

## The Extermination of the Canaanites

The Canaanites were a group of people who lived in ancient Canaan along the east coast of the Mediterranean Sea known today as Israel. The name *Canaanite* was also used in a general way to refer to these ten nations. Sometimes the Amorites were named in the same way. These people were so evil that Yahweh commanded their extermination specifically in the books of Deuteronomy and Joshua. The question at the heart of this topic is how an all-loving God could command the extermination of the Canaanites and have Israel carry it out, as recorded in the books of Joshua and Judges. The reality is that this topic is perhaps one of the most difficult issues in the Bible to understand, justify, and digest. The point of this discussion is not to provide a complete and satisfactory answer, for there is so much we do not understand about this time period, and it is genuinely an emotionally difficult concept to reconcile. I do not know if sinners—who do not fully understand the righteousness, justice, and greater all-encompassing will of Yahweh—will ever be able to comprehend fully or accept the answer the Bible gives for this issue. The point, instead, is to give insight that is never discussed by those who attack Christianity over this issue.

The commands about how Israel was to conduct themselves in war with the surrounding nations appear in two major passages—Deut. 7:1-6, 17-26 and 20:10-18. The first states that the Canaanites were to be handed over to destruction. The “handing over” reinforces the command that the Israelites were to make no treaties, show no mercy, and not intermarry with the Canaanites. In the second, the law states that Israel was to attack other nations outside the land of Canaan only if they were attacked first. They were to first offer peace, and if the nation refused, they could kill only the adult males, while women, children, animals, and spoils may be taken as plunder.

Yet the text makes it clear that this second law did not apply to those living in Canaan. From the very beginning, Yahweh made it clear that the Canaanites were distinct from all the other nations. There were not distinct just because they worshiped other gods or were sinful, for that was true of all the nations, including the Israelites at times. What made them distinct was the extent of their sin, their cultural approval of their sin and rebellion, and their unwillingness to relent or repent of their evil.

### The Reason for the Extermination

First it must be understood that the extermination of the Canaanites had nothing to do with race, religion, or land. It had everything to do with the judgment of a people for their sins. Yahweh did not command Israel to exterminate the Canaanites because they were a different race. In fact, the Canaanite people were Semitic just like the Israelites.

Nor did Yahweh command Israel to exterminate everyone who did not convert to Judaism. There were only ten nations specifically marked for destruction (Deut. 7:1). Three of the ten were dealt with before Israel entered the land of Canaan, leaving seven after they entered the land. Yahweh made it clear that Israel was not allowed to attack any of the other nations unless the other nation attacked first (Deut. 20). And even then they were only to drive them back, not destroy them.

Israel was never commanded in the Bible to kill the Canaanites merely to take control of the land. Rather, Yahweh made it clear that the Canaanite people were being destroyed for their sin.

The land that was then vacant after the conquest was to be given to Israel as a blessing for their obedience, but if they sinned as Canaan had, then they too would lose the land.

The reason Yahweh repeatedly gives for the extermination of the Canaanites is that it is their judgment for their sin and rebellion against Him (Gen. 15:16; 18:20-21; Lev. 18:20-30; Deut. 7:3-4; 9:4-5). The Canaanites, as a whole culture, committed sins of idolatry, holy temple prostitution, adultery, homosexuality, incest, murder, bestiality, gang rape, and child sacrifice (see *The Nature of the Canaanites' Sin* excursus on page 8). Though other cultures also participated in some of these practices, it was the widespread involvement and acceptance of these sins that brought the Canaanites under Yahweh's judgment. These sins exist in every culture, then and now, but are forbidden by most governments and are socially condemned by the majority of people in the culture. However, in Canaanite culture these sins were pretty much universally practiced and accepted because this is what their gods were like. Not only did they declare these acts as righteous morality, but they also participated in these acts in the worship of their gods as a means of gaining the gods' approval.

Most readers can understand the men being killed, but Yahweh's command of the death of the women and children is much harder to understand. The women were killed because they participated in the violence, child sacrifices, bestiality, and sexual immorality just as much as the men did. The women would often fight in battles and participate with the men in the cutting off of their enemies' heads and hands. They would often seduce men from other villages so that their men could kill them (Judg. 16:4-22). They also willingly offered their own children as a burnt sacrifice. The idea that women are more righteous or less sinful is a modern-day myth.

