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## OUR MORAL-SPIRITUAL PATH TO TIKKUN OLAM AS FAITH-BASED COMMUNITY ORGANIZERS

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אֲנִי רוֹצֶה לְהִיּוֹת עֶבֶד הַיְיָ (I want to be a servant of God to repair the world),<sup>1</sup> we told ourselves (and each other), time and time again. But the desire to do that was often at odds with the need to repair ourselves. It seemed if we were doing the one, we were ignoring the other. We stayed stuck in this muddle until we learned several lessons.

The first lesson, perhaps obvious to others, was that the *masorah* (מִסֹּרָה—Jewish religious tradition)<sup>2</sup> offers more than one way to understand *tikkun olam* (תְּקוּן עוֹלָם). The word *tikkun* seemed straightforward enough. We understood it to mean “. . . putting things in their right relationship, in right order.”<sup>3</sup> But the word *olam* raised a lot of questions, like *which* “world”? We recalled the Mishnah teaching that “whoever saves a single soul from the children of humankind, Scripture credits him as if he had saved a whole world.”<sup>4</sup> So, potentially, it seemed, there were as many worlds to repair as there were lives to save.

### OLAM AS DIVINE PROVIDENCE

This conundrum was further complicated because, according to the Torah commentary of Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch (1808-1888), the word *olam*, at least in the Torah, does not mean “world”;<sup>5</sup> it only came to have that meaning later, in the language of the rabbis. The Hebrew root of *olam*, *ayin-lamed-mem* (א-ל-מ), refers instead to that which is hidden or withdrawn.<sup>6</sup>

Hirsch thus defines *Eil Olam* (אֵל עוֹלָם),<sup>7</sup> one of the names of God, as “. . . the One Who sows the future with invisible seeds in the present.” *Eil Olam* is

. . . the Ruler and Director of the hidden future which is slowly maturing to perfection in the course of time. For every second truly lived is in the very centre of that eternity in which we all will not only participate but in which we are participating if we are what we should be.

But what if we’re not what we should be? Can we really see ourselves (in God’s image) planting seeds in the present for a future we will never know? What does it mean to live in a way that we make ourselves responsible for eternity?<sup>8</sup>

It's hard to believe that a far distant future depends on the choices we make today. Most of us hope for a change in the here and now. We don't imagine that the future is determined, as Rabbi Michael Hattin (DOB unk.) puts it, by which model of human history we choose to adopt. But the consequences of that choice, as he points out, become "staggering."<sup>9</sup>

Will it be the mechanistic approach that denies a Higher Purpose and sees all of life's events as either self-authored triumphs and defeats, or else accidents of nature? Or will it be the providential model that recognizes an all-powerful Deity Who created the cosmos with a purpose, Who quietly demands but also lovingly guides humanity and all humans to fulfill their unique roles in the larger world as well as within the microcosm of their own individual lives?

Our past reluctance to wholeheartedly accept an all-powerful Deity was based on our unwitting demand for material proof of an incorporeal God. Wanting to pin down the attributes of the Creator by understanding the origin of the Creation, we were flummoxed by the limited explanations available: either the material Creation has always existed, or it was created out of nothing—neither of which can be understood by human experience and reason. So we had to acknowledge that the Creator is inconceivable in material terms, incomprehensibly incorporeal, yet intervenes in the material and spiritual worlds by dint of their lawfulness. Even if we cover our eyes and close our minds, we cannot avoid seeing that the Creation is unfolding in accord with the Creator's natural laws and spiritual infrastructure, the moral and ethical commandments we accept as given to us by God, communicated in sacred literature, prophecy, and revelation, the overall effects of which constitute most of what we call Divine Providence.<sup>10</sup>

With our dawning awareness of providence came a heightened sensitivity to our dependence on God. The evidence of providence was plainly before us: since we know the Creation (הַבְּרִיאָה—*ha-Beriah*) to be predictable, ipso facto we take it to be purposive. So shouldn't we recognize the Creator's implicit purpose, at least vis-à-vis humankind, that we grasp the undeniable power and will of the Creator?<sup>11</sup> What kind of relationship could we have with such an omnipotent, omniscient<sup>12</sup> God, other than one of dependence? Accordingly, we accept that God is the author of the Torah<sup>13</sup> and its *mitzvot* (מִצְוֹת—commandments), which make up much of the moral-spiritual<sup>14</sup> infrastructure of *ha-Beriah*, and the benefactor of our *bekhirah khofshit* (בְּחִירָה חוֹפְשִׁית—moral free will).

Still, we thought, it's not enough to say God exists, even that God is all-powerful and among us, if we fail to see that our dependence is total and inescapable, because God masterminds both the preconditions and the consequences of our free-willed decisions and actions.<sup>15</sup> Just as we confront prior conditions and consequences that affect our choices in the material domains of biology, chemistry, and physics, the same is true in the spiritual domains of righteousness, truth, justice, freedom, peace, and kindness.<sup>16</sup>

Through our own moral and ethical shortcomings, we come to know what we don't know, what we must leave to God. This verity is impressed upon us when we admit to ourselves that, although we have free will to do as we please, we mostly do *not* control the prior circumstances in which we make our choices; and rarely, if ever, do we choose the consequences of living as if we

are morally autonomous, at liberty to adopt any “lifestyle” that we find pleasurable—especially those that make limitless, self-satisfying materialism and sensuality the be-all and end-all of our lives.

Our commonplace experience is that whatever at the outset we imagined, planned, and expected as the benefits of acting amorally, whether spurred on by moral ignorance, casual indifference, or purposeful wickedness, the ultimate consequences emerged unexpectedly, invariably painful, yet educational for all involved. We learned that the onus of wrongdoing eventually catches up to us or, in time, ensnares others we care about, regardless of whether our misbehavior involves gossip, infidelity, greed, theft, violence, cruelty, idolatry, etc.<sup>17</sup>

Knowing this from experience, it made sense to us that the most promising life of *tikkun olam* is one in which responding to the *mitzvot* is the be-all and end-all of fulfillment for those of us who believe ourselves to have been created in the image of God.<sup>18</sup>

Our view is that the *mitzvot* reveal the purpose of God’s might and its fulfillment, what we regard as the Creator’s manifest mission revealed at Sinai, which remarkably *creates, sustains, and restores life*.<sup>19</sup> So we decided that our parallel mission<sup>20</sup> and the essence of *tikkun olam* must necessarily be to “walk in God’s ways”<sup>21</sup> and “choose life,”<sup>22</sup> invigorating it whenever and however we can.<sup>23</sup>

That mission calls us to demonstrate “. . . loyalty towards the Holy One . . .”<sup>24</sup> by honoring the *mitzvot*; because we believe that when we take up that cause, there is the possibility of unlimited goodness in life. Thus the overriding purpose of our life together, whatever our shortcomings, has been to help create that goodness.

### *God’s Incorporeal Free Will*

But placing our confidence in the possibility of unlimited goodness requires us to believe that God, Who we accept as the *Gaon Hakol* (גאון הכל—Mastermind of All), has unconditional free will. Otherwise, how could unlimited goodness exist? And the *masorah* teaches that God is all-powerful, can do *anything*, can even change that which is non-material into a material form.

Yet none of us with bodies have any experience of completely unfettered will in the material world. Believing in the possibility of unlimited goodness also means we acknowledge that God does *not* have a physical body,<sup>25</sup> that the Creator is outside (בחוץ—*bakhutz*) of our material world, leaving us to describe God as incorporeal (לא חומרי).<sup>26</sup> With that recognition, it became plausible<sup>27</sup> to believe in the Creator’s free will as the source of *ha-Beriah* and the source of our own free-willed moral-spiritual awareness and action.<sup>28</sup>

Ironically, these once-basic tenets of Jewish belief, which have been rejected as nonsensical by much of contemporary Jewry,<sup>29</sup> have been reinforced inadvertently by cosmologists and physicists. This has happened even though at one time, mainstream scientists seemed to have little or no interest in the ultimate causation of materiality. In the not-too-distant past, they claimed that there is no “reason” for the laws of physics—they just exist! They characterized the ultimate

cause of materiality as unprovable and thus irrelevant, although apparently that's no longer their point of view.

Little more than a decade ago, Paul Davies, professor of physics and Director of BEYOND: Center for Fundamental Concepts in Science at Arizona State University, asked, "Can the mighty edifice of physical order we perceive in the world about us ultimately be rooted in reasonless absurdity? If so, then nature is a fiendishly clever bit of trickery: meaninglessness and absurdity somehow masquerading as ingenious order and rationality."<sup>30</sup>

More recently, Richard Feynman, a California Institute of Technology physicist, reported that although his colleagues can make accurate predictions based on quantum mechanics, they do not understand the *why* and *how* of quantum mechanics, even though it is ". . . the most fundamental theory we have" about the physical world.<sup>31</sup>

Perhaps in an effort to deal with what they do not understand, some scientists have theorized that materiality simply evolved. But, of course, that does not tell us from *what* it evolved and *how*. And we note that the scientific method usually requires identifying the prior *material* cause of any kind of materiality or, if that's not possible, that it be acknowledged as methodologically beyond the reach of science.

Others have proposed mathematical models (some of them elegant) to prove their assertion that *ha-Beriah* has always existed. Still others have claimed it was created out of nothing,<sup>32</sup> although the philosopher Jim Holt has in effect characterized that idea as derivative, coming from a "pseudo-religious point of view."<sup>33</sup>

Some have resorted to theories of cosmology that seem to ignore completely the demands of empiricism. Offering virtually no testable hypotheses, these theories may fairly be described as imaginative science fiction.

One such theory proposes the existence of multidimensional worlds beyond our material universe, presumably to demystify the source of materiality. Others, however, have noted that ". . . the additional universes of the multiverse would lie beyond our powers of observation and could never be directly investigated." They cannot be verified empirically because ". . . You can't get any evidence about what existed before space and time came into being."<sup>34</sup> This lack of agreement among physicists has been reported as "A Crisis at the Edge of Physics."<sup>35</sup>

Even if scientists in the future were able to verify empirically the existence of a "world of numerous other dimensions," and to discover therein a creative force, they will not have verified the *source* of materiality or *ha-Beriah*; because, as noted by the award-winning science journalist John Horgan, "The belief that all of reality can be fully comprehended in terms of physics and the equations of physics is a fantasy."<sup>36</sup>

That fantasy may have its roots in the commitment of science to "Naturalism," the ideology that only those things which can be verified by the methods of the natural sciences, especially physics, can be said to actually exist.<sup>37</sup> Since the scientific method cannot directly account for any-

thing that does not take verifiable material form, science must necessarily refuse to acknowledge any substantial link between the material and non-material (spiritual) domains.

It is possible, however, that science itself has begun to chip away at the seeming inextricability of Naturalism in science. For the science of neurobiology has recently confirmed the human ability to bring that which is spiritual into material form.

Groundbreaking neurobiological research of recent decades has shown that (a) the human mind, a non-material instrumentality, which is not the same as the physical brain, but is verifiable by persuasive indirect evidence, has the power to conceive a purpose which it can induce into effect in the material world; and that (b) the mind can transform spiritual experience in the material world into scientifically verifiable, new physical brain structure.<sup>38</sup>

After all, perhaps it is not implausible that an incorporeal, free-willed, purposive Creator, our God, established the material and spiritual domains and their laws<sup>39</sup> (unless we want to claim that humankind seems to have powers that the Creator does not have). We should not be surprised that we cannot know, scientifically, how God brings about such creations,<sup>40</sup> much as any organism that resides in our bodies, whatever its so-called intelligence, and even though it is affected, cannot know how we create its *beriah*.

