

"Two nations are in your womb, and two kingdoms will be separated from inside you." (25:23)

Rashi explains that while Yaakov and Eisav were still in the womb, they were distinct from one another. One was established in his evil ways and the other in his integrity. The *Maharal* asks, are we not taught that the evil inclination exerts its influence on the soul only from birth? Here we see that Eisav was already attempting to "run" to do evil while yet an embryo in his mother's womb! He responds that Eisav did not simply accede to the effect of the evil inclination. Rather, Eisav was naturally attracted to evil elements.

Whatever the case, the *Torah* definitely indicates to us that the relentlessly hostile relationship between the descendants of Yaakov and Eisav is neither a result of jealousy nor of political or economic rivalry. The hostility goes back to the womb, reflecting distinct congenital differences in character. The fierce hatred appears as a providential historical factor which escapes the control of will. Hence we can understand the *Talmud's* categorical statement "*it is a halachic axiom that Eisav hates Yaakov*).

In *Talmudic* and *Midrashic* sources, the names Eisav and Edom are usually identified with Rome. When Rome became the center of Christianity the whole Christian world was referred to as "Edom" since then. The Christians have been considered representative of Eisav's offspring and the Jews representative of Yaakov's offspring. The underlying reasons for the antagonism between Yaakov and Eisav are also attributable to the Jewish and Christian worlds. One can, therefore, conclude that the hostility of Christian anti-Semites is not founded on religious, economic, or political grounds, nor does it stem from any other specific motive. Since it originates in the prenatal stage, it is irrational in nature. It is reflective of an unrelenting struggle carried on between two brothers, representing two worlds with a deep chasm separating them. We may note that with all the various studies conducted on this subject, the true motives of anti-Semitism have not been conclusively identified through logical analysis.