

RCA Chomer Lidrush Lech Lecha 5787

Galus Yishmael (*Ruins to Redemption*, ch. 24, pp. 180–185)

Our *mesorah* counts four exiles: Bavel, Paras, Yavan and Edom. [R. Immanuel Bernstein asks whether](#) Yishmael might be a fifth. By the *bris bein habesarim* (15:12), *Bereishis Rabbah* 44:17 reads the four words *eimah*, *chashecha*, *gedolah*, *nofeles* as referring to the four kingdoms. *Pirkei d'Rabbi Eliezer* (ch. 28) adds the fifth word, *alav*, as “the sons of Yishmael, upon whom the son of David will sprout, and explains Yishmael’s name: Hashem will hear the cries of Israel over what Yishmael’s descendants will do in the land at the end of days.

R. Bernstein brings three sources that cast Yishmael as a partner of Edom in the final stage of the fourth exile, not a separate exile:

1. R. Chaim Vital (*Eitz HaDaas Tov*, Vayishlach) reads the feet of Nevuchadnetzar’s statue, part iron and part earthenware (Daniel 2:33), as Rome and Yishmael combined.
2. The Vilna Gaon (*Safra d’Tzneyusa* ch. 4) reads Eisav’s marriage to Yishmael’s daughter (28:9) as a forecast of that alliance.
3. The Rambam in *Iggeres Teiman*, on Yeshayahu 21:7, explains that the “pair of horsemen” are Edom and Yishmael, and that they come before the donkey rider, Mashiach.

Based on the Maharal (*Netzach Yisrael* ch. 17), he paints Yishmael’s destructive trait as unbridled fanaticism in God’s name. R. Bernstein connects this to the name “God will listen,” meaning the conviction that God will approve any act done for Him. Edom’s trait is structure and organization. Each one alone is limited: fanaticism lacks organization, and structure brings some sense of boundaries. Combined, the fanaticism gets the organization, training and weapons of Edom, and R. Bernstein says this is what we are seeing today.

For the response, he cites the Baal HaTurim on *al pnei kol echav nafal* (25:18). Read as “he fell,” it sits right before *Toldos Yitzchak*: when Yishmael falls, Mashiach from Yitzchak’s line will sprout. The antidote to perverted faith is true faith, modeled by Yitzchak bound on the altar, which means yielding our will to Hashem’s and not the reverse. Yishmael’s descendants don’t apologize for their faith, and neither should we. He closes with the Selichos line *kaleh Se’ir v’chosno*, “eradicate Se’ir and his father-in-law.”