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To cite this article: Tamir Sorek (18 Dec 2025): The Bible, the Holocaust, and eliminatory stands among Israelis: a survey analysis, Ethnic and Racial Studies, DOI: [10.1080/01419870.2025.2594528](https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2025.2594528)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2025.2594528>



Published online: 18 Dec 2025.



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The Bible, the Holocaust, and eliminatory stands among Israelis: a survey analysis

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ABSTRACT

Since October 2023, calls for ethnic cleansing and genocidal acts against Palestinians have become increasingly mainstream in Israeli politics. This article examines the role of the Bible and collective memory of victimhood, two major cultural pillars of modern Israeli identity, in facilitating that process. A March 2025 survey of 1,005 Jewish Israeli internet users measured the relationship between eliminatory attitudes and these key cultural references. Multivariate analysis found that viewing the Bible as central to one's identity was the strongest predictor of support for such attitudes. Identifying the October 7 massacre as a major event in Jewish history also strongly predicted eliminatory views. In contrast, respondents who cited the Holocaust as a defining historical event were significantly less likely to support such positions – suggesting the existence of some resistance to the politicization of Holocaust memory in justifying current violence.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 13 August 2025

Accepted 14 November 2025

KEYWORDS

Genocide; Palestinians; Israel; Bible; Holocaust; 7 October

Introduction

Since October 2023, eliminatory and genocidal attitudes in Israeli society have undergone a drastic shift toward the political center. Politicians, rabbis, military officers, journalists, musicians, and other public figures have made statements that promote the elimination of Palestinian existence in Gaza. In some cases, these statements reflected **genocidal imagination** – ideas and images that legitimize genocidal mass violence aimed at a substantial portion of a targeted population, both combatants and noncombatants.

Common explanations of eliminatory and genocidal attitudes and policy in Israel could be roughly classified into three categories. Some emphasize **settler colonialism** as an inherently genocidal structure, and therefore suggest a direct and deterministic link between Zionism as a settler colonial project and genocidal tendencies (Abdo 2024). Against this materialistic structural explanation, other emphasize the role of **bible-inspired ideas** in legitimizing annihilatory tendencies (Omer 2025; Sakhnini 2012). While these two explanations largely raised by critics of Zionism, a third – more sympathetic to Zionist narratives – focuses on **collective Jewish fears** of becoming victims of genocide, arguing that defensive existential anxiety fuels eliminationist attitudes (Sheffer, Yakter, and Shomer 2025).

The present study adopts a **multi-causal, non-reductionist framework** that incorporates all three factors and considers their interaction. Elsewhere, I have elaborated this model and offered a historical account of the evolution of genocidal imagination in Israel (Sorek 2025; 2026). Here, however, I take a different angle. Rather than tracing a *longue-durée* historical trajectory, this article provides a **contemporary snapshot**, drawing on a survey conducted in March 2025 to examine more closely the factors associated with eliminatory attitudes today.

An underlying premise of this study is that understanding the **structural context** in which Israelis operate is essential for explaining the evolution of the ecosystem that legitimizes eliminatory attitudes. Viewing Zionism as a settler-colonial project is not simply a retrospective critical interpretation imposed by later scholars. Several of the movement's early leaders themselves drew explicit parallels between the Zionist enterprise and other settler-colonial projects, recognizing both the inherent logic of colonization and the resistance it was likely to provoke (Jabotinsky 1925). Among scholars of settler colonialism, there is today an almost complete consensus regarding the paradigm's relevance for analyzing Zionism (Mamdani 2020; Shafir 2016). Zionist scholars, however, have pushed back against this characterization, arguing that Israel lacks a metropole, that economic motives were not central to colonization, and that the settlers shared a preexisting proto-national identity (Dowty 2022). While these qualifications are indeed relevant for understanding the subjective experience of Zionism, the more decisive test lies in its treatment of the indigenous population of Palestine.

In this regard, both the discourse and – still more – the practices through which Zionism has carried out the long process of dispossession share many features with other settler-colonial projects, such as the United States, Canada, and Australia (Veracini 2006; Wolfe 2006). This duality of settler-colonialism vs. national movement was well summarized by the Palestinian philosopher Raef Zreik observed, “the Europeans see the back of the Jewish refugee fleeing for his life. The Palestinian sees the face of the settler-colonialist taking over his land”. (Zreik 2016).

However, as Patrick Wolfe noted, while settler colonialism is inherently eliminatory, it is not invariably genocidal. Rather, it creates an ecosystem with the capacity to cultivate symbols, narratives, and discursive frameworks that can legitimize genocide. Building on this insight, I adopt the “paradigm of permission” within the sociology of genocide, which prioritizes the study of factors that enable and legitimize genocidal attitudes – focusing less on explaining the act of genocide itself and more on the conditions that make it thinkable and permissible (Ribes 2021). The two legitimizing elements I examine here are shared memories of victimhood, which could enhance existential anxieties, as well as Biblical narratives of conquest and annihilation. It is noteworthy here, that ascribing explanatory power to culture is not cultural determinism. Understanding culture as a toolkit, rather than a set of values (Swidler 1986), allows us to consider cultural themes as potential forces, which could be activated or enhanced under certain circumstances.

Cultural elements: victimhood and the Bible

This study places a spotlight on two cultural foundations of the State of Israel: the Bible and collective memories of Jewish victimhood. Both have provided the Zionist project

with legitimacy – one rooted in a mythical ancient past, and the other grounded in modern historical experience (Klar, Schori-Eyal, and Klar 2013; Segev 1993; Shapira 2004; Zertal 2005). Therefore, both play an important role in the Israeli “civil religion” (Liebman and Don-Yehiye 1983). The Bible offers “positive” moral capital: in the Zionist narrative, it serves as the ultimate proof of the Jews’ spiritual and eternal connection to the Land of Israel, as well as a source of inspirational mythology centered on war, prowess, and conquest. Victimhood, and the Holocaust at its center, provide “negative” moral capital. While both the Bible and the Holocaust are mobilized for internal and external purposes, the former tends to be directed more toward internal identity formation, whereas the latter has been primarily leveraged in the international arena.

