



Jewish Congregation of Marco Island

A CLOSE LOOK AT TORAH

Focus on a question in the weekly portion

December 27, 2025



“Fostering diverse modes of attention to textual details cultivates correlative forms of attention to the world and divine reality”

Michael Fishbane (1943-), *Sacred Attunement: A Jewish Theology*

ברוך אתה ייִהוּ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
אָשֶׁר קָדְשָׁנוּ בְמִצְוֹתָיו, וַצְנָנוּ לַעֲסֹק בְדִבְרֵי תּוֹרָה :

“Tachometer Torah”



...read down to the red line

Parashat-haShavu'a Stats

Weekly Portion: vaYigash

Consists of: Genesis 44:18-47:27

Sequence—

in annual Torah cycle: 11th of 54

in Genesis: 11th of 12



A Salient Selection from the Portion -

Genesis 46:29-34

Context: *Genesis, first of the Five Books of the Torah, is an outline of the Creation of the physical universe; a description of the origin of the human family by their respective nations; and an account of Abraham's and Sarah's lineage through their grandson Jacob as the foundation of the Israelite people.*

Content: *Having revealed himself to his brothers at last, Joseph informs them that the seven-year famine has only begun. He urges them to relocate their families and their father from Canaan to Egypt, where he can provide for them all. Having secured the requisite permission from Pharaoh, he rides out to the frontier to greet them on their arrival... and to brief them for what will be happening next.*

46:29] - Joseph harnessed up his chariot, and went up towards his father Israel into Goshen. Upon beholding him, he fell on his shoulders and wept copiously on his neck. [46:30] - To which Israel told Joseph: “Now I can die, having beheld your face again, and knowing that you are still alive!”

46:31] - Joseph informed his brothers, and their households, “I am going to go up and report to Pharaoh. I will tell him: ‘my brothers and my father’s household, who are from the land of Canaan, have come to me here.

וַיִּאָסֶר יוֹסֵף מִרְכַּבְתּוֹ וַיַּעַל לִקְרָאת
יִשְׂרָאֵל אָבִיו גָּשָׁנָה וַיַּרְא אָלֵינוּ
וַיַּפְלֵל עַל צְוֹאָרִיו וַיַּבְךְ עַל צְוֹאָרִיו
עוֹד וַיֹּאמֶר יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶל יוֹסֵף
אָמֹתָתָה הַפָּעָם אַחֲרֵי רָאוֹתִי אֶת
פְּנֵיךְ כִּי עָזָז חִי

וַיֹּאמֶר יוֹסֵף אֶל אָחִיו וְאֶל בֵּית
אָבִיו אֲעַלְהָ וְאֲגִידָה לְפָרֻעָה
וְאִמְרָה אָלֵינוּ אֲחִי וּבֵית אָבִי אֲשֶׁר
בָּאָרֶץ כִּנְעָו בָּאוּ אַלְיִ

- more over

46:32] - “‘The men are shepherds— for they have been livestock handlers, and they have brought here with them their flocks and herds.’

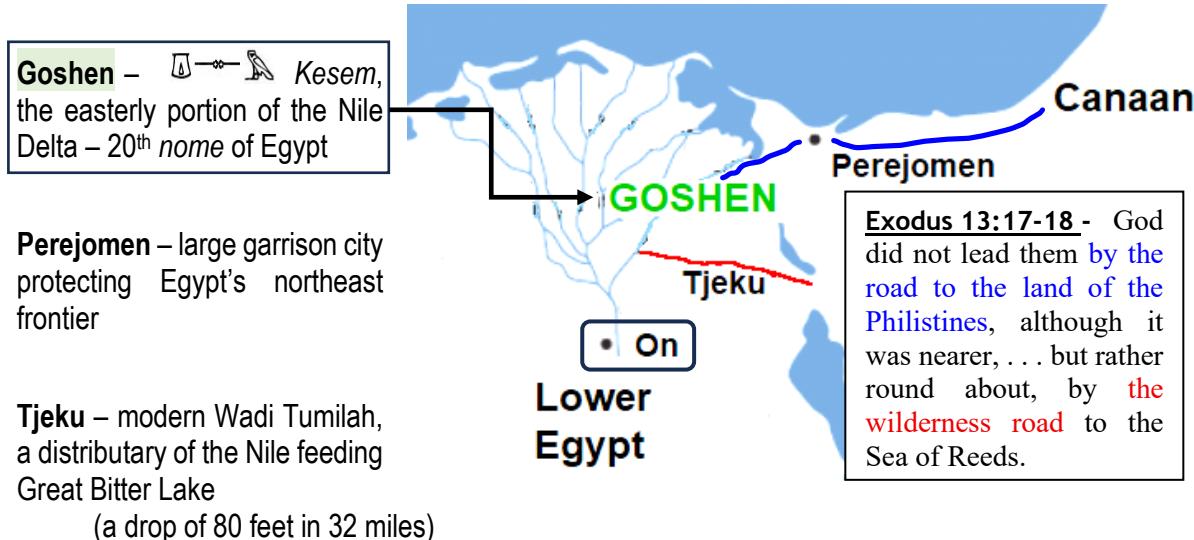
וְהַאֲנָשִׁים רְعֵי צָאן כִּי אֲנָשִׁי מִקְנָה
חֵי וְצָאן וּבְקָרָם וְכָל אֲשֶׁר לְהָם
הַבְּיאָו

