

SUSANNA*

WITH THIS BEGINS THE STORY OF SUSANNA, THE DAUGHTER OF
HILKIAH AND THE WIFE OF JOAKIM.
THIS HAPPENED IN BABYLON WHERE THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL WERE
TAKEN INTO CAPTIVITY. THIS WAS COMPOSED IN VERSE BY
MARKO MARULIĆ OF SPLIT.

In Thee, who art the Creator of all, I place
The hope of these words, which I now prepare to sing;
I cease not, therefore, to entreat your mercy,
So that my word and my song may be guided by its light, 5
In which I shall recount of faithful wives,
Who are married, virtuous beyond reproach.
You came to my aid in praising the widow,
Now assist me to speak these similar approbations.
All honour will be yours, my God, 10
For beautifully to speak, is a gift from you.
And you young brides, accept these examples:
They shall teach you to be clean of sin
And that you might prefer to choose death
Rather than be unfaithful to your husbands;
For what good is it if people are not aware of your sin, 15
If it will become known to the one who judges all.
Finding themselves strayed under the yoke of Babylonian captivity
God's people shed tears in suffering,
Without liberating themselves from that bondage
Until the sun circled the earth for the sixtieth time: 20
There lived amongst them a man of decent stock,
Who had no children, by the name Joakim,
Who, so it happened, chose for his wife,
The chaste maiden, the noble Susanna.

* This translation was prepared from the annotated text of *Susana* as it appears in Marko Marulić, *Duhom do zvijezda* [selection and introduction by Bratislav Lučin], Zagreb: Mozaik knjiga, 2001, pp. 139-171. Also consulted was Bratislav Lučin's »Prinosi tekstu i tumačenju Marulićeve *Suzane*« in *Colloquia Maruliana* XII, Split 2003, pp. 145-165.

From the time they ate manna wandering in the desert* 25
 A more beautiful dawn had not broken,
 On whichever path she set foot,
 She caught the eye of those passing by.
 Everyone marveled at her, saying that one more beautiful
 They had not seen. She was the daughter of Hilkiyah. 30
 A white neck she had, her eyes were dark,
 And her head was as beautiful as could be.
 Her eyebrows and pupils, upon which sat a veil,
 Were, if I may so say, impressed by God himself.
 Looking at her from a distance, one would say a pink flower 35
 Bloomed from her mouth, or a petal of a rose.
 Her face looked poured as though out of snow,
 Not fully white, but mixed with crimson in part.
 Her dress made of various silks hung to the ground,
 And her body, slender and tall, was like a nymph's. 40
 Her penetrating mind, one could say,
 Was level with all times. Who would be able to express
 Praises sufficient and worthy
 To do justice to the beauty that she possessed?
 But much greater virtues flourished in her,** 45
 Mind and wisdom possessed by no other womenfolk.
 Beauty and good repute soul mates were in her,
 Coming together like dough and yeast in bread.
 Though wheat of this kind grows sparser
 Than the hairs on the head of those bent by years, 50
 She radiated with both such flowers,
 Like a fruit tree blossoming in its time.
 All that is a gift from you and your grace, O God,
 Which now shines through brightly from above
 With heavenly goodness, where no suffering is found, 55
 For with her virtue, she renounced the world and sin.
 For she understood righteousness, decrees and your laws,
 And thus had the disposition of a saint.
 Her parents she knew to honour,
 Heeding their instructions as well as obeying them, 60
 And accepting from them the words which you
 Deigned to impart on Moses when you spoke to him.
 Such order and law were seen
 In all her deeds: loving you above all

* Susanna' Beauty.

** Susanna's goodness.

And prepared to relinquish all her wealth and life 65
 Sooner than offend you in anything whatsoever.
 Her cherished wealth was to conduct herself with honour
 And in God to place all her hope.
 And her husband's estate, you may be assured, * 70
 Was the foremost in that land.
 Aplenty of wine and grain and oil
 He had every year. Joakim was he.
 No one was more fortunate among the Jews than he,
 Nor was anyone who lived there more noble than he,
 There was no one more honest than he among the people 75
 Taken into Babylon because of sin.
 Every day Jews would gather at his house
 As though at some prince's known to all.
 He had a large house built of marble,
 Adorned with colours within and from without, 80
 While the lower level was lined with arched columns at the base,
 Which shone burnished like honey glaze;
 Next to it a green meadow fragrant with grass spread,**
 And in the middle a well with water cool and crystalline.
 Strewn around were benches of stone, 85
 With vines veiling them in shade from above;
 Lined beside them garden trees swayed,
 Countless in number, resplendent in green.
 And their every branch was laden with fruit,
 Their foliage rustled when the breeze blew. 90
 Now, every kind of tree grew here
 Lending shade below, oaks, beeches and firs;
 Cypresses and pines and green willows,
 Green maples and trained vines on the top,
 Red apples and golden quinces, 95
 And planted beside them the sweetest almonds;
 And native figs and the hinterland kind
 Readily pecked by birds when they see them ripened.
 Then there were walnuts, hazelnuts, and chestnuts,
 And sweetest pears imaginable and pomegranates sweeter no less, 100
 And there were oranges, which we strain for baking,
 Or cut in smaller pieces just for the taking.
 Wild cherries, which yield a tart and sweet juice,
 And sweet cherries, which are a treat to eat after a meal;

