

Congregational Code of Ethics



Ethics and Our Behavior

Ethics are the set of moral values and principles that we use to guide behavior. Our Jewish tradition offers the following teachings to help us understand how we ought to interact with God and each other:

“It has been told to you, child of Creation, what is good, and what the Eternal requires of you: Only to do justice, and to love goodness, and to walk modestly with your God.” (Micah 6:8)

“Speak to the whole Israelite community and say to them: ‘You shall be holy, for I, the Eternal your God, am holy.’” (Leviticus 19:2)

“You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” (Leviticus 19:18)

The Babylonian Tractate Sotah (page 14a) includes a lengthy discussion of how we are meant to follow the commandment to walk in God’s ways. In sum, it reminds us that we live more Godly lives by behaving ethically and treating all humanity with the respect due to others created in God’s image as we are.

Living ethically is not always easy, nor is it always clear what is the right and ethical choice. If we are facing a dilemma and wonder if our intended behavior is ethical, we may find it helpful to ask ourselves these questions:

1. Is this behavior something I would be proud to have publicized?
2. Is this behavior something about which I would tell my intimate partner and close friends?
3. Is this behavior something about which I would be proud to have my colleagues know?

Therefore, discussing and reporting a specific situation of concern is part of living ethically.

Unethical behavior is likely to continue unless and until it is addressed directly, and it can only be addressed if the issue is raised through appropriate reporting.

An Introduction to Temple Israel’s Code of Ethics

We strive to hold ourselves to the highest standards of personal integrity, social responsibility, and human decency. When we behave ethically and hold ourselves accountable, Temple Israel is a safe, welcoming, and sacred environment.

This code of ethics, based in the values of our mission statement, sets forth the expectations for adherence to standards of conduct for our clergy, congregants, staff, visitors, and guests, whether participating in a Temple Israel activity that is in person onsite, online, or offsite.

Temple Israel Mission Statement

This congregation shall be known as Temple Israel and is founded to perpetuate the heritage of the Jewish people. Temple Israel of Canton, Ohio is a synagogue which fulfills the three classic functions as a House of Prayer (Beit T'fillah), a House of Study (Beit Sefer) and a House of Gathering (Beit Knesset). Temple Israel, as a member of the Union for Reform Judaism (URJ), shall provide for its members and their children a liberal interpretation of Judaism, and shall give them the opportunity of living Jewish life creatively by encouraging them to confront tradition and make choices and to create new modes of Jewish expression. Temple Israel shall foster the application of the principles of liberal Judaism to personal conduct, family life, and society.

Temple Israel Core Values

Personal Conduct meaning to a) promote a sense of identity with and commitment to the Jewish people and to the State of Israel, b) promote high standards of personal morality and ethical conduct, c) empower the individual as a co-worker with God and to d) promote personal piety.

Family Life meaning to a) promote education of children and adults for Jewish growth, b) promote the celebration of life cycle and passage events Jewishly, and c) promote living with the rhythm of the Jewish calendar.

Society meaning to a) promote involvement with and support of the Jewish community locally, nationally and internationally, b) actively work for a Godly society of Righteousness and Justice with Compassion and c) be good custodians of God's creation.

Our ethics dictate that:

- Temple Israel welcomes all who wish to engage safely with our sacred community.
- We embrace everyone without regard to religious background, age, ability, race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, marital status, or socioeconomic status.
- We strive to make all who participate in our community feel a sense of belonging with the expectation that their ideas and concerns can be openly stated and responded to with respect.
- We expect all who engage in our community to conduct themselves in an honest manner.
- We promote open and honest communication that allows for addressing differences constructively.
- We refrain from derogatory speech, hate speech, negative talk, gossip, and slander, whether in person or online. This includes, but is not limited to, intentional misnaming or misgendering.
- We oppose bullying, including any unwanted behavior that degrades, humiliates, or oppresses another. Verbal, physical, or cyberbullying is never acceptable.
- We believe that everyone entering our sacred space has the right to feel physically safe and respected, and that we are morally and ethically responsible for one another.
- We do not tolerate sexual harassment, including unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal, physical, written, or visual conduct of a sexual nature.
- We do not tolerate acts or behaviors that exploit the vulnerability of another, take advantage of a power imbalance, compromise one's moral integrity, or create an intimidating, offensive, abusive, or hostile environment.
- We strive to protect those who appear to be the victims of abuse or neglect, including intimate partner abuse, child abuse, verbal abuse, physical abuse, and other types of domestic violence.
- We make decisions regarding synagogue-related matters with transparency, openness and accountability, unless confidentiality dictates otherwise. For example, it is especially important that we protect inadvertent and premature release of names of candidates for employment. This

includes adhering to placement guidelines of the CCAR (Central Conference of American Rabbis) and other institutions of our movement.

