

Jewish Values in the Marketplace

How can Jewish values direct our conduct in the workplace? Some people are under the impression that Judaism concerns itself only with kosher food, prayer in the synagogue, and the celebration of Shabbat and Festivals. Business affairs, they reason, are governed by common sense and one's personal sense of ethics. One's conduct in the workplace has little to do with being Jewish.

Nothing could be further from the truth! Business ethics revolve around the virtues of faith, integrity and honesty. The way we conduct our business affairs reflects our own belief in God, and may also make an impact on how others view the Jewish people and by extension, Judaism.

In this first Morasha class on Jewish business ethics we will explore the Jewish attitude toward conducting business honestly. The next class will deal with specific ethical dilemmas faced in the workplace and how Jewish law would resolve them.

Some questions we address in this class include:

- What does one's conduct in business say about his religious beliefs, or lack thereof?
- What does Judaism have to say about ethics in the workplace? What does religion have to do with running your business?
- Why should we, as Jews, be concerned about the impressions made by the way we conduct our business affairs?

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INTRODUCTION. NET WORTH VS. SELF-WORTH

Everywhere you look, there's compelling evidence that the single-minded pursuit of wealth often leads smart people to do incredibly stupid things – things that destroy what money can't buy.

Last week, the big story was the conviction of Raj Rajaratnam on 14 counts of insider trading, a greed-driven scheme that will lead to obliterated reputations, long prison terms, or both, for senior leaders at IBM, McKinsey, and other blue-chip institutions.

A few weeks before that, the big story was the resignation and humiliation of Berkshire Hathaway's David Sokol, the likely successor to CEO Warren Buffet, undone by his eagerness to cash suspiciously timed investments in the stock of a company Berkshire later bought.

*And next week on HBO we get to see the made-for-TV adaptation of the bestseller *Too Big to Fail*, a blow-by-blow chronicle of the subprime-mortgage fiasco – an exercise in collective greed that came pretty close to destroying the world as we know it.*

*Every time I read or see these sorry dispatches, I ask myself the same questions. How is it that brilliant people with more money than they'll ever need allow their hunger for even more money to cause them to lose everything? How much is enough, and why are people willing to risk so much to get more? If money is so alluring, how is it that so many people of great wealth also seem so unhappy? (*Money and the Meaning of Life* Posted on Harvard Business Review: May 17, 2011)*

The bloggers at Harvard Business Review were not the first to be astounded by the destructive nature of man's desire for money. The question they posed – why do brilliant people allow their hunger for money to cause their personal ruin – was addressed by the wisest of men thousands of years ago. King Solomon put the answer quite succinctly:

אודהב כסף לא ישבע כסף...
 ...כסף לא ישבע כסף...

One who loves money will never be satisfied by it...
 (Kohelet/Ecclesiastes 5:9)

The lure of money, the push for ever-higher profits, the drive to succeed at all costs – all common features of the cut-throat corporate culture these days – knows no bounds in the depth of the human psyche. The desire for more and more will never be satiated. And so we arrive at the situation we have known for a number of years: the corporate world self-exploding, bringing down the rest of the world's economy with it.

The need for a moral reorientation, for a shift back to ethical perspectives, has never been more pressing. As the economy sinks, we must head for the life boat of Divine values to teach us the ethics necessary to maintain credibility while pursuing profits. Indeed, it looks as if some of the corporate titans that manned the ship are starting to come to this very realization.

Two years ago I received an amazing invitation. A group known as the Gathering of Titans, comprised of 100 CEOs of major corporations in America, annually get together at a retreat – in this case at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology – to discuss issues relevant to their business practices and to hear from prominent experts in various aspects of corporate management. As part of their program, they asked if I could come and lecture as well.

Stunned, I asked what role I could possibly play. I have no business expertise. My rabbinic background hardly qualifies me to teach these titans of industry how to improve their corporate bottom line.

“We understand that,” they countered. “That’s not why we want you to address us. We all know how to make money. But somehow along the way we’ve come to confuse our self-worth with our net worth. More and more of us have come to recognize that in the process of making ourselves very wealthy we’ve impoverished ourselves spiritually. We’ve cut corners, we compromised our values and we realize we’re in great danger of losing our souls.”

The very first thing I did was to check if the Messiah had already arrived. It was very hard for me to believe that with all of the bad press business leaders were getting there was in fact a consciousness of conscience, an awareness by many that capitalism and moral principles not only could but must coexist (Rabbi Benjamin Blech, “Are Business Ethics an Oxymoron?” from Aish.com).

In a moment of self-reflection, these corporate moguls understood that the old cliché “You are what you’re worth” just doesn’t ring true anymore. Through the guidance of a rabbi, they were able to come to realize that just the opposite is true.

I attended that retreat... As a mini project, I asked them to make a list of the five people they most admired, heroic figures from history or present day. We then spent some time analyzing what it was about these men and women that defined their greatness. It quickly became clear that character rather than wealth was the key to the kind of successful life that warrants emulation. When the Titans took the time to consider what really impressed them about others they suddenly realized they lost sight of those goals in their own lives as they went about pursuing more and more material acquisitions (Ibid.).

Character, not wealth, is what truly impresses us most. So if we want to succeed, not just in business but in life, then our pursuit of wealth must be guided by a set of ethics answerable to an authority higher than the CEO. That is where Judaism comes into the picture.

SECTION I. FAITH AND FAITHFULNESS – THE CONNECTION BETWEEN JUDAISM AND BUSINESS

We are used to thinking that religion governs the sphere of ritual and belief – matters of the spirit – but that it has little to do with everyday living. For Judaism, though, the way in which we conduct our day to day affairs is at least as important as our synagogue attendance and dietary habits.

PART A. THE VERY FIRST QUESTION

The following source is an example of the primacy that Judaism places on the value of ethical behavior.

1. **Shabbat 31a – The first question a person is asked upon appearing before the Heavenly Tribunal (after his passing) concerns his business ethics.**

Rava says: At the time a person enters into Judgment, he is asked, “Did you conduct business faithfully?”...

אמר רבא בשעה שמכניסין אדם לדין אומרים לו
נשאת ונתת באמונה?

On the great Day of Judgment, after a person departs the world, he will be held accountable for the way in which he conducted his business dealings. According to the Sages of the Talmud, this is the very first question that a person is asked by the Heavenly Tribunal. This says much about the importance of a person's dealings in this world.

But this just begs the question: what does religion have to do with business ethics?

