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VAYIKRA: PREPARING FOR CHAG HAPESACH
TZAV: THIS SEDER PESACH, LEAVE YOUR MITZRAYIM!



FROM THE SHIURIM OF
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PREPARING FOR PESACH



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GROW THROUGH YOM TOV

We will be discussing today a little bit about the great *chag* that is already spreading its shade over us and we're beginning to feel its warmth, *Chag HaPesach*. Now, it says that from שלוש יום קודם החג, it's already time for a person to start involving himself in the *sugya* of the *chag*. You're considered a *shoel ke'inyan*. You start learning. The problem we face is that *chaggim* are things that we have experienced from our childhood and we take them for granted and we fail to become excited, moved, motivated and uplifted through these great moments of time in our lives. But you have to realize that Hashem gave us these *moadim* for the purpose of *sasson* and *simchah*. They were given with the greatest love. A person who thinks about them, and cherishes them, and prepares for them, will feel the love of the *chaggim* and will be excited about them. Tragically and very sadly, many people will go through the *yontif* and they'll say, "I went through *yontif*, but the *yontif* didn't go through me." Instead of taking something away with them, these people leave empty handed from the *yontif*.

I'm very, very thankful to Hashem, that finally, after many years of working on it, I'm actually looking forward with excitement to the upcoming *moed* knowing that we're about to enter the domain of an oasis, through which the *yesodos* of my *emunah*, the *yesodos* of my *Yahadus*, and the *yesodos* of my awareness of *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* will become strengthened. At the very least, I'll be reminded of my goals in Yiddishkeit. My hope is I will become stronger and I'll be *zocheh* to some growth.

PREPARE FOR THE TRIP

The first thing you have to know is: What is the *sugya* of Pesach? When you think of the *moed* of Pesach, you have to know that what you're thinking of is the first of the *Aseres Hadibros*, which is: אנכי ה' אלקיך אשר הוצאתיך מארץ מצרים. *Yetzias Mitzrayim* is something that doesn't only happen once a year, or something that we celebrate once a year. *Yetzias Mitzrayim* is something that we think about and mention a number of times every single day, we remember it and we try to relive it. And when it comes time for Pesach, the feeling you have to have is that we're going on a trip.

If you've ever gone on a trip, everybody knows that you've got to prepare for it. What's the first thing you have to make sure to do if you go on a trip? What's the first thing you have to make sure you have when you go on a trip? Your ID or a passport. You can't get on a plane without your passport. If you have your passport, even if you can't find your suit and you have no food, at least you get to your destination. You have to know, the first thing that you have to acquire, is to make sure your passport is up to date. That your picture is not worn out and you don't need to get a new one. That's what a person has to know. And that's what you have to feel like now, during these days.

Before you prepare for Pesach, you need a passport to get out of Mitzrayim. True, it is not your passport that you would use to go to *Eretz Yisrael*, but this is how you have to look at it. You have to look at *Yetzias Mitzrayim* as if you are taking a trip. You know today, we live in a world with all kinds of IMAX theaters. All kinds of experiences. There is the New York experience. You could relive going to places without actually going there. They sell you this fake little "passport." You get on the thing and you make believe you're flying somewhere. You have to know that when you're going into Pesach, and you're preparing for Pesach, you're preparing yourself to reach a destination. The destination is to get ourselves out of Mitzrayim and to stay out of Mitzrayim.

Our passport is to see this show. Our passport of *Yetzias Mitzrayim* is going to be *mechazek* to us *nachamol* and *nachamol* - again and again. Every year, through Pesach, you have to grow clearer and be *mechazek* yourself that we have *eidim ne'emanim* to the *emunas haBorei* and the *emunas haTorah kulah*.

Getting out of Mitzrayim means something specific. What was unique about Mitzrayim? Mitzrayim was the foundation of our *emunah* in Hashem. Now that's something you have to remind yourself of over and over, because when we look at the world, we know that Hakadosh Baruch Hu created it; a person could know there's Hashem; I can know that fact from the world. שא מרומ עיניכם, lift up your eyes and you'll know about Hashem (Isaiah 40:26). What's unique about *Yetzias Mitzrayim*?

YETZIAS MITZRAYIM REFUTES ANY DENIAL

There's a famous Ramban, a *moradigeh* Ramban. He says that before *Yetzias Mitzrayim* there were many different groups of people - starting from the days of a man named Enosh - groups who began to develop foolish ideas of *emunah*. Some of them were *kofer be'ikar*, totally denying Hashem; they said the world always existed. Some denied the power of Hashem. Some denied Hashem's individual knowledge of everything that goes on in the world. Some

said Hashem knows what's going on, but He's not involved. And some denied that there's *sechar ve'onesh*, that a person is responsible for his behavior. When Hakadosh Baruch Hu decided to show Himself at the event in Mitzrayim, and He changed the *minhag ha'olam*, He made an exceptional show and a demonstration. He neutralized all of those nonsensical ideas and proved to the world, once and for all, that He is the Creator. He demonstrated to the eyes of human beings that the world has a living Hashem, Who is *mechadesh* it constantly, who constantly renews it, and He knows all and He's *mashgiach al hakol*, controls all. And Hashem foretold prophecies, what He's going to do, and Hashem showed that He talks to human beings, like He talked to Moshe Rabbeinu, etc. This demonstrated that the whole purpose of *Yetzias Mitzrayim* was "למען תדע כי אני ה' בקרב הארץ - that I am Hashem in the midst of this land." I am the *hashgachah*; I'm paying attention. I'm watching every single thing you do. There's nothing that happens *by chance*. Hashem is *mechadesh* the world: "כי לה' הארץ"; "בעבור תדע כי אין כמוי בכל הארץ." Hashem is in full control. Nobody could question it. Nobody could challenge it.

