

The Winter Solstice Weeping Goddess: One Winter Blues Sufferer's Experience

(Excerpted from the last section of Part 2 of musical essay for "The Winter Blues")

An excellent modern example of reclaiming the sacred mysteries of the archaic festival of Winter Solstice comes from writer Aviva Joseph and her essay, "Re-Membering Her: The Weeping Goddess."

It seems that Aviva might be suffering from a particularly severe case of SAD (Seasonal Affective Disorder), which was the subject of the first section of this essay. Her sudden depression leads to an experience of an "altered state of mind" or waking dream of a figure she calls "The Weeping Goddess." Aviva's experience of this seasonal depression ("all I find is a sense of emptiness") is framed in a classical movement of descent, of moving down into an underworld like Persephone ("kidnapped by Hades"), and the images she records come as a sort of automatic writing. . . .

After researching her experience, Aviva is surprised to discover that "the image of the tearful numinous Mother, appearing as a Goddess, or as common women in myths and fairytales, is ancient and widespread around the world. She came to be known as the 'Weeping Goddess' . . . in various fields as archeology, anthropology, sociology and theology." Besides citing the archeologist Samuel Kramer's 1982 book, *The Weeping Goddess*, she also cites another book, *Crying: The Natural and Cultural History of Tears*, which mentions various goddesses associated with weeping and tears. She identifies many of these "weeping goddesses" from the mythology of the Sumerians, to the Egyptians, to the Greeks, to the Hebrew Shekhinah, noting that many scholars contend "the image of the Weeping Goddess is a favorite recurrent

motif in the Sumerian dirges and laments.” She also cites the example of how “Goddesses’ tears” revive their dead husbands/brothers, including the Egyptian Goddess Isis, whose name originally meant “she who weeps,” revives the dismembered Osiris through her weeping, a flow of tears that also gives life to the Nile River. Given all this, she decries the fact these “weeping goddesses” have been ignored in monotheistic and patriarchal religion. Aviva comes to interpret her experience and its images from the “depth psychological perspective,” by which she means the Jungian perspective. She writes: “The reoccurring image of the Weeping Goddess through time and place is an archetypal image expressing a primordial force in humanity’s collective unconsciousness.” Here, I think Aviva is referring to what the Jungians call feminine archetype, or anima, the psychic function that mediates between the unconscious and conscious mind. According to Jung, she explains, these archetypal images “can be found everywhere and at all times.” They occur in folklore, myths, as well as in the dreams, visions, and delusions of modern individuals entirely ignorant of all such traditions. She stresses that it is of great importance that these images are brought into consciousness, because, quoting Jung, “These archetypal images . . . are instrumental symbols with whose help unconscious contents can be channeled into consciousness, interpreted, and integrated.” Failing this, Jung warns that their energy gets redirected into pathological phenomena—phobias, obsessions, crazes; social, religious, or political perversions. . . .

Aviva comes to understand that the experience of facing the glass mirror was “a personal and collective manifestation of an image that is asking to be revealed, to create bridges into consciousness” These “bridges” enable the effects of the archetypes reach consciousness and, she observes, these bridges are mythological images and ideas that already exist religious traditions. These activated archetypes are charged with numinosity and do not

manifest in consciousness in a meaningless mechanistic form but, as Jung tells us, the psyche has telos, a purpose. Again, if these bridges are not accessed, the archetypes will find negative ways to manifest as personal and collective pathologies. But it should be pointed that even here the ego has a chance for integration, since Jung has also observed that in the modern materialistic world the “gods have become diseases,” which means that this is apparently the only way left for them to gain attention and manifest their power. So given this and my previous citation (from Jungian archetypal psychologist, James Hillman) about the gods reaching us through afflictions, we can rephrase Aviva’s interpretation of Jung to warn that if we do not acknowledge that even pathological states of the psyche have a purpose and are symptomatic of the need for the integration of archetypal unconscious contents, then they surely become nothing but destructive. . . .

