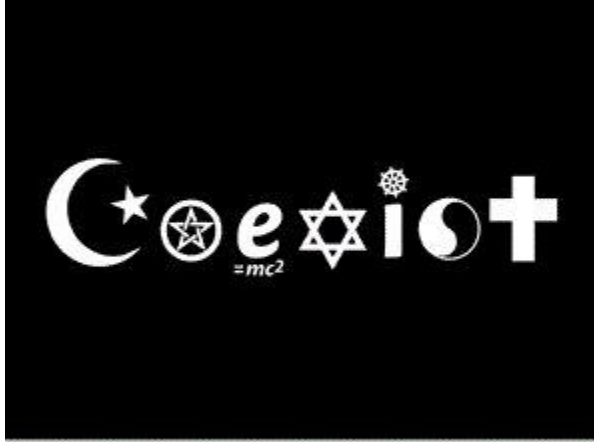


[The Understanding Jihad Series: Is Islam More Likely Than Other Religions to Encourage Violence?](#)

Posted on 11 March 2011 by Danios



Having been a very strong advocate of religious tolerance and pluralism, it is with great reservation in my heart that I publish the [Understanding Jihad Series](#), which compares violence and war in the Judeo-Christian tradition to the jihad of Islam. Certainly, the intention is **not** to target one particular faith or religious group. Quite the contrary, the goal is to prevent religious majoritarianism, whereby the dominant religious and cultural group is able to target weaker, poorly represented minority populations. These articles are meant to prevent a certain level of religious smugness that has become quite prevalent today. In the words of [Prof. Philip Jenkins](#), “Jews and Christians...so ignore their own scriptures that they become self-righteous” towards Muslims and Islam.

The aggressive way that anti-Muslim propagandists have pushed the Islamophobic idea—that Muhammad/Islam/Quran/Sharia/Allah are so uniquely violent and warlike—has made it almost impossible for me *not* to write such articles. The data makes my case overwhelming: a recent [Pew Research poll](#) found that almost half of U.S. adults think that the Islamic religion is more likely to encourage violence than other religions, a figure that has almost doubled since 2002. A clear majority of conservative Republicans (66%), white Evangelicals (60%), and Tea Baggers (67%) believe Islam is more violent than other religions, with a plurality of whites (44%) and older folks (42-46%) also thinking this. (Of note is that blacks, Hispanics, and liberal Democrats are significantly less bigoted towards Islam.) The idea that Islam is more violent than other religions—held most strongly by old white conservatives—is a key pillar to the edifice of Islamophobia. The need for the Understanding Jihad Series seems self-evident.

Any time Islam is mentioned on the internet, pseudo-experts ferociously start copying and pasting a litany of Islamic texts to whack Muslims over the head with. This anti-Muslim sentiment, fueled by profound ignorance (of both their own scriptures and Islamic), is no longer limited to fringe elements and has found its way into the mainstream. [Pro-Israeli hawks](#), in particular, have tried to transform this bigotry of Islam from a merely theological tussle into state policy. It is hoped that pointing to Judeo-Christian scriptural sources that are *far more* violent

than what is quoted from Islamic sources will instill in the extremist Zionists and Messianic Christians a level of religious humility.

My fear in so doing, of course, is of offending well-meaning Jews and Christians. Indeed, while it is true that [there is a definite link between Zionism and Islamophobia](#), it is also true that some of the most effective defenders of Muslims are in fact Jews. These include such notable personalities as Glenn Greenwald, Richard Silverstein, Jon Stewart, Norman Finkelstein, Noam Chomsky, Max Blumenthal, and—without naming names—even some writers of LoonWatch (*gasp!*). To be absolutely clear, I do not think that Judaism and Christianity are violent religions. What I am simply trying to prove is that just because certain Quranic verses seem violent, one cannot make sweeping statements of the religion based on this...no more so than showing certain violent Biblical verses would prove the inherent nature of Judaism or Christianity. When people from the majority group realize that their own religious tradition also has “problematic” texts, they are usually more hesitant to rush to judgment about other faiths.

Although in the past I have compared Islam to Christianity—such as when [I compared the traditional Islamic concept of “dhimmi” to the traditional Christian concept of “perpetual serf”](#)—in the Understanding Jihad Series the comparison will more often be made with Judaism. The reason for this is that it is much easier to compare Islam to Judaism because both are very similar in basic structure. The Jewish Halacha is equivalent to the Islamic Sharia and the rabbinical tradition is analogous to the Islamic jurisprudential tradition. The similarities between the two religions are actually quite uncanny. Therefore, it makes sense to invoke this comparison.

The reader should not think that I believe that a certain religion or another is violent. Rather, there exist peaceful and violent *interpretations* of religion. I reject the view held by religious orthodoxy that the human mind is simply an empty receptacle that unthinkingly “obeys” the divine plan. Hundreds of years after their prophets have died, believers (of all faiths) are forced (by virtue of not having a divine interlocutor) to exert their own minds and ethics to give life to texts, to render 3D realities from 2D texts. Such an elastic idea—that a religion is whatever its believers make it into—is certainly anathema to orthodox adherents who simply desire a step-by-step instruction manual to produce human automatons. But the truth is that even these orthodox adherents *necessarily* inject into the religious texts their own backgrounds, beliefs, and biases.

One can see why I do not think that simply showing a Biblical verse here or there would prove that Judaism or Christianity are violent faiths. There is a long journey from what is on the page to what is understood and put into practice. And once this reality is comprehended, it is hoped that Jews and Christians will gain a larger perspective when they approach Muslims and their religion.

It should be noted of course that not all Islamophobes are Jewish or Christian. Many are ex-Muslims who feel that their former religious affiliation gives them a free pass to be bigoted. This is hardly surprising, given that historically the worst oppressors of the Jewish minority in the Western world were actually ex-Jews converted to Christianity. Though they think of themselves as truly special, there is nothing unique about apostates from a religion; they have existed throughout history, and it was not uncommon for their zeal for their new religion to convert into wholesale bigotry for what they left behind.

When I argued that [Moses was more violent than Muhammad](#), one critic pointed out that atheists would condemn both. Yet, one only needs to glance at anti-Muslim websites to see that these atheistic Islamophobes try to (and need to) prove that Muhammad/Islam/Quran/Sharia/Allah are *uniquely* violent. Short of proving this uniqueness, their agenda fails. Thus, it hardly matters to the effectiveness of my article whether or not one believes in Jewish or Christian prophets. If we use the exact same standards applied to Islam to all religions and find them to be as violent or more violent than Islam, then what exactly is their point? This question is what my articles force onto them, to which the “I am not a believer” excuse hardly suffices.

There will definitely be those militant atheists who genuinely can’t tolerate *any* religious faith. These are the equal opportunity haters. But because they do not single out Islam, I am less bothered by them. Although many of their rantings are childish, they are not as destructive because they do not specifically target vulnerable minority populations.

Having thus expressed my general discomfort in writing these articles, I hope my readers can take into account context and intent. If, for example, a white supremacist site compiled a list of all criminals that are black, this would be a clear case of bigotry. An effective and appropriate way to counter this list would be to produce an even longer list of white criminals. Even though the action is the same (producing lists of criminals of a particular race), it is the context and intent that are all important. It is in a similar fashion that I am producing a “counter-list” of Biblical verses to counter the popular list of Quranic quotes that Islamophobes like to share. LoonWatch’s Understanding Jihad Series will categorically answer the question that an alarmingly high number of Americans answered incorrectly: [is Islam more likely than other religions to encourage violence?](#)

I would nonetheless strongly caution overzealous Muslim readers from using these articles to stir hatred against Jews and Christians, noting that Islam has no shortage of “problematic” texts.

Warrior Prophet: Moses or Muhammad?

Posted on 06 March 2011 by Danios

This article is part 1 of LoonWatch's Understanding Jihad Series.

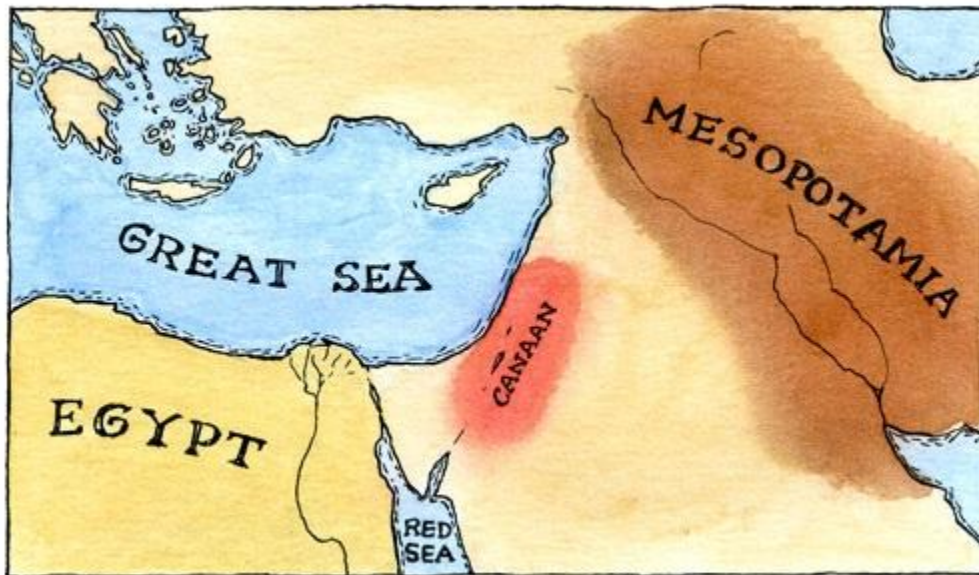
The video of [anti-Muslim bigots jeering at mosque-goers in Orange County](#) has now gone viral. Amongst those who sponsored the hateful event were two extremist Zionist Jews, namely [Pamela Geller](#) and *Rabbi* David Eliezrie. It was also sponsored by [ACT! for America](#), a fervently [pro-Israeli group](#) with heavy Christian Zionist overtones. The [link between Zionism and Islamophobia](#) is well-established.

As can be seen from the video, one of the principal ways these “Israeli-firsters” try to hurt Muslims is by insulting Muhammad, the prophet of Islam. In particular, they criticize Muhammad as being warlike and violent. The fact that their religious founder was belligerent explains why Muslims today are, or so the argument goes.

Yet, Moses—the prophet of Judaism and the principal figure of the religion—was far more warlike and violent than Muhammad. We know this from the Hebrew Bible, which is considered Judaism’s most sacred scripture and respected by Christians as the Old Testament. (The Biblical verses we will examine will also show us why the Bible is far more violent than the Quran.) Could the violent nature of Moses explain the belligerence of the modern day state of Israel and its supporters?

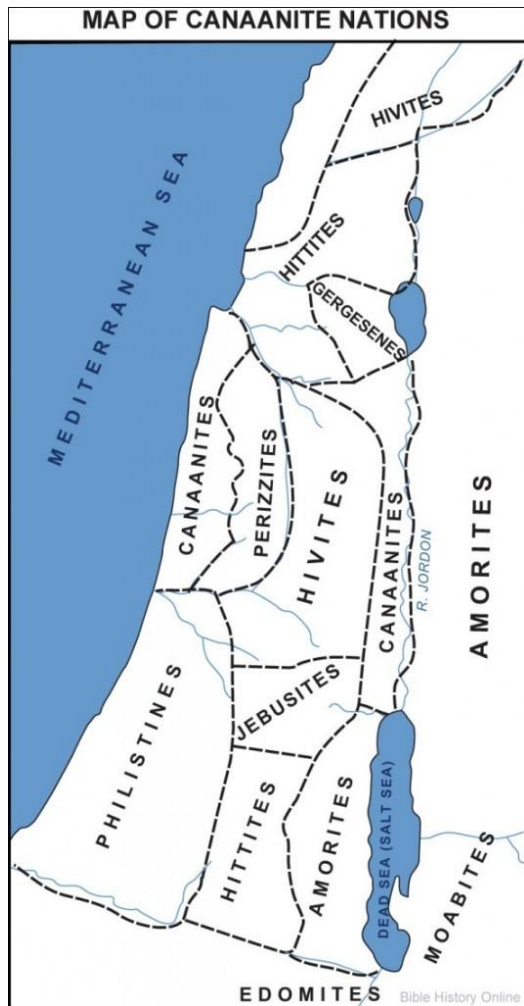
According to the Bible, a Jewish prophet by the name of Moses arose in Egypt. He liberated his people from bondage, and together they fled Egypt to the “promised land.” The promised land was a place called Canaan (Palestine). This journey from Egypt to Canaan was known as the Exodus.

It might help to glance at a map:



So the Hebrews fled Egypt and traveled to Canaan.

But they hit a small snag. There were already people living in Canaan. These natives are referred to in the Bible as “The Seven Nations.” (Not to be a stickler, but there were actually more than seven nations.) Here is what the tribes looked like before the Israelites arrived:



To resolve this dilemma, God ordered the Israelites to exterminate all the inhabitants of Canaan (men, women, and children) and to take their land. The God of the Bible commanded Moses and his followers:

Deuteronomy 20:17 You must utterly destroy the Hittites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites, just as the LORD your God has commanded you.

The God of the Bible threatened the people of Palestine/Canaan with catastrophe (*nakba*):

Exodus 15:14 The people shall hear, and be afraid: **sorrow shall take hold on the inhabitants of Palestine.**

15: 15 Then, the dukes of Edom shall be amazed; the might men of Moab, trembling shall take hold on them, **all the inhabitants of Canaan shall melt away.**

15:16 **Terror and dread shall fall on them;** by the greatness of your arm they shall be as still as a stone; till your people pass over, O LORD, till the people pass over, which you have purchased.

15:17 You shall bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of your inheritance.

In other words, God “purchased” the land that the natives lived on, and He would give it as “inheritance” to the Israelite conquerors. It should be clear that the words “all the inhabitants of Canaan shall melt away” refers to genocide, a point which we will subsequently be made clearer.

The Aradites were one group of peoples that inhabited Canaan, the land which the God of Israel had promised the Israelites. The Israelites marched towards them:

Numbers 33:40 At that time the Canaanite king of Arad, who lived in the Negev in the land of Canaan, heard that the people of Israel were approaching his land.

One [Biblical commentary](#) explains that the Aradite king “heard of the coming of the children of Israel, towards the land of Canaan, **in order to possess it**, and he came out and fought with them.” The king had some initial success:

21:1 He attacked the Israelites and captured some of them.

Ancient Israel responded with even more brutality than the modern day state of Israel does:

21:2 Then Israel made this vow to the LORD: “If you will deliver these people into our hands, **we will totally destroy their cities.**”

21:3 The LORD heard the voice of Israel and delivered up the Canaanites; **then they utterly destroyed them and their cities.** Thus the name of the place was called Hormah [Utter Destruction].

The word Hormah literally translates to “Ban”, because it means that there is a ban on all living things. As we shall see, the Israelites slaughtered men, women, children, cattle, sheep, donkeys, and anything that breathed. The word “Hormah” is often translated by Biblical commentators as “Utter Destruction.”

After annihilating the Aradites, Moses and the Israelites then turned their attention to the Amorites. The God of the Bible commanded the faithful to conquer the Amorite land of Heshbon:

Deuteronomy 2:24 Then the LORD said, “Now get moving! Cross the Arnon Gorge. Look, I will hand over to you Sihon the Amorite, king of Heshbon, and I will give you his land. **Attack him and begin to occupy the land.**

2:25 This very day **I will begin to put the terror and fear of you on all the nations under heaven. They will hear reports of you and will tremble and be in anguish because of you.**”

The Israelites requested King Sihon to pass through his land. Sihon naturally refused, as he had heard reports of what the Israelites had done to his neighbors. When Sihon refused the request, the order was given to attack him:

2:30 But Sihon king of Heshbon refused to let us pass through. For the Lord your God had made his spirit stubborn and his heart obstinate in order to give him into your hands, as he has now done.

2:31 The Lord said to me, “See, I have begun to deliver Sihon and his country over to you. **Now begin to conquer and possess his land.**”

Of course, every nation-state has a right to deny entry of foreigners into its territory. If, for example, the Iranian army requested permission to pass through Israel, would Iran have justification to attack Israel if the request was refused? King Sihon’s denial of the request is all the more reasonable when we consider that (1) the king knew that the Israelites were bent on conquering his land, and (2) the peoples of that region had “hear[d] reports of you [Israelites]” that made them “tremble and be in anguish.”

In any case, after furnishing themselves with a moral justification to invade Heshbon, Moses and the Israelites proceeded to kill the king of Heshbon and all his people:

2:33 The Lord our God delivered him over to us and we struck him down, together with his sons and his whole army.

2:34 **At that time we took all his cities and completely destroyed them—men, women and children. We left no survivors.**

2:35 But the livestock and the plunder from the towns we had captured we carried off for ourselves.

Multiple cities and their populations were completely annihilated:

2:36 From Aroer on the rim of the Arnon Gorge, and from the city in the gorge, even as far as Gilead, not one city was too strong for us. The Lord our God gave us all of them.

King Sihon and his people, the Amorites of Heshbon, were ethnically cleansed. The Israelites then moved on to King Og and his people, the Amorites of Bashan. The God of the Bible commanded the Israelites to “do to him what you did to Sihon, king of the Amorites”, i.e. annihilate them:

Numbers 21:34 The LORD said to Moses, “Do not be afraid of Og, for I have handed him over to you, with his whole army and his land. Do to him what you did to Sihon, king of the Amorites who reigned in Heshbon.”

21:35 **So they killed him and his sons and all his people, until there was none left to him alive, and they possessed his land.**

Moses and the Israelites then massacred the inhabitants of sixty different cities:

Deuteronomy 3:3 So the Lord our God also gave into our hands Og king of Bashan and all his army. We struck them down, leaving no survivors.

3:4 At that time we took all his cities, **There was not one of the sixty cities that we did not take from them—the whole region of Argob, Og’s kingdom in Bashan.**

3:5 All these cities were fortified with high walls and with gates and bars, and there were also a great many unwalled villages.

3:6 **We completely destroyed them,** as we had done with Sihon king of Heshbon, **destroying every city—men, women and children.**

3:7 But all the livestock and the plunder from their cities we carried off for ourselves.

In fact, the Bible repeatedly sanctions the genocide of natives:

20:16 In the cities of the nations the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance, **do not leave alive anything that breathes.**

20:17 You must utterly destroy the Hittites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites, just as the LORD your God has commanded you.

The next verse explains why “you must utterly destroy” them:

20:18 Otherwise, they will teach you to follow all the detestable things they do in worshiping their gods, and you will sin against the Lord your God.

The Bible advocates genocide of the adherents of other religions, due to the fear that the believers may convert. This becomes very clear when we consider the way Moses and the God of the Bible deal with the Moabites and Midianites. Some women from the Moabites and Midianites partook in consensual sexual relations with Israelite men. After cohabitating with idolatrous women, the Israelite men were affected by the Moabite and Midianite religion and culture. Eventually, these men started worshiping Ba'al Pe'or, the local god of the Moabites and Midianites. This earned the Israelites the wrath of God:

Numbers 25:1 While Israel was staying in Shittim, the men began to indulge in sexual immorality with Moabite women,

25:2 who invited them to the sacrifices to their gods. The people ate and bowed down before these gods.

25:3 So Israel joined in worshiping the Baal of Peor. And the Lord’s anger burned against them.

God then sent a plague down upon the people of Israel, which was only lifted after one of the Israelites murdered a Midianite woman:

25:6 Then an Israelite man brought to his family a Midianite woman right before the eyes of Moses and the whole assembly of Israel while they were weeping at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting.

25:7 When Phinehas son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron, the priest, saw this, he left the assembly, took a spear in his hand

25:8 and followed the Israelite into the tent. **He drove the spear through both of them—through the Israelite and into the woman’s body.** Then the plague against the Israelites was stopped;

25:9 but those who died in the plague numbered 24,000.

25:10 The Lord said to Moses,

25:11 “Phinehas son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron, the priest, has turned my anger away from the Israelites; for he was as zealous as I am for my honor among them, so that in my zeal I did not put an end to them.

25:12 Therefore tell him I am making my covenant of peace with him.

25:13 He and his descendants will have a covenant of a lasting priesthood, because he was zealous for the honor of his God and made atonement for the Israelites.”

In verse 25:15, we learn that Cozbi was the name of the Midianite woman who was murdered. This “honor killing” placated God’s anger, and God blessed the killer and his descendants with “a covenant of lasting priesthood.” God did, however, command Moses and the Israelites to massacre the Midianites:

25:16 The Lord said to Moses,

25:17 **“Treat the Midianites as enemies and kill them,**

25:18 because they treated you as enemies when they deceived you in the affair of Peor and their sister Cozbi, the daughter of a Midianite leader, the woman who was killed when the plague came as a result of Peor.”

The above verse makes it clear why God commanded Moses and the Israelites to kill the Midianites: because of the “affair of Peor” (i.e. the idolatrous women having consensual sexual relations with the Israelite men and the subsequent idol worship) and Cozbi (the woman who had sexual relations with an Israelite man).

And so God commanded Moses to attack the Midianites:

31:1 The Lord said to Moses,

31:2 “Avenge the people of Israel of the Midianites. After that, you will be gathered to your people.”

31:3 So Moses said to the people, “Arm some of your men to go to war against the Midianites and **to carry out the Lord’s vengeance on them.**

31:4 Send into battle a thousand men from each of the tribes of Israel.”

And:

31:7 They fought against Midian, **as the Lord commanded Moses, and killed every man.**

31:8 Among their victims were Evi, Rekem, Zur, Hur and Reba—the five kings of Midian. They also killed Balaam son of Beor with the sword.

31:9 The Israelites captured the Midianite women and children and took all the Midianite herds, flocks and goods as plunder.

31:10 **They burned all the towns** where the Midianites had settled, as well as all their camps.

31:11 They took all the plunder and spoils, including the people and animals,

31:12 and brought the captives, spoils and plunder to Moses and Eleazar the priest...

The Jewish followers of Moses killed every man, and took the women and children as slaves. They then returned to Moses, but he became upset at them for not killing the women and children as well. Only the young virgins fit to be sex slaves were to be kept alive:

31: 14 Moses was angry with the officers of the army—the commanders of thousands and commanders of hundreds—who returned from the battle.

31:15 “Have you allowed all the women to live?” he asked them.

31:16 “They were the ones who followed Balaam’s advice and were the means of turning the Israelites away from the Lord in what happened at Peor, so that a plague struck the Lord’s people.

31:17 **Now kill all the boys. And kill every woman who has slept with a man,**

31:18 but save for yourselves every girl who has never slept with a man.

Then God discusses how to divide up the spoils of war:

31:25 The Lord said to Moses,

31:26: “You and Eleazar the priest and the family heads of the community are to count all the people and animals that were captured.

31:27 Divide the spoils between the soldiers who took part in the battle and the rest of the community.

31:28 From the soldiers who fought in the battle, set apart as tribute for the Lord one out of every five hundred, whether persons, cattle, donkeys, sheep or goats.”

This last verse seems to justify human sacrifices to God “as tribute for the Lord.” The next few verses bear this out:

31:32 The plunder remaining from the spoils that the soldiers took was 675,000 sheep,

31:33 72,000 cattle,

31:34 61,000 donkeys

31:35 and 32,000 women who had never slept with a man.

31:36 The half share of those who fought in the battle was: 337,500 sheep,

31:37 of which the tribute for the Lord was 675;

31:38 36,000 cattle, of which the tribute for the Lord was 72;

31:39 30,500 donkeys, of which the tribute for the Lord was 61;

31:40 16,000 people, of which the tribute for the Lord was 32.

As for the Moabites, they avoided the wrath of Israel for a short period of time before they were ultimately decimated. That task was carried out by David, one of Moses’ divinely chosen successors (and a prophet of Judaism in his own right). The faithful massacred two-thirds of the Moabites and took the remaining one-third as ~~chinnis~~ perpetual serfs:

2 Samuel 8:2 David also conquered the land of Moab. He made the people lie down on the ground in a row, and he measured them off in groups with a length of rope. He measured off two groups to be executed for every one group to be spared. The Moabites who were spared became David’s subjects and paid him tribute money.

Some Biblical commentaries argue that two-thirds of the Moabite population was slaughtered while others argue that only the soldiers were. In any case, the Moabites were subjected to ~~chinnitude~~ perpetual serfdom and were forced to pay ~~jizya~~ tribute. But eventually the Moabites revolted against this tributary tax:

2 Kings 3:4 King Mesha of Moab was a sheep breeder. He used to pay the king of Israel an annual tribute of 100,000 lambs and the wool of 100,000 rams.

3:5 But after Ahab died, the king of Moab rebelled against the king of Israel.

The Israelites, with the blessing of Elisha (another Jewish prophet), mobilized three large armies to stamp out the rebellion. The people of Moab attempted to defend themselves:

3:21 Now all the Moabites had heard that the three armies had come to fight against them; so every man, young and old, who could bear arms was called up and stationed on the border.

The Moabites were vanquished and slaughtered:

3:24 The Israelites invaded the land and **slaughtered the Moabites.**

3:25 They destroyed the towns, and each man threw a stone on every good field until it was covered. They stopped up all the springs and cut down every good tree. Only [the fortress of] Kir Hareseth was left with its stones in place, but men armed with slings surrounded it and attacked it as well.

The Israelites then called off the siege with the result that a few Moabites survived. The Moabites were finally destroyed altogether in **2 Chronicles 20**, although the actual narration is a bit difficult to follow.

The Biblical Moses was thus responsible for the massacre and genocide of several populations. These included the people of Arad, Heshbon (and her surrounding cities), Bashan (including at least sixty cities), and the Midianites. Before he passed away, Moses was very disappointed that he couldn't complete the ethnic cleansing of the land. He wanted to take part in the genocide of those living past the Jordan:

3:23 At that time I [Moses] pleaded with the Lord:

3:24 “O Sovereign Lord, you have begun to show to your servant your greatness and your strong hand. **For what god is there in heaven or on earth who can do the deeds and mighty works you do?**

3:25 Let me go over and see the good land beyond the Jordan—that fine hill country and Lebanon.”

God rejected Moses' plea and declared:

3:28 “But commission Joshua, and encourage and strengthen him, for he will lead this people across and **will cause them to inherit the land that you will see.**”

And so, the job of genocide was divinely passed on from Moses to his successor, Joshua.

Addendum I:

The wars of Muhammad will be addressed in a subsequent part of the Understanding Jihad Series, which will directly refute chapter 1 (*Muhammad: Prophet of War*) of Robert Spencer's book, *The Politically Incorrect Guide to Islam (and the Crusades)*.

However, it would be helpful to point out the most striking difference between Moses and Muhammad in this regard. Moses targeted and killed civilians—women, children, babies, and the infirm elderly. Moses ordered his soldiers: “Kill all the boys[,] and kill every woman” (Numbers 31:17), an order which is an oft-repeated imperative in the Bible. Meanwhile, Muhammad explicitly forbade targeting civilians on numerous occasions, saying: “Do not kill an infirm old man, an infant, a child, or a woman.” (*Sunan Abu Dawood*, book 14, #2608)

Addendum II:

It could be argued that the life and wars of Moses are of questionable historicity, and that secular scholarship would doubt the accuracy of Jewish scriptural sources. Yet, this argument is nullified by the fact that the life and wars of Muhammad are similarly subject to questionable historicity. The primary sources of Muhammad's life and wars come almost exclusively from the Islamic scriptural sources and tradition, namely “(1) casual allusions in the Qur'an and (2) oral traditions”. More neutral non-Muslim sources from the seventh century are scant, and at most confirm the existence of Muhammad and very basic data. Writes Professor Solomon Alexander Nigosian on p.6 of [*Islam: Its History, Teaching, and Practices*](#):

The attempt to separate the historical from the unhistorical elements in the available sources has yielded few, if any, positive results regarding the figure of Muhammad or the role he played in Islam. The predicament faced by modern scholars is perhaps best stated by Harald Motzki:

At present, the study of Muhammad, the founder of the Muslim community, is obviously caught in a dilemma. On the one hand, it is not possible to write a historical biography of the Prophet without being accused of using the sources uncritically, while on the other hand, when using the sources critically, it is simply not possible to write such a biography.

In order to construct narratives of Muhammad's wars, one must rely on the Islamic scriptural sources and tradition (the same ones which Islamophobes use to criticize Islam). It seems only reasonable and fair then to compare Muhammad with the Moses derived from the Jewish scriptural sources and tradition. And in this light, Moses does not stack up well against Muhammad.

Addendum III:

Those who are familiar with my writing know very well that the intent here is not at all to “bash” Moses or Judaism, but rather to give the haters a taste of their own medicine in order that they realize the error in their ways. In particular, the goal is to show that the absurd standard Islam is held to—or anything related to Islam (Muhammad, Allah, the Quran, Sharia, Muslims, Muslim-

majority countries, etc.)—is unfair, a fact that becomes painfully obvious when applied in a similar way to a Jewish/Christian/ analogue.

Addendum IV:

Many of the counter-arguments raised by our opponents will be addressed in further editions of this series. I initially had planned on releasing the entire Understanding Jihad Series as one mega-article. Having realized that this would be well over one hundred pages long, I decided to heed the advice of LW readers who requested that my articles be split into parts so as to be easier to digest. This decision comes with the regret that many of my responses to the trite counter-arguments I know the Islam-bashers are itching to use will be published at a later date.

Who was the Most Violent Prophet in History?

Posted on 14 March 2011 by Danios

This article is part 2 of LoonWatch's Understanding Jihad Series. Please read my "disclaimer" here, which explains my intentions behind writing this article: [The Understanding Jihad Series: Is Islam More Likely Than Other Religions to Encourage Violence?](#)



Who was the most violent prophet in history?

Most readers will immediately assume it was the Prophet Muhammad, thanks to a decades long wave of Islamophobia and a sustained campaign of anti-Muslim propaganda. But here's a tip: it wasn't Muhammad. Not by a long shot. In fact, [Moses had Muhammad beat by far](#).

But it wasn't even Moses. In fact, it was **Joshua**—a Jewish prophet of Israel. Today, he is regarded by Jews as “a mighty warrior” of the faith, a victorious hero, and a righteous prophet after Moses:

Before he passed away, Moses was very disappointed that he couldn't complete the ethnic cleansing of the land. He wanted to take part in the genocide of those living past the Jordan:

3:23 At that time I [Moses] pleaded with the Lord:

3:24 “O Sovereign Lord, you have begun to show to your servant your greatness and your strong hand. **For what god is there in heaven or on earth who can do the deeds and mighty works you do?**”

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God rejected Moses’ plea and declared:

3:28 “But commission Joshua, and encourage and strengthen him, for he will lead this people across and **will cause them to inherit the land that you will see.**”

And so, the job of genocide was divinely passed on from Moses to his successor, Joshua.

Joshua sought to complete the task that Moses had left undone. It is recorded in the most sacred Jewish holy book, the Hebrew Bible (the Old Testament of Christianity), that God Himself commanded Joshua to finish the genocide of the natives living on the other side of the Jordan River:

Joshua 1:1 After the death of Moses the servant of the Lord, the Lord said to Joshua son of Nun, Moses’ aide:

1:2 “Moses my servant is dead. Now then, you and all these people, get ready to cross the Jordan River into the land I am about to give to them—to the Israelites.

1:3 I will give you every place where you set your foot, as I promised Moses.

1:4 Your territory will extend from the desert to Lebanon, and from the great river, the Euphrates—all the Hittite country—to the Great Sea on the west.

1:5 No one will be able to stand up against you all the days of your life. As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will never leave you nor forsake you.

1:6 Be strong and courageous, because you will lead these people to inherit the land I swore to their forefathers to give them.”

The city of Jericho stood between Joshua and the land he was to conquer. As one city after another fell to the sword of Judaism, the people of Jericho feared for their fate. Would they too be subjected to ethnic cleansing?

One of the natives of the city, a woman by the name of Rahab, was so fearful of the wild-eyed massacres that the God-chosen people were known for that she said:

Joshua 2:9 “I know that the LORD has given you the land, **and that your terror is fallen on us**, and that **all the inhabitants of the land are deathly afraid of you.**

2:10 For we have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea before you, when you came out of Egypt; and what you did unto the two kings of the Amorites, that were beyond the Jordan, unto Sihon and to Og, **whom you utterly destroyed.**

2:11 No wonder our hearts have melted in fear! No one has the courage to fight after hearing such things.”

Rahab offered to hide Israelite spies, who were sent to engage in ~~stealth-jihad~~ stealth [herem](#). In exchange for her services, she begged the Israelites to spare her family from the brutal massacre that was sure to come after the conquest of her city. Rahab implored:

2:12 “Now then, please swear to me by the LORD that you will show kindness to my family, because I have shown kindness to you. Give me a sure sign

2:13 that you will spare the lives of my father and mother, my brothers and sisters, and all who belong to them, and that you will save us from death.”

The Israelites agreed, but warned her:

2:19 “If anyone goes outside your house into the street, his blood will be on his own head; we will not be responsible.”

In other words, every living thing in that city—except what was in her house—was to be utterly destroyed. The entire city was to be smitten as a sacrifice to the Lord:

6:17 The city and all that is in it are to be **devoted** to the Lord. Only Rahab the prostitute and all who are with her in her house shall be spared, because she hid the spies we sent.

As a [footnote](#) clarifies, “devoted” to the Lord means: “The Hebrew term refers to the irrevocable giving over of things or persons to the LORD, often by totally destroying them.”

[The illustration at the top of this article is of the Battle of Jericho. Readers will notice the Jewish *shofars*, ram horns used in times of war. The Israelites sounded these shofars prior to invading the city and slaughtering all of its inhabitants. It is in this context that the anti-Muslim protesters in Orange County used them against Muslim-Americans in that now famous [video](#).]

To their credit, the Israelite invaders fulfilled their promise, sparing those in Rahab’s house. They did, however, kill everyone else, women and children included:

6:21 They devoted the city to the Lord and **utterly destroyed with the sword every living thing in it—men and women, young and old**, cattle, sheep and donkeys.

However, the silver, gold, bronze, and iron were taken as plunder:

6:19 But all the silver and gold and the articles of bronze and iron are sacred to the Lord, and must go into his treasury.

And the city was razed to the ground:

6:24 Then **they burned the whole city and everything in it**, but they put the silver and gold and the articles of bronze and iron into the treasury of the Lord's house.

After "utterly destroying" Jericho, Joshua and the believers turned their attention to the city of Ai:

8:1 Then the Lord said to Joshua, "Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged. Take the whole army with you, and go up and attack Ai. For I have delivered into your hands the kings of Ai, his people, his city and his land.

8:2 You shall do to Ai and its king as you did to Jericho and its king, except that you may carry off their plunder and livestock for yourselves. Set an ambush behind the city."

8:3 So Joshua and the whole army moved out to attack Ai. He chose thirty thousand of his best fighting men and sent them out at night

8:4 with these orders: "Listen carefully. You are to set an ambush behind the city..."

Joshua continued:

8:7 "You are to rise up from ambush and take the city. The Lord your God will give it into your hand.

8:8 "**When you have taken the city, set it on fire. Do what your Lord has commanded.** See to it! You have my orders."

As per their orders from God and his prophet, the city was razed:

8:19 They entered the city and captured it and quickly **set it on fire.**

When the men of Ai fought back, they were decimated by Israel:

8:22 Israel cut them down, leaving them neither survivors nor fugitives.

After cutting down the soldiers, the Israelites entered the city to kill off all the civilians (twelve thousand men and women altogether):

8:24 When Israel had finished killing all the men of Ai in the fields and the in the wilderness where they had chased them, and when every one of them had been put to the sword, all the Israelites returned to Ai and killed those who were in it.

8:25 **Twelve thousand men and women were put to death that day—all the people of Ai.**

8:26 For Joshua did not draw back the hand that held out his javelin until he had destroyed all who lived in Ai.

8:27 But Israel did carry off for themselves the livestock and plunder of this city, as the Lord had instructed Joshua.

8:28 So Joshua burned Ai and made it a permanent heap of ruins, a desolate place to this day.

The king's body was then mutilated:

8:29 [Joshua] impaled the body of the king of Ai on a pole and left it there until evening. At sunset, Joshua ordered them to take the body from the pole and throw it down at the entrance of the city gate.

And then the believers built a ~~triumphal mosque~~ triumphal synagogue:

8:30 Then Joshua built on Mount Ebal, an altar to the Lord, the God of Israel.

Terror and fear of the genocidal wrath of the believers spread far and wide, just as the God of the Bible promised. One such people who were struck with dread were the people of Gibeon, who offered themselves up as slaves in exchange for their lives. The Gibeonites said to Joshua:

9:24 "We feared for our lives because of you, and that is why we did this."

The Gibeonites were permitted to live so long as they ["left idolatry"](#) and lived under the ["yolk of servitude"](#). They were consigned to the curse of [perpetual servitude](#) and permitted only to be "woodcutters and water carriers", which were considered ["very low and mean employment"](#):

9:23 "You are now under a curse: You will never cease to serve as woodcutters and water carriers for the house of my God."

Joshua had thus destroyed Jericho and Ai, and neutralized Gibeon. The neighboring five Amorite kingdoms became aware that the Israelites were headed for them next, and formed a coalition to defend themselves. However, the Amorite coalition was soundly defeated by the Israelite army, and the five Amorite kings fled to a cave in Makkedah. The Israelites captured the kings and Joshua had them humiliated and executed:

10:24 When they had brought these kings to Joshua, he summoned all the men of Israel and said to the army commanders who had come with him, **"Come here and put your feet on the necks of these kings."** **So they came forward and placed their feet on their necks.**

10:25 Joshua said to them, "Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged. Be strong and courageous. **This is what the Lord will do to all the enemies you are going to fight.**"

10:26 **Then Joshua struck and killed the kings and hung them on five trees, and they were left hanging on the trees until evening.**

10:27 At sunset Joshua gave the order and they took them down from the trees and threw them into the cave where they had been hiding.

The Israelite vengeance was also savaged upon Makkedah (the city where the five kings had fled to), which was ethnically cleansed:

10:28 That same day Joshua captured and destroyed the town of Makkedah. **He killed everyone in it, including the king, leaving no survivors.** He destroyed them all.

The Israelite army then did the same to the southern cities, putting all to the sword—men, women, and children. First, the city of Libnah:

10:30 The city [of Libnah] and **everyone in it Joshua put to the sword. He left no survivors there.**

Then Lachish:

10:32 The Lord handed Lachish over to Israel, and Joshua took it on the second day. **The city and everyone in it he put to the sword,** just as he had done to Libnah.

Then Eglon:

10:35 They captured [Eglon] that same day and **put it to the sword and totally destroyed everyone in it,** just as they had done to Lachish.

Then Hebron:

10:37 They took the city and **put it to the sword, together with its king, its villages and everyone in it. They left no survivors.** Just as at Eglon, **they totally destroyed it and everyone in it.**

Then Debir:

10:39 They took the city, its king and its villages, and put them to the sword. Everyone in it they totally destroyed. They left no survivors.

The killing was thorough and complete:

10:40 **So Joshua subdued the whole region,** including the hill country, the Negev, the western foothills and the mountain slopes, together with all their kings. **He left no survivors. He totally destroyed all who breathed, just as the Lord, the God of Israel, had commanded.**

10:41 Joshua subdued them from Kadesh Barnea to Gaza and from the whole region of Goshen to Gibeon.

10:42 All these kings and their lands Joshua conquered in one campaign, **because the Lord, the God of Israel, fought for Israel.**

After the decimation of the southern cities, the northern cities banded together to fight off Israel. The Israelites responded in the familiar way—killing every man, woman, and child:

11:11 The Israelites completely destroyed every living thing in the city, leaving no survivors. Not a single person was spared. And then Joshua burned the city.

11:12 Joshua slaughtered all the other kings and their people, completely destroying them, just as Moses, the servant of the LORD, had commanded.

11:13 But the Israelites did not burn any of the towns built on mounds except Hazor, which Joshua burned.

11:14 And the Israelites took all the plunder and livestock of **the ravaged towns** for themselves. But **they killed all the people, leaving no survivors.**

11:15 As the LORD had commanded his servant Moses, so Moses commanded Joshua. And Joshua did as he was told, **carefully obeying all the commands that the LORD had given to Moses.**

Joshua then utterly destroyed the Anakites:

11:21 During this period Joshua destroyed all the Anakites... **He killed them all and completely destroyed their towns.**

11:22 No Anakites were left in Israelite territory; only in Gaza, Gath and Ashdod did any survive.

11:23 So Joshua took the entire land, **just as the LORD had directed Moses,** and he gave it as an inheritance to Israel...

After all this death and destruction...

11:23 ... Then the land had rest from war.

By this time, Joshua was on his deathbed and gave parting instructions to his people. He promised them that they would drive out the survivors from amongst the vanquished nations and usurp their land:

23:1 Now it came to pass, a long time after the LORD had given rest to Israel from all their enemies round about, that Joshua was old, advanced in age

23:2 And Joshua called for all Israel, for their elders, for their heads, for their judges, and for their officers, and said to them: "I am old, advanced in age.

23:2 You have seen all that the **LORD your God has done to all these nations because of you,** for the LORD your God *is* He who has fought for you.

23:4 See, I have divided to you by lot these nations that remain, to be an inheritance for your tribes, from the Jordan, with all the nations that I have cut off, as far as the Great Sea westward.

23:5 And the LORD your God will expel them from before you and drive them out of your sight. So you shall possess their land, as the LORD your God promised you.

And so died Joshua, the most violent prophet in all of history.

Addendum I:

Aside from the sheer magnitude of Joshua's killings, the major difference between Joshua and Muhammad is the issue of targeting civilians. Joshua, [like Moses](#), targeted and killed civilians—women, children, babies, and the infirm elderly. The Bible states that Joshua “utterly destroyed with the sword every living thing in it—men and women, young and old, cattle, sheep and donkeys.” (Joshua 6:21) On the other hand, the Prophet Muhammad “forbade the killing of women and children.” (Sahih al-Bukhari, Vol.4, Book 52, #258)

Addendum II:

The historicity of the Biblical account—of Moses, Joshua, and the Exodus/Conquest—is discussed [here](#).

Addendum III:

My intention in writing this article is *not* to bash Judaism or Christianity, but rather to refute a common argument raised by Islamophobes. To fully understand why I wrote this article, make sure you've read this: [The Understanding Jihad Series: Is Islam More Likely Than Other Religions to Encourage Violence?](#)

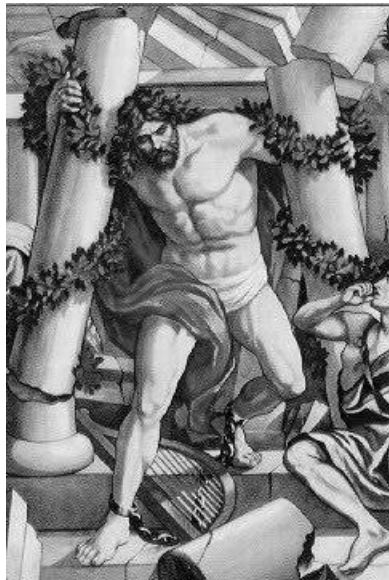
Update I:

I cannot reiterate enough how much I really, really didn't want to write this article because I know it could offend Jewish and Christian readers—but I simply do not see how I can *convincingly* refute the [Islamophobic argument](#) without doing it this way.

[The Suicide Bomber Prophet](#)

Posted on 20 March 2011 by Danios

This article is part 3 of LoonWatch's Understanding Jihad Series. Please read my ["disclaimer"](#), which explains my intentions behind writing this article: [The Understanding Jihad Series: Is Islam More Likely Than Other Religions to Encourage Violence?](#)



As we noted in an earlier [article](#):

A recent [Pew Research poll](#) found that almost half of U.S. adults think that the Islamic religion is more likely to encourage violence than other religions, a figure that has almost doubled since 2002. A clear majority of conservative Republicans (66%), white Evangelicals (60%), and Tea Baggers (67%) believe Islam is more violent than other religions, with a plurality of whites (44%) and older folks (42-46%) also thinking this. (Of note is that blacks, Hispanics, and liberal Democrats are significantly less bigoted towards Islam.) The idea that Islam is more violent than other religions—held most strongly by old white conservatives—is a key pillar to the edifice of Islamophobia.

Prof. [Philip Jenkins](#) writes:

In the minds of ordinary Christians – and Jews – the Koran teaches savagery and warfare, while the Bible offers a message of love, forgiveness, and charity.

Worse, the Quran is said to be a book of terrorism. It was in this vein that [Bill O'Reilly](#) invoked an analogy between the Quran and terrorism and Mein Kampf and Nazism. *It must be the Quran that compels these Islamic radicals to engage in suicide bombing and terrorism.*

Prof. Jenkins responds:

In fact, the Bible overflows with “texts of terror,” to borrow a phrase coined by the American theologian Phyllis Trible. The Bible contains far more verses praising or urging bloodshed than does the Koran, and biblical violence is often far more extreme, and marked by more indiscriminate savagery.

In [part 1](#) of LoonWatch’s Understanding Jihad Series, we traced the violence of the Bible to the Jewish prophet Moses, who submitted heathen nations to what can only be described as genocide. In [part 2](#), we moved on to Moses’ divinely ordained successor, Joshua, who was arguably the most violent prophet in history. But the holy killing did not stop there.

The Warrior Tribe

After the death of Joshua, the Israelites wondered who would carry on the God-sanctioned genocide and conquest of the promised land. They did not have to wait long for the answer. God passed down the sword of the faith to the tribe of Judah:

Judges 1:1 After the death of Joshua, the Israelites asked the LORD, “Who will be the first to go up and fight for us against the Canaanites?”

1:2 The LORD answered, “Judah, for I have given them victory over the land.”

Judah heeded this call and continued the holy genocide against the unbelievers, culminating in the brutal conquest of Jerusalem:

1:8 The men of Judah attacked Jerusalem also and took it. **They put the city to the sword and set it on fire.**

From there, the tribe of Judah vanquished the hill country, the Negev, the western foothills (1:9), Hebron, the Sheshai, Ahiman, Talmi (1:10), and Debir (1:11). They destroyed Zephath:

1:17 [Judah] attacked the Canaanites living in Zephath, and they utterly destroyed the city. Therefore it was called Hormah [*Hormah* means Destruction.]

Gaza, Ashkelon, and Ekron (1:18) fell to the Israelite nation, for “the Lord was with the men of Judah.” (1:19)

Judge, Jury, and Executioner

After the massacre of most of the inhabitants of Canaan, the God of the Bible was concerned with ensuring that Israel remain warlike:

3:1 These are the nations the Lord left to test all those Israelites who had not experienced any of the wars in Canaan

3:2 It was only in order that the generations of the people of Israel might know war, to teach war to those who had not known it before.

The sword was then wielded by the judges of Israel, first with Othniel, then Ehud, then Shamgar, then Barak, then Gideon, then Jephthah, and then Samson. Each of these judges of God was involved in religiously motivated massacres. The Bible recounts the hundreds of thousands of people they collectively slaughtered. From the first Israelite judge:

3:10 The Spirit of the Lord came upon him, so that he became Israel's judge and went to war.

To the last of them:

1 Samuel 7:11 The men of Israel chased the Philistines from Mizpah to a place below Beth-car, **slaughtering them all along the way.**

Samson the Suicide Bomber Glorified in the Bible

One of the Israelite judges is worthy of special mention: the [Jewish prophet](#) Samson. According to the Bible, Samson was responsible for killing thousands of Philistines (the indigenous population of southern Canaan). Eventually, the Philistines successfully used a ruse to capture Samson, who was then taken to a temple where he was to be given as a sacrifice to one of the Philistine gods. Instead, Samson leaned against the pillars of the temple, and brought the temple down, killing himself along with 3,000 men and women:

Judges 16:26 Samson said to the young man who held him by the hand, "Let me feel the pillars on which the house rests, that I may lean against them."

16:27 Now the house was full of men and women. **All the lords of the Philistines were there, and on the roof there were about 3,000 men and women,** who looked on while Samson entertained.

16:28 Then Samson prayed to the Lord, "O Sovereign Lord, remember me. O God, please strengthen me just once more, and let me with one blow get revenge on the Philistines for my two eyes."

16:29 Then Samson reached toward the two central pillars on which the temple stood. Bracing himself against them, his right hand on the one and his left hand on the other,

16:30 Samson said, **"Let me die with the Philistines!"** Then he pushed with all his might, and down came the temple on the rulers and all the people in it. **Thus he killed many more when he died than while he lived.**

Today, Samson is glorified as a hero by Israelis. Far from being a dead letter, Samson's deed has become part of Israel's state policy. The Samson Option is a doctrine adopted by the state of Israel, which states that should Israel's existence ever be threatened, it will release a nuclear holocaust upon its enemies and other targets as well. As Israeli military historian Prof. Martin van Creveld famously put it (as reproduced on p.119 of David Hirst's *The Gun and The Olive Branch*):

We possess several hundred atomic warheads and rockets and can launch them as targets in all directions... We have the capability to take the world down with us. And I can assure you that that will happen, before Israel goes under.

Unfortunately, the temple Samson destroyed has now become entire countries or even the entire world.

David: Giant Slayer and Baby Killer

The militant sword of Israel was then passed from the judges to holy kings. The first king of the United Kingdom of Israel was Saul. His story is especially interesting, and one which we will return to. We will however focus now on David, who at that time was Saul's appointed generalissimo. The Israelite ladies fawned over David, not only because he killed the Philistine Goliath but also because he massacred "tens of thousands":

1 Samuel 18:6 When the men were returning home after David had killed the Philistine, the women came out from all the towns of Israel to meet King Saul with singing and dancing, with joyful songs and with tambourines and lutes.

18:7 As they danced, they sang: **"Saul has slain his thousands, and David his tens of thousands."**

It should be noted that by the end of David's death, he ended up killing not tens of thousands, but *hundreds* of thousands. In any case, King Saul became jealous over the fact that David was credited with more kills than he was:

18:8 Saul was very angry; this refrain galled him. "They have credited David with tens of thousands," he thought, "but me with only thousands. What more can he get but the kingdom?"

18:9 And from that time on Saul kept a jealous eye on David.

But then the king's daughter fell in love with David. It seems that David was interested in this proposal but thought he was too poor to offer an adequate dowry:

18:23 David said, "Do you think it is a small matter to become the king's son-in-law? I'm only a poor man and little known."

King Saul reassured David that he accepted ~~American Express~~ penile foreskins:

18:25 Saul replied, "Say to David, 'The king wants no other price for the bride **than a hundred Philistine foreskins**, to take revenge on his enemies.'"

David was unfazed by this interesting request and brought back *double* the number of requested foreskins:

18:27 David and his men went out and **killed two hundred Philistines. He brought their foreskins and presented the full number to the king** so that he might become the king's son-in-law. Then Saul gave him his daughter Michal in marriage.

However, King Saul's jealousy continued to grow and he unsuccessfully tried to kill his son-in-law. David found refuge in Ziklag (Philistine territory!) and raided other cities to stay financially afloat. Typical Biblical cruelty was added to these ~~ghazwa~~ raids:

18:8 Now David and his men went up and raided the Geshurites, the Girzites and the Amalekites...

18:9 **Whenever David attacked an area, he did not leave a man or woman alive,** but took sheep and cattle, donkeys and camels, and clothes. Then he returned to Achish.

18:10 When Achish asked, "Where did you go raiding today?" David would say, "Against the Negev of Judah" or "Against the Negev of Jerahmeel" or "Against the Negev of the Kenites."

18:11 **He did not leave a man or woman alive** to be brought to Gath, for he thought, "They might inform on us and say, 'This is what David did.'" **And such was his practice as long as he lived in Philistine territory.**

David massacred the Amalekites—men, women, and children:

30:17 David and his men rushed in among them and **slaughtered them throughout that night and the entire next day until evening. None of the Amalekites escaped** except 400 young men who fled on camels.

Eventually David became king of Israel and continued his string of conquests, subjugating heathens to Israelite rule:

2 Samuel 12:31 **He also made slaves of the people of Rabbah** and forced them to labor with saws, iron picks, and iron axes, and to work in the brick kilns. **That is how he dealt with the people of all the Ammonite towns.**

It should be noted that David's slaughter of the Philistines was sanctioned by God:

1 Samuel 23:2 David inquired of the LORD, saying, "Shall I go and smite these Philistines?" And **the LORD said unto David, "Go, and smite the Philistines...!"**

God promised David:

23:4 "I am going to give the Philistines into your hand."

As well as:

2 Samuel 5:19 So David inquired of the Lord, “Shall I go and attack the Philistines? Will you hand them over to me?” The Lord answered him, “Yes, go! For I will surely hand the Philistines over to you.”

And David did what God commanded him to do:

5:25 And David did so, as the Lord had commanded him, and smote the Philistines.

Although we will discuss the genocide of Amalekites in a later article, it is safe to say that virtually every Biblical authority agrees that this was God-ordained as well. In fact, God approved of *everything* David did—all of his many killings—except for “in the case of Uriah the Hittite”:

1 Kings 15:5 David had done what was right in the eyes of the Lord and had not failed to keep any of the Lord’s commands all the days of his life—except in the case of Uriah the Hittite.

Uriah was one of King David’s soldiers. David had an affair with Uriah’s wife and had Uriah killed, an act which earned God’s displeasure. God forgave David, but it was the one killing that God did not approve of. The [Geneva Study Bible](#) commentary assures us that David “enterprised no war, but by God’s command.”

In fact, Jews and Christians today revere David’s “obedience to God” and even argue to become [“more like David”](#). Jewish and Christian children read about David in Sunday school.

Addendum I:

Muhammad’s wars will be discussed in a future part of this series. But suffice to say, we have now set the groundwork to prove that several Jewish prophets—including [Moses](#), [Joshua](#), Samson, and David—were far more violent and warlike than Muhammad.

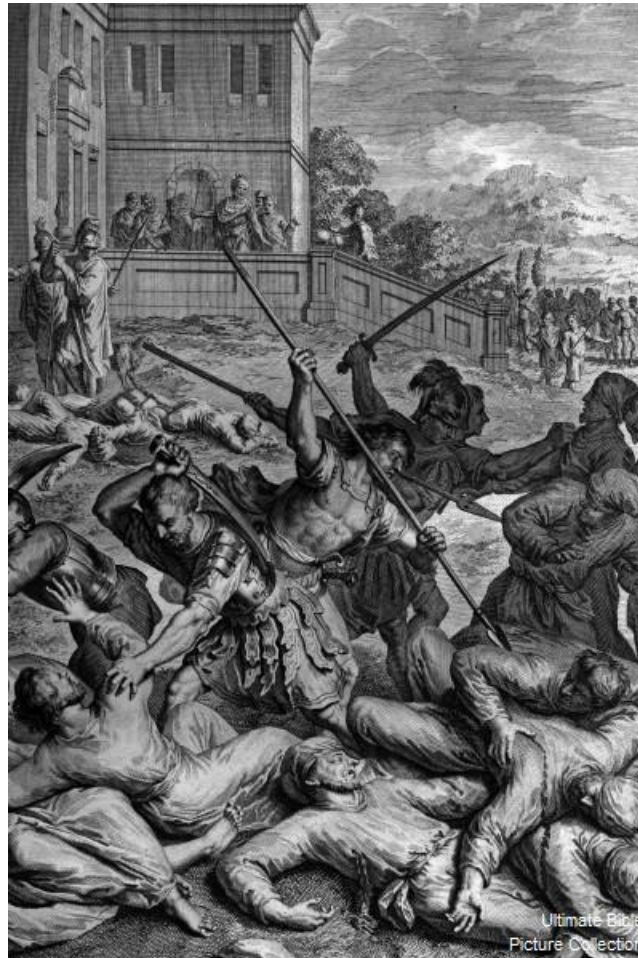
The major difference between Muhammad and the others was with regard to targeting and killing civilians. Samson killed 3,000 men and women in his suicide bomb attack, and David “did not leave a man or woman alive.” (1 Samuel 18:11) This stands in marked contrast with Muhammad who repeatedly “forbade the killing of women and children.” (Sahih al-Bukhari, Vol.4, Book 52, #258)

Regardless of issues surrounding [historicity](#), what is quite clear is that the Bible glorifies genocide and the killing of civilians, whereas the Quran does not. Unlike the Bible, no single verse in the Quran talks about killing women, children, and babies.

[What the Quran-bashers Don't Want You to Know About the Bible](#)

Posted on 26 March 2011 by Danios

This article is part 4 of LoonWatch's Understanding Jihad Series. Please read my ["disclaimer"](#), which explains my intentions behind writing this article: [The Understanding Jihad Series: Is Islam More Likely Than Other Religions to Encourage Violence?](#)



What the Quran-bashers don't want you to know is that the Bible is far more violent than the Quran. In fact, the Bible—unlike the Quran—glorifies **genocide**; we've documented some of these genocide-glorifying passages in our earlier articles: see [part 1](#), [part 2](#), and [part 3](#).

The anti-Muslim bigots—such as the extremist Jewish Zionist [Pamela Geller](#) and the fervent, zealous Catholic polemicist [Robert Spencer](#)—especially don't want you to know about the Biblical passages regarding King Saul. The reason they don't want you to read these passages is that it would make the Islamic literature look quite tame by comparison, and well, that wouldn't be too good for the anti-Muslim business, now would it?

It is of course getting tedious, redundant, and a bit boring to document all the God-sanctioned genocides of the Bible; there are too many of them, so they seem to mesh together. Having said that, Saul's genocide of the Amalekites warrants special attention, so it would behoove our readers to suffer through one last article on this topic. It should be noted, however, that our collection of violent Biblical verses is non-exhaustive, limited only by our own boredom.

So, who was Saul? He was the first king of the United Kingdom of Israel, divinely appointed to this position by the Jewish prophet Samuel. His first task as king was to ethnically cleanse the land of the Amalekite peoples:

1 Samuel 15:1 Samuel said to Saul, "I am the one the Lord sent to anoint you king over his people, over Israel; so listen now to the message from the Lord.

15:2 This is what the Almighty Lord says: 'I remember that which Amalek did to Israel, how he laid wait for him in the way, when he came up from Egypt.

15:3 Now go, attack the Amalekites and **utterly destroy everything that belongs to them. Do not spare them; put to death men and women, children and infants,** cattle and sheep, camels and donkeys.'"

Notice that it was God Himself who ordered Saul to slaughter the Amalekites. And so King Saul led the Israelites in war against the Amalekites. Per God's directives, Saul "put to death men and women, children and infants." He killed every human being with the lone exception of the Amalekite king; he also spared some animals. By sparing King Agag's life, Saul failed to complete the *mitzvah* (the religious obligation) of genocide—something which was completely unacceptable to the God of the Bible:

15:7 Saul attacked the Amalekites all the way from Havilah to Shur, to the east of Egypt.

15:8 He took Agag, king of the Amalekites, alive, and **all his people he utterly destroyed with the sword.**

15:9 But Saul and the army spared [King] Agag and the best of the sheep and cattle, the fat calves and lambs—everything that was good. These they were unwilling to destroy completely, but everything that was despised and weak they totally destroyed.

15:10 Then the word of the Lord came to Samuel:

15:11 "I am grieved that I have made Saul king, because he has turned away from me and has not carried out my instructions." Samuel was troubled, and he cried out to the Lord all that night.

Saul tried to defend himself, but God stripped him of his kingship:

15:13 When Samuel reached him, Saul said, "The Lord bless you! I have carried out the Lord's instructions."

15:14 But Samuel said, “What then is this bleating of sheep in my ears? What is this lowing of cattle that I hear?”

15:15 Saul answered, “The soldiers brought them from the Amalekites; they spared the best of the sheep and cattle to sacrifice to the Lord your God, but we totally destroyed the rest.”

15:16 “Stop!” Samuel said to Saul. “Let me tell you what the Lord said to me last night.”

“Tell me,” Saul replied.

15:17 Samuel said, “Although you were once small in your own eyes, did you not become the head of the tribes of Israel? The Lord anointed you king over Israel.

15:18 **And he [the Lord] sent you on a mission, saying, ‘Go and completely destroy those wicked people, the Amalekites; make war on them until you have wiped them out.’**

15:19 Why did you not obey the Lord? Why did you pounce on the plunder and do evil in the eyes of the Lord?”

15:20 “But I did obey the Lord,” Saul said. “I went on the mission the Lord assigned me. I completely destroyed the Amalekites and brought back Agag, their king.

15:21 The soldiers took sheep and cattle from the plunder, the best of what was devoted to God, in order to sacrifice them to the Lord your God at Gilgal.”

15:22 But Samuel replied: “Does the Lord delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the voice of the Lord? To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams.

15:23 For rebellion is like the sin of divination, and arrogance like the evil of idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, he has rejected you as king.”

15:24 Then Saul said to Samuel, “I have sinned. I violated the Lord’s command and your instructions. I was afraid of the people and so I gave in to them.

15:25 Now I beg you, forgive my sin and come back with me, so that I may worship the Lord.”

15:26 But Samuel said to him, “I will not go back with you. **You have rejected the word of the Lord, and the Lord has rejected you as king over Israel!**”

Saul repeatedly repented for his “failure”:

15:30 Saul replied, “I have sinned. But please honor me before the elders of my people and before Israel; come back with me, so that I may worship the Lord your God.”

And God was sad that He had chosen such a sissy to be king:

15:35 The Lord repented that He had made Saul king over Israel.

Saul was stripped of his kingship, which was given to [David](#)—who was frankly just much better at killing civilians. In fact, all the Israelite chicks fawned over David for being a more proficient killer; all the girls wanted him and all the guys (including Saul himself) wanted to *be* him:

18:6 When the men were returning home after David had killed the Philistine, the women came out from all the towns of Israel to meet King Saul with singing and dancing, with joyful songs and with tambourines and lutes.

18:7 As they danced, they sang: “**Saul has slain his thousands, and David his tens of thousands.**”

18:8 Saul was very angry; this refrain galled him. “They have credited David with tens of thousands,” he thought, “but me with only thousands. What more can he get but the kingdom?”

18:9 And from that time on Saul kept a jealous eye on David.

Certainly, killing thousands just doesn’t cut it. The mass murderer field is just so saturated, that you really need to kill tens of thousands to be considered competitive for Heaven University. No wonder Samuel felt like an absolute idiot for sending a sissy to do a man’s job; realizing this, he cleaned up Saul’s mess:

15:33 Samuel put Agag to death before the Lord at Gilgal.

King Agag was not the only one who was killed: God was so upset over the whole not killing everybody thing that He killed Saul *and his three sons*. The prophet Samuel explained to Saul why this was his fate:

28:18 Because you did not obey the Lord or carry out his fierce wrath against the Amalekites, the Lord has done this to you today.

[Using the emotive language of Pamela Geller, would this be a case of the mafioso Jewish god offing one of his goons for failing to carry out a hit--or in this case, a hit against thousands of people?]

According to the Jewish texts (as reproduced on p.76 of Vol.11 of [The Jewish Encyclopedia](#)), Saul had protested the commandment to “utterly destroy” the Amalekites, saying:

For one found slain the Torah requires a sin offering [*Deuteronomy 21:1-9*]; and here so many shall be slain. If the old have sinned, why should the young suffer; and if men have been guilty, why should the cattle be destroyed?

What Saul didn’t realize was that obeying the Lord’s commandment—in this case to kill women and children—was more important than anything else. The Bible explains the reason for Saul’s demise:

1 Chronicles 10:13 Saul died because he was unfaithful to the LORD. **He failed to obey the LORD's command...**

A well-renowned [Biblical commentary](#) explains:

Saul died for his transgression which he committed against the Lord—in having spared the king of the Amalekites and taken the flocks of the people as spoils [1Sa 15:9],

Today, Jews and Christians revere David over Saul, emphasizing the fact that David was more obedient to God than Saul. For example, ministry founder [Tom Bushnell](#) asks:

When faced with difficult decisions, should we act like King David or King Saul?

...King David and King Saul are as antithetical as any two people in the Bible. If we look at some of the defining moments in their lives, we see two men with drastically different outlooks on life.

When faced with a decision, Saul's first thought was, "Is this pleasing to me?"

King David's first thought usually was, "Is my choice pleasing to the Lord?"

Bushnell then gives this specific example to illustrate:

Saul was disobedient when he spared king Agag and the best of the livestock of the Amalekites. (Partial obedience is disobedience).

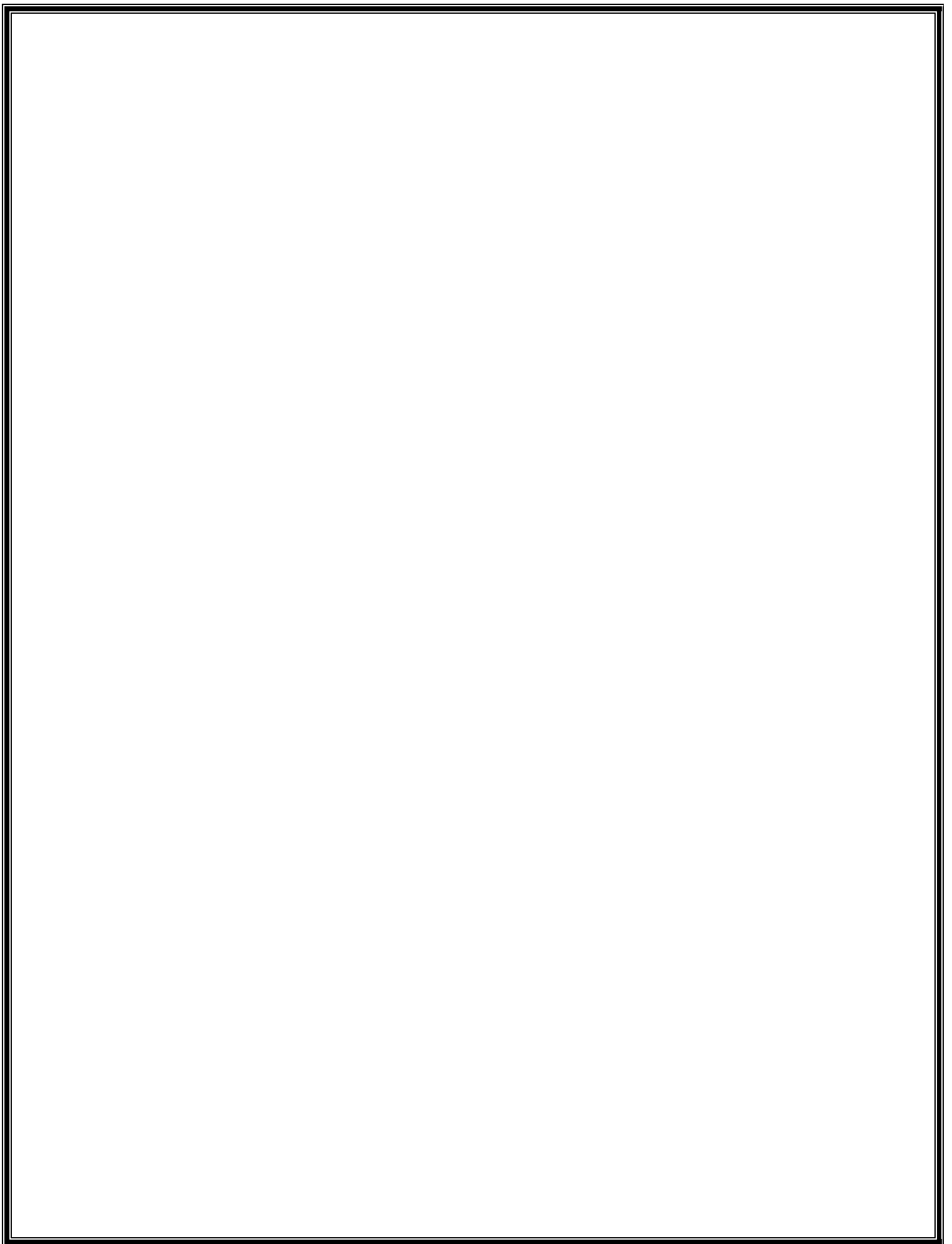
David was careful to follow the commands of the Lord, even during battle.

One can only imagine the reaction of the Islamophobes—Spencer, Geller, et al.—had the Quran glorified genocide in this way. In fact, they can never cite verses in the Quran that promote, sanction, or justify genocide—because they simply do not exist. Indeed, there are explicit statements of the Prophet Muhammad forbidding the killing of women and children.

So next time anti-Muslim bigots troll the net by copying and pasting a litany of Quranic quotes in order to bash Muslims, we encourage readers to link this article about Saul (as well as our earlier articles about [Moses](#), [Joshua](#), [Samson](#), and [David](#)) Reproducing these genocidal verses from the Bible is a good way to serve the Islamophobes a steaming hot platter of STFU, our absolute favorite dish.

Addendum I:

Perhaps the tone of voice in this article is a bit too aggressive, and as always with such topics I have my [regrets](#). Yet, in the spirit of [International Judge a Koran Day](#), I think a healthy dose of STFU is necessary. If you want to judge the Quran, then let's also be sure to judge some Bible. I'll see your jihad and raise you a [herem](#).



[Jesus Loves His Enemies...and Then Kills Them All](#)

Posted on 23 April 2011 by Danios



This article is part 5 of LoonWatch's Understanding Jihad Series. Please read my ["disclaimer"](#), which explains my intentions behind writing this article: [The Understanding Jihad Series: Is Islam More Likely Than Other Religions to Encourage Violence?](#)

Anti-Muslim demagoguery relies on the demonization of the Prophet Muhammad, who is characterized as being especially violent and warlike. This idea has certainly gained currency in the "Judeo-Christian West". When it is pointed out that the Biblical prophets—including [Moses](#), [Joshua](#), [Samson](#), [Saul](#), [David](#), among many others—were far more violent and warlike (and even engaged in [religiously sanctioned genocide](#)), anti-Muslim pro-Christian ideologues will respond by disregarding or downplaying the Old Testament and will instead focus on the personality of Jesus Christ in the New Testament.

Didn't Jesus preach nonviolence and "loving one's enemies"? The anti-Muslim ideologues use this idea to assault the religion of Islam with. For example, the Catholic apologist Robert Spencer compares Islam to Christianity by juxtaposing carefully selected quotes from Jesus to Islamic texts. In his book *The Politically Incorrect Guide to Islam (and the Crusades)*, Spencer includes a "Muhammad vs Jesus" section. He cites the following sayings of Jesus in the Bible:

"Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you"

"If anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also"

"Blessed are the peacemakers"

"Blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy"

“But love your enemies, and do good”

These “peaceful” verses of the Bible are compared to select violent-sounding Quranic verses. The violent verses of the Bible “don’t count” and are craftily excluded from the comparison (“that’s just the Old Testament!”). To tighten the noose, peaceful verses of the Quran are also excluded from the heavily biased analysis: these “don’t count” since they are supposedly from when Muhammad was still in Mecca.

To understand the last point, one needs to have a basic understanding of the Prophet Muhammad’s biography: he first declared his prophethood in the city of Mecca. Only a very small segment of society accepted him (mostly the weak and poor), whereas the masses—especially the powerful leaders of the city—not only rejected him but actively persecuted him. The chapters of the Quran that were revealed during this period are known as the Meccan chapters. Eventually, Muhammad fled to the city of Medina, whose people accepted him as their ruler. He went from persecuted prophet to ruler and commander-in-chief of a fledgling city-state.

The anti-Muslim ideologues claim that the peaceful and tolerant verses of the Quran come from when Muhammad was weak and persecuted in Mecca. These verses are “canceled”, they argue, by the violent-sounding verses in the Medinan chapters. Robert Spencer writes in his book:

Islamic theology divides the Qur’an into “Meccan” and “Medinan” suras [chapters]. The Meccan ones come from the first segment of Muhammad’s career as a prophet, when he simply called the Meccans to Islam. Later, after he fled to Medina, his positions hardened. The Medinan suras [are]...filled with matters of law and ritual—and exhortations to jihad warfare against unbelievers. The relatively tolerant verses quoted above and others like them generally date from the Meccan period, while those with a more violent and intolerant edge are mostly from Medina. [\[1\]](#)

The Islamophobes portray Muhammad as opportunistic: when he was weak and under the rule of the pagans, he called for peace. Without being in a position of authority, Muhammad was hardly in a position to do otherwise. *As soon as he came to power, however, he waged “jihad warfare” (what a strange phrase!) against them.* This is why, they argue, the peaceful verses of the Quran simply “don’t count”.

The merits of Spencer’s claims about the Prophet Muhammad will be critiqued in a future article of this Series. For now, however, we will demonstrate that, using such logic, it is equally possible to invalidate the “peaceful” sayings of Jesus Christ. While he was a persecuted prophet, Jesus advocated nonviolence and peaceful resistance. He was hardly in a position to do otherwise, right? Once in power, however, this changes dramatically and violent warfare becomes the new *modus operandi*.

The Messiah

Just as Muhammad’s biography can be divided into a Meccan and Medinan period, so too can Jesus’s lifestory be divided into a First and Second Coming. (Likewise can Moses’ lifestory be

divided into pre- and post-Exodus: prior to Exodus, Moses was largely peaceful, but after Exodus, Moses became the leader of the emerging Jewish state—and subsequently [engaged in holy wars and even genocide against other nations](#).) In the First Coming of Christ, only a small segment of society (mostly from the weak and poor) accepted Jesus, whereas the leaders and authorities persecuted him. During this time period, Jesus advised his followers to engage in nonviolent resistance only, perhaps even pacifism. Jesus advised his followers to “love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.” According to the Bible, this didn’t stop his Jewish and Roman persecutors from crucifying him.

Yet, the *Second* Coming of Christ is a central theological belief of Christianity. When Jesus returns to earth, the gloves will be off: no longer will he practice nonviolence or pacifism.

Enemies will be mercilessly killed, not loved. In this manner, Jesus will fulfill the messianic prophecies found in the Bible—both in the Old *and* New Testaments. To Christians, Jesus is the *Messiah* (the Greek word “Christ” has the same meaning as the Hebrew word “Messiah”)—the same Messiah that the Jews had been in anticipation of.

It is important to understand how the concept of Messiah developed. According to the Bible, Moses and his followers fled persecution in Egypt to find refuge in the land of Canaan. They believed that God had bequeathed this land to them, which would come to be known as Israel. Unfortunately, there were already peoples who lived in Canaan, a problem that Moses and his followers rectified via military might. The native Canaanites were subsequently occupied, exterminated, or run off their ancestral lands. When the natives fought back, the Israelites attributed this to their innate and infernal hatred of the Jewish people.

After ruling the “promised land” for a time, the Israelites were themselves conquered by outsiders. The Babylonian Empire captured the Kingdom of Judah and expelled the Jews. Though the Israelites felt no remorse over occupying, slaughtering, and running off the native inhabitants of Canaan, they were mortified when they received similar (albeit milder) treatment. In exile, the Jews prayed for vengeance, as recorded in a divine prayer in the Bible:

Psalm 137:8 O Babylon, you will be destroyed. Happy is the one who pays you back for what you have done to us.

137:9 Blessed is the one who grabs your babies and smashes them against a rock.

(We can hardly imagine the glee that an Islamophobe would feel had such a violent passage, one that blesses those who smash infidel babies against rocks, been found in the Quran instead of the Bible.)

It was during the time of exile that the Jewish concept of Messiah was first born. Dutch historian [Jona Lendering](#) writes:

The word Messiah renders the Aramaic word *mešîhâ*’, which in turn renders the Hebrew *mâšîah*. In Antiquity, these words were usually translated into Greek as *Christos* and into Latin as *Christus*, hence the English word *Christ*. All these words mean simply ‘anointed one’, **anointment being a way to show that a Jewish leader had received God’s personal help.**

It was believed that the Messiah (the Anointed One) would receive God's personal help against the enemies of Israel; the Messiah would defeat the Babylonians and reestablish the Jewish state of Israel. Cyrus the Great, king of Persia, fulfilled this role by conquering Babylon and releasing the Jews from exile. Israel Smith Clare writes:

After Cyrus the Great, king of Persia, had conquered Babylon, he issued an edict permitting the Jews to return to their own country and to rebuild the city and Temple of Jerusalem. ^[2]

Prof. Martin Bernal of Cornell University writes:

The first Messiah in the Bible was Cyrus, the king of Persia who released the Jews—at least those who wanted to leave—from Exile in Babylon. ^[3]

As for this passage in the Bible:

Psalm 137:8 O Babylon, you will be destroyed. Happy is the one who pays you back for what you have done to us.

137:9 Blessed is the one who grabs your babies and smashes them against a rock.

[Clarke's Commentary on the Bible](#) comments on this verse:

This was Cyrus, who was chosen of God to do this work, and is therefore called happy, as being God's agent in its destruction.

The Jews thereby returned to the promised land and rebuilt their nation. According to Jewish tradition, however, this did not last long: the Roman Empire conquered the land, destroyed the Temple, and exiled the Jews once again. As a result, as Lendering puts it, "the old prophecies [about Messiah] became relevant again." Although in Jewish tradition there is a messiah for each generation, there is also *the* Messiah, which is what is commonly thought of when we hear the word. The Messiah would fulfill the task of destroying *all* of Israel's enemies.

[JewFaq.org](#) says of *the* Messiah, which they spell as *mashiach* (emphasis is ours):

The mashiach will be a great political leader descended from King David (Jeremiah 23:5). The mashiach is often referred to as "mashiach ben David" (mashiach, son of David). He will be well-versed in Jewish law, and observant of its commandments (Isaiah 11:2-5). He will be a charismatic leader, inspiring others to follow his example. **He will be a great military leader, who will win battles for Israel.** He will be a great judge, who makes righteous decisions (Jeremiah 33:15).

[KosherJudaism.org](#) states:

The Messiah will defeat and conquer the enemies surrounding Israel.

The Second Coming of Christ

Around 4 B.C., a prophet by the name of Jesus was born. He claimed to be the Messiah, and some Jews followed him. The followers of Christ eventually split into numerous sects, and eventually one triumphed over all others. These became what are today known as Christians. As for the majority of Jews, they rejected Jesus. Why? The Jews rejected (and continue to reject) Jesus because he did not fulfill the prophecies pertaining to the Messiah. How could Jesus be the Messiah when he not only did not defeat or conquer Israel's enemies, but he never even led an army into a single war? On the contrary, didn't Jesus preach nonviolence and "loving one's enemies"?

Instead of rejecting these militaristic aspects of the Messiah, Christians attribute them to Jesus during his Second Coming. No longer will Jesus be a weak and persecuted prophet. Instead, he will hold governmental authority, and is depicted as powerful and mighty. This Jesus will certainly not love his enemies or turn the other cheek to them. In fact, the Bible tells us that Jesus will wage violent warfare against his enemies, and he will mercilessly kill them all.

Many Christians talk about how Jesus Christ will bring peace to the world, once and for all. But they often neglect to mention *how* this world "peace" is obtained. It is only after slaughtering his opponents and subduing "the nations" (the entire world?) under the foot of the global Christian empire that the world will have "peace". [Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible](#) explains:

There shall be no more war; horses and chariots shall be no more used in a hostile way; but there shall be perfect peace, **all enemies being destroyed**, which agrees with Micah 2:3 Zechariah 9:10.

In other words, there will be peace for the simple reason that there will be nobody left to fight, all opponents having been slaughtered or subdued. This world "peace" is the same "peace" that any conqueror dreams of: after utterly defeating and conquering all of one's neighbors and enemies, what is there left but "peace", insofar as the non-existence of violence? In the accidentally insightful words of the Evangelist [Wayne Blank](#): "Put another way, humans aren't going to have anything left to fight about." Following conquest, a foreign occupier would obviously want the occupied peoples to be peaceful, as this would eliminate the nuisance of having to fight off freedom-fighters. The absence of violence would allow the conquering force to effortlessly sustain its occupation.

The events of the Second Coming of Christ are found in the Bible, including the Book of Revelation—which is the last book in the New Testament. Jesus will "judge and wage war" (Rev. 19:11), his robe will be "dipped in blood" (19:13), and he will be accompanied by "armies" (19:14) with which he will "strike down the nations" (19:15), including "[the Gentiles](#)" in general and "[the nations that were opposed to him](#)" in specific. This will result in the "[utter destruction of all his enemies](#)". Furthermore: "[in his second coming\[,\] he will complete their destruction, when he shall put down all opposing rule, principality, and power.](#)"

Once he conquers the infidels, Jesus "will rule them with an iron rod" (19:15). [Wayne Blank](#) writes:

The good news is that The Return Of Jesus Christ is going to happen. The even better news is that this time **He's not coming to be sacrificed by the world, but to rule it**, along with those who have been faithful and obedient to Him. The world is going to know true peace, and genuine justice, in a way that it has never known before...

