

**Part B:**  
**The Hebrew Bible**  
*Is This Sacred Book Inherently Violent?*

1. Jehovah or Yahweh makes the pharaoh stubborn (obstinate and hard-hearted) so that he may rain misery on the Egyptians, especially so that **he may KILL the firstborn of every Egyptian.**  
Exodus 10:1-3; Exodus 7, 8, 9, 10
2. ...for I am a jealous god. I punish the children for the sins of the fathers of the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> generation of those who hate me.  
Exodus 20:4-6  
(why should a man or woman suffer punishment for the “sins” of their great-great-grandfather?)
3. Jehovah’s questionable behavior belies his commandments. Did not Yahweh cause the Egyptian army to chase after the Hebrews to the Red Sea **so that he could KILL them?**  
(3 months later: “Thou shalt not commit murder)
4. Jehovah wanted to give Baal’s (the Canaanite God) domain to the ancient Hebrews.  
According to Sitchin, Jehovah’s main rival at this time was the Canaanite god Baal. Baal, as Sitchin demonstrates, was almost certainly an ET whose domain Jehovah was to “give” to the ancient Hebrews. Certainly there are many references to Baal in the Old Testament. For example, as the Israelites were still wandering through the wilderness on the plains of Moab before they entered the promised land,  
...the people began to have intercourse with Moabite women, who invited them to the sacrifices offered to their gods; and they ate the sacrificial food and prostrated themselves before the gods of Moab. The Israelites joined in the worship of Baal of Peor, and the Lord was angry with them. He said to Moses, ‘Take all of the people and **hurl them down to their death** before the Lord in the full light of the day, that the fury of his anger may turn away from Israel.’ So Moses said to the judges of Israel.’ Put to death, each one those of his tribe who have joined in the worship of the Baal of Peor.”  
Numbers 25:1-5  
More than 800 years after the exodus, Israelites were still killing the followers of Baal. The fanatical Hebrew prophet, Elijah, who prophesied in the Ninth Century BC., had a contest of faith with the prophets of Baal before many people (many men) of Israel. After Elijah and the Lord won the little contest, Elijah said to the people,  
‘Seize the prophets of Baal; let **not one of them escape.**’ They seized them, and Elijah took them down to the Kishon **and SLAUGHTERED them** there in the valley.

1 Kings 18:39-40

5. Along the way (Hebrews wandering in the wilderness), a man was caught in the act of gathering sticks on the Sabbath day, and the man was brought before Moses and all the community. But the Israelites wondered what was to be done in such a case, so they asked Jehovah, through Moses, what should be done: ...the Lord said to Moses, 'The **man must be put to death; he must be stoned** by all the community outside the camp.' So they took him outside the camp and all stoned him to death, as the Lord had commanded Moses.

Numbers 15:35-36

6. The Israelites had many violent encounters with other peoples who lived in the areas of the wilderness they wandered, under Jehovah's guidance. Once while in the plains of Moab, the Israelites were near a people, or a land (the text doesn't make clear) that was known as Midian. The Lord instructed the Israelites, through Moses, "...to exact vengeance for Israel on the Midianites and then you will be gathered to your father's kin." One feels that much is left out of this story because we are not told why vengeance was "necessary." Nevertheless, Moses raised an army of 12,000 Israelites and "...made war on Midian as the Lord had commanded Moses, and **SLEW ALL THE MEN... They, burnt all their cities**, in which they had settled, and all their encampments. They took all the spoil and plunder..."

Numbers 31:7-11

Later, shortly before the Israelites crossed the Jordan, Jehovah helped provoke a conflict between them and the peoples of Heshbon and Bashan whose lands were located east of the River Jordan. Another bloody war was waged in which **all of the people of these two lands were slaughtered** with the help of Jehovah:

...the Lord our God...delivered Og, King of Bashan into our hands, with all his people. **We slaughtered them and left no survivors**, and at the same time we captured all his cities; there was not a single town that we did not take from them. **In all we took sixty cities... Thus we put to death all the men, women, and dependents in every city**, as we did to Sihon, King of Heshbon...

Deuteronomy 3:3-7

7. It is said in the Old Testament again and again that the ancient Hebrews must "fear their God. Certainly Jehovah gave the Hebrews many reasons and examples of why they should be terrified of him.

Finally, the day came when the Israelites were to enter the promised land.

Jehovah dammed up the River Jordan somehow and the whole nation entered Canaan from the east. A few days after they had entered Canaan, the Israelites ate the produce of the land. From that time on the "Israelites received no more manna; and that year they ate what had grown in the land of Canaan." So the main staple of their diet for 40 years, manna from "heaven," was cut off forever.

