

Torah Gathering Materials - Week of January 20th, 2021

I sometimes wonder how Europe's Jews went from the status they enjoyed in Western Europe *ante bellum*, to the degradation of the Ghettos and then to the dehumanization of the Death Camps.

I just as often ruminate of the ease in which the Israelites went from a '*favored status*' in Egypt to the degradation they came to know under the new Pharaoh we meet in the first Chapter of Exodus.

In the Egypt of the day, they were rapidly subjugated-down into a class of people both to be feared and despised. We hardly need to review what Joseph 'accomplished' in storing grain and then in his way of 'distributing' the grain.

Genesis 47:13

<p>יג וְלֶחֶם אֵין בְּכָל-הָאָרֶץ, כִּי-כָבֵד הָרָעַב מְאֹד; וַתִּלָּה אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם, וְאֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן, מִפְּנֵי הָרָעַב.</p>	<p>47:13 And there was no bread in all the land; for the famine was very sore, so that the land of Egypt and the land of Canaan languished by reason of the famine.</p>
<p>יד וַיִּלְקַט יוֹסֵף, אֶת-כָּל-הַכֶּסֶף הַנִּמְצָא בְּאֶרֶץ-מִצְרַיִם וּבְאֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן, בְּשָׂבֵר, אֲשֶׁר-הֵם שֹׂבְרִים; וַיָּבֵא יוֹסֵף אֶת-הַכֶּסֶף, בֵּיתֵהּ פַּרְעֹה.</p>	<p>14 And Joseph gathered up all the money that was found in the land of Egypt, and in the land of Canaan, for the corn which they bought; and Joseph brought the money into Pharaoh's house. (< -- whose house exactly?)</p>

All of which eventually led to this (see immediately below) -- importantly we should note that it was the Egyptians who spoke first . . .

<p>יט לָמָּה נָמוּת לְעֵינֶיךָ, גַּם-אֲנַחְנוּ גַּם אֲדַמְתֵנוּ--קִנְיָה אֶתְנוּ וְאֶת-אֲדַמְתֵנוּ, בְּלֶחֶם; וְנִהְיֶה אֲנַחְנוּ וְאֲדַמְתֵנוּ, עֲבָדִים לַפְּרָעָה, וְתֹן-זֶרַע וְנַחֲיָה וְלֹא נָמוּת, וְהָאֲדָמָה לֹא תִשָּׁם.</p>	<p>47: 19 Wherefore should <u>we</u> die before thine eyes, both we and our land? <u>buy us and our land for bread</u>, and we and our land will be bondmen unto Pharaoh; and give us seed, that we may live, and not die, and that the land be not desolate.'</p>
<p>כ וַיִּקֶן יוֹסֵף אֶת-כָּל-אֲדַמְתַּת מִצְרַיִם, לַפְּרָעָה, כִּי-מָכְרוּ מִצְרַיִם אִישׁ שָׂדֵהוּ, כִּי-חָזַק עֲלֵהֶם הָרָעַב; וַתְּהִי הָאָרֶץ, לַפְּרָעָה.</p>	<p>20 <u>So Joseph bought all the land of Egypt for Pharaoh</u>; for the Egyptians sold every man his field, because the famine was sore upon them; and the land became Pharaoh's.</p>
<p>כא וְאֶת-הָעָם--הֵעֲבִיר אֹתוֹ, לְעָרִים: מִקְצֵה גְבוּל-מִצְרַיִם, וְעַד-קְצֵהוּ.</p>	<p>21 And as for the people, <u>he removed them</u> city by city, from one end of the border of Egypt even to the other end thereof.</p>
<p>כב רַק אֲדַמְתַּת הַכֹּהֲנִים, לֹא קִנְיָה: כִּי חָק לַכֹּהֲנִים מֵאֵת פְּרָעָה, וְאָכְלוּ אֶת-חֲקֵם אֲשֶׁר נָתַן לָהֶם פְּרָעָה--עַל-כֵּן, לֹא מָכְרוּ אֶת-אֲדַמְתָּם.</p>	<p>22 <u>Only the land of the priests bought he not</u>, for the priests had a portion from Pharaoh, and did eat their portion which Pharaoh gave them; wherefore they sold not their land. (Note: Joseph was known as both a Royal (at birth) and of a priestly family (at marriage).</p>