How Will World Peace Happen?

...[This will] not [be] by pleading and debate, but with a rod of iron. Those who choose to love and obey Him will be loved, while **those who choose to rebel and hate Him will know His wrath.**

Jesus will “will release the fierce wrath of God” (19:15) on them, and [“he shall execute the severest judgment on the opposers of his truth”](#). Because of this, “every tribe on earth will mourn because of him” (Rev. 1:7), and they will [“express the inward terror and horror of their minds, at his appearing; they will fear his resentment”](#). Just as the people of Canaan were terrified by [the Israelite war machine](#), so too would the unbelievers [“look with trembling upon \[Jesus\]”](#). This is repeated in the Gospels, that “the Son of man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn” (Matthew 24:30). [“All the nations of the world shall wail when he comes to judgment”](#) and the enemies of Jesus [“shall mourn at the great calamities coming upon them”](#).

Far from the meek prophet of the First Coming, Jesus on his return will command a very strong military force that will “destroy[] every ruler, authority, and power”. Not only is this consistent with the legacy of conquests by the Biblical prophets, it is actually a fulfillment or completion of the task that [Moses](#) initiated: holy war and conquest in the name of God. In First Corinthians (part of the New Testament) it is prophesied that instead of loving his enemies, Christ will subdue and humble them under his feet:

1 Corinthians 15:24 [Jesus] will turn the Kingdom over to God the Father, having destroyed every ruler and authority and power.

15:25 For Christ must reign until he humbles all his enemies beneath his feet.

Pastor and Biblical scholar Ron Teed explains that Jesus Christ brought “comfort and salvation at His first coming” but will bring “vengeance on God’s enemies” during his Second Coming.

There are thus “two comings of Christ, the first to save, the second to judge”—yet in debates with Muslims it seems that Christians play up the First Coming and completely ignore the Second.

The popular [Teed Commentaries](#) explains how “vengeance” is for Christ’s enemies (the “unbelievers”) and “comfort” only for his followers (the believers):

The Messiah will bring both comfort and **vengeance. He will take vengeance on God’s enemies** and bring comfort to His people. This is a summary of the mission of Christ. He brought comfort and salvation at His first coming during His earthly ministry according to Luke...

However, He said nothing of taking vengeance on God's enemies at that time, for that part of his mission will not be fulfilled till He returns triumphant...

[There are] two comings of Christ, the first to save, the second to judge.

In His First coming He did the things mentioned in Isaiah 61:1-2; in His Second Coming He will do the things in verses 2-3. **When He returns He will bring judgment on unbelievers. This will be the day of God's "vengeance."**

The ever popular Evangelical site GotQuestions.org sums it up nicely:

Jesus' second coming will be exceedingly violent. [Revelation 19:11-21](#) describes the ultimate war with Christ, the conquering commander who judges and makes war "with justice" (v. 11). It's going to be bloody (v. 13) and gory. The birds will eat the flesh of all those who oppose Him (v. 17-18). **He has no compassion upon His enemies, whom He will conquer completely and consign to a "fiery lake of burning sulfur" (v. 20).**

It is an error to say that God never supports a war. **Jesus is not a pacifist.**

Will the Real Messiah Please Stand Up?

Whereas the Second Coming of Christ is curiously forgotten in debates with Muslims, it is conveniently remembered during debates with Jews. One of the primary (if not *the* primary) functions of the promised messiah in the Judeo-Christian tradition is, after all, vengeance against Israel's enemies and global dominance. Indeed, the entire concept of Messiah emerged following the conquest of Jewish lands with the subjugation and exile of its inhabitants. The Messiah stood as hope for the redemption of Israel as well as revenge against her enemies.

Jewish polemical tracts against Christians reveal to us how militarism is a fundamental characteristic of the Messiah. The Christian response in turn reveal how Jesus Christ will indeed be militaristic (during his Second Coming). David Klinghoffer, an Orthodox Jewish author, writes in his book *Why the Jews Rejected Jesus*:

There were certainly those among [Jesus'] followers who saw him as the promised Messiah.

This was natural. The first century produced messiahs the way our own time produces movie stars. There was always a hot new candidate for the role emerging from obscurity, whose glory faded either as he was slaughtered by the Romans or as his followers lost interest when he failed to produce the goods promised by the prophets. ^[4]

"The goods" refer to the military conquest of Israel's enemies and world domination. The fact that Jesus failed to produce these "goods" proves that he is not the promised messiah.

Klinghoffer continues:

Let him do what the "son of man," the promised Messiah, had been advertised as being destined to do from Daniel back through Ezekiel and Isaiah and the rest of the prophets. Let him rule as a monarch, his kingship extending over "all peoples, nations, and languages." Let him return the

exiles and build the Temple and defeat the oppressors and establish universal peace, as the prophets also said...

Let Jesus come up with the real messianic goods—visible to all rather than requiring us to accept someone’s assurance that, for example, he was born in Bethlehem—and then we’ll take him seriously. ^[5]

This point is reiterated in his book numerous times:

Hearing Jesus preach, a Jew might reasonably have crossed his arms upon his chest and muttered, “Hm, intriguing, but let’s see what happens.” After all, the scriptures themselves common-sensically defined a false prophet as someone whose prophecies fail to come true. According to Deuteronomy, this was the chief test of a prophet. ^[6]

Klinghoffer writes elsewhere:

The Hebrew prophets describe the elements of a messianic scenario that could not easily be overlooked: an ingathering of the Jewish exiles, the reign of a messianic king, a new covenant with the Jews based on a restored commitment to observance of the commandments, a new Temple, the recognition of God by the world’s peoples. The future Davidic king was expected to radically change the world. ^[7]

The “radical change” involves the “subjugation” of the nations:

The Messiah would be a military and political leader. Philo, whose views have sometimes been taken as foreshadowing Christian teachings, is clear on this: “For ‘there shall come forth a man’ (Num. 24:7), says the oracle, and **leading his host of war he will subdue great and populous nations.**”

The Gospel writers thus faced the challenge that Jesus never raised an army, fought the Romans, returned any Jewish exiles, ruled over any population, or did anything else a king messiah would do. ^[8]

The subjugated nations would then “prostrate” themselves to the Messiah and “serve” him ([perpetual servitude](#)?):

The promised royal scion of David, the Messiah, would surely inspire veneration and awe beyond that accorded even to David himself...The nations will “prostrate” themselves before God, says one psalm; but **so will they “prostrate” themselves (same Hebrew verb) before the Davidic king**, says another psalm...As Daniel puts it... “[The Messiah] was given dominion, honor, kingship, so that all peoples, nations, and languages would serve him.” ^[9]

Klinghoffer defines the Messiah as he “who conquers and rules the nations and liberates the Jews” and describes him as “a mighty warrior”. He rhetorically asks:

Was there in Jewish tradition any room for a dead Messiah? Didn't Jesus's death tend to cast doubt on his ability to accomplish all the world-transforming things the Messiah was supposed to do? [\[10\]](#)

Again, the “world-transforming things” include violent holy war against the heathen nations and their subjugation under his rule. Klinghoffer answers his own question:

But was Jesus a ruler over Israel? On the contrary, the younger Kimchi pointed out, “He did not govern Israel but they governed him.” [\[11\]](#)

Christians reply by arguing that Jesus *will* fulfill these prophecies, just during his Second Coming. [The Good News](#), a Christian magazine with a readership of nearly half a million subscribers, responds to the Jewish criticism by arguing that Jesus returns “a second time” as a “conquering King” who will “slay the great armies of those who opposed Him”. Jesus will be “the promised Messiah whom the prophets claimed would rule all nations ‘with a rod of iron’” and “all nations would come under His rule”.

Klinghoffer, our Orthodox Jewish interlocutor, cries foul:

Christians respond by saying that “the famously unfulfilled prophecies (for instance, that the messianic era will be one of peace) apply to the second and final act in Jesus’s career, when he returns to earth. This is a convenient and necessary dodge: The Bible itself never speaks of a two-act messianic drama. [\[11\]](#)

The interesting dynamic is thus established: Jews accuse Jesus of not being militaristic enough, and Christian apologists respond by eagerly proving the militaristic nature of Jesus during his Second Coming.

Christians Affirm Militant Old Testament Prophecies

Far from saying “it’s just the Old Testament!”, Christians routinely—and as a matter of accepted fundamental theology—use the Old Testament prophecies of the Messiah to validate their belief in Jesus—prophecies that have militaristic overtones. The Book of Isaiah, for example, has numerous prophecies in it that Christians routinely attribute to Jesus Christ. For example:

Isaiah 35:4 Say to those with fearful hearts, “Be strong, do not fear; your God will come, **he will come with vengeance; with divine retribution** he will come to save you.”

[Matthew Henry’s commentary](#) of this verse says:

Assurance is given of the approach of Messiah, **to take vengeance on the powers of darkness**, to recompense with abundant comforts those that mourn in Zion; He will come and save. **He will come again at the end of time, to punish those who have troubled his people;** and to give those who were troubled such rest as will be a full reward for all their troubles.

This will be “a day of vengeance, a year of retribution, to uphold Zion’s cause” (34:8) against the “[nations at enmity with the church](#)” and “[those found opposing the church of Christ](#)”, which will result in “[the destruction of \[the church's\] enemies](#).” Likewise do Christians claim that the Book of Micah foretells the Second Coming of Christ:

Micah 15:5 I will execute vengeance in anger and fury on the heathen, such as they have not heard.

[One Biblical commentary](#) helpfully explains this verse:

Christ will give his Son either the hearts or necks of his enemies, and make them either his friends or his footstool.

[NassirH, a reader of our website, astutely commented: *I suppose this is what JihadWatch writer Roland Shirk meant when he said “Islam is a religion of fear and force, and its adherents can only be at your feet or at your throat.”*]

[Another Biblical commentary](#) notes: “Here no mention is made of Mercy, but only of executing vengeance; and that, with wrath and fury.” Yet [another](#) states that this is “a prophecy of the final overthrow of all the enemies of pure and undefiled religion” and that this is “[a threatening of vengeance to the Heathens](#)”.

When we published articles comparing the Judeo-Christian prophets of the Hebrew Bible to the Prophet Muhammad, an anti-Muslim bigot by the name of Percey (formerly known as Cassidy) claimed that the genocides of the Old Testament were “not supported by Christ’s teachings.”

This hardly seems the case, however, when we consider that Jesus will bring to a climax the holy war first initiated by Moses against the enemies of Israel. Jesus will *fulfill*, not repudiate, Old Testament holy wars against Israel’s foes. In fact, the war will be expanded to heathen nations in general, or at least those that reject Jesus.

Conclusion

We could reproduce violent Christian texts *ad nauseum*... What is clear is that the Christian conception of Jesus can very easily be characterized as violent. Prof. Melancthon W. Jacobus writes in *A Standard Bible Dictionary*:

[Jesus] excluded from **the Messiah’s character the main elements of the popular ideal, i.e. that of a conquering hero, who would exalt Israel above the heathen**, and through such exclusion He seemed to fail to realize the older Scriptural conception. **The failure, however, was only apparent and temporary. For in the second coming in glory He was to achieve this work.** Accordingly, His disciples recognized a twofoldness in His Messiahship: (1) They saw realized in His past life the ideal Servant of Jehovah, the spiritual Messiah, the Christ who teaches and suffers for the people, and (2) **they looked forward to the realization of the Davidic and conquering Messiah in His second coming in power and glory to conquer the nations and reign over them.** ^[12]

How then do we reconcile the seemingly peaceful and pacifist sayings of Jesus with the violent and warlike Second Coming of Christ? There are numerous ways to do this, but perhaps the most convincing is that Jesus' peaceful and pacifist sayings were directed towards a resident's personal and local enemies—usually (but not always) referring to fellow co-religionists. It did *not* refer to a government's foreign adversaries, certainly not to heathen nations. Prof. Richard A. Horsley of the University of Michigan argues:

The cluster of sayings keynoted by “love your enemies” pertains neither to external, political enemies nor to the question of nonviolence or nonresistance...The content of nearly all the sayings indicates a context of local interaction with personal enemies, not of relations with foreign or political foes...

“Love your enemies” and the related sayings apparently were understood by [Jesus'] followers...to refer to local social-economic relations, largely within the village community, which was still probably coextensive with the religious community in most cases...[although sometimes referring] to persecutors outside the religious community but still in the local residential community—and certainly not the national or political enemies. ^[13]

This is consistent with the ruling given by the Evangelical site GotQuestions.org, which permits governments to wage war whilst forbidding individuals from “personal vendettas”:

God has allowed for just wars throughout the history of His people. From Abraham to Deborah to David, God's people have fought as instruments of judgment from a righteous and holy God. [Romans 13:1-4](#) tells us to submit ourselves to government authorities and that nations have the right to bear the sword against evildoers, both foreign and domestic.

Violence occurs, but we must recognize the difference between holy judgment on sin and our own personal vendettas against those we dislike, which is the inevitable outcome of pride ([Psalm 73:6](#)).

As for the “turning the other cheek” passage, it is known that the slap on the cheek that was being referred to here was in that particular culture understood as an insult, not as assault. The passage itself has to do with a person responding to a personal insult, and has nothing to do with pacifism. In any case, *The Wiersbe Bible Commentary* clarifies: “Of course, He applied this to personal insults, not to groups or nations.” ^[14]

Some Christians maintain that fighting the enemies on the battlefield does not exclude loving them. This begs the question: how absolutely irrelevant is this strange form of “love” for enemies that does not proscribe *killing* them?

Whatever the reason for the contradiction between loving enemies on the one hand and killing them on the other, the point is that the comparison between a supposedly peaceful Jesus and violent Muhammad is not just a vapid oversimplification but pure falsity. It is only through a very selective and biased analysis—a carefully crafted comparison between the most peaceful sounding verses of the New Testament (a handful of quotes from Jesus that constitute a small

fraction of the Bible overall) with the most violent sounding verses of the Quran (those too out of context, as we shall see in future parts of this Series).

Anything that doesn't fit this agenda simply "doesn't count" (and indeed, the anti-Muslim pro-Christian readers will furiously rack their brains to figure out ways to make the violent Jesus verses "not count"). The Islamophobic logic is thus: If we exclude all violent verses from the Bible and all the peaceful verses from the Quran, then *aha! See how much more violent the Quran is compared to the Bible!* Anti-Muslim Christians scoff at Islam and exalt their religion by informing Muslims of how Jesus, unlike Muhammad, loved his enemies. Let the Muslims reply back ever so wryly: Jesus loved them so much that he kills them.

Addendum I:

Anti-Muslim Christians often chant "Muhammad was a prophet of war, whereas Jesus was the Prince of Peace". A few points about this are worthy of being mentioned: first, Muhammad never used the title "prophet of war" nor is this mentioned in the Quran or anywhere else. In fact, one of the most common epithets used for Muhammad, one found in the Quran no less, was "A Mercy to All Humanity". (More on this in a later part of the Series.) Jesus, on the other hand, will be a "Warrior King" and a "Conquering King." Should it then be "Muhammad is A Mercy to All Humanity, whereas Jesus is the Warrior King"?

As for Jesus being the Prince of Peace, this epithet comes from Isaiah 9:6:

Isaiah 9:6 For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and **the government will be on his shoulders**. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, **Prince of Peace**.

9:7 **There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace**. He will rule with fairness and justice from **the throne of his ancestor David** for all eternity. **The passionate commitment of the LORD of Heaven's Armies will make this happen**.

One [Christian website](#) paraphrases this succinctly: "Israel's enemies will be destroyed. Peace will flow to the four corners of the earth, as the Prince of Peace rules and reigns." Again, this is the "peace" that conquerers dream of. Jesus is the Prince of Peace because he declares war, slaughters and subjugates all possible enemies to the point where nobody is left to fight, and *voila!* there is peace!

This brings us to the commonly quoted (and oft-debated) verse of the Bible, in which Jesus says:

Matthew 10:34 Do not think that I have come to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword.

Most debates focus on whether or not the word "sword" here is metaphorical or not. Leaving aside the fact that even if this is a metaphor it is certainly a very violent sounding one, it would actually behoove us to focus on the word "peace" in this verse. Jesus told the Jews: "do not think I have come to bring peace on earth" as a way to explain his failure to produce "the

goods”: [“the Jews believed that when the Messiah comes, there would be a time of world peace.”](#)

Naturally, this world “peace” would be brought about through war. Of course, in his Second Coming will Jesus bring this “peace on earth” (and by “peace”, what is meant is war, slaughter, and subjugation). As we can see, this verse confirms the militant nature of the Messiah (and thus Jesus), regardless of if it is metaphorical or not.

Addendum II:

Here is another hotly debated verse, in which Jesus says:

Luke 19:27 But these enemies of mine, who did not want me to reign over them, bring them here and slay them in my presence.

Robert Spencer dismisses this verse, saying: “These are the words of a king in a parable.” Yes, this was a parable that Jesus told his disciples. But what was his intention in narrating this parable? [Gill’s Explanation to the Entire Bible](#) explains that it was to explain what will happen to the Jews “when Christ shall come a second time”: Jesus will “destroy the Jewish nation” for rejecting him “and then all other enemies will be slain and destroyed” as well. Death and destruction will be the fate of whoever does not accept Jesus’ reign as Warrior King.

This was hardly an innocuous story. It reminds us of a scene in the movie [Gladiator](#) when the evil Roman emperor Commodus tells his nephew a story about an “emperor” who was betrayed by his sister (“his own blood”) and how he “struck down” her son as revenge. (Watch it [here](#).) The story was a thinly veiled threat, as was Jesus’ parable.

One can only hardly imagine how Islamophobes like Robert Spencer would react had it been the Prophet Muhammad who had used such a violent parable, threatening to return to earth in order to “slay” anyone who “did not want me to reign over them”! This would certainly “count” since all violence in the Quran “counts” whereas whatever is peaceful in the Quran “doesn’t count”, and whatever is violent in the Bible “doesn’t count” and whatever is peaceful in the Bible “counts”. Heads I win, tails you lose.

Footnotes

[refer back to article](#) 1. Spencer, Robert. *The Politically Incorrect Guide to Islam (and the Crusades)*. Washington, DC: Regnery Pub., 2005. 24. Print.

[refer back to article](#) 2. Clare, Israel S. *The Centennial Universal History: A Clear and Concise History of All Nations*. P. W. Ziegler, 1876. 33. Print.

[refer back to article](#) 3. Bernal, Martin. *Black Athena*. Vol. 1. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers Univ., 1996. 125. Print.

[refer back to article](#) 4. Klinghoffer, David. *Why the Jews Rejected Jesus: the Turning Point in Western History*. New York: Three Leaves/Doubleday, 2006. 61. Print.

[refer back to article](#) 5. Ibid., p.71

[refer back to article](#) 6. Ibid., p.64

[refer back to article](#) 7. Ibid., p.62

[refer back to article](#) 8. Ibid., p.63

[refer back to article](#) 9. Ibid., p.69

[refer back to article](#) 10. Ibid., p.161

[refer back to article](#) 11. Ibid., p.204

[refer back to article](#) 12. Jacobus, Melancthon Williams., Edward E. Nourse, and Andrew C. Zenos. *A Standard Bible Dictionary*. New York & London, 1909. 543. Print.

[refer back to article](#) 13. Swartley, Willard M. "Ethics and Exegesis: 'Love Your Enemies' and the Doctrine of Nonviolence." *The Love of Enemy and Nonretaliation in the New Testament*. Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox, 1992. Print.

[refer back to article](#) 14. Wiersbe, Warren W. *The Wiersbe Bible Commentary*. Colorado Springs: David C Cook, 2007. 21. Print.

[The Bible's Prescriptive, Open-Ended, and Universal Commandments to Wage Holy War and Enslave Infidels \(I\)](#)

Posted on 05 May 2011 by Danios

This article is part 6 of LoonWatch's Understanding Jihad Series. Please read my ["disclaimer"](#), which explains my intentions behind writing this article: [The Understanding Jihad Series: Is Islam More Likely Than Other Religions to Encourage Violence?](#)



In his book *The Politically Incorrect Guide to Islam (and the Crusades)*, anti-Muslim Catholic apologist [Robert Spencer](#) calls the Quran a “book of war” that is “violent and intransigent.” In contrast, he argues, “there is nothing in the Bible that rivals the Qur’an’s exhortations to violence.” This view is held by the general public as well; in the words of [Prof. Philip Jenkins](#):

In the minds of ordinary Christians – and Jews – the Koran teaches savagery and warfare, while the Bible offers a message of love, forgiveness, and charity.

This viewpoint is used to promote bigotry against Muslims and Islam, and to fan the flames of Islamophobia. Fortunately, we’ve “utterly destroyed” this viewpoint (see parts [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), and [5](#) of this Series), and have categorically shown that the Bible is far more violent than the Quran.

As Prof. Jenkins puts it:

In fact, the Bible overflows with “texts of terror,” to borrow a phrase coined by the American theologian Phyllis Trible. The Bible contains far more verses praising or urging bloodshed than does the Koran, and biblical violence is often far more extreme, and marked by more indiscriminate savagery.

The Bible sanctions genocide, something that one simply cannot find any equivalent of in the Quran. In the Bible are verses calling for the slaughter of civilians, with explicit calls for the

butchering of women, children, and even babies. Even the most violent-sounding passages in the Quran do not come close to saying this.

The “Descriptive vs. Prescriptive” Defense

Keenly aware of the fact that the horribly violent verses in the Bible sound far worse than anything in the Quran, Robert Spencer and other anti-Muslim ideologues have to explain why these Biblical passages “don’t count” (whereas the violent sounding Quranic verses always “count”). This follows an important rule of thumb employed by Islamophobes, as we explained in a previous [article](#):

All violence in the Quran “counts” whereas whatever is peaceful in the Quran “doesn’t count”, and whatever is violent in the Bible “doesn’t count” and whatever is peaceful in the Bible “counts”. Heads I win, tails you lose.

Islamophobes argue that the violent passages in the Bible “don’t count” because “the Biblical verses are merely descriptive, not prescriptive like in the Quran.” In other words, the Bible only records and *describes* the violence committed by Judeo-Christian prophets, without prescribing believers of today to carry these acts out.

According to this view, the God of the Bible only commands war against the people of the Seven Nations, who simply do not exist any more. *Since they don’t exist any more, those Biblical verses are effectively dead letters.* This is how the pro-Christian argument goes anyways.

The ultra-conservative Catholic organization [The American Society for the Defense of Tradition, Family and Property](#) summarizes Spencer’s argument in a sympathetic [review](#) of his book:

Biblical references record God’s commands to specific people to wage war against certain groups for a particular purpose and a limited time period. These passages are a historic account of God’s dealings with His people. Conversely, the Koran’s more numerous violent passages call upon Muslims of all times to fight unbelievers with impunity and spread Islam with the sword.

And in Robert Spencer’s own words (found on pp.28-31 of his book):

Islamic apologists more often tend to focus on several Old Testament passages:

* “When the LORD your God brings you into the land where you are entering to possess it, and clears away many nations before you, the Hittites, and the Girgashites and the Amorites and the Canaanites and the Perizzites and the Hivites and the Jebusites, seven nations greater and stronger than you. And when the LORD your God delivers them before you and you defeat them, then you shall utterly destroy them. You shall make no covenant with them and show no favor to them” (Deuteronomy 7:1-2)

* “When you approach a city to fight against it, you shall offer it terms of peace. If it agrees to make peace with you and opens to you, then all the people who are found in it shall become your forced labor and shall serve you. However, if it does not make peace with you, but makes war

against you, then you shall besiege it. When the LORD your God gives it into your hand, you shall strike all the men in it with the edge of the sword. Only the women and the children and the animals and all that is in the city, all its spoil, you shall take as booty for yourself; and you shall use the spoil of your enemies which the LORD your God has given you. Only in the cities of these peoples that the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance, you shall not leave alive anything that breathes” (Deuteronomy 20:10-17).

* “Now therefore, kill every male among the little ones, and kill every woman who has known man intimately. But all the girls who have not known man intimately, spare for yourselves” (Numbers 31:17-18).

Strong stuff, right? Just as bad as “slay the unbelievers wherever you find them” (Qur’an 9:5) and “Therefore, when ye meet the unbelievers in fight, smite at their necks; at length, when ye have thoroughly subdued them, bind a bond firmly on them” (Quran 47:4) and all the rest, right?

Wrong. Unless you happen to be a Hittite, Girgashite, Amorite, Canaanite, Perizzite, Hivite, or Jebusite, [the Seven Nations] these Biblical passages simply do not apply to you. The Qur’an exhorts believers to fight unbelievers without specifying anywhere in the text that only certain unbelievers are to be fought, or only for a certain period of time, or some other distinction.

Taking the texts at face value, the command to make war against unbelievers is open-ended and universal. The Old Testament, in contrast, records God’s commands to the Israelites to make war against particular people only. This is jarring to modern sensibilities, to be sure, but it does not amount to the same thing.

Robert Spencer reproduces Biblical verses to prove his claim when in actuality these verses are all the proof needed to refute his claim. One does not need to go further than *his own page in his own book* to see how fallacious his basic argument is!

The first passage is Deuteronomy 7:1-2, which orders the believers to “utterly destroy” the people of the Seven Nations:

When the LORD your God brings you into the land where you are entering to possess it, and clears away many nations before you, the Hittites, and the Girgashites and the Amorites and the Canaanites and the Perizzites and the Hivites and the Jebusites, seven nations greater and stronger than you. And when the LORD your God delivers them before you and you defeat them, then **you shall utterly destroy them. You shall make no covenant with them** and show no favor to them” (Deuteronomy 7:1-2)

The believers are forbidden to sign a peace treaty with the people of the Seven Nations (“you shall make no covenant with them”), and they must be ethnically cleansed (“you shall utterly destroy them”).

The next passage Spencer cites explains what to do with all nations **other than** the Seven Nations:

When you approach a city to fight against it, you shall offer it terms of peace. If it agrees to make peace with you and opens to you, then all the people who are found in it shall become your forced labor and shall serve you. However, if it does not make peace with you, but makes war against you, then you shall besiege it. When the LORD your God gives it into your hand, you shall strike all the men in it with the edge of the sword. Only the women and the children and the animals and all that is in the city, all its spoil, you shall take as booty for yourself; and you shall use the spoil of your enemies which the LORD your God has given you. **Thus you shall do to all the cities that are very far from you, which are not of the cities of these nations nearby. Only in the cities of these peoples that the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance, you shall not leave alive anything that breathes.** (Deuteronomy 20:10-17).

In his book, Robert Spencer completely omitted the verse in red above. Notice how the words in red (Deuteronomy 20:15) simply do not appear in Spencer's rendition of the passage. Take a look for yourself (click on the image to view):



This time, Spencer didn't even bother using those ever so strategic ellipses to manipulate the meaning of a passage. One wonders at the convenient omission of Deuteronomy 20:15 and whether or not this is a mistake or deception. It is certainly a very helpful "mistake".

Furthermore, Spencer didn't reproduce 20:17 either:

20:17 But you shall utterly destroy them; namely, the Hittites, and the Amorites, the Canaanites, and the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites; as the LORD your God has commanded you.

Whatever the case, the Biblical passage (the one that Robert Spencer uses as a proof) is *actually* saying that **the general rule** is that heathens are to be offered terms of "peace", which entails being reduced to "forced labor" ([perpetual servitude](#)). (This is the Bible's version of "peace", and the same type of world "peace" that [Jesus, the "Prince of Peace", will bring during his Second Coming](#).) If the heathens reject these terms of "peace", then in that case they are to be attacked and every single man (including non-combatants) is to be killed. Meanwhile, the women and the children are to be enslaved, and the animals and all property are to be taken as booty.

After stating this **general rule**, the God of the Bible clarifies that **this does not apply** to the people of the Seven Nations, who must be "utterly destroy[ed]". The women and children **cannot be taken as slaves** because the believers "shall not leave alive anything that breathes." In other words, Spencer's rationalization could be applied to Deuteronomy 20:16-17 (the

genocidal verses advocating “utter destruction”) but *not* to Deuteronomy 20:10-15 (the verses advocating perpetual servitude of heathens).

The Bible thus advocates genocide against heathen residing inside the Promised Land, and [perpetual servitude of heathen](#) outside of it. Genocide is the rule for the Seven Nations (Hittites, Gergashites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites), whereas perpetual servitude is the rule for all heathens other than this. The enforcement of this Biblical rule (genocide inside the Promised Land and slavery outside of it) can be seen in the story of Gibeon. As infidels, the Gibeonites were forced to choose between genocide and slavery (both options requiring forced conversion); we explain this story [here \[pdf document\]](#).

The Battle Psalms

Above have we refuted the argument that the Bible calls for holy war against the Seven Nations exclusively. But the juiciest Biblical verses are actually found in the Book of Psalms, including this doozie:

Psalms 149:5 Let godly people triumph in glory. Let them sing for joy on their beds.

149:6 Let the praises of God be in their mouths, and a two-edged sword in their hands,

149:7 to execute vengeance on the heathen and punishment on the people,

149:8 to bind their kings with chains, and their leaders with iron shackles.

There’s much more in the Book of Psalms, and that’s up next...

Editor’s Note: Due to the length of this article, it will be split into four pages, the next page to be published tomorrow.

Update I: Page 2 is now available [here](#).

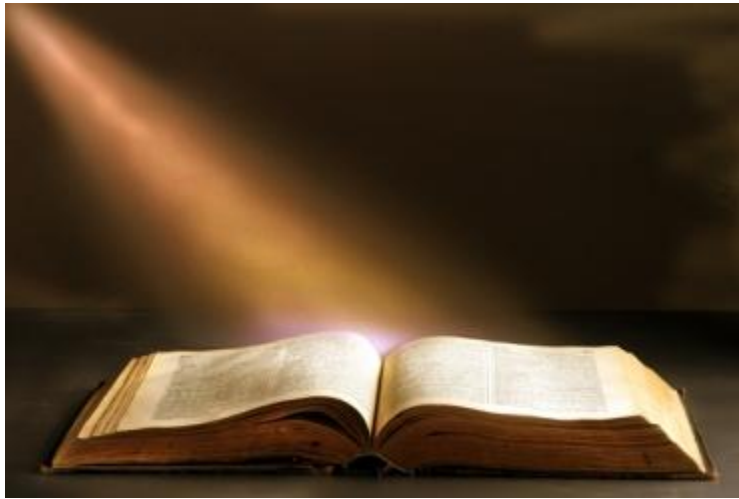
Update II: Page 3 is now available [here](#).

Update III: Page 4 is now available [here](#).

[Majority of Americans Believe the Bible is Literally True and the Word of God](#)

Posted on 12 May 2011 by Danios

This article is part 7 of LoonWatch's Understanding Jihad Series. Please read my ["disclaimer"](#), which explains my intentions behind writing this article: [The Understanding Jihad Series: Is Islam More Likely Than Other Religions to Encourage Violence?](#)



[Robert Spencer](#) and other anti-Muslim bigots fear-monger about Islam and Muslims by demonizing the Quran, calling it a “book of violence and war.” This, they argue, is quite unlike other religious scriptures, and is *especially* unlike the Bible, which is a book of love and good morals.

We threw cold water on this argument by reproducing oodles of violent passages found in the Bible (see parts [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#), and [6](#) of this Series), showing that the Bible is in fact way more violent than the Quran.

Instead of defending their initial argument (the oft-repeated claim that the Quran is a *uniquely* violent holy book, far more violent than the Bible) or even their “fall back” argument (the claim that the violent Biblical passages are merely “descriptive” unlike the Quran’s violent passages that are supposedly “prescriptive, open-ended, and universal”—a claim that we refuted in [part 6](#) of this Series), Islamophobes quickly move on to their next “fall back” argument:

Jews and Christians no longer believe in the inerrant nature of the Bible, unlike the Muslims who take the Quran as absolutely accurate. We are told that Jews and Christians have moved beyond the Bible (even “tossed it aside!”), whereas the primitive Muslims continue to follow their archaic holy book. Therefore, the argument goes, invoking the Bible is hardly relevant, since “most Jews and Christians no longer give credence to it.”

This argument is not grounded in fact, however. A poll by [Rasmussen Reports](#) found that a majority of all Americans (63%) believe the Bible is literally true and the Word of God, with less than a quarter (24%) disagreeing with this belief. This is quite amazing when one considers that

[about 20% of Americans are neither Jewish or Christian!](#) The percentage of those who believe in the literal meaning of the Bible jumps to 70% for Protestants, and becomes overwhelming (89%) for Evangelical Christians in specific. Meanwhile, 77% of Republicans believe in the literal truth of the Bible.

A [Pew Research poll](#) bore out fairly similar results, with 78% of Americans believing that the Bible is either the actual or [inspired](#) Word of God. This view is held by 88% of Protestants, 82% of Catholics, and 91% of other Christian groups. Contrary to the emerging scholarly consensus that the Biblical stories such as Exodus and Conquest are “best regarded as a myth”, only a minority of the public at large (19% of Americans, 11% of Protestants, 16% of Catholics, and 6% of other Christian groups) believe that the Bible is just “ancient fables, history, and legends.”

Quite the opposite of what our opponents claim, most Christian-Americans very much believe in the accuracy of their scriptural texts. This explains, for instance, why [only a minority of Christians in America believe in evolution](#), with [“60 percent of Americans who call themselves Evangelical Christians...favor replacing evolution with creationism in schools altogether.”](#)

Whether it's [evolution](#) or [abortion](#), Christian-Americans take the Bible very, very seriously.

* * * *

As always, our opponents will rely on a “fall back” argument and claim that the case of Europe is different, that the United States is far more religious than the “bastion of atheism” across the pond. The Christians in Europe, we are told, aren't that serious about their religion.

We will preempt this argument by pointing out that only a quarter of the world's Christians are in Europe. The other three-quarters are in North and South America, Africa, and Asia. Latin America has as many Christians as Europe does, and they take their religion [very seriously](#). So too is the case in Christian Africa and Asia, which together accounts for far more Christians than in Europe. It is a reasonable assumption that the Christians in Latin America, Africa, and Asia take the Bible very seriously. Therefore, the “but Europe is different!” excuse is of limited utility.

The majority of Christians actually live in the developing world. It is of course expected that our opponents will insist on comparing the minority of Christians in the First World to the Muslims in the Third World.

* * * *

The “official view” of the Church reinforces our assertion: [“The Christian Church as a whole claims that the Bible is inspired and inerrant.”](#) Both the Catholic Church and mainstream Protestantism (certainly Evangelical Christianity) view the Bible as accurate. This is a doctrinal view that has always been held and continues to be held by “mainstream Christianity”.

Anti-Islam ideologues further misleading arguments when they exaggerate between the views about “inerrancy” between Christians and Muslims. One “mainstream Christian view” posits

that the Bible does have some “errors” in it. The anti-Muslim ideologues shrug off the violent verses in the Bible by arguing that “well, we don’t believe that the Bible is without errors, unlike the Muslims!” This deceptive argument implies that the Christians believe that those violent verses are erroneous/inaccurate.

Yet, this “mainstream Christian view” holds that the Bible is [“98.5% textually pure”](#) and “the 1.5% that is in question is mainly nothing more than spelling errors and occasional word omissions like the words ‘the,’ ‘but,’ etc.” In fact, none of these errors “affect[] doctrinal truths.” Certainly, these “errors” do *not* encompass the violent holy wars that are narrated about the Biblical prophets: “In fact, nothing in ancient history even comes close to the accuracy of the New Testament documents.” Nor do they include the exhortations to violence (“prescriptive, open-ended, and universal” calls to holy war against infidels) found in the Book of Psalms.

What then is the relevance of this argument except to obfuscate the issue? The fact is that only 6-16% of Christians in America recognize the Bible as “ancient fables, history, and legends.” That having been established, we could care less about whether or not the word “the” should have been “a” or the other way around.

Neither is it relevant whether or not one believes the Bible is “literally” the Word of God or the “inspired” Word of God, as both amount to the same thing: a text that is considered accurate by its followers. As one popular Evangelical site, [GotQuestions.org](#), puts it: “Inspiration means the Bible truly is the Word of God...Because the Scriptures are the inspired Word of God, we can conclude that they are also inerrant and authoritative...Without a doubt the Bible is what it claims to be—the undeniable, authoritative, Word of God to humanity.”

As long as the majority of Christians don’t believe that the Bible is just “ancient fables, history, and legends” (which they don’t), whether they consider the Bible the literal or inspired word of God is largely inconsequential to the argument at hand.

* * * *

Unfortunately, we could not locate any poll about Jewish views towards the accuracy of the Bible. But as far as “official views” go, Orthodox Judaism (the only strand of Judaism recognized by the state of Israel) takes the Hebrew Bible very, very seriously.

* * * *

Lastly, it is rather quite telling that the Islamophobes have now fallen back on the argument that “Jews and Christians have tossed the Bible aside”: is this not a sign of surrender and an implicit admission that the Bible glorifies and exhorts violence and that there is no reasonable way of denying this? The need to invoke the argument (or rather, to fall back on it) is an indirect admission that the contrary could not be convincingly argued.

Compare this reaction to Muslims, who instead of needing to rely on the “but we don’t take the Quran seriously” defense, can reasonably argue—using the mitigating verses of the Quran—that the Quran calls for war in self-defense only (Just War Doctrine). Worded another way: the Bible

is so violent that it simply can't be defended, at least not using the same standards the anti-Muslim ideologues employ against the Quran.

[The “But That’s Just the Old Testament!” Cop-Out](#)

Posted on 22 May 2011 by Danios

This article is part 8 of LoonWatch’s Understanding Jihad Series. Please read my [“disclaimer”](#), which explains my intentions behind writing this article: [The Understanding Jihad Series: Is Islam More Likely Than Other Religions to Encourage Violence?](#)



We showcased violence in the Hebrew Bible (the Old Testament) in parts [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), and [6](#) of this Series. Even though this list of Biblical verses was hardly exhaustive, it was more than enough to refute the claim—made by Islamophobes like [Robert Spencer](#) (and unfortunately [accepted as fact by the majority of Americans](#))—that the Quran is more violent than the Bible.

In response, many Christians rely on a “fall back” argument: they claim that this “doesn’t count” since “it’s just the Old Testament!” and supposedly Jesus Christ rejected the violent legacy of the OT. It is of course of paramount importance to the anti-Muslim Christians—as well as to [“culturally Christian” atheists](#) and your run-of-the-mill Islamophobes who need to prove the “uniquely” violent nature of Islam’s holy book—to neutralize the Old Testament. After all, if the Old Testament “counts”, then it would be a case of Mutually Assured Destruction (M.A.D.) to attack the Quran for its alleged violence: the Old Testament is by far the more violent book.

There are numerous reasons the “But It’s Just the Old Testament!” Defense doesn’t do the trick:

1) There is no explicit or categorical textual proof from the New Testament that supports the idea that the Old Testament (or the Law) “doesn’t count”. For every verse cited to prove such a claim, there is another that can be cited for the opposite view. In fact, it seems that the textual proof for the opposite view is greater, even overwhelming. For example, Jesus says in the Gospels:

Matthew 5:17 Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.

5:18 I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished.

5:19 Anyone who breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

And Jesus also said:

Luke 16:17 But it is easier for heaven and earth to disappear than for one dot of the Law to become void.

There are other verses that similarly seem to affirm the importance of keeping the Law. On the other hand, the evidences used to counter this view are less explicit and less direct.

2) Both the Old and New Testament are considered by all mainstream branches of Christianity to be [“just as inspired as the New Testament.”](#) The New Testament itself affirms the accuracy of the Old Testament:

2 Timothy 3:16 All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness,

3:17 so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

[“All Scripture – This properly refers to the Old Testament...it includes the whole of the Old Testament, and is the solemn testimony of Paul that it was all inspired.”](#) More importantly, as [Catholic.com](#) says (emphasis is ours): “Scripture — all of Scripture — is inspired by God (2 Tim. 3:16). This means that the Old Testament is just as inspired as the New Testament and *thus an expression of the will of Christ.*”

[**Update I:** A reader pointed out the following: *Christians see Jesus as God. That means that he was also the God of the Old Testament. The same God who commanded all those killings and the author of all those violent and disgusting commands as listed in your previous articles. So the violence Jesus supports and predicts is not only evident in the New Testament, but he is supposedly also the author of said violent commands in the Old testament as well. Not only then is the Old Testament "an expression of the will of Christ"--it is Christ.]*

Protestant Christianity, as seen on this popular [Evangelical site](#), also agrees with this assessment:

Jesus is always in perfect agreement with the Father ([John 10:30](#)), so we cannot argue that war was only God’s will in the Old Testament. God does not change ([Malachi 3:6](#); [James 1:17](#)).

3) On this note, Jesus Christ *himself* is depicted in the *New Testament* as being *very* violent during his Second Coming (see [part 5](#)). Even if we completely sweep the Biblical prophets and the Old Testament under the rug (which is exactly what anti-Muslim Christians do in debates with Muslims), it doesn't change the fact that Jesus in the New Testament is *very* violent: he promises to kill or subjugate all of his enemies, which includes those whose only crime is to refuse to believe in him. So, even if we completely disregard the OT, this wouldn't solve the "problem".

More importantly, the fact that Jesus *promised* to kill his enemies (a promise he made during his First Coming)—*even if he is yet to fulfill this promise*—shows that Jesus did *not* reject the violent ways of the earlier Biblical prophets. He simply was not in a position of authority or power to carry out these acts of unbridled violence. He wouldn't have promised violence if he truly rejected the OT's violence.

When we published an article about the violent Second Coming of Christ, many critics cried "you can't compare Jesus' supposed violence in the future with what Muhammad actually already did!" (How quickly anti-Muslim Christians can turn something they believe in with all their might and which they believe is central to their faith—the Second Coming of Christ—into a "supposed" event makes us wonder if this is not Christian [taqiyya](#)?) Yet, it was during his First Coming that Jesus made the promise to kill all those who did not believe in him; the *action*—a violent threat to ruthlessly slaughter infidels (i.e. Luke 19:27)—*has already been made*.

4) Christians not only routinely cite the Old Testament, but they specifically cite it with regard to Jesus. Various prophecies in the OT are attributed to Jesus: these prophecies depict the Messiah as a violent conquering king who brutally vanquishes his enemies. (Please read the section entitled "Christians Affirm Militant Old Testament Prophecies" in [part 5](#) of the Understanding Jihad Series.) This reinforces point #3 above: Jesus is seen as *fulfilling*, not rejecting, the violence of the Old Testament. After all, the violence of the OT was "an expression of the will of Christ."

5) The official views of the Church itself do not endorse the idea of "tossing the Old Testament aside": even when it comes to formulating a doctrine in regards to war, [the OT must be taken into consideration](#). It is argued that there is concordance, not dissonance, between the Old and New Testaments. As the esteemed theologian [Prof. Samuele R. Bacchiocchi](#) concluded:

An attentive study shows that the NT complements, rather than contradicts the teachings of the OT regarding warfare...A balanced reading of the NT texts suggests that there is a basic agreement between the Old and New Testaments on their teaching on warfare.

The violent wars in the OT are reconciled by arguing that Biblical Israel was justified in its declarations of war and was only acting in self-defense: "[At various times in the Old Testament, God commanded the Israelites to defend their nation by force of arms.](#)" Of course, this is not supported by the facts: the Israelites were clearly [the aggressors, annihilating and/or running off the indigenous populations](#) of a land that they believed was divinely given to them. They were only "defending themselves" insofar as any aggressive occupier will "resist" those they occupy.

6) The fact of the matter is that all mainstream Christian groups affirm both the Old and New Testament as canon. The Church fought off any attempts to “throw away the Old Testament”. In the second century of Christianity, Marcion of Sinope rejected the Old Testament because of the violence, war atrocities, and genocide contained therein. He was denounced by the Church, and his views towards the Old Testament were officially damned as heresy. Tertullian, the Father of Western Christianity, issued a rebuttal against Marcion.

We [read](#):

Marcionism. Marcionism owed its existence to Marcion, an individual who gained popularity in Rome in 140-144. His theology was influenced heavily by the Gnostics, and he denied the power of the God of the Old Testament. He promulgated the use of a limited form of the New Testament, including Luke’s Gospel and Acts, and many of the Pauline epistles, the former since Luke was a Gentile and the latter since he was sent to preach to the Gentiles. He found the God of the Old Testament contradictory and inhumane. The “orthodox” Christianity of the time rejected his argumentation, upheld the value of the Old Testament, and dutifully began the work of canonization of the Old and New Testaments. The specter of Marcion loomed large enough so as to merit refutation by Tertullian at the end of the second century; nevertheless, Marcion’s movement mostly died out or assimilated into other Gnostic groups.

Marcionism died out, thanks to the Church and its insistence of the Old Testament’s validity. [The Catholic Encyclopedia](#) calls the Marcionist sect “perhaps the most dangerous foe Christianity has ever known.” Today, there are some modern-day believers, called New Testament Only Christians, who reject the Old Testament due to its inherent violence, war atrocities, and genocide. This group is a very small minority, a “heretical” group that is at odds with the main body of Christianity.

So, unless you happen to be a New Testament Only Christian, the “But That’s Just the Old Testament!” Defense simply doesn’t apply to you. The existence of the New Testament Only Christians, however, is actually indicative of just how violent the Bible is: it couldn’t be reconciled, so more than half of it had to be jettisoned.

* * * *

None of this is to say that Christians *must* interpret the Bible in a violent manner. But what we *are* saying is that a softer reading of the Bible requires textual acrobatics, convoluted argumentation, and theological mind-bending. The reasons given why the Old Testament Law are no longer in effect are far more complex to grasp than the simple, straight-forward understanding one gets from reading Jesus’ seemingly simple, straight-forward statements, such as:

Matthew 5:17 Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.

5:18 I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished.

5:19 Anyone who breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

This reinforces a point made in an [earlier part](#) of this Series:

Why is it that these anti-Muslim ideologues allow theological and textual acrobatics when it comes to the Bible, but meanwhile they forbid the contextualization of Quranic verses?

Certainly it is much easier to “constrain” the violent verses of the Quran than it is for the Bible, since the Quran itself almost always cushions these verses in between mitigating verses. This contrasts quite considerably with the Bible, which has violent verses wrapped in violent passages.

Anti-Muslim Christians point to various verses of the Quran that they claim are intrinsically violent. When it is pointed out to them that their own holy book is replete with violent passages, they respond by explaining why and how they interpret these Biblical passages in a peaceful manner. In the same breath, however, they forbid Muslims from doing the same to the Quran.

Rejecting the Old Testament is a perfectly fine way for a Christian believer to theologially constrain the violence of the Bible, one that we wholeheartedly support. But such a believer should know that his holy book requires such theological mechanisms to constrain its violence, and this should logically endow upon him some religious modesty when it comes to the holy books of others.

* * * *

7) Perhaps the most important reason why the “But That’s Just the Old Testament!” Defense doesn’t work is that it doesn’t do a damned thing for Jewish followers of the Hebrew Bible.

Jews don’t believe in the New Testament or Jesus. In fact, their most holiest of books is the Torah, which is the first five books of the Old Testament (known as the *Tanakh* or Hebrew Bible to Jews). These include Exodus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy—some of the most violent books of the entire Bible, replete with holy war and divinely ordained genocide. To Jews, the Torah and the Hebrew Bible are 100% active and applicable, with no New Testament to overrule or abrogate them.

When we published articles showcasing the violence of the Bible—especially after our article about [“the Bible’s prescriptive, open-ended, and universal commandments to wage holy war and enslave infidels”](#)—pro-Christian elements were quick to throw the Old Testament (and their Jewish comrades) under the bus: *The God of the Old Testament was a god of war, whereas the New Testament is a god of love.*

In order to prove their claim against Islam, the anti-Muslim ideologues must prove the “uniqueness” of the Quran’s violence. Certainly, this is Robert Spencer’s clear-as-daylight argument on p.19 of his book *The Politically Incorrect Guide to Islam (and the Crusades)*:

The Qur'an is **unique** among the sacred writings of the world in counseling its adherents to make war against unbelievers.

Short of proving the uniqueness of the Quran's violence, Spencer et al. have failed in what they set out to do. If it can only be proved that the Quran is only as violent as the Tanakh (or the Torah)—or that Islam is just as violent as Judaism—then what big deal is this? If Spencer wants to fear-monger about Islam, and if—using the same standards—it can be proven that Judaism is just as violent as Islam (nay, more violent)—then will Spencer also fear-monger about Judaism? Can we expect a *JewWatch.com* website coming soon?

In fact, such a site already exists, and it looks like JihadWatch, just against Jews instead of Muslims. Indeed, if the same conclusions about Islam were applied to Judaism, then all this would be exposed for what it really is: wholesale bigotry. But it is much easier to get away with bigotry against Muslims than it is against Jews.

How can Robert Spencer hide behind the “But That’s Just the Old Testament!” Defense when his comrade-in-arms is Jewish? [Pamela Geller](#) of the Atlas Shrugs blog is a partner in crime with Spencer and company. Clearly, the anti-Muslim Christian right is linked at the hip with Zionist Jews in their shared hatred of Muslims. Why is one side of this unholy alliance willing to throw the other under the bus, and why is the other side ominously quiet when they hear arguments such as “But That’s Just the Old Testament”?

Our argument has never been that the Quran has no violence in it. Rather, our argument is: *all holy books, including the Quran but also the Bible, have violence in them; in fact, the Bible is far more violent than the Quran.* This is in response to the question that most Americans answered incorrectly: [is Islam more likely than other religions to encourage violence?](#) Most importantly, this argument of ours is a response to a claim made by Robert Spencer.

This argument of ours is also based in our deeply held conviction that religions and religious scriptures are just what their readers make of them, as stated in the [introduction of this Series](#):

The reader should not think that I believe that a certain religion or another is violent. Rather, there exist peaceful and violent *interpretations* of religion. I reject the view held by religious orthodoxy that the human mind is simply an empty receptacle that unthinkingly “obeys” the divine plan. Hundreds of years after their prophets have died, believers (of all faiths) are forced (by virtue of not having a divine interlocutor) to exert their own minds and ethics to give life to texts, to render 3D realities from 2D texts. Such an elastic idea—that a religion is whatever its believers make it into—is certainly anathema to orthodox adherents who simply desire a step-by-step instruction manual to produce human automatons. But the truth is that even these orthodox adherents *necessarily* inject into the religious texts their own backgrounds, beliefs, and biases.

One can see why I do not think that simply showing a Biblical verse here or there would prove that Judaism or Christianity are violent faiths. There is a long journey from what is on the page to what is understood and put into practice. And once this reality is comprehended, it is hoped that Jews and Christians will gain a larger perspective when they approach Muslims and their religion.

Opponents have claimed that this Series so far has just been a case of *tu quoque* fallacy: yet, this is fundamentally misunderstanding the purpose of this Series, which is certainly not designed to convert the readers to Islam, but rather to refute the commonly held notion that [Islam is somehow more violent than other faiths](#), a view that the majoritarian group can easily hold (and demagogues like Robert Spencer can reinforce) unless dissenters like ourselves challenge it.

Update I:

See [page II](#) of this article for our follow-up piece.

[The “But That’s Just the Old Testament!” Cop-Out \(II\): How the Christian Right Interprets the Bible](#)

Posted on 02 June 2011 by Danios

Refer to [page I](#) of this article.



Any and all violence in the Quran “counts”. Nothing violent in the Bible ever “counts”.

This is the axiom closely adhered to by anti-Muslim pro-Christian elements. We are told that the Old Testament, which is clearly far more violent and warlike than the Quran (see [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), and [6](#)), simply “doesn’t count”. The double-standards used to single out the Quran—and exonerate the Bible—have been exposed on [page I](#) of this article.

We proved that the most straightforward, intuitive, and obvious reading of the Bible would support the enduring and even eternal applicability of the Old Testament’s violence. This does not mean that peaceful interpretations do not exist. They most certainly do. But if the anti-Muslim pro-Christian bigots will apply a standard of “well, your text *clearly* says XYZ” to the Quran, then this applies even more so to the Bible.

Some critics reassured us that we simply did not understand Christian theology—that we are just too ignorant or too stupid to interpret the Bible. What we have provided, however, is not simply our own interpretation: right-wing Christians *themselves* interpret the Bible in this way. They look to the Old Testament for guidance when it comes to matters of war and peace, quite the opposite of what is claimed in debates with Muslims (i.e. “but that’s just the Old Testament” and “the Old Testament doesn’t count!”)

The Christian Right, which singles out the Quran as being “uniquely violent”, is the same group that most often looks to the wars of the Old Testament for inspiration. Case in point: professional Islamophobe Dr. Robert Morey, a Christian theologian and pastor. A self-

proclaimed “professional apologist” Morey runs a right-wing Christian group called Faith Defenders. He is a highly regarded figure amongst the religious right, and [“is recognized internationally as a professional philosopher and theologian whose careful scholarship and apologetic abilities establish him as one of Christianity’s top defenders.”](#) According to [his bio](#), his works were included in the Christian Booksellers Association list of The Best of the Good Books and he won Christianity Today’s Significant Books of the Year.

Dr. Morey’s Islamophobic works include *Islam Unveiled* (1991), *The Islamic Invasion* (1992), and *Winning the War Against Radical Islam* (2002). Morey is one of the most recognizable faces in the Christian vs. Muslim debates. The influential far right-wing website *WorldNetDaily*, which is [aligned with the religious right](#) and in fact founded by Christian Evangelist Joseph Farah, published a plea requesting \$1.2 million to fund Morey’s “crusade” against Islam. (Robert Spencer also writes for *WorldNetDaily*.)

Morey’s site, *FaithDefenders.com*, supports [Act for America](#), the hate organization run by [Bridget Gabriel](#) and [associated with Pamela Geller and Robert Spencer](#). Morey’s books are sold on [Ali Sina’s website](#), the anti-Muslim [Faith Freedom International](#), the same Ali Sina whose work is reproduced by Robert Spencer on JihadWatch. [Daniel Pipes](#), another one of their comrade-in-arms, also reviewed Morey’s book *The Islamic Invasion*. The point is: Robert Morey is a well-known figure in anti-Muslim circles.

More importantly, Robert Morey’s book *When Is It Right to Fight?*—which has as its fundamental argument that wars of aggression are Biblically justified by the Old Testament—was met with acclaim by the religious right. For example, John M. Whitehead, founder of the Rutherford Institute, effusively praised *When Is It Right to Fight?* as “one of the best books on the subject.” Church pastor and famous Christian broadcaster (“Hall-of-Famer” at the National Religious Broadcasters) D. James Kennedy strongly recommended Morey’s book to “all who love and defend liberty” (if, on the other hand, you don’t love liberty, this book may not be for you).

The Dallas Theological Seminary, a notable Evangelical seminary, called Morey’s book “stimulating, thought provoking and helpful.” *The Biblical Evangelist*, a bi-monthly Evangelist magazine, not only loved the book (boasting that “Morey totally annihilates the position of pacifism”) but in fact raved about his books and scholarship in general (“[we have] been extremely pleased with all of them” and “Morey is a very scholarly writer”). [All quotes above appear on the back of Morey’s book.]

Robert Morey’s book *When Is It Right to Fight?* can be considered a compendium of the Christian Right’s justifications for waging wars. In this book, Morey justifies America’s many wars of aggression *using none other than the Bible*. He responds to Christian pacifists who claim that we shouldn’t base our lives on the Old Testament, saying:

The unity of the Scriptures should not be broken simply because we don’t like what they say. The New Testament authors did not hesitate to derive doctrine and ethics from principles contained in the Old Testament (2 Tim. 3:16-17) (p.136)

Far from rejecting the wars and warlike prophets of the Old Testament, Morey claims that “the patriarchs and prophets” are “models for us to follow today”:

Throughout the Old Testament, the patriarchs and prophets are pictured as real people struggling with the same kinds of problems we face today. This is why they are listed in Hebrews 11 as models for us to follow today. In this biblical spirit, let us examine their lives and history for answers to our questions. (p.12)

Morey goes on (emphasis is ours):

Perhaps the best place to begin is with the book of beginnings, Genesis...Genesis opens with the revelation that warfare is going on between God and Satan...**This cosmic war between God and Satan now involves the inhabitants of the earth** as well as those of heaven. God is called the “Lord of Hosts”, i.e. “the Lord of armies.” He is the Lord of the armies of the heaven **and on earth.**

Throughout Scripture, **earthly wars**, where the conflict is clearly between good and evil, are viewed as manifestations of the spiritual conflict taking place in heaven. For example, in Job 1:6-17, the Sabeans and the Chaldeans, as agents of Satan in his conflict with God, raided Job’s flocks and killed his servants. The violence against Job was a reflection of the war between God and Satan. Other Old Testament examples can be cited: 1 Chron. 21:1; 2 Kings 6:8-18; Dan. 10:7-14. (p.12)

Not only does Morey support using the Old Testament wars as “models for us to follow today” but notice also that he condones the concept of “holy war”: earthly wars are between “good and evil”, or more specifically, between the “agents of God” and the “agents of Satan”. Assigning one side to God and the other to Satan almost ensures the idea of holy war. Morey takes the concept to its logical conclusion, and permits the “agents of God” to use the same methods as God (“utter destruction”) against the “agents of Satan” on earth.

Morey says further:

The New Testament continues the tradition of depicting the course of human history as warfare between God and Satan, viewing it in terms of conflict between two kingdoms (Acts 26:18; Col. 1:13). (p.13)

Christian pacifists point out that Jesus will return to rid the world of wars. Morey counters this by arguing that (1) Jesus will only accomplish this task through the use of force, conquering his opponents in war. This, as we argued in [a previous article in the Series](#), is a conquerer’s “peace”. (2) The fact that Jesus said he will come back to end wars, instead of simply forbidding his followers from participating in the military or to wage wars, is an indication that wars will continue until the End Times. Wars will end only after Jesus destroys the forces of evil altogether, and until then the “agents of God” must continue to wage war against the “agents of Satan” in order that the “tyranny of Satan” not reign supreme. Says Morey (emphasis is ours):

Heavenly and earthly warfare will never be halted until Christ returns to earth to judge the wicked and establish his eternal kingdom (Isa. 65:17-25; Matt. 24:6-8)

The last battle which shall end wars will involve both heavenly **and earthly armies** (Rev. 12:7-9; 19:11-21). This last battle is what the Bible calls Armageddon (Rev. 16:15, 16). (p.13)

This quote also refutes the earlier counter-argument raised by our opponents: when [we argued that Jesus was not “peaceful” as portrayed by them and that he would wage brutal war when he returns to earth](#), they argued that during his Second Coming it would be “heavenly” and “celestial” beings that would do the killing—therefore, we couldn’t possibly use this example to compare to Muhammad’s wars which involved humans and “earthly” beings. Yet, as Morey notes, the wars of Christ’s Second Coming will involve “both heavenly and earthly armies”, which the Bible itself attests to. The killing will be inflicted by “celestial beings” *and men*.

Christian pacifists often cite Isaiah 2:4, in which it is said that Jesus will bring an end to wars. Morey says:

But Isaiah is only saying that wars will cease after Christ returns and judges the wicked (Isa. 2:10-21). Isaiah is describing the new earth where righteousness reigns (vs. 1-3).

In the New Testament, Jesus clearly indicated that wars will continue until the end of history (Matt. 24:6, 7) (p.13)

The argument goes: If Jesus will fight Evil when he returns, and we should follow his example, then shouldn’t we fight Evil as well? Christian pacifists often ask “What Would Jesus Do?”, arguing that Jesus would love his enemies. But in reality, [he kills them](#). Jesus will only stop fighting them when his enemies are killed or conquered. So shouldn’t we kill or fight our enemies until they are dead or conquered?

Instead of merely indicating that he would bring an end to wars, why wouldn’t Jesus simply have forbidden war upon his followers? Writes Morey:

In Matt. 24:6, Jesus clearly stated that wars would remain part of human experience until the end of the age. If He were a pacifist, then this would have been a perfect opportunity to condemn all wars. Jesus did not do so in this passage. (p.40)

Morey goes on:

God’s angelic armies do not use the techniques of nonresistance in their fight against Satan. Instead, God’s army will forcefully cast them out of heaven at the final battle. If pacifism does not work in heaven, neither will it work on earth. (pp.17-18)

The fact that Jesus promised to use force, violence, and war means that these cannot be viewed as something unchristianlike, for Jesus would never call for something unchristianlike. Reasons Morey:

If the sinless Son of God is going to use force to destroy His enemies, then it is not possible to view the use of force as intrinsically wrong or immoral. (p.42)

Robert Morey argues:

If the Scriptures taught that the use of force is intrinsically wrong and immoral, how could it describe the return of Christ as Jesus waging a righteous war?

And I saw heaven opened; and behold, a white horse, and He who sat upon it is called Faithful and True; and in righteousness He judges and wages war (Rev. 19:11, NASB).

The fact that Jesus will return to punish the wicked with flaming fire reveals that the use of force is not intrinsically incompatible with love, justice, righteousness, or truth. As long as the war to end all wars is righteous and true, lesser wars fought for the same reasons will always be righteous and true. Once the righteousness of Armageddon is accepted, the principle of the just war is established. (pp.20-21)

Morey uses the term “just war”, but be not mistaken: his version of “just war” does not restrict warfare to self-defense only. Once again, he uses the Old Testament to prove his case and argues that restricting war to self-defense runs contrary to the Bible:

It is assumed by some that only wars fought in self-defense are just. It would be immoral for one nation to attack another nation unless that nation was attacked first.

The problem with the above theory is that Abraham’s use of force was not in self-defense. Chedorlaomer was not attacking him. Abraham was initiating the conflict by pursuing and attacking a tyrannical enemy.

In this light, it is clear that wars of aggression in which one strikes the first blow against tyrants can sometimes be viewed as perfectly just and righteous. (p.22)

Morey’s frightening justification for “wars of aggression” gives religious legitimization to an extremely right-wing, neoconservative foreign policy. He writes (emphasis is ours):

It can also be legitimately deduced from Abraham’s example that **it is perfectly just for the Free World to use force when necessary and practical to deliver captive nations everywhere** (Estonia, Lithuania, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Afghanistan, East Germany, Angola, Cuba, Central America, etc.). (pp.22-23)

Morey’s book was first published in 1985, near the end of the Cold War. If it could be argued that it is justified for the Free World (the Judeo-Christian West) to attack any country under the sway of ungodly Communism, then it is even more justified to wage war against the even more evil moon-god religion of Islam. Surely, a government under Sharia Law is worse than one under Communism.

Indeed, not only has Morey since republished his book, he has smoothly transferred his wrath from Communism to Islam (a good right-wing Christian needs *something* to hate). Not only should Muslim countries be attacked and occupied, but the war “will not be won until we bomb the Kabah in Mecca” and other Islamic holy sites, as he writes on his [website](#):

First, as I wrote in my book, *How to Win the War Against Radical Islam*, the war against the Muslim Jihadists will be long and costly and will not be won until we bomb the Kabah in Mecca. Islam is based on a brick and mortar building that can be destroyed. They pray to that building five times a day, make a pilgrimage to it, run around it, kiss a black rock on the wall, then run between two hills and finally throw rocks at a pillar. What if that building, the Kabah, was destroyed? They could not pray to it or make a pilgrimage to it. The old pagan temple of the moon-god, al-ilah, is the Achilles’ heel of Islam. Destroy it and you destroy Islam’s soul.

In fact, Morey wants to nuke Mecca (and Medina?), which seems to be somewhat of a common fantasy for right-wing Christians and neoconservatives. (He also supports nuking Iran.) Posted on [Morey’s blog site](#) was this gem:

In the end, just as it happened with Japan (Hiroshima/Nagasaki), Muslim holy sites will have to be destroyed... The Qur’an promises Muslims that Allah will never allow these sites to be destroyed by the infidels. Without Mecca, Muslims will not be able to hold their ritualistic prayers on Fridays or anytime for that matter.

It may surprise Robert Morey to know that the Kaaba has been severely damaged and even destroyed numerous times in history, even in the time of the Prophet Muhammad himself. Muslims believe that the Kaaba was destroyed in the time of Noah and rebuilt by Abraham. From the time of Abraham to the time of Muhammad, it is said that the Kaaba sustained significant wear-and-tear and damage, periodically being repaired and restored. Thereafter, the Kaaba sustained fire damage, flooding, and was even completely destroyed during a time of civil war.

To Morey’s complete amazement no doubt, the Kaaba was even demolished by one of the disciples of the Prophet Muhammad himself, in order to be reconstructed and expanded. And another Caliph after this demolished the Kaaba yet again, rebuilding it to his desire.

Is it not a bit dangerous to offer such a solution—nuking Mecca to destroy the Kaaba—without actually *knowing* the religious views of Muslims? Robert Morey seems to be under the impression that Muslims will simply throw in the towel should the Kaaba be destroyed: “Ok you guys got us, we accept Jesus as our Lord and Savior.” Contrary to what Morey posits, Muslims will most definitely still be able to pray the five ritualistic prayers. Islam won’t come to an end if the Kaaba is destroyed: Muslims will just rebuild it. Perhaps Morey, the self-proclaimed “scholar on Islam”, should do some basic research first? Even Wikipedia would be a good enough place to start for him.

Going back to the subject at hand, Morey finds nothing in the Bible that contradicts the use of nuclear weaponry. And why should he, when the damage from a nuclear weapon would result in no more deaths than the genocidal wars waged by [Moses](#), [Joshua](#), [Samson](#), [Saul](#), [David](#), etc.

found in the Old Testament of the Bible—in which men, women, children, babies, animals, and “all that breathed” were killed?

But what about the the issue of Mutually Assured Destruction? Shouldn't we avoid nuclear war if not for our enemies but for ourselves? Won't the enemy retaliate with nuclear bombs and then there would be no life left on earth? Morey assures us:

Christians need to understand that there is not conclusive evidence that all life would be destroyed on this planet if nuclear war broke out...Many scientists believe that nuclear war is not only survivable but winnable. (pp.130-131)

Furthermore, we should throw caution and restraint to the wind, since God has promised us that we can't kill all life on earth, no matter how hard we try. Therefore, feel free to nuke and kill all you want. Writes Morey:

Another vital point, God's Word guarantees that humanity will not be annihilated by wars of its own making. Jesus said that the earth would continue to experience wars until He returned to judge the wicked. (Matt. 24:6) (pp.131-132)

One suspects that a similarly callous attitude towards global warming can be taken, based on the same reasoning.

In any case, after Morey approves of “wars of aggression” based on Abraham's example, he says:

If the West could only follow Abraham's godly example, the Communists would soon abandon their program for world conquest. (p.23)

So, the Free World (the Judeo-Christian West) is to wage a war “everywhere”, but it's the Communists who have the “program for world conquest”. It would be interesting to note the Soviet Union's own “fear” that the United States and the “Free World” had a desire to spread their ideology worldwide (“world conquest”) and would thus have a similar justification to conquer the world first.

Naturally, Robert Morey feels the same way about Muslims, who according to him want to conquer the world and impose Sharia on everyone. Therefore, it is imperative for the “Free World” (the Judeo-Christian West) to occupy the lands of Islam in order to stop this from happening. World conquest to prevent world conquest.

In our article entitled [Jesus Loves His Enemies...And Then Kills Them All](#), we argued that the Bible merely prohibits “personal vengeance” by individual citizens and not war waged by governments against other nations. We wrote then:

How then do we reconcile the seemingly peaceful and pacifist sayings of Jesus with the violent and warlike Second Coming of Christ? There are numerous ways to do this, but perhaps the most convincing is that Jesus' peaceful and pacifist sayings were directed towards a resident's

personal and local enemies—usually (but not always) referring to fellow co-religionists. It did *not* refer to a government’s foreign adversaries, certainly not to heathen nations...

This is consistent with the ruling given by the Evangelical site GotQuestions.org, which permits governments to wage war whilst forbidding individuals from “personal vendettas”.

Morey agrees, saying:

The Scriptures recognize a fundamental difference between the use of just force and the exercise of personal violence. (p.24)

The peaceful verses in the New Testament are with regard to “personal violence” and have nothing to do with how governments behave, so argues Morey:

When the New Testament condemns acts of personal violence in such places as Rom. 12:19, it is merely quoting the Old Testament’s condemnation. The Old Testament’s censure of personal violence in such places as Deut. 32:35 is not viewed as a condemnation of the just use of force elsewhere in the Old Testament. It is clear that while acts of vindictive personal violence are never justified, the proper use of force [by governments] is justifiable. (p.25)

Robert Morey then moves from Genesis to Exodus, arguing that “If God wanted his people to be pacifists, this would have been an ideal time to establish this” (p.27). Instead, “Israel developed an army at God’s command” (p.27) and waged an aggressive war against the native inhabitants of Canaan.

From Numbers Morey goes to Joshua: “Joshua led his people to victory over the enemies of God and Israel” (p.28). As we detailed in our article entitled [Who was the Most Violent Prophet in History?](#), Joshua engaged in genocide and ethnic cleansing. Far from seeing this as something despicable (“unlike Muslims who can never see anything wrong with Muhammad!”), Morey says that “Joshua’s leadership in military” matters is “a shining example” (p.28).

Morey then says that Joshua obtained peace through war: “peace was won and maintained by the use of force” (Josh. 21:44-45). This is more proof that the Second Coming of Jesus will bring peace only in the sense that any conquerer brings “peace” once all resistance is put down.

Morey then discusses Judges, condoning the violent tactics of the Israelites (emphasis is ours):

These brave men and women used assassinations, **terrorist acts**, sabotage, guerrilla warfare, and open revolt by armed resistance, **all under the blessing of God**. At no point in Judges are these freedom fighters condemned because they used force to destroy tyranny. Let it also be noted that the authors of the New Testament do not hesitate to hold up these freedom fighters as examples of faith and courage **for modern-day Christians to follow** (Heb. 11:32-40).

If the New Testament taught pacifism, as some imagine, the freedom fighters described in Judges would never have been praised by the New Testament writers as examples to follow today. (pp.28-29)

Not only should “modern-day Christians” use “terroristic acts”—which would be “under the blessing of God”—but so too is the art of assassination to be embraced:

It should also be noted that use of assassination to remove tyrants is viewed in Scripture as thoroughly just and commendatory. Ehud’s assassination of Eglon or the other assassinations committed by freedom fighters to overthrow tyrants throughout biblical history are always praised in Scripture as legitimate and just means of force. If one takes the biblical record seriously, assassination to remove a tyrant is not murder. (p.31)

Robert Morey then condones assassination of all the Soviet leaders (p.31), and even says that “the same is true for the oppressed peoples in all captive nations” (p.32)—and as he notes elsewhere, “captive nations” means “everywhere” except the Free World (the Judeo-Christian West). Certainly this applies to the lands of Islam today, which are ruled by the worst tyrants of all. Thus does Morey give Biblical justification for Ann Coulter’s [statement](#):

We should invade their [Muslim] countries, kill their leaders and convert them to Christianity.

Morey eventually transitions to the “imprecatory Psalms” [imprecatory: invoking evil upon]. Far from claiming “they are just songs!” as some of our opponents did, Morey uses them as a source for war doctrine. He points out:

There is not a single psalm which teaches nonresistance to tyranny. (p.33)

Wrapping up his survey of the Old Testament, Robert Morey concludes:

In our survey of the Old Testament, we have found that from Genesis to Malachi, God views the use of force to deal with tyranny and crime as just, holy, and true. (p.34)

Morey reasons, quite reasonably, that the New Testament cannot view something (in this case, the “use of force”) as morally wrong if it was viewed as something morally right in the Old Testament. He rhetorically asks:

Could the New Testament view something as morally wrong if it was viewed as morally right in the Old Testament? (pp.34-35)

Morey argues further that Jesus and his apostles almost never addressed the idea of war in the New Testament (p.37), and that the condemnations of violence here should be seen as only forbidding individuals from personal vengeance, not nation-states from going to war. In fact, points out Morey (emphasis is ours):

At no point in Jesus’ ministry did He ever tell Israel or Rome that governments should disarm. He never condemned the just use of force as taught in the Scriptures, nor did He ever condemn the police for using force to punish criminals. Despite the clarity of the Old Testament in its divine approval of the use of force, Jesus never once preached against a nation having an army or the state maintaining a police force.

Logically, this can lead us to only one possible inference. Jesus' silence meant that He approved of and accepted Old Testament precedent of the valid use of force. **Whenever we study the Scriptures, a biblical and historical precedent stands until directly removed by divine revelation.** (p.39)

The bolded part above is important: Morey is saying that it cannot be claimed that one part of the Bible "doesn't count" unless another Biblical passage clearly proves this. In the absence of a clear and unequivocal verse in the New Testament that condemns or at least abrogates the wars of the Old Testament, one simply cannot claim that these "don't count". For example, circumcision is condoned in the Old Testament, but rejected in the New Testament. Had the New Testament been silent on the issue of circumcision, no believer could say this is not necessary. Morey argues:

The apostles sought to carry on the teaching of the law and the prophets as well as the teachings of Christ. For them, the gospel was just as much an Old Testament truth as it was a New Testament revelation (Rom. 1:1-3, 1 Cor. 15:3, 4). They looked to the Old Testament Scriptures for basic principles of doctrine and ethics.

The apostles were careful to point out when various aspects of the Old Testament ceremonial laws, for instance, were superseded by the finished work of Christ. The book of Hebrews is a prime example of this.

Therefore, it is significant that nowhere in the Acts or the Epistles do the apostles ever deal with such issues as whether or not the state can maintain a military force or a national police force. Why did the apostles never deal with such issues?

The Old Testament clearly taught that God leads armies and has established penal justice. Christ never disapproved of that position in the Gospels. If the apostles rejected the Old Testament position on war and now taught pacifism, this would have stirred as much controversy as the laying aside of circumcision. (p.51)

He goes on:

If the apostles had condemned the Old Testament teaching on the use of force, they would have generated a great deal of controversy with the Jews...The silence of the New Testament in this regard, coupled with the silence of the Mishnah and Talmud, clearly indicates that the apostolic church was not teaching pacifism in opposition to the teaching of the Old Testament.

When we survey the Epistles, we do not find a single place where the apostles exhorted Israel or Rome to disarm their military forces or where the apostles condemned war or a Christian's participation in the military. There is no indication that they taught anything different than what is found in the [Old Testament] law. (p.52)

Morey raises several arguments as to why it cannot be said that Jesus disapproved of the Old Testament war doctrine, including the fact that

when dealing with Roman or Jewish soldiers, Jesus never told them to leave the military or that it was morally wrong to be soldiers (Matt. 8:5-13; Luke 6:15)...If He were a pacifist and opposed in principle any violence by anyone, He would not have failed to rebuke those who were in the military. Jesus was not known for overlooking sin in the lives of those who sat under His teaching. He denounced sin wherever and whomever He saw it. (p.40)

Morey is referring to several verses in the New Testament in which Christian soldiers are referred to, and there is no condemnation of them for being in the military profession. This, even though the Roman Empire waged wars of aggression and imperial conquest. This lends further credibility to the idea that nothing in the New Testament contradicts the Old Testament's approval of wars of conquest.

Furthermore, the evidences used to prove the pacifism of Jesus are misinterpretations, reasons Robert Morey. For example, "You have heard that it was said to people long ago...but I tell you..." was not a case of Jesus "rejecting the Old Testament, but the warped and twisted interpretation of the [Jewish] Pharisees..." (p.45)

Whenever Jesus is discussing peaceful coexistence, it is between neighbors, not nations:

Second, Jesus is clearly discussing personal ethics. He is describing vital inner qualities of piety and the ways in which we should respond to our neighbors when they become sources of irritation.

That is why Jesus could talk about loving one's neighbor, turning the other cheek and giving ones' coat to someone. At no point in the passage does Jesus discuss national or international ethics. (pp.45-46)

We dealt with the "turning the other cheek" issue in [our earlier article](#):

As for the "turning the other cheek" passage, it is known that the slap on the cheek that was being referred to here was in that particular culture understood as an insult, not as assault. The passage itself has to do with a person responding to a personal insult, and has nothing to do with pacifism. In any case, *The Wiersbe Bible Commentary* clarifies: "Of course, He applied this to personal insults, not to groups or nations." [14]

Robert Morey agrees and points out that

the slap of the right cheek by the back of the left hand was a personal insult and not an act of violence done in the context of war...It was a personal insult, like spitting in someone's face. (p.47)

As for the verse "blessed are the peacemakers", Morey notes:

"Blessed are the peacemakers" (v 9). The Greek word "peacemaker" was one of Caesar's titles. He was called "the peacemaker" because he won and maintained peace by the use of force. The word does not mean "peaceable" or "pacifistic" or "peace at any price." The word meant "peace

through strength.” As such, it named the head of the Roman army without contradiction. (pp.47-48)

This, as we mentioned several times before in this Series, is the “peace” that the Bible speaks of: the conqueror’s “peace”. It is the “peace” that [Joshua](#) brought: the Book of Joshua documents in great detail a lifetime of leading genocidal wars, and then—once the enemies are killed, run off, or subdued in the land—“the land had rest from war” (Joshua 11:23). There was peace because nobody was left to fight.

The same is the case with Jesus during his Second Coming, as we noted before in [Jesus Loves His Enemies...And Then Kills Them All](#). Indeed, Robert Morey concludes that Jesus “was not in any way uncomfortable with the Old Testament teaching in this regard [i.e. war]” (p.48).

* * * *

What we are trying to prove—and have succeeded in doing so—is that the Bible can certainly and quite easily be interpreted by Christians to affirm the violence in the Old Testament. Robert Morey, one of the leading anti-Muslim pro-Christian theologians in the nation, does exactly that. The Christian Right interprets the Bible in this violent and warlike way. And this is the most straightforward, intuitive, and obvious meaning of the Bible.

This certainly does not mean that all Christians, or even a majority, read the Bible in this manner. What is clear, however, is that just as Christians can point to violent texts in the Quran, so too can Muslims point to (even more) violent texts in the Bible. When Christians say the Quran can be (or even *must* be) interpreted in a violent way, **then using the exact same logic** Muslims can say the same of the Bible.

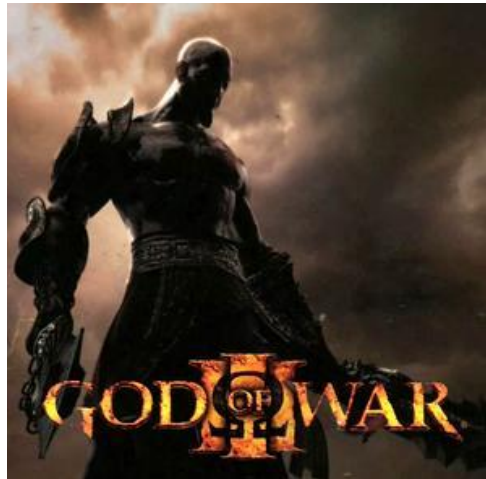
Lastly, it should be noted again that Robert Morey’s understanding of “just war” does not at all conform to the Just War Theory, and the reason it doesn’t is that the Bible itself does not. The Bible is thus flawed with regard to *jus ad bellum* (the right to wage war) as it sanctions the right to wage “wars of aggression” (as Morey says on p.22: “In this light, it is clear that wars of aggression in which one strikes the first blow against tyrants can sometimes be viewed as perfectly just and righteous”); it is also flawed with regard to *jus in bello* (conduct in war) for it permits the killing of non-combatants, even “utter destruction” (which is why Morey does not find nuking Mecca to be problematic). As we shall see in a future part in the Series, proper principles with regard to *jus ad bellum* and *jus in bello* are much easier to find in the Quran.

[The Bible's Yahweh, a War-God?: Called "Lord of Armies" Over 280 Times in the Bible and "Lord of Peace" Just Once \(I\)](#)

Posted on 29 August 2011 by Danios

*This piece was first published on Aug, 23.

This article is the conclusion to [part 9](#) of LoonWatch's Understanding Jihad Series. Please read my ["disclaimer"](#), which explains my intentions behind writing this article: [The Understanding Jihad Series: Is Islam More Likely Than Other Religions to Encourage Violence?](#)



Islamophobes argue that the holy book of Islam, the Quran, is *uniquely* violent as compared to other religious scriptures—certainly more so than the “peace-loving Bible.” Similarly, they argue that the prophet of Islam, Muhammad, was *uniquely* violent as far as prophets go—certainly more so than the religious figures of the Judeo-Christian faith.

