

October 27, 2022

Dear friends,

***Still, A Good Time Was Had by All.*** The learned journals are now putting at three the number of Covid-19 subvariants that we may have to contend with this Fall/Winter. Here at Shearith Israel, we respect that learning and feel that our protections are meet for the task. Our precautions enabled us to enjoy a glorious Shabbat *Bereshit*. The Torah reading by Rabbi Rohde was both mellifluous (special cantillations) and redolent with drama (if you don't find drama in the Creation stories, well, never mind). The choir's rendition of Rabbi Rohde's original composition to *Adon Olam* closing the morning service was beautiful, if polyphonic. We were also treated to incredible [dueling banjos](#), oh I mean dueling *Tenu Shebachas* (or is it *Tenu Shebachot*), one sung by our Hatan Torah, Rabbi Rohde, and the second sung by our Hatan Bereshit, Laurent Nahon. The Hatanim Luncheon was wonderfully attended on Paved Paradise, where we celebrated our Hatanim, their families, and the centennial birthdays of Jon Mendes. Despite Covid-19 and everything else, we had fun!

This coming Shabbat, we have two great events on tap:

First, Rabbi Soloveichik will be kicking off this year's *Friday Night Lights* talks with a special lecture on our three sets of Myer Myers rimonim, which will all be on display together (this is a rare event that not even a world-class museum can claim); and

Second, as a Congregation, will have the merit, and joy, of celebrating the Bar Mitzvah of Ness Gelman, son of Edie and Dr. Michael Gelman (Michael is a stalwart member of our Covid-19 Working Group), and brother of Hella (who I now find out is the young lady with the perfect Hebrew in our *Ruth* readings in recent years). We will be inside, adhering to our now-familiar *Safety With Sensible Choice* protocols.

***The Whole World Really Does Smile With You.*** Some people enjoyed the discussion last week of the Jewish Certainty Theorem, which long predated, and answered, Gödel's Uncertainty Theorem. Mathematician Rebecca Frankel totally got it by reminding us of [Bertrand] Russell's paradox:

*Does the set of all sets that do not contain themselves contain itself?*

Dr. Eric Braverman was also onto something, and in words poetic agreed that:

*God needs us to complete the messianic kingdoms and bruise death!!*

Some, however, found the post puzzling, to put it charitably (one of my favorite interlocutors said he was "dying" from it). For all of you in this category, but without apologizing, let me try something a little more prosaic – *or so it might seem*. The topic is smiling.

Now I'm sure it's not cool and certainly not post-modern to link to the great Sinatra hit, [When You're Smiling](#) (lots of others have sung this Popular Standard, too). How clichéd, or even worse, you will say to sing a song with the lyrics:

*When you're smilin'....keep on smilin'  
The whole world smiles with you  
And when you're laughin'....keep on laughin'  
The sun comes shinin' through*

This is not to be confused, by the way, with the Hank Penny (1946) and, later, Glen Campbell song, *When You Cry, You Cry Alone*, with the lyrics:

*When you smile the whole world smiles with you  
And your life is just a happy song  
Love won't linger in a heart that's blue  
When you cry you cry alone (you cry alone)*

And that's not to be confused with the 1883 poem by Ella Wheeler, *Solitude*, with the line:

*Laugh and the world laughs with you; Weep, and you weep alone*

The purpose of this entry is not to bemoan the fact that no one seems to give anybody else credit for preceding them in creativity or invention. My point rather is that the uncopyrighted Talmud had "smiling" covered way earlier and way better.

My proof text is a discussion on the second to last page of Tractate *Ketubot* (111b), the marvelous Daf Yomi experience that we completed yesterday (on to Tractate *Nedarim*). Page 111b includes a discussion of the incredible beauty, and bounty, of the Land of Israel - a textual treatment occurring several centuries after the Holy Land was laid waste, its Temple destroyed, its People scattered. When you read the descriptions of how the Talmud describes this Land (including especially how it will look in the then-future), you come away with some inkling why, 1,800 years later, we merited and, in any event, managed to get it back.

And yet the text speaks of something even more beautiful, even more bountiful, than the Land. The Talmud asks for the plain meaning of a phrase in the Torah that "teeth will be white from milk" (where is it?). With a play on words (in Hebrew), Rav Dimi says that when the Almighty is happy with the Jewish People, that is, when the Almighty shows metaphoric teeth as in a smile, the Jews value that smile more sweetly than even the sweetest milk. And the benefits of smiling are not limited to Heavenly smiles; the Talmud goes on to say that the smile by one person to another is more life-sustaining than the sweetest of physical sustenances.

The psychological benefits of smiling are too well known to deserve extended discussion here. But smiling does more than just benefit the smiler. Enter a room with a smile; the room lights up. Enter a room with a gloomy frown; see even the brightest lights dim. Rabbi Shalom Rosner,

whose brilliant exegesis of the Daf Yomi I stand in awe of, cites the Gadol Rav Palm who said that the face is a *reshut harabim*, a public place for all to see. Smile, please, and let the rest of the world smile with you.

