

# **Guiding Lights for Morally Responsible Sustainability in Organizations: Revisiting Sacred Texts of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam**

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*This paper explores how sacred texts of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam provide mindsets for morally responsible social and environmental sustainability. Using the Torah, Talmud, Bible, and Qur'an, common moral insights from each ethical tradition are presented to inform behavior around environmental integrity and stewardship and social justice and social responsibility. The religions' similar conceptualization of marketplace integrity around sustainable value is discussed. The paper concludes with ethical lessons managers can draw from contemporary application of this traditional wisdom for guiding more morally responsible behavior at work.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Sustainability has evolved to encompass more than its popularized meaning. Especially in business, it is no longer just an environmental initiative; it is a business strategy deriving economic value from achievement of social and environmental outcomes (Laszlo, 2008). In new competitive environments, stakeholder value, based on the economic, ecological, and social impacts a company has on its diverse constituents, is a way for businesses to achieve competitive value and become agents of world benefit where economy, business, and society thrive (Laszlo, 2008; Laszlo & Zhexembayeva, 2011).

With declines in natural resources, decreasing biodiversity, and environmental degradation, sustainability is driving strategic and operational change in business (Laszlo & Zhexembayeva, 2011). External market forces and internal motives are driving a spiritual dimension embedding sustainability in the strategy and operations of enterprises (Laszlo & Zhexembayeva, 2011). This has led to increased interest in spirituality in popular and academic presses (McKee, Mills, & Driscoll, 2008; Moore & Moore, 2012; Uday & Fleck, 2015). Companies race to create 'sustainable value', or sustainability enhancing and elevating potential for flourishing enterprise and prosperity across all stakeholder groups (Laszlo & Brown, 2014).

In Laszlo and Brown's research (2014), one-third of people interviewed indicated spirituality, defined as interconnectedness or being part of a larger whole, was important to organizational flourishing. They

indicated there was a “hunger for spirituality in business” (p. 34), which “recognizes that we are part of a living universe and that we are trying to reconnect with the natural world from which we come... and spirituality... includes feelings of intimate interdependence – how everything is part and parcel of everything else...” (p. 34).

Religion embraces the roots of the human spirit through teaching, ritual, and prayer. It includes elements of compassion, tolerance, forgiveness, responsibility, dignity, and connection. Religion leads to a sense of connectedness, to something greater than self. There exists a feeling of purpose, interconnection, and responsibility to act in ways that care for others and their futures, including the planet. The roots of reflective practices, like meditation and mindfulness, and spirituality are directly linked to ancient religious traditions. Considering sizeable social and environmental footprints in the sacred texts, insights from ethical faith-based perspectives can be drawn on to embed organizational sustainability. Corporate social responsibility and sustainability are fully integrated into each of these religions’ sacred texts.

Religion provides more than a ‘mind set’ for sustainability, for community well being, and for caring for our air, soil, and water. Religion instills in its adherents a moral responsibility to the environment, the world, and all its inhabitants. It provides meaning. It provides perspectives on right and wrong. It tells us about human nature. It prescribes how to live meaningfully. It implores stewardship with the earth. It provides rules for connecting people, community, and nature. Unfortunately, there is a failure “to tap into the deep well of ancient, yet eternal values that most people absorb with their mother’s milk, but are not taught to apply to the world of business” (Zinbarg, 2001, p. 168).

Scholars apply the teachings of Aristotle, Kant and others to ethical dilemmas in organizations (James & Smith, 2007), but rarely examine how the world’s religious teachers resolved analogous dilemmas. Religion’s moral and ethical precepts and narratives inform and shape the morality of a substantial portion of the population making business decisions (Calkins, 2000). Religions can provide guiding lights for morally responsible and sustainable behavior in organizations. People absorb religious teachings, consciously or unconsciously. Understanding Jewish, Christian, and Islamic wisdom, representing millennia of sustained efforts to build moral communities (Zinbarg, 2001), enhances what we know about marketplace behavior (Kim, Fisher, & McCalman, 2009). The sacred texts display considerable agreement on actionable marketplace behavioral standards and are applicable to sustainability.

The purpose of the paper is to bring insights of respective faiths to public conversation to build a more sustainable world through moral discourse. There is a difference between attempting to impose your faith on others and the willingness to share it with others. This paper analyzes ethical traditions and morally responsible sustainability from the sacred scriptures of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, summarizing their common advice regarding moral responsibility and sustainability in the workplace. Using the Torah, Talmud, Bible, and Qur’an, common moral insights from each ethical tradition are presented that inform behavior around environmental integrity and stewardship, and social justice and social responsibility.<sup>1</sup> The paper concludes with ethical lessons managers can draw from contemporary application of this traditional wisdom to guide morally responsible actions at work.

Management research and education rarely address these organizational and societal “elephants under the rug” (Case & Smith, 2012). Oil spills, health risks from unforeseen and non-removed toxic byproducts, and pollution abound. Leaders need to make morally responsible choices when faced with decisions concerning making both their businesses and society thrive. Applying a religiously informed lens can be important in our increasingly contentious world of power and dominance where there are supply chain issues related to human rights abuses, exploiting immigrant workers, non-living wages, and destruction of the fabric of local communities. A religious lens involves a paradigm shift from power and dominance over to good and evil, answering the question, “How will I live?” (Sacks, 2016).