The destruction of the children is much harder to understand. There is a concept known as generational sin, wherein a child will become like his parents not only because he was raised under their instruction and example, but also because he came genetically from those parents. There are certainly exceptions, but they are the exceptions. We already know that certain people are more genetically predisposed to alcoholism and other addictive tendencies; scientists are even trying to find a "gay gene." Ultimately, this question can be answered only when one comes to understand that Yahweh is good and that a God who is willing to die for us—even for the Canaanites—is a God who can be trusted with where babies and children go when they die.

Also, this language of killing everyone may have been hyperbolic and reserved for the main political and military cities in which, by nature, all the women and children there would be more corrupt simply because of where they lived. This is seen in the fact that only the main cities are listed as being defeated in the book of Joshua. To that point, Yahweh commanded the Israelites to not intermarry with the Canaanites, which seems odd if they were all supposed to be destroyed.

The main focus of Deut. 7:1-4 does not seem to be focused on the sole extermination of the Canaanites but on the theological principle of separation from the Canaanites and protection of the Israelites from their influence. Why prohibit intermarriage if they were to be completely wiped out? Destroying a people is not the main point; rather, remaining loyal to Yahweh and the covenant is the focus.<sup>1</sup> Yahweh was not interested just in punishing sin but in maintaining the righteous purity of His people. Yahweh wanted the lives of His people and their worship to remain completely pure. The extermination of the Canaanites had to do with removing all

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<sup>1</sup> See Daniel Hawk. *Daniel in 3D*, pp. 71-72

influence of the idolatry of immoral gods and practices that would corrupt the lives of the Israelites and lead to perverted and dysfunctional culture. Even when Israel went into battle they were commanded to consecrate themselves (Josh. 7:13) and to destroy all the idols (Deut. 12:3). Most of Josh. 6 is devoted to the sacred ceremonial rituals. This kind of ritual cleansing before battle is not seen in the surrounding cultures. There were many things in the cities that were to be devoted to Yahweh (Josh. 6:17-21), and even the things the people were allowed to keep were to be cleansed first with fire or water in the tabernacle. The overriding concern in all the episodes was remaining holy, found in Yahweh's demand for holiness, obedience, and purity of worship.

For whatever reason, Yahweh chose to use Israel as His tool of judgment in the same way He had used the flood (Gen. 6), plagues (Ex. 7-14), and other empires (2 Kgs. 17:7-23; 24:20-25:30). Yahweh gave Israel the land of Canaan as a reward for their obedience to Him but not because He was playing favorites. In fact, he made it clear that Israel, too, would be judged and would lose the land if they committed the same sins (Deut. 7:4, 7-11; 9:4-6; 13:16; 29:16-29; Josh. 7; 2 Kgs. 17; Amos 1-2).

When Achan stole from Yahweh after the defeat of Jericho (Josh. 7:10-15), Yahweh made it clear that all of Israel had sinned, and He punished Israel by allowing them to be defeated by the Canaanites in the same way they were now defeating the Canaanites. Josh 7:11 shows the seriousness of the situation. Israel had "sinned," "violated" Yahweh's covenant, "taken" some of the devoted things, "stolen," "lied," and put things among their own possessions. This shows that Israel themselves were now "a thing for destruction." But they would no longer be thus when their sin had been dealt with. This idea continues in the book of Judges with the many different foreign nations, including the Canaanites, that Yahweh allowed to oppress Israel for their sins of idolatry and social injustice.

Later Israel did commit the same sins as the Canaanites, and Yahweh took them into exile as judgment, as He said He would. He used another nation to do it just as He had used Israel to judge the Canaanites (2 Kgs. 17:7-23; 24:20-25:30). This fact makes it very clear that the extermination of the Canaanites had everything to do with the righteous justice of Yahweh and nothing else.

Yahweh did not take pleasure in the extermination of the Canaanites. When one reads records of the other nations' conquests, they are self-glorifying and graphic. They describe their conquests in great detail and brag about how they subjugated and destroyed other people groups. They describe their mutilation of people and stacking the people's heads in a self-glorification of their superiority. In contrast, the Bible gives very little detail of Israel's battles, and the killing of the people is stated merely as a fact (Num. 21:21-35; Josh. 5:13-6:27; 8:1-29; 10-12). There is never a glorification of the battle, only a record of its accomplishment. This is unlike any other records of battles from the nations of the ancient world.

