

Congregation Beth Sholom

TORAH WEEKLY

A Project of the Linda Mitgang 7"7 Learning Initiative

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‘Like a Father Carrying His Son on His Shoulders’

BY RABBI AVI MILLER
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וְשָׂמַתְּ אֶת־שְׁתֵּי הָאֲבָנִים עַל כְּתֹפֶת הָאֶפֹּד אֲבִי זִכְרֹן לְבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְנָשָׂא אֶהְרֹן אֶת־שְׁמוֹתֵם לִפְנֵי יְהוָה עַל־שְׁתֵּי כְתֻפֵּי לְזִכְרוֹן:

Attach the two stones to the shoulder-pieces of the ephod, as stones for remembrance of the Israelite people, whose names Aaron shall carry upon his two shoulder-pieces for remembrance before the LORD.

In this week's parsha, we read about the *Bigdei Kehuna*, the special vestments worn by the Kohen Gadol. One of these vestments was the Ephod, an outer vest woven with gold, blue, purple, scarlet, and linen thread. Attached to the frontside of the Ephod was the Choshen/breastplate which contained twelve precious stones (four rows of three) in gold settings with the names of the twelve tribes engraved upon them and the Urim V'Tumim tucked inside. Golden chains were used to fasten the Choshen to the two shoulder straps of the Ephod.

What's interesting about these shoulder straps was that each was decorated with a "Shoham" gem (possibly onyx, chrysoprasus, beryl, malachite?) engraved with the names of six tribes (twelve in total). Commentators have suggested that these two gems symbolize the burden of the nation which the Kohen Gadol had to bear upon his shoulders. He was charged with the task of carrying his nation, advocating

ZMANIM

Candle-lighting	5:25 pm
Mincha	5:30 pm
Shacharis Hashkama	7:45 am
Joel Shiff/Main	9:15 am
Mincha	5:15 pm
Shiur w/ Rabbi Miller	5:30 pm
Maariv	6:20 pm
Shabbos Ends	6:26 pm

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for them, atoning for them, and interceding on their behalf. The heavy burden of Jewish leadership is thus aesthetically represented by the twelve tribes resting on the Kohen's shoulders.

In his commentary Beer Mayim Chayim, R. Hayim of Czernowitz (1740-1817) offers a beautiful image that radically reinterprets the national burden that the Kohen Gadol had to carry.

שהיה הכהן גדול בעצמו מגין עליהם על ידי זה ונשא אותם עליו כאב הנושא את בנו על כתפיו להצילו מכל מכשול רע ביראתו שלא תגוף באבן רגלו

The Kohen Gadol protects the people, and carries them, so to speak, like a father carrying his child on his shoulders, to save him from any evil obstacle so he will not stub his toe on a rock. This is to protect them from suffering and any obstacle.

The image he conjures is striking. A parent schlepping and carrying a child can certainly be annoying at times, as well as physically exhausting and enervating. But a parent is also happy to do it. A parent knows all too well that the days fly by, and kids grow up, and soon enough they won't be needing any more carrying. That's parenting. Carrying the burden of a child, day in and day out, comes with a lot of pain and a lot of responsibility and a lot of joy.

What the Beer Mayim Chayim is suggesting is that the burden of the Kohen Gadol was the burden of a parent carrying his child. Yes it was heavy and difficult. But it was also joyful and there was absolutely no feeling like it.

The two engraved gems resting upon the Kohen Gadol's shoulders remind us that joy and responsibility can, and must, go together.

Unmasking God in the Megillah

BY Yael Saffra

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God's name is not mentioned even once in the entire Megillah. How does one find God when God is not close or obvious? How does one access God in a chaotic and uncertain world where God's presence is masked?

