

Toldos-Yaakov and Eisav, Two Separate Legacies.
by Rabbi Eliyahu Kirsh

In the beginning of Parshas Toldos we are told of the difficulties Yitzchok and Rivkah were having in conceiving children. They davened to Hashem and Hashem granted their request and Rivkah became pregnant. The Torah then tells us that the Children were struggling inside her womb. The Midrashim tell us that when Rivkah would pass a place of holiness Yaakov was struggling to get out. When she passed by a place of immorality or idolatry, Esav was struggling to get out. Not realizing that she was carrying two children, she was puzzled at how she could bring forth a child who would be prone to two extremes. She goes to inquire of Hashem which the Midrashim tell us was the Yeshivos of Shem and Ever. She is told that she is carrying two children who will be the fathers of not only two different nations but also of two different missions and heritages. They will never both be strong at the same time but the elder will serve the younger.

The idea that they will never both be strong at the same time is well confirmed by Chazal. In Pesachim 42B we are told regarding *chometz Haadiomi*, Edomite vinegar which is known for its strength. Even in the strength of Vinegar we see this phenomenon only exists when Yaakov is down and Edom is strong. Rav Nachamn Bar Yitzchak brings our verse that one nation will be stronger than the other [olom milom Yeematz] after the Gemara brings a verse in Yechezkel which brings the same point. The Gemara in Megilla 6A that if someone says Kisri [Rome] and Yerushalayim are both built, do not believe him. If he tells you both are destroyed, do not believe him. But if he tells you one is built and not the other is destroyed, then you should believe him. We see that this is true historically. Whenever Am Yisroel was at the top of their glory as in the days of Dovid and Shlomo, Edom was a small, unknown country. Whenever we went into exile, Edom's power rose. As we know, Esav's descendants built the

Roman Empire which destroyed our second Bais Hamikdash and sent us into exile till this day. Throughout our exile, Christendom, which our great rabbis saw as the continuation of Eisav's kingdom, has had the upper hand over us.

But why is it that Eisav and Yaakov cannot be strong at the same time? Why can't it be that both will have the power they want? Let Esav have the most powerful military empire and he'll be happy and we will have our Torah world and we will be happy. Why is it put into the nature of the world that this cannot be?

The Alshech explains that this issue with the following parable. There is a kingdom and a small kingdom. The big kingdom is always afraid of the smaller kingdom getting ahead. The small kingdom has to constantly assert itself to show that it too is a kingdom even if it is small. Esav is the kingdom of evil and Yaakov is the kingdom of kedusha, holiness. Ultimately, Esav will submit to the kedusha of Yaakov. But at that time Esav will not have his kingdom anymore. As is obvious evil and holiness cannot mix or be powerful at the same time.

Rav Yechezkel Levenstein, Zt"l, stated that Esav Represents the yetzer Harah and Yaakov represents the yetzer Tov. These two opposing forces cannot be strong at the same time. Our world is a constant battle between the two and one must conquer the yetzer harah in order to be and eved Hashem. Yaakov and Esav simply personify these two forces.

(Note: Perhaps Rav Levenstein was making the same point as the Alshech but put it in mussar terms while the Alshech used more Kabbalah oriented terminology.)