

Purim 5782: For Such A Time As This

Al Ha-Nisim for a Pandemic-Era Purim , R. Bracha Jaffe & R. David Markus	2
This Mask , R. Rachel Barenblat	3
A Purim Principle: <i>V'nahafoch Hu</i> , R. Sonja Keren Pilz, PhD	4
My Drink of Choice , Trisha Arlin	5
Be Esther , R. David Zaslou	6
Loglines For A Purim Movie , Trisha Arlin	7
Hide and Shine , R. Rachel Barenblat	8
The Talmud teaches, when Adar enters, joy increases , R. Dara Lithwick	9
A Prayer for What We Do , Trisha Arlin	10
About Us	11

*This offering is also available as google slides suitable for screenshare
at <https://yourbayit.org/purim5782/>*

Al HaNisim for a Pandemic-Era Purim

In this prayer we imagine ourselves into the year 2050 reflecting back on today's struggles: praying that by then, with God's help, we will have fulfilled these promises.

From the Year 2050 looking back on this time, for the children of our children.

על הנסים ועל הפרקון ועל הגבורות
ועל התשועות ועל הנפלאות שעשית
לאבותינו בזמנים קדומים בְּזֶמַן הַזֶּה.

We thank You for the miracles, and for the redemption, and for the strengths and salvations, and for the wonders You did for our ancestors in those days at this season.

בימי חגיגות הניצחון של מרדכי
ואסתר בשושן הבירה כשעמד עליהם
המן הרשע, התפשטה מגפה קטלנית
ונשארנו מפוזרים ומפורדים בביתנו,
חובשי מסכות נגד הוירוס שביקש
להשמיד, להרוג ולאבד, מנער ועד
זקן, טף ונשים, והטמיע קרע עמוק
בתוך קהלותינו.

In the days of celebrating the triumph of Mordechai and Esther in Shushan the capital over Haman the wicked, who rose up against them, a deadly virus spread and scattered us in fear. We secluded in our homes, donning masks against a plague that killed and maimed young and old worldwide, and tore the fabric of our communities.

ובימי פייזר ומודרנה למדנו שרק
חלק מהמסיכות הן קדושות. בורות
הסתירה מדע. הסברה הסתירה
אנטישמיות. נידוי ספרים הסתיר
גזענות ורצח עם. האולימפיאדה
בסין הסתירה את מצוקתם של
האויגורים. 'פייק ניוז' הסתיר
שינויי האקלים.

And in the days of Pfizer and Moderna, we learned that only some masks are holy. Ignorance masked science. Advocacy masked antisemitism. Book bans masked racism and genocide. The Chinese Olympics masked the plight of Uyghurs. "Fake news" masked climate change.

ואתה ברחמיך הרבים הארת את
עיִנוֹנוֹ. מתוך הרעש והתשישות,
למדנו ממך להבחין בין אמת ושקר,
בין טוב ורע, ובין אנושיות וחוסר
אנושיות. הסרנו את מִכְסֵּה המסכות
וחשפנו את המציאות הבהולה
שהסתתרה מתחת לפני השטח.
ראינו את הקדושה הגנוזה בתוך
אריגת הסבל האנושי.

But You, in Your abundant mercy, illuminated our blindness. From our tumult and exhaustion, we learned from You to discern truth from falsehood, right from wrong, and humanity from inhumanity. We uncovered societal masks, exposing urgent realities that hid in plain sight. We saw the sacred concealed in the tapestry of human suffering.

כשם שקיימו וקבלו עליהם בימי
שושן, כן קיימנו וקבלנו את הציווי
'ונהפוך הוא', את העֵוֹל ואת העוון
לצדק ושוויון. יד ביד החזרנו את
האיזון לעץ החיים.

Just as our ancestors in the days of Shushan took on and fulfilled Your covenant, so we took on and fulfilled anew Your call to invert transgression and iniquity into justice and equality. Hand in hand, we restored balance to the Tree of Life.

