Tzedekah Tzedek and Tikkun Olam: Jusitice for Disabled Jews in the Synagogue

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ABSTRACT

Tzedekah (charity) *tzedek* (justice) and *tikkun olam* (social justice) are all elements of Jewish religious thought and practice. Members of the Jewish community sometimes view disability as related to charity. For example, when the need for a ramp is identified, congregants suggest a fundraiser. However, in order for disabled Jews to obtain justice, architectural adjustments must be accompanied by attitudinal changes. The rights of disabled persons must be conceived as human rights rather than as aspects of charity.

TZEDEKAH, *TZEDEK* AND *TIKKUN OLAM*: JUSTICE FOR DISABLED JEWS IN THE SYNAGOGUE

In this paper, I compare and contrast the notions of *tzedek , tzedekah* and *tikkun olam* . I argue that while these words may be used interchangeably in certain contexts, they are very different in theory and in practice. By discussing physical and attitudinal *accessibility* of synagogues and the (in)visibility of disability issues in the Jewish community, I hope to persuade readers that change is necessary.

Tzedekah, Tzedek and *Tikkun Olam* all make reference to aspects of justice within Judaism. The meaning of each word varies, depending on context. Justice for some groups manifests differently than it does for others. Women, *Mizrachi*, gay men and lesbian Jews have all been acknowledged within our Jewish community. Each of these constituencies have organized support groups, cultural events as well as independent prayer groups or synagogues. Disabled Jews have done none of the above.

The organization "Women at the Wall" argued at the Supreme Court in Israel for permission to conduct women's prayer groups at the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem (Joseph, 2003). *Sephardi* Jews created their own organizations such as the World *Sephardi* Federation. They organize international conferences in order to maintain their particular customs and religious traditions (Arnold, 2003). In the movie, Trembling Before G-D, *Orthodox* and *Hassidic* lesbians and gay men described their lives in the enclaves of Williamsburg, Crown Heights, and Boro Park in New York City (DuBowski and Smolowitz, 2001).

Each of the above marginalized groups has somehow managed to achieve what disabled Jews have yet to accomplish. Women, *Mizrachi,* gay men and lesbian Jews have located accessible congregations, attained visibility and garnered some aspects of human rights entitlements. Disabled Jews, in contrast, continue to fight for the most basic accommodations. The demand for a ramp to the *bima*, for example, results in a request to organize a fundraiser rather than a structural adjustment .

Why is it that disabled Jews have not yet attained our most basic human rights? Is it perhaps because we have not organized a cross-disability support group? Is it because, unlike other groups, we are often physically separated from one another and unable to share experiences and validate perceptions? Is it because, although disabled persons now comprise approximately 14 % of the Canadian population (author unknown, 2002), the overwhelming majority of us live in poverty (Lee, 2000)? Is it our lack of economic clout which translates into social powerlessness? Obtaining answers to these questions will require greater resources than are available for this small research project. Nonetheless, the query must be made.

Tzedekah

In Hebrew, words are known by their "root", most often consisting of three letters. The words *tzedekah* and *tzedek* both derive from the verb "tz-d-k" which means to be righteous. *Tzedek* means "justice" or

"righteousness". In modern times, the word *tzedekah* has been translated as "charity" in English. Commands to assist others appear in the *Torah*, *Pirkei Avot* and in the *Talmud*. The *Torah* states; "Open your hand to the poor and the needy kinsman in your land." (Deuteronomy 15:11). Rabbi Hannina states; "Anyone whose good deeds exceed his wisdom, his wisdom will endure; but anyone whose wisdom exceeds his good deeds, his wisdom will not endure" (*Pirkei Avot*, 3: 12). Rabbi Joshua ben Korkha states; "Anyone who shuts his eyes against charity is like one who worships idols" (Jerusalem *Talmud*, Peah, 4:20). Finally, Rabbi Assi states in the *Talmud;* "*Tzedekah* is as important as all other commandments put together" (Babylonian *Talmud*, Baba Bathra, 9A).

In sermons presented by modern day rabbis, *tzedekah* is often viewed as the equivalent of charity. However, there are significant differences in the way in which the two words are understood and practiced. Charity views recipients as either deserving or undeserving of particular forms of assistance. There are no such distinctions made when *tzedekah* is offered. In fact, even rich people can receive *tzedekah*. In secular society, only the recipient of charity is considered a beneficiary. *Tzedekah*, in contrast, derives from the notion of justice. All property and assets are viewed as coming from G-d. Therefore, there is an inherent obligation to equalize distribution of G-d's gifts. *Tzedekah* is not something done simply for an individual in distress. Rather, by offering *tzedekah,* we perform a *mitzvah,* a good deed, which enhances our own piety. Hence, both the recipient and the donor are considered beneficiaries.

