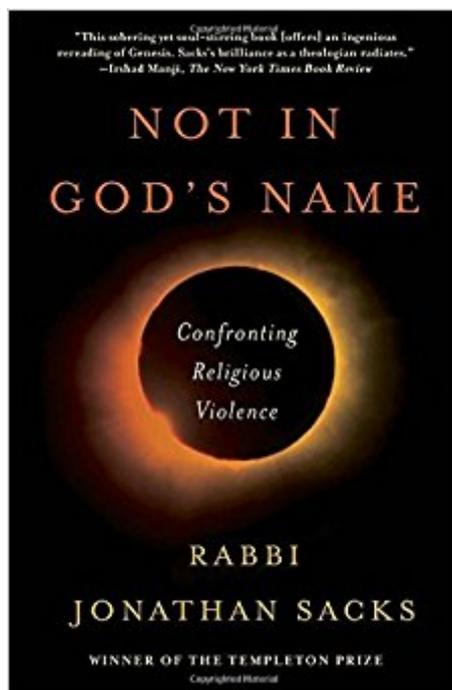


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# Not In God's Name: Confronting Religious Violence



## Synopsis

In this powerful and timely book, one of the most admired and authoritative religious leaders of our time tackles the phenomenon of religious extremism and violence committed in the name of God. If religion is perceived as being part of the problem, Rabbi Sacks argues, then it must also form part of the solution. When religion becomes a zero-sum conceit—i.e., my religion is the only right path to God, therefore your religion is by definition wrong—and when individuals are motivated by what Rabbi Sacks calls “altruistic evil” violence between peoples of different beliefs appears to be the inevitable outcome. But through an exploration of the roots of violence and its relationship to religion, and employing groundbreaking biblical analysis and interpretation, Rabbi Sacks shows that religiously inspired violence has as its source misreadings of biblical texts at the heart of all three Abrahamic faiths. By looking anew at the book of Genesis, with its foundational stories of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, Rabbi Sacks offers a radical rereading of many of the Bible’s seminal stories of sibling rivalry: Cain and Abel, Isaac and Ishmael, Jacob and Esau, Joseph and his brothers, Rachel and Leah. Here is an eloquent call for people of goodwill from all faiths and none to stand together, confront the religious extremism that threatens to destroy us all, and declare: Not in God’s Name.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Sunday Times (London) Bestseller" An urgent and authoritative exploration of the roots of religious violence, from one of the world’s great contemporary theologians. From Sacks’s first

gut-wrenching sentence, the reader has a solid sense that what follows are the deeply thought, carefully weighed words of an impeccable scholar. His reading of the Hebrew Bible is astute, illuminating layers of meaning too often missed. Sacks is a clear-eyed and compelling illuminator, and his methodical deconstruction, which routs out flawed understandings of the Bible, drives us emphatically toward hope, toward a theology that lets go of hate."

•Barbara Mahany, Chicago Tribune  
"In his remarkable book, Sacks argues that believers must face the painful facts. He is careful to document that wars of religion are not unique to Islam. He believes that to persuade religious people of the Abrahamic faiths, arguments against religious violence must be rooted in theology, not in secular ideas alone."  
•E. J. Dionne Jr. The Washington Post  
"The heart of Sacks's powerful argument is a compelling exposition of Genesis [that] suggests an astonishing rereading of the narrative. . . . The book is a wondrous and valuable probe of our current world of violence that invites us to rethink and rehear the founding texts that are invoked to fund crusades. . . . It points authoritatively toward an alternative practice of public life grounded in a common humanity that subverts all tribal temptations. . . . Wise and important."  
•Walter Brueggemann, The Christian Century  
"Not in God's Name is a really important book that I urge you to buy and read. . . . [It] is terrific."  
•Fareed Zakaria GPS, CNN  
"In Not in God's Name, the brilliant Rabbi Jonathan Sacks argues that ISIS is in fact typical of what we will see in the decades ahead. . . . [His] greatest contribution is to point out that the answer to religious violence is probably going to be found within religion itself."  
•David Brooks, The New York Times  
"Sacks's sobering yet soul-stirring new book . . . [offers] an ingenious rereading of Genesis. . . . His brilliance as a theologian radiates."  
•Irshad Manji, The New York Times Book Review  
"Sacks's analysis reflects an erudite mind fully engaged with philosophy, politics, and social studies of the most rigorous kind. It is when he turns his attention and all these resources to a theological engagement with the connection between religious faith and violence that he makes his greatest contribution . . . I cannot think of a more important new book for people of faith to read and study together . . . Jonathan Sacks is an enlightening presence for the whole world, and his message resonates today more powerfully than ever."  
•Michael Jenkins (president, Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary), Huffington Post  
"An intelligent analysis of old and new connections between religion and violence . . . Sacks tackles this task with the tenderness of a believer and the rigor of a scholar, drawing both on a thorough knowledge of ancient texts and history, and on modern insights such as those of Freud and the French literary critic and authority on sacred violence, Rene Girard."  
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•The Economist

“This is a courageous and imaginative book.”

