

Jewish Ethics and a Synagogue's Executive Director

Alan Samuel JP
Executive Director
Temple Beth Israel
St. Kilda, Victoria, Australia

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Thesis Proposal

Ethics

The term 'ethics' describes a set of principles governing the right or wrong way that people relate to each other¹. These principles include practices that encompass a history, a shared tradition, a body of specialized theoretical and practical knowledge, and most of all a profound commitment from the members of a profession to use their knowledge and skills to serve and protect their constituent members and the community at large². Yehiel ben Yekutiel of Rome³ said it simply, 'What is Ethics? It is doing in private what one would be embarrassed to do in public.'

What is the ethical system of Judaism? In short, it can be defined as 'one should love one's neighbour as one's self, and not do to others what one would not wish done to oneself⁴.

Ethical guidelines of the past (and one can presume for the present and the future) often become laws or regulations of our society.

In the history of ethics there are three principal standards of conduct⁵, each of which has been proposed as the highest good:

1. happiness or pleasure;
2. duty, virtue or obligation;
3. perfection, the fullest harmonious development of human potential.

Ethics (Greek *ethika*, from *ethos* meaning 'character', 'custom'), principles and standards of human conduct are sometimes called morals (Latin *mores*, 'customs'). The study of such principles is a normative science rather than a formal science because it is concerned with norms of human contact.

Ethics, according to *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*, is 'the philosophical study of morality'. The study and practice of ethics involves learning what is right or wrong, and then choosing to do and then actually doing the right thing.

When one acts in ways that are consistent with our moral values we will characterize that as acting ethically. When one's actions are not congruent with our moral values – our sense of right, good and just – we will view that as acting unethically.⁶

Ethics is the study of what constitutes a moral life; an ethic is a summary, systematic statement of what is necessary to live a moral life. Morality is the living, the acting out of ethical beliefs and commitments⁷.

¹ *Ethics 101 Professional Development Continuing Education Course page 5*

² *Ethics 101 Professional Development Continuing Education Course page 6*

³ *Sefer Ma'a lot ha – middot, Jerusalem Eshkol 1968 p 242)*

⁴ *Rabbi Hillel*

⁵ *Ethics 101 Professional Development Continuing Education Course page 36*

⁶ *Frank J. Navran, Ethics management consultant*

⁷ *Robert J. Starratt, Ethical Leadership page 5*

Jewish Values

A suggested strategy for ethical decision making is based upon these 11 core Jewish values as outlined in 'Who may abide in your House' Jewish Ethics and Decision making 2001 and UAHC Synagogue Ethics Manual 1989:⁸.

1. *Emet – Truth*

Our tradition commands us to be truthful and to correct false impressions (Exodus 20:18) so that 'They that deal truly are God's delight' (Proverbs 12:22).

2. *Yosher- Integrity*

Integrity implies wholeness, a consistency in work, action and conviction. 'Mark the person of integrity, and behold it upright' (Psalms 37:37).

3. *Acharayut - Personal responsibility*

Ethical people accept responsibility for their decision and, in doing so, set an example for others. Our tradition (Mishah Baba Kama 1:12) teaches that one is responsible regardless of whether an act is intentional or inadvertent.

4. *Mishpat - Respect for Law*

Responsible citizenship is an ethical obligation. 'The law of the State is the law' (Talmud, Gitten 106). However, respectful citizenship does not demand blind *observance when it is in conflict with other ethical values*.

5. *Brit - Covenant*

As our relationship with God is covenantal, we should mirror God by fulfilling the letter and the spirit of our contractual commitments to others as is suggested by 'Adonai made a covenant with us in Horeb ... not with our fathers, but with us ... who are here alive this day' (Deuteronomy 5:2).

6. *Emunah - Faith/Loyalty*

We are expected to be loyal to God, to our parents, to our tradition and to those with whom we have developed a trusting relationship. 'We are of them that are peaceable and faithful in Israel' (II Samuel 20:19).

7. *Tzedek - Justice*

'Learn to do good. Devote yourselves to Justice. Aid the wronged, uphold the rights of the orphan. Defend the cause of the Widow' (Isiah 1:17). 'Judaism does not say you shall believe but rather, you shall do' (Moses Mendelsohn).

The word *tzedakah* is derived from the Hebrew root meaning righteousness, justice or fairness. In Judaism, giving to the poor is not viewed as a generous, magnanimous act; it is simply an act of justice and righteousness, the performance of a duty, giving the poor 'their due'.

8. *Chesed - Compassion*

As God has dealt with us mercifully, so are we expected to deal with others. 'Execute true justice; deal loyally and compassionately with one another' (Zachariah 7:9).

'In Israel among the Nations', Anatole Leroy-Beaulieu, a nineteenth century historian, echoes this sentiment (of *Emunah, Tzedek, Chesed*) stating 'Conscience is like charity, a Semitic importation. Israel introduced it into the world'⁹. The Talmud, passage after passage, emphasizes concern for ethical human interaction and behaviour.

Judaism is characterized by its values of loyalty and honesty. The prophet Zephania writes, 'the remnant of Israel shall not do inequity, nor tell lies; (Zephania 3:13). As Jews, we are expected to uphold both our words and the honesty of our business transactions, knowing that integrity is the fabric of a just society. If a person keeps their word with others, so God will keep His word with him/her and will protect him/her in all his/her actions, as it is written in *Tehellim*, 'No good thing will He withhold from those who walk uprightly. O Lord of Hosts, happy is the man who trusts in You.'¹⁰

⁸ UAHC 'Who may abide in your House' Jewish Ethics and Decision making 2001 and UAHC Synagogue Ethics Manual 1989

⁹ UAHC 'Who may abide in your house' Jewish Ethics and Decision making

¹⁰ Sermon Parashat Bereshit: Deceptive advertising practices. Rabbi Yael Domb

9. *Btzelem Elohim - Respect for Human Dignity*

And God said 'Let us make humankind in our image, after our likeness' (Genesis 1:26). Every human being, then, should be viewed as being in God's image and should be treated accordingly.

10. *Kehilah - Accountability for our actions*

Our tradition holds us answerable to God and to others for our actions. All Jews are sureties for one another (Sh'vo-ot 39A)

11. *Tikkun Olam - Repair the World*

This concept has come to represent the Jewish commitment to make the world a better, a more merciful place.

Lashan Hara

Lashan Hara (literally 'evil tongue' also referred to as 'the triple tongue or the talk about third persons') is said to harm three people (Arachin 15b):

1. the speaker
2. the listener
3. the person spoken about.

Numerous references can be quoted from the texts regarding *Lashan Hara* including 'You must not carry false rumors' (Exodus 23:1) and 'You shall not go about as a talebearer among your people' (Leviticus 19:16).

Tale-bearing is, essentially, any gossip. The Hebrew word for tale-bearer is *rakheel*, related to a word meaning trader or merchant. The idea is that a tale-bearer is like a merchant, but he deals in information instead of goods.

Scope of this paper

This paper will address these 11 Jewish values with particular emphasis on three; namely *Emunah*, *Tzedek* and *Chesed*, and how the mitzvah of *Lashan Hara* impacts upon all of these values.

Values

The 11 Jewish values enumerated above form only one modern formulation of the vastness of Jewish values seen throughout our texts.

This paper proposes a discussion based upon Jewish values rather than humanistic values. The 11 Jewish values chosen have Hebrew words that describe them. It is in this context of the Hebrew root that we are able to study and live these core values.

Process

Menachem Marc Keller describes Jewish ethical teaching as being 'conditioned by the fact that Judaism is a religion which emphasizes human behaviour over general claims of theology and faith'.¹¹

The process of being ethical evolves during one's career by the study of text (by both specific study and by being in an environment in which one is constantly exposed to text on a day to day basis), and by seeing how it evolves into the context of the daily life of a synagogue Executive Director.

There seems to be no specific point of time that I can pinpoint when the text and the context become part of one's conscience.

Text, Context and Conscience

Webster's Dictionary describes 'text' as 'a verse or short passage of scripture', whilst 'context' is described as 'to weave, join together, connect'. 'Conscience', on the other hand, is defined as the 'knowledge, feeling, sense; sense of right and wrong, moral sense. It is also described as 'the knowledge of one's own thoughts and actions as right or wrong; the moral faculty of distinguishing right from wrong!'

Questions to be addressed

1. How do Jewish ethics govern the role of a synagogue's Executive Director? (text)
2. How do Jewish values influence my own work and dealings as a Synagogue Executive Director in the Melbourne Jewish Community? (context)
3. How should a Synagogue Executive Director deal with ethical issues which arise? (conscience)

Why three questions?

We have, again, our religion from which to draw:

1. The three patriarchs – Abraham, Isaac and Jacob
2. The three classes of people in relation to Temple worship – Priests, Levites and Israel.
3. The three parts of the Tanach – Torah, Neve'im and Ketuvim

¹¹ Menachem Marc Kellner. *The Structure of Jewish Ethics, Contemporary Jewish Ethics & Morality*, p12,13

Thesis

How can a synagogue's Executive Director improve the ethical climate within a congregation?

The Executive Director, as part of a synagogue's senior professional leadership team, shares the responsibility of creating the ethical setting in which our staff and lay leaders operate within the synagogue environment. The Executive Director is one of the prime keepers of ethics in a synagogue because his/her role is influential in the entire synagogue system. Synagogue Executive Directors are in daily contact with virtually all aspects of synagogue life and so have the potential to influence the character of the congregation through application of texts such as those explored in this paper, through context, and so eventually integrate them into their own conscience and that of their staff, colleagues and congregants.

Whilst most congregations may not encounter major ethical dilemmas on a daily basis, all congregations would encounter ethical dilemmas from time to time. This paper, through the study of examples and text, aims to identify some of the key ethical dilemmas a synagogue's Executive Director may face and how Jewish text and tradition could assist that Executive Director manage the situation ethically.

Ethical dilemmas can and do arise in any congregation, having clearly defined processes in place better prepares the Executive Director and the lay leadership to deal with such challenges. Using lessons drawn from Jewish scholars through the ages, from our texts, and from the processes implemented within a synagogue office, modern day Jewish professionals can ensure that their professional dealings with their congregations are ethical.

