## *Tikkun Olam*: What's a Rabbi To Do?

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I know the world must be mended. I know I have a role to play. But when someone tells me, "The problem is clear! I know what I must do!" or, worse, "I know what you must do!"—I want to check my pockets to see if they've taken my wallet. I distrust those who claim that the world's problems are clear to all and easily fixed. It's a big world we live in. As a rabbi, the phrase *tikkun olam* seems to be all around me—on websites and blogs, in newspaper articles and mission statements—but it's found much more rarely in the Jewish texts that are the basis of whatever authority I might have as a rabbi. I feel like a curmudgeon, old before my time. I am forty-two years old and suspicious of *tikkun olam*.

Every discussion about *tikkun olam*, repairing the world, begins in the middle. One only repairs a world that is both broken and also capable of being redeemed. One only repairs a world with both a history one did not choose and also a future that one can choose. **People** are called to repair the world, but the second paragraph of the Aleinu prayer hopes that **God** will repair the world to make it worthy of divine sovereignty. *Tikkun olam* forces us to see the world as it is, and demands that we dream of a world that is yet to be. *Tikkun olam* is both impatient and irritable, hopeful and hardworking. Rabbi Bunim of Przysucha famously taught that we are told to carry two notes in our pocket: one that says, "The world was created for me" (M. Sanhedrin 4:5), and another that says, "I am but dust and ashes" (Genesis 18:27). *Tikkun olam* begins when my hands are already full, because I'm holding both notes, saying, "I know you're busy, but you

have more work to do!" That is how I feel: already too busy and a bit frustrated because I know that there's more work to do.

## Rabbis and Politics and Repairing the World

I got asked, again, just this week, to say something publicly about North Carolina politics. For me to speak out on the record would make most people in my congregation happy, and a minority of them unhappy. I could do it. Some of my colleagues in the rabbinate blog about gun control, sermonize about health care, and inspire synagogue communities that thrive on the fusing of social action and Judaism. Some in my own congregation yearn for me and our community to move in this direction, for me to involve myself in politics, because Judaism calls on us to repair the world. "You're our rabbi," someone said to me. "We're looking to you for guidance, inspiration." But I'm plagued by a nagging question: what qualifies *me* to preach about this? I read the same newspapers as everyone else. I do consider myself well read and I try to keep up with current events. But there are many people in my congregation who are considerably better versed in North Carolina (and other) politics than I am. Even if I possessed some sort of expertise in an area of public policy, I remain suspicious: the whole mixing of religion and politics is fraught with danger, for both politics and religion.

Religion can stifle political debate. I don't want a society in which politicians make decisions about issues affecting society by quoting Scripture. I love the Bible, but too often it is a conversation stopper. Someone quotes a verse—and then, what else is there to say? Too often the use of religious language stops, rather than engenders, the debate that I believe helps us to arrive at wisdom. My teacher, Rabbi Elliot Dorff, has written:

> I believe in the Aristotelian model for attaining social wisdom—namely, that all views should be aired in the marketplace of ideas, with none given a priori authority…I would seek to determine America's commonalities in thought and values inductively, testing for agreement amid the diversity of traditions and attitudes brought to the table. This approach also parallels both the method and "the sound and fury" of each page of the Talmud, where multiple opinions must be heard and evaluated before a decision is made…[1]

In debating critical societal matters, religion *should* play a role—but I don't think it should be the trump card that it too often is.

