

# The Doctrine of Amalek

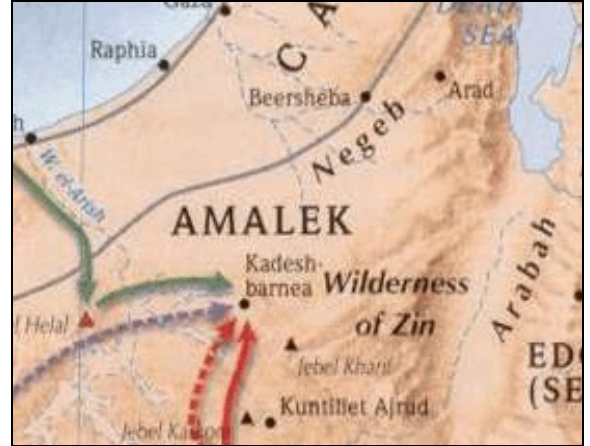
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**Preface:** The Amalekites were Bedouins<sup>1</sup> who possibly descended from Esau or whose origins are unknown to us. They began as vicious enemies of the Jews as the Jews exited Egypt, and continued until God commanded King Saul to wipe out every single one of them, along with their possessions.

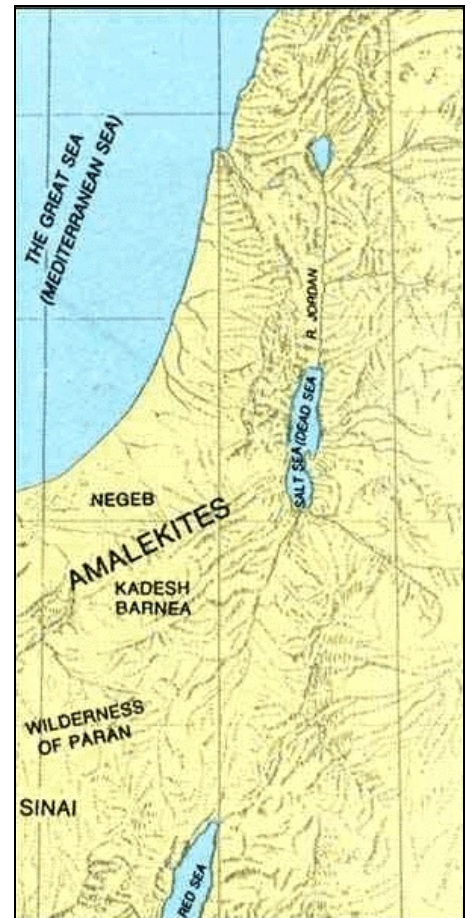
1. There are two Hebrew words here: 'Amâlêq (אַמְלֵק) [pronounced *áh-maw-LAYK*], which is transliterated *Amalek*. This can be used as an adjective gentis. Strong's #6002 BDB #766. 'Ămâlêqîy (אַמְלֵקִי) [pronounced *áh-maw-lay-KEE*], which is transliterated *Amalekite*. Strong's #6003 BDB #766.
2. The Amalekites are mentioned a several dozen times in Scripture: Gen. 14:7 36:12, 16 Ex. 17:8–11, 13–14, 16 Num. 13:29 14:25, 43, 45 24:20 Deut. 25:17, 19 Judges 3:13 5:13–14 6:3, 33 7:12 10:12 12:15 14:48 15:2, 3, 5–8, 15, 18, 20, 32 27:8 28:18 30:1, 13, 18 2Sam. 1:1, 8, 13 8:12 1Chron. 1:36 4:43 18:11 Psalm 83:7
3. The Amalekites are first mentioned in a great war between several nations in Gen. 14. We do not know much about them, other than they are involved in this war. Gen. 14:7
4. If it were not for Gen. 14:7, we would think that the Amalekites were an offshoot of the branch of Esau (Jacob's twin brother). Esau had a son, Eliphaz, and Eliphaz had a mistress, Timna, and she bore him a son, Amalek. However, this just happens to be the name of this particular son. Gen. 36:12, 16 1Chron. 1:36
5. Taking Gen. 14:7 and 36:12 together, it is possible that there are two different and unrelated groups of Amalekites. Because there is nothing in Gen. 1–13 to tell us who the Amalekites are and because the line given in Gen. 36 may or may not lead to any Amalekite group, we really have no idea as to their origins. In any case, they are seen to live in southern Judah during the time of the Exodus (Ex. 17) and in Ephraim after Israel had entered and captured the land (Judges 12:15). And, I should mention, that Scripture never seems to indicate that there are two separate groups of Amalekites.
  - a. As an addendum to this, one author even suggested that two groups of Amalekites (those from Gen. 14:7 and 36:12) at some point in time banded together.

