

TIKKUN OLAM; ORTHODOXY'S RESPONSIBILITY TO PERFECT G-D'S WORLD

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By

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Tonight I have been asked to address a very difficult subject, a subject in fact that I have not spoken about before: Tikkun Olam — perfecting, preparing or repairing the world— which I take to mean what part should we take as Jews, specifically what part should we play as Orthodox Jews, in the wider concerns of the society in which we live. I think that is an important question, perhaps even in a strange sense the most important question facing Jewish life today. However, in order to even begin I must engage you in a series of quite difficult propositions. I ask you to join me in a difficult intellectual journey.

I want to begin with a fundamental problem, one that I really have not seen spoken about or written about anywhere. There are certain questions in Jewish life which in order to answer, what do you do? You open a book; either a Shulkhan Arukh, or Responsa literature or the Talmud and you elicit a ruling from the sources. Why is that so? The reason is that those issues never change. Whether the issues regard shabbat, kashrut, taharat mishpacha, it makes no difference if you asked the question in 1897, 1997 or 2097. The issues never change, and the answers never change. I call this kind of Torah by a very ancient name, and that is “Torat Kohanim” because the kohen, the priest, was the first role model in Jewish history of the enduring structure of kedusha; the eternity in the midst of time. Torah as chayei olam — eternal life— in the midst of chayei sha’ah — finite life. That is one kind of Torah all of us are familiar with. It is for most of us all the Torah that there is.

However, there is another kind of Torah as well. It is much more rare, and the truth is that it is much more rarely needed; I call it “Torat Nivi'im” — Torah not of the priest but of the navi, the prophet. While a kohen represents eternity, a navi represents history. We know that the prophets were the first people in all of civilization and certainly the greatest of all time to see G-d in history. They saw history itself as a coherent narrative; a story with a beginning, middle and end, a journey through time with a destination. Kohanim were sensitive to the things in Judaism which never change; while prophets were sensitive to things which do change – things in which today's challenge are different then the day before.

Why? Because we are on a journey. The destination never changes but we move, and where we are today is not necessarily where we were yesterday so each day has a new challenge. That is Torat Nivi'im; it needs a special kind of sensibility to deal with questions of that kind.

Tikkun Olam, perfecting the world, sounds like a big subject. It is a big subject. However, if you look at the Shulkhan Arukh and the Responsa, you see that tikkun olam occupies a surprisingly limited space. There is not much there about this subject. That is because the guide to dealing with such dynamic changes must be sought not in Torat Kohanim but in Torat Nivi'im. One ought not look in the literature of halakha, of eternity, instead we must review the literature of the aggadah, which, I would say, is the literature of Jewish history seen through the eyes of faith; of Jewish reflection on the challenges of specific moments. Tikkun Olam is a subject we will only understand, especially as Orthodox Jews, if we are prepared to use our historical imagination and sensibility. So I want to begin with an exercise in historical imagination. Let us begin by seeing what is happening now in the perspective of the Jewish journey through time.

Let me begin with, Genesis, the book of our beginnings, the book of our destiny. What are the themes of Sefer Beresheit? There are two themes which predominate the narrative of Genesis. The first is the promise of a land. The first words to Abraham from G-d are "lech licha me'artzecha, me'moladitcha, me'bayt avecha el ha'aretz asher ereka." [1] Again and again. Go to the land; I will give you the land. There is the promise of the land of Israel to Abraham, Issac, and Jacob, again and again the promise turned out to be unbelievably difficult. Abraham at the end of his life has to even struggle to buy a burial place for Sarah. [2] Isaac, who never left Israel, has to contend with the Philistines over the wells he dug. [3] Jacob wants a little plot of land to pitch his tent and has to buy it for an inflated price. [4] Even the Torah ends with Israelites still not having entered and taken possession of the land of Israel, with that incredibly moving, poignant scene of Moses seeing the land from afar and being told "v'shama lo ta'avur" [5] – you will not yourself be able to enter. So there is the promise of the land, but it is a difficult promise.