Of course, Jehovah could not simply "give" the Israelites "the land of milk and honey." **The promised land had to be violently taken** from the Canaanites, the Amorites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, the Hebusites and whomever

else lived in the promised land at that time. And the Israelites did this, with the heavy-handed help of Jehovah.

The first town or city the Israelites came to in Canaan was the ancient (even in those days) city of Jericho. After Jehovah, with the help of the Israelites(?), caused the walls that surrounded Jericho, or at least part of them, to collapse, the Israelites rushed in, and they “destroyed everything in the city; they put everyone to the sword, men and women, young and old, and also cattle, sheep, and asses.”

Joshua 6:21

One shudders to think of the enormous amount of blood, shrieking and screaming, shouting, dust, burning, crying, not to mention death, the “simple” extinguishing of life, this one sentence in the bible represents. The Lord had instructed the Israelites to be brutal and show no mercy the Canaanites or any of the other occupants of the promised land. The Israelites destroyed everything in Jericho except, significantly, the most valuable material objects. They set fire to the city and everything in it, except that they deposited the silver and gold and the vessels of copper and iron in the treasury of the Lord’s.

Jehovah had demanded that the Israelites give the gold and silver and all cast metal to him. One named Achan secretly kept some from Sinar (Sumer). Jehovah apparently had what we call metaphysical ability - as do most more evolved entities that humans claim to have come into contact with today - of being able to be aware of what all humans are doing including what is being thought. He knew that Achan was secretly holding back some valuables. Jehovah had Joshua, his chosen successor to Moses, seek Achan out. After Achan had confessed to hoarding the goods, “...all the Israelites stoned him to death: and they raised a great pile of stones over him, which remains to this day. So the Lord’s anger was abated. The ancient Hebrews could not deviate, even a little bit, from doing exactly what Jehovah commanded. The penalty for deviation, as we see, was death.

Joshua 7:26

The Israelites and Jehovah next turned their attention to the town (or city) of Ai. With a bit of deception masterminded by Jehovah, the Israelites managed to draw the men of Ai out of the city and ambushed them. After they killed these men, they turned to the city itself and killed everyone else. “...The number who were killed that day, men and women, was 12,000 the whole population of Ai...” Then they burnt the city.

Joshua 8:25

And, so it goes through much of the Old Testament. There are many more examples of the violent, jealous and vindictive behavior of Jehovah.

8. The Israelites themselves were not exempt from suffering mass death. Once, while still in the wilderness, a small group of them under a man named Korah, challenged the authority of Moses, and indirectly, that of Jehovah. Basically, Korah and his followers objected to the authoritarian powers of Moses, and the fact that Moses had led them out of “...a land flowing with milk and honey to let us die in the wilderness...” Moses, furious at the questioning of his and the Lord’s authority confronted the followers of Korah at their tents. The Lord caused the

destruction of the followers of Korah, who “..holding themselves erect, had come out to the entrance of their tents with their wives, their sons, and their dependents.” The Lord caused the ground beneath the followers of Korah to split. The “Earth opened its mouth and swallowed them and their homes ...they went down alive into Sheol with all they had; the Earth closed over them, and they vanished from the assembly...” This act caused panic, turmoil and complaint among the rest of the assembly. The next day the Israelites complained to Moses and Aaron, the brother of Moses, about the violent deaths of some of the Lord’s own people. This infuriated the Lord more and he caused a plague to fall on the people. Only the intervention of Moses and Aaron saved the people from being completely destroyed, according to the Bible. The plague was stopped but not before 14,700 Israelites had died from it.  
Numbers 16:17-34

## 9. Final Comments

This brings up a curious question about Jehovah and his continued influence in human affairs. Given the clear cut evidence of the rapacious, unscrupulous, violent nature of the Jehovah entity, at least the early entity of the exodus, why is Jehovah proclaimed by so many millions today, Christians and Jews alike, to be a holy moral leader - a god - of humankind? Much of the answer to the above curious phenomenon has to do with the primitive nature of the human species. We haven’t evolved enough, most of us, to be able to determine if a superior being is god or a God.

