

CLASSROOM

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CHAPTER THREE

TERROR AND TRUE BELIEF

*The Jewish King Who Reinvented
the Faith of Ancient Israel*

Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass.

—1 Samuel 15:3

At certain sublime moments in the Bible, the spirit of toleration that was the core value of paganism is celebrated by some of the kinder, gentler biblical authors. The Israelites are commanded by God not only to respect and protect the “stranger”—a word that refers to anyone who does not belong to the Chosen People—but to love him, too. “The stranger who settles with you in your land shall be treated as the native-born among you,” says Moses in the Book of Leviticus, uttering the very first biblical expression of the “golden rule” that was later embraced by Jesus of Nazareth. “You shall love him as a man like yourself because you were strangers in the land of Egypt.”¹

Here we find the deeply empathetic teaching that prompts us to characterize Judaism, Christianity and Islam as “ethical monotheism.” Over the centuries and millennia that have passed since these words were first recorded in the Bible, all three of the great monotheisms have struggled to put them into practice. And the majority of Jews, Christians and Muslims in the modern world embrace the values of respect, toleration and compassion that can be found in their sacred texts. Rigorism and all that it implies—fundamentalism,

FROM YOUR
TEXT BOOK

fanaticism and religious terrorism—are found only on the ragged fringes of all three faiths.

Still, the worst excesses of monotheism are also plainly and sometimes even proudly recorded in the Bible. Some of the biblical authors adopt a punishing attitude toward the stranger, including all of the peoples of Canaan except the Israelites, and all gods and goddesses whom they worship. And some passages seem to pronounce a death sentence on any man, woman or child who dares to follow any deity other than Yahweh. The most heated and hateful passages of the prophetic writings can be explained away as rhetorical and metaphorical excess, of course, but the equally bloodthirsty accounts that we find in Exodus and Numbers and Deuteronomy, Joshua and Samuel and Kings, are presented as works of history.

If we read the Bible literally, as the rigorists ask us to do, some of the earliest accounts of monotheism depict what is today called genocide, and it is a genocide carried out in the name of the Only True God.

Fear and Dread

“By war, and by a mighty hand, and by an outstretched arm, and by great terrors” is how Yahweh promises to bring the Israelites out of Egypt and into the land of Canaan. “This day will I begin to put the dread of you and the fear of you upon the peoples that are under the whole heaven, who, when they hear report of you, shall tremble and be in anguish.”²

The military operations of the army of Israel that crosses the frontier of Canaan, as described in the Bible, can be understood as a war of conquest. God is shown to charge the Israelites with the task of defeating the native-dwelling peoples and establishing their own sovereignty by force of arms, and he points out that he is bestowing upon the Israelites not an empty wilderness but “great and goodly cities, which you did not build, and houses full of good things, which you

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HOW DO
MODERN
DAY
CHRISTIANS
& JEWS
VIEW
SUCH
PASSAGES?

FEAR THE
ISRAELITES
&
THEIR
GOD?

did not fill, and vineyards and olive-trees, which you did not plant.”³

The war of conquest is also explicitly described as a war of extermination. “You shall save nothing alive,” God commands the Israelites, “but you shall utterly destroy them.”⁴ And the Israelites take of God at his word: “And we utterly destroyed every city, the men, and the women, and the little ones,” says Moses in the account of one campaign as recorded in the Book of Deuteronomy. “We left none remaining.”⁵

Above all, the war of conquest and extermination is justified as a war on paganism. “You shall tear down their altars, smash their images, and cut down their Asherim”—that is, the upright posts or living trees by which the Canaanite goddess Asherah was worshipped.⁶ Crucially, all of the acts of violence carried out by the Israelites are attributed to the God himself. Among the many titles and honorifics used to describe the God of Israel is *Elohim Yahweh Sabaoth*, which is usually translated as “Lord of Hosts” but also means “Yahweh, the God of Armies.”⁷ Although the soldiers of Israel will actually wield the weapons of war, they are encouraged to regard themselves as the instrument of the divine will: “The Lord your God,” declares Moses, “it is he that fights for you.”⁸

Priests and prophets, kings and commoners, are shown to carry out the will of God with the same bloodthirsty zeal against both the pagans and the Israelites who find the pagan gods so alluring. On the long march from Egypt to Canaan, for example, a man called Phinehas discovers that an Israelite prince named Zimri has taken a Midianite woman as a lover—and he is inspired to kill both the prince and his lover with a single spear thrust, a feat that suggests they were engaging in an act of love, belly to belly, at the moment of their death.⁹ The Bible reports that God is well pleased by his act of zeal: “Phinehas turned my wrath away from the children of Israel,” God is made to say, “in that he was zealous for my sake, so that I consumed not the children of Israel in my jealousy.”¹⁰

The same zeal moves Moses to send an army of 12,000 soldiers to

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(MOSES)
HOW
DOES
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CENTRAL
FIGURE OF
JUDAISM/
CHRISTIANITY?

YAHWEH,
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punish the Midianites *en masse* for a similar sin on an even greater scale—the women of Midian have lured the men of Israel into their shrines *and* their beds. When the army returns in victory, the commander reports to Moses that every man among the Midianites has been slain, and their women and children taken as prizes of war. Moses, however, is angered by the very sight of the captives: “Have ye saved all the women alive?” he demands. Then he orders that all of the women and male children be put to the sword, too, sparing only the virgin girls and condemning them to a lifetime of slavery.¹¹

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WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS OF MOSES' [A CENTRAL PROPHET] TREATMENT OF THE MIDIANITES ON JUDEO-CHRISTIAN/MONOTHEIST ETHICS?

Not only does God sanction such acts of violence, according to the sternest biblical sources, but he is moved to wrath whenever his worshippers do not carry out his commands with sufficient promptness, precision and ruthlessness. King Saul, for example, is ordered by God to “go and smite Amalek,” an ancient tribal enemy of Israel, and the Book of Samuel confirms that he “utterly destroyed all of the people with the edge of the sword”—but Saul, in a moment of *noblesse oblige*, takes it upon himself to spare the enemy king. To punish him for his lack of zeal, God withdraws his favor from Saul and drives him to despair and even madness by refusing to grant him any further oracles. God orders the prophet Samuel to anoint a new ruler of Israel—David, the warrior-king, whom the Bible approvingly describes as both “a man after [God’s] own heart” and “a man of blood.”¹²

KING SAUL & KING DAVID

FOR WHAT, ULTIMATELY, DOES THE JUDEO-CHRISTIAN GOD PUNISH KING SAUL?

“Defiance of God is as sinful as witchcraft, and stubbornness as evil as idolatry,” Samuel scolds Saul, characterizing his decision to spare a single human life as an act of ^(rejection of God) apostasy because God had decreed the death of *all* the Amalekites, man, woman and child. “Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, he has rejected you.”¹³

Thus does the Bible provides both the vocabulary and the theological rationale of a new kind of rigorism. Yahweh is a jealous and wrathful god—he is moved to a murderous rage when any other god or goddess is worshipped, whether in place of him or merely in addi-

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tion to him. Of his own worshippers, he demands not merely faith but zeal—he is not satisfied with good intentions and an earnest effort. Anything less than abject submission to the divine will is as sinful as sorcery and idolatry. And what is God's will? It is to punish "with the edge of the sword," sometimes wielded by a single zealous man and sometimes by a whole army, anyone and everyone who refuses to worship him as the Only True God.

