

1. Letter from David Ben Gurion to Ehud Avriel, April 1948, as cited in Michael Keren's **בן גוריון והאינטלקטואליים**  
Ben Gurion issued instructions to seek out East European Jewish scientists who could "either increase the capacity to kill large numbers of people or the opposite, to cure large numbers of people; both things are important."

### The Early Years

2. David Ben-Gurion, *With What Will We Face the Future* (1948), Avner Cohen tr.

We are inferior to other peoples in our numbers, dispersion, and the characteristics of our political life, but no other people is superior to us in its intellectual prowess. Until now we have disseminated our intellectual capital in foreign lands, and helped many nations in the great scientific achievements of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. ... There is no reason why the genius of science would not blossom and flourish in this native land.

3. David Ben-Gurion, 1956, cited by Avner Cohen in *Israel and the Bomb*

What Einstein, Oppenheimer and Teller, the three of them are Jews, made for the United States, could also be done by scientists in Israel for their own people.

4. David Ben-Gurion, Farewell address to the Armaments Development Authority, June 27, 1963

I do not know of any other nation whose neighbors declare that they wish to terminate it, and not only declare, but prepare for it by all means available to them. We must have no illusions that what is declared every day in Cairo, Damascus, Iraq are just words. This is the thought that guides the Arab leaders. ... Our numbers are small, and there is no chance that we could compare ourselves with America's 180 million, or with any Arab neighboring state. There is one thing, however, in which we are not inferior to any other people in the world—this is the Jewish brain. And science, if a lay person like myself could say, starts from the brain. And the Jewish brain does not disappoint; Jewish science does not disappoint. ... I am confident, based not only on what I heard today, that our science can provide us with the weapons that are needed to deter our enemies from waging war against us. I am confident that science is able to provide us with the weapon that will secure the peace, and deter our enemies.

### Committing to a Military Stance

5. Talmud, Sanhedrin 72a

If someone comes to kill you, rise early to kill him

6. Rabbi Michael Broyde, "Fighting the War and the Peace: Battlefield Ethics, Peace Talks, and Pacifism in the Jewish Tradition," *War and its Discontents: Pacifism and Quietism in the Abrahamic Traditions*, ed. by J. Patout Burns

Battlefield ethics based on the pursuer model are simply a generic application of the general field of Jewish ethics relating to stopping one who is an evildoer from killing an innocent person... On the other hand, both the situation of obligatory war and authorized war are not merely global extrapolation of the principles of "self-defense" or "pursuer." There are ethical liberalities (and strictures) associated with the battlefield situation which have unique ethical and legal rules unrelated to other fields of Jewish law or ethics...

7. Rabbi Moses Maimonides (12<sup>th</sup> century Egypt), Laws of Kings and their Wars 5:1

What is a "commanded war"? These are the wars against the seven [Canaanite] nations, the war with Amalek, and the aid of Israel from an enemy who attacks them.

8. Exodus 23:32-33

You shall not make a covenant with them or their gods. They shall not live in your land, lest they incite you to sin against Me, for you will serve their gods, for they will be a stumbling block for you.

9. Exodus 20:22

When you make an altar of stones for Me, do not build it of hewn stone; you have raised your sword upon it, and desecrated it.

10. Chronicles I 22:8

And the word of G-d came to me: You have spilled much blood, and you have made great wars. You shall not build a house in My Name, for you have spilled much blood upon the ground before Me.

11. Deuteronomy 23:10-15

When you go to war against your enemy, guard yourself against every bad thing. When a man among you is impure... he shall leave the camp, he shall not enter the midst of the camp. Before evening he shall bathe in water, and at sunset he shall enter the midst of the camp. And you shall have a place outside the camp; go there, outside.

And you shall have a peg among your weapons; when you sit outside, you will dig with it, sit, and cover your waste. For Hashem your G-d travels in the midst of your camp, to save you and to put your enemy before you, and your camp shall be holy. Nothing which should be covered will be seen, lest He leave you.

12. Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch (19<sup>th</sup> century Germany), Commentary to Deuteronomy 23:10

Also, when you leave the normal boundaries of family and civil life, and you are in a military camp arranged against your enemies, then even though you are in a military camp, where the ethical reins are easily loosened and the actual goal of war is an unrestrained coarseness – then, too, "guard yourself against every bad thing." Do not cease examining yourself, with self-control, and be on guard against "every bad thing."

13. Deuteronomy 20:19

When you besiege a city for many days, fighting it to capture it, do not destroy its tree, to raise a hatchet upon it...

14. Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch (19<sup>th</sup> century Germany), Commentary to Deuteronomy 20:19

A midrash says: "The Torah says 'To capture it' – not to destroy it." Your goal should be only to subdue the city, not to enslave its residents as prisoners of war.

15. Rabbi Moses Maimonides (12<sup>th</sup> century Egypt), Laws of Kings and their Wars 6:7

When besieging a city to capture it, we do not surround it on its four sides, but only from three sides. And we leave a place to flee, and all who wishes may flee for their lives, as Numbers 31:7 says...

16. Rabbi Moses Nachmanides (13<sup>th</sup> century Spain) on Maimonides' Book of Mitzvot, Added Commandment #8

We are instructed that when we lay siege to a city, we must leave one of the directions without siege, so that if they wish to flee then they will have a place for flight. Thus we will learn to act with mercy even with our enemies in a time of war. It will also help in that we will give them an avenue to flee and they will not strengthen themselves against us.

