

What's Lavan Doing at Our Seder (?) & the Secret Sipping of the Fifth Cup

Source 1: Pesachim 116a

מתני' מזגו לו כוס שני וכאן הבן שואל אביו ואם אין דעת בבן אביו מלמדו

MISHNA: The attendants **poured the second cup** for the leader of the seder, and **here the son asks his father** the questions about the differences between Passover night and a regular night. **And if the son does not have the intelligence** to ask questions on his own, **his father teaches him** the questions.

[The Ma Nishtana text is detailed in the Mishna at this point]

ולפי דעתו של בן אביו מלמדו מתחיל בגנות ומסיים בשבח ודורש (דברים כו, ה)
מארמי אובד אבי עד שיגמור כל הפרשה כולה :

And according to the intelligence and the ability **of the son, his father teaches him** all or part of these questions. When teaching his son about the Exodus, **he begins with** the Jewish people's **disgrace and concludes with their glory**. **And he expounds from** the passage: "**An Aramean tried to destroy my father**" (Deuteronomy 26:5), the declaration one recites when presenting his first fruits at the Temple, **until he concludes** explaining **the entire section**.

Source 2: Devarim Ch. 26

26:1	When you come to the land that God your Lord is giving you as a heritage, occupying and settling it,
26:2	you shall take the first of every fruit of the ground produced by the land that God your Lord is giving you. You must place it in a basket, and go to the site that God will choose as the place associated with His name.
26:3	There you shall go to the priest officiating at the time, and say to him, 'Today I am affirming to God your Lord that I have come to the land that God swore to our fathers to give us.'
26:4	The priest shall then take the basket from your hand and place it before the altar of God your Lord.

26:5 You shall then make the following declaration before God your Lord:
'My father was a homeless Aramaean. He went to Egypt with a small number of men and lived there as an immigrant, but it was there that he became a great, powerful, and populous nation.

- 26:6 The Egyptians were cruel to us, making us suffer and imposing harsh slavery on us.
- 26:7 We cried out to God, Lord of our ancestors, and God heard our voice, seeing our suffering, our harsh labor, and our distress.
- 26:8 'God then brought us out of Egypt with a strong hand and an outstretched arm with great visions and with signs and miracles.

26:9 He brought us to this area, giving us this land flowing with milk and honey.

26:10 I am now bringing the first fruit of the land that God has given me.'

Source 3: THE HAGGADAH

יניח הכוס מידו ויגלה את המצות.

He puts down the cup from his hand and uncovers the matsa.

צא ולמד מה בקש לבן הארמי לעשות ליעקב אבינו: שפרעה לא גזר אלא על הזכרים, ולבן בקש לעקר את הכל. שנאמר: ארמי אבד אבי, וירד מצרימה ויגר שם במתי מעט, ויהי שם לגוי גדול, עצום ורב.

Go out and learn what what Lavan the Aramean sought to do to Ya'akov, our father; since Pharaoh only decreed [the death sentence] on the males but Lavan sought to uproot the whole [people]. As it is stated (Deuteronomy 26:5), "An Aramean was destroying my father and he went down to Egypt, and he resided there with a small number and he became there a nation, great, powerful and numerous."

וירד מצרימה – אנוס על פי הדבור. ויגר שם. מלמד שלא ירד יעקב אבינו להשתקע במצרים אלא לגור שם, שנאמר: ויאמרו אלפרעה, לגור בארץ באנו, כי אין מרעה לצאן אשר לעבדיך, כי כבד הרעב בארץ כנען. ועתה ישבונא עבדיך בארץ גשן.

"And he went down to Egypt" - helpless on account of the word [in which God told Avraham that his descendants would have to go into exile]. "And he resided there" - [this] teaches that Ya'akov, our father, didn't go down to settle in Egypt, but rather [only] to reside there, as it is stated (Genesis 47:4), "And they said to Pharaoh, to reside in the land have we come, since there is not enough pasture for your servant's flocks, since the famine is heavy in the land of Canaan, and now please grant that your servants should dwell in the land of Goshen."

במתי מעט. כמה שנאמר: בשבעים נפש ירדו אבותיך מצרימה, ועתה שמך ה' אלהיך ככוכבי השמים לרב.

"As a small number" - as it is stated (**Deuteronomy 10:22**), "With seventy souls did your ancestors come down to Egypt, and now the Lord your God has made you as numerous as the stars of the sky."

וַיְהִי שָׁם לְגוֹי. מִלְּמַד שֶׁהָיוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל מְצִינִים שָׁם. גְּדוֹל עֲצוּם – כְּמָה שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר : וּבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל פָּרוּ וַיִּשְׂרְצוּ וַיִּרְבוּ וַיַּעֲצְמוּ בְּמֵאד מְאֹד, וַתִּמְלֵא הָאָרֶץ אֹתָם.

"And he became there a nation" - [this] teaches that Israel [became] distinguishable there. "Great, powerful" - as it is stated (**Exodus 1:7**), "And the children of Israel multiplied and swarmed and grew numerous and strong, most exceedingly and the land became full of them."

וְרַב. כְּמָה שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר : רַבְּבָה כְּצֶמַח הַשָּׂדֶה נִתְתִּיף, וַתִּרְבִּי וַתִּגְדְּלִי וַתִּבְאֵי בְעַדֵי עַדְיִים, שְׂדֵים נִכְנוּ וַיִּשְׁעְרְךָ צֶמַח, וְאֶת עֵרֶם וְעֵרִיָּה. וְאֶעְבֵּר עֲלֶיךָ וְאֶרְאֶךָ מִתְבוֹסְסֵת בְּדַמְיֶךָ, וְאִמַּר לְךָ בְּדַמְיֶךָ חַיִּי, וְאִמַּר לְךָ בְּדַמְיֶךָ חַיִּי.

