

# Texts on Tikkun Olam

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“If you believe it’s possible to ruin, you should believe it’s possible to repair.” — Nachman of Breslov, *Likutei Moharan*

*Tikkun ha-olam* תיקון העולם, in the earliest texts, means establishing order and balance, whether in Nature/Creation, as God does when balancing the forces of compassion and judgment, or in society, as the rabbis do when they amend the laws of the Torah. The social meaning of *tikkun olam*, which became primary, refers to acts that establish and repair or improve society (that is, the present world) in the course of our normal lives and institutions. An emergent meaning that has roots in these themes is that humanity is responsible for repairing the natural world that we have despoiled. (See especially text #4 from *Ecclesiastes Rabbah* and #30 from Rav Kook.)

None of the earlier *midrashim*, the Mishnah, or the two Talmuds, know the meaning of *tikkun ha-olam* as something for which one strives in order to bring redemption, nor do they know the meaning of *tikkun ha-olam* as the end of idolatry. Both motifs probably derive from the *Aleinu* prayer. But this prayer, though written as early as the 3rd century, originally may have used the term לתכן rather than לתקן.<sup>1</sup>

*Tikkun olam* includes the many actions people take to help each other and to create a society. From the earliest texts of Jewish philosophical thought (also starting around the turn of the first millennium), *tikkun olam* explicitly includes concepts of justice and loving one’s neighbor. A messianic conception of social justice naturally flows out of the convergence of eschatological motifs derived from the *Aleinu* and ideas about sustaining and improving society found in the *Mishnah* and *midrash*.

The influence of humanism brought the integration of these concepts to its fullest fruition. A fairly complete expression of the idea that *tikkun olam* includes what we think of as social justice can already be found as early as 1797 in Pinchas Hurwitz’s *Sefer Habrit* (#24). Full-throated expressions of messianic social justice appear in Zionist writing at least by 1859 (Natan Friedland, *Kos Yeshu’ot*, #26), and this becomes a central motif in Palestine in the thought of Rav Avraham Yitzhak Kook and Rav Yehuda Ashlag. Youthful socialist pioneers in Palestine even aspired to be “*m’taknei olam*,” world-shapers and reformers.<sup>2</sup>

Perhaps surprisingly, the idea that everyday ritual acts specifically bring about *tikkun ha’olam* is also somewhat newer,<sup>3</sup> being developed furthest by Kabbalists like Moshe Chaim Luzzato (also 18th century), though this idea has roots in the *Zohar*’s interpretation of the sacrifices. The claim that the association of *tikkun olam* with the

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<sup>1</sup> We find לתכן attested in Saadyah Gaon and Ramban. However, Rambam does use *tikkun ha-olam* in the Messianic sense (*Mishneh Torah, Hilkhoh M’lakhim* 11:4 #10, 11:7). *Machzor Vitry*, which predates Rambam, has לתקן; in time this became the *musach* of almost every community except Yemenite, making the meanings found in *Aleinu* integral to the concept of *tikkun ha-olam*.

<sup>2</sup> There were also contemporaries who critiqued the idea of being a *m’taknei olam* both in Europe and Palestine — some because it was used by socialists who did not root their ideology in Torah, and some because it was not focused enough on the political practicalities of building a state. (See Yehuda Ashlag, second quote.)

<sup>3</sup> In earlier texts, *mitzvot* are performed for the *tikkun* of divine worlds, *tzorekh gavoha*. See e.g. terms like *tikkun hakavod* or *hatikkun ha’elyon* (unifying/rectifying the divine presence/upper realm) in Meir ibn Gabbai, *Avodat Hakodesh* 18. However, Gikatilla in *Sod Hanachash* (#15), and *Sefer Hakaneh*, which restates Gikatilla, both build on the *Zohar* to compare human power to the power of a priest, saying human action may “repair the world and destroy it”.

observance of traditional ritual *mitzvot* is ancient, while social justice *tikkun olam* is recent, is simply not supportable.

What happened in America after this history, largely through the influence of Zionism in pre-state Palestine, is fairly straightforward: Mordecai Kaplan's student, educator Alexander Dushkin, made *tikkun olam* (as activist world-repair) a central pillar in his design for Jewish educational programs in America in the 1940's (#37), and the same principle was popularized by Shlomo Bardin through his Brandeis Camp Institute in the 1950's. Both Dushkin and Bardin were deeply involved in developing the Israeli educational system, so it was natural for them to bring this meaning from Zionist culture to America. The Reform movement ran with these ideas to create what people call "*tikkun olam*" Judaism, inspired (at its best) by prophetic principles of justice.<sup>4</sup> However, Mordecai Kaplan himself already pointed out in 1934 the dangers of separating *tikkun olam* from national identity and from other *mitzvot* like Shabbat or Torah study (*Judaism as a Civilization* (1934), 103-7).

While it is clear that *tikkun olam* was connected to social justice long before its advent in North America, it also includes much more than social justice. Furthermore, *tikkun olam* does not equate with liberalism or any other single political ideology. In fact, a few of the actions designated as *tikkun olam* in the past are distinctly contrary to a liberal agenda (see the second quote from Rambam). Moreover, the enormous significance of *tikkun olam* in liberal Judaism blossomed after World War II and the Shoah, and the historical relation of this phenomenon as a response to the cataclysmic destruction of European Jewry has not been fully explored. (*Tikkun olam's* theological relation to the Shoah, however, has been deeply explored in the work of authors such as Emil Fackenheim and Yitz Greenberg.)

Following the texts, I give a list of the many meanings and translations of *tikkun* and *tikkun olam*, and terms that are parallel to *tikkun olam* (I). I also discuss how the texts were selected and outline some other uses of the term *tikkun* that are not necessarily connected with *tikkun ha'olam* (II), and give a brief bibliography (III). It feels important to acknowledge that because we are mostly looking at texts written before World War II (and the subsequent viral explosion of *tikkun olam* in America), and that none of the authors are women.

We live in a time where it is no longer possible to imagine the *tikkun* of the people Israel apart from *tikkun* of the human species, or the *tikkun* of the human species apart from *tikkun* of the more-than-human world we call Nature. How this will affect the evolution of *tikkun olam* from this point on is something each reader of these texts can help decide. May this evolution bring us ever closer to true *tikkun olam*. Though the task is great, Rebbe Nachman urges us to persist: "If you believe it is possible to ruin, believe it is possible to repair /*l'takein*."

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<sup>4</sup> A universalist interpretation of *l'takein olam* in *Aleinu* had also been articulated by Reform theologian much earlier - see text #35..

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Some themes by text numbers: Equity/Fairness and Social Justice, 1, 6, 18, 24, 26, 27, 32, 34; Ordering Society, 1, 11, 12, 13, 23, 25, 28, 29, 34; Ending Idolatry/Eschatology, 2, 10, 17, 21 Ecology/Nature's Order, 3, 4, 5, 22, 30; Loving Neighbors/Stumbling Block, 6, 7, 10, 12, 11, 16, 23, 27; Legal Justice, 8, 9, 26; Humanism, 6, 18, 23, 26, 30, 31, 33; Invention, 13, 24, 28; Ritual and Theurgy/Temple, 14, 15, 19, 20; Nationalism/Zionism 19, 28, 29, 30, 31.

**Key 1. Mishnah Gitin 4:5, ~ 2nd cent. משנה גיטין ד'ה'**

Rab-Mishnah Order-Society Equity מי שחציו עבד וחציו בן חורין, עובד את רבו יום אחד ואת עצמו יום אחד, דברי בית הלל. אמרו להם בית שמאי, תקנתם את רבו, ואת עצמו לא תקנתם. לשא שפחה אי אפשר, שפכר חציו בן חורין. בת חורין אי אפשר, שפכר חציו עבד. ובטל, והלא לא נברא העולם אלא לפריה ולרביה, שנאמר (ישעיה מה) לא תהו ברעה, לשבת יצרה. אלא מפני תקון העולם, כופין את רבו ועושה אותו בן חורין, וכותב שטר על חצי דמיו. וחזרו בית הלל להורות כדברי בית שמאי

One who is half slave and half a free person, he serves his master one day and then himself one day — the words of Beit Hillel. Beit Shammai said to them: You set it right /*tikantem* for his master, for himself you didn't set it right. To marry a maidservant isn't possible because half of him is free. [To marry] a free woman isn't possible because half of him is still slave. —So [would you] cancel [his obligation to reproduce]! But isn't it true that the world wasn't created except for bearing fruit and reproducing – as it says, (Isaiah 45:18) "Not to be waste did God create her (the Earth); to be settled upon did God form her"! Rather, because of setting right<sup>5</sup> the world / *mip'nei tikkun ha-olam*, they force his master, who [must] make him a free person and write a contract for [him to redeem the remaining] half of his value. And Beit Hillel turned to teach according to the words of Beit Shammai.

**2. Aleinu prayer, originally Rosh Hashanah Musaf, ~ 3rd cent.<sup>6</sup> עלינו, מחזור ראש השנה מלכויות**

Rab-Liturgy Eschat Idolatry עלינו לשבח לאדון הכל... שלא עשנו כגויי הארצות... שהם משתחוים להבל וריק... ואנחנו משתחוים לפני מלך מלכי המלכים הקדוש ברוך הוא, שהוא נוטה שמים ויסד ארץ על כן נקנה לך יי אלהינו לראות מהרה בתפארת עזך, להעביר גלולים מן הארץ והאלילים פרות יפרתו, לתקן עולם [לתכן עולם] במלכות שדי. וכל בני בשר יקראו בשמך, להפנות אליך כל רשעי ארץ.

<sup>5</sup> The word *tikkun* has been translated in different ways throughout – see note (2).  
<sup>6</sup> Tradition attributes *Aleinu* to Joshua, while most scholars consider Rav (3rd cent. Babylon) as its author or compiler. The original wording of *Aleinu* might have been עולם לתכן – if so, the standard wording of לתקן עולם might date as late as 1000 CE or later. If so, then its place as a *tikkun olam* text would be after the midrash texts that follow.

It is on us to praise [the One]...for You didn't make us like the nations of the Earth...for they pray to what is empty breath and emptiness... and we bow before the Sovereign of sovereigns, the Holy One, blessed be, who spread out heavens and founded an earth...therefore we hope for You, *YHVH* our God, to see quickly the manifest glory of Your strength, to cause the idols to pass away from the Earth and the unbreathing gods to be cut off, to establish a world under the reign of the Almighty/All-nourishing / *I'takein olam b'malkhut Shaddai*, and all people of flesh will call on Your name, to cause all the wicked of the Earth to turn toward you.

**3. Genesis Rabbah 4:6, ~ 4th cent.**

בראשית רבה ד:ו

למה אין כתיב בשני כי טוב? רבי חנינא אומר: שבו נבראת מחלוקת, שנאמר: ויהי מבדיל בין מים למים. אמר רבי טביומי: אם מחלוקת שהיא לתקונו של עולם ולישובו אין בה כי טוב, מחלוקת שהיא לערבובו על אחת כמה וכמה

Midrash  
Order-  
Nature

Why is it not written about the second day [of Creation], “for it is good”? Rav Chanina says: Because on [that day] division/argument was created, as it is said (Gen. 1:6): “Let there be a separation between waters (above) and waters (below).” Said Rav Tavyomo (Rabbi “Good Day”): If a division that was created for the sake of ordering the world and settling it / *I'tikuno shel olam ul'yishuvo* doesn't have an “it is good” in it, any division to disturb [the world], all the more so.

**4. Ecclesiastes Rabbah 7:13, ~ 5th cent.**

קהלת רבה ז:יג

ראה את מעשה האלהים כי מי יוכל לתקן את אשר עויתו (קילת ז:יג) — בשעה שברא הקדוש ברוך הוא את אדם הראשון, נטלו והחזירו על כל אילני גן עדן, ואמר לו, ראה מעשי כמה נאים ומשבחיו הן, וכל מה שבראתי בשבילך בראתי, תו דעתך שלא תקלקל ותחריב את עולמי, שאם קלקלת אין מי שייתקן אחריך

Midrash  
Order-  
Nature

Eco  
Esch

“See the work of God—who can fix what he<sup>7</sup> twisted?” (Eccl. 7:13) —In the time that the Holy One created the first human, He took him and brought him around all the trees of Gan Eden, and said to him: See My works, how lovely and praiseworthy they are, and all I created, for your sake I created [it]. Put your mind [to this], that you don't ruin or destroy my world /*olami*, for if you bring ruin, there is no one who will set [the world] right /*y'takein* after you.

**5. Devarim Rabbah 6:5, ~ 9th-10th cent.**

דברים רבה ו:ה

“שְׁלַח תְּשַׁלַּח אֶת הָאֵם, וְאֵת הַבָּנִים תִּקַּח-לָךְ” – אר"א לא היה צריך לומר כן אלא אמר הקב"ה הואיל ונתעסקה<sup>8</sup> בכבודו | בבניינו של עולם ובתיקונו של עולם כדי שתינצל

Midrash  
Order-  
Nature  
Eco  
Animal-  
Rights

“[When you come across a bird's nest on the way, the mother crouching over the nestlings or eggs], send, you will send away the mother, and the children you may take” – Said R' Eliezer: It wouldn't be necessary to say so, except the Holy One said, “Since she busies herself with building the world / the glory of the world and maintaining the world (*tikkuno shel olam*)”, it is right/worthwhile that she would be saved.

<sup>7</sup> In the verse “He” refers to God, but the midrash interprets it as referring to Adam, who is “the work of God”.

<sup>8</sup> The commonly published version of this teaching has נתעסק in the place of נתעסקה (“he busies himself” instead of “she busies herself”), but the correct version is found in numerous sources. Most sources have “glory of the world” but some have “building the world”. The latter version is consistent with *tikkun*, but the former adds a certain poetry.

6. *Tanna deVei Eliyahu, 10th cent., ch. 15*

Midrash  
Order-  
Society  
Love  
Equity  
Human

ובארבעה דברים העולם מתיישב מתוך הצדקה ומתוך הדין ומתוך האמת ומתוך השלום ואמר לי רבי מעשה שמכרתי לעכו"ם אחד ארבעה כורין של תמרים ומדדתי לו בבית אפל מחצה על מחצה ואמר לי אלקים על השמים ואתה יודע על מדה שאתה מודד לי ומתוך שמדדתי לו בבית אפל חסרתי לו שלשה סאין של תמרים ולאחר כך נטלתי המעות ולקחתי בהן כד אחד של שמן והנחתי אותו במקום שמכרתי התמרים לעכו"ם נקרע הכד ונשפך השמן והלך לו אמרתי לו בני כתיב (ויקרא יט:יג) לא תעשוק את רעך ולא תגזול וגו' רעך הרי הוא כאחיך ואחיך הרי הוא כרעך הא למדת שגזול עכו"ם אסור

[I explained] "Through four things the world is made settled / *ha-olam mit'yashev*: through charity and justice and truth and peace." And he said to me, 'Rabbi, it happened that I sold to one idolater four *kor* of dates, and I measured it in a dark place...and he said to me, 'God upon heaven and you know about whether the measure you [used is just]...and I shorted him three *sa'in* of dates, and after that I took the money and bought a pitcher of oil and placed it on the spot where I sold the dates to the idolater, and the pitcher shattered and it went.'" I said to him, "My son, it's written 'Don't oppress your neighbor and don't steal...' (Lev 19:13 – your neighbor behold is like your brother, and your brother is like your neighbor, so you have learned that stealing from an idolater is forbidden."

7. **R' Bachya ibn Pakuda (1050-1120, Spain), *Chovot Hal'vavot (Duties of the Heart) 8:3***

Phil  
Order-  
Society  
Love

ר' בחיה אבן פקודה, חובות הלבבות ח:ג

ועל המאמין לחשוב עם נפשו במה שהוא חייב לאלקים ית'...אבאר מהם שלשים פנים... והשנים ועשרים, חשבוננו עם נפשו על התערבו עם בני אדם בתקנת העולם מחרישה וקצירה ומקח וממכר והענינים שנעזרים בהם קצת בני אדם בקצתם על ישוב העולם שיאהב להם מה שיאהב לנפשו מהם וישנא להם מה שישנא לנפשו מהם ויחמול עליהם וידחה מהם כפי יכלתו מה שיזיקם כמו שכתוב (ויקרא יט) ואהבת לרעך כמוך...

