

The Laws Against Non-Jews



**By
Willie Martin**

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I HAVE NO IDEA WHERE THIS CAME FROM, EXCEPT THE PERSON WHO SENT IT TO ME SAID THAT HE WAS A RABBI IN ISRAEL, and that if I gave out his email address that the powers that be in Israel would assassinate him. Whether this is true or not I have no idea, but I will honour his request and have already destroyed his email address.

He said that he had been reading my posts for sometime because all posts that are not favourable to the Jews is sent to Israel for compilation and are filed under the email address and name whom the post is sent under. Thus if anyone of those people were to go to Israel at some future time would be immediately jailed and probably killed in some (sic) “accident.”

But at any rate he said that he was putting his life in my hands by sending me this. But that it would appear from my posts that I was a sincere dedicated man and would honour his request. That I have done.

So those of you who take the time to read this post keep all this in mind. It is not my writing, and I have no idea whose it is, I suppose it is from the rabbi or supposed to be rabbi that sent it to me. At any rate you be the judge for it appears to be pretty truthful to me, and does reveal a few things about Judaism that I did not know.

One thing to keep in mind also, that whenever he speaks of a “Gentile” he is talking about a Christian.

The Halakhah, that is the legal system of classical Judaism - as practiced by virtually all Jews from the 9th century to the end of the 18th and as maintained to this very day in the form of Orthodox Judaism - is based primarily on the Babylonian Talmud. However, because of the unwieldy complexity of the legal disputations recorded in the Talmud, more

manageable codifications of Talmudic law became necessary and were indeed compiled by successive generations of rabbinical scholars. Some of these have acquired great authority and are in general use. For this reasons we shall refer for the most part to such compilations (and their most reputable commentaries) rather than directly to the Talmud. It is however correct to assume that the compilation referred to reproduces faithfully the meaning of the Talmudic text and the additions made by later scholars on the basis of that meaning.

The earliest code of Talmudic law which is still of major importance is the Misbneh Tarab written by Moses Maimonides in the late 12th century. The most authoritative code, widely used to date as a handbook, is the Shulhan 'Arukh composed by R. Yosef Karo in the late 16th century as a popular condensation of his own much more voluminous Beys Yosef which was intended for the advanced scholar.

The Shulhan 'Arukh is much commented upon; in addition to classical commentaries dating from the 17th century, there is an important 20th century one, Mishnab Berurab. Finally, the Talmudic Encyclopaedia - a modern compilation published in Israel from the 1950's and edited by the country's greatest Orthodox rabbinical scholars - is a good compendium of the whole Talmudic literature.

Murder and Genocide

According to the Jewish religion, the murder of a Jew is a capital offence and one of the three most heinous sins (the other two being idolatry and adultery). Jewish religious courts and secular authorities are commanded to punish, even beyond the limits of the ordinary administration of justice, anyone guilty of murdering a Jew.

A Jew who indirectly causes the death of another Jew is, however, only guilty of what Talmudic law calls a sin against the 'laws of Heaven', to be punished by God rather than by man.

When the victim is a Gentile, the position is quite different. A Jew who murders a Gentile is guilty only of a sin against the laws of Heaven, not

punishable by a court. **to Cause Indirectly the Death of a Gentile Is No Sin at All.**

Thus, one of the two most important commentators on the Shulhan Arukh explains that when it comes to a Gentile, 'one must not lift one's hand to harm him, but one may harm him indirectly, for instance by removing a ladder after he had fallen into a crevice—there is no prohibition here, because it was not done directly. He points out, however, that an act leading indirectly to a Gentile's death is forbidden IF it may cause the spread of hostility towards Jews.

A Gentile murderer who happens to be under Jewish jurisdiction must be executed whether the victim was Jewish or not. However, if the victim was Gentile and the murderer converts to Judaism, he is not punished.

All this has a direct and practical relevance to the realities of the State of Israel. Although the state's criminal laws make no distinction between Jew and Gentile, such distinction is certainly made by Orthodox rabbis, who in guiding their flock follow the Halakhah. Of special importance is the advice they give to religious soldiers.

Since even the minimal interdiction against murdering a Gentile outright applies only to 'Gentiles with whom we [the Jews] are not at war', various rabbinical commentators in the past drew the logical conclusion that in wartime all Gentiles belonging to a hostile population may, or even should be killed.

Since 1973 this doctrine is being publicly propagated for the guidance of religious Israeli soldiers. The first such official exhortation was included in a booklet published by the Central Region Command of the Israeli Army, whose area includes the West Bank. In this booklet the Command's Chief Chaplain writes:

When our forces come across civilians during a war or in hot pursuit or in a raid, so long as there is no certainty that those civilians are incapable of harming our forces, then according to the Halakhah they may and even should be killed—Under no circumstances should an Arab be trusted, even

if he makes an impression of being civilized— **in War, When Our Forces Storm the Enemy, They Are Allowed and Even Enjoyed by the Halakhah to Kill Even Good Civilians, That Is, Civilians Who Are Ostensibly Good.**

The same doctrine is expounded in the following exchange of letters between a young Israeli soldier and his rabbi, published in the yearbook of one of the country's most prestigious religious colleges, Midrashiyat No'am, where many leaders and activists of the National Religious Party and Gush Emunim have been educated.

Letter from the soldier Moshe to Rabbi Shimon 'on Weiser ' With God's help, to His Honour, my dear Rabbi, 'First I would like to ask how you and your family are. I hope all is well. I am, thank God, feeling well. A long time I have not written. Please forgive me. Sometimes I recall the verse "when shall I come and appear before God?" I hope, without being certain, that I shall come during one of the leaves. I must do so.

'In one of the discussions in our group, there was a debate about the "purity of weapons" and we discussed whether it is permitted to kill unarmed men - or women and children? Or perhaps we should take revenge on the Arabs? And then everyone answered according to his own understanding. I could not arrive at a clear decision, whether Arabs should be treated like the Amalekites, meaning that one is permitted to murder [sic] them until their remembrance is blotted out from under heaven, or perhaps one should do as in a just war, in which one kills only the soldiers?

'A second problem I have is whether I am permitted to put myself in danger by allowing a woman to stay alive? For there have been cases when women threw hand grenades. Or am I permitted to give water to an Arab who put his hand up? For there may be reason to fear that he only means to deceive me and will kill me, and such things have happened.