When secular individuals donate to charity, no particular amount is required. For observant Jews, however, *tzedekah* is understood to be somewhere between ten per cent and twenty per cent of one's net annual income (Babylonian *Talmud*, Ketubot, 50A). This tithing of ten per cent or more applies even to those individuals who themselves receive *tzedekah*. From the above description, one can easily ascertain that while there are parallels between charity and *tzedekah*, there are also a great many distinguishing features associated with the latter.

Rabbi Shlomo Ephraim of Lunshitz, (1550-1619) also known as Kli Yakar, explains in a commentary that the repetition of the words, "aser, t'aser" are translated as "you shall surely tithe" (Deuteronomy, 15:10). The Kli Yakar states that the first time the word "aser" is used, it refers to money offered by hand. The second time the word is used, it refers to compassion offered by both hand and mouth. We extrapolate, therefore, that *tzedekah* is not simply the offering of financial aid but, rather, the provision of assistance in a sensitive and respectful way (Just-tzedekah, 2003).

This attention to the manner in which *tzedekah* is delivered is also reflected in Maimonides' Ladder of *Tzedakah.* The Ladder highlights the preferred methods by which to assist a needy person. There are eight rungs on the Ladder, ranked from the most preferred to the least preferred ways. The most preferred manner in which to help people is to offer them a way to help themselves e.g. by offering a job or a business partnership etc. The least preferred way is to give money directly to someone you know, unwillingly, with little dignity offered the recipient (Mishneh Torah, Laws Concerning Gifts to the Poor, 10:7).

The *Torah* emphasizes the *mitzvah* of caring for the widow, the orphan and the stranger. Characterizations of a munificent deity describe a G-d who "upholds the cause of the fatherless and the widow and befriends the stranger"(Deuteronomy, 10:18). We see this concern for the widow illustrated in the Book of Ruth when Boaz allows Ruth, who has lost her husband, to glean from his fields (Ruth 2: 17-19).

Interestingly, the *Torah* does not mention disabled people as recipients of specific forms of assistance. Today, however, according to the Tzedekah Reports web site, disabled persons constitute approximately fifty per cent of the recipients of *tzedekah* from Jewish social service agencies in the United States[1]. Thirty six of seventy two

[1] These organizations which cater to the Jewish community more broadly do not indicate what percentage of their total clientele are disabled.

agencies listed as charitable organizations on the Tzedekah Reports web site provide assistance to disabled persons, both Jews and non-Jews. Twenty three agencies mention specific programs administered to disabled persons. Thirteen agencies are dedicated entirely to working with members of the disabled community (Tzedekah Reports, 2003).

According to the Blue Book, a comprehensive listing of social service agencies serving the Greater Toronto Area (Community Information Service of Toronto, 2003), forty organizations work specifically with members of the Jewish community. Of those forty, seventeen indicated that they administered some programs or services to disabled individuals and ten organizations worked exclusively with disabled persons. Therefore, approximately sixty seven per cent of Jewish social service agencies in the GTA serve disabled citizens[2]. While the *Torah* may not have described disabled Jews specifically in their discussions regarding *tzedekah*, it is disabled Jews who may reap its benefits.

Tzedek / Justice

Disabled Jews are often viewed as recipients of *tzedekah*, but rarely in the context of *tikkun olam*. This much is evident from the focus groups, the interviews and the various web sites reviewed. When physical changes to synagogue structures are suggested, financial issues are inevitably raised. Fundraisers are the suggested solution. However, other capital expenditures receive cash directly from synagogue budgets. Why are changes necessary to accommodate disabled persons relegated to charitable initiatives? Why is the installation of an elaborate security system, for example, not also referred to the synagogue sisterhood? Why does safety for some people receive higher priority than safety for others? If disabled Jews and their needs were presented in the context of *tzedek* (i.e. social justice) rather than *tzedekah*,(i.e. charity), perhaps the synagogue ramp would have been installed long ago.

