

Did God Command the Slaughter of the Canaanites

Confronting Reality

Deut 2:34 And we took all his cities at that time, and utterly destroyed the men, and the women, and the little ones, of every city, we left none to remain:

It is difficult to read passages of scripture like these without a shudder of horror running through your soul. While some find a way to justify the slaughter of warring males, it is inconceivable to picture an Israelite soldier with a small child impaled on the end of his sword. I don't know about you, but for me it brings a feeling of utter revulsion. What makes this much worse is that the Bible appears to not only condone these actions, but to command them.

Deut 7:2 And when the LORD thy God shall deliver them before thee; thou shalt smite them, and utterly destroy [seclude, the ban] them; thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor shew mercy unto them:

Joshua 11:12 And all the cities of those kings, and all the kings of them, did Joshua take, and smote them with the edge of the sword, and he utterly destroyed them, as Moses the servant of the LORD commanded.

Joshua 10:40 So Joshua smote all the country of the hills, and of the south, and of the vale, and of the springs, and all their kings: he left none remaining, but utterly destroyed all that breathed, as the LORD God of Israel commanded.

It has been argued that the term *utterly destroy* or what is known as *the ban*, could be misunderstood in the sense that if a group of people were wiped off the map completely then why would you give a command not to intermarry with them?

Deut 7:2-4 And when the LORD thy God shall deliver them before thee; thou shalt smite them, and utterly destroy them; thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor shew mercy unto them: (3) **Neither shalt thou make marriages with them; thy daughter thou shalt not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son.** (4) For they will turn away thy son from following me, that they may serve other gods: so will the anger of the LORD be kindled against you, and destroy thee suddenly.

This apparent contradiction might be resolved in the understanding that Israel was commanded to proclaim peace unto a city and if they made peace then the city was to be made tributary to Israel and their idols and worship system were to be destroyed.

Deut 20:10-11 When thou comest nigh unto a city to fight against it, then proclaim peace unto it. (11) And it shall be, if it make thee answer of peace, and open unto thee, then it shall be, that all the people that is found therein shall be tributaries unto thee, and they shall serve thee.

Deut 7:5 But thus shall ye deal with them; ye shall destroy their altars, and break down their images, and cut down their groves, and burn their graven images with fire.

Yet even if we are to allow these points, it still falls far short of the teaching of Christ.

Matt 26:52 Then said Jesus unto him, Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword.

Luke 9:54-56 And when his disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did? (55) But he turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. (56) For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them. And they went to another village.

A Critical Issue that All Must Face

It really should be no surprise that the issue of understanding the character of God must involve a wrestling of the mind illustrated by the wrestling of Jacob with the Angel. Jacob could not discern the identity of the One with whom he wrestled. He thought the Angel was his enemy sent to destroy him, while in fact it was His loving Saviour sent to save him.

It was Christ that was with Jacob through the night, with whom he wrestled, and whom he perseveringly held until he blessed him. {1SP 119.1}

There was only one reason that Jacob endured that struggle with Christ.

Satan had accused Jacob before the angels of God, claiming the right to destroy him because of his sin; he had moved upon Esau to march against him; and during the patriarch's long night of wrestling, Satan endeavored to force upon him a sense of his guilt, in order to discourage him, and break his hold upon God. When in his distress Jacob laid hold of the Angel, and made supplication with tears, the heavenly Messenger, in order to try his faith, also reminded him of his sin, and endeavored to escape from him. But Jacob would not be turned away. **He had learned that God is merciful, and he cast himself upon His mercy.** He pointed [202] back to his repentance for his sin, and pleaded for deliverance. As he reviewed his life, he was driven almost to despair; but he held fast the Angel, and with earnest, agonizing cries urged his petition until he prevailed.

Such will be the experience of God's people in their final struggle with the powers of evil. God will test their faith, their perseverance, their confidence in His power to deliver them. Satan will endeavor to terrify them with the thought that their cases are hopeless; that their sins have been too great to receive pardon. They will have a deep sense of their shortcomings, and as they review their lives their hopes will sink. **But remembering the greatness of God's mercy, and their own sincere repentance, they will plead His promises made through Christ to helpless, repenting sinners.** Their faith will not fail because their prayers are not immediately answered. They will lay hold of the strength of God, as Jacob laid hold of the Angel, and the language of their souls will be, "I will not let Thee go, except Thou bless me." PP 201,202

Only those who cling to the understanding that our God is merciful will have the confidence to hang on to receive the blessing of Christ as did Jacob. This apparent conflict that arises from the stories of the Old Testament with the statements of Christ in the New Testament opens a door in our minds to the seed planted by Satan that God is not merciful. We are confronted with an apparent contradiction that will only result in an extended wrestle with our Saviour if we have not learned to know that our Father is merciful and we can trust in His mercy. The resentment that resides in the soul will manifest in the reading of these stories. Men such as Richard Dawkins, Stephen Fry and others give evidence of this bitter seed born of the lie that Satan has originated. It is a lie that presents God as a merciless dictator that results in His execution in the minds of men, as the preaching of these new atheists that God is arbitrary, violent, and cruel causes many to ceasing to believe in His existence altogether.

