
Rabbi Akiva in Jerusalem

Leo Haber

Roman soldiers patrol along the walls,
Jewish Christians travel the dolorous way,
wandering beggars slide among the stalls
looking for mislaid change. None pray
at the forsaken Wall. Each sacred stone clings
to the other seeking solace from the stout
camaraderie of solid weight, of things
that saw the uselessness of prayer, devout
men and women burning among the beams
of God's house. He dodges eyes and sneaks
between alleyways into a basement that teems
with Torah study. A bearded elder tweaks
a child's nose and thumbs his own at strife.
We live, Akiva cries, Our word is life.

Leo Haber, adjunct professor of Hebrew at Hebrew Union College, NY, and consulting editor at Midstream, has published poetry and fiction in a wide variety of journals. This poem is part of a cycle of Jewish sonnets.

