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What are the Essential Core Values for Individuals and Organizations? Lessons from Judaism

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***Abstract:** This paper examines the Torah to derive a small set of essential core values for living. Core values are the guiding principles that can be used by individuals as well as organizations to make correct decisions and provide a reason for being. This paper finds six core values in the Torah: compassion, peace, human dignity, integrity, justice, and industriousness.*

Judaism has a long and rich history of reflection on issues in business ethics and business law. People and organizations must conduct themselves in an honest way.

***Keywords:** core values, Judaism, ethics, business ethics.*

1. Introduction

Today, many organizations are thinking about core values. Core values for an organization- much as they are for an individual- are guiding principles and provide a fundamental reason for being. These values guide a

company internally, as well as externally in dealing with others. Core values enable organizations to make correct decisions and avoid detrimental, harmful ones. Core values are the soul of the organization and everything that a company does should flow from those values. The core values of an organization usually become an essential part of the company's mission statement.

For individuals, core values may serve as a guide, to provide a reason for being; they may be the essence of our beliefs, as well as a moral compass for how to live one's life. We should use these core values to help make decisions in good times as well as difficult times.

The religions of approximately 55 percent of the world's population, the so-called Abrahamic religions (the three major ones are Judaism, Christianity, and Islam), have their roots in the Torah (the Five Books of Moses). According to tradition, the Torah contains 613 precepts that cover ritual law as well as civil law. The purpose of this paper is to extract from the Torah a small set of essential core values, to see what lessons may be learned from them. One source that will be extensively used is the Talmud since it contains much of the Oral Law and attempts to explain the Written Law, i.e., the Torah.

Basic to Judaism is that in the conduct of everyday life and in the most mundane aspects of human interaction one fulfills duties or commandments concerning a person's obligations to other human beings. Judaism has a long and rich history of reflection on issues in business ethics and business law. Judaism admits the legitimacy of business, properly built. People must conduct themselves in an honest way. Organizations need to recognize some form of corporate social responsibility. The economic well-being at the individual, organizational, or national level is ineluctable connected to ethical values (1).

The core values of the Torah should not be confused with the *ikkarim* (fundamental principles of a religion) of Judaism. Maimonides and Albo attempted to determine the principles of faith in Judaism. Joseph Albo (c. 1380-1444), a rabbi and philosopher who lived in Spain, wrote a classic book dealing with the fundamental beliefs of Judaism and concluded that there were three *ikkarim*; Maimonides (1135-1204), a philosopher, physician, and rabbi, came up with 13 (Commentary on the Mishnah, Sanhedrin Chapter 10). Both Maimonides' better known "Thirteen Principles of Faith" and Albo's three principles focus mainly on beliefs rather than actions.

However, a core value, even when derived from the Torah, does not only belong to the faithful; both believers and nonbelievers can benefit from examining the guiding principles that should be part of one's moral compass.

The following story from the Talmud might shed light on a core value of the Torah. The Talmud (Babylonian Talmud, Shabbos 31a) relates the following well-known story of Hillel:

It happened that a gentile came before Shammai and said to him: 'Convert me to Judaism, on the condition that you teach me the entire Torah while I am standing on one

foot.' Shammai pushed him away with the builder's cubit that was in his hand. When the gentile came before Hillel and asked him to teach him the entire Torah while standing on one foot, Hillel replied: 'What is hateful to you, do not do to your fellow. That is the entire Torah; the rest is commentary. Go and learn it.'

It appears that the gentile in the above story wanted to know a core value of the Torah. One might have expected Hillel to talk about belief in God or, perhaps, divine punishment. Instead, Hillel cited the negative version of the golden rule that teaches one how to live one's life, rather than a principle of faith.

There are those who believe that learning Torah is itself a core value of the Torah, based on the following passage from the Talmud (Babylonian Talmud, Peah 1:1):

These are the things for which a person enjoys the fruits in this world, while the principal remains intact for him in the world to come: honoring one's father and mother, acts of lovingkindness, and bringing peace between people. And the study of Torah is equal to them all (*k'neged kulam*).

Regarding the statement that studying Torah is equal to all the precepts, one should be aware that the Talmudic sages often use this idea

that one precept is equivalent to many other precepts.

The people castigated by Isaiah and other prophets thousands of years ago did not understand the core values of the Torah. They behaved very much like the *chasid shoteh* of the Talmud. All that mattered was the ritual but not the core value behind it. Isaiah (1: 11-17) made it clear to the people that the sacrifices, the Sabbath, and other rituals are abominations if they are not accompanied by compassion for the needy members of society or if rituals are performed without any communal concern for truth and justice. Isaiah (58: 5-7) made it clear that the ritual of fasting was not sufficient.

One has to meditate on the Torah day and night since it is supposed to be used as a guide. Only then can a person act wisely and become successful. In other words, the core values of a person (and an organization) should come from the Torah.