There is increased documentation of positive links between religious beliefs and ethical attitudes in the work place (Brammer, Williams, & Zinkin, 2007; Conroy & Emerson, 2004; Graafland & Kaptein, 2007; Kim et al., 2009; Longenecker, McKinney & Moore, 2004). Empirical research linking religion and ethical values, managerial attitudes, decision making, and behaving with integrity in business conduct finds more religiously inclined individuals exhibit better decision-making in ethical contexts, are less

accepting of questionable ethical behavior, and have a greater orientation to corporate social responsibility.

Brammer et al. (2007) analyzed the relationship between individual religious affiliation from both Western and Eastern religions, denomination, and attitudes toward corporate social responsibility using a cross-sectional database of over 17,000 individuals in 20 countries. Although little difference appeared across denominations, religious individuals had broader conceptions of business social responsibility than non-religious individuals especially in areas of environment stewardship, community support, poverty relief, equal opportunity, human rights, and going beyond what law required. Graafland and Kaptein (2007) conducted an exploratory inductive study of twenty Dutch senior executives of different religious backgrounds providing additional evidence of religious beliefs increasing socially responsible business conduct.

In a questionnaire study of over 1200 Christian, Catholic, and Jewish business managers and professionals on sixteen questionable business decisions, Longenecker et al. (2004) found individuals with moderate to high religious identity demonstrated lower acceptance of questionably ethical decisions, applying higher standards of right and wrong than those without such religious salience. Conroy and Emerson (2004) studied the role of religiosity and ethics curriculum on ethical attitudes in the U.S. Their sample consisted of 850 undergraduate and graduate students from one public and one Christian private university who responded to twenty-five different ethical scenarios. Degree of religious affiliation was associated with higher ethical standards, but taking an ethics course had little impact on ethical behavior.

Religion is a defining characteristic of the world's communities with tension amongst the major religions increasing. Research exploring commonalities amongst these religions from the sacred texts of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam are examined as guides to leaders and employees grappling with moral challenges in the workplace about pursuit of shareholder profit without neglecting the costs and injuries business inflicts upon society. The world's religions have much to say about the workday world, honesty and transparency, employers and employees, and corporate responsibility to social and environmental sustainability (Case & Smith, 2012). Such wisdom enables managers to address moral and ethical dilemmas encountered with enhanced appreciative intelligence (Case & Thatchenkery, 2010), integrity, and context sensitivity inspiring action. It can serve as a guide to do the right thing even when no one else is looking; or to stand up for something or someone they know is right, even if doing so puts them at risk.

Many individuals, even those unaffiliated with organized religion, develop ethical understanding and a valuing of integrity of character from the teachings of religious figures like Jesus, Muhammad, or Moses, who combined their beliefs with behavior in morally responsible ways. By encouraging ethical behavior beyond the letter of the law, these religious teachers recognize realities of the workplace. Through stories and parables of them and others, Scriptures teach conducting business with integrity and not treating others as commodities, ensuring workers are treated with dignity, protected, and their health and welfare safeguarded. They caution against disparaging competitors, selling harmful products, price gouging, and damaging the natural environment. They denounce bribery, call on being worthy of a client's special trust, and ask lenders to suspend their legal rights in order to assist distressed borrowers. Honesty, justice in economic transactions, and compassion for people and community are hallmarks in each with strong human and natural system interconnectedness.

Many people apply religiously derived ethical standards in their personal lives (Kim et al., 2009), yet do not use them in daily business decisions (Weaver & Agle, 2002). Jackall's (1988, 2010) in depth, multi-organization study of the nature of moral behavior by managers in organizations found "What is right in the corporation is not what is right in a man's home or in his church" (1988, p. 6). His main conclusion was a "bureaucratic ethic" guided managers in organizations. This ethical relativism necessitated separation of personal values, including religious ones, from work, and conformity to the ethics of those in the corporate hierarchy whom they needed to please. An informant stated, "What is right in corporations is what the guy above you wants from you" (Jackall, 1988, p. 6). The dark side of loyalty, a quality usually regarded as a virtue, in certain situations, can dissuade people from behaving ethically.

Despite religion often being considered too personal for public discourse and perceived as inappropriate by many in business, what was once taboo – faith at work – is increasingly accepted in corporate America (Miller, 2007). An increased explosion of workplace spirituality (McKee, Mills, & Driscoll, 2008; Mitroff & Denton, 1999; Moore & Moore, 2012) has employees wrestling with how to effectively and appropriately bring faith into a corporate setting. They have a desire to live holistically, integrating the values and virtues of their religion with demands of their work (Shinde & Fleck, 2015). This predominantly Christian movement sees faith as a resource for ethical guidance with common knowledge that the right to do something does not automatically make it the right thing to do.

## **ETHICAL TRADITIONS: JUDAISM, CHRISTIANITY, AND ISLAM**

Judaism, Christianity, and Islam - listed in chronological order of development—are monotheistic religions developed in the Middle East tracing their origins to the vision of Abraham who lived roughly 4000 years ago. All are considered “People of the Book” (Smith, 1991, p. 233). All three religions believe one God created the world, revealing himself to humanity through chosen messengers, commanding people to live in morally responsible and accountable ways, and wants people to revere Him, and of their own free will, correct the world’s imperfections. With free will comes responsibility. While similarities and differences abound, they hold many common beliefs about behaving in morally responsible ways for ethical decision-making in economic life. The ethics of these religions are constructed in terms of responsibilities, not rights. Together, we can draw on a collective mindset from the sacred texts on environmental and social values in the marketplace.

