

Yeshiva University Center for the Jewish Future
Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary

To-Go

Special Edition with YUConnects

YUConnects conducts academic research and educational programs
focused on healthy relationship-building toward marriage.

Part I • 5773

Featuring Divrei Torah and Professional Insights from

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Mindy Eisenman • Rabbi Chaim Eisenstein • Marjorie Glatt, JD

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*Yasher Koach to Rebbetzin Dr. Efrat Sobolofsky and
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*In honor of our dear parents, Joseph (a"h) and Anna
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וחנוך חיים בן יעקב הכהן*



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*In honor of Lois Blumenfeld and her ongoing
support in guiding singles towards finding their soul mates,
much as she and her late husband, Avi (a"h), did on
November 19, 1961. Mom, you are a role model to all.*



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*Dedicated to Rebbetzin Dr. Efrat Sobolofsky
and the CJF for their vision and leadership.*



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*In honor of our special parents, Dr. Michael and Bracha Samet,
Mrs. Bella Sobolofsky, and in loving memory of Mr. Stanley
Sobolofsky a"h, for enabling all of our עבודת הקדש.*



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and Mrs. Mindy Eisenman.*



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*For the speedy Refuah Shleima for
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*In memory of our grandmother and great-grandmother,
Mrs. Tilly Goldberg a"h. Her giving nature and positive spirit
lives on in all of us.*

ANDREA & DR. RONALD SULTAN

*In honor of our son Daniel's marriage to Jessica Bruder. Thank you
to YUConnects and Mrs. Mindy Eisenman for facilitating this special
match.*

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YUConnects conducts educational studies and develops programs that foster healthy meeting opportunities and relationships toward marriage.

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This publication contains words of Torah. Please treat it with appropriate respect.

For sponsorship opportunities, please contact Genene Kaye at 212.960.0137 or gkaye@yu.edu,
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Table of Contents

Special Edition with YUConnects, Part I

2012/5773

Divrei Bracha

Rabbi Hershel Schachter p. 7

Foreword

Rabbi Kenneth Brander p. 8

Introduction

Dr. Efrat Sobolofsky p. 10

Divrei Torah and Halacha

Is there a Mitzvah to Arrange Shidduchim?

Rabbi Michael Taubes p. 12

Rejoice Beloved Friends

Rabbi Zvi Sobolofsky p. 23

Communication in Relationships in Tanach: A Paradigm
for Others

Mrs. Mindy Eisenman p. 26

The Ultimate Connection: Developing the Necessary
Tools for a True Lasting Connection in Your Marriage

Rabbi Chaim Eisenstein p. 28

Matchmaking Fees and Beyond

Rabbi Akiva and Chaya Sima Koenigsberg p. 32

Our Words: Helpful or Hurtful?

Ona'at Devarim in the Singles Community

Rabbi Ari Sytner p. 37

Psycho-Social Insights

Dating or Waiting: When Am I Ready?

Rabbi Dovid Cohen p. 41

Essentials to Look for in a Spouse

Dr. Chani Maybruch p. 46

Relationships that Work: Introspection and Expectations

Shana Yocheved Schacter, CSW p. 53

Seeking Mr./Mrs. "Perfect": Denying Mr./Mrs. "Right"

Rabbi Dr. Jonathan Schwartz p. 57

Deepening your Relationship: Dating and Beyond

Dr. Sara Barris p. 64

Practical Action Items

Let's Get Practical! Top Tips for Increasing Matches in
Your Community

Mrs. Marjorie Glatt, J.D. p. 70

Frequently Asked Questions about Genetic Testing

Dr. Nicole Schreiber-Agus, Estie Rose & Chani Wiesman Berliant p. 74

The Mandate of Genetic Testing

Rabbi Dr. Eddie Reichman p. 79

Points to Ponder: Positive Action Items

Dr. Efrat Sobolofsky p. 83

Please see page 91 to view the Table of Contents
of YUConnects To-Go, Part II

מכתב ברכה

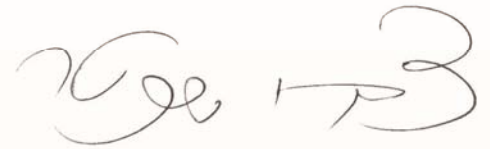
יום ג' לפ' והלכת בדרכיו, י"ז אלול.

רז"ל הורינו (סוטה יד.) שמה הוא - אף אתה, ומה הוא שימש כשדכן לחתן את אדם וחוה, אף אנו נלוינו בזה - לשמור על זלם האלקים שהוטבע בנו, ובהמשך לשון הפסוק - וראו כל עמי הארץ כי שם ד' נקרא עליך וגו'.

ובמ' שבת (לא.) נזכר שצטעה שמכניסים אדם לדין (בעולם האמת) שואלים אותו שם שאלות, והשאלה השלישית - עסקת צפריה ורביה - ביאר מהרש"א בחדושי אגדות שמה דר"ל - האם עסקת לסדר שידוכים.

ואין בן דוד בא על שיכלו כל נשמות שצגוף (יבמות סב.), וכל המשדך זוג הר"ז ממחר ביאת המשיח. וברכה מיוחדת לחזרת ה"מלרפים" על שעוסקים במלוא חסובה זו, ובמיוחד - על שכבר הגיעו למאה שידוכים. וכה יעשה ד' וכה יוסיף, להמשיך לשלוח ברכה במעשי ידיהם ולהוסיף עוד כהנה וכהנה עד שגזכה בקרוב לקבל פני משיח לרקנו.

ברוך ברכה,



Letter of Blessing (Translated from Hebrew)

The third day of the week of Parshas Ki Savo, 17 Elul.

Our Rabbis, of blessed memory, instruct us (*Sotah* 14a) that a person must act like G-d. Just like He arranged the marriage of Adam and Eve so too are we commanded to make shidduchim in order to preserve the image of G-d that we were created with, and thus we will fulfill the verse: "and the nations of the land will see that you carry the name of G-d."

The Talmud in *Masechta Shabbos* (31a) mentions that when a person is brought to judgment (in the world to come), he is asked six questions; the third question, whether you were involved in procreation, is explained by the Maharsha in his *Chiddushei Agados* as referring to whether you were involved in making shidduchim.

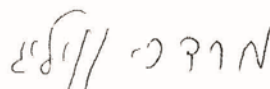
Mashiach will not come until all of the souls are brought into this world (*Yevamos* 62a), and thus anyone who makes a shidduch expedites the coming of Mashiach. YUConnects should receive a special blessing for their involvement in this special mitzvah, and in particular on the occasion of reaching 100 shidduchim. "And so should Hashem do and so may He increase," to continue to send blessing in your work and to increase that blessing in every way until we will merit shortly to greet Mashiach Tzidkeinu.

With much blessing,

Rabbi Hershel Schachter

"YUConnects is a program that successfully helps single men and women meet. It thoughtfully combines personal insight, computer networking and appropriate social events. We encourage men and women who are dating to register in the YUConnects database and to participate in YUConnects events. May all of those involved in the chessed of facilitating shidduchim be blessed with success in their efforts on behalf of Klal Yisrael."

Rabbi Hershel Schachter & Rabbi Mordechai Willig, Roshei Yeshiva, RIETS



Foreword

Rabbi Kenneth Brander

The David Mitzner Dean, Yeshiva University's Center for the Jewish Future

The *bracha* of *Yotzer ha'Adam*, creator of humankind, recited underneath the *chuppah* when an individual gets married, rather than at the time when they are born, highlights the additional level of *shleimut*, completion, achieved in our creation when an individual succeeds in finding their life partner. Nowhere but here, at Yeshiva University, are there *roshei yeshiva*, academics, *sganei mashgichim*, researchers, *rabbeim*, scholars, relationship-building experts, dedicated connectors and event planners all working tirelessly toward the same goal of *yotzer ha'adam*—supporting healthy relationship-building in our community. The unique composition of our Yeshiva and University puts us in a wonderful position to deal educationally with the systemic challenges in relationship development, increase meeting and networking opportunities for singles, and help our children navigate the possible twists along the road.

YUConnects is YU's Center for the Jewish Future's premier social and relationship-building program, convening the educational and research-based resources of Yeshiva University. The program initiates conversations with community leaders, mental health professionals, high school, post-high school and college educators and the greater community, focused on partnering to build healthy relationship-building fundamentals. Additionally, YUConnects offers many comfortable social and networking events for unmarried men and women, plus a growing database of singles with the help of trained and caring connectors.

Marriage is an important milestone in life, and the more time we take to prepare ourselves for this opportunity, as well as for the intricacies and challenges involved, the richer our marriages will be. This also underscores our paramount belief that education is the underpinning for success in all aspects of life. As you peruse the essays and appreciate their messages in this first-time endeavor, you will see certain themes emerge. In fact, we purposely placed the articles in a progressive thematic order, rather than in alphabetical order. Our intent is to expand horizons, broaden attitudes and hearts, and create maximum opportunities within the dating realm while simultaneously reinforcing positive relationship building-blocks. These activities contribute to the utmost happiness in the Jewish home.

The ongoing commitment of our advisory board demonstrates the importance of this holy work, and we owe much thanks to Sharon Blumenthal, Dr. Daniel Berman, Michelle Berman, Michael Feldstein, Dov Greenblatt, Dr. Naomi Greenblatt, Sharon Haberman, Charlie Harary, Dr. Tova Koenigsberg, Cheryl Nagel, Henry Orlinsky and Dr. David Pelcovitz.

A special thank you to the wonderful professionals at the Center for the Jewish Future, Yoni Cohen, Genene Kaye, Levi Mostofsky, Julie Schreier and Suzy Schwartz, for their ongoing guidance and support; to our talented editors, Rabbis Josh Flug and Rob Shur, without whom this first-time endeavor would not have moved forward; and to our YUConnects team ably

headed by the vision, tenacity and selflessness of Dr. Efrat Sobolofsky and her colleagues Mindy Eisenman, Marjorie Glatt and Tova Klapper.

We also thank Dr. Pelcovitz, Rabbi Hershel Schachter and Rabbi Mordechai Willig who serve as our mental health and rabbinic guides for YUConnects.

We owe a debt of gratitude to President Richard M. Joel; his encouragement and guidance continues to motivate and inspire us. None of this would have been possible without his support.

To our financial supporters and sponsors, we thank you for making this edition and forthcoming one possible. We are looking for more sponsors to add to the list for distribution of the second edition this winter.

We need your support to make it possible for more people to join our subsidized website, to participate in more social, networking and educational events, and to afford more communities to partner with the professional resources of YUConnects. Important additional research projects, vital to the continual development of best practices, have been proposed, awaiting sponsorship.

Please note the Sponsorship Opportunities on Page 95 and the enclosed envelope, and please consider making a generous donation to support the wonderful work of YUConnects.

Thank you,
Rabbi Kenneth Brander

Introduction

Dr. Efrat Sobolofsky

Director, YUConnects

YUConnects is proud to introduce this special publication as part of our long-standing “To-Go” series. This rich edition is filled with articles addressing a plethora of healthy relationship-building topics, covering everything from education and skill development during formative years, through all phases of dating, engagement, the first years of marriage and beyond. Additionally, readers can look forward to the second edition, Part II, to be released in January 2013, featuring many more essential relationship-building topics.

YUConnects turned to many of the experts we regularly consult to share their wisdom and insights. As you will read in the two publications, a number of articles present Torah perspectives and halachic guidelines, and several others are grounded in the current psycho-social literature that examines healthy relationship-building skills necessary for a long-lasting relationship and marriage. A few opinion pieces are included as well, based on extensive professional experience.

Important medical and legal information is provided, relating to selected premarital areas. Several articles refer to challenges and barriers in our way, while offering practical and positive action items for change.

A very special thank you to our impressive authors for their skillful contributions. Their words of wisdom are valuable to all readers, as we travel through various life stages of self-growth, character refinement and advancing our interpersonal meaningful relationships.

YUConnects would not have reached the 100-plus couple milestone without the diligence and commitment of so many...

First, a very special *mazel tov* to the engaged and married couples who met through the helping hand of YUConnects. May you all be blessed with beautiful marriages and families. Please continue recruiting your friends to join our programs as we work together to introduce more and more couples.

Words cannot express my personal thanks to the YUConnects staff, Tova Klapper, Mindy Eisenman and Marjorie Glatt, who work well beyond their allotted hours, investing their hearts and souls into the success of the program.

Many thanks to our growing group of volunteer connectors (matchmakers) and event facilitators around the globe who work closely with YUConnects staff to increase healthy and comfortable networking opportunities for members (singles who join YUConnects). In addition to the weekly hours connectors spend performing searches on the online database, they participate in ongoing educational training given by relationship-building experts and attend

social events, all toward professionalizing and personalizing their noble networking, matchmaking and mentoring efforts.

Special thanks to our active participants: our online members, event attendees and partnering community lay leaders who take the time to provide insight and guidance to YUConnects, enabling us to develop more educational programs and better networking venues. Please continue sharing your ideas with us!

To our advisory council and financial supporters, may you be blessed for collectively demonstrating that everyone can truly make a difference today in helping build more Jewish homes and families.

A very special thank you to President Richard M. Joel, Rabbi Kenneth Brander, the David Mitzner Dean of the Center for the Jewish Future, and Mrs. Suzy Schwartz, Assistant Dean of the Center for the Jewish Future, for their vision and ongoing support of YUConnects.

Finally, words cannot express our debt of gratitude to our Creator for enabling us to partner with Him in this very special mitzvah of bringing eternal joy and companionship into the lives of others, as we truly continue to build the Jewish future.

Sincerely,
Dr. Efrat Sobolofsky

Is There a Mitzvah to Arrange *Shidduchim*?

Rabbi Michael Taubes¹

Does anyone in the broader Jewish community not know of somebody who wishes to get married but has as yet been unsuccessful in finding a suitable spouse? It would seem fairly obvious to any sensitive human being that if one does know of such a person, one should do whatever one can to be of assistance in his or her quest for the right match.

The question is, is there an actual “mitzvah,” in the precise sense of the term, which is performed when one does so? And if so, what mitzvah is it? Upon whom is it incumbent? The following presentation puts forth a number of classic Torah sources which point to the suggestion that there is in fact a mitzvah to help arrange *shidduchim*; it is hoped that this will serve to encourage those who are committed to the observance and fulfillment of mitzvot to become further sensitized to this issue and to get involved in helping those seeking to get married to achieve their goal and build additional *batei ne’eman beYisrael*.

Areivut – Responsibility for a Fellow Jew

In one of the two sections of the Torah known as the *Tochachah*, which presents a list of the punishments which will unfortunately be visited upon the Jewish people should they fail to properly observe the laws of the Torah, the verse states: “וכשלו איש באחיו כמפני חרב ורדף אין,” meaning that people will stumble over one another and fall as if fleeing an attack, even though there is in fact no pursuer (Vayikra 26:37). Understood in context, as explained there by Rashi (s.v. *Kemipenei*), this description is one of panic and confusion, of the pervasive sense of terror when people are running for their lives. The Gemara, however, singling out the first phrase of this verse, derives from it a general concept:

“A man will stumble over his brother” — [this means that] a man will stumble because of the sin of his brother; this teaches that all [Jews] are guarantors [and thus responsible] for one another.

Sanhedrin 27b

וכשלו איש באחיו איש בעון אחיו,
מלמד שכולן ערבים זה בזה.
סנהדרין דף כז:

¹ Rabbi Michael Taubes (YC '80, RIETS '82, FGS '82) is the Rosh Yeshiva of The Marsha Stern Talmudical Academy/Yeshiva University High School for Boys. He also serves as the Rabbi of Congregation Zichron Mordechai in Teaneck, NJ.

The famous and oft-quoted idea that every Jew has some sort of responsibility, as a kind of guarantor, for every other Jew, known in general as the principle of “*areivut*,” is thus rooted in this notion that a person can potentially be brought down himself on account of the inappropriate behavior of somebody else, a fellow Jew (see Rashi to that Gemara, s.v. *Ish Be’achiv*).

The Gemara elsewhere teaches this lesson even more poignantly and clarifies the circumstances under which it is applied. The context there is a discussion about what one may and may not allow one’s animal to wear outside on Shabbat, as related to the prohibition against carrying or otherwise transporting items from one place to another on Shabbat. The Mishnah (*Shabbat* 54b) declares that R. Elazar ben Azaryah permitted his cow to go out on Shabbat wearing a certain kind of garment in opposition to the ruling of the rabbis. Finding it difficult to believe that such a great sage would in fact do such a thing, the Gemara comments:

It was taught [in a Beraita]: It was not [actually] his [i.e., R. Elazar ben Azaryah’s] cow, but rather it was [the cow] of his neighbor, but because he did not protest against her [action, and try to correct her behavior] it was identified with his name. Rav and R. Chanina and R. Yochanan and Rav Chaviva taught: ... Whoever has the ability to protest against [the inappropriate behavior of] the members of his household but did not protest is punished [himself] for [the sins of] the members of his household. [And whoever has the ability to protest] against [the inappropriate behavior of] the people of his town [but did not protest] is punished [himself] for [the sins of] the people of his town. [And whoever has the ability to protest] against [the inappropriate behavior of the people in] the whole world [but did not protest] is punished [himself] for [the sins of the people in] the whole world.

Shabbat 54b

תנא: לא שלו היתה,
אלא של שכניו היתה,
ומתוך שלא מיחה בה
נקראת על שמו. רב
ורבי חנינא ורבי יוחנן
ורב חביבא מתנו... מי
שאפשר למחות לאנשי
ביתו ולא מיחה - נתפס
על אנשי ביתו, באנשי
עירו - נתפס על אנשי
עירו, בכל העולם כולו -
נתפס על כל העולם
כולו.
שבת דף נד:

In short, we learn from here the remarkable notion that a Jew who sees a fellow Jew or group of Jews violating any precept and has the opportunity and the wherewithal to prevent the deed from being done, but instead fails to intervene, is held accountable as if he himself had committed that particular transgression. It is noteworthy that the Rambam (*Hilchot Teshuvah* 4:1), in a comprehensive list of various behaviors that prevent the person who engages in any one of them from being able to do *teshuvah* in a complete and proper fashion, includes among them not objecting when confronted with the chance to stop others from sinning.

Strikingly, though, the Rambam there also mentions that the same is true of one who prevents others from performing a mitzvah. While the simple reading of that Rambam indicates that he is referring to someone who deliberately stops others from fulfilling a mitzvah, R. Moshe Schick, in one of his *teshuvot*, takes this idea a step further, saying:

A person is also obligated, if possible, to assist his friend so that he will [be able to] do a mitzvah; one is obligated in this based on areivut. The Rambam in Hilchot Teshuvah enumerates this among the twenty-four things that prevent [proper] teshuvah; one of them is stopping one’s friend from doing a

וגם מחוייב האדם אם אפשר לו לסייע
את חברו שיעשה מצוה, הוא מחוייב
בזה מצד ערבות. והרמב"ם בה' תשובה
מונה זה בין כ"ד דברים המעכבין את
התשובה, ואחד מהם המונע את חברו
מלעשות מצוה... שמצוה לסייע לחברו

mitzvah ... for it is a mitzvah to assist one's friend [in the performance of a mitzvah] because of areivut.

Shu"t Maharam Schick, Orach Chaim #322

משום ערבות.
שו"ת מהר"ם שיק חלק אורח חיים
סימן שכ"ב

Because one is, in his view and in his understanding of the Rambam, actually obligated to enable someone else to perform a mitzvah, R. Schick discusses the possibility there that one can be forced by the local *beit din* (rabbinical court) to allow somebody else to use his *sukkah* when he needs it on Sukkot. Irrespective of his conclusion regarding that particular question, though, R. Schick is clearly of the opinion that not only may one not prevent someone else from performing a mitzvah, but that there is also a mitzvah, based on the principle of *areivut*, to actively help someone else perform a mitzvah which is incumbent upon him.

This is by no means a lone view among the *poskim*. The *Aruch HaShulchan*, for example (*Orach Chaim* 655:3), allows an etrog to be brought by a non-Jew from one town to a second town when the latter has none available for people's use on Sukkot (a situation which, while difficult to conceive of today, was not uncommon at one time in Europe). Although it is generally rabbinically forbidden to ask a non-Jew to do such a thing on Yom Tov, that prohibition is suspended in order to enable people to perform a mitzvah; the *Aruch HaShulchan* concludes there that one is indeed obligated to assist others in their performance of a mitzvah based on the aforementioned concept of *areivut*.

The *Mishnah Berurah*, in likewise ruling that one may do what is necessary to enable another Jew to be able to fulfill the mitzvah of taking an *etrog* on Sukkot, states succinctly:

For we are commanded because of areivut to see to it that a fellow Jew will do the mitzvot of the Torah, and if [any fellow Jew] will lack [the opportunity to perform a mitzvah] it is as if I am lacking it.

Shaar HaTziyun, 655:5

דהא אנו מצווין מטעם ערבות לראות
שגם חברו בן ישראל יעשה מצות
התורה, ואם יחסר לו הרי הוא כאילו
חסר לי.
שער הציון לסימן תרנ"ה אות ה

Clearly, then, these authorities maintain that based on the principle of *areivut*, there is indeed an obligation, categorized as a mitzvah, to do what one can so that others will be able to perform a mitzvah which they wish to perform. It would thus seem that involving oneself in making *shidduchim*, arranging for prospective marriage partners to get together and ultimately, if all goes well, to get married, is actually a full-fledged mitzvah; the *Shach* in fact writes clearly (*Choshen Mishpat* 73:22) that one is considered to be doing an actual mitzvah himself when trying to arrange a marriage for others.

R. Yaakov Ettlinger, in his commentary to the Gemara in *Sukkah*, goes so far as to say that this mitzvah may be biblical in nature:

Since all Jews are responsible for one another, then one who enables his friend to fulfill a biblical mitzvah is himself also considered to be involved in the performance of a biblical mitzvah...

Aruch LaNeir to Sukkah 25a, s.v. Hacha Tarid

כיון דכל ישראל ערבים זה לזה א"כ מי
שמביא חבירו לידי קיום מצוה דאורייתא
מקרי ג"כ עוסק במצוה דאורייתא ...
ערוך לנר לסוכה דף כ"ה. ד"ה הכא
טריד

R. Ettlinger therefore posits that from the fact that the Gemara later in *Sukkah* (25b-26a) exempts a groom's attendant and other members of a wedding party from certain mitzvot based on the well-known maxim that one who is involved in the performance of one mitzvah is exempt from another mitzvah at that time (העוסק במצוה פטור מן המצוה), one cannot infer that this maxim applies even when the first mitzvah is only rabbinically mandated, because those assisting someone in his marriage arrangements are considered to be performing a biblically mandated mitzvah. The same may well be true of someone who works to help someone else meet a suitable spouse and eventually get married, assuming, as the *Shach* said, that one who does so is considered to be performing a mitzvah. This assumption that one is indeed considered to be doing a mitzvah when arranging *shidduchim* forms the basis of a comment by R. Yosef ben Lev in his *Shu"t Mahari ben Lev* (1:100; 99 in some versions) about whether one may accept money and if so, how much, for successfully matching a couple for marriage, given that he is indeed performing a mitzvah.