If Aviva’s Winter Solstice depression had been treated with pharmaceutical drugs instead, which are prescribed under the assumption that the pathologies of the psyche are purposeless and not a part of the psyche’s organic attempt to achieve integration, then she certainly would have missed out on meeting the Weeping Mother-Goddess archetype. And this is why the rituals of ancient peoples were so important, they constellated the community’s collective consciousness in a meaningful direction and acknowledged and paid tribute to the forces outside and inside that were not under the control of the ego. This is also why, in my discussion of Babylonian ritual, I related that was believed to be essential that human beings should share the universal sorrow caused by the death of a god, especially the sun-god. If they remained unsympathetic, the deities would bring them misfortune. By observing their ritual, the worshippers won the sympathy and co-operation of deities. But today, at least in the so-called advanced Western world, we have no use of these antiquated ceremonies and, for the most part, replace them either with nationalistic ones or

commercialized ones. This is the reason I have presented this information about Winter Solstice rituals in the ancient world and in traditional societies today. And it is also why I have concluded my essay with the personal stories of two individuals who are part of a trend in the modern world to reclaim some of the ancient ways. In lieu of a collective participation in the life of ritual, it seems each individual must find a connecting link back to the world of the mythic archetypes. And there is one great archetype being experienced in various forms by many women today. Aviva Joseph calls the feminine archetype “The Weeping Mother,” or “Shekhinah.”

This information that Aviva has presented about the “Weeping Goddess” reminds of my discussion of one of the original sun-gods of Near-East mythology, Tammuz, who was brought back from the underworld by the weeping of his mother and spouse, the Great Goddess Ishtar. In fact, since the full title of Kramer’s book is *The Weeping Goddess: Sumerian Prototypes of the Mater Dolorosa*, where he calls attention to the presence of this “weeping mother” motif throughout Sumerian literature, there’s a very good chance that one of these “Weeping Goddesses” is none other than Ishtar, of whom I have already cited as instituting the first “wailing ceremony” for the dead sun-god, Tammuz. (Kramer, the world’s foremost Sumerologist, has searched through Sumerian literature for passages that portray the role, character, and behavior of the “weeping goddess.”) I would suggest that this goddess was probably the original “weeping goddess,” who, through her descent into the underworld and the power of her tears, saves the sun-god Tammuz. If this is true, then Aviva has made a similar *transformative descent into the underworld and met this mother-goddess—the Weeping Goddess*.

The Weeping Goddess, Weeping Deities, & Weeping Saints

For the Babylonians, the son-god Tammuz was the symbol of death and rebirth in nature. In cult practice, the dead Tammuz, or Dummuzi, was widely mourned on the Winter Solstice in the ancient Near East. Thus, the women weeping for Tammuz were participating in the annual Winter Solstice ritual, in which *weeping was believed to have the power to bring back the sun*. . . . This Babylonian Winter Solstice ritual of mourning and weeping for the dead sun-god was initiated by the fertility goddess Ishtar, the amorous Queen of Heaven. The *weeping ritual* was part of the religion of Mesopotamia, which was centered around the worship of the Great Goddess, or Queen of Heaven, Ishtar, and her son/consort, Tammuz.

(Excerpted from Part 2 of musical essay for “The Winter Blues” to serve as an introduction to this section.)

Among the gods of Babylonian mythology, none achieved more enduring fame than Tammuz. From the earliest times of which we have knowledge until the passing of Babylonian civilization, he played a prominent part in the religious life of the people. As an agricultural, fertility deity (like his Egyptian counterpart, Osiris), he was one of the first dying-and-resurrected sun gods—as the youth who perished annually, he was the corn spirit. However, Tammuz was most known as the god loved by Ishtar, the amorous Queen of Heaven—the beautiful youth who died and was mourned for and came to life again.

