

Vayaira

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It is amazing how quickly three *parshios* can pass by. This *Shabbos* will be a month since the *Simchas Torah* Arab invasion and atrocities. Unlike other *Simchas Torahs* from the past, this one will stay with us as we move forward in time because of the terrible bad that happened on it.

Last week we learned about the origin of Yishmael, the source of all of our Arab problems today. He might not have existed as he does now had Sarah not insisted that Avraham have a child through Hagar, her Egyptian handmaid. Yishmael would not have existed as he does had the angel not met up with Hagar in the desert and told her to return to Sarah. What a different world it might have been for the Jewish people.

Maybe the birth was not the problem, nor that Yishmael had to receive *Bris Milah* at 13 years of age. Maybe it was being expelled from his home with his mother and few provisions. Maybe almost dying in the desert from illness and thirst pushed him to become the *pere adam*—wild man—he was prophesied to be. That had to create some resentment in them, though we see at the end of next week's *parsha*, Hagar, a.k.a. Keturah, bore no hard feelings to either Avraham or Yitzchak.

And even had all that been necessary for some crazy historical reason that we cannot comprehend, did God have to go and make Yishmael the father of a massive nation, one that seems to keep growing? Hitler, *yv"z*, rose up against the Jewish people for a period, did terrible damage, and then was gone. Haman, for all of his virulent anti-Semitic behavior lasted only 70 days, was killed, and caused a new very celebratory Jewish holiday. After thousands of years, the Arabs still hate Jews and try to annihilate them.

The Arabs have caused the Jewish people so much misery for millennia and just

won't go away. They have had a very limited negative impact on the Jewish population, thank God, in proportion to the Crusades and the Holocaust. But as happiness researchers have proven, a one-time broken leg can be much easier to cope with than an ongoing trick knee. One large boom can be handled better than an ongoing squeaky door that just wears you down over time.

According to the *Gemora*, the angels had been perfectly happy to let Yishmael die in the desert, knowing how bad he would later be to the Jewish people on their way into Babylonian exile. But God told them, "I judge a person by what they are like at the moment, and at this time he is righteous." Well, righteous enough to be miraculously saved now to do evil another day.

But wait a second. Is that even true? What about the *Ben Sorrer u'Moreh*, the rebellious son, mentioned in *Parashas Ki Seitzei*. We are told to kill him today while he is still "innocent" to avoid having to kill him later when he becomes guilty. Shouldn't the same ruling have been applied to Yishmael, saving him from all his future guilt and us from all our future grief?

Shabbos Day

THERE IS A difference. The *Ben Sorrer U'Moreh* is Jewish and is born with a portion in the World to Come. The concern is that he will lose it based upon his current path in life. What about the fact that he could also later do *teshuva*, as many have done in the past? Not worth the risk, the Torah warns us, not for the *Ben Sorrer U'Moreh* or society, if he is already exhibiting certain signs of spiritual carelessness.

Not Yishmael though. He was not born with a portion in the World to Come that we need to save him from destroying in the future. On the contrary, we'd rather not see him there at all. We'd rather let him use up any merit he might have in this world and be "one and done."

That still leaves a very big question. What about the Jewish people to whom Yishmael will do so much of his evil? Doesn't their sanity and security come into play at all? Surely there must have been a time in the last 3,300 years when Yishmael's righteous status wore off and, the Arabs became worthy of a stricter Divine judgment, no?

Yes. But to understand why that doesn't make a difference here, we have to first understand why God arranged for Yishmael's birth at all. After all, it was God Who made Sarah barren, God Who compelled Hagar to leave Egypt with Avraham and Sarah after God had made them go down to Egypt in the first place. . . after seemingly promising Avraham the opposite! And it was God, in this week's *parsha*,

Who told Avraham to listen to Sarah to send Hagar and Yishmael away. *Why?*

Because of this:

But God has taken you, and brought you forth out of the iron furnace, out of Egypt, to be a people to Him, an inheritance k'yom—as at this day. (Devarim 4:20)

The *Kli Yakar* explains:

“Someone who purifies silver from all impurity until it is clean and pure makes it ‘clear like the sun.’ Similarly were you purified through the suffering in Egypt until you became ‘clear like the sun.’ Regarding this it says, “*to be a people to Him, an inheritance, as at this day,*” like the ‘daily cycle’ (i.e., the sun). It is similar to what is written, “*they that love Him (should be) as the sun when he goes forth in its might*” (*Sboftim* 5:31), and likewise, “*Sell me k'yom—as of this day your birthright*” (*Bereishis* 25:31). *K'yom* is explained [by *Onkeles*] to mean: just as they are clear without waste, likewise sell to me [the birthright] as clear as the sun.” (*Kli Yakar*)