These reassuring platitudes were shattered in LoonWatch's [Understanding Jihad Series](#), (see parts [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#), [6](#), [7](#), and [8](#)). Clearly, the Bible is more violent than the Quran, and the Biblical prophets were more violent than the Islamic prophet.

But what about the Islamic God? How does He compare to the Judeo-Christian God? Is it true that Allah of the Quran is *uniquely* warlike and violent as the anti-Muslim camp claims?

We previously came to the conclusion (see [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#)) that Jews, Christians, and Muslims all worship the same God—however, whereas the God of the Bible and the God of the Quran are *essentially* the same, they differ somewhat in their *details*. In other words, they have slightly differing qualities and characteristics. For example, [Christians would argue that their God is Trinitarian, whereas the Islamic God is Unitarian.](#)

Anti-Muslim Jews and Christians often try to portray the Islamic God as *uniquely* warlike and violent, as opposed to the supposedly loving and peaceful God of the Bible. However, I will argue (quite convincingly) that in fact the Quranic God is no more warlike and violent than the

Biblical one. Indeed, we might even be able to say the opposite: Yahweh of the Bible, *unlike* Allah of the Quran, is a war-god.

Yahweh originated from a war-god tradition. [Dr. Lloyd M. Barre](#) writes:

The earliest Yahwistic traditions reveal that Yahweh was a bedouin war god from the deserts of Edom and of the surrounding regions. His essentially warlike characteristics are demonstrated by his name, by cultic celebrations of his mighty deeds, and by his ark.

Prof. Mark S. Smith notes on p.144 of *The Origins of Biblical Monotheism* that Yahweh was introduced to the Israelites as a “divine warrior [god] from the south.” Indeed, “Yahweh and Baal co-existed and later competed as warrior-gods” (Ibid., p.33). This motif continued in the Israelite tradition: the tribal warrior-god Yahweh went to war against competing gods and nations on behalf of Israel.

Although Yahweh, the God the Israelites adopted, would one day become the supreme God of the land and eliminate his competition, initially he was just one of many competing “war and storm-gods;” as Prof. Erhard S. Gerstenberger writes on p.151 of *Theologies of the Old Testament* (emphasis added):

Yahweh was not always God in Israel and at every social level. Rather, **initially he belongs only to the storm and war gods** like Baal, Anath, Hadad, Resheph and Chemosh... His original homeland was the southern regions of present-day Palestine and Jordan. Thus the regional and functional, cultural and social limitations of Yahweh should be beyond all doubt. The elaboration of ideas about Yahweh, e.g. as a guarantor of fertility, personal good fortune, head of a pantheon, creator of the world, judge of the world, etc. is gradual and only fully unfolds in the exilic/post-exilic age, always in connection with social and historical changes.

In other words, Yahweh started out as a “storm and war god,” and only later acquired other functions now commonly associated with God, including for example the ability to create.

Prof. Corrine Carvalho writes on p.79 of *Encountering Ancient Voices: A Guide to Reading the Old Testament* that “Yahweh was first and foremost a warrior God.” From the very beginning, “God appeared to the ancient people as a warrior...’armed in military attire, to contend with all the forces of his foes” (p.19 of *God is a Warrior* by Professor Tremper Longman). This is a reflection of God being introduced to the Hebrews in a time of persecution and war, as Moses defeats Pharaoh’s forces and then leads his people to war against the Canaanites in the Promised Land.

As we shall see later, herein lies a major difference between Yahweh of Judaism and Allah of Islam; the very first introduction of Yahweh to the believers was in the war-god role, *not* as the creator of all things; as Robert Wright writes in *The Evolution of God*:

...If you go back to the poems that most scholars consider the oldest pieces of the Bible, there’s no mention of God creating *anything*. He seems more interested in destroying; he is in large part a warrior god. What some believe to be the oldest piece of all, Exodus 15, is an ode to Yahweh

for drowning Egypt's army in the Red Sea. It begins, "I will sing to the Lord, for he has triumphed gloriously; horse and rider he has thrown into the sea...the Lord is a warrior."

He notes:

The part about creating stars and the moon and the sun and light itself—the story in the first chapter of Genesis—seems to have been added later. In the beginning, so far as we can tell, Yahweh was not yet a cosmic creator.

Biblical scholar Prof. J.M.P. Smith writes in *Religion and War in Israel* published in *The American Journal of Theology* (emphasis added):

Among the functions of Yahweh called into play by Israel's needs, **the leading place in the earlier times was held by war...Hence, Yahweh is constantly represented as a war-god.** He it is who marches at the head of Israel's armies (Deut. 33:27); his right arm brings victory to Israel's banners (Exod. 15:6); Israel's wars are "the wars of Yahweh" himself (Num. 21:14; I Sam. 18:17, 25:28); Israel's obligation is to "come to the help of Yahweh, to the help of Yahweh against the mighty" (Judg. 5:23); Israel's enemies are Yahweh's enemies (Judg. 5:31; I Sam. 30:26); Yahweh is Israel's sword and shield (Deut. 33:29); yea, he is a "a man of war" (Exod. 15:3) **As the leader of a nation of war, Yahweh was credited with the military practices of the day. He shrank not from drastic and cruel measures.** Indeed, he lent his name and influence to the perpetration of such **deeds of barbarity...Yahweh orders the total extermination of clans and towns, including man, woman, and child** (I Sam. 15:3; Josh 6:17 f.).

In line with the customary belief in ancient times, the warrior-god of Israel did not just lend his help from afar or through divine agents but was thought to literally accompany the soldiers on the battlefield. Professor Sa-Moon Kang of Hebrew University of Jerusalem writes on p.224 of *Divine War in the Old Testament and in the Ancient Near East* (emphasis added):

YHWH was understood as the divine warrior...YHWH intervened not only to help the army on the battlefield but **He also marched in front of the king and soldiers...**The victory after the battles was given to YHWH, and the spoils obtained were dedicated to YHWH and His treasures.

In *Tree of Souls: The Mythology of Judaism*, winner of the 2005 National Jewish Book Award, Howard Schwartz writes (emphasis added):

40. The Warrior God

Yahweh is a mighty warrior who defeated Pharaoh at the Red Sea...God appeared to Pharaoh as a mighty warrior, carrying a fiery bow, with a sword of lightning, traveling through the heavens in a chariot...God took a cherub from His Throne of Glory and rode upon it, waging war against Pharaoh and Egypt, as it is said, He mounted a cherub and flew (Ps. 18:11). Leaping from one wing to another, God taunted Pharaoh, "O evil one, do you have a cherub? Can you do this?"

When the angels saw that God was waging war against the Egyptians on the sea, they came to His aid. Some came carrying swords and others carrying bows or lances. God said to them, “I do not need your aid, for when I go to battle, I go alone.” That is why it is said that Yahweh is a man of war (Exod. 15:3).

Notice here that Yahweh does not merely engage in fighting via divine or worldly agents. Instead, he is literally on the battlefield itself, fighting as a warrior god. Schwartz goes on:

In addition to Exodus 15:3, *Yahweh is a man of war*, God is described as a warrior in Psalm 24: *Who is the King of glory—Yahweh, mighty and valiant, Yahweh, valiant in battle* (Ps. 24:8).

Frank Moore Cross finds in this passage a strong echo of the Canaanite pattern, in which both El and Ba'al are described as warrior gods.

Prof. F.E. Peters writes on p.272 of *The Monotheists*:

Yahweh was a warrior God (Exod. 5:3, Isa. 42:13)...The Israelites, quite like the pre-Islamic Arabs, even carried their God with them into conflict on occasion (Num. 10:35-36).

Eventually, the Ark became associated with the presence of God Himself, and was brought to the battle front. Prof. Reuven Fireston writes in an article entitled *Holy War Idea in the Hebrew Bible*:

The Ark of the Covenant is the symbol and banner of God's presence in battle (1 Sam. 4:4, 2 Sam. 11:11), and this connection between the Ark and the presence of God in war is made already in the desert in Num.10:35: “When the Ark was to set out, Moses would say: Advance O Lord! May your enemies be scattered and may your foes flee before you!” The Ark is like a battle station from which God fights for Israel and, although not mentioned in every battle, probably went forth often and is referred to in passing as a regular part of the battle array (Jud. 4:14). The Philistine army was terrified of the Ark itself and related to the Ark as if it were the very appearance of God (1 Sam. 4:5-8)

On pp.16-17 of *God Is a Warrior*, Longman et al. trace the “the divine warrior theme,” dividing it into “five stages:”

The first stage is God's appearance as a warrior who fights on behalf of his people Israel against their flesh-and-blood enemies. The second stage overlaps with the first, yet culminates Israel's independent political history as God fights in judgment against Israel itself. The Old Testament period ends during the third stage as Israel's prophets look to the future and proclaim the advent of a powerful divine warrior. While many studies of the divine warrior are restricted to the Old Testament, we will show its development into the New Testament. The Gospels and letters reflect a fourth stage, Christ's earthly ministry as the work of a conqueror, though they also look forward to the next stage. The fifth and final stage is anticipated by the church as it awaits the return of the divine warrior who will judge the spiritual and human enemies of God.

The divine warrior theme is one of the basic motifs of the Bible, and can be seen from the very start of the Biblical narrative with Moses defeating the Egyptians all the way to the end of with it

with the triumphant return of the divine warrior conqueror Jesus Christ. The genocide against the infidels begins with Moses and comes to its completion with Jesus (refer to parts [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#), [6](#), [7](#), and [8](#) of the Understanding Jihad Series).

* * * * *

That Yahweh, the God of the Bible, is a war-god is clearly written in the text itself:

Exodus 15:3 The Lord is a man of war; the Lord is His Name.

Of note aside from the obvious “man of war” appellation is that Yahweh is depicted as a man who is actually physically on the battlefield as a warrior, instead of merely helping from afar. “The Lord will fight for you” (Ex. 14:14) is meant to be taken very literally.

Says the Bible elsewhere:

Isaiah 42:13 The Lord will march forward like a warrior. He will arouse His zeal like a man of war. He will utter a shout, yes, He will raise a war cry. He will prevail against all His enemies.

God was not just any warrior, but the best of them—victorious in battle:

Psalms 24:8 Who is the King of Glory? The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle.

He would prove his might in battle by crushing the heads of his enemies:

Psalm 68:21 Surely God will crush the heads of his enemies.

Indeed, the God of the Bible would order his people to do more than that, commanding them to ethnically cleanse and commit genocide against infidel populations (again, refer to parts [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#), [6](#), [7](#), and [8](#) of the Understanding Jihad Series).

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That Yahweh was a warrior-god can be ascertained from the choice of name itself. A longer name for Yahweh is found in the Bible: *Yahweh Tzevaot* or *Yahweh Sabaoth*, which is translated as “Lord of hosts” or “Lord of armies.” Prof. Corrine L. Carvalho writes on p.79 of *Encountering Ancient Voices: A Guide to Reading the Old Testament*:

In other passages in the Bible, a longer version of the name, the Lord of hosts, could also be translated as “the one who created the heavenly armies.” This would suggest that Yahweh was first and foremost a warrior God.

Biblical scholar Jonathan Kirsch writes in *God Against the Gods*:

Among the many titles and honorifics used to describe the God of Israel is *Elohim Yahweh Sabaoth*, which is usually translated as “Lord of Hosts” but also means “Yahweh, the God of Armies.”

This name, Lord of Hosts (Armies)—which defines God’s function as the war-God (or warrior God)—is used well over **two-hundred** times in the Bible. Stephen D. Renn notes on p.440 of the *Expository Dictionary of Bible Words*:

This title, translated “Lord of hosts,” occurs around two hundred times [in the Bible], mainly in Isaiah, Jeremiah, and the postexilic prophets. It is found occasionally in the Former Prophets, Chronicles, and Psalms.

Biblical scholar David Noel Freedman writes on page 1402 of *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*:

Yahweh is linked with *seba’ot* (“armies/hosts”) 284 times in the Hebrew Bible.

Jehovah is another way to spell *Yahweh* in English. BlueLetterBible.org says of *Jehovah Sabaoth* (the Lord of Armies):

Use in the Bible: *Jehovah* and *Elohim* occur with *Sabaoth* over 285 times. It is most frequently used in Jeremiah and Isaiah. *Jehovah Sabaoth* is first used in [1Sa 1:3](#).

Interestingly, if you scroll up just one entry above, you find the following entry for *Jehovah-Shalom* (the Lord of Peace):

Use in the Bible: In the Old Testament *Jehovah-Shalom* occurs only once in [Jdg 6:24](#).

In other words, God is the Lord of Armies over 280 times in the Bible, but Lord of Peace only once. Based on this, would you say that the emphasis of God’s nature is on his warlike nature or his peaceful side?

* * * * *

To make matters worse, the *one* time that the Lord of Peace is used, the passage isn’t that peaceful at all. As noted above, the name *Yahweh Shalom* is found in Judges 6, in which God orders an Israelite man named Gideon to ethnically cleanse the indigenous population of Midian, reassuring him that “you will strike down all the Midianites together” (Jdg 6:16).

Gideon expresses some doubt about his ability to do this “great task,” and he wants to make sure it’s really God who said that (reasonable enough, right?). Gideon asks God to prove that it’s really Him, so God reveals an angel to him. The angel burns up some meat and bread, which are both completely incinerated. The meat and bread represent the Midianites, who are to be “utterly destroyed.”

Once Gideon realizes it’s an angel in front of him, he panics and thinks that God is angry with him for asking for proof. Gideon is worried that God might kill him for that. That’s when God

reassures him that He's not going to kill him (Gideon, that is), whereupon Gideon breathes a huge sigh of relief and calls God the Lord of Peace for not killing him. Gideon decides to build an altar at that place which he calls "The Lord is Peace" and then God tells him to build an altar by destroying the altar built for the pagan god Baal.

Then, the Bible goes on to tell how God helps Gideon destroy the Midianites. Of note too is the fact the name Gideon is a Hebrew name that [means](#) "he that bruises or breaks; a **destroyer**," as well as "mighty warrior." So, The Destroyer built an altar called The Lord is Peace by destroying an altar to another god, in thanks to God for sending him proof that He is the one who asked him to destroy the heathen Midianites. Not very peaceful at all.

* * * * *

Indeed, "[Yahweh Sabaoth, the God of hosts' is one of the frequent titles or names of God in the Old Testament.](#)" In fact, using [BlueLetterBible.org](#) I compiled a list of the most frequently used names in the Bible, and Yahweh Sabaoth is God's *fourth* most frequently used name in the Bible:

Most Frequently Used Names for God in the Bible

1. Yahweh (Lord): 6,519 times
2. El, Elohim (God): over 2,000 times
3. Adonai (Lord): 434 times
- 4. Yahweh Sabaoth (The Lord of Hosts/Armies): over 285 times**
5. El Elyon (The Most High God): 28 times
6. El Shaddai (Lord God Almighty): 7 times
7. Qanna (Jealous): 6 times
8. El Olam (The Everlasting God): 4 times
9. Yahweh-Raah (The Lord is My Shepherd): 4 times
10. Yahweh Tsidkenu (The Lord Our Righteousness): 2 times
11. Yahweh Mekoddishkem (The Lord Who Sanctifies You): 2 times
12. Yahweh Nissi (The Lord My Banner): 1 time
13. Yahweh-Rapha (The Lord That Heals): 1 time
14. Yahweh Shammah (The Lord is There): 1 time
15. Yahweh Jireh (The Lord Will Provide): 1 time
- 16. Yahweh-Shalom (The Lord is Peace): 1 time**

(This list seems consistent with that provided by [Agape Bible Study](#).)

This would mean that not only is Lord of Hosts/Armies the fourth most common name of God, it would mean that it is the *first* most frequently used *descriptive* name of God in the Bible, behind only *generic* names such as Yahweh (Lord), El/Elohim (God), and Adonai (Lord). Sabaoth is certainly the most common descriptor following Yahweh, with *Raah* (as in *Yahweh-Raah*) a very distant second place.

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Having thus understood the warlike and violent origin and nature of the Judeo-Christian God, one would wonder why it would be something necessary for Muslims to prove that they worship the same deity. If it is agreed—as is only reasonable—that Muslims worship the same God as Jews and Christians but that their conception and understanding of God differs—I argue that the Judeo-Christian conception and understanding of God is not very desirable in the first place. That the Islamic view of God differs in regard to war and violence *is a good thing*.

Stay tuned for the next page, in which we contrast the Islamic conception and understanding of God with the Judeo-Christian one...

[What I Bet You Didn't Know About the Christian Just War Tradition \(I\)](#)

Posted on 25 October 2011 by Danios



This article is part II of LoonWatch's Understanding Jihad Series. Please read my ["disclaimer"](#), which explains my intentions behind writing this article: [The Understanding Jihad Series: Is Islam More Likely Than Other Religions to Encourage Violence?](#)

It is common to hear comparisons between the so-called "just war tradition" in Christianity and the jihad of Islam. We are told that Jesus of the New Testament was non-violent and that the early Church was pacifist. According to this standard narrative, it was only with Constantine that the Church "fell from Grace" and accepted a very limited concept of defensive war, one that sought to limit, restrain, and constrain war. We are told that the violent acts committed by Christians throughout history were done in contradiction to this doctrine.

Many Westerners seem to be under the impression that we can draw a straight line from the ancient Greeks to St. Augustine to Thomas Aquinas to Hugo Grotius to modern international law. This very selective, cursory, and incomplete understanding of history creates a very "generous" depiction of Christian tradition. Once this mythical and fabricated history is created, it is compared to the jihad tradition of Islam. No such "generous" depictions of Islamic tradition are harbored; if anything, the most cynical view possible is taken.

Such an unfair comparison—coupled with a completely Western perspective on contemporary world affairs—begs the question: why is Islam so violent? Why is the Islamic tradition so much more warlike than the Christian one?

Many right-wing Christians and even secular people of the "Judeo-Christian tradition" exhibit a great deal of religious arrogance, especially when it comes to this subject. Repeatedly, we are told to compare the supposedly peaceful Christian just war tradition with the allegedly brutal Islamic jihad tradition.

Occasionally, Christian polemicists have some level of shame and recognize that the history of Christianity has been marred by war and violence: the Crusades, the ethnic cleansing of the Americas, and the colonial enterprise come to mind. We are assured, however, that these occurrences were “in direct contradiction” to official church doctrine. This is what career Islamophobe Robert Spencer argues, for instance, in his book *Islam Unveiled*. This is, we are told, completely unlike the Islamic offenses throughout history, which were supposedly in line with traditional Islamic thought.

In this article series, I will prove that this understanding of the Christian just war tradition is mythical, fanciful, and misleading. Throughout history, there were serious shortcomings to the Christian understanding of just war—both in matters of *jus ad bellum* (the right to wage war) and *jus in bello* (right conduct during war). Specifically, just war doctrine was restricted to Christians and Europeans. Its constraints simply did not apply to “infidels”, “pagans”, “heathens”, “barbarians”, and “primitives”. The Christian just war tradition was not just exclusivist but through-and-through racist.

One could reasonably argue that such a critique suffers from a modern bias: using contemporary standards to evaluate pre-modern societies is not something I generally encourage. Yet, if we insist on critiquing historical Islam based on such standards, then surely we should be willing to apply the same to Christianity.

Additionally, this shortcoming—the lack of application of the just war principles to infidels—is hardly a tertiary issue. Instead, it lies at the very heart of the comparison that is continually invoked between Christianity and Islam. One could only imagine, for instance, the reaction of anti-Muslim critics if the dictates of war ethic in Islam were applicable to fellow Muslims only. Had this been the case, such a thing would not be seen as a mere “shortcoming” but indicative of the “Islamic supremacist attitude.” This wouldn’t be understood as something that could be relegated to a footnote or a few sentences buried somewhere deep in a huge text (which is the case with books talking about the Christian just war tradition). Instead, pages and pages would be written about the injustices of the Islamic principles of war.

This double standard between believer and infidel, were it to exist in the Islamic tradition (and it does, to an extent), would become the *focus* of discussion. But when it comes to the Judeo-Christian tradition, such things are relegated to “by the way” points that are minimized, ignored, or simply forgotten. Western understandings of the Christian just war tradition create a narrative by cherry-picking views here and there to create a moral trajectory that is extremely generous to that tradition. Meanwhile, Islamic and Eastern traditions are viewed with Orientalist lenses, focusing on the injustices and flaws (particularly with regard to religious minorities). This of course may be a result of a primarily Eurocentric view of history: *how did their war ethic affect people that were like me?*

Yet, if we wanted to extrapolate an overarching theme of the Christian just war tradition, it would have to be this: the Christian just war tradition did *not* limit war (as is commonly argued) **but instead, for the most part, served to justify the conquest and dispossession of indigenous populations.** This was not merely a case of misapplying or exploiting doctrines. Rather, the doctrines were themselves expounded in a way so as to facilitate such applications.

Many of history's famous just war theorists were generating such theories to provide the moral arguments to justify colonial conquest. The tradition was more about **justifying** wars than about limiting violence to just wars. The Christian acts of violence throughout history were **not in spite of** Church doctrine; they were more often than not *because* of it.

Why is it that, even in some scholarly books, the Christian just war tradition towards **fellow believers** is compared to the Islamic attitudes towards war with *unbelievers*? Either the Christian treatment of Christians should be compared to the Islamic treatment of Muslims, or alternatively the Christian treatment of infidels should be compared to the Islamic treatment of the same. It is the unfair comparison between apples and oranges that serves to reinforce this warped understanding of the matter.

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An error we must avoid is conflating the modern-day just war doctrine with the historical Christian just war tradition. Although St. Augustine laid down some principles that, through a long process of evolution, found themselves in today's doctrine, it should be noted that Augustine's views of just war were, by today's standards, extremely unjust. One must compare *this* proto-doctrine with what was practiced in traditional Islam, instead of retroactively superimposing the modern concept of just war onto Augustine.

Indeed, "one of the most influential contemporary interpreters of the [just war] tradition today, James Turner Johnson, goes so far as to say that to all intents and purposes, 'there is no just war doctrine, in the classic form as we know it today, in either Augustine or the theologians or canonists of the high Middle Ages. This doctrine in its classic form [as we know it today], including both a *jus ad bellum*...and a *jus in bello*...does not exist before the end of the middle ages. **Conservatively, it is incorrect to speak of classic just war doctrine existing before about 1500**" (Prof. Nicholas Rengger on p.34 of *War: Essays in Political Philosophy*).

In other words, for 1500 years—roughly seventy-five percent of Christian history—**there was no real just war doctrine**. Shouldn't this fact be stated when comparing Christian and Islamic traditions? The just war doctrine—as we know it today—arose during a time when the Christian Church's power was waning, hardly something for Christians to boast about.

And even after that—lest our opponents be tempted to use this fact to their advantage (that the Christian world distanced itself from the Church unlike in the Islamic world)—the just war doctrine that was established continued to be applied, from both a doctrinal standpoint and on-the-ground, to only Christians/Europeans. This continued to be the case in the sixteenth century and all the way through the nineteenth century.

It was only for a fleeting moment in the twentieth century that just war doctrine became universal. It is an irony that in no other century was just war theory so horrifically violated, and this by the Western world (with the United States dropping two atomic bombs on civilian populations).

This brings us to the situation today: Jewish and Christian neocons and extreme Zionists in the United States and Israel are leading the charge against the just war doctrine, trying to use legal means to change it to accommodate the War of Terror. Many of our opponents are the most vociferous proponents of doing away with such quaint principles as just war, at least when it comes to dealing with Muslims.

Is it this fleeting moment in Christian history, in which for a fraction of a second the just war doctrine really existed, that our opponents use to bash Muslims over the head with?

* * * * *

The standard meme among Islamophobes—and wrongfully accepted by the majority of Americans—has been that [Islam is exceptionally violent](#)—certainly more violent than Judaism and Christianity. When we look at the scriptural sources, however, this does not bear out: the Bible is far more violent than the Quran (see parts [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#), [6-i](#), [6-ii](#), [6-iii](#), [6-iv](#), [7](#), [8](#), [9-i](#), and [9-ii](#) of [LoonWatch's Understanding Jihad Series](#).)

Among the many other “fall back” arguments used by our opponents, we are reassured that Judaism and Christianity have “interpretive traditions” that have moved away from literal, violent understandings of Biblical passages—altogether unlike Islam (so we are told). Robert Spencer writes on p.31 of *The Politically Incorrect Guide to Islam (and the Crusades)*:

When modern-day Jews and Christians read their Bibles, they simply don't interpret the passages cited as exhorting them to violent action against unbelievers. This is due to the influence of centuries of interpretive traditions that have moved away from literalism regarding these passages. But in Islam, there is no comparable interpretive tradition. The jihad passages in the Qur'an are anything but a dead letter.

The Islamophobes then temporarily move away from quoting the scriptural sources but instead focus on comparing (1) the traditional interpretations of the canonical texts, and (2) the modern-day understandings of said texts. In both respects, we are told, the Judeo-Christian tradition is more peaceful than the Islamic one.

In the previous article series (entitled [Does Jewish Law Justify Killing Civilians?](#)), I addressed the Jewish side of “the Judeo-Christian tradition.” [Note: That article series is being modified before the last couple pages will be published. I have decided to take reader input and mellow it out quite a bit, i.e. remove the images, change the title, etc.] I proved that both **traditional** and **contemporary** Jewish understandings of the scriptural sources could hardly be used to justify the argument against Islam.

But when it comes to such matters, it might be more important to address the Christian side of the coin. Considering that Christians are in the majority in this country, it is more common to hear right-wing Christians invoke bellicose comparisons between their faith and Islam. Robert Spencer, an anti-Muslim Catholic polemicist, relies on this comparison routinely.

In order to shield himself from possible “counter-attack,” Spencer uses an interesting argument. In a section entitled “Theological Equivalence” in his book *Islam Unveiled*, Spencer writes:

When confronted with this kind of evidence [about Islam's violence], many Western commentators practice a theological version of “moral equivalence,” analogous to the geopolitical form which held that the Soviet Union and the United States were essentially equally free and equally oppressive. “Christians,” these commentators say, “have behaved the same way, and have used the Bible to justify violence. Islam is no different: people can use it to wage war or to wage peace.”

I am one of these “Western commentators.” Spencer cites “the humanist Samuel Bradley” who noted that “Central America was savaged” because of “this country’s God.” Bradley quoted “Spanish conquistador Pizarro” who slaughtered the indigenous population, by his own admission, only “by the grace of God.”

But, Spencer rejects such “theological equivalence,” arguing that Pizarro violated “the Just War principles of his own Roman Catholic Church.” Spencer is not just arguing that the *modern-day* just war theory would prohibit the European conquest and dispossession of the Native Americans, but that *even in the time of the conquest and dispossession itself the Church’s just war doctrine did*. He is arguing that the Christian acts of violence throughout history were “fundamentally different” than those committed by Muslims, since—according to him—the former were done *against the just war doctrine of the Church*, whereas the latter were endorsed by the Islamic religious establishment.

But, as I have argued above, this is patently false. The Christian just war tradition was used to *justify* the conquest and dispossession of the Native Americans, one of the greatest crimes in all of history. In fact, these doctrines were formulated for that exact purpose in mind.

* * * * *

Disclaimer:

Naturally, as was the case with the article series on Jewish law, there is the chance of offending well-meaning and good-hearted Christians. Let it be known, again, that nowhere am I trying to paint the entire Christian faith or community with a broad brush. There exists no shortage of Christians who oppose war (especially America’s current wars in the Muslim world) and who advocate peace, tolerance, and mutual respect.

Critically evaluating religious traditions can be uncomfortable, but the problems therein should not be ignored nor should we pretend they don’t exist. Honest evaluations of the past can be the key to coming up with more tolerant answers for the present and future.

I have already discussed some of the problems with the Jewish tradition. This article series deals with the Christian tradition. Rest assured, however, that a future article series of mine will take a critical look at the Islamic tradition as well. However, because Islamophobia has become so rampant and pervasive in our culture, I do not think that this should be done before we first look

at the problems inherent in the Judeo-Christian tradition that our society is based on. Once that is done, we can then look at the Islamic tradition from a more nuanced, balanced, and helpful perspective. This is the purpose of this somewhat controversial article series.

To be continued...

Update I: A reader pointed out that I made many claims above but did not back them up with proof. I should clarify that this page is just the introductory piece to the article series and simply states what I **will** prove. It is just a statement of my thesis; the proof to back the thesis up is still to come—hence, the “to be continued...”

----- Comments -----

@ Danios.

Please read the following and then comment on this. My thought is Craig has the better argument.

William Lane Craig writes:

According to the Pentateuch (the first five books of the Old Testament), when God called forth his people out of slavery in Egypt and back to the land of their forefathers, he directed them to kill all the Canaanite clans who were living in the land (Deut. 7.1-2; 20.16-18). The destruction was to be complete: every man, woman, and child was to be killed. The book of Joshua tells the story of Israel’s carrying out God’s command in city after city throughout Canaan.

These stories offend our moral sensibilities. Ironically, however, our moral sensibilities in the West have been largely, and for many people unconsciously, shaped by our Judaeo-Christian heritage, which has taught us the intrinsic value of human beings, the importance of dealing justly rather than capriciously, and the necessity of the punishment’s fitting the crime. The Bible itself inculcates the values which these stories seem to violate.

The command to kill all the Canaanite peoples is jarring precisely because it seems so at odds with the portrait of Yahweh, Israel’s God, which is painted in the Hebrew Scriptures. Contrary to the vituperative rhetoric of someone like Richard Dawkins, the God of the Hebrew Bible is a God of justice, long-suffering, and compassion.

You can’t read the Old Testament prophets without a sense of God’s profound care for the poor, the oppressed, the down-trodden, the orphaned, and so on. God demands just laws and just rulers. He literally pleads with people to repent of their unjust ways that He might not judge them. “As I live, says the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live” (Ez. 33.11).

He sends a prophet even to the pagan city of Nineveh because of his pity for its inhabitants, “who do not know their right hand from their left” (Jon. 4.11). The Pentateuch itself contains the Ten Commandments, one of the greatest of ancient moral codes, which has shaped Western

society. Even the stricture “an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth” was not a prescription of vengeance but a check on excessive punishment for any crime, serving to moderate violence.

God’s judgement is anything but capricious. When the Lord announces His intention to judge Sodom and Gomorrah for their sins, Abraham boldly asks,

“Will you indeed sweep away the righteous with the wicked? Suppose there are fifty righteous within the city. Will you then sweep away the place and not spare it for the fifty righteous who are in it? Far be it from you to do such a thing, to put the righteous to death with the wicked, so that the righteous fare as the wicked! Far be that from you! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do what is just?” (Gen. 18.25).

Like a Middle Eastern merchant haggling for a bargain, Abraham continually lowers his price, and each time God meets it without hesitation, assuring Abraham that if there are even ten righteous persons in the city, He will not destroy it for their sake.

So then what is Yahweh doing in commanding Israel’s armies to exterminate the Canaanite peoples? It is precisely because we have come to expect Yahweh to act justly and with compassion that we find these stories so difficult to understand. How can He command soldiers to slaughter children?

Now before attempting to say something by way of answer to this difficult question, we should do well first to pause and ask ourselves what is at stake here. Suppose we agree that if God (who is perfectly good) exists, He could not have issued such a command. What follows? That Jesus didn’t rise from the dead? That God does not exist? Hardly! So what is the problem supposed to be?

I’ve often heard popularizers raise this issue as a refutation of the moral argument for God’s existence. But that’s plainly incorrect. The claim that God could not have issued such a command doesn’t falsify or undercut either of the two premises in the moral argument as I have defended it:

1. If God does not exist, objective moral values do not exist.
2. Objective moral values do exist.
3. Therefore, God exists.

In fact, insofar as the atheist thinks that God did something morally wrong in commanding the extermination of the Canaanites, he affirms premise (2). So what is the problem supposed to be?

The problem, it seems to me, is that if God could not have issued such a command, then the biblical stories must be false. Either the incidents never really happened but are just Israeli folklore; or else, if they did, then Israel, carried away in a fit of nationalistic fervor, thinking that God was on their side, claimed that God had commanded them to commit these atrocities, when in fact He had not. In other words, this problem is really an objection to biblical inerrancy.

In fact, ironically, many Old Testament critics are sceptical that the events of the conquest of Canaan ever occurred. They take these stories to be part of the legends of the founding of Israel, akin to the myths of Romulus and Remus and the founding of Rome. For such critics the problem of God's issuing such a command evaporates.

Now that puts the issue in quite a different perspective! The question of biblical inerrancy is an important one, but it's not like the existence of God or the deity of Christ! If we Christians can't find a good answer to the question before us and are, moreover, persuaded that such a command is inconsistent with God's nature, then we'll have to give up biblical inerrancy. But we shouldn't let the unbeliever raising this question get away with thinking that it implies more than it does.

I think that a good start at this problem is to enunciate our ethical theory that underlies our moral judgements. According to the version of divine command ethics which I've defended, our moral duties are constituted by the commands of a holy and loving God. Since God doesn't issue commands to Himself, He has no moral duties to fulfill. He is certainly not subject to the same moral obligations and prohibitions that we are. For example, I have no right to take an innocent life. For me to do so would be murder. But God has no such prohibition. He can give and take life as He chooses. We all recognize this when we accuse some authority who presumes to take life as "playing God." Human authorities arrogate to themselves rights which belong only to God. God is under no obligation whatsoever to extend my life for another second. If He wanted to strike me dead right now, that's His prerogative.

What that implies is that God has the right to take the lives of the Canaanites when He sees fit. How long they live and when they die is up to Him.

So the problem isn't that God ended the Canaanites' lives. The problem is that He commanded the Israeli soldiers to end them. Isn't that like commanding someone to commit murder? No, it's not. Rather, since our moral duties are determined by God's commands, it is commanding someone to do something which, in the absence of a divine command, would have been murder. The act was morally obligatory for the Israeli soldiers in virtue of God's command, even though, had they undertaken it on their own initiative, it would have been wrong.

On divine command theory, then, God has the right to command an act, which, in the absence of a divine command, would have been sin, but which is now morally obligatory in virtue of that command.

All right; but isn't such a command contrary to God's nature? Well, let's look at the case more closely. It is perhaps significant that the story of Yahweh's destruction of Sodom—along with his solemn assurances to Abraham that were there as many as ten righteous persons in Sodom, the city would not have been destroyed—forms part of the background to the conquest of Canaan and Yahweh's command to destroy the cities there. The implication is that the Canaanites are not righteous people but have come under God's judgement.

In fact, prior to Israel's bondage in Egypt, God tells Abraham,

“Know for certain that your offspring will be sojourners in a land that is not theirs and will be servants there, and they will be afflicted for four hundred years. . . . And they shall come back here in the fourth generation, for the iniquity of the Amorites [one of the Canaanite clans] is not yet complete” (Gen. 15. 13, 16).

Think of it! God stays His judgement of the Canaanite clans 400 years because their wickedness had not reached the point of intolerability! This is the long-suffering God we know in the Hebrew Scriptures. He even allows his own chosen people to languish in slavery for four centuries before determining that the Canaanite peoples are ripe for judgement and calling His people forth from Egypt.

By the time of their destruction, Canaanite culture was, in fact, debauched and cruel, embracing such practices as ritual prostitution and even child sacrifice. The Canaanites are to be destroyed “that they may not teach you to do according to all their abominable practices that they have done for their gods, and so you sin against the Lord your God” (Deut. 20.18). God had morally sufficient reasons for His judgement upon Canaan, and Israel was merely the instrument of His justice, just as centuries later God would use the pagan nations of Assyria and Babylon to judge Israel.

But why take the lives of innocent children? The terrible totality of the destruction was undoubtedly related to the prohibition of assimilation to pagan nations on Israel’s part. In commanding complete destruction of the Canaanites, the Lord says, “You shall not intermarry with them, giving your daughters to their sons, or taking their daughters for your sons, for they would turn away your sons from following me, to serve other gods” (Deut 7.3-4). This command is part and parcel of the whole fabric of complex Jewish ritual law distinguishing clean and unclean practices. To the contemporary Western mind many of the regulations in Old Testament law seem absolutely bizarre and pointless: not to mix linen with wool, not to use the same vessels for meat and for milk products, etc. The overriding thrust of these regulations is to prohibit various kinds of mixing. Clear lines of distinction are being drawn: this and not that. These serve as daily, tangible reminders that Israel is a special people set apart for God Himself.

I spoke once with an Indian missionary who told me that the Eastern mind has an inveterate tendency toward amalgamation. He said Hindus upon hearing the Gospel would smile and say, “Sub ehki eh, sahib, sub ehki eh!” (“All is One, sahib, All is One!” [Hindustani speakers forgive my transliteration!]). It made it almost impossible to reach them because even logical contradictions were subsumed in the whole. He said that he thought the reason God gave Israel so many arbitrary commands about clean and unclean was to teach them the Law of Contradiction!

By setting such strong, harsh dichotomies God taught Israel that any assimilation to pagan idolatry is intolerable. It was His way of preserving Israel’s spiritual health and posterity. God knew that if these Canaanite children were allowed to live, they would spell the undoing of Israel. The killing of the Canaanite children not only served to prevent assimilation to Canaanite identity but also served as a shattering, tangible illustration of Israel’s being set exclusively apart for God.

Moreover, if we believe, as I do, that God's grace is extended to those who die in infancy or as small children, the death of these children was actually their salvation. We are so wedded to an earthly, naturalistic perspective that we forget that those who die are happy to quit this earth for heaven's incomparable joy. Therefore, God does these children no wrong in taking their lives.

So whom does God wrong in commanding the destruction of the Canaanites? Not the Canaanite adults, for they were corrupt and deserving of judgement. Not the children, for they inherit eternal life. So who is wronged? Ironically, I think the most difficult part of this whole debate is the apparent wrong done to the Israeli soldiers themselves. Can you imagine what it would be like to have to break into some house and kill a terrified woman and her children? The brutalizing effect on these Israeli soldiers is disturbing.

But then, again, we're thinking of this from a Christianized, Western standpoint. For people in the ancient world, life was already brutal. Violence and war were a fact of life for people living in the ancient Near East. Evidence of this fact is that the people who told these stories apparently thought nothing of what the Israeli soldiers were commanded to do (especially if these are founding legends of the nation). No one was wringing his hands over the soldiers' having to kill the Canaanites; those who did so were national heroes.

Moreover, my point above returns. Nothing could so illustrate to the Israelis the seriousness of their calling as a people set apart for God alone. Yahweh is not to be trifled with. He means business, and if Israel apostasizes the same could happen to her. As C. S. Lewis puts it, "Aslan is not a tame lion."

Now how does all this relate to Islamic jihad? Islam sees violence as a means of propagating the Muslim faith. Islam divides the world into two camps: the dar al-Islam (House of Submission) and the dar al-harb (House of War). The former are those lands which have been brought into submission to Islam; the latter are those nations which have not yet been brought into submission. This is how Islam actually views the world!

By contrast, the conquest of Canaan represented God's just judgement upon those peoples. The purpose was not at all to get them to convert to Judaism! War was not being used as an instrument of propagating the Jewish faith. Moreover, the slaughter of the Canaanites represented an unusual historical circumstance, not a regular means of behavior.

The problem with Islam, then, is not that it has got the wrong moral theory; it's that it has got the wrong God. If the Muslim thinks that our moral duties are constituted by God's commands, then I agree with him. But Muslims and Christians differ radically over God's nature. Christians believe that God is all-loving, while Muslims believe that God loves only Muslims. Allah has no love for unbelievers and sinners. Therefore, they can be killed indiscriminately. Moreover, in Islam God's omnipotence trumps everything, even His own nature. He is therefore utterly arbitrary in His dealing with mankind. By contrast Christians hold that God's holy and loving nature determines what He commands.

The question, then, is not whose moral theory is correct, but which is the true God?

A Good Question But Not A Good Answer

Part One

by Farrell Till

A reply to:

[Good Question ...](#)

by Glenn Miller

The barbaric nature of the Hebrew god Yahweh has led many former believers to reject their faith in the Bible. In ["God Is Pro-Life?"](#) I examined several biblical examples of Yahwistic barbarism that should convince reasonable people that the God-Is-Pro-life slogan of anti-abortionists is biblically unsustainable, because the Old Testament is full of claims that Yahweh many times either sent destruction upon children, infants, and unborn babies himself or else ordered others to annihilate them. The barbarism of the god Yahweh, however, extended beyond the massacre of children and unborn babies to include efforts to exterminate entire tribes and nations. The Old Testament depiction of this deity should be enough to turn any morally sensitive person away from the notion that he is a loving, merciful god, but, unfortunately, it isn't. Diehard Bible believers seem determined to make all sorts of excuses to "explain" why Yahweh's commands to kill Canaanites, Midianites, Amalekites, and other non-Hebraic people were morally right.

A favorite justification of the Yahwistic massacres in the Old Testament, one that I even used myself when I was an inerrantist preacher, is that "God" created life, so he has the right to take life. Four problems in this "excuse," which I will simply list here without discussing, are that (1) it begs the question of "God's" existence with apparently no consideration at all to the possibility that "God" doesn't exist, (2) it begs the question of whether the Hebrew deity Yahweh was in fact "God," with apparently no consideration at all to the possibility that Yahweh was simply another tribal deity who was no more real than Dagon, Chemosh, Baal, Ishtar, and other regional gods,

(3) it assumes that even if the god Yahweh is a real deity, he did in fact order the massacres in question and ignores completely the possibility that superstitious Hebrews at that time, like their [surrounding neighbors](#), believed incorrectly that "God" was ordering them to massacre other nations, and (4) it assumes that what is universally recognized as immoral conduct on the part of humans is somehow morally right for gods to do. The last of these problems is in direct conflict with the widely believed religious view that morality is objective, but my purpose here is not to discuss this or any of the other three problems in the popular belief that Yahwistic massacres in the Bible were morally acceptable because the god Yahweh had created life and was therefore entitled to take life. Instead, I want to reply point by point to an attempt by Glenn Miller, in the article linked to in the title, to justify the Yahwistic massacres in the Old Testament. In replying to his various points, I will have occasion to address some of the four problems above, but that will be incidental to my primary purpose of putting on the internet an article that will expose the fallacies in Miller's attempts to defend the Yahwistic massacres. In some "apologetic" articles on the internet, especially on Robert Turkel's [website](#), links to Miller's article will often be presented in reply to those who raise moral questions about the barbarism of the god Yahweh as he was depicted in the Old Testament. In a typical say-nothing reply to an article by Richard Packham on [biblical problems](#) that skeptics should mention in their discussions with believers, Turkel often linked his readers to Miller's defenses of Yahwistic barbarism. In the quotations below, the parts in italicized regular print are Packham's statements, and those in bold print are Turkel's. They have been cut and pasted from "[Refutation to \[sic\] Packham's 'Notes on Bible Problems,'](#)" which is one of those articles that Turkel threw together by just copying Packham's article and then inserting bold-print sound bites and one-liners here and there.

*Genocide was a tool used by God to further the interests of his chosen people. **None of what was done fits the definition of genocide -- see [here](#).***

*God commands Moses to slaughter 24,000 people and hang their heads in the sun (Num 25). **See [here](#).***

*God commands Moses to slay the Midianites because the Israelites are seduced by them. All males (including infants) and adult women are killed; virgins are enslaved (Num 25:17, 31:1-2, 7, 15-18). **Same link plus the first one in this section.***

*God's annihilation of Sihon's people and others (Deut 2:30-35, 36, 3:1-7). **See second link above.***

Turkel didn't even try to reply to Packham's points; he simply cited Miller's articles with the obvious intention of letting them serve as his answer. Those who bother to read Turkel's "reply" to Packham will see that it is little more than sound-bite/one-

liner "replies" to Packham's article. The format that he used in this and other "replies" on his website is hypocritically ironic in that he constantly claims that "sound bites" are incapable of refuting arguments. In another [thrown-together article](#) like his reply to Packham linked to above, Turkel copied an article from the [PTET website](#) and inserted throughout it bold-print comments, quoted below, that were little more than one-line sound bites that he repeatedly accused PTET of having done.

*Nothing like a vague, non-specific [sic] **sound bite** to win the day. How about actually coming to terms with arguments on the subject? No, **sound bites** are all PTET is capable of.*

*PTET meanwhile clings to his belief that it isn't, and staunchly refuses to provide more than **sound bites** as retorts.*

*Yeah. [Religioustolerance.org](#), a collection of non-scholars [sic] collecting **sound bites** from sources uncritically like PTET.*

*And PTET continues to plough vague **sound bites**, avoiding specifics. The safest route.*

*A backwards way of saying, "Oops, I got caught making **sound bites**."*

*The scary details PTET refuses to engage beyond **sound bites**.*

*When PTET can offer more than summary **sound bites** lacking detailed arguments, we will pay attention.*

*We skip PTET's **sound bites** on this subject, which contain arguments already answered in our series on Gospel dates.*

*It fits in precisely with what we know of Jewish Palestine and early Christianity, and PTET has no actual reply other than **sound bites**, as usual.*

*So that people can't see PTET's non-answering [sic] **sound bites**?*

This is just one of 67 articles on Turkel's website in which he either expressed his disdain for "sound bites" or else accused his opponents of using "sound bites" instead of argumentation. I wholeheartedly agree that so-called "sound bites" cannot satisfactorily refute arguments, because proper rebuttals will consist of carefully delineated counterarguments, and that cannot be done is just a line or two. When Turkel accuses an opponent of replying with "sound bites," however, we have a case of almost incredible hypocrisy--or possibly logical ignorance--because he repeatedly

makes statements like those quoted above, and then he will turn around and do the very thing that he so often complains about. Those who read his replies to Packham and PTET, linked to above, will find that his so-called rebuttals were primarily "sound bites" and one-liners that he inserted in bold print into the articles that he had copied from his opponents' websites. As I have said many times before, about the only consistency in Turkel's articles is his inconsistency.

In his sound-bite "replies" to Packham, Turkel several times linked to Miller's articles on Yahwistic massacres by simply saying, "See here," or "See the link above," or some such, as shown in the quotations above. Obviously, then, Turkel and others who link to them believe that Miller's articles on Yahwistic massacres have resolutely solved the moral problem of Yahwistic massacres in the Old Testament, so by replying point by point to Miller, I will remove his articles as satisfactory "explanations," which biblical inerrantists, writing in defense of the nature of "God" as depicted in the Old Testament, can simply link their readers to and let those links serve as definitive solutions to the problem.

Those who click Turkel's links to Miller's articles (in his sound-bite replies to Packham) will see that Miller has written separate articles in justification of the Canaanite, Midianite, and Amalekite massacres. The one that I will be answering below pertains to the Canaanite massacres, but it seems to contain materials that he has imported from the other two and especially from his Amalekite article, as his updating notice, which I have retained below, points out. As we will see, besides defending the Canaanite massacres, Miller attempted to justify Yahweh's orders for king Saul to "utterly destroy" the Amalekites, including women, children, and nursing infants ([1 Sam 15:1-3](#)). By linking to this article, Turkel apparently wanted his readers to see Miller's quibble that the extermination of the Amalekites wasn't actually genocide, but I will reserve comment about this part of the article until I come to it.

Before I begin my point-by-point reply to Miller's article, I first want to pay him a compliment. Those who have read articles on his website have probably noticed that he writes on a much higher apologetic plane than Turkel in that he refrains from insults and sarcasm, which are Turkel's stock-in-trade, but, more important, he usually tries to defend his positions with logical argumentation instead of relying primarily on bracketed citations of and "see here" links to authors who agree with his position, which are so characteristic of Turkel's articles. When he does cite or quote authors in agreement with him, Miller will, for the most part, try to defend their positions with logical argumentation and offer his reasons why the opinions of the authors cited should be given serious consideration. As I go through his article point by point, readers will see that he at times will strain to find a quotation that supports his position and will at other times slip into a Turkellike pattern of truncating quotations so consummately that readers don't have enough context before them to judge whether

there is any merit to the source's position. Overall, however, Mr. Miller's apologetic methods are vastly superior to Turkel's, so for the quality and tone of his articles, Miller deserves our appreciation. I will try to reciprocate by keeping my replies to his points on the same high plane of forensic debate. Dismantling an opponent's arguments, however, will at times require directness, but I hope that Mr. Miller will not see these moments as personal attacks on him.

Miller's article that I will be replying to began with the statement of a "good question" that he had apparently received from a reader. Miller stated the question and then proceeded to answer it. I will use **Miller** and **Till** as headers to help readers follow who is saying what.

The Good Question...

How could a God of Love order the massacre/annihilation of the Canaanites?

Miller's comments and answer began after the updating notice immediately below:

[Updated Oct 2k (added a bit more material on the Amalekites, and a short pushback at the end)]

On those very rare occasions when God displays His judgment within human history, it is very sobering and one which we find genuinely disturbing--it reminds us that "ethics" is not just another branch of philosophy!

Till:

I sensed in this an indication that Mr. Miller might take the God-can-do-no-wrong position, and that suspicion turned out to be right. I will reserve comment about this until I reach that point in his article. Here I will simply note that Miller, like most inerrantists, is begging the question not just of "God's" existence but of the involvement of "God" in the Canaanite massacres. There is no doubt that the Bible indicates that Yahweh was so involved, but I will insist that Mr. Miller--or anyone else who takes this track in defense of the massacres--offer more proof than just the simple fact that the Bible says that Yahweh was so involved. To argue that "God" was involved in those massacres because the Bible says that he was is to engage in special pleading and circular reasoning. I actually addressed this point in my introduction above in referring to the popular belief of the time that the gods were on the side of

the nations that worshiped them. For a more detailed refutation of this ideology, readers should go to ["Why Would God Bless America?"](#) to see that the belief that certain nations are favored by God is without any logical basis. Hence, if Miller is going to contend that "God display[ed] His judgment within human history" through such events as the alleged Canaanite massacres, I will insist that he give us more evidence for this than a mere say-so based on what the Bible says.

Miller:

And even though each recorded case--regardless of scale--**should** 'trouble us', [*sic*] the case of God's alleged ordering the Israelites to annihilate the Canaanites has always been particularly disturbing to our 'status quo' of sensibilities. So, I frequently get a letter like this:

The entire concept of a God of justice and mercy ordering the slaughter of thousands of people (many patently innocent) on many occasions I find abhorrent.

This is an issue I have always had profound trouble with and one I suspended judgment on when I began to believe. Lately, though, it has started haunting me again, and I have been searching and praying for an answer or insight. The responses to this problem I have seen so far (God did them a favor, they were like cancer, or God's justice is beyond ours) seem to me to be lame or inappropriate.

Or, in a less conciliatory tone--

The Old Testament paints a picture of a God who is extremely bellicose, giving repeated instructions to "his people" to exterminate other nations, (because he is giving them their "promised land"), and giving them practical assistance on the battlefield.

*It is easy to believe that such writings could be the attempted self-justification of a territorially minded people, who excuse their aggression and genocide against other nations as "divine instructions". [*sic*] It is almost impossible to believe that such writings are an accurate description of a God who has infinite love for people of all races.*

And finally, a more pointed accusation:

"Is the God of the OT merely sanctioning genocide (nay commanding it)?... isn't this "god" merely an invention for the Jews' own political land-gaining ends?"

Till:

I don't know who wrote these letters, but whoever they were, I commend them for

what I think are rational ways of looking at the problem of Yahwistic massacres in the Bible. They apparently see that it is illogical to accept conduct in "God" that they would consider morally reprehensible in people and nations. As I continue through Mr. Miller's defense of the Canaanite massacres, I will point out the places where he overlooks this.

Miller:

So, let's look at the passages involved:

Deuteronomy 7.1-5: When the LORD your God brings you into the land you are entering to possess and drives out before you many nations--the Hittites, Girgashites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites, seven nations larger and stronger than you --2 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. 3 Do not intermarry with them. Do not give your daughters to their sons or take their daughters for your sons, 4 for they will turn your sons away from following me to serve other gods, and the LORD's anger will burn against you and will quickly destroy you. 5 This is what you are to do to them: Break down their altars, smash their sacred stones, cut down their Asherah poles and burn their idols in the fire.

Deut 20.16 However, in the cities of the nations the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance, do not leave alive anything that breathes. 17 Completely destroy them--the Hittites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites--as the LORD your God has commanded you. 18 Otherwise, they will teach you to follow all the detestable things they do in worshiping their gods, and you will sin against the LORD your God.

Joshua 12.7 These are the kings of the land that Joshua and the Israelites conquered on the west side of the Jordan, from Baal Gad in the Valley of Lebanon to Mount Halak, which rises toward Seir (their lands Joshua gave as an inheritance to the tribes of Israel according to their tribal divisions--8 the hill country, the western foothills, the Arabah, the mountain slopes, the desert and the Negev--the lands of the Hittites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites):

*9 the king of Jericho one the king of Ai (near Bethel) one
10 the king of Jerusalem one the king of Hebron one
11 the king of Jarmuth one the king of Lachish one
12 the king of Eglon one the king of Gezer one
13 the king of Debir one the king of Geder one
14 the king of Hormah one the king of Arad one
15 the king of Libnah one the king of Adullam one*

16 the king of Makkedah one the king of Bethel one
17 the king of Tappuah one the king of Hephher one
18 the king of Aphek one the king of Lasharon one
19 the king of Madon one the king of Hazor one
20 the king of Shimron Meron one the king of Acshaph one

22 the king of Kedesh one the king of Jokneam in Carmel one
23 the king of Dor (in Naphoth Dor) one the king of Goyim in Gilgal one
24 the king of Tirzah one thirty-one kings in all.

Till:

Well, of course, these passages don't even begin to scratch the surface of Yahwistic barbarism and massacres depicted in the Old Testament, but before I comment further, let's hear what Mr. Miller has to say in defense of the passages that he did quote.

Miller:

At first blush, it looks like YHWH is taking the initiative in the matter, and ordering Israel to wipe out 7-10 nations--without pity and without compromise--and that He intends to give these nations' lands to Israel for their possession.

Till:

It "looks like" [as if] Yahweh was taking the initiative? How else can it be interpreted? Verse two in the first passage quoted clearly says, "(W)hen the LORD [Yahweh] your God has delivered them [the seven nations referred to] over to you and you have defeated them, *then you must destroy them totally.*" How can this be understood in any other way except that the writer of this text understood that Yahweh had issued a direct command to destroy **totally** everyone in the seven Canaanite nations?

As for "pity and compromise," this passage also had Yahweh telling the Israelites that they were to "show them [the seven nations] **no mercy,**" so what would be the difference in showing them no mercy and in wiping them out "without pity and without compromise"? This passage was clearly commanding the total destruction, without mercy, of the seven nations in Canaan, and no amount of verbal manipulation and rationalization can make it not be a command.

In the second passage quoted above, where Yahweh was allegedly speaking, another direct command was clearly given: *In the cities of the nations that Yahweh your God is giving you [which would have been the cities in Canaan], **do not leave alive anything that breathes.*** The passage went on to say, "*Completely destroy them, as Yahweh your God **has commanded you,***" so this text clearly said that Yahweh was commanding the Israelites to leave nothing alive to breathe in the cities that he was

giving to them. There is no way to understand this passage in any way except that it was written as a direct command from Yahweh.

Oh, yes, the second passage quoted above plainly says that Yahweh was **giving** the cities of the nations in Canaan to the Israelites "as an inheritance," so that should settle the question of whether "at first blush" the texts that Mr. Miller quoted said that Yahweh "intend[ed] to give these nations' lands to Israel for their possession." They clearly do say that this was his intention, and there are many more ([Deut. 2:29](#); [Deut. 4:21,40](#); [Deut. 11:17,31](#); [Deut. 12:1,9,10](#); [Deut. 15:4,7](#)), which Mr. Miller didn't quote, that also say it. The passages just cited are only some of the verses in Deuteronomy that say that Yahweh was **giving** the land of Canaan to the Israelites. That was said so many times in this book that one could accurately say that "the land that Yahweh your God gives you" was a theme in Deuteronomy. That theme was repeated in [Joshua 1:11,15](#), so there is no way to deny successfully that the Old Testament plainly taught that Yahweh took the land of Canaan from its earlier inhabitants and gave it to the Israelites.

Furthermore, the passages that he did not quote are very damaging to Mr. Miller's apparent attempt to argue that it is only "(a)t first blush" that these passages can be interpreted to say that Yahweh was "taking the initiative in the matter," which I assume was Mr. Miller's way of claiming that a closer examination of these passages will show that they were not saying that Yahweh was "taking the initiative" in the Israelite land grab. There are three ways, however, to prove conclusively that the first two passages that Mr. Miller quoted were to be understood as commandments that Yahweh had issued to destroy totally the nations in Canaan. First, we can prove that these were commands by comparing them to the clear command that Yahweh issued for Saul to utterly destroy the Amalekites and to include in the massacre even children and infants. Since Mr. Miller included the Amalekite massacre later on in his article, it is very relevant to his attempt to exonerate Yahweh of blame in Old Testament massacres.

Let's begin the comparison by reiterating that the passages quoted by Miller had Yahweh telling the Israelites to destroy the Canaanite nations **totally**, to show them no mercy, and to leave in their cities "nothing alive to breathe." The language in these passages is very similar to the clear command, attributed to Yahweh, for king Saul to utterly destroy the Amalekites. Since Mr. Miller quoted the NIV, I will use the same version but substitute *Yahweh* for *the LORD*, which I consider to be a mistranslation of the Hebrew name for their god.

*1 Samuel 15:1 Samuel said to Saul, "I am the one Yahweh sent to anoint you king over his people Israel; so listen now to **the message from Yahweh.** 2 This is what Yahweh Almighty says: 'I will punish the Amalekites for what they did to Israel when*

*they waylaid them as they came up from Egypt. 3 Now go, attack the Amalekites and **totally destroy** everything that belongs to them. **Do not spare them; put to death men and women, children and infants, cattle and sheep, camels and donkeys.**"*

In the first passage that Mr. Miller quoted, Yahweh told the Israelites to destroy **totally** the Canaanite nations; in the passage that I just quoted, Yahweh told Saul to **totally destroy** the Amalekites and everything that belonged to them. In the second passage that Mr. Miller quoted, Yahweh told the Israelites to "leave nothing alive to breathe"; in Yahweh's orders to Saul, he said that the Amalekites were not to be spared but that men, women, children, and infants were to be put to death. The three passages in question are similar enough that if I can show that the one pertaining to the Amalekites was a command that had to be obeyed to avoid incurring the wrath of Yahweh, then that should be enough to convince reasonable readers that the two passages quoted by Mr. Miller were also commands that had to be obeyed in order to please Yahweh.

That 1 Samuel 15:1-3 was intended as a command that Saul had to obey is shown by what happened when Saul did not "utterly destroy" all of the Amalekites.

*7 Then Saul attacked the Amalekites all the way from Havilah to Shur, to the east of Egypt. 8 **He took Agag king of the Amalekites alive, and all his people he totally destroyed with the sword.** 9 **But Saul and the army spared Agag and the best of the sheep and cattle, the fat calves and lambs--everything that was good. These they were unwilling to destroy completely, but everything that was despised and weak they totally destroyed.***

The command given to Saul was to destroy **utterly** all of the Amalekites and everything that belonged to them, but the verses just quoted show that Saul did not execute this command in its entirety. He saved Agag the king--just **one** Amalekite--and some of their livestock alive, and the next verses in this passage clearly show that this incurred the wrath of Yahweh.

*10 Then the word of Yahweh came to Samuel: 11 "I am grieved that I have made Saul king, **because he has turned away from me and has not carried out my instructions.**" Samuel was troubled, and he cried out to Yahweh all that night. 12 Early in the morning Samuel got up and went to meet Saul, but he was told, "Saul has gone to Carmel. There he has set up a monument in his own honor and has turned and gone on down to Gilgal." 13 When Samuel reached him, Saul said, "Yahweh bless you! I have carried out the Lord's instructions." 14 But Samuel said, "What then is this bleating of sheep in my ears? What is this lowing of cattle that I hear?" 15 Saul answered, "The soldiers brought them from the Amalekites; they spared the best of the sheep and cattle to sacrifice to Yahweh your God, but we totally destroyed the rest."*

16 "Stop!" Samuel said to Saul. "Let me tell you what Yahweh said to me last night." "Tell me," Saul replied. 17 Samuel said, "Although you were once small in your own eyes, did you not become the head of the tribes of Israel? Yahweh anointed you king over Israel. 18 And he sent you on a mission, saying, 'Go and completely destroy those wicked people, the Amalekites; make war on them until you have wiped them out.' 19 Why did you not obey Yahweh? Why did you pounce on the plunder and do evil in the eyes of Yahweh?" 20 "But I did obey Yahweh," Saul said. "I went on the mission Yahweh assigned me. I completely destroyed the Amalekites and brought back Agag their king. 21 The soldiers took sheep and cattle from the plunder, the best of what was devoted to God, in order to sacrifice them to Yahweh your God at Gilgal." 22 But Samuel replied: "Does Yahweh delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the voice of Yahweh? To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams. 23 For rebellion is like the sin of divination, and arrogance like the evil of idolatry. **Because you have rejected the word of Yahweh, he has rejected you as king.**" 24 Then Saul said to Samuel, "I have sinned. I violated the Lord's command and your instructions. I was afraid of the people and so I gave in to them. 25 Now I beg you, forgive my sin and come back with me, so that I may worship Yahweh." 26 But Samuel said to him, "I will not go back with you. You have rejected the word of Yahweh, **and Yahweh has rejected you as king over Israel!**" 27 As Samuel turned to leave, Saul caught hold of the hem of his robe, and it tore. 28 Samuel said to him, "**Yahweh has torn the kingdom of Israel from you today and has given it to one of your neighbors--to one better than you.**" 29 He who is the Glory of Israel does not lie or change his mind; for he is not a man, that he should change his mind." 30 Saul replied, "I have sinned. But please honor me before the elders of my people and before Israel; come back with me, so that I may worship Yahweh your God." 31 So Samuel went back with Saul, and Saul worshiped Yahweh. 32 Then Samuel said, "Bring me Agag king of the Amalekites." Agag came to him confidently, thinking, "Surely the bitterness of death is past." 33 But Samuel said, "As your sword has made women childless, so will your mother be childless among women." And Samuel put Agag to death before Yahweh at Gilgal. 34 Then Samuel left for Ramah, but Saul went up to his home in Gibeah of Saul. 35 Until the day Samuel died, he did not go to see Saul again, though Samuel mourned for him. **And Yahweh was grieved that he had made Saul king over Israel.**

This passage is clear enough that it needs no in-depth explication. It contained a command for Saul to go utterly destroy all of the Amalekites and everything that belonged to them. Saul almost carried out this command, but he didn't execute it completely. He did not destroy all of the Amalekites and all that belonged to them. He kept one--**just one**--Amalekite and some of their best livestock alive, and that so angered Yahweh that he took the kingship away from Saul and gave it to another. He then had Samuel call king Agag before him to cut him to pieces to show that almost

isn't good enough but that when Yahweh said "utterly destroy," he meant utter destruction. Hence, our first test of the passages that Mr. Miller quoted shows that clear commands to destroy totally the Canaanite nations and to leave no one alive to breathe were imbedded in the texts that Mr. Miller quoted. Now the second test can be applied, which will be as simple as quoting passages in the book of Joshua that plainly say that when Joshua left nothing alive to breathe in the Canaanite regions he attacked, he was obeying what Yahweh had **commanded** Moses.

Joshua 10:40** So Joshua subdued the whole region, including the hill country, the Negev, the western foothills and the mountain slopes, together with all their kings. He left no survivors. He totally destroyed all who breathed, **just as Yahweh, the God of Israel, had commanded.

Joshua 11:10** At that time Joshua turned back and captured Hazor and put its king to the sword. (Hazor had been the head of all these kingdoms.) 11 Everyone in it they put to the sword. They totally destroyed them, not sparing anything that breathed, and he burned up Hazor itself. 12 Joshua took all these royal cities and their kings and put them to the sword. He totally destroyed them, **as Moses the servant of Yahweh had commanded.

Joshua 11:14** The Israelites carried off for themselves all the plunder and livestock of these cities, but all the people they put to the sword until they completely destroyed them, not sparing anyone that breathed. 15 **As Yahweh commanded his servant Moses, so Moses commanded Joshua, and Joshua did it; he left nothing undone of all that Yahweh commanded Moses.

Mr. Miller, of course, didn't quote any of these passages, because they clearly dispute the position he is trying to defend. They show that the Israelites allegedly destroyed totally everyone in the cities they captured and left no one alive to breathe, but they also point out that in doing this, the Israelites were simply executing the commands that Yahweh had given to Moses. As these passages were written, there is no room at all to exonerate Yahweh from blame, as Mr. Miller tried to do in his article. Indeed, there is even one verse not yet quoted that explicitly says that Yahweh wanted the Canaanites to be totally destroyed **without mercy**.

Joshua 11:20** For it was **Yahweh himself** who hardened their [the kings defeated in battle] hearts to wage war against Israel, so that **he might destroy them totally, exterminating them without mercy, as Yahweh had commanded Moses.

This too is clear enough that it needs no extended explication. The verse claims that **Yahweh himself** had hardened the hearts of the Canaanite kings so that he could **destroy them totally** and **without mercy**, and it says that doing this was what

Yahweh had commanded Moses. Mr. Miller said above that it seems "(a)t first blush" that the passages he quoted were saying that Yahweh was "taking the initiative" and was ordering the Israelites to wipe out the Canaanites "without mercy," but doesn't the verse just quoted clearly show that there is no "first blush" way to deny Yahweh's direct involvement in these massacres. If the Bible is to be believed, Yahweh hardened the hearts of the Canaanite kings so that he could exterminate them **without mercy**. Why is it that so many would-be apologists can't seem to see what is clearly written in the biblical text? Or could it be that they do see these things but rationalize them away in order to come to terms with cognitive dissonance that they are wrestling with?

If any doubt is left in Mr. Miller's mind about whether Yahwah had taken the initiative in the Canaanite massacres, the third test of his "first-blush" comment should settle the matter. To apply this test, we have to go all the way back to the time when Yahweh called Moses to lead the Israelites out of Egyptian bondage. In his appearance to Moses in the burning bush, Yahweh left no doubt that he was taking the initiative to lead the Israelites into the land of Canaan.

***Exodus 3:6** Then he [Yahweh] said, "**I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob.**" At this, Moses hid his face, because he was afraid to look at God. **7** Yahweh said, "**I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering. 8 So I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey--the home of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites. 9** And now the cry of the Israelites has reached me, and **I have seen the way the Egyptians are oppressing them. 10** So now, go. **I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt.**"*

I have emphasized in bold print the first person pronoun where Yahweh referred to himself while speaking to Moses. This emphasis shows rather clearly Yahweh's personal involvement in the exodus from Egypt and the entry into Canaan. He plainly said that he had "come down" to rescue the Israelites from Egypt and "to bring" them "into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey." He identified this land that he would lead the Israelites into as the "home" of the same seven nations listed in the passage that Mr. Miller quoted above from [Deuteronomy 7:1](#). If what Yahweh allegedly said to Moses here was not "taking initiative," then what would he have had to do to take the initiative? The P version of this same scene also shows that Yahweh took the initiative in leading the Israelites out of Egypt and into the land that he had sworn to give to Abraham.

*Exodus 6:2 God also said to Moses, "I am Yahweh. 3 I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob as God Almighty, but by my name Yahweh I did not make myself known to them. 4 I also established my covenant with them to give them the land of Canaan, where they lived as aliens. 5 Moreover, I have heard the groaning of the Israelites, whom the Egyptians are enslaving, and I have remembered my covenant. 6 "Therefore, say to the Israelites: 'I am Yahweh, and **I will bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians.** I will free you from being slaves to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment. 7 I will take you as my own people, and I will be your God. Then you will know that I am Yahweh your God, who brought you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. 8 **And I will bring you to the land I swore with uplifted hand to give to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob. I will give it to you as a possession. I am Yahweh.**"*

Anyone who can read these passages and not see that the Bible clearly claims that Yahweh was directly involved in the Israelite exodus and entry into Canaan must not want to see it. There is really no "first blush" about it. The Bible shows very plainly that the Hebrew god Yahweh took the initiative in the Hebrew invasion of Canaan.

Before I go on to answer other points in Mr. Miller's article, I think I can say without fear of successful gainsaying that the Old Testament clearly attributed the massacres of the Canaanites and Amalekites to direct commands from Yahweh, who wanted to destroy them totally and exterminate them without mercy. If we can't believe the Bible when it plainly says that Yahweh was so involved in the Canaanite and Amalekite massacres, then what in the Bible can we believe?

Miller:

At the end of Joshua's military campaigns, a list of 31 conquered kings is given. (The Israelites fail to obey the directive, however, and God faults them for this--and, as He predicted, the Canaanites **do** 'entice' Israel into practicing their religion.)

Till:

The statement that Mr. Miller just made is inconsistent with his attempt above to exonerate Yahweh of any blame in the Canaanite massacres, because here he has said that the Israelites "fail[ed] to obey the directive" and that "God fault[ed] them for this." He can't have it both ways. Yahweh either commanded the massacres or he didn't, and the analyses of relevant texts above show that the writers of these texts obviously thought that he **did** command them. However, Mr. Miller is suggesting here that orders to exterminate the Canaanites was the right thing to do, because when the Israelites "fail[ed] to obey the directive," the Canaanites enticed them into practicing their religion. If this is what Mr. Miller is suggesting, I wish he would explain himself. Does he believe that it was morally right to kill people in order to keep them from enticing Hebrews away from practicing Judaism? If so, he is opening a can of

worms that I think will cause him all kinds of problems. For one thing, he should explain why Yahweh couldn't have kept his "chosen ones" from being enticed to practice Canaanite religions by just keeping them out of Canaan and leading them to a place where "false religions" wouldn't have been a problem. That way, killing people so that they couldn't entice Hebrews to practice their religion wouldn't have been necessary. A second problem is that Miller can't even prove that Judaism was the "true" religion of that time without engaging in special pleading, because the only "evidence" he can offer is that the Bible says that it originated with "God." As a final comment here, I must say that I find justification of the Canaanite massacres on the grounds that killing them kept them from enticing Hebrews away from Judaism to be a rather desperate argument. That kind of argumentation would justify not just Jews killing non-Jews but Christians killing Muslims or Muslims killing Christians, and so on *ad infinitum*, because they all think that theirs is the "true" religion.

Miller:

Obviously, there are a couple of **good** questions hiding in here:

- Did God actually command Israel to do this, or did they just invent this divine sanction to justify territorial greed or genocidal tendencies?

Till:

Well, of course, my position in this is already a matter of record. As I noted in ["Why Would God Bless America?"](#) the belief that nations were chosen of or favored by gods was by no means unique to the Hebrews. The inscriptions on the Moabite Stone and the pavement slabs at the temple of Urta in Nimrud quoted in the article just linked to show that the kings Mesha of Moab and Assurnasirpal of Assyria believed that the gods had chosen their nations and led them to victories over their enemies. Mr. Miller, of course, probably believes that this was a quaint but misguided belief but, for some reason, thinks that the god Yahweh did chose the Israelites and led them to victory over the Canaanites. Why he would reject what Mesha and Assurnasirpal said in their inscriptions but accepts as absolute truth what "Joshua" said is something that he needs to explain. I doubt that he can explain it without resorting to the fallacy of special pleading.

Mr. Miller's other "good questions" follow immediately below. I won't comment on them until, he begins his discussion of them further along.

Miller:

- Why would God use a nation as questionable as the post-Exodus Israelites to deliver His "judgment" on the Canaanites? (Why not just use natural disasters,

such as earthquakes [Num 16], volcanic-type phenomena [Gen 19], or plague [2 Kgs 19.35]?)

- What about all the innocent people killed in this "holy war"--families, "good" Canaanites, etc.? Even if it is 'okay' for God to execute judgment on nations within history, why didn't He only kill the evil-doers?
- Doesn't wholesale slaughter of nations seem a little incompatible with a God of Love and Mercy?

These are **not** simple or light questions (if your heart is in right!), and so we must be **very** thorough in our analysis of the situation. We will need to approach this issue from a number of different sides, to make sure we have seen it clearly and from a large-enough perspective.

Till:

No, they certainly aren't "simple or light questions," and as we will see, Mr. Miller's answers to them show a decided bias on his part to defend the Bible, but I will point that out as we go along.

Miller:

We will use the following question-set in analyzing the issue:

1. Do we have any precedents, paradigm cases, or similar incidents of such orders/actions to annihilate?
2. Who exactly **were** these people that God wanted Israel to 'exterminate'?
3. Were there any limits placed upon Israel in this venture, and what was the **exact** content of the orders?
4. What general principles of God's governance might shed some light on the situation?

Then, I will try to focus any insights we get onto the opening questions.

Question 1:

- *Do we have any precedents, paradigm cases, or similar incidents of such orders/actions to annihilate?*

Miller's

answer:

There are a few situations in the OT in which something like this either (1) occurs or

(2) is ordered: Sodom/Gomorrah, the Flood, and the Amalekites. And we will look at one "anti-Example" that might function as 'control data'--Ninevah.

Till:

I will alert everyone here to notice the line of reasoning that Mr. Miller uses. He will be seen arguing that the Canaanite and Amalekite massacres were morally right, because the Bible says that "God" had annihilated other people in earlier times. This is a form of circular reasoning, which is essentially saying that there was nothing wrong with the Bible's saying that Yahweh ordered the extermination of Canaanites and Amalekites, because the Bible says that before these massacres, "God" had also exterminated other people. In other words, Mr. Miller is engaging in special pleading. He is saying, in effect, that if the Bible says X, then X must be right, because X is in the Bible. The line of reasoning that follows below is why I said above that I had suspected from the beginning of Mr. Miller's article that he was going to use a God-can-do-no-wrong approach to "explaining" the Yahwistic massacres in the Old Testament. Readers will see right away now that my suspicion was correct.

Miller:

- The story of **Sodom and Gomorrah** seems similar with the main exceptions that the cities were destroyed **without** human agency, and that the vegetation was destroyed. God used some type of natural disaster to accomplish the destruction.

Till:

I will ask readers to notice that Mr. Miller gives no consideration at all to the possibility that if Sodom and Gomorrah were indeed destroyed as the Bible claims, that too would have been morally reprehensible. As we continue, I will explain why such conduct on a god's part would have been morally offensive.

Miller:

There are several known facts about this situation which might prove relevant. S & G lived in a good land ([Gen 13:10-12](#)). Abraham saved their cities once, in a masterful military maneuver ([Gen 14](#)), after which Abraham 'witnessed' to them. They were exposed to/had access to the pure message of God through Melchizedek--the priest-king of Salem--(who probably led Abraham to the true knowledge of God!).

Till:

Please notice that all through his "answer" here, Mr. Miller is assuming the historical accuracy [inerrancy] of the Bible.

Before I go on, I think some additional comments are in order. Mr. Miller said that Melchizedek had probably led Abraham to the true knowledge of God, but that is reading a lot into the [Genesis-14](#) story of their encounter, which is so full of inconsistencies that it cannot be considered a reliable source of information. Notice these points of inconsistency.

*Genesis 14:1 And it came about in the days of Amraphel king of Shinar, Arioch king of Ellasar, Chedorlaomer king of Elam, and Tidal king of Goiim, 2 that they made war with **Bera king of Sodom**, and with Birsha king of Gomorrah, Shinab king of Admah, and Shemeber king of Zeboiim, and the king of Bela (that is, Zoar). 3 All these came as allies to the valley of Siddim (that is, the Salt Sea). 4 Twelve years they had served Chedorlaomer, but the thirteenth year they rebelled. 5 In the fourteenth year Chedorlaomer and the kings that were with him, came and defeated the Rephaim in Ashteroth-karnaim and the Zuzim in Ham and the Emim in Shaveh-kiriathaim, 6 and the Horites in their Mount Seir, as far as El-paran, which is by the wilderness. 7 Then they turned back and came to En-mishpat (that is, Kadesh), and conquered all the country of the Amalekites, and also the Amorites, who lived in Hazazon-tamar. 8 And **the king of Sodom** and the king of Gomorrah and the king of Admah and the king of Zeboiim and the king of Bela (that is, Zoar) came out; and they arrayed for battle against them in the valley of Siddim, 9 against Chedorlaomer king of Elam and Tidal king of Goiim and Amraphel king of Shinar and Arioch king of Ellasar--four kings against five. 10 Now the valley of Siddim was full of tar pits; and **the kings of Sodom** and Gomorrah fled, and **they fell into them**. But those who survived fled to the hill country. 11 Then they took all the goods of Sodom and Gomorrah and all their food supply, and departed. 12 They also took Lot, Abram's nephew, and his possessions and departed, for he was living in Sodom.*

Verse 10 emphasized above says that the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fled and fell into the tar pits, which left the forces of Chedorlaomer free to sack Sodom and Gomorrah, at which time they took Abraham's nephew Lot captive. According to [verses 13-16](#), upon hearing of his nephew's capture, Abraham took a force of 318 after Chedorlaomer's forces and rescued Lot and other captives who had been taken in the sacking of Sodom and Gomorrah. On his return, Abraham had his encounter with Melchizedek.

*17 Then after his return from the defeat of Chedorlaomer and the kings who were with him, **the king of Sodom** went out to meet him at the valley of Shaveh (that is, the King's Valley). 18 And Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; now he was a priest of God Most High. 19 He blessed him and said, "Blessed be Abram of God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth; And blessed be God Most High, Who has delivered your enemies into your hand." He gave him a tenth of all. 21 **The king of Sodom** said to Abram, "Give the people to me and take the goods for yourself."*

The pronouns are typically vague here, but the general understanding ([Heb. 7:4](#)) is that Abraham gave a tenth of the spoils to Melchizedek. The inconsistency, however, involves the presence of the king of Sodom with Melchizedek, because verse 10, emphasized above, says that the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fell into the tar pits as they were fleeing. One might say, "Well, they fell into the tar pits, but they were able to get out of them," but the rest of the verse doesn't support that interpretation, because it says that "those who **survived** fled to the hill country." That certainly implies that those who fell into the tar pits didn't survive, so we have to wonder how the king of Sodom, after falling into the tar pits, was able to go out with Melchizedek and meet Abraham on his return from the battle with Chedorlaomer. There is enough of a problem here to cast doubt on the reliability of this account.

Besides that, it doesn't say that Melchizedek had led Abraham to "the true knowledge of God." That Melchizedek did not so lead Abraham is certainly implied by references to Abraham's relationship with Yahweh before this encounter with Melchizedek.

***Genesis 12:1** Yahweh had said to Abram, "Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you. 2 "I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. 3 I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you." 4 So Abram left, as Yahweh had told him; and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he set out from Haran.*

The broader context of these verses claim that Abraham had another encounter with Yahweh after he had entered the land of Canaan, at which time Yahweh promised to give this land to Abraham's descendants.

6** Abram traveled through the land as far as the site of the great tree of Moreh at Shechem. At that time the Canaanites were in the land. **7** Yahweh appeared to Abram and said, "To your offspring I will give this land." So he built an altar there to Yahweh, **who had appeared to him.

There is even more, but these examples are sufficient to show that Abraham, supposedly, had a relationship with Yahweh well before his encounter with Melchizedek. Furthermore, Stephen said in his speech before the Jewish council that Yahweh had even appeared to Abraham while he was still in Mesopotamia.

***Acts 7:2** To this he [Stephen] replied: "Brothers and fathers, listen to me! The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham **while he was still in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Haran.** 3 'Leave your country and your people,' God said, 'and go to the land I will show you.' 4 "**So he left the land of the Chaldeans and settled in Haran.** After the death of his father, God sent him to this land where you are now living.*

If Mr. Miller believes in biblical inerrancy, then he has to agree that Abraham enjoined a very close relationship with Yahweh long before his encounter with Melchizedek. I can't imagine how Melchizedek could have led Abraham to a better knowledge of Yahweh than he already had, since Yahweh had routinely dropped in to visit and talk with Abraham long before his encounter with Melchizedek.

I have taken the long way around here to make a point: **One should not accept uncritically just anything that he reads on an internet site**--and that includes anything that I say too. With that in mind, I will return to Mr. Miller's defense of the Yahwistic massacres.

Miller:

Nonetheless, they were extremely evil people (and who were proud of it--Is 3.9:

Till:

Notice again that Mr. Miller is using the if-the-Bible-says-it-it-must-be-true "apologetic" method.