Business ethics covers the whole spectrum of interactions between firms, individuals, industries, society and the state. Jewish ethical commandments are directed first to the community and only after to individual members of the community. The social responsibility of business does not consider business an entity in itself, independent of the

social system. The most impactful argument in favor of business responsibility is that society supplies the mandate for business's existence and that business must therefore react and respond to changes in society (2).

2. Core Values

How does one go about determining what is a core Torah value? Certainly, if a law or general principle is emphasized, is repeated many times, and may be found in different parts of Scripture, it is very likely a core value. If the Talmudic sages were willing to supersede or override a Torah law in order to protect a general principle that would also suggest an essential core Torah value. In examining the Torah, the Hebrew Scriptures, and the Talmud, the following six core values appear to be considered essential: compassion, peace, human dignity, integrity, justice, and industriousness.

2.1. Compassion for others, especially the weak and helpless

The Torah demands that individuals have compassion. This is why it is replete with laws that deal with acts of kindness, charity, and caring for the powerless and defenseless members of society. The Talmud views charity as part of *gemiluth chasadim* (performing deeds of loving kindness). *Gemiluth chasadim* includes all acts of kindness, such as attending to the dead, and is essentially the

opposite of self-centeredness. The Talmud (Babylonian Talmud, Sukkah 49b) asserts:

In three ways is *gemiluth chasadim* superior to charity:

(1) Charity can only be performed with one's money; *gemiluth chasadim* can be performed either with one's person or with one's money.

(2) Charity is only for the poor; *gemiluth chasadim* is for the poor as well as the wealthy.

(3) Charity is only for the living; *gemiluth chasadim* is for the living as well as the dead.

Gemiluth chasadim is listed in the Talmud (Babylonian Talmud, Peah 1:1) among the acts for which "the fruits a person enjoys in this world, while the principal remains intact for him in the hereafter."

The Talmud recognizes *gemiluth chasadim* as a core value. The Talmud (Babylonian Talmud, Baba Bathra 9a), as noted above, states that charity is equal to all the other *mitzvot* (religious precepts) combined. This is derived from the verse (Proverbs 21:3): "To do *tzedaka* and justice is more preferable to the Lord than sacrifice." Here, the word *tzedaka* can be translated as either charity or righteousness.

The Talmud (Babylonian Talmud, Baba Bathra 8b) considers the *mitzvah* of redemption of captives (*pidyon shvuyim*) to be a great *mitzvah*

(“*mitzvah rabbah*”). Indeed, it is a form of charity that can save captives from starvation, torture, humiliation, and death.

There is no question that *gemiluth chasadim*, which includes charity as well as helping any of the unfortunates of society, is a core Torah value. There are a huge number of precepts in the Torah that deal with caring for the unfortunates of society. These include the stranger, the orphan and widow, and the poor. Today, we might include the handicapped in the above group since they are sometimes more helpless than orphans and widows. One may also include debtors in this group as well as employees and animals. Workers have to be protected since employers are considered to have the upper hand when dealing with employees.

The Talmud (Babylonian Talmud, Baba Metziah 59b) notes that the principle of not maltreating, taunting, or oppressing the stranger is mentioned 36 different times in the Torah. It is also mentioned many times in the rest of the Hebrew Scriptures. The Torah even provides a reason for not oppressing the stranger: You shall not maltreat or oppress a stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt. (Exodus 22:20)

Do not oppress a stranger; you know the feelings of the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt. (Exodus 23:9)

When a stranger dwells among you in your land, you are not to mistreat him. The stranger who dwells with you shall be treated as your native-born; you shall love him like yourself for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.

The ‘stranger’ may be the paradigmatic “other” or outsider, and as such represents those individuals that even a civilized society has to be reminded to stand up for.

The widow and orphan are vulnerable in most societies. The Torah makes a serious threat to anyone who has the temerity to harm a widow or orphan. There are numerous verses dealing specifically with widows and orphans. Sometimes, the orphan and widow are grouped together with the stranger.

In Biblical times, large farms were the equivalent of big business, and several Torah laws describe what farmers must do to help the poor (these laws apply to all landowners). For instance, the corners of the field are not to be harvested by the owner but left for the poor. Individual stalks falling from the sickle during the harvest have to be left for the poor. In addition, a bundle of grain

accidentally left in the field during the harvest is to be left for the indigent. Similarly, the farmer is not permitted to pick all the fruits off the vine or tree and leave it bare, but must leave the gleanings of the vine and the olive tree for the poor.

Also, if your brother becomes impoverished and his hand falters beside you, you shall strengthen him, whether he is a stranger or a native, so that he can live with you. (Leviticus 25: 35)

High prices are especially problematic for the destitute. The maintenance of fair and low prices was important to the sages of the Talmud. When the price for a pair of doves, a necessity for certain sacrifices, reached a golden dinar, Rabbi Shimon ben Gamliel, President of the Sanhedrin, swore that he would not rest until the price dropped to a silver dinar. He even went so far as to revise the law concerning sacrifices in order to reduce demand for these doves; the price ultimately sank to one quarter of a silver dinar" (Babylonian Talmud, Krithos 8a).