Turning from perplexing cosmological mysteries to our wisdom tradition to know how *ha-Beriah* came into existence, Midrash Rabbah (1:1) calls on us to trust that, in ways we cannot comprehend, “the Holy One, blessed is God, looked into the Torah and created the world” (הַקָּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא מְבִיט בְּתוֹרָה וּבוֹרֵא אֶת הָעוֹלָם). The Torah, which we know as the tangible representation of the moral-spiritual infrastructure of *ha-Beriah*, becomes recognizable to us as such only when we become aware of the *Shekhina* (שְׁכִינָה—earthly presence of God)<sup>41</sup> in our world and in ourselves. The Torah, then, exists not fundamentally as a creed, doctrine, philosophy, or testament, but as a revelation of the Creation’s incorporeal lawfulness for human society.<sup>42</sup>

Yet, even if we accept the mind-bending incorporeal existence of God, how could the Torah have existed before *ha-Beriah*? Consider that, while everything of God is incorporeal and infinite, the Creation is material and finite. Presumably, then, the *mitzvot* God was to create for humankind as the moral-spiritual infrastructure of *ha-Beriah*, existed first in an incorporeal form, as a blueprint of sorts for the Torah God would subsequently create on earth—which would enable humankind to bring about all of God’s goodness in the soon-to-be material world.<sup>43</sup>

When we abandon that gift of God, we discover the consequences of ignoring the *mitzvot*. Experience has taught us that with the decline of Torah-derived morals and ethics in virtually all of our institutional life, secular culture has not proved to be a viable substitute. The legacy of amoral culture has damned us with the likes of Communism, Nazism, endemic government and corporate corruption, Scientology, pandemic pornography,<sup>44</sup> and unbounded hedonism, to list only a few.

Moreover, unreflective obeisance to science since the beginning of the twentieth century has not preserved the best of marriage, family, community, environment, and democracy. Now, in the early decades of the twenty-first century, they all face existential threats.

If we are to survive such threats, we need to move ahead without delay<sup>45</sup> on the path to a predictable and morally lawful world. We need to align our *kavanot* (כַּוָּנוֹת—intentions) to Divine Providence (*hashgacha elyonah*—הַשְּׂגָחָה עֲלִיוֹנָה), God’s plan for the unfolding of *ha-Beriah*, and to Special Providence (*hashgacha peratit*—הַשְּׂגָחָה פְּרָטִית), God’s plan for the unfolding of our individual lives<sup>46</sup>—which are revealed to us when we study Torah<sup>47</sup> and do *mitzvot*.<sup>48</sup>

## WORLDS TO REPAIR

### *Repairing Ourselves*

We were already getting Social Security benefits when we set out on our *spiritual* path to *tikkun olam*, but it was not too late to learn that

. . . the first product of a [hu]man, the first result of [her or] his work, is [her or] his own character. This would be especially the case in a time . . . in which it would certainly require the highest amount of energetic working on oneself to save oneself out of the general depravity. . . .<sup>49</sup>

We also learned that the ability to refine our character depends in no small measure on the integration we achieve when we connect the parts of ourselves to work well together, both within and beyond ourselves. Daniel J. Siegel, a clinical professor of psychiatry at the UCLA School of Medicine, describes integration as

. . . the linkage of differentiated elements of a system—[which] leads to the flexible, adaptive, and coherent flow of energy and information in the brain, the mind, and relationships. This coherent flow enables the individual to attain an intentionally established state of mindfulness with practice in the moment and creates the experiential substrate for developing mindful traits in daily life.<sup>50</sup>

We could see the usefulness of integration in pursuing the mindful traits of a Torah-based life. The integration of psyche and physicality, for example, could improve self-regulation, like self-control of thoughts, attitudes, emotions, moods, affect, behavior, physical and mental health, and moral awareness, all of which are helpful in living a life centered on Torah and *mitzvot*. We could see that, with the integration of our body, mind, emotions, and spirit, we could awaken the full power of our *neshama tahora* (נֶשְׁמָה טְהוֹרָה—pure soul), the God-given potential moral goodness within each of us, the spiritual well from which we may draw our unique goodness to repair the world.<sup>51</sup>

We tried to imagine what it would mean to be integrated to do God’s will in every part of our life. We tried to picture what it would mean to use not only our bodies, rationality, and emotions, but also the memories, feelings, and drives deep in our limbic brains and brainstems, which usually escape our consciousness and control but still have powerful effects. We wanted to bring ourselves into a state of *tikkun*, to fully awaken our *neshama tahora*, to do as the Torah com-

mands us: וְאָהַבְתָּ אֶת יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ בְּכָל-לִבְבְּךָ וּבְכָל-נַפְשְׁךָ וּבְכָל-מְאֹדְךָ (“And you shall love Adonai your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your means”).<sup>52</sup>

It seemed we could *hiddur mitzvah* (הַדוּר מִצְוָה—honor the commandment)<sup>53</sup> with mindfulness by consciously choosing to be disciplined in focusing all our attention, neither overwhelmed nor closed off, acutely aware of our surroundings and actions. Our mindfulness could be further strengthened with “mindsight,” which Dr. Siegel describes as the integration of relationships, mind, and the [embodied] brain, a vision which is “. . . holistic in the true sense of the word, inclusive of our whole being.”<sup>54</sup> We could imagine thereby, magnifying the practical impact of our knowledge that, among all the creatures, we alone have been endowed with the free-willed power to turn our moral-spiritual conscience into life-giving outcomes in the material world.

We came to see that it’s possible to understand this potential scientifically. Our awareness—say, a thought, emotion, or memory—exists in the form of measurable energy, the result of the integration of the mind’s elements, which regulate the flow of neural energy and the information it carries.<sup>55</sup> In this way, the mind manages transitions from mental possibilities to material actualities, which is not unlike the wherewithal of our God מִי שֶׁאָמַר וַיְהִי הָעוֹלָם (“Who spoke, and the world came into being”);<sup>56</sup> כִּי הוּא אָמַר וַיְהִי (“for He spoke, and it was”),<sup>57</sup> and in whose incorporeal image, our *masorah* teaches, we have been created.

Our mindfulness ideal is that with every inhalation of breath, we concentrate our awareness on the *Gaon*, the Mastermind; and with every exhalation, we reaffirm that God is masterminding *Hakol*, all of *ha-Beriah*. We can acquire this seemingly impossible zenith of mindfulness as a way of life to the extent that, little-by-little, we consciously choose to internalize the *mitzvot* and *halakhah* (הַלְכָה—rabbinic law) as the lenses through which we perceive the world and interact with it.<sup>58</sup>

Yet we could also see that one might achieve integration and not have knowledge of Torah; and in that case, might just as easily do evil as good. For having the *capacity* to do good is not the same as knowing what *is* good. In order to ensure that we serve to raise up humankind, the most important integration for us as Jews is that of our free will with the vision and path of Torah. To put things in their right order (*tikkun*), we affirm that יֵשׁ לָנוּ גּוּפִים מְשׁוּלָבִים לְשֵׁם שָׁמַיִם (we have integrated bodies for the sake of Heaven).<sup>59</sup>

But what if we don’t have integrated bodies? The Scripture enjoins us, וְלִפְנֵי עֵוֵר לֹא תִתֵּן מִכָּשֶׁל (“Do not place a stumbling block before the blind”).<sup>60</sup> While this usually refers to *placing* a stumbling block before others, it applies as well to *removing* stumbling blocks, including those within ourselves.

Many of our internal stumbling blocks spring from conscious attitudes and emotions, which are relatively accessible to be rectified. But others rise up stealthily from our unconscious, triggered by long-past painful experience, such as that which is potentiated by insecure attachment<sup>61</sup> in infancy and trauma in childhood.<sup>62</sup> Not remediated, these stumbling blocks can lead to a failure of character development.<sup>63</sup>

We came to see that neural integration, enhanced by mindfulness and mindsight, could help us to develop moral character by making us aware of the unconscious attitudes and emotions that give rise to our misguided speech and behavior, such as tale-bearing, dishonesty, self-importance, selfishness, and addiction of one kind or another.

Once aware of our own stumbling blocks and, in turn, much more conscious of our immoral behavior, we could see more clearly how to redirect that behavior. We could accept the necessity for *teshuvah* (תשובה—repentance), turning or returning to the way of God and Torah, by studying Torah and doing *mitzvot*.

### *Teshuvah Precedes Tikkun Olam*

Rav Yaakov Medan (b. 1950) teaches that, “. . . true ‘*tikkun*’ (repair)” is based on our own *teshuvah*.<sup>64</sup> And the teaching of Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz (1937-2020) adds that we can attain a godly way of life, individually and collectively, covering over past misbehavior and fulfilling our moral-spiritual potential, because “All forms of *teshuvah*, however diverse and complex, have a common core: that human beings have it in their power to effect inward change.”<sup>65</sup>

The depth of that belief is suggested by the traditional teaching that the possibility of repentance was created (presumably in an incorporeal form) before the creation of the physical world, that it is not a human precept but was part of the *Gaon Hakol’s* “master plan” to establish the moral-spiritual infrastructure of *ha-Beriah*.<sup>66</sup>

To realize the unlimited potential of *teshuvah* requires that we turn our lives and become joined together<sup>67</sup> as “what we should be”: *talmidim* (תלמידים—students) and *pealtanim* (פועלתינים—activists)<sup>68</sup> devoted to the Torah’s path; along which, the way is signposted for us with what we understand to be six guideposts of holiness: *tzedek* (צדק—righteousness), *emet* (אמת—truth), *mishpat* (משפט—legal justice), *kheirut* (חירות—freedom), *shalom* (שלום—peace), and *khesed* (חסד—kindness).

When we ignore those guides and go off the path, we make ourselves little different than the other creatures—hardly *human*.<sup>69</sup>

We can see the far-reaching impact of *teshuvah* in the story of Yosef (Joseph) and his brothers. The *teshuvah* of the brothers for having sold Yosef into slavery was pivotal not only for their own repentance, for the renewal of their relationship with him, and for the restoration of their family, but for the future of the Jewish people. We exist, unquestionably, not only as the spiritual descendants of Yosef; we serve as the cultural posterity of the many different sons of Yaakov (Jacob), beneficiaries of their unified mission and the diversity of their contributions to successful Jewish life.<sup>70</sup>

Rav Medan sums up the Yosef narrative by highlighting its historic impact: “The story of the brothers’ repentance is equal in weight and importance to the story of the Flood and the overturning of Sodom—if not greater than them.”<sup>71</sup> Rav Alex Israel (DOB unk.) concludes that “. . . *teshuva* can be perceived as a national process of renaissance, restoration and redemption,”<sup>72</sup>

providing the moral-spiritual foundation not only of our individual lives but of our redemption as a people.<sup>73</sup>

We understand, sociologically, that to realize their potential, *teshuvah and tikkun olam must be rooted in the moral-spiritual infrastructure* of society. When that infrastructure is strong and stable, its moral guidelines for our behavior (into which we have been socialized from childhood) sustain our physical well-being, psychological and emotional equilibrium, and moral-spirituality. Those outcomes, in turn, prompt and sustain our political, economic, and social initiatives to transform the larger world in the image of God.

The moral law “. . . may be mysterious, but its role in the social order is not. In any nation short of dictatorship, some form of moral compact, implied or explicit should be the basis of a just society.”<sup>74</sup> But, as we might imagine, when the moral-spiritual infrastructure weakens or becomes moribund, we are no longer sustained in the same way. The antidote for such periods is the renewed actualization of the Torah,<sup>75</sup> a visionary strategy we empower with every *mitzvah* we fulfill. For when the *mitzvah*-based culture is dominant, selfishness is deterred by the prevailing obligations of *tzedaka* (תְּדָקָה—righteousness) and *mishpat*; and cruelty is discouraged by the pervasiveness of *khesed*. Our combined *mitzvot*, when carried out persistently and wholeheartedly, can transform poverty, oppression, and injustice into prosperity, freedom, equality and equity.

How can a *mitzvah* have such effects? The *mitzvah*, continually reinforced in human consciousness by the moral-spiritual infrastructure, transduces the will of the *Gaon Hakol*—Who is the lawmaker of the world and implants our *neshama tahora*—into the consequences of human action that either observes or ignores *tzedek, emet, mishpat, kheirut, shalom, and khesed*. The flourishing of this connection is our supreme source of hope.

### *Repairing Worlds Beyond Ourselves*

When, however, the moral-spiritual infrastructure is weak, the prophet Isaiah (57:14) seems to call out to us from the dim past: הָרִימוּ מִכְשׁוֹל מִדְּרַךְ עַמִּי (“Take up the stumbling block from the way of my people”). And Nehama Leibowitz (1905-1997) spells out the obligation to *remove* stumbling blocks that exist in the worlds beyond ourselves:<sup>76</sup>

. . . the Torah teaches us that even by sitting at home doing nothing, by complete passivity and divorcement from society, one cannot shake off responsibility for what is transpiring in the world at large, for the iniquity, violence and evil there. By not protesting, ‘not marking the graves’ and danger spots, you have become responsible for any harm arising therefrom, and have violated the prohibition against placing a stumbling block.

