

## Parshat Toldot- Fruitful Fragrance

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Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Mrs. Shira Smiles

When Yaakov Avinu enters his father's presence, Yitzchak Avinu "smelled the fragrance of his garments and blessed him." Rashi explains that the fragrance refers to the scent of Gan Eden that entered with him. How did this fragrance connect to the garments that Yaakov wore, and why does the blessing begin with the connective "and"? What is it connecting?

The Torah Sheleimah quotes the Midrash that the scent was the aroma of the *ketoret* offering in the future *beit hamikdash*, or that it was the same smell he sensed at the time he was bound as an offering to Hashem. The Sefas Emes says it was the aroma of Gan Eden where Adam was originally placed at the site of the *beit hamikdash*. Both *Gan Eden* and the *beit hamikdash* are the source of blessing. When Adam sinned and was exiled from *Gan Eden*, he lost his original spiritual garment that was replaced by physical animal skin garments. This spiritual aroma is still available on *Shabbat* when Hashem gives us an additional soul, which we wish to retain by smelling the *besamim* spices at the end of the day. Yaakov Avinu is the nexus that connects these ideas. He is the repair for Adam and his sin. He "meets" the place of total spirituality and recognizes it as the gate to heaven. This is the site of the future *beit hamikdash* from which the blessings will emerge for the world. And it is already part of Yitzchak blessing to Yaakov, that his descendants should carry this fragrance with them throughout their lives. The only sense not involved in the sin and completely connected to Gan Eden was the sense of smell, writes the Bnei Yissaschar. Once the fruit was tasted, good and evil were mixed together, and it was hard to discern which was which. The essence of *berachah* is to separate good from evil. With every *berachah*, we emphasize the positive and separate it from the negative. We say in

*Tehillim*, "*Kol haneshamah tehallel kah*/every soul will praise Hashem; "which implies that even the evil are included in the sense of smell and retain some holiness.

The Avodat Avodah notes that Yaakov and Esau represent the struggle between good and evil. But good cannot develop its full potential without a struggle. Therefore, it was necessary to have both these children together, and for Esau to develop a natural antipathy to Yaakov. Only then would Yaakov struggle so greatly to overcome his own natural, human tendencies. This is also evident throughout Jewish history. In times of great anti-Semitism the unaffiliated begin to avow their connection to Judaism.

The incense offering in the *beit hamikdash* was a mixture of many sweet spices but also included one foul - smelling spice, the *chelbonah*. The negative is around us, and we must protect ourselves from it. Yitzchak thought that because Yaakov didn't have that strong *yetzer horo*, he did not need the blessing, whereas Esau needed more help. Rivka understood that Yaakov, in his naivete, needed to learn to differentiate between good and evil. Therefore, when Yaakov comes into Yitzchak's presence, Yitzchak smells the *chelbonah*, and realizes that we can't survive in this world in a state of apathy, but we need to struggle. And when we have these challenges, we must remember that they are for our good, to make us struggle to find the light and work toward it.

Our war against Amalek took place in Refidim, where we were weak spiritually as well as physically, notes Rabbi Yoffe z"l, citing Rabbi Elchonon Wasserman H"yd. We need to strengthen ourselves in Torah. That is how we destroy Amalek. That is the blessing of the *ketoret*, of the *chelbonah* and of the field. We need to learn to separate the two and appreciate the resistance we get from the "*chelbonah*

moments" in our lives that force us to struggle and grow stronger. The Sefas Emes notes that the clothing of the *neshamah* are our actions, whether sweet or foul, and our *neshamot emit* corresponding scents. These sweet aromas of our *chesed* and *mitzvot* are the scents originating in the apple fields of *Gan Eden*, and this is what Yitzchak smelled when Yaakov entered, writes the *Daas Torah*. It was the scent of a spiritual struggle that Yitzchak sensed.

The Sichot Baavodat Hashem notes that when we recite a *berachah*, our focus should be on the goodness of Hashem. Do we recognize the spiritual gift and blessing in each positive experience? Everything in this world was created for His glory, and everything therefore has a spark of spirituality within it, adds Rabbi Wolbe z"l.

Rabbi A. Tatz writes that we come to understand a person's essence through his clothes and through his actions. Similarly, the only way we can "know" Hashem is through the physical manifestations of His creations, of the world. The human consciousness retains a strong connection to its original home. The soul yearns for its origin in the spiritual world, for the place of its closeness with its Creator. It searches to acquire its beauty through *Torah*, *mitzvot* and *chesed*. Each detail of our lives is a projection of the deeper reality of our souls. When Yaakov enters his very being emits the sweet fragrance of his being. When Esau enters, he brings with him the odor his essence contains. Yitzchak can literally smell the difference.

