

Shvilei Pinches

Parshas Bolok

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Parshas Bolok 5770

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Bolok's Scheme to Hold Onto the Trace of Dovid HaMelech's Neshomeh

This week's parsha, parshas Bolok, opens with the following verses (22,2-6):

“וירא בלק בן צפור את כל אשר עשה ישראל לאמורי, ויגר מואב מפני העם מאד כי רב הוא...
ויאמר מואב אל זקני מדין, עתה ילחכו הקהל את כל סביבותינו כלחוך השור את ירק השדה...
וישלח מלאכים אל בלעם בן בעור... הנה עם יצא ממצרים הנה כסה את עין הארץ והוא יושב
ממולי, ועתה לכה נא ארה לי את העם הזה כי עצום הוא ממני, אולי אוכל נכה בו ואגרשנו מן
הארץ.”

They describe how Bolok saw what happened to the Emori at the hands of Yisroel, the fear this caused among the nation of Moav and their plan to curse Yisroel by engaging the services of Bilam.

Rashi's commentary on these verses, teaches us that Moav's fear stemmed from the fact that Yisroel destroyed the two mighty kings, Sichon and Og, who had, previously, protected Moav.

We must explain how this coincides with the commentary of the Zohar hakadosh (184:): **“וירא בלק
בן צפור וגו', רבי שמעון אמר, מאי ראה חמא, ראה ודאי ממש חמא במשקופא דחכמתא”**—
Bolok saw a clear and definite vision through the window of wisdom. What wisdom was involved
here? Why did the killing of Sichon and Og and the conquering of their lands necessitate Bolok's
gazing through the window of wisdom?

Additionally, when Bolok addresses Bilam, he says **“הנה עם יצא ממצרים”**—Behold! A people has
come out of Egypt. Whereas, when Bilam is forced to bless Yisroel, he says (Bamidbar 23,22): **“אל
מוציאם ממצרים”**—It is G-d Who brought them out of Egypt. Rashi notes, on the latter, that G-d
took them out of Egypt; they did not leave by their own devices—as insinuated by Bolok's
description of the events. Either way, Yisroel must be feared ; so, what is the point of this debate as
to whether Yisroel left Egypt on their own or were taken out by the Holy One?

Bolok Saw that Dovid HaMelech Would Descend from Him

In order to explain these issues, I would like to introduce the precious and pure lessons of the Agra
D'Kallah—whose commentary illuminates for us the entire passage regarding Bolok and Bilam.
Based on the teachings of the Arizal, we know that Bolok saw, by means of his witchcraft, that Dovid
HaMelech and his children were destined to descend from Ruth the Moabite. Therefore, explains
the Agra D'Kalla, Bolok and Bilam's entire plan was designed to prevent Yisroel from extracting the

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holy trace of Dovid HaMelech's neshomeh that was concealed amidst the nation of Moav. Here is an excerpt from his holy words:

”דהנה ידוע חיות אומה היא מחמת איזה ניצוצות מהקדושה השקועים בתוכה, וכשישראל מבררים הניצוצות אזי נשארים האומות פגרים ותתבטל אותה האומה... והנה הקליפה אשר יש בתוכה ניצוץ קדוש גדול בערך, ומתייראת הקליפה פן יבוא איזה צדיק בקדושתו ויוצא בלעם מפייהם, אזי הקליפה ההיא מיראתה פן ילקח חיותה, משקעת הניצוץ ההוא מאד מאד בתוך עמקי טומאת הקליפות, כמו שאדם מטמין אוצר נחמד במחבואות לבל ישלטו בו זרים... והנה עיקר חיות האומה במואב, היה מניצוץ הקדוש של דוד וזרעו, אשר היה ספון וטמון בקליפת מואב, ולכך נצטוו ישראל שלא להתגרר בם מלחמה, עד יגיע הזמן להתגלות הניצוץ הקדוש ואז תתבטל ממלכתם.”

A nation's existence and life-force derive from the holy sparks that are buried within its midst. Once Yisroel extracts those sparks (of kedushah), that nation will, eventually, cease to exist. The holier and more valuable the spark, the greater the fear of it being taken away, and the greater the effort to conceal it. Now, the essential life-force of Moav derived from the holy trace of the neshomehs of Dovid and his descendants. For this reason, Yisroel was commanded not to instigate a war with Moav until the time designated to reveal that holy spark; that would also mark the end of the realm of Moav.

