**Anthology of Jewish**

**Marriage Stories**

**Compiled by Daniel Keren**



**INTRODUCTION**

In commemoration of the recent chasanah (wedding) of my daughter Rivka Bracha to Ephraim Hirsch, I am printing this special 80-page anthology of wedding related stories. They have all previously appeared in the weekly *Shabbos Stories for the Parsha* that I compile and email to about 700 subscribers, free of charge. Indeed it is most appropriate as the origins of the Shabbos Stories for the Parsha emails came about through a chasanah.

My late wife Nechama and I and our family flew to Toronto for the wedding of our niece Yocheved Indaig to Yossie Markowitz. At one of the Sheva Brochas we attended, I was sitting next to a guest who was an uncle of the chasan. That guest lived in a California community without a strong Orthodox Jewish presence.

I had recently attended a series of kiruv outreach seminars held by Project Inspire, a division of Aish Hatorah and one of the ideas they spoke about was emailing a less affiliated Jew an interesting story.

I asked my neighbor at the Sheva Brochas if perhaps I could email him a story or two each. He agreed. But the only problem was that I was myself getting four or five interesting stories each week, so I put together something with all four or five emails and titled it Shabbos Stories for the Parsha.

The time it took me to copy and paste and make an easy to read 14 point type document was about an hour and a half and the thought occurred, “Why not share it with other people I knew?” That expanded the mailing to the uncle from California and about 40 other people.

And unbeknownst to me some of those other 40 people began forwarding my Shabbos Stories for the Parsha to others. I began receiving requests for subscription from those new readers. One of those individuals had his own daily Torah email which was sent out to thousands of subscribers around the world. He gave a plug to my Shabbos Stories and all of a sudden I had a couple of hundred new subscribers. And since then from word of mouth we have approximately 700 subscribers around the world (mostly in the USA, but also Israel, England, South Africa, Hong Kong, Australia and other exotic spots wherever Jews may live.)

So in order to celebrate the Chasana of Ephraim and Rivka Hirsch, I have published this collection of wedding related stories from the past six years of Shabbos Stories for the Parsha emails. Both the Keren and Hirsch families hope that when reading these stories you will do so as a zechus that the new couple should establish a Bayis Ne’eman BiYisroel and be a source of nachas for Hakodesh Baruch Hu and all of Klal Yisroel.

Daniel Keren

Menachem Av 21/August 6, 2015

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**Shabbos Stories for**

**The week of sheva brochas**

**for efraim & rivka hirsch**

20- 25 Menachem Av 5775/ August 5 - 10, 2015

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**Honeymoon Meal Ingredients**

**From the Desk of Yerachmiel Tilles**

It was Sivan of 5567/1807, and thousands of joyous Chasidim were anticipating the wedding that would unite two illustrious dynasties. The chatan, Yekusiel-Zalman, was the son of Yosef-Bunim Wallis, who was the son-in-law of the great Rebbe, **Rabbi Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev**. Yekusiel was about to be wed to Baila, the daughter of **Rabbi Dov Ber**, (later to be known as) the ***Mittler Rebbe***, who was the eldest son and eventual successor to **Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi**, the ***Baal HaTanya***, the first Chabad Rebbe.

The town of Zhlobin was chosen as the setting for the wedding. It was equidistant from the towns of Berditchev and Liadi, and also many Chabad Chasidim resided there. The chupah was set to take place on Friday afternoon, as was the custom in those times, and the festive meal would follow on Friday night.

**The Problem of No Fish Available**

**For the Friday Night Meal**

On the morning of the wedding day, the wife of the Baal HaTanya came in anguish to her husband. She had willingly agreed to prepare the entire Friday night meal, as the custom was that the meals of the first Shabbat after the wedding should be prepared by the kallah’s side, but there was a significant problem. There was no fish available!

How could there be a Shabbat wedding meal be without fish? Furthermore, she had heard that Rabbi LeviYitzchak had a custom to always eat fish at mitzvah and festive meals, about which he was very strict; if there was no fish, he would simply recite Kiddush and HaMotzi and partake of the wine and chalah bread, but would not eat anything of the remainder of the meal.This would surely be unfitting for such a joyous occasion.

**“Are There No Rivers in This Town?”**

Rabbi Shneur Zalman declared that Rabbi Levi Yitzchak himself should be consulted. When the Berditchever heard about the dilemma, he asked in wonder, “Could it be that there will not be fish for Shabbat? Are there no rivers in this town?” The messenger of the Chabad Rebbetzen responded, “The Dnieper River flows nearby, but the river does not have fish.”

Upon hearing this, the Berditchever summoned a horse and buggy and sent a message inviting his mechutan [relative-by-marriage], the Baal HaTanya, to join him at the bank of the river.

When they arrived there, Rabbi Levi Yitzchak removed a handkerchief and waved it over the river, all the while murmuring verses from [the Shabbat song in Aramaic composed by the holy Ari of Tsfat in honor of the Friday night meal] Azamer b’Shvachin. When he reached the words in the seventh stanza, “vinunin im rachashin,” which is Aramaic for fish and fowl, he called them out loud.

**Suddenly Schools of Fish Began**

**Swimming From All Directions**

Suddenly, schools of fish cane swimming towards them from all directions. People ran to get their nets, and soon their buckets were filled with fish, in honor of the holy Shabbat day.

Adapted by Yerachmiel Tilles from a post on [berdichev.org](http://link.myjewishpage.com/go.asp?li=A748161586658EB8D5A4DA68083F0A4E&ui=E439C22B2FA14D648D98C7BD5B92F85F) credited to Ruth Gardin.

Connection: the 200th yahrzeit of the great Berditchever, "defender of the Jewish people"

Biographic note: **Rabbi Levi Yitzchak** Deberamdiger **of Berdichev** (1740-**25 Tishrei** **1810**) is one of the most popular rebbes in chassidic history. One of the closest disciples of the Maggid of Mezritch, he is best known for his love for every Jew and his active efforts to intercede for them against (seemingly) adverse heavenly decrees. Many of his teachings are contained in the posthumously published, Kedushat Levi.

The above inspiring story is from the Ascent Institute in Safat, Israel or from the website www. Kabbalaonline.org. To subscribe, please email your request to ascent@ascentofsafed.com

**"It is Not Good for**

**Man to be Alone"**

Parashat Bereshit tells of not only the creation of the world, but also the creation of one of the world's most important institutions - marriage. Adam was first created alone, but G-d then declared, "It is not good for man to be alone - I shall make for him a

helper opposite him" (Bereshit 2:18). And so He created Hava, the first woman.

Judaism, unlike Catholicism, does not view marriage as a concession to the human being's base desires. Whereas the Catholic Church sees celibacy as the ideal lifestyle, the Torah here very clearly teaches that to the contrary, G-d very much wants men and women to marry and have families. Marriage, from the Torah's viewpoint, is the ideal lifestyle, not a compromise or concession.

While the institution of marriage seems self-evident and intuitive, we might still ponder the question, why is it "not good for man to be alone"? Of course, marriage is necessary for the purpose of procreation, and since G-d wants the world to be inhabited, men and women must marry. But is this the only reason why "it is not good for man to be alone" - so that the human race can reproduce? Is the value and importance of marriage limited to the need to populate the earth?

**Created in the “Image” of G-d**

Undoubtedly, the significance and purpose of marriage runs much deeper. Earlier in Parashat Bereshit (1:27), we read that man was created in the "image" of G-d.

The concept of a "Divine image" is a difficult one which requires a more thorough discussion, but for our purposes here, it means that G-d created the human being as a creature that somehow resembles Him. Commenting on the verse, "He [G-d] blew within his [man's] nostrils a living soul" (Bereshit 2:7), the Zohar writes that G-d infused within Adam a part of Himself, so-to-speak. Just as when a person blows air into a balloon the balloon contains air from that person, similarly, when G-d blew breath into Adam, Adam became infused with a likeness of G-d.

The practical implication of this concept is that we must live our lives in a way that resembles the Creator. Specifically, this means that we are to live lives of giving. G-d is constantly giving. At every moment, He sustains the lives of billions of people, feeds them, cares for them and protects them.

There is not a millisecond when G-d is not performing innumerable acts of kindness. It is impossible to even begin to imagine how much kindness G-d performs at any given moment. As creatures made in G-d's image, we are to similarly be giving people; our lives are to be characterized by the quality of Hesed (kindness). If we are created like G-d, we must act like G-d, and spend our days on earth giving, rather than taking.

**Judaism Urges All People to Get Married**

It is for this reason that "it is not good for man to be alone." Judaism urges all people to get married so that we all share our lives and everything we have with somebody else. It does not suffice to build and support institutions, important as this undoubtedly is. A person who donates does so voluntarily and on the terms which he determines.

Marriage, however, requires complete selflessness and constant giving. It necessitates taking somebody else other than oneself into consideration at all times and under all circumstances. "It is not good for man to be alone" because only if he shares his life with another person is he capable of truly resembling G-d by living to give.

**Showing Each Other Genuine Consideration**

When we speak of "giving" in the context of marriage, we do not refer to giving only what is expected, such as a husband working to support his wife. Rather, we mean giving of one's time, lending an ear, speaking a kind word, buying a thoughtful gift, showing each other genuine consideration.

In our society, unfortunately, marriage is generally approached from the precise opposite perspective. People marry for their own selfish interests, to receive, rather than to give, and this likely accounts for the ever growing divorce rate. If a husband and wife aren't looking to constantly give to each other, the marriage will not succeed. Rav Eliyahu Dessler (1891-1954) wrote that true love is achieved by giving, by investing of oneself in someone or something.

**Giving of Oneself unto Others**

A person who marries for his own needs and desires does not love his wife; he loves himself, and marries to advance his own interests. A person truly loves his wife if he works hard to please her and regularly gives of himself on her behalf. The same is true of children: parents love their children far more than anyone else because of all the work and exertion they invest in the children.

Thus, a stable, happy and fulfilling marriage is achieved when both partners give selflessly of themselves on behalf of one another. This is the recipe for true, lasting love and marital fulfillment - and also the way we fulfill our obligation to resemble our Creator and live in accordance with our divine image.

**The Virtue of Amram,**

**Father of Moshe Rabenu**

**By Rabbi Shmuel Choueka**

“*And a man went from the house of Levi*” (Shemot 2:1)

Did you even wonder what merit the parents of Moshe Rabenu had, to have a son like him? Rabbi Nissim Yagen z”l once said in our synagogue the answer to this question. When Amram, the father of Moshe, saw that Pharaoh was drowning all Jewish baby boys, he divorced his wife, reasoning that it doesn’t make sense to be married and have children and they should then be killed. All the people followed suit and divorced their wives, since Amram was one of the leaders of the generation.

**Reprimanded By His**

**Five-Year-Old Daughter**

When his daughter, Miriam, who was only five years old, saw this, she told her father, “Your decree is worse than Pharaoh’s, because by your separating from your wife there will be no Jewish boys and no Jewish girls, whereas Pharaoh only decreed on the boys.”

When Amram heard the truth in these words, although it came out of the mouth of a child, he accepted them wholeheartedly and remarried his wife, Yocheved. From that union came out Moshe Rabenu, about whom it is said, “Moshe is the paragon of truth who gave us the Torah of Truth.” Since Amram accepted the truth wholeheartedly and changed a decree, although it was not easy to do, he merited to have Moshe, who represented the truth.

Do we hear the truth about things we may have done incorrectly, and change them, or do we try to ignore the whole subject

**Mrs. Rachel Krishevsky, O.B.M.:**

**Survived by 1,400 Descendants**



JERUSALEM, Israel — The commandment to “be fruitful and multiply” the Krishevsky family follows quite closely. On 23 Elul/September 12, 2009, the great grandmother, **Rachel Krishevsky** passed away at the age of 99, leaving behind no less than 1,400 children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, and even great-great-grandchildren.

Krishevsky got married to her cousin, Yitzhak, just before turning 19. The couple brought seven sons and four daughters into the world. In accordance with haredi custom, Krishevsky brought up her children to see children as a great joy. Her children subsequently adopted her outlook and produced 150 children of their own.

These 150 children continued the commitment to be fruitful and multiply and themselves had no less than 1,000 children. From here, the lineage continued even further, and Rachel Krishevsky was blessed with a few hundred great-great-grandchildren.

**Surrounded by Loving Descendants**

Rachel Krishevsky died on Saturday surrounded by loving descendants.

Due to their great numbers, the family is not quite clear on precisely how many descendents there are. “The estimate in the family is that we are about 1,400 people since almost all of those from the family line were blessed with many children,” said one of the grandchildren Wednesday.

Though she lived a full and long life, the family is saddened by Rachel's passing. Krishevsky lived nearly her whole live next to Jerusalem's Mahane Yehuda open-air market.

**Door Always Open to the**

**Homeless and the Poor**

“Grandma was a G-d-fearing woman her whole life, and her door was always open to the homeless and poor near the market who were looking for a place to eat,” added the grandchild.

“She knew the entire book of Psalms by heart, and participated in all the family events, happy and sad, up until two years ago. She knew all of her descendents. We are sad about her death, but proud of what she achieved in her life and her righteousness and compassion.”

Though Krishevsky certainly produced many offspring, she did was not a record-breaker. In the haredi sector, there are two well-known cases of living people having great-great-great-grandchildren. One such case is in a Hassidic family living in the Jerusalem neighborhood of Mea Shearim. Another such family is that of Rabbi Yosef Shalom Elyashiv, the leader of the Lithuanian branch of haredi Judaism. A few months ago, his great-great-grandson had his first child.

**A Noble Reaction**

**By Rabbi Mendel Weinbach**

For years a resident of Jerusalem was concerned about finding a husband for his second daughter. The young lady had many virtues but suffered from a physical disability which necessitated wearing a brace on one of her legs.

Although it was not discernible in her walking there was still the lingering fear that once a suitor discovered this handicap he might back out of a *shiduch*.

A wonderful young man met the girl and when things looked serious she let him know about her problem.

The surprising response was "I am so sorry I took you for such a long walk which must have been an effort for you."

This noble attitude vindicated all the fine things the girl's family had heard about the boy and an engagement was soon announced.

**One Woman's Legacy**

**By Rabbi Mendel Weinbach**

In an age of birth control and zero population growth, it is comforting to see that there are still heroic women who endow their people with a bounty of offspring.

Yitta Schwartz passed away recently in the Satmar community of Kiryat Yoel in New York at the age of 94, leaving behind five generations of descendants – at least 2,500 people!

A survivor of the Bergen Belsen concentration camp, she moved to Antwerp with her husband and their six children after the war before settling in the Williamsburg section of Brooklyn. She bore 11 more children after the war and had about 170 grandchildren, all of whose names she knew.

**The Role of Women**

**In Judaism**

**By Rabbi Moishe Lichtenstein**

I was once asked a question about why the Shemonei Esrei, or Amidah prayer that Jews say three times a day mentions only the Patriarchs, "G-d of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob" but not the Matriarchs "Sarah, Rivka, Rachel and Leah".

There is a myth that in Judaism, women are considered to be inferior.

The Torah, the blue print of the universe and everything in it, presents roles for men and women based on the intrinsic natures of the two and the infinite wisdom of how it would be best for those natures to maximize their potentials. Women are *not* inferior. Nor are they superior. A man and woman work as a team for maximum results and universal benefit.

The Rambam, (Rabbi Moses Maimonides) teaches us how a husband and wife should treat each other. He writes that a man is a King and a woman is a Queen. They both have very different roles, but both important-- without one or the other there could not be a kingdom. A team effort is required to create, develop and maintain a kingdom.

The Rambam also says that a man should honor his wife more than himself. Thus, the well known Jewish statement "if you want to be the king of the house, treat your wife like a queen" -- or vice versa. There is no question in Judaism about the role of women because her role is that of a Queen.

**Jewish Life is Not Unaffected by**

**Modern Trends of World Thought**

Jewish life is not unaffected by modern trends of world thought. Jewish homes are affected by outside views of the role of women just as non-Jewish homes are. Originally, Jewish women were not maids in their homes, but true Queens. Today, many women's roles include even more responsibilities than that of a Queen. Today women are much more involved in every aspect of Jewish life and are even some times, the bread winners of the home. Today many women work outside their homes, yet they are not absolved of fulfilling the irreplaceable role of mother, wife and beacon of moral support which only she can fill.

However there is one uncompromising, fundamental and consistent concept, seen throughout the Torah with regard to the role of women – the concept of *tzniut* (modesty). Gila Manolson writes in her outstanding book Outside/Inside "*tzniut* is infinitely more than what we wear - it's about who we are. It's the potential within every one of us, male and female and Judaism enjoins us all to actualize it. *Tzniut* is the key to all spiritual growth and therefore to a healthy society. Rather than restricting, *tzniut* is, in the most profound sense, liberating."

**The Role of Women is Intrisically**

**Private and Internal**

The reason why the Amidah prayer mentions the patriarchs and not the matriarchs is because the role of women is intrinsically private and internal vs. the male role which is public and external, although men should be modest as well, it is the woman's role that contains within it, the power modesty brings.

Under no circumstances do we ever see that women in Judaism are considered to be inferior because of modesty. The association of publicity or prestige with how important a person is, does not exist in Judaism. Women are at the forefront of the foundation of life and are respected accordingly even if they do not hold a public position.

A man and woman are two parts of a whole. The Jewish woman is the back bone of her home and community and her fulfillment of that role determines the health, wellbeing and growth of our surrounding world.

