

# Avenging God?

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The latest horrible onslaught let loose against the virtually defenceless Palestinians in Gaza can raise in many people's minds an obstacle to the true worship of the true God, because it is well known that many of today's Israelis claim that they have from the Old Testament a God-given right to take all the land occupied by the Palestinians, by force if necessary. A reasonable person might ask two questions: what kind of a God can even remotely be pulled in to 'justify' such barbarous cruelty, together with such utter contempt for any world opinion condemning that barbarity? And what kind of a 'Chosen People' are these? The answer to both questions turns around Our Lord Jesus Christ, around whom of course all human history turns.

The Old Testament tells the story of mankind before Christ, especially the story of the Israelites, the people that God chose out from the rest of the human race to act as the cradle for the coming down from Heaven of the Incarnate God, Jesus Christ. About a thousand years after Adam, mankind had grown so corrupt that God had to wash it out and start again with the eight souls saved on Noah's Ark. About another thousand years later, mankind is again so corrupt that God has to pull Abraham out of the degenerate city Ur to be the founder of a race that must stay clear of all surrounding human contamination in order to be clean enough to act as that cradle. Here is the origin of that racial exclusivity observable in Jews ever since. It began with God, but it has fallen into the hands of men.

The Jews were indeed once, for the sake of Jesus Christ, the Chosen People. Thus St Thomas Aquinas has a tremendous article in his *Summa Theologiae* where he shows how every single detail in the furnishing of the Israelites' exclusive Temple in Jerusalem pointed forward to Jesus Christ (Ia IIae, 102, 4).

However, to clear the Promised Land for the Israelites to take over, there is no question that Almighty God gave them more than once the command to exterminate utterly the pagans occupying the land, and He punished King Saul severely for not observing this command to the letter (I Sam XV). What could justify such a command?

It is the same as what explains God's exterminating all mankind (except eight souls) in Noah's time. Firstly men's sins. God creates men for Heaven, they choose sin that deserves Hell. For indeed sin offends God first of all. So the sense of God and the sense of sin get lost together, as all around us today. A godless generation like ours cannot possibly understand the justice of God. Secondly, God's mercy, which goes hand in hand with His justice, and is today equally misunderstood. But given the reality of Hell, is it not a mercy of God if he cuts men off so that they can repent before they die, or at least be stopped from sinning so as not to deserve to go any deeper in Hell?

That is how it will have been with the pagan enemies of the Israelites between Abraham and Jesus Christ. To read the Old Testament is to see how often the Israelites were tempted to abandon the true God and to worship devils by the pagans all around them. As the Curé of Ars once said, 'Get rid of the priest, and within 25 years men will be worshipping beasts.' It is to the eternal credit of the Israelites that they did succeed in providing the cradle for the Messiah, for instance St Joachim and St Anne, especially their child, the Blessed Virgin Mary, the twelve Apostles and all other good Israelites who helped to launch their Messiah's Catholic Church. For today's Israelis see next week.

Kyrie eleison.