Rabbi Abraham Ibn Ezra (1089-1167) comments on the verse, “And the Lord said, If I find in Sodom fifty righteous inside the city, then I will spare the whole place for their sakes,”<sup>77</sup> that the words “inside the city” connote that the piety and awe of God of the righteous had to be expressed openly, publicly, if the city was to be saved for their sake. Nehama Leibowitz comments on this moral duty:

The same city which forces the righteous few into retirement so that their scrupulous moral standards should not interfere with the injustice dominating public life, that same city is not entitled to claim salvation by virtue of the handful of righteous men [and women] leading a secluded life within it.<sup>78</sup>

Our question was, where should we start? Rabbi Hirsch helped us to find an answer by clarifying the links that connect the various worlds, beginning with the family:

If one wishes the spirit of ethical integrity to permeate this society, then there is only one way: ‘build houses’ (Yirmeyahu [Jeremiah] 29:5), for such a spirit can flourish only in the dedicated atmosphere of a home. *There exists no substitute for the home*, and if one is looking elsewhere for the source of peace and prosperity, he is searching in vain. All of a nation’s politics and diplomacy, its theories of national economy and institutions for mass education, its trade and industry, its schools and community centers—none of these will save the people from extinction if they let the parental home become a parody. Are children born for the sake of the state’s false concern instead of the warm love of parents? Does the census show ever-growing numbers of children without parents and parents without children? Does the nation’s high society make a mockery of morality and modesty? If so, then all the palaces it is building are founded on quicksand.<sup>79</sup>

We came to accept that, “It is only a morally pure family life that becomes the cradle of a free nation, which stands for Right and the duties of brotherly love of fellow man. . . .”<sup>80</sup> We came to see that the commitment of any society to eliminate poverty, oppression, and injustice presupposes that it is rooted in a people “. . . conceived, born, brought up, and living” under moral law.<sup>81</sup>

The family home may have no viable replacement when it comes to teaching personal and civic morality,<sup>82</sup> but families often fail to fulfill that responsibility, leaving others to take their place. When there is no effective moral teaching in the home, and when the attitudes and behavior of children become problematic, parents often come to rely on schools, clergy, social workers, counselors, and therapists to fill the gap. But those professionals typically have other mandates to fulfill. Asking them to take on the job of parents is not only unworkable, it’s unfair. One result is that many become burned out and abandon their careers of service.

When the human services break down, families often become caught up in a Kafkaesque maze of police, courts, and other criminal justice institutions. There, too, the professionals are vulnerable to overload and burnout and, when they become swamped, not uncommonly morph into unaccountable forces of corruption and injustice.

The conditions that sabotage the teaching of moral sensibility in family life have intensified, cheered on by ubiquitous commercialized voices, ensuring our transformation into a nation fixated on materialism and sensuality. The moral ennui has made us a convenient target for unrestrained manipulation and exploitation by powerful economic forces and their political enablers. So we find ourselves in a world in which “. . . everywhere depravity of morals and social tyranny and oppression go hand in hand.”<sup>83</sup>

The commercially promoted implicit repudiation of religiously based morality in the United States<sup>84</sup> has had the secondary effect of removing our personal moral-spiritual dedication and that of our families from building and sustaining faith-based communities. The danger is that those communities, now in historic decline, will continue to withdraw from the mission of *tikkun olam*, thereby undermining the Torah vision:

This stone [set up by Jacob at Beth-El] shall be built up to a house in which such a life shall be lived that God will enter therein. Thereby, and thereby only . . . can a place on earth become a house of God. . . . The sanctity of the home is the necessary condition for the sanctity of the House of God, which is not called *מִקְדָּשׁ* [*mikdash*—sanctuary] because it is the place to which *קְדוּשָׁה* [*kedusha*—moral holiness] is relegated, but because from there holiness is to flow out and penetrate all human conditions and places, to be their centre point. *וְעָשׂוּ לִי מִקְדָּשׁ*, ‘let them make a Sanctuary unto Me’ (Exodus 25:8), it says later on to the descendants of Jacob who are to build out the foundation of this stone into a system of private and national life.<sup>85</sup>

Ideally, what begins with the *teshuvah*-rectification of our personal moral-spirituality, extends through our marriage, family, and faith community to vitalize the moral-spiritual infrastructure of the broader community and society.<sup>86</sup>

. . . [T]he family of Abraham were to be the realization of the establishment of human society on the basis of freedom and equality, where the value and nobility of every human being is recognised; where the common mission *לשמר דרך ה' לעשות צדקה ומשפט* [to guard the way of God to do righteousness and justice] as the expressed Will of God is alone to have the dictating rule over everybody.<sup>87</sup>

Psalm 127 teaches us that, unless we uphold the laws of the Creator, which comprise the moral-spiritual infrastructure of social life, our efforts to achieve the *salvation* of righteousness, truth, justice, freedom, peace, and kindness will always be fragmentary and futile. The implicit lesson for us as Jews is that we are not to be the makers of the moral law but to be made by it.<sup>88</sup>

As faith-based community organizers, we came to accept that to achieve *tikkun olam*, nothing less than the Noachide laws<sup>89</sup> or their equivalent must serve as the minimum moral-spiritual infrastructure to guide the social life of humankind; and for Jews, ideally the *mitzvot* and *halakha* should be understood as that minimum.

We concluded that the *masorah* provides a detailed guide to transformative soul-searching, which empowers us to reform our ungodly inclinations;<sup>90</sup> that we can enhance the power of the *masorah* by using the psychic discipline of mindfulness<sup>91</sup>—focusing all our attention—so that with each breath we align our *kavanah* (כַּוְנָה—intention) and our *maaseh* (מַעֲשֵׂה—action) with the *Gaon Hakol*; that when we link all our parts, uncovering our *neshama tahora*, we experience the Creator’s gift of integration, the fulfillment of our *human* potential; and that we can fully use our spiritual power *lahafokh hakol* (לְהַפּוֹךְ הַכֹּל—to transform all): ourselves, our marriages, our families, our faith communities, our people, and the nation in which we live.<sup>92</sup>

## *Inevitability of Obstacles*

But we have often been discouraged by the obstacles we faced, the conditions of our day-to-day life that sidetracked our *tikkun olam*. Much of our grasp of this vexation came from the teaching of Rabbi Soloveitchik.<sup>93</sup>

Our integration goals have been to achieve physical well-being, mental clarity, emotional balance, and moral conviction. But we often feel pressured to act in ways that seem contradictory, as if pushed and pulled by opposing forces.

We are attracted to associations that are inspired by moral-spiritual belief, such as our families, faith community, support groups, and civic associations; but we also feel pressured to commit ourselves to institutions that are driven by material creativity, such as universities, governments, and corporations—even with the tension between the values and principles of those two worlds.

We want worldly recognition, to be valued for our practical achievements, which often prove to be hollow; yet we also long for moral-spiritual redemption, to live out our essential goodness, which we sometimes believe to be impractical, and so bury within ourselves. On the one hand, we want to assert command and gain renown; on the other hand, we want compassionate acceptance, solitude, and inner tranquility. Sometimes we're preoccupied with the struggle to influence others; at other times we're completely taken up with the challenges of self-control. We are often confused by our contradictory experiences of seemingly unlimited power in some situations and powerlessness in others. Despite asserting dominion in many aspects of our lives, at times we have had a sense of being incomplete, even feeble. On occasion we have doubted who the "real me" is *going to be*—as if we're still teenagers impatient to grow up. At times, our two-sided personas can drag us onto emotional roller-coaster rides.

To lessen this turmoil, we have been tempted to pursue lifelong psychic harmony, although we knew from experience that humans never achieve unending contentment or happiness. Our misguided search was self-deluded and doomed, since none of our victories or defeats were ever complete or permanent. So we live with cognitive dissonance, never escaping entirely from contradictory beliefs, ideations, and values, hopes and dreams, and demands for action.

## *Experience of Faith*

We had managed to overcome the times when we were feeling wiped out and hopeless, when we failed at what we had set out to do. Our faith, which may be *sui generis*, made the difference, not wiping out the pain of the failures, but helping us to treat them as temporary setbacks.

Our "*external faith*," which we experience as conscious confidence or trust (יִתְבַּחַּ—*bitachon*), affirms that when we follow the Torah's teachings, God provides for our needs, regardless of our wants, at least insofar as they do not conflict with God's masterminding of *ha-Beriah*. This is mostly faith in God's ability to respond. Our "*internal faith*," which is inexplicable to us, seems to serve as an inexhaustible drive to do something good, despite all our reasoning and past failures that argue against it. This is mostly faith in our ability to respond.

Both types of faith rely on our belief that the *Gaon Hakol* creates the potential for more goodness, which is inherent in the path of the providential unfolding of *ha-Beriah*. We keep ourselves on that path by accepting that the *Mastermind of All can act* in ways that are entirely outside of our reason and experience, which is a “leap of faith”; and by accepting that, because of what God has created within us, *we can act* in ways that are entirely outside of our reason and experience (in that we too can create more goodness in the world), which is also a “leap of faith.” These two types of faith are not mutually exclusive; we rely on both to make our way, especially when in doubt or despair, personally or professionally.

When in such stressful circumstances, we recognize that the essential role of prayer is to help align our will and actions with *hashgacha*; prayer is then aimed not to change God’s behavior but our own.<sup>94</sup> Two dimensions of prayer are vital in this regard: (a) our understanding that *hit-paleil* (הִתְפַּלֵּל—praying) is typified by “. . . self-judgment, to exercise the office of judge on oneself before God. . . .” based on Torah; and (b) that the essence of Hannah’s prayer, “Let me fulfil my mission . . . for which You have created me . . . is the one formula for a prayer which can always hope to be granted.”<sup>95</sup>

Lastly, for spiritual reinforcement, we have produced some of our own *tefillot* (תְּפִלוֹת—prayers) and *chazanut*<sup>96</sup> (חֲזוּנֵי—cantorial music) for our *davnen* (דַּוָּנָה [Yid.]—praying):

Lovingly hold Adonai your God  
With all your tears and joy,  
With all your godliness unshakable,  
Lovingly hold Adonai.

This path you are guided on  
Shall fill your heart,  
Walk it for the children.  
Live it always,  
At home at work at play,  
Going back and forth  
In the light and dark.

Mark your hand with its map,  
Put it before your eyes,  
On your door and over the world,  
Say you’re one with Adonai.

## EMPOWERMENT OF THE SOUL

Beyond the faith needed to go on despite periods of hopelessness, our becoming more integrated helped us to overcome the endless struggle with oppositional contradictions.

We have learned that it's possible to discern the two worlds and the two sides of our personas from a psychic "space" between them, conscious of them separately yet somehow together. Instead of them jerking us back and forth in our day-to-day lives, we can calmly and thoughtfully encounter both worlds and both personas at the same time.

### *Soul-Mind Management*

We experience that space as our observation, decision, and action central. We understand it as our *neshama deiah* (נֶשְׁמַת הַדְּעִיָּה—soul-mind), which we employ to express our power of creative reasoning and moral sensibility, "breathed into" us exclusively as humans by our Creator,<sup>97</sup> but through means we can know only with metaphors. The soul-mind corresponds to the Oxford English Dictionary's definition of "psyche" as the human soul or spirit.

We can't account scientifically for the origin of the *neshama deiah*; however, from peer-reviewed research studies of interpersonal neurobiology and neuropsychiatry, we have learned how it manages that which we experience as the self.<sup>98</sup>

We now have compelling evidence that the mind can be distinguished from the brain, much as a driver who determines the direction and speed of a car can be distinguished from the vehicle that is the means of travel, but which is not self-operated (at least not yet successfully).<sup>99</sup> The symbol-laden meaning of the information that flows between two people is what distinguishes the mind from the brain, because brain neurons are simply firing as electrical energy, without meaning.

