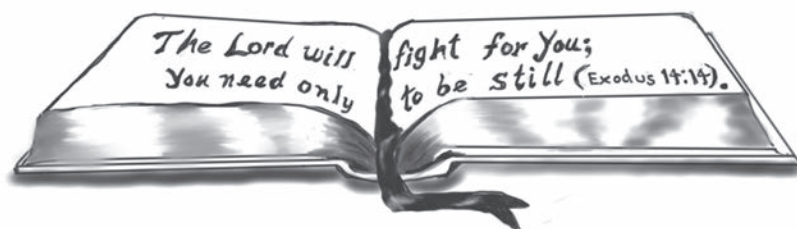


# God Fights for You



## SABBATH—OCTOBER 25

**READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON:** Genesis 15:16; Genesis 18:25; Exodus 23:28–30; Deuteronomy 20:10, 15–18; Isaiah 9:6.

**MEMORY VERSE:** “Joshua won all these battles in one long fight. He won against all these kings and their lands. He won because the **LORD**, Israel’s God, was fighting on Israel’s behalf [for Israel]” (Joshua 10:42, **EASY**).

**THE BOOK OF JOSHUA** contains some stories that we may have trouble understanding. These stories are about war. The stories upset and bother many people. They ask, “How can a holy God ask His people to destroy another group of people?”

For sure, Christians do have trouble understanding the topic of war in the Old Testament. The Old Testament shows us that God is in control of everything in heaven and on earth. So, everything that happens must somehow be part of His plan, right? That’s why many people ask the question, “How can God allow war to happen?” Last week, we saw that God is fighting a war that is bigger than any battle in human history. This war touches every part of our lives. We also saw that we must first understand this worldwide war between good and evil. Then we will better understand the things that happen in the Bible and human history.

This week we continue to study about the wars that God asked His people to fight. We will try to answer the following questions: Why did God ask His people to fight these wars? What Bible truth do these wars teach us? What were the limits that God put on His people when they fought? What peace plan did God offer?



Joshua won because the **LORD**, Israel’s God, was fighting for Israel (Joshua 10:42, **EASY**).

**THE SINS OF THE CANAANITES (Genesis 15:16)**

**Why did God offer the land of Canaan to the Israelites? Read Genesis 15:16; Leviticus 18:24–30; Deuteronomy 18:9–14; and Ezra 9:11 for the answer. What do these verses teach us about God’s bigger plan for His people?**

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If we want to understand why God said the Canaanites were so evil, we must read the book of Deuteronomy. The Canaanites killed babies and offered them to their gods as gifts. The Canaanites did magic. They communicated with evil spirits. They woke up the “dead” to get advice from them.

Bible thinkers who study Old Testament history discovered some ancient writings from this time. These writings talk about the Canaanite religion and people. The writings show that the Canaanite religion was very evil.

The Canaanites believed in many gods. The Canaanites thought these male and female gods, or goddesses, controlled nature with sex. What did the Canaanites believe happened when their gods and goddesses had sex with each other? Sex caused crops to grow and babies to be born! Or at least, that’s what the Canaanites thought. Also, the Canaanites believed that when they had sex, their behavior caused the gods and goddesses to have sex, too. When that happened, the crops grew, rain fell, and babies were born. So, sex was an important part of the Canaanite religion. As part of this belief, Canaanite men and women served their gods as sex slaves. These men and women had sex with each other as part of their worship!

Scientists found proof that the Canaanites killed their own children and offered them as gifts to their gods. These gods were really demons. Scientists discovered the crushed skeletons of Canaanite babies in large jars. The writing on the jars says that the babies were offerings.

Now we understand better why the Lord decided to give the land of Canaan to the Israelites. God gave the Canaanites time to learn about Him and give up their evil way of life. God sent Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob to live among them so they could know God better. The Canaanites had the chance to change their lives and improve. But they continued to do evil. Finally, the Lord stopped them.



