

Bible Studies for Life: July 21

Aaron and Hur • Exodus 17:8-13; 24:13-15

By Jessica McMillan



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Exodus 17:8-10

Following the miracle where God brought water from a rock to quench the thirst of the hot, tired, and grumbling Israelites, the Amalekites, who were desert nomads, brought an unprovoked attack on the Israelites by attacking them from behind (Deut. 25:17-18). Moses put Joshua in charge of leading the troops in battle and indicated that he would “stand on top of the hill with the staff of God in my hands” (v. 9). Joshua did what he was asked, and Moses went to the top of the hill. Accompanying him were his older brother Aaron, who was also high priest of the Israelites, and Hur, who likely also held authoritative influence over the people. Moses could have stayed back at a command post, but that was not his style. When Moses called his leaders into the difficult circumstances of this unforeseen battle against the Amalekites, he stayed with them.

Exodus 17:11-13

Being on top of the hill served two purposes. Not only did they have a clear view, but the elevation allowed others to see them as well. The rod of God lifted by Moses meant that “the Israelites were winning, but whenever he lowered his hands, the Amalekites were winning” (v. 11 NIV). If you have ever tried to lift something for any amount of time, you have experienced the shaking, the pain, and the exhaustion that

soon sets in when blood doesn't flow as intended. Unable to continue to lift the rod, Aaron and Hur first had him sit on a rock, but Moses still struggled. Finally, they each took a side and held his arms up so that Moses's hands "remained steady till sunset" (v. 12 NIV). Joshua was able to lead the troops to victory over the Amalekites. When Moses was exhausted beyond his ability to function, God provided support in just the way he needed to be able to complete the task before him.

Exodus 24:13-15

Some time later, Moses went up the mountain to meet with God, leaving Aaron and Hur in charge of settling disputes between the Israelites. While they seemed to be dependable enough for this task, it wasn't long until Aaron approved the building of the golden calf in response to the people's desire for "the gods who will go before us" (Exodus 32:1 NIV) since Moses had not yet returned. Hur is not mentioned in the golden calf scenario, and Jewish tradition holds that he might have been killed trying to stop the idolatry. While there is no way to be sure of the whereabouts of Hur, we can be certain that Aaron was not faithful nor dependable in Moses' absence. Both Aaron and the Israelites would suffer a consequence for their sin, but God was still firmly in control, providing for them even though they complained, in order to accomplish His purpose through them.

There are several great lessons from this story. Sometimes we find ourselves as leaders and sometimes as followers. As leaders, we can take comfort in knowing that unforeseen difficulties do not mean that God has withdrawn His presence from us. As followers, we can be a blessing to those in leadership over us by being supportive and trustworthy. But if Old Testament stories point to Christ, where do we see it in this story? Some scholars believe the account of Moses, Aaron, and Hur is a foreshadowing of Jesus's crucifixion. Moses is on a hill with his hands outstretched, had a man on either side.

Jesus also is on a hill with his hands outstretched with a man on either side. While there is no way to know for sure if this interpretation is correct, we can certainly see in God's character that He knows our human limitations and provides what we need. In our complete and utter lostness, He provided Christ for our salvation.

McMillan is a member of Prentiss Church, Prentiss.