



## Message 1: Day by Day to Pesach - - Rethink, Renew, Rebirth

Dear Friends,

I'm excited to once again join with you on a journey, day by day, as we prepare for Pesach.

We've arrived in Nissan. **There's a special energy in the air. We feel it. We sense it.** We're ready and waiting to tap into it and allow it to suffuse through our beings. We want the renewal.

The trees are starting to blossom, buds are emerging from the earth, and the whole world is announcing that it's time for rebirth and raf renewal. The physical renewal is a manifestation of the spiritual kochos of this

time. **The root of spring is the rebirth of our nation:** spring is simply how it is manifest in the world.

But it's not just the rebirth of our nation. It's the rebirth of each of us as individuals.

There's a beautiful brachah that we give to the moon:

וללבנה אמר **שתתחדש** עטרת תפארת **לעמוסי בטן** שהם עתידים להתחדש

*And say to the moon, May you be renewed as your crowning jewel, those who are carried from birth will one day be renewed.*

What does this mean? **What is the connection of the moon and Klal Yisrael**, and why is klal Yisrael given this unusual title—*amusei beten*, **those who are carried from birth?**

**We were born and created into a world of cycles.** The sun rises in the morning and sets in the evening. The months are marked by the waxing and waning of the moon. The seasons mark the passing of each year. This physical reality reflects something very deep and very real. Just as the moon waxes and wanes, Klal Yisrael as a nation rise and fall. History takes us on a journey of closeness and

distance as we wait for the day when the full moon will reflect the glory of the sun, in the times of Mashiach.

If this is the case for all of Klal Yisrael, **then it is more true for the woman**, who is compared to the moon, and who is intrinsically connected to the cycles of renewal and rebirth.

In our personal lives too, we ride on the spiritual energy of each season, turning inwards and drawing strength and inspiration as we detect the ebb and flow, the tides washing in and out. We are the moon, with its

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silvery light, **finding the seasons in the shift and flow we detect in our inner world.**

**Amusei Beten. Again, what does this expression mean?** Why is klal Yisrael given this unusual title—those who are carried from birth? The Malbim on Yeshaya (46:3) explains that this refers both to the expectant mother, and also to a newborn baby, cradled in its mother's arms.

We are *amusei beten* because we were reborn. Not only when we came out of Mizrayim. But every year, every Nissan, every leil haseder, we have the possibility of going through a *leidah* and experiencing the world—our world, our inner selves—from a place of newness. The old habits and the limiting mindsets can fall away. The difficulties, the circumstances and attitudes that weigh us down. That imprison us.

**Come Nissan, we can go through a labor and be reborn into a place of chiddush.** A place of newness. Connection. Calm. Clarity. Energy.

Klal Yisrael is Hashem's crowning jewel because **we have this ability.** We can move out of old spaces, the attitudes that restrict us and limit our horizons, and find something that sparkles with newness. We can leave the old, tired weariness behind and reach to a place of expansion and even transcendence. We can find freedom.

**And we, as the women of klal Yisrael, have a special connection with this.** For us, this is not an intellectual idea or a philosophical concept. It is something that

we experience in our very being. The knowledge of renewal is something that that we carry deep, deep within us.

And at no time of year is it more accessible than in Nissan.

**Together, we're going to discover it.**

Over the build up to Pesach, b'siyatta DiShmaya we're going to be exploring this rebirth. We're going to be looking at the concept of leidah.

**Together, I want to embark on a project—a few minutes each day—that asks the question: what is rebirth?**

We're going to break down the process together.

- What happens to an expectant mother before the time comes?
- What is the deeper significance of the fear that she feels, the way that life and death are intertwined? What is the transformation that occurs?
- What happens between mother and infant in the first moment when the mother holds that newborn tenderly, so full of love and awe?
- How does she nourish her infant?
- What happens when they lock eyes?
- How does the baby identify its mother? Pesach, the time of rebirth is also the time of emunah—when we recognize our Creator, when we make space for Him in our hearts, when we learn to experience His love for us.

It promises to be a meaningful journey and I'm excited to be sharing it with you.

Pesach is one of the most labor-intensive Yamim Tovim in the Jewish calendar. Yes, Purim is a lot of work, and certainly Sukkos requires planning and building and searching for the arbaah minim. But Pesach is up there on the Jewish woman's calendar. **We talk about it as 'making Pesach', and this is no loose expression.** Because it's the preparation and the tremendous effort that we invest which makes this Yom Tov a meaningful one.

