

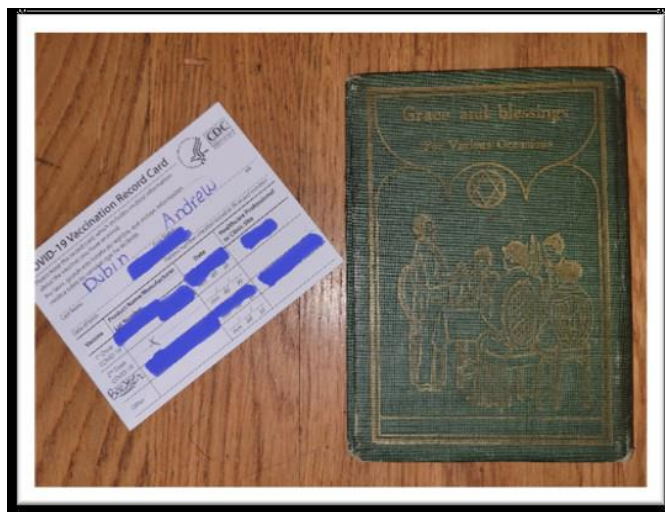
Rabbi's Message December 2021

Dear Friends,

As I sit here writing this message to you, I do so with a sore upper arm . . . and I couldn't be more grateful, because the soreness I feel tells me I'm doing what I can to protect myself and others. My soreness comes from the COVID booster shot that I received earlier today.

Over the past 8 months, every time I've needed to produce proof of vaccination to enter this public space or that, I've done what so many of us have been doing, which is to open my phone, scroll through picture after picture, until, finally, I've found the snapshot I took back in March. I'm sure there are easier ways to have been doing this, but, alas, that's how I've been doing it. And even if this isn't the most efficient way to find things on my phone, at least I knew well enough not to carry my original card with me at all times, because knowing me, having being shifted and nudged in my wallet over the months, it surely would have become a crumpled mess by now. Having kept it safely protected inside a small book in the "valuable papers" box that we keep at home, when I finally needed the original once again today for my booster appointment, it was as crisp and clear as the day I placed it aside for safe-keeping.

After checking in with the receptionist at the entrance to the vaccination site, I then took a seat at the nurses' station. While I couldn't possibly explain how it happened that it wasn't until that very moment (when I reached into the tiny book that had been protecting my life-saving card all these months) that it wasn't just any old book – which is appropriate because this wasn't just any old card. This card, which proclaims to everyone who sees it that I am the beneficiary of one of the greatest blessings science (or, better yet, *scientists*) has bestowed upon the world in living memory, had been nuggling all these months safely inside a book of blessings!



In case you can't make out the faint title, it is called, **Grace and blessings For Various Occasions** (don't ask me why the *b* is lower case and the *F* upper case...). Truth be told, while I can't actually remember doing it, I'm sure I must have taken this particular book from my shelf back in March simply because it was the right size to protect the small paper card. In retrospect, however, I now know that I could not possibly have chosen a more appropriate title!

Over the months, a number of new blessings have been written by rabbis and others to show gratitude for the miracle of COVID-19 vaccinations. Some have emphasized God's healing power, some have emphasized God's gift of wisdom to our human scientists, and some have emphasized the power for good that is embodied in human intelligence. Some have emphasized our gratitude for God's comforting presence through the horrific events of COVID-19, and some have emphasized the blessing of being given the opportunity to resume a "normal" life, even while the pandemic persists. Truth be told, there are probably as many reasons to offer gratitude for the vaccines and boosters as there are people who have received them.

To me, though, were I to choose just one of the newly minted blessings, I gravitate towards the words of Rabbi Mason-Barkin and Jason Berkowitz, because in these few lines, I see recognition of the sacred teamwork that I believe is required between God, scientists, and the rest of us in order to overcome the dangers of COVID-19:

*Baruch atah Adonai Eloheinu Melech ha-olam,
shutaf la'yetzirah, asher notein l'ruach-b'nei-enosh
et habinah liv'chor bachayim, v'et nechishut
la'asot et mah shenir'eh bilti efshari,
v'et chochmah limtzoh banu chosen
v'et tikvah l'taken et ha-olam.*

ברוך אתה יי אלהינו מלך העולם
שתף ליצירה אשר נותן לרוח בני-אנוש
את בינה לבחר בחיים ואת נחישות
לעשות את מה שנראה בלתי אפשרי
ואת חכמה למוצא בנו חסן
ואת תקווה לתקן את העולם

Blessed are You, Adonai our God,
Supreme Power of the universe:
Creative Partner, who gifts the human mind
with intelligence to choose life,
perseverance to do the impossible,
wisdom to vaccinate,
and the hope that will heal the world.

Rabbi Sara Mason-Barkin and Jason Bronowitz

So far as I see it, God cannot protect us unless scientists harness their God-given intelligence to create the vaccines and therapeutics, scientists cannot protect us unless they have that God-given intelligence to begin with, and the rest of humanity can protect neither themselves nor us unless they actually roll up their sleeves to accept the vaccine and booster. None of us, not the scientists, not we, and not even God, is capable of lifting us to a place of full safety without the all three of us doing our parts. But when we all work in concert, each doing that which the others cannot, we can indeed effect *Tikun Olam*, a full healing of the world, which is to say that when actually work in concert and harmony, we have the capacity to bring on nothing less than the Messianic Era itself.

So, as my arm continues to feel the presence of that life-saving booster pulsating through my body, I sit here with gratitude – not only for God’s bestowing our scientists with appropriate intelligence to develop the vaccines, not only for the scientists’ creation of vaccines, and not only for the 3.33 Billion world-wide who have taken the vaccine, but for being given the opportunity *myself* to be part of the process of bringing on the Messianic Era, a time of ultimate peace and harmony. And if I have that opportunity, that means that every other person in this world who has access to a vaccination and is able to take it also has the same opportunity.

Please God, watch over your Creation, give us the courage and wisdom necessary to protect ourselves and others, and continue providing us with the will to persevere through the danger that remains.

L'Shalom,
Rabbi Dubin