Miller:

[Nonetheless, they were extremely evil people (and who were proud of it--Is 3.9:] *The look on their faces testifies against them; they parade their sin like Sodom; they do not hide it.*), and their crimes were both against God ([Gen 13.13](#)) and against people ([Gen 18.20](#)).

Till:

So exactly what is Mr. Miller arguing here? His position seems to be that if people are "evil," they should be killed. If so, this raises the question of whose standard will be used to decide that they are evil. If Mr. Miller says, "Well, God determined that the people of Sodom and Gomorrah were evil," he will again be caught engaging in special pleading, because he will be arguing, in effect, that if the Bible says that God found the people of Sodom and Gomorrah to be evil, then they **were** evil, because whatever the Bible says is true. Such reasoning would be as fallacious as when a Muslim argues that X is true because the Qur'an says that it is.

There is an important factor in the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah that Mr. Miller is overlooking, but I won't introduce it until he anticipates it below and tries to quibble his way out of the problem it poses.

Miller:

Some twenty-five years after Abraham/Melky encounter, and several years after Lot had apparently been trying to 'moralize' the people (cf. [Gen 19:9](#)), the outcry to God is so great that He sends two angels to destroy the city and its environs ([Gen 19:24ff](#)).

God had announced His intentions to Abraham in [Gen 18](#), and agreed to spare the city if a few righteous could be found. Apparently, only Lot and his family (less than the required ten!) fit the description adequately, so the entire culture was judged and destroyed by God. The encounter involving Lot, the angels, and the men of the city is a vivid description of the evil of the city ([Gen 19](#)), and the NT refers to it as an example of judgment-future ([2 Pet 2.6](#)) with a special emphasis on sexual perversion ([Jude 7](#)). The fact that 'all the men of the city' were involved in the intended assault on Lot, indicates that the 'outcry' must have come from surrounding areas--hence, the 'international' scope of their evil.

Till:

Besides Mr. Miller's continual special pleading and question begging, which I have now pointed out several times, I just have to make a couple of comments here. First, Lot was not the target of the intended assault; the two "angels" who were in his house were their intended target.

Genesis 19:4 Before they had gone to bed, all the men from every part of the city of Sodom--both young and old--surrounded the house. 5 They called to Lot, "Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us so that we can have sex with them." 6 Lot went outside to meet them and shut the door behind him 7 and said, "No, my friends. Don't do this wicked thing. 8 Look, I have two daughters who have never slept with a man. Let me bring them out to you, and you can do what you like with them. But don't do anything to these men, for they have come under the protection of my roof." 9 "Get out of our way," they replied. And they said, "This fellow came here as an alien, and now he wants to play the judge! We'll treat you worse than them." They kept bringing pressure on Lot and moved forward to break down the door.

If Lot had been the intended target of these men, they had their chance to assault him while he was standing outside his door pleading with the crowd, not to mention that Lot's regular presence there as a resident of Sodom would have given these men plenty of chances to assault him. The passage clearly claims that the two men [angels] who had come to Lot's house were their target.

Second, the fact that the Bible claims in this story that all the men in the city, except Lot, gathered to take part in a homosexual orgy ([Gen. 19:4](#)) should be sufficient to arch some mental eyebrows about the biblical inerrancy claim. How likely is it that all the men in a city would have tried to participate in a homosexual gangbang? It is far more probable that this is just another case of exaggeration, which was so typical of biblical writers.

Miller:

The destruction was immediate and total, including the surrounding cities and the vegetation ([Gen 19.25](#)), and is even used as an example by our Lord in [Luke 17.29](#).

Till:

I am interrupting momentarily again to note that all through his comments immediately above, Mr. Miller continued to argue from an assumption that the Bible is inerrant. If the Bible said A about Sodom, then A was true. If the Bible said B about Sodom, then B was true. If the Bible said C about Sodom, then C was true. If the Bible said... well, the point should be clear by now. Mr. Miller is arguing that Yahweh's destruction of the Canaanites and Amalekites was okay, because he had previously destroyed the people of Sodom and Gomorrah too. It apparently did not occur to him that if Yahweh did indeed destroy the populations of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, that too would have been as morally offensive as his destruction of the Canaanites and Amalekites. If not, why not?

Let's see what else Mr. Miller had to say about Sodom and Gomorrah before I comment further.

Miller:

It is important to note that (1) they had plenty of access to 'truth' (at **least** 25 years);

Till:

So the Bible says, but how does Mr. Miller know that what the Bible says about this is historically accurate? He is once again engaging in the fallacy of special pleading.

Furthermore, he begs the question of "truth" by assuming that Abraham's god was the true god. How does Mr. Miller know that he was?

Miller:

2) their crimes were perverse, public, and the cause of international protest/outcry to God (!);

Till:

This is more argumentation by special pleading. Mr. Miller's statement above shows that he is assuming the historical accuracy [inerrancy] of what the Bible says about Sodom. Does he have any extrabiblical evidence that the crimes of the people of Sodom and Gomorrah were "perverse, public, and the cause of international protest/outcry to God"? How does he know, for example, that Sodom and Gomorrah were not destroyed by volcanic eruptions known to have happened in that region and that the superstitions of the time, which saw natural calamities as punishment from "God," spawned legends about divine judgment on these cities, which later found their

way into the biblical text? These are legitimate questions that Mr. Miller should address. If he is just going to assume that whatever the Bible says has to be true, then why write a lengthy article in which he tried to prove his premise that the Yahwistic massacres in the Bible were morally right? Why not just say, "The Bible says it, and so it must be true"?

Miller:

(3) the annihilation was a judgment;

Till:

This too is argumentation by assertion and special pleading. In order to prove this assertion, Mr. Miller would have to prove beyond question that the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah was executed by the "true god," and there is no way that he can possibly prove this.

Miller:

(4) God was willing to spare the innocent people--if any could be found;

Till:

The children, what about the innocent children? Let's notice what Mr. Miller says below about the children.

Miller:

(5) children living in the households of their evil parents apparently died swiftly in the one-day event (instead of being killed--as homeless orphans--by a combination of starvation, wild beasts, exposure, and disease; or instead of being captured and sold as slaves by neighboring tribes, for the older ones perhaps?);

Till:

So finally we come to the factor that I said I would discuss when we came to it in Mr. Miller's article. That factor is the children. In a city, of any appreciable size, there are bound to be children and expectant mothers, so if "God" really did destroy Sodom and Gomorrah, as the Bible claims, he also killed children and unborn babies. I discussed in detail in [this section](#) of "God is Pro-Life?" that if the biblical stories of the flood, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, the massacres of the Canaanites and other non-Hebraic tribes really happened as the Bible claims, then the god Yahweh was directly responsible for killing inestimable numbers of children and unborn babies, a fact that would clearly dispute the frequently heard claim that "God is pro-life."

I am glad to see that Mr. Miller recognized that the destruction of Sodom, as recorded in the Bible, would have necessarily involved the killing of children, but I was disappointed to see him resort to the often-heard inerrantist quibble that Yahweh

actually did the children a favor by killing them. This attempt to justify the brutality of the god Yahweh has taken various forms. One variation of it is that if Yahweh had not killed the Canaanite and Amalekite children, they would have grown up to be "evil" like their parents, so by killing them as children, while they were still in a state of innocence, Yahweh did them a favor, because they would go to heaven instead of being condemned to hell if they had been allowed to grow up. Mr. Miller's take on this quibble as he applied it to the children of Sodom is that Yahweh did them a favor, because if they had been left alive, they would have died of starvation or exposure or disease or from attacks by wild animals, so by killing them "swiftly," Yahweh had shown them mercy. It is really hard to believe that biblical inerrantists would be so desperate to defend their belief that they would resort to such absurdities as this, but readers have just seen Mr. Miller present his variation of this quibble.

This kind of quibbling ignores completely a fundamental principle of the nature of "God" as he was presented in an allegedly inerrant Bible. He was presumably omniscient and omnipotent, and if that is so, there would have been nothing that Yahweh did not know and nothing logically possible that he could not have done. Such a deity, then, could easily solve the problem of how to keep children alive and simultaneously protected from starvation, exposure, disease, and wild animals. Hence, what Mr. Miller is, in effect, arguing is that it would have been impossible for a deity who could speak the universe into existence, part the Red Sea, stop the mouths of lions, enable men to walk through a fiery furnace unharmed, resurrect the dead, etc., etc., etc. to find a way to keep orphaned children alive, and so he had to kill them. This is the kind of extreme that biblical inerrantists have resorted to when they had no logical arguments on their side. I regret to see that Mr. Miller has followed in their steps.

Miller:

(6) the one innocent man and woman are delivered (along with their children of the household).

Till:

Mr. Miller may see Lot as an "innocent man," but I can't stretch my imagination far enough to see him that way. As noted in the passage that I quoted above, Lot offered his daughters as sexual objects to the crowd that had gathered at his door ([Gen. 19:8](#)), and after he and his daughters had escaped the destruction of Sodom, he engaged in drinking orgies with his daughters that ended with the impregnation of both of them ([19:30-38](#)). In the New Testament, Lot was referred to as "righteous Lot" ([2 Peter 2:7](#)), but if Lot was the standard by which righteousness was determined back then, that doesn't speak too well for biblical standards of morality.

Immediately below, Mr. Miller takes us to the story of Noah's flood to try to prove that the Yahwistic massacres in Canaan and Amalek were morally right. As we go through that section, I would ask everyone to notice that Mr. Miller is following the same fallacious line of reasoning that he used above by arguing that the massacres of the Canaanites and Amalekites were not immoral, because long before these massacres, Yahweh had killed everyone in the entire world except for Noah's family. The way that Miller argues here would be somewhat as if a person should argue that John Doe committed no immoral acts when he murdered a woman in 2002 and another woman in 2004, because in 1989, he had murdered 100 different people. Such reasoning fails to recognize the real issue, which, in this case, is whether it was morally right, even for a god, to order the massacre of entire tribes and nations. That issue must be addressed on its own merits, and it cannot be proven morally correct on the grounds that the god allegedly involved in the massacres under consideration had committed several other massacres before them.

Miller:

The Flood of Noah:

This was the largest annihilation/judgment to date (although it is very difficult to estimate with confidence the population at this time, especially given that 'violence' was at an extreme high and correspondingly would have made homicide rates horrendously high), and involved people, animals, and much vegetation ([Gen 6-8](#)).

Till:

All that I need to do here is point out that Mr. Miller is again engaging in question begging and special pleading. He called the story of Noah's flood "the largest... judgment to date" and painted a dismal picture of moral conditions at that time, so he is again begging the question of the historical accuracy [inerrancy] of the Bible, which he must establish before he can legitimately call the biblical account of Noah's flood "the largest... judgment to date." Indeed, even if he could somehow prove that this flood really happened, that would in no way prove that it was a "judgment" from "God" any more than anyone could prove that other natural catastrophes were divine judgments.

There is plenty of evidence to show that Noah's flood was just another biblical story that didn't really happen as claimed. [Meteor Crater](#), located on I-40 between Flagstaff and Winslow, Arizona, was formed when an iron meteorite 30-50 meters in diameter slammed into the earth around 50,000 years ago and left a crater 570 feet deep and 4,100 feet in diameter. The dating of the impact has been determined by radiometric examination of impact rocks and metals. I have personally seen this impact crater, but those who haven't can see from the picture linked to above that the rim walls are still sharply defined, and the hole or crater is still very much in evidence. In ["Art That](#)

[Survived Noah's Flood,"](#) I analyzed biblical chronology to show that if the Bible is indeed inerrant, the universal flood could have happened no earlier than 8,403 years ago. I did this analysis to show that the present existence of paleolithic art in Southwestern Europe, which has been radiometrically dated to as far back as 30,000 years ago, clearly disputes the biblical claim of a universal flood that covered the entire earth over 20,000 years after the oldest of the paleolithic cave pictures were painted, because water filling the caves for a year would have certainly destroyed those paintings. The partly submerged paintings in [Cosquer Cave](#) on the Mediterranean coast of Southern France show what would have happened to paleolithic art if the caves in which they were painted had been flooded. In the same way, the existence of Meteor Crater in Arizona, which, as noted above, formed from an impact some 50,000 years ago, is proof that a universal flood did not cover the earth some 8 to 10 thousand years ago. If it had, the crater would have been filled with sediments, and the rim walls would have been washed away.

There are other evidences that dispute the biblical claim of a universal flood, but the two I have mentioned are sufficient to show that Noah's flood is at best a legend that has no basis in fact, but I am replying point by point to Mr. Miller's article, so let's see what else he had to say about the biblical flood.

Miller:

In a very incisive view of God's heart, we see the 'emotions' surrounding this apparent judgment:

Gen 6.5 The LORD saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time. 6 The LORD was grieved that he had made man on the earth, and his heart was filled with pain. 7 So the LORD said, "I will wipe mankind, whom I have created, from the face of the earth--men and animals, and creatures that move along the ground, and birds of the air--for I am grieved that I have made them."

Till:

As I asked in [this part](#) of "God Is Pro-Life?" why wouldn't the omniscient, omnipotent deity who created the world and then humans as his crowning achievement have known that they would turn out the way described in the passage that Mr. Miller quoted? This is a question that inerrantists rarely address, so Mr. Miller can talk forever about "a very incisive view of God's heart" in reference to the alleged biblical flood, but if this deity was really so grieved over the condition of morality on the earth at that time, he had only himself to blame. He created the humans who so grieved him, and his omniscience should have told him how his creation would turn out.

I am being facetious, of course, but with a serious intent. When biblical inerrantist try to put human emotions into their omniscient, omnipotent deity, they commit the fallacy of [anthropomorphism](#), which attempts to make their god emotionally like humans. We see this fallacy committed when preachers tear-jerkingly depict the agony and anguish that "God" must have felt as his only son hung dying on the cross, but if "God is not a man that he should repent" ([1 Sam. 15:29](#); [Num. 23:19](#)), why would this deity who was depicted to be so different emotionally from humans in other matters have been so humanlike in matters of grief? If the Bible is inerrant, as Mr. Miller and his cohorts claim, then whatever "incisive" grief Yahweh presumably experienced at the time of the flood had to have been very unhumanlike, because what sane human being could have intentionally sent upon the earth a catastrophe that would kill everyone on it except for eight chosen ones?

Furthermore, depictions of grief and anguish that Yahweh allegedly felt when he caused the extermination of untold numbers of people is the opposite of how biblical inerrantists react to moral complaints about the flood, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, and the Yahwistic massacres committed after the exodus. In my first public debate with a biblical inerrantist, I cited the Yahwistic atrocities as a reason to question biblical errancy, and my opponent resonded by saying something like, "Farrell Till's problem is that God just didn't do things the way he wanted." A favorite sound-bite "reply" that Robert Turkel makes to such objections is that skeptics are complaining because God didn't [kiss their patoots](#). In other words, would-be apologists try to play both sides of the street. When it is to their advantage to present "God" in an emotionally anthropomorphic way, they don't hesitate to do so. When it is to their advantage not to, they dismiss all complaints about Yahwistic barbarism by screaming, "God is not a human, so you can't judge him for having ways that are higher than ours."

Welcome to the world of biblical "apologetics."

Miller:

We also see the rather violent nature of the crimes in Gen 6.13:

*So God said to Noah, "I am going to put an end to all people, for the earth is **filled with violence** because of them.*

The story is familiar: (1) God decides to 'spare the innocent' again and warns Noah to build a boat for him and his household (apparently **not** so innocent);

Till:

The meaning of Mr. Miller's parenthetical statement eludes me, but the important

thing to address here is his claim that God decided to "spare the innocent" again. Again? When did he spare them the first time? Having referred to the destruction of Sodom before bringing in the flood, maybe the "again" refers to that story, which in terms of chronology happened after the flood. Anyway, I assume that Mr. Miller is claiming that in warning Lot's family to escape, God "spared the innocent," but even he noted above that the children of Sodom were not spared. Obviously, then, as this story was told, "God" spared only a few of the innocent, because we would suspect that there would have been far more children in Sodom than the four people in Lot's family who escaped. As noted, of course, these "innocent ones" right away engaged in a drunken incestuous orgy that resulted in Lot's impregnation of his own daughters ([Gen. 19:30-38](#)). If that is Mr. Miller's idea of sparing the innocent, all I can say is that my view of innocence is very different from his.

In the matter of the flood, however, God most certainly did not decide to spare the innocent, because as I pointed out above, children are certainly innocent, and just as there would have necessarily been children and unborn babies in Sodom and Gomorrah, in a destruction of the entire world, far more children and unborn babies would have been killed. That children are innocents, who don't know the difference in good and evil, was even recognized in the Bible. When the Israelites rebelled upon hearing the report of the spies whom Moses had sent ahead to Canaan, Yahweh condemned them to wander in the wilderness for 40 years until all of the adults were dead, but the children were exempted from this Yahwistic curse. In referring back to this event years later, when the Israelites were preparing to enter Canaan, Moses said that the children were spared because of their innocence.

***Deuteronomy 1:34** When Yahweh heard what you said, he was angry and solemnly swore: 35 "Not a man of this evil generation shall see the good land I swore to give your forefathers, 36 except Caleb son of Jephunneh. He will see it, and I will give him and his descendants the land he set his feet on, because he followed Yahweh wholeheartedly." 37 Because of you Yahweh became angry with me also and said, "You shall not enter it, either. 38 But your assistant, Joshua son of Nun, will enter it. Encourage him, because he will lead Israel to inherit it. 39 **And the little ones that you said would be taken captive, your children who do not yet know good from bad—they will enter the land. I will give it to them and they will take possession of it.**"*

Here is biblical recognition that children are innocents, who don't know the difference in good and evil, so when Mr. Miller says that "God" *again* decided to "spare the innocent," he apparently dismissed the drowning of untold hundreds or thousands of children as if it were nothing. We will see below that he tried to justify Yahweh's killing of children in the flood, because they "undoubtedly died swiftly."

Miller:

(2) the evil/violence of the people were both against God and against humanity ([Gen 6.12](#)) and was **very extensive** ("filled");

Till:

All I need to say here is that Mr. Miller continues to beg the question of biblical accuracy [inerrancy]. What evidence can he present to corroborate the Bible's claim of extensive "evil" at that time. I personally find it hard to believe that so-called "evil" was any more extensive than it is now.

I will also remind readers to keep in mind that the deity who presumably sent this flood was the same deity who, according to [biblical chronology](#), had created humans just 1656 years before the flood, so since this deity is supposed to be omniscient, *i. e.*, all-knowing, why didn't he know that his creation was going to turn out the way the Bible described them at this time? If he knew that humans would become so depraved that killing all of them but eight would become necessary but created them anyway, does this mean that Yahweh enjoys killing? When the flood story is analyzed critically, it doesn't paint a very flattering picture of the biblical god.

Miller:

(3) some of the evil was probably sexual violence or violation ([Gen 6.1-2](#));

Till:

Mr. Miller only cited his proof text, but I am going to quote it in context so that readers will see just what absurdities were involved in the Genesis flood story.

Genesis 6:1 When men began to increase in number on the earth and daughters were born to them, 2 the sons of God saw that the daughters of men were beautiful, and they married any of them they chose. 3 Then Yahweh said, "My Spirit will not contend with man forever, for he is mortal; his days will be a hundred and twenty years." 4 The Nephilim were on the earth in those days--and also afterward--when the sons of God went to the daughters of men and had children by them. They were the heroes of old, men of renown. 5 Yahweh saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time. 6 Yahweh was grieved that he had made man on the earth, and his heart was filled with pain. 7 So Yahweh said, "I will wipe mankind, whom I have created, from the face of the earth--men and animals, and creatures that move along the ground, and birds of the air--for I am grieved that I have made them."

A complete exegesis of this passage to bring out the meaning recognized by all but biblical inerrantists, who don't want to believe that silly myths are in the Bible, would take far too long, so I am going to use links to refer readers to articles I have

previously written, which show that an abbreviation of "Enoch's" legend of fallen angels who married human women is imbedded in the verses just quoted above. The "sons of God" were the fallen angels, and the daughters of men were the women whom the angels married to produce a race of evil giants. The text quoted above, like many English versions, tried to hide the meaning of this myth by transliterating the Hebrew word *nephilim* in verse 4, but the KJV rendered it as *giants*: "There were giants in the earth in those days." That this was the intended meaning of *nephelim* can be verified by reading the expanded version of this myth in 1 Enoch. For the convenience of readers, I will link to sections of [an electronic version](#) of this pseudepigraphic work where the following points can be verified, but first I will quote from 1 Enoch 6:1 to show the striking parallel between the opening verses from Genesis 6, quoted above, and "Enoch's" introduction of this myth.

***1 Enoch 6:1** And it came to pass when the children of men had multiplied that in those days were born unto 2 them beautiful and comely daughters. And **the angels, the children of the heaven**, saw and lusted after them, and said to one another: 'Come, let us choose us wives from among the children of men 3 and beget us children.'*

As "Enoch" continued to narrate this myth, the following claims, among many others, were made. By scrolling down from the beginning of the electronic version in the links below, one can easily find the chapters and verses cited.

- The women taken by the angels became pregnant and bore "great giants," whose height reached "three thousand ells" ([7:3](#)). The length of an "ell" varied from country to country. E. Isaac's translation of 1 Enoch put the height of these giants at 300 cubits, which would have been about 450 feet. In other words, the giants in this myth were about as tall as ten-story buildings.
- These giants consumed "all the acquisitions of men," and when humans could no longer sustain them, the giants began to eat humans and "to devour one another's flesh" ([7:4-6](#)).
- The angels Michael, Uriel, Raphael, and Gabriel looked down on the earth, saw the carnage of the giants, and heard the pleas of humans to do something about the giants being born to women who consorted with the angels ([chapter 9](#)).
- The "Most High" sent Uriel to the son of Lamech [Noah] and told him that the end was approaching and that "the whole earth" would be destroyed ([chapter 10](#)).
- God told the angel Raphael to seize Azazel--the leader of the fallen angels--and bind him "hand and foot" and then cast him into an "opening" in the

desert, cover him with darkness, and keep him there until the day of judgment when he would be "cast into the fire" ([10:4-7](#)).

To summarize the entire myth would take much too long, but the links provided above will give access to readers interested in seeing more of it. Other angels were bound and cast into the pit to be kept there until the day of judgment. All of this is silly myth, of course, but New Testament writers apparently took it very seriously. The author of 2 Peter referred to angels who had sinned and been cast **into gloomy dungeons to be held for judgment**" ([2:4](#)), and Jude also made an obvious reference to these fallen angels.

***Jude 5** Though you already know all this, I want to remind you that the Lord delivered his people out of Egypt, but later destroyed those who did not believe. 6 And the angels who did not keep their positions of authority but abandoned their own home--these he has kept in darkness, bound with everlasting chains for judgment on the great Day.*

Most inerrantists are loathe to admit that a silly pseudopigraphic work like 1 Enoch had any influence on New Testament writers, but biblical scholars who don't have inerrancy axes to grind recognize the contribution that 1 Enoch had on New Testament writers. In the introduction to his translation, E. Issac expressed his recognition of the contribution that this book had made to the writing of the New Testament.

*Likewise, even though Charles [R. H.] may have exaggerated when he claimed that "nearly all" writers of the New Testament were familiar with 1 Enoch, there is no doubt that the New Testament world was influenced by its language and thought. It influenced Matthew, Luke, John, Acts, Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Ephesians, Colossians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, 1 Timothy, Hebrews, 1 John, Jude (which quotes it directly), and Revelation (with numerous points of contact). There is little doubt that 1 Enoch was influential in molding New Testament doctrines concerning the nature of the Messiah, the Son of Man, the messianic kingdom, demonology, the future, resurrection, final judgment, the whole eschatological theater, and symbolism. No wonder, therefore, that the book was highly regarded by many of the earliest apostolic and Church Fathers ("A New Translation and Introduction," *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. James H. Charlesworth, Volume 1, p. 10).*

Isaac noted parenthetically [above] that Jude had quoted 1 Enoch "directly." The directness of Jude's quotation can be seen by juxtaposing his quotation with the statement quoted from 1 Enoch.

1 Enoch 1:9 And behold! He cometh with ten thousands of His holy ones to execute judgement upon all, and to destroy all the ungodly: and to convict all flesh of all the works of their ungodliness which they have ungodly committed, and of all the hard things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him.

Jude 14 Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men: "See, the Lord is coming with thousands upon thousands of his holy ones 15 to judge everyone, and to convict all the ungodly of all the ungodly acts they have done in the ungodly way, and of all the harsh words ungodly sinners have spoken against him."

Notice that Jude referred to Enoch here as "the seventh from Adam." Since Enoch was listed in [Genesis 5:1-8](#) as the seventh generation in Adam's genealogy, that is a rather obvious indication that the author of Jude thought that Enoch really did write the pseudepigraphic book attributed to him and just quoted above, so if New Testament writers took 1 Enoch seriously, as they apparently did, why should we not think that whoever wrote the book of Genesis would have also regarded the sons of God/daughters of men myth highly enough to imbed it into Genesis 6?

We should not be surprised that mythological references to giants would be in the Bible, because many ancient cultures had such myths. The Greeks, of course, had the Cyclops, the Norse tribes had their [Jotuns](#), a race of giants, who, unlike the biblical fallen angels, often married goddesses rather than earthly females. The word *Jotun* was derived from a root that meant "to eat," because they were thought to be man-eaters. (Sounds familiar, doesn't it?) The link above will also discuss giants in the mythology of Wales, Ireland, and other European cultures. No one who reads these myths will take them seriously, but believers will read about nephilim (giants) in the Bible and accept this without question. I guess it is all a matter of childhood indoctrination.

I was only able to scratch the surface of this myth, so I will refer interested readers to ["If It Walks Like a Duck..."](#) and ["The Sons of God and the 'Daughters of Men'"](#) where I discussed this myth in much greater detail. I think that any reasonable person who reads the evidence above and in these articles will see that [Genesis 6:1-2](#), which Mr. Miller quoted above to prove how "evil" the people of the earth were at the time of the flood, was actually part of a myth about 450-foot giants, born to women that consorted with fallen angels, who corrupted the earth. I can't see anything in this scriptural citation that would give any credence to Mr. Miller's claim that Yahweh did nothing morally wrong when he ordered the extermination of the Canaanites and Amalekites, but, of course, I am not struggling to believe that documents written in ancient, superstitious times, when vengeful gods were commonplace, were inerrant in their content.

Miller:

(4) Noah apparently "preached righteousness" to these people for **at least** a hundred years! (cf. 2 Pet 2.5);

Till:

I have heard this 100-year claim to, and I even parroted it myself when I was a preacher, but I don't know where this is taught in the Bible. The verse that Mr. Miller just cited says only that Noah was a "preacher of righteousness," but it doesn't say how long Noah preached righteousness. I suspect that this 100-year belief has been derived from [Genesis 5:32](#), which says that Noah was 500 years old when he begot Shem, Ham, and Japheth, and [Genesis 7:6](#), which says that he was 600 years old when the flood came upon the earth. There is nothing here, however, to indicate that Noah preached righteousness for 100 years. The only thing that can be determined from these two verses is that 100 years passed from the time that Noah began to have children and the time when the flood came. If Noah did "preach righteousness" for 100 years, I wonder when he found time to work on building the ark.

I suspect that biblical inerrantists reached this 100-year period out of a recognition that a boat 450 feet long could not have been built within a few weeks or months or even years, and so they derived their 100-year theory in an effort to give a semblance of plausibility to an implausible story. For the sake of argument, however, let's just assume that Mr. Miller is right and that Noah did "preach righteousness" for 100 years. So what? Is that any morally justifiable reason to wipe out the entire world, which, as pointed out above, would have necessarily included untold numbers of children and unborn babies? I just can't buy it, but maybe my standard of morality is higher than Mr. Miller's.

Miller:

5) this long period of preaching was an act of patience on God's part (I Pet 3.20);

Till:

This is an example of how biblical inerrantists try to play both sides of the street. If any skeptic dares to say anything about the delay in the coming of Jesus and the final judgment, which several New Testament writers indicated were coming soon, inerrantists will quickly quote or cite 2 Peter 3:8-9, which was said to address the same kind of complaints that were being made in New Testament times.

8 But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. 9 The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

See how it works? Inerrantists will say that the 2,000-year delay in Jesus's return is just God's way of showing patience. He doesn't want anyone to perish, so he has delayed the return for two thousand years, but back at the time of the flood, he was willing to wait only 100 years. It would seem that "God's" concept of patience has greatly increased over the years. Furthermore, if the reason for the delay in Jesus's return is that "God" doesn't want anyone to perish, does that mean that back in the time of Noah, he didn't care how many perished, and so his patience endured for just 100 years?

Doesn't anyone besides me ever think about these things?

Miller:

(6) in spite of the warnings, there were apparently no 'changed minds'. [*sic*]

Till:

So I guess "God's" patience just finally wore out, and so he decided to kill even the children and unborn babies.

Miller:

Let's note again that (1) they had plenty of access to 'truth' (at **least** 100 years) and at least a year of specific 'flood warnings';

Till:

There is no need for me to comment on that again.

Miller:

2) their crimes were violent and pervasive to God(!);

Till:

The same here. I will just remind readers to notice that Mr. Miller is still begging the question of biblical accuracy [inerrancy].

Miller:

(3) the annihilation was a judgment;

Till:

He is still engaging in question begging and special pleading. He assumes that whatever the Bible says about this alleged flood has to be true. The possibility of myth or legend finding its way into the Bible has apparently not occurred to him.

Miller:

(4) God was willing to spare the innocent people--if any could be found;

Till:

Uh, "God" couldn't find any children? Oh, yes, Mr. Miller refers to the children immediately below, and I am sure that everyone can guess what he is going to say.

Miller:

(5) children living in the households of their evil parents would have undoubtedly died swiftly

Till:

And so that made it all right? I don't suppose that Mr. Miller would say that when [Andrea Yates](#) drowned her five children, she was subjecting them to a "swift" and merciful death. Surely not!

Miller:

[the Flood was more of a sudden-event a la tidal waves, than a gradual rising water--cf. Gen 7.11: *In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, on the seventeenth day of the second month-- on that day **all the springs of the great deep burst forth, and the floodgates of the heavens were opened.***]

Till:

I'm not trying to be sarcastic here, but I just don't see how Mr. Miller gets "tidal waves" from this. The "fountains of the deep" would have been, well, in the "deep," so why would they have necessarily caused tidal waves or the surface? For the sake of argument, however, let's just grant Mr. Miller a concession about the tidal waves. If the flood really happened, this way, why would that necessarily mean that in the entire world, all of the children died "swiftly"? I wonder if Mr. Miller watched any television coverage of the tsunami caused by an earthquake in the Indian Ocean in December 2004. If so, then he surely saw people, including children, running as the tidal wave swept upon the land and others, including children, who had survived by grabbing onto trees and debris floating by. If Noah's flood really happened, there would have been trees and debris for the children of that time to cling to, so how can Miller say that all of the children would have died "swiftly"? Even if they had, would that have made the killing of untold numbers of innocent children and unborn babies right?

There seems to be no limit to the extremes that inerrantists are willing to go to find inerrancy in the Bible.

Miller:

(6) the one innocent man and woman are delivered (along with their children of the household).

Till:

Their children? All three of Noah's sons were married, so I would assume that the Bible intended readers to understand that they too were adults. The real children of the time were ignored by the all-knowing, all-merciful, omnibenevolent Yahweh and were allowed to die in the flood... but swiftly, of course.

I have now gone through, point by point, everything that Mr. Miller has said about the destructions of Sodom and Gomorrah and the entire earth, so I have a question to ask those who are reading this: **Did you see anything that he said that would morally justify Yahweh's killing of untold thousands?** If so, please point it out to me, because I honestly can't see it. As I said at the beginning of my reply, Mr. Miller's chief point of justification seems to be that if "God" did it, it had to be right. In other words, he is arguing that "God" can do no wrong, but he needs to do more than just assume this. He needs to present logical argumentation to support it.

At this point, Mr. Miller turned to the Amalekite massacre, mentioned above, so to keep the length of my replies to him within reason, I am going to stop here and continue my reply to his article in [Part Two](#).

Miller:

- The **Amalekite initiative** looks like an ordered annihilation.

Till:

Looks like an ordered annihilation? We have already seen in [this section](#) of Part One that, as the story was written in the Bible, it *was* an "ordered annihilation" and cannot be called anything else without just adamantly refusing to accept what the Bible plainly said. As I go through this part of Mr. Miller's article, point by point, please notice that he continues to rely on question begging and special pleading to present his God-can-do-no-wrong approach to the problem of Yahwistic massacres in the Bible. His argument seems to be that since "God" commanded other ethnic exterminations besides the Canaanites, the latter must have been morally right. This is clearly a non sequitur.

Miller:

This is what the LORD Almighty says: 'I will punish the Amalekites for what they did to Israel when they waylaid them as they came up from Egypt. 3 Now go, attack the Amalekites and totally destroy everything that belongs to them. Do not spare them; put to death men and women, children and infants, cattle and sheep, camels and donkeys.'" (1 Sam 15.2f)

The situation is thus:

Till:

No, the situation is that Yahweh allegedly told Saul to go destroy **totally** the Amalekites and to include children and infants in the destruction. There is just no way to whitewash what this passage plainly says, but as we will quickly see, Mr. Miller tries to clean it up and put a pretty face on it.

Miller:

- The Amalekites are a predatory, raiding, and nomadic group;

Till:

There are biblical claims that the Amalekites attacked the Israelites on their way out of Egypt ([Ex. 17:8-16](#)) and then later after they had entered Canaan ([Judges 3:13-14](#); [Judges 7:12](#)), but these encounters had happened some 400 years before Yahweh commanded Saul to destroy **totally** the Amalekites. The passage that Mr. Miller quoted above states very plainly that the reason for Yahweh's command to destroy the Amalekites was to punish them for their attack on the Israelites some 430 years earlier on their way out of Egypt. I will say more about this later as I go through Mr. Miller's attempt to rationalize the Amalekite massacre, but for now, I just want to emphasize that he simply cannot prove by the Bible that the Amalekites were the "predatory, raiding" group that he claimed above.

Before I leave this point, I will say that even if the Amalekites were "predatory" and "raiding," that would have made them no different from the Israelites. As noted earlier, on their way toward Canaan, the Israelites ravaged Midian and brought back "all of their cattle, all of their flocks, and all of their goods" and then killed all of the male children and nonvirgin females but kept the virgin girls alive for themselves ([Num. 31:9-18](#)), and in their blitzkrieg through Canaan, they killed entire civilian populations and left nothing alive to breathe [as noted [here](#) in Part One]. If Mr. Miller wants to see other examples, I can accommodate him. In reply to these examples, however, I suppose he will claim that such actions were not immoral as long as the Israelites did them, but if the Amalekites did them, that was sufficient to kill them all. If this is the route he takes, he will again be engaging in special pleading.

Miller:

- and are descendants of Esau (and hence, distant cousins to Israel).

Till:

That is what the Bible claims, but the fact that the Amalekites were presumably

"distant cousins" of Israel would not make what Miller says immediately below necessarily so.

Miller:

- They would have been aware of the promise of the Land **to** Israel, from the early promises to Esau's twin Jacob.

Till:

Even as the biblical story of Jacob and Esau was written, there is no indication at all that Esau knew about the land promise. Jacob was on his way to Paddanaram when Yahweh renewed the land promise given earlier to Abraham ([Gen. 28:10-15](#)), and Esau wasn't with Jacob at the time of the renewal. There is no biblical record that I am aware of that Esau was ever told of this promise, as if it would make any difference if he had been, because there would be no way at all to prove that because Esau knew of the land promise some 550 years before the time of king Saul, the Amalekite descendants of Esau would have known of a distant land promise that his god had made to Jacob.

When an inerrantist has to stretch this far to find a "point," you can tell that he is desperate for a point.

Miller:

- They did **not** live in Canaan (but in the lower, desert part of the Negev--a region south of where Judah will eventually settle), and would **not** have been threatened by Israel--had they believed the promises of God.

Till:

Where should I begin here? Well, first, as I just pointed out, there is no way to determine that they knew about "the promises of God" as Mr. Miller is claiming here. Second, he says that Israel wouldn't have threatened the Amalekites "had they believed the promises of God," but if these stories about the Amalekites are true, they would have had reason to wonder about [2.5 to 3 million Israelites](#) trekking up from Egypt toward their southern border. According to the tale of the spies whom Moses sent ahead to get the lay of the land, they were in the wilderness of Paran at the time ([Num. 12:16](#)), which was west of the Gulf of Aqaba and south of Amalekite territory. Moses told the spies to go up to Canaan "by way of the South" and then to "go up into the hill country" ([Num. 13:17-18](#)). This route to Canaan would have taken the spies into Amalekite territory. We can know that going this route would have taken the spies into Amalekite territory, because their report to Moses said that "Amalek dwells in the land of the south" ([Num. 13:29](#)). Further proof that this would have been Amalekite

territory is seen in action that the people took after Yahweh had sent a plague upon them for rebelling at the report of the spies.

***Numbers 14:36** So the men Moses had sent to explore the land, who returned and made the whole community grumble against him by spreading a bad report about it-- 37 these men responsible for spreading the bad report about the land were struck down and died of a plague before Yahweh. 38 Of the men who went to explore the land, only Joshua son of Nun and Caleb son of Jephunneh survived. 39 When Moses reported this to all the Israelites, they mourned bitterly. 40 Early the next morning they went up toward the high hill country. "We have sinned," they said. "We will go up to the place Yahweh promised." 41 But Moses said, "Why are you disobeying the Lord's command? This will not succeed! 42 Do not go up, because Yahweh is not with you. **You will be defeated by your enemies, 43 for the Amalekites and Canaanites will face you there.** Because you have turned away from Yahweh, he will not be with you and you will fall by the sword." 44 Nevertheless, in their presumption they went up toward the high hill country, though neither Moses nor the ark of the Lord's covenant moved from the camp. 45 **Then the Amalekites and Canaanites who lived in that hill country** came down and attacked them and beat them down all the way to Hormah.*

Mr. Miller has tried to paint the Israelites as goody-goodies personified, but as the Bible related the story just referred to, the Israelites tried to go through Amalekite territory in apparently large numbers, and they were pushed back by Amalekites and Canaanites, who, in effect, were only protecting their land from foreign invaders. I suppose Mr. Miller thinks that the Amalekites should have known of "God's" promise to give the Israelites the land, and so the Amalekites should have just stood aside and let their "distant cousins" come in and take their land, but that isn't the way nations react when they are threatened by outsiders encroaching on their territory. Just this week, the governor of New Mexico declared a state of emergency because of conditions on the Mexico/New Mexico border being created by intruders from the south. The right of people to protect their national territory has been recognized for centuries, and so the Amalekites were doing nothing that any modern country today would not do. The Israelite thrust northward into Amalekite territory could easily explain why "Amalek came and fought with Israel in Rephidim" ([Ex. 17:8-16](#)), although this battle seems to have happened earlier than the one referred to above. Regardless of that probability, a horde of [2.5 to 3 million](#) approaching their territory from the south would have given the Amalekites cause to launch a preemptive strike to turn them back. Mr. Miller can't argue that the Israelites were too far away at this time for the Amalekites to know that they were moving toward their territory, because the fact that the battle took place (if it did) would prove that the Amalekites had to know where the Israelites were. Besides, after the Israelites had crossed the Red Sea,

they sang a hymn to Yahweh whose lyrics claimed that word of their crossing had already reached the people of Philistia, Edom, Moab, and Canaan, which were all farther away than Amalekite territory.

*Exodus 15:13 In Your loving kindness You have led the people whom You have redeemed; In Your strength You have guided them to Your holy habitation. 14 The peoples have heard, they tremble; **Anguish has gripped the inhabitants of Philistia.** 15 **Then the chiefs of Edom were dismayed; The leaders of Moab, trembling grips them; All the inhabitants of Canaan have melted away.** 16 Terror and dread fall upon them; By the greatness of Your arm they are motionless as stone; Until Your people pass over, O Yahweh, Until the people pass over whom You have purchased.*

This hymn was sung after the Israelites had crossed the Red Sea, so don't ask me how nations like Philistia--which actually didn't exist at that time--Edom, Moab, and Canaan could have heard about this event before Moses "led Israel onward from the Red Sea" ([Ex. 15:22](#)). That's a problem that biblical inerrantists will have to explain. My point here is that if nations on beyond Amalekite territory had somehow heard immediately about the Israelite crossing of the Red Sea, there is no reason why the Amalekites couldn't have also heard about it. At any rate, if the Amalekites "came" to Rephidim and fought the Israelites, they had to know that they were there.

Mr. Miller is trying to make the Amalekites more barbarous than most tribes of that time, but there is no biblical support for this view. He is simply trying to defend the execution of a centuries-long Israelite grudge against the Amalekites. After the battle at Rephidim, as this story was told, Yahweh declared the grudge.

*Exodus 17:14 Then Yahweh said to Moses, "Write this on a scroll as something to be remembered and make sure that Joshua hears it, **because I will completely blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven.**" 15 Moses built an altar and called it Yahweh is my Banner. 16 He said, "For hands were lifted up to the throne of Yahweh. **Yahweh will be at war against the Amalekites from generation to generation.**"*

Just before the Israelites entered Canaan, Moses reminded them of the grudge that Yahweh had pronounced on the Amalekites.

*Deuteronomy 25:19 When Yahweh your God gives you rest from all the enemies around you in the land he is giving you to possess as an inheritance, **you shall blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven. Do not forget!***

There is the reason for Yahweh's command to exterminate the Amalekites. Mr. Miller has tried to paint them as "predators" and "raiders" so vexing to the Israelites that Yahweh had no choice but to order their extermination, but this is a spin that Mr.

Miller is trying to put onto the situation in order to take attention from the moral repugnance of the atrocity that took place. If the Bible is inerrant, as Mr. Miller seems to believe, then he must accept the reason that the Bible gives for the issuance of the command to eradicate the Amalekites. Here it is again, which I am quoting this time from the Jewish Publication Society's version to show that even Jews recognize the reason why this command was given. As you read it, please notice the bold-print emphasis.

*1 Samuel 15:1 Samuel said to Saul, "I am the one [Yahweh] sent to anoint you king over His people Israel. Therefore, listen to [Yahweh's] **command!** 2 Thus said [Yahweh] of hosts: **I am exacting the penalty for what Amalek did to Israel, for the assault he made upon them on the road, on their way out of Egypt. Now go, attack Amalek, and proscribe all that belongs to them. Spare no one, but kill alike men and women, infants and sucklings, oxen and sheep, camel and asses!"***

Mr. Miller and every other biblical inerrantist on earth can read this passage until doomsday, and they will find no reason why Yahweh gave the command to exterminate the Amalekites except the one emphasized in bold print: Yahweh was finally carrying out the grudge he pronounced in the passages quoted before this. He was "exacting the penalty for what Amalek did to Israel on their way out of Egypt."

That this was clearly the reason for the command is also shown in the next two verses, where Saul gave the Kenites safe passage out of Amalekite territory, because their ancestors had shown kindness to the Israelites on their way to Canaan.

*4 So Saul summoned the men and mustered them at Telaim--two hundred thousand foot soldiers and ten thousand men from Judah. 5 Saul went to the city of Amalek and set an ambush in the ravine. 6 Then he said to the Kenites, "Go away, leave the Amalekites so that I do not destroy you along with them; **for you showed kindness to all the Israelites when they came up out of Egypt.**" So the Kenites moved away from the Amalekites.*

That is clear enough, isn't it? Saul spared the Kenites, because their ancestors had shown kindness to the Israelites after they had come out of Egypt, but the Amalekites hadn't, and so Yahweh gave the orders to exterminate them. No reason for the command can be found **anywhere** but in this passage, and the reason given here was to extract punishment for something the Amalekite ancestors had done some 400 years earlier.

Although Mr. Miller didn't do so, some biblical inerrantists have defended Yahweh's reason for the massacre on the grounds that the Amalekite attack on the Israelites recorded in Exodus 17 had been made on the rear of the horde, where the weak and

feeble ones were straggling behind. Some of my comments now, as well as those above, anticipate some of Mr. Miller's rationalizations further along, but when I come to them, I can reply by referring readers back to this section.

Deuteronomy 25:17 Remember what the Amalekites did to you along the way when you came out of Egypt. 18 When you were weary and worn out, they met you on your journey and cut off all who were lagging behind; they had no fear of God.

To this, I can only say, "So what?" This incident had happened around 430 years before Saul was commanded to go destroy totally the Amalekites of his time. Is it morally right to hold people responsible for something their ancestors had done centuries earlier? This is the kind of thinking that results in centuries-old ethnic grudges in places like Bosnia and the Near East, which we hear about so often in the news. If we went back in time 430 years, we would be in the year 1575, which would be just 83 years after the discovery of the "new world" and 31 years before the first permanent colony was established at Jamestown. An account by Robert Beverly described [an Indian attack on the colony](#) on March 22, 1622, which killed 347 colonial settlers. The attack was deceptive in that the Indians, who had been on friendly terms with the colony, came into Jamestown as friends, as they often had, and then turned on colonists. Here is Beverly's description of the attack.

The very morning of the massacre they [the Indians] came freely and unarmed among them, eating with them and behaving themselves with the same freedom and friendship as formerly till the very minute they were to put their plot in execution. Then they fell to work all at once everywhere, knocking the English unawares on the head, some with their hatchets, which they call tomahawks, others with the hoes and axes of the English themselves, shooting at those who escaped the reach of their hands, sparing neither age nor sex but destroying man, woman, and child according to their cruel way of leaving none behind to bear resentment. But whatever was not done by surprise that day was left undone, and many that made early resistance escaped.

I doubt that any ethnically identifiable descendants of the Powhatan tribe exist today, but let's suppose they did exist on some reservation like the present-day descendants of other tribes. What would public reaction be if the president of the United States should say that he was going to exact the penalty for what the Powhatan tribe had done at Jamestown in 1622 and then sent army troops onto their reservation to destroy totally all of them, including women, children, and infants, along with any livestock they might have? Do you suppose there would be any public outrage if such a deed as this were done? The Nazi holocaust happened just some 50-60 years ago, but what would world reaction be if the Israelis, who almost certainly have atomic weapons, should send a fleet of bombers into Germany to nuke them on the pretense of

"extracting penalty" for what had been done to Jews during the Nazi era? Do you suppose there would be any cries of outrage around the world?

At times, I get the impression as I am going through Mr. Miller's article that he is laying down a smokescreen by talking about "predators" and "raiders" to try to hide from his readers what the Bible really says about the Amalekite massacre, but if this is his intention, I urge readers to look through the smoke. For pity's sake, the Bible plainly says that "God" gave a command to destroy completely the Amalekites of Saul's day for something that their ancestors had done 430 years earlier. There is just no way to whitewash this incident and make it morally acceptable.

Miller:

- As soon as Israel escapes Egypt--before they can even 'catch their breath'--the Amalekites make a long journey south(!) and attack Israel.

Till:

I replied to this rationalization above. When its borders are threatened, a nation can be expected to take military action, but let's just suppose that this wasn't the reason for the Amalekite attack on Israel at Rephidim. Let's suppose that it had been done for no other reason except sheer maliciousness. How would that justify massacring their descendants, including children and infants--430 years later?

Are the people who offer this "explanation" for the Amalekite massacre really serious? Do they really believe that a moral wrong committed by people today would be a justifiable reason for massacring their descendants 430 years later?

Miller:

- Their first targets were the helpless:

Deuteronomy 25.17-19 Remember what the Amalekites did to you along the way when you came out of Egypt. 18 ***When you were weary and worn out, they met you on your journey and cut off all who were lagging behind; they had no fear of God.*** 19 ***When the LORD your God gives you rest from all the enemies around you in the land he is giving you to possess as an inheritance, you shall blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven. Do not forget!***

Till:

I quoted this same text earlier, so I need say no more than what I said then, and immediately above, how would a dastardly Amalekite attack on the Israelites on their

way to Canaan justify killing 430 years later all of their descendants, who had had nothing to do with that attack on Israel?

Miller:

- Before the attack on Amalek is initiated by Israel, the innocent are told to 'move away' from them: *Saul went to the city of Amalek and set an ambush in the ravine. 6 Then he said to the Kenites, "Go away, leave the Amalekites so that I do not destroy you along with them; for you showed kindness to all the Israelites when they came up out of Egypt." So the Kenites moved away from the Amalekites. (1 Sam 15.5f).*

Till:

I also quoted this passage above and commented on it there. It does nothing at all to help Mr. Miller's case, because it merely confirms that the reason for Yahweh's command to wipe out the Amalekites was to extract punishment for what their ancestors had done 430 years earlier. I would ask Mr. Miller to tell us if he really thinks that killing people for what their ancestors had done centuries earlier would be morally right.

Miller:

This action would have also served to give the people of Amalek plenty of notice (*i.e.*, time to 'move away' themselves), and the impending attack by Saul--especially with the troop counts reported!--would hardly have been a surprise.

Till:

Well, who has ever said that the attack was a surprise? As the passage quoted earlier claims, Saul mustered 210,000 soldiers for the attack ([1 Sam. 15:4](#)). I can't conceive of an army this big coming into a territory without the people living there being aware of it, but the issue is not whether the Amalekites were surprised or whether Saul gave them a warning of the attack. The issue is whether it was morally right for even a god to order the extermination of a people for something that their ancestors had done four centuries earlier. The rest is just part of the smokescreen that Mr. Miller is laying down as he gropes to find some kind of justification for the Amalekite massacre.

Miller:

Some of them would likely have fled--we **know** all of them were not killed, since they 'lived to fight/raid again' in David's time ([1 Sam 27,30](#)) and even in Hezekiah's time (200-300 years later!, [1 Chr 4:43](#)).

Till:

All that Mr. Miller has done here is call attention to one of the oddities of the Bible. It

seems that when nations were completely eradicated, they didn't always stay eradicated. I have already quoted above the text ([Num. 31:1-18](#)), which told of an invasion of Midian in which the Israelites killed "all the men" ([vs:7-8](#)), brought the women and children back as captives ([v:9](#)), and killed all of the males and the nonvirgin females ([v:16-18](#)). One would think that after all of this, the Midianite nation would have been pretty well done in, but even though this national massacre had happened close to the end of the Israelite wilderness wanderings, we find that Midianites were still alive and kicking in the time of the judges. Yahweh, in fact, used them to enslave the Israelites for seven years as punishment for their having done "that which was evil in the sight of Yahweh" ([Judges 6:1-6](#)), so if the Midianites were able to enslave [2.5 to 3 million Israelites](#), they did indeed make an unusually fast recover from the devastating massacre in Numbers 31. Gideon later led a force of 300 against an Amalekite/Midianite army that "lay all along the valley like locusts for multitude" ([Judges 7:6-7,12](#)). Of course, most of the soldiers in this army were undoubtedly Amalekites, because it doesn't seem likely that any Midianites who survived the massacre in Numbers 31 could have reproduced in numbers great enough to muster enough fighting men to fit the description of the army that Gideon's 300 men faced in the passage just cited.

The Canaanites in Hazor were rather resilient too. Joshua defeated them early in his campaign in Canaan and killed their king Jabin ([Josh. 11:1,10](#)), but Jabin somehow led a Canaanite army in a later battle in [Judges 4:1-3, 23-24](#)). As the links will show, Jabin was killed in this battle too.

I could give other examples, but these are sufficient to show that people and nations sometimes didn't stay dead when they were killed in the Bible. Those interested in seeing more details about the rebounding of nations that the Hebrews presumably wiped out should read "[Those Resilient Heathens](#)," which will show that all that Mr. Miller has done above is identify the Amalekites as another example of exterminated nations that somehow made amazing comebacks.

- [First Samuel 1:7-8](#) plainly says that Saul "utterly destroyed all of the people [of Amalek] with the sword" except for king Agag, whom he kept alive.
- In [verse 15](#), Saul said to Samuel that he had "utterly destroyed" the rest of the people [except for Agag].
- In [verses 20-21](#), Saul said again that he had spared Agag and "utterly destroyed the Amalekites."
- [Verse 33](#) says that Samuel hacked Agag to pieces in Gilgal.

If these are inerrant statements in an inerrant Bible, then the Amalekite nation was eradicated on that day, but the scriptures that Mr. Miller quoted show that somehow

the Amalekites made a comeback to fight Israelites another day. Mr. Miller tries to make this problem into just a matter of some Amalekites having escaped, but if this happened, why didn't the inspired writer say so instead of claiming that Saul had "utterly destroyed them." One of the passages that Mr. Miller cited above states that in a battle with David from "twilight till evening the next day," all of the "resurrected" Amalekites were killed except "four hundred young men, who rode upon camels and fled" ([1 Sam. 30:17](#)). Now that is the way that any self-respecting writer inspired by an omniscient, omnipotent deity should report incidents. If some escaped in a battle, just say so. Don't say that they were "utterly destroyed" if they weren't.

Miller:

Kaiser notes in [EBC](#): Exodus 17.8:

Till:

This link connects readers to an endnote, which identifies the source of the quotation below as from *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*. That it was published by Zondervan books should tell readers to expect the quotation from it (below) to express a bias for biblical accuracy.

Miller [quoting Kaiser]:

Amalek's assault on Israel drew the anger of God on two counts: (1) they failed to recognize the hand and plan of God in Israel's life and destiny (even the farther-removed Canaanites of Jericho had been given plenty to think about when they heard about the Exodus--Josh 2.10); and (2) the first targets of their warfare were the sick, aged, and tired of Israel who lagged behind the line of march (Deut 25:17-19).

Till:

Well, I see that Kaiser also knows how to beg questions. He assumes that the Bible is right in saying that "the hand and plan of God [was] in Israel's life and destiny," but how does he know that this was true. Extrabiblical writings like [the Moabite Stone](#) and [inscriptions on pavement stones](#) at the temple of Urta in Nimrud state very clear beliefs of non-Hebraic kings that their gods favored them and led them to victory over their enemies, one of which, in the case of the Moabite king Mesha was Israel. An inscription on [the gate of Istar](#) in Babylon said that Nebuchadnezzar had been appointed king "by the will of Marduk." In other words, belief that kings and nations had been favored by gods to receive special favors was about as commonplace as dirt in those days, so I am curious to know why Mr. Miller believes that biblical references that, in effect, claimed that "the hand of God [was] in Israel's life and destiny" are true, but extrabiblical inscriptions about favors bestowed by the gods on other people are not. Mr. Miller seems to believe that if he keeps referring to what the Bible says about the

special divine favor that the god Yahweh had given to the Israelites, that will be sufficient to prove that they were. This is question begging gone to seed.

Kaiser said in the quotation above that even the people in Jericho had been "given plenty to think about when they heard about the Exodus." I have two comments to make about this: (1) The position that Kaiser and Miller seem to be taking about the Yahwistic massacres is that if the victims of the massacres knew that the Israelites were coming, they had no one to blame but themselves if they were later killed, but they have failed to give any kind of logical reason to support that position. According to this logic, all of the people who have been killed by American military action in Iraq have no one to blame but themselves, because they knew weeks in advance that the invasion was coming. This kind of thinking doesn't seem to recognize that fleeing isn't always practical or even possible. After all, if people are entrenched in a land and have invested their lives in building houses and farming land and tending herds, they would be reluctant to leave without making an effort to hang on to what they have. (2) Kaiser, like Mr. Miller, is assuming biblical inerrancy, but there is plenty of good evidence to suggest that the battle of Jericho never happened, because it had already been destroyed by the time of the alleged Israelite entry into Canaan. Those who want to see the evidence of this should read ["The Walls of Jericho"](#) by Brett Palmer, which is a detailed rebuttal of Robert Turkel's ["Evidence of Jericho,"](#) an article in which Turkel tried to defend the historicity of the biblical account.

As for Kaiser's second point quoted above, I have already shown that even if the Amalekites did, in fact, attack the Israelites on their way out of Egypt, they were not the same Amalekites that Yahweh allegedly ordered exterminated. The latter would have been descendants of the Amalekites who launched the attack, and these descendants lived over 400 years after that attack, so whether "the sick, aged, and tired of Israel who lagged behind the line of march" were the targets of that Amalekite attack is irrelevant. Mr. Miller may think that he helped his case by bringing the Amalekites into his defense of Yahwistic massacres, but instead he has irreparably damaged his case. No longer can he just argue that Yahweh was morally entitled to order the Israelites to exterminate the Canaanites of that time in order to gain possession of their land, he must now show logical reasons why it would have been morally right for Yahweh to command the total destruction of a people for something that their ancestors had done four centuries earlier.

To argue that this was a morally correct action would be parallel to saying that killing descendants of the Powhatan Indians for the Jamestown massacre in 1622 would also be morally right.

Miller:

But Amalek continues to **repeatedly** oppress, terrorize, and vandalize Israel for between 200 and 400 more years!

Till:

And what is Mr. Miller's proof of this? He can't even cite biblical claims that the Amalekites had terrorized the Israelites for 400 years. I cited above the passages that mention troubles that the Israelites had with Amalekites, and from the reference in [Judges 10:12](#) where Yahweh speaking--which he did routinely in those days--referred to having saved the Israelites out of the hand of the Sadonians, Maonites, and Amalekites when the Israelites cried out to him until the command in [1 Samuel 15:2](#) for Saul to destroy totally the Amalekites, there was no biblical reference to the Amalekites, much less any reference to oppression, terror, or vandalism that they inflicted on the Israelites. For about a 200-year span, then, there was no biblical reference to the Amalekites. How, then, does Mr. Miller know that the Amalekites had continued to "oppress, terrorize, and vandalize Israel for between 200 and 400 more years."

I will tell you what I think happened here. What Mr. Miller said above has been repeated by fundamentalist preachers over and over and over. I heard it myself as a young preacher, trusted the older preachers who had said it, and so I passed it along without bothering to see if there was biblical confirmation of the claim. I suspect that this is what Mr. Miller has done. He heard it, he trusted those he heard it from, and so he uncritically passed it along, **but the truth is that there are no records, biblical or extrabiblical, to confirm Mr. Miller's claim.** I am sure that discerning readers will understand that Mr. Miller didn't quote or cite any biblical, or extrabiblical, texts to support his claim that the Amalekites oppressed, terrorized, and vandalized the Israelites for 200 to 400 years, because there are none. With as much respect to him as I can muster, I just have to say that I wonder about the intellectual integrity of biblical "apologists" who make claims like this that have no evidence to support them.

If I am wrong, I will apologize to Mr. Miller when he presents corroborative evidence that the Amalekites had continued to "oppress, terrorize, and vandalize Israel for between 200 and 400 more years." Meanwhile, I hope that readers of Mr. Miller's website will learn from this to be a bit more critical of articles obviously intended to establish inerrancy in the Bible, especially when they just recycle "explanations" that have been responded to over and over.

Mr. Miller:

And yet, Amalekites were freely accepted as immigrants to Israel during this period.

Till:

They were? Just where did Mr. Miller get this? He is claiming to know that Israel "freely accepted Amalekites as immigrants," even though the Bible makes no mention of Amalekites from the early period of the judges until the reign of Saul. There is a reference in [1 Chronicles 4:43](#) to a raid that the "sons of Simeon" launched against "the remnant of the Amalekites" that had escaped and dwelt on mount Seir "until that day." This raid occurred in the time of Hezekiah, so it would have happened well after the time of Saul. Besides, mount Seir was located in Moab, so the presence there of a "remnant of the Amalekites" would in no way prove that they had been "freely accepted as immigrants to Israel."

Miller:

Let's note again that (1) they had plenty of access to 'truth' (at **least** 400 years since Jacob and Land-promise),

Till:

I hate to sound like a broken record, but Mr. Miller is begging questions again. How does he know that what the Bible presents about Jacob and the land promise was the "truth" rather than just the Israelite version of the common belief of the times that tribes and nations had been specially chosen of their "god(s)"? Even if we assume that the Israelite version of this common belief was the "truth," how would Mr. Miller know that the Amalekites had had access to it for 400 years? Judaism was not an evangelical religion, so it didn't send out preachers and missionaries to tell others that of all the gods and religions of that time, theirs were the true ones.

Miller:

plus enough information about the miraculous Exodus to know where/when to attack Israel;

Till:

Yes, as noted above, the theme of the "Song of Miriam" was that nations to the north, like Edom, Moab, Canaan, and the nonexistent Philistia, had already heard about the Israelite crossing before Moses led them "onward from the Red Sea" ([Ex. 15:22](#)), so if one can believe in instantaneous transmission of information over long distances in a time when there were no rapid communication systems, he may as well believe that the Amalekites had also heard about the exodus. Whatever the Amalekites had heard, however, and no matter what they may have done to the Israelites in the alleged attack on their rear guard, that is irrelevant, because the Amalekites whom Saul was ordered to exterminate lived about 430 years later. By what logic did Mr. Miller determine that the Amalekites contemporary to Saul should have been killed for something their ancestors had done centuries earlier? Believing that the Amalekites should all have

been massacred in Saul's time for something their distant ancestors had done doesn't tax Mr. Miller's sense of justice?

Miller:

(2) even their war conduct was cruel by current standards(!);

Till:

I realize that Mr. Miller is trying to put an acceptable spin on the Amalekite massacre, but he is now doing nothing but stringing together unsustainable assertions. As previously noted, the Israelites burned the Canaanite cities they conquered and left nothing alive in them to breathe. What did the Amalekites do in their attack on the Israelites that was crueler than this? In the inscription on the [Moabite Stone](#), Mesha said that he went to Nebo by night "and fought against it from break of dawn till noon" and that he "took it and **slew all, seven thousand men, boys, and women, and girls.**" How was the Amalekite attack on the Israelites crueler than the massacre described here? In the inscriptions on the pavement stones in the temple to Urta in Nimrud, the Assyrian king Assurnasirpal gave a very gruesome description of his treatment of prisoners taken in battle.

*At that time, I received tribute of the land of Isala--cattle, flocks, and wine. To the mountain of Kashirari I crossed, to Kinabu, the fortified city of Hulai I drew near. With the masses of my troops and by my furious battle onset I stormed, I captured the city; **600 of their warriors I put to the sword; 3,000 captives I burned with fire; I did not leave a single one among them alive to serve as hostage.** Hulai, their governor, I captured alive. Their corpses I formed into pillars; **their young men and maidens I burned in the fire.** Hulai, their governor, **I flayed, his skin I spread upon the wall of the city of Damdamusa; the city I destroyed, I devastated with fire** (Crane Brinton, *A History of Western Morals*, Harcourt, Brace, & Co., p. 48).*

In what way was the Amalekite attack on the Israelites crueler than what Assurnasirpal claimed that he did to captives taken in battle?

Besides the Canaanite and Amalekite massacres already referred to several times, the Bible mentions other atrocities that were surely as barbaric and cruel as anything the Amalekites could have done in their attack on the Israelites.

- The Israelites cut off the thumbs and big toes of king Adonibeseq, as he had previously done to kings that he had captured ([Judges 6:1-7](#)).
- After capturing Rabbah, David took the people and "set [them] under saws, sharp iron instruments, and iron axes, and made them pass through the brickkiln" and did the same in all the cities of Ammon ([2 Sam. 12:31](#)). Some

translations try to hide the horror of this atrocity by making the text say that David put the people to work with saws, sharp iron instruments, iron axes, etc., but this would mean that after having destroyed them, David put the people to work rebuilding their cities and land. That is unlikely, and, besides, the parallel account in [1 Chronicles 20:3](#) makes the meaning clear: "*He [David] led out the people who lived there and he **hacked** them with saws and iron threshing boards and axes.*" This is the JPS translation, but other translations are just as clear. The KJV, ASV, NASV, and Darby's, say that David "cut them." These translations probably capture the meaning better than those that try to make it parallel to 2 Samuel 12:31, because it just wasn't the custom of the time for armies to destroy cities and then help to rebuild them.

- In his brigand days as a fugitive from Saul, David raided cities of the Amalekites, who had somehow survived Saul's utter destruction 12 chapters earlier, and "did not leave a man or a woman alive" ([1 Sam. 27:8-9](#)).
- After an attack on Moab, David made the captives lie on the ground in lines, where he measured them with a cord; then he killed two lines within the length of the cord and spared the third ([2 Sam. 8:1](#)).
- After capturing Tiphseh, king Menahem [of Israel] "ripped open all the pregnant women" ([2 Kings 15:16](#)).

I see nothing in the account of the Amalekite attack on Israel, already quoted above, to indicate that the Amalekite conduct of war was crueller than "current standards." Indeed, there is an indication that their standards were noticeably more humane than Israel's. Those elusive Amalekites, who kept coming up after they had been totally destroyed, once showed a much higher standard of humaneness than was shown in the examples noted above.

*1 Samuel 30:1 Then it happened when David and his men came to Ziklag on the third day, that the Amalekites had made a raid on the Negev and on Ziklag, and had overthrown Ziklag and burned it with fire; 2 **and they took captive the women and all who were in it, both small and great, without killing anyone, and carried them off and went their way.** 3 When David and his men came to the city, behold, it was burned with fire, and their wives and their sons and their daughters had been taken captive.*

The Israelite method of warfare was to leave no one alive to breathe, but in this account of the Amalekite raid on Ziklag, they killed no one but took the population captive instead. It seems rather obvious whose "standards" of warfare were more noble, if war can in any sense be considered noble. As I said above, Mr. Miller is struggling to put a prettier face on Saul's massacre of the Amalekites, and in so doing,

he is making assertions that have no basis in biblical records. Does Mr. Miller believe that Mesha's claimed capture of Nebo and his subsequent slaughter of 7,000 men, boys, women, and girls in it was a judgment of the god Chemosh against this city? The inscription on the [Moabite Stone](#) certainly indicates that it was. Does Mr. Miller believe that Assurnasirpal's massacre of 600 warriors and 3000 captives in the city of Hulai was a judgment against that city by his gods? The inscriptions on the pavement stones of the [temple of Urta](#) in Nimrud claim that Assurnasirpal was "chosen of Sin [moon god], favorite of Anu, beloved of Adad, mighty one among the gods." What is Mr. Miller's rationale for accepting everything that the Bible says about Yahweh's executing "judgment" on the enemies of Israel but rejecting parallel claims that neighboring nations made about their gods?

The answer to this question is simple: Mr. Miller has been engaged in special pleading throughout his article that I am answering.

Miller:

(3) the semi-annihilation was a judgment;

Till:

The "semi-annihilation"? As we have noticed Yahweh ordered a complete, **total** annihilation and was thoroughly ticked off when Saul kept just one of the Amalekites alive. As for Miller's claim that this was a "judgment," that is another case of question begging on his part. He assumes that because the Bible says that Yahweh was "exacting a penalty" for the attack on Israel over 400 years earlier, this was a correct statement. He apparently doesn't even consider the possibility that this was nothing more than an Israelite belief that their god Yahweh was leading them in war, just as Mesha believed that Chemosh led him in war and as Assurnasirpal believed that the gods were leading him.

Miller:

(4) God was willing to spare the innocent people--and specifically gave them the opportunity to move away;

Till:

Oh, really? I guess that was why Yahweh's command to Saul explicitly said that he was to destroy the Amalekites **totally** and spare them not and expressly included children and infants in the command. Miller is apparently arguing that Yahweh ordered Saul to destroy **totally** the Amalekites, but then he graciously found a way to let some of them escape. Of course, he has no evidence to support that speculation.

Miller:

(5) children living in the households of stubbornly-hostile parents (who refused to flee

or join Israel earlier) died swiftly in the one-day event (instead of being killed--as homeless orphans--by a combination of starvation, wild beasts, exposure, disease, and other raiders; or instead of being captured and sold as foreign slaves by neighboring tribes, for the older ones perhaps?)--they are victims of their fathers' terrorist and oppressive habits toward Israel;

Till:

I have been trying to be civil to Mr. Miller, but that is hard to do when I read comments like this, which he keeps repeating in justification of every massacre that he brings into the discussion. In the first place, how can Miller know that the Amalekite children died "swiftly"? Where does the biblical text indicate that the children died "swiftly"? [Verse 9](#) in the biblical account of this massacre said that Saul "utterly destroyed all of the people **with the edge of the sword.**" I can't imagine that in every case of a child or baby who was run through or hacked with swords, the deaths were "swift." This is nothing more than an attempt by Miller to make a grudge killing more palatable, and it deserves nothing more than our contempt.

Miller:

(6) the innocent members of the community (Kenites) and any change-of-heart Amalekites who fled are delivered (along with their children of the household).

Till:

Here again are some wild guesses for which Mr. Miller has no supporting evidence. Where does the biblical text say anything about Amalekites who had changes of heart and fled? Where does it say that "the children of [their] households" were delivered with them? These are simply wild speculations. Because Amalekites were mentioned later, Miller assumes that they escaped because they had changes of heart and fled, with their children, but that is a non sequitur if I ever saw one. If we assume that this massacre really happened, why would it not have been possible that these were Amalekites who happened to be away from the region when Saul came into their territory to massacre them? Miller, of course, wants to whitewash this atrocity as best he can, and so he has Yahweh mercifully "delivering" those--and their children--who had changes of heart. I guess that is his way of saying, "Isn't Yahweh a really nice guy?" His speculations, however, fail to address the huge problems in this story: (1) Why would Yahweh have ordered Saul in the first place to go massacre an entire nation of people for something that their ancestors had done 430 years earlier? (2) Why would Yahweh have "delivered" only the children of parents who changed their hearts and fled? Why wouldn't an omniscient, omnipotent deity have known how to spare all of the innocent children?

In all that he has said **and speculated** in his comments about the Amalekites, Mr. Miller has said nothing to solve the moral problem involved in this story.

Miller:

[This brief summary above was objected to by a passionate writer, who asked [Shouldn't the butchering of Amalekite children be considered war crimes?](#) (Feb 19/2000, Part one:159k),

Till:

And rightly so! Rational people should object to it. Why should reasonable people accept conduct in a deity, whom they have never seen, that they would condemn in neighbors and nations? If, for example, the United States should undertake to kill everyone in Iraq, including children, and babies in order to remove them as a threat to our national security, would Mr. Miller find that decision morally right?

If he says, "Well, God decided to destroy the Amalekites totally, and that would have been different from the United States deciding to destroy completely its enemies," he will be engaging in question begging again by assuming that "God" really did order the extermination of the Amalekites. In all that he has said, Mr. Miller has not presented any logical reason why we should think that it was morally right to exterminate the Amalekites. His line of reasoning has been what I said at the beginning of my reply that it would be. He begs the question of biblical accuracy and then argues that if the Bible says that God ordered the massacre of the Canaanites and Amalekites, then God ordered the massacre of the Canaanites and Amalekites, so these massacres have to have been morally right, because God can do no wrong. That kind of argumentation is so fallacious that I need not say any more about it than I already have.

Miller:

and centers mostly on the emotionally difficult problem of the killing of the children (of Amalekites, but it would extend generally to the Canaanites and others as well).]

Till:

What else should it center on? As for extending it to Canaanites "and others" too, it certainly should be, because as we have noticed already, Yahweh commanded the Israelites to utterly destroy the Canaanites and to leave none of them alive to breathe. That would have meant the destruction of children too, so I will alter slightly Miller's statement above and call this a **morally** difficult problem of the killing of the children rather than an emotionally difficult one. If Mr. Miller does not find this a morally difficult problem, then he is allowing his allegiance to the ideology of biblical inerrancy to suppress his common sense.

Miller:

- In each of these cases the peoples did **not** 'change behavior'--let's look at one people that **did: the "anti-Example" of Ninevah.**

In the book of Jonah, we have an 'averted annihilation'.

- The wickedness of the city is great; prompts God to intervene ([1.1-2](#)).

The word of the LORD came to Jonah son of Amittai: 2 "Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it, because its wickedness has come up before me."

Till:

I will cut Mr. Miller's "anti-example" off at the pass. As he did above, he assumes below that whatever the Bible says must be historically accurate, and so he proceeds on the assumption that all claims in the book of Jonah are inerrant, including, I assume, the tale of the "great fish" that swallowed Jonah. As I continue to reply to his assertions, I will show good reasons why we should suspect that the book of Jonah is not historically accurate.

Miller:

- God sends Jonah to pronounce what **looks like** an 'unconditional prophecy' ([3.3f](#))--

Jonah obeyed the word of the LORD and went to Nineveh. Now Nineveh was a very important city--a visit required three days. 4 On the first day, Jonah started into the city. He proclaimed: "Forty more days and Nineveh will be overturned."

Till:

As usual, the NIV, which Mr. Miller quotes from, has tried to translate away a problem that casts doubt on Miller's belief that the Bible is inerrant. Verse 2, quoted above, says that Nineveh was an "important city" and that "a visit required three days." This could mean that in order to see everything, one would have to spend three days there, but the generally recognized meaning is that it was a city that required three days to pass through it. This meaning was made clearer in other translations.

KJV:** Now Nineveh was **an exceeding great city of three days' journey.

NKJV:** Now Nineveh was **an exceedingly great city, a three-day journey in extent

ASV:** Now Nineveh was **an exceeding great city, of three days' journey

NASV: Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city, a three days' walk.

NRSV: Now Nineveh was an exceedingly large city, a three days' walk across.

Jewish Publication Society: Nineveh was an enormously large city a three days' walk across.

I could quote others, but these are sufficient to show that the verse most probably meant that Nineveh was a large city--not an important one--which took three days to walk across. That this was the probable meaning was made clear even as the NIV continued into the next verses, which say that "Jonah began to go into the city, going a day's walk" and "cried out, 'Forty days more, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!'" If Jonah went a day's walk into the city, he would have needed two more days to walk the rest of the way through it, according to the biblical claim of its size, but a day's journey in the Bible was about 20 to 25 miles, so if Jonah went a "day's walk" into the city, he would have passed through its actual three-mile width (documented below) and found himself preaching to sand in the countryside. If the Nineveh of Jonah's time really was an enormous city of a "three days' walk," its diameter would have been somewhere between 60 to 75 miles. That would have made it bigger in area than present-day Los Angeles, St. Louis, Denver, and Chicago.

This claim is not consistent with archaeological diggings at the site of ancient Nineveh. In ["A Very Great city,"](#) Dave Matson discussed Jonah 3:3 in the light of those archaeological discoveries, which have found that Nineveh was only three miles across at its widest point. It appears, then, that the description of Nineveh's size is just another example of biblical exaggeration, but I don't expect Mr. Miller to accept this as a biblical discrepancy. Anyone who could justify the mass slaughters of children, as Mr. Miller did in his article, will easily accept some of the quibbles that inerrantists have postulated to "explain" the exaggeration of Nineveh's size. One quibble is that the three-day journey in Jonah 3:3 really meant that this was the size of the region or territory that Nineveh was in. This [website article](#) about the archaeology of ancient Nineveh proposed that very "solution" to the problem.

The city itself, with the walls around it, was 3 miles long and 1.5 miles wide. It is interesting that the prophet Jonah described the "great city" of Nineveh as a "3 days journey" across, obviously referring to the whole territory as does other parts of the Bible. He must have passed through several cities at the time.

Those who present this "explanation" of the problem ignore completely that the biblical text says that "Nineveh was an enormously large **city**"; it says nothing here about a region or territory. **The city** was enormously large. If the writer was referring to a territory instead of just the city of Nineveh, why would he have said that it was

"enormously large"? That could have been said of many regions or territories at that time. Further indication that a city and not a region or territory was meant in the writer's narration of this tale is seen in [4:5](#), which says that after Jonah had been displeased to learn that Yahweh was going to spare the Ninevites, he "left **the city** and "found a place east of **the city**, where he made a booth and sat under its shade." When Yahweh later addressed Jonah's anger over the dying of the gourd vine that had shaded the booth, he said that if Jonah was entitled to be angry over the gourd how much more should Yahweh have regard for "Nineveh, that **great city** ([4:11](#)), and at the very beginning of this book when Yahweh called Jonah to go to Nineveh, he said to him, "Go to **the great city** of Nineveh and preach against it, because its wickedness has come up before me" ([1:2](#)). Everything in this "story" indicates that the "enormously large" Nineveh was a city and not a territory or region, but the description of its size, as noted above, does not agree with the archaeological excavations of the city.

I have taken the time to discuss this discrepancy in order to ask a question: if the text of Jonah was inaccurate in the matter of its size, how can we know that it wasn't inaccurate in other matters too? This is an important point to keep in mind, because we will see that in discussing his "anti-example," Mr. Miller continued to beg the question of biblical accuracy [inerrancy].

Miller:

- Instead of turning a deaf ear (or even a scornful tongue) to Jonah, the people 'change direction' ([3.5-9](#)):

*5 The Ninevites believed God. They declared a fast, and all of them, from the greatest to the least, put on sackcloth. 6 When the news reached the king of Nineveh, he rose from his throne, took off his royal robes, covered himself with sackcloth and sat down in the dust. 7 Then he issued a proclamation in Nineveh: "By the decree of the king and his nobles: Do not let any man or beast, herd or flock, taste anything; do not let them eat or drink. 8 But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth. Let everyone call urgently on God. **Let them give up their evil ways and their violence.** 9 Who knows? God may yet relent and with compassion turn from his fierce anger so that we will not perish."*

Till:

I really don't understand how otherwise sensible people can't see obvious myth or legend in what they are reading. If Mr. Miller had read this is some document like the Moabite Stone or the temple inscriptions at Nimrud, he would have immediately

realized that these are at best exaggerations. After all, how likely would it have been that a stranger could have walked into the city of Nineveh and proclaimed, "Just forty days more, and Nineveh will be overthrown," and **all** of the people--not **some** of them but **all** of them--"from the greatest to the least" would have "believed God" (v:5)? *God* in this passage was, of course, Yahweh, but Nineveh was located well out of the region where Yahweh was worshiped, and the gods worshiped there, as noted in the link to Assurnasirpal's temple inscriptions, were Sin, Anu, Adad, Istar, and many others. How likely is it that the Ninevites would have immediately repented in sackcloth and dust over what some foreign prophet was preaching about a foreign god? When a storm struck the ship, which Jonah had taken to flee "from the presence of Yahweh" (1:3) the men aboard became frightened, and the shipmaster demanded that he call upon his "god" to keep them from perishing (v:6). That these were not worshipers of Yahweh was shown when Jonah said to them that he was a Hebrew who "fear[ed] Yahweh, the God of heaven, who made the sea and dry land" (v:9). Upon hearing this, the men became "exceeding afraid" (v:10), as if people hearing about a new god would immediately come to believe in him. This, however, is what the spinner of this tale would have us believe. Jonah went a day's journey into Nineveh and said, "Just forty days more, and Nineveh will be overthrown." Jonah didn't even mention Yahweh, but, just like that, the Ninevites immediately repented in sackcloth, and their king issued a decree ordering everyone, including man and beast, to fast so that "God" might turn from his fierce anger and spare them. This tale has myth written all over, but biblical inerrantists like Mr. Miller just won't even consider the possibility that this story didn't happen just as it is found in the Bible.

That this story wasn't written as history should become evident to anyone who takes the time to study its background. The central character Jonah was identified as "the son of Ammatai" (1:1), but it so happens that Jonah the son of Ammatai was mentioned elsewhere in the Bible in a context that enables us to date the time that he lived.

2 Kings 14:23 *In the fifteenth year of King Amaziah son of Joash of Judah, King Jeroboam son of Joash of Israel began to reign in Samaria; he reigned forty-one years. 24 He did what was evil in the sight of Yahweh; he did not depart from all the sins of Jeroboam son of Nebat, which he caused Israel to sin. 25 He restored the border of Israel from Lebo-hamath as far as the Sea of the Arabah, according to the word of Yahweh, the God of Israel, which he spoke by his servant **Jonah son of Amittai, the prophet**, who was from Gath-hepher.*

So this passage claims that Jonah had predicted the restoration of Israel's borders by king Jeroboam II. This would mean that Jonah was a predecessor of Jeroboam II, who reigned in the 8th century BC [from 786 to 746], but Nineveh did not become the capital of Assyria until Sennacherib's reign (705-681 BC). He moved the capital of

Assyria from Dar Sharrukin to Nineveh around 700 BC and built a palace there, but the passage quoted above by Mr. Miller referred to "the king of Nineveh" ([3:6](#)), who, after news of Jonah's message reached him, "rose from his throne," laid his robe aside, covered himself with sackcloth, sat in dust, and issued his decree to fast. Nineveh, however, did not become the capital of Assyria until at least 46 years after the death of Jeroboam II. If Jeroboam II had restored the borders of Israel, it would be unlikely that he had done this in the very last year of his reign, so if Jeroboam II had achieved the restoration of the borders of Israel, he would surely have done this earlier in this reign. If, then, Jonah was a predecessor of Jeroboam II, old enough to be a prophet who predicted Jeroboam's crowning achievement, and if Nineveh wasn't the capital of Assyria until 46 years after the end of the reign of Jeroboam II, Jonah must have been a pretty old guy when Yahweh sent him to Nineveh. No wonder the "great fish" vomited Jonah out on dry land. He would have been too old and tough to digest.