Rabbi Moishe Lichtenstein’s article “The Role of Women in Judaism” is the feature article in the latest email edition of The Oorah Spirit (February 2010/Shevat-Adar 5770). To subscribe, email your request to The Oorah Spirit <theoorahspirit@oorah.org>

[**The Human Side of the Story**](http://ohr.edu/yhiy.php?seriesid=17&archive=1)

**Recipe for a**

**Happy Marriage**

**By Rabbi Mendel Weinbach**

Couples in the Orthodox community have a better chance of enjoying a happy marriage than those in the general community.

This is the conclusion of a recent survey conducted by the Aleinu Family Resource Center in California.

"Very good" or "excellent" was what 72 percent of Orthodox men said to surveyors about their marriage, and 74 percent of Orthodox women echoed this response. By comparison 62.9 percent of men and 59.5 percent of women in the general population reported that their marriages are happy.

Commenting on these findings, one expert suggested that the success of Orthodox marriages was due to a shared vision of life, the observance of Jewish purity laws, and a more realistic expectation of marriage.

**The Important Lesson**

**Mirrors Can Teach Us**

**By Rabbi Shmuel Choueka**

"He made the washbasin of copper...from the mirrors of the legions" (Shemot 38:8)

The washbasin was made from the copper mirrors which the women donated to the Mishkan. Even though Moshe hesitated to use mirrors used to beautify women for something so sublime as the Mishkan, Hashem told him that this was very dear in His eyes. The women used to beautify themselves in order to restore the spirits of their downtrodden husbands in Egypt, and thus they were able to be fruitful and multiply. Hashem said that this is very precious to Him and should be used for the washbasin.

**The Connection Between a**

**Washbasin and Mirrors**

What connection is there between a washbasin and mirrors? Every time a kohen would do the service in the Mishkan, he had to purify himself by washing his hands and feet. When he saw the mirrors in the washbasin, he would undoubtedly look at his reflection in the mirror. This would allow him to purify his spiritual self by causing him to observe himself and remember which traits he would have to cleanse within himself. So the copper mirrors enabled the kohen not only to wash his hands and feet but also wash out any impurities of his character. This was especially important since he was about to serve the rest of the Jewish people and he might have been tempted to see negative traits in others. He was now reminded to rectify his own traits before judging others.

**A Better Way to Look at Others**

Whenever we leave the house we look at the mirror to see if we are presentable. We should learn this lesson and also look at our flaws in the "mirror" before going out into the world and seeing other people. This will put us in a better perspective to see only the good in others.

**G-d Said Multiply,**

**And Did She Ever**

**By Joseph Berger**



Yitta Schwartz, shown in the late 1980s.

WHEN Yitta Schwartz died last month at 93, she left behind 15 children, more than 200 grandchildren and so many great- and great-great-grandchildren that, by her family’s count, she could claim perhaps 2,000 living descendants.

Mrs. Schwartz was a memberof the Satmar Hasidic sect, whose couples have nine children on average and whose ranks of descendants can multiply exponentially. But even among Satmars, the size of Mrs. Schwartz’s family is astonishing. A round-faced woman with a high-voltage smile, she may have generated one of the largest clans of any survivor of the Holocaust — a thumb in the eye of the Nazis.



Times Herald-Record

**MATRIARCH** The casket of Yitta Schwartz after her death last month in Kiryas Joel, N.Y. She left perhaps 2,000 descendants.

**A Recent Great-Great-Granddaughter**

**Named in Her Honor**

Her descendants range in age from a 75-year-old daughter named Shaindel to a great-great-granddaughter born Feb. 10 named Yitta in honor of Mrs. Schwartz and a great-great-grandson born Feb. 15 who was named Moshe at his circumcision on Monday. Their numbers include rabbis, teachers, merchants, plumbers and truck drivers. But these many apples have not fallen far from the tree: With a few exceptions, like one grandson who lives in England, they mostly live in local Satmar communities, like Williamsburg in Brooklyn and Kiryas Joel, near Monroe, N.Y., where Mrs. Schwartz lived for the last 30 years of her life.

Mrs. Schwartz had a zest for life and a devotion to Hasidic rituals, faithfully attending the circumcisions, first haircuts, bar mitzvahs, engagements and weddings of her descendants. With 2,000 people in the family, such events occupied much of the year.

Whatever the occasion, she would pack a small suitcase and thumb a ride from her apartment in Kiryas Joel to Williamsburg or elsewhere.

“She would appear like the Prophet Elijah,” said one of her daughters, Nechuma Mayer, who at 64 is her sixth-oldest living child, and who has 16 children and more than 100 grandchildren and great-grandchildren. “Everybody was fighting over her!”

There were so many occasions that, to avoid scheduling conflicts, one of her sons was assigned to keep a family calendar. But her family insists that Mrs. Schwartz had no trouble remembering everyone’s name and face.

**Her Tribute to G-d**

Like many Hasidim, Mrs. Schwartz considered bearing children as her tribute to G-d. A son-in-law, Rabbi Menashe Mayer, a lushly bearded scholar, said she took literally the scriptural command that “You should not forget what you saw and heard at Mount Sinai and tell it to your grandchildren.”

“And she wanted to do that,” he said, without needing to add her belief that the more grandchildren, the more the commandment is fulfilled. Mrs. Schwartz gave birth 18 times, but lost two children in the Holocaust and one in a summer camp accident here.

She was born in 1916 into a family of seven children in the Hungarian village of Kalev, revered as the hometown of a founder of Hungarian Hasidism. During World War II, the Nazis sent Mrs. Schwartz, her husband, Joseph, and the six children they had at the time to the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp.

At the shiva last month, another Bergen-Belsen survivor recalled her own mother dying at the camp; Mrs. Schwartz took it upon herself to prepare the body according to Jewish ritual, dig a grave and bury the woman.

“For her it was a matter of necessity,” Nechuma Mayer said of her mother’s actions.

When the war ended, the family made its way to Antwerp, Belgium. There, Mrs. Schwartz put up refugees in makeshift beds in her own bombed-out apartment.

**Immigrated to the United States in 1953**

In 1953, the Schwartzes migrated to the United States, settling into the Satmar community in Williamsburg. She arrived with 11 children — Shaindel, Chana, Dinah, Yitschok, Shamshon, Nechuma, Nachum, Nechemia, Hadassah, Mindel and Bella — and proceeded to have five more: Israel, Joel, Aron, Sarah and Chaim Shloime, who died in summer camp at age 8. Sarah came along after Mrs. Schwartz had already married off two other daughters.

While her husband sold furniture on Lee Avenue, Williamsburg’s commercial spine, Mrs. Schwartz, who never learned English well, tended the family. She sewed her daughters’ jumpers with mother-of-pearl buttons and splurged for pink-and-white blouses — 20 for 99 cents each — at that late lamented discount emporium on Union Square, S. Klein.

**Baking Six Loaves of Challah for Every Shabbos**

With so many children, Mrs. Schwartz had to make six loaves of challah for every Sabbath, using 12 pounds of dough — in later years, she was aided by Kitchenaid or Hobart appliances. (Mrs. Mayer said her mother had weaknesses for modern conveniences, and for elegant head scarves.) For her children’s weddings, Mrs. Schwartz starched the tablecloths and baked the chocolate babkas and napoleons.

After her husband died 34 years ago, relatives said, Mrs. Schwartz never burdened others with her new solitude.

“We didn’t feel even one minute that she was a widow,” Mrs. Mayer said. “She used to say, ‘When there are so many problems in life, I should put myself on the scale?’ ”

Mrs. Schwartz did not want her children to collect photographs of her and, given that modesty, her family was reluctant to provide more than one to accompany this article. “Just keep me in your heart,” she used to say. “If you leave a child or grandchild, you live forever.”

*Reprinted from the February 18th edition of The New York Times.*

[**The Human Side of the Story**](http://ohr.edu/yhiy.php?seriesid=17&archive=1)

**In Place of a Gift**

**By Rabbi Mendel Weinbach**

Many wonder stories are told about the "Jerusalem Tzaddik", Rabbi Aryeh Levin, of blessed memory.

His renowned son-in-law, the generation's foremost halachic authority, Rabbi Yosef Shalom Eliyashiv, is reported to have told the story of how this saintly man and his wife merited raising such an outstanding family.

It is a widespread custom in Eretz Yisrael for a *chatan* to give his *kallah* a gift when they enter the privacy of the *yichud* room following the *chupah*. But Rabbi Levine was so poor that he could not afford to buy a present.

Instead he informed his new wife that in place of a gift he would present her with a promise that whenever they would have a discussion in their married life he would concede that she is right. Her response was that she was reciprocating with a promise that she would always concede that he was right.

**A Moment with Rabbi Avigdor Miller, Zt”l**

**Why Is Having Children**

**So Important?**

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| **ANSWER:** |

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And the answer is. Why are you so important? Certainly I am important. If my mother wouldn't have had me, I wouldn't be around to talk about it. The most important event in history to me was when my mother had me. Nothing excites me more than that. That elicits my full enthusiasm. I told you this story of a President of a sisterhood, who was talking about the subject of zero population. So the Rabbi said to her, how many children were in your family? She said, my mother had 12 children. Who was the 12th one? She said, I was the 12th one.

So the Rabbi said to her, suppose your mother had decided to stop before you, look what we would have missed. Such a good active member of our Synagogue. Look how many good things you did, not only for us, but for yourself to. And therefore, why is having children so important? "Halo Lo Nivra Ha'Olam Ela L'Piryah V'Rivyah", the world was created only for having children.

Nothing is more important than having children. That's a very big statement, but it has to be explained. And therefore we see how evil, and stupid, is the populace that allow themselves to be befuddled by the propaganda of the liberals against having children.

Here is a couple, he married, he is a decent fellow, not too smart, but he married. And the girl said to him, No Children, Zero, Period. So he is a weakling, not able to fight, and years have passed by and no children. This selfish and stupid women, is a victim of what people told her, and the wrong people.

And people that listen to the radio, people that read the New York Times, people that look at television, are acquiring every day attitudes that are just the opposite of Kabolas Hatorah. It's impossible to talk about Kabolas Hatorah, if at the same time you are mekabail **Anti Torah**. Now don't say I am able to do these things, and despite them I will be able to be Mekabail the Torah. You can not talk from your mouth, two different things, from two sides of your mouth. And therefore Kabolas Hatorah requires, we should first cut loose from **Anti Torah**, and then we can talk about Kabolas Hatorah.

*Reprinted from this week’s “A Moment with Rabbi Avigdor Miller” email that was transcribed from questions that were posed to Harav Miller by the audience at the Thursday night lectures. Tape 508 @ 1:21:33. To listen to the audio of this Q & A please dial: 732-534-8868*

**The Human Side of the Story**

**Drop the Suggestion!**

**By Rabbi Mendel Weinbach**

In his new book about his grandfather, Rabbi Eliezer Shach, *zatzal*, Rabbi Asher Bergman tells the story of a question which was put before this great Torah leader by one of his devoted followers:

"I have received a suggestion of a *shidduch* for my daughter," he said. "My investigations have convinced me that he is a serious, G-d fearing young man of good character. My only concern is that he has made three conditions for considering the match, all of them demanding a rather extreme level of religious observance which may be too much for my daughter."

"Drop the suggestion!" was the categorical response of the sage who went on to thus explain his objection:

"The conditions the young man made for a higher standard of religious life are quite praiseworthy. But if you are looking for an intelligent yeshiva student for your daughter, this one is not very smart at all. The things he would like to see in his marriage can only be achieved through considerate discussion with his soul-mate. Marriage is not a business transaction which requires making such conditions!"

*Reprinted from this week’s website of Ohr Somayach Yeshiva in Yerushalayim – Ohr.edu*

**Nuclear Reaction**

**By Rabbi Raymond Beyda**

The human being is expected to grow in intellect and maturity, not merely in size and weight like other creations such as plants and animals. The character of a person should improve and become refined with age, like fine wine. And so Hashem planned the world in a way that would be conducive to personal growth.

One of the built-in training devices is called marriage. The Torah describes a man’s mate as “ezer k’negdo” – a helper corresponding [opposite] to him. Hashem designed marriage as a place where a man and a woman who were created with different natures would live together in one home. Their different views regarding so many daily situations would thereby yield growth and perfection through the reconciliation of their opinions.

Men are different from women, and the differences are more than just physical. In any relationship, one party moves faster than the other. The trick to domestic tranquility is not necessarily for one spouse to slow down or speed up in order to move exactly in sync with his or her mate. The trick is really to learn how to react to the difference in pace.

One great Rosh Yeshivah in Jerusalem would always be ready to leave for semachot (happy occasions) before his wife was done getting dressed. In most instances he kept busy with learning or some other important activity while he waited for her to announce, “I am ready, let’s go!” One time the couple was invited to the wedding of one of the Rosh Yeshivah’s students. The Rosh Yeshivah had a very pressing matter to attend to that same evening; therefore he requested from his wife:

“Tonight we must leave home no later than six o’clock, as I cannot stay past eight, and I must show proper respect to the groom and bride before I depart. Please be sure to be ready promptly at six.”

The well-intentioned wife tried her best, but was not ready until six-thirty. When she finally came to the front door, the anxious Rosh Yeshivah accepted her apology and gave her an admiring look, as if to appreciate every detail of her simple but dignified wedding suit. “Kedai,” he said. (“It was worth [the wait].”) (Excerpted from “One Minute with Yourself” by Rabbi Raymond Beyda.)

*Reprinted from this week’s email of the Jersey Shore Torah Center*

**A Moment with Rabbi Avigdor Miller Zt”l"**

**Men in the Kitchen?**

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| **QUESTION:** |

What is the opinion about a Frum man who takes very little part in helping his wife and his children in the kitchen and so on?

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| **ANSWER:** |

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And the answer is, it depends on circumstances. Sometimes a man works very hard for Parnoso, and he has to take a lot of ill treatment from his boss or from competitors, or from customers. Sometimes a man comes home so broken that the house is like a hospital for him. And therefore he deserves a lot of consideration.

However, if it's a man who has a comparatively easy life, and he comes home in good condition, there is no reason why he shouldn't help out a little bit. There should certainly be some token assistance, especially if the wife wants it.

**A “Lucky Man”**

Now some women don't want the husband to putter around in the kitchen. They tell him to keep out of it. He is a lucky man. But even then he should make some motions as if he is trying to help out, until she tells him to go out. But there is no question at all, everybody should feel it's his duty to help carry the burden of the house.

Now I want to say this, when it comes to taking care of the children's Torah education, it's a very big error to let the burden fall on the woman. Some women have to take care of coaching the children in their Torah lessons from the Yeshiva.

A father must shoulder that responsibility. A father must help out. Very many children need help even Aleph Bais, they need help. Father must help. Chumash they need help. And some fathers neglect that, and therefore the children grow up failures, and sometimes they are dropouts Chas V'shalom from the Yeshiva, with the most terrible consequences.

**The Father is to Blame**

It's not the children's fault. The blame is on the father. If he can not have patience to do it himself, he must spend money. He has to hire a boy to teach his little child or a girl to teach his little daughter. You must see to it that your children's learning is supervised. Don't rely on the Yeshivos. Don't rely on the teachers.

Day to day check on your child if he is keeping up with the class. If he falls behind even one lesson, it's a tragedy, because the next day it will be two lessons, and he will be discouraged, and he will loose Chaishek, Chalila. And sometimes he becomes an enemy of learning as a result.

So it's up to the father to constantly be on guard. This surely he has to shoulder the responsibility of the Chinuch of his children. In Aleph Bais, in Chumash, Hascholas Gemara. If he is not capable, he must hire help.

*Good Shabbos To All*

*Reprinted from this week’s “A Moment with Rabbi Avigdor Miller, Zt’L” email. This email is transcribed from questions that were posed to Harav Miller by the audience at the Thursday night lectures. To listen to the audio of this Q & A please dial: 732-534-8868*

**The Human Side of the Story**

**Saved from the Queen**

**By Rabbi Mendel Weinbach**

A serious dilemma faced the great rabbi of Prague, Rabbi Yechezkel Landau, author of the Responsa *Noda BiYehuda*. A *kohen* in the community asked him to officiate at his marriage to a divorcee. When he refused to do so on religious grounds, the man reported him to the Austrian Queen Maria Theresa who ordered the rabbi to perform the service or face serious punishment.

The rabbi thereupon informed the informant *kohen* that he would indeed officiate and arrangements for the wedding were made. As the couple stood under the chupah and the climatic moment arrived, the rabbi turned to the *kohen* and asked him to repeat after him word for word this marriage declaration:

"You are betrothed to me according to the rule of Queen Maria Theresa."

The guests broke into loud laughter and left the *kohen* and the divorcee to themselves. The brilliant rabbi of Prague thus remained faithful to his religion and no longer in danger from the Queen.

**A Moment with Rabbi Avigdor Miller Z"L**

**Marriage Counseling**

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| **QUESTION:** |

What should a wife do, if her husband is never happy and satisfied with her?

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| **ANSWER:** |

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So I will turn back the pages of my old book, and I will repeat some advice. First of all, she should fulfill the sage council that I said years ago, keep your **mouth closed** and **smell good.** I once met a man, he gave me a lift in a car, he was riding with his wife and he gave me a lift. He said you know, he said, my wife once heard you speak, and she is fulfilling 50% of that. Now if people would follow the dictates of common sense. Women have to know, it's important to put up a good appearance. Women should spend time on their appearance. That's number one.

And secondly, they should keep their **mouth shut**. Now, if a husband despite that is not satisfied, you should know that he is a native crank and nothing will help. And so you have to live out your life and bury him. You will get Olam Habah for tolerating it. But I don't believe that this will be the result. I am sure, if one party makes a big effort, then the other party will respond. It's only because two parties engage in a quarrel. There always takes two, to make a Machlokes (argument). And if one makes a real concerted effort, then it's certain that the other party will be influenced. And therefore, we go back to the principle , that whatever happens is the result of the persons own free will.