In Talmudic times the obligation to help the needy was accomplished by having various special taxes: *kuppah* was the communal charity box for dispensing sustenance to the poor every week; *tamchui* was the community charity plate/soup kitchen and collected daily; and *maos*

chittim was a special charity drive to provide funds for the poor for Passover (3).

According to Maimonides (Mishna Torah, Laws of Gifts to the Poor, 10:7), one of the major codifiers of Jewish law, the highest form of charity is providing one with the ability to earn a living. He derives this from the verse in Leviticus (25: 35) that talks about "strengthening" the destitute individual.

Maimonides feels that this may be accomplished by providing a gift or loan enabling one to start a business, taking the destitute person in as a partner, or helping the individual find employment.

In many societies, workers are exploited by their employers. The Torah is concerned with ensuring that workers were paid and on time. Workers who labored in the fields had a right to eat the fruits on which they worked. Even servants had rights. The servant was entitled to *hanakah*, which is similar to severance pay. He was given enough so that he could be somewhat independent. Here are some relevant verses:

You shall not cheat your fellow and you shall not rob; the wages of a worker shall not remain with you overnight until morning." (Leviticus 19: 13)

Do not send him [the servant] away empty-handed. You shall give him a

severance gift from your flocks, from your threshing floor, and from your wine cellar... (Deuteronomy 15: 13 - 14)

When you come [as a worker] into your neighbor's vineyard, you may eat as many grapes as is your desire, to your fill, but you may not put any into a receptacle. When you come into your neighbor's standing corn, you may pluck ears with your hand, but you should not lift a sickle on your neighbor's standing corn. (Deuteronomy 23: 25-26)

Animals are also helpless and can be easily exploited by humankind. The Torah has many laws dealing with animals. One of the seven Noahide laws that all people, Jew and Gentile, are supposed to obey deals with gratuitously hurting animals.

Debtors in many societies have few rights; until recently, there were special prisons for people who could not repay their loans. One of the precepts of the Torah deals with lending money to the poor. The Torah (Deuteronomy 15:8) states: "...you shall open your hand to him and lend him sufficient for his need, whatever it may be."

Talmudic sages enacted numerous *takanot* (enactments/ordinances) as legal remedies when they saw that a core value of the Torah was being violated and/or to promote the public welfare. This is why Hillel the Elder

instituted the *Prosbul* (a document that in effect transfers the loan to the court, which may collect the debt on behalf of the creditor) when he observed that people refused to lend poor people money before the Sabbatical year (Babylonian Talmud, Gittin 36a). According to Torah law (Deuteronomy 15), the creditor is not permitted to collect his loan after the Sabbatical year. A potential creditor who uses a *Prosbul*, no longer fearing that the debt will be canceled by the Sabbatical year, will therefore be willing to lend money to the needy.

The Talmud enacted other rules using the principle of "not to close the door in the face of borrowers" (Babylonian Talmud, Gittin 49b-50a). In fact, this is the reason the rabbis enacted the principle that a creditor is permitted to collect his debt from medium-quality land belonging to the debtor; according to the Torah, the creditor should only be permitted to collect from the lowest-quality land (Babylonian Talmud, Gittin 50a). The Talmudic sages understood the importance of protecting a core value of the Torah and helping the destitute with loans is part of the core value of compassion. This is similar to the idea expressed in the Talmud (Babylonian Talmud, Temurah 14b) justifying the writing down of the oral law: "It is better that one letter of the Torah should be uprooted rather than the entire Torah should be forgotten."

Sometimes Torah laws had to be “uprooted” to protect a core value of the Torah.

2.2. Peace

Peace is a core Torah value. The Talmud (Babylonian Talmud, Gittin 59b) observes that: “The whole Torah is for the sake of promoting peace.” This is derived from the following verse (Proverbs 3:17): “Its [the Torah] ways are the ways of pleasantness and all of her paths are peace.” According to the Talmud (Babylonian Talmud, Derech Eretz Zuta, Perek Hashalom) one of God’s names is *Shalom* (peace). The Talmud (Babylonian Talmud, Berachot 64a) says that “Scholars increase the peace in the world” and refers to them as “builders.” A just legal system can be used to build a peaceful world. When waging a war against an enemy, the Torah says (Deuteronomy 20: 10): “When you draw near to a city to wage war against it, you shall offer terms of peace to it.”

There are numerous statements in the Talmud that stress the importance of peace: For example, Hillel’s famous adage: “One should be of the disciples of Aaron: Love peace and pursue peace; love humanity and bring them closer to the Torah” (Hillel, Avot 1: 12). Rabbi Shimon ben Gamliel the *Nasi* (President of the Sanhedrin), declared: “The world endures on three principles: truth, justice, and peace”

(Babylonian Talmud, Avot 1:18). Making peace between a person and his fellow is also listed in the Talmud (Babylonian Talmud, Peah 1:1) as deeds of which “the fruits a person enjoys in this world, while the principal remains intact for him in the hereafter.”

