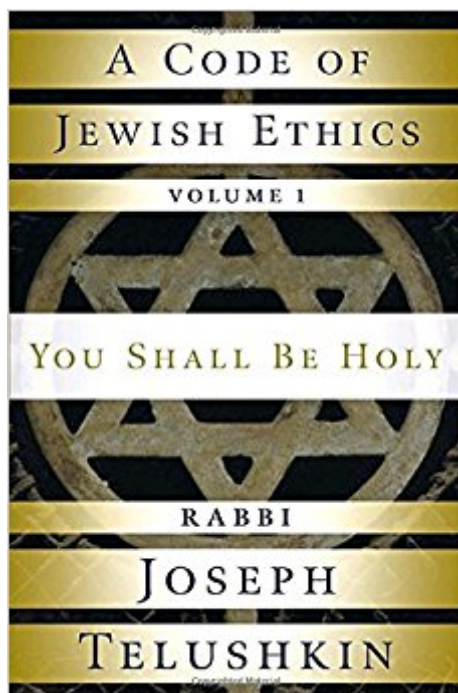


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# A Code Of Jewish Ethics: Volume 1: You Shall Be Holy



## Synopsis

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

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Starred Review. All societies have ethical codes that distinguish between right and wrong actions. For Jews, this is especially significant since Judaism ranks behavior as more important than belief. Behavioral prescriptions are set forth in sacred writings, anecdotes, medieval codes, rabbinical teachings and present-day stories. Telushkin is a scholar, author, lecturer, teacher and rabbi who is compiling this voluminous material in order to help Jews "become more honest, decent, and just people." He plans to present his research in a three-volume series of which *You Shall Be Holy* is the first. Its primary emphasis is character development, while later volumes will deal with interpersonal relationships and issues of family, friendship and community. This installment is divided into five sections: the task of a lifetime; basic vices and virtues; fair speech; leading a holy life; God and ethics. Basic vices and virtues take up 257 pages, by far the longest section. Here and in the section on fair speech, there are especially stimulating discussions of when hatred and lying are permissible. Telushkin is definitive in his judgments about what is right and wrong behavior. This is an outstanding contribution to understanding Jewish ethics and their relevance for people of all faiths. (Mar. 7) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

"An extraordinarily learned and inspiring work on Jewish ethics, written with style and clarity, and suitable for experts as well as those unfamiliar with Jewish texts. Rabbi Telushkin aims to make the world a better place by helping his readers translate Jewish learning into ethical behavior." —Jehuda Reinharz, Richard Koret professor of modern Jewish history and president of Brandeis University "Rabbi Telushkin's masterwork is a gift to humankind. In a time of encroaching darkness, it demonstrates that the light of Torah and Judaism's teachings lead to a life of wholeness that advances humanity and civilization. It is a wonderful and instructive reminder that this complex legal system is so much about people and filling our sacred spaces with meaning." —Richard Joel, president of Yeshiva University "Rabbi Joseph Telushkin displays the vast ethical resources contained in classical Jewish religious texts and demonstrates how these teachings can apply to the daily personal and communal challenges that confront us all. The book speaks to everyone concerned with leading a virtuous and meaningful life and deserves a wide readership by Jews and non-Jews alike." —Rabbi David Ellenson, president of Hebrew Union College "In every decade, there are a handful of truly great works, and this is one of them. Joseph Telushkin lifts up the ethical content of our tradition in whatever form it

appears—distilled law, interesting anecdotes, historical events, or moral fable. To these he brings his modern sensibilities, deep wisdom, and the common sense of a master teacher. I predict this book will be required reading for my grandchildren, and for all others who want to improve themselves and repair the world.

—Blu Greenberg, author of *How to Run a Traditional Jewish Household and On Women and Judaism*—“With all his characteristic grace and humanity, Rabbi Telushkin has produced a masterwork, vast in scope, rich in wisdom, engaging, lucid, and profound. Read it and you will be inspired. Live it and you will be transformed.”

—Rabbi Sir Jonathan Sacks, chief rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth—“This remarkable guide to goodness shows how holiness begins in decency. It is a treasure-house of Jewish spirit—compelling, readable, supremely wise, and sometimes even funny.”

—Rabbi David J. Wolpe, rabbi of Sinai Temple, Los Angeles, and author of *Making Loss Matter*—“Judaism has the most sophisticated system of moral theology, or ethics, of any world religion, which has been evolving for four millennia. This is the most comprehensive introduction to Jewish ethics to appear for many decades.”

—Paul Johnson, author of *A History of the Jews*

This is the first of a three volume work that spells out the basic "traffic rules" for one's relationship with other people. Rabbi Telushkin states that a "perfect" Jew would follow without error both Jewish ritual (wearing a kipa, eating kosher, etc) and a Jewish code of ethics. Needless to say, there are no perfect Jews (or non-Jews, for that matter), except for G-d Himself. Telushkin further argues (persuasively) that among the two (ritual and ethics), following Jewish ethics is far more important. The Rabbi discusses virtually all aspects of human relations, and the rules that should govern them. Many of these are common sense (prohibitions against stealing, murder, coveting), while others that should be common sense are widely violated; an example would be the prohibition against idle gossip. This would seem to be self evident, but it is surprising how many people routinely violate it, often with disastrous results. Telushkin sets out these rules of ethical behavior and backs them up with examples, anecdotes and scriptural, Talmudic and other Judaic writings. This book is appropriate for both Jew and non-Jew alike. If everyone followed these rules of ethical behavior, I would hazard to guess that there would be few wars, few divorces, no feuds, and virtually no politics. It may not be a utopian world, but it would be far closer to this ideal. I purchased the Kindle edition. The only criticism I have with this version is that footnotes and references are not easy to view and then return to the place from which they were referred. For this reason alone, one might consider buying a hardcover edition.

First off, in my opinion, anything written by Rabbi Telushkin is worth reading. I have several of his books and all are well written and the subject matter is explained extremely well. A Code of Jewish Ethics Volume 1 did not disappoint. A complex subject explained using simple language that makes it easier to comprehend. He includes real life examples to help explain concepts. I would definitely recommend to others.

Rabbi Tslushkin never fails to amaze.....to clarify.....to comfort. This Code is a Must Have, if you are serious about Ethics, Jewish or otherwise.

Easy reading with many interesting tidbits. Each explanation includes a story making it easy to understand and relate to

Probably one of the best books I have ever read! The book reads almost like a guide for daily life.

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

Excellent book. It compiles different sources (Torah, Ethics of the Fathers, Talmud, etc.) which is great. It is very clearly and very well written. It has some good examples but many are probably more tailored toward the American (USA) audience. Nevertheless, the concepts and principles are universal. Highly recommend it.

While I am not Jewish, Telushkin writes with candor and amazing clarity. I found myself at times disagreeing with him but so many more times being forced to deal with issues from a perspective I have not heard or read about. He deal with some tough issues. Do not read this book if you enjoy being lazy about thinking through issues from a historical Jewish perspective.

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