'I conclude with a warm greeting to the rabbi and all his family. - Moshe.'
Reply of. Shimon 'on Weiser to Moshe 'With the help of Heaven. Dear Moshe, Greetings. 'I am starting this letter this evening although I know I cannot finish it this evening, both because I am busy and because I would

like to make it a long letter, to answer your questions in full, for which purpose I shall have to copy out some of the sayings of our sages, of blessed memory, and interpret them.

'The non-Jewish nations have a custom according to which war has its own rules, like those of a game, like the rules of football or basketball. But according to the sayings of our sages, of blessed memory, [...] war for us is not a game but a vital necessity, and only by this standard must we decide how to wage it. On the one hand...] we seem to learn that if a Jew murders a Gentile, he is regarded as a murderer and, except for the fact that no court has the right to punish him, the gravity of the deed is like that of any other murder. But we find in the very same authorities in another place [...that Rabbi Shim'on used to say: "**THE Best of Gentiles - Kill Him**; the best of snakes dash out its brains."

'It might perhaps be argued that the expression "kill" in the saying of R. Shim'on is only figurative and should not be taken literally but as meaning "oppress" or some similar attitude, and in this way we also avoid a contradiction with the authorities quoted earlier. Or one might argue that this saying, though meant literally, is [merely] his own personal opinion, disputed by other sages [quoted earlier]. But we find the true explanation in the Tosafot. There [...] we learn the following comment on the Talmudic pronouncement that Gentiles who fall into a well should not be helped out, but neither should they be pushed into the well to be killed, which means that they should neither be saved from death nor killed directly. And the Tosafot write as follows:

"And if it is queried [because] in another place it was said The best of Gentiles - kill him, then the answer is that this [saying] is meant for wartime." [...]

'According to the commentators of the Tosafot, a distinction must be made between wartime and peace, so that although during peace time it is forbidden to kill Gentiles, in a case that occurs in wartime it is a mitzvah [imperative, religious duty] to kill them.[...] 'And this is the difference between a Jew and a Gentile: although the rule "Whoever comes to kill you, kill him first" applies to a Jew, as was said in Tractate Sanhednn [of

the Talmud], page 72a, still it only applies to him if there is [actual] ground to fear that he is coming to kill you. But a Gentile during wartime is usually to be presumed so, except when it is quite clear that he has no evil intent. This is the rule of "purity of weapons" according to the Halakhah - and not the alien conception which is now accepted in the Israeli army and which has been the cause of many [Jewish] casualties. I enclose a newspaper cutting with the speech made last week in the Knesset by Rabbi Kalman Kahana, which shows in a very lifelike - and also painful - way how this "purity of weapons" has caused deaths.

'I conclude here, hoping that you will not find the length of this letter irksome. This subject was being discussed even without your letter, but your letter caused me to write up the whole matter.

'Be in peace, you and all Jews, and [I hope to] see you soon, as you say.
Yours - Shim'on.

Reply of Moshe to R. Shun 'on Weiser 'To His Honour, my dear Rabbi,
'First I hope that you and your family are in health and are all right.

'I have received your long letter and am grateful for your personal watch over me, for I assume that you write to many, and most of your time is taken up with your studies in your own program.

'Therefore my thanks to you are doubly deep. 'As for the letter itself, I have understood it as follows: 'In wartime I am not merely permitted, but enjoined to kill every Arab man and woman whom I chance upon, if there is reason to fear that they help in the war against us, directly or indirectly. And as far as I am concerned I have to kill them even if that might result in an involvement with the military law.

I think that this matter of the purity of weapons should be transmitted to educational institutions, at least the religious ones, so that they should have a position about this subject and so that they will not wander in the broad fields of "logic," especially on this subject; and the rule has to be explained as it should be followed in practice. For, I am sorry to say, I have seen different types of "logic" here even among the religious

comrades. I do hope that you shall be active in this, so that our boys will know the line of their ancestors clearly and unambiguously.

'I conclude here, hoping that when the [training] course ends, in about a month, I shall be able to come to the yeshivah [Talmudic college]. Greetings - Moshe.'

Of course, this doctrine of the Halakhah on murder clashes, in principle, not only with Israel's criminal law but also - as hinted in the letters just quoted - with official military standing regulations. However, there can be little doubt that in practice this doctrine does exert an influence on the administration of justice, especially by military authorities. The fact is that in all cases where Jews have, in a military or paramilitary context, murdered Arab non-combatants - including cases of mass murder such as that in Kafr Qasim in 1956 - the murderers, if not let off altogether, received extremely light sentences or won far-reaching remissions, reducing their punishment to next to nothing.

Saving of Life

This Subject - the supreme value of human life and the obligation of every human being to do the utmost to save the life of a fellow human - is of obvious importance in itself. It is also of particular interest in a Jewish context, in view of the fact that since the second world war Jewish opinion has - in some cases justly, in others unjustly - condemned 'the whole world' or at least all Europe for standing by when Jews were being massacred. Let us therefore examine what the Halakhah has to say on this subject.

According to the Halakhah, the duty to save the life of a fellow Jew is paramount. It supersedes all other religious obligations and interdictions, excepting only the prohibitions against the three most heinous sins of adultery (including incest), murder and idolatry.

As for Gentiles, the basic Talmudic principle is that their lives must not be saved, although it is also forbidden to murder them outright. The Talmud itself; expresses this in the maxim 'Gentiles are neither to be lifted [out of a well] nor hauled down [into it]'. Maimonides explains: "As for

Gentiles with whom we are not at war...their death must not be caused, but it is forbidden to save them if they are at the point of death; if, for example, one of them is seen falling into the sea, he should not be rescued, for it is written: 'neither shalt thou stand against the blood of thy fellow' - but [a Gentile] is not thy fellow."

In particular, a Jewish doctor must not treat a Gentile patient. Maimonides - himself an illustrious physician - is quite explicit on this; in another passage he repeats the distinction between 'thy fellow' and a Gentile, and concludes: 'and from this learn ye, that it is forbidden to heal a Gentile even for payment...'

However, the refusal of a Jew - particularly a Jewish doctor - to save the life of a Gentile may, if it becomes known, antagonize powerful Gentiles and so put Jews in danger.

Where such danger exists, the obligation to avert it supersedes the ban on helping the Gentile. Thus Maimonides continues: '—but if you fear him or his hostility, cure him for payment, though you are forbidden to do so without payment.' In fact, Maimonides himself was Saladin's personal physician. His insistence on demanding payment - presumably in order to make sure that the act is not one of human charity but an unavoidable duty - is however not absolute. For in another passage he allows Gentile whose hostility is feared to be treated 'even gratis, if it is unavoidable'.

