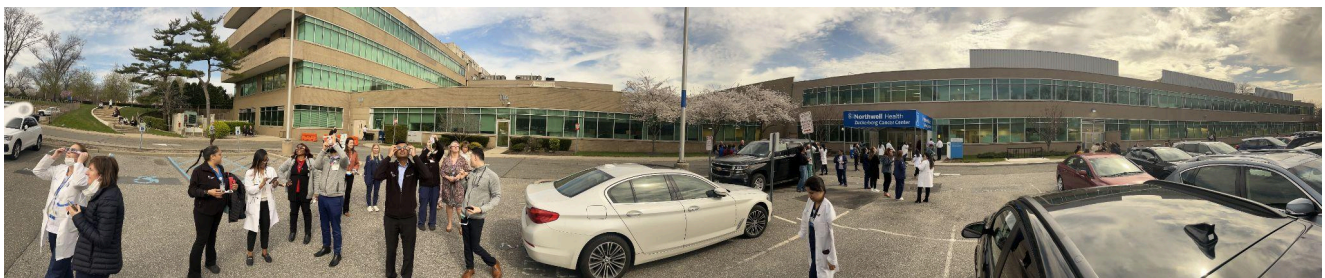


April 18, 2024

Dear Shearith Israel family,

***Our Year of Hope.*** Last week's solar eclipse has itself been eclipsed by a different miraculous light show: Iron Dome intercepting hundreds of rockets launched at Israel by Iran. Go online if you want to see a spectacle of bad and good -- on just about the grandest scale human beings have devised.

I did ask for photos of the eclipse. Dr. Michael Schulder obliged with three great ones, only one of which is of the sun:



Says Michael,

*The people watching was the most interesting part. This by far was the most 'popular' eclipse in my memory, and I suggest this reflects our yearning for cultural events that unify us across the country now that all of our culture is so completely atomized. The Super Bowl ain't enough.*

Michael's words are wise, but are they right? Everything today is hyped by print, online, and social media. One might wonder if even the eclipse did not escape this post-modern scourge. If, on the other hand, Michael is right, then I submit that the "unifying" "cultural events" at Congregation Shearith Israel are inspiring and in some cases unmatched.

We are days away from Pesah. Our Sanctuary will be full of light, song, learning, and conviviality. (Yes, it will still have our worn and tattered carpet. Work on the renovation is progressing marvelously. More on that soon.) Pesah is the first among our holidays (especially if you start counting at the beginning of the month of Nisan). Pesah created and now commemorates and consecrates us as a people. This Shabbat, the prelude to Pesah, we will have the opportunity to hear Rabbi Soloveichik's [Shabbat Hagadol Derasha](#) entitled, *From Door to Door: Ancient Egypt, Modern Israel, and the Secret of Jewish Endurance*, followed by kiddush. Come and join us for Pesah, the unifying cultural event of the season.

And, a three-fold treat from Albert Rosenblatt, who so kindly provides us with special Sephardic goodies for the holiday:

- A link to a [tri-lingual Haggadah](#) (Judeo-Spanish, English, and Hebrew).
- A link to [songs or zemirot](#) for the holidays (provided by the Sephardic Jewish Brotherhood). This might be especially welcome for Spanish-speakers, friends of Ladino, or congregants who just like to hear new tunes for old lyrics.
- [A link](#) to a Yiddish folk song "Say Marrano" converted into a Ladino song ["Dime Marrano"].

**Price "Fraud" in the Talmud.** The pages of Tractate Baba Metzia that the worldwide Daf Yomi learning cycle is studying this week run from 46 to 52. We have just begun the Fourth Chapter of the Tractate. The Chapter deals with transactions in personalty, rather than in real property, and the particular subject beginning on page 49b is the fascinating one of price "fraud" or *ona'ah*. In the main, the discussion studies conduct by merchants (or artisans, another fair translation from the Aramaic), rather than by individuals whose normal practice is not the buying and selling of the good or commodity under discussion.

The distinction between merchants and non-merchants is now deeply embedded in the Uniform Commercial Code, which has been adopted in every or virtually every state of the Union. It has international counterparts even in civil law countries. What is different about the Talmud's treatment is the clear-cut and quantified set of rules articulated by the Sages. The quantification is used to emphasize clarity and predictability over a case-by-case or more subjective approach to the issue of price "fraud."

The Mishna on 49b, together with the ensuing gemarra and some later explications, is as follows (the modern halacha seems to vary some of rules that you would get from a reading of the Mishna, which is independently interesting):

- If a merchant overcharges by less than one-sixth the value of the object, the buyer can return to the merchant, demand a price concession, but it is left to the discretion of the seller whether to accommodate the request. According to what may be the prevailing opinion, the law does not protect the buyer in this case.
- If the merchant overcharges by exactly one-sixth the value of the object, the overcharged amount is returned.
- If the merchant overcharges by more than one-sixth the value of the object, the buyer can void the transaction and receive a full refund.

Permutations exist in the text discussing how much time the buyer is given to return the item and claim price fraud, the extent to which sellers have reciprocal remedies (largely but not entirely), and when the over/under-charge can be measured not in relation to the value of the object but in relation to some other measure.

I don't think very many states have adopted numerical sets of rules like the Talmud adumbrates. It is interesting that, when systems of law try to define what is a "substantial" or "material" amount sufficient to trigger regulation or oversight or even liability, the amounts are uncannily close to one-sixth (varying between the high teens and the low twenty percents). But I don't know of numerical thresholds in New York or other states I know about (if you have a counter-factual from New York or anywhere else, please let us know).

