YOU CAN'T OPT OUT

If you see someone's animal gone astray, you can't just hide (ignore it) (D'varim 22:1-13).

Of course you're busy. Of course you're short of time. Of course you have your own problems. Of course you don't want to get involved. But the Torah leaves no room for opting out: you can't hide or just walk past.

You must restore a lost animal to its owner, and in the meantime look after the animal.

If someone's animal has fallen over you have to help lift the animal up again (22:4).

It's not just animals that you have to concern yourself with, though that is already a unique part of Jewish ethics. It's your fellow human-being whom you must assist and support. The Golden Rule is to love a neighbour as yourself (Vayikra 19:18), equating him to yourself, seeking his welfare as you would seek your own.

Kodesh Isn't Always Good

In D'varim 22:9 we are told not to sow a vineyard with two kinds of seed PEN TIKDASH - "lest the fullness of the seed be forfeited".

Targum Onkelos thinks the root KUF-DALET-SHIN - which is usually something good and sacred - sometimes goes to the opposite extreme and means "to become defiled". Rashi translates the word as "disgusting".

Rashbam and Ramban suggest that it means "to become prohibited as if it were consecrated, which would remove it from availability to the general public".

This latter interpretation explains why Jewish marriage is KUF-DALET-SHIN - the wife is now unavailable to anyone other than her husband. Temple property is KUF-DALET-SHIN because it cannot be used for a non-sacred purpose. Shabbat is KUF-DALET-SHIN, since it is a day devoted to God and not available for weekday activities. OZ