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Yigal Levin, Amnon Shapira, eds. *War and Peace in Jewish Tradition: From the Biblical World to the Present.* Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2012. xiii + 320 pp. $140.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-415-58715-0; ISBN 978-0-203-80219-9.

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Jewish Views on War and Peace in History, Religion, Literature, and Media

This volume is a collection of essays based on papers delivered at a conference at Ariel University in the West Bank in 2009. Twenty-five papers were given at the conference, of which eighteen are represented here. The volume is divided into four sections that analyze how war and peace have been treated in the Hebrew Bible, rabbinic Judaism, modern Judaism, and the Israeli media.

Conference volumes of this kind are often problematic for a number of reasons. First, the quality of the papers that appear in them is often uneven. Yet, for the most part, this volume has avoided this difficulty. Most of the articles are of excellent quality, especially in the first two sections that deal with the Bible and rabbinic Judaism. Of these two sections, the one on the Hebrew Bible is perhaps superior. It is also the largest section in the book, accounting for seven of the eighteen essays.

Another common problem with conference volumes is the tendency of the articles in them to be excessively specialized. Here too the present volume is better than most. The majority of the essays deal with themes that will be of interest to scholars broadly interested in issues of war and peace in Judaism. Thus, Yigal Levin's discussion of war in the book of Joshua, or Yishai Kiel's examination of the morality of war in rabbinic literature will appeal to most scholars who have dealt with these issues.

Still, the present book does not avoid all difficulties. Some of the essays are quite specialized, such as David Calabro's discussion of the semiotics of ritual hand gestures in times of war in the Bible, or Ziva Feldman's analysis of reactions to war in Yitzhak Orpaz-Auerbach's *Voyage of Daniel* (1969). A more significant problem is that the breadth of material covered in this volume is so great, that in places it does not quite hang together as a collection with a common theme. Certainly, all the essays deal with war and peace in Jewish tradition, but this theme is amorphous enough to include within it topics that are quite disparate from one another, and therefore the theme does not always provide sufficient coherence to the volume as a whole. This problem is evident particularly in sections 3 and 4 of the volume that address war and peace in modern Judaism. Here we find essays on this theme in modern American intellectual history, modern Hebrew literature, Israeli politics, and media–and as one moves from one essay to the next, there does not seem to be much that connects them.

Perhaps it is to be expected that the modern material would be so eclectic. The interest of Jews in writing about war increases greatly in the modern period because Jews become citizens of Western countries and fight in their armies. Moreover, Jews eventually establish their own sovereign state in which war becomes a constant feature of life and elicits much reflection about it. We must also consider the fact that the variety of media for Jews to express themselves on war and peace increases significantly as Jews enter the modern world and begin to produce a much wider range of genres of literature than they had in the medieval period. Still, these explanation do not mitigate the problem of having essays appear together in a single volume that do not seem to have much in common.

Furthermore, there are a couple of essays that seem only marginally connected to the theme of the volume. Gil Ribak's article deals with the attitudes of Jews in New York toward the two sides that fought in World War I, and while the essay is well written and interesting, it is more concerned about attitudes of American Jews to nations and ethnic groups in Europe than about war per se. Ziva Feldman's essay on Yitzhak Orpaz-Auerbach's work also makes for good reading, but its focus is on how secular Jews deal with war and the evil it represents in the *absence* of Jewish tradition, rather than *within* Jewish tra-

dition, which is the theme of the volume. (One could, of course, argue that secularism is part of Jewish tradition, as David Biale has done in a recent book, but Feldman does not make that case.)

A final comment should be made about the epilogue to the volume. In a brief essay, the two editors attempt to tie together the essays in their volume by praising the Jewish tradition for having consistently placed moral constraints on war. They also argue that these constraints explain why Israel's response to the violence of the second Intifada (2000-05) was so consistent in adhering to strict moral standards. They cite Asa Kasher's judgment that Israel's moral stature has not only survived this difficult period but, surprisingly enough, has even been strengthened by it. Levin and Shapira then list seven principles regarding war and peace that originate in the Bible and set a moral tone for later Jewish tradition and that therefore explain Israel's high moral standards.

These remarks are troubling for a number of reasons. First of all, Levin and Shapira go over well-trodden ground here. Most of their seven principles have been suggested by others. Second and more important, the record of Jewish tradition on violence is far more mixed than Levin and Shapira are willing to admit, as is the record of Israel's actions against Palestinians. A far more nuanced portrayal of Jewish morality as it relates to Zionism and the founding of a Jewish state can be found in Ehud Luz's excellent study, *Wrestling with an Angel: Power, Morality, and Jewish Identity* (2003). I should also mention my own recent study, *The Peace and Violence of Judaism: From the Bible to Modern Zionism* (2011) that attempts to address the entirety of the Jewish tradition on the question of peace and violence and, at one point or another, challenges most of the seven principles that Levin and Shapira adduce as evidence for Jewish morality.

I want to emphasize that I am not arguing that Jewish tradition is necessarily violent, only that its record on violence is consistently ambiguous. I was therefore disappointed to read the one-sided conclusions of Levin and Shapira at the end of a volume that contains a number of sophisticated essays. Still, no book should be judged by its epilogue, and the present book is no exception. Levin and Shapira are to commended for their work in bringing to light the scholarship represented here. They have produced a fine collection of essays that should be read by all scholars who are interested in Jewish views on war and peace.

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