Abstracts

Oren Ableman: Resistance to Antiochus IV in the Book of Daniel

In the past it has been argued that Jewish apocalyptic texts advocated an eschatological worldview which left the future salvation in the hands of God alone. It was therefore believed that these texts were opposed to armed resistance by Jews against foreign empires. It was even sometimes stated that the authors of such texts advocated a pacifist worldview. Recent studies in the use of apocalyptic language and imagery have cast much doubt on these assumptions. It has become increasingly clear that in apocalyptic literature earthly actions are attributed to heavenly forces. In light of this it can no longer be assumed that apocalyptic texts oppose human involvement in the eschatological events.

In my presentation I will examine the book of Daniel in light of the political events to which it responded. I will argue that the book was written during the persecution of certain Jewish groups by Antiochus IV—and his agents in Judea—in the years 168-165 BCE. The book was composed in its final form by a social circle of scribes, which appear to have been one of the main targets of the persecution, and aimed to encourage other members of the group to keep following and teaching Jewish Law (Torah) despite the danger this entailed. The book also promised that those who would endure would also receive various eschatological rewards. My study is informed by recent research into the book of Daniel and other contemporary apocalyptic literature, which has interpreted these texts as resistance literature written by Jews in order to oppose imperial powers.

Bibliography
Sam Baddeley: Severus of Minorca: Letter on the Conversion of the Jews

The letter of Bishop Severus purports to describe a horrific act of violence which involved the persecution and conversion of the whole Jewish community on the small Balearic island of Minorca in 418 CE. Despite serious doubts about its reliability as an historical source, it has been used by a number of scholars as evidence for the developing importance of the cult of saints within early Christianity, for the continuing vitality of Jewish Diaspora communities into the later Roman period, particularly - and perhaps unusually considering the general tenor of our evidence - within the Latin West, and for the development of opposing yet intertwined Jewish and Christian constructions of religious identity in Late Antiquity. It is the purpose of this paper to set the letter within the context of the wider debates which surround it and to examine the motives – both explicit and implicit within the internal evidence of the text – for religious violence in this period, a period which was formative in the development of Nicene Christianity and Rabbinic Judaism. It is hoped that this investigation will release the letter from the confines of its Late Antique origins and thus stimulate an examination of it within the context of other acts of intra- and interfaith Abrahamic intolerance and violence throughout history.


In his reading of Deuteronomy 23 in *De Tobia*, Ambrose of Milan describes usury, understood as any taking of interest, as a form of bloodless killing. Based on the Deuteronomic text, Ambrose asserts that usury is not to be demanded of one’s brethren, who he identifies as in his own day as being fellow Christians and persons under Roman law. Usury can only be exacted legitimately from the enemy. Although Ambrose will ultimately affirm that Christians are to love their enemies, he likewise affirms that usury is lawful where there is a right to war. Since Ambrose creates a loophole in the general prohibition and links that exception to warfare, a platform is created for the deployment of moneylending as a weapon against outsiders. Ambrose’s formula was received by subsequent centuries through Gratian’s Decretum, which was a collection of canons assembled in the twelfth century. Benjamin Nelson argues that the appearance of Ambrose’s formula without the caveat about love “authorized Christians to demand interest from Moslems,” who some viewed as “modern Canaanites.” Eventually, the permission was extended to include anyone “upon whom the Emperor or Pope wages war.” Thus, although Ambrose tempers his teaching with a call to love one’s enemies, it historically forms a basis for perpetuating usury as a weapon against religious and political outsiders.

*Ambrose, De Tobia*

Deuteronomy 23:19-20

Luke 6:34-35
Tehila Bigman: Sacrifice for holy territory in Jewish and Islamic religious movements:

Gush Emunim and Hamas

The subject of my talk is a comparison the discourse of self-sacrifice for holy territory in the religious-nationalist movements that are active in Israel and in Palestine: Gush Emunim and Hamas. Both Hamas and Gush Emunim base themselves on their holy scriptures in order to justify their activities today. They make connections between religion and nationalism and between tradition and the needs of the present.

First of all, I will outline the framework of both Jewish and Islamic thought about the value of life and its limits, as well as the definition of war. Secondly, I will discuss the Jewish discourse regarding total devotion to Eretz-Israel and how Gush Emunim uses, develops and expands on it. Then I will review the Islamic-Suni self-sacrifice discourse and will show the broad interpretation that Hamas gives to it. Finally, I will compare characteristics, values and goals of both movements in the context of self-sacrifice.

