



Yeshiva University
THE RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS–HERENSTEIN
CENTER FOR VALUES AND LEADERSHIP

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Any text in BLUE is intended as a guide for the teacher

This lesson plan was originally created as an introduction to a halakha unit on Yichud. The purpose of this lesson is to generate conversation about the interplay between halakha and morality, and specifically about the morals related to the laws of Yichud.

1. Kiddushin 80b

קידושין פ:

אמר ר' יוחנן רמז ליחוד מן התורה מנין שנאמר כי יסיתך אחיך בן אמך וכי בן אב מסית בן אב אינו מסית אלא לומר לך בן מתייחד עם אמו ואסור להתייחד עם כל עריות שבתורה.

From where are these matters, derived? Rabbi Yoḥanan says in the name of Rabbi Yishmael: From where is there an allusion from the Torah to the prohibition against seclusion? As it is stated concerning one who incites others to idolatrous worship: “If your brother, the son of your mother, entices you” (Deuteronomy 13:7). Rabbi Yishmael considers why the Torah uses the example of “the son of your mother.” But is it only the son of a mother who entices? Doesn’t the son of a father entice? Rather, the verse means to say to you: A son may be secluded with his mother but it is prohibited to be secluded with all others with whom relations are forbidden by the Torah.

What is the Biblical source for Yichud?

2. Rambam, Hilkhot Issurei Biah 22:18

רמב"ם הל' איסורי ביאה כב"יח

אין לך דבר בכל התורה שהוא קשה לרוב העם אלא לפרוש מן העריות והביאות האסורות...

There is nothing in the entire Torah that is more difficult for the majority of people to separate themselves from than sexual misconduct and forbidden relationships.

How/why are the laws related to “*arayot*” difficult?

3. Washington Post, March, 29 2017

 **Ashley Parker** ✓
@AshleyRParker · Follow

Mike Pence never dines alone w a woman not his wife, nor does he attends events w alcohol, w/o her by his side.



washingtonpost.com
Karen Pence is the vice president's 'prayer warrior,' gut check and shield
The second lady is one of the most important influences on one of Trump's most important allies.

10:34 AM · Mar 29, 2017

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[This has nothing to do with politics!](#)

What is shocking about Pence's behavior?

In your opinion, what ethics might be behind Pence's behavior?

4. Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks, Faith in the Future, pp14

In teaching our children moral relativism we have placed them in the world without a moral compass, even hinting that there is no such thing. In the name of tolerance we have taught that every alternative lifestyle is legitimate and that moral judgment is

taboo, even 'judgemental'. What is right becomes what does not harm others, and in time degenerates to what I feel like doing and can get away with.

How does the values of of tolerance conflict with morality?

How can the two values be reconciled?

What problems arise when people define morality on their own?

How can you observe *halakha* in a secular/non-observant environment confidently?

5. Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks, Morality, pp288

Cooperative groups survive; others fall by the wayside. Unexpectedly, some such view seems to be implicit in the Hebrew Bible. God punishes Cain for murdering Abel despite not having told him, 'You shall not murder.' He punishes the citizens of Sodom, despite not having revealed a moral code to them. The Egyptian midwives who disobey Pharaoh and save the lives of the Israelite children- the first recorded act of civil disobedience in history- are described by the Bible as God-fearing. This is a general term that the Bible uses of everyone who acts morally. So the relationship is inverse: it is not that you need to fear God to be moral. Rather, being moral shows that you fear God. The Hebrew Bible, in these early stories, seems to assume that we have an innate moral sense. This is the voice of God within the human heart and that which exists even prior to the rules and rituals, holy deeds and holy days that we call religion.

Do morals exist outside of the Torah commandments?

Closing question, bringing it back to the laws of Yichud...

Based on your current knowledge of Yichud, what morals are behind the laws of Yichud?

Some of society's laws are motivated by morals, i.e. do not murder. What moral values are in place in society that reflect the morals associated with the laws of Yichud?