I also worry about too much religion in politics because the understanding of morality found in the majority religion often tramples upon the religious freedom of minorities. In the spring of 2013, the North Carolina Senate passed a draft of a law (HB 695) which, in its own words, aims "to protect its citizens from the application of foreign law that would result in the violation of a fundamental constitutional right of a natural person"—but that very law contains within it provisions that threaten the Jewish community's constitutional right to practice Judaism with regard to abortion. Jewish legal sources oppose abortion in many cases, but the Jewish tradition does not believe that the life of the fetus is equal to the life of an already-born baby. Consequently, if the fetus threatens the life or health of the mother, according to Jewish tradition, the fetus *must* be aborted.[2] Reasonable people can and do disagree with Judaism's approach to abortion and its understanding of when life begins. Neither I nor the Jewish community seek to impose Judaism's beliefs upon the body politic, but Jews—and people in general—must be able to continue to practice our own understanding of what is right. Thomas Jefferson once wrote that the practice of morality is "necessary for the well-being of society."[3] He also wrote, "The interests of society require observation of those moral principles

*only in which all religions agree*."[4] Our society must be moral. There is widespread agreement on the immorality of murder and incest; secular law can rightfully forbid them. Not all religions agree about what is moral when it comes, for example, to abortion, as discussed above. Similar arguments might be made for issues such as gay marriage. Whereas for hundreds of years most religions in America considered gay marriage immoral, no such consensus exists today, as many religious leaders argue that gay marriage is a moral right provided for not only by the Constitution but by the Bible itself. In the absence of broad agreement, the understanding of any particular religion on issues such as abortion or gay marriage should not be a determining factor in how and when citizens can obtain a safe and legal abortion or be married in the eyes of American law.

I worry not only about what religion can do to politics, but also about what politics can do to religion. Politics is high-stakes, nasty warfare with strategies and tactics. Language is used to put people on one side or another of an issue. If I am pro-life, you must be anti-life. If I am pro-choice, you are anti-choice. The polarizing language and tactics of politics tears at the fabric of our society and makes more difficult the healing that religion, in its best form, seeks to bring into the world. By participating in the public arena, religion risks losing itself and embodying the very destructiveness of political discourse for which it can be a healing balm.

So I worry about what religion does to politics, and I worry about what politics can do to religion. And yet, I worry as well about what happens to both when they are kept too far apart. Our public discourse is impoverished without the values and insights of religion. Let me again quote from Rabbi Dorff, who writes:

> Jews have been badly burned when governments have enforced religious norms. In America, though, we do ourselves, religion, and the nation a disservice if we think that religion should have no role in shaping national policy. No religion should have

> the power or right to determine national policy, because that all too easily leads to intolerance, oppression, and sometimes even bloodshed. On the other hand, if public discussion of important social issues is to reflect the nation as a whole and if it is to attain the richness and wisdom that only multiple parties with differing views can give it, each religion must enter the fray of public debate and contribute its own views.[5]

So while I don't want to live in a world where leaders make public policy decisions by quoting Scripture or by simply declaring themselves to be morally superior by virtue of their religious beliefs, I also don't want to live in a world where our society makes decisions absent religious traditions that contain wisdom refined by generations over thousands of years.

It is not only American discourse that might be impoverished without an articulation of Jewish values; Judaism itself is diminished if it fails to live in the public sphere. I do not believe in a Judaism that tries to build for itself a self-imposed ghetto, simply for the sake of Jewish continuity. Authentic Judaism must live and breathe in relationship with the world, nourished by the wisdom of science and philosophy and medicine, challenged to grow by the advent of the Internet and a world of individual choice and freedom, shining as "a light unto the nations" and speaking a voice of truth to a world in need of a moral beacon. Beyond the physical security offered by the Jewish homeland, perhaps the greatest gift of Zionism has been that it has forced the richness of Jewish thought out of the synagogue and study hall, and thrust it into wrenching debates about diplomacy and public policy. For two thousand years, Judaism had little to say about things such as how to balance a nation's moral imperative to accept refugees fleeing oppression with the need to provide for the economic welfare of that nation's own citizens. We had no country of our own, nor did we live in a place where it mattered what Jews thought, even if we were permitted to speak. Such is not the case

today in Israel—or in America either, for that matter. The media and elected leaders pay attention to Jews and Jewish values. It is a blessing, not a curse, that rabbis, their congregations, and the Jewish community as a whole seek to formulate a Jewish voice in the public discourse and, at the same time, to navigate and maintain the blurred boundary between religion and politics.

