

International Conference

Exiting Violence: the role of religion. From Texts to theories

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Laws of War, Capital Punishment and Flogging: restrictions of sovereign power in early rabbinic literature

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Violence in the name of God and violence related to the worship of God is expressed on various levels in canonical Jewish literature. The main ones are:

- Laws of war and especially war of *mitzva* - war in the name of the Lord applied by the king;
- Punishment of those who violate divine law: Capital punishment and lashing laws (*Dinei Nefashot, Dinei Malkot*) applied by the legal system;
- Defamation: Controlling verbal violence that is supposed to be applied by the Individual.

The sovereign powers, whether the king or the law enforcement system, may be the main source of violence in the name of God. As we shall see, the justification for expressions of violence in certain cases depends on the sovereign's limitations of power. In this lecture, I will present a general overview of early rabbinic interpretation of the commandments of the *Torah* in these fields, and I will focus on the rabbinic legal system and the significance of the far-reaching limitations imposed on it by the sages.