* Joakim's estate.

** Joakim's Garden.

And peaches, which do not keep long after picked, 105
 Because their sides rot when they stay even a day;
 But that's not the case with the fruit placed on the table over-ripe,
 Plucked from the branch earlier, sorb-apples these would be.
 Of these trees there was a hundred, whose crop when dried,
 Would fill seven barrels and a half. 110
 And gallnuts were plucked here from up high,
 As were carobs, which had already turned black.
 And further below in the field a smell hovered,
 Sweeter than words can describe:
 Basil sprouted in stalks with green myrtle, 115
 Wormwood diffused and sweet marjoram with it.
 Along one side rosemary grew all over,
 And a bit below a row of roses bloomed;
 And lilacs grew in another row next,
 Whiter than the first fallen snow; 120
 Tansies with immortelle, carnations and violets,
 Looked like beryls embroidered on a garment.*
 A painter there never was, let anyone say what they will,
 Schooled to paint all this with such great skill.
 It would be difficult, I think, to enumerate the plants and fruits 125
 Or even imagine that one will ever hear of a garden such as this;
 On what rug could one expect the outpouring of such colours
 As the ones found here, so bright, so lively and so pure?
 When on their own were enamel and the colour blue
 Of such allure to be able to compete with 130
 The multihued beauty gathered
 In the garden flourishing there through and through?
 Through the garden's middle a brook flowed,
 Along its sides a heard of livestock grazed;
 On its edges, back and front, birds sang, 135
 Weaving goblet-like nests in which they hatched.
 And whoever came in amazement would say:
 Truly, this garden is like some earthly paradise.
 If the splendour of that garden was such,
 How marvellous must then be a soul which is righteous? 140
 Free of foul language, always speaking only good,
 Like virgin soil bringing forth bountiful wheat:
 Striving humbly God to please,
 She offers bread to the poor without airs of a proprietress,

* Beryls are precious stones, bright and golden, transparent.

** The pure soul is like Joakim's garden.

She lives wisely, and goes to church, 145
 Endlessly praises God, neglecting not to pray;
 She walks upright with equity and goodness adorned,
 In a state of purity, glowing with grace.
 God swathes her with eternal bliss,
 When with sorrow this world she leaves this; 150
 The true garden is not where man walks,
 But where like in a palace God resides.
 Rejoice, do not weep, O man, be not idle,
 Shout with joy in praise of God, a garden more beautiful
 Than Joakim or his lady you have, 155
 If only your soul in such a manner would live.
 Now may my zither turn its sound to the one
 Who is worthy to receive the crown
 Above all married women in those times
 And who lived captive in that Babylonian land. 160
 They were departing from the palace at midday
 And taking their leave from there, driven by the heat,
 When Susanna, not thinking she was seen
 Thought to freely stroll, took to the garden,
 Choosing the shade, praising God continually, 165
 Not suspecting that someone was watching her;
 But two judges who lingered there*
 Finally took their leave, departing at long last.
 Priests they were called, both
 Of advanced years, but short of reason. 170
 True reason does not inflate itself with pride,**
 Nor does it abandon the path of virtue of the spirit;
 And it shuns the sin of pride more
 Than a fish dry land, than a ship the reef and sandbank.
 But full of abomination were these two 175
 And of cunning no less. They both knew
 How to hide and secrete what was inside them,
 What is in their heart not wanting to say;
 Whitewashed tombs from without they could be called,
 But hideous was their dwelling from within. 180
 To all they appeared as the day, but in truth a dark night were they:
 Thus the sin that they bore remained unknown.
 They caught sight of Susanna but kept silent
 Upon finding her in the garden sitting.

* Old men notice Susanna.