Mainstream Zionism has always required a strong legitimizing framework, because it emerged as a late settler-colonial project. The most active phase of the Zionist movement has coincided with the rise of globalized media and the post-World War II proliferation of international human rights norms. This historical timing has created a persistent need to justify externally the dispossession of the Palestinians and to justify internally the immense sacrifices demanded by the project. In this context, both the Bible and the memory of the Holocaust have served as indispensable ideological assets.

European settler-colonial movements have often drawn on the Bible as a source of inspiration and legitimacy for the expulsion and killing of indigenous populations (Cherry 1998; Prior 1997). Similarly, the Zionist ambition to replace Palestinians has found legitimizing force in the biblical narrative of Joshua’s conquest and the command to annihilate the peoples of Canaan (Tamarin 1966). Rhetoric comparing Palestinians to the Amalekites and Canaanites has existed in Zionist discourse since the 1920s (Sorek 2026). However, such comparisons have become increasingly prevalent in the twenty-first century, alongside the rise of a messianic form of religious Zionism that now holds a central position in Israeli politics.

Jewish victimhood is deeply engraved in the mythical foundation of the State of Israel. Israel’s declaration independence (1948) considers the Holocaust as a major justification for the establishment of the state: “The catastrophe which recently befell the Jewish people – the massacre of millions of Jews in Europe – was another clear demonstration of the urgency of solving the problem of its homelessness by re-establishing in the Land of Israel the Jewish State”. Memories of the Holocaust, reproduced through both the domestic sphere, as well as state-orchestrated narratives, have played a central role in nurturing existential anxieties among Israelis. However, these anxieties have become “persecutory anxieties” (Neumann 2017) because of their interaction with anxieties induced by the settler-colonial context.

Dirk Moses has demonstrated that sentiments of existential anxiety, which fuel fantasies of achieving “permanent security” (absolute safety against future threats), often arise within settler-colonial communities. Indigenous resistance exacerbates these anxieties, intensifying the fantasy and creating a cycle of violence that can escalate into annihilatory tendencies (2021, 243–276). The interaction of Holocaust memory with fears related to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict has become vivid following October 7th. A study conducted in November–December 2023, found that watching the atrocities in videos taken by the perpetrators during the massacre of 7 October, invoked Holocaust memories alongside emotions of rage and a desire for revenge among Jewish Israelis (Kertcher and Turin 2025). Also, Israeli media and political figures have frequently invoked Holocaust

memory in relation to the 7 October massacre, often drawing explicit parallels between the two events (Bartov 2024). A 2024 survey found that 71 per cent of Jewish Israelis believe the massacre strengthened Holocaust memory, and a 2025 survey showed that 48 per cent agree there is a basis for comparison between the two (Maariv 2024).

It remains unclear, however, whether such remembrance at the popular level fosters eliminatory attitudes toward Palestinians. Some studies suggest that aside the most popular lesson that Jews should always avoid being passive victims (a lesson that enhances a militaristic orientation), for some Israelis the memory of the Holocaust reinforces resistance to assuming the roles of bystander or perpetrator (Schori-Eyal et al. 2017). Similarly, while religious leaders, politicians, and journalists have cited biblical references to justify collective revenge, expulsion, and annihilation, we lack a systematic examination of the broader resonance of this rhetoric.

Eliminatory stands in surveys

Until recently, surveys conducted in Israel have rarely included direct measures of violent eliminatory attitudes. A more common proxy is the question of voluntary transfer, typically phrased as: “Do you agree that the government should encourage Arab emigration from the country?” With minor variations, this question appeared in at least 26 surveys between 1981 and 2019. The rate of agreement ranged from a high of 64 per cent in 1988 and 2009 to a low of 37 per cent in 2019.

Questions concerning non-voluntary transfer are less common and are typically included in surveys only during periods of heightened tension. In 2002 and 2003, During the Second Intifada, 46 per cent and 45 per cent of respondents, respectively, supported the transfer of Palestinians from the West Bank and Gaza Strip, while 32 per cent and 31 per cent supported the transfer of Arab citizens of Israel (Jaffee Center 2003).

More recently, in February 2025, two Israeli TV channels commissioned polls to measure public support for President Donald Trump’s proposal to “relocate” residents of the Gaza Strip to other countries. The level of support ranged from 69 per cent (Channel 12) to 76 per cent (the radical right Channel 14).¹ Both channels, however, did not report separate figures for Jewish citizens – whose support is undoubtedly much higher.

A survey conducted by the aChord Institute (Sharki and Eldar 2025) asked a similar question, but added an explicit assumption that this would constitute “compulsory immigration” (i.e. forced expulsion). Respondents were offered three response options: “support”, “oppose”, and “neutral”. 60 per cent of Jewish respondents expressed support for the idea. However, when a question is politically or socially sensitive, the “neutral” option often attracts a disproportionate number of respondents. In this case, 26 per cent selected “neutral”, and it is likely that offering more nuanced categories such as “mild support” or “mild opposition” would have yielded an even higher level of support. In any case, only 14 per cent of Jewish respondents in this study explicitly rejected the idea of expulsion, marking a sharp increase in support compared to 2003. Analysis of raw data from the 1991, 2002, and 2003 surveys (Jaffee Center 1991, 2002, 2003) indicates that religious piety, young age, and lack of academic education are the primary socio-demographic factors associated with support for eliminatory positions.

An unpublished survey by the Israeli National Election Study at Tel Aviv University conducted in April 2025 found 53 per cent support for transfer among Jewish Israelis, when the question referred only to support (without offering objection, or various levels of support). According to aChord Center survey from May 2025, three quarters of Jewish Israelis agreed with the statement that “there are no innocent people in Gaza”. This time, there was no neutral option, only three levels of support and three levels of objection.² Similarly, in the face of reports about the heavy famine in Gaza in summer 2025, a survey of the Israel Democracy Institute (2025) 79 per cent of Jewish Israelis stated that they are not concerned about these reports.

