“Everything is Broken”

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from the album *Oh Mercy*

**Everything**. In brief, Luria proposed that before creation G-d’s presence filled all space. In order to make room for the world, G-d had to withdraw from a finite amount of space… Into this newly created void, G-d then shone (or emanated) a ray of light that arranged itself into the shape of the primordial human archetype…. This macro human contained the seed for all subsequent creation, the souls of every creature yet to be born To contain the light, G-d prepared vessels (*keilim*), but at this juncture a catastrophe happened. G-d had underestimated the power of the light, and the lower seven of the ten vessels shattered! This cataclysm Luria called *shevirat ha-keilim*, “the breaking of the vessels.” Instead of an orderly and perfect creation, the result was our present world: a heap of broken shards, or *kelipot* – each containing sparks or *nitzotzot* of original divine light. (R. Lawrence Kushner, *The Way Into Jewish Mystical Tradition*)

**Broken lines, broken strings
Broken threads, broken springs
Broken idols, broken heads
People sleeping in broken beds
Ain’t no use jiving, ain’t no use joking
Everything is broken

Broken bottles, broken plates
Broken switches, broken gates
Broken dishes, broken parts
Streets are filled with broken hearts
Broken words never meant to be spoken
Everything is broken

Seem like every time you stop and turn around
Something else just hit the ground

Broken cutters, broken saws
Broken buckles, broken laws
Broken bodies, broken bones
Broken voices on broken phones
Take a deep breath, feel like you’re chokin'
Everything is broken

Every time you leave and go off someplace
Things fall to pieces in my face

Broken hands on broken ploughs
Broken treaties, broken vows
Broken pipes, broken tools
People bending broken rules
Hound dog howling, bullfrog croaking
Everything is broken**

**Broken idols**. Terach was a worshipper of idols. Once he had to travel somewhere, and he left Abraham to sell them in his place… A certain woman came with a dish full of flour in her hand. She said to Abraham, “Take this and offer it to them [as a sacrifice].” Abraham rose and took a club in his hands and broke all the idols. Then he place the club in the hands of the biggest idol.

When his father returned, he asked, “Who did all this?” Abraham replied, “I cannot hide it from you. A woman came carrying a dish of flour and told me to offer it before them. I did, and one of them said, ‘I will eat it first,’ and another said, ‘I will eat it first.’ The biggest one rose, took a club, and smashed the rest of them.” Terach said, “Are you fooling with me? They have no thought processes!” Abraham said, “Let your ears hear what your mouth is saying!” (Midrash *Bereishit Rabbah* 38:13)

**Things fall to pieces in my face.** Concerning the study of Torah… [a person’s intention must be] to link his/her soul and bind it to its supernal source by the means of Torah. And his/her intention must be to achieve thereby the restoration of the “primordial Adam” – the “supernal *anthropos*” – which is the ultimate intention of the creation of humanity and the goal of the commandment to study Torah…. As when studying Torah, a person must intend to link his/her soul and to unite it and make it cleave to its source above… and she/he must intend thereby to perfect the supernal Tree [of Life] and holy *anthropos.* (R. Chayim Vital, *Sha’ar HaMitzvot,* based on the teaching of the Ari, R. Yitzchak Luria)

**Broken bodies.** A certain philosopher once asked Rabbi Hoshaya, “If circumcision is so precious to G-d, why wasn’t Adam born that way?” [R. Hoshaya answered,] “Everything that was created in the first six days requires completion [Heb. *tikkun*]. For instance: mustard needs sweetening, vetches need sweetening, wheat needs to be ground into dough, and even a person needs *tikkun*.” (Midrash *Bereishit Rabbah* 11:6)