As a righteous God, Yahweh cannot tolerate such sin and evil in His creation. And even though He is a merciful and longsuffering God, there is a point where, for the sake of His holiness and the good of others in His creation, He must punish evil. No one would want to live and raise their children in a culture like this. We would expect these people to be imprisoned or punished for the security of our families. In a world of no police or prisons, few options existed for dealing justly with these kinds of evils. (Not like modern cultures have done much better dealing out justice through prisons today....)

Though on the surface Yahweh's command to exterminate the Canaanites may leave us emotionally uncomfortable, we must realize that we really do want a God who hates sin and punishes evil justly. No one wants a God or an authority figure who is not angered by evil and does not execute justice. In fact, the problem of evil and the injustice of our governments anger all people more than anything else in our lives. The desire for justice is foundational to the core of every human.

As the creator of all things, Yahweh is sovereign over all creation and has the right to execute His justice in any way He sees fit. The human perspective is not always the divine and right perspective. We might not agree with His form of justice, but our very sense of justice on which we base our accusations of Him comes from Him as our Creator. If He had not created us with His sense of justice, then we would not have a sense that what He was doing was unjust. As sinners, we cannot even begin to have any concept of the magnitude of our sin from the perspective of a holy and righteous God. We have no right as sinners, who hurt or destroy others on a regular basis, to accuse Yahweh, a righteous God who has no sin and loves perfectly, that He is unjust, with the very concept and sense of justice He created us to have. But by the fact that He is a loving and just God, He is also long-suffering and merciful.

## **Yahweh's Patience and Desire for Repentance**

Yahweh did not just in a blind rage punish people when they first did something wicked. Yahweh was extremely patient, waiting for *hundreds* of years for them to reach a certain point of immorality before He judged them, for Yahweh is "slow to anger" (Ex. 34:6,7; Ps. 103:8). At the time of the flood, Yahweh told the world that they would be judged, and Noah preached to them for 120 years to bring them to repentance before Yahweh judged them (Gen. 6:3, 5-8; 1 Pet. 3:19-20). In Gen. 15:16, Yahweh stated that Abraham's descendants could not take the land of Canaan because the Canaanites were not yet evil enough to be destroyed. This implies that Yahweh waits until nations or people have become wicked enough before He judges them. This was 400 years before the extermination of the Canaanites, meaning He gave them a long time to repent from their idolatry and sins.

Yahweh destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah because they had become so evil that even the other Canaanites were complaining about how evil they were (Gen. 18:20). Thus, that destruction served as a warning to the rest of the Canaanites that if they did not change, they would be judged as well. They knew, therefore, what would happen if they continued in the path of Sodom and Gomorrah. The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (around 2100 BC) came 600 years before Israel destroyed the Canaanite nation. Yahweh has made it clear that He is willing to relent in His judgment if a nation repents of its sins and changes its ways (Jer. 18:7-8).

Yahweh also placed Abraham and his family in the land of Canaan in order to witness to the Canaanites, as Noah had previously. The righteousness of Yahweh and His covenant with the family of Abraham (Gen. 12:1-3; 15) is what led to Tamar leaving her Canaanite culture and joining the family and covenant of Abraham (Gen. 38). Yahweh not only received her, but He declared her more righteous than even many of the grandsons of Abraham because of her desire to know Yahweh (Gen. 38:26).

When Israel first entered the land, Yahweh did not immediately send warriors to kill people; rather, he sent two witnesses to give the people in Jericho a chance to repent and escape the

judgment (Josh. 2; Jam. 2:25). Rahab and her family repented, and they not only escaped the judgment but also became a part of Israel.

