

JEWISH ETHICS AND MICAH 6:8

A Survey of Jewish Ethics, Micah 6:8, and Analogous Academic Theories of Ethics

Pursuant to the Requirement for LEAD756: Jewish Ethics

by

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January 15, 2020

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Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to assist me in developing my knowledge and understanding of Jewish ethics and their academic antecedents. To this end, I will investigate the ethical values and behaviors rooted in Micah 6:8, and consider godly character—the behaviors that God desires. I will employ Scripture, where appropriate, and investigate significant Jewish values derived from the Talmud and rabbinical sources. Interspersed among my treatment, I will include several relevant, academic and analogous ethical parallels. Furthermore, this paper will serve as a guide for discussing universal truths related to ethics and morality, and thereby assist me in leading TMF in its efforts to bring Jews and Christians together and work toward dialogue and reconciliation through Jewish cemetery restoration projects in Poland.

The paper will be divided into three chapters, with each chapter exploring values and behaviors associated with Micah 6:8—acting justly, loving mercy, and walking humbly. In Chapter 1, I will explore justice and prominent ethical theories related to Micah 6:8 and Jewish values; I will also touch on mercy briefly. In Chapter 2, I will delve further into mercy, i.e., loving and caring for others around us, and in Chapter 3, I will examine humility and the implications of being humble and walking faithfully with God. I will link critical biblical principles to both Jewish and Christian thought and include, where possible, any academic research or understanding that I have gleaned from my research and reading in the development of this material.

CHAPTER 1

Micah 6:8

The prophet Micah wrote, “He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to *do justice*, and to love kindness, and to *walk humbly* with your God” (ESV, 2016). The Micah ethical pattern is characterized by acting justly, loving mercy/kindness, and walking humbly with God. According to Hyman (2005), the core of Micah 6:8 is based on a tripartite pattern of a simple string of three verbs emphasizing “*doing, loving, and walking*—connected to three basic moral values—*justice, mercy, and humility*,” which “make it comprehensible and easy to remember” (p. 164).

Jeremiah 7:5-7 defines the behaviors required of God in Micah’s passage:

If you really change your ways and your actions and deal with each other justly, if you do not oppress the alien, the fatherless or the widow and do not shed innocent blood in this place, and if you do not follow other gods to your own harm, then I will let you live in this place, in the land I gave your forefathers for ever and ever (NIV, 1984).

God is saying that he will allow the Children of Israel to live “in the land I gave your forefathers for ever and ever, if they did three things:

1. Do not live as you are; change your ways and actions and *deal with each other justly*.
2. Do not oppress the weak or shed innocent blood; *show mercy, care/love for others*.
3. Do not follow other gods: *be faithful to the One True God*.

God is echoing once more what he requires of us—acting justly, loving mercy, and walking humbly by providing concrete direction.

In Matthew 23:23, Jesus says that we do well when we keep the Law; however, he emphasizes that we should not neglect the important matters of the Law: justice, mercy and faithfulness.

"Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices--mint, dill and cumin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law-- justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former" (NIV, 1984).

We see how Jesus Christ affirms the Torah while at the same time he juxtaposes it to the values and behaviors that God requires, so that we do not neglect "the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy, and faithfulness."

I have prepared a summary of these three passages in Table 1. We may compare the values of Micah 6:8, with the associated behaviors of values characterized in Jeremiah 7:5-7, and how Jesus interpreted and gave them meaning in the New Testament.

Table 1: Values and Behaviors in Micah 6:8, Jeremiah 7:5-7, and Matthew 23:23

Micah 6:8	Jeremiah 7:5-7	Matthew 23:23
Justice/Act justly	Do not live as you are; change your ways and actions and deal with each other justly	Justice
Mercy/Love mercy	Do not oppress the weak or shed innocent blood; show mercy, care/love for others	Mercy
Humility/Walk humbly	Do not follow other gods: be faithful to the One True God	Faithfulness

Act Justly

In this chapter, I will assess justice and consider four ethical theories or frameworks related to justice and mercy (because justice and mercy are interrelated, as we shall see),

including analogous Jewish ethical values. In Chapters 2 and 3, I will consider loving mercy, and walking humbly respectively.

