



Reading Violent Scripture

28.02.2005 | Kessler, Edward

This essay will offer a variety of approaches to the interpretation of violent biblical texts. This is valuable in a world where violence is often carried out in the name of religion, justified by a particular interpretation of one or more sacred texts.

Reading Violent Scripture

[Edward Kessler](#)

If you have seen evil, it was shown to you in order that you learn of your own guilt and repent; for what is shown to you is also within you. (Baal Shem Tov 1698-1760)

This essay will offer a variety of approaches to the interpretation of violent biblical texts. This is valuable in a world where violence is often carried out in the name of religion, justified by a particular interpretation of one or more sacred texts. I will begin with a brief consideration of the traditional Jewish responses to violence in biblical, rabbinic and modern times. The survival of Judaism in the face of external attacks is not a new phenomenon and I suggest that recognition among Jews today to the ideas put forward in the rabbinic writings may provide some help in developing an appropriate response in an increasingly violent world. In addition, the realisation among Jews that there now exist partners in this exercise should strengthen our resolve to tackle these texts. Christianity, for so long an instigator of violence against and contempt for Judaism has, in recent years, become a friend who has respect and admiration for Judaism. Awareness of this transformation in Christian attitudes towards Judaism may contribute to the development of a hermeneutical principle by which both Jews and Christians can read and interpret violent texts. I hope that some of these suggestions would also be of value to Muslims in their reading of the Qu'ran.

The Traditional Jewish View of Violence

Until recently, the traditional and most common Jewish response to violence was based on Jeremiah 29:4-7

Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, unto all the captivity, whom I have caused to be carried away captive from Jerusalem unto Babylon: Build ye houses, and dwell in them, and plant gardens, and eat the fruit of them; take ye wives, and beget sons and daughters; and take wives for your sons, and give your daughters to husbands, that they may bear sons and daughters; and multiply ye there, and be not diminished. And seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away captive, and pray unto the LORD for it; for in the peace thereof shall ye have peace.

The yielding to outside power and accepting the violence that prevailed were strategies, which ensured the survival of Judaism. By relinquishing a desire for sovereignty, Jews gained some autonomy in regulating their lives. Under the motto *dina d'malkuta dina* ('the law of the land is the law') the Jewish community based its existence on the law of the host society. "A person must be at all times yielding like a reed", said the rabbis, "and not unbending like a cedar"¹. This approach

ensured Jewish survival and enabled Judaism to develop and flourish in the face of violence until the rise of antisemitism in the 19th and 20th centuries when the passiveness of the rabbinic model, with its acceptance of pogroms, massacres and finally the Holocaust, offered no respite.

Arthur Waskow points to the 1880s as the time when Jews began to realise that they could no longer live by the rabbinic model² and desired to take control of their own destiny. Self-determination in the Land of Israel became the goal. The Zionism of the left-wing Palmach as well as the right-wing Irgun produced a military model, which aimed to protect Jews in the Land of Israel by force. For the most part, the effort to secure and defend territory on which to build a Jewish society allowed for compromise, partition and self-restraint. However, in the last few years a more aggressive response to violence has become noticeable and the military decision-making process, which had been based on the use of military force sparingly and defensively, has now changed into the use of force liberally and belligerently - for conquest as well as for self-defense.

There are many difficulties with this approach, one of which is that it is unlikely a small people living in Israel can wage a long-term ethical military effort and at the same time develop a decent society. Not even the Soviet Union, a continental super-state, could shoulder this burden. It is not altogether clear that even the richest country in the history of the world, the United States, can for generations wage continuous war – even “a war against terror” – and remain a decent society at home.

The chances that Israel can do so are very small. It may seem implausible at first, but if we turn to some of the more violent passages from Scripture and examine the rabbinic interpretations alongside, we will find some surprisingly relevant and refreshing comments, which can provide guidance in developing a response to the issues raised by this problem.