Issues raised by members of NATA members have often posed ethical questions. I trust that this thesis, through its study of text in relation to contemporary contexts, will assist colleagues in ethical decision-making.

This thesis addresses the role of a synagogue's Executive Director (and hence the entire professional team, staff and lay leadership) in being proactive and pre-emptive in creating and maintaining an ethical synagogue environment.

Statement of Values and Code of Ethics

Judaism provides a number of formal indicators of *mitzvah* (Commandment), the values (which drive the Commandments) and the ethics which is the means by which we put the Commandment into effect. This practical application, after time, becomes internalized and therefore part of our conscience.

In Judaism, religion and morality blend into an indissoluble unity. The love of God is incomplete without the love of one's fellow man.

While other ethical codes have come and gone, while other ethical have given way to the fad of the moment, Judaism's ethical code – ethical monotheism – has endured because it comes from God, The Creator and Commander.'

By following Judaism's ethical code, and by continually striving to ingrain and observe its principles and moral mandate in our lives, we come to understand and act on what God wants from us – to be truly human and humane.¹⁵

God has by nature the initial word, but human beings have the last word. Though fallible by nature, the task of man is to apply divine wisdom – using human intelligence and intuition – to particular human situations.¹⁶

Having Hebrew names, these values have become deeply rooted in our tradition.

¹⁵ *Living Judaism, Rabbi Wayne Dosick, p 36*

¹⁶ *In Partnership with God, Contemporary Jewish Law & Ethics, Byron L Sherwin, p51*

In the paper entitled 'Obedience to the Unenforceable'¹⁷, 'obedience' is described as 'commitment beyond self, commitment beyond the law and commitment to the public good!'

Some 70 years ago, England's Lord Justice of Appeal, John Fletcher Mouton, described obedience as 'the extent to which the individuals composing the nation can be trusted to obey self-imposed law'.¹⁸

In the February 2004 edition of the 'Independent Sector'¹⁹, a coalition of leading nonprofits, foundations and corporations strengthening not-for-profit initiatives, philanthropy and citizen action issued a statement comprising six pillars of character.

Much of this code was adapted from 'Obedience to the Unenforceable'²⁰ which stated that 'Non profit and philanthropic organizations must earn this trust every day in every possible way. But organizations are, at base, people, and it is up to the people of the independent sector – board members, executive leaders, staff and volunteers – to demonstrate their ongoing commitment to the core values of integrity, honesty, fairness, openness, respect, and responsibility'.²¹

The six pillars of character itemised below comprise six of the 11 core Jewish values²² addressed by this paper-

The Josephson Institute of Ethics identified the following six pillars of character:²³

1. Trust – worthiness (Jewish value: *emet*)
2. Responsibility (Jewish value: *acharayut*)
3. Respect (Jewish value: *mishpat*)
4. Civic virtue and citizenship (Jewish value: *brit*)
5. Justice and fairness (Jewish value: *tzedek*)
6. Caring (Jewish value: *chesed*)

While these six pillars of character do not refer to any specific biblical texts, they clearly are drawn upon Jewish sources, as noted above.

¹⁷ First published by Independent Sector in 1991 and re-released in 2002

¹⁸ First published by Independent Sector in 1991 and re-released in 2002

¹⁹ www.independentsector.org

²⁰ First published by Independent Sector in 1991 and re-released in 2002

²¹ Independent sector statement of values and Code of Ethics for non profit and philanthropic organisations

²² UAHC: 'Who may abide in your house' – Jewish Ethics and Decision Making

²³ Developed by The Josephson Institute of Ethics

Lashan Hara

Texts and relevant textual interpretation

The 'rumour-mill' or 'grape-vine' of most congregations is robust. What constitutes 'news'? Is the information true and, if so, does such news impact on the role of synagogue's Executive Director, of the staff and of the lay leadership? Staff often receive information from sources other than from the congregational members themselves. If that information might impact on how staff do their job in respect to that member, then that information must be carefully evaluated as to its veracity – is it *Lashan Hara*? Is it going to impact on the work of the synagogue?

Lashan Hara is defined as any derogatory or damaging communication, be it physical, financial, social or stress-inducing. *Rechilus* is any communication that generates animosity between people, often the repeating of *Lashan Hara*.

The definition of *Lashan Hara* does not refer to whether a communication is truthful or false, but to whether that communication can inflict damage or hurt to a person. *Lashan Hara* most often occurs when one forgets that, in many cases, truth can be subjective (such as 'beauty is in the eyes of the beholder') or elusive, in that we don't always know the whole picture.

There is a wonderful Chasidic tale²⁵ which illustrates the point of *Lashan Hara* causing irreversible damage: 'A man went about the community telling malicious lies about his Rabbi. Later, he realized the wrong he had done and began to feel remorse. He went to the Rabbi and begged his forgiveness saying he would do anything he could to make amends. The Rabbi told the man to take a feather pillow, cut it open, and scatter the feathers to the winds. The man thought this was a strange request, but it was a simple enough task and he did it gladly. When he returned to tell the Rabbi that he had done it, the Rabbi said now go and gather the feathers, because you can no more make amends for the damage your words have done, that you can collect the feathers'. How is one to know when our talk about others is sinful²⁶? There are six types of evil talkers²⁷:

1. *The person who finds faults with others when they have no faults*
The Torah warns us not to listen to slander because it might be false. 'Thou shalt not utter a false report' (Exodus 23:1).
2. *The person who speaks evil but is careful not to say anything that is untrue.*
3. *The talebearer*
'Though shall not go up and down as a talebearer among thy people' (Leviticus 19:16).
4. *Dust of evil talk*
Our Rabbis tell us that all people are guilty of the 'dust of evil talk', a term used to describe a person who speaks or encourages others to speak evil.
5. *Unclean talk*
6. *The complainer*

The Darche Noam Institute identifies seven conditions²⁸ which exist and can help differentiate between productive discussions geared to problem solving and discussions which bad mouth another person in the workplace:

1. The speaker relies only on verified first hand information rather than hearsay or speculation.
2. The subject's activity should be properly analysed giving him/her the benefit of the doubt.
3. The subject should be approached personally and encouraged to change (according to the mitzvah of *toch acha* – rebuke), if at all possible.
4. It is forbidden to exaggerate what was actually done; it must be reported precisely.
5. The speaker's intention must be motivated exclusively for the purpose of being productive, not by spite, revenge or any other motive.
6. If there is any way of dealing with the problem other than speaking about the person, that alternative must be tried first.
7. The speech must not bring about excessive damage to the subject.

The Tanach is replete with examples of the power of the tongue including this selection:²⁹

²⁵ 'Chafetz Chaim', the famous work on guarding one's tongue, written by Rabbi Israel Meir Ha Cohen

²⁶ *Jewish Ethics, Philosophy and Mysticism*. Louis Jacob

²⁷ *Jewish Ethics, Philosophy and Mysticism* – page 27

²⁸ *Lashan Hara in the workplace* – Daiche Noam Institute

1. There are those who speak like the piercings of a sword: but the tongue of the wise is health (Mishlei 12:18)
2. A lying tongue hates those who are afflicted by it; and a flattering mouth works ruin (Mishlei 26:28)
3. A wicked doer gives heed to false lips. A liar gives ear to a naughty tongue (Mishlei 17:4)
4. The words of a talebearer are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly (Mishlei 18:8)
5. A soft answer turns away wrath, but generous words stir up anger (Mishlei 15:1)
6. The person that guards his mouth, guards his life. But the person that opens his lips wide will have destruction (Mishlei 13:3)
7. A person that goes around as a talebearer reveals secrets. Therefore, do not meddle with the person that flatters with his lips (Mishlei 20:19)
8. Do you see a person that is hasty in his words? There is more hope for a fool than for him (Mishlei 29:20)
9. Do not go about as a gossip monger among your people (Vayikra 19:16)
10. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour (Shemot 20:13)
11. Oh, that I had in the wilderness a lodging place of wayfaring men, that I might leave my people and go from them for they are adulterers, an assembly of treacherous men. And they bend their tongues like their bows ... (Jeremiah 9:1 – 2)

The vice of slander is condemned in all Jewish writings. 'You shall not go about spreading slander among your people; nor shall you stand by idly when your neighbour's life is at stake' (Leviticus 19:16)

The term *slander* has been defined as the utterance or dissemination of false statements or reports concerning a person, or malicious misrepresentation of his actions, in order to defame or injure him. In Jewish tradition, the Levitical law is understood to forbid gossip, even if the report is true and told without malice (Yad, Deoth 7:2)³⁰, but the strongest terms are used in the prohibition of slandering the dead (Shulkan Arukh, Orach Hayyim 606:3)

One Midrash (Genesis Rabbah 98:23) describes the spreading of malicious reports as 'what is spoken in Rome may kill in Syria'.

Context

Lashan Hara can occur inadvertently. As an example I draw upon a case concerning one of the member families of my synagogue (probably one of many similar cases within a large congregation such as mine) where many sources have advised the office of the couple's separation. To date, the synagogue has not been told this by the couple themselves. Whilst there is ample evidence to support the information, the questions which I have considered include:

Should the synagogue take it upon itself to 'split' the family in terms of their membership? Should mail now be addressed separately? Should separate and individual accounts be drawn? Should the synagogue decide which adult becomes the guardian of any children of the marriage for synagogue purposes?

The policy we have determined in our synagogue is to take our instructions, even in an unfortunate situation such as this, from the family itself. This policy is also in line with the Federal Privacy Legislation under which our organisation needs to function. In this example, even though I have frequent contact with one of the family members involved, I have not been given instructions to 'divorce' them within our membership database. When that occurs, and only then, will our staff act upon that information from a database viewpoint. Having stated this, it is still important that our staff be aware of the situation, so that they can deal compassionately with those concerned. This policy is in line with the three values to be examined in this paper – *emunah*, *tzedek* and *chesed*.

