

# WITH THOSE EYES HE SMELLED

*by Rabbi Label Lam*

His father Yitzchok said to him, "Come close to me and kiss me my son." He came close and kissed him. He (Yitzchok) smelled the fragrance of his garments, and he blessed him. He said, "See my son's fragrance is like the fragrance of a field blessed by HASHEM!" (Breishis 27:26-27)

He smelled the fragrance: Isn't it true that there is no smell more offensive than that of goat skins?! From here we learn that the essence of the Garden of Eden entered with him. (Rashi)

There are a few points of difficulty to ponder in this verse!

Wasn't Yitzchok blind? How come he says, "See my son's fragrance is like the fragrance of a field blessed by HASHEM"? What and how did he see? Why would a blind person appeal to the sense of sight when referring to a smell?

Rashi exposes and resolves the matter of the goat skins which have a notoriously putrid smell. Why did he perceive it as a delightful fragrance? It was the smell of Gan Eden that entered with him. Now, asks the Sefas Emes, "What's with 'his garments'?" If it was a wind of spirituality that blew in, then why mention that Yitzchok smelled?

The Sefas Emes answers as follows: "Through a person's actions he acquires garments for his NESHAMA- his soul. In the Zohar it is written that though Torah learning one merits a garment for his RUACH - his spirit in the Garden of Eden. Through his thoughts and desires he merits a garment for his NESHAMA. And a truly righteous person, a Tzadik, merits those spiritual elevations even in this world!" I suppose it was discernible to Yitzchok that such a person entered the room to receive the coveted blessings.

Why then did Yitzchok, who was blind, speak about seeing the pleasing fragrance of his son?

Twenty years ago when I was with my family in Jerusalem for the summer we went to visit an elderly woman who was blind the entire duration of her life. My wife used to read and write letters for her when she was in seminary back in the day. Her husband was also blind and they raised three sighted children in the modern city of Jerusalem.

Before ascending the stairs to visit we gave a brief cautionary lecture to our three young boys counseling them not to be startled by the slightly unusual appearance of the woman we were about to visit. When we entered, she unhesitatingly reached to the wall and flipped on the light switch for us. It was an act of incredible thoughtfulness. She did not need the light at all. Then we seated ourselves and she began to discern who was in the room. Without touching or seeing she began to offer deep readings and insights into the nature of each child. My wife and I exchanged glances acknowledging each other's amazement. She was spot on and then some!

After the encounter we descended to street level and my 4 year old Eli looked up at us and made the following profound declaration, "Ima- Abba, that woman can't see with her eyes, but she sure can see with her heart!" We are all aware of the phenomena that when a person is deprived of given sense the other senses will tend to compensate and create a complete picture of reality and sometimes a better and more detailed picture. Painter of colorful and exotic scenery, Paul Gauguin said, "I shut my eyes in order to see!" Perhaps we can say with regard to Yitzchok, that his seeing was not a material vision but rather a deeper perception of reality, as the Targum implies, "CHAZI" to visualize, and it's **with those eyes he smelled!** DvarTorah, Copyright © 2007 by Rabbi Label Lam and [Torah.org](http://Torah.org).