

# Weekly Teaching

May 17, 2019

In the Torah, we read the seemingly problematic verse:

*Anything blind, or injured, or maimed, or with a wart...you shall not offer to the LORD. (Lev. 22:22)*

If we read Torah without the lens of Oral Law (Midrash), we would walk away believing that God cares not for that which is “broken”.

Ironically, the Midrash explicitly teaches the opposite message. Rabbi Aba bar Yudan taught:

*All that God prohibited in an animal sacrifice, God accepts in a human being. What is prohibited in an offering? “Anything blind or broken or maimed or with a wart, anything with a defect may not be brought as an offering to Lord.” All these things, which render a sacrifice unfit, God fully accepts; the Holy One sees as fitting in a human being. (Vayikrah Rabbah 7:2)*

The Chazal (Sages of Blessed Memory) understood, only too well, that we often live in a state of Brokenness.

Besides the larger challenges of world affairs, societal woes, etc., we often confront Brokenness in our interpersonal relationships, state of personal health or the health of loved ones, etc.

Oscar Wilde wrote:

*Each man kills the thing he loves...Some do it with a bitter look, Some with a flattering word...Some kill their love when they are young, And some when they are old; Some strangle with the hands of Lust, Some with the hands of Gold...Some love too little, some too long, Some sell, and others buy; Some do the deed with many tears, And some without a sigh: For each man kills the thing he loves, Yet each man does not die.*

Our unkind words and/or actions—even small and minor—break the world that we are in. Each of us experiences brokenness; sometimes the victim and sometimes the culprit.

But, from our brokenness we can prompt mending.

As the poet and songwriter, Leonard Cohen wrote:

*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.*

God doesn’t want Brokenness for us, but God embraces us when we are in a fractured state; with our own willingness in place, God can help us find the ability to let the light back into our darkened lives.

When we participate in the mitzvah of teshuvah (repentance), we are embracing the process that lets God’s light back into our lives.

Brokenness is terribly difficult. While we can’t lessen the pain, we can lessen the suffering.

We can radically accept when we have no ability to change or control, and we can utilize the energies that are available to us to effectively confront those challenging items we have the ability to change or control.

This is where God can bolster our own resolve.

We can learn from our mistakes, and we can grow and change. We can acknowledge the hurt we feel or have caused, and we can find the resolve to move forward.

God would want that we could have a “perfect offering”, but the reality is that within the fragile vessel that is the physical body, such perfection can never be achieved within our mortal lives.

Within the cracks comes the light, but only if we choose to let it in.

Our bodies are made from the dust, but our souls are made in the image of God.

The physical will always, eventually break. But the soul can be made whole.

The Psalmist reminds us that God will never reject a “crushed and broken heart”. We are broken vessels, but:

*All that God prohibited in an animal sacrifice, God accepts in a human being. What is prohibited in an offering? “Anything blind or broken or maimed or with a wart, anything with a defect may not be brought as an offering to Lord.” All these things, which render a sacrifice unfit, God fully accepts; the Holy One sees as fitting in a human being.*

Reb Nachman famously taught:

*“There is nothing more whole than a broken heart.”*

This is because it is within the cracks of our lives that the Light can get in.

Shabbat Shalom,

Rabbi Mitch

[rabbimitch@templesholom.com](mailto:rabbimitch@templesholom.com)

