

## **BERESHEET 1.1 - GARMENTS OF THE SOUL**

As the body requires clothing so does the soul warrant its own celestial garments. The Sages have termed this spiritual clothing *Haluqa DeRabanan* - the cloak of the Rabbis 1, while the Tanakh prefers the term - *Selem* 2. We can adduce much concerning the relationship between man and his *Selem* with our elucidation of the verse - "And Elohim said - We shall make or en-cloth the soul of man with our celestial garments". 3 Furthermore our Rabbis teach that man's existence is predicated upon the nature of the celestial garb that cloths his soul. 4 This is the meaning of the verse "Man exists only by virtue of his *Selem*." 5 R. Yoseph Hayyim writes that the sin of Adam Harishon did not adversely affect his soul, but simply altered the nature of its' clothing. If Adam had acted properly, he would have merited to retain his majestic garb, but unfortunately he sinned and was disrobed. Prior to the event - his soul was clothed with light from the *Hashmal*. 6 As a result of his sin he lost this celestial garb which was woven from 378 lights which is numerically equal with that of *Hashmal*. 7 This term *Hashmal* appears in *Yehezqel's* vision of the *Merkava* and is described by R. HaAri as a holy celestial covering that offers protection from the negative spiritual forces. 8 Upon realizing that they had been disrobed - Adam and Havah fashioned for themselves spiritual clothing rooted in the filthy negative husk associated with their blemish. 9 The *Zohar* and R. HaAri teach that Adam and Havah had quickly repented. This spurred God to provide them with an alternate garb fashioned from the spiritual interface between good and evil called *Nogah*. 10 Though these garments were definitely inferior in comparison to their original clothing of pure light 11 - they are considered superior to the filthy garb they would have been left wearing - had they not done *Teshuva*. R. HaAri notes that a similar fate may hold true for us - the descendants of Adam and Havah - in that abominable actions can cause one's soul to become disrobed of its' holy garment. If poor behavior is not followed by repentance, the garment will be replaced instead with clothing woven exclusively from negative spiritual forces. 12

## **BEING INTIMATE WITH GOOD AND EVIL**

According to our exegesis, 13 the nudity of Adam and Havah after their sin refers to the lack of holy garments to cloth their souls. "They (Adam and Havah) realized they were naked." As a result of their sin they had thereby become intimate with good and evil. What had become revealed was their reduced spiritual state. R. Bahya implores us to pay attention to the wording in the verse - "The eyes of both of them were opened and they knew they were naked." It is not written that "they saw" but rather they had been granted a realization of something they had previously been unaware of. 14 God calls out to Adam asking rhetorically - "Where are you? ... Who told you that you are naked?" The truth was that this new revelation they attained to discern between good - the presence of majestic clothing; and evil - its' absence came as a result of their partaking of the *Es HaDaat* - the tree of knowledge. The serpent had promised this result earlier claiming - "For on the day you eat from it - your eyes will be opened making you as a celestial being." 15 Adam replies that he considered himself naked - bereft of a spiritual cover. One can rightly assert here that Adam could not have been referring to their physical nudity. The Torah had previously reported that he and his mate were already clothed prior to God's calling - "They sewed together leaves of the fig and made for themselves loincloths to serve as clothing." Evidently these garments made from the leaves of the fig or scraps from the forbidden fruit of the tree 16 did not alleviate their nakedness. They remained bereft of true celestial clothing - due to the removal of the holy garments of light from their souls.

## **KEEPING OUR CELESTIAL GARMENTS CLEAN**

Later on in the narrative we are told that God has mercy on Adam and Havah and provides new garments for their souls. They are termed there as "garments of skin." 17 In the Midrash it is reported that in the *Sefer Torah* of R. Meir - the word for skin which normally begins with the letter *Ayin* is spelled using an *Alef* instead. 18 This would indicate that they were granted in kindness or as a result of repentance - a replacement for their lost original garments of light. In fact, R. Bahya asserts that even these new garments derived somewhat from the upper celestial spheres. 19 These clothes would have to be cherished. From here on - Adam, Havah and their descendants would be given a mandate. They were to make sure that their spiritual clothing remain white at all times. *Shelomo HaMelekh* demands - "At all times you must insure that your clothing remain white." 20 - What the Torah describes here in *Beresheet* is not merely an historical account of Adam and Havah in and out of *Gan Eden*. Rather, it is to serve as a blueprint for their descendants. We must strive to keep clean the majestic clothes given our souls. Since they are rooted in a spiritual interface - they are susceptible to blemish. Even a faulty character trait can leave filthy stains on this celestial garment. In such an outfit we

would surely be ashamed to stand before our Creator. Zekharya HaNavi writes concerning the spiritual garments of the repentant Kohen Gadol - Yehoshua - "And he spoke to those who stood before him saying, Take off his filthy garments. And to him he said, behold I have caused your sin to pass from you. And I clothe you in festive garments." 21