Classic economists, like Adam Smith, suggest work is a means of fulfilling one’s self-interest, driving progress good for society and its economy (Friedman, 1962; Kim et al., 2009; Smith, 1937). Alternatively, Christian, Jewish, and Islamic ethics believe self-interest should be overcome for the common good. Christianity, in particular, views self-interest as immoral. Religion sees us a part of an interconnected whole, not separating us from each other and nature. The tension between Adam Smith’s free-market capitalism and the social responsibility focus of religion is no longer an either/or perspective in much of the business world, since ample research demonstrates businesses can both be profitable and do “good” for their employees, communities, the environment, creating sustainable value (Aguinis & Glavas, 2012; Kanter, 2009; Lazlo, 2008; Laszlo & Brown, 2014; Laszlo & Zhexembayeva, 2011; Senge, 2008).

### **Moral Responsibility in Judaism**

Jewish law includes guidelines for behaving ethically in business and managing others with a strong concern for justice (Dorff & Newman, 2008) and the dignity of individuals (Sacks, 2016). It provides a legal framework for understanding religious and moral obligations to cultivate a people of compassion (Talmud Yevamot 79a) who protect the underdog and prevent suppression of human potential (Goldstein, 2006). Judaism’s law shows God’s judgment and justice mixes fairness and loving kindness. The ethical imperative is, “We are here to make a difference, to mend the fractured world, a day at a time, an act at a time, for as long as it takes to make it a place of justice and compassion” (Sacks, 2005, p. 5).

The Talmud stresses how transacting business tests morals and reveals character. Work, money, and commerce offer opportunities to contribute to charity, provide employment, and build prosperity—or to lie, cheat, and steal. The Talmudic sage Raba said that when a person dies, the first question he or she would be asked in heaven is “Did you deal honestly in business?” (Kahaner, 2003, p. xvii; Zinbarg, 2001, p. 37).

The natural instinct in business is to maximize profits no matter the consequences, so the ability to deal justly with others is often tested, whether it is exploiting immigrant workers, union busting, sex discrimination, unpaid overtime, outsourcing jobs, or other human rights abuses. The Talmud’s ethical framework for business and commerce (Levine & Pava, 1999) addresses issues like employer-employee relationships, partnerships, and competition providing guidelines for running businesses, treating workers,

forming partnerships, making agreements, paying taxes, and advertising products with integrity. While ethical business practices should be a reward unto themselves, the Talmud acknowledges the benefit to a company's bottom line and for the community when operations are ethical.

Three attitudes distinguish Judaism's approach from unrestrained capitalism according to David Teutsch (2007). First, "We were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt" (Deuteronomy 6:21). Since Jews know unfair treatment, they should act empathically with a sense for justice. In Judaism, all forms of oppression are unethical (Exodus 22:20-26), with implications for sustainable employee and community relations and fair labor standards. Remembering slavery reminds people that they could again become slaves, so regardless of one's security, anyone can lose everything and survive only through the mercy of others. This is the motive for treatment of others with fairness, empathy, and insurance of their welfare.

Second, "The earth and all that is in it belong to God," (Psalms 24:1). Since we are tenants in the world, we cannot abuse the Owner's property. We should neither intentionally nor irreparably damage the environment. Judaism advises using the world's wealth on behalf of all inhabitants, as responsible stewards. In a world with ample food, allowing any human to go hungry violates Jewish stewardship. Justly distributing resources comes from understanding rights and obligations inherent in being human (Teutsch, 2007). Generosity emerges from this attitude. Our lives and futures are interdependent, so sharing with the less fortunate is essential to the common good, as is protecting the dignity of each person (Dorff & Newman, 2008).

Third, "God created the human being in His image, in the image of God He created him: male and female He created them" (Genesis 1:27). People have infinite worth, reflecting the divine presence in the world as unique creations of God; so we must see everyone – executive or janitor – as people worthy of our recognition, attention, and caring, seeking their welfare in respect for the divine image within them. Socially responsible conduct trumps faith. The Sages called this "imitating God" (Sacks, 2005, p. 5). This view guides economic lives. The Torah ties the divine image to ability to make moral judgments, distinguish good from bad, take moral social action, and judge one's actions based on moral standards. It commands us to do both "the right and the good in the eyes of God" (Deuteronomy 6:18), going beyond the letter of the law, and elevating compassion into behavior above everything else. Humans should not steal, deal deceitfully, defraud neighbors, commit robbery, or withhold workers' wages (Leviticus 19:11-13). This third principle links to Martin Buber's "I-Thou" relationship enabling deep connection with others, not just in utilitarian engagement for what we get from them (an "I-It" relationship).

Judaism is not just a religion, but a way of life predicted on the belief that a free society is a moral achievement for whose maintenance all people share responsibility (Sacks, 2016). Judaism provides guidelines to facilitate individual awareness of connection and caring for self, others, and the world. A famous quote in *Pirkei Avot (Chapters of the Fathers, 1:14)* by Hillel is "If I am not for myself, who will be for me? But if I am only for myself, who am I? And if not now, when?" The first "I" is our unique self and the Divine image we carry. If we do not reveal it, then who are we? The second "I" encompasses seeing ourselves as part of a greater whole. In the third clause, Hillel reminds us to continually act to make life truly meaningful.

### **Moral Responsibility in Christianity**

Christianity builds on Jewish laws. In the New Testament, Jesus describes rules of right behavior for all of humanity through the use of parables. In this way, he is able to explain employer/employee expectations, work ethic, forgiveness, benevolence, long-term orientation, contingency planning, vigilance, agency, service, and environmental stewardship through a largely reflective and introspective process.

The book attributed to Matthew is brimming with accounts and stories of Jesus's behavioral teachings. In Matthew 5:21-48, Jesus not only speaks out against murder, but says that anger and insult will incur a similar punishment. Reconciliation is the true aim. He continues by rejecting the law of retaliation, advocating for 'turning the other cheek', and loving one's enemy. In the same speech, Jesus proclaims "Let your word be 'Yes, Yes' or 'No, No'." (Matthew 5:37) in place of swearing oaths,

upholding that during this time, “doing right” was held in higher regard than merely “speaking right.” To impress others; act with integrity.

In the parable of the Two Sons (Matthew 21: 28-32), right behavior trumps right rhetoric (Case & Smith, 2012). Jesus spoke of a farmer instructing his sons to work his vineyard. The first said, “I will not...but later he changed his mind and went” (Verse 29). The second son said, “I will, sir...but he did not go” (Verse 30). Jesus then asked the chief priests and elders, “Which of the two did what his father wanted?” (Verse 31). He concludes that even tax collectors and prostitutes, presumed to have the lowest of morals and though they did not originally heed the word, similar to the first son, will be rewarded, as they were able to listen and follow. The priests and elders, though having heard and affirmed, as did the second son, “did not change” or “believe him.” (Verse 32). The New Testament demands change (Zinbarg, 2001), insisting competitiveness, inequities, and inequalities should not exist.

Jesus’s actions guide Christians’ moral perceptions about their own actions. They ask, “What would Jesus do?” They are then expected to model themselves after Jesus’ strong moral and ethical behavior including charitable actions and integrity toward others. Individual freedom with responsibility is a legacy of Christianity for Western democracy (Dorff, 2002; Green, 2001).

Catholic and Protestant ethics maintain human dignity for all, especially workers, and have begun redefining mankind’s relationship as stewards of the earth. In his 1891 encyclical on labor rights, Pope Leo XIII (Zinbarg, 2001) discussed employers’ responsibility to provide decent pay and working conditions. In 1986, Catholic bishops issued *Economic Justice for All*, outlining workers’ rights to full employment. In *Centesimus Annus* (1991), Pope John Paul II endorsed full employment policies and adequate unemployment insurance programs, stating, “The purpose of a business firm...is to be found in its very existence as a community of persons... at the service of the whole of society” (Zinbarg, 2001, p. 47). Later that year, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops released *Renewing the Earth* (1991). Using Catholic Social Teaching, Bishops problematized the use of the environment and wrote, “Mistreatment of the natural world diminishes our own dignity and sacredness... because we are engaging in actions that contradict what it means to be human. Our tradition calls us to protect the life and dignity of the human person... this task cannot be separated from the care and defense of all of creation.” (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1992).

More than two decades later, the same call is heard. In Pope Francis’s address to the 70<sup>th</sup> General Assembly of the United Nations (2015), he defends the Right of the Environment, noting not only are humans a part of it, but all creatures have intrinsic value. Consequently, “Any harm done to the environment, therefore, is harm done to humanity...the misuse and destruction of the environment are also accompanied by a relentless process of exclusion. In effect, a selfish and boundless thirst for power and material prosperity leads both to the misuse of available natural resources and to the exclusion of the weak and disadvantaged” (Beckwith, 2015).

### **Moral Responsibility in Islam**

Muslims also believe in the prophets Moses, Abraham, and Jesus, taking their teachings as precursors to Muhammad’s teaching (Wilson, 1997). “We believe in Allah and in the teachings which have been sent to us, and also in those teachings sent down to Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob and his descendants, and in the guidance that was given by Allah to Moses, Jesus, and other Messengers. We do not discriminate against anyone of them and we submit and surrender to Him...”(Qur’an 3:84). Islamic ethical codes are part of the Islamic faith and organize all life including business, society, and politics. Observing the religion leads to happiness in this world and promise in the Hereafter, with conduct in economic affairs integral to both the present and the afterlife.

Islam’s wisdom is to benefit society, including its economic order. Like Judaism, Islam concerns itself with community, advising followers to avoid divisiveness considering individual needs within the context of community needs. Economic justice (*adala*), equality, and fairness are overriding principles (Wilson, 1997). Along with Allah’s sovereignty and a responsibility to His human creatures, Islam emphasizes law and consequences of deeds (Smith, 1991).

The Qur'an includes God's sayings, orders, bans, and the Hadith, the Prophet Muhammad's sayings, deeds, behaviors, and teachings. As an experienced trader, living in a region at the intersection of many trade routes, Muhammad understood commerce and was particularly concerned with economic justice. The Qur'an devotes far more space to economic matters than the Bible, specifying duties and obligations of believers and their economic rights and entitlements (Wilson, 1997). Islam encourages a free market where everyone can earn a living without government intervention. It includes a value-based ethical system for business prescribing guidelines for behavior, types of businesses allowed, and the conduct of transactions to eliminate *zulm*, which involves inequality, exploitation, oppression, and other injustice.

To Adam Smith, manufacturing contributed to the wealth of nations, whereas trading and distribution did not (Smith, 1937). However, Islam considers trading important, because without distribution and sales, production would be worthless. Islamic economists consider tasks unproductive that earn reward without effort, such as charging interest. Labor reaps benefit: "Those who patiently persevere will truly receive a reward without measure" (Sura 39:10).

Work is a religious duty so it should be done to perfection. The Qur'an emphasizes the greed, covetousness, and forgetting of religious duties which result from excessive wealth accumulation. "In them such people glorify Him morning and evening as are not diverted by trade and merchandise from remembering Him... Allah may reward them for their excellent deeds and in addition show His favor to them out of His bounty" (Qur'an 24:37-38). Producing goods that satisfy basic needs is valued more than producing luxury items. Developing natural resources is valued more than trading or manufacturing.