[C]oncerning the one who believes in taking account with oneself concerning what one is obligated [to do] for God blessed be... I will explain thirty ways [to do this]... And the twenty-second is: one's account with oneself concerning one's involvement with people in establishing the world / *takanat ha'olam*, from plowing and harvest [to] buying and selling and [such] matters through which some people are helped by some [others] in [the process of] settling the world / *yishuv ha'olam* — [namely,] that one should love for them [to receive] what one would love for oneself from them, and that one should hate for them what one would hate for oneself from them, and should have compassion for them, and according to one's ability [one should] push away from them whatever would harm them, as it's written (Lev. 19:18), "And you will love your neighbor like yourself."

8. **Rambam (Maimonides, 1135-1204, Spain, Egypt), *Mishneh Torah, Hilkhot Sanhedrin 23:9***

Phil  
Justice  
Law

רמב"ם (ר' משה בן מיימון), משנה תורה, הלכות סנהדרין כג:ט

וְכָל דִּין שֶׁדִּין אֱמֶת לְאֶמְתוֹ אֶפְלוּ שְׁעָה אַחַת כְּאֵלוֹ תִּקֵּן אֶת כָּל הָעוֹלָם כְּלוּ וְגוֹרָם לְשִׁכְנֵיהָ שְׁתִּשְׂרָה בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל שְׁנֶאֱמַר (תהילים פב:א) אֱלֹקִים נֹצֵב בְּעֵדֹת אֵל

Every judge who judges truth unto its [deepest] truth, even for one hour, it's as if he fixed the whole world entirely / *tikein et kol ha'olam kulo* and caused the Shekhinah to rest upon Israel, as it is said (Ps. 82:1), "God stands in the council of the divine."

9. **Rambam, *Mishneh Torah, Hilkhot M'lakhim 3:10***

רמב"ם, משנה תורה, הלכות מלכים ג:יא

כל הורגי נפשות שלא בראיה ברורה או בלי התראה אפילו בעד אחד... יש למלך רשות להרגו ולתקן העולם כפי שהשעה צריכה

Phil Any who kill people without being clearly seen or without [being given] warning even with one witness...  
Justice [since there isn't enough evidence for them to be found guilty by a court,] the king has authority to execute  
Violence them and to [thereby] fix the world / *I'takein ha'olam*, according to what the hour needs.

#### 10. Rambam *Mishneh Torah, Hilkhot M'lakhim* 11:4

רמב"ם, משנה תורה, הלכות מלכים יא:ד

ואם יעמד מלך מבית דוד... וילחם מלחמות ה', הרי זה בחזקת שהוא משיח. אם עשה והצליח ובנה מקדש במקומו וקבץ נדחי ישראל הרי זה משיח בודאי. ויתקן את העולם פלו לעבד את ה' ביחד שנאמר כי אז אהפך אל עמים שפה ברורה לקרא כלם בשם ה' ולעבדו שכם אחד

Phil  
Eschat  
Idolatry

If a king will arise...[and if he waged [wars] and succeeded and built the Holy Temple...and gathered the dispersed of Israel, behold this is certainly *Mashiach*. And he will rectify the whole world / *y'takein et ha'olam kulo* to serve *Hashem* together, as it is said (Zeph. 3:9), "For then I will turn over to [all] peoples pure speech for all of them to call out in the name of *Hashem*..."

#### 11. *Sefer Hachinukh* (13th cent., Spain), 232 (240)

ספר החינוך (מאה 13, ספרד), רל"ב (ר"מ)

רל"ב: שלא להכשיל תם בדרך... שנאמר: "ולפני עור לא תתן מכשל" (ויקרא יט:יד)... שורש המצוה ידוע, כי תיקון העולם ויישובו הוא להדריך בני אדם ולתת להם בכל מעשיהם עצה טובה... וכן מה שאמרו זכרונם לברכה (עבודה זרה טו): שאסור למכור כל כלי מלחמה וכל דבר שיש בו נזק לרבים לגוים, אלא אם כן מוכרין כי היכי דמגנו עלן, וכן אסור למוכרו לישראל המוכרו לגוי, וכן לישראל ליסטים, ואסרו הכל משום ולפני עור.

Phil  
Stumbl-  
block  
Weapons  
Order-  
Society

Commandment #232: To not cause a naive/unaware person to stumble on the road — as it is said (Lev. 19:14), "And before a blind person don't place a stumbling block"... The root of the *mitzvah* is known, for [the way of] setting right the world and settling it / *tikkun ha'olam v'yishuvo* is to guide people and to give them in all their actions good advice... and so did [the sages] say (*Talmud Avodah Zarah* 15b), that it is forbidden to sell weapons (instruments of war) or anything that has in it [the capacity to] harm many to non-Jews, except if it is to sell them so that they can defend us, and so too is it forbidden to sell them to a Jew who sells to non-Jews, or to Jewish criminals, and all of it is forbidden because of the command "before a blind person [don't place a stumbling block]."

#### 12. Rabbenu Yonah Gerondi (1200-1263, Spain), commentary on *Pirkei Avot* 5:10

רבינו יונה גרונידי, פירוש על פרקי אבות ה:י

Phil שלי שלך ושלי עם הארץ. מפני שזה רוצה בתיקון העולם נקרא עם הארץ שרוצה ליקח וליתן כי בזה מתרבה האהבה ביניהם.  
Order- ואף שהיא מדה טובה לתיקון העולם לא מחכמה היא זאת כי שונא מתנות יחיה והמדה הטובה ליתן ושלא ליקח  
Society

Love "[There are four types of people... The one who says,] 'What's mine is yours and what's yours is mine' [is] a 'people of the land' / *am ha'aretz* (= an ignorant peasant)" (*Pirkei Avot* 5:10) — Because this one wants the betterment of the world / *tikkun ha'olam*, he is called an *am ha'aretz* (= one who cares about the people), for he wants [people] to take and to give, because through this the love among them increases. And even though this is a good quality for organizing the world / *tikkun ha'olam*, it does not come from wisdom, for the one who hates gifts [and doesn't accept them] is the one who will [truly] thrive, and the best type is [one who wants] to give and not to take.

### 13. *Sefer HaZohar* (13th cent., Spain), 1:38a

ספר הזוהר א:לה.

Kab

Order-

Society

Invention

Weapons

Agricult

אמר רבי יצחק, כל דרין דאשתכללו משת, כלהו צדיקי וחסידו. לבתר אתפשטו ואולידו, ואוליפו אומנותא (והכמתא) דעלמא לשצאה ברומחין וסייפין, עד דאתא נח ואתקין לון תקונא דעלמא, למפלא ולאתקנא ארעא, דהא בקדמיתא לא הו זרעין וחצדין, לבתר אצטריכו להאי, דכתיב עוד כל ימי הארץ וגו' (בר' ח:כב). רבי אלעזר אמר, זמין קב"ה לתקנא עלמא, ולאתקנא רווחא בבני נשא בגין דיורכון יומין לעלמין—הדא הוא דיכתיב (ישעיה סה:כב) כי כימי העץ ימי עמי וגו':

Said Rabbi Yitzhak: All the generations that developed from Seth (the third son of Adam and Eve), all of them were righteous and pious. Afterward they spread out and bore children, and they learned crafts and wisdom of the world, [how] to finish off [each other] with spears and knives, until Noah came and made for them a reparation of the world / *itkin lun tikuna d'alma* (= *tikkun ha'olam*), to farm and to prepare the earth / *l'atkanah ar'ah*, for in early times there was no sowing and reaping, [but] after they needed this, as it's written (Gen. 8:22), "Unto all the days of the Earth [sowing and reaping and summer and winter... won't stop]." Rabbi Elazar said: The Holy One prepares for fixing the world / *l'takna alma*, and repairing the spirit / *l'atkana rucha* of humanity, so that they may extend [their] days forever—that is what's written (Isaiah 65:22): "For as the days of the tree are the days of my people..."

