

TIKKUN OLAM: REPAIRING THE WORLD

REDIFAT TZEDEK U'SVIVA: PURSUING JUSTICE & SUSTAINABILITY

(Rabbi Fred Scherlinder Dobb, Adat Shalom Reconstructionist Congregation in Bethesda MD & COEJL, 2007/5767)

www.adatshalom.net, www.coejl.org

B"H

BERAKHA *la'asok b'divrei Torah*

ALEINU *l'taken olam b'malkhut Shaddai* - to repair (establish) the world under Divine dominion.

MISHNAH *mipnei tikkun ha-olam* - for the sake of repairing the world. "in the interest of public policy"... it refers to social policy legislation providing extra protection to those potentially at a disadvantage--governing, for example, just conditions for the writing of divorce decrees and for the freeing of slaves."
(http://www.myjewishlearning.com/daily_life/GemilutHasadim/TO_TikkunOlam.htm)

ISAAC LURIA ca. 1572, Tzfat. Theodicy. Exile. Conundrum.

Tzimtzum / Self-Contraction

Shvirat Ha-kelim / Breaking of the Vessels

Tikkun Olam / Repairing the World (God)

MODERN DO-GOODING What? How? Where to focus our limited resources?

"Contemporary usage of the phrase shares with the rabbinic concept of "*mipnei tikkun ha-olam*" a concern with public policy and societal change, and with the kabbalistic notion of "tikkun" the idea that the world is profoundly broken and can be fixed only by human activity.... [It] now is most often used to refer to a specific category of mitzvot involving work for the improvement of society...." (http://www.myjewishlearning.com/daily_life/GemilutHasadim/TO_TikkunOlam.htm)

EICHUT HA-SVIVAH / ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY / MOST LITERAL & URGENT TIKKUN OLAM

See www.coejl.org, www.hazon.org, www.tevacenter.org, www.shalomcenter.org, Adamah, IUED, Heschel Center, etc...

FIRST TRADE-OFF: PARTICULAR VS. UNIVERSAL

Mordecai Kaplan spoke of "living in two civilizations." Today we the balance needs & interests of those who really live in 1.02 civs (whose *hashkafa*/outlook is mostly American-Western), with those who are truly striving for living equally in Judaism & in America (and for whom, short of aliyah or Kiryas Joel, 1.2 or 1.3 civilizations ain't bad!).

The former (1.02) ask "why be just Jews"; the latter (1.3), "why not just be Jews?!" (cf Judith Helfand). The former might ask: 'Why give to universal causes thru JFSJ or AJWS or Mazon or COEJL, when I can go straight to Second Harvest or Docs w/o Borders or ARC or Greenpeace?' The latter might ask, 'why give to universal causes much, or at all, when the needs are so great for our Jewish Home for Aged - Day School - JCC - Israel - Kolel - etc?'

We must say, 'YES! Both are right (how can both be right? - you're right too!)'. We are universalists AND particularists. And we're better at each, because of the other.

A story that my Hillel Rabbi, Al Axelrad, taught me years ago... (Lev 11:19, Reb Levi Yitzhak, the *chasideh*)

A bifurcation of spiritual and sociopolitical concerns is hardly possible. Anyone who tries to undertake it ultimately has to deal with the prophets of ancient Israel, still the strongest and most uncompromising advocates for social justice our world has known. If you try to create a closed world of lovely Jewish piety and build it on foundations of injustice and the degradation of others, Isaiah and Amos will not let you sleep. (--- from Arthur Green, *These Are the Words*, Jewish Lights 1999, via www.socialaction.com)

TEXTS FROM MISHNAH AVOT

1:2 Simon the Righteous was one of the last of the Great Assembly. His motto was: "The world stands on three things--the Torah, the [Temple] service, and loving acts of kindness."

אָמַר עַל שְׁלֹשָׁה דְבָרִים הָעוֹלָם עוֹמֵד עַל הַתּוֹרָה וְעַל הַעֲבוּדָה וְעַל גְּמִילוּת חַסְדִּים:

This, then, is the ultimate category of prophetic theology: involvement, attentiveness, concern. Prophetic religion may be defined, not as what humanity does with its ultimate concern, but rather what humanity does with God's concern.

One whose thinking is guided by the prophets would say: God's presence is my first thought; God's unity and transcendence, my second; God's concern and involvement (justice and compassion), my third. Upon deeper reflection, however, one will realize that all three thoughts are one. God's presence in the world is, in essence,

God's concern for the world. One word stands for both. And both are expressions of God's unity. Divine unity implies concern. For unity means love.

(--- Abraham Joshua Heschel, *The Prophets*, 1962)

1:18 Rabban Shimon, the son of Gamliel, said, "The world stands on three things: on truth, on judgment, and on peace; as it is stated [in Scripture]: 'Execute the judgment of truth and peace in your gates.'" [Zech. 8:16]

אית רבן שמעון בן גמליאל אומר על שלשה דברים העולם קיים על האמת ועל הדין ועל השלום. שונאמר אמת ומשפט שלום שפטו בשעריכם:

1:17 His son Shimon said, "I have grown up among the sages all my days, yet I have never found anything better than silence. Study [of the Torah] is not the main thing; [the] doing [of Torah] is. All who talk too much bring sin."

