

When the one who should love you - hates you.

Jehovah Nissi (The Lord is my banner)

Message 4: [You are my anchor series](#).

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Introduction

What do you do when your brother, your sister, the person who should be your friend or a loved one hates you so much that they even want to kill you? It gets worse. What do you do especially when this person who hates you is stronger than you, smarter than you, more beautiful than you and uses these God given gifts to mock you and put you down?

If you are going through this, then you are not alone. This is the story of Israel and the Amalekites as we will see today.

So now, imagine you are a loving parent when this person who is stronger attacks your young and tired child and wants to kill them without provocation? You would be mad right? What would you do? You would do all that you can to protect or defend them. Israel God's first-born son, as will see was attacked by their brother, but God fought for his first-born son, Israel so that you who are his other sons can see that, just like he fought for your older brother, he will fight for you and defend you and your descendants from your powerful enemy, for thousands of generations. It is because of such powerful love from God that the Israelites were able to say:

“The Lord is my banner” which has been interpreted in Hebrew as Jehovah Nissi!

About me and these series

On 14 August 2022, my Lord and God commanded me to prepare to preach a series of 12 messages under the title: “You are my Anchor”. In these series, my Lord, who is also my father wants me to show you the intimate side of him that I see – so you can know how deep and wide and fierce his love is.

I love my father so much and he loves me too - because for 20 years, my enemy attacked me and put me down. My powerful enemy used my weaknesses such as my sexual sin and alcoholism to blind me, so I could not see the promises and inheritance my God had for kept for me until one day in 2017. On the day of my victory, my God woke up, as if from a deep sleep and he came and destroyed my enemy and set me free from my prison cell. I became baptized a second time, and then later that year after training me for war, he called me to go and fight my enemy who had previously oppressed me and that is how I came to be here to tell you about my God who is my banner – my God who has always fought for me. Now you see why I love him so much?

Anchor verses (Exodus 17: 8-16 (NIV))

The Amalekites came and attacked the Israelites at Rephidim. 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."

So Joshua fought the Amalekites as Moses had ordered, and Moses, Aaron and Hur went to the top of the hill. As long as Moses held up his hands, the Israelites were winning, but whenever he lowered his hands, the Amalekites were winning. 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. So Joshua overcame the Amalekite army with the sword.

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 name of Amalek from under heaven."

*Moses built an altar and called it *The LORD is my Banner*. He said, "Because hands were lifted up against the throne of the LORD, the LORD will be at war against the Amalekites from generation to generation."*

Understanding the story and its characters

The Israelites vs. the hateful Amalekites

Without sounding obvious - this is a story of a war. It is a story of the first battle that the children of Israel ever fought after being slaves in Egypt for over 400 years. This battle took place just 2 months after the Israelites' release from slavery.

The Israelites in this battle were at a VERY Large disadvantage. Why? As you can expect, if someone has been a slave for 400 years – they do not know how to fight, let alone use weapons. Remember if you have been a slave, would your slave master have shown you how to fight or defend yourself?

So typically, in this kind of battle – you expect that the Israelites were going to lose and I think the Amalekites knew this – but they were only seeing with physical eyes, ha!

Now in addition, in this battle the Amalekites used some "dirty tactics." So, typically in war they say, there are "rules of engagement" – the soldiers fight one another. But not Amalek. Amalek was cruel. The bible says this about how they attacked the Israelites:

When you were weary and worn out, they met you on your journey and attacked all who were lagging behind; they had no fear of God (Deut 25: 18).

So, what you have here is soldiers who are not following typical rules of war – fighting fellow soldiers, but sneaky and cruel soldiers who have been lying in wait, in ambush, watching the stronger ones at the front pass by and then like a prowling lion– attack the ones weakest and unable to defend themselves. Think of it, if you have a group of more than 600,000 people, which was the estimated

number of the Israelites minus women and children – you can expect that there will be within this group:

- The old;
- The sick;
- Pregnant and nursing mothers; and
- Young children.

Now, here is perhaps the cruellest thing about this battle and the reason the bible passage said that the Amalekites had “no fear of God” (Deut 25:18):

These Amalekites who were the first to attack the Israelites, were their relatives – akin to a brother!

Genesis 36 refers to the descendants of Amalek, the son of Eliphaz and grandson of Esau, as Amalekites (verses 12 and 16). This is fundamental to understand why the Amalekites had no “fear of God.”

So, we typically know of God introducing himself as “the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob.” Well, Isaac had two sons:

- Esau – who was the ancestor of the Amalekites; and
- Jacob – who God renamed Israel and so was the ancestor of the Israelites who had left Egypt.