R. Bracha Jaffe & R. David Evan Markus

This Mask

This mask is my love letter
to every immunocompromised soul
who doesn't have white blood cells for the fight.

This mask is not like Esther's veil, though
this mask does remind me
to show love with my voice and my eyes.

This mask goes on top of a KN95,
and comes off when I trust that I do no harm
to elders and children, family and strangers.

This mask doesn't mask anything about me.
This mask says "Rabbi" in sparkly letters.
This mask says I don't bow down to tyrants.

This mask sings with Stars of David,
bright against a backdrop of night sky.
This mask shows exactly who I am.

R. Rachel Barenblat

A Purim Principle: *V'nahafoch Hu*

("Everything Upside Down", Book of Esther 9:1)

I am a rabbi.
I step in quietly but I fill the space
So that you can breathe.

I am a mother
I hold and tickle and read to
My baby.

I am a wife.
I listen to and laugh with and connect to
My husband.

I am a writer.
I think and shape and let
My thoughts take place.

It is Adar: I cough.

I can't leave the house. I don't wear a mask because I don't go out. I hurt. I cry without warning. Once I leave I'll put on a mask in order to protect you from me. I don't get up. I lie down. I have trouble breathing. I bore the baby. I am not there as your wife. I have headaches so painful I can't go to sleep. I can't eat. I am gagging and puking without relief. I lie by myself crying because I want to keep you asleep so that you can take care of the baby and get us our groceries. I am weak. I am weak. I didn't know it would be like it is.

Rabbi Sonja K. Pilz, PhD

My Drink Of Choice

Over the last two years
I have discovered bourbon,
The good stuff.
With, when I can afford them,
Luxardo cherries.
In ginger ale.

It's my drink of choice
When cringing in fear and horror
At the fanatics
And their irrational hatred of
Ineffective little me
Because I am a Jew.

It's my drink of choice
When contemplating in surprise
What I mean to them:
Either disdainful rich elite
Or feral rat-like destroyers.
I am neither.

It's my drink of choice
When shouting in shul
At the name of Haman,
For all the good that does.
Schadenfreude comforts
But is not a long term solution.

It is not my drink of choice
When I have no choice
But to see truth
And then speak truth.
For that I find
I must be sober. Alas.

Trisha Arlin

Be Esther

Esther is told that if she that if she keeps silent
regarding Haman's schemes
deliverance will come מִמְּקוֹם אֲחֵר
"from another place"
Mordechai says to her, "מִי יוֹדֵעַ, Who knows,
maybe you're here
for just such a moment in the Kingdom."

Today I imagine he's asking each of us
if we're here for just such a moment in our kingdom.
"Who knows?" The Hamans of antisemitism,
racism, planetary devastation
all await Esther's response – my response?

When lies put on the mask of truth
and disguise themselves so well
that so many of our neighbors
are drunk on their own opinions
and can't tell the difference
between falsehoods and fact,
and between all the variations of
not knowing the difference between
"cursed by Haman and blessed be Mordechai,"
then maybe it's time once again
to take the story personally,
and to find meaning behind the masks
in my own life, and in the life of my nation.

Esther dares approach the King and declares
אֲבָדְתִי אֲבָדְתִי "if I perish I perish!"
Do I dare approach? I hear Mordechai whispering
"If not you then deliverance will come מִמְּקוֹם אֲחֵר
"from another place." Maybe each of us
has been chosen to be here
for just such a moment in the Kingdom.

R. David Zaslow

Loglines For A Purim Movie

A powerful woman
learns that her beauty is fleeting
and her influence was an illusion.

A clever man uses
an innocent female relative
to acquire power.

A young woman is pimped out
to an alcoholic
and never gets a chance to find out
what she would rather have done with her life.

An important advisor, poorly managed by his boss, so fears for his job and his status that he
viciously attacks convenient scapegoats
in order to bolster his fragile sense of self.

A pretty woman learns
that she cannot be honest
if she wants to survive.