According to Joseph Telushkin (2006), the prophet Micah declares that “God’s primary demand of human beings is to act righteously [or justly]” (p. 14). Telushkin expounds and says that God does not require from us sacrifices or religious rituals; “rather, God’s most significant demands are justice, compassion, and humility” (p. 14). For this reason, we should act justly or do justice. What is justice? According to Dictionary.com (2020), justice is:

- The quality of being just; righteousness, equitableness, or moral rightness
- The moral principle determining just conduct
- Conformity to this principle, as manifested in conduct; just conduct, dealing, or treatment
- the administering of deserved punishment or reward
- the maintenance or administration of what is just by law, as by judicial or other proceedings

Therefore by extension, justice means that we are to be fair in how we deal with other people. We are not lie, cheat, or steal.

Furthermore, the Torah teaches that justice is focused upon our actions toward others. According to Telushkin (2001), the Hebrew word *tzedakah* is translated as justice or righteousness and “it is usually translated, somewhat inaccurately as charity” (p. 573). He elaborates further by stating that acting justly “is perhaps the most important obligation Judaism imposes on the Jew” (p. 573). The Torah admonishes us in Deuteronomy 16:20 to pursue justice: “Justice (*tzedakah*), justice you shall pursue.” Later we learn from the Talmud: “*Tzedakah* is equal to all the other commandments combined (Bava Bathra 9b)” (cited in, Telushkin, 2001, p.

573). The giving of *tzedakah* is viewed in Judaism as acting justly. If we seek justice, we help others, the oppressed and care for orphans and widows. These actions express mercy.

Ethical Theories Analogous to Jewish Values and Micah 6:8

Ethics “refers to judgments about whether human behavior is right or wrong” (Johnson, 2012, p. xxi). Judgment means considering something, or making a decision about something. Ethics concerns our behaviors, what we do, whether it is right or wrong. Ethics are the “principles of right conduct or a system of moral values” (Hughes, Ginnett, & Curphy, 2012, p. 151). Morals are “specific standards of right and wrong” (Johnson, 2012, p. xxi). My underlying ethical assumption is that Micah 6:8 is a God-designed, moral template, or a godly pattern for moral and ethical living.

At this juncture, it would worthwhile to consider five relevant ethical theories analogous to Jewish ethics and the values and behaviors encountered in Micah 6:8. My analysis will be divided into three main parts. First, I will examine Kant’s categorical imperative which mirrors the values and behaviors of acting justly or doing justice. Second, I will consider three ethical derivatives of compassion (mercy): altruism, communitarianism, and social responsibility, and their ethical Jewish parallels. Third, I will address the ethical connection between justice and mercy.

Kant’s Categorical Imperative

The first ethical behavior and value of Micah 6:8 is to do justice or act justly. Justice is communal and expresses itself in the community in the way people interact with each other. Justice is a value, but it is also behavior. Subsequently, justice echoes a sense of morality and reflects the categorical imperative of the German philosopher Immanuel Kant (ca. 1785), who

proposed doing what is right—no matter what. Some investigators and scholars disagree with the universal nature of Kant’s argument because, according to Johnson (2012), Kant asserts that “there are universal principles that should be followed in every situation” (p. 160).

Since Kant’s ethical strategy is grounded in justice or righteousness (justice—doing what is right) it is related to the justice that is required of God. This sort of righteousness demonstrates integrity of character, which is also characterized in Micah 6:8 by “walking humbly.” I will discuss more fully the notion of walking humbly in Chapter 3. At this point, the way we “walk” or conduct our lives reveals our character. Integrity is best seen by truthfulness in our dealings. When leaders accept bribes, do what is best for them or lie or mislead, we see a lack of integrity. I believe that people universally desire to see right actions in corrupt times.

Compassion

Compassion means to feel with someone else and may be defined as “an orientation that puts others ahead of self;” more so, this type of orientation focusing on others distinguishes “ethical leaders from their unethical colleagues” (Johnson, 2012, p. 89). When we care for others around us in our community or demonstrate compassion towards our community, we express the ethical ideas of altruism, communitarianism, and social responsibility. In the following sections, I will discuss these three ethical derivatives of compassion along with several related biblical and Jewish values.

Altruism

The compassionate treatment of others is an ethic of care, which is known as altruism. Altruism demonstrates care toward people in need and generally does not expect anything in return. Since altruism is caring for other people, it is akin to love of neighbor. We can see that

altruism closely mirrors “loving mercy” or loving-kindness from Micah 6:8. In Psalm 86:5, we read, “For You, Lord, are good, and ready to forgive, and abundant in lovingkindness [mercy] to all who call upon You.” Notice that God is good, ready to forgive because of his “abundant” loving-kindness. Once more, we see that God’s mercy is loving-kindness.

