

**Series: The Names of God**

**Title: Jehovah-Nissi**

**Text: Exodus 17:15**

### **Introduction**

Only a few weeks elapsed from the time the children of Israel left Marah, the place of bitter waters, till they reached Rephidim. At Rephidim, God will reveal himself as Jehovah Nissi; Jehovah is my banner. Exodus 17:15 says, "And Moses built an altar and called its name, The-LORD-Is-My-Banner; for he said, "Because the LORD has sworn: the LORD *will have* war with Amalek from generation to generation."  
(Exodus 17:15-16 NKJV)

At Marah, God heals the bitter waters and reveals Himself as Jehovah Rophe, the God who heals. The Lord stands alone as the only one who has the remedy for sin and the balm for sorrow and sickness. Our takeaway from last week is that the most miserable and bitter circumstances of our life can become our sweetest memories and treasures when we put our trust in God. Jesus Christ is the Tree of life. He sweetens our lives with living waters. He takes us from Marah to Rophe because of God's great love for us.

From Marah, the people journeyed to the wilderness of Sin. And again, they murmured against Moses, this time because there was no food. God appeared in the cloud and provided the people with manna, which they called the bread of Heaven.

When they came to Rephidim, they found there was no water there. At Marah, the waters were bitter, but at Rephidim, there was no water at all. Exodus Chapter 17 says, "Then all the congregation of the children of Israel set out on their journey from the Wilderness of Sin, according to the commandment of the LORD, and camped in Rephidim; but *there was* no water for the people to drink. Therefore the people contended with Moses, and said, "Give us water, that we may drink." So Moses said to them, "Why do you contend with me? Why do you tempt the LORD?" And the people thirsted there for water, and the people complained against Moses, and said, "Why *is* it you have brought us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst?" So Moses cried out to the LORD, saying, "What shall I do with this people? They are almost ready to stone me!" 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. So he called the name of the place Massah and Meribah, because of the contention of the children of Israel, and because they tempted the LORD, saying, "Is the LORD among us or not?" (Exodus 17:1-7 NKJV)

Verse 3 says, "the people thirsted there for water." Hunger is difficult enough to bear, but the torments of thirst are unbearable. They murmured and threatened Moses because they doubted that God was actually leading Moses at all. They

already forgot the marvelous journey through the Red Sea and the tremendous victory over Pharaoh and his hosts.

They had already forgotten the miraculous healing of Marah's waters! And at the very moment they were receiving the manna from heaven, they questioned God's goodness and even His involvement. "Is the Lord among us, or not?" they asked. But from the rock in Horeb, the rock which the Apostle Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 10:4 was a picture of Christ; God causes waters to spring forth to quench the people's thirst.

Then verse 8 reveals the experience that shows God's love and help for His people as Jehovah Nissi. Israel faces a worse enemy than even hunger and thirst. Their journey would also be contested by human foes as well. Verse 8 says, "Now Amalek came and fought with Israel in Rephidim." (Exodus 17:8 NKJV)

## I. Israel Faces Their Enemies

Verse 9 says, "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." 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. And so it was, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed; and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed. 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. So Joshua defeated Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword." (Exodus 17:9-13 NKJV)

The Amalekites were the descendants of Amalek, a grandson of Esau, according to Genesis 36:12. They were descendants of Isaac, yet they became the persistent enemies of Israel and were a constant menace to their spiritual and national life. In Numbers 24, Balaam calls them "the first of the nations" to oppose Israel. Years later, in Deuteronomy 25, Moses would call upon Israel to "Remember what Amalek did to you on the way as you were coming out of Egypt, 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. 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." (Deuteronomy 25:17-19 NKJV)

In Exodus 17:14, God said, " 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." And Moses built an altar and called its name, The-LORD-Is-My-Banner; for he said, "Because the LORD has sworn: the LORD *will have* war with Amalek from generation to generation." (Exodus 17:14-16 NKJV)

Psalm 34:16 says, "The face of the LORD *is* against those who do evil, To cut off the remembrance of them from the earth." ([Psalms 34:16 NKJV](#))

Centuries later, Samuel came to King Saul with a commission from Jehovah to completely destroy the Amalekites (I Samuel 15:3). But King Saul failed to carry out the command, a decision that led to his own death (I Samuel 15:26-28). Saul was killed on the battlefield at Mount Gilboa by a young man who just happened to be an Amalekite. Saul disobeyed God and spared the Amalekites, but it cost him his own life in the end. It wasn't until the days of King Hezekiah that the command of God was carried out.

