

*FROM*  
*TISHA B'AV*  
*TO*  
*TU B'AV*

## **Hearts and Hands to Heaven**

***Let us lift our hearts with our hands to God in heaven.***

### **LAMENTATIONS 3:41**

This selection from Lamentations is more than a statement of faith that is read on Tisha B'Av, which commemorates Jewish historical tragedy, particularly the destruction of the ancient Temples in Jerusalem. Tisha B'Av occurs anywhere from the middle to the end of the summer, depending on when it occurs on the Gregorian calendar. In the playful heat of the summer, it forces us to take serious note of those who have come before us. It has an uncanny way of coloring the entire month in which it falls. The attitude it encourages us to adopt can inform all that we do.

By lifting our hearts to God, we pray that God will direct Divine attention to us. There is more here than turning our hearts to God. By doing so, we are taking initiative. We are not leaving the solution to any problem we may be facing to God. Instead we are enacting our part of the covenant and exercising our responsibility in the partnership.

So take action. Use your own strength and lift yourself up. Then you can be lifted up even more by God.

## **Tisha B'Av**

Historically, Tisha B'Av, the ninth day of the Hebrew month of Av, commemorates the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem and the exile of the Jewish people from the land of Israel.

While the Jewish homeland in Eretz Yisra'el has been rebuilt as the State of Israel, it is still true that Jews, and really most human beings, live in exile.

We have been in exile from the moment we left the Garden of Eden. We were in exile in our many Egypts and while we wandered in the deserts of this world. All of this happened to us and continues to happen to us. Our feeling of God's abandonment is not only a memory, but an ongoing experience despite the existence of the State of Israel. (Strassfeld, A Book of Life, p. 258)

The Rabbis of ancient times and the sages of today understand this time of the Jewish year to be one of spiritual fragility. It is a time when the destructive forces of our lives, the energies arising from the Sitra Achra, the "Other Side" of ourselves, selfishness and conceit, are said to be the strongest in us. The Sitra Achra gets a deep hold on us through negative thoughts and images about ourselves as well as others.

On Tisha B'Av we take pause from the frivolity of summer fun to consider the exiles we impose on ourselves and others. We listen carefully to the words we speak and the thoughts we possess. We distinguish between those words and thoughts that are helpful to our spiritual well-being and those that are not. We make the choice to face the Sitra Achra, our own inner psychological workings that keep us alienated from one another, and to diminish it as we reach out to one another and to God for healing and strength. We sing quietly. We pray. And, we meditate.

### ***All the World is a Narrow Bridge***

*Kol ha'olam kulo gesher tzar m'od. V'ha'ikar lo l'fached klal.*

All the world is a narrow bridge. The main thing is not to fear anything.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GxiFAB2LMLw>

## Lamentations 3:1-9, 21-24

*I am one who has known affliction  
under the rod of God's wrath.  
Me, God drove on and on  
in unrelieved darkness.*

*On none but me, God brings down the divine hand  
again and again without cease.*

*God has worn away my flesh and skin;  
God has shattered my bones.  
All around me God has built  
misery and hardship;  
God has made me dwell in darkness,  
like those long dead.*

*God has walled me in and I cannot break out;  
God has weighed me down with chains.  
And when I cry and plead,  
God shuts out my prayer;  
God has walled in my ways with heavy blocks,  
God has made my paths a maze...*

*But this do I call to mind,  
therefore I have hope.  
The kindness of Adonai has not ended,  
God's mercies are not spent.  
They are renewed every morning.  
Ample is Your grace!  
Adonai is my portion, I say with a full heart.  
Therefore I will hope in God.*

## Tisha B'Av - Guided Visualization

*On this saddest of days.....take a good long sigh.....close your eyes and imagine the Holy Temple standing before you.*

*Now see the Holy Temple in flames.....*

*see Jerusalem ravaged and destroyed.....*

*Hear the screams and cries of our people carried into exile.....*

*Feel what it means to be distraught...*

*broken-hearted and alone...*

*Feel yourself searching for God's comfort and guidance.*

*Take another long sigh...*

*know that pain and grief have existed in every generation.....*

*Recognize the terrible devastation, violence and suffering that fill our world today.....*

