

“The children agitated within her.” (25:22)

Rashi relates the source of Rivkah’s “agitation.” When she walked by a *bais ha’medrash*, Yaakov would push to come out; and when she walked by a house of idol worship, Eisav would fight to leave. She was concerned: What kind of a child am I bearing? If one moment he attempts to go to the *bais ha’medrash* and the next moment he is gravitating to the idols, he must be a confused child. When she was told that she was carrying twins, each with his own unique proclivities – one to Torah and the other to idol worship – she was calmed. She could deal with a child that was evil. However, a child who was mixed up, who attempted to traverse both worlds, was beyond her understanding. She felt that she would not be able to reach him, since he would be unable to realize that he had done anything wrong. There is hope for the undisputedly wicked. There is no hope for one who is spiritually crippled, for he cannot recognize his deficiency and therefore, cannot repent.

I was always bothered by this exegesis. After all, if one goes to the *bais ha’medrash*, should it not have some effect on him? Do we not see many people of all ages, many of whom have not yet become observant, spending time in the *bais ha’medrash* studying Torah as a prelude to increasing their religious observance? Why does Rivkah presumably “write off” the son that simultaneously leans towards both the *bais ha’medrash* and the house of idol worship?

We can respond simply that one questions the sincerity of an individual who gravitates to both. Does he really care about the Torah study in the *bais ha’medrash*? If he sincerely does, why is he also visiting the idols? He is either insincere and putting on an act, or he is really spiritually and emotionally crippled, a truly mixed up individual who cannot get his act together. In both situations, he needs serious help to make up his mind as to which *derech*, path, he wants to follow. It can only be one. The one who is sincere about his Torah study – who is searching for the proper path and whose focus is positive – should be encouraged until he is able to break away completely from his idols.

Alternatively, the *Ozrover Rebbe, z.l.*, suggests another approach in understanding the dual gravitation. Rivkah feared that when the child within her turned to the *bais ha’medrash*, it was for his own vested interest. Even his pull to the *bais ha’medrash* was motivated by idol worship. One who turns to the *bais ha’medrash* and to the house of idol worship really never leaves his idols. They control his attitude towards the *bais ha’medrash*. One who serves Hashem should do so with sincerity and integrity – for Hashem’s “sake” – rather than for personal gain, or even spiritual gain. Injecting a bit of ourselves into the service detracts from and diminishes the true lofty goal one should struggle to fulfill.