What is the second theme of Beresheit, if the first is the promise of the land? The promise of children. Again and again, Abraham is told you will have many, many children. Abraham's first message from the Almighty is "I will make you into a great nation." [6] I will make your children as numerous as the dust of the earth. G-d took him outside and told him to look at the stars. Can you count them? If you can, so surely your children will be numbered. Your children will be a great nation, as many as the dust, as many as the stars. What happened? All his life Abraham prayed for just one child. Sarah couldn't have children. Rebecca couldn't have children. Rachel couldn't have children. By the end of the Torah, Moses is saying to the Israelites: Not because you are many did G-d choose you, you are the smallest of all people. [7] There is a promise of children, a great promise but it turns out to be a very difficult promise. These are the two themes of Genesis: the land of Israel and the generations of Israel. They are the two themes set out 3,700 years ago, at the very beginning of Jewish time.

I want you to think now what has happened to Jewish life in the past 100 years. What are the themes of Jewish life between 1897 and 1997? We stand at the 100th anniversary of the first Zionist Congress and the fiftieth anniversary of the State of Israel. The gathering of the first Zionist Congress in Brussels was extraordinary. It was the first time Jews ever gathered together politically from all parts of Europe to do something that was believed widely among Jews and non-Jews alike to be impossible. That a nation which had suffered exile for two thousand years would return home, that a people that had been powerless for two millennia should certainly once again have power. It had never been done before. Most people said it couldn't be done. One man, Theodore Herzl, had the courage to say – “if you will it, it is no dream.”

For generation after generation, Jews prayed more in hope than in expectation, to gather our exiles back. In our time and in our century, from more than 70 countries, from every part of the world Jews have begun to come home. Our ancestors prayed ‘let there be one place in the world where we are not ruled by others but we have the privilege of ruling ourselves.’ Since 1948 we have recovered that power. Our ancestors prayed ‘to return to your city, Jerusalem, with mercy,’ and since 1967 we have seen Jerusalem rebuilt and united. The Sages say that the simple Jew saw at the Red Sea what later even the greatest of prophets were not privileged to see. We have seen, this century, things that even the great visionaries of Jewish history could only dream of. That is the first achievement of modern Jewish history – we have returned to the land of Israel. What is the second?

No sooner did we acquire the land, Midinat Yisrael, than did we see that something else was happening. We were losing our children. In this part of the world, the extent of this devastation is well documented. You know of the 1990 National Jewish Population Survey showing American inter-marriage rates of fifty seven percent; you also know of the recent survey, in San Francisco, where intermarriage is now up to eighty percent. You know that this is the contemporary realization of a terrible happening once before in our history. It says in the Torah “v'chamushim alu b'Mitzrayim.”[8] Rashi interprets “chamushim” to mean – only a fifth, only twenty percent left Egypt.[9] The other eighty percent disappeared in the plague of darkness. It is happening again. Once again the Jewish people are saying ‘Give me children, because with out them how can I live,’ and thank G-d, here in the United States a handful of people plucked from the fires of the Holocaust, came to the shores of the United States– figures like the late Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Soloveitchik, Rabbi Yaacov Kaminetsky, Rabbi Aaron Kotler, — and they built Jewish day schools and yeshivot, knowing full well what Jews have always known. When you have to defend a land you need an army; when you are defending a faith and Jewish continuity, you need schools. In the same space of time it took to rebuild the state of Israel, fifty, so did those individuals rebuild Torat Yisrael, the strength of Jewish learning and hence of the identity of our children.

You are all familiar with those extra-ordinary figures cited in Alan Dershowitz's book *The Vanishing American Jew*,[10] about the extent to which in the United

States, Orthodoxy has finally cracked the problem of how to pass our heritage to our children: 200 secular Jews, in four generations attenuate to 10; 200 Reform Jews to 27; 200 Conservative Jews to 48; 200 Orthodox Jews increase to 692; and 200 Hasidic/yeshiva Orthodox Jews to 5175. We have seen two great miracles: the rebuilding of the land and the rebuilding, among Orthodox circles, of Jewish children. What has happened to the Orthodox community since the war is every bit as remarkable as the rebuilding of Israel. This community, so afflicted, has multiplied and repopulated itself. It has come to pass that the two dominant issues of modern Jewish life – building Israel and building Jewish children – are the issues encoded in our national DNA at the beginning of time. These issues that concern us are the very issues that concerned our biblical forefathers. We have confronted them magnificently and we have achieved, at least within Israel and within Orthodoxy, the answer to both.