Failure to comply with these values and principles can lead to unfortunate and inadvertent instances of *Lashan Hara*. This occurred in my congregation when the office once acted upon the notification of a member who advised that another member had passed away without verifying the information with family members and the 'death', consequently, was advised to our congregants via our congregational

²⁹ *Derech Eretz: Fostering Jewish Values in the Workplace, NATA Convention 2005, pp 113 - 114*

³⁰ *Encyclopedia of Jewish Concepts, Philip Birnbaum, Evil Gossip, p 317*

newsletter. The fact of the matter was that one of our members had the same name as someone not affiliated with our synagogue and it was that unaffiliated individual who had died. Although inadvertent, our synagogue committed *Lashan Hara* by printing that name as a 'recent death' – something that could have been avoided with fastidious checking! To this day, we send special birthday greetings each year to that member acknowledging our mistake!

Applying the Darche Noam Institute's seven conditions which differentiate between productive discussions geared to problem solving and discussions which are *Lashan Hara*, is not always simple and straightforward as these examples suggest:

- People sometimes fall into less than helpful speech patterns – 'He *always* makes comments like that to me'. This contravenes condition 4 which forbids us to exaggerate.
- A worker, feeling somewhat helpless, may take a subtle form of revenge on his/her superior by speaking about them negatively or falsely. This is an example of contravening condition 5.
- A co-worker with a poor performance review may lose his/her job. This can be seen in opposition to condition 7 which requires that one's speech must not bring about excessive damage to the subject.

There are 17 prohibitions and 14 positive mitzvot one might possibly transgress by speaking disparagingly of others. Speaking negatively about others may be permitted when used for a productive purpose³¹. There are situations, in the workplace for instance, where one is not only permitted but is obligated to speak negatively about others.

1. To help the person spoken about – that is to speak about another's faults to help that person improve.
2. To help or protect a person – that is to inform an unwary person of someone's dishonesty.
3. To prevent a community dispute.
4. To help others learn from the first person's faults.

A synagogue's Executive Director, weighing the pros and cons of introducing coworker evaluations, should take these seven conditions into account. The advantages of peer review – the constructive feedback it provides and not allowing the Executive Director to be the sole 'judge' – should be preserved without creating additional stresses and difficulties. Anonymity should be preserved to avoid hard feelings, and an atmosphere of constructive objectivity and honesty should be created to avoid back-stabbing.

Conscience

Again, in line with the definition of conscience, 'sense of right or wrong'³², this becomes part of one's moral faculty to distinguish, or to make the conscious effort to distinguish, between fact and *Lashan Hara*.

³¹ *Chafetz Chaim, Hilkhos Lashan Hara, Chapter 10*

³² *Webster's Dictionary*

Emet

Texts and relevant textual interpretation

Emet, meaning *truth*, is a basic concept of the people of Qumran. The final three words that conclude the account of Creation (Genesis 2:3), – *bara Elokim la'asot* – (God created to do), spell *emet*, being the first, middle and last letters of the Hebrew alphabet.

Emet is understood to be the experience of the soul's almost impulsive 'drive' to 'create', whether by word or deed, and that this act should be sealed with integrity, 'in truth'.³³

Rabbi Shmon ben Gamliel (Babylonian Talmud Avot 1:18) proclaims 'the world endures on three things: justice, truth, and peace.'

Of the thirteen attributes of God, two go hand-in-hand: *Rav Chesed V'Emet*, Great loving kindness and Truth. We must therefore exhibit the *middah* (character trait) of *Chesed* (loving kindness) and balance it with the *middah Emet* (truth) in order to achieve the third *middah* of *Tzedek* (justice).³⁴

Roger Low shares the following quote: 'Teach your tongue to say 'I do not know,' lest you be led to lie' (Berachot 4a), but *Emet/truth* also is a factor in other ways such as how truthful we are to ourselves about ourselves, or how truthful we are to others with our presentation: dress, manner, things we appear interested in, how true we appear to be interested in, how true to ourselves are we being; how true to others?³⁵ Exodus 18:21 says 'you should choose *anshei emet* – men of truth

Pirke Avot says 'On three things does the world stand, *Al HaDin, Al HaEmet, v'Al HaShalom*: on judgment, on truth and on peace'. That is, we should bring *Emet*, truth, when we do not ignore the brokenness of this world; when our study of Torah, our prayers and our acts of loving kindness compel us to act as a community to change our surroundings; when we face the truth within Judaism.³⁶

The Talmud says that the first thing asked of a person in the world to come is, 'Have you been honest in business?' (Shabbat 31b) That is, truthfulness is important in relationships, *Bayn Adam L'Chavero* (literally, *between people*), whether with strangers and acquaintances or with close friends and family. We need to avoid falseness, be it in business encounters or in promises to loved ones. If hurt or humiliation may result from stark and blatant honesty, softening the truth is acceptable so long as the softening is defensible. Softening truths shouldn't become so habitual that you are in danger of slipping into patterns of outright lying³⁷.

One must also be truthful with oneself (*Bayn Adam L'atzm'* – between you and yourself). That is, one should be truthful whether people are 'watching' or not. Examples include: don't lie to yourself about who you are, and don't portray yourself as someone you are not, claiming qualities for yourself that you don't possess.³⁸

Thirdly, is paramount to be truthful between yourself and God (*Bayan Adam L'Makom* – between you and God). God is *Emet* (*Jeremiah 10:10*); As Rabbi Susan Freeman writes, 'God is true. Know this and live by it. God who is 'I am Who I am', wants you to be 'you-are-who-you-are' – your truest self.'³⁹

The Torah has many references with regard to lying: 'Thou shalt 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).

Geneivat Da' - the theft of one's mind, thoughts, wisdom, or knowledge - goes beyond lying. Words or actions that cause others to form incorrect conclusions about one's motives can be considered be a violation of this prohibition. The sages understood there to be seven types of thieves, the worst is one who 'steals the minds' of people. (Tosefta Bava Kama 7:3)

³³ Rabbi Yitzchak Ginzburg, *Gal Einai Institute of Israel*

³⁴ Michael Rothenberg, *Tikvah Online, University of Florida*

³⁵ Roger Low, *San Francisco*

³⁶ Rabbi Michael Holzman *B'nei Israel Congregation San Jose Costa Rica*

³⁷ *Teaching Jewish Values, Rabbi Susan Freeman, p 71*

³⁸ *Teaching Jewish Values, Rabbi Susan Freeman, p 71*

³⁹ *Teaching Jewish Values, Rabbi Susan Freeman, p 72*

Context

A synagogue's Executive Director should display at least *Emet*, if not all 11 qualities, as part of their persona, in all the spheres to their life (family, work, community and Jewish faith) because each sphere is interrelated and, living and working within our communities, a lapse in one sphere impacts upon the other spheres. A good question to pose, perhaps, is to ask whether a potential Executive Director is as meticulous about his/her honesty is in business as he/she is at home.

All the tenets of justice and righteousness should be applied with painstaking care when dealing with others, to avoid even the slightest trace of dishonesty. Rav Yosef Breur stressed that just as food should be *Glatt Kosher*, our financial dealings should be *Glatt Yosher* (uncompromisingly straight).⁴⁰

Therefore, when making business decisions, it is wise to ask two questions: 'What am I *legally* allowed to do?' and 'What is the *right* thing to do?' – ie. The letter and the spirit of the law. From a Jewish perspective, these two questions cannot be separated: What is *legal* and what is *right* go hand in hand.⁴¹

For example, the application of particular tax regulations relating to clergy (specifically in relation to tax law in Australia) is clearly defined, and whilst their origins may have been to benefit clergy of other faiths (who receive a very small stipend indeed) there is no doubt that such regulations can be applied to our own clergy. The application of such tax benefits (whilst of great significance to the clergy), is also of great significance to the congregation from a cash outlay perspective.

According to Mechilta, Mishpatim 13, 135, a 'thought thief', *Geneivat Da'at*, is the worst of all thieves. Why? Because this raises questions regarding intellectual property, claiming another's ideas as one's own. I suggest that *Geneivat Da'at* could be an interesting thesis topic for another NATA candidate.

Many congregations, no doubt, experience situations where 'ideas/thoughts' are taken by others and promoted as their own. In such situations it is often wise to practice the philosophy of *Tzim Tzum* (the act of contraction). Rabbi Eugene Borowitz⁴² says 'The leader withholds presence and power so that followers may have a place to be.' Whilst referring to a leadership style, Borowitz' comment also applies to a 'thought thief'. Perhaps the sign of a really great leader is, as well as contracting to allow others a place, to allow others to take one's own ideas and, even though they may claim it as their own, as long as they 'run with it' and make it work, then *Tzim Tzum* should also be practiced. Whilst egos will always exist, there is little room for them in a synagogue (or any organization for that matter). However, when egos come to the surface, it is often wise for the Executive Director to practice *Tzim Tzum*.

Speaking and acting truthfully is a key underlying value of business ethics and one which we, as Synagogue Executive Directors, must practice in our daily lives.

Conscience

Jim Clemmer⁴⁴ summarises this best, 'Honesty and integrity is a given in most conversations about leadership values, but some people seem to feel it's something you can slip on and off like clothing. They speak of personal, professional or business behaviours as if different suits of honesty are pure on according to the situation. This shows 'doing honestly' rather than being honest. It's no more than putting on an honest act. People quickly see through it and reduce us to our lowest level of honesty and integrity – our dirtiest clothes. Even more importantly – which is the real me? How can changeable honesty ring true to me?'

I suggest that because (in most cases) work, live and 'play' within our community these interlinked aspects of *Emet* (and for that matter all of these Jewish Values) must over a period of time, through the study of the text and its context become part of one's conscience.

⁴⁰ *A Time to Build* p. 48

⁴¹ *Teaching Hot Topics*, Rabbi Susan Freeman, ARE Publishing Inc. Denver, CO

⁴² HUC Faculty member (see www.huc.edu/faculty/faculty/borowitz.shtml for further information)

⁴⁴ Jim Clemmer, *Growing the Distance Timeless Principles for Personal Career and Family Success*

Yosher

Texts and relevant textual interpretation

Yosher can mean straight, straightforward, righteousness, honesty, integrity or sincerity.

