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Religious Violence in Judaism: Past and Present

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Throughout Jewish history, religious tradition has had a dialectical relationship with violence. Judaism is neither more nor less violent than any other religion. In this essay, however, we offer a comprehensive and integrated survey of the components of Jewish ethos and mythos relating to violence while analyzing and illustrating their development and influence over the course of three millennia, from biblical times to the contemporary Jewish world, particularly in the Jewish State. We analyze the various transformations that Jewish religious violent norms, values, moods, and symbols have undergone, their linkage to ever-changing social and cultural circumstances, their social-political roots and implications, and their relationship to other Jewish traditions. We trace how ancient violent motifs have emerged and have been processed over time, and observe present-day violent behavior in light of these motifs. Along the way, we explicate the dynamics that characterize the tradition of Jewish religious violence and its paradoxical nature. Our argument implies a general theoretical model of religious violence that can be applied in a comparative context: Actors engage in a constant evaluation, selection, and reinterpretation of religious ideas and practices from an ever-growing reservoir and in so doing contribute to that reservoir. Religious tradition is adaptable but it also places limits on the violence agents can justify at any point in time.

Keywords Bible, Israel, Judaism, religion, traditionalism, violence

Objectives, Definitions, and Theoretical Implications

This article offers a comprehensive and integrated survey of the components of Jewish tradition relating to violence while analyzing and illustrating their development and influence throughout history.[1] Our intention is not merely to describe

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the traditional violent themes in Judaism as they appear in sacred texts, rites, customs, and chronicles, or to explain their impact, past and present. Rather, we seek to emphasize the *dynamic* aspect of the Jewish religious violence tradition. We intend to show this tradition at work. We analyze the various transformations that these violent motifs have undergone, their linkage to ever-changing social and cultural circumstances, their social-political roots and implications, and their relationship to other Jewish traditions. The following is a twofold endeavor: to trace how ancient motifs have emerged and have been processed over time, and to analyze present-day violent behavior in light of ancient motifs. Along the way, we highlight the paradoxes that characterize the Jewish religious violence tradition.

The topic of this article is Jewish *religious* violence rather than Jewish violence. We address the relationship between religious tradition and violence in Jewish history and in the contemporary Jewish world, particularly in the Jewish State. However, this essay presents a paradigm that may be used for examining the role violence plays in other religious cultures as well. Our argument regarding Jewish religious violence implies a general theoretical model that can be applied in a comparative context.

Our thesis contrasts with three views that prevail among students of religious violence. First, those who adopt a deterministic view see violence as inherent in the very institution of religion and traceable to its deep structure and primordial essence. This view trivializes historical circumstances and leaves actors with little to no agency.[2] In a second group are those scholars who attribute a violent core to particular religious traditions. They distinguish between inherently peaceful religious movements and inherently violent ones. The devotees of the latter are said to be doomed to violence by the immanent nature of their religion.[3] Third, those who adopt a quasi-Marxist or instrumentalist view see religion as an infinitely flexible tool at the disposal of rational agents who engage in violence for practical reasons.[4] In this account, religion is epiphenomenal, a medium for strategic or materialist motives.

In contrast to the static and reductionist theories above, our approach emphasizes the dialectical nature of violence in a religious tradition. We do not view religion as fully constraining. Actors engage in a constant evaluation, selection, and reinterpretation of religious ideas from an ever-growing reservoir and in so doing contribute to that reservoir. At the same time, we do not envision believers as cynical and opportunistic actors, unconstrained in exploiting religious tradition at will, distorting and undermining its content as they see fit. Instead, we view religious tradition as both adaptable and bounded. Though its boundaries may change gradually over time in response to the choices agents make, they also place limits on what these agents can justify at any point in time.

Our intention in the following pages is not to depict Judaism as a violent tradition. Nor is it our intention to portray Judaism as a non-violent tradition. The reality is far more complex, as it is in all religious traditions. Jewish tradition includes an abundance of material that has clearly violent implications but also a profusion of materials that support a non-violent ethic. Jewish religious motifs are as apparent in the past and present struggle *against* Jewish violence as they are in justifying such violence. Most contemporary observant Jews have no violent tendencies. In today's Jewish world, not only are there religious movements dedicated to opposing violence but several of the most prominent members of Israel's peace camp justify their conciliatory, moderate, compassionate, and dovish positions by means of religious ethics and base their resistance to aggression on sacred texts.[5] Secular opponents of Jewish

violence often choose observant Jews as their representatives because these can deploy Jewish tradition to undermine the perception of religious violence as necessary and exclusive.

By "ideological violence" we mean the use or threatened use of physical force that may cause damage, injury, and death to promote a systematic agenda for the transformation of socio-political and/or cultural-spiritual reality.[6] Our definition excludes violence associated with criminal or egotistical intentions, purposeless hooliganism, psychotic impulses, personal animosity and domestic strife, and state-administered (or corporate bureaucracy managed) institutionalized violence that is justified in strategic, economic, legal-disciplinary, or organizational terms.

Religious violence, a sub-category of the above, is, firstly, violence sponsored or performed by individuals or groups who self-define and are identified by those around them as religious. Secondly, these actors account for their violence in a religious language, invoking religious symbols and referencing religious norms and values.[7]

According to recent research, there are some 150 recorded incidents of violence perpetrated by Jews (between 1932 and 1977) in pre-state and sovereign Israel that can be described as "political terror."[8] The vast majority of these cases were part of the national liberation struggle of the pre-State Yishuv, particularly the Zionist underground movements in Palestine—the Haganah, Etzel (Irgun), and Lehi (Stern Gang), which executed attacks against British Mandate Authorities (such as the attack on the King David Hotel), against Palestinians (such as the attack on Deir Yassin), and against fellow Jews (in competing movements, collaborators, etc.).[9] Notwithstanding two curious but negligible exceptions of the early 1950s, *Brit Hakana'im* and *Malchut Yisrael*, all these incidents were executed by secular individuals and groups, though some of these, especially Lehi, bore a certain affinity towards Jewish tradition.[10]

In contrast, in the thirty years between 1978 and 2008, scholars have counted 170 incidents of Jewish political terrorism in Israel (directed primarily at Palestinians, with a negligible minority directed at the dovish left in Israel). Of these, 3% were executed by secular Israelis, mostly driven by personal vendettas. About 3% were executed by mentally unstable individuals and another 5–7% were committed by individuals whose degree of observance is unknown.[11] The remaining 90% were executed by national-religious Jews: Gush Emunim settlers, followers of the Kahane legacy, and various Jewish underground cells.[12]

We are thus faced with an interesting puzzle: Before the 1970s, religious Jews abstained from violence while their secular counterparts espoused violence. How is it that practically all ideologically-motivated violent acts since then were committed by religious Jews and explained in religious terms while secular Jews tend to refrain from such violence? In other words, the phenomenon we call Jewish *religious* violence is a fundamentally contemporary phenomenon. It would seem that religious groups and political groups can change their character and shift from quietism, tolerance, and reconciliation to violence and back. We will argue that both currents coexist in parallel and in dialectical relationship with one another. At times, one will become an undercurrent while the other dominates. The intensity and sophistication of the anti-violent current can serve as a weathervane for the strength of the impulse towards violence. After all, the former functions primarily as polemic to counteract the latter.

The shift from violence to non-violence and back can occur across time or across space. As in Islam and Christianity, so Judaism too is characterized by fluctuations

in levels of violence across historical periods and across geographical locations. As we shall see, not only religious groups but entire religious traditions can experience violent and non-violent phases.

We begin our essay with a brief review of contemporary Jewish violent incidents in order to draw attention to several unique attributes that characterize these acts. We note, in particular, their common location (the State of Israel) and the level of religious observance shared by the perpetrators (all were Orthodox Jews). We conclude the first part of our article by discussing the differences between secular and religious Jewish violence and by elaborating the difference between tradition and traditionalism. Tradition, we argue, is a flexible and heterogeneous reservoir on which traditionalists draw, selectively and creatively, in order to legitimate their claims.

In the second part of this article we survey the roots of that tradition, beginning with the biblical text. We emphasize the changing relationship between Judaism and the Bible and the significance of interpretation and reinterpretation in this process. We illustrate this process at play in the paradigmatic biblical treatment of violence and the zealotry of Phinehas, a tradition that posed significant challenges for subsequent interpreters. The third part of our article is dedicated to the post-biblical tradition of violence in Judaism, starting with the great revolts and the extra-canonical texts, the Talmud and the *Halakha*, the mystical tradition, and the motif of messianism. In each case, we highlight how key historical events and the work of scholars were influenced by existing traditions but also reshaped the available reservoir of violent traditions, and thus formed the foundation for subsequent changes in that tradition.

In the fourth part of this article, we examine contemporary changes in the identity of perpetrators of Jewish violence. After two millennia of Jewish quietism, with several exceptions that we discuss in detail, the mantle of Jewish violence was assumed by the Zionist movement. In the early 1970s, however, this secular brand of Jewish violence was overshadowed by a new brand of Jewish religious violence. We analyze the relationship between Zionism, modern Jewish fundamentalism, and the tradition of Jewish violence. We conclude by contemplating several ongoing debates regarding Jewish religious violence: the relationship between intra- versus extra-Jewish violence, the issue of victimhood, definitional issues surrounding Jewish violence, and the effect of this violent tradition in the Israel Defense Forces.

Religious Violence: The Distinctiveness of the Jewish Case

Some Notorious Cases

The following are three of the most conspicuous instances of contemporary Jewish religious violence. All three are cases of political terrorism that took place in Israel in recent years. They were executed by Jews and rationalized in traditional Jewish terms. Moreover, the perpetrators were religious Jews, whose rhetoric, motivation, and objectives were profoundly religious. All these cases had implications on the national, regional, and international level, affecting society and politics in Israel and in the Middle East. At the same time, none of these cases can be understood fully without relating to their religious, traditional, Jewish core. In all instances, ethno-nationalist and even real-political foundations are combined with inspiration and mandate rooted in scriptures, rites, and collective memories, inherited from times past and remote places. In each instance, we wish to illuminate traditional

religious aspects that are not always self-evident, fully acknowledged, or correctly understood.

The Jewish Underground. In the early 1980s, Palestinian individuals and institutions were targets of a series of terror acts in the West Bank. These included the murder of three students at an Islamic college by means of a hand grenade and the wounding of several mayors of large Palestinian cities by means of booby-trapped cars. In April 1984, Israeli security services arrested a group of over twenty Israelis for these acts. All members of the group were observant Yeshiva graduates and most were settlers. Israeli media dubbed them "the Jewish Underground in the Territories."[13] Their arrest prevented another terror operation, the bombing of five buses from East Jerusalem, fully loaded with passengers. The press, investigators, and courts focused on the two leaders of the underground: Menachem Livni, an IDF officer and sapper, the operational commander, and Yehuda Etzion, an ardent Messianist and charismatic ideologue, who was the group's spokesperson.

Yeshua Ben-Shushan, a scrawny, fragile, and introverted member of the group, failed to attract the public's attention. Ben-Shushan was immersed in medieval Jewish mysticism, an expert in the Kabbalah's esoteric texts and rituals. As such, he had a saintly status and a magical influence on a subgroup within the underground. Under his influence, several members had plotted the destruction of "the abomination," the Dome of the Rock on Jerusalem's Temple Mount. The conspirators knew well enough that destroying the Muslim shrine would provoke millions of Muslims around the world against Israel. This terrifying scenario, described as heralding a "World War III," did not deter them. They perceived it as the ultimate confrontation, an Armageddon that would usher the full redemption.

Ben-Shushan's followers accepted his messianic schema according to which the Dome of the Rock emanates "high energy vibrations" that reach all parts of the Muslim world and bestow masculine strength on Muslims everywhere. These rays derive their potency from the Foundation Stone (*even hashtiya*) on which the shrine is built as well as the remains of the Jewish Temple at its foundations. The heavenly effluence (*shefa*) radiating from the shrine was the source of power that Arabs, "the emissaries of the devil," had conquered together with the city and the country, robbing the Jews of their uniqueness and superiority. Destroying this structure, Ben-Shushan argued, would bring about the fall of this hostile power and the disempowering of the wicked.

The Massacre in the Tomb of the Patriarchs. Baruch Goldstein of the settlement of Kiryat Arba was a recent immigrant from the U.S., a dedicated doctor, and a reserve officer. He was extraordinarily pious, an admirer of Rabbi Kahane, and a *Kach* activist. In February 1994, he entered the Tomb of the Patriarchs in Hebron, passed through the section of the tomb that functions as a synagogue, and snuck into the adjacent mosque where the devout were in the midst of prayer. He opened fire, killing twenty-nine Palestinians. After emptying four magazines his assault riffle stalled. He was then overwhelmed by the survivors, who killed him with their bare hands.[14] Soon thereafter, the Jews of Hebron described his deed as an act of revenge against Palestinian terrorism that "sanctified the holy name of God," effectively pronouncing Goldstein a martyr. His grave continues to serve as a pilgrimage destination.

This violent incident occurred on the holiday of Purim. The story behind Purim can be found in the biblical Book of Esther. Haman, advisor to the king of Persia,

convinced King Ahasuerus to kill the Jews of the kingdom. In a spectacular turn of events, the queen, a Jewish orphan girl, persuaded the king to overturn this decree and to execute Haman instead. Their fortunes overturned, the Jews took revenge on the Persians. According to the Book of Esther (and in variance with the historical record), they slaughtered 500 people in the capital and an additional 75,000 throughout the kingdom.

The day in which this fictional genocide is said to have occurred is celebrated annually by means of a feast and carnival. On this day, the Jews dared to do what throughout the year remains a fantasy. On Purim, Jews in medieval Europe expressed anger at Christians, as some Jews today do at Muslims. Centuries ago, they mocked those praying in churches. More recently, the day was the occasion for a massacre in a mosque.

After Goldstein's death, his admirers published a volume that sanctified him and lauded his actions.[15] The book included religious justifications for the massacre, such as the motif of "redeeming revenge": Goldstein's death as a martyr was linked with a desire to force God to avenge his death. Thus, Goldstein's aggression worked at two levels: He killed dozens of Palestinians by his own hand but his allegedly noble death was also presumed to provoke God into killing many thousands more.

The Assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin. The radical right in Israel saw Prime Minister Yitzchak Rabin as a "traitor" due to his signing of an interim peace agreement that transferred authority over much of the West Bank to the Palestinian Authority. Among the activists in protests against Israeli withdrawal from the territories and in favor of their annexation was Yigal Amir, a law student at Bar Ilan, Israel's national-religious university, and a graduate of a Yeshiva high school.

On November 4, 1995, at the end of a mass rally in support of the government's peace policy, Amir shot Rabin three times, killing the prime minister.[16] At his trial, he stated: "I acted according to *din rodef*. . . . In other words, I did this not as a punishment but as a prevention." The Halakha defines a *rodef* (pursuer) as one who is about to murder a Jew. According to the Talmud and Maimonides, not only can the target defend himself by striking preemptively but even a witness, who comprehends the situation but cannot deter the perpetrator, is obliged to stop the murder, be it with violent means. Such a violent bystander would be free of guilt, since he acted in good faith to save a Jewish soul. After the assassination, Israel's General Security Service discovered that several West Bank rabbis had surveyed the thirty greatest living halakhic authorities in the Jewish world for their expert opinion on whether the category of *rodef* applied to Rabin.[17]

According to Jewish law, the instance of *rodef* is exceptional. The urgency of saving a life relieves the would-be killer from the need for judicial sanction and the killer is exempt from penalties in court after the fact. Because Premier Rabin's peace policy was perceived as spilling Jewish blood, he had to be dispatched immediately. Amir took on this holy mission for the sake of the land, the Torah, and the name of God. The security authorities invested great energies into discovering the rabbinical authorities who provided Amir with the license to commit the assassination. This exhibits a failure in understanding traditional Jewish zealotry: As we shall argue below, its rationale rests entirely on taking an instant violent initiative *without* a rabbinic mandate. The Jewish division of the General Security Services (the Shin Bet), which is responsible for preventing domestic terrorism and which has mushroomed ever since the Underground and Goldstein and Amir's murderous

acts, has since learned its lesson: in recent years it tends to recruit Orthodox Jews as agents precisely because it understands that handling Jewish violence requires a familiarity with religion.

The Religious Nature of Contemporary Jewish Violence

David C. Rapoport has argued that terrorism since the 1880s can be divided into four successive waves, each lasting about a generation and identified by particular goals and tactics but occurring simultaneously in several countries: anarchist terrorism, anti-colonial terrorism, the terrorism of the new left, and religious terrorism.[18] The first wave was inspired by the failure of democratic reforms, the second was driven by national self-determination, the third claimed to bolster democratic reform whereas the current wave seeks to combat both liberal democracy and secularism.

Much of contemporary Jewish violence fits into this last wave, which began after the Iranian Revolution and the Soviet defeat in Afghanistan. Though religious elements could be detected in earlier waves, religion became the defining characteristic of this fourth wave, which did not seek to establish a secular order. Starting with Shi'a movements in Lebanon, this wave spread to Saudi Arabia, Syria, Tunisia, Morocco, the Philippines, Indonesia, and Israel. Al Qaeda is the most dramatic contemporary manifestation of this trend.

The most significant, durable, and deadly terrorist movements in the fourth wave are comprised of Muslim members. But terrorists from other religious denominations soon joined the fray, including Sikhs in the Punjab, the Aum Shinrikyo group in Japan, and members of the Christian Identity movement in the United States. Jewish movements fit into this category as well: Their activity has increased since the onset of this wave in parallel to attacks initiated by other religiously-motivated terrorist movements. Like their counterparts elsewhere, Jewish terrorists combine religious motivations with political and territorial goals.[19]

The roster of contemporary terrorist incidents that might be included under the heading of "Jewish religious violence" consists of more than thirty incidents, in addition to the three infamous cases mentioned above. These cases can be categorized according to three criteria. First, according to the target of violence: Palestinians and Israeli Arabs, the State of Israel (its leaders, agents, and representatives), or fellow Israeli Jews who are secular, liberal, and dovish. Second, we ought to distinguish between organized Jewish violence, on the one hand, and more-or-less spontaneous violence on the other hand. Third, these cases can be categorized based on the social profile of the perpetrator. Organized group acts were committed by privileged individuals and elite groups close to the Israeli "establishment." For example, members of the Jewish Underground were of upper middle-class background, well-educated, well-connected, and admired semi-official figures in the Gush Emunim movement. The vast majority of the individual and somewhat impulsive acts were committed by marginalized persons. Most of the perpetrators were lower-class Mizrahim who lived in the periphery, were socially isolated, and were often psychologically unstable.[20]

Here is a sample of the most extreme cases. Our list omits multiple cases of terror schemes that did not come to fruition and rioting that did not result in fatalities.[21]

In April 1978, Israel Lederman, an Orthodox reserve soldier, shot a Palestinian at close range and killed him. The act was unprovoked and the perpetrator chose the victim at random. After serving a few years in prison, Lederman kidnapped a Palestinian baby in Hebron and threw boiling tea on a left-wing MP.

In February 1982, Yehuda Richter, an American-born follower of Rabbi Meir Kahane and Orthodox settler, ambushed a Palestinian bus in the West Bank. He wounded many of its passengers in an effort to stop the Israeli withdrawal from the Sinai as stipulated in the peace accord between Egypt and Israel. Previously the assailant had tried to set fire to the offices of a Palestinian newspaper. In April 1982, he locked himself in a bunker with several comrades and heating-gas containers, threatening to commit suicide if the IDF continued its evacuation of the Sinai. Since his release from prison, Richter has been teaching Torah in a yeshiva in the Old City of Jerusalem. When Kahane's *Kach* Party ran for elections in the Israeli Parliament, he was listed second on the party slate after Kahane.