He is referred to in the Bible by his Babylonian name. (Tammuz’s Sumerian name was Dummuzi.) So popular was this Winter Solstice ritual that we find it even being observed in the prophet Ezekiel’s day among the Israelites. When Ezekiel detailed the various idolatrous practices of the Israelites, he was brought “to the door of the gate of the Lord’s house, which was towards the north; and, behold, there sat women weeping for Tammuz.” What Ezekiel witnessed was the annual Babylonian *weeping ceremony* that

was connected with agricultural rites. Corn deities were weeping deities, who shed fertilizing tears. The sowers simulated the sorrow of divine mourners when they cast seed in the soil “to die,” so that it might spring up as corn. Actually, this ancient custom contributed to the poetic imagery of the Bible. David sings in Psalm 126:6: “He who goes out weeping, carrying seed to sow, will return with songs of joy, carrying sheaves with him.” (This same imagery appears in the New Testament when another dying-and-resurrected god relates the parable of the seed to his disciples: “Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.” John 12:24. KJV).

Yet this ancient ritual, perhaps over 5000 years old, was not only practiced by the Babylonians, it was also a part of the agricultural rituals of the other Mesopotamian peoples; the Sumerians, the Akkadians, and the Assyrians. Thus, given the widespread occurrence of this very ancient ritual, it was probably an expression of an agricultural Ur-myth. In Egypt, too, we find this Winter Solstice agricultural ritual of weeping: the priestesses who enacted the parts of Isis and Nephtys mourned and wept for their lover, the slain corn-god Osiris.

Gods and men before the face of the gods are weeping for
thee at the same time, when they behold me! . . .
All thy sister goddesses are at thy side and behind thy couch,
Calling upon thee with weeping—yet thou are prostrate upon
thy bed! . . .
Live before us, desiring to behold thee.

This ancient, agricultural ritual was practiced because *it was believed to be essential that human beings should share the universal sorrow caused by the death of a god*. If they remained unsympathetic, the deities would punish them as enemies. Worshippers of nature gods, therefore, based their ceremonial practices on natural phenomena. According to Professor Robertson Smith:

“The dread of the worshippers that the neglect of the usual ritual would be followed by disaster, is particularly intelligible if they regarded the necessary operations of agriculture as involving the violent extinction of a particle of divine life.” (*Religion of the Semites*) Thus, by observing their ritual, the worshippers won the sympathy and co-operation of deities, who would bring about a successful harvest.

The Babylonian Winter Solstice ritual of mourning and weeping for the dead Tammuz was initiated by the fertility goddess Ishtar, the amorous Queen of Heaven. According to one mythic narrative, Ishtar was so grief-stricken at Tammuz’s death that she contrived to enter the underworld to get him back. A part of the myth of Ishtar and Tammuz survives in the famous Assyrian hymn known as “The Descent of Ishtar.” Ishtar must descend to the underworld to find the dead Tammuz. His dwelling was now referred to as “the bosom of the earth,” and he dwells in “the house of darkness among the dead where light is never seen.” Ishtar mourns for “the wound of Tammuz,” beating her breast: “The amorous Queen of Heaven sits as one in darkness, crying for her Tammuz.” The poem concludes with Ishtar’s wail:

O my only brother (Tammuz) thou dost not lament for me.
In the day that Tammuz adorned me, with a ring of crystal,
With a bracelet of emeralds, together with himself, he adorned me,
With himself he adorned me; may men mourners and women mourners
On a bier place him, and assemble the wake.

Thus, Ishtar, the *Weeping Goddess*, instituted the wailing ceremony for her lost lover. She mourned for her youthful lover, crying:

Oh hero, my lord, ah me! I will say;
Food I eat not . . . water I drink not . . .
Because of the exalted one of the nether world, him of the
radiant face, yea radiant,
Of the exalted one of the nether world, him of the dove-like
voice, yea dove-like.

The mourners chanted:

He has gone, he has gone to the bosom of the earth,
And the dead are numerous in the land. . . .
Men are filled with sorrow: they stagger by day in gloom . . .
In the month of thy year which brings not peace hast thou gone.
Thou hast gone on a journey that makes an end of thy people.

The following extract contains a reference to the slaying of the god:

The holy one of Ishtar, in the middle of the year the fields languish . . .
The shepherd, the wise one, the man of sorrows, why have they
slain? . . .
In his temple, in his inhabited domain,
The child, lord of knowledge, abides no more . . .
In the meadows, verily, verily, the soul of life perishes.

