

POWER AND POWERLESSNESS: THE JEWISH EXPERIENCE
(SOME CONSIDERATIONS)

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Political power involves the right and responsibility of a group to administer its internal and external affairs or, in alternative words, the "domestic and foreign affairs of the community. The crucial questions with regard to such political power are, first, the extent to which the community is able to succeed in determining its affairs, and second, the foundation or source of those rights; that is to say, are they given on sufferance by an overarching political authority, or are they recognized as inherently legitimate? The purpose of power at the national level is to make somebody "do something or not do something or stop doing something."¹ The aim is usually to influence behavior, though at times national power may be directed at influencing ideals and mental constructs as well.

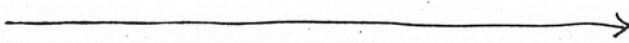
Power at the international level is fundamentally "the capacity of a political unit to impose its will on other political units,"² or conversely, the ability of a political unit to resist other political units' efforts to impose their will on itself.

The opposite of power is impotence -- the inability to affect the course of ^{events, that is,} history. It may even involve the conscious withdrawal from any attempt to influence history, at least political and temporal history, in favor of a nontemporal, apolitical mission. ^(as numerous religious groups and scientists have done) An impotent political unit is unable to determine its own fate or ensure the well-being of its citizens.³ And a powerless individual or minority is subject to the will or mood of the majority and its government.

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An individual may have "strength," but "power" belongs to the group. Since the individual's strength is not sufficient to maintain existence, collective power is necessary. Thus, the original meaning of Jewish power and its legitimacy is to be found not in some abstract "spirit of Judaism," but "in a collective will and existence," argues Abba Lessing,⁴ just as for all peoples and national communities. Because collective power was essential ^{to existence,} neither biblical nor rabbinic sources grant an individual the right to separate himself from the ^{nation's} ~~national~~ decision to commit itself to warfare.⁵

Because Judaism ^{has} emphasizes ^d the responsibility of the community to concern itself with the total well-being of all its members ^{in all aspects of life,} it has not had (or at least did not originally have) ^a the negative attitude toward power ^{per se,} that Christianity (at least in principle) has had. ^{Jewish thought} For Judaism accepts power as at once natural (it was one of the ten media by which the world was created and continues to be created) and also necessary (in order to enable people to live in some kind of harmony).⁶ Rabbi Hanania said, "Pray for the ^{welfare} ~~peace~~ of the ^{government,} ~~kingdom,~~ since but for ^{fear thereof} ~~we had~~ ^{men would} ~~swallowed~~ ^{sw} each his neighbor alive." (Ethics of the Fathers 3.2) And the Israeli scholar Ephraim Urbach comments, "It is the peace of the kingdom which justifies its authority. The fear of the government . . . is needed to preserve life."⁷

Of course the ^{prophets and sages} rabbis recognized the need to control power by limiting it. ^Even ~~as~~ the Creator ^{had} set a limit to divine power by stopping creation at a finite universe, and ~~by~~ giving humankind responsibility for cooperating with the Holy One to perfect the unfinished, imperfect world.⁸ ^{Therefore,} ~~This means that~~ for every power, there must be a counter-power, a check and balance of opposing forces. ~~It is~~ This balance ~~that~~ forms the covenant of society in Judaism. "Counter-power is the charter for man living in peace with his power." And "intelligent, restrained, and moral use of counter-power is the only method by which we can neutralize evil," Maurice Lamm affirms. In addition, power has to be 

refined -- by mitzvot, by legislation, and by constitutions⁹ in order that it be used for the well-being of the community. Thus, the achievement of justice, as nearly as possible, became the goal of Jewish Halakhah and Aggadah (as well as of modern liberal Judaism). The ideal, of course, is love, but since love^{as such} cannot be legislated, the rabbis said, Act toward your neighbor as if you love him; or at least do not act as if you hate him. ~~The goal was to make this makes~~ neighborliness a workable ethic of action rather than an unworkable perfectionist demand. ~~The perfectionist command becomes unworkable because of psychological demand, which so often has the psychological effect of producing guilt, that is produced when one recognizes one's failure to live up to the demand and anger, and then the consequence of transferring that guilt onto~~ Then as a way of dealing with the guilt, one transfers it onto the presumed enemy, against whom one must now protect or defend oneself.

What has been the Jewish experience with power and powerlessness?

If power is "the ability to initiate movement or change," it was only when Jews became a collective unit that they could "take their own identity and fate into their own hands." For Lessing then the accession of power first occurred when Israel left Egypt: Sinai is "a drama in which God commits [divine] power to the power of a newly collective power." Reaccessions of power occurred with the return from Babylon, the overthrow of the Seleucid overlords, and the establishing in our time of the State of Israel. In all these situations a Jewish national will could emerge, and reemerge, and the entire people could mobilize their energies to respond actively in history, ^{being forced into an inactive role on the sidelines or} instead of withdrawing from history.¹⁰

Lessing clearly reflects the view of Jewish history especially dominant since at least the nineteenth century, a view that in the long centuries of statelessness Jewry was totally powerless, impotent, perhaps even lacking in political sagacity. Ismar Schorsch rejects this view, arguing that medieval Jewry had a genuine, if unique, political history based on its legal status and group cohesiveness, which, he suggests, gave it power of a sort. Moreover, the leadership demonstrated considerable political astute-
~~ness~~

ness in order for the communities to have survived at all in their precarious situations. ^{Therefore,} I believe Schorsch would insist that a "national will" also manifested itself then, constrained as it was.¹¹