Finance is not a value-added activity. Muslims are forbidden to gamble or lend money at fixed interest rates. A wealthy Muslim is expected to invest in the real economy of new businesses, instead of the financial economy. Anything deceitful is unethical. Securities trading and insurance are viewed skeptically; activities like "selling short" (i.e., selling borrowed assets to be repurchased at a lower price) are illegal (Zinbarg, 2001, p. 56). The expectation is a just market contributes to a healthy economy where traders earn a reasonable profit for a just price.

Islam's economic concepts are virtually identical to Judaism's and Christianity's (Smith, 1991). Intentions matter. Behavior matters. Choices have consequences. Like Judaism, Islam emphasizes behavior rather than belief and law rather than dogma.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL RESPONSIBILITY AND STEWARDSHIP**

All three religions hold a biblical notion of people as trustees, in co-stewardship of the world that God created (Dorff & Ruttenberg, 2010; Sacks, 2016; Sandelands & Hoffman, 2008). Each sees humans and nature interconnected to one another, with nature having intrinsic value. This ethic of interdependence requires respect for the earth and its people, plants, animals, the air, water, and soil (Hoffman & Sandelands, 2005). Global warming, environmental degradation, and species extinction are challenges that need addressing. The religious imperative is to create, not destroy (Sacks, 2005).

The idea that everything, environment included, belongs to God and mankind is its caretaker is important to Talmudic rabbis' view of the world's resources. God commands Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, "to till it and tend it" (Genesis 2:15) and continues with the Torah's demand that, even in war, fruit trees must be preserved, "Although you may take food from them, you must not cut them down" (Deuteronomy 20:19-20), a concern we now call "sustainability". The Torah also requires giving the earth periodic fallow years to rest, not pursuing short-term gain at the cost of long-term dissolution. The Rabbis also created rules regarding air and water pollution (Mishna, *Bava Batra* 2:9; Talmud, *Yevamot* 44a), using God's voice, "Take care that you do not destroy My world, for if you do, there will be no one to mend what you have destroyed" (*Ecclesiastes Rabbah* 7:13). The Torah makes clear "The land is mine; for you are sojourners and residents with me" (Leviticus 25:23).

The principle of *khilafah* is the concept of Man as God's agent on Earth with a duty to use the world's resources judiciously and justly (Wilson, 1997). The protection of the environment is sacred. God appoints individuals (and institutions) as trustees to manage the environment and treat it with kindness,

celebrating God's creation (Searle, 1995). Islam also believes God owns the environment and all its natural resources (Searle, 1995).

Similarly, Jesus, in his Sermon on the Mount said God created man and nature on the same plane, each in relation to the other (Matthew 6:26-6:30) holding birds and flowers as a model for how to live within God's plan. Throughout Jesus' sermons and parables, he invoked images and metaphors of nature – mustard seeds, sheep and shepherds, fish and fishermen, soil, grain and wheat, trees, springs of water – as conveyances of moral teaching (Hoffman & Sandelands, 2005). Stewardship is an important component of the Christian message. People given control over resources by God have discretion in how they manage them. Their role as steward needs to balance the Genesis mandate of dominion with the challenge of restraint and replenishment (Hoffman & Sandelands, 2005).

Christians who understand that humans have the responsibility to cultivate and protect nature would not carelessly pollute the environment. Muslims are also required to protect and repair nature. Prophet Muhammad said, "Whoever revives dead land it should be his" and that "Whoever plants a tree and looks after it with care until it matures and becomes productive, will be rewarded in the afterlife" (Searle, 1995, p. 35). Environmental pollution and degradation offends the Islamic principle of trusteeship over property and is not legitimate in business. Islam also has laws about damaging nature: "Do not mischief on the earth after it hath been set in order, with mischief, corruption, destruction, or deterioration" (Searle, 1995, p. 35).

Talmudic rabbis understood everything on earth was interconnected, particularly the harm pollution causes. The Mishnah states: "Bits of broken glass should not be scattered on public land where they may cause injury" (Bava Kama 30a; Kahaner, 2003, p. 126). Pollution is never local because it impacts places and people far away. Businesses that polluted were kept away from population centers for health and aesthetic reasons in Talmudic law. This was the beginning of "zoning ordinances." Similarly, there were laws to ensure clean water was available to everyone since water pollution was a threat to community health and economic well-being. There is a kind of social justice applied to the natural world. "They ask you to regard all living things as God's property. Destroy none; waste nothing; employ things wisely...look upon all creatures as servants in the household of creation" (Hirsch, 1836, 1995, Letter 11).

In an Accenture survey of Fortune 1000 CEO's, they acknowledged the exploitive relationship between the economy and the natural and social environment that has grown with globalization of industrial production cannot be sustained (Sandelands & Hoffman, 2008). Sustainability recognizes global responsibility to others now and in the future. Greenhouse gases emitted in Cleveland, Mumbai, or Beijing affect the same atmosphere everyone depends on for life. Responsible companies balance profit and protect the environment (Case & Smith, 2012). Staples, has committed itself to promoting the sale of 100% recycled paper, choosing to phase out products made from endangered forests. Home Depot, Wal-Mart, and Whole Foods produce their own energy at select locations with wind turbines and rooftop solar panels, helping the environment, without impacting capacity for future growth (Dorff & Ruttenberg, 2010, p. 95). Pursuing sustainability created significant economic value for these companies' shareholders and stakeholders in a classic win-win situation (Laszlo, 2008).