As mentioned above, our mind, by the management of neural energy and information flow, can re-fire and thus re-wire the neurons of the brain, changing the structure of the brain and permanently modifying our conscious and unconscious mental, emotional, and physical initiatives and responses. Although it seems far-fetched, the mind can also switch chromosomes on and off, with wide-ranging results.<sup>100</sup> The take-away is that the mind manages all our ways of knowing, not only our conscious awareness, and controls the triggers of our behavior.<sup>101</sup>

We are reminded of the *masorah*, which has long recognized that the body is directed by the *nefesh* (נֶפֶשׁ—soul), by our conscious, reasoning moral sensibility. So the body is understood as "merely the instrument and agent of the soul." The *neshama* (נֶשְׁמַת) goes beyond the *nefesh* to include our free-willed striving to align our will to God's *hashgacha* for *ha-Beriah* and human-kind in it.<sup>102</sup>

From birth and throughout life, our *neshama deiah* relies on socio-emotional attachment with others, both for its own initial development and for our survival at every level of social life.<sup>103</sup>

The empathic potential of the mind, brought to life by healthy attachment to our caregivers in infancy and childhood, serves as the seedbed of our thinking about and acting for the greater good, beyond ourselves—our empathic *moral*-spirituality.<sup>104</sup>

As we mature, learning the Torah's requirements to maximize our moral potential, our empathy makes God present in the world—known to us in this earthly incarnation as the *Shekhina*, our

God dwelling *not in us* but, like a supportive neighbor, *among us*, by virtue of our own empathic godliness, our imitating God, the One who “listens” without limit to the pain of the people, much as we can listen to one another.

We understand the *Shekhina* naturalistically; that is, as with Yosef, we experience God as among us when we choose to make God present by acting in a godly way.<sup>105</sup> When we pray, we don't experience God as listening to the prayer service but as present within it.<sup>106</sup> Even our speech brings God near, since “The mention of God's name in our mouths constitutes the manifestation of the *Shekhina* in the world.”<sup>107</sup>

When we choose to be empowered in these ways by the Torah's blueprint for our lives, we can become lifelong, unambiguous moral actors, fulfilling our potential to “. . . be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters never fail.”<sup>108</sup>

When we face moral choices, however, our *neshama deiah* may be divided, a response to unconscious learning history—say, as a dissociative reaction to early trauma—which in turn may be revealed in psychic and bodily disorders. The conflicts in our lives can show up in the psychologically stronger and weaker sides of our bodies, such as when the strength of one leg, hand, arm, or eye over the other is discovered.<sup>109</sup> The contrasts can signpost our divided persona, an absence of integration, which we play out in the two worlds we inhabit.

Our personal ability to see more clearly the conflicts between our worlds and personas was helped by the following brief meditations.

With your eyes closed, focus your awareness on a *stronger* part of your body. While doing so, take a few moments to recall a memory in which you were in some way creatively masterful, something for which you received recognition and felt the achievement had made your life more worthwhile. Allow yourself to dwell on the details of that experience and, in particular, to once again think the thoughts and feel the gratifying emotions that you felt then.

Now, once more with your eyes closed, focus your awareness on a *weaker* part of your body. Once again, while doing so, take a few moments to recall a memory in which you were in some way powerless, humbled, or even humiliated, when you wanted nothing but compassion and comfort. Allow yourself to dwell on the details of that experience and, in particular, to once again think the thoughts and feel the painful emotions you experienced then.

Consider that in these meditations, using mindfulness to focus our attention, we occupy an awareness-space in which we can see parts of ourselves that are in psychic opposition. It's a place from which we can see both sides of our persona. When we're in that space, we are using our *neshama deiah*, the part of ourselves that makes possible both our awareness and the expression of our morally free-willed souls.

It became clear to us that we can use our *neshama deiah* to pursue body-mind-emotion-spirit integration to free our moral-spirituality from the bonds of the trauma, abuse, and neglect we have suffered, thus fully energizing our *tikkun olam*.

## Creators of Ourselves

The essence of this pursuit is not mysterious, but it does require disciplined effort to achieve the integration of all our parts. The sought-after outcome is that we use all our psychobiological wherewithal to fully energize our *neshama tahora*.

Rabbi Soloveitchik teaches that we are created as humans *to be creators*; that our first task is to create ourselves as complete, integrated, moral-spiritual beings.<sup>110</sup> The goal is to stay on the Creator's providential path, which ultimately is the shortest route to achieving our own happiness. Physiologically, it may require a deliberate neurobiological re-firing and re-wiring of our brain neurons, which we can direct with our *neshama deiah*.

Thankfully, for those of us who lacked a secure attachment in infancy and experienced trauma in childhood, many methods to bring about restructuring of the brain have been successfully used in the field of neuropsychiatry. Examples include Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR), Emotionally Focused Therapy (EFT), Psychobiological Approach to Sex Addiction Treatment (PASAT), mindfulness, meditation, yoga, and several movement techniques.

It's also possible as an adult to realize many of the benefits of secure attachment by following the *masorah's* guidance for *devekut* (דבקות—cleaving) to God. The essence of *devekut* is that we bond with God in both the “upper” and “lower” worlds, in both our spiritual and material experience; that our thoughts and words and deeds take place in God's reality; and that we come to know, “By the power of what you do below with true love and awe, will you be able to bond with the Creator . . . .”<sup>111</sup> Our experience of *devekut* with the Divine is that, like all secure attachment relationships, we wear our heart on our sleeve; our thoughts, feelings, and spirit become shared and bonded with those of the God of the Torah, Who we experience personally.<sup>112</sup>

But for what purposes are we to create or recreate ourselves? In our highs and lows, we are dogged by questions that challenge our *neshama deiah* to referee the struggle between our two sides. Perhaps these questions, which seem to reflect universal moral choices, arose when God looked into the Torah before creating *ha-Beriah*. Regarding the choices, Rabbi Hirsch cautions us:

By yielding and giving ourselves up to the enticement and pleasures of life which God has given us to be used only to further God-serving purposes of the world, we have stripped our physical beings of its [sic] moral character, the character of טהרה [moral purity], of being in full control of ourselves; we have sunk our moral freedom of will in the bonds of physical sensuality and thereby sunk to the level of animals and given up the basis of a continued existence worthy of human beings.<sup>113</sup>

Eventually we choose either commitment to our own boundless sensory and material pleasure, comfort and convenience, or to something greater than ourselves but on which our lifelong well-being depends. In the following fanciful scenario, consider for yourself some of the choices we faced in the past:

Imagine you're the solo driver of a long-haul truck and semi-trailer, making deliveries around the country. You're getting ready to go on the road. Although your rig is fully loaded, it's carrying a strange load—six large containers. Inspecting the load, you find that the first container is oddly labeled *righteousness*; the second, *truth*; the third, *justice*; and the fourth, fifth, and sixth, *freedom*, *peace*, and *kindness*. It gives you pause, but you decide to accept this curiosity. As you check your delivery route, you see that you have six stops to make.

On the road, your first delivery is to a senior clergyman who has been covering up the pedophilia and other sexual predations of his junior colleagues, which have severely damaged the children, the families, and the faith communities they betrayed. When you arrive, you tell him that you have a delivery of *righteousness* for him . . . but he tells you he's not going to accept delivery.

At that moment, something very strange happens. You hear a penetrating godly voice in your head that asks: What do you think about this situation, and what, if anything, are you going to do about it? (Perhaps you respond: Why me? I'm already doing what good I can.)

Your second delivery is to the president of your congregation, in which a small clique of religiously indifferent board members has been heavily promoting secular programming and cutting resources for religious education and social action. When you arrive, you tell him that you have a delivery of *truth* for him . . . but he tells you he's not going to accept delivery.

Then, again, you hear that needling, godly voice in your head, asking: What do you think about this situation, and what, if anything, are you going to do about it? (Perhaps you respond: How can I deal with this mess? I'm just another member of the congregation.)

Your third delivery is to a probation supervisor in your town, who you know personally. He has failed to train his officers to treat domestic violence as a violation of probation. When you arrive, you tell him that you have a delivery of *justice* for him . . . but he tells you he's not going to accept delivery.

You again hear that godly voice, asking: What do you think about this situation, and what, if anything, are you going to do about it? (Perhaps you respond: I'm not sure what I'm willing to do about this—it raises a lot of questions about what I owe my friends.)

Your fourth delivery is to a meeting of your state legislature, which has been working non-stop to suppress voting by minorities, the poor, college students, and the elderly. When you arrive, you tell them that you have a delivery of *freedom* for them . . . but they tell you they're not going to accept delivery.

Again, the godly voice comes: What do you think about this situation, and what, if anything, are you going to do about it? (Perhaps you respond: I'm not qualified to fix this. I don't know anything about lobbying the legislature.)

Your fifth delivery is to a meeting of neighborhood watch members who have been stopping and questioning anyone of color they see in their neighborhood after dark, reporting them to the police as suspicious, often leading to their arrest or worse—which is also stoking racial tensions in

the city. When you arrive, you tell them that you have a delivery of *peace* for them . . . but they tell you they're not going to accept delivery.

Then the godly voice comes: What do you think about this situation, and what, if anything, are you going to do about it? (Perhaps you respond: I have no idea how to deal with so much racism.)

Your last delivery is to random strangers you encounter on the streets of your city. They all ignore your attempts to distract them from their smart-phones and tablets and get them to see what's happening all around them. You try to tell them that you have a delivery of *kindness* for them, but you can't get their attention.

Undimmed, the godly voice asks: What do you think about this situation, and what, if anything, are you going to do about it? (Perhaps you respond: I should do something, but what's going on everywhere is overwhelming. I would have no idea where to begin.)

After a few moments of silence, the godly voice in your head returns one last time to challenge you, saying: What are you doing down there with the gift of life I have given to you? (Perhaps you respond: I'm often not sure what I'm doing with my life.)

Each of these situations poses a difficult choice, but our *neshama deiah* can consider both sides calmly. We can see the opposing forces and purposefully take charge of them, rather than their taking charge of us. Regardless of where we're working or what we're doing, our *neshama deiah* has the wherewithal to choose how we use our integrated bodies. But can we live in both worlds, given all their contradictions, yet be animated by Torah?

### *Unifying Moral Spirituality*

Our persona is unified when we have only one set of moral-spiritual guideposts for the worlds we inhabit—specifically, the Torah's salvatory vision and path of righteousness, truth, justice, freedom, peace, and kindness. That we should have one set of guides hearkens back to the words of Isaiah (30:21): וְאֶזְנוֹךָ תִּשְׁמָעֵנָה דְבַר מֵאַחֲרַיִךְ לֵאמֹר זֶה הַדֶּרֶךְ לְכוּ בוֹ כִּי תִאְמְרוּ וְכִי תִשְׁמְאוּלוּ (“And your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying: This is the way, walk in it, when you turn to the right and when you turn to the left”).

These Torah guideposts to our moral-spiritual salvation are linked to one another in action, leading to an effect much larger than their individual impact. Because when there is no righteousness, there is no truth; when there is no truth, there is no justice; when there is no justice, there is no freedom; when there is no freedom, there is no peace; and when there is no peace, there is no kindness. We have witnessed this domino effect in the four years of the Trump administration and in the life of virtually every authoritarian regime.

When we abandon the guideposts, we hasten the end of what makes us uniquely human (הֶאָנוּשִׁית הַיְחָדָה). When we honor them by our actions, whether alone or with others, our personas are unified, and we speed up *tikkun olam*. Regardless of which world we occupy, we become undivided by

activating the potential virtue of our *neshama tahora*, our pure soul, to contribute unique goodness to *all* worlds.

We can serve that godly purpose in a corporate organization or a covenantal community, on a construction site or in a civic-action organization, in a university classroom or a neighborhood watch meeting, in a pool hall or a congregation, in a pick-up basketball game or our own family. Regardless of which world we inhabit, our *kavanah* and *maaseh* remain the same.

By purposefully using our *neshama deiah*, we can empower ourselves to uplift our own lives, the lives of others with whom we're interconnected, and the planet on which we all live. Whether engaged in command and control or retreating in the face of loss, defeat, or failure, we can join in that transformative mission. We have that choice; although, admittedly, it requires of us enough moral-spiritual courage and maturity<sup>114</sup> to accept that the cost is to move beyond mostly *taking* from the personal and public good made possible by others, to mostly *giving* to it.

An especially hard part of that giving is that devotion to *tikkun olam* is challenging in a particularly painful way, since it leads to *kilyon einayim* (כְּלִיּוֹן עֵינַיִם—a longing of the eyes), not to be fulfilled in one's lifetime.<sup>115</sup> It's hard to admit that at best our individual legacy is miniscule when stacked up against what needs to be done to repair the world. But we still have the choice of whether or not to do the *mitzvot* to further that repair, even if our efforts may not add up to a faint blip on God's radar scan of the providential path of *ha-Beriah*.