** True reason.

Gazing at her, they stopped in approbation 185
 And with evil thoughts after her began to lust.
 They stood there settled like a lion for a doe lying in wait
 To trap her and press against her stretched out on the ground.
 Or like a hound who does not growl but waits to sink his teeth
 Holding back to rise when the time is right, 190
 Shriveling up, all shuddering, its jaws lifting
 To gain for what he aims with a single leap.
 They both decided to abandon God,
 And to turn their will to the evil which clutched them;
 Whichever one would leave, his heart would groan, 195
 And the one who first shook hands, was the first to return.
 When they met there to sit for a bit,
 They knew what was on their mind before even saying it;
 Then they declared: »Our wish is one and the same,
 Wanting to possess the one we crave. 200
 Here we are without our servants,*
 No one's looking for us now that we're here;
 Let's tread lightly, sneak in stealthily, let's be off
 And along those steps walk down.
 Let's go to the garden under the shelter 205
 And hide quietly to wait for an opportune moment.«
 The name of God did not cross their mind,
 Instead, the devil's seed filled their heads.
 Each was consumed by impure desire,
 Utterly bound and obsessed by the same snare. 210
 Thus they settled themselves in a place hidden by the leaves
 Of the poplar-tree, when Susanna arrived
 With two servant-girls, not knowing what was being contemplated,
 What painful wound was about to inflict her.
 It was dreadfully hot, the heat was scorching, 215
 So she said to her servants: »My loyal maids,
 Go quickly to the storeroom, which contains
 The gem ornaments and bring at once
 The pomade fragrance grated from the balsam tree
 When the cut branch lets out its juice. 220
 And I know that also there a cup of ointment you'll find,
 In paper wrapped: bring that, too, so that
 I may rub it down on me after I wash,
 This heat away from me to turn.
 I will not leave from here, and you be quick 225
 And make sure to close the garden gate behind you,
 So that no man, child, or anyone else comes here,

* The old men enter the garden and assail Susanna.

That my body I might treat when you come back.«
 The servant-girls departed leaving Susanna alone in the garden,
 And before they carried out what they had been asked, 230
 Making haste, the old men set out towards her;
 To carry out what they intended, they said to her: *
 »Look there's no one here,
 You're alone and we want to have you.
 Everyone's gone, no one can, no one'll 235
 Open the gate, who'll see us?
 So give in, don't deny us,
 For we're determined to love you.
 And if you refuse us, we'll swear by God that
 We caught a young man lying with you. 240
 Afraid that your servants 'll see, you dismissed them,
 Thinking that no one was here you made love with him.«
 Susanna turned pale from fear
 Like a ripe apple covered in dust.
 Like reeds her limbs shook 245
 Quivering in the light breeze by the brook;
 She fell down crying, beating her face
 With her hands and weeping sorrowfully.
 She shed tears in despair, lamenting with sadness,
 And not wanting to sin she exclaimed:** 250
 "Woe is me, hearing this and seeing how
 Trapped I am, I know not where to escape.
 If I commit evil deeds with you here,
 How will I escape God's judgment, I don't know.
 But if I don't do what you want, I know 255
 That I, an innocent, will perish at your hands.
 But I would rather forsake this life
 Than sin before my Lord,
 In whom I always heed to place my hope:
 Therefore, I do not regret not consenting to this sin. 260
 God will pay you who act like this;
 Do you think that there is no justice in heaven?«
 Then like a child she began to cry,
 Fearing that they would do more than threaten.
 Hearing the cry, the old men bellowed too;*** 265
 Heeding the same, a shepherd nearby thought jackasses he heard,
 Or, had he seen their beards, billy-goats he would have thought,
 And their noses had he seen, pecking cocks were they, he would conclude;

* The old men said to Susanna.

