

Amalek and Jesus: Reinterpreting Divine Justice Through the Lens of Radical Compassion

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The biblical story of Amalek and the command to destroy this enemy has long posed theological and ethical challenges for readers of the Old Testament. The command, seen as divinely sanctioned violence, seems at odds with the compassion and forgiveness emphasized in Jesus's teachings. This article explores how Jesus's vision of justice—rooted in mercy, reconciliation, and transformation—offers a radically compassionate lens through which to reinterpret such narratives. By shifting from retributive justice to a restorative approach, we invite a deeper understanding of divine justice that seeks not punishment but healing, not division but unity. Jesus's teachings on forgiveness, especially toward those traditionally seen as enemies, provide a transformative framework for engaging with complex biblical texts and addressing modern ethical dilemmas. This reinterpretation offers believers a pathway toward personal and communal peace, encouraging us to confront inner and societal conflicts with humility, empathy, and a commitment to reconciliation.

Keywords: Amalek, Jesus, divine justice, radical compassion, forgiveness, reconciliation, restorative justice, retributive justice, Old Testament, New Testament, ethics, mercy, healing, biblical interpretation, enemy love, Christian ethics.

Introduction

The Old Testament command to destroy the Amalekites, as found in 1 Samuel 15, presents a profound ethical and theological challenge. In this passage, God commands King Saul to “utterly destroy” the Amalekites—men, women, children, and livestock—as an act of divine justice and retribution. This directive seems stark and severe, particularly given the innocent lives involved, and raises difficult questions for readers: How could a loving God order the complete annihilation of a people? What purpose does this act of destruction serve within the larger narrative of God’s relationship with Israel? And how should believers today understand such commands, especially in light of Jesus’s message of love and forgiveness?

The narrative of the Amalekites as Israel’s enemy is complex and deeply rooted in the history of conflict between the two peoples. The Amalekites first appear in Exodus 17, where they attacked the Israelites shortly after their escape from Egypt, leading to a battle in which Moses, with God’s help, secured victory for Israel. This enmity reemerges throughout Israel’s history, with Amalek symbolizing not just a historical foe but also a recurrent force of opposition to God’s people. Within the Jewish tradition, Amalek has come to represent more than a physical enemy—it symbolizes unrelenting evil and opposition to divine order, becoming, in a way, a metaphor for forces that stand against God’s purpose.

However, the command to eradicate Amalek introduces a moral quandary for modern readers. The notion of divinely sanctioned violence or genocide is deeply unsettling, especially in a world where we understand the value of each human life and the devastating consequences of dehumanization. Many struggle to reconcile this depiction of God with the loving, compassionate, and forgiving God portrayed in other parts of the Bible. The question arises: Is this story purely historical, or is there a deeper, perhaps symbolic, meaning? Can such a command be understood in ways that align with a God who values mercy, justice, and peace?

In the Christian tradition, Jesus’s teachings provide a new lens through which to view God’s nature and justice. Jesus emphasized love, mercy, and forgiveness as foundational aspects of a life lived in alignment with God’s will. He taught His

followers to love their enemies, forgive repeatedly, and seek peace even in the face of persecution. In Jesus's teachings, we find a profound emphasis on the value of every person and a vision of justice that seeks restoration rather than destruction. Jesus's model of justice challenges us to think differently about concepts of enmity, retaliation, and retribution.

This paper aims to explore how Jesus's teachings on compassion, forgiveness, and peace offer a transformative approach to interpreting divine justice in the Old Testament. By reexamining the story of Amalek through the lens of Jesus's message, we can explore alternative understandings that go beyond literal destruction. This perspective invites us to consider Amalek not solely as a historical enemy but as a symbol of the forces within and around us that resist God's love, mercy, and justice. Through this reinterpretation, we find in Jesus's teachings a model that encourages reconciliation and transformation rather than annihilation. Ultimately, this approach seeks to reconcile difficult passages in the Old Testament with a theology centered on love, inviting readers to see divine justice as a pathway to healing, compassion, and peace in our world today.

Section 1: Amalek in the Old Testament – Context and Challenges

The story of Amalek and the divine command given to King Saul in 1 Samuel 15 lies at the intersection of history, theology, and ethics, presenting readers with some of the most challenging aspects of Old Testament narrative. In this passage, Saul is directed by God, through the prophet Samuel, to destroy the Amalekites completely: "Go and attack Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have; do not spare them, but kill both man and woman, child and infant, ox and sheep, camel and donkey" (1 Samuel 15:3). This command, known as *herem* or "holy war," demands the total destruction of all living beings among the Amalekites and the complete elimination of their cultural and material presence. The severity of the command poses complex questions about divine justice, mercy, and the moral obligations of those who serve God.

The Narrative of Amalek and God's Command to Saul

The Amalekites first appear in the biblical narrative during Israel's exodus from Egypt. In Exodus 17, as the Israelites journey through the wilderness, the

Amalekites launch an unprovoked attack against them. The resulting battle ends in an Israelite victory, thanks to Moses's intercession and God's support. However, this conflict plants the seed of enduring enmity between the two peoples. God declares that He will "utterly blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven" (Exodus 17:14), establishing Amalek as a persistent threat to Israel and an archetype of opposition to God's people.

This enmity surfaces repeatedly throughout Israel's history, with Amalek coming to represent more than just a political adversary; they are seen as an ongoing symbol of antagonism against God's chosen people. The command to Saul in 1 Samuel 15 is intended to fulfill this ancient decree of divine justice. However, Saul's partial obedience—sparing King Agag and keeping the best of the livestock—results in God's rejection of Saul as king. Saul's failure to fully carry out God's command is presented as a turning point in his kingship, highlighting the theme of obedience to divine will. This command, however, brings with it significant moral challenges, particularly as it calls for the destruction of innocent lives.

Historical Interpretations of Amalek as a Literal and Symbolic Enemy of Israel

Throughout Jewish and Christian traditions, Amalek has come to embody a broader symbol of evil, cruelty, and persistent opposition to God's people and purposes. Historically, Amalek was a nomadic people living in the southern regions of Canaan, often engaging in raiding and warfare. Their frequent skirmishes with Israel reinforced their image as an enemy intent on disrupting Israel's journey and identity. This historical enmity was remembered and retold in ways that transcended the specifics of time and place, making Amalek a symbol for adversarial forces that oppose God's plan.

