

WAS IT FAIR THAT GOD ORDERED THE KILLING OF CANAANITE CHILDREN?

1. I believe this was the only way for God to totally and absolutely remove the cancerous Canaanite civilization. Its emphasis on child-sacrifice, bestiality, and other heinous activities had totally saturated their culture. God deemed that this culture had reached a point of immorality where their moral conscience had become seared—beyond repair. At this point, God could no longer tolerate this morally repugnant culture negatively impacting other nations.
2. At first glance, this might seem to be unjust because the children were too young to know what they were doing or to be held accountable for aiding and abetting the acts of child sacrifice. However, it is important to remember that from God's perspective He was able to see all the possible free acts of people—even the future acts of those Canaanite children. Allow me to explain—Christians believe that God is omniscient—that God has completely infallible knowledge! The concept of “middle knowledge” affirms that God knows all the potential worlds which could/might exist and consequently all the potential actions that free individuals would embrace. God—given middle knowledge—would have foreseen the possible worlds in which generation after generation of Canaanites would have continued to perpetrate odious acts upon the world. Middle knowledge would seem to justify God's claim as the Moral Law Giver of the Universe—He was morally just to judge the Canaanite children.
3. I believe it is important to be reminded that an all-knowing God would have clearly understood the practical implications of allowing the Canaanite children to live. If the Canaanite children would have grown up and discovered what happened to their parents they would have most likely developed a deep-seated desire to take revenge upon the Israelites. In addition, we also know that everywhere the Canaanites traveled that their vile religion with child sacrifices polluted other nation. God knew that if another generation would be allowed to live they would continue to embrace their immoral practices.
4. I think it is important to remember that during the Old Testament period of time that God had instituted a “theocracy”. It was His desire to have His standard of morality and justice to be exhibited within one specific nation, Israel. It was clear throughout Israel's history that they were susceptible to embracing the false religions and immorality of surrounding nations. In order to protect His divine purpose for the nation of Israel it was imperative as a last resort that He remove this particularly odious culture from continuing to negatively influence His people.
5. Finally, I think that if a skeptic were faced with a real-life and tangible example from the mid-20th century that they would find themselves strangely endorsing a decision very similar to the divine decision in regard to the Canaanites. For example, an overwhelming majority of people today would not object to God taking Hitler's life in 1889 when he was born because we have knowledge of what his future would be. However, those living in 1889 would not possess, at that time, the same knowledge that we have today and would likely object to God taking the life of an “innocent child”. However, from the vantage point of the 21st century a vast majority of folks would endorse such an action. This is essentially the position that God possesses via “middle knowledge”—He knows every possible action that free individuals might make in every possible world.