5  Tzedakah, Tikkun
Jewish approaches to social justice

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Introduction

This chapter will present a historicised phenomenological account of the two dominant forms of social justice within Judaism: tzedakah (justice) and tikkun (advocacy, or, literally, ‘mending’). Tzedakah is a core principle of religious Judaism and also has profound resonances within secular Judaism; the history of the Anglo-Jewish community is illustrative of the manner and extent to which tzedakah has shaped Jewish identity. The concept of tikkun is conceptually more ambiguous, and even now is understood very differently by different Jewish communities. Liberal Jews understand tikkun to be both the action of social justice advocacy (of which charitable giving is only a single component) and, simultaneously, a meta-principle which governs the interpretation of halakah (Jewish law) even to the point of overriding particular halakhic restrictions which may otherwise impede advocacy activity. Ultra-Orthodox Jews are, conversely, likely to view strict adherence to halakah, including the practice of tzedakah, as the primary means of tikkun ha-olam (the mending of creation).

In addition to the key distinction between liberal and Orthodox social justice activity which emerges when tzedakah and tikkun are considered as modes of action, this chapter will also explore distinctions between ethnic and religious Judaism which emerge when consideration is given to the particular targets of social justice activity: which causes are self-evidently worthy of either charitable or activist intervention? What language is deployed in attempts to promote a cause through appeals to common (Jewish) values? Through a close examination of these issues, the ways in which different traditions of Judaism construct and enact concepts of social justice within both religious and ethnic frameworks will be discursively explored.

Tzedakah

Tzedakah, tzedakah you shall pursue.

(Deut 16:20)

There is an ambiguity in the translation of Deuteronomy 16:20 which is central to any discussion of Judaism and social justice. The word {justice ḥayim}, rendered
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in most translations of that passage as ‘justice’ (and in other passages as ‘righteousness’), appears in the Torah most often referring to legal judgments, although a notion of economic justice is present in Leviticus 19:36 and Deuteronomy 25:15, which command ‘a just weight and a just measure’ – one is prohibited from cheating those with whom one does business. The prophetic literature expands on this theme, most clearly in Isaiah (e.g. 11:4: ‘But with [justice קדצ] he shall judge the poor, and make equal the meek’), and by the time of the redaction of the Mishnah in 220 CE, the word took on a primarily economic connotation. In rabbinic Judaism, tzedakah means specifically action to raise the economic status and human dignity of the poor (Marks, Dollahite and Dew 2009: 21). Its linguistic and scriptural genealogy serve as a potent reminder that this action is not optional but a basic religious obligation – in fact, Midrash describes withholding from charitable giving as ‘rob[bing] the poor of that which God has granted them’ (Numbers Rabbah 5:1).

The recent Institute for Jewish Policy Research report Charitable Giving among Britain’s Jews found that 77 per cent of respondents – slightly more than one in four Jews surveyed – rated charitable giving as either ‘very important’ (36 per cent) or ‘fairly important’ (41 per cent) to their Jewish identity. By this measure, charitable giving outweighs ‘supporting Israel’ (69 per cent), ‘marrying another Jew’ (65 per cent) and ‘keeping kosher’ (50 per cent) (Graham and Boyd, 2016: 8). The study further found that the level of an individual’s religious engagement significantly correlates not only to their general attitude towards and practice of charitable giving but also to their choice of which organisations to give to, with Haredi (ultra-Orthodox) Jews being most likely to give solely to Jewish organisations and non-practising Jews being most likely to give solely to non-Jewish organisations – although the vast majority of Jews surveyed gave to a mix of both Jewish and non-Jewish charitable causes.¹ ‘Jewish organisations’ are not limited to organisations which promote some aspect of religious life; the majority of the 500 organisations listed in the UK Jewish Charity Guide are concerned with a broad range of secular concerns, including medical research, humanitarian aid, arts and culture and social welfare.²

