

AMIR MASHIACH
THE FAILURE OF THE MAJOR REVOLTS AND ITS
IMPACT ON JEWISH IDENTITY

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Abstract: The main corpus of rabbinical literature evolved following the failure of the Jewish revolts against the Roman Empire in The land of Israel and its vicinity in the first and second centuries AD: The Great Revolt (66-73), The Kitos war (115-117) and The Bar Kochba Revolt (132-135). Following the bloody events, which were a direct result of the Jewish-offensive ethos, the Sages clearly reached a strategic decision to change the Jewish identity and ethos from offensive to defensive. In order to achieve their goal, to transform the Jewish ethos from offensive to defensive, the Sages operated on two spheres: aggadic interpretations, often based on interpretation of verses, personal stories, and legends, and the halakhic discourse. In the article, I shall demonstrate each of these categories, which led to the shape of new Jewish identity.

Key words: The Great Revolt, The Revolt of the Diasporas (the Kitos War), The Bar Kochba Revolt, Jewish identity, offensive ethos, defensive ethos, Chazal, Hanukkah.

1. Introduction and methodology

The main corpus of rabbinical literature evolved following the failure of the Jewish revolts against the Roman Empire in the land of Israel and its vicinity in the first and second centuries AD: The first was the Great Revolt (66-73) (Kasher 1983), which reached its climax with the destruction of the Second Temple in the year 70 AD. Another was the Revolt of the Diasporas (115-117) (Rokach 1978), which began outside the borders of Judea. This revolt was cruelly repressed, and the flourishing Jewish community of Alexandria was destroyed. Yet another was the Bar Kochba Revolt (132-135) (Mor 1991; Eshel and Zissu 2001). At first it met with success and Judea even attained a type of independence, but ultimately it was repressed. Many were killed and the Jewish settlement in the land of Israel was almost completely decimated.

Notably, the revolts were not managed or led by the rabbinical leadership. The rabbis were present in the background, but the revolts were commanded by the political-military leadership. Neither Josephus Flavius nor the rabbinical sources speak of the rabbis as occupying leadership positions. On the contrary, when referring to rabbinical involvement the attitude to them is no different than to the rest of the nation and they certainly do not receive any preferable treatment or respect. For instance in the Great Revolt, when Rabban Johanan ben Zakai died and was taken out of Jerusalem for burial, the guard insisted on confirming that he was dead by stabbing the body (!), before allowing its removal from the walled city (Bavli, Gittin 56a-b). Another example is the behavior of Bar Kochba, of whom it is related that he kicked R. Elazar Hamodai to death (Yerushalmi, Taanit 4:68). Even if he suspected that the rabbi was a traitor, traitors are punished by trial and public execution and not by kicking. Moreover, although R. Akiba was perceived as a supporter of the revolt and of Bar Kochba himself, so much so that he defined the latter as the “King Messiah” (Yerushalmi, Taanit 84:68), nowhere do we find any reference of Bar Kochba to R. Akiba. No attitude of respect and sympathy for rabbis is evident in the rabbinical literature, and hence it may be assumed that this did not exist.

After the revolts were repressed, the Sages assumed control of Jewish leadership. Up until then, the leadership was political and military, but now the religious leaders came to occupy a major role. This hegemony was not limited by geographical borders, rather pertained to all Jews the world over.

Following the bloody events, which were a direct result of the Jewish-offensive ethos (Mashiach 2012), the Sages clearly reached a strategic decision to change the Jewish ethos from offensive to defensive. In the current article, the term “ethos” means the nature of Jewish conduct

when dealing with external threats to the nation. There are two models: the offensive ethos – behavior characterized by an offensive orientation, activeness, initiative, and daring, as in biblical times until the repression of the Bar Kochba Revolt; and the defensive ethos – behavior characterized by defensiveness, subservience, passivity, and lack of motivation.

This article endeavors to identify the rabbinical ethos. The rabbinical literature will be reviewed while taking into account the failed revolts, as text cannot be separated from context. It is no surprise that the Sages replaced the former offensive ethos with a defensive one, as the first was the cause of repeated damage to the People of Israel and their land.

