

YOUR EYES

by Yisroel Shtern

Translated by Miriam Koral (2005, 2013)

So he tells her:

Your eyes are pearls.
Yet pearls lie in the sea
and the waves ever restless be –
How can I be sure of thee?

And she replies:

Where the waters roil wilder
is where the swimmer his measure seeks.
If that is thy way – then come to me!

Then he tells her:

Your eyes are children,
black laughing children.
All day they run around
from street to street, and from the streets
to the trees – and from the trees
they dance the sun to greet,
and late at night they weep:
Give the moon to me! –
How can I be sure of thee?

And she replies:

He who a good father is
laughs when his children laugh;
when they cry – their tears are his.
If that is thy way – then come to me!

Then he tells her:

Your eyes are tablets,
black fire on white fire.
It may yet be
that long our desert sojourn takes
with sins occurring along the way,
and they will break --
How can I be sure of thee?

And she replies:

When hands grow scorched
by the fiery stones,
letting them drop to the ground,
a Moses sprung from compassion ascends
between the heavens and the hills,
and upwards he cries: Forgive them!
And he brings new tablets again.
If that is thy way – then come to me!

(Ed. - date of composition unknown – but before 1935)