"And numerous" - as it is stated (**Ezekiel 16:7**), "I have given you to be numerous as the vegetation of the field, and you increased and grew and became highly ornamented, your breasts were set and your hair grew, but you were naked and barren;" "And I passed over you and I saw you wallowing in your blood, and I said to you, you shall live in your blood, and I said to you, you shall live in your blood" (**Ezekiel 16:6**).

וַיַּרְעוּ אֹתָנוּ הַמִּצְרִים וַיַּעֲנוּנוּ, וַיִּתְּנוּ עָלֵינוּ עֲבֹדָה קָשָׁה. וַיַּרְעוּ אֹתָנוּ הַמִּצְרִים – כְּמָה שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר : הִבֵּה נִתְחַכְּמָה לוֹ פֶּן יִרְבֶּה, וְהָיָה כִּי תִקְרָאנָה מִלְחָמָה וְנוֹסֵף גַּם הוּא עַל שְׂנְאֵינוּ וְנִלְחַם־בָּנוּ, וְעָלָה מִרְהָאָרֶץ.

"And the Egyptians did bad to us and afflicted us and put upon us hard work" (**Deuteronomy 26:6**). "And the Egyptians did bad to us" - as it is stated (**Exodus 1:10**), "Let us be wise towards him, lest he multiply and it will be that when war is called, he too will join with our enemies and fight against us and go up from the land."

וַיַּעֲנוּנוּ. כְּמָה שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר : וַיִּשְׂימוּ עָלָיו שָׂרֵי מִסִּים לְמַעַן עֲנֹתוֹ בְּסִבְלָתָם. וַיִּבְנוּ עָרֵי מִסְכָּנוֹת לַפְּרֹעָה. אֶת־פְּתָם וְאֶת־רַעְמִסִּס.

"And afflicted us" - as is is stated (**Exodus 1:11**); "And they placed upon him leaders over the work-tax in order to afflict them with their burdens, and they built storage cities, Pitom and Ra'amses."

וַיִּתְּנוּ עָלֵינוּ עֲבֹדָה קָשָׁה. כְּמָה שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר : וַיַּעֲבֹדוּ מִצְרַיִם אֶת־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּפָרֶךְ.

"And put upon us hard work" - as it is stated (Exodus 1:11), "And they enslaved the children of Israel with breaking work."

וּנְצַעַק אֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ, וַיִּשְׁמַע ה' אֶת־קִלְנוֹ, וַיִּרְא אֶת־עֲנִיֵּנוּ וְאֶת עֲמָלְנוּ וְאֶת לְחָצְנוּ.

"And we we cried out to the Lord, the God of our ancestors, and the Lord heard our voice, and He saw our affliction, and our toil and our duress" (Deuteronomy 26:7).

וּנְצַעַק אֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ – כְּמָה שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר : וַיְהִי בַיָּמִים הַרְבִּיִּים הָהֵם וַיָּמָת מֶלֶךְ מִצְרַיִם, וַיִּאָּנְחוּ בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל מִהָעֲבוּדָה וַיִּזְעֻקוּ, וַתַּעַל שׁוֹעֲתָם אֶל־הָאֱלֹהִים מִן הָעֲבֹדָה.

"And we cried out to the Lord, the God of our ancestors" - as it is stated (Exodus 2:23); "And it was in those great days that the king of Egypt died and the Children of Israel sighed from the work and yelled out, and their supplication went up to God from the work."

וַיִּשְׁמַע ה' אֶת קִלְנוֹ. כְּמָה שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר : וַיִּשְׁמַע אֱלֹהִים אֶת־נַאֲקֹתָם, וַיִּזְכֹּר אֱלֹהִים אֶת־בְּרִיתוֹ אֶת־אַבְרָהָם, אֶת־יִצְחָק וְאֶת־יַעֲקֹב.

"And the Lord heard our voice" - as it is stated (Exodus 2:24); "And God heard their groans and God remembered his covenant with Avraham and with Yitschak and with Ya'akov."

וַיִּרְא אֶת־עֲנִיֵּנוּ. זֶה פְּרִישׁוֹת דָּרָךְ אַרְצָה, כְּמָה שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר : וַיִּרְא אֱלֹהִים אֶת בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיַּדַּע אֱלֹהִים.

"And He saw our affliction" - this [refers to] the separation from the way of the world, as it is stated (Exodus 2:25); "And God saw the Children of Israel and God knew."

וְאֶת־עֲמָלְנוּ. אֵלּוּ הַבָּנִים. כְּמָה שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר : כָּל־הַבֵּן הַיְלֹוֹד הַיָּאֲרָה תִּשְׁלִיכֶהוּ וְכָל־הַבַּת תִּחְיֶה.

"And our toil" - this [refers to the killing of the] sons, as it is stated (Exodus 1:24); "Every boy that is born, throw him into the Nile and every girl you shall keep alive."

וְאֶת לְחָצְנוּ. זֶה הַדְּחָק, כְּמָה שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר : וְגַם־רָאִיתִי אֶת־הַלַּחַץ אֲשֶׁר מִצְרַיִם לֹחֲצִים אֹתָם.

"And our duress" - this [refers to] the pressure, as it is stated (Exodus 3:19); "And I also saw the duress that the Egyptians are applying on them."

וַיֹּצִיאֵנוּ ה' מִמִּצְרַיִם בְּיַד חֲזָקָה, וּבְזֵרַע נְטוּיָה, וּבְמֶרְא גְדֹל, וּבְאֹתוֹת וּבְמִפְתִּיּוֹת.