In February 1983, Yona Avrushmi, a young Jerusalem resident of Mizrahi extraction, lobbed a grenade into a Peace Now rally, killing one activist and wounding nine others. The activists were protesting Israel's involvement in the First Lebanon War. Israeli society experienced the event as shocking and foundational since it was the first time in recent Israeli memory that lethal Jewish violence had been directed at fellow Jews. The assailant, who labeled the protesters "traitors," was convicted of murder and received a life sentence. In prison, he became an observant Jew.

In May 1990, Ami Popper, a dishonorably discharged soldier and lone wolf, drove to a bus station south of Tel Aviv where a group of Palestinian day laborers awaited transportation. He was dressed in an IDF uniform and armed with an M16 assault riffle. Popper asked the men for their identification and, having confirmed their Arab identities, he lined them up and shot the men, killing seven. Popper later claimed that he had acted to avenge the Intifada as well as personal humiliation. His acts unleashed massive riots in the West Bank in which seven more Palestinians were killed by IDF fire. Once imprisoned, Popper became a pious Orthodox Jew. Right-wing religious politicians have demanded his release in exchange for the release of Palestinian terrorists.

In April 1995, Michal Hilel and two of her friends, all right-wing extremists, murdered a Palestinian taxi driver on the way to Ma'ale Edumim, a satellite of Jerusalem. At the time of the terrorist act she was in the process of becoming a pious Jew.

In May 2003, a group of four extremely Orthodox Jews, later known as the Bat Ayin Underground, were arrested while trying to booby-trap a Palestinian girls' school in East Jerusalem. The security services later connected the group to a series of terrorist acts in 2001–2002 in which eight Palestinians were killed. The group's members were settlers practicing a peculiar mix of Hassidism and Kahanism.

In August 2005, Eden Natan-Zada, an AWOL soldier and resident of the settlement of Tapuach near Nablus, boarded a bus in the Israeli-Arab city of Shefar'am, armed with an assault riffle. He shot into the bus, killing four locals of Druze extraction and wounding eight other passengers. In reaction, a mob from the nearby town lynched him. At the time of the attack, Natan-Zada was undergoing a process of *hazara betshuva*—becoming an observant Jew.

In October 2009, Yaakov "Jack" Teitel, an American-born settler, was arrested and convicted for a series of terrorist acts committed over the course of twelve years. His acts included the murder of two Palestinians in 1997, booby trapping the Jerusalem home of Prof. Zeev Sternhel, a renowned liberal intellectual, and seriously wounding a follower of the Christian "Messianic Judaism" movement by means of an explosive package. The police uncovered a sizeable weapons arsenal at his home.

He appeared in court wearing a prayer shawl and proceeded to openly denounce the Israeli gay and lesbian community.

These contemporary acts of Jewish violence share two remarkable characteristics. First, all of them were committed in Israel (and the adjacent disputed territories). These acts of Jewish violence cannot be understood outside the context of the Arab-Israeli conflict, in which Israelis were both acting and reacting. Moreover, Jewish religious violence is confronted by a Muslim counterpart. Hamas and Gush Emunim are not merely in direct conflict but also share an implicit dialogue and a certain interdependence. The protagonists engage not only where Israeli settlements abut Palestinian settlements but also at sacred sites, where their conflict takes on a far more profound and blatant religious dimension. This is especially so at holy places claimed by both religions, particularly when these are located in politically contested areas.[22]

The authors know of no Jewish violence that occurred outside Israel. The only exception is Meir Kahane's Jewish Defense League, which originated in Brooklyn and aimed its aggression against black neighbors and Soviet diplomats.[23] However, a few years after its founding, the organization drifted to Israel, adapted to the Middle Eastern environment, and founded a political party, "Kach." Its parliamentary and especially extra-parliamentary activity was soon directed at Palestinians and Jews from the left.[24] Kahanism's complete disappearance from the diasporic Jewish horizon and its successful transplantation to Israeli soil makes this case of particularly blatant Jewish violence an exception that proves the rule.[25]

The second commonality is that all the perpetrators were religious Jews. To be more specific, all were Orthodox, meaning Halakha-centered Jews.[26] This places them in a minority among Israelis, since less than a quarter of Israeli Jews follow these practices in full.[27] Moreover, a considerable portion of the perpetrators was at least indirectly associated with the yeshiva world, representing an even smaller minority in Israel. Finally, many of the perpetrators were characterized by supereligiosity.[28] They were "more Orthodox" than their parents, the surrounding community, and their own pasts. As the above roster shows, none of the incidents of Jewish violence were perpetrated by actors who were not Orthodox.[29] Interestingly, a substantial proportion of the perpetrators were not born Orthodox or fully integrated into the Orthodox community, but rather were born-again Jews (*hozrim betshuva*) or still in the process of "becoming an observant Jew."[30]

While clearly motivated by religion and executed by religious actors, these Jewish violent acts have a clear political and national dimension that is right-wing and hawkish. As a rule, this violence appears in connection with Israeli settlement policy in the West Bank and with efforts to promote a Greater Land of Israel agenda. A separate category of Jewish violence in Israel, that is also religious, involves Ultra-Orthodox (*haredi*) actors.[31] The targets of this violence tend to be fellow-*haredim* who belong to rival factions, secular Jews, tourists, missionaries, and the secular Zionist establishment. *Haredi* aggressions are aimed at driving on the Sabbath, immodest dress, archeological excavations that defile Jewish tombs, autopsies, and "promiscuous" advertising. Other *haredi* forms of aggressions include intra-*haredi* violence that relates to social control (the Modesty Patrol, for example) and hostility towards competing groups presented as deviant. But this violence regards itself as "defensive," is relatively moderate, never involves firearms, and has yet to lead to fatalities. In recent years, there has been an increasing overlap and a certain collaboration between the former, right-wing violence, and the latter, *haredi* violence.[32]

Jewish Violence: Religious and Secular

It is worth noting that while we stress the religious nature of these violent acts, Israeli political discourse and the local and international press refer to it simply as "Jewish" violence. The latter term aims to distinguish this violence from its Palestinian counterpart.

The case of Jewish violence is especially complicated since Judaism is characterized by a close relationship and substantial overlap between religious and ethno-national association. In Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, and other world religions, religious affiliation does not necessarily involve attachment to any particular nation or ethnic group. In contrast, affiliation with the Jewish religion implies affiliation with the Jewish people and vice versa. For more than three millennia, until the late 18th or 19th century, it was difficult to differentiate between the religious and the "tribal" components of Jews' identity. In the modern era, however, this tight linkage was disentangled. With the disintegration of the traditional medieval Jewish community, new varieties of Jewish religion and secularism emerged.[33] Though one cannot be a religious Jew without belonging to the Jewish People, the vast majority of contemporary Jews are not religious, let alone Orthodox. Consequently, if before the term "Jewish violence" was sufficient to describe our phenomenon because it referred to both religious and ethno-national violence, the recent two centuries require us to distinguish between two types of Jewish violence: "Jewish secular violence," which we shall soon see is mainly associated with Jewish nationalism (i.e., Zionism), and "Jewish religious violence," on which this essay focuses.

Not only are nationalism and religion interlocked in Judaism but in Israel religion and state are inseparable.[34] One of the outcomes of this complex situation is the salient presence of religion in the public domain.[35] Jewish religion, or more precisely Israeli orthodoxy, intervenes in all issues on the social and political agenda, even those not obviously "religious," including issues of national security connected to the Arab-Israeli conflict. Private and collective Jewish violence are publicly discussed in terms of biblical commandments and heavenly mandates. National political controversies concerning aggressive Jewish initiatives, particularly towards Palestinians or Israeli secular leftists, often sound like medieval theological disputes or halakhic sophistry worthy of a yeshiva setting, even when they take place during a parliamentary debate.

The phenomenon of Jewish religious violence is a recent one. Its roots can be recognized in two interrelated developments in the 1960s–1970s. The first was the outcome of the 1967 Arab-Israeli War, particularly the conquest of territories populated by Palestinians and the resulting policy of settlement and annexation. This led to friction between two competing communities and provoked Palestinian radicalization and resistance that found expression in violent uprising and terror. The second is the new form of Religious-Zionism epitomized by *Gush Emunim* (the Block of the Faithful), an orthodoxy that tends to religious as well as political radicalism. Its members exhibit stringency in studying and observing the commandments of the Torah while also pursuing expansionist and militant attitudes. They are the champions of the Whole Land of Israel policy, suffused with a messianic spirit.[36]

The combination of these two developments, contemporary religious Jewish violence, is particularly remarkable given the fact that, since the formation of Jewish orthodoxy less than two hundred years ago, religious Jews were characterized by non-violence. This quietism was very much in contrast with secular Judaism,

particularly in its nationalist variant, which emerged more than one hundred years ago, and has monopolized Jewish violence ever since. The Jewish nationalist movement, Zionism, a fundamentally secular movement, aspired to create a "new Jew," the mirror image of the exilic Jew. It sought to replace the passive, spiritual, effeminate Judaism with a muscular and active Judaism that was assertive, politically involved, and sought to express the Jewish genius by means of state building, agriculture, athleticism, and militancy.[37] Soon enough, this movement found itself confronting Ottoman, British, German, and Arab opponents. The ensuing Middle East conflict forced Israeli Jews to develop a military apparatus and a militaristic habitus and ethos. Security challenges have become a dominant component of the Jewish experience in Israel. Naturally enough, this has brought about contemporary Jewish violence.

This secular, nationalist, Jewish violence found expression in two modes: The execution of state policy in the form of wars, military operations, and counterterrorism; and domestic political violence in the form of political assassinations, sabotage, and rioting (which came dangerously close to civil war at certain times). Issues of conflict included rivalry between pre-state underground organizations, the debate over accepting financial compensation from Germany, debates over separation of religion and state, etc.[38]

Tradition and Traditionalism

Tradition, including religious tradition, is a reservoir of ideas and symbols, norms and values, information and moods, handed down from generation to generation and stored in written and oral texts or objects, available for contemporary cultural, social, or political use. Past tradition is not just a fixed rigid body, a fossil, imposing itself on passive consumers of tradition. It is a vital and open-ended organism that lends itself to a wide variety of understandings and manipulations.[39]

The Jewish tradition preserved a harmony among countless interpretations, homilies, metaphors, sayings, ethical teachings, legends, and stories, which together constituted the material contained within the halakhic and aggadic components of the Talmud, Midrash, and Kabbalah. This included a fair amount of categorical, embellished, and provocative statements that were considered acceptable despite their problematic nature. With the help of irony and historical perspective, these putatively ridiculous, bizarre, offensive, or violent materials could be assimilated tolerably without causing any damage. Moreover, rabbinical tradition tended to view many passages from the multi-layered Torah as general ethical teachings or abstract pedagogical lessons rather than as directives for uncompromising activities or as the foundations of specific political agendas.

All these sacred texts provided a wealth of ideas that proved crucial for the tradition's survival. They can be said to contain everything: Arguments, on all their variants, including their opposites. This includes an abundance of materials that support violence and an abundance of materials that oppose it. In other words, this reservoir, limited but large, could be harnessed by a wide range of ideological leanings or historical requirements. It could legitimate a vast array of interests and moral stances by providing them with a "traditional" authority.

Contemporary users of tradition are not traditional but traditionalist, which means that they can view tradition from a self-conscious, voluntary, selective,

adjustive, and creative stance. The traditionalist project confronts tradition with an attitude that ranges from conservation to innovation. Naturally, the traditionalists who harness tradition to achieve their objectives tend to repudiate its inventive and adaptable nature and have uncompromising pretentions of faithfully returning the present to what they grasp as the authentic representation of the past.

Contrary to its self- and public image, Jewish orthodoxy is not traditional but traditionalist.[40] Modern Halakha-centered Jews, like many other traditionalists, rummage through the tremendous archives of their past, choose an existing principle—often subterranean or marginal—and bring it to the surface, to center stage. This can represent a change in emphases and degrees of legitimization, wrought by presenting a principle outside of its original context in which it might have been balanced or restrained by others.

In the traditional past, talmudic and halakhic interpretations were flexible and variegated, characterized by multiple layers and streams, sometimes contradictory, that nonetheless coexisted side by side. This is what gave religious Judaism a richness that facilitated its endurance and customization to individuals, groups, and situations. The traditionalists lost something of this Darwinian survivalist potential due to their proclivity for selective, unambiguous, and obligatory interpretation. Materials which were "soft" in their original contexts were hardened by the present-day Orthodox and Ultra-Orthodox. Legendary materials were transformed at a stroke into theological principles or halakhic commandments. Religious Jews in pursuit of inspiration and legitimization for their violent tendencies singled out a certain idea out of the many contained in the storehouse of Judaism, adopted it, and genuinely adhered to it as if it were the embodiment of the only consistent and pure Judaism.

For example, regarding the sanctity of each parcel of the Land of Israel, or the status of gentiles, believers in Israel fall into opposing camps (such as Gush Emunim and the equally Orthodox Oz Ve'Shalom), with contrasting ideological and political positions, both armed with the appropriate quotations from the sacred text that sanction their claims. Thus, whereas some passages require possession of each square inch of the holy land, even at the risk of human life, other passages emphasize the sublime value of human life and are therefore often quoted as recommending withdrawal from disputed territories.[41]

In hindsight, it can be hard to distinguish elements that expressed a purely religious rationale to begin with from elements that were grounded in a social, political, or economic rationale but that gradually assumed a religious status. Just as orthodox dress that originated in non-Jewish European custom came to represent a Jewish authenticity, so too the idea that one should "not provoke the gentiles" (quietism rather than militant rebellious activism) turned from a pragmatic position suitable for particular political contingencies into a religious tenet. The latter prohibition was a reflection of the realities of diasporic history, when the Jewish people had no national autonomy and were but a weak, dependent minority. Given these conditions, the violation of this prohibition and similar ones, such as hastening the coming of the messianic age, would have been absurd and would have had catastrophic consequences. It was a testimony to a realistic and responsible reading of history and a manifestation of adaptability to real-political constraints in its original context that turned into an *a priori* religious principle, binding under all circumstances.

In the last two generations, some of these very same categorical imperatives were interpreted anew in a way that turned their practical implications on their heads. As we shall soon see, radical changes in historical circumstances allowed new

understandings of the sacred legacy (particularly with regard to Jewish violent activism) that were in fact a resuscitation of long-forgotten interpretations.

Biblical Violence in Its Time and in Retrospective

The Biblical Text[42]

In the case of Judaism, the most fundamental element in this cultural reservoir, its very axis, is the Bible. The Hebrew Bible (*Tanakh*) provides a rich source of anti-violent themes, humanist ideals, and descriptions of idyllic peace and justice. At the same time, the Hebrew Bible, like its counterparts in other ancient Near Eastern civilizations, is a remarkably militant text that includes an extraordinary range of aggressive themes and models, often confusing and contradictory. Violence is evident in the image of God, his treatment of humanity, the manner in which he demands to be worshipped, and the rules he sets forth for social control. Violence is also apparent in the chronicles of the Israelites, replete with war, genocide, and internecine conflict, as well as in prophecies that envision a turbulent end of times.

The violence inherent in the Hebrew image of God is particularly significant, since the divine serves as a model for human emulation (*imitatio dei*). The Hebrew God is a Lord of Hosts, vengeful and militant. He ruthlessly kills individuals, annihilates groups, and punishes humanity with plagues, brutal wars, and natural disasters. He also commands killing on a chauvinist basis: His chosen people are instructed to implement his fury against inferior peoples that are accursed from the moment of their inception, like the Ishmaelites, Moabites, Ammonites, and Edomites.

The oft-quoted statement from the Torah that has become a symbol of Jewish humanism, "Love thy neighbor as thyself" is merely the latter half of the original verse. The full verse reads: "Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself: I am the Lord" (Leviticus 19:18).[43] In other words, "neighbor" refers only to the people of Israel. Maimonides concurs: the neighbor is a "neighbor in Torah and commandments."

The implications of God's wrath are both direct and indirect: God is wrathful Himself and he commands others to do violence on his behalf. Since he is a model of emulation, his exemplar permits, or even requires, mimetic violence, as exemplified by Phinehas, discussed further below.[44] At the same time, violence committed in the name of God and in emulation of God can absolve the perpetrator of agency and responsibility.

Violent divine discrimination is twofold: God is intolerant towards lesser peoples but reserves his most extreme expressions of fury for the people he holds to the highest standard. His entire relationship with Israel, even in its ideal form, is based on the ritualization of violence: It begins with Abraham's "Covenant between the Parts" (*brit bein habetarim*) which involves a dismembering of animals, continues with the covenant of circumcision (*brit milah*), and ends with the cultic butchering, eating, and burning of animals in the Jerusalem temple (*korban*).[45] God requires constant sacrifice. Sacrificial offerings, ranging from sheep, bulls, and doves to wine, grains, and incense, were offered at regular festivals, as thanksgiving, after birth or disease, as atonement for sin, in fulfillment of vows, or as a voluntary deed. The ritual slaughter industry in Jerusalem was vast, requiring a colossal administrative, architectural, and economic machinery. But it also undergirded a prohibition on human sacrifice, the likes of which had occurred in the valleys around Jerusalem.

Pre-biblical memories of child sacrifice to Moloch survive in the ominous tales of the sacrifice of Isaac and the story of Jephtah's daughter.

In prohibiting human sacrifice, homicide, and even the consumption of blood, the Bible places limits on violence. At the same time, the divinely ordained procedures designed to prevent crime, including violent crime, involve violence as a form of social control. The Bible commands capital punishment as a reprisal for violent acts such as murder, negligent homicide, brutality against parents, rape, and kidnapping. But it also requires capital punishment for sexual crimes (ranging from incest and bestiality to adultery) and for a long list of religious offenses (worshipping false gods, desecration of the temple, blasphemy, desecration of the Sabbath, and witchcraft). The response to minor violent crimes is violent as well, in accordance with the *lex talionis* principle of "an eye for an eye."

Beyond *prescriptions* for violence, the Bible abounds with *descriptions* of violence. Key historical moments in the Chronicles of the Israel stand out in their carnage. The Exodus from Egypt begins with Egyptian genocide against the Israelites, features the retaliatory killing of a violent Egyptian by Moses as its turning point, culminates in the ten plagues (including genocide against the Egyptians), and ends in the drowning of Pharaoh's army in the Red Sea, to the rejoicing of the Children of Israel. There follows the conquest of Canaan by Joshua, including the destruction of Jericho and Ai, the enslavement of the Gibeonites, defeat of the Amorites, and the destruction of Hazor, all aided by divine intervention. Once settled in the land, the Israelites follow judges and kings in a sustained campaign against neighboring ethnic groups, including the Aramites, Moabites, Midianites, Amalekites, Ammonites and, their most threatening rivals, the Philistines. These conquests are accompanied by a continuous struggle against idolatry, exemplified in the Prophet Elijah's massacre of 400 priests of Ba'al. The period of peace and flourishing under King Solomon is brief: There follow civil wars, conquest by regional empires, and exile. Even in exile, the Jews suffer and commit violence, as described in the Book of Esther.

The brutal wars that assume a central role in the Bible are regulated by laws of war that prohibit particular tactics but also compel ruthless killing.[46] Deuteronomy 20, for example, prohibits surprise attacks and requires sparing women and children in wars outside Canaan. But it suspends these constraints in wars against the six peoples of Canaan (the Hittites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites), in which none may be spared. Wars against these groups were regulated by the laws of the ban (*herem*), in which all the spoils of war were dedicated to God. Refusal to abide by these strictures, as in the case of Achan, prompts swift retaliation. Famously, King Saul loses his crown and his sanity for his refusal to execute the Amalekite king, a task which the prophet Samuel promptly completes on his behalf.