We have a phrase to describe the kind of war that is fought according to these rules of engagement: it is the blight on human history called holy war, and it begins here.

* PAUSE / REFLECT

The Man Who Invented Biblical Israel

Whether the wars of conquest and extermination that are described in such gruesome detail in the Bible actually took place is a matter of debate. According to modern biblical scholarship, the Israelites may not have conquered the land of Canaan at all—rather, they may have migrated to Canaan gradually and peacefully, or they may have been there all along. If so, what we are invited to regard as the very first holy war in recorded history is wholly mythical, a work of imagination by one or more of the biblical authors who sought to inspire and motivate the worshippers of the True God.

REMEMBER,
THERE IS NO CREDIBLE EVIDENCE FOR THE EXODUS STORY

IN OTHER WORDS
WHAT IS THE POINT OF THE CONQUEST STORY?

Indeed, the whole point of such mythmaking would have been to strengthen the idea of "chosenness," to physically separate the Yahweh worshippers from everyone else in the land of Canaan, and to discourage the Chosen People from indulging in the pagan rituals of their friends and neighbors. The most bloodthirsty passages of the Bible, according to the consensus of modern scholarship, can be seen as the handiwork of a faction of fundamentalists that emerged in the seventh century B.C.E. and carried out a bloody purge of Judaism as it was then practiced. If so, they can be understood to have picked up the flag of monotheism where Akhenaton dropped it and to have passed it along to the generations that followed them, all the way

THIS IS THE POINT OF THE CONQUEST STORY

down to Roman emperors who achieved the final victory in the war of God against the gods. → THE IMPERIAL ROMANS (WARLIKE PEOPLE)

IMPORTANCE OF KING JOSIAH?

The crucial figure in the making of Jewish monotheism, according to the revisionists in Bible scholarship, is the king called Josiah (c. 648-609 B.C.E.), a sixteenth-generation descendant of David, the greatest of all the biblical kings. No less than Akhenaton, Josiah was a visionary and a revolutionary who resolved to repudiate the oldest traditions of the land that he ruled and impose a new set of rituals and beliefs on his subjects. And Josiah was remarkably successful in doing so. According to the latest theories of biblical authorship, the Bible as we know it and the faith of ancient Israel as it is described there were the result of the crusade of religious reform that King Josiah carried out.

PRIOR TO JOSIAH

Before the reign of Josiah, we are invited to imagine, the majority of ancient Israelites mixed and matched their religious beliefs and practices, just like the pagans among whom they lived, and strict monotheists represented only a tiny minority of the Chosen People. But Josiah rejected the easygoing ways of his fellow Israelites and devoted himself to the worship of Yahweh as the Only True God. He allied himself with the most rigorous of the priests who served at the Temple of Solomon in Jerusalem, and he granted them a measure of power and privilege that they had never before enjoyed.

GRANTS POWER TO TEMPLE PRIESTS

The tale is told in the Bible itself. Josiah is only eight years old when his father is assassinated, the victim of a conspiracy among his own courtiers, and he ascends the throne as king.¹⁴ Presumably, the boy king rules under the regency of his mother, Jedidah, but the spark of true belief is already burning within him by the age of sixteen, when he wakes up to the spiritual failings of his fellow Israelites and "began to seek after the God of David." At the age of twenty, he commences the first of a series of purges: "He began to purge Judah and Jerusalem from the high places, and the Asherim, and the graven images, and the molten images."¹⁵ Later, at twenty-six, he piously resolves to refurbish the Temple of Solomon in Jerusalem, and he sends

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carpenters and stonemasons into the ancient shrine to make repairs. At that moment, according to the Bible, Josiah is granted a revelation from on high.

“A Pious Fraud”

The high priest reports to the young king that something remarkable ^{DISCOVERY} has been discovered in the Temple—a long lost scroll of the Torah. When Josiah opens the scroll, he is so alarmed at what he finds there that he rips his own garments in a gesture of grief and terror. The scroll, as it turns out, includes a set of laws that do not appear in the other four books of the Torah, the only ones known to the Israelites until the discovery of the lost scroll. If the missing fifth book of the Torah is authentic, Josiah realizes, the Israelites have been unwittingly breaking the sacred law of Yahweh for several hundred years.

What are the laws that came as such a shock to Josiah? Most of the text of the lost scroll simply restates the laws that appear in the earlier books of the Torah, including all of the commandments against “that which is evil in the sight of the Lord”—that is, the practices that the Israelites have borrowed from their pagan neighbors. But one point of law is wholly new—the scroll declares that God will accept sacrifice from only a single site in all of ancient Israel, the Temple of Solomon in Jerusalem. Elsewhere in the Bible, of course, it is reported without comment or criticism that altars have been erected and sacrifices have been offered to Yahweh at sites all over the land, ever since the God of Israel first revealed himself to Abraham. But now the Israelites discover that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, Moses and Joshua, Saul and David, among many others, were defying the sacred law of God when they did so.

Josiah sends the scroll to a prophetess called Huldah for authentication—one of the few instances in the Bible in which a woman is afforded a decisive role in the spiritual life of ancient Israel. The prophetess declares the scroll to be genuine, and so the young king

resolves to strictly enforce the new set of laws by, among other things, suppressing the offering of sacrifices to Yahweh at any site except Jerusalem, which happens to be the capital city of his kingdom. Indeed, as it turns out, the newly discovered scroll is perfectly consistent with Josiah's own understanding of what God wants of the Israelites. It is precisely this coincidence that prompted one nineteenth-century Bible scholar to call the lost scroll—which scholars believe to have been most or all of what we know today as the Book of Deuteronomy—"a pious fraud."¹⁶ Fraud or not, however, the scroll allows Josiah to claim that he is acting on specific instructions from God in escalating and expanding the purge that he has been carrying out with such zeal.

The reformer-king orders the destruction of all sanctuaries outside Jerusalem where sacrifices have been offered to the God of Israel in unwitting defiance of the newly discovered laws. Idols and other paraphernalia for the worship of pagan gods and goddesses are dragged out of the Temple and burned down to ash—"all the objects for Baal and Asherah and the host of heaven."¹⁷ The red-light district that has grown up around the Temple, where "sodomites" ply their trade as prostitutes, sacred or otherwise, and women fashion the ornate hangings that adorn the pagan shrines, is razed to the ground.

All over the land of Israel, pagan statuary and the altars where they have been put to use, including the ones installed by the anointed kings of Judah, are burned and beaten into dust. Even the shrines erected by King Solomon for the pleasure of his pagan wives and concubines—"for Ashtoreth, the abomination of Sidonians, and for Chemosh, the abomination of Moab, and for Milcom, the detestable thing of the Ammonites"¹⁸—are pulled down. At the height of the holy war that Josiah conducts within his own realm, all priests who offer sacrifice to any god other than Yahweh are put to death on their own altars.