Of course collective power and ^{national will} ~~action~~ can also be defeated and cause great tragedies, as the rebellions against Rome in the first and second centuries of the Common Era demonstrated all too vividly. For that very reason, the rabbis set out ^{deliberately} to suppress the example of Macca-bean military prowess and the ferment of messianic expectations, and to secure Jewish survival through submission to the empires that must, ^{they} somehow represent God's will. This latter point of view ^{that} God's judgment was at work in historical events ^{persisted} from the biblical period despite the efforts of the Pharisees and the rabbis to free ~~the Covenant People from events of history, that is at least~~ ^{Judaism} from too close a linkage of catastrophe and divine judgment. ^{They sought} ~~in order~~ to avoid the very sort of conclusion which ^{in our own age} some ^{Orthodox} Jews have drawn: that ^{an event such as} the Holocaust was divine punishment). Rather ^{Recognizing the obvious imbalance of righteousness and justice in the world,} the Pharisees sought to transfer the "locus of Providence" essentially to "the world to come."¹²

With the loss of their nation state the long Jewish age of powerlessness began (though for some centuries Jews not only waited expectantly but acted along whatever lines were feasible ^{to accomplish} ~~for~~ a resumption of national existence as ~~had occurred~~ after the first exile). ~~From the first or second centuries through most of the eighteenth century,~~ ^{+ even beyond,} ~~During this time,~~ their historical experiences increasingly fostered ambivalent attitudes toward the powers that ruled them.¹³ Though a good deal of internal autonomy was frequently granted to Jewish communities, it was always vulnerable to arbitrary cancellation. Suspicion, fear, lack of respect, and resentment toward the authorities ^{were} ~~mingled~~ with a necessary reliance upon the power of rulers who were their only source of legal status and of protection against hostile mobs, and the warm personal relationships which at times developed.

Nevertheless, ^{almost always} there was a positive aspect to ^{Jews} the Jewish relationship to ^{their countries} the country of residence. ^A As early as the Babylonian exile Jeremiah had ^{set the pattern by advising} advised his people to live by the law of the land, to pray for the peace and well-being of the kingdom in which they lived, to establish homes and raise children. At the same time they were told to look forward to an eventual return to the Land of Israel, i.e., to a resumption of power. ^{We can say that} Jeremiah gave us a foretaste of Emil Fackenheim's ^{prophetic counsel} advice today: to survive, to survive as Jews, to raise Jewish children, ^{to "return to history" through the reborn national community,} and to live in the hope that God is still -- in ^(or, for Jeremiah, in spite of the destruction of the nation and Temple) spite of the Holocaust -- a redeeming God.¹⁴

Without national power the only available ^{means of} resistance to threats to their communal integrity and to their spiritual and ethnic autonomy ^{were} ~~was~~ of an internal and essentially ^{quietist} quiet or ^maccomodative kind. This required demonstrating the utility of Jews to the ruling powers. In place of a ^(in dispersion) genuinely political existence,¹⁵ Jews were forced to assume a "symbolic life." Perseverance and endurance, rooted in a deep faith were the only available instruments of Jewish collective survival.¹⁶ Under such conditions the effort to survive was sustained by Jewish communal institutions that enabled the individual and the community to preserve some sense of collectivity ^{as} ~~of continuing to~~ ^{be} the covenanted people, and to sustain the values ^{which} all deemed central to a meaningful existence. These institutions rested entirely upon freely-given consent, since any Jew could opt out of the community by embracing the majority religion.¹⁷

A major consequence of the Jewish situation was that powerlessness had to become, so to speak, a Jewish virtue, through "surrendering, sacrificing, even dying in front of one's enemies" (though, to be sure, martyrdom was never to be sought). Spiritual authenticity had to become a substitute for political self-determination and national decision-making. All this ^{resulted in} ~~meant that~~ power itself ^{becoming} ~~became~~.

suspect, a "corruption of the soul," a distraction from the life of study and prayer -- quite in contrast to the earlier point of view regarding power. Powerlessness was more and more interpreted as God's way with his people, as his way of introducing the dimension of non-power into the world.¹⁸

Martyrdom and other strategies during powerlessness

How did martyrdom come to play such a dominant role in Jewish history and tradition? Was it a fulfillment of the idea that non-power was God's way? Was it a substitute for self-defense? Was it the only alternative to total submission and conversion? Did the rabbis turn this world into "an ante-chamber of the world to come" so successfully that self-preservation was all but abandoned? Have Jews only in the last century reverted to active resistance instead?