Maybe the fact that Jehovah was one of the last ET entities to have so openly and directly demonstrated his incredible powers on a portion of humankind, accounts for the fact that he is still respected and revered more than 3,000 years after the exodus of the ancient Hebrews from Egypt. We have seen the power biological imprinting can have on human consciousness and human belief systems. Part of the answer to Jehovah’s continued influence into the Twentieth Century is the strong imprint of the myth of Jehovah as the one lord god established on the ancient Hebrews as a result of their direct interaction with this entity during the exodus and afterwards. This myth has been passed from generation to generation for hundreds and thousands of years by the Jewish cultures, as well as the Christian cultures, which grew out of the Jewish state of Israel beginning about 2,000 years ago. The very fact that the Old Testament makes up more than half of the Christian Bible, speaks of how important the Old Testament has been to Christians. Certainly all Christian sects pay more attention to the New Testament and the teachings of Jesus than to Jehovah and the Old Testament. However much reverence is given to the Old Testament by Christians, and some Christian sects pay considerable attention to the Old Testament. In fact, as was the case with me in my early years, no distinction is made between the god of the Old Testament and the god of the New Testament among most Christians. In fact, some Christian fundamentalist sects believe all of the Old Testament, every word, is the word of the lord god almighty and must be believed verbatim.

## The 'Good' Book?

(This summary comes from Timothy Freke and Peter Gandy)

Modern research has now shown that the Tanakh (a.k.a. Old Testament) is not an accurate account of historical events. But can we still continue to see it as the 'Good Book', as we have for centuries, and use it as the basis for a moral code? Surely the answer is emphatically 'no'. Do we really want to carry on worshipping a God who legitimized the clearing of Canaan by the total extermination of every man, woman, and animal? The Tanakh is rarely moral or spin and contradictory collection of texts assembled by the immoral, brutal and bigoted Hasmoneans, and it reflects their values perfectly.

Dubious ethics and loose morals are littered throughout the Bible. Take the story of Noah, whom God saves after drowning the rest of humanity but who turns out to be nothing but a vindictive drunk! After the flood, Noah, always partial to a drink, passes out naked on the floor. One of his sons, Ham, accidentally comes across his father and goes off to tell his two brothers, Shem and Japheth, who return and respectfully cover their father's nakedness. When Noah regains consciousness he curses Ham's son Canaan, declaring that his off spring would ever after be slaves to Shem, Japheth and their descendants. So the moral of the story is that the Canaanites deserve to be punished because their ancestor's father saw Noah naked! The modern conflict between Jews and Palestinians is rooted in the spiteful behavior of a drunk for whom God had an inexplicable fondness. That's not moral. It's mad.

And what exactly is the moral lesson of the story of Abraham? His son Isaac was conceived when Abraham was a hundred and his wife ninety-nine. But after the miraculous birth of their much-longed-for child, God tells Abraham to build an altar of wood, tie up his son, lay him on the pyre and slit his throat. As if that wasn't sick enough, just as Abraham is about to carry out this dreadful instruction, God tells Abraham that it was all just a trick to test his fidelity! What kind of God is this? Fortunately, if anyone today declared that they were about to slit their child's throat on the instructions of the Lord they would be immediately arrested.

But God was hardly more pleasant to Abraham's other child Ishmael, whom the patriarch had previously fathered on Sarah's maid-servant Hagar. Jealous of Hagar and Ishmael, Sarah urges Abraham to abandon them in the desert. Incredibly God thinks this is a good idea. Abraham takes Hagar and Ishmael into the wilderness where he leaves them to die. A miracle saves them and Ishmael goes on to become the ancestor of all the Arabs. We could look long and hard to find any moral sense in any of this and still come up empty-handed. But as a way for Jews to denigrate Arabs its message comes across loud and clear. The Arabs are descendants of an outcast bastard whom God himself abandoned to his fate in the desert

What about God's beloved King David? The Jews regard him as the greatest king of Israel. The Christians consider Jesus to be of David's line. The Qur'an says David was an exalted prophet, given command by God over the mountains, the birds and the rising and setting of the sun. Yet David's moral standards are decidedly dubious. One day, as David arose from his afternoon nap and wandered up onto the roof of his palace, he spotted Bathsheba, the wife of one of his generals, bathing in her house. Despite the Biblical

injunction against adultery, David seduces her and she falls pregnant. David then sends Bathsheba's husband to the battlefield with express orders that he be exposed to maximum danger and he is duly slain.

The prophet Nathan denounces David for his behavior and, although David at first explodes with rage, he subsequently repents. But what does he do to cleanse his guilt? He sleeps with Bathsheba again! Yahweh did not allow Bathsheba's first child to live as a way of punishing David. But the second child, Solomon, lived to become a great king. So God kills an innocent baby to punish its father, but blesses David's other bastard child by giving him a life of luxury. This is not ethics. It's infanticide. And it hardly supports the 'family values' that that religious Fundamentalists so vigorously espouse!

