

THE BEIT MIDRASH WAY - UNIT 3: Xenophobia or National Security?

From Pharaoh and the Israelites through Japanese Internment to Today

Ibayau Lehu (a question was asked in the beit midrash):

When is fearing minorities xenophobia, and when is it a question of national security?

Text Study 1

Witnessing the Shared “Facts” of the Biblical Story of Pharaoh’s Speech Concerning the Israelites

Study the following verses in *havruta* (study partners). Note the differences in these translations. List all questions you have on these verses, focusing on verses 9 and 10.

Exodus 1:8–12 (The New JPS)

8 A new king arose over Egypt who did not know Joseph.
9 And he said to his people, **“Look, the Israelite people are much too numerous for us. 10 Let us deal shrewdly with them, so that they may not increase; otherwise in the event of war they may join our enemies in fighting against us and rise from the land.”**
11 So they set taskmasters over them to oppress them with forced labor; and they built garrison cities for Pharaoh: Pithom and Raamses. 12 But the more they were oppressed, the more they increased and spread out, so that the [Egyptians] came to dread the Israelites.*

שמות א:ח-יב

(ח) וַיִּקָּם מֶלֶךְ-חֲדָשׁ,
עַל-מִצְרַיִם, אֲשֶׁר
לֹא-יָדַע, אֶת-יוֹסֵף.
(ט) וַיֹּאמֶר, אֶל-עַמּוֹ:
הִנֵּה, עִם בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל-
רַב וְעֲצוּם, מִמֶּנּוּ.
(י) הֲבֵה נִתְחַכְמָה,
לֹא: פֶּן-יִרְבֶּה, וְהָיָה
כִּי-תִקְרָאנָה מִלְחָמָה
וְנוֹסַף גַּם-הוּא עָלֵינוּ-
שְׂרָאִינוּ, וְנִלְחַם-בָּנוּ,
וְעָלָה מִן-הָאָרֶץ.
(יא) וַיִּשְׂמְרוּ עֲלֵיו שָׂרֵי
מִסִּים, לְמַעַן עֲנוֹתוֹ
בְּסִבְלֵתָם; וַיִּבְנוּ עָרֵי
מִסְכְּנוֹת, לְפָרְעֹה-
אֶת-פִּתּוֹם, וְאֶת-
רַעַמְסֵס. (יב) וַיִּכְאֶשֶׁר
יַעֲנוּ אֹתוֹ, כִּן יִרְבֶּה וְכֵן
יִפְרֹץ; וַיִּקְצוּ, מִפְּנֵי בְנֵי
יִשְׂרָאֵל.

Shemos 1:8–12 (Artscroll/Stone Edition)

8 A new king arose over Egypt, who did not know of Joseph.
9 He said to his people, **“Behold! the people, the Children of Israel, are more numerous and stronger than we. 10 Come, let us outsmart it lest it become numerous and it may be that if a war will occur, it, too, may join our enemies, and wage war against us and go up from the land.”** 11 So they appointed taskmasters over it in order to afflict it with their burdens; it built storage cities for Pharaoh, Pithom and Raamses. 12 But as much as they would afflict it, so it would increase and so it would spread out; and they became disgusted because of the Children of Israel.**

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Exercise 1 - Writing My 'Intuitive Tweet'

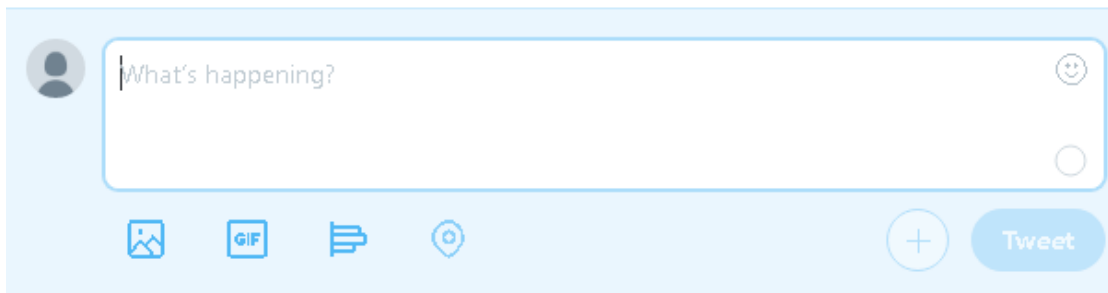
Background

One pillar of the Beit Midrash Way is the ability to be aware of our own bias, or our own '49' reasons that lead us to interpret a particular text or conflict the way we do. Today, very often people write these intuitive interpretations on social media thus contributing to the 'texts' of the conflict.

Instructions

If you had attended this "political rally," what would you tweet about it? What kind of leader was Pharaoh? How do you understand what was motivating him to say what he said? How understandable were his fears?

Compose New Tweet



Reply Tweet

Consider exchanging your 'intuitive tweet' with your *havruta* or someone sitting near you and writing a positive or critical reply tweet. Then pass it back.

Personal Reflection

To what extent would you define your 'intuitive tweet' as more "anti-Pharaoh" or more "pro-Pharaoh"? Explain why.



Text Study 2

Understanding the 49 vs 49 Conflicting Interpretations of the Facts of the Biblical Story

How did the following commentators understand what was motivating Pharaoh to say what he said? How understandable were his fears?

Understanding the First 49

Text 2.1

Anchor Bible, Exodus 1:8–10, Doubleday, New York, 1999, pp. 130–132.

(Prof. William Propp, UC San Diego, Department of History)

1:8 “New King”: “There arose a king that did not know Joseph” would have sufficed. Why a “new king”? Many speculate that the “new king” has founded a new dynasty (e.g. Josephus Ant. 2:202). A more conservative interpretation would be that the “new king”, like the “new wife” of Deut. 24:5, has not been king for very long. His headstrong action would exemplify the folly of youth upon attaining power (cf. I Kings 12:1-19)... 1:9 “his people”. This might refer to the king’s advisors, or perhaps to the entire people. In any case, Pharaoh is not the only culprit. All Egypt is implicated in the oppression of Israel, as is clear from the plurals in 1:11-14. “People of Israel’s sons”:... There may be, moreover, an effort to balance the “people” of Israel against “ammo” his [Pharaoh’s] people, to emphasize that the conflict is between two sovereign nations.... “Greater and mightier than us”: ... Thus 1:9 makes the historically preposterous claim that the Israelites became more powerful than the Egyptians... Pharaoh’s paranoia is ludicrous, yet sinister. Demagogues often credit weak minorities with vast powers. Elsewhere, the Bible depicts the Egyptian ruling class as obsessively xenophobic (Gen. 42:9, 12; 43:32; 46:34). Egyptian sources attest to their tight control on immigration and emigration. 1:10 “Go up from the Land”: We might expect the Egyptians to fear that Israel would conquer the land... But I am not sure we can or should rationalize Pharaoh’s concerns...

Understanding the Other 49

Text 2.2

Book of Jubilees, Chapter 46, 200 BCE, Land of Israel

[Context: God is speaking with Moses]

5. And he (Joseph) commanded the children of Israel before he died to carry his bones at the time when they would go out of the land of Egypt. 6. And he made them swear an oath concerning his bones because he knew that Egypt would not again bring them forth and bury them in the land of Canaan because when Makamaron, the king of Canaan, was dwelling in the land of Asshur, he fought in the valley with the king of Egypt. And he killed him there. And he pursued after the Egyptians as far as the gates of Ermon. 7. And he was unable to enter

because another new king ruled Egypt and he was stronger than he. And he returned to the land of Canaan and the gates of Egypt were shut up and there was none who could leave or enter Egypt. 8. And Joseph died in this forty- sixth jubilee in the sixth week in the second year. And they buried him in the land of Egypt. And all of his brothers died after him. 9. And the king of Egypt went forth to fight with the king of Canaan in this forty-seventh jubilee in the second week in the second year. And the children of Israel brought forth the bones of the children of Jacob, all except the bones of Joseph. And they buried them in the field in the cave of Machpelah in the mountain. 10. And many returned into Egypt but a few of them were left in Mount Hebron. And Amram, your father, was left with them. 11. And the King of Canaan was victorious over the king of Egypt and he closed the gates of Egypt. 12. And he [King of Egypt] conceived an evil thought against the children of Israel so that he might cause them to suffer. And he said to the men of Egypt, "Behold, the people of the sons of Israel have grown and increased more than we. 13. Come let us act wisely concerning them before they increase. And let us cause them to suffer in slavery before war comes to us, or before they battle with us, or if not (that, then) they will mix with our enemy. And they will depart from our land because their hearts and their faces are upon the land of Canaan." 14. And they appointed over them taskmasters to make them suffer in slavery. And they built strengthened cities for Pharaoh, Pithom, and Ramses. And they built all of the walls and all of the ramparts which had fallen in the cities of Egypt. 15. And they made them slaves by force.... 16. And the men of Egypt regarded the sons of Israel as defiled.

The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha Vol. 2, Charlesworth Edition, Doubleday, New York, 1985, pp. 137–138.

Text 2.3

Shadal, Exodus 1

(Rabbi Samuel David Luzzatto, 1800 – 1865, Italy)

8. "a new king ascended the throne." According to the opinion of the scholar Yast, the Pharaoh that reigned during that period belonged to the Ramses dynasty. The kings from that dynasty had defeated the shepherd kings who had themselves invaded Egypt from the West and had ruled over Egypt for about two centuries. He claims that Joseph and the brothers had come to Egypt during the era of these shepherd kings. The close relationship between the kings of that dynasty and Joseph and the Hebrews was due to the fact that both were descendants of Shem and originated in Asia Minor. The Egyptians at that time spoke a language which was similar to ancient Hebrew. It is also possible that the reason they were called "Hebrews" was that they were descended from Yokton the son of Ever, a grandson of Shem. (Genesis 10,25). The Pharaoh reigning



Image courtesy of the Abraham Schwadron Collection at the National Library of Israel.

שד"ל, שמות א

(ח.) "ויקם מלך חדש": דעת החכם יאסט, כי פרעה שהיה בזמן יצאת מצרים היה ממשפחת רעמסס, ומלכי משפחת רעמסס הכריתו כמאתים שנה קודם לכן את המלכים הרועים אשר באו מארץ ערב וכבשו את המצרים ומשלו במאה שנים. והנה הוא אומר כי יוסף ואח"כ כל בית אביו באו מצרי" מה בזמן ממשלת הרועים, והמלכים הרועים אהבו אותם להיותם מבני שם ומאנשי אסיה

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during Joseph's time was fond of the Hebrews and settled Yaakov's sons in the most fertile part of the country in the province of Goshen near the province and capital Ramses. It is most likely that this whole province was owned by members of one family, Ramses, and that the Israelites took over most of that province and settled there. Two hundred years later the members of the Ramses family got involved in a war, rebelling against alien kings from the dynasty of the shepherds and they defeated them and wiped them out. They took over the whole land of Egypt at about that time. Seeing that the members of the Ramses family were sworn enemies of the Israelites, due to having been deprived by them of their ancestral land, plus the fact that the Israelites were so friendly with the old ruling class, the result of all this was the decrees against the Hebrews. 1:10. ... Personally, I would say that it is true to say that the new King of Egypt was afraid of a public uprising against him, but was confident on the other hand, that if such an uprising would materialize and he would kill the leaders of the revolt, the original Egyptian population would be grateful to him for having put down the uprising and having restored law and order in the country. Not only that, but from that point on the population would be fearful, and therefore obedient to him. But he was even more afraid of the Israelites, who, seeing that they were newcomers and relative strangers in the country, did not have firm enough roots to stay in the country if war would break out and all that this entails. Even if the king would prevail in the war or against an internal uprising, he was not confident that he could prevail against the Hebrews. He suspected them of only biding their time before leaving the country en masse. Once having left, they would make common cause with Egypt's enemies.

ומדברים לשון הקרובה ללשון הקודש, ואולי היו גם הם נקראים עברים מבני יקטן בן עבר (בראשית י" כ"ה). והנה פרעה שבימי יוסף שהיה אוהב העברים הושיב בני יעקב במיטב הארץ בארץ רעמסס, והארץ ההיא קרוב להאמין שהיתה ארץ אחוזת משפחה אחת של מצרים הנקראת משפחת רעמסס, ובני ישראל לקחו נחלתם כולה או רובה וישבו בה, ואחרי מאתיים שנה אירע כי אנשי משפחת רעמסס מרדו במלכים הנכרים ממשפחת הרועים והכריתו אותם, ומלכו תחתיהם ולהיות אנשי המשפחה ההיא שונאי ישראל מפני שלקחו נחלתם, וגם מפני שהיו אוהבי הרועים היה שפרעה גזר על ישראל מה שגזר.

א: ואני הייתי אומר כי הנכון שהמלך החדש שקם על מצרים היה ירא ממרידת מצרים, אך היה בטוח, שאם יתחילו למרוד, יכה בהם ויהרוג גדולי המורדים וכל העם ישמעו וייראו, אך יותר היה ירא מבני ישראל, כי להיותם נכרים וגרים בארץ ההיא, ולא היתה נפשם דבקה בארץ מצרים כמו המצרים, קרוב היה שיתקוממו נגדו, כשתזדמן להם שעת הכושר, ואף אם תגבר יד המלך על אויביו ועליהם, לא יוכל להינקם מהם כי ועלו מן הארץ ההיא אל ארץ האויבים אשר התחברו עמהם.

Torah Commentary by Samuel David Luzzato,
Translated by Eliyahu Munk, Volume 2, Lambda
Publishers, Jerusalem/ New York, pp. 505-509.



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Exercise 2 – Writing the 49 vs 49 Faces of the Book


Background

Another pillar of the 'Beit Midrash Way' is the ability to understand contradictory interpretations of texts as well as ideological and political issues today. This has been referred to in short as the '49 vs 49' and more precisely in rabbinic literature as the *49 panim* or faces (מֵיַט פְּנִיּוֹת) why a matter may be understood in contradictory ways. In this exercise we will connect between these multi-dimensional contradictory 'faces' of the Book, with the too often singular-dimension, simplistic nature of Facebook.

Instructions

Write two Facebook posts about the biblical story, one for Pharaoh and one for an Israelite (for example, Moses's father, Amram), with each post telling over the story from a different perspective. Feel free to be creative, drawing upon both your own interpretations and the interpretations of the biblical commentaries.





Personal Reflection

To what extent do you feel you portrayed each side's perspective in a manner that the conflicting biblical characters would "like" your post? Explain why. Which post do you identify with more? Explain why.

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Text Study 3 – Historical Precedents

Can you think of examples of when this unit's question has come up in history? How may the following historical events serve as contrasting historical precedents?

3.1. Fears of American Japanese in the US in the 1940s

Image: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/pingnews/1602096354>



Text 3.1.1

Walter Lippmann "The Fifth Column" Los Angeles Times, February 13, 1942

SAN FRANCISCO—The enemy alien problem on the Pacific Coast, or much more accurately the Fifth Column problem, is very serious and it is very special. What makes it so serious and so special is that the Pacific Coast is in imminent danger of a combined attack from within and from without. The danger is not, as it would be in the inland centers or perhaps even for the present on the Atlantic Coast, from sabotage alone. The peculiar danger of the Pacific Coast is in a Japanese raid accompanied by enemy action inside American territory. This combination can be very formidable indeed. For while the striking power of Japan from the sea and air might not in itself be overwhelming at any one point just now, Japan could strike a blow which might do irreparable damage if it were accompanied by the kind of organized sabotage to which this part of the country is specially vulnerable. This is a sober statement of the situation, in fact a report, based not on speculation but on what is known to have taken place and to be taking place in this area of the war. It is a fact that the Japanese navy has been reconnoitering the Pacific Coast more or less continually and for a considerable length of time, testing and feeling out the American defenses. It is a fact that communication takes place between the enemy at sea and enemy agents on land. These are facts which we shall ignore or minimize at our peril. It is also a fact that since the outbreak of the Japanese war there has been no important sabotage on the Pacific Coast. From what we know about Hawaii and about the Fifth Column in Europe this is not, as some have liked to think, a sign that there is nothing to be feared. It is a sign that the blow is well-organized and that it is held back until it can be struck with maximum effect. In preparing to repel the attack the Army and Navy have all the responsibility but they are facing it with one hand tied down in Washington. I am sure

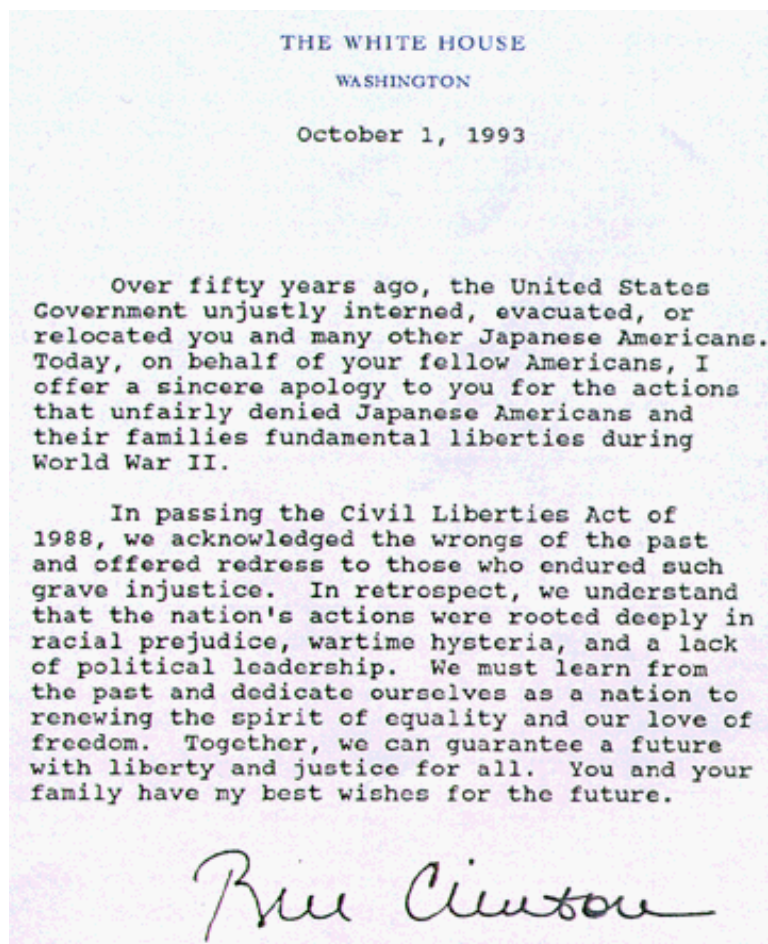
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I understand fully the unwillingness of Washington to adopt a policy of mass evacuation and mass internment of all those who are technically enemy aliens.... There is the assumption that if the rights of a citizen are abridged anywhere, they have been abridged everywhere. Forget for a moment all about enemy aliens, dual citizenship, naturalized citizens, native citizens of enemy alien parentage, and consider a warship in San Francisco harbor, an airplane plant in Los Angeles, a general's headquarters at Oshkosh, and an admiral's at Podunk. Then think of the lineal descendant, if there happened to be such a person, of George Washington, the father of his country, and consider what happens to Mr. Washington if he would like to visit the warship, or take a walk in the airplane plant, or to drop in and photograph the general and the admiral in their quarters. He is stopped by the sentry. He has to prove who he is. He has to prove that he has a good reason for doing what he wishes to do. He has to register, sign papers, and wear an identification button. Then perhaps, if he proves his case, he is escorted by an armed guard while he does his errand, and until he has been checked out of his place and his papers and his button have been returned. Have Mr. Washington's constitutional rights been abridged?

http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/active_learning/explorations/japanese_internment/lippmann.cfm

Text 3.1.2



<http://www.pbs.org/childofcamp/history/clinton.html>

3.2. Fears of Sudeten Germans in Czechoslovakia in the 1930s

Text 3.2

Statement of Mr. Sidney S. Alderman (Associate Trial Counsel for the United States) at Nuremberg Trial Proceedings, Volume 4, TWENTY-FOURTH DAY, Thursday, 20 December 1945, Morning Session, pp. 214– 215.

While building up the SS as a military force within Germany, the conspirators also utilized it in other countries to lay the groundwork for aggression..... The same pattern was repeated in Czechoslovakia. Henlein's Free Corps played in that country the part of Fifth Column which the Austrian SS had played in Austria, and it was rewarded by being placed under the jurisdiction of the Reichsfuehrer SS in September 1938. ... The SS had its own armed unit four battalions of the Totenkopf Verbände-actually operating in Czechoslovakia before the Munich Pact was signed. SS preparations for aggression in Czechoslovakia were not confined to military forces. One of the departments of the SS Supreme Command-the Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle-... was a center for Fifth Column activity. The Tribunal may recall the secret meeting between Hitler and Henlein in March 1938, described in notes of the German Foreign Office ... at which the line to be followed by the Sudeten German Party was determined. The Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle was represented at that meeting by Professor Haushofer and SS Obergruppenfuehrer Lorenz. And when the Foreign Office, in August 1938, awarded further subsidies to Henlein's Sudeten Party, the memorandum of that recommendation for further subsidies contained the significant footnote "Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle will be informed...." ... When at last the time came to strike, the SS was ready.



Image:

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bundesarchiv_Bild_146-1976-033-20,_Anschluss_sudetendeutscher_Gebiete.jpg

Exercise 3 - Studying Today's News 'The Beit Midrash Way'

Can you think of examples of where this unit's question comes up today either in politics or in your personal life? To what extent do you feel you understand the 49 vs 49 of this issue?

Background

The final pillar of the Beit Midrash Way is the interpretive skill of identifying key textual ambiguities, as well as understanding the conflicting interpretations of the commentaries on these textual ambiguities. These same interpretive skills are critical for reading both biblical verses and current events in the news today. Below is an example of where this unit's question comes up in the news today according to previous Mahloket Matters participants. Feel free to use other examples of current events for the following exercise.

Instructions

1. Read in *havruta* the two articles brought below reporting on President Trump's tweet which linked to President Obama's words in 2005 about building a security Fence/Wall, October 24, 2018.
2. What are the shared facts mentioned in both articles?
3. What facts and interpretation of facts are unique to each article?
4. With which article do you identify with more? Why?
5. What did you learn from reading each article and from reading the news in general this way?

<https://twitter.com/realdonaldtrump/status/1054874705491120133?lang=en>



President Trump quoting President Obama about building a security fence/wall, October 24, 2018

Democrats’ illegal immigration tune has changed over years despite incoming caravan

See <https://www.foxnews.com/politics/democrats-illegal-immigration-tune-has-changed-over-years-despite-incoming-caravan.amp>

Trump touted Obama’s 2005 remarks on immigration. Here’s what Obama actually said.

See https://www.washingtonpost.com/amphtml/politics/trump-touted-obamas-2005-remarks-on-immigration-heres-what-obama-actually-said/2018/10/24/1ed845c0-d782-11e8-aeb7-ddcad4a0a54e_story.html?noredirect=on

President Trump quoting President Obama about building a security fence/wall, October 24, 2018		
Article 1		Article 2
Additional Facts/ Interpretation of Facts	Shared Facts	Additional Facts/ Interpretation of Facts
<input type="checkbox"/> I identify more with this article because: <input type="checkbox"/> I identify less with this article, but still learned:		<input type="checkbox"/> I identify more with this article because: <input type="checkbox"/> I identify less with this article, but still learned:



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Supplementary Sources

Supplementary Sources for Text Study 2

How did the following commentators understand the biblical story? In what ways are they similar or different from the commentaries seen above in Text Study 2? How do they portray Pharaoh and his fears?

Text 2.4

Josephus Flavius, *The Antiquities of the Jews*, 2.201–2.204 (93/94 CE)

201 Now it happened that the Egyptians grew delicate and lazy, as to painstaking; and gave themselves up to other pleasures, and in particular to the love of gain. They also became very ill-affected towards the Hebrews, as touched with envy at their prosperity; 202 for when they saw how the nation of the Israelites flourished, and were become eminent already in plenty of wealth, which they had acquired by their virtue and natural love of labor, they thought their increase was to their own detriment. And having, in length of time, forgotten the benefits they had received from Joseph, particularly the crown being now come into another family, they became very abusive to the Israelites, and contrived many ways of afflicting them; 203 for they enjoined them to cut a great number of channels for the river, and to build walls for their cities and ramparts, that they might restrain the river, and hinder its waters from stagnating, upon its running over its own banks: they set them also to build pyramids, and by all this wore them out; and forced them to learn all sorts of mechanical arts, and to accustom themselves to hard labor. 204 And four hundred years did they spend under these afflictions; for they strove one against the other which should get the mastery, the Egyptians desiring to destroy the Israelites by these labors, and the Israelites desiring to hold out to the end under them.

Translated by William Whiston https://lexundria.com/j_aj/2.201-2.237/wst

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Text 2.5

Targum Yerushalmi (Aramaic Translation of the Bible),
Exodus 1:10

(2nd Cen. CE, Land of Israel)

And they will kill us and go up from the land unscathed.

תרגום ירושלמי, שמות א':

ויקטלון יתן ויסקון להון בשלם מן
ארעא.

Text 2.6

Rashi, Exodus 1:10

(Rabbi Shlomo Yitzchaki, 1040 – 1105, France)

And he will go up out of the land: against our will. Our Rabbis explained that they spoke like a person who is pronouncing a curse against himself but attaches the curse to others (because he does not wish to use an ominous expression of himself), so that it is as though Scripture wrote "and we shall have to go up out of the land" and they will take possession of it" (Babylonian Talmud, Sotah 11a).

רש"י, שמות א':

ועלה מן הארץ - על
כרחנו. ורבותינו דרשו
כאדם שמקלל עצמו
ותולה קללתו באחרים,
והרי הוא כאלו כתב
ועלינו מן הארץ והם
יירשנה (סוטה, יא ע"א)

Text 2.7

Rashbam, Exodus 1:10

(Rabbi Samuel ben Meir, 1085-1158, France)

And they will fight us and leave the land: To return to their native land. It is not good for us to lose our slaves and be called "a truncated kingdom." (See Babylonian Talmud, Avodah Zarah 10b).

רשב"ם, שמות א':

נלחם בנו ועלה מן הארץ
- לשוב אל ארץ אבותיהם
ולא טוב לנו לאבד עב-
דינו וקרו לי (ה) מלכותא
קטיעא:



Text 2.8

Ramban, Exodus 1:10

(Rabbi Moses b. Nachman, 1194 – 1270, Spain, Land of Israel)

“Come, let us deal wisely with him.” Pharaoh and his wise counsellors did not seek to slay them by the sword for it would have been a gross treachery to smite without reason a people that had come into a land by command of a former king. The people of the country also would not give the king consent to commit such perfidy since he took counsel with them, and all the more so since the children of Israel were a numerous and mighty people and would wage a great war against them. Rather, Pharaoh said he would do it wisely so that the Israelites would not feel that it was done in enmity against them. It is for this reason that he placed a levy upon them, as it was customary that strangers in a country contribute a levy to the king, as is mentioned in the case of King Solomon (II Chronicles 2:16-17). Afterwards he secretly commanded the midwives to kill the male children upon the birthstool (verse 16) so that even the mothers should not know it. Following that, “he charged all his people, Every son that is born, you shall cast into the river” (verse 22)..... This is the meaning of the complaint made to Moses our teacher [by the officers of the children of Israel], “Ye have made our savor to be abhorred in the eyes of Pharaoh, and in the eyes of his servants, to put a sword in their hands to slay us” (5:21), meaning, “Now they will increase their hatred of us and find justification for saying that we rebel against the government, and they will then openly slay us by the sword without the necessity of doing it slyly.” “And go up from the land” i.e. ‘against our will.’..... It is possible to explain that Pharaoh is saying that “if wars will occur, the Israelites may join forces with our enemies to take the spoil, and to take the prey (Isaiah 10:6). They will get themselves up out of this land to the land of Canaan with all our belongings, and we will not be able to wreak our vengeance on them nor to war against them.”

רמב"ן שמות א':

(י) הבה נתחכמה לו - לא ראה פרעה וחכמי יועציו להכותם בחרב, כי תהיה בגידה גדולה להכות חנם העם אשר באו בארץ במצות המלך הראשון. וגם עם הארץ לא יתנו רשות למלך לעשות חנם כזה, כי עמהם הוא מתייעץ, ואף כי בני ישראל עם רב ועצום ויעשו עמהם מלחמה גדולה. אבל אמר שיעשו דרך חכמה שלא ירגישו ישראל כי באיבה יעשו בהם, ולכך הטיל בהם מס, כי דרך הגרים בארץ להעלות מס למלך כמו שבא בשלמה (מ"א ט כא). ואחרי כן צוה בסתר למילדות להרוג הזכרים על האבנים, ואפילו היולדות עצמן לא ידעו בהם: ואחרי כן צוה לכל עמו כל הבן היולד היאורה תשליכוהו אתם.....

וזה טעם מאמר האומרים למשה רבינו אשר הבאשתם את ריחנו לתת חרב בידם (להלן ה כא), כי עתה יוסיפו בשנאתם אותנו, וימצאו טענה כי אנחנו מורדים במלכות ויהרגו אותנו בחרב לעיני הכל, לא יצטרכו עוד לעשות במרמה: “ועלה מן הארץ - על כרחנו. “ויתכן לפרש שיאמר כי תקראנה מלחמות יהיה נוסף על שונאינו לשלול שלל ולבוז בז, ויעלה לו מן הארץ הזאת אל ארץ כנען עם כל אשר לנו, ולא נוכל אנחנו לנקום נקמתנו ממנו ולהלחם בו.

Ramban (Nachmanides) Commentary on the Torah, Exodus, Translated Chavel, Shilo publishing, New York, 1973, pp. 8–10.