While major philanthropy is conducted through the normal system of cheques and bank transfers, the tzedakah box, or pushke, as it is called in Yiddish, is an iconic symbol of the practice of charitable giving. The practice of keeping a special box to collect coins for charitable distribution originated among the Hasidim of Eastern Europe in the early nineteenth century. The practice of collecting money for particular causes in a box kept in the home spread with emigrants from the Pale of Settlement over the course of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and the box has become an iconic item of Jewish ritual home furnishing.³ The Jewish Museum New York boasts two examples in its online catalogue, both designed by contemporary artists, although these are admittedly more images of an object familiar to their creators (and with which their creators expected their audience to be also familiar) than functional objects in their own right. The Israel Museum’s substantial collection of Judaica contains quite a few examples – not quite as numerous as the spice boxes used in the havdalah ritual,
which marks the close of the Sabbath, but sufficient that a viewer is not left in
doubt about the boxes forming a standard part of a Jewish home’s religious fur-
nishing. The boxes in the collection of the Israel Museum are, however, all
eamples of fine silver craft; similar to those in the New York Jewish Museum,
y they appear to have been primarily objects of display, rather than of use –
although the same might be said of the vast majority of the other sorts of ritual
equipment in the museum’s collection.

As the terms and interest of the 2016 Institute for Jewish Policy Research
report suggest, the patterns of UK Jewish charitable giving are seen by both
charitable organisations and the individuals who give to them as significant
markers of integration and ethnic identity. Historically, this is unsurprising; in
the nineteenth century, many Jewish charitable organisations began as attempts
by the relatives affluent members of the established Jewish community to protect
their social position by raising the status of the central European Jewish immig-
rants who arrived steadily throughout the century. Under the 1601 Poor Relief
Act, responsibility for social welfare fell to the parish – and the reforms of the
1843 Poor Law Amendment Act did not alter this; impoverished Jews did not
have an easy route of access to the support provided by the workhouse system,
and recent immigrants were by and large unlikely to have the social capital
necessary to participate in established mutual aid organisations or friendly soci-
eties. In response to this, a number of organisations emerged which aimed to
provide a parallel system of support, demonstrating the capacity of the Jewish
community to self-manage without becoming a drain on government resources.

Chief among these was the Jewish Board of Guardians, established in 1859. The
Board of Guardians and similar organisations followed the standard pattern of
Victorian philanthropy, emphasising aid to the ‘deserving poor’ rather than the
more radical concept of economic justice which modern commentators have
drawn from tzedakah.

In light of this history, it is notable that there is no pushke in the collection of
the Jewish Museum London. Nor is there a tzedakah box. A diligent search
through the online catalogue will eventually reveal precisely five objects which
might have borne either label:

1 a small cask, with staves and head made from a silver-coloured metal
(materials information is not included in the catalogue listing) and hoops
accented with gold, branded in gold with a Magen David and the initials
JNF; in the place where a bung hole might be, there is a coin slot. Of the
five, this is the one which has the most information about both provenance –
it was commissioned from a Jewish owned furniture manufacturer in 1924
for a couple living in the suburbs of London – and social context: JNF
stands for ‘Jewish National Fund’ and the box is presented as signifying the
increase of Zionist sentiment among British Jews in the wake of the Balfour
Declaration.

2 a very plain, straight-sided tankard made of copper, which is described as a
collection box from the Great Synagogue in Duke’s Place, and dated in the
late seventeenth or early eighteenth century. There is only one photograph
of this object, taken from the side, with the lid closed; the viewer must infer
the presence of a coin slot.

3 a very similar tankard,\textsuperscript{10} with provenance traced to the Hambro Synagogue;
this one is photographed with its lid open and the coin slot thus clearly
visible. No date is given for its manufacture, but, as the Hambro community
split from the Great Synagogue in 1710 and constructed its own building in
1725, a date of the early eighteenth century can be deduced, and the simil-
arity in design accounted for.

