariah 4:6**)

This “methodology” will extend itself all the way until the battle of Armageddon; This is our methodology too.

(Ephesians 6:12) For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual *hosts* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*.

2 Corinthians 10:3-6 For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. (4) For the weapons of our warfare *are* not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, (5) casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, (6) and being ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled.

It is a faithful saying that our Adversary, the devil tried to prevent the 1st Coming of Christ and he failed miserably. And Jesus did this by His willing sacrifice of Himself on the Cross. While Satan was deluded into thinking he had actually killed the Son of God, Jesus was resurrected from the grave that could not hold Him and He **“disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it.”** Colossians 2:15

Satan tried to destroy Israel so He couldn't come as Promised. Now he's trying the destroy the Church. Try as he might, it cannot be done for both Israel and the Church are precious in the sight of the LORD.

IMHO, Israel, in these days, is depending too much on its own strength. Did not the LORD speak to Isaiah about this?

Isaiah 31:1 Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help, *And* rely on horses, Who trust in chariots because *they are* many, And in horsemen because they are very strong, But who do not look to the Holy One of Israel, Nor seek the LORD!

Therefore, in order to overcome all of Satan's attacks, in order to overcome all of our fleshly lusts and in order to overcome the fallen world we live in and how it's trying to draw us into the abyss of filth and godlessness, we MUST allow the LORD to fight.

And we must humbly accept the help of our brothers and sisters in Christ to help us when we slip and slide along the way.

This is the other picture of Chapter 17's war with the Amalekites: Aaron and Hur holding up the hands of Moses! But, let's look at chapter 18 before we finish up this last thought.

One might ask why the last section of Chapter 17 seems out of order. The explanation is in Chapter 18 by way of a long example:

(Exodus 18:1) And Jethro, the priest of Midian, Moses' father-in-law, heard of all that God had done for Moses and for Israel His people—that the LORD had brought Israel out of Egypt. (Exodus 18:2)

Then Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, took Zipporah, Moses' wife, after he had sent her back, (Exodus 18:3) with her two sons, of whom the name of one *was* Gershom (for he said, "I have been a stranger in a foreign land") (Exodus 18:4) and the name of the other *was* Eliezer (for *he said*, "The God of my father *was* my help, and delivered me from the sword of Pharaoh"); (Exodus 18:5) and Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, came with his sons and his wife to Moses in the wilderness, where he was encamped **at the mountain of God**. (Exodus 18:6) Now he had said to Moses, "I, your father-in-law Jethro, am coming to you with your wife and her two sons with her."

Moses' wife, Zipporah, was the daughter of Jethro the priest of Midian. We read that either before the plagues began or sometime shortly thereafter, Zipporah went back home with their sons. Their sons are Gershom (whose name means "stranger in a strange land") and Eliezer (which means "God of help"). Nothing else is known of them.

Jethro sent word to Moses that he's coming to him with Zipporah and the boys.

(Exodus 18:7) So Moses went out to meet his father-in-law, bowed down, and kissed him. And they asked each other about *their* well-being, and they went into the tent. (Exodus 18:8) And Moses told his father-in-law all that the LORD had done to Pharaoh and to the Egyptians for Israel's sake, all the hardship that had come upon them on the way, and *how* the LORD had delivered them. (Exodus 18:9) **Then Jethro rejoiced for all the good which the LORD had done for Israel, whom He had delivered out of the hand of the Egyptians. (Exodus 18:10) And Jethro said, "Blessed *be* the LORD, who has delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians and out of the hand of Pharaoh, *and* who has delivered the people from under the hand of the Egyptians. (Exodus 18:11) Now I know that the LORD *is* greater than all the gods; for in the very thing in which they behaved proudly, *He was* above them." (Exodus 18:12) Then Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, took a burnt offering and *other sacrifices to offer* to God. And Aaron came with all the elders of Israel to eat bread with Moses' father-in-law before God.**

This man, Jethro, the priest of Midian is unique. His ancestors were from Abraham's 2nd wife, Keturah. You might read about a man named Reuel and another named Hobab. These could be other names or titles for Jethro. It's quite confusing and there's, of course, multiple explanations that span from "they are all the same person" to "one is a title and other is another name" to "they're all related to each other, like grandfather, father, son". Let's not get lost in the trees and not see the forest.

After an affectionate reunion, they retired to Moses' tent where Moses' tells Jethro about the great deliverance of the people. Jethro rejoiced at the recounting of the whole Exodus story. He declares that the LORD is greater and all the Egyptian gods. And had prevailed over them who acted presumptuously and insolently towards the True God.

Then Jethro gave burnt offerings and others as well to the LORD God and invited Aaron and the elders to break bread with him and Moses.

They glorified God and gave thanks for His power, grace and mercy that He showed to the Israelites!

(Exodus 18:13) And so it was, on the next day, that Moses sat to judge the people; and the people stood before Moses from morning until evening.

Imagine 2 million people lined up 6 feet apart and wearing masks....oh wait...wrong millennia.

Moses was their leader, their mediator, and their judge. With that many people there was certainly arguments and fights breaking out that required some judgment. And this was before the Law was given!! That had to be exhausting!