46:33] - “So it is, that should Pharaoh summon you and ask ‘what is your trade?’, [46:34a] - you are to say: ‘**Your servants have always been livestock handlers, from our youth to the present**— both we, and our forebears,’

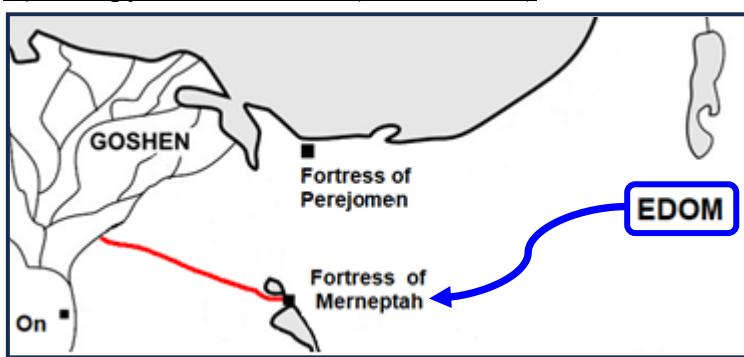
וְהִיא כִּי יָקַרְאָ לְכֶם פְּרֻעָה וְאָמַר
מַה פְּעָשֵׂיכֶם וְאָמַרְתֶּם אֲנָשִׁי
מִקְנָה חֵי עֲבָדִיךְ מִנְעוּרִינוּ וְעַד
עַתָּה גַּם אֲנַחֲנוּ גַּם אֲבָתֵינוּ

בַּעֲבוּר תִּשְׁבֹּו בָּאָרֶץ גָּשֵׁן בְּיַד
מִצְרָיִם כָּל רְעֵה צָאן

46:34b] - “in order that you should be settled in the land of Goshen. For any herdsman is **an abomination** to the Egyptians.”



A) Papyrus Anastasi VI (c. 1220 BCE) -



The Scribe Inena reports to his lord Qa-gabu, Scribe of the Imperial Treasury. We have just **allowed the sha-su** [Bedouin shepherd] tribes of **Edom** to pass the frontier fortress of Mer-nep-tah in **Tjeku**, to **keep them and their livestock alive** through the great grace of Pharaoh—the good sun of every land, to whom long life, prosperity, and health!

noun **תֹּעַבָּה** *to'eivah*

“an abhorrent thing;
an abomination”

verb **תִּעַבֵּד**

“to find abhorrent;
to avoid as something abominable”