It may be noted at this point that according to Rabbeinu Saadyah Gaon, as understood by R. Yerucham Fischel Perlow (in the latter's encyclopedic commentary on the former's *Sefer HaMitzvot, Parashah 57*), the obligation, which he classifies as communal in nature, to assume responsibility for one's fellow Jew in terms of his mitzvah observance is in fact enumerated as one of the 613 commandments of the Torah; it may thus be argued that this is the mitzvah fulfilled when people work on arranging *shidduchim* for others.

The Mitzvah to Get Married and Have Children

The premise underlying the aforementioned assertion that one performs a mitzvah by helping someone get married is that the person who gets married is indeed fulfilling a mitzvah himself (or herself) by so doing. Exactly which mitzvah is this?

The Rambam writes:

The 213th mitzvah is that we were commanded that one should have relations [with a woman] through [the acts qualifying as] "kiddushin" (defined as betrothal or engagement, the first stage of the marriage process) ... this [then] is the mitzvah of kiddushin ... indeed it has already been explained that the mitzvah of kiddushin is from the Torah.

Rambam, Sefer HaMitzvot, Mitzvat Asei 213)

והמצוה הרי"ג היא שצונו
לבעול בקדושין... וזו היא
מצות קדושין... הנה כבר
התבאר שמצות קדושין
דאורייתא.
ספר המצוות להרמב"ם
מצות עשה רי"ג

The Rambam is clearly of the opinion that there is a mitzvah to marry (see also his assertion in *Hilchot Ishut* 3:23 that the *Birchat Eirusin*, the blessing recited at the beginning of the formal wedding ceremony, is like the blessing recited before the performance of any other mitzvah); this mitzvah is independent of the mitzvah to procreate, which he enumerates as a separate requirement (*Sefer HaMitzvot ibid.* 212). The *Sefer HaChinuch* (Mitzvah 552) concurs with this view. According to these sources, then, both of which cite a phrase from the Torah (Devarim 24:1) as the basis for their position, the matter is quite simple: there is a biblical mandate to get married and one who helps someone else get married is thus helping someone fulfill a mitzvah from the Torah; he is therefore considered to be performing a mitzvah himself by providing this help.

It is true, of course, that not all authorities agree with the Rambam and the *Sefer HaChinuch* that getting married constitutes an independent mitzvah. The Rosh, for example (*Ketubot* 1:12), maintains that there is no independent mitzvah to marry; there is a mitzvah to procreate (“*peru u’revu*”), and the proper way to do that is to first get married, but marriage alone does not constitute the fulfillment of any mitzvah (see there for his claim that the *Birchat Eirusin* is thus not a blessing on a mitzvah, but a blessing of praise relating to the joyous occasion of the wedding). This dispute, however, does not at all impact the present discussion, because even if the mitzvah is not to marry but to procreate (with marriage being simply the appropriate vehicle via which one should ultimately have children), one who participates in arranging a marriage is still assisting someone in fulfilling a mitzvah from the Torah—the mitzvah to procreate—and he is therefore still considered to be performing a mitzvah himself by providing this assistance.

In line with this last idea, it is interesting to consider a statement in the Gemara in *Shabbat* (31a), according to which one of the questions that one is asked after his time on this earth is up and he is facing the Heavenly judgment is “עסקת בפריה ורביה” — “*did you engage in procreation?*” The Maharsha comments:

The Gemara did not say [that one is asked] “did you fulfill [the mitzvah] of procreation,” but rather “did you engage [in the mitzvah of procreation],” meaning, “[did you take steps] to marry off orphans.”

Maharsha, Chidushei Aggadot to Shabbat 31a, s.v. Asakta

לא אמר קיימת פריה ורביה אלא
עסקת דהיינו להשיא יתום ויתומה.
מהרש"א חידושי אגדות לשבת
דף ל"א. בד"ה עסקת

The Maharsha clearly understands that being engaged in the mitzvah of procreation means more than fulfilling that mitzvah by having children oneself; it includes doing what one can to facilitate the fulfillment of that mitzvah by others, by people who are less fortunate and who may never have the opportunity to get married and perform this mitzvah without the efforts of others. One who helps someone else get married and thereby enables him to carry out the mitzvah of having children is thus fulfilling this requirement of “involvement” in procreation; even if procreation—and not getting married itself—is in fact the only actual mitzvah relating directly to marriage, one is therefore still involved in a mitzvah when providing this help. And this is considered so significant a deed that it is one of the first things one is held accountable for when he leaves this world.

From these sources, it would appear that the mitzvah of *peru u’revu* includes facilitating the opportunity for others to fulfill the mitzvah. Since one who does so may thus be said to be performing that very mitzvah in a way himself, this can be viewed as something beyond, or independent of, the broader notion of *areivut* discussed above. It should be noted that the *Sefer Chareidim* writes in general (end of Chapter 61 in the newer arrangement) that one who encourages others to perform a mitzvah is considered as having performed that very mitzvah himself.

This idea that one performs a mitzvah by enabling someone else to fulfill his mitzvah to procreate emerges as well from the comments of the Ran at the beginning of the second chapter of *Kiddushin*. The Gemara, explaining the opening line of the Mishnah there (*Kiddushin* 41a), teaches that while it is acceptable, as the Mishnah says, for a man getting married to appoint an

agent to carry out the technical act of giving his bride the item needed to effect the *kiddushin*, or the betrothal, the first step of the halachic marriage process, it is nonetheless a greater mitzvah for the man to do the act himself rather than through an agent (מצוה בו יותר מבשלוחו). In subsequently explaining the next line of the Mishnah, which states that a woman may likewise appoint an agent to receive the item that will effect the *kiddushin*, the Gemara says that it is similarly a greater mitzvah for the woman to receive the item herself rather than have an agent do it for her (מצוה בה יותר מבשלוחה). In view of the fact that the mitzvah to get married (according to those who hold that that is indeed an independent mitzvah), as well as the mitzvah to procreate, are mitzvot incumbent specifically upon men (though a woman's participation is obviously necessary), the question is, what does the Gemara mean by saying that it is a greater mitzvah for the woman to receive the item herself? What mitzvah is she performing? The Ran explains:

For even though a woman is not commanded in [the mitzvah of] procreation, she nevertheless has a mitzvah because she is helping the husband to fulfill his mitzvah.
Ran to Kiddushin, 16a-b in Rif, s.v. Ika De'amri)

דאע"ג דאשה אינה מצוה בפריה ורביה מ"מ יש לה מצוה מפני שהיא מסייעת לבעל לקיים מצותו.
 ר"ן לקידושין, דף ט"ז-ט"ז: בדפי הרי"ף בד"ה איכא דאמרי

In the same way, then, arranging a *shidduch* may thus be at least a partial fulfillment of the mitzvah of *peru u'revu*.

There is also another possible mitzvah that might be fulfilled in this manner, a mitzvah that is similar to *peru u'revu*, but distinct from it. The prophet Yeshayah tells us:

For so said Hashem, Creator of the heavens, He is the God, Former of the earth and its Maker, He established it; He did not create it for emptiness, [but] he [rather] formed it to be inhabited: I am Hashem and there is no other.
Yeshayahu 45:18

כי כה אמר ה' בורא השמים הוא האלקים יצר הארץ ועשה הוא כוננה לא תהו בראה לשבת יצרה אני ה' ואין עוד.
 ישעיהו מ"ה:י"ח

The earth is described here as having been created not to be empty and desolate, but to be inhabited and populated. *Chazal* infer from this statement that there is a mitzvah known as "*shevet*," from the word in that verse meaning *inhabited*, which requires one to help populate the world; one who has children is thus also fulfilling this mitzvah of *shevet*. It is clear from *Tosafot* in *Gittin* (41b, s.v. *Lo tohu*) and others that this mitzvah is operative even in situations where the mitzvah of *peru u'revu* is not; R. Pinchas HaLevi Horowitz, in his *sefer* known as the *Makneh on Kiddushin* (41a, s.v. *Mitzvah*), explains that this is the mitzvah which women, upon whom the mitzvah of *peru u'revu* is not incumbent, are included in when they get married, and it is that mitzvah to which the Gemara there refers when speaking of a mitzvah for women to get married. One who helps arrange a *shidduch* and thereby enables people to have children and populate the world may thus also be fulfilling, at least partially, this mitzvah of *shevet*, which, according to *Tosafot* in *Avodah Zarah* (13a, s.v. *Lilmod*), is ranked together with *talmud Torah* as a mitzvah which is of great importance.

Along the above lines, it may be possible to suggest that there is in fact a communal responsibility to help someone find a spouse and ultimately have children. The Gemara earlier in *Kiddushin* (29a)

teaches that there are a number of obligations that a father has concerning his son, including circumcising him, redeeming him (if he is a firstborn), teaching him Torah and taking a wife for him, that is, helping him to get married. Regarding each of the first three cases, the Gemara (*ibid.* 29a-29b) questions why it is only the father, not the mother, who is required to take care of these matters for the son, and concludes that the mother is exempt because she is not obligated in that particular mitzvah herself, and thus does not have to see to it that it be performed by her son. Regarding helping him get married, though, the Gemara later (*ibid.* 30b), after indicating that a father must also see to it that his daughter gets married, does not say anything about the mother being exempt from this obligation. R. Yosef Engel, in his *Gilyonei HaShas*, posits that although the Gemara never says so, the fact is that the mother is indeed obligated in this case, and he adds that although she is exempt from the mitzvah of *peru u'revu*, she is included in the aforementioned mitzvah of *shevet*, and thus must likewise see to it that her children are able to fulfill this mitzvah.

We may now add that in view of the fact that just as in the case of circumcision, the Gemara (*ibid.* 29a) states that there is a requirement upon others in the community to get involved, if necessary, to see to it that the mitzvah gets done (a ruling accepted by the Rambam, *Hilchot Milah* 1:1, and the *Shulchan Aruch*, *Yoreh De'ah* 261:1), and likewise in the case of teaching Torah, others have a responsibility to get involved as well (as implied by the *Sifrei* to *Devarim*, No. 37, and cited by the Rambam, *Hilchot Talmud Torah* 1:2, and the *Shulchan Aruch*, *Yoreh De'ah* 245:3), then perhaps the same is true of marrying off a child. If the parents—or the child himself or herself—are unable to arrange for the child's marriage, it becomes incumbent upon other members of the community to get involved and help see to it that the child gets married and will thus be able to fulfill whatever mitzvot that entails, and those who do so have some share in the performance of those mitzvot, as discussed above.

Assisting HaKadosh Baruch Hu & Emulating Him (*Imitatio Dei*)

The Midrash in *Bereishit Rabbah* (68:4; it appears as well in *Vayikra Rabbah* 8:1) relates a fascinating story regarding a certain noblewoman and the great *Tanna* R. Yose bar Chalafta. Aware of the fact that according to the Torah, G-d created the world in six days (Shemot 20:11), the noblewoman asked the *Tanna* what He has been doing since then. He replied that G-d spends His time arranging *shidduchim*, carefully matching people with suitable spouses. Assuming that there really is not much to this, the noblewoman proclaimed that she could accomplish that herself; as a rich woman she had many, many servants, both male and female, and she said that in a short period of time she could easily join each male with a female and thereby accomplish without much effort what G-d seems to find so difficult. After R. Yose bar Chalafta challenged her to go and try it, she did so and indeed paired together all her male and female servants in one night. The next morning, however, she was overwhelmed with the complaints of her servants, as so many of the new couples were in fact completely incompatible; the noblewoman subsequently acknowledged G-d's greatness to R. Yose bar Chalafta. Aside from whatever else may be learned from this story, one point that emerges is that G-d Himself spends much time, as it were, "working on" arranging appropriate *shidduchim*.

It is perhaps for this reason that the Gemara in *Shabbat* refers to arranging marriages as *הפצת שמים*, *the business of Heaven*. The verse in *Yeshayahu* (58:13) teaches that we are to refrain on

Shabbat from doing our own business, from engaging in our own affairs, and from even talking about such things. The Gemara states:

And a Tanna of the academy of Menasheh taught: We may arrange for girls to be betrothed [and subsequently married] on Shabbat, and for a child to be taught a text or to be taught a trade. [This is all permitted on Shabbat because] the verse states: [Refrain on Shabbat] from engaging in your own business and speaking words [about such business; this implies that doing] your own business is forbidden, [but] the business of Heaven [i.e., an activity related to a mitzvah] is permitted.

Shabbat 150a

ותנא דבי מנשה משדכין על
התינוקות ליארס בשבת,
ועל התינוק ללמדו ספר
וללמדו אומנות. אמר קרא
ממצוא חפצך ודבר דבר,
חפצך - אסורים, חפצי
שמים - מותרין.
שבת דף ק"נ.

In other words, one may be engaged in and discuss activities that are mitzvah-oriented on Shabbat, as they are labeled as חפצי שמים, *the business of Heaven*, and not personal business; the primary example of such an activity which is in the category of חפצי שמים is arranging marriages. Actually, the issue of the permissibility of talking about *shidduchim* on Shabbat is the subject of a dispute between Beit Hillel and Beit Shammai in an earlier Gemara there (*ibid.* 12a), but the halachah follows the view of Beit Hillel that it is indeed permissible, as codified by the Rambam (*Hilchot Shabbat* 24:5) and the *Shulchan Aruch* (*Orach Chaim* 306:6), because it is included among the חפצי שמים. It would appear that this permission extends even to discussing the financial components of the marriage arrangement, as this is not considered a personal business matter, but a matter relating to a mitzvah, “the business of Heaven” (see the comments of, among others, the *Kaf HaChaim* there, no. 50, regarding this last point).

According to this presentation, it may be suggested that working on arranging a *shidduch* is a mitzvah not only between man and fellow man (בין אדם לחבירו), as it would more obviously seem to be, but also between man and G-d (בין אדם למקום), as doing so is a means of assisting G-d in taking care of His business, as it were. Moreover, it would appear that G-d gets involved Himself in this activity because getting married is considered to be on par with only Torah study in terms of its relative significance. The Gemara in *Megillah* (27a), for example, teaches that a *Sefer Torah* may not be sold for any reason other than to enable one to study Torah or to get married; the Rambam (*Hilchot Sefer Torah* 10:2) and the *Shulchan Aruch* (*Yoreh De'ah* 270:1 and *Even HaEzer* 1:2) rule accordingly. The Gemara in *Avodah Zarah* (13a) similarly equates getting married with Torah study regarding a different halachah, also cited in the Rambam (*Hilchot Avel* 3:14) and the *Shulchan Aruch* (*Yoreh De'ah* 372:1). If, as indicated by these sources, along with the aforementioned Midrash, getting married is such an important value that G-d Himself chooses to spend time helping enable people to do so, it certainly stands to reason that it behooves others to assist in doing “G-d’s work.”

In addition to the above point, though, there may be yet another motivation for people to get involved in arranging *shidduchim* in light of G-d’s involvement in this matter, a motivation based on yet another mitzvah. The Torah (*Devarim* 13:5) clearly instructs us to “follow” G-d, something that, on the surface, seems an impossible task. The Gemara therefore explains what this means:

And R. Chama the son of R. Chanina said: What is [the meaning of] that which is written: "G-d, your Lord you shall follow" — is it possible for a person to [actually] follow the Divine Presence? For has it not already been said: "For G-d, your Lord—He is a consuming fire" [which cannot be "followed" by a human being]? Rather, [the Torah in the initial verse means to teach that one must strive] to follow [or emulate] the attributes [and the behavior] of the Holy One, Blessed is He. Just as He clothes the naked ... you too should clothe the naked. [Just as] the Holy One, Blessed is He, visited the sick ... you too should visit the sick. [Just as] the Holy One, Blessed is He, comforted mourners ... you too should comfort mourners. [Just as] the Holy One, Blessed is He, buried the dead ... you too should bury the dead.

Sotah 14a

ואמר רבי חמא ברבי חנינא, מאי דכתיב: אחרי ה' אלהיכם תלכו? וכי אפשר לו לאדם להלך אחר שכינה? והלא כבר נאמר: כי ה' אלהיך אש אוכלת הוא להלך אחר מדותיו של הקב"ה, מה הוא מלביש ערומים... אף אתה הלבש ערומים; הקב"ה ביקר חולים... אף אתה בקר חולים; הקב"ה ניחם אבלים... אף אתה נחם אבלים; הקב"ה קבר מתים... אף אתה קבור מתים.

סוטה דף י"ד.

This is the idea known as *imitatio Dei*, imitating, or emulating, the behavior of G-d and doing the kinds of things that He does to the best of our ability.

Another verse in the Torah (Devarim 28:9) similarly teaches that people must "go in G-d's ways" (והלכת בדרכיו); the Rambam, based on a Gemara in *Shabbat* (133b) explains this mitzvah as follows:

They [i.e., the Sages] learned the following in explaining the meaning of this mitzvah: Just as He is considered gracious, so too should you be gracious. Just as He is considered compassionate, so too should you be compassionate. Just as He is considered holy, so too should you be holy. And in this manner the prophets referred to G-d by all the various appellations [such as] "Slow to Anger and Abundant in Kindness," "Righteous and Just," "Perfect," "Mighty," and "Powerful" and others like them, to make known that these are good and just modes of behavior and that a person is obligated to conduct himself in accordance with them and to emulate Him to the best of his ability.

Rambam, Hilchot De'ot 1:6

כך למדו בפירוש מצוה זו, מה הוא נקרא חנון אף אתה היה חנון, מה הוא נקרא רחום אף אתה היה רחום, מה הוא נקרא קדוש אף אתה היה קדוש, ועל דרך זו קראו הנביאים לאל בכל אותן הכנויות ארך אפים ורב חסד צדיק וישר תמים גבור וחזק וכיוצא בהן, להודיע שהן דרכים טובים וישרים וחייב אדם להנהיג עצמו בהן ולהדמות אליו כפי כחו.

רמב"ם, פרק א מהל' דעות הלכה ו

If, then, it is true that G-d arranges marriages, as an expression of His kindness, then based on this mitzvah to emulate Him we are obligated to do the same. Indeed, R. Yitzchak Zvi Leibovitch, in his work on *Shulchan Aruch Even HaEzer* entitled *Shulchan HaEzer* (3:1, in the side commentary called *Simlah LeTzvi*) specifically links acting as the go-between to help someone find an appropriate spouse with this mitzvah of emulating and cleaving to G-d, adding that the Torah itself was given to the Jewish people through the agency of a go-between. And in a similar vein, R. Yitzchak Lampronti, in his *Pachad Yitzchak*, an encyclopedia of Talmudic and rabbinic terms, writes (s.v. *Zivugim*) that there is a mitzvah to become involved in arranging *shidduchim* between suitable men and women; he too notes that the Torah was given through an intermediary and adds that *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* Himself was the very first *Shadchan*. When one works at arranging a match, one is thus emulating the actions of G-d Himself.

Tzedakah and Gemillus Chessed

In addition to all of the above, it appears that there also may be an aspect of the mitzvah of *tzedakah* associated with helping arrange *shidduchim*. The Torah states regarding the obligation to give to those in need:

Rather, you shall open your hand to him and you shall grant him whatever suffices for his needs that he is [presently] lacking.

Devarim 15:8

כי פתח תפתח את ידך לו והעבט תעביטנו
די מחסרו אשר יחסר לו.
דברים ט"ו:ח

Rashi there (s.v. *Lo*) explains that this includes helping him find a wife. In other words, if what a person is lacking is not necessarily money or possessions, but a spouse, part of the mitzvah of *tzedakah* may be to help him find one. The Gemara in *Ketubot* (67b) teaches, citing this very verse, that when an orphan—who presumably is unable to afford the expenses associated with getting married and setting up a household—wishes to marry, it is incumbent upon others to provide him with whatever he needs in order to be able to do so; the Rambam (*Hilchot Matnot Aniyyim* 7:4) and the *Shulchan Aruch* (*Yoreh De'ah* 250:1) rule accordingly. There is some debate as to whether this is a communal responsibility or whether the obligation devolves upon any individual who is able to help (see the comments of the Ramo there and of the *Shach* there No. 1, among other sources); the *Torah Temimah* to the above verse in *Devarim* (No. 27) makes a cogent argument that it is certainly required of an individual to be of assistance in such a case if he can be. Now, while the implication of this discussion is that the case is one where the orphan in question has already found a spouse and is just seeking help for the financial piece of the marriage, it does not seem unreasonable to suggest that if the person needs help finding the actual spouse that assistance too should be provided for him.

Moreover, it may be suggested that even if a person is not at all poor or needy in economic terms, but is lacking in the sense that he (or she) is unable to find an appropriate match, the mitzvah of *tzedakah* may be in force to mandate that others help him acquire what he is lacking. And having brought up the mitzvah of *tzedakah* in this regard, it is worth recalling the statement of the Gemara in *Bava Batra* (9a) that in a way it is even greater for one to inspire others to give than to give himself, a notion accepted by the Rambam (*Hilchot Matnot Aniyyim* 10:6) and the *Shulchan Aruch* (*Yoreh De'ah* 249:5). It would thus make sense for people not only to engage in arranging *shidduchim* themselves, but to inspire others to do the same.

Finally, and perhaps most simply, one who helps someone else find the proper mate and thus be able to get married and eventually have children is obviously doing a great act of kindness for that person. Even if there may perhaps be no direct, specific Scriptural source for doing this particular kindness for another person, the Rambam (*Hilchot Avel* 14:1) already makes it clear that various acts of loving-kindness done to help others which our Rabbis discuss are in fact included under the biblical precept of *וָאָהַבְתָּ לְרֵעֲךָ כָמוֹךָ*, *And you shall love your neighbor as yourself* (Vayikra 19:18), meaning that one should do for a fellow Jew everything that one would want others to do for him. It should be clear for this reason alone that one should make every effort to help those in need of finding an appropriate spouse.

In light of all of the above, it may be added that the directive to do for someone else whatever one would want done for himself would seem to be especially important if that which one does for the other person assists him in the performance of a mitzvah.

R. Moshe Schick, in the *teshuvah* cited above, thus writes:

To assist one's friend in a mitzvah matter is included [in the requirement] of doing acts of loving-kindness, for if it is a mitzvah to help him [by doing acts of] loving-kindness [directed toward] his physical well-being, then certainly it is a mitzvah to help him [be able] to do a mitzvah, through which he benefits [both] in this world and in the World to Come.

Shu"t Maharam Schick, Orach Chaim #322

לסייע את חברו לדבר מצוה
הוא בכלל גמילות חסד ואם
בחסד הגוף מצוה לסייע לו
מכ"ש שמצוה לסייע לו לעשות
מצוה שזוכה על ידה בעוה"ז
ובעוה"ב.
שו"ת מהר"ם שיק חלק אורח
חיים סימן שכ"ב

There is, then, perhaps a double mitzvah in the realm of *gemillut chessed* that one engages in by helping arrange *shidduchim*. There is the basic *chessed* done for a fellow Jew who is in need of help and there is the *chessed* which enables a fellow Jew to perform a mitzvah; what exactly that mitzvah is will depend upon the various views presented above.

In any case, though, it has been clearly demonstrated that one who is involved in arranging *shidduchim* can be said to be involved in any one—or perhaps all—of many possible mitzvot, even though it is understood that one's efforts will not always result in success. It is thus a noble pursuit for people committed to the performance of mitzvot to become active in whatever ways possible in the various programs, events and endeavors designed to bring people together for the purpose of establishing *batei ne'eman beYisrael*.

As a postscript, it is worth noting the meaning of the word "*shidduch*" as explained by the Ran, based on the Aramaic *Targum* of a verse in *Shoftim* (5:31):

[The word has] the linguistic connotation of quiet calm and serenity, [like that] which a woman finds in the home of her husband.

Ran to Shabbat, 5b in Rif, s.v. ein meshadchin

מלשון שקט ומנוחה שהאשה מוצאת
בבית בעלה
ר"ן לשבת, דף ה: בדפי הרי"ף
בד"ה אין משדכין

It is to be hoped that those who are married are indeed able to achieve what may be understood as the inner peace of mind apparently suggested by this often-used word, and that those who are not yet married will experience it soon through their union with the suitable spouse that they will find, with the help of G-d and those working with Him.

שמח תשמח רעים

Rejoice Beloved Friends

Rabbi Zvi Sobolofsky¹

This *beracha* that is bestowed upon the young married couple as they stand under the *chuppah* (wedding canopy) encapsulates the relationship they are about to embark upon. The image of רעים האהובים, beloved friends, conjures up in our minds a similar term, “ואהבת לרעך כמוך” — “You should love your neighbor as you love yourself” (Vayikra 19:18), which the Torah uses to describe one’s interaction with his fellow man, for this is the basis for all interpersonal relationships.

Let us examine the multiple dimensions of this fundamental mitzvah in order to gain a better understanding of its application in marriage, thereby ensuring the fulfillment of the *beracha* to become “רעים האהובים.”

The Rambam in *Sefer HaMitzvos*, *Shoresh* No. 2, disagrees with the enumeration of the mitzvos compiled by the *Ba'al Halachos Gedolos*. According to the *Ba'al Halachos Gedolos*, each distinct act of *chesed* (kindness) is counted as a separate mitzvah. Thus, *nichum aveilim* (comforting mourners), *bikur cholim* (visiting the sick) and *hachnasas orchim* (inviting guests) each count toward the total of 613 mitzvos. The Rambam, however, maintains that there is only one mitzvah that encompasses all acts of *chesed*. All manifestations of *chesed* are fulfillments of the mitzvah of “ואהבת לרעך כמוך.” The Rambam asks, why doesn’t the Torah delineate specific acts of *chesed*? What is the Torah teaching us by incorporating the various specifications of *chesed* under the one heading of “ואהבת לרעך כמוך?”

The Navi Micha (6:8) calls out to us to perfect ourselves in our interpersonal relationships in two ways.

“עשות משפט ואהבת חסד” — “Do justice and love kindness.” What is the significance of the different verbs that are used to describe our pursuit of justice and kindness? The *Chofetz Chaim*, *Ahavas Chesed*, Vol. II, Ch. 1, commented that we are instructed to merely perform justice.

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Meeting out justice is not an enjoyable activity, but rather a necessity for society. By contrast, *chesed* is not performed out of a sense of obligation; rather we are supposed to love doing acts of kindness. Perhaps for this reason the Torah does not instruct us concerning specific acts of *chesed*. One would mistakenly conclude that one is “*yotzei*” (discharged of obligation) by merely performing such acts. Rather, the Torah wants us to instill in ourselves the feelings of love to one another. The essence of the mitzvah of *chesed* is this love, and therefore, the appropriate way to convey this mitzvah to us is by instructing us to love our fellow man.

Although the ultimate goal to reach in our *bein adam l’chaveiro* (interpersonal) relationships is a feeling of love and not perfunctory acts, it is these acts themselves that can help us attain this love. The *Sefer Hachinuch* No. 16 develops a theme concerning many mitzvot: “אחרי הפעולות — נמשכים הלבבות” — “The hearts are drawn by actions performed.” Even if we haven’t yet reached those deep feelings of love, performing acts of love can eventually help us attain our desired goal. Thus, the mitzvah of *ואהבת לרעך כמוך* is a combination of feeling and action. Actions lead to feelings, and those feelings in turn spur us to greater actions.

The proper fulfillment of *ואהבת לרעך כמוך* serves as a model as of how *רעים האהובים*—husband and wife as beloved friends—should relate to one another. To view marriage as a mere necessity and our care for one another as only obligations that must be performed ignores the basic component of love that is the bedrock of a wholesome marriage. The deep love that develops over time must be constantly nurtured by the small demonstrations of love. The acts of *chesed* that can be performed between husband and wife enable the love to grow, thereby encourage even greater manifestations of kindness between the two.

There are other important lessons necessary for the fulfillment of *רעים האהובים* that can also be derived from the mitzvah of *ואהבת לרעך כמוך*. The Rambam in *Hilchos Teshuva*, Ch. 10, in discussing the mitzvah of *ahavas Hashem* (love of G-d), observes that *ahava* (love) and *yedia* (knowledge) go together. The way to attain *ahavas Hashem* is through *yedias Hashem*. In *Hilchos Teshuva* the Rambam emphasizes our reaching *yedias Hashem* by observing the wonders of the world around us, and in *Sefer Hamitzvos, Mitzvas Aseh* No. 3, the Rambam highlights attaining that *yedia* through the study of Torah. *Yedia* and *ahava* are so closely linked that the word used to describe the most intimate relationship between husband and wife is *yedia*. Knowledge is attained by careful listening to the other person and trying to understand their perspective. Just as *yedias Hashem* and *ahavas Hashem* require time and attention, so too *ahavas rei'im*, love of our fellow person, requires of us to spend time knowing and understanding our fellow person. The relationship of husband and wife is the greatest fulfillment of *ואהבת לרעך כמוך*. It is a lifelong privilege to truly know and understand one’s beloved partner. As the Rambam concludes *Hilchos Teshuva* concerning *ahavas Hashem*, *ואהבה*, “לפי הדעה תהיה האהבה” “To the degree of knowledge will be the amount of love”—our love for one another is dependent upon how much effort we invest in truly knowing each other.

Love of our fellow man is supposed to equal love of ourselves. The word “*kamocha*” is presupposing that we do, in fact, love ourselves. Just as knowledge is a prerequisite for love of others, so too is it necessary to love of ourselves. We must recognize our strengths and weaknesses to truly be able to appreciate and recognize others, thereby enabling us to know

others as we know ourselves. We must have positive feelings about ourselves before we can genuinely develop positive feelings for others. These qualities must be present in ourselves so that we are able to develop a positive, loving relationship with our spouse.

The dual term רעים האהובים refers to two distinct dimensions of the marriage relationship. Bonds of friendship and bonds of love unite a couple. It is not coincidental that friendship precedes love. A “love” without a pre-existing friendship is nothing more than a “אהבה התלויה בדבר” – “A love dependent on something external” — which can never last the test of time. The seeds of friendship are planted even before marriage. A couple that follows meticulously the halachos of *taharas hamishpacha* (laws of family purity) are given the opportunity to nourish those seeds of friendship out of the context of physical expressions of love. It is this commitment to friendship that enables the *rei'im* to become *ahuvim* once again, as Chazal describe the renewal that takes place upon the wife's return from the *mikvah*, as compared to the experience of a bride.

Although the *beracha* of רעים האהובים is bestowed on the *chasan* and *kallah* as they embark on their life together, the actual fulfillment of these words develops over a lifetime. Nevertheless, it is never too early to plant the seeds for the blessing to reach fruition. Prior to marriage one must develop oneself as a positive, caring person. During the dating process there are multiple opportunities to be kind and considerate thereby setting the stage for the profound love that will come later. Getting to know and understand one's prospective partner in an appropriate manner begins the lifelong knowledge that is synonymous with genuine love. The relationship of *rei'us*—friendship—is so fundamental to marriage that it is the culmination of all of the *berachos* bestowed upon a *chasan* and *kallah*. In the final *beracha*, we involve many phrases which describe the feelings of closeness the couple have for one another: ששון ושמחה ... גילה רינה דיצה: joy and gladness ... mirth, glad song, pleasure, delight, love, fellowship, harmony and companionship (ArtScroll translation). Friendship is the concluding blessing we wish the couple as they embark on life together.

Let us follow the guidelines of the Torah to properly develop and strengthen this relationship of רעים האהובים and thereby merit the *beracha* of “שמח תשמח” — “to truly rejoice” — that can only be granted by *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*. May every Jewish marriage be truly blessed with the immortal words “שמח תשמח רעים האהובים כשמחך יצריך בגן עדן מקדם,” “May the beloved friends truly rejoice like You caused Your creations to rejoice in the Garden of Eden from the beginning of time.”

Communication in Relationships in Tanach: A Paradigm for Others

Mrs. Mindy Eisenman, MA¹

Speech is the medium through which G-d created the world. The Mishna in *Pirkei Avot* (5:1) states “*b’asarah maamarot nivra haolam*, the world was created through ten utterances.” The resounding message of this statement of Chazal is the importance of the spoken word. The Mishna is hinting to us that the way particles are comprised in our universe are through words. Additionally, Bereishit (2:7) states that the defining factor of man is *nefesh chaya*, which according to Onkelos means “*ruach mimalelah*,” the ability to speak. Speech is G-dly. Hashem gave us this quality to differentiate between man and other species. This ability to express ourselves through words is with the intent of using it to not only behave in a G-dlike fashion but to bring Hashem into this world.

Communication is a key element in any relationship. It is especially critical in the marital relationship. The Gemara in *Eruvin* (18a) comments on the second chapter of Bereishit noting that Adam and Chava came into being as a single creature with two sides, one male and the other female. Woman was created from Adam’s “*tzela*,” his side, usually understood to mean “rib.” This could be taken in the sense of “side” as seen in the phrase (Shemot 26:20) “*tzela Hamishkan*,” the side of the Sanctuary (Rashi). Rav Adin Steinsaltz (*Biblical Images*, Ch. 1) explains the significance of Rashi’s statement. They are created as one unit and then man and woman split and became two distinct people. We can therefore understand that the relationship between man and woman in all times is a search for something lost, because man and woman are essentially two parts of one whole. This tie is therefore even stronger than the tie to one’s parents.

According to Rav Adin Steinsaltz, in this first generation of mankind, Adam was commanded directly by G-d while Chava received the commandment only through Adam. In Bereishit, (2:16-17) G-d commanded Adam, “Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat, but of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Bad you must not eat thereof.” When Chava recounts the prohibition to

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the snake she states (3:3), "You shall not eat of it and you shall not touch it lest you die." *Bereishit Rabba* asks the question, why did Adam add a prohibition? R. Yissachar B. Berman in the *Matnot Kehunah*, a commentary on the midrash, states that Adam didn't trust Chava to uphold the commandment and therefore added that she may not touch it lest she die.

The blatant lack of communication is glaring. When a spouse speaks we must truly listen attentively. We must not hear what we want to hear, but what is actually said. This is done by verifying the information and discussing the idea. There is no account of dialogue taking place between Adam and Chava in this story, which leaves us to wonder about the trust and closeness that they experienced. This is also seen so clearly when G-d tries to get Adam to admit his guilt. Rather than shielding his wife he blames her for his actions. This lack of clear communication, trust, and respect contributed to the tragic events in the beginning of Sefer Bereishit.

Avraham and Sarah, the first family of Judaism, are the rectification of Adam and Chava. Through many examples in the Torah we see their ability to communicate effectively. In Bereishit (12:11), when Avraham asked Sarah "*na*," "please," say you are my sister, he gives his reasons. He is afraid for his life because she is beautiful. It is a discussion, a request, not a command. Avraham and Sarah were not just a couple, but a unit. We do not see a man who makes the decisions for the family single-handedly with a subservient wife. Sarah worked alongside Avraham. Avraham respected Sarah and at times turned to her for guidance and deferred to her. In Bereishit (21:12) G-d tells Avraham, "Whatever Sarah tells you, heed her voice."

There is a recurrent mention of Avraham and Sarah as a unit. They are depicted as a team. Even the midrash picked up on this and interprets the phrase in (12:5) "The souls that they had gotten in Haran" as Avraham converting the men and Sarah the women. They work together with the same goals and a shared ideal. Because they were able to communicate so well with each other, they were able to use those communication skills to teach others about ethical monotheism.

When Sarah experienced fertility challenges, it may have been socially acceptable at that time for Avraham to abandon Sarah (literally or figuratively) and find another wife to bear his children. Yet the Ramban (16:2) notes that Avraham and Sarah worked together through this challenge, with Sarah taking the leading role in the entire process. While Avraham showed his dedication to Sarah by allowing her to take the lead, the Ramban notes that Sarah showed her dedication to Avraham by ensuring that Avraham's dignity would be protected throughout the process. The Ramban notes that it was in the merit of these efforts that they eventually were able to bear their son, Yitzchak.

Communication and miscommunication seem to make the difference between a relationship like Adam and Chava and a relationship like Avraham and Sarah. Active listening and hearing what the other person is saying is key to proper communication. Speaking effectively and positively without blame increases the bond that a couple establishes at the beginning of the relationship. It is important to set the proper tone to develop emotional openness. This is the difference between a deep emotional connection and a relationship that develops over time, versus a couple who are solely connected by raising a family together. It is about taking the relationship to the level where you feel you are truly an *ezer kenegdo*, "*etzem meatzamai*," and "*basar mebesari*," — a physical and spiritual bond.

The Ultimate Connection

Developing the Necessary Tools for a True Lasting "Connection" in your Marriage¹

Rabbi Chaim Eisenstein²

*"Wow! That couple seems really happy together. They seem to really **connect**!"*

Connection and chemistry are amorphous words that are often used to describe a meaningful relationship that will last despite life's challenges and difficulties while the couple continues to grow together. How is that connection created? Is it magical—"you either have it or you don't"—or can it be cultivated? What does our Torah and the field of psychology have to say about this question?

Starting Early

Forging the tools for a true meaningful connection with one's spouse does not start with the first date. It starts in the classroom, basketball court, dormitory room, study halls and work place.

Ba'al Hamaor, in his introduction to Talmud Bavli writes:

In many places, the Torah refers to the soul as "kavod — honor ... because G-d took from His ultimate honor and glory and created the soul which He imbued in every person.

במקומות רבים בכתוב נקראת הנפש
החיה כבוד ... כי הבורא אצלה על
האדם מכסא כבודו ובה נתן עליו
מהודו.

In other words, the essence of man is his dignity, and when it is stripped away, he is a body without a soul.³ **The first step in creating a meaningful connection with a spouse is to cultivate the ability to connect with others by focusing on the G-dly "honor" of every person.**

¹ This article is based on the first of a series of six *shiurim* given at Yeshiva University's Gruss Kollel entitled "Starting Off Right—Shalom Bayis in the First Years." I thank my dear wife Aliza for refining and editing the raw ideas from my *shiurim* and to many of my *talmidim* for their important input (including Rafi and Rachel Glickman who read and commented on the first draft).

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³ It is for this reason that insulting someone is akin to murdering him (*Bava Metzia* 58b) since undermining and denigrating a person's honor is rejecting a person's essence. (I am indebted to Rabbi Zvi Ron for this reference.)

The Double Trap

There may be several reasons why people have trouble fully developing the ability to connect with others. Let's focus on two possible factors. First, an individual who is absorbed in his or her own world may be entirely blind to others, especially to the G-dliness in them. Second, a person may look at the world and others in a cynical way and no longer notice the positive components of others. Rather, the focus becomes the opposite—the corporeality of others with all their shortcomings. If a true connection between people is defined by the ability to notice and connect with the G-dliness of others, then the self-centered or cynical person described above has difficulty developing lasting connections. Hence, a prerequisite for a long-lasting relationship between spouses is the ability to first view others in a positive light and connect with their G-dliness, exercising these mindful skills to prepare us for the ultimate connection between spouses.

Prerequisite Tools: Notice & Focus

A simple yet profound tool, which is necessary to recognize the G-dliness in others, is the ability to notice the feelings, needs and unique qualities of the other. A person can become less self-absorbed when he or she designates a certain amount of time each day focusing on the needs of others. When approaching a relationship, our own ego (i.e. our wants and desires) should be secondary, while the needs of the other become primary. Devoting time to focus on the needs and desires of someone else creates the ability to see a person in a whole new light. Doing this can combat both parts of the dual trap mentioned above. First, we are no longer focused on seeing the world only from our perspective, and we begin considering the perspective of others as well. Furthermore, once we begin to see things from the perspectives of others, we begin to be exposed to the distinctive *neshama* of another person. Hence, the G-dly component inside of us can "connect" to the G-dly component in others, and thus we begin to respect their unique "*kavod*."⁴

Creating Mutual Respect

Rebbe Akiva (*Sotah* 17a) describes the ultimate connection between husband and wife as a connection that brings G-d into the equation. When the letter *yud* from the Hebrew word husband (יָד) combines with the letter *hey* from the word wife (אִשָּׁה), the letters create the name of G-d. When both husband and wife give of themselves to one another, it brings G-dliness into the relationship. According to Rebbe Akiva, by definition every couple has the potential to create a real connection that is affirmed by the highest possible level of spiritual manifestation—the dwelling of the *Shechinah*. The necessary prerequisite for the ultimate connection is not a high level of Torah scholarship or even spiritual piety, rather the ability to connect to the soul of a person.

⁴ It is for this reason that the title of this article, "The Ultimate Connection," has a double meaning to it. The article is ostensibly a short guide to developing tools in enhancing our relationship with our spouse. However, these same details in forging a relationship with others and ultimately our spouse are also critical in developing our relationship with *Hakadosh Baurch Hu*. Being able to see the G-dliness in G-d's world is a critical part of *Avodas Hashem*. See for example: *Derech Hashem* 1:4-4. Hence, character growth in improving our abilities to see the G-dliness in others is nothing short of increasing G-dliness in this world (*Gilui Kavod Shomayim*) enhancing the ultimate spiritual connection, our bond with *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* as well.

How can we cultivate mutual respect between spouses and foster that ultimate connection? The answer lies in our ability to focus on and emphasize the positive qualities and strengths that we admire and love in our spouse. This, in turn, leads us to the appreciation of his/her essence, and generates a lasting respect for one another.

Many years ago, during a Purim shpiel at the home of one of my great rabbeim, HaRav Avigdor Nebenzahl, one of the students did a perfectly hilarious imitation of Rav Nebenzahl. Afterward, the Rebbetzin shared that while the imitation may have been accurate, the talmid did not capture the essence of Rav Nebenzahl, which includes the kavod that he accords his wife.

Turning Mutual Respect into Connection: Three Levels of Communication

Armed with the above-mentioned sensitivities, an individual is ready to begin forging the ultimate connection with his/her spouse. *Ba'al Hamaor*, mentioned above, uses the word *hod*, best translated as glory, as a description the G-dly component of the *neshama*. It is not a coincidence that the word for "thankfulness," "*hodaah*," is a derivative of the word *hod*. Recognizing and thanking G-d, *hodaah*, is the way in which we connect to G-d's *hod*, His Glory. Similarly, the secret to connecting to one's spouse lies in the ability to relate to the *hod* of one's spouse through *hodaah*. A true connection, despite excellent conditions of respect, cannot fully exist if that respect is not expressed with the connecting glue of *hodaah*—*hakaras hatov* (gratitude).

Hodaah as a form of Communication

In order for a person to project thankfulness, one must take time out during his daily routine to notice the special things that his/her spouse regularly does. Only when the recognition is in place can gratitude be communicated so as to create the "connection".

Life in the 21st century is extremely hectic. When there may not be enough time for regular walks or quiet meals together, a heart-felt thank you to your husband or wife can be expressed at any time. A one-minute thank you can go a long way. When expressing gratitude, no matter how big or small the favor, avoid interruptions and distractions. Furthermore, when saying "thank you," be specific for the kindness performed. A general statement of thanks may sound hollow if the reason for the thank you is not explicitly shared.

Although it is not the only time to communicate such feelings, vacations, Shabbos and Yom Tov are wonderful opportunities to expound on one's *hakaras hatov*. Stepping out of the routine of everyday life can create a relaxed freedom of thought and special moments to verbally recognize and express gratitude for all that a spouse does for you.

Communicating Compliments: Another form of *Hodaah*

There is another component of connection that also qualifies as *hodaah*. Complimenting one's spouse about all parts of their life (their food, appearance, ideas, actions, speech, etc.) is another way of connecting through *hodaah*. The root of the word *hodaah* is also the same as *modeh*, an

admission.⁵ *Hodaah* is not only thanks but also a joyous concession to the unique qualities of someone else. A man who notices the unique talents of his wife and conveys his admiration through compliments will strengthen the bond between them. A woman who recognizes her husband's special qualities and verbalizes her esteem and affection will intensify the ties that unite them as one.

A Lesson in Communication from the Rogerian Model

There is another form of communication that is crucial in producing an even deeper level of connection. Let us introduce the idea with a humorous reality.

In Reader's Digest's book titled, Laughter, The Best Medicine II (pg. 174), they record an interesting statistic. The average bride spends 150 hours preparing for her wedding. They whimsically concluded, "That means that the average groom spends 150 hours saying, 'it sounds good.'" When our spouse speaks we can either nod along and say, "it sounds good," or we can really listen.

While I was a graduate student at Teachers College, Columbia University, my professor encouraged the class to watch a video recording of the famous therapist Carl Rogers, as he sat in therapy with one of his clients. The class was struck by the fact that during the highly effective therapy session, Rogers merely repeated, albeit in clearer and more coherent terms, the thoughts and feelings of the client. This important skill became so popular it evolved into "Rogerian Therapy" or "Person-Centered Therapy."

A highly productive way of connecting with one's spouse is to encourage him or her to express their thoughts and feelings, and for the "listening spouse" to truly pay attention, as Rogers did. Giving your spouse your undivided attention broadcasts a loud and clear message that says, "I care about you and your feelings are important to me." This nonverbal message conveyed is just as important as, if not more than, verbal communication.

