

As we continue with the telling of our story we are about to reach the heart of the seder. The Mishna tells us that we are to expound upon the verses beginning with “My father was a wandering Aramean.” As introduction to this section we start with this paragraph. The promise is, of course the brit between God and Abraham, that God will take the people out of Egypt. The Rabbi’s extended this idea that in every generation someone has tried to destroy the people and God save us each time. Here the Hagaddah gives us an opening to bring the topic into our time. It is easy to find, in each generation, those of which to destroy the Jewish people. The difficulty is in seeing how God saves us in each generation. While the seder night has the set Hagaddah, this is a time for us to “elaborate on the story of the exodus.” Here is a simple jumping off point for such discussions. Where do we see God saving us throughout the generations? There are many answers to this question, in fact we each might have a different answer. What is important here is for everyone to discuss their thoughts to enhance the seder. The next section begins by giving us an example of someone in a different generation who wanted to destroy the Jewish people.

Here we see the **final of the four** examples of degradation and praise. That Lavan wanted to destroy us is the degradation, and the praise will be the Hallel just before the meal.

What does Lavan have to do with the story of the Exodus? On one level we could easily say that we are again dealing with an example of “In Every Generation,” meaning that in Jacob’s generation, it was Lavan who wanted to destroy the Jewish people.

The following text is from the book of Deuteronomy, chapter 26 beginning in the middle of verse 5. Here we are getting the laws of how to bring the first fruits to the Temple. Every person was to come with his offering and recite this passage (verses 5 - 10). This is a shortened version of the basic story of the Jewish people. In the Torah we translate “*Arami Oved Avi*,” as “My Father was a Wandering Aramean,” meaning that my ancestors did not have a nation, and then they were enslaved and then God took us out and gave us our home. These are perfect verses for bringing the first fruits. God gave us this home, and now I am bringing him my first fruits.

But here in the Hagaddah, our text is translated differently. “*Arami Oved Avi*” becomes the Aramean (Lavan) wanted to destroy my father BUT he went down to Egypt. We get two things here. We see a reason why we went to Egypt (for safety) and it was that generation’s destroyer who sent us there.

Another question comes to mind. We know we are supposed to tell the story of the exodus from Egypt. The Mishna (pesachim 10:4) tells us that we are to “*doresh*” or do midrash on “*Arami Oved Avi*” until the end of the *parasha*. So we even know what biblical verses we need to use to tell the story. But why these verses? Why not take the verses directly from the book of Exodus when the story occurred? One can perhaps find many esoteric reasons, but it seems that the main reason was because this section is much shorter than the rest.

This promise has sustained our fathers and us. For not only one enemy has risen against us to destroy us. Rather in every generation people rise up to destroy us. But the Holy One Blessed Be He saves us from their hands.

וְהִיא שְׁעֵמֶדָה לְאַבוֹתֵינוּ וְלָנוּ.  
שְׁלֵא אֶחָד בְּלִבָּד, עָמַד עָלֵינוּ  
לְכַלּוֹתֵנוּ. אֲלֵא שְׁבָכֵל דּוֹר וָדוֹר,  
עוֹמְדִים עָלֵינוּ לְכַלּוֹתֵנוּ.  
וְהַקְדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא מְצִילֵנוּ  
מִיָּדָם

Go and learn what Lavan the Aramean wanted to do to Jacob our father. While Pharaoh decreed only against the males, Lavan wanted to uproot all of Israel as it is written: “**The Aramean wanted to destroy my father, but he went down to Egypt and sojourned there with small numbers. There he became a great nation, mighty and numerous.**”

צֵא וְלָמַד, מֵה בְקֵשׁ לָבֹן הָאַרְמִי  
לַעֲשׂוֹת לְיַעֲקֹב אָבִינוּ. שְׁפָרְעָה  
לֹא גָזַר אֱלֹהִים עַל הַזְּכָרִים, וְלָבֹן  
בְּקֵשׁ לַעֲקֹר אֶת הַכֹּל, שְׁנֵאָמַר:  
אַרְמִי אֲבֹד אָבִי, וַיֵּרַד מִצְרַיִם,  
וַיֵּרַד שָׁם בְּמִתֵּי מְעַט. וַיְהִי שָׁם  
לְגוֹי גָדוֹל, עֲצוּם וְרַב: