

Shemot 5772

BS"D Shemot 5772

Plans for the enslavement of the Jewish people began formulating when Paro convened his inner cabinet to discuss the legality, legitimacy and morality of subjugating the family of the man who literally saved the Egyptian nation. The inner cabinet consisted of three wise and experienced men, on whose judgement Paro had previously relied for major decisions of state. They were Bila'am who was later called upon by Balak to curse the Jewish people; Iyov (Job) known for the extreme suffering he had to endure; and Yitro, later to be Moshe Rabbeinu's father-in-law.

The Gemara (Sanhedrin 106b) relates that Paro put before that august group his suggestion (Shemot 1:10)



Let us deceive them into being our slaves

Bilaa'm agreed; Iyov was noncommittal and Yitro fled to Midyan.

This is how the episode unfolds according to the texts of the Torah and Gemara; but we are not told the "behind the scenes" deliberations, conflicts and ramifications. What happened to make Paro wake up one morning and suggest enslaving the entire Jewish people? (It could not have been irrational anti-Semitism because Christianity and Islam were not yet even thoughts in anyone's mind).

The answer lies in the widespread, critical social upheavals of the time, as described in parashat Vayiegash. The Torah relates that the famine that befell Egypt required the citizens of the land to purchase food from Paro until all their money was spent. The following year they again purchased

food, this time by paying Paro with all their livestock. The third year, when the people no longer had anything of value with which to buy food, they offered Paro their land and their very bodies in return for food. In this way, Paro, through his viceroy Yosef, became the master of everything. All Egypt was now his personal fiefdom, and all its people his personal slaves. Except for one group – the family of Yosef, who remained free men.

Paro now faced a critical situation, bordering on the immoral, where the indigenous citizens of the land were all slaves, whereas these great numbers of foreigners were free men, able to advance their economic interests, social standing and influence in state matters.

Paro convened his trusted cabinet and put before them his plan of how to redress this unsustainable social, economic and political dilemma.

The evil Bila'am, in the name of social equality and political tranquility, put forth his view that the proper way was to also enslave the Jews, so that all people would be equal – slaves.

He was evil because he could have suggested to Paro to free everyone and thus achieve his goal of social equality; but he chose the way of evil to subjugate everyone, and was eventually killed by the Jews in the desert.

Iyov could not decide what to suggest and kept silent; he was later punished with his proverbial sufferings.

Yitro wanted to oppose Paro's plan, but to do so would have been tantamount to deciding his own death sentence. So he fled to Midyan, thereby letting it be known that he opposed the first and original "final solution" to the Jewish problem, and that no one could alter Paro's determination to enslave the Jewish people.

Paro was indeed evil, but in the name of truthful objectivity, one must agree that the Jews themselves could not “wash their hands in innocence”.

While the Egyptian citizens were barely able to eke out a living, and the official unemployment figures stood at 9% when realistically it was over 20%, the free and wealthy Jews were constructing ever larger and regal homes. They traded in their Lexuses every two years, after returning from vacation at the Alexandria Hilton or the Luxor Waldorf Astoria. The “yiddishe mamas” wore silks imported from the east by way of the Silk Road, and their perfumes were imported from India. The grandchildren of Ya’akov spoke Egyptian interspersed with Hebrew, so the Egyptian goy should not know what deals were being made in the market place.

Social unrest was growing among the rank and file of the indigenous Egyptian population. It was an unsustainable situation in which the Egyptian was a slave but the Hebrew was a free and wealthy man.

Social unrest was bubbling like a caldron among the farmers and merchants of the former Egyptian middle class, and news of the unrest came to Paro’s attention. Everyone was aware of the tsunami tidal wave of hatred that was building up in the temples and cafes, in the market places, and along the streets and alleyways of the land. Whenever a Jew would pass, one could discern whispering behind his back by the Egyptians and looks of scorn at the narcissistic manner of the Jew’s presence.

Everyone was aware of the pending tidal wave. Everyone, that is, except the Jews themselves. The homes, the wealth, the social superiority, the cocktail parties, the bar-mitzvas and weddings where the cost of the flowers could support ten Egyptian families for a year. The ostentatious lifestyle where money was never an issue. Their spiritual advisors who were paid handsomely for dropping bits of tradition which were

passed on to them from Ya'akov and his twelve sons. There was never a call to return to the land of their forefathers, even when many of the Jews began adopting the mannerisms and beliefs of the Egyptians, until the point when, according to the Midrash, the angels questioned Ha'shem's choice to save the Jews at the Red Sea at the expense of the Egyptians, by pointing out that both had worshipped idolatry.

The situation became so chaotic that Paro had no choice but to convene his inner cabinet and enslave the Jews in order to prevent social and political unrest, and by then it was too late for the Jews to escape to Eretz Yisrael.

Fast forward 3000+ years to today. The social unrest, unemployment, animosity towards those who "have," and the ostentatious lifestyle of very many Jews – it's all there today in the US. As King Shlomo says in Kohelet, "There is nothing new under the sun".

But it is still not too late for the Jews of America to escape. The clock on the wall is ticking ever faster, and when the guillotine of history begins to fall, no one will be able to alter the outcome.

Things are going to change drastically beginning in November. If Hussein Obama will be re-elected, they will come about quickly and dramatically; if another candidate will be elected the downhill change will come about but a bit less quickly.

The parasha (1:8) relates:

 *And a new king arose who did not know Yosef*

Rashi explains, that the new Paro acted as if he did not know what Yosef the Jew had done for his people. So take heed; act now and come home before all the opportunities will be closed.

Shabbat Shalom

Nachman Kahana

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