The Torah is unambiguous about the evil of lying: “Thou shall not bear false witness” (Exodus 20:16), “Thou shall not steal, thou shall not deny falsely, and thou shall not lie one to another” (Leviticus 19: 11), and “Distance yourself from a false matter” (Exodus 23:7). The Talmud maintains, however, that lying is permitted when its purpose is to maintain peace. The following is one passage from the Talmud on the subject of permissible lies (Babylonian Talmud, Yebamoth 65b):

The Talmud (Babylonian Talmud, Derech Eretz Zuta, Perek Hashalom) unequivocally states: “All falsehoods are prohibited. It is permitted, however, to lie for the purpose of making peace between a man and his fellow.”

The Talmud instituted many laws, some of which at face value appear not consistent with Torah law, in order to prevent strife. The Talmud uses the principle of *darkei shalom* (the ways of peace) as the reason one who removes a fish caught in a net is

considered a thief (Babylonian Talmud, Gittin 59a-b).

According to Torah law, one would not legally acquire the fish by placing a net in the ocean which is public property. The rabbis wanted to preserve peace so they enacted legislation to prevent people from taking fish from nets (or animals or birds from traps and snares set in forests).

2.3. Concern for Human Dignity

Hertz declares: "The belief in the unity of the human race is the natural corollary of the unity of God, since One God must be the God of the whole of humanity...Through Hebrew monotheism alone was it possible to teach the Brotherhood of Man" (4). Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik, one of the great rabbinical leaders of the twentieth century, makes the point that human dignity and social justice "are implicit in the biblical concept that man was created in God's image" (5).

Once the Torah establishes the value of all human beings, it can demand that we treat the Hebrew servant with dignity as well as the pauper and debtor as the following verses suggest: If your brother becomes poor beside you and sell himself to you, you shall not make him serve as a slave (Leviticus 25:39).

When you hold against your fellow a debt of any amount, you shall not enter his house to take his security. You shall stand outside; and the man to whom you lend shall bring the security to you outside. (Deuteronomy 24: 10-11)

The dignity of a servant, the lowliest of employees, had to be upheld. The Torah (Leviticus 25: 43) states: "You shall not rule over him through rigorous labor." His family has to be provided for (Leviticus 25:41), and his master is not permitted to make him perform debasing tasks (Leviticus 25:39). The Midrash (Sifra, Leviticus 86; Midrash Hagadol, Leviticus 25: 39) provides examples of demeaning work that is prohibited. One may not order a servant to perform unnecessary labor simply to assert one's authority. In addition, work given to a slave must have defined limit. Degrading work, labor without a purpose, or a job that seems endless because it has no definite time limit has the effect of demoralizing a human being and is therefore prohibited for servants and certainly for employees. As noted above, masters were required to give their servants a severance gift known as *hanakah* (see Deuteronomy 15: 13-14). The purpose of this gift was to provide the freed servant with the materials that he or she would need to start a new life as a free person.

Amsel quotes the Midrash (Genesis Rabbah 24:7) that maintains when you insult another person you have insulted his Creator, because man was created in the image of God. This may be why the Talmud (Babylonian Talmud, Berachot 43b) made the statement: "It is better to throw oneself into a fiery furnace than to publicly shame another person" (6). In addition, the rabbis of the Talmud based a law against taunting the stranger with words (*ona'at devarim*) on a verse in the Torah (Leviticus 19:33-34): "When a stranger dwells among you in your land, you are not to mistreat him." It is not enough to give him all the rights of the native-born (Leviticus 19:34). The stranger must be treated with dignity and one is not permitted to cause him pain by taunting him, e.g., by reminding him of his past deeds (Babylonian Talmud, Baba Metzia 58b).

Another way to diminish the dignity of another person is via slander and gossip. The Talmud (Jerusalem Talmud, Peah 1:1) avers: "There are four sins for which a person is punished in this world and the principal remains for the world to come. They are: idolatry, sexual immorality (incest and adultery), murder, and *loshon horah* (gossip and slander); *loshon horah* is equivalent to them all" (Jerusalem Talmud, Peah 1). It is obvious that *loshon horah*, as bad as it is, cannot be considered worse

than the others. The above-mentioned three are capital offenses; this is not the case with *loshon horah*. It is "equivalent" since it can have many negative outcomes. The Talmud is warning us that slandering another human being should not be treated lightly and can have many adverse effects. Indeed, even in our generation we see how gossip and slander can lead to bloodshed.

The Talmud asserts: "The value of human dignity is so great that it supersedes a negative commandment of the Torah" (Babylonian Talmud, Berachot 19b-20a). The Talmud concludes that human dignity overrides rabbinic law and precepts of the Torah where the person is not actively engaged in a violation but is refraining from performing a mandated commandment.

