



# Nonviolence in the World's Religions

A Concise Introduction

Edited by Jeffery D. Long and Michael G. Long

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# Judaisms and nonviolence

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### Introduction

Though nonviolence is not generally thought to be one of the central tenets of Judaism, core notions linked to nonviolence—ideas such as peace, justice, active resistance, and pacifism—have been central to this religion since its beginnings. This chapter begins by looking at how nonviolence, and these related terms, has been understood in the Hebrew Bible, as well as in later sacred Jewish texts, such as the Talmud and classical Midrash.<sup>1</sup> Thereafter, we examine ways that specific nineteenth-, twentieth- and twenty-first-century Jews have understood and argued for nonviolence, focusing primarily on Jews living in the United States and Israel/Palestine, where 80 percent of all Jews today live.<sup>2</sup> We include brief descriptions of the *realpolitik* in which contemporary Jewish theologians, ideologues, philosophers, and activists live and have lived, touching on potential ways that their respective geographical, cultural, and temporal contexts have shaped their thought. Changes in beliefs and practices as related to nonviolence reflect ways that contemporary Jews have modified these ancient ideas for current situations.

### Nonviolence in sacred Jewish texts: Hebrew Bible, Talmud, and Midrash

In order to gain a deeper understanding of Judaism and nonviolence, we need to explore different threads that, when woven together, provide a fuller tapestry of nonviolence within Judaism, as the term “non-violence,” historically speaking, is relatively recent. Sometimes referred to as “People of the Book,” Jews have been a text-based people for centuries. Thus, we will begin this chapter with an exploration of the primary signifiers Jews have used to discuss nonviolence—peace or שלום (*shalom*) and justice<sup>3</sup> or צדק (*tzedek*)<sup>4</sup> and משפט (*mishpat*)—within Judaism’s most important sacred texts, such as the Hebrew Bible, Talmud, and Midrash.

### Hebrew Bible: *Shalom*

Held up as among the highest values in Jewish tradition is *shalom*. The three-letter root for *shalom*, *slm*, means “whole” or “complete.” Many Jewish texts implicitly and explicitly voice how humans are considered complete when there is peace; likewise, peace is a path to wholeness. Perhaps the most recognized biblical verse reflecting the idea of peace is from the Prophets, where it says, “they shall beat their swords into plowshares, their spears into pruning hooks.”<sup>5</sup> As for the word peace specifically, the Hebrew term *shalom* appears 239 times in the Hebrew Bible.<sup>6</sup> The first occasion is in Gen. 15:15, where God instructs Abraham (then Abram), “As for you, you shall go to your father’s in peace.”<sup>7</sup> Yet, this is one of a variety of biblical usages for the word *shalom*, connoting different ideas in a diverse range of places. In short, there is no single biblically based definition for *shalom*.<sup>8</sup>

Perhaps the three usages of *shalom* most relevant to the topic of nonviolence are as follows:<sup>9</sup>

- 1 *Shalom* is used as a descriptive term to depict a situation where there is calm or an absence of war.<sup>10</sup> In such passages, peace—and concomitantly nonviolence—is used in a negative sense, as in when peace means the absence of war (similarly, nonviolence can mean the absence of violence).<sup>11</sup> This includes those examples when *shalom* is used to depict an individual or a group as *unpeaceful* or violent, utilizing the term “peace” as a contrasting adjective<sup>12</sup> or to note a time that is *unpeaceful*.<sup>13</sup>
- 2 *Shalom* is used to connote a nonviolent covenant or pact between an individual or group and another, whether the other is God<sup>14</sup> or another individual or group,<sup>15</sup> or with another individual or group when a non-violent covenant will *not* be made, such as when the terms are not mutually agreeable.<sup>16</sup>
- 3 *Shalom* is used to reflect a state of tranquility or calm that is experienced in a particular situation,<sup>17</sup> is foretold one will arrive at explicitly due to God’s intervention,<sup>18</sup> or describes a situation an individual or community has *not* arrived at or will *not* arrive at.<sup>19</sup>

### Hebrew Bible: *Tzedek* and *mishpat*<sup>20</sup>

The most renowned verse in the Torah that explicitly mentions *tzedek*—etymologically meaning “righteousness” or “doing the right thing”<sup>21</sup>—is “justice, justice you shall pursue” (Deut. 16:20),<sup>22</sup> a biblical *mitzvah*, or commandment, that cites justice twice, emphasizing its monumental importance. The Hebrew word *tzedek* appears in the Hebrew Bible 530 times, while *mishpat* appears 407 times,<sup>23</sup> but, like *shalom*, these terms are used to mean a range of different things; in fundamental ways, many of these

usages are not necessarily—on first appearance—linked to nonviolence. Examples include:<sup>24</sup>

- 1 *Tzedek* and *mishpat* are used to describe a person who is righteous (*tzadik*), someone who embodies justice,<sup>25</sup> people who are not wicked,<sup>26</sup> and people who are wicked (i.e., people who are not just).<sup>27</sup> These descriptors can sometimes mean that an individual fights for justice nonviolently.<sup>28</sup>
- 2 *Tzedek* (or a linguistically related word, such as *zedakah*)<sup>29</sup> appears alongside *mishpat*.<sup>30</sup> Sometimes *tzedek* and *mishpat* are used individually or in proximity to one another to mean “judgment” or “a just judgment.”<sup>31</sup>
- 3 *Tzedek* or *mishpat* appears in relation to God,<sup>32</sup> such as when God is held up as the archetype of righteous behavior,<sup>33</sup> when God’s laws are held up as the most righteous,<sup>34</sup> or God’s laws are equated with justice.<sup>35</sup>

Each of these examples can be understood to reflect nonviolence because, in Judaism, nonviolent thought and practice are rooted in justice.<sup>36</sup>

### **Hebrew Bible: active resistance**

The Hebrew Bible also contains examples of nonviolence where one does not see the words *shalom*, *tzedek*, or *mishpat*, such as episodes reflecting active resistance.<sup>37</sup> For example, in the beginning of Exodus (1:8–22), the text states that in an era long after the death of Joseph, a new king ascended to Egypt’s throne. Based in his fear that the Israelites were multiplying too fast—he thought they were a potential demographic threat—the king orders Shiphrah and Puah, the Hebrew (Israelite) midwives, to perform infanticide of all males. They refuse, which leads to the birth of countless Israelite males, including the future leader of this biblical nation, Moses. Using a definition of nonviolence that requires such an act to be both devoid of violence and one that actively works against violence, this is clearly an act of nonviolent resistance.<sup>38</sup> For Shiphrah and Puah, their reverence and fear of God far outweighed any directive given to them by the Egyptian king.

### **Talmud and Midrash**

Aside from the Hebrew Bible, the Talmud<sup>39</sup> and Midrash<sup>40</sup> are two foundational Jewish texts. Both of these corpuses embody Jewish interpretations of the Hebrew Bible; together they represent the main works produced during the rabbinical period.<sup>41</sup> Many contend that the rabbinic interpretation produced in this era (circa first through eighth century CE) initiated and contain the Jewish exegetical tradition itself.<sup>42</sup> In fact, some maintain that

when it comes to Jewish thought and practice, these rabbinic texts supersede the Torah in terms of practical application, especially the Talmud.<sup>43</sup>

Like the Hebrew Bible, the Talmud and Midrash do not have a single usage of “peace” or “justice” but utilize these terms in a multiplicity of ways. In fact, there are countless examples using these words in almost identical ways as the above-cited biblical passages. One of the most renowned passages of this kind notes, “The purpose of the Torah in its entirety is to promote the ways of peace, as it is written, ‘Its ways are ways of pleasantness and all of its paths are peace’” (Prov. 3:17).<sup>44</sup> According to the ancient sages, one of God’s names is “Peace”<sup>45</sup> and God’s primary characteristic of action is justice,<sup>46</sup> thus reflecting how central peace and justice are to the rabbis of this era.

But unlike the Hebrew Bible, Jewish texts written during the rabbinical period expanded upon the biblical words *shalom*, *tzedek*, and *mishpat* to include less explicit notions of peace and justice, such as those used in normative contemporary discussions about nonviolence (i.e., more akin to the biblical example of Shiphrah and Puah engaging in active resistance). Many of these instances reflect nonviolent action, such as transforming an “other” into a friend.

Take the following example from Genesis Rabbah:<sup>47</sup>

Rabbi Yochanan began, “Evil will never depart from the house of he who repays good with evil” (Prov. 13:17). ... Rabbi Simeon ben Abba said not only one who repays good but even one who repays evil for evil, “evil will never depart from the house.” Rabbi Alexandri commented on the verse, “who repays good with evil”; now the Torah states, “when you see the ass of your enemy lying under its burden and refrain from raising it[s burden], you must nevertheless raise it with him” (Ex. 23:5).<sup>48</sup>

From a contemporary perspective, this passage illustrates the Gandhian notion of transforming an enemy into a friend.<sup>49</sup>

Interestingly, this midrashic passage is based on previous textual traditions (i.e., those written prior to the above Genesis Rabbah text) that discuss reasons why one would want to transform their enemy into a friend.<sup>50</sup> For example, according to one of these sources, the intention when deciding to treat an enemy as a friend is to “oppose one’s [negatively intentioned] drive.”<sup>51</sup> Another source maintains that it is preferable to treat an enemy in a positive way in order to “break his heart,”<sup>52</sup> while a third maintains that “if you have suppressed your [negatively intentioned] drive in order to make your enemy your friend, [God] promises to make your enemy your friend.”<sup>53</sup> The centrality of an actor’s intention, whether examining an action deemed to be violent or nonviolent, that emerged during the rabbinic period continues to be central to the rabbinic exegetical process even today, in the twenty-first-century.