When considering altruism or love of neighbor, Johnson (2012) emphasizes this ethical consideration as “the ultimate ethical standard” (p. 170). I agree with Johnson’s conclusion; nevertheless, I would take into consideration the Jewish view of *Tzedakah* (charity) and *Gemilut Chesed* (acts of loving-kindness), which I will address more completely in Chapter 2.

Nonetheless, we may conclude that altruism is caring for other people and is akin to love of neighbor. We can see that altruism closely mirrors loving mercy from Micah 6:8. As a value, altruism demonstrates care toward people in need and generally does not expect anything in return. It is considered by many to be “the ultimate ethical standard” (Johnson, 2012, p. 170).

Communitarianism

Communitarianism or caring for community is seen when members of the community “shoulder their responsibility and seek the common good” by sharing concern for “their fellow citizens” (Johnson, 2012, p. 164). Members of the community must in turn care, show concern for or “have significant obligations to their fellow citizens” (Johnson, 2012, p. 164).

Communitarianism is somewhat controversial because it looks at society—what is best for the community and does not consider solely what is best for the needs of the individual.

Social Responsibility

The communitarianism ethical theory is related to the theoretical and Jewish understandings of social or collective responsibility. The theory of social responsibility is

predicated upon the notion of an individual's (or organization's) responsibility to act for the greater good of society. What this means is that individuals and organization are to care for society and address social needs and issues within their midst. More so, these entities have an obligation to act for the greater good of those around them.

When considering the social responsibility of corporations, Jones (1980) views corporate social responsibility as “the notion that corporations have an obligation to constituent groups in society other than stock holders and beyond that prescribed by law or union contract” (pp. 59-60). According to the online Cambridge dictionary, corporate social responsibility is “the practice of producing goods and services in a way that is not harmful to society or the environment” (Dictionary.cambridge.org, 2020).

Jewish views of social responsibility flow from the belief that God created humanity and placed men and women on this planet; therefore, he created us to live together. In Genesis 2:18, God said, *“It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him”* (NIV, 1984). We live as individuals within a community. Even though we are individuals, not one of us lives alone as if we live on a deserted island. We are surrounded by other people: family, friends, co-workers, and neighbors. Telushkin (2009) connects this understanding with the commandment to “love our neighbor” due to the fact that *“all human beings are created by God”* and for this reason human beings are interrelated as “one extended family” (p. 10).

From the Talmud, we read one of the questions the rabbis raised: “Why, when the world was created, did God create just one man and one woman?” Racelle Weiman (2008), cites their answer: “So that humankind understands that we all come from a single union, to teach us that we are all sisters and brothers, and that no one is greater than any other” (p. 91). The Tanakh asks this question similarly in Malachi 2:10: “Have we not all one Father? Did not one God

create us?” On this unique sphere—this globe, we live as human beings in community, in a relationship with God and each other.

For this reason, Weiman determines that we share a “common lineage,” in which each man and woman “is created in the divine image,” and is an acknowledgment of the fact that “God's presence is illuminated in each individual” (p. 91). God reveals his character in every human being; therefore, every man and woman is equal and worthy of dignity and for this reason we should treat each other as if we matter and as if we love one another.

Jewish people view themselves collectively as one large community in which they care for one another. The Babylonian Talmud teaches “*Kol Yisrael arevim zeh lazeh*” (Shavuot 39a), which means that “All Jews are responsible for one another” (cited in, Telushkin, 1994, p. 91). What this means, from a Jewish perspective, is that we are to be concerned for each other and “care for other people in the same way as we care about ourselves” (Delcau, 2012, p. 9). This connotation best captures the meaning of social responsibility.

Moreover, the Hebrew word for “responsible,” *ah-reivin/areyvut*, “literally means ‘surety,’ one who makes himself responsible for another” (Telushkin, 1994, p. 91). If we are responsible for one another, then we must “be kind and generous to everyone, especially [to] people who do not have as much as we have” (Delcau, 2012, p. 9). In other words, we will act justly toward one another and do the right thing.