As stated, one aspect of defensiveness is passivity, which according to Daniel Boyarin became a necessity (Boyarin 1997). As he sees it, passivity is a substantial and essential Jewish quality, since the Jewish faith worships a strong male God figure that requires absolute obedience. He refers to the *Passover Haggadah*, in the part on the 'Four Sons': the wise, the wicked, the simple, and one who does not know how to ask. The wise son is usually perceived as the ideal and the wicked son as the complete opposite, but Boyarin tries to show that it is the simple son who is the scholar and the epitome of perfection, while the wicked son is the belligerent one (Boyarin 1997, 33-80). Hence, it is no surprise that Judaism considers the belligerent as the wicked one. The wicked son symbolizes the non-Jew, the male ideal as perceived by the nations, who prefer muscled physical attributes and the offensive approach, contrary to Judaism. He further argues that the image of the traditional Jewish male is perceived as feminine and therefore he is portrayed as weak, passive, and defensive (Berkowitz 2009). Boyarin's words led Martha Nussbaum to the conclusion that Judaism generated a conceptual transformation between Jewish and Roman masculinity: "How Jewish males refashioned Roman norms of manliness, making the astonishing claim that the true man sits still all day with a book, and has the bodily shape of someone who does just that" (Nussbaum 2006).

Reuven Kimelman went one step further and claimed that the Talmud preaches a pacifist ideological non-violence reminiscent of Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King (Kimelman 1968). As he sees it, this is manifested in interpersonal relations and in relations between Jews and non-Jews (Hezser 2013).

In order to achieve their goal, to transform the Jewish ethos from offensive to defensive, the Sages operated on two spheres: aggadic interpretations, often based on interpretation of verses, personal stories, and legends, and the halakhic discourse. I shall demonstrate each of these categories.

2. Aggadah

When the Sages sought to replace the offensive ethos with a defensive one, they had to neutralize the offensive orientation by giving different meaning to the entire topic of war and war heroes in Jewish tradition, from the Bible on. The Sages did not reject the content of the biblical stories in their simple form. They saw the ancient times as a golden age that would be reinstated one day, but until that day they transformed the Jewish ethos.

The golden age of King David's united kingdom, an age of wars and conquests, received added meaning when King David was described as a man who studies Torah in the *beit midrash* "soft as a worm" (Bavli, Moed Katan 16b; Warhaftig 2002), and one of his heroes, Bnayahu ben Yehoyada, later to be King Solomon's captain of the guard, is described as "head of the Sanhedrin" (Bavli, Brachot 3b; Bavli, Sanhedrin 16b).

Part of the Sages' tactic in creating a new Jewish ethos included survival advice, "to keep a low profile". One of the Sages' ways of conveying their messages to the readers is by stories that, whether they occurred or not, their purpose was to forge a defensive ethos. For example: „Rabban Gamliel said: Once I was traveling on a boat, and I saw a boat that shattered. And I was grieved over the Torah scholar who was on board. And who was it? Rabbi Akiva. But when I disembarked onto dry land, he came, and sat, and deliberated before me about halakha. I said to him, who brought you up? He said to me: A plank from the boat came to me, and I bent my head before each and every wave that came toward me. From here the Sages stated: If wicked people come upon a person, he should bend his head before them" (Bavli, Yevamot 121a).

R. Akiba's seemingly personal story is translated in rabbinical literature into advice that has existential significance in its simple meaning. R. Akiba's actions and behavior when at the mercy of the raging waves, bending his head before each wave, receive different meaning that is an instruction for all times: "If wicked people come upon a person, he should bend his head before them". In other words: refrain from doing anything that may irritate the wicked.

A similar saying is "A person should always be soft like a reed, and he should not be stiff like a cedar" (Bavli, Taanit 20a). The message is the same: the Jew must bend his head, be soft as a reed, since "Just as this reed... even if all the winds in the world come and blow against it... it sways with them [until] the winds subside, and the reed in its place... but... the cedar... even [if] all the winds in the world blow they will not move it from its place, once the southern wind blows [against] it, it uproots [the cedar] and turns it on its face" (Bavli, Taanit 20a). This is a defensive message. The way of the reed is preferable, as true heroism is survival. The reed is indeed weak and soft, but it is a survivor, and that is the most significant.

In order to enhance the new orientation, the Sages converted the customary terms of heroism, liberty, and war, into new terms that object to offensive heroism. At the same time, the Sages made an effort to encourage patience and the ability to absorb insults. From now on there would be no more responses consisting of angry outbursts, these belonged to the previous ethos; now a different ethos was instated, one that called for a different type of heroism, the heroism of keeping silent: “Who is mighty? He who subdues his [evil] inclination” (Mishna, Avot 4:1). This is the new hero, one who is capable of subduing his inclination, not one who is capable of drawing his sword.

