

The Stolen Garment

Compiled by B.H. Porter

Hugh Nibley, *Ancient Documents*, Lecture 23:12

It's the famous story of the stolen garment. The priesthood garment of Adam was stolen. It should have belonged to the other brethren. They all had an equal claim, but when they were coming out of the ark, Ham stole the garment, made a copy of it, and claimed he had the priesthood. For that reason he was denied the priesthood until all the others should have it first. But this says he would fain claim it from Noah. That's the very thing we have here and the story we have in the Genesis Apocryphon.

The Collected Works of Hugh Nibley. *Mormonism and Early Christianity*, p. 366

Since we cannot here treat them individually, we must be content to note that the archetype of all usurpers is Nimrod, who claims kingship and priesthood by right of "the cosmic garment of Adam," which his father Ham stole from Noah. When in turn Esau, that other great hunter, by a ruse got this garment from Nimrod, he sold it as a "birthright" to Jacob, and then tried to get it back again "and force his way into the temple," according to the Leptogenesis. Early Jewish and Christian traditions report that Nimrod it was who built the Tower of Babel, the first pagan temple, in an attempt to contact heaven; it was he who challenged the priesthood of Abraham; it was he who built the first city, founded the first state, organized the first army, ruling the world by force; he challenged God to an archery contest and, when he thought he had won, claimed to be no less than God's successor. The interesting thing is that all his activities center around the temple, whose rites and whose priesthood he boldly attempts to seize for himself.

Nibley, Hugh W. *Teachings of the Book of Mormon* --Lecture 62

The student says, "Verily, if my master owned a house full of needles and Jacob came to him and begged for the use of a needle for one hour that he might sew up the torn garment of his son Joseph, he would refuse to lend it to him. That's the kind of man I'm working for." The point is that it takes for granted the torn garment that Jacob wanted to sew up, that Joseph's garment was torn in two parts. The one part was spoiled, and one part never rotted. It belonged to Abraham, and it went back to Adam. In the tradition it was the garment of the garden, and it had the marks on it. That's why Jacob recognized it, and that's why the brethren were jealous obviously. It was the greatest favor he could possibly give him. This is a great thing. Here we get something in the Book of Mormon that really "sews things up."

Nibley, Hugh W. *Teachings of the Book of Mormon* --Lecture 65

That's the story of Nimrod. Remember, there was Noah, Ham, and Cush. Cush's son was Nimrod. He was a righteous young man until he was 25 years old. He became the king, and he had received the garment of Adam, which had been stolen by Ham when they were leaving the ark. It

belonged to Adam and Noah had it. We mentioned that garment before, but there is great literature about this garment. Nimrod lost the garment later on, but when he wore it all people and animals assumed that he was a holy man and priest acting for God, and they submitted to him willingly. That was right. But then it turned his head, and he decided to become the great conqueror.

Nibley, Hugh W. Ancient Documents and the Pearl of Great Price. Lecture 9.

So Geb gave his own entire portion to Horus, the son of his son who was his firstborn. Well, what the theme is here is priesthood and kingship as well as land. Now, the division of the land is no trouble. You notice in the Bible the land is divided among the sons of Noah-Shem, Ham, and Japheth. No controversy there. In the fourteenth chapter of Genesis it's divided among the nations, etc. And the children of Israel divide it again. Israel (Jacob) divides it among his twelve sons; and they get their shares and that's all right. But they are jealous of one who is Joseph. They were jealous of him because he got the garment of the priesthood. We won't go into the story of the garment now, but the garment of many colors; incidentally, the word "many" is added in the King James; it's not in the Bible at all. It says the garment that had marks in it. It's a long story about the garment. When it was brought to Jacob by the brothers to show him that the lion had killed Joseph, Jacob both wept and laughed (this is a story told in the Book of Mormon). He was both pleased and oppressed by the fact that the garment was soiled and bloody. But also it showed that Joseph was alive. When he felt the garment (this is a very old source), he says he knew it. Remember, he had gone blind from weeping we are told. When he felt the garment, he knew it was the true garment of Joseph because we are told there was no other garment in the world like that. It was the garment that he had received from his father, Abraham, and Abraham had received it from Adam, and Adam had received it in the garden. This was the garment of the priesthood of which there was only one. When he gave this to Joseph, of course his brethren were jealous. And remember in the dreams he had, he was the king and they all bowed down to him. You can only have one king. And where did they bow down to him? In Egypt. This is an Egyptian story too as far as he goes, remember? Joseph becomes the second in power. He becomes the king's right hand. With all this authority he becomes a Rpt in fact which allows him to sit on the throne. So the brethren were very jealous of him because he became king.

Collected Works of Hugh Nibley, Approach to the Book of Mormon, p212

Moroni then reminded the multitude that they were actually "a remnant of the seed of Jacob," and also "a remnant of the seed of Joseph, whose coat was rent by his brethren into many pieces and if they should do wickedly "our garments shall be rent by our brethren, and we be cast into prison, or be sold, or be slain" (Alma 46:23). Then Moroni told an apocryphal story of how Jacob
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before his death . . . saw that a part of the remnant of the coat of Joseph was preserved and had not decayed. And he said--Even as this remnant of garment of my son hath been preserved, so shall a remnant of the seed of my son be preserved, . . . while the remainder of the seed of Joseph shall perish, even as the remnant of his garment (Alma 46:24).

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Moroni suggested that the lost remnant of the garment may actually represent the Nephites who had fallen away from the church (Alma 46:27).

Collected Works of Hugh Nibley, Approach to the Book of Mormon, pp. 218-220.
The Torn Garment, an Apocryphal Tale

When Moroni begins his story by saying, "Let us remember the words of Jacob," he is plainly reminding his hearers of a tale that is familiar to them all. Yet who in the West has ever known anything about the story that follows, in which the words of Jacob are: "Even as this remnant of garment of my son hath been preserved, so shall a remnant of the seed of my son be preserved, . . . while the remainder of the seed of Joseph shall perish, even as the remnant of his garment"? Here the survival of Joseph's garment guarantees and typifies the survival of Joseph (Alma 46:24).

Most significant is Thacalabi's discussion of the two remnants of Joseph's garment, from which we quote:

Note here that there were two remnants of Joseph's garment, one sent by Joseph to his father as a sign that he was still alive (since the garment had not decayed), and the other, torn and smeared with blood, brought by Judah to his father as a sign that Joseph was dead. Moroni actually quotes Jacob ("Now behold, this was the language of Jacob" [Alma 46:26]) as saying: "Now behold, this giveth my soul sorrow; nevertheless, my soul hath joy in my son" (Alma 46:25). Compare this with Judah's statement in the Old World account, that the undecayed garment caused Jacob as much joy as the bloody garment caused him sorrow. In both accounts Jacob is described as being near to death--hence Judah's haste to reach him with the garment and make amends for the evil he has done.