*Feel the pain that comes with this recognition.....*

*Allow yourself to cry.....*

*cry for the World, cry for Israel...*

*cry for family and friends.....*

*and cry for yourself.....*

*Through bitter, salty tears hear yourself calling out to God....*

*"Where are You? Where have You gone?"*

*Slowly allow the tears to soften and purify your heart...*

*returning you to God .....*

*and God to you...*

*Feel how the flow of tears softens us and prepares the ground to receive the seeds for new life.....*

*Sense new life slowly emerging from the ashes of destruction.*

*Now hear yourself saying a prayer for the world.....*

*and for yourself if you wish...*

*See your prayers being answered.....*

*When you feel ready.....*

*slowly open your eyes.*

## Let Every Breath Praise God

My God, let me focus not on what my body cannot do, but on what my body can do. Let me give thanks for what still works. Let me hope for what does not work. For no matter what, no matter how my body lapses, my soul, with each breath I take, is like the flicker of a candle within my being.

*Kol han'shamah t'halayl yah, halleluyah!*

As I breathe, may I receive.  
May I be surrounded in the protective glow of Divine light.  
May I allow myself to feel and absorb this Divine presence.

As I breathe, may I receive.  
May it awaken within me the force of my vitality,  
and the strength of my own will.

As I breathe, may I receive.  
May my willingness to believe in my own well-being be enhanced,  
embellished and enriched.  
May my faith in my own healing powers be renewed.  
Weak and strong,  
selfish and selfless,  
learner and teacher,  
prideful and humble,  
believer and non-believer.

As I breathe, may I receive.  
May this love for self merge with God's love and with the love of humanity.

As I breathe, may I receive.  
May I feel this love, acknowledge it, and take it in,  
knowing and recognizing that love and God's presence  
are always there.  
As I breathe, may I receive.  
As I breathe, may I receive.  
(Elaine Gilner Freidman)

## ***Breathing Meditation and Private Reflection***

***Sh'ma yisra'el adonai elohaynu adonai echad.***

***Baruch shem k'vod malchuto l'olam va'ed.***

***Hear O Israel, Adonai is our God, Adonai is One***

***Blessed be God's glorious sovereignty forever.***

***May God heal you, body and soul.***

***May your pain cease,***

***May your strength increase,***

***May your fears be released,***

***May blessings, love, and joy surround you. Amen.***

***(Rabbi Naomi Levy)***

# Prayer

O my God,  
My soul's companion;  
My heart's precious friend,  
I turn to You.

I need to close out the noise  
that separates, isolates...

I need to hear You again:  
In the silence of my innermost being,  
In the fragments of my yearned for wholeness.

I hear whispers of Your presence,  
echoes of the past,  
when You were with me.  
When I felt Your nearness,  
When together we walked,  
When you held me close,  
embraced me with Your love,  
laughed with me in joy...  
I yearn to hear You again.

In Your oneness, I find healing.  
In the promise of Your love, I am soothed.  
In Your wholeness, I, too, can be whole again.

Please listen to my call.  
Help me find the words, the strength within.  
Help me shape my mouth, my voice, my heart.

I can direct my spirit and find in Your prayer,  
in words only my heart can speak,  
in songs only my soul can sing.

Lifting my eyes and heart to You.  
Adonai s'fatai tiftach...  
Open my lips precious God,  
so that I can speak with You again.

(Zimmerman, Sheldon; music arranged by Nancy Fine)

## **Tisha B'Av Day of Distress and Pain**

My high hopes have been brought low, and in place of contentment I feel pain and distress. O God of life, even as you renew the work of creation day by day, so now, help me find renewal in my time of sadness and disappointment. Now, especially, I need the healing touch of Your love. It is written: God is my refuge and my strength, a very present help in time of trouble. (Psalm 46:1) Help me to feel that help. Let Your presence be a light within to dispel the darkness. Let Your nearness, Your silent speech within the heart, be a comfort to me.

