

PASSOVER

פֶּסַח

Text Study: The Seeds of Oppression

What motivates Pharaoh to enslave the Israelites?

Torah: Exodus 1:8-14

I. A new king arose over Egypt who did not know Joseph. And he said to his people, "Look, the Israelite people are much too numerous for us. 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 ground."

>> Does an increasingly large minority population ever instill fear in the majority population? When?

II. So they set taskmasters over them to oppress them with forced labor; and they built garrison cities for Pharaoh: Pithom and Raamses. But the more they were oppressed, the more they increased and spread out, so that the [Egyptians] came to dread the Israelites.

>> How is it possible that a new Pharaoh wouldn't know about Joseph, the royal vizier who saved Egypt a few generations earlier?

>> What is the root concern Pharaoh expresses to the Egyptians?



III. The Egyptians ruthlessly imposed upon the Israelites the various labors that they made them perform. Ruthlessly they made life bitter for them with harsh labor at mortar and bricks and with all sorts of tasks in the field.

>> The verses say 'the Egyptians' enslaved the Israelites, not an individual Pharaoh. What responsibility did ordinary Egyptians have in the Israelite oppression?

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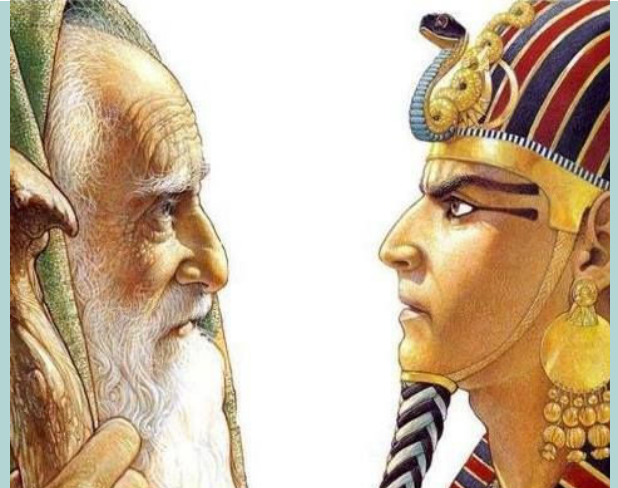
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בית כנסת בית אל

A diverse collection of thoughts on **oppression**



"Freedom is never voluntarily given by the oppressor; it must be demanded by the oppressed."

- **Martin Luther King, Jr.**



1. "If Tyranny and Oppression come to this land, it will be in the guise of fighting a foreign enemy."

- *James Madison*

2. "To hold a people in oppression you have to convince them first that they are supposed to be oppressed."

- *John Henrik Clarke*

3. "People need hard times and oppression to develop psychic muscles."

- *Emily Dickinson*



4. "It is often easier to become outraged by injustice half a world away than by oppression and discrimination half a block from home."

- *Carl T. Rowan*

5. "When a system of oppression has become institutionalized it is unnecessary for individuals to be oppressive."

- *Florynce Kennedy*



6. "Homophobia, racism, and sexism are all rooted in the same oppression that causes a group of people to internalize the oppression they've experienced and then continue the cycle of abuse. Simply put, hurt people hurt people."

- *Karamo Brown*

7. "Freedom is not won by merely overthrowing a tyrannical ruler or an oppressive regime. That is usually only the prelude to a new tyranny, a new oppression."

- *Rabbi Jonathan Sacks*

8. "Freedom is never voluntarily given by the oppressor; it must be demanded by the oppressed."

- *Martin Luther King, Jr.*

9. "The most odious of all oppressions are those which mask as justice."

- *Robert H. Jackson*

10. "[The Passover story should be told in a way that] begins with degradation but ends in praise."

- *Talmud (Pesachim 10:4)*

1. Which three quotes do you most agree with? Why?

2. Do you disagree with any of these? Which?

3. What does oppression look like in 2023?

4. Who in our world are not yet liberated?

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