

# Two Ways To Go

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Being a father of twin boys, I naturally keep comparing them to see the minute differences between them. Who is cuter? Who is smarter? Who is funnier? As they get older, it's interesting to observe their unique relationship. Having so many similarities creates a very, special tight-knit bond, something I don't see in the relationships between my other children.

Our Matriarch Rebecca's experience with her twin boys was entirely different. When they were still in the womb, they displayed completely opposite tendencies. When she would walk by a yeshivah, one would begin kicking to come out. She then would pass by a house of idol worship, and the other would try to come out. The two were already at war with each other, constantly fighting (see *Midrash Rabbah, Toldot*).

All of this “inner action” created perhaps the world’s most difficult pregnancy! But it didn’t end there. When Rebecca finally gives birth, the Torah recounts, “And his (Jacob’s) hand was gripping the heel of Esau” (Genesis 25:26). Why the heel?

Reb Noson explains that the days shortly before the arrival of the Mashiach, the era we are living in right now, is called *ikvasa d'Meshicha* (literally, the “heels of Mashiach”). Jacob’s “hand” is symbolic of prayer, as one usually raises his hands heavenward while engaged in deep prayer. (We also find that Moses raised his hands in prayer on behalf of the people as they battled Esau’s grandchildren, the Amalekites, a few generations later.) The message is that whenever we experience Esau’s “heel” attempting to trample us, we need to remember to grab hold of it with the “hand of Jacob” – namely, prayer and faith.

The children of Esau were the ones who sent our nation into exile, and each of us continues to experience inner exile because of our lack of faith. Our lives are filled with constant pressures, be they work-related, health-related, financial, and so on. We also suffer from emotional stress and negative feelings. All these are signs of inner spiritual exile. To understand how to get ourselves out of this exile, we have to know how we got ourselves into it in the first place.

The answer is that we mistakenly placed our trust in the tactics of Esau. Esau was a hunter; his physical strength was his way of life. Similarly, when we think we can solve our own problems through “natural means,” or the “strength and power of my hand” (Deuteronomy 8:17), we run into trouble. Our natural abilities and seemingly logical solutions don’t bring about our salvation, and our trust in these solutions leads to emotional duress. We are, in essence, being let down by their lack of effectiveness.

The real solution is the way of Jacob. Rebbe Nachman teaches that the most powerful weapon in the world is prayer. By strengthening our faith and relying on prayer to solve our problems, we not only gain a true answer to our issues, but we also free ourselves from having to deal with all of the emotional drama that results from taking matters into our own hands.

Rebecca’s difficult pregnancy mirrors our own decision-making. We can choose to “free ourselves” by emulating the tactics of Esau – worship of our natural abilities. Or we can “give birth” to Jacob, and live a life of prayer and personal redemption.