Another text,<sup>54</sup> attributed to one of the rabbis mentioned in the previous Genesis Rabbah text (Gen. Rab. 38:3), expands upon this idea in the following way:

Rabbi Alexandri said, “Two donkey drivers who were walking by the way hated each other. One of their donkeys sat down. His companion saw it and passed on. When he had passed, he thought, ‘It is written in the Torah, “If you see the ass of one who hates you ... you shall surely help him lift it up.”’ Immediately he returned and loaded with him. The man [helping the other] began to say to himself, ‘So and so is thus my friend and I did not know.’ Both entered an inn and ate and drank. Who is responsible for their making peace? The fact that the man [helping the other] had looked into the Torah. Accordingly, it is written, ‘You have established righteousness’” (Ps. 99:4).<sup>55</sup>

In this passage, Alexandri claims that transforming an enemy into a friend is not only a possibility but something that Jews are obligated to do.<sup>56</sup>

Elsewhere we find likeminded passages reflecting that Jews should transform their enemies into allies, such as the following texts:

“If your enemy is hungry.” Rabbi Hama ben Hanina says, “Even though he rose early to kill you and came hungry and thirsty to your home, feed him and give him [something] to drink. Why? ‘For you will heap coals of fire on his head and God will reward [*yeshalem*] you.’ Do not read ‘reward’ [*yeshalem*] but ‘he will cause him to be at peace’ [*yashlemeno*].”<sup>57</sup> A commentary on the Book of Esther echoes this idea: “Our rabbis taught: what was Esther’s reason for inviting [her enemy,] Haman? ... Rabbi Joshua said, ‘She learned to do this from her father’s house,’ as it says, ‘If your enemy is hungry, give him bread to eat.’”<sup>58</sup>

It says, “Her ways are pleasant ways, and all her pathways are peace” (Prov. 3:17) because when your enemy sees that you came and you helped him he will say to himself, “I thought that he is my enemy, but God forbid! If he was my enemy he would not have helped me, but if he is my friend then I am his enemy in vain. I will go and mollify him.”<sup>59</sup> This text argues that it is not enough to conquer one’s own hate for the ‘other’. It is equally, if not more, important to transform the ‘other’ into a friend.<sup>60</sup> We see a similar idea in the renowned statement from the Mishnah, “Who is a hero? One who controls himself,”<sup>61</sup> and the Talmudic commentary on this verse, which goes one step further in stating, “Who is a hero among heroes? He who controls himself, and he who makes an enemy into a friend.”<sup>62</sup>

In distinguishing an intention from an action, the rabbis contend that an actor must be separated from their action. In common American English

vernacular, one must “separate the sin from the sinner.” This idea is perhaps best expressed in the following Talmudic story:

There were once some highway men in the neighborhood of Rabbi Meir who caused him a great deal of trouble. Rabbi Meir accordingly prayed that they should die. His wife, Beruriah, said to him, “How can you make [such a prayer]? It is written, ‘Let sins cease.’ Is it written, ‘sinners’? [No.] It is written, ‘sins.’ Further, look at the end of the verse (Ps. 104:35), ‘and let the wicked men be no more.’ Since the sins will cease, there will be no more wicked men. Rather, pray for them that they repent, and there will be no more wicked.” He did pray for them, and they repented.<sup>63</sup>

It is clear from this passage that actors who commit “sins” should not be judged; rather only their “sins” should be judged. Further, the individual/s such actors wrong should strive to transform such “wicked” actions into potentially positive ones.<sup>64</sup>

In fact, say the rabbis of this time period, not even righteous individuals have a religiously justified right to punish wrongdoers.

He through whom his neighbor is punished is not permitted to enter the precincts of the Holy One. ... it is not good for the righteous to punish; it is even evil for the righteous to be a vehicle of punishment, as it is written, “For You are a God that has no pleasure in wickedness, evil will not dwell with You” (Ps. 5:5). You are righteous, and therefore evil will not dwell in your habitation.<sup>65</sup>

Here the rabbis teach that one of the primary reasons why the righteous are not allowed to punish the wicked is because humans must strive to model God, the biblical idea that humans were created in the image of God,<sup>66</sup> also known as the theological principle of *Imitatio Dei*.<sup>67</sup> Two Talmudic rabbis, both mentioned previously, extend this idea in the following two statements: “God feels pain when the blood of the wicked is spilled”<sup>68</sup> and “He who controls himself [from giving into his evil inclination] is happy.”<sup>69</sup>

Perhaps the most famous of all rabbinic passages related to nonviolence is a text from the Mishnah in which the rabbis expound upon the severity of taking a life.

In capital cases [an executed individual’s] blood and the blood of his [potential] progeny cling to him until the end of the world as we found in the case of Cain who murdered his brother. As it is written, “*d’mei ahicha tzo’akim*” (Gen. 4:10).<sup>70</sup> It doesn’t say, “Your brother’s blood” but “your brother’s bloods,” indicating his blood and the blood of all [potential] offspring. Another understanding of “your brother’s bloods”

is that his blood was splattered on the trees and on the rocks. Therefore, a single human was created to teach us that if anyone destroys one life from the children of humanity it is as if one destroyed an entire world, and if anyone saves one life from the children of humanity it is as if one saved an entire world. And [a single human was created] for the sake of peace among creation so that no one could say to one's friend, "my father was greater than yours"; and so that the heretics could not say that there are many ruling powers in heaven; and in order to proclaim the greatness of the Holy One Blessed be God because humans stamp coins with one mold and all of them look exactly like the other but the King of kings, the Holy One Blessed be God stamped humans in the mold of the first human but none of them have ever been the same.<sup>71</sup>

What is perhaps most poignant about this text is that it comes at the end of a long conversation regarding rabbinic approaches to capital punishment, as if the value of saving a life undergirds any discussion about potentially applying the death penalty.

Theoretically, the rabbis of this era were not against the utilization of capital punishment. As it states in one mishnah:

A Sanhedrin [court] that puts one to death once every seven years is called destructive. Rabbi ben Azariah says, "Or even once in seventy years." Rabbi Tarfon and Rabbi Akiba say, "Had we been the Sanhedrin [court], no one would ever have been put to death."<sup>72</sup>

From this passage, among others, it is clear that the rabbinical court permitted an individual to receive the death penalty in principle. In fact, though the above Mishnaic verses are present in most conversations related to Judaism's approach to capital punishment, the following words, found immediately thereafter in the original text, are usually omitted, wherein Rabbi Shimon ben Gamliel notes that had the position of Rabbi Tarfon and Rabbi Akiba been followed, "we might be considered guilty of promoting violence and bloodshed. ... [We] could also multiply shedders of blood in Israel."<sup>73</sup> For this reason, some argue that the *halachic* cannon, specifically that which emerged in the rabbinic period, is arguably of two opposite minds on the issue of capital punishment.<sup>74</sup> This all said, there is no tangible evidence that Jews ever enforced the death penalty during the rabbinic period or thereafter (arguably because they never had the legal autonomy to do so, among other reasons).

Further, even in cases deemed to be self-defense, many Talmudic rabbis prohibited the killing of another person.

Murder may not be practiced to save one's life. ... A man came before Rabbi Yehuda Hanasi and said to him, "My governor has ordered me

to “go kill so and so or I will kill you.” Rabba answered him, “Let him rather kill you than that you commit murder. Who knows whether your blood is redder? Perhaps his blood is redder.”<sup>75</sup>

Elsewhere the Talmud notes that if someone is being pursued and the only way they can rid themselves of the pursuer is to harm them through physical maiming, they are allowed. However, if the pursued kills the pursuer in this process, then they are guilty of murder.<sup>76</sup>

### **Nonviolence and contemporary Jews<sup>77</sup>**

For the better part of two thousand years, from the time of the Mishnah through the mid-twentieth-century, the perceived ethos of Jewish communities worldwide was to live nonviolently (i.e., to root one’s action in the related ideals of peace and justice)<sup>78</sup> and passively because Jews lived under the rule of non-Jews, as a minority community; in most historical cases, they were politically powerless. In the face of real and potential violence and persecution, Jews often chose pacifism or passivity, both because these forms of behavior were modes of survival and because of the ethical imperative Judaism places on peace and the sacredness of a human life.

This general *modus operandi* changed at the turn of the twentieth century with the rise of political Zionism in Europe and Russia. During this time, a small but vocal group of Jews emerged who argued that the only place Jews would be able to live in safety was in a Jewish-majority country, some of whom pushed for the creation of a new nation-state in the biblical Land of Israel (at the time a part of the Ottoman Empire called Palestine).<sup>79</sup> A portion of these early Zionist leaders believed that the Jewish people had the right to do whatever it took to establish a Jewish-majority country, including carrying out acts of violence.