But that doesn't just happen in the physical realm. Together, we can step into a mindset—and this is a uniquely feminine place—that

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enables us to be renewed. We can come to a place where the blossoms outside on the trees, the energy that pervades the natural world, is not only on the outside, but it is there in our hearts and our minds **as we**

**enter this Yom Tov with the joy and the awe that is the sign of an impending birth.**

**Happy prep. Looking forward to talking tomorrow.**

## Message 2: A Space of Freedom

Dear Friends,

The magic of Pesach doesn't start on Leil Haseder. Already in the days leading up to Yom Tov, **through the busyness and the snatched moments of silence**, we're engaged in a delicate and precious process of rebirth. And this is perfectly in sync with what happened to us at our roots. As we left Mitzrayim, klal Yisrael was a newborn nation. The dramatic events of yetzias Mitzrayim mirror the stages of birth.

We can look at klal Yisrael's birth and **use it as a map for our own renewal, which plays out in our lives during the lead up to Pesach**. There's a pathway, guiding us, step by step, through the process.

The months and weeks leading up to childbirth are marked by a subtle change that comes over the expectant mother. As childbirth looms large, the new mother loses interest in many of her old activities. The calendar seems to stop at her due date. **Her focus shifts to the momentous task that lies ahead of her**—the transformation that she will undergo in becoming a mother, and the awesome privilege of bringing life into the world.

This phenomenon is called by psychologists primary maternal preoccupation—the mother enters into a mindset that pushes away anything extraneous and frees her to invest all her energy into the birth.

When we listen to the rhythm of this time, we can detect an echo of this shift. As Pesach approaches, we are busier than ever. And part of that is the frenzy of preparation—**shopping and orders and errands, running to the appliance store and the keilim mikveh and the seamstress** and making sure that we have everything we need ready for the great moment—the due date—of leil haseder.

But we're also involved in another level of preparation. We go from room to room, opening drawers and organizing and searching for chametz. We're readying our bayis.

This is deeply significant. After all, our bayis is our container. It's the space in which we and our family eat and talk and think and grow and become. It's the womb of our tzelem Elokim. It's within the space of our homes and families that we develop our strengths, become conscious of our limitations, **and learn to connect with the precious inner space that is our core.**

Before they left Mitzrayim, **klal Yisrael also made this shift.** As events in Mitzrayim drew to a climax, Klal Yisrael were commanded (Shemos 12:22) to take a bunch of hyssop, dip it into the blood of the korban Pesach and apply that to the doorpost. This blood acted as a sign of a Jewish home, thus protecting them from the destructive forces outside. Let's look at this more carefully.

In effect, the Jews were told to make a delineation. To make a signal: this is the border of my territory. **Here, I live, and there, I do not live.** This is my place, the place of my family, my inner sphere. What is going on outside—the terror, the frenzy, the confusion—do not belong to my realm.

So what does belong in this sphere? Again, we find a hint in the passuk. The blood was spread on the doorpost by means of a bunch of hyssop. The Shem MiShmuel tells us that hyssop is a lowly, simple herb. It represents simplicity. **Go inwards, klal Yisrael were being told,** and find once again the simplicity of your lives.

What is that simplicity? That while Egypt might be filled with wizardry and idolatry, with magic and all kinds of impurity, know that in our world, **Hashem is the only power, and our connection to Him is the foundation of our being.** It is the center point of our lives. There is One G-d, and His will is our will. It's that simple. All this took place on the incredible night of leil shimurim, the night of guarding.

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On leil shimurim, Hashem guarded us, His people. **But we also guarded something. Klal Yisrael guarded their freedom.** They did this by making a delineation. They painted blood on the door to separate two realms. Outside in Mitzrayim were the screams of those who were killed. There was destruction. There was confusion.

But that was outside.

Inside their homes, the Jews ate roasted lamb and sang Hallel to Hashem. They were in Egypt still, but with the blood painted on the doorpost, they were lifted into a different realm altogether. **An inward realm of joy and emunah.** It was a night of ein od milvado that penetrated from their heads to their hearts to their very beings.

In the weeks before Pesach we turn our focus towards our homes, busy with our kitchens and our dining rooms, with cleaning and imposing order and often, too, throwing out all the clutter that has built up over the year—the physical clutter and the emotional clutter, too. The voices that tell us that if we were only a better wife and mother, that we are not worthy, the feelings of resentment or the fear that we are being erased by our duties. **All of these can be left behind.**

And the first step to do this is to make a space: in our homes and in our minds and hearts, to reconnect with the truth of ein od milvado. This space will allow us to look inward. It's a space of compassion, that will nurture us as we look to find freedom. As we search for the simplicity. For what we want and what is good for us. As we rediscover the pride in who we are. A pride that enables us to remain

true to our tzelem Elokim, **that version of ourselves that we are giving birth to each and every day, and especially in the month of Nissan, that time of renewal.**

For it's in that space that we can find the freedom to think. **To be. To want. To pray. To connect. To love. To choose. To be reborn.**



## Message 3: Fear. Being afraid. Is it a gift?

Dear Friends,

As the leidah of Klal Yisrael approaches, let's examine the next experience and **mine it for insight into our own process of rebirth.**

With her due date approaching, an expectant mother may go to classes, learn relaxation techniques, and assemble all the support that she needs.