I pray for the courage to carry on in the face of disappointment, for the wisdom to learn from adversity, for the strength to build a new and better life. Your spirit can transform affliction into salvation; enlighten me, therefore, that I may look to the dawn of a new day with confidence and trust. May hope abide beyond the moment's loss. For You, O God of hope, are my sustaining power, even when I have fallen. Keep me from self-recrimination. Give me peace of mind and contentment of spirit. Amen

### **Al Tastir**

*Don't hide Your face from me;  
I'm asking for Your help.*

*I call to You;  
Please hear my prayers, O God.*

*If you would answer me  
As I have called to You,*

*Please heal me now.  
Don't hide Your face from me.*

*(Debbie Friedman)*

# Personal Prayers

(Taken from TALKING TO GOD by Rabbi Naomi Levy)

A Prayer for the Ability to Pray Dear God, as I pray day after unpredictable day, may the voice of my soul spring forth from my lips. May I turn to You, God, in tears, in laughter, and in song. And may my prayers be answered.

A Prayer for the Humility to Learn from Others You have filled this world with so many good and wise people. Grant me the humility, God, to seek out many teachers. Give me the courage to ask for help, the ability to distinguish wisdom from folly, the willingness to embrace new thoughts. May my learning lead me to insight, to reverence, to love, and to You.

A Prayer to Find Love Open my heart, God; teach me to remove all obstacles I place in the way of love. Open my mind, God; prevent me from rejecting any person on the basis of superficial flaws. Open my mouth, God; let my words reflect the beauty and wisdom of my soul. Open my ears, God; let me be still so that I can truly hear what others are trying to say. Open my arms, God; give me the strength to be vulnerable, the courage to let down my defenses. Open my eyes, God; help me find the one I have been praying for. Please send me my soul mate, God. Amen.

A Prayer for a Marriage in Trouble It was all so easy at first. We went on instinct, fueled by passion and romance and the excitement of something new. But love has a shelf life, God. Milk goes sour, fruit spoils, and our marriage has grown cold. It never occurred to me, God, that I could be married and alone, married and numb, married and celibate. Help us, God. Show us the way to reclaim all that we once shared. Raise us up out of this rut; save us from pride, from resentment, from temptation. Save us from cruelty, jealousy, and anger. Awaken our desire, God, remove the hurt from our hearts, the boredom from our eyes. Breathe new life into our days, our conversation, our touch, our bed. Give us strength, God, perseverance, resilience, the stamina to fight for our marriage. Bless our efforts, God. Fill our home with Your light; furnish it with warmth, laughter, and peace. Show us the way, God. Lead us on the road back to intimacy, back to meaning, back to hope, back to joy, back to each other. Amen.

A Prayer for Healing from the Pain of Divorce (or loss) I am holding it all together on the outside, God, but inside my heart is crushed. I never imagined the future without him (her). Help me, God. Give me the courage to face the past and to learn from it. Remind me to take the time to grieve for all that is no more. I feel so alone. Be with me, God. Teach me to believe that there is hope for me, that I will find love again. Heal my heart, God. Fill me with the strength to gather up all the broken pieces, and begin again. Amen.

A Prayer When One Suffers a Miscarriage I am crushed, God. Just yesterday I felt so blessed, and now I feel hollow, empty. Why, God? Why did this pregnancy have to end? I know this miscarriage was not my fault, but I still feel as if I failed somehow. I want to be filled with hope once more, God. I want to be filled with life once more. Help me, God. Heal me. Let me begin again. Let life take root inside me once more. Remind me that tomorrow is a new day full of promise and possibility. Lead me, God, on the path back to life, back to hope, back to joy. Amen.

A Parent's Prayer for Wisdom Bless me, God. Infuse my spirit with patience and my body with energy. Send insight to my eyes and affection to my arms. Place understanding in my heart and wisdom on my tongue. Fill my character with integrity and my actions with kindness. May I raise children who will bring blessings to me, to all people, and to You, my God. Amen.

A Prayer for Healing I am sick, God. And I am frightened. I feel so alone. I am scared of doctors. I am scared of pain and uncertainty, of feeling helpless. Be with me, God. Be there when others fail me. Be my strength and my protector. Be my friend. Hear me, God. Heal me, God. Lead me back to strength, God, back to health, back to life, back to You. Amen.

