

# Lyrics/Dramaturgy

## 17 Tammuz/The 3 Weeks Leading up to Tisha b'Av - "One More Song to Sing"

[Demo recording \(very quiet, 6/19/25\)](#)

[Demo 2 \(louder, new lyrics, 7/10/25\)](#)

[Recording for Ratzon Shabbat \(7/11/25\)](#)

[Recording with Queer Choir Camp \(8/10/25\)](#)

["A New Song for Tisha b'Av," published on SVARA's Hot off the Shtender blog](#)

## Lyrics

### *Nigun:*

*Yum-bye yai-e-yo*  
*Yum-bye yai-e-yo*  
*Yum-bye, bye-bye*  
*Yum-bye, bye-mm-bye-mm-bye*

### *Chorus*

I've got one more song to sing  
 One last first to bless  
 And no more wedding rings  
 Before the walls fall  
 Before the Temple burns

### *Verse 1*

Why are you still mourning for this time you don't want back?  
 It was never meant to work for us, but still I feel its lack.  
 Are these punishments or consequences? I still can't tell myself,  
 Terrified and drenched in sadness, my music silenced on the shelf

### *Verse 2*

Put an idol in my temple, it was never gonna last.  
 Every year's another spiral, where our future is our past.  
 Join me in calamity, Lamentations on the floor  
 May the wounds that we remember, open our hearts that much more

# Dramaturgy

This song comes as part of a [continuing project of writing songs for obscure Jewish holidays](#). I thought up the chorus sometime the year previous, but only actually worked out the verses on a walk over to my girlfriend's place in the month leading up to the Fast of the 17th of the Month of Tammuz 5785. I was part of leading a July 2025 Shabbat service with Ratzon's Antizionist Minyan in Pittsburgh, and wanted to finally realize the song. Back around Hanukah I had invited a cellist to collab on the song, but after she broke her finger (*misherberach* to all injured musicians), I realized that the song might actually be an acapella piece in the first place.

A key reason that the song is acapella, without instrument accompaniment, is because of the tradition to fast from music during the Three Weeks between 17 Tammuz and Tisha b'Av.

## What are each of these holidays?

**Tisha b'Av is the big one - it's the 9th of the Hebrew month of Av - and it's a catastrophe magnet in Jewish History.** The 1st Temple was destroyed on Tisha b'Av; the 2nd Temple was destroyed on Tisha b'Av. Three nations expelled their Jewish populations on Tisha b'Av: England (1290), France (1306), and most famously, Spain in 1492 - The Nazis put out "The Final Solution" on Tisha b'Av 1941. I don't know what will happen this Tisha b'Av, but I have found resonance with number of traditional practices, which help me to receive the offerings of this holiday.

[I did a lot of writing about Tisha b'Av last year](#) when I learned how to chant the 1st chapter of Eicha/Lamentations, the traditional reading for the day of mourning, read on the floor at night in low light. My Tisha b'Av practice involves that nighttime reading of Lamentations, fasting (from food, sex, washing for pleasure, and sometimes from drinking water too) from sundown to sundown, not greeting people warmly (a way to show our devastation), not sitting in a normal chair until midday. AND it's also an important cleaning day for me - there's a tradition that the Messiah is born on Tisha b'Av, and so, for centuries, Jewish women/homemakers have used this day to make their homes ready for the Messiah's arrival, as their houseguest, you know. Male Rabbinic authorities have railed against this practice as forbidden labour, which kinda make me want to do it even more, for the women who were told no, when they clearly knew what was up. And while I clean I listen to appropriate podcasts - from Judaism Unbound, 2Jews4Questions, Xai How Are You, and really whatever comes up from the year when I search Tisha b'Av on the podcast app. One year I took a barefoot walk to the cemetery. One year I read the graphic novel version of The Diary of Anne Frank. Last year I read this PJ Library Choose Your Own Adventure book about the Expulsion from Spain.

My dream would be to find a copy of the rare out-of-print board game Expulsion - about the Expulsion from Spain and have a bunch of friends play it (with somber greetings when they arrive).

A few days after Tisha b'Av is Tu b'Av, the 15th of Av, which commemorates the ancient grape harvest - women swapping white dresses to obscure their economic status, and dancing in the moonlight to attract lovers. I'd like to plan a clothing swap this year, an idea I got from fellow SVARA Fellow Emet Monts. It's a holiday that recognizes there's a time for sadness and a time for love and joy. Which is important because Tisha b'Av is the culmination of THREE WEEKS of mourning.

**The 17th of Tammuz** is the **start of The Three Weeks** - It's a companion holiday to the **10th of Tevet** (find my song "[You Hold My Heart Like Jerusalem](#)"), which commemorates, among other things - all of these holidays end up commemorating a number of things - the start of the Babylonian Siege of Jerusalem around 588BCE. The 17th of Tammuz is when tradition **marks the Breach of the Walls of Jerusalem** - by Babylon first, and then by Rome 600yrs later. And, as we learned above, **Three Weeks later, on Tisha b'Av, is when the Babylonian Empire destroyed the 1st Temple** (Solomon's Temple, yes, the one which the Shamir Worm helped to build), and the Romans destroyed the 2nd Temple.

The 17th of Tammuz is also a fast day, but it's much lesser known, even in the Jewish world, than 9 Av, so I often end up fasting while doing other stuff. Queer Talmud Camp was on 17 Tammuz one year - but that was actually the first year I really learned of it, so good timing? But now I observe it with the sunrise to sunset fast - I usually try to fast from social media on these fasts too - but **this fast of 17 Tammuz & the Three Weeks have some unique traditional features which I've started to incorporate into my practice:** (some continue to fast from food/water during the day, but that's not me at this time)

- **Not playing or listening to music!**

- my favourite reason for this is based on [Psalm 137](#), which starts with the lines

עַל־נְהַרֹת בְּבֵל שָׁם יִשְׁבְּנוּ גַם־בְּכִינוּ בְּזָכְרֵנוּ אֶת־צִיּוֹן:

By the rivers of Babylon,  
there we sat, and also wept,  
while we remembered Zion.

עַל־עֲרָבִים בְּתוֹכָהּ תְּלִינוּ כְּנֹרוֹתֵינוּ:

On the willows/poplars (dark barked trees) in our midst  
we hung up our harps/lyres (*kee'noh'roh'tay'noo*)

So, therefore, in the narrows of this time, we would avoid listening to music. Some ancient authorities prohibited music and dancing outside of times of celebration, so that we would never forget to mourn for the destruction of the Temple.

- Last year was the first time I really tried to do this - beforehand I had kind of mocked it as an absurd asceticism, but last year I wanted to see the impact. I chose not to run away when music was on, but did try my best not to activate music for music sake myself. And I did miss it. **I noticed how much of my life I filled with music** - to deepen a mood, to distract, to fill up my attention while working. And without it, life was quieter. It was an passive/active **way to feel absence. Which is what this time invites us to do: remember loss.**
- For some interesting exceptions, [explore Chabad's article.](#)
- **Not doing anything that would require one to say *shehecheyanu*** - the blessing for the first time one does something in a year, or for new experiences in general
  - This most commonly shows up as **not eating a fruit one hasn't eaten yet in the year, buying new clothes, or making big purchases** - tho I found [a responsa](#) this year that instructs that if one doesn't have a practice of saying *shehecheyanu* over new dresses or furniture, then there isn't an issue. Which really makes me want to start saying a blessing over new stuff, especially as I am a person who loves that dopamine hit of books from a free library box or an obscure cassette at the Goodwill. Heighten, spiritualize the moment.
- And **not getting married** during this time. It's a pretty ominous time to think about getting married anyway, but summer weddings are rather lovely, so it's compelling. Engagements are a tricky subject too. Tho I remember being taught that one doesn't say *shehecheyanu* for getting married, because you're not hoping it will happen again the next year. Reminds me of my friends Gunner & Dax who have celebrated re-marrying each-other at least 5 times now! (with no divorces peppered in to my knowledge).