Judaism is a communal faith, ideally practiced in groups. Prayer is considered more powerful when we are part of a *minyan*, a group consisting of at least ten men and sometimes, women. In the early 1900's, when Eastern European Jews began arriving in Canada, Jewish Mutual Benefit Societies were established. These organizations, comprised of people from the same city or town in the "old country", assisted newcomers to integrate into Canadian society (Speisman, 1979). Even the names of synagogues built in downtown Toronto during that period suggest a form of organization emanating from previous places of origin. The Kiever Shul, Anshei Minsk and the Narayever all hearken back to the towns in Eastern Europe whence congregants originated.

Given the emphasis on community and the synagogue as a focal point of many activities, it is crucial that disabled persons be able to access synagogue environments. The synagogue is not only a place of religious worship (Kaufman, 1999). *Bar Mitzvah* celebrations, weddings, funerals, lectures, conferences, protests and commemorative ceremonies all take place within their walls. Excluding disabled Jews from synagogues is excluding us from the community. Justice for disabled Jews requires physical and attiutudinal accessibility, visibility of our ongoing concerns and support for continuity in our community.

Tikkun Olam

Just as there are commandments to give *tzedekah*, so too are there commandments to participate in *tikkun olam,* the "fixing of the world". The root of "tikkun" is the three letter word, "t-k-n", which, in modern times, is translated as "fix, repair, mend." The word is first noted in the book of Ecclesiastes (1:15, 7:13, 12:9) where it is translated as
"setting straight". The Aleinu prayer recited thrice daily, also contains the phrase "le-taken olam" which is translated "to perfect the world." Rabbi Tarfon states; "It is not your job to complete the work, nor are you free to desist from it" (*Pirkei Avot* 2:16). Hillel's oft-quoted remark states; 'If I am not for myself, who will be for me? But if I am only for

[2] Please see previous footnote.

myself, then what am I? And if not now, when?" (*Pirkei Avot* 1:14). Hence, the notion of "fixing the world" is a Jewish concept enshrined both within liturgy and religious text.

Clearly, then, there is an obligation to be generous with one's resources and simultaneously, to act in socially responsible ways that further the course of human development. Observant Jews are expected to practice the tenets of "tikkun olam". There are certainly tensions within the Jewish community as to the manner in which such requirements are to be implemented (Bleich,1997). For example, some authorities inquire as to whether Jews ought to be involved in activities that would bring them into contact with the non-Jewish community (Shatz, Waxman, & Diament, 1997).

Synagogue congregations view *tikkun olam* in a myriad of different ways. Some see it in the same light as *tzedekah*. Others distinguish *tikkun olam* from *tzedekah* and regard the former as a kind of advocacy. Upon review of twenty-two synagogue web sites which contained the words "*tikkun olam*", I noted that the overwhelming majority of social change efforts might easily be construed as charity. The most frequently mentioned
activities involved providing food to a food bank, volunteering at a homeless shelter and assisting Habitat for Humanity in the building of homes. Other activities included donating money to Israel, visiting sick people in hospital and removing litter dumped in natural environments. Although a few synagogue web sites did mention assisting disabled persons on an individual basis, not one of the *tikkun olam* activities emphasized accessibility or improvements in the built environment. Nor did any one site suggest education about disability issues.

Rabbis interpreting the *Torah* assume that there is significance to every word, every letter written. Repetition of words, therefore, has hermeneutical implications. One frequently quoted phrase commands the Jewish people; "Justice, justice shall you pursue". (Deuteronomy 16:20). *Nachmanides'* exegetical analysis suggests that repetition of the word "justice" describes two types; one rendered by humans in a court of law and the other delivered by G-d (Chavel, 1976). We can also extrapolate from this comment that we must honour and fear G-d and simultaneously, we must honour other human beings. We have to pursue justice with each other here on earth.

Indeed, if we are commanded to seek justice between human beings and justice between Jews and non-Jews, are we not also required to seek justice between able-bodied and disabled Jews? Surely sighted Jews must provide Braille prayer books for blind Jews. Surely hearing Jews will assist Deaf Jews by paying for interpreters. Surely Jews who have few psychological struggles will listen deeply and patiently to Jewish *psychiatric survivors*. Surely Jews who walk unaided will create a physical environment that eliminates all barriers for Jews who use wheelchairs. Surely justice will be pursued in the synagogue.

Accessibility

In conversation with rabbis and board members of various synagogues, I am often asked what features would enhance the accessibility of their particular congregation. I reply that they should immediately implement changes that can be easily introduced. Then, they can focus on changes to the built environment which facilitate the independence of disabled persons.

