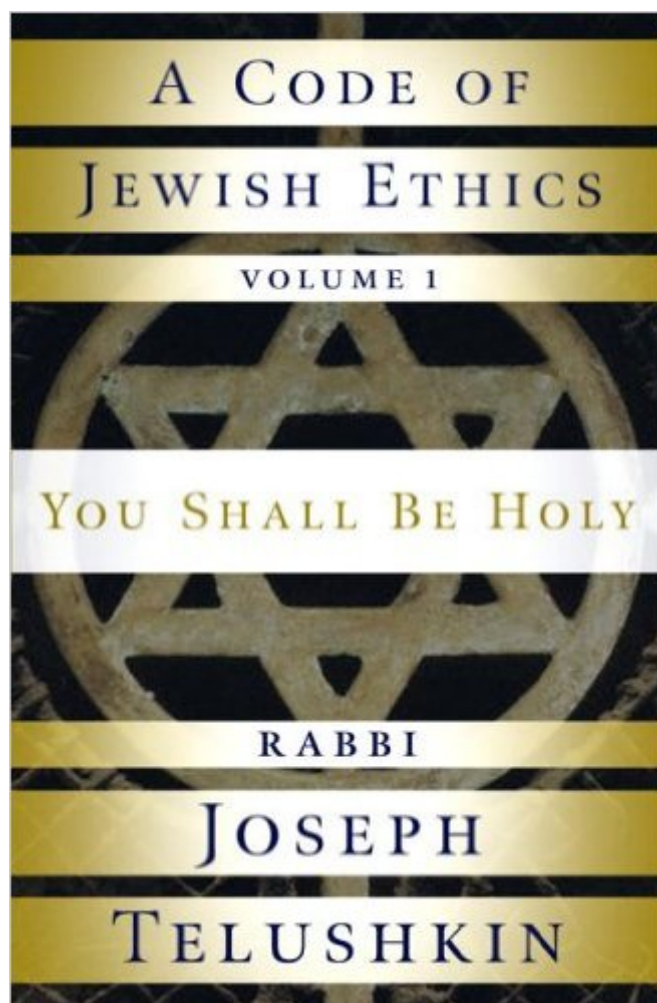


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A Code Of Jewish Ethics: Volume 1: You Shall Be Holy



Synopsis

A Code of Jewish Ethics, Volume 1: You Shall Be Holy is the initial volume of the first major code of Jewish ethics to be written in the English language. It is a monumental work on the vital topic of personal character and integrity by one of the premier Jewish scholars and thinkers of our time. With the stated purpose of restoring ethics to its central role in Judaism, Rabbi Joseph Telushkin offers hundreds of examples from the Torah, the Talmud, rabbinic commentaries, and contemporary stories to illustrate how ethical teachings can affect our daily behavior. The subjects dealt with are ones we all encounter. They include judging other people fairly; knowing when forgiveness is obligatory, optional, or forbidden; balancing humility and self-esteem; avoiding speech that shames others; restraining our impulses of envy, hatred, and revenge; valuing truth but knowing when lying is permitted; understanding why God is the ultimate basis of morality; and appreciating the great benefits of Torah study. Telushkin has arranged the book in the traditional style of Jewish codes, with topical chapters and numbered paragraphs. Statements of law are almost invariably followed by anecdotes illustrating how these principles have been, or can be, practiced in daily life. The book can be read straight through to provide a solid grounding in Jewish values, consulted as a reference when facing ethical dilemmas, or studied in a group. Vast in scope, this volume distills more than three thousand years of Jewish laws and suggestions on how to improve one's character and become more honest, decent, and just. It is a landmark work of scholarship that is sure to influence the lives of Jews for generations to come, rich with questions to ponder and discuss, but primarily a book to live by.

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Customer Reviews

One of the things I find most wonderful about this book is that I can pick it up and read only a page, and have something worth thinking about. It is packed full of good, clear advice and ethical guidance. On first glance there are some ideas that seem obvious, and some that seem impossible. But with further reading and effort the impossible becomes easier to conceive of, and ideas that seemed obvious reveal hidden depths. I am on my second reading of the book, mixed with frequently jumping around in the text, and I'm certain I'll get something new from it with future readings as well. A particularly lovely touch to this book is that with every piece of advice, there is an explanation, an example, or an anecdote - something to tie the subject in to our every-day lives. For example, the section on common sense and tact quotes the late Jewish humorist Sam Levenson in saying "It's not so hard to be wise. Just think of something stupid to say and don't say it." This seems like such a small thing, but this little bit of humor stays in my mind better than any lecture, and is just enough to remind me that I mean to improve. Other such anecdotes show that some of the "impossible" expectations through the book are in fact anything but. So many "self-help" and "self-improvement" books are easy to skim through, more fluff and cheery stories than content. While many books on living the good life have passed through my hands, no other has lingered quite as well as this one. Every time I open it I am reminded of some aspect of life that I should focus more on, and I expect it will be on my shelf for a very long time.

