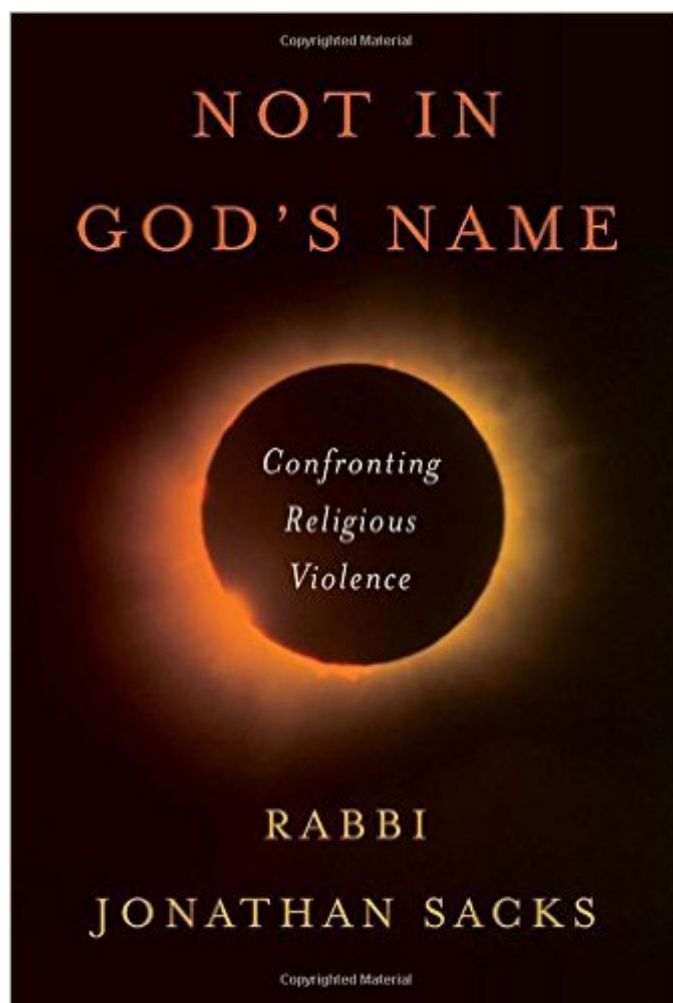


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Not In God's Name: Confronting Religious Violence



Synopsis

2015 National Jewish Book Award Winner In this powerful and timely book, one of the most admired and authoritative religious leaders of our time tackles the phenomenon of religious extremism and violence committed in the name of God. If religion is perceived as being part of the problem, Rabbi Sacks argues, then it must also form part of the solution. When religion becomes a zero-sum conceit—that is, my religion is the only right path to God, therefore your religion is by definition wrong—and individuals are motivated by what Rabbi Sacks calls “altruistic evil,” violence between peoples of different beliefs appears to be the only natural outcome. But through an exploration of the roots of violence and its relationship to religion, and employing groundbreaking biblical analysis and interpretation, Rabbi Sacks shows that religiously inspired violence has as its source misreadings of biblical texts at the heart of all three Abrahamic faiths. By looking anew at the book of Genesis, with its foundational stories of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, Rabbi Sacks offers a radical rereading of many of the Bible’s seminal stories of sibling rivalry: Cain and Abel, Isaac and Ishmael, Jacob and Esau, Joseph and his brothers, Rachel and Leah. “Abraham himself,” writes Rabbi Sacks, “sought to be a blessing to others regardless of their faith. That idea, ignored for many of the intervening centuries, remains the simplest definition of Abrahamic faith. It is not our task to conquer or convert the world or enforce uniformity of belief. It is our task to be a blessing to the world. The use of religion for political ends is not righteousness but idolatry . . . To invoke God to justify violence against the innocent is not an act of sanctity but of sacrilege.” Here is an eloquent call for people of goodwill from all faiths and none to stand together, confront the religious extremism that threatens to destroy us, and declare: Not in God’s Name.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This is a brilliant book and absolutely worth reading. Rabbi Sacks is a model of what a religious leader should be- a seeker of truth rather than a purveyor of dogma. The â œplusesâ • of this book are :1. Very insightful, original, and useful biblical commentary. This alone is worth the price of admission.2. Ditto for his remarks on politics. That being said, the book fails to accomplish the purpose for which it was written.1. The book offers commentary solely on the Hebrew Bible. However, Rabbi Sacks can offer no examples of religiously motivated large scale Jewish violence since the fall of the 2nd Temple or the Bar Kochba revolt. The religiously motivated violence by Christianity and Islam through the centuries dwarfs anything ever attributed to the Jews. Rabbi Sacks makes an oblique reference to Christian figures dealing with the former and makes no reference to anyone dealing with the latter. The sources of this religious violence are most assuredly not the Hebrew Bible (with one exception- see below), but the New Testament and the Koran. However, he â œwill not go thereâ • and address these texts. Both of these texts imply that Jews will be enemies forever. The Hebrew Bible (e.g. the Book of Joshua) refers only to nations long gone. It is understandable that a man of Rabbi Sackâ™s stature dare not address the problems with these texts regarding religious violence, but it is near impossible to do anything effective about religious violence without addressing them.2. He attempts to discuss Islam as if Ishmael was the original Muslim. It is highly unlikely that the Hebrew Bible can serve as the historical justification for such a wild speculation.

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