The point is, as the *Leshem* explains, everything since the sin of eating from the *Aitz HaDa'as Tov v'Ra*, the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, is a combination of good and evil, including, and sometimes *especially*, the Jewish people. But that is only a temporarily reality for which the events of history are designed to bring about a permanent fix. *Moshiach* comes when all of the bad has been separated from the good, resulting in the complete elimination of the bad and salvation of all the good (*Sba'ar HaGilgulim*, Introduction 20). As it says in *Sefer Yetzirah*, “the bad separates out the good” (Ch. 6, *Mishnah* 5).

That's why Avraham had to father Yishmael from Hagar. Impurities within Avraham had to go before Yitzchak could be born pure of all of them, and Yishmael was the product of those impurities. Once Yishmael was born, only *Bris Milah* remained to finish off Avraham's purification process so that Yitzchak could finally be born spiritually perfect.

Seudas Shlishis

THAT DOESN'T EXPLAIN though why they are still here causing us as much trouble, even more than ever before. Perhaps not, but the answer is implied.

The process of separating precious metals is a slow and methodical one. If too much heat is used, the metal will liquify and evaporate. If too little heat is used, some metal may not separate from the waste. This is why it is often done in stages, each one carefully refining the precious metal a bit more. To make ten *Menorahs* for the

Temple, Shlomo *HaMelech* put 1,000 *kikaros* of gold for each one in the smelting pot 1,000 times to finally end up with only one *kikar* of pure gold (*Menachos* 29a).

That has been the history of the Jewish people, which is why the punishment has often seemed to not fit the crime, at least from our perspective. It's because it was more refinement than punishment to end up, at the end of history, with one “*kikar*” of pure Jewish people. That is the generation that will greet *Moshiach* and live into the next era.

When it comes to gold and silver, a *kikar* is a fixed amount (about 96 pounds). When it comes to humans, it can be quality over quantity, meaning that the final “*kikar*” of the Jewish people may be a lot of people after they have been refined. This doesn't mean that some people won't go; we have been losing so many over the last few decades alone (perhaps because they have been rectified enough to go to the next level of existence, not just of history). But it does mean that those who will be remaining will have become purified in preparation for the Messianic Era.

Every nation the Jewish people have had to cope with over history has been the means for this process, just as Egypt was in its time. Now, with history closing out, the last nation to be part of that process seems to be the Arab world. At least, that is, until the War of Gog and Magog puts the finishing touches on a long history of *tziruf v'libun*—refinement and whitening.

***Ain Od Milvado*, Part 71**

I WAS RECENTLY asked what you tell a mother who says that she can't believe in a God Who took her two sons. The answer, of course, is, *nothing*. All you can do is support her and do whatever you can do to comfort her, for as long as she needs and as long as you can. If by some miracle, she later finds it in her painfully sore heart to accept both, the early loss of her sons and a God Who can allow it to happen, amazing. If not, she will join the millions of Jews who, over the ages, gave up on God because they believed God had given up on them.

So much of the time when we talk about *ain od Milvado*, it is the context of recalling that nothing in the world has any power but God. God directs everything, arranges everything, and makes everything either succeed or fail. Free-will may be ours to use, but the results of our decisions are God's alone (*Brochos* 33b).

But *ain od Milvado* also applies to the most tragic of losses. Not many may have said it, but some certainly thought it. How could God allow the Hamas butchers to capture and torture Jews, especially on *Shemini Atzeres*, the day that celebrates the unique relationship between God and the Jewish people? Why would He allow their

simchab of Torah to be turned into a day of dreadful fear and torture, perhaps for years to come?

The only answer we have at present is, *ain od Milvado*. It means, we can't answer the questions specifically because we just don't know the answers. We just know that He *did*, and that He had His reasons. Beyond that, we're going to have to wait to find out more of the truth, perhaps after *Mosbiach* has already come and fixed the world. Having *ain od Milvado*, not just in your mind but in your heart as well, is the only way for our belief in Him and all He does to remain intact until we reach that time, may it be quickly and in our time, *b"H*.