"And the Lord took us out of Egypt with a strong hand and with an outstretched forearm and with great awe and with signs and with wonders" (Deuteronomy 26:8).

Which of our "fathers" might have been a wandering Aramean?"

Source 4: Rashbam

ארמי אובד אבי - אבי אברהם ארמי היה, אובד וגולה מארץ ארם. כדכתיב: לך לך מארצך. וכדכתיב ויהי כאשר התעו אותי אלהים מבית אבי - לשון אובד ותועה אחד הם באדם הגולה, כדכתיב: תעיתי כשה אובד בקש עבדך. צאן אובדות היו עמי. רועיהם התעום, כלומר מארץ נכריה באו אבותינו לארץ הזאת ונתנה הקב"ה לנו.

ארמי אובד אבי, as if the Torah had written" my father Avraham was an Aramite, lost, and exiled from his birthplace Aram." G'd had told him in [Genesis 12.1](#) "go forth for yourself from your homeland, etc." Later on, Avraham himself relates to Avimelech the king of the Philistines, ([Genesis 20.13](#)) that G'd had made him wander, away from his father's house, etc. The meaning of the word אובד here is similar to תועה, the root Avraham used to describe wandering without specific objective, almost like walking because one is lost. The word occurs clearly in that sense in [Psalms 119.176](#) תעיתי כשה, אובד בקש עבדך, "I have strayed like a lost sheep; search for Your servant, etc.!" We also find the word in this connotation in [Jeremiah 50.6](#) עמי רועיהם התעום, "My people were lost sheep; their shepherd led them astray." In other words, the recital by the farmer goes back to the Jewish people's origin, the farmer saying: 'our forefathers came to this land from an alien country and now G'd has given it to us.

Source 5a): Ibn Ezra:

אובד אבי. מלת אובד מהפעלים שאינם יוצאים ואילו היה ארמי על לבן היה הכתוב אומר מאביד או מאבד ועוד מה טעם לאמר לבן בקש להאביד אבי וירד מצרימה ולבן לא סבב לרדת אל מצרים והקרוב שארמי הוא יעקב כאלו אמר הכ' כאשר היה אבי בארם היה אובד והטעם עני בלא ממון וכן תנו שכר לאובד והעד ישתה וישכח רישו והנה הוא ארמי אובד היה אבי והטעם כי לא ירשתי הארץ מאבי כי עני היה כאשר בא אל ארם גם גר היה במצרים והוא היה במתי מעט ואחר כן שב לגוי גדול ואתה ה' הוצאתנו מעבדות ותתן לנו ארץ טובה ואל יטעון טוען איך יקרא יעקב ארמי והנה כמוהו יתרא הישמעאלי והוא ישראלי כי כן כתוב:

"Were the 'Aramean' referring to Lavan, the Hebrew would have to read "maavid." Or "me'abed" (and not oved.) Moreover (in the context of the parsha in Devarim) what logic would there be in the statement, 'Lavan wanted to kill my father , and he went down to Egypt?' Lavan had no hand in causing Yaakov to descend to Egypt! Rather, we should suggest that **the Aramean is Yaakov, and the verses meaning is this. That when Yaakov was in Aram, he was an "oved" i.e. poor, penniless – proofs from Mishlei 31:6,7 – and the point here is that I did not inherit the land from my father (Yaakov) for he was poverty stricken when he came to Aram. He was even a stranger in Egypt ...**"

Source 5b) Mishlei (Proverbs 31:6-7)

תְּנוּ־שִׁכָּר לְאֹבֵד וְיַיִן לְמָרִי נֶפֶשׁ :

Give strong drink to the hapless And wine to the embittered.

יִשְׁתְּהוּ וְיִשְׁכַּח רִישׁוֹ וְיִעֲמְלוּ לֹא יִזְכְּרוּ־עוֹד :

Let them drink and forget their poverty, And put their troubles out of mind.

The plain peshat/meaning of the text is homelessness & the farmer's thankfulness to Hashem for a permanent abode.

How does this jibe with the Haggadah's reading of the verses of ארמי אובד אבי?

Source 6: Shemot Ch. 6

Moshe returns to Hashem - questioning the pace of the process;
Hashem issues new promises

לְכוּ אָמַר לְבְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲנִי יְהוָה וְהוֹצֵאתִי אֶתְכֶם מִתַּחַת סִבְלַת מִצְרַיִם וְהִצַּלְתִּי אֶתְכֶם מֵעַבְדֹתֵיכֶם וְגֵאלְתִּי אֶתְכֶם בְּזְרוּעַ נְטוּיָה וּבְשַׁפְטִים גְּדֹלִים:

Say, therefore, to the Israelite people: I am the LORD. I will free you from the labors of the Egyptians and deliver you from their bondage. I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and through extraordinary chastisements.

וְלָקַחְתִּי אֶתְכֶם לִי לְעָם וְהִייתִי לְכֶם לֵאלֹהִים וַיִּדְעֹתֶם כִּי אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם הַמּוֹצִיא אֶתְכֶם מִתַּחַת סִבְלֹת מִצְרַיִם:

And I will take you to be My people, and I will be your God. And you shall know that I, the LORD, am your God who freed you from the labors of the Egyptians.

וְהִבֵּאתִי אֶתְכֶם אֶל־הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁאַתִּי אֶת־יָדֵי לְתַת אֲתָהּ לְאַבְרָהָם לְיִצְחָק וּלְיַעֲקֹב וְנָתַתִּי אֲתָהּ לְכֶם מוֹרָשָׁה אֲנִי יְהוָה:

I will bring you into the land which I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and I will give it to you for a possession, I the LORD."