'Judge me, O Lord, according to my ...integrity' (Psalms 7:8)

The 'patience of Job' is legendary. What is often forgotten is his integrity. Job was a recipient of every calamity known to God and man, whose trials paralleled or surpassed any modern leader's sufferings. Even Job's wife suggested he was a gullible fool for sticking to these principles: 'Are you still holding on to your integrity? Curse God and die!' (Job 2:9-10)

But Job repeatedly refused to give up his integrity: 'You are talking like a foolish woman. Shall we accept good from God and not trouble? ... as long as I have life within me ... my lips will not speak wickedness .. I will not deny my integrity.' (Job 2:10, 27:2-5)

A modern leader may undergo many trials, but few of them are likely to be as devastating as Job's. In a sense, all that he had left was his integrity, and he was determined to hold onto it. Leaders, today, no matter what issue they face, must realize that integrity is the measure of good leadership.

Proverbs contains a plethora of texts relating to righteousness and integrity including:

'Righteousness exalts a nation; but sin is a reproach to any people' (Proverbs 14:34)

'Better is the poor that walks in his integrity than he who is perverse in his lips and a fool at the same time' (Proverbs 19:1)

'Better is the poor that walks in his integrity than he who is perverse, though he may be rich' (Proverbs 28:6)

'He who walks in his integrity as a just man, happy are his children after him' (Proverbs 20:7)

'To do righteousness and justice is more acceptable to the Lord than sacrifice' (Proverbs 21:3)

'Then shall you understand righteousness and justice' (Proverbs 2:9)

'That you may walk in the way of good men and keep the paths of the righteous' (Proverbs 2:20)

'The curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked; but he blesses the habitation of the righteous' (Proverbs 3:33)

'I walk in the way of righteousness, in the midst of the paths of justice' (Proverbs 8:20)

It is very clear from reading these that the practice of *Yosher* is of considerable importance, not only to Executive Directors, but to everyone.

The following 'modern day' quotes could easily have been written about how we, as Synagogue Executive Directors should conduct ourselves, in accordance with the Jewish Values outlined in this paper:

'To give real service you must add something which cannot be bought or measured with money, and that is sincerity and integrity'⁴⁹

'Integrity has no need of rules'⁵⁰

'Real integrity is doing the right thing, knowing that nobody's going to know whether you did it or not.'⁵¹

'Integrity is not a conditional word; it does not blow in the wind or change with the weather. It is your inner image of yourself, and if you look in there and see a man who won't cheat, then you know he never will'⁵³

⁴⁹ *Douglas Adams*

⁵⁰ *Albert Camus*

⁵¹ *Oprah Winfrey*

⁵³ *John D. MacDonald*

'Tzedek, tzedek tirdrof; righteousness, righteousness thou shall pursue' (Deuteronomy 16:20)

From where does our righteousness come? Does our community shape how righteous we appear or does it come from within? Each individual has their own set of morals which determine their righteousness; but we are influenced by the community in which we operate.

Context

Individuals tend to exercise increased integrity and honesty when the group culture supports these behaviours. It takes a strong individual to maintain these traits, particularly when he/she is in a position of power, with no checks, balances or rules.

The rule of law is repeated many times over in the Bible, as are the actual laws. There are strong warnings about abuses of power by those in high authority, as well as commands for leaders and followers at all levels to behave ethically.

The following passage was written by Moses who was keenly aware of the potential for abuse of power. Moses suggested some safeguards, which have often been ignored, in selecting our modern business and political leaders.

The king... must not acquire great numbers of horses for himself or make the people return to Egypt to get more of them ... He must not take too many wives or his heart will be led astray. He must not accumulate large amounts of silver and gold. When he takes the throne of his kingdom, he is to write for himself on a scroll a copy of this law... It is to be with him, and he is to read it all the days of his life ... [He should] not consider himself better than his brothers and turn from the law to the right or the left. (Deut. 17:14-20)

Lord Acton, centuries later, expressed this as 'that power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely'.

Integrity is perhaps one of the most important of virtue terms. Righteousness stretches itself across the whole gamut of human relations and human rights.⁵⁵ Integrity can be seen as

(a) The integration of self:

Harry Frankfurt says⁵⁶ a person is subject to many conflicting desires. If one simply acted at each moment out of the strongest current desire, with no deliberation or discrimination between more or less worthwhile desires, then one acts without integrity. Frankfurt calls such a person a 'wanton' (Frankfurt 1971). The cost of the resolution of all self-conflict may be a withdrawal from aspects of life that make genuine claims upon us. Resolving self-conflict at the expense of fully engaging with different parts on one's life does not seem to contribute to one's integrity.

(b) As maintenance of identity:

His view of integrity as maintenance of identity-conferring commitments recognizes the relevance of self-knowledge to *acting* with integrity. If people fail to act on their core commitments, through self-deception, weakness of will, cowardice or even ignorance, then to this extent they may be said to lack integrity.

(c) As standing for something:

Cheshire Calhoun⁵⁷ argues that integrity is primarily a social virtue, one that is defined by a person's relations with others. In 1995, she says that 'Persons of integrity treat their own endorsements as ones that matter, or ought to matter, to fellow deliberators. Absent a special sort of story, lying about one's views, concealing them, recanting them under pressure, selling them out for rewards or to avoid penalties, and pandering to what one regards as the bad views of others, all indicate a failure to regard one's own judgment as one that should matter to others.'

(d) As moral purpose:

A person of integrity is willing to bear the consequences of their convictions.

(e) As a virtue.

It is argued that integrity is a virtue but not one that is reducible to the workings of a single moral capacity. There are a variety of ways in which people use the term 'integrity' by examining conditions commonly accepted to diminish a person's integrity.

⁵⁵ *The Jewish Way of Life, Rabbi Dr Isadore Epstein p65*

⁵⁶ *Harry Frankfurt, Faculty Princeton University*

⁵⁷ *Charles A Dana Professor of Philosophy, Colby College, Waterville ME*

Conscience

A person no longer holds himself at all apart from the desire to which he has committed himself. It is no longer unsettled or uncertain whether the object of that desire – that is, what he wants by making the desires upon which he decides fully his own. To this extent the person, in making a decision by which he identifies with a desire, *constitutes himself*.⁵⁹

Integrity is a matter of having proper regard for one's role in a community process of deliberation over what is valuable and what is worth doing. This entails not only that one stand up for one's best judgment, but also that one have proper respect for the judgment of others.⁶⁰

Calhoun writes, 'Fanatics lack one very important quality that is centrally important to integrity: they lack proper respect for the deliberation of others.' Calhoun goes on to say 'that the fanatic lacks integrity because they fail to properly respect the social character of judgment and deliberation.'⁶¹

Professor Mark Halfron of Nassau Community College says, 'Embrace a moral point of view that urges to be conceptually clear, logically consistent, apprised of relevant empirical evidence, and careful about acknowledging as well as weighing relevant moral considerations. Persons of integrity impose these restrictions on themselves since they are concerned, not simply with taking any moral position, but with pursuing a commitment to do what is best'⁶²

An action which works before an action to keep us out of trouble and not merely afterwards is one where we act in good conscience. Torah gives us the abstract aspect of sin-awareness whereas conscience is the living personal aspect of sin-awareness.

When Solomon was about to succeed David on the throne of Israel, David's priority and most fervent prayer was for his son to continue his tradition of integrity. David said, of choosing successors in both lay and professional roles, 'I know, my God, that you test the heart and are pleased with integrity ... And give my son Solomon the wholehearted devotion to keep your commands, requirements and decrees ..' (1 Chron. 29:17-19).

An organization with a well-developed and deep rooted system of ethics, which is actually practiced rather than merely stated, does not need to spend a lot of time deciding the ethicality of each decision, because the conscience acts!

⁵⁹ Frankfurt 1987, p. 38

⁶⁰ Cheshire Calhoun, Professor of Philosophy, Colby College, Waterville, Maine.

⁶¹ Charles A Dana Professor of Philosophy, Colby College, Waterville ME

⁶² Integrity: A philosophical inquiry. 1987 p.37

Acharayut

Texts and relevant textual interpretation

Acharayut meaning personal responsibility.

Hillel, through the example of his life and through his teachings, emphasized the importance of relying on yourself, 'Do not separate yourself from your community.' It is incumbent on us all to ensure we do not allow this separation, either by ourselves or our members. A lot of our daily work is in this regard.

'If I am not for myself who is for me? and when I am for myself what am I? and if not now, when?' (Mishnah, Abot 1.14) We must attempt to look after ourselves with rest (easier written than done!) so that we may continue to serve our communities.

'Your own deeds will bring you near to them, or your own deeds will push you away from them.' (Akavyah ben Mahalalel). By virtue of one's work ethics, a successful Executive Director will make him / her self near to the community and one who does not, obviously will not succeed in the position.

'Know where you come from, where you are going, and to whom you are destined to give an account and reckoning.' (Akavyah ben Mahalalel, Pirkei Avot 3:1)

It is our own responsibility to learn what accepted communal norms are and then to enter into a personal agreement to live up to those norms. We, as individuals, cannot lay the blame on others for our failure to do this. It is incumbent on our communities to present appropriate role-models and opportunities for remediation to our young people where they fail to learn what accepted communal norms are.

Context

Individual responsibility means having an attitude of self-criticism. We should not blame others for our own difficulties, but rather look for the cause within ourselves. We bring Torah into the world when we strive to fulfill the highest ethical mandates in our relationships with others and with all of God's creation.⁶³

The mantle of leadership in Jewish life is heavy. The responsibilities are great and the danger of serious error abounds. Leaders must be aware of this when they assume positions of influence in Jewish life. Their names are recorded and they will be judged for good or for better based upon the results, even those unintended, of their decisions and behavior.

Judaism teaches that history is shaped by the actions of humans. The Marxist doctrine of history, shaped and governed by irresistible and omnipotent social and economic forces unaffected by the decisions and behavior of individual people, is the antithesis of Jewish tradition. People make history and shape events. One cannot escape personal responsibility by placing the blame for what goes wrong on outside forces, fate or chance.

