



“He smelled the fragrance of his garments and blessed him”

Yaakov Avinu Received the Berachos in the “Garments of Skin” HKB”H Made for Adam HaRishon from the Skin of the Primeval Serpent

This week’s parsha is parshas Toldos. In this essay, we will focus on the wonders of HKB”H’s orchestration of human events. We learn that Yaakov Avinu received the Berachos from his father, Yitzchak, by wearing Eisav’s coveted garments that were in safekeeping with their mother, Rivkah, as it states (Bereishis 27, 15): **“ותקח רבקה את בגדי עשו בנה הגדול החמודות אשר אתה בבית ותלכש את יעקב—בנה הקטן—then Rivkah took the precious garments of Eisav, her older son, which were with her in her house, and clothed Yaakov, her younger son.”**

Later on in the narrative, we learn that not only did these garments prevent Yitzchak from revealing Yaakov’s true identity—i.e., that he was not Eisav—but they induced Yitzchak Avinu to bestow the Berachos on him willingly and wholeheartedly, because they possessed the fragrance of Gan Eden. Here are the pertinent pesukim (ibid. 21): **“ויאמר יצחק אל יעקב גשה נא ואמושך בני האתה זה בני עשו אם לא, ויגש יעקב אל יצחק אביו וימשהו ויאמר הקול קול יעקב—Yitzchak said to Yaakov, “Come close, if you please, so I can touch you, my son; are you, indeed, my son Eisav or not?” So, Yaakov drew close to Yitzchak his father, and he touched him and said, “The voice is the voice of Yaakov, but the hands are the hands of Eisav.”** Then, after Yitzchak is brought food and wine, it says (ibid. 27): **“ויירח את ריח בגדיו: ויברכהו ויאמר, ראה ריח בני כריח שדה אשר ברכו ה', ויתן לך האלקים מטל השמים—he smelled the fragrance of his garments and blessed him; he said, “See, the fragrance of my son is like the fragrance of the field which Hashem has blessed. And may Elokim give you of the dew of the heavens and of the fatness**

of the earth, and abundant grain and wine.” Rashi comments: **This teaches us that the fragrance of Gan Eden entered with him (Yaakov).**

In light of these events, we will endeavor to clarify: **1) What was so special about Eisav HaRasha’s garments that are described by the Torah as “בגדי עשו החמודות”? 2) Why did HKB”H arrange for Yaakov Avinu to receive the Berachos specifically while being clothed in these garments? 3) Why did these special garments acquire the fragrance of Gan Eden specifically when Yaakov Avinu put them on?**

Eisav’s Coveted Garments Were the Garments HKB”H Made for Adam HaRishon

To answer these questions, we will embark on a sacred journey strolling through the enchanting gardens planted by Chazal with their wisdom and “ruach hakodesh” in various Midrashim and in the Zohar hakadosh. We will reveal the source of these unique garments, who made them, and how they came to be in Eisav’s possession. Although Eisav usually wore them when he went out to hunt, on this momentous day, HKB”H caused him to forget them and leave them in the safekeeping of Rivkah, his mother. This enabled her to dress Yaakov in them, so that he could receive the Berachos from Yitzchak Avinu by a ruse.

We will begin our journey with Rashi’s comment (Bereishis 27, 15) that Eisav coveted these garments, because he had taken them from Nimrod (see B.R. 65, 16). Rashi does not explain why Eisav coveted them,

or how he acquired them from Nimrod. The answer to these questions can be found in the Pirkei D'Rabbi Eliezer (Chapter 24):

The garment that HKB"H made for Adam and his wife was with them (Noach) in the ark; and when they exited the ark, Cham, the son of Noach, brought them out with him, and bequeathed them to Nimrod. When he wore them, all beasts, animals, and birds came and prostrated themselves before him, believing that it was due to the force of his might. Therefore, they made him king over themselves, as it is said (ibid. 10, 9): "Therefore it is said, 'Like Nimrod, a mighty hunter before Hashem.'"

Further on, it explains how these garments got from Nimrod to Eisav:

Rabbi Meir said: Eisav, his (Yaakov's) brother, saw Nimrod's garment and coveted it in his heart. So, he slew him and took it from him. And how do we know that they were desirable in his eyes? Because it says, "Rivkah took the precious garments of Eisav, her older son." And whoever wore them also became mighty, as it says (ibid. 25, 27): "And Eisav became a man skilled at trapping." So, when Yaakov departed from his father, Yitzchak, he said, "Eisav HaRasha is not worthy to wear this garment." What did he do? He dug into the ground and buried it.

We find another related, incredible chiddush in the Zohar hakadosh. Eisav's garments were the very same garments that HKB"H clothed Adam HaRishon with after the cheit. This explains why Yitzchak Avinu sensed the fragrance of Gan Eden when Yaakov entered wearing them. As we know, Yaakov Avinu was a semblance of the grandeur and beauty of Adam HaRishon (B.B. 58a). Therefore, when Yaakov wore these garments, they emitted the original fragrance of Gan Eden that they had when Adam HaRishon wore them. Here is a loose translation of the passage (Toldos 142b):

"Rivkah took Eisav's garments, etc." These were the garments that Eisav acquired from Nimrod. These were also the prestigious garments that came from Adam HaRishon and came into Nimrod's possession. Nimrod would hunt prey in them, as it is written (ibid. 10, 9): "He was a mighty hunter before Hashem, etc." Eisav went out to the field and fought with Nimrod, killed him, and took

these garments from him. This is the implication of the passuk (ibid. 25, 29): "And Eisav came in from the field, and he was exhausted . . ."

Eisav would take those garments to Rivkah; he would go out to hunt in them. That day, he did not take them; he went out to the field and was delayed there. When Eisav wore them, they did not give off any fragrances (scents). But when Yaakov put them on, the lost article returned to its original state, and they emitted fragrances, since the beauty of Yaakov was a semblance of the beauty of Adam. Hence, they returned at that time to their original state and emitted fragrances.

HKB"H Fashioned the "Garments of Skin" from the Skin of the Primeval Serpent

In this manner, we can explain the reason that HKB"H, the Grand Orchestrator, arranged for Yaakov Avinu to receive the Berachos specifically when he was clothed in the clothes that HKB"H had provided for Adam HaRishon after the cheit. We will begin by introducing a fascinating bit of information found in the Pirkei D'Rabbi Eliezer (Chapter 20) concerning the "garments of skin" that HKB"H made for Adam and Chava: **Rabbi Ilai says: From the skin the nachash sloughed off, HKB"H took it and made for them garments of skin and clothed them.**

This is truly astounding! Why would HKB"H choose to clothe Adam and Chava specifically in garments fashioned from the skin of the "nachash hakadmoni"—the primeval serpent? What purpose did this serve? Furthermore, why does the Targum depict these garments as "garments of glory"? It is equally difficult to understand why HKB"H arranged for Yaakov Avinu to receive the Berachos from Yitzchak Avinu specifically in these garments belonging to Eisav. After all, HKB"H made them from the skin of the "nachash hakadmoni," who had tricked Adam and Chava into eating from the Eitz HaDa'as.

In addition to all of these questions, we must also address the depiction in the Pirkei D'Rabbi Eliezer above of the profound effect these garments had on the animals and birds: **They would come and prostrate themselves before him . . . Therefore, they made him king over themselves.** What is the connection between them being stripped off the nachash to clothe Adam HaRishon and their amazing power over all of the animals?

A Fascinating Insight from the Ramak: the Nachash Was Placed in Gan Eden to Serve Adam HaRishon

Now, I would like to present to my royal audience what I was able to clarify and unravel regarding this enigmatic issue thanks to the favor of Hashem. We know that the “nachash hakadmoni” was in Gan Eden together with Adam and Chava. In fact, it approached Chava prior to the cheit and said to her (according to Rashi, Bereishis 3, 4): **“You certainly will not die.” He pushed her until she touched it** (the tree). **He said to her, “Just as there is no death for touching, similarly, there is no death for eating.”** But why did HKB”H place the nachash in Gan Eden in the first place?