Source 7: Jerusalem Talmud 68b

מניין לארבעה כוסות רבי יוחנן בשם ר' ר' בנייה כנגד ארבע גאולות (שמות ו) לכן אמור לבני ישראל אני ה' והוצאתי אתכם וגוי ולקחתי אתכם לי לעם וגומר והוצאתי והצלתי וגאלתי ולקחתי

From where [do we know the requirement to drink] four cups? Rabbi Yochanan [said] in the name of Rav, "Rabbi Banniah said, 'Corresponding to the four [expressions of] salvations: "Therefore say unto the children of Israel, I am the Lord, and I will bring you out, etc. And I will take you to Me for a people, etc." (Exodus 6:6-7). "And I will bring you out, and I will rescue you, and I will save you, And I will take you."

***Rav Ari Kahn:** In order to arrive at the desired number four, in order to create a parallel between the verses which promise liberation and the four cups of the Seder, a fifth expression is 'edited out':*

וְיֹאמְרוּ וְיֹאמְרוּ וְיֹאמְרוּ וְיֹאמְרוּ

Source 8: Rav Soloveitchik:

Pesach commemorates the Exodus, and the Seder is an educational tool to teach us about the experience of slavery in Egypt and our miraculous salvation. **This is the subject of the first four expressions, but not the fifth. The fifth expression addresses a different phase in our history. There is no reason to mention our conquest of the Land of Israel during the Seder; this is a different aspect of the biblical narrative, commemorated by a different holiday (Shavuot), in different liturgy and ritual (the Bringing of the First Fruits).** For this reason, the last verse is "disconnected" from the others. Although all five expressions comprise one unified communicate God's message to Moshe and the nation is truncated in the sages' analysis, and the fifth expression, the "Shavuot" expression, is suppressed.

On the other hand, the purpose of the Exodus from Egypt was never merely geographical. **The Jews were not freed from bondage in order to become nomads. Their freedom, as well as their enslavement, served a greater purpose. For this reason, from the outset, Moshe was entrusted with a task that went beyond the physical extrication of the Children of Israel from Egypt. As Moshe was told at the moment God first informed him of his task, their true freedom would involve more than a relocation or political emancipation. The purpose of the Exodus was to bring the Jewish People to Mount Sinai, where they would serve God.**

And he said, 'For I will be with you; and this shall be a sign to you, that I have sent you: When you bring forth the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God upon this mountain. (Shmot 3:12)

For millennia, this has been the Jewish definition of true freedom:

And it says, 'And the Tablets were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God, graven upon the Tablets.' Read not harut [which means graven] but herut [which means freedom]. For there is no free man but he that occupies himself with the study of the Torah. (Mishne Avot 6:2)

בן בן בן בן בן

Source 9: Mishna Pesachim

מתנני **ערב** פסחים סמוך למנחה לא יאכל אדם עד שתחשך אפילו עני שבישראל לא יאכל עד שיסב ולא יפחתו לו מארבע כוסות של יין ואפילו מן התמחוי :

MISHNA: On the eve of Passover, adjacent to *minḥa* time, a person may not eat until dark, so that he will be able to eat *matza* that night with a hearty appetite. Even the poorest of Jews should not eat the meal on Passover night until he reclines on his left side, as free and wealthy people recline when they eat. And the distributors of charity should not give a poor person less than four cups of wine for the Festival meal of Passover night. And this *halakha* applies even if the poor person is one of the poorest members of society and receives his food from the charity plate.

Source 10: Talmud Pesachim 118a

ת"ר רביעי גומר עליו את ההלל ואומר הלל הגדול דברי ר"ט

Our Rabbis taught: On the fourth [cup] he concludes the Hallel and recites the great Hallel.

Source 11: Rambam, Mishne Torah, Chametz U'Matzah Ch. 8

ואחר כך נוטל ידיו ומברך ברכת המזון על פוס שלישי ושותהו. ואחר כך מוזג פוס רביעי וגומר עליו את ההלל. ואומר עליו ברכת השיר והיא יהללוד ה' כל מעשיך וכו'. ומברך בורא פרי הגפן ואינו טועם אחר כך כלום כל הליקה חוץ מן המים. ויש לו למזג פוס חמישי ולומר עליו הלל הגדול (תהילים קלו א) "הודו לה' כי טוב" עד (תהילים קלו א) "על נהרות בבל". וכוס זה אינו חובה כמו ארבעה בוסות. ויש לו לגמר את ההלל בכל מקום שירצה אף על פי שאינו מקום סעודה:

And afterwards, he recites the Grace after the Meals over a third cup and drinks it. And afterwards, he mixes (pours) a fourth cup and finishes the Hallel (a set order of praises from the Psalms) over it. And he recites the blessing of song and that is "May all of your creatures praise you, etc." And he recites the blessing, "Who creates the fruit of the vine," and does not taste anything afterwards the whole night, except for water. **And he should mix (pour) a fifth cup and say upon it the Great Hallel (Psalms 136), from "Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good" (Psalms 136:1) to "Upon the waters of Babylon" (Psalms 137:1).** And this cup is not obligatory like the [other] four cups. And he can finish the Hallel anyplace that he desires, even though he is not in the place of the meal.

Rav Ari Kahn:

The fifth expression of redemption is alive and well in the versions of the Talmud that were current and common through the late Middle Ages; many mainstream commentaries taught that the Hallel is recited on a fifth cup, while others taught that the fifth cup is optional. In many communities, a "compromise" was forged between the traditions that reflected the variance in Talmudic texts, whereby the fifth cup is poured but not consumed. This fifth cup is known today as the "Cup of Eliyahu"because of the symbolism of the fifth expression of redemption as it relates to Eliyahu, the harbinger of the future redemption in which all Jews will be brought to the Land of Israel. In either case, the fifth expression of redemption, the final verse in God's assurances to Moshe, is not set aside completely; it remains part of the same organic speech to Moshe that was transmitted to the Children of Israel in Egypt - and to all of their descendants, throughout the generations - in the context of the process of liberation and redemption. As such, this fifth expression is preserved in the Pesach Seder.