*Reprinted from this week’s “A Moment with Rabbi Avigdor Miller, Zt”l” which was transcribed from questions that were posed to Harav Miller by the audience at the Thursday night lectures. To listen to the audio of this Q & A please dial: 732-534-8868*

**Tar Boy**

**From the desk of Yerachmiel Tilles**

Many years ago in a small village a Jewish boy was orphaned. A fellow villager took pity on him and took him into his own home. The child attended the local yeshiva but try as he might, he just couldn't grasp even the most rudimentary subjects.

Finally, the boy's guardian decided to apprentice him to a tar-maker. No sooner did his master teach him some element of the work than he could perform it faultlessly. After half a year his master said, You don't need me any longer. You are competent enough to go into business for yourself.

**Opened a Successful Business**

**In a Neighboring Village**

The boy, now a young man, opened his own business in a neighboring village. He quickly established himself amongst the villagers, for both Jews and non-Jews alike were drawn to his cheerful manner and absolute honesty. His business thrived and he married the daughter of a local tradesman. He was soon able to support not only his family, but to give charity generously to the local yeshivas and other needy causes in the town. He even had built a special guest house to feed and maintained travelers at his expense.

His only regret in life was his ignorance of Torah. His father-in-law tried to soothe him, assuring him that the charity he provided to Torah scholars was counted to him as if he himself had studied, but to no avail.

**Notices a Certain Guest**

**Suffering from Body Sores**

One day in his guest house he noticed a certain visitor who was suffering from sores all over his body. How did this happen to you? he inquired. I was proficient in learning Torah, the man replied, but the study of the commentaries was very hard for me. I decided to torment my body in order that G-d would help to open my mind to my learning. With G-d's help, I succeeded and reached my goal. With His help these sores will also heal.

The young man had never heard of such practices, but he was overjoyed to learn that he still had a chance. And so every day he would go into the woods, sit in a spot where there were biting gnats and flies, and there he would expose his skin to the creatures until it bled and itched unbearably.

One day, as he sat on a tree stump with flies buzzing all about him, a stranger approached and asked, Why are you doing this? The young man explained about his great desire to learn Torah. It is totally unnecessary for you to do this. I will make a deal with you. If you will give me all of your worldly possessions, I promise you to teach you Torah.

**Must Discuss the**

**Proposal with His Wife**

Of course, I am willing, but I must discuss it with my wife, for it affects her as well. I will meet you tomorrow, and I will tell you our final decision. The man returned home and related the incident to his wife. This is what you have always wanted. Of course, you should do it without delay, was her reply. But the man was still wary. After all, he had always been a responsible person. He went to his father-in-law and asked his opinion.

What! To sign away all your possessions to an utter stranger in return for some foggy promise that you will learn Torah! Your charity is equivalent to the learning of a great scholar!The young man left in confusion. But his wife told him: It seems to me that you aren't sure of what you want. You always professed the strongest desire to learn Torah, but now when you have the chance, you balk!

**None Other than the**

**Baal Shem Tov**

The following day the stranger, who was none other than the Baal Shem Tov, came to the same spot in the forest, and the two men proceeded together to the young man's home. When they entered a tantalizing aroma greeted them, and they were astounded to see the table

set for a lavish banquet.

What is this? asked the Baal Shem Tov.

The wife explained, This is the last time we will be able to fulfill the holy mitzva of entertaining guests, and I wanted to perform the mitzva as beautifully as possible. In addition, we have reason to celebrate, for now my husband will be able to achieve his life's ambition. But I had one other consideration: There are many ways in which G-d is

able to take away a person's fortune. We have the privilege of giving away all in order to 'buy' Torah learning. This is also a great cause for celebration.

After they had eaten, the Baal Shem Tov asked the young man, What have you decided? The young man seemed unsure but a look in the direction of his wife, gave the young man the courage to make the decision. He took a quill and signed all of his worldly goods over to the Baal Shem Tov.

In accordance with their agreement, the couple was permitted use of the house and its garden as well as flour to bake bread. And in return, the would-be scholar traveled with the Baal Shem Tov to a place of Torah, where his eyes were illuminated.

True to his promise, the young man eventually became a great scholar and a tzadik. Years later, the Baal Shem Tov was heard to say about the young man's wife who sacrificed everything for Torah, that which was uttered about Rabbi Akiva's wife, Rachel, Everything he has achieved belongs to her.

[Adapted by Yerachmiel Tilles from the rendition on lchaimweekly.org (#972), with permission.]

**Connection:** Weekly Reading - See the Midrashim about the opposite influences of the wives of Korach and On ben Pelet. (Also, we missed having a Besht story for Shavuos, as is traditional.)

**Biographic note:** Rabbi Yisrael ben Eliezer (18 Elul 1698-6 Sivan 1760), the Baal Shem Tov [master of the Good Name], a unique and seminal figure in Jewish history, revealed the Chassidic movement and his own identity as an exceptionally holy person, on his 36th birthday, 18 Elul 1734. He wrote no books, although many claim to contain his teachings. One available in English is the excellent annotated translation of Tzava'at Harivash, published by Kehos.

*Reprinted from this week’s email of KabbalaOnline.org, a projectof Ascent of Safed*

[*www.ascentofsafed.com*](http://www.ascentofsafed.com)[*ascent@ascentofsafed.com*](http://webmailbb.juno.com/webmail/new/5?userinfo=eff1e795994608ed6885dfdeac88e827&count=1276002813)

[**Rav Mordechai Eliyahu, Zt”l**](http://matzav.com/rav-mordechai-eliyahu-ztl)

It is with great sadness that we report the passing of Rav Mordechai Eliyahu zt”l, former Sefardic Chief Rabbi of Israel this past Monday, June 7th. Rav Eliyahu had been in critical condition at Shaarei Tzedek Medical Center in Yerushalayim where he had been hospitalized for nearly a year and where he was niftar this afternoon. He was 81.

Rav Eliyahu served as Chief Rabbi of Israel from 1983 to 1993 and was one of the leaders of the religious Zionist community in Eretz Yisroel.

Rav Eliyahu was born in 1929 in the Old City of Yerushalayim to his parents, Rav Salman and Mazal Eliyahu. His mother was a granddaughter of the famed Ben Ish Chai and a sister of Rav Yehudah Tzadka. His father, a rov and mekubal who had immigrated to Eretz Yisroel from Baghdad, was niftar when Rav Eliyahu was just a child.

**A Story of Helping an Agunah**

Rabbi Shmuel Zaafrani, the longtime assistant to Rav Eliyahu then told the story of an amazing “rescue” performed by Rav Eliyahu – which the latter attributed to the power of prayer, both his own and that of others. This is the story:

When Rabbi Eliyahu first became a dayan in Be’er Sheva, in 1957, his was the only rabbinical court in the entire south, between Eilat and Be’er Sheva. On his first day on the job, he saw a woman standing outside, praying from a small Book of Psalms. She remained outside all day. The next day, the rabbi saw the same thing, and the next day again, and so on.

Finally, he asked the court secretary to ask her to come in. He asked her why she stood outside and prayed all day, and she related in all innocence: ‘I came on Aliyah [immigration to Israel] from Morocco by myself, and they sent me to Be’er Sheva. I asked where the closest rabbinical court was, I was told it was here, and so here I am.’

**Tragedy at the End of Sheva Brochot**

He asked her, “What are you praying for?” and the woman said, “My husband in Morocco was a taxi driver, and a week after we were married, at the end of the Sheva Brachot [the seven days of wedding festivities], he crashed - and his body was never found...

After a while, I went to the rabbis to be declared a widow so that I could remarry, but they said that without a body, they could not be certain that he was dead – and so I remained a ‘chained woman’ [aguna, unable to marry]. But when I came to Israel, I had faith that what the rabbinical courts in Morocco could not accomplish [in permitting me to remarry], the courts in Israel would be able to do.”

**Why Didn’t You Come to the Dayanim?**

Rabbi Eliyahu asked, “So why did you remain outside the court? Why didn’t you come in to the dayanim?”

The woman said, “Who are you? I pray to G-d, not to you!”

Rabbi Eliyahu immediately took up her case. He took all her papers and went to the Baba Sali, who told him of his brother, the Baba Haki, a leading rabbi in the Israeli city of Ramle who was familiar with all those engaged in Jewish burials in Morocco. Rabbi Eliyahu traveled to Ramle, where the Baba Haki told him, “There were only two Jewish kavranim [people engaged in burials] in Morocco, and both have since come to Israel. One lives in Dimona and one lives in Kiryat Ata [near Haifa].”

Rabbi Eliyahu said, “I live in the south, so I might as well try Dimona.” He went to the exact address supplied to him by the Baba Haki – only to find that the man’s family was sitting shiva for him; he had died just a few days earlier.

**The Solution is Discovered**

Quite disappointed, Rabbi Eliyahu went in anyway, shared some words of Torah and solace with the mourning family and friends, and explained why he was there. Immediately, a man jumped up and said, “I am the other kavran, and I know that story! I was the one who buried the taxi driver!”

Rabbi Eliyahu asked him to accompany come him to other rabbis, who questioned him and determined that his testimony was acceptable. Rabbi Eliyahu convened the rabbinical court, and the woman was declared “unchained” and permitted to remarry.

“This is the power of prayer,” Rabbi Eliyahu later said, “both hers and mine.”

*May the memory of a Tzaddik be for a blessing*

**Redefining Intermarriage or**

**How to Help a Fellow Jew**

**By Daniel Keren**



When one reflects upon the status of *Yiddishkeit* today, the image of the opening lines of Charles Dickens’ classic 1859 novel – “A Tale of Two Cities” comes to mind:

“It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us, we were all going direct to heaven, we were all going direct the other way…”

**Impressed by the**

**Peaceful Atmosphere**

Today you can walk on parts of Avenue M or Avenue J in Flatbush or any commercial avenue in the Jewish sector of Boro Park on *Shabbos,* and you will be impressed by peaceful atmosphere of all the streets as stores owned by Jews and *goyim* alike are closed on the Holy Day.

*Baruch Hashem*, it is very easy to be *frum* in certain parts of the Big Apple and its suburbs. But the reality is that while the population of Orthodox Jews committed to keeping Hashem’s *mitzvahs* is growing dramatically, *bli ayin hara*; the situation with the rest of *Klal Yisroel* is not so rosy.

**Tinuk shel Nishba**

The vast overwhelming majority of Jews in America and even in the Empire State itself are in the status of *tinuk shel nishba*, captive infants who to no fault of their own have grown up totally ignorant of our precious Torah heritage and Jewish culture. Their definition of Judaism is limited to Sunday consumptions of bagels and lox, perhaps lighting the Menorah (at least on the first few days of Chanukah), observing some type of a Passover *Seder* and attending synagogue on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.

With each passing generation since the great wave of Jewish immigration from Europe to America in the years following the outbreak of pogroms in Tsarist Russia till the end of open immigration after the First World War (1880 – 1924), the level of knowledge and observance by succeeding generations of assimilated American Jewry has unfortunately become progressively weaker.

Prior to 1950, the vast overwhelming majority of non-religious Jews felt that it was very wrong to marry out of the faith. But just 15 years after the Holocaust that saw the murder of one third of world Jewry, the number of secular Jews without any solid Jewish education began to skyrocket and today, sadly more than 50% of all Jews in America are marrying non-Jews. In some outlying regions far from the Big Apple, the figures are even more horrific.

**Dangers of Rampant**

**Jewish Assimilation**

What really hurts is that we as *frum* Jews have given up on the vast majority of American Jewry who as said before are not religiously observant due to circumstances beyond their control. It is not a joy to realize that in 30 years the majority of Jews in America will be observant, because the majority of Jews today (G-d forbid) will have gone spiritually lost.

After 120 years when we come to the *Bais Din shel Mailah* (the Heavenly Court), we will be asked: “What did you do to help your brother or sister who didn’t become a *baai teshuvah* with you? What did you do to reach out to your second cousin from the Bronx? What did you to do to awaken the *pintele Yid* in your neighbor on the same floor of your apartment building or three houses down from you? What did you say that might have made a difference to your colleague at work or your classmate in college?

**Just a Sincere Concern**

Not all of us are *kiruv* professionals. We don’t have to be. All it takes is a sincere concern for your fellow Jew. The next time a relative or friend or neighbor or colleague tells you that he or she is about to marry a non-Jew, don’t just shrug it off, by saying “Oh!” and mutter something about probably not being able to go to their “*simcha*.”

A few years ago, **Feldheim Publishers** in conjunction with the ELIYAHOO College Outreach Network, a project of **JAAM (Jewish Awareness America)** published an important book on how to attack the problem of intermarriage. Written by **Rabbi Avraham Jacobovitz**, the book is titled “*Perfect Strangers: Redefining Intermarriage*.”

This is a book that should be read first by all *frum* Jews who care about their non-observant relatives, neighbors, friends and colleagues. All too often we live in our own guilded spiritual ghettoes and we have no idea of the challenges that are threatening the spiritual future of most secular Jews. Many of us might even *delude ourselves into thinking that we don’t really know any non-frum* Yidden.

**Important Major Questions**

Before discussing why a non-*frum* Jew who never had a true-Torah education should not marry a “nice” non-Jew, Rabbi Jacobovitz discusses the major questions that first have to be addressed. “Why Are We Here?” What is the purpose of the relationship between a man and a woman? What is love? What is the Jewish concept of marriage? After outlining Judaism 101, “Perfect Strangers” than attacks the question of why Intermarriage is wrong.

For many members of our community, it was never a question that we would only marry a fellow Jew. Nevertheless, the book is valuable because it will reinforce our values. When you mention to a secular Jew that he or she should not marry out of the faith and they respond, “Why? This is America and it is a free country,” Rabbi Jacobovitz’s arguments will give you the answers you need to know.

**A Powerful Kiruv Tool**

Secondly, this book seemingly written to the non-*frum* Jew is a powerful tool for you to use by giving to the secular Jew you want to help out. At the end of the book, it includes a list of additional books for the serious assimilated Jew to read along with a list of outreach groups the reader could contact for more information and help.

Obviously the best time to try and combat an intermarriage is before the Jew becomes engaged. Often your talking to your fellow *Yid* and demonstrating your sincere concern for both their spiritual and physical wellbeing will have a powerful influence.

**Open Your Homes**

Even if at that moment he or she pushes you off, your words will have entered their brains and heart. In addition to warning your friend against marrying out of the faith, it also helps to invite them to your home to enjoy the beauty of an authentic *Shabbos* or *Yom Tov*.

“*Perfect Strangers*” deserves to be in every Jewish home – both *frum* and assimilated. You might even consider offering to study the subject with another Jew who could benefit from the lessons in Rabbi Jacobovitz’s book. It is available in Jewish bookstores and by contacting the publisher at [www.feldheim.com](http://www.feldheim.com)

If you would like help in reaching out to the non-*frum* Jews you come into contact with on a daily or not-so-daily basis, please contact **Project Inspire**, a division of **Aish HaTorah International** by calling (646) 291-6191 or emailing [info@projectinspire.com](mailto:info@projectinspire.com) or visiting www.kiruv.com

*Reprinted from the June 18th issue of The Jewish Connection*

**Consolation in**

**Our Ketubah**

**By Rabbi Reuven Semah**

“*Yet this I bear in mind therefore I still hope. Hashem’s kindness surely has not ended nor are His mercies exhausted*.” (Eichah 3:21-22)

As we approach Tish’ah B’Ab, we hope this will be our last. As the verse quoted above states, we know Hashem’s mercy is endless, this is our hope for redemption, to return to Israel and the Bet Hamikdash. There is a beautiful Midrash (quoted by Rabbi A. Henoch Leibowitz) on Eichah that uplifts us even more.

The Midrash tells a parable of a king who married a princess and wrote a very elaborate ketubah (wedding contract) promising her expensive clothing and priceless jewels as a sign of his great love for her. The king had to travel overseas and was delayed there for many years. As the years passed by, she was taunted by her neighbors. They ridiculed her and told her he forgot about her and found someone else.

**Why She Had Hope that**

**Her Husband Would Return**

Her only consolation was her ketubah. She would read her ketubah and that would give her hope that he would return, for why else would he have given her such a beautiful gift? Sure enough, after many years her husband returned. When he saw that she really waited for him he was amazed. He asked her what gave her the strength to be so faithful. She responded that it was her ketubah, and if not for this ketubah she would have been crushed by her neighbors.

Similarly, the Midrash continues, the Jewish people have suffered so much over the centuries. The nations taunt them and say Hashem has left them for another nation. The Jews can bear the suffering but not the thought that Hashem left us. We come to shul and we read the holy Torah: And I will turn to you and make you fruitful and cause My Shechinah to dwell amongst you and I will walk in your midst” (Vayikra 26:9).

**The Torah is Our Ketubah**

The Torah is our ketubah. It is our hope and strength. When Hashem redeems us, it will be amazing that we were able to wait. Hashem will ask us where we found the strength, and we will answer that it was the Torah that You gave us. We should constantly open our “ketubah” and be happy and strong until the joyous day of our redemption arrives.

**The Human Side of the Story**

**The Stranger at the Wall**

**By Rabbi Mendel Weinbach**

The couple which had been childless for about 15 years decided to end their unsuccessful marriage in the least painful manner. A short while after their divorce the woman discovered that she was pregnant. The only thing standing in the way of her ex-husband remarrying her was that his name was Cohen and a *kohen* is prohibited from marrying any divorcee, even his own.

Heartbroken, he turned to the great halachic authority Rabbi Yosef Sholom Eliyashiv for guidance. The rabbi told him that there was no way he could halachically permit such a marriage if he was a *kohen* but urged him to go pray at the Western Wall for Heavenly assistance.

**Tearfully Crying and Loudly Praying**

As the husband stood before the sacred wall tearfully and loudly praying he felt a tap on his shoulder. When asked what he was lamenting about he told the stranger his sad story. "Do you have a father?" asked the stranger and the reply was that his father was in an old-age home in the US. The stranger urged him to immediately fly to visit his father. Although failing to understand what point there was in visiting his frail father who could hardly communicate, he decided to follow this advice.

When he arrived at his father's bedside the doctor in attendance told him that his father, Mr. Cohen, had not spoken for months and he should not expect to communicate with him. But as the son related his problem the father, to everyone's surprise, suddenly spoke and informed him that he was not his son, but rather a child he had adopted after the Holocaust. This meant that he was not a *kohen* after all and the story had a happy ending.

*Reprinted from the website of Ohr Somayach International in Yerushalayim.*

**It Once Happened**

**The Mysterious Marriage**

**Of the Spanish Tzadik**

Shortly after the Spanish Inquisition, a Spanish Jew named Joseph Jospa arrived in Krakow. He was a great scholar and a tzadik (righteous person), and was greatly respected by the Jews of Krakow, who called him the Spanish Tzadik. Being 50 years of age and unmarried, he lived by himself.

Thirty years went by in this manner until a tragic event changed this. A young businessman from Krakow was killed during a business trip to Prague, leaving a widow with no children. The businessman's brother performed a chalitza ceremony in the Rabbinical Court of Krakow.

**The Public Chalitza Ceremony**

It was the custom of Krakow in those days for the chalitza ceremony to be a community event, after which the rabbi of the Rabbinical Court would bless the woman that she should soon marry and have children. Then the shamash would announce that if any man present wished to marry the woman, he should present himself to the Court.

No one responded on that particular occasion, but about five months later, Joseph Jospa, the Spanish Tzadik, came to the Court and announced that he wished to marry the widow, if she would agree. He explained that he had not intended to get married, but now, for certain reasons which he did not wish to reveal, he wished to marry despite his advanced years.

**The Court Summons the Widow**

The Court then sent for the widow. Immediately upon arriving in the Court, even before she had a chance to ask why she was summoned, she burst into tears.

"Why are you crying?" they asked her.

"I have a terrible secret weighing me down, but I can't make up my mind whether to tell you about it," she replied.

She said she had been having a recurrent dream in which her father, who passed away many years before, appeared to her and asked her to do something. She could not decide whether to listen to him. She was worried and asked the Court for advice.

The rabbis of the Court told her that it would be best if she would tell them what the dream was. She said that in her first dream, her father appeared to her dressed in his Shabbos clothes, put his hands over her head, blessed her and said, "And now I wish you mazel tov, for it has been decreed that you marry the Spanish Tzadik, Joseph Jospa."

She had awoken from this dream trembling violently, but put it out of her mind. She had the dream again, but again did not take it seriously. Then her father appeared to her looking very serious and told her to that there was no way out of it, as it had been decided in the Heavenly Court. She must speak to someone to arrange the marriage. If she listened to him, he continued, she would be blessed with a son. But if she refused she would come to a bitter end.

**The Strange Dream Keeps Re-occurring**

Three more times she had the dream, and she finally decided to go to the Court about it. She had just made the decision to go, when the shamash arrived, informing her that the Court had sent for her.

When she finished her story, the rabbis of the Court looked at each other in amazement and told the woman that Joseph Jospa had come to them and told them that he wanted to marry her. She now had no doubt that it was G-d's will that she marry the tzadik, and the marriage was arranged. The wedding was a great celebration for the whole community. Everyone in Krakow felt that this was no ordinary wedding, but that it held an inner significance beyond their comprehension.

**Blessed with the**

**Birth of a Special Son**

In the second year of their marriage, they were blessed with a son, whom Joseph Jospa named Elijah, after Elijah the Prophet. When Elijah was two, Joseph Jospa taught him Torah until he was of bar mitzva age, and he studied diligently.

About two weeks before Elijah's bar mitzva, Joseph Jospa told his wife that he felt that he was about to pass away. He told her that after their son's bar mitzva, Elijah would tell her that he wants to go out into the world. She should not discourage him from doing this, because he had been sent down to this world to fulfill a special mission.

**Special Studies with Elijah the Prophet**

He told her that when her first husband had been killed, Joseph Jospa had received a Divine command to marry the widow, for a son of very high stature would be born to them who would have a special mission to fulfill for the Jewish people, to help them and uplift them. Elijah the Prophet had been studying with their son Elijah to prepare him for this mission. He was to be the first in a long chain of tzadikim leading up to the coming of Moshiach.

After concluding these instructions, Joseph Jospa passed away. A few weeks after Elijah's bar mitzva, he told his mother that he wanted to go out into the world. Having been prepared for this, she did not object. She gave him her blessing and he left. Forty years later, in the year 5350 (1590) he appeared in the city of Wurms, Germany and became known as a miracle worker and a healer. He also established a yeshiva there where he taught Kabbala, particularly the Zohar, in addition to the Talmud. He was the famous Rabbi Elijah Baal Shem.

Rabbi Elijah Baal Shem was indeed the first in the long chain leading up to the revelation of Moshiach. Rabbi Elijah Elijah was the first of four Baal Shem's. He was succeeded by his disciple, Rabbi Yoel Baal Shem, then by Rabbi Adam Baal Shem, who was succeeded by his disciple, Rabbi Yisrael, the famous Baal Shem Tov.

Reprinted from this week’s issue of “L’Chaim,” a publication of the Lubavitch Yourth Organization in Brooklyn.

**Chelsea’s Marriage is a “Spiritual Holocaust”**

The Israel, Hebrew-Language Yated Ne’eman newspaper devoted a recent editorial piece to a subject wholly ignored by the chareidi Israeli media - Chelsea Clinton’s wedding - dubbing the marriage a “spiritual Holocaust.”

It appears that Yated Ne’eman was interested in challenging the assimilation prevalent among US Reform Jews, particularly in light of Prime Minister Binyomin Netanyahu’s recent capitulation in the conversion law affair, and despite the taboo nature of the topic.

“We were not supposed to address the private family event had it not been for one tiny detail: The chosson is Jewish. (Bill) Clinton wasn’t bothered by this ‘miniscule’ detail. As far as he’s concerned, there is no difference between a Jew and a Christian. The problem is that his new in-laws were not bothered by this either. On the contrary, they appeared quite happy with their dear son becoming the former US president’s son-in-law,” the article said.

**The Bigger Problem is that Most**

**U.S. Jews Aren’t Bothered**

“The bigger problem is that most US Jews aren’t bothered either,” the article said. “On the contrary, many of them feel part of the American nation.”

The editorial also mentioned that the groom and his family belong to the Reform movement - “One that views the annihilation of the Jewish people in uprooting its unique identity and heritage as its main objective.”

According to the Yated Ne’eman, the Mezvinskys encouraged the marriage knowing that it would be cutting off another Jew from its people. “This move joins the many millions who have become extinct from the Jewish people through the spiritual Holocaust imposed by a bunch of clowns disguising themselves as ‘Jews’.”

The Israeli Yated Ne’eman is not affiliated or connected to the American newspaper by the same name.

Reprinted from the Matzav.com website of Wednesday, August 4, 2010.

**Good Shabbos Everyone.**

**The Power of One Who is Embarrassed Publicly But Doesn’t Respond**

Hashem tells us this week in Parshas Re'eh, "For you are a holy people to Hashem, your G-d and Hashem has chosen you for Himself to be a treasured people, from among all the peoples on the face of the earth."  (Devorim 14:2)  One of the definitions of the word "holy" is "separate, set apart."  We are truly a nation which enjoys a supernatural existence, with an extra special supervision from above.  The following amazing true story illustrates that we are a "holy people to Hashem."

**The Pain and Frustration of Not Having Children**

The pain and frustration of not having children had taken their toll on Dovid and Sarah Goldwasser. They had tried nearly every medical procedure, visited with almost every top specialist and had of course spent much effort and tears at the holiest sites in Eretz Yisroel. But, alas, they were married twenty-two years and still did not have children.

The anguish would have crushed most people's spirits. But Dovid and his wife refused to give up hope and one day decided to go to Reb Chaim Kanievsky in Eretz Yisroel for a brocha - blessing. Reb Chaim was warm and caring, as well as sensitive to their needs. He asked a number of questions regarding whom they had gone to see and what procedures they had tried.

Finally, Reb Chaim looked at them and sadly explained that sometimes Hashem in His Infinite Judgment does not grant someone a child. The couple both sat silently, contemplating the words which Reb Chaim had spoken.

**A Final Child-Like Plea**

"But Rebbi, there must be something to do. There has to be—" Dovid's plea carried with it so much hurt and aching for a child.

Reb Chaim thought for what seemed like an eternity and finally spoke. "Maybe there is a way. The Gemara (Shabbos 88b) speaks glowingly about someone who is able to endure the shame of someone embarrassing him and does not respond. Perhaps—," Reb Chaim spoke with a tinge of hope in his voice, "if you receive a berachah - blessing from a person who has endured humiliation and not responded in kind, then — maybe —"

**A Glimmer of Hope**

It was all they needed. It was — if nothing else — a glimmer of hope. But the problem they now faced was how to find someone who has suffered embarrassment at the hands of another, not responded and is prepared to give them a berachah. They resolved to do whatever they had to, whatever would help them...

Baruch Lipnick and his wife Rifka gave their new apartment a final once-over and were pleased that they had found a home in which they would be comfortable. Relatively new to the Bnei Brak area, they were pleased that their apartment search had come to an end. But as they opened the door to leave, they came face to face with a middle-aged woman standing at their door. "You're not buying this apartment, are you?"

**The Cursed Apartment**

The couple looked at the woman and then looked at each other. Neither of them knew who this woman was and could not figure out what she could have possibly intended when she issued her warning about the apartment. "I happen to know for a fact that this apartment has had a curse placed on it."

This announcement piqued their curiosity and alarmed them. They did want to buy the apartment but not at the expense of a shadowy curse. "How do you know that the apartment has been cursed?" They did not doubt her claim, rather they were just inquiring to get the full story. She looked at the two of them and defiantly declared, "Because I'm the one who cursed it."

She went on to explain that she lived in a neighboring apartment and a previous owner of this apartment had built an extension which she felt intruded on her privacy, and therefore she had placed a curse on the apartment. The woman seemed to be overreacting but before they were going to buy the apartment they wanted to make sure that they were not doing anything wrong.

**The Rav Dismisses the Seriousness of the Curse**

They approached Rav Nissim Karelitz and explained the situation to him. Rav Nissim smiled and totally dismissed the woman's ludicrous claim, and justified his decision by explaining that the previous apartment owners had been given a permit by beis din - Rabbinical Court to proceed with their extension; hence the woman's claim was completely unfounded and contrary to a ruling of beis din.

In fact, Rav Nissim concluded, he had been a member of that beis din. Based on their conversation with Rav Nissim, Baruch and his wife were relieved and decided to go ahead with the purchase of the apartment. Within a month they moved in and before long were completely settled.

**Invited to a Local Bar Mitzvah**

Although they were happy in their new living quarters, they still hadn't made many friends in the area. And so, when they were invited to a local Bar Mitzvah, Baruch was happy that his wife would be able to meet some of the other women in the neighborhood.

But unfortunately his happiness at the prospect of his wife meeting new women from the neighborhood quickly turned into a nightmare. In the middle of the Bar Mitzvah meal, the woman who had cursed their apartment burst into the room. She looked around and when her eyes finally locked onto Mrs. Lipnick's she let loose with a tirade directed at Mrs. Lipnick and her husband, claiming that they were "liars and cheaters, insensitive and uncaring." The entire barrage lasted for only about 2 minutes, but it felt like an eternity.

**Just About to React When Someone Taps Her Shoulder**

Mrs. Lipnick was mortified and was about to react to what had happened when someone tapped her urgently on her shoulder, "Please, I beg you, don't respond."

Mrs. Lipnick turned toward the woman who had tapped her and realized that she had never seen her before. The woman introduced herself quickly as Mrs. Goldwasser and again begged Mrs. Lipnick not to respond. So Mrs. Lipnick sat there quietly and suffered the terrible shame and indignity.

The crazed woman finally left and Mrs. Lipnick sat in her chair, feeling humiliated. "Please allow me to explain..." Mrs. Goldwasser sat down next to Mrs. Lipnick and told her about the entire meeting with Reb Chaim Kanievsky. "I've waited four and a half years to meet someone like you and I beg you to give me a berachah for a child." Mrs. Goldwasser's eyes were filled with tears and so were Mrs. Lipnick's.

And with heartfelt emotion, Mrs. Lipnick blessed her newfound friend that her years of suffering should end. And miraculously, twenty-six and a half years after they were married Dovid and Sarah Goldwasser cried tears of joy as they held their newborn baby boy in their arms. (Touched by a Story, Reb Yechiel Spero p. 235) We are truly a nation which enjoys a supernatural existence, with an extra special supervision from above. **Good Shabbos Everyone.**

***Reprinted from this week’s Good Shabbos Everyone email.***

**It Once Happened**

**The Chasana or**

**Social Event of the Decade**

Reb Nachum and Reb Gedalya were the two wealthiest citizens in their respective counties. Thus, when a match was arranged between the two families it was the talk of the town.

Several weeks passed as preparations were made for the celebration, an event that was already being referred to as "the" social event of the year if not the decade. Then, all of a sudden, a rumor began to circulate that Reb Nachum, the father of the bride, had lost his fortune.

Eventually the bitter truth came out: Reb Nachum had been forced to declare bankruptcy. Not only had he lost his personal wealth but he had even had to sell his house to appease his creditors. With nowhere else to go the family moved into a tiny apartment paid for by the community.

When Reb Gedalya heard the news he immediately sent a messenger to Reb Nachum with a letter expressing his sympathy. Reb Nachum's reversal of fortune sincerely touched his heart. At the same time, it was obvious to him that the match between their children could no longer take place; it was simply a mistake to be remedied as soon as possible.

However, what was obvious to Reb Gedalya was not all that obvious to Reb Nachum. "A match is a match," he insisted, refusing to back out of the agreement. "It should have nothing at all to do with financial considerations."

When the messenger returned to Reb Gedalya with Reb Nachum's reply his compassion quickly turned to anger. Without a moment's delay he set out for Reb Nachum's house, taking with him all of his son's engagement gifts so he could return them.

Reb Nachum, however, was equally adamant in person about refusing to annul the match. "It's not my fault I lost all my money!" he exclaimed. "'A person who sinned under compulsion, G-d exempts from punishment.' "

Reb Gedalya thought long and hard about his frustrating dilemma; then an idea occurred to him. "How about a third party making the decision?" he asked. "The famous tzadik, Rebbe Chaim of Sanz, lives not far from here. Let us go to him together, tell him what happened and follow his advice."

Reb Nachum was unmoved. "I am not calling off the match under any circumstances. It would never have been agreed to if it were not decreed from on high. If you want to go to the tzadik, fine. But I'm not going anywhere." Annoyed, Reb Gedalya had no choice but to make the trip alone.

It was late Friday afternoon when he arrived in Sanz. Although the Rebbe did not usually receive visitors so close to Shabbat, an exception was made for Reb Gedalya, whose acts of charity were legendary.

It is most likely that the tzadik was already aware of Reb Gedalya's story, as there was almost no one in the region who hadn't heard it. Nonetheless, he listened attentively as Reb Gedalya poured out his tale of woe.

The Rebbe was silent for a few minutes before responding. "You are very lucky to have come here," he finally said. "However, as it is almost Shabbat, it is too late now to discuss it any further. Why don't you stay here as my guest, and after Shabbat we will continue this conversation."

Reb Gedalya left the Rebbe's presence greatly encouraged and in a hopeful mood. The tzadik had listened to his every word and seemed to agree with him. Surely he would rule in his favor; hadn't he told him that he was "very lucky"? Reb Gedalya spent a delightful Shabbat in the Sanzer Rebbe's courtyard.

Right after Havdala, Reb Gedalya was again admitted into the tzadik's chamber. With awe and trepidation he awaited the Rebbe's pronouncement.

"Reb Gedalya," the Sanzer Rebbe told him, "I want you to leave immediately for Reb Nachum's house and deliver the following message:

Tell him that although he agreed to pay for half of the wedding, as he does not have even a penny left to his name, you, Reb Gedalya, will be happy to pay for the entire celebration, which will take place on the date already agreed upon."

After Reb Gedalya had recovered from his shock he surprised himself by daring to ask for an explanation. "But Rebbe!" he stammered. "I don't understand. Didn't you tell me that I was 'very lucky'?"

The Rebbe looked directly into Reb Gedalya's eyes and smiled. "I guess you didn't understand my intention," he said. "I meant that you are very lucky that it is you who has come to me and not your future mechuta (in-law), Reb Nachum. Can you imagine how you would feel if it were the other way around, if the wheel of fortune had turned against you instead of him?"

Indeed, Reb Gedalya's son and Reb Nachum's daughter were wed. And the Sanzer Rebbe himself conducted the ceremony.

*Reprinted from this week’s edition of “L’Chaim,” a publication of the Lubavitch Youth Organization.*

**It Once Happened**

**The Forgotten**

**Wedding Invitation**

Reb Berel and his wife had already eaten their dinner and the kitchen was cleared away. Reb Berel had settled down to study Torah and his wife was relaxing with some needlework when there was a knock at the door. Reb Berel opened the door a crack, but the visitor pushed it so forcefully that Reb Berel was thrown backward. Several young hoodlums quickly followed into the house and ordered the terrified couple to lie on the floor. Although they offered no resistance, the couple was beaten unconscious and then bound with strong ropes.

**A Group of Yeshiva Students Arrive**

As this violence occurred inside the placid exterior of the home, a group of yeshiva students arrived at this same house. "It's completely dark. Do you think we really should knock?" one of the students asked the others.

"Reb Moshe specifically told us to make sure to bring Reb Berel to the wedding. He's waiting there until we come," another replied.

"We have to wake them up," a third offered. And so they walked up to door and knocked. Repeated knocking, however, brought no response.

"Maybe we should force the door; maybe something has happened to them and they can't open the door." But forcing was not necessary, for the door easily pushed open.

**Sent to Bring Reb Berel to the Wedding**

When the young men entered they saw a dark form on the floor which turned out to be Reb Berel. They untied him and his wife who, by now, had regained consciousness, and explained that they had been sent by Reb Moshe to bring them to his daughter's wedding.

"Thank G-d you came when you did. The robbers would have ransacked the entire house and who knows what else they might have done to my family. This is truly a miracle that resulted from my mitzva (commandment) of dowering a bride (hachnasat kalla)!"

"Please tell us what happened," the students insisted.

Reb Berel, who was just recovering his composure, explained, "One day I was walking down the street, when I ran into Reb Moshe. He looked worried and so I asked him, 'How is everything?'

"He answered me, saying that he had to marry off his daughter very soon, and he didn't have the money. I asked him how much he needed, and he replied, 'Two hundred gold coins,' which was quite a sizable sum. Thank G-d, I have more than enough, and so I just took out my wallet and gave him the money plus some extra. Then I added, 'Just don't forget to invite me to the wedding!'

**Recognizing the Divine Providence**

"I knew the wedding invitations had gone out, and I was surprised that he had forgotten to invite me. Now, I understand the Divine Providence behind that apparent oversight. If you hadn't come along when you had I might have lost a great deal of my fortune and, who knows, we might have even lost our very lives!"

"Do you feel well enough to come to the wedding?" they asked Reb Berel. "For certainly, Reb Moshe is still waiting for you!"

"I wouldn't miss it for anything," Reb Berel exclaimed. "Thanks to the money I gave Reb Moshe, my life, the lives of my family and my fortune were saved."

**Recounts the Tale of His Rescue**

Most of the wedding guests had already left, but Reb Moshe was there waiting for the "guest of honor," the benefactor he had forgotten to invite. Reb Moshe was about to apologize, when Reb Berel hugged him and began recounting the tale of his rescue.

Then Reb Berel said he had an announcement to make. "For many years I have thought of moving to the Holy Land. Tonight I have decided that I will, in fact, move there as soon as I close up my business here. There, I will build houses for the poor and for Torah scholars in Jerusalem. In this way I hope to repay G-d for all the good He has done for me, and I pray that through this deed, I will bring the arrival of Moshiach a bit closer."

**The Result is Batei Orenstein**

This announcement brought cheers from the remaining guests, "Amen, Amen," they cried joyfully. And so, the section of Batei Orenstein arose in the holy city of Jerusalem to be a blessing to the needy who were furnished with housing due to the generosity of Reb Berel.

The large square, called "Batei Orenstein," stands to there to this day.

Reprinted from last week’s edition of “L’Chaim,” a publication of the Lubavitch Youth Organization in Brooklyn.

**The Human Side of the Story**

**Keeping a Promise**

**By Rabbi Mendel Weinbach**

When he was handed an invitation to the wedding of a young man, Rabbi Aryeh Levin, the famed *tzaddik* of Yerushalayim, did not recognize the prospective *chatan*. He nevertheless conversed with him about his wedding plans. In the course of their conversation he discovered that the *kallah*'s parents were boycotting the wedding because of some differences between them and the *chatan*'s parents. This caused Rabbi Levin to have reservations about participating in such a wedding, so he said that "he would attend if he could."

"But you once promised to be at my wedding," the inviter protested.

He then went on to remind the rabbi, who was famous for his visits to Jews imprisoned by the British Mandate forces, of the time he visited him when he was in the prison "death row" because of anti-British activity. He encouraged him by telling him that he would not be executed, leaving him with the promise that he would even someday dance at his wedding.

Rabbi Levin thereupon said he would keep his promise but asked that the wedding be postponed in order to give him time to make peace between the young man's parents and those of his *kallah*. The happy ending was that the wedding eventually took place with both sets of parents there along with the holy man who kept his promise.

*Reprinted from this week’s website of Ohr Somayach International in Yerushalayim.*

**Table For One:**

**For Singles, A Different Kind Of Judgment:**

**The Days of Awe and the Nagging Marriage Question.**

**By Alan Zeitlin**

The days of Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur are supposed to be days of judgment by G-d. But for singles, they are often days of judgment by family and friends who ask the inevitable — and inevitably annoying — question: “Why aren’t you married yet?”

“Parents can really make you meshugenah,” says Cantor Yossi Lisauer. “But there has to be a balance. They want to show they are there for you, but they should know when enough is enough. On the other side, some singles aren’t as sensitive as they should be [to their parents’ feelings] and unfortunately they may drive their parents away.”

Lisauer will be chanting the prayer services at Bellerose Jewish Center in Queens. The 31-year-old, who is single and who studied opera in Italy, said these days are crucial for introspection and self-evaluation. He said he knows that many singles will be praying that this is the year they meet their husband or wife, but he added that prayer is not enough. In some cases, there is work to be done. Lisauer said that in his case, he needed to work on his physical appearance and his health. After sustaining an ankle injury, he gained substantial weight and went on a date with a girl whom he liked. Her shocking response at the end of the date had a significant impact on him, he said.

**“You’re a Nice Guy, But…”**

“She said, ‘You’re a nice guy, but you’re a schlub and need to lose some weight,’” he recounted. “I couldn’t believe it when she said it. It hurt so much that it rocked me to the core, but rather than feel bad for myself, I knew I had to do something.”

Through diet and exercise, he lost 110 pounds in two years, he said.

This time of the year can be depressing for some who feel like their biological clock is ticking, said one 36-year-old teacher from the Upper West Side.   
“It’s hard when you go to Tashlich and see all the girls you babysat for that are now married with kids,” she said. “You’re definitely happy for them, but you wonder when it will be your time.”

**The Importance of an Open Mind**

An open mind can help to alleviate frustration, says Rachel Greenwald, a renowned matchmaker and New York Times best-selling author. Greenwald said it’s natural for singles to become frustrated during the High Holy Day period, especially in cases where they haven’t seen family or old peers in a while. But the author of “Have Him at Hello,” who will host a seminar titled “Successful Single Woman’s Dating Plan” at the 92nd Street Y, on Oct. 24, says singles shouldn’t see family and friends as a burden, but rather as a resource.

**The Knee-Jerk Reaction**

“Singles often have a knee-jerk reaction when they hear that they are too picky, and it often leads to a downward spiral,” Greenwald said. “And naturally people identify with siblings, friends or former classmates as yardsticks and want to measure up. The key is to change the lens and look at it as an opportunity. You’d never think to ask Aunt Zelda, under the rationale that if she would have known someone, she would have already suggested them. That’s not always the case. And when they do give advice, remember it’s coming from a good place. You have to change the perception from one where people are judging you to one where people who know you the best want to help you.”

Aaron Shemesh believes he’s now moved to a good place to meet Jewish women — the Upper West Side. But he will head to Brooklyn to be with his family for the holidays. Shemesh, 28, says he is playing it cool, despite the fact that he knows the spotlight will be on him, as his three brothers and five sisters are all married.

“My parents don’t nag me but some of my siblings do a little,” said Shemesh, who is an information technology specialist. “There’s obviously some pressure on me to get married and you think about it at this time of year, but I’m taking my time. What can you do?”

**Many Women Face a**

**Barrage of Questions from Family**

Alicia Post of Manhattan will be with her brother and parents at their synagogue in West Hempstead, L.I., for the holidays. The 30-year-old, who is president of the Mira chapter of the New York region of Hadassah, which focuses on women in their 20s and 30s, said many women face a barrage of questions when they come home for Rosh HaShanah.

“It’s a little weird and becomes quite a scene,” she said. “My mom nags me a little but it’s out of love. I think she is davening that I find someone and is more concerned than me. I am more stressed out about what I am wearing. But everyone comes over and says you’re great and asks how you are still single. My little niece suggested her gym teacher but then asked if that meant she would have to see him all the time. It was very cute.”

**Living to See a Granddaughter’s Wedding**

Post added that her grandmother has told her she is living to see her wedding.

Rachel Vasvari, a recreational therapist from Brooklyn, said men have less pressure during the Days of Awe.

“When you’re a Jewish female, you get a lot of pressure to settle down, get married and procreate, for me especially since my grandmother is a Holocaust survivor,” said Vasvari who is in her 20s. “My parents kind of stick to the saying that when you’re not looking you’ll find someone.”

And if you are simply fed up with all the marriage questions, one 30-year-old from Great Neck, who is one of the last single people left in Cantor Lisauer’s synagogue, said he has a trick to ensure he won’t get an earful.

“I make sure to sit near the rabbi,” he said, “so in that area, there’s no talking during davening.

*Reprinted from this week’s email of the AJOP (Association of Jewish Outreach Programs) Newsletter. The article originally was printed in the September 7th issue of The Jewish Week.*

**Good Yom Tov Everyone.**

**Saying “I’m Sorry!”**

The day of Yom Kippur is a gift from Hashem.  It is a day on which, assuming we have done Teshuva - repentance, Hashem forgives us for our spiritual misdeeds.  We attain forgiveness for the violations we have committed in our relationship with Hashem.  However, if one has wronged another, he must go to the wronged party and ask him for forgiveness.  For, although Yom Kippur is a tremendous day of forgiveness, Hashem cannot forgive the sins against one's fellow; rather, the offender must approach the offended party and ask him or her for forgiveness.

The following amazing true story illustrates this concept.

**All of Yerushalayim Was Excited!**

The whole of Yerushalayim was excited! A well-known and well-liked couple, members of a certain Chasidic sect, had just his first child - a boy - after being childless for twenty-eight years! The sholom zachor (party in honor of baby boy held the Friday night before the bris) that Friday night was the event of the year. Well over a thousand people came by to wish Mazel Tov to the proud and exhausted father. The food supply ran out in short order as did the drinks, but no one seemed to mind. At the height of the celebration, the crowd quieted down as the father indicated that he would like to say a few words.

He began in a loud voice, "Thank you all for coming and sharing in the simcha (joyous celebration). Although I have no more food to offer, let me at least tell over a story which I'm sure you'll appreciate."

The ecstatic new father composed himself and continued. "When I was a bochur (unmarried student) learning at a large Chassidishe Yeshiva in Eretz Yisroel , there was a cleaning lady who would come by every day to tidy up and scrub the Beis Medrash and adjoining rooms. She was a fixture in the yeshiva and devoted her life to maintaining the yeshiva building. She was, however, not a wealthy person by any stretch and as her own family grew, she was at a loss of options as far as taking care of her children. She decided to bring her kids with her to work, and as she cleaned and mopped in one area of the building, the young children would run amuck, screaming, crying and generally causing quite a commotion, in the rest of the yeshiva.

**Kids Thought the Cleaning**

**Lady’s Children Were Disrupting**

At first, we put up with it; we even thought it was cute for a time. But after a while, the kids really began to 'shter' (disrupt) us in our learning and davening. Try as we might to control them, they wouldn't listen and continued on in their childish games and noise. A number of younger bochurim (students) asked me, as one of the oldest in the chaburah (group), to ask her not to bring her children anymore to the yeshiva.

"I agreed to talk to her and I brazenly walked up to her and told her that her kids were disturbing everyone in yeshiva and she should find some sort of alternative method of child-care for them. I'll never forget how she looked at me with tired eyes and said, 'Bochur (young man), you should never have tzaar gidul bonim (the pain and anguish that one goes through when raising children, meaning that he would not be blessed with children). The crowd listening at the simcha gasped.

**Felt Doomed to a Life without Children**

"As many of you know," continued the father, "my wife and I have been to countless doctors who've recommended every sort of treatment. We moved abroad for awhile to be near an 'expert' which proved to be fruitless. One last, extreme treatment was offered and after trying that, it too, turned out to be just a fantasy; we felt doomed to a life without the pleasure of raising a yiddishe family.

"After that last attempt, as we walked back into the apartment that we lived in for the past twenty-eight years, our entire sad situation hit us full force, like a ton of bricks. Together, we broke down crying. I suddenly remembered the incident with the cleaning lady. I realized how insensitive I was to her plight and pain. I decided to ask for forgiveness.

**Hours Spent on the Phone**

“But how? I spent hours on the phone until I came up with an address, which I ran over to immediately. She did not recognize me obviously, but when I told her over the story, a spark flickered in her eyes. I tearfully apologized for my harsh words and she graciously forgave me with her whole heart."

Beaming from ear to ear, the father announced, " Rabbosai (distinguished guests), that took place  nine months ago!"

There is still time to reach out to those we may have offended in the past year and to mend fences with them.  Whenever we see a fence, we should think to ourselves:  "Do I have to mend fences with anyone I may have offended?"  In doing so, we will ensure for ourselves and our families a good final judgment on Yom Kippur.  Good Yom Tov Everyone.

*Reprinted from this week’s email of “Good Shabbos Everyone.”*

**A Moment with Rabbi Avigdor Miller**

**Na’nuim and Shidduchim**

|  |
| --- |
| QUESTION: |

 How much Hishtadlus, how much effort does one have to exert for a Shidduch?

|  |
| --- |
| ANSWER: |

|  |
| --- |
| lulav&etrog |

Number one: Al Zos Yispallel Kol Chosid L'eis Metzoh, for this every pious Jew has to pray, when the time comes to find. Metzoh means to find a wife. Now actually Metzoh means to find anything. If you want to find anything, any success, you have to pray. A very important ingredient in our lives is Tefilah, you have to ask Hashem.

But when it comes to a wife, it's an especial requirement, because so many things are necessary in order to succeed. Not only that that person has to be willing to marry you, sometimes you’d be better off if he would be unwilling. You have to make sure that only the right one is willing to marry you. And there are so many things you have to ask for. Now since you don't know, you’re young and inexperienced, so trust Hakadosh Baruch Hu, but ask Him constantly. Before marriage you must ask constantly.

And something else: When your daughters are getting close to eighteen, get busy praying to Hashem with all your heart. VERY IMPORTANT! And if you shed a few tears, no harm. Sharei Demo'os Einon Nishlavous, the gates of tears are never locked. You need a great deal of help to get married properly, and to marry your daughters properly.

And when you say tomorrow, by the Na'nuim, Hodu La'shem, if you married off your daughters well, it wouldn't be a bad idea, make one Na'nuim for this son-in-law, Iy Yi Yah, Thank You Hashem, and for the other son-in-law, that's how to work it. It's such a very big thing that you never can thank enough for a good son-in-law or for a good daughter-in-law. And that's how you have to think when you make the Na'nuim; it shouldn't be a mechanical thing. What does the Na'nuim mean? It's our thanks are to You because it came from You to us, our thanks are to You because it comes from You to us, that's what we are saying, back and forth. And all directions, means from where it comes from, no matter where the good flow comes from, it's only coming from You all the time.

And therefore you take your backbone, that's the Lulav, that's your Shedra, and you take your heart, that's the Esrog, and you take the Hadasim, that's your eyes, and you take the Aravos, that's your lips, your mouth, and you take all of these and you say, I dedicate them to You Hashem, for what you did for me, back and forth, you should make Na'nuim.

However, this business of praying for a wife, also must be accompanied by exercising the utmost caution, ask advice. Always ask advice before you get married. Don't be hasty even if you have the right girl, take your time, ask somebody, and when that person approves, go ahead, B'hatzlacha.

*Chag Kosher V'sameach To All*

*Reprinted from this week’s email of “A Moment with Rabbi Avigdor Miller, Zt”l.”*

**The Newark Riots and a Match Made in Heaven**

**By Yossy Gordon**

spacer My uncle, Rabbi Sholom Gordon of blessed memory, was a Lubavitch emissary in New Jersey, starting in the early forties. Over the years, he touched thousands of lives.

Sometime around 1960, the mother of a former student of Uncle Sholom approached him with a problem. Her daughter, who had reached marriageable age several years before, was having a hard time finding a *shidduch* (match).

Aware of the Rebbe's greatness, the desperate mother asked Sholom to arrange a meeting for her with the Rebbe. Sholom complied, and even drove the mother, along with her son who was accompanying her, to meet the Rebbe, of righteous memory.

"When G‑d sends her *bashert*... then I will close the store"

My uncle waited outside. When the mother emerged from the Rebbe's office, she looked upset. "What happened?" Sholom inquired. "Well," answered the mother, "I went in to the Rebbe and asked him for a blessing for my daughter's *shidduch*. I was surprised when the Rebbe began to ask me questions about my life. He asked me what our source of livelihood is. I told him that we have a very successful store in Newark. The Rebbe asked me if the store is open on Shabbat. I told him that it is.

"Then, and this is what I really do not understand, the Rebbe suggested that since we are financially secure, we should close our store on Shabbat and that G‑d will then send our daughter her *bashert* (intended one). I countered that we need the store to provide for our daughter in case something happens to us and she does not get married. When G‑d sends her *bashert*... then I will close the store. The Rebbe disagreed.

"Rabbi Gordon," continued the woman, "I am from Europe. I know chassidic rebbes. I thought they just gave blessings and wanted a donation. I didn't come here for business advice..."

Years went by. 1967 arrived and with it came the Newark Riots and violence and vandalism. The store owned by Sholom's former student's parents was among those destroyed in the melee. Already nearing retirement age, and with her husband having passed away shortly beforehand, the mother decided not to rebuild the store.

The store was finally closed on Shabbat.

Within a few months, the daughter met her *bashert*. Today, thank G‑d, she is the mother of a well-respected family.

**How a Gown**

**Becomes a Curtain**

**By Miri Yeshurun**

It was the end of summer 2003, at the height of the bloody terrorist attacks against the Jews of Israel. One of Jerusalem's heroes was Dr. David Applebaum, head of the emergency department at Shaarei Tzedek Hospital. Originally from the U.S. Dr. Applebaum was always among the first, whenever a terrorist attack hit, to give the injured his devoted care, thereby saving scores of lives.

Dr. Applebaum had just returned from New York, where he had been invited to lecture at a major Manhattan hospital on emergency treatment of terror victims. He hurried back home for the wedding of his eldest daughter, Nava, on Wednesday, September 10. That Tuesday evening, the doctor took Nava out to the popular Cafe Hillel.

**A Suicide Bomber Attack**

The Applebaum's were ready to leave, when someone called from home. Suddenly, a loud explosion was heard over the phone. A suicide bomber had walked into the cafe and blown himself up. David and Nava's family members tried calling them. But no one picked up their calls.

The older children in the family immediately ran over to the cafe. The scene there was chaotic so the family took a taxi to the hospital. The hospital's director saw them: "Where's David?" he asked. "We need him here!"

"I'm looking for him, too," Mrs. Devora Applebaum told him. The hospital's emergency staff quickly realized that this time their beloved head would not be among those giving aid.

Eventually Dr. Applebaum's son, head of the TRM emergency first aid clinic that his father had established, approached his mother.

"Which one?" Devora asked frantically.

**Both Father and Daughter are Killed**

Between sobs, he managed to burst out: "Both, Ima, both of them!"

The double tragedy, of a bride on the eve of her wedding day, and her father, the beloved doctor who had saved so many lives, shocked the whole country. Even the international media covered the story in depth. Thousands attended the funeral, many of them total strangers. During the shiva week, multitudes visited the family to console them, while many more came just to stand outside their home and weep with them. No one could look at Nava's beautiful wedding gown.

**An Idea of Memorializing the Wedding Gown**

Aviva is a close friend and relative of Devora. Her daughter was Nava's best friend, who had grown up with her and been in the same class as her all the way through school.

During the shiva, a memory floated before Aviva's eyes. Years ago, in a museum in Safed, Israel, she had seen a paroches - a curtain for a holy ark that holds sacred Torah scrolls - sewn by a woman from the bridal gown of her daughter who had been murdered in a pogrom before her wedding. Aviva recalled how she had gazed at that paroches, shocked by the very thought of a bride murdered on the eve of her wedding.

Suddenly it struck her: Why not perpetuate Nava's holy memory by converting her bridal gown into a paroches? When Aviva shared this with Devora, she embraced the idea. This, she felt, would be an appropriate symbol of Jerusalem's repeated devastation and its inhabitants' suffering over its millennia-long history.

**The Uniqueness of Rachel’s Tomb (Kever Rachel)**

Aviva is among the coordinators of a women's organization for preserving Rachel's Tomb (Kever Rachel). The Torah relates that Jacob buried his beloved wife Rachel outside Beit Lechem after she passed away in childbirth. Tradition tells us that Rachel was providentially buried along the way so that she could arouse Divine compassion upon the Jews when their captors brought them on that path on their way to exile in Babylon. This is recorded by Jeremiah (31:14-15): "...Rachel weeps for her children, refusing to be consoled... Thus says G-d: 'Restrain your voice from weeping and your eyes from tears, for there is reward for your accomplishment... and they shall return from the enemy's land. There is hope for your future... and your children will return to their border."

**Archetype of Every Jewish Mother**

Rachel became the archetype for every Jewish mother whose compassion for her children prompts her to arouse Divine mercy on them. Jewish women have always felt close to Rachel and have flocked to her tomb to pour their hearts out to G-d, confident that Mother Rachel's merit will bring Divine compassion upon us all.

Aviva and her friends agreed that the ideal place for a paroches made out of Nava's wedding gown was at Rachel's tomb!

**An Expert Seamstress Donates Her Services**

Needed now was a seamstress who could put her heart and soul into the craftsmanship. Aviva found Tal Levi, an expert seamstress who supports her family so that her husband can study Torah full time. Although Tal would need to put hundreds of hours into creating the paroches, she and her husband decided that she should donate her services.

Aviva approached the woman who owned the rental company to explain what they hoped to do with the bridal gown. The owner generously agreed to donate it without charge.

The graceful bridal gown became a magnificent paroches, a work of art. The paroches was finally completed and it was to be dedicated on Nava's 21st birthday, the 11th day of Adar (Thursday, March 4, 2004).

The dedication ceremony would take place at Rachel's Tomb. When the Israeli media heard about the event, they clamored to cover it. Rachel's tomb was packed for the deeply moving ceremony. The resplendent paroches, clearly transformed from a bridal gown, was hung in the approach corridor before the tomb's synagogue for all to admire. Later, Nava's brothers hung it in front of the synagogue's holy ark, and a prayer service was held. It was decided to hang it permanently in the women's section where many women pray next to it each day.

*Reprinted from this week’s issue of “L’Chaim,” a publication of the Lubavitch Youth Organization which reprinted the article with permission from the N'Shei Chabad Newsletter, translated by Rabbi Daniel Goldberg from the original Hebrew article in Mishpacha Chasidit (Lecha Lecha 5771)*

**Blizzard Can't Stop**

**Couple's Wedding**

**By Susan Berger**

The Wednesday evening nuptials of Sarah Finkel and Shmulie Schochet gave new meaning to the term “white wedding.”

The bride, a Skokie native, and the groom, who hails from Toronto, had decided to hold their marriage ceremony midweek so that out-of-town guests could then enjoy a long weekend in Chicago, explained Phil Finkel, the father of the bride.

Many of the out-of-towners — and even some of the Chicago-area guests — never made it because of the history-making snowstorm. But Phil Finkel said most of the “main players” managed to be on hand. Luckily, that included the groom’s grandfather, Rabbi Dovid Schochet of Toronto, who performed the marriage ceremony.

The couple, both 21, even followed the Orthodox Jewish tradition of setting up their wedding altar, or chuppah, outside under the stars — though the guests watched from the warm confines of the Westin O’Hare hotel in Rosemont.

And despite the disappointment over loved ones who missed the blessed event, the families refused to view the storm as a damper.

“It’s a happy occasion that the snow cannot deter. The snow does not change anything,” said Bernie Finkel, of Evanston, the bride’s grandfather. “There is thought in the Jewish religion about luck: the dew in the spring at Passover, the rain in the fall during Sukkot. And now I am saying snowfall is lucky too. This is a special time. There should be a special time to pray for snow.”

The weather did lend a modern touch to the traditional Orthodox ceremony: The groom’s sister “watched” through a laptop Web camera from out of state, since she couldn’t make it to the ceremony.

And, as Phil Finkel pointed out, there should be no trouble remembering their anniversary.

*Reprinted from this week’s email of the AJOP (Association for Jewish Outreach Programs) Update. The article originally appeared in the February 3, 2011 issue of the Chicago Tribune. (Tetzaveh 5771)*

**Mazal Tov!**

**18 Is Not a Crowd**

**By Liat Rotem Melamed**

Rivkah, 44, of Jerusalem gives birth to her 18th baby, who is already an uncle of two and evens out score in household which is now comprised of nine girls and nine boys. 'They came one by one,' she says

When she was young, Rivkah, a Jerusalem resident belonging to the Belz Hasidic movement, never dreamed that at the age of 44 she would be leaving the maternity ward with her 18th child.

It's true that she herself comes from a large family – she has 15 brothers and sisters, but her husband comes from a much smaller family that includes 'only' five kids.

"We didn't make a conscious decision to have 18 children," she says with a smile. "They came one by one - thank G-d."

Incidentally, the new addition to the family was born an uncle. His oldest brother already has two children, which makes Rivkah a proud grandmother. Another point for pride in her family – her 18 children are divided equally between the two sexes: Nine girls and nine boys.

**'Quiet? Not here!'**

Rivkah knows what it's like to grow up in a big family. Her childhood memories include a lot of noise and mayhem, but also lots of love and a house filled with life. Either way, she stresses, it's a lot easier being a mom today than it was when she was a kid.

"When my mother was raising us, being a mother involved a lot more physical work than it does today," she explained. "I remember how she had to launder and scrub all the diapers by hand. I especially remember piles and piles of laundry on Friday and before the holidays. I have two washing machines that work 24 hours a day; otherwise we wouldn't be able to manage.

"These days raising children isn't about the physical work; it's more about maneuvering between everybody's needs: This one needs an early bedtime, this one needs to read, that one needs his medication. Motherhood has become more of a mental strain than a physical one."

**What does your house look like?**

"Our house is a house filled with mess and noise. If you're looking for a quiet corner – don't look for it here. We have a house filled with life. My mother always used to tell me that cemeteries are quiet and clean, houses with children aren't. Noise is healthy. The children study, play, try all sorts of things together, they have a social life and friends that come over."

**Nevertheless, It Can't Be Easy Being**

**A Mother to so Many Children.**

"I used to think the more kids you have – the more stressed the parents. Today I see that people who have fewer children are more stressed than me. Children aren't a reason for hardship or anger. It all depends on the person and how much he works on his or her character.

"I believe that you need to get up every morning and thank God for each and every soul he has given us. They are all healthy and whole, and that only gives me strength, it doesn't take it away."

Rivkah wears a very special bracelet on her wrist; it's stamped with the names of her 17 children. The new baby, who as yet has no name, will also be added to the bracelet. And who knows, maybe the last three empty spaces will be filled in the future.

Does your husband help you out with the kids?

Until my eighth was born, I managed by myself, but when we got to eight, my husband saw that I needed help, so he started going to morning prayers even earlier so that he could get home by 7 am. Since then we've been getting the kids ready together every morning.

"My husband is the one who makes the kids' sandwiches every morning; each one gets his or her favorite: Omelet, toast, fruit. It takes him almost an hour. Then the kids have their carpools to school, so that my mornings are usually free because I don't work. My husband's involvement in raising our children is something he saw growing up, and it's the example he has passed on to our sons – a father who is a helpmate and partner."

If you were wondering what kind of car suits a family with 18 children, we can reveal that there isn't one. This family doesn't own a car, since there just isn't one that's big enough. "A car isn't enough for our family – we need a train. We use public transportation to get where we need to go. For my eldest son's wedding we rented a van."

**'Patience Comes with the Baby'**

In contrast to raising the children, which Rivkah says has gotten easier over the years, the pregnancies have become a greater burden with each birth. Not necessarily because of the physical difficulty.

"During the first pregnancies no one scared me by telling me what could happen to the baby, but the older I got and the more children I had, the more stressful it became because those factors increase the likelihood of problems with the baby. This pregnancy, I'm already 44-years-old and the doctors were very concerned due to the statistics, but thankfully, not all children born to older mothers are born with problems."

Did you undergo examinations during the pregnancy to see if there were any problems?

"Of course. Tests taken during the course of the pregnancy are important, not in order to have an abortion if a problem is discovered, but in order for the parents to be prepared before the baby comes."

Since giving birth to her 14th child, Rivkah is very meticulous about getting some rest after each birth. She spends a few days convalescing at a special maternity convalescent home. "After the first two births I stayed with my mother to get some rest, but for the next 12 births I preferred to go home," she explains.

"Then after the 14th birth, I decided to try the convalescent homes, because everyone spoke in favor of getting rest and told me that it rejuvenates. Happily, I found this to be very true."

At the age of 44 and after 18 children, do you have the strength for another baby?

"You don't need strength for the baby. You need strength for the big kids, the teenagers and the married kids. All the patience comes with the baby. I heard someone say that each baby is born with a loaf of bread in his hand, meaning that a baby is born with everything it needs. When the baby is created, love and patience are created with him; otherwise we wouldn't be able to raise them."

*Reprinted from this week’s email of the AJOP (Association for Jewish Outreach Programs) Newsletter. The article originally appeared in the Ynet News.com (Ki Sisa 5771)*

It's Never Too Late

**By Diane Faber Veitzer**

“After 15 years of dating for marriage, I hit the jackpot in a most unexpected way.”

I started bidding in the Simchat Torah auction years ago, when I was a young professional woman earning good money. But this year, after a career change, I didn't have any income, so I bid more cautiously and didn't win anything.

At the end of the auction, the shul president said, "We have four *hagbas*, $200 each. First four hands."

Perhaps instinctively, my hand went up. *Hagba* is a unique mitzvah where the Torah is lifted high, open to the portion which has just been read aloud, and shown it to the community. Even if I didn't have much money, $200 for *hagba* was too good a deal to turn down. In an instant, it was mine.

The rest of the day was consumed with trying to determine who should be the recipient of the *hagba* honor. I wanted it to go to someone who would find the experience of lifting the Torah meaningful, and who also was not participating in the bidding. I wanted the honor to go to someone who would be uniquely touched by it.

As the day passed with no good idea, I asked a few women for suggestions. One of them pointed to a man I'd never met, who was sitting across the shul alone, and said, "That guy." I went to the rabbi and said, "I bought the *hagba* honor, and I'd like it to go to that guy." I described him, and I went home.

**Really Big Sign**

The next day, I got a call from the man who performed the *hagba*. He wanted to take me out for coffee to say thank you. "You really don't have to do that," I explained. But he insisted. A few days later, we sat in a coffee house reviewing the story of what happened and the next thing we knew, we were making plans to see each other again. I was up all night with my mind racing.

It turns out that this gentleman had recently decided to explore seriously the idea of getting married, and had spent the High Holidays praying about it. "If You want me to get married," he implored, "You're going to have to give me a Really Big Sign."

Already overscheduled with personal and family obligations, he knew he wasn't going to be able to make the time-consuming effort of networking and dating many different women. At the Simchat Torah auction, his 10-year-old son had been urging him to bid on various honors. He told his son: "If G-d wants us to have an honor, He'll bring it to us."

Already overscheduled, he wasn't going to network and date different women.

As they were leaving the Simchat Torah celebration, the *gabbai* (organizer) approached him to say that he had the honor of *hagba*. "You must be mistaken," he responded. "No, someone bought it for you." They told him my name, but he'd never heard it before. He was so certain it wasn't for him that he went to the rabbi to confirm it. Ultimately, he reluctantly agreed to accept, so as not to hurt the feelings of the mystery donor.

As he stood holding the Torah in the air, he looked up at the eternal text scrolled all the way back to its starting point. He read "In the beginning, G-d created the heaven and the earth," and he thought, "G-d is renewing the world today. G-d created this moment and this situation. There is a reason that this unknown person gave me *hagba*. I don't know what the reason is, but I know there is a reason." Hence, the coffee date he so insisted on.

**Musician Without an Instrument**

I know that most people will not believe that we both suspected, after one coffee date, that G-d Himself had made the match and that we would wind up together forever, but that is indeed how it happened. And five months later, we were married under the tallis I bought with great hope... so many years ago.

When I called the woman who had said "that guy" to tell her the good news, she thought I had misdialed. "I don't know what you're talking about," she said. It turns out that with all the singing and shouting on Simchat Torah, she hadn't actually heard what I asked, and she didn't even know that I had won a *hagba* or that I was trying to give it away. She thought I said something completely different, and when she said "that guy," she was responding to what she thought I was saying.

"I don't know what you're talking about," she said.

It turns out that my (now-) husband had been living two blocks away, and it's amazing that we'd never met. There in the coffee shop, we discovered many objective reasons why we're a terrific match -- similar upbringings, similar educational backgrounds, similar paths to Jewish observance, the same rabbi and community, less than two years apart in age. Some people say we look alike; others say that we seem like an old married couple. Even our stuff fits together: I had an idle baby grand piano and he was a jazz pianist without an instrument, for example.

And there are moments when I feel that G-d is winking at me, like when I hear my husband in another room mindlessly humming my favorite melody, or when we each use the same obscure word in conversation (recently, "fisticuffs").

But we still might not have ever met or married, if my husband had not been open to the idea that when he lifted the Torah for *hagba*, that the words actually meant something to him -- i.e., that it could be a Really Big Sign. Or if we had not both been open to the possibility that just maybe, whatever life presents you with *is* actually the answers to your prayers.

**Kind and Generous**

On our wedding day, I saw that G-d had indeed heard every detail of my prayers, when my friends surrounded my husband and joined him as he kneeled before me to sing *Aishes Chayil,* King Solomon's praise of Jewish women. They who have known me for so many years, and seen me standing alone at their weddings, their children's brises and bar mitzvahs, and their shivas, encircled my husband and me, sang along with him, and embraced him as a brother.

In my more than 15 years of seriously dating for marriage, I had a pretty general idea of what I was looking for in a man. Like other women, I wanted a man of good character, who was kind and generous, but also smart and accomplished. In my vision, I was the first great love of his life, and he was mine, and together we would build a beautiful family. It seemed like I met just about every man in America who'd never been married. I saw a lot of finely tailored suits, and learned a lot about how smart and accomplished they all were, but I didn't see a lot of the kind and generous part.

Through all the lonely years, I had clung to the belief that G-d makes a match for every person.

When I met my husband for the first time at the coffee shop, he wasn't wearing a suit and didn't look anything like anyone I'd dated before. But in our conversation, I heard him say three things in passing which really struck me.