These findings are presented here only to provide a general background for what is known about the dependent variables under discussion. The main purpose of the survey presented in this article is not to measure the absolute level of support in eliminatory stands (although it could contribute to the growing aggregated data about this aspect) but to examine whether these attitudes are associated with perceptions of the Bible and with memories of collective victimhood.

Method

The sampling and data collection for the survey was carried out by Geocartpgraphy, a well-established poll firm, on 10–11 March 2025. It is based on a sample of 1,005 Jewish Israelis, who constitute a national, representative sample of internet users in the Israel aged 18 and over. The response rate, 8.4 per cent, is typical for panel-based online polls. Sampling quotas were based on gender, age, religiosity, and region of residence. As is common with internet-based surveys, the sample tends to be younger than the general population and underrepresents the Ultra-Orthodox community. To correct these imbalances, the results presented here make use of weights, with the sample calibrated to simulate a representative sample of the adult Jewish population in Israel. Weighting (see Tables 1 and 2) was conducted using age and religiosity distributions published by the Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics (further weighing based on distribution of reported voting in the 2022 elections did not change the distribution of answers to the major questions).

The overall design effect (DEFF) due to weighting was 1.39 (DEFT = 1.18), resulting in an effective sample size of 721.³ This measure reflects the impact of weighting on variance and provides a general indicator of the precision and quality of the weighted sample. The margin of error for the dependent variables discussed in this article range between $-/+2.8$ and $-/+3.6$.

The questionnaire includes three kinds of questions. The questions measuring eliminatory attitudes (the dependent variables), were:

Table 1. Weighting age.

Age	Unweighted sample (representing internet users)	Weighted sample (simulating distribution in population)
18–29	29.4	21.0
30–39	22.5	19.1
40–49	20.4	17.8
50–59	16.3	14.5
60+	11	27.5

Table 2. Weighting religiosity.

Religiosity	Unweighted sample (representing internet users)	Weighted sample (simulating distribution in population)
Secular	42.8	44.5
Traditionist	38.9	31.6
Religious	12.2	13.1
Ultraorthodox	6.1	10.9

- Do you support or oppose the transfer (expulsion) of the (residents of the Gaza Strip / residents of the West Bank / Arab citizens of Israel) to other countries? The optional answers were: Definitely supportive / Supports to some extent / Opposes to some extent / Completely opposed.
- The book of Joshua tells us that when the Israelites conquered the city of Jericho, they killed all its inhabitants. Do you think this was a justified act? (optional answers: Definitely justified / Quite justified / Not so justified / Completely unjustified).
- A following question referred directly to genocidal policy: Do you agree with the claim that the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) when conquering an enemy city, should act in a manner similar to the way the Sons of Israel acted when they conquered Jericho under the leadership of Joshua, namely – to kill all its all its inhabitants? (optional answers: Definitely agree / agree to some extent / Disagree to some extent / Completely disagree).

Another set of questions dealt with the respondents' view of the Bible (which its name in contemporary Hebrew, *Tanach*, refers exclusively to the Old Testament) and to biblical annihilatory narratives:

- To what extent do you see the Bible as an important part of your identity? (Possible answers: To a large extent / to some extent / to a small extent / not at all).
- In the Book of Deuteronomy it says, "Thou shalt blot out the remembrance of Amalek". Do you think there is a contemporary incarnation of Amalek?
- If yes, who is Amalek today?
- To what extent is the commandment to "annihilate the memory of Amalek" also relevant to modern-day Amalek? (possible answers: Perfectly suitable / Suitable to some extent / Not so suitable / Not suitable at all).

In addition, respondents were asked to name three events they considered the most important in the history of the Jewish people. This question aimed to assess the place of the Holocaust and the 7 October massacre in their worldview, without explicitly invoking the remembrance of these events. Past surveys that included a direct question about the Holocaust ("to what extent is the memory of the Holocaust important in your life?") could not detect much variation. In a 2013 survey (Smootha 2013) 95 per cent of the respondents answered "to a very large extent" or "to a large extent" – while the difference between the meaning of these two categories is vague. The spontaneous answer, in which the respondent is the one bringing (or not) the events into the conversation, could provide a better representation of the emotional centrality of certain events in the respondents' life.

Finally, socio-demographic variables were collected: Gender, education, region of residence, age, ethnic background (Ashkenazim, Mizrahim/Sephardim), and religiosity. Six initial categories collapsed to four: Seculars, Traditionist,⁴ Religious, Ultraorthodox. Among Jews in Israel, the last three variables (religiosity, ethnicity, and age) are considered the best predictors of political attitudes (Harsgor 2024; Sorek and Ceobanu 2022).

Israeli Jews who define themselves as secular are typically either non-observant of religious law or, more commonly, observe certain Jewish traditions while downplaying their religious dimension and emphasizing their national, familial, or consumerist aspects (Froman 2004). It is important to note, however, that the applicability of the term “secularism” – as a philosophical stance – to a quasi-messianic movement like Zionism is questionable, as is the conventional secular/religious distinction (Kimmerling 1999; Raz-Krakotzkin 2021, 33). Therefore, in what follows, I use the capitalized form “Secular” to refer to the specific sociological category, or a status group, that has emerged in Israel.

The data is presented in two stages: (1) a simple distribution of responses to the questions outlined above; (2) a multivariate analysis. The latter employs a logistic regression to identify which variables most strongly predict support for ethnic cleansing and genocidal acts.

The regression model includes demographic variables – age, level of religiosity, education, ethnicity, and region of residence – as well as worldview-related variables, which are central to the main research question: considering the Bible highly important to one’s identity, identifying certain groups as modern-day Amalekites, and attributing high historical importance to the Holocaust or the 7 October massacre. Dependent variables were dichotomized, while the cutting point was selected to optimize variance.

