



Cantor Marsha Dubrow November/December 2008

“A Blessing on Our Heads, Mazel Tov, Mazel Tov!”

In the midst of all the planning and preparations for Congregation B’nai Jacob’s 50th anniversary celebration coming up the weekend of November 21st and 22nd, the opening lyrics from a certain song keeps running through my mind: “A Blessing on your Head, Mazel Tov! Mazel Tov!”. The next line of the lyric continues: “To see your daughter wed, Mazel Tov!, Mazel Tov!” I know it must have something to do with B’nai Jacob’s 50th, because, much as I would love it, I don’t have any weddings for my kids coming up any time soon. A little investigation into the lyrics of the song gives me further insight:

Tevye wakes his wife, Golde, in the middle of the night and tells her, before beginning the song, “I dreamt that we were having a celebration of some kind. Everyone we knew was there. Musicians, too. In comes your grandma, Tzeitl, may she rest in peace. Naturally, I went up to greet her and she said, “A blessing on your head, Mazel Tov! Mazel Tov!” So that’s it, I think. In the deep, dark recesses of my mind, unconsciously I am associating the notion of the anticipation of a wedding from ‘Fiddler on the Roof’ with our forthcoming celebration of B’nai Jacob’s 50th. I quickly realize it makes perfect sense for a number of reasons.

First and foremost, we’re having a *Simcha*! A great celebration of 50 years of Jewish synagogue life in Jersey City. Members, old and new, will gather at our synagogue to remember the good old days and rejoice in our current blessings. We’ll dance the hora and sing some Yiddish and Hebrew songs. We’ll have Friday Night Live! Services that celebrate our 21st century approach to Jewish worship and we’ll honor our hard-working volunteers, past and present, at our Shabbat morning services. Ten individuals will be specially honored at our Gala Dinner Dance. We all are looking forward to being present for all of these festivities to witness our collective achievement, support our fellow congregants, and, most of all, participate in a great *Simcha* that belongs to all of us! A 50th anniversary celebration is like a wedding: filled with anticipation, lots of *kvelling* and lots of music-making and merriment. And we all know the ‘bride and groom’; they’re us!

Another reason why ‘Fiddler on the Roof’ is such a perfect metaphor for our 50th anniversary is that it has endured since the 1960s and continues to thrive, just like B’nai Jacob. The Broadway show premiered in 1964, less than one year after our current building at 176 West Side Avenue was dedicated. Fiddler’s success continued into the 1970s with the Hollywood movie premiering in 1971. The show has never stopped having multiple performances around the world, translated into many different languages. I saw it in Israel in Hebrew. The DVD was issued in 1998 and a recent check on StubHub, the on-line ticket auction site, reveals that there are performances scheduled for 2009 at the Providence Performing Arts Center, Providence, Rhode Island; the Pantages Theatre, Los Angeles, California; the Orange County PAC, Costa Mesa, CA; the Orpheum Theatre, Minneapolis, MN; and the Detroit Opera House, Detroit, MI. And that’s just in the United States. The continuity of the success of ‘Fiddler on the Roof’ parallels the continuity of the success of B’nai Jacob over the last fifty years.

And a further and final reason why ‘Fiddler on the Roof’ is an important metaphor for Congregation B’nai Jacob at this time of our 50th anniversary year: ‘Fiddler on the Roof’ is, above all else, a story about change. Sholem Aleichem’s stories about Tevye, the milkman, and his wife, Golde, are stories about Everyman and Everywoman; they’re about all of us. That’s why they have endured. ‘Fiddler’s’ universal message of change and acceptance, family commitment over everything else, and the embracing of courage, humor and love as abiding elements for survival, lends meaning to our lives still today. May Congregation B’nai Jacob endure for another 50 years! “A Blessing on Our Heads, Mazel Tov! Mazel Tov!”

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