



Coalition for  
Jewish Learning  
**MILWAUKEE**  
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# A Note from the Editor

The Torah commands us: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Lev. 19:18). What does that mean? Because human beings are created in God's image, we affront God when we insult another person. We are obligated to treat people with respect, recognizing each individual's uniqueness and divine worth, because all human beings embody the image of God. But our society today is fraught with ethical conundrums. Oftentimes we are unsure of how to conduct ourselves on our interactions with others.

Source: Book jacket of *Love Your Neighbor and Yourself* by Elliot N. Dorff.

This issue of the *Professional Jewish Educator* is dedicated to Jewish Ethics. In keeping with this theme, I've included articles on medical and business ethics, writing ethical wills and sample

ethical dilemmas for discussion. The topic is very timely given everything we've been reading and seeing in the news lately.

When teaching values and ethics to today's students, one of the most important things is to remember that we must create in schools that model what we are teaching. Our students will learn as much if not more from us by how we work with them than in what we say.

The comprehensive annotated bibliography in this issue contains a listing of materials geared both for adults and children.

For more ideas on teaching about Jewish Ethics, please give us a call or visit the CJL Creativity Center.

*Alice Jacobson*

## Jewish Ethics: Some Basic Concepts and Ideas

**Source:** [www.myjewishlearning.com/practices/Ethics/Caring\\_For\\_Others/Ethical\\_Behavior/Concepts\\_and\\_Ideas\\_Prn.shtml](http://www.myjewishlearning.com/practices/Ethics/Caring_For_Others/Ethical_Behavior/Concepts_and_Ideas_Prn.shtml)

*The rabbis of late antiquity, building upon the Hebrew Bible, shaped the terms and categories of practical ethics that have guided discussions of ethical issues in Jewish life for the past two millennia. This survey of those terms and some of the main areas of concern of Jewish ethics in the formative period of Judaism is reprinted with permission from Encyclopedia of Judaism.*

The rabbis generally referred to morality by the phrase *bein adam la-havero* ("norms between man and his fellow-man"), which was included in the term *derekh erez* ("ways of the world"). From various expressions by some of the most authoritative rabbis, it could be inferred that morality was deemed one of the central components of Judaism: "Simon the Just said, 'The world stands on three things: Torah, *avodah* ("divine service"), and acts of lovingkindness'" (Avot 1:2). Hillel said, "What is hateful to yourself do not do to your fellow-man. This is the entire Torah, the rest is commentary. Go and study" (Babylonian Talmud, Shabbat 31a).

In terms of the content of the morality of Judaism, the basic meaning of key moral terms such as *mishpat* ("justice"), *tzedakah* ("righteousness"),

*hesed* ("kindness"), and *rahamim* ("compassion") is much the same as what is understood by current philosophic analysis. Yet there are special qualities to the morality of Judaism, which, in turn, seem to be the result of distinctive approaches.

The involvement of God in the moral struggle imparts a quality of urgency and passion which is unique to Judaism. "For I know their sorrows," says God (Exodus 3:7) and "...it shall come to pass that when he cries out unto Me that I shall hear" (Exodus 22:26). Hence the "hysterical" tone of the prophets. Injustice cannot be tolerated. Cruelty and human suffering shake the foundations of society. Judaism did not introduce new definitions of moral terms but rather revealed the true source of morality:

God rather than man, prophecy rather than wisdom. Therefore, man could no longer be complacent about the moral situation. "Righteousness was asleep until it was awakened by Abraham" (Midrash Tehillim, Psalms 110).

In Judaism, the realm of morality is not restricted to deed but rather includes man's inner world of consciousness: thoughts, emotions, intentions, attitudes, motives. All are to a degree subject to man's control and qualify for moral judgement. Thus the Bible warns against coveting (Exodus 20:14; Deuteronomy 5:18), against hating one's



brother (Leviticus 19:17), against “hardening one’s heart” (Deuteronomy 15:9,10), while the rabbis inveighed against envy, desire, and anger (Mishnah Avot 2:11) and noted that “thinking about transgression may be worse than transgression itself” (Babylonian Talmud, Yoma29a).

Biblical sensitivity to the harm as well as the good that could be done by speech was unprecedented: “Death and life are in the power of the tongue” (Proverbs 18:2 1). Man must be careful not to lie, curse or slander (Leviticus 19:11,14,16), nor to receive a false report or speak evil (Exodus 23: 1, Deuteronomy 19:16-18). The rabbis also condemned the use of flattery, hypocrisy, and obscene speech and urged the practice of clean, pleasant, and non-abusive language. In terms of the good that could be achieved by speech, the rabbis encouraged proper greetings to all, the need to cheer people with good humor, rebuke properly, and comfort with words in times of bereavement (Babylonian Talmud, Bava Batra9, Ta’anit. 22a). The *halakhah* [Jewish law] endowed the spoken word with legal force and in the area of vows and oaths applied the biblical teaching: “He shall not breach his word, he should do according to all that proceeds from his mouth” (Numbers 30:3).

In the ancient world, animals were sometimes venerated as gods or exploited for work or sport with extreme cruelty. The morality of Judaism includes concern for man’s relationship to all living creatures. They are seen as junior partners in the

building of civilization and therefore entitled to rest on the Sabbath (Exodus 20:8-10). Since “the Lord is good to all and His tender mercies are over all His works” (Psalms 145:9), man must follow suit: “A righteous man regards the life of his beast” (Proverbs 12:10). Man must provide for those animals he has domesticated and must not cause them any unnecessary pain (Babylonian Talmud, Bava Metzia 32b). A number of biblical laws seem to aim at preventing “anguish” and “frustration” to animals, particularly in regard to their care for their young (Exodus 23:5; Leviticus 22:27,28; Deuteronomy 22:4,6,7,10, 25:4). The rabbis prohibited causing animals pain for the sake of sport or hunting when not for the sake of food, and permitted experimentation with living creatures only when it seemed likely to lead to practical advances in medical treatment.