We find in the *Sumerian and Babylonian Psalms* a description of the wailing for Tammuz:

The wailing is for the herbs: the first lament is, “they are not produced.”
The wailing is for the grain, ears are not produced.
The wailing is for the habitations, for the flocks which bring forth no more.
The wailing is for the perishing wedded ones.
The wailing is for the perishing children; the dark-headed people create no more.

The *Psalms* goes on to say the wailing is also for the shrunken river, the parched meadows, the forests, the plains, and the gardens, which all suffer because the god of fertility has departed. The female mourners cry: “How long shall the springing of verdure be restrained? / How long shall the putting forth of leaves be held back?”

In Norse mythology, Freyja (Old Norse “[the] Lady”) is a goddess associated with love, beauty, fertility, sex, war, gold, and seiðr (magic for seeing and influencing the future). Freyja appears in the Prose Edda books

Gylfaginning and *Skáldskaparmá* (late 13th or early 14th century). In these books, poetic ways to refer to gold are provided, including “Freyja’s weeping” and “rain or shower from Freyja’s eyes.” She is described as flying over the earth sprinkling morning dew, spring flowers falling from her hair and (in a trope made famous by poets) weeping tears that when fallen to the earth turn to gold. (It is explained that gold can be referring to as Freyja’s weeping due to her red gold tears.) The tears Freyja cries are tears of loss and grief, and a precious gift to humans from the goddess. In the 19th century, Britt-Mari Näsström observed that the art and literature of Swedish Romanticism focused less on Freyja’s erotic qualities and more on the image of “the pining goddess, weeping for her husband.”

In Ancient Greek mythology, Aphrodite was the goddess of love and beauty. According to her myth, when she wept in sorrow and grief her tears were transformed into flowers and as they fell to the ground they blossomed into anemones.

Niobe, believed to be the daughter of a Phrygian king, is known as the “Weeping Goddess.” The myth of Niobe is very ancient, she was mentioned already in Homer’s *Iliad*. (Some believe that she was originally a Mother Goddess.) According to the Greek myth of Niobe, she was a mother of fourteen children. She was so proud of this fact that she boasted to goddess Leto herself. Leto in turn had only two children – Artemis and Apollo. Of course, the vain goddess Leto took this boasting as an insult, and her children decided to take revenge. Artemis and Apollo, both excellent archers, took their bows and slew all of Niobe’s children. Devastated, Niobe stood rigid until she was transformed into a stone on Mount Sipylus in her homeland of Phrygia, where she brooded over the sorrows sent by the gods. (In modern Turkey, where this myth might have originated, there is a stone known as “The Weeping Rock,”

located in Mount Sipylus, Manisa. Its association with Niobe myth dates to antiquity.) But, even then, tears wouldn't stop pouring from her eyes. Again, the story of Niobe, and especially her sorrows, is an ancient one. The context in which she is mentioned by Achilles to Priam in Homer's *Iliad* is as a stock type for mourning. Niobe is also mentioned in Sophocles' *Antigone* where, as Antigone is marched toward her death, she compares her own loneliness to that of Niobe. (The posture of a weeping woman in general also recalls the Greek myth of Niobe who wept endlessly for her 14 children slain in revenge for an insult. When she pleaded with the Gods to end her pain, they turned her to stone.)

Also in Greek mythology, the Algea (Roman name: Dolor, Dolores) were the personified spirits (*daimones*) of pain and suffering (body and mind), grief, sorrow and distress (*algos*). *Algos* is used by Hesiod (*Theogony* 227) in the plural, as the personification of sorrows and griefs, which are there represented as the daughters of Eris. They were the bringers of weeping and tears. The Algea were related to Oizys (or Achlys), the ancient Greek goddess of grief, anxiety, and depression. In fact, her Roman name "Miseria" is where the modern term "misery" comes from. She characterized the spirit of the miserable human condition of deep sadness. (She was a primordial spirit or goddess who may have existed before Chaos or been birthed by Nyx, the personification of night.) The Algea were also related to Penthos, the god of mourning and lamentation. The three Algea were as follows: (1) Lupe - pain, grief, and distress; (2) Ania - grief, distress, sorrow, and trouble; (3) Achus - ache and anguish.