Conversely, some are quick to defend the character of God as merciful by adding, like our mother Eve, to what the Word of God teaches. Some succumb to deception in the form of universalism which teaches that all will be saved. Others take a higher critical approach and consign the Old Testament to "doing the best that they could at the time." Either way confidence in the plain reading of Scripture is eroded and the serpent is allowed to strangle the soul with his coils of deception.

Satan's Misrepresentation of God

From the beginning Satan has misrepresented the character of God.

The understanding of the people of God has been blinded, for Satan has misrepresented the character of God. Our good and gracious Lord has been presented before the people clothed in the attributes of Satan,

and men and women who have been seeking for truth have so long regarded God in a false light it is difficult to dispel the cloud that obscures His glory from their view. 1SM 355

It has been Satan's design from the beginning to clothe God with his own attributes in order that people would reject Him. We see the work of Satan in slaughtering women and children in the French Revolution.

At Arras even the cruel mercy of a speedy death was denied to the prisoners. All down the Loire, from Saumur to the sea, great flocks of crows and kites feasted on naked corpses, twined together in hideous embraces. **No mercy was shown to sex or age.** The number of young lads and of girls of seventeen who were murdered by that execrable government, is to be reckoned by hundreds. **Babies torn from the breast were tossed from pike to pike along the Jacobin ranks."** In the short space of ten years, multitudes of human beings perished.

All this was as Satan would have it. This was what for ages he had been working to secure. His policy is deception from first to last, and his steadfast purpose is to bring woe and wretchedness upon men, to deface and defile the workmanship of God, to mar the divine purposes of benevolence and love, and thus cause grief in heaven. **Then by his deceptive arts he blinds the minds of men, and leads them to throw back the blame of his work upon God, as if all this misery were the result of the Creator's plan.** GC 283,284

It is Satan who inspires humanity to slaughter without mercy regardless of sex or age. The great test is to know how to read the Scriptures faithfully, without twisting them, to reveal this reality. If we are serious, at times our Saviour will feel like our enemy seeking to do us harm, but if we have come to know the mercy of God, we will hold on until we receive the blessing. It is my deeply held conviction that a failure to understand the character of our God correctly will allow Satan to triumph over those who never made the effort to know the truth. We must know the truth of our Father's character. This is a work of tremendous urgency if we would be sealed under the Latter Rain. As it was Satan's first work to misrepresent the character of God, so the last message to the world will be a revelation of the character of His love.

It is the darkness of misapprehension of God that is enshrouding the world. Men are losing their knowledge of His character. It has been misunderstood and misinterpreted. At this time a message from God is to be proclaimed, a message illuminating in its influence and saving in its power. His character is to be made known. Into the darkness of the world is to be shed the light of His glory, the light of His goodness, mercy, and truth.

This is the work outlined by the prophet Isaiah in the words, "O Jerusalem, that bringest good tidings, lift up thy voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God! Behold, the Lord God will come with strong hand, and His arm shall rule for Him; behold, His reward is with Him, and His work before Him." Isaiah 40:9,10.

Those who wait for the Bridegroom's coming are to say to the people, "Behold your God." **The last rays of merciful light, the last message of mercy to be given to the world, is a revelation of His character of love.** COL 415

God's Original Plan to Take Canaan

In regard to the possession of Canaan by Israel, the Lord told them how this would be accomplished:

Exo 23:27-30 I will send my fear before thee, and will destroy [discomfort, disturb, vex] all the people to whom thou shalt come, and I will make all thine enemies turn their backs [stiffen their necks] unto thee. (28) And I will send hornets before thee, which shall drive out the Hivite, the Canaanite, and the Hittite, from before thee. (29) I will not drive them out from before thee in one year; lest the land become desolate, and the beast of the field multiply against thee. (30) By little and little I will drive them out from before thee, until thou be increased, and inherit the land.

There is no mention here of the use of the sword. Israel had escaped Egypt and seen the Egyptians defeated without one use of the sword.

