

Ethical business practices have always been important in Jewish Law. Hearing this, an uninformed individual would be confused. Jews are constantly stereotyped to be snake oil salesman type figures, and to engage in shady business practices. This stereotype could not be less true, however, as Jewish law for over 2 millennia has enacted laws that promote just business practices. This is shown in the Talmud, where the very first thing you are judged upon death is if you were moral in your business dealings. The Talmud is the central text for Rabbinic Judaism, and the primary source of Jewish law and theology. From the texts from the Talmud, it is blatantly demonstrated that Judaism places great stress on honesty, integrity, and morality.

First, Jewish law prohibits lying, deception, and fraud in business transactions. The Torah instructs people to “Distance yourself from falsehood” (Exodus 23:7) and to “not cheat another” (Leviticus 25:17). Jewish law also states that a vendor should always make sure that their scale is clean. This is not an order of cleanliness, however. This law is in place so that weight measurements are as accurate as can possibly be. Even a cent overcharged due to debris on a scale is considered an injustice. Relating to this, it is also strictly prohibited to not deliberately sell faulty products, and to accurately represent product quality. As an example, it would be illegal to cover rotten grapes with high quality grapes, to make it appear as if all of them are of high quality. This heavily correlates to modern day society, as many businesses still use false advertisement methods.

Second, how one uses their money is also dictated by Jewish law. The Torah states that an investment should never benefit an organization, person, or factor that is detrimental to society. Fair treatment of workers is also instituted, as it is stated that "The wages of a worker shall not remain with you overnight until morning" (Leviticus 19:13) b. and "Rava said, 'One who withholds wages from a worker is as though he takes his life'" (Bava Metzia 112a) c. This

protection of workers is highly progressive for the era it was written in. These commands are somewhat like a bronze age version of OSHA.

Third, Judaeen law protects the rights of animals. This concept was unheard of up until the 15th century for context. The Torah and Talmud both say to treat animals as you would a human being, and to not cause any unnecessary physical or psychological harm to them. This is further reinstated through the line from Torah: “One who causes suffering to animals violates a prohibition in the Torah” It is even stated that you should feed your animals before you feed yourself.

Lastly, traditional Jewish law promotes the rights of slaves. The Torah states that slaves should be given food and water, and never should be abused. “For they are My servants, whom I brought out of the land of Egypt; they shall not be sold as a slave is sold” (Leviticus 25:42) It also says that workers must never be unpaid for their labor. This is incredibly progressive for the time it was written. In conclusion, Jewish law has some of the oldest, progressive, and innovative business laws ever created by man.