Source 12a): Shemot Ch. 6 – Moshe’s frustration with the early stages of his return to Egypt warrants this promise from Hashem

וְגַם הִקְמַתִּי אֶת־בְּרִיתִי אִתְּם לָתֵת לָהֶם אֶת־אֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן אֵת אֶרֶץ מְגֵרֵיהֶם אֲשֶׁר־גָּרוּ בָּהּ:
I also established My covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land in which they lived as sojourners.

וְגַם | אֲנִי שָׁמַעְתִּי אֶת־נַאֲקַת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶׁר מִצְרַיִם מַעֲבִדִים אֹתָם וְאִזְכֹּר אֶת־
בְּרִיתִי:

I have now heard the moaning of the Israelites because the Egyptians are holding them in bondage, and I have remembered My covenant.

Source 12b) Rashi – a reference to Brit Ben HaBetarim

וְגַם אֲנִי. כְּמוֹ שֶׁהִצְבֵּיתִי וְהִעֲמַדְתִּי הַבְּרִית יֵשׁ עָלַי לְקַיֵּם, לְפִיכֹךְ שָׁמַעְתִּי אֶת נַאֲקַת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל הַנוֹאֲקִים, אֲשֶׁר מִצְרַיִם מַעֲבִדִים אֹתָם וְאִזְכֹּר אוֹתוֹ הַבְּרִית, כִּי בְּבְרִית בֵּין הַבְּתָרִים אָמַרְתִּי לוֹ "וְגַם אֶת הַגּוֹי אֲשֶׁר יַעֲבֹדוּ דָן אֲנֹכִי"

וגם אני — Since I established and set up My covenant it is incumbent upon Me to fulfil it; therefore, I HAVE HEARD THE GROANING OF THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL who groan (complain) THAT THE EGYPTIANS ARE ENSLAVING THEM, AND I REMEMBER that covenant which I have already made with them; because at the covenant “between the pieces” I said to him, (Genesis 15:14) “And also against that nation whom they shall serve will I pronounce judgment.”

12c) Bereishit Ch. 15: A return to the “Covenant Between the Pieces”

וַיְהִי הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ לָבוֹא וַתִּרְדָּמָה נִפְלָה עַל־אַבְרָם וַהֲנִיָּה אֵימָה חֲשֵׁכָה גְדֹלָה נִפְלְתָ עָלָיו:

As the sun was about to set, a deep sleep fell upon Abram, and a great dark dread descended upon him.

13

וַיֹּאמֶר לְאַבְרָם יְדַע תְּדַע כִּי־גֵר | יִהְיֶה זְרָעֲךָ בְּאֶרֶץ לֹא לָהֶם וַעֲבָדוּם וְעָנּוּ אֹתָם אַרְבַּע מֵאוֹת שָׁנָה:

And He said to Abram, "Know well that your offspring shall be strangers in a land not theirs, and they shall be enslaved and oppressed four hundred years;

14

וְגַם אֶת־הַגּוֹי אֲשֶׁר יַעֲבֹדוּ דָן אֶנְכִי וְאֶחְרִיכֶן יִצְאוּ בְרַכָּשׁ גָּדוֹל:

but I will execute judgment on the nation they shall serve, and in the end they shall go free with great wealth.

Source 13: Keli Yakar on the four expressions of redemption cited earlier:

והוצאתי, והצלתי, וגאלתי, ולקחתי. כנגד ד' דברים שעברו עליהם שנאמר (בראשית טו יג) **כי גר יהיה זרעך הרי הגרות, בארץ לא להם הרי ריחוק השכינה, כי הדר בחו"ל דומה כאילו אין לו אלוה כו'** (כתובות קנ:). **וסמך ריחוק השכינה לגרות כי הא בהא תליא שריחוק השכינה נמשך מן הגרות שיהיו כגרים בחו"ל במקום ריחוק השכינה, ועבדום זה דבר נוסף על הגרות, כי סתם גר אינו עבד לפחות, וענו אותם זה דבר נוסף על העבדות, כי סתם עבד אין מענין אותו חנם ובהצלה ראה הקב"ה להצילם בהדרגה מעט מעט, מתחילה הצילם מן הדבר המסוכן ביותר והוא העינוי, ועליו נאמר והוצאתי אתכם מתחת סבלות מצרים, כי הסבלות היינו העינוי, כמ"ש למען ענותו בסבלותם. ואח"כ הצילם גם מן העבדות, ועליו נאמר והצלתי אתכם מעבודתם. ואח"כ הצילם מן הקל שכולם הוא הגרות, ועל זה אמר וגאלתי אתכם וגו', כי סתם גר אין לו גואל כמ"ש (במדבר ה ה) ואם אין לאיש גואל ארז"ל (ב"ק קט:). זה הגר כו'.**

ולפי שמן הגרות נמשך סילוק השכינה, כי מטעם זה הוצרך להסמיך אל הגרות מאמר בארץ לא להם המורה על סילוק השכינה, לעומת זה אמר כאן שבביטול הגרות יזכו לדיבוק השכינה וע"ז אמר ולקחתי אתכם לי לעם והייתי לכם לאלהים ליקוחין ממש כדרך גבר בעלמה, ויען כי הדר בחו"ל כאילו אין לו אלוה ע"כ אמר כאן והייתי לכם לאלהים, וע"י דבוק זה וידעתם כי אני המוציא אתכם מתחת סבלות מצרים הגדולה שברעות ...