- continued

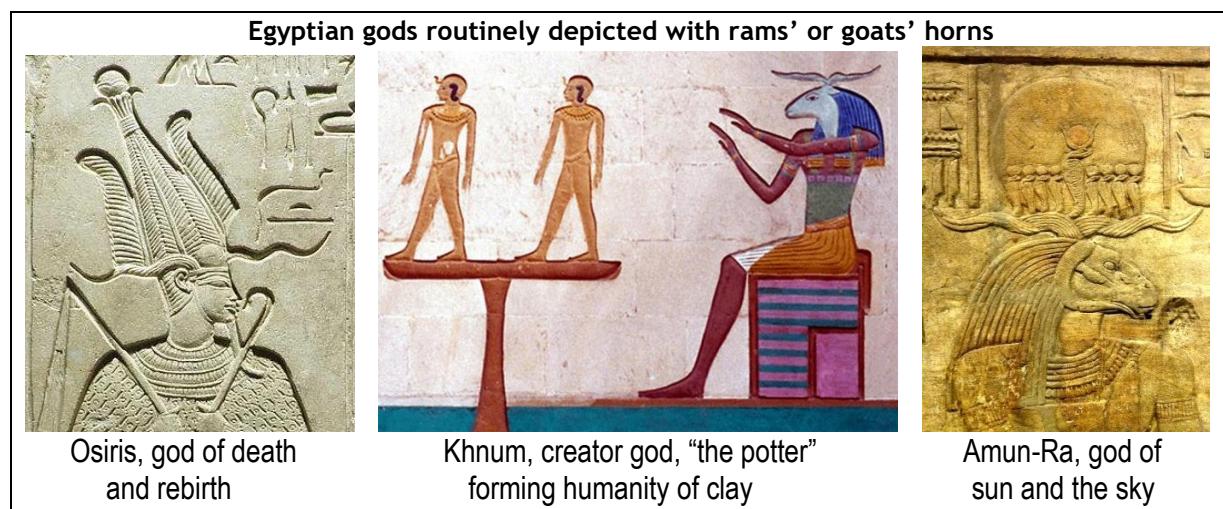
B) Herodotus (484-425 BCE) *The Histories*, 2:47, 2:46 - Swine are held by the Egyptians to be unclean beasts. If an Egyptian touches a hog in passing, he goes to the river and dips himself in it, fully clothed as he is. Moreover, **swineherds are the only men forbidden to enter any Egyptian temple. No one will give his daughter in marriage to a swineherd**, nor take a wife from their women; swineherds must intermarry among themselves.

The Egyptians think it improper to sacrifice swine to any god, except the Moon and Dionysus, to whom they sacrifice their swine in the same full-moon season, and then eat the meat. The Egyptians have an explanation of **why they sacrifice swine at this festival, while abominating them** [ἀπεχθάνονται, “avoiding it as repugnant”] **at all other times**. I know that explanation—but it is not fitting that I should relate it.



feeding sow's milk to a piglet
tomb carving, c. 1400 BCE

Now the Egyptians **do not sacrifice goats**, either female or male, because they count Pan to be one of the eight great gods that came into being before the twelve gods, and **their painters and sculptors represent the figure of Pan**—just as we Greeks do—with **goat's horns**. They therefore **reverence all goats**, and the goatherds too have greater honor than any other herdsmen.



ויאמר שינו לך וישימו לו לבדו ולהם לבדם ולמצרים האכלים אותו לבדם

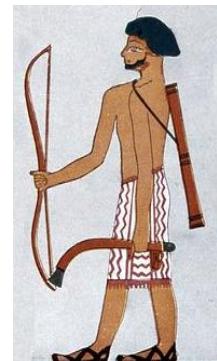
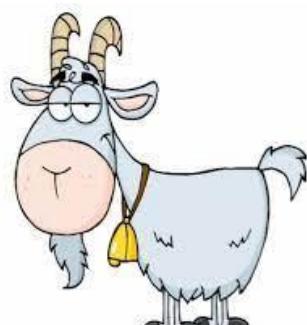
C) Genesis 43: 32 - When he gave the order “serve the food,” they served [Joseph] by himself; [his brothers,] by themselves; and the Egyptians who were dining with them separately and apart—

כִּי לֹא יוּכְלוּן הַמִּצְרִים לְאַכְלָת הָעָבָרִים לְחַם בַּיְתַעַבָּה הוּא לְמִצְרִים
for Egyptians are unable to eat food together with Hebrews, **because that is repugnant to the Egyptians.**

- more over



"That is a god"



"That is lunch"

וַיָּקֹרֶא פְּרָעָה אֶל מֹשֶׁה וְלֵאָהָרֹן וַיֹּאמֶר לְכֶם זָבֹחُ לְאֱלֹהִיכֶם בַּאֲרֶץ

D) Exodus 8:21-23 [After the third Plague = swarms of lice,] Pharaoh summoned Moses and Aaron and declared “Go and worship your gods, here within my land.”

וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה לֹא נִכְוֹן לְעֹשֹׂת כֵּן כִּי תֹּעֲבָת מִצְרָיִם נִזְבֵּחַ לְיְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ

But Moses replied: “It is not proper that we should do so—for the sacrifices we will be making to The Eternal One, our God, **will be repugnant to the Egyptians.**

הַנִּזְבֵּחַ אֶת תֹּעֲבָת מִצְרָיִם לְעֵינֵיכֶם וְלֹא יִסְקְּלָנוּ

“Indeed, should we sacrifice—in their presence, and within their viewing—that which the Egyptians **regard as sacred, will they not stone us?**

דָּרְךָ שְׁלֹשֶׁת יְמִים גָּלֵךְ בַּמִּדְבָּר וְזִבְחָנוּ לְיְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ כַּאֲשֶׁר יֹאמֶר אֱלֹהֵינוּ

No; we must go a three days’ journey into the wilderness to sacrifice to The Eternal One, our God, just as we have been saying to you.”

E) Administrative archives from the Persian frontier outpost at Elephantine -

To our lord Bagoas, governor of Judah, from your servant Y'donYah and his fellow *Cohanim* who are in the fortress at Yeb.

Your servant hereby deposes that in the month of Tammuz in the 14th year of the Emperor Darius [= July, 410 BCE], when [the Persian governor of Egypt] Arsames had gone away to report to the Emperor, the priests of the god Khnum ► here at the fortress of Yeb **conspired with the commander-in-chief Viradanag to demolish the temple of the God Yahu** here in the fortress of Yeb.

So that criminal Viradanag dispatched his son Nefayan in command of the garrison, with this order: “the temple of the God Yahu in the fortress of Yeb is to be destroyed.” Nefayan accordingly led the Egyptians, with the other troops; and, coming with their weapons into the fortress of Yeb, **they broke into that temple and razed it to the ground.** However, the vessels of gold and silver, and all other valuable furnishings of that shrine, they took and made their own.

If your lordship is favorable, and the temple of our God Yahu (which has been here since ancient times, before Cambyses [*i.e.*, for more than a hundred years at this point]) is rebuilt in



the fortress of Yeb as it was formerly, then **no sheep, ox, or goat** will be offered there as **burnt offering**, but only incense, grain offerings, and drink offerings.

F) Josephus Flavius (27-100 CE), *Against Apion* 1:9:223 - Now **the blasphemies against us began with the Egyptians**— in order to gratify which nation, **many others have subsequently undertaken to pervert the truth**. They will neither own that our forebears came into Egypt from another country (which is the case), nor give a true account of our departure thence.

The Egyptians took many occasions to hate us and envy us. The first was our forebears' dominion over their country. [Cf. Exodus 1, "there arose a new king, who knew not Joseph"]. The next was our prosperity upon returning to our own land. The next was the great enmity occasioned by the difference of our religion from theirs.

For our religion is as different from theirs as the nature of God differs from that of brute beasts. For they are in agreement, throughout their nation, in esteeming such animals as gods (even though they differ from one another in the peculiar worship they severally pay to them). And certainly **such vain and foolish people— long accustomed to have such bad notions concerning their own gods**, and incapable of contemplating such decent form of Divine worship as we made use of— **when they saw our institutions approved of by many others, could only envy us on that account.**

G) Manetho (c. 280 BCE), *Egyptiaca* - Those lepers that Pharaoh Amenophis [Amen-hotep III ►] had sent to the stone quarries united under a **renegade Priest** of the Sun named Osar-sef, **who commanded that they should not worship the gods, nor refrain from eating any of the animals proscribed by Egyptian law.**

They set fire to cities and villages; attacked the temples; mutilated divine images; and cast the holy men out naked. Having thereby changed the people, that renegade priest changed his name, as well, and called himself Moses.



Thutmose [III (5th Pharaoh of the 18th Dynasty, reigned 1479-1425 BCE)] concluded a treaty by which they **should all depart from Egypt** and go unmolested where they pleased. On these terms they— with their possessions and households complete, no fewer than 240,000 persons— left Egypt and journeyed over the desert into Syria. There, dreading the power of the Assyrians, who were at that time masters of Asia, **they built in the land now called Judaea a city** large enough to hold all those thousands of people, and gave it the name of Jerusalem.

H) David Nirenberg (1964-), *Anti-Judaism: The Western Tradition* - **The Egyptian tradition's characterization of the Jews** [by Manetho; his successor Lysimachus; and so on, throughout the Greco-Roman era] is easily outlined, and **proved remarkably stable across time**: 1) The Jews are a people once driven out of Egypt.
2) **Their practices are diametrically opposed to those of all other peoples**, especially the Egyptians and the Greeks.