Now, we may think that this is a strange thing, but even in our world, one of the most respected areas of education is science. Scientists like to present themselves as people of integrity. Truth seekers - people who are *mevakshei ha'emes*. But rather than being truth seekers, scientists are the biggest bunch of *shakranim*, *kazvanim*, mockers, and falsehood-seekers that exist in this world! They are *sheker*-seekers to such a degree! The scientific establishment is so blinded by the *sheker* and so petrified of the *emes* that any prestigious scientists in the great halls of academia who suggest that the world itself testifies to an intelligence behind its design - that the world was not created or run in a random fashion - are driven out of their career, blackballed, destroyed, and considered *meshuga'im*. You can't imagine how petrified they are to even *kler*, to investigate, to find out true information. You would think scientists would have explored these *shaylos*, should've asked these questions. For a scientist, everything has to be proven. Everything is open to *kler*, to investigate - but no! They are such garbage. It's *pashut mavhil al hara'ayon* - *mind-boggling* - that they cloak themselves in the clothes of lambs, and they're really wolves. I mean, evil, terrible, false wolves who are petrified from the *emes*. And if a guy will say, "*Ulai, efshar*, maybe, perhaps there is intelligent design." We're not saying the word, "Hashem," *chas veshalom*. That, they'll lock you up for.

There was a *frier* guy that went around the world making a study of this recently and he produced a movie, like a documentary, on this *inyan* to show how the biggest scientists in the world, *chashuve* people in different places in this country, suggested that maybe it's *shayach* that there's a *shitah* of Creation, that the world was actually created. *Pashut*, you can't imagine the uproar, the riots

this caused! It's unbelievable. You would never believe it. I would never believe it, if I didn't see it in writing.

Similarly, in Mitzrayim, people questioned and doubted Hashem.

So what the Ramban tells me is that, *b'emes*, the world is itself a *ra'ayah*. The world testifies to intelligent design. But *l'ma'aseh* looking at the world doesn't refute people; it doesn't stop and prevent people from coming up with *narishe shitos*. In order to obliterate the foolish *shitos*, Hashem made the show of all shows, the great event of *Yetzias Mitzrayim* - to establish His dominance over the world, that there is a concept of reward and punishment. There is a concept of *hashgachah pratis*. There is a concept of *yedias Hashem*. And from that, we have to learn that Hashem knows every single thing, there's *sechar ve'onesh* and everything is under *hashgachas Hashem*.

THE NUMBER ONE MITZVAH IN EMUNAH

Rav Chatzkel Levenshtein (1885-1974), the great *mashgiach* of Ponevezh Yeshiva, and before that, of the Mir Yeshiva, was known for his amazing *emunah*. Years after he came to Eretz Yisrael, he discovered that an older brother of his had also arrived in Eretz Yisrael. Rav Chatzkel was already the *mashgiach* in Ponevezh. His brother had arrived and lived in an old age home in Tel Aviv; he came from Warsaw. Rav Chatzkel became a *litvishe mashgiach* while his brother had become a fiery *chassid*. The brother would go every day and learn in *kollel* in Tel Aviv near his old age home. The two met a few times. I think three times. Somebody was present when they met the third time and he said that the Mashgiach turned to his brother and said: "Do you believe in Hashem?" They were already *zekeinim*. He said, "Yeah." "How do you know? *Vei'azoy veistu?*" His brother lost himself. "*Vei'azoy veistu?* What kind of question is that?! You asked me if I believe in Hashem?! What's the *shaylah?*" He was like fire, a *heise-varmeh chassid*. Rav Chatzkel calmly told him, "I'll tell you how I believe in Hashem. *Ich bin arois gegangen fun Mitzrayim*, I went out of Egypt, I experienced *Yetzias Mitzrayim*. That's how I know there's Hashem." Hashem wants me to believe that He took us out of Mitzrayim, so the first *mitzvah* of *emunah* is אשר הוצאתיך מארץ מצרים - *I am Hashem who took you out of Mitzrayim*.

There's a famous Rosh¹ that says שאינו מאמין כי מי שאינו מאמין ב"ה' אלקיך אשר הוצאתיך מארץ מצרים" doesn't believe in "I am Hashem Elokecha." That is frightening!

¹ ספר אורחות חיים להרא"ש - ליום ראשון לבטוח בה' בכל לבבך ולהאמין בהשגחתו הפרטית. ובזה תקיים בלבבך היחוד השלם בהאמין בו כי עיניו משוטטות בכל הארץ ועיניו על כל דרכי איש ובוחן לב וחוקר כליות, כי מי שאינו מאמין "אשר הוצאתיך מארץ מצרים" אף "באני ה' אלקיך" אינו מאמין. ואין זה ייחוד שלם. כי זה היה (נ"א הוא) סגולת ישראל על כל העמים וזה יסוד כל התורה כלה.

Why not? Why does that mean he doesn't believe? I could say I believe in Hashem for other reasons. I could experience other things with Hashem. Maybe I saw *nissim*. Maybe I saw *niflaos* in my life. Maybe I'm amazed at what Hashem did for me and what Hashem accomplished in the *velt*. Hashem did miracles in the world...No! The Rosh says: *kol zman* you don't have the *yesodos* of *Yetzias Mitzrayim* and you're not living with *Yetzias Mitzrayim*, you're not living with אֲנִי ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ. Of course you can do lip service and say "I believe in Hashem," but what proves beyond a shadow of a doubt, what neutralizes all the scientists, is *yetzias Mitzrayim*; everything is predicated on that. That's the gift of love that Hashem grants us on Pesach.

And you shouldn't think that nowadays is any different. We're surrounded by *kofrim*; *goyishe kofrim*, *frier kofrim* and, sadly, sometimes *frum* also. *Frummeh* people who don't know better.

As you mature and you get older, you're able to analyze things intellectually. It's very nice that a lot of people come around with *vertlach*; *Litvishe* schools, *chassidishe* schools, all try to outdo each other in printing up booklets. The schools compete with each other to see who can come up with a nicer booklet - to have the boys bring home *divrei Torah* on the *Haggadah shel Pesach*. Why is *karpas* called *karpas*? How do you say the *Mah Nishtanah* in Russian, French or Spanish, and other *narishkeit she'ein ke'moso*.

RAV CHATZKEL'S YETZIAS MITZRAYIM

In Eretz Yisrael, there was a *groise tzaddik*. His name was Rav Chaim Brim (1922-2002). I remember him. I was *zocheh* to meet him. A *chaver* of mine who was much older than me, married his daughter, a second marriage. Rav Chaim Brim was very famous, a big *mashpia*, close to the Chazon Ish, close to the Brisker Rav. The *gedolim* were *machshiv* him.

Rav Chaim Brim had a brother, Rav Yohoshua Heschel, who was a rosh yeshiva. Rav Chaim once said over a story that he and his brother paid a visit to the Ponevezher Mashgiach, Rav Chatzkel Levenstein. They asked Rav Chatzkel for some *divrei chizuk* and he refused to say anything. He wasn't forthcoming. The brothers pushed him and they said, "Nu, please. *Epes?* Something?" The Mashgiach lowered his head, *be'ofen hachna'ah*, like humbling himself, and he said very sharply, "I get *chizuk* by thinking about my *matzav* before I went out of Mitzrayim, and my *matzav* after I went out of Mitzrayim. That's the biggest *chizuk* that I have. I don't need any other *chizuk*."

Now, Rav Chaim told me this story. He was surprised at what Rav Chatzkel said, because it wasn't right after Pesach. It wasn't

right before Pesach. It wasn't even during the *parshiyos* when we read about Pesach. It was a regular day. But Rav Chatzkel Levenstein thought about this: "There was a time before I went out of Mitzrayim."

If somebody would ask, "How many times did you experience the event of *Yetzias Mitzrayim* in your life?" most people would have no idea. Most people remember whether the matzah was thick and hard or the matzah was soft and thin. They remember if they were constipated or not, on Pesach. Some remember whether the wine was strong, or the wine wasn't strong. You have to ask yourself: What do you remember about Pesach? People remember *matzah brei*. Fried matzah breakfast. One guy told me, "I remember I couldn't go to restaurants on Pesach." Rabbosai, it's all *narishkeit*.

One of the big *talmidim* of Rav Chatzkel once said that he came to Rav Chatzkel. A Yid had asked this *talmid* for a *brachah*, to *daven* for one of his relatives who got sick, so the *talmid* asked Rav Chatzkel, "Could the Mashgiach please *daven* for my relative."

Rav Chatzkel took his hand and said, "How am I better than you? You can also *daven*. What are you coming to me for?"

Another *talmid* of Rav Chatzkel, Rav Moshe Borenstein, was there. He was watching this experience, and he wanted the guy to get his *brachah*... "After all, the guy came for a *brachah*." So he mixed in and he said, "I know that the Mashgiach's *tefillos* are more *mesugal* to be accepted by Hashem." Rav Chatzkel pushed him away very strongly. Then this *talmid*, Rav Moshe Borenstein, said, "Nu, the Mashgiach is from the *mezakei harabim*, those who elevate the generation." "Ah *gornisht!* (I'm a nothing!)" said the mashgiach.

Finally, Rav Moshe turned to his *rebbe*, Rav Chatzkel, and said, "Nu, it's better that the Mashgiach should *daven* for the *choleh*, because I heard something from somebody who came to have a conversation with the Mashgiach; and in that conversation, the Mashgiach explained a *sugya* to him and brought him to a clearer *hakarah*, a clearer awareness, of *yetzias Mitzrayim*. In that *zechus*, *efshar* - maybe the Mashgiach could *daven* for this man's relative?"

The Mashgiach listened carefully, then smiled and said, "Ah, *azei zugts tu?* So that's what you say? If so, then I'm going to be *maskim*, *bli neder*, to *daven* for the *choleh*." Rav Chatzkel enlightened somebody, turned on the lights of *emunah* in somebody's life.

FIFTEEN LEVELS OF EMUNAH PESHUTAH

Now, in the next few days, as you all prepare for your *yetziah* from Mitzrayim, some of us will be bogged down by work, the cleaning, but you shouldn't lose sight of the *ikar*, and that is that I want to be *mechazek* myself in my *emunah*. How many people say,

“I heard it already? I got it. Okay, it’s *emunah*. I’m *maskim* to you. What more can I *mechazek*?” Most people are unaware of where they lack the *emunah*, but the *emes* is, *Chazal* were *mesaken* that in our *tefillos* on a daily basis after the *Shema* we say a very interesting *tefilah*. We mention *Yetzias Mitzrayim* and we say ה' אלוקים אמת and we go on and we say fifteen praises to be *mechazek* my knowledge that Hashem is *emes*! Fifteen. You know what you say? ויציב ונכון וקים וישר ונאמן ואהוב וחביב ונחמד ונעים ונורא ואדיר ומתוקן ומקובל וטוב ויפה הדבר הזה “and firm, certain and enduring, upright and faithful, beloved and cherished, desired and pleasant, awesome and mighty, correct and acceptable, good and beautiful is this [affirmation] to us for all eternity.” Fifteen different *shevachim*, praises of Hashem. For what? Why can’t I say one or two? I’ve got to say all fifteen?! The reason is because Hashem is telling you there are fifteen levels. Tomorrow when you say ה' אלוקים אמת ask yourself do you even feel ויציב? Do you feel ונכון? Do you feel וקים? Do you feel וישר? What do you feel? Some people don’t even know. I guarantee that many, if not most, people have no idea that ויציב ונכון is referring back to ה' אלוקים אמת. They don’t even know what they’re saying. Isn’t that correct?

This is called the *avodah* of להשיב את לבבך. That’s what it is. These many descriptions help a person to picture and to see Hakadosh Baruch Hu in a more real, physical, fashion. That’s what Hakadosh Baruch Hu wants you to do, to be *mechazek* your *emunah peshutah* in the *Borei Olam*. And what are you trying to be *mechazek*? All of the *yesodos* that were taught to us and were drilled into us by *Yetzias Mitzrayim* about Hakadosh Baruch Hu. That’s what a person has to know.