4 a barrel-shaped tankard with a scrolled handle and an ornate botanical
design chased on its surface, ‘said to have been used in a Sarajevo syna-
gogue and … probably made in the Balkans’.\textsuperscript{11} Again, the object is photo-
ographed only from the side and the presence of a coin slot on the top must
be inferred by the viewer. The means by which the tankard might open to be
emptied is not evident.

5 a cylindrical tankard\textsuperscript{12} with a square handle and several rows of decorative
banding, which might look plain next to the Sarajevo tankard but appears
almost fussy compared to the Great Synagogue and Hambro Synagogue
examples. This item is photographed both closed and open, to demonstrate
its unusual double opening mechanism. The door to the lower compartment
is inscribed in Hebrew lettering. Although the angle of the photograph pre-
vents the viewer from deciphering the inscription, the catalogue informs us
that it bears a date and the name, ‘The Brotherhood for Clothing the Poor’,
which is presumably the charity responsible for its manufacture.

The collection evidences an equal number of deed and tally boxes associated
with particular Jewish charities that operated in and around London in the long
nineteenth century (the Bread, Meat and Coal Society, the Jews’ Temporary
Shelter, the Soup Kitchen for the Jewish Poor, and the Jews Deaf & Dumb
Home); both of these collections are dwarfed by the museum’s holding of
snuff boxes. While it is true that the examples in the Jewish Museum New
York and the Israel Museum are, for the most part, objects of display rather
than of use, their presence in those collections, and absence from the collection
of the JML, speaks not only to the museum’s focus on public-facing, mascu-
line expressions of Judaism, but also to the distinctive understanding of
tzedakah within the Anglo-Jewish community: as a social, rather than spiritual,
obligation.

It is notable that item 1, the only item in the Jewish Museum London’s col-
lection that fits the classic profile of a pushke – that is to say, a box intended to
hold private charitable collections which accrue over time – is dedicated specifi-
cally to the Jewish National Fund.\textsuperscript{13} Shaul Stampsfer (2010) connects the develop-
ment of the pushke to the early waves of Eastern European aliyah
(immigration to the land of Israel). He notes that the pushke permitted charitable
giving to be both equalised, in that wealthy and poor were both enabled to give
according to their means without public display, and also regularised, so that the
communities of immigrants dependent on the proceeds of *pushke* campaigns could expect to receive a steady level of continuous financial assistance.\(^{14}\)

The two needs which the *pushke* addressed reflect the Jewish understanding of charity as a basic religious obligation from which no person is exempt. In the words of the Shulchan Aruch 34:2, ‘Every person is obligated to give charity according to his capabilities, even a poor man who gets his living from charity.’ This principle is materialised in item 5; the purpose of the double opening mechanism is to permit the user to open up a bottom compartment for receiving alms from others, and then to deposit a portion of their income into the upper compartment for distribution among those in even greater need. There are several rationales available for this understanding. In the first instance, there is the theological conviction that all of creation belongs to God and that humans, acting as stewards, are obliged to share whatever passes into their care with others (Ulmer and Ulmer 2014: 46–7). The second rationale is that one who receives charity should not feel themselves diminished thereby, but should be enabled to maintain full participation in the life of the community. In other words, the practice of *tzedakah* is governed, in part, by the same concern which also underlies much modern discourse about *tikkun olam*: human dignity.

**Tikkun Olam**

... every phrase associated with the idea of Tikkun Olam, phrases like—‘light unto the nation,’ or ‘the Jewish mission,’ or ‘ethical universalism,’ all those things became code words for assimilation, reform, and the whole concept of Tikkun Olam became suspect. What a tragedy that is today. (Sacks 1997)