It is inaccurate to refer to this category of conflicts as "holy wars," since they are not described as launched by Israel in God's name or in defense of God. Rather, they are "divine wars" fought by God himself to defend Israel.[47] Nonetheless, the war against the six peoples of Canaan bore distinctly religious characteristics. The confederacy of tribes was obligated before God to participate in it.[48] Combatants, their weapons, and their camp were consecrated. This purity was prompted by virtue of God's presence in the midst of the camp and by a perception of the enemy as unclean and contaminating.[49] In battle, the Israelites were accompanied by the ark of the covenant, priests equipped with trumpets, and temple vessels. The victims and loot were "consecrated to destruction," gifts to God akin to sacrifices in gratitude for

victory.[50] While composed in the context of an existential struggle and confined to a particular time and space, the virulent hostility towards neighboring groups depicted in the scriptures beckoned the reader to relive and re-implement ruthless enmity in every passing generation, as epitomized in the commandment to "Remember what Amalek did unto thee" (Deuteronomy 25:17).

Even the rare moments of peace in the Bible's historical account are interwoven with brutality. The origins of man, depicted in the early chapters of Genesis, involve betrayal, expulsion, pain, multiple homicides, and the annihilation of all living things by means of flood. The Hebrew patriarchs engage in theft, deceit, abduction, and physical combat, conduct war, commit incest, and attempt fratricide and infanticide. The latter is of particular significance, since Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son by divine edict, the *akedah*, supplies a model for Jewish martyrdom in later ages.

At times, several of these vicious acts are rolled into a single account. Genesis 34, for example, describes how Jacob's sons, Simeon and Levi, avenge the rape of their sister, Dinah, by offering the perpetrators a false alliance. They persuade the men of Sichem to undergo circumcision only to butcher them all in their vulnerable state. Though the Bible records Jacob's disapproval of his son's actions, some read the biblical author as condoning Simeon and Levi's actions.[51] Jacob's morality can be read as mere consequentialist pragmatism: he reprimands his sons for harming his good name and for exposing their family to risk. Simeon and Levi can be seen as representing bold idealism. The narrator allows them to have the last word: "Shall he deal with our sister as with an harlot?" Whereas Christian interpreters consistently criticized the revenge against Sichem, Jewish responses to this passage have been mixed.[52] The incident continues to be cited to both justify and condemn disproportionate acts of retribution in contemporary Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

In the Bible, civil conflict also pits Israelites against one another as rival kings, clans, tribes, cities, and the two kingdoms, Judea and Israel, struggle for supremacy. For example, in Judges 19-21, a Levite avenges the rape and murder of his concubine by his Benjaminite hosts by hacking the corpse into twelve pieces and sending the sections throughout the territory of Israel. This macabre call to arms prompts a civil war in which the other tribes nearly exterminate the tribe of Benjamin.

The Bible thus offers an infinite yet paradoxical repertoire from which believers can draw precedents, inspiration, and virtual blueprints for violent activity. The *herem* offers a script for violence but tempers the laws of war. The active role played by God in war suggests the feebleness and even innocence of the combatant, whereas the Bible's historical account emphasizes his pervasiveness and brutality. At times, the Bible glorifies war as a chivalrous game in which warriors prove their cunning and courage.[53] At other times, it prophecies an end to war. These prophetic scenarios for the end of times can be equally shocking. Isaiah, Micah, Zechariah, and Jeremiah may envision a distant future devoid of arms, poverty, and aggression. But, on closer reading, these prophecies of global peace result from the death, devastation, or enslavement of the enemy. Apocalyptic visions are suffused with bloodshed, torture, and annihilation of entire populations. Only the winners, friends in victory, enjoy "release from fighting."[54]

Even innocuous passages from the prophecies have received interpretations that are charged with intolerant implications. For example, Ezekiel 34:31 states: "And ye my flock, the flock of my pasture, are men (*adam*)." The Talmud interprets this quote to signify that "Ye [Israel] are called adam [man] but heathens are not called 'adam'" (Keritot 6b).[55] A statement in the Mishnah that expresses unconditional

love towards all humans received similar treatment. ''Beloved is man in that he was created in the image [of God]'' (Avoth 3:14), was interpreted by several leading rabbis as referring to Jews only. In the 16th century, Rabbi Judah Loew of Prague argued: ''Though it says 'Beloved is man' this does not include all of mankind, because the sages said, 'You are called man and gentiles are not called man.' ''[56]

The Bible in Perspective

Believers regard the Bible as a canonical truth that compels action. Yet in recent years, archeologists and Bible scholars have gradually come to accept the notion that significant segments of the historical description in the Bible do not portray a full and precise factual reality but are a fiction authored in much later times.[57] This is especially so regarding the key episodes of violence mentioned above. Although they are not reliable accounts of past events and conditions, these passages are nevertheless critically important for the issue of violence since they are ideologically motivated and meant to be adopted as a paragon. Crucially, they are genuinely believed by many generations of Jews to be absolutely true. They are enveloped in an aura of factuality that makes them easy to identify with and to be inspired by. These biblical stories function as mytho-history: a narrative recounting significant past events that a group tells itself about itself.[58] It narrates where the group comes from and where it is heading, its roots and destiny. Consequently, it defines its collective identity and marks its collective boundaries. To the degree that this (more or less) fictional story is intellectually persuasive and moving, it is effective in guiding actual behavior. This holds true for the violent episodes that the Bible is charged with.

The Bible is of particular significance to our current discussion due to the existence of individuals and groups, religious and secular nationalist, who see themselves as successors to its legacy. The Bible was adopted by Zionism as a core text that transformed from a religious to a political and national document.[59] First and foremost it served contemporary Israelis as a title to the land, to be used against contending claimants to the same territory. Consequently, the Bible's significance grew with the intensification of the Arab-Israeli conflict. The Bible also served as an inspiration for Zionist state building based on the ingathering of the exiles, the choice of Hebrew as the national language, establishing political sovereignty, settling the land and, last but not least, an inspiration for the conduct of war against Arab neighbors.

Certainly, several other cultural traditions relate themselves to ancient civilizations and claim to emulate their practices, as do Egyptians, Greeks, and Iraqis in relation to their territorial predecessors, the Ancient Egyptians, Ancient Greeks, and Babylonians respectively.[60] The Israeli case stands out due to claims about the contemporary religious, ethical, and political relevance of the ancient text, bolstered by a continuity of language from the ancient to the modern era. Present-day geopolitics actualizes the Bible, including its most violent components.

In a way, Judaism has distanced itself from the Bible. More precisely, religious Judaism has placed interpretation (the *oral Torah*) as an intermediate between itself and the Bible (the *written Torah*). With the passage of time, this interpretation assumed primacy. The Talmud, intended as an exegesis of the Bible, became its substitute. The essence of Judaism became the interpretation and application of the Bible to historical realities. This involved a neutralization of the Bible and a defusing of any embarrassing and complicating segments that encumbered this adaptation to

changing circumstances. Among others, this required taking the sting out of violent motifs in the Bible. Thus, Judaism is at one and the same time a religion in which the Bible is crucial and a different religion that developed after the Bible was sealed and canonized, yet rendered less relevant with the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem and the Jewish exile from the holy land. In the absence of a kingdom, a territory, or priesthood, the wars of the Bible, its sacrifices, and other violent elements lost their validity as a model for emulation.

Interpretation and mediation have blunted the Bible's violent elements. Biblical violence underwent the same process of castration as did biblical eroticism: Both experienced symbolization, spiritualization, and ritualization. In fact, as we shall argue below, the foundation of post-biblical religion which forms the core of Jewish tradition is a product of the systematic effort to "de-violence" the ancient Israelite inheritance.

Phinehas

We would like to dwell on a particular instance of biblical violence that we consider paradigmatic. The relatively detailed presentation of this case of Jewish violence *par excellence* allows us also to see the subtleties and ironies of the status of violence in Jewish tradition. Let us follow so many Jews across generations and re-read Numbers 25. It depicts the paragon of Jewish religious violence: Phinehas and the act of Zealotry.

While the Israelites were camping in the desert of Moab before crossing the Jordan River on the way to Canaan, they whored with Midianite women and worshiped the pagan deity. This double sin angered God who ordered Moses to hang the wayward Israelites. But Moses did not dare to confront the people. At that point, a prominent Israelite aristocrat challenged the divine power, transgressing both the sacred law and the authoritative leadership by committing a public act of blasphemy: he brought a local princess into the camp and coupled with her near the Tabernacle. In reaction, God punished his people with a plague that caused the death of many thousands. However, Moses and the judges did nothing to stop the scandalous situation. In contrast to the impotence of established authority, a man named Phinehas took the initiative and slew the mixed couple. This impulsive brutal action, committed out of true belief, appeased God, thus stopping the plague.

Phinehas' zealotry was rewarded highly. He was granted God's "covenant of peace" and the high priesthood was guaranteed for him and for his descendants. According to this biblical precedent, zealotry is defined as religious violence aimed against those who are perceived to be opposing the divine will, particularly by violating the boundaries of the collectivity and thus threatening its identity. From that formative religious moment onwards, zealotry in general, and Phinehas' zealotry in particular, were sanctified. For more than two thousand years, Phinehas and his zealous act have been a quintessential ideal of monotheistic religious virtuosity. His epic deed became a morally, if not legally binding, precedent among Jewish and Christian Old Testament devotees.[61]

Bible believers can hardly stay indifferent to the grandness of Phinehas; the faithful cannot simply relegate to the margins the obligatory potency of the incident in Numbers 25. Yet the text can be read in many different ways, as the Judeo-Christian record has shown. It can be read literally as an incontrovertible precedent calling for brutal action. It can also be interpreted critically, a move that

necessitates a great deal of creative sophisticated religious rationalization. Between these exegetical alternatives lies a vast array of resourceful maneuvering. The traditional Jewish handling of the Phinehasic issue, developed through hundreds of years of exilic rabbinic life, is a qualified and reluctant attempt to diffuse the sting of zealotry. In contrast, the essence of the contemporary "Protestant" treatment of the zealotry complex, in its American Christian variation or its Israeli Jewish variation, is an enthusiastic adoption of the text as an authoritative argument in favor of religious violence.

For example, one of the more extreme offshoots of the radical Protestant Right in the U.S. is called "The Phinehas Priesthood." This anti-Black and, ironically, also anti-Jewish group quotes Number 25 as its source of inspiration for militant action, including several cases of lethal violence.[62] At the same time, some of the ardent Jewish settlers in the Palestinian city of Hebron, typically hostile and aggressive towards local Muslims as well as liberal leftist secular Jews, have appropriated Phinehas the priest as a pseudo-patronymic: They call themselves "The Sons of Phinehas." They view Numbers 25 as representing a concrete and commanding reality and identify fully with its hero.[63]

Over the course of generations, the Jewish zealotry tradition has become mostly subterranean or marginal, while the anti-zealot tradition became the dominant traditional culture. However, the religious establishment could not afford an outright de-legitimation of an idea as highly praised and heavenly sanctioned as zealotry. Accordingly, Jewish tradition respected but also suspected zealotry. The religio-political leadership sought to avoid presenting zealotry as a guiding ideal lest it endanger the status of traditional authority, threaten the internal integration of the collectivity, and endanger its ability to cope with its external environment.[64] Phinehas had embarked on his deadly mission without any official license, ignoring all legal procedures. Yet he was not condemned even after the fact. Zealotry amounted to undermining authority, law, and order, thus threatening anarchy. It threatened to harm the very religio-political culture whose banner it bore.

These mixed feelings are reflected in the Palestinian Talmud, which argues that Phinehas and his zealous act are contrary to the rabbinic spirit (Jerusalem Talmud, Sanhedrin 27:2). The Mishnah rules that "he who cohabits with a heathen woman is punished by zealots" (Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin 82a). Under these conditions, the zealous act is not merely tolerated but expected. Surprisingly, however, tradition qualifies and effectively annuls this important and revealing rabbinic decision. The traditional convention is to introduce this passage into the peculiar category of "this is religious law but the rabbis do not so instruct" (*halakha ve'ein morin ken*). In other words, the ruling regarding zealotry is one of those rare cases referred to in the Oral Torah in which there is a general consensus about the legitimacy of a certain behavior in principle, but it is modified by the fear that license for such behavior would be expanded beyond acceptable bounds.

It is no coincidence that *Shulchan Aruch*, the most authoritative compendium of religious commandments in Orthodox circles to this very day, makes no mention of zealotry.[65] The topic might deserve theoretical examination in a yeshiva setting, but it has no bearing in the realm of practical norms. In effect, zealotry is so substantially restricted that it becomes nigh impossible to translate into actual practice. The multiple strict and intricate stipulations that condition the act also place religious educators and spiritual leaders in an awkward position: How are they to transmit the

value of unquestioning devotion to future generations without fostering anarchism and uncontrolled violence among their pupils?

The sages demanded that zealotry should be enacted in a public place, witnessed by many. A zealous act witnessed by less than ten people was regarded a punishable crime.[66] The sages also placed time constraints on the act. Zealotry is a matter of a clear-cut specific moment. The sages declared religious violence that is initiated a few seconds too early or terminated a few seconds too late to be illegitimate. Thus the distance between the most elevated zealous act and sheer murderous criminality is miniscule, but nevertheless critical. The Talmud contends that a zealot who approaches religious authorities to ask for their advice and sanction should not be granted such a license: ''If the zealot comes to take counsel, we do not instruct him to do so'' (Sanhedrin 82a). That is, zealotry has to be an individualist and spontaneous act. A person who commits religious violence can be defined as a zealot only in retrospect, never beforehand. The Talmud also sets a terminal time limit on the act: Had Phinehas killed the couple after their bodies had parted, the act of killing would have been considered illegal and liable for punishment. Furthermore, had the would-be victim reacted quickly enough to kill Phinehas, he would have been found innocent. Seconds suffice to turn an exemplary deed into a despicable act.

Rabbinical intervention is the crucial factor that prevents the transformation of Jewish zealotry into practice. Between the Torah and the Halakha on the one hand, and the implementation of the precepts derived from them, on the other hand, thick strata of rabbinic interpretation qualify and refine the law based on changing historical circumstances. A present-day interpretation of Number 25, published by the rabbi of a reformed community in Jerusalem while we were completing this essay, reads: ''For saving the Israelites, Phinehas was rewarded with a covenant of peace. His only reason for coming to our world was to bring eternal peace to humanity. This makes him the herald of global redemption.''[67]

Zealotry continues to cast a great shadow on contemporary Jews. For example, as we mentioned in the introduction to our essay, the so-called Jewish Underground contemplated blowing up the Dome of the Rock, the most significant Muslim shrine in Jerusalem. These religious activists made significant strides in planning the attack and took various practical as well as spiritual measures to promote their project, fully aware of its destructive implications. At an advanced phase in their preparations they asked some of their more favored rabbis for an authoritative approval, a sort of traditional blessing. These rabbis acknowledged the conspirators' genuine belief, backed their political-eschatological vision, and welcomed their aggressive inclination. However, they refused to provide the plotters with a permission to embark on this far-reaching action. The publicized reason for their refusal was their claim that the accomplishment of the holy mission should be postponed because the present generation is not yet mature enough in terms of its capability to appreciate the innermost (mystical-messianic) meaning of such an act.

A second reason, known only to the inner circles of radical settlers, was that the rabbis were not completely persuaded that the situation had fully met the requirements for a Phinehas-like act. The rabbis are said to have claimed that the very act of seeking permission from the established leaders of the community prior to initiating an extra-legal violent venture meant that one was not sufficiently confident and determined.[68] Consequently the Jewish Underground suspended further attempts to fulfill the sacred duty of blowing up the Islamic holy site.

Violence in the Post-Biblical Legacy

The interpretation, rationalization, adaptation, and application of the Bible mark the transformation of the ancient Israelite cult into what became known as rabbinical Judaism, represented in modern times mainly by Jewish orthodoxy. This old-new religion, basically an exegetical enterprise, became the crux of Judaism's distinct religious tradition. It is contained in a corpus that can be divided into four parts. The first, and least important, is the extra-canonical books. The second consists of the writings of the sages, starting with the Mishnah and continuing with the *halakhic* and *aggadic* elements in the Talmud, composed between the 2nd and the 6th century CE. The third consists of the medieval heritage which includes explanatory readings of the Torah (e.g., Rashi), halakhic rulings (such as *responsa*, and treaties, including those by Saadia Gaon, Maimonides, and Joseph Karo), theology and philosophy (e.g., Nachmanides, Yehuda Halevi, and Judah Loew of Prague), and mystical writings (particularly the Zoharic and Lurianic Kabbalah). The fourth component consists of rabbinical writings in recent centuries and in modern times, mostly Halakha (notably Chafetz Haim, Chazon Ish, and Ovadia Yosef) and also *machshava*. The latter combines simplified versions of theology and politics, moral-didactic teaching (*musar*) and mysticism (prominently, work by Abraham Isaac Kook and his son Zvi Yehuda Kook).[69]

The Great Revolts and the Extra-Canonical Books

The Jewish sacred reservoir includes not only canonical texts but also customs, symbols, and rituals, on the one hand, and closely related collective memories, on the other. These have implications for violence in three periods. So far, we have mentioned the biblical period and the modern, Zionist period. Between the two was a third, "violent" period, from the 2nd century BCE to the 2nd century CE, the period of the great revolts: the Hasmonean Revolt against the Seleucid Empire (167–160 BCE), and the Great Revolt (66 CE–73 CE), the Revolt of the Diasporas (also known as the "Kitos War," 115–117 CE), and the Bar Kokhva Revolt (132–136 CE) against the Roman Empire.[70]

These four revolts shared three characteristics. First, all exhibited a clear nationalist component, in addition to their religious facet. All occurred against the background of a Jewish striving for overthrowing foreign occupation and establishing political sovereignty and religious autonomy. Second, each revolt was suffused with a messianic spirit. Third, in all revolts, violence was directed not only against a foreign occupier, as part of a liberation struggle, but also inwardly at political and religious deviants and collaborators who were seen as insufficiently radical. During the Hasmonean revolt, much of the bloodshed was directed at Hellenizers, seen as undermining both the ritual and the ethnic purity of Judaism. During the Great Revolt, the Sicarii assassinated many who rejected their suicidal stance of combat against all odds.

Due to the excessive violence of these rebellions, particularly the inwardly directed violence, and because they ended in military, political, and religious catastrophes (primarily the destruction of the Temple and exile) they are remembered as traumatic events in Jewish historiography. After all, the violence resulting from repression of these revolts exceeded by far the violence initiated by Jews. Of the Bar Kokhva rebellion, for example, the Jerusalem Talmud notes that the Romans "went on killing

until their horses were submerged in blood to their nostrils'' (Ta'anit: 4:5). As a result, traditional Judaism has a deeply ambivalent attitude towards each of these episodes, which tend to be condemned or repressed and forgotten. The Masada episode, at the culmination of the Great Revolt, was absent from Jewish chronicles until it was rediscovered by Zionists. Bar Kokhva was initially perceived not only as a national savior but as a veritable messiah (hence his name: ''Son of the Star''). But after the failure of his revolt, the sages described him as ''Bar Koziba'' (meaning both ''son of a lie'' or ''son of disappointment,'' i.e., a false messiah) until his image was rehabilitated by Zionists.[71]

Public debates in modern Israel concerning current political and ideological issues that involve the use of state violence, mainly in the context of the regional conflict, typically resort to mytho-historical precedents of Jewish violence and are often couched in traditional and religious terms. Thus, for example, Israel's occupation of the West Bank and the military government in the Palestinian territories are discussed by reference to the lessons of the Bar Kochva revolt and its place in Jewish history as well as in the Jewish religious canon. The representatives of the opposing stances, from the Right and the Left, both tend to buttress their strategic arguments by amassing piles of quotations from the Talmud.[72]

The period of the revolts was a period in which Jewish violence was conspicuous and consequential. At the same time, this period was distinguished not merely by its disastrous violence but by virtue of being the only such episode in Jewish history. No less significant than its occurrence was the systematic effort by the guardians of Jewish traditions to relegate this interlude to oblivion or to regard it with loathing, from the period of the sages until the modern era.

