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## **Book Reviews**

# **The King's Torah and the Killing of Palestinians**

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## ***Series (Book Reviews)***

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*Title of the book: The King's Torah*

*Authors of the book: Rabbi Yitzhak Shapira and Rabbi Yosef Elitzur*

The impact of the torching a mosque in the Upper-Galilee village of Tuba Zingerah, which lies within the Green Line, on October 3, 2011 by an Israeli underground organization, raises urgent questions on the motives of burning the mosque and the body behind this crime. The underground, Jewish terrorist organization, which burnt the mosque, left its mark at the crime scene, just as it did when it set fire to more than five mosques in the occupied West Bank recently. On the walls of the mosques it burnt the Jewish terrorist organization sprayed the Hebrew words *tag mehir* (literally translated as “price tag”). In such a crime, the primary suspect is a racist and extremist network that is rooted in the Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian West Bank, especially the Jewish religious schools (*yeshivas*) scattered in these settlements and their extensions across the Green Line. In order to scrutinize the background of these heinous crimes, and their underpinning in intellectual, religious and political basis, embraced and heralded by a very large number of West Bank settlers, as well as a growing number of Israelis inside the Green Line, it is useful to read *The King's Torah*, a book written by Rabbi Yitzhak Shapira, head of the Yeshivat Od Yosef Chai (*Joseph Still Lives*), in the Yitzhar settlement located in the West Bank, south of the city of Nablus. The book is co-authored by Rabbi Yosef Elitzur, a teacher at the same religious Yeshiva. It should be noted that this book is just the tip of the iceberg of extremist, racist, and anti-human ideas that poison the mobilized students' minds of the Jewish religious schools in the West Bank settlements, in addition to the settler rabbis who foment hatred, racism, and hostility among their followers in the settlements, yeshivas or beyond toward the Palestinians.

*The King's Torah* aims to determine the position of the Torah and Jewish law on gentiles (non-Jews or '*goyim*' in Hebrew), which the Jewish State and the Jews must be committed and adhere to. The book classifies mankind into multiple ranks. According to this classification, Jews are ranked higher. They are, immeasurably, better than any other human beings. It deems the Jews as the only real humans, while the gentiles are lower in rank – closer to the status of animals. Therefore, the Jewish State and the Jews should take discriminative attitudes toward them, at best, or allow them be killed, or they should often be killed, particularly in time of war.

### ***The King's Torah ... a guide to the killing of Palestinians***

The two authors extensively tackle an issue that dominates the entire book – that is, when will the Jews be allowed to kill the gentiles (*goyim*)? When should the Jews kill them? The gentiles must not be misidentified. Clarifying the 'gentiles' here as being basically the Palestinian Arabs, Rabbi Yitzchak Ginzburg, a revered religious figure among the religious Jews in Israel, says in the introduction to *The King's Torah* that the issues addressed by the book "are closely related to the situation in the land of Israel, which we should restore from our enemies." He argued that the book serves the objective of achieving this goal, strengthening the morale of the Israeli people and soldiers, and explaining both the Torah's deep comprehensive view and Jewish law on

outstanding relevant issues. "In the war on the fate of the land of Israel, the gentiles must be killed," the authors say, adding, "The gentiles, who claim this land for themselves, are stealing it from us, but it is a legacy from our forefathers." This book really represents a guide for the perplexed, the hesitant and those who seek a religious Jewish legal opinion (*fatwa*) as to when it is allowed to kill the Palestinian Arabs and when this "should" take place according to the Jewish law. Moreover, it provides moral and religious support to many settlers and Israelis who are convinced of the content of this book before reading it.

Written in ancient Hebrew similar to ancient religious Jewish writings, the authors consolidate their views in the book, especially those calling for the killing of gentiles (i.e., the Palestinians), with texts from Jewish law and a lot of quotes by senior Jewish rabbis through different ages. They make this a backdrop for any opinion they hold in the book, giving it a religious aura influencing many Jews, especially the religious. The outstanding religious sources of the Jewish law were a basis for the book. In addition to the written Torah, which they quote little, the authors depend as well on the oral Torah, Mishnah (about AD 200), and on post-Mishnah rabbinic interpretations compiled in the Babylonian Talmud (AD 5<sup>th</sup> Century Babylonia) and the Jerusalem Talmud (AD 4<sup>th</sup> Century Palestine). *The King's Torah* is also based on *Mishneh Torah*, compiled and commented on by Moses Ben Maimon or Maimonides (Rambam) (1135-1204), and Rabbi Moshe Ben Nahman's (Ramban) writings, as well as Rabbi Joseph Caro's *Shulhan Arukh* (The Prepared Table) (published in the sixteenth century), and the writings and opinions of 20<sup>th</sup> Century senior rabbis who held a prominent place in the Zionist religious mainstream, such as Rabbi Kook.