The whole doctrine - the ban on saving a Gentile's life or healing him, and the suspension of this ban in cases where there is fear of hostility - is repeated (virtually verbatim) by other major authorities, including the 14th century Arba'ah Turim and Karo's Beyt Yosef and Shulhan 'Arukh. Beyt Yosef adds, quoting Maimonides: 'And it is permissible to try out a drug on a heathen, if this serves a purpose'; and this is repeated also by the famous R. Moses Isserles.

The consensus of halakhic authorities is that the term 'Gentiles' in the above doctrine refers to all non-Jews. A lone voice of dissent is that of R. Moses Rivkes, author of a minor commentary on the Shulhan Arukh, who writes. Our sages only said this about heathens, who in their day worshiped

idols and did not believe in the Jewish Exodus from Egypt or in the creation of the world ex nihilo. But the Gentiles in whose [protective] shade we, the people of Israel, are exiled and among whom we are scattered do believe in the creation of the world ex nihilo and in the Exodus and in several principles of our own religion and they pray to the Creator of heaven and earth... Not only is there no interdiction against helping them, but we are even obliged to pray for their safety.

This passage, dating from the second half of the 17th century, is a favourite quote of apologetic scholars. Actually, it does not go nearly as far as the apologetics pretend, for it advocates removing the ban on saving a Gentile's life, rather than making it mandatory as in the case of a Jew; and even this liberality extends only to Christians and Muslims but not the majority of human beings. Rather, what it does show is that there was a way in which the harsh doctrine of the Halakhah could have been progressively liberalized. But as a matter of fact the majority of later halakhic authorities, far from extending Rivkes' leniency to other human groups, have rejected it altogether.

Desecrating the Sabbath to Save Life

Desecrating the Sabbath - that is, doing work that would otherwise be banned on Saturday - becomes a duty when the need to save a Jew's life demands it.

The problem of saving a Gentile's life on the Sabbath is not raised in the Talmud as a main issue, since it is in any case forbidden even on a weekday; it does however enter as a complicating factor in two connections. First, there is a problem where a group of people are in danger, and it is possible (but not certain) that there is at least one Jew among them: should the Sabbath be desecrated in order to save them? There is an extensive discussion of such cases. Following earlier authorities, including Maimonides and the Talmud itself, the Shulhan Arukh decides these matters according to the weight of probabilities.

For example, suppose nine Gentiles and one Jew live in the same building. One Saturday the building collapses; one of the ten - it is not known which

one - is away, but the other nine are trapped under the rubble. Should the rubble be cleared, thus desecrating the Sabbath, seeing that the Jew may not be under it (he may have been the one that got away)?

The Shulhan 'Arukh says that it should, presumably because the odds that the Jew is under the rubble are high (nine to one). But now suppose that nine have got away and only one - again, it is not known which one - is trapped. Then there is no duty to clear the rubble, presumably because this time there are long odds (nine to one) against the Jew being the person trapped.

Similarly: 'If a boat containing some Jews is seen to be in peril upon the sea, it is a duty incumbent upon all to desecrate the Sabbath in order to save it.' However, the great R. 'Aqiva Eiger (died 1837) comments that this applies only 'when it is known that there are Jews on board. But...if nothing at all is known about the identity of those on board, [the Sabbath] must not be desecrated, for one acts according to [the weight of probabilities, and] the majority of people in the world are Gentiles . Thus, since there are very long odds against any of the passengers being Jewish, they must be allowed to drown.

Secondly, the provision that a Gentile may be saved or cared for in order to avert the danger of hostility is curtailed on the Sabbath. A Jew called upon to help a Gentile on a weekday may have to comply because to admit that he is not allowed, in principle, to save the life of a non-Jew would be to invite hostility. But on Saturday the Jew can use Sabbath observance as a plausible excuse. A paradigmatic case discussed at length in the Talmud is that of a Jewish midwife invited to help a Gentile woman in childbirth.

The upshot is that the midwife is allowed to help on a weekday 'for fear of hostility', but on the Sabbath she must not do so, because she can excuse herself by saying: 'We are allowed to desecrate the Sabbath only for our own, who observe the Sabbath, but for your people, who do not keep the Sabbath, we are not allowed to desecrate it.' Is this explanation a genuine one or merely an excuse? Maimonides clearly thinks that it is just an excuse, which can be used even if the task that the midwife is invited to

do does not actually involve any desecration of the Sabbath. Presumably, the excuse will work just as well even in this case, because Gentiles are generally in the dark as to precisely which kinds of work are banned for Jews on the Sabbath.

At any rate, he decrees: 'A Gentile woman must not be helped in childbirth on the Sabbath, even for payment; nor must one fear hostility, even when [such help involves] no desecration of the Sabbath.' The Shulhan 'Arukh decrees likewise.

Nevertheless, this sort of excuse could not always be relied upon to do the trick and avert Gentile hostility. Therefore certain important rabbinical authorities had to relax the rules to some extent and allowed Jewish doctors to treat Gentiles on the Sabbath even if this involved doing certain types of work normally banned on that day. This partial relaxation applied particularly to rich and powerful Gentile patients, who could not be fobbed off so easily and whose hostility could be dangerous.

Thus, R. Yo'el Sirkis, author of Bayit Hadash and one of the greatest rabbis of his time (Poland, 17th century), decided that 'mayors, petty nobles and aristocrats' should be treated on the Sabbath, because of the fear of their hostility which involves 'some danger'. But in other cases, especially when the Gentile can be fobbed off with an evasive excuse, a Jewish doctor would commit 'an unbearable sin' by treating him on the Sabbath.

Later in the same century, a similar verdict was given in the French city of Metz, whose two parts were connected by a pontoon bridge. Jews are not normally allowed to cross such a bridge on the Sabbath, but the rabbi of Metz decided that a Jewish doctor may nevertheless do so 'if he is called to the great governor': since the doctor is known to cross the bridge for the sake of his Jewish patients, the governor's hostility could be aroused if the doctor refused to do so for his sake. Under the authoritarian rule of Louis XIV, it was evidently important to have the goodwill of his intendant; the feelings of lesser Gentiles were of little importance.

Hokhrnat Shloinoh, a 19th century commentary on the Shulhan 'Arukh, mentions a similarly strict interpretation of the concept 'hostility' in

connection with the Karaites, a small heretical Jewish sect. According to this view, their lives must not be saved if that would involve desecration of the Sabbath, 'for "hostility" applies only to the heathen, who are many against us, and we are delivered into their hands ...But the Karaites are few and we are not delivered into their hands, [so] the fear of hostility does not apply to them at all.' In fact, the absolute ban on desecrating the Sabbath in order to save the life of a Karaite is still in force today, as we shall see.

