

Jewish Values and Ethics

Adam Yachid (a single human being):

The rabbinic concept that one human being was created originally so that no one can say, 'my father was greater than your father.' In other words, every human being is unique and inherently precious

Ahava (love):

The gift of love is a central source of joy, nurture and growth, bringing much of what gives life its meaning.

Ahavat Ger (love of “the stranger in your midst”):

A series of laws insisting on compassionate behavior towards strangers, empathy with foreigners, and their inclusion in every aspect of society

Ahavat Ha-Beriot (love of all of God’s creations):

A principle that encourages appreciation for the world and all of its inhabitants

Anei Ircha Kodmin (“the local poor are the priority”):

The concept that your primary tzedakah responsibility is to those closest to you (your family, then the poor of your city, then the poor of other cities).

Arevut (Jews have a special obligation to other Jews):

A series of ideas and laws encouraging commitments of mutual aid and devotion among Jews

Avadim hayinu bemitzrayim (we are slaves in Egypt [Deuteronomy 6:21]):

Having experienced physical and spiritual degradation, we should create empathy with all whom are downtrodden, victimized or in pain, and provide support for them.

Avoda (service):

Efforts to improve the world or to contribute to the welfare of society.

Bakesh Shalom V’Rodfehu (seek peace and pursue it):

The obligation to actively reduce conflicts. A series of laws and ethical teachings advocating peace, conflict resolution methodologies, and prohibiting violence against the innocent

Brit (covenant):

Jewish tradition suggests not only the importance of the Jewish people's commitments to God, but also the covenant made with and among humanity.

B'riyut (health and wellness):

Jewish tradition values the body and good health, supporting measures to protect them.

B'tzelem Elokim (humanity created in the image of God):

Protects, promote and increase the infinite value, dignity, equality and uniqueness of life.

Chesed (loving-kindness):

Responsibility to help, assist and serve others.

Dan L'Kaf Zechut (the presumption of innocence):

We should never initially believe someone has acted wrongly, even if it may be difficult to find merit in their actions

Darchei Shalom (ways of peace):

Talmudic rulings intent on preserving societal peace and maintaining positive inter-ethnic relations; includes directives to feed the poor of the gentiles and care for their vital needs

Dei Machsoro:

How much tzedakah is one required to give a poor person? The Torah says "enough for his lack."

Derech Eretz (proper behavior):

We must behave in a respectful, socially acceptable manner when interacting with others, including family members

Emet (truth and integrity):

Speaking truth to oneself and to others and living in a forthright fashion allows us to create communities characterized by trust, cooperation and mutuality.

Eretz Yisrael (Land of Israel):

Commitment to the welfare and safety of the State of Israel.

Gemilut Chasadim (paying back chesed):

Since chesed is showered on us each day, all our lives-from family and loved ones, from the created world around us-the only way to repay it is to do chesed for others.

Hakarat HaTov (recognition of good; gratitude):

Much of Judaism is based upon the principle of gratitude and thanksgiving

Hakaim Takim Imo (you shall surely lift up with him):

A law designed to encourage aid to one in distress, even one's enemy.

Halbanat Panim (avoidance of humiliating someone in public):

The loss of personal dignity at the hands of others is considered one of the gravest wrongs in Judaism

Hochai'ach Tochee'ach (you shall rebuke):

The obligation to be a social critic when you see that society or individuals are making terrible mistakes. Such criticism is viewed as an expression of care for others

Kedoshim tihyu:

Be a holy people and strive to achieve fulfillment and greatness.

Kedusha (holiness):

The system of mitzvot is intended to help us become more holy, more fully in touch with the Divine within us and in the world.

Kehila (commitment to community):

According to Jewish tradition, human beings can only fulfill themselves fully in relationship. Community is the locus of our relationships.