I still feel like a curmudgeon. I still feel suspicious of *fixing the world*, but my own convictions lead me, however begrudgingly, to acknowledge the blessing of living in a time when Jewish values can and should influence the world. I may wonder to myself, "What training did I undergo, what message from on high did I receive, that qualifies me as a rabbi to condemn the state legislature?" Or, more broadly, "Who empowered me to *repair the world*?" But I also must wonder to myself, "Who am I, to ignore a world in need?" I must acknowledge that the world is constantly being remade not just by God, but by people—and, if that is the case, why should I bequeath to my children a world shaped by those in my generation who yell the loudest, rather than by those guided by the wisdom of the Jewish tradition that I so love and respect?

## Doing Good, and Dangers to the Religious Self

Once one decides to take the plunge and become a "world repairer," is there any guidance from the Jewish tradition about how to go about doing it? My first instinct is to always remember that doing good is complicated business. "No Good Deed" is a musical number from the Broadway musical *Wicked*. Elphaba, the so-called "Wicked Witch of the West," looks back on all the good that she's tried to do and wonders, "One question haunts and hurts, too much, too much to mention: was I really seeking good, or just seeking attention?" When

we set out to fix the world, are we just seeking attention? How can one tell the difference between serving God and serving ourselves? A danger of *tikkun olam* is that it may run the risk of blurring the distinction between God and me.

Consider this text from the Talmud:

> Rabbi Ḥama son of Rabbi Ḥanina said: What is the meaning of the verse, "Follow the Eternal, your God" (Deuteronomy 13:5)? Is it possible for a human being to walk after God's presence? Has it not been taught: "The Eternal your God is a devouring fire" (Deuteronomy 4:24)? But [the meaning of the verse is that we are] to walk after the attributes of the blessed Holy One. Just as God clothes the naked, for it is written: "And the Eternal God made for Adam and for his wife coats of skin, and clothed them" (Genesis 3:21), so too you must also clothe the naked.[6]

God renews the work of creation, and we too renew the work of creation. God clothes the naked, and we too must clothe the naked. But God is a consuming fire; best be careful where one stands. The high priest entered the holy of holies on Yom Kippur and dared to do God's service, where one false move meant death. Now that the Temple is gone, we have no clear instructions about how to do all this. Who can be certain they are serving God? I am as suspicious of myself as I am of others who proclaim they know with certainty what it is that God wants. Certainty about God's will is arrogance; we make idols of our own knowledge. And yet arrogance, it seems, has a role to play in serving God—which is precisely what makes repairing the world such a dangerous business.

Quite inexplicably, the ashes of the red heifer purify the impure but contaminate the pure. In a commentary explaining the spiritual idea behind this strange *mitzvah* found in Numbers 19, the Baal

Shem Tov says that even though the *mitzvah* of the red heifer seems obsolete without the Temple, the laws contain within them a hint of the role of arrogance[7] in the service of God. He teaches:

> When one behaves improperly and is far from God, one's repair (*tikkun*) begins through arrogance…for example, [one is motivated to do commandments by a desire] for self glory or [one acts solely] to obtain the world to come, which is a type of hidden arrogance, if one believes that it is fitting for God to reward good deeds and [that one he has indeed done] something for God. But in truth, what are we in comparison to the strength of the Creator? How can we receive a reward? But [without this illusion that is based in arrogance,] it is impossible to come to this [insight], and [without it] God forbid, one would remain "outside." So it is permitted to grab hold of arrogance and glory, and to do things not just for the Torah's sake, because "by way of not for the Torah's sake, one comes to act for the Torah's sake" (B. Pesaḥim 50b). But when doing things for the Torah's sake [and not for any supposed reward], one must be refined and free of any moment of arrogance, because if arrogance mixes in, God forbid, the service [of God] will be spoiled. Therefore, arrogance purifies the impure who are far from God, and makes impure the pure who are close to God, such that, God forbid, if a person felt arrogance [as part of one's service of God], it would become an abomination before God.[8]

