

The Relationship Between Spirituality and Morality in Deepening the Commitment to *Tikkun Olam*

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“Great is learning,” runs the conclusion of the famous debate between Rabbi Tarfon and Rabbi Akiva as to whether study or good deeds is greater, “because learning leads to action.”¹ My argument in this essay is that attentiveness to the sacred leads us to action, while action in turn brings us back to the sacred, to seek replenishment and renewed inspiration. There thus exists a profound and compelling relationship between the spiritual and the moral. Sensitivity to God’s voice makes us aware of what we must do here on earth, while the commitment and courage required for action is most deeply sustained by a rich and disciplined life of the spirit.

I shall begin by considering how God’s presence touches us and motivates us to care for and love the world around us. I will then suggest how this can lead to a response of *tikkun*, of commitment to both the inner task of spiritual renewal and restoration, and also the outer work of practical engagement and reparation. I will consider the importance of prayer and Torah study as part of this process and briefly outline some of the principles that should, I believe, guide our actions.

If God is present in all things, then all things speak God’s commandments. Traditionally, Judaism understands these commands to have been communicated by God to Moses, delivered by him to Israel, and interpreted by subsequent generations to create the structure of Jewish laws and observances that are intended to govern our lives.

But there is a parallel mystical tradition that God's voice can also be heard throughout all of nature, through the *asarah ma'amarot* ("ten utterances") by which God formed the world and which still reverberate through all created matter.² Sometimes, seeing even a bird, a dragonfly, or a fox pausing in the road before disappearing behind the hedge, I feel I am hearing that voice. Often it fills me with a sense of wonder, occasionally with shame; but it always possesses great power. With a compulsion deeper than any language, it calls us to be mindful of the presence and oneness that connect us all. Perhaps it is to this kind of awareness that Isaiah refers in his vision of universal redemption: "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all of My holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Eternal as the waters cover the sea" (Isaiah 11:9). I never think of that mountain solely as a specific geographical location, the Temple Mount in Jerusalem, but rather as an image of the entire world and all of life in its diversity. Isaiah thus gives expression to what is, to me, the root and the essence of all the commandments: the demand that we respect and cherish all life, and strive to never wantonly or carelessly harm it.

At the moments when we apprehend this reality, this claim on our attentiveness and respect transcends any theoretical underpinnings for belief in revelation. Here is God's presence directly before us—in these trees, this bird, this human being—and it speaks immediately to our feeling of kinship with it, because we too belong to the one spirit

...that impels
 All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
 And rolls through all things.³

"Don't hurt" and "don't destroy": these commandments—whether expressed as words of admonition, as a silence tense with outrage or desolate with mourning, or as quiet reverence—can be intuited from

all being. We may hear them in the voice of an anxious child or in the cry of a tormented animal; we may infer them from the semi-desert of dead stumps where a forest formerly grew and birds fed in the branches.⁴ This call is at one and the same time the most potent and the most powerless in the world. It is consistently unheeded, yet it is there for all to hear.

That paradox is captured in the psalmist's assertion, in contemplating the wonders of God's creation, that "day talks with day and night whispers knowledge to night" (Psalm 19:3). Yet, the psalm continues: "There is no speech and there are no words; their voice is not heard at all" (*ein omer v'ein d'varim b'li nishma kolam*, 19:4), as if the communication were no more than an illusion—or, at best, so secret as to be hidden entirely from human apprehension. However, the Hebrew also suggests the very opposite interpretation: *ein omer v'ein d'varim*, "there is no speech and there are no words"; *b'li nishma kolam*, "without their voice being heard"—that is, there is no living being in all of creation that does not participate in the sacred, and there is no form of expression in which the voice of God is not articulated. It is precisely this tension between the two possible meanings of the verse that Yehudah Halevi (c. 1075-1141) captures in his great poem, *Yah, Anna Emtza·akha* ("God, where shall I find You?"):

God, where shall I find You; for Your place is exalted and hidden!
And where shall I find You not, for Your glory fills the world!
Who can claim that they have not seen You? Behold, the heavens
and their hosts
Proclaim the awe of You, *b'li nishma kolam*, without their voice
being heard.⁵

Throughout the ages, mystics of all faiths have addressed our yearning to hear—and our deep conviction that we can and do apprehend—God's voice within creation. Thus the Maggid of Mezeritch (c. 1700-