Another indication of fiction in the book of Jonah is its failure to identify the "king of Nineveh" by name. If Jonah was still living after Nineveh was made the capital of Assyria, then Sennacherib was surely the king when Yahweh sent Jonah there, because it would be even more unlikely that Jonah would have been still living 19 years later when Sennacherib's reign ended with his assassination ([2 Kings 19:36-37](#)), but Sennacherib was an important Assyrian king, who was mentioned by name in [2 Kings](#), [2 Chronicles 32](#), and [Isaiah 36-37](#), so it seems rather unlikely that the writer of Jonah would not have identified the "king of Nineveh" by name if he had been Sennacherib.

Although none of this is admittedly conclusive, it is sufficient to cast doubt on the historicity of Jonah, which Mr. Miller has obviously assumed throughout his discussion of this "anti-example." If inerrantists would bother to read commentaries that were not published in Grand Rapids, Michigan, they would see that there is a mainstream consensus that Jonah is a work of fiction that was probably written postexilically to express a more universalist view of Yahweh than the Hebrew chauvinist view of him presented in the Pentateuch, Joshua, and the books of Samuel and Kings, where he was depicted as a vindictive deity who would order the destruction of non-Hebraic people at the drop of a hat and would even be willing to drop the hat as an excuse to wipe them out. Very likely, the postexilic author of Jonah wanted to soften the earlier view of brutality in Israel's god.

Miller:

Notice that the 'questionable behavior' included "violence"--vs. 8.]

Till:

Notice that Mr. Miller is still begging the question of biblical accuracy [inerrancy], but what I said immediately above casts serious doubts on that view.

Miller:

- God responds to this "attitude adjustment" in grace ([3.10](#)):

When God saw what they did and how they turned from their evil ways, he had compassion and did not bring upon them the destruction he had threatened.

Till:

Yes, the story makes this claim, but keep in mind what I noted above: this book was very likely metaphorical or parabolic in its intent, so that a postexilic writer could present Yahweh as a kinder, gentler deity than he was in earlier times when he ordered harsh annihilations of non-Hebraic people. That theme was stated when Jonah realized that "God" had decided to spare the Ninevites after their citywide fast and repentance.

Jonah 4:1 But Jonah was greatly displeased and became angry. 2 He prayed to Yahweh, "O Yahweh, is this not what I said when I was still at home? That is why I was so quick to flee to Tarshish. I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity. 3 Now, O Yahweh, take away my life, for it is better for me to die than to live."

If Jonah knew that Yahweh was a gracious and compassionate God, who was slow to anger and abounded in love and relented from sending calamity, he must not have been very familiar with Hebrew history, because Mr. Miller's own examples that I have been discussing show that the god Yahweh was the opposite of how Jonah described him here. This passage should be interpreted in light of the writer's probable desire to present a better picture of Yahweh than how he was depicted in earlier Hebrew literature. Ezekiel, for example, depicted Yahweh quite differently even in the time of the exile, when Ezekiel was allegedly a captive in Babylon ([Ezek. 1:1-3](#)).

Ezekiel 14:12 The word of Yahweh came to me: 13 "Son of man, if a country sins against me by being unfaithful and I stretch out my hand against it to cut off its food supply and send famine upon it and kill its men and their animals, 14 even if these three men--Noah, Daniel and Job--were in it, they could save only themselves by their righteousness, declares the Sovereign Yahweh. 15 Or if I send wild beasts through that country and they leave it childless and it becomes desolate so that no one can pass through it because of the beasts, 16 as surely as I live, declares the Sovereign Yahweh, even if these three men were in it, they could not save their own sons or daughters. They alone would be saved, but the land would be desolate. 17 Or if I bring a sword against that country and say, 'Let the sword pass throughout the land,' and I kill its men and their animals, 18 as surely as I live, declares the Sovereign Yahweh, even if these three men were in it, they could not save their own sons or

daughters. They alone would be saved. 19 Or if I send a plague into that land and pour out my wrath upon it through bloodshed, killing its men and their animals, 20 as surely as I live, declares the Sovereign Yahweh, even if Noah, Daniel and Job were in it, they could save neither son nor daughter. They would save only themselves by their righteousness. 21 For this is what the Sovereign Yahweh says: How much worse will it be when I send against Jerusalem my four dreadful judgments--sword and famine and wild beasts and plague--to kill its men and their animals!"

This passage accurately described the temperament of the god Yahweh in the biblical examples that Mr. Miller has been trying to defend, but Jonah's description of Yahweh as a gracious, compassionate god, who was slow to anger and who abounded in love and relented in sending calamity, was a postexilic view of this god. The probability, then, that the book of Jonah is unhistorical in its content makes it too questionable for Mr. Miller to use as what he calls an "anti-example" that puts a more favorable spin on Yahweh's character.

Miller:

- (Notice that all during this judgment-time, God was still 'concerned' for Ninevah (4.10): *But Nineveh has more than a hundred and twenty thousand people who cannot tell their right hand from their left, and many cattle as well. Should I not be concerned about that great city?"*)

Till:

General opinion about the 120,000 in Neneveh who didn't know their right hand from their left is that these were children, so this is another text that screams exaggeration to those who aren't slavishly bound to a biblical inerrancy belief. If there were 120,000 children in Nineveh who were too young to know their right hand from their left, there would have been many times that more who were older children and adults. How likely is it that so many people could have lived in a city only 3 by 1.5 miles (as noted above) in a time when high-rise buildings couldn't be constructed?

We are probably talking about fiction here, but Mr. Miller quotes this book as if nothing in it should be questioned.

Miller:

So, in this "anti-Example" you have a people, confronted with truth/warning, who respond and avert the annihilation.

Till:

All Mr. Miller needs to do now is give us reasonable evidence that the book of Jonah is historically accurate. I have given several reasons above why Jonah is probably

fictionalized, but maybe Mr. Miller can explain those reasons away. Earlier I showed that elements of obvious mythology are imbedded in the Bible, but maybe Mr. Miller can explain why we should believe that a book with problems like these is inerrant. We will just have to wait to see.

Miller:

There is an obvious pattern here:

- The annihilations are judgments.

Till:

This is another example of question begging. Beyond the claim of biblical writers, who lived in a time when people generally believed in vindictive gods and thought that disasters and calamities were judgments of the gods, what is Mr. Miller's evidence that the annihilations he has cited were "judgments" of "God"?

Miller:

- These judgments are for publicly-recognized (indeed, international and cross-cultural in scope!) cruelty and violence of an **extreme** and **widespread** nature.

Till:

There is no need for me to keep talking about Mr. Miller's repeated assumptions of inerrancy in a book very prone to exaggeration, so whether the "cruelty and violence" of the cultures that Yahweh "judged" were as extensive, extreme, and widespread as he keeps claiming is something that he will have to prove, and he cannot do that without more engagement in special pleading and question begging.

I will, however, comment on his claim that Yahweh's "judgments" were for extreme and widespread "cruelty and violence," and I will make that comment in the form of a question. Were the cruelty and violence of those cultures that Yahweh "judged" more extreme than the cruelty of Yahweh in drowning every innocent child in the world and in ordering that all of the children in Canaan and Amalek be killed? I really do wish that he would address that issue.

Miller:

- These judgments are preceded by **long periods** of warning/exposure to truth (and therefore, opportunity to "change outcomes").

Till:

So Mr. Miller has asserted, but where is his proof that he gave the Canaanites and

Amalekites "long periods" to change? Where does the Bible say that Yahweh did anything for Canaan and Amalek like what he allegedly did for the Ninevites? Whom did he send to warn them? Where is the biblical text that indicates that he did? Where is the extrabiblical evidence that he did? I cited above a scripture that indicated the opposite of what Mr. Miller is here claiming, and for his benefit, I will quote it again.

***Joshua 11:20** For it was Yahweh himself who hardened their hearts to wage war against Israel, so that he might destroy them totally, exterminating them without mercy, as Yahweh had commanded Moses.*

That certainly doesn't sound as if Yahweh gave the Canaanites a "long period" to "change outcomes." It flatly says that Yahweh hardened their hearts so that he could **totally** destroy them and **exterminate them without mercy**, so instead of sending prophets to warn the Canaanites, Yahweh himself intervened directly to harden their hearts so that he would have an excuse to destroy them.

Miller:

- Innocent adults are given a 'way out'

Till:

What "way out" did Yahweh give to the innocent adults in Canaan? I read where Yahweh hardened their hearts so that he could "totally destroy" them and "exterminate them without mercy," but I have read nothing about "ways out" that he gave them.

Miller:

- Household members share in the fortunes of the parents (for good or ill).

Till:

And so innocent childre had to share in the fortunes of the parents who were "evil." If that is Mr. Miller's idea of mercy and justice, I am glad that my standards are higher than his.

Miller:

- Somebody **always** escapes (Lot, Noah, Kenites)

Till:

Yes, indeed, "righteous Lot" escaped through divine intervention so that he could get drunk and impregnate his daughters up in the mountains. Noah and seven other members of his family "escaped," but the rest of the entire world, including whatever

innocent children and babies were living then, drowned ("swiftly," of course). That is Mr. Miller's idea of love, mercy, and justice? Just what would a god have to do **not** to be loving, merciful, and just? I really can't imagine.

Miller:

- These are exceptional cases--there are **very, very** few of these.

Till:

Do you think that a person on trial for premeditated murder would get much sympathy if he said to the court, "But I killed only a very, very few"? Killing the entire world, except for Noah's family, would certainly make up for the times when Yahweh didn't kill anybody, but I am curious to know something. Just how many "cases" like the ones Mr. Miller has talked about above would have to be in the Bible before he would be so appalled that he would reject the claim that the Bible is "the word of God"?

Miller:

- Now, an obvious question comes up here. Do we have **any evidence** that the annihilation of the Canaanites falls into the above pattern? Do we have any reason to believe it was an exceptional case, a judgment for exceptional violence and evil?

Very definitely.

The biblical text gives us several indications that this campaign is such a judgment:

*Gen 15.13 Then the LORD said to him, "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. 14 But I will punish the nation they serve as slaves, and afterward they will come out with great possessions. 15 You, however, will go to your fathers in peace and be buried at a good old age. 16 In the fourth generation your descendants will come back here, for **the sin of the Amorites has not yet reached its full measure.**"*

Notice that Abraham cannot have the land until the 'sin of the Amorites' reaches some 'maximum threshold'. [sic]

Till:

I wonder why Yahweh had to withhold the land until then. Did he want to give the Amorites several more centuries to practice their alleged wickedness, so that he would then have a really good excuse to wipe them off the face of the earth? In the meantime, I guess Yahweh was willing to let the victims of Amorite "evil" suffer.

That Mr. Miller believes such nonsense as this is historically accurate speaks volumes about the questionable reliability of his comments on biblical issues.

Miller:

This certainly **looks like** a judgment by God on the peoples of the Land.

Till:

But did it really happen? Did a god named Yahweh actually drop in routinely to chat with Abraham, and did he on one occasion say what Mr. Miller quoted above? How do we know? What evidence does Mr. Miller have to corroborate this tale? The fact that "appearances" of the god Yahweh occurred throughout the Old Testament and then for some reason stopped should be enough to convince any reasonable person that such stories as these are as mythological as the fantastic tales in the literature of other cultures of that time. I am sure that Mr. Miller doesn't believe that king Mesha of Moab had the conversations with the god Chemosh claimed in the inscription on the Moabite Stone, yet he accepts without question whatever the Bible claims that Yahweh and Abraham or Yahweh and Jacob or Yahweh and Moses allegedly chatted about.

Miller:

Also, notice that the evil treatment by Egypt of the Israelites (enslavement and mistreatment) are **not** 'evil enough' to warrant annihilation--only "punishment". We might therefore expect the 'sin of the Amorites' to be more extreme than that of Egypt.

Till:

Notice too that Mr. Miller is still begging the question of biblical inerrancy. Mr. Miller would be more likely to impress critical readers of the Bible if he would offer evidence that the passages that he quotes are historically reliable. Instead of doing that, however, he simply quotes and expects his readers to accept the quotations without question. I am going to ask him, however, to give us reasonable proof that the incident in the quotation above is historically accurate. If Mr. Miller were in a discussion with a Muslim, would he accept without question Qur'anic quotations that the Muslim might present in proof of whatever Muslim belief he is defending? I doubt it, yet he seems to think that it is sufficient for him to quote the Bible in support of the Christian beliefs he is defending.

Now as for the Amorite/Egyptian comparison, Mr. Miller seems to think that the benevolent character of his god Yahweh is seen in Yahweh's decision to just "punish" the Egyptians instead of annihilating them, but he failed to mention that one of the "punishments" of the Egyptians was the death of every firstborn in Egypt ([Ex. 12:29](#)), and as if killing all of the firstborn humans wasn't enough "punishment," Yahweh even threw in the firstborn of all of the cattle for good measure. (It is really hard for

me not to love this god.) In "[God Is Pro-Life?](#)" I pointed out that, if the bible is to be believed, the population of Israel at the time of the exodus was somewhere between [2.5 and 3 million](#). If Egypt was able to enslave this many people, then surely its population would have been much larger. In that kind of population, there would have been many hundreds of "firstborn," and no doubt many of them would have been children and babies. Mr. Miller will often conveniently forget the children, but I am going to keep him reminded of them. Maybe he will try to give us a logical reason why we should see mercy, love, and kindness in a deity who rather routinely killed children.

Oh, I forgot; the children always died "swiftly," didn't they? How careless of me not to remember!

Miller:

- ***Deuteronomy 9:4*** *After the LORD your God has driven them out before you, do not say to yourself, "The LORD has brought me here to take possession of this land because of my righteousness." No, it is **on account of the wickedness of these nations that the LORD is going to drive them out before you.***

Till:

Mr. Miller quoted here three separate passages. I am going to reply to each one immediately after it is quoted, and then add some general comments after all three have been answered. These passages--and especially the first one--will give readers excellent examples of how biblical "apologists" will quote out of context to try to find some way to support whatever case they are trying to make. To show how Mr. Miller did that above, I am going to quote the broader context in which his one verse appeared. Please notice the parts that I emphasize in bold print and the catalog of Israel's sins that Moses ranted about in this speech.

Deuteronomy 9:3 *But be assured today that Yahweh your God is the one who goes across ahead of you like a devouring fire. He will destroy them; he will subdue them before you. And you will drive them out and annihilate them quickly, as Yahweh has promised you. 4 After Yahweh your God has driven them out before you, do not say to yourself, "Yahweh has brought me here to take possession of this land because of my righteousness." No, it is on account of the wickedness of these nations that Yahweh is going to drive them out before you. 5 **It is not because of your righteousness or your integrity that you are going in to take possession of their land;** but on account of the wickedness of these nations, Yahweh your God will drive them out before you, to accomplish what he swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. 6 **Understand, then, that it is not because of your righteousness that Yahweh your***

*God is giving you this good land to possess, for you are a stiff-necked people. 7 Remember this and never forget how you provoked Yahweh your God to anger in the desert. **From the day you left Egypt until you arrived here, you have been rebellious against Yahweh.** 8 At Horeb you aroused the Lord's wrath so that he was angry enough to destroy you. 9 When I went up on the mountain to receive the tablets of stone, the tablets of the covenant that Yahweh had made with you, I stayed on the mountain forty days and forty nights; I ate no bread and drank no water. 10 Yahweh gave me two stone tablets inscribed by the finger of God. On them were all the commandments Yahweh proclaimed to you on the mountain out of the fire, on the day of the assembly. 11 At the end of the forty days and forty nights, Yahweh gave me the two stone tablets, the tablets of the covenant. 12 Then Yahweh told me, "Go down from here at once, **because your people whom you brought out of Egypt have become corrupt.** They have turned away quickly from what I commanded them and have made a cast idol for themselves." 13 And Yahweh said to me, "I have seen this people, and **they are a stiff-necked people indeed!** 14 Let me alone, so that I may destroy them and blot out their name from under heaven. And I will make you into a nation stronger and more numerous than they." 15 So I turned and went down from the mountain while it was ablaze with fire. And the two tablets of the covenant were in my hands. 16 When I looked, **I saw that you had sinned against Yahweh your God; you had made for yourselves an idol cast in the shape of a calf. You had turned aside quickly from the way that Yahweh had commanded you.** 17 So I took the two tablets and threw them out of my hands, breaking them to pieces before your eyes. 18 Then once again I fell prostrate before Yahweh for forty days and forty nights; I ate no bread and drank no water, because of all the sin you had committed, doing what was evil in the Lord's sight and so provoking him to anger. 19 I feared the anger and wrath of Yahweh, for he was angry enough with you to destroy you. But again Yahweh listened to me. 20 And Yahweh was angry enough with Aaron to destroy him, but at that time I prayed for Aaron too. 21 Also I took that sinful thing of yours, the calf you had made, and burned it in the fire. Then I crushed it and ground it to powder as fine as dust and threw the dust into a stream that flowed down the mountain. 22 You also made Yahweh angry at **Taberah, at Massah and at Kibroth Hattaavah.** 23 And when Yahweh sent you out from Kadesh Barnea, he said, "Go up and take possession of the land I have given you." **But you rebelled against the command of Yahweh your God. You did not trust him or obey him.** 24 **You have been rebellious against Yahweh ever since I have known you.** 25 I lay prostrate before Yahweh those forty days and forty nights because Yahweh had said he would destroy you. 26 I prayed to Yahweh and said, "O Sovereign Yahweh, do not destroy your people, your own inheritance that you redeemed by your great power and brought out of Egypt with a mighty hand. 27 Remember your servants Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Overlook the stubbornness of this people, their wickedness and their sin. 28 Otherwise, the country from which you brought us will say, 'Because Yahweh was not able to take them into the land he had*

promised them, and because he hated them, he brought them out to put them to death in the desert.' 29 But they are your people, your inheritance that you brought out by your great power and your outstretched arm."

I discussed briefly above why we should question the historical accuracy of the book of Jonah, and in this passage just quoted, we have some even better reasons to doubt its historicity. [Verse 9](#) claims that Moses spent 40 days and 40 nights on Mt. Sinai chatting with Yahweh, during which time he "ate no bread and drank no water," after which he came down from the mountain with the the stone tablets on which Yahweh had engraved the 10 commandments. Upon arriving in the Israelite camp, he found them worshipping a golden calf that Aaron had molded for them. Moses cast the tablets down, broke them, crushed the idol into power, and threw it into a stream. He then went back upon the mountain and spent 40 more days and nights there without eating bread or drinking water. The text doesn't say here or in the original account of the story ([Ex. 32-34](#)) whether Moses "ate bread and drank water" before he went back upon the mountain, but the original story indicates that he didn't return to the mountain for perhaps a day or two, so maybe he gorged himself on food and water before he went back to fast for another 40 days and nights. That a man could go without food and water for 40 days and survive is too unlikely to be believable. That a man could go without food and water for 40 days, spend a day or two eating and drinking water, and then go fast for another 40 days goes way beyond credibility. When Mr. Miller goes for 40 days and 40 nights without eating or drinking water, then takes food and water for a day or two, and then goes 40 more days and nights without eating or drinking water **and lives to tell about it**, I will believe that this fasting story was possible.

That is just one part of the passage above that casts serious doubts on its historicity. The way that Moses presented the Israelites as a people who had been rebellious against Yahweh from the day they had come out of Egypt also taxes the imagination. What Moses said certainly agrees with the accounts of Israelite complaining, bellyaching, and rebelling that run through the books of Exodus and Numbers, but it is rather difficult to believe that a people would continually rebel against a god who was going before them in a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night ([Ex. 13:21](#); [Ex. 14:19,24](#); [Ex. 33:9-10](#); [Num. 14:14](#)), who had parted the Red Sea so that they could cross on dry land ([Ex. 14:21-27](#)), who sent down manna from heaven for them to eat ([Ex. 16:15](#)), and performed in their presence many more wonders than I could mention here. This was a god who punished swiftly and immediately anyone who crossed him, as in the cases of those whom the earth had swallowed up for joining Korah in his rebellion against Moses ([Num. 16:31-34](#)), those who were killed by fire for complaining about having no food ([Num. 11:1-3](#)), those who were killed by plagues for different kinds of rebellion ([Num. 11:33-35](#)), etc., etc. etc. There are just too many

examples to cite them all, but one would think that a people who had witnessed such things as these on a daily basis would have toed the line and said, "Whoa, we had better not tick this god off, or we will be history." That these people, under the circumstances described above, would have been as rebellious as Moses presented them in the passage quoted above is a bit hard to believe.

What is even more difficult to believe is the claim that Moses had to talk Yahweh out of destroying the Israelites in moments of anger, as if a mere human would be able to see things more clearly than an omniscient, omnipotent deity, yet that is what Moses claimed in his speech in reference to Yahweh's anger when the people were found worshiping the golden calf ([Ex. 32:9-14](#)) and his anger when the people rebelled upon hearing the report of the spies who had been sent into Canaan ([Num. 14:11-20](#)). These texts presented Yahweh as a nincompoop, who didn't have the good sense to realize the things that Moses was able to see. To discuss this further would take too much time, but those who want to pursue this subject and my comments in the paragraph above can read ["How Likely Is It?"](#) where I discussed all of these points in more detail. That anyone could think that any of this is actual history taxes the credulity of any rational person.

I have taken the time to say all of this so that readers will understand why I so frequently point out that Mr. Miller is arguing his case on the assumption that the Bible is inerrant when there are plenty of reasons to think that it isn't, but mainly why I quoted the broader context of the one verse he quoted was to notice how many times Moses said in this speech that the Israelites were "stiff-necked," "rebellious," and "sinful." Moses told them twice that Yahweh wasn't giving the land [of Canaan] to them because of their righteousness, because they were "stiff-necked" but because of a promise he had made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The long list of offenses against Yahweh that Moses then reeled off makes one wonder how the Amorities (and other nations in Canaan) could have been any worse than the Israelites were. I mentioned above the advantages that the Israelites had enjoyed for 40 years in that they had the god Yahweh traveling in their midst and performing all sorts of wonders for them to see, yet they were as Moses described, *i. e.*, rebellious against Yahweh from the day that they had come out of Egypt; hence, a 40-year period of having Yahweh traveling with them and living among them didn't make them a "righteous nation," for Moses specifically said that they weren't. I wonder how many times Yahweh appeared to the Amorites to give them manna, send quails among them for food, find water for them in rocks, and such like. If he had favored them in this way, would they have turned out better than the Israelites did?

My point is that, if the Bible is to be believed, Yahweh took the land of Canaan from the Amorites and the other nations there because of their "wickedness" and gave it to the Israelites, who turned out to be just as bad as the nations they replaced. The Old

Testament is full of tales of Israelites who "did that which was evil in Yahweh's sight," and their "evil" became so bad that Yahweh at times sent them into foreign captivity.

Mr. Miller conveniently left out these biblical claims about the morality of the Israelites.

Miller:

- ***Deuteronomy 18:12*** *Anyone who does these things is detestable to the LORD, and because of these detestable practices the LORD your God will drive out those nations before you.*

Till:

Let's look at this verse in its broader context.

Deuteronomy 18:9 *When you enter the land Yahweh your God is giving you, do not learn to imitate the detestable ways of the nations there. 10 Let no one be found among you who sacrifices his son or daughter in the fire, who practices divination or sorcery, interprets omens, engages in witchcraft, 11 or casts spells, or who is a medium or spiritist or who consults the dead. 12 Anyone who does these things is detestable to Yahweh, and because of these detestable practices Yahweh your God will drive out those nations before you.*

When Josiah began his reformation after the book of the law had been "found" during renovations of the temple, he "got rid of the mediums and spiritists, the household gods, the idols and all the other detestable things seen in Judah and Jerusalem" (2 Kings 23:24). The reference to "all the other detestable things seen in Judah and Jerusalem" suggests that these were commonplace practices. A statement prior to this indicates that idolatry had been commonplace.

2 Kings 23:11 *He [Josiah] removed from the entrance to the temple of Yahweh the horses that the kings of Judah had dedicated to the sun. They were in the court near the room of an official named Nathan-Melech. Josiah then burned the chariots dedicated to the sun. 12 He pulled down the altars the kings of Judah had erected on the roof near the upper room of Ahaz, and the altars Manasseh had built in the two courts of the temple of Yahweh. He removed them from there, smashed them to pieces and threw the rubble into the Kidron Valley. 13 The king also desecrated the high places that were east of Jerusalem on the south of the Hill of Corruption--the ones Solomon king of Israel had built for Ashtoreth the vile goddess of the Sidonians, for Chemosh the vile god of Moab, and for Molech the detestable god of the people of Ammon. 14 Josiah smashed the sacred stones and cut down the Asherah poles and*

covered the sites with human bones. 15 Even the altar at Bethel, the high place made by Jeroboam son of Nebat, who had caused Israel to sin--even that altar and high place he demolished. He burned the high place and ground it to powder, and burned the Asherah pole also.

The description given here indicates that idolatry, even the worship of "vile" gods like Chemosh, Molech, and Ashtoreth was widespread at this time. Inerrantists will say, "Well, yes, religious corruption and pagan worship was widespread at this time, but this was close to the end of Yahweh's patience when he sent the people of Judah into Babylonian captivity as punishment for their sins," but this rationalization conveniently overlooks that verse 13 (above) says that king Solomon had erected these "high places," and Solomon reigned over 300 years before the time of Josiah. For the sake of argument, let's just suppose that at least most of the idolatry of the Israelites was practiced late in their history. Even if that were true--and it isn't--one has to wonder why an omniscient, omnipotent deity would not have known that his "chosen ones" would turn out to be just as bad as the Amorites (and other Canaanites) whom he exterminated so that the Israelites could have their land. The Bible itself, however, admits that the evil of the Israelites at times exceeded that of the Amorites.

***1 Kings 21:26** 25 (There was never a man like Ahab, who sold himself to do evil in the eyes of Yahweh, urged on by Jezebel his wife. 26 He behaved in the vilest manner by going after idols, **like the Amorites Yahweh drove out before Israel.**)*

2 Kings 21:1** Manasseh was twelve years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem fifty-five years. His mother's name was Hephzibah. 2 He did evil in the eyes of Yahweh, **following the detestable practices of the nations Yahweh had driven out before the Israelites.** 3 He rebuilt the high places his father Hezekiah had destroyed; he also erected altars to Baal and made an Asherah pole, as Ahab king of Israel had done. He bowed down to all the starry hosts and worshiped them. 4 He built altars in the temple of Yahweh, of which Yahweh had said, "In Jerusalem I will put my Name." 5 In both courts of the temple of Yahweh, he built altars to all the starry hosts. 6 **He sacrificed his own son in the fire, practiced sorcery and divination, and consulted mediums and spiritists.** He did much evil in the eyes of Yahweh, provoking him to anger. 7 He took the carved Asherah pole he had made and put it in the temple, of which Yahweh had said to David and to his son Solomon, "In this temple and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, I will put my Name forever. 8 I will not again make the feet of the Israelites wander from the land I gave their forefathers, if only they will be careful to do everything I commanded them and will keep the whole Law that my servant Moses gave them." 9 But the people did not listen. Manasseh led them astray, **so that they did more evil than the nations Yahweh had destroyed before the Israelites.** 10 Yahweh said through his servants the prophets: 11 "Manasseh king of Judah has committed these detestable sins. **He has

done more evil than the Amorites who preceded him and has led Judah into sin with his idols."

Mr. Miller would have us believe that the Amorites were so wicked that Yahweh had no choice but to exterminate them and give their land to the Israelites, but passages like those I have just quoted show that the Israelites themselves became just as and even more wicked than the Amorites whom Yahweh had driven out of Canaan. I will ask again why the omniscient, omnipotent Yahweh didn't know that his chosen ones would turn out this way.

There are just too many passages like these to quote them all, so I will give just a summary list.

- King Saul consulted the witch of Endor, who conjured up the spirit of the dead prophet Samuel to tell him that he would lose a battle with the Philistines the next day ([1 Sam. 28:7-19](#)).
- Josiah destroyed the "high place" in the valley of Ben Hinnon so that no one could use it to sacrifice his son or daughter in the fire to Molech ([2 Kings 23:10](#)).
- In a list of offenses of the Israelites against Yahweh, [Psalm 106:37](#) says that they "sacrificed their sons and daughters to demons."
- King Ahaz offered his son as a burnt offering ([2 Kings 16:2-3](#)).
- Jeremiah condemned the people of Judah, because they had put idols into the temple of Yahweh, built "high places" to Baal in the valley of Ben Hinnom, and had "burn[ed] their sons and daughters in the fire" ([Jer. 7:30-31](#)).
- In [Jeremiah 19:3-5](#), the prophet condemned the people again for having "built the high places of Baal to burn their sons in the fire as offerings to Baal."
- Jeremiah repeated this condemnation in [32:35](#), where he listed the same abominations with the additional note that the sons and daughters had been burned to Molech.
- In a list of offenses of the northern kingdom, which ostensibly was the reason why Yahweh allowed them to be taken into Assyrian captivity, the writer said that they were "as stiff-necked as their fathers," that they had "followed worthless idols," that they had forsaken "all the commands of Yahweh," that they had "bowed down to all the starry hosts and Baal," that they had "sacrificed their sons and daughters in the fire," and that they had "practiced divination and sorcery"--the very offenses that were forbidden in the second "proof text" that Mr. Miller quoted above. ([2 Kings 17:9-18](#)).
- Ezekiel, claiming that Yahweh was speaking through him, said that the Israelites had taken their sons and daughters and "sacrificed them as food to the idols" ([Ezek. 16:19-20](#)).

- He repeated this charge in [20:31](#).
- Even Solomon, presumably the wisest man ever to live ([1 Kings 3:12](#)) turned to idolatry, worshiped Astoreth and Milcom, and built high places to Chemosh and Molech and sacrificed to them ([2 Kings 11:5-8](#)). Since Molech was the god of fire to whom children were sacrificed, as noted in the examples above, there is a suggestion here that maybe even Solomon had offered human sacrifices to him.

As many times as the prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel raged against child sacrifices, this must have been a widespread practice among the Israelites. Ezekiel, in fact, accused the Israelites of having practiced child sacrifices long enough to refer to those who had done it earlier as "your fathers."

*Ezekiel 20:30 "Therefore say to the house of Israel: 'This is what the Sovereign Yahweh says: Will you defile yourselves **the way your fathers did** and lust after their vile images? 31 When you offer your gifts--**the sacrifice of your sons in the fire**--you continue to defile yourselves with all your idols to this day. Am I to let you inquire of me, O house of Israel? As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign Yahweh, I will not let you inquire of me.*

In saying that the Israelites of his time continued to defile themselves **to this day**, "the way [their] fathers did," when they sacrificed their sons in the fire, Ezekiel was implying that this had been a long-standing practice among them, yet Yahweh presumably chose a people like this to exterminate the people who had been previously living in Canaan. Where is the morality or logic in this?

There are just too many examples of Israelite idolatry and religious corruption to notice them all, but these are sufficient to show that the "chosen ones" of Yahweh became just as religiously corrupt as the Amorites and other Canaanite nations whom Yahweh had ordered the Israelites to massacre so that they could have their land. I have to ask again why an omniscient, omnipotent deity would have ordered the slaughter of the Canaanite nations so that a bunch of "stiff-necked, rebellious" Israelites could have their land. Didn't the omniscient one know that the "wickedness" of the Israelites would equal and sometimes exceed that of the Amorites?

Miller:

- **Leviticus 18:24** "Do not defile yourselves in any of these ways, **because this is how the nations that I am going to drive out before you became defiled.** 25 Even the land was defiled; so I punished it for its sin, and the land vomited out its inhabitants.

Till:

There is no need to reinvent the wheel here. The various passages that I quoted above show that the Israelites did defile themselves like the nations that Yahweh had "vomited out of" the land. Why didn't Yahweh know that his "chosen ones" would turn out to be just as bad as the ones that he "vomited out"?

Miller:

So this annihilation was a judgment...

Till:

And this assertion, which Mr. Miller has now repeated several times, begs the question of biblical accuracy [inerrancy]. How does he know that the annihilation of the Canaanites was "a judgment" and not just a case of barbaric conquest of one nation over others--if indeed these conquests actually happened--which were commonplace at that time? If Mr. Miller has any kind of real evidence to support his claim that the annihilation of the Canaanites was "a judgment," I would really like to see it.

At this point, Mr. Miller switched to the subjects of who the Amorites and Canaanites were and why Yahweh wanted Israel to exterminate them, so I will reply to that section of his article in [Part Three](#).

Miller:

(B)ut what was so 'bad' about the Canaanites(and Amorites)? Which brings us to the next point...

- *Who exactly **were** these people that God wanted Israel to 'exterminate'?*

Till:

Notice that Mr. Miller continues his question-begging ways by assuming that "God" *wanted* Israel to exterminate the Amorites. He doesn't even consider the possibility that this was simply what the Israelites thought, just as Mesha of Moab had thought that Chemosh wanted him to massacre the Israelites in [Nob](#) and as Assurnasirpal thought that his gods wanted him to massacre the people of [Hulai](#). It just seems not to occur to Mr. Miller that what biblical writers said about their god Yahweh leading them to victory over their enemies was just a commonplace belief of a time when all nations thought that their gods were with them in time of war. The fact that many people in this country believe that "God" is on our side in times of war shows that not much has changed over the centuries.

Miller:

What do we know about the Amorites, and the Canaanites (often used

interchangeably)? What data do we have from the sources (archeology, classical writers, ANE literary remains, biblical passages)?

Till:

As you read Mr. Miller's quotations from these sources, notice that none of them attempt to show by logical argumentation that it was morally right for one nation invading another to kill children and babies, and that is a major issue in dispute.

Miller:

- 1. Prior to Abraham, the land of Syria-Palestine enjoyed a very high culture, dominated by the kingdom of Ebla.

By the latter part of the Early Bronze Age Ebla (Tell Mardikh) in northwestern Syria had become a city-state of 260,000 people, with lesser "vassal" cities forming a far-reaching empire. It was the center of a vast commercial network, and records of its enterprises contain the earliest mention of such biblical cities as Salim, Megiddo, Gaza, Hazor, Lachish, and Joppa. An indication of the city's sophisticated planning is the audience court of the royal palace, which both architecturally and functionally mediates the space between the quarters with private residences and those with administrative offices ([ISBE](#), s.v. "City", [sic] p. 707).

Till:

The link here is to *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, which was published by Eerdsman... in Grand Rapids, Michigan, of course.

Miller:

- 2. But something happened... something disrupted this advanced civilization... something destroyed the cities... something violently did international damage, driving nations from their homes, reducing this area to 'village life' again:

Till:

Nations rise and fall. They always have and probably always will. This was especially true in the time when Ebla dominated the region of Syria where it was located. We will see that Mr. Miller tries to blame those nasty old Amorites for the fall of this kingdom--even though the sources he quoted were reluctant to say so--but we will also see that other factors, especially dramatic climate changes, fueled the tribal migrations and abandonment of previously populated areas and that the [Akkadians](#)

rather than the Amorites moved into the area where Ebla had been located, but even if the Amorites had caused Ebla's demise, how would that have made the Amorites any more "evil" and debased than other ethnic groups of that general period, which also intruded on the territories of other nations? We saw in [Part One](#) and [Part Two](#) that Israel "utterly destroyed" the Canaanite nations and many times left "no one alive to breathe" in the cities they captured. Does that mean that Israel was morally depraved, or does it mean (if any of this happened) that Israel was just another nation typical of those times?

Miller:

"Sudden and violent destruction occurred throughout much of the ancient world ca. 2300-2100 B.C. Palestinian civilization returned to the village level, with many E.B. sites abandoned and others left unfortified, a situation that continued through the early stages of the Middle Bronze period (until ca. 1950 B.C.). While many factors may have been involved, especially significant were Egyptian raids and mass population movements, at the center of which were the Amorites."(A.C. Myers, [ISBE](#), op. Cit.)

Till:

This link was also to *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*. I was glad to see that Myers recognized that "many factors" could have been involved in the decline of Ebla, as the falling of kingdoms almost always is, so the Amorites were not to be totally blamed for the decline of this kingdom. Myers, for example, recognized that "sudden and violent destruction" happened "throughout much of the ancient world," and surely Miller cannot attribute such widespread upheavals in ancient societies to the Amorites alone, because, as we will see, these upheavals happened in places into which no Amorites migrated. We will see that the Amorite role in the upheavals was not as important as the other "factors" mentioned by Myers, but let's suppose that the Amorites alone were responsible for the conquest and overthrow of Ebla. Why would that make them any more "evil" and depraved than other nations of the time that overran neighboring kingdoms? The Israelites overran the Canaanite nations and caused their complete decline--so the Bible claims--so does that mean that the Israelites were "evil" and depraved? I think we are going to see that Mr. Miller has difficulty recognizing non sequiturs.

Miller:

And again, K. N. Schoville ([POTW](#):164):

Till:

This is a link to *Peoples of the Old Testament World*, which was published where? That's right, at Baker House in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Books published by the companies in this city almost always show a decided bias for biblical inerrancy. Before anyone accuses me of arguing guilt by association, I will repeat something I have said many times in my replies to biblical inerrantists: The truth or falsity of propositions is always independent of their sources. I recognize, then, that it is entirely possible for reliable information to be in books published in Grand Rapids, and I, in fact, have no doubt that much reliable information can be found in books published there.

Nevertheless, it is obviously true that many sources will slant their materials to make them supportive of propositions that the publishers/authors are committed to. Baptist publishing companies will slant their books to support Baptist doctrines, Mormon publishing companies will slant theirs to support Mormon doctrines, and so on. Hence, that is a good reason to be suspicious of claims published by companies known to have such biases. Robert Turkel seems to be an admirer of Mr. Miller, because he will often link his readers to Miller's articles. In [this part](#) of the land-promise debate, he clearly recognized that known biases of a source will make its reliability questionable.

This certainly serves to lay out our opponent's thematic intent, but only those who have never heard his name would ever suppose that he would take any other general position than that there is no real evidence of prophecy fulfillment.

He made this comment in reference to my claim that no real evidence for genuine prophecy fulfillment can be found, but in making the statement, he recognized that known biases of a source will affect a reader's willingness to accept its claims, and that is certainly a legitimate reaction to evidences offered in support of propositions. As a former preacher, I am familiar with the theological philosophy of the publishing houses in Grand Rapids, Michigan, because I had many of their books in my personal library and, in fact, still have some of them. Therefore, to adapt Turkel's comment quoted above, I can say without fear of successful contradiction that I know that books published in Grand Rapids, Michigan, are unlikely "to take any other general position than that" the Bible is the "inspired word of God." As we will see, the authors whom Miller quoted above and below--at least in the sections that Miller quoted--downplayed "other factors" involved in the "sudden and violent" changes in the Middle East, when Ebla and other kingdoms declined, and credited too much of the change to Amorite intrusions.

Nevertheless, Mr. Miller's source deserves a hearing, so let's look at what Schoville had to say about the Amorites.

Miller [quoting Schoville]

*The urbanization of Canaan in the Early Bronze Age II (ca. 2900-2700), illustrated by sites such as Arad and Ai, declined during the Early Bronze Age III, which ended about 2300. **Walled cities were destroyed or abandoned, and urban culture gave way to a pastoral, village way of life** over the next two centuries, Early Bronze Age IV (about 2300-2000). The reasons for such drastic changes are unclear, but three possible causes may be suggested: (1) Egyptian military action, (2) changing environmental factors including overpopulation, or (3) **an invading horde of Amorites. The Amorites would have destroyed the urban centers** and established the variant lifestyle characteristic of the period until urbanization flowered in the subsequent Middle Bronze Age II."*

[There were probably two invasions by Amorite peoples--the one we are discussing here is the earlier, non-urbanized [sic] *Amurru*--cf. [ISBE](#):s.v. "Canaan", p. 588]

Till:

This is another link to *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, so Mr. Miller seems a bit dependent on books published in Grand Rapids, Michigan. As we go along, I have been identifying reasons to question biblical inerrancy, so before I comment on the general thrust of Schoville's quotation above, I will address a problem that his quotation raises. Almost as an incidental comment, he referred to Ai as an example of "(w)alled cities that were destroyed or abandoned during Early Bronze Age IV," which he dated at "about 2300-2000 [BC]," yet [Joshua 8:1-29](#) claims that the Israelites destroyed Ai after the sacking of Jericho, and this would have happened some 40 years after the exodus, which the Bible dates at about 1446 BC. Work on the temple began in the 4th year of Solomon's reign, 480 years after the Israelites left Egypt ([1 Kings 6:1](#)). The 4th year of Solomon's reign would have been 966 BC, so 480 years before that would have been 1446 BC. Since the Israelites wandered in the wilderness for 40 years, the conquest of Canaan wouldn't have begun till around 1404 BC. Ai was the second city that Joshua's forces destroyed, so according to biblical chronology, that would have been somewhere around 1404 BC, but that doesn't agree with what Schoville said above, and what he said is consistent with archaeological excavations in the area of Ai. In "[Archaeology and Biblical Inerrancy](#)," I discussed this problem, as it was discovered by someone who prior to his excavation of Ai had been a believer in the accuracy of the biblical record. For the convenience of readers, I will quote below the relevant part of that article.

Joseph Callaway, a conservative Southern Baptist and professor at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, spent nine years excavating the ruins of ancient Ai and afterwards reported that what he found there contradicted the biblical record.

The evidence from Ai was mainly negative. There was a great walled city there beginning about 3000 BC, more than 1,800 years before Israel's emergence in Canaan. But this city was destroyed about 2400 BC, after which the site was abandoned.

*Despite extensive excavation, no evidence of a Late Bronze Age (1500-1200 BC) Canaanite city was found. **In short, there was no Canaanite city here for Joshua to conquer** (Biblical Archaeology Review, "Joseph A. Callaway: 1920-1988," November/December 1988, p. 24, emphasis added).*

This same article quoted what Callaway had earlier said when announcing the results of his nine-year excavation of Ai.

Archaeology has wiped out the historical credibility of the conquest of Ai as reported in Joshua 7-8. The Joint Expedition to Ai worked nine seasons between 1964 and 1976... only to eliminate the historical underpinning of the Ai account in the Bible (Ibid., p. 24).

I wrote this article, so, of course, it can be accused of bias, so I recommend that readers consult other sources to see that archaeology has discredited the biblical claim that the Israelites destroyed Ai early in their invasion of Canaan. In an article about the book of Joshua, [Wikipedia](#) made this observation about the alleged conquest of Ai.

*The archaeological records of these cities [Lasich and Hazor] show that a destructive invasion by the Israelites occurred at the end of the Late Bronze Age. **The excavation of Ai yielded evidence that disagreed with Ai's destruction in the Book of Joshua. Ai appears to have been abandoned in the Early Bronze Age and not reoccupied until after the Israelite invasion.** It has been suggested that the destruction of Ai was added to the Book of Joshua as an etiological myth, explaining the visible ruins of the Early Bronze Age city (emphasis added).*

Those who have access to archives of *Biblical Archaeology Review* can check the March/April 1985 issue for "The Problem of Ai" and "Was My Excavation of Ai Worthwhile?" which is Callaway's own account of his work at Ai. An article by W. W. Winter "[Is et Tell Ai?](#)" discusses the problem and some "solutions" to it. The article is worth reading to see the extremes that inerrantists will go to in order to preserve their belief in biblical inerrancy. I could give other references, but these are sufficient to show that archaeological excavations at the site of ancient Ai have cast serious

suspicion on the historicity of the biblical account. As we continue, we will see Mr. Miller often appealing to the Bible as his only proof of certain assertions, so readers should keep in mind that whenever he does this, he is appealing to a source whose historicity, at least in some matters, is questionable.

As for the main thrust of the Schoville quotation above, he said that the reasons for the "drastic changes" in Canaan during Early Bronze Age IV were "unclear" but went on to list "changing environmental factors" as a possible reason for the changes. If Mr. Miller had done a little research into environmental factors of that period, he would have found that Schoville was on to something. Dramatic climate changes were occurring worldwide about the same time that the "drastic changes" in Canaan, mentioned by Schoville, were happening, and the Amorites could hardly be blamed for all of those changes. The excerpt below from a report by [The International Conference on Climate and Culture at 3000 BC](#) shows that these worldwide changes had devastating effects on North Africa and the Mesopotamian region.

*Around 3000 BC, great changes befell climate and culture **throughout the world**. In the Pacific Basin, El Nino started up after a long hiatus, shifting from a permanent, stable condition to an irregular cycle that periodically throws climate into chaos. As a result, environmental conditions in the region became much less predictable from year to year, with "anomalous" droughts in Australia, floods in Peru, and other effects of El Nino fluctuation occurring more frequently. In the Northern Hemisphere, warmer temperatures of the preceding 3,000 years cooled down to about what they are now; new evidence suggests that the Southern Hemisphere experienced a similar change in temperature. **Desertification increased in Mesopotamia and Northern Africa** (emphasis added).*

A section of [From 10,000BC to 2000BC](#) in *Lost Worlds* described more specifically the devastating effects that these changes had on North Africa--and Egypt in particular--and the area of the Middle East where the Israelites eventually settled. The information is self-explanatory and requires no comments from me.

2200BC-2000BC-3000BC: A problem of global climatic change: *Regarding an SBS documentary screened in Australia on Ancient Apocalypse on 17 March 2002, on the Egypt of 5000 years ago. The Sphinx already exists at Giza, the Old Kingdom flourishes. Changelessness is the theme for the daily life of average Egyptians, but about 2200BC the Old Kingdom collapses. Egypt enters a dark age for 200 years. This era has mystified Egyptologists, there are no explanations for the chaos, etc. Why? Was a fall due to death of a Pharaoh, and a following battle for power? No, it*

was not due to political unrest. We find a little-known tomb, with "an astonishing story to tell"... the tomb of a local governor of an area just after the collapse of the Old Kingdom, an outstanding tomb which tells a story of famines, suffering of ordinary people, a poignant account of famine-horrors, giving succinct reports such as: the land is like "a starved grasshopper". Despair and atrocities are committed in Southern Egypt. People ate their children, and what is written on the tomb walls is not folk tales, not mythology, it is an account, a proper report.

But can any corroborative evidence be found? Recent new archaeological evidence from Egypt's far north reveals an extent of suffering on the Nile delta. One researcher is Donald Redford (US), who finds group-burials under reed matting, with tightly-packed bodies, nearly 9000 bodies, supine or on their side. But there are few grave goods found. The conclusion is that these people were very poor, but they all dated at the same period of death, from a community reduced to extreme poverty. Across Egypt, society, art religion are all breaking down, literally everything of the Old Kingdom is breaking down. This devastation was apocalyptic, could it have had to do with the environment? Was it a really sudden event? The Nile dominates, of course, as with anything to do with Egypt. A researcher--is this tantamount to heresy in history?--finds variations in the behaviour of the Nile. It is not a steady river, and one in five floods anyway is a bad flood. Is such any clue to the collapse of the Old Kingdom, as a small drop in a flood can be a disaster, as Napoleon found when he came to Egypt and conquered it after a bad flood, as the country was weakened. Could the Nile possibly have faltered for as long as 200 years? Was something bigger involved? What other natural features could be examined? A botanist examines various sites, including a desert zone once quite-populated. Evidence includes small cairns of stones from campfire areas. Traces of acacia tree, which no longer grows in the area, and charcoal of acacia, which grew with underground water. Thousands of pieces of such charcoal in the area are logged, dating to about 5000BC, indicating a dry savannah with trees, where people could live over long stretches of time. It seems that North Africa dries and becomes desert. Sand causes devastation, so do dust storms. (Poetry exists about such concerns). Dates about desertification don't quite fit a new theory, as this is all a gradual trend, over millenia, and nothing to do with the collapse of the Old Kingdom.

*A breakthrough for researchers comes from the hills of nearby Israel, in caves, forming a record of past climatic behaviour, from limestone stalactites and stalagmites. A record of ancient rainwaters, and ancient rain has two different types of oxygen; light for wetter periods and heavy oxygen for dry periods. Use is made of a mass spectrometer to find ratios of light and heavy oxygen. One sample is found, 4200 years-old, fitting the period circa 2200BC. **Something unusual; an important change in the amount of rainfall, a 20 per cent drop, and a sudden and significant climate***

change; the largest climatic event noticeable, even though Israel and Egypt have different climate systems.

*It is now necessary to know if the Israeli weather pattern is local or broader. Evidence is found from the glaciers of Iceland, where Gerard Bond, a geologist, examines ice near Greenland. He finds icebergs streaked with black ash from volcanic activity, dumped on glaciers, which become icebergs in North Atlantic, and dropped their ash to the ocean bottom. Bond has collected cores of ocean-bottom mud back 10,000 years, and in his searches for volcanic ash has found it in strange places, very much south, off Ireland. It also seems that then, icebergs were bigger, from colder areas; there is a pattern to mini-ice-ages, and every 1500 years a distinct cold period occurs, lasting "a couple of hundred years". Could this have affected Egypt? **One such cycle would have been affecting Egypt about 2200BC (emphasis added)....***

*Dr. Harvey Weiss is Professor of Near Eastern Archaeology in the Departments of Anthropology and Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations at Yale University. From 1968 to 1973 he excavated at and directed a variety of prehistoric and early historic archaeological sites in western Iran, including Hajji Firuz, Godin Tepe, Hasanlu and Qabr Sheykheyn. In 1978 he initiated the Yale Tell Leilan Project in northeastern Syria, which aimed at elucidating important developmental patterns in the agricultural practices of northern Mesopotamia. In the early 1980s and through the 90s, Dr. Weiss's attention moved to the forces that determined rain-fed agriculture in early historic West Asia. **In 1993 he and his colleagues published the hypothesis and confirmatory data for a major and abrupt climate change that affected the region from the Aegean to the Indus at ca. 2200 BC.** Since 1993, this climate change has become the focus of considerable research attention among scholars in the paleoclimatic and archaeological research communities and beyond. Dr. Weiss's most recent studies have appeared in a range of publications including Science, The Sciences, Orient Express, The Dictionary of Art, and The Encyclopedia of the Ancient Near East. His research on climate change was published in numerous edited volumes, including most recently, *Confronting Natural Disaster: Engaging the Past to Understand the Future (2000)* and was the subject of his co-edited volume *Third Millennium B.C.: Climate Change and Old World Collapse (1997)* [emphasis added].*

In "Sea Level Changes Document 20,000-Year Mideast Rainfall Cycles," [Science Watch](#) (January 1994, Page 48), Ruth E. Steele further discussed dramatic changes that the shifting climate brought to this region.

Observant visitors see the evidence all around them that the Middle East was not always so arid as it is today. Mighty canyons carved by raging rivers stand austere and bone-dry today. Bones of jungle predators and great grazing beasts of the

grasslands lie buried in clay laid down by lakes and streams in lands where the infrequent raindrops now vanish instantly into windblown sand. Shifting winds uncover abundant stone-age tools in waterless deserts. And in many parts of the Middle East great mounds of man-made rubble attest to vanished cities where not even nomads pass today.

Middle Easterners ponder the forces that halved the population of Iraq, birthplace of the world's first cities more than 5,000 years ago, and of Syria, the breadbasket of the Roman Empire 2,000 years ago. Today, these forces are widening the swath of Sahara sand that separates the grasslands of Central Africa from the fertile coastal strip of North Africa. Is the contemporary highly visible desertification of the Middle East and Africa manmade, or an irresistible force of nature?

At the end of the article, she referred to the "Kuwait River," which flowed through Saudi Arabia for 6,000 years reaching a width of three miles in some places. The "moist period," feeding the river, ended about 5000 years ago, and that would be about the time that Mr. Miller blames those nasty old Amorites for the decline of Ebla.

There is far too much information about the dramatic climate changes in the Middle East at this time to document it all, but readers should keep in mind that Mr. Miller's zeal to paint the Amorities as wicked, evil barbarians who deserved what they got from the Israelites has allowed him to overlook clear indications that the fall of civilizations like those at Ebla and Sumer were due to far more than his oversimplification that put the blame on the ancient Amorites.

Miller:

- 3. The Amorites were a distinctly war-culture, as well.

Till:

And the Israelites weren't? I would like to see Mr. Miller document the picture he is trying to paint of the Amorites and show us verifiable evidence that they were more brutal and cruel than the Israelites were depicted in their own literature.

Miller:

- They show up--by the name of Amorites-- in conquest texts as early as 2200 B.C. ([EBLA3:90](#)), and by their other names in many, many places.

Till:

At this point so much needs to be replied to in Mr. Miller's sources that I am going to

split the quotations to comment as the need arises. His next quotation below is from *Myth and Mystery: An Introduction to the Pagan Religions of the Biblical World* by Jack Finegan, which, of course, is another Grand Rapids work, published by Baker House.

Miller [quoting Finegan]:

The Semitic Amorites are the best known: in Mesopotamian sources they are the mar-tu (Sumerian) and amurru (Akkadian), both of which words mean "west," and they are referred to as desert people who "know not grain."

Till:

Here Finegan made both the Sumerians and the Akkadians Amorites, but that is news to me. The Sumerians were not Semites as were the Akkadians and the Amorites, who came into the area later. Of these Sumerians, *Eerdmans Bible Dictionary* says that they were "non-Semitic."

*The Ubaid culture, of Semitic Iranian origin, flourished from 4300-3500 [BC] and spread into Northern Mesopotamia as well. It was succeeded in the South by the Uruk culture of **the non-Semitic Sumerians**, who introduced pictographic writing and irrigation.*

Even another Grand Rapids source, then, disagrees with Mr. Finegan's claim about the origin of the Sumerians. Notice that the quotation from Eerdmans says that the Sumerian culture came up from the South instead of the west. This agrees with [other sources](#) that discuss the origin of the Sumerians.

*Among the earliest civilizations were the diverse peoples living in the fertile valleys lying between the Tigris and Euphrates valley, or Mesopotamia, which in Greek means, "between the rivers." In the **south of this region**, in an area now in Kuwait and northern Saudi Arabia, a mysterious group of people, **speaking a language unrelated to any other human language we know of**, began to live in cities, which were ruled by some sort of monarch, and began to write. These were the Sumerians, and around 3000 BC they began to form large city-states in southern Mesopotamia that controlled areas of several hundred square miles. The names of these cities speak from a distant and foggy past: Ur, Lagash, Eridu. These Sumerians were constantly at war with one another and other peoples, for water was a scarce and valuable resource.*

A [Wikipedia article](#) on the Sumerians presents corroborating information and confirms that Sumerians were a separate people from the Amorites, who eventually moved in to replace them. Amorites were a Semitic people, who spoke a Semitic language, but as

the information above shows, the origin of the Sumerians is rather nebulous, and the language they spoke was non-Semitic and, in fact, unrelated to any known language. From the beginning of the statement that Mr. Miller quoted above, then, Finegan got off on the wrong foot. He said, for example, that the Sumerians were referred to as a "desert people, who know not grain," but if the Sumerians didn't know about grain they quickly learned, because they constructed an irrigation system that made their culture flourish in what is now Southern Iraq and Iran.

As for Finegan's claim that the word *mar-tu* meant "Amorite," my research tells me that [mar-tu-ki](#) was a Sumerian word that meant "nomad of the western desert," and it was a word that the Sumerians used to describe the Amorites, but I have found no indication that this was a word that others applied to the Sumerians. As for *amarru*, my research shows that this was an [Akkadian word](#) that meant the same thing as the Sumerian word *mar-tu-ki*, so this was a word that the Akkadians applied to the Amorites, which would indicate that, although they were Semites, the Akkadians didn't consider themselves Amorites. The Amorites, then, will have to be exonerated of blame in the fall of Ebla, because it was actually conquered by Akkadians under their [king Naram Sin](#), the grandson of Sargon, in 2250 BC, and after being rebuilt and annexed into the Aleppo kingdom, it was conquered and destroyed again by the Hittites in 1600 BC, never to regain its former power and influence. It seems, then, that the Amorites weren't involved in the demise of Ebla, so in this matter, Mr. Miller will have to find some other rationalization for Yahweh's command to destroy the Amorites.

Miller [quoting Finegan]:

In the third millennium B.C. the conquests of Sargon of Akkad (2371-2316) extended to "the upper sea," meaning that he must have marched west to the Mediterranean.

Till:

Readers should keep in mind that Akkadians were not Amorites. They were a Semitic people, but so were Edomites, Moabites, Assyrians, and even the despised Amalekites. *Semitic* was more of a linguistic than an ethnic term, and just because an ethnic group spoke a Semitic language does not mean that they were necessarily ethnically close.

That aside, I can't see why the extent of Akkadian or Amorite influence would in any way prove that they were any more morally depraved than other ethnic groups of the time. We are talking about an era when cataclysmic conditions made mass migrations necessary for survival. Whenever that happens, conflicts between ethnic groups will inevitably arise. In such times of conflict, there will always be winners and losers, but winning doesn't necessarily indicate moral depravity.

Miller [quoting Finegan]

In the second millennium the Amorites established their First Dynasty in Babylon in which Hammurabi (1792-1750) was the most famous king; contemporary with that dynasty there were Amorite kings in Mari on the Middle Euphrates.

Till:

In what he said here, Finegan clearly disputed Miller's apparent belief that Sumerians and Akkadians were Amorites, for if the first Amorite dynasty was established in Babylon, this would exclude the Sumerians and Akkadians from being Amorites, because both of these had established long-standing kingdoms in the Mesopotamian area. If Sumerian and Akkadians were Amorites, their "first dynasty" would not have been the Amorite kingdom in Babylon.

Finegan also identified, correctly, Hammurabi as the most famous king of the Amorites in Babylon, and this is inconsistent with Miller's apparent effort to paint the Amorites as destructive barbarians, whose primary achievements were oppression, terrorism, and vandalism. Under Hammurabi, the Amorites organized separate city-states into a larger kingdom under a centralized control, and Hammurabi, of course, issued the famous code of laws, from which the Israelites apparently borrowed some of the precepts in the law of Moses. In this respect, the Amorites have had far-reaching legal and social influence, because wherever the Bible has gone principles that were first recorded by Amorites have also gone.

Miller [quoting Finegan]:

*At Jericho and other sites in Canaan cultural changes toward the end of the third millennium suggest the influx of new nomadic tribal people, probably Amorites. According to Ezekiel 16:3 Jerusalem was founded by a combination of Amorites and Hittites. Under Moses the Israelites found the Amorites in the hill country around Kadesh-barnea (Deut. 1:19-20), then conquered two Amorite kings, Sihon and Og, in Transjordan (Deut. 4:46-47). Joshua in turn overcame the Amorite kings of the five cities of **Jerusalem**, Hebron, Jarmuth, Lachish, and Eglon (Josh. 10:5).*

Till:

I emphasized *Jerusalem* in bold print for a special reason. The apparent purpose of all of Mr. Miller's quotations from Grand-Rapids books was to depict the Amorites as wicked, evil barbarians, who deserved Yahweh's "judgment" upon them, but by pointing out that the inhabitants of Jerusalem, who were known as Jebusites, were also Amorites, Mr. Miller has put himself into somewhat of a predicament, because Jebusites were one of the seven nations in Canaan that Yahweh ordered the Israelites to destroy totally.

Deuteronomy 7:1 When Yahweh your God brings you into the land you are entering to possess and drives out before you many nations--the Hittites, Girgashites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites and **Jebusites**, seven nations larger and stronger than you--and when Yahweh 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**.

That the Jebusites inhabited Jerusalem and its environs was claimed in [Joshua 15:63](#), [Judges 1:21](#), and [2 Samuel 5:6](#). The passage in Ezekiel that Finegan cited above also claimed that the inhabitants of Jerusalem were of Amorite origin. Let's look at the larger context of the passage.

Ezekiel 16:1 The word of Yahweh came to me: 2 "Son of man, confront Jerusalem with her detestable practices 3 and say, 'This is what the Sovereign Yahweh says to Jerusalem: Your ancestry and birth were in the land of the Canaanites; **your father was an Amorite** and your mother a Hittite. 4 On the day you were born your cord was not cut, nor were you washed with water to make you clean, nor were you rubbed with salt or wrapped in cloths. 5 No one looked on you with pity or had compassion enough to do any of these things for you. Rather, you were thrown out into the open field, for on the day you were born you were despised.

The significance of this lies in the fact that Melchizedek, the "priest of God Most High" and "King of righteousness" ([Heb. 7:1-2](#)), who met Abraham when he was returning from the slaughter of the kings ([Gen. 14:18-21](#)), was the king of Salem, which was thought to be the name of Jerusalem at that time. If not, this mysterious Melchizedek would have been an Amorite anyway, if the Bible is correct in saying that the people living in this region were descendants of Amorites. There is, therefore, something incongruous about the praise heaped on Melchizedek in Genesis 14 and the scorn that was expressed about the Amorites in [Genesis 15:16](#), which Mr. Miller has used as a proof text for his theory that the Amorites were so wicked and evil that Yahweh just had to order their destruction. In chapter 14, one of their kings was praised for his righteousness and became a figure or type of Jesus Christ, but in the very next chapter, the Amorites were treated with scorn. Something just isn't quite right here.

Miller [still quoting Finegan]:

In time Amorites and Canaanites were no doubt so mingled as to be indistinguishable, and the name Amorite was used as a general term for the inhabitants of the land, which could equally well be called the land of the Amorites (Josh. 24:15) or the land of the Canaanites." (Finegan, [MM](#):121-122)

Till:

And this does what to prove that the Amorites were so reprobate that they deserved to be wiped off the face of the earth? I will ask Mr. Miller again to give us evidence to show that the Amorites were any more "wicked" or "evil" than the other ethnic groups of that time and region.

By the way, the link above was to *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* again so, we are back in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Miller:

- 4. [*The Canaanite peoples were brilliant engineers, and put their skills to use building war-culture cities. Their sites include very heavily fortified cities, and advanced design war-chariot ramps and gates. (ISBE: s.v. "Canaan", p.588; POTW:176f; ECIAT:95)*]

Till:

And this does what to prove that the "Canaanite peoples" were so wicked and depraved that Yahweh just had to order their extermination? Is Miller arguing that other people of that time did not "build war-culture cities"? Most independent city-states of that time were walled and fortified, because such was necessary to defend them against invasions. The Israelites fortified their cities.

2 Chronicles 8:3 Solomon then went to Hamath Zobah and captured it. 4 He also built up Tadmor in the desert and all the store cities he had built in Hamath. 5 He rebuilt Upper Beth Horon and Lower Beth Horon as fortified cities, with walls and with gates and bars....

2 Chronicles 11:5 Rehoboam lived in Jerusalem and built up towns for defense in Judah: Bethlehem, Etam, Tekoa, 7 Beth Zur, Soco, Adullam, 8 Gath, Mareshah, Ziph, 9 Adoraim, Lachish, Azekah, 10 Zorah, Aijalon and Hebron. **These were fortified cities in Judah and Benjamin. 11 He strengthened their defenses and put commanders in them, with supplies of food, olive oil and wine. 12 He put shields and spears in all the cities, and made them very strong.** So Judah and Benjamin were his.... 23 He acted wisely, dispersing some of his sons throughout the districts of Judah and Benjamin, and to all the fortified cities.

2 Chronicles 14:6 He [Asa] built up the fortified cities of Judah, since the land was at peace. No one was at war with him during those years, for Yahweh gave him rest. 7 "Let us build up these towns," he said to Judah, "**and put walls around them, with towers, gates and bars.** The land is still ours, because we have sought Yahweh our God; we sought him and he has given us rest on every side." So they built and

prospered. 8 Asa had an army of three hundred thousand men from Judah, equipped with large shields and with spears, and two hundred and eighty thousand from Benjamin, armed with small shields and with bows. All these were brave fighting men.

Building fortified cities, with walls, towers, gates, and bars, was just a necessity of the times if the people living there wished to survive, so Mr. Miller needs to explain why it was so wicked and evil of the Canaanites to do this to their cities but not wrong of the Israelites to do the same to the cities they had captured from the Canaanites. The fact that the Israelites captured the cities of Canaan--or so the Bible claims--shows that they Canaanites were right to use their "brilliant engineer[ing]" skills to fortify their cities.

Miller:

- 5. *Not only did these peoples do destruction on an international scale, but they also were constantly fighting internally* [[MM:129](#); [ECIAT:193-194](#)]

Till:

Miller's first link here was to Finegan's book again, another Grand Rapids publication, and we have already seen that his information wasn't always reliable.

As for the Amorite "destruction on an international scale," doing such destruction was nothing new. It was simply a reality of the times in which global upheavals were causing people to migrate to where they could escape the ravages of droughts and floods. Survival is always a powerful motivation, and the ethnocentric attitudes of that time led people to put more emphasis on their own survival than on that of the people living in areas into which they were migrating. As we noticed above, the Sumerians established independent city-states in Southern Mesopotamia, which were frequently warring with each other, because water was a scarce commodity. Because of an exaggerated belief in some imminent threat, our own nation at this time is wreaking havoc on the very region once controlled by Amorites. We can only imagine how much greater such fears would have been in the barbaric biblical times when the perceived threats were not on the other side of an ocean but maybe just across a river or in an adjoining territory.

As for the "destruction on an international scale" of which Mr. Miller accused the Amorites, what about the international scale of Israelite destruction? I would urge Mr. Miller to think just a moment about what the Bible claims. The Israelites were in Egypt, where according to the Bible their ancestors had gone of their own free will, but they left that country and invaded Canaan with the avowed intention of killing everyone there and leaving "nothing alive to breathe." What did the Canaanites do on

an "international scale" that would exceed the international destruction of the Israelites?

Miller will no doubt argue that it was the will of "God" that this be done, but if he does take this route, he will again be engaging in question begging and special pleading. Besides the fact that the Bible says so, what real evidence does he have that "God" was leading the Israelites in their path of destruction across Canaan? He can't just say, "Well, the Bible says it, so it must be right," because that would be begging the question of biblical accuracy [inerrancy]. In addition to the initial routing of the Canaanite nations, Israel continued its "destruction on an international scale." Besides Saul's raid on the Amalekites, who lived outside of what was once the land of Canaan, the Israelites attacked the Syrians and Ammonites ([2 Sam. 10:9-19](#)), and a string of David's victories against Moab, Syria, and Edom are listed in [2 Samuel 8](#). Israel was almost perpetually at war, so Mr. Miller needs to explain why destruction and war were all right if Israel did them but wrong if the Amorites did them.

Miller:

- *6. Not only did the Amorites do wholesale destruction to the cities and the peoples, but they somehow also debased the 'better' polytheism of the pre-Amorite-invasion Canaanites. The pantheon of Ebla was prior to (by a thousand years) and yet essentially the same as, that of Canaan ([EBLA2:79-89](#)). Eblaite religion was your 'normal' polytheism of the ANE, but with some advanced traits. Pettinato points to one ([EBLA0:178-179](#)):*

Till:

Before we look at the "better polytheism" of Ebla, I will remind readers that Ebla was destroyed by the Akkadians when Naram Sin was their king. As I pointed out above, Ebla never regained its former power, so the Amorites could hardly be blamed for destroying what Mr. Miller refers to as "better polytheism." If any blame is to be affixed for the destruction of a "better polytheism," Mr. Miller will have to lay that blame on the Akkadians. Needless to say, I find it rather ironic that a monotheistic apologist would speak of "better polytheism," but, of course, Mr. Miller is bending over backwards to try to find some way to justify the Yahwistic massacres in the Old Testament.

Miller [quoting Pettinato]:

The second innovation is represented by the Eblaite conception of the divine. In spite of widespread polytheism, it seemed to be coupled with henotheism and an abstract

idea of God. Above all, the principal god, Dagan, was raised to a role of superiority that touched upon uniqueness."

Their religious praxis was likewise somewhat refined--relative to the other ANE nations--but somehow got 'changed' into the rather debased practices which we will below see were done in the Canaan of Israelite times. What influenced this cultural shift in praxis?

Till:

The author of the book that Miller quoted above was Giovanni Pettinato of the University of Rome, who is an epigrapher working on translating the tablets discovered in the library of Ebla, so he would certainly be an authority whose opinion would be worth serious consideration. Unfortunately, however, Mr. Miller has given to us only a brief quotation from Pettinato, which is entirely too abstract to tell us anything concrete about Eblaite religion that Mr. Miller seems to believe the Amorites were responsible for "debasing." Miller believes that, even though, as I noted above, the Amorites did not destroy Ebla. That was done by the Akkadians when Naram Sin was their king. In ["EBLA: Its Impact on Bible Records,"](#) Clifford Wilson, an archaeologist at Monash University in Australia, reviewed the discoveries at Ebla and mentioned at length the work of Pettinato. He made a reference to what Pettinato was perhaps referring to in the brief quotation above. In referring to the names of Eblaite gods, Pettinato found that *Ya* was one of the names, and Wilson, who exhibits clear tendency to read too much into what had been found on the tablets, attempts to make this a reference to Yahweh. Pettinato saw this only as "a new development in West Semitic religious concepts," but Wilson preferred to think that "(i)t would be more correct to see it as renewed acknowledgment of Yahweh."

Wilson was not the first to read Yahweh into the texts of some of the tablets found at Ebla. I remember reading an article, whose title and source I no longer recall, about the discovery of the Eblaite library after it was first found in 1975, and biblical maximists immediately jumped to find Yahweh in *Ya*, the name of one of the gods of the Eblaites, but that opinion is not shared by all. Let's suppose, however, that *Ya* was indeed a shortened form of *Yahweh* that was used in Ebla. Since Yahwism has survived until the present time, how can the Amorites be blamed for having "debased" the Eblaite religion--especially when the Amorites were not the ones who destroyed Ebla--if the worship of Yahweh was continued after Ebla ceased to exist?

As for Pettinato's belief that the Eblaite god Dagan was elevated to "a role of superiority that touched upon uniqueness," I have to ask what the relevance of this is. This god was not unique to Ebla, because Dagan was the god of crop fertility in [western Semitic cultures](#).

At Ebla (Tell Mardikh), from at least 2300 BCE, Dagan was the head of the city pantheon comprising some 200 deities and bore the titles BE-DINGIR-DINGIR 'Lord of the gods' and Bekalam 'Lord of the land'. His consort was known only as Belatu 'Lady'. Both were worshipped in a large temple complex called E-Mul 'House of the Star'. One entire quarter of Ebla and one of its gates were named after Dagan. Dagan is called ti-lu ma-tim 'dew of the land' and Be-ka-na-na, possibly 'Lord of Canaan'. He [was] called lord of many cities: of Tuttul, Irim, Ma-Ne, Zarad, Uguash, Siwad, and Sipishu.

So the pantheon of Ebla had 200 deities in it, and Miller is apparently arguing that the Amorites--who weren't responsible for the downfall of Ebla in the first place--deserved to be exterminated for somehow "debasing"--apparently without conquering Ebla--the "superior" role that the Eblaites had accorded their god Dagan. As noted in the quotation above, Dagan was the chief of the Eblaitic deities, and from this, Miller, through Pettinato, is claiming that they practiced [henotheism](#), which is the worship of only one god while acknowledging the existence of others. I guess we are supposed to believe that the Eblaites maintained a pantheon of some 200 deities, because they worshiped only Dagan. How much sense does that make?

For the sake of argument, let's suppose that the Eblaites were henotheistic. So what? Is Miller arguing from this, that the Amorites--who were not the people who destroyed Ebla--deserved to be exterminated around 1440 BC because their ancestors had destroyed a "superior polytheism" of the Eblaites some 800 years earlier? Perhaps so. After all, he is defending the Yahwistic massacre of the Amalekites for something their ancestors had done 400 years earlier. I thought that the Israelite slaughter of the Amalekites for something done 400 years earlier by their ancestors was bad enough, but now Mr. Miller is apparently arguing that it was morally right to destroy the Amorites in Israel's sweep through Canaan, because their ancestors had destroyed a "better polytheism" in Ebla 800 years earlier. One wonders where his cut-off point would be for punishing ethnic groups for atrocities committed by their ancestors.

This, folks, is an example of the extremes that inerrantists will resort to in order to defend their untenable belief in biblical inerrancy. In this case, apparently, they will argue that the Yahwistic slaughter of the Canaanites were morally right, because a branch of their ethnic group destroyed a "superior" polytheism eight centuries before Yahweh ordered the massacres, **but keep in mind that the Amorites didn't destroy Ebla.** That was done by Akkadians.

Before leaving this point, I must point out that the destruction of Ebla--**by the Akkadians**--did not end the worship of the god Dagan. He was mentioned in the Bible as *Dagon* ([Judges 16:23-30](#)) and was worshiped throughout territory occupied by the Amorites. He was, for example, one of the leading deities in the Amorite city of

Mari, so instead of destroying the worship of Dagan (Dagon), the Amorites contributed to its preservation. At any rate, I really don't get Miller's point here. The Old Testament raved against idolatry and obviously condemned the worship of Dagon. A quaint little tale in ([1 Samuel 5](#) claims that when the Philistines captured the ark of the covenant in battle, they put it into their temple of Dagon, where it caused the statue (idol) of Dagon to topple face down onto the ground. When the idol was set upright again, the Philistines found it face down the next day. This led them to return the ark to the Israelites.

In the passage linked to above (Judges 16:23-30), Samson pulled down the supporting columns and caused the temple of Dagon to collapse on a houseful of worshipers, so the Israelites obviously didn't have much use for the god Dagon (Dagan). Mr. Miller, however, apparently wants us to believe that Yahweh was morally right to order the extermination of the Amorites, because they had destroyed the worship of Dagan in Ebla. I will say again that this is an example of how far biblical inerrantists will go to defend the Bible.

Miller [quoting another source]:

*Nevertheless, the vicissitudes in political fortunes, after the collapse of the Early Bronze Age civilization in Canaan, were accompanied by **the settlement of new peoples (Amorites, Hurrians, and others). These new settlers brought about innovations and changes to the culture of Canaan.***" ([EBLA2:89](#))

Till:

And bringing "innovations and changes" into a culture is wrong? Did the Israelites bring any innovations and changes into Canaan after they conquered it?

Miller:

- *7. So, they were apparently into 'international violence', [sic]*

Till:

And the Israelites were not into "international violence"? Leaving one country and invading another one with the intention of "leaving no one alive to breathe" was not "international violence"? I am trying to pressure Mr. Miller to explain to us why conduct that was morally wrong in Amorites and other Canaanites would have been morally right for Israelites.

Miller;

- *but what about these religious practices that YHWH seemed to be referring to in Deut 12.31:*

*You must not worship the LORD your God **in their way**, because **in worshipping their gods, they do all kinds of detestable things** the LORD hates..*

Notice that the problem is **not so much** the 'other gods', but the religious **rituals** that are so bad.

Till:

We have already seen that the Israelites also did "detestable" things, such as [sacrificing their children](#) to the god Molech, and as we go through Mr. Miller's list of "detestable rituals" below, we will see again that the Israelites also practiced some of those rituals.

Miller:

So, what data do we have about their practices. Let's start with the biblical data, and check it against any archeological and extra-biblical [*sic*] literary data.

Till:

As we go through the "biblical data" that Mr. Miller cites, please notice that he continues to beg the question of biblical inerrancy, so another reminder of likely errancy in the Bible seems appropriate before we look at Miller's special pleading below. I showed the probability of myth in the Genesis-6 reference to "[sons of God](#)" who married the daughters of men, and in the case of the [book of Jonah](#) that there are several reasons to suspect that it is a work of fiction or metaphorical in purpose rather than a historical work. Earlier in [this rebuttal article](#), I presented archaeological evidence that the claim of Joshua's destruction of the city of Ai is unhistorical, so now I will present another reason why reasonable people will be suspicious of the fundamentalist claim that the Bible is inerrant. This reason pertains to scriptures that I have already quoted in [this section](#) of Part Two to show that child sacrifices were apparently commonplace in Israel. The problem appears in three of the passages that I previously cited in Jeremiah without quoting. As I quote them now, notice the expressions that I emphasize in bold print.

Jeremiah 7:30** "The people of Judah have done evil in my eyes, declares Yahweh. They have set up their detestable idols in the house that bears my Name and have defiled it. 31 They have built the high places of Topheth in the Valley of Ben Hinnom to burn their sons and daughters in the fire--something I did not command, **nor did it enter my mind.

Jeremiah 9:4 For they [the people of Jerusalem] have forsaken me and made this a place of foreign gods; they have burned sacrifices in it to gods that neither they nor their fathers nor the kings of Judah ever knew, and they have filled this place with the blood of the innocent. 5 They have built the high places of Baal to burn their sons in the fire as offerings to Baal--something I did not command or mention, **nor did it enter my mind.**

Jeremiah 32:34 34 They [the people of Judah] set up their abominable idols in the house that bears my Name and defiled it. 35 They built high places for Baal in the Valley of Ben Hinnom to sacrifice their sons and daughters to Molech, though I never commanded, **nor did it enter my mind**, that they should do such a detestable thing and so make Judah sin.

So three times Yahweh said through the prophet Jeremiah that it just hadn't entered his mind that the Israelites would sacrifice their sons and daughters to Molech, but this is not at all consistent with the biblical claim that Yahweh knows everything ([1 John 3:20](#); [Ps. 147:5](#); [Job 37:16](#); [Isaiah 46:9-10](#); [Isaiah 48:3-7](#)). There are many more passages that I could cite, but these are sufficient to show that biblical writers believed that Yahweh knew everything. The last two cited above claim that Yahweh also knew what was going to come to pass.

Isaiah 46:9 9 Remember the former things, those of long ago; I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me. 10 **I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come.** I say: My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please.

Isaiah 48:1 "Listen to this, O house of Jacob, you who are called by the name of Israel and come from the line of Judah, you who take oaths in the name of Yahweh and invoke the God of Israel--but not in truth or righteousness--2 you who call yourselves citizens of the holy city and rely on the God of Israel—Yahweh Almighty is his name: 3 **I foretold the former things long ago, my mouth announced them and I made them known; then suddenly I acted, and they came to pass.**

So if God knows everything and knows what is going to happen in the future, how could it not have entered his mind that the Israelites would offer their children as burnt offerings to the god Molech? This is just one more reason to suspect that the Bible is not the inerrant "word of God," as most fundamentalists think and as Mr. Miller seems to believe. Keep this in mind as we go through his catalog of "detestable rituals" that the Canaanites practiced, because he will rely heavily on begging the question of biblical accuracy.

I will reserve comment until Mr. Miller has taken us through the catalog of "sins" prohibited in Leviticus 18.

Miller:

- The Biblical Data...

Leviticus 18:1 The LORD said to Moses, 2 "Speak to the Israelites and say to them: `I am the LORD your God. 3 You must not do as they do in Egypt, where you used to live, and you must not do as they do in the land of Canaan, where I am bringing you. Do not follow their practices. 4 You must obey my laws and be careful to follow my decrees. I am the LORD your God. 5 Keep my decrees and laws, for the man who obeys them will live by them. I am the LORD.

6 "`No one is to approach any close relative to have sexual relations. I am the LORD.

7 "`Do not dishonor your father by having sexual relations with your mother. She is your mother; do not have relations with her.

8 "`Do not have sexual relations with your father's wife; that would dishonor your father.

9 "`Do not have sexual relations with your sister, either your father's daughter or your mother's daughter, whether she was born in the same home or elsewhere.

10 "`Do not have sexual relations with your son's daughter or your daughter's daughter; that would dishonor you.

11 "`Do not have sexual relations with the daughter of your father's wife, born to your father; she is your sister.

12 "`Do not have sexual relations with your father's sister; she is your father's close relative.

13 "`Do not have sexual relations with your mother's sister, because she is your mother's close relative.

14 "`Do not dishonor your father's brother by approaching his wife to have sexual relations; she is your aunt.

15 "`Do not have sexual relations with your daughter-in-law. She is your son's wife; do not have relations with her.

16 "Do not have sexual relations with your brother's wife; that would dishonor your brother.