- We believe that our leaders should act solely according to the synagogue's best interest when acting on its behalf.
- We refrain from using one's synagogue position for personal advantage or benefit. For example, we refrain from hiring or firing, rewarding or punishing staff or volunteers, and awarding or denying contracts based solely on personal considerations such as favoritism, nepotism, or bribery.
- We conduct financial matters related to synagogue involvement with complete honesty. For example, we refrain from financial impropriety in decisions regarding restricted, committed, and discretionary funds.
- We conduct employment practices and related decision-making in an ethical and legal manner. We establish and enforce the appropriate policies and procedures to protect the employees of the congregation, such as fair employment policies, grievance reporting, and conflict resolution procedures. We treat others with respect, dignity, fairness, and compassion.

This Congregational Code of Ethics is based on a document created by Temple Beth-El of Somerset, New Jersey, made available through the offices of the Union for Reform Judaism.

Procedures for Allegations of Unethical Behavior

The following procedures delineate how allegations of unethical behavior based on the Temple Israel Congregational Code of Ethics will be addressed.

The Temple president will appoint a congregant to chair an Ethics Committee for receiving and addressing allegations of unethical behavior. The chair will not be the Temple president or the rabbi. The president and the chair will also select a minimum of three committee members based on the following qualities: integrity, leadership, independence, and ability to handle challenging situations. The Temple president shall be an ex-officio member of the Ethics Committee. The Temple president, if unable to serve, shall appoint a member of the Executive Committee to serve in that capacity. Members of the Ethics Committee must recuse themselves if an allegation pertains to them or an immediate family member (spouse/partner, sibling, parent, child) in any way.

An allegation of unethical behavior should be directed to the Temple president, rabbi, or Ethics Committee chair. To initiate an Ethics Committee process, the person who received the allegation will share the information with the other two. If the allegation pertains to any one of the three, that person must recuse immediately.

To submit an allegation, visit www.templeisraelcanton.org/ethics. There you will find contact information for the appropriate people, as well as a form to share feedback and questions.

If an allegation of unethical behavior pertains to a member of a professional organization with its own code of ethics such as the Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR), American College of Cantors (ACC), Association of Reform Jewish Educators (ARJE), National Association for Temple Administration (NATA), or Union for Reform Judaism (URJ), the Ethics Committee will determine whether to handle the allegation or refer it to the appropriate organization.

When an allegation of unethical behavior is made to the Ethics Committee chair, the chair will decide with Temple president whether they should consult independent legal counsel representing the synagogue. The chair of the Ethics Committee shall be responsible for the follow through hereunder.

Where an allegation raises the possibility of imminent and substantial harm to the person(s) of concern, legal obligations will take precedence and supersede any procedures otherwise delineated by this Code. The Temple president, in consultation with the Ethics Committee chair and the rabbi, shall take such action as has been approved by the Ethics Committee.

The Ethics Committee in consultation with the rabbi will decide on a process that includes information gathering, deliberation, and resolution based on the particularities of each allegation that is received. All efforts will be made to resolve matters as promptly as possible.

Everyone involved in an Ethics Committee process is expected to comply with all Ethics Committee requests to assist in information gathering. All steps, from an initial allegation of unethical conduct to ultimate resolution, will be documented in writing by Ethics Committee.

Confidentiality will be maintained throughout any Ethics Committee process to the extent practicable and consistent with thorough assessment and resolution of the matter.

All attempts will be made to protect those who make an honest and reasonable allegation of unethical behavior from retaliation.

The Ethics Committee processes will balance the Jewish principles of judgment (*din*) and compassion (*rachamim*). All allegations will be responded to with sensitivity and compassion. Judgment will be withheld pending completion of a full evaluation. During information gathering and/or consideration of a resolution for an ethics violation, the committee shall bear in mind that, as a sacred community, healing and reconciliation are important goals to achieve. The committee may find it necessary and appropriate to ask parties to create distance between themselves and the congregation at various times during the process.

While there is no time limit to making an allegation of unethical behavior, the time that has elapsed since the alleged violation will be one of many factors in the totality of circumstances considered by the Ethics Committee.

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