

The Blind Beggar: Weary Eyes

And they began to remember the kindness they received in the forest. And they began to cry, to yearn: "how can we bring the blind beggar here, the one who brought us bread in the forest?" Suddenly, as they were still yearning for the blind beggar, he appeared: "here I am", he announced, "I have come to join you at your wedding, and to provide you with a gift: that you should be old like me. Previously I had blessed you with this, and now I offer it as a gift: that you may live a long life like me. Do you think I am truly blind? I am not blind at all, rather, the time of the world is but a blink of an eye, and I am very old yet I remain entirely young, for I have not yet begun to live, nevertheless I am very old indeed".

We are bombarded with images. Caught in the thicket of media, the eyes collapse under the weight of visions that assault the eyes.

The world in all its harshness, the sheer outsidersness that descends into our dwellings forces one to blink, reassuring ourselves that what we see is real. Things that in previous times were un/imaginable have now become commonplace.

With our gaze held on the moving images that move us towards the tears that have since dried up, the perceivable world induces a certain blindness. An inability to not-look. A blindness that sees too much. Worn out by the incessant barrage of images, the eyes grow tired. Squinting under the burden of the seen, our vision is blurred- seeing duplicitous, frightful things in the shadow of a distant clarity (see Likkutei Moharan, I:51).

Unable to close our eyes to the world, our gaze is caught in the brokenness, the weariness, the burden of times incessant sway that imposes the shackles of oldness on all things once new.

There is a path of vision, of a blindness that sees. A way of looking through *stimu d'eiynim*, the closing of the eyes. To peer into time. Through the trappings of her vicious movement, into the recesses of the perpetually new. Old with the knowledge of this-worldly pain; young with the knowledge of other-worldly time.

Closing our eyes to the incessant barrage of images, images born of lack and desire, we catch a glimpse of the gift hidden within the veil of the broken.

“Our master, may his memory be a blessing, answered and said: everyone says that there is this-world (olam ha-zeh) and the world-to-come (olam ha-bah). Regarding the world-to-come- we believe that there is a world-to-come; it is possible that this-world exists as well in some realm, because here it appears to be hell, for everyone is filled with interminable suffering. And he said: this-world does not exist at all.”

(R. Nachman of Breslov)