

שבירה

Shevirah

lit. brokenness

Embrace the Imperfection of Being Human

The Jewish approach makes room for both the joys and sorrows of life, and acknowledges that we are defined by our struggles and losses as much as by our victories.

Moses broke the first set of tablets he received from G!d because of his anger and disappointment at the people for making the Golden Calf (Exodus 32). He returned again to the mountain and received a second set of tablets. When the ark of the covenant was built to contain the tablets and carry them through the desert as a portable way to connect with G!d, it contained both the broken tablets and the whole ones. Our mistakes, our trials and our disappointments are a part of who we are. Don't forget to carry your own broken tablets with your whole ones – the broken parts are crucial.

Isaac Luria (a 16th century mystical Rabbi) described the beginnings of creation in mystical terms – in a way that sheds light on the importance of embracing brokenness. At the beginning of time, G!d's presence filled the universe. At a certain point, G!d decided to create our world, so G!d contracted G!dself to make room for it. From that contraction, darkness was created. Then G!d said, "Let there be light" (Gen. 1:3) and light filled the darkness, contained by special vessels. Unfortunately, the vessels could not contain the light. They burst open from its power, both the vessels and the light were scattered and those shards and sparks disbursed. As the story goes, our role is to gather the sparks, which are hidden in everything, and bring them back to a holy place. In this way, we need not see brokenness in the world as a *problem*, but rather a *condition of creation* – one that we can help to remedy by both accepting the brokenness and then working to repair it.

Questions for Conversation and Reflection

1. Sooner or later, we all have times of feeling broken or lost. During such a time in your life, what gave you solace or the support you needed?
2. Where/how might we find beauty in an instance of brokenness?
3. How might we better accept our broken parts as fundamental to our being of service in the world?