

Rabbi Julie Hilton Danan, Ph.D.  
[juliedanan@gmail.com](mailto:juliedanan@gmail.com), <http://wellspringsofwisdom.com/>

**Course Outline**  
**IPT5\_722 - Tikkun Olam: A Jewish Tradition of World Repair**  
**Vancouver School of Theology, Summer 2021**  
**July 5-9, 2pm – 5pm PST**

**PURPOSE:**

Rather than a perfect creation corrupted by humanity, Jewish tradition proposes that God created an imperfect world requiring human repair. We will examine the historical development of Tikkun Olam, the Jewish concept of repairing the world, from early Rabbinic literature through Kabbalah, Hasidism, Zionist and post-Holocaust theology, and contemporary social activism. Through the lens of Tikkun Olam, we will learn about Jewish history and major Jewish texts, as we also consider the connection between our own spiritual practice and our commitment to social justice.

**COMPETENCE OBJECTIVES:**

Students will be expected to learn and demonstrate the ability to:

- Define *Tikkun Olam* through its development and changes at four critical stages: Rabbinic, Kabbalistic, Modern (Early Zionist, Post-Holocaust), and Contemporary
- Identify major historic events, texts, and theological concepts that underlie Tikkun Olam at each stage of its development
- Discuss contemporary social justice developments in the Jewish community in the framework of Tikkun Olam
- Understand Tikkun Olam in the framework of Jewish-Christian and other Interfaith relations

**General Class Outline (subject to revision)**

Monday: Introduction to Tikkun Olam, introduction to Rabbinic Literature in its historical setting, Tikkun Olam in the Mishnah and Liturgy.

Tuesday: Introduction to Kabbalah and historic background of Lurianic Kabbalah. Tikkun Olam in Lurianic Kabbalah.

Wednesday: Introduction to Hasidism, Tikkun Olam in Hassidic thought and lore. Tikkun Olam in Early Zionist Thought

Thursday: Tikkun Olam in Post-Holocaust theology.

Friday: The Contemporary popularization of Tikkun Olam as social activism, and its critics. Tikkun Olam in our lives; Tikkun Halev (repairing the heart). Conclusion: Shabbat as a taste of Tikkun Olam. Welcome Shabbat with instructor.

**REQUIRED READINGS (all available to read online except items highlighted in Yellow)**

**PLEASE PRE\_READ BEFORE COURSE BEGINS**

(Note: although some of the primary sources show both Hebrew and English, students are only required to read the English. The instructor may point out some nuances of the Hebrew.)

**Book to buy:** Jaffe, David, *Changing the World from the Inside Out* (Trumpeter, Boulder, 2016).

Matt, Daniel C. *The Essential Kabbalah: The Heart of Jewish Mysticism* (San Francisco: HarperOne, 2009).

**General Articles:**

“Tikkun Olam and Christian Ethics After the Holocaust,” Robert A. Everett, in, *Remembering for the Future, The Holocaust in An Age of Genocide*, 3 vols, eds. Roth, Maxwell, Levy, Whitworth (Hampshire, United Kingdom/New York: Palgrave, 2001), pp 992-1006 (on Canvas).

“The Place of Tikkun Olam in American Jewish Life,” Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, 2014: <https://jcpa.org/article/place-tikkun-olam-american-jewish-life/>

“Tikkun Olam in Contemporary Jewish Thought,” Dr. Lawrence Fine: <https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/tikkun-olam/>

“The History of ‘Tikkun Olam,’” Zeek Magazine, 2007: <http://www.zeek.net/706tohu/>

General Resources from the Instructor: <http://wellspringsofwisdom.com/resources-about-tikkun-olam/>

**Biblical/Rabbinic**

Bible (social welfare and social justice)

Leviticus 19:9-18 <https://www.sefaria.org/Leviticus.19?lang=bi&aliyot=0>

Isaiah 58 <https://www.sefaria.org/Isaiah.58?lang=bi>

Siddur Ashkenaz, Aleynu:

[https://www.sefaria.org/Siddur\\_Ashkenaz%2C\\_Weekday%2C\\_Shacharit%2C\\_Concluding\\_Prayers%2C\\_Alenu?lang=bi](https://www.sefaria.org/Siddur_Ashkenaz%2C_Weekday%2C_Shacharit%2C_Concluding_Prayers%2C_Alenu?lang=bi)

Bereishit Rabbah (Midrash) 11:6

([https://www.sefaria.org/Bereishit\\_Rabbah.11.7?lang=en&with=all&lang2=en](https://www.sefaria.org/Bereishit_Rabbah.11.7?lang=en&with=all&lang2=en))

Mishnah Gittin 4:2, 3, 5: [https://www.sefaria.org/Mishnah\\_Gittin.2?lang=bi](https://www.sefaria.org/Mishnah_Gittin.2?lang=bi)

Mishnah Sheviit, 10:3:

[https://www.sefaria.org/Mishnah\\_Sheviit.10.3?lang=bi&with=all&lang2=en](https://www.sefaria.org/Mishnah_Sheviit.10.3?lang=bi&with=all&lang2=en)

### **Kabbalah:**

Matt, Daniel, "Creation," pp. 89-99, *The Essential Kabbala: The Heart of Jewish Mysticism* (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1994)

"How the Ari Created a Myth and Transformed Judaism," Howard Fine:

<https://www.tikkun.org/nextgen/2011/03/28/how-the-ari-created-a-myth-and-transformed-judaism/>

Biblical and Rabbinic Sources for Luria (and the preceding article), source sheet by instructor:

[www.sefaria.org/sheets/124636](http://www.sefaria.org/sheets/124636)

"Tikkun: A Lurianic Motif in Contemporary Jewish Thought," by Dr. Lawrence Fine, *From Ancient Israel to Modern Judaism: Intellect in Quest of Understanding—Essays in Honor of Marvin Fox, Vol. 4*, ed. Jacob Neusner, et.al. (Scholars Press). Reprinted here:

<https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/tikkun-in-lurianic-kabbalah/>

### **Hassidic:**

Selections by Rabbi Nachman of Breslov in this source sheet:

<https://prtcls.com/article/tikkun-olam-source-sheet/> (Downloadable version:

<https://www.neohasid.org/pdf/29-texts.pdf>)

"What is Tikkun Olam," by Tzvi Freeman, Chabad.org:

[https://www.chabad.org/library/article\\_cdo/aid/3700275/jewish/What-Is-Tikkun-Olam.htm](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/3700275/jewish/What-Is-Tikkun-Olam.htm)

"The Lamed Vav Taylor," in *Shlomo's Stories, Selected Tales*, Rabbi Shlomo Carlebach and Susan Yael Mesinai (Northvale, New Jersey: Jason Aronson, 1994), pp. 79-85.

"Repairing the Damage," p. 212, "What to Fix," 214, "Fixing Souls," 323-324, in *Light and Fire of the Baal Shem Tov* by Yitzhak Buxbaum (New York: Continuum Publishing, 2005).

### **Zionism:**

Selections by Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kuk and Rabbi Yehudah Ashlag in this source sheet:

<https://prtcls.com/article/tikkun-olam-source-sheet/> (Downloadable version:

<https://www.neohasid.org/pdf/29-texts.pdf>)

## Post Holocaust Theology for Jews and Christians

Fackenheim, Emil, *To Mend the World: Foundations of Post-Holocaust Jewish Thought* (Indiana University Press, 1994) pp. 250-314

“Tikkun Olam and Christian Ethics After the Holocaust,” Robert A. Everett, in, *Remembering for the Future, The Holocaust in An Age of Genocide*, 3 vols, eds. Roth, Maxwell, Levy, Whitworth (Hampshire, United Kingdom/New York: Palgrave, 2001), pp 992-1006

### Modern to Contemporary:

“How to Bring Mashiah,” Arthur Waskow, in *The (First) Jewish Catalog*, eds. Siegel, Strassfeld and Strassfeld (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1973), pp 29-30.

“Tikkun Olam – Mending the World,” in *Talking Points: Topics in Jewish Christian Relations*, Consultative Panel on Lutheran-Jewish Relations in the office of Ecumenical and Inter-Religious Relations, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America: <https://www.ccjr.us/dialogika-resources/documents-and-statements/protestant-churches/na/lutheran/elca2002#7>

Critique of Tikkun Olam:

Interview with Jonathan Newmann: <https://www.thejc.com/what-is-tikkun-olam-jonathan-neumann-limmud-1.474271>

Response to Jonathan Newman, Rabbi David Seidenberg: [https://jewishjournal.com/culture/first\\_person/294508/a-tikkun-for-tikkun-olam-how-to-heal-the-world-corrupts-debate-endangers-judaism/](https://jewishjournal.com/culture/first_person/294508/a-tikkun-for-tikkun-olam-how-to-heal-the-world-corrupts-debate-endangers-judaism/)

An Orthodox view of Tikkun Olam:

Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks, “Tikkun Olam: Orthodoxy’s Responsibility to Perfect G-d’s World,” (speech, December 1997): <https://advocacy.ou.org/tikkun-olam-orthodoxys-responsibility-to-perfect-g-ds-world/>

Jaffe, David, *Changing the World from the Inside Out* (Trumpeter, Boulder, 2016).

Stuart Kestenbaum (Poet Laureate of Maine, USA), “Holding the Light,” in *Only Now* (Deerbrook Editions, 2013), p. 71. Reprinted here: <https://poets.org/poem/holding-light>

For Shabbat experience (Friday):

Shabbat Blessings:

<https://www.schusterman.org/tablemakers/files/REALITY%20Shabbat%20Blessing%20Sheet-%20Shabbat%20101.pdf>

### **ASSIGNMENTS**

For all students:

- Attendance (100%) in accordance with VST policies
- Thoughtful, engaged participation in class discussion and activities
- Completion of assigned readings

For Certificate-level students:

- One 1000-1200 word reflection paper demonstrating mastery of course material and engagement with it.

For Basic-level students (MATS, M.Div, MAPPL, MAIS):

- A 1500-1875 word research paper on a Tikkun Olam topic of the student's choice, demonstrating engagement with some combination of Talmudic, Kabbalistic, theological and contemporary sources, and involving research (5 sources) beyond the assigned course readings.

Additional for Advanced-level students (Th.M.):

- A 3700-4250 word research paper on a Tikkun Olam topic of the student's choice, demonstrating engagement with some combination of Talmudic, Kabbalistic, theological and contemporary sources, and involving significant research (10 sources) beyond the assigned course readings.