Additionally, the Jewish people draw their understanding of social responsibility from the Babylonian Talmud (Ta'anit 11a) where it declares: “When the community is in trouble a person should not say, ‘I will go house and eat and drink and be at peace with myself’” (Telushkin, 1994, p. 94). The implications of this statement for the Jew is to be involved in the distress of the community, as was Moses (Exodus 27:12), “who took upon himself his community’s pain;” the

Talmud elaborates further, “one who shares in the distress of a community will merit to witness its deliverance” (Telushkin, 1994, p. 94).

Finally, we may consider the command from the Torah: “Do not stand idly by the blood of your neighbor” (Leviticus 19:16). Jews understand this verse to mean that we should not just stand “idly” by and be observers while something is happening to another person. It is our obligation to act and do something in order to help. The scriptural command is to be responsible for those around us and not only intervene in the act of murder or violence, but more so, Scripture commands us to be socially responsible and act when someone else is in need.

Justice Mitigated by Love

Du Preez (1985) discusses God’s concern for those treated unjustly. By doing what is right toward one’s neighbor, the love, or the loving-kindness of God is revealed. Furthermore, according to D. J. Bosch (1984), justice is central to the gospel of Matthew (p. 27), which illustrates the fact that the God of love is the God of justice or righteousness. Bosch argues that we cannot divorce “spiritual righteousness . . . from earthly justice” (p. 28). Du Preez connects these two dimensions of God to each other, forming a concept he describes as “*justice-love*” and links it to the kingdom of God. He believes that this construct is valid in both the Tanakh (Old Testament) and New Testament.

Scripture reveals God, as the God of love, who is also the God of righteousness and justice, and as Waldron Scott (1980) indicates, this God, “is concerned about social justice, not mere private morality” (p. 49). Glasser and McGavran (1983) echo this point of view and conclude that God, “is strongly moved by the cries of the oppressed, particularly when his people collectively make no effort to relieve their anguish” (p. 35). The relevance of these two statements is that the people of God are to be not just morally upright, but they are to be

compassionate and to show concern for their neighbors—those around them oppressed by injustice.

Jesus summarized the Torah (the Law) into two basic statements: love of God and love of neighbor and declared that the entirety of the Law and the Prophets rest on these two commandments (Matt. 22:40). Jesus does not merely have in view for those, who follow him only to obey a series of “moral or ceremonial rules;” obviously he is being “quite concrete” and stating that loving God is “revealed in doing what is right towards one's neighbour (sic)” (Du Preez, 1985, p. 45).

Doing what is right because of love for neighbor is what Du Preez equates with his concept of *justice-love*. The justice that Jesus has in view is clarified further in the so-called “Sermon on the Mount” (found in Matthew 5:21-47). In his teaching, Jesus illuminates the concept of God’s justice “in terms of a number of pithy contrasts in which the keyword is *love* that wishes to do right to one's neighbour (sic),” which by so doing demonstrates “love towards the hostile fellow-man, through which the pupil of the kingdom of God would be ‘perfect’ as his heavenly Father is perfect” (Du Preez, 1985, p. 45). In other words, this type of justice and love would reveal the character of God in a person by their actions.

Summary

I have extensively researched the literature and encountered material that will ensure the development a solid ethical foundation in my life and work. I have focused on Micah 6:8 as the vehicle to explore Jewish ethics via a simple set of three values and behaviors: *justice/act justly*, *mercy/love mercy*, and *humility/walk humbly*. Integrity and humility also play critical roles in developing an ethical life. I have included critical and vital ethical theories and attempted to connect them with biblical understanding where applicable. I also used the teaching of Jesus as a

basis for giving insight to these major ethical values. The Jewish influence to the discipline of ethics is immeasurable, as Jewish scholars and rabbis have helped us to understand the requirements of God, worked out over time in the context of life. We owe the Jewish people a great deal as they are the source of everything that we know about God and what he requires of us.

CHAPTER 2

Love Mercy

What does mercy mean? Mercy means to be “compassionate or kindly forbearance shown toward an offender, an enemy, or other person in one's power; *also*: lenient or compassionate treatment <begged for *mercy*>” (Meriam-Webster, 2012). Compassionate treatment of others is an ethic or care, which we know from our last session as altruism. Altruism demonstrates care toward people in need and generally does not expect anything in return. In the Micah 6:8, we see that mercy is derived from the Hebrew word, *chesed*, which means treating others with kindness, literally loving-kindness. This type of kindness shows concern or care for others; furthermore, we understand this sort of kindness as compassion.

