

I stood under the chuppah, my new husband beside me. My childhood rabbi in front of me. My family flanked us on the right, his family on the left. At the conclusion of the official wedding ceremony, we were married. But there was one more action we had to take care of before we could join our families and friends, singing and dancing in the aisles of the sanctuary. The rabbi introduced the next portion of the ceremony and placed a glass wrapped in a napkin on the floor beside my husband's feet. I nodded to our musical friends to begin their song. "Im eshkachech yerushalayim." "If I forget thee O' Jerusalem." They continued their beautiful harmonies, Ariel lifted his leg and smashed down on the glass, shattering it to pieces. All the while, I closed my eyes and sang along.

I had spent some time in preparation for this moment, thinking about the meaning of the tradition of breaking the glass. How could I mourn the destruction of the Temple without ever having experienced life with it? It seemed like an impossible task, to truly feel the loss. Instead, or perhaps in addition to this feeling I wasn't sure I could connect do, I decided to add another layer of meaning, which I know others often do-- to substitute Jerusalem with brokenness. If I forget the brokenness of the world, it is as if I forgot my right hand. If I do not acknowledge the brokenness, even in this, a most joyous occasion, let my tongue stick to the roof of my mouth. This, like a number of other Jewish traditions, is not just about the destruction of the Temple. It recognizes that we live in an imperfect world, and it is always our duty to be aware of that reality.

On the one hand, it is all too easy these days to be reminded of that reality. Of course, it would be impossible for me to forget the shooting a couple of months ago in Orlando, or last month in Dallas, the stabbings and other attacks in Israel, or the attacks in Turkey, or Germany, and, unfortunately, the list goes on. Every time I wake up to a tragic news story, I just think about the world's brokenness. Certain rabbinic decrees, such as leaving a portion of one's home unfinished, intentionally leaving something out of a meal, and forbidding listening to music except for purpose of fulfilling a mitzvah, were meant to be a constant reminder and invoke the same feeling. On the other hand, often, these are just news stories to me. Yes, they are tragic. Yes, people lose their lives. But I feel removed from it all. Even when the attacks hit close to home, like the shooting of a UCLA professor this year where the library I had been researching in was under lockdown, seem distant. I wasn't on campus that day even though I knew many people who were.

How can I respond to the brokenness of the world from where I stand, surrounded by family and friends and celebrating happiness, joy, and love? How should I? It feels so good to be around so much love that it is difficult for me to intentionally engage with hatred. And I know not everyone has that choice. Some have that choice made for them. So how do I help anyone else but myself by refusing to choose hatred?

The rabbis in the Talmud posit that while the first Temple was destroyed because of infidelity to God, the second temple was destroyed because of sinat chinam, often translated as baseless hatred. In order to reverse this, they say, the third Temple will only be rebuilt with ahavat chinam, baseless love. Sounds pretty simple, doesn't it?

I've been working on this trait within myself for a number of years now, and it's not as easy, at least for me, as it sounds. Sure, most of the time it's easy. But there's always that one coworker who is too antagonistic, that one classmate who doesn't take responsibility, and that

one fellow board member whose arrogance is palpable and unbelievably off-putting How do I love those people?

In an attempt to wrap my head around this, I adopted a custom from the bedtime kriyat shema a number of years ago. I recite a few verses from the pre-Shema section in many traditional siddurim. "Ribono shel olam, master of the universe, here I am, forgiving anyone who angered or provoked me, or sinned against me-- whether with my body, with my money, with my reputation, or with anything else that I have, whether it was intentional or unintentional, through words or through action or thought. And let no one be punished on my account."

For me, the action of verbalizing these words is a release in it of itself. I try not to go to bed angry and to release any ill will so that I can sleep peacefully and wake up fresh the next morning. If I am holding bad energy from a negative interaction that day, I think about that and consciously release it, at least for the time being, exercising power over my own feelings. Of course, it's not always that easy, but as a practice I've been cultivating for a while, I've become better at it. Of course, though, my short nightly meditation sessions won't help piece together a shattered world.

But I do think that in order to work on the world, I must be at peace with myself and my immediate surroundings. I view it like rabbinic levels of charity, in which the priority for giving is your community, with concentric circles expanding out to the entire world. And as the rabbis suggested, happiness is closely intertwined with giving. Because they believed that insular happiness that doesn't include the less fortunate, the needy, and the other, is not true happiness. This is why we welcome people off the streets into our seder, among other traditions. This is why the later prophets prophesy almost exclusively about the downfall of the Jewish people as a result of their mistreatment of one another. Not because they worshipped other gods or failed to observe the mitzvot, but because of their failure to execute justice in their society. Because those with power used it to oppress those below them on the ladder. Because of an abuse of power and perversion of justice.

When I tell people about my research of the history of day schools, I often remark how funny it is that so little has changed in the past fifty or one hundred years. And of course, when I say funny, I mean it's a sad commentary on the system and on humanity. It's actually completely ridiculous that the phrase "history repeats itself" is a commonly accepted adage, and how true Churchill's modified words from George Santayana: "those who fail to learn from history are doomed to repeat it," are.

So I consider myself lucky-- not just privileged but lucky. I am lucky to be part of a tradition that has always recognized the utmost importance of justice. "Tzedek tzedek tirdoph" is not just a phrase-- it's an imperative for Jews to build and maintain societies that are just. And since we live in the world, I would argue that it's our mission for the world. It's not a coincidence that the phrase tikkun olam, often translated as social justice, literally means fixing the world. Because it is our job to continually work toward picking up the pieces of an every-crumbling world. And when I feel overwhelmed by the magnitude of it all--- by the enormity of the feat that it requires, I know I can start with little steps. I know I live in a community with likeminded people who will do the same. And perhaps, by pursuing justice in our 4 amot, we can make a dent. After all, "it is not our duty to complete the work, but we are also not free to ignore it."

No, I'm not that idealistic to think that if everyone does a little bit of good then all of the world's problems will disappear. I know it's more complicated than that. But I also know that change starts from within and that it takes more than one person to gather all the broken pieces. And so, in a time when, unfortunately, we do not need the constant reminders of brokenness from the unfinished home or incomplete meals, I forgive, I give, and I join together with others who do the same, lest I, God forbid, become an ally in hatred. Because I much prefer to be an ally in the act of tikkun.