- more over

- 3) **They are enemies of all the gods.**
- 4) Whenever and wherever they rule, they rule brutally and tyrannically.
- 5) **They are misanthropes, enemies not just of Egypt, but of all mankind.**

The first of these basic points was of interest primarily to Egyptians; the others proved so useful that **they continue to provide cornerstones for ideologies up to the present day.**

I) Josephus Flavius, *Antiquities of the Jews* 3:10:4 - Not only did those Jews at Jerusalem and in Judea prosper, but also those that were at Alexandria, in Egypt, and at Cyprus—for Queen Cleopatra [III Euergetis], who governed at variance with her son Ptolemy [IX Lathyrus], had appointed for her generals [the Alexandrian Jews] Chelcias and Ananias, the sons of the aforementioned Onias. Cleopatra **entrusted these men with her army, and did nothing without consulting with them.** Strabo of Cappadocia writes: “Now the greater part of the people aligned with Ptolemy [when he rose up against his mother’s rule in 103 BCE]; only those that were called Onias’s party, **being Jews, continued faithful, because their countrymen Chelcias and Ananias enjoyed the favor of the Queen.**”

J) Paul’s First Epistle to the Church in Thessalonika (I Thessalonians 2:14-15) -

αὐτὰ ἐπάθετε καὶ ὑμεῖς ὑπὸ τῶν ιδίων συμφυλετῶν καθὼς καὶ αὐτοὶ ὑπὸ τῶν Ἰουδαίων τῶν καὶ τὸν κύριον ἀποκτεινάντων Ἰησοῦν καὶ τοὺς προφήτας καὶ ἡμᾶς ἐκδιωξάντων

You suffered from your own people the same things those churches suffered from **the Jews, who killed the Lord Jesus, as well as their own prophets**, and also drove us out.

καὶ θεῷ μὴ ἀρεσκόντων καὶ πᾶσιν ἀνθρώποις ἔναντιον σωθῶσιν εἰς τὸ ἀναπληρῶσαι αὐτῶν τὰς ἀμαρτίας πάντοτε ἔφθασεν δὲ ἐπ’ αὐτοὺς ἡ ὄργη εἰς τέλος



They are opposed to God, and are hostile to everyone. Thereby do they amass the full measure of their iniquity—but retribution has finally overtaken them.

K) Abraham Leon Sachar (1899-1993), *A History of the Jews* - Under [the three-year reign of Marcus Cocceius] Nerva[, 96 to 98 CE], **accusations of Jewish hostility to the state** was assuaged for a time when poll-tax coins were struck, bearing the Emperor’s image on one side, and on the other the inevitable palm tree and the inscription: *Fisci Judaici calumnia sublate*, “Falsehoods on account of the Jewish tax are ended”).



In 115 [CE] Trajan was compelled to take the field to combat the Parthians. The Emperor had fought his way into the heart of the Parthian kingdom, when news came to him that a series of formidable revolutions had broken out behind him. The

Roman historian Dio Cassius paints a sensational picture of the uprisings, **claiming that the Jews wiped out half a million people—eating their flesh; besmearing themselves with**

their blood; sawing them in half; feeding them to wild beasts. The citizens of Alexandria attacked the Jews, and called in the Roman legions for support with the claim that “**god-hating Jews**” were planning to take over their city.

L) Avraham Grossman (1936-2024), “*The Jews in Byzantium and Medieval Europe*,” in *The Jewish World* - The official Church attitude had long followed the principle laid down by Gregory the Great (Pope between 590 and 604) that **one should humiliate the Jews and put mild pressure on them**, and tempt them economically in order to persuade them to accept the Christian faith, **but not kill them or burden them excessively** with anti-Jewish economic edicts.

[In the High Middle Ages] it was the Christian clergy—especially the higher clergy—who were mainly responsible for the general decline in the political and social status of Jews. **The cruel massacres in the First Crusade of 1096 constituted a turning point** in the history of the Jews of Europe. These were **the first pogroms that knew no bounds**, encompassing almost all the countries of Jewish settlement in the realm of Christianity in Western and Central Europe, **and they revealed the full force of the hostility of the masses towards the Jews**.