<sup>1</sup> Nomadic Arabs.

6. ZPEB suggests that *Amalekite* used back in Gen. 14:7 refers to the people of the land where the Amalekites would settle.<sup>2</sup> However, even though they did mostly stay in southern Judah and south of Judah, which would fit with this narrative of Gen. 14, they also lived elsewhere as well. It is a reasonable alternative theory, no better or worse than what has been presented.
7. Amalek is called a son of Adah in Gen. 36:16, but Adah is Esau's wife, so he would have been descended from Esau and Adah.
8. Location:
- Easton places these people geographically: *[The Amalekites are] a tribe that dwelt in Arabia Petraea, between the Dead Sea and the Red Sea. They were not the descendants of Amalek, the son of Eliphaz, for they existed in the days of Abraham (Gen. 14:7). They were probably a tribe that migrated from the shores of the Persian Gulf and settled in Arabia. They dwelt in the land of the south...from Havilah until you come to Shur' (Num. 13:29 1Sam. 15:7). They were a pastoral, and hence a nomadic race.*<sup>3</sup>
  - ZPEB describes their territory: *The Amalekites as a nomadic desert tribe moved in the area from the Sinitic region and the steppe land of the Negeb in southern Canaan, south of Beersheba, over eastward to include the arabah region north of Elath and Zion-geber and possibly the more interior Arabia.*<sup>4</sup>
  - Easton was also the only person I came across who dealt with them from extra-Biblical sources: *In the Babylonian inscriptions they are called Sute, in those of Egypt Sittiu, and the Amarna tablets include them under the general name of Khabbati, or 'plunderers'.*<sup>5</sup>
  - The Amalekites had apparently entrenched themselves in the hills of Ephraim during the time of the Judges (Judges 12:15). Some translations read this as *Mount Amalek* or the *Mountain of Amalek*, which would imply the same thing.
  - Their attacks on David (1Sam. 30; compare 1Sam. 27:8–11) place them in Ziklag, which is north of Beersheba.
9. Almost immediately after the Jews had exited Egypt, **Amalek came out and fought against Israel at Rephidim** (Ex. 17:8). Rephidim was their last stop prior to entering the desert-wilderness of Sinai. All we know is, we are not too far out of Egypt—just a few day's journey for this attack (see Num. 33:4–16). The situation for the Israelites was, they had just faced the *no water* test and Moses struck a rock, and out from it came living waters (Ex. 17:1–6). During this battle, Joshua led Israel in the fight, and Moses, when he held his hands up, the Israelites had the upper hand; but when he dropped his hands, the Amalekites began to win. Aaron and Hur propped up Moses' arms, and Joshua was victorious over the Amalekites.



From <http://www.anova.org/sev/atlas/htm/029.htm>



Taken from: [http://www.bible-history.com/geography/maps/map\\_of\\_amalekites\\_territory.html](http://www.bible-history.com/geography/maps/map_of_amalekites_territory.html)

<sup>2</sup> *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*; Merrill Tenney, ed., Zondervan Publishing House, ©1976; Vol. 1, p. 123.

<sup>3</sup> M.G. Easton M.A., D.D., *Illustrated Bible Dictionary*; 1897; from e-Sword, topic: Amalekites.

<sup>4</sup> *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*; Merrill Tenney, ed., Zondervan Publishing House, ©1976; Vol. 1, p. 123.

<sup>5</sup> M.G. Easton M.A., D.D., *Illustrated Bible Dictionary*; 1897; from e-Sword, topic: Amalekites.

