

PRAYING with *Fire*

PRAYER POINTS

THE ALARM

After the devastation of World War II, with its inconceivable catastrophic impact on the Jewish people, one could hardly contemplate what a worse scenario might look like. Yet, the Chofetz Chaim's terrifying prediction of a third world war that would make the other wars seem "like child's play."

The lack of emunah that existed during World War I was child's play compared to the lack of emunah that existed during World War II. Yet, the darkness in the world which, because of the lack of emunah, will exist in the third and last conflict will make the previous wars look like child's play. We are now engaged in that last war of emunah, and though there will be armed conflicts, they are not the main aspects of this war.

These words explain why the Almighty has confronted us with enemies who, at every turn, call upon the Name of God every time they issue a threat, every time they charge into battle, even as they blow themselves up and murder innocent people. By attaching these dramatic acts to the Name of God, they force the issue of calling out to God and its underlying emunah into the center of our focus. They force us to acknowledge our own best hope.

We are now in the final stage of exile, the period of Yismael's ascent. To the rest of the world, this enemy's terrorism is mainly about geopolitics or territory or weaponry. But to those of us who place our faith in the Almighty, it is clear that this war is really about our calling out to the Almighty and placing all our hope in Him. When we forget that essential fact for even one second, our enemy is there to remind us, as it perpetuates every kind of atrocity in God's Name.

We are told that Yishmael believes he is justified in his demand for Eretz Yisrael because he claims the same essential merits as those of us who followers or Messiah and Torah. Both keep the mitzvah of circumcision and both nation's names include the Almighty's Name – *Yisra-el* and *Yishma-el*. Israel's claim to Eretz Yisrael will supersede Yishmael's only when its reliance on the Almighty is absolute enough to neutralize the power of Yishmael's faith.

Yishmael implements his mission unrestrained by rules of war or civility, chipping away at the illusion that there is any military or political strategy that can provide protection. He forcefully reminds us that praying to the Almighty is our only hope. Empowered by this faith, each word of sincere prayer that rises from our hearts erodes Yishmael's power. The strength of our faith in the Almighty, and the prayer that expresses it, is the force that propels our history forward, edging us ever closer to the *Geulah* – the *Final Redemption*.

POINTS TO PONDER

Yishmael's name indicates that he is the embodiment of his mother's answered prayer.

Since Yishmael is linked to prayer and faith in the Almighty, he possesses valid spiritual power.

Yishmael's constant references to God serve to arouse Klal Yisrael's faith and prayer.

Genesis 16:11 The angel of the LORD said to her further, "Behold, you are with child and shall bear a son; You shall call him Ishmael, for the LORD has paid heed to your suffering. (TNK)