ServiceMaster's commitment to the environment is based on stewardship, honoring God in all it does. The company set industry standards in responsible use of resources and development of innovative, responsible products and services. Founded in 1929, ServiceMaster believed each employee and customer, made in God's image, was worthy of dignity and respect. This shaped objectives of all its businesses including TruGreen, Terminex, American Home Shield, Merry Maids, and Furniture Medic. Core services cover lawn care, termite and pest control, home warranties, disaster response, reconstruction, house cleaning, furniture repair, and home inspection (Case & Smith, 2012). A core belief is "since everyone shares the same earth, everything they do matters" (ServiceMaster, 2011).

The Talmud disdains taking more than needed and not using resources responsibly. If destroying trees for profit, do not destroy more than needed. If clear-cutting a forest interferes with the soil's ability to contain erosion or destroys an animal's habitat, the Rabbis' recommend relocating operations or altering techniques. Similarly, Islam recommends balancing resource use and excess, practicing conservation. Muhammad said, "The merit of utilization lies in the benefit it yields, in proportion to its harm" (Searle,



1995, p. 35). Starbucks made environmental protection a core business value, increasing profits with that key decision. Finding coffee growing negatively affected rain forests, it developed a new technique that avoided cutting trees and still produced desirable coffee. What began as a way to preserve the environment turned out to be very profitable (Kahaner, 2003).

The Talmud cautions against wastefulness. “During the past decade, companies have begun to understand that producing waste during industrial processes is a symptom of inefficiency. Lowering the volume of waste products is environmentally right and profitable” (Kahaner, 2003, p. 129). Companies effectively addressing environmental issues enjoy accumulated returns over 60% higher than competing environmental laggards over a three-year period. Regardless of sector, total per share returns on equity and earnings growth positively correlate with environmental leadership (Kahaner, 2003). As Western affluence has expanded, many business people have shown concern about environmental degradation, internalizing the modern version of biblical stewardship, (Laszlo, 2008; Senge, 2008).

Many multinational organizations have adopted sustainable strategies: Lafarge, Novo Nordisk, Toyota, General Electric, J. C. Penny, Hanes, Unilever, Alcoa, Phillips and J P Morgan Chase (Laszlo, 2008). They track the environmental impact of water and land use, energy efficiency, chemical use, green house gasses, and labor policies. These are mainstream companies realizing they can thrive while reducing environmental harm. They can do well from doing good, being “partners in the work of creation”.

## **SOCIAL JUSTICE AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY**

Goodness and virtue as opportunities to make a difference in the world are widely represented by every faith and secular humanism. As long as there is corruption, unemployment, homelessness, and environmental degradation, there is work to do. Managers bear responsibility for whatever they could have prevented but did not.

Religion is full of rules for right behavior to promote a civil society and live in harmony with nature, protecting it for future generations. The golden rule, which serves as a normative foundation for business ethics, is consistent with a broadened definition of sustainability involving aspirations for a better life including equal opportunity, security, and community responsibility (Laszlo & Brown, 2014). Some version of it is advocated by all three religions. “Love thy neighbor as thyself” (Leviticus 19:18; Matthew 22:39) is the basic guideline for relationships. The New Testament’s, “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you, (Luke 6:31)” is echoed in Islam, “No one of you is a believer until he desires for his brother that which he desires for himself.” The Judaic rule from the Talmud is: “What is hateful to you, do not do to your fellow man” (Kahaner, 2003, p. xviii). Often the “Golden Rules” in business are: “Them that has the gold makes the rules” and “Do onto others before they can do onto you.”

Combining compassion and a results orientation for the long-term common good, especially when short-term gains are paramount is not easy. But some business leaders found without compassion and kindness to employees, customers, suppliers, and even competitors, short-term results cannot be maintained long-term (Woolfe, 2002).

The Bible says: “When a stranger resides with you in your land, you shall not oppress him. The stranger who resides with you shall be to you as one of your citizens; you shall love him as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God” (Leviticus 19:33-34). According to the Talmud (Babylonian Bava Metzi’a 59b) where kindness toward the stranger is mandated, it is followed by, “You shall also love the stranger for you were strangers in the land of Egypt” (Exodus 23:9; Leviticus 19:34; Deuteronomy 10:19, 15:15). Talmudic rabbis identified thirty-six reminders in the Torah of the obligation to love and not wrong strangers, an obligation to respect all others. The Egypt experience is the moral inspiration for the teaching of compassion (Telushkin, 2009), with an emphasis placed on the relief of poverty and human dignity.

The CEO of Timberland, Jeff Swartz, says his Jewish faith motivated him to sever ties with a Chinese factory where human rights violations were occurring. This led to a decreased bottom line. In a 2008 Fast Company profile he said, “I can’t show you the scripture that relates to the rights of a worker, but can

show you text that insists upon treating workers with dignity. It says in the Hebrew Bible one time that you should love your neighbor as yourself, but it says dozens of times that you should treat the stranger with dignity.” (Nisen, 2013).

Jesus insisted that love of neighbor must be understood in the context of love of God. He directed people to love their neighbor (their fellow human beings) as themselves. He proclaims each person has value and should be treated as worthy. Catholicism concurs that all are entitled to participate in the economic life of society and that all are obligated to help the vulnerable (Economic Justice for All, 1986). People sharing Christian values believe special care should be taken toward the unfortunate in society.