This is also true of liberty as a concept. Where up until now the meaning of the term was political or legal liberty, the main aspiration of all revolts in The land of Israel and in general and hence the source of the offensive ethos, from now on it received religious-conscious meaning: “For there is no free man but one that occupies himself with the study of the Torah” (Mishna, Avot 6:2). This is a rabbinical message to the reader – it is not necessary to rebel in order to be a free man. From now on, a Jew can study Torah wherever he is, and this makes him a free man. Adding this content to the concept of liberty neutralized a significant part of the Jewish offensive spirit.

In direct continuation of this trend, biblical war-related phrases also had to be converted by the Sages, through interpretation or exegesis, to fit the new ethos. An example of this is Jacob’s statement that he had conquered parts of the Amorites’ land “with my sword and bow” (Genesis 48:22). The simple interpretation is that Jacob engaged in war with the indigent peoples, but the Sages explained otherwise: “With my sword and bow – ‘My sword’ is prayer, ‘my bow’ is petition” (Bavli, Bava Batra 123a). Here any militarist activity by Jacob is rejected. From now on, the Jew’s weapons are prayer and petitioning God for help, and not weapons.

In fact, it seems that the Sages did not rest until they had converted the very concept of war, which is the distinct symbol of the offensive ethos, to “the war of Torah” (Hamitovsky, 2007). Obviously, the Sages also considered war in its simple meaning, but the conversion to “the war of Torah” is the change of ethos). The concept of war is shifted to the *beit midrash*, to the study of Torah and refining one’s virtues. The heroism and the war are academic-religious-cognitive.

3. Halakha, Hanukkah

The festival of Hanukkah is celebrated every year for eight days. This festival marks the success of the Hasmonean revolt against the Greek-Syrian monarchy in the second century BC. The festival of Hanukkah was a distinct symbol of the victory of the Jewish-offensive ethos over those attempting to repress the people of Israel. This is the lengthiest of all

Jewish festivals. No other festival in the Hebrew calendar is celebrated for so many days. It is interesting to examine the Sages' attitude to this festival, which is the complete opposite of the ethos they wished to impart.

When exploring the festival of Hanukkah in rabbinical literature, we encounter a type of discomfiture, as it receives only minimal reference. All Jewish festivals have tractates in the Mishna and the Talmud that explain the essence of the festival and its laws. For instance: Rosh Hashana – Tractate Rosh Hashana; Yom Kippur – Tractate Yoma; Sukkot – Tractate Sukkah; Purim – Tractate Megillah; Passover – Tractate Pesachim, and so on. But there is no tractate on Hanukkah in either the Talmud Bavli or Yerushalmi. Moreover, it receives only minimal, almost incidental, reference.

Hanukkah is mentioned several times in the Mishna, for instance with regard to a public fast day that may occur on Hanukkah (Mishna, Taanit, end of Chapter 2), the laws of mourning (Mishna, Moed Katan 3:9), and tort laws (Mishna, Bava Kama 6:6). Another reference to the festival is implied, as an antithesis to non-Jewish festivals, as marking the transition between the gradually shortening winter days and the gradually lengthening summer days (Bavli, Avoda Zara 8a). Hence, Hanukkah is the festival of light, but not due to the candles that are lit rather due to the season of the year in which it is marked. The conclusion is that there is no connection between Hanukkah and the Hasmoneans.

Many have tried to suggest why Hanukkah did not receive the attention it deserves (Safrai 1959; Alon 1967, 15-25; Gafni 1995, 261-276). Whatever the reason, the fact that the Sages were inclined to minimize the achievements of the revolt cannot be evaded. This is only to be expected, as they maintained a different ethos, one that contradicts the Hasmonean ethos. The latter was offensive and it benefited the people of Israel in the mid-Second Temple period, however the very same ethos is what brought about the end of the Second Temple and the Judean kingdom, as well as sealing the fate of tens of thousands of Jews, who died in the radical revolts and their repression during the first and second centuries. The Sages wanted to replace the offensiveness with defensiveness, and thus it was only natural for them to minimize the military achievements of the Hasmoneans. This is clear when we see the primary attitude to Hanukkah and to the reasons for its celebration, as noted by the Sages (Noam 2002): „What is Hanukkah?... When the Greeks entered the Sanctuary, they defiled all the oils that were in the Sanctuary. And when the Hasmonean monarchy overcame them and emerged victorious over them, they searched and found only one cruse of oil that was placed with the seal of the High Priest. And there was sufficient oil there to light for only one day. A miracle occurred and they lit from it eight days. The next year the Sages instituted those days and made them holidays with recitation of hallel and special thanksgiving” (Bavli, Shabbat 21b).