Judaism is the faith of personal responsibility. 'Pray as if everything depended on to God; act as if depended on you. Those who rise from prayer better persons, their prayer is answered.'⁶⁴

This is true not only in leadership roles but in one's personal life as well. We're taught that all of our names are recorded next to our decisions and actions and that we will be judged by them. Personal responsibility is the watchword of Jewish faith and life.⁶⁵

A synagogue Executive Director who separates his/her self from the community in which he/she serves, will be unable to be an effective or successful Director.

Conscience

By implementing, over a period of time, Akavyah ben Mahalalel's adage 'Your own deeds will bring you near to them, or your own deeds will push you away from them', one will find once again that it becomes part of one's conscience. Each of us tends to judge the behaviours of our friends, neighbours, co-workers and relatives. We need to inculcate in our personal responsibility the effects these judgments may have in respect to *Lashan Hara*.

⁶³ CCAR 1999 PITTSBURGH PLATFORM

⁶⁴ *St. Augustine 354-430*

⁶⁵ *Rabbi Berel Wein*

Mishpat

Texts and relevant textual interpretation

Mishpat Ivri, meaning ‘Hebrew law’ or ‘Jewish/Hebrew jurisprudence’, covers subjects including sales, renting, ownership, negligence and liability. Within classical rabbinic Judaism, all *Mishpat Ivri* subjects are also subsumed under *halakah* (Jewish law in general). *Halakah* is derived from the Hebrew root *Heh-Lamed-Kaf*, meaning to go, to walk, or to travel; thus providing the literal translation of ‘the path that one walks’.

The value of *mishpat* is always there for us in our work .We constantly seek guidance from our rabbis to ensure that what we do, as administrators, does not convene the rules of *halakah*.

‘You shall not wrest the judgment of the poor in his cause’ (Exodus 22:6)

‘You shall have one manner of law, as well for the stranger, as for the home-born.’ (Lev 24:22)

‘Judges and Officers shall you make in all the gates, which the Lord your God gives you, by tribe by tribe; and you shall judge the people with righteous judgment; you shall not respect persons; neither shall you take a gift ; for a gift does blind the wards of the righteous’ (Deut 16:18 -19)

‘Behold, I have taught you statutes and ordinances, even as the Lord my God commanded me, that you should do so in the midst of the land wither you go in to possess it’. (Deut 4:5)

And four commands, very similar to each other, repeated several chapters apart (Chapters 5,7,11 and 26), that could have been (had they existed at the time!) for Executive Directors harkening us to understand and apply the laws and statues that regulate us both in common law and congregational law.

1. ‘...and Moses called unto all Israel, and said unto them: Hear O Israel, the statutes and the ordinances, which I speak in your ears this day, that you may learn them and observe to do them’ (Deut 5:1)
2. ‘You shall therefore keep the commandment and the statutes, and the ordinances, which I command you this day to do them’ (Deut 7:11)
3. ‘Therefore you shall have the Lord your God, and keep His charge and His statutes and His ordinances and His commandments, always’ (Deut 11:1)
4. ‘This day the Lord your God commanded you to do these statutes and ordinances; you shall therefore observe and do them with all your heart and with all your soul’ (Deut 26:16)

Clearly this was an area of great significance for it to be commented upon four times in the Torah within such close proximity to each other.

Context

Whilst we have all the codes of law contained within the Torah, and in particular referenced to the 613 Mitvot, we must always remember that the laws of our country/state are paramount. It is these laws which govern how we as synagogue Executive Directors play out our daily role in respect the subjects in *Mishpat Ivri*.

Whilst to some the application of tax laws in relation to parsonage may seem to be unfair to those who are not eligible, they are in fact legal laws set by the state and we have every right to apply them justly to those who qualify.

Conscience

It is here again that by our daily performance of our many duties, in this instance, those specifically relating to the laws which govern our institutions that the upkeep of these laws become part of our conscience and apart from keeping up to date with them, and by seeking advice from relevant professionals, they should be ‘automatic’ to us in our operations.

Brit

Texts and relevant textual interpretation

Brit means covenant or contract. One of the most frequently used words in the Hebrew Scripture, appearing 270 times, it is also one of the Scripture's most important concepts.

God made a covenant with Noah that the world would never again be destroyed by flood (Genesis 9:8–17); with Abraham (Genesis 15:18; 22:16-18 and 26:4) promising him blessings and innumerable progeny; with the Jewish people with the giving of the Torah (Exodus 20:1-14, Deuteronomy 6:1-2) and with David (11 Samuel 7:11-16) giving him the gift of kingship and dynasty.

In recounting the giving of Torah, we read, 'This day, the Lord your God commands you to do these statutes and ordinances; you shall therefore be careful to do them with all your heart and with all your soul. You have declared this day concerning the Lord that he is your God, and that you will walk in his ways, and will obey his voice: and the Lord has declared this day concerning you that you are a people for his own possession, as he has promised you, and that you are to keep all his commandments, that he will set you high above all the nations that he has made, in praise and in fame and in honour, and that you shall be a people holy to the Lord your God, as he has spoken'. (Deut. 26:16–19).

What does this passage tell us about covenant? We learn that God has a unique relationship with Israel and that this relationship defines Israel's distinctiveness among the nations of the world. That relationship is based on Israel's willingness to obey God faithfully, to dedicate its communal life to God. The covenant is also defined by the specific laws which God has given Israel and which they are to obey. It defines the legal rights and responsibilities between God and Israel. Covenant, then, refers both to a relationship and to the laws which define the terms of that relationship.⁶⁶

Context

It is in the context of a particular religious world view, a distinctive understanding of the relationship between God and the world, that all Jewish ethical reflection takes place. The essence of this relationship, as it has been understood from biblical times on, is the covenant that God established with Israel. This covenant was created through God's revelation of Torah to Israel. This covenant between God and Israel establishes a communal way of life dedicated to *kedushah*, 'holiness'.⁶⁷

All Jews are bound to God by an eternal *brit*, covenant, as reflected in our varied understandings of Creation, Revelation and Redemption..... We continue to have faith in spite of the unspeakable evils committed against our people and the sufferings endured by others, the partnership of God and humanity will ultimately prevail.⁶⁸

The covenant with God is also the covenant we have between ourselves. From our members, contractors and suppliers we all enter into a covenant (contract), be it written or verbal, and it is incumbent on both sides to keep that covenant/contract.

Conscience

Without seeking 'formal written contracts' with our members, as we would in a commercial arrangement, we enter into a 'contract of conscience' and must be seen as such from both the Temple and the Member.

⁶⁶ *Contemporary Jewish Ethics & Morality*, Louis E. Newman, p 87

⁶⁷ *Contemporary Jewish Ethics & Morality*, Louis E. Newman, p 86

⁶⁸ *CCAR 1999 Pittsburgh Platform*

Emunah

Texts and relevant textual interpretation

Emunah, meaning faith and loyalty, speaks strongly of the notion of honesty.

We are expected to be loyal to God ('You shall love Adonai your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might', opening lines of the *V'ahavta*), and to our parents (fifth commandment, Exodus 20:18). By extension, we are expected to be loyal to our tradition, and to those with whom we have developed a trusting relationship.

In Psalms 34:14-15 we read, 'O God, keep my tongue from evil and my lips from deceit. Help me to be silent in the face of division, humble in the presence of all. Open my heart to your Torah, and I will hasten to do your mitzvot, save me with your power; in time of trouble by my answer, that those who love You may rejoice'.

These lines speak to me directly in my professional capacity as an emphatic reminder of how I should behave. I find these words extremely powerful. They teach me that if we develop a 'trusting relationship' with our staff, lay leadership and congregants then it follows that we must deal with them in an ethical way. We create, or must create if that situation does not exist, an atmosphere of complete trust so that colleagues, lay leaders and congregants have no hesitation in asking something of us.

The Torah's message is clear and direct – 'You shall not falsify measures of length, weight, or capacity ... you shall faithfully observe all My Laws and all My Rules: I am Adonai your God' (Leviticus 19:35). I was interested that this text links relatively 'minor' concerns such as measurement with the 'greater' concerns of observing God's commandments. I read this as reminding us not to be hypocritical in being seen to be 'pious' in some matters while acting unethically or dishonestly in others.

In an administrative sense, this is an admonition to not falsify any reports. In the thesis proposal outlined above, *Emunah* (Faith/Loyalty) is seen as developing a trusting relationship and, in II Samuel 20:19, this is reinforced when we are told that 'we are of them that are peaceable and faithful in Israel'. Clearly, a synagogue's Executive Director's ethical behaviour in *Emunah* creates a peaceable and faithful congregation.

Love of God and ethical behaviour are inseparable in Judaism. According to Rabbi W Gunther Plaut⁶⁹, the reference to 'your heart', in the first line of the *Vahavta* prayer – 'Thou shall love your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might' refers to one's physical strength (and, by tradition, to one's 'material possessions'). This can be interpreted as an admonition not to compartmentalize in that loving God requires one to harmonize one's mind, spirit *and* conduct.

The first verse of the *V'ahavta* speaks to me of my professional capacity and responsibility. The translation below, when applied to the work we perform as synagogue administrators speaks volumes about the *Emunah* (faith and loyalty) that we must provide our congregations and which, in turn, we receive from them.

You shall love Adonai your God
with all your heart, with all your soul,
and with all your might.
And these words which I command you today
shall be in your heart.
You shall teach them diligently to your children
and you shall speak of them
when you are sitting at home
and when you go on a journey,

⁶⁹ Editor, *The Torah : A Modern Commentary*

when you lie down and when you rise up.
You shall bind them as a sign on your hand
and they shall be jewels between your eyes.
you shall inscribe them on the doorposts
of your house and on your gates.

The *V'havta*, by specifying our required behaviours whenever we are 'at home on a journey when we lie down and when we rise up', that is, at all times and in all places, implies that the ethics we use within the synagogue must be the same as those we use outside of the synagogue. This is, therefore, something we need to encourage in our colleagues, staff and lay leaders too.