On a deeper level, this form of listening is also the actualization of *Ba'al Hamoar's* idea that true *kavod* is the ability to show sensitivity to the internal feelings and dignity of another, thereby connecting to their internal *kavod*. The ultimate connection with one's spouse is fulfilled when we communicate not only by expressing *hakaras hatov* through verbal communication, but also showing that we respect the internal thoughts and feelings of the other. In this manner, the necessary gratitude and compliments join together with a more sublime form of communication, which will bring the couple closer to the ultimate connection, the union of their souls.

⁵ See *Pachad Yitzchak*, Chanukah Ch. 2 which elaborates on this point based on Maharal, (*Nesiv Ha'Avodah* 18:1).

Matchmaking Fees & Beyond

Rabbi Akiva Koenigsberg¹

Chaya Sima Koenigsberg²

The following article addresses a question posed by an unmarried woman regarding the topic of *schar shadchanus*³ (matchmaking fees). The goal of the article is to review some basic issues regarding *shadchanus*, but as the issue is often delicate, with many factors involved, one should contact a halachic authority to discuss any specific case.

Dear Rabbi,

My friend got engaged recently and gave the shadchan an expensive gift as "shadchanus" (matchmaking fee). When I mentioned this to my parents they scoffed at the practice as some new-fangled thing that originated in the last two decades, similar to giving a pearl necklace in the Yichud room. They were quite adamant that I"YH when I get engaged they will be very grateful to the shadchan (if there is one involved), however, they do not intend to pay "shadchanus."

Is there any halachic basis to giving "shadchanus" or is it just a fad of sorts?

Sincerely,

Pays to be married?

Answer

The issue of *shadchanus* is often associated with professional matchmakers who are known to charge a fee for their services. However, the obligation to pay *shadchanus* applies to any *shadchan* who helps make a shidduch. In the section of the *Shulchan Aruch* devoted to monetary law, Rama states the following:

A matchmaker is like a broker.

Rama, Shulchan Aruch, Choshen Mishpat 185:10

השדכן הוי כמו סרסור.

רמ"א, שולחן ערוך, חו"מ קפה:י

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³ We will use the more common abbreviated form of simply "*shadchanus*" throughout the rest of this article.

If a matchmaker claims the matchmaking fee and the other denies and says that he was not his matchmaker, or if there is any other dispute between them, the law is the same as any other monetary claim and they take oaths about it.

Rama, Shulchan Aruch, Choshen Mishpat 87:39

תבעו בשכר השדכנות, וזה כופר ואמר
שלא היה שדכן שלו, או שאר טענות
שבינייהו, דינו כבשאר תביעות ממון,
ונשבעין על כך.
רמ"א, שולחן ערוך, חו"מ פז:לט

Rama treats a *shadchan* like any broker who brings together two parties to make a deal and is entitled to be paid for his or her services. The same laws that pertain to any monetary dispute would apply to *shadchanus* as well.

Actually, there are two scenarios involving a *shadchan*. In one case, a *shadchan* may be asked to make a shidduch. But it is also common for a *shadchan* to make a match without being asked. In this situation as well, the *shadchan* deserves to be paid. Indeed the Vilna Gaon, in his comments to Rama above, quotes the following:

Regarding the law of shadchanus, Maharam explained that it stems from the law of one who enters someone else's field without permission (and makes some improvement through planting). If the field is appropriate to be planted we assess how much the owner would normally give to plant it (and he must pay that amount).

Biur HaGr"a, Shulchan Aruch, Choshen Mishpat 87:117

תבעו כו'. דין השדכנות כתב
מהר"ם שהוא מדין היורד לשדה
חבירו שלא ברשות שאם היתה
שדה עשויה ליטע שאומדין כמה
אדם רוצה ליתן בשדה זו
לנוטעה.

ביאור הגר"א, חו"מ פז:קיז

Maharam compares a situation in which a *shadchan* suggests a match without being asked, to the law found in the Gemara⁴ of a person who helps out his friend and improves his field without being asked. In terms of other examples of favors that may warrant payment, Rama states:

And similarly with any person who does some action or favor for another, the one who benefits cannot claim, "You obviously did it free of charge, since I did not ask you to do anything." Rather, he must make the appropriate payment.

Rama, Shulchan Aruch. Choshen Mishpat 264:4

וכן כל אדם שעושה עם חבירו
פעולה או טובה, לא יוכל לומר:
בחנם עשית עמדי הואיל ולא
צויתך, אלא צריך ליתן לו שכרו.
**רמ"א, שולחן ערוך, חו"מ
רסד:ד**

Of course, just as one can forgive a debt or payment that he is owed, the *shadchan* can forgive the payment and there would be no monetary obligation to pay. On this point, the *Pischei Teshuva* quotes the following:

The Teshuvot Chut Shani writes about the prevalent notion that even if a shadchan says he will make a match for free, one must still pay the shadchanus—there is no basis for this anywhere in the Gemara or Poskim.

Pischei Teshuva, Even Haezer 50:7(16)

ועיין בתשובות חוט השני סימן ב' שכתב דמה
שרגילין העולם לומר שדכן שאמר לאחר
אשדך לך שידוך פלוני בחנם אעפ"כ מחוייבים
ליתן שכרו אין לזה שורש ועיקר כלל בתלמוד
או בשום פוסק.

פתחי תשובה, אבן העזר סימן נ סעיף ז (טז)

⁴ Bava Metzia 101a.

Since *shadchanus* is like any other monetary obligation, the same rules regarding forgoing payments applies to *shadchanus* as well. Specifically, with non-professional *shadchanim*, it may be the case that they will say they have no intention of collecting *shadchanus* and in such a case there is no monetary obligation to pay any fee.⁵

In today's day and age, various online and networking programs continue to blossom: some invite members to join free of charge, others have a sign-up or monthly fee. Some are manned by volunteer matchmakers and others have paid matchmakers. While people may assume that the *shadchanim* for these sites or programs have waived their right to *shadchanus*, in many instances this is not the case. Although they may not charge a specific predetermined amount, the volunteers may be looking forward to receiving *shadchanus* once they make a successful match. It is best for the young couple to inquire about any expectations or recommendations of *shadchanus* outlined by the respective program. Of course, a halachic authority can also be consulted to determine the appropriate amount to give in any specific situation.

A common situation that arises is when there is more than one *shadchan* involved in a shidduch. In these situations, the considerations may get quite complex. The poskim write about various roles that the *shadchanim* may have, whether as the originator of the suggested match, the facilitator, or the closer, and how the *shadchanus* may be split among them.⁶ Since every case is unique, it is best to consult a halachic authority in these situations.

In terms of the amount one should pay, the poskim write that it follows the local custom, but this may also get complicated when the bride and groom come from different locales.⁷ Similarly, the appropriate time to give the *shadchanus* is dependent on the local custom.⁸ The *Aruch HaShulchan* writes that the custom is to pay right after the engagement.⁹ In the absence of a custom, Rama writes that one can delay payment until the wedding.¹⁰

The obligation to pay may lie with the couple; however, the *Avnei Nezer* writes the following:

It is obvious that the obligation to pay shadchanus applies to the bride and groom since they are the beneficiaries of the match. However, [the custom is that] the parents pay on their behalf.
Avnei Nezer Choshen Mishpat 36

כי זה פשוט שחייב שדכנות חל על
החתן והכלה כי להם עשה הטובה
רק שהמחותנים משלמים עבורם.
שו"ת אבני נזר חו"מ סימן לו

⁵ See *Nesivos Hamishpat*, *Choshen Mishpat* 12:5. Some poskim also discuss a possibility that making a shidduch may be a mitzvah and in the absence of any stipulation, one can claim that he assumed the match was made for a mitzvah and would not be required to pay. However, other poskim reject this notion and reiterate the obligation to pay the *shadchan* (See *Chikrei Lev*, *Choshen Mishpat*, *Siman* 135).

⁶ See *Pischei Teshuva*, *Choshen Mishpat* 185, #3; *Erech Shai*, *Even HaEzer* 50:7; *Aruch HaShulchan*, *Even HaEzer* 50:42.

⁷ *Pischei Teshuva*, *Even HaEzer* 50:16; *Erech Shai*, *ibid.*

⁸ Rama, *Choshen Mishpat* 185:10.

⁹ *Aruch HaShulchan*, *ibid.*

¹⁰ Rama, *ibid.*

In light of this custom, some poskim write that even when the parents cannot pay, the couple has no obligation to pay.¹¹

As is often the case, *shadchanim* may spend many hours trying to make matches without much success. According to the strict halacha, even if the *shadchan* spends time with a shidduch, if it does not work out, there is no monetary obligation to pay the *shadchan*. However, there is certainly a place for *hakaras hatov*, appreciating the good one does. Indeed, regardless of how much *shadchanus* one gives, or whether one owes *shadchanus* at all, it is always appropriate to express *hakaras hatov*. Unfortunately, we do not always appreciate how many people may be involved in making a successful match. In his must-read work on the Jewish wedding, Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan notes:

Behind every couple that meets, there is a chain of events that stretches back through the eons. ... Take the following case. He is introduced to her by a friend. But how did he meet the friend? All the events that brought him together with his friend must also be taken into account. Let's say he met that friend in school. Why did he go to that particular school? Why was he attracted to that particular friend? How did she make contact with that friend? The answer can take one back years, and even generations. ... Whenever a person meets the special "one" it is something of a miracle. Somehow, through a particular set of coincidences and chains of events, God has brought them together. (Made in Heaven, pp. 1-3)

Yes. Miracles are made in Heaven and matches are made on Earth.

A *shadchan*, whether professional or recreational, proactive or incidental, is HaShem's messenger to bring about a match ordained in Heaven. HaShem orchestrates events from Heaven. Here on Earth a new couple has an obligation to express their gratitude not only to HaShem, but to His mortal messengers as well.

At times a *shadchan* puts in innumerable hours coaching and guiding the couple through the dating process to bring them to engagement and marriage. In other situations, the *shadchan* merely "gets the ball rolling" so to speak, by introducing the couple and the couple take it from there, never checking in with the *shadchan* again. No matter where the *shadchan* falls on the spectrum of perceived effort, it is appropriate for the new couple to express their *hakaras hatov* to the person who has changed their lives in the most profound way.

During the dating process, as things are progressing positively, call to let the *shadchan* know. Upon engagement, beyond whatever formal "*shadchanus*" you may give the *shadchan*, it goes without saying that a phone call to the *shadchan*, personally letting him or her know that you are engaged, is appropriate. You don't want your best friends to find out you are engaged through OnlySimchas, so don't let your *shadchan* find out that way either. Some go beyond the phone call and send flowers or a card. Still, the connection doesn't have to stop with engagement or an invitation to the wedding.

Many couples make an effort to call their *shadchan* to thank him or her every year before Rosh HaShana, just as they call their relatives and rebbeim who so greatly impacted their lives. Please G-d, when a couple is blessed with children, it is appropriate to share the good news with the

¹¹ *Erech Shai, Choshen Mishpat* 185:10.

shadchan and to again thank the *shadchan* who was HaShem's messenger in bringing about the next generation. Let your milestones be your *shadchan's nachas*.

Finally, it is appropriate to express *hakaras hatov* to an organization, website, or program that helped you throughout the dating process. Consider becoming a volunteer matchmaker, sponsoring or hosting an event or program after settling into married life. Additionally, spread the word and publicize the great work of the *shadchan* and/or venue that helped you meet your *bashert*. These sincere acts of *hakaras hatov* not only demonstrate your appreciation, but invite your single friends to approach the same *shadchan* or program, leading to the potential of more successes. Pay it forward.

Our Words: Helpful or Hurtful? Ona'at Devarim in the Singles Community

Rabbi Ari Sytner¹

After a decade of dating and watching all of her other friends get married, Sara, a 31-year-old single woman, sighs at the thought of attending another wedding. Yet, this wonderful, accomplished and independent woman stands tall, and takes a deep breath as she enters the wedding hall with a smile.

However, the procession quickly begins. One person after another approaches Sara with genuine heartfelt offerings of "Im yirtzeh Hashem by you" (may it be G-d's will that you be next to get married). Sara smiles and says Amein, but deep down wishes that people would take action to help her find her bashert, rather than just offering their blessings.

Throughout the evening, Sara endures numerous well-meaning gestures of sympathy; compassionate nods, squeezes of the hand and gentle pats on the back from those who wish to convey their awareness of her single status. During dinner, several women raise her hopes by loudly boasting, "I know the perfect boy for you." Yet Sara knows full well from all of her previous experiences that the chances of anyone actually following through and making a call on her behalf are slim to none.

Obviously, Sara's feelings as a single are extremely sensitive, and rightfully so. However, does that require well-intentioned people to dance around her sensitivities and refrain from ever referencing her dating life? Isn't it just a little callous to hang out with Sara without ever acknowledging the very issue that is weighing foremost on her mind?

Halachic Analysis

The Torah clearly commands us to avoid verbally oppressing another person. This prohibition is known as *ona'at devarim*.

One shall not oppress his fellow, and you shall revere G-d, for I am the Lord your G-d.
Leviticus 25:17

ולא תוננו איש את עמיתו ויראת מאלהיך כי אני ה'
אלהיכם.
ויקרא פרשת בהר פרק כה: יז

The Gemara explores five scenarios wherein a person violates the prohibition of *ona'at devarim*:

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How might one violate ona'at devarim?

1. *Reminding a Ba'al Teshuva (returnee to Jewish observance) of his previous ways.*
2. *Reminding the son of a convert about the ways of his non-Jewish ancestors.*
3. *Reminding a convert concerning his own previous ways; suggesting that his mouth, which previously ate non-kosher food, will now engage in studying G-d's holy Torah.*
4. *Suggesting to a grieving, suffering, or ill person that their pain or loss may be related to a particular deficiency in their mitzvah observance.*
5. *Sending a person who is in search of wheat on a wild goose chase to a vendor that you know full well does not sell wheat.*

Babylonian Talmud Bava Metzia, 58b

באונאת דברים. הא כיצד? אם היה בעל תשובה אל יאמר לו זכור מעשיך הראשונים, אם היה בן גרים אל יאמר לו זכור מעשה אבותיך, אם היה גר ובא ללמוד תורה אל יאמר לו פה שאכל נבילות וטריפות, שקצים ורמשים בא ללמוד תורה שנאמרה מפי הגבורה. אם היו יסורין באין עליו, אם היו חלאים באין עליו, או שהיה מקבר את בניו, אל יאמר לו כדרך שאמרו לו חביריו לאיוב - הלא יראתך כסלתך תקותך ותם דרכיך זכר נא מי הוא נקי אבד. אם היו חמרים מבקשין תבואה ממנו, לא יאמר להם לכו אצל פלוני שהוא מוכר תבואה - ויודע בו שלא מכר מעולם.

תלמוד בבלי מסכת בבא מציעא דף נח:

All of these are examples of causing harm with one's words. However, one must wonder why the Gemara felt it necessary to specifically present these five scenarios as a demonstration of this sin.

Upon closer examination, one will notice that the progression of the five examples represent a journey, transitioning from comments uttered out of pure innocence to those veiled in sheer malice. The Gemara could have simply instructed us to refrain from overt forms of verbal abuse; however, the point of the Gemara is that *ona'at devarim* reaches far beyond the obvious. The real danger in violating this grievous commandment emerges from those statements that are ostensibly innocuous.

The first three cases listed in the Gemara are examples of when a person might make a mild comment, or even a joke, blind to the deep emotional sensitivities or insecurities of the recipient and the pain they are subsequently causing. The intention was never to inflict harm, nevertheless the damage was done.

The sin intensifies with the fourth case, as the speaker is a surprisingly compassionate person, thoughtful enough to take the time to visit and console someone who is in great emotional distress in the wake of a tragedy. However, despite selfless intentions, the speaker only adds insult to injury by casting critical judgments upon others. Through the speaker's remarks, implications are made which suggest that the source of their pain, suffering and tragedy is actually a well-deserved punishment in response to their shaky commitment to G-d. Thus, instead of delivering words of comfort as intended, they inject further pain into the already agonized hearts of the downtrodden.

In the final, and most obvious case of *ona'at devarim*, we meet a person who is simply cruel. By design, he intends to inflict harm on others by raising and then dashing the hopes of both the buyer and seller.

It is through these five examples that we can more clearly understand that *ona'at devarim* spans a range of intentions from innocence to malevolence.

To emphasize this point, consider the concluding words of the verse. Why is it necessary for the Torah to insert the commandment, “and you shall revere G-d,” following the instruction to not verbally oppress?

Anytime we encounter the phrase, “And you shall revere G-d,” it is a reference to those matters that are found privately in one’s heart.

Babylonian Talmud, Kidushin 32b

There are scenarios of ona’at devarim wherein a person who seems well intentioned says things to help someone. Nevertheless, if they looked more closely into their heart, they would realize that they are really causing pain. Therefore, the Torah immediately states, “And you shall revere G-d” — the One who truly knows your innermost thoughts.

Torah Temimah, Vayikra 25:17

כל דבר המסור ללב נאמר בו
“ויראת מאלהיך.”

קדושין ל”ב

ויראת מאלהיך - כי יש אונאת דברים
כאלה שאפשר להמאנה להתנצל לפני
בני אדם לומר שכונתו לטובה ולכבוד,
אבל בלבו הוא יודע כונתו, ולכן אמר
ויראת מאלהיך הבוחן ובודק מחשבות
האדם ותחבולותיו.
תורה תמימה ויקרא פרשת בהר כה: יז

The conclusion of the verse, “and you shall revere G-d,” conveys the message that *ona’at devarim* goes far beyond bullying or blatant verbal abuse. It is most easily violated when casual comments are made, without first taking the deep sensitivities and feelings of others into account. Only through the sobering introspection that comes with the knowledge of G-d’s awareness of our innermost thoughts, can one truly ensure that their words are entirely pure.

How important is it to go the extra mile and measure one’s words before speaking?

It was taught before Rav Nachman son of R’ Yitzchak: Anyone who publicly shames his friend is considered to have murdered.

Babylonian Talmud Bava Metzia, 58b

One must be exceedingly careful to not publicly embarrass their friend, whether a child or adult, nor to call them a name that they are ashamed of, or to say anything in front of them that they may be embarrassed by.

Maimonides Hil. De’ot, 6:8

תני תנא קמיה דרב נחמן בר יצחק: כל המלבין פני
חבירו ברבים כאילו שופך דמים.
תלמוד בבלי מסכת בבא מציעא דף נח:

צריך אדם להזהר שלא לבייש חבירו ברבים
בין קטן בין גדול, ולא יקרא לו בשם שהוא
בוש ממנו, ולא יספר לפניו דבר שהוא בוש
ממנו.
רמב"ם הלכות דעות ו:ח

The Rambam is conveying a recipe for healthy interactions. Rather than speaking to others based upon our own compass of what we personally deem reasonable, acceptable or humorous, we should look more closely at the person to whom we are speaking and assess what they might deem hurtful or offensive based upon their station in life. Just as each person has a varying degree of tolerance to physical pain, the same is true with emotional anguish. What one person might think innocuous, to others may seem very hurtful.

Conclusion

There is no doubt that this situation is a difficult one. It is not as much a question of defining right and wrong, as it is a matter of achieving maximum sensitivity and support without crossing the line of *ona’at devarim*. In the case of Sara, every guest who approached her at the wedding

was well-intentioned, but was simply unaware of how she felt. What the traditional Jewish sources demonstrate is that it is not the intention of the speaker that matters, as much as the potency of the words themselves. Therefore, it is important to know the person before we speak. Some singles may genuinely appreciate the comments, while others may not. In cases of doubt, one should err on the side of caution and refrain from raising the subject of dating or marriage (unless Sara raises it first).

Unfortunately, by addressing these challenges of *ona'at devarim*, we may be causing additional problems. If we silence those who care, and prevent them from contributing toward the solution, what constructive avenues are left for those who wish to help Sara find her mate?

In lieu of blessings, rhetoric, or well-intentioned comments, consider the wisdom of Shamai:

Shamai said:

1. *Allow your Torah to be constant.*
2. *Let your words be few, but your actions be great.*
3. *Receive each person with a pleasant demeanor.*

Pirkei Avot, Ethics of our Fathers, 1:15

שמאי אומר עשה תורתך קבע, אמור מעט
ועשה הרבה, והוי מקבל את כל האדם בסבר
פנים יפות.
משנה מסכת אבות פרק א, משנה טו

This Mishna is a formula for how we can relate to singles with greater sensitivity. If we truly wish to help, we should let the Torah guide us, so that instead of offering just words (which can at times be painful), we take action on their behalf, and care enough to embrace everyone and uplift them with a pleasant demeanor.

When you see a single at a *simcha*, smile and enjoy the event together. It is a great opportunity to be a friend, as you support and embrace them *b'sever panim yafot*, with a pleasant demeanor (and be sure to do so regularly after the wedding as well). If you are inclined to offer a blessing but are not sure how it will be received, consider an alternative, which may reduce the risk of *ona'at devarim*. Rather, keep them in the forefront of your mind and serve as an ongoing advocate.

After the wedding is over, get right to work on their behalf and send a few e-mails, make a few phone calls and try to think who you might know that could help suggest a match. Even if you are not a trained *shadchan*, your involvement can help make those critical introductions and connections. In addition to our sensitivity, friendship and support, what the singles community needs most to help advance them to the *chupah* is *אמור מעט ועשה הרבה*, less words and more action.

Dating or Waiting: When Am I Ready?

Rabbi Dovid M. Cohen, J.D., M.Sc.¹

My first year at YU, after spending two years in Israel after high school, was a period marked by transition. I had left the cocoon of the Israel experience and was confronted with the challenge of integrating and harmonizing continued growth in Torah with a secular education. I arrived on campus as a 20 year old with dating far from my mind.

My YU roommate was holding in a different place. He had maintained sporadic contact with his high school girlfriend during his years in Israel, and she had already been back for a year pursuing an accounting degree when he returned to YU. He was ready to explore and was actively engaged in discerning if she was “the one.” He had already chosen a career path and was spending many hours on the phone with this young woman each evening.

The contrast was a lonely one. He had someone to share the vicissitudes of life with and I did not. Yet, as much as I craved the companionship that he had, I was less directed and sure of myself than he was. An honest self-assessment coupled with consultation with mentors revealed that I was not ready to be dating.

The first aspect of guidance is the belief that every person is created in the image of G-d, and has a specific life task and partner to help them accomplish their divinely ordained purpose. Sometimes people attempt to live up to someone else’s persona, rather than their own. They will bolster their fragile self-esteem by comparing themselves to a roommate or friend. They may even demean and criticize themselves because of the success of another. One should be careful not to be unduly influenced by those around them who may be on a different life trajectory. Dormitory or apartment living with others has many benefits, but care should be taken to remind oneself that competition does not have a place in this transcendent part of life.