17 "Do not have sexual relations with both a woman and her daughter. Do not have sexual relations with either her son's daughter or her daughter's daughter; they are her close relatives. That is wickedness.

18 "Do not take your wife's sister as a rival wife and have sexual relations with her while your wife is living.

19 "Do not approach a woman to have sexual relations during the uncleanness of her monthly period.

20 "Do not have sexual relations with your neighbor's wife and defile yourself with her.

21 "Do not give any of your children to be sacrificed to Molech, for you must not profane the name of your God. I am the LORD.

22 "Do not lie with a man as one lies with a woman; that is detestable.

23 "Do not have sexual relations with an animal and defile yourself with it. A woman must not present herself to an animal to have sexual relations with it; that is a perversion.

24 "Do not defile yourselves in any of these ways, because this is how the nations that I am going to drive out before you became defiled. 25 Even the land was defiled; so I punished it for its sin, and the land vomited out its inhabitants. 26 But you must keep my decrees and my laws. The native-born and the aliens living among you must not do any of these detestable things, 27 for all these things were done by the people who lived in the land before you, and the land became defiled. 28 And if you defile the land, it will vomit you out as it vomited out the nations that were before you. 29 "Everyone who does any of these detestable things--such persons must be cut off from their people. 30 Keep my requirements and do not follow any of the detestable customs that were practiced before you came and do not defile yourselves with them. I am the LORD your God." (repeated in Lev 20)

Till:

Many of these laws pertained to incest, and just about every incestuous relationship was anticipated except the father/daughter one. The restriction in verse 6 forbidding sexual relations with "any close relative" would have covered fathers and daughters, of course, but I have to wonder why the Levitical writer, who specifically mentioned

just about every other incestuous relation, didn't also specifically forbid what is probably the most common incestuous relationship of all, one that is fairly commonplace in modern society, *i. e.*, sexual relations between father and daughter. I can't help thinking about "righteous Lot" ([2 Peter 2:7](#)) and his daughters ([Gen. 19:3-38](#)), mentioned earlier. Could this suggest that such relationships were fairly common in Hebrew culture and folklore?

At any rate, Mr. Miller's apparent purpose in cataloging these "detestable practices" was to suggest that these were things that those nasty old Canaanites did, which left Yahweh with no choice but to order their extermination. We have seen, however, that the same "detestable practices" were also present in Israelite society. Verse 21, for example, prohibited sacrificing one's children to Molech, but we just noticed above that several biblical passages indicate that such sacrifices were fairly commonplace in the Israelite culture. Even though Abraham didn't complete the sacrifice of his son Isaac ([Gen. 19:1-19](#)), just the fact that it is in the sacred literature of the Hebrews indicates that this was a practice that they did not find shocking. In "[A Legacy of Human Sacrifice?](#)" I discussed the probable contribution that Abraham's willingness to sacrifice Isaac and the later story of [Jephthah's sacrifice of his daughter](#) to fulfill a foolish vow to Yahweh ([Judges 11:30-39](#)) made to the evolution of the Christian doctrine of the vicarious atonement of Jesus. Both Abraham and Jephthah were listed as "heroes of faith" in ([Heb. 11:17,32](#)), so if human sacrifice was considered so "detestable" in biblical times, how did these two find their way into a list of "heroes of faith" like Noah, Enoch, Sarah, Joseph, Moses, and others? The article just linked to brought a response from a [biblicist in Scotland](#) to which I replied in the same issue of [The Skeptical Review](#). Those who read these three articles should be able to see that the Old Testament did leave a legacy of human sacrifices, which ultimately culminated in the notion that God required the sacrifice of his own son as a condition to forgiving the "sins" of his creation. As my articles just linked to suggest, the doctrine of the vicarious atonement could not have evolved in a culture that found repugnance in human sacrifices. That this doctrine did develop in a religion that has its roots in Judaism is a rather clear indication that a legacy of human sacrifices was ingrained in this society, and as I have noted above, even biblical writers themselves made several references to the practice.

This poses a problem for Mr. Miller's attempt to defend the Canaanite massacres on the grounds that these people practiced human sacrifices, because it makes no logical sense at all to argue that "God" ordered the extermination of people who sacrificed children as burnt offerings so that he could replace them with people who sacrificed children as burnt offerings.

Some of these alleged "detestable practices" were merely superstitions of the time. Verse 20, for example, prohibited sexual relations during a woman's "monthly

period," but Mr. Miller can give no reason why this would have been a detestable practice beyond the fact that it was included in the long list of no-nos in Leviticus 18. Would Mr. Miller say that this is a sinful practice if it is done today? If so, let's see his evidence that it was beyond the mere fact that the Bible says that it was.

Verse 22 prohibited homosexuality, but [the latest research](#), although not yet conclusive, indicates that this is a hormonal/biological matter over which those who are attracted to the same sex have no choice. If that is true, I wonder what biblicists will say when the research establishes as scientific fact that homosexuality is not a matter of choice any more than one has a choice in other biological characteristics, such as race, hair and eye color, height, etc. Will Bible believers still continue to rant and rave against homosexuality and clamor for constitutional amendments to restrict it? Probably so, because science has already established the reality of biological evolution, but that has not stopped biblicists from ranting against it. I predict that time will show that those who rave against homosexuality on religious grounds will prove to be the modern counterparts of those who opposed Galileo's discovery that the earth is not the center of the solar system.

If we assume, however, that homosexuality is a "detestable practice," which homosexuals engage in as a matter of choice, that would be of little help to Mr. Miller's effort to defend the Yahwistic massacres on the grounds that the Canaanites were wicked, evil people who did such awful things as practice homosexuality, because this was present in Hebrew society too. Reminiscent of the story of the men of Sodom who demanded that the angels visiting Lot be sent out to them ([Gen. 19:1-11](#)), there is a quaint little yarn in [Judges 19](#) about a group of homosexuals in Gibeon who made the same demand of a man hosting a Levite and his concubine, who had stopped for the night. Like Lot, the host offered the men his virgin daughter (which must not have been a detestable practice, since "righteous Lot" did the same thing), but that didn't satisfy them. The upshot was that the Levite threw his concubine to the men, who... well, ravished her to death. The next day, the Levite took his dead concubine home, cut her body, "limb by limb" ([v:29](#)), into twelve pieces and sent the pieces to the various tribes in Israel. This provoked a civil war between the tribe of Benjamin, in whose territory the incident had happened, and the other tribes of Israel ([Judges 20](#)), which ended with the virtual extermination of the entire tribe of Benjamin, which was faced with the prospect of extinction, since only 600 men had survived, by fleeing from the battle ([Judges 21:1-6](#)). Not to worry, however, because the very tribes of Israel that had massacred the Benjamites devised a plan to [kidnap wives](#) for the Benjamites who had fled from the battle scene ([Judges 21:6-24](#)), so I guess that kidnapping women and forcing them into marriages was not a "detestable" practice.

Does Mr. Miller know that stories like this one are in the Bible? If so, how can he justify with a straight face the massacre of the Canaanites on the grounds that they were so depraved and immoral that Yahweh had to order their extermination?

Miller [quoting more texts that prohibited human sacrifices]:

Leviticus 20:1 The LORD said to Moses, 2 "Say to the Israelites: `Any Israelite or any alien living in Israel who gives any of his children to Molech must be put to death. The people of the community are to stone him. 3 I will set my face against that man and I will cut him off from his people; for by giving his children to Molech, he has defiled my sanctuary and profaned my holy name. 4 If the people of the community close their eyes when that man gives one of his children to Molech and they fail to put him to death, 5 I will set my face against that man and his family and will cut off from their people both him and all who follow him in prostituting themselves to Molech.

Deuteronomy 12:31 You must not worship the LORD your God in their way, because in worshipping their gods, they do all kinds of detestable things the LORD hates. They even burn their sons and daughters in the fire as sacrifices to their gods.

Deuteronomy 18:10 Let no one be found among you who sacrifices his son or daughter in the fire....

Psalms 106:38 They shed innocent blood, the blood of their sons and daughters, whom they sacrificed to the idols of Canaan, and the land was desecrated by their blood. (about Israel!)

Till:

I have shown above, *repeatedly*, that the Israelites also practiced child sacrificing, so this entire aspect of "detestable practices" that Mr. Miller has tried to lay onto the Amorites amounts to an approval of Yahweh's plan to exterminate people who sacrificed some of their children to the god Molech so that he could replace them with people who sacrificed some of *their* children to the god Molech. Miller certainly gets my agreement that this ancient barbaric practice was "detestable," but he needs to show us that child sacrifices were more "detestable" when done by Amorites than when done by Israelites. He can't do that, of course, because his whole purpose in all that he has said about the detestable Amorites was to offer a rationale for their eradication that the gullible would uncritically accept, and many of the gullible won't know the Bible well enough to say, "Hey, wait a minute, the Israelites did some of those detestable things too."

Miller [still quoting proof texts]:

1 Kings 14:24 There were even male shrine prostitutes in the land; the people engaged in all the detestable practices of the nations the LORD had driven out before the Israelites. (cf. also Deut 23.17--No Israelite man or woman is to become a shrine prostitute.)

Till:

This passage is describing "detestable" practices by the people of Judah as the two verses preceding the one quoted above clearly show.

1 Kings 14:22 Judah did evil in the eyes of Yahweh. By the sins they committed they stirred up his jealous anger more than their fathers had done. 23 They also set up for themselves high places, sacred stones and Asherah poles on every high hill and under every spreading tree.

Mr. Miller is using the "detestable" practices of the Amorites and other Canaanites to justify Yahweh's orders to exterminate them, but his time would be better spent trying to formulate a logical explanation for why his god Yahweh would have commanded the destruction of Canaanites who engaged in "detestable" practices so that he could replace them in the land of Canaan with another people who engaged in the same detestable practices. If Mr. Miller can see any logic in this, he should share it with us. Surely, he won't claim that Yahweh didn't know that that Israelites would turn out as badly as they did, because that would mean that Yahweh was not omniscient.

Miller:

So, the list of Canaanite "religious" practices included:

1. Child sacrifice (with at least some of it in fire)
2. Incest
3. Bestiality
4. Homosexual practices
5. Cultic prostitution--both male and female.

Till:

With the exception of bestiality, we have noticed that the Israelites at times engaged in all of these "detestable practices," and we can conclude by implication that even this was a moral problem in Israel. Mr. Miller quoted above the list of "sins" in [Leviticus 18](#), which prohibited "sexual relations with an animal" ([v:23](#)), but doesn't it make sense to think that this was restricted, as were all of the other "detestable practices" in this passage, because it was something that was being done? Why, for example, would a society have a law against stealing if stealing were completely unknown in the society?

Although there are no direct references to bestiality, there are some implications of it.

***Genesis 2:18** Yahweh God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him." 19 Now Yahweh God had formed out of the ground all the beasts of the field and all the birds of the air. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. 20 So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds of the air and all the beasts of the field. **But for Adam no suitable helper was found.** 21 So Yahweh God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and closed up the place with flesh. 22 Then Yahweh God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man. 23 The man said, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'woman, ' for she was taken out of man."*

Now how could Adam have determined that there was no suitable helper [helpmate KJV] in all of the animals that Yahweh presented to him unless Adam had... uh... well, "experimented" with them? The mere suggestion of that will probably be offensive to some readers, but I think it is a legitimate question, and I will show later that some commentators in the Talmud thought the same thing. Regardless of what this text may have meant, however, I can think of at least one place where bestiality was metaphorically referred to to compare Israel's immorality figuratively to two sisters named Oholah and Oholibah. After a lengthy description of their sexual promiscuity, Ezekiel applied a bestial metaphor to Oholibah.

***Ezekiel 23:12** She too lusted after the Assyrians--governors and commanders, warriors in full dress, mounted horsemen, all handsome young men. 13 I saw that she too defiled herself; both of them went the same way. 14 "But she carried her prostitution still further. She saw men portrayed on a wall, figures of Chaldeans portrayed in red, 15 with belts around their waists and flowing turbans on their heads; all of them looked like Babylonian chariot officers, natives of Chaldea. 16 As soon as she saw them, she lusted after them and sent messengers to them in Chaldea. 17 Then the Babylonians came to her, to the bed of love, and in their lust they defiled her. After she had been defiled by them, she turned away from them in disgust. 18 When she carried on her prostitution openly and exposed her nakedness, I turned away from her in disgust, just as I had turned away from her sister. 19 Yet she became more and more promiscuous as she recalled the days of her youth, when she was a prostitute in Egypt. 20 There she lusted after her lovers, **whose genitals were like those of donkeys and whose emission was like that of horses.**"*

I wonder where Ezekiel would have gotten the idea for this metaphor unless bestiality was known to exist at that time.

For the sake of argument, let's just assume that bestiality didn't actually exist in Israel. Would that mean that this one "detestable practice" was sufficient to tip the scales to cause Yahweh to order the destruction of the Canaanites? Did he, in other words, say, "Well, both the Canaanites and the Israelites practice child sacrifices, incest, homosexuality, and cultic prostitution, but the Israelites don't engage in bestiality and the Canaanites do, so I am going to order the extermination of the Canaanites so that the nonbestial Israelites can occupy the land"?

Unless Mr. Miller is arguing that the Canaanites deserved to be exterminated because they were wicked, I really don't understand what the point is of all of his biblical and extrabiblical evidence that the Canaanites engaged in all sorts of "wickedness," but if this is his argument, he should keep in mind that exterminating the Canaanites would have also entailed killing Canaanite children too. As previously noted, Yahweh said that the seven nations in Canaan were "greater and mightier" than the Israelites ([Deut. 7:1-2](#)). Did this mean that these seven nations individually were greater and mightier than the Israelites, or did it mean that collectively, they were greater and mightier? Either way would mean that many thousands of the Canaanites were children when Yahweh gave the command to wipe them out and leave "no one alive to breathe" ([Deut. 20:16-17](#); [Josh. 10:40](#); [Josh. 11:14-15](#)), because the Israelite population at that time numbered [2.5 to 3 million](#), so if the seven nations were just greater and mightier collectively than this, there would surely have been 400,000 to 500,000 Canaanite children at the time. As noted earlier, Yahweh told Jonah that there were 120,000 children in Nineveh alone, so an estimate of 400 to 500 thousand children in seven nations collectively greater and mightier than the Israelites' three million would certainly be reasonable. "Moses" claimed that children have "no knowledge of good or evil" ([Deut. 1:39](#)), so readers should keep in mind that Mr. Miller is trying to rationalize the massacre of hundreds of thousands of innocent children, who didn't know the difference in good and evil.

As I have been replying to Mr. Miller's rationalizations of the Canaanite massacres, I couldn't help wondering if he maintains a pro-life position in the present controversy over abortion.

Miller:

- Let's see if the **extra-biblical [sic] data** supports the biblical material.

Till:

It doesn't matter if extrabiblical data supports the biblical material, because if the Bible, which Mr. Miller believes is inerrant, says that the Israelites engaged in the same "detestable" practices as the Canaanites, that leaves Miller with the problem of explaining the morality of ordering the extermination of entire nations of people

because of their detestable practices so that they could be replaced with another ethnic group that engaged in the same detestable practices. It also leaves him with the problem of explaining the morality of ordering the massacres of hundreds of thousands of innocent children, because if the Bible is inerrant, they certainly did not knowingly engage in the "detestable practices" that Mr. Miller has been talking about.

Miller:

- Child sacrifice (with at least some of it in fire)

Sadly, Yes.

Let's look at some of the scholarly descriptions of the data:

Its origin (human sacrifice) must be sought, evidently, in Canaanite culture (in the broad sense). Punic and Neo-Punic inscriptions contain the expressions mlk 'mr (transcribed mokhomor in Latin) and mlk 'dm. Very probably, these phrases mean respectively 'offerings of lamb' and 'offering of man', and refer to the sacrifice of an infant, or of a lamb as substitute. This interpretation is supported by a find in the sanctuary of Tanit at Carthage, where archaeologists have discovered urns containing burnt bones of lambs and goats, and, more often, of children. There is, too, a famous text of Diodorus Siculus (Biblioth. Hist. XX 14): in 310 B.C., when a disaster was threatening Carthage, the inhabitants of the town decided it was due to the anger of Kronos, to whom they had formerly sacrificed their finest children: instead, they had begun to offer sickly children, or children they had bought. Thereupon, they sacrificed two hundred children from the noblest families. There was a bronze statue of Kronos with outstretched arms, and the child was placed on its hands and rolled into the furnace. Whether the details be true or false, the story is evidence of a custom to which other classical authors also allude.

These inscriptions and texts are of late date, but the molk offering is mentioned in two steles from Malta belonging to the seventh or the sixth century B.C. The sacrificial term has not so far been found in inscriptions from Phoenicia proper, but child-sacrifice was practised there: a fragment of Philo of Byblos cited in Eusebius (Praep. Evang. I 10) says that the Phoenicians had an ancient custom--'they offered their dearest children in a way full of mystery' when danger threatened the nation. Porphyry (De abstin. II 56) says that the Phoenician History written by Sanchuniaton and translated by Philo of Byblos was full of stories about child-sacrifices offered to Kronos in times of calamity. These texts furnish the connecting-link with the story told by Diodorus Siculus, and we may mention also the reference to the king of Moab's offering his son as a holocaust when his capital was under siege (2 K 3 : 27).

The sacrifice of children, then, by burning them to death probably made its way into Israel from Phoenicia (note: the main transmitter of Canaanite culture) during a period of religious syncretism. The Bible mentions only two specific instances, and they are motivated by the same exceptional circumstances as the Phoenician sacrifices: Achaz 'made his son pass through the fire' (2 K 16: 3) during the Syro-Ephraimite War, and Manasseh did the same (2 K 21: 6) when confronted with some Assyrian threat which is not mentioned in the Books of Kings but which may be alluded to in 2 Ch 33:11f. Yet the custom must have been fairly wide-spread to have deserved the condemnations uttered by Deuteronomy, Leviticus and the Prophets. Though Phoenician texts properly so called do not mention the word, it is possible (we say no more) that the sacrifice was called molk in Phoenicia, as in Carthage, and that it came into Israel under this name." ([AI:445-446](#)).

Till:

I saw no need to interrupt this lengthy quotation, because there can be little doubt that child sacrifices were commonplace in ancient, superstitious times. Mr. Miller's source (Roland de Vaux), however, didn't tell the complete story, at least not in the part of his book that Mr. Miller quoted, because human sacrifices were practiced all around the world, in places far removed from the ancient Near East. In many ancient societies, [such as the Grecian, Celtic, and Nordic cultures](#), animal sacrifices were far more common than human ones, but the latter were sometimes practiced. Mesoamerican cultures like the [Aztecs](#), however, practiced mainly human sacrifices in their religious rituals out of a belief that the world had previously been destroyed four times, and so to delay its fifth destruction, they should sacrifice human hearts to their god Huitzilopochtli. They maintained a state of constant warfare with surrounding tribes so that they could take prisoners to be sacrificed to their god. Myans in Mesoamerica also practiced [human sacrifices](#) to their gods as did the [Incans](#) in South America. Mr. Miller apparently wants his readers to think that human sacrifices was a "detestable practice" unique to the ancient Near East, but that was not at all the case. Anyone who researches the subject will find that the Mesoamerican cultures routinely offered human sacrifices to their gods, so if Yahweh had wanted to eradicate this practice, he should have ordered Moses to construct ships to take the Israelites into Mesoamerica to eradicate the Aztecs, Mayas, and other ethnic groups of that region. In other words, Mr. Miller gains nothing by quoting sources that tell of the practice of human sacrifices in Canaan, because this was admittedly a religious practice of the time. What Miller needs to do more than post sources that report a well known historical fact is to give us a logical explanation for why Yahweh would have ordered the eradication of Canaanite tribes who practiced human sacrifices so that he could replace them with Israelites who also practiced human sacrifices.

Miller:

Archeological evidence is firm and growing. Child sacrifice burial grounds are called *tophet* in the literature, and they occur throughout Palestine and the Phoenician empire. Ahlstrom mentions sites "at 'Atlit, Tell el-Far'a (S) and Tell el 'Ajjul in Palestine" ([HAP:688](#), n.2). He gives a description of one monument depicting child sacrifice ([HAP:op. cit.](#)):

The archaeological excavations at Punic Pozo Moro in Spain show a monument with a ritual scene with a god (with an animal head) on a throne and a table in front of him. He holds with one hand a pig lying on its back and in the other hand he has a bowl with the head and the feet of a little child (?) sticking up. He holds this bowl in front of his mouth. To the right there is another bowl, and a god with an animal head (horse?) holding a knife in his right hand above the bowl ready to slaughter the child.

Till:

I will split this quotation to ask, with admitted cynicism, why Yahweh didn't send the Israelites in the other direction, across North Africa and across the Strait of Gibraltar into Spain, so that they could have exterminated the people living there and then themselves become the ones who offered child sacrifices. In other words, I am trying to get Mr. Miller to see that he accomplishes nothing when he says, "Well, those wicked Canaanites practice human sacrifice," if the Old Testament admits that the Israelites did the same thing. What was so morally right about Yahweh's ordering the extermination of the human-sacrificing Canaanites if he was going to repopulate their land with human-sacrificing Israelites?

Of course, I won't let Mr. Miller forget that in ordering the extermination of everything that breathed in the Canaanite nations, Yahweh was ordering the killing of children who at the times of their deaths did not know the difference in good and evil. Instead of seeing all of the quotations from Mr. Miller's sources, who are telling us nothing that we did not know to be probable historical facts, I would like to see from him a logical argument that would prove the morality of killing innocent children because of what their parents and other adults may have been guilty of.

Miller [continuing Ahlstrom's quotation]:

The scene (in a neo-Hittite style) shows both animal and child sacrifices as food for the gods."

Till:

Yes, and the various biblical passages that I quoted above show that human sacrifices by the Israelites was by no means a rarity, so Mr. Miller confronts the same question again. Why would the omniscient, omnipotent Yahweh have ordered the

extermination of the Canaanites so that he could repopulate their land with another ethnic group that engaged in the same "detestable practices"?

More important than that, why would a perfectly holy and moral god have ordered the massacre of hundreds of thousands of children for things that their parents and other adults in their society had done? Mr. Miller seems to want to forget all about the children, but I am not going to let him forget them.

Miller:

New sites recently found include Gezer, Tyre, and numerous 'high places' ([POTW](#):171, Is 57.5-7).

These child sacrifices were practiced not only during religious ceremonies (as most of the above were), but also during times of crisis (esp. warfare) and as dedication offerings at the building of cities/houses (i.e. "foundation sacrifices"; cf. [AI](#):442). So Stern ([ZPEB](#), s.v. "war, warfare" p. 895):

Till:

I wonder if anyone else has noticed what Mr. Miller seems to be arguing. No matter how widespread the practice of child sacrifices was in ancient Canaanite, we necessarily know that they were not sacrificing **all** of their children, for if they had been, the Canaanites would have died out. Hence, Miller seems to be arguing that since the Canaanite societies were sacrificing **some** of their children, Yahweh ordered the Israelites to massacre **all** of the Canaanite children.

Doesn't anybody besides me ever notice this kind of twisted reasoning?

Miller [pointlessly continuing to cite sources about a historical fact that no one denies]:

Further, to secure God's aid, the troops would make sacrifices prior to battle-- sometimes even human sacrifices... This custom seems also to have been taken from earlier Canaanite traditions, for in many Egyp. reliefs from the late kingdom, depicting the capture of towns in Pal., the besieged are shown throwing their children from the walls in seeking the gods' favor."

Notice that unlike so many other aberrant practices (e.g. sorcery) of the Canaanites, **this was not** widely shared by the other ANE cultures--it was a rarity.

Till:

I think that Mr. Miller needs to research human sacrifices a bit more. If he does, he will find, as I indicated above, that humans were sacrificed worldwide. As for seeking

the favor of their gods by throwing children from the walls of their towns, Mr. Miller should also study the Bible a bit more. If he did, he would see biblical incidents like the time when a famine struck the land, and the Israelites, like the cultures around them, thought that this adversity was caused by the anger of their god Yahweh. The following passage will explain what they did to seek the favor of Yahweh.

*2 Samuel 21:1 During the reign of David, there was a famine for three successive years; so David sought the face of Yahweh. Yahweh said, "It is on account of Saul and his blood-stained house; it is because he put the Gibeonites to death." 2 The king summoned the Gibeonites and spoke to them. (Now the Gibeonites were not a part of Israel but were survivors of the Amorites; the Israelites had sworn to spare them, but Saul in his zeal for Israel and Judah had tried to annihilate them.) 3 David asked the Gibeonites, "What shall I do for you? How shall I make amends so that you will bless the Lord's inheritance?" 4 The Gibeonites answered him, "We have no right to demand silver or gold from Saul or his family, nor do we have the right to put anyone in Israel to death." "What do you want me to do for you?" David asked. 5 They answered the king, "As for the man who destroyed us and plotted against us so that we have been decimated and have no place anywhere in Israel, 6 let seven of his male descendants be given to us to be killed and exposed before Yahweh at Gibeah of Saul--the Lord's chosen one." So the king said, "I will give them to you." 7 The king spared Mephibosheth son of Jonathan, the son of Saul, because of the oath before Yahweh between David and Jonathan son of Saul. 8 But the king took Armoni and Mephibosheth, the two sons of Aiah's daughter Rizpah, whom she had borne to Saul, together with the five sons of Saul's daughter Merab, whom she had borne to Adriel son of Barzillai the Meholathite. 9 **He handed them over to the Gibeonites, who killed and exposed them on a hill before Yahweh. All seven of them fell together; they were put to death during the first days of the harvest, just as the barley harvest was beginning. 10 Rizpah daughter of Aiah took sackcloth and spread it out for herself on a rock. From the beginning of the harvest till the rain poured down from the heavens on the bodies, she did not let the birds of the air touch them by day or the wild animals by night.***

This didn't involve throwing children from city walls, but it was a form of human sacrifice that was fully as "detestable" as the human sacrifices of the Amorites that Mr. Miller has been deploring at length now. Such things as these no doubt happened in ancient Near Eastern cultures, and they resulted from an idiotic belief that when calamities happen, the gods are angry and have to be appeased. Of course, I suspect that Mr. Miller will go to whatever lengths are necessary to "explain" that what David did on the occasion described above was morally right. I suppose "detestable" things like this had to be done by the Canaanites in order to arouse Mr. Miller's indignation.

Miller:

This evil was specifically Canaanite/Amorite. [*Pushback:*" ["But, hey, what about Abraham?!--Didn't God order **him** to sacrifice his kid? Isn't this a little inconsistent, pal?!"](#)]

Till:

The link here is to an article by Miller in which he examined the story of Yahweh's command for Abraham to sacrifice Isaac ([Gen. 22:1-19](#)) and--surprise! surprise!--found nothing wrong with it or inconsistent with the Bible's later condemnation of human sacrifices. Since Mr. Miller answered the hypothetical question above by linking to one of his articles, I will remind readers that I earlier linked to [one of my own articles](#) in which I had presented an entirely different take on the story that Miller finds nothing wrong with. Another biblical story of human sacrifice tells of [Jephthah's sacrifice of his own daughter](#) to keep a foolish vow that he had made to Yahweh. In this case, it wasn't a matter of beginning to make the sacrifice and then being stopped by Yahweh. As this tale was told, Jephthah actually completed the sacrifice of his daughter or else the Bible doesn't mean what it plainly says. The details are in the article just linked to, so I will let readers decide whether to read it. Those who do and have no inerrancy axes to grind will see that it clearly says that Jephthah "did to her [his daughter] according to his vow which he had vowed," and what he had vowed was to sacrifice to Yahweh the first thing that came out of the door of his house to meet him upon his return. Unfortunately, the first thing that came out to meet him was his daughter.

Now here is a curious thing about this fellow Jephthah. He committed an act that was so detestable" that Miller says that Yahweh just had to exterminate the Canaanites for doing it, yet Jephthah was listed with the "heroes of faith" in [Hebrews 11:32](#), along with such notables as Noah, Abraham, Moses, etc. I have no doubt that Mr. Miller will follow the general course taken by biblical inerrantists and claim that Jephthah didn't sacrifice his daughter but only "sacrificed her virginity" by committing her to live a life of perpetual virginity, but those who read the story should have no problems seeing that the story clearly says that Jephthah did to his daughter according to his vow. The mere presence of this story in the Bible indicates that human sacrifice wasn't considered nearly as repugnant as Mr. Miller seems to think that it was.

At this point, Mr. Miller turned to incest among the Canaanites as a justification for Yahweh's orders to exterminate them, so I will wind down my reply to his attempt to paint them as dispicable practitioners of child sacrifices by pointing out something that is known to everyone who has ever bothered to research the ancient Near Eastern belief in what the Hebrews referred to as [cherem](#). The idea communicated by this word was an ANE belief in "devoting" things or putting things "under ban" to the gods, and so when cities and towns were captured in war, the belief was applied to everything taken in battle. All of the people captured, including children and babies, and their livestock were "devoted" or "put under ban" to be killed and their possessions burned,

except for precious metals like gold and silver, of course, and these were to be given to Yahweh, which was just another way of saying that the coffers in the tabernacle—and later the temple—were filled with the spoils of war.

Application of this belief can be seen in the instructions that Joshua gave to his troops before the people shouted to make the walls of Jericho collapse [snicker, snicker] after having been encompassed for seven days by the Israelites.

Joshua 6:16 *The seventh time around, when the priests sounded the trumpet blast, Joshua commanded the people, "Shout! For Yahweh has given you the city! 17 The city and all that is in it are to be **devoted to Yahweh**. Only Rahab the prostitute and all who are with her in her house shall be spared, because she hid the spies we sent. 18 **But keep away from the devoted things, so that you will not bring about your own destruction by taking any of them.** Otherwise you will make the camp of Israel liable to destruction and bring trouble on it. 19 All the silver and gold and the articles of bronze and iron are sacred to Yahweh and must go into his treasury."*

The very next chapter tells of the Israelite failure to take the city of Ai because of Achan's violation of Joshua's command about the "devoted things" during the sacking of Jericho.

Joshua 7:1 *But the Israelites acted unfaithfully **in regard to the devoted things**; Achan son of Carmi, the son of Zimri, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, took some of them. So Yahweh's anger burned against Israel.*

The *Keil and Delitzsch Commentary on the Old Testament* is popular with many conservative Bible believers, so I will let their comments on Achan's trespass serve to explain how the ANE belief in "devoted things" was applied in time of war.

*Because the Lord had given Jericho into the hands of the Israelites, they were to consecrate it to Him as a **ban (cherem)**, i. e., as a holy thing belonging to Jehovah, which was not to be touched by man, as being the first-fruits of the land of Canaan. (On cherem, see the remarks at Lev 27:28-29.) Rahab alone was excepted from this ban, along with all that belonged to her, because she had hidden the spies. **The inhabitants of an idolatrous town laid under the ban were to be put to death, together with their cattle, and all the property in the town to be burned**, as Moses himself had enjoined on the basis of the law in Lev 27:29. The only exceptions were metals, gold, silver, and the vessels of brass and iron; these were to be brought into the treasury of the Lord, i. e., the treasury of the tabernacle, as being holy to the Lord (v. 19; vid., Num 31:54). Whoever took to himself anything that had been laid under the ban, exposed himself to the ban, not only because he had brought an abomination into his house, as Moses observes in Deut 7:25, in relation to the gold and silver of*

idols, but because he had wickedly invaded the rights of the Lord, by appropriating that which had been laid under the ban, and had wantonly violated the ban itself.

The rest of [chapter seven](#) in the book of Joshua tells about the determination of Achan's guilt and then the killing of his entire family and all of his livestock and the burning of his possessions. This was a barbaric ancient belief rooted in primitive superstition, but it was not peculiar to the Israelites. The inscription on the [Moabite Stone](#) tells of king Mesha's application of the same belief when he killed 7,000 inhabitants after capturing the Israelite city of Nebo. Inscriptions on pavement stones in [the temple of Urta](#) in Nimrud tell of the application of this belief after Assurnasirpal captured the city of Hulai and killed 3,000 captives. He claimed that he did not "leave a single one among them alive to serve as hostage." I don't think that even Turkel and Mr. Miller would claim that Mesha and Assurnasirpal had acted morally in these postwar massacres, yet they will defend the Israelites for committing parallel actions. Those who can look at the ANE practice of *cherem* without emotional attachments to a belief that the Bible is "the word of God" will easily recognize that we are talking about nothing more than a widespread ancient superstition, which, in effect, amounted to a form of human sacrifice. Captives in war, in the case of the Israelites, were thought to have been "devoted" to Yahweh, and so the act of killing them was an act of offering them as sacrifices to the god that had led them to victory.

The quotation above from the commentary by Keil and Delitzsch referred to Leviticus 27:28-29, which is a passage worth looking at to show stubborn holdouts that a form of human sacrifice was clearly practiced by the Hebrews when they killed humans who had been "devoted" or put "under ban."

Leviticus 27:28 But nothing that a man owns and devotes to Yahweh--whether man or animal or family land--may be sold or redeemed; everything so devoted is most holy to Yahweh. 29 No person devoted to destruction may be ransomed; he must be put to death.

Mr. Miller cited above a source that told of people in besieged cities throwing children off city walls to try to win the favor of their gods, but if the Israelites had laid siege to such a city, after capturing it, they would have killed in tribute to Yahweh both the children and the ones who had been throwing them from the city walls. Basically, what is the difference? The people in the city thought that they were seeking the favor of their gods by sacrificing their children; the Israelites thought that they were pleasing their god Yahweh by killing all of the captives in the city. The real tragedy in all this rests in the horrible reality that humans were once ignorant enough to believe in such stupidity.

As a final word here, I will remind readers of what Mr. Miller is essentially arguing: The Canaanites were sacrificing *some* of their children, so Yahweh commanded the Israelites to invade Canaan so that they could kill **all** of the Canaanite children. If Mr. Miller has a logical point in anything he has said in the matter of human sacrifices in Canaan, I have not been able to see it.

Miller:

- Incest.

Incest was likewise **not** an acceptable ANE practice. For example, the famous Laws of Hammurabi contain several sections on this issue (Para 154-158; [LCMAM:110-111](#)) as do the Hittite law codes (laws 189-191; [LCMAM:236](#)).

Till:

Well, I wouldn't say that the [Code of Hammurabi](#) contained "several sections" about incest. I had read the code before and could remember only a couple of restrictions against incest, so I read the entire code again and found only these three, the last of which would not necessarily have been incest unless the father's "chief wife" was his mother.

154: If a man be guilty of incest with his daughter, he shall be driven from the place (exiled).

157: If any one be guilty of incest with his mother after his father, both shall be burned.

158: If any one be surprised after his father with his chief wife, who has borne children, he shall be driven out of his father's house.

The only laws against incest in the Code of Hammurabi, then, appear to be prohibition of incest between parents and offspring with the most severe penalty attached to mother/son incest, so if Mr. Miller's source actually said that "several sections" of the code contained laws against incest, maybe this will alert him to check the claims of his sources before he passes them along.

At any rate, the Bible obviously contained explicit laws against incest, which, of course, had to have been practiced extensively after the creation [snicker, snicker] of Adam and Eve, whose sons and daughters would have had to marry each other. Then there is the matter of Abraham's claiming that Sarah was his half-sister ([Gen. 20:12](#)), so would that be a case of just half-incest, which would have been morally acceptable? If

so, the writer of Leviticus 18, which Miller quoted above, was apparently unaware of it.

Leviticus 18:9 *Do not have sexual relations with your sister, either your father's daughter or your mother's daughter, whether she was born in the same home or elsewhere.*

According to the text cited above, Abraham told Abimelech that Sarah was his sister, the "daughter of [his] father but not the daughter of [his] mother," so it appears that this marriage would have violated Leviticus 18:9. Does this mean that such marriages were all right at one time but then later wrong? If so, then morality must not be objective, as most biblical inerrantists believe, but I am sure that Mr. Miller will find some way to show that even though morality is objective, Abraham's marriage to his father's daughter was morally acceptable.

Of course, I have already cited the case of the incest between ["righteous Lot"](#) and his daughters ([Gen. 19:30-38](#)), but what about the case of Amram and Jochebed, the parents of Moses and Aaron? Amram was the son of Kohath, who was the son of Levi ([Ex. 6:16-18](#)), and Jochebed was the sister of Kohath ([Ex. 6:20](#); [Num. 26:59](#)), so this means that the mother of Moses and Aaron was the sister of her husband's father, which was plainly forbidden in Leviticus 18:12.

"Do not have sexual relations with your father's sister; she is your father's close relative.

Many biblical inerrantists will argue that Jochebed wasn't Amram's actual sister but a sister only in the sense that she was a Levite. Although Numbers 26:59 says that Jochebed was a "daughter of Levi" who had been born to him in Egypt, these inerrantists will argue that she was a daughter of Levi only in the sense that she was a descendant of Levi. In other words, whenever they are confronted with a biblical discrepancy, inerrantists will always find some far-fetched way to explain it. According to Jewish tradition, however, which both Turkel and Miller claim was "reliable," Jochebed was the actual daughter of Levi. In an apocryphal work called *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*, each of the sons of Jacob gave their testaments. In Levi's, he said this in the [11th and 12th chapters](#).

I was twenty-eight when I took a wife; her name was Melcha. She conceived and gave birth to a son, and I gave him the name Gersom, because we were sojourners in the land. And I saw that, as concerns him, he would not be in the first rank. And Kohath was born in the thirty-fifth year of my life, before sunrise. And in a vision I saw him standing in the heights, in the midst of the congregation. That is why I called him Kohath, that is the Ruler of Majesty and Reconciliation. And she bore me a third son,

*Merari, in the fortieth year of my life, and since his mother bore him with great pain, I called him Merari; that is bitterness. Jochebed **was born in Egypt** in the sixty-fourth year of my life, for by that time I had a great reputation in the midst of my brothers.*

*And Gersom took a wife who bore him Lomni and Semei. The sons of Kohath were Amram, Isaachar, Hebron, Ozeel. And the sons of Merari were Mooli and Moses. And in my ninety-fourth year **Amram took Jochebed my daughter**, as his wife, because he and my daughter had been born on the same day... (quoted from The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha, editor James H. Charlesworth, vol. 1, Doubleday, p. 792).*

Readers can go to [this section](#) of "How Long Were the Children of Israel in Egypt?" to see a more detailed discussion of Jewish traditions that said that Jochebed was the actual daughter of Levi and therefore a sister of Amram's father Kohath. Hence, Amram and Jochebed were involved in an incestuous nephew/aunt relationship, which was clearly prohibited in Leviticus 18:12. As I said of Abraham's and Sarah's incestuous marriage, however, I am sure that Mr. Miller will have a way to explain that Amram's and Jochebed's incest was morally acceptable, because I have yet to see any article by Mr. Miller in which he said, "Yep, this is definitely a discrepancy."

There are many other examples of incest among the descendants of Abraham. Lot was the son of Haran ([Gen. 11:27](#)), and Milcah was the daughter of Haran ([Gen. 11:29](#)), so Lot and Milcah were brother and sister. Abraham, Nahor, and Haran were brothers, because they were all the sons of Terah ([Gen. 11:26](#)). Hence, Milcah, the daughter of Haran, was Nahor's niece. Nahor married Milcah ([Gen. 11:29](#)), who, as just noticed, was the daughter of Nahor's brother, so Milcah married her uncle. Leviticus 18:6, which Miller quoted above, however, says, "No one is to approach a close relative to have sexual relations." Would a man's niece, his brother's daughter, not be a "close relative"? Well, the answer to that question is in Leviticus 18:12-14.

12 "Do not have sexual relations with your father's sister; she is your father's close relative. 13 "Do not have sexual relations with your mother's sister, because she is your mother's close relative. 14 "Do not dishonor your father's brother by approaching his wife to have sexual relations; she is your aunt.

The sister of one's father or mother would be an aunt, an incestuous restriction that apparently didn't apply to Amram and Jochebed, so if a male should not have incestuous relationships with an aunt--unless he was someone important like Amram, of course--wouldn't it be safe to assume that a female should not have had sexual relations with an uncle? If not, why not? Perhaps Mr. Miller will argue that there were two different biblical standards, one for males and another for females.

The case of Milcah gets even more complicated, because she became the grandmother of Rebekah, who married Abraham's son Isaac.

***Genesis 22:20** Some time later Abraham was told, "Milcah is also a mother; she has borne sons to **your brother Nahor**: 21 Uz the firstborn, Buz his brother, Kemuel (the father of Aram), 22 Kesed, Hazo, Pildash, Jidlaph and **Bethuel**." 23 Bethuel became the father of Rebekah.*

Since Abraham and Nahor were brothers, Bethuel would have been Abraham's nephew, so if Bethuel was Rebekah's father, then she was Abraham's great-niece. Thus when Isaac married Rebekah, he was marrying his first cousin once removed (a relation sometimes referred to as second cousins). Rebekah later had a brother named Laban ([Gen. 24:29](#)), who was the father of Leah and Rachel ([Gen. 29:16](#)), so when Rebekah's son Jacob married both Leah and Rachel ([Gen. 29:21-28](#)), he was marrying the daughters of his uncle, who would have been his first cousins, so there was so much inbreeding in Abraham's descendants, that it is difficult to understand why those descendants would have prohibited sexual relations with "close relatives" as firmly as they did in Leviticus 18.

The fact is that these laws against incest may not have even been known by the Israelites before the writing of the postexilic Levitical code. I can't take the time here to discuss the reasons why it would be incredibly naive to believe that Leviticus was written by Moses during the wilderness wanderings, but we find imbedded in other Old Testament books clear indications that the Levitical law code had developed over centuries. David and Bathsheba, for example, committed adultery, so according to Levitical law, they were to be executed: "If a man commits adultery with another man's wife--with the wife of his neighbor--both the adulterer and the adulteress **must** be put to death" (Lev. 20:10). We know from the story of their escapades in 2 Samuel 11-12, however, that they were not put to death. Yahweh instead killed the baby that was born of their adulterous relationship ([2 Sam. 12:15-18](#)). Now this may have been just a case of rank having its privileges, but it could also have been that the law quoted above from Leviticus 20:10 wasn't known at that time. We have been talking about the biblical prohibition of incest, but if there was a clearly stated law against a brother/sister sexual relationship in the time of David, his daughter Tamar seemed not to know it. Tamar was said to be a "beautiful woman" (2 Sam. 13:1), and her half-brother Amnon fell in love with her. On the advice of a friend, Amnon feigned illness and asked his father David to send Tamar to care for him. When Tamar brought food to Amnon, he grabbed her and asked her to "lie" with him. Tamar's response indicated that if there was a law against a man's having sexual relations with "his sister, his father's daughter" ([Lev. 18:9](#)), she didn't know it, because after pleading at length with her brother not force her, she said to him, "Please speak to the king; he will not keep

me from being married to you" ([v:13](#)). It seems, then, that if these Levitical laws against incest existed in the time of David, they weren't known to the general public.

Anyway, with a history of incest in Israel's history like that described above, I find it rather ironic that Mr. Miller would cite incest as one of the reasons why Yahweh was justified in ordering the extermination of the Canaanite nations, for if incest were a legitimately moral excuse for exterminating an ethnic group, Yahweh should have killed Abraham and his descendants long before the time of the exodus, but let's look at Mr. Miller's "data" on Canaanite incest.

Miller:

The only external data about Canaanite practice we have here (you can imagine how difficult it would be to leave archeological traces of this around!) comes from the religious myths and 'role models' of their gods.

Till:

As just noticed, however, we have examples of notable biblical characters, who violated some of the very incestuous restrictions named in Leviticus 18, so what rule of logic has Mr. Miller used to conclude that Hebrew incest wasn't so bad but Canaanite incest made them deserve ethnic extermination?

Miller:

[It must be remembered that the religious rituals of ancient cultures were generally 'reenactments' of divine activities. For example, when a religious myth would have one god impregnating another--producing "spring"--the humans would "re-enact" this with the cultic prostitutes.]

For example, in the Ugaritic corpus (Canaanite), there is the story of an incestuous El:

The second myth is often called 'The Birth of the Good and Gracious God.' It opens with a banquet at which wine flows freely. The text is divided into sections, the tenth being the last and most crucial. El is about to create two women who will become either his wives or daughters, depending on his ability to impregnate them. He creates these females and seduces them, and they both become pregnant. One bears a child called Dawn (Shahar), and the other a child called Dusk (Shalim). Later, El makes love to these same women and they produce seven sons between them. These sons are 'the good and gracious gods.' They are destined to be gods of fertility, and are first suckled at the breasts of 'the Lady' (Asherah, wife of El?)." ([NIEBF](#): 130).

With such deities to emulate, there is little wonder that God described this Canaanite practice as being very, very real.

Till:

It is time for another cynical comment. With the Israelites' having the god Yahweh, who killed anywhere from one person (as in the case of David's and Bathsheba's son) to thousands (in the case of the plagues inflicted on the Israelites during the wilderness wanderings) and even most of the entire world (as in the case of the Genesis flood), there is little wonder that the Israelites would have massacred on the massive scales discussed earlier.

Anyway, I guess Mr. Miller hasn't done much reading in Hebrew mythology. He mentioned Asherah, the wife of El, but if Mr. Miller doesn't know that the Hebrews once widely worshiped this goddess as the consort of Yahweh, then he hasn't done much research in Hebrew Mythology. Biblical references to the worship of Asherah can be found in [2 Kings 18:4](#), [21:7](#), and [23:4,6-7](#), among others. Furthermore, if Mr. Miller doesn't know that El, the name of the Canaanite god, was appropriated by the Hebrews and applied to Yahweh at times, then he should get a Hebrew text of the Old Testament and notice how many times El was used in reference to the Hebrew god. Here are just a few examples.

Genesis 35:11 And God said to him, "I am God [El] Almighty; be fruitful and increase in number. A nation and a community of nations will come from you, and kings will come from your body."

Genesis 46:3 "I am God [El], the God of your father," he said. "Do not be afraid to go down to Egypt, for I will make you into a great nation there."

Numbers 12:13 So Moses cried out to Yahweh, "O God [El], please heal her [Miriam]!"

Numbers 16:22 But Moses and Aaron fell facedown and cried out, "O God [El], God of the spirits of all mankind, will you be angry with the entire assembly when only one man sins?"

If the Canaanite god El was so morally despicable, Mr. Miller should explain why the Israelites appropriated his name to use it in reference to their god Yahweh. As for Mr. Miller's claim that incest must have been practiced by the Canaanites because it was referred to in their mythology, I can use the same "logic" to prove that Hebrew women copulated with snakes. In *Hebrew Myths*, Robert Graves and Raphael Patai related the myth of Eve and Samael (Satan disguised as a snake). When Samael saw Adam and Eve copulating, he jealously waited until Adam fell asleep, and then he seduced Eve, who conceived Cain as a result of their union (Anchor Books by

Doubleday, 1964, p. 85.) Allusions to this myth are in the [Babylonian Talmud](#), where it tells women who encounter snakes how to determine if the serpents desire intercourse with them.

If a woman saw a snake and does not know if the snake desires her, she should take off her clothing and throw them before him. If he curls up in her clothes he desires her. How can she save herself from the snake's desire for intercourse? She should have sex with her husband in front of the snake; this will disgust the snake. There are those who say, though, that if she has sex in front of the snake it will increase the snake's desire for her, and that therefore she must take some of her hair and fingernails and throw them at the snake, saying, "I am a niddah" (Shabbat 110a).

Niddah in Hebrew meant *filth*, so the passage goes on to explain that if the snake still desires intercourse with her, the woman should tell him that she is menstruating, which in Jewish society made a woman "unclean" ([Lev. 15:19-28](#)). Myths about snakes copulating with women were commonplace in other cultures, but the presence of this myth in Hebrew society would, according to Mr. Miller's logic, mean that this was an actual bestial practice among the Hebrews. So much for Mr. Miller's appeals to mythology in order to paint the Canaanites as a morally depraved society in which incest abounded!

Miller:

- Bestiality.

Here we have the same situation as above--it is forbidden in other ANE codes (*e.g.* Hittite laws 187-188; [LCMAM:236](#)), but shows up in the Canaanite mythology, with Baal as the role model this time.

Baal is generally pictured in human form, and is often accompanied by a bull or rides upon a bull. (He is sometimes pictured as a bull as well, but this is in drawings, not in literary texts.) In one Ugaritic text, Baal, on his way to the underworld, has sexual relations with a young heifer ([NIEBF:129](#); [ANET:p139](#)):

Puissant Baal complies.

He desires a calf-cow in Dubr;

A heifer in Shihlmemat-field;

Lies with her times seventy-seven,

[...]...times eighty-eight.

[See also the summary statement in [ISBE](#): s.v. "Crimes", where it is linked to "certain pagan rites and mythology"]

Till:

Mr. Miller said that Baal was "generally pictured" in human form, but he wasn't always so depicted. Mr. Miller seems not to know that Baal was "the bull god," who was sometimes depicted and worshiped as [a bull](#).

Baal, the Bull God, was identified with thunder and life-giving rain. Anath, his sister and consort, was a fertility goddess and a Virgin Warrior Goddess. In myth cycle, Baal was annually killed by Mot, the god of summer heat. When Baal was killed, the rains stopped through the summer drought. Mot scorched the earth, send dust storms, and the earth became hard and cracked. When Anath brought Baal back in the early autumn, the rains returned, and plant life recovered, and it was possible to plow the earth again.

In the [Baal Epic](#), El, the father of Baal, was referred to several times as a "bull," so what Mr. Miller quoted above was not a case of mythological beastiality but of a bull god wanting sexual relations with a female of its species.

*Baal was the power worshipped by the Canaanites as God. He is the bull god **and is represented by a bull**. He is half man and half bull, the god of fertility (the Sun God) (J. P. Timmons, *Mysterious Secrets of the Dark Kingdom*, p. 114, *emphasis added*).*

Has Mr. Miller never noticed in the Bible that the bull was an object of worship for the Israelites, as when Aaron fabricated the golden calf at Mt. Sinai ([Ex. 32:1-6](#)) and when Jeroboam put golden calves at Bethel and Dan to entice the Israelites from going to Jerusalem to worship ([1 Kings 12:25-31](#))? They were worshipping Baal, a form of idolatry that was practiced throughout Israel's "history." Obviously, then, Mr. Miller has completely misinterpreted the Canaanite myth that he quoted above.

For the sake of argument, let's just assume that there were Canaanite myths about beastiality. I showed earlier that even though there are no specific examples of beastiality in the Bible that I know of, there are, nevertheless, implications that it was known to happen in Hebrew society. I cited the metaphorical references to Oholibah's lusting after men with sexual organs like stallions, who ejaculated like horses. I mentioned also Adam's experience of trying to find a "helpmeet" among the animals that Yahweh had created and asked how he could have determined that none were suitable for him unless he had engaged in experimentation. Before Mr. Miller or

Turkel or any other biblicist express their indignation over the suggestion that this story might imply bestiality on Adam's part, I will inform them that there is a Talmudic interpretation of Genesis 2:23, in Yebamoth 63a, which claims that "Adam had sexual intercourse with all the animals in the Garden of Eden." Furthermore, Yebamoth 59b says that "a woman who had intercourse with a beast is eligible to marry a Jewish priest." (This was evidently a clarification of the Levitical law that required the high priest to marry a virgin. He could not marry a widow, a divorced woman, or a harlot, but he could apparently marry a woman who had engaged in bestiality.) As I suggested earlier, the mere fact that the Levitical law legislated against bestiality would indicate that it was known to exist in Israelite society, and I can't imagine why the passage in the Talmud just referred to would have addressed the subject of women who had engaged in bestiality unless it was common enough that the writer thought that it deserved mentioning. Furthermore, those who check will find that the Talmuds made frequent references to bestiality, a fact that I don't understand unless its practice was common enough to make the writers believe that it was a social problem that should be addressed.

To wrap up my reply to this point, I will remind readers of what I have called attention to earlier concerning the other "detestable practices" that Mr. Miller claims the Canaanites were guilty of. If bestiality was a serious problem in Canaan, it would have been something that the adults were doing. Babies and young children would not have been doing it, so Mr. Miller seems to be arguing that Yahweh decided to exterminate all of the Canaanite children because their parents were engaging in bestiality. That certainly doesn't present Yahweh in a flattering light.

Miller:

- Homosexual practices

This appears to be an issue unique to Israel. Homosexual practice was generally not outlawed in the ANE, and certainly tolerated in the ANE in private life ([MWR:190-192](#)). It was also part of cultic practice (which we will treat below). But Israel's God condemned this behavior in **every** culture in which it was mentioned (!): ANE (i.e. Sodom), Canaanite and Egyptian (i.e. Lev 18:3), Israelite (Lev 18, 20), Roman (Rom 1), Hellenistic (I Tim 1.9), and Greek (I Cor 6.9).

Till:

I have let the issue lag for a while, but it is time again to point out that Mr. Miller is still engaging in question begging and special pleading. First of all, he begs the question of the actual existence of "Israel's God," which is something that he needs to prove before he declares something to be wrong because "Israel's God condemned this behavior." Even if the existence of "Israel's God" could be established as fact--and it

can't--Mr. Miller is begging the question of whether this god had anything to do with the writing of biblical passages that "condemned" homosexuality. I submit that Mr. Miller can prove neither one of these questions, so he accomplishes nothing by asserting that a practice was wrong because "Israel's God" condemned it. To do so is a resort to the fallacies of argumentation by assertion and special pleading. As I mentioned earlier, even though the research is not yet conclusive, it does indicate that homosexuality is a biological condition determined by circumstances of birth over which the person has no more control than his/her gender or ethnic origin. If the evidence of this ever becomes conclusive--and I think it will--I suppose that fundamentalist Bible believers like Mr. Miller will deny the evidence in the same way that they have denied the compelling scientific evidence of biological evolution.

Miller:

[I have always found the claim that Judeo-Christianity's lack of acceptance of homosexuality as a morally legitimate sexual expression was merely a cultural stance--not 'timeless' or 'transcultural'--to be a bit weak, in light of the above list of cultures. The range of times/cultures included in the list above--many of which **accepted** it as 'okay'--would certainly count as very strong evidence for a moral 'universal/transcultural' conviction against the practice.]

Till:

Well, let me suggest a more likely reason why homosexuality was not condemned in other cultures as it was in Judaism and Christianity. Could it be that these other cultures had enough common sense to understand that homosexuality was not just a "lifestyle" that was chosen? I don't know, but I do know that the evidence indicates a strong probability that homosexuality is biological and not voluntary.

I recall a young black student in one of my classes when I was teaching college writing. I suspected from his mannerisms that he was homosexual, and one day when he was absent, I came into the classroom and found the students making fun of him. I reprimanded them for conduct that I considered as inappropriate as if they had been ridiculing someone who had a physical or mental handicap. The student heard about it and came to my office to express his appreciation. Having found someone who was tolerant of his sexual orientation, he came fairly often to visit with my wife and me. I recall a conversation once in which he said something like, "Mr. Till, I am black, so why would I choose to be gay to bring even more scorn on me than I already have to put up with?" Mr. Miller can align himself with the likes of Fred Phelps if he wants to, and, of course, I can understand why belief that the Bible is "God's word" would lead people to be intolerant, but I personally consider discrimination against homosexuals to be as despicable as racial and religious discrimination.

Miller:

What **is** interesting about this though, is that of all the practices we have in the list above, this is the **one** practice that is **not** represented in the religious literature. So Bottero, in [MWR](#):92: "in mythology and theology we have not the slightest certain example of homosexual relations between gods."

Till:

I assume that Mr. Miller meant that this is the "one practice" that is not represented in the religious literature of other nations, because it was certainly represented in Hebrew literature. Could the absence of this subject in other religious literature indicate what I said above? Other cultures had the common sense to recognize that homosexuality was not something that a person chose but something that he/she had no biological control over. Regardless, we have the same factor here that we had in the other "detestable practices" that Mr. Miller has cited as reasons why Yahweh ordered the extermination of the Canaanites. That factor would be the children and babies. Although young children may out of curiosity experiment with those of the same sex, babies wouldn't have, so does Mr. Miller think that his god Yahweh ordered the extermination of even Canaanite babies because the adults and older children engaged in homosexual activities?

Mr. Miller:

- Cultic prostitution--both male and female.

The use of male and female prostitutes is also attested and sanctioned (to some extent) throughout the ANE ([MWR](#):189-190), and clearly so in Canaanite sanctuaries ([AI](#):384). So, [NIEBF](#):130:

The Bible and the Canaanite texts at Ugarit use the words qadesh and qedesha which mean 'holy one'--the first masculine, the second feminine. At Ugarit these 'holy ones' were homosexual priests and priestesses who acted as prostitutes.

"We find strong Hebrew reaction against this 'cultic prostitution' in passages such as Leviticus 19:29, 'Do not prostitute thy daughter, to cause her to be a whore,' and Deuteronomy 23:17, 'There shall be no whore(qedesha) of the daughters of Israel, nor a sodomite (qadesh) of the sons of Israel.' One of Josiah's reforms was 'to break down the houses of the sodomites' (2 Kings 23:7)."

Till:

We also find Hebrew acceptance of this same "detestable practice" that Mr. Miller is now citing as a justifiable reason to exterminate the Canaanites.

1 Kings 14:22 Judah did evil in the eyes of Yahweh. By the sins they committed they stirred up his jealous anger more than their fathers had done. 23 They also set up for themselves high places, sacred stones and Asherah poles on every high hill and under every spreading tree. 24 **There were even male shrine prostitutes in the land; the people engaged in all the detestable practices of the nations Yahweh had driven out before the Israelites.**

So the people of Judah not only had male shrine prostitution in the land, they also engaged in **all the detestable practices** of the nations that Yahweh had driven out before the Israelites. Hence, we are back to square one again. The Canaanites engaged in "detestable practices," including male shrine prostitution, and so Yahweh ordered them to be exterminated so that he could repopulate the land with people who did **all the detestable practices** that had caused Yahweh to order the slaughter of the Canaanites. Can anything be as ridiculous as stuff like this that fills the Bible?

The "detestable practices," including male shrine prostitution, continued until the reign of Asa.

1 Kings 15:9 In the twentieth year of Jeroboam king of Israel, Asa became king of Judah, 10 and he reigned in Jerusalem forty-one years. His grandmother's name was Maacah daughter of Abishalom. 11 Asa did what was right in the eyes of Yahweh, as his father David had done. 12 **He expelled the male shrine prostitutes from the land and got rid of all the idols his fathers had made.** 13 He even deposed his grandmother Maacah from her position as queen mother, **because she had made a repulsive Asherah pole. Asa cut the pole down and burned it in the Kidron Valley.**

This sounds conclusive, but it didn't end the "detestable practices."

1 Kings 22:45 As for the other events of Jehoshaphat's reign, the things he achieved and his military exploits, are they not written in the book of the annals of the kings of Judah? 46 He rid the land of **the rest of the male shrine prostitutes** who remained there even after the reign of his father Asa.

If Jehoshaphat rid the land of "the rest of the male shrine prostitutes," one would think that this put an end to the practice, but it apparently didn't. The text below indicates that by the time of Josiah, male temple prostitution still flourished and the country in general was engaging in just about every "detestable practice" that Mr. Miller could imagine.

1 Kings 23:4 The king [Josiah] ordered Hilkiah the high priest, the priests next in rank and the doorkeepers to remove from the temple of Yahweh **all the articles made for Baal and Asherah** and all the starry hosts. He burned them outside Jerusalem in

the fields of the Kidron Valley and took the ashes to Bethel. 5 He did away with the pagan priests appointed by the kings of Judah to burn incense on the high places of the towns of Judah and on those around Jerusalem--those who burned incense to Baal, to the sun and moon, to the constellations and to all the starry hosts. 6 He took the Asherah pole from the temple of Yahweh to the Kidron Valley outside Jerusalem and burned it there. He ground it to powder and scattered the dust over the graves of the common people. 7 He also tore down the quarters of the male shrine prostitutes, which were in the temple of Yahweh and where women did weaving for Asherah. 8 Josiah brought all the priests from the towns of Judah and desecrated the high places, from Geba to Beersheba, where the priests had burned incense. He broke down the shrines at the gates--at the entrance to the Gate of Joshua, the city governor, which is on the left of the city gate. 9 Although the priests of the high places did not serve at the altar of Yahweh in Jerusalem, they ate unleavened bread with their fellow priests. 10 He desecrated Topheth, which was in the Valley of Ben Hinnom, so no one could use it to sacrifice his son or daughter in the fire to Molech. 11 He removed from the entrance to the temple of Yahweh the horses that the kings of Judah had dedicated to the sun. They were in the court near the room of an official named Nathan-Melech. Josiah then burned the chariots dedicated to the sun. 12 He pulled down the altars the kings of Judah had erected on the roof near the upper room of Ahaz, and the altars Manasseh had built in the two courts of the temple of Yahweh. He removed them from there, smashed them to pieces and threw the rubble into the Kidron Valley. 13 The king also desecrated the high places that were east of Jerusalem on the south of the Hill of Corruption--the ones Solomon king of Israel had built for Ashtoreth the vile goddess of the Sidonians, for Chemosh the vile god of Moab, and for Molech the detestable god of the people of Ammon. 14 Josiah smashed the sacred stones and cut down the Asherah poles and covered the sites with human bones. 15 Even the altar at Bethel, the high place made by Jeroboam son of Nebat, who had caused Israel to sin--even that altar and high place he demolished. He burned the high place and ground it to powder, and burned the Asherah pole also.

It's hard to imagine how any society of that time could have been more "paganistically" depraved than the one described here. Mr. Miller mentioned above a Canaanite myth about an incestuous relationship between El and Asherah, but as the text just quoted shows, the worship of Asherah was still widespread until the reign of Josiah, which preceded the Babylonian captivity by only 12 years, and parts of the temple of Yahweh were being devoted to relics fabricated in honor of Asherah. The text also indicates that sun worship had been prominent, also in the temple, as well as worship of Chemosh and Molech, but more directly related to the point that Mr. Miller is presently trying to pursue, the text above indicates that living quarters for male cult prostitutes had been set aside in the temple. In other words, the very thing

that Mr. Miller is now using to justify Yahweh's orders to exterminate the Canaanites was apparently being widely practiced in Judah too. This brings us back to a point that I want to keep constantly before Mr. Miller. According to him, Yahweh ordered the extermination of the Canaanites because of "detestable practices" like cultic prostitution, so he apparently believes that it was morally right for Yahweh to massacre the Canaanites because of their detestable practices so that he could repopulated the land with another ethnic group that engaged in the same detestable practices.

How much sense does that make?

Miller:

What is important for us to note here is that this sacred prostitution was **not** unquestioned by the surrounding cultures.

Till:

We will see below that a could-have-been, might-have-been vague reference is all Mr. Miller had to offer as evidence that sacred prostitution was questioned by surrounding cultures. I will say more about that later, but here I want to state what should be obvious by now: **cultic prostitution was practiced not just in Canaan but in surrounding cultures, including even the Hebrew culture.**

Miller:

Remember that in the paradigm cases of annihilation we looked at, the culture was **uniform--all** the people (save a handful) were proponents and transmitters of the "values" of that culture. There were no rebels, or dissidents, or minority voices.

Till:

Now just how does Mr. Miller know this? Is this a conclusion he reached because there are no known records of such dissent? If so, he is arguing from silence, so I suggest that he go to [this section](#) of "Crimes By Speculation," where I replied to his attempt to explain why secular contemporary records made no mention of stupendous miracles that "Matthew" included in his account of crucifixion day. Mr. Miller proposed several reasons for the silence, but they can be condensed into these two: (1) a high level of illiteracy would have minimized the chances that others would have recorded them. (2) Secular records could have been made but just didn't survive. Wouldn't those same reasons apply here as possible explanations for why there are no records of dissenting opinions about cultic prostitution in Canaan?

Another thing to consider here is that history is written by the winners. In the Old Testament we see clear indications of a power struggle between the Yahwists and those who worshiped other gods. The texts quoted above claim that some kings like

Jeroboam and even Solomon actively supported idolatry, so there was a long period of struggle between those who wanted to worship Baal, Ashera, Chemosh, Molech, etc. and those who wanted Yahwism to be the official religion. Eventually Yahwism won the struggle, so we have a view of Israelite history from the perspective of the Yahwists, but if Baalism or one of the other religions had won, we would have an entirely different perspective. Since the Yahwists won the struggle, we have accounts of their dissenting voices in the Bible, but who knows what the Baalists would have said if they had won the power struggle?

For the sake of argument, let's just suppose that in all of the history of Canaan there had never been anyone who opposed cultic prostitution. Would that be a moral basis for exterminating the Canaanites? To argue that people should be killed for "false" religious beliefs and practices is to assume that one knows what the "true" religion is. That is not just arrogantly presumptuous; it is an attitude that has caused inestimable grief and suffering through the ages. In fact, the world is at this present time experiencing a plague of terrorism that was spawned by that very attitude.

Miller:

However, in **this** situation we have the Canaanite culture **totally sold out** to religious prostitution, but **not so** the entire ANE! Von Soden, cited above, points out in footnote 36 that there was major dissent about such practices:

*Inscriptions of the kings Merodachbaladan II and Nabonidus of Babylonia, as well as the Erra myth..., contain references to a type of revolution in Uruk around 765, during the reign of the king Eriba-marduk. **This revolution** was not caused by social conditions alone, but rather was **directed against the cultic practices of the temple of Eanna and the cult prostitutes** there; it had only temporary success.*

There was no such recorded "protest" in Canaanite [*sic*]--but rather, an 'evangelistic' posture in favor of it that reached (successfully) deep into Israel!

Till:

Mr. Miller's point here is really too elusive to deserve serious comment. It certainly isn't sufficient to prove his assertion that "there was major dissent [in other cultures] about such practices." He quoted five lines from a book by Von Soden, but those lines give none of the actual content of the "inscriptions" referred to, and he even truncated the quotation with an ellipsis in the second line where some content has been omitted. I always try to research an opponent's topic before I reply to it, but I was unable to locate any material about the "type of revolution" that the inscription referred to. In the fragmented quotation as Miller cited it, Von Soden said that the Erra myth, **as well as inscriptions of Merodachbaladan II and Nabonidus**, "contained references" to this "type of revolution in Uruk around 765," but the Erra myth dates back to the

Akkadian culture, which antedated by several centuries the two Babylonian kings mentioned, so I don't quite understand how a myth that evolved long before 765 could have referred to a "type of revolution" that occurred that year. Is Mr. Miller suggesting that the Erra myth prophesied of this "type of revolution"? If he is going to base a point on a source, he really should quote enough from the source--as he usually does--to make his point clear. I suspect that at this point he was scraping the bottom of the barrel to find some kind of extrabiblical support for his position on cultic prostitution in Canaan.

At any rate, 765 BC would have been almost seven centuries after the exodus, the time when Yahweh ordered the Israelites to "utterly destroy" the Canaanites and to leave no one alive to breathe, so is Mr. Miller arguing that because someone in Babylonia seven centuries after the exodus would start a "type of revolution" against temple prostitution, the Canaanites should have known in the time of Moses and Joshua to clean up their act too? If so, I have to admit that I don't see the basis for his argument.

I will close this section with a summation of my replies to all of Mr. Miller's charges of moral depravity in Canaan, which he apparently sees as justification for Yahweh's orders to exterminate them and leave no one alive to breathe.

- He has argued that the Amorites/Canaanites sacrificed their children to the god Molech, and so they deserved to be exterminated, but I have pointed out that his argument is actually saying that because these ethnic groups sacrificed **some** of their children, Yahweh decided to order the killing of **all** of their children by a people who would themselves sacrifice some of their children.
- He has argued that the Amorites/Canaanites engaged in incest, and so they deserved to be exterminated, but I have pointed out that his argument is saying that because adult Canaanites engaged in incest, Yahweh decided to order the killing of even their children--who didn't engage in incest--by a people who engaged in incest too.
- He has argued that the Amorites/Canaanites may have engaged in bestiality, and so they deserved to be exterminated, but I have pointed out that his argument is saying that because some Canaanites may have engaged in bestiality, Yahweh decided to order the killing of even their children--who didn't engage in bestiality--by a people who may have engaged in bestiality too.
- He has argued that the Amorites/Canaanites may have engaged in homosexuality, and so they deserved to be exterminated, but in so arguing he

is saying that because some Canaanites may have engaged in homosexuality, Yahweh decided to order the killing of even their babies--who didn't engage in homosexuality--by a people who **did** engage in homosexuality.

- He has argued that the Amorites/Canaanites maintained temple prostitutes, and so they deserved to be exterminated, but in so arguing he is saying that because the Canaanite adults supported temple prostitution, Yahweh decided to order the killing of even their children--who weren't involved in temple prostitution--by a people who supported temple prostitution too.

In other words, I have not allowed Mr. Miller to forget about the thousands of children who were necessarily killed by the Israelites if the biblical accounts of the conquest of Canaan are historically accurate. I know that he would like to forget about the children, but I won't let him do that. His conclusion of this section follows immediately, so I will close this point by reminding readers that Mr. Miller had actually tried to justify the killing of all the children involved in the Yahwistic massacres on the grounds that they had died "swiftly." That is how desperate he is to defend biblical inerrancy.

Miller:

Conclusion:

By 1400 B.C. the Canaanite civilization and religion had become one of the weakest, most decadent, and most immoral cultures of the civilized world. Many of its repulsive practices were prohibited to Israel in Leviticus 18. In view of the sexual perversions listed, it is more than likely that venereal diseases ravaged a large part of the population. Hence stern measures were required to prevent decimation of the Israelites by the spread of these and other diseases such as malaria and smallpox. Contagion would be possible by sudden fraternization before immunity could develop. ([ZPEB](#): s.v. "Joshua", p. 707).

Till:

This is a link to *Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, so Mr. Miller still continues to rely heavily on books published by companies in Grand Rapids, Michigan, where biblical inerrancy is just taken for granted. I wonder if the Canaanite civilization and religion were more "decadent" and immoral than, say, the Mesoamerican cultures, whose practice of human sacrifices exceeded anything done in the ancient Middle East. I wonder if the Canaanite civilization and religion were more "decadent" and immoral than headhunting cultures of New Guinea, South America, Southeast Asia, and Melanesia or cannibalistic cultures of Africa, South America, or the South Pacific. I wonder if the Canaanite civilization and religion were more "decadent" and immoral than the early Grecian, Roman, Eskimo, Polynesian, Chinese,

Egyptian, African, Indian, and Australian aborigine cultures, which practiced infanticide as a means of population control. When the tribes became too large, new babies were killed in order to contain growth. Babies born with physical handicaps were also killed. [Seneca](#), who is considered a humanitarian of his time, once said that children who were "weak and deformed we drown, not through anger, but through wisdom, preferring the sound to the useless." I wonder if the Canaanite civilization and religion were more "decadent" and immoral than the cultures like Greece and Rome, where pedasty was [commonplace](#).

The epitome of love in these ancient societies was pedasty--a sexual relationship between an older man and a young boy; today it is a very serious felony. To the Greeks this was something positive and beautiful. All the Greek greats--Sophocles, Aeschylus, and Plato, for instance--had young boy lovers. And many waxed ecstatic about it, such as the Greek poet Propertius: "May my enemies fall in love with women and my friends with boys."

If the [Babylonian Talmud](#) can be accepted as a basis for determining Hebrew social practices, we can know that pedasty was also tolerated in Judaism.

- *When a grown-up man has intercourse with a little girl it is nothing, for when the girl is less than this, it is as if one puts the finger into the eye; but when a small boy has intercourse with a grown-up woman he makes her as "a girl who is injured by a piece of wood" [Kethuboth 11b].*
- *A Jew may marry a three year old girl (specifically, three years "and a day" old) [Sanhedrin 55b].*
- *A Jew may have sex with a child as long as the child is less than nine years old [Sanhedrin 54b].*

By modern standards, many practices in ancient cultures have to be considered appallingly immoral. Instead of just recognizing that the ancient Hebrews were, in effect, the same as the societies around them, Mr. Miller has been tying himself into verbal knots to try to find some way to justify the ancient Hebrew custom of *cherem*. Regrettably, that kind of emotional attachment to the Bible is far too commonplace in those who were indoctrinated in their childhood to believe that it is "the inspired word of God."

Mr. Miller seems obsessed with the existence of temple prostitution in Canaan, but if he has ever researched this subject, he surely knows that this was a practice that extended far beyond the Middle East. It was practiced in such diverse places as Greece, Egypt, Rome, and India. If Mr. Miller would bother to investigate, he would

find many ancient societies whose cultural customs would be positively repugnant to us, so why is he just picking on the ancient Canaanites?

Well, the answer to that is obvious. He needs some way to justify the moral repugnance of the Yahwistic massacres in the Old Testament, so he has tried to paint the Canaanites as so decadent and immoral that they needed to be exterminated. He is so desperate to find a way to justify this that he has sunk to claiming that killing Canaanite children was morally right, because they died "swiftly."

Miller:

So, we have **international and extreme violence** and **unusually decadent (and destructive/ dangerous) religious practices**.

Till:

I have shown above that the Canaanite culture was no more decadent than other cultures. They didn't eat enemies that they killed in battle, and they didn't engage in perpetual warfare, as did some Mesoamerican cultures, so that they could have a steady supply of human sacrifices. Their temple prostitution was no more perverse than it was in Israel and Judah and in the other societies mentioned above. Mr. Miller needs some way to excuse the Yahwistic massacres in the Old Testament, and so he has tried to paint the Canaanites as more decadent than they probably were. Readers should keep in mind that history was written by the winners, and so the Yahwistic Israelites who won the struggle with other forms of worship, interpreted the culture according to the standards of morality that they wanted to impose on others.

Miller:

What other data do we have about them (or the other nations in the list)?

Till:

I will reply to Mr. Miller's "other data" in [Part Four](#).

Till:

In this fourth part, Mr. Miller presented the "other data" that he referred to at the end of [Part Three](#), so we will now see how he desperately scrapes the bottom of the barrel to find "data" to support his claim that the Canaanites were so morally depraved that Yahweh had no choice but to order their extermination.

Miller: We have a few more pieces of data--most of it bad--about these city-nations.

- The Canaanites have a 'bad' reputation already around the time of Abraham.

In surveying the historical mentions for the name "Canaan", Schoville points out that the 2nd mention of the name occurs in a derogatory context. ([POTW:158](#)):

"An eighteenth-century letter from Mari provides the next evidence for the name in a phrase that connects 'thieves and Canaanites'"

Till:

At the beginning of [Part One](#), I complimented Mr. Miller for the higher level of apologetics found in his articles as compared to those of Robert Turkel, but at the time, I mentioned that Mr. Miller sometimes strains to find quotations that will support his position and truncates them so consummately that readers can't evaluate the merit of the sources' positions, and what we see above is an example of both. Schoville's quotation has been so truncated that we can't evaluate the merit of what he said. Why didn't Mr. Miller give us the larger context of what Schoville said? Are we simply expected to take Miller's word that Schoville gave sufficient information in the broader context of the statement above to show that the word *Canaan* had a derogatory meaning?

Even if Schoville knows of a letter from Mari that derogatorily connected "thieves and Canaanites," so what? One letter found in Mari that made disparaging remarks about Canaanites would in no way prove that the remarks were either typical or accurate. Since when do ethnic slurs and insults prove anything about the character of people within those ethnic groups? The author of Titus, who very likely was not the apostle Paul, quoted the Cretan poet Epimenides, who had said, "Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, and gluttons" (Titus 1:12), so does this statement prove that Cretans were always liars, evil beasts, and gluttons, or does it prove no more than that one person held his countrymen in low esteem? If, for example, Mr. Miller should find books or articles or letters in our society that spoke disparagingly of Jews or blacks or hispanics, would he see these as accurate characterizations of entire ethnic groups, or would he see them for just stereotypical remarks that have been so unfortunately common in human societies? That Mr. Miller would attempt to gauge the moral character of an entire national group on the basis of a single 18th-century BC letter quite honestly surprises me, so I will consider it a lapse in judgment caused by his eagerness to find some way to justify the Yahwistic atrocities in the old Testament.

Miller:

Although some understand this pejorative reference being to 'rebellious soldiers' ([HAP:58](#)), others note that "commonly in Hebrew the root means 'to be abased, put down, subdued,' etc." ([ECIAT:168n192](#)).

Till:

And some note that the origin and meaning of the name *Canaan* cannot be determined.

*Attempts to explain the etymology of the name Canaanites and its geographical referent, Canaan, remain inconclusive. On the basis of a reference to ma-at ki-in-a-min ("land of Canaan") in a fifth-century BC inscription of King Idrimi of Alalakh, scholars have identified in the common Akkadian forms kinahni and kinahhu a root *kina meaning "reed (papyrus)" or "red-purple." Indeed, in the fifteenth-century Nuzi texts the adjective kinahhu "Canaanite" occurs in a context which points to the purple dye originally produced in the region. Thus, Canaan and the Caananites would be related etymologically to red-purple commodities much as Pergamum is identified with parchment and Damascus with damask. Unfortunately, however, linguistic complexities make such a derivation difficult (Eerdmans Bible Dictionary, 1987, p. 186).*

The article continued with a discussion of attempts to associate the word with the concept of merchandising, which Mr. Miller comments on below, but even the source that he quoted above indicates that the etymology of the word *Canaan* is very much in doubt, so attempts to characterize the Canaanites as moral reprobates on the basis of debatable derivations of the word shows just how desperate Mr. Miller is to find support for his belief that the Canaanites deserved to be exterminated.

Miller:

Latter meanings of the root and close-derivatives center around "merchant" (e.g. Job 41.6; Prov 31.24; Is 23.8) [[ISBE](#): s.v. "Canaan", p.585].

Till:

The word for *merchant* in [Job 41:6](#) was *ken'anîy*, which was either the same word or a homograph of the word that meant *Canaanite*, but the word used in [Proverbs 31:24](#) and [Isaiah 23:8](#) was *cachar*, an entirely different word, so whatever point Mr. Miller was trying to make in citing these last two passages eludes me. If, however, the same homograph *ken'anîy* was used to designate both merchants and Canaanites, what would that prove except that maybe the usage of the word in reference to merchants had had its origins in the same kind of ethnic stereotyping that has caused the word *jew* in English to be used in the sense of shrewdly bargaining or haggling as in, "He jewed me down on the price." Another example of this kind of ethnic stereotyping can be seen in a meaning that has been acquired by the word *Welsh*, which is sometimes used to indicate a belief that people from Wales are cheaters or evaders of responsibility, as in, "He welshed on the agreement." I suppose Mr. Miller thinks that his etymological claims here are helping him prove that the Canaanites were morally depraved, but if there is any basis in fact to what he has said above, he has actually

established that the Hebrews were guilty of the same kind of ethnic stereotyping that still prevails in modern times.

Miller:

In collocation with 'thieves', it **might** connote "cheat"--a meaning that would fit well with their deceptive practices in Joshua 9!

Till:

[Joshua 9](#) relates the story of the inhabitants of Gibeon and other nearby towns who, upon hearing of the military conquests of the Israelites, went to the Israelite encampment dressed in old clothes and worn-out shoes to give the appearance of having traveled on a long journey. They pretended to be people from a "far country," who wanted to make a treaty or covenant with the Israelites. The ruse worked, and the covenant was agreed upon before the Israelites realized that they had been taken. Customs of the time then required the Israelites to honor the covenant and spare the Gibeonites from the massacres that they were perpetrating on all of the towns and cities in the area.

Mr. Miller sees this as "cheating," but someone who isn't looking in desperation for some way to justify Yahwistic atrocities should see it as a matter of self-defense. As this tale was spun, the Gibeonites had heard about what had been done to Jericho and Ai, so they had simply devised a way to save themselves from the same fate. I suppose if Mr. Miller had been in that group of Gibeonites, he would have spoken up and said, "I cannot tell a lie; we aren't from a far country but live in a town directly in your invasion path."

By the way, these Gibeonites were not Canaanites; they were Hivites ([Josh. 9:7](#)).

Miller:

A textual piece of data to support this "cheat" understanding, might be the actions of the Hittite group in Genesis 23. (Remember, the scattered Hittite groups in Palestine at this time were subsumed under the term 'Canaanite' as is evident from comparing [Gen 27.46](#) with [28.1](#).) In Gen 23, Abraham's wife Sarah has died, and he needs to buy a burial field. Ephron the Hittite takes advantage of Abraham's grief and need to secure burial property quickly, and charges him an incredibly exorbitant 400 shekels of silver for a field (cf. Jer 32.9), **and** saddles him with the 'property taxes and dues' that went with "whole-lot" land ownership. (Abraham had only wanted to buy a 'cave'--not the whole field.) If this was the typical 'merchant ethic' of the Canaanites, then no wonder they were grouped in with 'thieves' [*sic*]!

