

Worse Than War – Genocide, Eliminationism, and the Ongoing Assault on Humanity
by Daniel Jonah Goldhagen.
Little, Brown 2010.

From the moment that Daniel Jonah Goldhagen's first book, *Hitler's Willing Executioners*, was published he has been a figure of controversy and for his written and spoken words he has paid a heavy price professionally and probably personally too. Modern historians love to criticise him, supporters of the State of Israel excoriate and machinate against him, and all of this must hurt. Yet, in spite of everything, Goldhagen persists in expressing his opinions and writing his meticulously researched books with undiminished commitment – it is something for which I respect him greatly, regardless of whether I feel 100% comfortable with everything which emerges from his mouth or his pen.

Worse Than War shows Goldhagen in fine form as a polemicist, indeed his zeal explodes from his writing. As the subtitle makes clear, this is a study of genocide, both historically and in today's world. Goldhagen also introduces the word 'eliminationism', an antidote in many ways to genocide, the latter's power having been diminished by abuse and over-use in recent years.

Goldhagen divides his book into three parts following an introduction entitled *Clarifying the Issues: Explaining Eliminationist Assaults, Modern Eliminationist Politics and Changing the Future*.

Each part is sub-divided in turn into what amounts to a thorough investigation of his subject combined with an impassioned polemic; in the final section he looks to the future and its threats, and posits ways of arresting eliminationist politics – it is here that he is at his most utopian even though it is hard to disagree with the sentiments he expressed. Goldhagen reserves his greatest diatribe for Political Islam, which he describes as 'today's most dangerous eliminationist political movement' [p. 510] and his equation of it with the excesses of the Soviet Union, Maoist China, imperial Japan and Nazi Germany will doubtless earn him a huge new swathe of critics and enemies!

He must care about the impact of his words, and yet he appears magnificently, defiantly not to – I find it very hard not to admire him!

Rabbi Dr Charles H Middleburgh