I interpret the clause, 'And these words which I command you today' as directing me to not only operate based on ethical values but to also be seen to do so by colleagues and congregational lay leaders and members. That is, not only should we do the right thing, we should also be seen to be *doing* the right thing.

Further, 'You shall bind them as a sign on your hands and they shall be the jewels between your eyes', literally a reference to laying *tefillin*, is surely, also, an admonition that everything we do with our hands and eyes (mind) must always be based upon ethical values of choice and, eventually, one's conscience.

Context

Confidentiality and loyalty may sometimes conflict when one considers the following three questions:

1. Should news about a congregational member be shared with Temple staff?
2. When is a member's confidential information able to be shared with congregational members?
3. Should the congregation's President, for this purpose, be considered staff?

Should news about a congregation member be shared with Temple staff?

Verified news/information about a member in instances that involve a significant life event or trauma should be communicated to staff as, in many instances, it may impact directly on their work and how they perform their tasks.

Consider, for instance, the case of a severe illness. Whilst it is not necessary for Temple staff members to know the specific details of the illness, it is important for them to be aware that a member is ill. This knowledge may impact on when a decision is made to call that family, or when to refrain from calling. The bookkeeper should, of course, be aware of an illness in the family so that, in dealing with a member's call regarding inability to pay an account, an appropriate level of sensitivity can be displayed.

Only those facts that will enable a staff member to improve his/her work for the congregation by having the relevant information about the issue should be shared.

By being aware of relevant family issues, Temple staff are empowered to deal with members more appropriately and demonstrate the caring, compassionate organizations synagogue Executive Directors believe they should lead.

When is a member's confidential information able to be shared with congregational members?

A synagogue's Executive Director also needs to decide if the knowledge known about a member's needs to be transmitted to congregational members.

In my synagogue, we have a group called the 'Caring Community Group', the members of which visit the elderly and sick. Relevant information should be shared with these volunteers to better enable them to fulfill their roles and provide appropriate assistance.

The Executive Director, however, should always be mindful to communicate only the relevant information. Information about adverse family interactions may assist a member of the Caring

Community Group in their role of visiting the elderly and sick, but information of a financial nature, for instance, is unlikely to be relevant to their role.

Should the congregation's President, for this purpose, be considered staff?

A congregational president is a key member of a congregation's leadership team. Together with other senior staff, including rabbis, the President should be aware of relevant personal information about congregants. Active and effective Presidents often communicate or visit congregational members and should, therefore, be made aware of pertinent information. Further, by providing the President with such information, they are further empowered to be active and effective in their leadership role.

Conscience

As mentioned above, I find in Psalms 34:14-15, 'O God, keep my tongue from evil and my lips from deceit. Help me to be silent in the face of division, humble in the presence of all. Open my heart to your Torah, and I will hasten to do your mitzvot, save me with your power; in time of trouble by my answer, that those who love You may rejoice', extremely powerful.

Each day they serve to reinforce how I should behave. I take each phrase separately and seriously. Sometimes it is hard to remain silent in the face of division, or even of derision; and sometimes it can be difficult to remain humble if, for instance, other people take credit for my work or the work of my staff or others. By reminding myself of these ethical behaviours on a daily basis, it does, one hopes, become part of one's being and conscience. As Robert Starrat⁷⁰ wrote, 'ethical principles are kept in the supply closet in the one of the back rooms of our consciousness.'

⁷⁰ Robert J Starrat, *Ethical Leadership* page 6

Tzedek

Texts and relevant textual interpretation

There are many texts, which encourage and support synagogue's Executive Directors to behave with *Tzedek* (justice)

In Deuteronomy 6:18, for instance, God tells us what is the right thing to do ('Do what is right and good in the sight of the Eternal'), and this is supported two verses later with the injunction to pursue justice, advising us that if we do, we will be treated justly in return - 'Justice, justice shall you pursue, that you may thrive and occupy the land that the Lord your God is giving you' (Deuteronomy 16:20).

Jewish tradition holds that we help repair the world through our actions. 'Thou shall not stand idly by the blood of your neighbour' (Leviticus 19:16). Moses Mendelsohn taught that 'Judaism does not say, you shall believe but rather, thou, shall do' (Moses Mendelsohn). That is, we should be seen to 'have less creed, and more deed' - in other words, we are required to engage in the mitzvot and to behave justly.

The powerful 'Thou shall not stand idly by the blood of your neighbour' (Leviticus 19:16) should guide a synagogue's Executive Director's work on a daily basis. We should not only be aware of the difficulties our congregants face, but of how we can assist them with those difficulties. For instance, when a congregant faces difficulties in employment, for instance, then we, as their synagogue, should support them with fee relief.

It is clear from the above text that we are commanded to:

- Pursue justice
- Act justly
- Do what is right and good
- Love our neighbours as ourselves
- Give the benefit of doubt

The Zohar, 11:47A, even more strongly than Leviticus 19:16, teaches that 'The acts of the leader are the acts of the nation, if the leader is just, the nation is just; if the leader is unjust, so is the nation'. In terms of synagogue life, the word 'nation' could be replaced with 'congregation'.

The Baal Shem Tov said, 'We are commanded (Leviticus 19:18) to love our neighbour as ourselves', and from this the Talmud (Pirkei Avot 1:16) commands us to give everyone the benefit of the doubt. It is sometimes too easy to find excuses for our own misdeeds – we should consciously strive to also 'make excuses', or give the benefit of the doubt, to our 'neighbour', colleague, staff member, lay leader or congregant.

Context

Moral business behaviour encourages long lasting and successful business relationships and ethical customers. Judaism reinforces that the imperative of integrity demands honesty even though it may be contrary to business advantage.

In discussing a members fees, for instance, a synagogue's Executive must remain mindful of budget constraints but must, also, be mindful of the member's desire to remain a congregant and the value that s/he may have to the synagogue in the longer term.

It is my assumption that most synagogue Executive Directors would have experienced the anxiety of congregational members who, having wrestled to get the courage to come and discuss their fees, discover that the meeting is not nearly as difficult as they thought it might be and that the outcome is generally quite favourable to them.

It is the experience of many Executive Directors that members who express an intention to resign will often cite fees as the key issue. In my experience I have found that if I separate the discussion into two separate issues – actual membership and financial dues – the matter is often resolved to a mutually satisfactory outcome.

Once it is established that, yes, the members wish to remain congregational members, we are able to discuss an appropriate and acceptable fee level. Whilst it is important to remain mindful of the budget, it is also imperative that we remain aware of our members' peace of mind.

Judaism recognizes that ethics can only exist where there is an effective and respected legal infrastructure. Rabbi Howard Greenstein⁷¹, in his article 'The Ten Commandments of Conflict Resolution'⁷² states the following:

1. You shall be honest but state your opinion in a way that does not offend or insult your adversary.
2. You shall respect the views of those who may not share your opinion
3. You shall not use gossip to undermine agreements concluded in open discussion.
4. You shall spend more time listening than speaking.
5. You shall speak to others, not at them, if your purpose is to persuade and not to dictate.
6. You shall respect privately decisions agreed upon publicly.
7. You shall not say 'we've always done it this way'. Every proposal deserves to be judged on its merit not its age.
8. You shall remember that the only feelings you know are your own.
9. You shall perceive the conflict from the other side, and thereby increase your neighbours faith and confidence in your integrity.
10. You shall forgive, for bearing a grudge is a transgression.

These 'commandments' also form a sound and useful basis for any discussions that we, as synagogue Executive Directors, may have with our colleagues, staff, lay leaders and congregational members. What may begin in the mind of a member as a conflict may dissipate as we offer both *Tzedek* (justice) as individuals and as an organisation.

Every complaint we receive is an opportunity. It is an opportunity for resolution of an issue, without any conflict, yet the Ten Commandments of conflict resolution enunciated, combined with the text and the context of *Tzedek* form the basis for our conscience, and our dealings with our board and members of the congregation.

Rabbi Peter S. Berg⁷³ says that it is possible to criticize ethically, reminding us of the classic example of the Schools of Hillel and Shammai as detailed in the Talmud, which has left us with the legacy of 'ethical argumentation'.

It is recorded that the two schools argued for a period of three years, each claiming it had a better understanding of the Law. Today we accept that the Law is according to Hillel. Why? Because Hillel was kind and humble, and encouraged the School of Hillel to study both its own rulings and those of the House of Shammai.

The 1999 CCAR Pittsburgh Platform states that 'we are obligated to pursue *tzedek*, justice and righteousness, and to narrow the gap between the affluent and the poor, to act against discrimination and oppression, to pursue peace, to welcome the stranger, to protect the earth's biodiversity and natural resources, and to redeem those in physical, economic and spiritual bondage. In so doing, we reaffirm social action and social justice as a central prophetic focus of traditional Reform Jewish belief and practice.'⁷⁴

Conscience

Whilst the old adage 'that the customer is always right' often applies to the work of a synagogue's Executive Director, we must also remember that, in our 'business', we are dealing with emotions and that intangible product called 'religion' which has different levels of meaning and importance for each of our congregational members.

Having internalized the texts and their interpretations, our conscience will determine that each member we deal with, and everything we discuss with them, is of the utmost importance – especially to them - in the context of their lives and their relationship with their synagogue. This must be respected at all times.

⁷¹ Rabbi of Jewish Congregation of Marco Island, Florida

⁷² 'Who may abide in your house' UAHC 2001

⁷³ Rabbi Temple Emanu-El, Dallas Texas

⁷⁴ CCAR Pittsburgh Platform 1999

Chesed

Texts and relevant textual interpretation

Chesed means compassion and kindness.

A synagogue's Executive Director should create, from the initial encounter with an individual, an atmosphere that invites and inspires lifelong relationships predicated upon the ideal of mutual responsibility. As discussed earlier, synagogue Executive Directors often deal with the intangible. They deal with an individual's emotions. Each member's issue is of utmost importance to them and should be dealt with as such.

By demonstrating through our actions that we really care more about people than about their money, then we live out this commandment.