The contemporary scholar Emanuel Rackman gives a categorical "no" to the very questions posed above: "Jews have always engaged in every type of defense that was possible." However, he is forced to admit that the difficulties of physical resistance were usually so numerous and so severe that the defense measures failed (though not for want of trying.)¹⁹ Israel Abrahams in his study of Jewish life in the Middle Ages emphasized "the martial spirit of the Jews of Spain," who fought under both the Cross and the Crescent, who insisted on their right to wear arms, and who made the Spanish mobs pay for their attacks on the Jewish quarters (though the mobs prevailed in the end). He wrote about the "courage and proficiency in self-help" which Jews elsewhere in Europe and the East "occasionally displayed. . . ."²⁰

However, courage, or lack of courage is not the crucial issue;

what is crucial is the residual powerlessness of the communities despite their courage.²⁰
Abba Lessing would answer our questions by saying a categorical "yes"
-- Jews did substitute martyrdom for self-defense.²¹

It is true that long before the twentieth century Judaism taught that one must not submit to evil but must resist it ("eradicate the evil from your midst"). Self-defense was an obligation for both the individual and the nation: no "lofty withdrawal from the world" was to be coveted. Jews were not to "stand idly by the blood" of their fellow man but were obligated, even at risk of their own life, to come to that person's defense. (Yet even in these situations restrictions were introduced to try to prevent killing when a lesser action would suffice.) War was permitted and even commanded under certain circumstances, not only for self-defense but to rescue those suffering under oppression.²²

Nevertheless, a nation at war was obligated to avoid unnecessary violence and to do everything possible to preserve humaneness. Within Torah and the rabbinic tradition, restrictions upon the conduct of war, as well as on action to stop a murderous pursuer, served as reminders of the brutalizing effects of violence upon all parties. It is true that "one must do what one must do in order to stay alive" -- but nothing beyond that. Above all, there must be no rejoicing in killing, not even a wicked enemy.²³ The well-known midrash wherein God rebuked the angels for singing while or because the Egyptians were drowning is often cited to make this point. Significantly, that midrash is included in the manual of the Israel Defense Forces.²⁴

Given the positive halakhic stance on self-defense and defense of others, and given the readiness of Jews to defend themselves when it was feasible, how and why did martyrdom come to have such a dominant place in Jewish history and tradition?

Martyrdom in order to sanctify God's name -- kiddush haShem --

was in fact "not a mitzvah of the first order," Emanuel Rackman asserts. For the rabbis it was "a much greater mitzvah to save one's life. . . ." And the most important way of sanctifying God's name was so to deport oneself in life situations that an observer would be moved to say, "'Blessed is that man's God.'"²⁵

There were, ~~however~~^W, three situations, according to talmudic literature,²⁶ where submission to being killed came to be expected: first, if one were told to murder another person; second, if ordered to commit illicit sexual intercourse; third, if commanded to commit idolatry. But because martyrdom was to be avoided if at all possible, a number of rabbis tried to limit the conditions under which martyr-
According to the formulations enunciated in the second century, dom would be necessary.²⁷ the mass suicide at Masada was not halakhically justified since none of the three obligatory conditions was present, and suicide in place of capture did not and does not sanctify God's name. Yet those on Masada were not alone^{in their time;} in that same war whole communities committed suicide as the culmination of their lost battle.²⁸ The non-halakhic nature of such suicides and the rabbis' emphasis on preserving life is the reason that Masada was "expunged from the collective memory" by the rabbis of the second and third centuries.²⁹

Nevertheless, kiddush haShem through martyrdom was implicit in Jewish life and faith even before the medieval period, and especially during the Hellenistic period. Moreover, when Judaism itself was endangered with extinction through the enemy's demands and actions, then martyrdom to preserve even the least commandment was deemed necessary.³⁰

Martyrdom was appropriated by the people themselves so that they could confront terrifying situations and not give way to threats or torture, could preserve their individuality and national identity, and could struggle for the right to profess their religious faith.

It was frequently the only means of demonstrating courage; and it offered suicide (though under a different name) as an alternative to submission and slavery. It helped them escape spiritual degradation during the long centuries of galut, and ironically perhaps, kept their courage and the spirit of resistance alive.³¹

As we look back at the various Jewish strategies for living without real power in generally hostile situations -- such ^{strategies} as submission, reliance on charters of rights and protection, ~~being~~ usefulness ~~ful~~ to the ruling powers, martyrdom when faced with unacceptable choices, segregation from the majority culture -- ^{we wonder whether we should} ~~can we~~ attribute Jewish survival to these policies? (Lessing goes so far as to say that we cannot even speak about "survival": Judaism as a system of thought may have survived, but "Jews have not survived. They have been murdered by the millions for thousands of years . . . over and over again."³²) Or ^{whether to} ~~should we~~ attribute ^{their} ~~the~~ survival instead to the uncoordinated and changeable policies of their enemies; or to the paradoxical teachings of the church, ~~which~~ On the one hand the Church reviled Jews as slayers of the prophets and murderers of God, and

on the other hand held that at least some Jews must be preserved as a negative witness to the truth of Christianity and the fate in store for all who followed this disobedient people's example.

If we find the survival tactics to have been effective (relatively speaking), we need to consider whether they are reuseable strategies today, for Jews or other minorities.³³ If we conclude that it was the inconsistent actions of the anti-Jewish forces, or a sufficiently ambiguous theology that allowed Jews to escape total annihilation, then the so-called survival tactics may be irrelevant or inapplicable to the modern world.

In any case, it is not that simple. We all know that another event has intervened, and that the late twentieth century is not

that of any of the earlier centuries (some of which are called the Dark Ages!). We live in the age after the Kingdom of Night; and in the century when an estimated 100 million (or perhaps even 200 million) human beings have been killed by other human beings; in an age when mass murder has been demonstrated not only as politically and technologically possible but as an accomplished fact.