A Prayer when a Child is Ill My child is in need of Your healing powers, God. I am frightened. Help me be strong. Let me not show him (her) any fear. He (she) is my life, God. Please heal him (her). Make him (her) strong, make him (her) well. Send wisdom and compassion to his (her) doctors and nurses. Watch over him (her), God, protect him (her). Heal him (her), God; please hear me, God. Return him (her) to me in health, in strength, and in blessing. Amen.

A Prayer for Spiritual Healing from Depression I remember joy, God, but I can't feel it anymore. Everything seems hopeless and tiresome. I think I've lost my soul. All I have left is this dreary hollow body. The people who love me are trying to help, but I can't seem to find my way out of this darkness. Free me, God. Breathe a new spirit into me. Give me strength. Give me patience. Give me hope. Be with me. Lead me back to joy, back to love, back to life, back to You. Amen.

A Prayer for the Strength to Combat Self-Pity When I am feeling self-pity, God, help me to see beyond myself. When I am feeling despair, restore me to hope. When I shut people out, help me to believe in the healing power of companionship. Remind me that I am not alone, that I am needed, that I am heard, that I am loved. And that You are with me, now and always. Amen.

A Prayer to Combat Envy Soften my hardened heart, God. In my suffering I have grown callous and unforgiving. Secretly, I have been wishing for my friends to fail. But this envy of mine is causing me to fail. Teach me, God, to cherish all that I am, all that I have, all that I have yet to offer. Help me to rejoice in the joy of others even when in pain, to take pleasure in their pleasure, to wish them nothing but blessings and peace. Amen.

A Prayer for the Power to Return from the Depths of Sorrow Teach me always to believe in my power to return to life, to hope, and to You, God, no matter what pains I have endured, no matter how far I have strayed from You. Give me the strength to resurrect my weary spirit. Revive me, God, so I can embrace life once more in joy, in passion, in peace. Amen.

A Prayer for Peace Let us live in peace, God. Let children live in peace, in homes free from brutality and abuse. Let them go to school in peace, free from violence and fear. Let them play in peace, God, in safe parks, in safe neighborhoods; watch over them. Let husbands and wives love in peace, in marriages free from cruelty. Let men and women go to work in peace, with no fears of terror or bloodshed. Let us travel in peace; protect us, God, in the air, on the seas, along whatever road we take. Let nations dwell together in peace, without the threat of war hovering over them. Help us, God. Teach all people of all races and faiths, in all the countries all over the world, to believe that the peace that seems so far off is in fact within our reach. Let us all live in peace, God. And let us say, Amen.

## B'yado

My soul, I give to You, my spirit in Your care.

Draw me near, I shall not fear;

Hold me in Your hand.

Draw me near, I shall not fear; Safely in Your hand.

(Taubman, Craig, arranged from the final verse of Adon Olam)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YEnSYmryvBo>

## Healing

Survival is not healing. Survival is one step on the journey of healing.

Healing is the body and mind's repair -- a processing and integration of the physical or emotional assault that we have survived. On the other side of healing, we emerge, annealed and reshaped, uniquely different from the person who began the journey. Hopefully, we will be completely healed, body and mind, with insight, compassion and wisdom.

Whether we face a surgeon's knife, an ongoing course of chemotherapy, the death of someone precious, a painful divorce, each of us confronts our ordeal as the individuals we are and with the tools we have brought with us.

Ultimately, each of us faces our pain alone. Yet, during the dark moment

We reach out to our family and friends for the loving touch that will re-energize us in our struggle;

We reach within to draw out our own newly found strength;

and We reach inward, outward and upward to seek divine intervention and explanation.

...

Healing is both an exercise and an understanding  
and yet not of the will nor of the intention.

It is a wisdom and a deeper knowledge  
of the daily swing of life and death in all creation.

## Sharing our Journeys of Pain and Healing

### Mi Sheberach Prayer for Healing

May the source of strength who blessed the ones before us  
Help us find the courage to make our lives a blessing  
And let us say Amen.