The Lord had never commanded them to ‘go up and fight.’ **It was not His purpose that they should gain the land by warfare**, but by strict obedience to His commands. PP 392

When they were at the first preparing to enter Canaan, the undertaking was attended with far less difficulty than now. God had promised His people that **if they would obey His voice He would go before them and fight for them; and He would also send [437] hornets to drive out the inhabitants of the land.** PP 436

Israel’s Fear of God

In delivering Israel from Egypt, He intended for them to become acquainted with Him and learn to trust Him. While living in Egypt the Israelites were surrounded by the spirit of tyranny. In the example of the Hebrew children being thrown into the river, and their harsh experience in Egypt, many were influenced by the notion that God was a tyrant that could turn against them at any time and slay them. We see this fear expressed from the beginning:

Exo 14:11 And they said unto Moses, Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? wherefore hast thou dealt thus with us, to carry us forth out of Egypt?

This fear goes all the way back to the garden of Eden, when Satan convinced Adam that when God said they would surely die that He was the one coming to kill them.

Gen 3:10 And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself.

Israel hid their fear of the God they perceived in accusing Moses. Yet it was clearly evident that Moses did not bring out the people by his own power. Satan was tempting the people to think that God was wanting to kill them in the wilderness. This temptation was only possible because of their false understanding of the character of God. This fear continues to grow for the Israelites:

Exo 16:3 And the children of Israel said unto them, **Would to God we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt**, when we sat by the flesh pots, and when we did eat bread to the full; for ye have brought us forth into this wilderness, to kill this whole assembly with hunger.

The Israelites express their fear of God and openly state they wished that they had died by the hand of God in Egypt rather than endure their current situation. They clearly did not trust God and their minds were blinded by Satan as to His true character.

A Pivotal Moment with Amalek

In the very next chapter of Exodus the Israelites manifest even further their perverted ideas of God:

Exo 17:3-4 And the people thirsted there for water; and the people murmured against Moses, and said, Wherefore is this that thou hast brought us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our cattle with thirst? (4) And Moses cried unto the LORD, saying, What shall I do unto this people? they be almost ready to stone me.

They continue to complain and accuse Moses and therefore God, of wanting to kill them. Their idolatrous view of a violent God begins to translate into threats to kill Moses. By beholding this false idea of a violent God they are changed into that image and plot violent acts against the man that God used to save them from Egypt.

The continual murmuring and complaining and distrust of God places Him in a position where He is less able to protect them. They are choosing Satan as their master, and Satan is demanding access to destroy

them. We see the connection between the complaints about water and the attack of the Amalekites as follows:

Exo 17:7-8 And he called the name of the place Massah, and Meribah, because of the chiding of the children of Israel, and because they tempted the LORD, saying, Is the LORD among us, or not? (8) **Then** came Amalek, and fought with Israel in Rephidim.

The Lord tested the faith of his people, but they did not endure the trial. They murmured for food, and for water, and complained of Moses. **Because of their unbelief, God suffered their enemies to make [229] war with them,** that he might manifest to his people from whence cometh their strength. 1SP 228,229

Because of Israel's disobedience and departure from God, they were allowed to be brought into close places and to suffer adversity; their enemies were permitted to make war with them, to humble them and lead them to seek God in their trouble and distress. 2T 106.

The chiding of the children of Israel opened a door for Satan to stir up the Amalekites to attack them. This would not have happened if Israel had trusted the Lord. The Amalekites would have been too afraid to touch them. There is no evidence that Israel repented of their sin against God. They had a false view of God as tyrant intent on killing them. There is no evidence of gratefulness in receiving the water. There is no apology to Moses or any statement of thanks to him for pleading for the water. Nothing is recorded to indicate this. The Israelites had threatened to kill Moses. Can we imagine how much this would have hurt Moses? He could have stayed in the calm realm of his desert home looking after his family and caring for his flocks. He may also have felt the base ingratitude they were showing to God. It would have been a real trial for him. Then within this frame of mind, he receives word that the Amalakites are attacking and picking off the weak. What happens next is pivotal. It is a decision made under discouraging circumstances and under pressure.

Exo 17:9 And Moses said unto Joshua, Choose us out men, and go out, fight with Amalek: to morrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in mine hand.

The Inherited Sword

It does not say, "And the Lord commanded Moses." It does not say that Moses went into the sanctuary and pled with the Lord. It just said that Moses told Joshua to go and fight. As I picture the scene of Moses walking towards Joshua, everything goes into slow motion and my thoughts divert to the night that Abraham was deeply concerned about what he had witnessed in rescuing Lot.

Abraham gladly returned to his tents and his flocks, but his mind was disturbed by harassing thoughts. **He had been a man of peace, so far as possible shunning enmity and strife; and with horror he recalled the scene of carnage he had witnessed.** But the nations whose forces he had defeated would doubtless renew the invasion of Canaan, and make him the special object of their vengeance. PP 136

Abraham, who occupied a position similar to Adam, set the course of inherited tendencies for generations to come. The lifting of the sword by Abraham would cause a horror of great darkness to fall upon his descendants, and he tasted it that frightful night as he contemplated a fearful future having taken the sword into his hand. My mind shifts to the village of Shechem, where the sword bursts forth in the hands of Abraham's great grandsons Levi and Simeon in revenge for their raped sister.

