

## Introduction

### 1. "Go Out and Learn!"

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

Go out and learn what Lavan the Aramean sought to do to Yaakov, our father. For Pharaoh only decreed [a death sentence] upon the males, but Lavan sought to uproot the whole [people]. As it says (Devarim 26:5): An Aramean tried to destroy my father, and he descended to Egypt and he dwelled there in small numbers, and there he became a large, mighty and great nation.

### 2. What did Lavan do?

- Bereishit 29:15-18 Lavan made Yaakov work for him for 7 years to marry Rachel
- Bereishit 29:21-23 Lavan swapped in Leah
- Bereishit 29:25-28 Lavan made Yaakov work for another 7 years for Rachel
- Bereishit 31:41 Lavan tried to cheat Yaakov of his salary
- Bereishit 31:22-24 Lavan pursued Yaakov until Hashem told him to leave Yaakov in peace.

### 3. Harry Freedman, *Laban – A Villain in the Family?* <http://www.harryfreedmanbooks.com>

Laban is certainly a trickster. He tricks Jacob into marrying Leah instead of Rachel and according to Genesis 31,41 he changes Jacob's wages ten times, though what he actually did is not spelt out.

But being a trickster is not so unusual in Genesis... Why is Laban singled out for special treatment? After all, as the father of Rachel and Leah he is as much an ancestor of Israel as is Isaac (but don't shout that out too loud!).

## Nation-Building

### 4. Alvin Powell, *How to build a nation*, <https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2012/12/how-to-build-a-nation/>

Francis Fukuyama, who in 1992 famously predicted "the end of history" because liberal democracies and free market economies suggested an endpoint in the evolution of government, said that external forces can erect the skeleton of state in an embattled country, creating police forces, administrative structures, and taxing authorities. But nation-building goes further and involves a shared sense of national identity, built on elements that tie people together — such as shared culture, language, and history — that cannot be imposed from without.

### 5. Pew Study - <http://www.pewglobal.org/2017/02/01/views-of-national-identity-by-country/>

### 6. Professor Ernest Gellner, *Thought and Change* pg. 169

Nationalism is not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness; it invents nations where they do not exist...

### 7. Francis Fukuyama, *Social Capital and the Global Economy*, Foreign Affairs (September/October 1995)

Virtually all economic activity, from running a laundry to building the latest-generation microprocessor, is carried out not by individuals but by organizations that require a high degree of social cooperation. As economists argue, the ability to form organizations depends on institutions like property rights, contracts, and a system of commercial law. But it also depends on a prior sense of moral community, that is, an unwritten set of ethical rules or norms that serve as the basis of social trust...

### 8. Mishlei 17:17

בְּכֹל עֵת אָהָב הֵרַע וְאָח לְצָרָה יוֹלֵד:

A friend loves at all times; a brother is born from trouble.

9. Rabbi Naftali Zvi Yehudah Berlin, Commentary to Exodus 2:23

ויזעקו. נתקבצו כולם למקום אחד והסכימו לעמוד לתפלה ולצעקה:

"And they cried out" – They gathered to one place and decided to stand in prayer and cries.

10. Rabbi Zalman Sorotzkin, HaShir v'haShevach, **האחדות והמשמעת: תנאים לעצמאות ולהיי חופש**

ורפואת המים מתכונתם הרעה ע"י עירוב בקמח, רק אז בטוחה ושלמה, אם תשים את העיסה תיכף לבליילה אל התנור ולא תשים בעיסה שאור... אבל אם תשים שאור בעיסה או שתניח אותה זמן מרובה בלא עסק וטיפול מיוחד, טרם שתשים אותה בתנור, אז יתחילו אטומי ה"מי מריבה" לשוב לאיתנם...  
And the healing of water from its bad trait is through mixing it with flour. Only then is it secure and whole, if you place the dough, right after mixing, into the oven, and you do not add a rising agent to the dough... But if you place a rising agent in the dough, or you leave it for a long time without working it in a special way until placing it in the oven, then the atoms of the "water of quarreling" will return to their origin...

11. Midrash, Mechilta d'Rabbi Yishmael, Beshalach "Vayehi" 4

נחלק לשנים עשר גזרים שני' ונטה את ירך על הים ובקעהו

[The sea] was split into twelve channels, as it says, "And raise your hand over the sea, and split it."

12. Tribalism is more complicated

- Other Villains of Passover, Part 1 <https://www.yutorah.org/lectures/lecture.cfm/921773/>
- Other Villains of Passover, Part 2 <https://www.yutorah.org/lectures/lecture.cfm/922358/>

13. Rabbi Yechiel Michel Epstein, Introduction to Aruch haShulchan on Choshen Mishpat

ותפארת השיר היא כשהקולות משונים זה מזה, וזהו עיקר הנעימות.

The splendour of a song is when the voices are different from each other; that is the essence of its appeal.