1772), successor to the Baal Shem Tov in the leadership of the early Hasidic movement, understands the sentence from the daily morning prayers, *malah ha-aretz kinyanekha*, not according to the conventional meaning that “the world is full of what is Yours, God,” but rather as teaching us that “the world is full of ways of acquiring You”—that there is nothing that does not speak of God’s presence and there is no place in which God’s presence cannot be found.⁶

The nineteenth-century British poet Gerald Manley Hopkins (1844–1889), who took his vows as a Jesuit in 1870, used the simile of a shaft of light dazzlingly reflected off bright metal to evoke the brilliance of God’s presence:

The world is charged with the grandeur of God.
It will flame out, like shining from shook foil.⁷

I cannot be alone in experiencing that sacred radiance as “shining out” only rarely, in privileged but infrequent moments of great wonder or joy. This is not because the light is absent, but because my attention is not present. I have to re-attune myself, to remind myself to observe it.

The presence of the sacred within creation does more than simply arouse our feeling of wonder. It calls out to our sense of responsibility; its demands on us are urgent and immediate. In his final address, delivered just three days before he died, the moral philosopher Hans Jonas (1903–1993), best known for his essay “The Concept of God after Auschwitz,” spoke of “the outcry of mute things.” Reflecting on the Holocaust, during which his mother had been murdered, Jonas observed that humanity was now confronted by a danger of even greater import, the all-embracing challenge of which had rendered questions of race “anachronistic, irrelevant, almost farcical.” He was speaking of the fate of the earth itself. He concluded, in what was to be the final sentence in a lifetime of engagement with questions of the origins, nature, and compass of our moral responsibility: “The latest revelation—from no Mount Sinai, from no Mount of the

Sermon, from no Bo (tree of Buddha)—is the outcry of mute things themselves that we must heed by curbing our powers over creation, lest we perish together on a wasteland of what was [that] creation.”⁸

It is from within this silent cry—which in moments of exaltation the prophets and psalmists understood as the song of the forests and the dancing of the hills, and in moments of pain the rabbis described as the call of the dying tree whose voice “reverberates from one end of the world to the other, yet no one hears”—it is from within this silent cry that God speaks to us.⁹ Jonas apprehends in it not the spontaneous outburst of natural joy, but rather the powerless plea of a voiceless world that demands our urgent attention. This appeal addresses us in the totality of our being—heart, soul, and conscience—and it pulls at the core of our moral and spiritual being.

It is of course possible to live a life of moral commitment without any engagement with or interest in the spiritual quest. The greatness of the need provides sufficient motivation in and of itself: the need of the hungry for food, of the homeless for shelter, of the refugee for a safe haven, of the ravaged hillside for replanting. Many people experience the desire to do what is right and good as deriving from a moral imperative unconnected to either religion or spiritual intuition. Indeed, the appeal to God may seem like a pious distraction, when suffering demands our immediate and practical involvement. Thus Elliot Dorff writes that “Jewish sources provide a series of rationales for caring for others, and some of them...invoke God much less than others do. As a result, atheistic or agnostic Jews can find ample grounds in the Jewish tradition for the duty to help others, and even those who affirm a belief in God will at times be motivated more by Judaism’s nontheistic reasons than by its theistic ones.”¹⁰ He is surely correct, and this is no doubt a significant benefit; after all, the greater the range of reasons that draw us into doing what is right and good, the better.

Yet to the person to whom God is important, the realms of the spiritual and the moral cannot be separated. They converge to form

a compelling sense of inescapable commitment. They require each other. Furthermore, unless spirituality expresses itself in moral action, it is liable to degenerate into a sophisticated form of narcissism. At the same time, moral engagement is most profoundly sustained by a spiritual communion that restores our vision and replenishes our energy.

The desire for *tikkun*—for reparation, restoration to how things should be according to the demands of justice and compassion—has different but interrelated dimensions. Combined with *nefesh* (“soul”), it becomes *tikkun ha-nefesh*, which can be understood as the personal journey of inner spiritual and moral development through which we refine both who we are and how we perceive the world.¹¹ Connected to *olam* (“world”), it becomes *tikkun olam*, “putting the world right.” Loosely translated as “social action,” the root meaning of this phrase is “the reparation or perfection of the world.” It refers to activity that is essentially restorative, requiring us to care for and protect the earth so that it can be healed and re-established according to a vision of how it might and ought to be. The broad concept of *tikkun* thus connects the redemption of the self with the ultimate goal of the redemption of all life. While these objectives can be understood quite independently from each other, the two aspects of *tikkun* can also be seen as intimately connected.