Esau hated his brother Jacob and so it seems the hatred was carried on in the blood line and so the Amalekites, who remember were also descendants of Abraham and Isaac – heirs of promise, SHOULD have known God. They should have known the stories – for example how Abraham received God’s promises, how Isaac was almost sacrificed and a lamb was given in his place. Even how God had delivered the Israelites from Pharaoh’s hand.

They would have known the stories – of the ten plagues on Israel, of the Passover, of the cloud by day and fire by night protecting Israel.

They should have known these stories and loved God or at least respected him enough to leave his first-born son, the Israelites alone BUT unlike Jacob and his descendants who had come closer to God and kept the promises from Abraham and Isaac, the descendants of Esau rebelled and hated God and so the Amalekites in attacking their brothers the Israelites, were showing that they didn’t care about God and hence they had no fear of God.

This attack by Amalek was therefore not really an attack on the Israelites. In the physical it was a war between Amalek and Israel but really it was a spiritual attack by Satan the prowling lion – attacking God so he could destroy God’s holy seed.

If you read other parts of the Bible, you will realize that Amalek's hatred of Israel was almost certainly Satanic. Many other parts of the Bible show just how much they hated Israel, like they were their arch enemy and even after this battle at Rephidim, their enmity continued for hundreds of years for exampleⁱ:

- Joining with the Canaanites and attacking the Israelites at Hormar (Numbers 14:45);
- They banded with the Moabites (Judges 3:13) and the Midianites (Judges 6:3) to wage war on the Israelites. They were responsible for the repeated destruction of the Israelites' land and food supply;
- An Amalekite raid on David's temporary home in the village of Ziklag – where they carried off women and children including David's 2 wives (1 Samuel 30); and finally
- 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).

The Amalekites were therefore so evil that their entire seed was bent on hatred – and hence I can finally understand why the Lord even over 400 years after Joshua's story above gave King Saul a seemingly cruel instruction to destroy the entire seed of Amalek (including women and Children and livestock) in 1 Samuel 15: 2-3. If you read this story, you will hopefully realize like I did that God who can see the past, present and future had no doubt tried to get the Amalekites to repent, but they rejected him over and over and even after King Saul failed to wipe them out, we see that they were not repentant but tried to wipe God's people out until God finally destroyed them about 1,000 years later in the book of Esther where we see the story of Haman the Agagite (a descendant of King Agag, an Amalekite) being hung from the gallows as proof that God finally wins his enemies – even if it takes hundreds of years.

The Israelites in this story represent you and I – we are often delivered by God from slavery - our sins but often, just as we are just starting to learn God and his ways – we are attacked when we are too weak to defend ourselves. We are attacked by someone who should have been close to us – our brother, our wife, a beloved friend. Instead of being the first to cheer us on, they are the first to betray us, but we should take heart for this fight is a spiritual attack by Satan our enemy, who was honoured by God and instead of loving God, betrayed God by causing rebellion among the angels.

Moses and the other Characters

In this battle, there are other characters to quickly highlight:

- **Moses.** He was the Leader of the Israelites. He had formerly been a prince in Egypt and had performed miracles in Egypt using the staff of God, the one he had in the battle against Amalekite. Moses was God's representative to the people
- **Aaron** – A brother to Moses who acted as the spokesman or “Prophet.” He had performed miracles in Egypt with Moses. He was later appointed as high priest.
- **Hur** – A leader from the tribe of Judah and close associate to Moses, likely a trusted friend. The bible also shows that he was the grandfather of Bezalel – the one who later constructed the tabernacle. ⁱⁱ
- **Joshua** – He was Moses' aide or personal assistant. He was faithful to God and trustworthy. He later became Moses' successor who led the Israelites into the Promised Land.

In this story, we see that when Moses was tired, the Israelites lost the battle, until Hur and Aaron helped to steady his hands – including the one holding the rod of God. In your life you will typically have a pastor, parent, guardian, grandparent, or similar leader. Someone who loves you, who prays for you, who wants to see you succeed. This person or “a Moses,” together with their assistants, akin to Aaron and Hur are “standing in the gap” for you or providing what is called a “spiritual covering.”

The leader and his associates in your spiritual life are watching over you from the “top of the hill” – make sure to honour them, to respect them, to obey their commands for in the story we see that the bible says: *“So Joshua fought the Amalekites as Moses had ordered”*

The language used here of Joshua following Moses' order represents the discipline of a soldier in battle. Joshua as the army commander respected orders from Moses, the Commander in Chief. Do you respect orders? Do you have spiritual discipline like a soldier on duty?

Now let me tell you the interesting thing about Joshua. Despite Joshua following Moses' order, Joshua was likely timid for after Moses died and Joshua became the leader of the Israelites, the bible records 3 times that God told Joshua to be “strong and courageous”. 3 times!

