

Israel’s First Exodus

By Rabbi Dr. Hillel ben David (Greg Killian)



The title of this study is a bit of a word play. I intend to speak about Israel’s, aka Yaaqob’s exodus; and Israel’s, aka the children of Israel’s, exodus. While it is clearly spelled out in the Haggada, it is rarely understood or appreciated that these two events are, in many ways, identical. In this paper, I intend to spell out Yaaqob’s story and connect it to Exodus II, the exodus from Egypt.[[1]](#footnote-1) This idea should help you to understand and explain the Haggadah’s[[2]](#footnote-2) maggid, the story that we are to retell on Passover.

The comparisons that I am about to share are a direct consequence of an important Midrashic understanding. The Ramban,[[3]](#footnote-3) commenting on Midrash Tanchuma on Lech Lecha,[[4]](#footnote-4) states that: “Whatever happened to the Patriarchs is a portent for their [future] children.” He believed that all events mentioned in the Torah would affect future generations. One of the themes of Sefer [the book of] Bereshit is "ma'aseh Avot siman l'banim", that *the actions of the forefathers foreshadow similar* events *for their children*.[[5]](#footnote-5) Sefer Bereshit [Genesis] is a virtual blueprint of what will happen to our nation during its history. The experiences of the Avot [Patriarchs] provide us with the strength to endure.

The Maggid section of the Haggada begins with a quote from sefer Yehoshua:

***Yehoshua (Joshua) 24:2*** *And Joshua said unto all the people: 'Thus saith* HaShem*, the God of Israel: Your* fathers *dwelt of old* time *beyond the River, even* Terah*, the father of* Avraham*, and the father of Nahor; and they served other gods.* ***3*** *And I took your father* Avraham *from beyond the River, and led him throughout all the land of Canaan, and multiplied his* seed*, and gave him* Yitzchak*.* ***4*** *And I gave unto* YitzchakYaaqob *and* Esau*; and I gave unto* Esau *mount Seir, to possess it; and* Yaaqob *and his children went down* into Egypt*.*

The question is why? Why do we start with Avraham? (We’ll eventually get a good answer for this, but first we need a bit more background.)

Next, the Haggada speaks of Laban’s plan for Yaaqov: *Go and learn what Laban the Aramean planned to do to our father* Yaaqob…

The Vilna Gaon explains that this is the reason why the Pesach Haggada tells us to “*go out and* study *what Laban wanted to do to* Yaaqob”. In order to understand the story of exodus from Egypt we need to study the *ma’aseh Avot siman l’banim* that preceded it; this was the story of Yaaqob in Laban’s home.

Now, let’s look at the words of the Haggada, in the maggid section, and try to understand their import:

*Blessed be He, who keeps His assurance to Israel, blessed be He! For the Holy* One*, blessed be He, planned the end of their bondage, in order to do as He had said to our father* Avraham *at the* covenant *between the Portions, as it states: "And He said to* Abram*: 'You should* know *for certain that your descendants shall be strangers in a land that is not theirs, and they shall serve them, and they shall treat them harshly, for* four *hundred years; but I will also judge the* nation *that they shall serve, and afterwards they shall come out with great wealth'."*

*The* Matzot *are covered, and the cups are lifted.*

*And it is this that has stood by our* fathers *and us; for not only* one *has risen up against us to destroy us, but in all ages they rise up against us to destroy us; and the Holy* One*, blessed be He, rescues us from their* hands*.*

The Haggada begins by telling us the promise given to Avraham at the covenant between the parts, the Brit HaBetarim. Here is the full text of that covenant:

***Bereshit (Genesis) 15:13-16*** *And he said unto* Abram*,* Know *of a surety that thy* seed *shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them* four *hundred years; 14 And also that* nation*, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance. 15 And thou shalt go to thy* fathers *in peace; thou shalt be buried in a good old age. 16 But in the* fourthgeneration *they shall come hither again: for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full.*

Then, the second paragraph, of the Haggada, tells us that this promise *has stood by our* fathers *and us*…

Let’s, for a moment, consider what Yaaqob might have learned from the words of the covenant made with Avraham, when HaShem passed between the animal parts on that fateful day. If Yaaqob believed that those covenantal words applied to his situation, then he would start contemplating, while guarding Laban’s sheep, that he would be in a unique position once his primary, and beloved, wife gave birth to her first son, Joseph. You see, Joseph was the fourth generation from Avraham.

***Bereshit (Genesis) 30:25*** *And it came to pass, when Rachel had borne* Joseph*, that* Yaaqob *said unto Laban: 'Send me away, that I may go unto mine own place, and to my country.*

The Torah comes to teach us that the birth of Joseph, in the above pasuk, was the trigger that caused Yaaqob (Israel) to leave Laban and return to the land of Canaan. Consider what he might have thought: I am a *stranger in a land that is not my own*, just as the promise foretold. Now, Joseph will be the fourth generation since the prophecy was given: Avraham, Yitzchak, Yaaqob, Joseph… The prophecy said that *in the* fourthgeneration *they shall come hither again.* If Joseph is the fourth generation, then it is time for me to return to the land promised to Avraham. Thus, the Torah tells us that Joseph’s birth was the trigger that caused Yaaqob (Israel) to return to the promised land.

The Torah strongly hints that what happened in Yaaqob’s life was the pattern that would follow in the Egyptian exodus. Let’s take a moment and compare Yaaqob’s exodus from Laban with the exodus of the Children of Israel from Egypt in the days of Moshe.

There are four particular points of congruence between Yaaqob’s exodus and the exodus of the Children of Israel. These four passages are delineated by the use of the same word in each of the following four passages.

The second of Rabbi Ishmael’s thirteen rules of hermeneutics, says that: **2.** Gezerah shavah: *From a similarity of words.* (Identical with the second rule of Hillel.)

If a similar word or expression occurs in two places in scripture, the rulings of each place may be applied to the other. The Haggada is making this connection for us. Consider that the identical Hebrew words (וישג וירדף ויקח ויגד), in the identical order, are used in all of the following passages:

In Bereshit (Genesis) 31:18ff, the Torah elaborates on Yaaqob's manner of leaving Paddan Aram, because it strikingly portends the departure of his descendants from Egyptian bondage.

Just as Yaaqob left with great wealth, so his descendants left Egypt with great wealth,[[6]](#footnote-6) as God promised Avraham.[[7]](#footnote-7) When Yaaqob left Laban’s home, Laban chased him. Similarly, when the Jewish People left Egypt, Pharaoh and his army chased after them. Furthermore, just like Pharaoh began his chase on the third day (because the Jewish people were supposed to go for just three days) and caught up with them on the seventh, Laban also chased Yaaqob on the third day of his absence and caught up with him on the seventh.[[8]](#footnote-8) Laban pursued Yaaqob, who was saved because of God's intervention; Pharaoh pursued Israel which was saved by the miracle at the Sea of Reeds.[[9]](#footnote-9) Thus, this is another illustration of the principle that the events in the lives of the Patriarchs were forerunners of their children's future history.[[10]](#footnote-10)

Yaaqob worked tirelessly day and night tending to Laban’s sheep, as Yaaqob said regarding his working conditions, “*I was consumed by the heat during the day, and frost by night, and my* sleep *drifted from my* eyes*.*” In Egypt, too, the Jewish People worked day and night under ruthless conditions for Pharaoh.

Laban changed Yaaqob’s wages time and time again, as Yaaqob said to his wives, “*Your father [Laban] mocked me and changed my wage* ten *times, but God did not let him harm me*. In Egypt, Pharaoh also tricked the Jews to work for him by promising wages, but then ordered them to work without compensation.

But wait! There is even more!

In Bereshit (Genesis) 31:18ff, Yaaqob purposely left in a grand manner, leading his flocks, all 600,00 sheep (mirroring the 600,000 men in the exodus[[11]](#footnote-11) [[12]](#footnote-12)), and systematically gathering all his wealth, so as not to arouse the suspicions of Laban's people. Anyone who saw him leaving so openly would assume that he was departing with Laban's full knowledge and consent. Had he gone stealthily, he would have been stamped as a fugitive.[[13]](#footnote-13) In the same way, the Torah tells us that the *Bne Israel went out with a high* hand.[[14]](#footnote-14) Further, we read that the *Bne Israel were armed when they went up* out of Egypt.[[15]](#footnote-15)

As an aside, the Targum tells us clearly that the Bne Israel were in Egypt for thirty weeks of years:

***Targum Pseudo Jonathan for: Shemot 12:40****. And the days of the* dwelling *of the sons of Israel in Egypt were* thirty *weeks of years, (*thirty *times* seven *years,) which is the sum of* two *hundred and* ten *years. But the* number *of* four *hundred and* thirty *years (had passed away since) the LORD* spoke *to* Abraham*, in the hour that He* spoke *with him on the* fifteenth *of* Nisan*, between the divided parts, until the day that they went* out of Egypt*.*

When we compare this to Yaaqob’s time with Laban, we find that he First was aguest of Laban for one month.[[16]](#footnote-16) Then worked seven years for Rachel and received Leah.[[17]](#footnote-17) He then served seven more years to finally receive Rachel.[[18]](#footnote-18) Finally, he served six plus years to acquire his fortune.[[19]](#footnote-19) Thus we find that there were three weeks of years (21 years) that Yaaqob served Laban corresponding to one-tenth the thirty weeks of years (210 years) that we served the Egyptians.

There were four stages to Yaaqob’s exile and his family’s exile:

1. Entering exile
2. Slavery
3. Attempt to leave early
4. Leaving exile

Yaaqob began his exile on Passover after serving Yitzchak the Passover lamb and receiving the blessing of the firstborn. The Bne Israel also went into exile on Passover.

Both Yaaqob and the Children of Israel *served (their enslavers) them; and they shall afflict them*, just as Avraham’s prophecy foretold.

Thus, Yaaqob understood the covenant, made with Avraham, was to be fulfilled in his day, with HIM! (Now how many of you thought that the covenant made with Avraham only applied to the Egyptian exodus in the days of Moshe?)

Yaaqob had thought that the prophecy could be fulfilled in him. However, Chazal teach that the sale of Joseph put an end to that possibility. Again, Joseph is the key to both exodus I and exodus II.

“*ma’aseh avot siman labanim” -* “The actions of the forefathers serve as a portent for their descendants”.[[20]](#footnote-20)

|  | **Yaaqob** | **Bne Israel** |
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| Brothers struggle | Yaaqob and Esav are struggling in the womb over the birthright of a firstborn. | Yoseph is struggling with 10 brothers because of Yoseph’s firstborn elevation. |
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| The birthright is acquired. | Yaaqob buys the birthright from Esav to become Yitzchak’s **firstborn**. | Yaaqob gives the double portion of garments to Yoseph who is considered by Yaaqob to be his true **firstborn**. |
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| Trouble brews when a brother is elevated to become the becor, the **firstborn**. | When Yaaqob revieved Yitzchak’s blessing for the firstborn by bringing a goat meal, wearing, a goat skin, and representing himself to be the **firstborn**, this forced Yaaqob into his exile.  | In the same way, when Joseph’s brothers dipped Joseph’s garment of a **firstborn** into goat blood (a goat and a garment II) and deceived Yaaqob with it. Thus, both went into exile in virtually the same way: with an elevated **firstborn**.. |
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| Exile began on Passover | Yaaqob left after serving Yitzchak the Passover lamb and receiving the blessing of the firstborn. | The Bne Israel left Egypt on Passover, the 430 years to the day when they entered.[[21]](#footnote-21) |
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| Exile  | One son’s elevation to **firstborn** by his father, with a goat and a garment, led to 21 years of slavery, for one man. | Ten son’s deception of their father, with a goat and a **firstborn’s** garment, led to slavery that was ten times longer, 210 years, for an entire nation. |
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| No regards for possessions | Eliphaz stole all of Yaaqob’s belonging.[[22]](#footnote-22) | Yosef commanded his brothers to have no regard for their stuff. |
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| Meet with HaShem on exile journey. | Yaaqob and the ladder to heaven.[[23]](#footnote-23) | HaShem speaks to Yaaqob at Beer-Sheba.[[24]](#footnote-24) |
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| Both kiss on arrival. | Yaaqob kisses Rachel.[[25]](#footnote-25) | Yosef kissed his father.[[26]](#footnote-26) |
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| The family grows. | Yaaqob acquired four wives and 12 children in exile. | The Bne Israel grew from 70 people to more that 3 million. |
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| Birth Pangs | Laban Changed Yaaqob’s wages ten times.[[27]](#footnote-27) | HaShem plagued Egypt with 10 plagues. |
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| Slavery | Laban decieves and enslaves Yaaqob. | The Egyptians deceive and enslave the Bne Israel. |
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| Attempt to leave early | Yaaqob decides to leave when Yosef is born.[[28]](#footnote-28) | Some Bne Ephraim leave 30 years too early and are all killed.[[29]](#footnote-29) |
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| The destruction of the Bne Israel. | Laban attempts to kill Yaaqob and all of his family. | The Egyptian threw baby boys in the Nile.[[30]](#footnote-30) |
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| Exile begins to end with a firstborn.  | When Yoseph, Yaaqob’s **firstborn**, is born - Yaaqob and his family begin leaving exile. | The Bne Israel are declared to be HaShem’s **firstborn**. This leads directly to the exodus and the end of the Egyptian exile. |
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| Left at midnight | Yaaqob was free of Laban at midnight. | The Bne Israel was free of the Ehyptians at midnight.  |
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| Left on Passover | Yaaqob left Laban on Passover.[[31]](#footnote-31) | The Bne Isreal left Egypt on Passover.[[32]](#footnote-32) |
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| Leaves with great wealth | Yaaqob leaves exile with Laban’s wealth given to him by HaShem for his 21 years of slavery. | The Bne Israel leave exile with the wealth of the Egyptian given to them by the Egyptians as wages for their slavery. |
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| The chase | Laban chases after Yaaqob after 3 days. | Paro chases after the Bne Israel after 3 days. |
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| The Torah teaches us that trouble would begin three days into the exodus from Laban and the exodus from Pharaoh. | ***Bereshit (Genesis) 31:22*** *And it was told* (וַיֻּגַּד) *Laban on the* third *day that* Yaaqob *was fled.* | ***Shemot (***Exodus***) 5:3*** *And they said: 'The God of the* Hebrews *hath met with us. Let us go, we* pray *thee,* three *days'* journey *into the wilderness, and* sacrifice *unto* HaShem *our God; lest He fall upon us with pestilence, or with the sword.'…****Shemot (***Exodus***) 14:5*** *And it was told* (וַיֻּגַּד) *the king of Egypt that the people fled:* |
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| So, on the third day of fleeing, the bad guys give chase to bring back the good guys. | ***Bereshit (Genesis) 31:23*** *And he (Laban) took* (וַיִּקַּח) *his brethren with him, and pursued after him* seven *days'* journey… | ***Shemot (***Exodus***) 14:6*** *And he made ready his chariots, and took* (לָקַח ) *his people with him.* |
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| The identical words are used to describe both Laban’s pursuit and Pharaoh’s pursuit. | ***Bereshit (Genesis) 31:23*** *And he (Laban) took his brethren with him, and pursued* (וַיִּרְדֹּף) *after him...* | ***Shemot (***Exodus***) 14:8*** *And* HaShem *hardened the* heart *of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and he pursued* (וַיִּרְדֹּף) *after the children of Israel; for the children of Israel went out with a high* hand*.* |
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| And just as Laban caught up to Yaaqob *after* seven *days*, so also did Pharaoh catch up with the fleeing Israelites *on the seventh day*. | ***Bereshit (Genesis) 31:25*** *And Laban came up* (וַיַּשֵּׂג) *with* Yaaqob*. Now* Yaaqob *had pitched his tent in the mountain; and Laban with his brethren pitched in the mountain of Gilead.* | ***Shemot (***Exodus***) 14:9*** *And the Egyptians pursued after them, all the horses and chariots of Pharaoh, and his horsemen, and his army, and overtook them* (וַיַּשִּׂיגוּ) *encamping by the sea, beside Pi-Hahiroth, in front of Baal-zephon.* |
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| Idols insulted | Rachel sat on Laban’s teraphim while menstruating. | The 10 plagues defeated the major Egyptian idols.[[33]](#footnote-33) |
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| The birth-like water crossing. | Yaaqob crosses the Yabbok river and immediately returns. | The Bne Israel crosses the Reed Sea in a shofar shape and come out on the same side. |
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| Never to return. | Yaaqob and Laban make a covenant never to cross into the opposite territory, except for business. | HaShem tells the Bne Israel never to return to Egypt, except for business. |
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| The birth | Yaaqob is given the additional name of “Israel”. | The Bne Israel, free of Egyptian control, became a nation.[[34]](#footnote-34) |
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| Brothers are reconciled | Yaaqob is reconciled with Esav. | Yoseph is reconciled with his brothers. |
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| Conflict with Esav and his descendants. | Yaaqob encounters an armed brother with 300 men. | The Bne Israel encounter an armed Amalek who a descendant of Esav. |
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| Succoth | Yaaqob builds succoth for his animals, in a place called Succoth soon as his exile ends. He stays there for a year and a half. | The Bne Israel stay at Succoth in their succoth at their firststop after leaving exile. |
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| Sexual Immorality | Dina is raped by Shechem. | Daughters of Moab and Midian seduced some members of the tribe of Simeon, including Zimri the leader. |
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| Circumcized sinners are killed | The males of the city of Shechem were circumcized and then killed by Simeon and Levi. | The immoral sinners of the tribe of Simeon are killed by a plague. |
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| Carrying Yaaqob’s bier | When Yaaqob died, his sons carried his bier to Canaan with the same entouage that we will see in the exodus. | The Bne Israel were escorted by the Egyptian when they left. They carried the Mishkan in the same tribal order as they carried Yaaqob’s bier. |

