

Israeli Mass Murder and a Jew's Jewish Question

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by [Michael Leshner](#), [OffGuardian](#)

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"A spirit [of piety] is characterized not only by what it does but, no less, by what it permits." ~ Rabbi Leo Baeck

One consequence of being Jewish is a standing familiarity with a wide range of Jewish jokes – including those that address what seems to be our collective inability to let well enough (or, more often, bad enough) alone.

So, for instance, there's the one about the difference between a Jewish pessimist and a Jewish optimist: the Jewish pessimist moans, "Things can't possibly get any worse" – to which the Jewish optimist replies, "Yes, they can!"

Alas, this particular joke would be a lot funnier if it didn't furnish an all too accurate description of Jewish moral decline.

What can I say? As thousands of tons of rubble bury the victims of the putative Jewish State's latest mass murder campaign in Gaza, I'm finding myself buried too – metaphorically, that is – under an avalanche of blended viciousness and self-pity by which "religious" Jewish media insists on its victimhood while celebrating slaughter.

And, Jewish optimist that I am, every time I think my coreligionists' moral turpitude can't possibly get any worse – it does.

(Full disclosure: thanks to my record of [criticizing Israel](#) and of [exposing rabbinic child abuse cover-ups](#), I've been [called a traitor](#) often enough to be hardened to the insult. Still, since it might be bad form for me to claim, *in propria persona*, that today's rabbinic and Jewish lay leadership is no better than a criminal conspiracy, all I am going to do in this article is to set out some relevant facts. Readers may form their own conclusions.)

It has been more than three years since Israel began [its routine massacres](#) of unarmed demonstrators inside the open-air prison known as Gaza; in one particularly memorable turkey shoot, Israeli soldiers killed [nearly sixty Palestinian civilians](#) on a single day in May 2018.

Their crime? Protesting Israel's [illegal siege](#) of that tormented sliver of land where, according to [Harvard University's Sara Roy](#), a million children are poisoned every day because Israel will not even allow its prisoners to operate a sewage treatment plant.

As for the response of Jewish "leadership" to those atrocities – well, apart from some highly praiseworthy but marginal exceptions, rabbis and Jewish pundits have either celebrated the torture of Gaza or have kept their mouths shut.

But on May 13 of this year, one rabbi I know in Passaic, New Jersey finally did break his silence. Did he decry the relentless Israeli attack that was leveling apartment buildings and wiping out [whole Palestinian families](#) in the Gaza ghetto? Did he protest the blatant ethnic cleansing campaign Israel was simultaneously waging in East Jerusalem? Did he mention that his congregants, as American Jews, are necessarily involved in the funding and political defense of [Israel's land theft](#) and [apartheid](#)?

No.

Our enemies are raining rockets aimed at the civilian

population of Israel[...]while wild mobs bent on killing Jews roam the streets..."

Mind you, as he wrote that message, Israel's [most recent assault](#) had already exterminated 113 people inside Gaza, 31 of them children, and had wounded 600 more. But the rabbi followed the typical Jewish pattern – he mentioned only the homemade rockets with which Gazans were feebly attempting to retaliate.

And when he wrote about "wild mobs," he didn't mean the [gangs of Jewish hoodlums](#) who, for weeks, had been destroying crops and olive groves all over the Israeli-occupied West Bank. Nor did he mention the [murders of Palestinian children](#) by Israeli soldiers. What troubled the rabbi was the relatively small number of Palestinians who were starting to fight back.

Others within the tribe were taking a similar line.

A day earlier, Allison Josephs, founder of an Orthodox Jewish blog called "*Jew in the City*," had fulminated against people who dared to criticize Israel for such trifles as [blowing up high-rise residential buildings](#) or [exterminating entire families](#).

"*How is peacefully living in our homeland inciting aggression?*" Ms. Josephs angrily demanded. A massive military assault against a trapped population was evidently what Ms Josephs meant by "peacefully living"; carrying out the slaughter in conjunction with the ethnic cleansing of occupied Palestinian territory was "peacefully living in our homeland."

Indeed, how could anyone object to a project so innocent?