Many believers infuse professional conduct with values from Christian narratives based on God’s command to serve others (Calkins, 2000). For example, after a Protestant inner city housing developer asked himself “What kind of home building company would Jesus establish and own?” he built durable, resource-efficient homes satisfying needs with a layout fostering neighborly relationships rather than providing luxuries (Zinbarg, 2001, p. 49). Moreover, business leaders intentionally base business decisions on theological convictions. Chick-fil-A’s corporate statement begins with the phrase, “To glorify God...” (Weaver & Agle, 2002). Truett Cathey, its founder and CEO, believes he is called to act with integrity and expects no less from those he leads choosing to close his chain on Sundays in honor of the Sabbath (Kim et al., 2009).

Robert Greenleaf introduced Christian principles into the workplace through Servant Leadership with it applied at ServiceMaster, Southwest Airlines, the Toro Company, TD Industries, and others. It is based on “Do as Jesus would do,” including personal responsibility, commitment, forgiveness, live by the “golden rule” and service to others (Greenleaf, 2002). Greenleaf substitutes “business friendly” language like create, value, stewardship, and trust as code words (Laszlo & Brown, 2014).

Jet Blue founder, David Neelman, a Mormon, has indicated “My missionary experience obliterated class distinctions for me. I learned to treat everyone the same. If any thing, I have disdain for people who think they are better than others.” His company does “home-sourcing” in the phone reservation system, based on his religious roots, where 700 stay-at-home workers of all ages deliver exemplary customer service (Nisen, 2013).

Ben and Jerry’s is founded on Biblical values showing kindness and compassion towards its employees, suppliers, customers, and community: “Do unto others as you would have them do to you.” This advances its bottom line as well as its do-good corporate culture. Co-founder, Jerry Greenfield, stated at a networking event at the Jewish Federation of Greater Washington, that his religious education “sensitized him to discrimination, marginalization, and the needs of other people in society and around the world.”

An example of Ben & Jerry’s socially conscious business practice is their selection of Greyston Bakeries, in Yonkers, NY, to make brownies for a new ice cream flavor. It is non-profit institution training and employing economically disadvantaged ex convicts, substance abusers, and former welfare recipients, hiring from its local, underprivileged neighborhood. After an initial disaster of workers and equipment unable to keep up with demand for 7000 pounds of brownies a day, Ben and Jerry stuck with them through the technical and personnel difficulties they encountered. Today, Greyston comfortably meets Ben and Jerry’s requirements with left over capacity to sell to other companies (Woolfe, 2002). “As you give, you receive,” Greenfield stated. “As you help others, you are helped in return. And just because the idea that the good that you do comes back to you is written in the Bible, and not in some business textbook, does not mean that it is any less valid.” Judaism regards this as *tikun olam*, the improvement of the world.

Both ethical behavior and bottom-line profitability are included in the Johnson and Johnson “Credo” written in 1943 by Robert Wood Johnson, the company founder. Long before anyone had heard the term ‘corporate social responsibility’ the credo served as the moral compass for the organization’s business success. It originally including God in its text, influenced by monotheistic ideas, (Case & Smith, 2012, p. 60). The credo is intended to guide behavior. The Credo states:

“We believe our first responsibility is to the doctors, nurses, and patients, to mothers and fathers, and all others who use our products and services...We are responsible to our employees...we must respect

their dignity and recognize their merit. They must have a sense of security in their jobs. Compensation must be fair and adequate, and working conditions clean and orderly and safe...Management and their actions must be just and ethical. We are responsible to the communities in which we live and work and to the world community. We must be good citizens – support good works and charities and bear our fair share of taxes. We must encourage civic improvements...better health and education...protecting our environment and natural resources. Our final responsibility is to our shareholders... to make a profit...when we operate according to these principles, stakeholders should realize a fair return.” (Johnson & Johnson, 2011 as cited in Case & Smith, 2012, p. 61).

These core values define what Johnson & Johnson stands for. It formed the basis for proactively removing millions of dollars worth of Tylenol from shelves of stores worldwide when a tiny number of cyanide-contaminated containers were discovered. Their action fit their credo and its ethical path for acting with moral responsibility.

Islam’s basic objective in interpersonal relations mirrors that of other prophets: brotherly and sisterly love. Islamic law provides detailed charitable requirements to relieve distress among the poor, expecting to share what they have earned with the less fortunate through a wealth tax (zakat). Though the Qur’an does not actively encourage Muslims to treat non-Muslims with loving-kindness, Muslims are developing new approaches to pluralism, and producing new understandings that address a religiously plural world.

“Love your neighbor as yourself” (Leviticus 19:18), demands mutual respect affirming the dignity of each individual. Poverty humiliates people and a just society will not tolerate humiliation. The primacy of love and service to others connects with goals of corporate social responsibility (Calkins, 2000; Kim et al., 2009). Most people implicitly accept the Golden Rule and its impact on their behavior. It can be applied to immoral business behavior like deceptive product representation, unsafe working conditions, discrimination, insider trading, theft and fraud, and in decision-making in ethical dilemmas concerning doing the right thing.

The art of doing business depends upon the treatment of others. Openness and sincerity, respect and regard, goodwill and trust are critically needed. These characteristics support a workplace in which employees feel worthy and valued. Regardless of age, experience, gender, physical challenges, color, or creed, everyone has something to give and something to teach. Business goals include more than profit maximization and the enhancement of shareholder value.