As we meander through the course of our lives, what aromas are we trying to extract and surround ourselves with? May we, the descendants of Yaakov Avinu, merit the true fragrance of *Gan Eden*.

## Builder of Her Home: Mutuality Part I

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rebbetzin Tziporah Heller

The mutual respect between a man and his wife creates an eternal bond. The *kavod* (honor) that he gives her generates the *kavod* that she feels for him. The *kavod* that she gives him generates the will on his part to give her *kavod* as well. One-sided *kavod* where you expect one spouse to give *kavod* without giving *kavod* in return cannot exist because it is not natural. The Rambam says a man is obligated to honor his wife, “*yoter midai*,” more than he honors himself. What does that mean? There are some people whose desire for *kavod* seems insatiable. Nobody calls it honor. The words we use are appreciation, validation, and acknowledgement. Everybody wants this because these are things that tell a person who they are. A man yearns for this. His secret wish is for a happy wife which

means he's done what he needs to do. The good feeling he has when he receives *kavod* which is *yoter midai* is that he'll respect her more than he respects himself. It starts with the wife and continues with the husband.

Any *kavod* that's real is mutual. If you did something that's genuinely valid and I acknowledge it, you'll feel respect for me because I've recognized the part of you that is genuinely great. False *kavod* is manipulation and only results in defensiveness. You have to find the place in the other person that you authentically respect. Authentic *kavod* by its nature is mutual because we are created in Hashem's image. Hashem says about himself, “Those who honor me, I will honor.” If a person sees Hashem's greatness, eternity, and

splendor, Hashem will see a person who is appreciative of this. *Kavod* and mutuality creates a bond between a couple that's based on each one's capacity for wholeness. The connection between them that is grounded on what each of them values the most, is the only true connection. The only *kesher* (connection) that is based on eternity is each one seeing what is truly eternal and whole in the other one. This *kesher* is based on real respect of the other person's *sheleimut* (wholeness). On some level we all yearn for this. We all feel lacking. If you see the other person's wholeness and you respect it and express it, you begin to identify with him. You also feel more whole. This creates a desire for greater connection which eventually leads to true love.

## Men and Women: The Goal of Humanity Part II

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rebbetzin Tziporah Heller

There are two kinds of giving, real and illusory giving. Real giving is when you give the other person what he wants. Illusory giving is giving what you want. Man and woman are meant to give what the other is missing.

The man finds satisfaction through giving, the woman through enabling. The Seforno explains that a wife is equal to her husband in divine image and form. Otherwise she would not know what he needs and be able to fulfill it in the right way. The equality is in value, but not in role because the one whose role is to build is dependent on the one who provides in the same way a surgeon cannot operate unless he has a patient. Although men are the ones commanded to have children, it's usually the woman who wants to marry more than the man. She is the one who will feel the lack of fulfillment in not having a family to build and develop.

Adam gave names to all the animals. But for himself he didn't find a helper parallel to him. Adam had to understand the relationship of every creation to Hashem. He had to recognize their potential. Hashem didn't make him a helper until he knew clearly that no other creation could help him and he would want to have a wife at his side. His need for the woman wasn't just physical but also spiritual. If it was just physical Hashem could have given him any animal. After naming all the creatures he said, “Nothing is at all like me, nothing is my essential being, nothing could be called by my name.” The name Adam conveys *tzelem* and *demut*. Adam said, “*Zot etzem m'atzamai...*” She's the only one with whom I can have spiritual children. The word *Zot* is one of the names of the *Shechina*, the Divine presence in this world. Man's relationship with his wife right at the start was on the basis of her being spiritually unique and different and with the ability to enable him to reach his potential.

There are two false images people have vis a vis woman. First, that a woman's role is entirely material and second, that she is not a spiritual person. According to Judaism, a woman by definition is part of Adam. She is a spiritual being and her fulfillment comes through her enabling. The woman's role is to build spiritually but it has to have a physical manifestation. This applies to men as well. However the directionality of the giver and the enabler are different. Giving comes from above to below. Enabling comes from below to above. There's a place of meeting that takes place that Adam saw could not happen between him and an animal. A woman's role is to build a home and create an atmosphere that's conducive to spiritual growth. She has to build with what is there. That's what being an *ezer kenegdo* is, building, not only on a physical level, but on a spiritual, emotional, and intellectual level as well.