This short paragraph that describes all the Israelite wars in the time of the Hasmoneans only states the fact that the Greeks were vanquished. The primary miracle, as evident from these words, is the finding of the cruse of oil that had sufficient oil to light the Menorah for only one day, but it lit for eight days. There is no description of the battles, there is no description of the heroic death of the five brothers, the sons of Matityahu the Hasmonean headed by Judah the Maccabi, and there is no mention of establishing an independent state. With all respect to this impressive achievement, the Sages did not see fit to mention it even in passing. According to the Sages, the only achievement of the Hasmoneans worth mentioning is finding the cruse of oil. Hence, the holiday is a time of thanksgiving to God for performing the miracle.

An important and notable fact is that the source that mentions the cruse of oil and the miracle in which it was involved is the Talmud Bavli. The miracle of the cruse of oil is not mentioned in the Hasmonean books or by Josephus Flavius. As we know, the Talmud Bavli was redacted hundreds of years after the Hasmonean revolt.

These facts raise questions: Did the miracle indeed occur? Why is it not mentioned in the contemporary literature rather only in the rabbinical literature that was written centuries after the revolt? How did the Sages know about the miracle? Did they “invent” a miracle and, if so, for what purpose?

The answers are not surprising, in light of the Sages’ general attempt to replace the offensive ethos with a defensive one. The Hasmonean revolt was the model for rebels in Jewish history, certainly in the time of the revolts during the Second Temple era. The Sages, who wished to alleviate the tensions that encourage militancy, saw the danger that the holiday entailed and understood that they must minimize its impact. From now on the miracle became the cruse of oil that illuminated the Menorah, which is the rabbinical symbol of Jewish wisdom (Bavli, Bava Batra 25b). Hanukkah was transformed from a festival that marks victory in the war against the Greeks to one that marks a completely different war, not a national victory but rather the victory of the Jewish-spirit over the Greek-body; a victory of the Torah of Israel over the wisdom of Greece; a victory of Jewish monotheism over Greek idolatry. Hanukkah was perceived as a cultural and religious war rather than a battle for political independence.

In short, the offensive ethos of the Hasmonean wars is absent; it was replaced by a defensive-cognitive ethos that gives preference to the value of Torah as represented by the Menorah.

4. Walk in His ways

One of the Torah’s commandments is to walk in God’s ways, “Walk in His ways” (Deuteronomy 28:9; Rosenberg 1983, 72-91). The sages

interpreted this: “Just as He is compassionate and merciful, so too should you be compassionate and merciful.” (Bavli, Shabbat 133b)

In order to introduce the trend of creating a new ethos, the Sages found a way of expressing this in legends, which show that God Himself restrains His anger, and His heroism is manifested in this restraining of His anger and in His silence. Hence, it is clear that the Jews must follow God’s example and behave similarly (Rambam, *Sefer Hamitzvot*, mitzvot aseih 8). An example of this is the following source: „This is the wicked Titus, who insulted and blasphemed God on High. What did Titus do? He took a prostitute with his hand, and entered the Holy of Holies. He spread out a Torah scroll and committed a sin on it... “Who is strong like You, O Lord?” Who is strong and indurate like You, as You hear the abuse and the blasphemy of that wicked man and remain silent... “Who is like You, O Lord, among the gods [*elim*]” Who is like You among the mute [*ilmim*]” (Bavli, Gittin 56b)

Jews reading the words of the Sages understand that silence is heroism. If that is how God conducts Himself, then obviously they must too.

5. “The three oaths”

As part of this trend, the Sages created a concept that continues to bear meaning today. This is the concept of the “three oaths” (Bavli, Ketubot 110b-111a; Ravitzky, 1996, pp. 211-234). The source utilized by the Midrash is the three verses in the Song of Songs that speak of an oath, “I adjure you, O maidens of Jerusalem...” (Song of Songs 2:7, 3:5, 8:4).

According to the rabbinical view, which sees the Song of Songs as a parable of God’s relationship with Israel, R. Yosi ben Hanina interpreted these verses as a call to refrain from precipitating the redemption. He explains the oaths and whom they refer to: “Why are these three oaths needed? One, so that the Jews should not ascend as a wall. And another one, that the Holy One, blessed be He, adjured the Jews that they should not rebel against the nations of the world. And the last one is that the Holy One, blessed be He, adjured the nations that they should not subjugate the Jews excessively” (Bavli, Ketubot 111a). The traditional explanation of the oath “so that the Jews should not ascend as a wall”, is that they must not ascend to The land of Israel en masse. But what established the defensive ethos was the oath that obliges the people of Israel to “not rebel against the nations of the world”.

