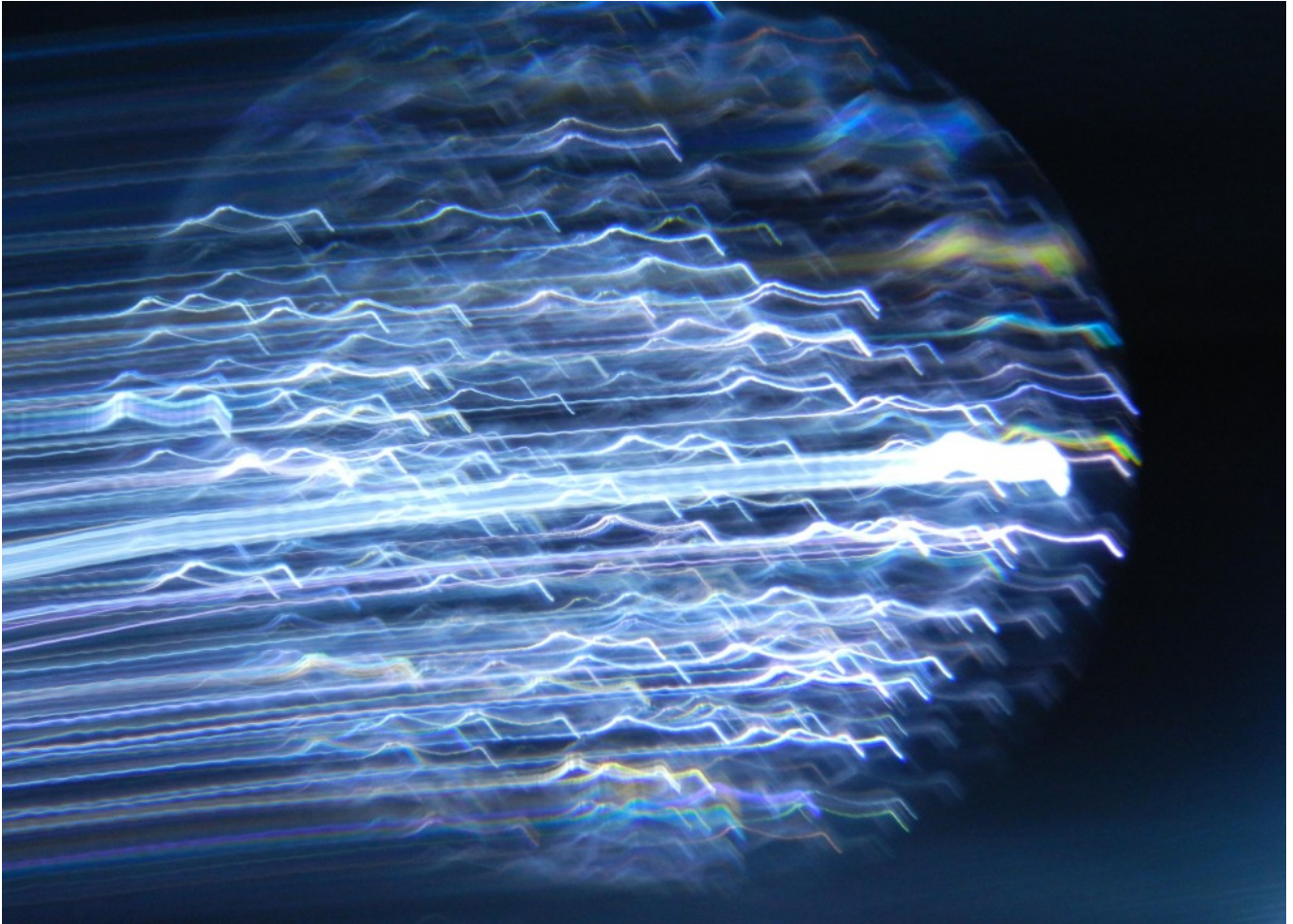


Between The Hardships

written by Yehudis Golshevsky

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A Sacred Time – Tammuz #5

“All of her pursuers caught her between the straits.”

The seventeenth of Tammuz is the beginning of a difficult three-week period for the Jewish people that only ends after the ninth of Av. The walls of Jerusalem were breached on the seventeenth of Tammuz; it is exactly forty days after the sixth of Sivan, when Moses first ascended on high to receive the Torah. It was the day that Moses was slated to descend Sinai with the first set of tablets; on that very day we made the Golden Calf. What could be more appropriate than to mark with fasting and repentance this day that witnessed these and

other tragedies?

This period of hardship is known as the Three Weeks, or "*Bein Hameitzarim*"—"Between the Straits." The Arizal points out that when the word for strait or difficulty "*meitzar*" is reversed, it spells *tzemer*, wool. Reb Nosson, z"l, explains that when a difficult experience or time is used to draw us closer to G-d, it transforms the difficulty into an advantage. Wool is soft and it warms. Kabbalistically, wool alludes to kindness. But how can we use the difficult experiences or times that tend to generate panic and despair to improve?

Reb Nosson explains that one must first focus on the good points. Each strand of positive, no matter how insignificant it feels, is actually another thread woven into a tapestry of goodness. The more I connect to my good points, the more I am able to cry out to G-d: "Please let there be light in my darkness!"

When we are positive enough to keep crying out despite our pain, "Between the Straits" becomes "Between the Strands" and we are surrounded with kindness.