

All Good

*They see it as far-off,  
but We see it as near.  
Quran: The Ways of Ascent 70:6-7*

i.

Out in the blue infinitude  
that reaches and touches us  
sometimes, Hajar and Sarah  
and Abraham work together  
to dismantle the house of fear, brick  
by back-breaking brick.  
With a broom of their own weaving,  
they sweep away the last remains.  
They sit down for a meal  
under the naked stars.

Ismaïl and Isaac come around shyly,  
new and unlikely companions.  
Hajar introduces them  
to her second and third husbands  
and a man from her pottery class  
who is just a friend.  
Hajar's twelve grandchildren  
pick up Sarah's twelve at the airport.  
The great-grandchildren appear,  
set down their backpacks,  
and tussle to put up the sleeping tents,  
knowing there will be no more rams,  
no more blood sacrifice.

ii.

Sorrows furrow every face.  
This, in the firelight, no one denies.  
No one tries to brush it all away  
or rushes into glib forgiveness.  
First, out of the woods, shadows emerge:  
the dead of Deir Yassin,  
killed by Zionist terror squads,  
the Kiryat Menachim bus riders  
killed by Palestinian suicide bomber.  
They face each other, tense up.  
Some of them still need gravestones.  
The ghosts of Mahmoud Darwish  
and Yehuda Amichai begin to teach them

how to pronounce each other's names  
in Hebrew and in Arabic. The poets  
will have a long night of it. Meanwhile,  
a Hamas sniper, a Mosad assassin fall  
to their knees, rocking; each one cries,  
"I was only defending my—my—"  
Into the arms of each,  
Hajar and Sarah place a wailing  
orphaned infant. Slow moaning  
fills the air: Atone, atone.

iii.

The grieving goes on for ages.  
When the orange groves are given back  
to their rightful owners, the old family drama  
finally loses its power, withers, dies. A telling time  
for new stories begins. Housekeys  
digging bloody stigmata into the palms  
of Palestinians cast from their homes  
turn into hammers and nails for the rebuilding.

Hajar pours water that becomes  
a subtle, sweet, and heretofore unheard of wine.  
Sarah laughs again, more deeply.  
Abraham is radiant. Everyone, this time  
around, can recognize  
in the eyes of every other,  
the flickering light of the Divine.