GAINING THE RECOGNITION

There was once a *talmid chacham* who went to Rav Chatzkel Levenshtein and he asked him, could he *daven* for a *choleh*. Rav Chatzkel asked him what’s the *matzav* of the *choleh*? He said, “*Nebach*, he’s הכרה בלי שוכב, he’s lying and is unaware of what’s going on around him.” No awareness. That’s a way of saying the guy is in a coma. The Mashgiach was surprised by that response and after thinking for a moment, he turned to the *rav* and he said, “Do most people live with *hakarah*? Are most people aware? Are they *makir* that there is a Ribono Shel Olam?” That’s what he said. Amazing! Most people walk around without *hakarah*. They’re not *makir* Hashem.

I was learning with somebody on the phone today. We were learning a piece from the Ramban in *Sefer Emunah uBitachon*. It says on the *passuk* ורעה אמונה, *re'eih* means you should shepherd *emunah*. What does that mean, *re'eih emunah*, you should “shepherd” *emunah*?

BOND TO HASHGACHAS HASHEM

The Ramban says a *moradige pshat*.² That *pashut* gave me a wonderful jolt of caffeine, *mamash* literally! The Ramban says a person goes through life and a lot of times he can't learn Torah. He's busy with *divrei hareshus*. So the Torah is telling you, be *mechazek* yourself, and make your friend *emunah*. He says, *והאבת לרעך* and *והאבת לרעך* *והוא ציווי* *והוא ציווי*. Now, there are two words for friendship. What's the other word for friendship? *Chaver*. What does the word *chaver* mean? Attached, from *chibur*. *Chaver* means *chibur*, an attachment. What does the word *רעך* mean? Let it say, *v'his'chaber be'emunah*, join yourself to Hashem with *emunah*. Why does it say *ורעה* *אמונה*? He says it's, *כלומר התחבר עם אמונה*. He saw somewhere in "*rei'acha*" also a *chibur*. What's the *pshat*?

I remember maybe forty-something years ago I heard a *vort* from Rav Yitzhak Hutner (1906-1980). He said, broken pieces are called *rei'im*. He said the word *rei'ah* is when you have two parts of something that make up a whole. That's called *reiacha*. *Chibur* is when you have two separate pieces of wood and you stick them together. That's *chibur*. *Reiacha* is if you take two halves of one piece of wood and you stick it together.

The Ramban says that you should attach yourself to *emunah* in such a fashion that the *emunah* blends in with you. It fits in with you. It's not like two things that are splotched together, but you feel it's *mashlim*. He says that's the *pshat*. He says, you know why? Because *emunah* is *כוללת כל התריג* *מצוות*. *Emunah* includes all the *taryag mitzvos*. So your *emunah* should be your friend. It should be your companion. You should go nowhere without it.

That's what you want to experience in the one week of Pesach, when you come out of Mitzrayim, that you have bonded. You're more aware of how every single thing in your life is from Hashem, by Hashem, for you to improve yourself. It's talking to you.

If a person does that, then he's going to be *zocheh* to the *geulah* of Mitzrayim, of *Yetzias Mitzrayim be'ofen nifla*.

TZAV: THIS SEDER PESACH, LEAVE YOUR MITZRAYIM!

On Pesach we talk about Yetzias Mitzrayim. I was in a Jewish bookstore today and somebody showed me a series of books on Torah stories that they put out. They bring them down to modern life. Pharaoh is driving a big, black limo. Pharaoh has a lot of double limousines. Pharaoh's guys are carrying big Uzis and M16s. And it tells the whole storyline of Yetzias Mitzrayim; the Yidden are driving garbage trucks, cars, and buses. The

² ועי' רמב"ן בספרו אמונה ובטחון (פרק א) שביאר המשך הפסק בתהלים שם "שכן ארץ ורעה אמנה" וז"ל: כלומר התחזק והשמר שיהיו כל מעשיך באמנה ותמצא שלא תהי' בטל מן הטוב אפי' שעה אחת ומלת "ורעה" הוא מלשון ואהבת לרעך כמון והוא ציווי כלומר התחבר עם האמנה והדבק בה שהיא כוללת כל תרי"ג מצוות כמו שאמרו (מכת כד) בא חקוק והעמידו על אחת שנא' (חבקוק ב, ד) וצדיק באמונתו יחי' עכ"ל.

fellow who put out this book was well-intended. He wants children to know, and maybe some adults also, that the stories that we're reading in the Torah are very applicable to our lives. But the way he told the stories was in my opinion in the wrong fashion. Not the Torahdike way. He got a *rav* to give him an okay.

The *sugya* of Yetzias Mitzrayim is probably the most *shayach sugya* to each and every last one of us. We have to realize that Klal Yisrael was formed in Mitzrayim. Am Yisrael had to go through Galus Mitzrayim in order to be *zocheh* to its birth. Mitzrayim in the Torah is called the *kur habarzel*, the iron refinery. It's where you take metals that have impurities in them, gold, silver, and other metals, and you separate out the dross from the good and you remain with a purified product.

EVERY YID HAS A MITZRAYIM IMPRISONING HIM

The Vilna Gaon writes that every Jew has to go through Mitzrayim. Every one of you sitting here, every one of you hearing this, is either in Mitzrayim or was in Mitzrayim. Mitzrayim means a place that encompasses you, that surrounds you, and the *koach* of *tumah* is so great that it imposes itself on you, to the point that you think it's impossible to get out. *Chazal* tell us no *eved* ever got out of Mitzrayim. It's a *metzius* in the *velt*. They had slavery, and slaves always tried to escape. Prisoners tried to escape. But no one escaped from Mitzrayim, because the *meitzarim*, the boundaries, the walls around Mitzrayim were so powerful, and that's the nature of Mitzrayim.