That anything other than shareholder value should be considered in a company’s decision making has been challenged by legislators in nine states including Maryland, Virginia, New Jersey, California, and New York, creating benefit corporations as an alternative business model for incorporation. This allows a company’s governing board to consider social or environment objectives for public benefit ahead of profit, shielded from investor lawsuits (Loten, 2012, p. 13). This type of corporation includes positive impact on society, workers, the community, and the environment in addition to profit as legally defined goals. Currently 30 states and the District of Columbia have legislated this for-profit corporate form. The Italian Parliament has introduced a similar for-profit structure, and Australia is drafting their own version. Patagonia incorporated under this new structure preserving its priority on sustainable and renewable production methods, putting public good ahead of shareholder value, with social and environmental goals clearly laid out in its bylaws and measured annually. Ben & Jerry’s and Greyston Bakery also incorporated as benefit corporations.

Two Jewish values describe this. *Kehila*, community, suggests community welfare is of primary importance to businesses (Teutsch, 2007). Economic transactions should strengthen interpersonal ties on which community is based and serve their needs. Profitable companies increase community prosperity through job creation. Islam has a similar community focus. Responsible employers do not exploit the communities in which they operate. *Emet* (truth) guides interpersonal relations. Since trust is critical to community, a commitment to *emet* influences ethical business practice (Teutsch, 2007). Christianity and Islam both embrace supporting appropriate interaction with one’s community and environment.

## IMPLICATIONS

Many of the cultural anchors our parents and grandparents relied on for guidance and stability are in flux. Company loyalty has disappeared, as have permanent jobs and careers. It is during periods of cultural transition where we need clarity about lasting values to carry them with us (Manz, Manz, Mark, & Neck, 2001). This nation was founded on Judeo-Christian values. Inspired by these values, they provide a road map for transcending cultural changes at work and in life. The sacred texts espouse responsibility and connectedness to the physical and social world. Religion provides purpose, interconnectedness, and responsibility to act in ways that care for others and future generations, including the planet. It is the basis for values, relationships and sets one's moral compass. These values remind us to exemplify honesty, fairness, transparency, trust, decency, and dignity in all our relationships and daily situations. Doing right by employees, customers, the global community, and the environment can be profitable as well as being the right thing to do. Scripturally based religious values provide a common platform to judge right from wrong. They become a life sustaining "spiritual backpack," intentionally carried through challenging times (Manz et al., 2001, p. 155). In Islam, one does not say, "This is business and this is moral." Moral, spiritual, economic, and social are all interrelated.

Efficiency and productivity often result from effective organizational structures and accurate data analysis. But as our examples have shown, spirit and meaning often spell the difference between an organization thriving and one existing. Workplace values stressing rationality over spirituality tell us to "leave the backpack at the door," making us mute the energy from integrity that comes when people do what is right in the right way.

For many, the combination of stories and ethical principles from our religious heritage are starting points for behavior. The story of the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20: 2-17; Qur'an 6:152-155) is inspirational, providing a foundation for current laws governing business, including truthfulness in transactions. Judeo-Christian and Islamic teachings offer relevant advice for acting in a morally responsible manner. Honoring the wisdom of these religions' values partners with our managerial ability to act morally despite pressures for short-term gain.

Values and virtues are part of a moral cultural system that nourishes capitalism, acting to counterbalance immoral business practices like fraud or embezzlement, and amorality where the question is not "right or wrong?" but "legal or illegal?" focusing on how to get around the law. Trust and loyalty are foreign concepts in an amoral system. A moral standard for business operates with values like service and integrity, not because they are legally required, but because they are morally right and will ultimately lead to long-term success.

Informing ethical discussions in behavior with religion is a fertile field for inquiry, offering a vantage point to individuals searching for wisdom to draw on as they struggle to do the right things that make a difference at work, to family, to community, and to the planet. We all have perspectives that influence our thoughts and actions. But it is difficult for people of faith to express their views honestly in the workplace without threatening others or appearing to be proselytizing. When a person of faith feels as if they have to leave a major part of themselves outside when they come to work, they often compromise their true character just to fit into the corporate environment. Public dialogue on moral and ethical issues will be richer if people could freely exercise their religious perspectives and values that drive them to act morally.

Religious discourse based on the biblical view that each of us is "created in the image of God" might help us learn to listen better, voice more honestly, and respect one another more deeply. It reminds us that the artificial carving up of our world into economic, environmental, and social domains is not useful for most purposes. Power entails responsibility. Immense power is generated by modern technology, instantaneous worldwide communication, and the global economy. This calls for responsibility on the same scale. Each of us whether we are religious or secular, Jewish, Christian, or Muslim, whether we represent non-Western traditions or more modern forms of spirituality can make a difference one act at a time, one day at a time.

We can learn much from the wisdom of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, whose beliefs influence economic and human behavior, providing a moral standard—even if people are unaware of its influence. The three religions share concern for honesty, justice in economic transactions, stewardship of the planet, and a concern for workers and the poor. We can use their wisdom to transform organizations, putting this wisdom to practice. Given challenges to create a more ethical environment where people act with integrity and dialogue in relation with each other, wisdom from the Scriptures of the three religious traditions provides a guiding light offering insights that could lead to increased morality and managerial integrity in the workplace. Lead by personal example. As Aristotle said, “Virtue is the product of habituated behavior.”

## ENDNOTES

1. We draw on the following sacred texts as sources: *Complete ArtScroll Siddur* (1994). NY: Menorah Publications, Dawood, N. J. (1999); *The Koran* (5th rev. ed.). London: Penguin; *New Testament*. King James & New Revised Standard versions; *The Soncino Talmud* (1991-1995). CD ROM. Chicago: Davko Corporation; *The Stone Edition Tanach* (1996). NY: ArtScroll/Mesorah Publications, Ltd; *Talmudic Encyclopedia* (1998). CD ROM. Tel Aviv: Yad Harav Herzog Institute.

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