
A new king arose

Rabbi Alon Meltzer

A New Page of Talmud

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Shemot 5782



A new king arose over Egypt who did not know Joseph. – **Shemot 1:8**¹ Rab and Samuel (two Amoraim or Talmudical teachers) differed in their interpretation of these words. One said that he was really a new king; the other said that it was the same king but he made new edicts. He comported himself as though he did not know him **Rashi on Shemot 1:8**² Some commentators, citing the fact that the death of the previous king has not been reported, claim that the Torah speaks about the same King (body), but that his attitude vis a vis the Israelites underwent such a change that he might as well have been a different king altogether.– **Chizkuni on Shemot 1:8**³ This means that he pretended not to know Joseph. (Ib., ib. 9) And he said unto his people, behold the people of the children of Israel are more numerous and mightier than we. We are taught that the king himself started to find ways of destroying Israel as it is said and he said unto his people; therefore was he also smitten first – **Ein Yaakov on Sotah 1:34**⁴ A long time after that, the king of Egypt died. The Israelites were groaning under the bondage and cried out; and their cry for help from the bondage rose up to God. – **Shemot 2:23**⁵ The Be'er Yosef explains that Pharaoh's objective was to subjugate, enslave and torture the Jewish people. However, the problem with his plan was the positive feelings of his nation towards Yosef's family and descendants. After all, Yosef had saved the Egyptians from

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starvation. Therefore, Pharaoh's first step was to uproot the laws which Yosef had established. During the years of famine, Yosef had sold food to the Egyptians. As they ran out of money and then all their possessions that they could use to purchase food, Yosef had compelled the Egyptians to sell themselves as slaves to Pharaoh. Additionally, he had forced them to uproot themselves and relocate to different parts of the land, to show that they did not own the land as all the land was owned by Pharaoh. The only people to whom this law did not apply were Bnei Yisrael who lived in Goshen. Thus, the native Egyptians had become strangers and the Jewish strangers had become natives. This was part of Yosef's plan to allow his family to settle in Goshen, undisturbed by the Egyptians. Pharaoh now incited his nation against the children of Israel, telling the Egyptians that Yosef's intentions had been purely for his own benefit and that of his family. Pharaoh therefore "renewed" the law by making Bnei Yisrael the slaves instead of the Egyptians. The law was not new. it was renewed and reversed. The Egyptians became free and could own land, whilst Bnei Yisrael became slaves. – **Darren Lauber quoting Beer Yosef**⁶

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