Reading the Bible

The centrepiece of the Jewish service is the reading of the Written Torah, the 5 books of Moses. Jews traditionally read each and every verse, including the more problematic verses. These include violent passages such as Deuteronomy 20 which deals with fighting a war and the ethics of warfare and begins with a remarkably democratic, enlightened and morally topical message:

When thou goest forth to battle against thine enemies, and seest horses, and chariots, and a people more than thou, thou shalt not be afraid of them; for the Lord thy God is with thee, who brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. And it shall be, when ye draw nigh unto the battle, that the priest shall approach and speak unto the people, and shall say unto them: 'Hear, O Israel, ye draw nigh this day unto battle against your enemies; let not your heart faint; fear not, nor be alarmed, neither be ye affrighted at them; for the Lord your God is He that goeth with you, to fight for you against your enemies, to save you.' And the officers shall speak unto the people, saying: 'What man is there that hath built a new house, and hath not dedicated it? Let him go and return to his house, lest he die in the battle, and another man dedicate it. And what man is there that hath planted a vineyard, and hath not used the fruit thereof? Let him go and return unto his house, lest he die in the battle, and another man use the fruit thereof. And what man is there that hath betrothed a wife, and hath not taken her? Let him go and return unto his house, lest he die in the battle, and another man take her.' And the officers shall speak further unto the people, and they shall say: 'What man is there that is fearful and faint-hearted? Let him go and return unto his house, lest his brethren's heart melt as his heart.' And it shall be, when the officers have made an end of speaking unto the people, that captains of hosts shall be appointed at the head of the people.

The Bible proposes a volunteer army and suggests that many groups of people should not be expected to fight in a war, particularly those who have:

- Recently moved into a new home
- Planted a vineyard but not yet reaped its fruits
- Become engaged and are shortly to be married
- Fear of war

The passage goes on to explain that the city to be attacked should first be offered terms for a peaceful surrender but if it refuses, should be besieged. Upon victory its women and children should not be harmed. So far, so enlighteningly good, but verses 16-18 are especially problematic:

Howbeit of the cities of these peoples, that the Lord thy God giveth thee for an inheritance, thou shalt save alive nothing that breatheth, but thou shalt utterly destroy them: the Hittite, and the Amorite, the Canaanite, and the Perizzite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite; as the Lord thy God hath commanded thee; that they teach you not to do after all their abominations, which they have done unto their gods, and so ye sin against the Lord your God.

The Bible commands that the cities of the Hittites, Amorites, Canaanites, Peruzites, Hivites and Jebusites should be destroyed and that every man, woman and child (and animal) should be killed. Although these cities, from the perspective of Scripture, may symbolise the Nazis of their time, how should such verses be interpreted, particularly in today's violent world?

The rabbis decreed that military power should no longer be used. They did this by evading, nullifying, and otherwise interpreting away the genocidal commands against the Canaanites and other idolatrous people. Instead of extrapolating from these commands that it was right – even obligatory – to wipe out a people that rejected the one true God, the rabbis went in the opposite direction, ruling that the Canaanite example was null and void. Since the Canaanite peoples no longer existed – the rabbis explained that the Assyrians had scattered them as well as the ten lost tribes of Israel in 721 BCE – the rabbis ruled that the commands to use military action against the Canaanites were a dead letter.³ If military action against the Canaanites was no longer necessary, then military action itself was no longer commanded.

The rabbis were creative in applying Torah to a new situation. They could have understood the six nations as symbols for ongoing dangers to be dealt with militarily but chose instead to annul the genocidal meaning of the text and even rejected the command to execute a rebellious Israelite child or wipe out a rebellious Israelite city⁴. This was an ethical decision not to carry out literally the command of Torah. One could argue that to a certain extent the rabbis were simply being pragmatic, given the power of the Roman and Byzantine empires, but these rulings point to an ethical rejection against the use of violence. Indeed, the rabbis mostly rejected the violent punishments prescribed in Torah, indicating that a court which sentences even one person to death in seventy years, is a court of murderers⁵.