Within Jewish tradition, Amalek symbolizes more than a historical tribe. Amalek has been seen as representing the archetype of irrational hatred and enmity toward God and God's people. This interpretation is deeply embedded in Jewish collective memory and emerges in the celebration of Purim, which commemorates the deliverance of the Jewish people from Haman, an Agagite (and thus traditionally associated with Amalek). Haman's plot to exterminate the Jews in the Book of Esther is seen as a reemergence of the Amalekite threat. Thus, Amalek has evolved into a symbolic adversary, representing the forces of evil that

seek to destroy God's people across time. This symbolism persists in both Jewish and Christian interpretations, where Amalek can be seen as an embodiment of doubt, hatred, and sin—forces that persist in opposition to God's will.

Theological Perspectives: Reconciling Divine Justice with the Command to Destroy Amalek

The command to utterly destroy Amalek has raised deep theological and ethical questions, leading scholars and theologians to explore various interpretative approaches in an attempt to reconcile this passage with the concept of a just and merciful God. Some of these perspectives include:

1. **Historical-Cultural Interpretation:** One approach views the command within its ancient Near Eastern context, where warfare often involved the complete destruction of enemy peoples as an assertion of dominance and divine favor. In this context, total destruction was a common practice among many ancient cultures as a way of demonstrating divine justice and protection. Some scholars suggest that God's command reflects the cultural norms of the time and must be understood in light of these historical practices. From this perspective, the command to annihilate Amalek is seen less as a literal call to genocide and more as a culturally specific way of conveying the absolute nature of God's judgment against forces that oppose His people.
2. **Hyperbolic Language Interpretation:** Another approach suggests that the command to destroy Amalek may contain hyperbolic language, a literary device commonly used in ancient texts. In this interpretation, terms like "utterly destroy" and "leave no survivors" are understood as exaggerations to emphasize victory and completeness rather than literal instructions for genocide. Hyperbolic expressions were often used in military contexts to communicate a decisive victory rather than the precise details of casualties. From this perspective, the command to annihilate Amalek may have been understood by its original audience as a call to total military defeat rather than the literal extermination of every individual.
3. **Symbolic and Allegorical Interpretation:** Many Jewish and Christian theologians view Amalek symbolically rather than literally, seeing the command as an instruction to eradicate spiritual or moral opposition within

oneself and one's community. In this interpretation, "Amalek" represents forces that oppose God's purposes, such as doubt, hatred, or sin, rather than a specific ethnic group. This symbolic reading suggests that the command to destroy Amalek is not about physical violence but rather about rooting out the "Amalekite" tendencies within human nature that lead to rebellion against God. By reframing Amalek as a metaphor for inner or societal evil, this approach allows believers to apply the story in a way that aligns with Jesus's teachings on confronting and transforming one's inner life.

4. **Divine Judgment and Mystery:** Some theologians accept the command to destroy Amalek as a difficult but divinely mandated act of justice. This view holds that God, as the ultimate moral authority, has the right to administer justice in ways that may surpass human understanding. From this perspective, the command to eliminate Amalek is seen as a unique instance of divine judgment rather than a model for human action. However, this interpretation acknowledges the tension between the severity of God's command and the teachings of mercy and compassion found elsewhere in scripture. This approach invites humility and caution when interpreting divine justice, emphasizing that some aspects of God's will may remain mysterious and beyond human comprehension.

Each of these perspectives attempts to grapple with the ethical and theological complexities presented by the story of Amalek. For many readers, none of these interpretations fully resolves the tension between a God of justice and mercy and the command to destroy an entire people. However, by examining the story through multiple interpretive lenses, readers can better understand the ancient context, symbolic meaning, and moral implications of the narrative. This exploration also opens the door to reinterpret the story through the lens of Jesus's teachings, which emphasize love, mercy, and reconciliation as central to the understanding of divine justice.

In examining the various historical and theological perspectives on Amalek, we see a complex interplay of narrative, symbol, and moral instruction. The Amalekites are not merely an enemy tribe but a representation of enduring forces that threaten the covenantal relationship between God and His people. Yet, as we

will explore in subsequent sections, Jesus's teachings on love and forgiveness may offer a transformative way to reinterpret these forces, encouraging us to seek peace and understanding even with those we might consider adversaries.

Section 2: Jesus's Teachings – A Paradigm Shift in Understanding Justice

Jesus's teachings on justice introduced a radical rethinking of how individuals and communities should approach relationships, conflict, and divine expectations. In contrast to the often retributive justice depicted in parts of the Old Testament, Jesus emphasized love, mercy, and forgiveness as central tenets of God's kingdom. His approach not only redefined justice but also transformed the traditional boundaries between friend and enemy, holy and profane, and justice and mercy. Jesus's message of nonviolence, compassion, and inclusion calls into question the earlier paradigm of justice as primarily punitive, suggesting instead a model of justice that is restorative, relational, and transformative.

Jesus's Revolutionary Approach to Justice: Love, Mercy, and Forgiveness

Jesus's ministry brought a new understanding of justice that centered on compassion and reconciliation rather than retaliation. In His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus redefined what it meant to be blessed, focusing not on power or dominance but on meekness, mercy, and peacemaking (Matthew 5:3–10). By proclaiming, "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy," Jesus emphasized a justice rooted in the well-being of others, even those who might be considered enemies. This shift marked a profound departure from the "eye for an eye" mentality (Matthew 5:38–39), proposing instead that followers should "turn the other cheek" when wronged, modeling a nonviolent response to injustice.

In addition, Jesus's frequent acts of healing and forgiveness, especially toward those marginalized or labeled as sinners, demonstrated that justice, in His view, was less about punishment and more about restoring relationships and redeeming lives. His interactions with tax collectors, adulterers, and even Roman officials reflect His commitment to healing rifts rather than deepening them. This approach often scandalized the religious authorities, who upheld a strict interpretation of the law and viewed justice as requiring retribution for sins.

Jesus, however, saw justice as an opportunity to extend mercy and to invite people into a transformative relationship with God.

Jesus's Reinterpretation of Old Testament Principles: Mercy Over Sacrifice and Nonviolence

Throughout His teachings, Jesus drew on Old Testament principles but often reinterpreted them to emphasize God's mercy and love over ritual or punitive obedience. One of the clearest examples of this is found in Jesus's quotation of Hosea 6:6: "I desire mercy, not sacrifice" (Matthew 9:13). By invoking this scripture, Jesus shifted the focus from external rituals and sacrifices to the heart's disposition toward others. This statement, which He referenced multiple times, underscores that God values kindness, compassion, and understanding above strict adherence to ritual law. Jesus's teaching here reflects a justice system that seeks to build up and restore rather than tear down or punish.

Another key teaching is Jesus's command to "love your enemies" and "pray for those who persecute you" (Matthew 5:44). This teaching directly contradicts the traditional wisdom of retribution, where enemies were to be opposed and punished. By instructing His followers to love their enemies, Jesus introduced a radical and counter-cultural principle: justice is fulfilled not through revenge but through love and goodwill. This command redefines the concept of "enemy" itself, transforming adversaries into neighbors who are equally deserving of God's grace. In doing so, Jesus invites His followers to participate in a divine justice that transcends human boundaries of hatred and division, one that reflects God's universal love and desire for reconciliation.

Jesus's commitment to nonviolence further demonstrates His revolutionary approach to justice. His admonition to "turn the other cheek" (Matthew 5:39) is often viewed as a call to resist the impulse to retaliate. Rather than advocating for submission or weakness, Jesus's command encourages a defiant form of love, one that breaks cycles of violence by refusing to reciprocate harm. By rejecting retribution, Jesus modeled a justice that disarms hatred and seeks peaceful solutions, aiming not to humiliate the aggressor but to expose the power of love and forgiveness. This nonviolent ethic runs throughout Jesus's ministry, culminating in His refusal to defend Himself violently during His arrest and crucifixion, even forgiving His persecutors from the cross (Luke 23:34).

Restorative vs. Retributive Justice: A Contrast in Models

The justice depicted in the Old Testament often emphasizes retribution, where consequences are matched to actions in a strict “measure for measure” approach. This model of justice, based on law and consequences, aims to uphold societal order by imposing penalties proportionate to the wrongdoing. Retributive justice is evident in stories of God’s judgment on Israel’s enemies, such as the command to destroy Amalek. In these narratives, justice is meted out in a way that exacts punishment for perceived threats to God’s people and, by extension, to God’s holiness and covenant.

In contrast, Jesus’s model of justice is fundamentally restorative, focused on healing and mending broken relationships rather than enforcing punishment. Restorative justice seeks to repair the harm caused by wrongdoing through forgiveness, reconciliation, and the transformation of individuals and communities. In Jesus’s parables, such as the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11–32), we see this restorative model in action. The father does not demand repayment or punishment from the returning son but instead embraces him in forgiveness, rejoicing at his return. This story exemplifies Jesus’s belief that justice is ultimately about restoration to community and relationship, not about condemnation.

Jesus’s teachings on justice invite His followers to go beyond the legalistic or punitive mindset of retributive justice. Instead of focusing on punishment, Jesus’s vision emphasizes the dignity of each individual and the importance of restoring right relationships. In the story of the woman caught in adultery (John 8:1–11), Jesus disarms her accusers by calling them to self-reflection, effectively shifting the focus from punishment to mercy. Rather than enforcing the law’s prescribed penalty of stoning, Jesus forgives the woman, urging her to “sin no more.” This example highlights Jesus’s understanding of justice as an opportunity for personal and communal transformation rather than condemnation.

Implications of Jesus’s Paradigm for Understanding Justice

Jesus’s approach to justice challenges His followers to reimagine what it means to live righteously in a way that reflects God’s character. For Jesus, justice is not merely about enforcing rules or punishing wrongdoers; it is about creating a world where relationships are healed, where enemies become friends, and where forgiveness restores brokenness. This perspective reshapes how we understand

Old Testament narratives like the command to destroy Amalek. Rather than seeing these commands as models for justice, Jesus's teachings encourage us to view them through a new lens—one that emphasizes mercy, peace, and the power of love to overcome enmity.

In this light, the story of Amalek might be reinterpreted not as a divine endorsement of violence but as a call to confront and transform the “Amalekite” qualities within ourselves and our societies—qualities of hatred, vengeance, and destruction. Jesus's paradigm suggests that God's justice ultimately seeks reconciliation and peace, inviting us to partner with God in building a world where mercy triumphs over judgment and where love conquers hatred.

Jesus's teachings offer a profound shift from the justice of retribution to a justice of restoration. By emphasizing love, mercy, and forgiveness, Jesus provides a new framework for understanding divine justice that calls His followers to engage in the world as peacemakers, bridge-builders, and ministers of reconciliation. In doing so, Jesus redefines what it means to embody God's justice, urging believers to see every person—friend and foe alike—as worthy of love and capable of transformation. Through this paradigm shift, Jesus not only challenges His followers to reimagine justice but also invites them into a deeper, more compassionate understanding of God's heart for humanity.

Section 3: Redefining “Enemy” – Lessons from Jesus and the Good Samaritan

In His ministry, Jesus often crossed boundaries to interact with individuals and groups who were traditionally seen as outsiders, enemies, or marginalized. These interactions challenged the conventional view of enmity and demonstrated that God's love and mercy transcend social, ethnic, and political divisions. Jesus's teachings, particularly the Parable of the Good Samaritan, offer a redefinition of relationships that calls believers to see the “enemy” not as a threat to be defeated but as a neighbor to be loved and transformed. This paradigm shift compels us to reconsider even the concept of “Amalek”—not as an adversary to be destroyed but as an invitation to extend grace, compassion, and healing.

Jesus's Interactions with Marginalized Groups: Challenging the Concept of "Enemy"

Throughout the Gospels, Jesus engages with individuals from groups considered outsiders or adversaries by Jewish society at the time. He dines with tax collectors, speaks with Samaritans, and heals the servants of Roman officials—actions that often put Him at odds with the religious authorities and social norms. Each of these interactions reveals Jesus's commitment to breaking down the barriers of hatred and exclusion, showing that no one is beyond the reach of God's love.

One of the most striking examples of Jesus redefining the concept of "enemy" occurs in His encounter with the Roman centurion (Matthew 8:5–13). The Romans were the occupying power, often seen as oppressors by the Jewish people. Yet, when a centurion comes to Jesus asking for help for his servant, Jesus does not hesitate to respond with compassion. He heals the servant and praises the centurion's faith, declaring, "I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith" (Matthew 8:10). This encounter challenges the assumption that enemies should be shunned or judged, suggesting instead that even those who seem opposed to God's people are capable of faith, respect, and love.

