Tsedakah, Social Justice, and Human Rights

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In an effort to enhance the understanding of the implications of tsedakah *for Jewish communal agencies whose self-image and identity include a commitment to social justice and human rights, this paper analyzes the values and value orientations which guided the formulation and implementation of traditional Jewish social welfare policies generated by* tsedakah, *focussing on the extent to which* tsedakah *both fostered and inhibited the attainment of social justice. The author suggests ways of revaluating* tsedakah *to make it more relevant to the contemporary American Jewish community.*

JEWISH social welfare agencies generally view their task of allocating resources and delivering services in response to unmet human need as issuing from the confluence of two frameworks or traditions of social welfare. Historically, they are heir to the tradition of *tsedakah,* the configuration of traditional Jewish social welfare values and policies most directly focussed on the satisfaction of basic human needs and on the protection of the most vulnerable members of the Jewish community. From a more contemporary perspective, they are engaged in the liberal democratic movement to achieve social justice, and even in the global struggle to promote human rights.

This perception is essentially accurate. However, the oft-made conclusion that social justice and *tsedakah* are therefore identical, leading usually to a definition of *tsedakah* as "social justice", is more tentative and subject to question. The translation of *tsedakah* has been developed to distinguish it from the Christian "charity." *Tsedakah,* unlike charity, it has been argued, is a legal obligation to the poor rather than a privilege granted them whimsically, it is obligatory rather than voluntary on the part of the donor. In contemporay terms, *tsedakah* guarantees the fulfillment of the basic needs of the poor as basic human rights. Communal rather than individual control of welfare allocations and translation of the broad range of defined basic human needs into human rights which could be demanded by those in need are important characteristics which *tsedakah* shares with social justice. Yet despite these similarities, *tsedakah* and social justice are structured upon differences in core values and value-orientations which must not be overlooked in our attempt to understand these fundamental concepts.

It is difficult to imagine a contemporary discussion of social justice which does not include some reference to achieving equality, or at least reducing inequalities. Social justice tends to focus on distributive equality and, from the perspective of social welfare policy, one can best conceive of social justice along an equality-inequality continuum. At one end of the continuum, a more militantly egalitarian concept of social justice mandates that distributive policies provide equal, albeit not necessarily identical, provisions of both life-sustaining resources (necessities) and life-enhancing resources (luxuries) to all members of a community. At the other end of the continuum, a minimally egalitarian, although perhaps more realistic, operative definition of social justice is that value, which when operative in social policy, translates all basic life-sustaining needs into human rights by providing all members of a commu-

nity with resources sufficient to meet their needs. In this latter concept, distribution reduces inequalities only to the point of basic need satisfaction of all members of the community. In addition to its core value of distributive equality, social justice requires value-orientations of universalism, rather than particularism, mandating that rights be distributed as universal entitlements and not for membership in a particular group; a collectivity-orientation which fosters cooperation rather than an orientation of rugged individualism; and a non-ascriptive orientation which prohibits allocation of goods and services on the basis of social class.

The core value of *tsedakah* is not equality. *Tsedakah,* in its traditional formulations, makes no conscious effort to achieve equality. Neither was the social welfare system it generated structured upon the elimination of inequalities. Some of our Jewish traditions do promote the notion of distributive equality. It is not by chance, for example, that contemporary theologies of liberation have drawn considerably upon the policies of the Jubilee Year (*Leviticus* 25), which mandated a radical redistribution of the means of production every fifty years, a return to the original egalitarian distribution of the land among the twelve tribes and their clans. A number of *midrashim* highlight the concept of distributive equality. Yet, there is no evidence that the Jubilee was ever implemented, and when it came time to formulate distributive policies, equality was not evident as a goal.

It is the traditional Jewish value *pikuach nefesh,* the concern for saving an endangered life, and not equality, which is the core value upon which *tsedakah* is structured. *Pikuach nefesh* is related to, but not identical to social justice. *Tsedakah* guided by *pikuach nefesh* contains elements both fostering and inhibiting the achievement of social justice as distributive equality. In most cases, *tsedakah* provides subsistence levels of provision with no intention of promoting equality. At times it approaches a minimum standard of social justice by ensuring the satisfaction of a broad range of needs at a subsistence level. Ascriptive and particularistic value orientations, on the other hand, frequently reenforced and exaggerated existing inequalities rather than reducing them.

Analyzing the consequences of *pikuach nefesh* rather than social justice as a value guiding the formulation and implementation of traditional Jewish social welfare policy enables us to refine our understanding of *tsedakah* and its meaning and relevance for us today. The differences between social justice and *tsedakah* become more apparent when we inspect *tsedakah* more closely as it is compiled and formulated in *Hilkhot Tsedakah,* the chapters of the authoritative *Shulkan Arukh (Yoreh Deah* 247–259) dealing with social welfare. Examples from the social welfare policies of traditional Jewish communities will illustrate further how these formulations were implemented.[1]

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[1] For the equation of *tsedakah* with social justice, which we question, see, for example, Louis Wirth, *The Ghetto* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1928), p. 81; Mark Zborowski and Elizabeth Herzog, *Life is With People* (New York: Schocken, 1952), p. 193; Alfred J. Kutzik, *Social Work and Jewish Values* (Washington, D.C.: Public Affairs Press, 1959), p. 34. Most of the illustrations of traditional Jewish social welfare policies are from Poznan, Poland, during the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries. They are found in Dov Avron (ed.), *Pinkas HaKesherim Shel Kehillat Poznau* (Hebrew) (Jerusalem, 1966); and Bernard D. Weinryb, *Texts and Studies in the Communal History of Poland* (New York: American Academy for Jewish Research, 1950). The translations in this paper are those of the author, who is grateful to Dr. Benjamin Ravid of Brandeis University for suggestions for difficult terminology.

Elements in *Tsedakah* Fostering Social Justice

Jewish tradition links most of the provisions distributed under the rubric of *tsedakah* directly to *pikuach nefesh.* The opening paragraph of *Hilkhot Tsedakah* emphasizes the importance of *tsedakah* to saving endangered lives. Citing a *midrash* in which a person in need actually died as a result of a delay in provisions, it warns that those who refrain from contributing to *tsedakah* "must be careful lest it result in murder, that the man who has requested *tsedakah* will die if it is not provided immediately." Murder—*shificut damim*—is, of course, the antithesis of *pikuach nefesh.* Failure to feed the poor before a fast; delaying the ransom of captives; preventing those in need of *tsedakah* from receiving it; and the withholding of treatment by a physician are also equated to bloodshed. Finally, *Hillhot Tsedakah* permits the Jewish community to transfer funds from *tsedakah* to a non-Jewish ruler only for the sake of *pikuach nefesh.*[2]

Communal records also mention *pikuach nefesh* directly when discussing *tsedakah.* A directive from the records of the Jewish community of Poznan, an important seventeenth century Polish-Jewish community, describes the responsibilities of the "overseers of the poor" (*gabbayim*) as "genuinely including saving the lives *(pikuach nafashot)* of the poor." The same records include a directive to hire a communal doctor to replace the threat to life in the community with *pikuach nefesh.*[3]

Traditions of *tsedakah* therefore indicate that, rather than attempting consciously to promote social justice, *tsedakah* consciously strove to save endangered lives, to implement the mandate of the traditional Jewish value *pikuach nefesh. Pikuach nefesh*—and not social justice—provided the essential rationale for the provisions which the traditional Jewish community supplied the poor within the rubric of *tsedakah.* However, closer inspection does reveal an important relationship between *pikuach nefesh* and social justice. Of all the need areas in which *tsedakah* supplied provisions, the area of health care—that need area most intimately involved with saving life—was the most egalitarian. Marcus' study of communal health care in traditional Jewish communities disclosed that most of these communities hired a communal doctor to care for the sick who were unable to afford a physician's fee. Some communal documents suggest that he even visited the sick at home, as well as at the communal center where they were usually cared for.[4] Unlike other areas of provision—food, shelter, clothing and the like—health care within *tsedakah* was egalitarian. The poor were treated by the same physicians as the wealthy, regardless of their ability to pay.

The egalitarian nature of health care can be attributed to a variety of factors. A healthy dose of self-interest emanating from fear of epidemic or plague, probably contributed to the concern for the sick. But *pikuach nefesh* was also a significant factor. Danger to life is most apparent when people are ill. Mandated by tradition to be alert about saving life, *tsedakah* required utmost vigilance for the sick. Tentatively we might conclude that *pikuach nefesh* leads more closely to social justice when the threat to life is most apparent.

A collective orientation reflected in the concern for the lives of all members of the community and the mandate of

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[2] *Yoreh Deah* 247:1, 251:14, 252:3, 255:2, 256:2, 336:1.

[3] D. Avron, *op. cit.*, para. 2, 176; 189; cf. para. 1, 185.

[4] Jacob Marcus, *Communal Sick-Care in the German Ghetto* (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College, 1947). Dov Avron, *op. cit.*, para. 714A, 455.

pikuach nefesh were part of Judaism's nomadic heritage reenforced by the ideology of covenantal community. Survival in conditions of oppression and scarce resources which many Jewish communities faced would have been almost impossible without a strong collectivity-orientation. Although the wealthier members of these communities, in some cases, enjoyed considerable luxury, they also shouldered considerable responsibility for the well-being of other members of the community. Communal authorities assessed the wealthy for greater contributions to both the general treasury and to *tsedakah.* They also required their direct involvement according to their wealth in feeding and clothing the poor and providing hospitality to travellers. Communal assertion of control over individual contributions to *tsedakah* also reflected this collective orientation. In anticipation of the modern welfare state, assessment of need was communally determined, and not left to individual charitable impulse and whim. The records of Poznan make this point very specifically. "No individual in our community," they decree, "will request donations for assistance to any poor person for food or clothing without explicit permission of the head of the council."[5] To the wealthier members of traditional Jewish communities, as well as to other members of the community, the Jewish community was not simply an ordinary community, but was rather a *kehillah kedoshah,* a holy community. This notion of holy community nurtured the strong collectivity-orientation embodied in *tsedakah.*

Another characteristic of *tsedakah* promoting social justice is its broad definition of human needs. *Tsedakah* requires the distribution of resources in ten basic human need areas: food, shelter, clothing, health care, a dowry and other support for the newly-wed, provisions for the traveller, ransom from captivity, support in old age, burial needs, and education. This list is considerably more extensive than those guaranteed by many modern welfare states. Social welfare policies pursued within the rubric of *tsedakah* in most communities paralleled in principle and provision the traditional Jewish social welfare system described in *Hilkhot Tsedakah,* and almost always translated these ten basic human need areas into human rights by supplying at least a minimum life-sustaining provision to all members of the community.

A dole *(kitsbah)* satisfied the requirements of the traditional injunction mandating the provision of a weekly food allowance to the poor. Communities also established soup-kitchens *(tamchui)* to feed students, and fed the poor by legislative mandate requiring their invitation to family feasts celebrating the religious life cycle. Annual collections provided clothing for the poor, while communal officials tried to maximize available housing, restricted by non-Jewish authorities, by legislating rent controls and providing the poor with rent supplements. Communal officials distributed tickets *(pletten)* to provide food and shelter to certain travellers, and required wealthier members of the community to provide food and shelter to Torah students from the *yeshivah* on the Sabbath. Communal funds provided dowries for poor brides, communal doctors to treat those unable to pay, payments for the ransom of captives and *yeshivot* and *talmudei* to educate young and old. Finally, they ensured that gravediggers served the poor with their burial needs.

Pikuach nefesh and the collectivity-orientation resulting in a broad definition of human need culminated in the guarantee of a subsistence level of basic

[5] D. Avron, *op. cit.* para. 227.

human need satisfaction as a basic human right in the traditional Jewish community. That the poor perceived these as rights in practice, and not in theory alone, is evidenced by their activism in demanding their rights. Numerous communal directives recorded the "complaint and cry of the poor" demanding their weekly food allowance or medical care. The directives also record their support by the *gabbayim*, commanded by tradition to be their advocates.[6]

Factors Inhibiting Social Justice: Ascription and Particularism

The ascriptive orientation of *tsedakah* is most apparent in its requiring that provisions be distributed according to the social status of the recipient. *Hilkhot Tsedakah* suggests more than once that people be provided *tsedakah* according to social status. In a general sense, it based its definition of need on what the recipient was accustomed to in the past, usually a function of social status:

> How much is given to the poor person? Sufficient for whatever he needs. If he is hungry, feed him; if he needs clothing, provide him with clothing; if he has no household utensils, buy him household utensils. And even if he was accustomed to ride on a horse when he was rich and have a servant run before him and now he is poor, buy him a horse and servant and therefore each according to what he needs . . .[7]