Isaiah taught that 'The one who trusts need not Fear' (Isaiah 28:16), and in Leviticus 19:18 we are told to 'Love your neighbour as yourself; I am the Eternal'.

Zachariah 7:9 explains this as requiring us to 'Execute true justice; deal loyally and compassionately with one another'. Just as God deals with us in mercy, so should we similarly deal with others. That is, we are instructed to go beyond simple justice by also creating compassion. This is reinforced in *Pesikta drav Kahana* where we are told that 'If an evil day befalls your neighbour, consider how you can show him loving kindness to deliver him from evil'. That is, as synagogue professionals, we must ensure we always remain aware of what is happening to our colleagues, staff and congregants so that we can show the loving kindness that person requires.

In *Pirkei Avot* 1:2, we are taught that the world is sustained by three things:

1. by Torah,
2. by worship
3. by loving deeds

Within the synagogue environment, it is up to the Executive Director, lay leadership and professional staff to create an atmosphere so that loving deeds can be done. *Lashan Hara* and *Chesed* are mutually exclusive. It is simply not possible to simultaneously display *Chesed*, compassion and kindness, and commit *Lashan Hara*.

Context

Temple Beth Israel, as do many other synagogues, encourages donations from members on the occasion of the *yahrzeit* of each of their loved ones. Each year our office receives a number of calls from members concerned that they have not sent in, or cannot afford, their donation and are worried that their loved one's name will not be read out at our services. It is the responsibility of the Executive Director and his/her staff to firmly confirm and reassure the member that whilst the donation is important to the synagogue's budget, the reading of a name is far more important and will be read regardless of whether or not, or when, a donation is received.

Retrenchments and job losses are no longer uncommon in our society and such experiences are generally traumatic for the families concerned. As synagogue Executive Directors, we can assist by waiving the fees in such circumstances – a simple task which, while having a negative effect on our budgets, offers some solace to the member and his/her family. True, this does not provide them a new job nor does it pay their weekly bills, it does, however, confirm that their community cares about them.

Leslie Bergman, Treasurer of the World Union for Progressive Judaism, puts it well by stating that while synagogues should not be run as businesses, they should be run using business principles underpinned by Jewish ethical teachings.

Conscience

The compassion and kindness that *Chesed* implies is an imperative for a synagogue's Executive Director and, again, should become an automatic way of thinking based upon text and context.

B'tzelem Elohim

Texts and relevant textual interpretation

As we read in Genesis, every human being is created *b'tzelem Elohim*, 'in the image of God' (Genesis 1: 27); that is, we are all created equal. Being holy is about remembering that each person is an image of God and acting accordingly. And that means it's not just about how we treat others. Being holy is about each person saying to himself or herself, 'I am an image of God', and acting accordingly. Which is why although our actions towards others are crucial, that's not where holiness begins?

Holy space and time is not just a preparation for our work in the world, it is also essential nourishment for our souls. And not just on Yom Kippur - everyday. We can't possibly stoke ourselves up with enough spiritual fuel on one day, however special, to last us a whole year. The world isn't divided between holy people and the unholy multitude. We are all called to sanctify our lives. The Franciscan Priest cum-Karate expert may be a specialist in spiritual discipline, but each one of us has the potential to be a general practitioner, to integrate the practice of spirituality into our daily lives.

When it comes to spirituality, the critical word is practice not expertise. Just as we should make time to maintain our bodies every day, so we should make time to maintain our inner selves on a daily basis. How long does it take you to floss and brush your teeth? What difference might it make to our lives if we spent the same amount of time, a few minutes each day, in quiet reflection?⁸⁰

You shall not oppress a stranger, for you know the feelings of the stranger, having yourselves been strangers in the land of Egypt. (Exodus:23:9)

Context

We affirm that every human being is created *b'tzelem Elohim*, in the image of God, and that therefore every human life is sacred. We regard with reverence all of God's creation and recognize our human responsibility for its preservation and protection.⁸¹

Conscience

As written above 'to integrate the practice of spirituality into our daily lives' sums up what we do without thinking about it. It has become part of our conscience.

⁸⁰ *Rabbi Elizabeth Tikvah Sarah Brighton & Hove Progressive Synagogue – Adat Shalom Verei'ut*

⁸¹ *CCAR 1999 Pittsburgh Platform*

Kehilah

Texts and relevant textual interpretation

Kehilah means accountability for our actions.

Commentators on the *parasha Pekude* caution us about the morality of those in public office. 'These are the records (*pekude*) of the Tabernacle of the Pact, which were drawn up at Moses' bidding... Why does Moses himself provide a full accounting of the materials entrusted to him for the construction project? One would think that Moses, of all people, was trusted absolutely by the people. According to some rabbinic views, Moses' accounting was his direct response to accusations that he had improperly managed public funds. Indeed, several rabbinic texts state that the sources of Moses' wealth, as well as his weight, were sharply criticized by others: 'They looked at his back and said to one another, 'What a neck! What legs! Look at Moses' thighs; how thick they are! Of course, he eats and drinks from what he takes from us.' Another would reply: 'Fool! A man who is in charge of the work of the Tabernacle, talents of silver, talents of gold, uncounted, unweighed, and unnumbered, what do you expect that he should not be rich?' When Moses heard this, he said, 'As soon as the work of the Tabernacle is finished, I shall render them an account.' And as soon as it was finished, he said to them: 'These are the accounts of the Tabernacle.' (Jerusalem Talmud, Bikurim, chapter 3, Halachah 3; Tanchuma, Pekude 7; Midrash Rabbah 51:6). Thus Moses accounted for the materials that were used in order to set the record straight and secure his own honour.'⁸²

The Chatam Sofer (1762 – 1839) taught that Moses intended to set an example for later leaders about the importance of remaining above suspicion.

Talmudic passages further instruct about the necessity to avoid even the appearance of misdeeds. A leader must possess integrity 'you shall be clear before God and Israel'.⁸³

In Exodus Rabbah 51:2 there is a discussion about Moses' responsibility to the Israelite people where our rabbis taught. 'One who entered the Temple treasury to take out money should not enter wearing clothing with pockets or with shoes, for if he should become rich, they will say, 'he has become rich from the Temple Treasury.' 'You shall be clean before God and before Israel'.⁸⁴

Context

Jewish communities need to be able to rely on the integrity and intentions of their leaders, and, as leaders, leaders need to be vigilant in accounting for the contributions of our members.

This is why we, as communal organizations, have (or should have) audits of our accounts. Apart from statutory reasons (in Australia as dictated by The Incorporated Associations Act 1981), we follow Moses' example, 'Thus Moses accounted for the materials that were used in order to set the record straight and secure his own honour.'⁸⁵

Paul Ylvisaker⁸⁶ says 'Stewardship is a term that is healthily disciplining, but it is also too passive: it does remind us of the specific trusts we have accepted, but it does not suggest the creative roles we inescapably play. We are stewards not merely of money, but of a tradition – a tradition that is still evolving and that makes us accountable not only for what we preserve but for what we create.'

Conscience

The concept of accountability implies that a person who assumes a position of responsibility should at all times be able to justify their behaviour and actions whilst holding that office. It is imperative that within our organizations that we have a system of checks and balances. When dealing with the assets of our community it is a clear case of 'not only doing what is right, but being *seen* to doing it right.

⁸² Rabbi Beborah Prinz, Temple Adat Shalom, Poway, CA, Sermon :The Accountability of Public Officials

⁸³ Numbers 32:22

⁸⁴ Numbers 32:22

⁸⁵ Rabbi Beborah Prinz, Temple Adat Shalom, Poway, CA, Sermon :The Accountability of Public Officials

⁸⁶ Biography <http://www.cof.org/files/documents/awards/ylvisaker/ylvisakerbio.pdf>

Tikkun Olam

Texts and relevant textual interpretation

Tikkun Olam means repairing, healing, balancing, transforming or perfecting the world. In modern Jewish circles, *tikkun olam* has become synonymous with the notion of social action and the pursuit of social justice.

The obligation to repair the world emerges from various Jewish sources. We are told in Deuteronomy 16:20 'Justice, justice shall you pursue, that you may thrive and occupy the land that the Lord your God gave you.'

The word *tikkun* first appears in the book of Ecclesiastes (1:5; 7:13; 12:9), where it means 'setting straight' or 'setting in order'. While the most notable early rabbinic source for the phrase *tikkun olam* is in the Aleinu prayer, where the phrase expresses the hope of repairing the world through the establishment of the kingdom of God, the concept of *Tikkun Olam* was created by Rabbi Isaac Luira in the city of Safed during the sixteenth century; 'It is not your task to complete the work, but you are not free to desist from it' (Avot 2:21).

In the 1950's, the phrase *tikkun olam* was used by the founder of the Brandeis Camp Institute, Shlomo Bardin. To Bardin the phrase *l'tikkun olam b'malchut shaddai* encapsulated the essence of Jewish values. Since that time, other Jewish movements have adopted the use of the phrase and concept *tikkun olam* as a platform for the fulfillment of *mitzvot* (commandments) and *tzedakah* (justice, righteousness).

Tikkun Olam is the imperative to repair the world, so that it reflects the divine values of *Tzedek* (justice), *Chesed* (compassion) and *Shalom* (peace).

Context

Leonard Fein⁸⁸ writes, 'engaging in acts of *tikkun olam* is the primary means of satisfying the need to create a sense of Jewish community and identity'⁸⁹ Whilst we are generally, as Executive Directors, unable to repair the world, we certainly have the full responsibility to ensure that we keep our own facility in 'good repair'.

Partners with God in *tikkun olam*, repairing the world, we are called to help bring nearer the messianic age. We should seek dialogue and joint action with people of other faiths in the hope that, together, we can bring peace, freedom and justice to our world.⁹⁰

Conscience

It will be very clear to Executive Directors who read this that it does easily become part of one's conscience to be continually examining our facility. Though we can become what I call 'store blind' (ie. too familiar with our surroundings that we miss simple things), from sitting in a service or any part of the facility for a meeting, I find I am automatically noting things that need to be done! Even when visiting other synagogues or any type of public facility, I note the things that need to be attended to. It has indeed become part of my conscience to note, for example, how many exit lights are not functioning! (and there are usually plenty!)