*Tikkun Ha-olam* (literally ‘repair of the world’) plays many roles within the universe of Jewish thought, but perhaps one of its most important functions is to mark out the conceptual divide between the Orthodox and non-Orthodox denominations. The term makes an appearance in a ruling attributed to Gamaliel the Elder (c. first century CE) in the Mishnah\(^{15}\) tractate Gittin 4:2, where a man’s ability to cancel or otherwise invalidate a bill of divorce – invalidating any marriage his former wife might have contracted in the meantime – is constrained ‘for the sake of the repair of the world’.\(^{16}\) In a similar way to *tzedakah*, the mishnaic *tikkun* may be understood as ultimately concerned with economic justice; the distinction between them is that the former is redistributive, while the latter is structural, aiming to prevent individuals from being forced into situations which would cause them to require *tzedakah* – if the cancellation of divorces became a common custom, it would seriously constrain women’s ability to remarry, putting them at increased risk of poverty. Jacobs (2007) has suggested that the mishnaic *tikkun* is applied ‘in response to situations in which a particular legal detail threatens to overturn an entire system’.

The phrase also makes a relatively early appearance in the text of the Alienu, the closing prayer of the daily prayer service,\(^{17}\) in a request that God ‘repair the
world, Your holy kingdom’. There is some dispute over the dating of the Aleinu; it is often attributed to Rav (c.175–247CE), and many scholars have taken this attribution as more likely to be accurate than the folk attribution which suggests the prayer was composed by Joshua on the occasion of the fall of Jericho. Jacob Neusner (1966: 164–7), however, has argued that available evidence suggests that Rav was responsible only for some slight emendations to a much older text – though he does not go quite so far as to attribute the original to Joshua. The question of the date is somewhat significant, insofar as a very early date for the Aleinu would cement the suggestion that the Mishnah is drawing on a previously established principle for its rulings, where an attribution to Rav suggests a concept of tikkun ha-olam emerging wholesale from the context of the 1st and 2nd centuries. Regardless of the date, however, in the Aleinu tikkun olam does a rather different job than in the Mishnah: rather than depending on a court and witnesses to enact laws permitting an individual to maintain their place in society (by e.g. permitting a woman abandoned by her husband to seek another), the Aleinu’s tikkun olam looks towards a future in which God acts directly to establish divine sovereignty. These divergent understandings of the concept were reconciled in the medieval period: in the twelfth century, Maimonides posited tikkun olam as the underlying principle of all halakah, clearing the way for the Zohar’s mystical reimagining of the concept. The Kabbalistic system positioned tikkun as a cosmic action, through which humans became co-creators, assisting with the mending of the created order through the performance of mitzvot (commandments). This performance constitutes what Rabbi Jonathan Sacks (2005: 77) has called ‘a redemption of small steps’, in which each individual act, no matter how small, takes on cosmic significance. Following the messianic disappointment of the Sabbatean movement, however, the concept slid into obscurity and disrepute. It emerged from the former only in the early twentieth century and, arguably, has never emerged from the latter.

The popularisation of tikkun olam in modern Jewish discourse can be traced back to the work of Gershom Scholem, the great historian of Jewish mysticism; the use of the phrase to denote political action dates to the interwar period (Cooper 2013). But it was the Reform rabbi Emil Fackenheim who can be credited with reactivating the concept as a lived religious idea. Broadly progressive Judaism embraced tikkun olam as a quasi-mystical, meta-halakhic principle; rather than a redemption of small steps, in which the framework of halakah infuses everyday activities with cosmic significance, contemporary tikkun measures the details of halakah against an idealised notion of cosmic redemption, most commonly pre-determined by the concerns of human dignity and secular social justice discourse. While critics of this new form of tikkun rightly point out that it is an accurate reconstruction of neither the mishnaic nor the medieval concepts, the objections thus raised often fail to account for the degree to which tikkun has been a historically unstable concept, always slightly vague, always open to interpretation and reinterpretation depending on the particular needs of its promoters, as well as the degree to which the current usage of the term does retain elements of its earlier incarnations. This continuity, as well as the controversies associated with modern
Debate on homosexuality

The debate on homosexuality in the rabbinate is of long standing; the Reform movement’s Central Conference for American Rabbis (CCAR) published the Resolution on the Rights of Homosexuals in 1977. This resolution frames the issue in straightforward, syllogistic terms:

WHEREAS, the Central Conference of American Rabbis has consistently supported civil rights and civil liberties for all people, especially for those from whom these rights and liberties have been withheld, and

WHEREAS, homosexuals have in our society long endured discrimination,

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED, that we encourage legislation which decriminalizes homosexual acts between consenting adults, and prohibits discrimination against them as persons, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that our Reform Jewish religious organizations undertake programs in cooperation with the total Jewish community to implement the above stand.

