

Here begins a midrashic commentary of these verses that can be found in the Sifrei Devarim (301:5), a midrashic commentary on the book of Deuteronomy. As stated above, The Mishna (pesahim 10:4) tells us that we are to “doresh” or do midrash on “*Arami Oved Avi*” until the end of the *parasha*. Here our Hagaddah gives us just that. Are we obligated to recite this passage? No, of course not. The Hagaddah is just a guide for us to follow. We are given the freedom to tell the story in our own ways. Earlier the Hagaddah tells us that whomever elaborates on the story of the exodus from Egypt deserves praise. Here is where we get a prime opportunity to do that.

The word sojourned, *vayagor*, seems to indicate some sort of temporary settlement. Jacob needed a place to wait out the famine and Egypt seemed to be the best way to do it. He specifically asks for the land of Goshen as it is a very fertile section and also segregated apart from the Egyptians. But where is Joseph in this? We know that Jacob really went to Egypt because Joseph was there. The midrash wants us to realize that it was God, fulfilling his prophecy to Abraham, who brought us into Egypt, as it will be God who takes us out.

The traditional understanding of “small numbers” is seventy people. These are Jacob and his sons and their sons. In truth there were probably many more people coming with them, including women and serverants. We know that Abraham had many people following him and it is safe to assume that the decendants of these people were still following Jacob. This is perhaps another reason why Jacob chose to live in Goshen. He understands that in order to stay one coherent group, they need to be seperate.

The Haggadah at this point is expanding upon this section on how we came to Egypt and leading up to how the Hebrews went from honored guests to despised enemies. How did we become a nation within a nation? The Hebrews kept to Goshen to stay seperate and as the midrash tells us they did not change their names and they did not change their language (Leviticus Rabbah 32:6). Elsewhere in the midrash we learn that in Exodus 1:7 there are six “expressions of fertility” (fruitful, swarmed, multiplied, increased, very, very much). These six expressions teach us that each pregnancy produced six children (sextuplets) (Exodus Rabbah 1:8).

**“But he went down to Egypt,”** compelled by God’s decree. **“And he sojourned there.”** We learn from this that Jacob our Father went down to settle temporarily, as it is written, “And they said to Pharaoh, we have come to sojourn in the land because there is no pasture for your servent’s sheep for the famine is very bad in the land of Canaan. And now, please let your servents live in the land of Goshen.”

וַיֵּרֶד מִצְרַיִם, אָנוּס עַל פִּי הַדְּבַר. וַיֵּגֶר שָׁם. מְלַמֵּד שֶׁלֹּא יֵרֵד יַעֲקֹב אֲבִינוּ לְהִשְׁתַּקֵּעַ בְּמִצְרַיִם, אֶלָּא לְגוּר שָׁם, שְׁנֵאמַר: וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֶל פַּרְעֹה, לְגוּר בְּאֶרֶץ גּוֹשֵׁן, כִּי אֵין מְרֻעָה לְצֹאן אֲשֶׁר לְעַבְדֶּיךָ, כִּי כִבֵּד הָרָעַב בְּאֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן. וְעַתָּה, יֵשְׁבוּ נָא עַבְדֶּיךָ בְּאֶרֶץ גּוֹשֵׁן: Genesis 47:4

**“With small numbers,”** as it is written, “with seventy souls your ancestors went down into Egypt. And now God has made you as numerous as the stars in the sky.”

בְּמֵתֵי מַעֲט. כִּמָּה שְׁנֵאמַר: בְּשִׁבְעִים נַפְשׁ, יָרְדוּ אֲבֹתֶיךָ מִצְרַיִם. וְעַתָּה, שְׂמֹד יִי אֱלֹהֶיךָ, כְּכֹכְבֵי הַשָּׁמַיִם לְרַב. Deuteronomy 10:22

**“And became a great nation there”** this teaches that Israel became a distinct people there. **“Great and Mighty”** as it is written, “The children of Israel were fruitful and increased greatly, they multiplied and became mighty, and the land was full of them.”

וַיְהִי שָׁם לְגוֹי. מְלַמֵּד שֶׁהָיוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל מְצִינִים שָׁם: גְּדוּל עַצוּם, כִּמָּה שְׁנֵאמַר: וַיְבָרַךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל, פָּרוּ וַיִּשְׁרְצוּ, וַיִּרְבוּ וַיַּעֲצְמוּ, בְּמֵאד מְאֹד, וַתִּמְלֵא הָאֶרֶץ אֹתָם: Exodus 1:7