Gen 34:25-29 And it came to pass on the third day, when they were sore, that two of the sons of Jacob, Simeon and Levi, Dinah's brethren, took each man his sword, and came upon the city boldly, and slew all the males. (26) And they slew Hamor and Shechem his son with the edge of the sword, and took Dinah out of Shechem's house, and went out. (27) The sons of Jacob came upon the slain, and spoiled the city, because they had defiled their sister. (28) They took their sheep, and their oxen, and their asses, and that which was in the city, and that which was in the field, (29) And all their wealth, and all their little ones, and their wives took they captive, and spoiled even all that was in the house.

The seed of Abraham's act to save his nephew burst forth in greater measure in the lives of Levi and Simeon aided by the deceit of their other brothers in asking the Shechemites to be circumcised. Truly Jacob could lament that his descendants would stink in the eyes of the Canaanites and Perizzites and that, as they had taken the sword, the sword would follow them down the generations. Do we witness the effects of the children of Levi telling the story of their father who rose up in behalf of his sister to slay the Shechemites? Would some of the children of Levi be tempted to be proud of what their father had done in protecting his sister? Would not Satan suggest to them that he was justified in his actions as self-defence? Wouldn't accepting this interpretation of history be easier than explaining that your forefather was a cold blooded killer and carry the shame of this down the generations?

All of this history is now walking in the footsteps of Moses towards Joshua. My thoughts shift to earlier in the life of Moses. A similar temptation to protect "one of your own" had come before to Moses in the form of an Egyptian slave master beating one of his relatives. The siren call of his father Levi rises up with indignation; the sword is raised and the fury is satisfied.

Moses was too hasty in slaying the Egyptian. He supposed the people of Israel understood that God's special providence had raised him up to deliver them. **But the Lord did not design to accomplish this work by warfare, as Moses thought, but by his own mighty power, that the glory might be ascribed to him alone.** Yet even this rash act was overruled by God to bring about his purpose. ST Feb 19, 1880

Had forty years in the wilderness released Moses from the temptation to protect his own through his own decisions? Had Moses possibly learned that Amalek had already slain some of the weak in the camp? Just before the time of his death Moses recalled:

Deu 25:17-19 Remember what Amalek did unto thee by the way, when ye were come forth out of Egypt; (18) How he met thee by the way, and smote the hindmost of thee, even all that were feeble behind thee, when thou wast faint and weary; and he feared not God. Therefore it shall be, when the LORD thy God hath given thee rest from all thine enemies round about, in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance to possess it, that thou shalt blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven; thou shalt not forget it.

Did all of this come together as Satan had designed in order to lead Israel to once again take the sword, thereby making Israel stink in the eyes of the world? Had Satan planned this in order that the character of God might be misrepresented down through the ages of time? The Israelites themselves misunderstood the character of God, so could it be that taking up the sword simply was a manifestation of the God that Israel had imagined? If this supposed God could not even get them water when it was needed, how would He be in the least bit concerned about them dying at the hands of the Amalekites?

Inspiration tells us that God never intended to use warfare to take the Promised Land. Is it therefore safe to conclude that this uncommanded and un-prayed about action to call Joshua to fight the Amalekites with the sword was not one that He had planned? It is evident in the great struggle that took place and the long earnest prayers that were needed to help Israel defeat the Amalekites that this was not what God originally intended. Yet God allowed them to walk this path because most of them imagined God as someone violent and warlike. When Satan was allowed to slaughter the Egyptians he was all the while telling the Israelites that their God was doing these things. For an explanation of the events of the plagues in Egypt, see the booklet *Calvary in Egypt*.

Once having taken this step it would be very hard not to resort to the use of the sword again. God appealed to them after the events with Amalek that He had a different approach that did not require the use of the sword (Ex 23:27-30), but until Israel could see the true character of God they would be tempted again and again to use it.

In the story of Korah, Dathan and Abiram and the 250 princes we see how this fear of a God who wants to kill them in the wilderness drives them to seek other leadership than Moses and Aaron. Then when they came up to the borders of Canaan they gave an evil report of the land because they were not able to believe that God loved them and would do good for them. They ignored all of His protection and care and focused on anything negative. Satan could easily tempt them on these things because they believed in a God who wanted to kill them and could change His mood at any time. Every time Satan was allowed to break through the hedge of protection and harm the Israelites, he would tell them that God was directly punishing them Himself with His own hand. How sad it must have been for God to have His people willing to believe such lies about Him.