Now, I want to ask the great historical question – what next? What is the next challenge facing the Jewish people if we have finally solved the problem of rebuilding the State and discovered the key to Jewish continuity. Of course, to answer this question I must ask another. Were there really only two challenges, only two promises to Abraham and the others? If so, we have done all that we need to do. However, you and I know the answer. There were not two promises made to Abraham; there were three. What is the third promise? When G-d first summons Abraham and Sarah to set out on the journey that becomes Jewish history, after he said go to the land– the challenge and promise of the land, and after I will make you a nation– the promise of Jewish children, what is the third promise?

The third promise of v'nivrichu b'cha kol mispacha ha'adama[11] – through you all the families of the earth shall be blessed. Abraham, at the end of his life, having all that time living apart from his environment, nonetheless had a level of influence such that his neighbors turn to him and say – we recognize the Prince of G-d in our midst.[12] It was the very same challenge that Moses faced at the end of his life. He said to the Israelites, don't think this Torah that I am giving you is for you alone, it isn't – this is your wisdom and understanding in the eyes of the nation – because when they hear and see this way of life, this Jewish way of life, they will say what a wise, understanding people is this great nation.[13] Or, in the simplest and most lucid of all formulations found in the aleinu prayer, it is the promise and the challenge l'takayn olam b'malchut Sha-dai – to perfect the world under the sovereignty of G-d. It is the last task of Jewish history, and it is the hardest task. It is perhaps the most paradoxical task that we are the people who live apart and are not reckoned among the nations and should nonetheless be the people of whom it is said 'the nations will see that you are the people of G-d.'[14] In other words, by transforming ourselves into a people we transform the world.

Jewish history is a journey through three destinations: the destination of Jewish land, the destination of Jewish children, and the destination of changing the world. The question is how do we do it? Here again I have to challenge you to think very hard about the fundamentals. We often forget that Judaism has a theology. Theology isn't written much about in our sources but it is set out very clearly. It is

set out very clearly in the first chapters of the book of Genesis, Beresheit, in one of the most remarkable statements in all of Judaism: The Torah was given “be’resheit,” for the sake of Torah which is called “resheit”, and for the sake of Israel which is called “resheit.” The Torah is a book about us, yet it doesn’t begin with the Jewish people. For the first eleven chapters all it talks about is humanity as a whole. It tells a story about humanity as a whole. It tells a story of two orders of civilizations which began as covenants with all of mankind and how they failed. The first order began with Adam and with the command, ‘Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it.’ The second began with Noah and with the command ‘Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed.’ Both are explicitly founded on the concept of humanity as betzelem Elokim, ‘in the image of G-d.’ Both fail.

The era of Adam began with fratricide and ended with ‘a world filled with violence.’ This was nemesis- man being less than human.[15] What happened to Noah’s order of civilization? That failed in the opposite way. By human beings trying to create a self-sufficient universe immune to G-d – “let us build a city and a tower with its top in the heavens”[16] – a polis, a self-sufficient city with a tower that reaches heaven. That civilization failed because of what the Greeks call hubris – man trying to be more than human. After the failure of two universal orders of civilization, G-d rejects the very concept of the universal order. He doesn’t cease the universal request that we call the seven Noahide laws, but he does no longer hope to believe that all human beings will worship G-d in the same way or will be a single culture. He says at the Tower of Babel: look at them, they are one people with a shared language and see what they have begun to do.[17] From then on, until the end of history, there will be many languages and many people, one of whom will carry a special burden and a responsibility of being a blessing and the result of that will be [18] – all the families of the world will be blessed. How does one nation fulfill this role?