- a. Fausset<sup>6</sup> has a very interesting view of this, which, insofar as I know, is unique to him. Fausset: *Contentions for possession of a well were of common occurrence (Gen. 21:25 26:22 Ex. 2:17); in Moses' message asking Edom and Sihon the Amorite for leave of passage, water is a prominent topic (Num. 20:17 21:22; compare Judges 5:11). This constitutes the special heinousness of Amalek's sin in God's eyes. They tried to deprive God's people of a necessary of life which God had just supplied by miracle, thus fighting not so much with them as with God. This accounts for the special severity of their doom. The execution was delayed; but the original sentence at Rephidim was repeated by Balaam, and 400 years subsequently its execution was enjoined at the very beginning of the regal government as a test of obedience; compare 1Sam. 12:12–15.*
  - b. In other words, the Amalekites attacked the Israelites over a matter of water rights, even though this was water provided for the Israelites miraculously by God. One might reasonably draw a parallel to unbelievers who want to keep others from the truth.
  - c. We find out later that Amalek's attack was from the rear, where the weak and helpless of Israel were (Deut. 25:17–18, which reads: “Remember what Amalek did to you on the way as you came out of Egypt, how he attacked you on the way when you were weak and tired, and cut off those in the rear of your procession; he did not fear God”).
10. We have two artistic renderings which speak of Joshua fighting against the Amalekites. There is Poussin's painting “The Battle of Joshua with Amalekites” and an illustration taken from *Figures de la Bible* (1728).



Nicolas Poussin's painting “The Battle of Joshua with Amalekites.”  
Taken from: <http://www.abcgallery.com/P/poussin/poussin2.html>



From: <http://www.mythfolklore.net/lahaye/05/>  
"Image courtesy Bizzell Bible Collection, University of Oklahoma Libraries."

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11. Then Y<sup>h</sup>owah said to Moses, “Write this in the book as a memorial and recite it to Joshua, that I will utterly blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven.” (Ex. 17:14). God would hold this against the Amalekites from generation to generation (Ex. 17:16).
  - a. This does not mean that all descendants of the Amalekites were held in low esteem by God by their birth. Amalek apparently always had it out for Israel; and they also stood in negative volition against God. When

<sup>6</sup> See Andrew Robert Fausset, *Fausset's Bible Dictionary*; from e-Sword, topic: Amalekites.

I visit sites which debate evolution or anything to do with religion, the anger and hatred of unbelievers is palpable. Insults and swearing are prevalent. This describes the hearts of the Amalekites, from generation to generation.

12. When the Jews spied out the Land of Promise at first, they saw that the Amalekites were living there. The Amalekites appear to live in a number of different places throughout Israel, although they principally lived south of Israel. Num. 13:29
13. 10 of the 12 spies did not want to invade the Land of Promise, and God spoke to this, mentioning the Amalekites and the Canaanites who are in the land (Num. 14:25). When the people change their minds and decide to charge up against these peoples, they are beat back by the Amalekites and the Canaanites (Num. 14:39–45).
14. Balaam spoke of Israel's enemies in an oracle, and said about Amalek: "[Amalek was the first among the nations, but its end is utter destruction.](#)" (Num. 24:20b). He did not mean that Amalek was one of the world's first nations, as it is not listed in Gen. 10. He simply means that this was the first nation to attack Israel coming out of the land; and that God will order their complete destruction.
  - a. According to Fausset, the Hebrew here reads: "[Beginning of the pagan \(was\) Amalek, and its end \(shall be\) destruction](#)" (Num. 24:20b).
15. Moses reminds Israel about Amalek's unprovoked attack in Deut. 25:17–19 and tells the Jews that the Amalekites must be wiped out.
16. In Judges 3:12–13, we read: [And the people of Israel again did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, and the LORD strengthened Eglon the king of Moab against Israel, because they had done what was evil in the sight of the LORD. He gathered to himself the Ammonites and the Amalekites, and went and defeated Israel. And they took possession of the city of palms.](#) Although Moab, Ammon and Amalek are all mentioned here, only Moab is spoken of in the rest of the chapter. It is not clear if these nations acted in a unified way against Israel, or if these are 3 separate but coterminous attacks upon Israel.
17. The mention of the Amalekites in Judges 5:13–14 is problematic. The text may indicate that there was a lot of intermarriage between Ephraim and Amalek (in the Hebrew text); that Ephraim conquered the land where the Amalekites were living; or that the Amalekites lived in Ephraim (which does appear to be true, as per Judges 12:15). The translation should be: ["Awake, awake, Deborah! Awake, awake, break out in a song! Arise, Barak, lead away your captives, O son of Abinoam. Then down marched the remnant of the noble; the people of the LORD marched down for me against the mighty. From Ephraim their root they marched down into the valley, following you, Benjamin, with your kinsmen; from Machir marched down the commanders, and from Zebulun those who bear the lieutenant's staff; the princes of Issachar came with Deborah, and Issachar faithful to Barak; into the valley they rushed at his heels. Among the clans of Reuben there were great searchings of heart](#) (Judges 5:12–15). Where we find *with your kinsmen* some have *Amalek*.
18. In Judges 6:3, the Midianites, the Amalekites and the sons of the east would attack them and destroy their crops (Judges 6:3–4, 33). God came to Gideon and Gideon delivered Israel from these 3 armies, and with only 300 men (Judges 7:1–8:12).
19. When Israel goes into idolatry again and are oppressed again, God reminds them that He has delivered them from the Sidonians, the Amalekites and the Maonites (Judges 10:6–14).