In a longer review for jbooks.com, I wrote: "Spending time with this first volume is akin to tapping into Rabbi Telushkin's encyclopedic mind. Fortunately, it's both an ample and organized mind, as evidenced by the logical breakdown of chapters, the bulk of which appear in the second part, in which basic virtues and vices are explicated. Everything from civility and forgiveness to anger and hatred are laid bare." You can read the full review at [...]

Like Telushkin's *Book of Jewish Values* (which overlaps somewhat with this book) this book is not only full of practical ethical suggestions. Here are a few examples:

1. To help yourself give other people the benefit of the doubt, think of rationalizations that might help, just as if you were making excuses for yourself
2. Praying for others when they are sick is a fine thing, but why not go further by praying for those with other problems such as financial or relationship issues?
3. When visiting friend you haven't seen in awhile, say the Shecheyanu prayer to thank God for the privilege;
4. If someone is getting on your nerves, think of ways in which they might be superior to you;
5. Chant "Do not be easily angered" (al tehi noach lekos) to calm yourself down if you feel yourself getting

angry. Although I am not sure yet which (if any) of these ideas I will have the self-discipline to put into practice, this book has already inspired me to do a little beyond what was directly suggested. Since this time of year is (for Jews) a propitious time for reforming oneself, I think this book is especially useful this time of year. Concededly, a few of the book's suggestions seemed a bit overly ambitious to me- but my feeling is that if this book inspires me to do just a few small things differently, than it is worth the time I invested in it.

This is wisdom from beginning to end. It is NOT limited to Jews either. Telushkin uses references from non-Jewish sources. This is largely a book on self-improvement. Easy reading with a lot of references in which one can check out on their own. This is a keeper. I will not get rid of this book since I will continue to read it several times over.

I wish this were called a Code of Biblical Ethics; I think more people would read it! This tells practically how to love G-d and your neighbor...and who shouldn't do that?

Joseph Telushkin is a master thinker, author and communicator. This book is essential for anyone who wants to better understand the wealth of Jewish wisdom and ethics that can guide us in living a more fulfilled and meaningful life. Amy Hirshberg Lederman, ([...] author of "To Life! Jewish Reflections on Everyday Living" and "One God, Many Paths: Finding Meaning and Inspiration in Jewish Teachings."

On the last chapter, and I love how much this book made me think. It's a beautiful way to live and I love the connections with Jewish texts, biblical stories and teachings from Jewish scholars. It is a book that I will return to again and again since the teachings are so applicable to modern life. Looking forward to starting his Volume 2.

This is the first of a three volume work that spells out the basic "traffic rules" for one's relationship with other people. Rabbi Telushkin states that a "perfect" Jew would follow without error both Jewish ritual (wearing a kipa, eating kosher, etc) and a Jewish code of ethics. Needless to say, there are no perfect Jews (or non-Jews, for that matter), except for G-d Himself. Telushkin further argues (persuasively) that among the two (ritual and ethics), following Jewish ethics is far more important. The Rabbi discusses virtually all aspects of human relations, and the rules that should govern them. Many of these are common sense (prohibitions against stealing, murder, coveting),

while others that should be common sense are widely violated; an example would be the prohibition against idle gossip. This would seem to be self evident, but it is surprising how many people routinely violate it, often with disastrous results. Telushkin sets out these rules of ethical behavior and backs them up with examples, anecdotes and scriptural, Talmudic and other Judaic writings. This book is appropriate for both Jew and non-Jew alike. If everyone followed these rules of ethical behavior, I would hazard to guess that there would be few wars, few divorces, no feuds, and virtually no politics. It may not be a utopian world, but it would be far closer to this ideal. I purchased the Kindle edition. The only criticism I have with this version is that footnotes and references are not easy to view and then return to the place from which they were referred. For this reason alone, one might consider buying a hardcover edition.

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