

“Then Came Amalek, and Fought With Israel.”

Ex. 17:8-16. *“Then came Amalek, and fought with Israel in Rephidim.”* The story of Amalek is one of the most remarkable accounts in all the Bible, and is in many ways unique to our own experience. The certain doom of extermination (i.e., the dreaded fate of Genocide!) was commanded by God for the Amalekite nation, just because of what they did to God’s feeble people – just as they had hardly begun to make their way with great difficulty from Egypt through the Red Sea to the Promised Land. This may be the greatest and most important lesson of all for us to take from the fascinating story of Amalek. Indeed, God Almighty’s decree for the utter annihilation of the whole Amalekite nation has historically been more than many commentators could swallow.

Dr. Robert Jamieson: *“The doom of extermination denounced against the Amalekites has been a great difficulty in the way of establishing the historical truth of this book; Rationalistic and infidel writers declaring it to be irreconcilable with the benevolence of the Divine character and government.”* In other words, God is too good a God to condemn a nation to complete annihilation (i.e., to bloody Genocide). Hogwash! I tell you, Beloved, if Dr. Jamieson had stopped there, I was prepared to throw all his books away. If Dr. Jamieson had suffered nearly as much as we have at the hands of our modern Amalekites, he would not think for a minute that Genocide – utter annihilation – was too harsh a penalty upon Amalek. Not harsh enough, would be closer to our sentiments. But Jamieson goes on to somewhat redeem himself in our eyes; by the following remarkable exposition; to wit: *“But it must be borne in mind,”* he says, *“that, although the attack upon Israel by Amalek was cruel, treacherous, and altogether unprovoked, it was not the baseness and implacable hostility of Amalek, but their daring impiety, which drew down upon them the vengeance of heaven (Deut. 25:17). ‘The attack, in respect both to the time and the circumstances, must have been intended by the Amalekites, as well as considered by the Israelites, as a direct insult to the majesty of Jehovah, in his character of peculiar guardian and immediate Lord of this, His chosen people.’”*

This attack was in direct and contemptuous defiance of the power and majesty of God as the Keeper and Defender of His Chosen People (i.e., His Elect). This attack was shortly after the whole world had witnessed God’s miraculous power in the series of 10 horrendous plagues upon Egypt culminating in the death of all the first-born; and the whole world had witnessed the amazing parting of the Red Sea for Israel to escape on dry land, and the death by drowning of Pharaoh and his entire army (i.e., the total destruction of the world’s only superpower for centuries of time) – all at the hands of that sovereign, almighty God who had sworn for 500 years to deliver His Chosen People out of Egyptian bondage and lead them through the Wilderness and place them in Canaan, the Promised Land.

“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.” (Deuteronomy 25:17-18)

JEHOVAH-NISSI – The Lord our Banner

I say, the whole world had witnessed – very recently, the last few weeks or a couple of months at most – these amazing demonstrations of the Power of God to Save and Keep His Own. THAT’S Jehovah-Nissi – the Lord our Banner (**Ex. 17:15**). THAT’S the main job of God Almighty – HE SAYS! For His own infinitely wise and glorious reasons, THAT’S God’s supreme accomplishment – to call out of the corrupt mass of mankind a People for His Name (**Acts 15:14**), and lead them safely to glory through many impossible circumstances.

Nobody knows for sure just exactly who these Amalekites were. This is an amazing story. They certainly were not a mere wandering band of Bedouins who just decided on a whim to pick a fight with these raggedy Jews. Hear **Dr. Jamieson** again: *“The attack, therefore, made upon Israel by this fierce Bedouin tribe was altogether unprovoked and gratuitous; and whatever was their impelling motive, they seem to have PREMEDITATED A SYSTEMATIC, OBSTINATE, AND EXTERMINATING CONTEST. At all events, it is evident that the assailing force was not some stray parties who had unexpectedly fallen in with the advancing hosts of Israel; but that it comprised the full strength of the Amalekite nation.”*

Who are these Amalekites? A few weeks after Israel leaves Egypt, bound for the Promised Land, WHAM! *“Then came Amalek.”* Amalek was no part of that Promised Land of Canaan, which was promised to Israel by the Lord God, and hence Israel was no threat to Amalek. Nor were Israelites wanting to pass through the country of the Amalekites, as was the case with Sihon and Og. I ask, Who put the burr under Amalek’s saddle? as they say. What bone does Amalek have to pick with Israel? as they say. What’s the beef? Do they want Israel’s wealth? – even all the treasure of Egypt, which the Israelites scarfed up by the clever ruse of “borrowing” the loot from the Egyptians just before they left town, as they say. How would Amalek know about that?, as it happened in private transactions just before Israel hurriedly left Egypt, just a few weeks at most before Amalek’s dastardly attack upon Israel. See, **Ex. 12:34,35**; to-wit: *“And the children of Israel did according to the word of Moses; and they borrowed of the Egyptians jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment; And the Lord gave the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they lent unto them such things as they required. And they spoiled the Egyptians.”* **Ex. 12:34,35.**

So, back to the question: What was Amalek’s beef with Israel? Was Amalek mad with Israel because Amalek was the grandson of Esau who was cheated out of his birthright by Israel (aka, Jacob)? **Gen. 25:33.** Almost all commentators say so. E.g., **Matthew Henry**: *“The Amalekites were the posterity of Esau, who hated Jacob because of the birthright and blessing, and this was an effort (i.e., the attack on Israel) of the hereditary enmity, a malice that ran in the blood.”*

As I say, nearly all Bible commentators agree with this simplistic view (Jamieson, Fausset & Brown, Scofield, Trapp, Broadman & Holman) – EXCEPT – **John Gill**; to wit: *“These Amalekites (about 1,500 B.C.) were not the posterity of Esau (from Shem)...but these were the descendants of Cush (i.e., Black, from Ham), and the same with those who were (already a large nation) in Abraham’s time (about 2,000 B.C.), long before Amalek the grandson of Esau was even born. Gen. 14:7;”* (to wit: *‘And they [Chedorlaomer and his three confederate*

kings who fought with Abraham over his nephew Lot's captivity] returned and smote all the country of the Amalekites.').

