



Jews  
in  
Encounter  
TEACHER'S BOOK



Funded by  
the European Union



# **FACE2FACE JEWS IN ENCOUNTER**

TEACHER'S BOOK



EDUC8

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# INTRODUCTION

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## INTRODUCTION

# EDUC8 TO BUILD RESILIENCE

The world can seem full of terrible things. Terrorism, war, natural disasters, violence, poverty, ... It seems as if the world is in a constant struggle to better itself. Young religious people today live in a diverse world which sees religion to often misused and abused to condone violence. EDUC8 is a religious education project created for secondary schools and extracurricular contexts. Its aim is **building resilience in young religious people against radicalizing and polarizing perspectives**, from within the religious traditions. **This initiative has been funded by the European Union's Internal Security Fund.**

EDUC8 focuses on six different worldviews, namely Judaism, Catholicism, Islam, Orthodoxy, Protestantism, and a non-confessional (ethical) perspective. Each tradition gives its own interpretation to the different themes. Several didactic packages have been developed for 13- to 18-year-old students. This textbook is made from the perspective of the Jewish faith.

This textbook on **Judaism** is divided into four chapters, also called **deep modules**. Specifically, it covers the following four topics:

1. Encounter with the other: dealing with diversity
2. Encounter with sacred texts: texts of violence
3. Encounter with the environment: social and ecological issues
4. When encounter becomes conflict: just war and just peace

Figure 1  
Video Clip



The first module on the encounter with the other examines the way in which ‘the other’ appears in the Jewish tradition. How does Judaism deal with diversity, and how is this related to the notions of justice and hospitality?

The second module focuses on how the Torah, the sacred text of Jews, contains violent texts. How can we deal with these texts in a modern world? In what different ways can Jews interpret one and the same text?

A third module shifts the focus to the relationship between ecology and Judaism. This module focuses on how violence can happen against nature, but also for nature. How can Jews tackle the issues raised by the climate crisis, while simultaneously avoiding polarization?

The fourth and final module highlights how Judaism positions itself in relation to war and peace. For example, how did the Talmudic rabbis interpret the stories of war in the Torah? And what can this teach us about war today?

The four deep modules each consist of the following **three learning materials**:

1. Each deep module starts with a **video clip** in which a possible real-life situation is presented. The video clip also contains some quiz questions, which directs the students’ attention to different aspects of the story. Afterwards, the students are invited to work individually, or with guidance, through the student handbook. The student handbook is set up to make it possible for the students to work through them individually. The choice remains yours, however.

2. The **student handbook** contains a short introduction to the video clip and continues with the basic subject material for each deep module.



Important aspects of Jewish thought on the various themes are introduced. The basic material and the video clip together form a single unit for approaching a specific topic concerning polarization and radicalization. The whole lesson normally takes one-hour.

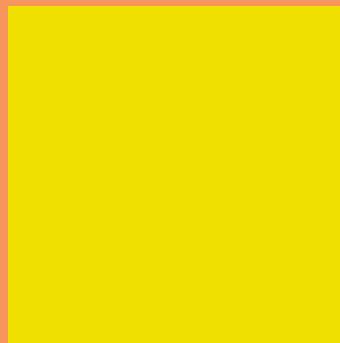
3. The **teacher handbook** gives supplementary information on the basis learning material. It also builds on the basis learning material by providing more in-depth material. Each section contains didactic suggestions that can be used at the teachers' discretion.

It is our hope that the teaching materials presented may inspire you and your students to reflect on your religious tradition from within, to see its beauty and richness, and to counter violent abuses of it.

Prof. Dr. Luc Anckaert, professor (KU Leuven)  
Mr. Pierre Costalunga, scientific researcher (KU Leuven)

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ENCOUNTER WITH THE OTHER:  
DEALING WITH DIVERSITY

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## MODULE ONE

# DEALING WITH DIVERSITY

## 1.1 THE STORY

### 1.1.1 GENERAL INTRODUCTION

This module is intended as a didactic framework for the theme “Encounter with the Other”. The material is suitable for the age groups from 13 to 18 years. The module gives the opportunity to the teacher or facilitator to elaborate on this theme at their discretion.

This module covers important topics such as hospitality, justice and standing up for the (strange) other. Starting with a story from the Torah, we learn how Judaism can give shape to these topics.

The student manual, together with watching the video clip, takes an hour. Afterwards, the topic can be explored in depth using additional material found in this handbook.

### 1.1.2 CONTENTS OF THE MODULE

The module focuses on the story of the downfall of Sodom and Gomorrah in Genesis 18-19. G-d hears a rumor that these sister cities are evil, and after an inspection by two angels, the two cities are razed to the ground. Yet the exact sins of Sodom and Gomorrah are not immediately clear. In this module we look at Jewish interpretations of this story.

The module makes a distinction between ‘basic study material’ and ‘in-depth study material’. The student handbook and the teacher handbook run parallel in terms of basic material, with the teacher’s handbook offering additional background information. The in-depth material offers additional material for the teacher or supervisor to elaborate on certain themes.

In the basic study material, we look at the story of Sodom and Gomorrah, and the possible Jewish interpretations. The teacher or facilitator is encouraged to relate the content to contemporary events and challenges as much as possible. The in-depth curriculum first explores the notion of justice and the folktales surrounding the famous *Tzadikim Nistarim*. These folktales about the ‘36 hidden righteous’ find their origin in the story of Sodom and Gomorrah. This is followed by a section on the historical context of the Tanakh stories and the historic notion of hospitality. The module concludes with a glossary and a bibliography.

## 1.2 THE DOWNFALL OF SODOM AND GOMORRAH

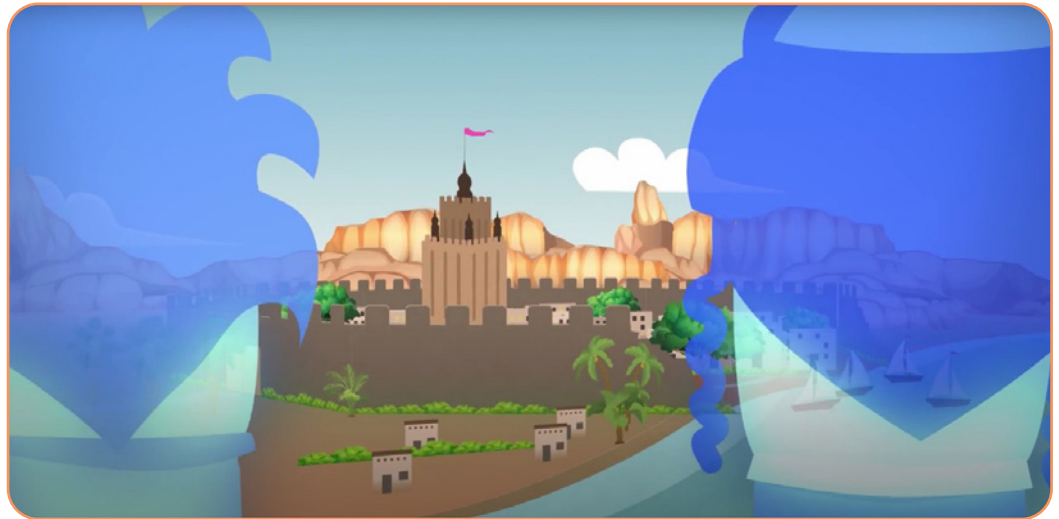


Figure 1.1  
The Video Clip

**1.2.1 THE STORY** After an apartment block burns down, the nearby school organizes a fundraiser to assist the victims. Aaron, a Jewish boy, refuses to offer help. The apartment block has many migrants. Aaron thinks they are only here to profit from others, and are thus undeserving of help.

Aaron's reason for not helping has to do with a peculiar Torah story: the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. The burning down of the apartment block, like the burning down of Sodom and Gomorrah, is a punishment from G-d. Levi, a fellow Jewish student, doubts Aaron's interpretation. Together they enter the story in search of its meaning.

**1.2.2 DISCUSSION** The following questions can possibly serve as an introduction to the lesson.

- What did you think of the story?
- Is the story relatable?
- Do you think Aaron interprets the story of Sodom and Gomorrah correctly?
- Do you identify more with Aaron or with Levi?
- Did you already know the story of Sodom and Gomorrah?

### **1.2.3 SUMMARY OF THE STORY OF SODOM AND GOMORRAH**

The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah is described in Genesis 19. However, the story actually begins in Gen. 18. There we meet Abraham, who is visited by three guests. Abraham is with his household in Mamre, not far from what is today known as the Dead Sea. G-d is also present. It is unclear whether G-d is all three guests, or just one of the three, accompanied by two angels or humans. Abraham receives his guests generously. He jumps up, runs over to them, bows down, offers every comfort, washes their feet, and along with his wife Sarah, prepares a sumptuous meal. For this they even slaughter a calf, which would have been an economic disaster in those days. At the end of His stay, G-d blesses Abraham and Sarah by promising them a child.

When two guests leave, G-d stays behind with Abraham: they look out over the valley in which Sodom and Gomorrah lie. G-d decides to communicate His intention to Abraham: He learned of the evil nature of these two cities, and makes an inspection. If the rumor is true, He will completely destroy Sodom and Gomorrah. Abraham, however, has some reservations, and therefore makes supplication. If G-d destroys the city, the righteous (and innocent) will also lose their lives. That would be unjust. After all, G-d is the Righteous One par excellence, and is considered the ultimate Judge of the world. Abraham wants to make sure that G-d saves the entire city in the name of the possible righteous who live there. G-d agrees: if Sodom contains at least ten righteous people, He will not destroy the city.

Meanwhile, in Sodom, two angels arrive. The text suggests that these are the two guests who were also guests of Abraham earlier in the story. Lot, not coincidentally Abraham's cousin, invites the two angels to his home as guests. The trouble appears when the men of Sodom come knocking furiously. They demand the guests. The text states unequivocally that they want to commit severe violence against the two angels. Lot even offers his daughters, but the people of Sodom want no part of it. Eventually the angels blind the crowd to neutralize the danger. Afterwards, they communicate to Lot the reason for their sending. They are sent by G-d to inspect the people of Sodom and Gomorrah. Because of the violent incident, they obtained enough information: the cities are heading for their destruction. As a reward for the ethical hospitality, the angels allow Lot and his family to escape to the nearby city of Zoar.

# 1.3 INTERPRETATION OF THE TORAH STORY

## 1.3.1 THE HOSPITALITY OF ABRAHAM AND LOT

This section is **basic study material**.

A striking element of the story is the way Abraham and Lot receive the three strangers. Hospitality was an important part of nomadic existence in the ancient Near East (see the in-depth section “Back in Time”). Both Abraham and Lot welcome their guests. However, there is a difference in how Lot receives his guests compared to Abraham.

Jon D. Levenson in his book *Inheriting Abraham* expresses it as follows:

“Abraham walks; Lot merely stands up. Abraham sacrifices water and food; Lot does not. And the food that Abraham actually provides - “...” as well as the cakes he commands Sarah to bake quickly - contrast with Lot’s “banquet,” of which only “baked unleavened bread” (18:6-8;19:3) is mentioned as an item... The greatest contrast lies in the initial purpose of the two men’s visit. The visit to Abraham has the purpose of announcing a birth; that to Lot has the purpose of announcing an impending death.”

Abraham and Lot, in their hospitality, stand up for the stranger or other. That standing up for the other is the thread that connects Abraham’s plea for the righteous with his hospitable reception of three strangers. Lot’s reception of the two guests, and the protection he offers them, is rewarded with an escape from destruction.

The Torah places great importance on the proper treatment of strangers. Indeed, on Passover, Jews reread Exodus 23:9.

“You are not to oppress a foreigner, for you know how a foreigner feels, since you were foreigners in the land of Egypt.”

This commandment is repeated 36 times in the Torah. Another example is found in Leviticus 19:33-34.

“If a foreigner stays with you in your land, do not do him wrong. Rather, treat the foreigner staying with you like the native-born among you – you are to love him as yourself, for you were foreigners in the land of Egypt; I am *Adonai* your God.”

### 1.3.2 THE DOUBT OF THE LORD

The Lord doubts whether He should share His plans with Abraham. This doubt has to do with Abraham's election: as the patriarch of the Lord's people, He should behave well and righteously. It seems that the Lord wants to shield Abraham from the evil of Sodom and Gomorrah. Those who do not come into contact with evil cannot be tempted by it. Therefore, it is striking that the Lord ultimately chooses to communicate His plan. The reason is again Abraham's election. As the patriarch of G-d's people, he must set the right example so that Jewish people begin on good terms. That means following the Word of G-d and acting righteously. After all, the election carries with it an ethical obligation, but Abraham can only make the right choice if he is placed before a choice in the first place. By communicating His plans to Abraham, the Lord offers to him the opportunity to make the right choice. That means: to choose righteousness. Only then is Abraham's good character tested and proven.

**So we can interpret Abraham's intervention as an act of justice!** The Lord communicates His plans to Abraham, and Abraham denounces the injustice of those plans. In doing so, Abraham commits himself to the principle of justice, and fulfills the condition for being the patriarch of the chosen people.

### 1.3.3 OUR ENVIRONMENT

Lot may offer hospitality and protection to two strangers, but he is not entirely cut off from the evil nature of Sodom. The text suggests that the city also tainted Lot's moral soul. Lot, for example, sacrifices his own daughters to protect his guests. Even though this underscores the importance of hospitality in the culture of the ancient Near East, this passage remains shocking to contemporary readers. Furthermore, compared to Abraham's, Lot's reception of the two strangers is less noteworthy. The difference may have to do with their location. Lot lives in the city of Sodom; Abraham lives near Mamre, in a tent in the wilderness. The story can teach us something about the interaction between humans and their environment. **The environment in which we find ourselves influences our behavior.** Lot lived in an evil culture, full of people with bad intentions toward each other, and this also marked him.

### 1.3.4 ABRAHAM'S CHUTZPAH

Abraham does not accept G-d's plan without question and makes a supplication. His intervention fits within the Jewish tradition of the '**chutzpah**', the critical frankness that cries out to G-d, against G-d, and in the name of G-d's creation and the covenant. It involves a kind of candid sincerity with which a Jew, as a full partner of the covenant, enters into discussion with the other partner, G-d.

The Lord, upon hearing the news of Sodom's wickedness, must intervene. As the Just, Righteous, and Non-indifferent, He cannot possibly remain neutral and stand aside. The plan to destroy the entire two cities was therefore devised with justice in mind. Abraham's plea, however, points to a major problem: justice can turn into its own opposite. A plan to target the guilty can also victimize the innocent. "Avraham approached and said, "Will you actually sweep away the righteous with the wicked?" (Gen. 18:23)

Abraham's proposal is very remarkable. Whereas the Lord wanted to destroy the whole city for the sake of the unrighteous, Abraham wants to see the whole city spared for the sake of the righteous. Abraham completely reverses the radical, extreme plan. He offers no compromise. The unjust are saved thanks to the righteous. In doing so, the Torah underscores the absolute nature of justice. As if justice carried the existence of the world on its shoulders!

We can see Abraham's supplication as a concrete yet extreme form of hospitality. It is not the hospitality that receives friends for dinner, but the hospitality that stands up for the other and the stranger. It is not a coincidence that Abraham sets the example here. As we saw above, G-d hesitates and decides to communicate His plans to Abraham out of the consideration that as the patriarch of the Chosen People, he must lead by example. Throughout the Tanakh, there are texts that underscore the universal status of this role.

#### **Gen. 12:2-3**

"I will make of you a great nation, I will bless you, and I will make your name great; and you are to be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, but I will curse anyone who curses you; and by you all the families of the earth will be blessed."

#### **Gen. 17:4**

"As for me, this is my covenant with you: you will be the father of many nations."

#### **Gen. 18:18**

"inasmuch as Avraham is sure to become a great and strong nation, and all the nations of the earth will be blessed by him?"



### 1.3.5 THE EVIL OF SODOM AND GOMORRAH

The Jewish philosopher Emmanuel Levinas labels Abraham as the “patriarch of universal humanity” [*patriarche de l’humanité universelle*]. Abraham’s actions are very important, and teach us a **lesson about hospitality, standing up for the other, protecting the stranger, and the importance of justice!**

Abraham’s plea unfortunately fell on deaf ears. The inhabitants of Sodom come to violently attack the angels at Lot’s home. It is immediately clear that there are no ten righteous to be found. The threshold with which G-d agreed has not been reached. Abraham’s extreme proposal - to spare all the inhabitants for the sake of a few righteous people - falls apart. Yet G-d does not return to His first extreme plan either: to kill all the inhabitants for the sake of the unrighteous. A handful of inhabitants, Lot and his family, are rewarded for their hospitality and protection, and are allowed to take refuge in a small nearby town called Zoar. This makes it appear that G-d did respond to Abraham’s plea.