Overall it's **intended to be a practice of lessening our joy. Which is sort of counter to how I tend to approach the suffering and fear in the world.** I tend to try to be all the more joyous, to take advantage of every possible moment to be appreciating the miracles and doing life affirming stuff, like theater and the pool, with good friends and family. But I know that I'm doing all this and filling my life to the brim with projects and parties so that I don't sit still and think about all of the terrors and violences.

- **But what's the purpose of all the wallowing? To help us understand the need to recognize the exiles and burned temples in today's world, and work to repair and rebuild the broken world.**

### **And thus we get the bones of the song!**

The chorus prepares for the Three Weeks, while the verses live it and build up to Tisha b'Av. Always a question in these song projects as to how much of the holidays I can explain in the

lyrics & vibe vs how much goes in an intro – and which aspects of the holiday turn best into metaphors that are approachable, meaningful without the full context.

I actually still feel sort off about the main line “I’ve got one more song to sing” - because one can sing a song during the Three Week, better if it’s a capella and slow/dreary. But it does still speak to the imminence of the change in calendar tone. A call to appreciate the times of aesthetic delights before a period of ascetics. Overcome the grief that’s washing over us to eat those last new fruits, do a little shopping, celebrate with a wedding party – the time may too soon come when we truly cannot, not just when we could not bring ourselves to.

*Why are you still mourning for this time you don't want back?*

*It was never meant to work for us, but still I feel the lack.*

I cracked where to go for the verses when I remembered what my Rabbi, Rabbi Sharyn Henry (who bless her for retiring this year) ask me why I was still fasting for the 17th of Tammuz, especially not thinking of me as someone who is interested in rebuilding The Temple, or restoring Jerusalem as the center of Jewish culture. What was I still mourning for? In the Reform movement we were sort of taught that we were over it (the destruction of the Temples) by now - which went along with a shifted perspective on how halakha worked.

From [my Eicha/Tisha b'Av intro](#) from 5784:

*It might feel like there's a sort of paradox in a Diasporist Jew like myself mourning the Destruction of the Temple, the end of Jewish rule in Jerusalem, while also being against the continued existence of a formal Jewish nation-state. **But, paradoxes are part of the Divine Nature, as my friend Mazal Mones taught me. To me, it's the same mourning I do for the synagogue where I grew up, the one that taught me how to teach, and then fired me when I came out as trans. It's a deep sadness for what was good about how things were, with a clarity around how broken they were too.** The memory of feeling safe and celebrated, tainted with hard learnings about where safety and support really come from.*

The Talmud sages deeply mourned the loss of the Temple, the Judaism that was – even though their power and authority of Rabbinic Judaism was only possible because of that massive CRASH. But knowing what was good and important about what is lost helps us know what we need to be building toward.

*Punishment or consequences? I still can't tell myself,*

*The three weeks I feel the sadness, Put my music way up on a shelf*

I was raised in the Reform Movement to believe that we'd left the **reward/punishment theology** of Deuteronomy to that past, that we didn't believe it anymore. But as I've gotten more into Talmud, it's something I struggle with more – because **the Rabbis do blame the Jewish people, and NOT Rome or Babylon, for the destruction and exiles** ([Gittin 55b](#) is a major

example of it being our fault). If you go down this road, you need to answer the question “What did we do to deserve the Holocaust?” But you also get to answer the question “What did we do to deserve October 7th?” with a century’s worth of examples of oppression and dehumanization – **actions which have natural and horrifying consequences.**

But how much confidence do I have to point to the Divine Hand in the horrors of the world? What did we do to deserve the new rise of fascism? Or, what have I/we done/not done which this is the natural and horrifying consequences of? I didn’t make the big actions when it was much easier and now I’m rather terrified to do what must be done. This feels like the best I can do most days, offering spiritual connection, pouring late nights into it, and hoping to tap into the opportunities of the season.

*Put an idol in my temple, it was never gonna last.*

*Every year I know more clearly, how our future is our past.*

**An aspect of 17 Tammuz I mentioned earlier, is that, like 10 Tevet and 9 Av, it has attracted additional tragedies.** In addition to the walls, [Mishnah Ta’anit 4:6](#) lists: Moses breaking the tablets when he saw we had made the golden calf; the last daily offering in the Temple (no more sheep in the Roman occupation); “Apostemos burned the Torah” (possibly a Greek general, think Chanukah times); **and [someone, some say Apostemos, some say the Jewish King Manasseh] erected an idol in the Temple.**

That last one felt most compelling of an image for me. **This feels like a time when nearly all of our institutions are being forced into idolatry, or eagerly promoting it –** overcompliance, acquiescence out of fear, nationalisms. But as a scholar of Jewish history and the stories we tell about ourselves, it feels sort of like a mid-Nevi’im **cycle we’re still trapped in,** periods of peace when we get complacent and piss off G☠D enough that the Merciful One sends an oppressor to conquer us – eventually lifting up in every age a hero or sage to come to our aid. We find ourselves resurrected once again in that turning point. May I merit to be able to find any wisdom and pass it along to anyone who can make use of it next time around.

A running question for me and my chevruta Kohenet Molly Block this year: **What was already happening in society that XYZ holiday was layered on to?** For Passover it turned out to be a festival of new grain, where all grain was disposed of at the beginning of the harvest. For Lag BaOmer it turned out to be a pilgrimage time to the graves of the tzaddikim around Pesach Sheni, which was increased in marvel because it was the time when Hillel’s grave would fill up with water – a geological quirk.

It’s possible that we were adopting a sadness from the story of Dmuzi and Innana - after all, that’s why the month is called Tammuz! The multitude of explanations usually makes me think that we were doing our best to Judaize a pre-existing practice. Not that that diminishes the

meaning of the holiday - in fact it speaks to **the power of the day, and its flexibility to meet us in a state of mourning for whatever we have to mourn in our time.**

*Join me in calamity, Lamentations on the floor*

*May the pain that we remember, open our hearts to much more*

A clear image of Tisha b'Av - but with **somber invitation: not to be alone, and not to simply wallow in our own sufferings to the point that we forget the lessons we're supposed to learn from them.** To never inflict on others the pains we have endured. To join with people facing what we have faced, because we know how terrible it is to be isolated and face them alone. We know that the same hand will come for us next, and already is. Just as Sci-Fi is always about the present, our Lamentations about the ancient destruction is also about now, right now, right here.

Explore "For These Things I Weep / על אלה אני בוכיה," a [Tisha B'Av Reader](#), a collaboration of [All That's Left](#) and [Halachic Left](#) - a 5784 commentary on Eicha, with devastating first hand accounts.