A word of caution about questionnaire responses: we have no way of knowing what people “really think”. Responding to a questionnaire is a form of performance, and as such, answers may vary across contexts. We can only interpret what people said within the specific context (who asked the question, what is the specific wording, collection method, and other circumstances) in which the study was conducted. The numbers, therefore, indicate what has become legitimate to think and to say in Israel in 2025, in an online anonymous survey, and how the degree of legitimacy varies across demographic groups and cultural subfields. For example, the above-mentioned polls by Israeli TV channels and the aChord Institute preceded the question by noting that this was President Donald Trump’s “idea”. Given Trump’s immense popularity among Israelis, it is possible that some respondents were more inclined to agree with the proposal because it was associated with him, compared to how they might have responded to a similar question without that attribution.⁵

Similarly, it should be noted that online polls tend to yield more extreme – particularly more negative – responses than phone interviews.⁶ This does not necessarily imply that the more extreme findings are less accurate; rather, the discrepancy may result from the reduced influence of social desirability bias in the absence of an interviewer. Nevertheless, this factor should be taken into account when assessing the overall level of support for eliminatory positions measured in this study.

Table 3. Distribution (%) of answers to the question: “To what extent do you see the Bible as an important part of your identity?”.

	To a large extent	To some extent	To a small extent	Not at all
Secular	19	40	31	10
Traditionist	65	29	6	0
Religious	87	11	2	0
Ultra Orthodox	94	5	1	0
Total	51	29	16	4

Descriptive findings

Table 3 shows that the Bible remains a significant element in the identity of the vast majority of Jewish Israelis. While it holds particular importance for the Religious and Ultra-Orthodox, even a majority of Secular Jews regard it as important, at least to some extent.

To the question “In the Book of Deuteronomy it says, “Thou shalt blot out the remembrance of Amalek”. Do you think there is a contemporary incarnation of Amalek?” 65 per cent answered positively (50 per cent among Seculars), 12 per cent said no, and 23 per cent said they do not know.

Table 4 represents the distribution of answers to the open question: Who is Amalek today?

In Jewish tradition, the term *Amalek* has been used to denote bitter enemies of the Jewish people or to signal that an enemy’s evil knows no bounds – sometimes in ways detached from the original biblical commandment. The term has even been applied to internal Jewish political rivals, further distancing it from its original genocidal context. In the questionnaire, therefore, after respondents identified who they considered to be the current-day Amalek, they were explicitly asked whether the commandment to “blot out the memory of Amalek” applies to that enemy. Among those who affirmed the existence of contemporary Amalekites, 93 per cent stated that the commandment is indeed relevant to them. In other words, those who use the term are well aware of the annihilationary commandment attached to the term.

It is noteworthy that among Israeli Jews, the terms “Palestinians” and “Arabs” are often used interchangeably. Given that Gazans are Arabs, Palestinians, and almost entirely Muslim, the actual percentage of Jewish Israelis who refer to the Gazans as *Amalekites* is 27 per cent. Among men under the age of 50 – the demographic that supplies most of the soldiers serving in Gaza – 34 per cent view Gazans as Amalek. Of those, 94 per cent believe that the commandment to “blot out the memory of Amalek” applies to the Amalekites of today.

Table 4. Who is Amalek today?.

Hamas	20%
Palestinians	10%
Arabs	10%
Gazan	7%
Iran	7%
Muslims/Islam	4%
Leftists	1%

Remembrance of victimhood

Table 5 presents the percentage of respondents who identified various historical events as among the three most important in the history of the Jewish people. Only events mentioned by more than 10 per cent of the sample are included. The results underscore the prominence of two core narratives in modern Israeli identity: the Bible and Jewish victimhood. At the center of collective memory is the event seen as both the fulfillment of the biblical promise to the People of Israel and a corrective to the historical experience of victimhood – the establishment of the State of Israel.

The centrality of the establishment of the state, as well as the Holocaust in Israeli collective memory are consistent with previous studies; however, in the current survey, these two events were mentioned significantly more frequently than in a similar study conducted 25 years earlier (Schuman, Vinitzky-Seroussi, and Vinokur 2003). The most striking increase was in the mention of the Holocaust, which was cited by only 20.5 per cent of respondents in that 1999–2000 study, compared with 55 per cent in this study. This rise is particularly notable for two reasons. First, the earlier study limited responses to events from the twentieth century, thus reducing the number of potential answers and lowering the “competition” among events. Second, the 2025s respondents include far fewer individuals with direct biographical memories of the 1940s or who were raised by people who experienced them firsthand.

The 7 October massacre, mentioned by 30 per cent of respondents, undoubtedly left a significant mark on Israelis. However, its relatively high rate of mention is also influenced by what memory scholars refer to as the “recency effect” (Meier 2021).

Prevalence of annihilatory stands

While the main purpose of this study is not to measure absolute level of support for expulsion and extermination, for the purpose of comparison and validation, it is worth discussing it shortly.

The general support for various annihilatory stands is summarized in Table 6.

The findings regarding support for expulsion from Gaza are similar or slightly higher than findings from survey asking similar questions. If the polls of channels 12 (showing 69 per cent support of expulsion in the same period of time) covered the entire Israeli population, and if we assumed that support for expulsion among Palestinian citizens of Israeli is negligible, the level of support among Jews in that poll is approximately 83 per cent. However, due to lack of methodological transparency among media outlets, we should be careful with relying on their findings.

As noted earlier, surveys that included a neutral option, did not force respondents to choose between support and opposition, or lacked a “mild support” category, generally

Table 5. Percentage of respondents who named various event as among the most important events in the history of the Jewish people.

Establishment of the State of Israel /War of Independence	68
Holocaust	55
Massacre of 7 October	30
Giving of the Torah to the Sons of Israel	27
Exodus from Egypt	23
Destruction of Temple(s) / beginning of exile	12

Table 6. Rate of support for various eliminatory stands (rounded percentage).