**God sent Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob to live among the Canaanites so they could know God better.**

**THE JUDGE OF HEAVEN AND EARTH (Genesis 18:25)**

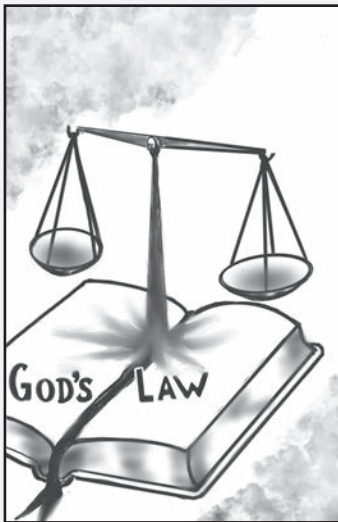
**Read Genesis 18:25; Psalm 7:11; Psalm 50:6; Psalm 82:1; Psalm 96:10; and 2 Timothy 4:1, 8. What do these verses tell us about God? God is the Judge of heaven and earth. How does God's work as Judge help us understand why God asked His people to go to war? What is a "holy" war?**

God is holy. A holy God cannot accept sin. God is patient with us sinners. But in the end, God will punish sin with death (Romans 6:23). The Lord announced war against all sin. That sin includes the sins of Israel and the Canaanites. The Israelites weren't made holy because they fought in a holy war. They were sinners, the same as other people (Deuteronomy 9:4, 5; Deuteronomy 12:29, 30). God used the Israelites to punish the other people around them. But if the Israelites disobeyed God, then God did not fight for them. God fought against them. God allowed Israel's enemies to attack them and cause them to suffer (compare with Joshua 7).

What, then, is a holy war? If we want to understand this idea, we must first understand God's work as Judge. The people from countries around Israel fought wars to get power, riches, and glory. The same is true today. But in Bible times, Israel fought for different reasons. Israel didn't fight to get glory or power. Israel fought for God. The Israelites fought to fill the land with God's peace. They fought to make things fair. So, the holy wars that Israel fought are really about God's work to make things fair. Israel's wars show God's work for His people as a Warrior, King, and Judge.

Yes, the Lord is a mighty fighter, who is also a judge. As judge, the Lord protects His law. The law shows us who He is. God is love. As a warrior, God won't allow people to fight against His government forever. So, the Lord's plan for war is never about winning glory or getting power. The Lord fights to bring peace. The Lord fights to make things fair. So, when God judges or goes to war, these two things are really the same thing. That's because God is the Person who is doing the work.

**Think about God's work as Judge. As Judge, God is always fair. We can't buy God's favor with money. God won't allow evil or sin to continue forever. Why is the idea of a fair Judge so important to the Good News about Jesus?**



**As judge, the Lord protects His law.**

**REMOVE OR KILL? (Exodus 23:28–30)**

**Read Exodus 23:28–30; Exodus 33:2; Exodus 34:11; Numbers 33:52; and Deuteronomy 7:20. Also read Exodus 34:13; Deuteronomy 7:5; Deuteronomy 9:3; Deuteronomy 12:2, 3; and Deuteronomy 31:3, 4. What do these verses teach us about Israel's war to win the Promised Land? How much did Israel destroy?**

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God's first plan for the Canaanites was not death. God wanted to remove their land from them and leave them alive. When we look at the verses above, we see what God wanted Israel to do in war. God wanted Israel to remove the people from their land. God also wanted the Israelites to destroy the objects that the Canaanites used to worship their gods.

God wanted His people to stay clean in their hearts and minds. So, He ordered Israel to destroy all the things that the Canaanites used to worship their gods. These things would cause Israel to sin against God. At the same time, God showed mercy to the Canaanites who accepted Him. God allowed these Canaanites to go free (Joshua 2:9–14; compare with Judges 1:24–26). God destroyed only those Canaanites whose hearts were hard. These Canaanites refused to obey God. They hid in their cities. They continued to fight against God's plan for His people (Joshua 11:19, 20).

We may ask the question: If God's first plan was to let the Canaanites go free, why did the Israelites need to kill so many people?