<p>כג וַיֹּאמֶר יוֹסֵף אֶל-הָעָם, הֲוֹ קִנִּיתִי אֶתְכֶם הַיּוֹם וְאֶת-אֲדָמַתְכֶם לַפְּרָעָה; הֲאֵלֶיכֶם זֶרַע, וְהִרְעַתֶּם אֶת-הָאֲדָמָה.</p>	<p>23 Then Joseph said <u>unto the people</u>: 'Behold, I have bought you <u>this day and your land</u> for Pharaoh. Lo, here is seed for you, and ye shall sow the land. <i>(Note: I am wondering if he was referring here to himself)</i></p>
--	--

When we meet a new Pharaoh in Exodus Chapter **1:8** and we see that the Torah says that he knew not Joseph -- it would be a misnomer if we were to understand that he has forgotten Joseph. That understanding would have been virtually impossible, especially given the records we know the Egyptians to have kept, not even to mention the proximity in time between Joseph and this Pharaoh.

Instead here we can understand his words as purposeful -- in other words, he has purposely chosen not to know nor recognize Joseph. His words are reflective of an Egyptian leadership that considers the People of Israel not only a *fifth column*, but a people whom he fears will take over the country (as they have before) and rise up (again) to subjugate the Egyptian people. He chooses to single out all of the Israelites for oppression as a way in which to both distance them and ultimately to eliminate them.

Exodus 1:8

<p>ח וַיִּקַּם מֶלֶךְ-חָדָשׁ, עַל-מִצְרַיִם, אֲשֶׁר לֹא-יָדַע, אֶת-יוֹסֵף.</p>	<p>Ex 1:8 Now there arose a new king over Egypt, <u>who knew not</u> Joseph.</p>
<p>ט וַיֹּאמֶר, אֶל-עַמּוֹ: הֲנֵה, עִם בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל--רַב וְעָצוּם, מִמֶּנּוּ.</p>	<p>9 And he said unto his people: 'Behold, the people of the children of Israel are too many and too mighty for us;</p>
<p>י הֲבֵה נִתְחַכְמָה, לוֹ: פְּו־יִרְבֶּה, וְהָיָה כִּי-תִקְרָאנָה מִלְחָמָה וְנוֹסֵף גַּם-הוּא עַל-שְׂנְאֵינוּ, וְנִלְחַם-בָּנוּ, וְעָלָה מִן-הָאָרֶץ.</p>	<p>10 come, let us deal wisely with them, lest they multiply, and it come to pass, that, when there befalleth us any war, <u>they also join themselves unto our enemies, and fight against us, and get them up out of the land.</u>'</p>
<p>יא וַיִּשְׂמְנוּ עָלֵיו שָׂרֵי מַסִּים, לְמַעַן עֲנֹתוֹ בְּסִבְלָתָם; וַיִּבְנוּ עָרֵי מִסְכְּנוֹת, לַפְּרָעָה--אֶת-רַעַמְסֵס.</p>	<p>11 Therefore they did set over them taskmasters to afflict them with their burdens. And they built for Pharaoh store-cities, Pithom and Raamses.</p>
<p>יב וְכַאֲשֶׁר יַעֲנֶנּוּ אֹתוֹ, כֵּן יִרְבֶּה וְכֵן יִפְרֹץ; וַיִּקְצוּ, מִפְּנֵי בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל.</p>	<p>12 But the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and the more they spread abroad. And they were adread because of the children of Israel.</p>
<p>יג וַיַּעֲבֹדוּ מִצְרַיִם אֶת-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, בְּכֹפֶר.</p>	<p>13 And the Egyptians made the children of Israel to serve with <u>rigour</u>.</p>
<p>יד וַיַּמְרֹרוּ אֶת-חַיֵּיהֶם בְּעִבְדָּה קָשָׁה, בְּחֹמֶר וּבִלְבָנִים, וּבְכָל-עִבְדָּה, בַּשָּׂדֶה--אֶת, כָּל-עִבְדֹתָם, אֲשֶׁר-עָבְדוּ בָהֶם, בְּכֹפֶר.</p>	<p>14 And they made their lives bitter with hard service, in mortar and in brick, and in all manner of service in the field; in all their service, wherein they made them serve with rigour.</p>

Not to complicate matters, but the boy babies of the Israelites are now to be thrown into the Nile . . . and yet there is one mother in particular, from the Levite tribe (i.e. the *Priests* of their time) who decides that she cannot do this.