Concern for the dignity of man is another distinctive feature of the morality of Judaism, expressing itself primarily as respecting each person’s privacy and being careful not to cause anyone shame or embarrassment. The rabbis incorporated into the *halakhah* a special category of “shame” or “indignity” in awarding compensation for damages caused one’s fellow (Babylonian Talmud, Bava Kama 8:1). In this area, they showed their awareness of the irreducible dignity or worth shared by every human being, as well as their sensitivity to the individual needs of people depending upon each one’s self-image and standing in life.

## Remember Me

The RAMBAM (Rabbi Moshe ben Nachman), a great scholar who lived in the 13<sup>th</sup> century in Spain, wrote the following to his children and students:

*“Listen, my child, to the instruction of your father, and do not forget the teaching of your mother.” (Proverbs 1:8) Speak with kindness to all people always. This will save you from anger, the major cause of misdeed...Always be humble; regard every person as greater than yourself...Study Torah regularly so that you can fulfill its commandments. When you finish your studies, think carefully about what you have learned; try to translate your learning into action...When you pray, do not think about worldly matters, think only of God...Read this letter once a week, and be regular in carrying out its requirements. By doing so you will always walk in the path of God and you will be worthy of all of the good which is due to the righteous.*

What are the values that Rambam wants to pass on to his children?

Why does he ask that the letter be reread every week?

Source: *Remember Me: An Instant Lesson*. Rabbi Philip Warmflash. Torah Aura Productions. 1992.

# Ethical Dilemmas of Teaching in Today's World

By Dr. Sherry H. Blumberg

When teaching values and ethics to our students of today, one of the most important things is to remember that we must create and teach in schools that model what we are teaching. Our students will learn as much if not more from us by how we work with them than in what we say. Because of this reality, we must not only teach ethics and values to our children and students, but also to the teachers who will model these values.

In many of our religious schools and Hebrew schools today we have families that are not the classical American family of father, mother, two children, a dog. Nor are they the classic Jewish family in which we know both parents are Jewish coming from Jewish families. Today, we have families of all kinds, some with converts who have non-Jewish grandparents, some with only one parent, and some that are family by love and not marriage.

In order to model our values, the job of the educator becomes one of identifying these values, and then exploring ways to teach them by our Jewish texts and by our educational techniques. This article presents some of the ethical dilemmas that could exist in a religious school. By having discussions with the teachers and teasing out the ethical issues in these dilemmas, teachers can more easily identify both the Jewish stories and texts that might be useful, and the many ways in which they could respond ethically to the situation.

Following are a few dilemmas that could be discussed at a teacher in-service: (*The full list of 11 dilemmas is available at the CJL Creativity Center.*)

1. Parents have agreed to raise the children as Jews. The mother is Jewish, and the father is a nonpracticing Catholic. The grandparents on the father's side were not happy with the decision, the grandparents on the mother's side are nonpracticing but fervent "ethnic" Jews. The children are 8 and 10 when they are brought to the Hebrew school for the first time. The 10 year old

boy is the required 3 years attendance away from Bar Mitzvah. The girl is enthusiastic, since many of her friends are Jewish. The children have celebrated Hanukkah and Passover with the grandparents and Christmas and Easter with the others. They have attended children's programs at the local Jewish Center.

The boy is very rebellious and lost. He wants to please everyone, but he is not a great student and is frustrated. As his teacher, what do you do? What do you owe to him, to his parents, to their parents, to Jewish tradition?

2. Your school requires certain criteria for passing from one grade to the next. One particular child, who works very hard, attends regularly and is not a behavior problem has not been able to master Hebrew writing—his reading is slow but accurate. The child has dysgraphia and is not very good in English writing either, despite being tutored twice a week. He wants to move ahead with his Hebrew class. Your rules say that he cannot enter *Bet* until he can print in Hebrew and in *Bet* he will be learning script. There is no other Hebrew school in your community. What do you do?

Where is the conflict here? What do you owe the school and institution? What do you owe the child?

3. You have believed the story a student has told you and then you find out that the student has not told the truth. You are really torn. If the whole truth does not come out then the reputation of the institution will suffer. If you confront the student with the facts as you now know them, then the reputation of one of the other teachers may be damaged for sharing something told in confidence. You are torn between loyalties to institution, colleague, and your concern for the untruth or misperception of the student. What should you do?

# Medical Ethics Seminar/Game

By Dr. Larry Hurwitz

*The following is excerpted from "Recipe for Medical Ethics Seminar Game" by Lawrence S. Hurwitz, M.D. in the CAJE Curriculum Bank (now defunct). The complete lesson with 8 sample cases is available at the CJL Creativity Center.*

Gather as many real life cases as possible from a practicing medical doctor in which he/she thought there was an ethical problem, dilemma or difficulty. Write up the case(s) clearly and concisely. Gather a list of laws, rules, guidelines, responsa and /or precedents from Jewish sources that may be related, even if only tangentially, to medical/life related problems of a similar nature. Try to find materials that are internally contradictory or diametrically opposed, i.e. the school of Bet Hillel vs. Beth Shamai, for instance.

Using the broad framework of "role playing", present the case(s) to the students and ask them to use the laws/rules to try to reach conclusions as to how to solve the case, assuming they were in the role of the doctor, rabbi, family, patient or friend. Ask for justification of positions based on the rabbinic rules/laws.

Always remember that there are no absolute right answers in most cases; the values of the exercise are in the debate, not in the conclusion. Encourage "rabbinic disputation" while maintaining a sense of decorum and *derech eretz*. When the group is exhausted in ideas or has reached consensus, reveal what the real decision and outcome in the case was.