### **Aaron Samuel Tamaret (1869–1931)**

At the end of the nineteenth century, most Jews in Europe and Russia were not in favor of the creation of a Jewish-majority country, a minority of whom were opposed to a Jewish political movement specifically if their adherents were ready to engage in violence. Perhaps the most renowned person among this group was Rabbi Aaron Samuel Tamaret, an Orthodox Jew who spent most of his life in today’s Belarus and Poland. Initially throwing himself behind the Zionist movement, where he had been won over by Zionist calls for justice and freedom, within a few short years he concluded that Zionism was devoid of any redeeming features. For instance, he contended that Jewish nationalism, like all forms of nationalism, was integrally connected to violence. He said that because violence has no place in Judaism, political Zionism is antithetical to Judaism’s central ideological

and theological pillars. For Tamaret, Jewish ethics—including a firm faith in *b'tselem Elohim* (Gen. 1:27), the biblical idea that all humans are created in the image of God—are central to Jewish identity and practice. He could not reconcile Jewish nationalism with what he saw as the Jewish imperative to live in peace.<sup>80</sup>

Over time, he became more vocal about his rejection of Zionism. In 1912, in an essay called “Judaism and Freedom,” he offered a harsh critique of Zionism, simultaneously deriding Theodor Herzl’s ambitious overtures to political leaders to help establish a Jewish-majority country.<sup>81</sup> In this essay, Tamaret says that the ends (i.e., creating a Jewish-majority country) cannot justify the means (i.e., using violence). In a separate text,<sup>82</sup> Tamaret says that his ultimate goal was the liberation of the Jewish people through spiritual means; in contrast, he argued, Zionism was rooted in the material.<sup>83</sup>

In identifying the Jewish peoples’ suffering, persecution, and exile, Tamaret saw Jews as uniquely positioned to understand the horror of violence; thus Jews needed to oppose it in all of its forms and instead choose the path of nonviolence. For example, during the era of World War I, he denounced war in its entirety: “Any decent man should have scorned [the War’s] outcome, never excusing its brutality and blood-letting by any purported future results.” Elsewhere, he went on to say that war was a form of idolatry, calling those Jews who praised the war efforts, especially Zionist leaders, “war-pimps.”<sup>84</sup>

### **Martin Buber (1878–1965)**

Like Tamaret, Martin Buber also disagreed with normative forms of political Zionism. Born to an Orthodox Jewish family in Austria in 1878, Buber parted ways with Theodor Herzl and his Zionist colleagues by the early twentieth century. He soon developed a new form of Zionist thought, speaking openly about not a literal Zion, embodied in land, but a “Zion of the soul.”<sup>85</sup> Buber challenged those who wanted the Jewish nation in Palestine to become similar to other nations. Such a political ideology, he said, was focused entirely on “preserving and asserting itself”; it was a form of “national egoism” rather than “national humanism.”<sup>86</sup>

Perhaps Buber’s most widely published work, *I and Thou* (1923), speaks most clearly to the ethos of nonviolence. In this famous text, Buber suggests that humans have two primary ways of interacting with others, through I-It relationships, in which we objectify or depersonalize the “other,” and I-Thou relationships, in which we regard the “other” as honored, valued, and sacred (i.e., as not separate from God and God’s existence). Although Buber recognizes that I-It relationships are a practical necessity, the ideal form of relationship is I-Thou.<sup>87</sup>

Alongside his emphasis on I-Thou relationships, in this book Buber highlights the importance of “dialogue” as a means to resolve conflict. While

not explicitly articulating a theory of nonviolence, Buber writes, “I believe, despite all, that the peoples in this hour can enter into dialogue, into a genuine dialogue with one another. ... Only so can conflict certainly not be eliminated from the world, but be humanly arbitrated and led towards its overcoming.”<sup>88</sup> According to Buber, this dialogue can only take place through authentic human-to-human interactions, when humans only orient to one another as subjects and not objects. In Buber’s approach, one is obligated to engage in dialogue with a friend as well as with an enemy,<sup>89</sup> a concept with roots harkening back to the previously discussed *midrashic* emphasis on transforming an enemy into a friend.

In 1938, when Hitler’s rise to power made life in Germany untenable for Jews like Buber, he emigrated to British Mandate Palestine.<sup>90</sup> Yet even before arriving in the Land of Israel,<sup>91</sup> he was in favor of a single country for both Jews and Palestinian Arabs, an idea also referred to as a “binational state.”<sup>92</sup> In this effort, Buber was active with Brit Shalom [Covenant of Peace], a short-lived but important political group that supported a single country from the Mediterranean Sea to the Jordan River (i.e., all of Israel and Palestine). His support for equal rights for Jews and Palestinians is arguably the political expression of his theological and philosophical notions of the I-Thou relationship.<sup>93</sup> While not explicitly addressing Tamaret’s concerns regarding the inextricable relationship between nationalism and violence, Buber’s universalist approach to nationalism encompassed an implicit reliance on principles of peace and nonviolence.

### **Abraham Joshua Heschel (1907–1972)**

A friend and colleague of Buber, Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel was one of the most influential American Jewish theologians and philosophers of the twentieth century. Born in Poland, Heschel immigrated to the United States in 1940. Though Heschel and Buber differed on specific issues, it is clear from their writings that each felt a profound duty to speak out in opposition to injustices committed against fellow humans. Steeped in traditional Jewish teachings, Heschel was a nonviolent practitioner who engaged in many of the major American social movements of the day, including the civil rights movement (1960s) and the anti-Vietnam War movement (1960s and 1970s).<sup>94</sup> For example, Heschel marched alongside Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. during the renowned 1965 protest march in Selma, Alabama. Afterwards, he famously said, “For many of us, the march from Selma to Montgomery was both protest and prayer. Legs are not lips, and walking is not kneeling. And yet our legs uttered songs. Even without words, our march was worship. I felt my legs were praying.”<sup>95</sup>

Central to Heschel’s approach to nonviolence was his deep theological conviction that all humans are children of God, all part of an interconnected “cosmic brotherhood.”<sup>96</sup> A passionate and vocal critic of the United

States military's involvement in the Vietnam War, Heschel had a deep sense of a shared humanity, which, for him, includes collective responsibility. As he put this in one of his most famous passages, an essay explaining why he is part of the anti-war movement,

Morally speaking there is no limit to the concern one must feel for the suffering of human beings. It also became clear to me that in regard to cruelties committed in the name of a free society, some are guilty, while all are responsible. ... 'Thou shalt not stand idly by the blood of thy neighbor' (Lev. 19:15). This is not a recommendation but an imperative, a supreme commandment.<sup>97</sup>

While Heschel rarely employed the words nonviolence or peace in his writings, his sense of mutual obligation to the "other" and his indignation at the injustice embodied in dehumanizing the "other" are central to his writings.<sup>98</sup>

Heschel and Buber are among the first Jewish theologians to develop "an all-encompassing ideological framework that discusses how to approach the other, whether Jewish or non-Jewish," a maximalist and universalist approach applicable to everyone, regardless of social identities.<sup>99</sup> Both rooted their theology and philosophy in particularist expressions of Jewish ideas and texts while extending them to the universalist collective, a development that would influence Jewish leaders in their use of nonviolence thereafter.

### **Arthur Waskow (b. 1933)**

On April 4, 1969, one year to the day after the assassination of Dr. King, Rabbi Arthur Waskow held a Passover "Freedom Seder" in Washington, DC, with 800 people in attendance, roughly 400 Jews and 400 black and white Christians.<sup>100</sup> From that point forward, Waskow has been known in American Jewish communities as a pioneer in merging Jewish rituals with the prophetic call for justice, specifically within contemporary American social movements, such as those focused on civil rights, feminism, and environmentalism.

Born and raised in the United States, Waskow, a founder of the Jewish Renewal movement as well as the founder and director of The Shalom Center,<sup>101</sup> has written extensively about Judaism and social justice issues, including nonviolence, for decades.<sup>102</sup> Explicitly drawing from Buber in rejecting such notions as the ends of peace justifying the means of violence, in Waskow's own words, "the best way to bring about the future you desire is to actually build a miniature or microcosm of that future in the present. No longer a passive nonviolent protest against the world we disdain, Jewish nonviolence today stresses that we must actively and positively create the

world we want.” Waskow sees the goal of Jewish nonviolence to be similar to one sought by the integrated lunch counter protests in the 1960’s South—the enactment of the future in the present. He is also critical of the “passive” rabbis of the Talmudic era, making sure to differentiate what he is talking about from their practices.<sup>103</sup>

Recently, in 2019, the 86-year-old Waskow, along with life partner, Rabbi Phyllis Berman, engaged in an act of nonviolent civil disobedience to protest the US presidential administration’s immigration policies, which led to their arrests.<sup>104</sup> Waskow also participates regularly in nonviolent direct-action climate strikes. Labeling fossil fuel corporations and their defenders as “Carbon Pharaohs,” he compares the ancient, oppressive Egyptian ruler described in the Torah to contemporary corporate complicity in the destruction of the earth through the continued burning of fossil fuels.<sup>105</sup>

### **Lynn Gottlieb (b. 1949)**

The first woman ordained in the Jewish Renewal movement and among the first ten women rabbis ordained in the United States, Rabbi Lynn Gottlieb has dedicated much of her life to Judaism and nonviolence.<sup>106</sup> Gottlieb is the author of *Trail Guide to the Torah of Nonviolence*, a comprehensive work addressing biblical and rabbinic sources discussing nonviolence that integrates contemporary approaches to human rights and nonviolent civil resistance. She identifies seven guiding principles of Jewish nonviolence, drawing from traditional Jewish sources emphasizing that the path to peace is preceded by the path of justice.<sup>107</sup>

Gottlieb interprets the words of the prophet Zechariah, “Not by might, nor by power, but by My spirit” (Zech. 4:6), to mean, “Refuse to cooperate with and nonviolently resist structural violence, militarism, and war with nonviolence.”<sup>108</sup> She acknowledges that Judaism contains within it a violent path, the “Path of the Sword,” but argues that for two thousand years, before the founding of the modern State of Israel, Jews opted for the “Path of the Book,” a path she equates with nonviolence.<sup>109</sup> In her own words:

By 1975, I was committed to the belief that active nonviolence is the only viable spiritual foundation for meaningful social change. From the time I began working on Jewish-Palestinian reconciliation in 1966, I came to see that Jews are also tempted to ensure their security and safety by military strength. As a woman and a rabbi, I reject this solution. I believe that the highest rendering of our tradition teaches us that nonviolent activism is the only way to achieve long-lasting security and peaceful coexistence with our neighbors. As a woman and a rabbi, I embrace the courage and wisdom of the nonviolence I learned as a young adult and continue to apply its lessons to the task of repairing the world and making a safe place for Jews, women, and all people to flourish in peace.<sup>110</sup>

Since the beginning of Israel's military occupation of the West Bank and Gaza in 1967, Israeli and American Jews have cultivated different nonviolent approaches to the conflict and violence that have arisen in its wake. For decades, Gottlieb has been a leading voice in fighting for Palestinian rights and an end to the Israeli occupation; she was among the first rabbis to support the Palestinian nonviolent movement for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS). Partially due to boycotts having been used against Jews in Nazi-ruled Germany, there is significant controversy in the Jewish community regarding the Palestinian call for economic activism leveled against Israel, and Gottlieb's position, for some, is contentious. But Gottlieb maintains that "There is no better way for activists to nonviolently struggle for policy and institutional changes that result in an end to illegal annexation of Palestinian homes and land."<sup>111</sup>

### ***Menachem Froman (1945–2013)***

Rabbi Menachem Froman was an Orthodox Israeli rabbi who pursued non-violence and peacemaking through interreligious dialogue, emphasizing Jewish religious tenets over what he considered to be rights-based, political approaches. For him, there was "no separation between politics and religion because there is only religion."<sup>112</sup> Froman defied stereotypes: on the one hand, he met face-to-face with Palestinian religious and political leaders in his pursuit of peace, including former PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat<sup>113</sup> as well as Hamas leaders (deemed by most Jewish Israeli leaders to be "terrorists" and enemies), such as Sheikh Ahmed Yassin;<sup>114</sup> on the other hand, he lived in Tekoa, a settlement in the West Bank, a place considered to be occupied land by many Jews and most Palestinians.<sup>115</sup>

From his perspective, he didn't take a political position regarding the division of the land in Israel and Palestine because all land belongs to God. When challenged to consider the possibility of a Palestinian country in the West Bank and Gaza, he said that he would prefer to stay in Tekoa as a citizen of a Palestinian country—and renounce his Israeli citizenship—rather than leave the land.<sup>116</sup> In contrast to Froman, those such as Gottlieb (and those discussed below, such as Ofran, Milgrom, Vardi, and Jacobs) publicly contend that the very act of living in the settlement of Tekoa is itself a form of complicity with structural violence.<sup>117</sup>

### ***Hagit Ofran (b. 1975)***

Hagit Ofran, a Jewish Israeli activist who has worked for decades with the Israeli organization Peace Now, challenges those who maintain a commitment to the Land of Israel above all else, adhered to by individuals like Froman. Among the world's leading experts on Israeli settlements in the West Bank (and formerly in Gaza, where there were settlements through 2005), Ofran is outspoken about the need to end the Israeli occupation. An

advocate of a so-called “Two State solution,”<sup>118</sup> she aspires to see a Jewish nation-state in the Middle East that does not engage in the violence accompanying the occupation, which stems, in part, from the deep attachment many religious Jews have developed with the West Bank.

According to Ofra,

The fact that the land became so holy for those religious Jews who see it as part of the redemption, for me, sometimes it looks like idolatry.<sup>119</sup> That instead of worshipping God, they’re worshipping the land. Instead of seeking the redemption that has to do with ... fixing how we behave, [they] say that ... redemption is a geographical issue and not an issue of repairing our ways and doing the good. So, I think it’s a big distortion for Judaism.<sup>120</sup>

Ofra employs such nonviolent tools as scholarship, education, and advocacy to unravel and confront the violence of the occupation, which she sees as a betrayal of Jewish values.

### **Jeremy Milgrom (b. 1953)**

Arguably the most prominent Jewish Israeli group that has explicitly utilized ancient Jewish texts (i.e., Torah, Talmud, Midrash) to support non-violent approaches to the occupation is an organization called Rabbis for Human Rights (RHR). Founded in 1988, RHR’s most well-known actions include the regular accompaniment of rabbis with Palestinian farmers in the West Bank who are harvesting olives, protesting Palestinian home demolitions, and supporting displaced Bedouin communities. This nonviolent allyship often deters the Israeli military and Jewish Israeli settlers from harassing or violently attacking Palestinians. In their own words, one of RHR’s goals is to “ensure [Palestinian farmers are able to] complete their agricultural tasks free of harassment or unjust limitations.”<sup>121</sup>

A former co-executive director of Rabbis for Human Rights in Israel, Rabbi Jeremy Milgrom engages in nonviolent activism by working to secure the rights of residents of Khan al-Ahmar, a Jahalin Bedouin community displaced from the Negev (inside Israel) in 1948 and relocated to the West Bank. For years, this community has lived under the threat of demolition at the hands of the Israeli government because of the latter’s plans to extend Jewish Israeli settlement construction in the area.<sup>122</sup> Milgrom regularly leverages his rabbinic voice and mobilizes Jewish Israeli activists to protest the government’s demolition orders and allow Bedouin communities to live in peace, with a reminder of the biblical command to “love your neighbor as yourself” (Lev. 19:18).<sup>123</sup> He has been engaged in this type of work for decades.

Central to Milgrom’s approach to nonviolence is his position that the biblical commandment “*lo tirtzah*” (Ex. 20:12), which is traditionally translated

in Jewish contexts to mean “you shall not murder,” actually means “you shall not kill.” A believer in total nonviolence (in his words, “absolute pacifism”), Milgrom contends that Judaism doesn’t sanction the killing of another person in any situation, even in situations of self-defense.<sup>124</sup> This is a minority opinion among rabbinic authorities, especially among Israeli rabbis.<sup>125</sup>

### **Sahar Vardi (b. 1990)**

In Israel, national military service is mandatory for most citizens over the age of eighteen (excluding Palestinian Arabs).<sup>126</sup> Although one’s military service is a pathway towards future advancement in Israeli society, as of 2020 the Israeli military has experienced a well-documented phenomenon in which an increasing number of eligible Jewish Israeli citizens, as many as one-third, opt not to enlist. Often applying for and receiving medical and mental health exemptions,<sup>127</sup> these so-called “grey refusers” are quietly tolerated in Israeli society. However, some Israelis explicitly refuse to enlist due to a moral objection to the violence of the occupation and a commitment to pacifism, and, as a result, are stigmatized, marginalized, and decried as traitors.

Sahar Vardi is one such “refusenik,” a conscientious objector to Israel’s mandatory military draft. When she was eighteen years old, Vardi chose to go to prison rather than enlist out of a commitment to her nonviolent and pacifist ideals; she spent two months in prison and three months in detention. In a letter explaining why she refused to enlist, she wrote, “It is a vicious circle that is sustained by the choice of both sides to engage in violence. I refuse to take part in this choice.”<sup>128</sup> As a younger teenager, Vardi became involved with Ta’ayush, a joint Israeli-Palestinian solidarity and nonviolent resistance organization, planting olive trees and building wells in Palestinian villages in the West Bank. In particular, she participated in nonviolent protests in the Palestinian village Bil’in, one of a cluster of Palestinian villages that were losing their agricultural land to the proposed building of the Israeli “Separation Barrier” at the time.<sup>129</sup> Vardi continued her nonviolent activism thereafter, explaining that getting shot at by the Israeli military as a teenager became a “normal occurrence, which is exactly what it is for Palestinians every day who protest Israeli occupation. There was no way I was going to join the army.”<sup>130</sup>

### **Jill Jacobs (b. 1975)**

Rabbi Jill Jacobs is the Executive Director of T’ruah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights, formerly called Rabbis for Human Rights-North America,<sup>131</sup> where she leads a network of approximately 2,000 North American rabbis and cantors committed to the pursuit of human rights through the lens of Jewish texts and tradition. For example, Jacobs is one of the leaders of the contemporary Jewish sanctuary movement; in partnering

T'ruah with other faith-based communities, her organization promotes the establishment of “sanctuary synagogues” to provide safe refuge to immigrants who risk deportation as a result of the American government’s recent anti-immigration policies.

As Jacobs explains:

When we think about our own history in the last one hundred years, we think about all the Europeans who hid Jewish families during the Holocaust, as well as Palestinians who hid Jews during the Hebron Massacre of 1929. Non-Jews committed civil disobedience and put their lives at risk to save Jews. Now it’s our turn to do the same for others. As Jews, we’ve always had the sense that sometimes doing the right thing—protecting other people’s lives—may involve violating government laws, if the laws themselves are unjust.<sup>132</sup>

An outspoken advocate for human rights—including the ethical treatment of workers, equitable health care, housing for the homeless, as well as peace and justice for Jewish Israelis and Palestinians—Jacobs continues to be one of the most important voices promoting Jewish nonviolence in the twenty-first-century US.

