PESAH: Some thoughts for the night of the Seder

As we explained yesterday, our mission at the Pesah Seder is to TEACH the Hagada to our children, family members and guest, not just to READ it in front of them. To teach the Hagada means, among other things, to make it alive and relevant also for those who are not familiar with Jewish history. We must show that the story of the Hagada is not part of a forgotten past, but shockingly contemporary. As if history, or Jewish history, repeats itself after thousands of years. With this idea in mind let us analyze one passage of the Hagada. This paragraph, four words, describes the strategy the Egyptians used to get us enslaved without any inside opposition.

The pasuq says: "VAYARE'U OTANU HAMITSRYIM VAY'ANUNU" (Deut. 26:6). The key word to understand this verse is the very first word "VAYARE'U"… . It is usually translated as "the Egyptians did bad to us", in the sense of treated us bad. But you will notice that this word is in the Hif'il, a transitive verbal construction. When understood in this way this word means: "And the Egyptians did US bad" , in other words, "they made us look bad", or in just one word" They "demonized" us. As my son Ya'aqob writes in his commentary to the Hagada, Pharaoh "a dictator singles out the People of Israel as an irrationally evil entity, who is to blame for all the misfortunes of this dictator's subjects. The propaganda of Pharaoh is nonsensical. Basically, he tells his people: "The other, this People of Israel, is very cunning. We must be more cunning than they are. If not, then if and when we are attacked, the Israelites will join our enemies out of sheer malice. Their goal in joining our enemies will be to harm us, nothing more. In fact, after they attack us, they will leave the land! ". The Jews are bad. They are irrationally bad. This is the only way it makes sense to systematically blame the

Jews for all possible misfortunes. Thus, Pharaoh succeeded in eradicating the positive impression Joseph had left on Egypt just a few years ago. Without Joseph, Egyptians would have perished in the worst famine to have ever affected them. At the time, they acknowledged it: "you have saved our lives!"- they admitted to Joseph. But Jewish contributions to society can be forgotten as swiftly as the time it takes for an irrational message of hatred to reach the ears of subjects in a dictatorial system. "
This phenomena, demonization > antisemitism, was started by Pharaoh but it repeated itself numberless times. In 1492 Queen Isabel from Spain, expelled the same Jews who had made Spain so successful and who had even helped the Christian queen in her war against the Arabs. Before doing that the Jews were demonized in Spain an across Europe, not just as "deicides" killers of a god, but also as poisoners of wells, usurers, and murders of Christian boys for ritual purposes, i.e., to bake the Matzot.

Today, this demonization is systematically applied to the State of Israel, the "Jew" among the nations. Israel is vilified, attacked and falsely accused of all imaginary evils. Antisemitism in the world is not, as it is usually claimed, the consequences of the "evils" of the state of Israel, antisemitism is the reason why Israel is systematically vilified.

There is no place in the world, no institution where antisemitism is most prominent than in the United nations. As of 2013, Israel had been condemned in 45 resolutions by United Nations Human Rights Council. Since its creation in 2006 the Council had resolved more resolutions condemning Israel than on the rest of the world combined! Two weeks ago, for example, the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women issued a report on March 20 condemning one country in particular for its mistreatment of women – Israel! And the most disturbing thing is that the world does not oppose

emphatically this antisemitic false propaganda. The world seems to accept that Israel the demonization of Israel.

I have a very disturbing example from today's news: As negotiations between the superpowers and Iran progress toward reaching a deal, there is one element in the negotiations that was entirely ignored, as no one seemed to have cared about, not even Israel's "best friend", the USA: Iran has said many times that they intend to wipe off Israel". Why, then, this statement was never part of the negotiations? Why America or France or Germany does not demand from Iran to publicly deny this belligerent against the State of Israel, something that will make Iran's promises about pursuing nuclear energy for peaceful purposes much more credible, and vice versa? As I was thinking about this idea, i got an email from "Times of Israel" with some very fresh news. As the deadline to reach a deal with Iran gets closer and closer by the hour, the Iranian militia chief was quoted today saying that for Iran "Destroying Israel is 'nonnegotiable' ".

Now, let us see how the superpowers would react to this statement… but do not bet your money on it…

In the meantime, Friday night, when we will read the Hagada, we will be saying VEHI SHE'AMDA LA-ABOTENU VELANU, that no matter what happens with our friends and foes, we will never be alone, HASHEM will always be on our side.