

Passover

Ancient nations were able to fabricate foundation myths out of whole cloth. There were no historical documents to contradict even their wildest fantasies. In distinction, newer nations are limited to embellishing and mythologizing their known historical development. Nevertheless, in both cases, commonly held myths serve a purpose. They give each believer a piece of self-image that can be recognized in compatriots. Creation myths make believers feel related, as though they came from the same place, even if they have never met. By making family out of strangers, national myths grease the wheels of cooperation in pursuit of national objectives.

When ancient nations stop believing their own creation myths, like modern Greeks in reference to Zeus, we cannot gain much insight into their contemporary self-image by examining those myths. The same is true for people who have renounced previously revered components of mythologized history. For example, when I was a boy my companions and I believed that cowboys were very good Americans who were at their very best when they were killing American Indians. When playing Cowboys & Indians, we took turns being Cowboys because nobody wanted to be an Indian -- not just because Indians were slated to lose deadly battles, but because they were the bad guys. In that sense, it was just like playing Cops & Robbers.

Back then, we did not have a sense that we were the descendants of the robbers. So, although one could learn a great deal about 1950's America by examining 1950's myths, one cannot learn as much about 21st Century America by investigating myths that were rejected forty years ago. Conversely, we can gain valuable insight into current cultures by examining their retained myths, even ancient whole-cloth myths, to the extent that those myths are still revered. The purpose of this essay is to look at the original Passover myth in order to gain insight into its believers' purposes.

The story of Jewish slavery in ancient Egypt has probably served more purposes more effectively than any other partially believed foundation myth in history. Every time the *Jerusalem Post* or *Haaretz* publishes a weekend magazine piece written by one of Israel's most prominent archaeologists, explaining that the story of Israelite enslavement in Egypt was a whole-cloth fabrication, a flood of outrage pours over the editor's desk. Some letter-to-the-editor writers even draw analogies to Holocaust denial. Why such a powerful response? Primarily because the myth still serves a variety of purposes.

The fact that the Passover myth, or any accepted myth, has no historical validity makes it all the more revealing. It means that the myth is unencumbered by facts that do not suite its purpose. It also means that the extent to which the myth has been effective is the extent to which it has been retrospectively considered prophetic, and thereby validated — a self-fulfilling prophecy perceived as a prophecy fulfilled.

The long history of Jewish influence in Diaspora host nations began with Joseph. According to the Bible, in exchange for a long range weather forecast and some important advice (Exodus 41:25-36), this son of Jacob (aka Israel) was given control of Egypt (Genesis 41:40-41):

"You shall be over my house, and all my people shall order themselves as you command; only as regards the throne will I be greater than you." And Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Behold, I have set you over all the land of Egypt."

The job came with substantial benefits and considerable status (Genesis 41:42-44):

Pharaoh took his signet ring from his hand and put it on Joseph's hand, and arrayed him in garments of fine linen, and put a gold chain about his neck; and he made him to ride in his second chariot; and they cried before him, "Bow the knee!" Thus Pharaoh set Joseph over all the land of Egypt. Moreover Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I am Pharaoh, and without your consent no man shall lift up hand or foot in all the land of Egypt."

Joseph was made the executor of his own recommendation to "take the fifth part of the produce of the land" (Genesis 41:34). Harvests were so good for the first seven years of his rule that Joseph was able to stockpile purloined "grain in great abundance, like the sand of the sea, until he ceased to measure it, for it could not be measured" (Genesis 41:49). Then came seven years of drought, and . . . (Genesis 41:55-56):

When all the land of Egypt was famished, the people cried to Pharaoh for bread; and Pharaoh said to all the Egyptians, "Go to Joseph; what he says to you, do." So when the famine had spread over all the land, Joseph opened all the storehouses, and sold to the Egyptians, for the famine was severe in the land of Egypt.