### **Stosh Cotler (b. 1968)**

Whereas Jacobs and T'ruah divide their time between social justice issues in North America and Israel, Stosh Cotler focuses her nonviolently-based political activism on social justice issues in the United States. Cotler is the CEO of Bend the Arc: A Jewish Partnership for Justice, arguably the most important progressive Jewish organization fighting for the human rights of all peoples in the US. Cotler regards structural violence and injustice as interrelated components woven into American political, economic, and social structures, and views these constructs as antithetical to the Jewish demand for justice. For Cotler, the pursuit of justice is itself the application of nonviolence in order to eradicate the very systems that create and reinforce violence. In this effort, Bend the Arc addresses issues such as immigration rights, racism, anti-semitism, and the more recent rise in white nationalism. With offices around the country, Cotler and Bend the Arc train local leaders and organize Jewish communities to become activist groups they call “Moral Minyans.”<sup>133</sup>

In her own words:

Given the violent nature of white nationalism and its goal to eradicate Jews and people of color, it’s a powerful response just to be visibly Jewish in a public space; when faced with violence because of your religious or ethnic identity, asserting your Jewishness is its own example of a nonviolent tactic.<sup>134</sup>

Cotler contends that concurrent with the rise of white nationalism is a surge in nonviolent activism carried out by young Jews.

There have always been large numbers of Jews in activist movements, ranging from the Labor Movement to ACT UP, but what's unique about this moment is the way an increasing number of Jews—many of them millennials—are explicitly drawing from Jewish ritual as part of their public protest.<sup>135</sup>

Under Cotler's leadership, Bend the Arc has begun to lobby Congress while participating in the electoral process through their new Political Action Committee (or PAC), Bend the Arc: Jewish Action. As Cotler explains:

Being Jewish in twenty-first century America, I am never separate from a lineage of people who have existed for thousands of years before me, whose mandate as a people is to live ethical lives and create conditions around us where others could also live in full dignity and full humanity. ... We've inherited a tradition of moral courage and we live in a society that is defined by violence. ... As Jews, we don't need to be the ones who are facing that direct harm to know it's our responsibility to eradicate the systems that create and reinforce systems of violence. I want to be part of a Jewish movement that is helping people connect with these practices of nonviolence in a Jewish framework.<sup>136</sup>

## Conclusion

Peace, justice, active resistance, and pacifism are all deeply connected to nonviolence. All of these ideas have been part of Jewish communal thought and practice as far back as the precursor groups of today's Jews: Hebrews, Israelites, and Judeans. Comprised of communities holding texts such as the Hebrew Bible, Talmud, and Midrash to be among their most sacred, Jews continue to elevate these ideas as among their most important values, for centuries using Jewish interpretive processes to apply these concepts to the most relevant situations of their times.<sup>137</sup> From Buber to Waskow and Cotler to Vardi, contemporary Jews continue to maintain nonviolence as one of Judaism's most important ideas.

## Notes

1. The classical midrashic canon consists of the Mekhilta, Sifra, Sifre, Genesis Rabbah, Vayikra Rabbah, and Pesikta de Rava Kahana, among other important books, as opposed to midrashic texts produced after the Talmudic period (Barry W. Holtz, "Midrash" in *Back to the Sources: Reading the Classic Jewish Texts*, ed. Barry W. Holtz [New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992],

- 186–189). For the remainder of this chapter, when “Midrash” appears, assume it to mean the classical midrashic canon, a collection of various texts using similar exegetical interpretive structures.
2. Aaron J. Hahn Tapper, *Judaisms: A Twenty-First-Century Introduction to Jews and Jewish Identities* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2016), 4, 19.
  3. In contemporary contexts, the term צדק (*tzedek*) is used to signify justice more often than משפט (*mishpat*).
  4. Scholarly journals often transliterate this Hebrew word as *zedek* rather than *tzedek*; however, the latter spelling is used much more often outside of academic circles.
  5. Isa. 2:4, Mic. 4:3.
  6. Sefaria Library, [sefaria.org](http://sefaria.org). Sefaria cites 1,160 appearances of the word “peace,” the most common English translation of the Hebrew word *shalom*; we assume Sefaria includes variations of this word in their total. Other scholarly sources, however, differ. For example, one source cites 152 appearances of “peace” and an additional 14 appearances of related words, such as “peaceable,” “peaceably,” “peaceful,” and “peacefully,” for a total of 166 appearances (John R. Kohlenberger III, *The NRSV Concordance Unabridged* [Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1991], 989–990). When one includes other reference sources, it becomes clear that there is little consistency or agreement regarding the number of appearances of this word in the Hebrew Bible.
  7. *JPS Hebrew-English Tanakh* (New York: The Jewish Publication Society, 1999), 26. From this point onwards, all English translations from the Hebrew Bible are our own, though they are based on the *JPS Hebrew-English Tanakh*. All English translations of other Jewish texts, such as those from the Talmud or Midrash, in addition to excerpts taken from discussions with Jewish Israelis, are our own as well, unless noted otherwise.
  8. Or, as explained elsewhere, “The Hebrew word, *šālōm*, is so rich in meaning that there is hardly a single word in our modern languages which can render adequately its nuances” (*Encyclopedic Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. Louis F. Hartman [New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1963], 1782; see also 1782–1785).
  9. Note that these categories are imprecise and some of the examples provided fit into more than one of them.
  10. As in “They have healed the pain of the daughter of my people superficially saying, ‘Peace, peace,’ when there is no peace” (Jer. 6:14). See also, Isa. 9:7, 32:18, Jer. 8:11, 14:19, Zech. 8:16, 8:19, Ps. 72:7, 122:6, 122:7, 122:8.
  11. For a discussion on the distinction between positive peace and negative peace, which can be extrapolated to positive nonviolence and negative nonviolence, see Johan Galtung, “Editorial,” *Journal of Peace Research* 1, no. 1 (1964): 1–4; Galtung, “On the Meaning of Nonviolence,” *Journal of Peace Research* 2, no. 3 (1965): 228–257; Galtung, “Violence, Peace, and Peace Research,” *Journal of Peace Research* 6, no. 3 (1969): 167–191.
  12. As in “For God says, ‘We have heard a voice of trembling, of fear, and not of peace’ (Jer. 30:5) and ‘You will not die by sword but will die in peace’ (Jer. 34:5). See also Jer. 8:15, Ps. 28:3, 35:20, 120:6, 120:7, Lam. 3:17.
  13. As in “And in those times there was no peace” (2 Chron. 15:5). See also Ezek. 13:10, 13:16.
  14. As in “If he holds fast to Me I will make peace with him, I will make peace with him” (Isa. 27:5). See also Isa. 54:10, Ezek. 13:25, 34:25, 37:26, Mal. 2:5.

15. Such examples include times when there is an absence of military fighting, as in “Say, therefore, I grant him my pact of peace” (Num. 25:12), even if utilized to show the end of a peaceful time, as in “He has broken his covenant with those who were at peace with him” (Ps. 55:21). Note that the verse from Num. 25:12 is a unique example because in this verse God tells Moses to make a “pact of peace” with another individual, Phineas son of Elazar son of Aaron. For more common examples of this category, see Deut. 20:10, 20:11, Josh. 9:15, 10:1, 10:4, 11:19, Judg. 4:17, 1 Sam. 7:14, 2 Sam. 10:19, 1 Kgs. 2:5, 20:18, 22:44, 2 Kgs. 9:17–19, 9:22, Isa. 9:7, Dan. 11:17, Ezra 5:7, 1 Chron. 19:19. Some examples include times when there is a need not to engage in such a treaty as in “And now do not give your daughters to their sons nor take their daughters for your sons, nor seek their peace” (Ezra 9:12).
16. As in “And if it does not make peace with you then you will make war with it” (Deut. 20:11). See also 2 Sam. 17:3, 1 Chr. 19:19.
17. Such as when an individual or community is arriving or departing from a person or place, as in “but have always dealt kindly with you and sent you away in peace” (Gen. 26:29) or “and they departed from him in peace” (Gen. 26:31). See also Gen. 44:17, Ex. 18:23, Judg. 11:31, 1 Sam. 16:4–5, 25:35, 29:7, 2 Sam. 3:21–23, 15:27, 1 Kgs. 2:6, 22:17, 2 Kgs. 22:20, Isa. 55:12, Ps. 69:23, Job 5:23–24, Song 8:10, Esth. 9:30, 1 Chron. 12:18.
18. As in “I will grant peace in the land, and you shall lie down untroubled by anyone” (Lev. 26:6) or “[May] God bestow God’s favor upon you and grant you peace” (Num. 6:26). See also 1 Kgs. 2:33, 2 Kgs. 20:19, Isa. 39:8, 60:17, 66:12, Jer. 4:10, 14:13, 23:17, 28:9, 33:6, 33:9, Nah. 1:12, 2:1, Zech. 6:13, 8:12, 9:10, Ps. 4:8, 29:11, 72:3, Job 25:2, Dan. 3:31, 6:26, 1 Chron. 22:9, 2 Chron. 18:16. This subcategory includes examples when God intervenes as a reward for righteous or ethical behavior, as in “You will keep those who stay focused on You in perfect peace” (Isa. 26:3) and “My son, forget not your Torah and keep My commandments in your heart because they will add years to your days of life and peace will be added to you” (Prov. 3:2). See also Lev. 26:6, 1 Kgs. 2:33, Isa. 32:17, 52:7, 57:2, 57:19, Jer. 28:9, Mic. 5:4, Mal. 2:6, Ps. 29:11, 34:14, 37:37, 55:19, 85:9, 85: 11, 119:165, 125:5, 128:6, 147:14, Prov. 3:17, 16:7, Job 22:21.
19. This includes times when a group or individual is foretold they will *not* arrive at a peaceful place explicitly due to God’s intervention as a punishment for wicked or unethical behavior, as in “There is no peace, says God, for the wicked” (Isa. 48:22). See also Isa. 57:21, Jer. 12:12, 16:5, Ezek. 7:25, Zech. 8:10.
20. Steven S. Schwarzschild, “Justice” in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, eds. Michael Berenbaum and Fred Skolnik, second ed. (New York: Macmillan Reference, 2007), 578–579.
21. Rela Mintz Geffen, “Philanthropy” in *The Cambridge Dictionary of Judaism and Jewish Culture*, ed. Judith R. Baskin (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 474; Hartman, *Encyclopedic Dictionary of the Bible*, 1251–1255.
22. The transliteration of the Hebrew for this verse is “*tzedek tzedek tirdof*,” which some translate as “you shall chase after righteousness and justice.”
23. Sefaria cites 612 appearances of the word “justice,” the most common English translation of the Hebrew word *tzedek* (Sefaria Library, sefaria.org). Other scholarly sources, however, differ. According to the unabridged NRSV Concordance, “justice” appears 116 times, and there are eight appearances of related words, such as “justices,” “justified,” “justifies,” and “justify,” for