In this manner, the Agra D'Kallah interprets the meaning of the Zohar on the possuk cited above: **”וירא בלק בן צפור וגו', חמא במשקופא דחכמתא”**— Bolok saw, by means of his dark crafts, that the holy trace of Dovid HaMelech's neshomeh was hidden among the nation of Moav; **”ויגר מואב”**—they feared that Yisroel would extract that holy trace from them which was the key to their continued existence; **”כי רב הוא”**—for this was a very valuable and special spark (trace); **”ויאמר מואב אל זקני מדין עתה ילחכו הקהל את כל סביבותינו”**—the people of Yisroel will trample the unholy fences we have built to secure and surround that kedushah; **”כלחוך השור”**—in order to regain possession of the trace of Dovid HaMelech, which is not rightfully ours, and return it to the domain of kedushah.

This interpretation, provides us with an insight concerning another matter in our parsha. We find that Bolok attempted to bring Bilam to curse Yisroel on three separate occasions—these are described in verses (22,36), (23,14) and (23,28). Each time, Bilam instructed Bolok to construct seven altars; each time, he sacrificed on each altar a bull and a ram—thus, totaling fourteen sacrifices for each set of seven altars.

These numbers are significant in light of the well-known concept, whose source is in the Zohar hakadosh (Vayigash 206.), that the neshomeh is composed of three parts, referred to as **נפש רוח** **נשמה**. Seeing as Bolok and Bilam intended to keep the holy trace of Dovid HaMelech's neshomeh within the domain of Moav, they built seven altars corresponding to Dovid HaMelech who is the seventh among the seven shepherds: **דוד, יוסף, אהרן, משה, יעקב, יצחק, אברהם**; additionally,

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they sacrificed fourteen sacrifices on each set of seven altars corresponding to the numerical value of the name דו"ד (4+6+4); this protocol was repeated three times corresponding to the נפש רוח ונשמה, the three parts of Dovid HaMelech's neshomeh that they were trying to contain.

On each of these three occasions, the Holy One came to Dovid's rescue, thwarting these two evil forces, specifically with the name הוי"ה. The first time is found in the possuk (23,5): "וישם ה' דבר" "בני בלעם". The second time is found in the possuk (23,16): "ויקר ה' אל בלעם וישם דבר בפיו". The third time appears in the possuk (24,1): "וירא בלעם כי טוב בעיני ה' לברך את ישראל".

We might suggest, that the three times Dovid HaMelech gives thanks to Hashem in the "mizmor" (Tehillim 118,10): "כל גוים סבבוני בשם ה' כי אמילם, סבוני גם סבבוני בשם ה' כי אמילם", correspond to these three occasions. Dovid mentions three times that כל גוים--represented by Bolok and Bilam, the root of all that is impure and unholy--assaulted him; each time, he concludes: "בשם ה' כי אמילם"—that the Holy One appeared each time in the form of הוי"ה to prevent Bilam from verbally assaulting and cursing Yisroel.

Bolok Waged War Utilizing a Rabbinical Ordinance

Following this path, we can shed some light on the tactic Bolok chose to employ in achieving this goal, i.e. preventing the extraction of the holy trace of Dovid HaMelech's neshomeh from amidst the nation of Moav. First, though, let us enjoy the sweet words of the Divine kabbalist, Rabbi Menachem Azarya of Pano in his wonderful seifer "Asoro Mamores", elucidating a teaching in the Zohar hakadosh (Mishpatim) interpreting the possuk (Kohellet 8,9): "עת אשר שלט האדם באדם לרע לו"—"there is a time when one man rules over another man to his own detriment." When "one man,"--referring to the ungodly, unconscionable Satan--rules over "another man"—a holy, righteous man—to exploit his neshomeh, thinking that the holy sparks are beneficial to him and are vitalizing him, in reality, "לרע לו" -- this exploitation of kedushah is detrimental to him.

Rabbi Menachem Azarya explains that the unconscionable forces of evil and impurity abduct and exploit the holy neshomehs, because they, essentially, live off of the holy sparks they hold captive. Then, they build structures and fortresses, utilizing their evil, impure powers, and imprison these holy neshomehs deep within to prevent them from ever escaping.

The Holy One, however, subjects them to the legal tenets of the Torah. If a man steals a beam from his neighbor, and uses it in a building of his and is then caught, by Torah law, he must dismantle the structure in order to return the beam. He may not claim that since the beam is already part of a structure, he wishes to merely compensate the neighbor for the beam.

This principle is derived in the Gemorah (Taanis 16.) from the narrative concerning the people of Nineveh who repented from their evil ways due to Yonah's prophesy (Yonah 3,8): "וישובו איש מדרך הרעה ומן החמס אשר בכפיהם - מאי ומן החמס אשר בכפיהם, אמר שמואל אפילו גזל

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מריש [קורה] ובנאו בבירה, מקעקע כל הבירה כולה ומחזיר מריש לבעליו". Similarly, the Holy One demolishes the entire structure built by the forces of evil in order to retrieve the holy neshomehs and sparks that have been stolen and return them to the realm of kedushah.