### ***Built Back Better.***

### ***Our Autumn Songbook.***

Here was the list as of last week, even before the collaboration officially commenced:

- [\*Do You Remember September\*](#), by Earth Wind and Fire
- [\*Autumn Leaves\*](#), by Nat King Cole
- [\*Wake Me Up When September Ends\*](#), by Green Day
- [\*Harvest Moon\*](#), by Neil Young
- [\*Leaves that Are Green\*](#), by Simon and Garfunkel

With the polls now officially open, here come more heavy-hitters:

Faith Fogelman suggests two beautiful Autumn tunes,

- [\*Try to Remember the Kind of September\*](#), from *The Fantastiks* (music by Harvey Schmidt and lyrics by Tom Jones)
- [\*Autumn in New York\*](#), sung by many including the Chairman of the Board (composer/lyricist Vernon Duke)
- Faith, what about [\*September Song\*](#), also sung by Velvet Voice?

Michael Schulder, of *Word of the Year* fame ([here!](#)), funnily says he will go toe-to-toe with anyone on one of the best Autumn songs being:

- [\*Autumn Song\*](#), by Van Morrison

Aura Bijou, who has been such a wonderful congregant to permit others to get points for things recently, is back! Her suggestions are great, including the EW&F song already suggested as well as:

- [\*Will I See You in September\*](#), by The Happenings; and

- [We Fell In Love In October](#), by Girl in Red

Bonnie Barest, actually among our first responders in so many ways, offers

- [If Ever I Would Leave You](#), from *Camelot*

Mind you, the song is not an Autumn song; it's more a "season song" that includes Autumn in it. So that's problematic. Are other straddle songs, like songs that have both Summer and Fall, now to be accepted? The Judges have said yes to Bonnie's suggestion, based on the Beautiful Song Exception to the Shearith Israel Song List Rules, which can be found in the Official Rulebook Rule 24.13.1.5(d). If anyone now wants to offer any other straddle songs, have at it.

And, now that "season songs" are being permitted, an anonymous entry by Lou Solomon suggests

- [You've Got a Friend](#), by the incomparable Carole King (this version with James Taylor)

**Closing the Circle.** We received a bunch of great entries for circle songs, and I thought we were done. But the great suggestions keep a'comin. I can't not (or can't not not not) share them with you. Thus,

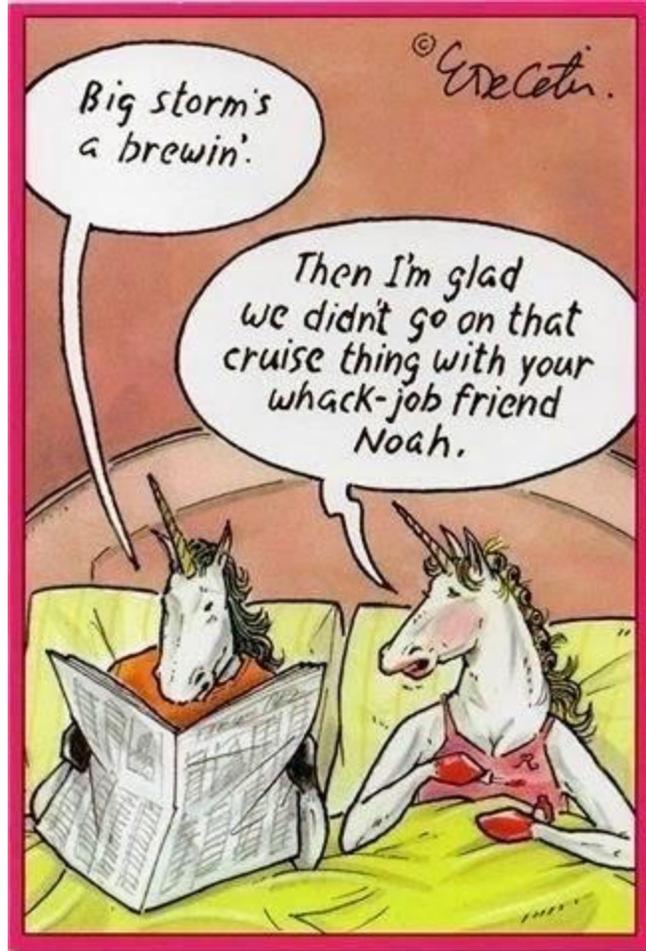
Michael Schulder offers

- [Full Circle](#), by the Byrds

Our resident artistic and next-gen editor, Sarah Meira Rosenberg, offers two songs by Harry Chapin's brother, Tom Chapin, together with the following edification:

- For the theme of circle *and* autumn, [Mother Earth's Routine](#), which describes the circular nature of the seasons - adding, "I've always loved the line in the bridge near the end: 'You have to change to grow'"; and
- For just circles, SMR submits [Rounds](#), "which is a song that both describes and demonstrates what a musical round is and how it is 'a circle of sound.'"

**Parashat Noah, the Final Word.** Ruth Lazar sends in the following, which just about says it all:



Thank you all. Bless us all. Shabbat shalom. Here here! *Kaminando kon Buenos.*

Louis Solomon, Parnas