### 14. *Sefer HaZohar*, 1:242a

ספר הזוהר א:רמד.

Kab

Blessing

Temple

Theurgy

אתערותא דקרבנא תקונא דעלמא, וברכאן דעלמין כלהו

[T]he awakening [caused by] sacrifices is restitution for the world / *tikuna d'alma* and blessing for all the worlds.

### 15. *Yosef Gikatilla* (1248-1305, Spain), *Sod Hanachash*

יוסף גיקטיליה, סוד הנחש

Kab

Order-

Nature

Temple

Theurgy

לפי שהאדם משוכלל בכל הדברים העליונים והתחתונים נתן השם ית' בידו לבוא להיכל הקדש ולצאת לחוץ ולהכניס ולהוציא, אבל צוה אותו והפקידו שישמור לבל יכניס טמאים לפניו ואל יוציא טהורים לחוץ. מכאן תבין כמה הוא כחו של אדם בקיום המצות או בעשות עבירה... ואחר שידעת זה דע כי כל הכחות החיצונים הטמאים השוכנים בחוץ ורואים מבחוץ מעלת היכל פנימי... משתוקקין ונכספים לידבק באדם, שאינם יכולים לידבק באדם אם לא יעבור עבירה מעין אותו הדבר שהם רוצים... שאין להם רשות להכנס אלא על ידי אדם. וזהו סוד "ראה נתתי לפניך היום את החיים ואת הטוב ואת המות ואת הרע" ונמצאו כל הטהרות והטומאות דבקות באדם והאדם גורם לתקן עולם או לחורבנו...

Since the human being is the most perfect over all things above and below, *Hashem* gave unto his hand [the capacity] to enter the holy Sanctum and to go outside and to bring in and to bring out, but [God] commanded him and charged him to guard [himself], to not bring impurities inside and to not bring purities outside. From here you may understand how much is the power of a human being in keeping the commandments or doing a transgression... [F]or all the impure external powers, the ones dwelling outside, they see the exalted nature of the inner Sanctum... They desire and yearn to cleave to humanity [so they can enter, but] they are not able to cleave to a human being until he commits a transgression... And this is the secret of [the verse] "See I have set before you life and the good, and death and the bad"...and the human being [may] cause the world to be restored or for it to be destroyed / *l'takein olam ul'chorbano*.

Phil

<sup>9</sup> The idea that Noah invented the tools of agriculture is found in *Midrash Tanchuma* (*B'reishit* 11).

Stumbl-  
block  
Love

**16. R' Menachem ben Moshe Habavli (d.1571, Hevron, Eretz Yisrael), *Sefer Ta'amei Mitzvot (Book of the Reasons for the Commandments)***

ר' מנחם בן משה הבבלי, ספר טעמי מצות

שלא להכשיל תם בעצה שאינה הגונה, שנאמר (ויקרא יט:יד) ולפני עור לא תתן מכשול. טעם מצוה זו, משום (שם יח) ואהבת לרעך כמוך, מאי דסאני לך לחברך כו' (שבת לא.), והוא תיקון עולם ויישובו.

One shouldn't cause a naive person to falter through advice that isn't sensible, as it says (Lev. 19:14), "before a blind person don't put a stumbling block". The reason for this mitzvah is "And you will love your neighbor like yourself" — what is hateful to you don't do to your friend (*Talmud Shabbat* 31a), and this [brings about] repair of the world and its settlement / *tikkun olam viy'shuvo*.

Kab  
Eschat

**17. R' Menachem Azariah DeFano (1548-1620, Italy), *Asarah Ma'amarot (Ten Utterances)*, 3:34**

ר' מנחם עזריה מפאנו, עשרה מאמרות, ג:לד

והאר"י זצ"ל דרש על קרח פסוק צדיק כתמר יפרח (תהלים צו:יג) שכן שמו רשם בסופי תיבות אלה ללמד שבסוף תקון עולם גם הוא יתקן

[T]he Ari (Isaac Luria) expounded the verse "A righteous person will flourish like a date palm, *tzadik katamar yifrach*" (Ps. 96:13) to be about Korach. For so is Korach's name impressed in [the letters at] the end of these words (ק, ר, ח), to teach that at the end of world rectification / *tikkun olam*, even he will be fixed / *y'takein*.

Phil  
Human  
Justice

**18. R' Shlomo Marini (d. 1670, Italy), *Sefer Tikkun Olam (Repair of the World)*, on Isaiah 60:18**

ר' שלמה מריני, ספר תקון עולם, על ישעיה ס:יח

לא ישמע עוד חמס בארצך שד ושבר בגבוליך וקראת ישועה חומתיך ושעריך תהלה: יתוקנו תכונות האנשים וירדפו הצדק והישר כל אנשי העיר אלו עם אלו וגם מחוצה לה יהיו בטוחים משוד ושבר באופן שישועת ה' ותיקון העולם

"No more will violence be heard in your land, destruction and shattering in your borders, and you will call salvation your walls, and your gates, praise." (Isa. 60:18) The character of humanity will be repaired and all the people of the city will pursue justice and uprightness, these with those, and even [when they are] outside the city they will be secure from destruction and cataclysm, in the manner of God's salvation and the world's restoration / *tikkun ha'olam*.

Kab  
Blessing  
Theurgy

**19. R' Moshe Chaim Luzzatto (1707-1746, Italy), *Derekh Hashem* 2, "Israel and the Nations"**

ר' משה חיים לוצאטו, דרך ה', ח"ב, ישראל ואומות העולם

במעשיהם של ישראל תלה האדון ב"ה תיקון כל הבריאה ועילויה... ושעבד כביכול את הנהגתו לפעלם להאיר ולהשפיע או ליסתר ולהתעלם ח"ו על פי מעשיהם.

Upon the actions of Israel did the Lord blessed be hang the restoration of all Creation / *tikkun kol hab'ri'ah* and its elevation...and made God's behavior consequent upon their work to shine and to make [blessing] flow, or to close off and to be hidden, God forbid, according to their actions.

Kab  
Theurgy

**20. R' Moshe Chaim Luzzatto, *Da'at T'vunot (Knowing Understanding)* 225**



האדם המצווה יש כח בידו, מסור ממנו ית', שיתקן במעשיו התיקונים המצטרקים בבריאה, מה שאינו כן שאינו מצווה. וראיה לדבר הכהונה, שהכהן העובד מתקן כל העולם, וזר שעבד חילל, וחייב מיתה

The person who is commanded (by Torah/God) has power in his hand, given from the One who is blessed, that he may repair with his actions the repairs needed by Creation, which is not the case for one who is not commanded. And the proof of the matter is the priesthood, for the priest (*kohen*) doing service is repairing the whole world / *m'takein kol ha'olam*, and (yet) the stranger who does service profanes, and is subject to death.

Kab  
Eschat  
Anti-Hum

**21. R' Moshe Chaim Luzzatto, *Ma'amar Chokhmah***

ר' משה חיים לוצאטו, מאמר החכמה

הנה תיקון העולם, הוא שיהיה הטוב שולט והרע נכפה, ובמין האנושי ישראל שולטים ואומות העולם משתעבדים תחתיהם, והנה בהיות הדבר כן הנה טוב לכל

*Tikkun ha-olam* will be when Good rules and Evil is forced down, and in the human species [this is when] Israel rule and the nations of the world are servile under them, and when the state of things is thus, "behold, it is good" for all.

Has  
Anthrop  
Eco

**22. R' Nachman of Breslov (1772-1810, Ukraine), *Likutei Moharan (Collected Teachings of Rebbe Nachman)*, 1:5**

ר' נחמן מברסלב, ליקוטי מוהר"ן א:ה

נמצא, כשהעולם נברא בשבילי, צריך אני לראות ולעיין בכל עת בתיקון העולם ולמלאות חסרון העולם ולהתפלל בעבורם

One finds, since the world is created for my sake, I need to see and look in every moment into repairing the world / *b'tikkun ha'olam*, and to replenish what the world lacks, and to pray on their behalf.

