

Why Would One Nation Oppress Another?

Rabbi Daniel Roth

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Why did the Egyptians want to oppress the Israelites?

How might an Egyptian and Israelite narrative explain the Israelite threat differently?

Exodus 1:8-12

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 פרק א

(ח) ויקם מלך חדש על מצרים אשר לא ידע את יוסף:
(ט) ויאמר אל עמו הנה עם בני ישראל רב ועצום ממנו:
(י) הבה נתחכמה לו פן ירבה והיה כי תקראנה מלחמה ונוסף גם הוא על שנאינו ונלחם בנו ועלה מן הארץ:
(יא) וישימו עליו שרי מסים למען ענתו בסבלתם ויבן ערי מסכנות לפרעה את פתם ואת רעמסס:
(יב) וכאשר יענו אתו כן ירבה וכן יפרץ ויקצו מפני בני ישראל:

2.6.2. *How did the various interpreters explain the Egyptian motivations behind the oppression?*

Josephus, Antiquities of the Jews. Book II, Chapter 9:1. 100 CE



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; 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; 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, (17) and by all this wore them out (exhausted our race); and forced them to learn all sorts of mechanical arts, and to accustom themselves to hard labor. And four hundred years did they spend under these afflictions.



<p><u>Rashbam Exodus 1:10 (1080-1160, France)</u></p> <p>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.”</p>	<p><u>רשב"ם שמות פרק א פסוק י</u> ונלחם בנו ועלה מן הארץ - לשוב אל ארץ אבותיהם ולא לנו לאבד עבדינו וקררו ליה) מלכותא קטיעא :</p>  <p>Jefferson Finis Davis (June 3, 1808 – December 6, 1889) President of the Confederacy</p>
<p><u>Ramban Exodus 1:10 (1194-1270, b. Spain, d. Israel)</u></p> <p>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.”</p>	<p><u>רמב"ן שמות פרק א פסוק י</u></p> <p>ויתכן לפרש שיאמר כי תקראנה מלחמות יהיה נוסף על שונאינו לשלול שלל ולבוז בו, ויעלה לו מן הארץ הזאת אל ארץ כנען עם כל אשר לנו, ולא נוכל אנחנו לנקום נקמתנו ממנו ולהלחם בו.</p>

Anchor Bible, Exodus 1:10 (W. Propp, 1999. p. 132)

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; Durham WBC 1987:7). 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 (Jacob 1992: 10).

“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 [Fox 1986: 11]....

“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 (Greenberg 1969:21-22).

1:10 “Be wise” Most “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... [Speculation: Those who favor interpreting “the land” (v 7) as the “Land of Ramses,” which I reject (see NOTE), might read similarly in v 10: Pharaoh simply fears that Israel might leave its ghetto.]



Jean-Marie Le Pen

Jubilees 200 BCE, (Charles, Pseudopigrapha):

5. And he 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. 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. 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. 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. 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. 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. 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.” 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. And they made them slaves by force. And to the extent that they acted cruelly against them, they likewise increased and multiplied. And the men of Egypt regarded the sons of Israel as defiled.

**Rav Shmuel David Luzzato, Exodus 1
(Italy 19th cent.)**

"And a new king arose" – The opinion of the scholar Yest, was that Pharaoh that was in the time of the Exodus from Egypt, was of the family of Ramses, and the kings from the family of Ramses annihilated two hundred years before hand the 'shepherd kings', that came from the lands of Arabia and conquered the Egyptians and ruled over them for a hundred years. And behold, he says, that Yosef and afterwards his entire father's house that came down to Egypt during the time of the Kingdom of the Shepherds. And the 'Shepherd Kings' loved them since they were all of the children of Shem and from Asia and spoke language very similar to Hebrew, and perhaps they were also even called "Hebrews" from the verse "and the children of Yokton son of Ever" (Gen. 10:25). And behold, Pharaoh, in the times of Yosef, who used to love the Hebrews, settled the children of Jacob in the best part of the land in the land of Ramses, and this land, it is reasonable to believe, was the homestead of one family in Egypt who were called the family of Ramses. And the children of Israel took all of their inheritance or most of it, and settled it. And two hundred years later, it happened that the people of Ramses rebelled against the foreign kings from the shepherd families, and annihilated them, and ruled in their place. And since this family hated the Israelites for taking their land, and also since they were the allies of the shepherds, Pharaoh decreed upon Israel what he decreed.

10. "And they will fight with us and go up from the land." And I would say, that what is correct

**שד"ל שמות פרק א' (איטלייה מאה
:19)**

(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 מצרימה בזמן ממשלת הרועים, והמלכים הרועים אהבו אותם להיותם מבני שם ומאנשי אסיה 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 מאתים 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.



White farmers in Zimbabwe now oppressed by President Mugabe.