We find wonderful, exalted explanations in the impeccable teachings of the divine kabbalist, the Ramak, in the holy sefer Ohr Yakar on the Zohar hakadosh (Volume 2, 6, 39). He asserts that HKB”H placed the nachash in Gan Eden to serve Adam HaRishon and clean up after him. Here is a brief excerpt of his sacred words: **The nachash was tasked with serving Adam with regards to all his materialistic—“gashmi”—needs in the Gan. For, the Gan is elevated by spirituality—“ruchniyut”—and brought down by material matters to the materialistic levels that we find ourselves in (today). So that Adam and Chava would not be involved with this material (physical) aspect (of the Gan), the nachash was created. Thus, the material things that Adam might wish to deal with would be relegated to the nachash.**

He goes on to explain that had the nachash fulfilled his assigned task serving Adam HaRishon, his sustenance would not have consisted of dust. Instead, he would have received all of the bones and leftovers from Adam for consumption—akin to the excess “kodshin”—the limbs and fats that were consumed on the mizbeiach throughout the night.

The Nachash Reigned over all the Animals that Were There to Serve Adam

As a loyal servant in the presence of his master, I would like to support this notion of the Ramak’s, zy”a—that HKB”H deliberately placed the nachash in Gan Eden to serve Adam and take care of all the material matters,

so that Adam could study Torah and serve Hashem without interruptions or distractions. Let us refer to a teaching in the Gemara (Sanhedrin 59b):

“תניא רבי שמעון בן מנסיא אומר חבל על שמש גדול שאבד מן העולם, שאלמלא נתקלל נחש, כל אחד ואחד מישראל היו מזדמנין לו שני נחשים טובים, אחד משגרו לצפון ואחד משגרו לדרום להביא לו סנדלכונים טובים ואבנים טובות ומרגליות, ולא עוד אלא שמפשיילין רצועה תחת זנבו ומוציא בה עפר לגינתו ולחורבתו.”

It was taught in a Baraisa: Rabbi Shimon ben Menasya says: It is unfortunate that a great servant was lost from the world. For, had the serpent not been cursed, each and every one of Yisrael would have had two good serpents as servants; one he would send to the north and one he would send to the south to bring him gems, precious stones, and pearls. Furthermore, it would have been possible to attach a strap beneath its tail and have it take out soil to his garden and to his ruin.

Further support can be brought from that which is written prior to the “cheit Eitz HaDa’as” (ibid. 2, 15): **ויקח Hashem Elokim את האדם ויניחהו בגן עדן לעבדה ולשמרה—Hashem took the man and placed him in Gan Eden, to work it and to guard it.** We find the following interpretation from Chazal in the Pirkei D’Rabbi Eliezer (Chapter 12):

“And He put him in Gan Eden to work it and guard it.” And what work was required inside the Gan that He said, “to work it and guard it”? Perhaps you might say that work was required in Gan Eden for him to trim the vines, plough and clear the stones from the ground, or to bind sheaves, or to harvest. But all the trees grew on their own. Perhaps you might suggest that work was required to irrigate the Gan. But a river flowed out of Eden, as it says (ibid. 2, 10): “And a river went out of Eden (to irrigate the Gan).” So, what is the meaning of the phrase “to work it and to guard it”? Rather, it means to be occupied with the study of Torah, and to safeguard the way of the Eitz HaChaim. And there is no Eitz HaChaim other than the Torah, as it says (Mishlei 3, 18): “It is a tree of life (Eitz Chaim) for those who cling to it.”

Clearly, prior to the “cheit Eitz HaDa’as,” it was unnecessary for man to work fields and vineyards; everything grew on its own and maintained itself based on the word of HKB”H; man’s effort and input were not required. This is consistent with the teaching in the

Gemara (ibid.): **“אדם הראשון מיסב בגן עדן היה, והיו מלאכי השרת צולין לו בשר ומסגנין לו יין”**—**Adam HaRishon would recline in Gan Eden; ministering angels would broil meat for him and pour him wine.** Even the malachim waited on him hand and foot, so that he could serve Hashem without being interrupted by matters of Olam HaZeh.

