

Ethics and society

- ☞ Man is an ethically responsible creature responsive to the presence of God and in history.
- ☞ God is not only the source of ethical obligation but is Himself the paradigm of it.
- ☞ In the so-called Code of holiness (Lev. 19), it is imitation of divine holiness that is offered as the basis of human behaviour.

Ethics and society

- 📄 “Walking in all His ways” (Deut. 11: 22)
- 📄 “As He is merciful and gracious, so be you merciful and gracious. As He is righteous so be righteous. As He is holy, strive to be holy.” (Sifre Deut. 85a)
- 📄 The just society requires the just man, and the just man functions within the just society.

The key moral virtues

- 📄 Study was viewed as an ethical virtue.
- 📄 Honouring parents
- 📄 Deeds of steadfast love, etc.
- 📄 “You shall do no wrong in judgement, in measures of length or weight or quantity. You shall have just balances, just weights.” (Lev. 19: 35-36).
- 📄 Mistreatment of beasts of burden is prohibited (Deut. 22: 4).

Man's place in the universe

- 📄 Although the creation story designates man as ruler over the earth, man's dominion is limited by Torah.
- 📄 The choice of Israel, according to the biblical writings, had occurred because of mankind's continual failure to fulfil its divine potential.
- 📄 The Kingdom of the future was conceived of as entirely natural.

Basic practices and institutions


Side by side with speculation --Haggadic, philosophic, mystical, or ethical -- there stood, Halakha (practice, rule of conduct), the paradigmatic statement of the behaviour, individual and communal.

The intention of the Halakhic attitude is to remind the Jew constantly that each and every occasion of life is a locus of divine disclosure.

Basic practices and institutions

- 📄 In the Babylonian Talmud (tractate *Berakhot* 60 b), the blessings accompanying a man's waking and returning to the routines of life are prescribed.
- 📄 There is a brief thanksgiving on awakening for being restored to conscious life.
- 📄 Reminding that the world and the life exist in the presence of God.

The Sabbath

 In the Talmud and the Midrash,

“If you wish to destroy the Jewish people, abolish their Sabbath first.”

“More than Israel kept the Sabbath, the Sabbath kept Israel.”

Modern attitudes toward the Sabbath and festivals vary considerable.

Holy places: Israel and Jerusalem

- 📄 The land of Israel, as is evident from the biblical narratives, played a significant role in the life and thought of the Israelites.
- 📄 The Babylonian Exile and the subsequent return saw Jerusalem and its Temple win over its rivals and become --in law, in fact, and in sentiment-- the centre of Jewish cultic life.

The Rabbinate

- 📄 The rabbinate is the result of a series of developments going back to the period that followed the disastrous second revolt against Rome (132-135 CE).
- 📄 These rabbis were not ecclesiastical personages but communal officials, responsible for the governance of the entire range of life of what was understood to be the *qehilla qedosha*, the “holy community.”⁹