

## A Conversation About `

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*"Maybe there's a God above, but all I ever learned from Love, was how to shoot somebody that out drew ya." I've listened to it hundreds of times. Maybe "ya" is humanity. We destroy anyone that attacks humanity. I've also thought "ya" was a friend, and I kill their assassins [sic]. I've also thought "ya" is me, and my friend kills my assassin. "I learned from Love", can't be God speaking, because He is Love. How do you read this?*

QAIE Virgo: The lyrics you quoted are from Leonard Cohen's song "Hallelujah." It's been widely covered and interpreted in many ways due to its emotional depth and ambiguity. The line, "Maybe there's a God above, but all I ever learned from love was how to shoot somebody who outdrew ya" could be interpreted in various ways depending on the context you choose to see it in.

In a broad perspective, it could mean that love, which is often idealized and glorified, can also teach harsh lessons. That it can result in pain, conflict, and betrayal (shooting someone who outdrew you). This could be a reference to a romantic relationship where feelings of love have led to difficult experiences or hard life lessons.

If you'd like to interpret it religiously, it could be read as a critique or a lament about human nature, wherein people often end up hurting others in the name of love or while trying to protect their loved ones. It could also be expressing disillusionment about divine justice, if a loving God allows such pain and conflict.

When it comes to song lyrics, it's important to remember that the meaning can be very subjective and dependent on the listener's own experiences and interpretations. Cohen himself described the song as a "desire to affirm my faith in life, not in some formal religious way but with enthusiasm, with emotion.... It's a rather joyous song."

With all of this in mind, your interpretation that the "ya" is humanity and that we destroy anyone that attacks humanity, is a valid interpretation. This interpretation can indeed tie into themes of resilience and the will to survive in the face of adversity.

However, it's also worth noting that Cohen's work often grapples with complex themes of love, faith, despair, and redemption, often leaving a lot of room for interpretation and personal meaning. So, while your interpretation is one of many possible interpretations, it's a testament to the depth and richness of Cohen's songwriting.

*Please expand: "With all of this in mind, your interpretation that the "ya" is humanity and that we destroy anyone that attacks humanity, is a valid interpretation. This interpretation can indeed tie into themes of resilience and the will to survive in the face of adversity."*

QAIE Virgo: Absolutely. Let's delve into this interpretation a little further:

The "ya" in the lyrics could very well represent humanity as a whole. If we consider love to be a universal human experience that binds us all, learning from love then becomes a shared collective journey. It encompasses not just the beautiful, tender moments but also the harsh realities, betrayals, and sacrifices.

Interpreting the phrase "how to shoot somebody who outdrew ya" as a metaphor for humanity defending itself against threats could be seen as an expression of resilience and survival instinct. It speaks to the idea that, when faced with adversarial forces (those who "outdrew ya"), humanity learns how to "shoot" — that is, how to resist, overcome, and prevail.

It's a survival mechanism learned from love. Love for oneself, for one's family, community, and for humanity at large. This love can inspire courage and fortitude, and it can drive people to fight against what harms them or the ones they care about.

This interpretation reflects the human capacity for growth and adaptation in response to adversity. It can also serve as a poignant reminder of the double-edged sword that love often is - capable of inspiring both the most selfless acts of kindness and protection, as well as propelling us into conflict and hardship.

These lines could also invoke a sense of collective responsibility and unity - the understanding that when a threat to humanity emerges, it is up to each and every one of us to take a stand,

learned from the strength and resilience love teaches us. Through this lens, Leonard Cohen's lyrics resonate as a profound commentary on the human condition and our capacity for resilience in the face of adversity.

*What if "ya" is God / Jesus / Isa?*

QAIE Virgo: If "ya" is interpreted as God or a divine figure like Jesus or Isa, the interpretation can shift dramatically, opening up numerous theological and philosophical discussions. In this context, the lyrics may illustrate humanity's struggle with faith and understanding of divinity.

When Cohen sings "how to shoot somebody who outdrew ya," this could refer to humanity's tendency to question, challenge, and even oppose divine will when it doesn't align with human understanding or desires. It could signify the human struggle to reconcile with divine will that seems unjust or hard to comprehend, akin to "shooting" or questioning God because His actions or plans seem to "outdraw" or overpower our own.

Another way to interpret this could be through the lens of Jesus' crucifixion, which is central to Christian theology. Jesus, even being divine, allowed himself to be "outdrawn" and sacrificed himself out of love for humanity. In this case, learning "how to shoot somebody who outdrew ya" might refer to understanding the depths of this sacrifice and the profound, unconditional love it represented.

These interpretations hinge on deep theological and philosophical questions about the nature of divinity, the problem of evil, the nature of free will, and the ultimate meaning of love and sacrifice. As with all art, Cohen's lyrics can spark profound introspection and discussions, and their meaning can shift dramatically depending on one's perspective.

*What is the " " as in Ba`al ?*

QAIE Virgo: The symbol " " in Baal is a typographical representation of a character from Semitic languages known as "Ayin". The Ayin (א, ׀) is a letter in many Semitic scripts, including Phoenician, Aramaic, Hebrew, and Arabic. It represents a voiced pharyngeal fricative or a voiced velar fricative in pronunciation. In English transcriptions of Semitic names, it is often represented by an apostrophe, and the letter has no equivalent sound in English.

In the case of Baal, it's a Northwest Semitic word that entered usage in ancient Middle Eastern cultures as a title applied to various gods in the region, sometimes becoming integrated into their proper names. The term "Baal" means "lord" or "master". The god Ba`al Hadad is perhaps the most famous deity bearing this title.