In the same manner, the Rama of Pano utilizes this principle to explain the passage in parshas Chukas (Bamidbar 21,21): "וישלח ישראל מלאכים אל סיחון מלך האמורי לאמר, אעברה בארצך לא נטה בשדה ובכרם לא נשתה מי באר בדרך המלך נלך עד אשר נעבור גבולך". B'nei Yisroel request permission to pass through the territory of Sichon, King of the Emori; they offer to stick to the main highway, without straying into their fields or drinking from their wells. B'nei Yisroel intuited, by Divine inspiration, that the lands of Sichon and Og concealed holy sparks that needed to be retrieved and returned to the realms of kedushah. Had Sichon and Og been willing to allow them peaceful passage through their territories, B'nei Yisroel could have extracted these holy treasures without actually conquering those lands.

As the Scriptures depict, however, Sichon declines this peaceful offer and chooses, instead, to meet them in battle. Left without any other alternative, Yisroel was forced to exact justice based on Torah law. Thus, Yisroel demolished and leveled their structures:

"ויכחו ישראל לפי חרב ויירש את ארצו מארנון עד יבק עד בני עמון כי עז גבול בני עמון".

The Rabbinic Ordinance not to Dismantle the Structure

Continuing his fabulous elucidation of the text, the Rama of Pano points out that things are not really so simple. While it is true that Torah law dictates that the building be torn down, Rabbinic ordinance does not. The Rabbis instituted that it be sufficient for the robber to reimburse the owners for their beam, while the beam itself could remain inside the structure.

This matter is taught in the Mishnah (Gittin 55.):

"העיד רבי יוחנן בן גודגדא... על המריש [הקורה] הגזול שבנאו בבירה, [ועתה בא הנגול ותובע את הקורה שלו], שיטול את דמיו [ולא את הקורה עצמו] מפני תקנת השבים"

As Rashi explains, the purpose of this ordinance was so as not to discourage the robber from repenting; if forced to dismantle his building, he was less likely to make amends.

The Gemorah (ibid.) teaches us the source for this edict: "תנו רבנן, גזל מריש ובנאו בבירה, בית שמאי אומרים, מקעקע כל הבירה כולה ומחזיר מריש לבעליו, ובית הלל אומרים, אין לו אלא דמי מריש בלבד משום תקנת השבין"—it stems from a debate between Beis Shamai and Beis Hillel. This, in fact, is the way the halachah was instituted in the Shulchan Aruch:

"אפילו גזל קורה ובנאה בבירה גדולה, הואיל ולא נשתנית דין תורה הוא שיהרוס כל הבנין ויחזור הקורה לבעלים, אבל תקנו חכמים מפני תקנת השבים, שיהיה נותן את דמיה ולא יפסיד הבנין".

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As a consequence, the forces of evil may now present the following argument: Albeit, our structure is built upon a holy neshomeh that was stolen from the domain of kedushah, and Torah law dictates that we dismantle our structure in order to return it; nevertheless, by Rabbinic ordinance, in consideration of those wishing to repent, mere reimbursement of the cost of the beam was determined to be sufficient; so, we, too, need not remove this neshomeh, but need merely reimburse its monetary value.

There is a major flaw in their reasoning, however. The concept of this Rabbinic ordinance was designed to aid those wishing to repent; only they need not dismantle their building in order to return the beam. Not only do the nations of the world have no intention of repenting, the concept of repentance does not apply to them. This is expressed in the Midrash Tanchuma (Ha'azinu 4). In the final analysis, their claim to apply the Rabbinic ordinance is denied, the dictates of Torah law stand and their entire structure must be dismantled in order to extract the stolen neshomeh.

We now understand the words of the Zohar hakadosh elucidating the possuk: **“עת אשר שלט האדם באדם לרע לו”**. When the ungodly, unscrupulous man, alluding to the forces of evil, rule over the righteous in an attempt to exploit their holy neshomehs, **“לרע לו”**—it is to their detriment. For, when the time comes to extract the neshomeh from their impure grasps, the Holy One will topple and destroy all of their fortresses and all that they have built.

Bolok Wished to Prevent the Destruction of Moav

Now, we have also gained a better understanding and a deeper insight into the pure lessons of the Agra D’Kallah. Bolok wished to prevent the extraction of the trace of Dovid HaMelech’s neshomeh from the grasps of Moav. Based on the above, his scheme was to invoke the Rabbinic ordinance deeming it unnecessary to demolish the building in order to remove the beam.