Jesus's interaction with the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4:1–42) further exemplifies His willingness to break social and ethnic boundaries. Samaritans were regarded with disdain by the Jewish people, who saw them as heretics and foreigners. By engaging with a Samaritan woman—a marginalized figure due to her ethnicity, gender, and lifestyle—Jesus demonstrates a radical openness and compassion. He speaks with her, offers her "living water," and reveals His identity as the Messiah. This conversation not only transforms the woman's life but also leads to the conversion of many Samaritans in her village. Through this interaction, Jesus redefines the relationship with Samaritans, showing that they, too, are recipients of God's grace and capable of spiritual transformation.

These encounters with Samaritans, Romans, and other marginalized groups illustrate Jesus's refusal to accept conventional boundaries of enmity. He does not treat individuals based on their cultural or political identity; instead, He sees each person as beloved by God. By doing so, Jesus offers a powerful model for His

followers, one that invites them to see beyond societal labels and to embrace even those deemed “enemies” as potential friends and allies.

The Parable of the Good Samaritan: Redefining “Neighbor” to Include Former Adversaries

The Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25–37) serves as a defining illustration of Jesus’s redefinition of “neighbor” and the dismantling of traditional enmities. In response to a lawyer’s question, “Who is my neighbor?” Jesus tells the story of a man traveling from Jerusalem to Jericho who is attacked by robbers and left for dead. Both a priest and a Levite—figures who would have been expected to help—pass by the wounded man without offering assistance. However, a Samaritan, considered an enemy and an outsider by Jewish society, stops to help. He tends to the man’s wounds, transports him to an inn, and pays for his care.

By making a Samaritan the hero of the story, Jesus shocks His audience and upends their expectations. In this parable, the Samaritan—someone traditionally seen as an adversary—embodies true compassion and love. Through his actions, he fulfills the command to “love your neighbor as yourself” (Leviticus 19:18), even though the wounded man might have viewed him with suspicion or prejudice. The parable challenges listeners to rethink who qualifies as a “neighbor” and suggests that anyone in need, regardless of their background or status, is worthy of care and compassion.

Jesus concludes the parable by asking the lawyer, “Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?” When the lawyer responds, “The one who had mercy on him,” Jesus instructs him to “go and do likewise.” This directive extends beyond the boundaries of ethnicity, religion, or enmity, calling everyone to a standard of mercy that transcends social divisions. By redefining “neighbor” in this way, Jesus sets a new precedent for how His followers should view others, especially those who might traditionally be seen as outsiders or enemies.

The Parable of the Good Samaritan invites believers to consider compassion as the highest law, one that overrides prejudices, cultural animosities, and personal grievances. It calls for a shift from seeing people through the lens of past conflicts to recognizing shared humanity and mutual vulnerability. Through this story,

Jesus teaches that love and mercy are the true markers of discipleship, encouraging His followers to see even those labeled as enemies as neighbors in need of help.

From Amalek to Neighbor: Reinterpreting “Enemy” as an Opportunity for Transformation

In light of Jesus’s redefinition of “neighbor” and His compassionate interactions with traditional adversaries, we are challenged to reconsider the concept of “Amalek.” Historically, Amalek was viewed as a bitter enemy of Israel, a people who posed a significant threat and whose destruction was seen as necessary for Israel’s security and spiritual purity. Yet, if we approach Amalek through the lens of Jesus’s teachings, we are invited to see them not as enemies to be destroyed but as neighbors to be transformed.

Rather than viewing “Amalek” as a call to literal or symbolic destruction, Jesus’s approach suggests that the true enemy lies in the qualities within ourselves and our communities that oppose love, mercy, and reconciliation. By embodying Jesus’s teachings, we can confront the “Amalek” within—qualities of hatred, prejudice, fear, and vengeance—and seek to transform these tendencies through compassion and humility. This perspective reinterprets “Amalek” not as an external foe but as a metaphor for the forces within each of us that resist God’s kingdom values.

Moreover, Jesus’s teachings invite us to approach potential adversaries with a spirit of reconciliation rather than antagonism. In a modern context, this might mean extending compassion to those who differ from us ideologically, culturally, or politically. It may involve seeking to understand and reconcile with those we consider opponents or threats, viewing them as neighbors who are also in need of grace. By following Jesus’s example, we can transform relationships that might otherwise be marked by division and hostility.

In this redefined framework, “Amalek” represents an opportunity to practice the radical compassion that Jesus modeled in His life. We are called to extend mercy and understanding, even to those who challenge or oppose us. Through this approach, justice is not about victory over an enemy but about healing, connection, and the restoration of dignity. By seeing “Amalek” as a neighbor to be

loved rather than an adversary to be destroyed, we embrace the fullness of Jesus's message and become agents of reconciliation in a fractured world.

Jesus's redefinition of relationships challenges us to move beyond narratives of destruction and toward a model of justice that is built on compassion, forgiveness, and love. In His vision, the lines between enemy and neighbor are blurred, and every person is seen as worthy of mercy. By embodying this transformative vision, we fulfill the call to "go and do likewise," living out the compassionate and inclusive love that lies at the heart of Jesus's teachings.

Section 4: Amalek as a Symbol – Overcoming Inner and Societal Evil

In Jewish and Christian traditions, Amalek has often transcended its historical role as a literal enemy of Israel to become a powerful symbol for the forces of evil, cruelty, and opposition to divine order. This symbolic interpretation allows believers to confront Amalek not as an external foe but as an embodiment of destructive qualities that can take root within individuals and societies. The idea of "Amalek" becomes a representation of the darkness that resists spiritual growth, peace, and reconciliation—qualities that Jesus consistently taught His followers to overcome. By engaging with the symbolic "Amalek" within and around us, Jesus's teachings guide believers toward self-awareness, humility, and a transformative love that has the power to subdue even the most ingrained tendencies toward hatred and division.

