

## 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!'<sup>1</sup>

(b) Some excuse Jacob's apparent lack not only of brotherly love but even of common humanity. He knew, they say, that Esau had once 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.<sup>2</sup>

(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.<sup>3</sup>

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

hour, God mercifully made Adam and Eve garments of skin. But He said to Himself: 'This man has become like a god in his knowledge of good and evil! What if he were to pluck the fruit hanging on the Tree of Life, and live eternally?' With that, He drove Adam out of Eden, posting at its East Gate certain cherubim called 'the Flame of Whirling Swords', to bar his way.<sup>4</sup>

(e) The Serpent had rudely thrust Eve against the Tree of Knowledge, saying: 'You have not died after touching this tree; neither will you die after eating its fruit!' He also said: 'All former beings are ruled by the latest beings. You and Adam, created last of all, rule the world; eat therefore and be wise, lest God send new beings to usurp your rule!' As Eve's shoulders touched the tree, she saw Death approaching. 'Now I must die,' she groaned, 'and God will give Adam a new wife! Let me persuade him to eat as I do, so that if we must both die, we shall die together; but if not, we shall live together.' She plucked a fruit and ate, then tearfully pleaded with Adam until he agreed to share it.<sup>5</sup>

(f) Eve later persuaded all beasts and birds to taste the fruit—or all except the prudent phoenix, which has remained immortal ever since.<sup>6</sup>

(g) Adam wondered at Eve's nakedness: because her glorious outer skin, a sheet of light smooth as a finger-nail, had fallen away.<sup>7</sup> Yet though the beauty of her inner body, shining like a white pearl, entranced him, he fought for three hours against the temptation to eat and become as she was; holding the fruit in his hand meanwhile. At last he said: 'Eve, I would rather die than outlive you. If Death were to claim your spirit, God could never console me with another woman equalling your loveliness!' So saying, he tasted the fruit, and the outer skin of light fell away from him also.<sup>8</sup>

(h) Some hold that Adam, by eating the fruit, won the gift of prophecy;<sup>9</sup> but that, when he tried to pluck leaves for an apron, the trees drove him off, crying: 'Begone, thief, who disobeyed your Creator! You shall have nothing from us!' Nevertheless, the Tree of Knowledge let him take what he wished—they were fig-leaves—improving his preference of wisdom to immortality.<sup>10</sup>

(i) Others make the Tree of Knowledge an immense wheat stalk, taller than a cedar; or a vinestock; or a citron-tree, whose fruit is used in celebration of Tabernacles. But Enoch reports that it was a date-palm.<sup>11</sup>

(j) According to some, the garments God gave Adam and Eve resembled fine Egyptian linens from Beth Shean, that mould them-

selves to the body;<sup>12</sup> according to others they were of goat-skin, or coney-skin, or Circassian wool, or camel's hair, or of the Serpent's slough.<sup>13</sup> 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.<sup>14</sup>

(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.<sup>15</sup>

(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.<sup>16</sup>

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

## CHAPTER XXIV

### NIMROD AND THE TOWER OF BABEL [28B. i.]

RABBI ELIEZER<sup>1</sup> said: They begat their sons and increased and multiplied like a great reptile, six at each birth,<sup>2</sup> and they were all one people, and one heart, and one language, as it is said, "And the whole earth was of one language and of one speech" (Gen. xi. 1).<sup>3</sup> They despised the pleasant land,<sup>4</sup> as it is said, "And it came to pass, as they journeyed<sup>5</sup> in the east" (*ibid.* 2). They went to the land of Shinar, and found there a large stone,<sup>6</sup> very extensive, and the whole plain, and they dwelt there, as it is said, "And they found a plain in the land of Shinar, and they dwelt there" (*ibid.*).

Rabbi 'Akiba said: They cast off the Kingdom of Heaven<sup>7</sup> from themselves, and appointed Nimrod king over themselves; a slave son of a slave. Are not all the sons of Ham slaves?<sup>8</sup> And woe to the land when a slave rules,<sup>9</sup> as it is said, "For a servant, when he is king"<sup>10</sup> (Prov. xxx. 22).

Rabbi Chakhinai<sup>11</sup> said: Nimrod was a mighty hero,

<sup>1</sup> The first editions read "Ilai."

<sup>2</sup> We have had this expression *supra*, p. 161. It is an "Oriental" exaggeration, signifying the prolific nature of the people.

<sup>3</sup> See Pal. Targum, *in loc.*

<sup>4</sup> Palestine; cf. Ps. cvi. 24, and Zohar, Gen. 75b.

<sup>5</sup> "In the east" might also be rendered "in the commencement," or "at first"; see Zohar, Gen. 74b.

<sup>6</sup> The first editions read: "a large and extensive land, entirely a plain."

<sup>7</sup> See T.B. 'Erubin, 53a; cf. Pal. Targum to Gen. x. 8 on Nimrod; see also the Book of Jashar vii. 46 ff., and Jeraḥmeel lvii. 14. Augustine rendered Gen. x. 9, "Nimrod was a hunter against God" (*de Civ. Dei*, xvi. 4).

<sup>8</sup> The Venice edition reads: "are slaves."

<sup>9</sup> The phraseology is based on Eccles. x. 16.

<sup>10</sup> The previous verse says, "The earth trembles." Nimrod caused the people to tremble, as a result of discarding the Kingdom of Heaven.

<sup>11</sup> The first editions read "Chanina."

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as it is said, "And Cush begat Nimrod, who began to be a mighty one in the earth" (Gen. x. 8). Rabbi Jehudah said:<sup>1</sup> The coats<sup>2</sup> which the Holy One, blessed be He, made for Adam and his wife, were with Noah<sup>3</sup> in the ark, and when they went forth from the ark, || Ham, the son of Noah, brought them forth with him, and gave them as an inheritance to Nimrod.<sup>4</sup> When he put them on, all beasts, animals, and birds, when they saw the coats,<sup>5</sup> came and prostrated themselves before him.<sup>6</sup> The sons of men<sup>7</sup> thought that this (was due) to the power of his might; therefore they made him king over themselves, as it is said, "Wherefore it is said, Like Nimrod, a mighty hunter before the Lord" (*ibid.* 9).<sup>8</sup>

Nimrod said to his people:<sup>9</sup> Come, let us build a great city for ourselves, and let us dwell therein, lest we be scattered upon the face of all the earth, as the first people<sup>10</sup> (were). Let us build a great tower in its midst, ascending to heaven,<sup>11</sup> for the power of the Holy One, blessed be He, is only in the water,<sup>12</sup> and let us make us a great name on the earth, as it is said, "And let us make us a name" (*ibid.* xi. 4).

<sup>1</sup> See *Rabbinic Philosophy and Ethics*, pp. 44 f. On the garments of Adam and Eve see the Book of Jashar, vii. 24 ff.; Gen. Rab. xx. 12 and lxx. 16; Pal. Targ. Gen. xxv. 27, xxvii. 15.

<sup>2</sup> The first editions read "coat." See Book of the Bee, p. 35.

<sup>3</sup> The first editions read "them." See Hippolytus, *A.N.C.L.* vi. p. 492.

<sup>4</sup> The *Recognitions of Clement*, iv. 27, speak of Ham as the first magician and refer to Nimrod as follows: "the magic art having been handed down to him as by a flash" (*ibid.* 29).

<sup>5</sup> The MS. reads: "the writing" (הכתב).

<sup>6</sup> See Rashi on T.B. Pesachim, 54b, and the Book of Jashar, *loc. cit.*

<sup>7</sup> The first editions read "they," *i.e.* his fellow-countrymen; see Jalkut, Gen. § 62. See *J.E.* ix. 309.

<sup>8</sup> The next verse says, "The beginning of his kingdom." See Josephus, *Ant.* i. 4. 2; T.B. Pesachim, 94b; and cf. Pal. Targum, *in loc.*, and the Book of the Bee, p. 37.

<sup>9</sup> See T.B. Chullin, 89a; Gen. Rab. xxvi. 4; and cf. Leqach Tob, Gen. p. 27a.

<sup>10</sup> At the Flood. According to Jubilees vii. 20, Noah enjoined upon his sons commandments "to cover the shame of their flesh, and to bless their Creator, and honour father and mother, and love their neighbour, and guard their souls from fornication and uncleanness and all iniquity. For owing to these three things came the flood upon the earth."

<sup>11</sup> See T.B. Synhedrin, 109a, and Othijoth de R. 'Aqiba, letter Resh. *B.H.M.* iii. pp. 46 f.

<sup>12</sup> Luria thinks that the correct reading should be "in heaven," and not "in the water."

19 These are the generations of Shem; Shem begat Arpachshad and Arpachshad begat Shelach, and Shelach begat Eber and to Eber were born two children, the name of one was Peleg, for in his days the sons of men were divided, and in the latter days, the earth was divided.

20 And the name of the second was Yoktan, meaning that in his day the lives of the sons of men were diminished and lessened.

