

**Shayla:** Why did God command the death of Amalekite animals?

- **1 Samuel 15:3 HCSB** Now go and attack the Amalekites and completely destroy everything they have. Do not spare them. Kill men and women, children and infants, oxen and sheep, camels and donkeys."

**Midrash:**

God usually demands great care for animals. Whether the animal belongs to "our brother"<sup>1</sup> or our enemy, the one who hates us,<sup>2</sup> our care and consideration for the lives and welfare of animals must not be curbed.

Cattle were allowable objects of looting. We may choose to deny the animal to the enemy. However, we may not cause the animal to suffer.

The case of Amalek is a notable exception.<sup>3</sup> Due to Amalek's hunting of the slow and weak among the congregation, and their willingness to kidnap children for profit<sup>4</sup> God made Moses permanently record His pronouncement of permanent hatred for Amalek. He said that he would be at war with Amalek from generation to generation. He told the people to blot the memory of Amalek from under heaven. Contrary to the usual practice of sparing the animals, this edict included animals.<sup>5</sup>

Their false religion included child sacrifice,<sup>6</sup> prostitution,<sup>7</sup> bestiality and homosexuality. So perhaps the culture was so diseased that even the animals were unsafe to have, much like the "Mad Cow" slaughters in England.

On the other hand, the Amalekites had a nasty habit of using their animals as weapons in a war of attrition.<sup>8</sup> Perhaps this made the vital difference and set the animals outside the usual prohibition.

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<sup>1</sup> Deuteronomy 22:4

<sup>2</sup> Exodus 23:4-5

<sup>3</sup> Exodus 17:14-16; Deuteronomy 25:19; 1 Samuel 15:2-3, 20-23

<sup>4</sup> 1 Samuel 30:1-3

<sup>5</sup> 1 Samuel 15:3 cp v. 14

<sup>6</sup> 2 Kings 23:10 with Jeremiah 32:35; 2 Kings 16:3; 21:6; 2 Chronicles 28:3; Isaiah 57:5; Jeremiah 7:31; Ezekiel 16:20-21; 20:26, 31; 23:37, 39 with Leviticus 18:21; 20:2-5

<sup>7</sup> Numbers 31:16; Revelation 2:14-15

<sup>8</sup> Judges 6:3-6