This principle, which clearly intended to preserve existing inequalities, was applied more specifically to provisions to the bride and traveller. Tradition commanded the *gabbayim* to provide the needy bride *lefi kevodah*, "according to her social status", and similarly to provide hospitality to the traveller *lefi kevodo.*[8]

Polish and Lithuanian Jewish communities established workfare programs in which poor girls who required assistance for their dowries and marriage performed domestic service for the wealthy, their wages used to provide them with a dowry. In 1595 Cracow's communal authorities denied assistance to any family whose daughter refused to enter domestic service at the age of ten. In 1638 the Lithuanian Council, a regional Jewish legislative body, required poor girls living near large communities to enter domestic service for three years:

> Poor virgins from the vicinity . . . are not to be given anything until they have in hand . . . some visible proof from the leaders of the community that they have served in the homes of the householders dwelling within the community for a period of three years from the time that they were twelve years old, since this age is fitting for domestic service . . .

Her wages were given to the communal treasurer rather than to her family; if, for example, she wished to make a Sabbath dress from her wages she required the treasurer's permission.[9]

Provisions or "hospitality" for travellers has a long and venerated tradition in the Jewish community. Travelling in the ancient and medieval world was very dangerous (even more so than today!), and providing shelter for the traveller actually involved protection of life. Records such as those from Poznan reveal clearly how communal officials consciously applied the tradition of aiding travellers according to their social status. Poznan, like other communities,

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[6] See, for example, D. Avron, *Ibid.*, para. 33; 623; 635; 626; 710; 711; 713; 714A; 714B; 814; 844; 994; 1,647.

[7] *Yoreh Deah* 250:1, cf. 249:1.

[8] *Ibid.*, 249:6, 250:2, 250:4.

[9] C. H. Ben-Sasson, "The Middle Ages." Pp. 385–726 in *A History of the Jewish People* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965), pp. 684–5; Simon Dubnow, *Pinkas HaMedinah* (Heb.) (Berlin: Anajoth, 1925), p. 128; Avron, *op. cit.*, para. 76.

established two institutions for providing for travellers and guests. In the first, the *gabbayim* distributed *pletten* or meal tickets with the names of householders (the original and literal *baalebatim*) who were required to provide food and shelter to the traveller for up to three days. The other institution required householders to provide meals for yeshivah students, most of whom were not residents of Poznan, on the Sabbath. The *kahal* or council determined the number of Sabbaths each householder was responsible for according to his tax assessment. Wealthier householders with correspondingly larger tax assessments were required to provide hospitality on more Sabbaths, and thus for more students. The wealthiest householders provided hospitality for other householders studying at the yeshivah. Less wealthy householders hosted the younger students, while those at the bottom of the taxation list hosted the youngest children.

These institutions and policies contained elements both fostering and inhibiting the achievement of social justice. The collectivity-orientation which led the council to require the wealthier members of the community to bear the burden of hospitality to travellers promoted social justice. And we might even argue that matching the providers and recipients according to social status in this instance also promoted social justice, since those who were less wealthy provided meals for children rather than adults, a less costly burden. But the unjust consequences of ascriptive policies for providing hospitality to travellers and guests are evident in the fact that only students of Torah and wealthy travellers received these privileges. In Poznan, for example, we learn of neither Sabbath provisions nor *pletten* for poorer transients. We can guess only from precedence that they were lodged in the synagogue, and not in the homes of Poznanites. Officials in Poznan specifically forbade the *gabbayim* from distributing meal tickets to non-Poznanite Jewish youths who were apprentices in trade and not Torah students.[10]

Prevailing attitudes embodied in *tsedakah* towards the bride and the traveller, although providing for the needs of all, tended to preserve existing inequalities. Even within Jewish tradition, it should be noted, there are allusions to more socially-just policies in related areas. *Hilkhot Tsedakah* defines need according to past social status. He who previously ate warm bread was served warm bread; if he had eaten cold bread in the past, he received cold bread; and if he had a horse and servant in the past, he received a horse and servant.[11] In a *midrashic* passage, God points out to Job, who had followed these dictates of tradition, that he had been surpassed by Abraham, the archetypical protester, who had essentially turned tradition upside down:

> The Holy One, Blessed be He, said to Job: "Job, you have not yet reached the half measure of Abraham. You sit and tarry in your house while wayfarers come to you. To him who is accustomed to eat wheat bread, you give wheat bread to eat; to him who is accustomed to drink wine, you give wine to drink. But Abraham did not act this way. Instead, he would go forth and make the rounds everywhere, and when he found wayfarers he brought them into his house. To him who was unaccustomed to eat wheat bread, he gave wheat bread to eat; to him who was unaccustomed to eat meat, he gave meat to eat; to him who was unaccustomed to drink wine, he gave wine to drink . . ."[12]

Although Abraham provided differential treatment to his guests, it may be likened more to a reparations program or affirmative action than to the ascriptive policies cited above.