Following are two cases for discussion.

A 14 year-old boy developed a rare form of bone cancer. After surgery to remove the tumor, he had drug treatments that made him very sick. When the drug did not work and the tumor spread to other parts of his body, he was taken to the National Cancer Institute for experimental treatment. During all of this time, he was given much encouragement by

the doctors and nurses who believed he was going to get well. However, the doctors at the NCI told his parents that he was really dying and that he should be taken home.

He entered a local hospital near his home and, although his condition got worse every day, he really believed he was going to get well. One day his doctor came in and found him gasping for air, his lips blue and in a state of wild panic. He said, in a very frightened way, to his doctor, "I'm going to die, I'm really going to die! Please help me!" If you were the doctor, what would you do or say?

A 40 year-old man developed a brain tumor with a very bad outlook. He was treated but did not get better. Soon, he took to his bed, slept most of the time and eventually lost his speech. As time went on, he went into a coma and stayed in a deep sleep all the time. At that point, he was moved to a hospice.

He had two sons. The first son was 13 and never left his father's room at the hospice. He just sat in a chair and stared at him all day. He would not go to school, see his friends or leave his father's room at any time. He would not answer people who said hello or asked how he was.

The second son was 16. He went to school, parties, stayed at friends' homes almost every night and never came to see his father, not even once, even when asked. He acted as if his father did not exist at all or was already dead.

What do you make of the two sons' behavior? Why did they act the way they did? What would you do to help them? What are their responsibilities, if any, toward their father? How do you think it would be for you if, God forbid, such a thing happened? What would you say to them if you were a friend? A rabbi? A doctor? A teacher?



# Ideas for Teaching about Medical Ethics

by Karen Lieberman, JD, MSJS

I developed and taught a class on Jewish medical ethics for 10th graders at Congregation Beth Israel. It was a one semester elective, and each week we looked at a different topic in medical ethics that the students had almost certainly read or heard about. Some were “hot button” topics, e.g., abortion, assisted suicide and euthanasia, stem cell research, genetic testing. I chose certain others because of their relevance to teens, e.g., tattooing and body piercing, organ donation (which each teen is asked to make a decision about when obtaining a driver’s license). I also did one week on the mitzvah of *bikkur holim*, a central tenet of medical ethics for Jews.

Each week, we looked at the particular topic in medical ethics from the American secular point of

view and from a Jewish point of view. My course objectives were to help students recognize and appreciate (1) that the American secular approach and the Jewish approach to resolving ethical dilemmas can be and often is very different, and the outcome is also often very different; (2) that, as modern Jews, we live in two worlds, i.e., the larger secular culture and the Jewish community. Our thinking is influenced by both of these worlds, and it’s important to be knowledgeable about both as we make decisions and choices about how we’re going to live our lives; and (3) that classical Jewish texts, even though ancient, are still relevant to us as modern Jews and can help us to resolve very modern ethical problems, even those that the authors of the texts could never have envisioned or imagined.

## Ethics of Business

Excerpted from: Teaching Hot Topics, “Ethics of Business”, Pages 107-128, A.R.E. Publishing, Inc., 2003.

The Talmud says that the first thing a person is asked in the world to come is, “Have you been honest in business?” (Shabbat 31b). Clearly, Judaism regards honorable business practice with high esteem. The Ten Commandments teach us not to steal and not to covet. The biblical “holiness code” enumerates ways to live in a sanctified manner. It includes warnings against dealing deceitfully of falsely with one another (Leviticus 19:11, 36 and 25:17) and oppressing others (Leviticus 19:13). One manifestation of these warnings is the command to be scrupulous in maintaining honest weights and measures (Leviticus 19:25). These principles underlie many of the intricate rules and regulations for monitoring business practices.

In our day, when making business decisions, we might ask ourselves these two questions: “What am I *legally* allowed to do?” and “What is the *right* thing to do?” From a Jewish perspective, these two questions are not separated. “What is *legal* and what is *right* go hand in hand. If what we’re about to do is not moral – that is, if our intentions are not respectful, honorable, and dignified – then, what we’re about to do is not legal, not allowed.

The paragraphs below summarize key considera-

tions regarding Business Ethics.

We are not to cheat, mislead, take advantage or one another, or otherwise treat others unfairly.

Some unethical business practices are most comparable to stealing, as they led to outright losses to another individual. Other practices deceive in more subtle ways, such as through withholding important information, concealing the truth, false flattery, misrepresentation, and so on. Judaism condemns both types of practices.

Judaism lays down basic ground rules for ethical business practice. Yet, the parameters of acceptable versus unacceptable business interactions always take local custom into account.

An emphasis on the immorality of mental deception is one of the distinguishing factors in Judaism’s approach to business ethics.

A “Global economy” increasingly characterizes our world today. This reality raises new ethical challenges for business.



# Ethical Wills

*"We all want to be remembered and everyone leaves something behind."*

## What Is an Ethical Will?

Ethical wills are a way to share your values, blessings, life's lessons, hopes and dreams for the future, love, and forgiveness with your family, friends, and community.

Ethical wills are not new. The Hebrew Bible first described ethical wills 3000 years ago (Genesis Ch. 49). References to this tradition are also found in the Christian Bible (John Ch. 15-18) and in other cultures. Initially, ethical wills were transmitted orally. Over time, they evolved into written documents. 'Ethical wills' are not considered legal documents as compared to 'living wills' and your 'last will and testament' which are legal documents.

Today, ethical wills are being written by people at turning points and transitions in their lives and when facing challenging life situations. They are usually shared with family and community while the writer is still alive.

Ethical wills may be one of the most cherished and meaningful gifts you can leave to your family and community.

