This coming Thursday evening and Friday is the holiday of Purim. Throughout the millennia, Purim has always been a day of fun and festivities with feasting drinking dressing up and mirth and merriment. But in some ways all that changed at Purim last year when the severity of the pandemic was becoming apparent. Some restrictions were already in place in Israel and other places around the globe, which meant that the festivities were muted. In other places including here in the UK it was two weeks before the first lockdown, and although there were rules about hand washing, not much else was in place and unfortunately the nature of our Perm celebrations led to a huge outbreak among the Jewish community, which in turn led to a surge in infections and sadly many casualties. It is a year later, and Purim will be celebrated globally with even more restrictions, and although we normally wear masks for fun on this day, this year we will be wearing masks out of necessity. But not just us the Jewish community here in the UK but the whole population of the UK and indeed most countries around the globe. Countries that we are million miles away from technologically, economically, culturally, and even by physical distance. However, the coronavirus has reminded us exactly how interconnected we all are. The strains of virus mutating and moving from one corner of the world to the other in the matter of days shows us that even in these highly restricted times and travel, what happens in one corner of the globe has major ramifications on the other side of the world, and whether we like it or not, we're all interconnected, and we are all impacted by the behavior of others. And together over the last year countries and companies around the world have worked on a common goal: to produce a vaccine to help us eliminate this deadly disease. And this cooperation is highlighted in the Purim story and in this week's portion. Parsha Teruma is the first of five portions which are the last five portions of the book of Exodus that deal predominantly with the building of the mishkan, the portable sanctuary that the children of Israel carried with them through their journeys in the wilderness and into the promised land, Lord Sachs points out that these portions would be better suited to be in the book of Leviticus, which deals with the service in the mishkan. The book of Exodus is about transition of children of Israel from slavery to freedom, so why does this book end with the construction of the sanctuary. He answers that until this point the short history of the children of Israel had been one long series of complaints. They complained to the sea after the exodus that they were going to die. Then they complained about the lack of water, followed by a complaint about the lack of food and so on. And then they made the golden calf. At that point, God gives them the instructions for the mishkan as a remedy for the sin of the golden calf, and during that construction there were no complaints. Everyone brought their contributions of gold, silver, copper, and materials, so much so that Moses had to tell them to stop. When it came to a common goal and collective responsibility of building the mishkan, God showed them what they can achieve positively when they work together. In the Purim story, when Haman approaches akhashverosh with a plan to annihilate the Jewish people, he refers to us in chapter 3 verse 8 of mcgill at esther as a nation who are desperate and separate, dispersed among disconnected peoples, and we found our redemption and safety only when Esther tells Mordechai in chapter 4 verse 16, go and gather all the Jewish people. When we gathered together as one, when we acted in a unified and united way, that's when we found our redemption and safety. Rabbi Goldberg writes, “When everyone is in it for themselves concerned only for their well-being, they're in danger, but when we see our destiny as intertwined, when my struggles are yours, we can together endure and overcome anything.” The very mitzvoth we perform on Purim center around connecting with others, being of service to them and seeking to relieve their pain. We deliver mishloch, gifts of food, to one another to further our connections and bonds and we distribute matano le vionim, gifts to the poor, to feel the pain of those less privileged. When we united, unified in our history and destiny, focused on what we have in common instead of what divides us, we are bigger and stronger than the sum of our parts. We are both worthy and capable of confronting, persevering, and triumphing over whatever challenge or threat we face. This is the message of Purim for the Jews, and perhaps this is the message of the coronavirus for the whole world. Please God this Purim will go by without the devastation of last year, and we can look forward to next year, when we will please God once again be able to join together for Purim like we used to. A Purim full of fun, festivity, and feasting. Wishing you all shabbat shalom, a happy Purim, and good health to all.