

Dear Friends,

No matter the twists and turns that our journey—both individual and communal—has taken us on in the last few days and weeks, we're all leading up to Yom Tov. **It's in the air. It's in our hearts.** And so today, I'd like to share with you a beautiful idea that is so relevant to our avodah right now, today.

Chazal say an interesting thing: A baby doesn't know how to say Totty/Abba/Daddy until he has tasted grain, dagan.

At what age does a little baby start with solids? A taste of oats, a rice cake, a whole wheat cracker? Six months. Nine months. Twelve months, if we're worried about allergies. That developmental stage—for deep reasons, connected to the essence of eating—ushers in an exciting new stage. **It is then that a baby has the ability to start saying 'Totty'.** He identifies his parents. He knows—this is Mommy, this is Totty. And then he starts his attempt to call to them.

Objectively, what does the infant know of his parents? He doesn't know where his mother went to school or camp or seminary. He doesn't know which business his father is in or the mesechta that he is learning. He hasn't figured out whether they're more introverted or extroverted, or what their values are. He does not know how prominent or simple is their status. He's far, far away from the relationship that he'll have with his **mother and father when he's five, fifteen, twenty-five, or fifty.**

He knows a face, a person, and a source of food. A source of nourishment. And a source of safety and love. But, not only does all that unknown not diminish the relationship; it deepens it. Because the connection between father and son doesn't depend on what each of them thinks, their temperament or character. The baby's innocence only emphasizes this. The father loves his baby—and the baby loves his father—not because of who they are, or what they've achieved, or even because of a family resemblance. **It's a bond that burrows down to the essence of who they are.** It's built-in. He doesn't need to know more, because all that he knows is enough.

There's a profound and beautiful parallel with leil haSeder.

In Mitzrayim, we were like newborns. Tiny, dependent, innocent of all knowledge and all understanding. And then what happened? We tasted the matzah. We ingested that grain that is called by the Zohar "the bread of emunah." And through that, we were able to point to Hakadosh Baruch Hu and say, Tatty. Daddy. Abba. It's You. We recognize You. The source of our sustenance, our nourishment, our care. There is an innocence to this emunah. **There is an innocence because it's an emunah that is so iron-clad, so deep, that questions are superfluous.** Because when a baby doesn't fully understand his father, but knows that he's in his father's arms - dayeinu. That's enough.

This didn't only take place in Mitzrayim. Every year, as we taste the matzah, swallow it, ingest the grain, we are like that baby. The matzah that we eat on Pesach **is that dagan, that grain that gives rise to, that enables**, a tiny baby to reach the next stage of his development. To identify our Father in Shamayim. To call out to Him. That "bread of Emunah" enables us to point, both upwards and inwards. It enables us to hold out our arms. Like infants. This year, maybe more than ever before. We are helpless and we have relinquished all control. But when we taste that matzah on Seder night, we attain a new stage, developmentally.

When an infant has tasted grain, he knows how to say Totty. We eat the matzah and we call out, Tatte! Tatte! Like that baby, there's not much we know about our father. We cannot fathom the mystery of Creation. We do not have the smallest inkling of the depth of His ways. But that's irrelevant. Because the bond we have is deeper than questions. It's more profound than knowledge. **It's a closeness of belonging. Father to son. Son to father.**

What happens when a baby first calls to his father? Everything stops! Daddy grabs his camera, tries to prompt a repeat performance so that he can play it again and again. Mommy calls her mother or sister. Both parents coax the baby to try again and say it again. There's a thrill. We're filled with love and joy. True, the baby doesn't understand much. But what is also true—the deeper truth is that he understands everything. He understands everything that matters. **That he has a**

Mommy and a Totty and there is a bond between them that is deeper than knowledge. It is a bond which is the essence of who they are, as father, as child.

Pesach is a time of love and light. We eat the matzah, the bread of emunah, and we are filled with the love and the connection—Abba! Totty! And Hakadosh Baruch Hu rejoices. He finds the chein, the beauty. Because it may look like we've said something very simple, but we've said the only thing that matters. **That we're Your child. That You are our Father. That You exist, and nourish us, and care for us. That we belong to You and You belong to us.**

The whole of Seder night is filled with questions. One of the highlights of this is Mah Nishtanah, which is traditionally asked by the youngest present at the seder. It's interesting that if we look carefully at the Haggadah, we'll find that there are no clear and methodical answers to all of these questions.

Because what's important on Seder night is not the answers. **It's the questions. More, what's important is the spirit of the questions.** A young child looks around the world and says, why, Mommy? Why, Tatty? Why is the sky blue and why are wheels round and why are clouds big and black when rain doesn't have a color at all? The questions can sometimes get a little too much, but they have an incredible chein. Because they're an expression of a unique relationship.

A child who is thirsty to know, who is curious, and innocent and completely open to the world calls to his father, because he knows that Totty has time and Totty wants to hear from him and Totty knows all the answers. And that's what happens on Seder night. We ask and we ask and we ask some more, because we're in the presence of our dear Father. Our Totty in Shamayim is right here, **He took us out of Mitrayim and we can turn to Him with wide eyes and wonder.**

Chazal tell us that on leil HaSeder, the Shechinah comes right down and joins us at the table. Hakadosh Baruch Hu listens as we say Maggid, as we tell over the nissim, as we tap into the powerful creative force that is every single word of the Haggadah. And as we eat the matzah, **as we verbalize our emunah, Hashem delights in us.**

This year, as we eat the matzah, the bread of emunah, let's tap into the incredible change that this is affecting in our inner world. We are like that child, eating the grain which will enable him, prompt him to call to his father. **And this is the joy of Pesach.** That our father was waiting to hear that from us. He was waiting for his darling, beloved child to open his eyes and call out, Totty!

May we all be able to reach past the difficulties of the past few weeks and delve into the special innocence of seder night. **May we feel comforted and secure in our prized status as Hashem's beloved child.** May we reach out to our Totty in Shamayim and revel in His encouragement, His love, His acceptance of all our questions and of our very beings.

Sincerely,

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