- a total of 124 appearances (Kohlenberger III, *NRSV Concordance*, 711). According to the Sefaria Library, there are 407 appearances of the Hebrew word *mishpat* in the Hebrew Bible (Sefaria Library, [sefaria.org](http://sefaria.org)). When one includes other reference sources, it becomes clear that there is little consistency and little agreement on the number of appearances of the word “justice” in the Hebrew Bible.
24. Note that these categories are imprecise and some of the examples provided fit into more than one of them.
  25. As in “Noah was a righteous man” (Gen. 6:9) and “She is more righteous than I” (Gen. 38:26). See also Gen. 7:1, 18:19. This said, there are also less generous interpretations of Gen. 6:9 in terms of Noah’s righteousness; for example, see BT Sanh. 108a.
  26. As in “Will you destroy the righteous with the wicked?” (Gen. 18:23–26, 28). See also Ex. 23:8.
  27. As in “You who turns justice into wormwood and throws righteousness to the ground” (Amos 5:7). See also 1 Sam. 8:3.
  28. Sometimes *tzedek* and related words seem to mean “innocent,” as in “God, will you kill the innocent?” (Gen. 20:4) or “honest,” as in “In the future, let my honesty speak for me” (Gen. 30:33). For the former case, see Ex. 23:7. For the latter, see Lev. 19:36, Deut. 25:1, 15.
  29. *Tzedakah* is most commonly translated to mean “charity,” but, in some places, can be understood more literally to be an act of justice.
  30. For example, in Genesis, immediately before Abraham actively resists God by challenging God not to destroy the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, including all of its inhabitants, God says to Sarah that Abraham “will preserve the ways of God, doing charity and justice” (Gen. 18:19). Elsewhere, there is a biblical commandment to “judge one’s kinsman with justice” (Lev. 19:15). See also Deut. 1:16, 16:18–19, 2 Sam. 8:15, 15:4, 1 Kgs. 10:9, Isa. 1:21, 21: 27, 5:7, 5:16, 9:6, 16:5, 28:17, 32:1, 32:16, 33:15, 56:1, 59:9, 59:14, Jer. 4:2, 9:23, 22:3, 22:15, 23:5, 33:15, Hos. 2:21, Amos 5:7, 5:24, 6:12.
  31. As in “He executed God’s judgments and his decisions for [the nation of] Israel” (Deut. 33:21). See also Deut. 10:18, 1 Sam. 7:17, 1 Kgs. 7:7, Isa. 30:18, 40:14, 42:1, 59:15, Jer. 21:12, Ezek. 18:8, 34:16, Hos. 12:7, Amos 5:15, Mic. 3:1, 3:8–9.
  32. As in “Let justice well up like water and righteousness flow like a steady stream” (Amos 5:24). See also Isa. 61:8.
  33. As in “because all of God’s ways are perfect; God is faithful, never false; God is true and upright” (Deut. 32:4). See also Gen. 18:25, Mal. 2:17.
  34. As in “What great nation has laws and rules as just as these teachings that I set before you this day?” (Deut. 4:8). See also Ex. 9:27.
  35. As in “You shall not render an unjust decision ... judge your kinsman justly” (Lev. 19:15). See also Deut. 16:19, 24:17, 27:19, 1 Kgs. 3:28, Isa. 1:17.
  36. Along these lines, it should be noted that the Torah repeats versions of the following idea at least thirty-six times: “You shall not wrong a stranger or oppress them because you were a strangers in Egypt” (Ex. 22:20). (Note that according to the Talmud, some count forty-six appearances of this phrase (BT B.M. 59b)). Other examples include Lev. 19:34, Deut. 10:18–19. For many, just treatment of the “other” is one of the most powerful ideas of justice.
  37. Another example of active resistance from the Torah includes Abraham arguing with God to save the inhabitants of Sodom and Gemorrah (Gen. 18–19). For an example of nonviolent behavior in the Torah such as efforts at reconciliation, see the encounter between Jacob and Esau (Gen. 32–33).

38. This definition is offered by Stellan Vinthagen, which builds on the work of the preeminent nonviolent theorist Gene Sharp (Vinthagen, *A Theory of Nonviolent Action: How Civil Resistance Works* [Zed Books, London, 2015], 12). Vinthagen explains that if an act of nonviolence is defined only as an act devoid of violence, this would render the concept of nonviolence meaningless. A nonviolent act must also be taken against an act of violence. In other words, it's not just the action itself that matters, but also the context within which it is operating.
39. Although the Mishnah is considered by many to be the main interpretative legal text of the Torah, often referred to as the "Oral Torah," much of the Mishnah is contained within the Talmud along with expositions provided by the Talmudic rabbis (Robert Goldenberg, "Talmud," in *Back to the Sources: Reading the Classic Jewish Texts*, ed. Barry W. Holtz [New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992], 129–131).
40. See note no. 1.
41. "To the contemporary reader the Jewish textual tradition is unusual in that virtually all of it is based on the single originating point of the inverted pyramid, the [Hebrew] Bible. In that sense Jewish literature is strikingly unique: it is creative, original, vibrant, and yet presents itself as nothing more than interpretation, a vast set of glosses on the one true Book, the Torah" (Holtz, "Introduction: On Reading Jewish Texts" in Holtz, *Back to the Sources*, 13). Similarly, as stated by a widely acclaimed scholar of modern Jewish scholarship, Gershom Scholem, rabbis from the rabbinic period through modernity orient towards the legal interpretative process in the following way: "Truth is given once and for all, and it is laid down with precision. Fundamentally, truth merely needs to be transmitted. The originality of the exploring scholar has two aspects. In his spontaneity, he develops and explains that which was transmitted at Sinai, no matter whether it was always known or whether it was forgotten and had to be rediscovered. The effort of the seeker after truth consists not in having new ideas but rather in subordinating himself to the continuity of the tradition of the divine word and in laying open what he receives from it in the context of his own time. In other words: Not system but commentary is the legitimate form through which truth is approached" ("Revelation and Tradition as Religious Categories in Judaism" in Gershom Scholem, *The Messianic Idea in Judaism* [New York: Schocken, 1971], 282–304). In the words of another scholar, Shaye Cohen, "Jewish practice has been shaped more by the Mishnah than by the Torah (or, perhaps less accurately, more by the Torah as understood by the Mishnah than by the Torah itself)" (Shaye J.D. Cohen, *From the Maccabees to the Mishnah* [Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1987], 179). Finally, as stated in one of the definitive treatises on the Talmud and Midrash, "We can only estimate with caution the actual significance of the rabbinic movement within Jewish life, especially of the Talmudic period. It is certain that the rabbis ascended slowly to the position of recognized leadership within Judaism, and that the party's literature could only gradually become the near-canonical literature of Judaism" (H.L. Strack and Günther Stemberger, *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash*, trans. and ed. Markus Bockmuehl [Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996], 6). See also Elliot N. Dorff and Arthur Rosett, *A Living Tree: The Roots and Growth of Jewish Law* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1988); Talya Fishman, *Becoming the People of the Talmud: Oral Torah as Written Tradition in Medieval Jewish Cultures* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011); Joel Roth, *The Halakhic Process: A Systemic*