Phil  
Human  
Love  
Order-  
Society

**23. R' Pinchas Hurwitz (1765-1821, Lithuania, Holland), *Sefer Habrit*<sup>10</sup> (*Book of the Covenant*, 1797), "On Loving Neighbors", ch. 1**

ר' פנחס הורוויץ, ספר הברית, מאמר אהבת רעים, פ' א

מהות אהבת רעים הוא שיהיה האדם אוהב כל מין האנושי יהיה מאיזה עם שיהיה ויהיה מאיזה לשון שיהיה בעבור אדם בדמותו ובצלמו כמוהו ועוסק בישובו של עולם או בונה או חורש או זורע או סוחר או מוכר או איזה בעל מלאכה או חושב בחכמות ותחבולות יקנה לצרכי העולם וחושב מחשבות לבלתי ידח דבר מצרכי הבריות והוא מכין תבל בחכמתו ואזן וחקר ותקן כלים נפלאים ברעיון לבו שהוא עמל כי על ידי אלה הדברים העולם עומד כתקונו ומתקיים בשלמותו ונמצאים כל הדברים אשר ברא א"ל להם לעשות ואשר עשה והנה טוב מאד לכל אדם...

The essence of loving neighbors is that a person would love all members of the human species, from whatever people they are from and from whatever language they speak, for each is a person in [God's] image and in [God's] likeness like him/herself, and engaged in settling the world or building or plowing or sowing or distributing or selling or whatever kind of craftsperson, or one who figures out how to attain the needs of the world with wise designs and inventions...for by means of these things the world is established

<sup>10</sup> *Sefer Habrit* was one of the most important and widely read books ever published in the modern period among religious Jews.

according to its proper form / *ha'olam omeid k'tikuno* and is sustained in its wholeness / *umitkayeim bishleimuto*, and all things [come to] exist “which God created to do” (Gen. 2:3), and which he has done, and “behold it is very good” (Gen. 1:31) for all humanity.

## 24. R' Pinchas Hurwitz, *Sefer Habrit*, “On Loving Neighbors”, ch. 19

Phil  
Social-  
Justice  
Invention

ר' פנחס הורוויץ, ספר הברית, מאמר אהבת רעים, פ' י"ט

נאמר שאחר העיון האמיתי הנדבות שבגוף יותר מפואר ויותר משובח מהנדבות שבכיס... ואמנם לא בעבור שזה המין יותר מפואר יעזב איש המין הב', כי באמת המין הב' יותר נצרך לתקנת הקהלת של מין האנושי. ויותר טוב בעיני א"להים ואדם להעניק לאביון מברכת ביתו להונן דלים מממונו, להתיר אסורים ונתון פדיון נפשם ולא יחוש את כסף הפדוים, לחמו לרעב יתן וערום יכסה בגד כסף ילוה את עני וכדומה לזה. ועקר תשלום חובת אהבת רעים הוא במין השני הזה אף כי שניהם כאחד טובים לתקנת העולם ולתועלת התחברות מין האדם...

It is said after deep inspection [that] the way of giving through [using one's] body is more glorious and praiseworthy than giving through the pocketbook... However, just because this type [of giving] is more glorious, a person should not abandon the second type [of giving], for truly the second type is more needed for repairing the community of humanity / *l'takanat kahalat min ha'enoshi*. And it's better in the eyes of God and humanity to furnish the poor from the blessings of one's house, to supply the poor from one's own money and to free the captives and give ransom for their lives and not feel [the loss of] the ransom money, to give one's bread to the hungry and to cover the naked with clothing, to loan money to the poor, and things like this. And the essence of fulfilling the obligation of loving one's neighbor is of this second type, even though “both of them as one are good” (Eccl. 11:6) for the fixing of the world / *l'takanat ha-olam*, and for the value of joining together the human species...

ועתה נחקורה כמה מעלות יש בשלש אלה מיני ההטבה. ונאמר שבכל אחת מאלה יש שלשה מעלות טובות זו על זו ואלו הן: (א) שעוזר ליחיד... (ב) שעושה כזאת לרבים כגון שלא היה בעיר אמת מים... והוא בכחו חפר להם באר... (ג) שמטיב לכל אנשי העולם כגון שעשה בגופו וכחו גשר על הדרך אשר רבים עוברים שמה מקצות הארץ אלה מפה ואלה מפה, או שהוא היה השוכר את הפועלים לעשות הגשר ושילם מכיסו, או שברוב שכלו המציא איזה כלי חדש הטוב לכל העולם כנה שהמציא כלי המחרשה בעולם וכדומה שאר כלים המשלימים תיקון העולם וטובו...

And now let us explore how many levels there are in these three kinds of doing good [through ideas, through one's body, and through property], and they are: 1) that one should help a single person... 2) that one should do this for many, for example if there were a town without a source of water... and one dug with one's strength a well for them... 3) that one does good for all the people in the world, for example, one used one's body and one's strength to make a bridge for a road that many pass through... or that one would hire workers to make the bridge and pay them from one's pocket, or through the power of one's intellect invent some new tool that is good for the whole world, like Noah invented plowing tools in the world, and similarly any tools that make complete the establishment of the world / *hamashlimim tikkun ha'olam* and its well-being...

ומי שהטיב לכל אנשי העולם כגון שהמציא כלי חדש הטוב לעול' או ספר טוב ראוי לכל משכיל על דבר אהבת רעים לכל הפחות שיקנה אותו כדי שירויה ויאמץ האיש את לבבו עיי"ז להמציא עוד כלים טובים בעולם, וכן שאר כל חכמי לב יתמצו וישתדלו ג"כ להמציא דברים טובים וכלים נצרכים לתקנת העולם ולהשלמתו.

And one who does good for the people of the world, such as one who invents a new tool that is good for the world, or a good book, it is appropriate for someone who is enlightened on the subject of loving neighbors that at the least he would buy it in order that [the inventor or author] would expand and strengthen his heart

by means of this to invent more good tools for the world, and so for the rest of all those who are wise of heart, that they should strengthen themselves and strive also to invent good things and necessary tools for the improvement of the world and its completion / *l'takanat ha'olam ul'hashlamato*.

**25. R' Pinchas ben David Soshis (1770-1841), *Pardes Hamelekh (The King's Orchard)*, 107b**

Phil/Kab  
Purpose  
Free will

ר' פנחס בן דוד, פרדס המלך, קז:

...תכלית הבריאה היה בעבור האדם להיות בחיירי להיות לו שכר ועונש. והשכר והעונש אינו מצד ה"בה (הקדוש ברוך הוא) בהיות לו ח"ו תועלת והיזיק במעשה אדם... אלא הוא מצד תיקון העולם ויישובו כי הצדיקים מתקנים העולם במעשיהם והרשעים מאבדים אותו להחזירו לתוהו ובוהו ולמעט השפע.

[T]he purpose of Creation was for the sake of the human being to have free choice in order for him to be punished or rewarded. And the reward and the punishment is not from the perspective of the Holy One, God forbid, that there would be some benefit or harm to God from the actions of a person ... rather it is from the perspective of fixing the world and settling it / *tikkun ha'olam viy'shuvo*, for the righteous are restoring the world / *m'taknim ha'olam* through their actions, and the wicked are destroying it and turning it back into chaos and void, and limiting the flow [of divine abundance].

**26. R' Natan Friedland (1808-1883, Breslau)<sup>11</sup>, *Kos Yeshu'ot (Cup of Salvation, Amsterdam 1859)*, 13a**

Phil/Kab  
Zion  
Human  
Justice  
Social-  
Justice

ר' נתן בן יוסף פרידלאנד, כוס ישועות, דרוש הדין י"ד, יג.

כה אמר ה' צבאות צום... יהי לבית יהודא לששון ולשמחה... והאמת והשלום אהבו (זכ' ח:ט), כי הימים האלה היתה התחלה להצרות והגלות. ויתוקן הכל ויהפך הימים לששון ושמחה אך אם אשר תעשו זאת "והאמת והשלום אהבו"... כל זה תגרום האמת והשלום אשר בישראל כי מן החיוב שיתנהגו באמת ושלום עם כל אדם בעולם...