Nibley, Hugh W. Teachings of the Book of Mormon Lecture 62, p.61.

He is talking here about the shirt of Joseph and the two things. This is what he says: "And when Joseph made himself known to his brethren, he asked them about his father. 'What happened to our father, Jacob?' He was in Egypt and he was the important man. The brethren had been brought before him, and he said, 'What happened to my father after I left?' They said, 'He lost his eyesight from weeping.' Then Joseph gave them the garment. He had the good half of the garment with him. That's the part that clung to him and he still wore. Joseph handed them the garment, which is called the qamis. Our word chemise comes from that. "And this garment was the garment of the Garden of Eden. It had the weave and the pattern of the janna." That is the Garden of Eden. It is usually rendered just as paradise, before man fell. "It had in it the breath of the garden."

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"...so that it never rotted." It used the word decayed. He saw the part that never decayed. The half he had was the part that "never rotted, never decayed, and its threads never deteriorated. That was its true state." It kept its true state. There were two parts. "...the remnant of the coat of

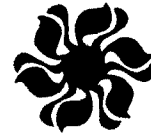
Joseph which was preserved and had not decayed, whereas the other half shall perish even as the remnant of this garment." It was decayed and rotten. We'll hear about that one in a minute here. "Joseph gave that garment to them [this is important here:], and this was a garment that had belonged to Abraham."

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The idea of a garment of many colors is an invention. If you look in your Bible every time it mentions many colors the word colors (even in the commentary) is in italics because it is put in there by modern editors. It's found in no ancient source. It's not a garment of many colors at all. A garment of certain marks is the term that's used here. We'll see what it is in a second. "This garment had belonged to Abraham, and it already had a long history." Its history was lengthy because it went back to the Garden of Eden, you see. That's the garment; it's the only one. Just as we treat the story of Cain and Abel, we trivialize this. We say, "Joseph was the youngest kid, so his father favored him and gave him a pretty garment of many colors." There is no mention in any ancient source of a garment of many colors. That's an invention of modern editors trying to explain it. But here it was the garment he gave him. It was the garment of the priesthood. No wonder they were jealous of him, they being the elder brothers and he the younger in the patriarchal line coming down from Abraham. This garment had belonged to Abraham and had come down to Joseph instead of to the other brethren.

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You always get lost among these little tiny things here. "And he said to them, 'Go with this very garment and place it upon the face of my father, and his sight will return to him.'" It's a miraculous garment. "And then come back to me and bring all the family with you." So they did. This is when the Israelites went into Egypt. They brought Jacob back with them, and the whole family came back to Egypt. Remember the story of Joseph and his brethren. "And when they had turned their faces toward Canaan and finally arrived [p.62] there, their father, Jacob, said to them, 'Behold, I detect in this garment the odor...'" Riha is smell or odor. It's the same word as ruakh and the English word reek. Reeky is smoke; it's Rauch in German. They used to call Edinburgh Auld Reekie, because it was a smoky city; they burned coal there. It's the same word we use. The Hebrew word ruakh is the Spirit, the Holy Ghost. The same word in Arabic is riha. It's always feminine. It also means wind. In the Dead Sea Scrolls it has led to lots of controversy because when it talks about the rih, does it mean spirit or wind? For example, in the story of Abraham in Egypt, an evil spirit has come. Or is it an evil wind? The Jewish scholars don't like "evil spirit," so they change it to "evil wind." It can be read "evil wind" all right, but it obviously means (and they admit it) an evil spirit came upon Pharaoh.



Hebrew Myths: The Book of Genesis

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Comment
 selves to the body;¹² according to others they were of goat-skin, or coney-skin, or Circassian wool, or camel's hair, or of the Serpent's slough.¹³ Others again say that Adam's garment was a High-priestly robe, bequeathed by him to Seth; who bequeathed it to Methuselah; whose heir was Father Noah. Although his first-born son, Japheth, should have inherited this robe, Noah foresaw that the Children of Israel would spring from Shem, to whom therefore he entrusted it. Shem gave the robe to Abraham who, as God's beloved servant, could claim the first-born's right; Abraham to Isaac; Isaac to Jacob. It then passed to Reuben, Jacob's first-born son; and so the legacy continued, generation after generation, until the privilege of offering up sacrifices was taken by Moses from the first-born of Reuben's house, and given to Aaron the Levite.¹⁴

(k) Adam and Eve were driven out of Eden on the First Friday, the day in which they had both been created and had sinned. On the First Sabbath, Adam rested and prayed God for mercy. At its close he went to the Upper Gihon, strongest of rivers, and there did seven weeks' penance, standing in midstream with water to the chin, until his body turned soft as a sponge.¹⁵

(l) Afterwards an angel came to Adam's comfort, and taught him the use of fire-tongs and a smith's hammer; also how to manage oxen, so that he should not fall behindhand in his ploughing.¹⁶

1. Genesis III. 1-6.

2. Genesis III. 7-13.

3. Genesis III. 14-19.

4. Genesis III. 20-24.

5. PRE, ch. 13; Gen. Rab. 172-74; B. Sanhedrin 29a; Adamschriften, 28.

6. PRE, ch. 14; Gen. Rab. 196.

7. Sources same as in preceding footnote.

8. Adamschriften, 28-29.

9. Gen. Rab. 200-01; Yalqut Gen. 34.

10. Gen. Rab. 139-42.

11. Sources same as in preceding footnote, and Ginzberg LJ, V. 97-98.

12. Gen. Rab. 196; Tanhuma Buber Gen. 17-18.

13. Sources same as in preceding footnote.

14. Tanhuma Buber Gen. 133; Num. Rab. 4.8.

15. Yalqut Gen. 34.

16. Adamschriften, 24, 33.

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1. Some elements of the Fall of Man myth in *Genesis* are of great antiquity; but the composition is late, and even in places suggests Greek influence. The *Gilgamesh Epic*, the earliest version of which can be dated about 2000 B.C., describes how the Sumerian Love-goddess Aruru created from clay a noble savage named Enkidu, who grazed among

gazelles, staked his mist beside wild cattle and sported with dolphins—until a priestess sent to him by Gilgamesh initiated him into the mysteries of love. Though wise as a god, he was now shunned by the wild creatures; and the priestess therefore covered his nakedness, using part of her own garment, and brought him to the city of Uruk, where he became blood-brother to the hero Gilgamesh. Later, Gilgamesh went in quest of the herb of immortality. He entered a gloomy tunnel twelve leagues long, and emerged in a paradise of jewel-hung trees owned by Siduri, Goddess of Wisdom. Declining the Sun-god's invitation to remain, Gilgamesh pressed on, until he learned from Utnapishtim (the Sumerian Noah) that the desired herb—a plant resembling buckthorn—grew deep under the sea. Gilgamesh tied stones to his feet, plunged down, found the herb and brought it safely back; but a serpent stole it from him when he visited a fresh-water spring. He sadly resigned himself to death.

2. Adam calls Eve 'the Mother of All Living', (*Genesis* iii. 20) a title of this same Love-goddess Aruru, or Ishtar; and she confers wisdom on him, just as Aruru's priestess did on Enkidu. Since, however, the Babylonian legend of Marduk as Creator had, centuries before, succeeded the Sumerian legend of Aruru as Creatrix, the Hebrew Creator is made to punish Eve for enlightening the innocent Adam.

3. Another source of the *Genesis* Fall of Man is the Akkadian myth of Adapa, found on a tablet at Tell Amarna, Pharaoh Akhenaten's capital. Adapa, son of Ea, the Babylonian god of Wisdom, was attacked in the Persian Gulf by a Storm-bird while catching fish for his father's priests, and broke its wing. The bird proved to have been the South Wind. Ea summoned Adapa to explain his violence and warned him that, having displeased Anu, King of Heaven; the gods would offer him the food and drink of death, which he must refuse. Anu, however, learning of this indiscreet disclosure, foiled Ea by offering Adapa the bread of life and the water of life and, when he refused them at his father's orders, grimly sending him back to earth as a perverse mortal. This myth supplies the theme of the Serpent's warning to Eve: that God had deceived her about the properties of the forbidden fruit.

4. Another possible source of the *Genesis* Fall of Man is an ancient Persian myth: Meshia and Meshiane at first live on fruit alone, but are then persuaded by the Demon Ahriman to deny God. They lose their purity, fell trees, kill animals, and commit further evil.

5. According to a Cretan myth quoted by Apollodorus and Hyginus, and a Lydian myth quoted by Pliny, serpents possessed a herb of immortality.

6. The *Genesis* story, in which agricultural work is represented as a curse laid upon man because of Eve's inquisitiveness and disobedient mischief, mythically expresses the age-old Mediterranean point of view which regards physical labour (symbolized and exemplified by tillage of the soil)

Zefwen

THE BARTERED BIRTHRIGHT

(a) One day, while Jacob was stewing red lentils outside his hut, Esau returned from a desert hunt, worn to skin and bone.

'Give me some of that red food, Brother,' he pleaded. 'I am starving!'

Jacob answered: 'Eat, Red One; but on condition that you sell me your birthright.'

'Not to sell would likewise lose me my birthright,' groaned Esau, 'because I should soon die of hunger.'

Before restoring Esau's strength with bread and lentil stew, Jacob made him confirm the sale by an oath; and when he had gone off again, laughed, saying: 'My brother despises his birthright!'¹

(b) Some excuse Jacob's apparent lack not only of brotherly love but even of common humanity. He knew, they say, that Esau had just ambushed King Nimrod—who was still alive at the age of two hundred and fifteen years—and murdered him; each having been jealous of the other's fame as a hunter. It was a long pursuit of Esau by Nimrod's vengeful companions that reduced him to such straits. Jacob, indeed, bought Esau's birthright with God's approval, because until the Tent of Assembly had been raised in the Wilderness centuries later, only the first-born of each family might offer sacrifices, and Jacob now cried: 'Shall this evil-doer, standing before God's altar, be blessed by Him?' Moreover, Esau readily agreed to sell the birthright, lest he should be struck dead at the altar for having derided the Resurrection of the Dead.

Others say that Esau also exacted a large sum in gold from Jacob, because his birthright gave him a double share in the inheritance of Canaan; and that he would have afterwards repudiated the sale had Jacob not made him swear by the fear of his father Isaac, whom he loved dearly; and had not Michael and Gabriel witnessed his signature to the contract.²

(c) Esau showed Isaac exemplary love: bringing venison every day, and never entering the tent except in festal dress. He was therefore rewarded when Joshua entered Canaan and God forbade the

Children of Israel to attack their Edomite cousins, saying: 'I must acknowledge the honour that he paid his father!' Esau, indeed, enjoyed great prosperity so long as he lived.³

1. *Genesis* xxv. 29-34.
2. Gen. Rab. 694-97, 699; *Sepher Hayashar* 90-91; B. Baba Bathra 16b; *Tanhuma Buber* 125-27; *Pesiqta Rabbati* 47b-48a; Mid. *Leqah Tobh* Gen. 123-24; Mid. *Sekhel Tobh* and *Imre Noam ad Gen.* xxv. 26; Mid. *Hagadol* Gen. 400-401; Mid. *Agada* Gen. 64-65; *Bereshit Rabbati* 105.
3. Gen. Rab. 728; *Pesiqta Rabbati* 124a; Mid. *Leqah Tobh* Gen. 133; Cf. Ginzberg LJ, V. 278.

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1. Esau's desire for red lentils emphasizes the redness of his hair (see 38. 2). That he was Edom, 'the Red One', or at least Edom's father, is repeatedly stated in *Genesis*. He was also Seir, 'the Shaggy One' (see 38. 2) and, in later books (*Numbers* xxiv. 18; 2 *Chronicles* xxv. 11 read in conjunction with 2 *Kings* xiv. 7) 'Seir' and 'Edom' were interchangeable terms (see 38. 2). Yet the Sons of Seir are elsewhere identified with the Horites: 'These are the Sons of Seir the Horite, the inhabitants of the land . . .' (*Genesis* xxxvi. 20) and: 'These are the Horite chieftains in the land of Seir . . .' (*Genesis* v. 30). The chronicler of *Deuteronomy* ii. 12 therefore explains that the Horites once lived in Seir, but that the Children of Esau drove them out and occupied their land.

2. The Horites, or Hurrians, whose language was neither Sumerian, nor Semitic, nor Indo-European, appeared on the northern frontier of Akkad towards the end of the third millennium B.C. Their settlements were in Northern Syria and Eastern Anatolia; and though no archaeological evidence of their establishment in Idumaea has yet come to light, the testimony of *Genesis* need not be doubted—unless 'Horites' means 'Hori', or Troglodites (compare *Job* xxx. 6), who ranked as the sons of Keturah (see 35. b). The Seirites, non-Semitic Bronze Age agriculturists, inhabited these parts from about 2000 B.C., and their name occurs on an obelisk raised seven hundred years later by Rameses II of Egypt. However, Semitic-speaking tribes already held the area, and 'Edom' is mentioned for the first time on a papyrus list made for Seti II about 1215 B.C. These Edomites, who partly assimilated both the Seirites and the Horites, prospered until their conquest by King David about 994 B.C.

