

Marc's Journal Entry

Klezmer ~ December 17th

Here's something about me that some people don't know. I am a "head" guy, not so much a "heart" guy.

By training I am a policy analyst; I look for patterns and solutions when I see data and problems, and I try to present a rational picture of what's going on and the recommended action. By profession I am a proposal leader; I lead teams in winning government contracts by addressing our clients' needs and requirements and soothing the clients' pain points, and by beating our competitors. And by avocation I am the president of an amazing Conservative congregation, where I listen to congregants and try to build consensus on a path forward.

All of the above is 80% head and 20% heart (well, maybe 90/10). I am valued for my thinking and expertise primarily, and only a bit for my feelings.

This evening I had an experience that was the opposite. All heart. All emotion and feeling. And I loved it.

Annette and I attended one of the most amazing live performances of our lives: the violinist Itzhak Perlman, the Klezmer clarinetist/mandolin player Andy Statman, and amazing Klezmer musicians in concert in Sarasota Florida. Amazing only begins to describe our evening.

For those who may not be familiar with Klezmer, here is a brief summary from a non-expert. Klezmer (from Hebrew *Klay Zemer* or Musical Instruments) is a musical form of Eastern European Jewish origin. It combines folk music styles from Russia and Eastern Europe plus unique Jewish musical styles. Key instruments are violin, clarinet, and brass. It came to the United States with Eastern European Jews, where it influenced and was influenced by Jazz. The band leaders Benny Goodman and Artie Shaw were influenced by Klezmer in the 1930s and 1940s. Today we often associate klezmer with wild Jewish hora dancing music at weddings. Click [here](#) for more information on Klezmer and some samples of the music.

Itzhak Perlman is arguably the best classical violinist in the world. He grew up in Israel, moved to New York as a young man, and studied at Julliard. He has performed all over the world, there is an amazing [documentary](#) about him. He is the best.

Perlman also is of course Jewish, and has a Jewish soul. He did a series of concerts 23 years ago with an excellent Klezmer band, and produced a terrific album (Fiddlers House) which I listen to often.

So tonight he came to Sarasota to perform Klezmer with members of terrific bands who were on the original [Fiddlers House](#) album decades ago: the [Klezmer Conservatory Band](#), who we saw performing at Strathmore a few months ago, and [Brave Old World](#)) and one of the best Klezmer musicians in the world, [Andy Statman](#). So as soon as the lights came up, we knew we were in for a special night. Click [here](#) for some short excerpts from the performance.

What I did not expect was how touched I would be upon hearing this music. It was a highly emotional experience. I felt like my Jewish heritage was calling to me, that my ancestors were calling to me. I felt that this music expressed the hopes of my grandparents and great-grandparents, and their Eastern European ancestors. It was more than an emotion, such as hearing the national anthem. I would call it a spiritual experience.

That's the power of music, and the power of this musical form. If someone had told me when I woke up this morning: "Marc, tonight your ancestors will call to you. What will they say? How will you feel? How will you process their message?" I would have said you are crazy. Yet there I was, tears in my eyes. And yes, I would count this as a spiritual experience. I feel that God was speaking to me through this music.

I want my children to experience the power of an emotional connection with their Jewish heritage. I want it to hit them unexpectedly, as it did to me. I've been fortunate to have other emotional, spiritual Jewish experiences. I'm the better for it, the better for having experienced this emotional/spiritual state. I want this for my children. And I want it for all Kol Shalom congregants. I don't necessarily think that everyone at Kol Shalom should run out and listen to Klezmer music; I listen to it frequently. I don't have experiences such as tonight's.

How do we do this in our own lives, or places, our daily/weekly routines? How can we take steps to help our children, our congregants, to feel deeply connected with our Jewish heritage?

I want to be in dialogue with you. You can click [here](#) to send me a message, or you can email me at mplieber@ymail.com. I am thrilled to hear from you, to get to know you better, and to hear your suggestions on continuing Kol Shalom's growth and value to you.

Thank you for your help and for your part in our *kehillah k'dosha*, our sacred community!

Marc Lieber, President