Amalek as a Symbol of Internal and Societal Evils

In Jewish tradition, Amalek has come to represent more than a tribe that opposed Israel; it symbolizes the irrational hatred, violence, and cruelty that stand in opposition to God's purposes. The Amalekites' initial, unprovoked attack on Israel in the wilderness (Exodus 17:8–16) is often interpreted as an act of baseless hatred, an emblem of forces that seek to destroy what is good and pure without cause. This enmity is echoed in the Book of Esther, where Haman, a descendant of Agag (an Amalekite king), attempts to annihilate the Jewish people. Haman's plot symbolizes the ongoing presence of irrational and genocidal hatred that seeks to extinguish the light of faith and righteousness in the world. Thus, "Amalek" is understood not just as an enemy from the past but as a recurring

symbol of those forces that threaten God's people and disrupt His vision for a world built on justice and compassion.

Christian interpretations have similarly embraced Amalek as a representation of inner and societal evils, such as pride, cruelty, and the human propensity for violence. In this view, "Amalek" symbolizes the darker impulses within each individual that can lead to harm if left unchecked. Pride, for instance, is seen as a manifestation of the "Amalekite" tendency to elevate oneself above others and ignore the sacredness of every life. Hatred and cruelty, similarly, are expressions of the inner Amalek that resists the call to love and mercy. This symbolic interpretation enables believers to understand Amalek not as a historical tribe but as a mirror reflecting the parts of ourselves and our communities that oppose God's love and justice.

In both Jewish and Christian traditions, Amalek thus becomes a call to vigilance, urging believers to recognize and confront these harmful tendencies in their own lives and in the structures of society. The "Amalek" within is not simply an adversary from without; it is also the pride, anger, and fear that can arise in our hearts and lead us away from God's path. Understanding Amalek as a symbol of these inner and societal evils invites believers to approach spiritual growth as an active struggle against the forces within us that resist God's peace and love.

Jesus's Teachings and the Call to Transform the "Amalekite" Within

Jesus's teachings emphasize internal transformation as the foundation for a life that reflects God's justice and mercy. He consistently called His followers to confront their own tendencies toward judgment, pride, and hatred, rather than projecting these qualities onto others. For Jesus, true discipleship begins with self-awareness and humility, recognizing that the greatest obstacles to a life of faith often lie within. This inward focus invites believers to confront the "Amalekite" qualities in themselves—the pride, resentment, and desire for retribution that can lead them away from love and toward division.

One example of Jesus's emphasis on internal transformation is found in His teaching on judgment: "Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye?" (Matthew 7:3). In this passage, Jesus calls His followers to examine their own faults before condemning others. This teaching encourages believers to look inward, identifying and transforming

the qualities within themselves that contribute to discord and separation from God. Rather than focusing on external enemies, Jesus's approach suggests that the primary battle is against one's own impulses toward pride and judgment.

Jesus also taught that the true measure of one's faith is not adherence to external rituals or public displays of righteousness but the purity of the heart. In the Sermon on the Mount, He said, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God" (Matthew 5:8). By cultivating humility, love, and forgiveness, believers can root out the symbolic "Amalek" within—the pride, resentment, and cruelty that prevent them from living in harmony with God's will. Jesus's emphasis on internal purity calls His followers to confront the darkness within themselves and to replace it with compassion, patience, and self-awareness.

In this way, Jesus's teachings transform the struggle against Amalek from a physical conflict into a spiritual journey. Instead of externalizing "Amalek" as a literal enemy, His followers are encouraged to see it as a symbolic adversary that resides within the heart, manifesting in thoughts and actions that are opposed to love and justice. By engaging in this inner struggle, believers can cultivate a life that reflects God's peace, extending mercy and forgiveness even to those they might otherwise view as adversaries.

The Inner "Amalek" and the Path to Spiritual Transformation

In the journey toward spiritual maturity, Jesus's teachings invite believers to confront and transform their inner "Amalek." This internal adversary may take many forms—pride, fear, anger, or the desire for revenge—and often surfaces in moments of conflict or vulnerability. By addressing these qualities, believers can move closer to embodying the love and humility that Jesus exemplified. This transformation is not easy; it requires courage, self-reflection, and a willingness to release deeply ingrained habits of thought and behavior. However, by embracing this process, believers can overcome the internal barriers that separate them from God and from others.

Overcoming the inner "Amalek" begins with humility, an attitude that Jesus consistently modeled in His life and ministry. In Philippians 2:5–8, Paul writes of Jesus's humility, noting that "though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself... becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross." By following Jesus's

example of humility, believers can confront the pride that often fuels their sense of superiority or entitlement. This humility creates space for compassion, allowing individuals to see others not as enemies but as fellow travelers on the journey of faith.

Love is another powerful antidote to the inner “Amalek.” Jesus’s call to love one’s neighbor and even one’s enemies (Matthew 5:44) encourages believers to view others through the lens of God’s love. This radical love dismantles the resentment and fear that can create division, transforming potential adversaries into neighbors and friends. In practical terms, this means extending kindness and understanding even when it feels difficult or undeserved. By loving others as God loves them, believers can break the cycle of hostility and create relationships grounded in mutual respect and compassion.

Self-awareness is also essential in confronting the inner “Amalek.” Jesus’s teachings encourage believers to be mindful of their thoughts, emotions, and actions, recognizing how they contribute to or detract from a life of faith. By cultivating self-awareness, individuals can identify the sources of their anger, fear, and pride, gaining insight into the ways these emotions influence their behavior. This self-reflection enables believers to take responsibility for their actions, replacing destructive tendencies with qualities that reflect God’s love and justice.

Through humility, love, and self-awareness, believers can overcome the symbolic “Amalek” within, transforming their hearts and lives in accordance with Jesus’s teachings. This process is not merely about suppressing negative qualities but about replacing them with virtues that align with God’s will. By doing so, believers can become vessels of God’s peace, extending mercy, compassion, and forgiveness to others. The struggle against the inner “Amalek” becomes an opportunity for spiritual growth, guiding believers toward a life that embodies the transformative power of God’s love.

Ultimately, Jesus’s teachings invite His followers to shift their focus from external enemies to the inner battles that prevent them from living fully in God’s presence. By confronting and transforming the “Amalekite” qualities within, believers can align themselves with God’s kingdom values, creating a world where love overcomes hatred, humility replaces pride, and mercy triumphs over judgment. In this way, the symbolic “Amalek” is not a foe to be vanquished but a part of the

human condition that, when transformed, brings believers closer to God and to one another.