*No one will be able to stand against you all the days of your life. As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will never leave you nor forsake you. **Be strong and courageous**, because you will lead these people to inherit the land I swore to their ancestors to give them.*

*“**Be strong and very courageous.** Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go. **8** Keep this Book of the Law always on your lips; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful. Have I not commanded you? **Be strong and courageous.** Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.” Joshua 1: 5-9 (NIV).*

The character of Joshua should tell you that even when you are afraid, you should obey God's commands given to you, including through leaders. Many think that those who are courageous have

no fear. That is not true. Many honest leaders will tell you that courage is not the absence of fear – but it's the ability to take action INSPITE of the fear.

Remember that Joshua – just like the other Israelites had been a slave in Egypt but unlike them, he had been bold enough to come closer to God – while others stayed far away. We can see Joshua's courage in being near God, even when likely timid in other places.

The LORD would speak to Moses face to face, as one speaks to a friend. Then Moses would return to the camp, but his young aide Joshua son of Nun did not leave the tent. Exodus 33: 11(NIV).

The ones who win the battles, therefore under the guidance of their spiritual or other leaders often learn to know God for themselves – not just the God of their leader, but God becomes their own God and they learn like Joshua – refusing to leave God's presence. Seeking to know him, just like their own leader knew him.

Symbolism of the banner

Having understood that the Amalekites attacking Israel were just a physical representation of the spiritual war between God and his enemy Satan, you can now start understanding the meaning of what Moses said in Exodus 17: 15-16:

The LORD is my Banner. He said, "Because hands were lifted up against the throne of the LORD

Amalek was not really fighting the Israelites. They were rebelling against the throne of God. They lifted up their hands, their fists in rebellion against God by attacking Israel his first-born son.

God in return took action to protect his family – he used Moses' lifted hands as a symbol of God's banner of protection over his people.

A banner is therefore like a flag, it shows that you are in the country of God, in the family of God and because you fly under his banner or his flag – he is committed to protect you.

A person who therefore says "The Lord is my Banner" can in today's world be taken as akin to someone who says a pledge of allegiance or an affirmation of loyalty to a country.

As an example, in America, the pledge of allegiance is often recited by patriots. It was first written by an army Captain after the American Civil war which was fought to abolish Slavery. It goes thus:

"I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all."ⁱⁱⁱ

In a pledge of allegiance – there is a commitment to live by the values of the country for which the flag or banner flies BUT there is also an implicit agreement that they will defend that country from enemies, if need be!

A flag in modern day countries could therefore be equivalent to a banner and thus if you can understand the importance of honouring the flag of a physical country, then likewise you can understand that spiritually as a soldier in the army of God, you should honour or pledge allegiance to God and his Kingdom and so the banner you fly also represents the victory God gives you over an enemy.

You might therefore be fighting a battle today and it might seem you are losing, but take heart, because God's banner is over you and your family, you are certainly receiving help from on high even if sometimes it FEELS like you are losing.

Just like Moses held up the rod of God and Joshua won the battle, even if sometimes they seemed to be losing – so in battle, remember that there is a great cloud of witnesses - a Moses, an Aaron and a Hur not counting God himself and the angels, watching over you – cheering you on, praying for you and holding up a symbol for you to see that ultimately it is God who is fighting for you. If you understand that you are flying under God's banner, you can have confidence that God will not let you lose for as his soldier, you can't lose – because God can't lose.

Finally, in the story we also see that the story of this battle is supposed to be a “memorial for Joshua” This is important because many times, when God helps us win our first battle at the time when we are weak, and then we later on win other battles, sometimes we forget that even then, God is still the one who wins our battles – even as we become stronger.

Keeping a record of your victory and particularly having a “memorial” of the Lord as your banner keeps you humble – so you do not forget the one who ultimately wins battles for you.

I believe that recording a memorial for Joshua is perhaps why, I believe a pre incarnate Jesus physically came to Joshua later^{iv}, over 40 years later when he was finally in the promised land. He likely came to remind him that it was He (IAM) who was still his leader. The story is recorded thus:

When Joshua was by Jericho, he lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, a man was standing before him with his drawn sword in his hand. And Joshua went to him and said to him, “Are you for us, or for our adversaries?” And he said, “No; but I am the commander of the army of the Lord. Now I have come.” And Joshua fell on his face to the earth and worshiped and said to him, “What does my lord say to his servant?” And the commander of the Lord's army said to Joshua, “Take off your sandals from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy.” And Joshua did so. Joshua 5: 13-15 (ESV).

I love this particular story because in those early years when I had just gotten saved, Jesus the Commander of the Army of the Lord came to me and he told me that on my wedding day, I was to have holy communion with my wife. We would take off our shoes for he would be there – and it was holy ground.

My king, my Lord and my God is not only a commander of the armies of heaven. He is also a loving father and I know this because on the day I got married, he came to me – his son and a soldier in his army and while I held his banner high, he blessed my marriage. Oh, how I wish you would come closer to him and know him – like I do and make him your banner, like I do!