PART B. THE WORKPLACE AS TESTING GROUND OF OUR VALUES

The workplace is an arena for achieving values that are central to Judaism's message:

1. **Vayikra (Leviticus) 19:35-36 – The prohibitions against falsifying weights and measures includes a reference to the Exodus.**

You shall not falsify measurements whether in size, weight or volume. You must have an honest balance, honest weights, an honest dry measure and an honest liquid measure. I am the Lord your God that took you out of Egypt.

לא תעשו עול במשפט במדה במשקל ובמשורה:
מאזני צדק אבני צדק איפת צדק והין צדק יהיה לכם
אני ה' אלהיכם אשר הוצאתי אתכם מארץ מצרים:

What does the fact that God took us out of Egypt have to do with the issue of exactness in weights and measures?

2. **Torat Kohanim, ibid. – The juxtaposition of the Exodus to exactitude in weights and measures teaches us a lesson.**

“I am God your Lord Who took you out of the land of Egypt” – I took you out of Egypt on the condition that you observe the commandments about measurements.

אני ה' אלקיכם אשר הוצאתי אתכם מארץ מצרים
– על תנאי כך הוצאתי אתכם מארץ מצרים על תנאי
שתקבלו עליכם מצוות מדות.

God intervened supernaturally in order to launch the birth of a new nation, a nation that would incorporate God-awareness into the very fabric of their lives. One of the most central areas of life, and one in which God-consciousness is the most difficult to realize, is the world of commerce. Maintaining the proper principles in business is a realization of the very purpose of the Exodus from Egypt. Underscored here is the idea that business is the arena in which our beliefs about God are truly tested.

PART C. TRUST IN GOD

The challenge of business conduct is rooted in the thought that acting ethically may cause a person to lose out. After all, “nice guys finish last!” One might feel that if he doesn’t cut corners, he will lag behind others and won’t manage to get ahead. It is therefore important to put things into perspective, to remind ourselves that ultimately one’s success in making a livelihood, as in all areas of life, is in God’s hands.

1. **Mishlei (Proverbs) 28:20 – Trust in God is a conduit for blessing.**

The man of faith [has] many blessings; but one who is hasty to get rich will not emerge unscathed.

איש אמונות, רב-בְּרָכוֹת; ואִץ לְהַעֲשִׂיר, לֹא יִנְקָה.

2. **Gaon of Vilna, Commentary to Mishlei 28:20 – Running after quick riches is a recipe for failure.**

The man of faith – one who trusts in God, “has many blessings,” but “one who is hasty to get rich” – i.e., he constantly runs after money – “will not emerge unscathed.”

“איש אמונות” המאמין, והוא השלם במידת הבטחון, לו “רב ברכות”. אבל ואִץ לְהַעֲשִׂיר שְׂרֹדֵף אַחַר הַמָּמוֹן תְּמוֹד, “לֹא יִנְקָה”.

3. **Rabbi Chaim Vital, Shaarei Kedusha, 2:5- Faith translates into faithful business dealings.**

The Sages say: “The man of faith [has] many blessings” – this refers to someone who conducts business affairs with integrity; his assets will grow, and God will provide him with livelihood.

אמרו רז”ל איש אמונות רב ברכות – זה הנושא ונותן באמונה שנכסיו מתרבים והקדוש ברוך הוא מזמין לו פרנסתו.

The man of faith is both trustworthy and trusting in God. He knows that everything is in God’s hands, and although he puts in the necessary effort, he is not tempted to cut corners. There is a direct connection between one’s faith in God and the faithfulness with which one conducts business affairs.

4. **Rabbi Naftali Tzvi Yehuda Berlin, HaEmek Davar, Devarim (Deuteronomy) 25:17 – Dishonest business practices betray a lack of faith in Divine providence.**

That which our Sages have stated (Bava Batra 88b) in regard to the sin of (inaccurate) measures, that it is even worse than sexual immorality, prompts us to ask why this form of stealing should be considered worse than any other? Furthermore, what is the comparison to sexual immorality and how could it be considered worse?

מה שהפליגו חז”ל במס’ ב”ב ס”פ הספינה בעון משקלות עד שאמרו חמור עון משקלות יותר מג”ע ומדוע חמור זה משארי גנבות. ותו מה זה דמיון משקלות לג”ע עד שאמרו שזה חמור מזה.

Our Sages have described three sins as cardinal: sexual immorality, idol worship, and murder. Now, the reason these are the worst is not due to the punishment inflicted upon their perpetrators but rather due to the fact that each one represents a specific type of fundamental flaw. That is, [these three sins demonstrate] either a lack of faith in God and His Torah, or a lack of self-control over one's passions, or the loss of control due to anger or other such antisocial tendencies. The chief form of a lack of faith is idol worship; the chief form of a crime of passion is sexual immorality; and the chief form of [a crime due to] bad character is murder. The worst of them all is idol worship.

Now, when someone steals something outright, we understand that as stemming from his desire for that thing, and his crime can be categorized as immorality. But when someone steals by falsifying his weights and measures, it is not due to his desire but rather due to a lack of faith in the God Who feeds and sustains by virtue of direct providence according to our actions. As such, it is a form of idol worship. That is why the Sages said that falsifying measures, even though it is only a branch of idol worship and far from the real thing, is nevertheless worse than sexual immorality, the chief form of a different kind of flaw, because lack of faith is more difficult to correct, and infringes on the honor of God.

ונראה דכלפי שאמרו חז"ל ג' עבירות חמורות היינו ג"ע ע"ז ש"ד. וחומר שבג' אלו אינו תלוי בעונש... אלא באשר שהאדם החוטא בא לחטוא בא' מג' אופנים. או מהעדר האמונה בה' ובתורתו או מצד התגברות התאוה או מצד התגברות הכעס וכדומה במדות שנוגע בין אדם חבירו. והנה הראש שבהעדר אמונה הוא ע"ז והראש בתאוה הוא ג"ע והראש שבמדות רעות הוא ש"ד וכל עונות באים בא' מג' אופנים הללו כגון המוחלל שבת מצד פרנסה ה"ז נוגע באמונה והוא שמץ ע"ז. ואם למלוי תאות נפשו ה"ז ענף מעריות. והנה הגרוע בשלשה עונות הללו הוא ע"ז...