Consequently, rabbinic Judaism constructed a non-violent way for the Jewish people to live in the world. Living as a vulnerable minority in Christian (and Muslim) society, Jewish communities in the rabbinic period abandoned the hope of overcoming oppressors. Only within ourselves, said the rabbis, can Jews overcome evil. According to one tradition, when all Jews truly observe the Sabbath twice in a row, the messiah will come and transform the world.⁶ It is noteworthy that such a transformation will take place as a result of divine action rather than human interference. For almost two thousand years, with few exceptions Jews accepted their suffering passively. They experienced expulsions, pogroms and burnings, believing that they would live beyond such events. This survival technique is illustrated by the fact that even as the Jewish lights of Western Europe were extinguished one by one – expelled from England (1290), France (1306) and Spain (1492) – new Jewish centres were being established in Eastern Europe, Turkey and the Middle East.

It is unsurprising that over the centuries a mentality permeated the minds of most Jews, which saw

the Jewish community as still being utterly engulfed by enemies. The legacy of this mentality exists today and must be overcome. The need to develop friendships and build positive relations with like-minded faith communities is essential. This is increased by the danger that a small people will suffer another catastrophe in the land of Israel. Judaism needs allies for this challenge. The mindset of isolation imbued both biblical and rabbinic Judaism. It developed in the effort to conquer Canaan against what was viewed as an ocean of idolaters and grew in the effort to survive the Roman Empire. This mindset was reinforced by Inquisitions and pogroms and even by the gentler Muslim habit of treating the Jews like tolerated pets. The Shoah and the continued threats to the State of Israel fuel it even further.

Whether Jews survived by military means in the ancient land of Israel, or lived a life of non-violence among other civilizations, both biblical and rabbinic Judaism reinforced the perception among Jews that they were on their own, that no one else shared their vision and that all outsiders were enemies. For centuries, this may well have reflected considerable truth. However, in the last one hundred years Jews have begun to discover that there are other communities in the world with which they can share a vision of a decent society. The transformation in Christian attitudes towards Judaism is one example. Indeed, a positive relationship between Judaism and Christianity is one of the few pieces of good news in media reports about religious encounters in today's violent world.

Transformation in Christian Perceptions of Judaism

In the last 100 years, the need for Christianity to abandon its historical religious animosity and misleading caricature of Judaism has been overwhelming. These are now generally admitted as being wrong and their full and public rejection was required before the possibility of rebuilding good relations with Judaism. Thus, what was required was a shift from what was, for the most part, an inherent need to condemn Judaism to one of a condemnation of Christian anti-Judaism. This process has not led to a separation from all things Jewish but in fact, to a closer relationship with 'the elder brother'. In the words of German theologian Johannes Metz, 'Christian theology after Auschwitz must stress anew the Jewish dimension of Christian beliefs and must overcome the forced blocking-out of the Jewish heritage within Christianity'.⁷ Social ethicist, John Pawlikowski stated that, 'the Holocaust has made it immoral for Christians to maintain any Christology that is excessively triumphalistic or that finds the significance of the Christ Event in the displacement of the Jewish People from an ongoing covenantal relationship with God'.⁸

As far as reading the Bible is concerned, this has led to the tackling of the traditional teaching of contempt of Judaism (known as *Adversus Iudeos*) in Christian interpretations of Scripture. This teaching of contempt had become part of Christian identity. The extent to which this first stage has been successfully completed is subject to some disagreement among scholars – critics both within and outside the Church believe that there is more to be done. However, the changes have been dramatic and it is clear that many of the main divisive issues between Judaism and Christianity have been either eliminated or taken to the furthest point at which agreement is possible. The efforts of Catholics and Protestants towards respect of Judaism are reflected in documents, which project attitudes that would have been unthinkable a few decades ago. Christian theology has been profoundly revised at the official level - all Churches are committed to the fight against antisemitism and to teaching about the Jewishness of Christianity. This is illustrated by the recent document published by the Pontifical Biblical Commission entitled *The Jewish People and their Sacred Scriptures in the Christian Bible*, (2002) which among other things called for Christians to read and learn about rabbinic interpretations of Scripture and stated that the Jewish messianic expectation was not in vain.⁹