Although it is widely based on the most important sources in Jewish law, *The King's Torah* reviews and cites the most extremist Jewish texts, legal opinions, and interpretations that permit, favor, call for or mandate the killing of 'gentiles,' overlooking the positive human values of the Jewish law. This makes the book more dangerous, as it incites and openly calls for the extermination of the Palestinian Arabs.

## Chapters of the Book

Published in 2009 by the Biblical Institute in Od Yosef Chai Yeshiva, the 230-page *The King's Torah* consists of an introduction, six chapters, and a summary. The Biblical Institute intends to issue a second volume of the book once the authors complete it. It will address a range of topics, such as the position of *The King's Torah* toward the "minorities in the Jewish State".

In chapter one, the authors confirm that the biblical obligation "Thou shalt not kill" only prohibits the killing of a Jew by a Jew, but it does not apply at all to the Jew who kills one or more gentiles. The book points out that in many cases the Jew has the right to kill the gentiles. In many other cases, the Jew should kill the gentiles.

In chapter two, entitled "The Killing of a Non-Jew Who Violates the Seven Laws (of Noah)," the authors stress that a non-Jew who violates one of the laws ordained on Noah's sons "must be killed". God, according to the authors, asked all human beings to accept His Torah, but only the Children of Israel responded while all other human beings rejected God's ordinance. Therefore,

God distinguished the Children of Israel from all other human beings, and gave them a very special and reputable status and drew them to Him. Conversely, God degraded the gentiles, whom the authors call "Noah's sons" and classify them in lower ranks in a hierarchy of classification for the human beings set by *The King's Torah*. Noah's sons must commit themselves to the Seven Laws ordained by God through the Children of Israel, with any Jew having the right to kill anyone from Noah's sons who violates one of the Seven Laws. The implementation of this murder, according to the authors, does not require a court of law or prosecution witnesses. It is enough for a Jewish person to see or know that a non-Jew violates one of the Seven Laws and thus kills him.

In chapters three and four, the authors compare between Jews and gentiles, focusing on how far each side adheres to their respective beliefs and their position on murder. The Jews are freer to kill non-Jews than the gentiles can kill other gentiles, the authors conclude.

### **Murder is the Master of Rulings**

In chapter five, entitled "The Killing of Gentiles in War," the authors write that it is not only the fighters who engage in war against Israel that should be killed, but any citizen in the region or in a hostile state, who encourages fighters or expresses satisfaction with their actions, must be killed as well. They add that the citizens of a hostile state or region, who do not encourage their state to commit acts of war, can be killed, claiming that the Jewish law doubts that they do not want, in time of peace, to shed the blood of the Jews. This suspicion is growing to the extent that they want to shed the blood of the Jews in time of war, thus allowing the killing of those innocent civilian gentiles who do not participate at all in the course of war. The authors give other reasons for allowing the killing of innocent civilians. "A large part of the malice and evil that exists within these civilian gentiles stems from their violation of the Seven Laws," the authors say. "Hence, we would enforce the ruling and kill them because of their violation of this. This is why our great sages ruled that the best gentiles during the time of war are 'the dead' – that is, there is no room for reforming the gentiles, given their intensive danger and malice. As for children from birth through adolescence, who of course do not violate the Seven Laws for not realizing or hearing about them, can be killed "because of the future risk they pose if they are allowed to live and grow up and thus become evildoers like their parents." The authors add, "Of course, the children and other civilians, whom the evildoers seek their protection, are allowed to be killed too. Thus, the evildoers must be killed, even if this led to the killing of children and civilians."

### **Targeting Innocent Civilians**

In chapter six, "Targeting the Innocents," the authors tackle the killing of the innocents in a "good state," (i.e., Israel), saying that this "good state" used to force its innocent men to go to war and risk their life. Not only that, but the state used to appoint guards to stand behind the fighting soldiers to kill whoever escapes from them. The authors add that if the king could not harm his combatant citizens in order to participate in war and force them to make headway and

be ready for death, his kingdom cannot face bad people who do not hesitate to kill to achieve victory. If the king, the authors conclude, is allowed to kill his innocent combatant men to force them to fight, he has the right and it is allowed to target the civilians belonging to the kingdom of evildoers.

The authors emphasize Israel's right to target and kill the citizens of a hostile state, regardless of their age and number. Even if they have just been born, elderly or on the brink of death, be they male or female, participating in fighting or not, Israel is entitled to target and kill them all. Their view is based on the Jewish law and rabbinic interpretations over ages. The authors use all provisions of Jewish law that allow for the killing of gentiles, such as the ruling of pursuing and persecuting the Jews, the *din rodef* (law of the pursuer), and slandering the Jews or *din moser* (law of the informant), all to justify Israel's killing of Palestinians. Again the authors confirm that the Palestinians should be killed because they violate the Seven Laws, adding that the Palestinian civilians who help the "killers" must be targeted, even if the innocent were forced to do so. "Even if they are tied or imprisoned and no way to escape and have no choice but to stay in the same place, like hostages, they can be targeted, crushed and killed if this is the way to get rid of the evildoers. As we explained earlier, whoever helps to kill someone against their will can be targeted and killed. In many cases, children find themselves in such a case: they block, by their presence at the scene, the way of rescue. They are forced to do so unintentionally. However, they can be targeted and killed, for their presence helps murder." Accordingly, it can be concluded that the *The King's Torah* justifies Israel's targeting and killing of hundreds of innocent Palestinian civilians if they happen to be, willingly or forcibly, in a big building where a wanted Palestinian is in.

