



## Holy War in Ancient Israel:

*Gerhard von Rad*

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## **Holy War in Ancient Israel:** Gerhard von Rad

From the earliest days of Israel's existence as a people, holy war was a sacred institution, undertaken as a cultic act of a religious community. The concept of holy war, an intriguing and sometimes disturbing theme in the Old Testament, is given its most articulate expression in this classic study by the distinguished German scholar Gerhard von Rad. For Israel, the most important feature of holy war was the demand for faith in Yahweh's saving acts. However, von Rad argues, it was not Yahweh alone who acted; rather, because they envisioned Yahweh fighting on their behalf the Israelites themselves were inspired - and obliged - to fight even harder. In this regard, the actual events differed vastly from the picture given by the biblical narratives, which downplay and often exclude the human factor and stress the exclusive warlike action of Yahweh, thus equating holy war with absolute miracle.

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