The rationale of the 1977 resolution is entirely grounded in the language of civil rights, rather than halakah: the Reform movement rejects discrimination; homosexuals are discriminated against; therefore the Reform movement rejects discrimination against homosexuals. This rationale carried forward to the 1990 Resolution on Homosexuality and the Rabbinate, which affirmed that any graduate of the Hebrew Union College Jewish Institute of Religion would be automatically admitted to the rabbinate, and that HUC-JIR would not make admissions decisions solely on the basis of sexual orientation (a roundabout way of saying that it cleared the way for the ordination of gay rabbis), and the 2000 resolution that ‘the relationship of a Jewish, same gender couple is worthy of affirmation through appropriate Jewish ritual’, followed finally by the 2013 resolution which affirmed that the appropriate Jewish ritual should be understood as kiddushin, or marriage. The language of the 1990 report, that ‘All human beings are created betselem Elohim’ and that ‘their personhood must therefore be accorded full dignity’, has become the movement’s key theological teaching on sexuality.

In spite of the movement’s sizeable membership, in both the US and the UK Reform views are often dismissed from consideration of ‘Jewish attitudes’, due to the perception of a permissive, ‘anything goes’ ethos within the movement – a perception not entirely unjustified, given the early history of Reform as a radically assimilationist movement, although such a perception is both out of date and insufficiently attentive to assimilationist tendencies within other branches of Judaism (including, notably, the Anglo-Orthodox community discussed above). For this reason, the halakah of the Conservative movement...
makes a considerably more instructive case study, in spite of its relatively smaller membership. The Conservative movement originated from a schism within the early American Reform movement, and since its inception it has attempted to balance between the Reform theology of continuous revelation and adherence to the more traditional forms of Jewish belief and practice which still retain spiritual and religious significance for the movement’s members. Major issues of halakah are decided by the Conservative Rabbinical Assembly’s Committee on Jewish Law and Standards, which receives queries from congregational rabbis and instructs its members to compose position papers (called teshuvot, or responsa); the entire committee votes on each paper, and those which attain the votes of six or more of the twenty-five members of the committee become official positions of the movement. Thus, the concurrence of less than a quarter of the committee is required to render a position official, and when particularly controversial questions are raised the normal procedure is that multiple responsa are presented, and every single one that attains the minimum number of votes becomes a halakhic position available to congregational rabbis.

This is what happened in 2006, when the question of the movement’s guidance on the inclusion of Jews in same-sex relationships arose. This was not the first time the question had come; there was a substantial discussion in the early 1990s, with a rare consensus statement, barring the blessing of same-sex marriages and the ordination of homosexual rabbis but welcoming gays and lesbians to participation in ‘congregations, youth groups, camps, and schools’, issued in 1992, and reaffirmed in response to a question about the placement of an openly gay rabbi in 1993. It’s important to emphasise that this debate was entirely about recognition within a religious framework; even in 1992, a significant number of the papers submitted to the committee were at pains to emphasise that their view on halakah should not be taken as a statement against campaigning for the legitimacy of same-sex relationships in civil law, and to explicitly repudiate suggestions that AIDS should be understood as a divine punishment (e.g. Roth 1992: 674). The rationale behind the consensus statement was a combination of perceived clarity in the extant halakah on sexuality and a perceived lack of clarity within scientific understandings of how sexuality functions – the argument about the degree of choice involved in sexual orientation was, even then, considered to have potential halakhic significance, and a responsum written by Elliot Dorff recommending further study did pass with eight votes in favour, eight opposed, and seven abstentions.