Synagogue committees should revise policies to ensure that when renovations are done and/or buildings are purchased, an accessibility audit is conducted. This audit would ensure that new premises welcome persons with a variety of different impairments. Synagogues should not have to raise money for an accessible *bima.* The *bima* should be accessible by right. Just as doors and walls are considered essential components of a building, so too should accessibility provisions be considered a necessary component of any structure. An accessible *bima* is not a "special" feature. As one disabled congregant commented," Even the language they use is condescending. Special needs. Special needs. I am not special. They should be including everyone."

It is important to compile a list of all accessible synagogues in each municipality. Creating an accessibility report with details of physical barriers would assist disabled persons in locating a convenient synagogue. Such a document would highlight places of worship easily accessed by persons with different impairments.

Providing such reports and necessary accommodations is only a first step. Obtaining *American Sign Language (A.S.L.*) interpreters, for example, requires some discernment of individual skill and knowledge. It is crucial to ensure that interpreters hired to work during religious services are fluent in the vocabulary pertaining to the Jewish faith. It is a lengthy and cumbersome process for an interpreter to finger spell every single Hebrew word. There is at least one *A.S.L.* dictionary specifically designed to communicate ideas describing Judaism and its practices (Shuart, 1986).

Concepts associated with inclusive liturgy acknowledge female aspects of G-d and women's contributions to the Jewish faith (Lerner, 1994). For example, some rabbis mention in a blessing, not only the names of our male ancestors, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, but also our female ancestors, Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel and Leah. This form of ritual change contributes to the increased visibility of women.

Similar ideas could be applied to address *ableist* prayers that negate the value of disabled persons and their participation in religious life. For example, in one daily prayer, we bless G-d who; "opens the eyes of the blind." This clearly indicates a value placed on sightedness.

According to *halakhic* decisions, a blind person can say this blessing (Toiv, 1997) although I am not sure many would want to. One friend, a blind Jew who has recently become observant, said "When I first heard that prayer, I thought 'What am I doing here?' Perhaps in the interests of sensitivity, rabbis could include a blessing acknowledging Isaac and Leah, both of whom had low vision.

There are also benedictions such as "meshane habriyot" ("Blessed art thou…who makes creatures different") which is said infrequently. This particular blessing, uttered upon seeing a person with an impairment from birth (Marx, 2002) is oppressive and renders disabled people less than able bodied people. The emphasis in the articulation of such a prayer is on the visible impairment rather than on the often invisible social conditions which perpetuate disability.

Ultimately, it is attitudes that need to change. For example, both disabled and able- bodied persons can be viewed as "dependent". Able-bodied persons usually require technology such as telephones or computers in order to communicate with others. What is the difference between able-bodied persons' dependence on the aforementioned items and disabled persons' dependence on speech synthesizers? Technological aids assist individuals to converse, albeit in different ways.

Visibility

Many synagogues invite speakers to present information to their congregation. When considering public forums, rabbis should insist that a disability perspective be integrated into the presentation. For example, include disabled persons as lecturers during Holocaust Education Week and ensure that disability issues are covered.

Larger synagogues have libraries for use by their members. Ensure that material regarding disability is available. Contact the Jewish Braille Institute and assist patrons in borrowing books. Subscribe to large print editions of popular publications. Have wide aisles and books on display at wheelchair height.

During sermons, mention that Moses spoke with difficulty, that King Saul was often depressed, Tobit was blind and that Jacob walked with a limp. Make visible the impairments of the biblical leadership. Just as women must hear the stories of Shifra and Puah, and as lesbians appreciate the intense love of Ruth and Naomi (Alpert, 1994), so too must disabled persons realize the power of Moses and others like him.

Continuity

Among Jews in all denominations, there is much discussion regarding the rate at which members of our community are assimilating into secular society. Although no statistics appear to be available, I would speculate that the rate of

assimilation of disabled Jews is likely much higher than that of able-bodied Jews. Given the history of institutionalization, the segregation from members of our own community, the lack of accessibility to the buildings in which many public events take place, it would not be surprising to determine that, in fact, many disabled Jews no longer identify with their co-religionists. Frederick Schrieber, a Deaf Jewish leader, wrote;

> "My sons were Bar Mitzvah but they never had the social or religious contacts which lead to regular attendance at temple. At this time, two of my children have married Gentiles. The other two will probably do the same. This hurts. Whether he attends temple or not, whether he is Deaf or not, a Jewish boy who grows up in a Jewish household is still a Jew" (Schreiber, 1970, p. 36).

