

## Repairing the world since 1989 & BJPA's kabbalistic aspect

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Can you remember a time before Tikkun Olam?

In Yehudah Mirsky's new paper, **Peoplehood - Think and Strong: Rethinking Israel-Diaspora Relations for a New Century**, among JPPI's policy recommendations to the government of Israel, he mentions Tikkun Olam as an anchor around which a common Diaspora-Israel Jewish identity and practice could be maintained and thrive. It seems to take for granted the idea that this concept, this formulation of the concept, is a widely held and deeply ingrained value.

On BJPA, this anchor of the Jewish people first appears in 1989. As far as its position in modern Jewish discourse, 'Tikkun Olam', as a term, has come a long way in a short time! The even more surprising thing is that it feels like a term that was never new at all.

Its first occurrence in our archives is in **Conflict or Cooperation? Papers on Jewish Unity**, in Lawrence A. Hoffman's contribution "Jewish Unity and Jewish Peoplehood: A Reform Position". He says:

The survival of the Jewish people as an agent of tikkun olam requires that we work together regardless of differences on the many issues of moment that face us.

The next instance of its use feels like an even bolder taking for granted of this term's broad-based acceptance :

Our communal mission has remained the same since Sinai—a covenant for Tikkun Olam, for repairing this imperfect world, for ensuring a Jewish future—and only the formulation and configuration have changed. -**The Future of the Profession: a Lay Leader's Candid View**, Shoshana S. Cardin, 1989

Then all of a sudden it's all over the place. Starting in 1994, it appears in not fewer than three documents per year.

Rabbi Jill Jacobs published **The History of "Tikkun Olam"** in Zeek in 2007. She follows the term's roots back to the Aleynu prayer, probably composed in the 2nd century, and its waxing and waning in popularity until present times. She dates its first modern emergence to the 1950's, but notes that it really picked up steam in the '70s and '80s. Of the four understandings of Tikkun Olam that emerge from her historical survey, its modern incarnation draws the most from Lurianic thought.

The popularity of the term tikkun olam, and the general emphasis on its Lurianic, rather than rabbinic, roots may indicate a desire to place one's own work in a larger context of influencing the greater world. In an individual's search for the meaning of his or her own life, it may be more compelling to think of one's every action as contributing to the repair of the

cosmos, than to think of the same actions as simply accomplishing a small fix to a much larger problem.

And so it seems that, as usual, we get back to the **Baby Boomers**.