## Why Write an Ethical Will?

There are many personal reasons for writing an ethical will. Here are some of them:

- We all want to be remembered, and we all will leave something behind
- If we don't tell our stories and the stories from whom we come, no one else will and they will be lost forever
- It helps you identify what you value most and what you stand for
- By articulating what we value now, we can take steps to insure the continuation of those values for future generations
- You learn a lot about yourself in the process of writing an ethical will
- It helps us come to terms with our mortality by creating something of meaning that will live on after we are gone
- It provides a sense of completion in our lives

Source: [www.ethicalwill.com](http://www.ethicalwill.com)

## A Code of Jewish Ethics

By Rabbi Joseph Telushkin

*A Code of Jewish Ethics, Volume 1: You Shall Be Holy* is a monumental work on the vital topic of personal character and integrity by one of the premier Jewish scholars and thinkers of our time. With the stated purpose of restoring ethics to its central role in Judaism, Rabbi Joseph Telushkin offers hundreds of examples from the Torah, the Talmud, rabbinic commentaries, and contemporary stories to illustrate how ethical teachings can affect our daily behavior. The subjects dealt with are ones we all encounter. They include judging other people fairly; knowing when forgiveness is obligatory, optional, or forbidden; balancing humility and self-esteem; avoiding speech that shames others; restraining our impulses of envy, hatred, and revenge; valuing truth but knowing when lying is permitted; understanding why God

is the ultimate basis of morality; and appreciating the great benefits of Torah study.

*A Code of Jewish Ethics, Volume 2: Love Your Neighbor As Yourself* covers such topics as love and kindness, hospitality, visiting the sick, comforting mourners, charity, relations between Jews and non-Jews, compassion for animals, tolerance, self-defense, and end-of-life issues. It offers hundreds of practical examples from the Torah, the Talmud, the Midrash, and both ancient and modern rabbinic commentaries—as well as contemporary anecdotes—all teaching us how to care for one another each and every day.

Visit: [www.randomhouse.com/crown/codeofjewishethics/discussion\\_guide.pdf](http://www.randomhouse.com/crown/codeofjewishethics/discussion_guide.pdf) for a study guide to key ethical issues raised in *A Code of Jewish Ethics*.

# Bibliography on Ethics

from the CJL Library/Media Center

Compiled by Laurie Herman, CJL Library/Media Center Director

## Books for Adults

***Ahavath Chesed: Kindness as Required by God*** – by the Chofetz Chaim

This is the classic and comprehensive guide to understanding the concept of chesed and incorporating acts of kindness in your daily lives. The first section deals with laws of loans, the second with chesed, and the third with helping the poor, the sick and those in mourning – as well as showing hospitality to guests.

***The Book of Jewish Values: A Day-by-Day Guide to Ethical Living (2000)***– by Rabbi Joseph Telushkin

Rabbi Telushkin, one of today's most respected and prolific Judaic authors, has created a day-by-day manual to help us lead a decent, kind and honest life. He presents an ethical issue a day, offering advice for issues as disparate as "If you have a bad temper", to "Should a Jew donate his organs?" to "Start your day with Gratitude". Telushkin raises questions and offers teachings to help us lead more dignified, ethical lives.

***A Code of Jewish Ethics – v.1-You Shall Be Holy (2006) and v.2 —Love Your Neighbor as Yourself (2009)*** – by Rabbi Joseph Telushkin

This 3 volume series (volume 3 has not yet been published) deals with different aspects of conducting one's ethical life. Volume 1 deals with character development, while Volume 2 covers interpersonal relationships. Volume 1 has a large section on vices and virtues, as well as God and ethics, speech and living a holy life. Volume 2 includes topics such as laws of kindness, justice, hospitality, visiting the sick, animals, and matters of life and death.

***The Committed Life: Principles for Good Living from Our Timeless Past (1998)*** – by Rebbetzin Esther Jungreis

Without claiming it's a book on ethics, Rebbetzin Jungreis provides guidelines to apply lessons of our faith for positive and moral living. She includes topics such as forgiveness, responsibility, faith and commitment to marriage.

***Contemporary Jewish Ethics (1979)*** – edited by Menachem Marc Kellner

Published by the Sanhedrin Press, this paperback looks at issues including abortion, death, women's rights, political ethics, medical ethics, sexual ethics and the Holocaust. Each topic has a different writer, including well-respected theologians including Norman Lamm, Emil Fackenheim, Martin Buber, Fred Rosner, and Eliezer Berkovits – among others.

***Happiness and the Human Spirit: The Spirituality of Becoming the Best You Can Be (2009)*** – by Rabbi Abraham Twerski

According to Rabbi Twerski, to be truly happy, one must be a spiritual being. How do we achieve this? Twerski writes about the importance of gaining self-awareness and humility; making good choices; developing patience; making the most of things; improving oneself; growing in compassion; acquiring perspective, purpose, truth and facilitating change.

***Life is a Test: How to Meet Life's Challenges Successfully (2006)*** – by Rebbetzin Esther Jungreis

Rebbetzin Jungreis, a Holocaust survivor, prescribes helpful and common sense advice for leading a life of chesed and worth.

***Living a Life That Matters: Resolving the Conflict Between Conscience and Success (2001)*** – by Harold S. Kushner

Rabbi Kushner claims that the "path to a truly successful and significant life is through friendship, through family, and through acts of generosity and self-sacrifice". He says that the way to truly matter, to have our lives gain significance, is through affecting the life of even one person in a positive way. An earlier Kushner title that is also relevant to the topic of personal ethics is ***When All You've Ever Wanted Isn't Enough: The Search for a Life that Matters (1986)***, which also deals with the importance of living a life of meaning through positively affecting the lives of others.



