

The power of song, music and especially poetry is palpable in these days of sorrow and isolation. Israeli poet and songwriter Ishay Ribo has written a song that truly speaks to this moment, and records in song how our lives changed so dramatically, week by week, against the weekly cycle of Torah reading.

He has called the song 'Keter Melucha' (the Crown of your Kingship), a reference to the liturgy of the High Holidays, capturing that this year as we prepare for Pesach with its themes of bitterness and then freedom, we are also living the themes of the High Holidays—days of 'who shall live' and of calling for God's compassion.

'Keter melucha' is part of the musaf service and is a favourite moment at Shira on Yamim Noraim where as if by magic, congregants sing the verses from all over the shul and we all joyfully join in the chorus 'Vayitnu lecha Keter Melucha'—'And we shall give to you the Crown of your Kingship'. The liturgy captures both surrender and also the idea of human agency; it is we who choose to crown God.

Without naming it, the title also brings a reference to the virus itself; corona means crown and in Israel, corona wards are known as 'Keter' wards.

There is so much to unpack in this beautiful poem but a real power is that like Pesach, it is centred on questions: *What do You want us to understand from this? How do we distance ourselves and still draw near in this pain? How will we know how to be together while apart?*

We hope that you find some comfort in this poignant song:

בין תרומה לתצווה
יום הולדת קצת משונה
הכל רגיל כאן לכאורה
במה קהל ואהבה

Between Terumah and Tetzaveh
A slightly different birthday party
Everything is as it always is
Spaces of community and love

בין תצווה לכי תישא
אסתר פורים משתה שמחה
מי יחנה ומי יסע
ומי ישא בתוצאה

Between Tetzaveh and Ki Tisa
Esther, Purim, feasting, and joy,
Who will stay home and who will travel
And who will bear the consequences

בין כי תישא לויקהל
עולם מפסיק להתקהל
להשתתק להסתגר
ישמעל אדום וישראל

Between Ki Tisa and Vayakhel
The world stops gathering
Is silenced, shuts down
Ishmael, Edom, and Israel

בין ויקהל לפקודי
אין איש בעיר ובשדה
כבר אין מול מי להתנהל
מגדל בבל שוב מתבלבל

Between Vayakhel and Pekudei
The fields and cities are empty
There's no one to hang with
The Tower of Babel is again confounded

ומה אתה רוצה שנבין מזה
איך מתרחקים ומתקרבים בכאב הזה
רוצה לחיות אותך
ולא להיות לבד

***What do You want us to understand from this?
How do we distance ourselves and still draw near in this pain?
We want to live with You
And not to be alone***

ומה אתה רוצה שנלמד מזה
ואיך נדע להתאחד בפרוד הזה
עד שניתן לך
כתר מלוכה

***What do You want us to learn from this?
How will we know how to be together while apart?
Until we give to You,
the KeTer Melucha***

בין פקודי לויקרא
כולנו באותה סירה
אביב הגיע פסח בא
ואיתו תקווה רבה

Between Pekudei and Vayikra

We are all in the same pot
Spring has arrived, Pesach is coming
And with it, much hope

שתקרע את רוע הגזירה
לכה דודי לקראת כלה
כבר אין לנו כוחות יותר
להתמודד להלחם

“To rip up the evil decree”
“Come my beloved to greet the Bride”
We don't have strength anymore
To cope, to keep battling

—
ומה אתה רוצה שנבין מזה
איך מתנתקים ומתחברים אל הלב הזה
רוצה לחיות אותך
ולא להיות לבד

***What do You want us to understand from this?
How to disconnect and reattach this heart?
We want to live with You
And not be alone***

ומה אתה רוצה שנלמד מזה
ואיך נדע להתאחד בפרוד הזה
שמע ישראל ה'
אחד ושמו אחד

***What do you want us to learn from this?
How can we know how to unite in this separation?
Shema Yisrael
The Lord is one and His name is one***