אית שמעון בנו אומר כל ימי גדלתי בין החכמים ולא מצאתי לנוף טוב משתיקה. ולא המדד ש עקר אלא המעשה. וכל המדבר דברים מביא חטא:

2:16 He would say, "It is not up to you to finish the work, yet you are not free to avoid it. If you have studied much Torah, then you will receive much in wages for your Employer is dependable to pay the wage for your work. Know that the giving of the wages for the righteous is in the time to come."

הוא היה אומר לא עליך המלאכה לגמור ולא אתה בן חורין להבטל ממנה אם למדת תורה הרבה נותנין לך שכר הרבה ונאמן הוא בעל מלאכהך. שישלם לך שכר פעלתך ורע שמתן שכרו של צדיקים לעתיד לבא:

3:7 Rabbi Elazar who lived in Bartota would say, "Give God what is God's, since you and all that you have are God's. Thus, David said, 'Since all things come from You, that which we give You is Yours.'" [1 Chron. 29:14] Rabbi Yaakov said, "Were one to be walking on the road while studying and then stop one's studies to say, 'How beautiful is this tree!' or 'How nice is that field!' such a person would be considered by the Torah to have sinned against one's own soul."

רבי אלעזר איש ברתותא אומר תן לו משלו שאתה ושלך שלו וכן ברוך הוא אומר כי ממך הכל ויבידך נתנו לך. רבי יעקב אומר המהלך בדרך ושונה ובפסיק מפשנתו ואומר בה נאה אילן זה מה נאה גיד זה מהעלה עליו הנתנו באלגממתחביב בנפשו:

4:1 One who is happy with what one has, as it says, 'When you eat what your hands have provided, you shall be happy and good will be yours.' [Ps. 128:2] You shall be happy in this world; and good will be yours in the world to come. Who is honored? One who honors others, as it says, 'Those who honor Me, will I honor, and those who despise Me will be lightly esteemed.'" [1 Sam. 2:30]

בן זקא אומר איהו חכם הלומר מכל אדם שונאמר מכל מלמדי השכלתי כי עדותיך סיחה לי איהו נבור הנבובש את יצרו שונאמר טוב ארד אפים מנבור ובושל ברוחו מלכד עיר. איהו עשיר השמח בחלקו שונאמר יגיע כפיך כי האכל אשתיך וטוב לך אשתיך בעולם הזה וטוב לך לעולם הבא. איהו מכבד המכבד את הבריות שונאמר כי מכבדי אכבד ובני יקלו:

הי ארבע מדות באדם. האומר שלי שלי ושלך שלך או מדה בניגונית ויש אחרים או מדת כדום. שלי שלך ושלך שלי עם הארץ. שלי שלך ושלך שלך חסיד. שלי שלי ושלי שלי רשע:

5:10 There are four kinds of human beings. One says, "What is mine is mine and what is yours is yours." That is the usual kind, although some say that is the Sodom kind. [The one who says,] "What is mine is yours and what is yours is mine" is an ignoramus. [The one who says,] "What is mine is yours and what is yours is yours" is a saint. [And the one who says,] "What is mine is mine and what is yours is mine" is a sinner.

1.14 He used to say, "If I am not for myself, who will be for me? And, if I am for myself alone, then what am I? And, if not now, when?"

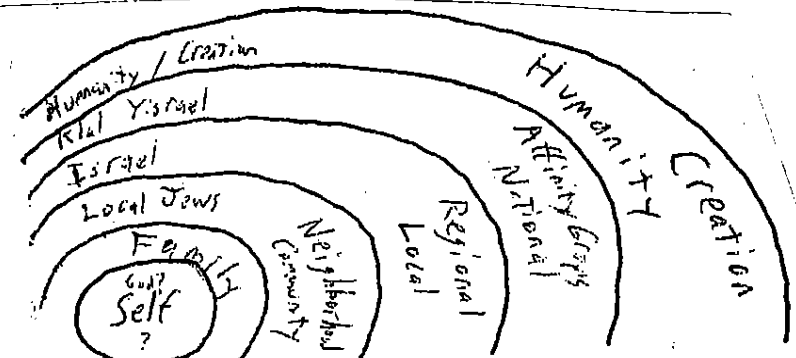
אם אין אני לי מי לי ובידאי לעצמי מה אני ואם לא עכשיו אימתי:

היה כל מחלקת שניא ליש לעיס סופה לתקום וישאנה ליש לעיס אין סופה לתקום. איו היה מחלקת שניא ליש לעיס או מחלקת הלל ושניא וישאנה ליש לעיס או מחלקת קרח וכל עזתו:

Frequently, when one has decided to give *tzedakah*, the evil inclination within him says, "Why should you do this *mitzvah* and give up your possessions? Rather than giving to others, give it to your own children!" (Exodus Rabbah 36:3)

5:17 Any controversy that is for the sake of Heaven shall in the end be resolved. A controversy that is not for the sake of Heaven shall not be resolved. Which controversy was for the sake of Heaven? [The controversy] between Hillel and Shammai. Which controversy was not for the sake of Heaven? [The controversy] of Korach and his band.

אלא הורה פעמים, שאדם מוכבד עליו לעשות מצוה, ודבר נורע עברתו אומר לו: מה לך לעשות מצוה ולתפס את נפשך? עד שאומר בנות לאחרים, תן לבניך!



- * PARTICULAR - UNIVERSAL
- * LOCAL - GLOBAL
- * SHORT TERM - LONG TERM
- * PALLIATIVE - PREVENTATIVE
- * BREADTH - DEPTH