Conclusion

What do you do when your brother, sister or anyone else who should be your friend hates you so much just like Amalek did to the Israelites? What do you especially do when this person is stronger than you, smarter than you, more beautiful than you and uses their gifts to mock you and put you down?

You must leave the battle to the Lord for the battles are not physical – so no you don't wrestle by quarrelling, by defending yourself for we do not wrestle against flesh and blood but principalities and powers in high places. We wrestle by praying to the Lord and he then fights for us.

God used the example of Israel, our first-born brother as an example for us – to show us how much God will fight for us for we too are heirs of God and we too are children and if he fought for our first-born brother, he will fight for us too.

Remember these lessons:

1. **Your enemy will always attack you when you are weak, when you are low.** This enemy is often someone who should have been close to you, your brother. They know the promises of God, like Esau knew God's promises to Abraham and Isaac. They should have received the promise as well – but they hate God and so they hate you – and they will attack you, who they should have loved. For a while it may even seem like the battle is lost for you are the weaker one but somehow it will turn around for you will receive invisible or secret help. Like the God of Israel fought for your older brother, he will fight for you.
2. **Don't compromise with your enemy.** Your enemy hates you because you are favoured and protected by God, just like Israel was protected by God. You represent all they hate and they have no fear of God. So, in the flesh they are attacking you – like Amalek attacked Israel, however in the spirit, they are attacking God and for such enemies – make sure you don't compromise with your enemy for they will not show you mercy. 400 years after Joshua, King Saul was supposed to destroy all the Amalekites but he didn't fully obey the command and

thus another 500 years later, the seed of their enemy (Haman the Agagite) wanted to destroy the nation of the Jews. This should tell you that what seems cruel as a command from God at the time, is actually saving you and your children and the thousands of generations who love you. Don't compromise with the Amaleks around you. God has rejected them for their rebellion, don't compromise with them.

3. **Take comfort that God doesn't forget your enemies and will fight for you.** Even when you are weak or when you are long gone, God will see to it that justice is done and he will fight for you until he destroys your enemy. God does not forget to punish those who hate him as he did for Amalek over 400 years later after Joshua when he asked King Saul to destroy Amalek. Even when Saul did not finish the mission completely, God finally finished the work when Amalek's descendant, Haman the Agagite was hung from the Gallows – so the enemy, Satan will eventually hang from the Gallows! Keep being faithful, keep the faith for God will continue fighting for you until he destroys your enemy completely even when you have forgotten or have been unable to complete the task.
4. **When the Lord gives you a victory over the enemy – you raise a banner.** When God gives you victory -do not forget to build a memorial to him. One way is to write down the victory in a spiritual journal and to even tell your children and others about it, so you don't forget when another war comes. We humans forget and can get proud when we win later battles. Keeping this memorial keeps you humble so you can remember that it is God who won the battle – not you.

The Message Jesus wants me to pass on to you

If you are wondering, who is this “God my banner” – also the Commander of the Army of the Lord and my Lord? I will tell you.

This Commander or Lord is Jesus, the son of God who became a man like us. He was born without sin - born of a virgin, on this earth, when he came as the “God- Man” - Immanuel, he went about doing good and preaching the gospel: “repent for the Kingdom of Heaven is near” (Matthew 4: 17). This kingdom of heaven Jesus spoke of is the inheritance of those who make God their banner. They do this by identifying with his kingdom when they repent of their sins and wash their garments clean in his blood – the blood he shed when he died as a lamb for our sins and then was raised from the dead – and now he is alive forever, seated at the right hand of God – the Majestic King of the Universe.

This good news of being saved from our sin is what causes people like me to raise our banner high and tell others about him! This banner of Jesus I live under however is not just for me, it is for all - as many as God the father calls. He promises that anyone who repents of their sins, will be forgiven and they will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit – who is the guarantee that you will receive the promise of eternal life and a Kingdom with no end where God's banner will fly – forever and ever and ever.

If you believe this and want to make the Lord your banner, then pray this prayer to become a Christian:

"God of heaven, I confess that I am a sinner and have been one since birth, but I have heard that you can make me new, and you sent your son Jesus to die for me. He rose again and it is he who can give me his Holy Spirit. Please forgive me and welcome me into your Kingdom, teach me how to follow you. In Jesus' name, Amen"

Lord Jesus, come, Maranatha!

Notes

ⁱ <https://www.gotquestions.org/Amalekites.html>

ⁱⁱ <https://www.gotquestions.org/Hur-in-the-Bible.html>

ⁱⁱⁱ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pledge_of_Allegiance

^{iv} <https://www.gotquestions.org/commander-army-Lord.html>