Seeing and Being Seen: "In the Shade of the Oak"

אָשָּׁה קְשִׁישָׁה וְחוֹלַת רַגְלַיִם An old hobbled woman a beggar in the street

was drinking tea in a paved courtyard

in the shade of the oak.

It was wondrous to me how she could break free

from the terrors of a cursed fate

to refined etiquette

to regal manners that take wing

יות a life of bounty, in a life of beauty. בּחַיִּים שֵׁל טוֹבָה בִּחַיִּים שֵׁיֵשׁ בָּהֶם נוֹי.

In her brown eyes shines the light

that Job saw in the heart of the whirlwind שֶׁרָאָה אִיּוֹב בְּלֵב הַסְּעָרָה

the shame of rubbish did not obscure in her face

.את אימת השמים the awe of heaven.

בתאם אמרה לי: Suddenly, she said to me:

שַׁמְתַּ לֵב לְאִישׁ שֵׁמוֹכֵר סְדָקִית בַּמַּרְתֵּף Did you notice the man who sells notions in the basement

at the corner?

ראית אֶת מַבַּטֵיו? Did you see how he looks?

נְדְהַכְּוּתִי I was amazed

that even in her bleak state she could reflect so

. בְּחֶזְיוֹנוֹת הַחַיִּים on life's dramas.

בק כַּאֲשֶׁר עָלָה בָּהּ לִבָּה עַל גְּדוֹתָיו But only when her heart overflowed

and she offered me a jar of honey

--שָׁקְבְּלָה בְּאיֹזֶה מְבוֹא that she had been given in some doorway—

did I discover to my surprise

that my love still hovered in the lower spheres

for I had to shatter seven walls of refusal פֿי הָיָה עָלַי לְנַפֵּץ שֶׁבַע חוֹמוֹת שֶׁל

to be able to accept from her hand פְּדֵי שָׁאוּכַל לְקַבֵּל מִיּיָדָה

אָת דבַשׁ מַתַּת הַיְדִידוּת. honey offered as a gift of friendship.

Zelda, "In the Shade of the Oak" Translated by Rabbi Steven Sager