The fact that Rahab was spared just as the spies and Joshua had promised serves two purposes. It shows that Yahweh did spare Rahab for her faith, and thus this is His true character. Also, it gives a very human face to Rahab the Canaanite as the city of Jericho filled with Canaanites is being destroyed. In Joshua 2, the narrator presents Rahab as a godly woman who wanted to be saved. In Joshua 6, the narrator presents a wicked city that was being destroyed. At the end of the chapter, the two perspectives are brought together. Where most cultures dehumanize the people they are destroying and make them out to be monsters to justify their slaughter, the narrator does not. He forces the reader to deal with the tension between a wicked city that must be destroyed in obedience to Yahweh's commands and a city of humans, the children of God, some who are willing to come to Yahweh in faith.

This mercy shows that strict application of the command to exterminate the Canaanites is superseded by mercy to a repentant Canaanite woman. Likewise, the Gibeonites (a Canaanite culture) deceived Joshua into making a treaty with them, which spared them from being exterminated (Josh. 9). Joshua decided that showing mercy and honoring oaths takes priority over the Mosaic Law to exterminate everything. Not once does the narrator or Yahweh condemn these acts of mercy.

Yahweh's mercy, poured out despite deserving judgment, was seen in Ex. 32. There, Israel had sinned against the covenant they made with Yahweh, when they worshipped the golden calves. This meant that according to the covenant they had agreed to, they were deserving of death. But Moses interceded on Israel's behalf, and Yahweh forgave them of their sin and stayed their judgment of death, contrary to the punishment decreed by the covenant.

Yahweh is both a just and a merciful God. As a just and righteous God, Yahweh cannot tolerate evil and sin. His very nature demands that He punish and deal with sin. This is what makes Him good, for no human is satisfied with a God who can look at the evil committed in the world and be all right with or apathetic to it, never exacting justice. But Yahweh is also a merciful God who loves us. He loves us so much that He does not want to punish us to the full extent that justice would require. The sovereignty and justice of Yahweh gave Him every right and demanded that Israel be punished for their sin. But as a merciful and loving God, He also desired to forgive them.

Ex. 32 makes it clear that the character and actions of Yahweh are complicated, and the fact that Yahweh reveals this part of Himself through Scriptures shows that He refuses to allow humans to put Him in a box. We do Him and Scriptures an injustice when we gloss over or oversimplify passages like this. The main point is that Yahweh loves humanity so deeply that despite His need to execute justice, He is looking for every excuse to forgive us. With little intercession from Moses, Yahweh quickly relented and forgave Israel. This pattern is seen over and over in Scriptures—how little intercession and prayer it takes to move Yahweh to forgiveness. Decade after decade, He will allow the sins of Israel to go unpunished. And time after time, the prayers of the prophets lead Yahweh to pour out His mercy on Israel.

Yahweh was willing to show mercy to the Canaanites in the same way He had with Israel previously. Yet the majority of Canaanites, in their hardness of hearts, refused to receive His mercy and so fell under his judgment, as had the 3,000 Israelites who were executed in Ex. 32:25-29 because they refused to accept the mercy of Yahweh. Jericho should have served as an

example of Yahweh's mercy to the rest of the cities, but, unfortunately, it did not. The Canaanites' unwillingness to repent and change even to escape judgment shows how bad they really were (Josh. 11:19-20).

Yahweh showed this same patience with Israel when He warned them in 1406 BC that if they lived like the Canaanites, He would, through another nation, send them into exile (Deut. 7:4, 7-11; 9:4-6; 29:16-29). Yahweh did not punish Israel (the northern kingdom) until 722 BC with the Assyrians (2 Kgs. 17:7-23) and Judah (the southern kingdom) in 586 BC with the Babylonians (2 Kgs. 24:20-25:30). Yahweh also showed his willingness to forgive and restore with His dealings with Nineveh, the capital of the Assyrian Empire (Jonah 3:4-10).

All of this must also be put in light of Jesus Christ and His death and resurrection for the sins of all people of all nations (John 3:16-17). It is in the death of Yahweh's Son that His mercy and justice are seen together clearly. By Jesus being a human, He could represent humanity in their sin. And all the wrath of Yahweh could be poured out on Christ as humanity's representative, killing Him and satisfying Yahweh's justice. Yet at the same time, Christ dying as our substitute allows humanity to be forgiven and declared truly innocent, satisfying the mercy of Yahweh. (Rom. 3:21-26). The fact that Jesus Christ was willing to be exterminated (Matt. 26-27; 2 Cor. 5:21) on behalf of all peoples, including the Canaanites (Ps. 87; Isa. 19:23-25; Zech. 9; Eph. 3:1-11; Rev. 7 all state the Canaanites will be in the kingdom of Yahweh), so that they might escape this judgment shows the love and mercy of Yahweh. There is no other God or being anywhere in history who dies for the sins of others so that they may experience life.

