

**Rabbi's Message**  
**AN INVITATION**

Over twenty-five years ago I was privileged to moderate a panel discussion entitled "Jewish Business Ethics." That experience introduced me to an area of study that I have since pursued with enthusiasm. In this pursuit I have discovered an ever-expanding library of modern works that explore, analyze, and explain in systematic depth a subject woven throughout Jewish texts from the Torah forward and ever present in Jewish Communal life.



As I have read, learned, and taught I have come to understand the fullness of the parenthetical subtitle of that panel presentation; "Not the Business Ethics of Jews." The implication that Jews have not necessarily always followed Judaism's teachings was clear to me then. What I have come to learn since is that taking the Torah's laws in re matters involving the roles and realities of property, business, wealth, and the like and using them to build a community's economic structure, rules, and regulations has a long, detailed, and, widely unknown to us, history.

I have been most influenced by the various works of the Israeli economist and academic Dr. Meir Tamari. Dr. Tamari is perhaps the most prolific and influential thinker, teacher, and practitioner in the field of Jewish ethics and economics. Such works as With All Your Possessions: Jewish Ethics and Economic Life (1987) and The Challenge of Wealth: A Jewish Perspective on Earning and Spending Money (1995) present a clear picture of thousands of years of Jewish economic activity in relationship to the realities of economic life in our own day.

In the introduction to With All Your Possessions, Dr. Tamari writes; "For centuries, Jews enjoyed autonomy in many countries and maintained rabbinic courts of law which regulated and governed their economic activity, thereby preserving its specifically Jewish characteristics. The Bible and the homiletical literature established an

ethical and moral framework within which the Jewish community operated, ..."

For a number of years now, under the aegis of our Social Action Committee, Temple Sholom has offered a Tikkun Layl Shavuot following Services on Erev Shavuot. On this holiday, which celebrates our receipt of the Torah - the Law, at Sinai, there is a long-standing tradition of an all night text study. In our adaptation of this tradition, each year the Social Action Committee selects a topic of some import in our troubled world and asks me to present texts from Torah and our other classic sources for our discussion. In recent years we have explored such subjects as "war" and "health care."

This year I will bring to the table texts from Torah, Talmud, and other traditional sources that may help us understand some of Judaism's teachings about the roles and usages of money in society. The challenge of our discussion will be in our efforts to draw from these texts directions we might take into our personal relationships with money, our communal and national policies and priorities, and the ramifications of monetary decisions for other aspects of life.

I invite you to join with us on Erev Shavuot Tuesday May 18. Services will begin at 7:30; an ice cream sundae Kiddush will follow and then we will move to our Tikkun exploring ancient texts relating to finance and money and our discussion about what those texts might teach us in the face of our world's realities. While we do not expect to be up all night, each year we have enjoyed a significant amount of time in exciting discussion. Please join us for worship, Kiddush, and for as much discussion as you are willing to stay awake. (Yes, you can leave at whatever time your bed beckons, the night owls among us will understand and be thankful for whatever amount of time you can share.)

Shalom u'v'racha,

Norman Koch, Rabbi