- Analysis* (New York: The Jewish Theological Seminary of New York, 1986); H.L. Strack, *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash* (Skokie, IL: Varda Books, 2007).
42. See Eliezer Berkovitz, *Not in Heaven: The Nature and Function of Halakha* (New York: Ktav Publishing, Inc., 1983); David Hartman, *A Living Covenant* (New York: Free Press, 1985); Suzanne Last Stone, "In the Pursuit of the Countertext: The Turn to the Jewish Legal Model in Contemporary American Legal Theory," *Harvard Law Review* 106 (1993): 813.
  43. Hahn Tapper, *Judaisms*, 75. See also note no. 41.
  44. BT Gitt. 59b. See also Sheldon Lewis, *Torah of Reconciliation* (New York: Gefen Publishing House, 2012).
  45. See M. Uk. 3:12, BT Shab. 10b, Lev. Rab. 9:9; Harold Louis Ginsberg, et al., "Peace" in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, eds. Michael Berenbaum and Fred Skolnik, second ed., 15 (New York: Macmillan Reference, 2007), 700–703.
  46. See Gen. 18:25; Ps. 9:5; Schwarzschild, "Justice" in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*.
  47. Genesis Rabbah is dated to approximately the third through fifth century CE.
  48. Gen. Rab. 38:3. See also Reuven Kimmelman, "Nonviolence in the Talmud" in *Roots of Nonviolence*, ed. Allan Solomonow (Nyack, NY: Jewish Peace Fellowship, 1985), 24–25.
  49. See Mohandas Gandhi, *Harijan* (February 17, 1946), in Mark Juergensmeyer, *Gandhi's Way: A Handbook of Conflict Resolution* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2002), 59.
  50. BT B.M. 32b, Pes. 113b based on Kimmelman, "Nonviolence," 25–26.
  51. Sifre, Tatsai 222, 225 in Kimmelman, "Nonviolence," 25. For a comparison with Gandhian thought—such as when Gandhi writes, "The *satyagrahi* should not have any hatred in his heart against the opponent"—see Mohandas Gandhi, *Non-violence in Peace and War, Volume II*, 149, in *Gandhi on Non-Violence*, ed. Thomas Merton (New York: New Directions Publishing Co., 1965), 33.
  52. BT B.M. II 26a in Kimmelman, "Nonviolence," 25.
  53. Mekh. Rash., 215–216 in Kimmelman, "Nonviolence," 25.
  54. Some contend that although this text was written in the third century CE (Kimmelman, "Nonviolence," 26), it was compiled into a larger collection of passages sometime later, in a text known today as Exodus Rabbah (circa ninth through eleventh century CE).
  55. Ex. Rab. 1:3 based on Kimmelman, "Nonviolence," 26.
  56. Although there are numerous similarities between Jewish and Hindu understandings of nonviolence (i.e., Gandhian-Hindu notions), it is rare that Gandhi ever uses the words "command" or "obligation" when discussing the need for individuals to embrace the nonviolent belief system, something that is quite common in Jewish (and Muslim) contexts.
  57. Midr. Mishle 25:21.
  58. BT Meg. 15b.
  59. Mid. Aggad., Ex. 23:5:1 based on Kimmelman, "Nonviolence," 26.
  60. A later commentary on the Talmud notes, "[if one] hates another, the other will hate him. As it states in Proverbs, 'As in water face answers face, so, too, the heart of man to man' (27:19). It follows that the hate will grow and hence it is appropriate to curb the initial response" (Tosaf. Pes. 113b in Kimmelman, "Nonviolence," 27).
  61. M. Avot 4:1. The Mishnah is dated to circa first through third century CE.
  62. Avot D'Rabbi Natan 23 in Kimmelman, "Nonviolence," 28.
  63. BT Ber. 10a. See also a similar idea in BT Sot. 14a, "Moses prayed for compassion that the sinners repent."

64. A different Talmudic text echoes this same idea: In the neighborhood of Rabbi Joshua ben Levi there was a Sadducee who used to annoy him about his [interpretation of] texts. One day the Rabbi took a rooster, placed it between the legs of his bed, and watched it. He thought, "When the moment arrives, I will curse him." When the moment arrived, he was sleeping. [Upon waking up] he said, "We learn from this that it is not proper to act in such a way. It is written, 'And his tender mercies are over all God's works' (Ps. 145:9). And it is also written, 'Neither is it good for the righteous to punish' (Ps. 17:26)" (BT Ber. 7a in Kimmelman, "Nonviolence," 28–29). In this passage, as well, the rabbis teach that individuals should not punish others, even those who aggravate Jews.
65. BT Shab. 149b in Kimmelman, "Nonviolence," 29.
66. In Hebrew, this idea is known as "*b'tselem Elohim*" (Gen. 1:27).
67. Kimmelman, "Nonviolence," 28–29.
68. BT Sanh. 46a, BT Meg. 10b in Kimmelman, "Nonviolence," 29.
69. BT Av. Zar. 19a in Kimmelman, "Nonviolence," 29.
70. This biblical phrase "*d'mei ahicha tzo'akim*" is commonly translated as "your brother's blood." It is important to note that the rabbis are extrapolating their interpretation based on the Hebrew word "*d'mei*." In English, a noun can precede a second noun. But in the Hebrew language when a noun is followed by a possessive pronoun the first noun's ending is modified depending upon the first noun's linguistic gender or if it is a plural, a conjugation process referred to in Hebrew as *Smichut*. For example, in terms of the Hebrew phrase "*d'mei ahicha*" this noun-noun phrase can also be said as "*damim shel ahicha*"; both *d'mei achicha* and *damim shel achicha* are translated into English the same way as "your brother's blood." However, despite the fact that in English the word "bloods" is not the plural of the word blood, as the English word "blood" is always implicitly understood in its plural form, in Hebrew the phrase "blood of your brother" is "*dam ahicha*" and not "*d'mei ahicha*." The latter phrase, which is the actual phrase in the Genesis text, uses the Hebrew plural for "blood" (*damim*) rather than the singular (*dam*). Thus, the rabbis ask, why would the Hebrew text say bloods instead of blood? Because the rabbis oriented toward the Torah as a divinely perfect text, where every letter is there to teach something specific, their interpretation was that the plural word bloods points to the unborn generations of Cain's brother, Abel, who would never have the opportunity to live due to Cain's egregious act; in killing Abel, Cain also killed off all of Abel's future progeny.
71. M. Sanh. 4:5. This translation is based on *Mishnayoth, Volume IV, Seder Nezikin*, ed. Philip Blackman (London: Mishna Press, 1954), 251–256.
72. M. Makk. 1:10.
73. M. Makk. 1:10. See also BT Makk. 7a.
74. See Nathan J. Diament, "Judaism and the Death Penalty: Of Two Minds but One Heart," *Shma* (October 2002).
75. BT Sanh. 74a.
76. BT Sanh. 74a.
77. A partial list of important figures left out of this chapter (due to writing constraints), all of whom approach their nonviolent activism, and belief in this ethos, from their understanding of Judaism, include Arik Ascherman, Aryeh Cohen, Everett Gendler, Marc Gopin, Abraham Yehudah Khein, Michael Lerner, Judah Magnes, Eliyahu McLean, Brant Rosen, Marshall Rosenberg, Aviv Tatarsky, and Brian Walt. Other important individuals also left out of this chapter, such as Bella Abzug, Gertrud Baer, and Hedy Epstein, occasion-

- ally referenced their Jewish identities in terms of their nonviolent activism, but not nearly to the extent of the previously listed individuals. Aside from this larger list being male-centric, this component of the chapter is severely lacking in that almost all of those included identify as Jews of Ashkenazi descent, those tracing their ancestry back to Europe and/or Russia, and does not include those identifying as Arab, Ethiopian, Indian, Mizrahi, Sephardi, or another non-Ashkenazi Jewish identity.
78. Arguably, the actions of a Jew are much more important than their beliefs (Hahn Tapper, *Judaisms*, 4).
  79. One reason Zionist leaders in Europe advocated for the establishment of a Jewish-majority country was out of a belief that despite the promises of the Enlightenment, in which all citizens would be treated equally, many European governments were still not extending genuine equality to their Jewish citizens.
  80. Aaron Samuel Tamaret, "Biography of One of the Sensitive Rabbis (Part 1)," trans. Ri J. Turner, *In Geveb: A Journal of Yiddish Studies* (April 24, 2017), [ingeveb.org](http://ingeveb.org).
  81. Many consider Herzl to be the founder of modern political Zionism.
  82. A collection of essays called "The Ethics of Torah and Judaism."
  83. Aaron Samuel Tamaret, "Biography of One of the Sensitive Rabbis (Part 2)," trans. Ri J. Turner, *In Geveb: A Journal of Yiddish Studies* (April 24, 2017), [ingeveb.org](http://ingeveb.org); Tamaret, "Biography of One of the Sensitive Rabbis (Part 3)," *ibid*.
  84. Everett Gendler, "Ancient Vision, Future Hopes: Rabbi Aaron Samuel Tamaret's Objection to Zionism as We Know It," *Tikkun* 18, no. 4 (July-August 2003): 25–30; Tamaret, "Biography (Part 2)"; Tamaret, "Biography (Part 3)." It is important to add that Tamaret was not opposed to Jews immigrating to Ottoman- and British-controlled Palestine in and of itself (i.e., a basic component of Herzl's Zionist thought). Rather, he contended that the creation of a Jewish-majority country—not only the process of establishing such a nation-state, but also attempts to maintain order thereafter—would be indubitably interlinked with violence, which would be horrific for Jews and non-Jews alike, especially those already living in Palestine (Gendler, "Ancient Vision").
  85. Scholar Maurice Friedman explains Buber's Zionist position in this way: "[Buber held that the] Zionist movement must be broadened to include all the factors and movements of spiritual rebirth, and at the same time deepened by leading it from the rigid and empty formalities of superficial activism to an inward, living comprehension of the people's being and the people's work. Zion must be reborn in the soul before it [could] be created as a tangible reality. ... The Jewish Renaissance [was] the goal and meaning of the Jewish movement; the Zionist movement [was] the consciousness and will that lead to Renaissance" (Maurice Friedman, *Martin Buber's Life and Work: The Early Years, 1878–1923* [Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1988], 45–46, in Hahn Tapper, *Judaisms*, 195).
  86. Friedman in Hahn Tapper, *Judaisms*, 195; Hahn Tapper, *Judaisms*, 195–196.
  87. Aaron J. Tapper, "From Gaza to the Golan: Religious Nonviolence, Power, and the Politics of Interpretation" (PhD diss., University of California, Santa Barbara, 2007), 125–129.
  88. Martin Buber, *Pointing the Way: Collected Essays*, trans. and ed. Maurice Friedman (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1963), 238.
  89. Tapper, "From Gaza to the Golan," 130–132.
  90. Zachary Braiterman and Michael Zank, "Martin Buber" in *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (2014), [plato.stanford.edu](http://plato.stanford.edu).