## **How Does This Apply to the Church Today?**

Today the church is not called to execute justice on the wicked in the same way. This does not mean that Yahweh has changed His mind on what He considers wickedness or on how to execute justice. Rather, for the same reason that only ten nations were marked for destruction and the others (even though they were unbelievers) were left alone in the First Testament, so today, in a post-Second Testament world, not every nation or people group is marked for destruction, though they are unbelievers as well. Likewise, Yahweh did not choose Israel alone to execute justice in every case throughout history. He also used the flood to judge the world, the plagues and the Red Sea to judge Egypt, fire to judge Sodom and Gomorrah, and the Assyrians and Babylonians to judge Israel. Today He is still judging people by many means we do not always recognize because we do not have divine revelation.

Furthermore, Israel and the Church have purposes that are different from each other. Israel was called to be a distinct and holy nation with their own government and to remain separate from the rest of the nations. They were to enter the land of Canaan, wipe out those ten nations, deal with sin in a just way within their own borders, establish a godly nation under Yahweh, and receive His blessings and protection. They were not to go out to the other nations but were to live so righteously within their own borders that they would become a better and more blessed nation; in doing so, the people from the other nations would be so attracted to this difference that they would want to leave their old lives behind and join Israel. However, Israel failed to do this and so became like all the other nations and was judged by Yahweh for their sins.

The Church, on the other hand, has not been called to be a nation with its own government but instead to be a people who are holy and distinct from the world within their nations and governments. Because we have the Holy Spirit, we have been called to go into the world and be

a righteous light among the nations, making disciples of all people (Matt. 5:13-15; 28:19; Acts 1:8). We are to live such righteous lives through the power of the Holy Spirit that those around us, like those living around Israel, will want to leave behind their old ways and worldviews and join the fellowship of Christians. Just as Israel was not to judge the sins of the surrounding nations, we are not called to judge the sin of the unbelievers around us. And just as the Israelites were to deal with their own sin in a just way, so is the Church. We, as the Church, are not called to kill lawbreakers since we are not a government; rather, we are called to dis-fellowship believers who refuse to repent in the hopes that they will want to repent and come back (1 Cor. 5). As with unbelievers, this principle requires that we are living such righteous and blessed lives that those outside the fellowship will recognize what they are missing (Jn. 13:34-35).

What Deut. 7:1-6 teaches us is how much Yahweh hates sin and thus so should we. And just as He desires that sin be removed from Israel, so should we desire that sin be removed from the Church. We are to live so righteously and love each other in such a unique way that the world cannot help but want to be a part of the Church. The First Testament also teaches that just as Israel failed to do this because they did not have Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit, we, too, will fail if we do not submit to the will of Jesus Christ and depend on the power and guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Today our true enemy is the demonic beings that were behind the moral corruption of the Canaanites (Eph. 6:10-12). Just as Jesus fights for the people of God and does battle with the demonic forces (Matt. 12:24-29; Mark 3:22-27; Luke 11:15-22), so we through the Holy Spirit fight the demonic forces through prayer (which is our spiritual weapon), resisting the evil ideas of the demonic forces (James 4:7), and taking every thought captive (Rom. 12:2; 2 Cor. 10:5) so that we may be loyal to our covenant with Yahweh and free of corruption.

