Not To Be Alone: Lessons From The Pandemic

Yishai Ribo: Lyrics for Keter Melucha (Crown of Sovereignty)

Stanza One

Between the Torah portions of Teruma and Tetzave, [February 29-March 7,, 2020] A somewhat strange birthday Everything seems normal here Stage, crowds and love	בין תרומה לתצווה יום הולדת קצת משונה הכל רגיל כאן לכאורה במה קהל ואהבה
Between the Torah portions of Tetzave and Ki Tissa [March 6-March 13, 2020]] Esther, Purim, feasting, merrymaking Who shall stay home and who shall travel And who will bear the consequence?	בין תצווה לכי תישא אסתר פורים משתה שמחה מי יחנה ומי יסע ומי ישא בתוצאה
Between the Torah portions of Ki Tissa and Vayakhel [March 14-March21, 2020] The world stops congregating Goes quiet, locks itself in Ishmael [Muslims], Edom[Christians] and Israel	בין כי תישא לויקהל עולם מפסיק להתקהל להשתתק להסתגר ישמעל אדום וישראל
Between the Torah portions of Vayakhel and Pekudei [March 21] Not a person in the city or the country Not a soul left to talk to The Tower of Babel again confused	בין ויקהל לפקודי אין איש בעיר ובשדה מי להתנהל מול אין כבר שוב מתבלבל מגדל בבל

Chorus And what do You want us to understand from this? How to keep away yet draw close in this pain I want to live You and not be alone And what do you want us to learn from this? And can we come together in this separation Until we give You a crown of sovereignty, a crown of sovereignty	]פזמון[ומה אתה רוצה שנבין מזה איך מתרחקים ומתקרבים בכאב הזה רוצה לחיות אותך ולא להיות לבד ומה אתה רוצה שנלמד מזה ואיך נדע להתאחד בפרוד הזה עד שניתן לך כתר מלוכה, כתר מלוכה

Stanza 2

Between the Torah portions of Pekudei and Vayikra [March 21-28, 2020] We are all in the same boat “Spring’s arrived Passover’s come” (a line from a popular children’s song) And with it, comes great hope	[בית 2] בין פקודי לויקרא כולנו באותה סירה אביב הגיע פסח בא ואיתו תקווה רבה

That You will tear up the evil decree	שתקרע את רוע הגזירה
Come, my Beloved, to greet the bride (Taken from the prayer Lecha Dodi said Friday night	לכה דודי לקראת כלה
We have no more strength	כבר אין לנו כוחות יותר
To cope, to fight	להתמודד להלחם

Chorus	
And what do You want us to understand from this?	[פזמון] ומה אתה רוצה שנבין מזה
How to keep away yet draw close in this pain	איך מתרחקים ומתקרבים בכאב הזה
I want to live You and not be alone	רוצה לחיות אותך ולא להיות לבד
And what do you want us to learn from this?	ומה אתה רוצה שנלמד מזה
And can we come together in this separation	ואיך נדע להתאחד בפרוד הזה
Until we give You a crown of sovereignty, a crown of sovereignty	עד שניתן לך כתר מלוכה, כתר מלוכה
Chorus repeats	
And what do You want us to understand from this?	
How to keep away yet draw close in this pain	ומה אתה רוצה שנבין מזה
I want to live You and not be alone	איך מתרחקים ומתקרבים בכאב הזה
And what do you want us to learn from this?	רוצה לחיות אותך ולא להיות לבד
And can we come together in this separation	ומה אתה רוצה שנלמד מזה
Hear O Israel the Lord is God the Lord is One	ואיך נדע להתאחד בפרוד הזה שמע ישראל ה' אלקינו ה' אחד

Last Stanza

Between the month of Adar and Nissan	בין אדר לבין ניסן
The die was cast – that is fate	נפל פור זה הגורל
It is said this is the time	אומרים זה זמן שמסוגל
When chance can be defeated	לנצח המזל

Questions for Discussion:

- What comes up for you during this clip?
- What images touch you?
- How does the video both reflect the particular and the universal?
  What might it mean to "live You and not to be alone?
- How could you explain Keter Melucha or the crown of sovereignty?

Nechama's Sources

Light in the Darkness: Where Might We Find God?

Bereishit Rabbah 11:2	**בראשית רבה (וילנא) פרשת בראשית פרשה יא**
As soon as the sun set on the night of the Sabbath [i.e. Friday evening], the Holy One, blessed be He, wished to hide the light, but He showed honor to the Sabbath; hence it is written, AND GOD BLESSED THE SEVENTH DAY: wherewith did He bless it? With light. … R. Levi said in the name of the son of Nezirah: That light functioned thirty-six hours, twelve on the eve of the Sabbath [i.e. Friday], twelve during the night of the Sabbath, and twelve on the Sabbath [day]. When the sun sank at the termination of the Sabbath, darkness began to set in. Adam was terrified [thinking] "surely the darkness shall envelop me" (Psalms 89:11) Shall he of whom it was written – "he shall strike at your head" (Gen. 3:15) [the serpent in the Eden story] now come to attack me! What did the Lord do for him? He made him find two flints, which he struck against each other. Light came forth and he said a blessing over it. Hence it is written – "but the night was light about me – Ba'adeni" (Psalms ib.) i.e. the night was light in my Eden. What did he bless? Blessed is God who creates the lights of fire.	ב ויברך אלהים את יום השביעי וגו', ... ר' לוי בשם רבי זעירא אמר ל"ו שעות שימשה אותה האורה, שנים עשר של ערב שבת, וי"ב של לילי שבת וי"ב של שבת, כיון ששקעה החמה במ"ש התחיל החושך ממשמש ובא ונתירא אדם הראשון, שנאמר (תהלים קלט) ואומר אך חשך ישופני ולילה אור בעדני, אותו שכתוב בו הוא ישופך ראש ואתה תשופנו עקב בא להזדווג לי, מה עשה הקדוש ברוך הוא זימן לו שני רעפים, והקישן זה לזה ויצא מהן אור ובירך עליה, הה"ד (שם /תהלים קל"ט/) ולילה אור בעדני, מה בירך עליה בורא מאורי האש.

Questions for Discussion:

- What happens when Adam experiences darkness for the first time?
- What is he afraid of?
- How does God help Adam overcome his fear?
- What is Adam's blessing (which we say in Havadala)?
- How does this reflect relationship with God in looking for light in the darkness?

B. Talmud Avoda Zara 8a	**תלמוד בבלי מסכת עבודה זרה דף ח עמוד א**
Kalanda is the eight days after the winter solstice, and Saturna is eight days beforehand. The Rabbis taught: As Adam [created in Tishrei] noticed [during the first three months of his life] how the days slowly became shorter and shorter - He said: Woe to me, because of my sin [in the Garden of Eden] the world is getting darker [as soon there would be no more light] and will return to an unformed void - and this must be my 'death sentence'. [Instead of accepting this imminent fate, Adam overcame his depression] and took upon himself to fast, pray and repent. After eight days, Adam noticed that the days indeed had begun to lengthen. Realizing that	גמ'. אמר רב חנן בר רבא: קלנדא - ח' ימים אחר תקופה, סטרנורא - ח' ימים לפני תקופה, וסימנך: אחור וקדם צרתני וגו'. ת"ר: לפי שראה אדם הראשון יום שמתמעט והולך, אמר: אוי לי, שמא בשביל ששרחתי עולם חשוך בעדי וחוזר לתוהו ובוהו, וזו היא מיתה שנקנסה עלי מן השמים, עמד וישב ח' ימים בתענית [ובתפלה], כיון שראה תקופת טבת וראה יום שמאריך והולך, אמר: מנהגו של עולם הוא, הלך ועשה שמונה ימים טובים, לשנה האחרת עשאן לאלו ולאלו ימים טובים, הוא קבעם לשם שמים, והם קבעום לשם עבודת כוכבים. בשלמא למ"ד: בתשרי נברא העולם, יומי זוטי חזא, יומי אריבי אכתי לא חזא; אלא למ"ד: בניסן נברא העולם, הא חזא ליה יומי זוטי ויומי אריבי! [דהוי] זוטי כולי האי לא חזא. ת"ר: יום שנברא בו אדם הראשון, כיון

this is the way of the world, he made a celebration for eight days [giving thanksgiving to the Almighty]. The next year, he made these days holidays. He [Adam] had good intentions [when making these holidays; however] they [his offspring] turned them into holidays of idol worship"	ששקעה עליו חמה, אמר: אוי לי, שבשביל שסרחתי עולם חשוך בעדי ויחזור עולם לתוהו ובוהו, וזו היא מיתה שנקנסה עלי מן השמים, היה יושב [בתענית] ובוכה כל הלילה וחוה בוכה כנגדו, כיון שעלה עמוד השחר, אמר: מנהגו של עולם הוא, עמד והקריב שור שקרניו קודמין לפרסותיו, שנאמר: ותיטב לה' משור פר מקרין מפריס.

Questions for Discussion:

- This Talmudic source also describes Adam's response to darkness.
- What is Adam's initial response to the day's getting shorter and night's longer? What does he try to do to overturn what he thinks is the world ending?
- How does that response tie to the first source we learned above?
- What does he realize as the days begin to slowly lengthen?
- How does this realization give him strength?
- Where is God in this source?
- What message can we take from this into the pandemic?

Leon's Sources

Megilla 23b	מגילה כ"ג ב:ד'
MISHNA: One does not recite the introductory prayers and **blessing [*poresin*]** before ***Shema*; nor does one pass before the ark** to repeat the *Amida* prayer; **nor do the** priests **lift their hands** to recite the Priestly Benediction; **nor is the Torah read** in public; **nor does one conclude with** a reading from **the Prophets** [*haftara*] in the presence of fewer than ten men.	מַתְנִי' אֵין פּוֹרְסִין עַל שְׁמַע וְאֵין עוֹבְרִין לִפְנֵי הַתֵּיבָה וְאֵין נוֹשְׂאִין אֶת כַּפֵּיהֶם וְאֵין קוֹרִין בְּתוֹרָה וְאֵין מַפְטִירִין בַּנָּבִיא
And one does not observe the practice of **standing up and sitting down** for the delivery of eulogies at a funeral service; **nor does one recite the mourners' blessing or comfort mourners** in two lines after the funeral; **or** recite the **bridegrooms' blessing; and one does not invite** others to recite Grace after Meals, i.e., conduct a *zimmun*, **with the name** of God, **with fewer than ten** men present. If one consecrated **land** and now wishes to redeem it, the land must be assessed by **nine** men **and one priest,** for a total of ten. **And similarly,** assessing the value of **a person** who has pledged his own value to the Temple must be undertaken by ten people, one of whom must be a priest	וְאֵין עוֹשִׂין מַעֲמָד וּמוֹשָׁב וְאֵין אוֹמְרִים בִּרְכַּת אֲבֵלִים וְתַנְחוּמֵי אֲבֵלִים וּבִרְכַּת חֲתָנִים וְאֵין מְזַמְּנִין בֹּשֶׁם פָּחוֹת מֵעֲשָׂרָה וּבְקַרְקָעוֹת תִּשְׁעָה וְכֹהֵן וְאָדָם יַיּוֹצֵא בָּהֶן:

Megilla 23b	**מגילה כג:**
GEMARA: The Gemara asks: **From where are these matters,** i.e., that ten people are needed in each of these cases, derived? **Rabbi Ḥiyya bar Abba said that Rabbi Yoḥanan said:** It is **as the verse states: "And I shall be hallowed among the children of Israel"** (Leviticus 22:32), which indicates that **any expression of sanctity may not be** recited in a quorum of **fewer than ten** men.	**גְּמָ'** מְנָא הָנֵי מִילֵּי אָמַר רַבִּי חִיָּיא בַּר אַבָּא אָמַר רַבִּי יוֹחָנָן דְּאָמַר קְרָא וְנִקְדַּשְׁתִּי בְּתוֹךְ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל כָּל דָּבָר שֶׁבִּקְדוּשָּׁה לֹא יִהֵא פָּחוֹת מֵעֲשָׂרָה
The Gemara asks: **From where** in the verse may this **be inferred?** The Gemara responds that it must be understood **as Rabbi Ḥiyya taught: It is inferred** by means of a verbal analogy [*gezera shava*] between the words **"among," "among." Here, it is written: "And I shall be hallowed among the children of Israel," and there,** with regard to Korah's congregation, **it is written "Separate yourselves from among this congregation"** (Numbers 16:21). Just as with regard to Korah the reference is to ten men, so too, the name of God is to be hallowed in a quorum of ten men.	מַאי מַשְׁמַע דְּתָנֵי רַבִּי חִיָּיא אָתְיָא תּוֹךְ תּוֹךְ כְּתִיב הָכָא וְנִקְדַּשְׁתִּי בְּתוֹךְ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וּכְתִיב הָתָם הִבָּדְלוּ מִתּוֹךְ הָעֵדָה
The connotation of ten associated with the word "among" in the portion of Korah is, in turn, **inferred** by means of another verbal analogy between the word **"congregation"** written there and the word **"congregation"** written in reference to the ten spies who slandered Eretz Yisrael, **as it is written there: "How long shall I bear with this evil congregation?"** (Numbers 14:27). Consequently, **just as there,** in the case of the spies, it was a congregation of **ten** people, as there were twelve spies altogether, and Joshua and Caleb were not included in the evil congregation, **so too, here,** in the case of Korah, the reference is to a congregation of **ten** people. The first several items mentioned in the mishna are expressions of sanctity, and they consequently require a quorum of ten.	וְאָתְיָא עֵדָה עֵדָה דִּכְתִיב הָתָם עַד מָתַי לָעֵדָה הָרָעָה הַזֹּאת מָה לְהַלָּן עֲשָׂרָה אַף כָּאן עֲשָׂרָה :

Lev. 22:32 Neither shall you profane my holy name; but I will be hallowed among the people of Israel; I am the Lord who hallows you.	**ויקרא כב: לב** וְלֹא תְחַלְּלוּ אֶת־שֵׁם קָדְשִׁי וְנִקְדַּשְׁתִּי בְּתוֹךְ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲנִי ה' מְקַדִּשְׁכֶם:
Numbers 16:21 Separate yourselves from among this congregation, that I may consume them in a moment.	**במדבר טז: כא** הִבָּדְלוּ מִתּוֹךְ הָעֵדָה הַזֹּאת וַאֲכַלֶּה אֹתָם כְּרָגַע:
Numbers 14:27 How long shall I bear with this evil congregation, which murmur against me? I have heard the murmurings of the people of Israel, which they murmur against me.	**במדבר יד: כז** עַד־מָתַי לָעֵדָה הָרָעָה הַזֹּאת אֲשֶׁר הֵמָּה מַלִּינִים עָלָי אֶת־תְּלֻנּוֹת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶׁר הֵמָּה מַלִּינִים עָלַי שָׁמָעְתִּי:

How the double *gezera shava* works:

1. God is sanctified *among* the Children of Israel.
2. The word *among* occurs alongside the word *congregation* (with reference to Korach and his followers).
3. *Congregation* means ten (as referenced by the scouts who bring back the discouraging report).
4. Therefore, God is sanctified among ten.

Berachot 6B R. Johanan says: Whenever the Holy One, blessed be He, comes into a Synagogue and does not find ten persons there, He becomes angry at once. For it is said: "Why, when I came, was there no man? When I called, why was there none to answer?" (Isaiah 50)	**ברכות ו:** אמר רבי יוחנן: בשעה שהקדוש ברוך הוא בא בבית הכנסת ולא מצא בה עשרה - מיד הוא כועס, שנאמר: (ישעיהו נ') מדוע באתי ואין איש קראתי ואין עונה.

Questions for Discussion:

- In the imagination reflected in this *aggadah*, what is God looking for when visiting a synagogue?
- What is the significance of God coming to the synagogue as opposed to the prayers offered there being elevated to heaven?
- What is the basis for God using the quote from Isaiah, when there may indeed be 9, 8 or 7 people in the synagogue? How is the lack of a minyan the equivalent of “none to answer”?

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks

The sequence of parashot that begins with Terumah, and continues Tetzaveh, Ki Tissa, Vayakhel and Pekudei, is puzzling in many ways. First, it outlines the construction of the Tabernacle (Mishkan), the portable House of Worship the Israelites built and carried with them through the desert, in exhaustive and exhausting detail. The narrative takes almost the whole of the last third of the book of Exodus. Why so long? Why such detail? The Tabernacle was, after all, only a temporary home for the Divine Presence, eventually superseded by the Temple in Jerusalem. Besides which, why is the making of the Mishkan in the book of Exodus at all? Its natural place seems to be in the book of Vayikra, which is overwhelmingly devoted to an account of the service of the Mishkan and the sacrifices that were offered there. The book of Exodus, by contrast, could be subtitled, "the birth of a nation". It is about the transition of the Israelites from a family to a people and their journey from slavery to freedom. It rises to a climax with the covenant made between God and the people at Mount Sinai. What has the Tabernacle to do with this? It seems an odd way to end the book.

The answer, it seems to me, is profound. First, recall the history of the Israelites until now. It has been a long series of complaints. They complained when the first intervention by Moses made their situation worse. Then, at the Red Sea, they said to Moses: "Was it because there were no graves in Egypt that you brought us to the desert to die? What have you done to us by bringing us out of Egypt? Didn't we say to you in Egypt, 'Leave us alone; let us serve the Egyptians'? It would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the desert!" (Ex. 14:11-12). After crossing the sea they continued to complain, first about the lack of water, then that the water was bitter, then at the lack of food, then again about the lack of water. Then, within weeks of the revelation at Sinai – the only time in history God appeared to an entire nation – they made a Golden Calf. If an unprecedented sequence of miracles cannot bring about a mature response on the part of the people, what will?

It is then that God said: Let them build something together. This simple command transformed the Israelites. During the whole construction of the Tabernacle there were no complaints. The entire people contributed – some gold, silver, or bronze, some brought skins and drapes, others gave their time and skill. They gave so much that Moses had to order them to stop. A remarkable proposition is being framed here: It is not what God does for us that transforms us. It is what we do for God.

…

The building of the Tabernacle was the first great project the Israelites undertook together. It involved their generosity and skill. It gave them the chance to give back to God a little of what He had given them. It conferred on them the dignity of labour and creative endeavour. It brought to closure their birth as a nation and it symbolised the challenge of the future. The society they were summoned to create in the land of Israel would be one in which everyone would play their part. It was to become – in the phrase I have used as the title of one of my books – "the home we build together."

Questions for Discussion:

- What are the contemporary parallels – actual or aspirational -- to the Tabernacle with regard to a "home we build together"?
- How might massive shared projects impact our Jewish community, Israel, America, and the larger world?

Final Thoughts:

Berakhot 3a	**ברכות ג.**
And Elijah said to me: My son, what sound did you hear when you were in this ruin? And I said to him; I heard a heavenly voice that was cooing like a dove and she was saying: Woe to the Me because I destroyed my house and burned my temple and exiled my son among the nations of the world. And he said to me: By your life! It is not only at this moment that she says this but she coos three times a day And not only this but at the time that the people of Israel do the Will of God and enter the synagogues and houses of study and answer Amen, May His Great Name Be Blessed, the Holy One Blessed be He shakes his head and says and says Fortunate is the king who is praised in his house. Woe to the sons who have been exiled from their father's table.	ואמר לי בני מה קול שמעת בחורבה זו ואמרתי לו שמעתי בת קול שמנהמת כיונה ואומרת אוי לבנים שבעונותיהם החרבתי את ביתי ושרפתי את היכלי והגליתים לבין האומות ואמר לי חייך וחיי ראשך לא שעה זו בלבד אומרת כך אלא בכל יום ויום שלש פעמים אומרת כך ולא זו בלבד אלא בשעה שישראל נכנסין לבתי כנסיות ולבתי מדרשות ועונין יהא שמיה הגדול מבורך הקב"ה מנענע ראשו ואומר אשרי המלך שמקלסין אותו בביתו כך מה לו לאב שהגלה את בניו ואוי להם לבנים שגלו מעל שולחן אביהם: