

PRAYING with Fire

PRAYER POINTS

MEET YISHMAEL

Rabbinic Commentary tells us: “*Yishmael was born with a bow and raised with a bow,*” as it is written: *and [he] became an accomplished archer...* In describing Yishmael this way, the Torah conveys that his potential for bloodshed is not just the result of his training, but is an inborn trait, for he was “born with a bow.” It is this inclination that the radicalized branch of his progeny expresses so frighteningly today.

Although Yishmael’s underlying fight is against the Jewish people, his aggression spans the world. There is no place to which one can flee.

Yishmael’s inclination toward wildness is innate, as the Torah relates: And an angel of the Almighty said to [Hagar], “*Behold, you will...give birth to a son...And he shall be a pere adam, a wild uncivilized man, his hand against everyone, and everyone’s hand against him, and over all his brothers shall he dwell.*” The root of the word *pere* denotes a man who is liberated from the confines of the social order. “His hand against everyone” means that Yishmael removes himself from the laws of society. As he sets about fulfilling his wishes at any cost, chaos prevails.

One Rabbi was asked what lay ahead as the times of Mashiach approached: *The Torah is eternal. When the Torah tells us that Yishmael is a pere adam, it means that he will remain that way forever. He cannot be civilized and who knows what this pere adam is likely to do to the Jewish nation at the end of days.*

Once we understand what we are seeing, we know – based on our redemption from Egypt – that, no matter how bleak the situation seems, we must never give up hope. Rather, we must open our hearts and minds and pray.

POINTS TO PONDER

The Torah identifies Yishmael as born with a bow and raised with a bow; both his nature and upbringing indicate a lust for blood.

Yishmael is also identified as a pere adam, an uncivilized man who fulfills his desires at the expense of society.

The volatile world of today is a sign that redemption is near.

Psalm 130:7 O Israel, wait for the LORD; for with the LORD is steadfast love and great power to redeem. (TNK)