Anyone who has tried to teach will know the answer. There are two ways of teaching morality; first is to teach universal rules, and the second way is to give particular examples. The Almighty tried twice to teach humanity universal rules: the rules of Adam and then the rules of Noah. They failed; because the most powerful way to teach is by particular example. If you want to instruct someone on how to be good, identify a role model and let him see how that person lives. So Rabbi Akiva learned from Rabbi Yehoshua;[19] so Hassidim learned from their Rebbe; so do all of us learn from the stories of the great figures of the past and our peers in the present. That is the difference between law and narrative, between universal rules and living examples. That became the Jewish vocation; not to stand for some universal truth but to be a particular, specific living example of how to live. Somehow the Jewish people would be the people in whose daily lives the will of G-d, and in whose collective history the presence of G-d would be particularly evident. You could look at Jews and see G-d. In that magnificent phrase in Isaiah: “you are my witnesses, says G-d”[20] and so it happened.

We were the people who were born in slavery to teach the world the meaning of freedom. We were the people who suffered homelessness to teach humanity the

importance of every people of having a home. We were the people who were the quintessential strangers to teach humanity that “Thou shall not oppress the stranger.”[21] We were the people who walked through the valley of the shadow of death to teach humanity the sanctity of life. We were the people who were always small but yet survived to teach the world a people does not survive by might nor by strength but by My spirit, says G-d.[22] Above all, we were the people that was always different to teach humanity the dignity of difference. Against all expectations it happened, and no other people before or since has had the impact that we have had on the civilization of the world.

Paul Johnson, a Catholic writer in Britain, has written one of the great histories of the Jewish people. In summing up the vast history of the Jews he says: “one way of summing up four thousand years of Jewish history is to ask ourselves what would have happened to the human race had no Jewish people had come into being? Certainly, the world without the Jews would have been a radically different place, humanity might have eventually stumbled along the great Jewish discoveries but we can’t be sure. All the great conceptual discoveries of the intellect seem obvious and inescapable once they are revealed but it requires a special genius to formulate them for the first time. The Jews had this gift. “To them,” writes Paul Johnson, “we owe the idea of equality before the law, both divine and human, the sanctity of life, the dignity of the human person, of the individual conscience and possible redemption, of the collective conscience, and social responsibility, peace as an abstract ideal, and love as the foundation of justice, and many other items that constitute the basic moral furniture of the human mind. Without the Jews, the world might have been a much emptier place.”[23] I find that a very moving statement from a person who is not Jewish. Sometimes non-Jews understand us better than we understand ourselves. Sometimes we envy other people’s way of life and fail to see the beauty and majesty of our own.

The late Rav Shlomo Carlbach, after a lifetime of traveling to countless American university campuses, summed up his experience in these words: “I go to a campus and I ask the kids what they are and a kid gets up and says ‘I’m a Protestant,’ I know that’s a Protestant; Kids get up and says ‘I’m Catholic,’ I know that’s a Catholic; Kid gets up and says ‘I’m just a human being,’ I know that’s a Jew.” We have a problem understanding what we have given to the world. Let me contrast those remarks with this one: “The Jew is that sacred being that was brought down from Heaven, the everlasting fire and illuminates with it the entire world.” Who said that? Tolstoy.[24] Or this one you know because he is American: “I will insist that the Hebrews have done more to civilize men than any other nation,” former President John Adams.[25] Or let me take the English historian who died a couple of months ago A.L. Rowes, a fellow at Oxford University. Out of the blue he writes this sentence, it is the penultimate sentence of a book, he says, “if there is any honor in all the world I should like it would be to be an honorary Jewish citizen.” That’s what the Gentiles say. I wish I could persuade our children, Jewish children, out in the streets to know that the greatest Shakespearean historian of the twentieth century said what he would like to be is your

inheritance. Therefore we should not take lightly our power to be mitaken olam – to transform the world.

