

Are Jews Good Neighbors?



Studying the Thought of Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks זצ"ל

Timely Torah, November 14th 2021

This shiur is kindly sponsored by Lisa Friedman upon the yahrzeit of her mother Mrs. Doris Musikoff, Doris bat Lewis and sister Mrs. Meryl Rubin Miriam Henia bat Tzvi



The Ways of Peace

The Jew in Exile

1. Jeremiah 29:4

ד כֹּה אָמַר ה' צְבָאוֹת, אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל: לְכֹל-הַגּוֹלָה--אֲשֶׁר-הִגַּלְתִּי מִירוּשָׁלַם, בְּבָבֶלָה.

4 Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, unto all the captivity, whom I have caused to be carried away captive from Jerusalem unto Babylon:

ה בְּנוּ בָתִּים, וְשָׁבוּ; וְנִטְעוּ גִנּוֹת, וְאָכְלוּ אֶת-פְּרִיָן.

5 Build ye houses, and dwell in them, and plant gardens, and eat the fruit of them;

ו קָחוּ נָשִׁים, וְהוֹלִידוּ בָנִים וּבָנוֹת, וּקְחוּ לְבָנֵיכֶם נָשִׁים וְאֶת-בָּנוֹתֵיכֶם תָּנוּ לְאִנָּשִׁים, וְתִלְדְּנָה בָנִים וּבָנוֹת; וּרְבוּ-שָׁם, וְאַל-תִּמְעָטוּ.

6 take ye wives, and beget sons and daughters; and take wives for your sons, and give your daughters to husbands, that they may bear sons and daughters; and multiply ye there, and be not diminished.

ז וְדַרְשׁוּ אֶת-שְׁלוֹם הָעִיר, אֲשֶׁר הִגַּלְתִּי אֶתְכֶם שָׁמָּה, וְהִתְפַּלְלוּ בְעַדָּהּ, אֵל-ה': כִּי בְשְׁלוֹמָהּ, יִהְיֶה לָכֶם שְׁלוֹם.

7 And seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away captive, and pray unto the LORD for it; for in the peace thereof shall ye have peace.

2. Ezra 6:8-10

וּמְנִי שִׁים טַעַם לְמַא דִּי-תַעֲבִדוּן עִם-שְׂבִי יְהוּדָיָא אֵלֶּךָ לְמִבְּנָא בֵּית-אַלְהָא דְּךָ וּמְנַכְסֵי מַלְכָּא דִּי מַדַּת עֵבֶר נְהָרָה אֶסְפְּרָנָא נִפְקֵתָא תְּהוֹנָא מִתְּיַהֲבָא לְגַבְרָיָא אֵלֶּךָ דִּי-יֵלֵא לְבִטְלָא:

And I hereby issue an order concerning what you must do to help these elders of the Jews rebuild this House of God: the expenses are to be paid to these men with dispatch out of the resources of the king, derived from the taxes of the province of Beyond the River, so that the work not be stopped.

וּמָה חֲשֵׁהוּן וּבְנֵי תוֹרִין וְדַכְרִין וְאִמְרִין לְעֵלְוֹן לְאַלְהָ שְׁמַיָּא חֲנֻטִין מְלַח חֲמַר וּמִשְׁחָ כְּמֵאמַר כְּהֵנִיָּא דִּי-בִירוּשָׁלַם לְהוֹנָא מִתְּיַהֲבָ לְהֵם יוֹם כְּיוֹם דִּי-יֵלֵא שְׁלוֹ:

They are to be given daily, without fail, whatever they need of young bulls, rams, or lambs as burnt offerings for the God of Heaven, and wheat, salt, wine, and oil, at the order of the priests in Jerusalem,

דִּי-לְהוֹן מְהַקְרָבִין נִיחוּסִין לְאַלְהָ שְׁמַיָּא וּמִצְלִין לְחַיֵּי מַלְכָּא וּבְנֵיהוּ:

so that they may offer pleasing sacrifices to the God of Heaven and pray for the life of the king and his sons.

Darkei Shalom

3. Mishna Gittin, 59b

אֵין מִמְחִין בַּיַּד עֹבְדֵי כּוֹכְבִּים בְּלִקְטֵי שְׂכַחָה וּפְאֵה מִפְּנֵי דְרַכֵּי שְׁלוֹם :

One does not protest against poor gentiles who come to take gleanings, forgotten sheaves, and the produce in the corner of the field, which is given to the poor [pe'a], although they are meant exclusively for the Jewish poor, on account of the ways of peace.

The Three Models

10. A Judaism Engaged with the World, 2013



Assimilation made sense in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, in a Jewish world traumatised by antisemitism. It makes no sense at all today, either in Israel or in the multicultural democracies of the West. In the United States, where outmarriage continues at the rate of one-in-two, Harvard sociologist Robert Putnam has shown that Jews are the group more respected and admired than any other.