The story is not clear on what **the sins of Sodom and Gomorrah** are. This makes interpreting difficult. The Tanakh does have a number of passages that mention the wickedness of Sodom and Gomorrah. These give an indication of what the sister cities are guilty of.

### 1.3.6 EZEKIEL 16:49-50

The book of Ezekiel describes Sodom’s sins as pride and turning the back on the poor and needy in times of affluence.

[49] The crimes of your sister S’dom were pride and gluttony; she and her daughters were careless and complacent, so that they did nothing to help the poor and needy.

[50] They were arrogant and committed disgusting acts before me; so that when I saw it, I swept them away.

### 1.3.7 JEREMIAH 23:14

The sins of Jerusalem are compared to Sodom and Gomorrah in the book of Jeremiah, and listed as adultery, lying, and encouraging evildoers.

But in the prophets of Yerushalayim  
I have seen a horrible thing –  
they commit adultery, live in lies,  
so encouraging evildoers  
that none returns from his sin.  
For me they have all become like S'dom,  
its inhabitants like 'Amora."

### 1.3.8 AMOS 4:1, 11

The book of Amos makes a comparison between Sodom and Ancient Israel. Throughout that comparison, the wickedness of Sodom and Gomorrah is described as mistreating the poor and oppressing the needy.

[1] "Listen, you [lovely] cows of Bashan,  
who live on Mount Shomron,  
who oppress the poor and grind down the needy,  
who say to their husbands, 'Bring something to drink'  
  
[11] "I overthrew some of you,  
as when God overthrew S'dom and 'Amora;  
you were like a burning stick snatched from the fire;  
still you haven't returned to me," says Adonai.

**In summary, the main sin of Sodom is hostility to the outsiders.** They were cruel to the poor and to strangers, and they were unwilling to share their own wealth and resources. In other words, they were unjust.

The contrast between the vocation of Abraham (Jews) and the practice of Sodom could not be greater: justice as mission versus injustice as practice, moral excellence versus immorality.



Figure 1.2  
Source: © Bignai /  
Adobe Stock

### 1.3.6 DIDACTIC SUGGESTIONS

The following questions can be discussed with the students.

#### **The hospitality of Abraham and Lot**

- Read Gen. 18-19. Compare how Lot and Abraham treat strangers.
- In what ways are you and your family hospitable? What customs do you have for receiving guests?
- Do you think there is still a duty today to give be hospitable to strangers? Why yes/no?
- Do you think there are people today who are in need of hospitality? Why yes/no?

#### **Abraham's *chutzpah***

- How would you describe Abraham's manner? Arrogant, humble,...?
- Describe Abraham's plea in your own words. What does he want G-d to agree with?
- Right or wrong. Abraham proposes a compromise to G-d..
- Abraham reminds G-d that a plan to punish the guilty can also punish the innocent. Can you associate this with contemporary events or phenomena?
- G-d changes his plan through Abraham's intervention. Do you change your mind easily?

#### **Our environment**

- Do you think you sometimes find yourself in a culture (environment) that does not protect the poor, weak, or vulnerable? Why do/don't you?
- To what extent do environmental factors determine our behavior? In other words, which is more important: personality or environmental factors?

## The evil of Sodom and Gomorra

- Try to summarize the three passages as precisely as possible. How do they describe the sins of Sodom and Gomorrah ?
- Do you think the things the three passages describe still occur today?
- What could be another contemporary sin of Sodom and Gomorrah?



Figure 1.3  
The Video Clip

# 1.4 TZADIKIM

This section is **in-depth study material**.

## 1.4.1 GENERAL

Justice is not just an abstract concept. It must be concretely practiced. According to Jewish folktales, at any given time there are 36 - *lamed vav* - people who excel in it. These 36 are characterized by their absolute righteousness. Therefore, they are also known as **the 36 righteous - lamed vav tzadikim**. They are righteous, humble, often poor, unknown, and their status as righteous is hidden because they live in poverty and ignorance. The *tzadikim* are righteous solely for the sake of righteousness, not for the sake of fame or reward.

The *tzadikim*, according according to these folktales, return from their hiddenness to save people, or a nation, from destruction. Afterwards, they disappear back into anonymity. Therefore, they are also known as the hidden righteous - *tzadikim nistarim*. They are usually unaware of their special status. A person who claims to be one of the 36 is by definition not a *tzadik* a righteous person is humble, and would never label himself a righteous person. A *tzadik* would simply never see itself as a *tzadik*. Should a righteous person be accidentally discovered, his identity must still remain secret. Indeed, the sin of hubris is always lurking. Every Jew, according to this folk tale, should live as if he or she were one of the righteous. That means living an ethical and humble life.

*Tzadikim* have an absolute role: the existence of the world rests on their shoulders. They bear all the miseries and worries of the world. According to these stories, G-d decides not to destroy the world as long as 36 righteous people still exist. When a hidden righteous person dies, a new one takes his place takes his place. If G-d fails to find someone to take the place, the world ceases to exist. In that case the existence of the world can no longer be justified.

This belief has its origins in two Talmudic fragments. These two sources, when combined, lead to the idea that the world is maintained by 36 righteous people. The combination was possibly derived from the fact that “saluting the Divine Presence” originally had a strong association with the Temple service in Jerusalem. That Temple service was considered the thing that sustained the world. (Pirkei Avot: 1:2).

**1.4.2 SANHEDRIN  
97B:11; SUKKAH  
45B:6**

The world has no fewer than thirty-six righteous people in each generation who greet the Divine Presence.

**1.4.3 CHULLIN 92A:1**

The verse states: "A omer of barley, and a half-omer of barley." A omer equals thirty se'a, and a half-omer equals fifteen se'a, totaling forty-five se'a; these are the forty-five righteous individuals in whose merit the world continues to exist.

**1.4.4 DIDACTIC  
SUGGESTIONS**

**ASSIGNMENT.** Create with the students a *mindmap* of examples of righteous behavior. The students can reflect on what justice means to them.

**ASSIGNMENT.** Students can reflect on their own experience with the kindness of others. Do students think they have ever encountered a *tzadik nistar*?

**ASSIGNMENT.** Together with the students, think about (historical) examples of possible *tzadikim nistarim*.



Figure 1.4  
Source: © Sergign /  
Adobe Stock

# 1.5 BACK IN TIME

This section is **in-depth study material**.

## 1.5.1 GENERAL

The story of Sodom and Gomorrah takes place in a world that is very different from ours. Therefore, to understand the story, it is also important to keep in mind the world in which it takes place. After all, the world we live in always influences our thoughts and behavior. The same applies for the Torah characters Abraham and Lot. We will not understand them fully without looking at the world in which they lived.

The world of the Hebrew Bible is about 3,000 years older than ours. This time difference also brings other differences. The world of the Hebrew Bible is ancient, agricultural, communal, and considers old age a blessing. The world today is modern, industrial, individualistic, and considers youth a blessing.

Biblical Jews often lived in harsh, rural areas, with local towns or small villages. The society was agrarian. The people cultivated wheat and barley. They used flax to make linen. They grew fig and olive trees and had vineyards. They cultivated the land, and were depended on it. The people of ancient Israel lived much more according to the rhythms of nature. They were depended on temperature, rainfall, and soil quality. In other words, the economy was a subsistence economy. Later, fishing, handicrafts, and trade became more common. Professions such as blacksmith, basket maker, potter, etc. came into existence over time.

## 1.5.2 HOSPITALITY

In the ancient Near East, travel was an integral part of the people's existence. The ancient Israelites lived largely a nomadic existence, in a harsh wilderness. Within this context there was a need for protocols, rules of conduct, which neutralized the dangers of this existence to some extent. On the one hand, the traveler was dependent on the good will and hospitality of others to obtain resting places and food. On the other hand, the host needed a way to neutralize the potential danger of the unknown traveler. Moreover, it was important for the host to maintain rules of conduct that would also protect him or her during future trips. A hospitable welcome allowed the guest to survive, and the host neutralized the unknown, and thus potentially dangerous, by adopting the stranger as a temporary member of the community.

**Hospitality emerged as a social system to enable a nomadic existence in an inhospitable landscape! From this context, hospitality developed into a Jewish virtue.**



Only the father had the authority to provide hospitality. An important ritual within hospitality was the washing of the feet. Washing signaled the transition from stranger to guest. After successful probation, the guest turned into a friend, and was presented as such to the village. In the case of unsuccessful probation, the guest met a grim fate with banishment or killing. After the stay, which was not to last too long, the guest left, blessing the host and his household. Sometimes guests decided to stay within the community. They were then known as ger, as a foreigner with a residence permit. They were protected, but did not have the right to offer hospitality themselves.

### 1.5.3 DIDACTIC SUGGESTIONS

The students can carry out the following assignments.

**ASSIGNMENT.** Read the story of Sodom and Gomorrah in conjunction with the above text on the ancient Near East. What historical elements recur in the story? What elements of hospitality as a social phenomenon do they recognize?

**ASSIGNMENT.** Answer the following questions.

- In your opinion, does the Torah paint a historically accurate picture of the world of the ancient Near East? Why yes/no?
- Do you think it's important that the Torah gives a historically accurate picture? Or is it more about the "life lessons" it gives?

## 1.6 GLOSSARY

### **Chutzpah**

The word *chutzpah* is difficult to define. The meaning of this noun lies somewhere between the more extreme 'insolence' and the more moderate 'impropriety'. Thus, someone with *chutzpah* is unafraid to do rather 'daring' things. This is also how we can describe Abraham's intervention.

The word comes from Yiddish, and the Yiddish word in turn comes from Hebrew. In Yiddish it tends to have a negative connotation, such as 'rudeness' or 'arrogance', but this is not necessarily the case in the other languages! Within Judaism, *chutzpah* has the meaning of a critical but sincere discussion between the two partners of the covenant: G-d and a Jew. The Jew cries out to G-d, against G-d, and in the name of G-d's creation and covenant.

In addition to Abraham, Moses also forms an example. In Exodus 32:11, Moses is at Mount Sinai when G-d informs him that the Jewish people at the bottom of the mountain are worshipping a calf. This goes against one of the Ten Commandments, so the Lord wants to destroy them all and start over with Moses. Moses thereupon enters into a discussion with the Lord, just as Abraham does in Genesis 18, and the Lord deviates from His plan. So Moses and Abraham both got *chutzpah!*

### **Righteousness**

Righteousness has several meanings. First, justice is a legal concept. Whatever is in accordance with the law is just. Second, justice is also a moral concept. To act justly is to act 'rightly', in accordance with what is 'good' or 'correct'. Justice also takes practice: no one naturally does the right or good thing all the time. We encounter this idea often in the Tanakh!

# 1.7. TRANSCRIPT OF THE VIDEO

## 1 INT CLASSROOM DAY

The scene opens on a classroom. The final school bell rings. The kids start to pack up.

Teacher: Before you go home, there is one more thing. As you know, there was a fire in one of our city's apartment complexes. The school has decided to organize a donation campaign to help out the poor families that lived there. Try bringing in some old clothes and other things you can miss for next Monday! I'm sure those families will appreciate that very much!

Aaron (mumbles to himself): I'm sure they would.

The kids take their school bags and walk outside.

## 2 INT COMPUTER DAY

We see Aaron sitting in front of his computer. He gets a videocall from his friend Levi. He accepts it and a video-screen call opens up.

Levi: Hey! What's up?

Aaron: Hey, I'm good, what about you?

Levi: I'm good, actually. Have you already found some stuff to donate?

Aaron: Nope, and I'm not really planning on donating anything.

Levi: Why not? You know they lost their house and a lot of their stuff, right?

Aaron: It's not really their house, though, is it? We just let them live there free of charge.

Aaron: They're not in actual need, Aaron. I heard my parents talking about them the other day. The people that lived in those apartments are economic immigrants. They're here for cheap housing and a bigger paycheck, without contributing anything themselves. It's almost like stealing. And now I even have to give them my stuff too? I don't think so. Why don't they just go back to where they came from?

Levi: Wow man, don't you think that's a bit harsh? If people are in need, it's our duty as Jews to be just and help them.

Aaron: Not necessarily. And I don't need to talk to them personally to know them. You can see how they are on the street, they're just mean people. There's a story in the Torah that's literally about this. And in that case Hashem

destroyed the bad people. It's the story of Sodom and Gomorrah.

Levi: I know that one! From the Book of Genesis, right? But doesn't it -

Suddenly a mysterious message appears on screen. It says: SODOM AND GOMORRA: A STORY. There's an accept and decline option. Aaron and Levi are both surprised.

Levi: What's that?

Aaron: I don't know... It says it's an invitation for the story of Sodom and Gomorrah... We were just talking about this! That's spooky...

Levi: Computers are really advanced nowadays. Do you think we should accept it?

Aaron: Sure, why not?

Aaron and Levi both click on 'accept'. The screen explodes into a kaleidoscope. A voice-over welcomes them to the story. Both of them are rather surprised.

Voice-over: Dear virtual travelers! Welcome to the Tanakh: internet edition! You have chosen the story of Sodom and Gomorrah. Strap in!

Aaron: But how did it know -

## 3 EXT SODOM EVENING

The screen abruptly transforms into a virtual reality. The scene opens up on the city of Sodom. We see an older looking man sitting near the city gate.

Voice-over: Word came to Hashem that the people of Sodom and Gomorrah were doing evil things. To see if this was true, He sent two angels. "That evening the two angels arrived in Sodom, while Lot was sitting near the city gate. When Lot saw them, he got up, bowed down low, and said, "Gentlemen, I am your servant. Please come to my home."

Levi: That's Lot, Abraham's nephew!

## 4 EXT LOT'S HOUSE NIGHT

Lot, together with his wife and two daughters are sitting inside the house when a mob of angry men comes knocking on their door.

Aaron: I guess those are the people of Sodom...

*Voice-over: The people of Sodom yelled: "Where are you visitors? Send them out, so we can know them!" Lot was so afraid that they might hurt his visitors, that he even offered his two daughters instead. "I'll bring them out, and you can do what you want with them. But don't harm these men. They are guests in my home." But the mob didn't care. "Don't get in our way," the crowd answered. "You're an outsider. What right do you have to order us around? We'll do worse things to you than we're going to do to them."*

*Levi: I didn't remember this story being so violent...*

*Voice-over: "But the two angels in the house reached out and pulled Lot safely inside. Then they struck everyone in the crowd blind, and none of them could even find the door. The two angels said to Lot, "The Lord has heard many terrible things about the people of Sodom, and he has sent us here to destroy the city. Take your family and leave." So Lot decided to escape to a small, nearby village.*

## **5 EXT SODOM DAY**

We see Lot and his family quickly leaving the city.

*Voice-over: The sun was coming up as Lot reached the town of Zoar, and the Lord sent sulfur and fire down like rain on Sodom and Gomorrah.*

During this narration, fire starts pouring down, until the entire city is engulfed in flames. After an explosion both Aaron and Levi are left looking at a black screen.

*Aaron: So, the story just concludes like that? I'm a bit confused now.*

*Voice-over: Can I ask you a question?*

*Aaron: Oh... Um, yeah, sure?*

*Voice-over: What exactly was the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah?*

*Aaron: I dunno... Unkindness? Violence?*

*Voice-over: Those are good suggestions. Different people have understood the story in different ways. Some think the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah was inhospitality, or cruelty to keep foreigners away, or mistreatment of the poor, injustice, selfishness, .... Do any of these things sound familiar?*

*Aaron: Wait, what do you mean? Am I doing those things?*

The voice-over remains silent.

*Aaron: I don't know, maybe I need to rethink all of this... Who are you, if I may ask?*

*Voice-over: Oh, I'm just the story, asking you this question.*

The virtual-reality screen abruptly closes. Levi and Aaron return to their videocall.

*Levi: So, uhhhh...*

*Aaron: You don't need to say anything. Can we meet up? I think I have an idea.*

## **5 INT CLASS ROOM DAY**

It's raining heavily outside. Aaron and Levi are sitting in class next to each other. At the front of the class room there are a lot of boxes stacked on top of each other.

*Teacher: Thank you everyone for donating so much stuff! And a special shout out to Aaron and Levi, who really pulled their weight on this one! I'm sure those poor families will appreciate this very much.*

*Aaron (mumbling to himself, sincerely): I hope they do.*

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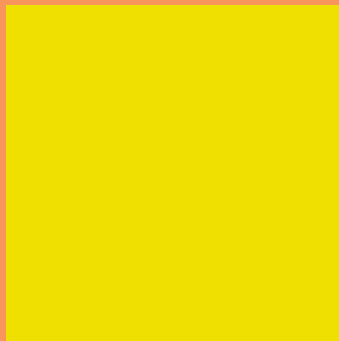
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ENCOUNTER WITH SACRED TEXTS:  
TEXTS OF VIOLENCE

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## MODULE TWO

# ENCOUNTER WITH SACRED TEXTS: TEXTS OF VIOLENCE

## 2.1 INTRODUCTION

### 2.1 GENERAL INTRODUCTION

This handbook is intended as didactic support for teachers to further elaborate on the following theme: “Encounter with Sacred Texts: Texts of Violence”. It gives the teacher or facilitator the opportunity to develop this theme appropriate to the students’ understanding.