Why is it, therefore, that if you read the Shulkhan Arukh, Gemara you find very little about this? The answer is that for two thousand years what chance did we have? For two thousand years we were dispersed, scattered, exiled, we were powerless, we were what Max Weber called the pariah people, who in the world would think of learning from us? We were the wandering Jew, Old Israel, displaced, superseded, we were the people rejected by G-d. That's what the nations thought. Who thought of learning from us? Thus, Tikkun Olam which could not be implemented as a Jewish value, squeezed under the door in some attenuated way. You find in the mystical literature, for example, that by keeping the mitzvot somehow mystically we would change the world, or passively like in the alienu prayer in which we say al kain nikaveh lecha Hashem Elokeynu l'takan olam. We don't know how we will do it, but we hope You will do it. Or in the Talmud itself where 'Tikkun Olam' functions as a mere concept of creating a social order, making sure that there is no chaos in society.[26] It would have been absurd to raise our sights any higher than that because who were we to change the world?

Then, in the nineteenth century under the impact of the Emancipation and Enlightenment the whole concept split apart; the essence of Tikkun Olam is that by being particularist, by being who we are, we have universal consequences, we help change the world. That very subtle idea split apart in the Enlightenment so that the early Maskilim and extreme protagonists of the Reform Movement wanted the universalism – we should change the world, like everyone else—and they wanted to give up the particularism, the particularism of the commandments. On the other hand there was the Orthodox community, very much concerned with the particularism but they gave up on the universalism. The result was that every phrase associated with the idea of Tikkun Olam, phrases like- 'light unto the nations,' or 'the Jewish mission,' or 'ethical universalism,' all those things became code words for assimilation, reform, and the whole concept of Tikkun Olam became suspect. What a tragedy that is today.

Today for the first time in two thousand years we have a chance to put it into practice. We have a State of Israel, which is our first chance to create a macro-society run on Jewish principles. We never had a chance for two thousand years to create a global society, and in the diaspora today for the first time ever we are part of the mainstream of the democracies of the West. We are able to speak and be heard; we are able to teach and be heeded; we are able to sanctify G-d's name in public.

Let me give you some very small practical examples in which I personally was privileged to have a little share. Britain, as you know, has both a monarchy and an "official" church. Twice a year we have a formal message to the nation, each by one of the leaders of these national institutions. The Queen gives a ten minute message to the nation on the 25th of December. The second message is given by the head of the Church, the Archbishop of Canterbury, another ten minute

message to the nation on New Year's. When I became Chief Rabbi in 1991 the BBC came to me and offered the same opportunity, you give a message to the nation a day before Rosh Hashanna. Well, I did it; ten minutes, face-to-camera message on national television. The next year they said 'let's make it more interesting, let's walk and talk at the same time.' They found it interesting and they increased it to fifteen minutes. The next year they said 'let's go out and about and we'll take a mobile camera crew.' They turned the segment into a twenty minute program that has remained ever since, now, the Chief Rabbi delivers a message to the nation which is as long as the Queen and the Archbishop of Canterbury combined. The Times of London has serialized my last two books in its national newspaper. We are a tiny community, half of one percent of the national population. Yet, The Times publishes editorials on Jewish values and their relevance to society as a whole. It is a rare and blessed moment of influence.

We have had a situation in Britain, like you have had here in the United States like every advanced state of liberal democracy has had, where there has been a decline in society's morals. Thank G-d, because of my close relationship with previous Prime Ministers and Secretaries of State for Education, we now have every single school in Britain teaching morality as part of the national curriculum. It is a formal requirement in all schools in Britain. People are taught responsibility, duty to others, importance of family, etcetera. That came about certainly not through me alone. It came about through conversations I've been having through the media and with Ministers and other religious leaders, and the Jewish community remained the major proponent in that initiative. As of the most recent national election, we have a government for the first time in many years that is actually taking the family seriously. Taking some very tough decisions to favor stable two-parent, nuclear families over any other kind of alternative. It is a very courageous thing. To take a very trivial example. Last week, in Birmingham, which is another major Jewish community in central Britain, a conference was held with people all from inner city areas, all from high breakdown communities like you have here in most major American cities. They met together to have a seminar, a conference how to reconstruct communities. The text for that meeting was my recent book *The Politics of Hope*,^[27] the title of the conference was "Community of Hope" and it was built around what I had written. To think that these community leaders were turning, to Torah for inspiration for their work, was remarkable. I tried to explain how Jews have done it through the ages. It was a tremendous kiddush Hashem that in black communities, Muslim communities they were able to say look, the Jewish community is helping us, showing us how things are done.