Meanwhile, Orthodox rabbis – you know, the kind that say they're not Zionists, just religious – were calling for an "emergency worldwide" recitation of psalms to counter the sudden danger. Like Josephs, they had all steadfastly ignored

the Israeli violence that culminated this spring in an orgy of [expulsions of Palestinians](#) from the occupied West Bank town of Sheikh Jarrah. Nor did they suggest, even now, that their followers might devote their efforts toward restraining the Israeli war machine.

One is tempted to quote [Theresienstadt survivor Rabbi Leo Baeck](#), who wrote that piety *“is characterized not only by what it does but...by what it permits,”* and that *“it is difficult to say what has been more pernicious in the course of time: the intolerance that committed the wrongs or the indifference that beheld them unperturbed.”*

But I say no more.

The Jewish Press – the world’s largest English-language Orthodox Jewish publication – got into the act, too. On May 15, by which time the death toll in Gaza had reached at least 149, its only relevant [headline screamed](#):

One Dead in Rocket Attack on Ramat Gan [in Israel], Monkey Injured, Hundreds of Rockets Hit Israeli Cities.”

That’s right: an injured monkey made it into the *Jewish Press* headline, but not the Palestinian victims of Israel’s onslaught. The article even listed the deaths of “three cows” before its one and only reference to Gaza’s human beings – in which it recycled Israel’s claim that *“30 Gaza civilians, including many children, have...been killed by rockets that were misfired by Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad terrorist organizations.”*

Well, but what about the other 119 dead Palestinians? Apparently, “religious” Jews weren’t even expected to ask such a question.

All of this commentary took it for granted that Jews – not the targets of Israeli shells – were the real victims of the

violence. But just in case anyone failed to appreciate the tribulations of the privileged as they pulverized the not-so-lucky, the *Jewish Press* website offered a podcast with the consoling headline [*"The Jewish Right to Rage."*](#)

Click on the audio link and you could hear Yishai and Malkah Fleisher inveighing against the Israeli police, whose insufficient brutality towards Palestinians – yes, really – had necessitated what Yishai proudly called *"Jewish militias to protect the homeland."* (*"We destroyed them, we left them in pieces,"* [*bragged a member of one of those impromptu "militias"*](#) after they smashed car windows, abducted and assaulted Palestinian passersby and arranged attacks on "Arab-owned businesses" in the Israeli town of Bat Yam.)

Unsatisfied, Yishai mused that *"there's something very, very wrong with our police and our army, that they're not actually using live ammunition to suppress this jihadist uprising."*

But Yishai's endorsement of mob violence was small change compared with his wife's ecstatic description of a fire she thought was roasting Muslim worshipers alive at the Al-Aqsa mosque in East Jerusalem.

"Celebrating" with other Zionists as they danced near the ancient Temple mount – she called this *"fulfilling their rights to pray in their own city, in their own capital,"* even though the site is actually [*inside occupied Palestinian territory*](#) – an excited Malkah had witnessed *"a big fire flying out of the top"* of the mosque where Israeli "police" were assaulting trapped Palestinian worshipers who, under a barrage of stun grenades, were trying to confuse the attackers by tossing "firecrackers" in their direction.

The blaze turned out to be no more serious than the Palestinians' mode of defense – but even when Malkah and her friends assumed the entire mosque was a deadly inferno, they were quite content to watch the goyim burn:

[I]t was shocking – but it was also not horrifying. It was not horrifying. Because...we just felt like, as you say in Hebrew, magia lahem, like, they deserve this, they deserve to have a fire up on the Temple Mount because of what they're trying to do to us, and we know if that those police weren't standing there, they'd be shooting those firecrackers directly in our faces... And [so] the [Jewish] crowd was not horrified to see this fire.

What's a girl to do? If we don't incinerate those pesky natives, they might just throw a firecracker at us while storm troopers bludgeon them out of their homes and mosques so we can keep dancing on what used to be their land. Poor us!

Fortunately, there's a remedy for such dilemmas. The same Allison Josephs who couldn't make out why some people object to mass murder has already [offered religious advice](#) to Jews who support it: trust in God and believe in Jewish infallibility.

"[I]t is pretty clear that there is Jew hatred going on," sighed Josephs in a blog post dated May 12. But no matter: *"Why should I feel insignificant and full of despair when we are the people who taught the world how a David could beat a Goliath?... What is impossible with Hashem [God] on our side?"*

Eight days later, a "community awareness bulletin" from a Jewish organization that focuses on "practical issues facing the Orthodox Jewish Community today" was even more explicit. Citing a verse in Psalm 8 that describes an evildoer who "has dug a pit deep, only to fall into a trap of his own making," the newsletter claimed that this "is a clear allusion to the tunnels dug by the Sonei Yisrael [enemies of the Jews], and what should become of their plans."