This module holds a poly-perspective view: it shows how the same passage can be approached from multiple directions. This makes the approach decidedly non-hermeneutical. No one all-explaining text is given the upper hand, but rather many different perspectives. The aim, therefore, is to encourage discussion, forming of one’s own opinion, daring to disagree, and daring to make counter-arguments as much as possible. That is why the teacher’s guide gradually works up to different interpretations, where different Jewish traditions are given the floor. This teacher’s guide therefore offers various points of attention to guide the discussions in new directions. The teacher is free to work with these suggestions at will and according to the needs and understanding of the class or learning group.

The student handbook, together with the viewing of and discussion on the video, takes an hour. In the second hour more depth can be achieved on the basis of the material in this package. The intention is to give the pupils as many different perspectives and interpretations as possible.

## **2.1.2 CONTENTS OF THE HANDBOOK**

The theme “Encounter with Sacred Texts: Texts of Violence” is approached through the infamous Amalek commandment, the context of which we find in the books Exodus and Deuteronomy. The Amalek passages provide much food for thought. This weighty character should, however, not deter, but instead give rise to a deeper understanding of the Tanakh. The fundamental question is: does Amalek still exist today? And if so, how exactly should we understand Amalek?

The starting point is a story: a real conflict situation concerning two arguing pupils leads to a search for the meaning of the Amalek figure. It concerns a possible real situation sketch from the everyday life of the students. In the first place, the story is a general introduction, but does not need to be reduced to this. On the contrary, it is possible to return to the story throughout the lesson. Which elements of the lesson do they identify in the story?

After the story, the basic subject material is discussed. This handbook makes a distinction between ‘basic subject material’ and ‘in-depth subject material’. The basic material runs parallel to the material in the student handbook. The ‘in-depth subject material’ follows afterwards. The aim is to offer a more comprehensive curriculum, which can be used at the teacher’s discretion. The in-depth subject material discusses the various Amalek interpretations. The list is not exhaustive, but gives a good framework to reflect together with the children. At the end of this handbook, there is a glossary and bibliography.



## 2.2 VIOLENCE AGAINST AMALEK



Figure 2.1  
The Video Clip

### 2.2.1 THE STORY

The story shows a conflict between two students: Levi and Lindsay. Levi is a Jewish boy who moved with his family to a new city. He goes to a new school, but feels like people are looking at him strangely, and he only hangs out with other Jewish children. Lindsay, a classmate of Levi's, sees him standing at the bus stop, and speaks to him. They get into a discussion. Levi calls Lindsay 'Amalek' out of anger. In his defence he refers to a passage from the Tanakh. Suddenly, an old rabbi named Ezra appears. With the magical bus Bunim, he takes the children on their way to Ancient Israel, in search of the possible meaning of this Amalek story.

### 2.2.2 DISCUSSION

Possible questions about preliminary knowledge can be asked:

- Who or what could Amalek be in the story?
- Do they recognize Levi's emotions?
- Have they ever called someone Amalek?
- Have they ever heard somebody else make a comparison between a certain person or group and Amalek?
- Levi compares the move of his family with the move of the Jewish people in the Book of Exodus. Is that comparison correct?
- Levi compares the treatment of his Gentile schoolmates with how Amalek treated the Jewish people. Is that comparison correct?
- Do they know any passages, other than the Book of Deuteronomy, in which Amalek appears?

## 2.3 'THEN CAME AMALEK'

This part is **basic subject material**.

### 2.3.1 GENERAL

The two texts with which the handbook opens are *Ex. 17:8-16*, and *Deut. 25:17-19*. The former gives us the first mention of Amalek's attack. In the latter, the Jewish people are reminded of this attack by Moses near the end of his sermons to the Jewish people on the plains of Moab.

Exodus 17:8-16 and Deuteronomy 25:17-19 are parallel stories: they mention the same event. However, they also differ in terms of information. They each give a different piece of the puzzle. Through the Exodus passage, we know the time and place of the attack. The attack was after the Jewish people left Egypt; the battle took place at Rephidim. The place name Rephidim has a unique meaning. The place name consists of the verb 'rafah' and the noun 'jadim'. 'Rafah' means 'to become weak'. 'Jadim' means 'hands'. Rephidim thus means: 'the weakness of the hands'. This means that our courage can slip away from us: our strength can flow out of our hands. This term, 'weakness of the hands' occurs nineteen times in the Tanakh. Each time it suggests this same meaning.

Moses and Joshua play an important role in the battle. This is the first time in the Tanakh that the name Joshua appears. During the battle, Moses is on top of a hill and keeps his hands in the air. This act is important because it is only as long as Moses keeps his hands in the air that the Jewish people can win. Nevertheless, the concrete battle still has to be fought: Joshua must pick out men and go to war. The link between the actions of Moses and Joshua is very strong. Their simultaneous character is striking. Whenever Moses' hands fall down, Joshua is losing the battle, but when they remain up in the air, Joshua has the 'upper hand'. Thus, the Bible suggests a strong relationship between "Higher" and "Lower/earthly". The Zohar interpretation in the appendix provides a theological and mystical framework to help further reflect on this.

The struggle is significant. We can deduce this from G-d's intention. Because of the attack, He will fight with Amalek from generation to generation. Yet it is not entirely clear what makes this fight so significant. For the answer, we must turn to the Book of Deuteronomy. Here, Moses speaks of the cowardly nature of the attack. Amalek attacked the rearguard, where the most vulnerable were. The people of Israel were already extremely vulnerable at this point. Deuteronomy also provides a new element: that Israel likewise has the responsibility to erase the memory of Amalek. This responsibility is a mitzvah, a religious commandment, given by G-d.

### 2.3.4 SUMMARY

1. Ex. 17:8-16 teaches us:
  - G-d will erase the memory of Amalek
  - G-d will wage war against Amalek from generation to generation
2. Deut. 25:17-19 teaches us:
  - Emphasis that the Jewish people were 'on the road': the pathway of liberation
  - Amalek attacked Israel at their weakest point
  - Israel also has an obligation to erase the memory of Amalek
  - It is a mitzvah: a commandment

### 2.3.5 HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The Amalek commandment seems very violent. The texts seem to encourage genocide: the intentional, deliberate extermination of an ethnic group. To make sense of this commandment, it is important to note that the world of Ancient Israel is a very different world from that of today. Back then, the region was divided into all kinds of tribes, who often fought over a limited amount of resources. Moreover, many trade routes ran through the promised land, Canaan. Such a world induces conflict. Today's Israel, which has built up a strong military power, is a different Israel than the vulnerable people who were searching for a new home while thirsty, hungry, and living in insecurity.

## ASSIGNMENT.

### 2.3.6 DIDACTIC SUGGESTIONS

The questions from this section can also be found in the handbook for the students. For the questions which can be answered correctly, a sample answer has been formulated. The remaining questions are open questions.

About which event do these two passages relate?

They are about Amalek's attack on the Jewish people. Time: they occur just after they left Egypt. Place: they occur at Rephidim.

Is this event told in the same way, or is there a difference in information between the two passages? If so, what's the difference?

There is a difference in information. With Ex. we think of an ordinary battle. With Deut. we know it was a deliberate attack on the weak. With Ex, the emphasis is on how G-d takes responsibility for fighting Amalek. In Deut. the emphasis is on Israel taking that responsibility.

What is the essence of these passages:

- Remember (Amalek's deed)
- Fighting (against Amalek)
- This is a conceptual question intended as a thought exercise. It is about the essence of the Amalek Commandment. The answer depends on how you interpret the commandment.

Who will eradicate the memory of Amalek?

- G-d
- The people of Israel

Where do the passages in their book take place?

- Always in the middle section
- At the beginning
- At the very end

Who didn't fear G-d?

Open question.

Explain in your own words the meaning of the place name 'Rephidim'.

The place name consists of the verb 'rafah' and the noun 'jadim'. Rafah' means 'to become weak. Jadim' means 'hands'. 'Rephidim' thus means: 'the becoming weak of our hands'. This means that our courage can fall away from us: the strength can flow out of our hands.

In the Deuteronomy passage it says: 'and he did not fear God'. This sentence could also grammatically refer to Israel. Why should Israel not fear G-d? What could this mean?

One possible answer can be found in the story. Rabbi Ezra mentions at a certain point that Amalek can stand for 'failing to protect the weak': leaving the vulnerable of the group to their fate. During the attack, Amalek was able to hit the vulnerable of the Jewish people. The people of Israel therefore failed to protect their vulnerable, while they themselves experienced vulnerability under the regime of Egypt. The people of Israel 'do not fear God' when they do not protect the vulnerable, because they show 'Amalekian behavior'. What other things can be called 'Amalekian behavior'?

- Amalek's attack was an act of war. Is the Amalek mitzvah a matter of self-defense, or of revenge?



- Read this sentence again: "Adonai will fight Amalek generation after generation." (Ex. 17:16) Do you think 'from generation to generation' means that the war is forever, or do you think it only applies to particular generations?



- Do you think the commandment to erase the memory of Amalek still applies?



- Who or what do you think is Amalek?



## 2.4 INTERPRETATIONS OF THE AMALEK

This part is **in-depth subject material**.

### 2.4.1. GENERAL

Rabbis have offered interesting solutions to help us understand what the Amalek commandment, and the figure Amalek, could mean. We make a distinction between classical Jewish interpretations, and the orthodox, Halachic tradition. The list of interpretations is certainly not exhaustive. It is not important that students memorize those interpretations. This section is aimed at understanding the interpretations and encouraging the students to form their own opinion in relation to these interpretations. Following the theory section, there are some questions that the students can answer.

### Yitschak ben Yehuda Abarbanel [1437-1508]

### 2.4.2 CLASSICAL JEWISH BIBLE READINGS

Yitschak ben Yehuda Abarbanel was a Spanish-Portuguese rabbi. Rabbi Abarbanel, strangely enough, first takes a look at the sentences just before the Amalek commandment in Deuteronomy.

[13] “You are not to have in your pack two sets of weights, one heavy, the other light.

[14] You are not to have in your house two sets of measures, one big, the other small.

[15] You are to have a correct and fair weight, and you are to have a correct and fair measure, so that you will prolong your days in the land Adonai your God is giving you.

[16] For all who do such things, all who deal dishonestly, are detestable to Adonai your God.

The Torah forbids the use of unequal weights or measures. With this, the Torah means: we can't treat each other unequal or unjust. We can't hold each other to different standards since this treats people unequally. Right after this sentence, the Torah immediately goes over to Amalek. That is a very strange transition.

For rabbi Abarbanel, this transition is not strange at all. On the contrary, for him, it has a lot of meaning? Amalek, rabbi Abarbanel says, is a typical example of injustice. They had no reason to attack Israel, but they did it anyway. And to make matters worse: they attacked the people of Israel at their weakest point. Because of that unjust, unfair waging of war, they deserve their punishment. The same situation applies to anyone who wages war in such an unjust way. Rabbi Abarbanel understands the commandment against Amalek as a very real situation of war! Amalek in this case refers to a concrete 'evildoer'.

### **Samson Raphael Hirsch [1808-1888]**

Samson Hirsch was a German orthodox rabbi. Rabbi Hirsch understands Amalek differently. According to him, Amalek can also be a symbol: Amalek doesn't stand for an identifiable person or thing, but for something else, like an idea. Amalek, rabbi Hirsch says, stands for war, destruction, and the sword. But not Israel: Israel stands for peace, building, and the voice of G-d calling for righteous action. Amalek and Israel stand for different values. This means that waging war is not the solution, because then we are copying Amalek's bad behavior. In that case we exercise the wrong idea! We may fight in self-defense, but we must always listen to the voice of G-d. And when we fight, we must fight for peace, according to rabbi Hirsch.

### **Chassidic Judaism**

The Chassidic tradition, for example rabbi Meir Simcha of Daugavpils, draws attention to a certain sentence in the Deuteronomy passage about Amalek: "Remember what Amalek did to you by the road when you were coming out of Egypt" (Ex. 17:17). In this sentence, one word is very important: 'you'. Amalek did something against you, or in general, against all people who deviate from the right path. Amalek is the **yetzer hara**: the evil instinct inside of us. This is the evil voice inside of our heads that makes us do wrong things. So, erasing the memory of Amalek means not listening to the bad voice inside of us! According to the Chassidic tradition, Amalek cannot be one person or group. On the contrary, every human being is part Amalek.



## **Sefer ha-Chinukh**

This book is a classical work from the 13th century AD, which discusses the 613 commandments in the Torah. In this book we read a surprising comparison: Amalek is like a fool jumping into a bath of boiling water! This comparison is not as farfetched as it may seem.

Someone who jumps into a bath of boiling water burns himself, but cools it down for others. Amalek attacked Israel and burned himself by losing the battle but opened the door for others to attack Israel as well. After the escape from Egypt, with the help of the Ten Plagues, everyone was afraid of Israel and their mighty G-d. Because of Amalek's attack, that fear disappeared. From that moment on, others also dared to attack Israel. That is why the punishment for Amalek is so severe: That is why the punishment for Amalek is so severe: Amalek opened the door to violence against Israel.

## **Zohar**

The Zohar is a work from the 13th century BC. The Zohar is known as a classical text within Jewish mysticism. In the Zohar we read that Israel is never alone in his fight against evil. After all, Israel is G-d's partner. G-d fights with evil in the divine world, and Israel fights with Amalek in the earthly world. That is why Moses on the hill must keep his hands in the air, and Joshua must fight down below at the same time. Moses symbolizes the battle of G-d, and Joshua symbolizes the battle of Israel. And therefore, says the Zohar, both G-d (Ex.) and Israel (Deut.) are responsible for the fight against (the memory of) Amalek.

### 2.4.3 HALACHIC TRADITION

#### Literal reading

Some Halachic Jews read the Amalek commandment literally. According to that reading, Amalek still exists as a population group, threatening Israel, and it is the task of Jews to exterminate them. There are Halachic Jews who disagree with this.

#### Meir ha-Cohen (end 13th century AD)

Rabbi Meir ha-Cohen draws attention to one important sentence, again in the Book of Deuteronomy: "Therefore, when Adonai your God has given you rest from all your surrounding enemies in the land Adonai your God is giving you as your inheritance to possess, you are to blot out all memory of 'Amalek from under heaven." (Deut. 25:19) According to rabbi ha-Cohen, the Tanakh refers to the **future**: only when the Messiah appears on Earth at the end of time, and we will live in an era of universal peace and harmony, does the commandment to eradicate Amalek apply!

#### Yosef Babad [1801-1874]

Rabbi Yosef Babad, however, goes in a different direction. He states that the Tanakh refers to the **past**. We have already discussed how Ancient Israel was different from the world today. Tribes used to be easier to distinguish from each other. Through time, however, they have become more and more mixed, so that we can no longer make that distinction. The Assyrian King Sennacherib [Circa. 705-681 B.C.] plays an important role in this theory. He was responsible for this intermingling of different people. So, for rabbi Babad there is a practical problem hindering the commandment and it became impossible to carry out.

#### 2.4.4. DIDACTIC SUGGESTIONS

This section first addresses questions that can be asked on the basis of the interpretations above. Afterward, there are additional questions about an Amalek text in the Book of 1 Samuel.

**ASSIGNMENT.** The students can answer the following questions

- Which interpretation appeals to you the most, and why?
- Which interpretation appeals to you the least, and why?
- Is Amalek a specific person or group, or a bad quality within each person?
- What bad qualities can you come up with that Amalek could symbolize?
- Why is the use of equal measures so important according to the Torah?
- According to rabbi Abarbanel, the Jewish people are allowed to wage war against those who act extremely unjust, such as Amalek's attack. Do you agree? Do you think this is the right response?
- What does 'yetzer hara' mean?
- Have you experienced this 'evil instinct/yetzer hara' within yourself?
- Are we allowed to fight in certain situations according to rabbi Hirsch?
- According to rabbi Meir ha-Cohen, the commandment to eradicate the memory of Amalek only exists in the Messianic Age. Do you agree?
- Can you find some of the above interpretations in the video? Does the character Levi understand Amalek as an *external* person, or an *internal* characteristic?
- Who or what do you think Amalek is? Have you changed your mind?

**ASSIGNMENT.** The students can read the text from 1 Samuel and answer the corresponding questions. In this text we read how King Saul receives the commandment to go to war against the Agag, the leader of the Amalekites.