Section 5: Justice Transformed – Jesus’s Vision of Redemption Over Retribution

In His teachings, Jesus presents a radically different vision of justice—one that is rooted in redemption rather than retribution, emphasizing forgiveness, reconciliation, and healing. This vision challenges conventional understandings of justice based on equal punishment for wrongdoing, urging a shift toward a justice that seeks to restore broken relationships and transform hearts. Through parables, direct teachings, and His own example, Jesus reveals a path where justice does not end in retaliation but moves forward in forgiveness and growth. By focusing on redemption, Jesus’s concept of justice becomes a powerful means of transforming both individuals and communities, encouraging a peace that surpasses mere absence of conflict to foster genuine healing and unity.

Justice as a Redemptive Process: Forgiveness, Reconciliation, and Healing

In the Gospel narratives, Jesus consistently teaches that true justice involves not only addressing wrongdoing but also actively seeking the restoration of those who have fallen. His approach to justice is not about exacting retribution; rather, it is about reaching out in compassion to bring healing and redemption. Jesus’s model is exemplified in His interactions with sinners, tax collectors, and outcasts—those whom society often condemned or marginalized. For instance, when Jesus encounters the woman caught in adultery (John 8:1–11), He does not condemn her, as her accusers expected. Instead, He challenges them to consider their own faults, saying, “Let anyone among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her.” When they leave, He tells the woman, “Go now and leave your life of sin.” Here, Jesus’s justice does not end in punishment but in an invitation to transformation, offering a new beginning rather than condemnation.

Jesus’s ministry reflects the conviction that justice is fulfilled not through vengeance or punishment but through the healing of relationships. He advocates for a process of reconciliation, where estranged individuals and communities are brought back into harmony. This redemptive approach is evident in the Parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11–32), in which a father welcomes his wayward son

back with open arms after he squanders his inheritance. Rather than scolding or punishing the son, the father celebrates his return, declaring, “For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.” This story exemplifies Jesus’s vision of justice as reconciliation, where love restores broken bonds and reclaims those who have gone astray. The father’s joy in the son’s return symbolizes the joy of God’s justice—a justice that seeks not retribution but the restoration of all to their rightful place within the family of God.

In addition to forgiveness and reconciliation, Jesus’s vision of justice places a strong emphasis on healing. In the Gospels, Jesus performs countless acts of healing, reaching out to those who are suffering physically, mentally, and spiritually. These acts are not simply demonstrations of power but manifestations of God’s justice, which seeks to make whole what has been broken. By healing lepers, restoring sight to the blind, and freeing those possessed by demons, Jesus shows that God’s justice is deeply concerned with the restoration of individuals and communities. Each act of healing is a testament to the idea that true justice is restorative, aiming to repair the harm done rather than merely exact punishment. In this way, Jesus’s concept of justice brings hope and new life, offering a path to wholeness that retributive justice could never achieve.

Forgiving “Seventy Times Seven” – Breaking Cycles of Violence and Retribution

One of the most powerful aspects of Jesus’s teaching on justice is His emphasis on forgiveness as a way to transcend cycles of violence and retribution. In Matthew 18:21–22, when Peter asks Jesus, “Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Up to seven times?” Jesus replies, “I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times” (or “seventy times seven” in some translations). This response is not meant to suggest a literal number of times one should forgive but rather to indicate that forgiveness should be boundless. Jesus’s teaching here calls His followers to a radical form of forgiveness that goes beyond any reasonable calculation, inviting them to abandon the idea of keeping track of offenses altogether.

The command to forgive “seventy times seven” challenges the natural human tendency to seek retribution and hold onto grudges. In human relationships, a cycle of offense and retaliation often perpetuates conflict, leading to escalating violence and deeper divisions. Jesus’s teaching on forgiveness disrupts this cycle,

introducing a justice that breaks free from the need for revenge. By forgiving, individuals release their claim on retribution, allowing space for healing and reconciliation. Forgiveness, in Jesus's vision, is not only an act of mercy but a transformative tool that brings individuals and communities closer to God's heart. It is a form of justice that sees the offender not as an irredeemable adversary but as someone capable of change and worthy of grace.

This boundless forgiveness is essential for creating a community where peace can flourish. Jesus's teaching suggests that true peace cannot exist where there is resentment and a desire for revenge. By forgiving generously, believers create an environment in which relationships can be restored, where trust can be rebuilt, and where love replaces the hostility of past wrongs. Jesus's command to forgive "seventy times seven" is thus a call to a higher form of justice—one that seeks to heal rather than harm, that sees redemption as the ultimate goal. This vision of justice not only transforms individual lives but also fosters a communal ethic of mercy and compassion, breaking down walls of division and opening the way to lasting peace.

Justice as Transformation: Toward Peace for Individuals and Communities

In Jesus's vision, justice is not merely about restoring balance after an offense but about transforming individuals and communities so they may experience true peace. This transformative justice is evident in Jesus's consistent call to love one's enemies and to do good to those who persecute (Matthew 5:44). Rather than seeking retribution, Jesus encourages His followers to respond to hostility with kindness, challenging them to rise above the instinct to retaliate. This call to enemy love is radical because it does not simply advocate for non-retaliation but actively seeks the well-being of the other, even if that other is an enemy. Jesus's justice thus moves beyond punishment and correction, focusing instead on the possibility of personal and communal change.

By emphasizing love, forgiveness, and compassion, Jesus sets forth a vision of justice that seeks to create a world in which people are reconciled to one another and to God. This approach is inherently transformational because it views justice not as a reaction to wrongdoing but as a proactive force for good. Through the practice of forgiveness and enemy love, individuals are invited to participate in the work of building God's kingdom—a kingdom where peace, understanding,

and unity are paramount. Jesus's justice does not simply call for the cessation of violence; it calls for the cultivation of relationships that nurture mutual respect and dignity. By transforming individuals, Jesus's model of justice has the power to transform entire communities, fostering an environment where mercy triumphs over judgment.

Furthermore, Jesus's redemptive approach to justice offers a profound model for addressing societal injustices. In a world marked by cycles of violence, inequality, and systemic oppression, Jesus's call to forgive and reconcile provides a path forward that goes beyond temporary solutions or punitive measures. His teachings suggest that true justice involves addressing the root causes of division and injustice, bringing healing to both the oppressed and the oppressor. By promoting a justice that is redemptive rather than retributive, Jesus encourages communities to move from punishment to restoration, from hostility to fellowship. This vision of justice seeks not only to resolve conflicts but to prevent them by fostering compassion, empathy, and understanding among people.