21 These are the sons of Yoktan; Almodad, Shelaf, Chazarmoveth, Yerah, Hadurom, Ozel, Diklah, Obal, Abimael, Sheba, Ophir, Havilah and Jobab; all these are the sons of Yoktan.

22 And Peleg his brother begat Yen, and Yen begat Serug, and Serug begat Nahor and Nahor begat Terah, and Terah was thirty-eight years old, and he begat Haran and Nahor.\*

23 And Cush the son of Ham, the son of Noah, took a wife in those days, in his old age, and she bare a son, and they called his name Nimrod, saying, At that time the sons of men again began to rebel and transgress against God, and the child grew up, and his father loved him exceedingly, for he was the son of his old age.

24 And the garments of skin which God made for Adam and his wife, when they went out of the garden, were given to Cush.

25 For after the death of Adam and his wife, the garments were given to Enoch, the son of Jared, and when Enoch was taken up to God, he gave them to Methuselah, his son.

26 And at the death of Methuselah, Noah took them and brought them to the ark, and they were with him until he went out of the ark.

27 And in their going out, Ham

stole those garments from Noah his father, and he took them and hid them from his brothers.

28 And when Ham begat his first born Cush, he gave him the garments in secret, and they were with Cush many days.

29 And Cush also concealed them from his sons and brothers, and when Cush had begotten Nimrod, he gave him those garments through his love for him, and Nimrod grew up, and when he was twenty years old he put on those garments.

30 And Nimrod became strong when he put on the garments, and God gave him might and strength, and he was a mighty hunter in the earth, *yea*, he was a mighty hunter in the field, and he hunted the animals and he built altars, and he offered upon them the animals before the Lord.

31 And Nimrod strengthened himself, and he rose up from amongst his brethren, and he fought the battles of his brethren against all their enemies round about.

32 And the Lord delivered all the enemies of his brethren in his hands, and God prospered him from time to time in his battles, and he reigned upon earth.

33 Therefore it became current in those days, when a man ushered forth those that he had trained up for battle, he would say to them, Like God did to Nimrod, who was a mighty hunter in the earth, and who succeeded in the battles that prevailed against his brethren, that he delivered them from the hands of their enemies, so may God strengthen us and deliver us this day.

34 And when Nimrod was forty years old, at that time there was a war between his brethren and the children of Japheth, so that they were in the power of their enemies.

\* Gen xi. 19.

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

<sup>19</sup> 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).<sup>(1)</sup>

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).

בְּיַד יַעֲקֹב בְּנֵהּ - 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 בְּנֵהּ, 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. וַיָּבֵא 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 בְּנֵי - 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 זָקֵן 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).



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.'<sup>[1]</sup>

הַשָּׂדֵה אִישׁ — 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 אִישׁ הָאֲדָמָה, man of the earth (9:20), and Cain in 3:2 as עֹבֵד אֲדָמָה, 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

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).

תָּם — 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 תָּם [plain; simple, wholesome] (Rashi).

The description of Jacob as אִישׁ תָּם, simple man, contrasts with Esau as יֹרֵעַ צִיד, a man who knows trapping; Jacob's יֹשֵׁב אֹהֶלִים, abiding in tents, contrasts with Esau as אִישׁ הַשָּׂדֵה, 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: תָּם, being interpreted in the sense of physically perfect and whole.

יֹשֵׁב אֹהֶלִים — Abiding [lit. dwelling; sitting] in tents.

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.

Canaan. <sup>7</sup>The children of Cush: Seba, Havilah, Sabtah, Raamah, and Sabteca. The children of Raamah: Sheba and Dedan.

<sup>8</sup>And Cush begot Nimrod. He was the first to be a mighty man on earth. <sup>9</sup>He 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 הזחל (4:26) and נחל (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 תחלה, 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 חולין, 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 [ציד = צר] men with his words, and incited them to rebel against the Omnipresent (*Rashi*).

As *Yonasan* paraphrases: He was

וְחַוִּילָה וְסַבְתָּה וְרַעְמָה וְסַבְתָּכָא וּבְנֵי  
 רַעְמָה שָׁבָא וְדָדָן: וְכוּשׁ יִלְד אֶת־נִמְרֹד  
 ה הוּא הַחַל לַהֲיוֹת גִּבּוֹר בְּאַרְצָּ: הוּא־הִיָּה  
 ט גִּבּוֹר־צִיד לִפְנֵי 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  
 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 2:11  
 where the name *Chavilah* appears  
 in connection with the rivers flow-  
 ing from Eden. According to the  
*comm.* there, it is probably the *Cha-*  
*vilah* in *v.*29 that is referred to.]

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

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

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

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

(25) דָּדָן — *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 יִלְד אֶת נִמְרֹד — *And*  
*Cush begot Nimrod.*<sup>[1]</sup>

*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 of 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.

על כן יאמר — 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. ... ותהי ראשית ממלכתו בבל — 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).

בבל — 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 ראשית 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 אַכַּד — 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

גבור ציד לפני יהוה: ותהי ראשית  
ממלכתו בכל וארץ ואכד וכלנה בארץ

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.<sup>[1]</sup>

לפני 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 לפני ה' in-

dicates a hypocritical display of piety. He notes that לפני 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 as denoting emphasis meaning 'an exceedingly strong hunter', just as God's name is used to emphasize the importance of Nineveh in *Jonah* 3:3: — עיר גדולה לאלהים [lit. 'a great city to God'] where the meaning is an exceedingly great city. [*Cf. comm.* to 1:2 s.v. ורדף אלהים].

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

*Ha'amek Davar* differs from all the above and interprets that Nimrod, unintentionally did indeed perform God's will. Without strong government, man cannot survive as a secure, civilized race. Nimrod was the first to establish such a strong political system. Thus, although his motives were base and selfish, he is 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 beasts, birds and animals 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 their king (*Sefer HaYashar* 7:30 al *Pirkei d'Rabbi Eliezer* 24).

ג  
 כב °רביעי כב °נילבשם: °ניאמר | יהנה אלהים  
 אלהים לאדם ולאשתו בתנות עור  
 האדם היה באחד ממנו לדעת טוב ור

he ה, 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 אשה, 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

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

בתנות עור — 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 [בתנות עור = 'Garments attached to their skin'], while others say they were עור = '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).<sup>11</sup>

וַיַּלְבֵּשׁם — 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

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).

impostor, a wandering tramp from afar whose claims to supreme authority cannot stand a too careful examination. Think of Prometheus' challenge to Zeus, of Loki's blackmailing of Othinn, of the dubious "Justification of Osiris," of the terror of almighty Anu when Tiamat challenges his authority, and so forth.<sup>33</sup> Run down these legends, and you will find in every case that the usurper comes from Central Asia. Even Isaiah (Isaiah 14:12-14) recalls that in the beginning the adversary himself set up his throne "upon the Mountain of the assembly in the regions of the North," and there pretended to be "like the Most High." For all this a single origin is indicated; whether historical or ritual makes little difference.

There is one aspect of the Nimrod cycle that is too interesting to pass by, especially for an anthropologist. That is the tradition of the stolen garment.

### The Stolen Garment

Nimrod claimed his kingship on the ground of victory over his enemies;<sup>34</sup> his priesthood, however, he claimed by virtue of possessing "the garment of Adam." The legends of the Jews assure us that it was by virtue of owning this garment that Nimrod was able to claim power to rule over the whole earth, and that he sat in his tower while men came and worshiped him.<sup>35</sup> The Apocryphal writers, Jewish and Christian, have a good deal to say about this garment. To quote one of them: "the garments of skin which God made for Adam and his wife, when they went out of the garden, were given . . . after the death of Adam . . . to Enoch"; hence they passed to Methusaleh, and then to Noah, from whom Ham stole them as the people were leaving the ark. Ham's grandson Nimrod obtained them from his father Cush.<sup>36</sup> As for the *legitimate* inheritance of this clothing, a very old fragment recently discovered says that Michael "disrobed Enoch of his earthly garments, and put on him his angelic clothing,"

taking him into the presence of God.<sup>37</sup> This garment of Enoch was supposed to be the very garment of skins that John the Baptist wore, called by the early Christians "the garment of Elias."<sup>38</sup> An Arabic "Life of John the Baptist" says that Gabriel brought it to John from heaven as "the garment of Elijah"; "it went back," says John Chrysostom, "to the beginning of the world, to the times before which Adam required covering. Thus it was the symbol of repentance."<sup>39</sup> Others believed it was the same garment that Herod and later the Romans put under lock and key when they wished to prevent the people from putting it on a candidate of their own choice, and tell how the Jews tried to seize the garment by force and put it on John the Baptist, thus making him, instead of Herod, their high priest.<sup>40</sup> Whatever its origin, the wearing of a garment of repentance, symbolic of life of man in his fallen state, was known to the most ancient Christians and practiced by certain ultra-conservative cults down to modern times.<sup>41</sup>