There is a famous story found in the Jerusalem Talmud:

ר' חייא בר אבא ורבי שמעון בן חלפתא היו מהלכין בבקעת ארבל וראו אילת השחר. אמר לו ר' חייא: כך היא גאולתן של ישראל, בתחילה קמעא קמעא, כל מה שהיא הולכת, היא רבה והולכת. כמו שכתוב: 'כי אשב בחשך ד' אור לי'. כך בתחילה - 'ומרדכי יושב בשער המלך', ואחר-כך 'ויקח המן את הלבוש ואת הסוס', ואחר-כך 'וישב מרדכי אל שער המלך'. ואחר-כך 'ומרדכי יצא מלפני המלך במלבוש מלכות', ואחר-כך 'וליהודים הייתה אורה ושמחה

Upcoming Shiurim

Daf Yomi

7:30am with R. Weberman

8:30 am with Chayim Maza

Thursday

9:15 pm, R. Weberman, Parsha

IN CASE YOU MISSED IT



AUDIO SHIUR ROUNDUP

R. Miller: Purim Seudah on Erev Shabbos

R. Wein: A Tefilla Lesson From A Peculiar Absence

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THE NEXT TORAH WEEKLY!

Rabbi Chiya Bar Abba and Rabbi Shimon ben Halafta were walking in the Arbel Valley and saw the sun rise. R. Chaya said to him: This is the redemption of Israel: at first it is קמעא קמעא - little by little, and then just like the sun slowly breaks through the darkness increasing in intensity and brightness as it rises in the sky, so too, is the redemption of the Jewish people. As it is written: 'For I will sit in the darkness God is my light'. Thus at first - 'And Mordecai sat at the king's gate', and then 'Haman took the garment and the horse', and then 'and Mordecai sat at the king's gate' and then 'and Mordecai went out before the king in royal attire', and then 'and the Jews had light and happiness.

According to Dr. Simi Peters, Megilat Esther opens a window and sheds new light on the way one can experience a relationship with the Hidden God. The storyline feels fast and continuous, as if one event miraculously and instantly leads into the next. The truth is, however, this is not the case. If we read the text carefully, there is a timeline that takes shape. The story of redemption in the Megillah is a process and unfolds slowly over time, like the sun slowly breaks through the darkness. The Megillah opens in the third year of King Achashveirosh's reign and the forced gathering of the young women and their year long beauty regime takes place in the seventh year. The decree to annihilate the Jews was written and distributed in year twelve and the Jews fought back in the thirteenth year. During those thirteen years, a lot of life was lived; babies were born, business deals were made, people got married, and people died. The natural order of the world continued. The Megillah is not one seamless, coherent event as it is purposely presented when we hear it in shul on Purim. Thirteen years of life are condensed into ten short chapters and a forty minute reading. Perhaps, if one lived in Shushan during those thirteen years, it would be unclear if any miracles actually took place at all. There is a debate in the gemara:

מַהִיכֵן קוֹרֵא אָדָם אֶת הַמְּגִלָּה וְיוֹצֵא בָּהּ יְדֵי חוֹבָה -

from where must a person read the Megilla in order to fulfill his obligation? Three opinions are offered.

רַבִּי מֵאִיר אוֹמֵר כּוֹלָהּ רַבִּי יְהוּדָה אוֹמֵר מֵאִשׁ יְהוּדִי רַבִּי יוֹסִי אוֹמֵר מֵאַחֲרֵי הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה

Rabbi Meir says: He must read all of it. Rabbi Yehuda says: He needs to read only from "There

was a certain Jew" (Esther 2:5). Rabbi Yosei says: From "After these things".

I would like to suggest that the underlying idea behind this argument is the ambiguity of the miracle. What was the miracle and when did it begin? According to Rabbi Meir the seeds of the miracle of Purim were planted thirteen years before anything ever happened. In other words, the miracle is that God is continuously present and involved in the world. Nothing is random. According to Rabbi Yehuda, the miracle begins when Mordechai and Esther, the heroes of the Megillah are introduced. He believes that miracles are brought about through the agency of brave individuals. Rabbi Yosi posits that the miracle started on the political stage, when Haman rose to power; thereby altering the trajectory of Persian Jewish history.