Till:

When I read this, I couldn't believe my eyes, because it so obviously distorted the

transaction between Ephron and Abraham that I have to believe that Mr. Miller had either never read the story or else was intentionally distorting it to try to force it into a mold that would support his opinion of the Canaanites. I am going to quote the entire chapter below, so I want readers to take special notice of the parts that I emphasize in bold print, which clearly show that Ephron tried to give the cave and land to Abraham, who refused the offer and insisted on paying the going price for the land, but first I want to take care of Mr. Miller's illogical appeal to [Jeremiah 32:9](#).

Jeremiah 32:6 *Jeremiah said, "The word of Yahweh came to me: 7 Hanamel son of Shallum your uncle is going to come to you and say, 'Buy my field at Anathoth, because as nearest relative it is your right and duty to buy it.' 8 "Then, just as Yahweh had said, my cousin Hanamel came to me in the courtyard of the guard and said, 'Buy my field at Anathoth in the territory of Benjamin. Since it is your right to redeem it and possess it, buy it for yourself.' "I knew that this was the word of Yahweh; 9 so I bought the field at Anathoth from my cousin Hanamel and weighed out for him seventeen shekels of silver. 10 I signed and sealed the deed, had it witnessed, and weighed out the silver on the scales."*

So Mr. Miller is arguing that Ephron the Hittite, who tried to give him the land he wanted, cheated Abraham by assessing its value at 400 shekels of silver, because Jeremiah, several centuries later, bought a field for just 17 shekels of silver. In the first place, neither the text in Jeremiah 32 nor the one in Genesis 23 gave the sizes of the two fields, but as we will see after I have quoted the entire context of Abraham's transaction, the passage indicates that Abraham bought a sizable piece of property, whereas the property that Jeremiah bought was just referred to as a field. Now let's suppose that I bought a piece of beachfront property at, say, Malibu and paid \$2 million for it. If Mr. Miller then said to me, "Boy, you sure got taken, because I just bought a piece of property in Meridian, Mississippi, for only five thousand dollars," would anyone have any difficulty seeing the flaw in his thinking? What Mr. Miller is actually arguing is that Ephron cheated Abraham by selling him land of unknown size for 400 shekels of silver, because Jeremiah later bought a field of unknown size for only 17 shekels of silver.

Let's look now at the full context of Abraham's transaction to see that (1) Ephron the Hittite tried to give the land to Abraham, that (2) Abraham wanted to buy both the cave and the field, that (3) Abraham insisted on paying the "full price" for the property, that (4) a sizable piece of property was implied in the text, and that (5) this field had special features that gave it added value.

Genesis 23:1 *Sarah lived to be a hundred and twenty-seven years old. 2 She died at Kiriath Arba (that is, Hebron) in the land of Canaan, and Abraham went to mourn for Sarah and to weep over her. Then Abraham rose from beside his dead wife and spoke*

to the Hittites. He said, 4 "I am an alien and a stranger among you. Sell me some property for a burial site here so I can bury my dead." 5 The Hittites replied to Abraham, 6 "Sir, listen to us. You are a mighty prince among us. Bury your dead in the choicest of our tombs. **None of us will refuse you his tomb for burying your dead.**" 7 Then Abraham rose and bowed down before the people of the land, the Hittites. 8 He said to them, "If you are willing to let me bury my dead, then listen to me and intercede with Ephron son of Zohar on my behalf 9 so he will sell me the cave of Machpelah, which belongs to him and is at the end of his field. **Ask him to sell it to me for the full price as a burial site among you.**" 10 Ephron the Hittite was sitting among his people and he replied to Abraham in the hearing of all the Hittites who had come to the gate of his city. 11 "No, my lord," he said. "Listen to me; **I give you the field, and I give you the cave that is in it. I give it to you in the presence of my people.** Bury your dead." 12 Again Abraham bowed down before the people of the land 13 and he said to Ephron in their hearing, "Listen to me, if you will. **I will pay the price of the field. Accept it from me so I can bury my dead there.**" 14 Ephron answered Abraham, 15 "Listen to me, my lord; **the land is worth four hundred shekels of silver, but what is that between me and you? Bury your dead.**" 16 Abraham agreed to Ephron's terms and weighed out for him the price he had named in the hearing of the Hittites: four hundred shekels of silver, according to the weight current among the merchants. 17 **So Ephron's field in Machpelah near Mamre--both the field and the cave in it, and all the trees within the borders of the field--was deeded 18 to Abraham as his property in the presence of all the Hittites who had come to the gate of the city.** 19 Afterward Abraham buried his wife Sarah in the cave in the field of Machpelah near Mamre (which is at Hebron) in the land of Canaan. 20 **So the field and the cave in it were deeded to Abraham by the Hittites as a burial site.**

This passage clearly states everything that I outlined above. Ephron offered to give the cave and the field to Abraham, but Abraham insisted on paying for it. As I noted above, this transaction cannot be contrasted with Jeremiah's, because (1) the sizes of the two properties were not stated, (2) the properties were located in different areas, and (3) the transactions took place centuries apart. Although the sizes of the properties were not stated, the text implies that Abraham bought a sizable piece of land.

Machpelah meant "double," so there may have actually been two caves or at least a cave of double size on Ephron's property, and Machpelah was located "at the end of [Ephron's] field" (v:9), an expression that suggests that the property had at least a bit of length to it. The field also had trees in it and was located near Mamre, where there were "great trees" ([Gen. 13:18](#)). The presence of trees in that region, near Hebron, probably accounted for why the Canaanites had chosen Hebron to be its royal city ([Josh. 12:10](#)), why Abraham had moved his tent to the oaks of Mamre, which were near Hebron ([Gen. 13:18](#)), and apparently made it his permanent residence ([Gen. 14:13](#); [Gen. 18:1](#)), and why David made it his capital ([2 Sam. 2:4,11](#)) until Jerusalem was captured

from the Jebusites. The biblical account, then, indicates that Abraham bought a field and cave in a choice location. That he bought both the field and the cave was corroborated by [Genesis 25:9-10](#); [Genesis 49:29-30](#); and [Genesis 5:13](#). Mr. Miller's claim that Ephron charged Abraham an exorbitant price for property of unknown size is about as absurd as Robert Turkel's claim that the writer of "John" didn't mention the miraculous events on crucifixion day that "Matthew" recorded because he didn't have enough space on his scroll of [unknown length](#).

As I have been doing, however, let's just assume that Ephron pulled a slick one on Abraham. Why would that mean that Canaanites in general were "cheaters"? Is Mr. Miller going to claim that because one Canaanite was dishonest, the nation as a whole was dishonest? That is how ethnic prejudices mentioned above develop. By the same logic, one could prove that blacks are lazy, Jews chislers, and Hispanics ruthless. Let's go even further and assume that the Canaanites in Abraham's time were in general dishonest wheeler-dealers? Would that justify exterminating the entire nation some five or six centuries later? Perhaps Mr. Miller will think it would. After all, he apparently thinks that it was morally right to massacre the Amalekites of Saul's time because of something that their ancestors had done [400+ years earlier](#). Then, finally, what about the children? I am not going to let Mr. Miller forget about the children. Whatever dishonest habits the Canaanites may have had--if we assume that they were dishonest--that would not have made the children guilty of anything, so where would the justice have been in killing thousands or perhaps even hundreds of thousands of children for what the adults had done?

As for the "property taxes and dues" with which Mr. Miller says that Ephron "saddled" Abraham, the passage that told of this transaction said nothing about "property taxes and dues," but if such taxes and dues had to be paid on the land, I am sure that Abraham, having lived in nearby Hebron for 37 years, would have known about taxes and dues. The time of Abraham's residency at Hebron is easy to determine: (1) Abraham moved his tent to the oaks of Mamre [[Gen. 13:18](#)]. (2) When Sarah was 90 and Abraham 100, Yahweh appeared to Abraham--as he routinely did--and announced that she would bear a son [[Gen. 17:1. 15-17](#)]. (3) Isaac was born when Abraham was 100, so Sarah would have been 90 [[Gen. 21:5](#)]. (4) Sarah died in Hebron when she was 127 [[Gen. 23:1-2](#)]. Since $127-90=37$, we can conclude that Abraham had lived in the region of Hebron for 37 years, plenty long enough for him to become familiar with laws about "taxes and dues." Mr. Miller was obviously straining again to find some way to accuse the Canaanites of being morally despicable.

Before I leave this point, I have to say that I can't help wondering who paid those taxes and dues on the property where the cave of Machpelah was located during the 17 years that Jacob and his family members were in Egypt ([Gen. 47:28](#)) before Jacob's body was taken from Egypt and buried there ([Gen. 50:12-13](#)).

Miller:

- At the time of Jacob, the Hivites had some interaction with the Hebrews--one of the Hivite leaders raped Dinah, a daughter of Jacob in Gen 34, and tried a subterfuge to accumulate all of Jacob's possessions!

Till:

Once again, I have to express my surprise at Mr. Miller's sudden turn toward duplicitous distortion in order to try to support his position about the Canaanites. In the first place, if Dinah was indeed raped--the text says only that Shechem took her, lay with her, and humbled her, so there is a question of mutual consent ([Gen. 34:2](#))--she was raped by a Hivite as the text just cited shows. His intentions toward her appeared too honest to describe him as a rapist, because he asked his father Hamor to secure permission to marry her. Hamor went to Dinah's father Jacob and presented a marriage proposal that included an offer of whatever dowry might be demanded. Dinah's brothers were upset over what Shechem had done but agreed to the marriage on the condition that all of the male **Hivites** would submit to circumcision. This condition was accepted, and after all the male **Hivites** were circumcised, Dinah's brothers Simeon and Levi took advantage of their incapacitation to massacre them, and then Dinah's other brothers sacked their city and took the women and children as captives.

***Genesis 34:24** All the men who went out of the city gate agreed with Hamor and his son Shechem, and every male in the city was circumcised. 25 Three days later, **while all of them were still in pain**, two of Jacob's sons, Simeon and Levi, Dinah's brothers, took their swords and attacked the unsuspecting city, killing every male. 26 They put Hamor and his son Shechem to the sword and took Dinah from Shechem's house and left. 27 **The sons of Jacob came upon the dead bodies and looted the city where their sister had been defiled.** 28 **They seized their flocks and herds and donkeys and everything else of theirs in the city and out in the fields.** 29 They carried off all their wealth and all their women and children, taking as plunder everything in the houses.*

When Jacob reprimanded his sons for having put his extended family in jeopardy of retaliation from the Canaanites and Perizzites ([Gen. 34:30-31](#)), they shrugged it off with an indifferent comment: "Should our sister be treated like a whore?" The spin that Mr. Miller has tried to put onto this tale flagrantly distorted the biblical account of what had happened. I wonder if he would think that the Hivites of Joshua's time would have been morally justified to massacre the Israelites because of what Jacob's sons had done to their ancestors in this story that Mr. Miller has appealed to in a strained effort to justify Yahweh's command to destroy the nations in Canaan.

As I always do in winding up my replies to Mr. Miller's dubious points, I will raise once again the issue of the children. Even if we assume that Shechem's possible rape of Dinah had set a precedent that eventually resulted in the male Canaanites/Hivites in Joshua's time engaging in widespread rape, would that morally justify killing all of the Canaanite/Hivite children of that time?

Miller:

- At the time of Moses, Israel is trying to march through Transjordan--on the 'neutral' Kings Highway. They peacefully approach the king of the Amorites with a standard 'passage through' request, but is met with abject hostility. The encounter is narrated in Numbers 21.21ff:

Israel sent messengers to say to Sihon king of the Amorites: 22 "Let us pass through your country. We will not turn aside into any field or vineyard, or drink water from any well. We will travel along the king's highway until we have passed through your territory." 23 But Sihon would not let Israel pass through his territory. He mustered his entire army and marched out into the desert against Israel. When he reached Jahaz, he fought with Israel. 24 Israel, however, put him to the sword and took over his land from the Arnon to the Jabbok, but only as far as the Ammonites, because their border was fortified. 25 Israel captured all the cities of the Amorites and occupied them, including Heshbon and all its surrounding settlements.

This was simply an unprovoked attack (with his **entire** army?!) on Israel. Notice also that Sihon the Amorite had taken this territory from Moab by force already (Num 21.26)!

Till:

The same point that I made about the [Amalekite attack](#) on Israel would apply here too. As the Amalekites had done, why wouldn't Sihon have brought out his entire army to meet the Israelites, who, according to Mr. Miller's inerrant Bible, had an army of over 600 thousand soldiers ([Ex. 12:37](#); [Num. 26:51](#))? Is Mr. Miller so naive that he thinks that a nation should allow unopposed entry into its territory to a horde of [2.5 to 3 million](#), with an army of 600,000, on their mere word that they would pass through without bothering or damaging anything? In the first place, how could Moses have guaranteed that none of the millions of Israelites would not turn aside to "any field or vineyard"? After all, this same Moses would later reprimand these same Israelites sharply and accuse them of having been "rebellious from the day that they had come out of Egypt" ([Deut. 9:24](#)) and in an incident related just before the account of the battle with Sihon's Amorite army, the benevolent Yahweh had sent venomous snakes into the Israelite camp to bite the people for having murmured against "God and

Moses" ([Num. 21:4-9](#)). So was Sihon supposed to believe that if Moses told these people not to touch the grapes or step on the wheat, they could be trusted to do as they were told? Any national leader so naive that he would allow an army of 600,000 to enter his territory unopposed would probably not be the leader very long.

A point that Mr. Miller conveniently overlooked is that Sihon was an Amorite king, and the Amorites were those despicable people who Mr. Miller seems to think were responsible for bringing moral depravity into the land of Canaan. Furthermore, the Amorites were one of the seven nations that Yahweh had commanded the Israelites to destroy **totally** ([Deut. 7:1-2](#)), so if nations as far away as Moab and Philistia could have heard about the [crossing of the Red Sea](#), why wouldn't the nations in all that region have known by this time that the Israelites intended to massacre them and take their land? Indeed, the Bible indicates in places that the nations in Canaan somehow had advanced notice of what the Israelites were up to. Here, for example, is what Rahab the Harlot said to the spies whom she had hidden in her house when they came to reconnoiter Jericho.

***Joshua 2:8** Before the spies lay down for the night, she [Rahab] went up on the roof 9 and said to them, "I know that Yahweh has given this land to you and that a great fear of you has fallen on us, so that **all who live in this country** are melting in fear because of you. 10 We have heard how Yahweh dried up the water of the Red Sea for you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to Sihon and Og, the two kings of the Amorites east of the Jordan, whom you completely destroyed. 11 When we heard of it, our hearts melted and everyone's courage failed because of you, for Yahweh your God is God in heaven above and on the earth below.*

If word of Israelite intentions had spread as rapidly as this text and the links above indicate, then why can't we assume that Sihon had also heard these reports? That probability puts the "unprovoked attack" that Mr. Miller referred to above in an entirely different light. In fact, I really don't see any way that Moses could have passed through Amorite territory in the manner that he promised without deliberately disobeying Yahweh's orders to destroy **totally** the Canaanite nations, one of which was the Amorites. Indeed, another biblical passage that tells of the Israelite defeat of the Amorites says that this was exactly what Yahweh had wanted. A verse before the passage that I will quote below claims that Yahweh was speaking to Moses to direct him in what to do as he led the Israelite army onward.

***Deuteronomy 2:24** "Set out now and cross the Arnon Gorge. See, I have given into your hand **Sihon the Amorite, king of Heshbon, and his country**. Begin to take possession of it and engage him in battle. 25 This very day I will begin to put the terror and fear of you on all the nations under heaven. They will hear reports of you and will tremble and be in anguish because of you." 26 From the desert of Kedemoth I*

*sent messengers to Sihon king of Heshbon offering peace and saying, 27 "Let us pass through your country. We will stay on the main road; we will not turn aside to the right or to the left. 28 Sell us food to eat and water to drink for their price in silver. Only let us pass through on foot--29 as the descendants of Esau, who live in Seir, and the Moabites, who live in Ar, did for us--until we cross the Jordan into the land the LORD our God is giving us." 30 But Sihon king of Heshbon refused to let us pass through. **For Yahweh your God had made his spirit stubborn and his heart obstinate in order to give him into your hands, as he has now done.** 31 Yahweh said to me, "**See, I have begun to deliver Sihon and his country over to you. Now begin to conquer and possess his land.**"*

So this account of the run-in with Sihon puts it in an entirely different light. Sihon did not grant safe passage to the Israelites, because Yahweh had "hardened his heart" [KJV] so that he would have an excuse to wipe out the Amorites in that region. Even the version of the battle that Mr. Miller quoted above said that the Israelites "took over his land from the Arnon to the Jabbok," so this would indicate that the Israelites all along had intended to massacre the Amorites and take their land. Mr. Miller conveniently omitted references to the account of this battle as told in Deuteronomy, and that omission may not have been made to deceive the readers. I suspect that he, like other would-be internet "apologists," simply don't know the Bible well enough to realize that positions they are presenting as "explanations" to problem passages are contradicted in other places. At any rate, if the Bible is inerrant, as Mr. Miller seems to believe, he must admit that Sihon's refusal to grant the Israelites free passage was orchestrated by Yahweh, who wanted a reason to massacre the Amorites. [Deuteronomy 2:24-31](#) claims that the Israelites carried out Yahweh's orders to massacre **totally** the Amorites: "At that time we took all his [Sihon's] towns and completely destroyed them--men, women and children. **We left no survivors.**"

The so-called hardening of Sihon's heart was not the only case where the Bible claimed that Yahweh intervened to cause the Canaanites to make the "wrong decisions" so that Yahweh would have an excuse for the Israelites to wipe them out.

***Joshua 11:18** Joshua waged war against all these kings for a long time. 19 Except for the Hivites living in Gibeon, not one city made a treaty of peace with the Israelites, who took them all in battle. 20 For it was Yahweh himself who hardened their hearts to wage war against Israel, so that he might destroy them totally, exterminating them without mercy, as Yahweh had commanded Moses.*

At the end of this article, I intend to show that if anyone was to be blamed for the Canaanites' failure to jump onto the Yahwist bandwagon, that blame should be put onto Yahweh himself. After all, what chance did a people have to do the "right" thing if Yahweh was exercising control over them to keep them from doing so? This

"hardening of hearts" is not what I have in mind for later on to show that blame for Canaanite failure to measure up to Yahwistic standards should be put onto Yahweh himself, but it is certainly another reason why Mr. Miller's efforts to paint the Canaanites as moral reprobates won't withstand logical scrutiny.

Let's suppose that Yahweh had not "hardened" the hearts of Sihon and other Canaanite kings, as the Bible clearly claims, and that the decisions to refuse the Israelites safe passage and later confront them in battles were the kings' alone. What would have been the justice in massacring entire populations for decisions that they had had no control over? These situations remind me of Yahweh's killing of all the firstborn in Egypt ([Ex. 12:29](#)) for the pharaoh's refusal to let the Israelites leave Egypt. If we assume the historicity of this unlikely tale, the Egyptians themselves would not have been responsible for the refusal to release the Israelites, so where was the justice in killing innocent people for something that they had no control over? And, finally, there is the matter of the children. The verse quoted above clearly says that the Israelites "completely destroyed" the Amorite population, including even children. What was the justice in massacring children who would not have been responsible for Sihon's decision and who themselves would not have been guilty of any moral corruption that Mr. Miller has been trying to lay onto the Amorites?

The bottom line--which is one of Robert Turkel's favorite phrases--is that there is simply no logical way to justify the Yahwistic massacres recorded in the Old Testament.

Miller:

- We have **another** unprovoked attack in Numbers 21:1 *When the Canaanite king of Arad, who lived in the Negev, heard that Israel was coming along the road to Atharim, he attacked the Israelites and captured some of them.*

Till:

There is no need to keep repeating a rebuttal that applies to all of the examples that Mr. Miller is wagging in to try to justify the Yahwistic massacres. When a horde of 2.5 to 3 million nomads with an army of 600,000, which has been wreaking havoc on the peoples they encounter, is approaching a national territory, the people there have the right to defend themselves. Mr. Miller didn't quote the full story, because this passage went on to say that the Israelites vowed to Yahweh that they would utterly destroy the Canaanites and their cities if Yahweh would "deliver" them into Israelite hands. Needless to say, Yahweh delivered them, and the Israelites "utterly destroyed" the people there ([vs:2-3](#)). Children would have been victims of the massacre, of course, so Mr. Miller is again left with the problem of explaining the moral justice in massacring children for something that they were not responsible for.

Miller:

- We also know that "Canaan" (between the times of Abraham and Joshua, roughly) was basically synonymous with Egypt's territory in Palestine! [Cf. [ISBE](#): s.v. "Canaan", [sic] p. 586: "Thus, the general picture that emerges from the scattered data is remarkably consistent[.] Canaan is a general name for the Asian holdings of Egypt."; see also the detail in [POTW](#):159ff]. As such, they would have known quickly about the Exodus victory (e.g. Josh 2.8-11) **and** had an interest in subjugating/destroying Israel for the Pharaoh.

Till:

I have posted elsewhere a series entitled "[Crimes by Speculation](#)," which was directed in part at Mr. Miller's attempts to explain secular silence about amazing miracles claimed in the Bible, but most of the series pertained to Robert Turkel's attempts to explain why Mark, Luke, and "John" would have omitted in part or in whole the amazing events that "Matthew" said had happened on crucifixion day. Mr. Miller's comments immediately above tell me that I was right to include some of his ideas in this series, because speculation ran rampant in this one short paragraph. I agree that Egyptian control and influence over the land of Canaan was present at this time, but even if the people of Canaan had had telegraphs, telephones, and radios to receive news that the Israelites were coming, how would that have justified the indiscriminant slaughter of entire civilian populations, including children, for nothing more than the decisions of their leaders to resist Israelite efforts to take their land? Even though Egypt did exercise influence in that region, one would think that if that influence was as great as Mr. Miller described above, there would have been at least some mention of Egyptian intrusions into the battles that were fought between the Canaanites and the Israelites, but none was referred to **anywhere**.

Mr. Miller was simply scraping the bottom of the barrel again to try to find some way to justify the morality of Yahweh's orders to exterminate all of the Canaanites and to leave **no one alive to breathe**.

Miller:

So, even the additional available data supports [sic] a very negative and abusive view of the Canaanites, Amorites, and Company...

Till:

When all of the distortions, omissions, and spin-doctoring are removed from Mr. Miller's "additional data," he is left with nothing that even remotely supports his claim that the Yahwistic massacres were morally justified.

We are going to see below that in addition to Mr. Miller's "additional data," he had more additional data, but we will see that he applied this additional "additional data" just as fallaciously as he did his "additional data" above. I will make my usual rebuttal comments about each of them, and then at the end of this section, I will show, as I promised above, that if anyone was to be blamed for the Canaanites' not knowing about Yahweh and his allegedly "true religion," that blame should be put onto Yahweh himself.

Miller:

- But...they also had **had a long exposure to truth and influences to 'moderation'** (even though they obviously did not heed them at all!).

Till:

By "truth," Mr. Miller means, of course, the alleged "revelations" of the god Yahweh to Old Testament characters like Abraham, Jacob, and Moses, but he is again begging the question of whether those Yahwistic revelations and appearances actually happened. Let him first prove that they did, and then we can talk about his claim that the Canaanites had had a "long exposure to truth." As my rebuttal continues, I will be showing that there is no reason at all to think that the Canaanites had had "a long exposure to truth and influences to moderation," as Mr. Miller is claiming.

Miller:

- We have seen above that Canaan drew heavily from the purer stock of Eblaite theology and culture. This would have been a long-term influence to moderation.

Till:

"Purer stock"? There is no ethnic prejudice in Mr. Miller, is there? Anyway, all that we have seen about this "above" are repeated assertions from Mr. Miller that he could never verify, just as he could never prove his "purer-stock" view of the Eblaites. I don't understand why he is needlessly repeating himself here. (Will Robert Turkel be upset by this repetition?) I guess he thinks that if he repeats an unverifiable assertion enough times, his readers will eventually believe it. If readers will go to [this section](#) of Part Three, they will see that the Eblaite religion wasn't quite as pure and noble as Mr. Miller has tried to present it.

Miller:

- The outstanding figure of Melchizedek ministered right in the middle of them, during the times of Abraham--and may have been an Amorite himself!

The story of Melky is given in Genesis 14. He is a king-priest of Salem (Jerusalem) and imparts additional theological knowledge to Abe! Awesome figure in biblical history. What is interesting is that he was right in the middle of the Amorite presence, and would have been quite a beacon to those peoples.

Till:

I discussed the character Melchizedek in [this section](#) of Part Three to point out that the alleged presence of this biblical character at that time in Amorite territory makes very questionable Mr. Miller's claim that the Amorites were corrupt to the core. That section can be accessed with the click of a mouse button, so there is no need for me to rehash it here. I will have more to say about Melchizedek as I go through Mr. Miller's references to him again.

Miller:

But also very intriguing is the notion that he could quite possibly have been an Amorite himself. In Ezek 16.3, the prophet rebukes the Jebusites of Jerusalem with these words: *`This is what the Sovereign LORD says to Jerusalem: Your ancestry and birth were in the land of the Canaanites; your father was an Amorite and your mother a Hittite.* (and again in 16.45). This would argue that Melky was either Amorite or Hittite.

Till:

I have no dispute with this, and in the section just linked to above, I quoted Ezekiel's references to the ancestry of the people of Jerusalem and pointed out that, rather than helping Mr. Miller's claim that the Amorites were wicked to an extreme, this information actually disputes it. Why Mr. Miller is wagging this in to try to prove his case against the Amorites is really quite perplexing to me. How could a culture that had produced a character that so epitomized righteousness and perfection as Melchizedek did have been as morally depraved as Mr. Miller has tried to paint it?

Regardless of his motive in wagging him into the discussion, a huge problem in Miller's references to Melchizedek is that he is begging the question of whether this person was an actual historical character. There are Bible commentators who believe that, rather than an actual person, he was an abstraction, who should be viewed symbolically. Outside of the Bible and the literature that it spawned, Melchizedek was not mentioned, and the Bible refers to him in mystical terms. In [Psalm 110:4](#), reference is made to someone addressed as "my Lord"--whom Christians, of course, see as Jesus--whom Yahweh has made a priest forever "after the order of Melchizedek." The writer of Hebrews quoted this and, of course, applied it to Jesus, but in making Jesus a

priest after the order of Melchizedek ([5:6](#)), the Hebrew writer made Melchizedek even more mysterious by saying that he was "without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life" ([Heb. 7:3](#)). Such a person could not have literally existed, and this, no doubt, is why many commentators believe that Melchizedek was an abstraction intended to symbolize righteousness or perfection rather than an actual historical person, so before Mr. Miller reads too much into Melchizedek's having lived among the Amorites, he needs first to prove that he was a real person. We frown on question begging in this forum.

Miller:

- Abraham also lived among these peoples, and had close relationships with both Amorites (e.g. [Gen 14.7,13](#)) and Hittites (e.g. [Gen 23](#)).

Till:

We saw just a few paragraphs above that Mr. Miller tried to present Abraham as a person who was easily duped in a land transaction, so I have to wonder just how much influence for good a man who would have been seen as a sucker could have had on the Amorites and Hittites. Anyway, in Abraham we have the same problem that we had with Melchizedek. Was he an actual person or just a legendary figure? Mr. Miller isn't going to prove anything by just constantly begging questions. Let him establish the historicity of Abraham, and then we can talk about the influence for good that he should have had on the people of Canaan. To be quite frank, however, I really can't see how much influence for good could have been effected on the Canaanites by a man who was considered easy pickings in business deals, who lied ([Gen. 12:10-20](#); [Gen. 20:2-7](#)), who consorted with his wife's handmaiden and then allowed his wife to kick her out when jealousy developed between the two ([Gen. 16:5-6](#)), who showed filial favoritism to the point of expelling a son and his mother from his house ([Gen. 21:9-14](#)), who exhibited ethnic prejudice by not allowing his son Isaac to marry a Canaanite woman ([Gen. 24:2-4](#)), and who took another wife after Sarah had died when he was "old and stricken in years" ([Gen. 24:1](#); [Gen. 25:1-4](#)) and then disinherited the 16 children and grandchildren produced by that marriage ([Gen. 25:5](#)). With a role model like him to tout, it's no wonder that Mr. Miller is so upset about the wicked Canaanites.

Miller:

- Esau actually married Hittite wives (also called 'Canaanite'), but this was a bad experience for the family ([Gen 26.34-35](#) with [27:46](#); [28.1](#)).

Till:

I will show readers why Mr. Miller merely cited the scriptures above and didn't quote them.

Genesis 26:34 *When Esau was forty years old, he married Judith daughter of Beeri the Hittite, and also Basemath daughter of Elon the Hittite. 35 They were a source of grief to Isaac and Rebekah.*

Genesis 27:46 *Then Rebekah said to Isaac, "I'm disgusted with living because of these Hittite women. If Jacob takes a wife from among the women of this land, from Hittite women like these, my life will not be worth living." 28:1 So Isaac called for Jacob and blessed him and commanded him: "Do not marry a Canaanite woman. 2 Go at once to Paddan Aram, to the house of your mother's father Bethuel. Take a wife for yourself there, from among the daughters of Laban, your mother's brother.*

So the "bad experience" that Esau's marriage to Hittite women was "for the family" was nothing more than a case of ethnic prejudice. Rebekah's and Isaac's conduct in this matter was no more than if a Caucasian mother today living in a Hispanic neighborhood should say, "If Johnny marries one of these Mexican girls, my life will not be worth living," after which his father would say to Johnny, "Don't marry a Mexican woman; go to live with your mother's brother and find a good white girl to marry." Of course, these two had had a good example set for them by Abraham, who in a text cited above made his servant swear that he would not let Isaac marry a Canaanite woman ([Gen. 24:3](#)). In both cases, Abraham and Rebekah preferred a bit of incest to the horrible prospect of having members of their families marry [gasp!] Canaanites. And Mr. Miller is trying to convince us that the Canaanites were morally despicable!

Miller:

- So, there would have been numerous points of contact (in generally friendly settings--but cf. Israel's fight with Amorites in [Gen 48.22](#)) in which worldviews would have been 'discussed'.

Till:

Here is another vague scripture citation that doesn't make much sense even when read in its context. The reference to the Amorites was made when Jacob [Israel] was blessing Joseph and his children.

Genesis 48:21 *Then Israel said to Joseph, "I am about to die, but God will be with you and take you back to the land of your fathers. 22 And to you, as one who is over*

your brothers, I give the ridge of land I took from the Amorites with my sword and my bow."

The most that could be determined from this text is that Jacob [Israel] claimed that he had once taken by force a piece of land from the Amorites. According to a later biblical text, however, this statement actually referred to a piece of property that Jacob had bought from the sons of Hamor, the father of Shechem (referred to above in the matter of Dinah's "rape"). Notice that Jacob said that God would be with Joseph and bring him back to the land of his fathers. As Joseph was dying, he requested an oath from the Israelites that they would "carry up my bones from hence" when they returned to Canaan ([Gen. 50:25](#)), and the book of Joshua ended with a reference to the fulfillment of that vow, which associated it with a land purchase that Jacob had made upon his return from Paddanaram ([Gen. 33:18-19](#)).

Joshua 24:32 *And Joseph's bones, which the Israelites had brought up from Egypt, were buried at Shechem in the tract of land that Jacob bought for a hundred pieces of silver from the sons of Hamor, the father of Shechem. This became the inheritance of Joseph's descendants.*

I could facetiously say here that Jacob also got taken on his land deal, because he paid 100 pieces of silver for it, whereas Jeremiah bought a field for just 17 pieces, but I will let it ride with just this brief aside. I really don't understand Mr. Miller's purpose in referring to this scripture, and his claim that Esau's marriage to Hittite women would have given the Canaanites "numerous points of contact" with Israelites in which "worldviews" could have been exchanged is equally vague. The "worldview" of people at that time would have been that the "world" was where they lived, and the Bible says very little about contacts that Jacob's descendants (who became the Israelites) had with Esau's family. For one thing, Jacob was separated from Esau for 20 years, while he lived in Paddanaram ([Gen. 31:41](#)). Their paths crossed when Jacob was returning home from Paddanaram ([Gen. 33:1-17](#)), and they reunited on friendly terms, but Esau then went south to Seir (located in Edom about 60 miles below the Dead Sea), and Jacob went north to Succoth (about 30 miles north of the Dead Sea), so the two families were separated by about 135 miles, which would have been a considerable distance at that time. No doubt the two groups had some contacts, just as the Israelites had contacts with Moabites, Phoenicians, Ammonites, and other ethnic groups in the Middle East, but Mr. Miller is straining to find a point if he is trying to argue that Esau's marriages to Hittite women would have had some kind of influence for good on the Canaanites. The only indication of further contact between Jacob and Esau was in Esau's participation in the burial of their father Isaac ([Gen. 35:29](#)). Esau was the eponymous ancestor of the Edomites, and elsewhere in the Bible, they were not too highly regarded. Mr. Miller spoke disparagingly of the Amorites earlier, because their king Sihon had refused to give the Israelites safe passage through their

territory during the Israelite trek to Canaan, but the Edomites also refused to let them pass.

Numbers 20:14 *Moses sent messengers from Kadesh to the king of Edom, saying: "This is what your brother Israel says: You know about all the hardships that have come upon us. 15 Our forefathers went down into Egypt, and we lived there many years. The Egyptians mistreated us and our fathers, 16 but when we cried out to Yahweh, he heard our cry and sent an angel and brought us out of Egypt. "Now we are here at Kadesh, a town on the edge of your territory. 17 Please let us pass through your country. We will not go through any field or vineyard, or drink water from any well. We will travel along the king's highway and not turn to the right or to the left until we have passed through your territory." 18 But Edom answered: "You may not pass through here; if you try, we will march out and attack you with the sword." 19 The Israelites replied: "We will go along the main road, and if we or our livestock drink any of your water, we will pay for it. We only want to pass through on foot--nothing else." 20 Again they answered: "You may not pass through." **Then Edom came out against them with a large and powerful army.** 21 Since Edom refused to let them go through their territory, Israel turned away from them.*

Another account of this contact with the Edomites, however, told it in a different way.

Deuteronomy 2:4 *Give the people these orders: 'You are about to pass through the territory of your brothers the descendants of Esau, who live in Seir. They will be afraid of you, but be very careful. 5 Do not provoke them to war, for I will not give you any of their land, not even enough to put your foot on. I have given Esau the hill country of Seir as his own. 6 You are to pay them in silver for the food you eat and the water you drink.'" 7 Yahweh your God has blessed you in all the work of your hands. He has watched over your journey through this vast desert. These forty years Yahweh your God has been with you, and you have not lacked anything. 8 **So we went on past our brothers the descendants of Esau, who live in Seir.** We turned from the Arabah road, which comes up from Elath and Ezion Geber, and traveled along the desert road of Moab.*

Inerrantists, of course, say that verse 8 was simply saying that the Israelites turned aside and "went on past" their brothers by another route instead of passing through their territory. It may have this meaning, but if so, it was rather confusingly stated. This meaning, if it is there, is at least doubtful enough to cast serious suspicion on Mr. Miller's apparent belief that citing or quoting a scripture is sufficient to settle any matter in dispute.

After settling into Canaan, the Israelites were constantly at war with the Edomites. They were one of the first enemies that Israel fought after Saul became king ([1 Sam.](#)

[14:47](#)), and the Israelites under the leadership of David's officer Abishai massacred 18,000 Edomites in the Valley of Salt and put garrison's there to make the Edomites servants ([1 Chron. 18:12-13](#)). Skirmishes with the Edomites were recorded through the books of Kings and Chronicles, so I doubt that much exchanging of "worldviews" took place during all of these hostilities. We can conclude that Mr. Miller is straining here to find another reason to justify the Yahwistic massacres of Canaanites.

Miller:

- Of special significance would be the words of Melky upon the victory by Abraham and his Amorite allies (Gen 14.18): *Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. He was priest of God Most High, 19 and he blessed Abram, saying, "Blessed be Abram by God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth. 20 And blessed be **God Most High, who delivered your enemies into your hand.**"*. This statement that God had fought for Abram--in such a victory of striking proportions!--would surely have registered with his Amorite companions (Gen 14.13), and been remembered in their legends.

Till:

Such a statement about a god's delivering enemies into the hand of a victor would have had no more impact than, say, Meshah's words on the [Moabite Stone](#), which told of victories that the god Chemosh had given to him, would have had on those who read them, and no more impact than [the inscriptions on the pavement stones](#) at the temple of Urta in Nimrud, which told of victories that the gods had given to Assurnasirpal, would have had on those who read them. The belief that gods led armies to victory was as commonplace as dirt in those days, so the statement by Melchizedek--if it was ever even made--would have been viewed no differently from all the other claims of victories in which gods were involved.

Besides this problem, Mr. Miller must prove that Melchizedek was an actual historical character, and, accomplishing that, he must then prove that Melchizedek actually said this. I would think that rather than Melchizedek's alleged statement registering with his Amorite companions, they would have instead wondered who this "God Most High" was that Melchizedek was talking about. Whether Melchizedek was historical or fictional, what we probably have here is a matter of a biblical writer putting words into his mouth, just as the writer of Daniel attributed to Nebuchadnezzar statements of belief in the god Yahweh, which a worshiper of Babylonian gods would not have likely made ([Dan. 2:29](#)); [4:34-37](#)).

Mr. Miller's wagging Melchizedek into his desperate effort to find some kind of justification for the Yahwistic massacres is a bit inconsistent with the line of

reasoning that he used earlier. He cited cases of individuals like Ephron the Hittite's alleged dishonesty in a business dealing with Abraham and Shechem's rape of Dinah as evidence that the Canaanites deserved extermination. His line of reasoning seemed to be this: (1) Ephron the Hittite cheated Abraham; therefore, the Canaanites were so wicked that they needed to be massacred. (2) Shechem raped Dinah; therefore, the Canaanites were so wicked that they needed to be massacred. I wonder why the same kind of argument should not work in reverse: The Amorite king Melchizedek was an exceptionally righteous man; therefore, the Amorites were so righteous that they should have been left alone in their land.

This is a ridiculous argument, of course, but it is just as logical as Mr. Miller's attempts to depict the Canaanites as morally depraved on the basis of limited samples.

Miller:

- The Canaanites/Amorites would have witnessed God's judgment on Sodom and the cities of the plain! Abraham had delivered those cities from a Mesopotamian king in Gen 14 (and perhaps the Amorite cities in v.7), only to see them destroyed in Gen 19.

Till:

Once again Mr. Miller is begging the question of biblical accuracy. If we assume that Sodom and the cities of the plain were actual historical places and that they were destroyed by fire and brimstone that rained down on them, how do we know that their destruction was "God's judgment"? How does Mr. Miller know that "God's judgment" caused this destruction rather than just a natural catastrophe like the thousands of natural catastrophes that have happened throughout time? In our country, for example, we have had a terrible catastrophe to happen in New Orleans and along the gulf coast. Prior to this, catastrophes less severe struck the state of Florida. Were these judgments of God? After all, these places are located in the so-called Bible belt, so is "God" sending judgment on these places where belief in the Bible is probably stronger than in other parts of the country? I think that Mr. Miller lives in California but grew up in Mississippi. I don't know exactly where he lived in this state, but I wonder if he thinks that the destruction inflicted by the hurricane along the coast was "God's judgment"? Does he think that the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius in AD 79, which destroyed Pompeii and Herculaneum and killed thousands of people was a "judgment of God"? What about the tsunami in Southeast Asia in December 2004--was that also a "judgment of God"? If so, what makes Mr. Miller think that they were? How does he know that earthquakes, hurricanes, tornadoes, floods, volcanic eruptions, and such like aren't just natural occurrences that happen according to scientific laws in an indifferent universe? And if he thinks that such catastrophes today are just natural events, by

what line of reasoning does he conclude that similar events centuries and centuries ago were "judgments of God"? If he says that he knows that these were judgments of God because the Bible tells him so, does he know what the logical fallacy of special pleading is?

I am sure that he finds these questions to be positively shocking, but it is something that he must consider. The biblical tales about the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah originated in a time when people believed that natural calamities were... well, judgments or punishments of God. Mr. Miller, therefore, must offer more evidence than the mere fact that ancient documents from prescientific, highly superstitious times said that "God" once destroyed Sodom and cities on the same plain because of their wickedness; he must show that this really was why they were destroyed, and, needless to say, he cannot do that.

Miller:

- Abraham (and Lot) were witnesses to the theological understanding of a highly visible (and internationally applauded, no doubt!) action by God. The peoples of the Land should have taken notice and warning.

Till

How does Mr. Miller know that Abraham and Lot were witnesses to "the theological understanding of a highly visible--and internationally applauded--action by God"? Well, the Bible tells him so. Hence, he is doing nothing now and has been doing nothing for hundreds of Ks except to beg the question of biblical accuracy in its "history."

Nothing else needs to be said about this except to point out that the alleged "judgment of God" on Sodom and Gomorrah would have happened some six centuries before the time of Joshua's conquests, so what would the people of Joshua's time have known about that except for some vague legends that they may have heard? An unfortunate part of human nature is that people are rather quick to forget. Even in our time of mass communication, what do the people, in general, who were born after World War II really know about that period in our history? I was 12 when that war ended, and I first realized that I was getting old when a student in one of my classes asked me if Hitler was involved in the first or the second World War. The Vietnamese War was apparently so vague in our memories that the government in power foolishly started another war that seems to be going in the same direction as the other quagmire, so Mr. Miller is extremely naive if he thinks that strong memories of important events will survive for centuries in people who didn't experience them. That he would make such arguments as this in defense of the Yahwistic massacres is just more evidence of how desperate he is to find some way to defend them.

Miller:

- The above items are 400 years+ before the 'judgment' on them begins!

Till:

And the above are nothing but begged questions strung together one after the other. What I just said about quickly fading memories is all that I need to say about this desperate reach into left field to try to find some way to explain the embarrassment of the Yahwistic massacres in the Old Testament.

Miller:

- During the 400 years in Egypt, the Canaanites would have had much interaction with Egypt, much of which probably "went through" Goshen--the place of the Hebrews. They also were probably in constant contact with Joseph (and the tribes) during the early famine years. (It is likely that Egyptian influence into Palestine was expanded due to this commercial interaction.)

Till:

Once again Mr. Miller is begging the question of biblical accuracy. If he has done any research at all into biblical history, he surely knows that more and more biblical scholars are concluding that the captivity in Egypt, the exodus, the wilderness wanderings, and the conquest of Canaan are fictionalized history, which was written to give Israel a glorious, heroic past. Furthermore, he is begging the question of "truth" by assuming that what the Israelites believed in their culture was "truth," but how does he know that? What is his proof that this Israelite god Yahweh had any real existence? The Moabites believed that their god Chemosh was real? Was he? The Philistines believed that their god Dagon was real? Was he? If these gods weren't real, then what rule of logic has Mr. Miller used to determine that just the one tribal god Yahweh **was** real?

As I previously said, I appreciate the effort that Mr. Miller puts into his articles, but he seems not to understand very rudimentary principles of logic.

Miller:

- During the 400 years, the Canaanites would have still been surrounded by offspring of Abraham--through Ishmael and Esau, not to mention that of Lot.

Till:

What I said above applies here too. Let Mr. Miller first prove that Ishmael, Esau, and Lot were actual historical characters and after proving that, then prove that they had

the same kinds of direct contacts with the god Yahweh that the Bible claims that Abraham had, and then we can talk about this. for the sake of argument, let's just assume that these were real persons and that Yahweh dropped in to chat with Ishmael, Esau, and Lot as routinely as he allegedly did with Abraham. Why would that mean that the Canaanites should have "taken notice and warning"? This unfounded assumption assumes that (1) the descendants of Ishmael, Esau, and Lot would have been evangelistic in spreading the word about a special relationship that they had with a god named Yahweh, and that (2) the people in Canaan, where gods were as common as dirt, would have paid any attention to what someone was saying about another god named Yahweh. We have Hindus in our midst, for example, but does Mr. Miller pay any serious attention to what they say about their gods? I doubt that he does, so why should he think that Canaanites would have cared what outsiders were saying about some new god that they had brought with them?

If Mr. Miller says, "Oh, well, we know that Hindu gods aren't real," he will once again be engaging in special pleading.

Miller:

- The nations of Moab, Ammon, Edom would have preserved early traditions about Elohim for 'exchange' with the nations.

Till:

Mr. Miller can't really know that Moabites, Ammonites, and Edomites would have "preserved early traditions about Elohim." In the first place, he is begging the question of biblical accuracy in its references to the existence of this deity, but as I just noticed, Hindus who have come into our midst from Southern Asia are preserving traditions that they have about Brahma, Vishnu, Siva, and other gods, but who among us is paying any serious attention to what they are saying? Mr. Miller shows a remarkable ignorance of how religion works. Basically, a religion is a cultural matter that is transmitted from generation to generation. Mr. Miller is a Christian no doubt because he grew up in a family where Christianity was taught or at least in a society where it was respected as the "true religion"; hence, it really doesn't matter what Hindus living here may say about their religion, he is not going to cast away his birth religion in order to accept a foreign one. What makes him think that the Canaanites would have been any different about new religions that were brought into their culture? I mentioned earlier the climatic changes that had caused dramatic changes in that part of the world, so can you imagine how many new gods were brought into the Near East by the people migrating there from other geographical regions? Why should someone talking about a god named Yahweh have been any more believable than those who talked about other gods? This question relates directly to the blame that should be put

onto Yahweh himself for the failure of the Canaanites to know about him, but that will be one of my final points in this article.

All that aside, the Moabites, Ammonites, and Edomites were not presented favorably in Mr. Miller's inerrant Bible. The Moabites worshiped Chemosh ([1 Kings 11:7](#)), the Ammonites worshiped Milcom ([1 Kings 11:5](#)), and the chief diety of the Edomites was Qauš, who wasn't named in the Bible but has been identified by archaeological work. The Bible, however, does claim that Edom was a polytheistic culture ([2 Chron. 25:14](#)). Even though Lot was presumably the eponymous father of the Moabites and Ammonites--through incestuous relationships with his own daughters ([Gen. 19:30-38](#))--and the Edomites were descendants of Jacob's brother Esau, these groups evidently didn't do very much at all to preserve "early traditions about Elohim." If the direct descendants of Lot and Esau didn't even preserve traditions about Elohim among their own people, why does Mr. Miller think that the Canaanites should have known about this god from traditions that had been preserved in Moab, Ammon, and Edom? He is apparently reaching way out into left field to try to find some point to support his belief that the Canaanites deserved extermination.

Miller:

- Immediately after the Exodus, word 'got out' about the Hebrews, and made its way into Canaan. By the time Israel made it to Jericho, a common prostitute in the city could say (Josh 2.9ff: *"I know that the LORD has given this land to you and that a great fear of you has fallen on us, so that all who live in this country are melting in fear because of you. 10 We have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red Sea for you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to Sihon and Og, the two kings of the Amorites east of the Jordan, whom you completely destroyed. 11 When we heard of it, our hearts melted and everyone's courage failed because of you, for the LORD your God is God in heaven above and on the earth below.*).

Rahab had heard about the Exodus (some 40+ years earlier),

Till:

If we assume the historicity of the exodus and the crossing of the Red Sea, for which there isn't a shred of unbiased evidence, then 40 years would have been plenty of time for word of these events to spread up to Jericho, but as I pointed out earlier, [Exodus 15:14-15](#) ridiculously claimed that nations like Edom, Moab, Philistia--which didn't even exist then--and Canaan knew about the crossing even before the Israelites had left the far shore of the Red Sea and proceeded toward the wilderness. Such absurdities as this give any reasonable person sufficient cause to question biblical

claims, so Mr. Miller needs to give more evidence to support his assertions than the mere fact that the Bible says thus and so.

Miller:

- the conquest of the Amorite Kings Sihon and Og (a few months earlier), and the land-grant promise by YHWH(!)--given 400 years earlier.

Till:

To say that Rahad (if she was an actual historical person) knew about the crossing of the Red Sea (if it was an actual historical event) is one thing, but to claim that she knew that Yahweh had promised Canaan to the Israelites 400 years earlier is another thing. Mr. Miller needs to show us evidence that she knew this beyond the mere fact that an ancient document obviously written to promote Yahwism says that she knew it.

Furthermore, he needs to brush up on his math. [Exodus 12:40](#) claims that the Israelites "sojourned" in Egypt for 430 years, but the promises allegedly made to Abraham would have preceded the Egyptian bondage by some 200+ years.

Miller:

News traveled fast back in those days,

Till:

Indeed it did! As I have noted twice above, the Bible asserts that nations as far away as Edom, Moab, nonexistent Philistia, and Canaan knew about the crossing of the Red Sea immediately after it happened. The fact that such absurdities as this are in the Bible should be enough to convince reasonable people just how logically flawed is Mr. Miller's method of proving the Bible by quoting the Bible. He wouldn't stand still for a Muslim to prove Islam by just quoting the Qur'an, but he apparently thinks that we should allow him to prove the Bible by quoting the Bible.

Miller:

- so they probably had at least 40 years notice of Israel's coming. [Remember that Amalek knew of the Exodus **within days** and attacked Israel.]

Till:

Well, the Amalekite attack happened more like months rather than "within days." After crossing the Red Sea, the Israelites traveled into the wilderness and came to a place between Elim and Sinai in the wilderness of sin "on the fifteenth day of the second month after their departing out of the land of Egypt" ([Ex. 16:5](#)), which would have been about 45 days after the exodus. They camped there long enough for the 2.5

to 3 million Israelites to bellyache about the food, a complaint that Yahweh met with manna from heaven. They were in this place for at least seven days after the manna began coming down, because Moses reprimanded them for going out to look for manna on the seventh day after Yahweh had assured them that if they gathered it for six days, he would double the amount gathered on the sixth day so that they would have food on the seventh ([Ex. 16:4-6, 16-30](#)). After this, they left that place, moved on, and eventually camped at Rephidim ([Ex. 17:1-7](#)), where the Israelites complained about the lack of water, which complaint Yahweh took care of by causing water to come from a rock. In "[The Water Problem](#)," I showed how much time the Israelites would have needed to get just one day's supply of water for themselves and their livestock each time they came to a water source. In the matter of water being brought forth from rocks, as allegedly happened in Rephidim, I assumed that the water miraculously provided in these incidents had gushed out to form lakes one thousand feet in diameter and then showed the logistical problems that would have been involved in drawing water from a source like this to provide just the minimal needs of 2.5 to 3 million people and their "[much cattle](#)" that they had brought with them, to which herds they added 675,000 sheep, 12,000 oxen, and 71,000 asses when they pillaged the Midianites ([Num. 31:22-34](#)). The Amalekites attacked the Israelites at Rephidim ([Ex. 17:8-16](#)), but this was their **seventh** encampment after crossing the Red Sea.

They left Pi Hahiroth and passed through the sea into the desert, and when they had traveled for three days in the Desert of Etham, they camped at **Marah**. 9 They left Marah and went to **Elim**, where there were twelve springs and seventy palm trees, and they camped there. 10 They left Elim and camped by the **Red Sea**. 11 They left the Red Sea and camped in the **Desert of Sin**. 12 They left the Desert of Sin and camped at **Dophkah**. 13 They left Dophkah and camped at **Alush**. 14 They left Alush and camped at **Rephidim**, where there was no water for the people to drink.

The third encampment would have been the one "by the Red Sea" after they had left Elim, but they didn't reach this third encampment until the 15th day of the second month after leaving Egypt, so this indicates that several days passed between each encampment, and we would understand that it would indeed have taken several days for 2.5 to 3 million people to break camp and travel any significant distance with their possessions and "much cattle" before setting up their next encampment. Hence, we can conclude that if 45 days passed between the exodus from Egypt until their third encampment, at least that much time would have passed between their third encampment and their seventh.

Don't any of these biblical inerrantists ever take the time to analyze the logistics that would have been involved in some of the tales spun in Exodus and Numbers about the wilderness adventures of the Israelites. If not, I suggest that they go to [the index page](#) of

TSR Online, scroll down to "Tall Tales of Wilderness Wanderings," and read the articles there, which analyzed some of the wilderness stories to show that they were logistically improbable and in some cases even logistically impossible. These articles will give readers another reason to understand just how flawed is Mr. Miller's attempts to prove the Bible by quoting or citing the Bible.

Miller:

- Likewise, after the drying up of the Jordan and before the fall of Jericho, the whole land of Palestine knew and individuals could have begun migrating (as was common in those days).

Till:

Yeah, right! When barbarians from the north began swooping down on the Romans, they should have just packed up and left, shouldn't they have? I am sure that if migrations across our southern borders begin to threaten Mr. Miller's home, he will just pack up, go somewhere else, and leave his house and other properties he may have to the intruders. Is Mr. Miller really so naive that he just doesn't understand human attachment to people's homelands and the properties that they have worked to build and maintain?

Anyway, I wonder if Mr. Miller is arguing that those morally depraved Canaanites should have had enough sense to abandon their land and go to some other places, where they could have morally corrupted the people living there.

Miller:

- So Joshua 5.1f: *Now when all the Amorite kings west of the Jordan and all the Canaanite kings along the coast heard how the LORD had dried up the Jordan before the Israelites until we had crossed over, their hearts melted and they no longer had the courage to face the Israelites..*

Till:

I separated this little tidbit from Mr. Miller's statement above, which introduced it, so that I could show readers another reason to view with suspicion claims that the Bible is historically accurate. The text that Mr. Miller just quoted said that the Canaanite kings "no longer had the courage to face the Israelites," but the next three chapters tell about Joshua's destruction of Jericho and Ai, after which we are told that the Canaanite kings were unified in their determination to resist the Israelite invasion.

Joshua 9:1 *Now when all the kings west of the Jordan heard about these things--those in the hill country, in the western foothills, and along the entire coast of the Great Sea*

as far as Lebanon (the kings of the Hittites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites)--2 they came together to make war against Joshua and Israel.

The next several chapters go on to relate battle after battle fought against Canaanite armies whose hearts, according to the text Mr. Miller quoted above, had previously melted and left them with no courage to face the Israelites. This is just one more example of inconsistency that resulted from the hodgepodge way that the Bible was patched together from different--and often variant--traditions. There are so many examples like this in the Bible that anyone who is really knowledgeable in its contents will understand why the Bible cannot be relied on to give an accurate account of the history of biblical times.

Miller:

- There was an abundance of information for these people--perhaps even **more than** the other nations around them had!--but they did not respond appropriately.

Till:

They didn't respond appropriately, so Yahweh was justified to order their extermination. Is that Mr. Miller's position? Apparently so, but I have shown above that there is no real evidence that the Canaanites should have been informed about Yahwism, which even the direct descendants of Lot and Esau were unable to maintain in the lands that they settled. That aside, Mr. Miller has yet to say anything about the reason why the innocent children in Canaan should have been massacred too, except to say that they died "swiftly." I guess we can assume from this that it would have been morally right for allied forces in World War II to have killed German children for the war crimes of the adults if the killing had been done "swiftly."

How can anyone believe such nonsense as this? It simply goes to show the extremes that people will go to in order to defend emotionally important religious beliefs. The fact that Mr. Miller has gone to such extremes as these to defend his religious beliefs should give him pause to wonder if maybe the Canaanites were not just like him, *i. e.*, willing to rationalize to the extreme in order to hold on to their religious beliefs, to the point that no matter how "abundant" the information about Yahwism that they may have had access to, they were not going to give up their traditional beliefs. When religion is involved, people just can't seem to think rationally, and so resisting all efforts to make them modify their beliefs seems entirely appropriate to them. Why should we think that the Canaanites would have been any different?

All that aside, I will leave this point by reminding readers again that Mr. Miller is begging the question of what is "true" in religion. He, of course, thinks that Yahwism is the truth, but beyond a collection of ancient writings by people biased to the religion of Yahweh, what is his proof that it was?

Miller:

(The other nations in the ANE seemed to respond to 'available' truth with a degree of moderation and correspondingly did not develop the ruthless, cruel, and degenerate practices of their Canaanite neighbors.)

Till:

This is only an assertion for which Mr. Miller offered no supporting evidence. Which "other nations" did he have in mind? Exactly how did they show "a degree of moderation"? If he will explain himself, I will be glad to reply, but I really suspect that he had no specific examples in mind but was merely saying something to wind down a long section of additional "additional data," which he probably realized offered no real evidence for the moral justification of the Yahwistic massacres in the Old Testament.

Miller:

Summary: These nations show up in archeology and literature as a uniquely evil and destructive civilization, whose culpability is increased due to the abundance of truth and religious warnings which they were confronted with, and had access to.

Till:

I have replied to this claim earlier and shot it to pieces, so there is no need for me to say any more about it except for my own summary statement, which I will put after Mr. Miller's, to show that if anyone should have been blamed for the Canaanite failure to accept Yahwism, that blame should have been put on Yahweh himself.

Miller:

In contrast to the vast majority of surrounding nations, the Canaanite/Amorite cultures would not act responsibly and prudently, in matters of foreign relations and domestic practice. The result was a destructive and malignant force, in an already difficult ANE historical setting. If the nations of that day could have had a vote on who [*sic*] to 'destroy', they all would have voted for the Canaanite/Amorite culture.

Till:

So the unsupported assertions continue to run rampant. Just what were these

"vast majority of surrounding nations" that acted responsibly and prudently? Egypt? Greece, Babylon, Assyria, Phoenicia? Carthage? What? Why didn't Mr. Miller tell us? If he will name the nations, I will gladly show evidence that they all, at that time, practiced idolatry and that many of them practiced human sacrifices and maintained cultic prostitutes, the very crimes that Mr. Miller found so detestable in the Canaanites. I also have to wonder just how Mr. Miller knows that "the nations of that day" would have voted to destroy the Canaanite/Amorite culture if they had been able to vote on whom to destroy. It would be helpful if he would give us at least a hint about where he gets such information as this. I suspect that he is just projecting onto "the nations of that day" his own personal prejudices that he has acquired from the Bible.

I have said above that I would show at the end of this section how Yahweh himself must bear the blame for the failure of the Canaanite/Amorite culture to believe in him. If the Bible is to be believed--and, unfortunately, too many people think that it should be--individuals like Abraham, Jacob, Moses, Joshua, etc. had very good reasons to believe in Yahweh, **because he routinely dropped in to chat with them.** If Yahweh would do this for me, I would believe in him too. After all, wouldn't seeing be believing? If, then, Yahweh had dropped in to chat with the Amorite king Sihon instead of hardening his heart, as noted above, he probably would have taken an entirely different attitude toward the Israelites. If Yahweh had also dropped in on all the Canaanite kings of the regions listed in [Joshua 11:1-17](#) to tell them that he was the real thing, which they should all worship instead of their traditional idols, maybe they too would have become worshipers of Yahweh. Instead, as we have already noted above, Yahweh hardened their hearts so that he would have an excuse to "destroy them" ([Joshua 11:20](#)). This Yahweh was such a nice guy, how could anyone not adore him?

Mr. Miller continued with still more additional data added to his "additional additional data." All of the next section is just another desperate attempt to rationalize the obvious immorality of the Yahwistically ordered exterminations of non-Hebraic nations. We will even see Mr. Miller quibbling that the extermination of the Amalakites wasn't really genocide, but I will reply to all of this in a [Part Five](#).

Till:

After straining at length to justify the Yahwistic massacres in the Old Testament by unsuccessfully depicting the Canaanites as morally reprobate, Mr. Miller turned in this section to attempts to mitigate the moral repugnance of Yahweh's commands to destroy **totally and utterly** the people in Canaan by arguing that "limitations" were included in the commands. We will see that these so-called "limitations" were actually

common-sense instructions that the Israelites were to follow in order to secure maximum advantages in controlling and using the cities and land that they conquered. Those common-sense instructions did nothing to mitigate the fact that Yahweh, as the incidents were written into the Bible, clearly commanded the Israelites to destroy totally the Canaanites and to leave no one alive to breathe. The passages that state this were quoted so many times in the previous parts of this series that it isn't necessary to repeat them again.

Miller:

Were there any limits placed upon Israel in this venture, and what was the **exact** content of the orders?

First, I want to look at the limits placed on the Israelites--the boundary-statements. What limits did God place on these marching orders? How exhaustive was the command-set? What implications might we draw from these?

Till:

Well, ordering the Israelites to destroy totally the seven nations in Canaan ([Deut. 7:1-2](#)), to leave no one alive to breathe ([Deut. 20:16-17](#)), and to possess every place that the soles of their feet would tread upon ([Josh. 1:3](#)) sounds rather "exhaustive" to me. We will see where Mr. Miller tries to make a great deal out of passages where the Israelites were told not to destroy trees, vegetation, and city buildings, but these were nothing more than common-sense instructions for a people intent on grabbing the land of the Canaanites, living in houses that they didn't build, and eating the produce of fields and vineyards that they didn't plant. I don't need to quote the passages that said this, because Mr. Miller cites them below as mitigating "limitations" on the Israelites.

Miller:

- Unlike the early Amorites, Israel was **not** supposed to destroy the cities and buildings (Deut 6.10ff). [The main exception was Hazor--the 'nerve center' of Canaanite culture and trade--cf. Joshua 11.10, [ECIAT:94](#).]

Till:

Well, let's just look at the passage in Deuteronomy.

Deuteronomy 6:10 When Yahweh your God brings you into the land he swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to give you--a land with large, flourishing cities you did not build, 11 houses filled with all kinds of good things you did not provide, wells you did not dig, and vineyards and olive groves you did not plant--then when you eat and are satisfied, 12 be careful that you do not forget Yahweh, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.

What we have here is exactly what I described above. The cities, fields, vineyards, wells, etc. were spared as much as possible so that the Israelites could move in to occupy and use them. It was a purely selfish tactic, which didn't involve even a shred of compassion for the people who had built the cities and planted the crops and vineyards. The people were massacred and their property and possessions spared as much as possible. This is somewhat like military plans in recent years to build neutron bombs, which could be exploded above cities to kill the populations by radiation and leave the factories and buildings intact to be used after they were safe to be occupied. If Mr. Miller sees this as mitigating "limitations" on the Israelites, he must be looking hard for some way to justify the Yahwistic massacres.

Miller:

- Unlike the Egyptians ([ANET:239ff](#), for the campaigns of Thutmose III), they were **not** supposed to destroy the vegetation and the trees ([Deut 20.19](#)).

Till:

Mr. Miller gave no details on the military campaigns of Thutmose III, so it is hard to guess what he may have had in mind here. The campaigns of this pharaoh, however, were documented by a royal scribe whose records were later recorded on temple walls at [Karnak](#). When Mr. Miller compares the military campaigns of the Israelites (as recorded in the Bible) to those of Thutmose III, he is comparing apples to oranges, because the battles that Thutmose fought were waged to preempt military conspiracies against him in the Levant or to quell attempts to avoid paying tribute, which he collected from nations as far away as Syria. In his military campaigns into the Levant, he had no intentions of letting his army stay there to live in the cities and use the crops and vineyards. He wanted either to eliminate threats to Egypt or to quell rebellions in cities loyal to him, after which he would return to Egypt; hence, his military tactics would have been entirely different from an invading people who wanted to grab the land and cities and then live there.

I might add before leaving Thutmose III behind that his military tactics were also different from the Israelites'. He spared the [civilian populations](#).

*The victorious army [at Meggido] took home 340 prisoners, 2041 mares, 191 foals, 6 stallions, 924 chariots, 200 suits of armor, 502 bows, 1929 cattle, 22,500 sheep, and the royal armor, chariot and tent-poles of the King of Megiddo. **The city and citizens of Megiddo were spared.***

It would seem then that Thutmose III and his army were more humanitarian than Yahweh's "chosen ones."

As for the Israelite policy of sparing trees, Mr. Miller conveniently cited a passage above without quoting it. If he had quoted it, readers could have easily seen why the Israelites were told not to destroy vegetation and trees.

Deuteronomy 20:19 When you lay siege to a city for a long time, fighting against it to capture it, do not destroy its trees by putting an ax to them, **because you can eat their fruit**. Do not cut them down. Are the trees of the field people, that you should besiege them? 20 However, **you may cut down trees that you know are not fruit trees and use them to build siege works until the city at war with you falls.**

The Israelites were told to protect trees not because they were the environmentalists of their day but because the fruit of the trees would be available to eat if they were spared. Notice, however, that this passage told the Israelites, in effect, that trees that bore no fruit--in other words trees that weren't particularly beneficial--could be cut down, so this was nothing more than a law intended to assure the Israelites of an adequate food supply.

This is as I noted above: the "limitations" that Mr. Miller is apparently trying to make into divinely decreed humanitarian restrictions were nothing more than common-sense plans for a people intent on grabbing land that wasn't theirs and using whatever had been built or planted on it by the previous owners. Readers should be suspicious of biblical inerrantists who merely cite without quoting, because the full context of the passages cited will often show that their meanings are being distorted.

Miller:

- They were restricted from attacking Esau's land--Deut 2.4ff:

Give the people these orders: `You are about to pass through the territory of your brothers the descendants of Esau, who live in Seir. They will be afraid of you, but be very careful. 5 Do not provoke them to war, for I will not give you any of their land, not even enough to put your foot on. I have given Esau the hill country of Seir as his own. 6 You are to pay them in silver for the food you eat and the water you drink.'"

Till:

As this text shows, the "descendants of Esau" (Edomites) were ethnically related to the Israelites. Since Jacob and Esau were twin brothers, the Edomites were as ethnically close to Abraham as the Israelites were, so the Israelite attitude toward them would have been somewhat like the Nazi army's moving into the German-speaking Sudetenland, which was then a part of Czechoslovakia, in 1939. The infamous scorched-earth policy, which characterized the German invasions of other European countries, was not applied here, because the people of that area were

ethnically related to the invaders. The same was true of Western Poland, known as the Polish Corridor, which had been formed from Prussia after World War I. Except for Jewish and Polish minorities, the people there were ethnically German primarily, so the invading Nazi army treated them as fellow countrymen who were being liberated.

Since the Edomites were ethnically related to the Israelites, who superstitiously believed that Yahweh had given them the land of Edom in the same way that he had given the Israelites Canaan, they would not have tried to take their land for fear of invoking the wrath of their god Yahweh. If Mr. Miller sees this as a mitigating "limitation" on the Israelites, he must be looking hard for mitigating limitations.

Miller:

[Notice that Esau 'got' that land the same way as Israel did--by conquest ([Deut 2.12, 22;](#) [Josh 24.4](#)).]

Till:

A look at Mr. Miller's proof texts cited above will confirm what I just said, *i. e.*, the Israelites didn't try to take the land of Edom because they superstitiously believed that their god Yahweh had destroyed the original inhabitants there so that the Edomites could have the land.

Deuteronomy 2:12 (*Horites used to live in Seir, but the descendants of Esau drove them out. They destroyed the Horites from before them and settled in their place, just as Israel did in the land Yahweh gave them as their possession.*)

Deuteronomy 2:19 "When you come to the Ammonites, do not harass them or provoke them to war, for I will not give you possession of any land belonging to the Ammonites. **I have given it as a possession to the descendants of Lot.**" (That too was considered a land of the Rephaites, who used to live there; but the Ammonites called them Zamzummites. 21 They were a people strong and numerous, and as tall as the Anakites. Yahweh destroyed them from before the Ammonites, who drove them out and settled in their place. 22 **Yahweh had done the same for the descendants of Esau, who lived in Seir, when he destroyed the Horites from before them. They drove them out and have lived in their place to this day.**

We have nothing here but ancient superstition. The Israelites believed that their god Yahweh had driven out/destroyed original inhabitants of lands occupied by descendants of Lot and Esau, and so they considered these lands to be hands off. Is this Mr. Miller's idea of mitigating "limitations"?

Keep in mind something that will become important later when we come to another one of Mr. Miller's quibbles: *Drive out* and *destroy* were used synonymously in both

of the passages quoted above. In the first text, the descendants of Esau "drove out" the Horites, and in another example of parallel emphasis, which was a common Hebrew literary technique, the driving out was referred to as destroying. Likewise, the Ammonites "destroyed" the Raphaites [Zamzummites], and then the next sentence in another example of parallel emphasis referred to this destruction as driving them out.

Miller:

- They were restricted from attacking Moab (Lot's descendants)--Deut 2.9:

Then the LORD said to me, "Do not harass the Moabites or provoke them to war, for I will not give you any part of their land. I have given Ar to the descendants of Lot as a possession."

Till:

What I said above applies to the Moabites too. These were descendants of Lot, through an incestuous relationship with his own daughter (as noticed earlier), so the Israelites thought that their god Yahweh had given the Moabites their land just as he was giving the Israelites the land of Canaan. Is this Mr. Miller's idea of mitigating "limitations"?

Miller:

- They were restricted from attacking Ammon (Lot's descendants)--Deut 2.19:

When you come to the Ammonites, do not harass them or provoke them to war, for I will not give you possession of any land belonging to the Ammonites. I have given it as a possession to the descendants of Lot."

Till:

I have already commented above on the text that Mr. Miller quoted here. The Ammonites were presumably the descendants of their eponymous ancestor Ben-ammi, who was born of Lot's incestuous relationship with his daughter ([Gen. 19:36-38](#)), so the Israelites superstitiously believed that their god Yahweh had given the Ammonites their land. The Israelites would have thought that trying to take Ammonite land would incur the anger of their god Yahweh.

I will ask again if this is Mr. Miller's idea of mitigating "limitations." Nothing in these examples of favoritism that the Israelites showed to ethnically related tribes will remove the fact that Yahweh ordered the Israelites to go into Canaan and destroy **totally** the seven nations living there to the point of leaving no one alive to breathe.

Mr. Miller's attempt to find mitigating "limitations" in the fact that the Israelites left some tribes outside of Canaan alone could be compared to the doctrine of [manifest destiny](#), which European settlers used as an excuse to grab from the native Americans all of their land from ocean to ocean. Along the way, there were some horrible massacres of natives, such as the [Pequot massacre](#) in 1637, the [Sand Creek massacre](#) in 1864, and the [Wounded Knee massacre](#) in 1890, among others. What Mr. Miller is now saying about the Yahwistic massacres would be parallel to someone's arguing that the massacres of native Americans by European settlers really wasn't so bad, because there were some tribes that they didn't massacre, and the European settlers didn't go into Mexico or Canada to massacre tribes living there. If an intruder broke into a home where a family of eight lived and murdered six of them, would Mr. Miller think that the murderer wasn't really such a bad guy, because he didn't kill two of the family members, or he didn't go next door and murder the family living there?

Miller:

- They were **never** allowed to take the cultic objects--with the precious metals and stones--Deut 7.25f:

The images of their gods you are to burn in the fire. Do not covet the silver and gold on them, and do not take it for yourselves, or you will be ensnared by it, for it is detestable to the LORD your God. 26 Do not bring a detestable thing into your house or you, like it, will be set apart for destruction. Utterly abhor and detest it, for it is set apart for destruction.

Till:

This passage was referring to the ancient custom that the Hebrews called *cherem*, which I discussed in [this section](#) of Part Three of this series. I recounted the story of Achan, whose entire family was stoned and burned with his livestock, because he had kept a Babylonian mantle and some precious metals that he had found in the sacking of Jericho. You see, all of the precious stuff was "devoted" to Yahweh, along with all of the people who were massacred. In the section just linked to, I quoted the *Keil and Delitzsch Commentary on the Old Testament*, which gave a full explanation of how the custom called *cherem* required the Israelites to put all of the precious stuff into Yahweh's treasury, which, of course, meant that the priests were the ones who profited from it. Mr. Miller seems to see this restriction as some kind of virtuous "limitation," so I suppose that he hasn't considered even the possibility that it could have been only a "law" made by greedy priests who wanted to line their own pockets.

Miller:

- They were **required** to offer peace to nations at a distance--Deut 20.10-16:

10 When you march up to attack a city, make its people an offer of peace. 11 If they accept and open their gates, all the people in it shall be subject to forced labor and shall work for you. 12 If they refuse to make peace and they engage you in battle, lay siege to that city. 13 When the LORD your God delivers it into your hand, put to the sword all the men in it. 14 As for the women, the children, the livestock and everything else in the city, you may take these as plunder for yourselves. And you may use the plunder the LORD your God gives you from your enemies. 15 This is how you are to treat all the cities that are at a distance from you and do not belong to the nations nearby.

Till:

Now let me see if I have this right. When the Israelites attacked a city that was outside of the land-promise borders that Yahweh had presumably fixed, if the people in that city agreed to surrender and open their gates, they would be spared and then put to forced labor--and Mr. Miller considers this a virtuous limitation that Yahweh put onto the Israelites? If he thinks that enslaving people is commendable, he apparently wouldn't have much difficulty seeing virtue in just about any military ventures the Israelites engaged in. I would ask him, however, to explain, if he can, what was so virtuous about forcing people into slavery. Of course, if the people in those distant cities didn't surrender and open their gates, the Israelites were to kill all the men and then take the women, children, livestock, and everything else in the city as "plunder" for themselves. Mr. Miller sees virtue in this? If so, I am glad that my moral standards are on a higher plane than his.

All that aside, this whole matter of how the Israelites were to treat "distant cities" is irrelevant to what Mr. Miller is supposed to be doing, which is defending the Yahwistic command for the Israelites to destroy **totally** the people of the seven mighty nations in Canaan. What they may or may not have done to people outside that area would not prove or disprove Mr. Miller's claim that the massacres of the Canaanites was morally right.

Miller:

- There were restrictions on how Israelite men treated female war captives (from distant nations)--Deut 12.10ff:

When you go to war against your enemies and the LORD your God delivers them into your hands and you take captives, 11 if you notice among the captives a beautiful woman and are attracted to her, you may take her as your wife. 12 Bring her into your home and have her shave her head, trim her nails 13 and put aside the clothes

she was wearing when captured. After she has lived in your house and mourned her father and mother for a full month, then you may go to her and be her husband and she shall be your wife. 14 If you are not pleased with her, let her go wherever she wishes. You must not sell her or treat her as a slave, since you have dishonored her.

Till:

The passage that Mr. Miller quoted is not in Deuteronomy 12. He has apparently inverted the numbers, so the correct citation is [Deuteronomy 21:10-14](#). Anyway, Mr. Miller's concepts of morality get worse the longer he goes. He seems to see high moral standards in a law that would permit soldiers to take captive women into their homes and then force them into marriage if they are "attracted" to them, or as the KJV and ASV say, if they have "a desire" for them. Nothing was said about the wishes of the women, but I can't imagine that a woman would be too thrilled about being forced into marriage with a captor who had been responsible for killing her parents. Likewise, I see no high moral standard in the last part of this law. If a captive woman forced into marriage didn't please her "husband," he could just "let her go wherever she wishes." Nothing was said about any obligations that the "husband" would have to see that she would be provided for after she was sent away.

Miller:

- [Scholars have noted that this was an unparalleled benevolence toward women, in ANE warfare.]

Till:

I don't know what ANE customs of other nations Mr. Miller may have in mind, but if he wants to talk about "unparalleled benevolence," he will have to find something to praise besides forced marriages of captive women to the killers of their parents--within only one month after the massacres--because I certainly can't see anything even remotely noble about such a practice as this. If Robert Turkel should inject himself into this discussion--which he may do, since he obviously admires Mr. Miller's "apologetic" articles--he should keep in mind that saying that my problem is that "God" didn't kiss my patoot is not a satisfactory explanation. A satisfactory explanation would be one that (1) didn't beg the question of "God's" involvement in laws such as this one and that (2) showed that a law permitting the forced marriages of captive women to the killers of their parents is consistent with recognized moral principles. It certainly isn't a satisfactory explanation to claim that a law like this was "unparalleled" in terms of what was done in Ancient Near Eastern societies, because many of the customs of that time were appallingly barbaric. Wouldn't a reasonable person think that if an omniscient, omnipotent, omnibenevolent deity were actually directing the ancient Hebrew nation, the moral standards that he required of them would have been vastly superior to those of the barbaric nations around them?

I have repeatedly emphasized throughout this series that the Old Testament claims that Yahweh ordered the Israelites to destroy **totally** men, women, and children in the cities of Canaan and to leave no one alive to breathe, and Mr. Miller is supposed to be showing us that there was nothing immoral about Yahweh's commands to so destroy the Canaanite nations. Mr. Miller says that the law pertaining to captive women was "an unparalleled benevolence toward women in ANE warfare," but he is comparing the bad to the worse. Shouldn't we expect the god from whom Christians say that objective morality emanates to impose on his "chosen ones" a system of morality that was perfect rather than just "unparalleled" in terms of what other nations in those barbaric times may have done?

What Mr. Miller is doing could be compared to someone who would argue that a man who robbed a chain of convenience stores in city A and killed all of the clerks who worked in them isn't really a bad guy, because he had also robbed some stores in a distant city and didn't kill any of the clerks. The point is that Mr. Miller is supposed to be showing us that the massacres of the Canaanites were morally right, so references to what Israelites may have done in battles outside of Canaan are irrelevant (even though Israelite conduct in those places couldn't exactly be held up as examples to emulate).

Miller:

So, this obviously was **not** a war of unrestrained lust, greed for expensive goods, or even "empire-building"--God did **not** tolerate those attitudes.

Till:

Yahweh did, however, tolerate and even command that his "chosen ones" exterminate **totally** the people in the Canaanite nations. When Mr. Miller cites an allegedly "unparalleled" attitude toward women captured in places outside of Canaan, this does not remove the facts that (1) the Israelites were commanded ([Deut. 20:16-17](#)) to destroy **totally** the Hittites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites and to **leave no one alive to breathe** and that (2) they allegedly executed those commands when they invaded Canaan ([Josh. 10:40](#); [Josh. 11:1-11,15](#)). Mr. Miller is supposed to be showing us that there was nothing immoral about any of this, but instead he is arguing that the Israelites were really not too bad, because when they attacked cities outside of Canaan, they spared their trees and forced captive women into marriage instead of killing them. In so quibbling, of course, he is forgetting about the massacre of the Amalekites ([1 Sam. 15:1-4](#)) when Yahweh ordered the first king of Israel to destroy **totally** the Amalakitish nation, **which lived outside of Canaan**, and to spare them not but to kill male and female, children and infants. Yahweh even threw in all of the Amalekite livestock for good measure and got his hackles up when the Israelites spared the best of the livestock ([1 Sam. 15:10-15](#)). Mr. Miller may defend this kind of barbarity, but I am glad to say that I don't.

Miller:

For example, in [Joshua 7](#), an Israelite **did** take some of the expense [*sic*] idol pieces, and God held the entire community responsible for this breach.

Till:

Mr. Miller is referring to Achan's violation of the ancient custom of [cherem](#), which I discussed at length in Part Three of this series to show that it amounted to a form of human sacrifice. Those who click the link above will see that all of the gold, silver, and other precious items were to be put into Yahweh's coffers, which, needless to say, the priests would have had control over, so this was nothing more than what we see in modern times where clerics live in luxury far better than their parishioners, whom they dupe into putting their money into the collection baskets.

In the case that Mr. Miller cited, as readers who click the link above will see, a man named Achan kept a Babylonian mantle and some gold and silver that he had found in the sacking of Jericho, where the Israelites slaughtered all of the inhabitants except for Rahab's family. For doing this, his entire family, along with all of his livestock, were stoned and burned ([Josh. 7:24-25](#)). There is just nothing like Yahweh's high moral standards, is there? No wonder Mr. Miller is defending them.

Miller:

Second, I want to look at the **exact content** of the instructions. What **exactly** was ordered?

Till:

Anyone who doesn't know the answer to that question by now must not have been paying attention. Yahweh's instructions were to destroy **totally** the seven nations in Canaan ([Deut. 7:1-2](#); [Deut. 20:17](#)) and to leave no one alive to breathe ([Deut. 20:16](#)). That is **exactly** what Yahweh ordered the Israelites to do, and it is exactly what the book of Joshua claims that the Israelites did ([10:40](#); [11:8,10-12,14](#)). There is just no spin that Mr. Miller can put onto these passages that would remove the fact that Yahweh presumably ordered the Israelites to destroy **totally** the people in seven nations, but let's take a look at Mr. Miller's attempts to whitewash these orders.

