

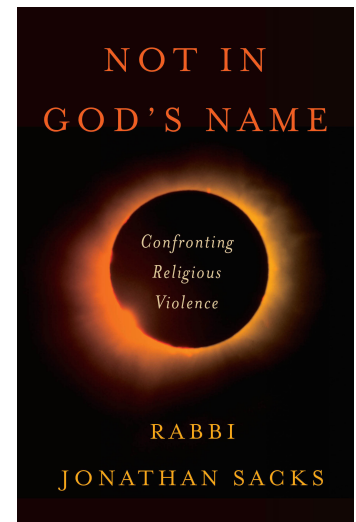
# Not in God's Name: Confronting Religious Violence

**Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks**

(For biographical details please visit [www.rabbisacks.org](http://www.rabbisacks.org))

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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—i.e., 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 by undertaking 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 of the Abrahamic faiths. By looking anew at the Book of Genesis with its foundational stories of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, Rabbi Sacks offers a radical re-reading 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. In doing so, he offers a powerful rebuke to those who kill in the name of the God of life.

“Abraham himself,” writes Rabbi Sacks, “sought to be true to his faith and 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. It is a kind of blasphemy. It is to take God's name in vain.”

Here is an eloquent call for people of good will to stand together, confront the religious extremism that threatens to destroy us all, and declare: Not in God's Name.

# Praise for Not in God's Name

## ***A Sunday Times (London) Bestseller***

"Inspired by Isaiah's vision of nations beating their swords into plowshares, Sacks embraces religion as the pathway to peace. . . . He unfolds a genuinely inclusive and pacific Abrahamic faith by burrowing into the Hebrew Bible . . . discerning deep themes conducing both to a universal justice between all peoples and a profound sense of God's particularizing love for diverse covenant communities. A much-needed antidote to lethal animosities."

***Booklist, starred review (United States)***

"A remarkable exploration of the reasons behind religious violence and solutions for stopping it... A fascinating and ingenious reinterpretation of the book of Genesis... An artful and meaningful work on interfaith dialogue. His treatment of Scripture alone is worth a close read. A humane, literate, and sincere book, one with something truly new to say."

***Kirkus, starred review (United States)***

"Sacks turns his prodigious intellect to deconstructing the mechanisms of religious violence. . . . He displays his wide learning and empathy in service of an ambitious, ingenious worldview. We'd all be wise to listen."

***Publishers Weekly (United States)***

"...A passionate exploration of the religious sources of violence. Throughout this book, Sacks' analysis reflects an erudite mind fully engaged with philosophy, politics and social studies of the most rigorous kind."

***Huffington Post (United States)***

"An intelligent analysis of old and new connections between religion and violence."

***The Economist (London / United States)***

"Rabbi Sacks is one of today's most interesting thinkers, writers, and speakers. His interventions into the public debate rarely fail to encourage thought, knowledge, and, indeed, wisdom. I suspect that this latest book will contribute a significant amount to the ferocious debates around religion and violence in our world today."

***The Spectator (London)***

"Sacks can't be accused of shirking the big issues. *Not in God's Name* is, as the briefest survey of the headlines will confirm, a timely inquiry. Sacks rejects the suggestion that religion itself is what causes the problem, though he does believe that if it is to be solved, theology must play a part."

***The Guardian (London)***

"A global campaigner for greater religious understanding between all the faiths . . . Sacks is unmistakably a man on a mission, and he is sure that there is plenty we can do, if we find the will . . . His book is one front in that battle."

***The Telegraph (London)***

"The book makes interesting and valuable points . . . Sacks reminds us that it is wrong to casually conflate 'orthodox' believers with armchair fundamentalists. The two approaches to faith are not only different but opposed to one another, he says. It is a case well put, and worth hearing."

***The Independent (London)***

"*Not in God's Name* makes an explicit link between [religious] extremism and the growing gulf between a secular West and a religious world . . . A persuasive analysis."

***BBC News (London)***