Immorality is rife throughout the Tanakh. God goes to the extraordinary lengths of destroying the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah because of their infamous degeneracy, and only Lot and his family are thought worthy of saving. But immediately after this we are told how Lot's daughters get their father drunk, seduce him, become pregnant, and Lot then raises his daughter's sons as his own. If this is the new standard of morality that God wanted to raise out of the ashes of Sodom and Gomorrah, why did he bother destroying these cities in the first place?

What about the Ten Commandments? These are held up as some of the greatest moral statutes of all time. Yet they appear embarrassingly naïve and simplistic when set beside the great Law Codes of Hammurabi in Mesopotamia or the Negative Confession of the Egyptians. They begin with the declaration 'Thou shalt have no other God but me', but as this God is the capricious tribal deity Yahweh who legitimizes the genocide of all who oppose him, this rather precludes trying to derive any kind of moral sense from the other nine.

The reason we should have no other God but Yahweh is because, as he openly admits, Yahweh is prone to jealousy. But isn't jealousy a mortal sin? The commandment not to kill appears to have had no effect on the majority of the Tanakh's leading characters. But, then, we can hardly expect consistency from them when God himself ignores his own commandment on a regular basis. That still leaves us with a few salvageable commandments, such as not coveting one's neighbor's ox or ass, but thankfully such crimes are no longer a major problem in the modern world.

### **Nationalist Propaganda and Gnostic Myths**

The Tanakh (a.k.a. Old Testament) has been a part of our culture for so long that we are incapable of applying the same critical standards to this collection of old books that we would to any other piece of ancient literature. After all, if we found these texts today, would we for a moment believe that Noah and his wife had really herded all the world's animals onto their little boat? Or that Joshua had brought down the walls of Jericho with a trumpet? Surely not! We would read them as we do the epic of Gilgamesh or the story of Beowulf, with the understanding that anything that is remotely historical is almost completely buried beneath layers of mythological accretions. We are today, where the Holy Land is crawling with well-funded expeditions intent on finding lost arks or magical trumpets!

Two thousand years ago a Jew born of the tribe of Benjamin, who had been circumcised on the eighth day, and was once a zealous Pharisee, described the sacred texts of Judaism as 'crap' that were so outdated they would soon be redundant. We know him as Saint Paul. But sadly, although Paul was right about the Tanakh being crap, he was wrong about it becoming redundant. Instead, the Christian movement he helped inspire degenerated into a Literalist cult that adopted this crap as its Old Testament. This disaster was further compounded when another religion arose called Islam, which based itself on the same old crap. As now almost half of the world's population calls itself Jewish, Christian or Muslim this has left us up to our waists in crap.

Yet Paul didn't see Jewish Scripture as just 'crap'. Jewish Gnostics, such as Paul of Tarsus and Philo Judaeus, viewed important sections of the Tanakh as profound allegorical myths. They were able to interpret these texts in this way because parts of them were originally Gnostic teaching stories, which answered the human need to understand where we have come from and what life is all about. The Tanakh, like so many sacred texts, offers us distorted versions of allegorical myths overlaid with other material included by religious Literalists for political purposes.

Jewish Gnostics interpreted the books of Genesis and Exodus, for example, as complementary symbolic stories. Genesis was seen as an allegory of how human beings became lost and exiled in the world, whilst Exodus was seen as an allegory of awakening to gnosis. Genesis was interpreted as a mystical cosmology, in which eating of the fruit of the Tree of Good and Evil represents the fall from a primal oneness into a state of duality. Exodus was understood as an allegory of awakening in which captivity in Egypt symbolises being lost in the world, the crossing of the Red Sea represents the process of initiation, the forty years wandering in the desert represents the spiritual work of waking up and the arrival in the Promised Land represent the experience of gnosis.

It is typical of Gnostics to try and re-awaken their religious tradition by bringing out the mystical meaning hidden within sacred scripture. The Pagan philosophers did this with the myths of Homer and Hesiod. Jewish Gnostics did it with the Tanakh. Sometimes Gnostics may have projected onto texts mystical meaning that was never there, but often they recovered ancient truths encoded by other Gnostics before them. The Gnostic agenda throughout history has been to show Literalist interpretations of sacred scripture to be 'crap' and to revivify the teachings of gnosis that these myths originally articulated.