Just as Yaaqob left Laban in the 21st year of his exile, so also did the Children of Israel leave their exile after 210 years, exactly ten times longer.

HaShem did not put us into slavery, rather we sent ourselves into slavery by our own actions. Remember the goats and coats? Notice in the first table below, that the cause of Yaaqob’s problems begin with the actions of people.

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| **Bereshit (Genesis) 15:13-14** |
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| **Cause** | **Effect** |
| Your children | Your descendants will be strangers in a strange land. |
| Inhabitants of the land | The inhabitants of the land will enslave them and they will oppress them. |
| HaShem | But, I will exact judgment against that nation and then [your progeny] will leave with great wealth. |

It is possible that we could have avoided the Egyptian exile if we had avoided the second episode of goats and coats. In that case, Yaaqob’s exile with Laban could have sufficed to fulfill the prophecy given to Avraham.

Laban's cruelty is the reason why Yaaqob could not remain in Paddan Aram in fulfillment of God's prophecy to Avraham that his children would endure a long exile.[[35]](#footnote-35) An allusion to this may be found in the verse: *An Aramean was the destroyer of my father, and he went down to Egypt*;[[36]](#footnote-36) because of Laban the Aramean, Yaaqob was forced to undergo his exile in Egypt rather than in Aram.[[37]](#footnote-37)

The passage in the Haggada, from Yehoshua, now begins to make sense:

In the beginning our fathers were worshippers of idols, but now the Ever-Present has brought us to His service, as it is said: "And Joshua spoke to the whole people: Thus, has HaShem, God of Israel spoken: 'Your fathers dwelt in olden times beyond the River (Euphrates), Terach, the father of Avraham and the father of Nahor, and they served other gods. And I took your father Avraham from beyond the River and led him throughout all the land of Canaan, and I multiplied his seed and gave him Yitzchak. And I gave to Yitzchak, Yaaqob and Esau; and I gave to Esau Mount Seir, to possess it, and Yaaqob and his sons went down to Egypt'."

Joshua describes a long journey that did not have to be so long. Note the verbs used:

***Yehoshua (Joshua) 24:2*** *And Joshua said unto all the people: 'Thus saith* HaShem*, the God of Israel: Your* fathers *dwelt of old* time *beyond the River, even* Terah*, the father of* Avraham*, and the father of Nahor; and they served other gods.* ***3*** *And I took your father* Avraham *from beyond the River, and led him throughout all the land of Canaan, and multiplied his* seed*, and gave him* Yitzchak*.* ***4*** *And I gave unto* YitzchakYaaqob *and* Esau*; and I gave unto* Esau *mount Seir, to possess it; and* Yaaqob *and his children went down* into Egypt*.*

Notice in the second table below, that the cause of Avraham’s blessing begins, with the actions of HaShem, and ends with the actions of man.

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| **Yehoshua (Joshua) 24: 3-4** |
| **Cause** | **Effect** |
| HaShem | And then I took your father Avraham from the other side of the river |
| HaShem | and I walked him throughout the land of Canaan |
| HaShem | and I gave him many children. I gave him Yitzchak |
| HaShem | and to Yitzchak, I gave Yaaqob and Esav. |
| HaShem | and I gave Esav the mountain of Seir as an inheritance |
| **Man** (because of goats and coats II) | and Yaaqob and his children went down to Egypt |

In other words, HaShem did not force us into the Egyptian exile, rather we forced ourselves!

