DAY 13 - V'HI SHE’AMDA

At times of difficulty, we often find comfort and hope standing in solidarity with each other. We pray together, sing together, and cry together. Perhaps what might be the most difficult component of our current challenge is precisely our inability to physically come together to give each other hope and comfort. When we think of responding to our traditional challenges, the paragraph of the seder that comes to mind is v’hi she’amda.

וְהַקָּדוֹשׁ בָּרוּךְ הוּא מַצִּילֵנוּ מִיָּדָם שֶׁבְּכָל דּוֹר וָדוֹר, עוֹמְדִים עָלֵיֽנוּ לְכַלּוֹתֵנֽוּ. וְהַקָּדוֹשׁ בָּרוּךְ הוּא מַצִּילֵנוּ מִיָּדָם.

And this (Hashem’s blessings and the Torah) is what kept our fathers and what keeps us surviving. For, not only one arose and tried to destroy us, rather in every generation they try to destroy us, and Hashem saves us from their hands. (translation from Chabad.org)

We highlight all our enemies who sought to destroy us, beginning with Pharaoh in Egypt, and throughout the generations since then as well. Throughout the ages, we have been forced to bounce back against all odds and against the wishes of our oppressors. On a face value, the single secret to our success is v’hi She’amda, that Hashem has saved us throughout each of these difficult times; allowing us to survive darkness after darkness.

The Sfas Emes has a unique way of reading this Seder paragraph, however, which gives us another insight into our survival throughout the ages. He reads "שֶׁעָמְדָה שֶׁלֹּא אָמַד בִּלְבָד, בִּלְבָד, שֶׁלֹּא אָמַד בִּלְבָד" as referring not only to the external enemies we have throughout history, but the internal ones as well. When we are not אָמַד or unified together as a Jewish people, we stand to lose everything. In other words, our ability to survive relies on a double edged sword, relying on Hashem and unifying together.

It may feel like our second measure against moments of collective difficulty has been removed from our toolbox because we are all in solitude right now. But this is anything but true!

Solitude is not the opposite of solidarity. Both can coexist. We can stand together (virtually and emotionally) more so now, than ever before. We have the capacity to unify as a people well beyond physically coming together. Call a friend. Facetime with grandparents. Daven for Jews you have never met before. Give tzedakah. Share Torah or a positive message with an online audience. Let us take this opportunity to unite our minds and hearts and ensure that we are truly "יאזרו עזרה."

Join the Conversation

What have you done to show solidarity in solitude?

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