	Definitely supportive	Supports to some extent	Total support
Support expulsion from the Gaza Strip	53	29	82
Support expulsion from the West Bank	50	28	79
Support expelling Palestinian citizens	30	26	56
Support killing the entire population of a city after its conquest	24	23	47

reported lower levels of support (ranging from 53 per cent to 60 per cent). A May 2025 aChord poll might indicate that the high support for eliminatory policy is related also to some basic assumptions about Palestinians and their nature: that poll found that three-quarters of voters for Jewish parties agreed with the statement, “There are no innocent people in Gaza”.⁷

In September 2025, the independent scholar Efrat Lihi Shahaf conducted an online poll in which she replicated the same questions appeared in my poll, and found 74 per cent support for the expulsion from Gaza.⁸ The gap between the two polls may be attributable to several factors: the passage of time and the growing internal opposition to the war⁹; methodological differences¹⁰; random sampling error in either survey; or a combination of these reasons. The same factors could explain the slightly lower support for the expulsion of Arab Palestinians citizens of Israel (49 per cent) and for killing of the population of a conquered city (39 per cent).

In any case, both studies indicate that among Jewish Israelis approximately three quarters or more support the expulsion of Palestinians from Gaza, about half support the expulsion of Palestinians citizens of Israel, and well over one in three endorse explicitly genocidal position of killing the entire population of a conquered city.

In both polls, the wording the question, which framed the act as following a Biblical precedent, merits discussion. It is likely that a more direct formulation, without invoking the Bible as a moral authority, would have yielded a lower level of support. That said, the Bible is a significant source of moral authority in Israeli society, and public calls for mass killing in the Israeli discourse have frequently drawn on biblical references. In this sense, although the responses are inevitably context-dependent, the context presented to respondents reflects a salient feature of the current socio-political reality in Israel.

Multivariate analysis

Charts 1–3 offer a visual representation of the odds ratios for each independent variable across three different eliminatory attitudes.¹¹ Only variables whose predictive power was found to be statistically significant ($p < 0.05$) are included in the charts. Accordingly, gender, ethnicity and region of residence were excluded from all three graphs because their predictive power was not statistically significant.

For the question about Gaza expulsion, to optimize variance in the dependent variable, I used the highest level of support (“definitely supportive”) against other categories. It means that values in the graph represent the prediction that an individual would be highly supportive of the expulsion. For the rest of the questions, I used a simple distinction between two levels of support and two levels of opposition. Odds ratios always have positive values, and some values are presented as negative for the purpose of visual

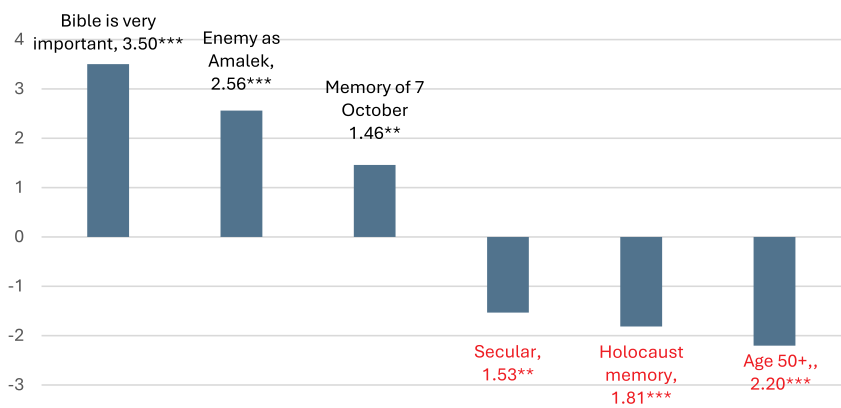


Chart 1. Predictors of high support for expelling all Gazans*.

*Odds ratios obtained from a logistic regression. Values for education, region, and ethnicity were not statistically significant ($p > 0.05$). ** $p < 0.05$. *** $p < 0.001$.

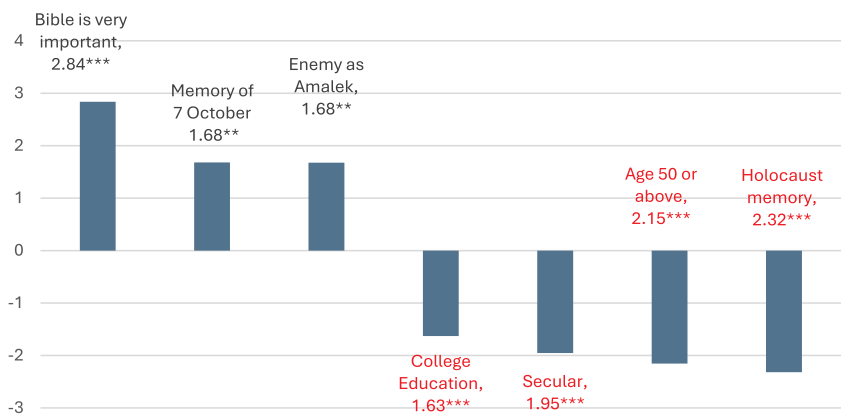


Chart 2. Predictors of support for expelling the Palestinian citizens of Israel*.

*Odds ratios obtained from a logistic regression. Values for region, and ethnicity were not statistically significant ($p > 0.05$). ** $p < 0.01$. *** $p < 0.001$.

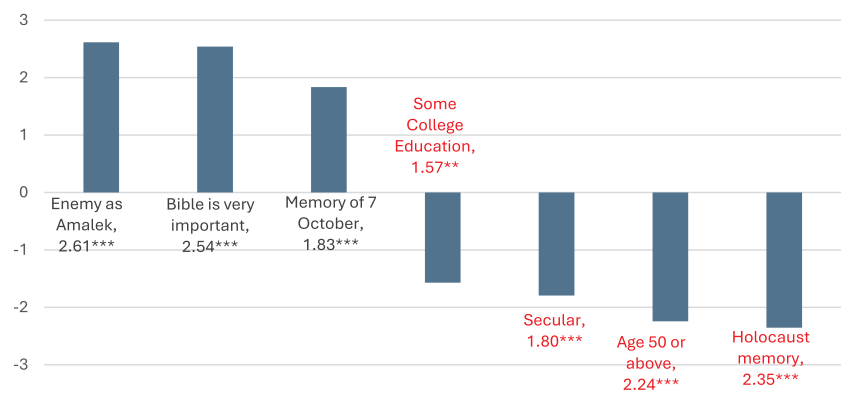


Chart 3. Predictors of support for killing the entire population of a conquered city*.