(י.) "ונלחם בנו ועלה מן הארץ": ואני הייתי אומר כי הנכון שהמלך החדש שקם על מצרים היה ירא



<p>is that the new king that rose up on Egypt, would be afraid of an Egyptian revolt, yet would be confident, that if they begin to revolt, he would smite them, and kill the leaders of the revolt, and all of the rest of the nation will tremble and adhere to him. However, he was more afraid of the Children of Israel, since they were foreigners and strangers in the land, and their souls were not connected to the land of Egypt like the Egyptians were, and it was more likely that they would rise up against him, when they would have the opportunity to do so, and even if the hand of the king would prevail against his enemies and upon them, he would not be able to exact his vengeance upon them since they would go up from the land, to the land of the enemy, to whom they were connected.</p>	<p>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.</p>
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Early Rabbinic Interpretations of the Bible

<p>Targum Pseudo – Jonathan Exod. 1:10 Come now, let us take counsel against them to see by what laws we may diminish them before they multiply, lest when war break out against us, they join on their own with our enemies and destroy us <u>and not leave a single one of us [alive]</u> and then depart from the land.</p>	<p>תרגום יונתן שמות א':י: איתון כדון נתיעט עליהון בהלן דינין נזער יתהון קדם עד לא יסגון ויהוי ארום יארע יתן סדרי קרבא ויתוספון לחוד הינון על סנאינן וישיצון יתנא <u>ולא ישיירו מין און לא חד</u> ומן בתר כדן יפקון להון מן ארעא.</p>
<p>Targum Yerushalmi Exodus 1:10 <u>And they will kill us</u> and go up from the land unscathed.</p>	<p>תרגום ירושלמי שמות א':י: <u>ויקטלון יתן</u> ויסקון להון בשלם מן ארעא.</p>
<p>Talmud Sotah 11a (500 C.E) <i>And fight against us and get them up out of the land</i> (ועלה) (Exod 1:10). It should have read “and we will go up!” (ועלינו). R. Abba b. Kahana said: It is like a man who curses himself and hangs the curse upon somebody else.</p>	<p>תלמוד בבלי מסכת סוטה דף יא עמוד א (שמות א) “ונלחם בנו ועלה מן הארץ” – “ועלינו” מיבעי ליה! א”ר אבא בר כהנא: כאדם שמקלל את עצמו ותולה קללתו בחבירו.</p>



<p>Rashi Exodus 1:10 (1040-1105, France) <i>And he will go up out of the land:</i> 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” (Sotah 11a).</p>	<p>רש"י שמות פרק א פסוק י ועלה מן הארץ - על כרחנו. ורבותינו דרשו כאדם שמקלל עצמו ותולה קללתו באחרים, והרי הוא כאלו כתב ועלינו מן הארץ והם יירשוה :</p>
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Do Muslims pose a demographic threat to Europe (Western World)?

Demographic time bomb: millions of Muslim immigrants will change Europe beyond recognition, and almost no policymakers are talking about it

<http://exposingislam.blogspot.com/2009/08/demographic-time-bomb-millions-of.html>

And those who are talking about it are smeared and vilified as racists and bigots.... According to the US's Migration Policy Institute, residents of Muslim faith will account for more than 20 per cent of the EU population by 2050 but already do so in a number of cities. Whites will be in a minority in Birmingham by 2026, says Christopher Caldwell, an American journalist, and even sooner in Leicester.

Another forecast holds that Muslims could outnumber non-Muslims in France and perhaps in all of western Europe by mid-century. Austria was 90 per cent Catholic in the 20th century but Islam could be the majority religion among Austrians aged under 15 by 2050, says Mr Caldwell.... That is not the core of the problem. The core of the problem is that they have a ready-made system of laws and customs that they consider superior to the laws and customs of Europe, and are ready to replace the one with the other. And their system denies freedom of speech and conscience, as well as equality of rights for women and non-Muslims. As such, all free people should be fighting against it. A fifth of European Union will be Muslim by 2050.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2008/jul/11/islam>

Saying 'Islamic threat' over and over doesn't make it real

By Soumaya Ghannoushi ,The Guardian, Friday 11 July 2008

Pick up any newspaper today in Britain or elsewhere in Europe, switch on the TV or tune in to any radio station, and you're very likely to get the impression that "our societies" - if not western civilisation in its entirety - face an imminent Islamic threat, on a par with the old dangers of fascism. Since the terrorist bombings of New York, Madrid and London, the "fundamentalist peril" has become part of the air we breathe. It



has become a rhetorical crutch for everyone from rightwing bigots to opportunistic politicians and repenting "former extremists", each with their own agenda.

Today we live amid an explosion of discourse and imagery around Islam and Muslims. Sparked by al-Qaida's lunatic atrocities, it has since fed on the politics of fear and suspicion. The victims have included objectivity, balance, and the ability to judge issues calmly and rationally. Flawed material is endlessly reproduced and recycled, so it is little wonder that the public's understanding of Islam and the complex political problems of the Muslim world are limited at best.

Years of peddled fear and demonisation have had severe consequences: a widening of ignorance and bigotry, deepening mistrust between individuals and communities, and the resurrection of the pernicious language of racism and fanaticism...The much hyped Islamic threat is one of the greatest lies of our time. The "Muslim world" - though no such bloc really exists - is politically fragmented and economically impoverished. It is reeling under the weight of crises and a long colonial legacy. Militarily, it is of scant significance. It is laughable that we should be discussing the Islamic threat when in the past seven years alone two Muslim countries have come under direct military occupation, ending hopes that the world had firmly closed this chapter of history decades ago.



Islamic demographic threat for Europe:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M27spDwM7zY>



Processing Questions: *If you were an Egyptian would you be afraid of the Israelites? How comfortable are you with "the other" living in your cultural environment?*

Rabbi Daniel Roth is a faculty member at Pardes and the director of the Pardes Center for Judaism and Conflict Resolution.