For me to improve as a person, for me to move from being distant from God to serving God, I must pass through the (illusory?) stage of believing in my own power, the dangerous, idolatrous, self-centered moment of saying, "I know God's will! I can serve God and my service is important!" But for me to actually serve God, I must be free of any sense of self-importance, of any confidence that I have indeed done

something important. I must make of my life an offering, without any expectation that it is fitting or acceptable. To return God's light to God I must become a vessel, empty of ego and arrogance. The moment I think I've achieved something is the moment when the achievement disappears because I think I have it. It slips through my fingers. I must retreat, becoming again distant from my Creator, and I must then ready myself for the whole process to begin anew.

## Do Motivations Matter?

Whether we are arrogant in believing too strongly in our own ability to make a difference, or whether we are overly humble in believing too meekly in our ability to create change—when it comes to repairing the world, one can legitimately ask whether motivations should matter at all. The road to hell is, after all, paved with good intentions. In the opening scene of *Fiddler on the Roof*, a villager says to Naḥum the Beggar, "Here, Reb Naḥum, here's one kopeck." Nahum the beggar complains, "One kopeck? Last week you gave me two kopecks!" The villager answers, "I had a bad week," to which the beggar replies, "So? If you had a bad week, why should I suffer?" The scene raises an important question about trying to do good: does it matter to the poor person why one is doing the *mitzvah*?

The lowest level of giving on Maimonides' ladder of *tzedakah* is giving begrudgingly.[9] But just ask the family of a poor person if they'd rather receive a lot of money, given begrudgingly, or a little money, given cheerfully: they'll look at you like you're crazy. First, they need to eat.

Dan Pallota, an American entrepreneur, humanitarian activist, and author, is best known for founding multi-day charitable events such as AIDS Rides and Breast Cancer three-day walks. He is known as a pioneer for rethinking the way that nonprofits operate and raise money. In a March 2013 TED Talk, Pallotta argues that the whole

way we approach charity limits the extent to which we can do good in combating large-scale social problems:

> We don't like non-profits to use money to incentivize people to produce more in social services. We have a visceral reaction to the idea that anyone would make very much money helping other people. Interesting that we don't have a visceral reaction to the notion that people would make a lot of money not helping other people. You want to make $50 million selling violent video games to kids, go for it; we'll put you on the cover of *Wired* magazine; but you want to make half a million dollars trying to cure kids of malaria and you're considered a parasite yourself. And we think of this as our system of ethics! But what we don't say is that this system has a powerful side effect, which is: it gives a really stark, mutually exclusive choice—between doing very well for yourself and your family, or doing good for the world—to the brightest minds coming out of our best universities, and sends tens of thousands of people who could make a huge difference in the non-profit sector marching every year directly into the for-profit sector, because they are not willing to make that kind of life-long economic sacrifice.[10]

Does the fact that someone makes an annual salary of $500,000 while raising millions of dollars to help millions of people make that person less ethical than someone making $80,000 per year helping a few people? Even if we assume that the well-paid executive is ill-motivated—an unfair assumption—ask all the people being helped by the well-paid executive which they prefer. The answer should be obvious.

Pallotta argues that our puritanical need for people to benefit very little while helping others holds us back from doing a lot more good. Someone can do an awful lot of good while serving their own self-

interest, and people with the best motivations may also wreak a lot of havoc. I once made an off-handed remark from the pulpit that if the United States decided to do so, we could grow enough food in the State of California to put an end to poverty in much of the world. Someone raised their hand and pointed out that in doing so, we would wind up draining the Colorado River and ruining the entire Southwest region of the United States. Without entering into the finer points of water policy, the rebuke was a good reminder that well-intentioned actions are not, by definition, moral. Much havoc has been wreaked by those meaning well. Shouldn't goodness (and wickedness, as well) be measured by what we actually *do*, and not by *why* we do it?