In 1 Samuel 15:2-3, King Saul receives the mitzvah to fight against King Agag, the leader of the Amalekites:

[2] Here is what Adonai Tzvaot says: 'I remember what Amalek did to Israel, how they fought against Israel when they were coming up from Egypt.'

[3] Now go and attack Amalek, and completely destroy everything they have. Don't spare time, but kill men and women, children and babies, ox and sheep, camel and donkey.'

How do you feel about this passage?

Is this the correct way to 'punish' someone today? (cf. Abarbanel)

Is this passage about revenge, or self-defense?

It seems to be about revenge. (But more could be said about it: It seems to be about revenge, but more could be said about it. The students can reflect together on the phenomenon of 'precautionary measures': preventative actions in order to be safe. Are they justifiable?)

What similarities do you find between this passage and the Exodus and Deuteronomy passages?

For example: the emphasis lies again on the road. G-d remembers what the people of Israel suffered. G-d is involved as Israel's partner.

According to Meir ha-Cohen, the Amalek commandment can only take place in the future: the Messianic Age. Does this 1 Samuel text, which appears after the book of Deuteronomy, contradict this interpretation?

Some rabbis think so.

## 2.6 GLOSSARY

In this glossary you will find more information on certain terms used in this module.

### **Amalek**

In Hebrew, the term 'Amalek' can refer to both a person, Amalek, and a people, the Amalekites. This module uses both meanings interchangeably.

### **Genocide**

The term 'genocide' means the deliberate extermination of an ethnic group. International law regards this act as a horrific crime.

### **Canaan**

According to the Old Testament, Canaan is the land promised to the Jewish people. This area lies between the Mediterranean Sea in the West and the Jordan River in the East. This area is now made up of Lebanon, Israel, a part of Syria, and Jordan.



Photo: © Annie Spratt | Unsplash

## 2.7 TRANSCRIPT OF THE VIDEO

### 1 INT KITCHEN DAY

We see a father sitting at the kitchen table. It's morning. His son enters with his school bag and walks straight towards the door.

Father: Good morning! Leaving already?

Levi: Yeah. I don't have time for breakfast, sorry.

Father: I wanted to ask you about your new school. How's it going? It has been a week now... Have you made some friends in class yet?

Levi: Not really. But there are some other Jewish kids in school, though.

Father (confused): Why don't you hang out with your classmates?

Levi: Why would I? They always look at me, like I'm from outer space... Sorry, I really have to go now.

We see Levi quickly leaving the house.

### 2 EXT BUS STOP DAY

Levi arrives at the bus stop early. There is another kid, Lindsay. The other kid sees him.

Lindsay: Hi! I'm Lindsay. We're in the same class, right? Isn't your name Levi?

Levi: Now you care to talk to me?

Lindsay: What do you mean?

Levi: I've been here a week. No one talks to me. If you think I don't belong here, just say so.

Lindsay: Look, you're the one that is not talking to anyone. We see you Jewish kids grouping together all the time, what do you expect from us?

Levi: Ah forget it. You're just like Amalek.

Lindsay (confused): Who?

Levi: 'sighs' Of course you wouldn't know...Have you ever even opened the Bible?

Lindsay: euh... who has? But what are you saying?

Levi: Amalek hurt the people of Israel just when they moved out of Egypt and were vulnerable, like my family... We just moved here, too. But you wouldn't understand and why would you,... you don't even want us here.

Lindsay: Oh come on man...Comparing me to that Amak...

Ezra: You mean 'Amalek'.

Lindsay: Yes, exactly. Huh -

The kids turn around in surprise. They see an old, strange looking man, scratching his head.

Ezra: Shalom Aleichem!

Levi: Aleichem Shalom... I'm sorry... Who are you?

Ezra: My name is... Wait, hold on, I have a bad memory... Uhm... Oh, yes, it's Rabbi Ezra! I've come to help you! But tell me, what is all of this about Amalek?

Lindsay: He is calling everyone who is not Jewish that! It's ridiculous!

Ezra: Aha! Well, let's recall the passage... Wait, I've got a bad memory... Oh! Why don't we go and take the bus? I said I've come to help! Or I think I said that...

The kids look confused.

Lindsay: Uhm... How is a bus ride going to help us?

Ezra (laughing): aahhh! It'll take us of course! Come on!

The kids look confused. Ezra taps with his walking stick on the floor. Suddenly in a purple cloud of dust, a bus arrives at the bus stop.

Ezra: I couldn't think of a good name for this bus, so I called him Bunim! He can take us everywhere, so let's go to ancient Israel!

Levi: Wait... You mean back in time? But that's just a bus?

Ezra: That's exactly what I mean! Let's go!

Ezra taps his stick again, and suddenly they are all sitting in the bus. The bus starts driving.

We see the bus disappear in a purple fog.

### 3 EXT ANCIENT ISRAEL DAY

The bus stops in ancient Israel. Lindsay, Levi, and Rabbi Ezra get out.

Levi: Where are we?

Ezra (proudly): Well, young ones, welcome to Ancient Israel, just like in the Bible! These are the plains of Moab. You wanted to look up what Moses exactly said, right? Bunim took us there! Now, it's kinda like a live concert!

Levi and Lindsay are bewildered.

Levi: So, we travelled through time??

Ezra: You got it! Look!

We see a long line of people, looking tired and wearisome, all moving towards one gathering place.

Ezra: Quickly, quickly. I don't want to miss the speech.

The company walks towards the front. They mix in with the rest of the people. No one seems to notice them. We then see Moses standing in front of a mountain. He is speaking passionately with his arms raised. One of his arms is holding a walking stick. He has long white hair and a long white beard.

Ezra: I wish I had that stick... Oh, listen! Moses is about to mention Amalek!

Moses: Remember what Amalek did to you on your journey, after you left Egypt – how, undeterred by fear of God, he surprised you on the march, when you were famished and weary, and cut down all the stragglers in your rear.

Levi: See!

Lindsay looks disappointed.

Ezra: Hmm. You're a bit hasty. Why are you so sure Amalek is a person or group?

Levi: Because Moses just said so?

Ezra: Did he? Did you know that the Torah always has a deeper meaning? We can understand the writings in different ways.

Lindsay: How so?

Ezra: Well, Amalek first appeared right after the people were complaining about the lack of water, and they were doubting their decision to leave Egypt and follow God.

For this reason, some Rabbi's think Amalek symbolizes our inner doubt. They think 'destroying the memory of Amalek' means destroying the part in us that doubts God and ourselves!

Levi: So, he's like a mirror to the bad parts of us?

Ezra: So, they think! But this 'bad part' can be many different things besides doubt, like 'not protecting the vulnerable', 'indifference', ... Amalek can symbolize all of these things!

Levi: But can't it be a person, too?

Ezra: Perhaps. You're thinking about your self-defence? But some Rabbi's think that if Amalek were a people, they only existed in ancient Israel. Then other Rabbi's think Amalek will only arrive in the future.

Levi: All of this about a couple of sentences...

Ezra: Look around. There are as many ways to understanding the Bible, as there are people standing here listening to Moses.

Ezra: All right, I think it's time for us to leave. [taps stick] You've got school, remember!

Levi: How do we get back?

Ezra: I don't know, but Bunim does!

Ezra, Levi and Lindsay walk towards the bus and get on. The bus drives to the present day bus stop.

### 4 EXT PRESENT DAY BUS STOP DAY

Levi and Lindsay get out.

Levi: Thank you, Rabbi Ezz –

Levi and Lindsay turn around and see that they are alone. The bus and Ezra are gone.

Lindsay: That was strange...

Levi: Yeah, it was... Look, I'm sorry. Calling you Amalek was weird, ... But it doesn't change the fact you are treating us like aliens.

Lindsay: It's okay, I understand. It must be hard to feel so unwelcome... We should have started talking much earlier.

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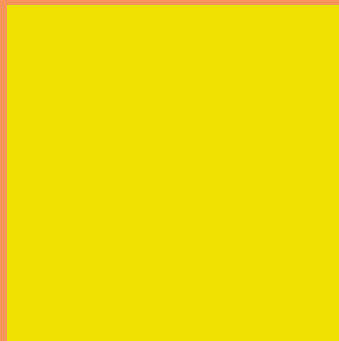
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# 3

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ENCOUNTER WITH THE  
ENVIRONMENT: SOCIAL AND  
ECOLOGICAL ISSUES

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## MODULE THREE

# ENCOUNTER WITH THE ENVIRONMENT: SOCIAL AND ECOLOGICAL ISSUES

## 3.1 INTRODUCTION

### 3.1.1 GENERAL INTRODUCTION

This handbook is intended as didactic support for teachers to further elaborate on the following theme: 'encounter with the other: social and ecological issues'. The age group is 13 to 15 year olds. It gives the teacher or facilitator the opportunity to develop this theme appropriate to the students' understanding.

In 1966, the historian Lynn White, Jr. gave a speech to the *American Association for the Advancement of Science*. One year later that speech was published as an article. White's article caused a lot of controversy. One of the reasons for this was the ecological issue that came to the fore in the 1970s. According to White, the Judeo-Christian religious tradition lies at the root of the ecological crisis. This religious tradition allowed scientific knowledge, technological innovation, and industrialization to progress unrestrainedly, without paying attention to possible damage to nature. Without this careless attitude to progress, White says, the ecological crisis would not exist. To defend this thesis, Lynn White points to Gen. 1:28:

God blessed them: God said to them, "Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea, the birds in the air and every living creature that crawls on the earth."

God commands Adam and Eve to subdue and rule over the Earth. Both the idea that man is above nature, and the idea that there is no longer a divine presence in nature itself, would lead to despotic behavior. And that in turn leads to the careless destruction of biodiversity and climate change.

White's essay stirred up controversy among religious groups. Christianity was quick to respond. Judaism also disagreed with White's argument. The Jewish answer to White appeared in many forms. There are organizations like *Jewcology*, for example, that try to reconcile the Jewish faith with an ecological world view. There are also those that point out that the Tanakh contains concepts and commandments that are contrary to the opinion of Lynn White, Jr. This module agrees with the proposition that the Tanakh can provide important pointers for a theological-ecological orientation.

### **3.1.2 CONTENTS OF THE HANDBOOK**

A literal reading of the Tanakh can lead to violence. Violence can be broken down into two meanings here: on the horizontal axis there is violence in the name of nature. On the vertical axis there is the violence against nature. This module deals with both axes, and encourages reflection on their points of contact.

This teacher's handbook distinguishes between 'basic subject material' and 'in-depth subject material'. Each chapter provides didactic suggestions. The basic material runs parallel to the student's handbook, but offers extra background information and work methods. The point of departure is a story about polarization linked to ecological issues. Afterwards, the topic 'violence *in the name of* nature' is discussed. This is approached through the theme of polarization. Hereafter, the topic 'violence *against* nature' is introduced. We approach this topic from a theological point of view: *the bal tashchit* principle. This ethical principle, which can be translated into 'do not destroy/waste', offers a useful paradigm for students to reflect on current climate issues and related social issues. The handbook offers the etymological and symbolic background of this commandment, together with different interpretations.

The in-depth material offers additional material that the teacher can use at their discretion. The first in-depth chapter is devoted to Catherine Chalier, who offers an interesting interpretation of the complex relationship between Judaism and nature. This is followed by two chapters about the climate crisis and food waste. All three in-depth chapters are supplementary to the basic subject matter, but can also be studied independently. The handbook concludes with a glossary and bibliography.

## 3.2 CLIMATE (PROTESTS)

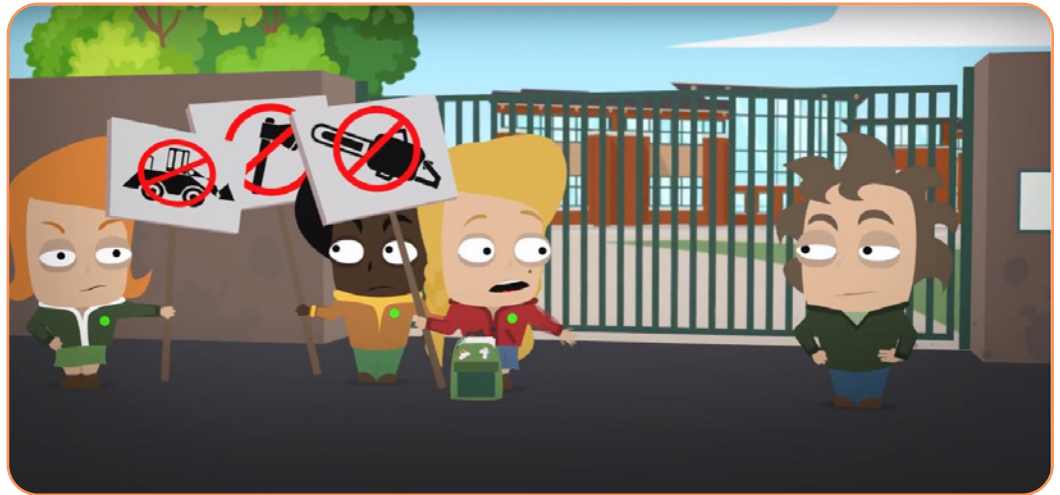


Figure 3.1  
The Video Clip

### 3.2.1 THE STORY

The video shows a conflict at school. Ariella is a Jewish girl who learns through the evening news about forest fires in Australia. To satisfy her hunger for more information, she sneaks to the computer at night. Her research reveals an avalanche of ecological crises, while the mysterious words *'bal tashchit'* reflects in her eyes.

At school she hears terrible news: the city council and the school board have decided to cut down a piece of the forest nearby. For years now there has been a shortage of parking spaces. Ariella decides to contest this decision, and she starts a protest movement. However, her movement soon starts dividing people up. What started out of noble intentions, threatens to escalate into full blown conflict. What is the role of the mysterious words *bal tashchit* in all this?

### 3.2.2 DISCUSSION

This part is optional.

#### **Discuss the video with the students in the classroom: what did they see?**

Possible questions about preliminary knowledge and personal reflection can be asked:

- Do the pupils recognize Ariella's feelings (the girl)?
- Would the students join Ariella in protesting?

- Do the students feel that Ariella went too far with her actions?
- Is destroying or attacking property, for example through graffiti, allowed in some cases? Why would it be allowed?
- What associations do the students' protest evoke to current situations and challenges? Do the students recognize similar situations in real life?
- Did the students recognize some of the 'ecological disasters' that Ariella found on the internet?
- Do the students also experience the climate problem as a 'problem'?
- What is, according to the students, the position of Judaism in the climate debate? Is there even such a 'position' according to them? Do Jews bear a responsibility, and do they have to take action?



Figure 3.2  
Source: © ystewart  
henderson / Adobe Stock

## 3.3 POLARIZATION

### 3.3.1 GENERAL This part is **basic subject material**.

People have differing opinions on many subjects. A difference of opinion is inherent to communication and is not problematic in itself. In every society there are subjects on which (groups of) people have different opinions. It only becomes problematic when these different opinions and views lead to conflict, or when certain (groups of) people are personally attacked.

We can speak of polarization when contrasts between opposing groups keep increasing. The two groups face each other as 'opposite poles'. The term 'polarization' seems to appear more often in recent years. People talk about increasing polarization between certain groups in society, or politicians who make use of polarizing statements and thus deliberately want to set people against each other. This in order to increase their own following or to divert attention from other social problems.

Polarization is not always negative. Different points of view, dynamics of polarization, and conflicting opinions can be of importance for a society. It creates an open debate, in order to scrutinize and denounce possible abuses or to implement social changes. But when solely radical points of view are given attention, and the moderate voices in the debate disappear, people may feel compelled to choose either side. Society can be strongly divided. There is no longer any attention for nuance.

Polarization can also be described as an 'us vs. them' kind of thinking. In this way groups of people are placed diametrically opposite each other. Examples of such groups are groups based on ethnic, cultural or religious differences; poor versus rich, the people versus the elite, political right versus political left, men versus women, government versus citizens, and so on. Polarization can escalate, thus leading to conflict, aggression, violence and possibly war. The climate debate can also result in polarization. This section invites students to reflect on the phenomenon of climate protest. The 'climate marches' are a topical theme. Yet they also raise many questions. When do protests go too far? Do protests lead to more polarization? Is protest always the right way to come to solutions?

According to the Dutch philosopher Bart Brandsma, it is important to distinguish polarization from conflict.

A **conflict** is obvious. A problem arises, and around that problem there are different 'problem owners'. For one 'this' is at stake, for the other 'that'. These differences are 'conflicts of interest': different problem owners have different interests. In part these are based on rationality. The backgrounds, the motives, are easier to trace, and so are the steps. This explains why a constructive conversation is a good method for dealing with conflict. A conversation can clarify the different interests, give them a place, and offer a rational solution.