The whole subject is extensively discussed in the response of R. Moshe Sofer - better known as 'Hatam Sofer' - the famous rabbi of Pressburg (Bratislava) who died in 1832. His conclusions are of more than historical interest, since in 1966 one of his response was publicly endorsed by the then Chief Rabbi of Israel as 'a basic institution of the Halakhah'.

The particular question asked of Hatam Sofer concerned the situation in Turkey, where it was decreed during one of the wars that in each township or village there should be midwives on call, ready to hire themselves out to any woman in labor. Some of these midwives were Jewish; should they hire themselves out to help Gentile women on weekdays and on the Sabbath?

In his Tesponsum, Hatam Sofer first concludes, after careful investigation, that the Gentiles concerned - that is, Ottoman Christians and Muslims--- are not only idolaters 'who definitely worship other gods and thus should "neither be lifted [out of a well] nor hauled down," ' but are likened by him to the Amalekites, so that the Talmudic ruling 'it is forbidden to multiply the seed of Amalek' applies to them.

In principle, therefore, they should not be helped even on week- days. However, in practice it is 'permitted' to heal Gentiles and help them in labour, if they have doctors and midwives of their own, who could be called instead of the Jewish ones. For if Jewish doctors and midwives refused to attend to Gentiles, the only result would be loss of income to the former - which is of course undesirable. This applies equally on weekdays and on the Sabbath, provided no desecration of the Sabbath is involved. However, in the latter case the Sabbath can serve as an excuse

to 'mislead the heathen woman and say that it would involve desecration of the Sabbath.'

In connection with cases that do actually involve desecration of the Sabbath, Hatam Sofer - like other authorities - makes a distinction between two categories of work banned on the Sabbath. First, there is work banned by the Torah, the biblical text (as interpreted by the Talmud); such work may only be performed in very exceptional cases, if failing to do so would cause an extreme danger of hostility towards Jews. Then there are types of work which are only banned by the sages who extended the original law of the Torah; the attitude towards breaking such bans is generally more lenient.

Another response of Hatam Sofer O deals with the question whether it is permissible for a Jewish doctor to travel by carriage on the Sabbath in order to heal a Gentile. After pointing out that under certain conditions travelling by horse-drawn carriage on the Sabbath only violates a ban imposed 'by the sages' rather than by the Torah, he goes on to recall Maimonides' pronouncement that Gentile women in labour must not be helped on the Sabbath, even if no desecration of the Sabbath is involved, and states that the same principle applies to all medical practice, not just midwifery.

But he then voices the fear that if this were put into practice, 'it would arouse undesirable hostility,' for 'the Gentiles would not accept the excuse of Sabbath observance,' and 'would say that the blood of an idolater has little worth in our eyes'. Also, perhaps more importantly, Gentile doctors might take revenge on their Jewish patients. Better excuses must be found. He advises a Jewish doctor who is called to treat a Gentile patient out of town on the Sabbath to excuse himself by saying that he is required to stay in town in order to look after his other patients, 'for he can use this in order to say, "I cannot move because of the danger to this or that patient, who needs a doctor first, and I may not desert my charge"

With such an excuse there is no fear of danger, for it is a reasonable pretext, commonly given by doctors who are late in arriving because another patient needed them first.' Only 'if it is impossible to give any

excuse' is the doctor permitted to travel by carriage on the Sabbath in order to treat a Gentile.

In the whole discussion, the main issue is the excuses that should be made, not the actual healing or the welfare of the patient. And throughout it is taken for granted that it is all right to deceive Gentiles rather than treat them, so long as 'hostility' can be averted.

Of course, in modern times most Jewish doctors are not religious and do not even know of these rules. Moreover, it appears that even many who are religious prefer to their credit - to abide by the Hippocratic oath rather than by the precepts of their fanatic rabbis. However, the rabbis' guidance cannot fail to have some influence on some doctors; and there are certainly many who, while not actually following that guidance, choose not to protest against it publicly.

All this is far from being a dead issue. The most up-to-date halakhic position on these matters is contained in a recent concise and authoritative book published in English under the title Jewish Medical Law. This book, which bears the imprint of the prestigious Israeli foundation Mossad Harav Kook, is based on the response of R. Eli'ezer Yehuda Waldenberg, Chief Justice of the Rabbinical District Court of Jerusalem. A few passages of this work deserve special mention.

First, 'it is forbidden to desecrate the Sabbath—for a Karaite.' This is stated bluntly, absolutely and without any further qualification. Presumably the hostility of this small sect makes no difference, so they should be allowed to die rather than be treated on the Sabbath.

As for Gentiles: 'According to the ruling stated in the Talmud and Codes of Jewish Law, it is forbidden to desecrate the Sabbath - whether violating Biblical or rabbinic law - in order to save the life of a dangerously ill gentile patient. It is also forbidden to deliver the baby of a gentile woman on the Sabbath.'

But this is qualified by a dispensation: 'However, today it is permitted to desecrate the Sabbath on behalf of a Gentile by performing actions

prohibited by rabbinic law, for by so doing one prevents ill feelings from arising between Jew and Gentile.'

This does not go very far, because medical treatment very often involves acts banned on the Sabbath by the Torah itself, which are not covered by this dispensation.

There are, we are told, 'some' halakhic authorities who extend the dispensation to such acts as well - but this is just another way of saying that most halakhic authorities, and the ones that really count, take the opposite view. However, all is not lost. Jewish Medical Law has a truly breathtaking solution to this difficulty.

The solution hangs upon a nice point of Talmudic law. A ban imposed by the Torah on performing a given act on the Sabbath is presumed to apply only when the primary intention in performing it is the actual outcome of the act. (For example. grinding wheat is presumed to be banned by the Torah only if the purpose is actually to obtain flour.)

On the other hand, if the performance of the same act is merely incidental to some other purpose (melakhah seh'eynah tzrikhah legufah) then the act changes its status - it is still forbidden, to be sure, but only by the sages rather than by the Torah itself. Therefore: In order to avoid any transgression of the law, there is a legally acceptable method of rendering treatment on behalf of a gentile patient even when dealing with violation of Biblical Law.

It is suggested that at the time that the physician is providing the necessary care, his intentions should not primarily be to cure the patient, but to protect himself and the Jewish people from accusations of religious discrimination and severe retaliation that may endanger him in particular and the Jewish people in general. With this intention, any act on the physician's part becomes an act whose actual outcome is not its primary purpose'... which is forbidden on Sabbath only by rabbinic law.