The Talmud considers compassion to be “the hallmark of an ethical person” and it “is *the* defining characteristic of being a Jew” (Telushkin, 2006, p. 20). In the writings of the Prophet Isaiah 1:16b-17, we hear the admonition to Israel: “Stop doing wrong, learn to do right! Seek justice, encourage the oppressed. Defend the cause of the fatherless, plead the case of the widow.” Scripture characterizes God as just and righteous and connects these attributes to his mercy. He is just, righteous, and acts mercifully on behalf of humanity. We also observe in Hosea 6:6 that God is not pleased by sacrifices, but kindness: “For I desire mercy (kindness), not sacrifice, and acknowledgment of God rather than burnt offerings.”

By being merciful or compassionate, we demonstrate that we care for what was important to someone else, which could be an injustice, a misdeed, or an emotional pain. The best way to show compassion is through a loving deed—an act of kindness in an attempt to make right what

was wrong. In so doing, we are able to display the character and heart of God. Recall that God “saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy” (Titus 3:5) – his kindness toward us.

Mercy: Caring/Charity/Loving-kindness

Our understanding of charity begins in the Bible and comes to us from the Jewish people, whom God used to write his Word to us. *Tzedakah* (charity) is derived from the Hebrew word *tzadik*, “meaning righteousness, fairness or justice” and “refers to the religious obligation to perform charity, and philanthropic acts, which Judaism emphasizes, are important parts of living a spiritual life” (Wikipedia, 2012). We see that this ethical consideration is mirrored in altruism.

However, the Jewish concept of *gemilut chasadim* expresses a much deeper concern for those around us through acts of loving-kindness. In the Babylonian Talmud (Sukkot 49b) we read that “Our Rabbis taught that *gemilut chasadim* (acts of loving kindness) is greater than *tzedakah* (charity) in three ways (Telushkin, 1994, p. 24):

1. Charity is done with one’s money, while loving-kindness may be done with one’s money or with one’s person [e.g., spending time with a sick person].
2. Charity is given only to the poor, while loving-kindness may be given both to the poor and the rich [e.g., consoling one who is in mourning or depressed].
3. Charity is given only to the living, while loving-kindness may be shown to both the living and the dead [e.g., by arranging a proper burial for a person who died indigent].

The major difference, as Jews view the difference between charity and acts of loving-kindness, rests on the concept of repayment. When considering the burial of the dead *gemilut chasadim* (loving-kindness) it is viewed as “par excellence because it necessarily is done without any hope that the ‘recipient’ will repay the good deed” (Telushkin, 1994, p. 25). Furthermore,

Telushkin (1994) indicates that a rabbi, Haffetz Hayyim, considered *gemilut chasadim* as “any good deed that one does for another without getting something in return (*Ahavat Chesed*)” (Telushkin, 1994, p. 25).

In light of these considerations, I would say that instead of altruism, I would follow the Jewish ethical idea or understanding of *gemilut chasadim* and practice loving-kindness or compassion as my ethical construct to make decisions because it keeps us from expecting to be repaid for our kindness. By understanding this type of kindness, we are able to understand God’s compassion for us and thereby direct this kind of compassion (loving kindness) toward others in our community. Wolf (2010) points to the work of Malloch from the 1990s, who calls this notion “social compassion” (p. 8).

Loving Acts

The question of evil is not new. Humanity lives on a planet inhabited by corruption, which may be exemplified by the horrors birthed through such tragedies, as the genocides of Rwanda and certainly the Shoah. I hope that Jews and Christians can come to terms with the past trauma brought about by long-term anti-Semitism, anti-Judaism, and the Shoah through dealing with such evil today by means of “loving acts.” Johnson (2012) considers that “Scott Peck is not alone in arguing that loving acts can overcome evil” (cited in, Johnson, 2012, p. 127). Peck (2012) defines the concept of love in this manner: “Love is as love does. Love is an act of will—namely, both an intention and an action. Will also implies choice” (p. 83, loc. 1078). The concept of loving acts will be academically linked to humane orientation below and dealt with more thoroughly in the next section; however, it is important to emphasize that love acts. It is not passive. Compassion is an extension of love in action.