One way of providing ordinary people with dignity is via education. Hillel the Elder was born in Babylonia and started out as a woodchopper and was appointed as a *Nasi* (President of the Sanhedrin) on about 31 B.C.E. Hillel and his descendants served as heads of the Sanhedrin for the next fifteen generations. Hillel was responsible for spreading Jewish values throughout the Western world. One of the major contributions of Hillel, was opposing the view that one should only teach those who were wise, humble, of a good family, and

wealthy. This belief that education was only for the elite was quite prevalent until recent times. Hillel believed that everyone should be taught Torah which meant that everyone needed an education and had to be literate (Babylonian Talmud, Avot D'Rabbi Noson 2: 9). Apparently, Hillel's views were accepted and about 2,000 years ago, Rabbi Yehoshua ben Gamla, the High Priest in ancient Israel, established a system of universal education. Teachers were appointed in every district and town, and children started school at the age of six or seven (Babylonian Talmud, Baba Bathra 21a).

Undoubtedly, the concept of human dignity is crucial to everyone. The General Assembly of the United Nations adopted "The Universal Declaration of Human Rights" on December 10, 1948. Article 1 of the Declaration states: "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood." René Samuel Cassin, one of the major architects of this declaration, who won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1968, acknowledged that the idea of human dignity and rights came from the Scriptures (see his essay "From the Ten Commandments to the Rights of Man" available at: <http://www.udhr.org/history/tenco>

mms.htm). Human dignity is inextricably linked with human rights and belief in the brotherhood of all humankind.

2.4. Integrity

Of the Torah's 613 precepts, more than 100 deal with business (7). The Biblical prohibition against stealing is the eighth commandment of the Ten Commandments. It is also discussed more thoroughly in Leviticus (19: 11-13): "Do not steal, do not deny falsely, and do not lie to one another. Do not swear falsely by My name... Do not cheat your fellow and you shall not rob." The Torah (Exodus 23:7) also states: "Distance yourself from a false matter."

Honest weights and measures are stressed in the Torah. For example, Scripture states (Leviticus 19: 35-36): "You shall not commit an unrighteousness in justice, in measures of length, weight, or volume. Just scales, just weights, just dry measures, and just liquid measures you shall have." The Torah (Deuteronomy 25: 13 -16) also states:

One might say that honest weights and measures also fall into the category of justice. Business ethics, in general, is connected to justice and the practice of righteousness.

One of the prophet Isaiah's criticisms of Israel dealt with unethical business practices. Isaiah

(1:22) complained that: "Your silver has become dross, your wine diluted with water." According to most commentaries, this is not a metaphor but refers to actual deceptive practices in ancient Judah and Jerusalem that angered the Lord.

The prophet Amos (8:5) also rebuked the ancient Israelites for unethical business practices including "making the *ephah* (a dry measure) smaller and the *shekel* larger and falsifying the scales of deceit." Individuals as well as organizations have to refrain from any type of unethical practices.

Honesty in business is so important that the Talmud (Babylonian Talmud, Shabbos 31a) believes: "The first question an individual is asked in the afterlife at the final judgment is: 'Were you honest in your business dealings?'"

An ethical community or organization has to be governed by ethical leaders committed to the well-being of the others. Jewish business ethics needs to continue to self-consciously promote models of aspirations, as well as rely on fixed legal norms (1).

Honesty in economics is considered an absolute rule. It is not only beneficial, but obligatory. Jewish business texts have traditionally focused primarily, but not

exclusively, on the individual's ethical responsibilities.

Jewish business ethics not only provides rules of behavior, but the texts reveal a vision encouraging people to incorporate the highest spiritual ideals into the business world. The Jewish tradition emphasizes the centrality of a business ethics demanding honesty and integrity in business. The Jewish perspective on business ethics deals with the two major sources of economic immorality: unbounded desire and the fear of economic uncertainty. Business activity and the pursuit of economic well-being can never be ethically neutral (2).

2.5. Justice

There are numerous laws in the Torah that discuss the importance of justice. In fact, the Torah (Deuteronomy 16:20) states very emphatically: "Justice, and only justice, you shall follow, so that you may live and inherit the land that the Lord your God is giving you." One is not permitted to show partiality to the poor when it comes to justice (Exodus 23:6) or favoritism to the rich. The Torah (Leviticus 19:15) states: "Do not pervert justice; do not show partiality to the poor or favoritism to the mighty, but in righteousness you shall judge your nation." Justice is not only for the citizen; the Torah (Deuteronomy 1:16) declares: "...and

judge righteously between a man and his brother and the stranger that is with him." On the verse "justice, and only justice, you shall follow," Hertz (8) observes that "justice is the awe-inspired respect for the personality of others, and their inalienable rights." Hertz makes the point that throughout Scripture the individual who tramples on the rights of the weak and helpless (orphans, widows, strangers, the destitute, etc.) is seen as the enemy of both God and humankind.