In making that choice, we ought to ask ourselves if we're willing to die to be an *eved Hashem* (עֶבֶד ה'—servant of God). We don't raise the point for dramatic effect, but as a reminder that how we use the time of our lives is literally that for which we are willing to die. And if we have nothing for which we are willing to die, for which we choose purposefully to devote the days and decades of our lives, then for what are we living?<sup>116</sup> Were we created simply for the mindless and soulless pursuit of physique, possessions, position, privilege, and power, which invariably reward us with spiritual alienation and psychic depression?<sup>117</sup>

Finally, then, we are brought back to the vision and purpose of our life together, and so back again to our *kavanah*: וְשֵׁנוּ גִּבּוֹרִים לְשֵׁם שְׁמַיִם (we have integrated bodies for the sake of heaven)—to do all we can to repair the world.

Since our professional path in this endeavor is faith-based community organizing, we leave you with the words of our “anthem” in that mission, which we have sung with thousands of members of faith-based organizing projects:

#### New World Coming\*

There's a new world coming, we're going to shape it.  
There's a new world coming, we're going to make it.  
We're going to sing, we're going to dance.  
We're going to give humanity a chance.

Organize, organize. . .  
With the word of God leading every life. (x2)

We've got a vision of salvation on this earth.  
It's a time for humankind to live in peace.  
To come to know that we can make  
What our hearts want the whole world to be.

Organize, organize. . .  
With the word of God leading every life. (x2)

It's a job that's going to take all our lifetimes,  
And a whole lot more besides.  
So let's start laying track and get on a train  
To a righteous world for us and our offspring.

Organize, organize. . .  
With the word of God leading every life. (x2)

There's a new world coming, we're going to shape it.  
There's a new world coming, we're going to make it.  
We're going to sing, we're going to dance.  
We're going to give humanity a chance.

\* A recording of the melody is available at [www.gatherthepeople.org/Media/20\\_NEW\\_WORLD\\_COMING.mp3](http://www.gatherthepeople.org/Media/20_NEW_WORLD_COMING.mp3);  
and sheet music is available at [www.gatherthepeople.org/Downloads/NEW\\_WORLD\\_COMING.jpg](http://www.gatherthepeople.org/Downloads/NEW_WORLD_COMING.jpg).

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<sup>1</sup> We understand *tikkun olam* to be a radical condition of the covenant between the Jewish people and God. As Rabbi Irving Yitzchak Greenberg teaches in “What Happened at Sinai” (audio file), J.J. Greenberg Institute for the Advancement of Jewish Life (2021) [<https://www.hadar.org/torah-resource/what-happened-sinai#source-9776>]: “At this place [Sinai], the Israelites as a people entered into the covenant of *tikkun olam*, to repair the world and fill it with life.”

<sup>2</sup> See Yechezkel (Ezekiel) 20:37, וְהִבֵּאתִי אֶתְכֶם בְּמִסְכַּת הַבְּרִית (“And I will bring you into the bond of the covenant”). The word “bond” (מִסְכַּת) is based on the root מ-ס-ר, meaning to transfer, as in “handing over,” but also commonly understood to mean “tradition,” that which is passed from generation to generation.

<sup>3</sup> From Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch commentary on Bereshit (Genesis) 5:8. The simple definition we have relied on doesn't do justice to the Kabbalistic view of *tikkun*. The Kabbalists in sixteenth and seventeenth century Safed spoke of the “completion of the world” (תִּיקוּן עוֹלָם—*tikkun olam* or simply *tikkun*) as the gathering of all the sparks of holiness strewn among the imperfections of life. *Tikkun olam* now commonly refers to “repair of the world.” The etymology of *tikkun* points to multiple meanings: to *be in order* (הִתְקַנְתָּהוּ) (Daniel 4:33); a twisted thing which cannot be *made straight* (לְתַקֵּן) (Kohelet [Ecclesiastes] 1:15); the *arranging* (תְּקַן) of things, which may be taught by the wise [“skilled in moral philosophy”] (Kohelet 12:9); and the work of God “Who can *make straight* (לְתַקֵּן) what He has made crooked” (Kohelet 7:13)—about which Rashi said: “See God's work: how straight it is, everything according to man's deed.”

<sup>4</sup> See Sanhedrin 4:5 (Judaica Press, 1963), although the Hebrew text reads: וְכָל הַמְּקַיִם נִפְשׁ אֶחָת מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל, מַעֲלָה עָלָיו (הִבְרַתוּב בְּאֵלוֹ קַיִם עוֹלָם מְלֵא).

<sup>5</sup> For examples, see Bereshit 9:12, 9:16, 13:15, 17:7, etc.

<sup>6</sup> See Hirsch commentary on Bereshit 21:33; and see also: Rabbi Matityahu Clark, *Etymological Dictionary of Biblical Hebrew* (Jerusalem & New York: Feldheim Publishers, 1999), p. 186; Ernest Klein, *A Comprehensive Etymological Dictionary of the Hebrew Language for Readers of English* (New York: Macmillan Publishing, 1987), p. 466; and Reuben Alcalay, *The Complete Hebrew-English Dictionary* (Ramat-Gan-Jerusalem: Massada Publishing, 1981), p. 1907.

<sup>7</sup> See Bereshit 21:33, translated by Hirsch as “God of the future.”

<sup>8</sup> See Hirsch commentary on Shemot (Exodus) 34:7: נֶצַח הַחַסֵּד לְאַלְפִים (“Preserving love for the thousandth generation”): “. . . goodness itself becomes a tree of happiness and salvation for the farthest thousandth generation; so that the effect of any man’s fate, or that of any nation, is not merely for his own individual self and for the duration of his lifetime, but is felt by all his contemporaries as well by the whole future. . . . which God’s providence allows to blossom out of the lives of good people to all their contemporaries, and above all, to their children and children’s children down to the thousandth generation.”

<sup>9</sup> See Rav Michael Hattin, “Parashat Miketz: From Dreamer to Interpreter,” Yeshivat Har Etzion, Israel Koschitzky Virtual Beit Midrash (n.d.) [<https://www.etzion.org.il/en/dreamer-interpreter>].

<sup>10</sup> For more on the plausibility of this proposition, see Martin Rees, *Just Six Numbers: The Deep Forces That Shape the Universe* (New York: Basic Books, 2000—Kindle edition). Peter Roberts, in his review, “Just Six Numbers,” *Science and Environment* (Fall 2001) [<https://www.vision.org/review-just-six-numbers-1139>], sparingly summarizes Rees thesis: “. . . six ‘cosmic numbers’ . . . have determined the way the universe is today. According to Rees, these numbers govern the shape, size and texture of the universe and would have been defined during the big bang. His astonishing conclusion, based on the scientific evidence available, is that these six numbers appear to be unerringly tuned for the emergence of life. That is to say, if any one of them were much different, we simply could not exist.” Rees admits the possibility of “providence” as an explanation but prefers the “multiverse” theory, which he acknowledges as still no more than a “tentative hypothesis, which is *not* now “vulnerable to being refuted” (locs. 2326-2341), and that “These universes would never be directly observable” (loc. 2352).

<sup>11</sup> Regarding God’s purpose in creating *ha-Beriah*, see Rav Ezra Bick, “The Purpose and Signs of Miracles According to the Ramban,” Yeshivat Har Etzion, Israel Koschitzky Virtual Beit Midrash (n.d.) [<https://www.torahmusings.com/2015/04/the-purpose-of-signs-and-miracles-according-to-the-ramban/>].

<sup>12</sup> In the Yom Kippur Shaharit (morning) service, we acknowledge עֵינֶיךָ מְנַגֵּד מִנְּסֻתְךָ וְאֵין נֶעְלָם מִמֶּךָ וְאֵין דָּבָר נֶעְלָם מִמֶּךָ (“There is no thing concealed from You and nothing is concealed from before Your eyes”). In effect, there is nothing, no action, too small for which Hashem arranges consequences—not unlike Newton’s Third Law of Motion, which we assume the Creator also authored.

<sup>13</sup> Obviously, there is no scientific way to verify or falsify the authorship of the Torah. History cannot be proved or disproved with the rigor of the natural sciences, so we can never know with certainty what happened in the distant past and why it happened. What we do have, however, is evidence and reasoned likelihood based on a multi-millennial tradition of generation-to-generation teaching.

<sup>14</sup> Moral-spirituality, as used here, whether referring to an intellectual ideal, behavioral standard, or emotional anodyne, has two radical dimensions sociologically: (1) that realization of the unique potential of humankind, individually and collectively, is *rooted* in shared morality that is sustained by society’s moral infrastructure; and (2) that the potential for widely shared morality is most fully realized when the source of that morality is incorporeal, universal, and not itself advantaged in any way by its particular requirements. An overall objective of Jewish moral-spirituality is “Not to elevate the free uncontrolled impulsive life of animals to the ideal of human life. . . .” (Hirsch commentary on Vayikra [Leviticus] 18:1). For a detailed description of the character and effects of moral-spiritual infrastructure, see Moshe ben Asher, “Moral-Spiritual Infrastructure: Touchstone of Movement-Building Community Organizing,” *Social Policy* (Winter 2020).

<sup>15</sup> See Rav Ezra Bick, “The Symbolism of Chametz,” Yeshivat Har Etzion, Israel Koschitzky Virtual Beit Midrash (1997) [<http://www.vbm-torah.org/pesach/pes61-eb.htm>], in which he affirms that there is no Pesach without Shavuot—there is no freedom without the law; but also, that there is no Shavuot without Pesach—there can be no commitment to the law without moral freedom.

<sup>16</sup> Hirsch comment on Bereshit 45:11 spotlights Mishlei (Proverbs) 26:10, רַב מְחוּלָּל בֶּל וְשֹׁכֵר כְּסִיל עֹבְרִים, that “The great Master of the World achieves everything from the smallest beginnings, as physical so also social.” Moreover, the spirit of God within us “. . . is not a spirit of mere theoretical knowledge and understanding, but is the means of both understanding and action” (Hirsch commentary on Shemot 25:39).

<sup>17</sup> Hence the wisdom of Solomon (Kohelet 11:9) cautions us: וְהָלַךְ בְּדַרְכֵי לִבְךָ וּבְמַרְאֵי עֵינֶיךָ וְדַע כִּי עַל-כֵּל-אֵלֶּה יִבְיָאָךְ וְהָאֵלֹהִים בְּמַשְׁפָּט (“And walk in the ways of your heart and in the sight of your eyes, but know that in all these things God will bring you into judgement”).

<sup>18</sup> The Mishnah Torah, Sefer Mada, Teshuvah 9, teaches: שְׂאֵנוּ עוֹשִׂים כָּל מִצְוֹת הַתּוֹרָה וְיָגִיעוּ אֵלֵינוּ טוֹבוֹת הָעוֹלָם הַזֶּה כֻּלּוֹ (“. . . when we do all the commandments of the Torah, the good of this whole world will come to us”).

<sup>19</sup> Rabbi Irving Yitzchak Greenberg, “On the Priesthood, Holiness is Living in the Fullness of Life,” J.J. Greenberg Institute for the Advancement of Jewish Life (5781/2021) [<https://www.hadar.org/torah-resource/priesthood>], teach-

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es that the Creation “. . . was not made to be void; it was created to be filled with life (Isaiah 42:18). Humans are called to fill Creation with life and to repair the world so it will support life to the maximum, in all its dignity and value.” Rabbi Ezra Bick, *In His Mercy: Understanding the Thirteen Midot* (Jerusalem: Magid Books, Koren Publishers, 2011—Kindle Edition), loc. 501, teaches that “The attribute of *Havaya* [הוּיָהוּ—lit. being or existence; but here the Tetragrammaton, the Divine Name of the four Hebrew letters (יהוה) denoting God’s incorporeality] . . . grants life to all living things,” which we assume is not limited to physical life, but includes psychic, emotional, and moral-spiritual life, which are essential to the successful continuation of the physical life of humankind.

<sup>20</sup> David W. Weiss writes of “A Mystique of Action” in *The Wings of the Dove* (Washington, DC: B’nai B’rith Books, 1987), pp. 20-23: “Judaism is permeated by a mystique of action. The archetypal concept for the Jew is *mitzvah*; the medium of redemption is action. . . . It is the *mitzvah* that transforms, not declarations of faith. . . . Man is obliged to reflect and reciprocate the attributes of the Divine in the thrust of doing; for the Jew the ground of action is the *imitatio dei* of *mitzvot*. The mystery is that in their course, man is transformed.”

