# The Center for the Study of Conversion and Inter-Religious Encounters

# Violence, the Use of Force, and their Justification

# in the Abrahamic Religions

Although the first Biblical character to whom violence is attributed is Cain, the first person in the Bible to go to war is Abraham, who went to redeem his nephew Lot from captivity and was the first to employ violence. In all of the Abrahamic religions there is reference to violence, both physical and verbal. Some scholars in the fields of Comparative Religion and Anthropology of Religion argue that the monotheistic Abrahamic religions have a propensity for intolerance, which leads to the justification of violence due to their claim to speak for one irrefutable divine truth. In the three Abrahamic religions, the idea of ​​a holy war or a war aimed at conquering territory and disseminating their message is well known. On the other hand, there are religious mechanisms in these religions whose purpose is to prevent violence, reduce it, or to channel it to "justifiable" purposes. When do religions turn to violence? When and how do they justify it? Who is the victim of this violence, what rationalizations can be exercised from this act, and when and how is violence limited and alternative activities encouraged? In some religious systems, violence is related to sacrifice. In others, violence is directed outside the confines of the religious group. The question of violence and its justification also have a clear ethnic and gender dimension.

In some religions, internal violence was used and justified when directed against heretics and those who were suspected of undermining the authority or ideology held by hegemonic circles. In most religions, exercising violence and shunning social deviations were also justified. The approach towards violence and the question of limiting its justification in the religious context will be at the center of our attention in the coming year.

The Seminar of the Center for the Study of Conversion in 2019-2020 will be devoted to examining a wide range of issues related to violence and its justifications in the three Abrahamic religions. The discussion of the question of violence and its status also invites us to deal with issues related to hegemony and heresy, internal and external enforcement methods, and questions regarding the development and theological adjustments in light of changes in historical circumstances. What, for example, is the place of violence and how can it be justified in societies and religions that are part of the process that Norbert Elias called "the civilizing process" during which the discourse on the legitimacy of violence and the use of force was altered?