With this understanding in tow, we are ready to begin exploring how each individual can attempt to assess his or her emotional aptitude in beginning dating for marriage purposes. There may be objective criteria, but they are subjectively applied. A specific young woman may fit the criteria and be ready to marry at a given age, while a young man may not be ready at a similar age and vice versa. Disparate backgrounds will logically impact the age of the prospect one dates, lifestyle

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goals, choice of community to reside in, and a myriad of other factors relevant in the consummation of a match.

What are some of those objective criteria? About 20 years ago, the book *The Art of Loving* by Eric Fromm was a must-read in a certain yeshiva for all boys entering the dating world. Fromm focuses on family-of-origin issues and the ability to individuate and build healthy relationships of one's own. Rav Eliyahu Dessler's essay on *chesed* in *Michtav MeEliyahu* Part I (known as "*Kuntrus HaChesed*") is also a foundational work elaborating on how true love is knowing *how to give*. This is hinted at by the root "*hav*," "to give," found in the word "*ahava*," "love." Loving another is an "art," hence, one must be adequately prepared to enter into a marital relationship. When studied with a keen eye and a listening heart, both of these works educate the reader to the reality of needing to be in a certain *emotional space* to sustain a lasting relationship.

I recently worked with a female client who was dating a man with a narrower view on certain issues, than her own personal perspectives. She was frustrated by some of his attitudes, but to her credit grew to understand that she needs to respect but not necessarily agree with him on every position and outlook. A commitment to love another requires embracing differences while working together to achieve unity of purpose that goes beyond "my" needs and wants. Being open minded, respectful, flexible and receptive to the opinions of others (within the confines of halacha when referring to areas of religion), are key elements to a happy marriage.

True love also requires being vulnerable. A person with a strong ego is able to reveal their fears, weaknesses, frailties and great dreams. People with perfectionist tendencies often have a difficult time sharing their developing emotional world. They may overly intellectualize things in a way that stunts the development of promising relationships. This type of personal growth and introspection, the ability to be in touch with one's own emotional experience, is crucial toward forging the relationships discussed by Rav Dessler and Eric Fromm. Stated a bit differently, "inner-work" is at the root of truly giving oneself over or making room for another. Transitioning from "I" to "we" is a brand new qualitative reality. Rav Yosef Dov Solovetichik, zt"l (cited in *Mesorah* Vol. II pg. 5) used this psychological transformative insight in his explanation of the *bracha* recited on *eirusin* (betrothal), categorizing it as a new type of "*birkat hamitzvah*" appropriate for a change in status taking place on various planes—emotional, physical, existential and halachic.

Marriage requires ongoing nourishment to truly reap its rich rewards—particularly during the beginning stages, when we are taught by Chazal that "*kol hatchalot kashot*," "all beginnings are difficult." Rav Shlomo Wolbe zt"l notes in his *Kuntrus Lechatanim* that *shana rishona* is a qualitative concept rather than a quantitative amount of time. Challenges come and go, thus it is wise for a young man and women to devote some time to introspect and ask themselves some questions before embarking on dating, evaluating if they possess the tools and inner fortitude to ride the normal waves of life.

Am I a resilient person? A flexible person? Do I have experience bending my will to the will of another, even when I may have strong reservations? What personal conundrums have I weathered in relationships or otherwise that I can lean on for guidance? Do I know what a deep emotional relationship and commitment is?

In many ways, a marital relationship makes demands of a person similar to the requirements between a person and G-d, humbling ourselves to a Higher will. Contemplating one's religious level and outlook can also be a helpful exercise in this exploratory analysis. Therapists have long noted the interplay between one's relationship with G-d and with one's parents;² these complexities are often transferred onto the marital playing field as well.

Marriage does best when comprised of two healthy individuals with a strong appreciation of their own strengths and weaknesses. The term "best" would signify working toward an emotionally healthy self prior to beginning the dating process. This self-awareness enables individuals to join as one. While individuals and couples may face earlier or ongoing challenges relating to relationships with family members, childhood friends or others, addressing these issues before marriage will allow the couple to blossom together in many other realms, such as their mutual goals, common values and interests, spiritual growth, personal and professional pursuits, and life perspectives.

Thankfully, we live in a society where therapy is no longer taboo. It is not uncommon to hear people say in casual conversation that their therapist advised them of something. Both undergraduate campuses of YU have active counseling centers that students and alumni can access, in addition to wonderful faculty members, rebbeim, mechanchot, mashgichim and mashgichot. If a student is concerned that he or she isn't fully prepared to enter into a relationship or is having difficulty clarifying their readiness for marriage, he or she should be encouraged to take advantage of these wonderful resources.

Sometimes one may meet a person but is not yet "ready" to date. This can be tricky, especially when the other party is, in fact, ready. We all know of people who pushed up their timetable because the "right" person suddenly came along. Sometimes one party will wait and other times he or she will marry another. It is helpful to be open, flexible when possible, and reassess often, since we never know when divine *hashgacha* may come knocking.

Parental input is important to this process. Every dynamic is different, but presumably at younger ages there will be more significant parental involvement. It is advisable that parents not only love and guide us, but also respect our choices. Many times, the goals of parents and child are not unified in the courtship process. While the child's happiness is at stake, it is important that the child communicate clearly and respectfully with his/her parents in terms of how they can help or how they may be hindering prospects. Friends and even parents may have subconscious agendas that may cause friction and frustration in the dating process. Additionally, emotional and psychological awareness of one's own environment and origins is certainly a helpful tool in preparation for joining a new extended family with its own fresh style and influence. Communicating within our own family of origin about our emotional universe is a necessary building block toward strong marital communication.

² See, for example, Angie McDonald et al. "Attachment to God and Parents: Testing the Correspondence vs. Compensation Hypotheses," *Journal of Psychology and Christianity* (2005), Vol. 24, No. 1, 21-28.

Placement in the family hierarchy can also play a role. There may be an older sibling not yet married and a younger sibling may be uncomfortable preceding his/her sibling. Although delicate, communication and sensitivity to the parties and circumstance involved is of the essence. It may be reasonable for a younger sibling to wait a minimal amount of time in this context, but certainly not to delay one's prospects significantly or indefinitely.

It is important to realize when deciding to start dating that you can theoretically be married within the year from when you begin, maybe even sooner. This requires an awareness of the practical and less romantic side of married life, financial responsibility.

How will we support ourselves? Am I able to articulate my career aspirations? Are my parents willing and able to help me financially in the early years as I complete my schooling? I'd like to continue studying or learning for a few years, how will that impact upon my potential mate and marriage?

I have met with people post-marriage who were not firmly in touch with the reality they purportedly signed up for. Love doesn't conquer all and it certainly does not pay the bills. This does not mean that every detail must be ironed out in advance, but rather that dating requires a certain level of maturity and sense of responsibility.

Additionally, one should have a clear demarcation in their mind between what is a "need" and what is a "like" when looking for a spouse. These categories can be rather subjective, but each individual should be honest in assessing what they can and cannot live without. One's dreams can be ambitious, but should also be realistic. It may be helpful to discuss your views on these areas with a parent or an experienced mentor, encouraging that person to share their insights on areas that they find to be most predictive of a healthy marriage. One should also have a genuine sense of wanting to share with and give to another person. Some experts say the readiness stage is preceded by an internal loneliness. This includes the desire to share dreams, ideals, resources and personal space. There should be an intuitive internal call toward this process, rather than an "I'm back from Israel" or "I just graduated, time to start dating" approach.

I recall many years ago hearing a dating schmooze in the YU *beit midrash* from Rabbi Hershel Reichman, Shlita. He gently chided us, exclaiming, "Don't ask what she can do for you, ask what you can do for her," adapting JFK's inaugural address to our nation in 1961. Character refinement and kindness ultimately assures a successful marital union. Almost everything else is secondary to these qualities. Many of us are accustomed to focusing on the glitz and glamour promoted prominently by society at large. Before we begin this most important stage of life, we should inculcate within our psyche that Torah values must reign supreme. An individual who is hung up on a certain look, type of family or salary range may be sabotaging his or her chances at marriage. Rav Avraham Pam zt"l has an excellent essay in *Atara LaMelech (Chayeh Sarah)* in helping one access these timeless values.

As people transition into dating, it behooves such individuals to be keenly aware that dating is just one of the many activities that they will be involved in. I know of too many examples where dating began to dominate a person's life at the expense of all else. One must always remember that dating is a means to an end and not an end unto itself. There is often more time and financial resources available before marriage. Therefore, while certainly giving dating the

requisite attention, one should also be sure to cultivate friendships, travel, join community service initiatives, expand their Torah knowledge, and continue climbing higher in their personal and professional milestones. Each of these endeavors will not only serve as a solid foundation for the future home they build, but nourish their spiritual and emotional strides in the interim.

With focus on these various areas, coupled with ongoing prayer, it is my fervent prayer that G-d grant all those engaged in this process an easy, meaningful and fulfilling road toward finding their *zivug*.

Essentials to Look for in a Spouse

Chani Maybruch, Ed.D.¹

Sarah had been dating Zvi for a few months and she felt that they were ready to become engaged. One night, he suggested that they go to a certain venue. Sarah was quite surprised at his suggestion, since that venue was in dissonance with her sense of morality and she frowned upon entering such a place. After she asked Zvi more questions about the reasons for his choice of venue, she discovered that they had critical differences in values and did not seem to be headed in the same life direction. When Sarah's mother told me this story, she was perplexed that her daughter and Zvi had felt almost ready to get engaged when they did not yet know some of each other's most firmly held values.

When individuals and their families inquire about a potential spouse, they are sometimes interested in an abundance of peripheral information about the person. In an effort to find indicators of compatibility, it is common to research factors such as the person's schools, synagogue, community, profession and friends. In addition, physical traits, earning power, the promise of parental support and social popularity are often considered valuable in determining future marital satisfaction. Yet these criteria are often circumstantial, transient, or subjective—and do not necessarily shed light on a person's essence or on a person's potential to be a suitable spouse. The following discussion will focus on some match criteria that research suggests are highly correlated with a satisfying and stable marriage.

Research on Important Match Criteria

Recent empirical research of individuals with marital experience within the Orthodox Jewish community sheds light on what to look for in a potential spouse in order to ensure a satisfying and stable marriage. The data for this study emerged from a larger study conducted by the author that pertained to relationship education and marital satisfaction of Modern Orthodox Jews. This research, involving approximately 2,650 individuals, was performed at the Azrieli Graduate School of Jewish Education and Administration at Yeshiva University under the guidance of Dr. David Pelcovitz, together with Dr. Efrat Sobolofsky and Rabbi Dr. Chaim Feuerman.²

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² Maybruch, C. (2012) Relationship Education for Modern Orthodox Jewish Adolescents as a Factor of Marital Satisfaction: A Quantitative Study. *Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Azrieli Graduate School of Jewish Education and Administration.*

With impetus from Dr. Sobolofsky, director of YUConnects, a subsection of the study described above was dedicated to researching what factors are deemed to be important criteria for choosing a spouse using a sample of individuals with marital experience. A full, detailed description of the research is planned for future publication. This article will highlight some of the findings and discuss practical applications that may benefit individuals who are dating, those who seek to suggest suitable matches, professional dating and couple counselors, rabbis and rebbetzins, and other communal leaders.

Approximately 500 individuals, aged 20–30 (98 percent married for the first time, 2 percent divorced, widowed or remarried) evaluated the importance of 14 criteria in choosing a spouse. The following two questions were posed: (1) How important were these aspects of your spouse to you before marriage? (2) Now, based on your marital experience, how important are these aspects to the success of your marriage? Using a six-point scale ranging from “very unimportant” to “very important,” participants rated the extent to which the following criteria were important to them: (1) attraction, (2) brings out the best in me, (3) education, (4) emotional stability, (5) family structure, (6) finances, (7) health, (8) intelligence, (9) interpersonal skills, (10) level of religious observance, (11) personality, (12) self-esteem, (13) shared vision and dream, and (14) values. The percentage of participants who rated each aspect as “important” or “very important” were calculated to compare the relative importance that participants ascribed to each of the criteria.

The six highest ranking criteria, in order of importance, that participants reported to have been “important” or “very important” to them before marriage were: (1) values, (2) emotional stability, (3) personality, (4) level of religious observance, (5) brings out the best in me, and (6) interpersonal skills. The top six criteria that participants reported as “important” or “very important” to them in light of their marital experience were: (1) values, (2) emotional stability, (3) brings out the best in me, (4) personality, (5) interpersonal skills, and (6) shared vision and dreams.

The results demonstrated that there are a few core criteria that individuals with marital experience had considered to be essential before their marriage, and continued to see as important after marriage. Of all the criteria included in the survey, values and emotional stability were regarded highest in importance by participants. These two were ranked as “important” or “very important” by over 80 percent of participants, both before and after marriage. Personality and interpersonal skills were ranked high in importance by approximately 75 percent of participants, both before and after marriage. Interestingly, while “brings out the best in me” was high on the list even before marriage (75 percent), it was ranked even higher in perceived importance after marital experience (over 80 percent). In addition, having a “shared vision and dream” was ranked as more important after marriage (approximately 75 percent). At the same time, the “level of religious observance” dropped somewhat in perceived importance (from 75 percent to 71 percent) and was therefore not one of the top six criteria in perceived importance after marriage.

The following discussion will explain how the six criteria that were ranked highest in importance based on the marital experience of the participants can inform the decisions of those who are dating and others assisting in the dating process. It will also demonstrate how these criteria are related to marital satisfaction based on previous empirical research. Criteria that are conceptually related will be presented together. An analysis of the possible reasons for the

differences between the relative importance that participants reported to have ascribed to criteria before vs. after marriage, and their implications, is planned for a future publication.

Values and Shared Vision

The values of a person serve as the basis for many of the essential qualities that one should look for in a potential spouse. “Values” refer to what is important to people in their lives.³ They represent broad goals that apply across various contexts and time, and that often motivate individuals in their behavior.⁴ Shared values have been correlated with higher marital satisfaction. For example, Jewish Israeli couples who shared similar values with each other also reported higher levels of marital satisfaction.⁵ Likewise, marriages between American couples who reported shared values, such as placing a high value on belief in G-d, religious commitment and commitment to good parenting, were associated with a significantly greater ability to manage conflict.⁶

Since sharing values is essential to developing a thriving marriage, it is important for dating individuals to discover each other’s values. However, it is not an easy task to accomplish. In the case described above, Sarah might have speculated about Zvi’s values based on his previous choices and practices. She might have observed that he attended all of the “right” schools, chosen the “right” profession, and that he currently spends his day in pursuit of ventures she deems important. Therefore, she concluded that they must be headed in the same direction. However, these indicators could still be inaccurate, as Sarah discovered on their final date. If Sarah and Zvi’s values dictate that their trajectories for their life goals are even slightly off now, they will probably grow further apart as time goes on.

The ideal way a couple should discover one another’s values is by having discussions about things that are important to each other. They might ask each other the following questions, while keeping in mind that they are only projections of the future.

- What are your goals?
- What are your dreams?
- What are your relationships like? (examples: family members, friends, co-workers, mentors)
- Who do you admire and why? (examples: family member, friend, mentor, teacher, etc.)
- How do you deal with stressful situations?
- If money was no object, what would you change about your life?
- How would you choose to raise your children similarly or differently than your own experience?
- Who do you enjoy going to for Shabbos? What is Shabbos like in their home and why do you like it?

³ Bardi, A. & Schwartz, S. H. (2003). Values and Behavior: Strength and Structure of Relations. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 29(10), 1207-1220.

⁴ Bardi, A. & Schwartz, S. H. (2003).

⁵ Gaunt, R. (2006). Couple Similarity and Marital Satisfaction: Are Similar Spouses Happier? *Journal of Personality*, 74(5), 1401-1420.

⁶ Rosen-Grandon, J. R., Myers, J. E., Hattie, J. A. (2004). The Relationship Between Marital Characteristics, Marital Interaction Processes, and Marital Satisfaction. *Journal of Counseling and Development*, 82(1), 58-68.

Based on the answers to some of these questions, they can draw more accurate conclusions about one another's values.

In contrast, a potential date's background, past experiences, and many current involvements are insufficient and often faulty determinants of shared values. Sarah's ideal spouse could come from a very different background, and could currently have a different life style than Sarah would have chosen for herself. What he did in the past, or is doing in the present, may be largely based on circumstances beyond his control or may be only temporary. Although many individuals in Sarah's shoes would be reluctant to pursue such a *shidduch*, and might decline the match altogether, what should be most important to Sarah is the direction in which he is headed in the future.

To Dream the Possible Dream

A person's values also shape their dreams and vision for the future. Couples in satisfying marriages are aware of and support each other's vision and dreams.⁷ These may include dreams about personal improvement, education, religion, career, parenting, greater involvement in community affairs, or travel. Couples who intimately know each other's dreams are better equipped to understand what lies behind their difference of opinions in a conflict.⁸ On the other hand, conflict gridlock tends to occur when a spouse is unaware that his or her dream underlies a perpetual disagreement between them.

For example, a conflict about where to live will become gridlocked if each spouse merely repeats his/her point of view along with current practical reasons for it. In contrast, they will come to a greater understanding of the feelings behind their opinions and be able to mutually resolve the conflict if they discuss how their past experiences helped shape where they want to live now, what living in a particular place means to them, and how it is tied to their dreams for the future. Couples who are committed to their relationship will want to help one another meet their respective needs and fulfill their dreams. Therefore, a couple who is dating should communicate and share their personal goals and dreams to ensure that they can commit to respect and support one another's dreams later in a marriage.

Emotional Stability

Loving couples who care about one another's well-being are inevitably affected by one another's emotional ups and downs.⁹ Ideally, one's spouse serves as a trusted confidante and source of support to rely on through the vicissitudes of life. Yet extreme emotional instability can put an excessive strain on a couple's relationship. For example, when a spouse is depressed, it is common to notice a cyclical relationship in the marriage. The spouse's depressive symptoms are

⁷ Barnacle, R. & Abbott, D. (2009). Couple and Relationship Education Update: The Development and Evaluation of a Gottman-Based Premarital Education Program: A Pilot Study, *Journal of Couple and Relationship Therapy*, 8, 64-82.

⁸ Gottman, J. M. & Silver, N. (1999). *The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work*. New York, NY: Three Rivers Press.

⁹ Whisman, M. A., Uebelacker, L. A., Weinstock, L. M. (2004). Psychopathology and Marital Satisfaction: The Importance of Evaluating Both Partners. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 72(5), 830-838.

associated with decreased marital satisfaction for both spouses, and the decrease in marital satisfaction increases the spouse's depressive symptoms.¹⁰

On the other hand, couples who interact well in the face of emotional instability have been shown to have a more satisfying relationship than those who interact less effectively.¹¹ Understanding the nature of the instability can help guide the couple's decision about whether or not to marry one another, as well as inform them of how to best support each other while dating and after marriage. Therefore, it is wise to seek professional guidance when dating a person who has a history of, or exhibits symptoms of, emotional instability.

Personality and Interpersonal skills

In an effort to determine the influence of personality traits and interpersonal skills on marital satisfaction, the majority of research studies have focused on specific measurable, observable behaviors during couples' interactions in daily life and during conflict. Such research can be challenging to apply with practical ramifications, since it is difficult to clearly define and quantify emotional expressions during observations of couple interaction and to replicate study results.¹² Nevertheless, several studies conducted by researchers with extensive experience have found significant factors that contribute to healthy couple interaction.

Above all, the way a couple responds to one another's bids for emotional connection during daily life experiences influences their marital satisfaction. Spouses who respond favorably to one another's bids for emotional connection, who, for example, enthusiastically reply to what their spouse says or asks, report greater marital satisfaction.¹³ These positive interactions also help a couple ride the waves of the inevitable conflicts that arise in marriage. It is as if they invest in an emotional bank account from which positive feelings can be withdrawn to support each spouse during a conflict.¹⁴

Furthermore, the way a couple deals with conflict has been found to be the greatest predictor of marital happiness and stability.¹⁵ Engaged couples who were observed communicating effectively during conflict were found to have high levels of satisfaction over their first six years of marriage.¹⁶ These couples entered into a disagreement in a calm and neutral manner, voiced their complaints without criticism or contempt, were open to accepting the influence of one

¹⁰ Davila, J., Karney, B. R., Hall, T. W., Bradbury, T. N. (2003). Depressive Symptoms and Marital Satisfaction: Within-Subject Associations and the Moderating Effects of Gender and Neuroticism. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 17(4), 557-570.

¹¹ Karney, B. R., & Bradbury, T. N. (1997). Neuroticism, marital interaction, and the trajectory of marital satisfaction. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 72, 1075-1092.

¹² Bradbury, T. N., Fincham, F. D., & Beach, S. R. H. (2000). Research on the nature and determinants of marital satisfaction: A decade in review. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 62, 964-980.

¹³ Driver, J. L. & Gottman, J. M. (2004). Daily marital interactions and positive affect during marital conflict among newlywed couples. *Family Process* 43(3), 301-314.

¹⁴ Gottman, J. M. & DeClaire, J. (2001). *The Relationship Cure*. New York, NY: Crown.

¹⁵ Gottman, J. M., Coan, J., Carrere, S., & Swanson, C. (1998). Predicting marital happiness and stability from newlywed interactions. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 60, 5-22.

¹⁶ Gottman et al., 1998.

another, and made efforts to de-escalate any negativity of their spouse by not responding to it in kind. On the other hand, another study determined that negative behaviors including stubbornness, defensiveness and withdrawal interfered with a couple's ability to cooperate and resolve their conflict constructively.¹⁷ Interestingly, expressions of affection, humor, interest or enthusiasm during conflict were found to have the power to eliminate the damaging effects of high levels of negative communication skills.¹⁸

Individuals who demonstrate the positive interpersonal behaviors described above are likely to contribute to a happy relationship. Yet, along with the conduct of a potential spouse, one's own attitudes and actions play an equally central role in creating a fulfilling marriage.¹⁹ Consequently, to prepare for marriage and to achieve a desirable dynamic with a compatible spouse, one should engage in self-reflection about one's own personality during the dating process. This process includes exploring one's personal strengths and weaknesses and how they are manifested interpersonally. This exploration is often essential in two ways. First, in my experience mentoring couples, I have seen that often to find the "right" person, one must *be* the "right" person. Dating can become a vehicle for self-growth to help a person become a better candidate for a relationship and to be an ideal future spouse. Second, self-reflection and working on one's own *middos* (character traits) can enable one to appreciate and accept the strengths and weaknesses of another person, which can foster tolerance, understanding and respect between them to enhance their courtship and—ultimately—their marriage.

It is recommended that dating individuals seek feedback from loved ones, matchmakers and their dates to help them self-reflect and hone their interpersonal skills. A trusted and experienced dating mentor can also provide concrete tips and advice to approach dating in general, and to address specific questions. Of course, the Torah's attitudes and behaviors that foster friendship and love between people provides an excellent guide.

