

The Backwards Year

Poems

Joe Weil

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kind in the face of futility.
She was one who had put God
on trial for war crimes, had found God guilty
and then celebrated Shabbat.

She did not try to comfort me
or say my pain was insignificant
or promise there would be another job.
She sat with me until her bus arrived

and swallowed her whole.
And there was only the sound of traffic and my
sobbing, and I no longer knew
why I sobbed, or whether it was grief
or shame, or joy. I was rocking
like a man at the wailing wall

For all I know I was praying—
if that's what you want to call it.
It was prayer, but at the place
where praise and lamentation are both
beside the point
My heart burned like a paper plate
and it ascended. It was winter, a dirty
bus stop, and when the bus arrived
I put the change in slowly, carefully,
and stumbled to my seat.