*Odds ratios obtained from a logistic regression. Values for region, and ethnicity were not statistically significant ($p > 0.05$). ** $p < 0.01$. *** $p < 0.001$.

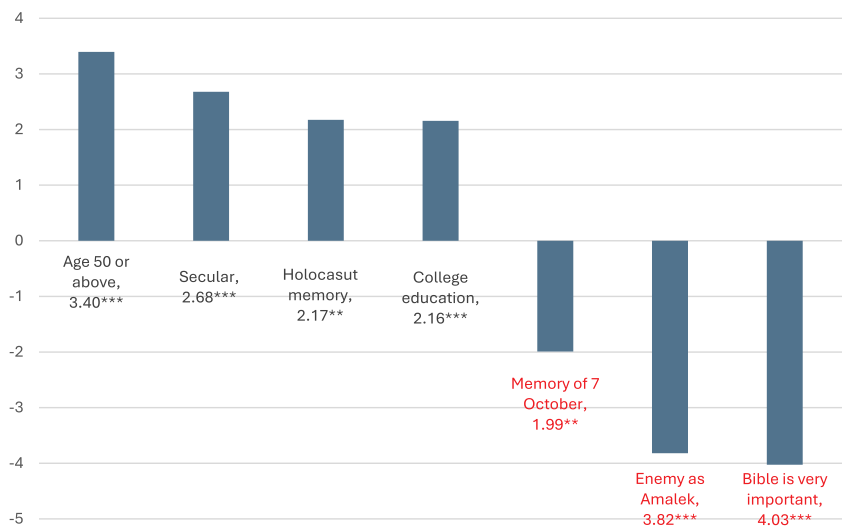


Chart 4. Predictors of rejection of all eliminatory statements*.

*Odds ratios obtained from a logistic regression. Values for region and ethnicity were not statistically significant ($p > 0.05$). ** $p < 0.01$. *** $p < 0.001$.

clarity. For example, while the original regression used the variable “not mentioning the Holocaust” the graph presents the variable “mentioning the Holocaust” in a way that illustrates the negative correlation of this variable with eliminatory attitudes.

While most of the respondents adopted eliminatory stands toward Palestinians, one out of six rejected any of the eliminatory statements. [Chart 4](#) presents the major predictors of this rejection.

The group that rejects all eliminatory stands is small and very distinctive. If we isolate a sub group of respondents who are above 50, Seculars who do not consider the Bible as very important in their lives, but do consider the Holocaust as one of the most important events in the history of the Jewish people (about 12 per cent of the sample fits all these criteria), the percentage of those rejecting all the eliminatory practices jumps from 17 to 53 per cent.

Because the Bible and the Holocaust memory are associated with contradictory orientations, it is not surprising that those expressed the highest rate of agreement with genocidal statements included respondents who ascribed the highest importance to the Bible in their lives but did not mention the Holocaust (30 per cent of the sample). Among those, 67 per cent supported a statement that Israeli army should kill all the residents of an enemy city it conquered (45 per cent “strongly supported”). 80 per cent supported the expulsion of the Palestinian citizens of Israel (among them 48 per cent “strongly supported”). Not surprisingly, this category is over-proportionally Religious and Ultra-Orthodox.

Discussion

Relation to the Bible emerged as the strongest predictor of eliminatory attitudes. Individuals who stated that the Bible is highly important to their identity are between 2.5 and 3.5 times more likely to support eliminatory positions than those who do not. Conversely,

individuals who do not regard the Bible as very important are more than four times more likely to reject all eliminatory statements. Importantly, association between Bible and support for elimination is **not reducible to religiosity alone**. The odds ratio represents the peculiar contribution of appreciation of Bible, regardless of religiosity. In addition, a separate regression analysis conducted solely within the Secular subgroup revealed that even among Seculars, those who attribute high personal importance to the Bible are 2.6 times more likely to support the expulsion of Gaza's population and 2.3 times more likely to support the expulsion of Palestinian citizens of Israel, and 2.9 times more likely support the killing of the entire population of an enemy city occupied.

Similarly, respondents who view Gazans, Palestinians, Arabs, or Muslims as Amalekites are between 1.7 and 2.6 times more likely to express eliminatory attitudes. This is not surprising, given that in contemporary Hebrew usage, the term *Amalek* has become synonymous with ultimate evil and the absolute enemy of the Jewish people. Nevertheless, its origins are biblical, and Jews who regularly read the Torah are periodically reminded of the commandment to "blot out the memory of Amalek". In the survey, respondents were explicitly reminded of this commandment before being asked to identify who they believe the Amalekites are today. Thus, in contemporary Israel, the invocation of *Amalek* is not merely a rhetorical device denoting enmity – it carries a practical and potentially genocidal implication.

These statistical associations do not imply that attachment to the Bible is the *cause* of eliminatory attitudes. Rather, it reflects a broader settler-colonial structural context that predisposes the settler community to adopt such positions. Under these circumstances, if the Bible is in the cultural toolkit of the community, it might be politicized and used to derive legitimacy. The Bible occupies a central place in Israeli culture and plays a key role in legitimizing the Zionist colonization, as it did in other settler-colonial projects (Akenson 1992). It is possible that individuals draw on Biblical narratives to justify their support for ethnic cleansing and genocidal violence and not necessarily the other way around. The data nonetheless point to the existence of an *elective affinity* between attachment to the Bible and the aspiration to eliminate Palestinians. Unpacking the nature of this affinity requires a different methodological approach – one grounded in in-depth interviews and phenomenological analysis.

The data support the argument that the fear triggered by the 7 October massacre may help explain some of the eliminatory attitudes that became common in Israel. Individuals who identified the massacre as one of the most important events in Jewish history were between 46 per cent and 83 per cent (odds ratios between 1.46 and 1.83) more likely to endorse eliminatory positions. The likelihood of those who did not mention 7 October to be among the minority who rejected all eliminatory statements was twice as likely as those who did mention the massacre.

The relationship between the fear triggered by 7 October and Jewish memories of persecution, particularly the Holocaust, is more complex, though. Seven out of eight respondents who mentioned 7 October also cited the Holocaust, suggesting that the memory of the former is held in close proximity to the latter. By contrast, only three out of four of those mentioned 7 October also named the establishment of the State of Israel. The overlap between 7 October and any other event was 5 per cent or less. In other words, the Holocaust has become the "closest" neighbor of 7 October in Israeli collective memory.

However, respondents who mentioned the Holocaust were significantly less likely to express eliminatory attitudes. Admittedly, as with the broader sample, a clear majority

(76 per cent) of those who mentioned the Holocaust still endorsed at least one eliminatory position. Nevertheless, this rate was markedly lower than among respondents who did not mention the Holocaust (92 per cent). The association between omitting Holocaust references and holding eliminatory views remained statistically significant even when running separate regressions for various subgroups – Seculars and non-Seculars, those under and over the age of 50, men and women, Mizrahim and Ashkenazim.

The only subgroup in which mentioning the Holocaust did not predict rejection of eliminatory positions was respondents without a college education. Among college-educated respondents, those who mentioned the Holocaust were 2.7 times more likely to reject all eliminatory statements. In other words, education not only associated with rejecting such statements (as shown in [Chart 1](#)), but it is also associated with distancing Holocaust remembrance from eliminatory stands. The causality is unclear though. Education could contribute to tolerance, but it is also possible that higher social status makes people generally less anxious, and therefore less inclined to adopt eliminatory stands.

Those who cited the Holocaust without also mentioning 7 October, were especially less likely to adopt eliminatory stands. Among them 28 per cent rejected all eliminatory stand, compared with 12 per cent in the rest of the sample. Everything else being equal (using a logistic regression with the same variables used in the other equation), they were 2.3 more likely than other respondents to reject all eliminatory stands.

How should we make sense of these numbers? These findings stand in tension with previous studies that addressed similar questions using different methods. Canetti et al. (2018) found that being a descendant of Holocaust survivors was associated with more radical political attitudes, and that priming Israeli Jews to think about the Holocaust increased levels of political militancy. However, my study did not focus on direct family biography but rather on broader manifestations of collective memory. In addition, participants were not primed to think about the Holocaust – those who mentioned it did so voluntarily and could have chosen any other event related to Jewish history. While these methodological differences may partly account for the apparent discrepancy, they do not fully explain it.

As with the Bible, unpacking the nature of the association between Holocaust remembrance and eliminatory attitudes requires methodological refinement. This includes both a more granular survey approach – asking more detailed questions about the nature of Holocaust remembrance – and the addition of a qualitative methods, such as in-depth interviews and phenomenological analysis. Still, some preliminary suggestions could be made here.

Since 7 October, Israeli media and political leaders have made a concerted effort to frame the massacre as part of a broader continuum of Jewish suffering – casting it as a tragedy that echoes, and even revives, the trauma of the Holocaust. It could be that the emergence of 7 October as a major myth of victimhood, interfered with the relations between Holocaust memory and political attitudes, as observed in recent studies. Following this line of thoughts, for those who have fully internalized the narrative describing 7 October as a “second Holocaust”, the Holocaust may function less as a historical event and more as a present, existential threat. This perception can heighten anxiety and intensify the desire for “permanent security”, including through eliminatory policies.

At the same time, there appear to be some “pockets” of resistance to this narrative. Those who ascribe high importance to the Holocaust but did not consider 7 October as

its extension, were more likely to derive different political conclusions. The alternative interpretations of 7 October could situate it within the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, or on a universalist understanding of the Holocaust's lessons, as opposed to the Zionist-nationalist reading (Auron 2017).

In this context, a study in social psychology in Israel and Northern Ireland identified two patterns representing opposing orientations related to collective victimhood: Perpetual Ingroup Victimhood Orientation (PIVO) and Fear of Victimizing (FOV). PIVO was positively and FOV was negatively related to aggressive attitudes and emotions toward the outgroup (Schori-Eyal et al. 2017). A similar association between type of lessons learned from the Holocaust and attitudes toward the enemy was found in an analysis of speeches delivered by Israeli politicians (Shochat 2020). The findings from our study suggest that, although a victimhood orientation is far more prevalent, the fear of becoming a perpetrator may have a stronger effect in linking Holocaust memory to opposition to eliminatory policies.

The more predicable findings of this study are the associations between two sociodemographic variables and eliminatory stands: generation and religiosity. The generational divide was found to be especially sharp. Respondents under the age of 50 were more than twice as likely to support eliminatory positions compared to older respondents, and more than three times less likely to be among those who rejected all eliminatory statements. This reflects more than a general tendency for younger people to adopt extreme views; it indicates a clear cohort effect. In 1991, being under 50 increased the likelihood of supporting the transfer of Palestinian citizens of Israel by 56 per cent (odds ratio of 1.56), and in 2002 by 47 per cent (odds ratio of 1.47). In our March 2025 survey, the odds ratio rose to 2.2. Harsgor (2024) has shown that generational differences in public opinion were relatively minor until the early 2000s. Since then, younger Israelis have increasingly expressed more hawkish attitudes than older generations. While multiple factors may contribute to this shift, our study is consistent with declining commitment to democratic values within the Israeli education system (Pinson and Agbaria 2021).

Secularism was found to be negatively associated with support for any of the eliminatory statements. Studies conducted in other national contexts have shown that the relationship between religiosity and anti-outgroup sentiment varies across time, countries, and religious denominations (Bohman and Hjerm 2014; Sherkat and Lehman 2018). The relevant question, therefore, is: what specific features of the Israeli context make a religious worldview or lifestyle correlated with eliminatory attitudes?

Scholars of Religious Zionism have documented a long-term transformation in the movement since its emergence in the late nineteenth century (Don-Yehiya 2014; Greenblum 2016; Ravitzky 1996). Ultra-Orthodox Judaism in Israel has also experienced a profound transformation. Though initially suspicious of Zionism – particularly its militaristic dimensions – the Ultra-Orthodox public has, at least since the 1980s, when surveys begun asking respondents to identify based on categories of religiosity, consistently exhibited strong hawkish anti-Arab sentiments.