Humane Orientation

House, Javidan, Hanges, and Dorfman (2002) outline the parameters of the GLOBE (Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness) Study, which is a multi-country/culture case study of nine dimensions of leadership and culture in 62 nations. These dimensions are performance orientation, future orientation, assertiveness, power distance, humane orientation, institutional collectivism, in-group collectivism, uncertainty avoidance, and gender egalitarianism.

The GLOBE Study acknowledges the role of religion in shaping our understanding of what humane behavior is. In Judaism, Islam and Christianity, God is seen as the “ultimate” source of “goodness” and requires “humane-orientated behaviors and doing good to others,” while Eastern Religions such as Buddhism and Taoism, “there is no God that gives orders in the direction of goodness;” instead, individuals must “harmonize” themselves with the “cosmic rhythm” and do what is “good” (Kabaskal & Bodur, 2004, p. 565).

Humane orientation may be defined as “the degree to which individuals in organizations or societies encourage and reward individuals for being fair, altruistic, friendly, generous, caring, and kind to others” (Javidan & Dastmalchian, 2009). Kabaskal and Bodur (2004) explain further that “this dimension is manifested in the way people treat one another and in the social programs institutionalized within each society” (p. 569). Simply stated humane orientation is concerned with the welfare of humanity.

Descriptions of humane behavior are not new but have existed since antiquity and “ideas and values” related to this dimension may be found among “classic Greek philosophers” and “in the teachings of many of the major religions of the world” (Kabaskal & Bodur, 2004, p. 565). The principal idea embedded in the classical Greek understanding concerning this human

attribute is reciprocal as well as mutual love found in friendship. Humans are interrelated and connected to each other; therefore, love or concern for others is a fundamental expression of humanity.

Humane orientation is expressed differently across cultures along a continuum from high to low humane orientation in societies and institutions. Briefly, the concept of humane orientation is not unique; it is related to what Hofstede and Bond (1988) called “Kind Heartedness.” It is also related to the work of Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck (1961) regarding “Human Nature Is Good vs. Human Nature Is Bad.” We also see a connection with the work of Putnam, Leonardi, and Nanetti (1993) regarding their treatment of “the Civic Society” and from McClelland (1985) and his concepts concerning “the affiliative motive.” Furthermore, Price (1989), Dover (1980) and Ferrari (1987) looked at how classical Greek philosophers of Plato, Aristotle and Socrates viewed interpersonal relationships. Triandis (1995) addressed culture theory and said that “altruism, benevolence, kindness, love and generosity” are important factors to consider with regards to social behaviors of people (cited in, Warner-Søderholm, 2012, p. 6).

Summary

Compassion/mercy/loving-kindness reflect the same ethical values and behaviors defined by caring or being concerned for the world and the people around us, wherever that may be. Compassion is “the hallmark of an ethical person” and it “is *the* defining characteristic of being a Jew” (Telushkin, 2006, p. 20). I did not really see this connection until a Jewish man, the son of Shoah survivors, told me one day that “I was a true Jew.” I had been assisting him in Poland with an important matter for some time. I asked him, “Why?” He related to me that in his life, many people perform rituals and keep laws and traditions, but in their actions they lack what truly defines a Jew. He said, “I see the heart of a Jew in you.”

By being compassionate and caring, we are viewed as merciful. Mercy or true loving-kindness flows from the heart of God. He is the source of this loving-kindness. We are only the pathways for it.

Peck (2012) claims, “Love is as love does. Love is an act of will-namely, both an intention and an action. Will also implies choice” (p. 83, loc. 1078). The only real choice that Jews and Christians have, in resolving their conflict and come to terms with the past trauma brought about by long-term anti-Semitism, anti-Judaism, and the Shoah, is to be compassionate toward each other, to act in love, kindness, and mercy. As I have written elsewhere, mercy is the language of dialogue and the bridge of mercy leads to restoration, reconciliation, and possibly one day, forgiveness .

CHAPTER 3

Walk Humbly

Doing what is right or what the Bible defines as righteousness demonstrates integrity of character, which is also described and inferred in Micah 6:8 by “walking humbly.” The way we “walk” or live our lives reveals our character. Integrity is best seen by truthfulness in our dealings. When leaders accept bribes, do what is best for them or lie to or mislead others, we see a lack of integrity. Universally, people desire to see right actions in corrupt times. It is critical to note that integrity plays a role in encouraging leaders “to be true to themselves” and their values, while humility causes leaders to consider their limitations that “might keep them from taking action” (Johnson, 2012, p. 246). Both of these character traits play a vital part in shaping and defining our personal ethics.