With this understanding, we can begin to comprehend Chazal’s teaching that initially—before the nachash in Gan Eden rebelled against Hashem and enticed Adam and Chava to sin—HKB”H appointed it king of the animal kingdom. Here is a pertinent passage from the Gemara (Sotah 9b): **“וכן מצינו בנחש הקדמוני שנתן עיניו במה שאינו ראוי לו, מה שביקש לא נתנו לו ומה שבידו נטלוהו ממנו, אמר הקב”ה אני אמרתי יהא מלך על כל בהמה וחיה, ועכשיו ארור הוא מכל הבהמה ומכל חית השדה, אני אמרתי יהלך בקומה זקופה, עכשיו על גחונו ילך.”** **And so we find concerning the “nachash hakadmoni” that set its eyes on something not fit for it. What it sought, they did not give it, and what was in its hand, they took from it. HKB”H said: I had said that it should be king over every animal and beast, but now, it is more cursed than all the animals and beasts of the field. I had said that it would walk upright, but now, on its belly, it will go.**

It appears that they deduced this from the passuk (Bereishis 3, 1): **“והנחש היה ערום מכל חית השדה אשר עשה ה’ אלקים”**—**now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field that Hashem had created.** The Targum render this as: **“וחויה הוה חכים מכל חות ברא”**. This implies that HKB”H endowed the nachash with chochmah, so that it could reign as king of the entire animal kingdom. In this capacity, it could subjugate them to assist Adam HaRishon and his progeny to serve Hashem without any distractions or hindrances.

Unfortunately, the nachash used its wisdom in a negative way instead of a positive way. Instead of helping man fulfill his destiny in the service of Hashem, it caused his downfall by inducing him to sin by partaking of the Eitz HaDa’as. As a consequence, HKB”H cursed it. Rather than being the king of the animals, it became the exact opposite; it became the most accursed of all creatures. This is evident from the passuk (ibid. 3, 14): **“ויאמר ה’ אלקים אל הנחש כי עשית זאת ארור אתה מכל הבהמה ומכל חית השדה על גחונו תלך ועפר תאכל כל ימי חיך.”** **Hashem G-d said to the nachash, “Because you have done this, accursed are you beyond all the cattle and beyond all beasts**

of the field; upon your belly shall you go, and dust shall you eat all the days of your life. With regards to the words **“upon your belly shall you go,”** Rashi comments: **“רגלים היו לו ונקצצו”—it (the serpent) once had legs, which were later cut off.** Practically speaking, its legs were no longer necessary to facilitate the service and assistance of mankind. On the contrary, it was preferable that it not have legs that could enable it to run to perpetrate evil. After all, it had acted as man’s deterrent and adversary rather than as his assistant.

The Auspicious Power of the Skin of the Nachash

Following this sublime line of reasoning, we will now reveal the unique, auspicious qualities of the “garments of skin” that HKB”H fashioned for Adam HaRishon from the sin of the “nachash hakadmoni.” As we learned from the Pirkei D’Rabbi Eliezer, it attracted all animals and birds to come and bow down to it. Now, we have learned in the Mishnah (Kiddushin 82a): **“רבי שמעון בן אלעזר אומר ראית מימך חיה ועוף שיש להם אומנות והן מתפרנסין שלא בצער, והלא לא נבראו אלא לשמשני ואני נבראתי לשמש את קוני, אינו דין שאתפרנס שלא בצער, אלא שהרעותי את מעשי וקפחתי.”** **Rabbi Shimon ben Elazar says: Have you ever seen a wild animal or a bird that has a trade? Yet, they sustain themselves without travail, though they were created only to serve me; whereas, I was created to serve my Master. Does it not follow that I certainly should be able to sustain myself without difficulty? However, I have corrupted my deeds and thereby forfeited my sustenance.**

The brilliant author of the Panim Yafos (Bereishis) presents a fabulous interpretation of this Mishnah based on a teaching of the masterful Arizal in Sha’ar HaMitzvos (Eikev) concerning the activity of eating. The purpose of eating is for man to elevate the sparks of kedushah from the four categories that make up all of creation: **דומם, צומח, חי, מדבר—inanimate objects, plant life, animals, and mankind** (the one who speaks).

