

Sukkot and the Seven Beggars

תִּיבוֹ אוֹשְׁפִיזִין עֵילָאִין, תִּיבוֹ תִּיבוֹ אוֹשְׁפִיזִין קְדִישִׁין, תִּיבוֹ תִּיבוֹ אוֹשְׁפִיזִין דְּמִהִימְנוּתָא

Before beginning his thirteenth and final tale “The Seven Beggars”, R. Nachman asked his students to bring him the news of the world. Listening, silent, he sighed and opened, “let me share with you how once there was joy from within despair”.

The tale tells of a carnivalesque celebration. As all the villagers return to their homes, two young orphans, a young boy and girl, are left behind in the vacant forest. Bereft and lost they are visited by seven enigmatic beggars who open with advice and close with blessings.

With each beggars departure the desire of the orphans grows, mourning the loss and anticipating their re/turn. The beggars of the neighboring villages, the “community of those without community” take the children under their care, initiating them into the ways of the impoverished.

Eventually the community decides that the orphaned children should get married. A royal feast was set in a neighboring village. The beggars descend on the feast collecting the leftovers and the surplus for the marriage of the lost children.

The beggars dig a four-walled pit into the mud of the forest. The orphans descend into the pit. The pit is covered with branches and dirt.

The seven enigmatic beggars, the blind, the deaf, the stuttering, the hunchbacked, the crooked and the arm-less visit the muddy pit covered with branches to offer their gifts.