This hypocritical substitute for the Hippocratic oath is also proposed by a recent authoritative Hebrew book. Although the facts were mentioned

at least twice in the Israeli press, the Israeli Medical Association has remained silent.

Having treated in some detail the supremely important subject of the attitude of the Halakhah to a Gentile's very life, we shall deal much more briefly with other halakhic rules which discriminate against Gentiles. Since the number of such rules is very large, we shall mention only the more important ones.

Sexual Offences

Sexual Intercourse between a married Jewish woman and any man other than her husband is a capital offence for both parties, and one of the three most heinous sins. The status of Gentile women is very different.

The Halakhah presumes all Gentiles to be utterly promiscuous and the verse 'whose flesh is as the flesh of asses, and whose issue [of semen] is like the issue of horses' is applied to them. Whether a Gentile woman is married or not makes no difference, since as far as Jews are concerned the very concept of matrimony does not apply to Gentiles ('There is no matrimony for a heathen').

Therefore, the concept of adultery also does not apply to intercourse between a Jewish man and a Gentile woman; rather, the Talmud equates such intercourse to the sin of bestiality. (For the same reason, Gentiles are generally presumed not to have certain paternity.)

According to the Talmudic Encyclopaedia: 'He who has carnal knowledge of the wife of a Gentile is not liable to the death penalty, for it is written: "thy fellow's wife" rather than the alien's wife; and even the precept that a man "shall cleave unto his wife" which is addressed to the Gentiles does not apply to a Jew, just there is no matrimony for a heathen; and although a married Gentile woman is forbidden to the Gentiles, in any case a Jew is exempted.'

This does not imply that sexual intercourse between a Jewish man and a Gentile woman is permitted - quite the contrary. But the main punishment

is inflicted on the Gentile woman; she must be executed, even if she was raped by the Jew: 'If a Jew has coitus with a Gentile woman, whether she be a child of three or an adult, whether married or unmarried, and even if he is a minor aged only nine years and one day - because he had wilful coitus with her, she must be killed, as is the case with a beast, because through her a Jew got into trouble.'

The Jew, however, must be flogged, and if he is a Kohen (member of the priestly tribe) he must receive double the number of lashes, because he has committed a double offence: a Kohen must not have intercourse with a prostitute, and all Gentile women are presumed to be prostitutes.

Status

According to the Halakhah, Jews must not (if they can help it) allow a Gentile to be appointed to any position of authority, however small, over Jews. (The two stock examples are commander over ten soldiers in the Jewish army' and 'superintendent of an irrigation ditch'.) Significantly, this particular rule applies also to converts to Judaism and to their descendants (through the female line) for ten generations or 'so long as the descent is known'.

Gentiles are presumed to be congenital liars, and are disqualified from testifying in a rabbinical court. In this respect their position is, in theory, the same as that of Jewish women, slaves and minors; but in practice it is actually worse. A Jewish woman is nowadays admitted as a witness to certain matters of fact, when the rabbinical court 'believes' her; a Gentile ——— never.

A problem therefore arises when a rabbinical court needs to establish a fact for which there are only Gentile witnesses. An important example of this is in cases concerning widows: by Jewish religious law, a woman can be declared a widow - and hence free to remarry - only if the death of her husband is proven with certainty by means of a witness who saw him die or identified his corpse. However, the rabbinical court will accept the hearsay evidence of a Jew who testifies to having heard the fact in question mentioned by a Gentile eyewitness, provided the court is satisfied that the

latter was speaking casually ('goy mesiah left tummd) rather than in reply to a direct question; for a Gentile's direct answer to a Jew's direct question is presumed to be a lie. If necessary, a Jew (preferably a rabbi) will actually undertake to chat up the Gentile eyewitness and, without asking a direct question, extract from him a casual statement of the fact at issue.

Money and Property

(1) Gifts. The Talmud bluntly forbids giving a gift to a Gentile. However, classical rabbinical authorities bent this rule because it is customary among businessmen to give gifts to business contacts. It was therefore laid down that a Jew may give a gift to a Gentile acquaintance, since this is regarded not as a true gift but as a sort of investment, for which some return is expected. Gifts to 'unfamiliar Gentiles' remain forbidden.

A broadly similar rule applies to almsgiving. Giving alms to a Jewish beggar is an important religious duty. Alms to Gentile beggars are merely permitted for the sake of peace. However there are numerous rabbinical warnings against allowing the Gentile poor to become 'accustomed' to receiving alms from Jews, so that it should be possible to withhold such alms without arousing undue hostility.

(2) Taking of interest. Anti-Gentile discrimination in this matter has become largely theoretical, in view of the dispensation which in effect allows interest to be exacted even from a Jewish borrower. However, it is still the case that granting an interest-free loan to a Jew is recommended as an act of charity, but from a Gentile borrower it is mandatory to exact interest. In fact, many - though not all - rabbinical authorities, including Maimonides, consider it mandatory to exact as much usury as possible on a loan to a Gentile.

(3) Lost property. If a Jew finds property whose probable owner is Jewish, the finder is strictly enjoined to make a positive effort to return his find by advertising it publicly. In contrast, the Talmud and all the early rabbinical authorities not only allow a Jewish finder to appropriate an article lost by a Gentile, but actually forbid him or her to return it. In more recent times, when laws were passed in most countries making it

mandatory to return lost articles, the rabbinical authorities instructed Jews to do what these laws say, as an act of civil obedience to the state - but not as a religious duty, that is without making a positive effort to discover the owner if it is not probable that he is Jewish.

(4) Deception in business. It is a grave sin to practice any kind of deception whatsoever against a Jew. Against a Gentile it is only forbidden to practice direct deception. Indirect deception is allowed, unless it is likely to cause hostility towards Jews or insult to the Jewish religion. The paradigmatic example is mistaken calculation of the price during purchase. If a Jew makes a mistake unfavourable to himself, it is one's religious duty to correct him. If a Gentile is spotted making such a mistake, one need not let him know about it, but say 'I rely on your calculation', so as to forestall his hostility in case he subsequently discovers his own mistake.

(5) Fraud. It is forbidden to defraud a Jew by selling or buying at an unreasonable price. However, 'Fraud does not apply to Gentiles, for it is written: "Do not defraud each man his brother"; but a Gentile who defrauds a Jew should be compelled to make good the fraud, but should not be punished more severely than a Jew [in a similar case].'