ומעתה הגונב מחבירו כלי יקר יכול להיות שבא מצד התאוה לאותו כלי וה"ז מגדר עריות. אבל העושה משקלות שקר אינו מדרך התאוה אלא חסרון אמונה בה' הזן ומפרנס בהשגחה פרטית לפי מעשיו וה"ז מגדר ע"ז. ע"כ אמרו דעון משקלות אע"ג שאינו אלא ענף מע"ז ועדיין רחוק מראש הכפירה מ"מ הוא חמור מג"ע שהוא ראש פרעות התאוה. באשר חסרון אמונה קשה לתשובה וגם נוגע לכבודו ית"ש.

KEY THEMES OF SECTION I.

- ∞ Judaism places supreme importance on the value of ethical behavior specifically in relation to business dealings. It is the first item we will be held accountable for after death.
- ∞ The Marketplace is the ultimate testing ground of one's religious principles. Faced with the challenge of commercial competition, a person must have faith in God to conduct his affairs honestly.
- ∞ The knowledge that God is in control grants one the freedom to deal in good faith and not worry about losing out to others.

SECTION II. THE LAW AND BEYOND

In a sense, the term "business ethics" is a misnomer. Not because there is no such thing as an ethical business practice – far from it! But from Judaism's perspective, much of what is considered by the rest of the world to be merely ethical conduct is actually mandated by Jewish law. Ethics and morality imply optional behavior

beyond the strict letter of the law. Judaism, however, demands that we act beyond the letter of the law, i.e., that we fulfill not only what we *must* do but also what we *should* do.

PART A. THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN ETIQUETTE AND MORAL OBLIGATION

In Judaism, we do not just talk about moral obligations; we actually insist upon them.

1. Rabbi Yosef Dovid Epstein, *Mitzvot HaBayit*, Introduction, pg. 28 – Jewish law demands adherence to ethical principles.

Etiquette in the general secular world, with all of its stress and exactitude in the ways of pleasantness and cordial social relations, is not on the level the ethical. Etiquette and morality occupy two separate spheres in the world. But the etiquette of the Torah is not just moral; it is actually a legal obligation.

The ethical is subsumed within the legal to such an extent that a Jewish court has the right to enforce it. (Whereas amongst the wise non-Jews of the world this would constitute the dividing line between morality and the law: only the law is enforceable and not morality.) But the Torah actually enforces going beyond the letter of the law.

נימוס עולמי-חילוני, עם כל קפדנותו ודקדוקו על דרכי נועם ויחסי חן של בני אדם, אינו אף במדרגתו של המוסרי; הנימוסי והמוסרי שתי רשויות הן בעולם. אולם נימוסה של תורה לא רק מוסרי הוא אלא גם חיובי-משפטי.

והמוסרי נעשה כ"כ משפטי עד שגם כופין עליו בבית דין על קיומו, (אמנם אצל חכמי האומות זהו ההבדל בין מוסרי למשפטי, שרק על המשפטי כופין ולא על המוסרי) – כופין על לפני משורת הדין.

2. *Ibid.* The Torah legislates against even the slightest unethical encroachment.

Even though in legal terms any form of encroachment that does not affect a person's body, property or honor is not considered of a legal concern but rather an ethical concern, nevertheless in the Torah's frame of reference, even if something is in the realm of a person's feelings or hidden in the recesses of his heart with no external manifestations whatsoever, it may still be a legal concern. Even the slightest encroachment hidden in the recesses of one's friend's soul is still an encroachment upon his "piece of Godliness from above" and upon the authority of the Master of the Universe.

אכן, בבחינה המדינית, כל שהפגיעה אינה בגופו, או בממונו, או בכבודו של איש, אינה משפטית אלא מוסרית, ואילו בבחינה התורנית כל שהיא פגיעה אף רק בנשמתו, אף רק בהעלם, אף רק ביחס פנימי שבלב, ללא כל גילוי, היא כבר עלולה להפוך משפטית, שכן הפגיעה הכי דקה, הכי נעלמה בנשמתו של חברו, הרי היא פגיעה בחלק אלוה מומעל, ובבעלותו של אדון העולמים."

Jewish law itself – without recourse to grandiose moral teachings – is the strongest basis for ethical business practices. It is for this reason that when Rabbi Yisroel Salanter, the founder of the ethical *Mussar* movement, wanted to teach people how to improve their business ethics, his suggestion was to study Jewish law!

3. Rabbi Yisroel Salanter, *Iggeret HaMussar* – If you want to improve your business ethics, study the Jewish laws pertaining to it.

The foremost and primary element in the

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utilization of the Torah's healing powers against the tactics of the evil inclination is the intense, concentrated, and deep study of the laws pertaining to any particular transgression....

...If a person will direct his heart and soul to learn in-depth the laws germane to business matters from the Talmud and the halachic authorities – each person according to his ability – a character transformation will take place. If the focus of the study is to internalize the knowledge of the forbidden and the permitted, then the study will be particularly effective to guard against stealing. (And even if at first one is not able to desist from infringements of stealing, one should not despair – for this is doubtless due to the strong desire for stealing as well as the prevalent practices of society.) How great is the power (of this study) to implant, however slowly, a vast acquisition within the soul.

היצר, הוא ללמוד בעזו ועיון עמוק היטב דיני העבירה עצמה, ההלכה עם כל סעיפיה...

...אם ישים האדם לבו ונפשו ללמוד ההלכות השייכות לממון בעיון, גמרא ופוסקים איש לפי ערכו, ובפרט אם המרכז יהיה על תכונת איסור והיתר, לידע איך להשתמר מגזול (אף אם לא יקיים בתחילה, כי התאוה רבה בזה וגם רחוק הדבר מהרגל המדיני), מה רב כחה להשריש לאט לאט קנין רב בנפש.

PART B. DO THE RIGHT THING

Specifically with regard to monetary dealings, the Torah instructs us in the general principle of “You shall do that which is upright and good” (Deuteronomy 6:18). This statement urges us to ensure that our dealings are always just and fair.

1. **Rabbi Yosef Dovid Epstein, Mitzvot HaBayit, Introduction, pp. 26-27 – Many verses in the Torah point to the requirement of going beyond the letter of the law.**

“Do what is upright and good” (Devarim/Deuteronomy 6:18), “Show them the path they must take, and the things they must do” (Shemot/Exodus 18:20), “in order that you go in the way of the good” (Mishlei/Proverbs 2:20) – these are the sources for going beyond the letter of the law, our ethical justice. But how great is this ethical justice in that it is not limited to the sphere of moral teachings but rather enters into the realm of our judicial system as well.