I intend to question whether the movements are indeed very different from each other. Whatever the answer will be, the comparison will enable us to view both as parallel rivals with strong faiths, broad ideologies and all-encompassing world views about violence, peace and everything in between.

ביבליוגרפית


Anna Chrysostomides: Crossing the line: Christian literary and Islamic legal depictions of violence against Muslim converts to Christianity, 7th-10th centuries.

Eastern Christian martyr lives are often used as historical evidence; however, they are rarely compared with Islamic legal sources for the purposes of social history. There are several late-antique and early medieval Christian martyr lives depicting people who convert from Islam to Christianity and the reaction of the Muslim authorities, which, in the narratives, always result in the martyrdom itself.

This paper seeks to compare the Christian descriptions of the Islamic official reaction to conversion to Christianity with contemporary Islamic hadīth material in an effort to explore the rhetorical and symbolic nature of the trial and death scenes within both Christian and Islamic narratives. For Christianity, most aspects of these purpose-written scenes are clearly meant to paint a picture of Muslims as a dangerous ‘other,’ asking the audience to identify with early Christian martyrs and feel a part of Christian memory through the shared experience of persecution. For Islam, these ahādīth represent a form of conquest narrative, similar to traditional Abbasid conquest narratives and diyārāt literature. They show the power of Islamic society through narratives intended to be read or heard by those already in power, re-enforcing the collective identity of Muslims as the ‘conquerors’ vs. the ‘conquered’ people and classes. The violent act of killing someone for apostasy required narrative justification in both communities, while the Christian narratives follow the traditional path by fully embracing the role of the meek victim, the Islamic ahādīth fall in line with what may have been a very early tradition of rhetoric, one which portrays Muslims as victorious and powerful.


Kimberey Czajkowski: Pagan perceptions of Jewish violence in antiquity: The case of human sacrifice

In his Contra Apionem, Josephus preserves an extraordinary accusation of violence perpetrated by Jews. The Jews, according to Apion, would each year capture a Greek, imprison him in the Jerusalem Temple, fatten him up and finally sacrifice him (C. Ap. II.91-96). Such accusations against the Jews by pagan authors are rare, even though anti-Jewish sentiments are far from uncommon. Jews are, in many cases, characterised as misanthropic, separatist, antisocial and secretive but this rarely leads to allegations that they committed what is considered to be the ultimate barbaric act in Graeco-Roman society: human sacrifice. Apion’s tale is therefore somewhat unusual. This paper will examine the few accusations of human sacrifice by Jews that survive to us from antiquity, with a particular focus on the Contra Apionem passage. These will be placed in the context of similar allegations against other ancient peoples and other descriptions of Jewish violence in pagan sources in an attempt to understand with what intent this charge was deployed against the Jewish people.


Idan Dershowitz: Monotheism in Canaan and Egypt — Tolerance and Intolerance

The Amarna period in Egypt was short lived, and few traces of the cultural and religious upheaval it introduced survived after the death of the revolutionary Pharaoh, Akhenaten. Nevertheless, a major component of his heretical and unprecedented theology — the worship of, and apparently belief in, only one god — eventually became pervasive in much of the world, as it remains today.

I would like to suggest that the mytho-historical approach to monotheism found in Psalm 82 is unique in all of the Bible and parallel to a remarkable Atenistic composition discovered in Karnak. This fragmentary composition was apparently attributed to Akhenaten himself and addressed the transition in Egypt from the worship of a multitude of gods to just one. In contrast to later Amarnan texts that fundamentally negated the existence of all gods but Aten, this composition spoke only of the “cessation” of the other deities. These two ancient texts suggested that the polytheistic beliefs and practices of prior generations were not mistaken, and it was only in the present day of the writers that a single god superseded all others. This exceptional explanation stands in stark contrast to the far less tolerant approaches to polytheism that ultimately pervaded both Amarna-era Egypt and ancient Israel.

Bibliography:

Biblical historiography distinguishes between several discrete periods in the history of Israel. My paper deals with the presentation of the period of Judges, which followed the conquest and inhabitance of the Land, under the leadership of Joshua, and preceded the establishment of the monarchy. While the main portrayal of this era comes in the book of Judges, this lecture focuses on its presentation in 1 Samuel 12:9-11, in the speech attributed to Samuel, the last Judge.

This period, characterized as a cycle of oppressions by neighboring nations and the Israelites’ deliverance by saviors, raised up by God, will be discussed in relation to the theory of the existence of a “Book of Saviors”, a composition of savior tales. It has been suggested that this composition was used in the redaction of the canonical book of Judges. Supporting evidence will be brought forth through a new examination of 1 Sam 12:9-11 and its presentation of the period of the Savior-Judges through a structure of two lists, of oppressors and of saviors.