When we study the Bible, we see that God didn't want to kill the Canaanites. But most of the Canaanites were the same as Pharaoh, king of Egypt. Their hearts grew hard against the Lord. They didn't obey His warnings. So, God destroyed them when He gave their land to Israel.

**Are there things in your heart that you must allow God to remove and destroy? If so, what are they?**

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**God showed mercy to the Canaanites who accepted Him. God allowed these Canaanites to go free (Joshua 2:9–14; compare with Judges 1:24–26).**

**FREE CHOICE (Deuteronomy 20:10, 15–18)**

**Read Deuteronomy 20:10, 15–18; Deuteronomy 13:12–18; and Joshua 10:40. What do these verses teach us about the rules of fighting that God gave to Israel? What limits did God put on Israel? What were the Israelites allowed to destroy? How much were they allowed to destroy?**

The Bible uses a Hebrew word to talk about the people who were destroyed in war: “*cherem*.” “*Cherem*” shows us things that are under God’s curse. So, these things must be destroyed. Most of the time, “*cherem*” is used to talk about people, animals, or objects under God’s full control. In war, these things often were destroyed. We can best understand this idea if we also understand God’s fight against evil. This war is about Satan’s attacks on God’s love and His law.

In this war, everyone is on God’s side or against Him. One side leads to everlasting life. The other side leads to everlasting death.

When God destroyed the Canaanites, He showed what He will do to sin and evil in the end. God gave the work of destroying the Canaanites to His chosen people, Israel. But God controlled this work. This work was limited to a certain time and place in history. That was the time when Israel fought for the Promised Land. As we saw yesterday, God destroyed only the people who fought against Him. These people refused to stop sinning. God’s decision to destroy them wasn’t because He was mean or loved Israel more.

The Israelites understood that they also would be destroyed if they behaved the same as the Canaanites (compare with Deuteronomy 13). As we shall see, the stories about Rahab, Achan, and the Gibeonites show us that God is willing to show mercy to sinners who are under the curse of sin. But they must turn away from sin and accept Him. God always gives sinners a choice. They can choose to obey God and live. In the same way, the Israelites could lose God’s special favor if they sinned against the Lord.

**What does the story about the hard hearts of the Canaanites teach us about our free choice today?**



**God always gives sinners a choice. They can choose to obey God and live.**



**THE PRINCE OF PEACE (Isaiah 9:6)**

**Read Isaiah 9:6; Isaiah 11:1–5; Isaiah 60:17; Hosea 2:18; and Micah 4:3. What do these verses tell us about the future that God plans for His people?**

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This week's lesson is about holy war in the Old Testament. But we need to discuss another idea that the Old Testament also talks about: the future of peace that God promises. The Savior will bring His people this peace. The Savior is named the Prince of peace (Isaiah 9:6). The Savior's kingdom will be a kingdom of peace. The wolf and the lamb will eat together in peace in this kingdom (Isaiah 11:1–8). There will be no more pain or suffering (Isaiah 11:9). Peace will control everything (Isaiah 60:17; Isaiah 66:12).

**Read the story in 2 Kings 6:16–23. What does this story teach us about God's plan for His special people and for everyone else on earth too?**

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In this story, Elisha commands God's people to feed the Syrian army. Elisha chooses not to kill the Syrians (2 Kings 6:22). He chooses to show them mercy. God's plan for His people and for everyone else always is peace. In the story, Elisha knows that an invisible army of angels is around the enemy (2 Kings 6:17). These angels are stronger than the Syrian army. God wants to save people, not beat or destroy them. He wants them to live in peace, not as slaves. Hate and pain causes more hate and pain (Matthew 26:52). Peace makes more peace. The story in 2 Kings 6 ends with this verse: "After this [feast] happened, no more groups of Syrian soldiers came to attack Israel" (2 Kings 6:23, EASY).

