

## DID GOD COMMAND OR ENDORSE GENOCIDE IN THE BIBLE?

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***“When the LORD your God brings you into the land you are entering to possess and drives out before you many nations – Hittites, Girgashites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites, seven nations larger and stronger than you – and when the LORD your God has delivered them over to you and you have defeated them, then you must destroy them totally. Make no treaty with them, and show them no mercy.”*** (Deuteronomy 7:1-2)

Genocide is defined as the systematic attempt at extermination of a national, racial, religious or ethnic group.

1. There was never a time when God was only interested in the Jews. His expressed purpose has always been to rescue people from every tribe and from every nation, including the Canaanites! (Genesis 12:3)

2. Archeologists have discovered that the Canaanites were anything but innocent.

3. For centuries God had been incredibly patient with the Canaanites.

***“Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own, and they will be enslaved and mistreated four hundred years. But I will punish the nation they serve as slaves, and afterward they will come out with great possessions. You, however, will go to your fathers in peace and be buried at a good old age. In the fourth generation your descendants will come back here, for the sin of the Amorites has not yet reached its full measure.”***

(Genesis 15:13-16)

4. This was not a campaign of genocide. The Israelites were not commanded to hunt down their enemies throughout the land. The Israelites were commanded to drive out their enemies from the land.

***“I will send my terror ahead of you and throw into confusion every nation you encounter. I will make all your enemies turn their backs and run. I will send the hornet ahead of you to drive the Hivites, Canaanites and Hittites out of your way. But I will not drive them out in a single year, because the land would become desolate and the wild animals too numerous for you. Little by little I will drive them out before you, until you have increased enough to take possession of the land.”*** (Exodus 23:27-30)

5. It is vital to recognize that these events took place while Israel was a functioning theocracy: God was directly leading them as their King. The command given to “destroy” the Canaanites was specifically given to Israel at a specific time for a specific purpose.

6. Israel had to be protected, because Israel was God's delivery mechanism for eternal life.
7. Ancient Near Eastern war texts used heavy hyperbole and a group of common, stereotypical phrases as an ancient form of 'trash talk.'

*"Leave alive nothing that breathes..." "Man and woman, young and old..."*  
*"No survivors..." "Utterly destroyed..." "Perished"*

It was a style of writing and speech that employed an exaggerated form of rhetoric that communicated one, simple truth to the ancient reader: "a comprehensive victory was achieved."

Compare Joshua 10:20a with Joshua 10:20b

Compare Joshua 10:33 with Judges 1:29

Compare Joshua 10:38-39 with Joshua 11:21

Compare Joshua 11:23 with Joshua 13:1

Compare Joshua 12:7-8, 21, 23 with Judges 1:27

### ***Suggested Further Reading for Difficult Old Testament Passages...***

**"Is God a Moral Monster?: Making Sense of the Old Testament God," Paul Copan**

**"Is God a Vindictive Bully?: Reconciling Portrayals of God in the Old and New Testaments," Paul Copan**

**"Did God Really Command Genocide?: Coming to Terms with the Justice of God," Paul Copan**

**"Slaves, Women and Homosexuals: Exploring the Hermeneutics of Cultural Analysis," William J. Webb**