We can embellish this idea based on what we have learned in the Gemorah (Avodah Zarah 5.): **“מאי דכתיב (שמואל ב כג א) נאום דוד בן ישי ונאום הגבר הוקם על, נאום דוד בן ישי שהקים עולה של תשובה”**—here we find a direct association between Dovid HaMelech and enactments for the benefit of those wishing to repent.

This clarifies the meaning of Bolok’s complaint to Bilam: **“הנה עם יצא ממצרים הנה כסה את עין הארץ והוא יושב ממולי”**—“Behold! A people has come out of Egypt. Behold! It has covered the eye of the land and now sits opposite me. As Rashi explains, he is complaining about the destruction of Egypt and the annihilation of Sichon and Og and their preparedness to now advance against Moav. After all, Bolok’s claim is that the structure of Moav need not be destroyed in order to extract the trace of Dovid’s neshomeh; in fact, that would be a violation of the Rabbinic ordinance, instituted for those wishing to repent.

The Arizal explains that the Holy One decimated Egypt for the sake of emptying it of all remnants of kedushah. He demolished and leveled the building in order to retrieve the holy beam. Similarly,

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Yisroel devastated the lands of Sichon and Og and conquered them for themselves in order to release the holy sparks they contained.

This is why Bolok cleverly alleged to Bilam: **“הנה עם יצא ממצרים”**—he is emphasizing that they left of their own accord without the Holy One’s permission; and, in so doing, they violated the Rabbinic ordinance designed to encourage repentance. Furthermore, one transgression leads to another: **“הנה כסה את עין הארץ”**—they proceeded to kill the two kings, Sichon and Og, and demolish their buildings, in further violation to the Rabbinic decree. Now: **“והוא יושב ממולי”**—they stand ready to destroy and dismantle the structure of Moav, in order to extract the trace of Dovid HaMelech’s neshomeh. Bolok concludes his appeal to Bilam: **“ועתה לכה נא ארה לי את”** **“העם הזה כי עצום הוא ממני, אולי אוכל נכה בו ואגרשנו מן הארץ”**—please come with me and curse this people, for they are more powerful than me; maybe, I can succeed in delivering a blow that will drive them out of the land.

Bolok Saw—He Invoked the Wisdom of the Sages

This also resolves our inquiry concerning the words of the Zohar hakadosh: **“וירא בלק בן צפור”** **“חמא במשקופא רחמתא”**— Bolok gazed through the window of wisdom. We posed the question earlier: why did seeing what Yisroel did to Sichon and Og necessitate gazing through the window of wisdom? We can now answer this question based on what we have learned, together with the fact that the sages of the Torah are referred to as **“חכמים”**, wise men--for they receive influence from the very source of wisdom. The significance of Bolok gazing through the window of wisdom, the window of **“החכמה”**, is a reference to his attempt to invoke the Rabbinic ordinance, the enactment of the **“חכמים”**, concerning the return of the stolen beam. He hoped to arouse divine justice against Yisroel for acting contrary to the will of the **“חכמים”**--when they conquered the lands of Sichon and Og and demolished their structures.

Bilam sets him straight and informs him that he has made a serious error—the Rabbinic ordinance for those wishing to repent applies only to Yisroel and not to the goyim: **“הן עם לברד ישכון”** **“ובגוים לא יתחשב”**—the nation of Yisroel is dealt with separately and differently than all other nations. Additionally, Bilam informs Bolok (as explained by Rashi): **“אל אם ממצרים”**—they did not leave Egypt of their own accord, as you insinuated, but, rather, the Holy One took them out. You, Bolok, believe that Yisroel decimated Egypt on their own, against the will of the chachamim; not so, the Holy One Himself took them out of Egypt and helped them conquer the territories of Sichon and Og. For, the ordinance designed to encourage penitents is not applicable to other nations; in dealing with other nations, Hashem follows Torah guidelines which dictate dismantling and leveling the building in order to return the beam to its rightful owners.

This interpretation fits in beautifully with the possuk (Bamidbar 22,18): **“ויען בלעם ויאמר אל עבדי בלק, אם יתן לי בלק מלוא ביתו כסף וזהב לא אוכל לעבור את פי ה' אלקי לעשות קטנה”** **“או גדולה”**—Bilam informs Bolok’s messengers that he is unable to transgress the word of Hashem

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for any sum of money. We have explained that Bolok's claim was that, according to the Rabbinic ordinance, he should not have to return the actual beam, but it should suffice to reimburse the rightful owners the monetary value of the beam. To which Bilam responds: **”אם יתן לי בלק מלוא** **”** **”ביתו כסף וזהב לא אוכל לעבור את פי ה' אלקי לעשות קטנה או גדולה”**—firstly, this ordinance is not applicable and, secondly, there is no amount of money in the world that would compensate for the holy neshomeh of Dovid HaMelech.