But nothing can take away **the fear that she will experience before birth.**

Fear. *Eimah chashecha gedolah*. A great and dark fear. Avraham Avinu was told of the gestation of Klal Yisrael in Egypt and their eventual exodus and he experienced fear. Yetzias Mitzrayim was an awesome, fearsome experience: blood, fire, and columns of smoke. And this was intensified at the final moment of geulah, when klal Yisrael stood before the Yam Suf, entrapped on all sides. The Egyptians thundered towards them in their chariots. To their right and left was the desert. The sea was in front of them. **The only way forward was a birth.**

And they were afraid.

When do we feel fear? **What is the purpose of fear?**

Think back to moments in your life when you were afraid. It could be that you were nervous before you started a new project. Those moments before you stepped up to the chupah. When you started a new job. When we look at our children, we see their anxiety before they start first elementary school and then

high school, and then before they spread their wings and go to yeshivah or seminary. **Every new stage comes along with fear.** Part of this is because we're entering into the unknown. Nothing is familiar. We don't know what we're going to encounter. But there's something deeper at work, as well.

When Moshe was told to go to Paroh and warn him about the final set of *makos*, the pasuk says, “*Bo el Paroh.*” Come to Paroh. This is an interesting word choice. We would expect the command to be *Lech el Paroh*—**Go** to Paroh, not **come** to Paroh. **What’s the significance of this word choice?**

The mefarshim tell us **that Moshe Rabbeinu was afraid**. He was about to encounter Paroh in what was nothing less than a spiritual showdown—Moshe Rabbeinu representing emunah in Hashem, and Paroh was the personification of tumah. Of kefirah. He went so far as to create himself as a deity—The Nile is Mine and I created it, Paroh declared.

While this may sound delusional, it wasn’t simply the claim of a lunatic. Paroh was deeply entrenched in tumah that he set himself up as god. This was his existence, his essence, and it was so powerful that he ruled the civilized world. Moshe was afraid of this confrontation. Did he really possess enough light, enough spiritual power to confront this level of evil, he asked himself. **Was this too much for him?**

What did Hashem answer? *Bo el Paroh*. Don’t simply go to Paroh. *Come* to Paroh. The mefarshim flesh this out: Come to Me, **and I will come with you to Paroh**.

I will be with you. I will accompany you. You are not alone. But more than that. **I will help you find your strengths**. I will be with you as you reach deep inside and find the potential you are not yet aware of. I will be with you as you birth an even deeper aspect of your truth.

Why are we afraid, before birth, and before every new stage of life?

We are afraid before childbirth not only because of the danger and the unknown. But because we know that **we are about to attempt to do something which is, objectively, too big for us**. Creation is an act that belongs to the Borei Olam. It’s an impossible task—we are frail, physical beings, so how can we bring a spiritual neshamah into this material world? And yet, this is exactly what we do, as we imitate Hashem’s

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creation of Adam Harishon. Birth is frightening because it is beyond us. It's in the realm of the Almighty.

And this echoes into every aspect of childrearing. Once the baby is born, **we will then again nurture him or her into a tzelem Elokim**, not just a man, but a mentch.

We are afraid because we don't know if we have the inner resources, the strength, the wisdom, the clarity, the emunah to complete the task. We feel like we're about to embark on something that is too big for us. This child feels too much for me. This challenge is too hard. This task is overwhelming. I'm scared. **I'm aware of my limits and I have reached them.**

In these situations, fear is a gift. Fear is our call to look at a situation or a task and say, this is too big for me. **Hashem, I need You here in the picture with me. I need You to hold my hand** and say, Bo, I will come with you. The darkness and tremulousness push us to find Hashem, and to continue our journey alongside Him.