**Polarization** is complex. It is harder to identify the problem owners. Furthermore, motivations are harder to trace. There is a big world behind people's actions, where feeling and irrationality play important roles. That is why a constructive conversation is much less effective: It leads to so-called 'fake conversations'. What is needed, Brandsma says, is strong leadership. A strong leader can, with the right attitude and tone, acknowledge the real concerns, and at the same time point out the real problems in the debate. A leader must not remain indifferent and neutral, but adopt an inclusive attitude. And since polarization is an us vs. them thinking, a leader must be able to give a voice to the middle: the group of doubting, indifferent, and neutral people.

The story at the beginning of the lesson shows us a conflict, as a result from climate change leading to polarization! There is an 'us vs. them' dynamic, embodied very emotionally by the characters Ariella and Levi. Together with the problem, clear problem owners can be identified that interpret the problem differently. This leads to 'conflicts of interest'. The school board recognizes the problem of a parking shortage, and wants to address it. Ariella recognizes a climate issue, and thinks this is more important. The problem does not escalate too much, and the school principal manages to dismantle the conflict with constructive conversation. He offers a rational solution, which everyone rationally accepts.



### 3.3.2 DIDACTIC SUGGESTIONS

At school, in the media, with politicians, between certain groups in society; every day we are confronted with an 'us vs. them' kind of thinking.

**ASSIGNMENT.** The students can be divided into groups and each group receives a newspaper article, or searches independently for a newspaper article, about polarization. The students analyze the article on the basis of the following questions:

- Which conflict comes to the fore in the article?
- Which two poles are opposite each other?
- Are both sides of the story given, or is one perspective shown in more detail than the other?
- What do you think about the reporting?
- Do you agree with the climate protesters? Why or why not?

The analysis of the article can then be reworked and presented before the class.



Figure 3.3  
The Video Clip

**ASSIGNMENT.** The story at the beginning of this module shows us how Ariella, frustrated with the school's decision to cut down a part of a forest, starts a protest group. The students can reflect on the theme of polarization through this story.

- Do they think Ariella is polarizing? Is Ariella partaking in 'us vs. them' kind of thinking?
- Does the story show us a conflict, or polarization? This is a conceptual question.
- Are there elements in the story that could suggest 'a process of polarization is happening?'
- Do they understand Levi's reaction? Would they also be reticent? Do they feel reticent about the climate strikes happening today?
- The school director invites Ariella and Levi for a conversation. Can a dialogue help solve an 'us vs. them' thinking? How?
- How can we envision depolarization? Can you give examples of possible solutions?
- Do they think it is possible to take action without polarizing? What could such a non-polarizing protest look like?

### 3.3.3 POLARIZATION: DEEPENING MATERIAL

The Dutch philosopher Bart Brandsma has done a lot of work on the topic of polarization. He developed a scheme that reveals the internal dynamics of polarization. In this section we discuss this scheme.

#### 3.3.3.1 GENERAL

According to Brandsma, polarization consists of three basic law has five main players or types of persons involved. Furthermore, there are four essential game changers to realize depolarization.

#### The three basic laws of polarization.

1. Polarization is a **thought construct**. Based on identity characteristics, oppositions are created in groups of people. Man vs. woman, left vs. right, etc.
1. Polarization fuels statements about the **identity of the opposites**. 'They don't want to understand', or 'they only want to do harm', are typical examples.
1. Polarization is a **dynamic of feeling**. Addressing what is emotionally involved is at least as important as arguing, reasoning, and factchecking. Talking about the identity of the other person is rarely truly factual.

#### The five main players

1. **Pushers** are the most visible group. These are the people who seek out and stir up debate, always daring to make extreme statements, and pressuring people in the middle to choose a side. Each pusher is stuck in their own right, and thinks they have an absolute hold on the truth.
2. **Joiners** are somewhat less visible. These are the followers of the pushers. They defend and support the pushers, but can more easily return to the neutral middle.
3. **The silent middle** is not visible. This is the group of people who feel the pressure to choose a side, but are often held back from doing so.
4. **Bridge builders** try to put themselves above the poles in order to connect, create understanding, and thus dissolve polarization. However, this can often encourage polarization, instead, when they start to be identified with one of the poles.

5. **Scapegoats** are the victims of radical polarization. They are identified as the culprits of a problem, and often have no defense against a maelstrom of blame. Both the bridge builder and the quiet middle can end up in this position.

#### **Four game changers for depolarization**

1. Change the **target audience**. Instead of fighting the poles, it is better to strengthen the middle.
2. Change the **topic**. Instead of talking about the identity of others, place the agenda of the middle at the front.
3. Change **positions**. Don't stand above the involved parties, but find a credible position in the middle.
4. Change the **tone**. Do not evaluate by speaking in terms of right or wrong, true or false, but address the dynamics of feeling within the debate.

#### **3.3.3.2 DIDACTICAL SUGGESTIONS**

**ASSIGNMENT.** The students can answer, classically, or by writing a paper, the following questions:

- Based on the extra information on polarization, do you think the school principal's conversation is depolarizing, or just deconflicting? Does such a conversation always help depolarize?
- Describe the tone/attitude of the three main characters: Ariella, Levi, and the school principal.
- Does the school principal apply the four game changers well?
- Do you recognize the five main roles in the story?
- What is meant by the statement, "polarization is a thought construct"? Explain in your own words.
- Can you give examples of statements about the identity of the other in polarized topics? The examples may come from personal experience.

## 3.4 THE BAL TASHCHIT-PROHIBITION

This part is **basic subject material**.

### 3.4.1 GENERAL

The environmental crisis raises important questions about the link between humans and nature. Which role do humans play in relation to nature? The answer to that question is an important piece of the puzzle to map out the encounter between humans and nature. Within the Jewish tradition we can distinguish at least two options: humans can behave as despots, or as caretakers. In the following we will treat this distinction.

The tension between the two clearly emerges in the story of the Garden of Eden. G-d creates Adam and Eve and gives them instructions on how to behave towards the natural world.

#### 3.4.1.1 GEN. 1:27-28

[27] So God created humankind in his own image; in the image of God he created him: male and female he created them.

[28] God blessed them: God said to them, "Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea, the birds in the air and every living creature that crawls on the earth."

#### 3.4.1.2 GEN. 2:15

[15] Adonai, God, took the person and put him in the garden of 'Eden to cultivate and care for it.

Both passages use different verbs to describe the actions of Adam and Eve. In the first passage Adam and Eve have to 'fill' the earth, 'subdue' it, and 'rule' over it. What comes to the fore in this passage is 'despotic behavior'. A despot is an autocrat who, without regard for the his subjects, dominates his realm. Here we see the accusing finger of Lynn White, Jr. looming up.

In the second passage, however, Adam and Eve seem to be assigned a different role. Again this is reflected in the use of particular verbs: Adam and Eve have to 'work' the earth and 'watch over' her. After all, Adam and Eve take care of nature in the name of G-d. So in the first passage nature seems to be the property of humans, to handle it as they see fit. In the second passage, however, humans are reminded that in the end everything is the creation, and the property, of G-d. That puts the importance of our position into perspective.



Figure 3.4  
Source: © ystewart  
henderson / Adobe Stock

### 3.4.2 THE BAL TASHCHIT PASSAGE

A literal reading of the Tanakh can lead to violence. If we read Gen. 1:18 literally, as Lynn White, Jr. does, we can come to the conclusion that the unbridled destruction of nature is permitted. The Tanakh, however, reveals a more complex relationship with nature. Many Judeo-ecological individuals and groups point out that the Tanakh is also concerned with the protection of nature. To argue this, they often refer to a certain prohibition: *bal taschit*.

In this section we first discuss the passage as we read it without context in the Torah. Afterwards we consider its symbolic and etymological backgrounds. Following this we put forward different interpretations of the commandment. We conclude this section with some didactic suggestions.

#### 3.4.2.1 DEUT. 20:19-20

[19] When, in making war against a town in order to capture it, you lay siege to it for a long time, you are not to destroy its trees, cutting them down with an axe. You can eat their fruit, so don't cut them down. After all, are the trees in the field human beings, so that you have to besiege them too?

[20] However, if you know that certain trees provide no food, you may destroy them and cut them down, in order to build siege-works against the town making war with you, until it falls.

#### 3.4.2.2 ETYMOLOGY AND SYMBOLISM

The verb '(don't) destroy' is derived from the Biblical Hebrew root sh.h.t. [destroy]. That word, *schachat*, is synonymous with the word *kilkul*, which means spoil or corrupt. Modern Hebrew translates sh.h.t. to: spoil, hurt, waste; destroy; sin; corrupt; murder.

**The word 'destroy' should therefore be understood in a broad sense, and is closely related to the notion of 'waste'!**



The passage mentions 'trees in the field'. This emphasis on the field, or *sadeh*, is striking. The field symbolizes everything that requires care before it can bear fruit. Furthermore, the symbol of the tree is not coincidental. A tree carries, within Jewish intellectual history, a lot of meaning. A tree can symbolize nature enabling (human) life through its function in planetary oxygen exchange. A tree can also symbolize growth and development. After all, trees continue to grow during their lives, retaining the ability to produce fruit. Finally, the tree can also symbolize the spiritually elevated person, such as the Torah scholar or *Tzaddik*.

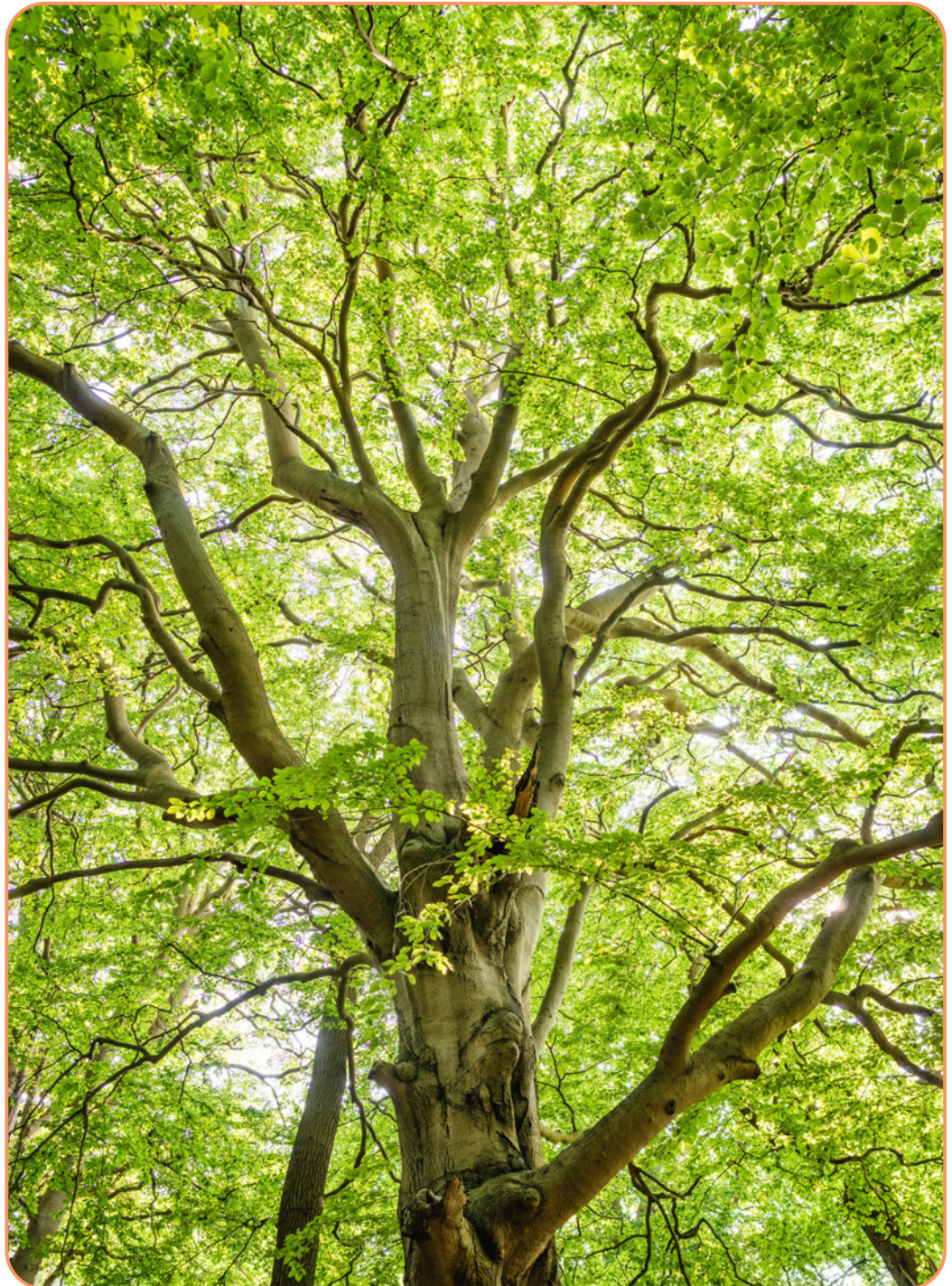


Figure 3.5  
Source: © Felix Mitterm / Pexels



### 3.4.3 INTERPRETATION OF THE BAL TASHCHIT PROHIBITION

The Tanakh's meanings are not always obvious. The Tanakh originated in a world that is very different from the present one. This makes understanding and interpreting more difficult. And yet the Tanakh is rich in meaning. It is a common saying that the Torah has seventy faces. Rabbis have developed various techniques to interpret and decipher all those meanings. Those techniques are like keys that open the lock of the Tanakh.

#### 3.4.3.1 HOW TO INTERPRET? KAL V'HOMER!

One of those interpretation keys is *kal v'homer*. That literally means: 'from difficult to easy'. In the Tanakh we often find commandments and prohibitions in very specific situations. *Kal v'homer* shows us how we can deduce something from a less probable situation for a more probable situation. Or in other words: what does a specific case tell us about how to behave in general?

The biblical prohibition *bal tashchit* forbids, in times of war, to cut down fruit trees to gather wood for a siege. We already noted how the image of the 'fruit trees' was not chosen accidentally. The image is especially important as a symbol for the natural environment, our life support system. Rabbis therefore started to apply the prohibition in a broader sense, making it applicable to all kinds of useful materials, objects, and resources for humans, and even to the human body. That movement, from an exceptional, specific situation to a general one, is *kal v'homer*.

#### 3.4.3.2 BAL TASHCHIT: A UTILITY ASSESSMENT

Keith Wolff, in his book *Bal Tashchit: The Jewish Prohibition against Needless Destruction*, examined the rabbinic interpretations of the *bal tashchit* prohibition. He concludes that *bal tashchit* protects nature, but not unconditionally. There is always a trade-off or assessment. Thus, **the prohibition is gradual, not absolute!** The focus is, first and foremost, on what something potentially provides, not on its existence per se.

The more something is of use, or produces benefit, the more protection it enjoys. Human life, the body and health, enjoy the most protection. This is followed by objects that are useful more than once, and finally by objects that are useful only once. An apple tree produces multiple apples, while one apple can only be consumed once. So, an apple tree should receive more protection. This also means that the more knowledge mankind has about the natural environment, and thus of the utility that the natural environment provides, the greater the scope of the prohibition.

### 3.4.3.3 BAL TASHCHIT: BEYOND THE UTILITY ASSESSMENT

With the previous, widespread interpretation of *bal tashchit* we encounter a problem: the focus on profit or utility can very quickly turn into a focus on (economic) profit solely for the sake of profit. When everything revolves around utility, we forget the fundamental respect for all life. Such a kind of thinking can sacrifice sustainability on the altar of profit.

So, contemporary rabbis do not always agree with the previous interpretation of *bal tashchit*. They point out that only later rabbis began to focus on the potential profit or utility. The Torah, they argue, defends a different ethos:

“What seems to have been missed in past rabbinic interpretation of *bal tashchit* is that the rule given in the Torah is both literally and fundamentally about sustainability – about what sustains you.”

[...]

However, if we incorporate the spirit of the Torah, we can go far beyond such utilitarian measurements. The Torah after all doesn't just protect the trees when it says, “Is the tree of the field a person, to come before you in the siege?” It ascribes a kind of subjectivity to them.

More than this, the deepest Torah guidance is that we must respect the sources of life. That spirit is expressed in so many ways – including not just in *bal tashchit*, but also burying the blood/soul of a wild animal one has slaughtered, never eating blood, which represents the life force, and never combining milk, the source of life, with meat. Life – all life – is the purpose of Creation.

- Rabbi David Seidenberg

### 3.4.4 DIDACTIC SUGGESTIONS

**ASSIGNMENT.** This module mentions the term “despotism”: the behavior of a ruler who rules purely out of self-interest, without regard for his or her subjects. This definition makes it clear that it is a political term, but the term can also be used metaphorically to refer to any careless, inconsiderate act, possibly with destructive consequences. We can this way act toward nature.

The students can reflect on this metaphoric definition of despotic behavior. In class, possibly by means of a mind map, examples can be listed of a careless treatment of nature.