By 2006, an understanding of sexual orientation as innate and mostly unchosen – and of sexual behaviour as therefore the natural expression of that innate orientation – had become far more widely accepted, and of the five papers presented to the Committee on Jewish Law and Standards, three were strongly in favour of finding some way of legitimating same-sex relationships within the social and legal structures of Conservative Judaism. Of these, two were recorded as dissentions, rather than as official positions of the CJLS. One, however, did pass the vote of the committee, with thirteen votes in favour, twelve opposed,
and no abstentions; that paper was authored again by Elliot Dorff, in collaboration with Daniel S. Nevins and Avram I. Reisner – Reisner’s participation is especially significant, as he voted against the Dorff responsum in 1992.

The 2006 paper considers, first, contemporary theories of sexual orientation, then halakhic sources regarding homosexual intimacy, and finally engages in an extended discussion on human dignity before arriving at its conclusions, which ‘effectively normalize the status of gay and lesbian Jews in the Jewish community’. While a shift in popular understandings of sexual orientation provides the basis for the paper’s consideration, the key to its conclusions is the five-page consideration of precisely what sexual acts are forbidden in Torah. Reviewing a range of sources, but relying heavily on Talmud, Maimonides and the Shulhan Aruch – the three major compendia of traditional halakah – the paper examines male–male anal intercourse, oral sex, other forms of intimacy covered under the Talmudic category of ‘approach’, or ‘drawing near’, and lesbian sex, which Maimonides refers to as ‘rubbing’. The paper acknowledges that all of these have been treated as prohibited acts, but notes that only male-on-male anal intercourse is the subject of a prohibition d’oratia – as an integral part of the law given in the revelation at Sinai. All other sexual acts are prohibited by rabbinic interpretation – and that prohibition may be subject to interrogation in a way that a prohibition d’oratia may not. The paper then turns briefly to consider the feasibility of celibacy, noting that it is not a normative or desirable practice within Judaism, and that to expect gay and lesbian Jews who wish to remain observant to become celibate is, in the eyes of the authors, ‘not asking for heroism but inviting failure’ (Dorff et al. 2006: 9) – before dedicating a further five pages to detailing a number of places in the Talmud where commandments that are normally taken quite seriously (mostly pertaining to ritual purity or Sabbath observance) are superseded by concerns for human dignity.

In other words, the authors of the responsum pursue, by a far more exacting path, the same argument that the CCAR embraced in 1990; the emphasis on human dignity is not a peculiarity of Reform theology. Dorff et al., however, have to answer counterclaims introduced in the intervening years, most notably the claim by Rabbi Joel Roth – the author of the 1992 responsum most closely reflected in the consensus statement – that the principle of human dignity may only permit an individual to suspend an ordinary interpretation of halakah for the benefit of another person; dignity may not be the cause for an individual to claim exemption for themselves (Roth 2006: 22). This counterclaim is disposed of first by another flurry of citational argument, but, second, and more importantly, by the argument that:

Dignity is a social phenomenon. In all of [the cases cited], there is interplay between the dignity of the actor and the dignity of his neighbours…. This, of course, is precisely our point. We are concerned for the dignity of gay and lesbian Jews not only because we are sympathetic to their dilemma, but also because their humiliation is our humiliation…. When gay and lesbian Jews are finally welcomed to take their rightful places in our community,
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then we will have safeguarded their dignity as individuals, and our dignity as a community.