*Nigun (to the tune of the Chorus)*

*yum-bye bye-bye yum-bye-yo's*

I feel more satisfied with the **nigun (the wordless melody chant)** in this song than any of the lyrics. It's proper melancholy with a little lift, and the *bye-byes* when I found them had me tearing up. I'm hoping to get a recording of our whole Shabbat minyan singing together, and share that out with the world who might need this song. I am scared of what this Av might attract, and I very very much pray to merit to dance with you in the vineyards next full moon.

## Scraps

The three weeks I feel the sadness, Put my music way up on a shelf

One new/more fruit to eat

## More Links (See also "17 Tammuz Art" tab)

<https://judaism.stackexchange.com/questions/7002/why-should-a-capella-music-be-allowed-during-sefirah-three-weeks>

[https://www.chabad.org/library/article\\_cdo/aid/479885/jewish/The-17th-of-Tammuz.htm](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/479885/jewish/The-17th-of-Tammuz.htm)

[https://www.chabad.org/library/article\\_cdo/aid/5999334/jewish/What-You-Need-to-Know-About-the-Three-Weeks.htm](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/5999334/jewish/What-You-Need-to-Know-About-the-Three-Weeks.htm)

<https://torah.org/torah-portion/weekly-halacha-5773-pinchas/>

## Reflections

from molly - liked the repetition-y the vibe of the tune, felt in the Lamentation chant realm

# RAZM Handout

## Song for the 17th of Tammuz & The Three Weeks

by Olivia Devorah Tucker (www.TalmudMagic.com ~ 5785)

*Nigun:*

*Yum-bye yai-e-yo  
Yum-bye yai-e-yo  
Yum-bye, bye-bye  
Yum-bye, bye-mm-bye-mm-bye*

*Chorus*

I've got one more song to sing  
One last first to bless  
no more wedding rings  
Before the walls fall  
Before the Temple burns

*Verse 1*

Why are you still mourning for this time you don't want back?  
It was never meant to work for us, but still I feel its lack.

Are these punishments or consequences? I still can't tell myself,  
Terrified and drenched in sadness, my music silenced on the shelf

*Verse 2*

Put an idol in my temple, it was never gonna last.  
Every year's another spiral, where our future is our past.

Join me in calamity, Lamentations on the floor  
May the wounds that we remember, open our hearts that much more



60/100  
"The Capture of Jerusalem"  
by Marc Chagall (1956, etching)

**The 17th of Tammuz** is when we **mark the Breaching of the Walls of Jerusalem** – by Babylon around 588 BCE, and then again by Rome c. 70 CE **Three Weeks later, on Tisha b'Av**, in both cases, **the Temple was destroyed. Both days are catastrophe magnets:** 9 Av also marks the expulsion from Spain (in 1492); 17 Tammuz, Moses breaks the tablets when he sees the Golden Calf.

**Traditional mourning practices in this time** are particularly evocative: **1) Not playing or listening to music** (based on Psalm 137); **2) Not doing anything that would require one to say shehecheyanu**, the blessing over first times for something in a year (e.g. eating a new fruit, buying new clothes.) **3) No weddings. Lessen our joy, feel the absence, and exist in the narrow void, all part of the path to repairing a broken world.**



“Unlike Tisha B'Av, which has a finality to it, the 17th of Tamuz invites us to ask what we can prevent. What do we do when we see what is wrong and where it can lead? Octavia Butler explained her prophetic writing this way: "All I did was look around at the problems we're neglecting now and give them about 30 years to grow into full-fledged disasters.”

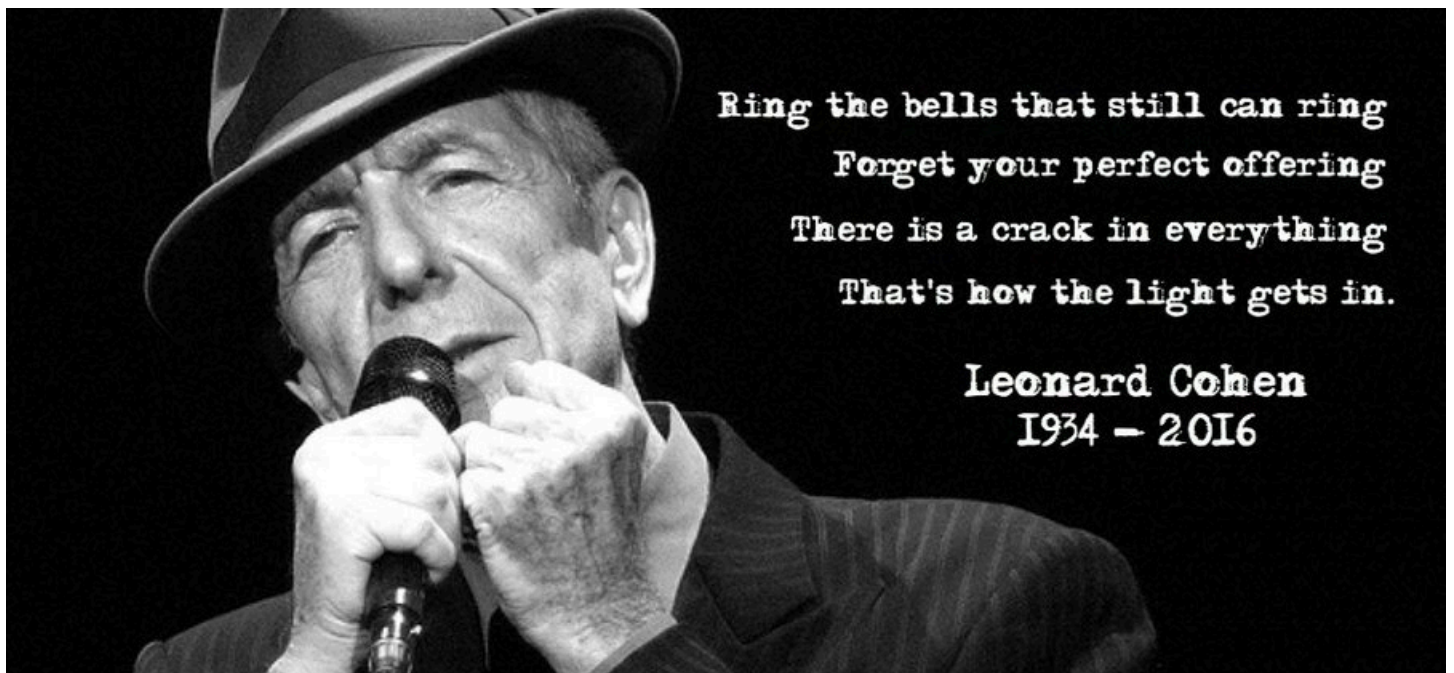
Tamuz asks us to interrupt the course of events and create a different outcome. It's a small leap to call the Earth our temple. The walls of her city have indeed been breached. The question of how to prevent destruction is the most pressing one of our times. Every day we need to remember and mourn, then take responsibility and action. In the busiest, happiest, fullest time of summer, Tamuz urges us to make sacrifices, to grow our collective power, and to change the unacceptable.”