- Do the students think that the world sometimes treats nature carelessly? Or do they recognize this in their own (family or societal) environment?
- Do they themselves sometimes display ‘despotism’ in relation to nature? If so, in what ways?

**ASSIGNMENT.** Let the students first read this Talmud passage that deals with the bal tashchit prohibition and then answer the question. How does the Babylonian Talmud apply the *kal v’homer principle*?

#### 3.4.4.1 THE TALMUD PASSAGE – KIDDUSHIN 32A

Whoever breaks vessels or rips up garments, destroys a building, stops up a fountain, or ruins food is guilty of violating the prohibition of bal tashchit.

Difficult: for a siege you need wood, and yet you can’t just cut down fruit trees.

Easy: in everyday situations you can easily destroy objects or food, so you shouldn’t do it.

**ASSIGNMENT.** Let the students answer the following questions or carry out assignments on the basis of Rabbi David Seidenberg’s article. If the text turns out to be too difficult to comprehend on their own, the teacher is free to go over the article in class, and then to guide the students more closely.

Rabbi David Seidenberg writes: The Torah after all doesn’t just protect the trees when it says, “Is the tree of the field a person, to come before you in the siege?” It ascribes a kind of subjectivity to them.”

- Think with the students about what Seidenberg means by ‘subjectivity of trees’. Let the students do research around the term ‘subjectivity’ and learn it independently.
- Do trees have as much right to life as people, or are they ‘less important’? Do they have a similar point of view concerning other phenomena of nature?

**ASSIGNMENT.** Let the students read the following passage from Rabbi David Seidenberg's article. Afterwards, the following questions can be discussed.

David Seidenberg writes: "More than this, the deepest Torah guidance is that we must respect the sources of life. That spirit is expressed in so many ways – including not just in bal tashchit, but also burying the blood/soul of a wild animal one has slaughtered, never eating blood, which represents the life force, and never combining milk, the source of life, with meat. Life – all life – is the purpose of Creation."

- Let the students mark/underline what they do not understand, and ask questions about it.
- Do they agree with Rabbi Seidenberg's interpretation of these passages?
- How do they feel about this passage?
- In what ways do they try to show respect for every life, for all aspects of Creation? Do they understand what Rabbi David Seidenberg means by this?

**ASSIGNMENT.** The students can answer the following questions.

- **What is the *bal tashchit* passage literally about?**

The destruction of fruit trees (orchards), during a siege in times of war.

- **Is *bal tashchit* a positive or negative commandment?**

It is a negative commandment, or prohibition, since it prohibits certain behaviors.

- **What does *bal tashchit* mean? Can you explain its etymological links?**

Bal tashchit literally means 'don't destroy', and comes from the etymological root sh.h.t., which is linked to the Hebrew word for corrupting: kilkul. So destroying is linked to wasting!

- Explain the *kal v'homer* principle using your own words.

Kal v'homer means from 'difficult to easy' or from 'exceptional to probable (circumstances)'. If a certain commandment already counts in exceptional situations, it certainly counts in everyday, more common situations.



Figure 3.6  
Source: © Markus Spiske /  
Pexels

## 3.5 CATHERINE CHALIER: IN THE LORD'S TRAILS

This part is **basic subject material**.

### 3.5.1 GENERAL

The *bal tashchit* prohibition teaches us to deal with nature in a utilitarian way. The central question is: what yields the most good/utility/profit? As shown above, human health was seen by rabbis to be the highest good. However, we can also approach the relationship between Judaism and nature from a different angle. Catherine Chalier, a Jewish philosopher, formulates an approach that is very different from any profit maximization or utility assessment. Her central theme is that, since nature has been touched by the same breath of creation as humans, humans and nature have a common destiny. Chalier, in other words, also starts from the covenant between G-d and man.

According to Chalier, G-d presents itself as a Trail in nature. That does not imply that G-d exists in nature. Through the act of creation He separates Himself from the world, and stands above it. In that sense, the glory of G-d is that He placed someone in the world who can seek Him in it, and can answer Him. Mankind's task, therefore, is to search for the traces of G-d and to bring their meaning back to life. This entails viewing all beings from the same perspective: as a creation that fundamentally refers to G-d, the Creator.

This perspective requires the right attitude. First of all, we must not be swallowed up by our own selfish interests. Chalier places modesty and disinterest against self-interest. Contemplation on nature lifts us above our own, private interests, and makes us think and reflect on something outside of us. Secondly, nature has to be read as a 'Book' that we have to interpret in order to know Him. After all, the Creator of nature and the giver of the Torah is the same G-d. It is precisely the Tanakh that commissions us to look at nature as the work of G-d, in which He left His mark. Nature is just as much a riddle that demands interpretation; the truth that emerges from it is equally a revelation of the Word of G-d.

This perspective leads us to a new meaning of the notion of 'subjects'. The book of Genesis, as shown above, gives the message to Adam and Eve to subdue nature and rule it as a despot. According to Chalier we should not interpret this 'subduing' as an abuse, exploitation, or a reduction to utility. What it means is that we find the Trail of Creation in what we control and cultivate. This recognition reminds us that this world is not the property of humans. G-d placed Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden to take care of it in His name.

### 3.5.2 DIDACTIC SUGGESTIONS

**Assignment.** The students can answer the following questions.

- **What do you think about Chalier's interpretation?**

Open question

- **Right or wrong: According to Chalier, The Traces of G-d are proof that G-d is in nature.**

The Traces are proof that nature is G-d's Creation.

- **Explain in your own words the difference between Chalier's philosophy and the utility assessment interpretation of the bal taschit commandment.**

Chalier attaches great importance to disinterest, the focus on something outside of us instead of our own interests, in order to experience nature with the right attitude. After all, a correct experience of nature recognizes nature as an equal element of Creation. In other words, it is not about approaching nature as a system we can exploit, but about recognizing its shared destiny with humans.

- **Are there similarities between the interpretation of Catherine Chalier and that of Rabbi David Seidenberg?**

They complement each other in their attempt to move away from a quasi-economic profit maximization concerning nature. A proper Jewish attitude, according to them, approaches nature as something that is of value in itself.

## 3.6 CLIMATE ISSUES

**3.6.1 GENERAL** This part is **basic subject material**.

The vast majority of the scientific community agrees that we are finding ourselves in a climate crisis. The main reasons are considered to be a declining biodiversity and an increasing global temperature.

Global warming can have serious consequences for many ecosystems: heat waves, extreme drought, increasingly severe hurricanes, severe flooding, and so on. Due to the melting of glaciers, sea levels are likely to rise even further. In addition, the oceans may heat and acidify, which will have an effect on the underwater world and water cycle. Changes in the water world and water cycle may affect the availability of water. In addition to flooding, there may therefore be a lack of water in some places. In that case, a lack of fresh water leads to less irrigation, reducing harvests, with negative consequences for many communities that depend on these harvests.

The ecological crisis also has social repercussions. On the one hand, vulnerable sections of the world population are affected more severely by climate change, since they lack the (economic) means to adapt and protect themselves. On the other hand, the climate discussion is leading to an increasing polarization. Examples are the ecologists vs. the oligarchy, the protesting students vs. the government, the scientists vs. the conservatists.

One possible solution for climate change is sustainability. Sustainability means that systems remain productive and diverse indeterminately. To do this, we must take care of the system that ensure our existence and personal development. Nature, as we can infer from above, is this system.



### 3.6.1 DIDACTICAL SUGGESTIONS

**ASSIGNMENT.** The students can reread Rabbi David Seidenberg's article and/or the section on Catherine Chaliar, and write a short paper in response to one of the following questions.

- Does Rabbi David Seidenberg connect the bal taschit prohibition to the concept of sustainability? How does he do so? Is he convincing?

Is Catherine Chaliar's Jewish philosophy of nature aimed at sustainability?

**ASSIGNMENT.** At the end of the lesson, have the students write down in a sentence or short text what they have learned. What stays with them? What did they find important? Are they going to change something in their lives? Are they going to encourage others, e.g. family, to make that change with them? At the end of the lesson they can hand over the small text or sentence.



Figure 3.7  
Source: © Gustavo Cruz /  
Pexels

## 3.7 GLOSSARY

### **Consumption**

Consumption refers to the use of goods and services.

### **Ecosystem**

An ecosystem is another word for a natural community, in which a collection of species or organisms within a certain environment exist in relation to each other. An ecosystem is a part of the general natural environment. Well-known examples of ecosystems are forests, lakes, rivers, and so on.

### **Migration**

Migration indicates the movement of a group from one location to another.

### **Utility assessment or calculus.**

A utility assessment attempts to determine in a discussion what produces the most utility. The word utility means more than just usefulness, and thus must be understood in a broad sense. Other words for utility are: good, benefit, gain, and advantage. Utility can also be used in ethical discussions. The good is then equated with the most useful. For example: what makes the greatest number of people happy, and the smallest number of people unhappy?

Sometimes one speaks of a utility calculus. Calculus is another term for calculation. So a utility calculus is a calculation, or consideration, of what produces the most good, utility, or benefit.

# 3.8 TRANSCRIPT OF THE VIDEO

## 1 INT LIVING ROOM NIGHT

We see a family sitting in their living room. They're watching TV. There is a news reporting on the wildfires in Australia. We zoom in on the girl's face looking intrigued.

Father: Wait, is it THAT late? It's time for bed, Ariella.

Ariella (indignant): Wait, what? No! It was just getting interesting!

Mother: You've already stayed up later than usual. You've got school tomorrow!

Father (spurring on): Come on!

## 2 INT ROOM NIGHT

Ariella goes to her room. She is laying in bed, with her eyes wide open, staring at the ceiling. After a while she gets up and walks to the door. She opens the door carefully and enters the hall. It's dark; everyone has gone to bed. She stealthily walks through the hall. She enters another door.

## 3 INT COMPUTER ROOM NIGHT

Ariella takes a seat behind a computer. She starts looking up things like 'climate change' and 'climate crises'. The camera zooms in on her eyes while we see images mirrored in them, getting bigger, all of them depicting environmental disasters and climate strikes. Through the images, the words 'bal taschit' pop up.

Teacher: Ariella, wake up!

The background scene changes to that of a classroom. Ariella, who was dozing off, suddenly jumps upright. The class is laughing. One boy, Levi, looks concerned.

Ariella: I'm sorry! I wasn't sleeping!

Teacher: I understand the classes can be boring, but try to stay awake either way.

Ariella: I will! Sorry!

The school bell rings.

Teacher: All right, time for a break!

## 4 EXT PLAY GROUND DAY

The kids walk out of class, unto the playground.

Levi: How come you're so tired, Ariella?

Ariella: I've been up all night. There was a news reporting on those fires in Australia and...

The conversation becomes muted while we overhear another conversation taking place.

Student A: Well, that's a shame, do they HAVE to cut down the trees?

Ariella overhears the conversation.

Ariella: Huh? Sorry, what are you guys talking about?

Student A: They are planning on cutting down a part of the forest next to school.

Ariella: Why? How do you know this?

Student B: There's a problem with the lack of parking space. My dad's on the school board. They're working with the city council to find a solution.

Ariella: And they decided to cut down trees?

Student B: I guess so...

Ariella: Well, we can't let that happen. I have an idea...

## 5 EXT SCHOOL ENTRANCE DAY

A couple of days pass. Levi arrives at school. There's a group of students, all holding up signs. He recognizes Ariella, standing in front of the group, holding a petition. Everyone in the group is wearing green badges.

Levi: What's going on here?

Ariella: We're protesting! After hearing about the school's plans I've decided to take matters into my own hands. I've made a petition! And look, already ten people signed up!

Levi: Oh. So what are you going to do with this?

Ariella: Send it to the principal. And we already made some plans for if he doesn't want to listen.

Levi: Like what?

Ariella: He'll be sure to get the message if it's painted on the school walls... We got other things planned as well, but I can only tell you after you signed up and got your green badge. You wouldn't want a red one, would you? Here you go.

Ariella holds up the petition in front of Levi.

Levi (hesitant): Uhm... I don't know...

Ariella: What's wrong? As a Jew you're supposed to know how important this is!

Levi: What does that mean?

Ariella: Oh, come on, the Tanakh clearly forbids the destruction and waste of nature. There is literally a command called *bal taschit*. Do you even know what that means?

Principal: I do!

Ariella and Levi turn around in surprise. They see a man in a suit sizing them up.

Principal: Shalom!

Ariella and Levi: Shalom!

Ariella: I apologize, I didn't see you.

Principal: I have an idea: why don't you two join me in my office? Let's talk about this little revolution!

Ariella: Okay...

Principal (turning to the group): All right, everyone! Time to get to your classrooms!

## 6 INT PRINCIPAL OFFICE DAY

The principal enters the school building, followed by Levi and Ariella.

Principal: Take a seat. You two had quite the interesting discussion going on. Ariella, would you like to tell me what's going on?

Ariella: We heard about the school's plans to cut down the trees. As Jewish people, we can't let that happen. It's forbidden.

Principal: Oh yes, you mentioned the famous *bal taschit*-command. What can you tell me about it?

Ariella: It's a command from the Book of Genesis that means: 'You shall not destroy'. It's a negative command because it prohibits you from doing something. In this case, it prohibits the school from carelessly destroying the forest.

Principal: I see. Well, this might ease your mind: the school board and city council have agreed to create a new bus stop. No trees will be cut down.

Ariella: Oh, well, that's goo -

Principal: But that's not the important issue I want to talk about. Why were some students wearing green badges, and did others get red ones?

Ariella: So that we know who's on our side...

Principal: Why did you need to create sides?

Ariella: Because the *bal taschit*-command is absolute! It's pretty simple! I've read a lot about it.

Principal: Have you read the Torah-passage in which you can find the command?

Ariella doesn't respond. She never did. The principal opens one of the slides of his desk and grabs the bible out of it.

Principal: "When, in making war against a town in order to capture it, you lay siege to it for a long time, you are not to destroy its trees, cutting them down with an axe. You can eat their fruit, so don't cut them down. After all, are the trees in the field human beings, so that you have to besiege them too?"

Levi: So it's about not cutting down fruit trees in times of war, as long as they are still useful!

Ariella: But then why did I find the command being applied to other situations?

Principal: Because the Tanakh can mean many things, and we can discuss these different meanings. Discussion and interpretation is the way we learn! So protesting can be a good way to raise concerns, and ask important questions loud and clear, but let's not turn on each other just yet.

Ariella: Okay... I'll talk to the others. I'm sorry. But the trees are safe?

Principal: They definitely are. If not, I would just replant them in my office!

They all laugh. Levi and Ariella are visibly relieved.

Principal: All right, let's get to class, you two. I'll speak to the teacher. Chop chop!

Ariella looks up at those last two words.

Principal: I don't mean that literally!



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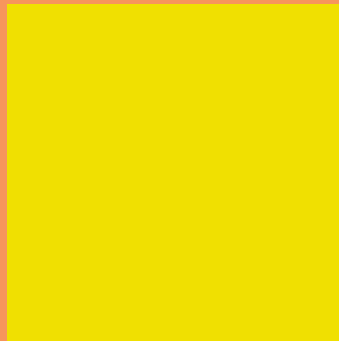
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WHEN ENCOUNTER  
BECOMES CONFLICT: JUST  
WAR AND JUST PEACE

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## MODULE FOUR

# WHEN ENCOUNTER BECOMES CONFLICT: JUST WAR AND JUST PEACE

## 4.1 INTRODUCTION

### 4.1.1 GENERAL INTRODUCTION

This manual is intended to be a didactic framework for the topic 'When encounter becomes conflict: just war and just peace'. The material is suitable for age groups from 12 to 18 years. The module gives the opportunity to the teacher or facilitator to elaborate the theme tailored to the class group.

The module focuses primarily on the theme of Holy War, but also covers topics such as pacifism, messianism, etc. The Torah and Talmud provide the interpretive lines for the lesson. The teacher or facilitator is free to incorporate didactic impulses from this handbook to suit the students. It is possible to relate the material to current discussions and conflicts surrounding Zionism.

The manual for the students, together with the viewing of the video clip, takes one hour. The topic can be further explored afterwards, at the teacher's discretion, with the additional material from this handbook.

### 4.1.2 CONTENT OF THE MANUAL

This module focuses on how Judaism deals with the theme of Holy War. Judaism does not have a comprehensive rulebook regarding warfare. The Talmud does provide paradigms for thinking about G-dly sanctioned war.

The manual distinguishes between 'basic learning material' and 'in-depth learning material'. The student's manual and the teacher's manual run parallel in terms of basic learning material, but the teacher's manual has additional assignments under the title 'in-depth assignments'. The in-depth material offers additional material for the teacher or supervisor to elaborate on certain themes.