The lowest category, inanimate objects—**“domeim”**—consists of all objects that are stationary and cannot change locations on their own — such as earth, rocks, water, and salt. The next category up, plant-life—**“tzomeiach”**—possesses a life-force and includes everything that has the ability to grow and thrive—such as trees, grass, plants, and vegetation.

Next is the category of animals—“chai”—creatures possessing an even greater, more developed life-force, includes living creatures that possess the ability to move from place to place. The highest category, man, “midaber,” consists of human beings—whom HKB“H endowed with the power of speech.

If we examine this hierarchy, it becomes apparent that each category is nourished by the category below it. How so? The plants and vegetation, “הצומח,” receive nourishment from the soil of the earth, “הדומם”; thus, the sparks and elements of the inanimate matter are incorporated into the “צומח” and become inseparable from it. As a result, the “nitzotzei kedushah” originating from the inanimate category are elevated and become an integral part of the plant category.

The animals, “החי,” feed off of the plants and their essence becomes inseparable and indistinguishable from that of the animals. Thus, the “nitzotzei kedushah” previously found in the “צומח” category are elevated to the category of animal-life, “החי,” and are integrated into this category. Finally, man, “המדבר,” possessing the faculty of speech, is nourished by the meat and flesh of creatures in the animal category, “החי”. When he slaughters a kosher animal according to Torah guidelines, and consumes its meat after reciting a berachah, he incorporates the life-force and “nitzotzei kedushah” of the animal—which already contains the “nitzotzei” of the plant-life and inanimate elements—as an inseparable part of his being.

Based on this, the Arizal explains the rationale underlying the Gemara’s statement (Pesachim 49b): “תניא רבי אומר עם הארץ אסור לאכול בשר, שנאמר זאת תורת הבהמה והעוף, כל העוסק בתורה מותר לאכול בשר בהמה ועוף, וכל שאינו עוסק בתורה אסור לאכול בשר בהמה ועוף.” **It was taught in a Baraisa: Rebbe says: It is forbidden for an “ahm ha’aretz”** (a boor; an unlearned Jew) **to eat meat. For it is stated** (Vayikra 11, 46): **“This is the Torah pertaining to the animal and the bird.” Whoever is occupied with the study of Torah is permitted to eat the meat of an animal or bird, but whoever is not occupied with the study of Torah is forbidden to eat the meat of an animal or bird.** For, a talmid-chacham, one who engages in Torah-study, elevates and rectifies the “nitzotzei kedushah” that he incorporated from the meat that he consumed. An “ahm ha’aretz,” however, who neglects to

study Torah, but chooses to occupy himself instead with the meaningless, frivolous pursuits of Olam HaZeh, is prohibited from eating meat; because not only does he fail to elevate the “nitzotzei kedushah,” but he actually drags them down to perdition.

The Three Lower Categories Flee from a Person Who Will Not Elevate Them

Accordingly, the Panim Yafos explains why animals usually find their food in the vegetation scattered on the ground in fields and forests. For, the “nitzotzei kedushah” in the “domeim” and “tzomeiach”—inanimate objects and plant life—inherently desire to ascend to a higher level. The only way this can be accomplished is if an animal consumes them. Therefore, they are made readily available for animal consumption.

This then is the message conveyed by Rabbi Shimon ben Elazar: **Have you ever seen a wild animal or a bird that has a trade? Yet, they sustain themselves without travail.** Undoubtedly, this is because the plants and vegetation pursue the animals and birds, in a sense, because they want to be eaten by them, so that they can ascend to a higher level of kedushah. Yet, this poses the difficulty: **But, after all, they were created only to serve me; whereas, I was created to serve my Master. Does it not follow that I certainly should be able to sustain myself without difficulty?**

In other words, animals were created solely to serve and benefit mankind—so that a person will eat them and serve Hashem with the energy provided by consuming them. Thus, the “nitzotzei kedushah” within the animal are elevated and rectified. This prompted Rabbi Shimon to ask why mankind has to work so hard to make a livelihood and find sustenance. If animals find sustenance so easily, one would think that, all the more so, this should hold true for man. So, why is this not the case? He answers: **However, I have corrupted my deeds and thereby forfeited my sustenance.** Since man has strayed and does not serve Hashem with the strength and vigor provided by the food, he has forfeited his sustenance. How so? The food, such as the animals, flee from him, so that he will not sully the “nitzotzei kedushah” that they possess. This is the gist of his intriguing explanation.