In so many ways, we look for renewal. As Pesach nears, we ask, Can I really open my heart to Hashem's love? Can I relinquish control and give myself and those around the space to enter the unknown? Can I find the trust and certainty as I face a particular challenge? **Can I bring something out of myself that was always hidden?**

And we can feel frightened. **But the fear can be a gift. A signal.** Something momentous is about to take place. And not only do I not have to do it by myself, it's not even possible. We need to be supported by Hashem's love. We need that clarity and calm. **We need the surety that Hashem believes in us and we believe in ourselves.** And so we reach for Hashem and He says to us, like He said to Moshe Rabbeinu, **Bo. Come. Come to Me, and I'll come with you.**

## Message 4: How Can the Difficulty be Life Itself?

Dear Friends,

Every *leidah* is a dance of opposites.

The infant, who until now received its blood supply—nutrition and oxygen—exclusively from its mother, is cut off from that vital supply. It's a moment of intense danger, where death hovers in the shadows. But at that very moment when the baby has nothing, is cut away—**it gives its first cry and life is born.**

Every birth—including the birth of klal Yisrael—carried both intense danger, and an experience of profound reversal. **What looks like death, becomes life.** What looks like catastrophe becomes the pathway to redemption.

But we only see this with hindsight. Let's look at what happened in Mitzrayim.

Paroh in Mitzrayim decreed death on all the Jewish boys. It was the destruction of a nation that was already battered and bowed by hard labor. **Now, the ultimate**—all boys were to be thrown in the river.

We all know the series of events that followed: **Basya noticed Moshe Rabbeinu in the water.** Not only was his life saved, but the future redeemer was brought up in the very palace of Paroh.

**In the very place** where the decree of death was promulgated, the key to future life was guarded and raised.

What looked like death was another labor pain, bringing redemption to Klal Yisrael.

Again, Moshe Rabbeinu was sent by Hashem to protest the slavery. Not only did he not succeed in his task, but Paroh piled even more oppressive decrees upon the first. Bitterly disappointed, Moshe brought his

complaint to Hashem. But **it was the intensification of the work that caused the Jews to cry out**—and for the seeds of redemption to begin to sprout.

What looks like death is life. What looks like suffering is another step to redemption. But here we learn something about redemption itself. **The birth comes through the labor pangs. The redemption comes from the suffering.**

There is a very deep reason for this.

We're used to thinking of galus as the tragic though logical result of our aveiros and shortcomings. But galus was built into the plan of the world, even before Adam HaRishon was created, before anyone did any aveiros at all. This is because the essence of galus is the process of standing up against evil and thereby revealing our hidden strengths. **Our emunah. Our conviction. Our courage.**

Galus is process whereby klal Yisrael acquire spiritual strengths. **And that's why galus itself carries the seeds of redemption.** Because it's by engaging with and challenging this particular form of hester that we bring out the exact opposite in ourselves—and thus become worthy of geulah.

If this is true of all exiles, the Egyptian exile had a special and terrifying strength. **In Mitzrayim, Klal Yisrael became a nation.** They were born. Egypt pitted itself against this developing fetus.

**What was the power of Egypt?** The Maharal tells us in Gevuros Hashem that Egypt was physicality. It was a galus of bricks and cement and building. Of sinking into this world for its own sake. Of immorality. Any gifts of Egypt did not come from above, but from below—there was no rain, but the river Nile overflowed and led to the fertile Nile delta. There's no relationship with anything above them. Here is all there is. There's no need for God in Egypt, and there's no one looking for Him.

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And it was this mindset that was transformed in the birth of klal Yisrael. In what was a fight almost to the death, but at the very last moment became something new. In Mitzrayim, klal Yisrael learned to say, this is not all that there is. There is more. We are not here to eat, drink, and be merry. We do not have to relate to each other through their skin. Mitzrayim said, it's all here. **Yisrael says, no, it's all inside—and up there.**

The distress of a mother, the pain—all of these look like death. **Klal Yisrael had the inner wisdom to look at the picture and discern the opposite**—that life was about to be born. Because their task in Mitzrayim was not only to build store cities that sunk into the ground. It was to realize that bricks and mortar can build a home. A place that is filled with family. A place that is filled with emunah.

It was for them to realize that what looks difficult and painful, **what seems to be a death, can bring us to life and rebirth.**

And that's what we commemorate this time of year, when we go through a yetzias Mitzrayim and undergo our own personal transformation. **When we undergo hardships, and do so with the emunah that in the trials, both personal and collective, lay the seeds of our rebirth.**

Where there's death, there's life.

## Message 5: Leaping Over All Logic

Dear Friends,

It's a moment of awe. It's a moment of love. After long months of waiting, a new mother and father cradle their newborn close. Nothing will ever be the same again. And one of the reasons for this is that something has been unlocked inside them. **Access to a well of love that is so deep that it can never be finished.**

**B'ni bechori Yisrael**, Hakadosh Baruch Hu said to us, on the eve of yetzias Mitzrayim. You are being born today. And you are being born into a world of love.