The basic material starts with the tense relationship between pacifism and Holy War. That tension relationship forms the prelude to a discussion of how the Talmud deals with the war stories in the Torah. The Talmud develops a typology of war that can guide the discussion around war. The in-depth material examines The Three Oaths, the debate between Zionism and anti-Zionism, messianism, and International Humanitarian Law.



## 4.2 WAR AND JUDAISM



Figure 2.1  
The Video Clip

**4.2.1 A STORY** A school trip brings Ariella to a war museum. Struck by the tragedy of war, she gets lost in the museum. There she encounters a mysterious Jewish janitor. Together they discuss the Jewish tradition of war.

**4.2.2 DISCUSSION** This section is **optional**.

The following questions can be asked of the students.

- Do the students recognize Ariella's emotions?
- Have they ever been to a war museum?
- Have they thought about war many times?
- Do they feel the same tension regarding the wars in the Torah and the ideal of peace?

## 4.3 WAR AND PEACE IN JUDAISM

This section is **basic learning material**.

### 4.3.1 GENERAL

War and peace are two high-profile themes within Judaism. On the one hand, the Torah emphasizes the absolute importance of peace and harmony between and within all peoples. The word 'shalom,' which includes the meaning of 'peace,' is a central example of this. On the other hand, the Torah contains many war stories. War and peace form a dichotomy within the same Jewish religion.

This dichotomy can also be represented **theoretically**. On the one hand, there exists the position of **pacifism**. According to pacifism, war or violence is never allowed. An escalating conflict must always be resolved peacefully; a violent attack must not be met with violence. In its most extreme representation, we also speak of radical pacifism. On the other side is the theory of **Holy War**. A Holy War is waged because of a divine commandment or for religious purposes. Within this theory, collective violence is sanctioned if it is religiously or divinely commanded. In addition, intermediate positions exist. In the West there is the theory of Just War, which establishes rules according to which war may be lawfully waged. It is often seen as holding the middle ground between radical pacifism and Holy War. Judaism has no similar theory.

### 4.3.2 PACIFISM AND HOLY WAR

**Pacifism is an attitude or doctrine that seeks peace and disapproves of the use of force to resolve conflicts (between nations).** Political power building is out of the question. According to this doctrine, for example, a nation-state cannot introduce military service. This doctrine does not derive from any person within Jewish history. Judaism is not a pacifist religion, but harmony, peace, and justice are central to Judaism. Pacifism also raises many questions of interest to Judaism. How do we handle violent passages? Can pacifism inspire? Throughout history, Judaism has often prioritized indulgence and passivity. Can we see those values as pacifist? And at the same time, we can ask the critical question: is pacifism always something positive? Isn't self-defense, for example, just?

**Holy War is a form of collective violence that, according to the doers, is seen as divinely sanctioned.** In the Torah we find many violent passages. Joshua is commanded to conquer the Promised Land with great violence. In addition to these wars, there is also the war against Amalek. King David, in turn, is known for his expansionist wars. Many of the wars, such as Joshua's War of Conquest, were commanded by G-d and thus sanctioned. The reading of the book of Esther, in which the Jews commit mass murder, is the central event of the Purim festival. The Torah also describes G-d as a warrior, and the human warriors (Joshua, David, Esther, etc.) are depicted as

heroes. Violence in the name of G-d is thus a common theme in Judaism. Judaism has its own history with the phenomenon of Holy War.

### 4.3.3 JUDAISM AND JUST WAR

Despite the presence of war stories in the Torah, the Rabbis did not establish a comprehensive 'Just War'-theory as Augustine of Hippo and Thomas Aquinas did for the Christian tradition. A theory of just war formulates principles that determine under what conditions a war may be started (*ius ad bellum*). In addition, such a theory also formulates some principles that must be maintained during the war (*ius in bello*). There is no one or 'the' theory of just war. Throughout time, this theory has been adapted each time to the relevant context. The principles formulated are aimed at limiting violence and suffering as much as possible. In other words, this is a war that can be 'justified' depending on the time, place, and context.



Figure 4.2  
Source: © Syda Productions  
Adobe Stock

#### 4.3.4 DIDACTIC SUGGESTIONS

**ASSIGNMENT.** Students are introduced to the concepts of 'pacifism' and 'holy war'. Can they explain these concepts in their own words? What are their views on these concepts?

- Describe pacifism in your own words.
- Would you describe Judaism as 'pacifist'? Why yes/no?
- Are there pacifist ideas in Judaism?
- Holy War means collective violence in the name of G-d. What is your opinion of Holy War? Is Holy War just?
- Do you think Holy War also exists within Judaism?

**ASSIGNMENT.** Students choose a proposition and argue for or against it. The assignment can be made individually through a paper. It is also possible to make the assignment in groups. The groups are divided into pro and contra, and each is given a certain amount of time to formulate arguments. The teacher is free to appoint a 'moderator', who will moderate the discussion and pay attention to the speaking time for each side. Possible propositions:

- "War is never just."
- "Peace can only exist alongside war."
- "Never do anything in a war that makes reconciliation impossible afterwards."
- "A world without violence is not realistic."
- "Violence begins or ends with yourself."
- "Even in times of peace, it is important for a country to invest in weapons."
- "Risking your own life for a stranger in another country is useless."

**DEEPENING ASSIGNMENT.** Students receive a current newspaper article about war. The material found can be discussed in class. Which sides are fighting the war? Why did the war start? Who is the aggressor? Who is the victim? Are they looking for a peaceful solution? If so, in what way?

## 4.4 MITZVAH AND DISCRETIONARY WAR

This section is **basic study material**.

### 4.4.1 GENERAL

Judaism thus has no comprehensive theory to which reference can be made in discussions of war and peace. However, paradigms for thinking about war have been developed in the Jewish tradition. Current Jewish discussions of (holy) war, often in connection with the state of Israel, always refer back to these paradigms. Before looking at these, we first turn to a Torah passage that serves as a starting point for the Talmudic discussions. In the book of Deuteronomy 20 we find a brief discussion of how to wage war.

### DEUTERONOMY 20

[5] “Then the officials will speak to the soldiers. They are to say, ‘Is there a man here who has built a new house, but hasn’t dedicated it yet? He should go back home now; otherwise he may die fighting, and another man will dedicate it. [6] “Is there a man here who has planted a vineyard, but hasn’t yet made use of its fruit? He should go back home; otherwise he may die fighting, and another man will use it. [7] “Is there a man here who is engaged to a woman, but hasn’t married her yet? He should go back home; otherwise he may die fighting, and another man will marry her.’ [8] “The officials will then add to what they have said to the soldiers: ‘Is there a man here who is afraid and fainthearted? He should go back home; otherwise his fear may demoralize his comrades as well.’ [9] When the officials have finished speaking with the soldiers, commanders are to be appointed to lead the army. [10] “When you advance on a town to attack it, first offer it terms for peace. [11] If it accepts the terms for peace and opens its gates to you, then all the people there are to be put to forced labor and work for you. [12] However, if they refuse to make peace with you but prefer to make war against you, you are to put it under siege. [13] When *Adonai* your God hands it over to you, you are to put every male to the sword. [14] However, you are to take as booty for yourself the women, the little ones, the livestock, and everything in the city — all its spoil. Yes, you will feed on your enemies’ spoil, which *Adonai* your God has given you. [15] This is what you are to do to all the towns which are at a great distance from you, which are not the towns of these nations. [16] “As for the towns of these peoples, which *Adonai* your God is giving you as your inheritance, you are not to allow anything that breathes to live. [17] Rather you must destroy them completely — the Hitti, the Emori, the Kena’ani, the P’rizi, the Hivi and the Y’vusi — as *Adonai* your God has ordered you; [18] so that they won’t teach you to follow their abominable practices, which they do for their gods, thus causing you to sin against *Adonai* your God.

This passage addresses four issues. First, a peace offering must precede any siege. Thus, the Torah emphasizes the importance of peace. Second, the Torah recognizes four valid reasons for deferments: a recently planted vineyard, a recent engagement, a newly built house, and fear. And third, G-d communicates the reason why the peoples of the Promised Land should be wiped out: their idolatry leads to unacceptable behavior. Other Torah passages mention that this unacceptable behavior includes human sacrifice and even cannibalism. G-d does not want His people to be defiled by these peoples and begin similar practices. Fourth, the text makes a distinction between cities that are part of the Promised Land and cities outside of it. Within the Promised Land, the Israelites must act harsher.

The **Mishna** starts from the Deuteronomy passage shown above. In it, four valid reasons for deferring military service are discussed. In the first six chapters, the Mishna elaborates on the question of in what cases these four reasons for deferment are valid. To what idea or theory does this refer? (Misjna Sotah 2)

To answer this question, the Mishna makes an important, fundamental **distinction between two types of war**. The first type is the **optional or discretionary war**. A discretionary war is a war at one's discretion, which is not the result of a Divine commandment. In a discretionary war, the grounds for postponement of military service are valid. The second type is the Commanded War. By this the Mishna means: directly commanded by G-d. We can somewhat call this type of war a Holy War, even though the word Holy War itself does not appear in Judaism. For a **Commanded War**, the reasons for deferments are invalid. Thus, the Mishna defines a war that is so important that everyone must participate in it.

#### 4.4.2 THE JERUSALEM TALMUD

The Jerusalem Talmud defines a **discretionary war as one that Israel initiates**. Israel is not commanded to attack anyone. And since the Promised Land has already been conquered, further wars serve only to expand the territory. A commanded war is obligatory; everyone must participate in it. According to the Jerusalem Talmud, only the wars of Joshua and defensive wars are commanded.

The Jerusalem Talmud recognizes the right of self-defense. For the ancient Israelites, this meant that since the Promised Land had been conquered, they now had to protect it. In addition, there is an important conclusion that can be drawn from the Jerusalem Talmud. According to the Jerusalem Talmud, only defensive wars and the Wars of Conquest of Joshua were commanded and thus sacred. However, those wars took place thousands of years ago. The Jerusalem Talmud thus seems to state Holy Wars are not possible today.



### 4.4.3 THE BABYLONIAN TALMUD

The Babylonian Talmud has a slightly different perspective. This perspective became predominant. The Babylonian Talmud agrees with the Jerusalem Talmud on two points: a discretionary war is one that Israel initiates, and the Conquest Wars of Joshua were commanded, obligatory wars. However, the Babylonian Talmud does not mention defensive wars. It does give an additional example of discretionary wars: **David's wars of expansion**. Expansive wars serve only to expand territory, and are thus discretionary. A separate status is given to **preemptive strikes**. A preemptive strike is a military action that aims to first weaken the enemy to prevent a hostile attack. preemptive strikes are a gray area. Whether they are ordered depends on the degree of certainty with which can be determined that an attack is coming. The Talmud seems to suggest that, if this can be determined, preemptive strikes count as *milchemet mitzvah*.

**From this we can summarize that the Talmud has three different approaches to the typology of war categories.**

1. First, the Jerusalem Talmud suggests looking at the categories from the perspective of the historical wars in the Torah. The expansive wars of King David were discretionary. Only the Conquest Wars of Joshua were commanded.
2. A second approach is to view the categories as a division between wars initiated by the Israelites (discretionary) and defensive wars (commanded/mandatory) on the one hand.
3. According to the Babylonian Talmud, third, we can think according to the perspective of whether there is a preemptive attack. A preemptive attack is discretionary. In summary, we can express it as follows:

	Discretionary	Commanded
Mishnah	Deferments	No deferments
Jerusalem Talmud	Israel initiates	Joshua's Wars and defensive wars
Babylonian Talmud	Israel initiates, David's Wars (preemptive strikes)	Joshua's Wars (preemptive strikes)

War in the ancient Near East proceeded differently than today. Optional wars had to be authorized by the Sanhedrin, the Jewish court. In addition, the oracle Urim VeTumim had to be consulted (Babylonian Talmud Berakhot 3b, Sanhedrin 16b). Thus, the Jewish people were only allowed to go to war if the Sanhedrin and the oracle allowed it. A leader or king did not have free rein! Today, the Sanhedrin and the oracle no longer exist.

Diaspora communities do not have their own army. Therefore, Jewish discussions of war are usually about the state of Israel. Not every Jew is equally concerned with the state of Israel, but a healthy discussion of war and peace can help us understand the world better. The distinction between commanded and optional wars still matters today, and they help explain why certain wars are important to some Jews. Whether a war of Israel is commanded or optional is a contemporary point of debate. The Talmud gives us food for thought.

This concludes the discussion of war typology as found in the Talmud. This Talmudic discussion, and the passage from the book of Deuteronomy, are the starting point for thinking about war in Judaism. The central question is: when do we speak of a divinely legitimized war? By primarily seeing only Joshua's wars as commanded, the Talmud seems to limit holy wars to the past. According to this perspective, Holy War is no longer a real possibility.

#### 4.4.4 DIDACTIC SUGGESTIONS

**ASSIGNMENT.** Through the following questions, students can reflect on the material introduced in this chapter.

A commanded war

- Is a war ordered by a political leader.
- Allows people to refuse to participate.
- Is commanded by G-d and allows no exceptions.

A discretionary war

- Is a war commanded by G-d
- Is a war that allows deferments of military service
- Is a war that does not allow for deferment of military service



Right or wrong. According to the Talmud, future wars are possible. Please justify your answer.

The answer depends on how you interpret the question. If the question refers to ordered wars, then the answer is that they are no longer possible. If the question refers to discretionary wars, the answer remains undecided. The Talmud says nothing about the possibility of future discretionary wars.

Is the concept of a 'Commanded War' credible? Do you believe in it? Why do/don't you?

Open question

Is a preemptive strike justifiable? Why yes/no? In which cases are they?

Open question

The Sanhedrin and the oracle Urim VeTumim used to play a major role in the decision to start a war. Who do you think has the right to start a war? The government, a large group of residents, rabbis, ...

Open question

The Torah states that if hostile cities do not accept a peace settlement, the male inhabitants may all be killed. In your opinion, are there any rules for how a war may proceed? Or is all violence permitted?

Open question

**DEEPENING ASSIGNMENT.** Students study a current conflict (e.g., Zionism vs. anti-Zionism), possibly through a newspaper article. Based on the article, they answer the following questions and have a group discussion.

- What type of war is it? Can we apply the Jewish categories of war?
- Is it a case of self-defense?
- Who is the aggressor? Are there innocent victims?

The class can be divided into two groups. One group seeks arguments pro war, the other seeks arguments contra. The students conduct the discussion and try to come to a conclusion. The in-depth learning material about the International Humanitarian Law and/or Fackenheim's 614th commandment can supplement the discussion.



Figure 4.3  
Source: © Georgiy  
Adobe Stock

## 4.5 MAIMONIDES VERSUS NACHMANIDES: DEEPENING SECTION

### 4.5.1 GENERAL

The two Talmuds were composed around 200 AD (JT) and 500 AD (BT). Also afterwards, in the Middle Ages, this typology of war was reflected upon. In this deepening section for Chapter 4, we will briefly discuss Maimonides' and Nachmanides' position regarding the categories of war and the commandment to settle in the Promised Land. The material in this section ties in with Chapter 6 on the Three Oaths and the discussion around Zionism.

Moses ben Maimon (1138-1204), or Maimonides, largely agrees with the Talmud, but does not mention the wars of Joshua as an example of commanded war. Instead, he considers the wars against Amalek and seven the nations of Canaan as commanded. In addition, Maimonides agrees with the Jerusalem Talmud that defensive wars are also commanded. Discretionary wars are wars to expand territory, for prestige. The wars of King David are examples of this type of war.

For Maimonides, the wars against Amalek and Canaan are universal, even though these peoples no longer exist. These wars thus take on a spiritual quality. For Maimonides, they testify to the Holy Will to oppose idolatry. Idolatry he associates with immorality. The concrete land of Israel is thus less important. That context is too particular. Maimonides therefore does not mention the commandment to settle in the Promised Land in his *Book of Commandments*, in which he discusses the 613 commandments (BT Shabbat 87a).

Moses ben Nahman (1194-1270), or Nachmanides, criticizes Maimonides' view. Maimonides, Nachmanides says, makes the commandment too abstract. The commandment is specific and refers to a concrete area. The Promised Land must be in the hands of Jews, according to him. Any other people may be driven away unless they accept a peace settlement and the Seven Noachide Laws. An important nuance is that Nachmanides states that the commandment does not automatically mean violent conquest. Simply settling the Land of Israel, cultivating the land and forming Jewish communities fulfills the commandment. Nachmanides himself set the example by moving to the land of Israel at a late age.

The debate between Maimonides and Nachmanides is still important today. Orthodox Zionists quote from Nachmanides to argue for their position. At the same time, they have wasted a lot of ink on the question why Maimonides ignored the commandment to settle in the Land of Israel.