Of course, there are many other role models. Let me give you some other examples. Our leading fertility specialist in Britain, a man who has led the way in treating infertile women, called Lord Winston, an Orthodox Jew, who makes no secret of it, wears a yarmulke, when talks, whenever he is given a newspaper profile, says he is doing this for religious reasons, and he is showing the world what it is to take seriously *hava li banim v'im ay'in meta anokhi*^[28] – to cure the Rachels, Rebeccas, and Sarahs of our time. Or take a Jew who is not religious at

all but who never once gave up on his pride in being Jewish, who really was inspired by the fact that he used to conduct a Passover seder every year, the late Sir Isaiah Berlin. He was known as the great British intellectual of his day. Shortly before he died, Sir Isaiah, a secular Jew, sent a message to me that he would like me to officiate at his funeral and deliver his funeral address. I felt proud to do so, because the concept of liberty which he learned as a child through his sederim and which he did more than any other thinker in the twentieth century to defend against the blasphemy of totalitarianism was a model of the Jewish ability to perfect the world.

For many years, at least in Britain, Jews thought that if you wanted to go into public life, you wanted to be accepted in society, you down-played your Jewishness, you hid it. Or as a philosophy professor at Columbia University once put it, the Jewish statement is incognito ergo sum. However, currently, because my predecessor Lord Jacobovits and I have quite deliberately gone into the public arena, in the press, on television, on the radio, and been very publicly identified—I am now about to say these sentences and I must tell you that whenever I say them to an audience however irreligious, they all agree with me, I am able to say to them without fear of contradiction—non-Jews respect Jews who respect Judaism, and non-Jews are embarrassed by Jews who are embarrassed by Judaism. That is a powerful message that can only be delivered if we as Orthodox Jews, yarmulke-wearing, or sheitel-wearing Jews are willing to play our part in the public domain of our shared life as citizens of the nation and of the world, and therefore I come back to the structure of Tikkun Olam.

Our task is to become a particular living example of a set of universal truths, and therefore the conflict between the universal and the particular in Judaism is not a conflict at all because it is only by being Orthodox Jews that we are able to mitaken ha'olam – it is only by being true to ourselves that we can be true to other people. Only if we preserve the sanctity of Jewish family can we talk with authority about the sanctity of the family to the world. Only by studying Torah can we speak compellingly about the value of education and human dignity. Only by having the courage to be different can we be role models to the dignity of difference. That is why Tikkun Olam in my view is the special responsibility of we who are the guardians of Torah.

Maimonides says that when it comes to violating shabbat in order to save a life you don't do it by employing non-Jews, children, or slaves but it must be the great sages of Israel and the role models who must violate shabbat in order to save a life.[29] Why? Maimonides states that in saving a life you are teaching the most fundamental Torah of all, which is that the judgments and laws of the Torah are not vengeance against the world, but compassion, kindness and peace in the world.[30] That has to be done by the role models of Jewish life.

Friends, there are great things left to do. Things we never had the opportunity to do. We have the chance today of shaping a society built on justice and compassion in the State of Israel. We have the chance to be an outstandingly authoritative voice in the moral conversations of mankind. If we do it the world

will be a better place; if we do it, we will be better Jews. Why do we say in the festival prayers “you chose us from all other nations, you loved us, you showed us favor?” Because G-d was only interested in us? We say it in order to go on to say “so that one day everything that lives, every human being will acknowledge Him.” How will history judge us if we had the opportunity and like Jonah, in the face of Ninveh, ran away, and we thought only of ourselves? We will not do that. We have to have the courage to engage. That is not only a task for the greatest leaders, it is a task for everyone of us, a task for you and for me. Because every single one of us, by the integrity with which we conduct our business or professional lives, by the grace that we bring to our relationship, by the beauty that radiates from our homes, by the way we use words to heal and not to harm, everyone of us, day by day, is sanctifying the name of G-d in the world.