3. Esau's bartered birthright mythically justifies the Edomites' subsequent conquest by their junior kinsmen, the Israelites (*Numbers* xx. 14) who spoke the same language but had not previously dared to attack them. David took the precaution of garrisoning Edom (2 *Samuel* viii. 14; 1 *Kings* xi. 15-16), which acknowledged Israelite overlordship until the reign of the Judaeen King Jehoram (about 850 B.C.). The Edomites then made a successful revolt (2 *Kings* viii. 20 ff and 2 *Chronicles* xxi. 8 ff) and, apart from

ספר
בראשית

Translation and commentary by
Rabbi Meir Zlotowitz

Overviews by
Rabbi Nosson Scherman

Foreword / דברי פתיחה

HaGaon HaRav Mordechai Git

Telshe Rosh HaYeshivah

Bereishit

GENESIS / A NEW TRANSLATION WITH A
COMMENTARY ANTHOLOGIZED FROM
TALMUDIC, MIDRASHIC AND RABBINIC SOURCES.

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... and HASHEM God made for Adam and his wife garments of skin, and He clothed them.

22 And HASHEM God said, 'Behold Man has become like the Unique One among Us, knowing

although they had sinned, His great love for them did not wane (R' Bachya).

He also did not exile them naked lest they dress themselves as a result of their own efforts and interpret the feat as proof of an added attainment (Sforno).

The Talmud cites this verse as an example of one of the ways that man should figuratively 'walk after God' [Deut. 13:5] by imitating His virtues. Just as He clothes the naked, so must man clothe the naked (Sotah 4a).

וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֱלֹהִים — And HASHEM God said — to the angels that minister before Him (Targum Onasan).

הֵן הָאָדָם הָיָה כְּאַחַד מֵאֵנוּ — Behold, man has become like the Unique One among Us.

[This translation, (as opposed to the more familiar translation: 'Behold man has become like one of us') follows the comm. of Rashi (as explained by Gur Aryeh), Targum and Midrash. (See further).]

[The more familiar translation has God addressing Himself to His heavenly familia and in the manner of 1:26 modestly including himself as one of them in a gesture of *paritas majestatis* and saying: *Behold man has become like one of Us to know* (i.e. in his knowledge of) *good and bad*. This translation takes מֵאֵנוּ as the heavenly familia with God included among them, and renders like one of Us. This rendering is preferred by R' Shor, Ibn Ezra ('*behold man thinks he has become like one of Us*' — Tzafnas Aram), R' Bachya, R' Meyuchas and many other commentators.

(In fact, Abarbanel and HaRechasim interpret the statement as God ironically jeering at the evil intent of man

who believed the serpent's blasphemy when he said, '*and God knows ... that you shall become as God knowing good and bad* [v. 5]. They render this verse as God saying to the angels: '*Behold man has — according to the Tempter — become like one of Us to know good and bad*. Now, he might further heed the serpent's wicked counsel and put forth his hand. Let us show him how false these words are:)

This familiar translation has its basis in the Midrash where Rav Pappas explained מֵאֵנוּ כְּאַחַד מֵאֵנוּ as meaning 'like one of the ministering angels.' But R' Akiva with the words כִּי־יִרְדֶּה פָּפִיּוֹס, 'let that suffice you Pappas' (i.e. you go too far; it is incorrect) reproved him for the impropriety of placing God Himself on par with the angels regarding the knowledge of good and evil.

Instead, R' Akiva suggested that God placed two paths before Adam, the path of life and the path of death, and (by eating of the forbidden tree) he chose the latter. [Accordingly מֵאֵנוּ is to be rendered 'like one of them' (i.e. of the paths) by his action, he has become like one of the alternatives from which he was to choose.' (See Hirsch). Or, according to Yefe To'ar: 'Behold, man has become as one who knows good and evil of himself, of his own free will' (see Overview).]

The Midrash continues that according to Rav Yehudah ben Rav Shimon the interpretation of מֵאֵנוּ is: 'Like the Unique One (of the Universe)' [translating: '*the man has become like the Unique One among his kind*.']

It is the latter interpretation that is adopted by Rashi when he comments: Behold he is unique among the terrestrial ones, just as I am unique among the celestial ones; and in having his own ability to discriminate between good and bad, a quality not possessed by cattle and beasts.

This also follows Onkelos: 'Behold man has become unique in

אָדָם וְלֵאשֶׁתּוֹ כְּתָנוּת עוֹר
וַיִּלְבָּשׁוּ יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים הֵן
זֶה כְּאַחַד מִמֶּנּוּ לְדַעַת טוֹב וְרָע.

the ו, *vav*, and י, *yod*, being interchangeable.

Although other women also become mothers, Adam gave her the name because she was the first (*Sforno*).

The *Vilna Gaon* suggests that this name denotes woman's primary role as matriarch after the sin.

[*Harav David Cohen* elaborates that her original name was אִשָּׁה, *woman*, because her role prior to the sin was to interact with man to perfect creation. Following the sin, the mission of mankind shifted to future generations and countless people (see *Overview*). Thus her new name 'mother of all living'.]

— Individuals die, mankind lives; and it is through woman that man lives on in children. Adam could well have castigated his wife for causing the loss of Paradise, yet he names her by the loveliest calling of woman! ... She became the savior from death, the dispenser of life, the guarantor of mankind's immortality. She is not only the physical, but the spiritual and intellectual perpetuator of mankind's higher calling (*Hirsch*).

21. וַיַּעַשׂ ה' אֱלֹקִים — *And HASHEM*

1. The *Midrash* comments that these garments were embroidered with pictures of all the animals and birds. When Adam and Eve wore them they had dominion over the animals, and were invincible. They were handed down from generation to generation to Methuselah and to Noah who took them into the Ark. Ham stole the garments passing them on to Cush who in turn hid them for many years until he passed them on to his son Nimrod. Nimrod's prowess as 'a mighty hunter' [10:9] is directly attributable to these garments. When Esau slew Nimrod, Esau appropriated them. These were the 'coveted garments of Esau' [27:15]. These were the garments worn by Jacob when he received Isaac's blessing, after which they were concealed. (See *Torah Sh'lemah* 3:184; *Sefer HaYashar* 7:24; *Sefer HaParshiyos*).

God made — i.e. inspired them with the industry to make garments for themselves (*Malbim*; but see *Radak* below).

קְתָנוּת עוֹר — *Garments of skin*. They were uncomfortable in their scanty aprons of fig leaf, and, though they were sinners, God had compassion upon them and clothed them (*Midrash Aggadah*; *R' Bachya*).

Rashi cites the various *Midrashim*: some say the garments were smooth as fingernails, attached to their skin [קְתָנוּת עוֹר = 'Garments attached to their skin'], while others say they were קְתָנוּת עוֹר = 'Garments made out of skin'.]

Additionally, according to *Pirkei d'Rabbi Eliezer*, these garments were made from the skin which the serpent sloughed off.

Do not wonder how God fashioned skin garments for them. It is no greater mystery than any other one of His wondrous acts of creation! (*Radak*).^[1]

וַיִּלְבָּשׁוּ — *And He clothed them*.