## The Nature of the Canaanites' Sin Excursus

One must understand when we talk about the sin and practices of the Canaanites that we are not talking about a small group of people in these nations; we are talking about everyone. Everyone, including women and, in some cases, children, were involved in the following practices. The Canaanite people were an extremely violent people involved in and promoting idolatry, gang rape, bestiality, child sacrifice, and many other evil and grotesque practices.<sup>2</sup>

### ***Idolatry***

The idolatry and the worship of pagan gods would not seem like a sin to most people other than Jews and Christians. But in order to understand why they lived the way they did, one must understand the gods that the people of the ancient Near East worshiped. Anyone who has ever studied the mythology or religions of ancient people knows that their gods were not moral beings, according to anyone's standard in the modern world. The gods were always betraying and fighting against each other. Ba'al, the Canaanite storm god, became the high god by defeating Yamm, the sea god. Later, Mot, the god of the grave, attacked Ba'al in order to gain power. Anat, Ba'al's wife and goddess of war and love, fought her way into the grave to rescue her husband. Ugaritic Ba'al myth describes Anat as taking joy in slaughtering her enemies, cutting off their heads and hands and wearing them as a necklace and belt. She is described as killing so many that she was wading through their blood. The death of Yamm and Mot involved cutting them in half, grinding them up, and sifting them in the wind.

Incest and adultery were also part of the gods' lives. El, the father of the gods, was married to Asherah, by whom he had seventy children. Ba'al, one of his sons, was married to his sister Anat. One day Ba'al reported to his father that his mother had tried to seduce him. El told him to go ahead and have sex with her in order to humiliate her, which Ba'al did.<sup>3</sup> One of Ba'al's wives was his daughter Pidray.<sup>4</sup> These are just a few examples, and none of these behaviors of the gods are portrayed with contempt in the texts of their religions.

These are the gods that the Canaanites worship, which means that the people thought and behaved as the gods did. Not only did they worship these gods, but they worshiped these gods with acts of sex in the temples and called it holy and righteous. In fact, temple prostitution was a large part of worship in the Canaanite culture. Asherah or Ishtar, also known as the *Queen of Heaven*, was a female fertility goddess who was worshiped through sexual acts, including orgies. Temple prostitutes were male and female priests who had dedicated their bodies to the gods and were considered holy priests. People would go to the temples and have sex with these prostitutes as an act of worship. The people of the ancient Near East viewed a sexual act with these priests as sexual union with the goddess herself.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> For a discussion of how the Roman Empire by the Second Testament was just as bad as the Canaanites, see Sarah Ruden, *Paul Among the People: The Apostle Reinterpreted and Reimagined in His Own Time*, 2010.

<sup>3</sup> See "El, Ashertu and the Storm-god," trans. Albrecht Goetze, ed. James B. Pritchard, in *The Ancient Near East: Supplementary Texts and Pictures Relating to the Old Testament*, p. 519.

<sup>4</sup> See W. F. Albright, *Yahweh and the Gods of Canaan: A Historical Analysis of Two Contrasting Faiths*, p. 145.

<sup>5</sup> Martti Nissinen, *Homoeroticism in the Biblical World: A Historical Perspective*, trans. Kirsi Stjerna, p. 33.

## ***Incest and Adultery***

The earliest Canaanite laws did prescribe the death penalty for those caught in incest or adultery, but by the fourteenth century BC the penalty had been reduced to a financial fine. However, incestuous fantasies were looked upon with favor and seen as a good omen. The Egyptian Dream book has a section for men that begins with:

“If a man sees himself in a dream...

... having intercourse with his mother: Good. His companions will stick to him.

... having intercourse with his sister: Good. It means that he will inherit something.

... having intercourse with a woman: Bad. It means mourning.”<sup>6</sup>

Remember, the gods themselves were involved in incestuous relationships. This was so prevalent in the Canaanite culture that Lot’s daughters, after growing up in and being influenced by Sodom, both slept with their father and thought nothing of it (Gen. 19:30–8). Adultery was forbidden by law but only for a married woman. There were no restrictions on the man.<sup>7</sup>

## ***Homosexuality***

Just as fantasies of incest were seen as good omens, so was homosexuality. Some statements in the Babylonian magical text (pre-seventh-century BC) say:

“If a man has intercourse with the hindquarters of his equal [male], that man will be foremost among his brothers and colleagues. If a man yearns to express his manhood while in prison and thus, like a male cult-prostitute, mating with men becomes his desire, he will experience evil. If a man has intercourse with a cult prostitute, care [troubles] will leave him.”<sup>8</sup>

There was also a form of homosexuality that was far more violent and subjugating than what we know today. It was not uncommon for a man who wanted to demonstrate his authority and power to rape another man. This act of dominance was seen as a sign of power, and other men looked at this with high regard. The way that one proved his worth to lead others in politics or in the military was through dominating rape. To be the rape victim was so humiliating that no one would ever show respect to that person. The closest thing to this that exists today is when a group of prisoners corner a newcomer in the showers and the alpha male rapes him in order to put him in his place (Gen. 19:4-9; Judg. 19:22).