Every single human being has some Mitzrayim, some *matzav*, some condition in his or her life from where they feel they can't get out of it. Mitzrayim and Pharaoh appear with many, many faces. For some people, their Mitzrayim begins with their parents. You may have a narcissistic mother. You may have a narcissistic father that appears to be very controlling. For a mother it's more unusual but there are many mothers that sadly are controlling, and their control does not allow their kids to develop. There are some parents that have emotional disorders, personality disorders. They were once children and they became parents. And it creates tremendous boundaries for the children in that home. Today, there are all kinds of organizations. Now, when I was a child, they had the same thing but then the *nusach* was: Don't blame the parents. They were from the Holocaust. They were Holocaust survivors. That was the *nusach* in my day. As I got older, the *nusach* became a different reason: that they're children of Holocaust survivors. I'm sure in a few *doros* they'll say they're *ureineklach* of Holocaust survivors. Of course, no one says it's from Hashem. That's for sure. It was all Hitler's fault. Hashem has nothing to do with this, not even a bit.

Many people are challenged with all kinds of pressures. Pharaoh was the ultimate pressure. He took away every freedom that every Jew yearned for in every area, religious freedom and physical freedom, choosing where to live and what to do. He wiped everything away from us. And every single person has this. One difference you have to know is that just like Hashem created Pharaoh, and Pharaoh carried out Hashem's plan to enslave the Jews like Hashem had told Avraham Avinu, every single one of you was put in their position by Hakadosh Baruch Hu.

Now there are some people who have healthy parents - they are lucky people - but they have other problems. They have emotional disturbances. There are many people who are emotionally disturbed. They're full of fears. They have paranoid ideas. They have anxieties. They always try to blame it on somebody: their mother, their father. People are emotionally weak. Hashem creates some people and He tells the *malach* upstairs, "Don't screw in the screws too tight on this one." And sometimes He says, "Screw them a little tighter than regular," and they end up a little bit off-balance. That's what Hashem does. It's planned down to the tiniest detail. Lucky is the person about whom Hashem says to the *malachim* upstairs, "Do a perfect job on this one. I'm going to check this one over. I'm going to put My little sticker on this one." Checked by Hashem. Inspected by Number One. Good to go.

HASHEM BRINGS MITZRAYIM TO IMPROVE OURSELVES

How many people have anger problems? That's a real Mitzrayim! How many people don't have confidence? Don't have strength? In this silly world of ours, we live with such *kofrim*. We try to believe that everyone who causes me *tza'ar* and puts pressure is not from Hashem, but rather because, "My mother did this to me." Or my father, or the teacher in school. Or the kids in school didn't pump you up enough, didn't give you enough attention. All this *kefirah* upon *kefirah* upon *kefirah*. Mitzrayim is a *metzius*! Hashem puts people in their Mitzrayim for one purpose: To refine them, to purify them and to improve them!

Here is a kid, and this is very common today. Today, every third kid has ADHD. He cannot focus. That means his mind is not built, not put together, in the same way as other people's minds are. It's a tremendous, tremendous challenge. It's heartbreaking when I see it. They open their mouths and these kids have to talk, they have to talk back. They can't control themselves. I've dealt with this for years. I've analyzed it. I've gotten children who were willing to work with me, to acknowledge that every time you open your mouth, it's because your automatic filter is broken. You have no control over your mouth. It just pops open! The parent says, "Yes." The kid says, "No." The teacher asks, "How?" The kid says, "Like this." These kids have to be *chutzpadik*. Some kids more and some kids less.

I remember the first time I engaged a child like this. He came to me. I invited him. The first night, I took him to *daven Ma'ariv* in the *Mechinah* of Telz. He met a whole bunch of people that he knew. These guys usually

know how to make a scene, and this guy *shafed* a big *matzav* (“handled the situation”) in the back of the *beis medrash*. Then the *menahel* went over to the guy and said, “Excuse me. I’m not sure who you are, but I would appreciate it if you wouldn’t do this here.” The guy looks at the *menahel* and says to him, “Now, who in the world do you think you are?!” The guy says, “I work here. I’m the *menahel*.” He said, “Well, that’s maybe what you think. I don’t have to agree to that.” The *menahel* said, “You’re a persona non grata in this building from now on. I never want to see your face in this building.”

I walked out and I told the guy, “You realize you’re nuts. You realize you’re a cuckoo.” He said, “I had no control over myself. That wasn’t a planned thing. That was a reflex.” You go to a doctor and they want to see if the knees are working, the muscles, and they hit you in the knee to see if your foot jerks. Did you plan that? No. Did you say, “*Hineni muchan umezuman* to move my knee”? It’s a reflexive action. “Do you acknowledge that you are a very, very different person from regular people?” He said, “I’m starting to realize that.” I started doing exercises with him just to “zip it up.” He had no control over his mouth. That’s why when this kid used to say things to me, awful things, I blew it off. I ignored whatever he said, because I knew, he just had no control over himself. He needed help. He was willing to get the help and he got it. His former *rebbe* told me, “I knew you had a special *koach*, but that you have the *koach* of the Maharal, that I never knew.” I said, “What was that?” He said, “The Maharal took some piece of clay and made it into a *golem*. This is the first time I’m seeing a piece of clay turning into a human being.” He said, “He wasn’t a *sug ben adam*. He may have looked like a *ben adam* but he was definitely a *sug beheimah*. And now he’s a *sug ben adam*. He’s going to get married someday. He’s going to have children someday. He’ll be a citizen of Klal Yisrael. Will he be a *rosh yeshivah*? I don’t know about that, but he’ll be an upstanding citizen.”

DON’T ACCEPT YOUR MITZRAYIM OR BLAME OTHERS

A person has to know: Everybody has his own Mitzrayim. Step number one is that you have to know you’re in Mitzrayim. Now knowing you’re in Mitzrayim creates two choices for you. Remember that 80% of the Jews didn’t get out of Mitzrayim. You know why? They didn’t want to get out. That’s what Rashi says. You know what it means they didn’t want to get out. They just said, “This is how I am. This is how I am and this is where I’m going to stay. It’s nuts. I have Mitzrayim around me. I’m going to get used to it. I’m going to accept it. I’m going to live with it.” You know what Hashem said? “Nothing doing! You’re not even staying in Mitzrayim. You’re going to be buried in Mitzrayim. Because this is a *kur habarzel*.” Hashem said, “I sent you here, to a refinery. You have to improve! Instead, you accepted your weakness? If that’s how it is, you failed your mission. You have no place here. You have forfeited your place in this world.” That’s what a person has to realize.