## The World Is a Big Place; Leave Room For God

In her book *Epilogue: A Memoir*, Anne Roiphe writes:

> I wake up at 2:45 in the morning…I listen to the sirens wail along the avenue. I pick up my *New Yorker* magazine. I want to read an article about the Sudan. But I am too tired. My head begins to throb. I cannot help those the Janjaweed would kill. I cannot make dictators desist and warlords retreat and land-grabbers grow modest in their needs. I am a widow who can grind her teeth in fury, who can write a letter to her president, e-mail a friend, or just wait for morning at the window, knowing that the blush of dawn will return over the East River when it is ready, good and ready and nothing I can do will rescue a child.[11]

"What good can one person do?" can sound like giving up too easily, or like an excuse to make ourselves feel better for doing nothing at all. It is also the exhaustion of a widow mourning her husband,

who does not have the energy to lift herself from grief to fight evils a world away. Roiphe reminds me not to judge or condemn those who cannot rally to a particular cause at any given time. While one shouldn't spend one's life cocooned away from the world's suffering, there are times in life when we need to seek refuge, to help ourselves for a time—so that we can then emerge and be of help to others once again.

But it is also true that we should maintain a healthy humility regarding the role that we play in the unfolding human story. Abraham pleads on behalf of Sodom and Gomorrah, negotiating with God down to ten righteous people: "For the sake of ten, I will not destroy it" (Genesis 18:32). Abraham does what he can, but, in the end, there are not even ten righteous people in the city. Despite all of Abraham's efforts, Sodom and Gomorrah are destroyed.

I want to quote at length from an essay on *tikkun olam* written by Professor Moshe Benovitz, in which he questions the whole idea that God calls upon human beings to involve themselves in repairing the world:

> God commands Moses: "Behold, I have given into your hand Siḥon, king of Ḥeshbon, the Amorite, and his land; begin to possess it and challenge him to battle" (Deuteronomy 2:24). And what does Moses do? "I sent messengers out of the wilderness of Kedemot unto Siḥon king of Ḥeshbon with words of peace, saying: 'Let me pass through your land; I will go along by the highway, turning neither to the right nor to the left" (2:26–27). Moses deliberately violates God's explicit command: he is ordered to provoke battle with Siḥon, but instead he sends emissaries on a mission of peace. And God ignores him, arranging things exactly as He had planned originally, without Moses' help: "But Siḥon king of Ḥeshbon would not let us pass, for the Eternal your God hardened his spirit, and made his heart obstinate, that he might deliver him

into your hand this very day. And the Eternal said unto me: 'Behold, I have begun to deliver up Siḥon and his land before you; begin to possess his land.' Then Siḥon came out against us, he and all his people, to battle at Yaḥatz. And the Eternal our God delivered him up before us, and we smote him, and his sons, and all his people" (2:30–32).

When Moses smote the rock accidentally instead of speaking to it, God was furious, and decreed that Moses' lifelong dream, to enter the Promised Land, be snatched from him a moment before it was to become a reality. This is the gravest punishment that could possibly be inflicted on a person who devoted his entire life to one goal. Yet here, when Moses deliberately turns his back on God's explicit command, refusing to do his part in establishing international boundaries in accordance with the divine plan, God ignores him, and carries out his plan without Moses' cooperation. God deprives Siḥon of his free will and hardens Siḥon's heart, in order to fix the borders of nations as He pleases.