Hashem's love for us is present all year round. But Pesach is a time when it's easier to access, **when it's manifest to the highest degree, so it's easier for us to see and feel it.** Pesach, the Arizal tells us, corresponds to the sefirah of Chesed. There's an outpouring of Hashem's kindness into the world—we can see this in the natural world, as the bare trees are once again covered in snowy white wedding dresses of blossom.

A tiny baby can only eat and sleep and cry. It's not expected to do anything. It doesn't have to tidy its crib or say thank you to its mother for soothing it. It's loved *just because*. When it gets older, there will be rules and demands. But that first year of life, **when a baby is celebrated just because, and showered with love for no reason but the fact that it's our child**, lays a deep foundation. It means that everything and anything after this, is also an act of love. It may look like rules. It may look restricting. It may even be a punishment. But that's on the surface. Underneath it all, is love.

**And that's the kind of love that Hashem has for us, His children.**

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When Moshe Rabbeinu came to Klal Yisrael and said, **'The geulah is coming! An end to servitude. No more slavery. Freedom is within reach'**. They looked at him and shook their heads. The Midrash tells us that klal Yisrael said, How is that possible?

And they had a very logical reason for their argument. Only 210 years had passed since the beginning of the shibud. We know that we have another 190 years to go, out of the 400 year total. **It's not possible. There's more to endure.**

So what did Moshe say? A pasuk in Shir Hashirim.

מַדְלֵג עַל הַהַרִים מִקְפֵץ עַל הַגְּבְעוֹת, קוֹל דּוּדֵי הַנָּה זֶה בָּא (פסוק ח, פרק ב)

*The voice of my beloved is coming, skipping over mountains and leaping over hills.*

What are these mountains and hills? The Midrash explains that the mountains and hills—**these are all the calculations. The cheshbonos. All those logical arguments that make so much sense.** The knowledge of who I am and what I really deserve. Those limitations. It's not that they have disappeared. It's that they are irrelevant. There's something so much bigger here. And that's the love that Hashem has for Klal Yisrael, the nation that is about to be born anew.

Another Midrash says that the mountains and hills refers to our misdeeds. Our wrongdoings. All the times we slipped up. The ways we disappoint others and ourselves. Come Pesach, none of that matters. Because Hashem, k'viyachol, comes skipping and leaping towards us, **ready to take us into His arms, the way we cradle a newborn child.**

We don't need to come with a resume of accomplishment. We don't need to be able to recite a litany of the mitzvos that we have performed. **We just need to want to come close.**

Think about that for a moment. Feel it. What stirs inside you?



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We've had such a tough year. So full of sorrow and challenge and yes, even times of desperation. How can we shake it off? How can we muster up energy and tap into the flow of hischadshus?

We can do so by knowing that **Pesach is a time when Hashem comes towards us with love.**

It's so normal to feel anxious in the lead up to Pesach. And that's not just because of the mammoth tasks that need to be completed to arrive at a kasheren Yom Tov. **It's because we know that something momentous is about to occur.** Klal Yisrael is about to be born. Freedom is within reach. Emunah is in the air, waiting for us to imbibe it. As beni bechori Yisroel is about to be uttered once again, we can open ourselves to the incredible love that is waiting to be poured down to us.

For it is this time of year that Hashem is medaleg al heharim, leaping over all logic, **disregarding all of my limitations, to bring me into His presence.**

## Message 6: Recognizing my Father – and Then What?

Dear Friends,

“This is Mommy, and this is Tatty.” As the midwife swaddles a newborn and hands it over to its parents, there’s no need for any introduction. Even without seeing them, **the baby recognizes its parents’ voices**. It knows its mother’s heartbeat and automatically relaxes when held close. There’s nothing more obvious in the world.

Pesach is the Yom Tov that corresponds to Avraham Avinu, the first Yid, he who recognized Hashem. What he passed down to us is an emunah that is central, essential, and natural. It’s part of who we are. We don’t need to go through a series of philosophical lectures to conclude that God exists. **We know it the same way that an infant knows its parents.**

As a baby develops, **its relationship with its parents grows and deepens**. At just a few months old, the mother or father holds out their hands, and the baby, in turn leans towards them, eager to be held close.

Having discovered the Creator, Avrohom Avinu also journeyed towards Him. Lech Lecha. Go. Travel. Come towards me. **Leave behind your old beliefs, abandon all that is familiar, and journey.** You may not know exactly where you are going, but you do want to leave apathy behind.