Few would deny that a massive change in attitude has taken place and that for the most part Christianity, in the West at least, is no longer part of the problem of antisemitism but part of its solution. As far as Scripture is concerned, Christians are now taught that the Hebrew Bible is not

simply a foil for the New Testament, possessing little authority in its own right. It was necessary for some kind of balance to be restored between the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament and reverence towards the *graphai* (Scriptures) as a whole has been reasserted in Christian biblical interpretation. Jewish biblical interpretation is valued and respected by Christians to an extent, which would have caused disbelief just a couple of generations ago.

Whilst Christian biblical scholarship has rejected its former negative stereotyping of Jews and Judaism, resulting in a revised approach to the teaching of biblical studies, some Jewish writers have focussed more on how to read the Bible in light of the Shoah. In general, Jewish responses to the Shoah tend to fall into two categories, both of which impact upon the Jewish reading of the Bible. The first is represented by figures such as the philosopher Emil Fackenheim, the theologian Richard Rubenstein and the author Elie Wiesel. They have all argued that the Shoah has resulted in a 'rupture' in the relationship between Jews and God and a consequent Jewish distancing from Scripture.

Richard Rubenstein offered an 'atheistic' reaction in his 'death of God' theology. In *After Auschwitz* (1966) he stated that the Shoah had buried any possibility of continued belief in a covenantal God of history and that instead of interpreting the Bible in traditional terms, Jews should consider it simply in terms of an earthly existence. In his revised second edition of the same work (1992), Rubenstein offered a more mystical approach. What has not changed is his affirmation of a view of God quite different from the mainstream view of biblical and rabbinic Judaism and his rejection of the notion that the Jews are in any sense a people either chosen or rejected by God.¹⁰

The second response is to view events between 1933 and 1945 as one would to persecution and oppression during other periods of extreme Jewish suffering. This view is represented by Jewish scholars such as Jacob Neusner, Eliezer Berkovits, Eugene Borowitz and Michael Wyschogrod. The latter makes their position clear when he states that, 'the voices of the prophets speak more loudly than did Hitler'.¹¹ According to this argument, traditional approaches to Scripture provide the means by which to come to terms with the Shoah. But how should we read Scripture in light of Holocaust?

Emil Fackenheim calls for a struggle with the biblical text and if need be, a fight against it. The biblical text is accepted as a primary text but is viewed as 'naked'; Jews are impelled to tackle the biblical text because they are also 'naked'.

After the Holocaust Jews cannot read, as they once did, of a God who sleeps and slumbers not; so enormous are the events of recent history ... that the Jewish Bible ... must be struggled with, if necessary fought against.¹²

Fackenheim examines a number of previous approaches to the Bible and rejects them all. For instance, Martin Buber had proposed that each generation in turn 'struggled' with the Bible. Before the Shoah Buber stated that:

The generations are by no means ready to listen to what the book has to say, and to obey it; they are often vexed and defiant; nevertheless, the preoccupation with this book is part of their life, and they face it in a real world.¹³

After the Shoah, Buber asked whether one could dare recommend to Holocaust survivors, 'thank ye the Lord for He is good, for His mercy endures for ever'? (Psalm 111:1). Adopting the phrase 'eclipse of God' (*hester panim*) as a means of describing the Shoah, he suggested that just as the moon can appear to block out the sun, so God was eclipsed during the Holocaust¹⁴.

