

The Schmooze

Stories with a Yiddish Twist

BROKEN-NESS

by
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The Yiddish word meaning “to crack” or “to split” is “shpaltn.”

The Yiddish word for “perfect” is “perfekt.”

“Alle meiles in ainem iz nita bei kinem” means “There is no such thing as a perfect person.”

“Everything is Broken” is a song written and recorded by American musician, Bob Dylan, and released on his 1989 album, “Oh Mercy.” The lyrics describe Dylan’s detachment from his “velt” (world) at the time of his writing.

Dylan describes broken bottles, broken plates, broken switches, broken gates, broken parts, people sleeping on broken beds, and streets filled with broken hearts.

Rick Warren [Aug. 3, 2011] said, “We live on a broken planet; it’s not perfect anymore. Before sin (“zind”) entered the world, there were no earthquakes, tidal waves, hurricanes, blizzards or extreme weather (“veter”) phenomena. The environment was in perfect balance.

During May of 2016, we read these headlines: “Tornadoes damage homes as more states brace for storms,” “Flattened houses in Howe, Texas,” “Six Killed in Texas as severe weather lashes central U. S.” And we had hundreds of supporters of lesbian, gay bisexual and transgender rights protesting against a new state law they called discriminatory. Trade unions

and other groups staged rallies around the world to mark International Workers Day. Police commissioner William Bratton stressed that collaboration between the NYPD and counterparts overseas is key to keeping New Yorkers safe from terror attacks. “Zolst nit visn fun dem.” (May you not know about that.)

Shalom Rav, A Blog by Rabbi Brant Rosen (Sept. 18, 2007) contained a sermon titled, “There Is Nothing So Whole As a Broken Heart.” He wrote, “Today, of course, Tikkun Olam is one of our favorite Jewish expressions. We use it as a euphemism for any good deed, any act of social justice, any time we do something to make the world a better place. The central assumption of this term, of course, is that we live in a world that is BROKEN and in need of repair. (Note: The Yiddish word meaning “to repair” is “farrikhtn.”) But I believe there is also an inner existential meaning to Tikkun Olam. It doesn’t only refer to the world around us. It also refers to the world WITHIN US--the BROKEN PLACES of our own lives....” Like Eggbert the Slightly Cracked Egg” by Tom Ross, Rabbi Rosen says, “We are all, in a sense, slightly broken in one way or another. And like Eggbert, I think we naturally grieve over this aspect of our basic humanity. We assume that as a result of our broken-ness, we will never fit into the world around us. And so, these broken places often become sources of shame. We try with all of our might to deny them, to pretend that we are more whole than we actually are, in the hopes of being like everything, like everyone else.”

The rabbi’s sermon ends as follows: “May we face these broken lives, may we face this broken world of ours together. And in the end, may we find that our hearts are stronger for it.”

Amen.

And, finally, the May 5, 2016, issue of the Forward contained a “vunderlekh” article titled, “The Talmud of a Cracked iPhone Screen” by Cantor, Eric Schulmiller. He states that when he sees the iPhone screens of his bar and bat mitzvah students, many have screens that are broken--cracked. When he chants a student’s Torah portion onto their iPhone and notes the cracks, he feels that this experience presents an opportunity to “think different” about our unrealistic desire to preserve (and present) ourselves in a bubble of perfection.

The Cantor states, “Viewed in the right state of mind, the random cracks on our screens, like the lines on our palms, can help us divine something we already know, deep down, about ourselves. We are cracked, yet

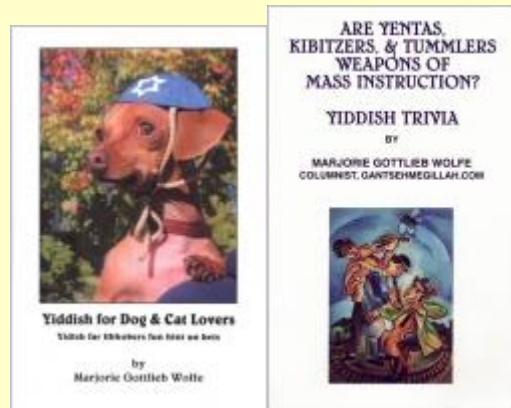
functional.”

MARJORIE WOLFE agrees with Bryant McGill: “When you are broken open you get to discover for the first time what is inside you.”

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Marjorie Gottlieb Wolfe is the author of two books:



"Yiddish for Dog & Cat Lovers" and "Are Yentas, Kibitzers, & Tumblers Weapons of Mass Instruction? Yiddish Trivia." To order a copy, go to her website: MarjorieGottliebWolfe.com

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