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20. 1Sam. 14:47–48 lists the groups that Saul fought against and beat down, and this included the Amalekites. It is unclear whether these are unrecorded battles or whether we are speaking of Saul's war with the Amalekites in 1Sam. 15.
21. In 1Sam. 15, God will tell Saul to completely wipe out the Amalekites and to burn all that they have. The soldiers, apparently on Saul's orders, save out the best from the Amalekites, and apparently, a large number of them escape, even though they are soundly defeated. One of the reasons given for the killing of Saul is the fact that he did not wipe out the Amalekites as God required him to do (1Sam. 28:18).

- a. Fausset comments: *That the Israelites might perceive they were but the executioners of God's sentence, they were forbidden to take the spoil Saul's taking of it to gratify the people and himself, under the pretext of "sacrifice," was the very thing which betrayed the spirit of disobedience, to his ruin.*<sup>7</sup>
  - b. I should add that the Kenites and the Amalekites apparently had a peace agreement worked out, as they did live in the same area (although, it is apparent that they did not have a mutual-defense treaty—1Sam. 15:6).
  - c. Let me add an additional comment: the period of the Old Testament when Israel was a theocracy (a nation ruled by God) is unique to history. God is not speaking to any nation today nor is God telling any nation or individual to wipe out this or that race of people. We get some of the greatest distortions of Scripture when someone reads an historical event in the Bible, and then tries to duplicate that event. There are a great many mandates in Scripture, and not one single mandate tells us to pick out some random historical narrative and try to imitate it.
  - d. **Application:** I know that this goes pretty far afield from our study, but this is the problem with the charismatic movement—they observe the history of early Christians speaking in tongues (actually, in foreign languages and dialects), and they try to imitate this. Since they cannot really speak in a foreign language which they have not learned, they instead speak gibberish and call it angelic tongues (a complete and total misinterpretation of 1Cor. 13:1).
  - e. **Application:** Any time you see a Christian denomination or cult point primarily to historical events to back up their doctrine, then they are probably teaching apostate doctrine at that point. Various movements to wipe out this or that race (called ethnic cleansing today), justified by what Israel did in the Old Testament, are completely anti-Scriptural. No nation today is a theocracy; no person today has God speaking into his ear telling him exactly what to do next.
22. David raided the Amalekites, among others, when he was living in Ziklag, although he told his benefactor that he was attacking Israel instead. 1Sam. 27:8–10
  23. When David went to join up with the Philistines to attack Israel, his camp was struck by the Amalekites. However, they did not kill anyone or destroy their things (except for the camp itself). David and his men, when they returned, went after these Amalekites and destroyed them. 1Sam. 30
  24. An Amalekite apparently observed the Philistines attacking and killing Saul, and went to David to take credit for this, thinking that David would elevate him to a high position for killing Saul. David had him executed instead. 2Sam. 1:11–16
  25. The Amalekites were among the people which David struck down. 2Sam. 8:11–14 1Chron. 18:11
  26. Simeon is said to have struck down the Amalekites in 1Chron. 4:43; however, it is difficult to place this verse in time. In 1Chron. 4:24, we are clearly dealing with the early line of Simeon; however, we are unsure about the men who follow—that is, how far down into time we go. ZPEB, ISBE and Fausset all place this at the time of Hezekiah, which is around 700 A.D.<sup>8</sup> At this point in time, they would have been a remnant living around Mount Seir and after their defeat, there is no further Biblical reference to the Amalekites (apart from one mention in the Psalms).
  27. Asaph, in a psalm, speaks of Israel's enemies, and includes the Amalekites. Psalm 83:4–8
  28. Haman, of the book of Esther, was apparently descended from Agag, who would have been a king over the Amalekites during the time of Saul. He perpetrates an attempted holocaust against the Jews in the book of Esther. See Esther 3:1 8:3
    - a. The general name for the kings of the Amalekites is *Agag* (Num. 24:7 1Sam. 15:8–9), just like *Abimelech* refers to a king of the Philistines and *pharaoh* refers to an Egyptian king.
    - b. *Agag* possibly means *fiery one*.
    - c. We may reasonably assume that Haman is descended from the Amalekites, but there is no particular king that we can point to as his ancestor.