In order to stem the tide of cultural and spiritual alienation, educational programs administered in synagogues should accommodate disabled children. Rabbis of all denominations have insisted that we educate disabled
children even if they will not "count" in a traditional *minyan* as adults (David, 2001; Schneerson, 2001; CCAR Committee on Justice and Peace, 2000).

A number of *Conservative* and *Reform* synagogues have developed "special" educational programs for disabled children. Instead of enforcing segregation, the Jewish community should create an integrated program. Teachers should assist disabled students the same way they assist other students. If specific forms of accommodation are required, perhaps an integration facilitator could be hired, not to "assess" children or plan alternative events, but rather to ensure that disabled students are treated fairly.

Unfortunately, special education teachers, by virtue of their own training, locate the problem of disability within the corpus of a child. An integration facilitator addresses the systemic barriers to inclusion and locates the problem of access within the larger society. An ideological framework which focuses on the liberation of disabled persons has a profoundly different analysis and outcome than one which sees the disability itself as the problem.
Instead of providing "special" education for the child, create accessibility education for the able-bodied population. Instead of moving rituals to accessible locations, renovate synagogues so persons with various impairments can enter houses of prayer with ease.

The percentage of unaffiliated Jews increases each year. Synagogues must seek innovative ways to increase their membership base. Currently, many disabled children live with able-bodied parents that could conceivably pay membership dues. This financial consideration may be one reason why there is so little outreach to disabled adults. The perception that adults with impairments live in poverty means that subsidies would be necessary. Disabled adults would, therefore, be a financial drain on a congregation rather than a source of income.

Although some argue that a lack of outreach to disabled adults merely reflects adherence to "pediatric Judaism", the belief that religion is just for children, one can also count numerous outreach efforts in the Jewish community directed towards adults. Aish Hatorah[3], Chabad Lubavitch[4], and Kollel[5] are all Jewish religious organizations with outreach programs directed specifically at Jewish adults. Efforts are focused on encouraging unaffiliated Jews to return to some form of religious observance. Of the abovementioned

[3] Aish Hatorah is a Modern Orthodox organization with outreach programs for Jewish adults interested in traditional Jewish religious observance.
[4] Chabad Lubavitch is a Chassidic organization with outreach programs for Jewish adults interested in traditional Jewish religious observance.
[5] Kollel is a Reform Jewish organization with outreach programs for Jewish adults interested in more liberal Jewish observance.

organizations, only Kollel explicitly welcomes disabled Jews. Its facilities are wheelchair accessible, an *A.S.L.* interpreter is available at public functions and material is provided in large print upon request. Kollel's willingness to reach out to disabled Jews stands in sharp contrast to the lack of response of the other organizations.

Final Considerations

It is evident from the research conducted and the religious texts cited above, that dis/bled persons are excluded from many aspects of synagogue life. The built environment and the religious strictures governing various impairments conspire to reinforce experiences of profound alienation. Indeed, how would one function as a blind person, prohibited from taking a guide dog into the sanctuary, unable to read directly from the *Torah* to the congregation without an intermediary, often unable to access a prayerbook in Braille? Why would one even continue to attend the synagogue? Nonetheless, a number of observant blind Jews with whom I am acquainted do continue their affiliation with a place of worship, despite the hardships imposed. Clearly, there is meaning in the communion with G-d and with other Jews.

It appears, however, that changes are required. Not only must the "bricks and mortar" perspective, so common among congregants, give greater credence to attitudinal accessibility. There must also be a corresponding paradigm
shift. Disabled Jews are not simply recipients of t*zedekah*. We are the subjects of *tikkun olam*, social justice. The framework in which we are ideologically constructed must change. Accessibility is cause, not for a fundraiser, but for political protest. The needs of disabled Jews should be indicated as a line item on an annual budget. We must be integrated in black ink.

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Glossary

Ableism*:* The oppression of dis/abled persons. Similar to sexism and racism, ableism can operate on both an individual and systemic basis. For example, a psychiatric survivor can be denied the right to rent an apartment by a landlord. The denial of the apartment takes place between two individuals. However, psychiatric survivors as a group are often automatically referred to boarding homes upon discharge from a psychiatric facility. In this case, the denial of private rental accommodation takes place systemically. Both of the above situations are examples of ableism. Psychiatric survivors are denied their preferred form of housing because of their impairment or dis/ability.