## ***Bestiality***

Not only was bestiality practiced and dreams about it seen as good omens, but it was also practiced as a form of worship. Remember, if the gods did it, then certainly the people who worship them would do it.

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<sup>6</sup> Papyrus Chester Beatty III recto (BM10683) from about 1175 BC, quoted in Lise Manniche, *Sexual Life in Ancient Egypt*, p. 100.

<sup>7</sup> Godfrey Rolles Driver and John C. Miles, *The Assyrian Laws*, p. 38.

<sup>8</sup> Text in brackets is provided because it was missing in the original document. A. Kirk Grayson and Donald Redford, *Papyrus and Tablet*, p. 152:149.

“Mightiest Baal hears; He makes love with a heifer in the outback, A cow in the field of Death’s Realm. He lies with her seventy times seven, Mounts eighty times eight; She conceives and bears a boy.”<sup>9</sup>

There were laws against bestiality but only for certain animals. The Hittite law states:

“If anyone has intercourse with a pig or a dog, he shall die. If a man has intercourse with a horse or a mule, there is no punishment.”<sup>10</sup>

There were even ritualistic practices involving animals tied to the bed of a woman in order to bring some kind of blessing. The ritual describes the woman not only doing grotesque things with the animal but enjoying it.<sup>11</sup>

The Egyptian dream book also describes which animals bring good omens when you have a dream about having sex with them. What is most interesting is that it goes on and states that if a woman has a dream where she embraces her own husband, she is doomed.<sup>12</sup>

### **Child Sacrifice**

Molech was a Canaanite underworld deity<sup>13</sup> that required child sacrifice in order to prove devotion to him (Lev. 18:21; 20:5; 2 Kgs. 16:3; 21:6; 23:10; 2 Chr. 33:6; Ezk. 16:21; 20:31; 23:37; Jer. 7:31; 19:5; 32:35; Isa. 30:33; 57:9). Molech was portrayed as a man with the head of a bull standing upright with his arms outstretched. Inside his stomach was a fire, and children would be placed in his arms for burning. Molech required that you sacrifice your firstborn son to him in order to ensure the blessings of the gods. Infants and children as old as four were offered up to him. If you built a house, you were to lay one of your sacrificed children as the cornerstone to the building to ensure that the gods blessed the house and family all of its days. If someone wanted to guarantee a victory in battle, they could sacrifice one of their children to ensure the gods fought on their behalf (Judg. 11:30-40; 2 Kgs. 3: 26-27).

“In fact, we have independent evidence that child sacrifice was practiced in the Canaanite (Carthaginian and Phoenician) world from many classical sources, Punic inscriptions and archaeological evidence, as well as Egyptian depictions of the ritual occurring in Syria-Palestine, and from a recently discovered Phoenician inscription in Turkey. There is therefore no reason to doubt the biblical testimony to Canaanite child sacrifice.”<sup>14</sup>

“No other ancient people, however, regularly chose their own children as sacrificial victims, or equated them with animals which could sometimes be substituted for them. The Phoenician practice indicates a definition of the ‘family’ and the boundaries belonging to it and alienation from it that was incomprehensible to others in the ancient Mediterranean.”<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Mark S. Smith, trans., in *Ugaritic Narrative Poetry*, ed. Simon B. Parker, p. 148.

<sup>10</sup> Hoffner, “Incest, Sodomy and Bestiality in the Ancient Near East,” p. 82.

<sup>11</sup> Leick, *Sex and Eroticism in Mesopotamian Literature*, p. 205.

<sup>12</sup> Manniche, *Sexual Life in Ancient Egypt*, p. 100–01.

<sup>13</sup> See Day, John. *Molech: A God of Human Sacrifice in the Old Testament*, p. 62.

<sup>14</sup> John Day. *Yahweh and the Gods and Goddesses of Canaan*, p. 211–12.

<sup>15</sup> Shelby Brown. *Late Carthaginian Child Sacrifice*, p. 75.

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