The worst thing is to just accept your Mitzrayim, rabbosai. I love when a guy tells me, "I have no feeling for it - *yiras shamayim* means nothing to me." There's a certain type of a child and a human being who has a certain condition that it's like a tape. You can make a tape. Each one says the exact same words of *narishkeit*: "I really don't care. I have no feelings for anything to do with *ruchniyus*. I don't care about anything." That's a Mitzrayim. If a guy says, "I can't sit," that's a Mitzrayim. It's a serious Mitzrayim. If you're a *mechutzaf*, it's a Mitzrayim. There's a person who wants to see if he can have any control over himself. He puts himself on a program to see if he can control himself for a few days, and he can't. It's funny how they fool themselves. They do something for three or four days and they think, "Oh that's it! I'm good to go. If I really want to, I can do it." They have no *musag* and they have no understanding. They can't do it even if they tried. Because you want to get rid of your anxiety, you want to get rid of your oppositional behavior, you want to get rid of your inner problem, but you can't do it just by wanting to. You have to work on it. There's a way to improve. You have to learn how to improve. You have to understand the problem, deal with it and then you can begin to improve it.

The second thing is the *mehalech* that people take, which is totally wrong, is they go crazy. They break down. They have anxiety, life is over. If they have ADHD, or they're hyper, they climb the walls. They can't control themselves. They just go berserk. Paranoia. They just give up and they lay down on the floor. They go nuts. They lock themselves in a room. They're finished. I call that, "the crying method." They become victims. They like pity parties. They love when their mommy tells them, "You know how you're such a sweet boy. Deep down you're so sweet. You're a victim *nebach*. You're just a victim." And the kid says, "Yeah, Mommy, I am a victim." The mommy says, "You're going through something. Go and make yourself happy now. Why don't you go do something really stupid and bring other people with you and do the stupid thing with them also and eat yourself up." "Mommy, I love you." The mother and the kid belong in the same hospital bed. They're both nuts.

ONLY HASHEM CAN TAKE US OUT

A person must not "victimize" himself. You can't take the crybaby way. You've got to make a choice: I'm going to improve. That's the only course of action you have to take in this life. I don't care what family you were born into. I don't care what handicaps you have. I don't care what emotional or physical handicaps you may have. If you're sane, and can drive a car, and not drive into walls. If you can see the difference between your right and left hand, and your right and left foot, you are improvable. You have a chance. If you undertake to improve, you will discover a *yetzias Mitzrayim*. *Anochi Hashem Elokecha asher hotzeisicha meiEretz Mitzrayim*. But you have to know Hashem put you in Mitzrayim. You need this for your improvement and the only one that's going to get you out is Hashem. No therapist is going to get you out. No psychologist. No psychiatrist. No. Not working on

a farm. Not going on extreme summer vacations and climbing mountains, or survival camps. Not working with animals and loving cows and horses and riding horses and maybe even raising dogs, training dogs. This is all nice stuff. But the only thing that's getting you out is Hashem. I don't say there's no form of therapy, but what's getting you out is Hashem and only Hashem. That's what's getting you out.

A lady once called me up and told me that her husband has a mental block. He has Asperger's. So? I'm very familiar with Asperger's. I've met a lot of Asperger patients. So what? I understand your life will have limitations, but Hashem made you marry that husband. The one to turn to is Hashem. You have an emotionally imbalanced wife. My heart goes out for you, don't get me wrong. The only one that's getting you out of this is Hashem. And to whatever degree you can get out of it, Hashem is going to decide. You must understand this and turn to Hashem for help, instead of becoming fearful and overcome with fright.

Here is a father whose wife goes a little berserk and has tremendous anxieties. I was talking to a lady who has been calling me up for the last three days telling me she wants to die. She wants to kill herself. I said to her, "Why would you do that? You get a *mitzvah* every single second." She said, "For what?" I said, "You're getting a *mitzvah* of saving a Jew's life for every single second that you breathe. Do you know how many Jews you're saving in a day?" She said, "Really? You mean it's like Hatzalah?" I said, "It's like Hatzalah. You are Hatzalah." She said, "Oh, wow!" She calls me the next day. She says, "You know what song I'm singing the whole day? על כל נשימה ונשימה תהלל קה." I said, "Keep singing it! Keep singing it! Don't even stop to call me. Just keep singing it!" She said, "Do you know what tape it's on? I've got to find it." I said, "I'm not sure, but it's a nice song. It's the right attitude. Keep on breathing!"

A person has to understand that you have to turn to Hashem. You have to beg Hashem like your life depends on it. You have to acknowledge Hashem in your life. You have a sick child, you have a sick husband, you have a sick wife, whatever you have, emotionally sick, physically sick, you have to make that your strongest connection to Hashem.

There are people who are challenged in the area of *parnasah*. For some weird reason, most people only feel the major challenge in life is *parnasah*. They tell me their only challenge is *parnasah*. "That's my *zach*, my issue," they tell me. A person must turn to and beseech Hashem, your situation could improve; only Hashem can help you. You have to look at how the Yidden got out of Mitzrayim. What does Hashem want you to do? Hashem doesn't like it when we adopt the attitude of: לא שמעו אל משה מקצר רוח. Over-focusing on the problem wasn't going to help them. This is not going to help you either.

RECOGNIZE THAT HASHEM IS BEHIND EVERYTHING

Today, I saw this beautiful story that took place during the 1948 war in Yerushalayim Ir Hakodesh. The *pachad* that people lived with, was a feeling of choking. It paralyzed almost all the Yidden in Yerushalayim. You could cut the air with a knife. My *rebbe* described it to me. People described it to me. The Jordanians were down the block. Right after Meah Shearim was where Jordan began and they were lobbing bombs constantly right into Geulah, into Meah Shearim! It was not normal. Every day people were dying. They weren't exactly modern day missiles, but the Jordanians were shelling Geula and Meah Sharim around the clock, and people were *mamash* dying every day.