Incidentally the story of the stolen garment as told by the old rabbis, including the great Eleazer, calls for an entirely different rendering of the strange story in Genesis 9 from the version in our King James Bible. They seemed to think that the *erwath* of Genesis 9:22 did not mean "nakedness" at all, but should be given its primary root meaning of "skin covering." Read thus, we are to understand that Ham took the garment of his father while he was sleeping and showed it to his brethren, Shem and Japheth, who took a pattern or copy of it (*salmah*) or else a woven garment like it (*simlah*) which they put upon their own shoulders, returning the skin garment to their father. Upon awaking, Noah recognized the priesthood of two sons but cursed the son who tried to rob him of his garment. By an extremely common type of substitution, the *simlah* of Genesis 9:23 could very easily stand for an original *tsimlah*, a copy, imitation, pattern, or by an equally common type of transposition for *Salmah*, a garment or mantle,



as in Micah 2:8. Even as it stands *simlah* means only a woven garment and can hardly refer to the original skin article. This is, apparently, the source of the widespread legend that Ham stole the garment of Noah and claimed to possess the priesthood by virtue of his illegal insignia. Ham's descendants, Cush and Nimrod—both Africans, though Nimrod in his wandering moved to Asia<sup>42</sup>—made the same claim. It is interesting that according to certain ancient scriptures which the Latter-day Saints claim have been restored by revelation in our own age, Pharaoh (who represents the Afro-Asian line of Cush-Nimrod) was blessed as to the kingship but cursed as to the priesthood, and he offered Abraham the privilege of wearing his own royal insignia in hope that Abraham would return the compliment by allowing Pharaoh to wear his priestly ones (Abraham 1:26-27). According to a very old tradition, Pharaoh coveted the priesthood of Moses exactly as his ancestor Nimrod did that of Abraham, and it was said that the Pharaohs of Egypt dressed in a skin garment "to show that their origin was older than time itself."<sup>43</sup>

According to the Talmud, Nimrod's "great success in hunting was due to the fact that he wore the coat of skin which God made for Adam and Eve."<sup>44</sup> There is a tradition that Nimrod, becoming jealous of the rival hunter Esau (so much for chronology!), lay in ambush for him but was defeated by Esau, who cut off his head and "took the valuable garments of Nimrod, . . . with which Nimrod prevailed over the whole land (or earth!), and he ran and concealed them in his house." These garments, says the report, were nothing less than the birthright which Esau later sold to Jacob.<sup>45</sup>

Two significant conclusions come from all this: (1) that any historical reconstruction of what actually happened is out of the question, what has come down to us being a mass of conflicting legends and reports, and (2) that these conflicting legends and reports nevertheless agree on cer-

tain main points, that they are very old, and were considered by the most learned Jews to present matters of great importance, whose significance escaped later ages. The priests and kings of antiquity certainly wore such garments,<sup>46</sup> and the skin garment was often imitated in woven materials<sup>47</sup>; in fact, the skin garment was itself held to be a substitute for a still older garment made of the leaves of the *figus religiosus*.<sup>48</sup>

I make no apology for conducting you into these lost bypaths of the past. You have often proclaimed it your professional obligation to be interested in all things, and especially the unusual. Still there is such a thing as going too far, and it is high time I was showing you what a sober, factual, and common-sense document the book of Ether really is. Let us return to Babel.

4. The early fathers had a ready explanation for any suspicious resemblances between Christian and non-Christian practices. The former, they explained, had come down from the ancient Hebrews and were thus really much older than their pagan counterparts, which had been borrowed or stolen from them. Actually there is a great deal of evidence for the widespread *usurpation* of the temple rites at a very early time. One would hardly expect people to view their own highest rites as stolen and their highest god as a usurper, yet wherever we look that is what we find. Every major mythology tells of the great usurper who rules the world and who upon examination turns out to be the father and founder of the race!<sup>63</sup>

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.<sup>64</sup> 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*.<sup>65</sup> 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.<sup>66</sup> The interesting thing is that all his activities center around the temple, whose rites and whose priesthood he boldly attempts to seize for himself.

5. The same comparative studies that discovered the common pattern in all ancient religions—a phenomenon now designated as "patternism"—have also demonstrated the processes of *diffusion* by which that pattern was spread throughout the world—and in the process torn to shreds, of which

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invention of the banner to the founder and ancestor of the nation—in the Scrolls and the Book of Mormon it is Jacob or Israel.

### 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).

In the tenth century of our era the greatest antiquarian of the Moslem world, Muhammad ibn-Ibrahim ath-Tha'labi, collected in Persia a great many old tales and legends about the prophets of Israel. After the fall of Jerusalem and the scattering of the Jews, many of the sectaries, such as those that once lived around the Dead Sea, moved East to be under the protection of the Persians. Thus groups of Jews representing various sects and shades of belief were scattered all over central Asia in the Middle Ages, and it is from such, no doubt, that Tha'labi gets his amazing fund of information, which is worthy to be set up beside the most enlightening volumes of Apocrypha. Among other things, Tha'labi tells a number of stories, which we have not found anywhere else, about Jacob and the garment of Joseph. In one, Joseph's brethren bring his torn garment to their father as proof that he is dead, but Jacob after examining the garment ("and there were in the garment of Joseph three marks or tokens when they brought it to his father") declares that the way the cloth is torn shows him that their story is not true: "Behold, if the bear had eaten him he surely would have rent his garment, and since he

would (naturally) have fled towards the gate, verily the garment should have been torn behind." But since this is not the case it may be that Joseph still lives. Another account is the case of "the vizier" Potiphar, who by examining the tears in Joseph's garment, knew that he was innocent and spared his life, "for he knew that if he [Joseph] had attacked his wife the tear would have been in front." So again his torn garment declared that Joseph should live.<sup>16</sup>

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

And when Joseph had made himself known unto them [his brethren] he asked them about his father, saying, "What did my father after [I left]?" They answered, "He lost his eyesight [from weeping]." Then he gave them his garment [*qamis*, long outer shirt]. According to ad-Dahak that garment was of the weave [pattern, design] of Paradise, and the breath [spirit, odor] of Paradise was in it, so that it never decayed or in any way deteriorated [and that was] a sign [omen]. And Joseph gave them that garment, and it was the very one that had belonged to Abraham, having already had a long history. And he said to them, "Go, take this garment of mine and place it upon the face of my father so he may have sight again, and return [to me] with all your families." And when they had put Egypt behind them and come to Canaan their father Jacob said, "Behold, I perceive the spirit [breath, odor] of Joseph, if you will not think me wandering in my mind and weak-headed from age." . . . [for] he knew that upon all the earth there was no spirit [breath, odor] of Paradise save in that garment alone. . . . And as-Sadi says that Judah said to Joseph, "It was I who took the garment bedaubed with blood to Jacob, and reported to him that the wolf had eaten Joseph; so give me this day thy garment that I might tell him that thou art living, that I might cause him to rejoice now as greatly as I caused him to sorrow then." And Ibn-Abbas says that Judah took the garment and went forth in great haste, panting with exertion and anxiety . . . and when he brought the garment he laid it upon

his face, so that his sight returned to him. And ad-Dahak says that his sight returned after blindness, and his strength after weakness, and youth after age, and joy after sorrow. [Then follows a dialogue between Jacob and the King of Death].<sup>17</sup>

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.

Surely there is "a type and a shadow" in this story, for the particular concern of Israel is with Joseph and Judah and how, after working at cross purposes, they were reconciled after many years by the magnanimity of the one and the remorseful repentance of the other. It is another form of the symbolic story of the Two Sticks told in Ezekiel 37. But aside from the great symbolic force of the tale, there can be no doubt that the story told by Moroni as one familiar to all the people actually was one that circulated among the Jews in ancient times and was taken to the East by them, being like much early Jewish lore completely lost in the West. It was totally unknown to the world in which Joseph Smith lived.

These interesting little details are typical apocryphal variations on a single theme, and the theme is the one Moroni mentions; the rent garment of Joseph is the symbol both of his suffering and his deliverance, misfortune and

preservation. Such things in the Book of Mormon illustrate the widespread ramifications of Book of Mormon culture, and the recent declaration of Albright and other scholars that the ancient Hebrews had cultural roots in every civilization of the Near East. This is an acid test that no forgery could pass; it not only opens a window on a world we dreamed not of, but it brings to our unsuspecting and uninitiated minds a first glimmering suspicion of the true scope and vastness of a book nobody knows.

### Questions

1. Why has the denunciation of war and the awareness of its evils in no way diminished the frequency of ferocity of wars?
2. Was Moroni justified in putting to death those who would not "support the cause of freedom"? Was that real freedom?
3. Is there any justification for war? Can we break the commandments of God every day and then profess indignation because he allows us to suffer the effects of our folly?
4. What things are strange and unfamiliar in the Title of Liberty story?
5. What Old World parallels are there to these things?
6. What common origin is indicated to explain the resemblance?
7. How does the concept of war in the *Milhamah* Scroll and Alma differ from the modern view?
8. What considerations justify seeking illuminating parallels between the Book of Mormon customs and beliefs and practices as far away as Iran? Could there be any real connection between the two?
9. What indication is there in the story of Moroni's banner that the Nephites were familiar with apocryphal teachings since lost to the world?
10. Discuss the attitude of the Book of Mormon towards types and symbols. To what extent can such things be realities?



that place, Satan, the wicked one, had heard the Word of God communing with Adam respecting his covering.