This period, in which the last books of the Bible were written, the centuries before the common era, was a tumultuous period of changing governments, wars, civil wars, rebellions, the destruction of the Temple, and exile. All were momentous events in ancient Israel, upheavals of geopolitical, national, and religious dimensions. It seems that different varieties of Judaism existed side by side in this period in the Land of Israel and its surroundings. One of these Judaisms was the Pharisaic movement which, in retrospect, was considered the most authentic and legitimate and which found its expression in the writings of the sages. Another such movement eventually became Christianity. In the range between the two, a variety of movements provided textual innovations in response to the decline of the Jerusalem-centered priestly cult.

Several of these more-or-less Jewish books were excluded from the scriptures due to theological resistance or because they were completed after the sacred writings were sealed. Some of these texts have been lost, some survived only in Greek translation, and some were only recently discovered. The status of these documents, in particular their representativeness and influence, continues to be hotly debated. Though this literature has had a negligible influence on later Jewish worldviews and on Jewish behavior, it can testify to the moods prevailing in this revolutionary period.[73] The Dead Sea Scrolls, discovered in the 1940s and 50 s, offer a dramatic example. The texts are replete with violence, concentrated particularly in the scroll about the ''War of the Sons of Light against the Sons of Darkness'' which researchers refer to as ''The War Scroll.'' This scroll offers a detailed Manichean account of a brutal confrontation in the future, between Israel and a coalition of nations, that will result in redemption.[74]

The expressions of violence in texts from the Second Commonwealth period take one of two literary forms: Apocalyptic visions and mytho-historical accounts. The prophecies, such as the Books of Enoch, Ezra, and Baruch, are reminiscent of the catastrophic visions of the biblical prophets, such as the Book of Daniel, and the New Testament prophets, such as the Book of Revelations.[75] Among the mytho-historical accounts, Jews respect (though Jewish tradition has not canonized) the Books of Maccabees, which describe the Jewish rebellion against Seleucid rule in Judea.[76] These two books are our most important source about this period. First Maccabees, a Hebrew text addressed to local Judeans, is sympathetic towards the rebellion's leaders, the Hasmonean priestly family, who strain for ritual purity and national militancy, emphasizing heroic zealotry. Second Maccabees, written in Greek and addressed to Jews in the Diaspora, tends to be more critical of the revolt. It argues that it was not an inevitable clash between two cultures but unnecessary bloodshed caused by corrupt and alien interests.

These texts have also offered behavioral models for later Jews, in particular Zionists. This includes the most gruesome incident of Jewish martyrdom: the legendary tale of an anonymous mother and her seven children who are willing to undergo macabre torment and, ultimately, painful death rather than agree to consume pork. The narrator comments: "Most admirable and worthy of everlasting remembrance was the mother, who saw her seven sons perish in a single day, yet bore it courageously because of her hope in the Lord."[77] Sure enough, generations of schoolchildren in Israel have been taught to revere this woman as a symbol of Jewish courage and dignity.

Talmud and Halakha

Present-day orthodoxy is a Judaism that is centered on the Halakha. It inherited, fostered, and developed the normative-ritual code from traditional Judaism, which now regulates its way of life. The Halakha dictates how a Jew is to behave in any situation. Orthodox doctrine considers the source of these laws to be divine and regards the laws as having been transmitted to the Jewish people in a revelatory act at Mount Sinai. The laws were initially recorded in the Written Torah (i.e., the Hebrew Bible, particularly the Pentateuch). The Oral Torah is a sequel and interpretation of the written Torah.[78] Officially, the Oral Torah is slightly inferior to the written Torah in holiness and authoritativeness but in practice it replaces and supersedes the written Torah. The writings of the sages and the Halakha combine elements from different sources, with different agendas, expressing various schools, periods, and places. Nonetheless, subsequent generations, including contemporary Orthodox Jews, conceived of these as made of one cloth. Moreover, they are organically bound with the great pillars of the medieval and early modern *halakhic* literature.

The number of rabbinical rulings has grown exponentially over time. Generations of rulings, rendered generally as answers (*responsa*) to questions from community members, analyzed the commandments and adapted them to the changing situations with which Jews had to contend. In this manner, the rabbis compiled a rich corpus covering almost every conceivable topic. Thousands of compendiums have since collected, reworked, and updated these rulings.[79] The oral law in general and the Halakha in particular are not merely an exegesis of past writings but also a foundation for future writings, an infrastructure for a new Judaism that would have to survive unknown circumstances.

The Bible, composed in ancient times, had to be adapted for a people without a temple, homeland, territorial concentration, a shared language, independence, or politics. The oral law can be seen as Judaism's adjustment project to thousands of years of life in exile. To do so, the oral law and the Halakha had to suppress nationalism and repress messianism. This also involved a sublimation of the Bible in an effort to supervise and qualify the violence of Judaism until it could no longer be expressed. This denationalizing and de-messianizing required the severing of the Gordian knot between religion and territory and between religion and politics. Thus, the sages emphasized the sanctity of the Land of Israel and its ritual significance over its historical significance and its function as a sovereign base. In the first four or five centuries of the common era, the counter-violent trend may well have been one current among others, perhaps not even the primary current. Only later on, given the exilic reality, did this current prove to be the most adaptive. It alone prevailed and became identified with Jewish tradition. This is not to say that the Talmud is an exclusively and consistently non-violent text.[80]

The sages used several strategies in order to curb the violent elements of Judaism, particularly those hidden in the religion's national and messianic aspect. First, Jewish tradition underwent a fundamental theological transformation: It transferred the focus of responsibility to the heavens and placed sovereignty exclusively in the hands of God. The Jewish collective and the individual were absolved of the need to take an active role in history. Second, Jewish fate was reinterpreted: The failure of rebellions and exile were presented as a divine punishment for transgressing religious law, "because of our sins" (*mipney hata'enu*). This allowed the believer to come to terms with his circumstances and to turn his efforts towards contemplation and ritual and away from politics. Indeed, since persecution was divinely ordained, failure to submit to God's instruments (the Assyrians, Babylonians, Greeks, or Romans) merely invited further suffering and delayed redemption. The focus of conflict shifted away from military clashes between Jews and their enemies and towards the tension between Israel and God. Here, Israel's power lay in the opposite of self-determination: in negating power, subjecting itself to God, and repenting.[81]

Changes in religious conceptions were accompanied by changes in Jewish identity that had implications for violence. A clear example was the revolution in the masculine image in Judaism. The biblical hero, who worked the land, administered the state, and participated in combat, was gradually replaced with the man of books and the man of faith. The great virile conquerors underwent near effeminization: Joshua became a Torah scholar and David became the head of a yeshiva. From now on their distinction was wisdom and piety. An exemplary expression of this revolution can be found in the tale of an emperor who asked a rabbi: "Who is he that is mighty?" According to the Mishnah, the rabbi replied: "He who subdues his [evil] inclination" (Avot 4:1).

A parallel twist occurred in stories about the Bible and the Second Commonwealth. The emphasis shifted from physical to spiritual force, and from the political to the miraculous. The Passover *Hagadah* retold the Exodus as a deliverance by divine hand in which Jews were passive participants and from which Moses, the Bible's charismatic leader, was completely absent. Similarly, the Chanukah epic ceased to be about a war in which the weak cunningly and courageously overcame Seleucid troops equipped with elephants, as reported in First and Second Maccabees. The Talmud transformed this military account into a story about the miracle of the small

pot of oil. Here, as in the rabbinical treatment of Bar Kokhva, the rabbis strove to ensure that violent legacies would not lead to risky imitation.[82]

This new Jewish stance also led to significant halakhic innovations, including a moderation and restraining of the laws of war. The Halakha suggested that the launching of war involved prudence and caution. It distinguished between mandatory war (*milkhemet mitzvah*), which was essentially defensive, and discretionary war (*milkhemet reshut*) that could be launched only with permission from the Sanhedrin (the parliament of 71 sages) and with the support of the high priest. Since both the Sanhedrin and the priesthood had been dissolved, some argued that these conditions precluded war altogether.[83]

Other halakhic changes related to the regulation and humanization of war. It was said that even Amalek must be offered peace conditions before attacking. Maimonides, for example, ruled that one cannot surround a city from all sides but only from three sides so that the enemy can escape.[84] Nachmanides prohibited pillaging the enemy's livestock and property. Judah Loew of Prague ruled that one could not harm civilian bystanders.[85]

At the same time, the sages placed limits on violent criminal penalties. Though the list of capital offenses in the Bible was long, in practice the death penalty was enacted only under the most extreme circumstances and only after particularly complex legal procedures. So much so that Rabbi Eleazar ben Azaryah regarded a court that executed one criminal in seventy years as a "destructive tribunal" (Makkoth 7a). Maimonides stated that it is better to set a thousand criminals free than to punish a single innocent man.[86]

Jewish Mysticism

Analyses of the traditional sources of Jewish violence tend to focus on the Bible and the Halakha while ascribing a significantly lesser role to the mystical or moralistic literature.[87] Yet even these disregarded texts have shaped the ethos of Jewish believers, particularly in the modern era.

Like any religious mysticism, the Kabbalah deals with the secret of the divine and the wonders of creation and of man.[88] Mysticism seeks to create an unmediated link between the believer and his God and to arrive at a knowledge of a reality that is both sublime and internally hidden. This reality is authentic, while apparent reality is only its symbolic reflection.

The roots of Jewish mysticism lie in the Second Commonwealth era. It flourished in the Middle Ages, both in the Land of Israel and in the Diaspora, in parallel to Jewish philosophy, its rival and complement. Because of its esoteric and individualist tendency and its preoccupation with higher realms, mysticism is usually associated with the tendency to withdraw from worldly matters, with an indifference and alienation towards the surrounding environment, or a striving towards harmony with the environment. Consequently, the Kabbalah has a naturally quietist and conciliatory dimension. At the same time, the Kabbalah has a facet that can lead to worldly activism and even to Jewish violence.

Jewish mysticism can be divided into two currents.[89] The ecstatic Kabbalah focuses on meditative procedures to create a direct contact with God. This type of Kabbalah has a prophetic and an occult aspect, which can gravitate towards practical Kabbalah. The second type of Kabbalah is theosophical. It develops an elaborate theological system to intimately and profoundly know God, his environment, deeds,

and plans. For hundreds of years, the ecstatic Kabbalah has been linked to violent rituals that have a clear magical element.[90] This violence is neither central nor prominent in the Kabbalah but it is a noteworthy offshoot of this tradition. These rituals include complex cultic procedures aimed at affecting the well-being of individuals and groups, such as rituals that can cause material and physical harm, even death.[91] The most well known of these is the secret spell "Lashes of Fire" (*pulsa dinura*), rumored to be in use even today by Israeli political activists who wish to neutralize opponents.[92]

More surprisingly yet are the subtle and effective implications of theosophical Kabbalah for Jewish violence. First, the Kabbalah gives rabbinic Judaism vitality by introducing a mythical component to what is otherwise an intellectual and legalistic tradition. The Kabbalah overflows with mythology, in the strict sense of the word: the epic exploits of the divine.[93] Second, the Kabbalah offers tools for theurgy, the ability to influence God and manipulate the heavens. The Kabbalah does so by supplementing the halakhic practice with *kavanah*, a concentrated awareness of the mystical implications of one's normative actions. In so doing, the believer can redeem the divine and thus redeem the world.[94] In sum, the Kabbalah makes possible an activism pregnant with religious energies. It presents historical reality as a mirror and integral component of a larger cosmic drama in which the Jew and the people of Israel can play a vital role.

The two most influential kabbalistic texts are the Zohar, composed in 13th century Spain, and the Lurianic Kabbalah, composed in Galilee in the 16th century. The Zohar allows the reader to become thoroughly acquainted with the nature of God and to fathom the secrets of the universe by means of the ten *sefirot*, emanations of the divine that create and sustain the world.[95] Of the many interesting ideas in the Zohar, the most relevant to Jewish violence is the distinction between the exalted Jew and inferior non-Jew. The Zoharic tradition treats the Jew as unconditionally and undeniably holy whereas the gentile is of low moral standing, regardless of his behavior. The Jew draws from the divine light whereas the gentile is impure, beastly, corrupt, and sinister.

The contemporary impact of these Kabbalistic ideas is exemplified in the ideas of Rabbi Yitzhak Ginsburg (born 1944).[96] Ginsburg is a charismatic rabbi, worshipped by a growing circle of young disciples from the settlements around Nablus. He is a repentant Jew of North American origin, a former scientist who developed an original mystical-messianic system rooted in Chabad writings, on the one hand, and Rabbi Kook's writings, on the other. Ginsburg's kabbalistic lessons and writings, as well as his personal manners, place him between Chassidic orthodoxy and nationalistic neo-orthodoxy. His religious logic hides an extremely radical right-wing geopolitical agenda. He encourages the settlement project in the West Bank even at the price of severe damage to the basic rights of local Arabs and has called for a campaign of vengeance against the Palestinians. Ginsburg not only denies the Palestinian rights of property but also upholds the distinction "between blood and blood" (meaning, between Arab and Jewish blood). This differentiation is not merely metaphorical but genetic: these are qualitatively different kinds of blood.

Rabbi Avraham Yitzhak HaCohen Kook (1865–1935) provides an even better example, since he was by no means a radical rabbi but the first Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi of Israel and a representative of the moderate religious Zionist establishment. Gershom Sholem, the great scholar of the Kabbalah, regarded him as the last link in the long chain of Jewish mystics. In Kook's famous book, *Lights* (*Orot*), Kook

extends the line of argumentation from the Talmud and Rabbi Loew, cited in section 1 above, which discriminates between Jews and gentiles. He writes: "The difference between the Israelite's soul and the gentile's soul is greater and deeper than the difference between the spirit of a man and the spirit of a beast."[97]

The Lurianic Kabbalah can be read as confirming this discriminatory attitude towards gentiles and can be exploited to back calls for violence against non-Jews. For example, according to the Lurianic myth of *berur* (selection), evil achieves its reign over human existence, struggles against the divinity, and harms humans by capturing sparks (*nitzotzot*) in shells (*klipot*). Whereas divinity is the sole supplier of life-energy, evil, the essence of matter, has no independent source of power. It draws its vitality from its hold on holiness, which is the substance of the sparks. The devil can only exist by joining the divine source, taking it hostage by stealth or force and drawing it out. Rescuing the sparks from the grasp of matter is the key to destroying the powers of evil. There is no repair (*tikkun*) for heaven and earth without a clear selection between the emissaries of good and evil. This esoteric account has been read as identifying the sparks with Jews and the shells with gentiles, whose force derives entirely from their hold on Jews. Destroying the gentile will release the Jew from captivity, will eliminate chaos (*tohu vabohu*), and will restore order to the world.

The Lurianic Kabbalah has an even greater impact on violence by virtue of linking mysticism with messianism.[98] This mystical messianism is suffused with national ideas and symbols that encourage the believer to become an agent for change. For these and other reasons, this Kabbalah is particularly popular and has impacted multiple facets of Judaism, including normative Halakhah, the 17th century Sabbatian messianic surge, and 18th century Hassidism. It has many followers among religious Jews in Israel, particularly those of Middle Eastern origins.

According to Luria, the primal event of the breaking of the vessels (*shvirat kelim*) is the root of all evil and chaos. Overcoming this catastrophe requires repair (*tikkun*), which means redeeming the divine and the world, in particular Israel. This process is not merely cosmic, in which good and evil struggle over the future of the universe, but delegates a seminal role for the individual Jew. Redemption does not occur of its own accord but requires human awakening from below (*itaruta diletata*) through the improvement of religious behavior. This unites the mystical and the messianic goals: perfecting the world (*tikkun olam*). It creates an overlap between the redemption of God and the cosmos from a state of fragmentation, the redemption of the nation from its exile, and the redemption of the individual Jew's soul.

This is an activist and proto-nationalist approach that places responsibility on each and every Jew, and on the Jewish people as a whole. The Jews' task is to usher in the Messiah by separating from the gentiles and discarding them. They do so by fulfilling the commandments of the Torah in a focused matter that leads to awareness of their deeper significance, a penetration of the heavens, and their manipulation. A particular mystical-messianic power is ascribed to the commandment to conquer the land and settle in it. Thus the forceful treatment of the Palestinians has cosmic significance.

The atmosphere of mystery and awe that surrounds the Kabbalah, in addition to the explicit rabbinical ban on the study of the Kabbalah, has limited its circulation. Only in certain periods did the preoccupation with the Kabbalah become relatively widespread. In these periods, it underwent concretization and simplification. This occurred in the 16th–17th centuries, when the trauma of the expulsion from Spain

created fertile ground for redemptive ideas, and this occurs again today. In Israeli society and politics, the Kabbalah's systematic and crystallized body of knowledge has given way to "kabbalism," a collection of metaphors, idioms, stories, formulas, and vague ideas. Practitioners use these concepts latently, incidentally, or inadvertently, and often refuse to acknowledge their sources or to call their Kabbalah by name.

The tendency to think in mythical terms, drawing on kabbalistic roots, leads practitioners to conceive of the violent Arab-Israeli conflict as a cosmic drama. They judge events as a reflection of something beyond the immediate and apparent, something spiritual and sublime. The circumstances and outcomes of an incident are not only tactical or strategic but also metaphysical. Ultimate struggle occurs on the scene between good and evil, a Manichean struggle between powerful, fundamental, and contradictory forces. The participants feel like actors in a play that is "larger than life," involving both human and super-human powers.

The following is an example of a kabbalistic interpretation of political events with implications for Jewish violence. The Orthodox Jews who make it their mission to provide Jewish victims of Palestinian terror acts with traditional burial rites diverge from traditional funerary customs in a significant way: They bury terror victims without washing their bodies and without wrapping them in shrouds. Instead, they inter them in their blood-stained clothes, together with blood gathered at the site of the assault. The explanation they offer is not merely halakhic but also mystical-messianic. It draws on a quote from the prophecy of Ezekiel: "That it might cause fury to come up to take vengeance" (Ezekiel 24:8). Their belief is that, when these bodies arrive in heaven, their blood will stain God's robes. With every additional drop of martyrs' blood the full measure will be attained and God's white garment will ferment with blood. God will no longer be able to contain his wrath and will embark on a campaign of vengeance against the gentiles.

The roots of this theurgist conception lie in the martyrdom concept of "vengeful redemption" prevalent in ancient times and in the Middle Ages. It implies forcing God to act powerfully against the perpetrators of anti-Jewish violence. By means of a post-mortem magical act, Jewish terror victims become partners to an act of aggression. They turn from a passive to an active agent in the cycle of Middle Eastern violence; from accidental by-passers at the scene of a terrorist act to a fierce fighting arm against the enemies of Israel.

Jewish Messianism

Messianism is one of Judaism's most important contributions to the Western heritage. This motif is not to be found in a distinct corpus of sacred books or in a particular genre of Jewish thought. Rather, it is manifested in a broad variety of sources that have infused Jewish tradition throughout the ages. Judaism conceived of messianism, developed it, and spread it.[99] Judaism has also done its best to restrain messianism and neutralize it of its revolutionary and aggressive elements. Even the sages of the first centuries of the common era proclaimed messianism to be detrimental "to awe" (of God) "and love" (of man).