“Thus said *YHVH* of hosts, the [fast days] will become for the house of Judah joy and gladness...and you, love Truth and Peace” (Zech. 8:19)—for these days were the beginning for the troubles and the exile. And all will be fixed / *y'tukan* and the days will be turned into joy and gladness, only if you will do this, “love truth and peace”... All this will Truth and Peace bring about in Israel, because of [Israel fulfilling] the obligation that they conduct themselves in truth and peace with every person in the world...

וכן נמצא מפורש בתנא דבי אליהו (פי ט"ו) שאמר אליהו הנביא לאיש יהודי אחד, שמכר לגוי ארבעה כור תמרים ומדד לו בבית אפל רק המחצה ונתן לו, ואמר לו אליהו: בני, כתיב לא תעשוק את רעך רעך הרי הוא כאחיד ואחיד הרי הוא כרעך...

And so one finds explained in *Tana De'Vei Eliyahu* (ch.15), that Eliyahu the prophet said [this] to one Jewish man, who sold four *kor* of dates (= 6 bushels) to a non-Jew and measured out for him in a dark place only half and gave it to him, and Eliyahu said to him, My son, it's written, “Don't oppress your neighbor.” Behold your neighbor (non-Jew) is like your brother (Jew), and your brother is like your neighbor...

וריע נקרא המתחבר אחר בקריבות הדעת ובמדות האנושיות, יהיה מי שיהיה—רק שיהיה בכלל אוהבי-אדם וישרי-לב עושים משפט לעשוקים ועוסקים בישובה של עולם לזה אתה מוזהר מן התורה על אהבתו והוא רעך כמוך, שגם אתה נוהג במדות המעולות הללו

And neighbor is what the [person] who joins himself [with you] is called, your brother in nearness of spirit/consciousness and in humanistic values, who will be whomever he will be (from whatever race or tribe

<sup>11</sup> Friedland was a co-founder of Hibat Zion, one of the earliest religious Zionist organizations.

or country or religion)—[the] only [qualification is] that he should be in the category of lovers of humanity and the upright of heart, doing justice for the oppressed and engaging in the settling of the world / *yishuvah shel olam*. For this you were warned by the Torah concerning loving him, and he is your neighbor like yourself, and you also [must] conduct [yourself] with these exalted qualities.

ועי"ז ישיגו כל העולם את האמת, כי השלום יביא את האמת, ויעמדו על האמת לבסוף, ויתוקן העולם בכללה לעבדו שכם אחד את ד' א"להי האמת ואז יקוים מה שאמר המשורר (תהלים קמ"ח) הללו את ד' מן הארץ וכו' מלכי ארץ וכל לאומים שרים וכל שופטי ארץ וכו' יהללו את שם ד' כי נשגב שמו לבדו ולא שם אחרים.

And by means of this all the world will reach the truth, for peace brings truth, and they will stand upon truth in the end, and the world will be prepared in its entirety / *y'tukan ha'olam bikh'lalah* to serve [as with] a single shoulder *YHVH* the God of truth, and thus will be established what the singer said (Ps. 148:7-13): “Praise *YHVH* from the earth... kings of the earth and all the nations, nobles and all earth's judges... Praise the name of *YHVH*, for the name alone is exalted”, and not the name of others.

ועל אותו העת אמר דוד ועתה מלכים השכילו הוטריו שופטי ארץ (תה' ב:י) - הכוונה השופטים יקבלו מוסר מן העולם וישיכלו איך לעשות צדק בעמם ומשפט בגוים וזהו הסדר הנאות אל תיקון העולם היינו בתחלה אהבת ריעות ושלום ומזה יבוא אל האמת ומזה יבוא אל משפט צדק כי השופטים ימצאו עולם מתוקן ולפי העולם ככה יהיו המשפטים.

And concerning that same time David said, “And now kings will become enlightened and judges of the earth be instructed” (Ps. 2:10)—the intent is that the judges will receive moral instruction / *musar* from the world and they will become enlightened [as to] how to do righteousness for their people and justice for the nations. And this is the proper/pleasing order for [reaching] the redemption of the world / *tikkun ha'olam*, which is this: in the beginning, love of neighbor and peace, and from this one will come unto the truth, and from this one will come unto righteous justice, for the judges will find a world mended / *olam m'tukan*, and according to [the nature of] the world, so will be the laws.

**27. R' Chaim Yudah Leib Litvin (1840-1903, Ukraine, Lubavitcher), *Sha'arei Dei'ah (The Gates of Knowledge, Lemberg, 1878)*, §57, 27a**

Has  
Equity  
Charity  
Love

ר' חיים יודה לייב ליטוויץ, שערי דעה ס' נז, טז.

וכדאשכחן לענין צדקה סלע זו לצדקה על מנת שיחיה בני הרי זה צדיק גמור... אף על גב דבעלמא בכהאי גוונא עובר על לא תעשה דלא תנסין את ד'. ... דמשום תקנות עניים לא הקפידה התורה על הכונה בזה... והכי נמי בכל מצות שבין אדם לחבירו שעיקרן מפני תקנות העולם ורצה יתברך להטיב בזה לבריותיו לא אכפת לן בהכונה כלל

We find in the matter of charity/*tzedakah* [that if one says,] “This *sela* coin is for *tzedakah* on the condition that my son will live,” behold this [person can still be considered] a completely righteous person / *tzadik gamor*—... even though in general, [acting] in this manner would transgress a prohibition, that you shouldn't test *YHVH*... because [in order to strengthen] enactments/*takanot* [on behalf] of the poor, the Torah is not meticulous about the intention with [respect to *tzedakah*], and this is also [true] for all the commandments between a person and their fellow human being, for their essence is because of setting aright the world / *mipnei takanot ha'olam*. And [since] the Blessed One wants through this to benefit His creatures, we are not concerned with intention at all...

**28. R' Ben Zion Eisenstadt (1873-1951), *Or Lifnei Hadorshin (Light before the Seekers)*, 10**  
**(New York, 1916)**

Zion  
Invention

ר' בן-ציון אייזענשטאדט, אור לפני הדורשין, י'

וישב יצחק ויחפר את־בארת המים אשר חפרו בימי אברהם אביו ויסתמום פלשתים (בר' כו:יח): יצחק חופר וממציא, מתקן עולם, משתדל בקיומו, והפלשתים סותמים את הבארות, משתדלים בהרבנו של העולם ובהפסדו.

“Isaac returned and dug the wells of water...and the Philistines had stopped them up” (Gen. 26:18): Isaac digs and brings forth (invents/develops), improves the world / *m'takein olam*, and the Philistines stop up the wells, strive for the destruction of the world and its depletion.

**29. R' Avraham Yitzhak Hakohen Kook (1865-1935, Jerusalem)<sup>12</sup>, *Orot Hakodesh (Lights of Holiness)***  
**v.3, 180**

Has/Kab  
Zion  
Order-  
Society  
Nation

ר' אברהם יצחק הכהן קוק, אורות הקודש, חלק ג, ק"פ

כל מחשבה שהיא מפקרת את תיקון העולם וסדרי המדינות ופורחת באוויר רוחני לבדה, ומתפארת בתיקון נשמות והצלחתן, הרי היא מיוסדת בשקר שאין לו רגלים

Any idea that abandons restoration of the world and the ordering of States / *tikkun ha'olam v'sidrei ham'dinot*, and floats in the spiritual air alone, and takes glory in [the power of] fixing souls and their success [only], is founded upon a lie that has no legs [to stand on].

**30. R' Avraham Yitzhak Hakohen Kook, *Orot Hatechayah (Lights of Resurrection)*, ch.28, 77**

ר' קוק, אורות, אורות התחיה פ' כח, עמ' עז (וגם נמצא בשמונה קבצים ב' שכו-שכז)

Has/Kab  
Zion  
Order-  
Nature  
Eco  
Nation  
Human

הקדושה שבטבע היא קדושת ארץ ישראל, והשכינה שירדה בגלות עם ישראל הוא הכשרון להעמיד קדושה בנגוד לטבע. אבל הקדושה הלוחמת נגד הטבע אינה קדושה שלמה, צריכה היא להיות בלועה בתמציתה העליונה בקדושה העליונה, שהיא הקדושה שבטבע עצמה, שהוא יסוד תקון עולם כולו וביסומו הגמור, והקודש שבגולה יחובר אל קודש הארץ... אז המלחמה חודלת לגמרי, מדת הדין מתבסמת, והכל נוטה כלפי חסד.

