

Judaism & Gun Control

Importance of Human Life

- "Thou shalt not murder" (Exodus 20:13).
- Bavli Sanhedrin 37a :For this reason, one individual was created first, to teach that anyone who causes one life to be lost from Israel it is as if they have destroyed the entire world. And anyone who saves one life from Israel- it is as if they have preserved an entire world.

Allowance - Defense

- In Exodus 22:1 we read: If, while breaking in, the thief is discovered, and he is struck and dies, [it is as if] he has no blood.
- Rashi: He has no blood. [This signifies that] this is not [considered] murder. It is as though he [the thief] is [considered] dead from the start. Here the Torah teaches you: If someone comes to kill you, kill him first. [From Talmud Sanhedrin 72a]"
- "You shall not stand by [the shedding of] your fellow's blood. [I.e., do not stand by,] watching your fellow's death, when you are able to save him; for example, if he is drowning in the river or if a wild beast or robbers come upon him. — [Torath Kohanim 19:41; Talmud, Sanhedrin 73a]"

Military

- 2 Samuel 24:9 - Yoav reported the number of the fighting men to the king: In Israel there were eight hundred thousand able-bodied men who could handle a sword, and in Judah five hundred thousand.
- King David rose to his feet and said: "Listen to me, my fellow Israelites, my people. I had it in my heart to build a house as a place of rest for the ark of the covenant of the LORD, for the footstool of our God, and I made plans to build it. But God said to me, 'You are not to build a house for my Name, because you are a warrior and have shed blood.'

Rabbis - Weapons Block "Eden"

- Bereshit Rabbah (21:13) further idealizes the land free of weapons, "The Rabbis, commenting on the words: 'He placed at the East of the Garden of Eden the Cherubim and the flaming sword' say: 'At the East of the Garden of Eden at the very spot where stood the Cherubim with the flaming sword - there was Gehenna created.'

Weapons increase Violence

- Genesis 4: Lamech married two women, one named Adah and the other Zillah. Adah gave birth to Jabal; he was the father of those who live in tents and raise livestock. His brother's name was Jubal; he was the father of all who play stringed instruments and pipes. Zillah also had a son, Tubal-Cain, who forged all kinds of tools out of bronze and iron. Tubal-Cain's sister was Naamah. Lamech said to his wives, "Adah and Zillah, listen to me; wives of Lamech, hear my words. For have I killed a man for my bruise, a youth for my injury; If Cain is avenged seven times, then Lamech seventy-seven times."

No Weapons on Shabbat

- Shabbat 63a Mishnah: (on Shabbat)A man may not go out with a sword, nor with a bow, nor with a shield, nor with a round shield, nor with a spear. If he has gone out [with any of these] he is liable for a Chattat. Rabbi Eliezer says: They are ornaments for him. But the Sages say: They are nothing but an indignity, for it is said, "They shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears unto pruning-books; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more" (Isaiah 2:4).
- The Maharam of Rottenberg has written that one may not enter a synagogue with a long knife; for prayer prolongs one's life and a knife shortens it.

Prohibition - Creating a Dangerous Situation

- Bava Kamma 46a Rabbi Nathan says: From where [do we derive] that a person should not raise a "bad" dog inside his house nor should a person raise a ruined ladder inside her home? It is stated: "and you shall not bring blood upon your house" (Deuteronomy 22:8).
- Rabbi Shlomo Luria points out elsewhere in the tractate (fol 83) that in a "dangerous area" one may keep a bad tempered dog that one chains by day and allows to patrol one's property by night.
- "When you build a new house, you shall make a guard rail for your roof, so that you shall not cause blood [to be spilled] in your house, that the one who falls should fall from it [the roof]" (Deuteronomy 22:8)

Prohibition - Stumbling Block

- Leviticus 19:14 You shall not curse the deaf, and you shall not place a stumbling block (something dangerous) before the blind.
- Shulchan Aruch (Choshen Mishpat 427:8) And for every stumbling block that is a danger to someone's life, there is a positive commandment to remove it and to destroy it from among us and to take good caution; as it says: "You shall guard your lives," (Deuteronomy 4:9). And if you don't remove the stumbling block that brings danger you have neglected a positive mitzvah

Not Selling Weapons

- Avodah Zarah 15b : We don't sell to them [idolaters] a weapon or the housings [or accessories] of a weapon, nor do we sharpen a blade for them. Not stocks, nor neck-chains, nor fetters, nor chains of bronze--neither to an idolater nor to a Cuthean.
- R. Dimi b. Abba said: Just as it (a weapon) is forbidden to sell to an idolater, so it is forbidden to sell to a robber who is an Israelite. What are the circumstances? If he is suspected of murder, then it is quite plain; he is the same as an idolater! If [on the other hand] he has never committed murder, why not [sell them to him]? — It refers indeed to one who has not committed murder; but we may be dealing here with a cowardly thief who is apt at times [when caught] to save himself [by committing murder].
- Our Rabbis taught: It is forbidden to sell them shields; some say, however, that shields may be sold to them. What is the reason [for this prohibition]? Shall we say, Because they protect them? In that case even wheat or barley should likewise not [be sold to them]— Said Rav: If it is possible, these, too, should not. There are some who say that the reason for not permitting [the sale of] shields is this: When they have no weapons left, they might use these for killing [in battles]. But there are others who say that shields may be sold to them, for when they have no more weapons they run away. Said R. Nahman in the name of Rabbah b. Abbuha: The halachah is with 'the Others'.
- Maimonides (Mishneh Torah, Laws of a Murderer 12::12) writes: "It is forbidden to sell heathens weapons of war. Nor is it permitted to sharpen their spears, or to sell them knives, manacles, iron chains, bears, lions, or any object which can endanger the public; but it is permitted to sell them shields which are only for defense
- Nimukei Yosef to Avoda Zara 16a: Nowadays (in Talmudic times) we sell weapons [to idolaters] that are fully assembled because they protect us, they fight on our behalf to protect the city and its inhabitants and there is definite [protection from danger], whereas there is only a small possibility that they might use it to harm a member of the Jewish community and this is what we rely on.