

CLOTHING ALONE DO NOT MAKE THE MAN

by Rabbi Yissocher Frand

These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: Tape # 169, The Blind in Halacha. Good Shabbos!

Clothing Alone Do Not Make the Man

This week's parsha contains the story of Yakov and Eisav, the two brothers who went their different ways. Yakov was righteous and Eisav was wicked.

The Rabbis teach that although Eisav was wicked, there was one thing that he did extremely well. His performance of the command to honor parents was exemplary. He was a 'chosid' at performing this mitzvah.

The Medrash Rabbah records that the Tanna, Rabban Shimeon ben Gamliel, bemoaned the fact that although he served his father his entire life, his actions did not measure up to even one percent of what Eisav did for Yitzchak, his father.

"When I served my father, I served him in my regular, dirty clothes; but when I went out in public, I would wear clean (e.g. -- distinguished) clothing. However, Eisav would only serve his father wearing royal clothing as if he was serving a king..."

Rav Shimeon ben Gamliel was bemoaning his inability to serve his father properly. The Succas Dovid asks a simple question: there was an easy solution -- Rav Shimeon ben Gamliel should have simply worn his good clothing when he served his father!

The answer is that Rav Shimeon ben Gamliel was not bemoaning his inability to wear good clothing. He was bemoaning the attitude difference between Eisav and himself. He certainly could have worn good clothing, but that would have been a hollow act. Eisav wore royal clothing for his father because he sensed that he was dealing with a king when he dealt with his father. Rav Shimeon ben Gamliel was not bemoaning the fact that he was missing the clothing -- he was bemoaning the fact that he was missing the sensitivity and emotion that Eisav felt for Yitzchak.

We can, in fact, interpret the Talmud in Yoma [47a] in the same way. The Talmud records that

Kimchas had 7 sons who all became High Priests. She attributed this merit to the fact that "all my life, the rafters of my house never saw my hair". She was so modest that even in the confines of her own home, she never removed her hair covering.

The Talmud comments, "Many women attempted to imitate Kimchas, but they did not have her success". Why? The answer is the same.

It was not covering her hair per se that produced High Priests. Modesty is a reaction to an inner feeling that "I am in the Presence of G-d". If a [married] woman would feel that she is always in the Presence of the Master of the World, then she would naturally never uncover her hair. But the act of simply covering the hair in the total privacy of one's home, when it is not because of the feeling of "I have set Hashem before me always..." [Tehillim 16:8] is merely a hollow act which will not produce High Priests.

This is a concept that we must contemplate. Sometimes there are things that we do that cause us to feel good and right and religious. Yet, we must ask ourselves -- are we just doing the act, or are we doing that which is behind the act? It is not good enough to merely wear clothes or to do things that perhaps make us look more religious or feel more religious. We need the emotions and the feelings behind those acts to be the inspiration for the feeling of religiosity.

Glossary

chosid -- exceptionally pious

Tanna -- Rabbinical personality from the time of the Mishneh.

Brochos -- Blessings

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