

Pesach Message 5767 / 2007

Rabbi Geoffrey L. Shisler



There is a short and rather enigmatic passage in the Haggadah that we sing while we're holding a cup of wine:

Vehi She'amedah La'avoteinu Velanu.....

"This is what has stood for our fathers and for us; for in each and every generation they stand against us to destroy us, and the Holy One, Blessed be He rescues us from their hand."

However, it's not clear what "this" refers to. Is it the promise made to Abraham, that we have just mentioned before singing this paragraph, or is it that Hakadosh Baruch Hu always rescues us from the hand of our enemies?

An ingenious suggestion is that the word 'Vay'hi' is an acronym:

Vav is 6, and recalls the Six Orders of the Mishna
Hei is 5, and reminds us of the Five Books of the Torah
Yud is 10, which evoke the Ten Commandments and
Alef is One - which is of course, the One G-d.

It is *these* things which have protected and saved the Jewish people throughout the generations!

There is though, another suggestion that has a special relevance today.

In each and every generation there have been people who have stood against us to try and exterminate us. Paradoxically, it is these constant and unremitting attacks against the Jewish people that has protected us. However hard we may try to forget that we are Jews, and whatever efforts we may make to dissipate into the host nation and become 'just like everyone else,' sooner or later they rise against us and remind us of our origins, even when we try to forget it ourselves. And it's just at such a time that even those Jews who have tried to renounce their Jewishness step forward to be counted amongst us once again.

How much happier would our lot be were we to be able to see in the first interpretation offered here the reasons for the continuation of Judaism. Sadly, too often it's in the second.

Let us pray for a time when all Jews will come to acknowledge the Almighty and His Torah and when, as a result, He will bring peace to His troubled people and His Holy Land.

Anne and I wish you, and all your family a Chag Kasher VeSameiach.

Rabbi Geoffrey L. Shisler