

# A TALE OF TWO PHILOSOPHIES

by Rabbi Yissocher Frand

*These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: Tape # 351, Tefilas Haderech. Good Shabbos!*

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## A Tale Of Two Philosophies

In this week's parsha we read about the reunion of Eisav and Yaakov after many years of separation. Eisav, responded to the generous gifts that Yaakov sent to him, by saying "I have much. My brother, keep what is yours." [Bereishis 33:9] Yaakov, on the other hand, answered Eisav, "Please take the gift I have given you, for G-d has been gracious with me and I have everything." [33:11]

The Chofetz Chaim (1838-1933) said that this short dialogue sums up the different approaches to the world of Eisav and Yaakov. A person who says "I have much" will be an unhappy person. There is so much out there in the world to acquire, and no one person will ever acquire it all. Our sages say "Every person passes from this world without achieving even half of his desires" [Medrash Rabbah Koheles]. Therefore, someone who is focused on what he does not have will never be happy.

The only person who will be happy in life is the one who says that "I have everything that there is to need." Physically, he realizes that he does not have everything in the world. But the key is knowing that he has all that he needs to have. If he believes he has all he needs to have, he truly has everything.

In conjunction with this thought, Rav Eliyahu Lopian (1872-1970) explained the verse at the end of Birchas HaMazon [Grace After Meals or "bentching"]. The pasuk says, "Dorshei HaShem lo yachseru kol tov" ["Those who seek out Hashem, will not lack any good."] The pasuk does not say that those who seek out Hashem, in fact, \_have\_ everything, only that they will not be \_lacking\_. This is the greatest blessing that a person can receive. If a person feels that he has what he needs, he will be happy. If, however, he only feels that he has "a lot," he will always want more than he has.

Rav Lopian gave the following example. A person once took a visitor to his home into the bathroom, and opened up the medicine cabinet. The medicine cabinet was full with prescription drugs. He proudly boasted about the value of the contents of the medicine cabinet. "Look, I have thousands of

dollars worth of valuables here." The other person looked incredulously at his host and thought to himself, "Big deal. I have a medicine cabinet and all I have inside of it is aspirin."

Who is happier in this example - the person who has thousands of dollars worth of medicine, or the person who does not need the medicine? This is the difference between "I have much" and "I have all".

## **We Are Still Suffering From Yishmael's Resentment**

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The very end of this week's Parsha [Bereishis 36:43] contains a type of verse that we typically read through without giving it a second thought: "The chief of Magdiel and the chief of Iram; these are the chiefs of Edom by their settlements, in the land of their possession -- he is Eisav, father of Edom."

What lesson can we learn from this pasuk? Who ever heard of the chief of Magdiel or the chief of Iram? What is their significance?

Although the meaning of such a passage escapes us, it did not escape the likes of Rav Yitzchak Hutner (1907-1980), zt"l.

In the late summer of 1970, Rav Hutner was returning to New York from Eretz Yisrael when Palestinian terrorists hijacked his return flight and two other jets. The planes and passengers sat on a hot runway in Jordan for over a week, while the PLO negotiated for release of Palestinian prisoners being held in Israeli prisons.

When Rav Hutner emerged from that experience, he spoke publicly about the ordeal. Among other things, he explained the difference between the descendants of Eisav and the descendants of Yishmael. Rav Hutner said that even though both of them have persecuted Jews and we have suffered miserably and horribly at the hands of both of them, there is a difference between the two cultures. The descendants of Eisav never thought of taking our land. The Torah clearly spells out that the descendants of Eisav were given Mt. Seir [Devorim 2:5]. Eisav knew that he had his own land to the East of the Land of Israel. Although Eisav's descendants killed us and tortured us, they never wanted our land -- because they had their own inheritance.

Yishmael, however, was thrown out of Avraham's home without an inheritance [Bereishis 21:10]. This profoundly affected the development of history. Yishmael still feels as if we have his land.

Magdiel and Iram had their own settlements, in the land of their own inheritance. They had their own land, and so they did not have their eyes on ours. But the pasuk regarding the children of Yishmael says, "These are the sons of Ishmael and these are their names by their open courtyards (Chatzeirehem) and their strongholds (tirosam)" [Bereishis 25:16]. They are nomads. They are left with tents and refugee camps. They may have hundreds of thousands of square miles in the Middle East, but they do not have what they think is their land. They think that "their" land is a small piece of real estate called Palestine and they continuously want it "back."

The whole trouble stems from this point. Eisav received his inheritance - Mt. Seir. But G-d ordered Yishmael sent out of the house of Avraham without an inheritance, causing the inheritance to go only to his younger brother Yitzchak. This is something that Yishmael has never gotten over. Unfortunately, this is something he will never "get over" until the end of days. He is always going to want to take back the land that he thought should have been his rather than Yitzchak's. Unfortunately, we are still suffering from this resentment to this day.

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Transcribed by [David Twersky](#); Seattle, Washington.  
Technical Assistance by [Dovid Hoffman](#); Yerushalayim.

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This write-up was adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Torah Tape series on the weekly Torah portion. The complete list of halachic topics covered in this series for Parshas Vayeitzei are provided below:

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