Judaism as a faith of strict monotheism can be said to begin with King Josiah. His purge "dramatically changed what it meant to be an

LOST
SCROLL =
DEUTERONOMY
(OLD TESTAMENT)
Q) HOW DOES
JOSIAH USE
THIS LOST
SCROLL?
WHY DOES HE
DO IT?

DESTRUCTION
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IDOLS, ALTARS,
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PRIESTS

Israelite," according to archaeologist Israel Finkelstein and his collaborator, Neil Asher Silberman, in *The Bible Unearthed*, "and laid the foundations for future Judaism."¹⁹ Thanks to his discovery of the lost scroll of the Torah that turned out to be the Book of Deuteronomy, Josiah can be said to have added to the Bible a strong measure of zeal that is quite at odds with those biblical authors who are perfectly willing to show Yahweh siring a brood of randy godlings, Moses making a magical bronze snake and David keeping a few household idols on hand.

But King Josiah was more than a religious reformer. The young king saw clearly how the idea of a single all-powerful god in heaven implied the appropriateness of a single all-powerful king on earth—an idea that would continue to exert a powerful appeal for kings and men who would be kings down through history, including Constantine and his fellow Christian emperors. "One God, worshiped in one Temple, located in the one and only capital, under one king of the Davidic dynasty," explain Finkelstein and Silberman, "were the keys to the salvation of Israel."²⁰

THE NATION

(THE ROMAN EMPEROR THAT ADOPTS CHRISTIANITY

Q WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

The Son of Amon and the Son of Zeus

Josiah's reign was brought to an abrupt end before he reached the age of forty. The tiny kingdom of Judah was caught between two rival superpowers, Egypt and Assyria, and Josiah sided with the Assyrians. When the pharaoh and his army crossed through the land of the Jews on the way to do battle with the Assyrians on the far banks of the Euphrates, Josiah loyally came to the assistance of his ally. At a place called Megiddo—the site where, according to biblical prophecy, the apocalyptic battle of Armageddon will take place—Josiah mounted a war chariot and led an attack on the Egyptians in 609 B.C.E. An arrow fired by an enemy archer struck him, and he fell from his chariot.

DEATH OF JOSIAH

"Have me away," cries the king in the battle report that we find in the Bible, "for I am sore wounded."²¹

His comrades in arms rescued Josiah and carried him back to

Jerusalem, but he succumbed to his wound. His purge, as it turned out, was incomplete and ultimately ineffective—Jewish kings and commoners alike hastened to take up the very practices of paganism that Josiah had tried to eradicate. Archaeologists at work in modern Israel, for example, have recovered numerous examples of statuary that depict a woman cupping her breasts in her hands—she is believed to be the goddess Asherah, a figure the women of ancient Israel continued to revere, despite the best efforts of their reformer-king.

REVENGED
TO PUNISHMENT

BACK
TO
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JOSIAH, LIKE
OTHER
ANCIENT
WARRIOR
KINGS
TRIES
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CULTURE

Within a quarter century after Josiah's death, the dynasty that began with David finally died out and Jewish national sovereignty was extinguished. Jerusalem was conquered by the Babylonians in 586 B.C.E.; the Temple was destroyed and the rest of the ruling class were marched off to Babylon. When the exiles were allowed to return to Jerusalem some fifty years later by the Persian conquerors of Babylon, they regarded themselves as the "Holy Seed" and they insisted on separating themselves from the rest of the Jews who had been allowed to remain behind. The returned exiles, for example, refused to allow the so-called *Am Ha'aretz*—"the people of the land"—to join them in the task of rebuilding the Temple of Yahweh in Jerusalem, where the strict and pure monotheism of Josiah was put back into practice. → RESULT TEMPLE → RETURN OF JOSIAH'S MONOTHEISM

Invasion, conquest and exile failed to exterminate the hardy monotheists of the Holy Land. Indeed, as we shall shortly see, the argument can be made that oppression and persecution are the ideal conditions for the flourishing of true belief. Far more dangerous to fundamentalism, as it turns out, are the seductions of peace, freedom and prosperity. And so the faith that survived the destruction of the Temple, the conquest of Jerusalem and the Babylonian Exile was put to its greatest trial when confronted with the changing tide of classical paganism that began with a young Macedonian general called Alexander.

ROLE
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ALEXANDER
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THE HISTORY
OF THE JEWS

Alexander the Great (356–323 B.C.E.) was so successful in his own wars of conquest that he was famously said to have wept when he ran

ALEXANDER (CONT.)

out of worlds to conquer. But his greatest conquest was achieved without force of arms: wherever Alexander and his armies marched, he introduced his new subjects to the language, philosophy, literature, religion and other institutions of Greek civilization, leaving behind cities and towns in the Greek style that endured long after he was gone. Indeed, Alexander was dead at the age of thirty-three, but he was still revered six centuries later by the Roman emperors, who followed his example in matters of both religion and statecraft.

The Greek culture that Alexander carried around the world is known as Hellenism, and it played the same role in the ancient world that American culture plays in our own. Just as the world covets the weapons, medicines, machines and amusements that America produces, the ancient world aspired to copy the Greek style of dress and manners, arts and letters, athletics and education, weaponry and military tactics. The Greek language, like English today, was the *lingua franca* of international commerce and diplomacy. Above all, the world embraced the Greek pantheon of gods and goddesses and the Greek way of worshipping them. The people whom we call "pagans" called themselves "Hellenes."

The religion of Hellenism was the highest expression of the openness that had always characterized paganism. Alexander may have waged war with cruelty and brutality, and he may have made slaves of those he conquered, but he did not punish anyone for holding a belief in one god rather than another. Indeed, he displayed a lively interest in the gods and goddesses who were worshipped in the lands that he conquered, and he followed the old pagan practice of adding the deities of his new subjects to his own traditional pantheon. Thus, for example, Alexander advertised himself as the begotten son of a god whom he identified with both the Greek deity Zeus and the Egyptian deity Amon. The conflation of gods from two different cultures, the mixing and matching of beliefs and practices, is an example of what historians of religion call syncretism, and it is the essential feature of classical paganism as it was embodied in Hellenism.

HELLENISTIC RELIGIOUS CULTURE

ALEXANDER'S GREECE: 'AMERICA' OF THE ANCIENT WORLD

Alexander brought Hellenism to the land of the Jews when he replaced the defeated Persian emperor as its overlord. Much to the horror of the Jewish rigorists, the Chosen People promptly showed themselves to be no less vulnerable to the charms and attractions of Hellenism than they had been to the "abominations" of their pagan seducers in distant biblical antiquity. By the second century B.C.E., the city of Jerusalem boasted its own gymnasium, where Jews studied the Greek language and practiced the athletic skills that were put on display in Olympic-style games. Not only did they insist on competing in the nude, aping the traditions of ancient Greece, but some of them resorted to a primitive form of plastic surgery to conceal the fact that they were circumcised—an act that was regarded by the rigorists as the ultimate betrayal of the God of Israel.

