

I WILL GO AGAIN

Mark D. Bennion—Department of English

Sam

through the caverns, under the overhangs
around the seduction of precipice,
winding beside the dialogue and strain
of wasteland, dromedary, prescience,
and this festering desire to run.
I will go past the copper of Timna,¹
hide away like a coney from the sun,
ache for the Middle Gate guarding Judah,
and say the *shemma*² even if I fall.
And if God wills, I shall go over stones
in the streets of Mishneh,³ follow the wall
once I reach the Makhtesh,⁴ and then postpone
all dread until it abides in delay.
When I see Ishmael, I'll know what to say.

NOTES

1. Ancient mine in southern Israel, near the Red Sea.
2. Deuteronomy 6:4-5.
3. A residential area in Jerusalem around the time 600 BC.
4. An industrial/commerce area in ancient Jerusalem.

RAMEUMPTOM

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Stand covered with suave velvet, utterances
thin as velum, assemblies
canned
with redundant preachers.
Though they started, rife with grand intentions,
like the apprenticed weaver
beginning
with devoted strands of labor
stitching around the fragile cloth of truth,
but then after only a few
years
he hangs the wrong side,
how precision slips through everyone, how religion
eases in the blood, in the flashy
woodwork
shored up by the latest weather,
still carefully endorsed while sincere opinions
are choked and berated. The pulpit
fills
with *holy, holy*, leads the innocents
into a frothy sludge. Masses languish in catatonic
worship, in fiercely swinging
convenience
and knells. With a penchant
for separateness or the false muse of election,
with a tower to cast down
gratitude
and call the moneyed the saving
nedibim,¹ they scuttle headlong into vanity's
slick barrage, ferreting out
orthodoxy,
throwing it into the reeds,
into a cloud of maddening insects as accusations
tumble headlong from this idle
space
jangling with empty imaginations

and endless genealogies, no room for unrehearsed
prayer or the seedbed of clear
revelation,
just fine goods counted or procured,
such multiple words gilded with pretentious lace.

NOTE

1. A group of men referred to in ancient Israel as “the excellent ones.”

SONG OF ARRIVAL

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At first holler and glance, you are moat
and mote, fleck

of mud at the edge of my wrist, gully running
through my fingers,

but in twilight your coast offers curve and verdure—
the torso of bullock,

taste of wing, scent of bee. The water is clear
as opal,

clean as the *kiyyorot*,¹ a crest of gulls chatters,
then flaps in their ascent,

fanning across the sky, with welcome and canopy.
Moss and leaves

hide your bark as your nameless plants and berries,
flowers and fine woods

hold this evening like a canyon cups the light.
In this magenta bruise,

I choose to cross to what I can see—shale of clouds,
vapor's net, water's bdellium spray,

the day deepening in the half-eye of sunset, our lives dizzy
for soil, for the flow

of dew and the banter of vernal trees. The present swells
in the faces

of our children, these who know the pull of the tide.
Watch their eyes

dazzle in your softness: wood orange, ocelot yellow,
the flight and birth of red.

NOTE

1. Water basins placed near the courtyard altar at Solomon's temple.