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### January 3, 2009: The Fighting in Gaza

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Title: The Fighting in Gaza

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1/3/2009--The depressing, developing catastrophe in Gaza is a source of distrust of religion for many people. I make the point in the book, *Hallowed Secularism*, that the hatreds spawned by religion are one reason that secularism is growing. Jesus said, By their fruits will you know them. Well, the fruits of institutional religion have been violence all too often. Yet, the fighting in Gaza is not about religion, at least not primarily. I read in the *Jewish Chronicle* in Pittsburgh that Hamas had made proposals and had premised acceptance of these proposals on a cessation of bombing Israeli towns. I don't say this to suggest that Hamas is in the right, but to suggest that the fighting in Gaza is not directly about the ultimate existence of Israel. There should be a rule of international relations for the United States—whichever wins a fair election is the legitimate government. When Hamas won the most recent elections, what would have happened if it had been recognized as the legitimate government? Certainly matters would be no worse than they are now. As most Israelis certainly are aware, there is no security for Israel in continuing military confrontation. There is no future in that. There must be peace. And ultimately that means convincing average people on both sides. Democracy is the only way to do that. But that means that Hamas must be permitted to govern. As long as Hamas does not cancel future elections, the democratic experiment must be permitted to go forward. Won't the Palestinian voters eventually vote for peace? Or, do we imagine they are different from us, from the rest of humanity? The religious threat in the Israeli/Palestinian conflict is not from Islam, but from the settler movement in Israel. That is where one hears that God gave all the land to the Jews. Let the Jews of America confront this imperial tendency in Torah and not worry so much about the flaws in Islam, real though they may also be.