When Esther and Mordechai established Purim as a holiday for the generations, they reimagined what a relationship with God looks like while living in exilic times. Megillat Esther gives us the ability to find God when there is no longer a Beit Hamikdash. As the Gemara suggests, God's hand may potentially be seen in the arc of history, people and politics. This new understanding of God contrasts sharply with the thunderous, miraculous, and omnipresent God of the Book of Exodus. At Har Sinai, upon experiencing an all powerful and all-pervasive God, the children of Israel proclaimed נַעֲשֶׂה וְנִשְׁמָע. God gave the Torah, set the holidays and laid out the mitzvot. God granted and the Jewish people readily accepted. Generations later, as the role of God in exile was redefined, so too, the role of the Jewish nation evolved. Because of Mordechai and Esther, Purim is the first holiday on the Jewish calendar created by individuals. The Jews of Persia and Media, proactively echoed the "we will do and we listen" of Sinai with the promise of קִיָּמָה וְקִבְלוּ - "fulfilling and accepting" the holiday of Purim and its Torah-inspired mitzvot. Ultimately, Megillat Esther charges us to recognize that the all-powerful God of the Exodus and Sinai is also the God of history and human agency.



Tetzaveh, Moshe, & Purim

BY AVROMIE FEIN

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פרשת תצוה is the only one that Moshe is not mentioned since he was born. As we know, this omission is due to Moshe telling Hashem in next week's פרשת אמ-תשא חטאתם. Moshe "threatens" Hashem that if He does not forgive בני ישראל for the חטא העגל to strike his name from the Torah. The Tur writes that Moshe lost the right to become the גדול and to avoid causing Moshe pain when the Torah discusses the garments of the גדול, Hashem does not mention Moshe's name in the Parsha. The רבינו states, that although Hashem did forgive בני ישראל and the condition precedent did not occur, nevertheless, a curse spoken by a tzaddik (akin to the case of Yaacov inadvertently cursing Rachel) is מתקיימת. Rav Sorotzkin brings up two issues.

1. Yaacov's curse did not contain a condition precedent. He said whoever has the idols should die. Conversely, Moshe's curse is contingent on Hashem not forgiving בני ישראל. Therefore, this utterance should have no effect.
2. Moshe spoke to save בני ישראל. His מסירת נפש should be rewarded not punished.

Rav Sorotzkin answers that there are two worlds, here on earth and one in שמים. In our world, there are conditions that can be attached before something becomes effective. We just learned in פסחים, a father slaughters a korban Pesach and can stipulate the first child to make it to ירושלים is included and exclude the others. However, in שמים, every word and action have consequences. The message is so powerful. All our actions and speech, no matter how insignificant we think they are, have enormous ramifications, both in this world and in שמים. Rav Sorotzkin suggests that Moshe is not punished for saying "מחני לא מספרך". He quotes גמרא סוטה, since Moshe was מוסר צפח for בני ישראל, Hashem rewards Moshe as if he fulfilled the מצות התלויות בארץ although he never entered the land.

פרשת תצוה is read at the same time as the Megillah is read. There must be a deep connection between them. Although the Megillah does not mention Hashem's, His presence and providence is obvious

throughout. So much of פרשת תצוה is about Moshe. "ואתה הקרב" "ואתה תצוה", etc. I would like to suggest two answers.

1. Purim represents the transition from the era of Hashem being נגלה in the world and Hashem being נסתר. The Jews in בבל Hashem needs to emanate from within and to recognize yad Hashem in everyday events. In the desert, בני ישראל approached Moshe to pray to Hashem on their behalf. The משכן creates a direct relationship with Hashem through the עבודה. The Jews are shown how to converse with Hashem when Moshe is no longer physically with Am Yisrael.

2. Following the חטא העגל, Hashem says to Moshe, ועתה הניחה לי ויחר-אפי בהם ואכלם ואעשה. It is with this background that Moshe responds, מחני לא מספרך. (1Y"H next week we will explore the meaning of this back and forth). Moshe is saying to Hashem, the greatness of the Torah is only enhanced with בני ישראל following the מצות. Avraham asks Hashem ויאמר אדני יהוה במה אדע כי אירשנה. Hashem responds, ויאמר לאברהם ידע תדע כי-גר | יהיה זרעך. We read in the Haggadah at the Seder, ואמתן לעשו את-הר שעייר לרשת אתו, ויעקב ובניו ירדו מצרים.

