

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Sir,

The last issue of *JBQ* carried an interesting paper dealing with the meaning of *kotnot or* in Genesis 3:21 (Stanley Schneider and Morton Seelenfreund, "Kotnot Or [Genesis 3:21]: Skin, Light, or Blind?" *JBQ* 40:2 [2012], 116-124). The authors (on p. 116) mention that "there is even a version that spells the word with an *aleph* (*aleph-vav-reshe*) instead of the *ayin* as it appears in the Masoretic Text." They are referring to the torah scroll of R. Meir often mentioned in the Talmud. It is notable that the reading *aleph-vav-reshe* is replicated in the *Severus Codex* which differed from the Masoretic Text in at least 32 instances. See: Hanokh Albeck (ed.), *Midrash Bereshit Rabbati* (Jerusalem: Mekitze Nirdamim, 1940), 209ff, a Midrash on Genesis, either composed by, or based on, the teachings of Moshe HaDarshan (c. 1050). See also M.H. Segal, "The Promulgation of the Authoritative Text of the Hebrew Bible," *JBL* 74 (1955), 46-47. It is doubtful that we have here a scribal confusion of the letters *aleph* and *ayin* since the Ketib-Qere apparatus attests only to the *ayin-lamed/aleph-lamed* confusion. If a version existed with the reading *aleph-vav-reshe*, it is reasonable to ask how this reading was understood.

I would like to propose that the key to such an understanding is the link between Genesis 3:21 and Genesis 3:17 suggested by the paronomasia between *aleph-vav-reshe* and *aleph-reshe-vav-reshe-he*. Having been cursed, Adam and Eve need protection against the consequences of the curse. Thus, *aleph-vav-reshe* should be understood here as being derived from the root *arr* "to curse" (Jud. 5:23) and *kotnot or* are "garments for the curse" (i.e., garment to survive when under the curse). At this point in the story, it would certainly be more important for the reader to know what the functionality of the *kotnot* was, rather than the material they were made of.

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