During the Nazi era Jewish powerlessness and its consequences reached its apogee, despite the presumed radical alteration in Jewish status which ~~had~~ in the modern era ^{had} made Jews equal members of the national societies where they lived. Accordingly, the responses to this most desperate and helpless situation, and the conclusions that were drawn from it in the final years of the Shoah ^{after people realized the actual} and in the years since are of great import, ~~especially as the world Jewish community -- and some others -- increasingly evidence consensus on them.~~ To the extent that these conclusions are generally appropriated ^{by the World Jewish community}, they must be seen as the present counterpart to the conclusions of Rabbi Yohanan ben Zakkai and his colleagues ^{after 70 C.E.} of the ~~first century C.E.~~ which became normative ~~for so many centuries.~~

Conclusions drawn from the Shoah

Initially, ^{in the first years of the Nazi period, and even into the beginning of 1945} ~~during the Shoah,~~ there was a continuation of what had become the dominant patterns of Jewish existence: At first some post-Emancipation tactics such as protestations of loyalty to the nation, appeals to facts, and rational denials of the lies were attempted. But very quickly there was, and in many cases had to be, a reversion to the older techniques of survival: trying to accommodate to the new conditions (even when this meant going beyond the more ~~bringing the right to emigrate~~ ^{bringing officials} traditional accommodations ^{and, for the religiously Orthodox}); attempting to outlast the enemy; waiting for Messiah to lead them to Eretz Israel; accepting the present Haman as Heaven's instrument of punishment, ³⁵ ~~resting~~ ^{trusting} in the ~~assurance of the~~ continued existence of the Jewish people despite the

present catastrophe (which was seen as but one of Jewry's many holocausts, and not even its largest);³⁶ rejecting armed resistance^{religiously} as a form of opposition to God's will or^{pragmatically} as endangering the lives of other Jews;³⁷ and remaining halakhically observant in spite of the difficulties, dangers, and health hazards involved.³⁸

1. Degradation through powerlessness

Despite following the time-honored strategies for survival, the first "lesson" that the Shoah made ruthlessly clear was the degradation that powerlessness brought: total vulnerability, absolute helplessness, and complete isolation (even from human sympathy). If "neither God nor his people is intended to be powerless," argues Abba Lessing,^{then} the "first concern of the Jewish people today must . . . be public power. . . . existence precedes ethics and power is of the essence when we dare to exist."³⁹ Though the prophets preached peace, they denounced those who "cry 'peace' when there is no peace."^{Moreover, peace, even coexistence is a two-way, not a one-way, street. A contemporary Israeli peace advocate put it bluntly but poignantly after the 196} ~~has echoed that prophetic voice:~~

I want peace peace peace peace, peace peace peace.

[But] Until you agree to have peace, I shall give back nothing. And if you force me to become a conqueror, I shall become a conqueror. And if you force me to become an oppressor, I shall become an oppressor. And if you force me into the same camp with all forces of darkness in the world, there I shall be.⁴⁰

2. The relation of ~~exit~~, powerlessness, and resistance, and evil.

Lack of collective status and recognition, together with the inability to act on behalf of one's people can ~~and does~~ lead to desperate^{acts of} violence as a way of breaking out of one's helpless state.

The various ghetto and death camp uprisings were undertaken without any hope of victory, even without the hope of individual survival.

^{Rather,} They were attempts to break the circle of impotence: "We shall not go like sheep to the slaughter!" was the call for resistance by Abba Kovner in December 1941 in Vilna. (However, ^{that} ~~we know the~~ call was turned down by the majority until they could no longer escape the

realization that death was everyone's destiny.⁴¹⁾

The resisters recognized that there was radical evil in the world, a radical evil to which Rabbi Marc Gellman claims rabbinic Judaism had become blind. By and large resistance to this evil was led almost entirely by Jewish secularists and radicals. Gellman insists that the Fourth Commonwealth of Judaism must never again delude itself about the real and ominous evil in this world.⁴² We have here a challenging reversal of the traditional Jewish and Christian positions on evil, with Jews now taking evil more seriously than Christians.

3. Resistance as a moral obligation, and rejection of martyrdom as a meaningful model.

In the midst of the Nazi campaign of total annihilation the Jewish community ^{gradually} came to recognize its absolute impotence in the face of those who fitted no traditional category of enemy. The acknowledgment of the unique plight of the whole people led a few rabbis (a very few as far as we can tell) to call for an alteration in the community's response. In the very first ghetto established, on October 28, 1939 -- Piotrkov -- Rabbi Yitzhak Finkler immediately saw the German trap (both physical and moral). When the Germans called for work volunteers and promised benefits in return, Rabbi Finkler told his people, "Let no one go voluntarily! Do anything, everything. Disappear, hide, lie down, anything -- but don't volunteer!"⁴³ Two Warsaw rabbis finally came to recognize the face of the new Amalek. Rabbi Yizhak Nissenbaum reminded the Ghetto inmates how during the Middle Ages the mitzvah required martyrdom because the enemy wanted to conquer the souls of Jews by converting them to Christianity. But since "Hitler and his cohorts" want to destroy the Jewish body, the mitzvah of kiddush ha-Shem now requires that the enemy be frustrated by Jewish survival. "Jews should do everything . . . to live."