— Maya Amichai, in *Indwelling Dreams of Olam haBa* (5783)

## Reflections

- What state(s) are the practices of The Three Weeks priming us for?
- How might we feel after a month without music? New experiences?
- At Purim we learned to increase our joy in the face of suffering and fear. Now, in the next season, we try to deliberately limit our joy. Why not just feel what we feel?
- What breaches and destructions are you mourning for? Can we imagine repair?
- Our scripture and our sages blame the Jewish people ourselves for the destruction and exiles – framed as retribution from The Holy One in the form of empires (e.g. Gittin 55b). How would they explain: What we did to deserve the new rise of fascism? Or, what have I/we done/not done which this moment is the natural and horrifying consequences of?

- What do we need in order to actually be present with our sadness?



Ring the bells that still can ring  
Forget your perfect offering  
There is a crack in everything  
That's how the light gets in.

Leonard Cohen  
1934 – 2016

# 17 Tammuz Art



Marc Chagall, Capture of Jerusalem, 1956, etching, courtesy Chagall and the Bible, The Jewish Museum, 1987



Archie Rand, *Av*, 1993, oil and enamel painting, courtesy the artist

## Mourning, Memory & Art

<https://richardmcbee.com/writings/mourning-memory-and-art/>

Published: August 8, 2011

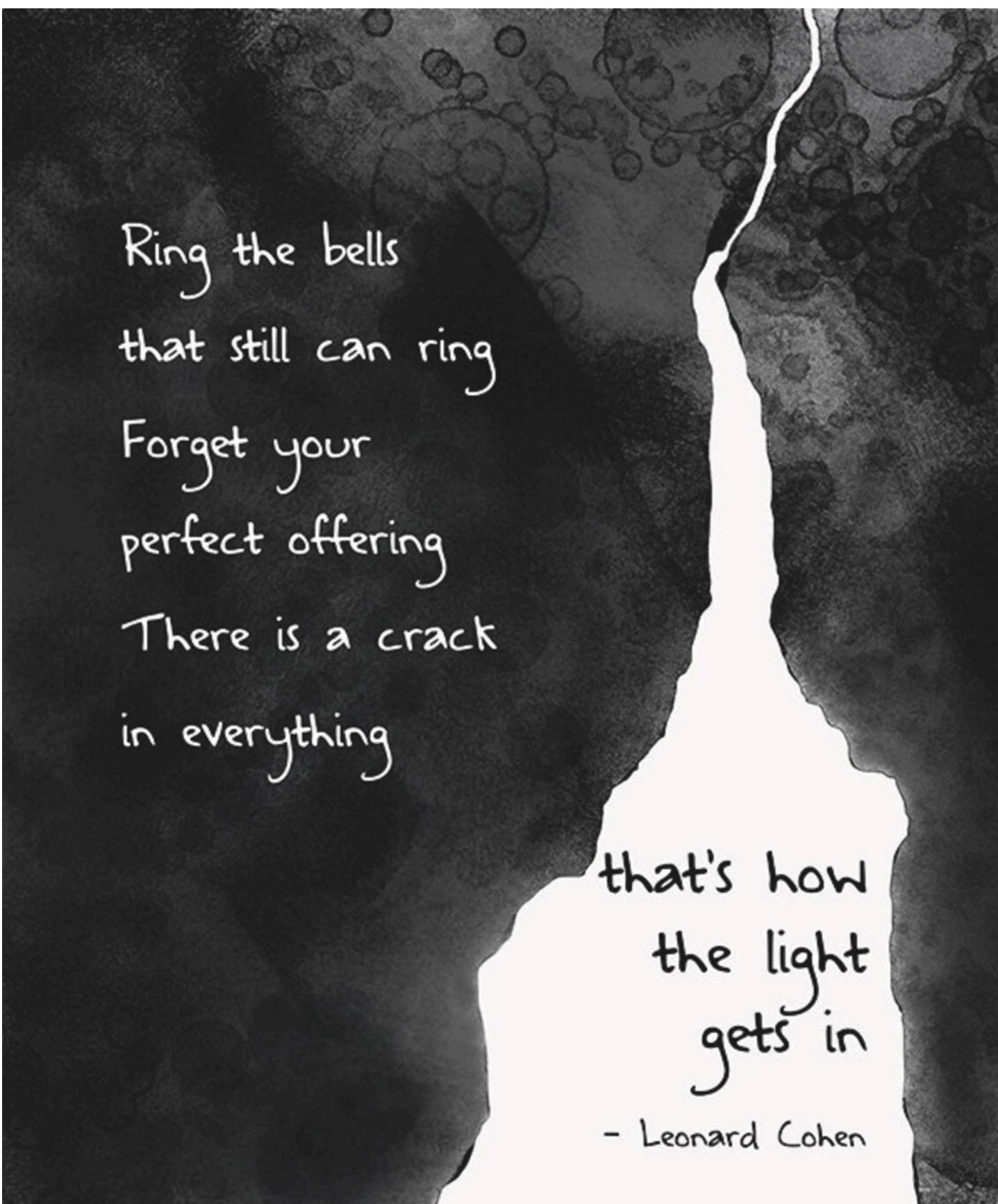
by Richard McBee

David Roberts (1796-1864) was a Scottish painter who in the late 1830's traveled extensively in the Levant and Egypt documenting "Orientalist" sites in drawings and watercolors. Together with the lithographer Louis Haghe, he marketed his work to a public eager for exotic scenes. Queen Victoria was one of his first customers.

Roberts is not the only artist to memorialize visually the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 C.E., an event marked, along with the loss of the First Temple four centuries earlier, on the ninth of the Hebrew month of Av (Tisha b'Av). On this day, which this year falls on August 9, Jews are commanded to mourn their ancient tragedies by fasting, reading the biblical book of Lamentations, and reciting dirges.

In order properly to mourn, one must feel the tangible loss of something cherished and remembered. Words alone are insufficient for the task: it helps enormously to be able to visualize, if only in the mind's eye, that which has been lost. Among Jewish artists, two who have notably attempted to deal with the events are Marc Chagall and Archie Rand. Chagall's *Capture of Jerusalem*, from his 1956 series of etchings drawn from the Bible, cuts to the chase, presenting an anguished angel setting fire to Jerusalem as the Jewish people flee. The artist's insight is unnerving, as if imploring God to answer why such terrible destruction had to be wreaked on His house and His people.

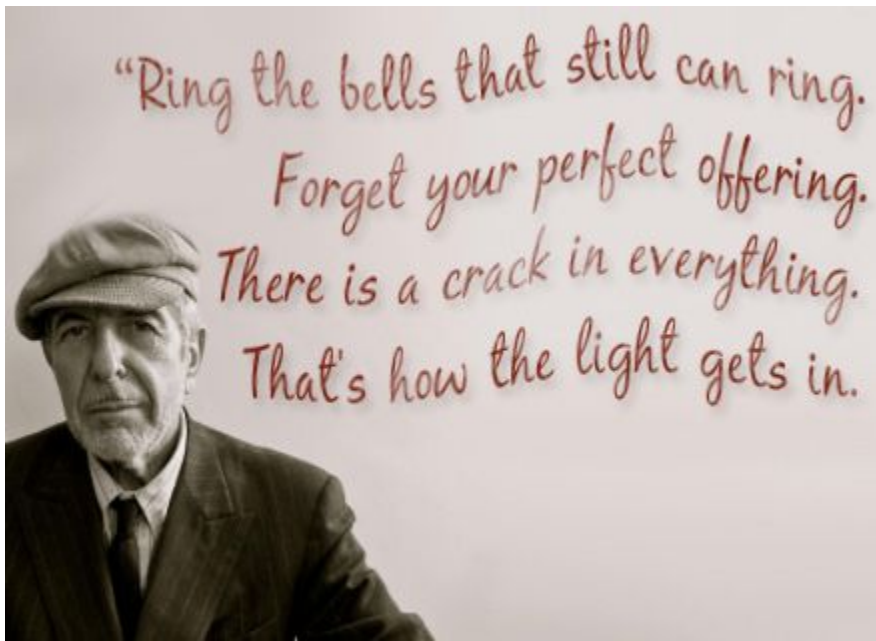
Rand, in *Av* (1993), depicts the prophet Jeremiah exclaiming (in the words of Lamentations) that Jerusalem has "become like a widow": with a dark curtain pulled back, we see the smoldering ruin, fractured with after-images of a grand building devastated and shattered. The painting may not provoke tears of mourning, but it, too, poignantly raises the question of God's justice.