“ועשית הישר והטוב”, “והודעת להם את הדרך ילכו בה, ואת המעשה אשר יעשון”, “למען תלך בדרך טובים”, אלה המה המקורות לעניני לפנים משורת הדין – הצדק המוסרי שלנו. אבל מה רבו עניני הצדק המוסרי הזה שלא נשארו בתחומה של תורת המוסר, אלא נכנסו ובאו לתורת המשפטים שלנו...

Why does the Torah employ a catch-all phrase telling us to do what is right; isn't it enough just to give us the mitzvot and expect us to fulfill them?

Ramban (Nachmanides) explains that the explicit instructions of the Torah cannot address each and every eventuality that may arise, and the general instruction is therefore essential in guiding us in how to act.

2. Ramban to Deuteronomy 6:18 – The general instruction of acting justly.

This is a great and fundamental matter, for the Torah cannot explicitly refer to all the dealings of a person with his neighbors and his fellows, and all of his business dealings, and the refinement of communities and nations.

However, after the Torah mentions many instructions [that pertain to a person's dealings with others], it continues to write the general principle, namely, that a person should do that which is just and good in every matter, to the degree of agreeing to compromise and to going beyond the letter of the law... even in that which they state (Yoma 86) "his name is good and his speech is pleasant" – until he is just and perfect in every matter.

וזה ענין גדול, לפי שאי אפשר להזכיר בתורה כל הנהגות האדם עם שכניו ורעיו וכל משאו ומתנו ותקוני הישוב והמדינות כולם.

אבל אחרי שהזכיר מהם הרבה... חזר לומר בדרך כלל שיעשה הטוב והישר בכל דבר, עד שיכנס בזה הפשטה ולפנים משורת הדין... ואפילו מה שאמרו (יומא פו) פרקו נאה ודבורו בנחת עם הבריות, עד שיקרא בכל ענין תם וישר:

Another important concern is the peaceful coexistence of neighbors and partners, and the general concept of fairness. Where the two come into conflict and the letter of the law does not seem fair or just in the broader sense, the Torah calls upon us to go beyond the letter of the law.

The following story is a classical Talmudic example of the requirement to go beyond the letter of the law in business dealings. Even when the Torah's civil law exempts a person from payment, there can remain an "ethical imperative" to pay, which is also a part of Torah law.

3. Bava Metzia 83a – Although the Torah outlines obligatory behavior, it is sometimes obligatory to go beyond the letter of the law.

Raba, the grandson of Chanan, had some porters that broke a barrel of wine. He took their garments [to ensure that they would reimburse him]. They came and told Rav. Rav told Raba to return the garments. Raba said, "Is this the law?" Rav said, "Yes, in order to 'follow the way of good' [Mishlei 2:20] return their garments." They said, "We are poor, we worked all day and we are hungry and we have nothing." Rav said, "Give them their salary." Raba said, "This is the law?" He told him, "Yes, 'Preserve the way of the righteous'" [Mishlei 2:20].

רבה בר בר חנן תברו ליה הנהו שקולאי חביתא דחמרא שקל לגלימיהו אתו אמרו לרב אמר ליה הב להו גלימיהו אמר ליה דינא הכי אמר ליה אין למען תלך בדרך טובים יהיב להו גלימיהו אמרו ליה עניי אנן וטרחינן כולה יומא וכפינן ולית לן מידי אמר ליה זיל הב אגרייהו א"ל דינא הכי אמר ליה אין וארחות צדיקים תשמור:

How can the law demand going beyond itself? And if it is the law, then surely it is only the law itself, and not anything *beyond the law*.

The answer is that the law tells us two things: it lays down the obligations that must be adhered to, and also tells us what we should do according to the dictates of peace and kindness.

4. **Maharal, Be'er HaGolah, Chapter 2 – The Torah includes both absolute obligations and “suggested behaviors.”**

The Torah is perfect: On the one hand, it is a Torah of Truth, teaching what one is absolutely *obligated* to do, based on absolutes; but at the same time, it teaches what one *should* do, based on kindness. The Torah is thus missing nothing as it integrates both truth and peace.

ובזה התורה שלימה בתכלית השלימות, שהיא תורת אמת מזה שהוא מחוייב לפי השכל וגם למדה מה שראוי לעשות מצד החסד עד שלא תחסר כל בה ועם התורה האמת והשלום.

The Maharal's idea of “suggested behavior” should not be seen as optional. In the Talmudic instance quoted above, Rav obligated Raba to pay his workers, even though the strict law exempted him.

PART C. BE HOLY

Not only does the Torah tell us to act with kindness beyond the letter of the law, it also demands that we show restraint in holding ourselves back even when not technically required to do so. This in the Torah's view is the essence of what it means to be holy.

1. **Vayikra 19:2 – The Torah enjoins us to be holy.**

Speak to the entire Jewish people and say to them: You must be holy, since I am God your Lord [and] I am holy.

דַּבֵּר אֶל כָּל עַדְת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם קְדוֹשִׁים תִּהְיוּ כִּי קְדוֹשׁ אֲנִי יְקֹנֵךְ אֱלֹהֵיכֶם.

We see that there is a mitzvah to be holy, but what does that mean? Does this mean that we are to seclude ourselves in meditation for hours on end, or to become hermits? No, being holy, in this context, means going beyond the letter of the law (see the Morasha class entitled “Spirituality I” for a more detailed analysis).

2. **Ramban to Vayikra 19:2 – The Torah is telling us to show restraint beyond the letter of the law.**

The idea here is as follows: The Torah forbade illicit relations and forbidden foods, yet permitted marital relations and the consumption of meat and wine. As such, the licentious person has an outlet to be lewd with his wife or to have many wives, to be gluttonous with food and wine, and to speak as he wishes with all manners of vulgarity, for these things are not expressly prohibited in the Torah. So one could be a repulsive individual within the confines of the Torah.

As such the Torah came along, after specifying which things are absolutely prohibited, and commanded us generally to have restraint when it comes to excesses.

והענין כי התורה הזהירה בעריות ובמאכלים האסורים והתירה הביאה איש באשתו ואכילת הבשר והיין, א"כ ימצא בעל התאווה מקום להיות שטוף בזמת אשתו או נשיו הרבות, ולהיות בסובאי יין בזוללי בשר למו, וידבר כרצונו בכל הנבלות, שלא הוזכר איסור זה בתורה, והנה יהיה נבל ברשות התורה.

לפיכך בא הכתוב, אחרי שפרט האיסורים שאסר אותם לגמרי, וצוה בדבר כללי שנהיה פרושים מן המותרות.