As always, control of wealth lead to control of more wealth (Genesis 47:14-17):

And Joseph gathered up all the money that was found in the land of Egypt, for the grain which they bought; and Joseph brought the money into Pharaoh's house. And when the money was all spent in the land of Egypt, all the Egyptians came to Joseph, and said, "Give us food; why should we die before your eyes? For our money is gone." And Joseph answered, "Give your cattle, and I will give you food in exchange for your cattle, if your money is gone." So they brought their cattle to Joseph; and Joseph gave them food in exchange for the horses, the flocks, the herds, and the asses: and he supplied them with food in exchange for all their cattle that year.

Now Joseph controlled all of the money, all of the cattle, and all of the grain. What was left? Everybody knows the story about the Jews being slaves in Egypt, but that only happened, according to the Bible, after Joseph made slaves of the Egyptians (Genesis 47:18-21):

They said to him, "We will not hide from my lord that our money is all spent; and the herds of cattle are my lord's; there is nothing left in the sight of my lord but our bodies and our lands. Why should we die before your eyes, both we and our land? Buy us and our land for food, and we with our land will be slaves to Pharaoh" . . . So Joseph bought all the land of Egypt for Pharaoh; for all the Egyptians sold their fields, because the famine was severe upon them. The land became Pharaoh's; and as for the people, he made slaves of them from one end of Egypt to the other.

After arranging the enslavement of the Pharaoh's subjects, Joseph invited his family to join him. The Pharaoh was most obliging (Genesis 45:18; 47:6):

"Take your father and your households, and come to me, and I will give you the best of the land of Egypt, and you shall eat the fat of the land . . . The land of Egypt is before you; settle your father and your brothers in the best of the land."

So began a sequence of events that presaged developments in the real history of several Diaspora host nations. As if foretelling two thousand years of reactive racism, a new Pharaoh realized that he was in danger of becoming the tool of his predecessor's tool (Genesis 47:27; Exodus 1:7-10):

Israel dwelt in the land of Egypt and they gained possessions in it, and were fruitful . . . and grew exceedingly strong; Now there arose a new Pharaoh over Egypt, who did not know Joseph. And he said to his people, "Behold, the people of Israel are too many and too mighty for us. Come, let us deal shrewdly with them, lest they multiply, and, if war befall us, they join our enemies and fight against us."

Now the story becomes more familiar. The Pharaoh subjugated the Jews and oppressed them even more than his Egyptian subjects. And when the Jews' new leader, Moses, tried to trick the Pharaoh into letting his people take a three day leave of absence with most of the nation's wealth in tow (Exodus 3:18-22; 5:3), the Pharaoh said *no*. Then the god of the story, the god of the Jews, sent horrible plagues to torture the Egyptians and the Pharaoh himself.

At several points the Pharaoh tried to make an accommodation with Moses, asking him to leave some wealth behind, but each time Moses refused (Exodus 8:25-28; 10:7-11, 24-26). And each time the god of the story "hardened" the Pharaoh's otherwise amenable heart so that he, the god of Moses, would be able to show more of his power (Exodus 10:1-2):

Then the Lord said to Moses, "Go to Pharaoh; for I have hardened his heart and the heart of his officials, in order that I may show these signs and wonders of mine among them, and that you may tell your children and grandchildren how I have made sport of the Egyptians and what signs and wonders I have done among them -- so that you may know that I am the Lord"

Finally, we come to the *coup de grace* which had been devised by Moses and his god (Exodus 3:21-22 & 4:21-23) from the beginning (Exodus 12:29-33, 35, 36):

At midnight the Lord smote all the first-born in the land of Egypt, from the first-born of Pharaoh who sat on his throne to the first-born of the captive who was in the dungeon And Pharaoh rose up in the night, he, and all his servants, and all the Egyptians; and there was a great cry in Egypt, for there was not a house where one was not dead. And he summoned Moses and Aaron by night, and said, "Rise up, go forth from among my people, both you and the people of Israel; and go, serve the Lord, as you have said. Take your flocks and your herds, as you have said, and be gone" And the Egyptians were urgent with the people, to send them out of the land in haste; for they said, "We are all dead men" The people of Israel had also done as Moses told them, for they had asked of the Egyptians jewellery of silver and of gold, and clothing; and the Lord had given the people favour in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they let them have what they asked. Thus they despoiled the Egyptians.

According to the myth, Jacob's family left Canaan to escape a famine. They arrived in Egypt as impoverished and bedraggled guests of the Pharaoh (Genesis 47:26-27). Several generations later they left Egypt with a standing army of "six hundred and three thousand five hundred and fifty* every man able to go forth to war" (Numbers 1:45-46). Logistical support included "very many cattle, both flocks and herds" (Exodus 12:38), and having gained the trust of their Egyptian neighbours, financing included several thousand kilograms of "borrowed" gold and silver (Exodus 38:24-25**).

The Israelites were able to leave Egypt with so much wealth and power because their god "passed over" his people's houses when he killed all Egyptian firstborn children (Exodus 12:27). To this day, as instructed (Exodus 12:11-14), Judaism celebrates these fabled events as Passover.

Can you imagine the outrage that would be rightfully felt today — rightfully felt but eventually elicited, solicited, embellished, organized, manipulated, and incessantly propagandized to promote Zionist objectives through books, newspapers, magazines, radio, television, film, show-trial litigation and tax-payer supported museums — if some group of eighteen to twenty million people annually celebrated a tale of the killing of all firstborn Jewish children as a "sport" of their god?

Just as today's Palestinians are forced to pay for what yesterday's Germans did to yesterday's Jews, the express purpose of the Exodus was to take "great and goodly cities, which you did not build, and houses full of all good things, which you did not fill, and cisterns hewn out, which you did not hew, and vineyards and olive trees, which you did not plant" (Deuteronomy 6:10-11) — not from people who were portrayed as the Israelites' victims-turned-oppressors, not from the Pharaoh and his legions — but from an entirely separate people who lived in a land that the Israelites wanted for themselves.

Above all else, to insure that the god who was the source of their solidarity would not face competition from the gods of the people that they instructed themselves to conquer, the myth's authors commanded the Israelites to commit multiple genocide:

In the cities of these peoples that the Lord your God gives you for an inheritance you shall save alive nothing that breathes, but you shall utterly destroy them, the Hittites and the Amorites, the Canaanites and the Perizzites, the Hivites and the Jebusites, as the Lord your God has commanded (Deuteronomy 20:16-17).

They should be utterly destroyed and should receive no mercy but be exterminated, as the Lord commanded Moses . . . Utterly destroy all that they have; do not spare them, but kill both man and woman, infant and suckling (Joshua 11:20 . . . First Samuel 15:3).

You will make them as a blazing oven when you appear. The Lord will swallow them up in his wrath; and fire will consume them. You will destroy their offspring from the earth, and their children from among the sons of men (Psalms 21:9-10).***

Ultimately, because adults are responsible for the myths that they believe, we bear more responsibility for behaviour that is inspired by our myths than we bear for behaviour that is a response to actual history. For those who accept the premise that gods are inventions of people, as distinct from people being inventions of gods, it follows that people who revere a god who delighted in the death of non-believers' children and commanded his followers to commit multiple genocide in order to steal a particular tract of land, have no right to set foot on that land.

As such, on the basis of the principle that a man's right to swing his fists wildly around in the air stops at the tip of any other person's nose, people who worship the god that Jesus prayed to have a right to live anywhere in the world except in the land they designate as Israel.

* Approximately the size of today's Israeli Defense Forces, including Reservists:
([www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/israel/army .htm](http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/israel/army.htm))

** There were two sets of sacred weights. A sacred talent equalled either 48 or 33 kilograms and a shekel equalled either 16 or 10.8 grams.

*** For additional examples of the commandment to kill non-co-religionists and boasts of having done so, see: Numbers 21:2-3; 21:34-35; 24:8; 24:19-20; Deuteronomy 2:34; 3:2-6; 3:21; 7:1-2; 7:16; 7:23-24; 9:3; 11:24-25; 31:3-5; 33:27; Joshua 2:10; 6:21; 8:2; 8:24-26; 10:1; 10:28; 10:35; 10:37; 10:39-40; 11:11-14; 11:21; Judges 1:17; 3:29; First Samuel 15:8; 15:15; 15:18; 15:20; First Chronicles 4:41).