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Jerusalem

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Jerusalem • *Jon Silkin*

This 'good plan, fleshed in childhood'; these fruits
raised out of the lintel. Meagre light

smoked the aperture where Rome, elbowed
in brass, illuminates the war-caves

the North's bashed out of; but not Israel,
a stone sumptuous with carved light.

Hollows fruit under the olive tree, pith
to cram the black seed. Every creature

works out from the dark: miners
cough in Solomon's emerald caves, scooped

by lust for delicate Sheba, in whose flesh
the fertile cock never sates. This good plan.

Without which no God would be adored, none to
raise earth's pillars, or the North's mild orange brick.

So much of the world is as this, fine
arousals of flesh pinioned in spirit tack

through ginnels: the soft wood-pigeons
Sieged Jerusalem runnels on the sword:

like wind famine clings the canvas walls.
Yiddisher flesh concaves; children, mothers

in seed lie like Babylonish reeds
wailing outside the wall, whose stench

spasms Roman muscle. Our temple's
the Sabbath candle, and our prayers

disperse in rubble. This wall is a straight
piece of misery whose root like babies' teeth

's a row of tears that blench and harden, altogether
changed from grief; and the small figure, god,

undone of clothes, stares doll-like on ashes.
I can't tell you.

To think hurts. It hurts not to: still
I can't tell you. Jerusalem, olive

and white; light glutinous against
stone. Flesh sings as if spirit;

would to God it were, but then, no. All
I have to do, where clashes

of serene absence whiten blank stone
is lift you to where this illumination

overfills with space.