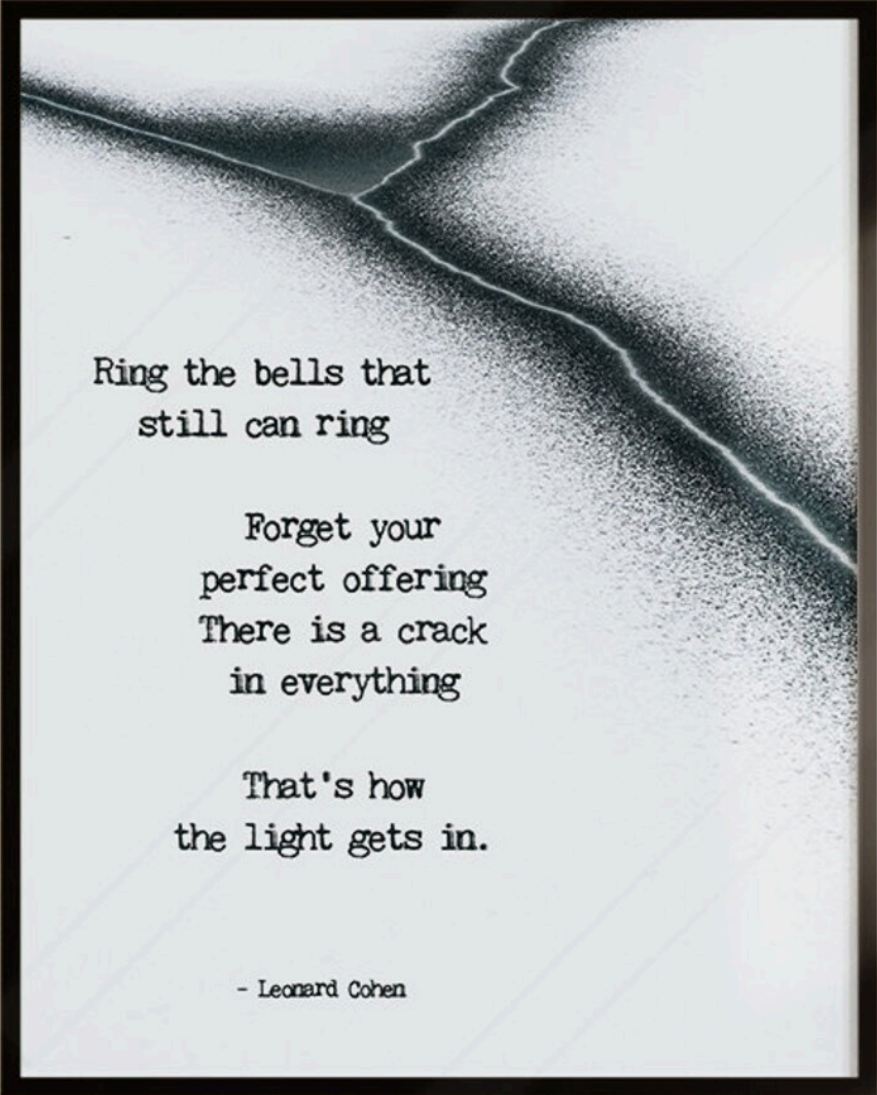
Ring the bells  
that still can ring  
Forget your  
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that's how  
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- Leonard Cohen



<https://www.pinterest.com/pin/255649716323808361/>



Ring the bells that  
still can ring


Forget your  
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<https://www.etsy.com/listing/746998910/leonard-cohen-song-lyric-wall-art-print>

<https://www.poetryverse.com/leonard-cohen-poems/anthem>

 Leonard Cohen - Anthem (Official Live in London 2008)

Ring the bells

THAT STILL CAN RING

Forget your

PERFECT

OFFERING

There is a crack  
IN EVERYTHING

'That's how

the light

GETS IN

*Leonard Cohen*



*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  
That's how the light gets in  
That's how the light gets in*

*"Anthem" Leonard Cohen*

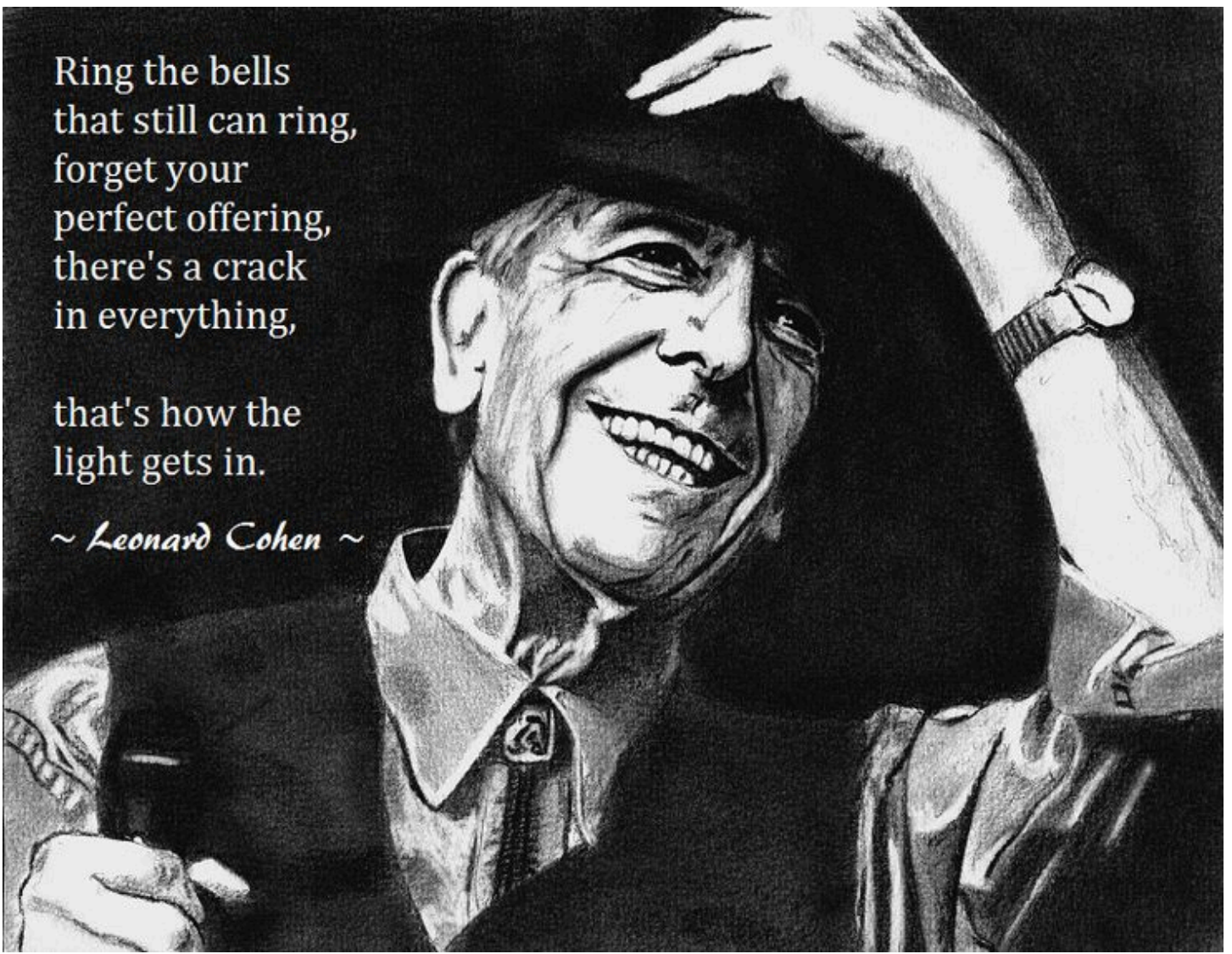
<https://4roomsandthemoon.com/2011/02/09/there-is-a-crack/>