** Susanna speaks to the old men.

*** Susanna begins to cry. The old men bellow.

But had he seen them whole, I think
 He would say: »Oxen they resembled to a tee.« 270
 A more obese man than these there was none,*
 So let's see what their bodies were like!
 They drank wine, and meat with saffron sprinkled
 They ate with all the fat and spice,
 And whatever was found on the table 275
 When laid out for warlords to consume.
 Their bellies were like dishes filled with food of all kind,
 Neither rule nor law concerned them at all.
 In whom such debauchery pervades**
 In them iniquity rises above righteousness. 280
 Who can be content with suchlike as judges,
 Or that as priests such deviants should serve?
 For a drunken and full belly tracks the path of carnal pleasure,
 It is difficult for him to fashion purity and hard work,
 And when he sits in court having received a gift, 285
 The one who brought it will not plead in vain.
 I strayed enough complaining, it's time to return
 Where I heard the loud invoking cry.
 But pay careful attention to what is about to happen,
 My lute will now resonate forcefully. 290
 As Joakim's servants started to gather,
 The old men told what shameful thing had occurred,***
 But quite the opposite was heard from her
 Whom all generations of the Jews praised.
 Everyone was aghast, for never before 295
 Had they heard what was then to them said.
 Like the thinned metal hammered on the forge,
 In embarrassment the faces of the servants blushed;
 The relatives were overcome by grief
 And became cloaked with a mantle dark and doleful. 300
 Dissolved into tears, no one's heart
 Was at peace; you would think they saw her dead.
 Lump in their throat comes from such sorrow,
 And she trembles from fear for innocent she is slandered;
 Not that she feared that she would be killed, but that 305
 After her, a slandered reputation will linger.
 But the trust, which in God she placed,
 Remained with her, never abandoning her.

* One old man haughty and obese.

** Debauchery leads to sin.

*** The old men lie about Susanna.

The sun had already receded below the sea,
 Taking with it the day leaving behind the bitter night. 310
 In the devil's company all night long the two old men,
 Plotting many evils, their eyes did not close:
 Such was their sleeplessness; but different was Susanna's
 And also that of all her relatives, troubled by distress.
 She did not tire from pleading with God, 315
 Praying that at daybreak he look at her woe,
 And that when he comes, for the sake of justice he deliver her
 From the burden of the charge, which will be uttered.
 That lies, hypocrisy, maliciousness, be exposed,
 How virtue is made to suffer, and perversion 320
 With which both men want to shed her blood,
 And cover their own shamelessness at the same time;
 But this shall not be, for the falsehood will vanish,
 That God shall will, and unsoiled the truth will remain.
 The light of the dawn starts to break, and in the east 325
 The sun begins to rise, turning a bright day.
 Then the people gathered at Joakim's house
 And having entered would not leave
 Until the might of God's hands, which reaches everywhere,
 Defeated falsehood with truth, justice upheld. 330
 When everyone gathered there, as the priests had arrived
 They came closer, where the tables stood;
 They sat high on new chairs
 And forthwith spoke the following:
 »Call«, they said, »Hilkiah's daughter,* 335
 For her transgression requires that she be put to death.
 What one sows thus shall he reap,
 And having reaped, he shall winnow a lot or very little.
 Like bread, which one may think to be fresh from the outside,
 Its staleness is noticed only when it's tasted. 340
 You must believe that what you never thought likely,
 Will not remain hidden from you, O people;
 Everyone is surprised inside, but leaning forward,
 The stone from the tomb removed, his nose he will turn away
 And the word which is true will be admitted, 345
 Bowing before justice, glorified may be God.
 Unjust is the judgment of the judge and man
 Who does not consent to the law's fulfillment.«
 The ring of these words resonated falsely,
 They had a good tone, but mischievous was their intent. 350

* The old men address the people before Susanna arrives.

What they wanted to say the people still did not know,
 Bewildered they awaited to hear the sin of the one
 Whose ways they all thought to be pure,
 As indeed they were, above any newly married wife's.
 Without waste the son of the noble-woman Callista there present 355
 Summoned Susanna and her relations with her at once.
 And lo and behold Joakim and with him his wife,*
 And their kinfolk, the end of all this to see.
 Offended by that sin the old men sought to accuse
 Susanna, determined to have her condemned; 360
 They had no mercy. She stood head hung down
 Slandered with a disgrace of which she was innocent.
 She was afraid of being condemned;
 But would not leave until she had been judged.
 Then those who intended to keep secret their own indecency, 365
 Under oath began to embellish their evil lie;
 Accusing an innocent woman, with no fear of God,
 And without any shame they began to deceive the people.
 They rose and ordered that her head she uncover,
 Wanting to see what aroused them still. 370
 She uncovered her head and raised her eyes, she looked up
 That God, who created all, liberate her from them.
 Then they quickly rose, stood before the people,
 Placing their hands above her head,**
 They said: »She's the one we asked to be brought here, 375
 And what we two saw concerns her.
 We went walking about the garden,
 When we saw her and with her two servant maids;
 When she sent them away and closed the gate,
 Along the path a young man came by and stood with her. 380
 Like some thief he started to look around
 And then, taking her by the neck, he started touching her freely.
 Having observed this, we gave chase,
 But running we stumbled and were unable to catch him.
 When we seized her, we said: 'Who was that with you, who?' 385
 Our breath we did we waste, she would not tell.
 This we saw, to that here we testify
 For all to hear, you judge her now.«
 Having heard these words, they believed them***
 And an innocent woman to death condemned. 390

* Susanna appears before the court with her husband and relatives.

