

שבירה

**SHEVIRAH**  
brokenness

*Embrace Imperfection*

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

In order to be whole, one must also experience brokenness.

SENSIBILITY CARD

# On One Foot: Shevirah

## IMPORTANT TEXTS

“The tablets as well as the broken pieces of the tablets were placed in the Ark.”

— Babylonian *Talmud Bava Batra* 14b

“There is nothing more whole than a broken heart”

— Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Kotzk (1787-1859)

“If you believe that it is possible to break, believe that it is possible to repair.”

— Rabbi Nachman of Breslov, (1772-1810)



## The Implications

### We will look at *Shevirah* in the context of:

- *Beit Midrash: Broken and Whole* 86
- What Becomes of the Brokenhearted? 91
- *Tikkun Olam: Can We Repair a Broken World?* 95
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# Beit Midrash: Broken and Whole

This Activity is Great For



## Learning

- Beit Midrash
- Dvar Torah



## Identity & Relationships

- Inclusion

**Note:** This session can be used as a straightforward Beit Midrash session, with intensive text study, or you can choose to tell the story of Moses and the tablets and focus more on the inclusion message. Mix and match the sources as you see fit.

## Big Ideas

- The inclusion of the broken tablets in the Ark shows that *shevirah* — brokenness, can be holy and valuable.
- The *Talmud's* use of the broken tablets as a metaphor for showing respect to an elderly, forgetful *Torah* scholar, teaches a powerful message of inclusion.

### I. Beginning the Conversation

Set the stage for students — be as dramatic as possible to capture their attention. Briefly remind students of the Passover story, culminating in the Giving of the *Torah* at Mount Sinai. (Challenge yourself to do this in 3 minutes or less.) End by telling students: “and they lived happily ever after” — until just a few days later. Let’s read together what happened next.”

#### Exodus 32: 1-19

**א** וַיֵּרָא הָעָם כִּי בָשַׁשׁ מֹשֶׁה לָרֶדֶת מִן הָהָר וַיִּקְהֵל הָעָם עַל אֶהָרֶן וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֵלָיו קוּם עֲשֵׂה לָנוּ אֱלֹהִים אֲשֶׁר יֵלְכוּ לִפְנֵינוּ כִּי זֶה מֹשֶׁה הָאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר הֶעֱלָנוּ מִמִּצְרָיִם לֵאמֹר לָנוּ יִדְעֵנוּ מָה הָיָה לוֹ.

**ב** וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים אֶהָרֶן פָּרְקוּ נְזָמֵי הַזָּהָב אֲשֶׁר בְּאָזְנֵי נְשֵׁיכֶם בְּנִיכֶם וּבְנֹתֵיכֶם וְהֵבִיאוּ אֵלַי.

**ג** וַיִּתְּפְּרוּ כָּל הָעָם אֶת נְזָמֵי הַזָּהָב אֲשֶׁר בְּאָזְנֵיהֶם וַיֵּבִיאוּ אֶל אֶהָרֶן.

**1** When the people saw that Moses was so long in coming down from the mountain, they gathered around Aaron and said, “Come, make us gods who will go before us. As for this fellow Moses who brought us up out of Egypt, we don’t know what has happened to him.”

**2** Aaron answered them, “Take off the gold earrings that your wives, your sons and your daughters are wearing, and bring them to me.”

**3** So all the people took off their earrings and brought them to Aaron.

## Exodus 32: 1-19 (continued)

- ד** וַיִּקַּח מִיָּדָיו וַיַּצַּר אֹתוֹ בַּחֲרֹט וַיַּעֲשֶׂהוּ עֵגֶל מִסֹּכָה וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֵלֶּה אֱלֹהֵיךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶׁר הֵעֲלוּךָ מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם.
- ה** וַיֵּרָא אֱהָרֹן וַיְבִן מִזְבֵּחַ לִפְנֵי וַיִּקְרָא אֱהָרֹן וַיֹּאמֶר חַג לַיהוָה מָחָר.
- ו** וַיִּשְׁכַּיְמוּ מִמָּחָרֶת וַיַּעֲלוּ עֹלֹת וַיִּגְשׁוּ שְׁלָמִים וַיֵּשֶׁב הָעָם לֵאמֹר וַיִּקְמוּ לַצַּחֲקָה. (פ)
- ז** וַיְדַבֵּר ה' אֶל מֹשֶׁה לֵּאמֹר כִּי שָׁחַת עַמִּי אֲשֶׁר הֵעֲלִיתָ מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם.
- ח** סָרוּ מִהֵרָא מִן הַדֶּרֶךְ אֲשֶׁר צִוִּיתִם עֲשׂוּ לָהֶם עֵגֶל מִסֹּכָה וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲוּוּ לוֹ וַיִּזְבְּחוּ לוֹ וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֵלֶּה אֱלֹהֵיךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶׁר הֵעֲלוּךָ מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם.
- ט** וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל מֹשֶׁה רְאִיתִי אֵת הָעָם הַזֶּה וְהִנֵּה עִם קָשָׁה עֵרְפָה הוּא.
- י** וַעֲתָה הִנֵּיחָה לִי יַחֲרָ אִפִּי בָהֶם וְאֶכְלֵם וְאֶעֱשֶׂה אוֹתָךְ לְגוֹי גָדוֹל.
- יא** וַיַּחַל מֹשֶׁה אֶת פָּנָיו ה' אֶלְקָיו וַיֹּאמֶר לָמָּה ה' יַחֲרָ אִפִּי בְעַמִּי אֲשֶׁר הוֹצֵאתָ מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם בְּכַח גָּדוֹל וּבְיָד חֲזָקָה.
- יב** לָמָּה יֹאמְרוּ מִצְרַיִם לֵאמֹר בְּרַעַה הוֹצֵאתָנוּ לְהָרִג אֹתָם בְּהָרִים וּלְכַלְתֵּם מֵעַל פְּנֵי הָאָדָמָה שׁוֹב מִחֲרוֹן אַפָּךְ וְהִנָּחֵם עַל הָרַעַה לְעַמִּי.
- יג** זָכֵר לְאַבְרָהָם לְיִצְחָק וּלְיִשְׂרָאֵל עַבְדֶּיךָ אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּעְתָּ לָהֶם בְּךָ וַתְּדַבֵּר אֲלֵהֶם אֲרָבָה אֶת זַרְעֲכֶם כְּכּוֹכְבֵי הַשָּׁמַיִם וְכָל הָאָרֶץ הַזֹּאת אֲשֶׁר אָמַרְתִּי אֲתֵן לְזַרְעֲכֶם וְנָחֳלוּ לָעָלָם.
- יד** וַיִּנָּחֵם ה' עַל הָרַעַה אֲשֶׁר דִּבַּר לַעֲשׂוֹת לְעַמּוֹ.
- טו** וַיִּפֹּן וַיֵּרָד מֹשֶׁה מִן הָהָר וּשְׁנֵי לַחַת הָעֵדוּת בְּיָדוֹ לַחַת כְּתָבִים מִשְׁנֵי עֲבָרֵיהֶם מִזֶּה וּמִזֶּה הֵם כְּתָבִים.
- 4** He took what they handed him and made it into an idol cast in the shape of a calf, fashioning it with a tool. Then they said, "These are your gods, Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt."
- 5** When Aaron saw this, he built an altar in front of the calf and announced, "Tomorrow there will be a festival to the Lord."
- 6** So the next day the people rose early and sacrificed burnt offerings and presented fellowship offerings. Afterward they sat down to eat and drink and got up to indulge in revelry.
- 7** Then the Lord said to Moses, "Go down, because your people, whom you brought up out of Egypt, have become corrupt.
- 8** They have been quick to turn away from what I commanded them and have made themselves an idol cast in the shape of a calf. They have bowed down to it and sacrificed to it and have said, 'These are your gods, Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt.'
- 9** "I have seen these people," the Lord said to Moses, "and they are a stiff-necked people.
- 10** Now leave me alone so that my anger may burn against them and that I may destroy them. Then I will make you into a great nation."
- 11** But Moses sought the favor of the Lord his God. "Lord," he said, "why should your anger burn against your people, whom you brought out of Egypt with great power and a mighty hand?"
- 12** Why should the Egyptians say, 'It was with evil intent that he brought them out, to kill them in the mountains and to wipe them off the face of the earth'? Turn from your fierce anger; relent and do not bring disaster on your people.
- 13** Remember your servants Abraham, Isaac and Israel, to whom you swore by your own self: 'I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and I will give your descendants all this land I promised them, and it will be their inheritance forever.' "
- 14** Then the Lord relented and did not bring on his people the disaster he had threatened.
- 15** Moses turned and went down the mountain with the two tablets of the covenant law in his hands. They were inscribed on both sides, front and back.





**Exodus 32: 1-19 (continued)**

**טז** והלחת מעשה אלהים המה והמכתב מכתב אלהים הוא חרות על הלחת.  
**יז** וישמע יהושע את קול העם ברעה ויאמר אל משה קול מלחמה במחנה.  
**יח** ויאמר אין קול ענות גבורה ואין קול ענות חלושה קול ענות אנכי שמע.  
**יט** ויהי כאשר קרב אל המחנה וירא את העגל ומחלת ויחר אף משה וישלח מידו את הלחת וישבר אתם פחת הקר.

**16** The tablets were the work of God; the writing was the writing of God, engraved on the tablets.  
**17** When Joshua heard the noise of the people shouting, he said to Moses, "There is the sound of war in the camp."  
**18** Moses replied: "It is not the sound of victory, it is not the sound of defeat; it is the sound of singing that I hear."  
**19** When Moses approached the camp and saw the calf and the dancing, his anger burned and he threw the tablets out of his hands, breaking them to pieces at the foot of the mountain.

TALK IT OUT

- What surprises you about this story?
- What are some of the things in this story that are broken?
- Is Moses caught by surprise when he sees the people worshipping the Golden Calf? Why do you think he reacts in this way?

II. A Deeper Dive

**A. Bibliodrama**

Ask for volunteers to engage in Bibliodrama: Narrate the story that we read above from the perspective of Moses (using the pronoun "I"). Explain what you feel as you stand at the mountain receiving the Law, your reaction to God's telling you about the actions of your people, your conversation with Joshua, and the breaking of the tablets.

Note: ask for several volunteers to engage in the Bibliodrama, as they may each have a different perspective.



## TALK IT OUT

- What new insights did you get into the story when you put yourself in Moses' s place?
- What new insights did you get into your own moments of brokenness when you put yourself in Moses' place?

Shevirah



### B. Where do broken tablets go?

In this activity, students will reflect on the Talmudic statement that the broken tablets were kept in the Ark along with the whole tablets, and will write and share their own commentaries on why it was important to preserve the broken tablets, and to keep them right next to the whole tablets. This will set the stage for them to think about the value of inclusion — and its benefits to the entire group.

Tell students (or read together Exodus 35:1-4, 27-28) that God forgives the people, and then Moses goes back up to Mount Sinai and receives a second set of tablets. This time, though, Moses chisels the stone and writes the words of the Ten Commandments on the tablets himself.

Now that we have the new tablets, what happens to the old ones? Read together the text from the Babylonian *Talmud*, *Bava Batra* 14b:

#### **Talmud Bavli Bava Batra 14b:**

דתני רב יוסף (דברים י') אשר שברת ושמתם מלמד שהלוֹ-  
חות ושברי לוחות מונחין בארון

Rabbi Joseph learned: [The verse states: "the tablets] that you broke and put them" (Deuteronomy 10): [the juxtaposition of these words] teaches us that the tablets as well as the broken pieces of the tablets were placed in the Ark."

Why were the broken tablets kept in the Ark? What was so valuable about them that required them to be kept in the Ark?

Write your own commentary in the space below to explain this perplexing statement.

Go around the room and have students read their commentaries and reflect upon them.





## OFF THE PAGE AND INTO LIFE



The *Talmud* in Tractate *Berachot* uses the example of the tablets to teach a general lesson of inclusion. Read the text together, and then talk it out. (Note to teacher: Make sure not to refer to people with disabilities as “broken” but to instead embrace the general idea of the metaphor).

*Talmud Bavli Berachot* 8b

ר' יהושע בן לוי לבניה . . . הזהרו בזקן  
ששכח תלמודו אונסו דאמרינן לוחות  
ושברי לוחות מונחות בארון

Rabbi Joshua ben Levi said to his children . . . Be careful regarding how you treat an elderly individual who has forgotten his learning due to an extenuating circumstance (Rashi: as a result of sickness or struggle to make a livelihood, be careful to honor him), as we say, “The tablets as well as the broken pieces of the tablets were placed in the Ark.”

## TALK IT OUT

- How does the *Talmud* apply the case of the broken tablets to interpersonal relationships?
- How does it change your perspective when you look at someone as a “broken tablet” who still has an important place in the Ark? Why is that person worthy of honor?
- How can true inclusion of others who have different challenges, or appear different on the outside, enhance our campus, just as the inclusion of the broken tablets enhanced the Ark?
- What other important lessons can you draw from this piece of *Talmud* about inclusion?

# What Becomes of the Brokenhearted?

Shevirah

This Activity is Great For



## Pastoral Counseling

- Relationships
- Self-Worth



## Identity & Relationships

- Team Building
- Group Dynamics



## Big Idea

Brokenness can be valuable, giving us the opportunity and empathy to grow and become better people.

### I. Beginning the Conversation

Divide students into two groups for a “sing-down” using the word “broken”. Students will compete to see how many songs they can think of, and sing, that use the word broken. (Information about sing-down activities can be found at <http://extension.psu.edu/youth/intergenerational/curricula-and-activities/handouts/other-activities/sing-down>.) Students will discover that brokenness is usually associated with despair. This activity will set the stage for them to discover that Judaism sees brokenness as a natural part of life that can lead to opportunity and growth.

## “ TALK IT OUT

After students have finished singing all the songs they know with the word “broken”, reflect with them on the associations that the word “broken” or concept of brokenness have in our culture:

- What do most of the songs associate brokenness with?
- What are the attitudes about brokenness in these songs?
- According to these songs, how does one deal with brokenness? Do you agree with this perspective?





## II. A Deeper Dive

**Read together the following excerpt from Jewish educator Erica Brown about the Jewish attitude toward brokenness.** (Erica Brown, Commentary, Voices and Visions at <https://www.voices-visions.org/content/poster/collection-poster-rabbi-menachem-mendel-kotzk-michael-peters>)

“Many experiences in life try to break us: illness, loneliness, the death of those we love, rejection, insecurity, loss. But such experiences also make us more whole as human beings. They expand our range of consciousness and compassion. They enlarge our capacity for inclusion. They make us stronger and help us reach out to others with greater empathy and concern. When we acknowledge that we are broken, we enter a universe where we are not measured by perfection but by our willingness to repair ourselves and the world. We stop judging others only when we can recognize our own inadequacies.”

Before you begin to discuss this paragraph together, give students the time and space to reflect on the ideas presented here. Each student should have a copy of this paragraph in the student handout, as the only text on the page. Ask each student to underline the sentence in this text that speaks to them the most, and then write a line or two underneath with their response or reaction to the underlined sentence. Students should then pass their papers on to the person to the right, who should write a line or two in response to the first student’s comments. Continue to have students comment and pass on, until each student has had a chance to comment 4 or 5 times. Return the papers to the original commenters, and give them time to read the comments.

## “ TALK IT OUT

- What can be positive about brokenness?
- Were there any comments on your paper that gave you another way of thinking about brokenness?
- How can this perspective help you when you experience moments of brokenness in your own life?



### III. Reflect and Craft

**Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Kotzk, also known as the Kotzker Rebbe (1787–1859), was a *Hasidic* rabbi known for withering self-analysis and high standards.** He spent the last twenty years of his life in solitude.

In the following activity, students have the opportunity to reflect on the Kotzker Rebbe's observation that "there is nothing more whole than a broken heart" through art. They will see how one artist illustrated this observation, and will have the opportunity to illustrate the quote in their own way. Know your audience - for some groups, 5 minutes to illustrate the quote will be enough, others may need a full half-hour.

Introduce the Kotzker's saying, and share the following illustration from Michael Peters. Use the illustration to understand how a broken heart can be whole. Then give students the opportunity to create their own illustrations.



## TALK IT OUT

- How can a broken heart be considered whole?
- How can something be "more whole" than another?
- Do you agree with the artist's illustration of this idea? What do you think he meant to convey? What would you do differently?

Bring in paper, glue, scissors, pencils and "broken" materials (for example, scraps of fabric, discarded containers, rejection letters -- be creative!) for students to use to illustrate the Kotzker Rebbe's quote. When students are done, go around the table and give them the opportunity to explain their artwork and how it reflects on the relationship between brokenness and wholeness.

### Watch and Talk

As an alternative or in addition to the art activity, show students Phil Hansen's incredible Ted Talk, *Embrace the Shake* [https://www.ted.com/talks/phil\\_hansen\\_embrace\\_the\\_shake](https://www.ted.com/talks/phil_hansen_embrace_the_shake). Questions for *chavruta* discussion:

1. How can embracing limitations help us?
2. What are your "shakes"? How can you embrace your shakes/brokenness to become more whole, giving, creative and purposeful?





## OFF THE PAGE AND INTO LIFE



- How do you currently think about brokenness in your own life?
- How would your life be different if you viewed brokenness as an opportunity for growth and wholeness?
- What is holding you back?
- What piece of advice would you give yourself the next time you experience brokenness?

# Tikkun Olam: Can We Repair a Broken World?

Shevirah

This Activity is Great For



## Social Justice

- Service Projects
- Challah for Hunger



## Big Idea

Brokenness gives us the opportunity, and responsibility, to partner with God and repair the world.

### I. Beginning the Conversation

Arrange the room beforehand if possible so that students can sit in comfortable chairs. Dim the lights and light candles. This will help students focus on the session, and will get them in the mood for some *Kabbalah* later on in this session. :)

- Play Leonard Cohen's song Anthem ([www.youtube.com/watch?v=mDTph7mer3I](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mDTph7mer3I)) and give out the lyrics (see Textsheets for Students).

## TALK IT OUT

- In the beginning of the song, Cohen sings of all the things that are wrong with the world, and the evil that people do to one another. But then he sings:

But they've summoned, they've summoned up  
a thundercloud  
and they're going to hear from me.

What does he mean by that? What can one person do about this broken world?

(continued next page)



# “ TALK IT OUT (continued)

- Cohen sings:

Ring the bells that still can ring  
 Forget your perfect offering  
 There is a crack, a crack in everything  
 That's how the light gets in.

What is important about the cracks in the world? What is the relationship between cracks and light?

- Do you feel that there are things in the world that are seriously broken? What is your response to the cracks in everything?

## II. A Deeper Dive

In this section, we will look at repair as a possibility, opportunity and responsibility.

### A. Rabbi Nachman's Saying

Rabbi Nachman of Breslov (1772-1810, Ukraine) was a *Hasidic* rabbi, mystic and storyteller. His teachings are still powerful; one of his famous teachings is:

אם אתה מאמין שאפשר לקלקל, תאמין שאפשר לתקן. If you believe that it is possible to break, believe that it is possible to repair.

# “ TALK IT OUT

- Do you agree with Rabbi Nachman? What is the relationship between breaking and repairing?
- Is it easier for you to believe that something can be broken, or that something can be repaired? Why do you think that is?
- Why does Rabbi Nachman use the word “believe”? Why doesn't he just say: if you can break, then you can repair? What is the role of belief in breaking, and repairing?

Print or write Rabbi Nachman's teaching on stickers/labels. Bring in newspapers (including the campus newspaper) and magazines from the past week and ask students to each place 5 of the stickers on articles or advertisements that require repair.

- How did it feel to place these stickers on articles about situations that needed repair? How did it affect how you looked at the article or thought about the issue?

## B. Rabbi Nachman's Chair

Tell students the story about Rabbi Nachman's chair:

About Rebbe Nachman's Chair, <http://www.breslov.org/about-rebbe-nachmans-chair/>  
Shortly before *Rosh Hashanah* 1808, one of Rebbe Nachman's followers, the *shochet* (ritual slaughterer) of Teplik, brought the Rebbe an exquisitely handcrafted chair. The Rebbe asked the *shochet* how long it had taken him to make the chair, and he replied that he had worked an hour a day for the previous six months. The Rebbe said, "Then for half a year, you spent an hour each day thinking of me."

During the Cossack raids against the Jews in the Ukraine in the early 1920s, the chair was dismantled and cut into small pieces by Reb Tzvi Aryeh Lippel. He carried it from Tcherin to Kremenchug, some twenty miles (thirty-two kilometers) distant, running nearly the entire time. The chair was deposited with the Rosenfeld family of Kremenchug.

In 1936 Reb Moshe Ber Rosenfeld brought the chair to Jerusalem. In 1959 it was restored by craftsmen from the Israel Museum. In 1984 the chair was again refinished, by Katriel's of Jerusalem, and placed on display in the Breslov synagogue in the Meah Shearim neighborhood of Jerusalem, where it can be seen today.



## TALK IT OUT

- Why do you think it was so important to Rabbi Nachman's students to rebuild his chair? How does their rebuilding of his chair reflect Rabbi Nachman's philosophy?
- What are some broken things in the world around you that require repair?
- How can you take part in rebuilding those broken things?
- Have you ever thought about the social action work you do as holy repair work? If so, what is holy about it?



### C. Tikkun Olam is Holy Work

**(Note to teacher: Know your students! You may wish to spend 5 minutes on this, 50 minutes on it, or skip it entirely.)**

Tell students that one of the earliest uses of the phrase “*Tikkun Olam*” was in *Kabbalah*. Briefly tell students the story of the creation of the world according to Lurianic *Kabbalah*:

When the world was first created, God created space for a world, and set up vessels to hold the divine light. But the divine light was so powerful that the vessels broke, scattering fragments of light throughout the world. Our job is *tikkun*, gathering up and restoring the light, and restoring harmony to creation.

OR read together:

#### **Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, *To Heal A Fractured World: The Ethics of Responsibility*:**

“[T]he world is a broken place, literally a broken vessel, and our human task is to put those fragments together — to repair the brokenness.

There are certain questions that, once asked, seem obvious, yet it takes a special genius to formulate them for the first time. That was the case with Rabbi Luria [Rabbi Isaac ben Solomon Luria, 1534-72]. He posed a question, seemingly naïve in its simplicity, yet far-reaching in its consequences: *If God exists, how does the world exist?* If God is infinite, filling the world with his presence and every place with his glory, how is there room — physical or metaphysical — for anything else? Two things cannot coexist at a single time in a single space. Infinity must always crowd out finitude. How then is there a universe?

Luria’s radical answer was the doctrine known as *tzimzum*, a word that means contraction, self-effacement, withdrawal or concealment. God, he said, *contracted into himself*, to leave a space for the world. The universe that unfolded day by day during six phases of Genesis 1 was necessarily only the second stage of creation. The first was the act of divine self-effacement, a withdrawal into himself on the part of God. The Hebrew word for “universe” and “eternity” — *olam*— comes from the root *l-m* which also means “hiding” or “concealment”. Only when God is hidden can the universe exist.

To this must be added a second idea, *shevirat ha-kelim* (“breaking of the vessels”), a catastrophe theory of creation. God, in making the world, could not leave it void of His presence. He therefore sent forth rays of his light (strangely, this is not unlike the “background radiation” discovered by scientists in 1965 which eventually proved the Big Bang theory of the birth of the universe). The light was, however, too intense for its containers, which thereby broke, scattering fragments of light throughout the world. It is our task to gather up these fragments, wherever they are, and restore them to their proper place. Hence the third idea: *tikkun*, healing a fractured world. Each religious act we do has an effect on the ecology of creation. It restores something of lost harmony to the cosmos.”



# “ TALK IT OUT

- According to this philosophy, what are we doing when we engage in actions that help repair the world?
- How is this idea of “tikkun olam” different from other contexts in which you have heard this phrase?
- How could thinking of yourself as restoring the light change the way you look at your acts of social justice and kindness? How could it impact how you respond in everyday situations?



## OFF THE PAGE AND INTO LIFE

Give students some more labels with Rabbi Nachman’s teaching to take home with them. Ask them to place the stickers on places that need repair, and to try to approach those places or situations with the belief that it is possible to repair. Students should come back next time prepared to report on how the labels impacted how they viewed, and responded, to the situation.





# Just for Hillel Professionals: Vulnerability in Leading and Teaching

This Activity is Great For



**Just for Hillel  
Professionals**

## I. Beginning the Conversation

As educators, we often feel that we have to appear 100% confident and unwavering in order to attract students to Judaism. How can expressing vulnerability in our teaching and leadership enhance our practice?

Use these questions to reflect on how you can incorporate some of the lessons of *shevirah* into your teaching:

1. Do you think that you need to appear absolutely sure or joyful so that students will view Judaism in the most positive light?
2. How much of your own vulnerability do you share in your teaching?
3. Think about some of your role models. In what ways do they show their vulnerability?
4. What is appropriate sharing of vulnerability, and what is TMI?

Try it out: find a time in your teaching to let some vulnerability through. How does this change your teaching and interaction with your students?



# Textsheets for Students

Shevirah

On the next pages, you'll find just the texts mentioned in each of the sections of this curriculum, without the facilitator's guide. Use these sheets if you would like to make copies of the texts for students, while keeping the facilitator's notes just for you!



## Beit Midrash: Broken and Whole



## Exodus 32: 1-19

**א** וַיֵּרָא הָעָם כִּי בִשֵׁשׁ מִשָּׁה לָרִדְתָּ מִן הָהָר וַיִּקְהַל הָעָם עַל אַהֲרֹן וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֵלָיו קוּמָה עֲשֵׂה לָנוּ אֱלֹהִים אֲשֶׁר יִלְכוּ לִפְנֵינוּ כִּי זֶה מִשָּׁה הָאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר הָעֵלְנוּ מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם לֹא יָדַעְנוּ מָה הָיָה לוֹ.

**ב** וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵהֶם אַהֲרֹן פָּרְקוּ נְזָמֵי הַזָּהָב אֲשֶׁר בְּאָזְנֵי נְשֵׁיכֶם בְּנֵיכֶם וּבְנֹתֵיכֶם וְהֵבִיאוּ אֵלָי.

**ג** וַיִּתְּפְּרוּ קָל הָעָם אֶת נְזָמֵי הַזָּהָב אֲשֶׁר בְּאָזְנֵיהֶם וַיָּבִיאוּ אֶל אַהֲרֹן.

**ד** וַיִּקַּח מִיָּדָם וַיִּצַר אֹתוֹ בַּחֶרֶט וַיַּעֲשֶׂהוּ עֵגֶל מִסֹּכָה וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֵלָה אֱלֹהֵיךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶׁר הָעֵלְוֶךָ מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם.

**ה** וַיֵּרָא אַהֲרֹן וַיִּבֶן מִזְבֵּחַ לְפָנָיו וַיִּקְרָא אַהֲרֹן וַיֹּאמֶר חַג לַה' מָחָר.

**ו** וַיִּשְׁכִּימוּ מִמָּחָרֶת וַיַּעֲלוּ עֹלֹת וַיִּגְשׁוּ שְׁלָמִים וַיִּשֶׁב הָעָם לֶאֱכֹל וְשָׂתוּ וַיִּקְמוּ לְצַחֵק. (פ)

**ז** וַיְדַבֵּר ה' אֶל מֹשֶׁה לֵּךְ רֵד כִּי שַׁחַת עָמְדָה אֲשֶׁר הָעֵלִיתָ מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם.

**ח** סָרוּ מִהָר מִן הַדֶּרֶךְ אֲשֶׁר צִוִּיתָם עֲשׂוּ לָהֶם עֵגֶל מִסֹּכָה וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲווּ לוֹ וַיִּזְבְּחוּ לוֹ וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֵלָה אֱלֹהֵיךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶׁר הָעֵלְוֶךָ מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם.

**ט** וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל מֹשֶׁה רְאִיתִי אֶת הָעָם הַזֶּה וְהִנֵּה עִם קָשָׁה עֲרָף הוּא.

**י** וְעַתָּה הִנֵּיחָה לִי וַיִּחַר אַפִּי בָהֶם וְאֶכְלֵם וְאֶעֱשֶׂה אוֹתָךְ לְגוֹי גְדוֹל.

**1** When the people saw that Moses was so long in coming down from the mountain, they gathered around Aaron and said, "Come, make us gods who will go before us. As for this fellow Moses who brought us up out of Egypt, we don't know what has happened to him."

**2** Aaron answered them, "Take off the gold earrings that your wives, your sons and your daughters are wearing, and bring them to me."

**3** So all the people took off their earrings and brought them to Aaron.

**4** He took what they handed him and made it into an idol cast in the shape of a calf, fashioning it with a tool. Then they said, "These are your gods, Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt."

**5** When Aaron saw this, he built an altar in front of the calf and announced, "Tomorrow there will be a festival to the Lord."

**6** So the next day the people rose early and sacrificed burnt offerings and presented fellowship offerings. Afterward they sat down to eat and drink and got up to indulge in revelry.

**7** Then the Lord said to Moses, "Go down, because your people, whom you brought up out of Egypt, have become corrupt.

**8** They have been quick to turn away from what I commanded them and have made themselves an idol cast in the shape of a calf. They have bowed down to it and sacrificed to it and have said, 'These are your gods, Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt.'

**9** "I have seen these people," the Lord said to Moses, "and they are a stiff-necked people.

**10** Now leave me alone so that my anger may burn against them and that I may destroy them. Then I will make you into a great nation."



**Beit Midrash: Broken and Whole (continued)****Exodus 32: 1-19 (continued)**

**יא** וַיַּחַל מֹשֶׁה אֶת פָּנָיו ה' אֱלֹהָיו וַיֹּאמֶר לָמָּה ה' יִחְרָה אִפְּךָ בְּעַמֶּךָ אֲשֶׁר הוֹצֵאתָ מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם בְּכַח גְּדוֹל וּבְיָד חֲזָקָה.

**יב** לָמָּה יֹאמְרוּ מִצְרַיִם לֵאמֹר בְּרָעָה הוֹצִיאָם לְהַרְגֵם אֹתָם בְּהָרִים וּלְכַלְתֵּם מֵעַל פְּנֵי הָאָדָמָה שׁוּב מִחֲרוֹן אִפְּךָ וְהִנַּחֵם עַל הַרְעָה לְעַמֶּךָ.

**יג** זָכֵר לְאַבְרָהָם לְיִצְחָק וּלְיִשְׂרָאֵל עַבְדְּךָ אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּעְתָּ לָהֶם בְּךָ וַתְּדַבֵּר אֲלֵהֶם אַרְבָּה אֶת זַרְעֲכֶם כְּכֹכְבֵי שָׁמַיִם וְכָל הָאָרֶץ הַזֹּאת אֲשֶׁר אָמַרְתִּי אֲתָן לְזַרְעֲכֶם וְנָחְלוּ לָעַלְמִים.

**יד** וַיִּנָּחֵם ה' עַל הַרְעָה אֲשֶׁר דָּבַר לַעֲשׂוֹת לְעַמּוֹ.

**טו** וַיִּפֹּן וַיֵּרֵד מֹשֶׁה מִן הָהָר וּשְׁנֵי לַחַת הָעֵדוּת בְּיָדוֹ לַחַת כְּתָבִים מִשְׁנֵי עֲבָרֵיהֶם מִזֶּה וּמִזֶּה הֵם כְּתָבִים.

**טז** וְהַלַּחַת מַעֲשֵׂה אֱלֹהִים הִמָּה וְהַמְּכַתֵּב מְכַתֵּב אֱלֹהִים הוּא חֲרוּת עַל הַלַּחַת.

**יז** וַיִּשְׁמַע יְהוָה אֶת קוֹל הָעָם בְּרָעָה וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל מֹשֶׁה קוֹל מִלְחָמָה בְּמַחְנֵה.

**יח** וַיֹּאמֶר אֵין קוֹל עֲנוּת גְּבוּרָה וְאֵין קוֹל עֲנוּת חַלוּשָׁה קוֹל עֲנוּת אֲנֹכִי שָׁמַע.

**יט** וַיְהִי כַּאֲשֶׁר קָרַב אֶל הַמַּחְנֵה וַיֵּרָא אֶת הָעֵגֶל וּמַחְלַת וַיַּחֵר אֶף מֹשֶׁה וַיִּשְׁלַח מַיְדוֹ אֶת הַלַּחַת וַיִּשְׁבַּר אֹתָם תַּחַת הָהָר.

**11** But Moses sought the favor of the Lord his God. "Lord," he said, "why should your anger burn against your people, whom you brought out of Egypt with great power and a mighty hand?"

**12** Why should the Egyptians say, 'It was with evil intent that he brought them out, to kill them in the mountains and to wipe them off the face of the earth'? Turn from your fierce anger; relent and do not bring disaster on your people.

**13** Remember your servants Abraham, Isaac and Israel, to whom you swore by your own self: 'I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and I will give your descendants all this land I promised them, and it will be their inheritance forever.' "

**14** Then the Lord relented and did not bring on his people the disaster he had threatened.

**15** Moses turned and went down the mountain with the two tablets of the covenant law in his hands. They were inscribed on both sides, front and back.

**16** The tablets were the work of God; the writing was the writing of God, engraved on the tablets.

**17** When Joshua heard the noise of the people shouting, he said to Moses, "There is the sound of war in the camp."

**18** Moses replied: "It is not the sound of victory, it is not the sound of defeat; it is the sound of singing that I hear."

**19** When Moses approached the camp and saw the calf and the dancing, his anger burned and he threw the tablets out of his hands, breaking them to pieces at the foot of the mountain.





Textsheets for Students

**Beit Midrash: Broken and Whole (continued)**

**Talmud Bavli Bava Batra 14b:**

דתני רב יוסף (דברים י) אשר שברת  
ושמתם מלמד שהלוחות ושברי לוחות  
מונחין בארון

Rabbi Joseph learned: [The verse states: "the tablets] that you broke and put them" (Deuteronomy 10): [the juxtaposition of these words] teaches us that the tablets as well as the broken pieces of the tablets were placed in the Ark."

**Talmud Bavli Berachot 8b**

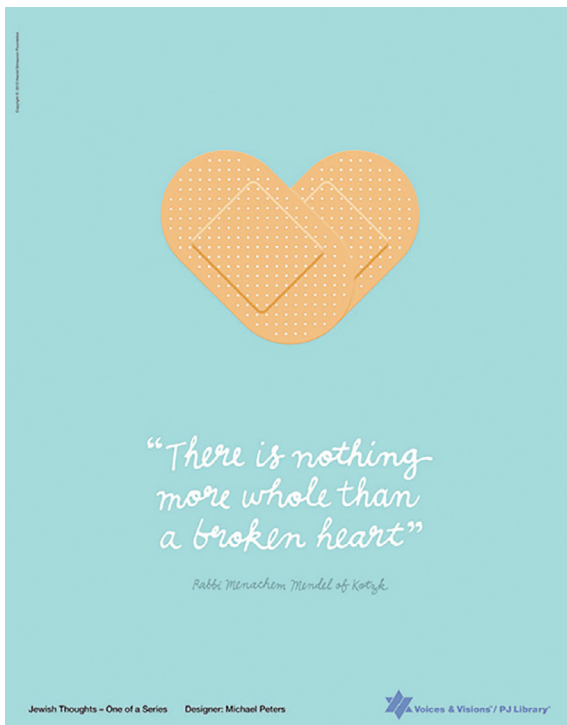
ר' יהושע בן לוי לבניה . . . הזהרו בזקן  
ששכח תלמודו מחמת אונסו דאמרינן  
לוחות ושברי לוחות מונחות בארון