***Jewish Ethics and Halakhah for Our Time: Sources and Commentary (1984)*** - by Basil F. Herring  
Herring looks at key areas that raise ethical dilemmas including abortion, euthanasia, homosexuality, drugs, smoking, parents and children, and legal issues - including capital punishment. For each dilemma, he poses a question and then sites Biblical and Talmudic references, before going into commentaries and a discussion. This book is from a Traditional viewpoint.

***Jewish Personal and Social Ethics (1990 edition)*** – by Louis Jacobs

Behrman House printed this highly accessible volume that examines Jewish ethics and the relationship of the Jew to society. It includes 23 areas of discussion, including “life and death”, “humans and animals”, “sexuality”, “gambling” and ecology – among many others. Its approach is concise and to the point.

***Love Your Neighbor (1977)*** – by Zelig Pliskin

This book is arranged according to the Chumash, or five books of the Torah, citing specific verses that deal with man’s relationship to man. The material used has been culled from over 270 sources.

***Love Your Neighbor and Yourself: A Jewish Approach to Modern Personal Ethics (2003)***– by Elliot N. Dorff

Rabbi Dorff (Conservative) looks at the moral challenges that confront us at home and at work. He draws from modern sources, as well as Jewish tradition, suggesting ways to deal with these moral challenges today. The book deals with issues such as privacy, family relations, sexuality, family violence and forgiveness, among others. Be sure to check out Dorff’s book on Medical Ethics, ***Matters of Life & Death: A Jewish Approach to Medical Ethics*** (as well as Fred Rosner’s books on medical ethics).

***Pirke Avot and Commentaries on Pirke Avot***

What better and more definitive source on Jewish ethics? We have a wide variety of commentaries on Pirke Avot in our library.

***The Ten Commandments of Character: Essential Advice for Living an Honorable, Ethical Honest Life (1993)*** – by Rabbi Joseph Telushkin

In this warm and highly readable book about ethical behavior, Telushkin outlines his “ten prerequisites for doing good together”. He handles topics from everyday life such as smoking, being overweight, responding to telemarketers and the problems of being completely honest. The book reads as a contemporary guide for distinguishing right from wrong.

***Voices of Wisdom: Jewish Ideals and Ethics for Everyday Living (1980)*** – by Francine Klagsbrun

Klagsbrun’s book is organized by topic – including many topics involved in daily living. Under each topic, she includes passages from Jewish literature of all ages that pertain to the topic, and can guide us towards ethical behavior. Some categories include: “Relating to Others”, “Health and Medicine”, Family Relationships”, Study Scholarship and Superstition”, “Work, Wealth and Philanthropy”, and “The Value of Life”.

## **Curricular Materials for Teachers:**

***A Bridge to Our Tradition: Pirkei Avot (2001)*** – by Nachama Skolnik Moskowitz

Textbook and Teacher’s Guide for 6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> graders organized thematically, that looks at the text of Pirkei Avot. The book is described as helping students to “navigate the complicated journey of Jewish character development.

***It’s a Mitzvah!: Step-by-Step to Jewish Living( 1995)*** – by Bradley Shavit Artson

Rabbi Artson ‘s book offers many practical ways to live ethically – such as caring for the environment, honoring one’s parents, visiting the sick and compassion to animals.

***How Do I Decide? A Contemporary Jewish Approach to What’s Right and What’s Wrong (1989)***– by Roland B. Gittelsohn

Behrman House textbook for grades 7-10 that examines ethical issues dealing with “life and death”, “family”, “men and women”, “community” and “endings”. It uses personal experience and case studies to address contemporary issues.

***Jewish Ethics, Philosophy and Mysticism (1969)*** – by Louis Jacobs

The first third of this text looks at specific Jewish writings dealing with ethics and examines what Judaism says about speaking evil; right and wrong; truth and falsehood; on hatred, revenge and pride; on gratitude; and how a good Jew should behave.

***The Still Small Voice*** and ***The Still Small Voice Today (1955 & 1957)*** – by William B. Silverman

Although some sections are quite dated today, these companion textbooks can be useful to the teacher looking for specific writings from Biblical, Rabbinic and post-biblical religious literature that apply to ethical issues.

***Teaching Jewish Virtues: Sacred Sources and Arts Activities (1999)*** – by Susan Freeman

This is an invaluable source for the classroom or adult educator dealing with ethics. Each chapter presents a distinct virtue or value, providing an overview, text study, and activities for different age groups. The first chapter discusses middot, or Jewish virtues, themselves, providing an explanation and background information.

***Why Be Good? Sensitivities and Ethics in Rabbinic Literature (1985)*** – by Naomi F. Towvim with Jan Rabinowitch and Laura German Samuels

Produced by the BJE of Greater Boston, this curriculum for teenagers looks at “Who is Responsible?” “Shalom Ba-Bayit”, “Across Generations”, and “Ill Gotten Gains?”, “Deception”, “Tzedakah and Gemilut Hasadim”, and “Do Not Separate Yourself from the Community”.

## Children’s Books

***The Golden Rule (2007)*** – by Ilene Cooper. Illus. by Gail Swiatowska

In this beautiful picture book, a grandfather explains to his grandson the importance of treating others how you wish to be treated.

***Blessed Are You (1997)*** – written and illustrated by Michelle Edwards

*Blessed are You* is a book of everyday Hebrew prayers. Each double-page spread presents a blessing in Hebrew, English and in transliteration. Michele Edwards’ bright colored full-page illustrations show children engaged in an activity that illustrates the blessing.

***Ten Good Rules (2007)*** – by Susan Remick Topeck

This simple picture book introduces the Ten Commandments to children from a Jewish perspective.

