

Dealing With Crisis – David Hamelekh as a Model

How does soon-to-be King David deal with crisis? And what can we learn from him about coping in difficult times?

By Rabbi Dr. Shuky Reiss, Tanakh Department Head

1 Shmuel, Chapter 30 - https://www.sefaria.org/l_Samuel.30?lang=bi

King David is presented in the Tanakh as a figure who is successful in coping in times of crisis and distress – both on an individual level and as a leader. One of the most difficult events experienced by David was the Amalekite invasion of Ziklag, in which the city was destroyed and his men’s families were taken captive:

<p>1 And it came to pass, when David and his men were come to Žiqlag on the third day, that the 'Amaleqi had raided the Negev, and Žiqlag, and had smitten Žiqlag, and had burned it with fire; 2 and had taken the women captives, that were there both great and small: they slew not any, but carried them away, and went on their way 3 When David and his men came to the town and found it burned down, and their wives and sons and daughters taken captive 4 David and the troops with him broke into tears, until they had no strength left for weeping. 5 David’s two wives had been taken captive, Ahinoam of Jezreel and Abigail wife of Nabal from Carmel. 6 David was in great danger, for the troops threatened to stone him; for all the troops were embittered on account of their sons and daughters. But David sought strength in the LORD his God.</p>	<p>(א) וַיְהִי כַּבָּא דְּיָוֵד וְאֶנְשָׁיו עֲקֵלָג בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁלִישִׁי וַעֲמֻלְקִי פָּשְׁטוּ אֶל-נֶגֶב וְאֶל-עֲקֵלָג וַיִּבְּאוּ אֶת-עֲקֵלָג וַיִּשְׂרְפוּ אֹתָהּ בְּאֵשׁ: (ב) וַיִּשְׁבּוּ אֶת-הַנְּשִׂיִם אֲשֶׁר-בָּהּ מִקֶּטָן וְעַד-גָּדוֹל לֹא הָמִיתוּ אִישׁ וַיִּנְהֲגוּ וַיִּלְכְּדוּ לְדַרְכָּם: (ג) וַיָּבֹאוּ יָוֵד וְאֶנְשָׁיו אֶל-הָעִיר וְהִנֵּה שְׂרוּפָה בְּאֵשׁ וְנָשֵׂיהֶם וּבָנֵיהֶם וּבְנֹתֵיהֶם נִשְׁבּוּ: (ד) וַיִּשָּׂא יָוֵד וְהָעָם אֲשֶׁר-אִתּוֹ אֶת-קוֹלָם וַיִּכְבּוּ עַד אֲשֶׁר אִזְוָּבָהֶם כַּח לִבְבוֹת: (ה) וּשְׁתֵּי נְשֵׁי-דָוִד נִשְׁבּוּ אַחֲנִיעָם הַיִּזְרְעֵלִית וְאַבִּיגַיִל אִשְׁתׁ נָבָל הַכַּרְמֶלִי: (ו) וַתִּצַּר לְדָוִד מְאֹד כִּי-אָמְרוּ הָעָם לְטַקְלוֹ כִּי-מָרָה נָפֶשׁ כָּל-הָעָם אִישׁ עַל-בָּנָיו וְעַל-בְּנֹתָיו וַיִּתְחַזַּק דָּוִד בַּיהוָה אֱלֹהָיו:</p>
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If we pay attention to how David and his men react to this difficult event, we can note several stages:

First stage: Weeping - *David and the troops with him broke into tears, until they had no strength left for weeping (4).*

Second stage: Sadness and a sense of distress - *David was in great danger, for the troops threatened to stone him (6).* The sadness and anger of David’s men were directed at him, adding to his private pain and sorrow, leaving him feeling alone and abandoned.

Third stage: An inner strengthening of faith and choosing to turn to God - *But David sought strength in the LORD his God...and David inquired of the LORD...(6-8).*

Fourth stage: Action - David does not remain mired in sorrow and sadness, rather he chooses to take action. He goes to war and succeeds in freeing the captives: *David continued the pursuit... David attacked them from before dawn until the evening of the next day... David rescued everything the Amalekites had taken; David also rescued his two wives” (10-18).*

David's activities in this difficult time can teach us some significant lessons about coping in times of crisis. First, there is space for crying and sorrow. However, once the shock is over, the most useful way to deal with feelings of this kind is to turn inward to one’s own faith and belief - *But David sought strength in the LORD his God.* It was this belief that gave him the strength to pursue the Amalekites and save the people.