### **BERAKHOT ESTABLISHED TO REPLACE AND CLEANSE THESE GARMENTS**

The Berakhot Malbish Arumeem - to clothe the naked and Hanoten Laya'eph Koah - to give strength to the weak are part of the arranged Birkhot HaShakhar established by our Sages. 22 They are to serve as an antidote of a rule that "there is no man on earth who does not sin." 23 We have already explained that a result of sin can be the removal of aspects of the holy garb from one's soul, being substituted instead with an impure garb in its place; With less severe transgressions resulting in the weakening of the garb - expressing itself as a spiritual stain. R. Hayyim Vital writes in the name of his teacher R. HaAri that each evening our souls are given over to the Divine Presence. Beginning at midnight we are given the opportunity to have our ethereal garments renewed or cleansed by the Shehina. 24 The blessing Malbish Arumimeem - serves as the method to reclothe the soul - for transgressions that - caused it to become disrobed. The blessing of Hanoten Laya'eph Koah serves to strengthen the ethereal garment and effectively cleanse it from the stains associated with more minor transgressions. 25 R. HaAri details additional meditations associated with these Berakhot. The numerical value of the word Malbush - clothing is 378. This is the secret of the 378 lights (and numerical value) of the holy spiritual garb or the Hashmal. The 378 aspects of this ethereal garb is formed by a combination of holy names which can be meditated upon - to fully effectuate the rectification of one's transgressions. 26

### **CLOTHING OF THE FUTURE**

It is clear from what we have learned thus far - that the presence of our soul - connecting with our bodies is solely dependent upon the nature of these celestial garments. A Beraita cited in the Talmudic tractate of Shabbat brings out this point with its' analogy of a king who distributes royal apparel to his servants. Those amongst them who are wise preserved their cleanliness while the foolish amongst them got them soiled. Sometime later the king requested his garments be returned to him. He thereby greeted his wise servants with happiness while the foolish were greeted with disdain. 27 Before a person passes from this world aspects of his Selem that house his soul depart from him. 28 The perception of these garments was granted to Yehoshua and Calev when they informed their colleague spies that the inhabitants of the land were destined to die immanently - "Their celestial garments have already been dispatched". 29 They evidently perfected their spiritual eye as did Zekharya during his early second temple era vision of the Kohen Gadol. Even R. Shimon Bar Yohai testified of his ability to perceive the dismissal of these ethereal garments from R. Yishak prior to his demise. 30 This vision of the garments - represents the ability to perceive the essence of others. The Zohar asserts that at least during the era immediately following the Maboul even the earthly creatures once again perceived the Selem and thereby were instilled with awe of man. 31 The Creator once again elevated human kind to his position paralleling the face of man of the Divine chariot. Yehezqel in his description of the Merkava teaches that the other three faces of the Aryeh, Shor and Neshar depicted respectively in terms of three general species of the animal kingdom were subservient to that of the face of man. 32 Subsequent to the sins of man and the descent of the Selem - the creatures once again considered man merely as one of their own. As the Talmud teaches that an animal does not overpower a person until he appears to it as another animal. 33 This vision of one's celestial clothing is the perception of our true selves. These special garments are who we are! It is obvious then that the perfection of our soul-garments are not only dependent upon the recitation of these two Berakhot. In fact, R. Hayyim Vital writes that the Mivot in general were given for us to enhance our Selamim and to deflect and distance the evil husks from any opportunity of attachment. 34 This is how we will view everyone and be perceived by all in the future. The Zohar teaches that it is these same garments that will cloth our souls after death - giving us the ability to rise and exist during the era of Tehiyat HaMeteem. 35 This is alluded to in its' elucidation of the verse from Iyov - "And they will stand by virtue of their garment." 36

**Shabbat Shalom**

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