I suppose the rabbis deserve some credit for knowing that Gaza's meager defenses include underground tunnels. All the

same, the rabbis' familiarity with the Bible leaves something to be desired: they might have quoted more aptly from Ezekiel 33:24-26, where God rebukes Jews who claim "the land [of Israel] is given us for inheritance" with the angry rejoinder:

Ye stand upon your sword, ye work abomination, and ye defile every one his neighbor's wife: and shall ye possess the land?"

But that prescient description of the modern State of Israel wouldn't have yielded the answer the rabbis wanted, so... Again, I say no more.

A bit of personal history is worth mentioning here. Several years ago, I learned that Ohr Somayach, the school in Monsey, New York where – as a newcomer to traditional Judaism – I once studied the Talmud, Scriptural commentaries and the legal codes, was planning a massive new complex in occupied Sheikh Jarrah.

Horrificed, I wrote to the school's administrators, pleading with them not to make students of holy texts accomplices in an international crime. They responded that the new building was the work of Ohr Somayach's Israeli branch, which was not affiliated with the one in Monsey. (A falsehood, but what the hell.)

So I wrote to Ohr Somayach in Israel with the same message. I waited patiently for an answer; nothing ever came.

But two years ago, advanced plans for the eleven-story building were officially announced in Israel as part of what human rights activists have called ["Israel's ramped up efforts to deepen its circle of control around the Old City Basin."](#)

You don't have to be a prophet to understand what is going on. As part of its ethnic cleansing campaign, Israel wants to tighten its noose around the Palestinians of East Jerusalem –

and what better excuse for evicting Palestinian families from Sheikh Jarrah than the proximity of a large school full of young Jews, many from the United States, who might otherwise face danger from “Arab terrorists”?

For its part, Ohr Somayach is seeking a bargain-basement price for a hefty real estate development project – and the Israeli government is happy to oblige, given the role the new building will play in its own criminal plans.

In other words: it’s a dirty deal made in heaven. God, meet ethnic cleansing. Neo-Nazis, meet the Talmud.

Over three hundred years ago (as told by Martin Buber) the Hasidic master Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev warned against the growing perversion of moral priorities that is ripening today in the grotesque marriage of Zionist brutality with ersatz Jewish piety:

What I see before me is a topsy-turvy world. Once the whole truth was in the alleys and market-places of Israel: there everyone told the truth...Truth and faithfulness were the lamps lighting their steps, and...with their souls they proved the words: “Your ‘yes’ be true and your ‘no’ be true,” and all their trading was done in good faith. But when they came to the House of Prayer they beat their breasts and said: “We have trespassed! We have dealt treacherously! We have robbed!” And all this was a lie because they had kept faith before God and Man. Today the reverse takes place: in trading they lie and cheat; in their prayer they profess the truth.

How fortunate is the religious community that “lies” to God by claiming more wickedness than it actually possesses! And how ominous is our moral horizon when the only truth we tell is the rote repetition of the confessional liturgy – while in every other respect, our collective words and actions have sunk to the level of Nazi apologetics!

I can picture that future Ohr Somayach building in Sheikh Jarrah – the rows of earnest young men swaying in fervent prayer or delving into their Talmudic folio volumes.

The image fills me with sadness. And with anger.

With every prayer they recite, with every religious law they learn, with every page they study, the occupants of that bloodstained structure will be more deeply entangled in a web of deceit, treachery, cruelty, hypocrisy and fraud.

Yes, I know that some aspects of history are irreversible, and that we cannot all be responsible for the crimes of the past.

But when a society builds its future on a foundation of stolen property and murdered children – and that's what we "religious" Jews are doing at this very moment – it invites both the curse of Ezekiel and the taunt of the political philosopher Leo Strauss, who once complained of an ideology so blind to reality that when it is brought to justice for "*fiddling while Rome burns*" it will plead only two worthless "excuses":

it does not know that it fiddles, and it does not know that Rome burns."

And that won't be just another Jewish joke.

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