In the end, Jesus's vision of justice as a redemptive process invites a profound shift in how we understand our relationships with others and with God. His teachings encourage a justice that is expansive and inclusive, one that sees every person—regardless of their actions—as worthy of love and capable of transformation. This approach calls believers to work for a world where forgiveness, reconciliation, and healing are the primary tools for resolving conflict, a world where peace is achieved not through dominance or punishment but through mutual respect and shared commitment to God's purposes. Jesus's model of justice is an invitation to participate in the redemptive work of God, transforming individual lives and communities toward a peace that reflects God's kingdom on earth.

By embracing this vision, we move beyond retribution and into the transformative power of divine justice—a justice that restores, redeems, and ultimately brings us closer to God's dream for humanity.

Section 6: Implications for Modern Faith and Ethics

The model of justice that Jesus presents—rooted in forgiveness, reconciliation, and redemption—offers a profound and transformative approach to modern faith and ethics, especially in contexts where retribution might seem justified or where societal and global conflicts persist. Jesus’s teachings encourage a reorientation away from the cycles of retaliation that often characterize human relationships and towards a justice that seeks restoration and peace. By reinterpreting the story of Amalek and similar Old Testament narratives through the lens of Jesus’s compassion, contemporary believers can find guidance for addressing modern conflicts, injustices, and ethical dilemmas with humility and love. In this way, a Jesus-centered reading of scripture invites us to pursue peace, not only in personal relationships but in the larger issues facing our world today.

Relevance of Jesus’s Model of Justice in Modern Conflicts and Retributive Contexts

In the face of injustice, violence, or wrongdoing, the natural human response is often to seek retribution—to demand that those responsible face consequences equal to the harm they have inflicted. This desire for “eye for an eye” justice can be observed in both personal relationships and societal responses to crime, terrorism, and political conflicts. However, Jesus’s model of justice challenges this impulse, inviting believers to consider an approach that moves beyond mere punishment. By focusing on forgiveness and the potential for transformation, Jesus’s teachings offer a framework for justice that seeks not only to address wrongs but also to heal wounds and rebuild trust.

In situations where retribution seems justified—such as in response to acts of violence or oppression—Jesus’s call to forgiveness and enemy love offers a radical alternative. Forgiveness in these cases does not mean excusing or ignoring wrongdoing; rather, it represents a commitment to break the cycle of vengeance that perpetuates division and animosity. In a world often characterized by cycles of violence, from generational family feuds to longstanding ethnic and religious conflicts, Jesus’s teachings on justice serve as a reminder that retribution often deepens wounds rather than healing them. By forgiving “seventy times seven,” as Jesus taught (Matthew 18:22), individuals and communities are freed from the

endless cycle of retaliation, making room for new relationships grounded in peace rather than hostility.

This approach to justice is also relevant in the criminal justice system, where retributive models have long dominated. Jesus's emphasis on redemption challenges society to reconsider how it treats offenders, particularly those who have served their sentences and wish to reenter society. A justice model that seeks transformation over retribution would emphasize rehabilitation, offering pathways for individuals to atone, grow, and contribute positively to their communities. By following Jesus's teachings, believers and policymakers alike might advocate for restorative justice practices that prioritize reconciliation and healing over punishment, creating systems that reflect the mercy and compassion Jesus exemplified.

Reinterpreting Amalek and Justice: Ethical Approaches to Social and Global Conflicts

The reinterpretation of Amalek and divine justice through Jesus's teachings provides ethical insights that can guide responses to contemporary social and global conflicts. In a world often divided by political, ethnic, and religious differences, the traditional view of "enemy" as an irredeemable adversary has led to polarization, dehumanization, and a tendency to justify violence. By reimagining Amalek not as a literal foe to be annihilated but as a symbol of inner and societal forces opposed to peace and justice, believers are encouraged to confront hatred, prejudice, and fear within themselves and their communities rather than externalizing these qualities onto others.

This reinterpretation has implications for how modern faith communities engage in global issues such as war, economic inequality, and social justice. For example, in conflicts where religious or cultural differences have been used to justify violence, a Jesus-centered approach would advocate for dialogue, understanding, and a commitment to see the "enemy" as a neighbor. In Jesus's parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25–37), the true neighbor is the one who shows mercy, regardless of cultural divides. This lesson urges believers to approach conflicts not with an adversarial mindset but with a desire for mutual respect, empathy, and cooperation.

In addressing issues such as racial injustice, poverty, and systemic oppression, Jesus's emphasis on restorative justice invites believers to seek solutions that empower and uplift rather than condemn. By seeing the "Amalekite" within as a symbol of the pride, prejudice, and greed that contribute to social injustice, believers can engage in introspection and strive to dismantle these harmful systems both within themselves and in society. This approach calls for addressing the root causes of inequality and suffering rather than merely managing their symptoms. A justice that aligns with Jesus's teachings would emphasize equity, compassion, and the fair distribution of resources, recognizing the inherent dignity of every person.

Furthermore, Jesus's model of justice can inform how nations approach international conflicts. In place of escalation and retaliation, Jesus's teachings suggest a commitment to peacemaking efforts that seek to resolve disputes through diplomacy and dialogue. While defending the oppressed and protecting the vulnerable remain essential, Jesus's model of justice encourages restraint and a focus on long-term reconciliation rather than short-term victory. In global politics, this could mean advocating for policies that prioritize human rights, seek common ground, and avoid rhetoric that dehumanizes or demonizes other nations or groups.

A Jesus-Centered Reading of the Old Testament: Seeking Peace, Compassion, and Transformation

Viewing Old Testament stories through the lens of Jesus's teachings provides contemporary believers with a framework for navigating difficult passages and applying biblical principles to today's challenges. When interpreted in light of Jesus's radical compassion, Old Testament accounts like the story of Amalek can be seen not as endorsements of retributive violence but as complex narratives that reflect humanity's struggle with sin, justice, and divine expectation. By reinterpreting these stories, believers can draw on the wisdom of scripture without being bound to a literal interpretation that might conflict with Jesus's vision of love and mercy.

