

You asked “How can the God who commanded the Israelites to wipe out nations and kill those in their midst who sinned be related to an all-forgiving Savior?”

All sincere questions are worthy of an answer. The answer to your question is known by learning three lessons from God, found in the Bible.

1. God teaches man what He expects

God told Adam and Eve what He expected of them. God has always made this clear. In Genesis 3:6; 11:4 it is clear that people knew what God expected them to do. But, men often do the exact OPPOSITE of what He said. This describes the people God told Israel to destroy. They created their own ideas of God, rejecting the knowledge of God, what He had revealed about Himself, and what He expected of them (Romans 1:18-23).

2. God teaches man of the consequences of man’s choices

When God has given teaching, He has warned of the consequences of disobedience and also offered promises for obedience. These nations who were destroyed were not punished as a random act of meanness. It was the consequences of their iniquity. Are you aware of the wickedness of those people? It is referred to in Genesis 15:16.

God is not partial with that punishment—when the Israelites followed the same path of iniquity, He punished them too, having given them plenty of warning. "I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live" (Deuteronomy 30:19; all of chapter 28).

3. Man chooses to listen to God or reject God. God is longsuffering.

When men rebelled against God, He was patient with them, allowing their “cup of iniquity” to fill over time (Genesis 15:16). In fact, when non-Israelite nations repented, God did not destroy them (Jonah 3:5-10), but they rarely repented. Typically, these people created their own gods, religions, and laws which resulted in extreme wickedness and rebellion. Romans 1:18-32 summarizes that process. In the case of the people God told Israel to destroy, He had been patient with them and was always willing to forgive them, but they repeatedly rejected Him. Many of those nations were practicing all types of wickedness (Romans 1:18-32), including child sacrifice to their false gods.

So, God in both the Old Testament and New Testament was, and is, a God of forgiveness. But He is also a God who describes Himself as worthy of being obeyed (By the way, obedience to Him is ALWAYS in OUR best interest. “And the LORD commanded us to observe all these statutes, to fear the LORD our God, for our good always,” Deuteronomy 6:24. Because He is God, He knows what is best for us.). Do you agree that God is worthy of being obeyed?

When man chooses to disobey God, then they learn that God does not make empty threats. I must learn that lesson. You must learn that lesson.