



Torah for Turbulent Times

“When your heart is broken, you plant seeds in the cracks and pray for rain.”
(Andrea Gibson)

The 16th century Rabbi and Kabbalist, Isaac Luria, told this sacred tale of the ancient unfolding of the universe. In very brief summary, a Divine light was delivered in holy vessels. The light couldn't be contained and the vessels were shattered. One of our tasks then is to search for and gather up the pieces from the broken vessels, known as “sparks of holiness.” In doing our part to help the world be a better place, we do *tikkun olam*, making tiny repairs in a broken world. I return to this story now, as the lives of so many in our country are being shattered. Brokenness, violence and injustice run rampant, as if a pandemic world can take any more!

First the growing number of deaths from the pandemic and now this. I've been watching the stories and images of the past week unfold, and my *kishkes*, my insides, ache as I witness the growing suffering and shattering of lives. In searching for consolation, the Kotzker Rebbe's words ring in my ears. “There is nothing so whole as a broken heart.” (1787-1859, Poland) It's a puzzling statement. One interpretation is that our hearts can only be made whole when we're able to integrate the experience of brokenness into it. In this way it has the potential to be a catalyst for change, for planting seeds of solidarity in the cracks. Being broken, it can now become whole.

Both of these Jewish sources provide me with strength and hope. First, we the Jewish people have something to do. We have a duty to do our part and to help mend the brokenness of our world. Second, we can choose to understand that these latest examples of injustice and violence should compel us, each in our own ways, to work for change that brings us closer to wholeness.

How can we do our part to mend the world?
How can we move from shattered and fragmented, to whole and unified?

It's easy to get overwhelmed and to become numb from what's going on in our world today. I don't know about you, but lately I feel this on a regular basis. What can we do? It's not up to us to complete the task, but neither are we free to ignore it. (Pirkei Avot, 2:21) Let's talk together, share ideas, support each other, build more community

bridges, and be allies for those in need during these turbulent times. Join the community [zoom](#) discussion this Sunday at 11:00 am.

May the many ways that our world is broken compel us to pick up the shattered pieces and move us towards solidarity and wholeness.

-Rabbi Mark