We cannot know how Judaism would have fared if the Jews of antiquity had been free to choose between their own traditions of monotheism and the attractions of Hellenism. Then, as now, the lure of assimilation was so powerful that no amount of scolding or sermonizing was effective in preventing defections from the oldest and strictest traditions of Judaism. But, as it turned out, the Jews did not enjoy the freedom to choose between the worship of one god or many gods. Rather, after the death of Alexander and the disintegration of his empire, they found themselves under the rule of a pagan ruler so harsh and so punishing on matters of faith that he more closely resembled a monotheist like Akhenaton or Josiah than any of his fellow pagan kings.

The Mad King

Alexander the Great believed that Hellenism would win the hearts and minds of the people he conquered by its own undeniable superiority and its own powerful allure. But one of the men who inherited a portion of his empire, Antiochus IV (c. 215–164 B.C.E.), lacked the open mind that was the hallmark of Hellenism. He was disgusted and enraged by the stubborn refusal of the most observant Jews—known

ANTIOCHUS

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as the Hasidim ("Pious Ones")—to pay respect to the pantheon of Greek gods and goddesses, and he resolved to impose Hellenism on all of his unruly Jewish subjects by force of arms.

Antiochus looted the gold and silver treasures of the Temple at Jerusalem. He defiled the Holy of Holies—the inner chamber that only the high priest of Yahweh was permitted to enter—by installing a statue of Zeus. He banned the fundamental rites of traditional Judaism, including circumcision, the observance of the Sabbath and the dietary laws of kashrut. He forbade the offering of sacrifices to the God of Israel, and he compelled the offering of sacrifices to the gods and goddesses of the Greek pantheon. To make the offerings especially offensive, he commanded that only the animals that Jewish law regarded as ritually impure could be offered to the pagan deities—a pig was to be slaughtered on the holy altar of Yahweh, its flesh was to be eaten in public by the high priest and its offal was to be poured over the scrolls of the Torah.

But Antiochus was not content with merely suppressing the practice of Judaism and compelling the practice of polytheism in its place. Antiochus sent his soldiers into the land of the Jews to carry out a massacre. His death squads sought out the Pious Ones and put them to death—men, women and children alike. Special tortures were reserved for those who were caught with Torah scrolls: "They were whipped with rods," reports the ancient Jewish historian Josephus, "and their bodies torn to pieces." Mothers who dared to defy the royal decree against circumcision were strangled together with their circumcised sons, and the dead child was hung from the neck of his mother, "as they were upon the crosses."²²

The pagans of the ancient world were capable of inflicting terrible cruelties on their fellow human beings, especially criminals, prisoners of war and conquered peoples. But they did not engage in the kind of religious persecution that Antiochus inflicted on his Jewish subjects. Only rarely did the ancient pagans attempt to suppress the practice of a religion, and even when they did, they displayed a degree of restraint that seems almost quaint from our vantage point. Thus, if

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the atrocities carried out by Antiochus were an assault on the values of monotheism, they were also a betrayal of the values of polytheism.

The grotesqueries of Antiochus's war against the Jews inspired a subtle act of resistance by his victims. Antiochus had adopted the pious title Epiphanes, which means "the Manifestation of God," but the atrocities that he committed against his Jewish subjects were so senseless that they called him Antiochus Epimanes—"Antiochus the Madman." The moniker reminds us that Antiochus violated the canons of the very civilization that he claimed to champion and thus crossed from mere cruelty into mental aberration.

Zealous for the Law

Even if the account of the conquest of Canaan by the Chosen People as depicted in the Torah is mostly or only a myth, it served its purpose during the reign of Antiochus the Madman. Inspired by the stirring examples of zealotry that they found in the Torah, the Jewish rigorists banded together in a guerrilla army, rose up in open rebellion against Antiochus and eventually inflicted a defeat on both their foreign overlords and those of their fellow Jews who had embraced the pleasures of Hellenism. Significantly, the very first casualties in their campaign were a Syrian and a Jew.

An old man of priestly descent called Mattathias and his five sons, according to a tale that is cherished in both Jewish and Christian tradition, are the first to take up arms. Mattathias has been ordered by a Syrian officer to offer a sacrifice to the pagan god, and when he refuses, a more willing Jew steps forward to comply. "Fired with zeal," Mattathias steps forward and strikes down both the Syrian officer who gave the order and the Jew who was willing to obey it, leaving their dead bodies on the altar of sacrifice. "Follow me, every one of you who is zealous for the Law and the Covenant," cries Mattathias, whose tale is told in the Book of Maccabees. "Thus Mattathias showed his fervent zeal for the law, just as Phinehas had done by killing Zimri."²³

WHAT IS THE IMPORTANCE OF THE CONQUEST OF CANAAN STORY TO JEWS WHO FACED ANTIOCHUS' PERSECUTION?

STORY OF MATTATHIAS + REBELLION

The author of the Book of Maccabees is reminding his readers of an incident in the Book of Numbers—the slaying of the the Israelite prince who took a pagan woman as a lover. Significantly, Phinehas is the same man who commands 12,000 soldiers of God on a punitive expedition that ends with the mass murder of the men, women and male children of Midian. Thus did the Maccabees take up the tradition of holy war as they found it in the pages of the Torah.

Mattathias and his sons put themselves in command of an army of Jewish partisans and conducted a sustained campaign of guerrilla warfare against the Syrian invaders. The battlefield commander was one of Mattathias's sons, Judah, whose toughness and tenacity earned him the nickname Maccabee (“hammer”), and the Jewish resistance movement came to be known as the Maccabees. Under Judah and his successors, the Maccabees defeated the armies of Antiochus and restored the sovereignty of the Jewish homeland for the first time since the Babylonian conquest in 586 B.C.E. **JEWISH INDEPENDENCE** ↘

But the struggle of the Maccabees was more than a war of national liberation—it was also a holy war. They fought against the armies of the Syrian king with the sure conviction that God was on their side, and they enjoyed the tactical advantage that is bestowed upon any soldier who is willing and even eager to die. But the pagan army from beyond the borders was not the only enemy. The Maccabees and their successors targeted not only the Syrian overlords but also their fellow Jews, punishing the Jewish assimilationists and collaborators who were deemed too friendly with the army of occupation.

Among the less celebrated exploits of the Maccabees, for example, was a campaign of forcible circumcision that was directed against any Jew, whether infant or adult, who had neglected the ancient and all-important rite. Some of the Jewish fathers and mothers who failed to circumcise their sons, of course, were merely seeking to spare their lives by complying with the royal decree of Antiochus that criminalized the practice. Others, as we have seen, were seeking to ape the ways of Hellenism and perhaps even to conceal their Jewish origins so they could pass into the pagan world. To the rigorists, however, it

Q7 WITH IMPORTANT ?

did not matter whether the failure to circumcise was the result of coercion or collaboration—it was an act of disobedience to Yahweh, and disobedience, as the prophet Samuel put it, is the theological equivalent of sorcery and idolatry.