At yetzias Mitzrayim, we hear another echo of Lech Lecha—*Lechteich acharei B’Midbar*. We recognized the Creator. Our Father had revealed Himself to us in a process that began with makas dam and reached its crescendo at Kriyas Yam Suf. And what did we do? We moved. **We traveled towards Him, with Him, into His arms**. We traveled forward, ready to reinvent ourselves, as a nation whose every action is defined by our connection with Hashem.

But it didn’t happen only then.

מה יפו פעמיך בנעלים בת נדיב. (Shir Hashirim 7:2).

*How beautiful are your feet in sandals, daughter of the generous one.*

The Gemara in Chagiga explains that this pasuk refers to klal Yisrael, who are *oleh regel*. Three times a year, klal Yisrael didn't simply recognize Hashem in their hearts. **They embarked on a Lech Lecha. They trod the pathways and roads to Yerushalayim, to return home**, to enter into those outstretched arms. And when klal Yisrael did this, they are called *bas nadiv*. Daughter of the generous one. Daughter of Avrohom Avinu, who not only recognized our Creator, but this truth fueled his life's journey, as he embarked on a lech lecha, stepping towards Him.

What's the opposite of lech lecha? The opposite of lech lecha is that universal and familiar **experience of being stuck**.

Reaching an impasse, not being able to move. The opposite of lech lecha brings us to give too much or too little, and either way, being filled with resentment. It can mean being stuck in a place of uncertainty, afraid to make a decision. Allowing negative self-talk pull us down. Being caught up in the illusion that we have to be perfect, instead of embracing the whole of us, **and focusing not on being perfect, but being good**.

All these false beliefs and false perceptions stunt our movement—and our happiness. In fact, Chazal tell us that that which is false—*ein lo raglayim*. It can't carry us anywhere. It's no coincidence that when Hashem curses the nachash, He took away its legs, leaving it slithering on the ground. **Doubt, uncertainty, —all of these things sap us of strength and energy**. They paralyze us, stopping us from putting one foot in front of the other with a sense of purpose.

But come the shalash regalim, and we have a command—*be oleh regel*. Get going. *Mah yafu pe'amayich*—your footsteps have a special chein, a treasured beauty. The lessons of the *yestzias Mitrayim* will act as your gas—**the truth of Hashem's power and might and love for His newborn**

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**child**—will help us to leave behind the limitations of the past, move out of our comfort zone and step towards a beautiful future of closeness.

## Message 7: Losing Our Words – And Finding Them

Dear Friends,

A baby enters the world, takes its first breath, **and lets out a cry. That wonderful newborn wail.** And an infant will continue to cry: each time she is hungry or he is uncomfortable or tired.

Fundamentally, babies cry because they know, deep in their beings, that someone is there. Mommy or Tatty will come and tend to them. **It's a knowledge that's built-in, and then strengthened through experience.** In fact, babies who don't cry tell unspoken tales of neglect or abandonment.

When Hashem appeared to Moshe and asked him to go to Paroh, he answered: *v'lo ish devarim anochi*. **I am not a man of words.** On one level, we know that he was a *k'vad peh u'kvad lashon*. Moshe had some kind of speech impediment—it was hard for him to get the words out.

But the Pri Tzaddik points to something else.

When Moshe Rabbeinu said that he was not a man of words, it was because the Egyptian exile was so profound **that words themselves had gone into galus.** The faculty of speech was hidden. Prayer was locked away.

**We've all lost our words at times.** It could be that the experience is so deep that we can't articulate it. Or, the feelings are swirling around and it's hard to define them. At times, words feel insufficient, or they disappear altogether.

This is what happened to klal Yisrael, in Mitzrayim.

We know instinctively what this means on an emotional level. **What does it mean on a spiritual level?**

Hashem created the world through speech. **Light. Day. Foliage. Birds. Animals. Each of these things was spoken into being.** A word of Hashem was clothed in physical form and became a part of the world. So we can look at this world and see a car, a house, a tree, or we can alter the channel and see words of Hashem: His will for Creation.

In fact, the Nefesh Hachaim says that when Mashiach arrives, we will be able to look at a physical object and discern its spiritual essence. The world will have a translucent quality: we'll be able to **look at the davar, the thing, and find the dibur, the word.** A tree will not just be a trunk and branches and fruits—it will be a way of seeing Hashem's will, a physical expression of the pathway for growth.

