



The Exodus from Egypt was the fulfillment of God's promise to Avraham at the *Brit Bein HaBetarim* (Covenant Between the Parts), that his descendants would be strangers in a foreign land, oppressed, and ultimately redeemed (Bereishit 15:7–21).

This was not a one-time event. *Brit Bein HaBetarim* was established for Israel, as an “eternal covenant” (Tehillim 105:7-15), and Chazal understood that this cycle of exile and oppression followed by divine salvation repeats itself throughout Jewish history. As we recite in the Haggadah, “It [the *brit*] is what stood for our ancestors and for us...that in every generation they rise against us to annihilate us, and the Holy One, blessed be He, saves us from their hand.”

Even in the *tochechah* of Sefer Vayikra, the harsh rebuke in which God details the consequences of violating our side of the *brit*, Hashem reaffirms His unwavering loyalty to it. No matter how far we stray, God says, He will never sever His relationship with us (Vayikra 26:44–45), “Yet even then, while they are in the land of their enemies, I will not despise them nor will I abhor them so as to annihilate them and annul My *brit* with them...and I will remember for them the *brit* of old, that I brought them out of the land of Egypt...to be a God for them.”

This *brit*, however, is not merely a legal contract that obligates God to protect us. It is the expression of an eternal love between God and His people. As the Torah explains (Devarim 7:8), it was “because of Hashem’s love for you” that He redeemed us from Egypt. So too in every generation.

Pesach teaches that even in our darkest moments, God’s commitment to us does not fail, “For the mountains may waver and the hills may be shaken, but My kindness will not waver from you, and My covenant of peace will not be shaken, says Hashem, your Merciful One” (Yeshayahu 54:10). It is this undying love which has carried us through the seemingly endless nights of exile.

Yet Pesach is not only a time to reflect on God’s kindness toward us. This relationship is bilateral, and we played an active role in establishing it. We rejected our Egyptian masters by slaughtering their god for the

first korban Pesach, and we followed Hashem into the wilderness, demonstrating unequivocally that our loyalty and love for Him came above all else.

This act of devotion would later be recalled by God in the streets of Jerusalem on the eve of the destruction of the First Temple, “Thus says Hashem: I have remembered for you the kindness of your youth, the love of your betrothal, how you followed Me into the wilderness, into a land not sown. Israel is holy to Hashem, the first of His produce; all who prey upon it will be ashamed, evil will come upon them - declares Hashem” (Yirmiyahu 2:2–3).

After the destruction of the First Temple and the subsequent exile, the Jewish people feared that God was terminating His relationship with them. In response, God asked rhetorically (Yeshayahu 50:1), “Where is the bill of divorce?” Though we had become spiritually estranged from God through our conduct and physically distant from Him through our exile, the underlying relationship could never truly be severed.

The mutual love between God and His people is a pillar of our faith. In the blessing immediately preceding *Keriat Shema*, we affirm God’s everlasting love for us, and we then, in turn, declare our unwavering love for Him. Similarly, the passages in our tefillin speak of our total love for God, while *Chazal* (Brachot 6a) teach that God’s own “tefillin” reflect the same love for us (Shmuel II 7:23), “And who is like Your people Israel, one nation on the earth?”

For this reason, many communities have the custom to read Shir HaShirim on Pesach. It is not merely because of the spring imagery that fills the megillah, but because Shir HaShirim poetically portrays the eternal bond between God and His people, and Pesach marks the anniversary of the moment that relationship began.

We ask God to restore our closeness as in the days of old so that we may return to Him (Eichah 5:21), yet in the haftarah of Shabbat HaGadol read immediately before Pesach, God asks us to take the first step (Malachi 3:7), “Shuvu eilai v’ashuva aleichem” - “Return to Me, and I will return to you.”

Together, let us move toward the time when that return is complete, when the bond first forged at the Exodus is fully restored, and the cycle of exile and redemption gives way to a secure and fully expressed love. Next year, may we celebrate in a rebuilt Jerusalem.

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