The verse should have read 'and God made them garments of skin to wear.' However, God Himself clothed them to demonstrate that

... THE CHILDREN OF CUSH: SHEBA, HAVILAH, SAB-
tah, Raamah, and Sabteca. The children of Raamah:
Sheba and Dedan.

8And Cush begot Nimrod. He was the first to be a
mighty man on earth. 9He was a mighty hunter
before HASHEM; therefore it is said: 'Like Nimrod a

According to Ramban, however, Nimrod is listed separately because he did not form a nation under his own name.

As Hirsch comments: Those mentioned up to now were founders of nations. That, Nimrod did not do, but introduced the new factor of might and domination into the development of nations.

הוא החל להיות גבר בארץ — He was the first [lit. 'he began'] to be a mighty man on earth — i.e. he was 'mighty' in causing the whole world to rebel against God by the plan that he devised for the generation of the Dispersion (Rashi).

Mizrachi and Gur Aryeh disagree on Rashi's interpretation of החל. Mizrachi associates it with החל (4:26) and החל (9:20) both of which refer to defilement. Thus, Nimrod became mighty in defiling [God's Name] in the world by establishing idolatry.

Our translation follows Gur Aryeh who derives החל from החלה, beginning. He agrees, however, that Nimrod was the first [i.e. 'began'] to coerce people to idolatry, and adds that the word החל is used by Scripture because of its similarity to חולץ, defilement, and because of its allusion to Nimrod's goal to indeed rebel against God by establishing idolatry among the nations under his mighty rule.

His very name described him. The Sages identify him with Amraphel, King of Shinar [see 14:1]. Why, then, was he called Nimrod? — Because he stirred up

the whole world to rebel (himrid) against God's sovereignty (Eruvin 53a).

Radak explains that in the literal sense it certainly does not mean that there was never a mighty man before him, or that he was the only one in his generation. Behold, there were the Nephilim! Rather, the verse tells us that he was the first to subjugate others and proclaim himself a monarch over others, because until his time there was never a king; people were governed by judges and leaders. Furthermore, all of these events happened after the Dispersion.

For, as Ralbag explains, 'he was the first to seek dominion and conquest ...'

He was the first monarch. For preceding him there were neither wars nor reigning monarchs. He prevailed over the Babylonian people until they crowned him [v. 10], after which he went to Assyria and built great cities (Ramban).

Before him every family lived under the authority of its own patriarch (Malbim).

9. הוא היה גבר ציד — He was a mighty hunter.

He ensnared [צד = ציד] men with his words, and incited them to rebel against the Omnipresent (Rashi).

As Yonasan paraphrases: He was

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וְחַוִּילָה וְסַבְתָּה וְרַעְמָה וְסַבְתָּכָא וּבְנֵי
 ח רַעְמָה שָׁבָא וְדֶדָן: וְכוּשׁ יָלַד אֶת־נִמְרֹד
 ט הוּא הַחֵל לְהִיּוֹת גִּבּוֹר בְּאַרְצָ: הוּא־הִיָּה
 גִּבּוֹר־צִיד לְפָנָי יְהוָה עַל־כֵּן יֵאמָר בְּנִמְרֹד

separate nations as did his brothers
 (*Ramban*).

(18) וּבְנֵי — *And Canaan* — i.e.,
 peoples of the low coastland of
 what was later known as Phoenecia,
 Philistia, and the Land of Canaan.
 Later the term Canaan had a wider
 connotation, embracing all the seven
 nations that were conquered by the
 Jews (*Abarbanel; Kesses HaSofer;*
Hoffmann).

Describing the base characteris-
 tics of Canaan the *Talmud*
Pesachim 113b comments that,
 'Five things did Canaan charge his
 sons: Love one another, love rob-
 bery, love lewdness, hate your
 masters, and never speak the truth.

(19-23) ... סַבְתָּה ... חַוִּילָה ... שָׁבָא
 סַבְתָּכָא ... רַעְמָה — *Seba...Havila...
 Sabtah ... Raamah ... Sabteca.*

... And the name of their
 provinces, Sinirai, and Hindiki
 [=India?], and Semadai, and Lubai,
 and Zingai (*Targum Yonasan*).

[*Seba* is mentioned in *Psalms*
 72:10 and *Isaiah* 63:3.] They are the
 Sabeans of Arabia in Asia Minor
 which divides Egypt from Canaan
 (*Abarbanel*).

[*Chavila* was the ancestor of cer-
 tain tribes who lived on the African
 coast (*Abarbanel*) while a *Chavilah*
 near Ophir, apparently in northeast
 Arabia, appears as the descendants

of Joktan in v. 29. See also 2:1
 where the name *Chavilah* appear
 in connection with the rivers flow
 ing from Eden. According to the
comm. there, it is probably the *Ch-*
vilah in v.29 that is referred to.]

The *Talmud* identifies *Sabta*
 and *Sabteca* as 'Inner Sakistan on
 Outer 'Sakistan [Scythia?] (*Yom*
 10a).

(24) וּבְנֵי רַעְמָה שָׁבָא — *And the sor-*
of Raamah: Sheba.

The name occurs also among the
 children of Joktan [v. 28] an
Keturah [25:3], the reference being
 to a nation of wealthy Arabia
 merchants which consisted of man
 tribes who apparently migrate
 from North Arabia to the south in
 the eight century B.C.E. (*Shalshel*
Hakabbalah; Hoffmann; Kesses
HaSofer).

[It was the Queen of Sheba who visited
 King Solomon (*1 Kings* 10).]

(25) דֶּדָן — *Dedan.*

This name also occurs among the
 sons of *Keturah* [25:3]. They ap-
 parently resided on the shores of the
 Red Sea. They traded heavily with
 the Canaanites (*Kesses HaSofer*).

8. (26) וְכוּשׁ יָלַד אֶת נִמְרֹד — *An*
*Cush begot Nimrod.*¹¹

Nimrod is listed separately to
 draw attention to his might and
 kingdom (*Radak*).

1. *Me'am Loez* comments that, as a son of *Cush*, *Nimrod* should have been listed among
Cush's other offspring in v. 7. This separate listing is to suggest that *Nimrod* proclaimed
 himself to be a god and people worshipped him thinking that he was not a mortal man born
 woman. Therefore, Scripture makes a special point of saying that *Cush* begot him as if
 to ridicule those who believed he was an idol.

HASHEM', because he was an instrument to carry out God's will.

עַל בֶּן יֶאֱמַר — Therefore it is said — concerning any man who brazenly acts wickedly — knowing his Master yet acting rebelliously against Him (*Rashi*).

His prowess was proverbial: In the days of Moses if one wanted to describe a mighty hunter [or a vicious tyrant (*Ralbag*)] one would compare him to Nimrod (*Radak*).

According to *Ha'amek Davar* see above): it is said of any evil person who is an implement of fulfilling God's wish that he is like Nimrod.