Sacks (9) notes the difference between *mishpat* (justice) and *chesed* (lovingkindness). *Chesed* "exists only in virtue of emotion, empathy, and sympathy." It requires "not detached rationality but emotional intelligence." Justice, on the other hand, is "best administered without emotion." The correct way to administer justice is by being detached, disinterested, and impartial.

The Talmud (Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin 6b) addresses the problem of *tzedaka* and *mishpat*. The Hebrew word *tzedaka* is translated as righteousness but also means charity, and actually hints at both. The Talmud has difficulty understanding how King David did both in judgments. The verse (II Samuel 8:15) indicates that David "administered justice (*mishpat*) and righteousness

(*tzedaka*) for all his people." One answer provided by the Talmud was that David was indeed impartial when acting as a judge. If, however, he decided a case against a poor person, he would pay the claimant with his own money. In this manner, David was able to practice both justice and righteousness. Another answer provided by the Talmud is that compromise (mediation or arbitration), which satisfies both parties, is considered justice combined with righteousness. Compromise, as noted above, is also a way to have justice with peace, according to the Talmud (Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin 6b). Providing justice and peace allows the judge to fulfill what Zechariah (8:16) demands: "...truth, justice, and peace are you to adjudicate in your gates."

Nachmanides (1195 - 1270), a major commentator on the Torah, believes that the verse "And you shall do that which is right and good" (Deuteronomy 6:18) is a general commandment that follows the specific, detailed precepts of the Torah. It is necessary since it is impossible for the Torah to list every single injustice a person could commit against another. Therefore, the Torah lists a general principle of "doing that which is right and good." It includes situations that are not mentioned in the Torah such as going beyond the strict requirements of the law and

trying to achieve a compromise. Compromise is sometimes superior to following the letter of the law. The Talmud (Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin 6b) notes that when both parties in a lawsuit compromise and give up something they might actually be entitled to by law, it is easier for them to preserve a friendship. The price of strict justice, unfortunately, can be eternal hatred between the defendant and plaintiff. The Talmud also sees going beyond the requirements of the law as a Torah requirement; obeying the strict letter of the law is not enough. Jerusalem was destroyed for following the strict letter of the law and not doing more than the law required (Babylonian Talmud, Baba Metzia 30b).

2.6. Industriousness

Hertz discusses how, unlike the ancient Romans or Greeks, Judaism saw dignity in labor (8). Hertz observes that “the Jewish sages are unanimous in their insistence that work ennobles and sanctifies.” The Hebrew word *avodah* can mean either work or worship / Divine service. In Genesis we see God as being industrious and innovative in creating the world in six days (10). Rae states: “God, in His providence, works through our occupations to accomplish His work in the world.” The Jews are commanded to emulate

God and work for six days and rest on the seventh (10).

The Midrash (Midrash Hagadol Exodus 20:9) observes that just as there is an obligation to rest on the Sabbath, there is also an obligation to work on the other days. Work was always part of the divine plan for humankind (10). In fact, humankind, which has an obligation to imitate God (Leviticus 19:2), was given dominion over the entire earth (Genesis 1:26) for a reason. We are the caretakers of this planet and have to continue God’s work of creation by improving the world (*tikkun olam*).

The messianic vision of Isaiah and Amos in which humankind sits around being productive is a vision of world peace with everyone employed (10). Swords are transformed into working implements, not couches. The major verses are:

Yishuv ha’olam (settling the world) and *yishuv eretz yisrael* (settling the Land of Israel) are both biblical obligations (7). The Torah describes what the Israelites must do upon entering the land (Leviticus 19:23): “When you come into the land and you shall plant any food tree...”

Humankind’s responsibility to “replenish and subdue” the earth is the basis of the concept of *tikkun olam*. *Tikkun olam* is the philosophy that people are obligated to repair and perfect the world (in Hebrew, *tikkun*

means repair and *olam* means world). *V'al Kein Nekaveh* (which follows the prayer of *Aleinu*) is one of the oldest of Jewish prayers (some claim that it goes back to the time of Joshua making it more than 3,000 years old) and it concludes all congregational services. One phrase in this prayer deals with *tikkun olam*, and describes the ideal society "when the world will be perfected under the reign of the Almighty." The concept of *tikkun olam* includes alleviating such world problems as poverty, racism, oppression, and doing everything to improve the environment.

More recently, *tikkun olam* was a major part of the kabbalah of Rabbi Isaac Luria (1534-1572). Indeed, Rabbi Luria once remarked that the reason for so many problems in the world was because God needs humankind's "help" in repairing the world. Everyone has a responsibility to work on such issues as human rights, the proper treatment of animals, poverty, and the environment and, thereby, do everything possible to improve the world. The sages of the Talmud used the principle of *tikkun olam* to enact various laws to help society (e.g., Babylonian Talmud, Gittin 32a, 34b, 40b, 41b, 45a,b).