3 It grieved him, and he hastened to the place where the sheep-skins were, with the intention of taking them and throwing them into the sea, or of burning them with fire, that Adam and Eve should not find them.

4 But as he was about to take them, the Word of God came from heaven, and bound him by the side of those skins until Adam and Eve came near him. But as they neared him they were afraid of him, and of his hideous look.

5 Then came the Word of God to Adam and Eve, and said to them, "This is he who was hidden in the serpent, and who deceived you, and stripped you of the garment of light and glory in which you were.

6 "This is he who promised you majesty and divinity. Where, then, is the beauty that was on him? Where is his divinity? Where is his light? Where is the glory that rested on him?

7 "Now his figure is hideous; he is become abominable among angels; and he has come to be called Satan.

8 "O Adam, he wished to take from you this earthly garment of sheep-skins, and to destroy it, and not let you be covered with it.

9 "What, then, is his beauty that you should have followed him? And what have you gained by hearkening to him? See his evil works and then look at Me; at Me, your Creator, and at the good deeds I do you.

10 "See, I bound him until you came and saw him and beheld his weakness, that no power is left with him."

11 And God released him from his bonds.

## CHAP. LII.

*Adam and Eve sew the first shirt.*

**A**FTER this Adam and Eve said no more, but wept before God on account of their creation, and of their bodies that required an earthly covering.

2 Then Adam said unto Eve, "O Eve, this is the skin of beasts with which we shall be covered. But when we have put it on, behold, a token of death shall have come upon us, inasmuch as the owners of these skins have died, and have wasted away. So also shall we die, and pass away."

3 Then Adam and Eve took the skins, and went back to the Cave of Treasures; and when in it, they stood and prayed as they were wont.

4 And they thought how they could make garments of those skins; for they had no skill for it.

5 Then God sent to them His angel to show them how to work it out. And the angel said to Adam, "Go forth, and bring some palm-thorns." Then Adam went out, and brought some, as the angel had commanded him.

6 Then the angel began before them to work out the skins, after the manner of one who prepares a shirt. And he took the thorns and stuck them into the skins, before their eyes.

7 Then the angel again stood up and prayed God that the thorns in those skins should be hidden, so as to be, as it were, sewn with one thread.

8 And so it was, by God's order; they became garments for Adam and Eve, and He clothed them withal.

9 From that time the nakedness of their bodies was covered from the sight of each other's eyes.

10 And this happened at the end of the fifty-first day.

11 Then when Adam's and Eve's bodies were covered, they stood and prayed, and sought mercy of the Lord, and forgiveness, and gave Him thanks for that He had had mercy on them, and had covered their nakedness. And they ceased not from prayer the whole of that night.

12 Then when the morn dawned at the rising of the sun, they said their prayers after their custom; and then went out of the cave.

13 And Adam said unto Eve, "Since we know not what there is to the westward of this cave, let us go forth and see it to-day." Then they came forth and went towards the western border.

#### CHAP. LIII.

##### *The prophecy of the Western Lands.*

**T**HEY were not very far from the cave, when Satan came towards them, and hid himself between them and the cave, under the form of two ravenous lions three days without food, that came towards Adam and Eve, as if to break them in pieces and devour them.

2 Then Adam and Eve wept, and prayed God to deliver them from their paws.

3 Then the Word of God came to them, and drove away the lions from them.

4 And God said unto Adam, "O Adam, what seekest thou on the western border? And why hast thou left of thine own accord the eastern border, in which was thy dwelling-place?"

5 "Now, then, turn back to thy cave, and remain in it, that Satan do not deceive thee, nor work his purpose upon thee.

6 "For in this western border, O Adam, there will go from thee a seed, that shall replenish it;

and that will defile themselves with their sins, and with their yielding to the behests of Satan, and by following his works.

7 "Therefore will I bring upon them the waters of a flood, and overwhelm them all. But I will deliver what is left of the righteous among them; and I will bring them to a distant land, and the land in which thou dwellest now shall remain desolate and without one inhabitant in it."

8 After God had thus discoursed to them, they went back to the Cave of Treasures. But their flesh was dried up, and their strength failed from fasting and praying, and from the sorrow they felt at having trespassed against God.

#### CHAP. LIV.

##### *Adam and Eve go exploring.*

**T**HEN Adam and Eve stood up in the cave and prayed the whole of that night until the morning dawned. And when the sun was risen they both went out of the cave; their heads wandering from heaviness of sorrow, and they not knowing whither they went.

2 And they walked thus unto the southern border of the garden. And they began to go up that border until they came to the eastern border beyond which there was no farther space.

3 And the cherub who guarded the garden was standing at the western gate, and guarding it against Adam and Eve, lest they should suddenly come into the garden. And the cherub turned round, as if to put them to death; according to the commandment God had given him.

4 When Adam and Eve came to the eastern border of the garden—thinking in their hearts that the cherub was not watching—as they were standing by

did ye sell your brother, and thus shall Ahasuerus sell your descendants to Haman over a meal, and because ye have sold Joseph to be a slave, therefore shall ye say year after year, Slaves were we unto Pharaoh in Egypt.”<sup>80</sup>

The price paid for Joseph by the Midianites was twenty pieces of silver, enough for a pair of shoes for each of his brethren. Thus “they sold the righteous for silver, and the needy for a pair of shoes.” For so handsome a youth as Joseph the sum paid was too low by far, but his appearance had been greatly changed by the horrible anguish he had endured in the pit with the snakes and the scorpions. He had lost his ruddy complexion, and he looked sallow and sickly, and the Midianites were justified in paying a small sum for him.<sup>81</sup>

The merchantmen had come upon Joseph naked in the pit, for his brethren had stripped him of all his clothes. That he might not appear before men in an unseemly condition, God sent Gabriel down to him, and the angel enlarged the amulet hanging from Joseph’s neck until it was a garment that covered him entirely. Joseph’s brethren were looking after him as he departed with the Midianites, and when they saw him with clothes upon him, they cried after them, “Give us his raiment! We sold him naked, without clothes.” His owners refused to yield to their demand, but they agreed to reimburse the brethren with four pairs of shoes, and Joseph kept his garment, the same in which he was arrayed when he arrived in Egypt and was sold to Potiphar, the same in which he was locked up in prison and appeared before Pharaoh, and the same he wore when he was ruler over Egypt.<sup>82</sup>

The  
Divine  
Replacement

that in the "future" every one shall be cured except the serpent, who will remain cursed for ever.

<sup>86</sup> BR 20. 6; Yerushalmi Sotah 8 (beginning); Tehillim 9, 86.

<sup>87</sup> ARN 42, 116-117. Quite different is the view of PRE 14 concerning the punishments inflicted on Adam; comp. Ginzberg in *Ha-Zofeh*, IV, 31. On the "garments of light", comp. notes 69 and 93 (with respect to the "horny skin" mentioned vol. I, p. 74, as well as in the first passage, comp. Dähnhardt, *Natursagen*, I, index, s. v. "Mensch"; *Orehot Hayyim*, I, 68c); on the second punishment comp. Philo, *De M. Opif.*, 24 and 40. Whether death is the consequence of the sin committed or not, see note 142. All animals were tame before the fall of man, and will become tame again in Messianic times; comp. Tan. B. III, 47; Tan. Mezora' 2; BR 20. 5. Comp. further notes 59 and 113. On the curses which were pronounced against Adam, comp. also vol. I, pp. 97-98, and the notes appertaining to them. According to 2 ARN 34, 74, the years of man's life have been shortened, but not those of the animals.

<sup>88</sup> BR 5. 9; Yerushalmi Kil'ayim 1, 27b; comp. vol. I, p. 19.

<sup>89</sup> Zohar Hadash Bereshit 24b on Gen. 3. 15, where two views are cited as to how long the curse lasted over the earth; according to one, it lasted to the birth of Noah (comp. vol. I, pp. 146-147); according to another, to the birth of Abraham. The idea that the sun and the earth are witnesses for and against man, is already found in the older sources; comp. Sifre D., 306; note 105 on vol. I, p. 25. On the eclipse of the sun at the time of the fall of man, comp. the account given in Matthew 27. 45 of the eclipse of the sun at the time of the crucifixion of Jesus; see further Sukkah 29a and note 113.

<sup>90</sup> 2 ARN 42, 117; PRE 14; comp. Luria's note, *ad loc.*, and Ginzberg in *Ha-Zofeh*, IV, 31. On vermin as a consequence of the fall of man, see also BR 5. 9 and 20. 8, as well as the Christian legends; comp. Dähnhardt, *Natursagen*, I, 216. Another view declares that whatever God created has its value; comp. vol. I, p. 42, and the note appertaining to it. On the origin of the mountains, comp. note 31 on vol. I, pp. 112-113; on the disclosing of the absorbed blood by the earth, comp. vol. I, p. 112, as well as vol. III, pp. 31 and 91. On the curse of the earth comp. 2 Alphabet R. Akiba, 61.