Now, we have another question: Why does the Haggada divert our attention to: ***4*** *And I gave unto* YitzchakYaaqob *and* Esau*; and I gave unto* Esau *mount Seir, to possess it?*

Because Avraham was beginning to have progeny and he was in the land. The covenant promise seems to be coming true. The promises to Esav came true while Yaaqob was sent into exile with Laban. Suddenly the covenant promise to Avraham has gone off the rails, so to speak. No sooner does Yaaqob get back from Laban’s land, then he and his family go into exile in Egypt. Never the less, the Haggada tells us that HaShem keeps His promise to Avraham- in EVERY generation!

And it is this that has stood by our fathers and us; for not only one has risen up against us to destroy us, but in all ages, they rise up against us to destroy us; and the Holy One, blessed be He, rescues us from their hands.

This tells us that no matter how bad we mess up the plan, HaShem will always step in and put our train back on the track.

Our survival, in every generation, hinges on the promise given to Avraham at the covenant between the parts. The Haggada makes this point with the next paragraph where it equates the exile with Laban with the exile with Pharaoh.

Go and learn what Laban the Aramean planned to do to our father Yaaqob; for Pharaoh decreed only that the male (children) should be put to death, but Laban had planned to uproot all, as it is said: "**The Aramean sought to destroy my father, and the latter went down to Egypt and sojourned there, with a family few in** number**; and he became there a** nation**, great, mighty, and numerous**."

The Haggada is now, briefly, telling us that there is a direct connection between the two exiles, just as we laid out earlier.

This should bring us great comfort. If HaShem has delivered us at least twice, then **we can count on Him to deliver us in every** generation. That is the point being made by the Haggada. This is the comfort for those of us who are still in an exile of our own making. HaShem will take us out and He will make us wealthy.

Interestingly, when the Chida[[38]](#footnote-38) addresses the connection between the exodus from Egyptand the story of Laban, he quotes the Alshich[[39]](#footnote-39) who says that Laban’s actions directly caused the enslavement in Egypt. The Alshich explains that when Laban switched Leah for Rachel in their marriages with Yaaqob, Yosef - Rachel’s firstborn - was no longer Yaaqob’s firstborn. This being the case, Yaaqob’s favoritism toward Yosef, had Yosef been his firstborn, would have been normal. Since, however, Laban manipulated Yaaqob’s marriage, Yaaqob also married Leah, and she bore him Reuven, his actual firstborn. Thus, the favoritism Yaaqob showed Yosef (the youngest of the brothers at the time) was unfounded, and thus led to their brothers’ jealousy. This jealousy led to Yosef’s sale to Egypt — the eventual cause for Yaaqob’s, and essentially the entire Jewish nation’s, descent to Egypt.[[40]](#footnote-40)

Chida’s answer clearly explains why the story of Laban and Yaaqob is the perfect place to start with. This was the both the root of how it happened, by serving as the *ma’aseh Avot siman l’banim*, and also the direct cause.

**The** futureExodus **III**

The Prophet Micah contains a scary thought that bears directly on what we have just learned.

Rabbi Yose said, “It is written: As in the days of your coming out of the land of Egypt, I will show him wonders”.[[41]](#footnote-41) This refers to the future redemption through Mashiach.[[42]](#footnote-42)

The Mechilta[[43]](#footnote-43) at the end of Chapter11 comments: He did wonders for the fathers and in the future, will do so for the children, as it says “As in the days of your coming out of the land of Egypt, I will show him wondrous deeds”.[[44]](#footnote-44) I will show him what I did not show the fathers.

Perhaps the last 2100 years of exile are nearing an end and we are about to be led back into the wilderness.

