



Toldot

Eisav - Our Broken Clock

Why did Eisav not keep his favourite clothes in his own home?

This fascinating detail emerges in Parshat Toldot, from the fact that when Rivka was preparing her son Yaakov to see Yitzchak his father, to deceive him, and to declare, “I am Eisav,” she needed to put Eisav’s clothes on him. And it just so happened that Eisav’s favourite outfit – “ha’chamudot,” says the Torah - the one he loved more than any other – was in the home of his parents. But what were his clothes doing there?

So, our sages explained beautifully. They say that Eisav excelled in the virtue of Kibud Av – respect for his father, so every time he came to his parents' home, before he went in to see his father Yitzchak, he changed into his favourite outfit.

Now, there is an intriguing element of this all because Yitzchak was blind. Yitzchak could not see what anybody was wearing and yet Eisav insisted on wearing his finest clothes. So therefore, I believe there are two very powerful messages which emerge for us.

The first is, when it comes to respect for one’s parents, we should not be engaging in it because we want them to like us or because we need to tick a particular box. We should be doing it out of sincerity. As far as Eisav was concerned, it did not matter whether Yitzchak noticed or not, he wanted to demonstrate his

appreciation of the fact that his father had brought him into this world and his father had raised him. Even though there were various differences between them, some of them sharp and deep, but nonetheless, he showed respect to his father and therefore it came from his heart with sincerity. And so too, we all need to engage in sincere Kibud Av Va’em, showing respect to our parents. It is so important – and that is why it is part of the Decalogue. Because if not for our parents, we would not be present in this world and we are indebted to them for raising us.

The second message is, Eisav certainly ranks as one of the worst personalities presented to us in the entire Bible. And yet, here we see that he did excel in something. He excelled in the honour he gave to his father. This is what our Sages in Pirkei Avot mean when they say, “ein lecha adam, she’ein lo sha’ah”, every person has his or her hour, every dog has its day. So therefore, let us recognise that whoever the person is, there could still be some positive element within their characters from which we all can learn something, that is exactly what we do from Eisav. Some people put it this way, even a broken clock tells the right time twice a day.

Shabbat Shalom.