	Discretionary	Commanded
Mishnah	Deferments	No deferments
Jerusalem Talmud	Israel initiates	Joshua's Wars and defensive war
Babylonian Talmud	Israel initiates, David's Wars (preemptive strikes)	Joshua's Wars
Maimonides	Israel initiates, to gain territory, for prestige	Amalek, the seven nations of Canaan, defensive war
Nachmanides	/	Settling and living in the Promised Land

**ASSIGNMENT.** A group discussion is possible based on the discussion between Maimonides and Nachmanides. The following questions can serve to guide the discussion.

- Who do they think is right?
- Which interpretation is the most credible?
- How do they view Nachmanides' belief that settling down is sufficient?
- Why is Maimonides against idolatry?
- Is idolatry still something a Jew must fight against?
- Why is it/is it not? Does Nachmanides allow for war?

## 4.6 MESSIANISM

### 4.6.1 GENERAL This section is **in-depth study material**.

The topic of war and peace brings us to messianism. Jewish messianism holds that the restoration of the world (tikkum olam) cannot happen until the chosen one, the Messiah, descends to earth. With that event, the times will be complete. The past thus finds its completion in the future. The messianic age is one of peace and perfect harmony. Messianism is in a tense relationship with war.

The basic element of messianism is the '**messianic hope**': the longing for the messianic age. This era is marked by the coming of a King or leader of the House of David. This descendant of David will usher in a new political existence for the Jewish people. This includes the affirmation of a political independence and a return to Erets Israel. The new Jewish land will function as a model for a connected and improved humanity. Judaism is thus the bearer of a universal message, with peace and harmony as the highest good.

Modern messianism has mainly two camps. The **Orthodox** hold to the traditional doctrine outlined above, whereby a descendant of the House of David will reign in Jerusalem, rebuild the Temple, and reintroduce the sacrificial system. The messianic era marks the end of political domination by other nations. After the establishment of the State of Israel, some of the Orthodox communities can be found in the camp of the Zionists. The founding of the State is then interpreted as *athalta de-geulla*, the beginning of redemption. Many Orthodox rabbis reflect on current political events in light of the messianic hope.

The **Reform** version of Judaism takes a slightly different course. First, there the messianic age has been exchanged for a personal Messiah. Not the Anointed One will usher in a utopian era, but human efforts. Second, the messianic hope is disconnected from a return to Zion. That return is too particular. After all, messianism tells of universal peace and harmony. The Diaspora thus contains great potential: because Judaism is scattered throughout the world, it is better equipped to spread the universal, utopian message. Of course, this is the opposite of Zionism, which affirms Judaism as a nation and promotes the return to Palestine.

Theoretically, we can also further describe two focal points of messianism. Grosso modo there is a division between **apocalyptic messianism** and **rational messianism**. Apocalyptic messianism holds that history is discontinuous. Catastrophes characterize the rupture between the old and new world. The Chosen One can interpret these, and calculate the time from numerical mysticism (kabbalah).

According to rational messianism, history is continuous. In the messianic age, the commandments remain in effect. The transition between the pre-messianic era and the messianic era is a historical development, not a historical break.

#### 4.6.2 DIDACTIC SUGGESTIONS

Students can reflect on the theme of messianism using the following questions.

- Which version of messianism do you think is the correct one? Do students prefer the Orthodox version, or the Reform version?
- Is the messianic age pacifist?
- May war be a means to achieve the messianic age as an end?
- What is the difference between apocalyptic messianism and rational messianism?



Figure 4.4  
Source: © Ollega /  
Adobe Stock

# 4.7 THE THREE VOWS VERSUS THE 614TH COMMANDMENT

## 4.7.1 GENERAL

The chapter on messianism succinctly introduced the discussion between Zionism and anti-Zionism. In this chapter, that discussion gets a more comprehensive articulation. Of course, the teacher or supervisor is free to take up the didactic impulses as they sees fit.

We approach the discussion from two different points of view. On the one hand, there are the famous Three Vows, which go back to the Song of Solomon. The Three Vows prevent the departure for Palestine and the founding of a nation. On the other hand, there are Zionists who support the existence of a Jewish state. We show this position through the philosophy of Emil Fackenheim.

## 4.7.2 THE THREE OATHS

In Ketouboth 11a, two rabbis discuss returning to the Promised Land. One rabbi wants to return, the other does not. Rabbis 'fight' with quotes, arguments and scriptures. The winner of the discussion refers to a phrase from the Song of Solomon (2.7: 3.5 and 5.8): "I warn you, daughters of Yerushalayim,

by the gazelles and deer in the wilds, not to awaken or stir up love until it wants to arise!"

Based on this sentence, the rabbi arrives at the Three Vows:

- The Israelites may not collectively settle in the Promised Land;
- The Holy One commands the people of Israel not to rebel against the nations;
- He commands the nations not to subjugate the people of Israel too severely.

For the rabbis, "I warn you, daughters of Yerushalayim" refers to the Israelites, and "awaken love before it wants to arise" means implementing commandments too early. This is known as 'forcing G-d's hand'. Here it refers to settling early in the Promised Land, before the dawning of the messianic age. If we translate the phrase according to this interpretation, we end up with: do not migrate to the Promised Land before G-d wills it. Do not force the commandment to settle in Israel.



### 4.7.3 THE 614TH COMMANDMENT

This interpretation became especially prevalent in the Middle Ages. This interpretation maintains the Jewish people as a diaspora. The Three Vows keep the Jewish people from rebelling against the nations. Simultaneously, there is something in return: the nations are forbidden to harshly subjugate the Jewish people. **The Three Vows thus articulate a delicate balance between G-d, the people of Israel, and all the nations.** They are also part of the messianic hope: the Jewish people may not redeem themselves. That choice is up to G-d. The Three Vows are still an important argument for anti-Zionists in the 21st century.

Emil Fackenheim is an example of the Zionist response to The Three Vows. Fackenheim emphasizes that the survival of the Jewish people is a historical coincidence. Through all the historical tragedies, with Auschwitz as the bleak climax, Judaism might as well not have existed.

Auschwitz, the Shoah, according to Fackenheim, demands an answer. This answer is his famous 614th commandment: "Jews are forbidden to give Hitler a posthumous victory." Jews may not participate in their own destruction. They may not doubt man or G-d. The answer to the challenge of Auschwitz is to affirm one's Jewish identity and fulfill the commandments. This necessitates the existence of a Jewish nation.

"Jews are forbidden to hand Hitler posthumous victories.

1. They are commanded to survive as Jews, lest the Jewish people perish.
2. They are commanded to remember the victims of Auschwitz lest their memory perish.
3. They are forbidden to despair of man and his world, and to escape into either cynicism or otherworldliness, lest they cooperate in delivering the world over to the forces of Auschwitz.
4. Finally, they are forbidden to despair of the God of Israel, lest Judaism perish."

For Fackenheim, the 614th commandment also means the establishment of a Jewish state. It is his belief that if a Jewish state existed in 1930 it could have saved many Jews in 1930. The 614th commandment thus contradicts The Three Vows. Because of Auschwitz and all the pogroms the Jews had to endure, The Three Vows are no longer in effect. The Third Vow, the nations must not subjugate the Jews too severely, has been broken and ushers in the 614th commandment. This argument is common in current discussions.



#### 4.7.4 DIDACTIC SUGGESTIONS

**ASSIGNMENT.** Students can reflect on Fackenheim's thesis using the following questions.

In your opinion, is Fackenheim right?

What is the 614th commandment?

The sentence from the Song of Songs "I warn you, daughters of Yerushalayim, by the gazelles and deer in the wilds, not to awaken or stir up love until it wants to arise!" means, according to the Talmud:

- Do not go to the Promised Land before G-d commands it
- You cannot force love
- You may not visit the Promised Land

The Three Vows keep Jews from leaving en masse for the Promised Land, but would you also describe them as pacifist? Why yes/no?

**ASSIGNMENT.** Divided into groups, students can conduct the discussion between Zionism and anti-Zionism themselves. One group defends one position, the other group defends the other. The Three Vows and Fackenheim can serve as inspiration for the discussion. The teacher is free to designate a moderator.

**ASSIGNMENT.** The discussion around Zionism can be applied to war in this regard. When is a Jewish state allowed to go to war? Are pre-emptive strikes allowed? In which case yes/no? Are wars to defend Palestine Holy or not? Does going to the Promised Land mean conquering it or settling there?

## 4.8 INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW.

This section is **in-depth study material**.

### 4.8.1 GENERAL

Just War theory is a collective term for all approaches that attempt to connect war between states with the concept of justice. There is a classic division between *ius ad bellum*, *ius in bello*, and *ius post bellum*. *Ius ad bellum* represents the conditions under which starting a war is justified. *Ius in bello*, also known as International Humanitarian Law (IHL), concerns the legal rulebook that regulates warfare itself. In other words, IHL determines how one may fight. The *ius post bellum* regulates the final phase of a war, mindful of any reconstruction. This chapter focuses on *ius in bello*, International Humanitarian Law.

Other names for IHL are “law of war” or the “law of armed conflict. IHL is mostly derived from international treaties. The best known of these are the *Hague Conventions* of 1899 and 1907; the four *Geneva Conventions* of 1949 and two 1977 *Additional Protocols*; and the *Lieber Code*. Here we briefly outline the main points.

- Parties are required to make the **distinction between civilians and combatants**. It is forbidden to attack civilians. Attacks are possible only on military targets.
- The parties are **not free in the method of warfare**. Methods and means that do not distinguish between civilians and combatants or cause unnecessary suffering are prohibited.
- **Persons who do not, or no longer, participate in combat** have the right to life and physical and moral integrity. They must be treated with respect for human dignity.
- The **wounded and sick** must be cared for as quickly as possible whenever possible. Everything necessary for care must be protected. The red cross, the red crescent or the red crystal on a white background are the emblems of the organizations responsible for care.
- **Captured combatants and civilians** retain the right to their life and dignity. Contact with family and the receiving of assistance must remain possible. Every criminal justice procedure adheres to fundamental legal principles.

These rules reflect the essence of International Humanitarian Law. They do not replace treaties and are not on the same level as a legal instrument. They do provide food for thought. They are not pacifist, but neither do they accept a carelessly proliferating war.

**ASSIGNMENT.** Students can reflect on International Humanitarian Law using the following questions.

In your opinion, are the rules of IHL correct?

Is there a rule you would leave out? If so, which one?

Do you think the IHL is complete? Should there be another rule?

Do you think all parties involved in a conflict would follow these rules?

Do you think the rules of IHL apply to a Holy War? Why is this so?

The IHL

- Is a form of pacifism
- Is a form of Holy War
- Authorizes total war
- Holds the middle ground between pacifism and total war

## 4.9 GLOSSARY

### **Discretionary**

Discretionary refers to the ability to judge or act independently, at your own discretion.

### **Holy War**

A Holy War is a war with a religious motive. A Holy War is sometimes waged because of a G-dly obligation, because of a religious position, but also in defense of a holy land.

### **Righteousness**

righteousness has several meanings. First, justice is a legal concept. Whatever is in accordance with the law is just. Second, justice is also a moral concept. To act justly is to act “rightly,” in accordance with what is “good” or “correct. Justice also takes practice: no one naturally does the right or good thing all the time. We encounter this idea often in the Tenach!

### **Pacifism**

Pacifism is an attitude or worldview that seeks peace absolutely. Pacifism rejects any form of violence.

### **Peace Settlement**

A peace settlement is an agreement between two parties, often countries, to keep the peace and not go to war.

## 4.10 TRANSCRIPT OF THE VIDEO

### 1 INT MUSEUM DAY

The tour guide and teacher are standing in front of the group.

*Tour Guide: Welcome to the Museum of War. We have a large collection of First World War artifacts, not just weapons and arms, but also items from everyday life. You might get an impression on how it would be to live during such times!*

*Teacher: All right, everyone is free to go and look around for themselves. Let's meet up back here in time. The bus won't wait, ok! Make sure you keep each other in sight, and don't get lost!*

The students run off in different directions. We follow Ariella and Adil who walk past some uniforms.

*Adil: Hey, can you imagine me wearing one of those? You would probably fall in love with me.*

*Ariella: In your dreams.*

They walk past a corner. They're surrounded by pictures depicting battle scenes.

*Ariella: Can you imagine living through such a war? Even today people are still at war, in the 21st century.*

*Adil: Yeah, but what can you do about it?*

*Ariella (sighing): I don't know, but war should never happen.*

*Adil doesn't respond. He hesitates to speak. Something's on his mind.*

*Adil: Wow. That's a bit hypocritical coming from you.*

*Ariella: What do you mean?*

*Adil: You're Jewish, right? The Torah is full of stories of war. Like the wars to conquer the Promised Land. And you read these stories yearly.*

*Ariella: You mean Joshua's Wars of Conquest? Look, it's not because we have those stories that we are suddenly pro-war or something.*

*Adil: Yeah, but they must have some kind of effect. Some people read religious texts literally, you know. I wouldn't be surprised if these stories actually inspire people to start wars.*

*Ariella: That could never happen. Jews are one hundred percent peaceful.*

*Adil: Don't make me laugh. If that were the case, you wouldn't have those stories.*

*Ariella: Whatever, you don't know what you're talking about! I'm out of here.*

Ariella walks away angrily.

*Ariella: I can't believe him. What does he know about Judaism?*

While walking she accidentally misses the pathway that leads to the main hall. She suddenly bumps into a janitor.

*Ariella: Ow, I'm so sorry, sir.*

*Janitor: You look lost.*

Ariella turns around and notices that she is, indeed, lost.

*Ariella (shy): I guess I am... Could you tell me how to reach the main hall, please?*

*Janitor: I'll take you. Follow me.*

The janitor starts walking and Ariella follows suit.

*Janitor: So, did the museum leave an impression?*

*Ariella: To be honest, it's very disconcerting. It's hard to imagine a war like this happened.*

*Janitor: The sad part about it is that so many wars took place.*

*Ariella: I know... I'm Jewish, and someone recently reminded me of all the stories of war in the Torah.*

*Janitor: Shalom!*

*Ariella (surprised): Shalom! You're Jewish too?*

*Janitor: Yes! So, what do you think about those stories?*

*Ariella: Well, war is horrible, of course, but I always thought that Joshua's Wars of Conquest were somewhat... Necessary. That without going to war, the ancient Israelites would have never reached the Promised Land. But that doesn't mean that I think war is a good idea! I guess I never thought about it much; my Jewish community doesn't really mention war a lot.*

*Janitor: I understand. There is a historic reason for that: Jewish communities did not always possess armies, so they didn't spend a lot of time thinking about war.*

*Ariella: So no one said anything?*

*Janitor: Well, the old rabbis made an important distinction between commanded and discretionary wars. Commanded wars are, as the name suggests, commanded by Hashem. They are sacred and important, so every Jew must partake in them. Discretionary wars are less important, and therefore Jews cannot be forced to partake in them. An example of discretionary wars are so-called 'expansionary wars': wars to conquer new territory.*

*Ariella: So what about the wars to conquer the Promised Land in the Torah?*

*Janitor: The Talmud deems them commanded wars! But here's the catch: many rabbis believe that these were the only truly commanded wars in Jewish history. And that in any case, if war ever becomes necessary, for instance in the case of self-defense, there are still principles to uphold. Like offering peace first, only fighting to achieve peace, and preventing the loss of innocent lives as much as possible. Let's not forget that Judaism values peace above all else!*

Ariella and the janitor have almost reached the main entrance hall. The noise of people talking gets louder.

*Ariella: I think I understand. I wish I could keep talking to you about this.*

*Janitor: Some other time. I have to go back now.*

*Ariella: Okay. Thank you for helping!*

*Janitor: Goodbye!*

As Ariella walks away she suddenly remembers something she wants to say.

*Ariella: Wait, where did you have to go back to?*

Ariella turns to find the hall empty. The janitor seems to have disappeared.

### **3 INT MUSEUM DAY**

As Ariella reaches the main hall she is greeted by the teacher and tour guide. The tour guide's hair is in disarray.

*Teacher: At last! There you are! We checked every single hall!*

*Ariella: That's strange, I was walking through all them with the janitor. He helped me find my way back.*

*Guide: Uhm, no, well the janitor was not working today. Well, I don't think so.*

*Teacher: I guess the museum made their imagination run wild. Thank you for the tour. I'm sure it left a big impression on all of them.*

### **4 EXT BUS DAY**

Ariella gets on the bus. She sees Adil sitting alone and goes to sit next to him.

*Adil: Hey, look, I'm sorry if I hurt you, I didn't mean to say you were violent or anything like that.*

*Ariella: I know. The museum just gave me a lot to think about. Hey, do you want to come over after school? My mom is making a special dish and...*

As the bus drives off, the audio of Ariella and Adil's conversation distorts and shizzles out. The image shifts to that of an empty museum hall. The camera slowly zooms in on a picture on the wall. The old picture reveals the janitor in a 1915's war costume. He winks at the camera before the screen turns black.

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