Like other religions, Judaism displays an affinity between messianism and violence.[100] The books of Isaiah and Daniel, the apocrypha, the legends of the Talmud, the Kabbalah, and even current prophecies, envision the end of days in apocalyptic terms.[101] Outside Judaism, it is difficult to think of historical incidents of acute

messianism that did not degenerate into violence. In Jewish history, the variable intervening between messianism and violence is nationalism, as exemplified by the rebellions of the Second Commonwealth. Another example of the connection between Jewish messianism and Jewish nationalism is modern Zionism, also implicated in violence.

Is Judaism a messianic religion? This is both a theological and historiographical question. It is also a question that Jews ask to understand their own identity. This question can be split into sub-questions. Which is more significant: Is it the few messianic outbreaks that characterized Judaism, mostly during the Second Commonwealth period?[102] Or is it the long periods in which no such outbreaks occurred and in which prior incidents were condemned as catastrophes, due in large part to their violence? To paraphrase: What are the implications of Jewish messianism for Jewish history during two millennia of exile, starting with the national-religious crisis caused by messianic rebellions? Did messianism have an active and rebellious impact on Jewish behavior or did it contribute to passivity and quietism, a coming to terms with a reality of persecution and dependence?

Any attempt to answer these questions requires several distinctions. First, we need to distinguish the religious component of messianism from its nationalist component. Second, we need to distinguish concrete and imminent messianism from soft and diffuse messianism, deferred to a distant and unspecified future. As a rule, with the exception of several brief episodes, Jewish tradition has treated messianism with ambivalence. It praised the messianisms of the past and future but deplored present-tense messianism. Excessive messianism would endanger the existing order, make tradition superfluous, undermine the authority of the Halakhah and the rabbis and undercut political power. An example of this attitude is the famous talmudic assertion that "There is no difference between this world and the days of the Messiah except [that in the latter there will be no] bondage of foreign powers" (Berakhot, 34b). Maimonides interpreted this as a bold claim to defuse the explosive revolutionary and miraculous element of messianism and turn redemption into a normal political process. At the same time, Judaism took care to maintain messianism on the back burner because it recognized that a measured and contained drive was necessary for sustaining religious vitality.

The Jewish Middle Ages were characterized by a messianic mindset paired with messianic inactivity. On the one hand, we witness obsessive preoccupation with and impressive elaboration of Jewish messianism due to the hardships of exilic life. On the other hand, there is evidence of a systematic self-conscious effort to refrain from actualizing the messianic vision due to the lessons of the rebellions of the Second Commonwealth. This conspicuous dissonance exemplifies the distinction between the messianic idea and messianic movement. The former is a religious tenet, memory, or aspiration, an abstract principle, or an imaginary, hypothetical, or proscribed model, as depicted in sacred texts. The latter is a historical initiative that takes believers from the religious into the political realm with the intention of inducing profound change. The link between the messianic idea and movement can be causal but a common claim in modern Jewish historiography sees them as inversely related. Zionists placed the blame for the lingering exile directly on the religious tradition that cultivated the messianic idea, which fostered false illusions that made all activism superfluous.[103]

Exilic quietism was interrupted by messianic incidents that were mere historical curiosities, as in the case of Shlomo Molcho (a 16th century Portuguese Marano and

mystic who is recorded in Jewish historiography as a "pseudo-Messiah"). The famous exception that problematizes the linkage between messianism and violence is the 17th century Sabbatean movement.[104] This was a particularly intensive messianic outburst that lasted two years and swept much of Judaism, from the Middle East to Europe. And yet, the movement provoked no violence at all. The Turkish Sultan was threatened by Sabbatai Sevi's "kingdom" and arrested the messiah but the enthusiasm that seized hundreds of thousands of Jews from all sectors of society was contained within the bounds of religion and did not cross the line into social and political unrest. It most certainly did not manifest as rebelliousness and violence. Sabbatai alone was assigned the burden of realizing redemption while his followers were expected only to focus upon his personality and deeds by means of faith and rite. It is tempting to hypothesize that the very presence of a figure that personifies the messianic urge releases the followers from the burden of activism.

The Sabbatean movement was echoed in several movements in the century after its decline, such as the Frankists. Their messianism became more esoteric and antinomian over time, until they lost all political and activist potential.[105] A final element of Sabbateanism appeared in yet another great historical Jewish movement, the East European Hassidism of the 18th century. This movement was also messianic but its messianism was curbed by displacing mundane religious energies into the soul.

The paradox of messianic quietism in the Middle Ages is even more surprising in light of several characteristics of Jewish messianism that distinguish it from its Christian counterpart and grant it a national-political quality. First, in Jewish messianism both the redeeming agent and the redeemed unit are not the individual but the collective, the Jewish people. Second, redemption occurs not merely on the spiritual level, but first and foremost, on the historical level. Even at its most fanciful, when it conjectured the redemption of God and the cosmos, Jewish messianism maintained a nucleus of Jewish territorialism and sovereignty. The fulfillment of the messianic vision, in all its variants, posited the ingathering of the exiled in the Land of Israel and the establishment of an independent state that would guarantee security, affluence, and dignity for Jews. It can be said that the Jewish conception of redemption always contained a proto-Zionist element.

Answers to the following two questions determine whether any particular instance of Jewish eschatology will have an activist potential that can lead to violence. First, is the vision gradualist, moderate, and conciliatory or is it revolutionary, total, and confrontational? Judaism, like Christianity, has a catastrophic conception of redemption, the realization of which involves cruel wars, suffering, and death, and in particular, the destruction of the evil forces that resist the messianic process. The second question that affects the odds of violence has to do with the agent responsible for redemption. Is God alone responsible for redemption or do humans have to play a role in ushering in redemption? A related question addresses the determinism of redemption: Is the messianic process inevitable or are there necessary conditions that have to be fulfilled first?

Jewish tradition tended to adopt an intermediate stance. Although redemption is up to heavenly forces, man has a role to play, be it minor. Human behavior is not a sufficient but a necessary condition. Human involvement is limited to ethical and ritual behavior at some times and necessitates historical action at other times. Religious behavior that contributes to redemption can be limited to the fulfilling of commandments and the strengthening of faith or it can necessitate an involvement in the social and political order. Such involvement risks being interpreted as

signaling distrust in divine providence. Consequently, activism is trivialized and minimized as an effort to "merely" hasten the pace of redemption, as a trial of determination to signal the divine that one is deserving of redemption, or as a mechanism of selection that sets apart those willing to take action into their own hands. And yet, even though it fulfills a minor role, human participation in the dynamics of redemption is often violent.

Human intervention in the messianic process can take on a paradoxical character. When belief in messianic determinism is particularly strong, and the redemption is particularly imminent—when redemption is practically behind the door—logic dictates passive waiting in full trust in the divine. Ironically, it is precisely then that believers tend to lose their patience and take violent action. When the messianist is active in history, his action tends to be assertive precisely because he is playing a role in a divine process, feels omnipotent, is released from ethical restraint, and can overcome all real-political hurdles. After all, the responsibility for his actions is not truly his. These are the ideal conditions for messianic violence. In Jewish history, this has occurred two times, separated by two millennia: Once in the period immediately before and after the destruction of the Temple, and once in the last four decades.[106]

The most resourceful and dominant Jewish revival movements in recent times are the overtly messianic movements Gush Emunim, the Lubavitch Hassidim (Chabad), and, to a lesser extent, the Breslav Hassidim.[107] All three contributed substantially to the re-messianization of religious Judaism and all involve right-wing, militant ethno-nationalism. Members of the first group have been implicated in violent acts and members of the latter two movements seem to sympathize with and even admire perpetrators of Jewish violence.

Several idioms related to the messianic tradition involve catastrophic eschatology that is unavoidably violent. The pangs of the Messiah (*chevley mashiach*, often also *ikvata demeshicha*) refers to the period that precedes the realization of the full redemption, typically characterized by a radical deterioration in religious and political conditions.[108] This concept suggests that the messianic process is not necessarily linear but involves digressions, regressions, and most importantly, a dramatic crisis just prior to the consummation of the process. This catastrophe has a moral-spiritual and a physical-historical aspect. The pangs of the Messiah can take the form of heavy wars involving Israel. Like their post-dispensational millenarian counterparts in Christianity, there are Jews who seek such a war to ensure redemption in their time.

The messiah from the Davidic branch is the idyllic Messiah whose appearance signals the end of days. He is the embodiment of harmony and peace. Some Jewish traditions claim that his reign is preconditioned by a different Messiah, "Messiah, son of Joseph" (*mashiach ben yoseph*), a man of war, who fiercely fights for the fulfillment of redemption. Only his death in battle opens the opportunity for the arrival of the Davidic Messiah.

Redemption is a matter of timing. Its date is clouded in mystery and dread. This tormenting uncertainty can be overcome by anxiously searching for hints (*simanim*) regarding the definite time and by calculating the End of Days (*chishuvey kitzin*). On occasion, this search can escalate into taking impatient action to provoke the appearance of these indices. For example, those who read Jeremiah's prophecy that "out of the north an evil shall break forth" (1:14) as a precondition of messianic timing, find a degree of comfort in Israel's armed confrontations with Syria and Lebanon.

The War of Gog and Magog (the equivalent of the Christian Armageddon) is the ultimate military clash between Jews and the nations that hate Israel and seek to conquer Jerusalem. After great suffering and sacrifice, the Jews will be victorious and will usher in the full redemption.[109] Any identification of a contemporary military confrontation with the War of Gog and Magog might encourage certain Jews to support the war enthusiastically and take great risk in the certain knowledge that the end will involve victory and redemption. The Jewish messianic tradition describes this war as a day of judgment (*yom ha'din*) on which all accounts will be settled.[110] This will be a day of darkness, suffering, blood, and death but also a day in which justice will prevail.

When messianic Jews lose their patience, they seek at all costs to change reality in order to force it to match reality. A different strategy to fulfill the vision is to turn it from a future aspiration to a present reality by declaring that the current order, as it stands, is a redeemed world. Both approaches are dangerous. It is no coincidence that Orthodox authorities are deeply concerned about the realization of the very dream held high by their followers. Rabbinical authorities, from ancient times to this day, have fought every messianic phenomenon by declaring it to be a false messianism as soon as it manifested itself. In addition to endangering traditional religion and conventional morals, which are rendered obsolete by the Messiah, there is also a danger of violence. Believers experience a dissonance between their internal reality, which acknowledges redemption, and external reality, which is abundant with the characteristics of an unredeemed world. The frustrating gap between these levels of consciousness has to be bridged without reservations, even violently if necessary.

A Return to Biblical Violence?

Two Millennia of Quietism

Between the suppression of the Bar Kokhva Revolt and the modern era, most Jews settled in the European and Middle Eastern diasporas as a minority that survived by virtue of Christian and Muslim tolerance.[111] This relative peace was interrupted occasionally by violence against Jews, as occurred during the First Crusade. The very survival of Jewish communities, let alone their well-being and prosperity, depended on curtailing violent initiatives. Gradually, this non-violence transformed from an existential expediency into a religious principle.

A well-known example is that of the "three oaths." At the origin of this principle is a verse in the Song of Songs: "I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes, and by the hinds of the field, that ye stir not up, nor awake my love, till he please" (Song of Songs, 2:7). The Babylonian Talmud invokes this verse and relates that God made the Israelites swear to "not go up [altogether as if surrounded] by a wall" (Kethuboth 111a), traditionally understood as a prohibition against mass immigration to the Land of Israel. The second oath is "they shall not rebel against the nations of the world," interpreted as a command to refrain from politics and violent activism. Many quote a version of these oaths that imposes an additional prohibition: "that [the people] shall not press the end," i.e., abstain from coercing God to bring the redemption before its preordained time.

A treatise on these oaths was published in the foundational book of Rabbi Joel Teitelbaum (d. 1979), the leader of the Satmer Hasidim and their splinter-sect, the Neturei Karta, the most hard-core contemporary *Haredim*. This treatise, which

became a cornerstone of ultra-orthodoxy, utterly transformed the status of the oaths. In contrast to their relatively marginal and somewhat esoteric character, Teitelbaum placed the oaths at the center of the Jewish outlook of *Haredim*. While these oaths were never considered proper laws, and were certainly never considered one of the six hundred and thirteen commandments enumerated by Maimonides, they have been accepted in the *Haredi* world as an actual, unqualified interdiction.[112]

However, another brand of contemporary Israeli orthodoxy, the National-Religious movement, particularly devotees of Gush Emunim, adhere to a diametrically opposed interpretation of these oaths. They claim, for example, that instead of "shall not press (*lidchok*) the end" the sacred source actually says "shall not delay (*lirchok*) the end." The change of a single letter turns the whole meaning of this critical command upside down. Now it is understood as instructing Jews to abandon passive minimalism. The anti-messianic version is transformed to an imminent-messianic message that encourages believers to embark on ambitious activism that naturally involves violence.

In the Middle Ages, the effort to curb violence was accompanied by a parallel effort to neutralize messianism, gradually distance Judaism from the written Bible (the Torah) in favor of the oral Torah (the Talmud), condemn violent episodes, and reduce the nationalist elements associated with Jewish violence, such as territory and sovereignty, to a symbolic level. For example, rituals and memories of the holy land, such as prayer eastwards, came to replace immigration and settlement. Techniques for neutralizing the threat of activist messianism include spiritualization, ritualization, and co-optation. All three techniques manifested in the 18th century Hassidic movement.[113]

In this protracted period of exile, which provided the roots of religious Judaism as we know it today, violence was rare and a tradition of victimhood developed. But in this same period new canons, customs, and rituals developed that undoubtedly had a grain of violence in them. The two most prominent examples are the Passover Haggadah that was compiled over the course of the Middle Ages and Purim celebrations that drew on the Book of Esther. The reader will be familiar with the ceremonial Seder meal in which religious Jews repeat the line "Pour out your wrath on the nations that refuse to acknowledge you—on the peoples that do not call upon your name. For they have devoured your people Israel . . ." Participants sing hymns of victory accomplished through cruel acts of violence against Egyptians (which are often identified with contemporary villains). They also recount with triumphalism each of the ten plagues with which the Egyptians were afflicted, including the killing of their firstborns. We return to the case of Purim presently.

In this period, expressions of violence remained constant but their targets changed according to circumstances. For much of the exilic period, the recurrent motifs of Jewish violence were aimed at Christianity and Christians as an expression of both a fundamental religious clash and an ongoing oppressive presence. Later on, particularly in the Middle East, Jewish expressions of anger were turned against Islam and Arabs as well.

There is a clear gap between the halakhic, theological, and ceremonial preoccupation with violence and the ability to actualize that violence. It was precisely the certain knowledge that violence could not be exercised that gave free rein to violent fantasies. One can speculate that the textual and ritual acting out of violence betrayed impotence as an overcompensation for the inability to take violent action. As soon as Jewish conditions changed and the practical possibility of enacting hatred

arose, these texts and rituals changed their meaning. This raises questions about the relationship between symbolic and physical violence: Are they unconnected, is their connection reversed, or might they enjoy a direct relationship?

A rare exception in this non-violent tradition is the celebration of Purim, an exception that proves the rule. This celebration consists of three elements. The first, not unlike Passover, revolves around a ritual reading of biblical text, the Book of Esther, which includes superiority over gentiles, hatred, and a great deal of verbal violence. Readers express joy at the hanging of Haman, the villain of the tale, with his ten sons at gallows intended for the hanging of Jews. The second element is the eating of Haman's ear (*ozen haman*),[114] a sublimated cannibalistic violence mirrored in the Passover custom of sprinkling drops of wine (symbolizing blood) as one enumerates the ten plagues. The third element, as distinct from Passover, is a carnival atmosphere that may have led on occasion to modest physical violence against gentiles. The prototypical medieval carnival involves not only the overturning of fortunes, which is a central principle of this holiday, but also the upending of all social hierarchies and categories. This reversal finds expression in the donning of costumes and in the commandment to consume alcohol until one cannot distinguish friend from foe. At the same time, the festival confines aggression in time and space (such as the synagogue, on one particular day of the year).

In several cases, this violence spread beyond the boundaries of the carnival and was aimed at non-Jews.[115] These cases seem to challenge the non-violent image of the exilic period but, at a closer reading, they turn out to be few and far between, involving no physical injury or substantial damage. Typical incidents included spitting on Christian symbols or cursing at Christian clergy. Such delimited breaching of norms entailed a certain risk since it presented revolutionary, though essentially hypothetical, alternatives to the social order that might have led to violent action beyond the symbolic. At the same time the very emancipating subversiveness that enabled measured expressions of Jewish violence during Purim also contributed to restraint during the rest of the year and thus bolstered the existing social order in which Jews were passive and subordinate.

Two final comments conclude this discussion of medieval Jewish quietism. First, there is some evidence of violence directed by Jews against other Jews in the context of social control. This violence relates primarily to rabbinical rulings designed to penalize deviants in the community by means of humiliation or excommunication. A conspicuous example is the struggle against informers, particularly in periods of Jewish persecution in Europe. The community's fear that its autonomous social and economic arrangements would be exposed to the authorities and to the Christian environment led it to view informers as one of its greatest menaces. Ashkenazi communities often circumvented Jewish legal institutions when dealing with informers (categorized as *moser* in halakhic law). On rare occasions, Sepharadic communities condemned informers to death, with the assent of Christian rulers. The most common and effective control mechanism was the *herem* which, in distinction from its biblical namesake, was akin to an excommunication. This banishment was proclaimed in a terrifying ceremony and was experienced as a particularly violent measure given the precarious nature of Jewish life outside the community.[116]

Second, the ancient Jewish tradition of "sanctifying the name of God" (*kiddush ha'shem*) reached it apex during the Middle Ages.[117] This martyrdom tradition developed in response to extreme acts of violence directed against Jewish communities, such as the slaughters of the Crusades. As part of this tradition, many Jews

killed their families or committed suicide to avoid conversion. To be sure, these defiant acts contained a measure of aggressiveness towards the Christian perpetrator, perhaps even an internalizing of the perpetrator's belligerence. Indeed, recent historical research has shown that medieval Jewish and Christian martyrdom traditions influenced one another in subtle ways. The medieval Jewish martyrdom tradition assimilated certain elements of the Christian models of martyrdom until they appeared to be authentically Jewish.[118] Such martyrdom was violent not merely by virtue of the aggression directed towards oneself and one's family. The martyr also appropriated the prerogative of killing from his opponent, thus exercising mastery over his own death. Finally, by undergoing a noble death that sanctifies the name of God, the martyr provoked the divine to avenge his death, unleashing God's violence against his opponent.

Modern Vicissitudes of Jewish Violence

In modern times, violence in Judaism has taken a radical turn. In the aftermath of the disintegration of the traditional Jewish community, Jews were faced with a choice between several fundamentally new options: assimilation; joining European nationalist, liberal, or socialist movements; varieties of reformed Judaism; and Orthodox Judaism. These options were either non-violent or, where they include violence, their violence was not religious violence. The remaining option was Jewish secularism, especially of the ethno-nationalist brand, that is, Zionism.

The violence in Zionism echoes the violence of the European nationalist movements that inspired it. Moreover, the sources of violence in Zionism lay in its reaction to exilic Judaism, which stood out in its passivity, quietism, and spirituality. The Zionists freed themselves of the characteristics of exilic Judaism and defined themselves as its mirror image. They emphasized pride, power, physicality, masculinity, assertiveness, and militarism. They sought to change the image of the Jewish people away from a people characterized by persecution and subordination and, instead, forge a "muscular Judaism" whose members toiled the land, excelled in gymnastics, and bore arms.

To achieve this, they extracted elements of dignity, independence, and heroism from their mytho-history. Ultimately, the "new Jew" was shaped by combining a vitalistic model with a pioneering model, producing the paradigmatic *sabra*.[119] This Hebrew native was expected to be a patriot, a lover of labor and nature, an impulsive, practical, forceful, and rebellious individual who was willing to sacrifice himself for the collective. This mythical creation found expression in two closely related spheres: settlement and national defense.