The first was that when his family needed better health insurance, he had back-burnered a "creative" career and taken a less glamorous "day job."

The second was that when his son's teacher suggested he would benefit from being read to, he read him the entire *Lord of the Rings* trilogy, which took more than a year.

The third was that when his wife became ill, he did absolutely everything on earth possible to help her get well, even though it financially devastated the family.

When asked how married life is, I always say the same thing: I feel like I woke up from an endless nightmare, in which I was growing older and had no husband or family, only to find that I do have a loving husband and a beautiful family.

My life changed completely in an instant, from the time (and the manner in which) I wake up, to the books I read, to the decor of the house, what is in the refrigerator, and how I make decisions (i.e., in conjunction with another person!). And most of the time it feels completely familiar, and gloriously happy.

Through all the lonely years, I had clung to the belief that G-d makes a match for every person. How wonderful to be proved right! It truly is never too late.

Our marriage works because the qualities I saw in my husband on that first coffee date are his true nature. He is willing to do the hard thing rather than the comfortable thing. He sticks through with a task until it is completed. And he is willing to do anything for his family, no matter what the cost. He is now the chief operating officer of the "less glamorous day job," and I'm on Book 4 in my own reading aloud to the kids -- of the Harry Potter series.

And to think it was all possible because I raised my hand on Simchat Torah. For 200 bucks, a pretty good deal.

*Reprinted from this week’s website of Aish.com (Emor 5772)*

**The Human Side of the Story**

**A Reward from Heaven**

**By Rabbi Mendel Weinbach**

“Did you hear where Shimon is making his daughter’s wedding? It’s going to be in the most expensive hall in town!” This was the outraged reaction of a neighbor of Shimon upon reading the invitation he received. He shared his shock with another neighbor who had been his partner in collecting money from their fellow congregants in a Bnei Brak synagogue to provide Shimon, an indigent Torah scholar, with the minimum funds required to make a simple wedding. Realizing that more and more people would be surprised at his choice of a hall, Shimon rushed to the rabbi of the congregation to explain what had happened.

Shimon had already contacted the cheapest hall in town and made an appointment to discuss arrangements. Before he left the meeting there was a knock on his door. There stood a stranger who asked to speak to him for a few minutes. He told Shimon that he just got up from the shiva mourning period for his father, the owner of a large wedding hall in town.

Just before passing away he told his son that during the Holocaust there was a Jew who had saved his life at the risk of his own. Upon arriving in Israel he was anxious to locate this Jew and somehow show his gratitude. All he knew of him, however, was his first name and the town he came from, and his search proved unsuccessful. Now that he was leaving this world he charged his son with the responsibility of locating that Jew or any heir of his and to repay him the favor he owned him.

During the shiva period one of the comforters mentioned the heroism of the mourner’s father and another Jew in surviving the Holocaust. In the ensuing conversation, it suddenly became clear that the mysterious benefactor was the father of Shimon. As soon as the shiva period was over he rushed to Shimon’s home and when he verified that he was indeed the son of the man who saved his father’s life, he burst into tears.

Upon hearing that Shimon was about to make a wedding he insisted that it be done in the hall he inherited from his father at no expense and would not take no for an answer.

Thus was the mystery solved and Shimon’s reputation reestablished in his community.

*Reprinted from this week’s email of OHRNET, the Ohr Somayach Torah Magazine on the Internet (*[*www.ohr.edu*](http://www.ohr.edu)*) (Shelach 5771)*

**The Dreams of**

**The Angel’s Wife**

**From the desk of**

**Yerachmiel Tilles**

[**editor@ascentofsafed.com**](http://webmailb.juno.com/webmail/new/21?folder=Inbox&msgNum=0000beW0:001Ekwok00002zJh&count=1321499711&randid=522801727&attachId=0&isUnDisplayableMail=yes&blockImages=0&randid=522801727)

In 1764, Rabbi Avraham the Malach (the Angel), the pure, holy son of Rabbi Dov-Ber of Mezritch (the successor to the Baal Shem Tov as the leader of the Chassidic movement), became a widower. His father, the Maggid, sought a second partner for him as soon as possible.

The idea was suggested of a match with the daughter of the important sage, Rabbi Meshulam Feivish HaLevi Horowitz, the author of Mishnas Hakhamim. The Maggid sent two respected messengers to Kremenitz to try to arrange the shiduch. The two men traveled there in a large, beautiful carriage and wore expensive holy mission.

**Mother Isn’t Ready for Her**

**Daughter to Get Married**

When they arrived at the Rabbi's house they were told that he was engaged in Torah study in the nearby Study Hall. They began to negotiate with his wife, who had invited them in and also sent word to her husband. She, however, refused to take them seriously, saying, "Not only don't I know your Rebbe, but I've never even heard his name. Also, my daughter Gittel is only twelve years old and I'm not ready for her to be married."

But the two men were not put off so easily and they kept describing the holiness of their Rebbe and his only son. Finally, she warmed to the idea and said, "I have a brilliant husband, thank G-d. Let him decide what is best for our daughter."

**The Father Agrees to the Shidduch**

When R' Meshulam Feivish returned from the Bais Midrash soon after, he agreed to the shiduch and the writing of the tenaim (marriage agreement) right there and then. When they reached the paragraph relating to the date of the wedding, the messengers said that it was necessary for the marriage to take place right away, and so the bride should travel back to Mezritch with them.

But R' Feivish and his wife resisted. "Our Sages ruled that one should allow a girl twelve months after her betrothal. Besides, we never planned for our daughter to be married so soon and she has no dowry or a bridal gown, or any other appropriate clothes and jewelry."

The messengers responded, "We'll provide for all her needs but the Rebbe insists it is absolutely impossible to postpone the date of the wedding. She must come with us immediately."

**Clearly the Will of G-d**

Rabbi Feivel said that he and his wife would have to discuss this with each other in private. After only a short time they returned and announced, "As it seems clear that this has come from G-d, we accept."

They decided that since R' Feivish was unable to travel at that particular moment, the bride should journey to Mezritch in the company of her mother. The very next day, the Rebbetzin and her daughter with the two men left for Mezritch.

During the trip, the mother and daughter began to wonder how they had allowed themselves to be talked into the wedding.

**Greeted By All the People of the Town**

But then, when they arrived at the outskirts of Mezritch, the carriage was greeted by all of the men and children of the town. The crowd was so large that the carriage could hardly move. And when the carriage finally reached the town, all the women came out to greet them. It was a joyous moment and the mother and daughter felt themselves become completely at peace about the intended marriage.

Next the carriage stopped in front of the Maggid's house and the Maggid and his son Avraham came out to welcome them. When Gittel saw her bridegroom she modestly showed no reaction, but she was thrilled inside. The bride and her mother stayed at the local inn while the whole town got involved in preparing for the wedding. The marriage took place soon after that. The celebrations lasted for seven joyous days, filled with endless discussions of Torah.

From this marriage of the Malach, the son of the Maggid, and Gittel, the daughter of R' Meshulam Feivish, were born two sons, Sholom Shachna and Yisrael Chaim. [Rabbi Sholom Shachna had a son, named Yisrael after the Baal Shem Tov, who became one of the most highly regarded Chasidic rebbes of all time, the holy Rhizhiner.

During the first year of their marriage, the new wife of the Malach had a dream. In it she entered a large chamber where she realized it was the Divine Tribunal sitting in session. They ruled to take her husband away from her. She shed hot tears before them and presented many arguments in her attempt to dissuade them. She had the same dream the following night too, but again told no one.

**Revealed that Her**

**Arguments Were Accepted**

On the third night the dream came again, but this time they told her that they had accepted her arguments and that they would extend her husband's life another twelve years. She told this to her father-in-law, the Maggid, the next morning, and he told her that she had done very well, he blessed her exceedingly because through her pleadings she had extended the life of his son another twelve years. And so it happened exactly.

Several years later, after the Maggid had already passed away in 1772, he appeared in a dream to his daughter-in-law Gittel one Shabbat night. He told her that her husband should move into her room, or at least she should move his books from his study into her room. In the morning she came to inform her husband of this. He did not consider it significant, however, because his father had not told him but only her. The very next night, a fire broke out in R. Avraham’s study, and by the time it was extinguished, all of his books were burned and lost.

**Husband Accepts Position**

**Of Rabbi in Hvastov**

In the summer of 1776, several years after the death of the Maggid, Rabbi Avrohom the Malach traveled to the city of Hvastov where he accepted the position of Rabbi of the city. The elders of Hvastov sent a messenger and several wagons to inform Rebbetzin Gittel of her husband's new position and to help her pack and move in time for the High Holy Days.

That night, when the messenger arrived at her home, she had a dream in which her father-in-law, the Maggid, came to her and told her not to travel in these wagons to Hvastov. In the morning she accordingly refused to travel. This upset two of her husband’s closest associates, the tzadikim, Rabbi Zushya of Anipoli and Rabbi Yehuda Leib HaKohen of Puma, because they felt strongly that she should travel with the messenger to join the Malach. Nevertheless, she remained adamant in her refusal.

About two weeks later, R' Avrohom the Malach fell ill and died. A messenger was dispatched to Anapoli to inform her of his death. The two tzadikim, however, did not want her to know as yet, and they hid the news from her. They did, however, tell her son, R' Sholom Shachna, who was only a small child of about eight at the time, so that he could say Kaddish for his father.

His mother soon noticed something unusual in her son's behavior, in that he was getting up very early in order to go to synagogue, something he hardly ever did before. One morning she decided to follow him and stood outside the wall of the synagogue.

**Discovers the Truth from Her**

**Son’s Recital of Kaddish**

From there she thought she heard him saying the mourner's Kaddish, but she was not sure. After the prayers were concluded, she asked her son why he was saying Kaddish and why he had hidden from her. He had to answer her, so now she knew the truth.

After her seven days of sitting shivah were over, she traveled to the town of Hvastov to take possession of her husband's effects. She was received there with great honor. They prepared a special meal for her at the inn where she was lodging, and many townspeople came out of respect and to console her. But she was inconsolable.

**Comforted By Her Dream**

At the third meal of that Shabbat, nearly every inhabitant of the town was present. As they sang the customary Shabbat zemirot songs, Rebbetzin Gittel, still filled with sorrow and sadness, sat on a comfortable couch next to the innkeeper's wife. Suddenly, and without transition, she was dreaming! She found herself in a great palace. The doors opened, and her husband, R' Avrohom the Malach, came out. His face was shining and he seemed to be very happy. Behind him trailed a number of wondrous-looking venerable old men. They sat around a long table. He said to them, "Here is my wife, may her days be long.

"During my lifetime I was quite ascetic, as you know, and so I denied my wife many things that she was really entitled to. I want to beg her forgiveness before you."Gittel immediately interjected, "You are forgiven wholeheartedly."

Rabbi Avraham continued, "The Torah allows that she remarry, especially since she is a woman of only twenty-four, and I cannot prevent her from doing so. But if she agrees not to marry anyone else, I pledge to fulfill all her needs, and each of our children will be assured of a good life."

When the Rebbetzin awoke from the dream, she felt consoled by her husband's words. Everyone noticed that her face lost its sad expression. Soon after Rebbetzin Gittel returned to her home in Annipoli. She was able to maintain herself with honor and respect, and she lacked nothing. With help from the tzadik Rabbi Shlomo of Karlin, her two sons received fine educations and desirable marriage proposals.

**A Suggested Proposal of Marriage**

On occasions when she needed advice, the Maggid would never fail to appear to her and advise her as to what course of action she should take. More years went by. The wife of Rabbi Menachem-Nochum of Chernobyl passed away. Rabbi Nochum expressed his wish to remarry with the Malach's widow, Rebbetzin Gittel.

He spoke with her son Rabbi Sholom Shachna, who was also his grandson-in-law, who agreed it could be a good idea because his mother was still young. So R. Nachum sent R' Sholom Shachna to speak to his mother. His first night on his way, R' Sholom Shachna had a dream. A great palace was standing before him, and his father, R' Avrahom the Malach, appeared at the door of the palace with his two hands stretched to the roof, crying out in a loud voice: "Who is he who dares to enter into my chamber?"

**Son Refuses to Make the Suggestion**

Immediately Rabbi Sholom Shachna awoke and understood the meaning of the dream. He returned to his house and refused to complete the trip. In any case, Rebbetzin Gittel was not interested in remarrying at that time. At a certain point she decided to move to the Holy Land. There she declined to reveal her relationship with the Maggid and his descendants, which could have benefitted her, and instead supported herself on her earnings as a laundress. She lived the rest of her life there and is buried in the Old Cemetery of Tiberias.

Sources: Adapted by Yerachmiel Tilles from the renditions in "The House of Rizhin" by Rabbi Menachem Brayer (Mesorah) and on //baalshemtov.com by Tzvi Meir Cohn.

Connection: Weekly Torah (3) - The passing of Sarah, the shiduch negotiations for the match between Yitzchak and Rivka, and the remarriage of the patriarch Avraham.

Biographical notes: Rabbi Dov Ber (c.1700-19 Kislev 1772), the son of Avraham and Chava, known as the Maggid of Mezritch, succeeded his master, the Baal Shem Tov, as the head of the Chasidic movement. Most of the leading chasidic dynasties stem from his disciples and his descendents. The classic anthologies of his teachings are Likutei Amarim and Torah Ohr (combined by Kehas Publishing as Maggid Devorav l'Yaakov), and Ohr HaEmmes.

Rabbi Avraham the Malach ("the Angel") (1739- 12 Tishrei 1776). Son of Rabbi Dov Ber (the Maggid) of Mezritch. While still a young man he committed to an ascetic and secluded lifestyle. Upon his father's passing in 1772 he declined to assume leadership of the chassidic movement, even though he was held in high esteem by all of hisfather’s main disciples. He wrote a work entitled Chesed L’ Avraham.

Rabbi Shalom Shachna (Friedmann) of Probisht (1766-1803) was the son of R. Avraham the Malach and grandson of Rabbi Dov Ber (the Maggid) of Mezritch. His wife was the granddaughter of Rebbe Nachum of Chernobyl. One of their sons was the famed Chasidic leader, Rabbi Yisrael of Ruzhin.

*Reprinted from this week’s email of KabbalaOnline.org, a project of Ascent of Safed*

**It Once Happened**

**The Shach Makes**

**A Shidduch**

Hundreds of years ago there was no dependable mail service. Transportation was difficult, and communication between distant locations almost nonexistent. Shabtai Cohen was no different from many other lads who followed our Sages' dictum to "exile oneself to a place of Torah." Nonetheless, it was a wrenching experience to leave his widowed mother and sister for a foreign land.

Despite the heartache, Shabtai's mother gave her blessing to her firstborn's departure. From an early age she had recognized that her son was destined for greatness. Only in a place of Torah could he live up to his vast potential and extraordinary talents.

The lad arrived in Vilna, where he studied for several years in the city of Torah giants. When he reached marriageable age, he was taken as a son-in-law by one of Vilna's most respectable citizens and continued his studies. Within a few years he was a renowned legal authority and had authored the work Siftei Kohen, or as it is known by its initials, the Shach. However, his mother and sister knew nothing of this.

**The Terrible Chmielniki**

**Attacks on Polish Jewry**

It was at this time in history that the cursed Chmielniki and his followers began to wreak havoc in Europe. The destruction they brought to the Shach's hometown was beyond description. Countless Jewish men, women and children were brutally murdered. Their property was plundered and their homes burned to the ground.

The Shach's sister managed to escape with the clothes on her back. In the course of her subsequent wanderings with a group of beggars, she arrived in the city of Vilna and sought shelter in a synagogue.

**The Compassion of**

**The Gabbai’s Wife**

The gabbai's wife was immediately stricken by the young woman's obvious refinement, as evidenced by her bearing, speech and comportment. "How is it that you have been reduced to wandering?" she asked her kindly. "Why don't you remain here in Vilna? I will find you a respectable position, that you may earn your bread with honor."

The young woman was delighted by the offer, and was hired as a domestic by one of Vilna's leading Jewish families. After all of her travails, she was happy.

The mistress of the household was also soon impressed by the young woman's qualities. "The truth is that I really have enough domestic help," she told her. "But I have a special job for you, one that is not very difficult yet requires someone responsible. You see, my son-in-law is a Torah scholar, who studies Torah until very late at night. By that time, the rest of the household has already gone to bed, and no one is awake to serve him his supper. I would like to assign this task to you."

**Recalls Long-Forgotten Memories**

And so, that evening the young woman sat outside the son-in-law's study door and waited for him to finish. She listened as he studied aloud, and the sweet melody resonated within her soul and awakened long-forgotten memories. For a brief second she imagined herself a child back at home; the voice sounded uncannily like her late father, Reb Meir, of blessed memory. But of course, he had died years before when she was very young.

The contrast between the warm, pleasant dream and her present status as a poor orphan was suddenly too much to bear. A flood of emotion overwhelmed the young woman and her eyes filled with tears. Unable to control herself, she began to weep.

**The Son-in-Law Heard**

**The Maid’s Crying**

The son-in-law heard her crying and opened the door. When he asked her what was the matter, she dried her eyes and said, "It's nothing." The son-in-law went back to his studies. A few minutes later, however, she could no longer contain herself, as the sound of his learning was just too evocative. When he came out a second time she poured out her heart.

The young woman told the son-in-law all about her illustrious family, about her father who used to learn with the same sweet melody, and the wonderful memories his learning had brought back. Then she filled him in on the rest of her sad story.

**Recognizing His Sister**

She was so intent on her tale that she didn't notice how he had suddenly paled. The realization that the young woman was his sister almost made him faint. For the time being, however, he kept his emotions in check, and comforted her as best he could.