Short preliminary bibliography:
Charlotte Klingelhoefter: Intolerance and authority in the 2nd century church.

The paper will examine the relationship between intolerance against heresies and the establishment of authority in the 2nd century in church history. Examples will be Ignatius, Irenaeus and Tertullian. Moreover, I will ask how the perception of a common heretical enemy influences the group identity of the church and contributes to the polemical language.


Marten Krijgsman: Practical and Theoretical Ethics of Warfare in the Bible and in the Ancient Near East

In this paper, different approaches to war in the ancient world are investigated. The focus lies on Deuteronomy 20, which prescribes in detail the conduct of the Israelites when besieging cities. The theoretical description of siege warfare in the biblical book is then compared to Assyrian records – primarily Sennacherib’s invasion of Judah – in order to provide a practical counterpoint. From the comparison of available material, several observations are drawn out. Firstly, the biblical text falls short as a manual of warfare, but is primarily concerned with the outcomes of battle and treatment of the conquered. The Assyrian texts, on the other hand, describe a fuller range of tactics in addition to the aftermath of battle. Secondly, the ethical perspective of both texts differs in radical ways. While the Assyrian texts are concerned purely with practical expansionism and consolidation of power, Deuteronomy prescribes a kind of cultural or racial purity that goes beyond merely imposing power. Thirdly, considering the position of Judah during the presumed time of composition, the biblical text propagates a fantasy of warfare rather than a manual that was ever put into practice, as opposed to the practical Assyrian text.


Ussishkin, D. 1982. The Conquest of Lachish by Sennacherib. Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University, Institute of Archaeology.

Yitz Landes: Jewish Sacrifice: From Hubert and Mauss to the Rabbis.

Since the publication of Hubert and Mauss’ seminal essay *Sacrifice: Its Nature and Functions* (Hubert and Mauss 1964), killing and violence have received a special place in modern theories of ancient sacrifice, notably in the works of Girard and Burkert and in their understanding that sacrifice redirects social violence (Girard 1979; Burkert 1983). Recent studies by McClymond and Swartz have challenged the notion that Jewish forms of sacrifice should be understood in terms of violence or violent origins (McClymond 2008; Swartz 2011). Swartz and McClymond point out that other aspects of the sacrificial ritual—such as apportionment or blood manipulation—receive much more attention in the Hebrew Bible and in rabbinic texts than does the act of killing. In my paper, I hope to offer an additional reassessment of the place of violence and aggression in sacrifice by analyzing what Jewish texts from Late Antiquity have to say on the topic. Such an analysis of rabbinic and other perceptions of sacrifice will not only enrich our understanding of sacrifice, but also of wider phenomena that occurred in Late Antiquity and of the place of violence in society.

**Select Bibliography**


Yael Moise: The problem of “The Jews” in the study of John’s gospel, overview and analysis.

Whatever you might think of their “real” meaning, the two words most commonly translated as “The Jews” are found in John very often. And, though they occasionally (read: rarely) can be found, cast in a positive light, the overwhelmingly negative, more usual, sometimes even violent light they are cast in has earned them a “place of honour” among the fields of recent study in the gospel of John.

Questions like - Is John’s author, or isn’t he, anti-Semitic? Is he or, isn’t anti-Judaic? Is the book anti-Semitic? Is the book anti-Judaic? Are these actually Jews we’re talking about? Which Jews? What Jews? What is meant by Jews? Who is meant by Jews? etc. etc. etc. – saturate a debate that seems to reach no conclusions, but definitely keeps the presses going, and the scholars arguing… and for good reasons.

The purpose of this paper will be to engage, as briefly as possible, with the sea of ink that has been shed on this issue. I will attempt to show the reasons why it persists in being a problem for scholars, as well as attempt to put forward some ideas as to how the issue should, and shouldn’t, be addressed.

Partial Bibliography:
Mino (Giacomo) Negrin: "The judge of all the earth will not do justly!"

The subject of my research deals with a particular rabbinical interpretation of the Sodom and Gomorrah chapter in general and more specifically of Abraham's negotiation with God. The main attention is dedicated to a deep reading of the 49th chapter in the "Genesis Rabba Midrash", which is expressing – in my opinion – the human astonishment from God's action, guilty of mixing his wrath in an unbalanced judgment of Sodom and Gomorrah's sinners. In the frame of this reading, Abraham is not asking rhetorically "shall not the Judge of all the earth do justly ?" but rather bitterly states that "The judge of all the earth will not do justly !"