Brings out the Best in Me

An area that was rated high in importance by many individuals with marital experience was "brings out the best in me." This open phrase could have been interpreted by the respondents in several ways. Some might have considered it to mean that a person can be true to himself because he feels so comfortable when he is with her. Others may have felt that it implies that she feels her "best side" and finest personality traits emerge in the context of her relationship with him because their personalities are so compatible. Essentially, though, it echoes the words of Koheles (4:9), "Two are better than one"—each one of them is enhanced because of their relationship together.

¹⁷ Burpee, L. C., & Langer, E. J., (2005). Mindfulness and marital satisfaction. *Journal of Adult Development*, 12(1) 43-51.

¹⁸ Johnson, M. D., Cohan, C. L., Davila, J., Lawrence, E., Rogge, R. D., Karney, B. R., Sullivan, K. T., Bradbury, T.N. (2005). Problem-Solving Skills and Affective Expressions as Predictors of Change in Marital Satisfaction. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 73(1), 15-27.

¹⁹ Johnson et al., 2005.

Marriage researchers have found that one of the factors that cause couples to feel more committed and satisfied in their relationships is that they feel their partner develops them into better people, also known as self-expansion.²⁰ Included in a scale that measures the extent of self-expansion in a relationship is that being with one's partner:

- Makes you a better person.
- Results in you having new experiences.
- Improves your ability to accomplish and learn new things.
- Has strengths (e.g. abilities, skills) that compensate for your weaknesses.
- Helps you expand your own capabilities.
- Enables you to have a broader perspective on things.

The more each half of a couple can agree that “my partner brings out the best in me” in the ways described above, the happier they will be together.

Conclusion

Groundbreaking research in the Orthodox Jewish community has found several criteria that individuals with marital experience believe are essential to a fulfilling marriage. It is advisable that individuals who are dating, and those who are involved in helping along the process, keep these findings in mind. Knowing “what to look for” will hopefully help many people succeed in finding spouses with whom they will discover the joy of marriage.

²⁰ Lewandowski, G. W., Jr., & Ackerman, R. A. (2006). Something's missing: Need fulfillment and self-expansion as predictors of susceptibility to infidelity. *Journal of Social Psychology*, 146(4), 389-403.

Relationships that Work: Introspection and Expectations

Shana Yocheved Schacter, CSW¹

Brian, a 30-year-old Modern-Orthodox single man, attended a barbeque for single men and women. He walked into the event feeling rather skeptical about meeting anyone he could possibly date, since he has not met with success at similar events before. Brian did his due diligence by walking around the outdoor venue and by chatting with various men and women. He left for home having enjoyed himself but not interested in calling any of the several women with whom he had conversations. When Brian's friend asked him about the event the following day, Brian described it as pleasant but not exciting; and that the women in attendance were nice but average in looks and personality.

Lois, a 28-year-old Modern Orthodox woman, went out on a blind date with a man who got her number from a mutual friend. They went out for dinner, and Lois felt immediately excited by his sense of humor and flirtatious style. Time passed quickly and she was confident and eager as she anticipated a second date. Days, and then weeks passed, and she did not hear from her date again. Lois did not follow up with their go-between and added this experience on to a long list of other times when she misjudged a man's interest in her.

Miriam and Charlie met on the Upper West Side when they were in their late 20's and early 30's respectively. While they shared similar educational and professional backgrounds, enjoyed similar recreational activities and were attracted to one another, they were puzzled and concerned that their dating was punctuated by loud fights and frustration regarding feeling misunderstood by the other. They wondered about how they should evaluate their relationship: did it hold great promise of happiness based on their shared history, or were they doomed to a future of tumultuous fighting? Moreover, they wondered if there were any interventions they could utilize to build on the strength of their relationship and diminish the conflicts that in retrospect always seemed so trivial, or whether they should cut their losses, go their separate ways, and try to meet other partners with whom there was a greater sense of harmony.

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Single adults across the spectrum of society, both religious and secular, Jewish and non-Jewish, rich and poor, educated and non-educated, all face the challenge of finding their life's partner and creating a sustainable relationship. What makes some couples more easily able to find one another, while others face what feels like endless trial and error? Are there conscious and unconscious determinants that we can identify in order to help single adults better understand what their course of action and reaction is all about? It is impossible to know the answers to all these questions, and indeed, some of the answers have little to do with the psychology of human beings. But to the degree that we can be thoughtful, insightful and helpful in making loving, lasting relationships, we must do what we can!

Where does it begin? What motivates an individual to choose a life's partner of a particular type? How does one nurture and sustain a long-term relationship? How does one ensure compatibility and happiness in a marriage decades after the first years of excitement have passed?

Our early life's experiences provide a road map for our later relationships with family, friends and eventually a life's partner. As an infant, it is important that we feel secure in the responses of our parents/caretakers to provide our basic needs: food and protection from danger of all kinds. When we are raised in a safe environment and the emotional climate in our homes of origin is calm, warm and empathic, we learn as children to trust and will therefore be able to thrive physically and emotionally. Perfection is not required (or possible); rather "good enough" parenting is the goal, with just the right amount of frustration built-in to allow us as young children to learn to comfort ourselves. When our parents are attuned to their children and their needs, we grow to become adults who are able to create trusting and healthy relationships of our own. Children who are praised and listened to as opposed to those who are overlooked, dismissed and criticized, develop a strong sense of self and can later relate to others in their adult lives in honest, patient and loving ways.

Most of us fall somewhere on the spectrum of having received "good enough" parenting. Life is complicated though, and most of us also inevitably experience disappointment and/or trauma through illness, death of loved ones, and/or emotional betrayal. Even relocating from one city to another creates experiences of separation and loss. People of all ages need to learn how to mourn these losses and to cope with them through acceptance and adaptation. Losses can often provide unexpected opportunities for resilience and growth: an individual can grow emotionally wiser, deeper and stronger as she or he becomes able to remember and internalize the positive aspects of the person who was lost or the experience that was traumatic. These unexpected developments can actually enhance the potential of a man or woman to make deep and meaningful relationships as they learn to appreciate the really important priorities of life, as opposed to the superficial but commonly cited and pursued goals and values.

Furthermore, children learn how to behave as partners by observing the relationship between their own parents and other adults. Children of parents who argue will expect that yelling and even name-calling are expected and customary ways of relating to one's spouse. On the other hand, when children witness parents who demonstrate their love, care and respect for one another, they will be more likely to mimic that behavior in their own future relationships. Also, when elementary school age boys and girls (from the earliest ages) are taught to behave in

sensitive and respectful ways to one another and these honest, kind and sensitive interactions are reinforced at home and at school, they will be well-equipped with the beginning skills of dating.

If, however, men and women, for whatever reasons or circumstances, emerge from their adolescence with feelings of self-consciousness, low self-esteem and/or a level of hopelessness about their prospects for love and work, they will be at risk for contributing to their own worst fears. For this reason, it is extremely important for all young people to be encouraged by adults around them, from the earliest ages, to be introspective and to be able to honestly assess their own strengths and weaknesses in order to achieve the goals they desire and deserve. True, this task of assessing oneself in a candid and realistic way is an ongoing and lifelong process. For this reason, I highly recommend that it begins early and be done regularly so that it becomes a familiar and routine process that helps us to know ourselves and frame our expectations appropriately.

Brian's parents had divorced when he was a young teenager. Despite his parents' best efforts to maintain a normal life for Brian, he could not help but think about how this chapter of his life would impact his own future with a wife. When speaking openly to his therapist, Brian acknowledged that he feared he would also not find long-term happiness in marriage either, and therefore he unconsciously avoided the intimacy and closeness in dating that would allow a relationship to grow. Fortunately, Brian was able to do some good work with his therapist to separate his own emotional life from that of his parents, to underscore his own wish for a family and to nurture his potential into a reality. Brian's expectations for personal happiness were originally too low and therapeutic intervention offered a different reality for him.

Lois suffered from a series of disappointments that were too heavy for her to bear alone. In the years that she had dated, she suffered a broken engagement as well as the death of a dear friend. Though externally continuing to pursue a full social life, Lois admitted that she felt hopeless about her future and had a hard time following up on situations that might actually play out in her favor. While she felt excited by this date, as she did on earlier ones, she did not give him any clue of how she really felt; she had developed a persona of disinterest in order to protect herself from rejection. Lois could not initially see that her external behavior did not match her secret hope and yearning but, over time, she learned to take more emotional risks by being "real" on her dates, and this soon led to a meaningful and committed relationship for her.

Charlie and Miriam not only wanted to be married, but to have an intimate relationship that reflected their love and care for one another. Through couples' therapy they were helped to see the differences in each other and recognize that their families of origin operated in very different emotional ways. They learned that when they differed, it was not helpful to focus on who was right and wrong. Rather, it was important for them to learn how to be a couple, how to understand for themselves and then convey to one another what each one of them needed in order to feel that they were heard and valued in the marriage. This couple recognized that they also needed to return to discussing their respective expectations about basic values central to every marriage: money, religion, relationships to their families of origin and plans for their own future family. When their expectations were delineated more clearly, they did not feel as desperate a need to convey their position when disagreeing with one another. Miriam and

Charlie learned the three T's—timing, tack and tone—that need to be employed in any productive conversation, even while dealing with the most sensitive of topics.

Relationships require our careful attention and investment of time and energy. We must be honest with ourselves about our expectations and our realities, and only then can we be successful in making positive connections with, and life-long commitments to, the partners with whom we want to share our lives.

Seeking Mr./Mrs. “Perfect”: Denying Mr./Mrs. “Right”

Rabbi Jonathan Schwartz, PsyD¹

What is Perfectionism?

Chaim is what you might call a “professional dater.” Since he was 22, he always knew “exactly” what he wanted in a girl. A delightful person and conversationalist, a Ben Torah who learns daily and a successful orthodontist to boot, he was a matchmaker’s dream initially. He would sincerely and succinctly articulate to anyone who asked, exactly what he was looking for in a mate. “A person just like me in a girl,” he would say. But inevitably every date or two would end in disaster. Somehow, Chaim would go out and each girl would have something that was “flawed.” Now 35, Chaim was worried that he would never find that “perfect girl to bring home to his mother.”

Perfectionism involves the relentless striving for extremely high standards, judging one’s self-worth based largely on one’s ability to strive for and achieve these unrelenting standards and then despite the regular negative consequences involved in sticking to these impossible, demanding standards, continuing to go for them despite the huge cost (Schwartz, 2008) .

Put bluntly, when one is more wed to his ideals about dating than to the potential for a meaningful, lasting relationship with an excellent partner with whom to grow together, he might be suffering from perfectionism.

“So wait a minute,” you ask, “now *ambition* and *striving for perfection* are also bad?” You might even be wondering how psychologists reconcile this diagnosis with a healthy Torah outlook. After all, who among us hasn’t noted the concept of *shleimut* – of perfection, as a primary goal of Judaism? Why be concerned with a pervasive preoccupation with perfection?

The answer is clear. Perfection is *not* a Torah desired concept to be *had* in relationships. It is something to be *built* in relationships. The Malbim (Yeshaya 42:19) distinguishes between two similar Torah concepts – *temimut* and *sheleimut*. While on the surface these two concepts seem similar, *temimut* refers to perfection. It is a notation that implies no blemish whatsoever. (*temimut*, he notes, is only relevant to an animal who achieves *temimut* at the time he is offered as a *korban*). *Sheleimut*, refers to a complete achievement – doing the best that is possible for the particular type. Rav Shimshon R. Hirsch (Commentary to Beraishit 33:18) adds that the concept of *sheleimut*

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must involve a certain internal harmony within the individual striving for it. To the person seeking a relationship while seeking perfection all along, these stages are never possible.

Moreover, psychologically, we find that those who approach dating and relationships with a perfectionistic perspective, are often unhappy with their quest for perfection (Ben Shahar, 2009). They might exhibit distinct indecisiveness, severe issues that are often perceived as controlling in relationships and a general misunderstanding of the self and others in relationships. All of these factors certainly would not be in line with the standard Torah outlook on relationships.

Indecision

Sarah has been dating Barry for the last 7 months. Barry is special to her. Barry treats her well and she feels that she will likely grow together with him. Although she knows all of these things, she still experiences extreme anxiety whenever anyone, especially Barry, discusses moving the relationship "further." Whenever asked by her mother or her counselor why she is hesitant, the answer is always the same: "How can I be SURE he's the right one? How can I KNOW?"

Someone once noted that buying coffee today has become a major undertaking for him. The reason is that frankly there are too many choices. A recent documentary about COSTCO noted that part of its success is that it limits the number of choices offered to its consumer members. Wherever we go, we seem to be faced with too many decisions (Iyengar & Lepper, 2000). While we might appreciate having the freedom and power to buy exactly that which we want, that very freedom of choice can breed the need within us to seek perfection in our choices and never settle or make do. This inherent need, often found among a group labeled by American psychologist Barry Schwartz as **maximizers**, find the sheer number of alternatives in a decision to be overwhelming leaving them often feeling anxious and depressed (Schwartz, 2004).

If this is the case with coffee and lima beans, whose cost of error is minor, imagine the pressure when the decision is one of a spouse and the stakes, hopefully forever?

Moreover, what do you do when the orthodox community inspires such specificity -- as it demands that our young people seeking relationships identify themselves and potential suitors on the basis of differentiation so fine, they would make the students of the Brisker style of learning proud in the sharpness of delineation? We have become convinced that the idea of *bashert* is so daunting and yet so G-d-given, many are paralyzed by indecision instead of committing to long lasting relationships.

Is the concept of *bashert* so myopic and fixed as it is believed to be? Or is that vision built on, and promoting perfectionism?

Shlomo HaMelech notes (Kohelet 7:26) that he found *HaIsha* – the woman -- more bitter than death. On the other hand, in Mishlei (18:22) he notes that if one finds *isha*, he finds *tov*. Rabbi Dr. Benzion Sorotzkin once noted that if one is seeking **HaIsha** -- with an assumption that there is only one for him and that one must be perfect, the experience will be more bitter than death. However, if he can find *isha* – a woman about whom he can say *tov*, he has found the true ideal treasure (Sorotzkin, 2005). The same is true for women searching for men - if one seeks

perfection while dating instead of seeking a mate, the quest can be arduous and can likely bring about much frustration and anxiety.

Rav Eliezer Papo in the *Pele Yoetz*, (*Erech Zivug*), identifies a *bashert* as being fluid, based upon one's desires (*bakashot*) and his *hishtadlut* (efforts). Rav Pam used to compare a *bashert* to a bus ride. It depended upon where one was going. According to this approach, Torah relationships do not demand perfectionism – only *tov* (Notes to *Sicha* on *Parshas Chayei Sarah*).

Some try to allay their fears by seeking reassurance. **Reassurance** is the evil partner of the perfectionist. While temporarily providing relief to anxiety, reassurance-seeking continually reinforces the faulty belief that one cannot make his or her own decisions or the provider of the reassurance is later assumed to not have understood or to be out of the loop on these issues.

In relationships, we often find many who are afraid to commit without reassurance and blessing from one's rebbeim. – and that the reassurance must be recited by those rebbeim, perfectly. And while in certain worlds this is the norm, often things that are a norm in a Chassidic world have perfectionistic roots in a different environment. Rav Elazar Schach ztl. (*Lulei Toratcha* p. 240) used to bemoan the “laziness” of our generation who are afraid to think or daven on their own. Indeed Rav Hershel Schachter writes that Rav Soloveitchik ztl. noted that our practice never insisted on holding up a *shidduch* until the rebbe approves (*MePeninei HaRav*, p. 212). Demanding this approval is perfectionistic in nature and serves as a religious cover for a psychologically driven desire for reassurance that can never be filled by someone else. That never-ending reassurance behavior has been correlated with depression and poor relationship functioning (Jacobson, 2007).

Sarah, and people suffering from the same indecisiveness like her, need to be aware of the perfectionistic tendency and its dissimilarity with religion. She needs to honestly set a personal limit wherein she can separate qualitative time to get to know someone from never-ending indecision and reassurance seeking and know that she needs to confront decision making. A good CBT therapist can be useful in helping her identify and work on decision making skills here.

Control issues

Jack is a 30 year old accountant who lives in a strong singles community. He is active in the shul, works full time, is a gourmet cook and is quite the social butterfly. His apartment is one of the “go to” meals in the community for Shabbos. The women in the neighborhood who have gone out with him all say that he treats them well. When asked why things don't work out, none of them seem to be able to answer the question. It seems that Jack breaks off the relationships early on before anything substantive can develop. Jack sees it differently: “I can already see it is not going anywhere. It's just not how I thought it should be. We just don't see eye to eye on when to have children, the specific number of kids we would have, or whether they would excel in baseball or basketball first. Why prolong the emotional misery?” he asks. About another girl with whom there was potential he would say “I think everything's great but she's just not the way I imagined my wife to be” and ended it there.

When events stray from what a person's sense of how things “should be,” bouts of intense angst and emotional discord are characteristic. But Jack's case highlights yet another aspect of

Perfectionism- **dichotomous thinking**. Dichotomous thinking is the tendency to categorize all aspects of life into one of two perspectives -- "All good" or "all bad." It can take only one stain or blemish to have the person completely find justification in discarding anything or anyone who evidences a perceived flaw.

Moreover, the fear of rejection is so high, that at times the person would rather end it with his or her dignity now, than risk having trouble seeing or being around the other person in the future. After all, how can this couple ever talk to one another ever again if they did not hit it off now as potential mates? What will that do to future Friday night meals?

This highlights another flaw in perfectionist thinking. Instead of asking themselves if the situation and the relationship can work out and how, the perfectionist becomes overly focused in judicial proofs as to why it cannot. With such high consequences at stake, the desire to maintain "perfection" is evident. At the same time, the tension of maintaining that perfection is anything but *shaleim*.

Jack could benefit from learning how to take risks in his relationships. By understanding how he tends to see relationships in a very controlled "black and white" style and his tendency to try to control his environment to ensure he doesn't get hurt, Jack could learn how to allow relationships to develop and perhaps find purpose and enduring relationships that blossom through effort. Again, with awareness and active work on his part, Jack can improve his future relationships and establish deeper, more meaningful ones instead of struggling to maintain his present relationships on a shallow level.

The Self in Dating and Relationships

Cheryl was very nervous about dating. "So what do you discuss on a date? What's the point and what's the goal?" Her friend Chaya who was an experienced dater told her "Make it simple. Dress to impress and make your parents proud." As Cheryl's relationship was getting more intense she found her anxiety rising too. She openly explained her worry, noting, "but I don't feel it."

Cheryl and her friend highlight some of the differences perfectionistic thinking can have on relationships. After all, everyone wants to "date right" but is there really an objective "right way" to date? To the perfectionist, dating, like most other arenas of life, is very factual and grounded. Successful dating to the perfectionist is built upon where we went, how well was time spent and was the environment and the date "perfect." However, at the same time, it is also quite shallow and very impersonal. To a perfectionist, dating is no different than a job interview. It is not about connecting, it is about making sure that you "do" your best and "get" the best.

Chaya seizes on Cheryl's concerns and grounds her in simple terms. "Dress to impress," may secure you the job you want, but it does not land you a long term relationship. Perfectionistic thinking is often highlighted by a focus of attaining a goal instead of developing from an experience and continuing to grow from and within it. When it comes to a job, this could be workable but in a marriage, it is a disaster. The problem starts in the dating focus. Rav Matisyahu Salomon describes the negative consequences to one's spiritual and emotional life when s/he becomes obsessed with making an impression on others rather than focusing on impressing himself with his own growth. (*Matnas Chaim, Kinyanim* I: 68-69) Elaborating on this idea in the

context of dating, Rabbi Dr. Benzion Sorotzkin noted that “focusing on **selling** yourself rather than **being** yourself is very detrimental to developing a relationship (Sorotzkin, 2005).”

Chaya’s next piece of advice is therefore also quite telling. “Make your parents proud” as if she was not in the dating process at all. And yet, in absenting herself from the dating picture, Chaya highlights a certain aspect of perfectionism that hurts the dating process. Namely, someone who always focused on doing things to please and to impress others (in this case the parents) will find it difficult to suddenly focus on what type of spouse she’s looking for, and would be happy with. S/he never realized that personal opinions and happiness were even important! But with misguided communal pressure to “just get married already” or “not be too picky” we sometimes forget that some perfectionists will turn that over to an opposite extreme and absent themselves from the process entirely.

When Cheryl’s relationship seems to be advancing, she begins to report more intense anxiety. As a result, she worries that she is “not feeling it.” Has she considered that “feeling it” may be what is causing her anxiety? When a person sets an amorphous goal “to feel” but does not know what that feeling is, then in the mind of the perfectionist it becomes something that is “not there” or at least not there “enough.”

The Talmud tells us that 40 days prior to the birth of a child, a heavenly voice declares who is destined to marry whom. The Chazon Ish is purported to have noted that only one whose heart is open to listening to this heavenly voice will be able to hear it and actualize it (*Maaseh Ish* I:212). As he notes elsewhere, emotions are Hashem’s agents sent to highlight that which has already been determined on high (See *Alei Shur* I:313). Rav Chaim Friedlander adds that if one is disconnected from the situation or absents herself from it as Cheryl and Chaya do in this situation, there can never be any emotional connection to begin with and the situation becomes overrun with anxiety as the people involved deny themselves the opportunity for anything intense and worthwhile (*Siftei Chaim, Moadim* II: 346).

Misunderstandings about Relationships

“He must be perfect” Rachel’s mother told the shadchan. “Minyan three times a day is given, work a full time highly successful job, learn before work, help my Rachel with the kids and put them to bed nightly, work out regularly and call his mother and me each day too.”

Of course mothers want the best for their children. But is the best that which is had or created? Moreover, are the “lists” we develop too specific and minute that they lower our antennae to those “in the ballpark” who actually might be excellent potential spouses?

Inherent incompatibles, or when a person seeks two or more things to coincide which cannot coexist together, is a fundamental problem for those with perfectionistic thinking. When one strives to “be perfect” at everything, the tendency tends to spread forward into the selection of a spouse who is also “all perfect.” The issue becomes compounded as time goes on when people believe that the longer they are “out there” the more they “have to” find the mysterious Mr./Mrs. “Perfect” who will have made all that time “worth it.” This in turn, raises the perfectionistic thinking and raises the bar in dating which leads to increased anxiety on the part of the perfectionist.

Judgementalism and **misinterpretation** become quite common features that will drive perfectionistic thinking to a higher level. As the years go by and the demands go up, the perfectionism leads the person to become irritated with the dating process. Comments made about and by potential suitors tend to be misconstrued and misjudged, leading to people pulling out of a dating situation before determining that it is indeed “not for them.”

