

Music

Eitan Freilich

Yearning to celebrate simcha together

Whoa! Judging from the wave of emails and comments I received after my last column, it seems there's been a campaign to make sure that you all get in touch. So, many thanks to everyone for taking the time – I appreciate every one of your messages. Some thoughtful questions were asked. Most people were interested in my family's musical history. Let's answer some of these questions. I have three older brothers. I'm sure they won't mind my saying that while they can certainly hold a tune, their true calling lies elsewhere. That said, they are stunningly creative in their own fields. One is tremendously creative with numbers. He's my go-to accountant and I promise you, if accountancy were music, he'd be Mozart. Although my brothers didn't take up music as a career, they are my most loyal fans. From the start of my career, as a budding 13-year old child prodigy, they've always been cheering their support. I always enjoy their comments and thoughts about my latest musical or video releases. That's not to say they don't give me their honest feedback. So "always enjoy" might be a slight exaggeration. But thinking about it, I don't recall my eldest brother

missing a single show of mine. Whether I was performing as a Year 8 student at Hasmonian High School, or at a recent sold-out concert, he's always in the audience (right beside my mother, natch) and usually in the front row. It's pretty impressive, considering he doesn't live locally and flies in for each and every occasion.

Then there are my cousins, still very active in the musical world, whether as chazzanim or as music teachers. Somehow or another we are all related, and it's always heartwarming when we have the opportunity to sing together. Our mutual grandfather must be smiling! And, who knows, perhaps even humming along? What

a great way for families to stick together and show that they are always there for each other.

Family is so precious, now more than ever. The lockdown can be a very lonely period for many, and with those shielding, even more so. It's so lovely to hear of communities and neighbours lending one another a hand during these fraught times. Our road has a one-hundred percent legally compliant front-drive minyan. I'm used to working terribly late nights, and while the June/July sun has been rising early, I've been davening at netz during weekdays. I don't want to come over all David Attenborough, but there really is something so beautiful about seeing nature work its magic in the morning. Especially on Shabbos, there's a lovely community street spirit, with a limited amount of singing and some resemblance to the normal minyanim we all know and love. For Shavuot, the street was decorated with flowers and other decorations. Such a beautiful and respectful response is admirable in light of the difficult circumstances we're all struggling with.

Speaking of light, I was so humbled to be able to release my album last week. The response was truly heartwarming, with around 20 thousand views online within hours. It's available on all well known digital platforms, and I also released five new music videos online. I took several wedding songs and reimagined them, making them truly my own. I'm sometimes asked if I get bored singing the same songs again and again. Hand on heart, I can tell you, the answer is: never! Perhaps hearing the same song can become tedious, but singing, singing with meaning, always inspires me. It lights up my journey through life, illuminating new meanings and understandings each day, as I grow in mind and soul. Take the song Yesimcha, originally sung by Avraham Fried. I grew up with this song



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– it was part of my childhood home. Many of us hear it every Friday night, giving brochos to the kids. As for me, I sang this song each and every Friday when my children were born and were in incubators. I have only the most heartwarming memories of this song, which I sing time and again at simchas. Or take track 1, the words of Mi Adir, sung to the tune of Vehi Sheamda by Yonatan Razel. To me, this is a classic. It has a timeless meaning. When everything is against us, Hashem saves us and we remain here, to continue the tradition so many have tried to destroy. What a meaningful, profound song, despite its wedding-associated lyrics. I try to sing from the heart, with meaning and with



feeling. As I say to those who were meant to celebrate their Barmitzvahs, life throws us curveballs, and it's the way we react that teaches us the most important lessons. In this new world, we have seen so much of our normal routine taken away from us as the pandemic affects every aspect of our lives. While isolation offers new ways to express chessed, Kiddush Hashem and our love for our fellow Jew, one feature of life is sadly absent: the simcha. From a Bar and Bas Mitzvah to a Bris Mila or Simchas Bas, and of course weddings, we all yearn for a time when we can come together as families and communities to celebrate one another and mark life's journeys with joy and meaning.

It was with this in mind that I brought friends and musicians together to collaborate on a project to bring a new flavour to the music of the simchas we all know and look forward to. The songs you will hear are familiar chuppah songs, infused with timeless feelings of joy and hope, and with our current longing to return to a life overflowing with simcha. Thank you for all your wonderful comments, feedback and support. Keep them coming!

As we now focus in the coming weeks on the Churban Beis Hamikdash, from the bottom of my heart I hope and pray for the day when we can all celebrate our next simcha together in a rebuilt Yerushalayim.