In the Chevron Yeshivah, there was a tremendous *pachad* and every time a shell landed, it was boom! It shook the houses and it shook the street. Everybody's heart was shaking. After the bomb exploded, everyone would ask, "Did anything happen? Who? What? When?" People would go out of their hiding places and see. Chevron Yeshivah was in Geulah. The downstairs floor of the lunchroom became the *miklat*, the room that everybody went into. When there was an attack, everybody piled into that room, and no one was allowed to walk out.

There was only one person who didn't go into the *miklat* and that was the *rosh yeshivah*, the Gaon, Rav Chatzkel Sarna (1890-1969). He was busy with his *inyanim* in his room upstairs. All he did was make sure that no *bachurim* left the yeshiva building. Guys get claustrophobic. You know how *bachurim* are. They have a hard time sitting. He made sure that every kid was downstairs.

There was a *talmid*, a close *talmid* of his who didn't live in Yerushalayim. At one time, during a lull in the fighting, he decided to come to Yerushalayim and visit his *rebbe* because he heard what the story was, that his *rebbe* is the only one not going down to the *miklat*. The *talmid* went into the *rosh yeshivah's* room and asked him, "Are you not petrified or you don't worry about all the *boomim*, the *kolos ubrakim* that are happening in Yerushalayim?" Listen to what the Rosh Yeshivah answered him. The Rosh Yeshivah said to him *behisragshus*, "אני שומע קול דודי דופק" - what I hear from every boom is Hashem knocking on my door" (based on Shir HaShirim 5:2). You understand that? Would you hear that? Here is a bomb coming. One guy hears an incoming bomb. "Ohh! My life's over. It's not from Hashem. It's from the Jordanians." Every time there was a shell, they would curse the Jordanians and curse the mufti, curse the king of Jordan. Another curse, another curse. What's the Rosh Yeshivah hearing? קול דודי דופק. The Ribono Shel Olam. He's knocking on my door.

Rabbosai, you can be *zocheh* to so much on Pesach if you understand what your Mitzrayims are and you acknowledge them! Here is a *bachur* and it's just like in Mitzrayim. He gets impressed by the outside world. He likes to look like a *goy*. He wants to dress like a *goy*. He wants to dress cool.

He wants to walk on a plane wearing a baseball hat. There were these two guys who walked with a baseball hat on the plane today. It's like, hello?! Everybody knows you're Jewish! What's this baseball hat thing over here? They were hiding out in clear sight. But it's amazing that you should see how people get overwhelmed. They're "swallowed up" by the culture of Mitzri'im. They want to *meshaneh* their *malbush*. They want to *meshaneh* their *lashon*. They love talking "broken English." They love talking *shvartze* talk. American talk. Irish talk. They think it's so cool and so wonderful. So *geshmak!* They don't realize that they're giving up their identities. They don't even know what's in Mitzrayim anymore. They're not aware. Their clothes? They wear clothes like they dress for Purim every single day. So extreme, they don't look normal.

FIND YOUR MITZRAYIMS AND WANT TO BREAK FREE

But once you understand you're in Mitzrayim and you 'decide' that you want to get out of Mitzrayim, that's the beginning of freeing yourself. For the next week, it would behoove every one of you to really give consideration of where your Mitzrayim is. Where's your border? Is it from the outside? Is it from a sickness? Is it from your parents? Family challenges? Social pressures? Where does your insanity come from? Does it come from inside, from your *befnim*? Are you just drawn to the *umos haolam*? Where is your problem? Acknowledge your Mitzrayim and understand that Hashem says, "Every year on Pesach, I take the Jews out of Mitzrayim again. I remove you from Mitzrayim. But you have to want to get out of Mitzrayim." Hashem says, "You have to turn to Me. You have to *daven* to Me."

The Yidden had to *shecht* a *korban Pesach* and they had to circumcise themselves in order to leave. That was their ticket out of Mitzrayim. They had to be willing to part from their Egyptian attachment. They had to be willing to slaughter the god of the Mitzri'im. Yesterday it was *avodah zarah*. Today they were slaughtering that god. It doesn't say that they were 100% with Hashem in their hearts. But Hashem said, "I want to see a *peulah*. I want to see you do some action. I want to see you commit yourself to get the *bris milah*," which they had not done for many years. It had already become the fashion not to do *bris milah* in their time. Even though they weren't *meshaneh malbusham uleshonam*, but they were *meifer bris milah*, as *shtait* in *Chazal*. Hashem said, "Today you have to sign on the dotted line. Today you've got to do what you've got to do. And if you do what you've got to do, you're going to be *zocheh* אני ה' אלוקים אני ולא מלאך אני ולא שרף, I, Hashem, personally, will come to your house on Pesach and I'm going to save you." But you've got to want to stay out of Mitzrayim. Hashem is going to test you. Hashem is going to take you out. Hashem will take you out. But what if by the *seder* there's a disruption, and by the *seder* itself, you're getting all angry and by the *seder* itself, you think: *I hate to be here. I don't want to be a victim. I don't want to be a miskein*. And at the *seder* itself you're complaining and you're getting upset. Hashem says, "I'm offering you a chance to get out of Mitzrayim - and you don't want out!?! You want to be a victim!?"

Understand that every challenge, every Mitzrayim in your life is קול דודי Hashem's knocking on your door.

