

HOW TO MOURN

He asked of me,
“Help me mourn.”
An odd request from one so learned,
Who has the mind, the heart, and tears
 why does he need my help to mourn?

We spoke a while
 and then his request grew clearer
He wanted to mourn
 not as if he were unrelated, a stranger
 to his people, to his father's people.

He wants to mourn as part of a community
 with a language of its own
 a melody of its own
 a history of its own
 a future of its own.

He intuited the immortality for his father
 was bound to the eternity of his people.
He wanted rituals
 that bind generations.

What did he want of me?
Teach me to mourn
 Not as an isolated spirit
 But as part of the transcendent God
 who brings the congregants
 to the bosom of His memory.

Teach me to mourn
as my ancestors mourned
 and as in time, hopefully,
 my children will learn to pray.