Num 14:2-3 And all the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron: and the whole congregation said unto them, Would God that we had died in the land of Egypt! or would God we had died in this wilderness! (3) **And wherefore hath the LORD brought us unto this land, to fall by the sword, that our wives and our children should be a prey?** were it not better for us to return into Egypt?

Num 14:22-23 Because all those men which have seen my glory, and my miracles, which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, **and have tempted me now these ten times, and have not hearkened to my voice;** (23) Surely they shall not see the land which I swear unto their fathers, neither shall any of them that provoked me see it:

When Israel was told they could not go up to possess the land because of their sin, they rebelled again and determined to go up and fight, when God had not commanded them to fight.

Forty Years Later...

The Israelites had repeatedly stated that they feared that God would kill them in the wilderness. As we will explore a little later on, God allowed their own view of God to judge them. A whole generation died in the wilderness by the hand of the destroyer who had deceived them into the idolatry of believing in a god who wanted to kill them in the wilderness.

Job 3:25 For the thing which I greatly feared is come upon me, and that which I was afraid of is come unto me.

Job greatly feared that calamity would befall him. Could part of the reason that this happened was because of the fear Job had? Could a constant fear of the New World Order and death camps actually contribute to allowing Satan to bring this about?

When the forty years had passed and a whole generation had gone to their death, they came again up to the border. The sins of the fathers were still in the mouths of their children:

Num 21:5 **And the people spake against God, and against Moses, Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness?** for there is no bread, neither is there any water; and our soul loatheth this light bread.

As they continued their journey toward the south, their route lay through a hot, sandy valley, destitute of shade or vegetation. The way seemed long and difficult, and they suffered from weariness and thirst. Again they failed to endure the test of their faith and patience. **By continually dwelling on the dark side of their experiences, they separated themselves farther and farther from God.** They lost sight of the fact that but for their murmuring when the water ceased at Kadesh, they would have been spared the journey around Edom. God had purposed better things for them. Their hearts should have been filled with gratitude to Him that He had punished their sin so lightly. **But instead of this, they flattered themselves that if God and Moses had not interfered, they might now have been in possession of the Promised Land. After bringing trouble upon themselves, making their lot altogether harder than God designed, they charged all their misfortunes upon Him. Thus they cherished bitter thoughts**

concerning His dealings with them, and finally they became discontented with everything. Egypt looked brighter and more desirable than liberty and the land to which God was leading them.

As the Israelites indulged the spirit of discontent, they were disposed to find fault even with their blessings. "And the people spake against God, and against Moses, Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? for there is no bread, neither is there any water; and our soul loatheth this light bread."

Moses faithfully set before the people their great sin. It was God's power alone that had preserved them in "that great and terrible wilderness, wherein were fiery serpents, and scorpions, [429] and drought, where there was no water." Deuteronomy 8:15. Every day of their travels they had been kept by a miracle of divine mercy. In all the way of God's leading they had found water to refresh the thirsty, bread from heaven to satisfy their hunger, and peace and safety under the shadowy cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night. Angels had ministered to them as they climbed the rocky heights or threaded the rugged paths of the wilderness. Notwithstanding the hardships they had endured, there was not a feeble one in all their ranks. Their feet had not swollen in their long journeys, neither had their clothes grown old. God had subdued before them the fierce beasts of prey and the venomous reptiles of the forest and the desert. If with all these tokens of His love the people still continued to complain, the Lord would withdraw His protection until they should be led to appreciate His merciful care, and return to Him with repentance and humiliation. {PP 428.3}

Israel takes a Vow

The Israelites were moving further and further away from God, and their capacity to appreciate His character grew less and less. After forty years Israel once again passed over the same ground in regard to complaining about having enough water, and they once again gave a similar response, only more direct.

Num 21:5 And the people spake against God, and against Moses, Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness?

Satan had been working on Moses all this time encouraging him to give up on these miserable wretches. God had tested Moses on this point for his own sake when Moses was on the Mount with God and the Israelites were worshipping the golden calf (Exodus 32:9-14), and thankfully Moses responded to the Spirit of Christ and asked God to pardon the people, which He graciously did. Yet now, seeing that Israel was even worse than before, Moses gives in to temptation.

Moses Strikes the Rock in Disobedience

Num 20:10-11 And Moses and Aaron gathered the congregation together before the rock, and he said unto them, Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock? (11) And Moses lifted up his hand, and with his rod he smote the rock twice: and the water came out abundantly, and the congregation drank, and their beasts also.

When Moses gave in to this temptation, it gave Satan greater access to the minds of the Israelites. He had prayed for them and stood between them and Satan in so many ways. Yet this step gave Satan the advantage. Satan rejoiced to be able to take Aaron's life as a result of this failure.

Num 20:24 Aaron shall be gathered unto his people: for he shall not enter into the land which I have given unto the children of Israel, because ye rebelled against my word at the water of Meribah.