## Films:

***Eye of the Storm (1970)***

Award-winning documentary of an experiment in prejudice conducted in 1968 in a third grade all-white classroom. Students were taught to discriminate against classmates based on eye color (blue eye – brown eye experiment). The children’s behavior and abilities changed based on whether they felt superior or inferior. 25 min. AGE: 9 to Adult.

***For Goodness Sake? (1996)***

Hosted by Dennis Prager, this short humorous video deals with the subject of goodness – analyzing why people aren’t always good and offering suggestions on how to include goodness in their daily lives. 17 min. AGE: 10 to Adult.

***The Hangman (1964)***

This animated trigger film is based on Maurice Ogden’s award-winning poem and narrated by Herschel Bernardi. It follows the same idea as the famous writing by Martin Niemoller (“First they came for the communists, but I didn’t speak up because I wasn’t a communist...”). The hangman in the film executes people in the town, one at a time, and no one interferes until there is only one person left- and no one left to protest on his behalf. 12 min. AGE: 12 to Adult.

***The Lottery (1969)***

Adaptation of a tension-filled short story by Shirley Jackson, this trigger film can be used to discuss scapegoatism, adherence to tradition, hypocrisy, the role of the individual in society, and the

bystander's reaction to a violent episode. 18 min AGE: 14 to Adult.

***Not in Our Town: Heroes (1995)***

This film focuses on ways in which the town of Billings, Montana, has fought against hate crimes by white supremacist groups – against Native Americans, African Americans and Jews. Several examples are shown, with focus on an act of anti-Semitism at Chanukah time. 20 min. AGE: 12 to Adult.

***Not in Our Town II: Citizens Respond to Hate (1996)***

This film continues where its predecessor (“Not in Our Town”) left off, showing how many other communities around the U.S. reacted to what the folks in Billings, Montana did by taking action against racist and hate crimes in their own areas. *Note: this film does not deal with any specifically Jewish hate crimes as its predecessor did.* 56 min. AGE: 12 to Adult.

***Not in This Town (1997)***

This made-for-TV movie dramatizes the events depicted in the documentary “Not in Our Town”. The story focuses on Tamie Schnitzer, a citizen of Billings, who, with spoke and acted out against the hate crimes in her community – and then her family was affected. Focus here is on the Chanukah incident. 2 hr. Rated PG. AGE: 13 to Adult.

***Quiet Rage: The Stanford Prison Experiment (1992)***

Based on the 1971 psychological experiment, this film shows what happens when you put good people in an evil place. Volunteer students from Stanford were put into a prison, where some were guards, while others were prisoners. The film uses original footage and includes post-experiment interviews. The experiment, which was to last 2 weeks, had to be terminated after only 6 days. 50 min. AGE: 16 to Adult.

***The Wave (1981)***

A riveting dramatization of an incident that took place at a northern California high school in 1967. In response to a student questioning how the German people could claim ignorance of the Holocaust, the teacher initiates a classroom experiment, which eventually pits student against student. The school movement he begins, the Wave, uses theories of power, discipline and superiority to show how ordinary people can become involved in an exclusive or a “hate movement”. 46 min. AGE: 12 to Adult.

***Bioethics Series:***

***Dr. Grey's Baby (1998)***

***The Last Infusion (1999)***

***My Name is John (1999)***

***A Question of Authority (1991)***

This series of 4 videotapes, produced by the Jerusalem Religious Council, deal with the subjects of euthanasia, abortion, cloning and making ethical choices in at-risk emergency situations. Approx. 30-42 min. ea. AGE: 14 to Adult

***Children's Series:***

***The Adventures of Agent Emes (2003-present)***

Agent Emes is an orthodox boy detective who helps to thwart misdeeds against the Jews. Some episodes of this humorous series concentrate more heavily on Jewish holidays, while others deal with middot, or ethical issues. There are currently 8 episodes in the series Approx. 30-45 min. AGE: 5 to 11.

***Alef...Bet...Blast Off! (1995-1998)***

This series for children illustrates how traditional Jewish values apply to modern life. In each episode, Mitzvah Mouse uses his magic matzah meal to whisk puppet children David and Rachel back in time to briefly meet important people in Jewish history – and to explore a theme (tikkun olam, freedom, honesty, helping those less fortunate than you). There are 8 distinct episodes, and 4 deal with Jewish holidays as well. AGE: 4 to 8.

# A Bridge to Our Tradition: Pirkei Avot

**Pirkei Avot • 4:1 • דק"י אבות**  
**BEN ZOMA SAID, "WHO?"**  
 Ben Zoma said, "Who is wise?"  
 The one who learns from everyone, as it says, "From all who would teach me, have I gained understanding..." (Pirkei 1:18)

**Who is mighty?**  
 One who controls one's [transmit] anger, as it says, "One who is able to anger is better than the mighty and one who rules one's spirit than one who conquers a city." (Pirkei 1:12)

**Respecting Others**  
 One of our responsibilities is to respect others, for like us, they are created in God's image. But that is often easier said than done because:

- there are people we like.
- there are people we do not like.
- there are people we may not be friendly with, but dislike them.

Shmuel HaGoran recognized human nature and following advice:  
 DO NOT REJOICE WHEN YOUR ENEMY FALLS.  
 DO NOT LET YOUR HEART BE GLAD WHEN ENEMIES FALL.

