

”ויתחפש באפר על-עיניו”

אבנר רמו



Al Jolson (Asa Yoelson); 1886-1950) was an American singer often Performing in blackface.



In the Book of Kings we read:

וילך הנביא ויעמד למלך על-הדרך ; ויתחפש באפר על-עיניו

“And the prophet departed, and waited for the king by the way, and disguised himself with a headband over his eyes” (1 Ki 20:38).

וימהר-ויסר את-האפר מעל (מעלי) עיניו; ויכר אתו מלך ישראל כי מהנביאים הוא.

“And he hastened and took the headband away from his eyes; and the king of Israel discerned him that he was of the prophets” (1 Ki 20:41).

The word **אפר** appears in the Bible 24 times and except for these two remarks in the Book of Kings, it is translated to Greek (and English) as “ashes.” The decision of the Greeks (and English) to translate here **אפר** to "bandage" or to “headband" is probably based on the implausibility putting ashes over the eyes.

It is therefore suggested that in these verses the word **עיניו** (*a'inav*) is a letter-substitution error of **פניו** (*panav*) - “his face” (e.g. Ex 34:33, 35). However, it is also possible that this error occurred only in verse 1 Ki 20:38, while in verse 1 Ki 20:41 the words **מעל (מעלי) עיניו** are a letter-insertion error of **מעלי** (*mea'lav*) - “off himself” (e.g. Jud 16:19, 20; 1 Sam 16:23; 17:39; Zec 3:4; Pro27:22; Est 4:4).