(Exodus 18:14) So when Moses' father-in-law saw all that he did for the people, he said, "What *is* this thing that you are doing for the people? Why do you alone sit, and all the people stand before you from morning until evening?" (Exodus 18:15) And Moses said to his father-in-law, "Because the people come to me to inquire of God. (Exodus 18:16) When they have a difficulty, they come to me, and I judge between one and another; and I make known the statutes of God and His laws." (Exodus 18:17) So Moses' father-in-law said to him, "**The thing that you do *is* not good. (Exodus 18:18) Both you and these people who *are* with you will **surely wear yourselves out. For this thing *is* too much for you; you are not able to perform it by yourself.****

Jethro sees the potential for disaster. It might come in the form of Moses dying at an early age from stress related diseases. Considering how he was treated by his people, I'm surprised that he made it to 120.

(Exodus 18:19) **Listen now to my voice; I will give you counsel, and God will be with you: Stand before God for the people, so that you may bring the difficulties to God. (Exodus 18:20)** And you shall teach them the statutes and the laws, and show them the way in which they must walk and the work they must do.

Jethro is wise and perhaps prophetic. Moses will very shortly be called up to the top of Mt Sinai where the LORD will give him the LAW, the 10 Commandments. There's going to be a lot more difficulties involved once the people understand what the expectations of God are for their lives, their actions and their attitudes. Perhaps though, once they were taught right and wrong (from God's perspective), then they might be able to settle some of these things themselves. (hahahaha).

So, Jethro has a solution. Raise up men to be a delegation of judges for the people.

(Exodus 18:21A) Moreover you shall select from all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness;

Take men who had some basic qualifications:

1. **Able** – could they judge properly?
2. **Fear God** – did they understand the gravity of their calling? They must be humble enough to know that their awesome God was the ultimate judge – of them and the people that came for resolutions
3. **Truthful** – they had to be men known for their truthfulness in all matters
4. **Hate covetousness** – at first glance, this was a strange requirement; but they could not fall prey to bribes of any kind. Even today, some jobs require a background check that includes a complete credit/finance check.

There's a NT situation that's similar:

Acts 6:1-4 Now in those days, when *the number of* the disciples was multiplying, there

arose a complaint against the Hebrews by the Hellenists, because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution. (2) Then the twelve summoned the multitude of the disciples and said, "It is not desirable that we should leave the word of God and serve tables. (3) Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of *good* reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business; (4) but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word."

Some might object to this as sounding like the Apostles were unwilling to help with things that they deemed less important. But there are just so many hours in a day and Moses had heavy responsibilities on his shoulders. He needed help just as the Apostles did with their duty to teach the Word of God and minister to the people with a lot of "new" things that the newly formed church had to learn.

Once you know who, then you need to have the right number of them:

(21B) and place *such* over them *to be* rulers of **thousands**, rulers of **hundreds**, rulers of **fifties**, and rulers of **tens**. (Exodus 18:22) And let them judge the people at all times. **Then it will be *that every great matter they shall bring to you***, but every small matter they themselves shall judge. So it will be easier for you, **for they will bear *the burden with you***. (Exodus 18:23) If you do this thing, **and God so commands you**, then you will be able to endure, and all this people will also go to their place in peace."

Josephus added "rulers over 500, 30's and 20's. These commanders would have rulers over them. I think this may be the first pyramid scheme....but Josephus likens it to an army,

This was the idea behind "sharing the burden". Only the most pressing and difficult matters would be brought to Moses.

(Exodus 18:24) So Moses heeded the voice of his father-in-law and did all that he had said. (Exodus 18:25) And Moses chose able men out of all Israel, and made them heads over the people: rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens. (Exodus 18:26) So they judged the people at all times; the hard cases they brought to Moses, but they judged every small case themselves. (Exodus 18:27) Then Moses let his father-in-law depart, and he went his way to his own land.

Moses was humble enough to listen to his father-in-law and he did as he advised.

For tonight, the take away is fellowship. We are not a collection of islands but a family. Jesus is the head of the family. He calls the shots. Even Jesus has delegated certain responsibilities to men and women in the body. I am an under-shepherd and teacher. The Board Elders are responsible to manage the church from a financial perspective, but they also have responsibilities to pray for me and for this church family as well as provide feedback and guidance for all church matters.

But this extends to those who choose to call CP their home. As a family, we worship in unity of spirit and truth. We break bread together and we pray for one another. We also support each other with wisdom and discernment when the need arises.

The simple fact is, we were created as relational beings who serve a relational God. We cannot live our lives completely apart from one another. This is why we cannot forsake the assembly of the church. We truly need each other. And that is not a sign of weakness. We are not stronger together apart.

Even Jesus had 12 disciples and many others who followed Him. Paul traveled with others who helped him proclaim the Word of God. Paul also taught us to “**Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.**” (Galatians 6:2) Sure, we have phones, texting, social media but they cannot completely replace the need to be face-to-face communication!

And finally, while we abide in Christ as a branch, we are not the only branch, but one among many all receiving from Him and growing His fruit. Who can know if your branch will grow strong enough to support a branch that's above you? Who can know if we might need to rest on another branch for a season until we are strengthened?

[Hebrews 10:24-25](#) And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, (25) not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as *is* the manner of some, but exhorting *one another*, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.