A Jesus-centered reading of the Old Testament suggests that the ultimate message of scripture is one of transformation, where justice is fulfilled through mercy and reconciliation. Instead of viewing Amalek and other "enemies" as

people to be eliminated, Jesus's teachings encourage believers to seek transformation for both themselves and their perceived adversaries. This approach requires humility, as it acknowledges that the impulse to harm or seek revenge can arise within each person. It also calls for courage, as it challenges individuals to break free from the cycles of retribution that are often deeply ingrained in culture and society.

By embracing this Jesus-centered framework, contemporary believers are invited to embody the love, forgiveness, and peacemaking that Jesus modeled. In practical terms, this might mean choosing patience and understanding in personal conflicts, working toward reconciliation in divided communities, and advocating for justice in ways that restore rather than punish. In a world where hostility, resentment, and fear often dominate, this commitment to compassion and transformation reflects a profound faith in the redemptive power of God's love.

Jesus's teachings on justice, when applied to modern ethical dilemmas, remind believers that peace is not simply the absence of conflict but the presence of right relationships and mutual respect. His vision of justice calls individuals and communities to foster environments where mercy is shown freely, where forgiveness is offered generously, and where the dignity of every person is upheld. Through a Jesus-centered approach, the call to "destroy Amalek" becomes a call to dismantle the inner and societal forces that hinder peace, understanding, and reconciliation.

Conclusion: Embracing Jesus's Vision of Justice for a Transformed World

The implications of Jesus's model of justice for modern faith and ethics are vast. By reinterpreting Old Testament concepts of enmity and justice through His teachings, believers are encouraged to embrace a justice that seeks not retribution but redemption. In a world fraught with division and conflict, this approach challenges us to rise above the immediate impulse for retaliation and instead work toward peace, compassion, and understanding.

In both personal and societal contexts, Jesus's vision of justice calls for a courageous commitment to love and forgiveness, even when it feels counterintuitive or difficult. It invites us to confront the "Amalek" within, transforming harmful tendencies in ourselves and in our communities into opportunities for growth and healing. By choosing reconciliation over retribution,

we participate in a vision of justice that reflects the heart of God—a justice that heals, redeems, and ultimately brings us closer to the peace of God’s kingdom.

This Jesus-centered reading of the Old Testament, therefore, is not only a reinterpretation but a path forward for contemporary believers, providing a model for living out God’s love in a broken world. Through the teachings of Jesus, justice is transformed from a tool of division into an instrument of peace, offering a blueprint for a world where compassion triumphs over judgment and where transformation, rather than retaliation, is the ultimate goal.

Conclusion

The exploration of Jesus’s teachings on justice, compassion, and reconciliation offers profound insights into how we might reinterpret challenging Old Testament narratives, such as the story of Amalek. In traditional readings, stories like the command to “utterly destroy” the Amalekites can be difficult to reconcile with a loving and merciful God. Yet, through the lens of Jesus’s teachings, these narratives reveal new layers of meaning, allowing believers to view them not as literal endorsements of violence but as symbolic representations of the internal and societal struggles humanity faces in its journey toward God. Jesus’s model of justice transforms these ancient texts into opportunities for inner growth and communal healing, prompting believers to confront and overcome the forces of hatred, pride, and vengeance that can exist within every heart and society.

Jesus’s life and ministry centered on an approach to justice that transcends retribution, focusing instead on forgiveness, redemption, and peace. His teachings call believers to “love your enemies,” forgive boundlessly, and seek peace in even the most challenging relationships. This revolutionary vision of justice challenges the common instinct to retaliate or seek revenge, offering instead a pathway to healing that emphasizes restoration over punishment. Jesus’s model invites individuals and communities to break free from cycles of hostility and division, choosing instead the transformative power of forgiveness. In this framework, divine justice is not an act of retribution but a force of healing that restores broken relationships, reconciles differences, and creates space for true peace.

By reinterpreting Old Testament stories through the compassionate and forgiving perspective that Jesus embodied, believers are encouraged to approach the world with humility, empathy, and openness. Rather than viewing others as “Amalek” or adversaries to be defeated, this approach challenges us to see every person as a neighbor and every encounter as an opportunity to embody God’s love. In today’s complex world, filled with social, political, and personal conflicts, Jesus’s teachings provide a timely reminder that the true power of justice lies not in dominance or punishment but in the ability to heal, transform, and unite.

Reading the Old Testament through the lens of Jesus’s radical compassion also has significant implications for how we engage with ethical and moral issues today. It calls us to examine our own hearts, recognizing and transforming the “Amalekite” qualities within—such as pride, resentment, and the desire for revenge—before we seek to judge others. It invites us to actively work toward peace in our communities, to seek justice in ways that uplift rather than condemn, and to promote reconciliation in the face of division. By embracing Jesus’s vision, we can engage in a justice that reflects God’s kingdom, one that seeks the flourishing of all people and that understands justice as a dynamic process of transformation rather than a static system of reward and punishment.

Ultimately, reading the Old Testament through Jesus’s teachings invites believers into a deeper, more compassionate understanding of God’s heart and vision for humanity. It encourages a way of life where love and forgiveness are not just ideals but practices, where justice is measured by the restoration it brings, and where peace is the ultimate goal. This approach transforms how we understand scripture and how we live out our faith in a world that desperately needs healing and reconciliation. By choosing to see the world through Jesus’s eyes, believers can become agents of divine justice, embodying God’s love and compassion in ways that bring hope, unity, and lasting peace.

In a time when divisions and conflicts seem insurmountable, this Jesus-centered perspective on justice offers a beacon of hope—a reminder that the justice of God is not harsh or unyielding but is filled with grace, mercy, and a boundless desire for redemption. This vision of divine justice invites us to work towards a world where compassion prevails, where relationships are restored, and where God’s love binds together even those who once seemed like enemies. Embracing

this transformative approach to scripture and justice, we can help build a more just, loving, and peaceful world—one that reflects the heart of God and the teachings of Jesus.

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This selection of resources provides a diverse foundation for further exploration into Jesus's teachings on justice, the reexamination of Old Testament narratives through a New Testament lens, and the implications for contemporary ethics and faith. These works encompass biblical exegesis, Jewish and Christian perspectives on justice, ethical considerations in modern conflicts, and theological reflections on forgiveness, peace, and reconciliation.