(6) Theft and robbery. Stealing (without violence) is absolutely forbidden - as the Shulhan 'Arukh so nicely puts it: 'even from a Gentile'. Robbery (with violence) is strictly forbidden if the victim is Jewish. However, **Robbery of a Gentile by a Jew Is Not Forbidden** outright but only under certain circumstances such as 'when the Gentiles are not under our rule', but is permitted 'when they are under our rule'.

Rabbinical authorities differ among themselves as to the precise details of the circumstances under which a Jew may rob a Gentile, but the whole debate is concerned only with the relative power of Jews and Gentiles rather than with universal considerations of justice and humanity. This may explain why so very few rabbis have protested against the robbery of Palestinian property in Israel: it was backed by overwhelming Jewish power.

Gentiles in the Land of Israel

In Addition to the General anti-Gentile laws, the Halakhah has special laws against Gentiles who live in the Land of Israel (Eretz Yisra'el) or, in some cases, merely pass through it. These laws are designed to promote Jewish supremacy in that country.

The exact geographical definition of the term 'Land of Israel' is much disputed in the Talmud and the Talmudic literature, and the debate has continued in modern times between the various shades of Zionist opinion. According to the maximalist view, the Land of Israel includes (in addition to Palestine itself) not only the whole of Sinai, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon, but also considerable parts of Turkey.

The more prevalent 'minimalist' interpretation puts the northern border 'only' about half way through Syria and Lebanon, at the latitude of Homs. This view was supported by Ben Gurion. However, even those who thus exclude parts of Syria-Lebanon agree that certain special discriminatory laws (though less oppressive than in the Land of Israel proper) apply to the Gentiles of those parts, because that territory was included in David's kingdom. In all Talmudic interpretations the Land of Israel includes Cyprus. I shall now list a few of the special laws concerning Gentiles in the Land of Israel. Their connection with actual Zionist practice will be quite apparent.

The Halakhah forbids Jews to sell immovable property - fields and houses - in the Land of Israel to Gentiles. In Syria, the sale of houses (but not of fields) is permitted.

Leasing a house in the Land of Israel to a Gentile is permitted under two conditions. First, that the house shall not be used for habitation but for other purposes, such as storage. Second, that three or more adjoining houses shall not be so leased.

These and several other rules are explained as follows:—'so that you shall not allow them to camp on the ground, for if they do not possess land, their sojourn there will be temporary.' Even temporary Gentile presence may only be tolerated 'when the Jews are in exile, or when the Gentiles are more powerful than the Jews,' but when the Jews are more

powerful than the Gentiles we are forbidden to let an idolater among us; even a temporary resident or itinerant trader shall not be allowed to pass through our land unless he accepts the seven Noahide precepts, for it is written: 'they shall not dwell in thy land' that is, not even temporarily.

If he accepts the seven Noahide precepts, he becomes a resident alien (ger toshav) but it is forbidden to grant the status of resident alien except at times when the Jubilee is held [that is, when the Temple stands and sacrifices are offered]. However, during times when Jubilees are not held it is forbidden to accept anyone who is not a full convert to Judaism (ger tzedeq).

It is therefore clear that - exactly as the leaders and sympathizers of Gush Emunim say - the whole question to how the Palestinians ought to be treated is, according to the Halakhah, simply a question of Jewish power: if Jews have sufficient power, then it is their religious duty to expel the Palestinians.

All these laws are often quoted by Israeli rabbis and their zealous followers. For example, the law forbidding the lease of three adjoining houses to Gentiles was solemnly quoted by a rabbinical conference held in 1979 to discuss the Camp David treaties. The conference also declared that according to the Halakhah even the 'autonomy' that Begin was ready to offer to the Palestinians is too liberal. Such pronouncements - which do in fact state correctly the position of the Halakhah - are rarely contested by the Zionist 'left.'

In addition to laws such as those mentioned so far, which are directed at all Gentiles in the Land of Israel, an even greater evil influence arises from special laws against the ancient Canaanites and other nations who lived in Palestine before its conquest by Joshua, as well as against the Amalekites. All those nations must be utterly exterminated, and the Talmud and Talmudic literature reiterate the genocidal biblical exhortations with even greater vehemence.

Influential rabbis, who have a considerable following among Israeli army officers, identify the Palestinians (or even all Arabs) with those ancient

nations, so that commands like 'thou shalt save alive nothing that breatheth'⁵⁶ acquire a topical meaning. In fact, it is not uncommon for reserve soldiers called up to do a tour of duty in the Gaza Strip to be given an 'educational lecture' in which they are told that the Palestinians of Gaza are 'like the Amalekites.' Biblical verses exhorting to genocide of the Midianite were solemnly quoted by an important Israeli rabbi in justification of the Qibbiya massacre, and this pronouncement has gained wide circulation in the Israeli army. There are many similar examples of bloodthirsty rabbinical pronouncements against the Palestinians, based on these laws.

Abuse

Under This Heading I would like to discuss examples of halakhic laws whose most important effect is not so much to prescribe specific anti-Gentile discrimination as to inculcate an attitude of scorn and hatred towards Gentiles. Accordingly, in this section I shall not confine myself to quoting from the most authoritative halakhic sources (as I have done so far) but include also less fundamental works, which are however widely used in religious instruction.

Let us begin with the text of some common prayers. In one of the first sections of the daily morning prayer, every devout Jew blesses God for not making him a Gentile.

The concluding section of the daily prayer (which is also used in the most solemn part of the service on New Year's day and on Yom Kippur) opens with the statement: 'We must praise the Lord of all—for not making us like the nations of [all] lands.—for they bow down to vanity and nothingness and pray to a god that does not help.'

The last clause was censored out of the prayer books, but in eastern Europe it was supplied orally, and has now been restored into many Israeli-printed prayer books. In the most important section of the weekday prayer - the 'eighteen blessings' - **There Is a Special Curse, Originally Directed against Christians, Jewish Converts to Christianity and Other Jewish Heretics:** 'And may the apostates' **1 Have No Hope, and All the**

Christians Perish Instantly.' This formula dates from the end of the 1st century, when Christianity was still a small persecuted sect. Some time before the 14th century it was softened into: 'And may the apostates have no hope. and all the heretics perish instantly', and after additional pressure into: 'And may the informers have no hope, and all the heretics perish instantly'.

After the establishment of Israel. the process was reversed, and many newly printed prayer books reverted to the second formula, which was also prescribed by many teachers in religious Israeli schools. After 1967, several congregations close to Gush Emunim have restored the first version (so far only verbally, not in print) and now pray daily that the Christians may perish instantly.'