**GOAT Songs Long and Short.** It seems that no one is reading my Talmudic missives these days (these days, you ask?). It is too fun to go straight to the GOAT Long Song and Short Song sections. I don't blame you. Actually, I can't recall a song-book series generating more interest in the four years we've been doing these updates.

**GOAT Long Songs.** As of last week, we had

- [Layla](#), by Derek and the Dominos (Eric Clapton)
- [In-a-Gadda-Da-Vida](#), by Iron Butterfly, is a loooong song, says Billy
- [Won't Get Fooled Again](#), by The Who
- [Season of the Witch](#), here by Al Kooper & Co. (which I don't love, btw)
- [American Pie](#), by Don McLean
- [Stairway to Heaven](#), by Led Zeppelin
- [The Rain Song](#), also by Led Zeppelin
- [Alice's Restaurant](#), by Arlo Guthrie
- [Hurricane](#), by Bob Dylan
- [The End](#), by The Doors
- [Paradise By the Dashboard Light](#), by Meatloaf
- [Nights in White Satin](#), by The Moody Blues
- [Bohemian Rhapsody](#), by Queen
- [Funeral for a Friend/Love Lies Bleeding](#), by Elton John
- [Sad-Eyed Lady of the Lowlands](#), by Bob Dylan
- [Band on the Run](#), by the incomparable Paul McCartney

For this week, Billy Schulder suggests:

- [Murder Most Foul](#), by Bob Dylan. The Judges are adding it to our list only because it is recommended by our Grand Master of the R&R Song; and
- [The Wreck of the Edmund Fitzgerald](#), by Gordon Lightfoot

Brother Michael Schulder offers a better longie, imho:

- [The Four of Us](#), by John Sebastian. Am I the only one who hears [Heart and Soul](#), the Hoagy Carmichael classic, about a third of the way in? Heart and Soul qualifies as a GOAT Short Song, so here it is.

Andrew Druck offers several fabulous longies:

- [Jungleland](#), by Bruce Springsteen
- [Desolation Row](#), by Bob Dylan
- [Like a Rolling Stone](#), Bob Dylan
- [Hey Jude](#), by The Beatles
- [Visions of Johanna](#), also by Bob Dylan (who wrote too many long songs, evidently)
- Andrew also argues that “side two of the Beatles *Abbey Road* [album], from “[Because](#)” through “[The End](#)” “can be thought of as one song with different movements.” The Judges agree. On the list they go.

Once Andrew really started cookin’, he also sent in two great Neil Young classics, both definitely great and long enough to be GOAT longies (9-10 minutes each):

- [Down by the River](#), by Neil Young; and
- [Cowgirl in the Sand](#), also by Neil Young

Andrew was even willing to suggest (with a *lehavdil* to Neil Young)

- [All Too Well](#), by Taylor Swift

Rabbi John Moscovitz (of the [Holy Blossom Temple](#) or קדש קדושי קדושי) sends in, in addition to *Layla*:

- [Highway Patrolman](#), by Bruce Springsteen

Faith Fogelman, who has been waiting to see the rest of us miss among the very best of GOAT long songs, has two suggestions, one great and the other, even greater:

- [Sing, Sing, Sing](#), by Louis Prima. This is the eight minute version by Benny Goodman - *oh yeah!*
- [MacArthur Park](#), written by the truly gifted Jimmy Webb and sung by Richard Harris (see my email of [9/15/21](#) – he also wrote *Up Up and Away* and *Wichita Lineman*). Faith knows *MacArthur Park* was “a disc jockey's delight!” and is such a wonderful person that she hopes that nobody “leaves your cake out in the rain.” Billy Schulder can’t abide the song. For me, it’s among the best of the best of the best. And not just because of the unforgettable music. Webb writes lyrics about love that Shakespeare or the Romantics would envy. *Lineman* contains:

*And I need you more than want you/  
And I want you for all time*

And *MacArthur Park* contains beautiful poetry and then the *coup de gras*:

*And after all the loves of my life/  
After all the loves of my life/  
You'll still be the one*

If our GOAT Long Song list stopped with Webb, it would be sufficient, or *dayenu*. But there are still a few more GOAT Long Songs. Send them in so that we can finalize our list; we'll give you until after Pesah.

**GOAT Short Songs.** As of last week we had:

- [Her Majesty](#), by The Beatles
- [Oxford Town](#), by Bob Dylan
- [One by One, Two by Two](#), by Burl Ives
- [The Shortest Song in the World](#), by Kenny Price.
- [Life Song](#), by Mason Williams

The new fare for this week is mixed but certainly are GOAT Short:

Andrew Druck offers:

- [Why Don't We Do It In The Road](#), by the Beatles. True, it's under two minutes – but it's so awful. Oh well, on the list.

Andrew thoroughly redeemed himself, however, with the following two great suggestions:

- [Till the Morning Comes](#), by Neil Young; and
- [Cripple Creek Ferry](#), also by Neil Young

Faith Fogelman again captures one of the GOAT GOAT Short songs:

- [Stay \(Just a Little Bit Longer\)](#), by Maurice Williams and the Zodiacs. Faith provides more than song title. She has always been, and remains, an endless font of song knowledge. Faith says that the song “plays for one minute and 36 seconds, the shortest song ever to top the Billboard chart”. She adds: “A more famous version was recorded by *The Four Seasons* in 1964 and plays for one minute, 52 seconds. Our congregants are amazing!

Thank you all. Bless us all. Shabbat shalom. *B'yachad* (united together). יהיה טוב *Yihiyeh tov* (things will be good). Moadim L'simcha.

Louis Solomon, Parnas