Review fo Keli Yakar by Rav Ari Kahn: Keli Yakar explains that the four expressions of freedom precisely parallel God's covenant with Avraham, the vision that mapped out the history of the Jewish People. Avraham was informed that his descendants would suffer exile, slavery and persecution. The very core of this affliction is the **isolation and estrangement that results from becoming distanced from the shechina**. This is what it means to be a stranger, to feel isolated; **it is this estrangement that is described in the verse "strangers in a land that is not theirs."**

This initial stage is followed by slavery; the spiritual disconnection is what makes the slavery possible. Surely, not every stranger is enslaved; this second stage represented a more extreme level of affliction, a deepening of the existential crisis that Avraham's descendants would experience. This second stage is described to Avraham in the verse "and [they] shall enslave them". A third stage is foretold: Even more than 'regular' slavery was the extreme torture and abuse meted by the Egyptians, which is represented by the phrase "and they shall afflict them."

The redemption may be seen as a stage-by-stage reversal of each of these levels, with the most pressing need addressed and corrected first: When God addresses Moshe with the various expressions of redemption; He first gives redress to the affliction, to their acute and unprecedented physical affliction. The first thing God tells Moshe is that He will save the Children of Israel from suffering: "I will bring you out from under the burden of Egypt". The next expression addresses the second stage: "I will save you from their slavery". The next expression of redemption, "I will redeem you", addresses the physical exile of the Jewish People.

The final expression of redemption addresses the metaphysical distress of estrangement: "And I will take you to me for a People, and I will be to you a God". The uniqueness of this nation of erstwhile slaves will be made apparent to the world. Pharaoh and all of Egypt will finally understand the unique relationship that God has with the descendants of Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov. The reason for the suffering, the hardship, the exile and torture, will become apparent as the Jews march out of slavery toward their destiny as God's chosen nation.

This fourth expression stands alone, in a verse unto itself, and the terminology used to express this assurance is noteworthy: **The word with which God describes the realization of Israel's uniqueness is "ve'lakachti", the very same term used in the context of marriage. When God says that He will "take" us as a people, the language used to describe this special, unique relationship is reminiscent of marriage. In effect, when God gives Moshe this assurance, when He says "ve'lakachti", the overtones that we hear, the echoes that reverberate through the text, seem to say "Harei at mekudeshet li". This phrase, which creates the legal status of marriage, demarcates and creates a unique, holy bond. The literal**

translation of this phrase, "I am making you holy to me", is the core of the relationship between man and wife, as well as between God and the Jewish People. This unique relationship, promised to Moshe and to all of the Jewish slaves, was consummated at Sinai.

Shemot Ch. 19: *Now therefore, if you will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then you shall be my own treasure among all peoples; for all the earth is mine. And you shall be to me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation.*

We may say, then, that the first three expressions of redemption were used describe the Exodus, while the fourth term describes the realization of the true and complete emancipation of the Jewish People, as they stand at Sinai and are betrothed to God. This is parallel to the Brit bein Habtarim, the covenant between God and Avraham; it is in that covenant that God spells out the path of exile, slavery, affliction, but it is also the covenant that lays the basis for Avraham's chosenness, and for the unique destiny of all of Avraham's descendants

But what of the fifth expression of redemption - "And I will bring you in to the land I swore to give to Avraham, to Yitzchak, and to Yaakov; and I will give it to you for a heritage; I am God"? The reference to the covenant forged with the Patriarchs is explicit - as explicit as the promise of the Land of Israel is in the Brit bein Habtarim:

Source 14: The end of the Covenant Between the Pieces:

וְדֹר רְבִיעִי יָשׁוּבוּ הֵנָּה כִּי לֹא־שָׁלַם עֲוֹן הָאֱמֹרִי עַד־הֵנָּה :

And they shall return here in the fourth generation, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete."

¹⁷
וַיְהִי הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ בָּאָה וַעֲלָטָה הָיְתָה וְהַיָּה תִנּוֹר עֹשֵׂן וְלֶפֶיד אֵשׁ אֲשֶׁר עָבַר בֵּין הַגְּזָרִים
הָאֵלֶּה :

When the sun set and it was very dark, there appeared a smoking oven, and a flaming torch which passed between those pieces.

¹⁸
בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא כָּרַת יְהוָה אֶת־אֲבָרָם בְּרִית לְאֹמֶר לְזָרְעוֹ נְתַתִּי אֶת־הָאָרֶץ הַזֹּאת מִנְּהָר
מִצְרַיִם עַד־הַנְּהָר הַגָּדֹל נְהַר־פָּרָת :

On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, “To your offspring I assign this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates:

¹⁹
אֶת־הַקֵּינִי וְאֶת־הַקְּנִזִּי וְאֶת־הַקַּדְמוֹנִי :
the Kenites, the Kenizzites, the Kadmonites,

²⁰
וְאֶת־הַחִתִּי וְאֶת־הַפְּרִזִּי וְאֶת־הַרְפָּאִים :
the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Rephaim,

²¹
וְאֶת־הָאֱמֹרִי וְאֶת־הַכְּנַעֲנִי וְאֶת־הַגִּרְגָּשִׁי וְאֶת־הַיְבוּסִי : (ס)
the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Girgashites, and the Jebusites.”

Keli Yakar's final statement:

ואחר כך פירש ליקוחין אלו באמרו והבאתי אתכם אל הארץ וגו', וע"כ תקנו בפסח
ד' כוסות כנגד התשועה מן ד' רעות אלו

What does Keli Yakar mean when he said, “and then the Torah explained/elaborated upon this taking/marriage when it said ‘and I will bring you to the land...’”

