

Amorite

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(Heb., Emori', אַמֹרִי, Sept. Ἀμορῥαῖος), the designation of the descendants of one of the sons of Canaan ([Genesis 10:16](#), in like manner. with the art., אַמֹרִי, Sept. ὁ Ἀμορῥαῖος, Auth. Vers "the Amorite." Gesenius, however, prefers the derivation suggested by Simonis, from an obsolete אַמֹר, height, q. d. mountaineer; comp. Ewald, Isr. Gesch. i. 279 sq.). They were the most powerful and distinguished of the Canaanitish nations ([Genesis 10:16](#); [Exodus 3:8](#); [Exodus 13:5](#); [Exodus 33:2](#)). We find them first noticed in [Genesis 14:7](#), "the Amorites that dwelt in Hazezon-tamar" (q v.), afterward called Engedi, a city in the wilderness of Judiea not far from the Dead Sea ([Numbers 13:29](#); [Deuteronomy 1:7](#); [Deuteronomy 1:20](#)). In the promise to Abraham ([Genesis 15:21](#)), the Amorites are specified as one of the nations Whose country would be given to his posterity. But at that time three confederates of the patriarch belonged to this tribe — Mamre, Aner, and Eshcol ([Genesis 14:13](#); [Genesis 14:24](#)). When the Israelites were about to enter the promised land, the Amorites occupied a tract on both sides of the Jordan. Josephus calls it Amoritis (Ἀμωρῖτις, Ant. 4, 5, 1; 7, 3) and Amorica (Ἀμορῖα v.r. Ἀμορῖα, Ἀμωρῖα, Ant. 5, 1, 1). They seem to have originally inhabited the southern slopes of the mountains of Judsea (hence called the mount of the Amorites, [Deuteronomy 1:7](#); [Deuteronomy 19:20](#)), but whether as aborigines or as dispossessors of an earlier race is uncertain, probably the former. It appears, therefore, that from the barren heights west of the Dead Sea ([Genesis 14:7](#)) they had stretched west to Hebron ([Genesis 14:13](#); comp. 13:18). From this, their ancient seat, they may have crossed the valley of the Jordan, tempted by the high table-lands on the east, for there we next meet them at the date of the invasion of the country. Sihon, their then king, had taken the rich

pasture-land south of the Jabbok, and had driven the Moabites, its former possessors, across the wide chasm of the Arnon (**Numbers 21:26**; **Numbers 21:13**), which thenceforward formed the boundary between the two hostile peoples (**Numbers 21:13**). That part of their territories which lay to the east of the Jordan was allotted to the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh. This district was under two kings-Sihon, king of Heshbon (frequently called king of the Amorites), and Og, king of Bashan, who "dwelt at Ashtaroth [and] in [at] Edrei" (**Deuteronomy 1:4**, compared with **Joshua 12:4**; **Joshua 13:12**). The Israelites apparently approached from the southeast, keeping "on the other side" (that is, on the east) of the upper part of the Arnon, which there bends southward, so as to form the eastern boundary of the country of Moab. Their request to pass through his land to the fords of Jordan was refused by Sihon (**Numbers 21:21**; **Deuteronomy 2:26**); he "went out" against them (**Numbers 21:23**; **Numbers 2:32**), was killed with his sons and his people (**Numbers 2:33**), and his land, cattle, and cities, taken possession of by Israel (**Numbers 21:24-25**; **Numbers 21:31**; **Numbers 2:34-34**). This rich tract, bounded by the Jabbok on the north, the Arnon on the south, Jordan on the west, and "the wilderness" on the east (**Judges 11:21-22**) — in the words of Josephus, "a land lying between three rivers after the manner of an island" (Ant. 4, 5, 2) — was, perhaps; in the most special sense, the "land of the Amorites" (**Numbers 21:31**; **Joshua 12:2-3**; **Joshua 13:9**; **Judges 11:21-22**); but their possessions are distinctly stated to have extended to the very foot of Hermon (**Deuteronomy 3:8**; **Deuteronomy 4:48**), embracing "all Gilead and all Bashan" (**Deuteronomy 3:10**), with the Jordan valley on the east of the river (**Deuteronomy 4:49**), and forming together the land of the "two kings of the Amorites," Sihon and Og (**Deuteronomy 31:4**; **Joshua 2:10**; **Joshua 9:10**; **Joshua 24:12**). Og also gave battle to the Israelites at Edrei, and was totally defeated. After the capture of Ai, five kings of the Amorites, whose dominions lay within the allotment of the tribe of Judah, leagued together to wreak vengeance on the Gibeonites for having made a separate peace with the invaders. Joshua, on being apprised of their design, marched to Gibeon and defeated them with great slaughter (**Joshua 10:10**). Another confederacy was shortly after

formed on a still larger scale; the associated forces are described as "much people, even as the sand upon the sea-shore in multitude, with horses and chariots very many" ([Joshua 11:4](#)). Josephus says that they consisted of 300,000 armed foot-soldiers, 10,000 cavalry, and 20,000 chariots (Ant. 5,1, 8). Joshua came suddenly upon them by the waters of Merom (the lake Semechonitis of Josephus, Ant. 5,5, 1, and the modern Bahr el-Huleh), and Israel smote them until they left none remaining ([Joshua 11:8](#)). Still, after their severe defeats, the Amorites, by means of their war-chariots and cavalry, confined the Danites to the hills, and would not suffer them to settle in the plains; they even succeeded in retaining possession of some of the mountainous parts ([Judges 1:34-36](#)). It is mentioned as an extraordinary circumstance that in the days of Samuel there was peace between Israel and the Amorites ([1 Samuel 7:14](#)). In Solomon's reign a tribute of bond-service was levied on the remnant of the Amorites and other Canaanitish nations ([1 Kings 9:21](#); [2 Chronicles 8:8](#)). (See CANAAN).

A discrepancy has been supposed to exist between [Deuteronomy 1:44](#), and [Numbers 14:45](#), since in the former the Amorites are said to have attacked the Israelites, and in the latter the Amalekites; the obvious explanation is, that both terms are used synonymously for the "Canaanites" named in the same connection. Thus the Gibeonites in [Joshua 9:7](#), are called Hivites, yet in [2 Samuel 21:2](#), they are said to be "of the remnant of the Amorites," probably because they were descended from a common stock, and wherein subjection to an Amoritish prince, as we do not read of any king of the Hivites. The Amorites, on account of their prominence among the Canaanitish tribes, sometimes stand ([Joshua 24:18](#); [Amos 2:9](#); [1 Kings 21:26](#)) as the representatives of the Canaanites in general (Hamelsweld, 3, 56 sq.; Kurtz, on the primitive inhabitants of Palestine, in the Luther. Zeitschr. 1845, 3, 48 sq.; Jour. of. Sac. Lit. Oct. 1851, p. 166; Apr. 1852, p. 76; Jan. 1853, p. 306; Rosenmuller, Bibl. Geogr. II, 1, 255; Reland, Palœst. p. 138). But although the name generally denotes the mountain tribes of the center of the country, yet this definition is not always strictly maintained, varying probably with the author of the particular part of the history, and the time at which it was written. Nor ought we to expect that the Israelites could have possessed very

accurate knowledge of a set of small tribes whom they were called upon to exterminate with whom they were forbidden to hold any intercourse — and, moreover, of whose general similarity to each other we have convincing proof in the confusion in question. Thus, Hebron is "Amorite" in [Genesis 13:18](#); [Genesis 14:13](#), though "Hittite" in 23, and "Canaanite" in [Judges 1:10](#). The "Hivites" of [Genesis 34:2](#), are "Amorites" in 48:22; and so also in [Joshua 9:7](#); [Joshua 11:19](#), as compared with [2 Samuel 21:12](#). Jerusalem is "Amorite" in [Joshua 10:5-6](#), but in [Joshua 18:28](#); [Judges 1:21](#); [Judges 19:11](#); [2 Samuel 5:6](#), etc., it is "Jebusite." The "Canaanites" of [Numbers 14:45](#) (comp. [Judges 1:17](#)), are "Amorites" in [Deuteronomy 1:44](#). Jarmuth, Lachish, and Eglon were in the low country of the Shefela ([Joshua 15:35](#); [Joshua 15:39](#)), but in [Joshua 10:5-6](#), they are "Amorites that dwelt in the mountains;" and it would appear as if the "Amorites" who forced the Danites into the mountain ([Judges 1:34-35](#)) must have themselves remained on the plain. Notwithstanding these few differences, however, from a comparison of the passages previously quoted, it appears plain that "Amorite" was in general a local term, and not the name of a distinct tribe. This is confirmed by the following facts:

1. The wide area over which the name was spread.
2. The want of connection between those on the east and those on the west of Jordan — which is only once hinted at ([Joshua 2:10](#)).
3. The existence of kings like Sihon and Og, whose territories were separate and independent, but who are yet called "the two kings of the Amorites," a state of things quite at variance with the habits of Semitic tribes.
4. Beyond the three confederates of Abram and these two kings, no individual Amorites appear in history (unless Araunah or Ornan the Jebusite be one)
5. There are no traces of any peculiar government, worship, or customs, different from those of the other "nations of Canaan." (See CANAANITE). All mountaineers are warlike; and, from the three confederate brothers who at a moment's notice accompanied "Abram the Hebrew" in his pursuit of the five kings, down to those who, not depressed by the slaughter inflicted by Joshua and the terror of the name of Israel, persisted in driving the children of Dan into the

mountain, the Amorites fully maintained this character. From the language of [Amos 2:9](#) it has been inferred that the Amorites in general were men of extraordinary stature, but perhaps the allusion is to an individual, Og, king of Bashan, who is described by Moses as being the last "of the remnant of the giants." His bedstead was of iron, "nine cubits in length and four cubits in breadth" ([Deuteronomy 3:21](#)). One word of the "Amorite" language has survived — the name Senir (not "Shenir") for Mount Hermon ([Deuteronomy 3:9](#)); but may not this be the Canaanitish name as opposed to the Phoenician (Sirion) on the one side and the Hebrew on the other? (See HERMON).