•Martha Minow (dean, Harvard Law School), *The New Rambler*

“Sacks believes that Islamic violence, like Jewish and Christian violence, flows from a misunderstanding of sacred text. In *Not in God’s Name* he illuminates a wiser faith and a gentler God. It’s a perceptive, poignant, and beautifully written book.”

•William Saletan, *The Wall Street Journal*

“A remarkable exploration of the reasons behind religious violence and solutions for stopping it, [through a] fascinating and ingenious reinterpretation of the book of Genesis. . . . Sacks’s treatment of Scripture is alone worth a close read. A humane, literate, and sincere book, one with something truly new to say.”

•Kirkus Reviews (starred review)

“Inspired by Isaiah’s vision of nations beating their swords into plowshares, Sacks embraces religion as the pathway to peace. . . . He unfolds a genuinely inclusive and pacific Abrahamic faith by burrowing into the Hebrew Bible . . . discerning deep themes conducive both to a universal justice between all peoples and a profound sense of God’s particularizing love for diverse covenant communities. A much-needed antidote to lethal animosities.”

•Booklist (starred review)

“Sacks turns his prodigious intellect to deconstructing the mechanisms of religious violence. . . . He displays his wide learning and empathy in service of an ambitious, ingenious worldview. We’d all be wise to listen.”

•Publishers Weekly

“Rabbi Sacks is one of today’s most interesting thinkers, writers, and speakers. His interventions into the public debate rarely fail to encourage thought, knowledge, and, indeed, wisdom. I suspect that this latest book will contribute a significant amount to the ferocious debates around religion and violence in our world today.”

•The Spectator (London)

“Sacks can’t be accused of shirking the big issues. In *Not in God’s Name* he considers a subject that believers of all faiths have a huge difficulty explaining: Why do so many insist on advancing their belief in God as a justification for violence? It is, as the briefest survey of the headlines will confirm, a timely inquiry. Sacks, unsurprisingly, rejects the suggestion that religion itself is what causes the problem, though he does believe that if it is to be solved, theology must play a part.”

•The Guardian (London)

“A global campaigner for greater religious understanding between all the faiths . . . Sacks is unmistakably a man on a mission, and he is sure that there is plenty we can do, if we find the will . . . His book is one front in that battle.”

•The Telegraph (London)

“The book makes interesting and valuable points . . . Sacks reminds us that it is wrong to casually conflate orthodox believers with armchair fundamentalists. The two approaches to faith are not only different but opposed to one another, he says. It is a case well put,

and worth hearing. • The Independent (London) "Not in God's Name makes an explicit link between [religious] extremism and the growing gulf between a secular West and a religious world . . . It is a persuasive analysis." • BBC News  
Hardcover edition.

RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS is the award-winning author of more than thirty books. He is a frequent and respected contributor to radio, television, and the press around the world and teaches at universities in Britain, the United States, and Israel. Rabbi Sacks holds sixteen honorary degrees and has received many awards in recognition of his work, including the Jerusalem Prize and, in 2016, the Templeton Prize. He served as Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth from 1991 to 2013.

This may be one of the most powerful books I have read in the past decade, and I hope and pray that it receives an enormous readership. One reviewer thought that Rabbi Sacks may be "preaching to the choir" and not reaching those who perpetrate religious violence. I see the concern, especially given the events of the past week, but I don't share it. Rabbi Sacks' work in this book is truly prophetic in the tradition of prophets of biblical times, who were not predictors of the future, but rather inspired voices calling people to repentance and justice. They reminded the people of God's amazing and steadfast faithfulness, as Rabbi Sacks does here. They offered not despair, but hope and a reminder of right relationship with G\*d, by whatever name we choose to use for the Divine. If religion is to live into its potential as the source of hope, love and justice, then especially the children of Abraham--teachers, leaders, clergy and lay people--would do well to get re-inspired by this masterwork from a brilliant soul. Pick up this book, read it, and remember or learn how to put love into action for justice, instead of retribution or despair.