This process of reversion happened in the period when the Catholic Church (under Pope John XXIII) removed from its Good Friday service a prayer which asked the Lord to have mercy on Jews, heretics etc. This prayer was thought by most Jewish leaders to be offensive and even anti-Semitic. Apart from the fixed daily prayers, a devout Jew must utter special short blessings on various occasions, both good and bad (for example, while putting on a new piece of clothing. eating a seasonal fruit for the first time that year, seeing powerful lightning, hearing bad news, etc.)

Some of These Occasional Prayers Serve to Inculcate Hatred and Scorn for All Gentiles, We have mentioned in the rule according to which **a Pious Jew Must Utter Curse When Passing near a Gentile Cemetery,** whereas he must bless God when passing near a Jewish cemetery.

A similar rule applies to the living; thus, when seeing a large Jewish population a devout Jew must praise God, while upon seeing a large Gentile population he must utter a curse. Nor are buildings exempt: the Talmud lays down that a Jew who passes near an inhabited non- Jewish dwelling must ask God to destroy it, whereas if the building is in ruins he must thank the Lord of Vengeance. (Naturally, the rules are reversed for Jewish houses.) This rule was easy to keep for Jewish peasants who lived in their own villages or for small urban communities living in all-Jewish townships or quarters.

Under the conditions of classical Judaism, however, it became impracticable and was therefore confined to churches and places of worship of other religions (except Islam). In this connection, the rule was further embroidered by custom: it became customary to spit (usually three times) upon seeing a church or a crucifix, as an embellishment to the obligatory formula of regret. Sometimes insulting biblical verses were also added.

There is also a series of rules forbidding any expression of praise for Gentiles or for their deeds, except where such praise implies an even greater praise of Jews and things Jewish. This rule is still observed by Orthodox Jews. For example, the writer Agnon, when interviewed on the Israeli radio upon his return from Stockholm, where he received the Nobel Prize for literature, praised the Swedish Academy, but hastened to add: 'I am not forgetting that it is forbidden to praise Gentiles, but here there is a special reason for my praise' - that is, that they awarded the prize to a Jew.

Similarly, it is forbidden to join any manifestation of popular Gentile rejoicing, except where failing to join in might cause 'hostility' towards Jews, in which case a 'minimal' show of joy is allowed.

In addition to the rules mentioned so far, there are many others whose effect is to inhibit human friendship between Jew and Gentile. I shall mention two examples: the rule on 'libation wine' and that on preparing food for a Gentile on Jewish holy days.

A religious Jew must not drink any wine in whose preparation a Gentile had any part whatsoever. Wine in an open bottle, even if prepared wholly by Jews, becomes banned if a Gentile so much as touches the bottle or passes a hand over it. The reason given by the rabbis is that all Gentiles are not only idolaters but must be presumed to be malicious to boot, so that they are likely to dedicate (by a whisper, gesture or thought) as 'libation' to their idol any wine which a Jew is about to drink.

This law applies in full force to all Christians, and in a slightly attenuated form also to Muslims. (An open bottle of wine touched by a Christian

must be poured away, but if touched by a Muslim it can be sold or given away, although it may not be drunk by a Jew.) The law applies equally to Gentile atheists (how can one be sure that they are not merely pretending to be atheists?) but not to Jewish atheists.

The laws against doing work on the Sabbath apply to a lesser extent on other holy days. In particular, on a holy day which does not happen to fall on a Saturday it is permitted to do any work required for preparing food to be eaten during the holy days or days. Legally, this is defined as preparing a 'soul's food' (okhel nefesh); but 'soul' is interpreted to mean 'Jew', and 'Gentiles and dogs' are explicitly excluded.

There is, however, a dispensation in favour of powerful Gentiles, whose hostility can be dangerous: it is permitted to cook food on a holy day for a visitor belonging to this category, provided he is not actively encouraged to come and eat.

An important effect of all these laws - quite apart from their application in practice - is in the attitude created by their constant study which, as part of the study of the Halakhah, is regarded by classical Judaism as a supreme religious duty.

Thus an Orthodox Jew learns from his earliest youth, as part of his sacred studies, that Gentiles are compared to dogs, that it is a sin to praise them, and so on and so forth. As a matter of fact, in this respect textbooks for beginners have a worse effect than the Talmud and the great Talmudic codes.

One reason for this is that such elementary texts give more detailed explanations, phrased so as to influence young and uneducated minds. Out of a large number of such texts, I have chosen the one which is currently most popular in Israel and has been reprinted in many cheap editions, heavily subsidized by the Israeli government.

It is The Book of Education, written by an anonymous rabbi in early 14th century Spain. It explains the 613 religious obligations (mitzvot) of Judaism in the order in which they are supposed to be found in the

Pentateuch according to the Talmudic interpretation. It owes its lasting influence and popularity to the clear and easy Hebrew style in which it is written.

A central didactic aim of this book is to emphasize the 'correct' meaning of the Bible with respect to such terms as 'fellow,' 'friend' or 'man.'

Thus, devoted to the religious obligation arising from the verse 'thou shalt love thy fellow as thyself', is entitled: 'A religious obligation to love Jews,' and explains:

To love every Jew strongly means that we should care for a Jew and his money just as one cares for oneself and one's own money, for it is written: 'thou shalt love thy fellow as thyself' and our sages of blessed memory said: 'what is hateful to you do not do to your friend'—and many other religious obligations follow from this, because one who loves one's friend as oneself will not steal his money, or commit adultery with his wife, or defraud him of his money, or deceive him verbally, or steal his land, or harm him in any way. Also many other religious obligations depend on this, as is known to any reasonable man.

In §322, dealing with the duty to keep a Gentile slave enslaved for ever (whereas a Jewish slave must be set free after seven years), the following explanation is given:

And at the root of this religious obligation [is the fact that] the Jewish people are the best of the human species, created to know their Creator and worship Him, and worthy of having slaves to serve them. And if they will not have slaves of other peoples, they would have to enslave their brothers, who would thus be unable to serve the Lord, blessed be He.

Therefore we are commanded to possess those for our service, after they are prepared for this and after idolatry is removed from their speech so that there should not be danger in our houses, and this is the intention of the verse 'but over your brethren the children of Israel, ye shall not rule one over another with rigor', so that you will not have to enslave your brothers, who are all ready to worship God.