Rav Shlomo Wolbe lets young people in on a little secret: “One day, your spouse too, will learn that you are “only human and not an angel.” He adds that this realization is a great thing. For on that day, the young couple will get a chance to realize that they have room to grow together instead of receiving things “ready-made (*Kuntres Hadracha L’kallot*).” That day the couple will take a great step forward in their quest for *sheleimut* – something that is created when a couple works together – not something that is had.

“But we disagree so we must not be for one another” is a common thought pattern of the perfectionist. It too, is built on faulty logic that couples never disagree and if one does, then something isn’t “perfect” in the relationship and thus, it should be destroyed. The *Avot* and *Imahot* certainly came from different backgrounds and even disagreed on lofty matters. Rav Moshe Soloveitchik used to note that disagreements aren’t the reason to nullify a relationship (*V’HaIsh Moshe* p. 216). The general inability to communicate and clarify issues and positions is. Relationship expert John Gottman notes that a certain amount of disagreement is necessary in good relationships. For in finding certain aspects of disagreement, couples are assured that they are not running away from challenges and confrontations but rather learning from them (Gottman, 2000).

Conclusion

Microsoft’s policy is that if a product is 80% complete it is ready to launch. This policy is built on the principle that at 80%, it is workable and can be improved into a better system over time. Tal Ben Shahar, calls this the 80-20 rule and successfully applied it to the lives of regular people striving to find happiness instead of perfection and it served as the thesis of his course, the largest one ever taught at Harvard University (Ben Shahar, 2011).

Relationships are similar in that regard. Constant search, research, review, rebooting and booting out of relationships is personally harmful and can lead that quest for Mr./Mrs. “Right” to go on indefinitely. But the truth is, perfectionism is not a death sentence to a person or in a relationship. The issues are quite workable. Through good awareness and where necessary, therapeutic intervention, perfectionists can successfully learn to shed their rigid thought processes in favor of relationships that are built upon communication, trust, love and support for one another.

In the meantime, perfectionists (and those of us who love and live with them) are best off remembering a few good things about Mr./Mrs. Right:

Mr./Mrs. “Right...”

- **“Is”** (exists) and **not** “Should be” (a figment of imagination).
- **Is a friend** and partner, **not** a trophy.
- **Is “optimal”** and “excellent” but hopefully **not** “Perfect.”
- **Is created together** and **not** found ready made.

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Deepening your Relationship: Dating and Beyond

Sara Barris, PsyD¹

Tova Klapper²

Tova Klapper **interviews Dr. Sara Barris to learn how to deepen one's relationship during the dating process, engagement and marriage.**

Tova Klapper (TK): *What is the best way to build an emotional connection with someone you are dating?*

Dr. Barris (SB): Marriage has been studied all over the world and there is a lot of empirical evidence on relationships. Researchers have looked at couples who are really getting it right over the long haul and those who are not doing well. A compelling research finding is that a significant predictive factor of excellent marriage is the power of connection and the ability to be good friends.

TK: *What do you mean by friendship and how do you develop that?*

SB: Actually, we can talk about friendship in a skills-based way. Flourishing relationships build upon thousands of mundane interactions, tiny little pebbles again, and again, and again.

If you want to break down the pieces of a committed friendship, one of the first things you can look at is whether you can talk about what is on your mind and feel like you are being heard.

Marriage research expert John Gottman has coined the term “love maps—knowing and being known.” This can be described as sharing tiny little details about one's life, from what games you played as a kid and what kind of candy you like, to things that are much more profound, like what scares you in the middle of the night and what *really* scares you in the middle of the night. It

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doesn't have to be in any specific order, although we want to see a relationship unfold a little bit before we start sharing more vulnerable information.

TK: *I understand that really getting to know one another is important, but what about couples who are different from each other professionally, or couples where one is more emotional and one is more intellectual? How can they bridge that gap?*

SB: These are great questions. Our family spent a weekend with a couple where the husband was an international real estate tycoon. They had a number of sophisticated guests at their Shabbos table who were intrigued by what he was doing. The man's wife, who was sitting next to me at the table, leaned over, giggled, and said, "this is way over my head! I am totally clueless about his work." That is not amusing. We want to have a sense of what the other person is doing so that we don't lead parallel lives. That doesn't mean that we have to know all the intricacies of what the other is doing professionally, but we want to have a basic idea of what's going on so that we can connect and be supportive. "Good luck, I'll be thinking of you today. I know that you have that nerve-racking meeting—call me when you're done and let me know how it went." I have a friend who is a nuclear theoretical physicist—her husband is in Jewish education. He doesn't really get physics the way she does, but he absolutely appreciates the politics in the lab, and is aware of the pressure involved in research grant deadlines. And he is right up front ready to celebrate the successes. Likewise, his wife is keenly aware and sensitive as to the nuances of being a Jewish educator. Being aware of the details of each other's lives helps keep the friendship on track.

Sometimes it's hard to be able to share things with each other. When we are hearing information it can feel like, "oh, that doesn't sound good" or "that worries me." What we try to do in establishing an emotional connection is to adopt an attitude of non-judging acceptance. You work on that, not only during dating, but throughout marriage and the rest of your life. There is a place for expressing our concerns, but the timing has to be right. When I work with couples and tell them that *knowing and being known* is important, sometimes they say, "We did that! We're good, we really know each other well." However, at the end of the day they begin to realize that it takes the rest of their lives to know each other because things keep shifting and deepening as life unfolds. So this is a lifetime commitment. When we say go on dates after you are married, it is not just to have a good time, but to continue to deepen and connect and get to know one another.

TK: *Many people say, don't worry about deep philosophical discussions because after marriage all you'll be doing is cleaning chickens and changing diapers—what can you say about that?*

SB: I believe that this is a myth and I disagree. Relationships that work over the long haul and that are resilient have a deep friendship and a lot to talk about. True, life can be frenetic at times and it can be a challenge to make space for time to talk and to continue to get to know each other. I have to laugh when every year I come across articles in magazines around Thanksgiving time. The suggestions are typically: on day one you buy the canned goods, day two buy the vegetables, day three buy the bird, day four—it's ok, get support, get help, let someone bring the yam pie and cranberry sauce. You're almost there ... day five—have a glass of wine, calm down, breathe, spice that bird, congratulations—you made it! As observant Jews, we do that every Friday night, every Shabbos, not to mention Yom Tov and every other celebration that we have!

There is a lot of beauty, but also stress, and many people feel like it's hard to make time, but it's important not to use this as an excuse and simply cop out and say that no one is really talking anymore. Despite their hectic lives, the couples who are doing well, *are* talking to each other and are continuing to deeply connect.

TK: *Are there any specific tools or skills that couples can employ in their relationship?*

SB: In addition to these love maps and moving toward skillful friendship, I'd like to focus on the buzz words of gratitude and appreciation. Gratitude isn't just about positive thinking. Rather, on a deeper level we are trying to fight off the negativity bias. Martin Seligman and many psychologists, sociologists and neuroanatomists have talked about the fact that human beings are wired toward negativity. Noticing what is going wrong in the environment and the people around them has helped with survival. However, research is telling us that this kind of brain process isn't exactly the healthiest for the survival of long-term relationships. Research experts Barbara Fredrickson and Marcial Losada have discovered that a high positive-to-negative statement ratio (approximately 5 to 1) was highly predictive of well-being in couples.

TK: *What if you show how you feel using actions, but not words? What if you are in a space where you're just not feeling it?*

SB: Actions and acts of kindness are very important. For example, filling up your partner's car with gas when he is stressed out. Taking over a chore for your spouse when she is trying to meet a deadline can be very supportive. Buying chocolate, gifts, etc. is great. But actions do not replace putting thoughts and feelings into words either spoken or written. This is precisely the point that Rashi makes regarding the bringing of the first fruits to the kohen. The *pasuk* (Devarim 26:3) says, "*ve'amarta eilav*," you should say to him. so as not to appear ungrateful. The *Alei Shur* (Vol. II pg. 279) adds to this Rashi by punctuating the point that gratitude in thought alone, without its verbal expression, falls terribly short. Neuroscientist Norman Doidge tells us that verbalizing thought kicks it up a notch, combats that negativity bias and helps rewire the brain.

You asked though, what if you are not feeling it. As I mentioned earlier, life becomes very hectic so we don't want to just rely on that moment of inspiration when we are feeling the "love." Those moments are gifts. They may come every so often as punctuation points, but we want to fill in the space in between and deepen the infrastructure. A seamlessness in the relationship. We can call it scaffolding. We want to build it and keep it up, not just for the first year of marriage, but for the rest of your lives. It is not about being unauthentic but rather about getting out of your comfort zone. We do not necessarily have to rely on deep poetic dialogue here. Evidence tells us that tiny pebbles of positive affirmation play a powerful roll in maintaining an excellent relationship over the long haul. Like, "I love the way you play with the baby," or "If I had to choose again it would be you!" or "Your chavrusa told me the other day how lucky he is to have you, I feel so lucky too." Those are the kind of things you want to repeat again and again. And don't be afraid to overuse the love word.

Generally we are afraid to be corny. It makes us feel uncomfortable and vulnerable. For many it is much easier to roll their eyes and remain cynical and sarcastic. But it is precisely that soft space that is the kernel of emotional intimacy in the relationship. We encourage people to move beyond their automatic habituated response to rewire their negative habits. We are not relying

on a fleeting feeling of good emotion but rather we are going for the larger truth of cultivating a conscious response toward building authentic connection. We are not talking about fabricating a compliment that is completely untrue. Psychologist Dr. Nathaniel Branden claims that this leads to a false sense of self-esteem. Rather, the intent is to be able to discern and speak to those inherent strengths in your partner. We are talking about leaning your cortical real estate toward positivity and safeguarding your relationship.

TK: *It seems like gratitude is crucial, is there anything else that is important that a couple can employ?*

SB: One famous researcher, Shelly Gable, talks about ACR, which is Active Constructive Responding. This research has shown us that how we celebrate is actually more predictive of strong relationships than how a couple fights. When your partner shares good news, how you respond can either build or undermine the relationship. Gable talks about different ways couples respond when one comes home with good news. Passive constructive responding might be, “Oh, that’s so nice, what are we going to eat for dinner?” Active destructive might be, “Oh, so are you actually going to take that promotion, because now you are *really* not going to have time with the children; now we’re really going to be stressed.” Yes, there is a time and a place to speak about the concerns, but the way we respond in the heat of the moment is very important. An active constructive response would be to say, “I’m so happy for you! Tell me where you were when you heard. Tell me again! How did you feel at that time? Let’s celebrate!”

The idea is that what we appreciate, appreciates. It is not just about making the other person feel good, but it cushions the relationship so that when we need to, we can have a safe place to talk about the difficulties and have conversations about issues that are not working so well.

TK: *I understand that spontaneity might be overrated and it is important to scaffold marriage and build a relationship in a focused way, but what about people who seem to just have magic in the beginning and it happens naturally, like you may see in postings on Facebook?*

SB: Generally, comparing your relationship to others can be counterproductive. Dr. Barry Schwartz, an expert on the paradox of choice, points out that people walk around starry-eyed—not looking into the eyes of their partner, but over their partner’s shoulder in case there might be someone better walking by. This is not the path to a successful long-term relationship. Sometimes seeing “proposal productions” and relationship details on Facebook can be misleading. As a therapist I can tell you firsthand, no one really knows what’s going on behind the curtain.

There is a concept called adaptation that many psychologists, such as Sonja Lyubomirsky and Ed Diener, write about. Adaptation is described as the force in human beings that pulls us back to our baseline. Even though there can be emotional highs over time, adaptation will drag you back to a neutral mood. So even for those couples who start off in a dreamlike state, saying “It’s incredible, we knew we were right for each other from the moment we laid eye on each other,” sooner than later reality sets in. But this is not bad news. Evidence tells us that romantic, thriving marriages over the long haul are alive and well. It is what we have been talking about. It is building the emotional intimacy, a culmination of many small acts, sometimes subtle and mundane, over the long haul, which has the best predictive value of success.

TK: *How do couples in a good relationship manage conflicts?*

SB: It is clear from couples research that conflict is definitely necessary for relationship. A lack of conflict means that you are not dealing with issues that matter and important concerns are kept under wraps. Keeping everything buried has poor predictive value for the relationship.

The question, though, is how do we have these arguments? The good news, according to John Gottman, is that the scaffolding, mentioned earlier, helps to protect the marriage so that couples can repair and recover without wounding each other.

Dr. Daniel Wile feels that the argument is a necessary entry point for a needed conversation. He talks about communication “booby traps” such as using “you” statements instead of “I” statements, digging up old grievances, or lumping all the conflicts into one ball, etc. As mentioned above, he stresses that conflicts are absolutely necessary; however, the initial fight may be ineffective. Dr. Wile explains that the majority of time during the argument the communication rules are often broken (this applies to the communication experts themselves!). The initial conversation will probably not go too well, and turning it into a marathon can make things even worse. Wile suggests taking a “time out,” or exiting the dispute, can be helpful. That doesn’t mean we are going into stone-walling but rather coming up with a time when the issue will be revisited. Wile calls this the “conversation after the conversation.” At that point the partners may be less emotionally flooded, and are ready to take some responsibility so that they can move forward.

TK: *How can we stay focused on all the useful skills you shared during times of vulnerability?*

No one is immune from vulnerability, no matter how great a shidduch and marriage. We value perfection, strength and competence, and when things don’t appear that way it is very scary. We can discover more compassion when we intuit that we are all part of humanity and no one is singled out from difficulty. In our relationships we don’t have to shrink back from the suffering of our partner. We don’t want to avert our gaze and cross the street when our partner is going through a hard time. We want to provide a sanctuary for their unwanted parts, for the piece that they feel vulnerable about, and to give them permission to be human. It is ok not to be perfect. We wish for the same acceptance and care of our own vulnerabilities and flaws as well. When we do that, and provide a sanctuary for unwanted parts, we discover more beauty in ourselves and discover undetected goodness in one another. And it is precisely at those outer limits, when things are hard, that we discover and rediscover our strength, faith, hope and connection. And it is at that place, with the lightest of touch and the deepest mercy, we begin again and again, one pebble at a time, to promote that sweet, loving relationship for the long haul.

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Let's Get Practical...

Top Tips to Increase Matches in Your Community

Marjorie Glatt, J.D.¹

Our beautiful Jewish legacy is replete with stories of matches and ways that our ancestors were united in marriage. In reviewing many of those accounts of the Tanach and Talmud, one common theme becomes clear: their diverse ways of meeting had nothing in common. Each one was unique, no one method was utilized and each had its own *hashgacha pratit* (individual Divine intervention).

Yitzchak and Rivka were united through an “old fashioned” matchmaker, Eliezer. Rachel met her husband, Yakov, at the well. Moshe Rabbeinu was a “*ben-bayit*” (long-term guest) at the home of his future father-in-law, while King Shaul hand-chose David the warrior to be the intended for his daughter Michal. And, it should certainly be noted, Ruth met Boaz in the workplace. We also see through the tale of one of the most joyous days of the year, Tu B’Av, that there were community-sanctioned public gatherings in Yerushalayim and its environs which historically turned into an auspicious day for matchmaking and betrothals (Mishna, *Ta’anit* 26b).

The phrase *harbe shluchim LaMakom*, Hashem has many messengers to carry out His will, is therefore apropos in bringing a bride and groom together. In today’s day and age, where Grossingers doesn’t exist and many bemoan the difficulty of finding their spouse in this highly internet-connected but socially-disconnected world, YUConnects fills the void by aiding individuals and communities in expanding their horizons and creating new opportunities.

In fact, there are numerous practical suggestions that anyone entering the dating world can incorporate. These “top tips” are simple and offer commonplace ideas on a personal and communal level. *Davening* (praying) for *siyahta d’shimaya* (Divine help) remains of paramount importance of course, and Hashem’s blessing is what truly matters. At the same time, *hishtadlut*, personal and communal effort, is essential.

What are the best ways on a **personal level** that a single individual can increase his or her opportunities for suggestions and introductions?

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- **Network (and network, network, network!):** Many of the suggestions for successfully landing a job apply equally as well to obtaining a date. Speak to everyone you meet—in an upbeat, positive way. While some disparage a written “profile,” putting something tangible on paper offers definite advantages. It serves as a permanent physical reminder for a friend or matchmaker who can have the details handy when recommending you; of course, you also get to clearly articulate what you are seeking. The debate about whether to include the “dreaded photo” will not be resolved here, but it should be noted that many young adults have their profiles and photos very visible on the Internet already through the various social media. A photo on a profile allows one to immediately “put their best face forward” since they will invariably be Googled by a prospective match.
- **Be active in community events and activities:** Expand horizons beyond work or school, meet as many new people as possible, participate in social *chessed* activities and accept opportunities to grow spiritually while making new connections.
- **Register online:** In the recently published groundbreaking article led by Dr. Eli Finkel² that examined current online trends, the researchers noted that by 2009 more romantic relationships were begun online than through any means other than meeting through friends. Some databases that exist nowadays offer the best of both worlds—they have access to thousands of members but are discreet and allow for directed personal matchmaking through an intermediary. The matchmakers of SawYouAtSinai and YUConnects are able to view a profile and make appropriate suggestions as they arise. Numerous options exist that allow the member to choose how public, private or visible a profile will be to others.
- **Attend singles events:** Appropriate social events offer so many distinct advantages. They allow one to meet dozens of suitable suitors at in a single evening or day, plus one can network with facilitators or matchmakers and suggestions often arise for you or for friends (see next point!). Events and activities are interesting, enjoyable and YUConnects specializes in providing venues that are comfortable, relaxed and selective. Recent YUConnects events have ranged from *chessed* projects for homebound seniors to a multimedia trivia panoply game to exciting food competitions modeled after the Food Network shows, plus many more fun-filled programs. Even if an event does not lead to a direct date, it is a great way to get out and keeps a person on other people’s minds.
- **Make suggestions for others:** By thinking of your friends and neighbors, and coming up with suggestions for them, you not only do a *chessed*, but it is a great way to keep your name in the minds of those you speak to.
- **Meet matchmakers:** Certainly don’t rely on any one matchmaker. The most important thing to realize is that they are overwhelmed with hundreds, if not thousands, of names running through their heads. Therefore, stand out. Make the extra effort to meet them in person. Become a real individual to them and not simply another young person who “loves to read, travel and spend time with family.” Please bear in mind that matchmakers who seem not to care because they have not made any suggestions are not necessarily ignoring you.

² Finkel, E. J., Eastwick, P.W., Karney, B. R., Reis, H.T., & Sprecher, S. (2012). Online Dating: A Critical Analysis from the Perspective of Psychological Science. *Psychological Science in the Public Interest*, 13(1), 3-66

They may simply be inundated or have been turned down by prospective matches. Remind them with a friendly e-mail once a month or with a quick call before Yom Tov wishing them a happy holiday. Many *shadchanim* are volunteers and are very dedicated, so being *mentschlich* and nice should be a given.

And for those who want to get inspired and help others, so much more can be done. The YUConnects office has guided communities across the globe—from Los Angeles to Chicago to Panama and Israel. Some steps are common and simple and can be taken by any shul or community that wants to get involved.

The YUConnects staff offers the following helpful and practical tips for **communities**:

1. **Create a database:** Start with the basics. Gather names of those men and women in the community who would appreciate more suggestions and events. A simple e-mail with links to a Google document spreadsheet is one of the easiest and most efficient ways for a community to gather basic information and build a potential database of potential matches. Similarly, generate a list of interested shul members who can be quickly and electronically contacted to help publicize and recruit attendees to fun events or interesting mixers. Finally, don't overlook the possibility that willing community volunteers can become matchmakers on existing online sites to advocate and network specifically for their neighbors and friends.
2. **Organize a Networking or Shidduch Brainstorming Night:** Invite area residents to participate in a session where profiles can be formally presented or young newly married couples can gather to offer suggestions. YUConnects regularly assists shuls and other organizations in running such successful brainstorming programs. Some community meetings invite singles to present themselves in person, offering a live impression, and the networking continues much more successfully thereafter.
3. **Run A Singles Event:** There are a panoply of ideas—including running a “panoply” multimedia trivia game where participants switch tables each round to work together in selecting the correct game answers, *chessed* activities, food-based programs, lectures or trips. An event or Shabbaton allows natural meeting venues and expands horizons for many.
4. **Home Hospitality:** Start small. A couple or a shul can invite Shabbat guests who are compatible. This can create the ideal forum for meeting in an informal setting. Our experience has found that the best model is three or four men and women (table for eight total) allows for the easiest flowing conversation.
5. **Power in Numbers:** Shuls are banding together and sharing their databases in new ways. “Shul Shares,” founded in Brooklyn, or “Shul Links” in Monsey bring together compatible *kehillot* in scheduled meetings to exchange suggestions or ideas.
6. **Promote a Resource Fair:** Have a *melava malka* with matchmakers present or lists of matchmakers available to your community for future meetings. Provide lists of organizations or online websites that can be useful to the single members or their families.
7. **Sensitivity and Inclusion:** Our friends and neighbors who are unmarried are talented members of any community who can, and should, be included in development or planning within local organizations. Include them in committees, boards and other communal activities. This great pool of activists is unfortunately frequently ignored, to the detriment of all.

8. **Enlist the Pros:** Invite speakers or workshops to come to your community who can offer guidance on the entire dating experience. There are established programs offered by The Relationship Couple, Sasson V'Simcha in Israel, SHALOM Taskforce, National Council of Young Israel, the OU or YUConnects that provide advice in profiles, maximizing networking, and—most important—moving relationships forward.

This article's intention is meant as a starting point. Everyone is familiar with the famous Gemara that states that making marriages is as difficult as splitting the Red Sea (*Sotah* 2a). Hashem is there to help, he sends many messengers and each one of us must do our part. Certainly, the path to success in making matches is tumultuous and overwhelming at times, with many challenges along the way. But if each of us does our part and makes our personal and communal efforts, *b'ezrat Hashem*, we will be successful.

Frequently Asked Questions about Genetic Testing

A discussion with genetic counselors from Yeshiva University's **Program for Jewish Genetic Health**

Dr. Nicole Schreiber-Agus, scientific director and program liaison for Yeshiva University's **Program for Jewish Genetic Health (PJGH)**, sits down with the PJGH's two genetic counselors, **Estie Rose** and **Chani Wiesman Berliant**, following spring 2012 genetic screening and educational programs at both undergraduate campuses of YU.¹

***Nicole Schreiber-Agus (NSA):** Tell me a little bit about your dual roles in genetic counseling and with the PJGH.*

Estie Rose (ER): Well to start, Chani and I both are board certified genetic counselors. At our offices, we meet with people who are identified as being at risk for genetic diseases or for having children with these diseases. We take detailed family medical histories for each of our patients and make recommendations for genetic testing based on these histories. Our involvement with the PJGH allows us to apply our expertise specifically to the Jewish community and engage in how issues of genetics interplay with Jewish law, tradition, and values.