So, by simply comparing the Hamitic (Cush, Black) "Amalekites" of **Gen. 14:7** (2,000 B.C.) with that white Semitic "Amalek" who was the grandson of Esau of **Gen. 36:12**, proves that THIS Amalek's attack upon Israel was not motivated by ancient bad blood of Esau against Israel for stealing his birthright.

We are back to the problem: What was Amalek's motive?: "***Then came Amalek, and fought with Israel.***" (**Ex. 17:8**) Indeed, **Dr. Gill** hit the nail on the head: "*What should move the Amalekites to come and fight with them, IS NOT EASY TO SAY.*" The right answer to that question may explain the great wrath of God in His pronounced determination to utterly exterminate the Amalekites from the face of the earth – Genocide indeed.

Dr. Jamieson may come closest to unlocking the mystery; to wit: "*Considering that the Amalekites were the first – (see, **Num. 24:20**, Balaam's prophesy: "***Amalek was the first of the nations [to attack Israel in the Wars of the Lord]; but his latter end shall be that he perish for ever.***") – to oppose the march of the Israelites after the miraculous passage of the Red Sea, their assault was a mean, dastardly, insidious surprise on the rear (**Num. 24:20; Deut. 25:17**), and AN IMPIOUS DEFIANCE OF GOD.*" Mark those words: An Impious Defiance of God!

Then add these revealing words from **Dr. Jamieson**: "*But it must be borne in mind, that, although the attack upon Israel was cruel, treacherous, and altogether unprovoked, it was not the baseness and implacable hostility of Amalek, BUT THEIR DARING IMPIETY – (mark those words: But Their Daring Impiety!) – which drew down upon them the vengeance of heaven (**Deut. 25:17**).*"

And, these words from **Graves**, 'On the Pentateuch:' "*The attack, in respect both to the time and the circumstances, must have been intended by the Amalekites, as well as considered by the Israelites, as A DIRECT INSULT TO THE MAJESTY OF JEHOVAH, (BANG!) IN HIS CHARACTER OF PECULIAR GUARDIAN AND IMMEDIATE LORD OF THIS CHOSEN PEOPLE...(BANG!) It was A CONTEMPTUOUS DEFIANCE OF THE POWER AND MAJESTY OF GOD*" – AS THAT POWER AND MAJESTY IS MANIFESTED IN THE WORLDWIDE PUBLIC DISPLAY OF DELIVERING HIS PEOPLE FROM EGYPTIAN BONDAGE AND LEADING THEM SAFELY TO GLORY.

Now see the text at **Ex. 17:8-16**:

“Then came Amalek, and fought with Israel in Rephidim. 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 the 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 the sword. 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.” Ex. 17:8-16.

The Septuagint renders the end of this passage as follows: “The Lord has sworn by Himself, My hand upon the throne of God; By a concealed and unseen hand the Lord will war against Amalek.”

And this text at Deut. 25:17-19:

“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. Therefore it shall be, when the Lord thy God hath given thee rest from all thine enemies round about, in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee for an inheritance to possess it, that thou shalt blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven; thou shalt not forget it.” Deut. 26:17-19.

About 500 years later, Israel had not obeyed God’s order to annihilate Amalek, and the Amalekites had multiplied; and so God renewed the order, making it crystal clear to King Saul; to wit: *“Thus saith the Lord of hosts, I remember that which Amalek did to Israel, how he laid wait for him in the way, when he came up from Egypt. Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass.” 1 Sam. 15:2,3.* Saul – with 210,000 troops – disobeyed the order. It was therefore an Amalekite who slew the wounded King Saul on the battlefield, (2 Sam. 1:10) and a strong band of Amalekites who sacked Ziklag, the city of David’s exile. 1 Sam. 30:1,2.

There are multiple valuable lessons for us in tracking the story of Amalek through the Bible. Probably the most valuable is this: Beloved, we are ripe for attacks by Amalek. We are high profile worldwide as the Elect of God, supernaturally called out of a corrupt mass to deliver God’s message of doom, even as we are amazingly kept and delivered from every evil work – just as Israel – out of Egypt, through the Red Sea, and bound for Canaan – all of which is God Almighty’s main business, and by which He displays His sovereign grace and power as He does in no other way; and hence, Satan plots and schemes to attack us when and where we are weak and vulnerable, so as thereby to attempt to thwart, frustrate, and destroy that signal display of God’s sovereignty. Nothing else so enrages the Lord God Almighty, and for which He pronounces the ultimate penalty of Genocide upon all our Amalekites. We must be prepared, Beloved, and ready to respond at every hour of every day, until we reach the Promised Land – to wage the Holy War – upon hearing the ever-familiar and famous call to arms; to wit: *“Then came Amalek, and fought with Israel.” Amen.*