But for Fackenheim the focus lies not with a metaphorical eclipse of God but with a more tangible

struggle by Holocaust survivors:

If these [survivors] open the Jewish Bible they are more than 'vexed' and 'defiant': the Book fills them with outrage; yet, too, more than merely 'preoccupied' with it, they clutch it as if for survival. So new, so paradoxical a relation is coming into being between the Book, then and there, and the 'generation' here and now. This is because of two events both referred to by names of places. One is Auschwitz, the other, Jerusalem¹⁵

Exegetical Relativity¹⁶

To a certain extent, struggling with the meaning of scripture lies at the heart of rabbinic exegesis. The Rabbinic Bible, the *Mikraot Gedolot*, with its commentaries spanning the centuries ranged around the biblical text, is rightly regarded as a celebration of the enduring nature of the debate about meaning. The rabbinic willingness to see a multitude of different possible meanings, in marked contrast to the single 'authentic' meaning, backed by clerical or scholarly authority, provides us with the means of handling difficult biblical texts.

This approach may be described as exegetical relativity and is put forward by the rabbis as follows:

In the School of Rabbi Ishmael it is taught: 'See, My word is like fire, an oracle of the Eternal, and like a hammer that shatters a rock' (Jeremiah 23:29). Just as a hammer divides into several sparks so too every scriptural verse yields several meanings.¹⁷

This approach to biblical interpretation can also be found in classical Christian exegesis. Although less well known in the West because it derives from the Syriac tradition, the following passage from the fourth century church father, St. Ephrem, is significant to our study:

The facets of God's word are more numerous than the facets of those who learn from it. God depicted His word with many beauties, so that each of those who learn from it can examine that aspect of it which he likes. And God had hidden within his word all sorts of treasures, so that each of us can be enriched by it from whatever aspect he meditates on. For God's word is the Tree of Life which proffers to you on all sides blessed fruits; it is like the Rock which was struck in the Wilderness, which became a spiritual drink for everyone on all sides: 'They ate the food of the Spirit and they drank the draft of the Spirit'¹⁸.

An acceptance of the legitimacy of a variety of different meanings, each of which claims validity, is therefore found at the heart of traditional Jewish and Christian exegesis. The existence of exegetical relativity means traditional interpretations of Scripture allow for a breadth and plurality of viewpoint. In this way, both the Jewish and Christian exegetical traditions provide a means by which to deal with texts, which run contrary to what we regard as the fundamental values of our tradition or which may be read as a license for violence or bigotry. The application of exegetical relativity is dependent upon one criterion: that biblical interpretation should reject any interpretation, which promotes hatred, discrimination or superiority of one group over another. For example, the literal application of a biblical text for the purpose of the subjugation of women to men, black to white, Jew to Christian and so on should be considered invalid, requiring reinterpretation.

This approach is justified by a hermeneutical principle shared by both Christians and Jews: humanity should live by the commandments and not die by their observance.¹⁹ This means that in light of the Shoah biblical texts need to be examined in light of potential damage they may cause (or the real damage they have caused). The rabbis coined the term *Pikuah nefesh*, referring to the duty to preserve life, taking precedence over the commandment: simply put, when human life is at stake the biblical text needs reinterpretation.

The recognition that the biblical text can have more than one meaning is significant for contemporary Jewish and Christian interpretation of Scripture in particular and Jewish–Christian relations in general. It is no longer appropriate to search for the one and only correct meaning of a text but rather it is essential to examine a number of different interpretations, each within its own context, each worthy of consideration in its own right. The existence of exegetical relativity may leave the interpreter with an uncomfortable tension because of the presence of a number of interpretations arising out of a single biblical passage. The multitude of possible interpretations may be disconcerting to some but their existence illustrates the variety of interpretations, which can be applied to Scripture. Occasionally, even the biblical text contains an inherent ambiguity.

Consider the following opposing translations of Job 13:15:

- Behold, he will slay me; I have no hope (RSV)
- Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him (KJV).