With greater access to the minds of the Israelites, Satan induced them to make a bargain with God, the God they imagined who loved to kill people. They had been attacked by another tribe for their sins, and now in their desperation they made a vow:

Num 21:1-3 And when king Arad the Canaanite, which dwelt in the south, heard tell that Israel came by the way of the spies; then he fought against Israel, and took some of them prisoners. (2) **And Israel vowed a vow unto the LORD, and said, If thou wilt indeed deliver this people into my hand, then I**

will utterly destroy their cities. (3) **And the LORD hearkened to the voice of Israel**, and delivered up the Canaanites; and they utterly destroyed them and their cities: and he called the name of the place Hormah.

God did not ask the Israelites to slaughter their enemies. Their false view of God caused them to believe that He would desire them to make such a blood thirsty vow, and that this would gain His approval, and He would help them. It says that God hearkened unto their voice. Why did God hearken unto their voice? Would this not only cement them in the idea that God desired them to kill their enemies? The answer is found in the parable of the talents:

Luke 19:20-23 And another came, saying, Lord, behold, here is thy pound, which I have kept laid up in a napkin: (21) For I feared thee, because thou art an austere man: thou takest up that thou layedst not down, and reapest that thou didst not sow. (22) And he saith unto him, **Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant.** Thou knewest that I was an austere man, taking up that I laid not down, and reaping that I did not sow: Wherefore then gavest not thou my money into the bank, that at my coming I might have required mine own with usury?

The lazy servant imagined the Lord to be an austere person. According to this belief, he received judgment. As the Scripture says:

James 2:12-13 So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty. (13) For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment.

God allowed the man who had a false view of Him to be judged according to his own ideas. How does God do this?

Gal 6:7 Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.

Exo 34:7 Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation.

When parents or rulers neglect the duty of punishing iniquity, God Himself will take the case in hand. His restraining power will be in a measure removed from the agencies of evil, so that a train of circumstances will arise which will punish sin with sin. PP 727

The nations around Israel had well passed the boundary of God's protection. Israel refused to accept the truth of the loving character of God. They persisted in thinking He wanted to harm them and everybody else. When Israel came to the place of making a vow with God to slaughter their enemies, He hearkened unto their voice, not as a reward for faithfulness but rather to let them have their false view of God and punish sin with sin. He visited the iniquities of the fathers upon the children as He said He would do. Allowing Israel to defeat their enemies in this context was the Lord allowing them to hold fast their conviction that God is a murderer. He tried for a long time to show them His true character of love by showering them with many blessings but in the end He allowed them to maintain their cruel false beliefs and let them be judged by this.

God Giving Israel what They Desired

Before Israel's first failure on the borders of Canaan we find Israel complaining about their desire for meat. They are weeping in their tents because they want flesh to eat. At this point Moses complains to the Lord about the burdens he had to carry.

Num 11:10-11 Then Moses heard the people weep throughout their families, every man in the door of his tent: and the anger of the LORD was kindled greatly; Moses also was displeased. (11) And Moses said unto the LORD, Wherefore hast thou afflicted thy servant? and wherefore have I not found favour in thy sight, that thou layest the burden of all this people upon me?

This test for Moses reveals elements in his character that still reflect a wrong understanding of the character of God.

Num 11:14-15 I am not able to bear all this people alone, because it is too heavy for me. (15) And if thou deal thus with me, kill me, I pray thee, out of hand, if I have found favour in thy sight; and let me not see my wretchedness.

Moses asks God to kill him to release him from the burden. Elijah had a similar experience in dealing with Jezebel. Anyone who has felt completely overwhelmed by circumstances can understand Moses' feelings; yet they reveal a lack of trust in God and His dealings. To help Moses God commanded:

Num 11:16 And the LORD said unto Moses, Gather unto me seventy men of the elders of Israel, whom thou knowest to be the elders of the people, and officers over them; and bring them unto the tabernacle of the congregation, that they may stand there with thee.

Yet it was not God's original plan to ordain these seventy men.

The Lord permitted Moses to choose for himself the most faithful and efficient men to share the responsibility with him. Their influence would assist in holding in check the violence of the people, and quelling insurrection; yet serious evils would eventually result from their promotion. **They would never have been chosen had Moses manifested faith corresponding to the evidences he had witnessed of God's power and goodness.** But he had magnified his own burdens and services, almost losing sight of the fact that he was only the instrument by which God had wrought. He was not excusable in indulging, in the slightest degree, the spirit of murmuring that was the curse of Israel. Had he relied fully upon God, the Lord would have guided him continually and would have given him strength for every emergency. PP 380

One of the first issues that arose from this process was that Aaron and Miriam felt slighted by Moses in appointing the seventy elders without consulting them. This led to more problems.