** The old men, placing their hands on Susanna, spoke before the people.

*** Susanna is condemned.

For they had regard for the age, reputation, and the number
 Of those who testified that this they saw.
 For the Scripture says: the word attested to
 By two or three, is to be believed; 395
 Being priests, judges as well and older than the rest,
 The two were believed all the more.
 Therefore, they all wanted to observe the law
 And stone to death the one they thought guilty.
 She started to implore: »Almighty God,*
 From whom nothing can be hidden, 400
 All secrets from the heaven's terrace are seen by you
 And judged. Who can say what you do not see?
 You foresee everything, everything is open to you,
 You probe everything before it happens.
 You know that I'm guiltless of which I'm falsely accused, 405
 The testimony against me has been deceitfully contrived.
 You are just, O God, do not forsake me,
 May it please you to absolve me, according to your will;
 May it please you to deliver me from this injustice,
 Even if my life's duration you do not prolong: 410
 The burden of death's painful hour is not as grave
 As the humiliation of a name disgraced.«
 Woefully thus the poor soul sang her song,
 And upon reaching God her voice was heard;
 Hence he that deceives will be punished, 415
 He that falsely accuses the innocent, himself is sinful.
 And you who are persecuted by evil lies,
 Know that God says: blessed is he who is persecuted,**
 Blessed is he who is reviled for the sake of righteousness,
 Not even mallets of iron will harm him. 420
 And those who malign, damn, curse, and beat him,
 They will not harm him, but add to their own sin.
 The Gospels tell you: do not fear
 Those who have the power only the body to kill;
 But look to fear and show honour to him 425
 Who can hurl the body along with the soul into perdition.
 For the acrimony and distress of an unjust judgment
 Does not mollify your neighbour, but makes him bitter even more;
 For they knew that she was not guilty of those transgressions,
 Which they cast upon her with their false testimony. 430
 Then Joakim began to speak before the elders

* The condemned Susanna implores God.

** Blessed are the persecuted for the sake of righteousness.

And to plead with them with tears and sorrow:^{*}
 »Woe, what haste drove you so
 With your hands to inflict upon us the deadly wound,
 Without waiting that I might defend 435
 My Susanna and on her behalf reply her innocence to prove.
 What am I to do when you have already decided,
 Before I spoke, her from me you separated;
 You wrongly condemned her, this much I can tell you,
 For you prevented that we speak our truth. 440
 Yet I well know the corruption of these old men,
 Which to declare before all of you I am ashamed.
 But why am I blaming them, along with them you are guilty too,
 For I did not think that in good reason you so lacked.
 Without assessing what and who are they who conceived the lie 445
 Against her of whom we know how she lived,
 Full of deceit are the ones who were believed;
 They who walked honourably were convicted.
 O just God, you see that what has befallen me
 Has not been visited upon anyone else; 450
 Not a word would I have said if I knew not the fidelity
 Always fostered by the one with whom now I perish:
 Are you going to tolerate such great injustice,
 And not rescue the weeping blameless,
 From the hands of those who dared to carry out such wickedness, 455
 Without regard for the justice of your truth?
 And you, dear woman, expecting a different outcome,
 Why do you tremble in the face of unexpected death?
 You know that you are innocent before God and before me,
 Let this knowledge be a comfort to you. 460
 May your fidelity be your consolation
 And your goodness with it, which has no blemish.
 Let those be dejected who perish because of their guilt,
 Not the innocent ones who are condemned to death in haste.
 They who kill the just, their own soul kill, 465
 They do them no harm, even if they murder them.
 Another's sin to eternal damnation does not lead,
 But one's own does whose desire leads him astray.
 Therefore, the ones who endure suffering, death and hurt,
 Walk along the righteous path and do not sin: 470
 To the ports of peace they lead the vessels of sorrow,
 Where the saints assemble, such is that virtue.

* Joakim laments the injustice and speaks to Susanna.