Miller:

What were the possible responses available to the Canaanites & Co.?

- The first thing to notice is the wide range of words used to describe what YHWH/Israel was supposed to do the these nations.
 - "wipe them out" (e.g. [Ex 23.23](#))

Till:

In an apparent attempt to prove that Yahweh didn't order the Israelites to exterminate the Canaanites, Mr. Miller put together here a list of 16 different terms that were used to describe what Yahweh ordered the Israelites to do to them. I will reply to each term as it is introduced, so that when Mr. Miller takes these terms one by one and tries to twist them into meaning something besides total destruction, I can just refer readers back to where I have already answered his quibbles.

The word translated *wipe out* in the NIV, which Mr. Miller apparently relies on, was *kachad*, which meant "to destroy." Here are some examples of how the word was used in the Old Testament.

Exodus 9:13 Then Yahweh said to Moses, "Get up early in the morning, confront Pharaoh and say to him, 'This is what Yahweh, the God of the Hebrews, says: Let my people go, so that they may worship me, 14 or this time I will send the full force of my plagues against you and against your officials and your people, so you may know that there is no one like me in all the earth. 15 For by now I could have stretched out my hand and struck you and your people with a plague that would have wiped you off [**kachad**] the earth.

2 Chronicles 32:21 And Yahweh sent an angel, who annihilated [**kachad**] all the fighting men and the leaders and officers in the camp of the Assyrian king.

Job 15:27 "Though his face is covered with fat and his waist bulges with flesh, 28 he will inhabit ruined [**kachad**] towns and houses where no one lives, houses crumbling to rubble."

Job 4:7 "Consider now: Who, being innocent, has ever perished? Where were the upright ever destroyed [**kachad**]?"

So unless Mr. Miller can show us that *annihilate*, *destroy*, or *wipe out* didn't mean to annihilate, destroy, or wipe out, I can't see that he has a point.

Miller:

- "throw them into confusion" (e.g. [Ex 23.27](#))

Till:

We are still in the same text in which Yahweh, speaking through Moses [snicker, snicker], assured the Israelites that he would destroy or annihilate or wipe out the nations of Canaan, so it is unlikely that anything that he said in this context would mean anything different from his promise to destroy those nations. The Hebrew word

for "throw into confusion" here in Mr. Miller's NIV was *hamam*, which was used as a synonym for destroy. Elsewhere it was translated *consume* or *destroy* and was, in fact, translated *destroy* in the KJV of the very text that Mr. Miller cited.

Esther 9:24 Because Haman the son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, the enemy of all the Jews, had devised against the Jews to destroy them, and had cast Pur, that is, the lot, to consume [**hamam**] them, and to destroy them.

Deuteronomy 2:15 For indeed the hand of Yahweh was against them, to destroy [**hamam**] them from among the host, until they were consumed.

What we likely have here, then, is just a case of parallelism, common in Hebrew, in which emphasis was achieved by using synonyms to repeat the same idea. That can be seen in the broader context of the verses that Mr. Miller is citing.

Exodus 23:20 "See, I am sending an angel ahead of you to guard you along the way and to bring you to the place I have prepared. 21 Pay attention to him and listen to what he says. Do not rebel against him; he will not forgive your rebellion, since my Name is in him. 22 If you listen carefully to what he says and do all that I say, I will be an enemy to your enemies and will oppose those who oppose you. 23 My angel will go ahead of you and bring you into the land of the Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, Canaanites, Hivites and Jebusites, **and I will wipe them out [kachad]**. Do not bow down before their gods or worship them or follow their practices. You must **demolish them and break their sacred stones to pieces**. 25 Worship Yahweh your God, and his blessing will be on your food and water. I will take away sickness from among you, 26 and none will miscarry or be barren in your land. I will give you a full life span. 27 "I will send my terror ahead of you and throw into confusion [**hamam**] every nation you encounter. I will make all your enemies **turn their backs and run**. 28 I will send the hornet ahead of you **to drive the Hivites, Canaanites and Hittites out of your way**. 29 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. 30 Little by little I will drive them out before you, until you have increased enough to take possession of the land. 31 "I will establish your borders from the Red Sea to the Sea of the Philistines, and from the desert to the River. I will hand over to you the people who live in the land and you will drive them out before you.

Mr. Miller quibbles below about the meanings of "turning their backs" and "driving them out," so I will reserve comment on these terms until I get to where Mr. Miller tried to give them meanings that made the Israelites look downright virtuous. At this point, I will emphasize the case of parallelism that I identified above. In the first part of the text, Yahweh clearly said that he would destroy/consume the Israelites, and that is consistent with the passages we have now noticed several times where Yahweh

ordered the Israelites to destroy **totally** the Canaanite nations and to leave in them no one alive to breathe, so if Mr. Miller believes that the Bible is inerrant, he needs to explain to us why he is now trying to make Yahweh's orders to the Israelites concerning the Canaanites to mean only that they were to drive them out so that they could migrate somewhere else. As I will show, one could certainly say that if the Israelites destroyed **totally** the Canaanites and left none of them alive to breathe, it could be correctly said that they had driven them out. If not, why not? If, however, they were simply driven out of the land in the sense of having been forcibly expelled, it could not be said that they had been totally destroyed to the point of none of them having been left alive to breathe. If not, why not?

That this parallel meaning was intended in the passage above can be seen in some of the other places that I emphasized in bold print. What, for example, would be the difference in demolishing the Canaanite idols and in breaking their sacred stones to pieces? If the Israelites demolished the idols, they would have broken the sacred stones into pieces, and if they broke the sacred stones into pieces, they would have demolished the idols. This is nothing more than an example of parallel emphasis that was used throughout the Old Testament. Likewise, if the Canaanites turned their backs and ran, they would have been driven out before the Israelites, but nothing in the text indicates that after the Canaanites turned and ran, they were not totally destroyed later. In fact, we will see examples later that show that this is exactly what happened after the Canaanites turned and ran. What Mr. Miller is trying to make into mitigating implications in Yahweh's command to destroy totally the Canaanites was really nothing more than a Hebraic way of emphasizing just how total the destruction was to be.

Miller:

- "make them turn their backs and run" (e.g. [Ex 23.27](#))

Till:

Since Mr. Miller uses the NIV, which gave the word *hamam* the meaning of "to throw into confusion," I am going to go with that and combine the ideas of throwing the Canaanites into confusion and "turning their backs on the Israelites and running from them." There is nothing at all in either term that would mean that the Israelites were not to destroy them **totally** and leave no one alive to breathe, because Yahweh [snicker, snicker] was describing in this passage how he would give the Israelites the land of Canaan through military conquest. There are examples in Joshua that claim that Canaanites turned and retreated from the Israelites, who pursued and slaughtered them.

- When a coalition of Canaanite kings gathered to fight the Gibeonites who had deceived the Israelites into making a treaty with them, Joshua's forces routed them and chased them all the way from Bethhoron to Azek. The Israelites slaughtered them when Yahweh stopped the sun to prolong the day so that Joshua's forces could mop up the Canaanites ([Josh. 10:1-14](#)).
- When Joshua was told that five Canaanite kings had fled from this battle and hidden in a cave, Joshua ordered his men to seal the cave with stones and then pursue and kill the soldiers who had been there with the kings. After Joshua's forces had destroyed them with "a great slaughter," he reopened the cave, humiliated the kings, killed them, and then hanged them in trees ([Josh. 10:16-27](#)).
- When a coalition of Canaanites gathered by king Jabin of Hazor went out against the Israelites, the Israelites chased them "to Greater Sidon, to Misrephoth Maim, and to the Valley of Mizpah on the east, **until no survivors were left** ([Josh. 11:1-8](#)).

Obviously, then, references to Canaanites who would be thrown into confusion and run from the Israelites didn't mean that Yahweh would suddenly turn into Mr. Nice Guy and let some of the Canaanites live to "migrate" to other places, because examples of when the Canaanites did turn and run were followed with claims that the Israelites pursued and killed them.

Miller:

- "drive them out of your way" (e.g. [Ex 23.28](#))

Till:

My comments above apply here too. The conquest stories in Joshua claim that when Yahweh did drive the Canaanites out of the way, the Israelites pursued and slaughtered them. Mr. Miller is looking hard for some way to mitigate the absurdity of a benevolent god's "chosen people" engaging in massive slaughters, but if the book of Joshua is inerrant, as Mr. Miller seems to believe, the Israelites took no mercy at all on the people living in the cities that they conquered. Notice the bold-print emphasis in the text quoted below.

*Joshua 10:29 Then Joshua and all Israel with him moved on from Makkedah to Libnah and attacked it. 30 Yahweh also gave that city and its king into Israel's hand. **The city and everyone in it Joshua put to the sword. He left no survivors there.** And he did to its king as he had done to the king of Jericho. 31 Then Joshua and all Israel with him moved on from Libnah to Lachish; he took up positions against it and attacked it. 32 Yahweh handed Lachish over to Israel, and Joshua took it on the*

*second day. **The city and everyone in it he put to the sword, just as he had done to Libnah.** 33 Meanwhile, Horam king of Gezer had come up to help Lachish, but Joshua defeated him and his army--**until no survivors were left.** 34 Then Joshua and all Israel with him moved on from Lachish to Eglon; they took up positions against it and attacked it. 35 They captured it that same day **and put it to the sword and totally destroyed everyone in it, just as they had done to Lachish.** 36 Then Joshua and all Israel with him went up from Eglon to Hebron and attacked it. 37 They took the city **and put it to the sword, together with its king, its villages and everyone in it. They left no survivors. Just as at Eglon, they totally destroyed it and everyone in it.** 38 Then Joshua and all Israel with him turned around and attacked Debir. 39 They took the city, its king and its villages, **and put them to the sword. Everyone in it they totally destroyed. They left no survivors. They did to Debir and its king as they had done to Libnah and its king and to Hebron.** 40 So Joshua subdued the whole region, including the hill country, the Negev, the western foothills and the mountain slopes, together with all their kings. **He left no survivors. He totally destroyed all who breathed, just as Yahweh, the God of Israel, had commanded.** 41 Joshua subdued them from Kadesh Barnea to Gaza and from the whole region of Goshen to Gibeon. 42 All these kings and their lands Joshua conquered in one campaign, because Yahweh, the God of Israel, fought for Israel. 43 Then Joshua returned with all Israel to the camp at Gilgal.*

Nothing that Mr. Miller can say will make passages like this one disappear, and there is no spin that he can put on expressions like "thrown into confusion" or "turn their backs and run" that will remove the fact that the Bible, which he believes is inerrant, clearly claims that Joshua's forces did exactly what Yahweh had commanded Moses: **They destroyed totally the people they defeated and conquered and left no survivors, no one to breathe.** I have looked through Mr. Miller's website, and he seems like a very decent person. He should be ashamed to debase himself to defend the ancient barbarity glorified in the Bible.

Miller:

- "struck down" (e.g. [Ps 135.10](#))

Till:

The word translated *struck down* in this passage was *nakah*, which conveyed the sense of striking down in the sense of killing. I don't know why Mr. Miller went to Psalms to find an example of where this word was used, because it appeared many times in Joshua in the sense of striking down or killing the people that the Israelites fought in Canaan.

Joshua 8:21 For when Joshua and all Israel saw that the ambush had taken the city and that smoke was going up from the city, they turned around and attacked the men of Ai. 22 The men of the ambush also came out of the city against them, so that they were caught in the middle, with Israelites on both sides. Israel **cut them down [nakah]**, leaving them neither survivors nor fugitives.

Joshua 10:10 Yahweh threw them into confusion before Israel, who defeated them in a great victory at Gibeon. Israel pursued them along the road going up to Beth Horon and **cut them down [nakah] all the way to Azekah and Makkedah**. 11 As they fled before Israel on the road down from Beth Horon to Azekah, Yahweh hurled large hailstones down on them from the sky, and more of them died from the hailstones than were **killed by the swords of the Israelites**.

Joshua 10:28 That day Joshua took Makkedah. He **put [nakah] the city and its king to the sword and totally destroyed everyone in it. He left no survivors**. And he did to the king of Makkedah as he had done to the king of Jericho.

Joshua 10:30 Yahweh also gave that city and its king into Israel's hand. The city and everyone in it Joshua **put to [nakah] the sword. He left no survivors there**. And he did to its king as he had done to the king of Jericho.

Joshua 10:32 Yahweh handed Lachish over to Israel, and Joshua took it on the second day. The city and everyone in it he **put to [nakah] the sword**, just as he had done to Libnah. 33 Meanwhile, Horam king of Gezer had come up to help Lachish, but Joshua **defeated him [nakah] and his army--until no survivors were left**.

Joshua 10:35 They captured it that same day and **put it to [nakah] the sword and totally destroyed everyone in it**, just as they had done to Lachish. 36 Then Joshua and all Israel with him went up from Eglon to Hebron and attacked it. 37 They took the city and **put it [nakah] to the sword**, together with its king, its villages and everyone in it. **They left no survivors. Just as at Eglon, they totally destroyed it and everyone in it**.

I could give many more examples, but these are sufficient to show that when "struck down" and "put to [the sword]" were used in the Old Testament, they conveyed the sense of killing, so there is nothing in this word to support Mr. Miller's claim that Yahweh just wanted the Israelites to drive the Canaanites out of the land.

Miller:

- "dispossessed" (e.g. [Num 21.32](#))

Till:

The word translated *dispossessed* in this verse was *yaresh*, which conveyed the idea of driving out with the intention of possessing property. As I explained above, if the Israelites totally destroyed the Canaanites, they would have driven them out, and so this meaning would be consistent with the Yahwistic commands to destroy **totally** the Canaanites and to leave none of them alive to breathe, but if the Israelite just drove them out in the sense that they expelled them to another place, they would not have obeyed the command to destroy them **totally** and leave none of them alive to breathe. It is time, then, for Mr. Miller to tell us if he thinks that the Bible is inerrant. If he believes it is inerrant, then let him explain to us how the Bible is consistent if it says in one place that the Israelites totally destroyed the Canaanites but in another place says only that they displaced them to other locations.

Miller:

- "drive out" (e.g. [Num 33.52](#))

Till:

I addressed this above in my explication of [Exodus 23:27-33](#), where I showed that "wiping out" or "cutting off" [translations of a word that meant "to annihilate or destroy"] was used in parallelisms with "driving out," which indicates that the writer's purpose was to emphasize that the Canaanites were to be destroyed **totally**, just as Yahweh had commanded the Israelites in various passages already noted several times. If Mr. Miller thinks that Yahweh meant only for the Israelites to "drive out" the Canaanites in the sense of expelling them to other locations, then he will have to explain how doing that would have constituted destroying them **totally and leaving none of them alive to breathe**. Does Mr. Miller believe that the Canaanites stopped breathing after the Israelites (according to his scenario) drove the Canaanites out of their former lands?

Miller:

- "thrust out" (e.g. [Deut 6.19](#))

Till:

There is no need to keep rehashing the same rebuttal point. I have shown above that the Bible claims that when the Canaanites fled from the Israelites, they were chased and put to the sword **until there were no survivors**. Understanding all of the references to driving or casting out the Canaanites before the Israelites can be harmonized with the texts that claim that the Israelites destroyed **totally** the people in Canaan and **left none alive to breathe** only if the driving-out and casting-out texts are interpreted to mean that when the Canaanites fled, they were pursued and killed. If

these texts are interpreted to mean that the Canaanites fled in the sense of "migrating" to some other place, then Mr. Miller has a glaring textual inconsistency to explain.

Miller:

- "destroy them" (e.g. [Deut 9.3](#))

Till:

A look at this complete text will quickly show that "destroying" and "driving out" were intended to convey the same meaning.

*But be assured today that Yahweh your God is the one who goes across ahead of you like a devouring fire. He will **destroy them**; he will **subdue them** before you. And you will **drive them out and annihilate them quickly**, as Yahweh has promised you.*

Mr. Miller probably couldn't have cited a passage more detrimental to his position, which is apparently that Yahweh's primary intention was to drive the Canaanites out to make them "migrate" to another land, but notice the words emphasized in bold print above. Yahweh first said that he would **destroy** the Canaanites, and then he said that when they were "subdued," the Israelites were to **drive them out and annihilate them quickly**. Hence, this verse clearly corroborates what I have been saying above. Yahweh clearly ordered the Israelites to destroy **totally** the Canaanites and **to leave none of them alive to breathe**, so when he referred to "driving them out," he meant that when the Canaanites were in retreat and disarray, the Israelites were to pursue and **annihilate them**. Otherwise, there is a glaring contradiction in the Bible that Mr. Miller will need to explain.

Miller:

- "subdue them before you" (e.g. [Deut 9.3](#))

Till:

I just quoted this verse above so that I could show that when Yahweh spoke of subduing the Canaanites, he meant that the Israelites were then to pursue them and **annihilate** them. Mr. Miller is obviously fighting a losing battle in his attempt to make the god Yahweh Mr. Nice Guy.

Miller:

- "annihilate" (e.g. [Deut 9.3](#))

Till:

As I explained above, Mr. Miller's own proof text clearly shows that, as the Old Testament was written, presumably by inspired men, Yahweh wanted the Canaanites **annihilated**, so the references to driving them out or casting them out or making them flee, etc., didn't mean that Yahweh wanted them driven into other lands, but as Deuteronomy 9:3 clearly states, the Israelites were to **annihilate** them after Yahweh had "subdued" them and "driven them out."

Miller:

- "delivered them over to you" (e.g. [Deut 7.2](#))

Till:

Does Mr. Miller read any of his proof texts before he cites them? Notice that the verse cited above is exactly parallel to Deuteronomy 9:3 in that it clearly says that when Yahweh had "delivered" the Canaanites to the Israelites, they were to destroy them **totally**.

*Deuteronomy 7:1-2 When Yahweh your God brings you into the land you are entering to possess and drives out before you many nations--the Hittites, Girgashites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites, seven nations larger and stronger than you--2 and when Yahweh your God has delivered them over to you and you have defeated them, **then you must destroy them totally.***

What part of a command to destroy **totally** does Mr. Miller not understand? Did Mr. Miller even read the rest of this chapter? If so, why didn't he see the passage below?

*7:22 Yahweh your God will drive out those nations before you, little by little. You will not be allowed to eliminate them all at once, or the wild animals will multiply around you. 23 But Yahweh your God will deliver them over to you, **throwing them into great confusion until they are destroyed.** 24 He will give their kings into your hand, **and you will wipe out their names from under heaven.** No one will be able to stand up against you; **you will destroy them.***

Destroy, destroy, destroy--time and time again that was the primary theme in passages that gave the Israelites instructions concerning how to deal with the Canaanites. Mr. Miller is shamelessly quibbling about expressions like "drive out" or "cast out" or "turn and run" or "subdue," but over and over, when these expressions were used, they appeared in contexts that clearly show that Yahweh expected annihilation and destruction of the Canaanites after they had been subdued or driven out. Notice that verse 23 above illustrates what I just said. Yahweh would (1) deliver them [the

Canaanites] over to the Israelites and (2) throw them into great confusion, until (3) **they are destroyed.**

Another point is in order here. As I have been replying to Mr. Miller, I have pointed out inconsistencies and discrepancies in the biblical text, as in the case of references in the book of Jonah to a king in Nineveh before this city became the capital of Assyria, so it is time to point readers to another discrepancy. The first verse in the quotation immediately above conflicts with one that was quoted earlier. Let's juxtapose them to make the inconsistency so obvious that anyone should be able to see it.

Deuteronomy 7:22 *Yahweh your God will drive out those nations before you, **little by little.** You will not be allowed to eliminate them all at once, or the wild animals will multiply around you.*

Deuteronomy 9:3 *But be assured today that Yahweh your God is the one who goes across ahead of you like a devouring fire. He will destroy them; he will subdue them before you. And you will drive them out and **annihilate them quickly**, as Yahweh has promised you.*

Now which was it going to be? Was Yahweh going to drive them out little by little so that wild animals wouldn't multiply around the Israelites, or was he going to destroy them **quickly**? Inconsistencies like this should give reasonable readers pause to think about how reliable the biblical text can be when it has inconsistencies like this in it.

The same little-by-little statement was made in [Exodus 23:29-30](#), and every time I read it I wonder why the [2.5 to 3 million](#) Israelites wouldn't have been numerous enough to keep animal populations under control in a land area no larger than ancient Israel. The present day population of Israel is only 6.2 million, so are we supposed to believe that half that many people couldn't have kept wild animals from overpopulating if Yahweh had given the land to the Israelites all at once? Regardless, there is an inconsistency in the two texts quoted above. If Yahweh gave the land to the Israelites little by little, then he couldn't have given it to them quickly, and if he gave it to them quickly, he couldn't have given it to them little by little.

Miller:

- "defeated them" (e.g. [Deut 7.2](#))

Till:

This text has been quoted, analyzed, and reanalyzed, so there is no need to requote it here. It has Yahweh telling the Israelites that he will deliver the seven Canaanite

nations to them so that they can defeat them, after which "you must destroy them **totally**." When Mr. Miller's proof texts are analyzed within their broader contexts, they consistently show that Yahweh ordered the Israelites to destroy **totally** the Canaanites after they had been delivered, subdued, defeated, etc. I hate to impugn his motives, but I can see no reason why Mr. Miller is citing, without quoting, these texts except that he didn't expect his readers to take the time actually to read them, so he cited them hoping that they would just accept his word that they contained nothing but references to "delivering" or "subduing" or "defeating" the Canaanites with nothing said about killing them.

Miller:

- "perish" (e.g. [Deut 7.20](#))

Till:

Well, doesn't *perish* mean to die? When this verse is viewed in its entirety, it shows that Yahweh is directly intervening to cause the Canaanites to perish.

Deuteronomy 7:20 Moreover, Yahweh your God will send the hornet among them until even the survivors who hide from you have perished.

So there is nothing in this verse that would promote a good-guy image for Yahweh. It is actually saying that if any Canaanites should succeed in hiding from the Israelites, Yahweh would send "the hornet," probably being used symbolically to represent some kind of divine pestilence, to make those who survived the Israelite battles to perish. Rather than conveying what Mr. Miller tried to make it mean, this verse was really saying that Yahweh was not going to let any of the Canaanites survive the Israelite onslaught.

Miller:

- "give kings into your hands" (e.g. [Deut 7.24](#))
- "wipe out their names from under heaven" (e.g. Deut 7.24)

Till:

I have combined these two to show that the same text that says that the kings would be given into the hands of the Israelites went on to say that the Israelites were then to "wipe out their names from under heaven." How could this have been done unless those kings and their people were destroyed totally? Yahweh, for example, ordered the Israelites to "blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven" ([Deut. 25:19](#)), and we have already seen that this obviously meant that the Amalekites were to be destroyed **totally** ([1 Sam. 15:1-3](#)).

I also quoted above several passages that showed that when kings were given or delivered into the hands of the Israelites, they were killed, but apparently Mr. Miller's memory needs refreshing.

Joshua 8:21 For when Joshua and all Israel saw that the ambush had taken the city and that smoke was going up from the city, they turned around and attacked the men of Ai. 22 The men of the ambush also came out of the city against them, so that they were caught in the middle, with Israelites on both sides. Israel cut them down, **leaving them neither survivors nor fugitives.** 23 But they took the king of Ai alive and brought him to Joshua. 24 When Israel had finished killing all the men of Ai in the fields and in the desert where they had chased them, and when every one of them had been put to the sword, **all the Israelites returned to Ai and killed those who were in it.** 25 **Twelve thousand men and women fell that day--all the people of Ai.** 26 For Joshua did not draw back the hand that held out his javelin until he had destroyed all who lived in Ai. 27 But Israel did carry off for themselves the livestock and plunder of this city, as Yahweh had instructed Joshua. 28 So Joshua burned Ai and made it a permanent heap of ruins, a desolate place to this day. 29 **He hung the king of Ai on a tree and left him there until evening.** At sunset, Joshua ordered them to take his body from the tree and throw it down at the entrance of the city gate. And they raised a large pile of rocks over it, which remains to this day.

Joshua 10:16 Now the five kings had fled and hidden in the cave at Makkedah. 17 When Joshua was told that the five kings had been found hiding in the cave at Makkedah, 18 he said, "Roll large rocks up to the mouth of the cave, and post some men there to guard it. 19 But don't stop! Pursue your enemies, attack them from the rear and don't let them reach their cities, for the LORD your God has given them into your hand." 20 So Joshua and the Israelites destroyed them completely--almost to a man--but the few who were left reached their fortified cities. 21 The whole army then returned safely to Joshua in the camp at Makkedah, and no one uttered a word against the Israelites. 22 Joshua said, "Open the mouth of the cave and bring those five kings out to me." 23 So they brought the five kings out of the cave--the kings of Jerusalem, Hebron, Jarmuth, Lachish and Eglon. 24 When they had brought these kings to Joshua, he summoned all the men of Israel and said to the army commanders who had come with him, "Come here and put your feet on the necks of these kings." So they came forward and placed their feet on their necks. 25 Joshua said to them, "Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged. Be strong and courageous. This is what Yahweh will do to all the enemies you are going to fight." 26 **Then Joshua struck and killed the kings and hung them on five trees, and they were left hanging on the trees until evening.**

As this passage continued, it told of the killing of the kings of Makkedah ([Josh. 10:28](#)), of Libnah ([Josh. 10:30](#)), of Hebron ([Josh. 10:37](#)), and of Debir ([Josh. 10:38-39](#)). The fact

that Mr. Miller's proof text referred only to "giving" kings into the hands of the Israelites certainly didn't mean that Yahweh was ordering the Israelites to show mercy to them, because the same verse that Mr. Miller quoted said that the Israelites were to wipe out the names of these kings from under heaven, and the passages quoted and cited above claim that the Israelites did this by killing the kings that they captured.

Miller:

Notice that there is a **huge** difference (at first blush) between "annihilate" and "drive them out"!

Till:

And I have shown that there is no difference, because expressions like "drive out," "subdue," "defeat," etc. were consistently used in contexts that went on to say that after Canaanites were "subdued" or "defeated," they were killed, and contexts that referred to "driving out," went on to say that the Israelites pursued them until they were **totally** destroyed. I want to give Mr. Miller every benefit of doubt concerning his sincerity, but I find it hard to believe that he didn't notice how the complete contexts of passages he has been citing showed that utter destruction followed references to subduing, or defeating, or driving out.

Miller:

These seem almost contradictory.

Till:

Not at all, because, as I have shown, these terms were used in passages where the full contexts show that defeating, subduing, and driving out were followed by references to the total destruction of those Canaanites who were subdued or defeated or driven out.

Miller:

This warrants a closer look.

Till:

Not really. If Mr. Miller thinks that the Bible is the inspired, inerrant word of God, then he should accept what I have noted above: biblical accounts claim that the Israelites pursued Canaanites, who turned and ran after they had been defeated or subdued, and then killed them. There is just no way to whitewash the clarity with which so many biblical texts claim that Yahweh ordered the Israelites to destroy **totally** the Canaanite nations and to leave no one in them alive to breathe. This is one of the most repugnant aspects of the Bible, and there is just no way that Mr. Miller or anyone else can sugar-coat it.

Miller:

These words group into two categories: dispossession vs destruction. "Dispossession" would include the words like *drive out, dispossess, take over possession of, thrust out, send away* (33 occurrences).

Till:

Yes, and as I explained above, umpteen times, the full contexts of passages that referred to "dispossession" showed that terms for this were used in the sense of killing or destroying, so the Bible teaches that the Canaanites were to be dispossessed by destroying them **totally**.

Miller:

"Destruction" words would include *annihilate, destroy, perish, and eliminate* (11 occurrences). The Dispossession words would indicate that the population 'ran away'--migrated out of the Land prior to any encounter with the Israelites;

Till:

Actually, there are 13 references in the KJV to "destroying" the Canaanites, and four to the command to leave no one alive to breathe, which, of course, would be synonymous with "destroying." Anyway, as I showed earlier--repeatedly--killing the Canaanites would have had the effect of dispossessing them, so when viewed in that sense, there would be no inconsistency or contradiction--to use Mr. Miller's word--in the passages where Yahweh ordered the Israelites to destroy **totally** the Canaanites and the ones where Yahweh spoke of "dispossessing" them, but if Mr. Miller is going to claim that the Israelites dispossessed the Canaanites only in the sense of expelling them to some other lands, then he will have a biblical discrepancy to explain.

That "dispossessing" was used in the sense of "destroy" is evident from passages whose context used both terms. There is one text in particular that is very clear about this.

*Deuteronomy 31:1 So Moses went and spoke these words to all Israel. 2 And he said to them, "I am a hundred and twenty years old today; I am no longer able to come and go, and Yahweh has said to me, 'You shall not cross this Jordan.' 3 "It is Yahweh your God who will cross ahead of you; **He will destroy these nations before you, and you shall dispossess them.***

Notice that *destroy* and *dispossess* were used interchangeably here. The rest of the passage clearly shows that Yahweh's orders were for the Israelites to destroy the Canaanites.

*Joshua is the one who will cross ahead of you, just as Yahweh has spoken. 4 "Yahweh will do to them just as He did to Sihon and Og, the kings of the Amorites, and to their land, when He **destroyed** them.*

As we will see below when I analyze the biblical texts that described the conquests of Amorites ruled by Sihon and Og, the Israelites destroyed **totally** everyone in the Amorite cities and towns, specifically stating that men, women, and children were all killed ([Deut. 2:24-35](#); [Deut. 3:1-17](#)).

*5 "Yahweh will deliver them up before you, and you shall do to them according to **all the commandments** which I have commanded you.*

Doing to them according to **all** the commandments that Yahweh had commanded the Israelites would have necessitated **totally** destroying all of the Canaanites ([Deut. 7:2](#)) and **leaving none of them alive to breathe** ([Deut. 20:16-17](#)).

6 "Be strong and courageous, do not be afraid or tremble at them, for Yahweh your God is the one who goes with you He will not fail you or forsake you." 7 Then Moses called to Joshua and said to him in the sight of all Israel, "Be strong and courageous, for you shall go with this people into the land which Yahweh has sworn to their fathers to give them, and you shall give it to them as an inheritance. 8 "Yahweh is the one who goes ahead of you; He will be with you. He will not fail you or forsake you. Do not fear or be dismayed."

This passage spoke of Yahweh's "delivering up" the Canaanites and the Israelites' "dispossessing" them, both in contexts that were clear in conveying that this meant that the Canaanites were to be destroyed. Try as he may, Mr. Miller just cannot quibble his way around the obvious fact that the Old Testament teaches in language too clear to misunderstand that Yahweh ordered the Israelites to destroy **totally** the Canaanites and **to leave none of them alive to breathe**.

Besides the clarity of the passages just analyzed, there are others that used both terms [*dispossess* and *destroy*] in reference to the same Canaanites.

- **Numbers 21:21-34** described the Israelite conquest of the Amorite region ruled by king Sihon, and this description speaks of "striking him with the sword" and "possessing" his land. It speaks of taking all of the Amorite cities "in Heshbon" and of "a fire" that went out "from the city of Sihon" and "devoured the lords of the high places of the Arnon."
- **Verses 33-35** then turned to describing the region ruled by Og the king of Bashan. In speaking to Moses on that occasion, Yahweh told him to do to "all

of his people and his land" as has been done to Sihon king of the Amorites "who dwelt at Heshbon." The last verse in this passage says that "they struck him and his sons and all his people, until there was none left him remaining, **and they possessed his land.**

- **Deuteronomy 2:24-35** also described the conquest of Amorite land ruled by Sihon, and this version of the battles claims that the Israelites "took all of his cities at that time and utterly destroyed every inhabited city, with the women and the little ones" and "**left none remaining.**" Verse 31 says that the Israelites "began to possess" Sihon's land when these battles began, so the Israelite concept of "dispossessing" was to kill everyone in the land and then to possess it for themselves.
- **Deuteronomy 3:1-17** also described the conquest of Amorite land ruled by Sihon and Og. This text claims that Yahweh told Moses to do to Og and his people "as you did to Sihon king of the Amorites, who dwelt at Heshbon." Moses said in verse 3 that Yahweh "delivered" Og into the hands of the Israelites, who "struck him until none were left to him remaining." He went on to describe the conquest of 60 cities in "the region of Argob" in "the kingdom of Og in Bashan." Moses claimed that "we utterly destroyed them, **as we did to Sihon**, utterly destroying **every** inhabited city, with the women and the little ones." The text continued to tell of the destruction of all the Amorite cities of the plain, **and all Gilead**, and all Bashan, to Salecah and Edrei, "cities of the kingdom of Og in Bashan." Verse 12, says that the Israelites took this land "in possession at that time," from Aroer, which is by the valley of Arnon, **and half the hill country of Gilead, and the cities thereof.** The passage went on to explain that the land and cities in this half of Gilead were given to the Reubenites and the Gadites and that the rest of Gilead was given to the half-tribe of Manasseh.

There is a reason why I emphasized all of the details above about the **utter destruction** of the people living in Gilead. As I noted immediately above, the land of Gilead was given to the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh, but another discription of this land claims that the taking of this land was an act of "dispossession."

***Numbers 32:33** Then Moses gave to the Gadites, the Reubenites and the half-tribe of Manasseh son of Joseph the kingdom of Sihon king of the Amorites and the kingdom of Og king of Bashan--the whole land with its cities and the territory around them. 34 The Gadites built up Dibon, Ataroth, Aroer, 35 Atroth Shophan, Jazer, Jogbehah, 36 Beth Nimrah and Beth Haran as fortified cities, and built pens for their flocks. 37 And the Reubenites rebuilt Heshbon, Elealeh and Kiriathaim, 38 as well as Nebo and Baal*

*Meon (these names were changed) and Sibmah. They gave names to the cities they rebuilt. 39 The descendants of Makir son of Manasseh went to Gilead, **captured it and drove out [dispossessed, KJV] the Amorites who were there.** 40 So Moses gave Gilead to the Makirites, the descendants of Manasseh, and they settled there. 41 Jair, a descendant of Manasseh, captured their settlements and called them Havvoth Jair. 42 And Nobah captured Kenath and its surrounding settlements and called it Nobah after himself.*

So if this passage and the other ones that described the Israelite battles and defeat of the Amorites in the kingdoms of Sihon and Og, then we have to conclude that the terms "driving out" and "dispossessing" were used not to mean that the Israelites just expelled the Amorites into other lands but that they drove them out and dispossessed them in the sense that they destroyed them **totally**.

If Mr. Miller still has doubts that "driving out" and "dispossessing" were terms used in the sense of "destroying," he should read Jephthah's message to the kings who were disputing the Israelite right to the land that was taken from the Amorites who had been ruled by king Sihon.

***Judges 11:19-24** "Then Israel sent messengers to Sihon king of the Amorites, who ruled in Heshbon, and said to him, 'Let us pass through your country to our own place.' 20 Sihon, however, did not trust Israel to pass through his territory. He mustered all his men and encamped at Jahaz and fought with Israel. 21 Then Yahweh, the God of Israel, gave Sihon and all his men into Israel's hands, and they defeated them. Israel took over all the land of the Amorites who lived in that country, 22 capturing all of it from the Arnon to the Jabbok and from the desert to the Jordan. 23 Now since the Yahweh, the God of Israel, has driven [dispossessed, KJV] the Amorites out before his people Israel, what right have you to take it over? 24 Will you not take what your god Chemosh gives you? Likewise, whatever Yahweh our God has given us, we will possess."*

Jephthah was obviously referring to the massacres of the Amorites described in the passages that I summarized above, but in describing the outcome of those battles, he said that Yahweh had "driven out" or "dispossessed" the Amorites, so here is more proof that "dispossession" in the biblical sense often conveyed the sense of taking ownership of land after the earlier owners had been killed. Mr. Miller's quibbles about terms like "drive out" or "subdue" or "dispossess" have no merit at all. The Bible clearly claims that the Israelites destroyed **totally** the peoples they conquered and "left nothing alive to breathe." He has yet to present anything that even remotely resembles a logical justification of those massacres.

Miller:

- Destruction words would indicate the consequences for those who stayed behind.

Till:

I have shown above that this was clearly not the case. When the Canaanites fled from the Israelites they were pursued and **totally destroyed**, but for the sake of argument, let's just suppose that Yahweh's orders to destroy totally the Canaanites referred only to "the consequences for those who stayed behind." Where is the morality in acts of taking peoples land, homes, cities, vineyards, wells, etc. by force? Where is the morality in killing children and babies who by necessity would have had to remain with their parents who did choose to stay behind?

Miller:

- What then is the mix of these two sets of words? The "Dispossession" words outnumber the "Destruction" words by 3-to-1!

Till:

But I have repeatedly shown that Mr. Miller has tried to distort the intended meaning of the "dispossession" words, because consideration of the complete contexts in which they were used clearly shows that they referred to acts of "driving out" or "subduing" or "dispossessing" through the **total destruction** of the Canaanite people.

Miller:

- This would indicate that the dominant 'intended effect' was for the peoples in the Land *to migrate somewhere else*.

Till:

I analyzed enough passages above that anyone who really wants to see the truth about what the Bible teaches on this subject will have no difficulty seeing that the "intended effect" of Yahweh's commands was the **utter destruction** of the Canaanite people who were living in the land that the Israelites wanted to grab for themselves. Mr. Miller is straining to find some way to put a moral spin on the Yahwistic massacres and just can't find a way to do it.

Miller:

- So, consider Deut 12.29: *The LORD your God will cut off before you the nations you are about to invade and dispossess. But **when you have driven them out and settled in their land**, 30 and after they have been destroyed before you,*

be careful not to be ensnared by inquiring about their gods, saying, "How do these nations serve their gods? We will do the same."

Till:

It's amazing how Mr. Miller can't seem to see what is right in front of his eyes. The very passage he quoted said that "(t)he LORD your God will **cut off** before you the nations you are about to invade and dispossess," but doesn't he know that "cut off" to the Hebrews meant "to kill"? The word used here was *karath*, which was used in the sense of "destroy" or "consume." That *karath* [cut off] meant to destroy or kill in Hebrew can be shown by looking at Mr. Miller's own quoted proof texts about "detestable things." He quoted Leviticus 18, which listed a whole array of abominations, many of them sexual acts that involved adultery, incest, and bestiality. After listing them, verse 29 warned that "Everyone who does any of these detestable things--such persons must be **cut off** from their people." Some have tried to make this mean only that the offenders would be cut off socially from Hebrew society, but that it didn't mean this can be seen when this passage is compared to chapter 20, which listed many of the same offenses and warned that those who did these things would be put to death ([Lev. 20:1-16,20,27](#)). In other words, [Leviticus 18:8,29](#) said that anyone who had sexual relations with his father's wife must be "cut off from [his] people," but [Leviticus 20:11](#) said that the one who committed this offense "must be put to death." [Leviticus 18:20,29](#) said that the one who had sexual relations with his neighbor's wife must be "cut off from [his] people," but [Leviticus 20:10](#) decreed death for the same offense. A comparison of these two chapters will show that "cut off" was the penalty ordered in chapter 18, whereas chapter 20 decreed death for the same offenses. It is rather evident then that "cut off" to the Hebrews meant death.

When the passage that Mr. Miller quoted above said that Yahweh would "cut off" the nations that the Israelites were about to invade and "dispossess," it obviously meant that they would be cut off in the sense that they would be killed. Even Mr. Miller's own proof text bears out that this was what "cut off" meant, because the verse went on to say, "when you have **driven them out and settled in their land**, and after **they have been destroyed** before you," be careful that you don't worship their gods, so the longer Mr. Miller goes, the more he proves himself that terms like "driving out" and "dispossessing" were just other ways of referring to the **total** destruction that the Bible claims that Yahweh had decreed for the Canaanites.

Miller:

- Let's look at a few examples of the "dispossession" words.
 - From the *garasl* group ("drive out"):

- **Ex 23:28-30:** *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,... Little by little I will drive them out before you"*

Till:

I analyzed the full context of this passage earlier and compared it to other texts to show that "driving out" was used to convey the idea of dispossession by killing and showed that those other passages claim that when the Canaanites turned and ran, the Israelites pursued them and killed them. This rebuttal is already too long, so there is no need for me to rehash all of those comparisons here.

Miller:

- **Ex 23.31-33:** *"I will hand over to you the people who live in the land and you will drive them out before you. 32 Do not make a covenant with them or with their gods. 33 Do not let them live in your land,"*
- **Ex 33.2:** *"I will send an angel before you and drive out the Canaanites...."*
- **Deut 33.27:** *" He will drive out your enemy before you, saying, 'Destroy him!'"*

Till:

Mr. Miller is doing nothing here but confirming what I have now pointed out umpteen times earlier. Expressions like "handing over," "delivering up," "subduing," "defeating," etc. in reference to the Canaanite nations were used to convey their destruction, so there is no need for me to repeat those rebuttals here. Even Mr. Miller's own proof texts betray his attempt to put a pretty face on the Yahwistic massacres, because the last text that he quoted above said that "(h)e [Yahweh] will drive out your enemy before you, saying, '**Destroy him!** What part of "destroy" does Mr. Miller not understand? This text obviously shows that "driving out" the Canaanites was simply another way of saying that they were to be destroyed.

Miller:

- [Notice that this word is used to describe the Pharaoh [sic] 'driving out' the Israelites--obviously not annihilating them!--in [Exodus 6.1](#): *" "Now you will see what I will do to Pharaoh: Because of my mighty hand he will let them go; because of my mighty hand he will **drive them out** of his country."* and by Balak trying to drive Israel away in [Numbers 22:6,11](#).]

Till:

Yes, the same word was used in reference to Pharaoh's "driving out" the Israelites, but there is a huge contextual difference in its usage here: the passage did not continue with any kind of indication that Pharaoh would drive the Israelites out by killing or destroying them, but I have analyzed passage after passage above to show that when Yahweh ordered the "driving out" or "defeating" or "subduing" of the Canaanites, he almost invariably went on to indicate that he meant for them to be destroyed **totally**. Mr. Miller seems not to understand that words in a language often have more than one meaning and that context is what determines how these words are being used. In English, for example, "take care of" often means "to attend to" or "provide for," but the term can be used in ways that give it a more sinister meaning. If a mobster upset by a former gang member who has been snitching on him should say to one of his underlings, "I expect you to take care of him." The underling certainly wouldn't think that the boss was telling him to provide for the needs of the snitch. He would know that he had just received orders to kill the snitch. Likewise, if the mob boss said to the underling, "I expect you to shut him up," he would know that he had just received orders to kill the snitch, even though "shut up" can be used in senses that have nothing to do with killing. If Mr. Miller will check a thesaurus, he will see that *kill* has various synonyms like *waste*, *polish off*, *take for a ride*, *bump off*, etc., all of which are terms that could be used in contexts that have nothing to do with killing. What Mr. Miller needs to do is find biblical passages in which "driving out" was used in reference to the Canaanites in contexts that clearly meant that the Israelites were simply expelling the Canaanites to relocate them in other lands, but he accomplishes nothing by citing passages like the one in reference to Pharaoh where "driving out" was used in a context entirely different from those that clearly indicated that driving out the Canaanites meant utterly destroying them.

As for Mr. Miller's second example above, I am not so sure that "drive out" in Numbers 22:6,11 merely mean to expel from the land.

Numbers 22:6 The Moabites said to the elders of Midian, "This horde is going to lick up everything around us, as an ox licks up the grass of the field." So Balak son of Zippor, who was king of Moab at that time, 5 sent messengers to summon Balaam son of Beor, who was at Pethor, near the River, in his native land. Balak said: "A people has come out of Egypt; they cover the face of the land and have settled next to me. 6 Now come and put a curse on these people, because they are too powerful for me. Perhaps then I will be able to **defeat them and drive them out of the country**. For I know that those you bless are blessed, and those you curse are cursed...." 10 Balaam said to God, "Balak son of Zippor, king of Moab, sent me this message: 11 'A people that has come out of Egypt covers the face of the land. Now come and put a curse on them for me. Perhaps then I will be able to fight them and drive them away.'"

Balak was superstitiously trying to hire Balaam to pronounce a curse on the Israelites, hoping that the curse would enable him to "defeat" and "drive out" the Israelites. Obvious reference was made to battlefield confrontation here, so just as the terms when used in reference to Israelites defeating and driving out Canaanites meant to destroy them **totally**, the same could be true here. There just isn't enough context to tell, but there is more than enough contexts to determine that "defeat" and "drive out" were used to mean the total destruction of the Canaanites.

Miller:

- The *yaras* group ("dispossess"):
 - **Ex 24.34:** *"I will drive out nations before you and enlarge your territory,"*

Till:

There are only 18 verses in Exodus 24, so I think that Mr. Miller inadvertently reversed the chapter and verse. [Exodus 34:24](#) appears to be the verse Miller was citing, to which I need say nothing more than what I have already said umpteen times earlier: the expression "drive out" was used in various contexts where it obviously meant the complete destruction of the Canaanites.

Miller:

- **Num 33.52f:** *"drive out all the inhabitants of the land before you. Destroy all their carved images and their cast idols, and demolish all their high places. 53 Take possession of the land and settle in it,"*
- **Deut 4.38:** *"to drive out before you nations greater and stronger than you and to bring you into their land to give it to you for your inheritance, as it is today."*
- **Deut 9.3,4,5:** *"And you will drive them out and annihilate them quickly... After the LORD your God has driven them out before you... the LORD your God will drive them out before you"*
- **Deut 11.23:** *"then the LORD will drive out all these nations before you, and you will dispossess nations larger and stronger than you."*
- **Deut 18.12:** *"because of these detestable practices the LORD your God will drive out those nations before you."*

Till:

What I have said and said and said and said earlier applies here too. There are too many contexts where "drive out" was obviously used in the sense of killing and destroying to accept the spin that Mr. Miller is trying to put onto it in passages that referred to "driving out" Canaanites. In fact, the broader context of one of the very

passages that he cited above clearly shows that "drive out" was used in the sense of *annihilate*.

Deuteronomy 9:3 But be assured today that Yahweh your God is the one who goes across ahead of you like a devouring fire. **He will destroy them; he will subdue them before you. And you will drive them out and annihilate them quickly, as Yahweh has promised you.**

Nothing has changed since I analyzed this verse earlier. First, the text said that Yahweh will **destroy** them. Then it said that he would "subdue" them and that the Israelites would "drive them out," and **annihilate them**. As I have now pointed out more times than I could estimate, the terms "defeat," "subdue," and "drive out" were used interchangeably over and over with words like "destroy" and "annihilate."

Miller:

- The *salah* group ("send away")
 - **Lev 18.24:** "because this is how the nations that I am going to drive out before you became defiled. 25 Even the land was defiled; so I punished it for its sin, and the land vomited out its inhabitants."
 - **Lev 20.23:** "You must not live according to the customs of the nations I am going to drive out before you."

Till:

Well, at least Mr. Miller has cited here two passages that haven't already been analyzed to death. Usage of the word *shâlach* was comparatively limited in Old Testament passages concerned with Israelite attacks on Canaanites, but when it was so used, it was translated "cast out" in the KJV, as in the two Levitical passages quoted above. The NIV, which Mr. Miller consistently quotes, translated it "drive out," so apparently it was a synonym to *yaresh* [drive out] when used in that sense, and I have already analyzed several passages where *yaresh* [drive out] was used in contexts that obviously meant that the Canaanites were "driven out" by **totally** destroying them. Despite the limited usage of *shâlach* in reference to Israelite attacks, there are enough other texts to show that this word could be used to mean casting out in the sense of exterminating. Mr. Miller cited the only two passages in the Pentateuch where this word was used in reference to the nations in Canaan, but there is a Psalm that uses it in reference to the "casting" out of the nations.

Psalm 44:1 We have heard with our ears, O God; our fathers have told us what you did in their days, in days long ago. 2 With your hand you drove out the nations and planted our fathers; you crushed the peoples and made our fathers flourish [**shâlach**].

I have found no reason why the NIV version translated *shâlach* to mean *flourish*, because other versions convey the sense of "casting out."

The KJV and NKJV, for example, used "cast out," but regardless of how it is translated, the broader context shows that it was being used in the same sense as *yaresh* [drive out] in the various passages analyzed above. Just as they were "driven out" in the sense of being **totally** destroyed, the Canaanites were "cast out" in the same way. The context of Psalm 44:1-2 bears that out, because it tells of Yahweh's having "driven out" [*yaresh*] the nations and "crushed the peoples." That certainly doesn't sound as if Yahweh had just "sent way" the Canaanites into other lands, and usage of *shâlach* in other places will show that it could convey the meaning of "casting out" in the sense of killing or destroying.

Jeremiah 15:1 Then Yahweh said to me: "Even if Moses and Samuel were to stand before me, my heart would not go out to this people. Send them away [*shâlach*] from my presence! Let them go! 2 And if they ask you, 'Where shall we go?' tell them, 'This is what Yahweh says: "Those destined for death, to death; those for the sword, to the sword; those for starvation, to starvation; those for captivity, to captivity.'" 3 "I will send four kinds of destroyers against them," declares Yahweh, "the sword to kill and the dogs to drag away and the birds of the air and the beasts of the earth to devour and destroy."

"Casting away" [*shâlach*] did at times convey the sense of death and destruction, so in view of the numerous passages analyzed earlier in which "defeat," "subdue," "drive away," "dispossess," etc. were used in contexts that conveyed the sense of killing and destroying the Canaanites, there is no reason to think that *shâlach* did not have this meaning in the two verses that Mr. Miller quoted above from Leviticus.

Jeremiah 28:15 Then the prophet Jeremiah said to Hananiah the prophet, "Listen, Hananiah! Yahweh has not sent you, yet you have persuaded this nation to trust in lies. 16 Therefore, this is what Yahweh says: 'I am about to remove [*shâlach*] you from the face of the earth. This very year **you are going to die**, because you have preached rebellion against Yahweh.'" 17 In the seventh month of that same year, **Hananiah the prophet died.**

Here is a biblical example where the word *shâlach* was used in the sense of dying. In view of the numerous passages that referred to "wiping out," "defeating," "subduing," and "driving out" Canaanites by **totally destroying** them and leaving none of them alive to breathe, there is no reason at all to think that Mr. Miller's two verses in Leviticus that referred to "casting out the nations" didn't convey the same meaning.

Miller:

This is striking--it looks more like God is planning on "moving" a nation, than on "destroying a people"...

Till:

There is nothing at all "striking" about it for reasons that I have noted and noted and renoted above. If Mr. Miller wants to see something really striking, he should read the numerous Old Testament passages that depicted Yahweh as a barbarous god who ordered the Israelites, over and over, to destroy **totally** the Canaanites and to **leave no one alive to breathe**. Then he should compare the biblical passages that refer to the massacres of non-Hebraic people to the contemporary literature of surrounding nations, which like [the Moabite Stone](#) and [inscriptions on pavement stones](#) at the temple of Urta in Nimrud will show that people living in those times routinely massacred entire civilian populations after conquering cities, and thought that they were doing what their gods wanted them to do. Principles of morality have obviously evolved over the centuries, and although I doubt that he would ever admit it, Mr. Miller is trying to arrest its evolution and keep morality on the level of what it was in the primitive, superstitious era of biblical times.

Miller:

Let's see if the evidence continues to support this...

Till:

The "evidence" that we will see consists of quotations from authors, who, like Mr. Miller and almost all biblical inerrantists, lean over backwards to try to explain away the problem of Yahwistic immorality in the Old Testament.

Miller:

Notice in some of the above passages that 'destruction' images are mixed with 'dispossession' images. How can these be reconciled?!

Till:

I have shown above, repeatedly, how they can be reconciled as far as consistency is concerned. When a passage that speaks of "dispossession" or "driving out" or "casting out" goes on to speak of the utter destruction of those who were being "dispossessed," then we can know that "dispossession" was obviously being used as a euphemistic synonym for destruction. I showed above how terms like *take care of*, *waste*, *polish off*, *bump off*, etc., which usually convey no sense of killing can be used to mean kill. The context is what determines the meaning, and I have shown that Mr. Miller's "dispossession" words were used over and over in contexts that conveyed a sense of **total** destruction.

Miller:

The answer comes in recognizing the intent of the 'punishment'. [sic] God was destroying a culture and its carriers--not necessarily all the individuals in it. **Roughly, it was the 'nations' that were destroyed, and it was the 'individuals' who were driven out.** With the national and cultic centers destroyed (along with the staunchest, die-hard defenders of that culture inside those cities), the culture would simply dissipate and evaporate in the Land. As **other** cultures absorbed individual Canaanite families and groups, the Canaanite cultural depravity would not have had the critical mass to perpetuate itself. [Remember, Canaanite was a 'bad word' in the ANE.] The culture would have simply "died from starvation". [sic]

Till:

Mr. Miller has been citing passage after passage that used words like "defeat" or "drive out" or "cast out," etc. to try to support his claim that Yahweh didn't really want to destroy the Canaanites; he just wanted them to "migrate" to other lands. In everything that he said above, however, he didn't cite a single passage of scripture to support it. He simply asserted it. He could only assert this, of course, because he had no scriptural evidence to cite in support of it.

His claim that any Canaanite remnants left in the land would be "absorbed" by other cultures is contrary to observable reality and biblical examples of Canaanite cultures that survived long after the Israelite conquest of the "promised land." Just look at the many Indian cultures in North and South America that still exist today despite the dominant European cultures that took the land of these tribes from them. In Southwestern France and Northern Spain, the Basque culture still exists centuries after their land was taken over by France and Spain. In Southern Turkey and Northern Iraq, the Kurdish culture still flourishes even though their land has been partitioned between two countries. The languages of the Kurds, Basques, Navajos, Mayans, etc. have also survived along with their cultural habits, so Mr. Miller's claim above is contrary to reality.

It is also contrary to what the Bible says about Canaanite groups that managed to survive long after the Israelite conquest. When David ordered a census, Joab including "the cities of the Hivites and the Canaanites" in his tallies ([2 Sam. 24:7](#)). When Solomon began work on the temple, he conscripted several Canaanite groups as forced laborers.

1 Kings 9:20 All the people left from the Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites (these peoples were not Israelites), 21 that is, their descendants remaining

in the land, whom the Israelites could not exterminate --these Solomon conscripted for his slave labor force, as it is to this day.

These groups were apparently distinctive enough that they could be ethnically identified, so obviously they had not been "absorbed" into the Israelite culture even after almost five centuries. Even after the Babylonian captivity, the Bible spoke of Canaanite groups still in the land with whom the Israelites were intermarrying.

***Ezra 9:1** After these things [offering of sacrifices by "the children of the captivity"] had been done, the leaders came to me and said, "The people of Israel, including the priests and the Levites, have not kept themselves separate from the neighboring peoples with their detestable practices, like those of the Canaanites, Hittites, Perizzites, Jebusites, Ammonites, Moabites, Egyptians and Amorites. 2 They have taken some of their daughters as wives for themselves and their sons, and have mingled the holy race with the peoples around them. And the leaders and officials have led the way in this unfaithfulness."*

So this passage is saying the opposite of what Mr. Miller claimed above. Instead of having been "absorbed" by the conquering culture, the Canaanite groups had managed to survive to the point of exercising negative influences on the Israelites. So much for Miller's first piece of "evidence," which in reality was nothing more than an unsupported assertion.

The Old Testament obviously taught in various places that Yahweh ordered the Israelites to destroy TOTALLY the Canaanites and to leave no one alive to breathe, and there is just no way that Mr. Miller can make the Old Testament not say what it plainly does say.

Miller:

And with Canaan, this might have been the only way to do this--cf. [ECIAT:192-193](#):

"In Canaan, however, it was at once realized by the Egyptians that native political institutions could not be easily replaced, as they partook of a degree of sophistication (thanks to their origin among the Amorites of North Syria and Mesopotamia) comparable with that of Egypt itself."

The Canaanite culture was strong and proved to be powerful in working against Israel from **within**.

Till:

What Mr. Miller just said is completely contrary to what he had said before this. He

first indicated that Yahweh just wanted to expel the Canaanites from the land to put an end to their culture, but now he is saying that the Canaanite culture "was strong and proved to be powerful in working against Israel from within." So which was it? Did the Israelites destroy the Canaanite culture by driving these people off to other lands, or did they find that their culture was too strong to get rid of?

Anyway, Mr. Miller conveniently neglected to mention here that the omniscient, omnipotent Yahweh presumably fought with the Israelites. This was claimed so many times in the Old Testament that space won't permit me to quote all of them.

Exodus 14:13 Moses answered the people, "Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance Yahweh will bring you today. The Egyptians you see today you will never see again. 14 **Yahweh will fight for you; you need only to be still.**"

Joshua 10:14 There has never been a day like it before or since, a day when Yahweh listened to a man. **Surely Yahweh was fighting for Israel!**

Joshua 10:42 All these kings and their lands Joshua conquered in one campaign, **because Yahweh, the God of Israel, fought for Israel.**

Joshua 23:3 You yourselves have seen everything Yahweh your God has done to all these nations for your sake; **it was Yahweh your God who fought for you.**

I could drag this out indefinitely, but why bother? The Bible clearly teaches that Yahweh fought for the Israelites during their invasion of Canaan, so here is a simple question for Mr. Miller: if an omniscient, omnipotent deity fought for the Israelites, how were the Canaanites able to stand against them and survive? Doesn't Mr. Miller ever think before he posts such stuff as this to "explain" why some Canaanites managed to survive the Israelite onslaught? There is just no logical way to explain how finite Canaanites could have prevailed over an infinitely powerful deity fighting for the Israelites. That Mr. Miller would resort to such as this merely underscores just how desperate he is to find some way to defend the deplorable morality of the Hebrew god Yahweh.

Miller:

We have an interesting piece of data to support this approach, in the account of the "destruction" of the Amorite country of Og (Num 21.31ff):

*After Moses had sent spies to Jazer, the Israelites **captured its surrounding settlements and drove out the Amorites who were there.** 33 Then they turned and went up along the road toward Bashan, and Og king of Bashan and his whole army*

marched out to meet them in battle at Edrei. 34 The LORD said to Moses, "Do not be afraid of him, for I have handed him over to you, with his whole army and his land. Do to him what you did to Sihon king of the Amorites, who reigned in Heshbon." 35 So they struck him down, together with his sons and his whole army, leaving them no survivors. And they took possession of his land.

Notice that the Amorites in the villages (i.e. surrounding settlements in v.32 were 'driven out'; but the royal bloodline and national army were destroyed in v.35).

Till:

How many times will I have to show Mr. Miller that when **all** biblical references to the defeat of Og king of Bashan are considered, they show that the Israelites completely destroyed these people and left none alive? Notice first of all that Mr. Miller's own proof text says that Yahweh told Moses to do to Og "what you did to Sihon king of the Amorites." Well, what did Moses do to Sihon?

Deuteronomy 2:26** From the desert of Kedemoth I sent messengers to Sihon king of Heshbon offering peace and saying, 27 "Let us pass through your country. We will stay on the main road; we will not turn aside to the right or to the left. 28 Sell us food to eat and water to drink for their price in silver. Only let us pass through on foot--29 as the descendants of Esau, who live in Seir, and the Moabites, who live in Ar, did for us--until we cross the Jordan into the land Yahweh our God is giving us." 30 But Sihon king of Heshbon refused to let us pass through. For Yahweh your God had made his spirit stubborn and his heart obstinate in order to give him into your hands, as he has now done. 31 Yahweh said to me, "See, I have begun to deliver Sihon and his country over to you. Now begin to conquer and possess his land." 32 When Sihon and all his army came out to meet us in battle at Jahaz, 33 Yahweh our God delivered him over to us and we struck him down, together with his sons and his whole army. 34 **At that time we took all his towns and completely destroyed them--men, women and children. We left no survivors.

I analyzed this passage earlier, and now here it is again for Mr. Miller to see. This account of the Israelite defeat of Amorite territory ruled by Sihon said that after defeating Sihon's army, the Israelites went to his towns, **completely destroyed them**, including women and children and "**left no survivors**," so if Yahweh told Moses to do to Og as he had done to Sihon and if Moses did as Yahweh had commanded, the Israelites would have **totally** destroyed those Amorites too. If not, why not?

This, however, isn't all the biblical evidence I have to show that the Israelites also destroyed **totally** the Amorites ruled over by king Og. The account of this battle in

Deuteronomy is just as clear as the one quoted above about the total destruction of Sihon's subjects.

***Deuteronomy 3:1** Next we turned and went up along the road toward Bashan, and Og king of Bashan with his whole army marched out to meet us in battle at Edrei. 2 Yaheh said to me, "Do not be afraid of him, for I have handed him over to you with his whole army and his land. **Do to him what you did to Sihon king of the Amorites, who reigned in Heshbon.**" 3 So Yahweh our God also gave into our hands Og king of Bashan and all his army. We struck them down, leaving no survivors. 4 **At that time we took all his cities. There was not one of the sixty cities that we did not take from them--the whole region of Argob, Og's kingdom in Bashan.** 5 All these cities were fortified with high walls and with gates and bars, **and there were also a great many unwallled villages.** 6 **We completely destroyed them, as we had done with Sihon king of Heshbon, destroying every city--men, women and children.** 7 But all the livestock and the plunder from their cities we carried off for ourselves.*

This account of the Israelite conquest of Og's territory clearly claims that after the Israelites had defeated Og's army, they turned to his cities, conquered them all, and destroyed every city--men, women, and children. The passage went on to say that the Israelites didn't destroy just the people who lived in the cities but turned and did the same to those who lived in "unwallled villages." So much for the "interesting piece of data" that Mr. Miller thought he had found in Numbers 31 "to support this approach," *i. e.*, his claim that Yahweh's primary interest was to destroy the Amorite culture and not the Amorite people.

I just have to make a comment here. So many times, I have seen Christians refer to the websites of Mr. Miller and Robert Turkel as excellent sources of information to defend the Bible, but time and time again, I have found that both of these would-be apologists have only a superficial knowledge of the Bible. I recommend to both of them that they take the time to study--independently of what commentators think--the Bible itself enough to know what it says rather than depending so much on the "apologetic" works of writers whose primary goal is to present to their readers the traditional view that the Bible is "the inspired word of God." I don't want to believe that Mr. Miller has been intentionally dishonest. I prefer to believe that he does such things as cite his "interesting piece of data" above because he just doesn't know the Bible well enough to recognize that when text A says something, that account may well be incomplete and that other accounts of the same events may include information that shows, in this case, that Moses didn't just capture the towns and villages of king Og and then "drive out" or send its inhabitants to some other place but that he "drove them out" in the sense of **totally** destroying them.

Miller:

That this punishment was more 'national' shows up in the frequent mention of the word "nation(s)" in the passages, and the displacement image in Ps 44.2 is explicit: *With your hand you drove out the nations and planted our fathers...*

Till:

By coincidence, I quoted and analyzed [Psalm 44:2](#) above and [compared](#) it to [Jeremiah 15:1-3](#) and [28:15-17](#) to show that the word *shâlach* was sometimes used to convey the sense of "casting out" by killing or destroying. Mr. Miller continues to quibble against overwhelming evidence that the Old Testament in various places depicted Yahweh as a deity who ordered the Israelites to destroy **totally** the Canaanites and **to leave no one alive to breathe**.

Miller:

Migration was not that big of a deal in that time period--the peoples are generally classified into the "mobile" terminological groups: pastoral nomadism, semi-nomadism, transhumance [*sic*] nomadism, etc. Migration and movement was a fact and way of life.

Till:

All of this is certainly true, but what is Mr. Miller's evidence that the Canaanites at any time during the period of the Israelite conquest of Canaan "migrated" to other lands? If he thinks that this actually happened in some cases, why doesn't he cite evidence, either biblical or extrabiblical, that it did happen? Well, the answer to that is simple. He didn't because he has no such evidence.

Besides the lack of evidence to support Mr. Miller's position here, there is another problem with it. He needs to give us some kind of logical rationale that would morally justify the invasion of another country by people who want to run the inhabitants out of their land so that their abandoned homes, buildings, fields, vineyards, wells, etc., which would have been acquired at a huge cost of human labor, could be appropriated by the invaders. Mr. Miller speaks of "driving out" the Canaanites as if this would not have been "that big of a deal," but I suspect that he would view the situation entirely differently if he should find himself in a situation where he was the one being driven off property that he had worked to acquire.

Miller:

With a little notice, whole tribes could migrate in days.

Till:

Yeah, right! The passages that I last quoted above spoke of the walled and fortified cities of the Amorites, so are we supposed to believe that the Amorites could have

vacated these places and moved on within a matter of "days"? Furthermore, as I pointed out earlier, cities are built, vineyards grown, and wells dug at great expense in time and labor, so are we to think that people living in places so built would just up and leave because they had heard that some god called "Yahweh" wanted the Israelites to have their territory? Gods were as commonplace as dirt in those days, so what would be the likelihood that a people firmly entrenched in a territory would just pull up stakes and move on because they were hearing about some god called "Yahweh," who was helping the Israelites. Mr. Miller's line of "argumentation" at this point is showing an almost incredible naivety.

Miller:

The Canaanites had **decades** of notice--authenticated by the miracles of the Exodus--

Till:

Once again, Mr. Miller is assuming the historical accuracy [inerrancy] of the Old Testament, which spoke in several places of how word of what Yahweh had done for the Israelites had reached places like Moab, Edom, Jericho, etc. almost instantaneously, but there is no more reason to believe that this actually happened than there is to believe that exceptional claims in the Qur'an or the Book of Mormon are historically accurate. Let Mr. Miller first prove the existence of his god Yahweh, and then we can talk about the "decades" that the Canaanites allegedly had to high tail it out of their land.

Besides that problem, Mr. Miller needs to explain the morality of a god who would order and assist in "dispossessing" an entrenched people of the land and cities that they had worked to build. I own a house and property that I worked hard to acquire. What would be the morality of some god telling me that I had to pull up stakes, move on, and let someone else enjoy what I had worked to acquire. I don't heistate a moment to say that I am very glad that my standards of morality are significantly higher than Mr. Miller's.

Miller:

and any sane ones probably **did** leave before Israel got there.

Till:

Any sane ones probably did leave? What is Mr. Miller's evidence of this? I appreciate the way that he at least tries at time to support his claims with evidence, but the longer I work at replying to all of his points, the more I realize that his "apologetics" is just as superficial and simplistic as Robert Turkel's. He cited no evidence, biblical or extrabilbical, to support this claim for the simple reason that he has none.

Miller:

Abandoned city structures are common all over the ANE and Ancient Middle East from that period.

Till:

Well, of course, they are, and the cause of this was discussed in [this section](#) of Part Three of this series. The Ancient Near East at the time of many events mentioned in the Old Testament was experiencing unparalleled upheavals caused by dramatic climatic changes, which caused many people to abandon their former homes and move on to more friendly climates. When droughts were producing famines, the people affected by them had no choice except to abandon their land and homes and go elsewhere, but people didn't just pull up stakes and leave because of outsiders intruding on their territory. The natural inclination in that circumstance was to fight to protect their lands and homes, as the Amalekites, Amorites, and other Canaanites did in biblical stories we have already discussed. The migrations of that period also resulted in new ethnic groups moving in to occupied territories and taking land and cities by force when they could. In Part Three of this series, just before the section linked to above, I showed that the archaeological work of Joseph Callaway showed that some ancient cities in that area, like Jericho and Ai, had actually been destroyed long before the time that they were alleged overthrown by Joshua and his forces. The presence of such ruins and abandoned structures does nothing at all to support Mr. Miller's claim that the "sane" Canaanites got out while the getting was good. That proves only that the Israelites developed legends to explain the presence of those ruins.

Miller:

The amount of time God allowed to the residents to migrate was substantial--not only did they get the Exodus information quickly, they got the 40 years of wandering, and **even after** the Conquest begun [*sic*], the penetration into the villages and smaller districts was done 'little by little' (e.g. Deut 7.22), allowing even more time for simple villagers (and hence, not serious carriers of the culture--

Till:

Mr. Miller is now arguing as if it is an established fact that Yahweh's intentions toward the Canaanites was just to expel them to some other land, but I have presented overwhelming evidence that the intentions of the commands to the Israelites was to destroy the Canaanites **totally** and **to leave none of them alive to breathe**. As for the "quickness" with which the Canaanites received the news of the exodus, Mr. Miller introduced this claim in [Part Four](#) of this series, where I showed the absurdity of believing that the news of the Israelite crossing of the Red Sea could have reached Moab, Edom, Philistia (which didn't even exist then), and Canaan as quickly as the Bible claims. Mr. Miller's problem is that he continually argues from the assumption

of biblical inerrancy. The fact is that modern archaeologists have seriously questioned the historicity of the Bible's claim of an exodus from Egypt and a subsequent 40-year period in the wilderness of Sinai, so to make his case, Mr. Miller is going to have to do more than parrot what the Bible says. As I have asked before, if Mr. Miller were debating a Muslim, would he allow his opponent to argue from the assumption that whatever the Qur'an says has to be true?

As for Mr. Miller's reference again to [Deuteronomy 7:22](#) which said that Yahweh would drive out the Canaanite nations "little by little" so that the wild animals wouldn't take over the land, I have already shown that this text disagrees with [Deuteronomy 9:3](#), where Yahweh said that he would drive the Canaanite nations out "quickly."

*Deuteronomy 9:3 But be assured today that Yahweh your God is the one who goes across ahead of you like a devouring fire. He will **destroy them**; he will subdue them before you. And you will drive them out and **annihilate them quickly**, as Yahweh has promised you.*

As I asked before, which passage was right, the one that said that Yahweh would drive the nations out "little by little" or the one that said that he would drive them out "quickly"? They can't both be right, so this is just another example of inconsistency that readers should keep in mind when Mr. Miller tries to prove the Bible by quoting the Bible.

Miller:

[the penetration into the villages and smaller districts was done 'little by little' (e.g. Deut 7.22), allowing even more time for simple villagers (and hence, not serious carriers of the culture--)] mainly perpetuated by the urban 'elite' of the walled cities) to move north.

Till:

I assume that everyone noticed that Mr. Miller cited no evidence, either biblical or extrabiblical, to show that people in "the villages and smaller districts" moved north. This is just something that he asserted, without supporting evidence, as he has been doing throughout his article. I quoted above the broader contexts of [Deuteronomy 2:26-34](#) and [3:1-5](#), which described the Israelite conquests of the territories ruled by the Amorite kings Sihon and Og. These passages claim that the Israelites took all of their cities, towns, and "a great many unwalled villages," after which they **completely destroyed them--men, women, and children** and "left no survivors." A parallel description of the Israelite conquest of Sihon's territory in [Numbers 21:25](#) told of taking all of "the surrounding settlements" and dwelling in them, but if the account in Deuteronomy 2:26-24 is accurate, as Mr. Miller surely believes, then the Israelites "completely destroyed them—men, women, and children and left no survivors." None

of these texts said anything at all about the people in the "smaller districts" moving to the north. That scenario is just a figment of Mr. Miller's wishful thinking so that he can have a way to give some semblance of a reasonable explanation for Yahweh's commands to destroy **totally** the nations in Canaan.

That problem aside, Mr. Miller seems unaware that cultural changes almost always begin in cities and urban areas, whereas cultural traditions are more likely to be preserved in small towns, villages, and rural areas. To see this, one has only to look around at the differences in rural/small-town areas and urban centers here and elsewhere. The latter tend to be far more receptive to new ideas, whereas the former tend to stick to the old ways. Travelers, immigrants, and other outsiders go to cities in much greater numbers than to small towns and rural areas, so the people living in thinly populated regions have fewer reasons or opportunities to change their cultural habits, because people just aren't likely to adopt beliefs and lifestyles that they are never exposed to and may not even know exist. People living in urban areas, on the other hand, are constantly subjected to different cultural beliefs and habits, so they have to decide almost daily whether to keep what they have or adopt some of the foreign ways. This is why if one goes to so-called third-world countries, he will find acceptance of many modern ways in the cities but will think that time has stood still if he goes into villages that are relatively isolated from modern influences.

The survival of Native American cultures and languages illustrates how population density contributes to cultural change. If one wanted to study, say, the Navajo language and culture, he wouldn't go to Los Angeles, San Francisco, Chicago, or New York, where some of Navajo heritage no doubt live. He would go instead to the Navajo reservation in Arizona, where there are few towns of any size but over 200,000 Navajos living in hogans and small villages, preserving their language, songs, sandpainting and other art, jewelry, basketry, ritual ceremonies, etc. All of this survives in a rural part of the United States, because the people preserving this culture have less exposure to cultural modification than if they lived in heavily populated regions. In Central and South America, [Indian cultures](#) still survive in greater numbers than in North America, and that is because there are many more mountainous and jungle regions where they can live with minimal exposures to European cultures that transformed the Indian cultures in more densely populated parts of the continent. The present political situation in the United States bears out everything I have said above. We have a government that was put into place by a coalition of conservative rural cultures that favor fundamentalist religion, militaristic "patriotism," gun culture, anti-abortion, and subjugation of women, ideas that for the most part are minority views in urban areas. A map of the [red and blue areas of the country](#) without regard to state boundaries will show that people voted "blue" in urban areas like St. Louis, Kansas City, Miami, Denver, Albuquerque, Phoenix, Des Moines, Cincinnati, Dayton, Las

Vegas, Memphis, Little Rock, and several others, although these urban areas are located in so-called "red states." Likewise, the rural areas of "blue states" like Minnesota, Wisconsin, Illinois, Michigan, Pennsylvania, New York, California, Oregon, Washington, etc. voted "red." Since the candidate who won shamelessly pushed a religiously conservative agenda, which he probably doesn't personally believe entirely, the most reasonable conclusion to reach from these results is what I said above. People who live in small towns and rural areas tend to be more socially and religiously conservative than those who live in urban areas, so Mr. Miller's claim that the corrupt Canaanite culture thrived only in urban areas and that expulsion to the "north" of Canaanites living in "small villages" and districts would have resulted in the destruction of their culture seems contrary to observable realities, because these Canaanites in all probability would have been more fixed in their religious and social thinking than those who lived in larger towns and cities.

It appears, then, that Mr. Miller is grasping any straw in sight to try to find some way to make his god Yahweh a palatable deity.

Miller:

Israel never was able to "sneak up on anyone"--information flow was simply too good (cf. Rahab--[Josh 2.9ff](#); the kings of [Joshua 5](#); the Gibeonites of [Joshua 9](#); Balaam from Aram--[Num 23.7](#) with [24.8](#)).

Till:

Yes, we know that the Bible claims that news of the coming of the Israelites spread as swiftly as if they had had rapid means of communication like telegraphs, telephones, and radios, but we also know that the mere fact that the Bible says something is no guarantee that it is historically accurate. As I have been walking readers through Mr. Miller's long, drawn-out article, I have already given several examples of how biblical passages that he has used as proof texts are inconsistent with other parts of the Bible, so I am certainly not impressed when he argues that news of the Israelite exodus and wilderness ventures traveled rapidly to tribes and nations to the north with nothing to support that claim except that the Bible says so. Besides that problem, I ask everyone to notice that Mr. Miller has stated a universal negative above: Israel **never** was able to "sneak up on anyone." How does he know this? Even if we assume the historical accuracy of the five texts that he cited above, how would they prove that Israel **never** was able to sneak up on anyone?

The fact is that some accounts of Israelite attacks on Canaanites don't agree with Mr. Miller's universal negative.

Joshua 10:7 So Joshua marched up from Gilgal with his entire army, including all the best fighting men. 8 Yahweh said to Joshua, "Do not be afraid of them [the five

*Amorite kings of Jerusalem, Hebron, Jarmuth, Lachish, and Eglon]; I have given them into your hand. Not one of them will be able to withstand you." 9 After an all-night march from Gilgal, **Joshua took them by surprise.***

If Joshua took these armies by surprise, wouldn't that mean that he had been able to "sneak up on them"? If not, why not?

Joshua 11:6 *All these kings joined forces and made camp together at the Waters of Merom, to fight against Israel. 6 Yahweh said to Joshua, "Do not be afraid of them, because by this time tomorrow I will hand all of them over to Israel, slain. You are to hamstring their horses and burn their chariots." 7 So Joshua and his whole army came against them **suddenly** at the Waters of Merom and attacked them, 8 and Yahweh gave them into the hand of Israel. They defeated them and pursued them all the way to Greater Sidon, to Misrephoth Maim, and to the Valley of Mizpah on the east, **until no survivors were left.***

The word translated "suddenly" in this text is *pith'om*, the same word that was translated "by surprise" in the passage quoted above it, and it was so translated in the REB, GHB, CEV, NCV, ESV, HCSB, and the NAB, and the Jerusalem Bible says that Joshua "caught them unaware" by the Waters of Merom. Hence, we have two examples in Joshua where the Israelites were able to "sneak up on" Canaanite armies.

Tales of the Israelite conquest of Canaan continued into the book of Judges, where chapter 7 tells of Gideon's defeat of a Midianite/Amalekite army, which lay along the valley "like locusts for multitude" and "whose camels were without number as the sand is upon the seashore for multitude" ([Judges 7:12](#)). As this story was spun, after Gideon had sneaked into the enemy camp and overheard a man telling a dream that Gideon considered a good omen, he launched a surprise attack against this army and put it to flight with just 300 men.

Judges 7:13 *Gideon arrived just as a man was telling a friend his dream. "I had a dream," he was saying. "A round loaf of barley bread came tumbling into the Midianite camp. It struck the tent with such force that the tent overturned and collapsed." 14 His friend responded, "This can be nothing other than the sword of Gideon son of Joash, the Israelite. God has given the Midianites and the whole camp into his hands." 15 When Gideon heard the dream and its interpretation, he worshiped God. He returned to the camp of Israel and called out, "Get up! Yahweh has given the Midianite camp into your hands." 16 Dividing the three hundred men into three companies, he placed trumpets and empty jars in the hands of all of them, with torches inside. 17 "Watch me," he told them. "Follow my lead. When I get to the edge of the camp, do exactly as I do. 18 When I and all who are with me blow our trumpets, then from all around the camp blow yours and shout, 'For Yahweh and for*

Gideon." 19 Gideon and the hundred men with him reached the edge of the camp at the beginning of the middle watch, just after they had changed the guard. They blew their trumpets and broke the jars that were in their hands. 20 The three companies blew the trumpets and smashed the jars. Grasping the torches in their left hands and holding in their right hands the trumpets they were to blow, they shouted, "A sword for Yahweh and for Gideon!" 21 While each man held his position around the camp, all the Midianites ran, crying out as they fled. 22 When the three hundred trumpets sounded, Yahweh caused the men throughout the camp to turn on each other with their swords. The army fled to Beth Shittah toward Zererah as far as the border of Abel Meholah near Tabbath. 23 Israelites from Naphtali, Asher and all Manasseh were called out, and they pursued the Midianites. 24 Gideon sent messengers throughout the hill country of Ephraim, saying, "Come down against the Midianites and seize the waters of the Jordan ahead of them as far as Beth Barah." So all the men of Ephraim were called out and they took the waters of the Jordan as far as Beth Barah. 25 They also captured two of the Midianite leaders, Oreb and Zeeb. They killed Oreb at the rock of Oreb, and Zeeb at the winepress of Zeeb. They pursued the Midianites and brought the heads of Oreb and Zeeb to Gideon, who was by the Jordan.

So once again I have caught Mr. Miller claiming something that is contrary to biblical facts. Despite the unlikely biblical claim that news of the Israelite exploits spread like wildfire throughout the regions, there are some stories of surprise attacks that they launched on Canaanite armies. Readers should keep this in mind the next time they read something in Mr. Miller's articles that presumably solves a biblical discrepancy.

At this point, Mr. Miller shifted to a quote-the-authorities approach to try to prove his claim that Yahweh didn't really intend to destroy the Canaanites; he just wanted to expel them to other lands. He apparently doesn't realize an obvious fact that I have repeated several times in my replies to Robert Turkel, who has to be the chief guru of this method of "apologetics": **there is no religious position for which an advocate of it cannot find books and articles by the dozens who agree with it.** In the case of the issue now being discussed, the morality of the Hebrew god's commands to destroy **totally** the Canaanites and to leave none of them alive to breathe has long been a source of embarrassment to biblical apologists, so it is not at all surprising that Mr. Miller has been able to find books and articles that, like him, have tried to rationalize these atrocities into sensible moral principles. Mr. Miller, of course, goes on and on and on in his quotations of these "authorities," so to keep my replies from dragging out endlessly, I am going to post this fifth part and continue my replies in a sixth part, which I will link readers to after it is completed. Go to [Part Six](#).