

NiSh'ma: Disassembling and Reassembling



By Adina Lewittes:

Smashing the tablets on the slopes of Sinai, Moses chooses an imperfect, unpredictable people over inviolable, unchanging tablets and initiates the sacred dynamic of rewriting Torah in every generation.

The Torah warns us against worshipping idols — far more than simply bowing down to a rock. It's worshipping anything that's unresponsive or inflexible. Not only God refuses to be limited in this way; we aren't permitted to stagnate, either, by turning our own lives, or beliefs, into stone.

When ground and continuously broken, stone becomes grains of sand, free to be reconfigured by the winds of life — to connect and assemble as new structures. Eventually, these new structures also surrender to the winds of change. Even at Sinai, at the foot of the mountain, a rock, the people stand for only a few days. Then they wander and camp in the desert with sand shifting endlessly under their feet for 40 years, seeking holiness from the dynamism and instability that is life.

The shards of the first tablets, along with the second tablets, are brought along on the journey — sacred symbols of the eternal disassembling and reassembling that bind a people, that animate a soul. As we live alongside the new tablets, they remind us that to find and nourish wholeness from within life's inevitable brokenness is the sacred narrative of human existence.