Bless those in need of healing with r'fu'ah sh'layma,  
The renewal of body, the renewal of spirit,  
And let us say, Amen.

(Debbie Friedman)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HSUAXQIfv8A>

## The Priestly Benediction

We ask for blessings for one another. Please add any personal words you wish to offer.

Y'varech'cha Adonai v'yish'm'recha  
*May God bless you and keep you.*

Ya'er Adonai panav aylecha vichunecha  
*May the light of God be reflected through you.*

Yisa Adonai panav aylecha v'yasem l'cha shalom.  
*May the Beauty of Creation be lifted towards you, and may you be filled with peace.*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c1-4gLkz2jY>

## The Angels Blessing All Around Us, Shechinah

*Miy'mini Micha'el  
Umismoli Gavri'el  
Umil'fanai Uri'el  
Umi'achorai R'pha'el  
V'al roshi Sh'chinah.*

May our right hand bring us closer to our Godliness.  
May our left hand give us strength to face each day.  
And before us may our visions light our paths ahead.  
And behind us may well-being heal our way.

All around us is Shechinah.

(Debbie Friedman)

## Taking our Leave from Tisha B'Av

We never leave Tisha B'Av without filling our souls with a dose of what the ancient rabbis called *nechemta*, comfort.

Yes, we suffer. Yes, our bodies and minds break down now and then. Yes, we age and it gets harder to move and to remember things that once seemed so important.

But understanding that life itself is a great gift and that even death is simply a part of life, we can cultivate gratitude. We can recognize the Source of all Being as our God. We can find strength in our camaraderie and the sharing of our challenges and pains along the journey of our lives. We can come to understand that the very fact that we are unites us to one another and to the Eternal wellspring of all being.

### Lamentations 3:55-58

*I have called on Your name, O Adonai,  
from the depths of the Pit.*

*Hear my plea,  
Do not shut Your ear  
to my groan, to my cry!*

*You have ever drawn nigh when I called You;  
You have said, "Do not fear!"  
You championed my cause, O Adonai,  
You have redeemed my life.*

### Oseh Shalom

*Oseh shalom bimromav  
hu ya'aseh shalom alaynu  
v'al kol yisra'el, v'imru amen.*

*May the One who forms peace in the highest portion of the  
heavens, be a source of peace among us, Israel and all  
humanity. And we say: Amen.*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=scbPrzCicLk>

## TU B'AV

Just when you thought the heaviness was too thick to bear, and the deep sadness was too much, Tu B'Av rolls around. It is sometimes referred to as Jewish Valentine's Day, although Tu B'Av predates Valentine's Day by centuries, if not millenia. It's an old trick of the Hebrew calendar — pump up the contrast. This time, we flow straight from the saddest time of the year into one of the happiest.

The celebration of Tu B'Av falls on the full moon of Av. According to ancient custom, women dress all in white and run out and dance all night under the full moon, flaunting their moves for prospective mates and celebrating love at the best lunar dance party there ever was. Apparently, many marriages got their starts on Tu B'Av, when people joined together, found joy, and got a lil' freaky.

The Hebrew calendar is beautifully designed. Summer builds in heat, intensity, and light...and then boils over in grief. Then comes a respite to laugh, smile, dance, and play in the moonlight. The first half of the Av, when the moon is waxing, is a time to delve deep into the innermost corners of the soul, to the dark places in which we know the Divine dwells. This year, the full moon shines on August 3rd on the Roman calendar.. During this time, we feel the brokenness in the world and investigate how it shows up inside of ourselves.

After that hard work, the tides turn. It's time to love and celebrate joyously. Let laughter flood your heart. Why do these holidays, so opposite in nature, come in such close proximity to one another? Well first off, Jewish teachings say there's always light in the darkness and, in the case of these summer months, darkness in the light. Jewish spiritual heritage also says that in order to feel whole, we must know what it is to feel broken. We

experience the brokenness of our souls, meet it with courage, acceptance, and humility, and turn that knowledge into something beautiful, unbreakable, and bright.

