

# Book review on judaism and peacebuilding

[Religion](#), [Islam](#)



The main idea of this reading is the assertion that there is currently a gap in Jewish scholarship about the religion's teachings concerning the avoidance of conflict. While there have been some scholars who have managed to identify passages that establish the idea of a "just" war, dating back to Maimonides, and there have been other scholars who have noted that rabbinic literature establishes peace as a "supreme ethical principle" (Gopin, p. 111). Because the country of Israel faces many threats to its continued political existence, there has been significant discussion among rabbinical scholars about how to find a way to justify war, so that Israel can proactively hit its enemies, instead of having to wait to be attacked to strike out. The fact that Judaism has many overlooked teachings about the ways to avoid conflict implies a lack of effort, according to Gopin, by the Jewish community toward maintaining peace in the Middle East.

2.

Four interesting points come to mind after reading this essay. First, it is intriguing that the modern Orthodox community has represented, to this point, the largest roadblock in the way of a treaty between Israel and Palestine. These are the Zionists who have moved into Gaza and the West Bank, necessitating settlements more quickly than any of the prime ministers of Israel have been able to seek out a rollback of settlements. One might expect Orthodox teachings to focus on the older ways, including peace. A second point considers how powerful it would indeed be if members of all three of the major religions with a footprint in Israel (Islam, Judaism and Christianity) could come together and find peace. A third point highlights the

importance of maintaining face, or personal dignity, during negotiations. Because pride leads to conflict, it is difficult to find a way to maintain face while giving up concessions in negotiations. A fourth point is the importance of empathic listening during negotiations. Parties who are speaking only to hear themselves talk do not hear the interests of the other side; however, it is those interests that must be taken into account if an accord is to be reached.

3.

Two questions come to mind. Given the numerous threats to Israel's territorial integrity since its creation after World War II, why has it not received greater protections from the United Nations? Given that its current adversary seems to have a track record of signing treaties and then using those treaties as a starting point from which to make further demands, what is the use of peacemaking strategies in this situation?

4.

It would be wonderful if diplomacy and negotiations could bring the tensions in the Middle East to a peaceful solution. Most of the basal language of the religions of Judaism and Islam refer to peace, indeed, as a central virtue. However, the practitioners of Islam that surround Israel either seem to be concerned with pragmatically maintaining calm in the region, to keep the flow of petrodollars coming in steadily, or with systematically eliminating Israel from the map. The pragmatists do not want to rattle the zealots, who happen to sit on a lot of the region's oil, and they are not emotionally invested in the conflict either way. And so Israel is left to deal with the zealots, who move from compromise to demand to compromise to demand.

It is difficult to see how Israel could be expected to trust the compromises it accepts, because so often treaties have been undone.

## **Works Cited**

Gopin, Marc. "Judaism and Peacebuilding." In Name of Book, Editor's last name, Editor's first name (ed.). City of Publication: Publisher, Year of Publication.