The new Jewish identity that emerged in the mid-19th century and that crystallized in the early 20th century sought to pass over two millennia of exilic experience and connect with the two previous periods in Jewish chronology: the biblical era and the Second Commonwealth era. The common denominator of these two phases was not merely Jewish territoriality, physicality, and sovereignty but also Jewish violence directed both inward and outward.

Zionism appropriated elements of Jewish tradition that embodied Jewish violence. One of many expressions for this trend of nationalization were the Jewish holidays that were reinterpreted and celebrated with great vigor in Eretz Yisrael and later in the State of Israel: Chanukkah, Purim, Passover, and La Ba'Omer. All four are religious holidays at their origin that became nationalist celebrations and that

display a clear violent dimension. At the same time, the Zionists sidelined the four fast days on which observant Jews commemorated the various destructions of Jerusalem. The old/new heroes of Israel were the conquerors David and Joshua, the judges Ehud, Gideon, and Samson, the Maccabees, and particularly the Masada zealots, who had been marginalized by Jewish tradition.[120]

In this new Hebrew period, which lasted until the 1970s, religious Jews were relegated to a relatively marginal role. Both branches of orthodoxy in Israel continued the exilic Jewish tradition of abstaining from violence. The *Haredim*, whose non-violence became their trademark and a feature that distinguished them from the Zionists, based their case against Zionism, among others, on the claim that Zionists relied on brute force and presumed to play an active role in history. The modern Orthodox, on the other hand, joined the Zionist camp yet were discriminated against by the secular majority and were prevented from joining the blood, sweat, and tears *sabra* circles that led the new Jewish violence.[121]

Zionists also revived the biblical text. Over the last 2000 years, the gulf between the popular image of the Bible and its effective status had grown ever wider. The Jews' most sacred text had been toppled from its primacy and was relegated to a secondary role. Religious Jews read the Bible in a ritualistic, partial manner, on special occasions only. Their contact with the Bible was always indirect, mediated by interpretation which eventually became the primary text, either because the original was too sacred and thus too dangerous for the reader, or because it was too wild and thus required taming.

Secular Jews made the Bible into their central canon by fostering and glorifying it. They read it directly, without interpretation, as a whole, clean, intimate, and significant text. At the same time, secular Jews loaded the Bible with non-religious values. They turned it into a historical, linguistic, ethical, and literary text that had aesthetic and moral value for humanity as a whole and for Jews in particular. For secular Jews, the Bible played a crucial role in the holy triad of language, land, and glorious indigenous past. The sacred text became the book of the Hebrew language, the book of nativeness and authenticity, and the book of the Israeli nation-state's politics. The centrality of the Bible in Israeli life is evidenced in the frequency of Bible classes in elementary and high school classes, the role of biblical archaeology as Israel's "national hobby," the Israeli love of hiking along "biblical paths," the biblical influence on titles and ranks in the army and police, etc.[122]

The supreme irony is that the Zionist decision to make the Bible an ideological centerpiece has distanced Orthodox Jews from their secular counterparts just as it has distanced them from the Bible. This was part of a greater challenge that Zionism posed. Orthodox Jews had to contend with a Zionism that monopolized the definition of Judaism and that practically fulfilled the prophetic vision of founding a Jewish state. The religious right's response to this challenge in the mid-1970s was a mystical messianism in which empirical reality was perceived as hiding another reality, more profound and sublime. This hidden reality, they argued, was in fact a redeemed reality. Secular Jews were said to be unaware of their true inner nature, which was alleged to be very sacred. Though Zionism may seem to sin, this interpretation argued, in actuality it was god-seeking and driven by messianic impulse. This spiritual usurpation redefined Zionism as an inherently religious movement, despite its appearance and self-awareness. This new religious Judaism focused on the nation and state as cardinal religious values. It was no longer religious Zionism but a Zionist religion.

This religionization of the pillars of Zionism—defense and settlement—involved appropriating the Bible as well.[123] Problematically, this Bible that was now being re-imported into religious circles had become a national and secular product. It was a living, ideological text of explosive potential. In returning to religious hands, the Bible became the sacred text of a camp that was both ultra-religious and ultra-nationalist. Its political dimensions became narrow and clearly defined. It was translated into a political blueprint for direct activism, thus becoming a fundamentalist text. The Bible was read as defining maximalist boundaries of Israel that exceeded the borders demanded by the most right-wing secular Israelis. Orthodox readers of the Genesis tale about the rape of Dinah, mentioned above, saw the vicious revenge taken by Simeon and Levi as a license for acts of violence against the current residents of Samaria. The settler slogan "not an inch" (*af sha'al*) was re-read esoterically as an acronym for "Simeon and Levi" (*Shim'on ve Levi*). Thus, not only was the Bible contributing to extremism in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict but the conflict was also reviving the Bible. The conflict both enhanced and was enhanced by the significance of the Bible in Israeli discourse.

Secular Zionism combined prophetic elements of the Bible that were focused on humanistic justice and enlightenment with proto-statist elements that emphasized autonomy and productivity. Religious Zionism shifted the Bible's center of gravity towards the tribal, ethno-nationalist aspect, together with a cultic facet that sought to emphasize rituals that were previously considered archaic. Whereas Zionists emphasized Isaiah, Judges, and Kings, the religious right emphasized Leviticus and Joshua. If the former reading of the Bible was a shared reading that acted to unify the Israeli public, the latter reading was sectarian, provoking quarrel and schism.

This process was accelerated after the 1967 and 1973 wars. The IDF victory and conquest of the Sinai, West Bank, and the Golan caused dramatic upheaval not only in the geopolitics of the Middle East and the political culture of Israel but also in the character of Judaism, particularly religious Judaism. This led to a profound transformation of Jewish violence. Unlike their *Haredi* counterparts, Zionist religious Jews underwent two parallel yet complementary processes that together contributed to a strengthening of Jewish violence: messianization and the nationalization of Jewish orthodoxy. The Orthodox appropriation of secular violence was not unconnected with their bid for leadership and influence. At the same time, this new religious Zionist violence was accompanied by a gradual withdrawal of many secular Israelis from their prior militancy. The outcome of this process was a reversal of roles: Whereas religious Zionism led the nationalist, militant line, a substantial proportion of secular, left-wing Israelis tended towards more moderate and pragmatic positions.[124]

Orthodox Judaism was confronted with an unprecedented situation. Jewish tradition had developed over the course of millennia of weakness and dependence in which the violent implications of that tradition could not even be fathomed. Jews were now faced with a reality of force and independence, in which the violent implications of tradition could be implemented. "Remember what Amalek did unto thee" and "Pour out thy wrath on the nations" suddenly received a revolutionary meaning. Violent fantasies were no longer hypothetical. Violent imperative could be taken at face value and realized. Sacred texts, rituals, and symbols became feasible blueprints for violent action. Traditional idioms, the origins of which we examined above, were now used by agents of modern Jewish violence to sanction behavior: "Sanctification

of the name of God'' (*Kidush Hashem*); ''Zealotry for God'' (*Kana'ut*); Realizing the Messianic Vision (*Geula*); the commandment to conquer, inherit, and settle the Land (*Milkhemet Mitzva*); and the halakhic categories of *moser* and *rodef*.

The Debate Over Jewish Violence

As this article was being concluded, the media reported an alarming case of arson at a Palestinian mosque in the West Bank. The perpetrators, radical settlers from the area, left graffiti in the form of Stars of David on the walls of the mosque. Jewish religious violence remains a burning concern. It provokes a lively debate in Israel and the Middle East, both in the context of tensions between Israel and the Palestinians and between Judaism and Zionism. The topic of Jewish religious violence has become the primary bone of contention in the conflict between religious (mainly right-wing) and secular Israelis.

Furthermore, religious violence is not merely a historiographic question but primarily an issue concerned with Jewish identity. This question preoccupies Judaism not only in the present but in the past as well. The Jewish tradition itself asks ''is Judaism violent?'' This question was traditionally hard for Jews to evade since it was often asked not only by Jews but also by non-Jews, especially Christian neighbors and rivals.[125] Therefore, the question has a theological dimension as well. Often, the question appears in reverse form: ''Is Judaism inherently non-violent?'' Today, questions concerning Jewish violence are posed primarily by secular Jews or Orthodox Jews from the moderate left. Given the frequency of religious violence incidents in Israel, some phrase these questions in terms that echo the equivalent question asked by moderate and reflective Muslims: ''What went wrong with Judaism?''[126] Unavoidably, several observers imply a distinction between ''good'' and ''bad'' Jews.[127]

The classical issue of Jewish self-questioning regarding the place of violence in Jewish tradition finds expression in four current dilemmas faced by Jews in Israel and in the Diaspora: intra- versus extra-Jewish violence, the relationship between committing violence and being subject to violence; definitional issues surrounding Jewish violence; and the place of Jewish violence in the Israel Defense Forces (IDF). All four issues are manifested in bitter public debates that have both ethical and political implications.

The first question relates to the discrepancy between inner-directed and outer-directed Jewish violence. How is it that despite the intensity of political life in Israel and the multiplicity of contentious issues concerning Jewish collective identity on the one hand, and sheer pressures of survival on the other hand, these tensions have not approximated civil war? This is true even for the two primary rifts in Israeli society that separate hawkish right from dovish left and religious from secular Israelis.[128]

The most important explanation for this accord is a primordial sense of solidarity and mutual responsibility.[129] ''All Israel are brothers'' (Midrash Tanhuma, Naso 3) is a particularly effective motto. Religious Jews cite the talmudic adage: ''Even though [they] have sinned, they are still [called] 'Israel' '' (Sanhedrin 44a). This explains the taboo against violence, particularly lethal violence, directed at fellow Jews. The fear of Jewish bloodletting feeds, among others, on the traumatic memory of the destruction of the Second Temple, said to have been provoked by intra-Jewish animosity. This trepidation accounts for the Israeli practice of avoiding resolution on thorny political issues. The decision to sidestep the writing of a constitution,

and perhaps the delay in permanently delineating the borders of Israel, serve as examples for this trend. The fear of intra-Jewish violence is also motivated by the threat of anti-Semitism and Arab hostility, which create a perceived atmosphere of constant emergency.

Exceptions to this aversion against internecine violence are rare. They include very few incidents of political assassination in the pre-state and early years of the state (e.g., the Kastner murder in 1957) and one single case of religiously motivated political murder, the Rabin assassination in 1995.[130] The Orthodox right wing in Israel makes a particularly sharp distinction between the killing of Jews, denounced by the strictest sanctions, and the killing of non-Jews, which we discussed extensively above. In that sense, the political reality in Israel is a consistent continuation of a longstanding Jewish tradition. However, as in many other political and religious traditions, even in Judaism violence directed outwards occasionally turns inward. Several Jewish notions facilitate this redirection of violence, such as labels assigned to Jews who collaborate with external enemies or who adhere to gentile norms and values. For example, in the 2nd century, Jews who dared to take part in pagan cults were deemed "Hellenizers" and became targets of violence. The most vital traditional symbol from this period is Mattathias the priest, slaughtering a fellow Jew for sacrificing to Zeus. Modern extremists from the Kahane camp and from Gush Emunim continue to apply the term "Hellenizers" to members of the dovish left.

The second issue often raised in debates over Jewish violence involves the closely-related issue of Jewish victimhood. For long and formative periods in history, Jews were targets of violence by non-Jews, as exemplified by the attacks on Jewish communities during the crusades, forced conversions and expulsions in 15th century Spain, 19th century pogroms in Russia, and so forth. This violence tended to be lethal and was driven by ideological-religious (mostly Christian) justifications in addition to an economic and political logic. Moreover, it was directed against Jews as an ethnic and religious collective. In the two millennia in which Jews were victims of anti-Semitism and its violent derivatives there emerged an elaborate tradition of Jewish victimhood.

Interestingly, though Zionism made it its task to rid Judaism from the "exilic victimhood complex," and despite the establishment of an independent and militarily strong Jewish state, the culture of victimhood fulfills crucial functions in modern Jewish life. In both the political and the religious discourse in Israel and the Diaspora, the motif of victimhood remains dominant. The Orthodox and especially the Ultra-Orthodox play a role in cultivating this motif, though ironically it is still present among secular right- and left-wing Israelis as well.[131]

The issue of victimhood is particularly conspicuous in the post-Holocaust era. Contemporary Jewish life takes place under the shadow of the most extreme case of anti-Jewish violence, the Holocaust (*Shoa*). Jewish collective memory and collective identity as victims of violence has two implications. On the one hand, it has led Jews to be acutely aware of issues concerning violence, leading to toleration and moderation. On the other hand, a distinct minority of Jews use their own victimhood as a license to inflict violence upon others by way of compensation or revenge. Some Jewish individuals and institutions have used or abused the Holocaust as an explanation and legitimization for Jewish violence directed against non-Jews (mostly Palestinians).[132] These conflicting implications can coexist not merely within the same Jewish community, in Israel or the Diaspora, but can produce a deeply ambivalent attitude towards violence in the individual.

Thus, to the two parallel and complementary Jewish traditions discussed above, violence and anti-violence, one should add another Jewish tradition, that of victimhood. These three traditions can be viewed as an integrated triangle, each corner of which has a dialectical relationship with the other two.

The third issue brings us full circle to a question asked at the outset of this paper. To what extent should violence perpetuated by Jews that has no self-evident connection to their religion be considered "Jewish violence"? For example, to what extent and in what sense is violent crime, committed in Israel or by Jews worldwide, Jewish? A recent publication entitled "Jews and Violence" broadened the definition of Jewish violence to include Partisan resistance to Nazi Germany, verbal violence in Israeli politics, Jewish gangsters, Jewish boxing champions, Jewish participation in Socialist revolutionary movements, and corporal punishment in Jewish education. But it excluded Jewish political terror from its definition.[133] The activities of pre-1948 underground movements in Israel and the campaigns fought by the IDF may or may not be "Jewish" in character but it would be difficult to describe them as "religious." After all, the motivation, definition of objectives, and their justification by political and military leaders as well as participants, betray no conscious religious component.[134] Their logic was geopolitical and national.

The Zionist shift from Jewishness to Israeliness raised anew the classical issue of Jewish passivity and Jewish relationship with power.[135] Such issues became especially acute in light of the involvement of Israeli Jews in a growing number of armed conflicts, at tremendous costs, both human and material, to the warring parties. In every decade of its existence, Israel has faced its neighbors in full-scale wars and low-intensity hostilities, resulting in a century-long protracted conflict. The violent reality of Arab-Israeli relations has led some observers to associate the State of Israel with militarism, as indicated by the percentage of GNP dedicated to security, the percentage of the population at arms, the length of mandatory military service, the number of generals in the high political and economic echelons, etc.[136] Others have identified a "cultural militarism" characterized by the prominence of defense issues in public discourse, and the function of the military and the military way as signifiers of patriotism, membership in the collective, and access to power and prestige.[137] Despite a significant decline in the prominence of Israeli militarism, the warrior remains an influential model of masculinity in Israel. Paradoxically, whereas some critics of Israel see Zionist violence as the actualization of the violence inherent in Jewish tradition all along, other critics see Zionist violence as a deviation from the "non-violent traditional Jewish way."

A variant of this question concerns the moral cost of (Jewish) sovereignty, which necessitates the use of power and the employment of violent means. Such violence is not limited to the state and its military.[138] Jewish violence is concentrated primarily in Israel, while the Diaspora, which represents half of the Jewish population, is exempt from this violence. How is it that *Haredi* Jews regularly throw stones and feces-filled diapers at police and at secular Israelis who drive through their neighborhoods on the Sabbath, an unimaginable scenario in Crown Heights or Golders Green? Jews seem to act out violent drives under the auspices of Jewish rule and as members of an absolutely dominant Jewish majority that they would not otherwise engage in. This is not just a matter of tolerance by the state. Territorial autonomy and political sovereignty make violence possible and for some even religiously mandatory.

This observation has led certain Jews and non-Jews to reject Zionism as a project doomed to Jewish violence. This touches on the classical Zionist dilemma of

seeking, at one and the same time, to retain Jewish exceptionalism and yet to finally achieve Jewish normalization. Opponents of Zionism, both Jewish and anti-Jewish, adopt the exceptionalist stance, either in positive terms (''a light onto nations'' with the responsibility of proclaiming prophetic, humanist, and universal values) or in negative terms (an inferior race). Both camps are conspicuous in condemning Zionism for its violent tendencies.

A fourth issue of contentious debate revolves around the impact of the violent tradition in Judaism on the IDF. At the beginning of this essay, we stated that the violent aspects of Zionism and the State of Israel will be excluded from our examination as long as they are not distinctly religious in nature. Though Jewish-Israeli violence might have some deep religious roots, it is nevertheless predominantly secular, that is, essentially national and political in nature. Our inclusion test differentiates between violent behavior of religious Jewish institutions and individuals (observant Jews and those who rationalize their actions in halakhic or kabbalistic terms) and Jewish behavior that is not necessarily religious. Here, we wish to draw attention to two significant phenomena that are characteristically religious: the exponential growth in the presence of Orthodox troops and commanders and the expanding role of rabbis in the IDF.[139]

Ever since the 1960s–1970s, there has been a constant increase in the absolute and relative number of young modern-Orthodox Zionists enlisted in IDF infantry divisions and elite combat units. A substantial proportion of these soldiers are second-generation settlers and graduates of the Yeshiva educational system. Their presence is especially conspicuous in highly motivated all-volunteer units, where they serve as the rank and file as well as commanders at all levels. While religious-Zionist make up only 10–13% of the Jewish population in Israel, in 2010 Orthodox soldiers accounted for between one third and one half of the School for Officers' graduating cohort. Moreover, until the wars of 1967 and 1973 there were practically no Orthodox officers in the IDF, whereas now they are dominant among company, platoon, and battalion commanders and there are already three observant former yeshiva students at the Brigadier-General rank. Religious pre-military educational institutions, offering demanding Torah-centered training to future recruits, now outnumber their secular counterparts.

In parallel, the Military Rabbinate, the IDF's chaplaincy, has undergone a radical transformation of its self-understanding, size, and impact. From its establishment in 1949 until the 1970s, the military Rabbinate in Israel was a small body with negligible prestige and power. It fulfilled the conservative function that clergy conventionally fulfill in many Western armies: secure the sectorial interests of religious servicemen and provide religious services on demand (e.g., supply special wine for the Sabbath eve *Kiddush* rite, enforce short breaks despite tight training schedule to allow for daily prayers, etc.). As a consequence of the messianic and nationalistic radicalization of religious-Zionist society and in tandem with the demographic change described above, the IDF Rabbinate has become a significantly larger, more powerful, and more ambitious apparatus. It now imposes various Orthodox norms on the entire military, including secular personnel, such as strictly enforced *kosher* dietary rules, observing several fasting days a year, etc.