The acquisition of the Torah and ארץ ישראל is dependent on שעבוד מצרים. Only בני ישראל were subject to the harshness of the שעבוד. Moshe did not endure the physical labor of slavery (although we see throughout this era that Moshe is tormented by the suffering of his brothers). A new nation created through Moshe will lack this essential component. Better to erase my name from the Torah so there should be no mistake, בני ישראל earned the privilege to be העם הנבחר and receive the Torah. Despite experiencing 210 excruciating years, בני ישראל had the fortitude to respond נשמע ונעשה. Similarly, the Jews of אחשוורוש kingdom were exiled from Israel and witnessed חורבן בית קינתו וקבל [וקבל]. Hashem and Moshe want the focus on עול מלכות כלל accepting the Torah and שמים. The first פסוק of the Torah בראשית ברא בשביל ישראל שנקראו ראשית בשביל. Rashi, אלהים. התורה שנקראת ראשית. The entire world exists for בני ישראל and the Torah which are inextricably intertwined.

אנחנו בני ישראל are living proof of Hashem's dominion. We have been subjected and persecuted throughout history. Not only do we thrive but we continue to learn Torah and serve Hashem. During this time of Purim, may we witness the final redemption בימינו במהרה.

Halacha Al Hadaf *Pesachim 56*

BY CHAYIM MAZA
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The Gemara, Pesachim Daf 56a tells us the origin of the prayer “Baruch Shem K’vod Malchuso Leolam Vaed”, that we say together with “Shema Yisroel”, even though Baruch Shem is not found anywhere in the Torah.

The Gemara, in the name of Raish Lakish tells us a fascinating story of what occurred, in Parshas Vayechi, when Yaacov Avinu was about to give the Brachos to his sons, right before his passing. The Gemara tells us that Yaacov wanted to reveal the “Ketz Hayamim”, the “End of Days”, the entire future of the Jewish People, to his sons, but that it was concealed from him. Yaacov was distressed and said to his sons, “perhaps I am prevented from revealing the future to my sons because there is a blemish, a lack of faith in G-d, in one of my sons, as was the case with my grandfather Abraham, who had Yishmael, and with my father Yitzchak, who had Esav.” When Yaacov’s children heard this, they said “Shema Yisroel Hashem Elokainu Hashem Echad”, saying to their father, “Listen, our father, Israel (that was his name), just as there is only one G-d in your heart, there is only one G-d in ours.” When Yacov heard this, says Raish Lakish, he was comforted and reassured, and Yaacov responded “Baruch Shem K’vod Malchuso Leolam Vaed.”, “Blessed is the name of His glorious kingdom forever.” And, that is why, says the Gemara, we say Baruch Shem together with Shema Yisroel, arguably, the most special Possuk in the Torah.

The Gemara in Pesachim then poses the following question: What should we do? Should we say Baruch Shem together with Shema or not? To say it, would be contrary to Moshe Rabbeinu, who did not say it (i.e., write it), when he wrote the Possuk Shema Yisroel in the Torah; to not say it, would be contrary to Yaacov Avinu who did say it. Therefore, says the Gemara, the Rabbis established the practice that we should say Baruch Shem SILENTLY, to account for the practice of, both, Moshe and Yaacov.

Now, it is unusual for a story, even one as profound as this, to be the source for a Halacha

in the Shulchan Aruch, and, yet, remarkably, this story is the source for not, one, but for two Halachos. The Rambam’s Mishnah Torah is a Halacha Sefer, not a Sefer on Kaballah or philosophy, and Aggadah (stories) is not typically included in it. And, yet, the Rambam, Hilchos Krias Shema, Perek 1, Halacha 4, says that Baruch Shem must be recited together with, and, as part of, Shema Yisroel, and the Rambam expressly recites this story of Yaacov and his sons, told in our Gemara, as the source for this Halacha.

And, the Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim, Hilchos Krias Shema, Siman 66, Seif 1 says, that they are so connected, that one may not interrupt during the recitation of Shema AND Boruch Shem, for any reason, even to greet an important person, even a king (unless you fear for your life), and the Mishnah Berura, Seif Katan 12 adds, that one may not even interrupt, to respond to Kaddish, Kedusha or Barchu. And the Mishnah Berura Seif Katan 13 adds, that the standard is the same as interrupting while you are in the middle of Shemona Esrai. In addition, The Mishnah Berura, Siman 61, Seif Katan 29 says that there are opinions among the Poskim that if you omitted Baruch Shem, or even if you said Baruch Shem without Kavanah, i.e., without focus on the acceptance of Ol Malchus Shamayim, that the recitation of the Shema represents, you have not fulfilled your Biblical obligation of reciting Shema, and you must repeat the Shema. However, after much discussion, the Beur Halacha concludes that, even if you omitted Baruch Shem completely, you do not have to go back and repeat the Shema.

