

# I TOO WAS STRUCK

by Rabbi Label Lam

"9-11"- It's not just a number anymore. It's one of those days I'm sure none of us will ever forget. I'm certain many can recall with vivid detail where they were and what they did that morning and to whom they spoke as the horror unfolded.

I remember talking with a friend in Boston trying to sort out the magnitude of the event when my hand gravitated almost instinctively to a Chumash and I found myself opening to a verse in this week's Torah portion. It was something I had seen years earlier in a Sefer in Jerusalem. Since then I had purchased my own set of this commentary. I could not have grasped the full implication of those words until this terrifying moment.

Writes the Zohar Niglah on the words of Avraham, *"If only Ishmael would live before you"* (Breishis 17:18): Rebbi Chia groaned and cried. He opened up and said: *"And Sara was barren and she had no child bearing capacity"* (Breishis 11:30). Woe about this and woe about that time that allowed Hagar to give birth to Ishmael. Rabbi Yossi interjected, "Why cry? Sara did give birth afterwards and there was to her a holy branch!"

Rebbi Chia answered him, "You see and I see and so I heard from the mouth of Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai on this subject and it's about this I wail. Woe to that time period that because Sara was prevented from having children she said to Avram, *"Come to my handmaid"*. And because of that an opportunity manifested for Hagar to disinherit Sara her mistress, and there was to her a son from Avraham and Avraham said, *"If only Ishmael would live before you!"* And even though The Holy One Blessed Be He had announced to him about Yitzchak, Avraham clung to Ishmael until The Holy One Blessed Be He answered, *"And regarding Ishmael, I have heard you!"* And afterwards he circumcised him before Yitzchak ever came into the world."

Come and see that for four hundred years the Arch-Angel of Ishmael, pleaded before the Holy One, Blessed Be He. He said, "Someone who is circumcised, does he not have a portion in Your name?" He said to him, "Yes!" So he said, "Ishmael is circumcised. Why does he not have a portion in You like Yitzchak?" He answered him, "Yitzchak is circumcised in a fitting and proper way and this one is not. And not only that but these ones cleave to me appropriately from eight days while those remain distant for a long period of time (13 years)." He said again to Him, "Even still since these ones are circumscribed should there not be some good reward for them?"

Woe about this time that Ishmael was born and circumcised. "What did the Holy One Blessed Be He

do? He pushed Ishmael from a higher attachment and He gave him a portion of holiness in the lower world (the land of Israel) because of his circumcision. In the future, the children of Ishmael will rule over the Holy Land all the time that it is empty and desolate because their circumcision is empty and without perfection. And they will prevent the Children of Israel from returning to their place, up until the time when the merit of the Children of Ishmael expires. And in the future the Children of Ishmael will awaken powerful wars in the world, and the Children of Edom (Western Civilization) will make a coalition against them and will arouse a war against them..."

The Zohar continues. It's not all pretty but we know how everything ends. Now, go and write an accurate book telling about events sixteen hundred years from now. Try for fifty years. Tell us what countries or families will dominate. Who will be relevant? All the depth analysis in the knowable world could not yield a modestly reliable report. Who could possibly have known these things?! The day those planes struck it was as if the words of the Zohar walked off the page and I too was struck. DvarTorah, Copyright © 2007 by Rabbi Label Lam and [Torah.org](https://torah.org).