While there could be multiple reasons for both the strengthening of religious Zionism, as well as the gap in support of eliminatory stand between Religious and Secular Israelis, any attempt to explain them, must consider the settler-colonial framework and the legitimizing role of religion in sustaining a regime that violates universalist moral principles. While the settler-colonial condition predisposes the settler population to adopt supremacist and violent stances, these dynamics are especially pronounced among religious Jews.

One plausible explanation for the Secular–Religious gap in eliminatory stands is that Seculars are more likely to participate in globalized secular cultural circuits. They have historically been more inclined than others to see themselves as part of global communities – in the realms of economy, science, popular culture, sports, and more. For example, in a poll I conducted in 2021 Religious and Ultra-Orthodox were much less likely to be fans of a European soccer club. Especially in the cultural field, liberal voices are overrepresented globally, and as a result, non-religious Israelis are more exposed to the liberal international gaze directed at Israel, including moral judgment. For example, polls from the last decade showed that Religious and Ultra-Orthodox Israelis are much less likely to support considering the position of international actors such as the United Nation and the International Court of Justice (Israel Democracy Institute 2019; 2022). They are thus less attuned to the tension between their support for settler-colonial practices and the universal human rights norms embraced by segments of the global elite. Among them, Ultra-Orthodox Jews are the least exposed to this gaze and therefore far less concerned about it.

However, secularism does not function as an antidote to support for ethnic cleansing or genocide. A substantial majority of secular Jewish Israelis still expressed eliminatory views. Notably, in the survey, 80 per cent of Secular respondents reported attending synagogue less than once a year – or not at all – indicating a significant distance from religious practice. Yet 69 per cent supported the expulsion of Gazans. The mitigating effect of global cultural embeddedness or international scrutiny appears to be limited. Still, A thorough discussion of the relationship between religiosity and eliminatory positions must therefore go beyond quantitative survey analysis. It demands deeper qualitative and historical inquiry.

Conclusion

The Bible and the ethos of victimhood have long played central roles in the construction of Israeli national identity. This research examined the association between these cultural elements and eliminatory attitudes, which have become highly prevalent in Israeli society. The centrality of the Bible in individuals' lives was found to be unambiguously associated with eliminatory attitudes, across all levels of self-identified religiosity. The ethos of victimhood, by contrast, displayed a more complex relationship with such attitudes. The memory of October 7th emerged as a strong positive predictor of eliminatory attitudes, whereas the memory of the Holocaust was unexpectedly found to be negatively associated with the aspiration to eliminate Palestinians. These findings may suggest that Israeli collective memory is undergoing a restructuring: October 7th is becoming a major symbol of revengeful victimhood, while the memory of the Holocaust is an increasingly contested terrain, with some segments of Jewish Israeli society rejecting its instrumentalization to legitimize eliminatory policies.

Notes

1. "סקר חדשות 14: הרוב בישראל בעד תכנית טראמפ לתושבי הרצועה", *Chanel 14*, 6 February 2025, <https://www.c14.co.il/article/1113665>; "סקר אולפן שישי: 69% מהציבור תומך בתוכנית של טראמפ להעברת", *Chanel 12*, 8 February 2025, https://www.mako.co.il/news-politics/2025_q1/Article-b259081b841e491027.htm. In both cases, details about the questionnaire and the method were not published.

2. <https://www.haaretz.co.il/gallery/media/2025-06-10/ty-article/.premium/00000197-58f3-deed-a9bf-5dffd41d0000>
3. DEFF values between 1.2 and 1.5 fall within the acceptable range, (Groves et al. 2009).
4. On the meaning of the Traditionist category see (Yadgar 2010).
5. In a pre-election survey among Israelis, Trump beat Harris 69% to 26%. <https://www.c14.co.il/article/1050081>
6. See https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2019/02/07/phone-vs-online-surveys-why-do-respondents-answers-sometimes-differ-by-mode/?utm_source=chatgpt.com
7. Ron Gerlitz, 26 August 2025, <https://www.facebook.com/ron.gerlitz/posts/pfbid0djUKLnXjrnTMs85sVDkJMRofJoxrmQuKwf7aGWkpgwqTPLWJ4mzEwpQdaWAhh8dVI>
8. Efrat Lihi Shahaf, "Genocidal stands among the Jewish population", 3 October 2025, <https://efratshahaf.wixsite.com/my-site/post/עמדות-ג-נוסיעידיות-בקרב-האוכלוסיה-היהודית>
9. According to polls, opposition to the war among Jewish Israelis grew from 45 percent in September 2024 to 60 percent a year later. See: two surveys by Israel Democracy Institute. *A Year Since the "Swords of Iron" War – The Israeli Voice, September 2024*, and *Two Years Since the "Swords of Iron" War – The Israeli Voice, September 2024* Retrieved from: <https://dataisrael.idi.org.il/#>, [raw dataset provided by the Viterbi Center for Public Opinion and Policy Research of the Israel Democracy Institute].
10. Unlike all other polls discussed here, Lihi Shahaf did not weight her sample to correct for the underrepresentation of the ultra-Orthodox population.
11. The variables associated with support for expulsion from the West Bank were very similar to the variables predicting expulsion from the Gaza Strip. Therefore, to save space, the multivariate analysis regarding the West Bank expulsion has been omitted.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank Alin M. Ceobanu, Kobi Kabalek, Michael Shalev, and Ran Zwigenberg for their valuable comments on earlier versions of this article. I am also grateful to Joshua Rosenberger from the Penn State Survey Research Center and to Eric Plutzer for their input on methodological issues. Ron Gerlitz and Boaz Sherki from the aChord Center kindly provided raw data that informed parts of the analysis. While I deeply appreciate their support and insights, I alone am responsible for the content of this article.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Statement on ethics

The poll has been approved by the Office for Research Protections Human Research Protection Program at Penn State University on 7 November 2025 (STUDY00028157). Subjects were provided with a consent form prior to the survey that includes all the required elements of consent.

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