The second Halacha that is derived from this Gemara, is the well-known practice, codified in Shulchan Aruch, Siman 61, Seif 13, that Baruch Shem is to be said silently, and here too, the Mishnah Berura, Seif Katan 30, recites the story of Yaacov and his sons, told by Raish Lakish, in our Gemara.

There is one additional law, related to the recitation of Baruch Shem, which also highlights the magnitude of the importance and significance of this special phrase, and that is the well-known exception to the rule that it be said silently, which is of course, on Yom Kippur, when it is said out loud.

The Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim, Hilchos Yom

Hakipurim, Siman 619, Seif 3, says that on Yom Kippur we say Baruch Shem "BeKol Ram", in a loud voice. The Mishnah Berura, Seif Katan 8, says simply, in explanation, that Baruch Shem is the "Song of the Angels" and on Yom Kippur we are like the Angels.

While the Mishnah Berura does not elaborate, The Tur does, and remarkably, cites another Midrash as the source for this Halacha. The Tur writes in Siman 619, Seif 2, quoting the Midrash, Devorim Rabbah, that when Moshe went up to Heaven to receive the Luchos, he heard the Angels glorifying G-d, with the prayer, Baruch Shem, and Moshe brought it down to the Jewish People. The Midrash goes on to compare this to a person who steals a brooch from the palace and gives it to his wife, but tells her, that she can only wear it in the house (which is a second explanation why we say Baruch Shem quietly all year round). However, on Yom Kippur, says the Tur, when she, too, is royalty, she may wear it in public.

The Aruch Hashulchan expresses it this way, in Siman 619, Seif 7. He says that Baruch Shem is a mighty and awesome praise that the Angels say to Hashem, and, we are not worthy to say it out loud. And that is why we say it silently, except on Yom Kippur, when we are compared to Angels (due to our elevated level of spirituality), are we permitted to say it out loud.

Purim and the Oppournity to Change

BY RABBI BARUCH FOGEL

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It was Purim time last year when the coronavirus began to affect us (here in NY). And, as we prepare for Purim this year, I thought that since one of the main lessons of Purim is to realize that there are no coincidences(1), I would try and see if there was some connection between Purim and a lesson from the coronavirus.

At the end of Megillas Esther, the pasuk says that the Jews obligated themselves to observe Purim every year. The two words at the begining of the pasuk "קִיְּמֻ וְקִבְּלֻ" "they

fulfilled/confirmed and accepted" seem to be redundant. The Ramban (Bereishis 6:18) explains that they accepted upon themselves to make the mitzvah of Purim fulfilled.(2) Although this explanation is the simple meaning of the pasuk, it does lead to the question that the words seem to be out of order. According to the Ramban, it should have first said "קִבְּלֻ" and then "קִיְּמֻ".

This awkward placement of the words is the basis for the famous derasha in the Gemara Shabbos (88a). The Gemara says that "the Bnei Yisroel re-accepted the Torah at the time of Purim" - they confirmed "קִיְּמֻ" that which they had previously accepted "קִבְּלֻ". Since it was possible to claim that the original acceptance of the Torah was coerced, with the mountain held over their heads like a barrel, the Megillah teaches us that the Bnei Yisroel now accepted the Torah without compulsion. The words of the pasuk, seemingly out of order(3), teach us that because of the miracle of Purim(4), the Bnei Yisroel accepted the Torah completely voluntarily.

On the surface, the Gemara is only telling us that the original acceptance lacked "free will", and now, the Bnei Yisroel changed their original acceptance from coerced to voluntary. In other words, because of the miracle of Purim, the Jewish people, 1000 years later, changed their original acceptance from coerced to willing. On a simple level, before Purim occurred we could have defended our misdeeds by claiming that we had never chosen to accept the Torah, but after the miracle of Purim, we now willingly accept the Torah retroactively. While this explanation is definitely the simplest one, it implies that the original coercion was flawed, even though Hashem had chosen it as the method to give the Torah(5). Additionally, it seems that there is more to the story than the Bnei Yisroel finally agreeing to accept the Torah retroactively.

There are two important, yet distinct, aspects of our relationship with the Torah. On one hand, we must view the Torah as essential to our lives. The Torah demands complete fealty to its every word, without the possibility of veering from any commandment. On the other hand, we approach the Torah with our free will, which implies that we can also choose not to accept it, and that is in the realm of possibility to live a life without Torah. The Torah is both something that we need to agree to and it is also

compulsory. Since there are two possible ways to relate to the Torah, at Har Sinai, Hashem decided that He wanted us to understand that the Torah is essential to our lives, and He therefore 'forced'(6) us to accept the Torah. The coercion was actually a lesson about which relationship with the Torah that Hashem wanted to emphasize.

Until Purim, we were able to claim that we had wanted a different type of relationship; one built upon our decision to accept the Torah. We wanted the Torah to be part of our lives because we choose it to be. On Purim, we realized our mistake. We don't need to "undo" the original coercion, because we now realize that the Hashem was correct in forcing us. Our relationship with the Torah is not based on our decision that we want the Torah as part of our lives, but rather because we acknowledge that it must be part of our lives.

Purim did not just certify that our original acceptance was valid retroactively. It proved that we now accepted the Torah because we are 100% sure that it is the exact right approach to living our lives. We accepted that which was coerced(7). The coercion was meant to teach us that the Torah is essential, and our free-willed acceptance was to agree that the coercion was correct!(8) We now freely admit and acknowledge that the Torah is the only way to live our lives.

To say it as bluntly as possible, "we chose not to choose". We used our free will to give up on an acceptance based on free will. Purim made us realize that Hashem's Torah is correct for us, it fits us perfectly, and we therefore don't base our lives on our free will to decide what is good for us.

Why was this the result of the miracle of Purim? Picture a Jew hearing about Haman's decree on the 13th of Nissan in the 12th year of Achashverosh's reign. The Beis HaMikdash had been destroyed for over 60 years, and Achashverosh was never punished for using all the vessels from the Beis HaMikdash(9). Perhaps, the 70 years ended without a Beis HaMikdash being built? (10) There had not been a new prophet for the Jewish people in the past 50 years as well(11). And, now Haman set in motion a plan to wipe out the Jews who were all

under his thumb! (12)

The picture is a very bleak one, and we would not blame anyone for imagining that the Jewish people c"v were done. Logic seemed to dictate a bitter end. And, yet, in almost an instant, everything flipped. Haman was gone. Mordechai was in his place. The 2nd Beis HaMikdash will be built shortly. From death to life! And, instead of prophecy we had the Anshei Kneses HaGedola and mitzvos D'Rabbanan. Jewish life would continue, even if it could not be predicted. Even if it is completely different than previously, and no one would have imagined what it would be like, yet it continues. The miracle of Purim was the continuation of the Jewish people against all odds(13) and in a new and unpredictable way of life.

Purim teaches us that it is a colossal mistake to think that we choose, or predict, or define, or decide how to live a life of Torah(14). It was impossible to imagine a Torah life without prophecy, but it became the reality. It was impossible to think of a world without the 1st Beis HaMikdash, but that too came true. Purim teaches us not to rely on our decision how to live a Torah life. Once we realized that, we gave up on our claim that we were coerced. Coercion is only a problem if we expect to be in charge. When the miracle of Purim teaches us of the eternal nature of the Jewish people, and that our relationship with the Torah is eternal and unpredictable, then we accept coercion as the proper way to receive the Torah. We affirmed our acceptance through coercion, because no matter the form we know the Torah is our way of life.

As I mentioned at the outset, this new approach to the Gemara, and to Purim, was only a result of pondering the coronavirus. From almost the beginning of the pandemic, I have been trying to figure out the rationale of decisions made by different people, leaders, and groups,(15) and I have written a number of times about this topic. Once again, in preparing for Purim, I was struck by the diversity of approaches in the Jewish world to wearing masks, social distancing, etc.. Without discussing or debating the actual merits of each question, I was struck by how predictable the decisions of each person and group were. The clearest conclusion from the past year is that people, leaders, and groups don't really change. Even a pandemic that changes everything eventually changes nothing(16).

Just to give a small example from my life. Last year, a student and his father came to drop off mishloach manos. As they were leaving, I reached out to shake their hands and wish them a Happy Purim. The father, a doctor, politely, and correctly, declined to shake hands. Since then, for the past year, I too have almost not shaken anyone's hand. I used the pandemic to change how I greet people, how I define personal boundaries, and how to convey feelings without using touch. Though it started because of hygiene, I used change to implement a change.

(This idea of change is also the underlying idea behind the unique garments of the Kohen and Kohen Gadol mentioned in this week's parsha, Tetzaveh. Just like the idea we mentioned last week about the vessels of the Mishkan, which were meant as a paradigm of a perfect human and service of Hashem, the garments of the Kohanim were there to model perfect behavior. The reason that each garment atoned for a specific sin,¹⁷ was because the wearing of the garment caused the Kohen to change his character traits. The atonement came about not through the wearing of the garments, but because the garments caused the person wearing them to change his traits to match. Even the repetitious act of wearing the same clothes every day can be an agent of change. Each time the Kohen 'changed' into his garments, he had to change.)

Purim changed everything. It added new mitzvos. It changed our relationship with the Torah. Our perception of how Hashem protects the Jewish people in the world gained a totally new understanding. It is no coincidence for me that it coincided with the pandemic that changed our lives¹⁸. Purim affords us the opportunity to change, and when our lives are constantly changing, there is no better time for that than Purim.

1 אסתר מן התורה מנין (דברים לא, יח) ואנכי הסתר אסתיר Chullin 139b
From where in the Torah can one find an allusion to Esther? He replied to them that the verse states: "And I will surely hide [haster astir] My face" (Deuteronomy 31:17-18).
שקבלו עליהם דבר להיותו קיים

3 The Torah Temima makes an interesting observation that the switching of the order of the words in the megilla parallel the reversal of the words in our original acceptance of the Torah "naaseh v'nishma"

4 Or as Rashi says, because of the "love of the miracle done for them". מאהבת הנס שנעשה להם:

5 When it comes to Shavous we mention this coercion of the Torah in a positive light, as we will explain.

6 With force, but not against our will, so that we could understand our relationship to it.

7 The words of the Gemara fit very well with this. "We established that which was originally accepted". We certified the original coercion!

8 See Gur Aryeh (Shemos 19:17)

9 After all, it has been 9 years since his party (in the 3rd year of his reign) and nothing happened to him like Balshetzar.

10 As the Gemara says (Megilla 12a) Rava said: Daniel also erred in this calculation, as it is written: "In the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, meditated in the books" (Daniel 9:2). From the fact that he said "I meditated," a term indicating recounting and calculating, it can be inferred that he had previously erred.

11 And the age of prophecy was coming to a close. See Radak (Yechezkal 9:3) and Malbim (Zecharia 1:5,6), and Sanhedrin 11a. See also Vilna Gaon on Seder Olam Raba 30)

12 See Gemara Megilla 11a

13 It is interesting that in the Haftorah for Parshas Zachor, which is always read the Shabbos before Purim, we read from Shmuel (1:15:29) וְגַם נֶצַח יִשְׂרָאֵל לֹא יִשְׁקַר וְלֹא יִנָּחֵם כִּי לֹא יִנָּחֵם הוּא לֹא לְהִנָּחֵם: - But, the Eternal One of Yisrael neither lies nor regrets, for He is not a human that He should regret."

14 Of course, this is related to the concept of inebriation on Purim.

15 Although, to paraphrase my esteemed brother in law, it does not make sense to think that all decisions make sense.

16 Recently, my Rebbe, Rabbi Reuven Leuchter, recorded a mission statement for his approach to teaching Torah, and it is a beautiful and succinct approach to change. It is available at <https://youtu.be/D-rG-lud80s>

17 Zevachim 88b

18 Obviously, throughout history there have been much worse and climactic changes to society too numerous to list. However, since we had been enjoying a relatively stable existence (from wars, persecution, plagues, etc.) until the pandemic, it is appropriate to speak about our relationship to how the pandemic changed us.