The Ramban thus teaches us that we are impelled to go beyond the letter of the law, embracing the ethical imperatives that are within that legal structure. In so doing, we attain the level of holiness.

3. **Rabbi Yitzchak Breitowitz, Jewish Business Ethics: An Introductory Perspective from Jlaw.com – Being holy means going beyond the letter of the law.**

We know that the Torah has 613 mitzvot. Of course, none of us can do all of them but one of the mitzvot in the Torah is a mitzvah that says “*kedoshim tiyu*, be holy.” Now, what does that mean? I mean, basically, is “be holy” something that simply says do the other 612? Or is there some extra dimension that this mitzvah entails? The great commentator, the Ramban, tells us that “*Kedoshim Tiyu*” is a requirement of a Jew not to just obey the letter of the law but to obey the spirit of the law as well. Ramban posits that it is entirely possible for a person to be 100 percent observant, keeping all the mitzvot and yet in the famous immortal phrase, he can be a “*naval b’rishut haTorah*” he can be a repulsive, disgusting individual within the confines of the law. It is not enough just to obey the law. One must go beyond the law and embrace the ethical imperatives that are within that legal structure. This is the concept of going “*lifnim mishurat haDin*,” going beyond the law, not just confining oneself to the law.

KEY THEMES OF SECTION II.

- ⌘ The Torah does not limit ethical behavior to the sphere of morality; it actually legislates such behavior. Moral obligations are actually obligatory in Jewish law. As such, studying the Jewish laws of business transactions is the greatest lesson in business ethics.
- ⌘ The Torah does not just concern itself with strict justice, but with peaceful coexistence as well. As such, we are enjoined not to insist on our rights but rather to go beyond the letter of the law.
- ⌘ Showing restraint even when the Torah technically permits the behavior is considered an act of holiness. This is another example of going beyond the letter of the law.

SECTION III. JEWISH VALUES

It would be a mistake to leave business ethics entirely to the realm of Jewish law. As our Sages have said, “God wants the heart.” He not only expects us to keep the letter of the law but also to imbibe its spirit as well. Below we shall explore some of the key Jewish values that inform the Torah’s approach to business ethics, such as the aversion to theft, a commitment to truth and justice, and holiness defined as going beyond the letter of the law.

PART A. AVERSION TO THEFT

The Torah views theft – or anything related to it – as one of the gravest of offenses. This includes stealing property or kidnapping people.

1. **Shemot 20:13- The Ten Commandments warns us not to kidnap.**

Do not kidnap.

לא תגנב.

2. **Vayikra 19:11- The Torah forbids us to steal property.**

Do not steal property.

לא תגנב.

3. **Vayikra Rabbah 33:3- The world is first called to task for stealing.**

[Imagine] A container full of sins: Which one is first to be prosecuted? Theft!

קופה מלאה עונות מי מקטרג בראש? גזל!

In Judaism, theft is seen as the transgression that led to some of the world's greatest disasters. The following sources discuss the Great Flood at the time of Noah, and the destruction of the First Temple in Jerusalem.

4. **Bereishit (Genesis) 6:13 with Commentary of Rashi – The generation of the Great Flood was ultimately punished for their crime of theft.**

God said to Noah, “The end of all flesh has come before Me. The world is filled with crime. I will therefore destroy them with the earth.”

Rashi: The world is filled with crime – Their fate was only sealed by virtue of theft.

וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים לְנֹחַ קֵץ כָּל בָּשָׂר בְּאֲלֵפֵי כִי מָלְאָה הָאָרֶץ חַמְסִים מִפְּנֵיהֶם וְהִנְנִי מוֹשְׁחִיתָם אֶת הָאָרֶץ:

רש"י: כי מלאה הארץ חמס - לא נחתם גזר דינם אלא על הגזל.

Why did theft trigger the flood?

5. **Maharal, Gur Aryeh, Bereishit 6:13 – The world is destroyed through theft for it is impossible to engage in business.**

Theft brings destruction to this world, for thieves destroy the world by preventing the practice of business.

שהגזל הוא השחתת העולם הזה, דהיינו הגולנין מחריבין את העולם, שאין מושא ומתן בעולם.

Moreover, widespread theft undermines God and corrupts humanity.

6. **Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch, Horeb, pp. 226-227 – Theft is a total disrespect for humanity and God.**

Just as God gave a body to the human spirit as a tool for his human activities, and the body must be respected for the spirit within it; so He gave him the earth with all that is on it and that belongs to it so that he may freely acquire it...according to his destiny...Therefore, just as it is God's command that you shall not kill or injure, that you shall respect the body for the Divine spirit within it, so also it is God's command that you shall not steal. You must respect all human property, even though it may be under your control, because of the human spirit which owns it and because of the Divine order by virtue of which it is his; for property is but an artificial extension of the body. If you steal, you transgress not against matter, but against the invisible human spirit which hovers over it, and against God Who demands you respect the human spirit and his property.

7. **Rabbi Dr. Meir Tamari, In the Marketplace, pg. 14 – Theft indicates a breakdown in individual and social morality.**

Judaism views economic evils as the beginning of the destruction of both Jewish and non-Jewish societies. The commentators, discussing the sin of biblical Sodom, argue, *inter alia*, that the reason for the cities' destruction was their refusal to share their wealth with others, while the fate of the Generation of the Flood was sealed, according to the Sages, by the sin of theft.

The chassidic Admor of Sochochov queried the latter. Since we know that the Generation of the Flood transgressed three major sins - idolatry, adultery, and bloodshed - for which the penalty is death, why did the rabbis say the world was destroyed because of theft, which does not merit a death penalty? He answered that theft is the beginning of the unraveling of the entire social fabric, which leads to the three major sins, and therefore, it was theft that led to their destruction.

In the Jewish world, the same centrality of economic morality applies. It is well known that the rabbis saw groundless hatred as the reason for the destruction of the Second Temple in Jerusalem in 70 AD, yet the Jerusalem Talmud ascribes the reason for the destruction to the fact that the Jews of that generation loved money. Similarly, the writings of the prophets Isaiah, Amos, and Jeremiah foretell the destruction of the First Temple - partly attributed to the theft and avarice which had become rampant.

So strong is the Torah's aversion to theft that it even warns us against taking too much pleasure in taking things from others even in a permissible way. In this vein we are told not to over-indulge in accepting presents.

8. **Mishlei 15:27– One who hates gifts will be far removed from stealing.**

One who hates gifts shall live.

