

The children agitated within her. (25:22)

Rashi cites *Chazal* who explain that the word *Vayisrotzetzu*, “And they (the children) agitated” is derived from the word *rotz*, to run. When Rivkah *Imeinu* passed the *Yeshivah* of Shem and Eivar, Yaakov “ran” and struggled to go forth; and when she passed a house of idol worship, Eisav “ran” to go out. Each child had a certain proclivity representative of the cosmic forces within Creation – forces that are not connected to normal personality development, but transcend it. Yaakov *Avinu* gravitated towards the *bais hamedrash*, while Eisav was more comfortable in the house of idol worship. As they grew into adulthood, their personal inclinations were developed; Eisav was attracted to the base and ignominious, while Yaakov was drawn to the spirit and good.

The various commentators wonder why Eisav did not just “leave.” As the biological firstborn, he was first in line to emerge from the birth canal. Nothing stood in his way. Yaakov, however, could not leave, because Eisav blocked his exit. **Horav Yechezkel, zl, m’Kozmir**, explains that Eisav “parked” himself at the entrance to the birth canal in order to block Yaakov’s exit. Why would he want to stay in the womb with the righteous Yaakov, when he could have left and begun a life of worshipping his idols? He explains that it was worth it for Eisav to forgo his pleasure as long as he had the satisfaction of preventing Yaakov from achieving greater spiritual perfection.

I think this is a powerful truth and a sad commentary concerning those who purport to adhere to other religions. Any rational person with a modicum of intelligence understands that the major world religions are confronted with serious questions concerning their validity. This is not the forum for discussing comparative religions, but any scholar-- or even a knowledgeable layperson-- must have serious questions concerning how and when his religion began, and how to reconcile a religion of love with two thousand years of brutal murder, pogroms, holocausts and jihads. Apparently, they really have no idea or do not care. They just want to see to it that we, representing the only true religion of the world, are not able to exist. Yes, Eisav was willing to forgo his spiritual service, to even live the life of a lie, as long as he could prevent Yaakov from serving Hashem.

In an alternative exposition, the commentators state that Eisav’s greatest source of satisfaction was to be in Yaakov’s proximity and make his life miserable. It is not even an issue of preventing him from serving Hashem. Eisav simply derived his greatest enjoyment from seeing Yaakov suffer – and what greater source of misery was there to Yaakov than his inability to serve Hashem?

The **Maggid, zl, m’Dubno** was going through a difficult time financially. It reached the point that he was relegated to packing his bag to travel from city to city, delivering inspirational lectures for which he received a paltry recompense. It was hardly sufficient, and certainly unbecoming a man of his stature, but it paid the bills.

The *Maggid’s* first stop was Berdichev, where he gathered his friends and asked them to put together a venue for him to deliver a lecture. Hopefully, he would draw a sizable audience that would appreciate his efforts and, in turn, express gratitude with some financial support. This was

the way many of Europe's greatest rabbinic scholars earned their meager livelihood. No one became wealthy, but it definitely delayed the hunger. One of his close friends asked him, "You are well known for your brilliance. How is it that you left your home, your city where you surely had a multitude of supporters, to come here to 'knock on the door' of our wealthy citizens? Certainly, had you remained at home, your supporters would have put together a communal fund to assist you in your present financial challenge."

The *Maggid* replied, "Our Torah describes the agitation that took place within Rivkah *Imeinu's* womb. Every time she passed by a house of idol worship, Eisav "ran"; likewise, when she passed a *bais hamedrash*, Yaakov "ran." She could have solved her problem by staying at home! Who asked her to take a stroll? Obviously, she realized that at home the pain would be greatly exacerbated. Likewise, for me to remain at home and have people collect for me would increase my pain."