Tikkun ha-nefesh may be described as the desire to attune one’s own spirit to God’s spirit, to align one’s own consciousness with the sacred oneness that fills all being. The value of prayer can be understood in this way, as a regular and disciplined endeavor to realign and refocus our awareness. Haunted by thousands of nagging demands on our attention, the consciousness is unrelentingly assailed by distractions of every color. Many of them may indeed be important, but they may distract us from the call that is much less voluble yet far more urgent: the sound of God’s voice in all being, what Hans Jonas called “the mutely insistent appeal of [God’s] unfulfilled goal.”¹²

Thus *tikkun ha-nefesh* may begin with listening. In this way it is profoundly connected with *yirat shamayim*, awe before heaven, before the sacred in all being. *Yirat shamayim* is misunderstood if it is taken to imply little more than fear of God's power or punishment. Rather, at its highest it is an expression of respect and reverence—not just for God, as if God were solely a separate and distant being, but before the sanctity of life itself, before the integrity and uniqueness of all created being. True awe, implies Rabbi Kalonymus Kalman Shapiro (later known simply as the *rebbe* of the Warsaw Ghetto), is not simply *yirah* but *yirah she-b'ahavah*, that reverence which is an essential part of love, which may be understood as the desire not to hurt or harm in any way the object of our concern because of the respect, appreciation, and ultimately love that we feel toward it.¹³ Thus *yirah* coupled with *ahavah*, awe and love together, express the heartfelt concern that we should not in any way damage what we care about most deeply and thereby bring upon ourselves sorrow and shame because of our failure to protect and cherish something so precious. Such feelings might be stirred by a lonely child, a destitute refugee, the raw heart of a friend, a calf on the way to the slaughterhouse, or a needlessly uprooted tree.

Crucial to *tikkun ha-nefesh* is the combination of such sensitivity—which I, like many of us, fail to attain the great majority of the time—with an awareness of our accountability. This is expressed in classical rabbinic literature as the recognition that we are judged for all our deeds, both in the present and the hereafter: “Know what is above you: an eye that sees, an ear that hears, and all your actions written in a book,” teaches Rabbi Judah the Patriarch.¹⁴ The image of God in heaven recording our every deed, and especially misdeed, in a Book of Memories (*sefer ha-zikbronot*, as it is called in the liturgy)—which the verdict is read out yearly on the High Holy Days—provokes in many people a sense of disbelief, which only our residual feelings of guilt and anxiety prevent us from dismissing entirely. Yet those very fears (or intuitions) indicate that whatever we may feel about

so literal a picture of the deity passing sentence, the feeling that we both are and want to be known and judged, is anything but irrelevant to our conscience and to our moral life. Accountability before God may therefore be more vividly understood within the immediacy of our historical context and relationships, as our answerability to each other and to all life for our actions, words, and even thoughts in every situation and interaction in which we are engaged. We exist in constant kinship with all other living beings and the quality of our responses—whether to other creatures or to our shared environment—is always felt, always registered somewhere, and somehow and always makes a difference—even if the effect is imperceptible to us at the time. Because God is present in all life, the way in which life around us is aware of and takes note of us is also, in effect, a measure of God’s judgment of us. Stephen Duncan poignantly captures this sense of ethical and spiritual interconnectedness in his remarkable voice poem “Grandma’s Philosophy”:

She even said
 Be nice to the trees
 Because even the breeze is your companion
 And the sun sees every hand that moves wrongly
 And scorches the serenity of its present calm...
 So be careful when you shout
 Because the universe can hear you.¹⁵

Such apprehension leads to a profound and disturbing understanding of the implications of being commanded. It never lets go of us. Awareness of it is never, and never can be, simply an end in itself. Rather, it is a ceaseless call to service, an appeal that knows of no escape and no time off. The failure to act, the refusal to care, is always a multiple betrayal; I at once let down the spirit within me, the life before me, and that aspect of the sacred or divine that is present and embodied within in it. Thus *tikkun ha-nefesh* leads compellingly and ineluctably to *tikkun olam*.

The specific commandments and duties described by the Torah and defined and refined over millennia by rabbinic analysis can be understood as the means of directing this consciousness of the depth and value of the life of all things into appropriate attitudes and actions. Precisely what these must be at any given time requires a constantly renewed consideration of context, of both the intellectual and moral continuity of the rabbinic tradition and the exigencies of the hour in which we are called upon to respond. Thus the culture of ceaseless debate as to what is right and just, as to what constitutes God's will in any and all of the circumstances of human life—which is the hallmark of Jewish, and specifically of talmudic, culture—is and must be ongoing, impassioned, and relentless.