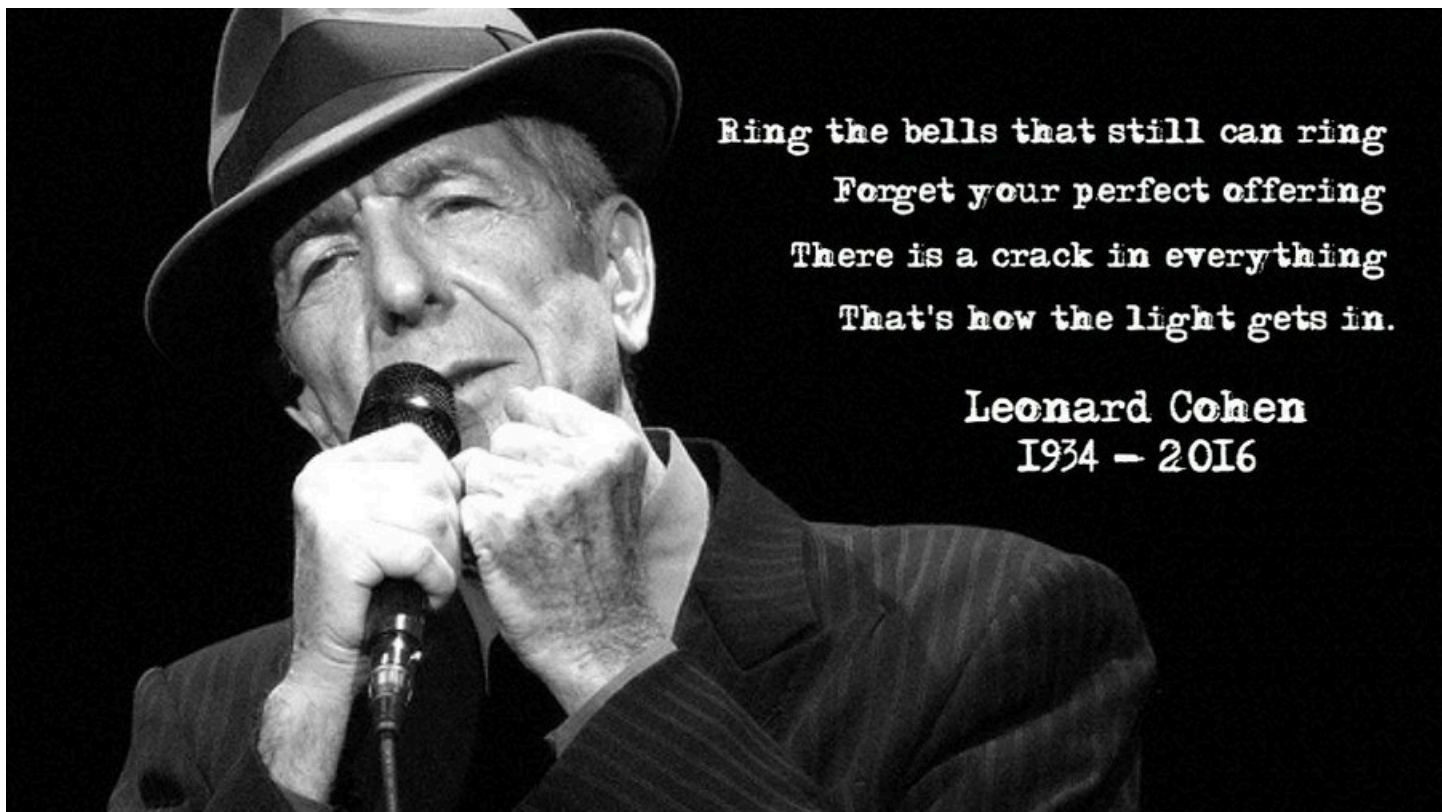
Canvas paper, collage, watercolor, gouache, found paper. 12 in x 7.5 in.

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that still can ring,  
forget your  
perfect offering,  
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~ Leonard Cohen ~





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Leonard Cohen  
1934 - 2016



Avital Sheldo via <https://blogs.timesofisrael.com/reality-check-day-the-17th-of-tammuz-speaking-to-us-today/>



<https://abbykorotney.com/paintings/ice-dance>

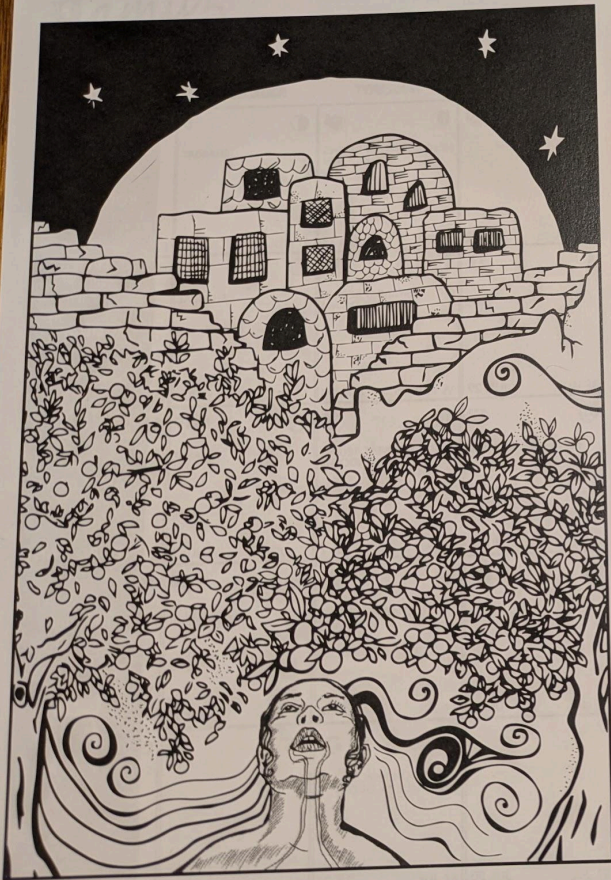
<https://abbykorotney.com/blog/2020/7/7/between-the-straits>