<sup>21</sup> Tehillim (Psalms) 119:3 and 128:1

<sup>22</sup> Devarim (Deuteronomy) 30:19

<sup>23</sup> As taught in Samson Raphael Hirsch, *The Collected Writings*, Volume II (New York: Feldheim Publishers, 1985, 1992), pp. 388-389: “Acknowledgement of God as the Creator of life commits every thought, feeling, sensation and emotion, every word and deed to holiness,” to aligning one’s will with the will of God as revealed in the Torah.

<sup>24</sup> See Harav Yehuda Amital (Kaeren Fish & Rav Ronnie Ziegler, Trans.), “Commitment vs. ‘Connecting’—The Current Crisis of Our Youth,” Yeshivat Har Etzion, Israel Koschitzky Virtual Beit Midrash (from a speech delivered at Yeshivat Har Etzion’s Mesibat Chanuka, 5760 [1999]) [<https://www.etzion.org.il/en/commitment-vs-connecting-current-crisis-our-youth>].

<sup>25</sup> In other words, God is nothing like us; as we read in Bamidbar (Numbers) 23:19, לֹא אִישׁ אֵל (“God is not a man”).

<sup>26</sup> “Incorporeal” is how we describe that which is unknowable in the ways we know the material world. Moreover, as the *masorah* directs, our task and our welfare require us to know God’s will for us from the Torah, and to carry it out, not to fathom the particulars of how God created and masterminds *ha-Beriah*.

<sup>27</sup> Our belief in an omniscient and omnipotent God does not depend on material proof, because God’s incorporeality makes that impossible. We find useful in this regard the sociology of Peter L. Berger in *The Sacred Canopy, Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (New York: Anchor Books, 1969—Kindle Edition, Open Road Media, 2011), which describes the phenomenology of “plausibility structures” (loc. 729), which are constructed and maintained by social interaction and shared language experience. Berger describes the interplay between the non-material plausibility structures, which convey the meaning of the material world as we project it, and how we actually experience the world. When the plausibility structures accurately foretell outcomes in the material world, they become stronger; when they no longer conform to such outcomes, they begin to weaken. The *masorah*, as a plausibility structure, was weakened because the world of the closed traditional Jewish community and the socialization of its members were overtaken by the Haskalah (Jewish Enlightenment, from the late 1700s to the late 1800s) and by the allure of unrestrained sensuality and materialism that followed the beginnings of secularization in Europe in the seventeenth century. That history did not disprove the value of the *masorah*’s principles and practices to Jewish communities, but it did undermine their transmission from generation to generation by observant families. Nevertheless, the plausibility structure of the *masorah* has survived for thousands of years because, for the remnant that has adhered to it, their physical and spiritual integrity, individually and as a people, has been sustained.

<sup>28</sup> Hirsch commentary on Bereshit 1:1

<sup>29</sup> In this regard, see the insightful commentary of Samson Rafael Hirsch, *The Collected Writings*, Volume I (Feldheim Publishers, 1984, 1997), p. 26: “. . . the members of the ‘House of Israel’ are increasingly losing confidence in themselves, in their Calling, in their God and His Law, and His promises. . . . They increasingly declare that the Divine Law of Sinai, which should have been their soul, is dead. . . . Because of this they were becoming corpses, dead to their God and to their people, dead to the great hope—the perfection of [hu]mankind, which is the sublime historical calling of the House of Israel.”

<sup>30</sup> See Paul Davies, “Taking Science on Faith,” *New York Times* (November 24, 2007).

<sup>31</sup> Feynman, a physicist and Nobel laureate, notes that “. . . nobody really understands quantum mechanics.” According to Sean Carroll, a theoretical physicist at the California Institute of Technology, “Physicists brought up in the modern system will look into your eyes and explain with all sincerity that they’re not really interested in understanding how nature really works; they just want to successfully predict the outcomes of experiments,” and in that sense they are not “empirically minded. . . . although how reality works might actually matter.” See Carroll, “Even Physicists Don’t Understand Quantum Mechanics,” *New York Times* (September 7, 2019).

<sup>32</sup> For example, see Lawrence A. Krauss, *A Universe from Nothing* (New York: Free Press, 2012). Similarly, Stephen Hawking in *Brief Answers to the Big Questions* (New York: Bantam Books—Kindle Edition, 2018), loc. 440, writes: “I think the universe was spontaneously created out of nothing, according to the laws of science.” However, *yesh mei-ayin* (יש מֵאֵין)—something from nothing), according to Jewish thinking, differs from the “nothing” Krauss defines as a cosmologist. Robert Barron in “Stephen Hawking: Great Scientist, Lousy Theologian,” *ShalomTidings* (July 7, 2019) [<https://shalomtidings.org/stephen-hawkins-great-scientist-lousy-theologian/>] comments that, “The first mistake . . . is to equivocate on the meaning of the word ‘nothing.’ In the strict philosophical (or indeed religious) sense, ‘nothing’ designates absolute nonbeing; but what Hawking and his disciples mean by the term is in fact a fecund field of energy from which realities come and to which they return. The moment one speaks of ‘coming from’ or ‘returning to,’ one is not speaking of nothing! . . . Whatever you want to say about the laws of science, they are not nothing! Indeed, when the quantum theorists talk about particles spontaneously popping into being, they regularly invoke quantum constants and dynamics according to which such emergences occur.” The so-called nothing that Krauss and Hawking define originates from beyond the scientifically verifiable material world, and therefore it is from “nothing” only insofar as its provenance eludes the scientific method. Since neither Krauss nor Hawking have any prospect of obtaining empirical evidence of cosmological events that occurred before the Big Bang, we apply the principle that “What is unfalsifiable is unscientific, and it is pseudo-science to declare an unfalsifiable theory to be true.” See Lawrence I. Bonchek, “Absence of Evidence Is Not Evidence of Absence,” *Journal of Lancaster General Hospital*, 11(3):65-66 (Fall 2016). Thus we distinguish between speculative theories and evidence-based laws, because it’s possible for theoretical explanations to be mathematically perfect, appearing lawful, but in fact be unable to account empirically for the phenomena they purport to explain.

<sup>33</sup> See Jim Holt, “Why does the universe exist?” TED Talk (September 2, 2014) [[https://www.ted.com/talks/jim\\_holt\\_why\\_does\\_the\\_universe\\_exist?language=en](https://www.ted.com/talks/jim_holt_why_does_the_universe_exist?language=en)].

<sup>34</sup> See John Horgan, “Is Lawrence Krauss a Physicist, or Just a Bad Philosopher,” *Scientific American* (posted online November 20, 2015) [<https://blogs.scientificamerican.com/cross-check/is-lawrence-krauss-a-physicist-or-just-a-bad-philosopher/>].

<sup>35</sup> See Adam Frano and Marcelo Gleiser, “A Crisis at the Edge of Physics,” *New York Times* (June 5, 2015). Adam Frank, a professor of astrophysics at the University of Rochester, and Marcelo Gleiser, a professor of physics and astronomy at Dartmouth College, co-founded National Public Radio’s *Cosmos and Culture* blog.

<sup>36</sup> Horgan, op. cit.

<sup>37</sup> See Phillip E. Johnson, “Evolution as Dogma: The Establishment of Naturalism,” *First Things* (October 1990) [<https://www.firstthings.com/article/1990/10/evolution-as-dogma-the-establishment-of-naturalism>].

<sup>38</sup> See Daniel J. Siegel, Attachment (Ch. 3), in *The Developing Mind* (New York and London: Guilford Press, 1999), pp. 67-120.

<sup>39</sup> Our tradition describes God as omnipotent (כֹּל־יָכוֹל), omniscient (כֹּל־יּוֹדֵעַ), and omni-benevolent (כֹּל־טוֹב־לֵב). For example, see Isaiah 45:5-7: הֲ אֲנִי הַיְהוָה וְאֵין עוֹד זֹלַתִּי אֵין אֱלֹהִים אַאֲזַרְךָ וְלֹא יִדְעַתְּנִי: וְלִמְעַן יִדְעוּ מִמְּוֹרַת־שָׁמַשׁ וּמִמַּעַרְבָה כִּי־אֶפְסָם: זֶ יוֹצֵר אֹר וּבוֹרָא חֹשֶׁךְ עֹשֶׂה שְׁלוֹם וּבוֹרָא רַע אֲנִי הַיְהוָה עֹשֶׂה כָּל־אֵלֶּה [I am Hashem and there is no other; other than Me there is no God; I will gird you, though you did not know Me; I am Hashem, and there is no other. [I am the One] Who forms light and creates darkness, makes peace and creates evil; I am Hashem, Maker of all these”). The scientific viewpoint, as expressed by Stephen Hawking (op. cit.), proposes that while God may have created the universe and the scientific laws that govern it, God “. . . cannot intervene to break the laws, or they would not be laws” But according to some scientists, there is the possibility that the material universe we know is simply one of a series, which includes those that came before this one and others that will follow. Lee Smolin, a physicist at the Perimeter Institute for Theoretical Physics, has theorized that the laws of nature change with time. His theory “. . . envisions universes nested like Russian dolls inside black holes.” See Dennis Overbye, “Laws of Nature, Source Unknown,” *New York Times* (December 18, 2007). We might reasonably think that whatever we now regard as scientifically lawful behavior would be superseded in a remarkable way to enable the ending of one universe and its replacement with another. Notably, Hawking’s lawfulness seems to be on a hiatus in the operation of black holes. Consider that “Einstein’s general theory of relativity beautifully weaves space and time together into a four-dimensional fabric. . . . But Einstein’s theory and the space-time concept break down inside black holes at the moment of the big bang.” See Natalie Wolchover, “A Different Kind of Theory of Everything,” *The New Yorker* (February 19, 2019). As the 2020 winner of the Nobel Prize in physics, astrophysicist Andrea Ghez, stated: “We have no idea what’s inside the black hole. . . .” See Joel Achenbach, “American Andrea Ghez, 2 others win Nobel Prize in physics for discoveries about black holes,” *Washington Post* (October 6, 2020). Scientific lawfulness appears to be a dynamic process of continuing redefinition, subject to the improving human ability to observe and

measure and thus to achieve greater understanding. A more down-to-earth but related problem with the claim that scientific laws cannot be broken is that those who hold that belief often refuse to acknowledge when such laws seem to be superseded—when scientists are faced with enigmatic circumstances, whether the creation of the universe itself or inexplicable recovery from irreversible terminal disease—which suggests that sometimes they are more dedicated to their scientific ideology than to the methodological necessity to deepen their observations and analyses and thus their understanding, or simply to acknowledge that which is beyond the limits of their methodology. Moreover, Hawking’s certainty can be turned on its head: While *ha-Beriah* seems to be ever-changing, the laws that govern all change, according to Hawking, are fixed, which he describes as a limitation on God’s power. But then, how did the laws become fixed? The Jewish view of the miracle of *ha-Beriah* is not limited to what God set in motion, but according to Bereshit 2:1, וַיְכַל אֱלֹהִים בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי מְלַאכְתּוֹ אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה וַיִּשְׁבֹּת בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי מִכָּל-מְלַאכְתּוֹ אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה (“Then God completed with the seventh day His work that He had made, and with the seventh day He ceased from all the work that He had made”)—that is, that the process of creation *ceased*, which was primarily in regard to establishing the lawfulness of *ha-Beriah*. Since physicists and cosmologists cannot explain scientifically the existence of lawfulness in *ha-Beriah*, they resort to philosophical and theoretical explanations, neither of which can be verified empirically.<sup>40</sup> See the Mishnah Torah, Sefer Madda, Teshuvah 6: וַיְכַבֵּר אֱמֻנָתוֹ שֶׁאֵין בּוֹ בְּאֶדָם לִידַע הַיָּאֵר יַדַע הַקְדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא דְבָרִים (“We already explained that it is beyond the power of humankind to know how God knows future things to be”).

<sup>41</sup> From the Hebrew root ש-ב-ן, to dwell or reside with others, as with a helpful neighbor (Shemot 12:4). The *masorah* teaches שְׁכִינָה בְּתַחְתּוֹנִים, the essence of God dwells below—on earth as well as in heaven (Bereshit Rabbah 19:7).

<sup>42</sup> Total attention and dedication—drawing on our completely integrated selves—decrees what’s required of us to avoid running afoul of the divine jurisprudence. Unfortunately, because of the compelling attractions of materialism and sensuality, we only come to that mindful posture through the pain of our moral and ethical mistakes. See Hirsch, *The Collected Writings*, Volume II, p. 397.