<sup>91</sup> BR 20. 10; ARN 1, 6-7; Pesahim 118a; ER 31, 164.

<sup>92</sup> Slavonic Apocalypse of Baruch 9; the Greek version of the apocalypse reads: The moon did not hide at the time of the fall, although

it found itself near to Sammael when he seduced Eve. On the eclipse of the sun during the fall, see vol. I, p. 79 (below).

93 PRE 20; Targum Yerushalmi Gen. 3. 21. Against this later view the older sources maintain that the garments mentioned in Gen., *loc. cit.*, were given to Adam and Eve by God before the fall, and that they really were not "garments of skin", but of light; comp. BR 20. 12, citing R. Meir's statement (the explanation given there שריוטין לפרט is a later rationalistic addition), and note 69. The view that the garments were made of the skin of Leviathan (*Hadar, Da'at*, and Hizkuni on Gen., *loc. cit.*, very likely quoted the same source) wishes to retain עור ("skin") in the biblical text, without losing the "light", since the skin of Leviathan has a shining lustre; comp. vol. I, pp. 27 and 28. The Church Fathers Irenaeus, III, 23. 5, and Tertullian, *De Pudicitia*, 9, and *De Resurrectione*, 7, speak of the celestial garments of Adam and Eve. Origen, *Contra Celsum*, 4. 40 (based very likely on Philo, *Quaestiones*, Gen. 1. 53), remarks: They received garments of skin at the time of the fall; *i. e.*, bodies, since before the fall they were spiritual beings. A similar statement is found in Zohar I, 36b, which reads: Before the fall they were dressed in garments of light" (= כְּתוּמֵי אֹרֶךְ), after the fall in "garments of skin" (= כְּתוּמֵי עוֹר), which were useful only for the body, not for the soul. A very important part is played by Adam and Eve's "garments of light" in the various versions of the Vita Adae; comp. *Adamschriften*, 52-53. However, we must not, without any further proof, connect the garments of light with the splendor of the light which shone over Adam before the fall (comp. note 105). But we shall not go astray if we identify them with the celestial garments of the pious, frequently mentioned in pseudepigraphic literature, and in early Christian as well as in kabbalistic writings; comp. Enoch 62. 16; 2 Enoch 22. 8-10; Ascension of Isaiah 4. 16, and the parallel passages cited by Charles. See further Zohar II, 150, and the lengthy discourse by Vital, *Sha'are Kedushah* (beginning). But also those who assert that Adam and Eve received their garments from God after the fall maintain that these clothes were of a superior and unusual kind. God created these garments at the twilight of the first Friday, hence it belongs to the primordial creations, on account of which both Adam and his descendants wore them as priestly garments at the time of the offering of the sacrifices. Furthermore they were not only of extraordinary brilliance and splendor, but had also supernatural qualities; comp. Sifre D., 355; Mekilta Wa-Yassa' 5, 51a; Pesahim

54b (top); 2 ARN 37, 95 (read דקור עור, with respect to כתנות עור); BR 20. 2; Tan. B. I, 17-18 and 33. See further vol. I, pp. 177, 319, and 332. Identifying Adam's priestly garments, which he received after the fall, with the garment of light, Abkir has the following statement (Yalkut I, 34): God made high-priestly garments for Adam which were like those of the angels; but when he sinned, God took them away from him. In 2 ARN 42, 116, it is stated briefly: Adam wore splendid garments, which were removed from him after the commission of the sin. That the garments of Adam and Eve belonged to the primordial creations is also asserted in Christian sources; comp. ps.-Justinian, *Quaestiones, . . . ad Orthodoxes*, VI, 1293; Jacob Sarug, cited by Moses bar Cepha, *De Paradiso*, 84A; comp. further Theodoretus, Gen. 3. 27. The latter cannot admit that God killed certain animals in order to furnish Adam and Eve with clothes. The same objection to the literal interpretation of כתנות עור is very likely the basis of the statement in Sotah 14a and BR 20.12 that the garments of Adam and Eve were made of wool, or, according to others, of linen.

<sup>94</sup> BR 21. 5-9; Philo, *De M. Opif.*, 60. The cherubim as a definite group of angels are already mentioned in the Book of Enoch (comp. Enoch 61. 10; 2 Enoch 19. 6), and are even considered as the "angels of destruction", for which reason Enoch 20. 7 mentions them alongside with the serpents, and in ShR 9. 11 they are explicitly described as such. Later sources (*Pa'aneah*, Gen. 3. 24 and *Hinnuk*, precept 62) insert שרים instead of מלאכי חבלה (Rashi on Gen., *loc. cit.*, employs the latter, more accurate expression), which is not exactly correct, because the "angels of destruction" are not devils. The statement of *Hadar*, Gen., *loc. cit.*, that the cherubim have the form of steers is perhaps due to the confusion of שרים = שורים "oxen" with שרים "devils". However their name is explained in this source from the Aramaic כרב "he ploughed". This view concerning the form of the cherubim would be very interesting if it should contain a reminiscence of the winged bulls. Comp. Index, s. v. "Cherubim".

<sup>95</sup> MHG I, 106 (based on two different sources); ER 1 (beginning); Targum Yerushalmi Gen. 3. 24. Comp. also BR 21 (end), and Philo, *Quaestiones*, Gen. 1, 57. On the flaming sword which is found in front of paradise, comp. vol. I, p. 174, and the note appertaining to it, as well as *Hemat ha-Hemdah* 14a. In the last passage it is said (based on Sa'adya Gaon's remarks in his *Polemic*

as well as note 34 on vol. I, p. 201. In Yashar Noah, 17b-18a, also two different sources are found; according to one Nimrod went (comp. *ibid.* 17. concerning the explanation of the name Nimrod: because man at the time of his birth rebelled against God) hunting in order to prepare sacrifices for the altar he erected to God. But afterwards we read that he was instrumental in causing man to forsake God. Midrash Aggada Gen. 10. 8, asserts that Nimrod was the first who ate meat.

<sup>78</sup> Yashar Noah 17a. On these garments, comp. PRE 24 (this is the source of Yashar); Pesahim 44b; notes 39 and 89 on vol. I, pp. 319 and 332 respectively. Comp. the following note.

<sup>79</sup> PRE 24; Midrash 'Aseret Melakim, 38-39; Zohar I, 73b and 142b; Sabba, Toledot, 28a; R. Bahya, Gen. 3. 21 (from Adam they came down to Cain, and after his death Nimrod took possession of them); *Hadar* and *Da'at* on Gen. 25. 32 and 27. 15. These splendid garments which Adam and Eve received at the time of leaving paradise were made of the skin of the female Leviathan (comp. vol. I, p. 27); *Hadar* and *Da'at* on Gen. 3. 21. Comp. BR 20. 12; Tan. B. I, 18, and Abkir in Yalkut I, 44, concerning these garments of Adam which served to the former generations as priestly garments. Comp. the preceding note.

<sup>80</sup> Yashar Noah, 17b; Zohar I, 73b-74a.

<sup>81</sup> PRE 24. According to ps.-Philo, 5A, Nimrod was only the chief of the Hamites, whereas the Japhethites and Semites had their own chiefs; comp. vol. I, p. 175 (top).

<sup>82</sup> Yashar Noah, 17b-18a; comp. also 23a concerning Nimrod's war enterprises and the founding of the cities; see further vol. I, p. 229, about the identity of Nimrod with Amraphel. On the Haggadah concerning the rulers of the world, a number of versions are extant. PRE 11 reads: God, at the time of the creation of the world was the first ruler; then Nimrod, Joseph, Solomon, Ahab, Nebuchadnezzar, Cyrus, Alexander of Macedon, the Messiah, and at the end of time God, who was the first ruler, will also be the last. *Maamar 'Aseret Melakim*, 54-55, and *Ma'asiyyot* (ed. Gaster, beginning) go back directly to this source; both of these books are to be used for a correct text of PRE. A version of this legend closely related to that found in PRE is that of Midrash 'Aseret Melakim, 38-55, whereas 2 Targum Yerushalmi 1. 1, which has (instead of Joseph, Solomon, Ahab, Cyrus, and Alexander) the following names: Pharaoh king of Egypt (either the one who ruled in the land in the time of Joseph

72, and Index, s. v. "Prophetesses". A different view is found in Lekah, *ad loc.*, and MHG I, 421, which, on the contrary, remark: Women are eaves-droppers, as may be seen from Rebekah's action. Comp. vol. I, p. 66.

<sup>82</sup> Philo, *Quaestiones*, Gen. 200.

<sup>83</sup> PRE 36; Targum Yerushalmi Gen. 27. 6. On the first day of Passover the quantity of dew is fixed for the ensuing year, and on the last day of Tabernacles (Shemini 'Azeret) the quantity of rain; comp. Mishnah Rosh ha-Shanah 1. 2; Ta'anit 1. 1-2, and Luria, PRE, *ad loc.*

<sup>84</sup> Lekah and Midrash Aggada on Gen. 27. 8.