As a high contrast, the second half of the Av is about meeting the souls of others. All is revealed: It's the inner work of the first half of the month that allows us to be better partners in the exterior world. Because we've encountered the innermost regions of our own hearts, we can offer more empathy, connection, and ease in our love of others.

## HEART MEDITATION FOR AV

Leora Fridman (the creator of this guided meditation) is an interdisciplinary artist, ritualist, and educator living in the Bay Area. Find out more at [leorafridman.com](http://leorafridman.com).

Sit quietly, and close your eyes if you feel comfortable doing so. If you don't want to close your eyes, just keep your gaze soft and gentle. Scan through your body, just noticing what's there right now. Are there any points of tension, tenderness, calm or numbness? What is your breath like right now? Just feel what's there from your head to your fingertips, from your belly to your toes.

After you've scanned for a few moments, bring your attention to the center of your chest, to your heart space. What do you feel there? What do you notice? Warmth or coolness, numbness or tightness? Whatever's there is okay.

Keeping your attention at your heart space, imagine there's a small fire at the center of your chest, your heart fire, the fire of your capacity for connection, intimacy and compassion. Picture that small bonfire in the center of your chest. With each in-breath, watch the fire rise, and with each out-breath imagine you're blowing on the fire gently, giving it oxygen, feeding it. Breathe in, watch the fire rise. Breathe out, blow on it gently to feed it. Do this for a few moments, keeping your attention on the fire and allowing it to build or shrink as it may.

Keeping the fire in your chest, bring to mind one thing that's hard for you or for someone you love right now, and bring it into your chest. Let it sit by the fire. Know that this fire is the fire of compassion, intimacy, care, and love. Whatever you bring to the fire of love is fuel for that fire — it only creates more love, more compassion. Let the hardship meet the fire and be transformed into compassion, compassion for you or someone you love, compassion for the suffering that is around us. You can bring whatever you want to the fire. Whatever you bring there is transformed into compassion and love. Breathe in and out, watching what happens to the fire as you bring hardship there, as you bring breath there, as you focus on the fire.

In the last few moments, you can let the fire die down. There's no need to bring effort to it; just observe. Before you open your eyes to consider Av with your circle, feel what's there in the center of your chest. Let it accompany you as you dive into this month of loss and love. Whether you notice it or not, your heart fire will be here

## Design your own Ritual for Mindful Loving

Ritual helps us navigate the ephemeral and makes concrete that which is theoretical, or passing. We use Big Rituals to guide us through life's major milestone events (beginnings, endings, transitions, death, etc.). We use ritual to ground us in the present moment and to make significant that which would otherwise be fleeting. There's power in those big moments of shift, but perhaps an even more potent power in elevating mundane, day-to-day tasks from routine to Ritual.

In this exercise, we'll uncover the power of the Little Rituals that we already do on a daily basis in order to grow in love (of the self and others) so that there's no place for the destructive power of senseless hatred in our minds or bodies.

1. Sit with a partner and take turns describing the unfolding of an average day in your life. Make particular note of anything that you do on a daily basis (brushing your teeth, making the bed, preparing food, walking the dog), the more mundane the better.

2. Partners will then ask the following questions:

- With what attitude do you typically approach these tasks?

- How do you feel on days when you forget, or otherwise aren't able to complete these tasks?

- If you could get rid of one of these tasks per day, which would it be?

- If you could luxuriate in/take your time with one of these tasks, which would it be?

3. Partners offer help in reflecting upon which of these daily routines could be elevated from “task” to “Little Ritual” for the month of Av. Some thoughts to consider as you choose:

- Which of these tasks is particularly grounding (helps me get out of my head and into my body)?
- Which is particularly softening (helps me to relax and ease up on the controls)?
- Which helps me be more loving to myself (bonus points if mind, body, and soul are more easily aligned within one particular task.)

4. RITUALIZE IT: Every day, for the month of Av, turn this task into a ritual. Do it with regularity and with the care you would afford a Big Ritual. You might want to consider a sensory change to your space as well (dim or brighten the lights, burn some incense, play some soft music, make music of your own).