After Moses had told the Lord that he was unable to bear the burden of the people alone, and God had directed him to choose seventy of the elders, and he had put the same Spirit upon them which was upon Moses, Aaron and Miriam were jealous because they had not been consulted in the matter. 1SP 285

The Lord then gave to the Israelites the desire of their hearts for flesh food.

In this instance the Lord gave the people that which was not for their best good, because they would have it. They would not submit to receive from the Lord only those things which would prove for their good. They gave themselves up to seditious murmurings against Moses, and against the Lord, because they did not receive those things which would prove an injury to them. 1SP 284

In like manner God hearkened unto the vow that Israel made to slaughter Arad the Canaanite king. He gave them that which was not for their best good because they would have it.

So we see in the appointment of the seventy elders and in the sending the quail that God was giving to Israel things that they wanted but which He knew was not best for them.

Releasing the Idol of Terror

One significant point relates to what God told them in Exodus 23:27:

Exo 23:27 I will send [loose] my fear [fright, idol] before thee, and will destroy [discomfort, vex] all the people to whom thou shalt come, and I will make all thine enemies turn their backs [stiff necked] unto thee.

The surrounding nations in Canaan all had a view of God that was vengeful and murderous. The fact that some nations would sacrifice their children to their gods revealed how they viewed the tyrannical,

murderous nature of their gods. The word for fear in Exodus 23;27 can be translated idol, as is the case in Jeremiah 50:38.

Jer 50:38 A drought is upon her waters; and they shall be dried up: for it is the land of graven images, and they are mad upon their **idols**.

As the nations worshipped gods of terror and death, God allowed the sin of Israel to bring upon these nations what they feared and believed. In speaking of the heathen Paul states:

Rom 1:32 Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.

The guilt resulting from the sins of the Canaanites caused them to fear death and destruction. After Satan had secured the heart of Israel in believing that God wanted them to slaughter people, he then was able to inspire Israel to vow to slaughter these nations since God had ceased to protect them because their cup of iniquity was full. So as God predicted, the terror of the false gods they worshipped came upon them. But this came upon them through the Israelites, rather than by self-destructive means.

Judgment Without Mercy

One of the evident signs that God was giving to Israel what they desired is this statement in Deuteronomy 7:2.

Deu 7:2 And when the LORD thy God shall deliver them before thee; thou shalt smite them, and utterly destroy them; thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor shew mercy unto them:

The instruction to utterly destroy their enemies without mercy, while being in harmony with a god that Israel had imagined was not reflective of the true God of heaven. The Bible says that judgment is given without mercy to those who have showed no mercy.

James 2:13 For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment.

This verse can read two ways. Those who show no mercy will judge others without mercy and also those who show no mercy will receive none when they are judged. This idea of merciless justice reflects the mind of Satan.

The condemning power of Satan would lead him to institute a theory of justice inconsistent with mercy. He claims to be officiating as the voice and power of God, claims that his decisions are justice, are pure and without fault. Thus he takes his position on the judgment seat and declares that his counsels are infallible. **Here his merciless justice comes in, a counterfeit of justice, abhorrent to God.** Ellen White, Letter 16a 1892

The Scriptures reveal that God is ever merciful:

Exo 34:6 And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth,...

1 Ch 16:34 O give thanks unto the LORD; for he is good; for his mercy endureth for ever.

God's justice is never to the exclusion of His mercy. This is an invention of Satan. Consider the events of the destruction of Jerusalem:

The Jews had forged their own fetters; they had filled for themselves the cup of vengeance. In the utter destruction that befell them as a nation, and in all the woes that followed them in their dispersion, they were but reaping the harvest which their own hands had sown. Says the prophet: "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself;" "for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity." Hosea 13:9; 14:1. **Their sufferings are often**

represented as a punishment visited upon them by the direct decree of God. It is thus that the great deceiver seeks to conceal his own work. By stubborn rejection of divine love and mercy, the Jews had caused the protection of God to be withdrawn from them, and **Satan was permitted to rule them according to his will. The horrible cruelties enacted in the [36] destruction of Jerusalem are a demonstration of Satan's vindictive power over those who yield to his control.**

We cannot know how much we owe to Christ for the peace and protection which we enjoy. It is the restraining power of God that prevents mankind from passing fully under the control of Satan. The disobedient and unthankful have great reason for gratitude for God's mercy and long-suffering in holding in check the cruel, malignant power of the evil one. But when men pass the limits of divine forbearance, that restraint is removed. **God does not stand toward the sinner as an executioner of the sentence against transgression; but He leaves the rejectors of His mercy to themselves, to reap that which they have sown.** Every ray of light rejected, every warning despised or unheeded, every passion indulged, every transgression of the law of God, is a seed sown which yields its unfailing harvest. The Spirit of God, persistently resisted, is at last withdrawn from the sinner, and then there is left no power to control the evil passions of the soul, and no protection from the malice and enmity of Satan. The destruction of Jerusalem is a fearful and solemn warning to all who are trifling with the offers of divine grace and resisting the pleadings of divine mercy. Never was there given a more decisive testimony to God's hatred of sin and to the certain punishment that will fall upon the guilty. GC 35,36

