

A Taste of Judaism
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Torah: Some Selected Texts

The Shema (Deut. 6:4-9) – This text is the source for morning and evening recitation of the Shema, custom of the mezuzah and of tefillin.

Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord alone. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. Take to heart these instructions with which I charge you this day. Impress them upon your children. Recite them when you stay at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you get up. Bind them as a sign on your hand and let them serve as a symbol of your forehead; inscribe them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

Text for Tallit – Numbers 15:37-41

Adonai said to Moses saying: Speak to the Israelite people and instruct them to make for themselves fringes on the corners of their garments through the ages; let them attach a cord of blue to the fringe at each corner: That shall be your fringe; look at it and recall all the commandments of Adonai and observe them, so that you do not follow your heart and eyes in your lustful urge. Thus you shall be reminded to observe all My commandments and be holy to your God. I am Adonai your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt to be your God: I, Adonai, your God.

Imitating God (Babylonian Talmud, tractate Sotah, page 14a)

What is the meaning of the verse, "Follow none but the Lord your God?" (Deuteronomy 13:15). Is it possible for a human being actually to follow the ways of God?

What it means is that we should imitate the attributes of God.

- As God clothed the naked-as it is written: " And the Lord God made for Adam and his wife garments of skin, and God clothed them "-so you should clothe the naked.
- As God visited the sick-as It is written: "The Lord appeared to Abraham by the terebinths of Mamre" [after Abraham's circumcision) - so you should visit the sick.
- As God comforted the mourners- as it is written: "After the death of Abraham God blessed his son Isaac"- so should you comfort the mourners.
- As God buried the dead-as it is written: "He buried him [Moses) in the valley" - so also you should bury the dead.

Hillel, in Ethics of the Father , chapter 1 : 14

If I am not for myself, who is for me?

And if I am only for myself, what am I?

And if not now, when?

Milk and Meat: What the Torah Says

Ex. 23:19 – You shall not boil a kid in its mother's milk.

Ex. 43:26 – You shall not boil a kid in its mother's milk.

Deut. 14:21 – You shall not boil a kid in its mother's milk.

Midrash (Leviticus Rabba 34:8)

It was taught in the name of Rabbi Yehoshua: The poor person [standing at the door] does more for the householder than the householder does for the poor person.

Hasidic Saying

A person should have two slips of paper which he carries with him at all times, one in each pocket. On one should be written "The whole world has been created only for my sake." On the other would be written, "I am but dust and ashes."

Talmud

In the Next World, we will be accountable for every permitted pleasure we denied ourselves.

Maimonides' (12th century Jewish Philosopher) Ladder of Giving

There are eight degrees in the giving of Tzedaka, each one higher than the next:

1. to give grudgingly, reluctantly, or with regret;
2. to give less than one should, but with grace;
3. to give what one should, but only after being asked;
4. to give before one is asked;
5. to give without knowing who will receive it, although the recipient knows the identity of the giver;
6. to give without making known one's identity;
7. to give so that neither giver nor receiver knows the identity of the other;
8. to help another to become self-supporting, by means of a gift, a loan, or by finding employment for the one in need.