Biblical Concepts of Humility

In Numbers 12:3, we read that “*Moses was a very humble man, more humble than anyone else on the face of the earth*” (NIV, 1984). Humility was “the only virtue the Torah attributes to its greatest hero” and accordingly underscores “the importance of humility in the Jewish tradition” (Telushkin, 2006, p. 210). In addition, we see that Telushkin (2006) says that humility is a frequent theme in the Bible; humility is so important, that Micah the prophet (Micah 6:8) “commends one who walks ‘humbly with God,’ as fulfilling one of the three most

important demands God makes of us (the other two, as we have seen, are “acting justly and loving mercy).

Oftentimes in Scripture we see arrogance pitted against humility. For example in the encounter between Moses and Pharaoh, “Pharaoh is the epitome of arrogance” (Telushkin, 2006, p. 211). We see clearly the arrogance of Pharaoh in his response to Moses’ pleas to release the Israelite slaves, when he says: “*Who is the Lord, that I should obey him and let Israel go*” (Exodus 5:2) (NIV, 1984)? Moreover, the Pharaoh resists proudly to the point that Moses and Aaron say to him, “*This is what the Lord, the God of the Hebrews, says: ‘How long will you refuse to humble yourself before me’*” (Exodus 10:3) (NIV, 1984)?

Humility and Self-Awareness

Telushkin (2006) defines humility as “not regarding ourselves as more important than other people” and he adds, “It implies judging ourselves not in comparison with others but in light of our capabilities” (p. 212). This conclusion echoes the concept of humility and self-awareness which enables us objectively to assess “strengths and limitations” (Johnson, 2012, p. 88). We have also seen the scriptural admonition: “*Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment*” (Romans 12:3) (NIV, 1984).

Interestingly, we see that Telushkin (2006) points to moderation “in pursuing a path between arrogance and humility,” citing the great Jewish religious teacher Maimonides, who said in *Laws and Character Development*: “one should move away from the one extreme [i.e. of arrogance] and adopt the other [extreme of humility]” (p. 211).

Three Sources of Humility

Finally, Telushkin (2006, p. 213) identifies three sources of humility, which amazingly relate to what academic researchers and ethical theorists have proposed, which are:

1. “An ongoing awareness of God: *‘I am always mindful of the Lord’s presence’*”
(Psalms 16:8)”
2. “The awareness that every human being with whom we interact is created in God’s image (Genesis 1:27), and therefore is as valuable as we ourselves”
3. “. . . Suffering, which can make even self-confident people aware that they are not the masters of their fate”

We can connect the “ongoing awareness of God” to an idea “that there is a power greater than the self”—greater than us, which will keep us from “developing an inflated view . . . [of our own] importance;” it will enable us to appreciate “the worth and contributions of others” (Johnson, 2012, p. 88) because we understand that everyone is “created in the image of God.” Finally, Telushkin points out that we are not masters of our fate, which reinforces self-awareness that allows us to be humble and thereby able to be objective and see our “strengths and limitations,” because being mindful of “one’s weaknesses” and allows us to be “open to new ideas and knowledge” (Johnson, 2012, p. 88).

Humility and Academia

Morris, Brotheridge, and Urbanski (2005) propose that “self-esteem is best thought of as a predictor of humility” (p. 1336). According to Johnson (2012), Morris, Brotheridge and Urbanski “argue that true humility strikes a balance between having an overly low and having an overly high opinion of the self” (p. 88). Johnson reasons that this type of understanding does not

mean that we have “low self-esteem, as many people think, or of underestimating our abilities” (p. 88). Instead, Johnson postulates that humility is made up of three basic components (p. 88):

1. Self-awareness: “a humble leader can objectively assess her or his strengths and limitations”
2. Openness: is a result of “knowing one’s weaknesses” and having humility “means being open to new ideas and knowledge”
3. Transcendence (exceeding in excellence): transcendent leaders realize “that there is a power greater than the self,” which keeps them from “developing an inflated view of their importance” and enables them to appreciate “the worth and contributions of others”

We see from Johnson (2012) also that understanding the power that humility has on people is important because humility impacts how they behave ethically in a powerful way. He points out that “humble leaders are less likely to be corrupted by power, claim excessive privileges, engage in fraud, abuse followers, and pursue selfish goals” (p. 88). Lastly, humble leaders are “more willing to serve others” and practice servant leadership by “putting the needs of followers first while acting as role models” (p. 88).

