



## Amalek- Nature or Nurture?

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### Source 1: Shemot 17:8

Amalek came and fought with Israel in Rephidim.

**וַיָּבֹא עַמְלֵק וַיִּלָּחֶם עִם־יִשְׂרָאֵל  
בְּרִפְדִּים:**

### Source 2: Shemot 17:1-3

The entire community of the children of Israel journeyed from the desert of Sin to their travels by the mandate of the Lord. They encamped in Rephidim, and there was no water for the people to drink.

**אֲוִיסְעוּ כָל־עֵדֶת בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל  
מִמִּדְבַּר־סִין לְמַסְעֵיהֶם עַל־פִּי ה'  
יְיָ וַיַּחֲנוּ בְּרִפְדִּים וְאֵין מַיִם לְשָׁתֶת  
הָעָם:**

**2** So the people quarreled with Moses, and they said, Give us water that we may drink. Moses said to them, Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you test the Lord?

**בְּיָרֵב הָעָם עִם־מֹשֶׁה וַיֹּאמְרוּ תָנוּ־  
לָנוּ מַיִם וְנִשְׁתֶּה וַיֹּאמֶר לָהֶם מֹשֶׁה  
מִה־תִּרְיֹבֶנָּה עִמָּדִי מִה־תִּנְסֶנּוּ אֶת־ה'**

**3** The people thirsted there for water, and the people complained against Moses, and they said, Why have you brought us up from Egypt to make me and my children and my livestock die of thirst?

**וַיִּצְמָא שָׁם הָעָם לַמַּיִם וַיִּלֶּן הָעָם  
עַל־מֹשֶׁה וַיֹּאמְרוּ לָמָּה זֶה הָעֲלִיתָנוּ  
מִמִּצְרַיִם לָהֶמֶית אֹתִי וְאֶת־בְּנֵי וְאֶת־  
מִקְנִי בַצָּמָא:**

### Source 3: Shemot 17:6

Behold, I shall stand there before you on the rock in Horeb, and you shall strike the rock, and water will come out of it, and the people will drink Moses did so before the eyes of the elders of Israel.

וְהִנֵּנִי עֹמֵד לְפָנֶיךָ שָׁם | עַל-הַצּוּר  
בְּחֶרֶב וְהִכִּיתָ בַּצּוּר וַיֵּצֵאוּ מִמֶּנּוּ מַיִם  
וְשָׁתָה הָעָם וַיַּעַשׂ כֵּן מֹשֶׁה לְעֵינֵי  
זִקְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל:

#### Source 4: Refidim to Horev



According to Google maps on foot this would take 10 hours 48 minutes

#### Source 5: Devarim 25:17-18

You shall remember what Amalek did to you on the way, when you went out of Egypt,

יִזְכֹּר אֶת אֲשֶׁר-עָשָׂה לָךְ עַמְלֵק  
בַּדֶּרֶךְ בְּצֵאתְכֶם מִמִּצְרָיִם:

[18](#)how he happened upon you on the way and cut off all the stragglers at your rear, when you were faint and weary, and he did not fear God.

יַחַשׁוּר קִרְוֶךָ בַּדֶּרֶךְ וַיִּזְנֹב בְּךָ כָּל-  
הַנֶּחֱשָׁלִים אַחֲרֶיךָ וְאַתָּה עֵיף וְיָגַע  
וְלֹא יָרָא אֶל--הָאֱלֹהִים:

#### Source 6: Bereishit 20:11

And Abraham said, "For I said, 'Surely, there is no fear of God in this place, and they will kill me because of my wife.

וַיֹּאמֶר אַבְרָהָם כִּי אָמַרְתִּי רֵק אֵין-  
יִרְאָתָא אֶל--הָאֱלֹהִים בַּמָּקוֹם הַזֶּה וְהִרְגֻנִי  
עַל-דְּבַר אִשְׁתִּי:

#### Source 7: Bereishit 42:17-18

And he put them in prison for three days.

וַיִּאָסֹף אֹתָם אֶל־מִשְׁמֶר שְׁלֹשֶׁת יָמִים:

[18](#)On the third day, Joseph said to them: "Do this and live I fear God.

וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵהֶם יוֹסֵף בְּיוֹם הַשְּׁלִישִׁי זֹאת עֲשׂוּ וְחִיּוּ אֶת־הָאֵל--הֵי אֲנִי יִרְאֶה

#### Source 8: Shemot 1:17

The midwives, however, feared God; so they did not do as the king of Egypt had spoken to them, but they enabled the boys to live.

וַיִּתְּרָאן הַמִּילָדוֹת אֶת־הָאֵל--הֵי וְלֹא עָשׂוּ כְאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר אֲלֵיהֶן מֶלֶךְ מִצְרַיִם וַתַּחֲיֶינָן אֶת־הַיְלָדִים:

#### Source 9: Shemot 18:21

But you shall choose out of the entire nation men of substance, God fearers, men of truth, who hate monetary gain, and you shall appoint over them [Israel] leaders over thousands, leaders over hundreds, leaders over fifties, and leaders over tens.