No less significant is the fact that the IDF Rabbinate is currently in a position to instill traditional ''Jewish Values'' in IDF troops, which amount to religious ethos in the spirit of Rabbi Kook and Chabad. Supported by lobbies from within and from without the army, the IDF Rabbinate managed to usurp the traditional role of the

military educational authorities. It now plays a leading role in reinforcing soldiers' motivation to fight for the State. The IDF Rabbinate is not merely responsible for initiatives such as the mass distribution of costly phylacteries (*teffilin*) and the enforcing of more stringent standards of separation between the sexes in the army (which amount to a critical withdrawal from vital achievements of equality for women). It has also taken measures to organize homilies in which rabbis lecture on biblical ethics of war, facilitate the active participation of rabbis in field training and military operations, and orchestrate rabbinic attendance at military decision-making forums at all levels. These twin phenomena, the rise in the number of Orthodox recruits and the growing role of the IDF rabbinate, could have far-reaching consequences for violent behavior. According to recent research, there may be a relationship between these factors and the weakening of moderating mechanisms on the employment of exceedingly aggressive means. An Israeli military sociologist has argued that the outright "religionization" of the army, especially of particular fighting corps, is related to the disproportionate use of lethal force in the *Intifada* in the Territories, as reflected in the high number of local Palestinian casualties. While this hypothesis is not methodologically waterproof, it raises some disturbing questions regarding religion and violence in Judaism.[140]

Conclusion

To summarize our discussion, we would like to present a prototypically religious document that is particularly violent. Describing and analyzing this case allows us to observe several elements of violence in the Jewish tradition in context and recognize their complexity and the paradoxes involved in their application. It is a compelling tale about the ironies of Jewish violence.

The document is a hardcover book, published in Israel in 2009, entitled *Torat Ha'melech* ("The King's Teaching: Capital Law Regarding Israel and the Nations").[141] In effect, once euphemisms are removed, the title can be translated as "What Is and Is Not Permitted Regarding the Killing of Gentiles." A reading of the book clarifies that the reference is to Palestinians, though this is not stated explicitly. It is an edited volume that contains rabbinical rulings from ancient times to this day. It is a near-endless sequence of quotations from classical Jewish texts, few of which are from the Bible. Most are from the Talmud, Maimonides, Nachmanides, Shulchan Aruch (the standard halakhic codex from the 16th century), as well as contemporary rulings.

At the basis of the book is an essential distinction between "Israel," meaning the Jews, who have superior rights, and Gentiles, who are an inferior race. The authors argue that the prohibition against murder in the Decalogue applies only to the murder of Jews by Jews, not to the murder of Gentiles by Jews. This is true even when a Gentile is righteous, as long as he has not converted to Judaism. Gentiles can be categorized into two groups: Those who can be killed with impunity, and those who respect the seven Noahide laws, who are tolerated, yet whose killing has no legal implications for the perpetrator. (To quote: "There is no prohibition against killing a Gentile who has transgressed the seven Noahide laws.")[142]

Of greatest relevance to our analysis are the rulings in the book that pertain to inter-communal conflict. Any civilian in an opponents' camp who encourages or assists the persecution of Israel is considered a *rodef* and is thus a valid target for killing. The book states explicitly: "In any place in which the mere presence of a

gentile endangers Israel, he may be killed.'' This is particularly true for gentiles who intend to ''steal'' the land ''promised'' to Israel. Later on, the text permits the killing of children, since they might join the enemies of Israel in adulthood.

The editors of the volume are rabbis Yosef Shapira and Yitzhak Elizur, whose religious approach is an idiosyncratic combination of Kook, Breslauer, and Lubavitcher Hassidism mixed with Kahane's tradition. They lead the Kever Yosef yeshiva in the outskirts of Samaria (the biblical Shechem and Palestinian Nablus), a spearhead of the effort to establish a Jewish presence in the middle of the Palestinian population. Their most devout followers are the settlers of Hebron, Yitzhar, and Tapuach, bastions of daily harassment against Palestinians in the form of arson, stoning, etc. These followers have often clashed with the IDF and have regularly transgressed Israeli law.

It should be emphatically noted that none of the quotations in the book are original. They are known from old, well-recognized, legitimate, and sacred sources, though many of these quotes had been forgotten or sidelined in recent generations. Moreover, the interpretation of these sources is straightforward and even banal. The book's innovation lies not in its content but in removing that content from its original context, emphasizing it, and exposing it to the public. This includes, for the first time, displaying these sources for secular consumption through extensive press coverage. The book's radical contribution lies in dusting off old ideas and in making them relevant and applicable to current circumstances.

The text's primary source for quotations is Maimonides, the ''Great Eagle'' of Judaism, one of the most prominent figures in Jewish tradition, often equated in stature to his namesake, the biblical Moses. He was a philosopher, scientist, theologian, and halakhic authority in 12th century Spain. Insofar as Judaism can be said to have a dogma, it consists of Maimonides' thirteen tenets of belief. His *Mishneh Torah*, which provides much of the material cited in ''The King's Teaching,'' is one of the three most comprehensive and significant halakhic documents.

Maimonides is considered a central, highly authoritative, and mainstream figure among Orthodox Jews, though not necessarily in radical circles. He is cited most often by moderates (for example, by Lithuanian opponents of Hassidic extremism) as a device for curbing Jewish radicalism. Maimonides' stance on the end of days is exemplary of this pragmatism and political responsibility: It presents messianic fulfillment not as a miraculous rupture but as a gradualist and very political enterprise. Moreover, his tradition is so varied and broad, rife with internal tensions, that one can quote from it to suit most any circumstance and any cause. For eight hundred years, until a generation ago, Maimonides was regularly quoted to support tolerant and adjustive stances. Only in recent decades is he quoted to support the opposite positions. Today, Maimonides is a pillar for two opposing camps, the moderate and the extreme.

Yet Maimonides wrote in circumstances entirely different from the present ones. He led a minority community in an environment dominated by a foreign society and dependent on its good will. His community could not implement, or even conceive of implementing, the least of his ideas about violence against gentiles. An Israeli observer compared the current recycling of these rulings to what a weak child, suffering from bullying, might utter only alone, at night, in whispers to his pillow.

''The King's Teaching'' quotes primarily from Maimonides' ''Laws of the Kings,'' which discusses the laws for administering a sovereign Jewish state. The kingdom is not to be understood to refer to modern Israel but rather to the

messianic state that will replace it and that will be administered according to religious principles. The editors of "The King's Teaching" are implicitly calling for a rebellion against the State of Israel and for turning it into a theocracy. They also call for the death sentence against those who resist this program.

The editors of "The King's Teaching" were arrested and brought, in handcuffs, before a judge to stand trial for racist incitement to violence. They were ultimately released but not before unleashing a media firestorm. The Israeli press, representing a secular majority, inflated the affair. Public opinion leaders in the Israeli liberal left openly criticized the editors and their readers and attempted to incriminate all orthodox Jews for the violence supposedly engrained in their religious identity. Radical religious circles, on the other hand, primarily Kahanist circles and settlers from Hebron and Shechem, harnessed the incident to challenge the authority of the State of Israel and to embarrass its secular majority. In a manner both self-righteous and provocative, they claimed that "this is merely a halakhic debate." They raised not only questions about freedom of expression but fundamental questions about Jewish religion and tradition: Does the routine analysis of classical texts pose moral or legal challenges? What are the limits on citing and reciting ancient and sacred texts and interpretations in a manner that is, technically speaking, loyal to its sources?

Of particular interest are the reactions among moderate Orthodox Jews, including settlers who reject Kahanist positions, denounce violence, and condemn the book and its editors. They sarcastically label the book "The Hamas Manifesto." However, they also believe that it is the Orthodox community in Israel that should be responsible for dealing with the challenge posed by the book, given its dangerous implications. The problem posed by the book is not a juristic question to be resolved by the Israeli courts but a religious question about Jewish values and identity. These Orthodox critics call not merely for a condemnation of the book's message but for a radical change in the manner in which "problematic" traditional texts have been dealt with. In other words, rather than ignore or bypass such texts, they should be deleted from the canon altogether. This amounts to a bold call for a renaissance in orthodoxy: to re-write Jewish traditions that deal with violence.

No more than a year after the publication of "The King's Teaching," another book, titled *Derekh Hamelekh* ("The King's Road"), appeared in print.[143] Its subtitle is: "Racism and Anti-Gentile Violence: A Halakhic and Meta-Halakhic Alternative to the Book the King's Teaching." It is a meticulous talmudic treatise aiming to refute the reasoning of "The King's Teaching" and present a different, non-violent interpretation of the very same sacred texts. The author is a rabbi in a well-established Orthodox yeshiva.

"The King's Teaching," on the other hand, enjoys endorsements that provide it with an authoritative status. The endorsers are three distinguished rabbis who are very popular among the settlers and the right wing. The first, Rabbi Dov Lior, is the spiritual leader of the settlers in the heart of Hebron. The second is Rabbi Yaacov Yosef, the oldest son of a former Israeli Chief Rabbi, regarded as the highest authority in halakhic ruling in Israeli orthodoxy. The third is Rabbi Yitzak Ginsburg, the spiritual leader of the Jews who try to settle Nablus despite Palestinian resistance and IDF prohibitions.

Under interrogation, Ginsburg condescendingly explained to the police the distinction between three categories of halakhic treatment, known to any yeshiva student. The first, *svara*, is the abstract examination of talmudic ideas without reaching halakhic conclusions. The second, *halakha*, involves defining the principles that

arise from the previous category. The third, *halakha le'ma'ase*, involves explicit guidance on how to behave under specific circumstances. Feigning innocence, Ginsburg was implying that "The King's Teaching" was a harmless text because it limited itself to the first two categories. His students may have interpreted matters differently.

The endorsers were asked to appear for police interrogation on several occasions but refused to do so, arguing that "our sacred Torah cannot be subjected to investigation." As this article was being concluded, one of the endorsers finally reported to the police for brief questioning. This sparked violent protests by hundreds of his supporters, young settlers, in front of the Supreme Court, the symbol of liberal democracy in Israel. The spokespersons for the protesters announced: "It is not these rabbis and their ruling that are on trial but tens of generations of rabbis and a venerable tradition that is thousands of years old. At stake is the Jewish tradition itself."

Notes

1. This article is a revised and substantially expanded version of Ron E. Hassner and Gideon Aran, "Religion and Violence in the Jewish Traditions," in Mark Juergensmeyer, Margo Kitts, and Michael Jerryson, eds., *Oxford Handbook of Religion and Violence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 78–99. The present version is especially adapted to relate the legacy of Jewish violence to its contemporary manifestations.

2. See, for example, Sigmund Freud, *Totem and Taboo*, trans. Abraham Arden Brill (New York: Moffat, Yard, and Co., 1919); Rene Girard, *Violence and the Sacred* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977); and "Mimesis and Violence: Perspectives in Cultural Criticism," *Berkshire Review* 14 (1979): 9–9; and Walter Burkert, "The Problem of Ritual Killing," in Robert G. Hamerton-Kelly, ed., *Violent Origins: Walter Burkert, Rene Girard, and Jonathan Z. Smith on Ritual Killing and Cultural Formation* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1987), 149–176.

3. See, for example, Samuel Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations* (New York: Touchstone, 1996); Raphael Israeli, *Islamikaze* (London: Taylor & Francis, 2003); John Esposito, *Unholy War* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2003); and Bruce Hoffman, *Holy Terror: The Implications of Terrorism Motivated by a Religious Imperative* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corp, 1993).

4. See, for example, Robert Pape, *Dying to Win: The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism* (New York: Random House, 2005); and Scott Atran, "Genesis of Suicide Terrorism," *Science* 299 (2004): 1534–1539.

5. Religious movements in Israel that are opposed to Jewish violence include Netivot Shalom (Oz Ve'Shalom), the Reform Movement, and the Conservative Movement. Prominent Orthodox Israelis who are champions of Jewish non-violence include Yeshayahu Leibovitch, Aviezer Ravitzky, and Avrum Burg.

6. In the fourth section, we shall refer also to verbal and symbolic violence, and discuss its relation to physical violence.

7. On religious violence, see, for example, Scott Appleby, *The Ambivalence of the Sacred: Religion, Violence and Reconciliation* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000); Mark Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2000); and Martin Marty and Scott Appleby, eds., *Fundamentalisms Observed* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991).

8. We draw these findings from a comprehensive database compiled by Ami Pedahzur and Arie Perliger, in *Jewish Terrorism in Israel* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 175–192.

9. For details about the various cases of political terror in Israel, see Pedahzur and Perliger, ibid., as well as Ehud Sprinzak, *Brother Against Brother: Violence and Extremism in Israeli Politics from Altalena to Rabin Assassination* (New York: Free Press, 1999); and Shaul Zadka, *Blood in Zion: How Jewish Guerrillas Drove the British Out of Palestine* (London: Brassey's, 1995).

10. *Brit Hakana'im* (The Covenant of the Zealots) consisted of Ultra-Orthodox Jews who operated mostly spontaneously and on an individual basis to turn Israel into a Halakha-abiding state. They harassed and damaged private and public symbols of Jewish secularism like transportation companies that worked on the Sabbath and butchers that sold non-kosher meat. The underground members were arrested after planning to throw a smoke bomb into parliament during a session devoted to establishing compulsory military service for women. One of the imprisoned members was Mordechai Eliahu, many years later to become the Chief Rabbi of the State of Israel and spiritual leader of Gush Emunim. He recently confessed that he still strongly believes in the mission of the underground though he regrets its violent tactics. *Malchut Yisrael* (The Kingdom of Israel) succeeded Lehi. It murdered Count Folke Bernadot in 1949 and Rudolf Israel Kastner in 1957, in addition to more minor acts of violence against diplomats and public officials. Though infused with a messianic character and borrowing metaphors from ancient Israel, none of its members, including prominent right-wing intellectuals and eccentric ex-combatants, were observant Jews.

11. Several indicators suggest that, of those whose degree of observance was unknown, at least half were observant Jews.

12. See David Weisburd, *Jewish Settlers Violence* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania University Press, 1989).

13. See Hagai Segal, *Dear Brothers: The West Bank Jewish Underground* (Jerusalem: Keter, 1987).

14. See: Juergensmeyer (note 7 above), 49–59.

15. Michael Ben-Horin, ed., *Baruch Hagever: Sefer Zikaron la-Kadosh Baruch Goldstein* [Baruch Hagever: In Memory of Goldstein Who Sanctified the Name of God] (Jerusalem: Shalom Al Israel, 1995). This is a collection of essays written by Rabbi Meir Kahane and his followers, including a chapter on "The Commandment of Taking Revenge from the Gentiles" and "Examining Halakhic Rulings Concerning Killing Gentiles."

16. Yoram Peri, ed., *The Assassination of Yitzhak Rabin* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000); and Michael Karpin and Ina Friedman, *Murder in the Name of God: The Plot to Kill Yitzhak Rabin* (London: Granta Books, 2000).

17. The issue of *rodef* will be discussed below, in section II, part 3.

18. David C. Rapoport, "The Fourth Wave: September 11 in the History of Terrorism," *Current History* 100, no. 650 (2001): 419–424.

19. Ami Pedahzur and Arie Perliger, "The Fourth Wave: Comparison of Jewish and Other Manifestations of Religious Terrorism," in Jean E. Rosenfeld, ed., *Terrorism, Identity and Legitimacy: The Four Waves Theory and Political Violence* (London: Routledge, 2011), 103–111.

20. See Michael Feige, "Rabin Assassination and the Ethnic Periphery of Gush Emunim" (Unpublished Paper).

21. Omitted cases include the Lifta Underground, TNT Underground, DOV and GAL Undergrounds, Yoel Lerner's scheme, and more. The second category includes the uprooting of Palestinian olive trees, shattering the windshields of Palestinian cars, puncturing Palestinian water-heaters by means of gunshots, and more. For an exhaustive roster of such cases see Pedahzur and Perliger (note 19 above).

22. Ron E. Hassner, *War On Sacred Grounds* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2009).

23. Janet Dolgin, *Jewish Identity and the JDL* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977).

24. Yair Kotler, *Heil Kahane* (New York: Adams Books, 1986); Jerald Cromer, "The Debate over Kahanism in Israeli Society," Occasional Papers No. 3 (New York: Harry Frank Guggenheim Foundation, 1988); and Ehud Sprinzak, *The Ascendance of Israel's Radical Right* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991).

25. Though Kahane was assassinated, his party outlawed, and his organization disbanded, Kahane's spirit still persists in Israel and the Middle East. A group of his loyal, loud, and aggressive followers maintains a prominent presence in Arab-Jewish friction zones. They number only a few dozen but effectively create tension by means of racist pronouncements, especially provocative demonstrations, and clandestine sabotage.

26. They strictly abided by Torah precepts, such as keeping the Sabbath, observed various fast days, observed kosher dietary laws, prayed three times daily, donned phylacteries every morning, wore skull-caps and ritual fringes (*tzitzit*), etc.

27. Israel's 7.3 million population is only 75–80% Jewish, of which more than half are secular, 12% are Modern Orthodox, and 8% are Ultra-Orthodox. About 30% of Israel's Jews define themselves as "traditional" (*mesortim*).

28. See Gideon Aran, "Religiosity and Super-Religiosity: Measures of Radical Religion," *Numen* 60 (2013): 155–194; and Emmanual Sivan, Gabriel Almond, and Scott Appleby, *Strong Religion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000).

29. There is no evidence of Jewish religious violence perpetrated by Reform, Conservative, or any other kind of religious Jews. This is not to say, of course, that all Orthodox Jews are right-wing, hawkish, or violent, or that all right-wing and hawkish Jews are Orthodox.

30. This is in line with the conspicuous role played by converts in the history of religious radicalism in general.

31. Menachem Friedman, "Haredi Violence in Contemporary Israeli Society," *Studies in Contemporary Jewry* 18 (2003): 186–197; Menachem Friedman and Samuel Heilman, "Religious Fundamentalism and Religious Jews: The Case of the Haredim," in Martin Marty and Scott Appleby, eds., *Fundamentalisms Observed* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 197–264; and Sprinzak, 1999 (see note 9 above).

32. Gideon Aran, Nurit Stadler, and Eyal BenAri, "Fundamentalism and the Temptation of Action," *Religion* 38 (2008): 25–53.

33. Jacob Katz, *Out of the Ghetto: The Social Background of Jewish Emancipation, 1770–1870* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973); and Jacob Katz, *Tradition and Crisis: Jewish Society at the End of the Middle Ages* (New York: Schocken Books, 1971).

34. Allen Dowty, *The Jewish State: A Century Later* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1989).

35. Chaim Waxman, "Religion in the Israeli Public Square," in Uzi Rebhun and Chaim Waxman, eds., *Jews in Israel: Contemporary Social and Cultural Patterns* (Hanover: Brandeis University Press, 2004), 221–239.

36. Gideon Aran, "Jewish-Zionist Fundamentalism," in Martin Marty and Scott Appleby, eds., *Fundamentalisms Observed* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 265–344; and Akiva Eldar and Idit Zertal, *The Lords of the Land* (New York: Nation Books, 2009).

37. Anita Shapira, *Land and Power: The Zionist Resort to Force, 1881–1948* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992); and Anita Shapira, *Yehudim, Tsiyonim, u-Mah she-Benehem* [Jews, Zionists, and in between] (Tel Aviv, Israel: Am Oved, 2007).

38. Sprinzak, *The Ascendance of Israel's Radical Right* (see note 24 above).

39. Cf. James Lewis and Olav Hammer, eds., *The Invention of Sacred Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

40. Moshe Samet, "The Beginning of Orthodoxy," *Modern Judaism* 8, no. 3 (1988): 249–269; Haim Soloveitchick, "Rupture and Reconstruction," *Tradition* 28, no. 4 (1994): 64–131; Michael Silber, "The Emergence of Ultra Orthodoxy," in Jack Werthheimer, ed., *The Uses of Tradition: Jewish Continuity in the Modern Era* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1992), 23–84; and Aviezer Ravitzky, *Jewish Orthodoxy: New Perspectives* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2006).

41. See Arye Naor, *The Whole Land of Israel: Belief and Policy* (Haifa, Israel: Haifa University Press, 2001).

42. Modern bible scholarship has recognized that the scriptures are composed of several layers, each representing a different set of authors, interests, and values. In the following pages, however, we treat the bible as a coherent and unified text, as would believers, since we are interested in exploring the role of the bible in their worldview.