In §545, dealing with the religious obligation to exact interest on money lent to Gentiles, the law is stated as follows: 'That we are commanded to demand interest from Gentiles when we lend money to them, and we must not lend to them without interest,'

The explanation is: And at the root of this religious obligation is that we should not do any act of mercy except to the people who know God and worship Him; and when we refrain from doing merciful deed to the rest of mankind and do so only to the former, we are being tested that the main part of love and mercy to them is because they follow the religion of God, blessed be He.

Behold, with this intention our reward [from God] when we withhold mercy from the others is equal to that of doing [merciful deeds] to members of our own people.

Similar distinctions are made in numerous other passages. In explaining the ban against delaying a worker's wage (§238) the author is careful to point out that the sin is less serious if the worker is Gentile.

The prohibition against cursing (§239) is entitled 'Not to curse any Jew, whether man or woman. Similarly, the prohibitions against giving misleading advice, hating other people, shaming them or taking revenge on them (§§240, 245, 246, 247) apply only to fellow-Jews.

The ban against following Gentile customs (§262) means that Jews must not only 'remove themselves' from Gentiles, but also 'speak ill of all their behaviour, even of their dress.'

It must be emphasized that the explanations quoted above do represent correctly the teaching of the Halakhah. The rabbis and, even worse, the apologetic 'scholars of Judaism' know this very well and for this reason they do not try to argue against such views inside the Jewish community; and of course they never mention them outside it.

Instead, they vilify any Jew who raises these matters within earshot of Gentiles, and they issue deceitful denials in which the art of equivocation

reaches its summit. For example, they state, using general terms, the importance which Judaism attaches to mercy; but what they forget to point out is that according to the Halakhah 'mercy' means mercy towards Jews. Anyone who lives in Israel knows how deep and widespread these attitudes of hatred and cruelty to towards all Gentiles are among the majority of Israeli Jews. Normally these attitudes are disguised from the outside world, but since the establishment of the State of Israel, the 1967 war and the rise of Begin, a significant minority of Jews, both in Israel and abroad, have gradually become more open about such matters.

In recent years the inhuman precepts according to which servitude is the 'natural' lot of Gentiles have been publicly quoted in Israel, even on TV, by Jewish farmers exploiting Arab labour, particularly child labour. Gush Emunim leaders have quoted religious precepts which enjoin Jews to oppress Gentiles, as a justification of the attempted assassination of Palestinian mayors and as divine authority for their own plan to expel all the Arabs from Palestine.

While many Zionists reject these positions politically, their standard counter-arguments are based on considerations of expediency and Jewish self-interest, rather than on universally valid principles of humanism and ethics. For example, they argue that the exploitation and oppression of Palestinians by Israelis tends to corrupt Israeli society, or that the expulsion of the Palestinians is impracticable under present political conditions, or that Israeli acts of terror against the Palestinians tend to isolate Israel internationally. In principle, however, virtually all Zionists - and in particular 'left' Zionists - share the deep anti-Gentile attitudes which Orthodox Judaism keenly promotes.

Attitudes to Christianity and Islam

In the Foregoing, several examples of the rabbinical attitudes to these two religions were given in passing. But it will be useful to summarize these attitudes here.

Judaism Is Imbued with a Very Deep Hatred towards Christianity, combined with ignorance about it. This attitude was clearly aggravated

by the Christian persecutions of Jews, but is largely independent of them. In fact, it dates from the time when Christianity was still weak and persecuted (not least by Jews), and it was shared by Jews who had never been persecuted by Christians or who were even helped by them. Thus, Maimonides was subjected to Muslim persecutions by the regime of the Almohads and escaped from them first to the crusaders' Kingdom of Jerusalem, but this did not change his views in the least. This deeply negative attitude is based on two main elements.

First, on hatred and malicious slanders against Jesus. The traditional view of Judaism on Jesus must of course be sharply distinguished from the nonsensical controversy between anti-Semites and Jewish apologists concerning the 'responsibility' for his execution. Most modern scholars of that period admit that due to the lack of original and contemporary accounts, the late composition of the Gospels and the contradictions between them, accurate historical knowledge of the circumstances of Jesus' execution is not available.

In any case, the notion of collective and inherited guilt is both wicked and absurd. However, what is at issue here is not the actual facts about Jesus, but the inaccurate and even slanderous reports in the Talmud and post-Talmudic literature - which is what Jews believed until the 19th century and many, especially in Israel, still believe. For these reports certainly played an important role in forming the Jewish attitude to Christianity.

According to the Talmud, Jesus Was Executed by a Proper Rabbinical Court for Idolatry, inciting other Jews to idolatry, and contempt of rabbinical authority. All Classical Jewish Sources Which Mention His Execution Are Quite Happy to Take Responsibility for It; in the Talmudic Account the Romans Are Not Even Mentioned.

The more popular accounts - which were nevertheless taken quite seriously - such as the notorious Toldot Yesbu are even worse, for in addition to the above crimes they accuse him of witchcraft. The very name 'Jesus' was for Jews a symbol of all that is abominable, and this popular tradition still persists. The Gospels are equally detested, and they are not allowed

to be quoted (let alone taught) even in modern Israeli Jewish schools. Secondly, for theological reasons, mostly rooted in ignorance, Christianity as a religion is classed by rabbinical teaching as idolatry. This is based on a crude interpretation of the Christian doctrines on the Trinity and Incarnation. All the Christian emblems and pictorial representations are regarded as 'idols' - even by those Jews who literally worship scrolls, stones or personal belongings of 'Holy Men.'

The attitude of Judaism towards Islam is, in contrast, relatively mild. Although the stock epithet given to Muhammad is 'madman' ('meshugga'), this was not nearly as offensive as it may sound now, and in any case it pales before the abusive terms applied to Jesus. Similarly, the Qur'an - unlike the New Testament - is not condemned to burning. It is not honoured in the same way as Islamic law honours the Jewish sacred scrolls, but is treated as an ordinary book.

Most rabbinical authorities agree that Islam is not idolatry (although some leaders of Gush Emunim now choose to ignore this). Therefore the Halakhah decrees that Muslims should not be treated by Jews any worse than 'ordinary' Gentiles. But also no better. Again, Maimonides can serve as an illustration. He explicitly states that Islam is not idolatry, and in his philosophical works he quotes, with great respect, many Islamic philosophical authorities. He was, as I have mentioned before, personal physician to Saladin and his family, and by Saladin's order he was appointed Chief over all Egypt's Jews. Yet, the rules he lays down against saving a Gentile's life (except in order to avert danger to Jews) apply equally to Muslims.

