

Maamarei Mordechai

הסבר לפי ממש פשוט

Parshas Ki Savo 5783

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The Torah talks about coming into Eretz Yisroel. Upon settling in the Land, bikkurim would be brought to the Mishkan. The bringer of bikkurim – the first grapes, figs, pomegranates, olives, and dates – would say a proclamation upon bringing the fruits.

**וְעֲנִיתָ וְאָמַרְתָּ לְפָנָי | הָאֵלֵיִקָּה אֲרַמְלִי אֲבִד אָבִי וַיֵּרַד מִצְרַיִם וַיִּגְדַּר שָׁם בְּמֵתֵי מְעַט
וַיְהִי־שָׁם לְגוֹי גָּדוֹל עָצוּם וְרַב:**

“And you shall respond and say before Hashem, your Lord, ‘My forefather was a lost Aramean, and he went down to Mitzrayim, and he sojourned there with meager numbers. And he, there, became a great nation, powerful and many.’” (Devarim 26:5).

The baal Pesach Haggadah uses the homiletic translation, that an Aramean wanted to destroy our forefather. However, the word אבד also means lost. (*Hashovas aveida*). This is how the phrase means “my father was a lost Aramean.” The avos were known as Hebrews (Bereishis 14:13) but Avraham was from Aram. וַיִּקַּח תְּרַח אֶת־אֲבָרָם בְּנוֹ וְאֶת־לוֹט בְּנוֹ־הָרָן וְאֶת־סָרַי בְּנוֹתֵהּ וַיֵּצְאוּ אֹתָם מֵאֶרֶץ אֲרָם לְלֶכֶת אֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן וַיִּבְאוּ עַד־חָרָן וַיִּשְׁבוּ שָׁם: “And Terach took Avram, his son, and Lot the son of Haran, his son, and Sarai, his adopted daughter, the wife of Avram, his son. And they went with him from Ur Kasdim (Chaldeans) to go to the Land of Canaan. However, they came to Charan, and they settled there.” (Ibid 11:31). Avram traveled south from Ur Kasdim and settled in Charan which was Aram. His children, then, were also Arameans, and Yitzchok and Yaakov both had their spouses from there. The pasuk is saying, my forefather, Yaakov – who lived in Aram for twenty years – was a lost Aramean. He was alone in Canaan, living in a land not his. He went down to Mitzrayim and dwelt there, few in family members. There he became a large nation, powerful and populous.

This pasuk is taken from the giver of bikkurim, or first fruits, at Shevuos time. When giving the bikkurim the giver says that is forefather was a lost Aramean, no potential, no land, and no prospects. However, despite going down to Mitzrayim with few in number, he became a great and powerful nation. “And the Egyptians treated us cruelly and afflicted us, and they imposed hard labor upon us.” (Devarim 26:6).

When the giver of bikkurim says the pesukim, he does not compare Pharaoh to Lavan. He mentions that as a lost Aramean, from a land of idols, he ended up in Mitzrayim and was then oppressed by Pharaoh. He had no protection because he was lost and a foreigner. He cannot call himself a Canaani because he did not yet possess Canaan. His forefathers, up to Terach, were from Aram. Still in all, he made it out. (Ibid 26:8). While the Haggadah uses the pasuk to prove how bad Lavan was, the Aramean in the pasuk said by the bringer of bikkurim is not Lavan. There is no connection between “An Aramean sought to destroy my forefather” and “he went down to Mitzrayim.” Lavan did not send Yaakov down to Mitzrayim.

It can be said that Lavan did cause Yaakov to go down to Mitzrayim. Lavan mixed up the wives which mixed up the birth order. That created jealousy between Leah's kids and Yoseph, their younger brother but brother that was favored by their father. That led to them putting Yoseph in a pit and then him being sold down to Mitzrayim. However, that is not the point of Lavan trying to destroy Yaakov. Certainly, Lavan had no say in Mitzrayim enslaving Yaakov and his sons. In fact, when they originally went down, Yoseph was viceroy to Pharaoh, far from being oppressed.

Further, the jealousy between the brothers only made them put him in a pit. They did not sell him to Mitzrayim. First, they want to kill Yoseph and throw him in a pit and blame it on a wild beast. (Bereishis 37:20). Then Reuven (who should be Yoseph's greatest adversary) says that they should not kill Yoseph but throw him in a pit unharmed. (Ibid 37:22). This way he could come back later and save Yoseph. (Ibid). Yehuda then said, "What gain do we have from killing our brother or covering up his blood. Let us sell him to Yishmaelim that are passing by." (Ibid 37:26-27). It was their plan to sell Yoseph but that is not what happened.

"And Midianites passed, pulled Yoseph up out of the pit, and the Midyanim sold him to the Yishmaelim." (Ibid 37:28). It was Midyanim that happened along, found Yoseph, pulled him up, and sold him. In fact, this came as a shock to the brothers. Reuven came along, saw that Yoseph was not in the pit and tore his clothes. (Ibid 37:29). Where was Reuven? He was likely with his brothers eating. The plain explanation of the pasuk is that he was with the rest of the brothers. He came to the pit to bring up Yoseph to sell him to the Yishmaelim but the Midyanim beat him to it. Yoseph was gone.

Why did Reuven rent his clothing? It was because he knew that the brothers no longer wanted to kill Yoseph and their plan was to sell him. Finding the pit empty can only mean Yoseph died in the pit—he was not responding—or he was kidnapped. Reuven returns to his brothers and says, "the lad is gone, what am I to do?" (Ibid 37:30). He knew it was his plan to throw Yoseph alive into the pit and save him. He did not know what to do now. The brothers did not tell him he was sold *because they did not know what happened to him, either*. Instead, having seen Yoseph disappear, they went back to their original plan and dipped the tunic in blood. (Ibid 37:31).

Note, after Yehuda thought of selling Yoseph, he said "no use in covering up his blood." There was no indication that they would use the ploy of dipping the tunic in blood if they sold him. It was only now, after Yoseph went missing, that the brothers reverted to their original plan and dipped the tunic in blood.

The pasuk corroborate this when it says, "The Midyanim, meanwhile, sold him to Mitzrayim." (Ibid 37:36). They are the ones that sold him to Mitzrayim because they sold him to a caravan carrying spices—not salves—heading to Egypt. The pasuk also says, "Potiphar purchased him [Yoseph] from the Yishmaelim." (Ibid 39:1). It is not a contradiction in the pasuks because while Potiphar purchased Yoseph from Yishmaelim, it was Midyanim that sold Yoseph into slavery, *down to Mitzrayim*. Therefore, the pasuk is not talking about Lavan. Instead, it is about the family history of having nothing, being oppressed, and Hashem bringing them to greatness. Thus, the bikkurim are brought with joy and thankfulness.