Twitter Thread by Joshua Cypess

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1/ OK a few more #Exodus thoughts (because I'm going through a mountain of parsha stuff amidst all my other writing) connected to the #DvarTorah here about the nameless collective-compassionate action of the multitude being the engine of the salvation.

> 1/ Another observation the #Literalist fallacy I see about how much Trump (ym'sh) has planned all of the chaos & violence. My overarching point will be that society is structured & that means there's an inherent pattern to effects no matter the 'intelligence' behind the causes
>
> — Joshua Cypess (@JoshuaCypess) January 12, 2021

2/ It struck me to link to another conundrum (kinda like the large plague frog in the room): how Pharaoh has his free will removed

So, the nameless action could be a purposeful contrast to the singular powerful individual who normally is history's focus.
https://t.co/PYOeJ29P1A

3/ IMO God manipulates Pharaoh in order to prevent one person making too much of a difference!

This ties into another larger point I often make about the culpability of the Egyptians & how actually they, not Pharaoh, are the focus of the plagues.

4/ My point contrasts how the Egyptians - who were responsible for being enslavers, for dehumanizing & stealing the labor of Israelites up to the point of joining in the Pharaoh command of infanticide (see 2:22)
https://t.co/k2pvbSiVgu

5/ These individuals needed to make their choices without coercion from the autocrat, hence Pharaoh lost 'free will' in his capacity as someone who can move the engines of political power.

He lost free will in order to preserve the free will & action of his subjects

6/ The same subjects who enjoyed free/stolen labor. The same who joined in killing children b/c it served their xenophobic goals (see 1:10, the numerous Israelites will replace them?) These people needed to learn their own lesson or else face punishment

https://t.co/nZNogJc0RM

7/ This is the crucial point of Ex. 9:20-21:

Those among Pharaoh’s courtiers who feared the LORD’s word brought their slaves & livestock indoors to safety; but those who paid no regard to the word of the LORD left their slaves and livestock in the open

https://t.co/DPT4OYUaJw

8/ This is also why I praise the Mixed Multitude, the Eruv Rav, b/c in my mind they were the point of the plagues. I see them as righteous gentiles who became Jews by Choice, and while good in itself, by contrast they damn those who refused God's warnings
https://t.co/jdAhRp9Jzd

9/ I've written elsewhere that the Righteous Gentiles of the Shoah are an overlooked part of the 'lessons' we're to learn: that it was possible to resist.

[Although, see this thread for a very sharp critique of the universalizing of the Shoah] https://t.co/B3d5Oe6z0h

> Universalizing the Holocaust gives the impression that genocide is just something that randomly happens to random groups of people from time to time. But it was not by happenstance that the Nazis landed upon the Jewish, Sinti, and Roma peoples as targets for extermination. (2/x)
>
> — Josh Kaufman (@HeyHeyJoshK) January 11, 2021

10/ BTW, the Eruv-Rav needed to convert for technical reasons (it's how anyone could survive plague #10, also how some Israelites may not have survived, if they didn't bring a korban-Pesach, no distinguishing doorpost).

Otherwise, righteous gentiles are a world l'chatchila.

11/ My kids know how to press one of my shiny buttons, which are the bigoted divrei Torah about the Eruv-Rav being responsible for every sin in the desert.

I won't get into it now but that idea is so crazy wrong I can't stand it.
https://t.co/SkrUsJkPLL

> 1/ My kids know my pet-peeves and, thank God, are compassionate people who won't bring things up just to see me angry (outside of the standard parent-child education process). I describe these triggers as 'big red shiny buttons' based on ancient literature: pic.twitter.com/U9EmuvtgvR
>
> — Joshua Cypess (@JoshuaCypess) December 21, 2020

12/ In sum: the free-will problem of Pharaoh is linked to the need for nameless, collective action of the nations: Israelites to keep faith in God's covenant with Avraham, which ipso facto means being compassionate, in contrast to the super-Sedom, Egypt https://t.co/Wa05zGYKZs

13/ Avraham's people needed to practice nameless compassion while the Egyptians - who acted as unhospitable, cruel, and greedy as Sedom - needed to either repent & follow God, or be punished with plagues

This required removing from history the single powerful man like Pharaoh

14/ This ties together the earlier dvar Torah (see 1st post) of nameless collective action with the question of Pharaoh's lost free will along with the moral question of how the plagues could've been an unjust collective punishment https://t.co/mtT4VrDwci

15/ The plagues are justified when we see that Pharaoh's commands could have been resisted (like we see with Bat-Paro and Shifra & Puah, who I insist were Egyptian) and this highlights the culpability of the society that maintained slavery and murder.

16/ OK, maybe I can turn my attention to my other work now. Whew. #DvarTorah #Parsha #Vaera #Exodus

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@threader_app please compile.