A substantial change for the worse occurred following the harsh decrees of 1348, when the Black Death raged through Europe. Under the instruction of the Church, the people were encouraged **to see the Jews literally as devils, creatures in the image of Satan**. This is the background of the most famous libel against the Jews in the Middle Ages: their depiction as **drinkers of little Christian children’s blood** or as the users of such blood for ritual purposes and acts of witchcraft.

Jews burned alive in Mecklenburg, Bavaria, in 1492 for alleged desecration of the host

tinted woodcut from *Die Nürnberger Chronik*, 1493



M) *Protocols of the Meetings of the Zionist Men of Wisdom* (1903) - The people of the **goyim** are stupefied by spirituous liquors and **their youth are driven insane** through excessive study of the classics, and **through vice to which they have been instigated by our agents**—tutors, valets, governesses—in rich houses, **and by our women in the pleasure places of the goyim**.

Our motto is Power and Hypocrisy. Only power can conquer in politics, especially if it is concealed in talents which are necessary to statesmen. **Violence must be the principle; hypocrisy and cunning the rule** of those governments which do not wish to lay down their crowns at the feet of the agents of some new power. **This evil is the sole means of attaining the goal of good**. For this reason we **must not hesitate at bribery, fraud, and treason** when these can help us **to reach our end**. In politics it is necessary to seize the property of others without hesitation if in so doing we attain submission and power.

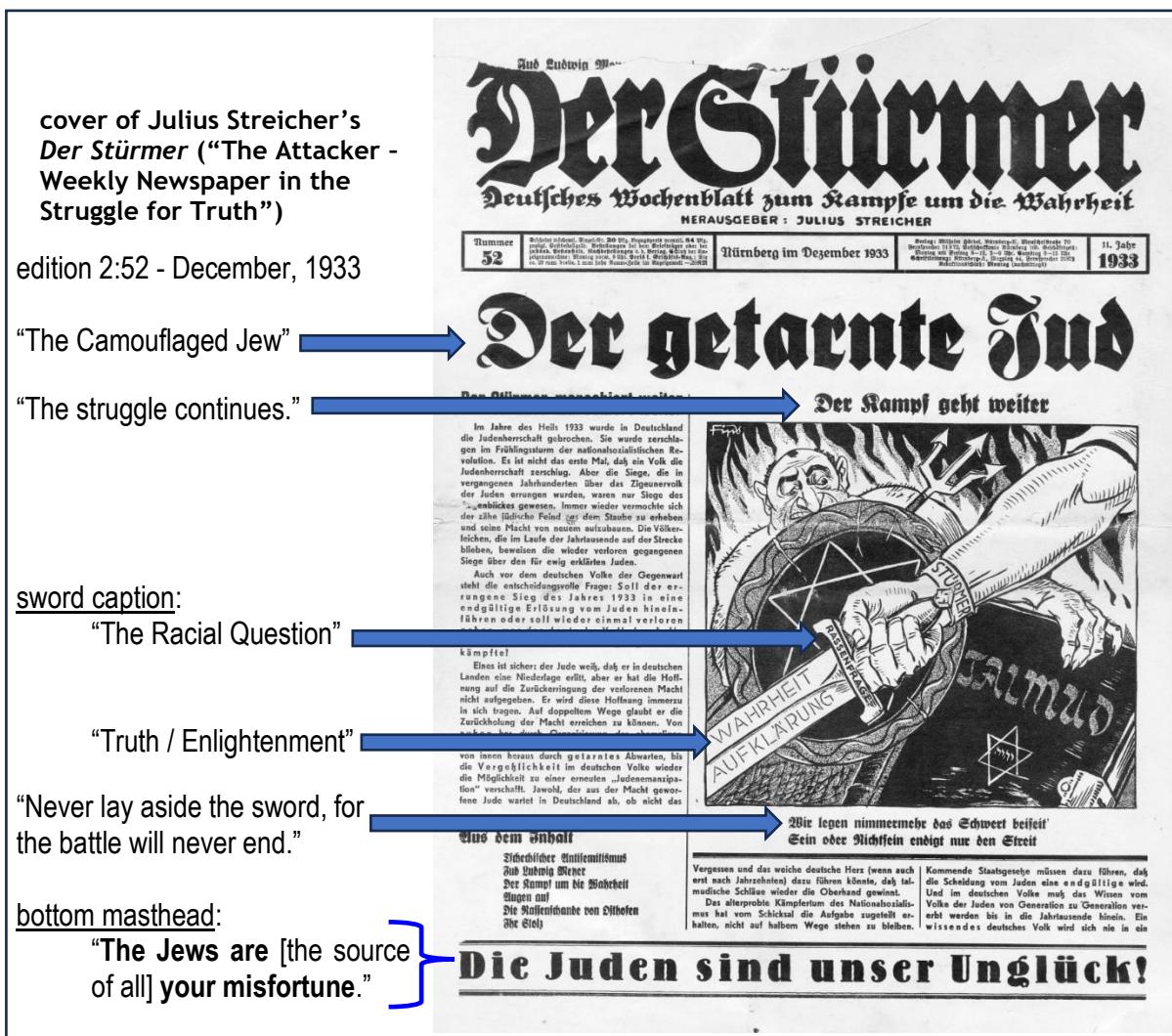
Our government, following the line of peaceful conquest, has the right to substitute for the horrors of war **less noticeable and more efficient executions**, these being necessary **to keep up terror, which induces blind submission**. We must follow a program of violence and hypocrisy, not only for the sake of profit, but also as a duty and for the sake of victory.