From the analysis of this exegesis and the context of the whole chapter of Genesis Rabbah, I would like to argue that the basic concept of this Midrash has an intriguing parallelism with the perception of the pure human justice ideals preached by the most important representative of the Roman Stoicism (1st century CE) – Lucius Annaeus Seneca.

I am now extending my research to interpretations of several Fathers of the Church (more or less contemporary to the Genesis Rabbah rabbinical period) to the Sodom and Gomorrah chapter and God's punishment. I have not found so far such a daring and controversial standing facing the Divine justice (or, more accurately..the lack of justice), but rather a completely opposite position. A line similar to the Father of the Church's one is taken in the Quran and in the first Muslim interpretations of the Quran itself.

Short Bibliography – firsthand sources:
- Bereschit Rabba, Theodor-Albek, Jerusalem 1996

My contribution will look at anti-Jewish polemical passages in Near-eastern Christian texts from the early Islamic period (seventh-eighth centuries), drawing from material available mainly in Greek and Copto-Arabic. Recent scholarship has shown how anti-Jewish attacks in Syriac and Greek literature of the period could easily hide fears concerning the Muslim conquerors (in the aftermath of the conquests), or subtle complaints about the ruling class (in the Umayyad and early Abbasid periods), thus bringing to light complex ‘inter-Abrahamic’ weaves which have been not fully untangled and appreciated as yet. This paper will focus on the use of anti-Jewish stereotypes and topical images recurring in those texts. Besides showing how anti-Jewish and anti-Muslim polemics naturally overlapped with each other in Christian sources, emphasis will be put on the function and value of ‘intolerant’ stereotypes from an intra-Christian perspective. While framing polemical images in their historical context (why did certain themes prevail over others in a certain age?), this analysis will lead to more general questions on the use and significance of stereotypical accusations in inter-religious controversies. Hopefully, this will give rise to possible comparisons in the discussion with other historical/literary examples of polyvalent polemical interchanges between conflicting religious groups. By questioning the category of ‘stereotype’ and ‘intolerance’, the paper will also engage with methodological questions brought about by our modern understanding of the concept and its application to the sources. Finally, this paper will offer the speaker the opportunity, albeit incidentally, for presenting a still largely unknown corpus of sources – consisting of eighth-century Copto-Arabic homilies – and for putting them side by side with much better-known Christian witnesses from the early Islamic period.

Hoyland (Robert), Seeing Islam as Others Saw it. A survey and evaluation of Christian, Jewish and Zoroastrian writings on early Islam (Princeton, 1997)
Levy-Rubin (Milka), Non-Muslims in the Early Islamic Empire (Cambridge, 2011)
Orlandi (Tito), Omelie copte: scelte e tradotte, con un’introduzione sulla letteratura copta (Milano, 1981)

Lucy Parker: Christian Holy Men: Figures of Peace?

Modern historians, following the arguments of Peter Brown, have tended to depict Christian holy men as figures of peace, as ‘mediators’ and ‘arbiters’ in the evolving society of Late Antiquity. Such arguments have undoubtedly helped further our understanding of holy men, but it is also important to recognise that holy men could be divisive, intolerant, and even violent figures, who acted to undermine social cohesion and sought to impose strict boundaries between ‘orthodox’ Christians and religious ‘outsiders’. This paper will analyse a range of hagiographical sources from the fourth- to seventh-century Eastern Roman empire, suggesting that intolerance and conflict are endemic to the genre. It will consider the possibility that holy men’s opposition to religious ‘outsiders’ – from Christian heretics to pagans – often formed an essential part of their presentation by hagiographers as it offered one justification for their independent role in society. There are, however, limits to what can be discerned from hagiography about the actual behaviour of holy men, as hagiographers had their own concerns and interests which shaped their presentation of intolerance and violence. This paper will also, therefore, move beyond the hagiographic record by looking at documentary evidence including letters by Shenoute of Atripe, Barsanuphius of Gaza, and Symeon Stylites the Younger. It will examine not only the rhetoric and behaviour of holy men, but also, as far as possible, society’s reactions to this behaviour. It will show that intolerance by holy men often met with resistance not only from religious ‘outsiders’ but also from fellow orthodox Christians, and will consider what this evidence of conflict implies for our understanding of the role of holy men in Eastern Roman society.