There is no single formula for the relationship between action and intention: does the motivation precede the deed, or does action itself engender deeper motivation? The answer must be both: sometimes, our inner conviction leads us to act; at other times, involvement in a task subsequently leads us to deeper awareness.

Returning to the discussion of *yirat shamayim*, awe before heaven, the Talmud offers two challenging analogies. In the first, Rabbah son of Rav Huna asks rhetorically what a person is like who has knowledge of Torah but no awe before heaven. Such a person, he explains, is like a treasurer whose money is kept in a safe within a safe, and who has the keys to the inner chest but not those to the outer container. How, Rabbah asks bluntly, is one to get in? Here, knowledge of Torah represents the inner chamber, God's secret treasure house; but without the first key of *yirat shamayim*, awe before heaven, a person lacks the essential means to access it.¹⁶ The inference is as clear as it is radical: knowledge of Torah undirected by reverence and wonder is of limited spiritual value. Indeed, we cannot even understand what such knowledge truly entails. Yet, at the same time that very sense of reverence now leads us to Torah; it requires knowledge of Torah in order to bring it into full focus. Torah and *halakhah* guide the vital experience of the sacred into channels of appropriate action and response.

Equally, though, right actions have the power to lead us back to a deeper awareness of the sacred. In our daily lives, actions often precede feelings. There are many situations when we are called upon to take action, and when dwelling on our thoughts and motivations would be an indulgence. One doesn't ask oneself what one feels when a child is on the pavement bleeding. Often one just has to get on with doing what is necessary and right. Even then, though, as Abraham Joshua Heschel so beautifully wrote, the commandments do not function solely as ends in themselves but rather "lead us to wells of emergent meaning, to experiences which are full of hidden brilliance of the holy."¹⁷ Doing what we have to do in the moment guides us back to a reconsideration of our values.

Thus, in the same discussion of *yirat shamayim*, awe before heaven, the Talmud offers a second, different analogy: "Alas for the person who has no courtyard," declares Rabbi Yannai, "but makes a gateway into it."¹⁸ In other words, what's the point of having a gate if you have no land to which it leads? Here, the gate represents the "doorway" of Torah: it comes first because in passing through it we are subsequently made aware of the need to create the kind of home, the sort of world, that its precepts demand. Through our deeds, our motivation is deepened and refined, leading us to a deep sense of reverence. Indeed, Judaism has always maintained the view that *mitokh she-lo li-sh'mah ba li-sh'mah*, that "out of doing things for the wrong motive we can arrive at doing them for the right reasons"—that good actions have the power to purify those who do them.¹⁹

For these reasons, Torah study is an essential part of *tikkun olam*. This is not simply because Torah and Talmud are our heritage and we should study them out of respect for the past and for the sake of Jewish continuity. Nor, as it has been put somewhat cynically, is it so that we should appreciate that what we are doing anyway is actually something Jewish. Rather, the study of Torah—both the specific texts of Torah, and also Torah in its widest sense as embracing the whole discourse of Judaism through the ages—is essential, because

it immerses us in an enduring and incisive conversation defined and refined by the search for what is just and right before humanity, creation, and God.

Furthermore, as in every generation, we are responsible for creating a full and deep engagement between Torah and those specific issues that beset us in our day. This is important both so that we can examine them through the moral and spiritual disciplines that Judaism has given us, and also so that whatever may be learned from our own age can become part of the legacy of the vital and contemporary Judaism that we bequeath to our children.

Some of the key concepts that must inform this ongoing discourse include:

- moral responsibility and its inescapability, based on the core beliefs that we have the capacity for both moral discernment and freedom of action, and on the understanding that the other person is always our brother, sister or neighbor, be he or she rich or poor, in health or in need of care;
- the equally shared dignity of all human life, based on the creation narrative, wherein all people are made in God's image; on the commandment that no innocent blood must ever be shed; and on the belief that God hears the cry of the oppressed;
- the centrality and impartiality of justice, rooted in the commandment that we must not attend to the status of the plaintiff but rather to the merit of the case, and especially in the core or meta-narrative of Judaism to which we refer every day—namely, that we were slaves in the land of Egypt, that our very identity was formed out of the experience of being the victims of injustice, and that we are therefore eternally committed to the implementation of justice at every level and in every sphere of life;
- compassion, based on the understanding that we are the instruments of God's desire that there should be compassion on earth, and on the insistence that we are not allowed "to hide

ourselves away from our own flesh” (Isaiah 58:7)—that is, from the basic necessities of food, drink, clothing, healing, shelter, protection, and companionship, which we all experience and which every human being requires;

- respect for the natural world, founded on the awareness that it belongs not to us but to God, that it is entrusted to our care, and that we are thus bound not to destroy it, not to waste its gifts, not to treat it as our rubbish bin, and not to bring suffering or destruction to any species with which we share the privilege of life;
- the primacy of deeds, the realization that it is not our beliefs alone that matter, or our adherence to the forms of culture or religion, but our actions, the way we live and implement our values every day.

All these principles, and the many texts that underlie them, require attentive debate; only our generation can determine how they should be interpreted and fulfilled in our world today. One of our most important tasks is therefore to develop a contemporary dialogue with these core concepts of the Torah. A key aim must be to articulate for our own time, within the language of Judaism, the principles of a universal ethic within open and democratic societies, in which Jews participate fully and equally alongside people of other faiths and philosophies, and carry a proportion of the shared responsibility for the moral conduct of the country in which they live, as well as of the world as a whole. Jewish law has never been a hermetically sealed system bound solely by its own rules; it has always existed in dialectic tension with new ideas and realities—because “it is not in heaven” but on the earth, and it does not lack the creative capacity to respond to the needs of that earth and the people and life that it sustains.²⁰

An especially urgent part of this task is the need to extend and apply the laws of *bal tash·hit* (the prohibition of wanton destruction) and *tza·ar ba·alei hayyim* (the prohibition of causing suffering to animals) so as to formulate an adequate approach to action concerning the environment.²¹ Not long ago I saw the film *A Sacred Duty: Applying*

Jewish Values to Help Heal the World, produced by the American Jewish Vegetarian Society. One of the closing scenes shows a pen in which a calf is trapped among scores of terrified animals, pressed against the wire fence of the enclosure into which they have been herded prior to their transportation to the slaughterhouse, and from which there is no escape. The calf weeps in utter desolation. In its tears I glimpsed a fraction of the unbounded measure of the helpless suffering of innocent life in the face of the calf's tormentors and oppressors, and I felt that I was witnessing the indictment of our entire civilization for its immeasurable cruelty and brutality toward the rest of creation. Can such behavior possibly be considered as God's will?

One evening when I was in my early twenties and unsure what path to follow and what I wanted to do with my life, my father and I happened to watch a television program about the work of the charity organization "Doctors Without Borders." After a few minutes, during which we saw a group of young people struggling to treat sick and destitute people in what looked like the middle of nowhere, my father said to me, "And what about you?" My father was never prolix in his criticisms, with the result that I remember very clearly those moments when he did chide or challenge me. Although I have tried to better the world, I often still feel as if I'm still watching that program with him and struggling to respond to his question. There are many thousands of people who show remarkable compassion, courage, and selflessness in what they do for others and the world. They serve by their actions as a goad and an example—whatever their faith, nationality, or motivation. It is what they do, and what each of us does, that matters most.

Yet alongside the necessity of responding to the suffering around us, there is an existential and spiritual need to answer with our lives the question that Elijah heard in the voice of fine silence, in the mute articulacy of life itself, and which the prophet intuited as God's question not only to him but to every human being: "What are you doing here, Elijah?" (1 Kings 19:12,13). What am *I* doing here?

What are *you* doing here? Then, once we have found our particular response to the commandment implied within the question, and made the inner resolution to try to live by it, we need the sustenance and restoration offered by grace and beauty, by reverence and awe, by God's presence within all life that so wondrously surrounds us.

NOTES

¹ B. Kiddushin 40b, where the intention of the majority of rabbis is to side neither with Rabbi Tarfon (who advocates the primacy of learning over action—that is, the performance of the *mitzvot*) nor with Rabbi Akiva (who espouses the opposite view), but rather to emphasise the interdependence of the study of Torah and carrying out its precepts. Neither enterprise on its own makes sense without the other.

² The *asarah ma'amarot* (M. Avot 5:1), the ten divine utterances, are the ten times that God spoke in the creation of the world. The Talmud (at B. Rosh Hashanah 32b and Megillah 21b) notes that there are in fact only nine such references, and therefore counts *b'reishit*, “in the beginning” (Genesis 1:1), as the first such utterance. These *ma'amarot* are understood in many places in Jewish mystical literature to constitute a channel of divine revelation that is parallel to the Ten Commandments (thus, see Zohar III 11b).

