

PASSING THROUGH

MICHAL LEMBERGER

1

*Into the wreck of stones that had been the Temple, a despair
of waste and scattering, someone stepped to pray, to shield
his words from the wind and thoroughfare.*

2

Whereas, in a late afternoon sky blown
over with shallow clouds, I saw a bare patch of mountain still shining in
a strong stain of sunlight.

3

*Behind him, Elijah followed, asked, Why have you come
to this relic of holiness, deserted by God, open only the sun?*

4

Our shadows lengthening beyond ourselves,
and somehow, ahead of us, a strip of sand, shifting

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reminder of an ancient sea blown to this ruinous place,
glowed gold amid the purpling of the landscape.

5

And what is the voice you heard here, whispering as a dove?

It cried, Oh, my children, my children, what have you done?

6

At night, stars hang above the desert, a profusion strung
to the dome encircling this feeble place, and the infinite
too big, even here—pressed to this rocky field,
pulled heavy to this bright spot, glowing.

7

But you are wise and should know,

said the prophet. You cannot re-enter here. You can only

walk in the streets; You can only speak loudly as you go.

8

This is prayer; straddling time, looking
into the vastness and whispering, whispering.