

“Ruled By Logic”

We learned in this week’s *amud* about *Hashem*’s “anger” and the amount of time His anger lasts. The *gemara* notes that it was this information that gave *Bila’am* his powers. The reason why his curses were fulfilled was because he knew the time that *Hashem* became angry at the world, and it was at that opportune time that he would curse. In fact, as noted in our *gemara*, there is a verse from the prophet *Micha* that exhorts us, the Jewish people, to remember the kindness that *Hashem* did for us when we were in the desert. That kindness was that *Hashem* did not become angry during the forty years that we were in the desert. Had *Hashem* become angry, *Bila’am*’s curse would have taken effect to the extent that there would not be a remnant left of the Jewish nation.

Tosfos in their commentary on our *gemara* asks; from our *gemara* we see that the amount of time that *Hashem* becomes angry is the time to say “*rega*”, a millisecond. If so, asks *Tosfos*, what could *Bila’am* have said in that time period that would have caused such drastic results? One of the answers that *Tosfos* gives is that *Bila’am* could have said כָּלֵם (“*kaleim*”), destroy them, which can be said in that same time frame.

I heard from Rabbi Yitzchak Breitowitz, Esq., a Rosh Yeshiva at Ohr Sameach in Yerushalayim, a beautiful understanding from the *Chasam Sofer* (Rabbi Moshe Sofer 1762-1839). The *Chasam Sofer* explains, that *Bila’am* actually meant a lot more than simply כָּלֵם (“*kaleim*”), destroy them. He explains, that each letter of the word; the כ, ל and the ם allude to three different things. The כ (*kaf*) refers to the כְּלִיּוֹת (kidneys), the ל (*lamed*) refers to the לֵב (heart) and the ם (*mem*) refers to the מֹח (brain).

The *Chasam Sofer* explains, that the ultimate way a person must strive to live, is as a מֶלֶךְ (*melech*), a king. Why? Because the order of what is in control of all that we do is; brain, heart, kidney. In other words, the logic, represented by the brain, controls the emotions (heart) and physical desires (kidneys). *Bila’am*, during this short span of time, was going to be able to say, כָּלֵם (*kaleim*) destroy them. He was, however, not only meaning to destroy them in the normal sense, from the outside. What he was really trying to do, was to destroy them from within. How so? By flipping the letters around. Instead of the brain (logic) being in control, the kidneys (physical desires) and heart (emotions) would control the logic. Instead of having מֶלֶךְ (*melech*) and being like a king making decisions based on logic, only supplemented with desires and emotions, we would have כָּלֵם (*kaleim*), and thereby we would destroy ourselves from the inside, by living life and making choices based on our desires and emotion with logic taking a backseat.

That is the deeper understanding of *Bila’am*’s evil plan, and with *Hashem*’s help we should all merit the Divine assistance to live our lives like kings, מֶלֶךְ (*melech*), with logic taking charge of all that we do.