The Talmud advocates an effective, functioning marketplace. Society cannot be productive without markets that allow people to buy and sell

goods. Berkovits describes how the Talmudic sages used *takanot hashuk* (enactment for the marketplace) as a legal device to ensure the proper functioning of the marketplace. For example, the rabbis discuss the case of someone who recognizes his property in someone else's possession and it is known that the first party was indeed robbed. The person who currently possesses the stolen property purchased it innocently not realizing that it was stolen (11). According to Torah law, the true owner would simply take back his property after producing witnesses that it belonged to him. However, this would mean that everyone would be afraid to purchase goods in the marketplace. How can any buyer know whether the seller truly owns the merchandise on sale? In order to ensure that the marketplace would function, the rabbis used the principle of *takanot hashuk* and ruled that the true owner swears to the court how much he paid for the merchandise and buys it back. This way the person who innocently purchased the stolen goods does not have to take a loss (Babylonian Talmud, Baba Kama 114b-115a).

3. Organizational values

Organizational, or corporate, cultures have been a fashionable topic in the management literature since the early 1980s. At that time, authors began to popularize the claim that the

“excellence” of an organization is contained in the common ways by which its members have learned to think, feel, and act. Corporate culture is a soft, holistic concept with, however, presumed hard consequences. Organization sociologists have stressed the role of the soft factor in organizations for more than half a century. Using the label culture for the shared mental software of the people in an organization is a convenient way of repopularizing these sociological views. However, organizational cultures are a phenomenon by themselves, different in many respects from national cultures. An organization is a social system of a different nature from that of a nation, if only because the organization’s members usually did not grow up in it. On the contrary, they had a certain influence in their decision to join it, are involved in it only during working hours, and will one day leave it (12).

During the last twenty years it has become increasingly recognized that both national and organizational cultures need to be considered in modern business management, as Trompenaars and Asser and Rosinski observe (13, 14). Besides, leaders, even in local firms, will find they are leading and managing multicultural workforces, operating within multiple cultures. Interestingly, nation is not

the only one of the groups to which we belong. For instance, these groups originate from various categories: nationality, gender, ethnicity, profession etc.

The idea that the validity of a theory is constrained by nationality was more obvious in Europe, with all its borders, than in a huge borderless country such as the United States. In Europe the cultural relativity of the laws that govern human behavior had been recognized as early as the sixteenth century in the skepticism of Michel de Montaigne (1533–92). The quote from Blaise Pascal (1623–62) referred to earlier in this chapter—“There are truths on this side of the Pyrenees which are falsehoods on the other” (the Pyrenees being the border mountains between France and Spain)—was in fact inspired by Montaigne. Since Montaigne and Pascal, the link between nationality and ways of thinking has sometimes been recognized but more often forgotten (12).

There are six ways in which national cultures differ; all of these have implications for organization and management processes. Theories, models, and practices are basically culture specific; they may apply across borders, but this should always be proved. The naive assumption that management ideas are universal is not found only in popular literature: in

scholarly journals—even in those explicitly addressing an international readership—the silent assumption of universal validity of culturally restricted findings is frequent (12).

Authors exploring the influence of national and organizational culture tend to rely on diverse theories. A historical view highlights that corporate culture is a soft, holistic concept with, however, presumed hard consequences (12). Other authors show that the relationship between culture and integration is not static and refers to chain reactions. For instance, changes in organizational culture may change the cultural challenge at the national level due to the fact that cultural differences can instill creativity (15; 16). In their studies of organizational culture, Simha and Stachowicz-Stanusch and Ahammad et al. reveal that there is a positive relationship between promotion of benevolent cultures and knowledge transfer versus CBA performance through the mediatory effect of organizational culture differences (17; 18).

Lack of awareness of national limits causes management and organization ideas and theories to be exported without regard for the values context in which they were developed. Fad-conscious publishers and gullible readers in those other countries encourage such exports.

Unfortunately, to rephrase a famous dictum, there is nothing as impractical as a bad theory. According to U.S. business historian Robert Locke, the successful industrialization of the United States took place in a distinct historical context and owed much more to external circumstances than to the quality of the management principles used. U.S. business professor and consultant Michael Porter analyzed why some nations succeeded much better than others in the international competition of the latter part of the twentieth century. His “diamond” of the determinants of national advantage recognized four attributes: (1) factor conditions, by which he meant the availability of necessary production factors such as skilled labor and infrastructure, (2) demand conditions, (3) related and supporting industries, and (4) firm strategy, structure, and rivalry. Porter stopped short of the question of *why* some countries get better diamonds than others. He still assumed universal applicability of the ethnocentric laws of competitive markets. Just as certain nations excel in certain sports, others are associated with specific disciplines. Psychology, including social psychology, is predominantly a U.S. discipline: individualist and mostly masculine. Sociology is predominantly European, but even European sociologists rarely consider the influence of their

nationality on their thinking (12). In individualistic cultures organisations (from the Greek *organon*) are essentially instruments. They have been deliberately assembled and contrived, in order to serve individual owners, employees and customers. Members of organisations enter relationships because it is in their individual interests to do so. Their ties are abstract, legal ones, regulated by contract. The organisation is a means to what its actors want for themselves. In so far as they co-operate, it is because they have particular interests at stake. Each performs a differentiated and specialised function and receives an extrinsic reward for doing so. Authority originates in an individual's skill at performing tasks, and an individual's knowledge is used to make the organisational instrument work effectively (13).