**Think about all the ways we can be the same as Jesus. How can we share His peace with other people? What about your own life right now? In what ways can you bring peace and not war to the lives of other people?**

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**The wolf and the lamb  
will eat together in peace  
in this kingdom  
(Isaiah 11:1–8).**

**ADDITIONAL THOUGHT:** Read Ellen G. White, “The Fall of Jericho,” pages 491–493, in *Patriarchs and Prophets*.

As we saw already, the worldwide war between God and Satan helps us to understand Israel’s wars against the Canaanites.

“God is very patient. He doesn’t get angry easily or fast. God gave the Canaanites time to learn about His law and His love. God judged them because they refused to believe the Bible truth that He sent to them. The Canaanites chose their own ways and not God’s ways. God gave the reason why He didn’t remove the Canaanites right away from the Promised Land. God wanted to save the Amorites. But the Amorites continued to sin. Soon God would stop being patient with them because of their sins. Then He would destroy the Amorites. Until then, God would continue to be patient with them. God gave all the people groups in the land of Canaan time to come back to Him. But people who didn’t respect God’s law did more and more evil. Their children were born with the same evil hearts their parents had. The children did worse sins than their parents did. This made God angry. So, finally God punished them. Just because God didn’t punish them right away didn’t mean that their sins weren’t terrible.”—Ellen G. White Comments, *The SDA Bible Commentary*, volume 2, page 1005, adapted.



**God gave the Canaanites time to learn about His law and His love.**

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① God is the Judge of all heaven and earth. Why is God’s work as Judge important to His plan to save us?
- ② What does the story about the Canaanites teach us about God and how patient He is with us? How can we show God’s love and be patient with other people?
- ③ Why do you think God respects our free choice? How are love and free choice connected with each other?
- ④ The Old Testament contains many stories about war and disagreement. But the Bible really is a promise for future peace. What can Christians do to bring peace in their communities?

## **"GOD BROUGHT YOU HERE"**

Maria and David were Bible workers. Maria felt nervous as the man came near them in his home in a big city in southern Asia. The man recorded their conversation on his cell phone. The man waited for them to answer his wife's question about their religious beliefs.

David said, "As I said, we are Seventh-day Adventists."

The man asked, "Does that mean you are Christians?"

David prayed silently for wisdom. He knew that many people in that country didn't like Christianity. Many Christians drank alcohol and ate foods that weren't clean. The religion of that country did not allow its followers to do those things.

David answered, "Let me explain. We believe what Moses says. In Deuteronomy 6:4, Moses wrote, 'The LORD is our God. The LORD is the only [there is no other] God.' [ERV]. So, we believe there is one God. This verse tells us that."

The man said, "Interesting."

David said, "We also believe in the Sabbath. Moses' law says that we should worship the Lord on the Sabbath. The Sabbath starts Friday at sunset and continues until Saturday at sunset."

Then David talked about how the Lord said that eating pork was a sin, in Isaiah 66:17. The man continued to record the conversation. But his angry frown slowly became a smile.

David continued, "We believe our bodies are God's temple. While we live on earth, we must take care of them."

The man's smile grew big.

David added, "We don't believe in hurting our bodies. So, we do not drink alcohol or smoke."

The man said, "I believe God brought you to me." He got up and left the room. Then he came back with a plate of food. The man put the food on the table and asked the visitors to eat.

Then the man said a prayer. He thanked God for the meeting. He asked God to bless the food. After that, the man brought his adult son from a back room. The man said to his son, "I want you to meet these people." Then the man said to David and Maria, "I want to share my family with you." The man said he was sorry that he and his family couldn't eat with them. But they were fasting. When people fast, they don't eat food for a short time.

As David and Maria ate, the man asked them questions about *The Great Controversy*. The man said, "We are happy you came today. We know that God sent you here. We will accept you. Peace be with you."

As the visitors got ready to leave, the man blessed them. He said, "May you have peace and blessings as you visit with people in our neighborhoods."

INSIDE  
*Story*  
by LAURIE DENSKI-SNYMAN



**The man put the food on the table and asked the visitors to eat.**