YOU ARE EITHER WITH GOD OR AGAINST GOD

No single point of conflict between the rigorists and the assimilationists in Judaism offers a clearer example of what was at stake in the larger conflict between monotheism and polytheism. Circumcision was an unmistakable and ineradicable sign of membership in the Chosen People, a sign that is literally carved into the flesh. As the Jewish rigorists saw it, circumcision at the point of a sword was “not an act of tyranny,” explains historian Steven Weitzman, “but an act of zeal required to restore the social boundaries between Jews and Gentiles in the Holy Land.”²⁴ The God of Israel, according to the strictest practitioners of monotheism, required nothing less of his worshippers.

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SEPARATES GODS PEOPLE ON THE EARTH

The Invention of Holy Martyrdom

The war that the Maccabees fought against Antiochus ended in victory. But, significantly, the Book of Maccabees preserves the memory of those moments when the worshippers of Yahweh were victims rather than victors. It is a collection of stomach-turning and heartrending accounts of the Pious Ones who preferred to perish by fire or by sword rather than break faith with the Only True God. The most horrific of these tales shows us the ordeal of a mother who is forced to witness Antiochus’s torture of her seven sons in the hope that she will persuade at least one of them to comply with the king’s command to taste a morsel of pork. How she responds to the king’s cruel demand marks the beginning of something new and crucial in the history of monotheism—the invention of the holy martyr.

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The author spares his readers no gruesome detail in describing the ordeal of the Jewish mother and her sons—that’s the whole point of telling the tale in the first place. The seven brothers are beaten with whips and straps, but they are resolute: “We are ready to die,” declares

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one of the brothers, "rather than break the laws of our fathers." The outraged king orders that his tongue be cut out, his scalp torn from his skull and his body mutilated. At last, what is left of the young man, still alive, is roasted in a cauldron. One by one, the brothers suffer the same horrific fate until only the youngest remains. The king, maddened by their defiance, demands that the woman use her motherly wiles to persuade her last surviving son to swallow a bite of pork and thus save himself.

She pretends to agree, but when she addresses her son—speaking in her native tongue so that the king will not understand what she is saying—the heroic mother delivers a very different message. "Do not be afraid of this man," she boldly counsels her seventh son before the both of them give up their lives. "Accept death and prove yourself worthy of your brothers."²⁵

Here we are witnessing the birth of a tradition that is absent from the triumphal passages of the Torah where Yahweh, the God of Armies, decrees a holy war against the abominations of paganism. It is the Maccabees, insists Rabbi Emil L. Fackenheim, a Holocaust survivor and a contemporary Jewish philosopher, who, literally, "invented martyrdom."²⁶ And martyrdom, as we shall see, is the moral counterweight of holy war. The soldier of God may delight in taking the enemy's life, but when the battle turns against him, he must be equally willing to offer his own life, all in the name of the True God. Holy war is the weapon of the powerful and the victorious; martyrdom is the weapon of the weak and the vanquished. Both will be wielded in the war of God against the gods.

The Jewish War

The Maccabees defeated the army of Antiochus in 164 B.C.E. and promptly set up the first independent Jewish state since the last descendant of King David had been dragged from the throne in Jerusalem some four hundred years before. The new Jewish kings are known as the Hasmonean dynasty, a term that derives from Hasmon,

the family name of Mattathias, Judah and his brothers. But the new Jewish commonwealth was not the theocracy that the Maccabees had fought to establish. The Hasmonean kings were accommodationists and assimilationists who made their peace with the pagan world of Hellenism, adopting Greek names, titles, dress and manners. By then, both Judah the Maccabee and Antiochus the Madman were dead, and their successors were far more inclined to compromise, thus proving that rigorism in both religion and politics burns so hot that it sometimes burns itself out.

Indeed, the victory of the Maccabees did not erase the old struggle between the Pious Ones and the less rigorous Jews who preferred the pleasures of Hellenism, and a civil war broke out in the little Jewish kingdom in the first century B.C.E. By now, a new superpower dominated the ancient world—the empire of pagan Rome—and each of the warring Jewish factions struggled to win the support of the Roman emperor. But the Romans, who sought to impose the so-called *Pax Romana* (“Roman Peace”) on the whole of the known world, refused to be drawn into the treacherous politics of the tiny Jewish state. Instead, a Roman army marched into Judea in 63 B.C.E., conquered Jerusalem and ultimately installed a king to serve as both “King of the Jews” and a client of pagan Rome.

The new king was Herod (73–4 B.C.E.), a man of Arab descent whose family had been converted to Judaism during the reign of the Hasmoneans. Herod had come to the attention of the Roman authorities when, as a provincial governor in the Galilee, he was charged with the task of searching out and exterminating the latest generation of Jewish rigorists who challenged the occupation of their homeland by the Roman legions. He found out for himself that some of the Jewish partisans who had taken up arms against Roman occupation were perfectly willing to martyr themselves in defense of their faith and their country. During one operation, for example, he pursued a band of resistance fighters to a cliffside cave and contrived to lower a few of his soldiers from the cliff top in baskets so they could haul out

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the fugitives. One man sheltering inside the cave was seen to cut the throats of his wife and children before taking his own life, preferring to die by his own hand rather than surrender to Herod's army.

Herod was no mere puppet king, and he earned the same title that was bestowed upon Alexander before him and Constantine after him: "the Great." His army managed to suppress the Jewish rigorists who still sought a purer form of Judaism and a free Jewish state, and he succeeded in brokering an uneasy peace between his unruly Jewish subjects and his Roman overlords, who followed the customary pagan practice of letting the locals worship as they pleased. A golden eagle, the symbol of Rome, was mounted on the gateway to the Temple, but—quite unlike Antiochus—the Romans declined to defile the inner chambers of the Temple itself with pagan imagery. So deferential were the Romans to Jewish sensibilities, in fact, that a Roman legionnaire who defied the Jewish prohibition against entering the inner courtyards of the Temple in Jerusalem could be put to death for the offense.

"Even the Jews, a wretched people as they are, and separate from all other nations, certainly worship but one God," allows one ancient writer who disdains the theology of Judaism but recognizes something familiar in the Jewish rituals of worship. "Yet they do it openly, they do it in temples, they do it with altars, sacrifices and ceremonies." 27

The Temple remained the single most important site in Jewish observance, a place where thousands of sheep and goats were sacrificed to Yahweh according to the rituals that are prescribed in the Torah. Herod expanded and enhanced the Temple, enclosing the old structure that had been rebuilt when the exiles returned from Babylon inside a vastly larger construction that aped the architecture of Greece and Rome and was regarded as one of the wonders of the ancient world; indeed, the Temple was a kind of tourist attraction. But the Temple was not the only monument to Hellenism—Herod built amphitheatres and stadiums, baths and gymnasiums, all the facilities

MAN KILLED HIMSELF + FAMILY TO AVOID HEROD'S ARMY

HEROD'S PERSECUTION OF PIOUS ONES

Herod: Hellenistic

ROMANS ALLOWED JEWS RELIGIOUS AUTONOMY

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that the Greco-Roman culture demanded. Fatefully, he also built for himself a fortified palace in the desert wilderness at a place called Masada.