Ovid's elegiac poem *Fasti* (published in 8 CE and sometimes translated as *The Book of Days* or *On the Roman Calendar*), contains a very peculiar moment in the fourth book of his poetic calendar that describes the rituals of the Roman year. The goddess Ceres (also known as Demeter) is searching for

her daughter Persephone, who has been kidnapped by Hades and carried off to his grim domain in the Underworld. In the course of her quest, Ceres arrives at Eleusis, near Athens, and a young woman and her father ask her why she is there. The goddess explains and then “like tears . . . a gleaming drop fell onto her warm bosom. Soft of heart, the old man and girl weep with her.”

In Sophocles’ tragedy, *Antigone*, the sentry describes Antigone’s cry to express the agony she felt when she witnessed her work undone. She cries because her brother, Polyneices, again lay unburied because King Creon, who ascended to the throne of Thebes, decreed that Polyneices was not to be buried or even mourned, on pain of death by stoning. Antigone, defied the order, but was caught and imprisoned, awaiting death. Antigone speaks of her immense sadness. She will never have the chance to marry her fiancé Haimon; she must face death alone and hangs herself.

Of course, the archetype of the “Weeping Goddess” in Christianity is the Virgin Mary, as she weeps for her crucified son (in imitation of Ishtar or Isis weeping for their son/sun-god Tammuz or Osiris).

The Desert Mothers and Fathers considered crying an “official form of worship.” The Rule of St. Benedict stipulates that tears are the mark of “pure prayer.” Tears — whether quiet or loud — are expressions of the heart that connect us to divine wisdom. For example, in the 15th century, Margery Kempe received the divine gift of weeping. According to a 20th-century writer, “... ‘the gift of tears’—the very expression shows that the tears in question are supernatural, associated not with human passions but with the experiences of God.” (Gillet, L., “The gift of tears in the ancient tradition of the Christian east,” *Sobomost*, 1937) Thus, in the Christian tradition, weeping is seen as a holy spiritual practice. In the book of Romans (12:15), it advocates: “Weep with those who weep.”

“The loss of lament in the modern church has had serious consequences, including a lack of compassion for pain-bearers, the failure to challenge injustice, and essentially the loss of the church’s mission: bringing hope into pain. This article suggests five ways to restore lament to the life of a church, to facilitate a healthy, caring community.” (June Dickie, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban, South Africa.)

Finally, there’s a very interesting website *Cogniarchae*, authored by someone of the same name, that researches the “Weeping Goddess” across cultures, presenting artifacts (statues and monoliths) that bear striking similarities. The following is an excerpt from this website. (The photos of the relevant artifacts can be found on the “Winter Blues” webpage of the *Tower of Song* website.)

In the previous article, I established a connection between the “weeping” Ikom monoliths of Nigeria and the weeping figurines of the Neolithic Balkans. But there is one more example worth mentioning – the weeping figurines of Cycladic islands, modern Greece. They date to 2500BC, or the Early Cycladic II period.

“Progenitor” or “Foremother” is one of the most famous sculptures of the Lepenski Vir. Interestingly, almost an identical sculpture has been discovered in Capdenac le Haut, France. It dates to 3200-2800 BC, meaning that it is at least 3000 years younger. Still, the similarities are so striking that they did not go unnoticed by the scholars.

In the case of the “Foremother” of Lepenski Vir, it is not so easy to determine if she has male or female attributes (or both). Perhaps this was the intention of the artist. A similar ambiguity exists in Nigerian monoliths. Moreover, they quite often have “tears” pouring from their eyes. This could be an association with rain, fertility, and water. Perhaps this fact can give us a deeper insight into the universal symbolism of all these sculptures.

Moreover, in Indo-European mythology, autumn is usually associated with the entrance to the underworld or the land of the dead. So the mourning aspect remains. But strangely enough, it seems that scholars have missed the most obvious place to look for clues – the Greek mythology. (The author goes on to examine the Greek myth of Niobe.)

The Weeping Goddess in Popular Culture

One of three continents in the world of the TV series *Game of Thrones*, Essos, serves as the easternmost continent whereas Westeros is the westernmost. “The Weeping Lady” is a deity worshiped in Lys, one of the Free Cities in Essos. Hers is one of several religions and cults popular in the city. She is sometimes also called the “Weeping Woman.” (See images of “The Weeping Lady” on the “Winter Blues” webpage of the *Tower of Song* website.)

Contemporary painter Anne-Marie Zylberman was inspired to paint “Freya’s Tears or Golden Tears” after reading a poem and researching the Nordic Goddess Freyja, who saw secrets of what are to come and weep for those that are inevitable.

murmur no poems of sorrow
sing no songs of love for me,
under this autumn twilight
just set my shadow free

recall no times of laughter
forget all tears of pain,
under this autumn twilight
let no memory remain

Debra Denker is the author of the cli-fi time travel novel *Weather Menders*. She wrote a poem, “Isis Weeping,” on December 20, 2020. She introduces her poem in the following way: “I hope you will be moved by my poem, ‘Isis Weeping,’ which I wrote on Winter Solstice as I connected with the anguished grief of the Ancient Egyptian Goddess Isis as she searched for the fourteen pieces of her dismembered husband. How many pieces of our own souls is each of us searching for? How many pieces of Gaia’s soul? What are you Resurrecting with your love?”

Isis, Weeping

Like Isis, I grieve.
I grieve for the world,
 which has vanished.
I grieve for our lives,
 cut into pieces like Osiris'
 mortal remains,
Scattered.
I feel her anguish, my own,
 as she searches
 wailing with tear-streaked face
 the length and breadth of Egypt
 for her murdered Beloved.
I choke on desert sands, blowing.
I cry in the heat of a changed world,
 tears drying on my ravaged cheeks.
I am wide awake with love and longing,
 seeking, restless
 finally falling into exhausted sleep
And dreams of the stars.
I wait for the renewal of the day
 the life-giving Light of Ra
 that still does not shine
 upon the face of the Beloved.
I grieve, today, for all the lives torn
 asunder,
For all the loved ones separated,
For all the strangers afraid
 of one another,
For the wildly swinging scale of Ma'at,
Her feather blowing away
 in a savage, unending gale
 of pestilence and greed.
I grieve for Lion and Cat
 and life forms larger and smaller.
I grieve for harmony,
 for gatherings, for dance,
 for music, for shared food.
I grieve and search, endlessly it seems.
The sun rises and sets, rises and sets,
 the moon goes through her
 pregnant phases.
The stars wheel uncaringly around
 the drifting North Star—
Are they indifferent to our plight?
We are separated as surely
 as the Beloved's parts,
 scattered, scattered
Longing to be found,
 transformed,
 brought together in a scream

of love
Like the voice of the kite.
Like Isis, I will grow wings,
wings to help me search
the Heavens and the Earth.
I will take the form of Mut
ugly-headed beautiful vulture
The Cleanser
And scream as I rush down the steps
of the holy temple
at dawn on the solstice.
The sun stands still
over the hot sands of Egypt
over the life-giving waters of the Nile
Over forests of north and south
jungles, farmland,
pyramid-mountains
with capstones of snow.
Over the still-frozen pole
The sun waits
the Earth waits
the sky waits
For the victory of Love.
Like Isis, I preserve Love
I nurture Love
I raise the Osiris of my Hopes
with Love.
I become a thousand "we's"
nay, millions, nay, billions.
We grieve like Isis
whether we know it or not,
Only our minds and hearts
are free to wander at this moment.
But we are free to wonder,
no rules nor plagues
keeping us from wonder.
The grief, the loss
is the beginning.
That sick moment when we realize it's true.
Osiris is missing
Earth is fading
Life is draining away
species by species
Sand through the glass of time.
What do we do?

First, we grieve.
It takes as long as it must.
Then we Journey
to worlds as yet undreamed

to bring back the pieces of the world.
We grow wings like a billion angels
And the tender Wings of Love
bring life back to the planet.
The Wings of Love stir the breath of life,
of rebirth of all that is sacred
of all that loves, and is loved, and is Love.
The Wings of Love change the weather,
cause the waters to rise up
become clouds
Bring rare and life-giving rain
shimmer into rainbows in the sun.
When we can transform our grief
our hot rage and outrage
to cooling rains of Love
Our world will be reborn
New, different
But vital and strong.
Our love will miraculously give birth
to re-generation.
Sons and daughters of Life will be born
and reach to rejoin the stars.
Grief shall shatter,
our tears become purified of salt,
become fresh, life-giving rain
Each drop a rainbow.

We will embrace again
We will dance to sistrum and harp
We will twirl and stamp.
We will again join our voices
in laughter and song.
Osiris will rise again
and again
In every form
Through the power of Love
pure, unmitigated
bright
This is how Earth transforms
This is how Earth heals
This is how humans are born
from the loving womb of Earth
to begin anew, wiser.
This is the time of Isis' labor
painful, focused
She gives birth, we give birth
to the promised New Earth.
We at last take our place among the Stars.

The following is a prayer to Isis the “Beautiful Mourner, Isis the Weeper” by Isidora.

This is a gift I bring before the Beautiful Mourner, Isis the Weeper Who Transforms: an invocation offering of mourning.

I offer You, Isis, my mourning for there is nothing else I can do with it. How is it that something so empty can be called pain-full? I am abandoned in an ocean of pain so deep that there is nothing else. My tears are nothing but more salt for that bitter sea. My grief is nothing but a hole in my belly. I cannot breathe. I have no breath. There is no air. My mind is blank, unable to receive the words that are pushed at me. My heart? I have no heart.

Mourning is what we do when the loss is so great that we can do nothing else. Each of us who mourns has her or his own share of this hollow pain. But it is the pain of one human being at one time, in one place. You, Isis, You hear the cries of the world. You feel each heart breaking, You know every human cruelty.

The sorrows of a Goddess are deep. What then is my mourning compared to Yours?

Listen, O Isis, to the words of Mourning: “I am offered unto Isis for She is the Well of Mourning. She absorbs me and takes me into Her vastness. I am dissolved in infinity. I am mixed with all things. I am reborn as a child. I am the mystery of suffering. I am Mourning.”

Unto You, Isis, I offer my mourning and all things beautiful and pure. M'den, Iset. Accept it, Isis.

Why the Winter Solstice “Mourning & Weeping Ritual” Is Important for Our Times

All the above information is intended to serve as a lead-in to this section. The importance of *mourning*, or “*grieving*,” both for individual and for the collective healing, has been stressed by a wide variety of cultural critics from diverse fields and disciplines—religious leaders, psychotherapists, sociologists, and self-help gurus. Their message in brief is that we, as people and as a culture, have lost the vital virtue of “grieving” as part of the healing process and, as a result, we are stuck in a vicious circle of trauma and unresolved psychological issues, which lead to pathological symptoms and behavior. Therefore, the Gypsy Scholar suggests that during this time of year at the Winter Solstice, we might take a lesson from the example of the myth of the “Weeping Goddess.”

As Aviva Joseph (as quoted from my musical essay above) has observed, because these “weeping goddesses have been ignored in monotheistic and patriarchal religion,” we can turn to interpret our grief from the “depth psychological perspective.” Here, she is referring to Jungian depth-psychology. She writes: “The reoccurring image of the Weeping Goddess through time and place is an archetypal image expressing a primordial force in humanity’s collective unconsciousness.” She stresses that it is of great importance that these images are brought into consciousness, because, quoting Jung, “These archetypal images . . . are instrumental symbols with whose help unconscious contents can be channeled into consciousness, interpreted, and integrated.” Failing this, Jung warns that their energy gets redirected into pathological phenomena—phobias, obsessions, crazes; social, religious, or political perversions.” However (as previously pointed out), “even here the ego has a chance for integration, since Jung has also observed that in the modern materialistic world the ‘gods have become diseases,’ which means that this is apparently the only way left for them to gain attention and manifest their power. So given this and my previous citation (from Jungian archetypal psychologist, James Hillman) about the gods reaching us through afflictions, we can rephrase Aviva’s interpretation of Jung to warn that if we do not acknowledge that even pathological states of the psyche have a purpose and are symptomatic of the need for the integration of archetypal unconscious contents, then they surely become nothing but destructive.”

In other words, what the Gypsy Scholar is attempting to get across here is that the psychological malady of the “Winter Blues” (clinically, SAD) type of depression can actually serve as a doorway into psychological integration, if, that is, its sufferers resist medicating it with antidepressants and follow the homeopathic path of the “Weeping Goddess.”

The following are excerpts from an article by Rosemarie Anderson published in *The Journal of Transpersonal Psychology* (1996, Vol. 28, No. 2), “Nine Psycho-Spiritual Characteristics of Spontaneous and Involuntary Weeping.”

Transformative and sacred weeping is defined by this author as the “spilling over of Tears” which is intense, spontaneous and seemingly involuntary, that is not caused by obvious immediate stimuli or set of conditions known to the weeper. In contrast to tears caused by the common human passions and their accompanying stimuli, transformative weeping evidences little reddening of the eyes or contortions of the facial muscles and is accompanied by feelings of physical and psychological well-being. To the weeper, it seems a gift. According to a twentieth-century writer, “... ‘the gift of tears’—the very expression shows that the tears in question are supernatural, associated not with human passions but with the experiences of God. Even their physiological aspects manifest this fact. They flow without strain or effort, without violent sobbing or contraction of the face” (Gillet, 1937, p. 7)

Episodes of transformative weeping vary widely in duration, lasting a few seconds or continuing off and on for a period of years. While transformative weeping has its own unique properties, as indicated above, it may be accompanied by a wide variety of emotions—ranging from profound grief and lament to rapture and joy—yet always the experience is intense, usually vividly remembered, and difficult to capture easily in words. Other examples include weeping in profound grief which reaches into the very core of Self, weeping at the sight of astonishing beauty, at the apprehension of one’s essential nature and that of others, and as a gift, i.e., receiving spontaneous acts of grace. . . .

One of the most unique aspects of the characteristics of transformative weeping is the explicit descriptions of physical/mental/spiritual integration taking place in the context of sacred tears. Integration, re-integration, unification, reclaiming and healing of the Self, are phrases commonly used by both historical writers and interviewees. . . . At a fundamental level, the nine characteristics of transformative weeping challenge some of our basic assumptions about the body-mind-spirit connection. While there are notable exceptions among spiritual practices such as yoga, Tai Chi, and Aikido, a popular assumption of many transpersonal psychologists and mystical writers is that spiritual processes initiate mental, emotional, and physical changes—but not the other way around. The descriptions reported here, especially among the Syrian historical writers and contemporary female interviewees, suggest the possibility that the somatic expression of sacred tears is “... to the mind the border, as it were, between the bodily and the spiritual state, between the state of being subject to passions [emotions] and that of purity ...” If sacred tears initiate or facilitate integration of body-mind-spirit, physical practices and somatic changes may be starting points rather than end points in the integrating processes per se.

In closing, it is important to point out that there is no reason to suspect that the historical writers were usually pathological from a modern clinical point of view. From what we know

about them, they functioned within their communities (at least as well as anyone else) and often were responsible for large communities of monks or other on-going administrative or leadership responsibilities. The three women interviewed were functioning extremely well. All of them are full or part-time doctoral students and have demanding personal and professional lives. The purposes of this investigation was not to look at depressive, indulgent, or pathological tears. The transformative weeping described here show signs—not of disintegration—but of integration of the psyche and expanded awareness of the deeper and universal realities of human existence.

(The full article can be found via the link: <https://atpweb.org/jtparchive/trps-28-96-02-167.pdf>)