(Dorff et al. 2006: 16)

None of the authors of the response to the CJLS used the language of tikkun outright, but the logic underlying the statements is clear and consistent with the ‘tikkunista’ view critiqued in March (2010):22 there are larger concerns which can and must overrule even the most entrenched Jewish tradition as well as the details of halakah. The important lesson to take from this is that the conclusions drawn by Dorff et al., or indeed in the 1977 CCAR statement, are drawn not in spite of the law, but because of the law; they emerge naturally from a very detailed process of halakhic reasoning – by which we should understand not only reasoning within the framework provided by traditional halakhic texts but also reasoning about halakah and its role in the community, informed by the broader concerns of human dignity and social justice. At the same time, it is clear that these rulings are outside of the boundaries of normative Orthodox Judaism, and an appeal to a meta-halakhic principle which is similarly outside the boundaries of normative Orthodoxy is unlikely to bridge the gap. This is not to say that there are no meta-halakhic principles recognised within Orthodoxy; one might argue the principle of pikuach nefesh (the preservation of life) effectively functions as such – but a determined opponent might note that the precedence of pikuach nefesh over ritual concerns is explicitly enshrined within traditional halakah, and the explicit legal function of tikkun olam is limited at best.

To conclude, then, the two major frameworks within which Judaism addresses issues of social justice, while not mutually incompatible, have each developed in response to particular social and political pressures on the communities in which they are dominant. Anglo-Orthodoxy retains the tzedakah model as developed in response to the project of assimilation in Victorian England, while American progressive Judaism has become characterised by the tikkun model, which was shaped by a project of assimilation undertaken largely during the civil rights era. In spite of claims to the contrary, the tikkun model is not substantially more assimilationist than the tzedakah model, provided that the former is understood within a broader framework of progressive halakhic reasoning and the latter understood within a broader framework of ethnic mutual aid projects, although commentators who are predisposed to view progressive Judaism as itself fundamentally assimilationist and anti-halakhic are unlikely to agree with this analysis.

Glossary

Aleinu the closing prayer of the daily prayer service
aliyah literally ‘ascent’. Jewish immigration to Israel
betselem Elohim ‘in the image of God’
d’oratia a portion of halakah which can be traced directly to the revelation at Sinai, which is to say directly to the word of God,
as opposed to d’rabannan, which is halakah resulting from rabbinc interpretation

halakah Jewish law
halakhic legal
kosher (kashrut) Jewish dietary laws
Haredi ultra-Orthodox
havdalah literally ‘separation’. The ritual which marks the end of the Sabbath, just after sundown on Saturday evening

Kabbalah a system of Jewish mysticism which posits that creation is flawed and human agency is required to effect its repair

Magen David a six-pointed star formed by two equilateral triangles, a long-recognised symbol of Judaism in general, which in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries became particularly associated with Zionism, and is now the chief symbol on the Israeli flag

Maimonides a Jewish philosopher active in twelfth-century Cordoba, known for his attempts to harmonise halakah with Aristotelian philosophy

Mishnah the earliest written compilation of halakah, containing more a record of debates between early rabbis than definitive rulings, redacted in 220 CE

Pale of Settlement the region of Western Imperial Russia where Jewish settlement was permitted, comprising Latvia, Lithuania, Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova and Poland

pikuach nefesh the preservation of life
pushke collection box, particularly for charity
Sabbateanism a movement in the late seventeenth century which embraced Sabbatai Zevi, a rabbi and a teacher of Kabbalah, as the messiah who would complete the redemption of the world. The movement gained great popularity prior to Zevi’s conversion to Islam in 1666

Shulchan Aruch a reference book containing normative rulings on halakah, compiled in the late sixteenth century

tzedakah charity, or economic justice
Tikkun Olam the mending of the world, or the redemption of creation
Zionism a Jewish ethno-nationalist movement which began in the late nineteenth century

Zohar The foundation text of Kabbalah, first published by Moses de León in thirteenth-century Iberia