The Fire Within

After the death of Herod in 4 B.C.E., Rome left his sons in charge of various provinces of his kingdom, but the whole of Judea was now under Roman occupation. The Romans discovered that Jewish resistance was still alive. Just as one person's "terrorist" is another person's "freedom fighter," the Romans called them "brigands" and "bandits," but they regarded themselves as holy warriors in a struggle to restore Jewish sovereignty in the land of the Jews. Just like the Maccabees, they resorted to what we would today call acts of terrorism against both the Roman overlords and those of their fellow Jews who were deemed too friendly toward the occupation authorities.

CONTINUE
JEWISH
RESISTANCE

GUERRILLA
TACTICS
VS
COLLABORATORS

The so-called Sicarii, for example, were urban guerrillas who adopted the tactic of slipping into a crowded public square in Jerusalem, drawing close to some Jewish collaborator, striking him down with the stealthy blow of a dagger (*sica*) and then disappearing into the crowd again. Precisely because they embraced the old traditions of holy war—like Phinehas and Mattathias, they were "zealous for the Lord"—the ancient Jewish historian Josephus coined a new term to describe the Jewish partisans who resisted the Roman occupiers and their Jewish collaborators. He called them Zealots.

"ZEALOTS"

The Zealots rose up in open rebellion against Rome in 66 C.E., a guerrilla army challenging a superpower. For four years, the Zealots and their allies managed to keep the most formidable army in the ancient world at bay. But, unlike the holy war that the Maccabees conducted against Antiochus, the latest war of national liberation ended in defeat. In 70 C.E., Roman legions fought their way into Jerusalem, destroyed the Temple and put to death all but a remnant of the resistance fighters. Perhaps a thousand survivors of the siege of Jerusalem sought refuge in the palace Herod had built for himself in the Judean

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SPECULATE → How DOES THE STORY OF JESUS OF NAZARETH, A JEWISH MESSIAH (ONE HOPED TO SAVE THE JEWISH PEOPLE FROM ROMAN PERSECUTION) FIT INTO ALL OF THIS?

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MARTYRDOM
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desert—the mountaintop fortress called Masada—where they held out for another two years. But Jewish armed resistance and Jewish political sovereignty had been crushed by the weight of Roman arms. All that was left was the opportunity for martyrdom.

Masada, of course, is the ultimate and enduring symbol of martyrdom in Jewish history. Surrounded by a Roman army, watching Jewish prisoners at work on an earthen ramp that would allow the legionaries and their siege engines to reach the walls of the fortress and awaiting the inevitable moment of defeat and death, the defenders of Masada chose to slay themselves rather than be slain by their enemies. Or, perhaps more accurately, the most zealous of their leaders made the choice on their behalf. On the night before the final assault by the Roman army, lots were cast to determine who would put nearly one thousand Jewish men, women and children to the sword before taking their own lives.

“[W]hen ten of them had been chosen by lot to be the executioners of the rest,” reports Josephus, “every man flung himself down beside his wife and children where they lay, put his arms round them, and exposed his throat to those who must perform the painful office.”²⁸

The ten executioners drew lots again, and one of the ten was selected to cut the throats of the other nine. At last, only a single man remained alive atop Masada. As his last act of defiance, he set fire to the palace of Herod, “and, summoning all his strength, drove his sword right through his body and fell dead by the side of his family.” When the Roman soldiers finally reached the summit of Masada at dawn, fully expecting a last stand by the most zealous of the Jewish freedom fighters, they found only corpses: “Dreadful solitude on every side,” as Josephus recalls it, “fire within, and silence.”²⁹

The Turncoat General

Jewish armed resistance against Rome did not come to a final end at Masada. Another major insurrection against Roman occupation

took place under Bar Kokhba in the second century C.E., and Jewish uprisings on a more modest scale continued to flare up now and then over the next several hundred years. But Judaism was ready to make its peace with pagan Rome. Indeed, the ancient historian who recorded the events of the Jewish War, including the last hours of the martyrs of Masada, offers a good example of the spirit of compromise that replaced the spirit of zealotry that had exhausted itself in the war.

He is remembered as Flavius Josephus, but he was born in Jerusalem about 37 C.E. as Yoseph Ben Mattiyahu. A wealthy and aristocratic Jew of priestly descent, Josephus was called upon to serve as governor general of Galilee, and he was placed in command of a Jewish army at the outset of the uprising against Roman occupation. But he counseled his fellow Jews against making war on Rome, and he surrendered to the Roman general Vespasian after surviving his first and only battle. Notably, Josephus declined to embrace the ideal of martyrdom as espoused by the Maccabees and the Zealots, and he contrived to escape the fate of his comrades in arms, who committed suicide *en masse* rather than be taken prisoner by the enemy.

The turncoat Jewish general put himself at the service of the Roman conquerors. He frankly depicts himself standing beneath the walls of besieged Jerusalem and calling on his fellow Jews to join him in surrender. For changing his colors, Josephus was rewarded with an apartment in the imperial palace at Rome and a life of leisure that afforded him the opportunity to write the histories and memoirs where some of the most crucial events in the history of Judaism and Christianity are recorded. He was exactly the kind of "Hellenized" Jew whom the Zealots would have deemed worthy of death, and yet it was Josephus and not the Zealots who lived to tell about the experience of the Jewish War.

Much of what we know about the Zealots, in fact, comes from the war memoir in which Josephus offers an eyewitness account of the siege of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Temple. He may have set himself against the "brigands" and "bandits" of the Jewish resis-

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FLAVIUS JOSEPHUS
RE-INTEGRATES
JEWS INTO
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tance, but he betrays a grudging admiration for the self-willed martyrs of Masada, praising "the nobility of their resolve" and their "utter contempt of death."³⁰ Still, the writings of Josephus amount to a kind of epitaph for the doctrine of holy war that begins in the Hebrew Bible but now disappears from Jewish history.

"God takes care of mankind," muses Josephus on the futility of a war undertaken in the name of Yahweh, "but men perish by those miseries which they madly and voluntarily bring upon themselves."³¹

Josephus was proud of his Jewishness, and he used his writings to defend the Jewish people and explain Judaism to the pagan world. And yet, as a former politician and general, he understood the *realpolitik* that now governed the fate of the Jews in the Roman empire. A Jewish king like Josiah was able to carry out a purge of Judaism only because he commanded the power of the state. At his decree, rival sanctuaries for the worship of the God of Israel were closed and sealed, pagan shrines and statues were burned to ash and any priest who did not conform to his kind of Judaism was put to death. A Jewish general like Judah Maccabee was able to compel the forcible circumcision of his fellow Jews only because he commanded an army. The same resources, of course, are required in order to go to war, holy or otherwise, against a foreign enemy. Once the Jewish state was dismantled and the Jewish army was demobilized by victorious Rome, holy war was no longer an option.