At the request of the Shach, the young woman was elevated to the status of family member. No one knew why, but everyone respected his wishes. The young woman was soon beloved by all.

**Proposes a Shidduch**

A while later the mistress of the household fell ill and passed away. After the mourning period, the matchmakers pressed the husband to remarry, as he was still relatively young. When he asked his son-in-law what to do, he advised him to marry the young woman who had come to live with them. "She is modest, wise, and from a good family," the Shach told him. "G-d willing, at the wedding I will reveal her true identity."

**Mother of the Famed Panim Meirot**

And so it came to pass. The Shach revealed to everyone at the wedding that the bride was, in fact, his sister. As a wedding present the Shach blessed the new couple with a son who would illuminate the Jewish world; his blessing was fulfilled with the birth of the famous Rabbi Meir, author of the Panim Meirot.

*Reprinted from this week’s edition of “L’Chaim,” a publication of the Lubavitch Youth Organization in Brooklyn, NY.*

**A Match Made in Heaven**

**From the desk of Yerachmiel Tilles**

[**editor@ascentofsafed.com**](http://webmailb.juno.com/webmail/new/21?folder=Inbox&msgNum=0000esk0:001EpDef00002uUb&count=1322602864&randid=1636309780&attachId=0&isUnDisplayableMail=yes&blockImages=0&randid=1636309780##)

In 1810, Rabbi Yehoshua-Heshel of Komarna, the eldest son of Rabbi Baruch Teumim-Frenkel, the author of Baruch Ta'am, once found it necessary to travel to the city of Tarnigrod on business. After finishing his commercial transactions, he went straight to the local yeshiva to study Torah.

There he came upon a seventeen-year-old youth who was grappling with a Talmudic problem in intense and unbroken concentration. The traveler entered into a scholarly discussion with him, and immediately realized that he was dealing with a young man of extraordinary gifts.

**A Match for His Sister**

He asked the young man who he was, and when the latter replied by giving his name, Chaim Halberstam, his father's name and other details of his ancestors, Yeshoshua Heshel decided then and there to broach the subject of a possible match with his sister, Rachel-Feigeh.

The young Chaim expressed his willingness to consider such a match. Yehoshua-Heshel went immediately to his lodging place and dispatched an urgent letter to his father in Leipnick, announcing that he had found a suitable match for his sister, and that the prospective bridegroom was a paragon of Torah scholarship and religiosity, on the level of the greatest sages of previous centuries.

**No Hint About the**

**Young Man’s Lameness**

This letter included all the details of the youth's identity and lineage. However, the writer held back one detail from his father: he gave no hint that the young man was lame.

In the eyes of Rabbi Yehoshua-Heshel the extraordinary genius of the youth made the lameness seem insignificant, and he had a strong desire that this match should come to fruition.

At that very time the father of young Chaim, Rabbi Aryeh-Leibush, a known scholar, was on a business trip in the city of Leipnick, where he decided to visit his friend, the author of Baruch Ta'am, in order to converse with him on Torah topics. And thus it transpired that at the moment when Yehoshua-Heshel's letter arrived, the two fathers were sitting together in Rabbi Baruch's house!

**“What an Extraordinary**

**Thing Has Happened!”**

Seeing that the letter had been sent from Tarnigrod, both men assumed that it was intended for Rabbi Leibush. However, since it was addressed to Rabbi Baruch, who quickly opened it. After perusing its contents he exclaimed, "Just see what an extraordinary thing has happened! This letter is from my son who is in Tarnigrod on business, and it proposes a match between your honors son and my daughter!"

He showed the letter to Rabbi Aryeh-Leibush, and after allowing him time to read it, asked him, "Nu, what is your opinion? Do you agree to this proposal?" The answer he received was, "This must be from G-d! I agree with all my heart."

**However, There Was a**

**Previous Negotiation**

The path ahead, however, was not yet clear. Rabbi Baruch proceeded to inform his guest that for some months now he had been discussing a possible match between his daughter and the son of the wealthy and well-known rabbinical figure, Rabbi Zalman Margolis of Brod.

Rabbi Baruch had set a final date, allowing Rabbi Margolies until the fifteenth of Shvat

(Tu b'Shvat); if a letter or emissary did not arrive by that date, Rabbi Baruch would be free to arrange a different match for his daughter. "As today is already the fifteenth of Shvat," Rabbi Baruch continued, "I must request that you wait until this evening. If no message arrives from Rabbi Zalman by then, we two shall finalize the match between our children." Leibush readily agreed to wait, and set out to complete his business affairs in Leipnick.

**The Emissary of Rabbi**

**Margolies Arrives in Town**

At that very hour, the emissary of Rabbi Margolies arrived in Leipnick, to the same hotel where Rabbi Aryeh-Leibush was staying! Weary from a hard journey, the man ordered a large meal accompanied by a quality, well-aged wine, which he ate and drank until his stomach was satisfied and his head a bit dizzy. He managed to pray the Minchah prayer, and then went to his hotel room, where he lay down for a short rest. There was still plenty of daylight left, and in half an hour he would no doubt be in the house of R' Baruch to finalize the match.

That evening, Rabbi Aryeh-Leibush returned to the house of Rabbi Baruch, and asked if any word had come from Brod. His host replied that no message had arrived, which meant that the time-limit had expired, leaving him free to conclude the match they had discussed earlier that day. Thereupon the two fathers finalized the match and wrote out the tenna'im (conditions of contract), thus formalizing the engagement.

**The Short Rest Turns**

**Into a Long Slumber**

And what of the emissary from R' Zalman Margolies? Fatigue, combined with his heavy meal and the effect of the wine, had caused him to doze off. His short rest turned into a long slumber. At the moment when the two Rabbis were signing their agreement, the emissary was still deep in sleep. When he finally awoke late that evening, it was already past normal visiting hours. So, he decided to put off the completion of his mission until the next morning.

When morning came, and after the morning prayers were completed, the emissary from Brod appeared at Rabbi Baruch's house, well rested and prepared to fulfill his mission. He presented the power of attorney from Rabbi Zalman Margolis authorizing him to conclude the match for Rabbi Baruch's daughter.

**The Emissary is Turned Down**

The latter replied: "The agreed time limit has already passed. I kept my word and waited until Tu b'Shvat, as stipulated in my letter to Rabbi Zalman. Then, last night, when I saw that there was still no voice, nor anyone to answer, I wrote out and signed tenna'im with the esteemed Rabbi Aryeh Leibush of Tarnigrod."

A shudder passed through the emissary when he heard these words. He revealed to Rabbi Baruch that he had already been present in the city the previous day, but that due to his great weariness he had delayed his appearance until this morning. He implored him to cancel the agreement with Rabbi Leibush.

R' Baruch answered, "If he should wish to release me, I shall conclude an arrangement with R' Zalman." Rabbi Aryeh-Leibush was consulted, but he refused to annul the arrangement, instead continuing to insist, "This match has been decreed from above." The emissary had no choice but to return disappointed to Brod; and the contract with Chaim Halberstam's father remained in full force.

This would seem to have removed the obstacles between the young genius and his future bride. In fact, it only set the stage for greater obstructions. The whole matter of the shiduch and the forthcoming marriage became known to the young scholars of R' Baruch's yeshivah.

**A Group Goes to Inspect the Bridegroom**

These young men were very surprised that their rav had concluded a match for his daughter without first seeing the prospective bridegroom face to face. They forthwith decided to choose two of their number and dispatch them to Tarnigrod to have a look at the bridegroom and thoroughly scrutinize his character.

When these emissaries returned from their mission, the matter of the young prodigy's physical handicap became known. At first, the students did not wish to inform their teacher, for they did not want to be a source of distress to him.

**The Bride-to-Be is Very Upset**

Nevertheless, the information reached the ears of Rachel-Feigeh, the bride-to-be, and she rushed to her father with the distressing news. When he heard the report from his daughter, R' Baruch expressed his wrath towards his son, who had held back this information.

But what was to be done now? To cancel the shiduch was impossible, for undoubtedly the bridegroom's father would be unwilling to release him from their agreement.

**The One Responsible for the**

**Distressing State of Affairs**

Rabbi Yehoshua-Heshel, who bore the main responsibility for this distressing state of affairs, attempted to console his father, and proposed that the prospective bridegroom be invited to Leipnick. Rabbi Baruch's eldest son was certain that once his father had seen the young prodigy with his own eyes and had tested his knowledge and character, he would be happy with him, and then he too would see the physical handicap as an insignificant detail.

Moreover, Yehoshua-Heshel was equally sure that his sister Rachel-Feigeh would be pleased to marry such a great genius. Meanwhile, the whole city of Leipnick was in an uproar. This is the right match for their

grand rabbi’s daughter? - a cripple!

In the house of the Rabbi too, all was confusion and turmoil reigned. The bride-to-be wept bitter tears; her father attempted to conciliate her and to encourage her with reassuring arguments. He promised her that if she still did not want the young man after having seen him, he would not force her into the marriage, but instead would offer the opportunity to her younger sister.

**Anxiously Awaiting to**

**See What Would Happen**

So, preparations went forward to receive the special guest. Everyone waited anxiously to see what would happen when he arrived.

The day came; the young scholar appeared in Leipnick and within minutes had discovered that his designated bride did not wish to go through with the marriage, because of his physical defect. His reaction was that he wished to speak a few words with the girl in private.

At this point, those who recount the story admit, "What he said to her was never revealed." The results, however, are well known.

Some say that when they were alone, Rabbi Chaim asked the young woman to look in the mirror. When she glanced in that direction, her face went pale; in the reflection of herself that she saw, she was crippled in one leg.

**The Truth as to Who was to**

**Have Been Born with the Defect**

Rabbi Chaim explained to her: "The truth is that it was you who were to have been born into the world with this defect. But I, as your destined husband, took upon myself to bear the handicap instead. Do you still wish to decline this match?"

The young woman was quiet and left the room without saying a word.

Later that evening she approached her father and said that she had changed her mind. It would be an honor, she declared, to marry Rabbi Chaim Halberstam.

The two did indeed marry, and they had many children who followed faithfully in the footsteps of their father, who had become the famous Sanzer Rav “ the “Divrei Chaim.” His sons assumed their father's mantle of greatness, and their sons after that.

An international rabbinic and chasidic dynasty was established that exists to this day. The father of the bride, Rabbi Baruch Teumim-Frenkel, was the most publicly joyful after the wedding. Whether or not he knew what had been said between the young couple, of one thing he was certain. "It is true that the leg of my son-in-law is crooked," he declared; "but his brain is straight."

**Source:** Adapted by Yerachmiel Tilles from (mainly) "The Sanzer Rav and his Dynasty" [Mesorah] by Rabbi Yitzchak Bromberg and translated by Shlomo Fox-Ashrei (my son in Jerusalem’s upstairs neighbor!), and from A Match Made In Heaven by Yitta Halberstam, a great-great granddaughter from this match.

**Connection to the Torah Reading**

**Connection:** Weekly Torah Reading soul mates

**Biographical note**: Rabbi Chaim Halberstam of Sanz [1793 - 25 Nissan 1876] was the first Rebbe of the Sanz-Klausenberg dynasty. He is famous for his extraordinary dedication to the mitzvah of tzedaka and also as a renowned Torah scholar; his voluminous and wide-ranging writings were all published under the title Divrei Chaim. His eldest son founded the famous Sanzer synagogue in Tsfat in the middle 1800s.

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**The Human Side of the Story**

**The Unborn Shidduch**

**By Rabbi Mendel Weinbach**

A man seeking a shidduch visited Rav Chaim Kanievsky, *shlita*, seeking advice and a *beracha*. He was one of the many people who visit with the Torah giant during the afternoon hours.

The man, in his 30s, visited the rabbi about two months ago. The teary-eyed man explained he could not find a shidduch and asked Rav Kanievsky for a *beracha*.

The rabbi probed the man’s details somewhat and reportedly responded, “Your *zivug* hasn’t been born, *beracha v’hatzlacha*”, leaving the man in tears, apparently despondent over hearing these words.

The man recently returned to the great rabbi, this time with a smile on his face, announcing “I am engaged”.

Those present were somewhat surprised, wondering how he accomplished this in the two months after hearing the rabbi’s previous words. The happy groom explained that his bride-to-be is a convert who converted a month earlier, thus explaining the great rabbi’s words “your *zivug* has not been born”.

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**Is It Improper to Date a Girl Who Has an Older Unmarried Sister?**

**By Rabbi Eli J. Mansour**

If a young man is suggested a Shidduch with a girl who is, let’s say, 21 years old, and that girl has an unmarried 23-year-old sister, would it be improper for the boy to date the girl? Should he be concerned about the possibility that the older sister will feel resentment over the fact that her younger sister is marrying before her, which could invite the Ayin Hara (evil eye) or otherwise cast a dark shadow over the marriage? This question also arises in the reverse case, of a girl who is introduced to a young man who has an older unmarried brother.

**No Prohibition Against Marrying**

**Somebody with an Older Unmarried Sibling**

This question was addressed already by the Maharit (Rav Yosef of Trani, 1568-1639), who wrote that there is no prohibition at all against marrying somebody who has an older unmarried sibling. He notes that this concern was relevant only in ancient times when it was customary for the father to marry off his daughters when they were still children, by accepting Kiddushin on their behalf. When the father accepts Kiddushin for the betrothal of his daughters, it is improper to marry off his younger daughter before the older daughter.

Nowadays, of course, young women marry on their own, when they are adults, and in such a case there is no concern whatsoever when a younger sister marries before her older sister.

**The Sequence of Marriage is Only**

**Of Concern for the Girl’s Father**

Similarly, the Or Hahaim (Torah commentary by Rav Haim Ben-Attar, 1696-1743), in Parashat Vayeseh (29:26), writes that the sequence of marriage is of concern only for the girls’ father, but not for the groom. Meaning, if a man wishes to marry a younger sister, he may certainly do so, and it is the sister’s father who must worry about first marrying off the older daughter.

The Or Hahaim draws proof to this theory from Yaakob Abinu, who wished to marry Rahel even though her older sister, Leah, was unmarried. Of course, Laban switched the two sisters, but regardless, Yaakob was prepared to marry Rahel even though Leah was unmarried, proving that this is not an issue with which a groom must be concerned.

Rav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv (contemporary) indeed rules that one may date and marry a girl who has an older unmarried sister, and a girl may marry a boy with an older unmarried brother, as the older sibling’s need to get married is not the responsibility of the younger sibling’s suitor. And besides, as Rav Elyashiv noted, it can generally be assumed that the older sibling does not mind the younger sibling’s marriage.

**Younger Siblings are Free to**

**Date for Purposes of Marriage**

Certainly, a younger sibling should not be forced to remain single just because he or she has an unmarried older sibling. Therefore, an older unmarried sibling should not be a factor in considering a marriage prospect. Ideally, of course, we want all our children to marry as soon as they are ready and in order, but if this does not happen, the younger siblings are free to date and marry even if there is an unmarried older sibling.

Summary: It is entirely permissible for a girl to date and marry a boy who has an older unmarried brother, and for a boy to date and marry a girl who has an older unmarried sister.

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**Wrongly Religious?**

**From: Allen**

*Dear Rabbi, Is it acceptable that a Jewish man or woman become religiously observant because of their desire to marry someone they know that is already observant? Is there any problem with the possibility that they might not be sincere?*

Dear Allen,

Since the person is Jewish, he or she is obligated to be observant in any case. Of course, the more sincere a person’s motivations are the better. But even if he or she is only interested or practicing in order to gain or maintain a relationship with one who is already observant, this is tolerable.

This is not so different from the fact that many observant people are committed for any number of reasons, which, in addition to the altruistic ones, might include social acceptance, recognition, honor, livelihood, etc. While these motives are certainly not ideal, realistically they exist, and if in the end of the day they contribute to a person’s observance, they have value as such.

In fact, the Sages taught that even if a person realizes his motivations are not ideal, he should not desist from observance. Rather, through lower-level intentions one will eventually grow toward the ideal. In a case you describe where the motive is for another person, the observant person, if interested, should try his or her best to guide the other toward genuine belief and observance.

This is probably the more problematic issue with the question you raise. Because even if the interested person eventually retracts from observance, G-d will not be “harmed”, and the person can always come back to G-d even if it takes an entire lifetime. But if he or she retracts after committing to another person, particularly in marriage, that can have devastating ramifications. So it’s really the observant person who has to be most careful.

**The Famous Rabbi Akiva**

The famous Rabbi Akiva was initially an illiterate hired hand of a wealthy estate owner whose daughter Rachel saw that Akiva had what it takes to become a great Torah scholar.

She proposed to him saying, “If I marry you, will you study Torah?” Apparently, he was not so sure of himself, or sure of the sincerity of his motives, because the Midrash teaches us that Rachel took him on a walk with the intention of inspiring him.

When they arrived at the base of a waterfall, she asked him, “What do you see?” He replied, “Water pouring onto the rocks beneath the fall.”

**Take a Closer Look**

“Look closer”, said she. “I see the rushing water has bored a hole through the rock.” Rachel then said these piercing words: “Take heed. If something as soft as water can bore a hole through something as hard as rock, surely something as strong as Torah can bore a hole through something as soft as your heart of flesh.”

Akiva was inspired. They were married. After 24 years of extreme sacrifice and dedication on the parts of both Rachel and Akiva, he became a rabbi to 24,000 students. And it was through Rabbi Akiva that much of the Torah was preserved through the destruction of the Temple to the generations that followed.

*Reprinted from this week’s email of OHRNET, the Ohr Somayach Torah Magazine of the Internet (ohr.edu)*

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