*the Seventeenth of Tammuz* is a drawing by David Baruch Wolk which was uploaded on June 29th, 2021.  
<https://fineartamerica.com/featured/the-seventeenth-of-tammuz-david-baruch-wolk.html>



**"Post 17 Tamuz" – Genrikh Frid (1994)**



**Tamuz: Balancing Oranges on our (collective) Head**  
Maya Amichai

I love the word Tamuz. It sounds soft, full and glamorous. As a kid I renamed Tamuz "Tapuz" ("orange" in Hebrew), invoking images of bright ripe oranges. The month of Tamuz holds the summer solstice (*tekufah*), a time of abundance and endings that will return again. *Tapuzim* (plural in Hebrew for orange) at this time are tiny and green. While many other crops are being harvested, oranges slowly store the sweet sun and water of summer for us to consume in winter. The events of our history in this month include the golden calf, subsequent smashing of the first set of tablets, and later the breaching of the walls of Jerusalem leading us to Tisha B'av. To commemorate the breaching of the walls, the 17th of Tamuz is a fast day. We fast to remember, to mourn, to repent.

Unlike Tisha B'Av, which has a finality to it, the 17th of Tamuz invites us to ask what we can prevent. What do we do when we see what is wrong and where it can lead? Octavia Butler explained her prophetic writing this way: "All I did was look around at the problems we're neglecting now and give them about 30 years to grow into full-fledged disasters." Tamuz asks us to interrupt the course of events and create a different outcome. It's a small leap to call the Earth our temple. The walls of her city have indeed been breached. The question of how to prevent destruction is the most pressing one of our times. Every day we need to remember and mourn, then take responsibility and action. In the busiest, happiest, fullest time of summer, Tamuz urges us to make sacrifices, to grow our collective power, and to change the unacceptable.

Going backward in time to Sinai, we learn from our ancestors' moment of crisis that we need to find and nurture leaders who keep us on track when we stray. While Moses was busy receiving the ten commandments on the mountain, our ancestors waiting at the base built an idol out of gold. Personally I do not mourn the smashing of those first tablets, nor do I blame my ancestors for bowing to beauty. I was among the whiners and complainers, the ones who craved familiarity and fell prey to distraction. I continually learn and relearn to let the past go and to perceive the imperceptible, hold sight of the unseeable. No one ever said transformation was going to be easy. Thankfully, mistakes are not failures. Let's try shit and mess it up, do our best and forgive each other for our worst, work too hard then rest, give

and receive care, write new tablets collectively, and fight gently for our temple. We will take turns being leaders and being led, like graceful (and noisy) migrating birds.

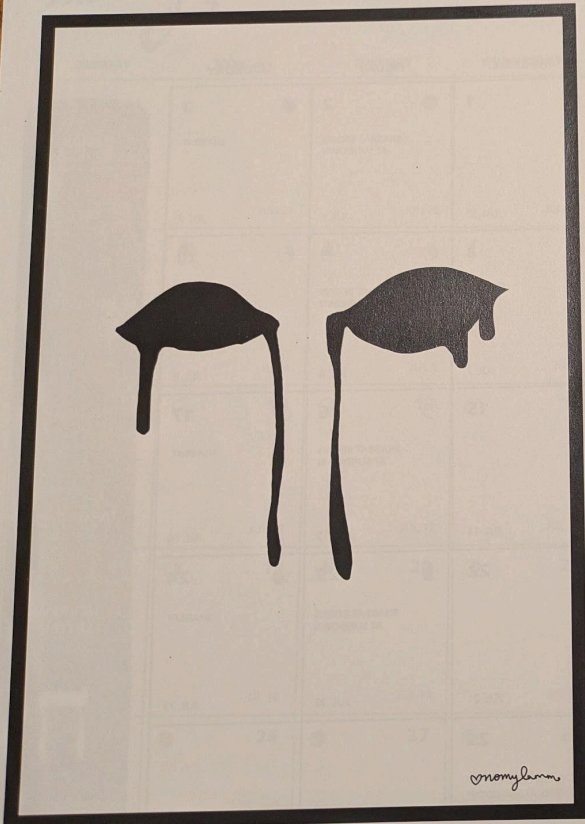
In the beginning of Tamuz, orange trees in California drop hundreds of tiny green fruits from their overburdened branches, allowing space for maturation of the fruits we will get to enjoy. At the same time, the Sun is traveling its longest path across the sky in the Northern Hemisphere, marking the Equinox (*Tekufah*) and the shortening of days.

### **Body movements for the month of Tamuz:**

Stand or sit in a comfortable position, perhaps with your feet pointed forward, legs a little more than shoulder distance apart, knees slightly bent. Hinge forward in a way that is comfortable for your body and release tension. While hanging, shake to release: head, legs, arms, booty, hands, whatever parts are available. You are an orange tree dropping green fruits.

Returning to your natural posture, allow yourself to feel your spine. You may want to slowly roll back up, keeping a bend in the knees and tucking your tailbone. Imagine holding the sun in your hands, bringing its energy into your heart. Move your body in a way that invites the sky and earth back to your center, perhaps with big sweeping rotations, perhaps with subtle intentional movements.

***Maya Amichai** is a daydreamer. Some days they find energy in gratitude, some days they find energy in anger.*



### Tamuz: Eyes Ablaze

In the Northern Hemisphere, the month of Tamuz brings us into the longest days of the year, following the summer solstice. Hot weather, summer daze, sweaty bodies, I love it! But maintaining balance is key. We need to be mindful of the intensity of this time and sensitive to ourselves and others. What does all this energy and length of days stir up in you? What are the spiritual insights and tools we can draw upon during the intensity of this month?

- The zodiac is cancer the crab, Sartin in Hebrew.
- The Hebrew letter for this month is Chet.
- The Seventeenth of Tamuz (*Shivah Asar b'Tamuz*) is observed as a day of mourning and fasting commemorating the breach of the walls of Jerusalem before the destruction of the Second Temple.
- The *Eim*/Mother is the *netivah*/archetype for the month.
- Jealousy and Desire (*Kin'ah*) are associated with this month.

The Lore of Tamuz/Dumuzi: The name of the month was adopted from the Assyrian and Babylonian month *Arah Dumuzu*, named in honour of the Mesopotamian deity Dumuzi. Maimonides recounts the story of Tamuz, a figure associated with the god Dumuzi. Tamuz was labeled a "false prophet" and was killed by a king in his time. After his death, his followers turned his story into a play. Ezekiel mentions that there were regular showings at one of the entrances to the Holy Temple in Jerusalem where the women of Jerusalem would watch the play and weep. Rashi explains that a Tamuz idol was placed near the Holy Temple and was fabricated with eyes made of lead. In the peak of the heat of summer, the idol's eyes would melt and shed tears of lead, which would run down its face.