<sup>85</sup> PRE 36; Targum Yerushalmi Gen. 37. 11.

<sup>86</sup> BR 65. 15. Comp. also MHG I, 424 (ט"ב).

<sup>87</sup> PRE 36; Targum Yerushalmi Gen. 27. 9. By רתנין, in PRE, reference is made to Tosefta Pesahim 5. 3, according to which מטעמים (Gen., *loc. cit.*) is to be taken as a festival sacrifice. Comp. Targum Yerushalmi, *ad loc.*

<sup>88</sup> BR 65. 14; WR 21. 11 and 27. 9; Tan. Toledot 10 and Emor 12; PR 47, 191a. Goats' skins were used for the tabernacle in remembrance of Jacob who obtained the blessings by means of goats' skins; Shir 2. 4.

<sup>89</sup> Tan. B. I, 133 (read: לְאֵרִים... שְׂדֵה בְּכוֹר) and 181; BaR 4. 8; Aggadat Bereshit 43, 85-86. Comp. notes 39, 44, as well as vol. I, p. 177, notes 78-80. Jerome, Gen. 27. 16, also mentions the Jewish tradition according to which the choicest garments were the priestly garments worn by the first-born who performed the priestly service before Aaron's time. That Isaac, though the first-born of his mother (and inasmuch as Ishmael was the son of a bondwoman, the former was the first legitimate child of his father), did not act as priest himself, is due to the circumstance that his blindness disqualified him from the priesthood. Comp. Josephus, *Antiqui.*, I, 18.

<sup>90</sup> BR 65. 16-17; DR I. 15; PR 23, 124a; MHG I, 424-425.

<sup>91</sup> Tan. B. I, 131; BR 65. 18. The Haggadah would not admit that Jacob uttered an unqualified untruth, especially as his answer to Rebekah's suggestion was: To tell a lie is as great a sin as to worship idols (BR, *loc. cit.*, and Sanhedrin 92a). Accordingly, Gen. 27. 19 is explained in such a way, that Jacob's words, though somewhat ambiguous, do not express an untruth. The construction of the Hebrew sentence admits of such an explanation without difficulty. Jub. 26. 13 goes still further, and makes Jacob answer his father: "I am



thy son." Similarly with regard to verse 24, it is remarked that Jacob's answer was: "I" (=It is I), and not "I am Esau." Comp. Lekah and Rashi, *ad loc.*

<sup>92</sup> BR 65. 19-23; Tan. B. I, 131-132 and 134-135 (comp. *ibid.* 165, where the episode with the angel is given in connection with Jacob's terror at meeting Esau on his return from Mesopotamia); Tan. Toledot 11; Ephraim, I, 77D. On the assistance rendered by the two archangels, Michael and Gabriel, comp. also BR 63. 14, where it is said that they drew up the bill of sale, transferring the birthright from Esau to Jacob. On the fragrance from paradise, and how Isaac recognized it, see vol. I, p. 286, note 255, and vol. I, p. 297, note 300, as well as vol. IV, p. 205, note 54. According to Tan. B. I, 145, the bodies of the pious emit a celestial fragrance like that of paradise (comp. vol. III, p. 5), while according to another view the paradise fragrance which Isaac discerned came from Jacob's garments which originally belonged to Adam who had worn them in paradise; comp. vol. I, p. 332. The statement Tan. B. I, 141, that God caused the garments to emit a fragrance like the aromatic perfume of the incense used in the temple is a later modification of the Haggadah in BR 65. 23, and Targum Yerushalmi Gen. 27. 27.

<sup>93</sup> Tan. B. I, 135; Targum Yerushalmi Gen. 27. 35 (with the addition that the wine given by the archangel to Isaac was of the kind created at the very beginning of the world for the use of the pious in the world to come, and which is "preserved in its grapes", = "ן המסמר", till that time; comp. note 79 on vol. I, p. 20). A similar Haggadah is found in Shu'aib, Toledot, 12c, and Shir, 52b. A badly mutilated form of this legend occurs in a Pahlevi writing. Comp. *R.E.J.*, XVIII, 13-14.

<sup>94</sup> Zohar Shir 1. 2. On joy as the necessary condition for the manifestation of the holy spirit, comp. Shabbat 30b; vol. II, p. 116, note 294.

<sup>95</sup> MHG I, 430; PRE 32, and comp. Luria, *ad loc.* The mid-rashic literature contains many interpretations of the "blessing", all of which are based on the assumption that it is nothing but a prophecy of Israel's history. See BR 66. 1-4; Tan. B. I, 133-134; Aggadot Bereshit 42, 86-87.

<sup>96</sup> BR 66. 4; Tan. B. I, 136; MHG I, 430; Yerushalmi Targumim Gen. 27. 29; Aggadot Bereshit 42, 87.

<sup>97</sup> BR 75. 8; MHG I, 438. In Rebekah's blessing an allusion

## NIMROD

The first among the leaders of the corrupt men was Nimrod." His father Cush had married his mother at an advanced age, and Nimrod, the offspring of this belated union, was particularly dear to him as the son of his old age. He gave him the clothes made of skins with which God had furnished Adam and Eve at the time of their leaving Paradise. Cush himself had gained possession of them through Ham. From Adam and Eve they had descended to Enoch, and from him to Methuselah, and to Noah, and the last had taken them with him into the ark. When the inmates of the ark were about to leave their refuge, Ham stole the garments and kept them concealed, finally passing them on to his first-born son Cush. Cush in turn hid them for many years. When his son Nimrod reached his twentieth year, he gave them to him." These garments had a wonderful property. He who wore them was both invincible and irresistible. The beasts and birds of the woods fell down before Nimrod as soon as they caught sight of him arrayed in them," and he was equally victorious in his combats with men." The source of his unconquerable strength was not known to them. They attributed it to his personal prowess, and therefore they appointed him king over themselves." This was done after a conflict between the descendants of Cush and the descendants of Japheth, from which Nimrod emerged triumphant, having routed the enemy utterly with the assistance of a handful of warriors. He chose Shinar as his capital. Thence he extended his dominion farther and farther, until he rose by cunning and force to be the sole ruler of the whole world. the first mortal to hold universal

The arrows and stones hurled at him effected naught,\* but the dust of the ground, the chaff, and the stubble which he threw at the enemy were transformed into death-dealing javelins and swords.\* Abraham, as tall as seventy men set on end, and requiring as much food and drink as seventy men, marched forward with giant strides, each of his steps measuring four miles, until he overtook the kings, and annihilated their troops. Further he could not go, for he had reached Dan, where Jeroboam would once raise the golden calves, and on this ominous spot Abraham's strength diminished.\*

His victory was possible only because the celestial powers espoused his side. The planet Jupiter made the night bright for him, and an angel, Lailah by name, fought for him.\* In a true sense, it was a victory of God. All the nations acknowledged his more than human achievement, and they fashioned a throne for Abraham, and erected it on the field of battle. When they attempted to seat him upon it, amid exclamations of "Thou art our king! Thou art our prince! Thou art our god!" Abraham warded them off, and said, "The universe has its King, and it has its God!" He declined all honors, and returned his property unto each man. Only the little children he kept by himself. He reared them in the knowledge of God, and later they atoned for the disgrace of their parents.

Somewhat arrogantly the king of Sodom set out to meet Abraham. He was proud that a great miracle, his rescue from the slime pit, had been performed for him, too. He made Abraham the proposition that he keep the despoiled goods for himself.\* But Abraham refused them, and said:

“I have lift up mine hand unto the Lord, God Most High, who hath created the world for the sake of the pious, that I will not take a thread nor a shoe-latchet nor aught that is thine. I have no right upon any goods taken as spoils,<sup>100</sup> save only that which the young men have eaten, and the portion of the men who tarried by the stuff, though they went not down to the battle itself.” The example of Abraham in giving a share in the spoils even unto the men not concerned directly in the battle, was followed later by David, who heeded not the protest of the wicked men and the base fellows with him, that the watchers who staid by the stuff were not entitled to share alike with the warriors that had gone down to the battle.<sup>101</sup>

In spite of his great success, Abraham nevertheless was concerned about the issue of the war. He feared that the prohibition against shedding the blood of man had been transgressed, and he also dreaded the resentment of Shem, whose descendants had perished in the encounter. But God reassured him, and said: “Be not afraid! Thou hast but extirpated the thorns, and as to Shem, he will bless thee rather than curse thee.” So it was. When Abraham returned from the war, Shem, or, as he is sometimes called, Melchizedek, the king of righteousness, priest of God Most High, and king of Jerusalem, came forth to meet him with bread and wine.<sup>102</sup> And this high priest instructed Abraham in the laws of the priesthood and in the Torah, and to prove his friendship for him he blessed him, and called him the partner of God in the possession of the world, seeing that through him the Name of God had first been made known among men.<sup>103</sup> But Melchizedek arranged the words of his

## THE SALE OF THE BIRTHRIGHT

Though Abraham reached a good old age, beyond the limit of years vouchsafed later generations, he yet died five years before his allotted time. The intention was to let him live to be one hundred and eighty years old, the same age as Isaac's at his death, but on account of Esau God brought his life to an abrupt close. For some time Esau had been pursuing his evil inclinations in secret. Finally he dropped his mask, and on the day of Abraham's death he was guilty of five crimes: he ravished a betrothed maiden, committed murder, doubted the resurrection of the dead, scorned the birthright, and denied God. Then the Lord said: "I promised Abraham that he should go to his fathers in peace. Can I now permit him to be a witness of his grandson's rebellion against God, his violation of the laws of chastity, and his shedding of blood? It is better for him to die now in peace." "

The men slain by Esau on this day were Nimrod and two of his adjutants. A long-standing feud had existed between Esau and Nimrod, because the mighty hunter before the Lord was jealous of Esau, who also devoted himself assiduously to the chase. Once when he was hunting it happened that Nimrod was separated from his people, only two men were with him. Esau, who lay in ambush, noticed his isolation, and waited until he should pass his covert. Then he threw himself upon Nimrod suddenly, and felled him and his two companions, who hastened to his succor. The outcries of the latter brought the attendants of Nimrod to the spot where he lay dead, but not before Esau had stripped him of his garments, and fled to the city with them."