Notes
1 The broad denominational correlations in this report are upheld by the study of American Jewish giving patterns discussed in Waxman (2005: 111–12).
2 See www.jewishcharityguide.co.uk (accessed 2 November 2016).
3 For the educational function of the *pushke*, see Blumberg (2005).
4 See Black (1988); Rozin (1999); Englander (1994).
5 Jewish community charity was also influenced in part by the desire to counter stereotypes of Jewish criminality, as described in Tannenbaum (2003).
6 For a discussion of the development of zedakah as a communal practice in the medieval period, see Barzen (2005).
8 In fact, it was designed and made in the firm of Salamon Hille, which at that point had not attained the iconic status that it would at mid-century, under the leadership of Salamon’s daughter Ray Hille, and the box shows no hint of the functional, modernist aesthetic that Hille would become known for.
13 It is also worth noting that the single example in the Jewish Museum Berlin is a JNF collection box, catalogue number KGM 98/1/0/1–2. Available at http://objekte.jmberlin.de/object/jmb-obj-106101 (accessed 17 October 2016).
14 Stampfer (2010: 112):

In the passage from the 1829 letter of Perl cited above, he mentioned the requirement that Jews put a coin in the box before each meal and before lighting the Sabbath candles. An additional practice that developed was to make a donation before taking *halah*, the ritual separation of a portion of dough which a Jewish woman was required to do every time she made bread.

15 The Mishnah was redacted c. 220 ce, although many of the rulings within it are attributed to rabbis of the first and second centuries. While there is some dispute over the extent to which the Mishnah reflected normative Jewish practice at the time of its redaction, the fact that *tikkun ha-olam* appears as a principle used to justify a course of action, rather than a subject of debate, suggests that it was recognised at least among the Tannaim.

Rosenthal (2005) notes that the verb {standard תקן} appears three times in Ecclesiastes, referring to repair in a general sense, and the phrase as a whole appears ‘a handful of times’ the Midrash and Tosefta; Jacobs (2007) argues that within Genesis Rabbah, it refers very specifically to the repair of imperfections in the physical world.

16 The following verses of Mishnah make a number of other adjustments, aimed at protecting divorced women and captives from economic mistreatment, for the sake of *tikkun ha-olam*. Dorff (2005: 7) suggests that the purpose of *tikkun* in the Mishnah is ‘guarding the established order in the physical or social world (with derivatives *t*’*kinah* meaning “standardization” and *t*’*kinut* meaning “normalcy, regularity, orderliness, propriety”).

17 Also significant is the argument of Mitchell First (2011), who contends that ‘the original version of Aleinu read {design תקן לשלט stos פלח החלופי} (= to establish the world under God’s sovereignty), and not {fix תקן לשאר פלח החלופי} (= to perfect/improve the world under God’s sovereignty.)’. However, First’s view is decidedly a minority position, and appears to be motivated largely by a desire to distance the text from the later meanings which accrued to *tikkun olam*, discussed below.

18 For a much more complete discussion of this development, see Rosenthal (2005). Rosenthal notes that the vast majority of medieval responsa literature does not utilise
The notion of *tikkun* has been particularly influential in post-Holocaust theology, but is by no means restricted to this field. See e.g. Fackenheim (1988); Blumenthal (1993); Raphael (2003). Without being directly connected (although an argument might be made about nostalgia for the ‘lost’ ‘authentic’ Judaism of Eastern Europe) to post-Holocaust theology as such, a trend towards neo-Hasidism in fin de siècle theology has also promoted *tikkun*; see e.g. Green (2003); Fishbane (2008).

There is a difficulty in language surrounding Jewish denominations: a broad split between Orthodox and non-Orthodox Judaism obscures both the huge variety of positions within the Orthodox world and the more Orthodox-leaning practices active within the Conservative movement; referring to ‘conservative’ and ‘liberal’ Judaism is apt to promote confusion between broad outlooks and the particular Liberal and Conservative movements. ‘Progressive Judaism’ is mainly associated with Reform and related movements. For simplicity, I have chosen here to use the term ‘broadly progressive’ to encompass Reform, Reconstructionist, Renewal, Liberal, and the more liberal side of Conservative Judaism.

For similar critiques, see e.g. Kerbel (2010); Plaut (2002); Korff (2013); Sherwin (2009).

**Bibliography**


Jewish approaches to social justice