43. Here and throughout, we use the Authorized King James Version of the Bible, unless otherwise stated.

44. Robert Eisen, *The Peace and Violence of Judaism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

45. The recent protest movement against circumcision includes members of Jewish communities who wish to replace ritual circumcision with a symbolic act, "as has been done for other bloody practices, such as the sacrifices." See also Jacob Katz, *Divine Law in Human Hands: Case Studies in Halakhic Flexibility* (Jerusalem: Hebrew University, 1998).

46. Reuven Firestone, "Conceptions of Holy Wars in Biblical and Quranic Traditions," *Journal of Religious Ethics* 24, no. 1 (1996): 99–123.

47. Gerard von Rad, *Holy War in Ancient Israel* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1991), 72.

48. Max Weber, *Ancient Judaism* (Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1952).

49. von Rad, *Holy War in Ancient Israel* (see note 47 above), 42; Susan Niditch, *War in the Hebrew Bible: A Study in the Ethics of Violence* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 152.

50. Eisen, *The Peace and Violence of Judaism* (see note 44 above), 25; and James Barr, *Fundamentalism* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1978).

51. Meir Sternberg, "Delicate Balance in the Story of Dinah's Rape," *Hasifrut* 4, no. 2 (April 1973): 193–231 (in Hebrew).

52. Elliott Horowitz, "Genesis 34 and the Legacies of Biblical Violence," in Andrew R. Murphy, ed., *The Blackwell Companion to Religion and Violence* (Chichester, West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 163–182.

53. Niditch refers to this as the "bardic" tradition (see *War in the Hebrew Bible,* note 49 above), 90–105.

54. Niditch, *War in the Hebrew Bible* (see note 49 above), 135.

55. Here, and throughout this article, we rely on Isidore Epstein, trans., *The Babylonian Talmud* (London: Soncino Press, 1935–1952) for translations of the Talmud and Mishnah.

56. For Judah Loew's commentary on Tractate Avot (3:17) see Tuvia Basser, ed., *Maharal of Prague: Pirkei Avos: A Commentary Based on Selections from Maharal's Derech Chaim* (Brooklyn, NY: Mesorah Publications, 1997).

57. Israel Finkelstein and Neil Silverman, *The Bible Unearthed* (New York: Free Press, 2001); Zeev Herzog, "Deconstructing the Walls of Jericho: Biblical Myth and Archeological Reality," *Prometheus* 4 (2001): 72–93; and Nadav Neeman, *Ancient Israel's History and Historiography* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2006).

58. Shlomo Sand, *The Invention of the Jewish People* (London: Verso, 2009), Ch. 2.

59. Anita Shapira, *The Bible and Israeli Identity* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, Hebrew University, 2005), in Hebrew.

60. The Palestinians have recently joined the ranks of Middle Eastern nations who claim descent from an ancient people. Their choice is the Canaanites who preceded the Israelites in settling the holy land.

61. See Gideon Aran, "Jewish Zealotry" (unpublished manuscript). Available from the author.

62. See for example the attack on the Los Angeles Jewish Community Center by Buford Furrow in August 1999. For other cases, see Richard Hoskins, *Vigilantes of Christendom: The Story of the Phinehas Priesthood* (Lynchburg, VA: Virginia Pub., 1997).

63. See Gideon Aran, *Israeli-Jewish and American-Protestant Fundamentalist Violence* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, forthcoming 2013).

64. Compare Charles Liebman, "Extremism as a Religious Norm," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 22 (1983): 75–86.

65. Interestingly enough, Maimonides does address the law concerning zealotry in Mishne Torah, Sanhedrin, Ch. 18, Halakha 1.

66. See for example R. Ovedya of Bartenora's discussion of the necessary conditions for permitted zealotry (*B. Sanhedrin*, Ch. 9).

67. Roni Eilon-Hirsch, *Shabbat: Parashat Phinehas* (Jerusalem, July 13, 2011) (in Hebrew).

68. Rumor has it that the rabbis quoted an exegesis on Numbers 25 by Rashi, the most prestigious interpreter of the Bible and the Talmud. See Rashi's commentary on the Baylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin, 82a.

69. Gideon Aran, "The Father, The Son and the Holy Land: The Spiritual Authorities of Jewish-Zionist Fundamentalism in Israel," in Martin Marty and Scott Appleby, eds., *Spokesmen for the Despised* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 294–327; Benny Ish-Shalom, *Rabbi A. Y. H. Kook: Between Rationalism and Mysticism* (New York: SUNY Press, 1993); Benzion Bokser, ed., *The Essential Writings of Abraham Isaac Kook* (Teaneck, NJ: Ben-Yehuda Press, 2006); and Zvi Yaron, *The Philosophy of Rabbi Kook* (Jerusalem: World Zionist Organization, 1992).

70. Bezalel Bar-Kochva, *Judas Maccabaeus: The Jewish Struggle Against the Seleucids* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); Arie Kasher, ed., *The Great Revolt*

(Jerusalem: Shazar, 1983) (in Hebrew); and Aaron Oppenheimer and Uriel Rappoport, eds., *Bar Kochva: New Research* (Jerusalem: Ben-Zvi, 1984) (in Hebrew).

71. Yehuda Devir, *Bar Kochva: The Man and the Messiah in Light of the Sages* (Jerusalem: Kyriat-Sefer, 1964) (in Hebrew); and Yigal Yadin, *Bar Kochva: The Rediscovery of a Legendary Hero* (New York: Random House, 1971).

72. This includes the celebrated debate between two late intellectuals, Yehoshafat Harkavi and Yisrael Eldad. See: Yehoshafat Harkavi, *Reality and Fantasy: The Lessons of Bar Kochva Revolt and Present-Day Geo-Politics* (Jerusalem: Domino, 1982); and Yisrael Eldad, *Polemics: How Should We Understand The Bar Kochva Revolt and Its Aftermath* (Jerusalem: Van Leer, 1982).

73. Avraham Kahana, *Hasfarim Ha'khitzonim: Text, Introductions and Interpretations,* (Jerusalem: Beit-Hilel, 2004) (in Hebrew).

74. Yigal Yadin, *The War of the Sons of Light Against the Sons of Darkness Scroll: Text with Introduction and Interpretation* (Jerusalem: Bialik, 1955).

75. See, for example, Jacob Licht, *Ezra's Vision: Translation and Interpretation* (Jerusalem: Bialik, 1968) (in Hebrew); and James Vanderkam, *Enoch and the Growth of an Apocalyptic Tradition* (Washington, DC: The Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1984).

76. Sidney Tedesche, trans., *The Book of Maccabees* (Hartford, CT: Prayer Book Press, 1962).

77. Second Maccabees, 7:24 (New American Bible translation). Though she is not named in the narrative, she has come to be known in Jewish folklore as "Hannah.".

78. The origins of the Oral Torah are in the Mishnah, composed in the shadow of Roman rule. It consists of six volumes composed by sages in the Land of Israel in the 2nd–3rd century C.E. In the 4th–6th century C.E., Jewish scholars added the Gemarah, thus forming the Palestinian and the Babylonian Talmud, of which the latter is the more complete, influential, and authoritative. The Talmud is organized by topics (matters of agriculture, crime, purity, etc.) expressed through two genres: the *halakhic* and the *aggadic*. The halakhic consists of religious law, particularly the 613 traditional commandments and prohibitions. This legalistic component is intertwined with the aggadic genre, which offers spiritual and ethical guidelines. Its educational lessons are based on a collection of theological debates, stories about biblical heroes and important rabbis, and homiletic expositions. Alongside the Talmud, the sages also contributed the Midrash, a narrative or homiletical exegesis of parts of the Bible.

79. Solomon Ganzfried, *Code of Jewish Law: Kitzur Shulchan Aruch* (New York: Hebrew Publications Company, 1961); Menachem Elon, ed., *The Principles of Jewish Law* (Jerusalem: Encyclopedia Judaica, 1975); David Bleich, *Contemporary Halakhic Problems* (New York: Ktav, 1977–89); Hanina Ben Menahem and Neil Hecht, eds., *Selected Topics in Jewish Law* (Ramat Aviv: The Open University, 1999); and Adin Steinzaltz, *The Essential Talmud* (New York: Basic Books, 2006). An illustration of the massive and variegated dimensions of the halakhic corpus can be witnessed in the computerized "Responsa Project," http://www.biu.ac.il/jh/Responsa/.

80. One idiosyncratic passage that betrays this violent impulse is the report, factual or allegorical, that eighty witches were hung in one day in Ashkelon (Sanhedrin 45b). In another curious passage, the Talmud seems to encourage even extra-legal violence: It mentions priests who chose not to bring a fellow priest before court for serving in the temple in a state of impurity. Instead, they split his skull with clubs (Sanhedrin 81b).

81. Michael S. Berger, "Taming the Beast: Rabbinic Pacification of Second-Century Jewish Nationalism," in James K. Wellman, ed., *Belief and Bloodshed: Religion and Violence across Time and Tradition* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield), 53.

82. Berger, ibid., 55.

83. Stuart A. Cohen, "'Unlicensed' War in Jewish Tradition: Sources, Consequences and Implications," *Journal of Military Ethics* 4, no. 3 (2005): 198–213.

84. Cf. Michael Walzer, "War and Peace in the Jewish Tradition," in Terry Nardin, ed., *The Ethics of War and Peace* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 95–114. See also Michael Walzer, *Just and Unjust Wars: A Moral Argument with Historical Illustrations* (New York: Basic Books, 1992).

85. Maimonides, *Laws of the King*, Vol. 5, No. 1; Nachmanides, commentary on Deuteronomy 20; and Judah Loew, *Gur Aryeh al HaTorah*, Commentary on Genesis 32:18. For a general discussion see Walzer (1996), ibid.

86. Maimonides, *Sefer Hamitzvot* (The Commandments), Commentary on Commandment 290.

87. For example, Eisen, *The Peace and Violence of Judaism* (see note 44 above) dedicates a mere page and a half to violence in the Kabbalah.

88. Gershom Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (New York: Schocken, 1995); Danny Matt, *The Essential Kabbalah: The Heart of Jewish Mysticism* (San Francisco: Harper, 1996); and Joseph Dan, *Gershom Scholem and the Mystical Dimension of Jewish History* (New York: New York University Press, 1987).

89. Moshe Idel, *Kabbalah: New Perspectives* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988).

90. Maureen Bloom, *Jewish Mysticism and Magic* (London: Routledge, 2007).

91. Moshe Idel, *Enchanted Chains: Techniques and Rituals in Jewish Mysticism* (Los Angeles: Cherub Press, 2005); and Gershom Scholem, *Devils, Demons, and Souls*: *Essays on Demonology* (Jerusalem: Ben-Zvi, 2004) (in Hebrew).

92. For example, the authors are familiar with a charismatic leader who used his knowledge and control of the mysteries of Kabbalah in order to place a curse on Palestinian terrorist leaders.

93. Yehuda Liebes, *The Epic Exploits of the Divine: Essays and Researches* (Jerusalem: Carmel, 2008) (in Hebrew); and Haviva Pedaya, *The Myth in Judaism* (Beer Sheva: Ben Gurion University Press, 1996) (in Hebrew).

94. Gershom Scholem, *On Kabbalah and its Symbolism* (New York: Schocken, 1965).

95. Nathan Wolski, *A Journey into the Zohar: An Introduction to the Book of Radiance* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2010).

96. Jonathan Garb, *Observations on 20th Century Kabbalah* (Jerusalem: Carmel, 2005) (in Hebrew).

97. Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook, *Orot* (Beit El: Me'avnei Hamakom, 2004), 156 (in Hebrew).

98. Gershom Scholem, *Lurianic Kabbalah: Collection of Essays* (Los Angeles: Chruv Pub, 2008); Joseph Avivi, *Lurianic Kabbalah* (Jerusalem: Ben Zvi Institute, 2008); and Moshe Idel, *Messianic Mystics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).

99. Gershom Scholem, *The Messianic Idea in Judaism and Other Essays* (New York: Schocken, 1972).

100. See David Rapoport, "Messianic Sanctions For Terror," *Comparative Politics* 20, no. 2 (1988): 195–213; and Michael Barkun, ed., *Millenialism and Violence* (London: Frank Cass, 1996).

101. Joseph Dan, *Jewish Apocalypse: Past and Present* (Tel Aviv: Yedioth-Hemed Press, 2000) (in Hebrew).

102. Aaron Eshkoli, *The Messianic Movements in Jewish History* (Jerusalem: Bialik, 1957) (in Hebrew).

103. See Haim Hazaz's short story "The Sermon" (*HaDrasha)* in *The Sermon and Other Stories* (New Milford, CT: Toby Press, 2005), 231–250.

104. Gershom Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi: The Mystical Messiah, 1626–1676* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1973); Jacob Barnai, *Sabbatianism: Social Aspects* (Jerusalem: Shazar Center, 2000); and Rachel Elior, ed., *Messianism and Sabbatianism* (Jerusalem: Hebrew University, Jewish Studies Institute, 2001).

105. Gershom Scholem, "Redemption through Sin," in *The Messianic Idea in Judaism* (New York: Schocken Books, 1971), 78–141.

106. Joseph Dan, *Modern Jewish Messianism* (Tel Aviv: Ministry of Defense Pub., 1999) (in Hebrew).

107. Dov Schwartz, *Religious Zionism: Between Rationality and Messianism* (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1999) (in Hebrew); Aran, "Jewish-Zionist Fundamentalism" (see note 36 above); and Menachem Friedman, "Messiah and Messianism in Chabad Hasidism" (Unpublished manuscript).

108. See Ezekiel 36, for example.

109. David Ariel-Yoel, ed., *Gog and Magog: Messianism and Apocalypse in Judaism* (Tel Aviv: Miskal, 2001).

110. Incidentally, Israeli officials have often referred to the 1973 October War as the "Day of Judgment War" (*milkhemet yom hadin*).

111. Ben Sasson, *History of the Jewish People* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976), Vol. II; and Ben Sasson, *Jewish Society Through the Ages* (New York: Schocken, 1971).

112. Aviezer Ravitzky, *Messianism, Zionism, and Jewish Religious Radicalism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

113. Rivka Shatz, *Hasidism and Mysticism: Quietistic Elements in 18th Century Hasidism* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1968).

114. East European Jews used to eat in Purim poppy seed-filled pouches called *Mohntaschen* in German. In folk etymology the latter is the source of the term *Hamantaschen* still in use by Ashkenazi Jews. Later in modern Israel the Yiddish name of these Purim pastries changed to the Hebrew *oznei haman*, meaning Haman's ears, in light of the tradition that this archenemy of the Jewish people and his ten sons were hung by their ears.

115. Elliott Horowitz, *Reckless Rites: Purim and the Legacy of Jewish Violence* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006). Naturally, given the patterns we have identified, these incidents are not commemorated, let alone celebrated, in Jewish chronicles but appear in Christian accounts, some of which may be polemical.

116. Ben Sasson, *History of the Jewish People* (see note 112 above).

117. Jeremy Cohen, *Sanctifying the Name of God* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004); Motti Arad, ed., *Dying for God: A Reader* (Jerusalem: The Hebrew University, 2004) (in Hebrew); and Simha Goldin, Yigal Levin, and C. Michael Copeland, *The Ways of Jewish Martyrdom* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2008).

118. Yisrael Yuval, *Two Nations in Your Womb* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 200); and David Biale, *Blood and Belief: The Circulation of a Symbol Between Jews and Christians* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007).

119. Oz Almog, *The Sabra: The Creation of the New Jew* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).

120. Nachman Ben Yehuda, *The Massada Myth: Collective Memory and Mythmaking in Israel* (Madison WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1995).

121. Gideon Aran, "The Beginnings of the Road from Religious Zionism to Zionist Religion," in Jonathan Frankel, Peter Medding, and Ezra Mendelsohn, eds., *Studies in Contemporary Jewry*, Vol. II (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 116–143.

122. Amos Eilon, *The Israelis: Founders and Sons* (Toronto: Bantam Books, 1972); and Dalia Gavriely-Nuri, "Rainbow, Snow, and the Poplar's Song: The 'Annihilative Naming' of Israeli Military Practices," *Armed Forces and Society* 36, no. 5 (August 2009): 825–842.

123. Gideon Aran, "Return to the Scriptures in Modern Israel," *L'Annuair de l'Ecole Practique des Hautes Etudes, Section des Sciences Religieuses* 99 (1993): 101–133.

124. Michael Feige, "Gush Emunim and Shalom Achshav" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Hebrew University, 1996); Baruch Kimmerling, *The Invention and Decline of Israeliness: State, Society and the Military* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2001).

125. Horowitz, *Reckless Rites* (see note 116 above), chapters 7 and 8.

126. Compare Bernard Lewis, *What Went Wrong: The Clash Between Islam and Modernity in the Middle East* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).

127. Compare Mahmood Mamdani, "Good Muslim, Bad Muslim: A Political Perspective on Culture and Terrorism," *American Anthropologist* 104, no. 3 (2002): 766–775.

128. Dan Horowitz and Moshe Lissak, *Trouble in Utopia: The Overburdened Polity of Israel* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1989).

129. Sprinzak, *Brother Against Brother* (see note 9 above).

130. Nachman Ben Yehuda, *Political Assassination by Jews* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1993).

131. See, for example, Menachem Friedman, "Haredim and the Holocaust," *Jerusalem Quarterly* 53 (Winter 1990): 321–375.

132. See, for example, Dorit Natan, "Victimhood as an Obstacle to Conflict Resolution: The Israeli Case" (M.A. Thesis, Hebrew University, Political Science Department, 2004).

133. Peter Medding, ed., *Issues in Contemporary Jewry*, Vol. XVIII (Oxford University Press, 2002).

134. Some of these wars have employed religious symbolism (e.g., the 1973 Arab-Israeli War, named the "Yom Kippur War"). Interestingly, a minority among Israelis grasp these wars in retrospect as if they were sacred events *ex ante*. Thus Messianic Orthodox Zionists declared the 1948 War, twenty years later, and the 1967, a day later, as "wars of redemption."

135. See, for example, David Biale, *Power and Powerlessness in Jewish History: The Jewish Tradition and the Myth of Passivity* (New York: Schocken Books, 1986).

136. Edna Lomsky-Feder and Eyal Ben Ari, eds., *The Military and Militarism in Israel* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1999).

137. Kimmerling, *The Invention and Decline of Israeliness* (see note 125 above).

138. Ehud Luz, "The Moral Price of Sovereignty: The Dispute about the Use of Military Power within Zionism," *Modern Judaism* 7 (1987): 51–98.

139. See Stuart Cohen, "Israel," in Ron Hassner, ed., *Religion and the Military Worldwide* (New York: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming 2013); and Aaron Kampinsky, "Religion, Army and Society in Israel: Changes in the Military Rabbinate 1948–2006" (Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, Bar Ilan University, 2008).

140. See for example Yagil Levi, "Violence as a Competitive Test: The Influence of the Social Composition of the IDF on the Moderating Mechanisms in the Al-Aksa Intifada," *Israeli Sociology* 9 (2008): 325–335 (in Hebrew).

141. This text should not be confused with Maimonides' *Laws of the King*, from which it draws its inspiration and materials. See also Yosef Peley, ed., *Mishne Torat Hamelekh: Essays Following the King's Teaching*, Including Synopsis and appendix (Yitzhar settlement: Yeshivat Od Yoseph Chai, 2011).

142. All translations are our own. Maimonides distinguishes between three methods for executing Noahides: by sword, by stoning (if the Noahide has coupled with a Jewish woman who is engaged to another man), and strangling (if he has coupled with a married Jewish woman who has not consumed her marriage).

143. Ariel Finkelstein, *Derekh Hamelekh* (Netivot: Yeshivat A'havat Yisrael, 2010).