

Introduction

1. Deuteronomy 26:5-9, as per the Haggadah

And you shall declare and say before Hashem your Gd: 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. And the Egyptians harmed us and oppressed us and placed harsh labour upon us. And we cried out to Hashem, Gd of our ancestors, and Gd heard our voice, and He saw our oppression and our struggle and our strain. And Gd took us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm and great awe, and with signs and wonders. And He brought us to this place, and He gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey.

2. Contemporary Ashkenazi Haggadah (modified from sefaria.org)

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

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: What it takes to truly be 'one of us' - <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...

Laban: The Germ

8. Genesis 29:18-28

And Jacob loved Rachel, and he said, "I will work for you for seven years for Rachel, your younger daughter." And Laban said, "Better that I give her to you than that I give her to another man; stay with me." And Jacob worked for Rachel for seven years, and they were just a number of days in his eyes, in his love for her.

And Jacob said to Laban, "Give me my wife, for my days are complete, and I will be with her."

And Laban gathered all of the local people, and he made a feast. And that evening, and he took his daughter Leah and he brought her to [Jacob], and he came to her. And Laban gave her his maid Zilpah, to his daughter Leah as a maid.

And it was in the morning, and behold, she was Leah. And he said to Laban, "What is this, that you have done to me?! Did I not work with you for Rachel? Why have you deceived me?!"

And Laban said, "Thus shall not be done in our place, to give the younger before the elder. Complete this week, and we will give you also this one, for the work you shall do with me for another seven years."

And Jacob did this, and he completed that week, and [Laban] gave him his daughter Rachel, to him as a wife.

9. Genesis 31:14-16

And Rachel and Leah answered, and they said to him: Do we have a share and portion in our father's house anymore? He thinks of us as strangers, for he has sold us, and he has also eaten our money. For all of the wealth that Gd has saved from our father belongs to us and to our children. Now, do all that Gd has told you.

10. Genesis 31:1-2

And Jacob heard the words of the sons of Laban, saying, "Jacob has taken all that our father possessed; from our father's property he created all of this wealth!" And Jacob saw Laban's face, that he was not with him as he had been previously.

11. Genesis 31:36-44

And Jacob was enraged and he fought Laban. And Jacob declared to Laban: What is my rebellion, what is my sin, such that you lit out after me? You have felt through all of my implements – what have you found, from all of the implements of your house? Place it here, before my brothers and your brothers, and let them demonstrate which of us is right! I have been with you for twenty years, and your lambs and goats never lost young, and I never ate the rams of your sheep. I never brought a torn animal to you; I made up the loss, from my own hand you sought it, whether stolen by day or night. I was eaten by heat in the day and ice at night, and sleep flew from my eyes. I was in your house for twenty years – I worked for you for fourteen years for your two daughters, and six years for your sheep, and you switched my salary ten times! If not for the Gd of my father, the Gd of Abraham and the Terror of Isaac being with me, you would have sent me off with nothing! My affliction and the work of my hands, Gd saw them and determined last night.

And Laban declared and said to Jacob: The daughters are my daughters, the sons are my sons, the sheep are my sheep, and everything you see is mine. And as far as my daughters – what would I do to them today, or to the children they have birthed? Now, let us make a pact, me and you, and it will be a witness between me and you.

12. The Children of Jacob

Leah	Reuben, Simon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Zevulun, Dinah
Zilpah	Gad, Asher
Bilhah	Dan, Naphtali
Rachel	Joseph, Benjamin

13. Genesis 30:1

And Rachel saw that she had not birthed to Jacob, and Rachel became jealous of her sister. And she said to Jacob: Give me children! If not, I shall die.

14. Genesis 30:14-15

And Reuben went during the wheat harvest, and he found mandrakes in the field and he brought them to his mother Leah. And Rachel said to Leah: Please give me from your son's mandrakes.

And [Leah] said to her: Is it a small thing, that you took my husband, and now you will take my son's mandrakes?
And Rachel said: Therefore, he will lie with you tonight, in exchange for your son's mandrakes.

15. Genesis 33:1-2

And Jacob raised his eyes and saw Esav coming, and 400 men with him. And he split the children between Leah, Rachel and the two maids. And he placed the maids first with their children, and Leah and her children after them, and Rachel and Joseph after them.