Desire and sight are attributes associated with the heat of this month. Each month and season of the year has distinct qualities and unique opportunities for growth. During this month of the year we can learn to exercise our sight to see things in a divine light. Contemplating what we really see, not just what we want to see, we can practice setting our sights on seeing the best in ourselves and all around us. The world is filled with glory, our bodies are filled with glory, and even our desires can be filled with glory. Channel desire to experience the sublime, the holy. Check out the ancient love poems of Dumuzi and Innana, whose poetry is said to be a precursor to the Song

of Songs.<sup>1</sup>

Ritual ideas: Built into Jewish daily life are a myriad of ritual artifacts, such as the *tallit*, *mezuzah*, and *hamsa*, intended to remind us of the holy actions we are to set our sights on. A *tallit*, Jewish prayer shawl, or any form of prayer garment can be a visual and tactile reminder of wearing your sacred intentions on your body. When you wrap yourself in this sacred cloth, robe, or shawl recite your sacred intentions and prayers for the day. Get creative by sewing or drawing a symbol of protection on your prayer shawl. As you wrap yourself in the protection of the cloth, gather the fringes, or corners, in one hand and place them before your eyes. Recite the following blessing:

"I am prepared to wrap my body and soul in the light of these fringes. I set my body on a course for accomplishing my mitzvot this day. May this prayer shawl spread its wings over me and protect my essence, my spirit, my soul, and my prayer from external forces. Amen, Selah."

**Amanda Nube** is a kohenet of life cycle priestessing, she serves during times of transition, between seasons and life. For more info visit [www.healingmama.com](http://www.healingmama.com).



### Av: Lamentations and Exaltations

In the month of Av, we face the unloved demon of grief. Our first instinct may be to run for cover. Who, after all, wants to pause their summer vacation or camping trip to go mourn for ancestral traumas dating back thousands of years? But follow the roadmap of the Jewish calendar — in particular, this month — and you will find some wily wisdom. Av takes us deep into the valley of the shadow of death and then up to the mountaintop to make love beneath the full moon. Let me explain.

The first nine days of Av comprise an emotional descent, a commemoration of the destruction of both sacred Temples in Jerusalem and a litany of other traumas that occurred throughout Jewish history. This is a time we might choose to connect with the traumas our own ancestors lived through, and contemplate the residues of their challenges, some of which may have landed within our own bodies and minds.

The nadir of the Jewish calendar is the Ninth of Av, Tisha B'Av, a fast day for practicing Jews the world over. (This year, because the Ninth falls on Shabbat, we observe Tisha B'Av on the Tenth of Av). Sitting by candlelight on bare floors, we give ourselves over to the dirge-like chant of *Eichah*, Lamentations, composed by the Prophet Jeremiah in the 6th century BCE while in Babylonian captivity. And if we don't connect with the destruction of the Temples in Jerusalem, we might let our focus roam to the destruction of another Temple, that of Mother Earth, and the extinction of her glorious species, or any of hundreds of other grievous destructions that the world is enduring today.

Creating containers in time to experience profound sorrow over the meaningless destruction of life in all its forms is a way Jews have learned to preserve their resiliency throughout history. Having endured centuries of discrimination and scapegoating could have been a fatal determinant, utterly debilitating future generations. But this did not occur. It turns out that facing our losses and experiencing grief makes space for us to celebrate heartily when joy finally arrives.

Tu B'Av, the full moon of Av, invites our bawdiness. The Talmud recounts that on this late summer festival young women of all classes would swap their finery, get dolled up, and go into the vineyards to

dance, get lusty, and find lovers beneath the full moon.

Av takes us on a journey into sorrow and then returns us to vivacious living. As the moon waxes in the first part of Av, we sanctify memory and memorialize trauma. But by the full moon, having sat, wept, and fasted, we return to our senses again, and are ready to party.

**Ritual Suggestion:**

Av is Hebrew for father or ancestor. Some have renamed the month Menachem Av (comforting ancestor) or Avlma (Father & Mother). This month, find time to pull out photos of ancestors, light a candle, and gaze. Connect with your ancestors' journeys, their challenges, and how their traumas have been transmitted to future generations. Equally, celebrate them. Thank them for their hard won lessons and resiliency. Feel gratitude for your own life and all its pleasures and opportunities. For you are an answer to their prayers for freedom, betterment, and the possibility of true joy.

**Rabbi Tirzah Firestone, PhD**, is an author, Jungian psychotherapist, and leader in the international Jewish Renewal Movement, and a renowned scholar and teacher who is known for her groundbreaking work on Kabbalah, the re-integration of the feminine wisdom tradition within Judaism, and ancestral healing.



### Building Community Love: Av's Mindful Remembering

Jna Shelomith

By age fourteen I was broken and dried up: heart, bones, dreams. After years of being unhoused, surviving abuse, betrayal, full of rage pointed at myself, I concluded that there was something very wrong with me that should go far away inside. Later that year I heard the words of Ntozake Shange "i found god in myself and i loved her, i loved her fiercely." I tried to listen to the god-voice that might live in my asthmatic lungs or heartbeat. My best friend and I got sober, learned to play guitar, and joined a lesbian separatist witches coven that protested nuclear weapons and patriarchy. From rubble, I began building a lush home: safe and justice-filled.

During the month of Av we acknowledge two holidays. Tisha B'Av commemorates the destruction of the temples thousands of years ago. When the Babylonian Empire destroyed the temple in Jerusalem, we were killed or forced into diaspora. When the temple was destroyed a second time by the Roman Empire, we were forced to assimilate, be put into slavery, or move. Genocide, pogroms, war and assimilation are tools of Empire to rip out our roots and distort our relationship to our bodies and the earth.

Many Zionists use our unhealed pain and fear to validate the existence of colonialist Israel. "If we don't embody the rules of Empire, this will happen to us again." Alone, without allies, we turn our fear into Othering and dehumanization.

Instead, we can act as if we are each other's safety, practicing what bell hooks calls "mindful remembering." Without embodying domination or genocide, building rather than breaking, we can bravely look at the unbearable, mindfully remembering all who have been displaced: by fascist governments, abusive relationships, or because of economic violence and settler colonialism. The more we grieve, the more we release this past pain, the more we can cultivate love-as-an-action for justice and restoration.

Av's invitation is to head into our journey of diaspora together and connected, choosing a love that heals. By bravely facing our broken places and internalized patterns of domination and separation, diaspora becomes a sacred story of travel and reconnection, of adaptation and innovation, of bravery and healing.

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Moving toward Tu b'Av, the holiday of love, we connect with ourselves, listening to places where Shechinah lives in us as we heal. Let us cultivate courage and love from the rubble: no more empire, no more genocide, no more assimilation. I will be fully myself—unassimilated, tender, lush, and full of love.

### **Ritual**

Find a place to reflect, alone or with a friend.

**Center.** Ask your body where the old grief lives? Devastation and broken parts. Acknowledge and welcome these places. What do they ask for?

**Explore.** What song, movie, art, nature spot, memory, or piece of clothing brings joyful tears? Where does so much love help our hearts to crack open, letting the grief out?

**Remember.** What are the strengths of your ancestral communities? What's great about being from these communities? What humanity have you been able to hold onto? Where do you believe the lies of white supremacy or patriarchy? Name who is on this healing journey with you. What tools do you bring?

**Bless** yourself with audacity and gratitude for being brave and truthful—these are acts of love. Right hand out to release. "I release grief and shame. I release how I've internalized limits and lies from past pain." Left hand on a part of your body to receive. "I live in the truth about myself. And this means...."

Give yourself time to integrate, using water, salt and earth as support.

*Jna Shelomith is a Jewish Arab poet, trying to end systemic oppression through crying and laughing (and gf doughnuts) as much as she can.*