From now on there was no need for hidden statements, statements that expect the discerning reader to understand one thing from another and to reach the conclusion that he must subscribe to the new rabbinical ethos. From now on, the Sages imposed a religious obligation under strict oath, which Israel are adjured to uphold by none other than God Himself.

So much so that the Sages interpret the following verses as a terrible sanction against the people of Israel if they are to ever breach the oath: "The Holy One, Blessed be He, said to the Jewish people: If you fulfill the oath, it is good, and if not, I will abandon your flesh like the gazelles and like the hinds of the field." This threat was issued, according to the Sages, by God Himself.

6. Suicide

One grave phenomenon characteristic of the Jewish revolts in those times was the issue of suicide. We know of two major incidents, both from the time of the Great Revolt: Gamla and Masada (The story of Masada is well known. On Gamla see: Gutman 1994; Josephus Flavius, *The Jewish war*, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1959, Volume III, Chapter 8, particularly paragraphs 6-7). Right before the Roman breach of Masada, when its inhabitants understood that no hope remained they took their own lives and committed suicide. They chose suicide because they preferred to die as free people than live a life of slavery. The leader of Masada, Elazar ben Yair, declared: "We chose death over a life of slavery" (Ibid., volume 7, end of Chapter 8). His first speech before the rebels was not accepted, but he gave another speech (Ibid., Chapter 8), and at its end they all committed suicide en masse (Ibid., Chapter 9).

If it were not for Josephus Flavius, we would not have known about these two events. This leads to the question: Why did the Sages not see fit to relate these incidents of Jewish heroism on the battlefield? Why did they not even hint at them? (Mashiach 2016)

It appears that according to the Sages, Jews indeed committed suicide at Gamla and Masada but not for religious reasons rather for ideological reasons originating from the offensive ethos. Not only were the revolts not led by the religious leadership, rather when examining their outcomes it is clear that the Great Revolt brought ruin upon the Temple and the Judean State. From now on, the Sages preached a different ethos. So different that Masada and Gamla are not part of it and are not even mentioned. The silence of the Sages with regard to the events at Gamla and Masada is a thunderous silence, one that is a forceful statement – these are not part of our educational orientation and of what we are trying to build – namely, an ethos that will protect the people of Israel in exile and refrain from encouraging destructive ideas of rebellion.

Make no mistake, the Sages' silence does not imply criticism of the suicide act itself. There is an oft-heard claim that Masada is not mentioned in rabbinical literature because the Sages adamantly objected to suicide, so much so that they excluded the story of Masada's heroes from their literary corpus (On suicide in Jewish law see: Steinberg, 1988; Rosner, 1970, Lichtenstein, 2008; *ibid.*, pp. 57-62, 78-86, 118-127). This is not true. The

Sages had no problem with suicide in general. On the contrary, from their words it is clear that suicide has a role in Jewish life if it has religious underpinnings rather than being occasioned by distress stemming from the offensive ethos.

I shall demonstrate this from an account of mass suicide related in rabbinical literature, one that received the Sages' support and approval: „[There was] an incident involving four hundred boys and girls who were taken as captives for prostitution. [These children] sensed on their own what they were expected; they said: If we drown in the sea, we will come to life in the World-to-Come... When the girls heard this, they all leapt and fell into the sea. The boys drew an *a fortiori* [inference] with regard to themselves and said: If these, for whom [sexual intercourse with men] is their natural way, [act in] such a manner, we, for whom [sexual intercourse with men] is not our natural way, all the more so. They too leapt into the sea. Concerning them the verse states: “As for Your sake we are killed all the day long; we are reckoned as sheep for the slaughter”” (Bavli, Gittin 57b).

The conclusion of the event is that the suicide committed was perceived by the Sages as legitimate. They cited a verse from Psalms with regard to those who died, and did not object to the suicide or criticize it.

Another incident related by the Sages, which ended with suicide that was perceived by them as legitimate and even received a blessing and approval from Heaven, is the story of “a woman and her seven sons”, known as “Hannah and her seven sons” (Also appears in *Hasmoneans* 2 chapter 7, as well as in Lamentations [*Eykha*] Rabba 1:50. The latter source states that the name of the woman was Miriam bat Menachem). An idolatrous king tried to convince the woman's sons to worship idols. All the sons refused and were executed one after the other, and then it is related that the woman committed suicide: “She too went up to the roof, fell and died” (Bavli, Gittin 57b).

