

## **THE FRIENDS OF ISRAEL TODAY**

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Chris Katulka, Is the God of the Old Testament the same as the God of the New Testament?, Part 1

Exodus 34

Hello everybody, I'm Chris Katulka and welcome to the Friends of Israel Today.

You know it wasn't too long ago I was watching one of the many film awards show like the Golden Globes or the Oscars on TV... and... during the show a very famous actress won an award for her role in a movie she starred in. Now, typical of all awards show the actress got up and started to thank all the people who helped her during the filming of the movie and all the people who helped her along the way, which is the right and decent thing to do.

It was after she thanked everyone that her acceptance speech got interesting. This particular actress decided to launch into her own personal understanding, her own personal theology of God from the Bible, the way she understood God from the Bible. As she was sharing with the audience she said these words, "the God of the Old Testament is a God of wrath and anger, and the God of the New Testament is a God of love, mercy, and peace."

This wasn't the first time I've heard this said, that God in the Old Testament is angry and the God in the New Testament was loving,

but it was the first time I've heard it on national television for everyone around the country to hear from the pulpit of the performers.

But is this understanding of God from the Bible correct? Did God deal with anger issues in the Old Testament... and then decided along the way to have a change of heart? Well, I want to answer this question, is God schizophrenic in the Bible, or does His character and nature remain the same in both the Old Testament and New Testament.

So in this first message I'm going to examine the wrath and the compassion of God in the Old Testament. Is God only angry, or does His compassion always come before anger.

For this discussion we are going to focus on one passage, to use it as a foundation for knowing the character of God, and whether God's character is consistent in both the Old Testament and the New Testament.

The verse comes from Exodus and be found in chapter 34 verses six and seven. In this section of Exodus God is going to write the 10 commandments for the second time, after His people completely disobeyed him and created a false god in the form of a golden calf.

I have to pause and just say for a second, we don't have to go far in the Old Testament to see the compassion of God. Here is a perfect example, God's people started to worship a false god and instead of displaying His wrath He showed compassion and desired to continue a deep and abiding relationship with His people.

So as I was saying, God was writing out the 10 commandments for His people a second time, and it's here that God reveals to Moses His character. The Lord says this about Himself,

“The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children's children to the third and the fourth generation.”

So let's unpack this verse. First, the Lord shares with Moses that He is “merciful and gracious”, which immediately flies in the face of the actress that calls the God of the Old Testament a God of wrath. Here the Lord tells us His first character trait as God is to be compassionate.

In the previous chapter of Exodus in chapter 33, Moses says to the Lord, “Show me your glory” and the Lord says to him, “I will make

all My goodness pass before you, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before you. I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.”

I’m reminded of the compassion and grace God displayed after the first sin of mankind. Adam and Eve were fully aware of the consequences of eating fruit from the one tree they were commanded not to eat from. God said to Adam and Eve, “for in the day that you eat of it [that’s the fruit of the tree], you shall surely die.”

Adam and Eve decided to go against God’s wishes and ate of the forbidden fruit, disobeying God and committing the first sin.

What’s most fascinating about this story is how God reacts to Adam and Eve’s disobedience. You would think God would unleash His holy anger and both Adam and Eve would be consumed in His wrath, as He said, “you shall surely die” if you eat of the forbidden fruit.

Yet, that’s not the case, God in His compassion and mercy calls out to Adam and Eve... He calls them.

“Where are you?”

God in his omniscience graciously approaches Adam and Eve to speak to them. Even after announcing the consequences of their actions, God in His grace and mercy clothes Adam and Eve.

God still demands Adam and Eve pay for their sinful action, but He still displays His grace by providing for them clothing for the new condition they will be living in outside of the Garden of Eden.

And don't forget, God didn't write off mankind when He banished Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden. Even in their sinful action God in His compassion made a promise to one day defeat the serpent and sin through a son of Adam, a man who would crush the serpent's head! God gives hope to Adam and Eve, a glimpse of the hope that one day we'll be able to interact with Him face to face, just like Adam and Eve did in the garden.

Folks, God's action in the garden is a picture of the way God acts throughout the Old Testament. He is not just a God of wrath. If you really read through the Old Testament you'll see He is always displaying His compassion, grace, mercy, forgiveness, long-suffering on His people.

Yet, at the same time God's love and compassion should not be interpreted that He will not judge sin. He says that in Exodus 34:6-7... He is forgiving, but, "by no means clearing the guilty." That means that in God's all encompassing holiness, He demands that

sin be paid for. Compassion and grace mean that God provides a means for forgiveness, but if you choose to turn from Him, His wrath is still waiting.

That's not just an Old Testament concept, that's a New Testament concept too! Listen to what the Apostle Paul says in Romans 2:4-5, listen how Paul connects the character of God we find in Exodus 34:6-7 to this New Testament passage, "Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance? But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God."

The God of the Old Testament is the God of the New Testament. His character is such that He is overly gracious and merciful to us, but because of His holiness He cannot excuse sin. That's why in His goodness He provided His Son to cleanse us from our sins so we can stand blameless before a holy God.

Response:

Steve: Chris is there any connection between God's character found in Exodus 34 and the way we should live our lives as Christians today?

You know, in 1 Peter 1:16 Peter says that we should be holy because God is holy. But what does it mean to be holy. It means that we should have the character of God, and where do we find the character of God? God tells us in Exodus 34:6-7. The Apostle Paul tells us to have the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, long-suffering, and self-control. If you notice God's character from Exodus is the fruit of the Spirit. So to answer your question, our character believers in the Lord Jesus should mimic the character of God.