Accessible: Convenient, easy to use. Applies to both physical environment and social milieu.

American Sign Language (A.S.L.): The language of Deaf people living in North America.

Bar/Bat Mitzvah: Literally son or daughter of the commandment(s). Refers to the occasion when a boy or girl reaches the age of majority and accepts responsibility for observance of religious rites.

Bima: Reader's platform; space in synagogue where Torah is placed when it is read. In older European synagogues, bima is located in centre of building. In modern North American synagogues, bima is often at front of building, close to the holy ark.

Conservative: Denomination of Judaism whose adherents believe that majority, but not all, traditional rules and regulations should be observed. Musical instruments are not permitted in a Conservative synagogue on the Sabbath, but men and women sit together.

Disability: A social construct, similar to race, gender and class, which emphasizes physical / mental impairments as categories of social exclusion; also refers to the social and attitudinal barriers that people with impairments experience.

Gemara: An addition to the Mishnah. Although there is only one Mishnah, there are two Gemarot. The Yerushalmi was developed in Israel; the Bavli was developed in Babylon. They supplement the Mishnah with biblical expositions and are a source of history and legend.

Halakha: Jewish religious law.

Hassidism: A mystical form of Orthodox Judaism begun in the 1700's in Eastern Europe. Men wear distinctive garb including black hats, long fringes appearing like strands of string, beards, and sometimes, long earlocks. Married women wear head coverings such as wigs. All women wear clothes which cover their elbows and knees.

Impairment: A difficulty with physical, emotional or cognitive function.

Kli Yakar (1550-1619) Rabbi Shlomo Ephraim of Lunshitz became the spiritual leader in Prague. He wrote a commentary on the Pentateuch which is still published today.

Minyan: Quorum of ten men (and sometimes, women) needed to pray in communal worship.

Mishnah: Ancient code of Jewish law collated, edited and revised by Rabbi Judah Hanasi at the beginning of the third century C.E.. The work is the authoritative legal tradition of the early sages and is the basis of legal discussions of the Talmud.

Mitzvah: Literally, a "commandment"; pl. mitzvot: One of the six hundred thirteen commandments given by G-d to the Jewish People, or colloquially, any good deed.

Mizrachi: Literally, "eastern". The term refers to Jews of African or Asian descent.

Nachmanides: (1195-1270) During his lifetime, Nachmanides was world renowned as an expert in Jewish religious law. He was born in Spain and later moved to Israel. His biblical commentaries were the first to incorporate mystical teachings.

Orthodox: Denomination of Judaism whose adherents believe that all traditional rules and regulations should be strictly adhered to today. For example, in an Orthodox synagogue men and women sit separately, no musical instruments are played on the Sabbath and the liturgy is read almost exclusively in Hebrew.

Pirkei Avot: Literally, "Ethics of the fathers". One of the books of the Mishnah. A collection of writings focused on moral, ethical and philosophical teachings.

Psychiatric survivor: A person who identifies as having a psychiatric impairment or a person who has been involuntarily detained in a psychiatric facility. The former believe that they survive their "illness". The latter believe that they survive the oppression of institutionalized psychiatry.

Reform: Denomination of Judaism whose adherents believe that the majority of traditional rules and regulations mentioned in the Torah are not relevant to observance of Judaism today. In a Reform synagogue, there is sometimes an organ, men and women sit together and the majority of the liturgy is in English rather than Hebrew.

Sephardi: "Sepharad" in Hebrew refers to Spain. "Sephardi" describes Jews of Spanish / Portuguese origin. In modern Israel, "Sephardi" also refers to Jews of African and Asian origin.

Shifra and Puah: Two midwives in ancient Egypt who, according to the Bible, defied Pharoah's order to kill all male babies. They saved many lives despite the danger to their own.

Talmud: The Mishnah and the Gemara combined.

Tikkun olam: Hebrew expression; literally, "fixing the world"; term used by Jews to emphasize roots of social justice within context of Jewish faith.

Torah: Hebrew Bible; the five books of Moses; Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. Also refers to the Torah scroll read in synagogue.

Tzedek: **Justice, righteousness.**

Tzedekah: Charity, financial or other forms of assistance offered in a Jewish religious context.

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