We can now shed some light on the magnificent “segulah” associated with the “garments of skin” that

HKB"H fashioned for Adam and Chava from the skin of the nachash. They drew every animal, beast, and bird to them automatically. For, as explained, the nachash was created to be the king of all the animals. As such, all the animals came to it to join in its mission of assisting man to serve Hashem.

Unfortunately, the nachash rebelled against Hashem. Not only did it not help Adam to fulfill the mitzvos of Hashem, but it even caused him to sin. This prompted HKB"H to strip off its amazing skin and make garments from it for Adam and Chava. This was designed to teach them a valuable lesson. Although they were banished from Gan Eden for violating Hashem's command, and they forfeited their automatic sustenance, as per the decree (ibid. 19): **"בזיעת אפיק תאכל לחם"—by the sweat of your brow shall you eat bread**; nevertheless, if they accept upon themselves the burden and responsibility of Torah, they will still possess the inherent, auspicious power of the "garments of skin." In other words, all plant-life and animal-life will run towards them, so that they may be elevated as a pleasant aroma to Hashem.

Yitzchak Wished to Bless Eisav since He Witnessed Animals Flocking to Him of Their Own Accord

Through the graces of Hashem, we now approach the conclusion of our journey regarding the "garments of skin." The Torah describes how Yaakov Avinu entered his father's tent wearing Eisav's coveted garments. We have learned that they were fashioned by HKB"H from the skin of the "nachash hakadmoni" in Gan Eden for Adam and Chava. Yitzchak intended to bestow the Berachos upon Eisav, because (ibid. 25, 28): **"ויאהב יצחק את עשו כי ציד בפיו"—Yitzchak loved Eisav for trapping was in his mouth.** Rashi comments: **"In his mouth"**

is to be understood as rendered by the Targum—in the mouth of Yitzchak.

Let us suggest an explanation in keeping with this essay. Upon seeing that Eisav was able to trap prey with the "garments of skin" worn by Adam HaRishon, and they all came to him of their own accord, this proved to him beyond a shadow of a doubt that Eisav wanted to assist Yaakov—to enable him to study Torah without distractions. Because of this altruism, he was privileged to acquire this unique garment, formerly belonging to Adam HaRishon, which attracted all forms of animal life to it. That being the case, Yitzchak concluded that Eisav truly deserved the Berachos. This coincides magnificently with the sacred insights of the Chasam Sofer and the Sefas Emes that Yitzchak Avinu planned to pass on the Berachos to Eisav, because he believed that the relationship between Eisav and Yaakov would mirror the ideal paradigm of Zevulun and Yissachar—where Eisav, representing Zevulun, would provide for Yaakov, representing the people of Yisrael as Yissachar.

But then Yaakov entered clothed in Eisav's precious garments. Suddenly, Yitzchak Avinu sensed the fragrance of Gan Eden, which he was familiar with, because he spent three years after the Akeidah in Gan Eden (see last week's essay). He realized that when Eisav wore the garments, they did not emit the scent of Gan Eden, and that Eisav did not really deserve to have them; they really belonged to someone else, namely Yaakov. Hence, Yaakov was truly worthy to receive the Berachos. This is the message conveyed by the pesukim: **"He (Yitzchak) smelled the fragrance of his garments and blessed him; he said, 'See, the fragrance of my son is like the fragrance of the field which Hashem has blessed. And may Elokim give you of the dew of the heavens and of the fatness of the earth, and abundant grain and wine.'"**

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