<sup>43</sup> A Jew once asked his rabbi, “How can I be sure that God is the author of the Torah?” The rabbi replied: “Suppose you find yourself with a group of people lost in a large mansion. It’s so large, you have no idea of your location or how to find where you need to go—the kitchen, the bathrooms, the bedrooms, etc. Wandering the halls of the mansion, stumbling over unexpected twists and turns and stairways, you discover a niche in a wall that contains a set of architectural drawings which detail the entire floorplan of the mansion, which even allow you to determine the exact place where you are located. At that moment, you and all the rest of the group begin to celebrate—you’re going to find your way to the places you need to go. So you begin to make your way, following the plans. But then a couple of people speak up and say, ‘Wait a minute! How do we know that these plans are accurate or who drew them? How can we be sure that they really are the plans drawn by the architect of this mansion?’ The question for the group then became, ‘Should we use the plans to find our way or should we first try to figure out and agree on who actually drew the plans?’ Would you want to first figure out who drew the plans or simply use them to find your way?”

<sup>44</sup> The popularity of pornography is inversely related to popular knowledge of its deleterious effects. For some of the most damaging outcomes, see: Shira Tarrant, *The Pornography Industry* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016); Gail Dines, *Pornland: How Porn Has Hijacked Our Sexuality* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2010); and Christine Wilcox, *How is Online Pornography Affecting Society?* (San Diego: ReferencePoint Press, 2016).

<sup>45</sup> As one of the great activist Chasidic rabbis of the modern era, Menachem M. Schneerson (1902-1994), taught, implicitly in recognition of the costs of dithering, timidity, and cowardice, “Anything worth doing should be done now and not delayed.”

<sup>46</sup> See Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzzatto (1707-1746), *Mesillas Yesarim, Way of the Upright* (New York, NY: Mesorah Publications, 2014—Digital Edition), Ch. 26, Note 30, which explains that “This refers to the wisdom of the ways in which Hashem guides the world: from how Hashem directs the universe toward its ultimate goal, to His involvement with the most minute details of each person’s life, and how all these factors interconnect.” Notably, while we believe we are individually under “. . . God’s Care, that nevertheless . . . [our] own well-being, and that of every individual is dependent on the well-being of all.” See Hirsch commentary on Bamidbar 15:21.

<sup>47</sup> In his commentary on Vayikra 18:4-5, Hirsch notes that “The value of ‘learning,’ of Torah study, is only so great: גדול תלמוד, because it מביא לידי מעשה, because it leads to practice.”

<sup>48</sup> Torah study and *mitzvot* may be understood as mutually reinforcing, since anyone involved in [*mitzvot*] efforts for the welfare of the community is like one involved in Torah study [תורה] תוֹרָה [מִשְׁנֵה תוֹרָה, Sefer Ahavah, Tefillah & Birkat Kohanim, Ch. 6; Commentary: This comparison of community work to the study of Torah is found in the Yerushalmi [Jerusalem Talmud], Berachot 5:1).

<sup>49</sup> Hirsch commentary on Bereshit 6:9

<sup>50</sup> See Daniel J. Siegel, “Mindful Awareness, Mindsight, and Neural Integration,” *The Humanistic Psychologist*, 37(2):137-158 (2009).

<sup>51</sup> The Talmud (Berachot 60b) directs us to begin each day by reciting: אֱלֹהֵי נִשְׁמָה שְׁנִתְּתָ בִי טְהוֹרָה הִיא (“My God, the soul You placed within me is pure”). The soul is regarded as morally pure (טהור) because its Creator is pure, not subject to transgression of the self-authored law devised for humankind.

<sup>52</sup> Devarim 6:5

<sup>53</sup> See *Mesillas Yesharim*, 19:47: “‘A person should spend an extra third to beautify a mitzvah’ [בְּחִדּוּר מִצְוָה עַד שְׁלִישׁ] [בְּמִצְוָה] (Bava Kama 9b). . . . [because] the performance of the mitzvah by itself is not enough. Rather, one must also honor and beautify it” [to be worthy in the sight of God]. We understand that worthiness as effecting the *mitzvah*’s transformational power in the image of God.

<sup>54</sup> See the Foreword to Daniel J. Siegel, *Mindsight, The New Science of Personal Transformation* (New York: Bantam Books, Random House, 2010—Kindle Edition), loc. 74.

<sup>55</sup> See Daniel J. Siegel, “Mindfulness training and neural integration: differentiation of distinct streams of awareness and cultivation of well-being,” *Social Cognitive and Affective Neuroscience*, 2(4):259-263 (December 2007).

<sup>56</sup> Eruvin 13b

<sup>57</sup> Psalm 33:9

<sup>58</sup> For an in-depth treatment of this aspiration, see Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, *Halakhic Man* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1983).

<sup>59</sup> That is, everything we do should be part of our service to God, bringing the presence of God into our material world, sanctifying the mundane with God’s purpose and thereby redeeming the world from evil.

<sup>60</sup> Vayikra 19:14

<sup>61</sup> The benefits of secure attachment from childhood are indirectly suggested by traditional Judaism. For example, see Hirsch commentary on Bereshit 43:14: “רחמים, the feeling that we are to have inherited means more than pity. The word is derived from רחם, by which is designated the most self-sacrificing energy of one being for the formation of another being to come into existence and be completed; רֶחֶם, the womb, is the hearth of the deepest devotion. And afterwards, too, when the new being is there, the רחם begets not only sympathy with its crying, but even more intimate joy with its smiling. A smile from the baby on the lap makes up for years of worry and sleepless nights. From this רחם is רחמים formed and not only suffers when the other suffers, but knows no rest until he sees him happy. . . .”

<sup>62</sup> See Part Three: The Minds of Children in Bessel Van Der Kolk, *The Body Keeps Score—Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma* (New York: Penguin Books, 2015—Kindle Edition), locs. 2006-3226.

<sup>63</sup> For the attachment-foundation of morality, see: Spassena Koleva, et al., “The Moral Compass of Insecurity: Anxious and Avoidant Attachment Predict Moral Judgment,” *Social Psychological and Personality Science*, 5(2):185-194 (March 2014); Phillip R. Shaver and Mario Mikulincer, “An Attachment Perspective on Morality: Strengthening Authentic forms of Moral Decision-Making” (unpublished, 2010)

[<http://portal.idc.ac.il/en/symposium/hspsp/2010/documents/15-shaver-mikulincer.pdf>]; and Marinus H. van IJzendoorn, “Attachment, Emergent Morality, and Aggression: Toward a Developmental Socioemotional Model of Anti-social Behavior,” *International Journal of Behavioral Development*, 21(4):703-728 (2010). See also: Deborah Davis, et al., “‘I can’t get no satisfaction’: insecure attachment, inhibited sexual communication, and sexual dissatisfaction,” *Journal of the International Association for Relationship Research*, 13(4):465-483 (December 2006); Donald G. Dutton and Katherine White, “Attachment insecurity and intimate partner violence,” *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, 17(5):475-481 (September-October 2012); James P. Henry and Sheila Wang, “Effects of Early Stress on Adult Affiliative Behavior,” *Psychoneuroendocrinology*, 23(8):863-875 (November 1998); Mario Mikulincer and Phillip R. Shaver, “Attachment Security, Compassion, and Altruism,” *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 14(1):34-38 (February 1, 2005); and Robert T. Muller, et al., “Attachment as a Mediator between Childhood Maltreatment and Adult Symptomology,” *Journal of Family Violence*, 27(3):243-255 (April 2012).

<sup>64</sup> See Rav Yaakov Medan, “The Meaning of Josef’s Estrangement,” Yeshivat Har Etzion, Israel Koschitzky Virtual Beit Midrash (n.d.) [<https://www.torahmusings.com/wp-content/uploads/2007/12/10-65miketetz.htm>].

<sup>65</sup> In Adin Steinsaltz (Michael Swirsky, Ed. & Trans.), *Teshuvah: A Guide for the Newly Observant Jew* (New York: Free Press, 1987), pp. 3-4.

<sup>66</sup> See Pesachim 54a.

<sup>67</sup> In Mishlei (Proverbs) 14: 28, we read: בְּרִבְעָם הַדִּרְתָּ מַלְךְ וּבְאִפְסָ לֹאִם מְחַתֵּת רֹזֶן (“ . . . in a multitude of people is the ruler’s glory, but in the lack of people is a ruler’s ruin”). Malbim (Rabbi Meir Leibush ben Yehiel Michel Wisser,

1809-1879) comments that, “. . . ‘people’ denotes a population united by a spiritual belief. Even where there is an impressive display of numbers . . . , [the ruler] will find himself helpless if there is a lack of people of religious faith and understanding.”

<sup>68</sup> *Tikkun olam* is not the mission of a vanguard spiritual corps. Menachot 27a teaches that, like the four species required for the sufficiency of the lulav, the four types of Jews—personified in all the combinations of (1) possessing Torah knowledge and (2) doing good deeds, or their absence—must be bound together for Israel to succeed. Those with little or no Torah knowledge or good deeds, if ignored or excluded, visibly reveal the inadequacy of the moral-spiritual mission of the nation and, moreover, when abandoned have negative effects, from dead-weighting to active undermining of the mission; while those with Torah knowledge and good deeds must know and act not only for their direct positive influence, but as models for others without those virtues, because the merit of the former depends on the latter, since without encompassing the latter the former cannot fulfill their *mitzvah*-mission. As Yalkut Shimoni (§651) teaches: אַחַת בְּאַגְוִיָּה אֶחָד (they will not return to their land until they are bound together as one) [[https://www.sefaria.org/Yalkut\\_Shimoni\\_on\\_Torah.651?lang=bi](https://www.sefaria.org/Yalkut_Shimoni_on_Torah.651?lang=bi)]. And as Hirsch teaches: “God’s Sanctuary [the fount of our education up to our full moral-spiritual potential] can never rest upon the individual alone, but upon the union of all individuals and upon those individuals as part of that union.” (See Hirsch, *The Collected Writings*, Volume II, p. 410.)

<sup>69</sup> The Gematria (Hebrew numerology) of the last letters of the six enumerated guides to holiness is equal to that of Bamidbar 17:8: וַיְבֹא מֹשֶׁה וְאַהֲרֹן לְפָנֵי אֱלֹהִים מִחוּץ לַאֲוֶן הַמִּזְבֵּחַ (“And Moses and Aaron came to the front of the tent of meeting”—to hear Hashem’s anger at the people), which, as we take up the way of these guides, calls our attention to the striking parallels to current ubiquitous self-idolatry and the apparent immobilization of the faithful, despite the devastating consequences of making amoral autonomy an unassailable social value.

<sup>70</sup> Hirsch commentary on Bereshit 49:1-2

<sup>71</sup> See Medan, op. cit.

<sup>72</sup> See Rav Alex Israel, “Teshuva: Two Dimensions of Return,” Yeshivat Har Etzion, Israel Koschitzky Virtual Beit Midrash [<https://www.etzion.org/il/en/teshuva-two-dimensions-return>].

<sup>73</sup> See the Mishnah Torah, Sefer Madda, Teshuvah 7, which warns that “Israel will not be redeemed except through *teshuvah*” (וְיִשְׂרָאֵל נִגְאָלִין אֶלָּא בְּתִשְׁבּוּבָה) [[https://www.chabad.org/library/article\\_cdo/aid/911908/jewish/Teshuvah-Chapter-Seven.htm](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/911908/jewish/Teshuvah-Chapter-Seven.htm)].

<sup>74</sup> See Donald M. Berwick, “The Moral Determinants of Health,” *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 324(3):225-226 (July 21, 2020), p. 225.

<sup>75</sup> “This continuous rearticulation moves people to live covenantally and keep the Torah as a guide to living, as well as play their part in the ongoing movement toward *tikkun olam*, world repair.” See Irving Yitzchak Greenberg, “The Torah Speaks in the Language of Humanity” (audio file), Hadar Institute (5781/2021) [<https://www.hadar.org/torah-resource/torah-speaks-language-humanity#source-9871>].

<sup>76</sup> See Nehama Leibowitz, *Studies in Vayikra* (Jerusalem: World Zionist Organization, 1983), p. 178.

<sup>77</sup> Bereshit 18:26

<sup>78</sup> See (Aryeh Newman, Trans.) *Studies in Bereshit* (Genesis), (Jerusalem: World Zionist Organization, n.d., 4th ed.), pp. 185-86.