"This is the hour of kiddush ha hayyim [sanctification through life] . . . the enemy demands the physical Jew, and it is incumbent upon every Jew to defend . . . his own life."⁴⁴

At last it was realized that in such "a time of general extermination" it was no longer possible to try to save part of the community by a partial acquiescence with the ruling authority. In mid-January 1943, at a meeting of the new communal leaders who had replaced the Jewish Council, Rabbi Menahem Ziemba, Gaon of Praga, concluded:

We must resist the enemy on all fronts. We shall no longer heed his instructions. . . . we must refuse to wend our way to the Umschlagplatz. . . on the road to mass annihilation. . . . we have no choice but to resist. We are prohibited by Jewish law from betraying others, nor may we deliver ourselves into the hands of our archenemy. . . . In the past during religious persecutions, we were required by the law 'to give up our lives even for the least essential practice.' In the present, however, when we are faced by an arch foe, whose . . . ruthlessness and total annihilation purposes know no bounds, Halachah demands that we fight and resist to the very end with unequalled determination and valour for the sake of sanctification of the Divine Name.⁴⁵

One rabbi reportedly concluded that active resistance to the Germans was essential on the ground that the Covenant would be abrogated unless a portion of the Jewish people survived. Since God apparently was not going to take the necessary action to prevent this^{possib} Jews must assume the responsibility of saving the Covenant.⁴⁶

~~Though~~ ^{Though} the resistance in the ghettos and the uprisings in several camps appears to be the traditional response of martyrdom, since it was undertaken with the expectation of death, it was in fact a step in the direction of a Jewish resumption of power. A conviction that some Jewish life would survive the Nazi enemy's defeat was the motivation for the doomed fighters to establish a new response to evil as a model for future generations.⁴⁷

4. Political sovereignty and the "suffering servant".

As we reread the saga of Jewish ^{vulnerability and} torment, culminating as it did in Hitler's "Final Solution", ^{What is to be said about} ~~how are we to respond to~~ the tradition

that upholds Israel as a "holy nation," as God's "suffering servant"? How long must this one people be the vicarious victim for God's long-suffering with the evil-doers of the world? Is there no alternative to either the ongoing suffering of the people of the Covenant or to the destruction of the world and human history if divine justice were enacted?⁴⁸

Neither Zionism nor the State of Israel can be equated with messianism for they do not promise redemption. But they ^{do} constitute a renunciation of the "suffering servant" model⁴⁹ ^{which} ~~applied to~~ the people of Israel ^{accepted} for so many centuries, a model that neither saved Jewish lives nor influenced the world to emulate such self-sacrifice. The Jewish state enables Jews to fight for their lives; it is as simple, and as complicated, and as painful as that. In fighting for the nation's right to exist Jews are saying, in effect, "'We are here to live. We are going to defend our right to do so, if necessary by fighting for our lives.'" And if we have to die, we are going to die ^{people (and include non-Jews)} in battle, not in crematoria.'" For many, Israel is so far "the only serious attempt to challenge . . . the possible eventuality" of a second Holocaust.⁵⁰ → For it is the only restitution of power — the ability to determine one's fate, at least to some degree — in an effective form.

This is anything but a glorification of war or aggression. Any such attitude is absent in present-day Israel as it has always been in Judaism. But Judaism and Jewish history both attest to the fact that not resisting evil can lead to tacitly accepting evil, to ^{pretending} ~~mini-~~ evil is not as serious as it actually is, ~~missing it,~~ to succumbing to it, or even to condoning evil (especially if one is not the victim). Judaism's commitment to life, and to life in this world, must lead it to emphasize that problems cannot be solved by either opting out of society or history, or yielding to the evil-doer.

Raymond Aron insists that the nation-state should not be derided or undercut for in the last resort "the life of people . . . is not

achieved outside the 'national communities'. . . . It is in the concrete morality of collectivities that universal morality is realised -- however imperfectly. And it is in and by politics that concrete moralities are achieved." For that very reason the politician who allows himself the "moral" luxury of obeying his heart without considering the consequences of his act becomes immoral. The same judgment can be applied to a government. It is our duty as persons, communities, and nations "to combat what we condemn and not to assume in advance the privileges of the pure spectator. . . ."51

5. The search for peace versus pacifism.

A "passion for peace" must not be confused with pacifism. The greatest desire for peace cannot by itself avert war. It is the passion for peace that has been, and continues to be, the thrust of mainstream Judaism and of ^{the State of} Israel, as against pacifism or a counsel to "resist not evil." Maurice Lamm asserts that pacifism is rejected by Judaism because, among other reasons, it absolutizes a concept (nothing is worth fighting for) and thereby creates an idol (peace) in place of the living God. As such it can demolish justice, freedom, equality, liberty, religion, homeland; it becomes "an insatiable, satanic idol." Furthermore, pacifism misreads political reality and the human condition. It affirms perfection as presently achievable, but ~~the world is not yet redeemed;~~ ^{the very things it sets out to ensure;} it treats an ideal as if it were a practical procedure. It applies an uncompromising ethic where compromise is essential, and it does so with tragic consequences. Just as involuntary powerlessness encourages the aggressor, so does pacifism which is voluntarily-assumed powerlessness. Further, Judaism insists that the reality of evil must be faced and combatted through an ethic of power and mercy, or "sweetness and strength."52

In Aron's terms this means that "peace by equilibrium" is preferable to any peace (so-called) achieved by terror or subjugation, or submission.