⁸⁸ Dr Leonard Fein, writer & teacher; Biography www.seekpeace.org/bio/fein.shtml

⁸⁹ Leonard Fein, *Where are we? The Inner Life of America's Jews* (New York: Harper & Rowe, 1988, pp 205

⁹⁰ CCAR Pittsburgh Platform 1999

Creating a climate of ethical decision making

The Executive Director, as part of a synagogue's senior professional leadership team, shares the responsibility of creating the ethical setting in which our staff and lay leaders operate within the synagogue environment.

The Executive Director is one of the prime keepers of ethics in a synagogue because his/her role is influential in the entire synagogue system.

Synagogue Executive Directors are in daily contact with virtually all aspects of synagogue life and so have the potential to influence the character of the congregation through application of texts such as those explored in this paper, through context, and so eventually integrate them into their own conscience and that of their staff, colleagues and congregants.

Some suggested strategies include:

1. Staff/Colleague meetings
2. Staff/Colleague shiurim
3. Board shiurim
4. Congregants' shiurim
5. Leadership by example

Staff/Colleague meetings

Time at staff meetings could/should be devoted to exploring actual situations that occur in synagogue life – for instance, deaths, separations, financial difficulties etc – and how they were handled. Keeping in mind that no two situations are identical, staff should be encouraged to discuss how situations were handled, how could the situations have been better managed, and whether the concepts outlined in this paper, especially *emunah*, *tzedek* and *chesed* were prominent in their thinking? Was *Lashan Hara* avoided? How could it have been avoided?

Staff/Colleague shiurim

Recognising that time is a real issue in synagogue office life, it would be a worthwhile exercise to establish regular study time for the staff where texts are examined from the perspective of these 11 values and in particular of *emunah*, *tzedek*, *chesed* and *Lashan Hara* with regard to how these values could/should be infused into their personal and professional lives.

Staff should be acquainted with, and reminded, that *Lashan Hara* harms three people:

1. The speaker
2. The listener
3. The person spoken about

and should, therefore, be avoided at all costs.

A question arises, however, about the need for staff, from time to time, of having to 'let off steam'. This question could be the basis of another paper at another time (for another FTA accreditation candidate perhaps?).

Seriously, though, that in itself would be a worthwhile discussion at a staff shiur as it not only involves the concept of *Lashan Hara* but also with stress management.

I have decided that, in my office, following relevant shiurim discussing *Lashan Hara*, *emunah*, *tzedek* and *emunah*, I will place the following sign in each workstation to remind staff how every interpersonal communication should be conducted, regardless of whether that interaction is with a colleague, a lay leader, a member or potential member, and regardless of whether that interaction is verbal or in writing, face-to-face, over the phone or via email:

Always remember:



✓ Emunah

✓ Tzedek

✓ Chesed

✗ Lashan Hara

Board shiurim

It is always advisable to commence any Board Meeting with some Jewish learning. Regardless of whether individual Board Members need to be 'taught' *emunah*, *tzedek* and *chesed*, or not, textual study from the perspective of ethical leadership would be advantageous. Synagogues, whilst not businesses, should be run in a business-like manner, but Board Members should always be mindful that community is not business and that community, even more than business, requires conscious efforts at implementing these 11 values especially *emunah*, *tzedek* and *chesed*.

Board Members should be acquainted with, and reminded, that *Lashan Hara* harms three people:

1. The speaker
2. The listener
3. The person spoken about
and should, therefore, be avoided at all costs.

Is 'pillow talk' an example of *Lashan Hara*? Is 'pillow talk' an abuse of *emunah* to the Board itself? How does a Board Member manage *emunah* to his/her partner while at the same time maintaining Board confidentiality? Similar questions could be framed in relation to *tzedek* and *chesed*.

Congregational shiurim

Rabbis often speak of *Lashan Hara* from the pulpit but it would be worthwhile to have, from time to time, shiurim could be held to discuss broadly the concept of the 11 values and that of *emunah*, *tzedek* and *chesed* in particular

While these key ethical values are prominent in discussions at many congregational committees dealing with caring for the community, social justice and the like, I suggest that shiurim targeted at the general congregation member would be worthwhile and beneficial.

With the increasing use of the internet, *Lashan Hara* is becoming more prevalent – a reason in itself to teach our members that *Lashan Hara* harms three people:

1. The speaker
2. The listener
3. The person spoken about

Leadership by example

Leaders need to lead by example. Without regular and conscious attention to one's own avoidance of *Lashan Hara*, and one's regular and conscious attention to valuing and enacting *emunah*, *tzedek* and *chesed*, one cannot hope to lead by example.

A synagogue's Executive Director must not only avoid *Lashan Hara*, and value and live the 11 values and in particular of *emunah*, *tzedek* and *chesed* in his/her personal and professional dealings, he/she must be *seen* to do so as well.

Reform Platforms about Social Justice

Following vigorous debate, the Central Conference of American Rabbis adopted the following platforms in relation to Social Justice – *Emunah*, *Tzedek*, *Chesed* and Ethics – upon which our movement stands today.

Pittsburgh 1885

‘... The spirit of Mosaic legislation which strives to regulate the relation between rich and poor ... To solve on the basis of justice and righteousness ...’

Columbus 1937

‘... aims at the elimination of man-made misery and suffering The creation of conditions under which human personality may flourish. Judaism emphasizes the duty of charity Protect men against the material disabilities of old age, sickness and unemployment’.

‘In Judaism, religion and morality blend into an indissoluble unity ... the love of God is incomplete without the love of one’s fellow men ...’

San Francisco 1976

‘... A universal concern for humanity unaccompanied by a devotion to our particular people is self destructive: a passion for our people without involvement in human kind contradicts what the prophets have meant to us ...’

Pittsburgh 1999

‘ ... We respond to God daily: through public and private prayer, through study and through the performance of other Mitzvot - ... to other human beings ... We are obligated to pursue *Tzedek* – just and righteousness ... to welcome the stranger ... we recognize that all Jews are responsible for one another, we reach out to all Jews across ideological and geographical boundaries’.

URJ Ethics

The URJ (formerly UAHC) Ethics Committee stated, in its mission statement, in November 1989 that ‘Our ethical imperative also points in the direction of the personal conduct of our own individual lives within the daily context of family, livelihood, community and synagogue. Additionally, the synagogue itself and other Jewish institutions in which we are involved must be models of the highest ethical standards.’

Conclusion

Almost all aspects of synagogue life have an ethical dimension including, but not limited to, the issues discussed in this paper.

When synagogue leaders draw guidance from our sacred texts, as well as from their own life experiences, and apply that knowledge and wisdom to congregational issues, they attempt to create an ethically sensitive and peaceful oasis for their colleagues, staff and congregants.

Ethical training is never just a matter of instruction. It involves guidance, encouragement and motivation. But most of all, it involves modeling. We teach what we show with our own conduct,⁹¹

The process of being an ethical synagogue Executive Director requires, in the first instance, the study of our texts and, secondly, by integrating that text into the context of our daily and professional lives until such time it becomes (at a point which we are unable to specifically pinpoint) part of our conscience.

In his article on conscience in the July 2005 edition of *Gesher*, the journal of the Council for Christians and Jews, Rabbi Fred Morgan writes, 'The Hebrew term for 'conscience', *matzpun* ... has really come into its own only in the post-Enlightenment period. This does not mean, however, that moral mechanisms similar to 'conscience' cannot be identified in Torah ... the conscience is at the whim of any humanly constructed ideology that might manipulate our definition of right and wrong.... Torah is necessary to define right and wrong according to absolute standards if our values are themselves derived from Jewish tradition, then it is possible to understand conscience as 'Torah-trained', that is, as a conscience that is informed by Torah values through education and upbringing While conscience is generally taken to represent the inner voice, Torah represents the external voice..... From our human perspective the unity of God will be achieved only when the inner and outer worlds – the worlds of conscience and of Torah – become fully synchronized as one, in the way we live our lives.' That is, everyday living requires ongoing ethical decision making. By viewing every human interaction as an ethical 'dilemma', it will eventuate that the ethical guidelines recommended by our tradition become internalized in the way we 'normally' think and work.

Robert Starrat⁹² writes, 'In reality, leaders do not start their day by asking 'How can I enact my core ethical principles today?' Rather, ethical principles are kept in a supply closet in one of the back rooms of our consciousness.'

It is my assertion that, by exploring and considering at least the following three of the eleven core Jewish values - *Eemunah*, *Tzedek* and *Chesed*, and constantly being aware of *Lashan Hara* – and through the study/exposure to their related texts, by relating these to contexts within daily synagogue life, then, as synagogue Executive Directors, we achieve the conscious behaviour of an *ethical* synagogue Executive Director.

As the Zohar, 11:47A, teaches that 'The acts of the leader are the acts of the nation, if the leader is just, the nation is just; if the leader is unjust, so is the nation'. In terms of synagogue life, the word 'nation' could be replaced with 'congregation'. As Synagogue Executive Directors, a greater responsibility could not be given us. It is our responsibility, in turn, to study the texts, to consider the contexts, and to internalize these so they become part of our conscience in order that our synagogues are ethical organizations which provide and teach all of these values but with particular emphasis on *emunah*, *tzedek* and *chesed*.

By applying ourselves to be true to these Jewish values we can achieve what Rabbi Shimon said: 'There are three crowns – the crown of Torah, the crown of Priesthood and the crown of Kingship – but the crown of a good name surpasses them all'.

And perhaps as a final few words:

*O, God, keep my tongue from evil, and my lips from deceit. Help me to be silent in the face of derision, humble in the presence of all. Open my heart to your Torah, and I will hasten to do Your Mitzvot. Save me with Your power; in time of trouble be my answer, that those who love You may rejoice.*⁹³

⁹¹ *Philosophy for Dummies*, Tom Morris Ph.D, p120

⁹² Robert J. Starrat, *Ethical Leadership* p6

⁹³ *Gates of Prayer* p314

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