The authors make a distinction between the laws of war that apply to non-Jewish States, and the laws that apply to Israel. In a war between two "fair" and "evil" non-Jewish States, if the military action carried out by the fair state leads to the killing of a large number of innocent citizens of the evil state to save a few citizens of the former, the latter is prohibited from carrying out this operation. However, "in war between Israel and gentiles, we simply prefer to kill non-Jews in order to save the Jews, because the lives of the Jews are more valuable and better, as we explained in Chapter Four. Moreover, the Jews are the ones who are reforming the world and also delivering the Word of God, especially the Seven Laws, to the whole world."

### Revenge...revenge...on children

The authors put revenge in an aura of veneration in chapter six of *The King's Torah*, confirming that Israel should take revenge on the Palestinians. Revenge is a necessity that makes the killing of evildoers a must. It is an essential need to defeat and win. Therefore, it is possible to delay the burial of a dead body in order to take revenge. As manifestation of justice, revenge must be done with enthusiasm and "without accountability". Revenge is not only necessary for those alive, but also for the dead. "In the world of the dead, there is a similarity between a person's soul and justice. The soul demands justice, which is revenge." The authors add, "No one must be excluded when Israel retaliates. All the Palestinians are vulnerable to retaliation. In the face of

revenge, no one is innocent, be they old, young, children, men or women, and regardless of their health. Children and adults, men and women, whatever their condition, should be avenged.” Justifying the killing of children, particularly infants who have just been born, the authors say the Children of Israel had killed the young children of Midian (is a geographical place and a people mentioned in the Bible and in the Qur'an believed to be located in Saudi Arabia) in the bygone time. The killing of children en masse is not only meant to create a balance of terror, because those children belong to the evildoers, but for “the existence of an internal need for revenge,” and the killing of children, especially the young, responds to this need. Enumerating reasons for the killing of Palestinian children, the authors say it is possible to deal with the necessity of killing Palestinian children on the basis that they are chosen by fate to be killed to save the Jews. By the same token, by killing them, evil can be avoided. “In addition to what we mentioned in the previous chapter, they are, of course, accused of becoming evildoers when they grow up,” they say.

It is noted that all penalties and provisions included in *The King's Torah* book for any offense is murder and death. There are no penalties in the book but murder and death. Even the punishment prescribed by the book on the innocent is murder and death. Other penalties, such as imprisonment, fining or the like, have no room in the book. It is also noted that the book does not recognize international laws related to war, protection of civilians in time of war, or international humanitarian law on the prevention of genocide and punishment of the perpetrators. This is, perhaps, because the book assumes, as many Israelis believe, that Israel is above the international laws, and as long as the US administration supports Israel, the balance of power in the region will tilt in favor of Israel, while the Arab countries are subject to Israel and are unable to face or resist it.

The danger of this book lies in the fact that its hostile theories and ideas – the worst ever inhuman theories that emerged in human history – are not confined to a few settlers isolated from the rest of the Israeli society. These ideas are adopted by very large segments of the Jewish settlers in the occupied Palestinian West Bank, and large groups of religious Zionists as well as the ultra-Orthodox Jews, *the Haridim*, in Israel. The senior rabbis, who publicly support *The King's Torah* and defend what is mentioned in it, are not marginal at all. They are known for being belonging to the religious mainstream of Israel, both religious ultra-Orthodox (*Haridim*) and national-Zionist wings. In addition, thousands graduate from the Jewish religious schools (*yeshivas*) in the Israeli settlements and inside Israel after they have learnt hatred, resentment, and anti-human values, such as the hostile, attitudes toward the Palestinians calling for their expulsion and killing. These values are also based on the teachings mentioned in *The King's Torah* that advocate extermination of the Palestinians. The number of students is growing year after year as are the numbers in the Israeli army.

The danger of this book does not lie in the adoption and preaching of these ideas, even though it is very dangerous. Rather, large sectors of the settlers turn from the adoption of these ideas into putting them into action. Under the auspices of the Israeli government and the protection of the occupying Israeli army, the settlers have been assaulting Palestinians, their property, and holy places. The rabbis and yeshiva students, who revere the ideas of *The King's Torah* and deal with it as their original Torah, represent the spearhead of settlers and the occupation. They abuse the Palestinians, ravage their towns and villages, cut down their trees, and burn their farms, crops

and mosques, thus turning their lives into a hell as a prelude to deportation. In this context, a secret, Jewish military organization named Tag Mehir emerged in 2009 from the ranks of those rabbis and their West Bank settlement yeshiva students, representing the military power of *The King's Torah*-guided settlers.