Accordingly, if civilization is to be protected, confrontation at the international level must be maintained in place of one-sided sacrifices, concessions, or capitulations, no matter how tempting such a way out of tension may appear.⁵³ To follow the path of pacifism in the face of evil is to abnegate the co-responsibility which God bestowed on humanity.⁵⁴

While none of the foregoing rules out non-violent resistance in certain circumstances, we must never forget that only the military defeat of Nazi Germany and its allies made possible the survival of any of its intended victims, as Jews struggling to stay alive well knew.

Dare we even suggest after the Holocaust that the Jewish people must be "holy," "a nation of priests," the suffering servant of the Lord? that they should renounce their political and military power or forego its use? Any such renunciation of power, which only a collective entity can provide, would make each person in the nation dependent on the good will of those who had not abandoned power. To be dependent on others' good will has been shown over and over again to be a dangerous risk. The risk may be immediate, at the moment of submission, or it may arise at some later time, for generations yet unborn.⁵⁵ ^{To be sure,} the risk of such dependency cannot be judged on identical terms in all situations, though we must always be sensitive to the potential threat to any minority, especially in a non-pluralistic society. But it would be intolerable to demand that Jews once again become a minority everywhere in the world in view of their history.

Martin Buber wrote to Gandhi in 1939: I do not want force, but "if there is no other way of preventing the evil from destroying the good, I . . . shall use force, and give myself into God's hands." On another occasion he said, "I do not believe that violence must always be answered with non-violence."⁵⁶

6. Power and hope.

Colin Morris, a Methodist clergyman in England, has observed that the commandment to hope requires first of all survival. He believes that Christian despair in this world can be overcome by witnessing the act of faith which the Jewish people have been living out since the Shoah by reaffirming their Jewishness and raising Jewish children.

What is the basis of hope? If it is not to be mere wishful thinking, escape from reality, or other-worldly spiritualism, it must be commanded, argues Emil Fackenheim. Hope is commanded --commanded by the very silence of Auschwitz. (There is no redeeming voice to be heard in Auschwitz, but there is a commanding voice.)⁵⁷

Yet the silence of Auschwitz underlines the fact that hope without power is not a hopeful position in a world where power dominates, in a world that has seen all too clearly the price of powerlessness. It was this existential realization that made survivors of the Shoah such a crucial factor in bringing to an end two millennia of Jewish powerlessness.⁵⁸ Zionism, (the Jewish liberation movement) and its end product reflect the "courage of a people who dared to embody 2,000 years of hope in the fragile vessel of a state."⁵⁹ And the State is a "testimony to the Jewish ability, spiritual as well as physical, to perform the deed and live with its results."⁶⁰

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The Jewish history of powerlessness culminating in the Shoah, and the positive views of the Jewish tradition with regard to power combine to produce (at least for the present) a number of positions which we need to take very seriously as we all strive to cope with the problems of power and powerlessness in the many forms that issue can assume. Those conclusions which most Jews have reached, along with some Christians who have understood the absolute challenge which the Holocaust continues to represent, include: an insistence that the end of Jewish statelessness (which the State of Israel represents) is a responsible religious and political commitment; that forces of death and destruction -- radical evil -- must be resisted in behalf of life and a community's existence, even if force and power are required for that resistance; that martyrdom can no longer be either the ideal religious or the responsible political method of responding to tyranny or other forms of evil; that peace and community must be the continual goal of our strivings, but not at the expense of a "sacrificial offering" of some one nation or people. In short, it is the time for the Jewish "return into history" with all the responsibilities and ambiguities -- and mistakes of power and decision-making which that entails, and all the courage which it requires.

FOOTNOTES

1. Thomas C. Schelling, Introduction to Gene Sharp, The Politics of Nonviolent Action,
2. Raymond Aron, Peace and War, London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1967, as cited in Michael Howard's review, Encounter London, XXX, 2 (1968), p. 57.
3. Aron, ibid.
4. Abba Lessing, "Jewish Impotence and Power," Midstream, XXII, 8 (1976), p. 55.
5. In a "permissive" or "discretionary" war (milhemet reshut), though numerous categories of men were exempted from conscription on the basis of Halakhah, an individual "conscientious objection" to war as such or to a particular war was not one of the factors to be considered. For such a war to take place, there had to be a joint decision of the "king," the Sanhedrin of seventy-one, and the high priest through the Urim and Thumim. Its purpose could not be conquest ^{per se} or plunder or destruction, but only the protection of Israel and the sanctification of the Name of God. (See Eric Gendler, "War and the Jewish Tradition," in Menachem Marc Kellner, Contemporary Jewish Ethics, New York: Sanhedrin Press, 1978.)
 However, expansion of the borders as part of the strategy of protecting Israel appears permissible.
6. Maurice Lamm, "After the War -- Another Look at Pacifism and SCO," Judaism, XX, 4 (1971), 425.
7. Ephraim Urbach, "Jewish Doctrines and Practices in Halakhic and Aggadic Literature," in Salo Baron and George Wise, eds., Violence and Defense in the Jewish Experience, Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1977, p. 110. Urbach gives the citation from Rabbi Hanania.
 In both these observations, separated by centuries, we have a recognition of the need for governmental power to secure or work for peace and to preserve life. But Rabbi Hanania was attempting to quell nationalist aspirations on the part of Jews in the wake of the disastrous wars against Rome, whereas Urbach speaks in the context of a revived Jewish sovereignty, though also in the name of seeking peace in place of unnecessary military ventures or excessive land claims.
8. "... the heavens are the heavens of the Lord; but the earth He has handed over to the children of men." (Psalm 115:16).
 Ephraim Urbach insists that "the guiding principle in using force or defense, both for the individual and the state, remains the absolute value of human life, for it is made in the image of God" (op. cit.). This is a fundamental criterion by which the use of power is to be restrained.
9. Lamm, op. cit., p. 422. The balance of power arrangement is essentially democratic; the people play a significant role in establishing customs, observances, beliefs, etc. The rabbis decreed that no court can or should set up a ruling that would not be accepted by the majority of the people.
10. Lessing, op. cit., pp. 54, 55; and David Hartmann, "The Moral