<sup>7</sup> Andrew Robert Fausset, *Fausset's Bible Dictionary*; from e-Sword, topic: Amalekites.

<sup>8</sup> *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*; Merrill Tenney, ed., Zondervan Publishing House, ©1976; Vol. 1, p. 125. *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*; James Orr, Editor; ©1956 Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.; © by Hendrickson Publishers; Vol. I; p. 113. Andrew Robert Fausset, *Fausset's Bible Dictionary*; from e-Sword, topic: Amalekites.

29. The Velikovsky-Courville revision: there is a theory which I came across in *When Skeptics Ask*, by Geisler and Brooks, part of a series of excellent books.<sup>9</sup> They identify the Amalekites with the Hyksos.
- a. We have a very old papyrus written by Ipuwer, an Egyptian priest. When Israel left Egypt, it was preceded by a great many plagues, which find their parallels in this papyrus.
  - b. In 3:1 of this papyrus, we have the invasion of Egypt by a foreign tribe. This would make sense, as Egypt would be at its weakest point at this time.
  - c. Geisler and Brooks suggest that this is the Hyksos, who dominated Egypt between the Middle Kingdom and the New Kingdom.
  - d. There is a similar monolith of el-Arish which tells a similar story of darkness and suffering in Egypt in the days of King Thoth. It tells us that the Pharaoh went out to battle against the *friends of Apopi* (i.e., *the friends of darkness*) and that the army did not return—and that the Pharaoh was kept in the “Place of the Whirlpool.” Where this occurred is Pi-Kharoti, which may be equivalent to Pi-hahiroth where the Israelites camped by the sea (Ex. 14:9).
  - e. The biggest problem with correlating this to Jewish history is, we have assigned the date 2000 B.C. to these events, based upon the Egyptian king list. This means there are either 600 years padded into the Egyptian king list (as we believe that Israel left Egypt around 1440 B.C.) or that there were a repetition of remarkable events in Egypt. Bear in mind that, even though almost all ancient historians accept the dates based upon the Egyptian king list as gospel, that does not mean that they are.
  - f. Velikovsky identifies the Hyksos as the Amalekites, who attacked Israel immediately upon their exodus from Egypt. It is possible that news of the plagues in Egypt drew the Hyksos to Egypt, hoping to conquer and rule this rich land.
  - g. It is claimed that, when Balaam cursed Amalek in Num. 24:20, that this was a curse of the Hyksos rulers in Egypt. “[Amalek was the first of the nations, but his end destroying.](#)”
  - h. The Agag’s of the Amalekites, their kings, are supposed to correspond to the Hyksos kings. At this point, I have a problem with this theory—all that we have with Israel and the Amalekites occurs in southern Judah and below Judah, but there is no indication that we go as far southwest as Egypt. If the Agag whom is hacked to death by Samuel in 1Sam. 15 is the last of the Hyksos, what is he doing so far outside of Egypt? We are talking over 100 miles from the Nile and the most livable portion of Egypt, and 100 miles of mostly desert wilderness. I am not saying that this theory is impossible, but we have the Amalekites leading fairly nomadic lives for simultaneously ruling over Egypt.
  - i. The final point which Velikovsky makes is, when Saul partially destroyed the Amalekites (1Sam. 15), that this released the Egyptians from bondage and paved the way for normalized relations between Egypt and Israel during the time of David and Solomon. He suggests that the Queen of Sheba is equivalent to Queen Hatshepsut of Egypt. Although this is possible, nations develop normalized relations all the time, even having been enemies at one time (e.g., the US and Germany or the US and Japan).
  - j. Even without equating the Hyksos to the Amalekites, the histories of Egypt and Israel can be set into a marvelous correspondence with one another if 500-600 years are removed from accepted Egyptian chronology.<sup>10</sup>