The holiness that is in Nature is the holiness of the Land of Israel, [while] the *Shekhinah* that descended into exile with [the people] Israel [has] the capability of preserving holiness [even] in opposition to what is natural. But holiness battling against Nature is not holiness [that is] whole — it needs to be absorbed into its highest essence, in supernal holiness, which is the very holiness of Nature herself, which is the foundation of repairing the world in its entirety / *tikkun olam kulo* and its complete rapture, and [then] the Holy in the exile will be joined to the Holy of the Land... Then war will stop completely, the attribute of judgment will be enraptured, and all will incline toward lovingkindness.

**31. R' Avraham Yitzhak Hakohen Kook, *Olat Ra'ayah (Offering of Vision)*, 1, 386**

ר' קוק, עולת ראיה חלק א', עמ' שפו (וגם עין איה על ברכות ט, רצ)

Has/Kab  
Nation  
Human  
Peace

התכלית הלאומית של ישראל... מצוינת בתקוה לעצמה לא בשביל עצמה, כי אם בשביל הטוב הכללי שהוא חן השכל הטוב, המוסר והיושר האמיתי, שאי-אפשר שיבנה כי אם על ידי תיקון עולם במלכות שדי... אמנם כל העמים, לכל אחד מהם יש מטרה ותעודה המצטרפת בתור מקצע מיוחד הנצרך לתיקון העולם... אמנם הדבר המיוחד בחכמת ישראל, חכמת התורה, הוא להשכיל איך כל

<sup>12</sup> Rav Kook was the Ashkenazi chief rabbi of Palestine from 1921-1935.

עבודת העמים כולם בשדי החכמה מתכנסת למקום אחד לדעת ד', ולישר דרכים במעגלי צדק כלליים, שגורמים להביא שלום בעולם...

The national purpose of Israel... is distinguished by its hope for itself not being for the sake of itself—rather, it's for the sake of the general enlightened good, which is the goodness of morality and true uprightness, which is impossible to build except through establishment of a world under the reign of the Almighty/All-nourishing / *tikkun olam b' malkhut Shaddai*... However, all the nations, for each one of them there is a purpose and aim that joins itself [to this purpose] as a unique expertise that is needed for repair of the world / *l'tikkun ha'olam*... However, the unique thing about the wisdom of Israel, the wisdom of the Torah, is that it brings enlightenment [about] how all the work of the peoples in the fields of wisdom converges to one place, to knowing God, and to making straight paths through the general tracks of righteousness, which will cause peace to come into the world...

### 32. R' Yehuda Ashlag (1885-1954, Jerusalem)<sup>13</sup>, “Building the Future Society”

ר' יהודה אשלג, בנין החברה העתידית

Kab  
Equity  
Social-  
Justice

אין לתקן את העולם בענייני הדת מטרים שמבטיחים לעולם את התיקון הכלכלי.

It is not possible to repair the world / *l'takein et ha'olam* in religious matters before securing for the world economic reparation / *hatikkun hakalkali*.

### 33. R' Yehuda Ashlag, “Peace in the World” I

ר' יהודה אשלג, השלום בעולם

Kab  
Holism  
Human

כל דבר שישנו במציאות, הן טוב והן רע, ואפילו היותר רע ומזיק שבעולם, יש לו זכות קיום, ואסור להשחיתו ולבערו כליל מן העולם — אלא שמוטל עלינו רק לתקנו, ולהביאו למוטב...

Everything there is in reality, whether good or bad, and even the most evil and harmful in the world, has a right/merit of existing, and it's forbidden to destroy and eradicate it from the world completely. Rather, what is laid upon us is only to mend it / *l'takno* and bring it to [the side of] goodness...

ומכאן המפתח להבנת החולשה של מתקני עולם שקמו בדורותיהם. כי הם ראו את האדם בדמות מכונה שאינה פועלת כראוי, וצריכה תיקון. דהיינו, להסיר ממנה את החלקים המקולקלים, ולהחליפם באחרים מתוקנים. כי כן כל מגמתם של מתקני עולם הללו לבער כל רע וכל מזיק שבמין האדם — ואמת היא שלולא הבורא ית' עמד לנגדם, ודאי שהיו כבר מספיקים מזמן לנפות את האדם כבכברה, ולהותיר בו רק טוב ומועיל בלבד. אלא, מתוך שהבורא ית' שומר על כל הפרטים שבבריאה שלו בהקפדה יתרה... אינו מרשה למישהו להשחית שום דבר שברשותו - אלא רק להחזירו ולהפכו למוטב בלבד...

And this is the key to an understanding of the incapacity of [so-called] world-reformers/ *m'taknei olam* that arose through the generations. For they saw a human being in the image of a machine that is not working properly and needs repair/*tikun*. This means, to remove the corrupted parts and replace them with others that are fixed/*m'tukanim*. And that is the whole tendency of these world-reformers – to eradicate anything bad and harmful in the human species – and the truth is were it not that the Creator was standing against them, they would certainly have already had enough time to sift humanity like a sieve, and to leave only [what is] good and useful. But because the Creator watches over all the elements in [the divine] Creation with such great care... no allowance is made for anyone to destroy a single thing in [God's] Domain—but only to turn it and transform it to be good...

<sup>13</sup> Rav Ashlag is known as *Ba'al Hasulam*, after the title of his complete translation and commentary on the *Zohar*.

### 34. R' Yehuda Ashlag, "Peace in the World" II

ר' יהודה אשלג, השלום בעולם

Kab  
Order-  
Society  
Equity  
Holism

הרי שמדות טובות ומדות רעות, מעשים טובים ומעשים רעים, נערכים רק כלפי טובת הציבור... והאמור עד כה אינו אלא להראות את נקודת התורפה, כלומר, המקום התובע את תיקונו, והוא שכל יחיד יבין שטובתו וטובת הציבור אחד הוא ובזה יבוא העולם על תיקונו המלא.

Indeed, good attributes and bad attributes, good deeds and bad deeds, are valued only according to the good of the community... And what has been spoken about up to here is only to show the point of weakness, that is, the place requiring correction /*tikuno*, and [the correction] is that each individual would understand that his own good and the good of the community are one, and through this the world will come to its full correction / *yavo ha'olam al tikuno hamalei*.

**Liberal Judaism in America** - some early texts on social justice *tikkun ha-olam*

### 35. Kaufman Kohler, *Jewish Theology: Systematically and Historically Considered* (1918)

Every achievement of the Jewish people, every attainment in power, knowledge, or skill, must lead toward the completion of the divine kingdom of truth and justice; that for which the Jew laid the foundation at the beginning of his history is still leading forward the entire social life of man to render it a divine household of love and peace.

### 36. Mordecai Kaplan, *The Meaning of God in Modern Jewish Religion* (1937), 124

We cannot consider ourselves servants of the Divine King unless we take upon ourselves the task "to perfect the World under the Kingdom of the Almighty." We must strive to reconstruct the social order in ways that would give evidence of our allegiance to the creative spirit of human life, that spirit which makes for personal self-realization and social communion... We should not give up hope of achieving an adequately representative government integrally related to a righteous economic order and to an internationalism without which there can never be universal peace.

### 37. Alexander Dushkin "Common Elements in American Jewish Education" *Jewish Education* 17 (1945):12

There is a growing acceptance by Jewish teachers that they must... transfuse all their work with that faith which posits an ongoing purpose in the universe making for the betterment of the world and of mankind, and which involves the teaching of our obligations to strive to share in this continuing urge to betterment, this *tikkun ha-olam*.

### 38. The right-wing polemic against social justice *tikkun ha-olam*: Here is one example from Grand Rabbi. Y. A. Korff (Boston), "The fallacy, delusion and myth of *Tikkun Olam*" (June 3, 2013 / JNS)

It is not at all a centuries-old tradition, it is not a call to action, and it is not a commandment. And to be clear, *Tikkun Olam* does not even mean repairing the world in the sense of social justice. Nor in traditional sources is *Tikkun Olam* in any way even a direct human imperative or action, but rather one that is left in G-d's hands. We cannot, and are not instructed to, save the world, or even to repair it. Judaism teaches no such thing. Rather, we are instructed to conduct ourselves properly, to observe the *Mitzvos*, the Commandments (which are not good deeds, but rather commandments, required imperatives), and in that way to contribute to society and civilization both by example and through practice and action.