Jonathan Sacks' latest book is his most important and best yet. With great depth, and a fantastic understanding of the human condition, psychology, philosophy and religion, he explores the remarkable core principles of the Abrahamic tradition that spawned Judaism, Christianity and Islam. He analyzes how and why these principles have often been twisted to justify violence, and the dangers posed to our 21st century world by the current wave of extremism. Lastly, he recommends ways to counter these extremes and preserve the world's humanity. Regardless of your religion or views, you will learn much that is new and stimulating in this excellent book.

A little bit of history of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. A lot of philosophy of how religions have interacted with and against each other over the ages and a really great discussion of how the idea of us and other gives rise to wars because some people are fundamentalists and look at the world through a very small tight window of ideas that only serve the people who are on one side of the idea. Being blinded by goals of my way and only my way leaves no room for negotiation and most likely will continue to cause wars and problems for years.

Brilliant and well written book on Abrahamic religions over the ages that gives an in-depth understanding of this complex and important group of cultures and religions that have left their mark on civilization. It also explains the very essence of the title on his book: "Not in God's Name: Confronting Religious Violence". It adds profound yet clear pointers of how to prevent political power from taking the world into a destructive war, like it has over the years. "Today Jews, Christians and Muslims must stand together, in defense of humanity, the sanctity of life, religious freedom and the honour of God himself". "Wars are won by weapons but it takes ideas to win a peace"...says Jonathan Sacks. Reading this book, I am enlightened, not only on the subject matter, but on the religion I have practiced all my life, Catholicism. Since I recall being at my mother's and father's side, I was taught to cherish the values between religions, races and genders and the importance of trying to understand the interdependence between us. My book "Network Africa A Complex System" published by Xlibris, describes my experiences living and working in countries with very different social environments, namely Europe, Africa, India and China stressing the importance of that interdependence between religions, races and genders. Jonathan Sacks book also adds value and substance to my research on "Convivencia" and explains and supports the principle of requiring a peaceful outcome to the current religious violence that we now face. Having read "The Ornament of the World. How Muslims, Jews and Christians Created a Culture of Tolerance in Medieval Spain" by Maria Rosa Menocal, I was encouraged to carry out research into this fascinating subject now published on the Researchgate website. The research project focuses into "Convivencia" at Al-Andalus and the Caliphate of Cordoba, Spain, between the years 756 to 1031. In Convivencia we can see a model for peace between Muslims, Christians and Jews, being the three main beliefs that dominate world religious and socio-political environments. For over 400 years, knowledge and mysticism thrived in the Spanish towns of Cordoba, Toledo and Granada as students and teachers in all three religions and cultures helped one another to learn, translate, and understand ancient teachings. Unprecedented level of scientific, philosophical, and metaphysical discovery, rendering medieval Spain the ornament of the

world. This serves as an extraordinary model for all countries seeking an effective peace process. The alternative is military action recently approved by the United Nations. Christianity, Islam and Judaism, otherwise known as the Abrahamic religions, are being researched at Woolf Institute, Cambridge, United Kingdom; University of Texas, Austin, USA; Georgetown University, Doha, Qatar; The Open University of Israel, Raanana, Israel and the University of Cape Town, Cape Town, South Africa, amongst others. This extensive wealth of knowledge ensures, that through academic postgraduate studies, e-learning, conferences and real life experiences, we address the many challenges being faced in social interactions and in conflict situations through a better understanding of these complex relationships. This should reduce the risk of conflict in the environments we live in, despite ISIS "rejecting peace as a matter of principle" and "hungers for genocide" according to Grahame Wood's "What ISIS really want?" published in The Atlantic of March 2015.

Absolutely extraordinary, impartial, wise, serene and cardinal for our understanding of present times. The most well balanced, history and anthropological serious work I was able to read for the last ten years! It should be referred to in all serious newspapers, news and opinion forming magazines. It should be used by scholars, priests, teachers and religious authorities to pursue bringing common sense and peace to our troubled times.

I can't praise this book enough. I think this book should be read by all who seek to understand the background of what we are witnessing in the world of the Middle East and beyond. Whether you are a Christian Jew or Muslim or secular person this book is instrumental in your achieving a fuller understanding of what we face — minus all the hysteria and fear.

Rabbi Sacks wrote one of the most profound books I have ever read. He goes to the roots of religious violence and provides a direction for humanity to move forward in dealing with it. As recent events in France and Brussels have demonstrated, no religion is immune or protected against the possibility of religious violence, making his book relevant to all religious believers. Rabbi Sacks calls all people — and particularly those of the Abrahamic faiths — to let go of hate. Something human nature is often loath to do. He observes, "No soul was ever saved by hate. No truth was ever proved by violence. No redemption was ever brought by holy war. No religion won the admiration of the world by its capacity to inflict suffering on its enemies." A very

deep read.

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