The reason for the difference between the RSV and KJV is the result of a variation in the reading and spoken versions. The Masoretic vocalisation (spoken reading) indicates that Job has hope while the consonantal text (written text) offers the view that Job has no hope. The Mishnah acknowledges the ambiguous meaning of the biblical text and has recognised that both translations are possible ‘the matter is undecided – do I trust in Him or not trust?’²⁰ The contradiction is meaningful as it expresses the tension of one who is torn between hope and doubt: the very tension that inhabits our mind when we read the Bible today. According to Andre Neher ‘Job pronounces two words which signify simultaneously hope and hopelessness...I hope in Him, he shouts, but also do not hope in him’.²¹

Such an approach does not offer an easy or a comfortable reading of Scripture for it leaves the reader with unresolved tension and contradiction. Yet it provides a way of understanding the text to those who, like Fackenheim, are struggling with the meaning of the Bible in light of the Shoah. It can be equally applied to reading violent Scripture. The existence of ambiguity may enable Christians and Jews to realise that the plain, obvious and literal interpretation is not the final meaning of the text. The tension which arises as a result is helpful because, like the Bible and its interpretations, the Jewish-Christian encounter is full of ambiguity.

Techniques for Handling Difficult Texts

This paper has shown that although both Jews and Christians share difficult texts, each has within its own history of biblical interpretation the means by which to handle such texts. However, some polemical texts are particular to the Church.

The problem of polemic in the New Testament provides one of the major challenges in Jewish-Christian relations. The problem is exaggerated by the fact that Jesus was a Jew who taught his fellow Jews, some of whom followed his teaching and some others did not. Most of his contemporaries, of course, had never heard of him. After his death, his Jewish followers, encouraged by their experience of the resurrection – commonly called the Christ Event – argued for the validity of his teaching and their own, against their fellow Jews who had not been persuaded. To complicate the position somewhat further, Jesus’ Jewish followers argued amongst themselves about the conditions under which Gentiles might be admitted to this new Jewish movement. In addition, some of the Jewish communities within the Jesus movement – with or without Gentile members – found themselves further at odds with other Jews over issues such as Torah observance and claims about Jesus.

The New Testament bears witness to all of this and many of the texts illustrate the debates and arguments, which were taking place. These disputes were serious, vigorous and often bitter.

Nevertheless, what must not be forgotten – but which over time has been almost completely neglected – is the fact that the arguments were between Jews, about a Jew or about Jewish issues (even when they concerned Gentile converts!).

The problem of polemic is therefore magnified greatly when we read the polemical passages as if they were 'Christian' arguments against 'Jews'. To read them this way is to misread them. It is this misreading which has resulted in the Christian teaching of contempt. While we cannot deny that the New Testament includes many polemical texts, other than exegetical relativity, there are a number of important techniques to handle such texts.

The most important method is to contextualise them. This means to consider the implications of the fact that the mission and ministry of Jesus can only be understood in the context of first century Palestinian Judaism. Not only is it essential to emphasise that the concerns of Jesus and his followers are Jewish concerns, as we mentioned above, but that Christianity in part shares the Scriptures of the Jews and that the Jewish way of worship heavily influenced Christian modes of worship.

In addition, it is essential to read the text in light of:

- Modern statements about the Christian relationship to Jews and Judaism such as the various Vatican statements, The Anglican Lambeth 1988 Document entitled *Jews, Christians, Muslims: the way of dialogue* and so on. For example, John Paul II's famous comment in 1980, "the people of the Old Covenant, never revoked by God" might be cited alongside Matthew 23. A comparison of post WWII statements would be worthwhile in the interpretation of such passages.²²
- The close relationship between Jesus and the Pharisees. For example it was a Pharisee who warned Jesus about the intention of Herod (Lk 13:1); Jesus taught and associated with Pharisees; many of Jesus' teachings are paralleled in the rabbinic writings.
- More positive biblical passages. For example, one might compare negative interpretations associated with verses such as 'No-one comes to the Father except through Me' (John 14:6) or 'nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved' (Acts 4:12) with passages such as 'Other sheep I have which are not of this fold'. (John 10:16)
- Its abuse by later Christian interpretation, most noticeable in the *Adversus Iudaeos* tradition. The dangers of abuse, such as the harmful consequences of Matthew 25:27, should be highlighted.