That is to say: the role that God allots us in *tikkun olam* is not all that significant. Right- and left-wing politics are much ado in the hearts of men and women, but the counsel of the Lord will stand forever, regardless of people's best efforts. To paraphrase Lekha Dodi: "Break out to the right or to the left, but worship Adonai." Note that our prayer in [the second paragraph of the Aleinu] is not "And so we hope to repair the world with the sovereignty of the Almighty," but "And so we hope for you, Adonai our God, to speedily see Your glorious power remove idolatry from the face of the earth and utterly destroy false gods, in order to repair the world with the sovereignty of the Almighty." We don't hope to change God's world. We hope that God will change His world.[12]

What if Benovitz is right? What if Jewish tradition looks to God, not to us, to repair the world? What, then, are human beings called upon to do? Benovitz continues: "There is another world. There is a whole world 'in here,' within each of us, and repairing that world is our responsibility. Moses was not punished when he veered left, in accordance with his conscience, after God told him to turn right, but he was punished severely when he lost his temper with the Israelites and smote the rock."[13] It is not repair of the world that is our task, says Benovitz, but rather repair of the individual soul—and that task is hard enough.

Yet there is a certain irony in Benovitz's essay. A scholar at Machon Schechter in Jerusalem, Benovitz wrote his essay in modern Jerusalem, a city that was reunited in 1967 and that is secure today because Jews stopped leaving their fate up to God. The Zionists who founded the modern Jewish State rejected the idea that changing the course of Jewish history should be left to God; they decided to break with thousands of years of Jewish history and stop waiting for God to redeem the Jewish people, and instead took action to redeem the world for themselves. They stopped praying and waiting for a Messiah. They engaged in politics and international diplomacy; they established newspapers for culture; they raised money, worked the land, raised an army, and built a country. Religious Zionists now claim that it was God who strengthened the hand of the secular Zionists who fought and founded modern Israel. From a spiritual perspective, I find the claim that God continues to act in history compelling, but intellectually I must recognize (1) that I possess no certainty that God mysteriously helped found the State, and (2) that it was largely secular, not religious, Zionists who founded the modern State of Israel. Was God's hand at work? Was it human effort alone that created the (relatively) safe and prosperous city of Jerusalem, from which Benovitz could pen his essay? Where, exactly, divine and human effort overlap is, again, unclear. Again, the boundary is a tricky one—especially in modern Israel, where zealots of different

political stripes each cling to their own vision of what a "repaired world" should look like, and who should do the repairing.

## Finding One's Place in (Repairing) the World

Before I became a rabbi, I once sat with my father in his living room. He looked at me and said, "Daniel, you should run for office. You could be a senator." As I smiled, he said with greater urgency, "I can tell you're thinking, 'That's what every father believes about his son'"—which was, indeed, exactly what I *was* thinking—"but you really can do it. The country needs people like you to be involved." I listened dutifully and flew home. I have no plans to run for office… but that is not to say I haven't thought about it.

I met the President of the United States a few years ago. I drove from North Carolina to Washington D.C., gathered with a group of Conservative rabbis in the office of a local law firm, made the short walk to the White House, went through security, walked into the West Wing, sat at the end of a table in the Roosevelt Room, and, at approximately 2:20 p.m., shook the President's hand as he made his way around the room greeting each person. What I remember most about the experience was thinking to myself, "Here is the flesh-and-blood person who is making decisions that will affect the fate of the world. He is not so different than I. If I made a decision to move my life in that particular direction—to get the right degrees, to study, to run for office—the American democratic process makes it possible for me to become President. Wow!"

So why don't I try? Is it hubris and arrogance to believe in one's own potential? Shouldn't we all want to be President, so that we can change the world? But even if I committed myself and, in some alternative universe, were to actually become President, it seems that even presidents have a hard time changing the world. What with Congress and politics, natural disasters and those pesky other parts

of the world that do not like to listen as much as we'd hope they would, even presidential power is no guarantee that one can change the world for the better. But world leaders *do* seem to have more means at their disposal than the rest of us. Why not, then, run for office? Why not try?