1. With a partner, read the comic below.

**LEAVE ME ALONE, AND DON'T SPEAK TO ME!**  
**GET OUT OF MY SIGHT, AND DON'T TALK TO ME!**  
**LET ME GO!**

**LET ME GO! LET ME GO! LET ME GO!**  
**LET ME GO! LET ME GO! LET ME GO!**  
**LET ME GO! LET ME GO! LET ME GO!**

**LET ME GO! LET ME GO! LET ME GO!**  
**LET ME GO! LET ME GO! LET ME GO!**  
**LET ME GO! LET ME GO! LET ME GO!**

2. Together, first figure out who might rejoice. Then the boy telling one of his friends what happened. He says:

**Is it mine or is it yours?**  
 There are four kinds of human beings:  
 One that says, "What is mine is mine and what is yours is yours." This is the good kind, although some may find it in the Southern kind.  
 One that says, "What is mine is yours and what is yours is mine." This is the simple-minded kind.  
 One that says, "What is yours is mine and what is mine is yours." This is the bad kind.  
 One that says, "What is mine is mine and what is yours is yours." This is the best kind of behavior, because the people of Israel and the nations of the world are all created in the image of God.

Sample pages from a *Bridge to Our Tradition: Pirkei Avot*, by Nachama Skolnick Moskowitz. See bibliography on page 9 for more information.

**Pirkei Avot • 1:14 • דק"י אבות**  
**HILLEL SAID, "IF?"**  
 Hillel said to say, "If I am not for myself, who will be for me?" In other words, when we feel good about ourselves and someone for what we need in life, then others will "be for us" as well. There's an old Greek story of a poor farmer who was taking his produce to the market. One wheel on his cart was old and got stuck in the mud. He did not think he had the power to push his cart out of the mud, and so he sat for a really long time, crying. Finally, he got up and put his shoulder to the cart and encouraged his donkey to pull. His donkey happened to find that then a Greek god came and helped the man push his cart out. As he finished off with the poor man, the god said, "Hillel helps those who help themselves."

With a partner, answer these questions:  
 1. What did the man in the story do to show that he was "for himself"?  
 2. When the man showed that he was willing to try and take care of himself, even help, did he get?

**Hillel said, "If I am not for myself, who will be for me?"**  
 And if I am for myself alone, then what am I?  
 And if not now, when?

**SOUP KITCHEN**



# Marsha B. Cohen's Jewish Ethics Resource Site

This website is designed and maintained by Marsha B. Cohen, who teaches "Ethics of Jewish Living" for the Florence Melton Adult Mini-School in Miami, Florida. Its purpose is to provide Melton students, and anyone else who is interested, with access to online resource materials for learning and reflection. It has no official connection with or endorsement from the [Florence Melton Adult Mini-School website](#) or FMAMS.

## **General Thoughts on Jewish Ethics Definitions and Concepts (Areyvut.org)**

from the *Sh'ma* archive (CLAL)

### **"The Question of Jewish Ethics Today"**

Steven S. Schwarzschild

### **"The Particularism of Jewish Ethics"**

Michael Wyschogrod

### **"The Non-Jew in Jewish Ethics"**

Gerald Blidstein

### **"The Ethics of Preferring One's Own"**

Norbert Samuelson

### **"The Sin Against Persons"**

Arnold Jacob Wolf

### **"The Bystander's Duty to Rescue in Jewish Law"**

Aaron Kirschenbaum (*Journal of Religious Ethics*)

### **"The Dignity of Difference: How to Avoid the Clash of Civilizations" (pdf)**

Jonathan Sacks (FPRI)

## **Medical Ethics and Bio-Ethics**

### **"Why Jewish Medical Ethics?"**

Daniel Eisenberg, M.D.

### **Jewish Law Articles: Medicine/Health**

### **Articles on Jewish Medical and Bioethical Issues**

Jewish Virtual Library

### **Controversies regarding Brain Death, Transplants and Jewish Law**

Halachic Organ Donation Society (HODS)

### **Organ and Tissue Donation Informational Brochure (pdf file)**

Committee on Jewish Law and Standards, Rabbinical Assembly

### **Chronicle of a Son-to-Father Kidney Donation and Transplant**

#### **"Selling Organs Should be Legal"**

Robert Berman (*Jerusalem Post*)

#### **"Human Kidneys: The New Cash Crop"**

Nancy Scheper-Hughes (*New Internationalist*)

#### **"Abortion in Jewish Law"**

Daniel Eisenberg, M.D.

### **"Physician-Assisted Suicide Under Jewish Law"**

Steven H. Resnicoff

## **Living Wills and Advance Medical Directives**

### **"The 'Halachic Health Care Proxy'"**

Chaim Dovid Zwiebel (*Jewish Law*)

### **Halachic Living Will Forms**

(downloadable state-specific versions, plus emergency wallet card)

Agudat Yisrael of America (*Jewish Law*)

### **"Jewish Medical Directives for Health Care"**

(pdf file-includes downloadable checklist form)

Committee on Jewish Law and Standards,

Rabbinical Assembly

### **"The Terri Schiavo Case: Related Ethical Dilemmas"**

Daniel Eisenberg, M.D.

### **"The Death of Terri Schiavo: An Epilogue"**

Daniel Eisenberg, M.D.

### **"Judaism and Cosmetic Surgery"**

Daniel Eisenberg, M.D.

## **Financial and Business Ethics**

### **Jewish Law Articles: Economics/Marketplace: Professional Ethics**

### **Judaism in the Workplace: Professional Ethics and Halacha", Darche Noam (misc. articles)**

### **The Jewish Ethicist**

Center for Business Ethics

### **Issues in Business Ethics (torah.org)**

### **"The Simple Life: The Case Against Ostentation in Jewish Law"**

by Dr. Hershey H. Friedman (CUNY)



## What Are Jewish Ethics

“Moses received the Torah from Sinai and gave it over to Joshua. Joshua gave it over to the Elders, the Elders to the Prophets, and the Prophets gave it over to the Men of the Great Assembly.” Thus begins The Ethics of our Fathers, the “Jewish Handbook of Ethics.” On the surface, it is difficult to grasp the link between the transmission of Torah and ethics, but in fact, by starting with these words, Rabbi Judah the Prince, compiler of The Ethics, is alluding to the core of Jewish ethics. Man-made ethics are driven by (personal) experience and current understandings. Often the premise is: just about anything is allowed as long as it doesn’t interfere with another individual’s emotional and material security. “Interfering with another” is obviously very subjective. Today, for example, many contemporary ethicists condone abortion but protest capital punishment for a serial murderer; or they advocate euthanasia but condemn the consumption of meat.<sup>1</sup>

Torah ethics, on the other hand, are intended to raise a person above his or her natural limited vision and basic animalistic desires. For example, in the Torah it is not sufficient that we don’t harm another, rather we are obligated to assist others, and not because it makes the benefactor feel good, but because that is our G-d given mission. Torah is also absolute in its mandates. The Torah prohibits murder regardless of the person’s age or economic class.