Conclusion

Abraham Joshua Heschel tells the story of a band of inexperienced mountain climbers. Without guides, they struck recklessly into the wilderness. Suddenly a rocky ledge gave way beneath their feet and they were tumbled headlong into a dismal pit. In the darkness of the pit they recovered from their shock, only to find themselves set upon by a swarm of angry snakes. Every crevice became alive with fanged, hissing things. For each snake the desperate men slew, ten more seemed to lash out in its place. Strangely enough, one man seemed to stand aside from the fight. When the indignant voices of his struggling companions reproached him for not fighting, he called back: If we remain here, we shall be dead before the snakes. I am searching for a way of escape from the pit for all of us.²³

Heschel points out that the killing of snakes will provide security for a brief moment but not forever. The killing of snakes is also an inadequate metaphor in reading the Bible and especially those

violent texts shared by our religious traditions. A successful re-reading of the texts is more likely to be achieved through partnership than in isolation. Jews and Christians share many of the same textual difficulties but also have many of the same tools within their exegetical traditions by which to tackle these problems. The story of the Jewish-Christian relationship in the last 100 years provides us with a lesson of how we can learn from and help each other.

Notes

1. Babylonian Talmud (BT), Ta'anit 20a
2. A. Waskow 'The Sword and the Plowshare as Tools of Tikkun Olam' *Tikkun*, May 2002
3. Based on Mishnah Yadayim 4.4
4. Mishnah Sanhedrin 8:1-4; BT Sanhedrin 71a
5. Mishnah Makkot 1:10
6. BT Shabbat 118b
7. J –B. Metz, 'Facing the Jews: Christian theology after Auschwitz', E. Schussler-Fiorenza and D. Tracy (eds.), *The Holocaust as Interruption. Concilium* 175 (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1984), p. 27.
8. J. Pawlikowski 'Christology after the Holocaust' *Encounter* 1998:3 p. 346.
9. *The Jewish People and their Sacred Scriptures in the Christian Bible*, ~21 (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2002).
10. R. Rubenstein *After Auschwitz : history, theology, and contemporary Judaism* (2nd ed, 1992) pp. 311-2.
11. M. Wyschogrod, 'Faith and the Holocaust, *Judaism* 20 (1972) p 294.
12. E. Fackenheim, *The Jewish Bible after the Holocaust*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press 1992) pp vii-viii.
13. M. Buber, 'The man of today and the Jewish Bible', *Israel and the World Israel: essays in a time of crisis*, (NY: Schocken, 1948).
14. M. Buber, *The Eclipse of God: studies in the relation between religion and philosophy*, (London: Gollancz, 1953)
15. Fackenheim, op.cit pp. 16-17.
16. I am grateful to J Magonet whose paper at a conference in London in 2000 sparked this idea. See his 'Reading our Sacred Texts Today', *He Kissed him and they Wept* T. Bayfield, S. Brichto and E Fisher eds. (London, SCM, 2001) pp110-119
17. BT Sanhedrin 34a
18. Commentary on the Diatessaron 1:18-19
19. Eg, compare Mark 2:27 with Mekhilta de Rabbi Ishmael on Exodus 31:12 or BT Sanhedrin 74a
20. Mishnah. Sotah 5:5
21. A. Nehr, *L'Exil de la parole: du silence biblique au silence d'Auschwitz* (Paris: Editions du Seuil 1970) p. 215.
22. See elsewhere in www.jcrelations.net for a selection of the main statements issued by the Churches and Jewish community.
23. Delivered in March 1938 at a Quaker conference in Frankfurt-am-Main, Germany and published in. E. Kaplan, *Holiness In Words: Abraham Joshua Heschel's Poetics Of Piety* (State University of New York Press, Albany 1996) pp. 145-51

Edward Kessler is Executive Director of Centre for the study of Jewish-Christian Relations, Cambridge, and a Bye-Fellow of St Edmund's College, Cambridge