Rashi: If he hates gifts, all the more so he hates theft.

וְשׂוֹנֵא מִתְּנִיּוֹת יִחְיֶה.

רש"י: מאחר שהוא שונא מתנות כל שכן ששונא את הגזל:

PART B. TRUTH AND INTEGRITY

One way to explain the extreme Jewish aversion to theft and why business ethics are so central to Judaism is that truth and integrity are traits of God Himself.

1. **Jeremiah 10:10 - God is the ultimate Truth.**

God, your Lord, is Truth.

וַיְהִי הָאֱלֹהִים אֱמֶת.

2. **Shabbat 55a - Truth is a manifestation of Godliness.**

God's seal is Truth.

חותמו של הקב"ה אמת.

Just as God is the God of truth, so too are His laws. Hence we find specifically in relation to the Torah's rational laws of social justice, termed *Mishpatim* in Hebrew, that they are called "true."

3. **Tehillim (Psalms) 19:10 – God's laws are truth.**

... the judgments of the Lord are true, altogether just.

... משפטי יקוק אמת צדקו יחדו:

It may sound strange to say that a law is "true" since we usually think of laws as merely a utilitarian way to promote social justice and welfare. However, as Rabbi Reuven Leuchter has explained, the verse here calls *Mishpatim* by the epithet of truth, because the Torah's laws stem from the source of truth itself, namely God.

And since God is the God of truth and His laws are truth, He maintains a love for justice in human relations, as expressed by the following sources:

4. **Isaiah 61:8 – God’s love for justice.**

I am God Who loves justice.

כי אני יהוה אהב משפט.

Since God is a God of truth and His laws are laws of truth, He warns us in the Torah to stay far away from any semblance of its opposite, namely falsehood.

5. **Shemot (Exodus) 23:7 – The Torah instructs us to “distance ourselves” from falsehood.**

Distance yourself from falsehood.

מִדְבַר שָׁקֶר תִּרְחֶק:

6. **Sefer HaChinuch, Mitzvah # 74 – The unique prohibition against falsehood: Not just “do not tell a lie” but “distance yourself from falsehood” to indicate an abhorrence of falsehood and a love for truth, which is the way of God.**

The root of this mitzvah is well known: falsehood is abominable and corrupt in the eyes of all. There is nothing more abhorrent than it. Desolation and curse [is found] in the home of those who love falsehood ...

And blessing is only found and will only take effect upon those who emulate Him in their actions: to be truthful just as He is a God of truth; to have compassion, as it is known that He is compassionate; to do acts of loving-kindness, just as He abounds in loving-kindness [c.f. Rashi, Devarim 11:22].

For this reason the Torah cautions us to distance ourselves exceedingly from falsehood, as it is written: “Distance yourself from falsehood” (Shemot 23:7). In stating the mitzvah, the Torah uses the word “distance” [as a verb], which it does not do regarding any other mitzvah, to [indicate] the disgusting nature [of falsehood].

שורש המצוה ידוע, כי השקר נתעב ונאלח בעיני הכל, אין דבר מאוס ממנו, והמארה והקללה בבית כל אוהביו ...

ואין הברכה מצויה וחלה אלא במתדמים אליו במעשיהם, להיותם אמיתיים כמו שהוא אל אמת, ולהיותם מרחמים כמו שידוע שהוא רחום, ולהיותם גומלי חסדים כמו שהוא רב החסד ...

ועל כן הזהירנו התורה להרחיק מן השקר הרבה, כמו שכתוב מדבר שקר תרחק, והנה הזכירה בו לשון ריחוק לרוב מיאוסו מה שלא הזכירה כן בכל שאר האזהרות ...

7. **Rabbeinu Yonah, Shaarei Teshuvah 3:184 – Being truthful is a crucial component to the purity of the soul.**

Misleading people and lying ... is in a sense more serious than theft. This is because speaking falsehood is an act of self-destruction, for truthfulness is one of the foundations of the health of the soul. Therefore, we are obligated to stay within the parameters of truth.

מי שמתעה את חברו... והנה החטא הזה חמור אצל חכמי ישראל יותר מגזל הנכרי, יען וביען כי שפת שקר אשמה רבה, ונתחייבנו על גדרי האמת, כי הוא מיסודי הנפש.

In other words, even though theft affects someone else in the physical world and is a serious offence, speaking falsehood is in a sense more serious since it leaves a stain on the purity of one's soul, because truth is a crucial component of a person's soul (Rabbi Avrohom Ehrman, Journey to Virtue 10:2).

The following story shows how a modern day Rabbi followed the dictates of Truth:

When Rabbi Aharon Kotler founded the yeshivah in Lakewood, New Jersey, he acquired for this purpose a small house. The walkway leading up to the door of the house was lined with trees, two on one side and three on the other. Receipt books were ordered for the yeshivah, and it was decided that a picture of the yeshivah building should be printed on top of the receipts. But the graphic artist who designed the receipts felt that the picture would look better if another tree were added to the walkway, so that there would be three trees on either side, and the extra tree was drawn into the picture.

When the receipts were delivered and shown to Rabbi Kotler, he was very disappointed with them, and exclaimed, "This is not a true likeness of the yeshivah building!" He ordered that the receipt books be discarded and new ones prepared.

"I am building a yeshivah based upon the foundation of the principle of truth," Rabbi Kotler explained. "I do not want even a small trace of misrepresentation or dishonesty to be involved in the foundation of this yeshivah!"

That was 60 years ago. Today, the same Lakewood yeshivah is the largest rabbinic school in America, with some 4,000 active students. (from Rabbi Asher Bergman, The Rosh Yeshiva Remembers)

For more on truth and falsehood, see the Morasha class entitled, "Can You Ever Tell a Lie?"

KEY THEMES OF SECTION III:

- ∞ Jewish values are anathema to any form of theft, as can be seen by the central role the Jewish tradition gives to theft in accounting for the tragedies of history. The Torah also urges us to act ethically beyond the strict calling of the law.
- ∞ God is the epitome of integrity, and desires that we emulate Him and strive to live up to His standards of integrity. This responsibility is central to one's mission in this world.

SECTION IV. KIDDUSH HASHEM – SANCTIFYING GOD'S NAME

The conscientious Jew maintains the highest standards of business ethics regardless of whether or not anyone else is privy to his conduct. The knowledge that integrity is both God's will and intrinsically Godly should be motivation enough to act scrupulously. Nevertheless, there is another dimension here as well. Since it is rare for one's business practices to remain private forever, proper conduct in this area can serve as an outlet for influencing and inspiring others.