These garments of Nimrod had an extraordinary effect upon cattle, beasts, and birds. Of their own accord they would come and prostrate themselves before him who was arrayed in them. Thus Nimrod and Esau after him were able to rule over men and beasts."

After slaying Nimrod, Esau hastened cityward in great fear of his victim's followers. Tired and exhausted he arrived at home to find Jacob busy preparing a dish of lentils. Numerous male and female slaves were in Isaac's household. Nevertheless Jacob was so simple and modest in his demeanor that, if he came home late from the Bet ha-Midrash, he would disturb none to prepare his meal, but would do it himself.<sup>60</sup> On this occasion he was cooking lentils for his father, to serve to him as his mourner's meal after the death of Abraham. Adam and Eve had eaten lentils after the murder of Abel, and so had the parents of Haran, when he perished in the fiery furnace. The reason they are used for the mourner's meal is that the round lentil symbolizes death: as the lentil rolls, so death, sorrow, and mourning constantly roll about among men, from one to the other.<sup>61</sup>

Esau accosted Jacob thus, "Why art thou preparing lentils?"

Jacob: "Because our grandfather passed away; they shall be a sign of my grief and mourning, that he may love me in the days to come."

Esau: "Thou fool! Dost thou really think it possible that man should come to life again after he has been dead and has mouldered in the grave?"<sup>62</sup> He continued to taunt Jacob. "Why dost thou give thyself so much trouble?" he said. "Lift up thine eyes, and thou wilt see that all men

eat whatever comes to hand—fish, creeping and crawling creatures, swine's flesh, and all sorts of things like these, and thou vexest thyself about a dish of lentils."

Jacob: "If we act like other men, what shall we do on the day of the Lord, the day on which the pious will receive their reward, when a herald will proclaim: Where is He that weigheth the deeds of men, where is He that counteth?"

Esau: "Is there a future world? Or will the dead be called back to life? If it were so, why hath not Adam returned? Hast thou heard that Noah, through whom the world was raised anew, hath reappeared? Yea, Abraham, the friend of God, more beloved of Him than any man, hath he come to life again?"

Jacob: "If thou art of opinion that there is no future world, and that the dead do not rise to new life, then why dost thou want thy birthright? Sell it to me, now, while it is yet possible to do so. Once the Torah is revealed, it cannot be done. Verily, there is a future world, in which the righteous receive their reward. I tell thee this, lest thou say later I deceived thee."\*

Jacob was little concerned about the double share of the inheritance that went with the birthright. What he thought of was the priestly service, which was the prerogative of the first-born in ancient times, and Jacob was loth to have his impious brother Esau play the priest, he who despised all Divine service.\*

The scorn manifested by Esau for the resurrection of the dead he felt also for the promise of God to give the Holy Land to the seed of Abraham. He did not believe in it, and

therefore he was willing to cede his birthright and the blessing attached thereto in exchange for a mess of pottage.\* In addition, Jacob paid him in coin,\*\* and, besides, he gave him what was more than money, the wonderful sword of Methuselah, which Isaac had inherited from Abraham and bestowed upon Jacob.†

Esau made game of Jacob. He invited his associates to feast at his brother's table, saying, "Know ye what I did to this Jacob? I ate his lentils, drank his wine, amused myself at his expense, and sold my birthright to him." All that Jacob replied was, "Eat and may it do thee good!" But the Lord said, "Thou despisest the birthright, therefore I shall make thee despised in all generations." And by way of punishment for denying God and the resurrection of the dead, the descendants of Esau were cut off from the world.‡

As naught was holy to Esau, Jacob made him swear, concerning the birthright, by the life of their father, for he knew Esau's love for Isaac, that it was strong.§ Nor did he fail to have a document made out, duly signed by witnesses, setting forth that Esau had sold him the birthright together with his claim upon a place in the Cave of Machpelah.¶

Though no blame can attach to Jacob for all this, yet he secured the birthright from him by cunning, and therefore the descendants of Jacob had to serve the descendants of Esau.‡

#### ISAAC WITH THE PHILISTINES

The life of Isaac was a faithful reflex of the life of his father. Abraham had to leave his birthplace; so also Isaac. Abraham was exposed to the risk of losing his wife; so also



world love thee, as the heart of thy affectionate mother rejoices in thee, and may He bless thee." "

#### ISAAC BLESSES JACOB

Esau's marriage with the daughters of the Canaanites was an abomination not only in the eyes of his mother, but also in the eyes of his father. He suffered even more than Rebekah through the idolatrous practices of his daughters-in-law. It is the nature of man to oppose less resistance than woman to disagreeable circumstances. A bone is not harmed by a collision that would shiver an earthen pot in pieces. Man, who is created out of the dust of the ground, has not the endurance of woman formed out of bone. Isaac was made prematurely old by the conduct of his daughters-in-law, and he lost the sight of his eyes. Rebekah had been accustomed in the home of her childhood to the incense burnt before idols, and she could therefore bear it under her own roof-tree. Unlike her, Isaac had never had any such experience while he abode with his parents, and he was stung by the smoke arising from the sacrifices offered to their idols by his daughters-in-law in his own house." Isaac's eyes had suffered earlier in life, too. When he lay bound upon the altar, about to be sacrificed by his father, the angels wept, and their tears fell upon his eyes, and there they remained and weakened his sight.

At the same time he had brought the scourge of blindness down upon himself by his love for Esau. He justified the wicked for a bribe, the bribe of Esau's filial love, and loss of vision is the punishment that follows the taking of bribes. "A gift," it is said, "blinds the eyes of the wise."

Nevertheless his blindness proved a benefit for Isaac as well as Jacob. In consequence of his physical ailments, Isaac had to keep at home, and so he was spared the pain of being pointed out by the people as the father of the wicked Esau." And, again, if his power of vision had been unimpaired, he would not have blessed Jacob. As it was, God treated him as a physician treats a sick man who is forbidden to drink wine, for which, however, he has a strong desire. To placate him, the physician orders that warm water be given him in the dark, and he be told that it is wine."

When Isaac reached the age of one hundred and twenty-three, and was thus approaching the years attained by his mother, he began to meditate upon his end. It is proper that a man should prepare for death when he comes close to the age at which either of his parents passed out of life. Isaac reflected that he did not know whether the age allotted to him was his mother's or his father's, and he therefore resolved to bestow his blessing upon his older son, Esau, before death should overtake him." He summoned Esau, and he said, "My son," and Esau replied, "Here am I," but the holy spirit interposed: "Though he disguises his voice and makes it sound sweet, put no confidence in him. There are seven abominations in his heart. He will destroy seven holy places—the Tabernacle, the sanctuaries at Gilgal, Shiloh, Nob, and Gibeon, and the first and the second Temple."

Gently though Esau continued to speak to his father, he yet longed for his end to come." But Isaac was stricken with spiritual as well as physical blindness. The holy spirit deserted him, and he could not discern the wickedness of his older son. He bade him sharpen his slaughtering knives

and beware of bringing him the flesh of an animal that had died of itself, or had been torn by a beast, and he was to guard also against putting an animal before Isaac that had been stolen from its rightful owner. "Then," continued Isaac, "will I bless him who is worthy of being blessed."<sup>10</sup>

This charge was laid upon Esau on the eve of the Passover, and Isaac said to him: "To-night the whole world will sing the Hallel unto God. It is the night when the storehouses of dew are unlocked. Therefore prepare dainties for me, that my soul may bless thee before I die." But the holy spirit interposed, "Eat not the bread of him that hath an evil eye."<sup>11</sup> Isaac's longing for tidbits was due to his blindness. As the sightless cannot behold the food they eat, they do not enjoy it with full relish, and their appetite must be tempted with particularly palatable morsels.

