

*The next of these you read, my non-  
Existent reader,  
If you can make it past this one,  
Should be the first  
Of the book, its indefatigable leader,  
Except it's something I've cursed,*

*So now I write these words to lift  
That curse and bless  
The things you'll see I haven't fixed  
As yet: these lines  
The sign fixed to an unfixd lift that lets  
You know there's stairs to climb.*

*The third time in two years I worked  
On its faults, I cursed  
Again and changed 'the Word or words  
He finds himself  
Muttering' to 'the burden of His lust',  
Then took from off my shelf*

*The original text, whose pages opened  
At words I'll note:  
'And as for people that say, The burden  
Of the Lord,  
I will visit that man and his house', and not  
The psalm that I looked for.*

*Thank God, I thought, my lines had said  
That 'his delight'  
Is in that burden. The prophet had  
A dream and weaves  
That dream in words. What is the chaff to the wheat?  
I'll raise to David these leaves.*

And as he passed this way one evening,  
 Muttering an old hymn  
 He'd learnt at school, the pavement screaming  
 Its wide advice around him,  
 Like crowds with in-ear head-  
 Phones howling, he  
 Stopped dead and saw some men seated,  
 Discoursing ironically.

Follow me, he said, his hand  
 As massive as  
 The marble hand of David: stand  
 And make my crooked tracks  
 Perceptible, he seemed  
 To me to say,  
 And I arose and followed, dreamed  
 He was with me this way.

That man is prosperous, or blessed with joy,  
 Who has not walked through streets and fields of his day  
 In agitated company, nor does  
 He stand around at entrances with those  
 That breathe out smoke and swear there's nothing higher  
 Than an endless play of signifiers,  
 Nor will he sit through meetings with bosses that scoff at  
 The very syllabi they'd sell for a profit.  
 But his delight is in the burden of  
 His lust, the massive self-secluding love  
 The everlasting has for us, and on  
 This law, whose words a finger cast at stone  
 The rain has made illegible, he makes  
 His heartfelt moan, a murmuring cry that breaks  
 Its words upon his tongue by day and sundown.  
 And like a tree transplanted to the ground  
 Of tributaries that pulse a land more arid  
 Than mine, that brings its fruit in its unhurried  
 Time and season, it falls out that his leaves  
 Can't fade, and all that he shall make, succeeds.  
 Not so the people lost on every street,  
 But they are chaff winds blow in their disquiet.  
 Therefore, the faithless do not arise and stand  
 In the moment: sinners crowd no righteous man.  
 There's something that re-routes the way of the righteous:  
 The self-metalead way a standstill of the faithless.



In all subsequent languages.

Even now the very absence of purpose  
In royal psalms out of context  
Makes a kind of soil of them  
Without which nothing can come next.

19 (Of David)

I

Invention woke inside an attic space  
As if there came a sound of rushing day.  
A sonnet called *The Skylight's* not as close  
As was that room of rhymes misplaced, or said  
Internally without a sound, inside,  
Let's say, the next line's breathless present tense,  
Which must be running late or thinking to hide  
In crowds that press the opened door of sense.  
These rhymes have climbed the text and hauled, it seems,  
Invention with his bed upon the slates  
And let him down, while he still lies and dreams,  
Into the midst of the broken open space,  
And as they press, peer in, predictably talk,  
Day says to day, take up thy bed and walk.

II

Your topic always was this ancient text  
And how you woke inside it, on the line  
Of its horizon, beside a few bent pegs  
And stones around scorched ground, a pool that shines.  
It is a place that turned into a room  
Or canopy or chamber, the sun a bridegroom  
That turned into a strongman in a stanza  
Warming up as lightly as a dancer.  
His race is on an ancient way-marked path,  
His going forth is from the end of heaven,  
His circuit's to its other end at last,  
The topics of the old philosophers,  
The statutes of the Lord, a little leaven  
That we are lightened of as if by fears.

23 (Of David)

The unconsuming flame that burns  
    No bush ablaze:  
The fire that manifests itself  
    In speech that turns  
        Always  
        Itself  
Away. The ground. The shepherd shoeless on't.  
The Lord. My friend. I shall not want.

In homes of wolds of tender shoots  
    He makes me crawl and crouch:  
Upon waters of quietness  
    He glints and leads me out.  
    The living breath along  
My blood he turns about. He leads me on  
    The crooked paths hoofs make,  
The track that must be right, for his name's sake.

Surely as I move inside a shadow  
    Of the valley of death I will revere  
    No evil: I shall not fear  
        Affliction with you  
        By me.  
Your club and stick they make me breathe thickly.

    Before  
    My eyes  
    You lay a board  
Before my enemies.  
With fat you fattened my head:  
    I was force-fed.  
    My cup  
    Fills up.

Ach, the beauty of chesed  
Shall chase, put me to flight,  
All the warm hours of my life,  
And so I am arrested  
In a world that is ablaze  
The length of our hot days.

28 (*Of David*)

A page conceals a rock;  
An open hand, two fingers cut,  
But those, next round, the rock might blunt:  
    The unhewn block  
Of which my writing's made.

It is the heart of a poem  
About the impossibility,  
Or high improbability,  
    Of making that poem,  
No sound my words have made.

And many erudite,  
Or wicked, people, in bars, or their books,  
On Instagram, Twitter, or Facebook,  
    Draw me from it  
With mischief in their hearts.

Hear my voice when I cry,  
When I lift my hand, not in a round  
Of scissors, paper, rock, but drowned  
    By that vast cry,  
The oracle in my heart.

87 (*The Sons of Korah XI*)

The primal distant mountain  
That looms from out the plain,  
From out our hills and mountains  
As crown of a cosmic chain  
Of rocks of mountains, is his foundation:  
The base of a city of gates of nations.

I will remember Rahab  
And talk of Babylon,  
America and China  
Shall know Svalbard and Cape Horn:  
This man was born and brought up here,  
That man was brought up and born there.

Or so I've heard it's written,  
The highest counts them up,  
In the register of peoples,  
This city of works of love.  
The singers, musicians, and dancers, sing,  
'This City of Love' and 'All My Springs'.



110 (Of David)

They say the thing no longer is of use  
    When it's inside those walls  
    That echo with footfalls  
Of visitors. Likewise this old, obtuse,  
Corrupted text: its critical edition  
    Footnotes it to perdition.

Or not quite yet. Out of what might just be  
    An old scribe's carelessness,  
    The dittographic mess  
Of a *hapax legomenon*, I see  
A royal figure come: like night the day tricks,  
    This ancient text's its matrix.

As words are from the heart so offspring are,  
    Laboriously, from  
    The womb. The temple's gone  
In which this psalm was first performed. Not far  
Above our feet, in inhospitable space,  
    The words remake their place.