The holy prophets also suffered thus,
Enduring death and struggle, girding their waists with rectitude.
The fathers of these people sawed Isaiah through, 475
Then, in the course of time, Jeremiah they killed;
Zechariah too and many others,
And Uriah with him. On account of iniquity the world perishes.
But, dear God, he that chooses to die
Before transgressing your law, does not perish! 480
Fear not, therefore, woman; this burden
Do endure and stand courageous, to God be faithful:
For either he will reward you for this generously,
Or, drawing closer, he will wrench you free and shield you.
I will be comforted come what may, 485
But more so if he wills to set you free;
For how will I fare here without you?
Even if I were to reap a crop of pearls to it I would not adapt.
If at least I could gain whatever trifle relief
When I turn my mind to the delight, 490
With which your beauty and your fidelity,
Your obedience and your virtue, my life did award.
Separated from me, my sorrow you shall be;
And my joy that you were with me when you became mine.
Neither reproach nor quarrel our love knew, 495
To the end in harmony our life lasted true.
Wholeheartedly therefore direct your thought to God
And do not abandon him, he will grant you his grace.
I now leave my love with you,
Still, I am not leaving nor departing from you yet. 500
I trust and my hope in God I place,
As I prepare to see the end of this court.«
While he was speaking the words of his address,
Poor Susanna was shedding tears,
And listened silently reliving her woes, 505
Sighing inconsolably as she departed from him;
Having stopped his discourse, he embraced her warmly,
Bringing his face close to hers, his throat full of grief.
There was no haste, each other they held for a long time,
Wiping not their tears, until from each other they parted. 510
Then all her kin took turns to bid farewell,
Everyone lamenting, their faces wet with tears.
Shortly after that they started to take her away,
And her kin in sequence wailed even more.
The house was resonating from the moaning 515
When they finally turned them out.

All her kindred and acquaintances walked behind
 Following her closely, with hands in prayer raised;
 Entreating God: »O Lord, have mercy,
 Seeing that this woman is just, 520
 She who is righteous yet prepared to give up her life,
 Rather than live dishonourably in sin;
 This woman regularly gave you high praise,
 Don't allow that she be killed, let your power come to her aid!«
 But those with the authority to inflict death on her temporal life, 525
 To fulfill their moment of pleasure wanted to kill her all the same,
 Looking to take her to that place
 Where to death they said they would stone her.
 But the grace of God willed to look into that,
 And not allow those people to kill her; 530
 His mercy he willed to show,
 And not permit the righteous one to perish.
 Straight away a child he inspired
 Who began to speak, standing among the people;
 And before he took a breath, hearing him, everyone stopped, 535
 They all pulled back, and they all looked at him.
 Not even ten years of age yet,
 He shouted: »I am clean of her blood.«
 They said to him: »Tell us, Daniel, you who stand here«
 For that was his name, »what kind of words are these?« 540
 And he, rising confidently, started to speak even more loudly*
 Addressing the entire gathering like this:
 »Is this the way that you condemn a daughter of Israel,
 You mad people, even wanting to put her to death?
 The court you held was unjust, you didn't even notice** 545
 What the old men's anger intended to heap.
 Go back! It's time that the court test again
 The truthfulness of the evidence, and that it not be misled.«
 It wasn't difficult to go back; they assembled again
 Having recognized the character of her accusers. 550
 They had Daniel sit among them,
 And the principal elders said to him:
 »Sit here and you judge them! We are giving you the honour,
 Placing you above the others for God has chosen you for himself;***
 For at such an age such intelligence you would not have 555
 If the one who is in heaven was not with you.
 He who created the world and who knows the deeds of all,

* The child Daniel judges the old men.

** Daniel admonishes the people.

*** Daniel sits on the judge's seat.

Whether innocent, whether guilty, he wants you to judge.«
 Daniel said to them: »You are to separate these two,
 To hear from me the verdict of God's justice, 560
 So that you might recognize that the old men lied
 When you find out what they thought.«
 When those two old men were then separated,
 As he had ordered, he summoned the first one before him.
 He said to him: »In evil your old age immersed you,* 565
 The wicked deeds which it conceived shall be repaid;
 Improperly judged, the guilty were set free,
 And the innocent were condemned, the law not upheld,
 Even though the Lord says: do not kill the innocent,
 Do not inflict death on the just one. 570
 Tell me now, where did you see her
 With that young man, who came to her?
 Tell me, under what tree did they stop to make love,
 Since such a thing you said that they did?«
 He said: »They shut the garden gate with a latch 575
 And then lay under the sycamore.«
 With harsh words Daniel rebuked him
 For forging such a lie with his accusation,
 Saying: »Go on you wicked old man, this lie
 Was made up so that by it you may be punished; 580
 It will fall on your head and press you to the ground,
 It will weight down so hard as to destroy you,
 The sword of heavenly judgment will cut you in half,
 Because you dared to condemn a righteous one.«
 Having taken the first one away, Agab by name, 585
 He summoned the other one, who agreed with everything.
 He said to him: »O you descendant of Cain and not of Judah,**
 The burden of your evil intent bears down on you.
 You are of a foolish mind, with beauty you became infatuated,
 For he who is heedless, under the bridge will fall. 590
 Your reckless desire intoxicated your body and bones
 And steered your frantic old age into a hole.
 Wickedness often smears you with debauchery and
 The threat of it drives fear into the daughters of Israel;
 Lying with you, talking with you, 595
 Walking after you, they drown in adultery.
 They feared death, but not offending God,
 Hence without care they transgressed the law.