In contemporary times we are unfortunately witness to cases in which people who identify themselves as observant Jews have failed to incorporate God's will into their business practices. This brings enormous damage to those spiritual seekers who might have otherwise considered the path of Torah, who are distanced from the Torah when they see people who supposedly travel that path but lack integrity and ethics. Moreover, the sight of observant Jews who fail to maintain high standards of business ethics leads people to

think badly of the Jewish religion.

Teaching other people about the path that leads to Godliness is called “Kiddush Hashem,” sanctifying God’s name, and constitutes a holy endeavor. Failing to do so is called “Chillul Hashem,” desecration of God’s name – a grave matter indeed.

PART A. THE MITZVAH OF KIDDUSH HASHEM

1. **Leviticus 22:32 – There is a mitzvah to sanctify God’s Name.**

Do not desecrate My Holy Name. And I shall be sanctified amongst the Children of Israel; I am God Who has sanctified you.

וְלֹא תַחֲלִילוּ אֶת-שֵׁם קִדְשִׁי וְנִקְדַּשְׁתִּי בְּתוֹךְ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל
אֲנִי יְהוָה מְקַדְּשְׁכֶם.

Parallel to the positive instruction to sanctify the Name of God is the injunction to avoid its desecration.

2. **Rambam, Hilchot Yesodei HaTorah 5:1 – Just as we are enjoined to sanctify God’s name, so too are we enjoined not to desecrate it.**

All of the House of Israel is commanded to sanctify the great Name [of God], as it is written, “I shall be sanctified amongst the Children of Israel.” And they are all warned not to desecrate it, as it is written, “Do not desecrate My Holy Name.”

כל בית ישראל מצווין על קידוש השם הגדול הזה,
שנאמר “ונקדשתי בתוך בני ישראל”; ומוזהרין שלא
לחללו, שנאמר “ולא תחללו, את שם קדשי”.

This pair of mitzvot ought to pervade everything we do.

3. **Rabbenu Yonah of Gerondi, Shaarei Teshuvah 3:148 – Everything a Jew does, down to the minutest detail, should convey the beauty and vitality that comes from a life dedicated to serving God.**

Part of Kiddush Hashem is showing – through every word uttered, through every movement of the eyes, and through every action – that serving God, fearing God, and keeping His Torah are the very foundation of his soul, its most beautiful adornment, its goodness, its essence and purpose and ultimate value... This is the honor of God.

מדרכי קידוש השי"ת, להודיע בכל מבטא שפתים,
ובכל אשר ירמזון עינים, ובכל הנהגה ופועל ידים, כי
יסוד לנפש האדם וצבי עדין והטוב והעיקר והתועלת
והיקר אשר בו, עבודת השי"ת ויראתו ותורתו... ודבר
זה כבוד השי"ת.

PART B. GOD’S PR COMMITTEE

The Jewish People are the representatives of God in this world. This is the very purpose of our creation, as the verse states (Isaiah 43:21): “This nation I have created for Myself, My glory they shall tell.” The actions of the Jewish People are patterned after God’s actions, and our deeds therefore reflect directly on God. This is at once a great privilege and a daunting responsibility.

1. Ramban, Iggeret Hakodesh, Chapter 1 – We are God’s PR agents in this world.

The Jewish nation is devoted exclusively to God. [It is known that a loyal servant’s conduct is in the imitation of his master’s conduct.] The actions of the Jewish people are based on reflecting God’s unity. Since all of our actions are patterned after God’s actions, when we conduct ourselves in good and straight ways we sanctify God’s name. Since our deeds are reflective of God’s, the consecration or desecration of God’s Name depends upon our actions.

בהיות אומת ישראל מיוחדת להקב"ה... אם כן נמצאו ישראל שכל הנהגותיהם מיוסדות על יחוד השם הגדול יתברך... ומאחר שכל מעשינו כדמיון מעשה השי"ת, נמצא שכל זמן שאנו עושים הטוב והישר, שאנו מקדשים שמו יתברך... כי מאחר שאנו מתדמין במעשינו להקב"ה, הנה קדושת השם וחילולו תלוי במעשינו.

2. Rabbi Moshe ben Yaakov of Coucy, Sefer Mitzvot HaGadol, Positive Commandment 74 – As God’s chosen people, the way we act will reflect upon Him.

Now that our exile has been going on too long, it is incumbent upon every Jew to separate himself from the vanities of this world and to maintain the seal of God, which is Truth – not to lie, neither to Jews nor to non-Jews, nor to trick them in any way. Rather, we must sanctify ourselves even within that which is permitted to us, as the verse says, “The remnant of Israel shall neither commit injustice nor speak lies; neither shall deceitful speech be found upon their lips” (Zephaniah 3:13).

When God comes to redeem us, the nations will say, “It is right for God to do so for they are people of Truth and the law of Truth is upon their lips.” But if we deal crookedly with the non-Jewish nations, then they shall say, “Look what God has chosen, a bunch of thieves and crooks.”

עתה שהאריך הגלות יותר מדאי יש לישראל להבדיל מהבלי העולם ולאחוז בחותמו של הקב"ה שהוא אמת ושלא לשקר לא לישראל ולא לגוים ולא להטעותם בשום עניין ולקדש עצמם אף במותר להם שנאמר (צפניה ג, יג) שארית ישראל לא יעשו עולה ולא ידברו כזב ולא ימצא בפייהם לשון תרמית.

וכשיבא הקב"ה להושיעם יאמרו הגוים בדין עשה כי הם אנשי אמת ותורת אמת בפייהם אבל אם יתנהגו עם הגוים ברמאות יאמרו ראו מה עשה הקב"ה שבחר לחלקו גנבים ורמאים.

The greater the stature of a given individual, the more his actions are representative of the Jewish faith and God, and hence the greater the responsibility of ensuring that there should be no deviation from the highest standards. For instance, if a known Rabbi fails to maintain required standards of business ethics, the damage can be great and far reaching.

The following source demonstrates the point with regard to the Torah scholar, a person who is looked up to for his scrupulous deeds.

