

Law as a Moral Force: When President Truman and Chief Justice Warren Studied Talmud at JTS

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March 18, 2024

Some historical materials:

I. New York Times articles:

September 14, 1957 (front page): Richard Amper, “Warren Studies Talmudic Law Here,” *New York Times*. <https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1957/09/14/issue.html>

September 15, 1957: Richard Amper, “Trumans Join Judaic Law Class,” *New York Times*. Page 65. <https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1957/09/15/167836742.html?pageNumber=65>

September 16, 1957: Richard Amper, “Warren Pleads for Moral Unity,” *New York Times*. Page 22. <https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1957/09/16/84761933.html?pageNumber=22>

II. John F. Kennedy’s Speech at the Seminary, November 23, 1958:

<https://www.jfklibrary.org/archives/other-resources/john-f-kennedy-speeches/new-york-ny-senator-lehman-dinner-19581123>

[n.b.: Mishnah Sanhedrin 4:5 is the rabbinic source Kennedy cited, quoted in the lecture slides]

III. Chief Justice Earl Warren’s speech on July 4, 1961, inaugurating the Chief Justice Earl Warren Chair in Law and Ethics at the University of Judaism:

https://makor.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/fulldisplay?docid=alma994971514107706&context=L&vid=01JTS_INST:01JTS&lang=en&search_scope=MyInstitution&adaptor=Local%20Search%20Engine&tab=LibraryCatalog&query=any,contains,earl%20warren&facet=rtype,include,audio&offset=0

[this has been digitized by the JTS library]

Source for “Law as a Moral Force”
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Amos 7:7-15

(7) This is what I was shown: [God] was standing on a wall checked with a plumb line while holding a plumb line. (8) And GOD asked me, “What do you see, Amos?” “A plumb line”. I replied. And my Sovereign declared, “I am going to apply a plumb line to My people Israel; I will pardon them no more. (9) The shrines of Isaac shall be laid waste, and the sanctuaries of Israel reduced to ruins; and I will turn upon the House of Jeroboam with the sword.” (10) Amaziah, the priest of Bethel, sent this message to King Jeroboam of Israel: “Amos is conspiring against you within the House of Israel. The country cannot endure the things he is saying. (11) For Amos has said, ‘Jeroboam shall die by the sword, and Israel shall be exiled from its soil.’” (12) Amaziah also said to Amos, “Seer, off with you to the land of Judah! Earn your living there, and do your prophesying there. (13) But don’t ever prophesy again at Bethel; for it is a king’s sanctuary and a royal palace.” (14) Amos answered Amaziah: “I am not a prophet and I am not a prophet’s disciple. I am a cattle breeder and a tender of sycamore figs. (15) But GOD took me away from following the flock, and GOD said to me, ‘Go, prophesy to My people Israel.’”

עמוס ז'ז-ט"ו

(ז) כֹּה הִרְאֵנִי וְהִנֵּה אֲדֹנָי נֹצֵב עַל-חֹמַת אֲנָךְ וּבִידוֹ אֲנָךְ: (ח) וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֵלַי מָה-רְאִיתָ וְאָמַרְתָּ רֹאֵה עֲמוֹס וַאֲמַר אֲנָךְ וַיֹּאמֶר אֲדֹנָי הִנְנִי שֹׁם אֲנָךְ בְּקֶרֶב עַמִּי יִשְׂרָאֵל לֹא-אֹסִיף עוֹד עֲבוֹר לוֹ: (ט) וְנִשְׁמַח בְּמוֹת יִשְׁחָק וּמִקִּדְשֵׁי יִשְׂרָאֵל יִחַרְבוּ וְקִמְתִּי עַל-בֵּית יִרְבֵּעַם בְּחָרְב: {ס} (י) וַיִּשְׁלַח אֲמַצְיָה כֹהֵן בֵּית-אֵל אֶל-יִרְבֵּעַם מֶלֶךְ-יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵאמֹר קִשֶׁר עָלֶיךָ עֲמוֹס בְּקֶרֶב בַּיִת יִשְׂרָאֵל לֹא-תוּכַל הָאֲרֶץ לְהִכִּיל אֶת-כָּל-דְּבָרָיו: (יא) כִּי-כֹה אָמַר עֲמוֹס בְּחָרְב יָמוֹת יִרְבֵּעַם וַיִּשְׂרָאֵל גְּלָה וְגָלָה מֵעַל אֲדָמָתוֹ: {ס} (יב) וַיֹּאמֶר אֲמַצְיָה אֶל-עֲמוֹס חֲזֵה לָךְ בְּרַח-לָךְ אֶל-אֲרֶץ יְהוּדָה וְאֶכְלֵ-שֵׁם לֶחֶם וְשֵׁם תִּנְבְּא: (יג) וּבֵית-אֵל לֹא-תֹסִיף עוֹד לְהִנְבֵּא כִּי מִקִּדְשֵׁי-מֶלֶךְ הוּא וּבֵית מַמְלָכָה הוּא: (יד) וַיַּעַן עֲמוֹס וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל-אֲמַצְיָה לֹא-נִבִּיא אֲנִי וְלֹא בֹן-נִבִּיא אֲנִי כִּי-בֹקֵר אֲנִי וּבֹלֵס שִׁקְמִים: (טו) וַיִּקְחֵנִי יְהוָה מֵאַחֲרֵי הָצֹאן וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלַי יְהוָה לָךְ הִנְבֵּא אֶל-עַמִּי יִשְׂרָאֵל:

Amos 5:21-25

(21) I loathe, I spurn your festivals, I am not appeased by your solemn assemblies. (22) If you offer Me burnt offerings—or your grain offerings—I will not accept them; I will pay no heed To your gifts of fatlings. (23) Spare Me the sound of your hymns, And let Me not hear the music of your lutes. (24) But let justice well up like water, Righteousness like an unfailing stream. (25) Did you offer sacrifice and oblation to Me Those forty years in the wilderness,

עמוס ה'כ"א-כ"ה

(כא) שָׂנֵאתִי מִזְבְּחֵי חֲגִיגֵיכֶם וְלֹא אֶרְיַח בְּעֲצֹרֹתֵיכֶם: (כב) כִּי אִם-תִּעְלֶוּ-לִי עֹלוֹת וּמִנְחֹתֵיכֶם לֹא אֶרְצֶה וְשֵׁלֶם מְרִיאֵיכֶם לֹא אֶבִּיט: (כג) הָסֵר מִעָלַי הַמָּוֶן שִׁרְיֹד וְזִמְרַת נְבֻלָּיִךְ לֹא אֶשְׁמַע: (כד) וַיִּגַּל בְּיָמַי מִשְׁפָּט וּצְדָקָה כַּנְּחַל אֵיתָן: (כה) הִזְבַּחִים וּמִנְחָה הַגִּשְׁתֶּם-לִּי בַמִּדְבָּר אַרְבָּעִים שָׁנָה בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל:

O House of Israel?

Amos 9:7-8

(7) To Me, O Israelites, you are
Just like the Cushites *Cushites People of Cush, the region south of Egypt.*
—declares GOD.
True, I brought Israel up
From the land of Egypt,
But also the Philistines from Caphtor
And the Arameans from Kir. (8) Behold, my Sovereign GOD is
keeping an eye
On the sinful kingdom:
I will wipe it off
The face of the earth!
But, I will not wholly wipe out
The House of Jacob
—declares GOD.

עמוס ט:ז-ח'
(ז) הֲלוֹא כְּבָנִי בְּשָׂיִם
אַתֶּם לִי בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל
נְאֻם־יְהוָה הֲלוֹא אֶת־
יִשְׂרָאֵל הֵעֲלִיתִי מֵאֶרֶץ
מִצְרַיִם וּפְלִשְׁתִּיִם
מִכַּפְתּוֹר וְאַרְם מִקִּיר:
(ח) הֲיֵה עֵינִי אֲדַבְּרֵי
יְהוָה בְּמַמְלַכָּה הַחַטָּאָה
וְהִשְׁמַדְתִּי אֹתָהּ מֵעַל פְּנֵי
הָאָדָמָה אֶפְסֹ כִּי לֹא
הִשְׁמִיד אֲשַׁמֵּיד אֶת־בַּיִת
יַעֲקֹב נְאֻם־יְהוָה: