

Sunday, August 26, 2012

Did God Incite Violence and Killing in the Old Testament? (1)

Some wonder why some of the old Testament's events has too much violence and killing while in the New Testament the commandment is all about tolerance and love. Does God change? Why does He command some of His men in the Old Testament to kill people or destroy entire cities? Doesn't this contradict the nature of God being the lover of mankind? I would like to address these questions, God willing, in this article and next article.

1- The truth is, God does not change. He is the same in both the New and Old Testaments, He is a God of peace and love, a God of mercy and compassion. However, He is a All-Holy and Just God and always acts within a frame of justice.

2- Let's take a look at the story of the people of Israel from its beginning. When God called Abraham and had him settle in the land of Canaan (modern day Palestine), a time when earth was hardly populated by man (around 2000 BC), He gave earth to him and his offspring saying:

"To your descendants I have given this land." (Genesis 15:18) and warned him saying:

"Know certainly that your descendants will be strangers in a land [meaning Egypt] that is not theirs, and will serve them, and they will afflict them four hundred years. ... But in the fourth generation they shall return here, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete."

(Genesis 15:13-16) Here it is clear that God did not drive the Amorites out of the land until the cup of their iniquity became full to the top, and He emphasized this several times.

+ *"It is not because of your righteousness or the uprightness of your heart that you go in to possess their land, but because of the wickedness of these nations that the LORD your God drives them out from before you, and that He may fulfill the word which the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob."* (Deuteronomy 9:5)

+ *"When you come into the land which the LORD your God is giving you, you shall not learn to follow the abominations of those nations... For all who do these things are an abomination to the LORD, and because of these abominations the LORD your God drives them out from before you."* (Deuteronomy 18:9-12)

+ *"Lest they teach you to do according to all their abominations which they have done for their gods, and you sin against the LORD your God."* (Deuteronomy 20:18)

+ *"If indeed you do go back, and cling to the remnant of these nations—these that remain among you—and make marriages with them, and go in to them and they to you, know for certain that the LORD your God will no longer drive out these nations from before*

you. But they shall be snares and traps to you, and scourges on your sides and thorns in your eyes, until you perish from this good land which the LORD your God has given you." (Joshua 23:12-13)

3- Thus, we see that driving out the inhabitants of Canaan in order for the people of Israel to inhabit it, was a just act, the proof is that when the people of Israel sinned and indulged themselves in iniquity, they were also driven out and were displaced. Their punishment was proportional to the magnitude of their sin, and when their sin increased so much, they fell in captivity in Ashur (eighth century BC) then later the rest fell in captivity in Babylon (Sixth century BC) and they were scattered across many nations. Some small number came back to their land on several groups, but they repeated their disobedience and sinned the greatest sin, they rejected the Lord Jesus Christ and crucified Him. Here they saw the major punishment being scattered and driven out of their land for nearly 19 centuries. Thus, we see that **the judgments of God are always within a framework of justice for all.**

4- The divine justice was also mixed with mercy and giving many chances for repentance and transformation. Additionally, God did not destroy the righteous along with the sinners (Genesis 19). In many cases He accepts the intercession on behalf of the sinners and forgives them. There are many examples to this...

We will resume our topic in the next article, God willing.

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