At the end of Av, we begin preparations for the High Holy Days. Let this month of Little Rituals ground and expand your heart center as you navigate the rocky emotional terrain of Av. Making a Little Ritual will help you increase your love of yourself and others, and better prepare you for the soul-accounting to come with the next New Moon.

## GET CREATIVE, GET EXPRESSIVE: A Love Letter to Yourself ABOUT LOVE

Love. The greatest experience of all, meant to be explored every day. From best friends to lovers and everyone in between, we spend so much time and energy giving love. And sure, we women are GREAT at nurturing others; but we often forget, avoid, or neglect to do a pretty important thing: love ourselves. No matter your age, place, race or space, you are amazing, capable, special, wise, and caring, even if you suffer from the worldwide epidemic many women struggle to overcome: never feeling good enough. The truth is that you are exactly enough. You are enough of everything in this very moment. You need nothing else, except of course to believe and accept your 'enoughness' as truth. Because once you allow these feelings to pulse from within you, you'll find that you are, in fact, a source of powerful love. Today, take love into your own hands — and heart — and show some love to yourself, sister! You effin' deserve it!

**ABOUT THE TASK** When we express ourselves through writing, we get the chance to put our heart on paper. We tap into our deepness and exhale with words. Words are powerful. How we speak to ourselves is important and often we're pretty nasty and mean to ourselves, in shorthand and privately inside our own heads. Writing yourself a love letter is a great place to BYOB. Yes, a bottle of wine can help you get lovey dovey, but in this case, BYOB stands for something different: "Be Your Own Bestie." This exercise offers an opportunity to treat yourself like you would your best friend – with unconditional support and kindness.

**WHAT TO DO** Get out a piece of paper and a pen. Complete this task by yourself. After you write yourself a love letter, seal these letters tight and read them at the next gathering (or at every gathering!). You could also carry the letter with you and read it whenever you need an instant boost of love. Another option: trade your envelope with a partner and promise to mail it to each other in the next couple of months.

### **PROMPTS FOR YOU**

Darling dearest YOU,

- I'm writing because...
- I love you because...
- I appreciate you because...
- I am proud of you because...
- You should feel accomplished because...
- \_\_\_\_\_ makes me feel happy because...
- You are freaking awesome because...
- You are beautiful because...
- You are unlike anyone else because...
- I'm thankful to you because...

What I wish for you is...

- Let's make a date to...

**JUST IN CASE** If you feel hesitant to write to yourself, or find this show of love challenging, here are a few ways to jumpstart your self-love.

- Gaze into your eyes in the mirror for 5 minutes.
- Take as long as you need to sit still and connect with your heartbeat.
- Pretend you're your own secret admirer. Or, channel your inner best friend.

## Personal Journal Questions:

If your tears could speak, what would they say that they cry for?

- What's the biggest heartbreak of your life? How did it feel? How did you find wholeness in your heart again after? •
- What's the hardest thing about love? What is the hardest thing about self-love?
- What is wholeness to you?
- How do you understand the connection between destruction and love?

*And in the end*

*The love you take*

*Is equal to the love*

*You make*

*The Beatles*

*To love another person is to see the face of God.*

*Les Miserables*

*5 Minute Feel Love Meditation*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d1agZSg7Rk0>

## *T'filat Haderech*

*May we be blessed as we go on our way.*

*May we be guided in peace.*

*May we be blessed with health and joy.*

*May this be our blessing, Amen.*

*Amen, amen. May this be our blessing, Amen.*

*Amen, amen. May this be our blessing, Amen.*

*May we be sheltered by the wings of peace*

*May we be kept in safety and love.*

*May we be blessed with health and joy.*

*May this be our blessing, Amen.*

*Amen, amen. May this be our blessing, Amen.*

*Amen, amen. May this be our blessing, Amen.*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0oCWI1DY25E&list=RD0oCWI1DY25E&index=1>

### Notes:

1. Almost all of the readings for Tisha B'Av are from "A Healing Service for Tisha B'Av: from Temple Chai in Phoenix, AZ"
2. The Guided Visualization for Tisha B'Av is from *Reclaiming Judaism*
3. All of the readings for Tu' B'Av are from *At the Well: Month of Av*