³ William Wordsworth, “Lines Composed A Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey,” cited from *The Poems of William Wordsworth* (London: Edward Moxon, 1845), pp. 160–161.

⁴ The commandment of *lo tash·hit* or *bal tash·hit*, “do not destroy,” originates in the injunction in Deuteronomy 20:19 that a besieging army may not cut down fruit-bearing trees to use the wood to make instruments of war. From here, the scope of the prohibition expanded to include such acts of wanton destruction as tearing clothing, smashing dishes, pulling down buildings, or ruining food for no reason (M.T. Hilkhoh Melakhim 6:10).

⁵ *Yah, Anna Emtza'akha*, a liturgical poem (*piyyut*) by Yehudah Halevi, opening couplet and end of third verse. This is my translation of the text published by Samuel Philipp in his edition of Halevi's poetry, with notes by Samuel David Luzzatto (Lemberg: Wolf, 1888), pp. 81–82.

⁶ Referred to in the name of the Maggid of Mezeritch by Rabbi Shalom Noah Berezovsky of Slonim, “On Rosh Hashanah,” in *Sefer N'rivot Shalom: On the Festivals*, vol. 2 (Jerusalem: Yeshivat Beit Avraham Slonim, s.a.), p. 134b.

⁷ Gerald Manley Hopkins, “God's Grandeur,” in his *Poems and Prose*, selected and edited by W. H. Gardner (London, New York, et al.: Penguin Books, 1976), p. 27.

⁸ Hans Jonas, “The Outcry of Mute Things,” in his *Mortality and Morality: A Search for the Good after Auschwitz*, ed. Lawrence Vogel (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1996), pp. 201–202.

⁹ *Pirkei D'Rabbi Eliezer*, ch. 34, quoted in *The Book of Legend, Sefer Ha-aggadah: Legends from the Talmud and Midrash*, ed. Hayyim Nahman Bialik and Yehoshua Hana Ravnitsky, trans W. G. Braude (New York: Schocken Books, 1992), §773, p. 138.

¹⁰ Elliot Dorff, *The Way Into Tikkun Olam* (Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2005), pp. 12 and 23.

¹¹ *Tikkun ha-nefesh* is not a well-established expression in Jewish spiritual literature, although there does exist the eleventh-century moralist work *Tikkun Middot Ha-nefesh* by the Spanish Jewish poet and Neoplatonist philosopher Solomon ibn Gabirol. I am using the phrase to refer to the inner process of *tikkun*—that is, spiritual development and purification in contrast to and in partnership with the outer work in the wider world that is generally meant when speaking of *tikkun olam*.

¹² Hans Jonas, “The Concept of God after Auschwitz: A Jewish Voice” in *Mortality and Morality*, p. 141.

¹³ Rabbi Kalonymus Kalmish Shapiro, *Sefer Derekh Ha-melekh* (Tel Aviv: Va'ad Hasidei Piaseczno, 1976), *passim*.

¹⁴ Pirkei Avot 2:1.

¹⁵ Stephen Duncan, “Grandma’s Philosophy,” online at www.youtube.com/watch?v=_fBQUhSfZPc.

¹⁶ B. Shabbat 31a–b.

¹⁷ Abraham Joshua Heschel, *Man’s Quest for God: Studies in Prayer and Symbolism* (1954; rpt. New York: Crossroad, 1987), p. 105.

¹⁸ B. Shabbat 31b.

¹⁹ For this idea, see, e.g., B. Pesahim 50b, Sotah 22b and 47a, Sanhedrin 105b, Horayot 10b, and Arakhin 16b. This view seems to me axiomatic in understanding Jewish views about motivation. A person is not to be rejected for doing things for the wrong reason, but appreciated for doing them at all—in the confidence that the process of engagement can be trusted to purify the motive.

²⁰ The words “it is not in heaven” are from Deuteronomy 30:12 and were later used by Rabbi Joshua in his fierce argument with Rabbi Eliezer in order to “prove” that the interpretation of the Torah is a matter not of divine revelation (i.e., “in heaven”) but rather belongs to the realm of human debate and reasoning (B. Bava Metzia 59b).

²¹ See note 4 above. We think of *tikkun* as action, yet it is also understood in the world of hasidic thought as perception, how we see the world, as the capacity for *yihudim*. See *Derekh Ha-melekh*, pp. 288–289.