In communitarian cultures the organisation is not the creation or instrument of its founders so much as a social context all members share and which gives them meaning and purpose. Organisations are often likened to a large family, community or clan which develops and nurtures its members and may live longer than they do. The growth and prosperity of organisations are not considered bonanzas for individual shareholders or gravy-trains for top managers, but are valuable ends in themselves (13).

In organization theories, the nationality of the author reflects implicit assumptions as to where organizations came from, what they are, and what they try to achieve. These national "paradigms" all have the same starting point: "In the beginning was" After God had created men, men made organizations; but what did they have in mind when making them?

The lack of universal solutions to management and organization problems does not mean that countries cannot learn from each other. On the contrary, looking across the border is one of the most effective ways of getting new ideas for management, organization, or politics. But their export calls for prudence and judgment. Nationality constrains rationality (12).

4. Conclusion

Hertz (8) believes that the command of "You shall be holy" is linked directly to precepts such as consideration for the disadvantaged, honesty in business, paying wages on time, equal justice for all, loving one's fellow human being, and the prohibition against tale bearing and malice because it is a "regulative principle in the everyday lives of men and women." Hertz adds that "Man is never nearer the Divine than in his compassionate moments." Holiness is thus an overarching theme that relates

to truth, justice, compassion, and respect for human dignity. According to Sacks (9), responsibility is the “greatest overarching theme” of the Torah. Responsibility can also be seen as part of *Imitatio Dei* and is a way of living a spiritual/holy life.

Friedman provides an extensive discussion of human dignity and Jewish law and cites Talmudic, post-Talmudic, and modern cases where Jewish law uses the importance of human dignity as a reason for setting aside various laws (19). Friedman makes the point that Torah law is concerned about any behaviors that will shame those of limited means (20).

Nachmanides (Leviticus 19:2) believes that the admonition to be holy is a general, wide-ranging commandment that follows the specific, individual precepts of the Torah. The Torah lists numerous precepts but it is still quite possible for someone to follow the letter of the law, but not its spirit. In fact a person could obey the individual *mitzvot* and still become a “*naval b’reshut haTorah*” (a disgusting person within the permissible framework of the Torah). There are too many ways to get around the law. This is why it is necessary to have a law that simply states that one should be holy. Being holy is about following the spirit and spirituality of the Torah and leading a

moral, compassionate, and honorable life.

The opposite of *kadosh* is *tamei* (unclean / defiled). The Israelites were warned not to defile the land by unholiness, immorality, social corruption, or violence (Leviticus 20:22; Numbers 35: 34-35) or they would also be expelled.

The core values cited in this paper — compassion, peace, human dignity, integrity, justice, and industriousness — are not only for individuals but also for organizations and even apply to economic systems. A for-profit company has to be concerned with making a profit for its shareholders. The fiduciary responsibilities of a CEO (as well as the Board of Trustees of a company) certainly involve making a profit; after all, a for-profit company is supposed to earn a profit for the shareholders.

However, as can be seen in the mission statement of many firms, CEOs are expected to follow an ethical compass. Without an ethical compass, a firm will find itself traveling on a road to destruction. Note how many firms got into serious trouble during the Great Recession of 2008. Corporate social responsibility, business ethics, and sustainability have become mantras of many for-profit companies.

As mentioned before, nationality constrains rationality, however

Judaism and especially Torah offers core values that can be considered without borders. The lessons offered by Judaism can be applied equally to individualistic cultures and communitarian cultures.

It is hoped that executives and leaders interested in making their organizations financially as well as ethically strong will use the core values of the Torah. No one wants a Jeremiah-like figure to say: "Woe to him who builds his house by unrighteousness and his upper stories by injustice" (Jeremiah 22:13). Jeremiah did indeed assert that a house (i.e., country or organization) that is not built on justice and righteousness, one that does not protect the robbed, the stranger, the orphan, and the widow, will become a "house of desolation." One wonders what would Jeremiah say to the numerous executives at financial institutions that made a profit off deceptive loans and foreclosures? These executives live in mansions and the widow has lost her home to foreclosure.

Organizational, or corporate, cultures have been a fashionable topic in the management literature since the early 1980s. "Excellence" of an organization is contained in the common ways by which its members have learned to think, feel, and act.

Judaism offered valuable solutions thousands of years before.

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