IMPORTANCE
OF THE POLITICAL
STATE TO
THE ABILITY OF
ZEALOUS
JEWS TO
EJECT
REFORMS TOWARD
MONOTHEISM

The Rabbi in the Coffin

Now that the once glorious Temple that Herod had built was only a pile of broken stones, the sacrifice of animals that Yahweh is shown to demand in the Torah could no longer be offered. God, as King Josiah had determined when he found the lost scroll of the law, would not accept sacrifice from any place other than the one where "the Lord your God shall cause his name to dwell"³²—that is, the Temple at Jerusalem. So Judaism was forced to reinvent itself yet again.

NO
TEMPLE
NO BLOOD
SACRIFICE

The study of the sacred writings of Judaism—the Bible and, later,

BLOOD SACRIFICE

the anthology of religious law, legend and lore known as the Talmud— wholly replaced the rituals of blood sacrifice. Rabbis took the place of the hereditary male priests who once served at the Temple in Jerusalem as the spiritual leaders of the Jewish people. "Rabbi" literally means "my master," and a rabbi functioned not only as a prayer leader but also as a teacher, a preacher, a scholar, a judge. Worship could be offered anywhere in the world where a *minyán* of ten Jews gathered.

TRULY MOBILE PRACTICE

RABBI'S AS INTERPRETERS

The revolution in monotheism that followed the destruction of the Temple is summed up in a tale that is told about Yohanan ben Zakkai, a revered figure in the history of rabbinical Judaism. One of his fellow rabbis insists that the Jews are doomed because, now that the Temple is gone, they can no longer atone for their sins by offering sacrifices to Yahweh. "My son, be not grieved," says Yohanan ben Zakkai, who goes on to quote some of the softer words of the prophet Hosea. "We have another atonement as effective as this, and what is it? It is acts of loving-kindness, as it is said, 'For I desire mercy and not sacrifice.'"³³

REVOLUTION IN MONOTHEISM

BLOOD SACRIFICE
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ACTS OF KINDNESS + MERCY

Yohanan ben Zakkai, in fact, is the emblematic figure in the new kind of monotheism that constituted the practice of Judaism after the destruction of the Temple. He was a contemporary of Josephus, and he, too, made a separate peace with Rome. Yohanan ben Zakkai smuggled himself out of besieged Jerusalem in a coffin, placed himself under the protection of the same Roman general to whom Josephus surrendered, and asked his captor only for a safe haven where he could establish a rabbinical academy to preserve and study the sacred law of Judaism. Just as Josephus was granted refuge in the imperial palace in Rome, where he wrote his memoirs, Yohanan ben Zakkai was permitted to establish a *yeshiva* at a place called Yavneh, where the writings that constitute the Hebrew Bible were finally canonized in 90 C.E.

ABILITY TO OVERLOOK PASSAGES OF MURDER & GENOCIDE

ABILITY TO LIVE W/ PAGAN ROME

So a strictly observant Jew like Yohanan ben Zakkai, no less than a "Hellenized" Jew like Josephus, demonstrates exactly how and why Judaism made its peace with paganism. The call to zealotry is replaced by the celebration of "acts of loving-kindness," and rigorism is

confined to the study and observance of religious law. The rabbis whose teachings are collected in the Talmud are not Bible literalists or religious fundamentalists: they preserve the passages of the Torah that command a faithful Jew to keep the Sabbath and the dietary laws of *kashrut*, but they overlook the passages that call on a faithful Jew to take up arms against the "abomination" of paganism. The pious rabbi and the turncoat general, as it turns out, adopt the very same stance toward pagan Rome.

"Pray for the peace of the ruling power," advises Rabbi Hanin, one of the contemporaries of Yohanan ben Zakkai whose words are recorded in the Talmud, "since but for the fear of it men would have swallowed each other alive."³⁴

The ruling power, of course, was pagan Rome, which had just inflicted upon Judaism its cruelest defeat and greatest humiliation. Perhaps one million Jewish men, women and children died in the Jewish War, a casualty figure that prompts Bible critic Jack Miles to call it "the Roman Shoah" in *Christ: A Crisis in the Life of God*. The land of the Jews was reduced to the status of an occupied territory, and its name was changed from Judea to Palaestina, a reference to one of the traditional enemies of the Jewish people, the Philistines. Jerusalem was renamed Aelia Capitolina, a tribute to the family name of the reigning emperor, and a shrine to Jupiter was erected on the site where the altar of Yahweh once stood. And yet, remarkably, the Roman authorities and the Jewish people found a way to forgive and forget.

"A Craze for Judaism"

The Jews were not universally loved in ancient Rome. Pagans, who were respectful toward the gods and goddesses of the people they conquered, resented the Jewish claim to be the "Chosen People" of the "Only True God." The characteristics of Judaism that pagans found so obnoxious were only reinforced by the rite of circumcision, the dietary laws of kashrut and the strict observance of the Sabbath, all of which tended to keep the Jews to themselves. However, for ex-

(2) WHY ROMANS RESENTMENT OF JEWS OF EXCLUSIVITY

actly these reasons, Judaism was not regarded as much of a threat to paganism—few Roman men were willing to submit to circumcision, and neither men nor women were eager to give up the banquets for which Rome was so celebrated in order to keep the laws of *kashrut*.

In fact, despite all of these disincentives, the strange new idea of the Only True God began to exert a certain appeal to pagans, who were starting to entertain the notion of a supreme god even within the context of polytheism. Then, too, the pagans were impressed by the fact that the history of Judaism was fully as ancient as their own, and they were intrigued by the Jewish emphasis on the study of the Torah and other ancient texts. Tellingly, the very first translation of the Hebrew Bible into Greek—the so-called Septuagint—had been completed in the second century B.C.E. in Alexandria, the seat of Hellenistic civilization, and its translators had been commissioned by the pharaoh of Egypt, one of the rulers of the former empire of Alexander the Great.

By the first century of the Common Era, Rome was undergoing "a 'craze' for Judaism," as historian and biographer A. N. Wilson puts it in *Paul: The Mind of the Apostle*. Curious pagans who attended Jewish services—the so-called God-fearers—were numerous enough that some synagoges were outfitted with special galleries to accommodate spectators.³⁵ And the Jews were treated with a marked degree of respect and tolerance when it came to participation in the rituals of emperor worship that had become a kind of loyalty test in the Roman empire—the worshippers of the Only True God were officially permitted to pray for the emperor rather than to the emperor, a theological nicety that reveals something profound about the capacity of both Judaism and paganism to take a step back from rigorism.

Thus did a certain kind of zealotry pass out of Jewish tradition. The Jewish people, of course, would continue to provide martyrs in terrible abundance. But they would be men, women and children on whom martyrdom was imposed rather than besieged and defeated soldiers, like the Zealots at Masada, who preferred suicide over surrender. And the future martyrs were not victims of paganism; rather,

INTEREST AMONG ROMANS IN MONOTHEISM / JUDAISM

Jews ALLOWED OUT OF EMPEROR WORSHIP

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CHRISTIANS

by a terrible irony, their oppressors and persecutors would be fellow worshippers of the Only True God. For now, however, the Jewish people and pagan Rome made their peace with each other, and it was the soldiers of Christ who took up the banner of holy war and carried it into battle.