Why did she commit suicide? How did she commit such a grave act? But the Sages found room for suicide so long as it was related to death for the Torah of Israel rather than for some other ideology. So much so that her act of suicide received the approval of Heaven: “A Divine Voice emerged and said: ‘A joyful mother of children’”.

These examples show that the Sages did not reject the issue of suicide categorically, rather it is necessary to examine the reason for the act. If a person or a group of people commit suicide due to their religious faith or for concern that they will be required to perform acts that contradict Jewish law, then their suicide is legitimate and desirable. If their suicide has national or ideological underpinnings, however, as in the act performed by the inhabitants of Gamla and Masada, then the Sages do not see fit to even hint at these nationally oriented heroic acts.

In short, the rabbinical ethos acknowledges suicide only on a theological but not on an ideological basis. The former is desirable while

the latter, originating as it does from the offensive ethos, is not even mentioned.

7. Special cases

Despite the many sources mentioned above, rabbinical literature also includes other voices with an offensive orientation. They are indeed in the minority but their voice is heard. This is only natural, as the “Sages” were not all of one opinion. They encompass hundreds of scholars who operated along several centuries. It is not surprising to find different schools in Jewish law, interpretation, and leadership.

R. Shimon bar Yochai (Rashbi) was a major proponent of the offensive ethos, at least from a religious-conscious aspect. One of his militant statements is: “The most legitimate Gentile should be killed” (Yerushalmi, Kiddushin 4:64). Another statement is: “One is permitted to provoke the wicked in this world” (Bavli, Berachot 7b). This view is the complete opposite of the Sages’ general suggestions such as: “If wicked people come upon a person, he should bend his head before them” (Bavli, Yevamot 121a). And in general, the statement that “One is permitted to provoke the wicked in this world” contradicts the statement: “It is permitted to flatter wicked people in this world” (Bavli, Sota 41b). But this is Rashbi’s view, one that is expressed after the Bar Kochba revolt was repressed and his rabbi, Rabbi Akiva, was executed.

8. Summary and discussion

In this article I have shown how the Sages, as leaders recognized due to the circumstances of political destruction that led to elimination of the political and military leadership, took upon themselves to replace the offensive ethos with a defensive one. As part of this trend, they lent different meaning to the concept of liberty, which from now on had religious-conscious rather than political-national meaning, “For there is no free man but one that occupies himself with the study of the Torah” (Mishna, Avot 6:2). The terms “heroism” (*gevura*) and “war” received new meaning as well, one that rejects offensive heroism. From now on heroism is cognitive-subjective, spiritual, and Torah-oriented, “Who is mighty? He who subdues his [evil] inclination” (Mishna, Avot 4:1). The concept of war, which appears in the Torah and is the epitome of the offensive ethos, was also replaced by the “war of Torah”. The Sages recommend, accordingly, that “If wicked people come upon a person, he should bend his head before them” (Bavli, Yevamot 121a).

The Sages’ intention of replacing the offensive ethos with a defensive one reached the halakhic discourse within their teachings as well. One

conspicuous example is the transformation of the miracle of Hanukkah from a miracle of victory in battle to one designating the finding of the cruse of oil. They relate legends showing that God Himself restrains his anger and that His heroism is manifested in restraining His anger and in His silence. It is therefore clear that the observant Jew must follow God's way and behave accordingly, observing the commandment to "Walk in His ways". And in order to halt the offensive ethos for once and for all there is an explicit commandment in rabbinical literature, a call and threat whereby the people of Israel are forbidden from rebelling against the nations of the world. This received the title of the "Three Oaths". "The Holy One, blessed be He, said to the Jewish people: If you fulfill the oath, it is good, and if not, I will abandon your flesh."

Notably, although the Sages established a defensive ethos and neutralized the offensive one, this does not mean that they created Jewish pacifism, as argued in the introduction (Kimelman 1968). Pacifists object to any use of violence and war as a matter of principle and refuse to participate in military operations. This is not the Sages' outlook (For examples in this context, of both outlooks, see: Eisen 2011, 65-110). The defensive ethos was a means utilized to ensure the Jewish people's survival in exile, rather than fundamental pacifism. In short, replacing the offensive ethos with a defensive one – yes, pacifism – no.

Throughout 2000 years of exile, Jewish history shows that the Sages succeeded in their intention of creating a defensive ethos and introducing it into Jewish consciousness.

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