So far, so deep. Here's the thing. There can be a schism between thing and word, davar and dibbur, **a disconnect between the word and its inner meaning.** What's inside isn't expressed. Or it's given a word that doesn't fit. Daily life is a grind of work and inconvenience, instead of a journey to authentic connection. Life is about bricks and mortar, with nothing being built from all the effort. External reality doesn't seem to reflect an inner meaning.

When that separation occurs, the faculty of speech is in galus. In fact, the climax of the *geulah* occurred at Matan Torah, where we heard the aseres hadibros, the ten utterances, **that finally freed us to connect the world with its source,** the physical with its inner essence, the outside world and events of our lives, with its meaning.

And that's what happened in galus Mitzrayim. They were in galus. All the pent-up emotions, the distress—it wasn't able to be expressed. All this is not so different from our experience today. So often we say yes when we mean no, or no when we want to say yes. We feel that we can't ask for what we need or say what we really think. **We may lock our emotions inside and put on a big smile for the world,** unable to find an address where we can authentically and deeply say what's on our heart. When we talk to Hashem, we may say words that don't echo through to our

hearts, or feel constrained from expressing our true experience. Our words are imprisoned.

When we succeed in releasing our words, we're at the start of a geulah. **When speech reflects inner experience, then we've arrived at Pesach—peh sach, an open mouth.** The relief is palpable. We feel lighter. When the words can express the thing, then we are in the realm of redemption.

Let's think about how this happened. How was the gift of speech restored to klal Yisrael? **The first stage was wrapped up in the gift of Shabbos.** Even among the servitude of Mitzrayim, we had a form of Shabbos, instituted by Moshe Rabbeinu.

The Midrash tells us that every Shabbos they would read from *megillos*, scrolls that had been handed down through the generations. It was a kind of kriyas haTorah, but each week they would tell of the promise of redemption (Shemos Rabbah 5:18). **Words of hope. Words of vision. Words that connected them to their forgotten identity.** Each Shabbos, words were restored to Klal Yisroel. But there was also a trigger. Something happened that made them cry out to Hashem: *Vayizaku*.

The Torah brings us the context: The king of Egypt died and they were finally able to cry out, and their screams were heard by Hashem. The mefarshim explain that the king did not actually die, but he became a metzora, a leper. To alleviate his condition, he ordered that 150 Jewish babies be slaughtered, morning and evening, for him to bathe in their blood. **And here we find the cries of the Jewish people for the first time.**

Our hearts were calloused and ossified. Our suffering had numbed us. **Servitude had closed our mouths, stopped up our throats.**

But a Jew can not be cut off from the future. Our children are so central to who we are, **that we somehow find the words**, even if we could not cry out on our own behalf.

Every newborn knows how to cry. And in Mitzrayim, we once again found the words—for the sake of our children, and for the sake of the child

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that is inside each one of us. That child who knows that whether she is hungry or tired or in pain or in a place of narrow straits—**there is someone present to tend to her.**

Mitzrayim was the exile of our words and our voice. Every Pesach, as we experience yetzias Mitzrayim anew, we can rediscover that place inside. **The place of words. The place that talks—communicates with others, makes connections.** That draws on stories of the past to find hope for the future. That connects with our Father in Heaven. Whether it's through tefila or song, whether through our personal stories of redemption like the megillos read by Moshe Rabbeinu each Shabbos-- Pesach is the time when we can open our mouths.

Every newborn baby knows how to cry. At the slightest need, he opens his mouth, secure in the knowledge that he will be answered. On Pesach, we are reborn again. **And renewed within us is the ability to open our mouths, to share our authentic selves with our loved ones, and with our Father in Heaven, who is watching and waiting for us to find our voices once again.**



## Message 8: And I Have Taken – In Which Way?

Dear Friends,

As a Pesach gift to you this year we've compiled all of the messages about Pesach and Rebirth and we're attaching it here for you to print out and enjoy over Yom Tov.

We're almost there. Seder night is almost upon us, with its blend of trepidation and elevation; ancient and new; thoughts and emotions **that both echo with our history and are alive to the present.**

In two days' time, we will look up at the night sky and see a full moon. The shining orb will gaze down at us and whisper a story of rebirth and renewal that echoes the rebirth of klal Yisrael as a whole, **and every one of us in particular.**

On this incredible night, we are taken by **the hand and led through every physical and emotional stage of yetzias Mitzrayim.** We describe the hard labor and eat the maror dipped into charoses, reenacting a spiritual and emotional journey as we move from servitude and a slave mentality into a space of freedom.

There are four milestones along the way. **V'hotzeisi, v'hitzalti, v'goalti, v'lakachti** (Shemos 6:6-7). Each of these is accompanied by one of the arba kosos. Wine enters, secrets come out. As we commemorate each aspect of our nation's birth, we awaken something deep inside us, something that has been gestating all year, ready to be born.

