

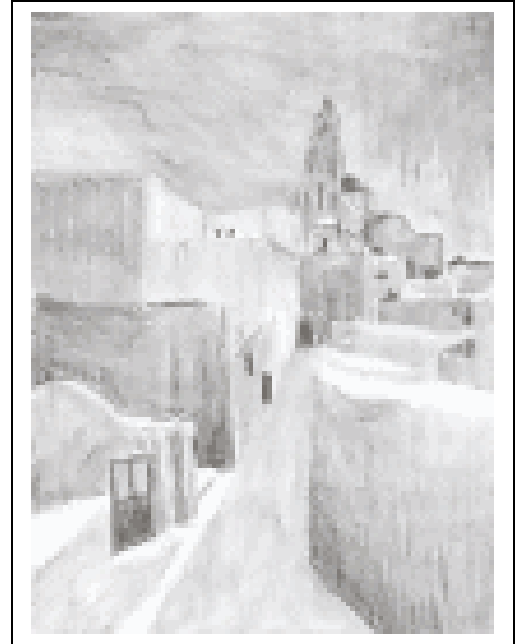
# JERUSALEM FOOTNOTES: 1979

It is the morning before Pesach.  
Like the Judeo-Christian pilgrim of Bordeaux,  
who came here in 333 of the Common Era,  
I try to find places and figure out what was,  
seeing how easily I get turned around  
and seeing how much is plowed down and sown.  
The Cenacle, for instance,  
is where Yeshua ha Notsri and his students  
kept Pesach.  
And supposedly there are steps that lead down  
from Caiaphas' house  
to the Tyropoen (Cheesemaker's) Valley.  
Yeshua himself most likely went up and down  
up and down these stone steps I cannot seem to find.  
Under a white merciless sun  
I get caught up in the middle of a herd of goats.  
One kid, one only kid moving among the crags.  
*Chad Gadya, Chad Gadya.*

I somehow found myself back inside the Old City,  
heading for the Damascus Gate.  
Steel awnings clang shut.  
Merchants plod away in plastic sandals,  
but men linger in coffee houses  
sitting on low stools, smoking from narilahs (hookahs).  
I catch a pair of tiger eyes blazing  
from underneath wire-brush eyebrows  
and hasten away—up steps, around turns,  
through murmuring alleyways, and out the gate.  
Jerusalem, you are both shy and aloof  
tough as an eagle, vulnerable as a dove.

*All leaven or anything leavened which is in my possession, whether I have seen it or not, whether I have observed it or not, whether I have removed it or not shall be completely considered naught and ownerless as the dust of the earth.*

A sack of rice beads and bunches of greens  
in a plastic basket  
weigh down on her veiled head.  
The swayback Arab woman carries life=s essentials,  
the elements of the ritual of living.  
She crosses the road and steps on my shadow.



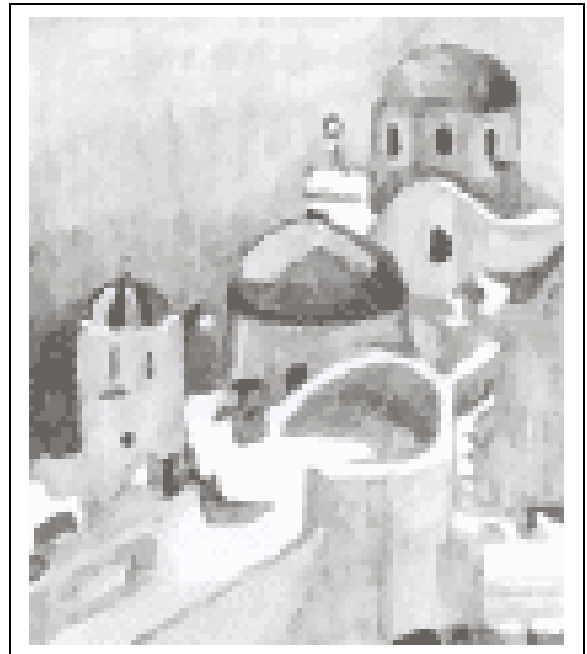
I seem to be skirting a metaphorical forest where piety dwells—  
a great divide that keeps out what is profane.  
The woman disappears in the other direction,  
merging into the wash of dust,  
moving toward the carts of pita and roasting eggs.  
I'm tired. The streets seem to empty  
as I edge toward Mea Shearim.  
A group of men cluster, reminding me of mushrooms.

They form a circle,  
and I watch them watch the fires.  
It is the burning of the chometz.

Bread burns.  
Little packets of leaven turn to ash.  
Smoke continues to ascend.  
The chometz burns on.  
The sun marks time  
Cinders snap. Snap! Snap!

Unclean! unclean! Am I  
fermenting as I lean on a pole, watching  
the burning of the chometz.  
Defiled! Defiled! Am I  
fermenting as I lean on a pole, weary  
from the active cultures of sin.

Here comes one forlorn crow.  
It's grueling; it's futile; it's vain.  
He can't find one crumb among the ashes.  
Caw! Caw! Caw! The crow looks at me. Chaff encircles me.  
On my tongue I taste yeast; on my skin I feel chometz.  
What is in me can scarcely be considered naught and ownerless!  
About these bitter things I know.  
From clay, rags, bone, dust  
come no good seeds to sow.



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