Shalom Friends,

One of the beauties and wonders of Judaism is that we have been able to pass on our stories and our traditions virtually intact for thousands of years. Pesach is the perfect example of how the repetitive recitation of the Exodus story has enlightened and inspired generations of Jews.

Our collective memory is strong and our rituals ensure that together, we pass our stories from one generation to the next. Pesach not only celebrates our freedom, the Seder (the order) provides us with the script for our remembrance. The Hagaddah or ‘telling’ is our guide for sharing our story, recollecting our suffering, and tasting freedom again and again year after year.

When we gather around the Passover table, it is not for love of matzo. It’s because we want to remember and share the story of one of the most compelling journeys ever. And through the Seder we read, sing, ask questions, and literally taste the hardship: the bread made in haste, the tears, the bitter herbs, and the mortar – all the elements of our past.

The path out of Egypt included stretches of hunger, illness, challenges to our faith, and aimlessness wandering with no end in sight. Yet the underlying theme is hope.

Our mandate is to tell the story of our escape from Egypt as if we had been there and experienced the journey ourselves. Each year we relive this. We recall and remember how our ancestors were from an impossible situation to a journey full of possibilities, from enslavement and suffering to freedom and self-determination. As Rabbi Jonathan Sacks writes, "It is the story of the defeat of probability by the force of possibility. It defines what it is to be a Jew: a living symbol of hope.”

We share this hope with our children around the table and concurrently with millions of other Jews around the globe, and millions upon millions who have relived the story over thousands of years.

We share a collective experience that transcends geography and, in many ways, time. Collective memory is a bonding and binding force. The annual story of Exodus serves to perpetuate Jewish continuity and connects us as a people to one another. Relating the story also cultivates empathy in us for others who are suffering, and frames for us that very little is achieved without at least some degree of faith, challenge, and difficulty.

There are two sides to that matzo: it is both the taste of suffering and the taste of freedom.

Happy Passover and success to all your endeavors!