Segregation made immense sense after the Holocaust, when the heartlands of tradition in Eastern Europe had been almost entirely obliterated. But today, by a miracle of rebirth, the Haredi community is stronger than it was before the start of the Second World War. It has won the battle. We are in its debt. By sheer commitment and dedication it has brought the worlds of Jewish learning and practice back to life.

Now is the time to turn outward and share its energies with the rest of the Jewish world. The battle of the twenty-first century is the one Jews have been waiting for, for at least two thousand years. What if we had a Jewish state and could do what Jews have

been commanded to do since the days of Moses: build a society based on Torah values of righteousness, justice, kindness and compassion, the great prophetic virtues? What if non-Jews no longer looked down on Judaism as inferior to Christianity, Islam or enlightenment universalism? What if they actually respected it as a source of wisdom and inspiration?

Tikun Olam

11. Liturgy, Aleinu

Therefore we hope that You, Lord our G-d, that we may see the glory of Your power, to remove abominations from the earth so that the idols are utterly cut off, to perfect the world (*letaken olam*) under the sovereignty of the Almighty. Then all humanity will call in Your name...

עַל כֵּן נִקְוָה-לָךְ ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ, לְרֹאוֹת
מְהֵרָה בְּתַפְאֶרֶת עֲזֹרָה, לְהַעֲבִיר
גְּלוּלִים מִן הָאָרֶץ, וְהַאֲלִילִים כְּרוֹת
יְכַרְתֵּנוּ, לְתִקֵּן עוֹלָם בְּמַלְכוּת שְׁדֵי,
וְכָל-בְּנֵי בָשָׂר יִקְרְאוּ בְּשִׁמְךָ...

12. Mishna, Gittin 4:5-6

Someone who is half a slave and half a free person shall work for his master one day and for himself one day. These are the words of Beit Hillel. Beit Shammai asked him: 'You have appeased the master but the slave himself you have not sorted out. He cannot marry a servant lady since he is half free, but he cannot marry a free woman since he is still half a

מי שחציו עבד וחציו בן חורין עובד
את רבו יום אחד ואת עצמו יום
אחד דברי בית הלל אמרו לו בית
שמאי תקנתם את רבו ואת עצמו
לא תקנתם לישא שפחה אי אפשר

<p>slave. Should he not marry? Surely the world was created to settle it, as it says (Isiah 45) "Not for emptiness did He create it, rather to settle and develop it." Rather because of <i>tikun olam</i> we force the [remaining] master to free the slave ...' Beit Hillel retracted to adopt the opinion of Beit Shamai.</p>	<p>שכבר חציו בן חורין בת חורין אי אפשר שכבר חציו עבד יבטל והלא לא נברא העולם אלא לפריה ורביה שנאמר (ישעיה מ"ה) לא תהו בראה לשבת יצרה אלא מפני תקון העולם כופין את רבו ועושה אותו בן חורין ... וחזרו בית הלל להורות כדברי בית שמאי:</p>
<p>One cannot redeem hostages for much more than their value because of <i>tikun olam</i>.</p>	<p>אין פודין את השבויים יותר על כדי דמיהן מפני תקון העולם</p>



13. To Heal a Fractured World, "Mending the World" pages 76, 78

In choosing the phrase *tikkun olam*, Rabbi Luria was thus bringing together two ideas, one from Jewish law, the other from Jewish prayer, neither of which had the sense that he attached to it. None the less, Lurianic kabbalah does express an idea fundamental to Judaism, spanning the whole of history from creation to the 'end of days'.

...

One thing I must make clear. *Tikkun olam* as R. Isaac Luria conceived it, is a mystical and spiritual idea. It is *not* social action. For the kabbalists, we mend the world not by healing the sick and feeding the hungry, but by prayer and the observance of the commands. Jewish mysticism is about the commands linking us to God, not those relating us to other people. To be sure, each of our acts has an effect on the 'upper worlds', the deep structure of reality, but this is not through normal channels of causation. *Tikkun olam* in the Lurianic sense is about the soul, not the world; the spirit, not the body; metaphysical fracture, not poverty and disease. Lurianic kabbalah is at best a metaphor, not a prescription, for the forms of social action I have described in this book. But it remains a compelling metaphor none the less. It suggests that our acts make a difference. They repair fractures in the world. They restore a lost order. They rescue fragments of the divine light. They mend the damage done by the evil men – even the imperfections that are part of creation itself. Our moral imagination is shaped by such metaphors.⁹ Lurianic kabbalah is not afraid to look at catastrophe without concluding that the world is irreparable, evil endemic, that history is a meaningless sequence of events and the human situation irredeemable. Out of broken fragments, it shapes a mosaic of hope.