Discussion

Both Judaism and Christianity are rich religious traditions offering us sets of ethical values. However, are these offerings of values enough? Parker Palmer (1994) argues,

The great spiritual traditions are not primarily about values and ethics, not primarily about doing right or living well. The spiritual traditions are primarily about *reality*. The spiritual traditions all strive to penetrate the illusions of the external world and to name its underlying truth—what it is, how it emerges, and how we relate to it (p. 3).

Parker offers a striking commentary about the nature of reality and our attempts to navigate our way through it. Essentially, Parker asks, “What is truth, how does it emerge, and how do we relate to it?” Our values and behaviors are linked. What we believe, or hold to be true, we do. As a Jesus-follower, Parker says that he was taught “ethical exhortations, as guides to what we *ought* to do” (p. 3). Consequently, he asserts that the “ethical pronouncements” of Jesus “are simply his statements of what is real. That is the nature of great spiritual teaching” (p. 3).

There is a difference between what is and what should be. This is reality. How do we reconcile these polar opposites of what is and what should be, and thereby, change the reality around us?

Theodore Malloch (2011) points to “the ability of people with religious faith and spiritual commitment to make great successes of their businesses” (loc. 232). The reality is that many, if not most, businesses fail, so Malloch contends that “faith changes business for the better, just as it changes lives” (loc. 232). Continuing he states, “[Faith] injects into business something that [he calls] ‘spiritual capital’” (loc. 232). Therefore, we may conclude that religious faith injects truth in to life and changes reality.

Malloch’s concept of “spiritual capital”—this injection of faith into reality, is an interesting idea. Wolf (2010) applies this notion to what he calls a “Jesus-shaped *worshipview*,” or a “J-shaped spiritual capital” (p. 8). Wolf posits that Malloch

[A]rgues that historically, the spiritual capital of Protestant business persons focuses on the three virtues of faith, hope, and charity. That Jesus-shaped *worshipview*, says Malloch, yields a worldview triad of leadership discipline (faith), social compassion (charity), and persevering justice (hope) (p. 8).

Wolf’s emphasizes that these three virtues of faith, charity, and hope produce what he describes as “worldview triad of leadership discipline (faith), social compassion (charity), and preserving justice (hope)” (p. 8). We may link Wolf’s worldview triad to Micah 6:8 and the values of

humility/walking humbly/integrity/faithfulness, *mercy*/loving-kindness/charity, and *justice*/acting justly/social responsibility.

If we take into consideration the ethical contributions of Parker, Malloch, and Wolf and we merge and compare them with the ethical values and behaviors that we discovered in Micah 6:8, Jeremiah 7:5-7, Matthew 23:23, and analogous academic theories, we may summarize these concepts in Table 2:

Table 2: Summary and Comparison of Ethical Values

Micah 6:8	Jeremiah 7:5-7	Matthew 23:23	Ethical Theory	Worldview Triad
Justice/act justly	Do not live as you are; change your ways and actions and deal with each other justly	Justice	Kant's "Do what is right"	"Preserving justice (hope)" Social responsibility
Mercy/love mercy	Do not oppress the weak or shed innocent blood; show mercy, care/love for others	Mercy	Altruism Communitarianism	"Social compassion (charity)" demonstrating loving-kindness
Humility/walk humbly	Do not follow other gods; be faithful to the One True God	Faithfulness	Humility Integrity	Integrity having "leadership discipline (faith)"

It is obvious from Table 2 above that the values and behaviors of Micah 6:8 intersect well with several biblical texts and form the basis of Jewish-Christian values and behaviors. When we view the scriptural instruction encountered in the Micah to Jeremiah passages, we see a spectrum of understanding and clarity of these pivotal ethical values. The teaching of Jesus reinforces the ethical teaching of the Prophets Micah and Jeremiah. I find it interesting that these values appear to be ubiquitous in nature and shared by many cultures so much so that academia reflects these values and behaviors expressed by various ethical theories. Although I did not have time to explore the New Testament echo of these ethical values advanced by the Apostle Paul, Malloch

and Wolf capture them and integrate them eloquently in a triad of values of hope, charity, and faith. I will return to this Pauline ethical triad and consider them further in the light of what I have learned from Micah.

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