

Music

When the music takes a break

MUSICAL MUSINGS
Eitan Freilich

Strolling down Golders Green on Shabbos morning, readers of this column appeared bewildered to find me on the streets of London rather than America. Wondering why? Do try to keep up. I'm in London this week and back to New York next, remember? But it was delightful to see the recognition on people's faces. It's always a treat meeting JT readers and followers face to face, especially after releasing video clips from chuppahs, weddings and dinners just this week. I do have a bookings manager, but nothing beats personal interaction. When I'm in the country and available, I'll always want to speak to my clients and Baalei Simcha personally – who needs a manager when the fun part of the job is speaking to people yourself? After all, I'm the one who's going to deliver your perfect musical experience – you're booking me, not my manager!

I'm ready for the annual three-week musical break. Live music halts until after Tisha B'Av – but that's when we prepare for the upcoming musical season, full steam ahead, working on the album. My manager has organised our global radio appearances and newspaper interviews, and work is underway for our world live album tour. Last week the finished vocals (yes, my job is mostly done), went to the choirs to finish the backing tracks. We sent the vocals to the Zemiro group, based in Williamsburg and Brooklyn. Their amazing creativity and style hugely enhances the track. Insider information? So, since you asked, we will include a zemer on the album, composed by Ari Goldwag. Ari sent me the song on a Tuesday morning – by the afternoon we'd secured its place on the album – a snap! We also have a beautiful wedding song composed by Elie Schwab. The lyrics were inspired by a wedding present from the Roodyn family – a beautifully bound book which included a special tefillah for a bride to recite under the chuppah. I showed the book to Elie when I was visiting him in Far Rockaway last January, and we created a lovely melody to accompany the lyric. The perfect song is a marriage

of melody and lyric – and this song is just that! I've had more input with this album than my last. Great for me, but I do feel sorry for the composers, who have to put up with me day and night. On the last day of my January visit to America, I met with my dear old friend Yitzy Waldner. Yitzy has been with me since day one, not only in a professional capacity; he's a lifelong friend and a lynchpin of this upcoming album. We spent hours discussing three concepts I had for songs. First, I wanted a song about peace – a very specific type of peace. Peace between brother and sister, Jew and Jew, must precede any world peace. If we can't get on together, how can we expect anyone else to? A particularly appropriate message, I think, for the Three Weeks.

My second concept was a part of davening I often reflect on. During the Yomim Noraim we sing and recite *Avinu Malkeinu*. There's a haunting parallel between a parent-child relationship and the relationship between Hashem and His children – both unique, unconditional relationships. After hearing a soul-stirring story on this theme, I sang my first English song to be featured on the upcoming album. My third concept concerns serving Hashem with joy. Yes, you've heard this before. But I mean practically, because repeating a mitzvah again and again can blunt the edge of excitement. My best brocho for a Barmitzvah boy laying tefillin for the first time would be the hope that he experiences that same excitement about laying tefillin in 20 years as he feels the first day he puts them on. It's the same for all mitzvahs: we must find something fresh and exciting within the mitzvah to reinvigorate us. After composing three songs based on these three concepts, I flew back to London.

That, then, is your sneak glimpse into the future but there's much, much more. I promised to keep you updated and I'm not one to break a promise (*bli neder*). And remember, if you see me on the streets of London – or anywhere else – I'm always happy to say hello!

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PHOTO BLAKE EZRA