

## Study Guide 12: Kiddush Hashem

### A CODE OF JEWISH ETHICS: VOLUME I, YOU SHALL BE HOLY

Rabbi Joseph Telushkin

#### *Getting Started*

Reading Rabbi Telushkin's A CODE OF JEWISH ETHICS will challenge you to consider how and why you live an ethical life; discussing what you've read with others will allow you to share these profound considerations.

Conversations about ethics will necessarily get personal as each participant shares examples from his or her life. An open, respectful environment will ensure that you have a lively discussion. Referring back to A CODE OF JEWISH ETHICS as much as possible – bringing your discussion from the personal back to the rabbinic commentaries and contemporary stories in the book – will enrich your discussion experience.

We've provided a series of discussion questions on several key passages in A CODE OF JEWISH ETHICS to help you focus your discussion. You may decide to move through these questions one by one, or you may decide to skip around a bit and tackle questions as they arise. The questions are here to provide a road map, to help you regain direction if your discussion veers off track, and to help you get where you're going: to a clearer, deeper, and more satisfying understanding of Rabbi Telushkin's remarkable book.

In addition to using the following questions to direct your conversation, we recommend that you begin your meeting by introducing yourself to the other members of your group. Why are you interested in Jewish ethical teachings? What do you hope to get out of your discussion? To be sure that each person gets what he or she wants, we suggest this simple exercise:

- Get yourself something big to write on so everyone can see—a poster-sized paper taped up on the wall, for instance, or a poster board propped up against a chair or table.
- Choose someone, maybe your hostess or discussion leader, to write down a word or phrase for each person's vital discussion issue, something basic to remind you of the big idea.

- Then go around the room and ask each person to contribute one *specific* aspect of the reading that he or she would like to discuss—a particular passage, a question left unanswered, a positive, negative, or neutral observation.
- Each time you notice you've discussed a new point from the list on your board, give the person who chose this topic a chance to expand on her question or observation.
- Ask one member to keep an eye on the clock and call time once you have only fifteen or twenty minutes remaining before the end of the meeting. The discussion-board secretary can then check off each of the topics that you've already hit upon and see if there are any big or burning issues still left unaddressed.

Best wishes for a stupendous discussion experience! Enjoy all the discoveries you will make about yourself, your faith, and your world as you read, study, and talk about A CODE OF JEWISH ETHICS.

## 12

### *KIDDUSH HASHEM*

- Rabbi Telushkin identifies the elements of *Kiddush Hashem* (“sanctifying God’s Name”) on page 456 #1: to offer both non-Jews and non-observant Jews a shining example of how to “do the right thing” so that they are drawn to Judaism and, if necessary, show that Jews are willing to die for their faith rather than deny it. These are major responsibilities. How do we feel about each of them?
- On the page 456 #2, Rabbi Telushkin points out that other people can become alienated from both God and Judaism when they observe our unethical behavior. Have you had experience of this?
- One of the ways in which we desecrate God’s Name (*Chillul Hashem*) is by associating it with unethical actions in order to justify what we do. See pages 457-458 #3. Yet God is very clear in the Third Commandment that this is an unforgivable sin. Do we

see the effect of attaching the Name of God to something that is wrong?

- In the section on martyrdom beginning on page 469, Rabbi Telushkin examines the appropriate action for Jews to take when their lives are threatened because of their religion. And in #11 on page 475 he tells the story of a Jew who died on 9/11, sacrificing his own life in order to comfort a paraplegic friend. As Rabbi Telushkin points out, this is “a poignant example of *Kiddush Hashem*.” Explore the question of martyrdom and what your personal response might be.
- On page 468 #18, Rabbi Telushkin reminds us that Jews are God’s ambassadors. He sums up the whole teaching of this book when he writes: “When Jews act with integrity, they not only bring credit on themselves, but they draw people to God. This has been the mission of the Jewish people since the time of Abraham, the first Jew, and it remains the mission of the Jewish people today.” Are we ready to be ambassadors of God?

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