10. ... וַתְּהִי רֵאשִׁית מַמְלַכְתּוֹ בָּבֶל — And the beginning of his kingdom was Babylon, etc. The verse can be interpreted in two ways. Either that the conquest which laid the foundation for his kingdom was Babylon, after which he conquered Erech, Akkad, and Calneh, the four of which are in the land of Shinar; or, he initially conquered these four and then conquered other countries which are not enumerated (*Radak*).

בָּבֶל — Babel [or: 'Babylon'] [Babel mentioned here refers to the city which later, under Nebuchadnezzar, became the center of the empire. It had the same Hebrew name, Babel, as the place of the Dispersion described in Chapter 11. In English Nebuchadnezzar's Babel is usually rendered Babylonia. It was one of the greatest cities of the ancient world. The reason it received this name (from בבל to confound) is given in the next chapter. *Jeremiah* (51:13) later describes the city which lies on the

east bank of the Euphrates as being upon many waters, abundant in treasures. As Nebuchadnezzar himself describes the city [*Daniel* 4:27]: Is this not the great Babylon that I built by the might of my power as a royal residence and for the honor of my majesty?

According to *Imrei Shefer*, these verses are prefatory to the events of the Dispersion [Chapter 11; see *Malbim* next verse]. The word רֵאשִׁית in this verse does not necessarily mean first but primary. We are thus told that the seat of his empire was in the territory where the generation of the Dispersion later assembled to build their tower.

[It would seem then, that verses 8-12 are parenthetical to the genealogies. Since the Torah was listing the line of Ham to which Nimrod belonged, it went on to elaborate upon the events of his life and the places which would play a role in the events of the Dispersion that would be described in the next chapter.]

According to the *Midrash*, Shinar and Babylon are synonymous. The reference here to Babylon is prophetic because Shinar did not assume that name until after the Dispersion [11:9] (*Maharzu*).

אֶרֶךְ אֶבְרָם בְּלִנְיָה — Erech ... Akkad ... Calneh. I.e., Urikath, Baskar, and Nuper-Ninpi [unidentified territories near Babylon] (*Yoma* 10a).

Rav Saadiah Gaon identifies them with areas in upper Mesopotamia and near Baghdad.

Kesses HaSofer identifies Erech with the Babylonian ruin on the left bank of the Euphrates now called

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מִמְלַכְתּוֹ בְּכָל וְאָרֶץ וְאֶפְרַיִם וְכַלְנֵה בְּאֶרֶץ

a mighty rebel before HASHEM.

He became a mighty hunter of men, becoming the first to use his intellectual and physical superiority to bring lesser men under his domain. He kept people under his despotic rule until he was ready to exploit them (*Hirsch*).

According to the *Midrash* he instilled a false confidence in people and thereby entrapped them.

Midrash Aggadah takes the phrase literally: [Although meat became permitted after the Flood] no one ever partook of it until Nimrod. *He was the first who hunted and ate.*

This is followed by *Ibn Ezra*: He was the first, as a hunter, to exhibit man's might over the animals.⁽¹⁾

לִפְנֵי ה' — Before HASHEM, i.e., his intention being to provoke God to His face (*Rashi*).

Ibn Ezra, however, interprets that in the most literal sense, this phrase would suggest that Nimrod built altars upon which he sacrificed unto God the animals he hunted.

[A basis for this interpretation is found in *Sefer Hayashar* 7:30 which states that in his youth, before he turned evil, Nimrod built altars upon which he offered the animals he trapped.]

Abarbanel qualifies this. He explains that he offered these sacrifices in a hypocritical pretext of piety in order to attract the masses.

Hirsch agrees that לִפְנֵי ה' in-

dicates a hypocritical display of piety. He notes that לִפְנֵי ה' always refers to sincere devotion to God (see *Numbers* 32:20;32). Nimrod was the forerunner of those who hypocritically draped themselves in robes of piety as a means of deceiving the masses.

According to *Ramban*, the phrase suggests an exclamation that no one under the heavens rivalled his strength.

Sforno explains the phrase denoting emphasis meaning 'an exceedingly strong hunter', just as God's name is used to emphasize the importance of Nineveh in *Jonah* 3:3: עִיר גְּדוֹלָה לֵאלֹהִים — [lit. 'a great city to God'] where the meaning is an exceedingly great city. [*Comm.* to 1:2 s.v. גְּדוֹלָה לֵאלֹהִים].

— In those times wild beasts were in abundance and people were in terror of them. Nimrod began his dominion by hunting down the animals, and, as a great hunter, people deified him, hence the phrase before HASHEM (*Malbim*).

Ha'amek Davar differs from the above and interprets that Nimrod, unintentionally did intend to perform God's will. Without a strong government, man cannot survive a secure, civilized race. Nimrod was the first to establish such a strong political system. Thus, although his motives were base and selfish, he was considered as acting 'before

1. As noted in the *comm.* to 3:21 the garments that God provided for Adam and Eve passed on to Cush who passed them onto his son, Nimrod. These garments were embroidered with animals and birds. When he put them on, God endowed him with strength, and all the animals and birds crouched before him so that he had no difficulty in catching them. The people thought that these feats were due to his extraordinary strength, and they made him king (*Sefer HaYashar* 7:30 al *Pirkei d'Rabbi Eliezer* 24).

27 The lads grew up and Esau became one who
27-28 knows hunting, a man of the field. But Jacob was a
wholesome man, abiding in tents. 28 Isaac loved Esau

hunter before HASHEM, (above 10:9) which Rashi there explains as, 'he ensnared men with his words and incited them to rebel against the Omnipresent.'^[1]

איש שדה — A man of the field.

— As it literally implies: A carefree person who hunted beasts and birds with his bow (Rashi).

[I.e., Esau was a man of the outdoors; unrestricted; in contrast with the description of Noah as איש הארצה, man of the earth (9:20), and Cain in 3:2 as עבד ארצה, worker (tiller) of the earth, both of which terms denote agricultural labor. That interpretation of agriculturalist, however, cannot be applied to Esau who was a hunter (Mizrachi).]

According to Sforno, however, the term does, even in this case, describe one skilled in field work.

The Zohar perceives the phrase man of the field to imply that he was a highwayman who robbed and murdered people while pretending to his father that he isolated himself to pray. Also, he was a man of the field in that his portion was not cast in inhabited land, but in wild and desolate places. [See footnote to v.28.]

Kli Yakar, based on Bava Basra

1. Yalkut Shimoni preserves a Midrash that Esau's skill as a hunter was directly attributable to a tunic which Esau took from Nimrod. As noted in the footnote to 3:21 and 10:10, this garment, originally made for Adam, passed on to Cush who in turn passed it on to his son, Nimrod. It was embroidered with animals and birds, and it was to this that Nimrod owed his prowess and renown.

As Hadar Zekeinim and Da'as Zekeinim record, Esau and Nimrod had been engaged in a bitter feud for a long time and finally resolved to leave the decision to a duel. Jacob, knowing that Nimrod was invulnerable as long as he was clad in Adam's garments, advised his brother not to enter into combat before his adversary had removed these garments. Whereupon Esau put those garments on stealthily and killed Nimrod in the duel. This made Esau, too, a cunning hunter. These were the coveted garments of Esau [referred to in 27:15] which Jacob wore when he received Isaac's blessing.

16b interprets that Esau went to the fields to commit adultery. There, far from towns, the cries of his victims would not be heard [cf. Deut. 22:25-7].

איש תם — But [lit. and] Jacob was a wholesome man [lit. a simple or perfect man, in the moral sense].

I.e., not expert in all of the above: his heart and mouth were consistent with one another. One not ingenious in deceiving people is called תם [plain; simple, wholesome] (Rashi).

The description of Jacob as איש תם, simple man, contrasts with Esau as ירע ציד, a man who knows trapping; Jacob's ישב אהלים, abiding in tents, contrasts with Esau as איש שדה, a man of the field, again emphasizing the starkness of their diametrically opposed characteristics (Ibn Ezra; Abarbanel).

The Midrash cites this verse to support the tradition that Jacob was born circumcised: תם, being interpreted in the sense of physically perfect and whole.

ישב אהלים — Abiding [lit. dwelling; sitting] in tents.

ולדת כו שנה בלדת אתם: ויגדלו הנערים ויהי
 עשו איש ירע ציד איש שדה ויעקב כח ז/כז-כח
 כח איש תם ישב אהלים: ויאהב יצחק את

Abraham did [in regard to Sarah — see *comm.* to 16:3]. When she did still not conceive, he realized she was barren and prayed for her. But he did not want to marry one of his maids [as Abraham did in the case of Sarah] because he had been sanctified on Mount Moriah to be *עולה תמימה*, an *unblemished offering* [and could therefore not marry a slave] (*Rashi*).

[On Isaac as an *unblemished offering* in cosequence of his having been consecrated as an offering to God at the *Akeidah*, see *comm.* to 26:2.]

27. The Personalities Emerge.

ויגדלו הנערים — [And] the lads grew up.

[Although as *v.* 23 records, Jacob and Esau were distinct from the womb (*Mizrachi*)], there was no *conspicuous* difference between them when they were children. No one paid much attention to their characters [attributing Esau's pranks to childishness rather than wickedness (*Sifsei Chachomim*)]. But when they reached thirteen their varying dispositions became manifest: Jacob frequented houses of study, and Esau the idolatrous temples (*Rashi*).

How does *Rashi* specify *thirteen* as the age when their varying characteristics became manifest, when further, (in *v.* 30), *Rashi* makes it clear that Abraham died prematurely when Esau was *fifteen* years old so Abraham would not see Esau pursue a career of wickedness?

Mizrachi answers that during the 13 years until he was fifteen, Esau sinned privately; after that he sinned openly. According to *Nachalas Yaakov*, before Esau was fifteen he did not commit cardinal sins such as adultery with married women or murder.

ויקח עשו איש ירע ציד — [And] Esau became [lit. was] one who knows hunting [lit. trapping].

—I.e., knowing [that is] figuratively attaining skill] how to entrap and deceive his father with his mouth, asking him how tithes were to be taken from salt and straw [although he knew full well that these were not subject to the law of tithes]. Consequently, his father thought him to be punctillious in performing the *mitzvot* (*Tanchuma; Rashi*).

Rashbam interprets the phrase literally as a *cunning hunter*.

[The figurative *Midrashic* interpretation which *Rashi* follows is not opposite to the literal sense but reflects a profound perception into the nature of Esau. The term *ירע ציד*, one who knows hunting signifies, as *Hirsch* points out that "the *ציד*, *hunter*, must understand the art of stalking; he must be able to appear quite innocent and still have in his heart the thought of killing. It is a complete exercise of trickery, slyness, sidiuousness ..." Hence, apparently *Rashi* accepted as the underlying sense of the phrase, the *Midrashic* interpretation that the phrase implies Esau's devious character in deceiving his father.]

[Compare the description of Nimrod whose spiritual heir Esau seems to have been, as *גבור ציד לפני ה'*, a *mighty*

myself a curse rather than a blessing."

15-13 But his mother said to him, "Your curse be on me, my son. Only heed my voice and go fetch them for me."

14 So he went, fetched, and brought them to his mother, and his mother made delicacies as his father liked.

15 Rebecca then took her older son Esau's clean garments which were with her in the house, and clothed

my son. *Ralbag* similarly comments that Rebecca might have been prophetically informed that Jacob would not be cursed.

Malbim explains that Rebecca instructed Jacob that if Isaac were to find out his deception and attempt to deliver a curse, Jacob was to tell him *עלי*, upon me, i.e. the responsibility was Rebecca's. Then Isaac would realize that Jacob had come not for personal gain, but in obedience to his mother. He would further realize that Rebecca would not have done so without a compelling reason. And even if he were to be angry, his anger would be directed only against her.

אך שמע בקלי - Only heed [in] my voice. [Cf. comm. v. 8].

- And take the risk on my word (*Radak*).

- Since I have informed you that such is God's Word, it is incumbent upon you to cooperate (*Malbim*).

Minchah Belulah suggests that the phrase *listen to my voice* implies that she coached him to listen to how she imitated Esau's voice, and follow suit. But in his wholesomeness, Jacob did not do so, and this caused Isaac to be suspicious.

14. וילך ויקח ויבא לאמו - So [lit. and] he went, [and] fetched, and

brought [them] to his mother.

Jacob undoubtedly valued the blessings, and under the circumstances he certainly had need to hurry and bring the delicacies to his father. There should, then, be some allusion to this haste as there was in the case of Abraham where the text notes he ran to meet his guests [18:2] and the many other references to his haste in the narrative there. Similarly in the case of Eliezer and Rebecca the text often notes their haste. Therefore, the text here, too, should have said *וירץ ויקב* Jacob ran, and brought them to his mother. The verse, as it is written, indicates clearly that Jacob did not apply himself enthusiastically to this scheme but reluctantly carried out his mother's behest (*HaKabbal V'haKaballah*).

Cf. the Midrash which also detects in the text a hint of Jacob's reluctance: *He went and got and brought to his mother - under duress, silent, and weeping.*

15. The disguise.

בגדי עשו... קמרות - Esau's clean garments.