At the time that Israel made a vow to God to slaughter the Canaanite king they were ruled by the spirit of Satan. They had murmured and complained against God and rebelled against Him at every opportunity. God warned them and encouraged them to follow His commandments:

Deu 4:1 Now therefore hearken, O Israel, unto the statutes and unto the judgments, which I teach you, for to do them, that ye may live, and go in and possess the land which the LORD God of your fathers giveth you.

Deu 8:1 All the commandments which I command thee this day shall ye observe to do, that ye may live, and multiply, and go in and possess the land which the LORD swore unto your fathers.

Yet Israel refused to obey God and therefore Satan was enabled to control their desires for judgment without mercy. God gave to them what they desired even though it was not His plan. He also gave to the heathen nations what they feared as they were no longer protected, Satan used Israel to slaughter the Canaanites. In doing this he would lead millions to their deaths through a false understanding of the character of God as one who murders and slaughters people.

Glimpses of Glory

We do obtain glimpses of God's plan to deal with their enemies without weapons in verses like these:

Jos 24:11-12 And ye went over Jordan, and came unto Jericho: and the men of Jericho fought against you, the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Girgashites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites; and I delivered them into your hand. (12) And I sent the hornet before you, which drave them out from before you, even the two kings of the Amorites; **but not with thy sword, nor with thy bow.**

2 Chron 20:17-23 Ye shall not need to fight in this battle: set yourselves, stand ye still, and see the salvation of the LORD with you, O Judah and Jerusalem: fear not, nor be dismayed; to morrow go out against them: for the LORD will be with you. (18) And Jehoshaphat bowed his head with his face to the ground: and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem fell before the LORD, worshipping the LORD. (19) And the Levites, of the children of the Kohathites, and of the children of the Korhites, stood up to praise the LORD God of Israel with a loud voice on high. (20) And they rose early in the morning, and went forth into the wilderness of Tekoa: and as they went forth, Jehoshaphat stood and said, Hear me, O Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem; Believe in the LORD your God, so shall ye be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper. (21) **And when he had consulted with the people, he appointed singers unto the LORD, and that should praise the beauty of holiness, as they went out**

before the army, and to say, Praise the LORD; for his mercy endureth for ever. (22) And when they began to sing and to praise, the LORD set [delivered up] ambushments against the children of Ammon, Moab, and mount Seir, which were come against Judah; and they were smitten. (23) For the children of Ammon and Moab stood up against the inhabitants of mount Seir, utterly to slay and destroy them: and when they had made an end of the inhabitants of Seir, every one helped to destroy another.

So when Israel was enabled to take the land of Canaan by warfare it was not what God had originally intended. Since Israel had constantly feared that God was trying to kill them and they doubted His loving care, Satan was enabled to seduce them into vowing to God to slaughter the Canaanites and other heathen nations. Israel was granted to be victorious in battle, but Satan won the war against God's character. Israel was defeated by their victory and enslaved to a false view of God.

Seeing God in the Light of Christ

In these last days we are granted the opportunity to see the character of God as it truly is. In the face of Jesus Christ we can begin to uncover the true intentions of our heavenly Father.

All that man needs to know or can know of God has been revealed in the life and character of His Son.
{8T 286.1}

Tender, compassionate, sympathetic, ever considerate of others, He represented the character of God, and was constantly engaged in service for God and man. {8T 286.4}

How many people did Jesus kill with the sword? How many did He burn with fire? How many children did He impale with a spear? Absolutely none! For all those who entertain ideas that God came to destroy men's lives remember the words of Jesus:

Luke 9:55-56 But he turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of.
(56) For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them.

As long as we continue to believe the lie that God will personally kill those who resist Him, we will find Jesus comes to us in the time of Jacob's trouble as an enemy and we will let go before we receive His blessing. Only those who find our Father to be truly merciful will be enabled to hang on and be sealed against the lie of Satan that God is a tyrant that we should fear. It will take the events of Jacob's trouble to fully surface this human wickedness against God; this fear that conceives of God as a personal murderer to those who think differently of Him.

Will Satan defeat you in the victory of Israel over Canaan with the sword, or will you see our merciful Father letting men have their own wishes and following their own course to its completion? Choose you this day whom you will serve; as for me and my house we will serve the ever merciful God, who will by no means clear iniquity but let the wheat and tares come to harvest that every man's heart will be revealed.