

Inspired By Ruin

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Ruins are a catalyst to imagination. When we see the remains of an old building or civilization we can imagine what once stood in that place. Should you travel this summer, notice the inspiration of lost splendor. Gaps and flaws and remnants are the spur to vision.

So it is that our greatest efforts and ingenuity are directed toward what is wrong or incomplete in the world. Perfection admits of no additions. There is even something tyrannical about the ideal of perfection, like the halo that, when it slips, becomes a noose.

Judaism never asks that we make the world perfect, only that we make it better. One of the names of God, *El Shaddai*, is interpreted by the Talmud as meaning the God who said to the world *dai* — enough. God will create only so much, leaving things cracked and incomplete. It remains for us to use the considerable gifts we are given, of intellect and spirit, to finish what God has left undone. To envision and bring into being a better world is the never ending task; but that is why we are drawn to ruins, for they remind us of what might be.