In his commentary on the Torah portion *Va-yak·hel*, Rabbi Mordecai Yosef Leiner of Izbica (1800–1854) writes about the construction of the tabernacle:

> If so much as a nail were missing, the Shekhinah would not rest in the mishkan. Therefore no one could in any way feel superior to another, even the one who made the ark [could not feel superior] to the one [who made] the tent-spikes of the courtyard, for, as it says in the Talmud, "What does it matter, both this and this serve to exalt the Most High?" (B. Sotah 40a)[14]

What is one to do? How does one know one's place in repairing the world? The key is not to try and do everything, or even the biggest thing. Rather, we must each know ourselves and find the part that we want to do—and that God needs us to do—to help God's presence be felt in the world.

It is a weekday morning in December as I finish these thoughts. The sun rises again this morning. Cars stream by. An hour ago, I helped my children get off to school in the early morning darkness. Now I type quietly before the day begins, straining to sew together a few words, to add my voice to a conversation that began long before me and will continue long after. The world is broken; this much I know. It can be redeemed; this too I believe. I am in the middle: between brokenness and redemption, between arrogance and humility, between my family and the world, between hunger to act and resignation. Should I be here, typing away at this screen? Not everyone must run for President. Not everyone must involve themselves in every cause, every issue. No person may feel superior to

another because of having done this or that. But each person must do what he or she feels called to do by God; no more and no less. We must listen—to God, to ourselves, to the world—at each and every moment. We must constantly struggle to know ourselves as we really are, without self-deceit. We must constantly judge ourselves and allow ourselves to be judged. Perhaps the question of fixing the world returns to the question the poet Mary Oliver asked so beautifully so many years ago:

> Tell me, what is it you plan to do
> With your one wild and precious life?"[15]

## NOTES

[1] Elliot Dorff, *To Do the Right and the Good: A Jewish Approach to Modern Social Ethics* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2004), p. 100.
[2] According to the Mishnah in Ohalot 7:6, "If a woman has [life-threatening] difficulty in childbirth, the embryo within her should be dismembered limb by limb, because her life takes precedence over its life. Once its head or its greater part has emerged, it may not be touched, for we do not set aside one life for another." See also David M. Feldman, "Abortion: The Jewish View" (1983), p. 803, at http://rabbinicalassembly.org/sites/default/files/public/halakhah/teshuvot/19861990/feldman_abortion.pdf.
[3] Cited by E. Raab in an untitled essay published in *American Jews and the Separatist Faith*, ed. David G. Dalin (Washington, DC: Ethics and Public Policy Center, 1993), p. 112.
[4] Ibid., 12:315; emphasis added.
[5] Dorff, *To Do the Right and the Good*, pp. 112–113.
[6] B. Sotah 14a.
[7] The word he uses is *hagbahut*, which might be translated as "accomplishment" or "a lifting up of oneself." It comes from the same root as *hagbah*, the word we use to describe the lifting up of the Torah after it is read.
[8] *Sefer Baal Shem Tov Ha-m'fo·ar* (Jerusalem: Nofet Tzufim, 1987), part. 2, p. 114.
[9] M.T. Hilkhot Matnot Aniyim, ch. 10.
[10] http://www.ted.com/talks/dan_pallotta_the_way_we_think_about_charity_is_dead_wrong.html.
[11] Anne Roiphe, *Epilogue: A Memoir* (New York: Harper, 2008), p. 202.
[12] http://www.schechter.edu/facultyForum.aspx?ID=44. Translations of biblical texts, as well as transliterations of Hebrew words, have been changed from the original in order to accord with the style of this volume.
[13] Ibid.
[14] *Living Waters: A Commentary on the Torah by Rabbi Mordechai Yosef of Isbitza*, trans. and ed. by Betsalel Philip Edwards (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aaronson, 2001), p. 175. "Isbitza" and "Izbica" are alternate spellings of the same village in Poland.
[15] Mary Oliver, "The Summer Day," in *New and Selected Poems, Volume One* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992), p. 94.