

What Flag Do You Look To?

What comes to mind when you think of flags?

Most of us think of a country or state. But for much of history, flags were not symbols of their countries, but ways of communicating or pulling people together.

Of course, even today the United States flag has a way of pulling people together—or dividing them. Consider how many political hopefuls wave the American flag, hoping to get people to rally around the flag—and by association rally around them as a candidate.

Military campaigns have often included flags as rallying points for the troops.



The Gadsden flag used during the Revolutionary War for the country's first company of Marines



Flag flown by Texans in 1831 as a symbol of defiance against the Mexican government.



Flag used by the first African-American regiment in the Civil war: the 54th Regiment Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry

Even today, groups create flags as a way of communicating their views and getting people to rally behind them. The Tea Party has resurrected the Gadsden Flag. Homosexuals wave a rainbow flag.

In battle, seeing the flag waving has a way of motivating the troops to keep fighting, to move forward, and to not give up. It's a visual reminder that we are not defeated and we are still in the battle.

When the Israelites first began their wilderness journey, they also had a flag—a banner—they rallied around. In the earliest days of their travels,

they were attacked by the Amalekites. Men, who weeks earlier had been slaves, were now warriors fighting for their lives.

"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" (Ex. 17: 10-13).

So what was their flag? It was the staff Moses held up for all to see. The staff is not explicitly mentioned in this account, but it was a constant companion to Moses. It is natural to assume that as Moses held up his hands, he was holding this staff.



The staff was a symbol of God's presence with Moses—and thus with the people. Moses held up this "banner" to rally the Israelites and remind them that God was with them. As a response to God's victory, Moses led the people to acknowledge God's presence and help.

"Moses built an altar and called it The Lord is my Banner." (v. 15).

That's a flag worth rallying around. In those moments when circumstances try to drag us down ... when we feel attacked when we tire of the onslaught of life, remember this flag: **the gracious, loving powerful presence of God.**

"But those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint" (Isa. 40:31).