

Parshas Bolok – Rabbi M Taubman (Reprinted)

י"ז תמוז תשע"ה – 4 July 2014 – שבת פי' בלק

It has long been recognised by Rabbonim of the 20th Century that Hitler (Y'Sh') represents a modern aspect of Amalek (Y' Sh'). The Amalekim attacked the weak and defenceless. So too, the Nazi regime decided to destroy the weak and defenceless as part of its attempt to rid themselves of those who it regarded as inferior. The "final solution" programme to murder the Jewish people being another expression of the emergence of its Amalekite nature.

The Sidra of Bolok opens with Bolok sending a message to Bilom asking him to curse the Jewish people. The implication is that Bolok wished to destroy the Jewish people. The Midrash explains that Bilom knew the moment of G-d's anger and was planning at that time to curse the Jewish people by saying just one word "Kalaim" – destroy them". This would cause the Jewish people to disappear. This of course is an attempt at Genocide and indicates that both Bolok and Bilom had an aspect of Amalek about them.

Both names - Bolok and Bilom - have negative connotations. Bolok means "to destroy" and Bolai'ah means "to swallow". The underlying concept is one of destruction albeit by different means. (In addition, both words begin with the letters "Bais-Lamed" - this two letter root means "to wear out" and all words that start with these two letters have destruction/wearing out at their root meaning.) The type of destruction that is indicated by the name Bolok is primarily one of destruction through physical means. Swallowing is done by the mouth and represents destruction through spiritual means. Bolok represents physical/military strength whilst Bilom represents the power of speech.

The Zohar [281] says that placing the last two letters of the names Bilam & Bolok together results in the name Amalek being created.

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This implies that that only by combining their physical and spiritual destructive powers could they achieve the impossible and destroy the Bnei Yisrael. This would also mean that Amalek, in and of themselves, have this combined physical and spiritual power enabling them to attack and (possibly) destroy the Bnei Yisrael.

"Reishis Goyim Amalek VeAchriso Adai Ova'id - The head of the nations is Amalek but he will be destroyed in the end." (Bamidbar 24:20): Amalek's power can be perceived as the opposite of the Kedusha of Israel. Our Kedushah stems from the tribe of Levi, whose leaders were Amram, Moshe, Levi and Kehas. The lead letters of these names produce the name AMALeK. However at the end of time Amalek will cease to exist. The end letters of the names Amram [M], Levi [L], Kehas [S] and Moshe [H], produce the word MISaH – death.

Bolok realised that the only way to defeat Yisrael was to combine the power of might (the physical) which he did possess and the power of speech (the spiritual), which he did not. He was therefore "forced" to hire Bilom. The connection between Bolok and Bilom is deeper yet. Both men were experts in the art of magic (Midrash) and both their fathers' names are names of animals. Perhaps we can explain that their father's names are names of animals to indicate that their root nature was one of physicality. Bolok is "ben Tzipor" (a bird): Bilom is "ben Beor" (a donkey): (An interesting side point would be to examine why Bolok and Bilom father's names have the opposite characteristic to that which they represent. A bird chirps and always has the connotation of speech and the donkey represents the material/physical. (Perhaps it indicates that they are two halves of one true persona.)

Bilom and Bolok represent the antithesis of Torah holiness. Their attack (spiritual and physical) is the opposite of Moshe and Aharon's holiness. Bolok prepared the altars and is to be compared to Aharon who is in charge of the Korbanot system. Bilom prepared himself to receive Nevuah to curse Am Yisrael and is therefore compared to Moshe in terms of Nevuah. (Incidentally Moshe's name means to draw up whilst Bilom's means to swallow – showing their opposing personalities). Being immersed in tumah rather than kedushah is perhaps the meaning of both parties being said to have engaged in magic. [Midrash]

Bolok and Bilom are therefore the spiritual heirs to Amalek and we should see the parsha in that light.