[The word *קמרות* literally means *treasured, precious*.] The primary translation *clean* follows *Rashi* who

זולדת
 ז'יג טו
 יג בְּרָכָה: וַתֹּאמֶר לוֹ אִמּוֹ עָלַי קָלְלָתְךָ בְּנֵי
 יד אֶךְ שָׁמַע בְּקִלְי וְלֶךְ קַח-לִי: וַיִּלֶךְ וַיִּקַּח
 וַיָּבֵא לְאִמּוֹ וַתַּעַשׂ אִמּוֹ מִטְעָמִים כַּאֲשֶׁר
 טו אָהָב אָבִיו: וַתִּקַּח רְבִקָּה אֶת-בְּגָדֵי עֶשָׂו
 בְּנֵהּ הַגָּדֹל הַחֲמֹדֹת אֲשֶׁר אָתָּה בֹכֵית

Midrash Tanchuma observes: He who deceives his father is as though he practiced idol worship. See also *Sanhedrin* 92a.

[Cf. באשר התעו in 20:13].

Hirsch observes that Jacob employed the prefix ב, *like*. He was not a cheat, but would appear *like* one. Isaac would be outraged and, without giving him time to explain, might curse him.

— [And] וְהִבֵּאתִי עָלַי קָלְלָה וְלֹא בְרָכָה
I will thus bring upon myself a curse rather than [lit. and not] a blessing.

Even if he had planned to reserve a blessing for me, he will withhold it if he discovers a deception (*Sforno; Malbim*).

— My father will not give me even the single blessing that he would otherwise reserve for me (*Midrash*).¹¹

13. עָלַי קָלְלָתְךָ בְּנֵי — *Your curse be on me, my son!*

Upon me and upon my neck [i.e. I take full responsibility.] She had complete confidence in the prophecy that *the elder would serve the younger* [25:23] (*Rashbam*).

1. *Rabbi Elimelech* of *Lizhensk* [*Noam Elimelech*] homiletically interpreted this and the next verse as a dialogue between Jacob and the *Shechinah* speaking through the mouth of Rebecca.

Isaac intended to bless Esau with material wealth and give only spiritual riches to Jacob. The *Shechinah*, however, wanted Jacob to have wealth in This World as well. Jacob argued that the temptation of material wealth might cause flaws to develop in his erstwhile innocence. 'Perhaps my Father [in heaven] will feel me [detect my unworthiness] and thus, by taking blessings for which I am unqualified, I will bring a curse upon myself.'

The *Shechinah* replied that it would take responsibility for the curse. As long as Jacob would obey its voice by devoting his material wealth to the performance of good deeds and the giving of charity, he need feel no ill effects.

If he blesses you they shall be upon you and your descendants; if, however, he curses you, the curses shall remain upon me and my soul. (*Targum Yonasan*).

— 'Have no fear that he will curse you. If he does curse you, may it alight on me, not you,' this being the way of women [to have compassion and want to suffer for their children (*Yohel Or*)] (*Ibn Ezra*).

Radak perceives the nuance as: If he *does* curse you, the malediction will affect not you, but me, since I incited you.

— He himself will perceive that I am responsible for the scheme and not you (*Chizkuni*)...

And in effect it is not *you* who will be cursed but עָלַי קָלְלָתְךָ, *the curse you speak about will be upon me*, since it is the way of the world that when a child acts improperly, one castigates the parents and says, 'Cursed are those who raised this one!' (*Daas Zekeinim; Tosafos HaRosh*).

Onkelos renders: עָלַי, *unto me*, has it been said in prophecy, that there shall be no curses upon you.

16-19 Jacob her younger son. ¹⁶ With the skins of the goat-kids she covered his arms and the bareness of his neck. ¹⁷ She placed the delicacies and the bread which she had prepared into the hand of her son Jacob, ¹⁸ and he came to his father and said, "Father," and he said, "Here I am. Who are you my son?"

¹⁹ Jacob said to his father, "It is I, Esau your first-

determined that they go to Jacob because she perceived Esau's unfitness for them (Ramban).⁽¹⁾

According to *HaKsav V'haKabbalah*, the sons are described as younger or older to imply that Rebecca did not act out of personal motives but only in fulfillment of the prophecy that the elder would serve the younger [25:23].

16. על יָדָיו וְעַל חִלְקַת צְנָאָרָיו - [On] his arms and [on] the bareness of his neck.

- To deceive Isaac into thinking that Jacob was the hairy Esau (Tz'ror HaMor).

17. וְאֵת הַלֶּחֶם - And the bread.

- Which she had baked to accompany his meal (Radak).

בְּיָד וְעַקֵּב בְּנָהּ - Into the hand of her son Jacob.

[Again symbolic of Jacob's lack of enthusiasm for the scheme. His mother had to place it into his very hand; it was only by virtue of the filial devotion due her as בְּנָהּ, her son, that he took it. He was passive

and tearful throughout the preparations, as noted above by the Midrash, and she accompanied him as far as Isaac's door.]

18. וַיָּבֹא אֶל-אָבִיו - [And] he [Jacob] came to his father.

- With head bowed, and in tears (Midrash).

וַיֹּאמֶר אָבִי - And [he] said, '[My] father.'

A courteous form of announcing his presence since Isaac could not see him (Radak; Ibn Caspi).

Jacob called out this one word to test whether his father would recognize his voice. Were Isaac to recognize his voice, Jacob would have abandoned the scheme and pose as if he merely came to visit. (Alshich).

[See Ramban to v. 12 that either Jacob disguised his voice or his voice was similar to Esau's.]

מִי אַתָּה בְּנִי - Who are you, my son?

The scheme was working! Isaac was uncertain which son had just come in (Alshich).

1. The terms in Hebrew are גָּדוֹל and קָטָן, lit. large and small, instead of רַב and צָעִיר, older and younger. This implies that though Esau was of much larger build than Jacob the smaller brother, nevertheless the clothes fit Jacob perfectly. Rebecca perceived this as a sign that Heaven agreed with her plan that Jacob should receive the blessing. This is similar to the case of Saul, who was very tall [I Sam. 9:2] who clad the shorter David with his royal garments [ibid. 17:38], and they fit David perfectly. This was perceived as a divine sign that David's mission against Goliath would be successful, and that David would eventually reign as king in Saul's stead (Yesod HaTorah).

did not entirely trust th
shi; see *Hirsch*).

According to *Rashbam's* :
retation (see above) they w
umably kept there out of c
ence since those were the g
its Esau wore when he serv
father. Thus, they would
y whenever Isaac summor
This follows the *Midrashic* v
standing also.][1]

נתלבש את – And [she] cloth
b.

Jacob's reluctance is evide
in filial devotion he allowed
her to dress him; he did not w
out them on himself (*HaKe*
Kaballah).

בנה – Her younger son.

As *Hirsch* notes in v. 11, it was
mother that she demanded, a
er son that he obeyed.

That the narrative describes Es
the older and Jacob as t
nger is to the credit of Rebec
ough a mother would norma
ognize that the blessin
nged to the firstborn, she w

obis.

he needs of my father all my life but I
or his father. When I would care for
lirty my good clothing; but when I w
astered to his father he put on his r
royal robes befits my father's hono