When Moses and the Israelites first encountered the Amalekites, they lived with their flocks and herds near Rephidim. Their suspicion and fear caused them to attack this great multitude of strange people from the wilderness. They were determined to prevent them from passing through their territory. At first, they carried out a harassing guerilla campaign against Israel, attacking the weaker, slower people at the rear. But when they thought there wasn't going to be any response, they came out against them in open battle.

They became a barrier to God's purpose and plan when they refused to let Israel pass through the land.

## **II. The Triumph of Israel**

There appears to have been no fear or confusion among Israel during this crisis. Maybe the recent miracle of the water from the rock inspired them with confidence and trust. Maybe it was easier to fight a tangible foe than face the terrors of the wilderness with its hunger and thirst and weariness.

Moses calmly orders Joshua to choose men and go out and fight Amalek. The Amalekites probably, thought they would prevail easily over this rabble of runaway slaves who were without supplies, without arms, and without knowledge of the country. Israel was an ill-equipped and inexperienced mob going out against a well-armed and experienced army. But Amalek was not aware of the secret source of the calm and courage of God's people.

Two other factors also contributed to Israel's confidence. The first was Joshua, whom Moses chose to lead the expedition. Joshua was a leader of inflexible purpose and dominating courage. His name was originally Hoshea, and he was a prince of the tribe of Ephraim (Numbers 13:8). Hoshea means to give deliverance or help. But in Numbers 13:16, Moses changed his name to Joshua, which means Jehovah is our help or salvation.

The second factor was, of course, Moses. Moses was vindicated in the eyes of the people when he struck the rock with his rod to bring the waters gushing out. To encourage Joshua and the fighting men, Moses takes his position on a hill with the rod of God in his hand. Israel prevailed as long as Moses held up his hands during

the battle, but Amalek prevailed when his hands were lowered. When Moses' hands grew tired, Aaron and Hur held them up. Israel was victorious and defeated the Amalekites.

In Moses' hand was the rod of God. It was the God-given rod, the wonder-working rod, the rod which brought the terrible plagues upon Egypt, that opened a path through the Red Sea for the deliverance of Israel. It was the rod of God's mighty hand and outstretched arm, the rod of the Elohim. Whether Amalek acknowledged it or not, the Elohim, the name associated with God's creative glory, might, and sovereignty is the name used here.

This rod is the banner of God, which brought the victory. What was the meaning then of Amalek's success when it was lowered and Israel's success when it was raised. It was to deeply impress upon Israel that our victory depends upon God and that under His raised banner, victory is always assured. No matter what the odds, if Jehovah decrees it, victory is assured.

A banner, in ancient times, was not necessarily a flag. Often it was a bare pole with a bright shining ornament that glistened in the sun. It was the standard that stood for God's cause and His battle. It was a sign of deliverance and salvation. It is the word used by the psalmist as "lift up" in the expression "LORD, lift up the light of Your countenance upon us." (Psalm 4:6).

So, Joshua, as Jehovah is salvation; Moses with the rod of Elohim held in upraised hands as God's banner over them, and the light of God's countenance upon them were the symbols of Israel's victory.

### III. Israel Is Our Example

Israel is our Example. God is always interested in the welfare of His saints. Israel's experience in battle is a picture of our own spiritual warfare. Amalek is a picture of those who oppose God's plan for your life and His Church. Moses says there is always a hand upon or against God, and God will have to war against Amalek from generation to generation. 1 John 5:19 says, "We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies *under the sway of the wicked one.*" (1 John 5:19 NKJV) 1 John 2:16 tells us the characteristics of the things that cause wickedness are; the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.

