

And Sarai dealt harshly with her. (16:6)

Horav Mordechai Gifter, zl, cites *Targum Yonasan* who teaches that Sarah *Imeinu* dealt harshly with Hagar after Avraham *Avinu* freed her as a slave. She was a *giyores*, convert, who was betrothed to our Patriarch. How was Sarah permitted to treat her in such a manner? *Targum Yonasan* himself explains our Matriarch's rationale. Hagar was the daughter of Pharaoh who was the son of Nimrod, the cruel idolator who viciously sentenced Avraham to death in the fiery furnace of *Uhr Kasdim*. Hagar herself had acted disrespectfully toward Sarah, which was an indication that the impure character traits handed down to her from her ignoble grandfather still reigned in her life. Sarah hoped that, by treating Hagar harshly, she would expunge her flawed character traits.

Having said this and by identifying Yishmael's geneology, we have a window into the psyche of Yishmael, the progenitor of the Arab/Muslim people. Nimrod was not an ordinary evil person. He was the archetype of rebellion against Hashem. He built the *Migdal Bavel*, the tower upon which his people would be able to scale the heights to fight G-d. He threw Avraham into the fiery furnace. Clearly, he could not tolerate competition. He stood for everything our Patriarch opposed: tyranny, idolatry, arrogance – three traits that defined his ignominious character.

Yet, Nimrod's granddaughter found herself in Avraham's household, where she absorbed some holiness and was privy to extraordinary *chesed* and *emunah* in Hashem at its apex. Something, albeit very little, had to rub off on her. She eventually bore Yishmael who was also raised in Avraham and Sarah's home. It did very little to change his character, but we can now see the tension in his confused character. His great-grandfather, Nimrod, was the greater enemy of Avraham, his father.

Let us make no mistake. Nimrod's evil, his opposition to anything holy, anything that touched upon monotheism, emerged subtly generations later in his great-grandson. The conflict between Avraham and Nimrod was transplanted in Yishmael, who (if I may make use of contemporary vernacular) was totally "messed up," entangled in spiritual confusion, eclipsed by darkness and turmoil.

Is it any surprise that his descendants have so often harbored such intense hatred toward the true descendants of Avraham? The tension within Yishmael, the animus handed down to him from his ignoble great-grandfather-- in contradistinction to the beauty, *chesed* and *kedushah* he witnessed in Avraham's home -- produced a *pere adam*, wild man. The inner spiritual, moral conflict of this wild man emerges in a deep-rooted self-loathing which he manifested towards Avraham *Avinu*'s descendants.