**The first three expressions here are straightforward.** We were enslaved and oppressed, and Hashem removed these shackles of servitude: He took us out of Egypt, saving us and redeeming us.

**But what about the last expression: v'lakachti.** *And I will take.* What does this mean? What additional dimension does it give to our geulah and freedom?

Let's turn to the Gemara in Kiddushin. Ki Yikach Ish, the pasuk says. When a man will take. This refers to taking a wife, or marrying. **But why is marriage called lekichah, taking?**

The Gemara gives an answer. When Adam HaRishon looked around the world and felt alone, then Hashem put a deep sleep upon him. Hashem took—Vayikach—from Adam HaRishon's side, or rib, and formed Chava. So the word lekichah, taking, **always refers to marriage because of the very first marriage in history**, wherein Chava was taken from Adam's side.

But it goes deeper.

When Adam lakach Chava as a wife, he was reconnecting with a part of him that was lost. It was an act of hashavas aveidah. At first, Adam and Chava were one neshamah. Then came the division of that neshamah. **Their marriage restored to Adam something that had been lost.**

V'lakachti, and I have taken, is a seminal moment of Seder night—and in the internal journey that we take. We were far away, strangers in a strange land. Our mindsets were overtaken by the pressure and hopelessness of harsh physical labor and endless sorrow. **Slowly, we began to see Hashem's might, His power. We began to absorb the fact of our chosenness.** While the Egyptians drank blood, we drank clear water. While they sat in darkness, we walked in light. The birth was coming. The moment of transformation.

V'lakachti. And I took you. Every Jew is a chelek Elokai Mimaal. He has part of Hashem's godliness in him. Klal Yisrael as a whole was a lost object, **waiting to be found and claimed and returned to where we belonged.** We may have been distanced. We may have reached the 49th level of impurity. But... V'lakachti. Hashem reached into the decay of Egypt and took us back to Him.

On leil shimurim, the night of yetzias Mitzrayim we were returned to our Source, **the place from which our neshamah was hewn.** And we can see

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this in the very root of the word lakach, to take. When you rearrange the word lakach, lamed kaf, ches—you form the word chelek—a part. Ki chelek Hashem Amo (Devarim 32:9)—For we, Hashem’s people, are His portion, His part.

On Pesach we’re a newborn child. We have not yet received the Torah. We have not yet reached an intellectual maturity. Our emunah has not ripened into a sophisticated and deep understanding. **But it doesn’t matter. We’re a newborn, with all the awe of pure potential.** A new life, born from hardship and suffering, but fresh and ready for connection.

There may have been fear and anxiety and uncertainty, moments when we felt lowly and lonely—but all these have brought us to a new place. The distance and apathy have been brushed away. Our emunah is reignited, **and we are back where we belong. A circle has been completed. V’lakachti.** We are returned to Hashem’s love after years of being lost.

*V’lakachti.*

As we lift the fourth and final of the arba kosos, we no longer talk about the slavery. We pass from maggid to Hallel. We have finished with the realm of speech. Now we enter the realm of song. Whatever we have in our hearts can not be contained by words alone. **We turn to song to express not only our knowledge, but the newfound longing of our newborn souls.**

Hallel. Nirtzah. We are wanted. Our song is wanted. There is nothing more to say.

We sing Hallel every Yom tov, but we also sing it on a day that is not Yom Tov at all. Every Rosh Chodesh, as we sight a new sliver of silver in the sky, we lift our voices with Hallel. **Because the renewal of the moon is a birth.** A molad. And with every new moon, we are reminded of our potential. That we can receive light so fully and perfectly that one day the moon will grow and rise and shine so bright that it will equal the light

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of the sun. Every month we are reminded of the promise that the moon's lost light will one day be restored—and we sing.

Shirah, song, demands a particular type of freedom. It is not only the freedom to act. To travel. To make choices. It's also the ability to look at our lives and see the closing of a circle. To experience the slowly disappearing moon—and its rebirth. To look up at the full moon, that perfect sphere in the night's sky, **and know that the cycle that is our lives and hearts brings us to a place of meaning and gratitude.** On Seder night, we are free to sing.

For two weeks we have talked about the process of rebirth. And now we are counting down to those incredible moments in which we were lifted from degradation to grandeur in the ultimate leidah. This Pesach, my prayer for all of us **is that we open our hearts to the journey and feel the first tender moment of birth. The purity. The trust. The love. The emunah. That all of it fills our hearts until there are no words, only song.**

Sincerely,

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