At their worst, man-made ethics are simply misconstrued, and at their best they still do not take into consideration the higher mission and goal of the human being. Man-made ethics teaches: “Do it unless it’s destructive.” Torah ethics tells us: “Don’t do it unless it’s constructive.” “Moses received the Torah from Sinai and gave it over to Joshua.” And our ethics, too, are part of that Torah.

### Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> In fact, less than a century ago a civilized society, with their own code of ethics, justified the creation of gas chambers and crematoria, and the massacre of one and a half million Jewish children.

**Source:** [www.askmoses.com/en/article/158,91787/What-are-Jewish-Ethics.html](http://www.askmoses.com/en/article/158,91787/What-are-Jewish-Ethics.html)

*Continued from “Save the Dates,” Page 15*

topics of illegal immigration & racial discrimination. Pre-movie introduction at 3:30 – led by Jody Hirsh. Movie screening: 4:00-6:20 Ages 14 to Adult (In Hebrew, French & English w/subtitles)

### **January 24 – “Praying with Lior” (2008)**

Do children with special needs have a unique connection to G-d and spirituality? Prepare to be charmed by Lior, a 12-year-old Jewish boy with Down Syndrome, who is preparing for his Bar Mitzvah in this fascinating documentary. that was a Jewish film festival favorite. A talkback will follow the screening. Ages 12 to Adult.

***Watch for Cutting Edge Israel: Contemporary Israeli Short Film Series this fall.***

## Save the Dates

**Creativity Center Open Evening**, Tuesday, Wednesday, September 9, 2009 -7:00 - 8:30 pm in the CJL Creativity Center located in the the Harry & Rose Samson Family JCC. Please RSVP to Alice at (414) 963-2727. (At least 3 people must register to make this viable.)

**Day of Discovery**, Sunday, January 17, 2010, 9:00 am - 3:30 pm at the JCC.

**Nathan and Esther Pelz Holocaust Education Resource Center Programs for 2009-2010.** For more information contact Bonnie Shafrin at 414-963-2719 or [bonnies@milwaukeejewish.org](mailto:bonnies@milwaukeejewish.org)

**Monday, October 12, 2009**

Holocaust Educators Trip to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, DC

**Sunday, November 8, 2009**

2009 Kristallnacht Commemoration; 4:00 pm; Jewish Home and Care Center

**Tuesday, March 16, 2010**

Film: *Defiance*

Jewish Partisans and Holocaust Resistance Series and Holocaust Film Series

Talkback and discussion with Jody Hirsh in the Daniel Soref Community Hall in the Harry and Rose Samson Family JCC

Co-sponsored by the Harry and Rose Samson Family JCC

**Sunday, April 11, 2010**

Yom Hashoah Commemoration; 2:00 pm; Harry and Rose Samson Family JCC

**Monday, April 12, 2010**

The Jewish Novel Class: *The Gates of the Forest* by Elie Wiesel

Jewish Partisans and Holocaust Resistance Series

1:30 pm.

Instructor: Jody Hirsh

Harry and Rose Samson Family JCC

**Thursday, April 15**

The Bielski Partisans—Presenter: Sharron Rennert, granddaughter of Tuvia Bielski

Jewish Partisans and Resistance Series

7:30 pm at the Harry and Rose Samson Family JCC

Co-sponsored by the Harry and Rose Samson Family JCC and Lubavitch of Wisconsin

**2 New Film Series presented by the Coalition for Jewish Learning and the Harry and Rose Samson Family Jewish Community Center, Fall/Winter 2009.** All Films are FREE and open to the community. Presented at the Harry & Rose Samson Family Jewish Community Center

***Climbing Ethical Mountains: Films dealing with Moral Choices in the Modern World*** – Presented Sundays, 4:00-6:00 pm.

**November 8 – “Waltz with Bashir” (Vals Im Bashir) (2008)**

Nominated for a 2008 Academy Award! In this unique animated film, an Israeli soldier tries to reclaim lost memories of his experiences in the 1982 Lebanon War. (In Hebrew w/subtitles) Talkback led by Yoni Zvi, a former soldier in the IDF. Ages 18 and up.

**December 6 – “Live and Become” (Va, Vis et Deviens) (2005)**

Compelling drama about a 9-year-old Ethiopian boy (who is not Jewish), airlifted to Israel as part of Operation Moses – who is not Jewish. The film follows his life from ages 9-23 in Israel, dealing with

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# Professional Jewish Educator

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### Programs and Resources

Congregational School Initiative • Consultation to Schools • Creativity Center • Day of Discovery • Day School Scholarship Allocation • Distance Learning Programs • Library/Media Center • Mentoring • Nathan and Esther Pelz Holocaust Education Resource Center • Synagogue Educator Council (SEC) • Teacher Preparation • Teacher Recognition and Incentive Program (TRIP) • Teen Enrichment Programs

### For further information about any items in this issue or our programs and resources, please contact:

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