

"A son honors his father, and a servant his master" (Haftara)

"A son honors his father, this refers to Eisav who honored his father very much" (Midrash Rabba). When *Chazal* choose to describe the essence of the *mitzvah* of honoring one's parents, they adopt Esov's performance as the epitome of observance of this *mitzvah*. They teach us that the honor Eisav showed his parents was so superior, that in its merit alone he nearly superceded Yaakov. If so, we may ask how could Eisav have remained so wicked? Does one not better himself through the performance of mitzvos? Why is this *mitzvah* so commonly found among people who otherwise place so little value in the *Torah*?

Obviously, we must say that for all the greatness of Esov's service to his parents, it was flawed. Although Eisav displayed great honor towards his parents, this was not motivated by an inner source of holiness, but rather stemmed from personal selfish concerns. Only when one's actions emanate from a Divinely inspired source does this action have a spiritual influence on the rest of one's behavior. Eisav honored his parents for the wrong reasons and therefore remained the wicked person that he was.