16. Genesis 37:2

These are the children of Jacob: Joseph was seventeen years old, herding the sheep with his brothers, and he was a *na'ar* with the sons of Bilhah and the sons of Zilpah, his father's wives...

17. Numbers 1:5-15 - List of heads of tribes, for a census

Reuben, Simon, Judah, Issachar, Zebulun, Joseph (Ephraim & Menasheh), Benjamin, Dan, Asher, Gad, Naphtali

18. Numbers 2 – The desert camps

Judah, Issachar, Zebulun

Reuben, Simon, Gad

Levites

Ephraim, Menasheh, Benjamin

Dan, Asher, Naphtali

Judah: The Sale

19. Genesis 37:18-20

And they saw him from afar, and before he could draw near, they plotted to kill him. And one said to his brother: Behold, this dreamer is coming! Let us go kill him and throw him into one of the pits, and we will say that a wild beast ate him. We will see what comes of his dreams.

20. Rashi to Genesis 49:5

"Simon and Levi are brothers" – In one plan regarding Shechem and Joseph. "And one said to his brother: Let us go and kill him" – Who were they? Reuben and Judah did not agree to his murder. The sons of the maids did not fully hate Joseph, as it is written, "He was a youth with the children of Bilhah and Zilpah." Issachar and Zebulun would not have spoken before their elder brothers. It must have been Simon and Levi – whose father called them "brothers."

21. Genesis 49:5-7

Simon and Levi are brothers; tools of violence are their weapons. In their secret, my spirit will not enter. In their council, my honour will not be degraded. For in their anger they killed a man, and at will they uprooted an ox. Cursed be their rage, for it is strong, and their anger, for it is harsh. I will split them among Jacob, and I will scatter them among Israel.

22. Rabbi Abraham ibn Ezra to Genesis 37:1

"Offspring of Jacob" – The occasions which befell him, and events which came upon him.

23. Rashi to Genesis 37:2

The first cause, "Joseph was 17", this led to their descent to Egypt...

"And he was a youth" – he acted like a youth, fixing his hair, rubbing his eyes, to look good.

"With the sons of Bilhah" – meaning, he regularly stayed with the sons of Bilhah, because his [other] brothers mocked him, and he drew them close.

"Speech about their bad conduct" – Whenever he saw bad in his brothers, the sons of Leah, he told his father...

24. Rabbi Naphtali Zvi Judah Berlin, Haameik Davar to Genesis 37:3

"And he was a *na'ar*" – Meaning, a serving youth... Joseph served them and they served him. Thus it says, "He was a *na'ar* with the sons", serving each other. Therefore it says, "And Joseph brought news of their bad conduct to their father," that they did not treat him properly. Therefore, the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah hated him. This is Ramban's view.

25. Genesis 37:21-22

And Reuben heard and he saved him from their hands, saying, "Do not strike him mortally." And Reuben told them, "Do not spill blood! Throw him in this pit in the wilderness, and do not send your hand against him." So that he could save him from their hand, returning him to his father.

26. Genesis 37:23-29

And when Joseph reached his brothers, they stripped Joseph of his tunic, the striped tunic he wore. And they took him and cast him into the pit, and the pit was empty, without water. And they sat to eat bread, and they raised their eyes and saw, behold, a caravan of Ishmaelites coming from Gilad... And Judah said to his brothers, "What profit would there be if we would kill our brother and cover his blood? Let us sell him to the Ishmaelites, and let our hands not be upon him, for he is our brother and our flesh!" And his brothers listened...

And Reuben returned to the pit, and behold, Joseph was not in the pit. And he tore his clothes.

27. Amos 2:6-8

So declares Gd: For three sins of Israel, and for four I shall not recant: For selling the righteous for silver, and the pauper for shoes. They trample into the ground the heads of the indigent, and they warp the path of the humble. And a man and his father go to a girl, to desecrate My holy Name. They lean back on clothing taken as collateral beside every altar, and they drink the wine of those they punish, in the house of their Gd.

28. Talmud, Sotah 13b

One who performs a task but does not finish it, and someone else finishes it – the text considers it as though the other had finished it [as seen from the credit given to the Jews, rather than Moses, for taking Joseph's bones from Egypt to Israel]. Rabbi Elazar added: He is also removed from his elevated status, as Genesis 38:1 says, "And at that time, Judah descended."