

3. Mazel Means Good Luck

By Artie Wayne & Jack Beekman (EMI Feist Catalog Inc.) with Leo Fuld; arranged by Eve Sicular & Metropolitan Klezmer; shout chorus by Debra Kreisberg

First recorded in 1947 by co-writer Artie Wayne, this tune (sometimes published as “Mahzel” or “Mazzel”) was covered that year by Louis Prima, Benny Goodman, and even doo-wop group The Ravens, whose release on Mazel-Tov Records (Sam Goldberg’s Independent Folklore Recordings, N.Y.) features a label with the title translated into Yiddish as “Dos [sic] Goldene Medine”—an (ironic?) reference to the “Golden Land” of the New World. It gained the full Yiddish verse and chorus below when sung in 1954 by multilingual star Leo Fuld for Tikva Records. In 2006, Robert (Triumph/SNL) Smigel made a wild takeoff on Fuld’s, even re-creating and updating Fuld’s added Yiddish verse, which we perform and have translated below:

אַ מענטש מוז האָבן מזל.	<i>A mentsh muz hobn mazel.</i>
דאָס איז דאָך פֿעסטגעשטעלט.	<i>Dos iz dokh festgeshtelt.</i>
אַז מע האָט אַ ביסל מזל,	<i>Az me hot a bisl mazel,</i>
געהערט דיר די גאַנצע וועלט.	<i>Gehert dir di gantse velt.</i>
און ביסטו אַ שלימזל,	<i>Un bistu a shlimazel,</i>
ווען שטערקסטו אויס די האַנט,	<i>Ven shtrekstu oys di hant,</i>
דו לויפֿסט אַהין, דו לויפֿסט אַהער;	<i>Du loyfst ahin, du loyfst aher;</i>
מיטן קאָפּ האַקסטו די וואַנט.	<i>Mitn kop hakstu di vant.</i>
מע קען משוגע ווערן	<i>Me ken meshuge vern</i>
פֿון קלערן און פֿרעגן זיך	<i>Fun klern un fregn zikh</i>
פֿאַר וואָס האָט איינ' מיליאָנען	<i>Far vos hot eyn' milionen</i>
און קען נישט אונטערשרייבן זיך?	<i>Un ken nisht untershraybn zikh?</i>
אַ מענטש מוז האָבן מזל.	<i>A mentsh muz hobn mazel.</i>
עס איז דאָך פֿעסטגעשטעלט.	<i>Es iz dokh festgeshtelt.</i>
אַז מע האָט אַ ביסל מזל,	<i>Az me hot a bisl mazel,</i>
ס'ווערט קיין מיליאָנען געלט.	<i>S'vert keyn milionen gelt.</i>
אוי מזל, מזל, מזל.	<i>Oy mazel, mazel, mazel.</i>
עס איז דאָך פֿעסטגעשטעלט.	<i>Es iz dokh festgeshtelt.</i>
צו גליקלעך זיין הביבי,	<i>Tsu gliklekh zayn, habibi,</i>
איז מזל מער ווי געלט.	<i>Iz mazel mer vi gelt.</i>

Gotta have a little mazel. / Mazel means good luck.
'Cause with a little mazel, / You'll always make a buck.

And if you have no mazel, / Although you're on the ball,
You try and try and can't get by; / You beat your head against the wall.

Don't ever try to figure / Why you seem to be to blame
That some folks have a million / And can't even write their name.

That's why you gotta have a little mazel. / Mazel means good luck.
'Cause with a little mazel, / You'll always make a buck.

Oy mazel, mazel, mazel. / It's something you should know.
In order to be happy, baby, / Mazel's worth more than dough.