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[10] D. Avron, *op. cit.*, para. 1,172; 1,996; 2,084; 2,137; 988.

[11] *Yoreh Deah, op. cit.*, 250:1.

[12] *Abot D'Rabbi Nathan,* Section 7.

Traditional Jewish marriage policies imposed a distinct disadvantage upon the poor. A *Mishnaic* tradition which may, in fact, preserve what was an ancient, operative tribal policy, suggests a way of eliminating distinctions based upon social class differences:

> R. Simeon b. Gamliel said: "There never were in Israel greater days of joy than the 15th of Ab and Yom Kippur. On these days the daughters of Jerusalem used to walk out in white garments which they had borrowed in order not to put to shame anyone who had none. All these garments required ritual dipping. The daughters of Jerusalem came out and danced in the vineyards exclaiming at the same time, 'young man, lift up your eyes and see what you choose for yourself. Do not set your eyes on beauty but set thine eyes on family. Grace is deceitful, and beauty vain; but a woman who fears the LORD, she shall be praised . . .' "[13]

Thus, on the day of Yom Kippur in ancient times when matches were made in Jerusalem, every attempt was made to ensure that all maidens wore the same garment.

Jewish tradition is particularistic in emphasizing family and local responsibility for the poor. *Hilkhot Tsedakah* states this principle distinctly:

> . . . one must provide for his household before the poor of the community, the poor of the community before the poor of another community, and the inhabitants of the land of Israel before the poor of other countries . . .[14]

Emphasis on family responsibility is not without positive value, especially for those who are concerned with strengthening the family system and structure. Yet, since the poor who were fortunate enough to have wealthy relatives tended to receive more adequate care and a higher level of provision, family responsibility tended to perpetuate existing inequalities. The community of Poznan, for example, distributed money to the poor, to students, and to teachers to help them celebrate the three pilgrimage festivals of Passover, Shavuot, and Sukkot. The council instructed the *gabbayim* to distribute this money "to the poor whose fathers left money in trust with the council or lent them money before distributing it to the other poor of the community."[15]

Local responsibility is similarly not without virtue, as it can strengthen the structure and solidarity of the community. Yet, even today, local responsibility frequently results in regional inequalities that are the targets of social justice movements. Poznan's policies, like those of other communities, reflected traditional priorities. Its directives use the term *orchim,* literally "guests" for whom hospitality was to be provided, to designate non-citizens whom they allowed to dwell in the community only temporarily. They prohibitted local guilds from writing contracts for *orchim* who were craftsmen until all members of the community had been provided with work. They similarly prohibited the craft guilds from teaching their skills to *orchim.*[16]

Local responsibility guided by particularism was especially harsh for those poor who were forced by circumstance to beg for survival. *Hilkhot Tsedakah* discourages begging, directing the *gabbayim* to provide only small provisions to those who beg from door to door.[17] Polish-Jewish communities generally provided wagons to the poor to travel from town to town. It is not clear whether a collectivity-orientation motivated them to share the responsibility, or whether it was simply a matter of getting rid of them. In times of economic distress, the beggars were the first to feel the crunch. In 1672, for example, the Jewish com-

[13] Babylonian Talmud, *Taanit* 26b.

[14] *Yoreh Deah, op. cit.*, 251:3.

[15] D. Avron, *op. cit.*, para. 1, 132; cf. 714B, 999.

[16] *Ibid.*, para. 2,164; 2,165.

[17] *Yoreh Deah, op. cit.*, 250:3.

munity of Poznan issued a directive "concerning the beggars who have come here during the year":

> ... From today they will no longer be provided with a wagon to send them from here to another place. They are also prohibited from begging from house to house, and every householder is forbidden to give them even a cent . . .

Citing increasing poverty, and their primary obligation as defined by tradition—the policy directive quotes directly "the poor of our city take precedence"—they also requested other communities to cease providing beggars with wagons with which to travel to Poznan.[18] And thus we witness the defeat of the collectivity-orientation of traditional Judaism expressed most eloquently in the traditional maxim "all Israel is responsible one for the other" at the hands of the equally traditional local responsibility fostered by particularism.

Tsedakah and Social Justice in the Contemporary Jewish Community

Tsedakah is a system of traditional Jewish policies and institutions of mutual aid of which the Jewish community can be proud, and from which it can draw upon to a point in its own struggle to achieve social justice and promote human rights. Its core value, *pikuach nefesh,* the concern for saving an endangered life, historically has sensitized the Jewish community to its obligation to care for the poor and more vulnerable members of the community. The basic concern for the lives of all members of the community and the strong collective orientation inherent in *tsedakah* have resulted in its relatively broad definition of human need and its strong efforts to translate these needs into human rights by providing appropriate resources. At times, these efforts almost succeeded in achieving a minimum standard of social justice, in many ways anticipating by centuries the modern welfare state. The records which describe the vocal activism of the poor on behalf of these rights, and their support in attaining these rights by the officially-appointed *gabbayim,* is perhaps the most eloquent testimony to the human rights orientation of *tsedakah.*

Yet *tsedakah* guided by *pikuach nefesh* frequently tended to fall short of even the minimum standard of social justice. Even when Jewish communities encountered difficulties providing all of their members with minimal provisions of life-sustaining resources, official policy, often guided by tradition, permitted other members of the community to accumulate luxury well beyond need. Although many traditional Jewish communities frequently encountered periods of resource scarcity, failure to achieve social justice was more often a result of core values and value-orientations rather than lack of resources. The goal of *tsedakah* was not social justice, even if at times it approached its attainment. Its core value, *pikuach nefesh,* is a necessary, albeit not quite sufficient condition for the achievement of social justice. Ascriptive and particularistic orientations in *tsedakah* tended to reenforce existing inequalities. Social welfare policies which promote social justice are usually more universalistic and less ascriptive than *tsedakah.*

The realization of the traditional Jewish value *pikuach nefesh* by Jewish social welfare policies and institutions generated by *tsedakah,* despite its shortcomings, is not to be minimalized. Many societies today cannot honestly boast of the achievement of *pikuach nefesh;* certainly the chaos of global distribution falls much more short of achieving social justice than did *tsedakah* based upon *pikuach nefesh.* But as the

[18] D. Avron, *op. cit.,* para. 138, 139; 1, 204.

American Jewish community continues its tradition of aligning itself with social justice movements, and as it continues to concern itself with the distributive inequalities which are the concern of a more demanding measure of social justice, it will need to address the limitations of *tsedakah.*

While there are perhaps some in the community who would argue that, in view of its limitations, the tradition of *tsedakah* is no longer relevant and can no longer adequately serve the needs of the community, we would suggest that more is to be gained from a reformulation of *tsedakah* and *pikuach nefesh* for the contemporary Jewish community, perhaps using the process of revaluation suggested by Rabbi Kaplan.[19] This would enable the American Jewish community to align itself with and thus enhance and preserve Jewish tradition at the same time that it addresses issues of social justice. The revaluation would begin with strengthening the collective orientation and broad definition of need in *tsedakah,* while eliminating those ascriptive and particularistic orientations which inhibit the attainment of social justice.

A productive direction of reformulation emerges from our earlier conclusion that *pikuach nefesh* leads more closely to social justice when the threat to life is most apparent. Just as some Orthodox rabbis have banned smoking in their communities because of *pikuach nefesh,* we can expand *tsedakah* to include issues which may not have been viewed as life-threatening to our forebears but which we now understand as life threatening. Our forebears focussed on the quantity of food allocations; we can focus more on nutritional standards as our measure of *tsedakah. Tsedakah* should include categories which address environmental pollution which is life-threatening. It might even include in its goals the elimination of those structural inequalities in our society which foster unrest and violence that ultimately result in the loss of life. Such a revaluation of *tsedakah* would be of considerable value to Jewish social welfare agencies whose self-definition and self-image have always included a commitment to social justice and human rights, and would enhance their efforts to realize these goals.

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[19] Mordecai M. Kaplan, *The Meaning of God in Modern Jewish Religion,* (New York: Reconstructionist Press, 1962), pp. 6–8.