3. Yoma 86a – The responsibility of the Torah scholar: actions speak louder than words.

“You shall love God” – This means that God’s Name should become beloved through your actions. One who studies Torah should conduct himself properly in his interactions with others. Then people will say, “Fortunate is his father who taught him Torah! Fortunate is his teacher who

תניא ואהבת את ה' אלהיך שיהא שם שמים מתאהב על ידך שיהא קורא ושונה ומשמש ת"ח ויהא משאו ומתנו בנחת עם הבריות מה הבריות אומרות עליו אשרי אביו שלמדו תורה אשרי רבו שלמדו תורה אוי להם לבריות שלא למדו תורה פלוני שלמדו תורה ראו

taught him Torah! Woe to those who have not studied Torah, for look at So-and-so who did study Torah – how perfect are his actions.” Regarding such an individual, it is written (Yeshaya 49:3), “Israel, in whom I take pride.”

But if someone studies Torah *and does not conduct his business affairs with integrity*, or does not behave in a befitting manner, what do people say? “Woe to so-and-so who studied Torah... see how he misbehaves and how ugly are his actions...”

כמה נאים דרכיו כמה מתוקנים מעשיו עליו הכתוב אומר ויאמר לי עבדי אתה ישראל אשר בך אתפאר.

אבל מי שקורא ושונה ומשמש ת"ח ואין משאו ומתנו באמונה ואין דבורו בנחת עם הבריות מה הבריות אומרות עליו אוי לו לפלוני שלמד תורה ... ראו כמה מקולקלין מעשיו וכמה מכוערין דרכיו.

The following source presents an example of how a leading Rabbi sanctified the Name of God through his refined practices.

4. Devarim Rabbah, Parshat Eikev 3 – God is praised when we act ethically in business.

Once upon a time, Rabbi Shimon ben Shetach bought a donkey from an Ishmaelite. His students inspected it and found a precious stone tied around its neck. His students said to him, “Our Master, the blessing of the Lord has made you rich!” But Rabbi Shimon ben Shetach replied, “I only bought a donkey, not a precious stone.” So he went and returned it to the Ishmaelite. At that point the Ishmaelite exclaimed, “Blessed is the Lord of Shimon ben Shetach!”

מעשה בר"ש בן שטח שלקח חמור מישמעאלי אחד, הלכו תלמידיו ומצאו אבן טובה אחת תלויה בצוארו, אמרו לו תלמידיו, ר', ברכת ה' היא תעשיר, אמ' להם ר' שמעון אני חמור לקחתי, אבן טובה לא לקחתי, הלך והחזירה לאותו ישמעאלי, וקרא עליו הישמעאלי, ברוך ה' אלהי שמעון בן שטח.

The following is a case of a contemporary businessman who made a *Kiddush Hashem* carried by the largest media networks.

5. The Mensch of Malden Mills, www.cbsnews.com – Mr. Aaron Feuerstein rebuilt his business and supported his payroll when he could have retired and collected fire insurance.

The fire that broke out at Malden Mills in the winter of 1995 was the largest fire Massachusetts had seen for a century. Malden Mills was one of the few large employers in a town that was already in desperate straits. “The only thing that went through my mind was, how can I possibly recreate it?” says owner Aaron Feuerstein, the third generation of his family to run the mill. “I was proud of the family business and I wanted to keep that alive, and I wanted that to survive. But I also felt the responsibility for all my employees, to take care of them, to give them jobs.”

Feuerstein decided to rebuild right there in Lawrence – not to move down South or overseas as much of the industry had done in search of cheap labor. He also made another shocking decision. For the next 60 days, all employees would be paid their full salaries.

“I think it was a wise business decision, but that isn't why I did it. I did it because it was the right thing to do,” says Feuerstein. Some might have said the proper business decision was to take the \$300 million in insurance and retire. “And what would I do with it? Eat more? Buy another suit? Retire and die?” asks Feuerstein. “No, that did not enter my mind.”

He kept his promises. Workers picked up their checks for months. In all, he paid out \$25 million and became known as the Mensch of Malden Mills – a businessman who seemed to care more about his workers than about his net worth. For guidance he turns to the Torah, the book of Jewish law ...

See further the Morasha shiur, *Making Impressions for Stardom or Infamy: Kiddush Hashem & Chillul Hashem*.

KEY THEMES OF SECTION III.

- ⌘ God calls upon the Jewish people to sanctify His name. We do that by infusing our everyday actions with consciousness of God.
- ⌘ Whether we like it or not, Jews are held to a higher standard, as people judge us according to the standards of God's chosen people.
- ⌘ When we fail to act scrupulously in our business dealings, we make God look bad. Conversely, when we conduct our business affairs honestly we glorify God and His Torah in the eyes of the world.
- ⌘ The onus of acting scrupulously increases corresponding to the stature of the person involved. A person of high stature, such as a rabbi, community leader, Member of Parliament or Congress, and so on, is bound to a higher code of conduct. If he should slip up, the damage can be tragic and vast.

CLASS SUMMARY:

WHAT DOES ONE'S CONDUCT IN BUSINESS SAY ABOUT HIS RELIGIOUS BELIEFS, OR LACK THEREOF?

The marketplace is the testing ground of our religious ideals and ethical values. How we conduct ourselves shows whether we believe God is in control or that we must take things into our own hands regardless of right and wrong.

One who has faith will not feel that he is losing out by adhering to the rules. In fact, just the opposite: such a person can take pride in knowing that his every penny was earned honestly.

WHAT DOES JUDAISM HAVE TO SAY ABOUT ETHICS IN THE WORKPLACE?

Judaism has its ritual component, but it also teaches values and ethics. The first of such values is commitment to the rule of law and respect for the property of others.

Judaism also places a great premium on truth and honesty, with the concomitant aversion to theft that goes hand in hand. But it is not only concerned with adjudication of law; peace is also of primary importance. As such, business should be conducted not just honestly but also with consideration for the sensitivities of others.

Judaism is very concerned with ethical business practices as a means of coming closer to God, Who Himself loves truth and integrity. In fact, going beyond the letter of the law is considered an act of holiness. We are thus charged with acting justly and fairly in all our ways.

WHY SHOULD WE, AS JEWS, BE CONCERNED ABOUT THE IMPRESSIONS MADE BY THE WAY WE CONDUCT OUR BUSINESS AFFAIRS?

Seeing as people associate the Jews with God and the Torah, demonstrating a lack of commitment to ethical behavior reflects negatively upon that which we have come to stand for.

The world has higher expectations of God's chosen people (whether they believe in that or not). Failing to live up to these expectations not only makes us look bad, it makes God look bad, too. As the stature of an individual grows, so, too, his responsibility to maintain the highest standards increases.

On the other hand, when we act with integrity we can bring praise to God's name.