17. Rabbi Maurice Lamm, *Red or Dead?*, Tradition 4:2 (1962) pg. 168

As Jewish tradition urged peace, but was not pacifist, so it sanctioned military action but was never militarist.

How many enemies should we kill to defend the Jewish state?

18. Book of Maccabees I 3:18-22, <http://www.sacred-texts.com/bib/apo/ma1003.htm>

Unto whom Judah answered: It is no hard matter for many to be shut up in the hands of a few; and with the G-d of heaven it is all one, to deliver with a great multitude, or a small company. For the victory of battle standeth not in the multitude of an host; but strength cometh from heaven. They come against us in much pride and iniquity to destroy us, and our wives and children, and to spoil us: But we fight for our lives and our laws. Wherefore the Lord Himself will overthrow them before our face: and as for you, be ye not afraid of them.

19. Talmud, Shevuot 35b

Samuel said: A government which would kill [up to] one-sixth of the world would not be punished.

*Comment of Tosafot (13<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> c. Western Europe):* This is referring to a discretionary war.

Should we kill our attackers if we will die as well?

20. Chief Rabbi Lord Immanuel Jakobovits, *Rejoinders*, Tradition 4:2 (1962) pg. 202 (emphasis in the original)

[I]n the words of the rabbis, "if a man comes to slay you, forestall by slaying him!" (Rashi; *Sanhedrin* 72a). Now this law confers the right of self-defense only if the victim will thereby *forestall* the anticipated attack and save his own life at the expense of the aggressor's. But the defender would certainly not be entitled to frustrate the attack if this could be done only at the cost of both lives; for instance, by blowing up the house in which he and the robber encounter each other. Presumably the victim would then have to submit to the robbery and even to death by violence at the hands of the . attacker rather than take "preventive" action which would be sure to cause two deaths. In view of this vital limitation of the law of self-defense, it would appear that a defensive war likely to endanger the survival of the attacking and the defending nations alike, if not indeed of the entire human race, can never be justified. *On the assumption, then, that the choice posed by a threatened nuclear attack would be either complete mutual destruction or surrender, only the second alternative may be morally vindicated.*

21. Michael Wyschogrod, *Rejoinders*, Tradition 4:2 (1962) pg. 207

Both optional and obligatory wars are predicated on the chance of winning and thereby of achieving the ends sought. Whether the goal is to destroy the Amalekites or to defend the Jewish people against an aggressor, all of this makes sense only if the Jewish people, or at least a segment of it, can be conceived of as surviving the war and enjoying its fruits.

22. Talmud, Berachot 61b

Rabbi Akiva said: I lived my entire life in pain regarding this sentence – "'With all of your life,' even should He take your life." I said, "When will this come to my hands, and I will uphold it!"

23. Talmud, Avodah Zarah 18a

When Rabbi Yosi ben Kisma fell ill, Rabbi Chanina ben Tradyon went to visit him. Rabbi Yosi ben Kisma said: "My brother, Chanina! Don't you know that this nation has been coronated by G-d, for they have destroyed His house and burned His sanctuary and killed His pious ones and destroyed His best, and still they endure – and yet you sit and involve yourself in Torah and gather people in public, and a Torah scroll is in your lap!" Rabbi Chanina ben Tradyon replied: "They will have mercy from Heaven." He said, "I speak logically, and you say, 'They will have mercy from Heaven'? I would be shocked if they would not burn you and that Torah scroll in flames."

24. Rabbi Moses Maimonides (12<sup>th</sup> century Egypt), *Laws of the Foundations of Torah* 5:1-2

All Israel are instructed in sanctifying this great Name, as [the Torah] says, "And I will be sanctified in the midst of the Children of Israel"... If an idolater arises and compels Israel to violate any of the Torah's mitzvot, on penalty of death for refusal, he should trespass and not be killed... This is true for all but idolatry, sexual immorality and bloodshed, but for these three transgressions, if he says to him, "Violate one of these or be killed," he must be killed rather than transgress...

25. Talmud, Gittin 56a

Abba Sikra, lead Biryon of Jerusalem, was the nephew of Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai. Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai sent to him, "Come to me in secret." He came, and Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai said to him, "How long will you do this, killing the world with famine?"

### What about the inevitable civilian deaths?

26. Rabbi Yehudah Loeb (Maharal), *Gur Aryeh* to Genesis 34:13

Deuteronomy 20:10 says, "you shall call to it for peace", but that is where they have not acted upon Israel. Where they have acted toward Israel, such as here [Shechem] where they had broken forth, doing this repellent thing, then even though only one of them had done it, since they had attacked first, Israel was permitted to respond. So, too, for all wars... since there were those among the nation who had harmed them, they were permitted to go to war against them...

27. Rabbi Avraham Shapira, *War and Ethics*, *Techumin* 4 (1983), pg. 182

When there is no substantive risk to our soldiers, there is no permission to strike lives or property. However, when there is a discernible risk, one must remember that it is not only a matter of weighing one unit opposite a civilian population on the scale. The loss of one unit, or part of it, can affect the entire battle...

28. Rabbi Aharon Lichtenstein, *Ethics and War*, *Techumin* 4 (1983), pg. 185

The price [of war] is also paid by the enemy, who is also graced with the Divine image, and one should grieve whenever Gd's creations drown in the sea. On this point, the issue of quantity is meaningful, and one certainly must weigh the justifications for harming many in order to save an individual.

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