An older man relies on inherited privilege
to protect himself from the consequences
of his poor decision-making while
he enjoys power, wealth,
beautiful wives and great parties.

An obnoxious woman supports her husband which results in all ten of her children being
murdered.

Trisha Arlin

Hide and Shine

Esther's name means hidden
but when it matters
she reveals.

Coming out is never
one and done. How many times
did she have to say

*Yes, I'm a Jew. No, I'm not afraid.
Or maybe: yes, I'm a Jew
and I'm afraid sometimes.*

People hate us for no reason
or they think we're uppity
refusing to bow

or they believe we're in
the seat of power, secretly
in charge, profiting from plague...

Sometimes our masks protect us
from being known. Sometimes
we wear a hat to hide a kippah

and escape the attention
of the angry man with a gun.
Sometimes he notices anyway.

We hide like Esther, we emerge
like Esther: when it's safe, or
when it's not but we've no choice

– despite risks – but to fully be.
Jews have always lived with masks.
Sometimes we hide our light.

This Purim, wherever
we are: may it be safe
for us to shine.

R. Rachel Barenblat

The Talmud teaches, when Adar enters, joy increases.

Thank goodness this year there are two Adars (it's a leap year.) Adar I has been something.

On the 1st of Adar I (Wednesday, February 2) protests in Ottawa against vaccine mandates and masks and some and any and all public health measures, peppered with racist and antisemitic slogans and imagery, brought my city, Canada's national capital, to a standstill.

Trucks blocked streets throughout downtown, in through residential neighbourhoods up to Parliament Hill, costumed in signs and upside down flags, belching diesel and honking incessantly at all hours of the day and night, drowning out pleasantries and norms and laws in the name of freedom, a city under siege, Haman's revenge.

Police didn't (couldn't?) get it to stop, but Zexi Li, a 21-year old contemporary Esther and now a local hero, got a court injunction against the honking.

Shabbats came and went and things got ever more topsy turvy with hot tubs on Parliament Hill, and blocked bridges to our southern neighbour.

Ottawa residents, with signs of "Make Ottawa Boring Again", had enough. They gathered, masked, and stood up for civics and POGG (peace order and good government), preventing the trucks from spreading ever more downtown.

On erev Shabbat the 10th of Adar, Ontario declared a state of emergency, and motzei shabbat, on the 13th of Adar I, the Prime Minister of Canada declared a national emergency.

The next day, on the 14th of Adar I, Purim Katan, the police chief resigned.

By the following Shabbat, the 18th of Adar I, the center of the city was locked down, 100 checkpoints surrounding a swath of Ottawa, three levels of police (municipal, provincial, federal) surrounding the siege in the three-pointed shape of a hamantaschen.

By the 20th of Adar I most were cleared. Arrests were made, not a shot fired.

The last week of Adar I brought an ice storm, reflecting and refracting light, casting silence over the capital.

I realize how much masks reveal – what we think about each other, and responsibility, and freedom, and compassion, and privilege, and entitlement, and love.

As the moon wanes to the new moon of Adar II, I am ready for joy to increase.

Rabbi Dara Lithwick

A Prayer For What We Do

Blessed One-ness,
We give thanks for this Purim festival
Of costumes and traditional noise,
Distracting us from the bad guys
For at least one night.
We give thanks for the laughs
As we give thanks for our survival.
We could do the latter without the former
But why would we want to?
Happy Purim!
Amen

Trisha Arlin

About Us

Co-created by members of Bayit's Liturgical Arts Working Group, 2022.

Bayit is building a soulful, inclusive and meaningful Jewish life for all ages and stages. Our visionary teams of clergy, liturgists, artists, educators and other thought leaders across and beyond denominational life develop, test, refine and distribute tools for a Jewish future always under construction.

Find our collaborations here: [Liturgical Arts Working Group](#)

And our bios here: [Builder Biographies](#).

Now In Print:

[From Narrow Places: Liturgy, Poetry, and Art of the Pandemic Era](#)

Bayit, 2022