* Daniel, having separated the old men, says to the first one.

** Daniel speaks to the other old man.

But Helkiah's daughter was so faithful,
 Rather than disobey the law, she chose to die. 600
 But since there's no time to bring up other matters,
 Answer me here at the table what I ask you:
 So when you started to move toward her,
 Under what tree then did they start touching each other?«
 He opened his mouth and said loudly: 605
 »Under the pine tree which spreads a wide shade.«
 »Well, well, how can you lie so« — Daniel said —
 »not even a pagan would dare to do so.
 May the all-knowing God send down from heaven
 An angel, to cut you in half.« 610
 Seeing how the testimony of these two differed,
 Everyone there came to know their duplicity;
 They saw that with their lie the two mislead everyone,
 Deceiving them to kill Susanna as the court had decided.
 They cursed the character of the old men who lied* 615
 And with their deceit did cause the innocent to suffer;
 So they stood up and with arms raised to heaven,
 To God gave thanks, big and small.
 For whoever places in him his trust and praises him,
 God loves him in return and will not forsake him. 620
 The holy writ says: he who trusts
 In God, ensures that he will not be forsaken ;
 But he who is overcome by the temptation of evil deeds,
 Forgotten by God, flying up he will fall,
 And, alas, will land into the devil's vile hands, 625
 Never to be freed, having fallen into them for good.
 Thus the people spoke, thus everyone spoke,
 Placing their lots into the hat to change the verdict,
 And having changed it, deservedly to inflict death on the two old men,
 The ones who unjustly wanted to kill Susanna. 630
 O ordinance of God, what the power of your truth
 Safeguards remains strong, what it does not, perishes.
 In you there is no deceit. Those who do your will
 Do not falter, in you they remain;
 The light did not shine upon those who feared not 635
 To stand against the truth, which was known to them.
 They tied their hands behind their backs**
 And drove them off kicking them;

* The old men are condemned.

** They tied up the two old men and stoned them to death.

The flame of their anger flared greater
 Than the bursting flame of burning straw. 640
 All the more angry were their hands
 Because ashamed they moaned for having been deceived;
 For the two old men dared to lead them astray as they willed,
 Lying when they intended to bear false testimony.
 They all hastened to chase them out 645
 And started walking, leaving behind the dwelling.
 The sin of the two was known to all, they all rebuked them,
 Pushing them ahead with their hands by their shoulders and backs;
 And the two walked with eyes cast down,
 For ashamed were they to lift their faces. 650
 Like two thieves the couple staggered
 As they were escorted by Jewish soldiers,
 Planning to put them to death beyond the city —
 As decided at council – like the two thieves on each side of Jesus.
 Their death was of wounds different from those of the two 655
 Who were taken out that day; they killed them both
 By hurling stones at them, smashing their necks
 Without stopping, until they finished them off.
 They swayed and spun a little,
 Then fell to the ground absorbing the hits: 660
 Thus they killed them both. Such was the end
 Their lies had met: this song tells you that.
 And you who read this, don't let be overcome
 By some such will, which heaps slander,
 Upsets others, insults and defames,* 665
 Never indisposed to hurt another.
 Fear God's judgment, for such like are destroyed by God,
 Guard against inclinations to lie for lies invite wickedness.**
 That's the danger falsehoods brings, on its account Gehasi ***
 Was disfigured by leprosy, as one reads in the books. 670
 No one will gain any benefit from such wickedness,
 Deceived are they who think that lies will bring them profit.
 Therefore, endeavour to avoid all deceit
 And be reminded that the devil's daughter is she.
 Don't forsake the truth for God is called by that name, **** 675

* Be mindful not to slander others.