I repeat there is no formula, no Shulkhan Arukh, and no responsum governing how to be mitaken ha'olam. For this the Orthodox community needs not only masters of the law but also ba'alai nivuah – people with historical insight; that is the challenge of our time. We have thank G-d done magnificently on the two great challenges of Jewish history: Israel and Jewish children. Now what stands before us is the third great, untouched challenge of tikkun olam that we, in a secular age, should become role models for spirituality. That we in a relativistic age should be able to teach people once again to hear the objective “Thou shalt” and “Thou shalt not”. In an age in which religion so often brings conflict we should teach once again that Shalom, peace, is the name of G-d and that the mighty is one who turns an enemy into a friend. If we do these things there will surely come to all of us that experience of living a Jewish life and knowing that those around us, those with whom we have dealings are blessed by that life, and they will return to us saying: you have been a prince or princess of G-d in our midst. Do that and we begin to perfect the world.

Notes

[1] “Go from your land, from your relatives, and from your father’s house to the land I will show you.” Genesis 12:2.

[2] Genesis 23.

[3] Genesis 26.

[4] Genesis 33:19.

[5] Deuteronomy 32:49-51.

[6] Genesis 12:2.

[7]

[8] Exodus 13:18.

[9] Commentary of R. Shlomo Yitzchaki, Exodus 13:18.

- [10] A. Dershowitz, *The Vanishing America Jew; In Search of Jewish Identity for the Next Century*, Little, Brown (1997).
- [11] Genesis 12:3.
- [12] Genesis 23:5.
- [13]
- [14]
- [15] Genesis 1:28.
- [16] Genesis 11:4.
- [17] Genesis 11:6.
- [18] Genesis 12:3.
- [19] B.T. Berakhot 62a
- [20] Isaiah 43:10
- [21] Exodus 22:20, 23:9
- [22] Zehcariah 4:6
- [23] Paul Johnson, *A History of the Jews*, London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1987, p.585
- [24] Quoted in J.H. Hertz, *A Book of Jewish Thoughts*, Oxford University Press, 1926, p.135.
- [25] John Adams, letter to F.A. Vanderkemp, February 16, 1809.
- [26] Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Gittin, 32 et. seq.
- [27] J. Sacks, *The Politics of Hope*, London, 1997.
- [28] “Give me children, otherwise I am dead.” Genesis 30:1.
- [29] Mishneh Torah, Hilkhhot Shabbat, 2:3
- [30] Mishneh Torah, Hilkhhot Shabbat, 2:3

"Tikkun Olam: Orthodoxy's Responsibility to Perfect God's World", Orthodox Union West Coast Convention, December 1997.
First, Mitchell. "Aleinu: Obligation to Fix the World or the Text?" Thus Hirsch explicitly relates tikkun olam to practical sociological rectification of the material world. Dr. Judith Bleich, "Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch: Ish al Ha'edah" Jewish Action, issue unknown, p. 28 (accessed October 23, 2008): "[Hirsch aimed at nothing less than transformation of the entire Jewish community and ultimately, the molding of society at large in its moral image (tikkun olam)."] Tikkun olam (Hebrew: תיקון עולם, lit. 'repair of the world') is a concept in Judaism, interpreted in Orthodox Judaism as the prospect of overcoming all forms of idolatry, and by other Jewish denominations as an aspiration to behave and act constructively and beneficially. Documented use of the term dates back to the Mishnaic period. Since medieval times, kabbalistic literature has broadened use of the term. In the modern era, among the post-Haskalah Ashkenazi movements, tikkun olam is the idea that Tikkun olam is not about turning Jews into Marxists. It's about rebranding Marxism as Judaism. As Neumann has it, American Jews have been led to believe that the purpose of the Jews in the world is to campaign for higher taxes, sexual permissiveness, reduced military spending, illegal immigration, opposition to fracking, the banishment of religion from the public square and every other liberal cause under the sun all in the name of God. Everything about tikkun olam as social justice is bogus. The phrase doesn't mean what the Jewish left says it means and social justice is neither just nor very social. In the context of that prayer, it is the Almighty himself in whom hope is invested to perfect the world under the kingdom of God.