<sup>79</sup> See *פסח של פסח Haggadah*, With commentary compiled and adapted from the writings of Samson Raphael Hirsch (Jerusalem and New York: Feldheim Publishers, 1998), pp. 14-15.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid

<sup>81</sup> Ibid, 18:4-5

<sup>82</sup> Michael Novak in “The first institution of democracy. Tocqueville on religion: What faith adds to reason,” *European View*, 6:87-101 (2007), describes de Tocqueville’s belief in the importance of the home to democracy: “When there is no trust in the home, trust in public life is highly improbable. Where there is a lack of [moral] self-government at home, self-government in the public sphere has little probability of success” (p. 97) [<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1007/s12290-007-0012-8>]. We discern in the *masorah* that the merit

(תַּחַת—*zechut*) of one’s lineage (יָחִיד—*yichus*) is the generation-to-generation blessing one receives in the form of the parental voice that articulates the Torah legacy of challenge, affirmation, and commission to do the *mitzvot*.

<sup>83</sup> Hirsch commentary on Vayikra 18:3

<sup>84</sup> The harmful effects of the widespread decline of moral sensibility are multiplied by ubiquitous commercially driven rationalizations that promote unrestrained pleasure-seeking. Some of the more blatant corporate messaging includes: “Do what feels good!” (Coke), “If it feels good, do it!” (Burger King), “Freedom of expression—it’s what

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it's all about" (Botox Cosmetic), "You can never have too much fun" (Apple), and "When you have passion, you have everything" (Don Julio Tequila).

<sup>85</sup> Hirsch commentary on Bereshit 28:22

<sup>86</sup> As noted by Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., if the faith community ". . . does not recapture its prophetic zeal, it will become little more than an irrelevant social club with a thin veneer of religiosity." See Patrick Lacroix, "Martin Luther King's activism points to a way forward for the left—but not how we might imagine," *The Washington Post* (January 15, 2018).

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid*, 37:11-12

<sup>88</sup> As taught in Hirsch, *The Collected Writings*, Volume II, p. 387: "The origin, character, purpose and significance of the Jewish laws differs from all others. Everywhere else the law is created and formulated by the people; the Jewish people were formed by the Law. Everywhere else the law serves the people, the Jewish people serve the Law."

<sup>89</sup> The children of Noah were given seven commandments: to establish a system of laws, not to curse God, not to practice idolatry, not to engage in sexual transgressions, not to murder, not to steal, and not to eat a limb torn from a live animal. See Sanhedrin 56a and 56b.

<sup>90</sup> We are taught that every inclination, ". . . as long as . . . from the יוצר [Creator], is pure and holy," (Hirsch commentary on Bereshit 2:7), and to repurpose our evil inclination (יצר רע) into a good one (יצר טוב). For example, if we see something that triggers our evil inclination to steal, we can choose instead to make sure that the object in question is no longer vulnerable to theft.

<sup>91</sup> Regarding the potential of mindfulness for self-healing, see Laura Buchholz, "Exploring the Promise of Mindfulness as Medicine," UCLA Longevity Center (October 12, 2015)

[<https://www.semel.ucla.edu/longevity/news/exploring-promise-mindfulness-medicine>], which notes that ". . . evidence suggests that mindfulness meditation may be associated with structural and functional changes in brain areas responsible for attention, emotional regulation, and self-awareness. . . ."

<sup>92</sup> A traditional teaching ascribed to Rabbi Yisrael ben Ze'ev Wolf Lipkin, known also as Israel Salanter (1809-1883), suggests the breath of action entailed in *tikkun olam* and its underpinning of *teshuvah*: "When I was a young man, I wanted to change the world. I found it was difficult to change the world, so I tried to change my nation. When I found I couldn't change the nation, I began to focus on my town. I couldn't change the town and as an older man, I tried to change my family. Now, as an old man, I realize the only thing I can change is myself, and suddenly I realize that if long ago I had changed myself, I could have made an impact on my family. My family and I could have made an impact on our town. Their impact could have changed the nation and I could indeed have changed the world." Retrieved from Sefaria [<https://www.sefaria.org/sheets/188318?lang=bi>].

<sup>93</sup> See Reuven Ziegler, *Majesty and Humility, The Thought of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik* (Jerusalem and New York: Urim Publications, 2012).

<sup>94</sup> For a more detailed treatment of our prayer practice, see Magidah Khulda Bat Sarah and Rabbi Moshe ben Asher, "God's Warden," Gather the People (2015) [[http://www.gatherthepeople.org/Downloads/GODS\\_WARDEN.pdf](http://www.gatherthepeople.org/Downloads/GODS_WARDEN.pdf)].

<sup>95</sup> See Hirsch commentary on I Shemuel (Samuel) 1:10-11.

<sup>96</sup> Available at [http://www.gatherthepeople.org/Media/13\\_LOVINGLY\\_HOLD.mp3](http://www.gatherthepeople.org/Media/13_LOVINGLY_HOLD.mp3).

<sup>97</sup> See רַחֲמֵי יְיָ in Bereshit 2:7.

<sup>98</sup> Some of the most illuminating knowledge on this subject comes from the research, writing, teaching, and clinical practice of Dr. Daniel J. Siegel who, in addition to being a clinical professor of psychiatry at the UCLA School of Medicine, is a founding co-director of the Mindful Awareness Research Center at UCLA, and Executive Director of the Mindsight Institute; and from Dr. Allan Schore, a member of the UCLA Medical School faculty, the UCLA Department of Psychiatry and Biobehavioral Sciences, and the UCLA Center for Culture, Brain, and Development.

<sup>99</sup> For a more detailed explanation, see Daniel J. Siegel, "Toward an interpersonal neurobiology of the developing mind: Attachment relationships, 'mindsight', and neural integration," *Infant Mental Health Journal*, 22(1-2):67-94 (January-April 2001).

<sup>100</sup> See Dan Siegel, "Aware: The Science and Practice of Presence," The Gottman Relationship Blog, The Gottman Institute (August 21, 2018) [<https://www.gottman.com/blog/aware-the-science-and-practice-of-presence/>].

<sup>101</sup> Siegel posits that the "mind," the inner source of subjective experience, comes not only from the brain, encased in the skull, but from the "embodied brain," encompassing the entire nervous system, and from relationships. The mind incorporates all our ways of knowing, not only conscious thought or awareness. See Daniel J. Siegel, "The Neurobiology of Relationships and Community," YouTube presentation (published March 29, 2018) [<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RA35tWKUdPA>]. The mind is self-organizing, creating meanings, including a sense of personhood or self, thus becoming more integrated. It can also undo meanings. Ideal self-organization of

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the mind is flexible, adaptive, coherent, energized, and stable; in combination, these characteristics are the benchmarks of mental health. For a general introduction to this perspective, see Daniel J. Siegel, *Mindsight, The New Science of Personal Transformation* (New York: Bantam Books, 2010—Kindle Edition), loc. 1328. When self-organization is not optimal, we experience the chaos and rigidity that are characteristic of virtually all mental illness (loc. 1234).

<sup>102</sup> Hirsch commentary on Bereshit 9:4

<sup>103</sup> See Marci Green and Marc Scholes, eds., *Attachment and Human Survival* (New York: Routledge, 2018).

<sup>104</sup> The qualitative research study conducted by Shoshana Ringel, “Formative Experiences of Orthodox Jewish Women: Attachment Patterns and Spiritual Development,” *Clinical Social Work Journal*, 36:73-82 (2008), identifies secure attachment as a foundation for moral-spiritual development, activated through integration of a well-developed religious belief system, initially passed on through family relationships. On the neurobiology of this process, see: Istvan Molnar-Szakacs, “From actions to empathy and morality—A neural perspective,” *Journal of Economic Behavior and Organization*, 77(1):76-85 (January 2011) for “. . . evidence suggesting that the human MNS [mirror neuron system]—by linking intention and outcome, observer and actor—forms part of the neural system for empathic concern, the capacity to understand and feel another’s emotional state. By helping to establish a ‘likeness’ between interacting agents, the human MNS may support the active desire to understand others, to feel what they are feeling and to help alleviate another’s suffering. By providing a biological substrate for such fundamental affiliative behaviors, the MNS may provide a neural scaffold for the evolution of our sophisticated sociality and the morality that governs it.” In their survey of experimental data on the “neurological origin of the moral sense,” Donatella Marazziti, et al., “The neurobiology of moral sense: facts or hypotheses?” *Annals of General Psychiatry*, 12:6 (March 6, 2013) concluded: “The available findings would suggest that there might be a main integrative centre for the innate morality, in particular the ventromedial prefrontal cortex, with its multiple connections with the limbic lobe, thalamus and brainstem. The subjective moral sense would be the result of an integration of multiple automatic responses, mainly associated with social emotions and interpretation of others’ behaviours and intentions.” See also Allan N. Schore, “Foreword,” in Darcia Narvaez, ed., *Neurobiology and the Development of Human Morality: Evolution, Culture, and Wisdom* (W.W. Norton, 2014); Leo Pascual, et al., “How does morality work in the brain? A functional and structural perspective of moral behavior,” *Frontiers in Integrative Neuroscience*, 7 (September 2013); Dr. Mario F. Mendez, “The Neurobiology of Moral Behavior: Review and Neuropsychiatric Implications,” *CNS Spectrums*, 14(11):608-620 (November 2009); and Manuela Fumagalli and Alberto Priori, “Functional and clinical neuroanatomy of morality,” *Brain*, 135:2006-2021 (2006).

<sup>105</sup> See Bick, op. cit., loc. 1505, where he notes: “The good I perform [as a “chariot” for the Shekhina] does not simply resemble divine goodness—it is Divine Goodness itself”; and see also Hirsch commentary on Bereshit 39:2.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid., loc. 263.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., loc. 257.

<sup>108</sup> Isaiah 58:11

<sup>109</sup> See Robert J. Waldinger, et al., “Mapping the Road from Childhood Trauma to Adult Somatization,” *Psychosomatic Medicine*, 68(1):129-135 (January-February 2006).

<sup>110</sup> See *Majesty and Humility*, p. 219. In *Halakhic Man*, p. 109, he declares that “The most fundamental principle of all is that man must create himself.”

<sup>111</sup> See Rabbi Ariel Bar Tzadok, Trans. & Comm., *Devekut: The Teachings of the Baal Shem Tov* [Rabbi Yisrael Ben Eliezer, 1700-1760] (Fairfield, IA: Yeshivat Benei N’vi’im, 1993—Kindle Edition), locs. 25, 75, 150 & 275.

<sup>112</sup> It’s also possible to form avoidant or other insecure attachments to God. Those instances reflect the conviction that God is not accessible or responsive to one’s needs. See Christopher G. Ellison, et al., “Prayer, Attachment to God, and Symptom of Anxiety-Related Disorders among U.S. Adults,” *Sociology of Religion*, 75(2):208-233 (February 2014).

<sup>113</sup> Hirsch commentary on Vayikra 16:30

<sup>114</sup> We regard it as *chilul Hashem* (חילול ה'—desecration of God) to allow the world to pass us by when we have goodness to contribute to it, because we have an obligation to glorify our Creator and take the initiative to give back to God’s Creation at least what we have been given.

<sup>115</sup> Devarim 28:65

<sup>116</sup> The point is highlighted by John Kaag and Clancy Martin in “Looking Death in the Face,” *New York Times* (December 26, 2016): “Dying for something has a heroic ring to it. But really, it’s the easiest thing in the world and has little to do with fame and fortune. When you wake up and eat your toast, you are dying for something. When you drive to work, you’re dying for something. . . . As surely as time passes, we human beings are dying for something. The trick to dying for something is picking the right something, day after week after precious year.”

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<sup>117</sup> Hirsch, in *The Collected Writings*, Volume II, pp. 379-380, teaches us: “If you let yourself be dazzled and enticed by the blinding radiance of the world’s powers, what are you offered in exchange for renouncing your Jewish calling? . . . When the luster dims and the success fades, it will be due to your having lost your spiritual-moral firmness, having renounced your Jacob [i.e., Jewish]-calling which summons even the poorest into the ranks of the fighters for God. . . . Consider yourself a co-builder of the Divine Sanctuary [of God’s goodness on earth] and you will find your destiny, your virtue and your purpose. . . . Thus, you lift your entire being above transience, your entire life is spent in the ‘service of the Sanctuary’ and with each small or large contribution you inscribe yourself לזכרון לפני ה’ ‘an eternal remembrance before God’.”

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