** Guard against lies.

*** Gehasi: this was a disciple of the prophet Elisha, who lied because of greed and suffered the disease of Naaman.

**** Love the truth.

Always keep her company; he who dwells in her,
 Dwells in God and God dwells in him;
 God does not overlook him and aids him in everything,
 Just like he came to Susanna's aid, whom the wicked men wanted
 To kill, flogging her with a whip; he willed to defend her 680
 Seeing that it was worthy to protect the one
 Who did not care to save her life or her repute,
 Preferring to die a shameful death
 Than to destroy her soul through covert transgression;
 She was willing to die with a smeared name, 685
 Rather than live dishonestly in secret.
 What words of praise for any woman in ancient scripts
 Could say that she is like Susanna?
 Not even Penelope was her equal, who
 Lived faithfully while awaiting her husband's return; 690
 Nor Alcestis, who did not hesitate to choose
 Her own death in order that her husband live;
 Nor the one who did not want to live after she lost her husband,
 Ending her life with embers in her teeth;
 Nor the raped wife, who killed and caused that he 695
 Who raped her be put to the sword, thus confirming her fidelity.
 Sulpicia herself would not be worthy
 Of the honour which belongs to Susanna,
 Even though in truth none was more honourable
 In Rome in her days than she. 700
 But Sulpicia's honour was not tested by distress
 Like the honour of Susanna, nor was it so offended.
 The noble act of Lucretia
 Would be meager if placed by Susanna's side;
 Lucretia consented to sin but not to give up 705
 Her good repute, and that's why she chose to kill herself:
 Susanna did not want to sin before God,
 Therefore she cared neither about her repute nor her life;
 That was fitting for her, who loved God more
 Than herself. So we too are to love him, 710
 Him alone above all else, refusing
 To sin on account of some feared evil deed.
 Seeing Susanna thus, they all rose,
 Rejoicing, they gave praise to God;
 So they returned to that house 715
 And celebrated pouring wine into pitchers.
 Some were drunk and some sober, they brought sweets
 In cups into the hands of those who were sitting.
 As one of the merry-makers brought a goblet to his mouth,

His elbow was knocked from below , the goblet fell out of his hands 720
And clanged against the tiled floor; wine spilled all over his mouth,
His face and his eyes, and laughter overtook them all.
Joachim then stood up and profusely thanked
All those celebrating for having done what was right.
From then on great esteem was shown 725
To Daniel, who possessed judgment
That surpassed that of all the elders,
And this becoming apparent at his tender age.
This all happened when Babylon came under the rule of
Cyrus who replaced Astyages on the throne. 730
There is nothing to be said about that,
Only that we should give glory to God,
Whose truth and judgment protects the righteous
And punishes the wicked with deserved death;
For to us as well he gave the blessing to compile these words, 735
In which Susanna's honour will be so great,
That all married women will praise her, seeking to
To be honourable following her path.
Navigating through such a sea, through a storm we sailed,
Showered by the sea, we folded down the sail 740
And to God we prayed for his help,
And we saw him walking towards us on the water.
Then the fear left us, the waters calmed down,
The wind rose no more; for God ordered it so.
Everyone rejoiced, and we drifted smoothly, 745
The shore appeared green, and pulled into the port.
Since we have arrived, we shall not leave from here,
We reached our destination safely, let us now rest.
Only let's remind married women
And say to them: this is what God tells us, 750
How much he himself loves those who safeguard honesty
And uphold faith in chaste living.
Fall not into the sin of foul lawlessness,
And rid your thoughts, O woman, of the foolish world;
God will set you free of affliction and suffering, 755
If you shun vileness, and if you walk the straight path.
He will not allow you to be harmed by a malicious tongue
Nor allow you to be ensnared by some deceitful lie;
With abundant grace he will fill you
And with the great honour of blessedness crown you. 760
I will also hearten the young man who wishes
To stand himself in good stead by fulfilling what God commands.
For the law says that he who covets a wife

Other than his own, with that sin he shall perish.
 Don't linger where she rests, don't look where she goes, 765
 Neither listen to what she sings nor the words she speaks.
 And keep far away from where she dances,
 And when she walks by, turn your eyes from her.
 Always stay away from the company of women,
 Rely on advice that does not deceive. 770
 For if the fervour of a woman's beauty
 Creeps into the bones of old men whose blood is cold,
 How can a youth then be free of such fever, himself burning,
 Escape from such heat, while standing by the fire?
 How safe will be the one in whom youth is ablaze, 775
 If the old men were burned up by wantonness?
 O you song which I sang, rest your music
 Upon the altars of God and do decree: Be deigned to receive o Lord
 This song of your gifts, you who reigns
 Over all creation, and to paradise do us bring. 780
 Amen

Translated by Vladimir Bubrin

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