I was talking to a *talmid chacham* recently who doesn't believe in vaccinations. He's an anti-vaxer. He was up in arms. I mean he was really upset about how the *menahel* in the *yeshivos* can forbid kids from coming to school if they're not vaccinated. "How can he do that?" I said, "It's a very good question. It defies logic." "We have to do something." I said, "What are you going to do? You're going to move the bridge? You can't fight city hall." "Oh, they listen to this *balebub* and that doctor." "Who is that doctor?" "That doctor is *gornisht*." All the doctors are *gornisht*. Only the doctors who agree with them are something. Usually the doctors they want to listen to are the unknown doctors. But all the known doctors, they don't want to listen to. He told me, "You know how false doctors are?" One of these anti-vaxers told me that a doctor in medical school learns about vaccinations for no more than one hour and he's building his whole *shitah* in his life of vaccinations and how important they are from that one hour of learning. I told him, "You don't get it?" He said, "What do you mean?" I said, "There's a guy in Lakewood named Dr. Shanik. Do you know how many patients he has? Over the last thirty years, how many children did he vaccinate? Ten thousand? Twenty thousand? Thirty thousand? Forty? Without batting an eyelash. Not *stam*. A hundred thousand." I said, "A hundred thousand kids went through him and got vaccinated and you think that he believes vaccinations are good because of the hour he spent in medical school on it? The guy is a *ba'al nisayon*, he has experience. You don't think if people would be dying like flies, the guy would pause to question? You think he's being paid off by the pharmaceutical industry? Then you're doubly retarded."

There are people who have experience. I'm not saying your opinion has no validity. I'm not saying that. He says, "You know what goes into vaccinations?" I said, "You know what the *gemara* says? I'll tell you a *gemara* I'm sure you don't know. Do you know that the *gemara* says that any medicine that doesn't have a negative side effect, that can't make you sick, is not a medicine?" Somebody once brought the Brisker Rav medicine. He said, "This medicine is *mamash* vitamins. It's *mamash* something that can be good for the body. It has no side effects! I'm not taking it." You just told me it's not a medicine. The *gemara shtait pum fakhert*. He was a *ma'amin* in Hashem but today the *kofrim* say, "No, no, no, I only believe in things that have no side effects. I'm not *maskim* to take it. It has side effects." "But the *menahalim* are not letting people in the schools." I said, "Do you think the *menahalim* are making that choice or do you think Hashem is orchestrating that choice? You don't think it's a *gezeirah min hashamayim* against parents?" "But it's dangerous." I said, "Do you think it's a *gezeirah min hashamayim*?" Boom! Silence! קול דודי דקרה ישמע (based on Melachim 1; 19:12). Then I said, "We have to ask your rav." I told him, "You get on the phone and ask him right now: Who made this *gezeirah*?"

One of the head people in this area calls me up. One of the main spokesmen in this area calls me up. “Rabbi Brog, you don’t know what’s going on! The *menahelim* are terrible people!” I said, “I agree with you, but it’s a *gezeirah min hashamayim*.” “And what about Hitler?! Was that *min hashamayim*?” I said, “Oh sure it was. And what about *metzitzah bepeh*? It’s all *min hashamayim*.” I said, “Everything is *min hashamayim*.” I said to this *talmid chacham*, “Why don’t you look in the *Chafetz Chaim*.” He’s a big *ba’al Chafetz Chaim*, this person. He’s a master in the *Chafetz Chaim be’emes*. He’s like a *talmid chacham* in *Chafetz Chaim*. I said, “The *Chafetz Chaim* is the one who explains exactly how to recognize what type of *gezeirah* is *ma’aseh Satan* and what *gezeirah* is directly from Hashem but they’re both from Hashem and how to deal with it. Why don’t you follow the *Chafetz Chaim*?”

You know what the answer is: because there’s no *Ribono Shel Olam*. That’s what the *Chazon Ish* said. The *Ribono Shel Olam* plays no role here. “I have this *rav* that agrees with me.” I said, “I agree with you. Don’t vaccinate your kids. I don’t care. It doesn’t bother me.” “I’m not *maskim* to you.” But there’s a *gezeirah*. You’re facing a *gezeirah min hashamayim*. If the *gezeirah* would be for me to keep my kids out of school, I would have to think: What does Hashem want from me? Just like I told you, in New York we have a *gezeirah* against learning. It’s not because some *frei* guy made the *gezeirah*. What do you think, this guy is worse than Pharaoh? Hashem made the *gezeirah*. Hashem is sending a message. That’s the *Mitzrayim*. And you’ve got to respond accordingly.

Let us all be *zocheh* to get out of *Mitzrayim* and to free ourselves of our personal *Mitzrayims*, other *Mitzrayims*. May we be *zocheh* to the *geulah sheleimah*.

חג כשר ושמח

✧ IN SUMMARY ✧

Pesach is our opportunity to grow and develop in *emunah*. We can do this every day in our *seder tefillah*. However, Pesach is “the” time to strengthen ourselves and grow, as Hashem gave us the Yom Tov for *sasson* and *simchah*, and we can feel the love of Hashem more. We unite ourselves with *emunah* and bond with it. We should come out of Pesach being more aware that every single thing in our life is from Hashem, and that Hashem gives and supervises every event. We should not merely go through Pesach without a goal, and pick up something. We should prepare ourselves before Pesach, as we would prepare for a journey, with a clear aim of reaching a destination or goal in *emunah*. This week, I will (*bli neder*), use the run up to Pesach to be *mischazeik* in *emunah* by focusing on either or both of: The fifteen praises beginning *V'Yatziv v'nachon...* that strengthen *emunah* in, “*Hashem, Elokeichem emes,*” for *chizzuk* in Yetzias Mitzrayim.

Galus Mitzrayim was painful and it seemed to be destructive. However, that very challenge facilitated Klal Yisrael becoming the best they could be, with the birth of Klal Yisrael as Hashem’s people. In Mitzrayim, the Bnei Yisrael were prevented from serving Hashem properly; they were limited by the *tumah* that saturated the country. Today, Mitzrayim symbolizes the issues that limit us and hold us back from serving Hashem with our full capabilities , our personal Mitzrayim. We are charged with getting out of that Mitzrayim, so we can serve Hashem with our full capabilities. We must decide to make a change and then bring Hashem into the picture, because only He can help us escape. This week, I will (*bli neder*) identify one of my Mitzrayim and make myself a physical or digital reminder saying that it is actually “*Kol Dodi dofek,*” and Hashem is reminding me to ask Him for help with getting out of that Mitzrayim.

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