Ki Gerim Heyitem B'Eretz Mitzrayim:

On more than one occasion, the Torah instructs us not to oppress the stranger, "because you were strangers in the land of Egypt." We should know better than to perpetuate injustice on others, through our actions or inactions. We should remind ourselves that we were victims ourselves, and that without organized action (and divine assistance) we would never have escape

Klal Yisrael (unity and survival Of the Jewish people)

Jews are one people with a shared history. We recognize that we are responsible for each other regardless of differences in ideology and practice.

Kupah (community fund for the needy):

It is the obligation of every Jewish community to establish a communal agency to collect resources and distribute them to the needy

K'vod hab'riyut (human dignity):

We are bound to respect the dignity of each human being and act in a way consistent with the dignity.

Lashon Harah, Rechilut (tale bearing):

Rechilut prohibits statements which are not true, whereas lashon harah expands this prohibition to include even factually truthful speech if it might possibly malign an individual or ruin a reputation. The gravity of the offence results from the fact that it is nearly impossible to retract these types of statements

Lifnei Iver Lo Titen Michshol (do not place a stumbling block before a blind man):

Applied to the sin of keeping someone in ignorance from information that will protect him/her, or to the sin of making it easier for someone else to commit crimes

Lifnim mishurat hadin:

Go beyond one's usual ethical obligations

Lo Ta'amod Al Dam Rei'echa (do not stand by the blood of your neighbor):

The prohibition against passivity in the face of violence to others

Menschlichkeit:

A mensch is a person of great integrity, courage and sensitivity, honesty and caring.

Mishpat, Din (justice, law):

A foundational set of rabbinic assumptions about the need for good government and a just legal system

Mitzvah (obligation):

A community living in harmony helps its members to discover the transformative power that comes from honoring obligations. Some mitzvot serve as pathways connecting us to our community and our people, to our highest values, to humanity and to God.

Pidyon Sh'vuyim (the redemption of captives):

The obligation to do everything in one's power to help release people who are trapped and suffering in some way

Pikuach Nefesh (the saving of life):

The highest Jewish obligation that overrides almost every other law

Rachmanut (compassion/mercy):

Empathy for those who are less fortunate results in caring action that can involve the emotional, physical and economic realms.

Rodef (pursuer):

The obligation to actively intervene to prevent the murder or injury of innocent victims, even to the point of killing the aggressor

Shalsholet hakabbala (preserving the chain of tradition):

We are the current link in the chain, preserving the extraordinary richness we have inherited and adding our own experience and insight so that we have a powerful legacy for subsequent generations.

Shalom Bayit (for the sake of peace in the house):

The need to ensure that there are peaceful relations in one's home and family. This can also be extended to one's synagogue, workplace, or community

Tikun olam (improving the world):

We cannot expect to complete the task of bringing the world to that ultimate redemption, but we are not at liberty to neglect the task". There is an enormous amount to be done, and each good thing we do makes a difference.

Tza'ar Ba'alei Chayyim (The pain of living creatures):

A set of laws prohibiting cruelty to animals and obligating acts of compassion and proper treatment of animals used to perform labor

Tzedakah (righteousness; charity):

One of the best known aspects of Jewish communal and religious life, encompassing a wide range of Biblical, Rabbinic and medieval institutions of Judaism

Tzedek (social justice):

To ensure just treatment means preserving human dignity and meeting basic human needs, including education, dignified work, food, clothing and shelter.

Tzelem Elohim (Image of God):

The foundational principle of Jewish ethics that every human being is created in the image of God and must be treated accordingly

Umot ha-Olam (other nations of the world):

A set of principles recommending care and respect for gentiles, especially those who are vulnerable or in need

Ush'martem Et Nafshotaichem (you shall protect your health):

Obligation to protect the general health of oneself and one's society

V'hechezakta bo (you shall strengthen him):

This is the source for the well-known idea that the highest form of tzedakah is to make someone strong, by providing a job, a business loan, or a partnership.

V'Shinantam L'Vanecha (you shall teach your children):

The mandate to teach and transmit the Torah to one's own children, one of the most important tasks of any Jewish parent

Yatom, Almanah (orphan, widow):

Series of laws obligating special care for orphans and widows