Challenge of Israel," The Jerusalem Post, June 20, 1982, p. 8. Hartmann argues that the movement for Jewish political independence (Zionism) "initiated a greater Jewish involvement with the world [and] implies a movement toward greater interhuman dependence."

11. Ismar Schorsch, On the History of the Political Judgment of the Jew, New York: Leo Baeck Institute, 1977, pp. 8-9.
12. Marc Gellman, "The Fourth Commonwealth," unpublished paper presented to the Israel Study Group, October 4, 1980. ^{Greenwich, Conn}
13. Cf. Salo Baron, A Social and Religious History of the Jews, Second Ed, Revised and Enlarged, New York: Columbia University Press, 1952, Vol. I, pp. 22-24.
14. See, e.g., Emil Fackenheim, God's Presence in History, New York: Harper Torchbook, 1972, pp. 88-92.
15. I considered using "sovereign existence" here in place of "political existence" since both Avineri and Ismar Schorsch argue so cogently for the political nature of the diaspora communities through the medieval period and right up until the Emancipation era. However I believe political is still a legitimate and the more accurate term since we are talking about a diaspora people whose political (legal) rights were extremely tentative and who were not permitted to share in any of the decision-making processes.
16. When the faith weakened, the will to persist also weakened, as in fourteenth to sixteenth century Spain (cf. Schorsch, op. cit. p. 8).
17. Shlomo Avineri, "Power and Powerlessness: A Jewish Perspective," in The Concept of Power in Jewish and Christian Traditions, WCC & IJCIC: Study Encounter, XI, 4 (1975), p.9.
Avineri believes we must look to similar voluntary, socially-oriented structures for possible resolutions of the dilemma of power and its abuses within today's national societies.
18. Abba Lessing, op. cit., p. 56. On the last point Eliezer Berkovits is especially relevant (Faith After the Holocaust, New York: Ktav, 1973, p. 115) as Lessing observes.
19. Emanuel Rackman, "Violence and the Value of Life: The Halakhic View," in Baron and Wise, eds. Violence and Defense in the Jewish Experience, Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1977, p. 119.
20. Israel Abrahams, Jewish Life in the Middle Ages, New York: Atheneum, 1969, p. 253.
21. See Lessing, op. cit., p. 57.
22. In June 1982 the Chief Rabbinate of Israel ruled that Operation Peace for the Galilee was, in all its stages, a milhemet mitzvah (mandatory war) based on Maimonides' definition that such a war is one in which Jews are delivered from an enemy. The Rabbinate went on to cite the "moral" aspect of this military undertaking, especially the restraint with which soldiers used their arms in

order to avoid harming innocent civilians (The Jerusalem Post, July 1, 1982).

Some rabbinic scholars argue that "no war today can be regarded as either [milhemet] hovah or mitzvah [obligatory or mandatory] . . ."; that "all wars today are at best reshut [discretionary] and therefore must be morally evaluated very carefully." Among the rabbinic limitations on discretionary war the purpose is crucial: it must not be conquest or plunder or destruction, but only protection of Israel and sanctification of God's Name.

Over the centuries rabbis increasingly stressed the need to fear killing, even in the midst of combat, regardless of the type of war involved. (See Eric Gendler, op. cit., for numerous rabbinic citations.)

23. Michael Brown, "Is There a Jewish Way to Fight?", Judaism, XXIV, 4 (1975), 470-72. Cf. also Urbach, op. cit., pp. 101-2.
24. In the days of tension prior to the 1967 Six Day War many Israeli commanders issued to their units S. Yizhar's short story "The Prisoner". The author of that story unflinchingly deals with the brutalizing effects of war and violence through a tale of inhuman treatment meted out to an Arab prisoner by an Israeli patrol. Nevertheless, despite Yizhar's views on war, he was a Member of the Knesset. He recognizes the inescapable need of his people -- and other peoples -- to possess and exercise power.
25. Rackman, op. cit., p. 118.
26. At no place in the Torah, in the Written Law, is it a mitzvah to sacrifice one's life for God (Rackman, ibid.).
27. One such limitation was whether the command to commit idolatry was made in a private situation or in front of ten fellow Jews.
28. Encyclopedia Judaica, 10:982.
29. Cf. Schorsch, op. cit., p. 10.
30. Cf. Maimonides, Hilhot Yesode Hatorah
31. Nevertheless the killing of children and especially of infants in order to prevent their being forced into apostasy was condemned by at least one rabbinic authority. At a time when there was a decree of forcible conversion, one rabbi slaughtered many infants for this very reason. Another rabbi called him a murderer. Subsequently the decree of forcible conversion was annulled, and the children would have been spared from both conversion and death (Irving Rosenbaum, Holocaust and Halakhah, New York: Ktav, 1976, n.22, p. 162.
32. Lessing, op. cit., p. 57.
33. We know that in fact they are being utilized in numbers of cases, though the unreliability of this kind of arrangement or relationship has been made poignantly clear to all of us connected with this conference.
34. The attempts to save a part of the community by sacrificing very