Rav Kahn: Only then, only there, can the People of Israel attain the highest level of freedom. This may be seen as ultimate expression of the sanctity of the union between a husband and wife: their union is not complete until they establish their home together and live together. While their relationship is unique and holy as soon as the "Harei at mekudeshet li" is uttered, the full realization of their unique bond occurs when they live together. So, too, the covenant with the descendants of Avraham is fully realized only when the Children of Israel reside in their own home, in perfect union with God.

Source 15: Yechezkel Ch. 34

יא כִּי כֹה אָמַר, אֲדַנִּי יְהוָה: הֲנִנִּי-אֲנִי, וְדַרְשֵׁתִי אֶת-צֹאֲנֵי וּבִקְרָתֵימִם.
11 For thus saith the Lord GOD: Behold, here am I, and I will search for My sheep, and seek them out.

יב כְּבִקְרַת רֵעָה עָדְרוּ בְיוֹם-הַיּוֹתוֹ בְּתוֹךְ-צֹאֲנָיו, נִפְרָשׁוֹת--כֵּן, אֲבַקֵּר אֶת-צֹאֲנֵי; וְהִצַּלְתִּי אֹתָהֶם, מִכָּל-הַמְּקוֹמֹת אֲשֶׁר נִפְצוּ שָׁם, בְּיוֹם עָנָן, וְעָרְפֶל.
12 As a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are separated, so will I seek out My sheep; and I will deliver them out of all places whither they have been scattered in the day of clouds and thick darkness.

יג וְהוֹצֵאתִים מִן-הָעַמִּים, וְקִבַּצְתִּים מִן-הָאָרְצוֹת, וְהִבִּיאוֹתִים, אֵל-אֲדָמְתָם; וְרָעִיתִים, אֵל-הַרֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, בְּאֲפִיקֵים, וּבְכֹל מוֹשְׁבֵי הָאָרֶץ.
13 And I will bring them out from the peoples, and gather them from the countries, and will bring them into their own land; and I will feed them upon the mountains of Israel, by the streams, and in all the habitable places of the country.

יד בְּמִרְעָה-טוֹב אֲרַעָה אֹתָם, וּבְהַרֵי מְרוֹם-יִשְׂרָאֵל יִהְיֶה נֹהֵם; שָׁם תִּרְבְּצֶנָה בְּנוֹה טוֹב, וּמִרְעָה שָׁמֹן תִּרְעֶינָה אֵל-הַרֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל.
14 I will feed them in a good pasture, and upon the high mountains of Israel shall their fold be; there shall they lie down in a good fold, and in a fat pasture shall they feed upon the mountains of Israel.

טו אֲנִי אֲרַעָה צֹאֲנֵי וְאֲנִי אֲרַבִּיצֵם, נְאֻם אֲדַנִּי יְהוָה.
15 I will feed My sheep, and I will cause them to lie down, saith the Lord GOD.

ארמי אונד אבי א return to

Rav Alex Israel: Now it is true that in the Torah, Lavan is the only person to be described as "HaArami. Lavan is THE biblical Aramean with a capital 'A.'" **And yet, let us ask ourselves, did Lavan ever seek to "uproot everything?"** Even if we can deflect the grammatical discomfort of the Ibn Ezra, where do we read that Lavan wanted to destroy Yaakov in some way?

What did Lavan really just want to do?

Source 16: LEAVING LAVAN – Bereishit Ch. 30

כה ויהי, כַּאֲשֶׁר יָלְדָה רָחֵל אֶת-יֹוסֵף; וַיֹּאמֶר יַעֲקֹב, אֶל-לָבָן, שְׁלַחֲנִי וְאֵלֶיךָ, אֶל-מְקוֹמִי וּלְאַרְצִי. כו תָּנָה אֶת-נָשָׁי וְאֶת-יְלָדֵי, אֲשֶׁר עֲבַדְתִּי אִתָּךְ בְּהֵן--וְאֵלֶיךָ: כִּי אֲתָה יֹדְעָתָ, אֶת-עֲבַדְתִּי אֲשֶׁר עֲבַדְתִּיךָ

After Rachel had borne Joseph, Yaakov said to Lavan, 'Give me my wives and my children, for whom I served you, that I may go ...'

Lavan persuades him to stay. He offers him a higher salary, a chance to get rich and Yaakov agrees. He remains there for quite a while, another six years, and at the end of this period he has amassed a large herd:

Bereishit Ch. 30

א וַיִּשְׁמַע, אֶת-דְּבָרֵי בְנֵי-לָבָן לֵאמֹר, לָקַח יַעֲקֹב, אֶת כָּל-אֲשֶׁר לְאָבִינוּ; וּמֵאֲשֶׁר לְאָבִינוּ-עָשָׂה, אֶת כָּל-הַכֶּבֶד הַזֶּה. ב וַיֵּרָא יַעֲקֹב, אֶת-פְּנֵי לָבָן; וַהֲנִה אֵינָנו עִמּוֹ, כְּתַמּוֹל שְׁלֹשׁוֹם. ג וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל-יַעֲקֹב, שׁוּב אֶל-אַרְצְךָ אֲבוֹתֶיךָ וּלְמוֹלְדֹתֶיךָ; וְאַהֲיֶה, עִמָּךְ.