כֹּא וְאַתָּה תִּחְזֶה מִכָּל־הָעָם אַנְשֵׁי־חַיִל יִרְאֵי אֵל--הֵי אַנְשֵׁי אֱמֶת שֹׂנְאֵי בָצַע וְשֹׂמֵת עֲלֵהֶם שָׂרֵי אֲלָפִים שָׂרֵי מֵאוֹת שָׂרֵי חֲמִשִּׁים וְשָׂרֵי עֶשְׂרֵת:

#### Source 10: Shmuel Aleph 27:8-9

And David and his men would go up and raid the Geshurites and the Gizrites and the Amalekites, for those (tribes) were the inhabitants of the land, who were of old, as you go to Shur, even to the land of Egypt.

וַיַּעַל דָּוִד וְאֲנָשָׁיו וַיַּפְשֻׁטוּ אֶל־הַגִּשּׁוּרִי וְהַגִּזְרִי (כְּתִיב וְהַגִּזְרִי) וְהָעַמְלִקִּי כִּי הָנָה יֹשְׁבוֹת הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר מֵעוֹלָם בּוֹאֵךְ שׁוּרָה וְעַד־אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם:

[9](#)And David would smite (the inhabitants of) the land, and leave neither man nor woman alive; and he would take sheep and cattle, and donkeys and camels and clothing, and return and come to Achish.

ט וְהָכָה דָּוִד אֶת־הָאָרֶץ וְלֹא יָחִיָּה אִישׁ וְאִשָּׁה וְלֶקְחָהּ צֹאן וּבָקָר וְחֲמָרִים וְגַמְלִים וּבִגְדִים וַיָּשָׁב וַיָּבֹא אֶל־אָכִישׁ:

#### Source 11: Shmuel Aleph 30:1-19

The story of Amalek's capture of women and children in Tsiklag

#### Source 12: Geographical position of Amalek

1. Western Sinai Desert- Beshalach (Shemot 17:8)
2. Northern Negev near Kadesh Barnea- Shlach Lecha (Bamidbar 14:25)
3. East of the Dead Sea- Balak (Bamidbar 24:20)

Source 13: To Whom does Amalek Ally itself?

1. Moav- at the time of Ehud (Shoftim 3:13)
2. Attacking Ephraim at the time of Devora (Shoftim 5:14)
3. Midyan- time of Gidon (Shoftim 6:3 and 6:33)
4. Attacks against Shaul and David

But where is their territory?

Source 14: Who is their designated god?

See Shoftim 10:6

And the children of Israel continued to do that which displeased the Lord, and they served the Baalim, and the Ashtaroth, and the gods of Aram, and the gods of Zidon, and the gods of Moab, and the gods of the children of Ammon, and the gods of the Philistines. And they forsook the Lord, and did not serve Him.

וַיִּסְפוּ | בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לַעֲשׂוֹת הָרָע  
בְּעֵינֵי ה' וַיַּעֲבְדוּ אֶת־הַבְּעָלִים וְאֶת־  
הָעֲשָׁתְרוֹת וְאֶת־אֱלֹהֵי אֲרָם וְאֶת־  
אֱלֹהֵי צִידוֹן וְאֶת | אֱלֹהֵי מוֹאָב וְאֶת  
אֱלֹהֵי בְנֵי־עַמּוֹן וְאֶת אֱלֹהֵי פְלִשְׁתִּים  
וַיַּעֲזְבוּ אֶת־ה' וְלֹא עָבְדוּהוּ:

Source 15: Shmuel Aleph 15:18

And the Lord sent you on a mission, and said, 'Go, and you shall utterly destroy the sinners, the Amalekites, and you shall wage war against them until they destroy them.'

וַיִּשְׁלַחְךָ יְהוָה בְּדֶרֶךְ וַיֹּאמֶר לְךָ  
וְהִחַרְמָתָה אֶת־הַחֲטָאִים אֶת־עַמְלִק  
וְנִלְחַמְתָּ בּוֹ עַד כְּלוֹתָם אֹתָם:

The Contrast:

Source 16: Devarim 25:13-16

You shall not keep in your pouch two different weights, one large and one small.

יֹלֵא־יִהְיֶה לְךָ בְּכִיסֶּךָ אֶבֶן וְאֶבֶן  
גְּדוֹלָה וְקִטְנָה:

[14](#) You shall not keep in your house two different ephah measures, one large and one small.

יֹלֵא־יִהְיֶה לְךָ בְּבֵיתְךָ אִיפָה וְאִיפָה  
גְּדוֹלָה וְקִטְנָה:

[15](#)[Rather,] you shall have a full and honest weight, [and] a full and honest ephah measure, in order that your days will be prolonged on the land which the Lord, your God, gives you.

[טו](#)אֲבֹן שְׁלֵמָה וְצִדְקַת יְהוָה לְךָ אִיפֹה  
שְׁלֵמָה וְצִדְקַת יְהוָה לְךָ לְמַעַן יִאָּרְכוּ  
יָמֶיךָ עַל הָאָדָמָה אֲשֶׁר ה' אֱלֹהֵיךָ  
נָתַן לְךָ:

[16](#)For whoever does these things, whoever perpetrates such injustice, is an abomination to the Lord, your God.

[טז](#)כִּי תוֹעֲבֹת ה' אֱלֹהֵיךָ כָּל-עֲשֵׂה  
אֵלֶּה כָּל עֲשֵׂה עֹול:

## Conclusion

There is definitely an element of genetic about Amalek, at least in Am Yisrael's first encounter with that nation.

However, the unethical nature of the attack, and the Torah's command to remember that event for all generations, suggests a "generic" understanding as well, for by remembering what Amalek had done wrong, Am Yisrael is encouraged to remember their own national goal- to do what is "right and just"