

Come let us outsmart it lest it become numerous....and it too, may join our enemies. (1:10)

Chazal tell us that Pharaoh had a council composed of three advisors, Bilaam, Iyov, and Yisro. Bilaam was the one who suggested the diabolical scheme to enslave the Jews. Iyov remained silent; he was later punished for his silence with ordeals of terrible pain and anguish. Yisro fled Egypt, rather than acquiesce to the evil advice. He was rewarded with the promise that his descendants would one day sit in the *Sanhedrin*. This well-known *Midrash* assumes a new meaning when one considers the nature of each of the three advisors and the inconsistency of their advice with his own personal character.

Bilaam was as arrogant and egotistical as he was evil. He had the power to curse entire nations. He could cast anyone under his evil spell. Why did he fear the Jews to the point that he initiated the scheme to destroy them?

Iyov, a pacifist, was the symbol of loving-kindness and human decency. He could not tolerate evil; he would never turn his back on oppression. Yet, what did he do when the tragic decree to enslave an entire nation was made? He remained silent! Is that consistent with his nature? Is this the response we would expect from a man of his noble stature? Is silence the type of reaction one would expect from a man whose life was dedicated to humane causes? How could he tolerate the screams of the Jewish infants as they were cast in the river?

Yisro, the great philosopher, epitomized justice and truth. Was he acting in accordance with his nature? A man who had served - and subsequently rejected - every pagan idol, who had fought for integrity and justice, would be expected to decry such an evil decree. He should have protested vehemently, endeavoring to rescind the decree. Yet, what did this paragon of virtue, this noble fighter for justice do when he heard the tragic decree enacted against the poor Jews? He ran away! Is this type of behavior consistent with Yisro's character?

In light of the above, **Horav Yosef Zundel Salant, z"l**, infers a significant lesson. Hashem told Avraham during the *Bris bein Ha'besarim* that one day his descendants would go into exile. When Hashem issues a decree, nothing stands in the way of its fulfillment. Hashem's plan functions beyond the realm of the "consistent" and the "typical." Bilaam, who would typically not regard *Bnei Yisrael* as a national threat, acted strangely and advised Pharaoh to kill the Jewish boys. Iyov, whose essence could not tolerate cruelty, remained silent. Yisro, the fighter for justice, fled the country. Nothing can stand in the way of Hashem's decree. Indeed, the Egyptian exile and ensuing liberation is incongruous with the natural course of events. Once again, Hashem is manifested as the creator of "nature" as we know it.