91. There is a difference between the biblical Land of Israel described in the Hebrew Bible and the State of Israel, the latter being a contemporary nation-state established in 1948. For many Jews, referring to the Land of Israel—rather than the Holy Land or Israel and Palestine or Israel/Palestine and other terms of this kind—is apolitical insofar as it is commonly thought to be a piece of land that has existed and continues to exist irrespective of modern nation-states.
92. In some Jewish circles today, this idea is controversial. Perhaps for this reason it never gained a significant following in the majority of the Jewish world for the remainder of the twentieth century.
93. Tapper, “From Gaza to the Golan,” 132.
94. Tapper, “From Gaza to the Golan,” 135–136. For more on Heschel’s involvement in the anti-war movement vis-à-vis Vietnam, see Abraham Joshua Heschel, “The Moral Outrage of Vietnam” in *Vietnam: Crisis of Conscience*, ed. Robert McAfee Brown (New York: Behrman House and Herder and Herder, 1967), 48–61; Heschel, “The Meaning of this War” in *Moral Grandeur and Spiritual Audacity*, ed. Susannah Heschel (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1977), 209–212; Heschel, “The Reasons for My Involvement in the Peace Movement” (January 1973) in *Moral Grandeur*, 224–226. See also Shaul Magid, “A Monk, a Rabbi, and the ‘Meaning of this Hour’: War and Nonviolence in Abraham Joshua Heschel and Thomas Merton,” *Cross Currents* 55, no. 2 (Summer 2005): 184–213.
95. Reuven Kimmelman, “Abraham Joshua Heschel: Our Generation’s Teacher,” *Melton Journal* 15 (1983) in *Cross Currents*, [crosscurrents.org](http://crosscurrents.org).
96. Abraham Joshua Heschel, *Man is Not Alone: A Philosophy of Religion* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1976), 104–105. This is similar to the idea of humans having been created in the image of God, mentioned towards the beginning of the section on Tamaret.
97. Heschel, “The Reasons for my Involvement,” 225; Tapper, “From Gaza to the Golan,” 137.
98. Tapper, “From Gaza to the Golan,” 139–140.
99. Tapper, “From Gaza to the Golan,” 125–126.
100. Arthur Waskow, “Original 1969 Freedom Seder,” [theshalomcenter.org](http://theshalomcenter.org).
101. See “About Aleph” in Hahn Tapper, “Notes,” *Judaisms*, [content.ucpress.edu](http://content.ucpress.edu).
102. In his own words, “This willingness to consider violence makes Jewish civil disobedience different from the Gandhian or Buddhist model. After the passiveness of the Rabbinic model, with its acceptance of pogroms and massacres, Jewish nonviolence must be robust, and willing to consider violence in the last resort” (Waskow, “The Sword and the Ploughshare as Tools of Tikkun Olam,” September 8, 2001, [theshalomcenter.org](http://theshalomcenter.org)).
103. Waskow, “The Sword and the Ploughshare.”
104. Alyssa Fisher, “86-Year-Old Rabbi Arrested Protesting ICE,” *The Forward*, September 5, 2019, [forward.com](http://forward.com).
105. Arthur Waskow, “Facng [sic] Carbon Pharaohs in the Spirit of Passover and Palm Sunday,” March 18, 2015, [theshalomcenter.org](http://theshalomcenter.org).
106. Jewish Women’s Archive, “Lynn Gottlieb,” [jwa.org](http://jwa.org).
107. Lynn Gottlieb, *Trail Guide to the Torah of Nonviolence* (Paris: Editions Terre d’Esperance, 2013), 83–85. Gottlieb calls these seven principles “roots.”
108. Gottlieb, *Trail Guide*, 84.
109. Gottlieb, *Trail Guide*, 16–17.
110. Jewish Women’s Archive, “Lynn Gottlieb.”

111. Yoav Litvin, "Who Would Not Slap a Soldier after Years of Trauma and Direct Assaults?—An Interview with Lynn Gottlieb," *Mondoweiss*, February 2, 2018, [mondoweiss.net](http://mondoweiss.net).
112. Menachem Froman, interviewed by Aaron Hahn Tapper, Tekoa, March 13, 2005; Tapper, "From Gaza to the Golan," 174; Tapper, " Hamas Pacifists and Settler Islamophiles: Defining Nonviolence in the Holy Land," *Tikkun* 20, no. 4 (July/August 2005): 56–58.
113. Arafat was the Chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization from 1969 until his death in 2004.
114. Sheikh Ahmed Yassin was a founder and the spiritual leader of the Palestinian organization Hamas through 2004, when he died.
115. Froman interview; Tapper, "From Gaza to the Golan," 172–174; Tapper, " Hamas Pacifists."
116. Froman interview; Tapper, "From Gaza to the Golan," 172–177; Tapper, " Hamas Pacifists."
117. Tapper, "From Gaza to the Golan," 172–177; Tapper, " Hamas Pacifists."
118. According to this political idea, the West Bank and Gaza would become an independent Palestinian country, alongside Israel. The "Two State solution" has had the broadest international support for over a quarter century, but has not been realized, despite repeated efforts.
119. This same idea was often discussed by Yeshayahu Leibowitz (1903–1994), a Jewish Israeli philosopher, scientist, and ideologue who was also an outspoken critic of Israel's military occupation of the West Bank and Gaza. See, for example, *Judaism, Human Values, and the Jewish State*, ed. Eliezer Goldman (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995). It is worth noting that Leibowitz was Ofra's grandfather.
120. "Hagit Ofra, Peace Now," January 15, 2015, [vimeo.com](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=921-1015). In particular, see minutes 9:21–10:15.
121. Rabbis for Human Rights, [rhr.org](http://rhr.org).
122. Orly Noy, "The Bedouin Village Where Compassion Ends," *+972 Magazine*, October 6, 2017, [972mag.com](http://972mag.com).
123. Jeremy Milgrom, "Parshat Nitzavim: Stored Within Your Heart," September 6, 2018, [rhr.org](http://rhr.org).
124. Jeremy Milgrom, interviewed by Aaron Hahn Tapper, Jerusalem, October 11, 2004; Tapper, "From Gaza to the Golan," 149.
125. See, for example, Abraham ben Meir Ibn Ezra, commentary on Ex. 20:13, [sefaria.org](http://sefaria.org); Moshe ben Maimon, "Laws of a Murderer and the Preservation of Life," 1:1 in *Mishneh Torah*, [sefaria.org](http://sefaria.org); Moshe ben Nahman, commentary on Ex. 20:13, [sefaria.org](http://sefaria.org).
126. Other exceptions are given based on extenuating circumstances, such as for ultra-Orthodox Jewish Israelis.
127. Anna Ahronheim, "A Third of Israeli Youth Do Not Enlist in IDF," *The Jerusalem Post*, January 19, 2020, [jpost.com](http://jpost.com).
128. Neve Gordon, "The Ordeal of Sahar Vardi, Refusenik," *Counterpunch*, August 29, 2008, [counterpunch.org](http://counterpunch.org).
129. In describing her participation in these protests, Vardi recalls, "I was shot at by the Israeli army: teargas, rubber bullets. I got hit by a rubber bullet at 16. I was detained by the Israeli army when I was 16" (Sahar Vardi, interviewed by Ilana Sumka via Zoom, January 29, 2020).
130. Vardi interview. For Vardi, having a Jewish identity in the State of Israel is synonymous with privilege, an identity she leverages in order to engage in nonviolent activism. In her own words, "If I get arrested, the consequences

for me as a Jewish person are much less than for a Palestinian. I'm using my privileged Jewish identity the way a white person in America might use their privileged identity to work for racial justice. ... Outside the context of nonviolent activism in Israel, my Jewish identity means other things." While many American Jews go to Israel to explore their Jewish identity, Vardi explains that, perhaps ironically, it is when she is outside of the State of Israel that she feels the strongest connection to her Jewish identity. In Jewish communities outside Israel, she enjoys Jewish culture and tradition without the layers of the politics of the Israeli government that she finds so problematic.

131. Prior to January 2013, RHR-NA was the American affiliate of RHR in Israel; T'ruah is now a fully independent organization.
132. Jill Jacobs, interviewed by Ilana Sumka via Zoom, January 21, 2020.
133. A *minyan* is an edict in the Talmud requiring a quorum of ten adult males, or, in many contemporary communities, adults of any gender. One example of a Bend the Arc "Moral Minyan" is a group in Pittsburgh that became particularly active in the aftermath of the mass shooting carried out by a white supremacist at the city's Tree of Life synagogue on October 27, 2018, which killed eleven Jews. Following the massacre, the "Moral Minyan" group organized not only memorial vigils but also nonviolent protests against President Trump, who many hold indirectly responsible for the spike in white supremacy and its corresponding violence since 2016.
134. Stosh Cotler, interviewed by Ilana Sumka via Zoom, March 4, 2020.
135. Cotler interview, March 4, 2020.
136. Cotler interview, March 4, 2020.
137. A simultaneous and distinct trend among Jews has been the interpretation of these same sacred Jewish texts to justify the use of violence, especially alongside the establishment of the State of Israel in the mid-twentieth century and thereafter. See Hahn Tapper, "Powers" in *Judaisms*, 185–216; Tapper, "From Gaza to the Golan."