## APPENDICES

I) There are many meanings and possible translations for *tikkun olam* and for the term *tikkun* in its own. Here is a listing of many of those meanings and translations, as well as synonyms.

- *Tikkun/l'takein* תיקון | תיקון can be translated as: to arrange, establish, fix, mend, repair, heal, reinforce, restore, prepare, perfect, set up, set right, order, ordain, invent, make, rectify, improve, reform, organize, accomplish, complete, make whole, straighten, dress, adorn, dress up; embodiment, structure, infrastructure, preparation, unification, establishment, remedy, reparation, correction, betterment, restitution, restoration, rectification. (And this list is not exhaustive!) While I usually translate concordantly (using the same root in English for the same root in Hebrew), I have taken the opportunity herein to demonstrate *tikkun's* breadth of meaning by using an array of these terms.
- *Tikkun/l'takein* is associated with *t'shuvah* (repentance), *yichudim* (unifications), *tovah* and *hatavah* (goodness or benefit), *sh'leymut* (wholeness), *l'hashlim* (to make whole), *l'heitiv* (to do good for), *l'takein* תיקון with a *kaf* (to establish, to balance, to measure), and with activities such as plowing, pruning, circumcision, adornment, cooking, praying, mending, performing a *mitzvah* (commandment), making tools and vessels (*keilim*).
- *Tikkun/l'takein* can mean the opposite of: evil, disorder, chaos, crookedness, to ruin, distort, twist.
- *Tikkun ha'olam*, *tikuno shel olam v'yishuvo*, *takanat ha'olam*, and *tikkun olam* are all interchangeable terminologies. Other terms that function as synonyms for *tikkun ha'olam* include: *yishuv ha'olam*, *kiyum ha'olam*, and *hashlamat ha'olam*.
- Terminology using the word *tikkun* that is closely related to or synonymous with the understanding *tikkun ha'olam* as final redemption or as the completion of the natural world/Creation includes: *tikkun k'lali*, *tikkun haklal*, *g'mar hatikun*, *hatikkun hashalem*, *hashlamat hatikun*, *takhlit hatikun*, *tikkun hateva*, *tikkun hab'riyah*, *tikkun ma'aseh v'reishit*.
- Terminology using the word *tikkun* that is closely related to or synonymous with the understanding of *tikkun olam* as the repair of society or the proper ordering of society includes: *tikkun m'dini*, *tikkun ham'dinah*, *tikkun hakibutz ham'dini*, *tikkun seder ham'dinah*, *tikkun hachevrah*, *tikkun chevratit*, *tikkun ha'adam*, *tikkun min* (מין) *ha'adam*.

II) How were the texts selected?

Most of these texts were selected from a collection of several hundred that I gathered to see how far back one could trace the idea that *tikkun olam* signifies social justice. I also included other texts that represent different streams in the evolution of *tikkun ha'olam*.

Where a stream of meaning is well-known, or relatively static, fewer examples are given. For example, I only included one case from the larger set of rabbinic rulings that are explained as being “*mip'nei tikkun ha'olam* / because of *tikkun ha'olam*.” Those rulings include laws related to *gittin* (divorce), *pidyon shvuyim* (freeing captives), freeing the half-slave (the case included), fair pricing, *prozbul* (a mechanism for allowing loans to outlast the sabbatical year cycle), returning a lost object, etc. There are also thousands of examples in halakhic literature where the Mishnaic phrase is cited, but only rarely do they tell us anything about the meaning of the term *tikkun olam* or its evolution.

What is left out? In general, if *olam* or *ha'olam* does not modify *tikkun*, then that use of *tikkun* should not be counted as related to *tikkun olam* (unless it influences later authors writing about *tikkun olam*, or is a term used as a synonym for *tikkun olam* by that author, like *takanat ha'olam* in Bachya or *tikkun kol hab'ri'ah* in Luzzatto). One of the confusions in many studies on the history of *tikkun olam* has been that texts about other types of *tikkun* were incorporated as evidence.



Here are some examples of the many other uses and valences of *tikkun* that do not refer to the world as a whole — *tikkun hanefesh* (repairing the soul), *tikkun hamidot* (character improvement), the *tikkun* of *tefilah* (prayer) or of a particular prayer service (which means the institution of a prayer or liturgical recitation), of *korbanot* (sacrifices), *avodah* (labor), *t'shuvah* (repentance), etc. In particular, there is a multitude of kabbalistic uses for the term *tikkun*. One may find authors who draw connections between these activities or goals and *tikkun olam*, but they are not equated with each other. A few examples of this are found in the texts above.

Despite the fact that *tikkun* is such a central concept in Lurianic Kabbalah, only a very small number of texts in Lurianic works deal with *tikkun ha'olam* or the *tikkun* of Creation as a whole. Lurianic Kabbalah is therefore not very influential in the evolution of the idea of *tikkun olam* until later authors like Moshe Chaim Luzzatto use the term *tikkun olam* in the messianic sense of redemption for this world. More often, Kabbalah talks about the *tikkun* of one particular world among the many many worlds and levels that are believed to exist (e.g., *tikkun olam ha'atzilut*, repairing the first world of Emanation, or *tikkun haShekhinah*, restoring the divine presence). Other unrelated uses of *tikkun* in Kabbalah also include discussion of *tikunim* (ritual or liturgical practices; also, material from the book *Tikunei Zohar*), or *olam hatikkun* (the repaired/redeemed world, which is contrasted in Lurianic Kabbalah with *olam hatohu*, this world of chaos).

III) Here is a brief bibliography drawn from literally dozens of articles and works on *tikkun olam* and its evolution and meaning — the vast majority of other articles are referenced in one or more of these resources. Whichever articles you read, you will notice that there are texts included above that contradict one or more of their conclusions.

Adena Berkowitz, “*Tikkun Olam* as Text and Context”, in *Tikkun Olam: Judaism, Humanism & Transcendence*, edited by David Birnbaum and Martin Cohen (Mesorah Matrix, 2014), 453-474. This whole book is online at [www.mesorahmatrix.com/tikkun-olam/](http://www.mesorahmatrix.com/tikkun-olam/).  
Lawrence Fine, “Tikkun: A Lurianic Motif in Contemporary Jewish Thought” in *From Ancient Israel to Modern Judaism IV* (1989) 35-53. Fine’s work was the first effort to identify some of the sources of *tikkun olam* in America, and the first to focus on the question of Lurianic influence on the contemporary concept of *tikkun olam*.  
Mitchell First, “Aleinu: Obligation to Fix the World or the Text?” in *Hakirah* 11 (2011) 187-197, online at [www.hakirah.org/vol%2011%20first.pdf](http://www.hakirah.org/vol%2011%20first.pdf). First marshals evidence that אלהינו may have appeared in the *Aleinu* prayer only after the classical period of rabbinic literature.  
Jill Jacobs, “A History of *Tikkun Olam*,” in *Zeek* (June 2007), online at [www.zeek.net/706tohu](http://www.zeek.net/706tohu). Jacobs’ work starts from the periodization of four completely different meanings of *tikkun olam* accepted by most scholars (i.e., *Mishnah*, *Aleinu*, Luria, liberal Judaism), and suggests a way to integrate them.  
Jonathan Krasner, “The Place of *Tikkun Olam* in American Jewish Life” (Jewish Center for Public Affairs, Nov. 1, 2014), online at <http://jcpa.org/article/place-tikkun-olam-american-jewish-life1/>. Krasner is one of the few to identify Rav Kook and Zionist thought as an important source for *tikkun olam*. (See also Aubrey Glazer in *Tikkun Olam: Judaism, Humanism & Transcendence*.)  
Jonathan Sacks, *To Heal a Fractured World: The Ethics of Responsibility* (Random House, 2005). Sacks was the chief rabbi of Great Britain from 1991 to 2013.