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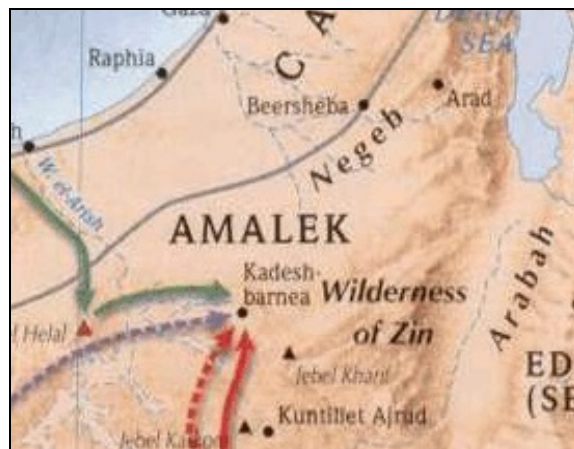
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<sup>9</sup> *When Skeptics Ask*; Geisler and Brooks, ©1990, Victor Books, pp. 191–196. Most of the points are condensed paraphrased from the pages.

<sup>10</sup> I have left out the many other parallels, which are not a part of this study.

## Summary of the Doctrine of the Amalekites

1. The origins of the Amalekites are unknown. They seem to appear suddenly in Gen. 14:7, although there is also a mention of an Amalek being born to the family of Esau (Gen. 36:12, 16). As a result, there are several theories concerning the origins of the Amalekites, none of which can be seen as definitive.
2. They primarily occupied the area south of Judah, although they also made inroads to Ephraim. Gen. 14:7 Ex. 17:8 Judges 12:15 1Sam. 30:1–3
3. The Amalekites were the first nation to attack Israel when they came out of Egypt. They attacked Israel from the rear, where there were the tired, weak and sickly Israelites. It is possible that this attack was based on water rights, even though the water provided for the Israelites was from God. Ex. 17:8–16 Deut. 25:17–18



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4. Because of this merciless and vicious attack, and because of the negative volition and anti-Semitism which this people exhibited over the years, God ordered their complete and total destruction. Deut. 25:19 1Sam. 15:2–3
5. Saul disobeyed God about completely destroying the Amalekites, which was the act of disobedience which marked the end of his dynasty. 1Sam. 15
6. David was troubled by the Amalekites when he was an expat in the territory of the Philistines. They raided his camp when he was gone and took his women and the things which he had accumulated over the past year or so. 1Sam. 30
7. An Amalekite falsely claimed responsibility for killing Saul and was executed by David for this transgression. 2Sam. 1:1–16
8. The Amalekites were among the people which David struck down. 2Sam. 8:11–14 1Chron. 18:11
9. The Amalekites are not mentioned again until the time of Hezekiah (circa 700 B.C.), when the tribe of Simeon defeat them. 1Chron. 4:24
10. The last Amalekite that we here about is Haman, who is said to be descended from Agag (an unspecified Amalekite king). Haman, in the book of Esther, launches a plan to destroy all the Jews in Persia (a scheme thwarted by Esther and her uncle, Mordecai). Esther 3:1, 10 8:3, 5 9:24.

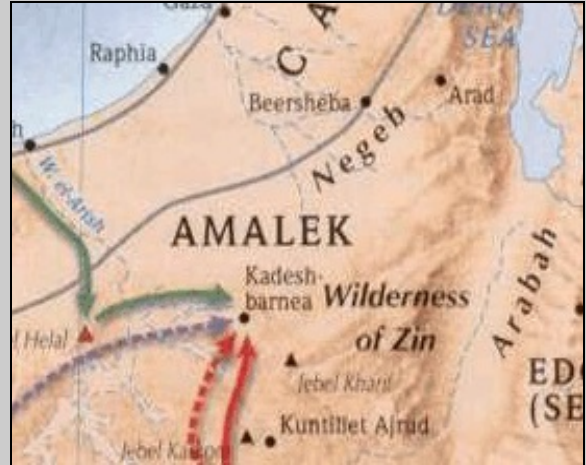
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And just in case you don't look to the Doctrine of the Amalekites, let's look at...

## A Brief Summary of the Amalekites

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9. There is one historical theory which equates the Amalekites with the Hyksos dynasty in Egypt, but I personally do not buy into that, primarily because every time we run into the Amalekites in Scripture, they are over 100 miles away from Egypt and function more like Bedouins than like a people who have conquered a great nation.



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