



Yeshiva University
THE RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS-HERENSTEIN
CENTER FOR VALUES AND LEADERSHIP

Holding Each Other Up in Crisis
Dr. Erica Brown



What are you noticing in this painting?

Shemot 17:8-16

וַיָּבֹא עֲמֹלֵק וַיִּלָּחֶם עִם־יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּרַפִּידִם:
וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶל־יְהוָה שֶׁלֹּא בְחַר־לָנוּ אֲנָשִׁים וַצֵּא הַלָּחֶם בְּעַמְלֵק מִחֹר אֲנֹכִי נֹצֵב עַל־רֹאשׁ הַגְּבָעָה וּמִטָּה הָאֵלִים בְּיָדֵי:
וַיַּעַשׂ יְהוָה כְּפֶה־אֲשֶׁר אָמַר־לוֹ מֹשֶׁה לְהִלָּחֶם בְּעַמְלֵק וּמֹשֶׁה אֶהְרֶן וְחֹזֵר עָלָיו רֹאשׁ הַגְּבָעָה:
וְהָיָה כַּאֲשֶׁר יָרִים מֹשֶׁה יָדוֹ וְגִבֹר יִשְׂרָאֵל וּכְאֲשֶׁר יִגִּיד יְדוֹ וְגִבֹר עַמְלֵק:
וַיְדִי מֹשֶׁה כַּבָּדִים וַיִּקְחוּ־אֹבֹן וַיַּעֲשִׂימוּ תַחְתֵּיו וַיִּשָּׁב עָלֶיהָ וְאֶהְרֶן וְחֹזֵר תָּמְכוּ בְיָדָיו מִזֶּה אַחַד וּמִזֶּה אַחַד וַיְהִי יָדָיו אֲמוּנָה
עַד־כָּא הַשָּׁמֶשׁ:
וַיִּחַלֵּשׁ יְהוָה עַתְּ־עַמְלֵק וְאֶת־עַמּוֹ לְפִי־הָהָרֵב:
וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה כְּתֹב זֶאת זָכְרוֹן בְּסֵפֶר וְשִׂים בְּאָזְנִי יְהוָה שֶׁלֹּא עָמְלֵק אֶמְחָה אֶת־זָכְרֵךְ עַמְלֵק מִתַּחַת הַשָּׁמַיִם:
וַיִּבֶן מֹשֶׁה מִזְבֵּחַ וַיִּקְרָא שְׁמוֹ יְהוָה נָסִי:
וַיֹּאמֶר כִּי־יָד עַל־כַּסֵּ לֵה מִלְחָמָה לִיהוּ בְּעַמְלֵק מִדֹר דָּר

Amalek came and fought with Israel at Rephidim. Moses said to Joshua, “Pick some troops for us, and go out and do battle with Amalek. Tomorrow, I will station myself on the top of the hill, with the rod of God in my hand.” Joshua did as Moses told him and fought with Amalek, while Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill. Then, whenever Moses held up his hand, Israel prevailed; but whenever he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed. But Moses’ hands grew heavy; so they took a stone and put it under him and he sat on it, while Aaron and Hur, one on each side, supported his hands; thus his hands remained steady until the sun set. And Joshua overwhelmed the people of Amalek with the sword. Then ה' said to Moses, “Inscribe this in a document as a reminder, and read it aloud to Joshua: I will utterly blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven!” And Moses built an altar and named it Adonai-nissi. He said, “It means, ‘Hand upon the throne of ה' ’! ה' will be at war with Amalek throughout the ages.”

Text Questions

1. This occurs only two chapters after *Bnei Yisrael*, the Israelites, were saved and the Egyptians pursuing them were killed. Can you think of other examples in *Tanakh* or in modern Israeli history where deliverance/salvation is followed by crisis? Why do you think this is so often the case?
2. Discuss the symbols in these verses: the hill, the staff, and the stone.
3. Why must Moshe specifically write this all down?
4. Who works the hardest in this story?

Reflective Questions

1. When you are down or in crisis, what holds you up?
2. Who holds you up?
3. Who can you be holding up right now?