Amalek was a grandson of Esau. And we know that Esau despised spiritual things and preferred a bowl of pottage to the spiritual birthright. Amalek was the first enemy to oppose Israel following her deliverance from Egyptian bondage.

Israel's crossing of the Red Sea is a picture of redemption and baptism. As Israel begins her journey to the Promised Land, she partakes of the spiritual meat, represented by the manna, and she drinks the water from the spiritual rock, which represents Christ.

The apostle Paul says that, in the flesh, there is no good thing and that the flesh wars against our mind and seeks to bring us into captivity to itself (Romans 7:23). The flesh and its lusts must be crucified daily for us to keep our hearts and minds pure. (Galatians 5:24). James 4:4 asks, "Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God."

The world is at war with God. The kingdoms of this world have not yet become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ (Revelation 11:15). Amalek represents the kingdom of darkness that wars against the kingdom of light. It is the struggle of evil against good, the lie against the truth. Jehovah is God, who lifts up a righteous standard against the nations.

Behind every outward manifestation of conflict, the battle is essentially spiritual. Ephesians 6:12 says, "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*." (Ephesians 6:12 NKJV)

## Conclusion

There is a striking contrast between the experience at the Red Sea and the experience at Rephidim. At the Red Sea, the children of Israel were terrified at the sight of Pharaoh's hosts coming upon them, and the way of escape was blocked. But they were commanded to "stand still" and see the salvation of Jehovah" (Exodus 14:13). God is the only one who can do the work of redemption and salvation in your life. We can do nothing to secure our salvation.

But once we experience deliverance from sin and are introduced to new life in Christ, Satan appears to wage warfare against us. The Holy Spirit encouraged us to fight the good fight of faith, and He will give us the victory. At Rephidim, a redeemed people must fight the good fight of faith (II Timothy 4:7). However, we cannot wage this warfare in our own strength alone.

When Moses' arms grew weary, the rod of God was lowered. The rod was the symbol and pledge of God's presence and power. Lowered, the rod could not be seen. When the standard of God is lowered, evil prevails. Moses learned how indispensable God's presence was for victory and success, but Israel forgot.

Israel was denied entrance into the Promised Land at Kadesh Barnea because they failed in faith and believed the evil report of the ten spies. When they attempted to enter Canaan on their own, Moses told them: "Don't go up, for God is not with you." But they went anyway and were defeated and chased out by the very Amalekites they had defeated at Rephidim (Numbers 14:42-45).

In our own Christian journey, we cannot do anything without God. We must put on the whole armor of God and go confidently forth to defeat the enemy (Ephesians 6:10-12). When Israel saw the banner of God, they were assured victory.

Deuteronomy 20 says that before every battle, the priest would approach the people and say, "Hear, O Israel: Today you are on the verge of battle with your enemies. Do not let your heart faint, do not be afraid, and do not tremble or be terrified because of them; for the LORD your God *is* He who goes with you, to fight for you against your enemies, to save you." (Deuteronomy 20:3-4 NKJV)

Psalms 118:6 says, "The LORD *is* on my side; I will not fear. What can man do to me?" (Psalms 118:6 NKJV) The rod in Moses' hand was only a symbol. Moses called the name of the altar he built, Jehovah Nissi; Jehovah, Himself, is my banner. Isaiah predicts the rod to come forth out of the stem of Jesse; King David's father is Jesus Christ.

Jesus is our banner. The cross is our rod of God's mighty power in redemption. Jesus said, "In the world, you will have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." (John 16:33 NKJV)

Our faith in Him is the assurance of our victory. It is the victory that overcomes the world. (I John 5:4). "If God is for us, who can be against us?" For "we are more than conquerors through him that loved us" (Romans 8:31, 37). "Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory" (I Corinthians 15:57) and "always causes us to triumph in Christ" (II Corinthians 2:14).

Don't live your life under your own banner; say, "Jehovah Nissi! The Lord is my banner!