**\* \* \***

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1. I heard this idea from Rabbi David Fohrman who ascribed the idea to Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik (1903-1993). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. The Haggada ("telling") is a Jewish text that sets forth the order of the Passover Seder. Reading the Haggada at the Seder table is a fulfillment of the Scriptural commandment to each Jew to "tell your son" of the Jewish liberation from slavery in Egypt as described in the Book of Exodus in the Torah ("And thou shalt tell thy son in that day, saying: It is because of that which HaShem did for me when I came forth out of Egypt." Ex. 13:8). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Rabbi Moses ben Nachman (1194–1270), commonly known as Nachmanides, and also referred to by the acronym Ramban, was a leading medieval Jewish scholar, Sephardic rabbi, philosopher, physician, kabbalist, and biblical commentator. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Lech-Lecha (לֶךְ-לְךָ‎ Hebrew for "go!" or "leave!", literally "go for you") is the third weekly Torah portion (פָּרָשָׁה‎, parashah) in the annual Jewish cycle of Torah reading. It constitutes Genesis 12:1–17:27. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Midrash Tanchuma (Lech Lecha 9); Sotah 34a [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. בך־כש גדול [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Bereshit (Genesis) 15:14 [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Shemot (Exodus) 14:5 [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. The events in Yaaqob's life were a prognostication for his descendants (Rimzei HaTorah, Torah Shelemah 31:50). [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Hoffman; cf. Tanchuma Lech-Lecha 9 [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. R. Tsadok haKohen, Tsidkat HaTsadik, 91, 197.  Also see: R. Shlomo Elyashuv, Chelek haBiurim, Shaat HaAkudim 1:7. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. According to the Yismach Moshe, his first gilgul was as one of the sheep in the flock of Yaakov Avinu, when he worked as one of Lavan’s shepherds: “As is known in many sources, Yaakov Avinu, who was one of the ‘seven shepherds,’ had 600,000 sheep, which included all 600,000 Jewish souls. I remember myself as one of those sheep, and I even remember the tune that Yaakov Avinu would play with his flute before the flock, when the time came to gather them together...” On the second occasion, he was among the 600,000 children of Israel who left Egypt. He recalled their time in the wilderness, and all the trials and hardships they endured, particularly the story of Korach’s rebellion. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Abarbanel [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Shemot (Exodus) 14:8 [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Shemot (Exodus) 13:18 [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Bereshit (Genesis) 29:14 [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Bereshit (Genesis) 29:20 [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Bereshit (Genesis) 29:27 [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Bereshit (Genesis) 31:38 [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. See Midrash Tanchuma, Lech Lecha section 9, and Ramban, Bereishit 12:6. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Shemot (Exodus) 12:41 [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Rashi to 29:11 and from Bereshit Rabbathi by Rabbi Moshe Hadarshan. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Bereshit (Genesis) 28:11-17 [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Bereshit (Genesis) 46:1-4 [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Bereshit (Genesis) 29:11 [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. Bereshit (Genesis) 46:29 [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Bereshit (Genesis) 31:7 [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. Bereshit (Genesis) 30:25 [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. Sanhedrin 92b [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. Shemot (Exodus) 1:22 [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. The Haggada [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. Shemot (Exodus) 12:27-41 [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. Bamidbar (Numbers) 33:4 [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. The Maharal explains that Yetzias Mitzrayim was not merely a *physical* process, in which the Jewish People departed from the land of Egypt and traveled to a different physical location. It was a *spiritual* metamorphosis, an existential transition, the birth of a people. Prior to leaving Mitzrayim, Bnei Yisrael were a collective of individuals, but upon leaving, we became a nation, a single people, a unified whole.  [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. Bereshit (Genesis) 15:13 [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. Debarim (Deuteronomy) 26:5; When Laban set out in pursuit of Yaaqob he intended to kill him, and the Torah accordingly speaks of Laban as if he had actually done so, as it says: An Aramean, was the destroyer of my father [Deut. 26:5]. For the gentile nations, God equates evil intentions with actions [because their general performance justifies the assumption that they would indeed do so if they had the opportunity] (Rashi, Deut. ibid.). [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. R' Munk [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. Haim Yosef David Azulai ben Yitzhak Zerachia (1724 – 1 March 1806), commonly known as the Chida (the acronym of his name, חיד"א‎), was a Jerusalem born rabbinical scholar, a noted bibliophile, and a pioneer in the publication of Jewish religious writings. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. Moshe Alshich (1508–1593), known as the Alshich Hakadosh (the Holy), was a prominent rabbi, preacher, and biblical commentator in the latter part of the 16th century. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. see the Chida’s *Geulat Olam* and the Alshich’s *Torat Moshe*on *Debarim* 26:5 [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. As in the days of your coming out... In this verse from Micah 7:15, the Exodus serves as a paradigm for Israel’s future restoration and salvation. On this theme, sec Mekhiha, Shirta 8; Tanchuma, Eqev 7; Tanchuma (Buber), Toledot 17; Shemot Rabbah 15:11. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. Mashiach = Messiah [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. Mechilta (a collection of rules of interpretation) is a halakhic midrash to the Book of Exodus. The name "Mechilta", corresponds to the Hebrew "middah" ("measure", "rule"), and is used to denote a compilation of Scriptural exegesis. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. Micah 7:15 [↑](#footnote-ref-44)