

And they appointed taskmasters over it in order to afflict it with their burdens. (1:11)

By inflicting hard labor upon the Jews, the Egyptians' goal was simply to destroy their dignity, to hurt them emotionally as well as physically. **Horav Shimon Schwab, z"l**, comments that the purpose of placing taskmasters over the Jews was to degrade and humiliate them, to convey to them that they could not be trusted to perform their job adequately without supervision. They were telling the Jews that they were crude and undignified; their integrity was lacking and their work ethic unsuitable. Is there anything worse than such a loathsome form of emotional abuse? Indeed, the intention of the Egyptians was to debase and degrade the Jews, to destroy their will so that they would become worthless human beings devoid of hope and aspirations. This, suggests *Horav Schwab*, is the underlying meaning of the *pasuk* in *Sefer Devarim* 26:6, "Vayareiu Osanu Hamitzrim" *And the Egyptians did evil to us.* "Vayareiu" - "And they made us look bad." They portrayed us as evil people; lazy ne'er do-wells, living off the Egyptians; people who could not be trusted. They maintained that we had no sense of allegiance to the country that admitted us and cared for us. They asserted that we were interested in taking over and dominating the Egyptian populace. When such foolishness is reiterated enough times, people begin to believe what they have heard. We can understand why the Egyptians reacted in such a manner.