Lavan's sons were saying, 'Jacob has taken all that was our father's and from that which was our father's he has built up all this wealth.' Jacob also saw that Lavan's manner towards him was not as it had been in the past. **Then the Lord said to Jacob, 'Return to the land of your fathers where you were born and I will be with you.'**

כב וַיִּגַּד לְלָבָן, בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁלִישִׁי: כִּי בָרַח, יַעֲקֹב. כג וַיִּקַּח אֶת-אֶחָיו, עִמּוֹ, וַיֵּרְדוּ אַחֲרָיו, דְּרֹךְ שִׁבְעַת יָמִים; וַיִּדְבַּק אֹתוֹ, בְּהַר הַגִּלְעָד. כד וַיָּבֹא אֱלֹהִים אֶל-לָבָן הָאֲרָמִי, בַּחֲלֹם הַלַּיְלָה; וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ, הֲשֹׁמֵר לָךְ פֶּן-תִּדְבֹּר עִם-יַעֲקֹב--מֵטוֹב עַד-רָע. כה וַיִּשָּׂג לָבָן, אֶת-יַעֲקֹב; וַיַּעֲקֹב, תִּקַּע אֶת-אָהֳלוֹ בְּהָר, וּלָבָן תִּקַּע אֶת-אֶחָיו, בְּהַר הַגִּלְעָד. כו וַיֹּאמֶר לָבָן, לְיַעֲקֹב, מָה עָשִׂיתָ, וַתִּגְנֹב אֶת-לִבְבִי; וַתִּנְהַג, אֶת-בְּנֹתַי, כְּשִׁבְיֹוֹת, חָרָב. כז לָמָּה נִחַבְתָּ לְבָרַח, וַתִּגְנֹב אֹתִי; וְלֹא-הִגַּדְתָּ לִּי, וְאֲשַׁלַּח בְּשִׂמְחָה וּבְשָׂרִים בְּתֹף וּבְכִנּוֹר. כח וְלֹא נִטְשָׁתָנִי, לְנִשְׁק לְבָנֵי וּלְבִנּוֹתַי; עֲתָה, הִסְכַּלְתָּ עִשׂוֹ

On the third day, Lavan was told that Yaakov had fled. So he took his kinsmen with him and pursued him a distance of seven days, catching up with him in the hill country of Gilead. God appeared to Lavan the Aramean in a dream by night and said to him, 'Beware of attempting anything with Yaakov, good or bad.' ... Lavan caught up with Yaakov ... And said, 'What did

you mean by sneaking off, and carrying off my daughters like prisoners of war ... you didn't let me kiss my sons and my daughters..."

מא זֶה-לִי עֲשָׂרִים שָׁנָה, בְּבֵיתְךָ, עַבְדְּתִיךָ אַרְבַּע-עָשָׂרָה שָׁנָה בְּשֵׁתִי בְּנֵתֶיךָ, וְשֵׁשׁ שָׁנִים בְּצֹאנְךָ; וַתַּחֲלֶף אֶת-מִשְׁכָּרְתִּי, עֲשָׂרַת מָנִים. **מב** לוּלִי אֱלֹהֵי אָבִי אֱלֹהֵי אַבְרָהָם וַיַּחַד יִצְחָק, הִזָּה לִי--כִּי עָתָה, רִיקָם שְׁלַחְתָּנִי; אֶת-עַנְיִי וְאֶת-יְגִיעַ כַּפִּי, רָאָה אֱלֹהִים--וַיֹּכַח אִמְשׁ. **מג** וַיַּעַן לָבָן וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל-יַעֲקֹב, הִבְנוֹת בְּנֹתַי וְהִבְנִים בְּנֵי וְהִצְאֵן צֹאנִי, וְכָל אֲשֶׁר-אֶתָּה רֹאֶה, לִי-הוּא; וְלִבְנֹתַי מָה-אֶעֱשֶׂה לָאֵלֶּה, הַיּוֹם, אוֹ לִבְנֵיהֶן, אֲשֶׁר יִלְדוּ

41 These twenty years have I been in thy house: I served thee fourteen years for your two daughters, and six years for thy flock; and you have changed my wages ten times. Were it not that the God of my father, the God of Abraham, and the Fear of Isaac, had been on my side, surely now you would have sent me away empty handed.... And Laban answered and said to Jacob: 'The daughters are my daughters, and the children are my children, and the flocks are my flocks, and all that you see is mine.'

What does this entire discussion revolve around?

צא וְלָמַד מָה בִּקֵּשׁ לָבָן הָאַרְמִי לַעֲשׂוֹת לַיַּעֲקֹב אָבִינוּ: שְׁפָרְעָה לֹא גָזַר אֱלֹהֵי עַל הַזְּכָרִים, וְלָבָן בִּקֵּשׁ לַעֲקֹר אֶת-הַכֹּל. שְׁנֵאָמַר: **אַרְמִי אֲבִד אָבִי, וַיֵּרֵד מִצְרַיִם וַיָּגֵר שָׁם בְּמֵתֵי מֵעֵט, וַיְהִי שָׁם לְגוֹי גָדוֹל, עַצוֹם וְרַב.**

Go out and learn what what Lavan the Aramean sought to do to Ya'akov, our father; since Pharaoh only decreed [the death sentence] on the males but Lavan sought to uproot the whole [people].

- Clipping of the declaration accompanying the Bikkurim
- Reworking of Arami Oved Avi
- Am Yisrael's Identity Issues

וַיְהִי שָׁם לְגוֹי. מְלַמֵּד שֶׁהָיוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל מְצֻיְנִים שָׁם. גָּדוֹל עַצוֹם – כְּמָה שְׁנֵאָמַר: וַיְבָנִי יִשְׂרָאֵל כְּרוֹ וַיִּשְׂרָצוּ וַיִּרְבוּ וַיַּעֲצְמוּ בְּמַאֲד מְאֹד, וַתִּמְלֵא הָאָרֶץ אֹתָם.

"And he became there a nation" - [this] teaches that Israel [became] distinguishable there. "Great, powerful" - as it is stated (Exodus 1:7), "And the

children of Israel multiplied and swarmed and grew numerous and strong, most exceedingly and the land became full of them.