

GOD DEFENDS ISRAEL AGAINST THE AMALEKITES

Old Testament Lesson #162

The people of Israel were in the wilderness after Moses led them out of slavery in Egypt. They were on their way to Canaan. In the wilderness, near a place called Rephidim, a nomadic tribe of people called Amalekites attacked the Israelites. Moses told Joshua to select some men of Israel to fight the Amalekites. Moses said he would stand on top of a nearby hill and hold his staff – the “staff of God” – in his hands.

Joshua did as Moses said. He took some men and went to fight the Amalekites. Moses stood on the hill, along with his brother Aaron and another man named Hur. Moses raised his hands and as long as he kept his hands up, the Israelite fighters were winning the battle. Whenever Moses got tired and lowered his hands, the Amalekites started winning.

So Aaron and Hur found a large stone for Moses to sit on. Then Aaron stood on one side of Moses and Hur stood on the other side, and they each held up one of Moses’ hands. They continued that way until sunset, long enough for Joshua and his men to defeat the Amalekite army.

Then God spoke to Moses and told him to write down what had happened, so that Joshua and the other people of Israel would know how God had helped them.

Moses also built an altar to God there on the hill, and he called the altar “The Lord is my Banner.” At the same time, Moses declared that God would be at war against the Amalekites from then on.

POINTS TO CONSIDER:

- The Amalekites were probably descendants of Amalek, who is mentioned in Genesis 36:12, 16. As a tribe, the Amalekites date from at least the time of Abraham (see Genesis 14:7). The last of the Amalekites were killed during the days of King Hezekiah (1 Chronicles 4:41-43).
- “The Lord is my Banner” is a translation of Yahweh-nissi, which refers to the “hand” or activity of God. Clearly Moses understood that the victory that day was because of God’s help, not the prowess of the Israelite fighters. The staff of the Lord represented the hand of God.
- Deuteronomy 25:17-19 provides some additional detail about the battle against the Amalekites. The Amalekites came against Israel when they were worn out on their journey to the Promised Land. They attacked those who were lagging behind, those who were weak and weary.

- The altar was so that people would remember what God had done at that place.
- According to Jewish tradition, Hur was Moses’ brother-in-law, the husband of Moses’ sister Miriam.

God Defends Israel Against the Amalekites

- I. The people of Israel were in the wilderness.
 - A. Moses was leading them out of slavery in Egypt.
 - B. They were on their way to Canaan.
- II. Near Rephidim, the Amalekites attacked the Israelites.
 - A. Moses told Joshua to select some men to fight back.
 - B. Moses said he would stand on top of a nearby hill and hold the “staff of God” in his hands.
- III. Joshua took some men to fight the Amalekites.
 - A. Moses stood on the hill, along with his brother Aaron and Hur.
 - B. Moses raised his hands with the staff
 - C. As long as he kept his hands up, the Israelite fighters won.
 - D. When Moses tired and lowered his hands, the Amalekites started winning.
- IV. Aaron and Hur found a large stone for Moses to sit on.
 - A. Aaron and Hur stood on each side of Moses and held up Moses’ hands.
 - B. They continued that way until sunset.
 - C. Joshua and his men defeated the Amalekites.
- V. God had helped the people of Israel.
 - A. God told Moses to write down what had happened.
 - B. Moses built an altar to God there on the hill, and he called it “The Lord is my Banner.”
 - C. Moses declared that God would be at war against the Amalekites from then on.

ANSWER KEY:

6, 7

Hur, Aaron, Amalekites, Joshua, Moses, tired, hill, altar, stone, Lord, staff

Then the Lord said to Moses, “Write this on a scroll as something to be remembered ...”