RACHEL EDELMAN

To Belong Less to the Aggressor

\textit{Shem} means name, \textit{Shmuel} the name
embossed glittergold
on the vault cover
lowered onto the coffin.

My tongue ululates
between palate and teeth
between eulogy and kaddish.

\begin{center}
\textbf{Grief} sleepwalks,
lisping \textit{yisgadal v'yiskadash}
toward Jerusalem. Toward Jerusalem
the scrolls turn like clockwork.
\end{center}

Through splayed roots
the river's fingers figure anthems:
\begin{center}
we say \textit{sh'ma} and \textit{v'abavta}
toward Jerusalem, \textit{aleinu}
with a bow.
\end{center}
We linger.
The nightmare looms.

\begin{center}
\textbf{Portion} follows portion
toward \textit{a dispersion}
\textit{in all kingdoms}.
\end{center}

\textit{Disperse}, the order
before the recorder hits asphalt.

\begin{center}
\textbf{Dia} “apart,” \textit{sperein} “to sow.”
\end{center}

My mother’s rabbi
\begin{center}
says, \textit{Israel isn't always right}.
\end{center}
I let my father tell me
about the male prophets,
tell me God has
    a masculine pronoun, tell me
manna in the desert is feminine.

Lamentations figures Jerusalem
as an abandoned woman
    not beautiful, but visible.

In the Old City
    outside the Arab Gate
I spoke in my second tongue
to belong less to the aggressor.

Dia “apart,”
sperien “to scatter,” like ashes.

The historian tells me, I am calling
my senators. We are all shouting
    STOP
into the wind.