Rabbi Joshua ben Levi said to his children . . . Be careful regarding how you treat an elderly individual who has forgotten his learning due to an extenuating circumstance (Rashi: as a result of sickness or struggle to make a livelihood, be careful to honor him), as we say, "The tablets as well as the broken pieces of the tablets were placed in the Ark."

## What Becomes of the Brokenhearted?

**Erica Brown about the Jewish attitude toward brokenness.** (Erica Brown, Commentary, Voices and Visions at <https://www.voices-visions.org/content/poster/collection-poster-rabbi-menachem-mendel-kotzk-michael-peters>):

“Many experiences in life try to break us: illness, loneliness, the death of those we love, rejection, insecurity, loss. But such experiences also make us more whole as human beings. They expand our range of consciousness and compassion. They enlarge our capacity for inclusion. They make us stronger and help us reach out to others with greater empathy and concern. When we acknowledge that we are broken, we enter a universe where we are not measured by perfection but by our willingness to repair ourselves and the world. We stop judging others only when we can recognize our own inadequacies.”



## Tikkun Olam: Can We Repair A Broken World?



### Anthem Leonard Cohen

The birds they sang  
at the break of day  
Start again  
I heard them say  
Don't dwell on what  
has passed away  
or what is yet to be.  
Ah the wars they will  
be fought again  
The holy dove  
She will be caught again  
bought and sold  
and bought again  
the dove is never free.

Ring the bells that still can ring  
Forget your perfect offering  
There is a crack in everything  
That's how the light gets in.

We asked for signs  
the signs were sent:  
the birth betrayed  
the marriage spent  
Yeah the widowhood  
of every government —  
signs for all to see.

I can't run no more  
with that lawless crowd  
while the killers in high places  
say their prayers out loud.  
But they've summoned, they've summoned up  
a thundercloud  
and they're going to hear from me.

Ring the bells that still can ring  
Forget your perfect offering  
There is a crack in everything  
That's how the light gets in.

You can add up the parts  
but you won't have the sum  
You can strike up the march,  
there is no drum  
Every heart, every heart  
to love will come  
but like a refugee.

Ring the bells that still can ring  
Forget your perfect offering  
There is a crack, a crack in everything  
That's how the light gets in.

Ring the bells that still can ring  
Forget your perfect offering  
There is a crack, a crack in everything  
That's how the light gets in.  
That's how the light gets in.  
That's how the light gets in.

## Tikkun Olam: Can We Repair A Broken World? (continued)



### Rabbi Nachman of Breslov (1772-1810, Ukraine):

אם אתה מאמין שאפשר לקלקל, תאמין  
שאפשר לתקן. If you believe that it is possible to break,  
believe that it is possible to repair.

### Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, *To Heal A Fractured World: The Ethics of Responsibility*:

"[T]he world is a broken place, literally a broken vessel, and our human task is to put those fragments together — to repair the brokenness.

There are certain questions that, once asked, seem obvious, yet it takes a special genius to formulate them for the first time. That was the case with Rabbi Luria [Rabbi Isaac ben Solomon Luria, 1534-72]. He posed a question, seemingly naïve in its simplicity, yet far-reaching in its consequences: *If God exists, how does the world exist?* If God is infinite, filling the world with his presence and every place with his glory, how is there room — physical or metaphysical — for anything else? Two things cannot coexist at a single time in a single space. Infinity must always crowd out finitude. How then is there a universe?

Luria's radical answer was the doctrine known as *tzimzum*, a word that means contraction, self-effacement, withdrawal or concealment. God, he said, *contracted into himself*, to leave a space for the world. The universe that unfolded day by day during six phases of Genesis 1 was necessarily only the second stage of creation. The first was the act of divine self-effacement, a withdrawal into himself on the part of God. The Hebrew word for "universe" and "eternity" — *olam* — comes from the root *l-m* which also means "hiding" or "concealment". Only when God is hidden can the universe exist.

To this must be added a second idea, *shevirat ha-kelim* ("breaking of the vessels"), a catastrophe theory of creation. God, in making the world, could not leave it void of His presence. He therefore sent forth rays of his light (strangely, this is not unlike the "background radiation" discovered by scientists in 1965 which eventually proved the Big Bang theory of the birth of the universe). The light was, however, too intense for its containers, which thereby broke, scattering fragments of light throughout the world. It is our task to gather up these fragments, wherever they are, and restore them to their proper place. Hence the third idea: *tikkun*, healing a fractured world. Each religious act we do has an effect on the ecology of creation. It restores something of lost harmony to the cosmos."