Gaddis, M. ‘There is No Crime for Those Who Have Christ’: Religious Violence in the Christian Roman Empire (Berkeley, 2005).


The Gospel of Luke’s attitude towards violence and peace, intolerance and tolerance, is complex: it is the gospel in which Jesus commands his followers to practice non-violence in response to violence and to love enemies (6:27-35), but also to bring those who do not welcome him as king before him and kill them (19:27). This paper aims to briefly explore these paradoxes, especially focusing on 22:35-28. In this notoriously strange passage, Jesus orders his disciples to sell their possessions to buy swords, and when presented with two, replies with “It is enough”. The passage has proved troublesome to commentators, and what it tells us about the evangelist’s attitude to violence has been much-debated.

Anthony Rabin: Forcible circumcision by Jews of non-Jewish males in the Second Temple period

According to the Old Testament, circumcision for Jewish males on the eighth day was a sign of the covenant between Abraham and his descendants and God. Circumcision of males was also seen in the Greco-Roman world as a distinctive Jewish marker, setting Jewish males apart from others. With such a background, this paper explores the references, principally in the works of Josephus, to the occurrence in the Second Temple period of forcible circumcision by Jews of non-Jewish males, usually within the context of war. How reliable are these reports? If we believe that these events happened, why did they happen? If we believe that they did not, why would Josephus assert that they had?


Moshe Yagur: Jewish attitudes towards Jewish converts in medieval Islam

In my paper I will try to survey briefly different Jewish attitudes towards Jews who chose to convert to Islam, the dominant religion around them. Naturally, in that ‘religious age’, tolerance – in the way it was articulated from the 17th century onward – was not an option. On the other hand, coercion against the convert was also not efficient. How, then, did Jews respond to the conversion of a friend or a relative?

The material for my paper was collected from the Responsa literature, a legal genre. These queries to important halakhic figures were sometimes theoretical and sometimes very real and urgent, but in both cases they can teach us about dilemmas of the Jewish communities.

In my paper I intend to show that Jews did not recognize the mere fact of conversion, and that was definitely not tolerant. But this ideological intolerance enabled the Jews to be practically tolerant towards Jewish converts to Islam (or Christianity). I will show that Jews maintained daily contacts with Jewish converts to Islam. We will examine few queries – can a convert testify in a Jewish court? Can a Jew serve non-kosher food to a convert? Can a Jewess marry a convert? Is their son Jewish? All these cases show that practical tolerance led sometimes also to ideological tolerance, and even to rare cases where freedom of choice was given to an individual.

Tentative bibliography


שתהראב, מהד', ימי עיר-שי
dömär, ימי עיר-שי
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ייהלום, ש進一步ו ירח tổנ, "הכר במדיה ומקבילותה. פסקה על ירח תוחלת: הנאותם ב蛳וובא בירוש ממר", ש-ר"ע ע"ש-ר"ע ("תפיע"-טפיע), י-גא
6435-361.
Koji Yamashiro: Judah Halevi's Spiritual Journey: The Conception of the Messianic Community in the *Kuzari*

The careful comparison between *Kuzari*, Part 1 and *Kuzari*, Part 4 reveals Judah Halevi's change of attitude towards Christianity and Islam, i.e. from exclusivism/particularism to inclusivism/universalism. In order to elucidate this shift, I shall analyze his description of the Messianic community in the eschatological age in *Kuzari*, IV. 23. In this connection, I will also take issue with the previous scholarly interpretations of the idea of the chosenness of the Jewish nation in the *Kuzari*, among others, those of Daniel Lasker and Ehud Krinis.

Basic Bibliography


לשון מחקר, משוררים האמנים והמחברים מקורותינו (המותר לפרסום) - ז"יר אלמלאמא חומרא הצע עניין. אוד וקריניס, בנב נוריון-ב' תמאותיבין, "לפיווסת וקוטור" חפוץ עבורה הדרישה של חלקי מילוי, 2007.
**Jonathon Wright: Not such bad men after all? Levi and Simeon in extra-biblical interpretation.**

Simeon and Levi are (in)famous in the Bible for their violent slaughter at Shechem. Yet despite the negative interpretation of their actions by Jacob in the so-called blessings of Genesis 49, the biblical tradition assigns a generally positive attitude towards them. In a variety of extra-biblical material, Simeon and Levi’s actions are reinterpreted in interesting directions, often in the service of other exegetical priorities. This paper will explore some of the contours of this interpretation. Further, it will suggest that Christians and Muslims probably did not make more use of them precisely because of the difficulty in giving a positive reading to their actions.