N) E[dgar] L[awrence] Doctorow (1931-2015), *Ragtime* - [J. P. Morgan inquired of Henry Ford:] “Has it occurred to you that your assembly line is not merely a stroke of industrial genius, but a projection of organic truth? Although mammals do not have interchangeable parts, as do your automobiles, shared design is what allows taxonomists to classify animals as mammals. And within a species— man, for example— the rules of nature operate so that our individual differences occur on the basis of our similarity.”

Ford pondered this. "Exceptin' the Jews," he muttered.

Morgan didn't think he had heard correctly. "I beg your pardon?"

“The Jews,” Ford said. **“They ain’t like anyone else I know.** There goes your theory up shits creek.” He smiled.



- continued

O) Rev. Charles Edward Coughlin (1891-1979), radio broadcast on WJR-Detroit – November 20, 1938 - The original White Paper issued by the English War Cabinet in 1919 lists the names of the **Jewish bankers** Kuhn, Loeb and Company of New York among those **who helped to finance the Russian Revolution and Communism**.

The 1917 list of those who, with Lenin, ruled many of the activities of the Soviet Republic disclosed that of the twenty-five quasi-cabinet members, **twenty-four of them were atheistic Jews whose names I have before me**. It was increased year by year—and particularly in 1935, when the official disclosure made manifest that the Central Committee of the Communist Party operating in Russia **consisted of 59 members, among whom were 56 Jews**; and that the three remaining non-Jews were married to Jewesses.

ויאמר פרעה אל אחיו מה מעשיכם ויאמרו אל פרעה רעה צאו עבדיך גם אנחנו גם אבותינו

P) Genesis 47:3-4 - When Pharaoh inquired of Joseph's brothers: "What is your trade?", they replied to Pharaoh: "**Your servants have always been shepherds**—both we, and our forebears before us.

ויאמרו אל פרעה לגור בארץ באו כי אין מראת לצאו אשר לעבדיך כי כביך הרעב בארץ פנו ועתה ישבו נא עבדיך בארץ גשן

"**We have come but to sojourn in your land**—for there is no pasturage for the flocks of your servants, since the famine is severe in the land of Canaan. "**So now, pray let your servants reside in the land of Goshen.**"

Q) Toby Wilkinson (1964-), *The Rise and Fall of Ancient Egypt* -

In spite of Egypt's international relations entering a new period of dynamism, the Egyptian government maintained a fiction of splendid isolation.

According to royal doctrine, the king's role as defender of Egypt (and the whole of creation) involved the corresponding defeat of Egypt's neighbors (who stood for chaos). To instill and foster a sense of national identity, **it suited the ruling elite—as leaders have discovered throughout history—to cast all foreigners as the enemy**.

F) Josephus Flavius (27-100 CE), *Against Apion* 1:9:223 -

Τῶν δὲ εἰς ἡμᾶς βλασφημιῶν ἥρξαντο
μὲν Αἰγύπτιοι

Now the blasphemies against us **began with the Egyptians**—

βουλόμενοι δ' ἐκείνοις τινὲς χαρίζεσθαι παρατρέπειν ἐπεχειρησαν τὴν ἀλήθειαν

in order to gratify which nation, **many others have subsequently undertaken to pervert the truth.**

R) Irving Howe (1920-1993) - In the warmest of hearts, **there's a cold spot for the Jews.**