

## **Fresh Eyes on Ancient Texts**

### **The Deepest & Highest Understanding of Torah**

#### **A Teaching from the Zohar 3:152a, Parashat Behaalotecha**

Rabbi Shimon said: Woe to a person who says that the Torah comes to display general, simple stories and mundane things. For if this were so, even in our own day, we would be able to make a Torah out of mundane things better than all of them (the Bible's stories). If the Torah does indeed display a merely worldly subject matter, well then, princes have superior textual compilations. We could, therefore, go along with them and make a Torah from their compilations. Rather all the words of the Torah are heavenly words and celestial secrets. Concerning the heavenly angels, it is written: 'He [God] makes His angels pure spirits. At the time they descend below, they clothe themselves in this worldly garments, for if they did not wear garments of a this-worldly type they would not be able to survive in this world, nor would the world be able to tolerate their presence. If this is the case with angels how much more so is it the case with the Torah, which created them and created all the worlds, and which their continued existence depends on. Thus, when the Torah comes down to this world, if it did not clothe itself in this-worldly garments the world would not be able to endure it.

Therefore, the story form of the Torah is a garment of the Torah. Anyone who thinks that this garment is the sole reality of the Torah, his spirit will waste away and he will not have a portion in the World to Come [Olam Habbah]. There are human garments that everyone can see. Fools see a person wearing a garment that appears attractive and look no further.

They think the garment is the body, and they also think that the body is the soul. In a similar way, the Torah has a body, namely the commandments of the Torah. This body arrays itself in garments which are stories about this world. Fools in the world only look at the garments, which are the stories of the Torah, and do not comprehend more than that, not looking at what is beneath the garments. Those with more understanding do not pay attention simply to the garments, but look at the body underneath the clothing. Wise people, servants of the heavenly King, who have actually stood at Mt Sinai, only look at the soul, which is the true essence of everything, the real Torah. In the future time they will be destined to become aware of the soul of the soul [Neshamah of the Neshamah] of the Torah.

Come and see! This is also true in the heavenly world above where there is clothing, body, soul, and soul of the soul.

The heavens and their hosts are the clothing, and the Community of Israel [Knesset Yisrael] is the body which accepts the soul, which itself is the Glory of Israel [Tiferet Yisrael], and it is therefore the body of the soul. The soul that we have said is the Glory of Israel, is the real Torah and the soul of the soul is the Holy Ancient One, and they are all connected to each other. Woe to those wicked ones who say that the Torah is only ordinary stories: they look only at the clothing and at nothing more. Happy are the righteous people who look at the Torah in the correct manner. Just as wine cannot survive except in a plain flask, so the Torah cannot survive except in its clothing. Therefore, one should only look at what is beneath the outer garment, for all those mundane matters and all the stories are really garments.