Esau sallied forth to procure what his father desired, little recking the whence or how, whether by robbery or theft.<sup>12</sup> To hinder the quick execution of his father's order, God sent Satan on the chase with Esau. He was to delay him as long as possible. Esau would catch a deer and leave him lying bound, while he pursued other game. Immediately Satan would come and liberate the deer, and when Esau returned to the spot, his victim was not to be found. This was repeated several times. Again and again the quarry was run down, and bound, and liberated, so that Jacob was able meanwhile to carry out the plan of Rebekah whereby he would be blessed instead of Esau.

Though Rebekah had not heard the words that had passed between Isaac and Esau, they nevertheless were revealed to her through the holy spirit,<sup>13</sup> and she resolved to restrain

her husband from taking a false step. She was not actuated by love for Jacob, but by the wish of keeping Isaac from committing a detestable act." Rebekah said to Jacob: "This night the storehouses of dew are unlocked; it is the night during which the celestial beings chant the Hallel unto God, the night set apart for the deliverance of thy children from Egypt, on which they, too, will sing the Hallel. Go now and prepare savory meat for thy father, that he may bless thee before his death." Do as I bid thee, obey me as thou art wont, for thou art my son whose children, every one, will be good and God-fearing—not one shall be graceless."

In spite of his great respect for his mother," Jacob refused at first to heed her command. He feared he might commit a sin," especially as he might thus bring his father's curse down upon him. As it was, Isaac might still have a blessing for him, after giving Esau his. But Rebekah allayed his anxieties, with the words: "When Adam was cursed, the malediction fell upon his mother, the earth, and so shall I, thy mother, bear the imprecation, if thy father curses thee. Moreover, if the worst comes to the worst, I am prepared to step before thy father and tell him, 'Esau is a villain, and Jacob is a righteous man.'"

Thus constrained by his mother, Jacob, in tears and with body bowed, went off to execute the plan made by Rebekah." As he was to provide a Passover meal, she bade him get two kids, one for the Passover sacrifice and one for the festival sacrifice." To soothe Jacob's conscience, she added that her marriage contract entitled her to two kids daily. "And," she continued, "these two kids will bring good unto

thee, the blessing of thy father, and they will bring good unto thy children, for two kids will be the atoning sacrifice offered on the Day of Atonement."

Jacob's hesitation was not yet removed. His father, he feared, would touch him and convince himself that he was not hairy, and therefore not his son Esau. Accordingly, Rebekah tore the skins of the two kids into strips and sewed them together, for Jacob was so tall a giant that otherwise they would not have sufficed to cover his hands.\* To make Jacob's disguise complete, Rebekah felt justified in putting Esau's wonderful garments on him. They were the high-priestly raiment in which God had clothed Adam, "the first-born of the world," for in the days before the erection of the Tabernacle all the first-born males officiated as priests. From Adam these garments descended to Noah, who transmitted them to Shem, and Shem bequeathed them to Abraham, and Abraham to his son Isaac, from whom they reached Esau as the older of his two sons. It was the opinion of Rebekah that as Jacob had bought the birthright from his brother, he had thereby come into possession of the garments as well.\* There was no need for her to go and fetch them from the house of Esau. He knew his wives far too well to entrust so precious a treasure to them; they were in the safe-keeping of his mother. Besides, he used them most frequently in the house of his parents. As a rule, he did not lay much stress upon decent apparel. He was willing to appear on the street clad in rags, but he considered it his duty to wait upon his father arrayed in his best. "My father," Esau was in the habit of saying, "is a king in my sight, and it would ill become me to serve before him in any

thing but royal apparel." To the great respect he manifested toward his father, the descendants of Esau owe all their good fortune on earth. Thus doth God reward a good deed.

Rebekah led Jacob equipped and arrayed in this way to the door of Isaac's chamber. There she parted from him with the words, "Henceforward may thy Creator assist thee."<sup>a</sup> Jacob entered, addressing Isaac with "Father," and receiving the response, "Here am I! Who art thou, my son?" he replied equivocally, "It is I, thy first-born son is Esau." He sought to avoid a falsehood, and yet not betray that he was Jacob.<sup>a</sup> Isaac then said: "Thou art greatly in haste to secure thy blessing. Thy father Abraham was seventy-five years old when he was blessed, and thou art but sixty-three." Jacob replied awkwardly, "Because the Lord thy God sent me good speed." Isaac concluded at once that this was not Esau, for he would not have mentioned the name of God, and he made up his mind to feel the son before him and make sure who he was. Terror seized upon Jacob at the words of Isaac, "Come near, I pray thee, that I may feel thee, my son." A cold sweat covered his body, and his heart melted like wax. Then God caused the archangels Michael and Gabriel to descend. The one seized his right hand, the other his left hand, while the Lord God Himself supported him, that his courage might not fail him. Isaac felt him, and, finding his hands hairy, he said, "The voice is Jacob's voice, but the hands are the hands of Esau," words in which he conveyed the prophecy that so long as the voice of Jacob is heard in the houses of prayer and of learning, the hands of Esau will not be able

to prevail against him. "Yes," he continued, "it is the voice of Jacob, the voice that imposes silence upon those on earth and in heaven," for even the angels may not raise their voices in praise of God until Israel has finished his prayers.

Isaac's scruples about blessing the son before him were not yet removed, for with his prophetic eye he foresaw that this one would have descendants who would vex the Lord. At the same time, it was revealed to him that even the sinners in Israel would turn penitents, and then he was ready to bless Jacob. He bade him come near and kiss him, to indicate that it would be Jacob who would imprint the last kiss upon Isaac before he was consigned to the grave—he and none other. When Jacob stood close to him, he discerned the fragrance of Paradise clinging to him, and he exclaimed, "See, the smell of my son is as the smell of the field which the Lord hath blessed."<sup>18</sup>

The fragrance emanating from Jacob was not the only thing about him derived from Paradise. The archangel Michael had fetched thence the wine which Jacob gave his father to drink,<sup>19</sup> that an exalted mood might descend upon him, for only when a man is joyously excited the Shekinah rests upon him.<sup>20</sup> The holy spirit filled Isaac, and he gave Jacob his tenfold blessing: "God give thee of the dew of heaven," the celestial dew wherewith God will awaken the pious to new life in days to come; "and of the fatness of the earth," the goods of this world; "and plenty of corn and wine," the Torah and the commandments which bestow the same joy upon man as abundant harvests;<sup>21</sup> "peoples shall serve thee," the Japhethites and the Hamites; "nations

shall bow down to thee," the Shemite nations; "thou wilt be lord over thy brethren," the Ishmaelites and the descendants of Keturah; "thy mother's sons will bow down to thee," Esau and his princes; "cursed be every one that curs-eth thee," like Balaam; "and blessed be every one that blesseth thee," like Moses."

For each blessing invoked upon Jacob by his father Isaac, a similar blessing was bestowed upon him by God Himself in the same words. As Isaac blessed him with dew, so also God: "And the remnant of Jacob shall be in the midst of many peoples as dew from the Lord." Isaac blessed him with the fatness of the earth, so also God: "And he shall give the rain of thy seed, that thou shalt sow the ground withal; and bread of the increase of the ground, and it shall be fat and plenteous." Isaac blessed him with plenty of corn and wine, so also God: "I will send you corn and wine." Isaac said, "Peoples shall serve thee," so also God: "Kings shall be thy nursing fathers, and their queens thy nursing mothers; they shall bow down to thee with their faces to the earth, and lick the dust of thy feet." Isaac said, "Nations shall bow down to thee," so also God: "And He will make thee high above all nations which He hath made, in praise, and in name, and in honor."

To this double blessing his mother Rebekah joined hers: "For He shall give His angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy feet against a stone. Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder; the young lion and the serpent shalt thou trample under feet. Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him; I will set him on high, because he hath known my name."



The holy spirit added in turn: "He shall call upon me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him, and honor him. With long life will I satisfy him, and show him my salvation." "

Jacob left the presence of his father crowned like a bridegroom, adorned like a bride, and bathed in celestial dew, which filled his bones with marrow, and transformed him into a hero and a giant."

• Of a miracle done for him at that very moment Jacob himself was not aware. Had he tarried with his father an instant longer, Esau would have met him there, and would surely have slain him. It happened that exactly as Jacob was on the point of leaving the tent of his father, carrying in his hands the plates off which Isaac had eaten, he noticed Esau approaching, and he concealed himself behind the door. Fortunately, it was a revolving door, so that though he could see Esau, he could not be seen by him.

#### ESAU'S TRUE CHARACTER REVEALED

Esau arrived after a delay of four hours." In spite of all the efforts he had put forth, he had not succeeded in catching any game, and he was compelled to kill a dog and prepare its flesh for his father's meal." All this had made Esau ill-humored, and when he bade his father partake of the meal, the invitation sounded harsh. "Let my father arise," he said, "and eat of his son's venison." Jacob had spoken differently; he had said, "Arise, I pray thee, sit and eat of my venison." The words of Esau terrified Isaac greatly. His fright exceeded that which he had felt when his father was about to offer him as a sacrifice, and he cried