sizeable portions -- into the tens of thousands -- clearly exceeded any precedents, even though almost everyone tried to convince themselves that the deportations were for "resettlement" rather than death.

35. The Lubavitcher rebbe, during the Warsaw Ghetto uprising in April 1943, said, ". . . a Haman does not arise of himself, but is sent to remind the Jews that they have gone too far astray, and to force them to repent. He cannot maintain himself a single day longer than is necessary to carry out the purpose of Heaven. . . . he will not take one more victim than Heaven permits" (cited by Leon Wells, "I Do Not Say Kaddish," Conservative Judaism, XXXI, 4 [1977], p. 3).
36. Rabbi Mandel, during his remarks in April 1943, said that in the destruction of the Second Temple the Jews lost half of their people (ibid., pp. 4, 5).
37. Rabbi Zisho Friedman, in the Warsaw Ghetto (cited by S. L. Shneiderman, "The Warsaw Ghetto Struggle," Midstream, XXIV, 6 [June/July 1978], p. 21).
38. See Alexander Donat, The Holocaust Kingdom, New York: Holocaust Library, 1978; Irving Rosenbaum, Holocaust and Halakhah, op. cit. ; and Hirsh Jakob Zimmels, The Echo of the Nazi Holocaust in Rabbinic Literature, New York: Ktav, 1977.
39. Lessing, op. cit., pp. 56, 55.
40. Amos Kenan, cited in Emil Fackenheim, God's Presence in History, New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1972, pp. 91-2.
41. Some in the Warsaw Ghetto who lacked arms with which to join the battle chose to die through "flaming crucifixion" in the ghetto buildings, considering that not surrendering made them co-fighters instead of meaningless bodies for the Nazi ovens (Alexander Donat, op. cit., p. 146).
42. Marc Gellman, op. cit.
43. Cited by Emil Fackenheim, The Jewish Return into History, New York: Schocken, 1978, p. 191.
44. Zimmels, op. cit., pp. 64, 159n.
45. Ibid., pp. 63-4. Italics added.
46. From author conversation and correspondence with Rabbi Michael Chernick, May and October 1977. The name of the rabbi is not mentioned. The opinion may possibly be a "read-in" by a covenantal theologian to Rabbi Ziemba's responsum.
47. Rabbi Pinhas Peli of Israel goes so far as to say that "Israel was actually established in the Warsaw Ghetto when Jews picked up arms and fought back literally to the last drop of blood" ("The Future of Israel," Proceedings of the Rabbinical Assembly 74th Annual Convention, 5-9 May 1974, Lake Kiamasha, New York, p. 13).
Kiamasha
48. See Eliezer Berkovits, op. cit., for an effective presentation

of the traditional view on the relation of divine justice and long-suffering and the consequences for the human realm and especially the people of Israel.

49. A modification of this statement is required: There is some retention of the biblical ideal in the Israel Defense Forces' "morality of arms use" policy which voluntarily accepts more casualties for itself in the effort to harm as few civilians as possible "on the other side".
50. Peil, op. cit., p. 15.
51. Aron, op. cit., p. 58.
52. Lamm, op. cit., pp. 419-23, passim. These arguments are essentially those also of the American Protestant theologian Reinhold Niebuhr.
53. Aron, op. cit., p. 58.
54. Lamm, op. cit.
55. Cf. Emil Fackenheim, God's Presence in History, p. 71. Rabbi Pesach Schindler says that he is willing to accept the Covenant's special demands as long as Jews have the State of Israel and the Israel Defense Forces (conversation with the author, February 1976).
56. Martin Buber, Brief an Gandhi, Zürich: Verlag die Gestaltung Zürich, 1939, p. 29. Mahatma Gandhi advised German Jewry to commit collective suicide at one given moment in order to shock the conscience of the world. When Rabbi Leo Baeck received this advice, he did not pass it on to his people. He said, "We Jews know that God commands us to live!" (Albert Friedlander, "Stations Along the Way: Christian and Jewish Post Holocaust Theology," Common Ground [London], #2 [1978], 13-14).
57. Emil Fackenheim, "Commanded to Hope," in Michael Ryan, ed. The Contemporary Explosion of Theology, Metuchen, N.J.: The Scarecrow Press, 1975, pp. 160-62.
58. See Yehuda Bauer, The Jewish Emergence from Powerlessness, Buffalo and Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979.
59. David Harman, op. cit.
60. Emil Fackenheim, Foreword to Yehuda Bauer, ibid., p. xiv.