<p>טו ויאמר מלך מצרים, למילדת העברית, אשר שם האחת שפרה, ושם השנית פועה.</p>	<p>15 And the king of Egypt spoke to the Hebrew midwives, of whom the name of the one was Shiphrah, and the name of the other Puah;</p>
<p>טז ויאמר, בילדכן את-העבריות, וראיתן, על-האבנים: אם-בן הוא והמתן אותו, ואם-בת הוא וחייה.</p>	<p>16 and he said: 'When ye do the office of a midwife to the Hebrew women, ye shall look upon the birthstool: if it be a son, then ye shall kill him; but if it be a daughter, then she shall live.'</p>

And this Levite mother prepares a basket in which to save her infant son Moses, who in turn will (in a foreshadowing like way, save Israel, who in turn will destroy the Egyptian regime (i.e. as an understanding of the 10th plague of the Egyptian kingship/royal house as a 'First born' -- in many ways representing the powerful symbolic motif of Egypt harkening all the way back to Ishmael as the first born, and here that would be Ishmael, as the progenitor of the Egyptian peoples).

Compare . . .

<p>י ויגדל הילד, ותבאהו לבת-פרעה, ויהי-לה, לבן; ותקרא שמו, משה, ותאמר, כי מן-המים משיתוהו.</p>	<p>10 And the child grew, and she brought him unto Pharaoh's daughter, and he became her son. And she called his name Moses, and (the Princess) said: 'Because I drew him out of the water.'</p>
--	--

Let's remember that Moses grows up in the halls of the palace as a royal and as an Egyptian. And even though he is weaned by his Israelite mother, still however he is raised by his Egyptian Princess mother. When he goes out among the people, sees an Egyptian strike an Israelite, kills the Egyptian and buries him in the sand. One could say, this is not too unlike his own identity - buried somewhere -- wherever that may be at that particular moment in time.

The following day he also wanders outside of the palace compound and sees two Israelites quarreling. When he attempts to break them up, one of the Israelites then speaks up in such a way that we can better see Moses' real identity begin to emerge . . . or perhaps we should say instead, withdraw inwards . . .

<p>יד ויאמר מי שמך לאיש שר ושפט, עלינו-- הלהרגני אתה אמר, באשר הרגת את-המצרי; ויירא משה ויאמר, אכן נודע הדבר.</p>	<p>14 And he said: 'Who made thee a ruler and a judge over us? thinkest thou to kill me, as thou didst kill the Egyptian?' And Moses feared, and said: 'Surely the thing is known.'</p>
---	---

I suspect that his anguish is equally held by many Israelites in that they have only known Egypt and cannot fathom how they could have been betrayed by the Egyptians who they were such an integral part of. This is somewhat reminiscent of Germany's Jews well into the 1930's and significantly beyond a time that neither their 'good-German' merits nor the Iron Crosses they were awarded in the First War were of use any longer and significantly, no longer of any comfort to them. As the new Pharaoh had spoken so too would the Fuhrer speak one day as well.

We will explore this duo identity not only of Joseph, but of Moses and equally of the Egyptian Israelite nation, living at home in a land not theirs as an exilic people suffering in slavery and not willing to pick themselves up and go home.

If there were ever a reason for plagues, this would be the time, but not as plagues to punish the Egyptians, but instead as plagues to 'educate' the Israelites that this was not their home and the Pharaoh was not their Gd and they, most importantly, were Israelites, not Egyptians.

Note: Gd of Israel, People of Israel, Land of Israel.

The Israelites were out of place on all three and they didn;t know it, yet.

Moses had to return to a land he had originally fled from, an Egyptian father who sought to kill him, and to a people who didn't know him, at least as one of theirs.

<p>י ועתה לכה, ואשלחך אל-פרעה; והוצא את-עמי בני-ישראל, ממצרים.</p>	<p>10 Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth My people the children of Israel out of Egypt.'</p>
<p>יא ויאמר משה, אל-ה'אלהים, מי אנכי, כי אלך אל-פרעה; וכי אוציא את-בני ישראל, ממצרים.</p>	<p>11 And Moses said unto God: 'Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?'</p>

He was sent back from the presence of a father-in-law whom he loved, and who in turn doubted his mission, to a father figure (Gd) who sought to kill him along the way "in" (albeit as a foreshadowing) due to his own children not being circumcised, and as of yet not protected by the blood resulting from an ad hoc circumcision performed by the daughter (*Tzipporah*) of the very Midianite Priest who had so openly doubted the (Moses') mission. All of this served as an intentionally connected parallel to the 10th plague, which not coincidentally also happens in the midst of the night and at a time in which those who survived a visit by an agent of Gd, were only able to do so because their door-frames were painted with a protective blood. The very same as Moses was to experience on his way 'back in.'

Much to discuss . . .