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29. Ibid., 47.
30. Ibid., 47.
31. Ross Shepard Kraemer, *Her Share of the Blessings: Women's Religions Among Pagans, Jews and Christians in the Greco-Roman World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 51.
32. Merlin Stone, *When God Was a Woman* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1976), 3.
33. Franz Cumont, *Oriental Religions in Roman Paganism*, 186.
34. Pierre Chuvin, *A Chronicle of the Last Pagans*, trans. B. A. Archer (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1990), 33.
35. Fox, 343.
36. Julian, *Heroic Deeds*, quoted in (and slightly adapted from) Giuseppe Ricciotti, *Julian the Apostate, Roman Emperor, 361–363*, trans. M. Joseph Costelloe (1960; reprint, Rockford, Ill.: Tan Books, 1999), 117.
37. Num 12:6 (adapted).
38. Num. 5:17, 27.
39. Exod. 29:20.
40. Julian, *Against the Galileans*, quoted in (and slightly adapted from) Ricciotti, 223.
41. Ramsay MacMullen, *Christianity and Paganism in the Fourth to Eighth Centuries* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 2.
42. Ibid., 32.
43. Quoted in Smith, *Death of Classical Paganism*, 81 (adapted).
44. Samuel Dill, *Roman Society in the Last Century of the Western Empire*, 2d rev. ed. (New York: Meridian, 1958), 132–133.
45. Edward Gibbon, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, (1776; reprint, New York: Heritage, 1946), 1: 432.
46. Fox, 30.
47. Acts 17:23–24.
48. Klauck, 82–83.
49. Quoted in August Neander, *The Emperor Julian and His Generation*, trans. C. V. Cox (1812; reprint, Eugene, Ore.: Wipf and Stock, 2001) 58 (adapted).
50. Ezek 16:15; Rev. 17:5.

CHAPTER THREE: Terror and True Belief

1. Lev. 19:34 (adapted from JPS and NEB).
2. Deut. 4:34, 2:25.
3. Deut. 6:10–11.
4. Deut. 20:16–17 (adapted).

5. Deut. 2:34.
6. Exod. 34:13.
7. E.g., Jer. 2:19 (NEB).
8. Deut. 3:22.
9. Num. 25:8.
10. Num. 25:11. The Hebrew word *Ki-nah* is variously translated as "zealous" and "jealous."
11. Num. 31:15, 17-18.
12. 1 Sam. 15:3, 12.
13. 1 Sam. 15:3, 9, 23 (adapted from JPS and NEB).
14. According to the Bible, the land of Israel was united under a single monarch during the reigns of David and Solomon. On the death of Solomon, as a punishment for his acts of apostasy, a civil war ensued and the kingdom was split into two separate monarchies. The southern kingdom was called Judah and the northern kingdom Israel. Shortly after Solomon's death, the monarch of the northern kingdom, Jereboam, set up sanctuaries for the worship of Yahweh in the northern cities of Bethel and Dan as alternatives to the Temple of Solomon in Jerusalem, the royal capital of the kingdom of Judah.
15. 2 Chron. 34:3.
16. Richard Elliott Friedman, *Who Wrote the Bible?* (New York: Summit Books, 1987), 102.
17. 2 Kings 23:4 (New JPS).
18. 2 Kings 23:13 (New JPS).
19. Israel Finkelstein and Neil Asher Silberman, *The Bible Unearthed: Archaeology's New Vision of Ancient Israel and the Origin of Its Sacred Texts* (New York: Free Press, 2001), 275, 276.
20. *Ibid.*, 122.
21. 2 Chron. 35:23.
22. Flavius Josephus, *The Works of Josephus*, trans. William Whiston (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1987), *Antiquities of the Jews*, 324.
23. 1 Macc. 2:24, 26, 27 (NEB).
24. Steven Weitzman, "Forced Circumcision and the Shifting Role of Gentiles in Hasmonean Ideology," *Harvard Theological Review* 92, no.1 (January 1999): 59.
25. 2 Macc. 7:2, 29 (NEB).
26. Emil L. Fackenheim, *What Is Judaism? An Interpretation for the Present Age* (New York: Summit, 1987), 67, 68.
27. Caecilius, quoted in Augustus Neander, *The Emperor Julian and His Generation*, trans. C. V. Cox (1812; reprint, Eugene, Ore.: Wipf and Stock, 2001), 56.

28. Flavius Josephus, *The Jewish War*, rev. ed., trans. G. A. Williamson (New York: Dorset Press, 1981), 404.
29. *Ibid.*, 404–5.
30. *Ibid.*, 405.
31. Flavius Josephus, *Works, Antiquities of the Jews*, 743.
32. Deut. 12:11.
33. Quoted in Jacob Neusner, *A Life of Yohanan ben Zakkai, ca. 1–80 C.E.* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1962), 142. Yohanan ben Zakkai is quoting Hos. 6:6.
34. Zvi Kaplan, “Hanina Segan Ha-Kohanim,” *Encyclopedia Judaica* corr. ed. (Jerusalem: Keter, n.d.), 7: 1266–67, citing Avot 3:2.
35. A. N. Wilson, *Paul: The Mind of the Apostle* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1997), 5.

CHAPTER FOUR: Confessors and Traitors

1. Quoted in Franz Cumont, *Oriental Religions in Roman Paganism* (1911; reprint, New York: Dover, Publications, 1956) 37.
2. *Ibid.*, 28, 31.
3. *Ibid.*, 24.
4. *Ibid.*, 66.
5. Quoted in Samuel Dill, *Roman Society in the Last Century of the Western Empire*, 2d rev. ed. (New York: Meridian, 1958), 32.
6. Quoted in Patrick Tierney, *The Highest Altar: Unveiling the Mystery of Human Sacrifice* (New York: Penguin, n.d.), 441.
7. James George Frazer, *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion*, abridged ed. (1922; reprint, New York: Macmillan, 1979) 406.
8. *Ibid.*, 406 (adapted).
9. *Ibid.*, 445 (adapted).
10. Adapted from Apuleius, *The Golden Ass*, trans. Jack Lindsay (1932; reprint, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1962) 237–238.
11. Quoted in Augustus Neander, *The Emperor Julian and His Generation*, trans. C. V. Cox (1812; reprint, Eugene, Ore.: Wipf and Stock, 2001) 58.
12. Hans-Josef Klauck, *Magic and Paganism in Early Christianity: The World of the Acts of the Apostles*, trans. Brian McNeil (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000), 77 (referring specifically to the Epicureans and Stoics).
13. Pseudo-Plutarch, quoted in Abraham J. Malherbe, *Moral Exhortation: A Greco-Roman Sourcebook* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1986), 30–31.