Chani Wiesman Berliant (CWB): Back in March, the PJGH, in coordination with the student-led YU Medical Ethics Society of Yeshiva University's Center for the Jewish Future, ran two events, one on each undergraduate campus, to educate students about the medical and halachic importance of genetic carrier screening for diseases that are common in the Ashkenazi Jewish

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population, like Tay-Sachs disease. After these, we ran subsidized genetic screening events in April on each undergraduate campus. We screened about 120 students, and 30 percent of our screenees were identified to be carriers. This is just about what we'd expect, as one in three Ashkenazi Jews are found to be carriers for at least one of the Ashkenazi Jewish genetic diseases that we screen for.

NSA: *You mentioned the term "Ashkenazi Jewish genetic diseases." Can you explain what they are and why carrier screening for them is important?*

ER: Ashkenazi Jewish (AJ) genetic diseases, for the most part, are severe diseases that can be passed down from unsuspecting healthy parents to their children. These conditions can technically affect anybody, but we called them AJ diseases because they are more commonly found in the AJ population, and individuals of AJ descent carry specific and well-defined *founder mutations*. Carriers will never develop the disease in question, however being a carrier is very significant for a couple in which both members are carriers of the same genetic condition. In that case, there is a one in four chance in each pregnancy for them to have an affected child. This type of inheritance is called "recessive inheritance." Statistically, it has been found that one in 100 couples will be carriers of the same AJ genetic disease, or "carrier couples." Genetic screening for Sephardic Jews is not as straightforward because unlike the more uniform Ashkenazi Jewish gene pool, the Sephardic community is more diverse and there is no well-defined list of founder mutations. We recommend that Sephardic Jews have a genetics consultation, since the Sephardic diseases that need to be addressed depend on one's country of origin.

CWB: The AJ disease screening process itself is fairly simple. The genetic testing is done on a blood sample. Currently we are testing for 18 AJ genetic diseases, and we are looking for the specific AJ founder mutations. We also offer testing for spinal muscular atrophy (SMA), an inherited disease that does not have a specific AJ mutation, but has a mutation that is common in all populations. If the mutations are not present, then that individual is most likely not a carrier. However, there is always that slight possibility that one could still be a carrier of a less common mutation that we did not look for.

NSA: *If someone doesn't have a family history of these conditions, do they still need to be screened?*

CWB: Absolutely! Because carriers of these genetic conditions will never develop any signs or symptoms of the condition in question, the only ways to know if you are a carrier is either to find out through this genetic blood test, or to be identified as a carrier after having an affected child. Of course, we want to avoid having individuals finding out the hard way, and so we encourage people to get screened *before* they start a family.

ER: If you were to meet a family with a child affected with any of these diseases, you would understand how important it is to take these precautionary measures. Carrier screening is crucial because it provides couples with the knowledge and options to help build healthy families. In fact, many rabbis have included genetic carrier screening as part of the same obligation to protect one's health implied from the words in Deuteronomy 4:9 "רק השמר לך ושמר נפשך מאד" *However, be careful and guard yourselves very well.* and Deuteronomy 4:15 "ונשמרתם מאד לנפשיכם, *You shall be very careful of yourselves.*"

NSA: *What do you tell people who are found to be carriers?*

CWB: When our patients are identified to be carriers, we remind them not to panic. Remember that being a carrier does not change anything you've always known or thought about yourself. In fact, we are all carriers of somewhere between five and 10 recessive genetic conditions. We encourage our patients to tell their partners so that they could be tested for that condition as well. We also remind our patients that if they are a carrier, it means at least one of their parents must be a carrier, and so too, each of their siblings has a 50 percent chance to be carriers. Aunts, uncles and cousins may be carriers as well, and it is important to share this information with other family members so that they can be tested and potentially learn valuable information which may have important implications for family planning in the future.

NSA: *If one in 100 couples are "carrier couples," wouldn't we expect to see more families having children with these diseases?*

CWB: That's a good question. We don't see so many families having children with these diseases because there are ways for "carrier couples" to avoid having an affected child. Some carrier couples will decide to break up a relationship and, in some communities, being carriers for the same genetic disease may disqualify the couple even before they meet. For couples who choose to stay together, there are other reproductive options. Remember that there is still a 75 percent chance in each pregnancy for those couples to have a healthy child. That being said, 25 percent is quite a high risk to have an affected child, and we work with carriers to help them decide how they want to go about building a healthy family. Some couples may decide not to have children, others may consider adoption, and others may utilize gamete donors.

ER: It's a common misconception that couples in which both members are carriers of the same genetic disease can't have healthy children and shouldn't pursue a relationship together. Some couples may decide to achieve a pregnancy naturally and "take a chance." Those couples can opt to test the fetus for the disease through procedures such as a chorionic villus sampling (CVS) or amniocentesis. Both the CVS and amniocentesis do have a small risk of miscarriage, however the end result of this testing would give a couple the information of whether or not their child is affected. Some couples may choose to continue a pregnancy knowing that their child is affected, while other couples may seek rabbinic guidance to help them decide whether or not to terminate the pregnancy. Our job is to present the options so that the families we work with know what is out there.

CWB: Another option available to carrier couples to achieve a healthy pregnancy is through in vitro fertilization (IVF). Prior to implanting the fertilized embryos in the woman's uterus, the embryos are tested for the specific genetic disease through a process called preimplantation genetic diagnosis (PGD). At the end of this process, only the embryos that are unaffected are implanted back into the woman's uterus. While this is indeed a great option for carrier couples, it is important to recognize that IVF with PGD is a very expensive and challenging process. It may not be covered by insurance, could add quite a bit of stress onto a couple's relationship, and may require multiple cycles before achieving a successful pregnancy and the birth of a healthy child.

ER: As you can see, there are a lot of options out there, but each couple is going to have their own feelings about these. Couples who are trying to determine what the best route is for them might find it helpful to talk with rabbis, therapists, genetic counselors, friends, family members and even couples who have already had an affected child.

NSA: *How do you counsel singles who have been identified as carriers? Must they disclose this information when they go on dates?*

CWB: There is a point in each relationship where couples should discuss genetic testing, and that point will be different for each couple. Some use it as a pre-screening process, while others will discuss their carrier status later in the dating process. I tell my patients that it is up to them to decide when to discuss their genetic carrier status, but it is definitely something that needs to be discussed. Follow-up testing for the other partner, once determined, will help us clarify the risk for a couple to have an affected child, and the earlier that couples have this information, the better. One's carrier status for these types of diseases does not reflect who somebody is as a person or how suitable he or she is as a spouse. This is information which couples must be able to discuss in an open and honest way.

NSA: *If someone meets with you and gets tested and the results are negative, can we safely say that they are "in the clear"?*

CWB: Unfortunately not! When we do this AJ genetic testing, we are testing for a panel of genetic diseases that are more common in Ashkenazi Jews. However there are many other genetic diseases out there that we are not testing for. Some are not necessarily due to AJ founder mutations, but could still affect AJ individuals, while others could occur because of spontaneous changes in the fetus. People don't like hearing this, but every couple has about a 3 percent risk of having a baby with a birth defect or mental retardation. Unfortunately, we cannot test for every disease or condition out there, and it is impossible for us to ever "guarantee" a healthy child.

ER: When it comes to the AJ screening in particular, I want to emphasize that if you are tested now, it does not mean that you are "in the clear" forever. New diseases are constantly being added to the panel, and so it is important to update your AJ screening before each pregnancy. Our hope is that through screening, we can identify couples who are at risk to have an affected child and give them the best chance to have a healthy child. The mutations, however, will never disappear; they will always be passed down, and that's why testing needs to be done in every generation.

CWB: Our hope is that the more knowledge we can provide, the better equipped our communities will be to take ownership over their own health and take a more proactive role in building healthy families.

*The **Program for Jewish Genetic Health**'s philosophy revolves around servicing the Jewish community and listening to its needs, with the ultimate goal of protecting its health and the health of its future generations. www.yu.edu/genetichhealth*

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The Mandate of Genetic Testing

Rabbi Dr. Edward Reichman¹

According to our *mesorah* (tradition), *HaKadosh Baruch Hu histakel b'oraita u'bara alma*—G-d looked into the text of the Torah and created the world.² In essence, the Torah is the divine architectural blueprint for the creation of the world. I would submit that the converse is true for man. *Adam*, man, *histakel b'alma u'bara oraita*. When man delves into the workings of the world through the study of medicine and science, he brings the Torah to life and gains an appreciation of *HaKadosh Baruch Hu's* role in the creation of the world. In essence, DNA and the genetic code is the blueprint for the human being, which gives us the wisdom to appreciate G-d's creation. Just as we find secret codes in the arrangements of the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet in the Torah, we discover genetic codes with the handful of letters that comprise the nitrogen base building blocks of DNA.

Medicine is replete with military metaphors—we speak of the therapeutic “arsenal” or “armamentarium,” we fight the “war” on cancer and “battle” other diseases, as we continually seek the “magic bullet.” The Torah also utilizes a military metaphor in what Rav Soloveitchik considered man's mandate to harness nature for the good of man: “*u'milu et haartet v'kivshuha*,”³ fill the earth and conquer, or subdue it. In what is the consummate fulfillment of this directive, man has been able to identify the genetics of certain diseases and literally conquer and begin to vanquish them.

We live in an age where alarmists have labeled the challenges people are experiencing in identifying suitable matches as the “shidduch crisis.” This label has appropriately led to the rallying of many well-meaning people attempting to alleviate the crisis in creative and novel ways. Yet there is one aspect of shidduchim that everyone should treat with concern: genetic testing. Genetic testing, accomplished through a simple blood test, is a safe and effective way of identifying the possibility of couples having children with a variety of severe and sometimes fatal

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² For an explanation of this concept, see R' Chaim of Brisk's commentary to Shemot 13:4.

³ Bereishit 1:28.

diseases. The student-led YU Medical Ethics Society of Yeshiva University's Center for the Jewish Future offers testing annually for the student body on both undergraduate campuses, and the testing is now under the auspices of the newly formed Program for Jewish Genetic Health at Einstein.

Genetic testing is not a purely medical/scientific issue. It has halachic and hashkafic ramifications. The Talmud already acknowledges concern over the transmission of disease to future progeny in advising one to not marry into a family of epileptics or lepers, assuming these conditions were heritable.⁴

Just as a rabbi is charged with educating his congregation about the halachic permissibility of violating Shabbat in the face of *pikuach nefesh*, so he is now equally obligated to inform his congregation of the availability of genetic testing, which can prevent disease in children and unimaginable anguish for parents. One may think that perhaps one should not second guess *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*, and if it is G-d's will that one bear children with genetic disease, so be it. This appropriate theological question was asked and answered by Rav Moshe Feinstein zt"l some 40 years ago when Tay-Sachs testing was first offered. Rav Moshe clearly articulated the position that testing should be done, as it can easily be performed and can potentially spare the anguish of parents who are at risk to bear children with genetic diseases.⁵ One need only spend five minutes with the parent of a Tay-Sachs child to appreciate the veracity of these words.

We have moved well beyond the identification of this one disease to a time when many diseases can be tested for—including tests for genes that will certainly cause disease, some possibly, some fatal, some not. The genetic landscape is admittedly complex and evolving, and questions raised by genetic testing are manifold:⁶ who to test, how to test, what to test, and when to test, but not, IF to test—as test we must. We still debate whether to test in a closed, anonymous fashion, as per the Dor Yesharim model, or in an open format. Studies are in process now to assess the impact of both. In either case, the ever-expanding mandate of *verapo yerapei* (you shall surely heal)⁷ surely includes genetic testing in its purview, and its scope continues to widen as we identify more causes of disease. It is clear that man is privy to these Divine genetic secrets for a reason.

The details are debated by poskim and much halachic discussion is proceeding and will ensue in the coming years. The answers to the questions will not be unanimous, but they derive from the *mesorah*, and there is simply no other way for a Torah observant Jew to deal with the abundance of information and its potential halachic ramifications. Moving forward, we as a community will need to form clearer guidelines.

⁴ *Yevamot* 64b.

⁵ *Igrot Moshe* E. H. 4:10.

⁶ See F. Rosner, "Judaism, Genetic Screening and Genetic Therapy," *Mount Sinai Journal of Medicine* 65:5-6 (October-November, 1998), 406-413; R' J. D. Bleich, "Genetic Screening," *Tradition* 34:1 (Spring 2000), 63-87.

⁷ *Shemot* 21:19.

Which genetic conditions rise to the threshold of disclosure?⁸ When and if should conditions be disclosed to one's children? Should third parties, either medical or non-medical, share unsolicited genetic information? If a couple is already married and are found to be carriers for genetic conditions, can they perform prenatal testing?⁹ If yes, can they act on the results? Can they avail themselves of pre-implantation genetic diagnosis? Some of these questions have also been asked and answered in the last generation, but the analyses need to be revisited and updated in light of new scientific advances.

One of the more challenging questions is when in the courtship should genetic conditions be divulged? While there is no magic formula, too early disclosure can unnecessarily sabotage a potentially wonderful relationship, while too late disclosure, when engagement is imminent or past, may cause undue stress. Disclosure of genetic information does not in itself assume the seriousness or advanced stage of the relationship, but rather is an important precautionary measure to prevent unnecessary psychological harm to the involved parties.

The poskim of our generation are addressing these issues and the *piskei halachah* continue to evolve with the accumulation of scientific and psychological data. It is not the mere acquisition of knowledge that constitutes a fulfillment of "fill the land and subdue it," but a judicious application of this knowledge to better serve the world and its inhabitants. Some have considered this vast amount of complex information to have generated a so-called tyranny of knowledge. There is much merit to this notion. But the tyranny of ignorance may be a worse fate.

⁸ On issues of disclosure in shidduchim, including which diseases to disclose, and who can or must disclose, see A. Dori, "Disclosure of medical conditions in shidduchim," *Assia* 87-88 (Sivan, 5770) (Hebrew), Y. Steinberg, "Disclosure of medical information to a potential spouse," in Y. Steinberg, ed., *Brachah L'Avraham* (Jerusalem, 5768), 341-362 (Hebrew). R' Yitzchak Zilberstein devotes some 80 pages to issues of disclosure and shidduchim, including specific genetic diseases, in his new *sefer*, *Shiurei Torah L'Rofim* (Tevet, 5772).

⁹ The two extreme positions on prenatal testing and subsequent abortion are espoused by Rav Moshe Feinstein in *Igrot Moshe* C. M. 2:71 and Rav Eliezer Waldenberg in *Tzitz Eliezer* 13:102. For a comprehensive analysis on halakhic aspects of abortion, see R' J. D. Bleich, "Abortion in Halakhic Literature," *Contemporary Halakhic Problems* (Ktav, 1977), 325-371.



We believe that all students should undergo genetic testing before marriage, preferably before dating or entering into a serious relationship. Testing aids in diminishing pain and suffering in Klal Yisroel. Please take advantage of the opportunities afforded to you at the Yeshiva. Should you have any questions regarding the results of a test, please feel free to speak to your local posek and a trained genetic counselor.

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Points to Ponder: Positive Action Items

Efrat Sobolofsky, PhD¹

If one browses through the majority of Jewish media venues, local papers, internet sites, blogs and the like, it is clear that never before has so much attention been given to the areas of dating, shidduchim, and healthy relationship building. In my role as director of YUConnects, I have the privilege of conferring with many roshei yeshiva, rabbis and rebbetzins, psychologists and social workers (also referred to as relationship-building experts), community activists and leaders of other similar organizations who uniformly agree that healthy relationship-building in dating and marriage should be high on our respective lists of priorities and communal values. As a result, many small and larger shidduch-making initiatives and social programs have been launched by singles and marrieds. While we may differ in opinion regarding solutions posed, it is evident that all those inspired are working round-the-clock to increase comfortable meeting and networking opportunities in an effort to bring more couples into matrimony.

The Time is Now

Each week, YUConnects receives dozens of new calls and e-mail requests from individuals looking for a match, or from their loved ones calling on their behalf asking for suitable networking ideas. Using a multi-pronged educational and research based psycho-social approach, the program has successfully matched 206 individuals with their life partner, 103 couples, *kein yirbu*. This January, YUConnects enters its fifth year of operation. We host monthly social events, frequent educational forums, a growing database of over 2,200 members, and manage close to 100 volunteer trained connectors worldwide; collectively these activities are responsible for close to 200 dates a week. We recognize that to make an even greater difference, we need the positive participation, public support and open-minded attitudes of all.

Unfortunately, we still encounter a number of callers who, after being explained how the program works, respond with statements like “I’m sorry, it’s not for my son to meet with a matchmaker; just text me if you meet any suitable girls, I’m sure you know his type.” The same parent may add, “But wait, can you meet with my daughter?” Or from a young woman we may hear, “Thanks, but there’s no way I will sign up for an online program, it’s like posting myself on ebay; please keep me in mind when you meet some nice guys.”

¹ Dr. Efrat Sobolofsky (WSSW ’95, WSSW ’06) serves as the Director of YUConnects. She is also the Coordinator of Respite Services at the Jewish Association for Developmental Disabilities.

When receiving such requests, we politely try to explain that—for those at YUConnects trying to keep order of all the young men and women they meet—we are blessed to utilize an advanced high-tech online system, ensuring everyone's confidentiality. We recognize that this system of providing personal resumes or profiles has many feeling uneasy, as they ask "how did we get to this point?" but until we come up with better strategies, let's embrace the available programs to advance forward with the goal in mind.

Whether it is a hesitance to sign up for one of the three membership options on the on-line database, declining an invitation to come to a social or networking event or Shabbaton (even when the rabbis encourage it) "until I am older," etc., each one of these seemingly individual preventative acts poses additional barriers in increasing meeting opportunities for not just one, but potentially for many prospects.

Yes, certainly, it is lovely to meet someone at a Shabbos meal or through a mutual friend. And, yes, of course, we all wish (I did too) we could meet in a most natural and effortless fashion, but it doesn't always happen that way. True, while some happy couples meet today via the suggestions or at the homes of their close friends, many others are equally as blessed by introductions through acquaintances or even strangers who were networking on their behalf.

A few months ago, two young male YU alumni visited our office. At that time, one of the men was already an online member, a frequent event participant, and dating a lovely young woman through the volunteerism of an online connector. He brought in his friend, who had expressed some resistance in joining the program, to introduce him to the office staff. As he continued to show some hesitance, his friend turned to him and eloquently relayed the following: "If you were in the market for a new job today, chances are that you would do everything in your power to network with past colleagues, close friends, casual acquaintances, etc. You would take advantage of all that technology offers by connecting to professionals suspended in multiple degrees of separation from you and by chasing any possible lead that could help you achieve success. Simply put, you would stop at nothing to land the most suitable job. By contrast, can you imagine applying for a job by saying, 'I won't fill out an application, I'll pass on an interview, you really don't know anything about me, but please—offer me a job.'"

While some may feel that comparing the dating atmosphere to a job-hunt sounds a bit crass, the young man above raised some noteworthy points. There is no question that the dating years can be a trying time in a young man or woman's life, and for some, this period continues on for much longer than one would like. Let us try to be as positive and open-minded to the possibilities out there and maximize opportunities. And if one has a negative experience, which unfortunately does happen, let's not reject an entire system by saying, "the suggestions I received were so off that I will never accept another suggestion made online," or "there was no one for me at that event, so I'm done with those."

There are so many phases in our life, in addition to dating and relationship building, that we commit ourselves to perform a plethora of acts of *hishtadlut*, hoping to reach a targeted goal. Not always are we awarded the projected prize from a directed act of effort; it may arrive through a different one, which may not have had any pre-conceived calculation, yet we are still expected to entertain all reasonable acts of *hishtadlut* in front of us.

The Master of the Universe has invited many more messengers to help Him in His task of facilitating matches, and the time has never been better for us to smile and welcome them our way.

Toward a Broader Perspective

What is truly beautiful today is the way progress IS being made. Part of our program's mission is to broaden horizons in meeting and relationships-building opportunities. Below are a few highlights, infused into all elements of YUConnects programming modules.

Form versus Substance

Take, for example, the “tablecloth question.” While many laugh and consider it unthinkable to ask about colored tablecloths, disposable dishes or the like when considering a dating partner, too often inquiries are made into other matters that have little prognostication for a happy marriage. Our office often fields questions or statements like, “Where does her family spend their vacations?” “Why can’t you suggest someone a few years older; a few months younger or two inches taller?” “Why that choice of occupation?” or “I can’t see myself with someone from that community, an alumnus of that post-high-school program in Israel,” or other narrow pronouncements. Relationship-building experts commonly refer to this phenomenon as a focus on “form versus substance,” that is, people place more weight on peripheral, circumstantial or even influential institutions, communities, or experiences the person traveled through, rather than evaluating the individual’s unique array of character traits, current values, aspiring goals, dreams and practices, many of which come to life through the dating and marital experience.

Some may argue for the value in these inquiries saying they maximize compatibility and minimize differences; yet, we all know that no two individuals or families are exactly alike. Then there is the known reality that most people do not fit neatly into any one or all boxes and categories used by matchmaking databases and sites; so while we use this technological framework to manage the thousands of profiles today, it’s optimal to view suggested matches with an open mind and fluidity. Social events and informal contexts also offer opportunities for people to meet without being distracted by any line item on a profile.

Nevertheless, regardless of the introductory venue, even if one marries someone with a very similar upbringing and shared values, all individuals and couples can expect to continue to evolve and navigate through inherent differences and the natural transitions, trials and tribulations of married and family life. Individuals and couples who fortify their relationships with healthy expectations, open-mindedness, flexibility, a deep friendship, mutual respect, a positive attitude, commitment and the resilience needed to genuinely appreciate that G-d holds the master plan for our day-to-day pursuits, can easily set aside their checklists, avoid absolutes, and devote proper attention to the meaningful ingredients of long lasting relationships.

While some preliminary inquiries may be warranted, provided that they are in fact grounded on factors correlated with a healthy marriage, one of our roshei yeshiva shared with his colleagues at a YUConnects meeting that he advises his students to agree quicker to a first date. His rationale to his students is that “the date itself is shorter than the amount of time spent calibrating in advance whether to have that non-committal first cup of coffee or soda.” For these reasons, we

are working with Dr. Chani Maybruch in examining her data on factors found to be important criteria for selecting a spouse. This empirical information will help us prioritize and focus our programming efforts on the factors that matter most for a successful marriage. (See “Essentials to Look for in a Spouse” for preliminary findings.)

A Focus on the Person being Suggested

When matchmaking sites operate with intermediaries of online matchmakers (such as SawYouAtSinai and YUConnects), the mediators are strongly encouraged to take the time to get to know their members. The vastness of the internet is then combined with the personal and discreet touch of a trained matchmaker looking out for the best interests of their members. While this methodology is ideal, grounded in a sense of familiarity and comfort, we are seeing many targeted matches being suggested today by those who have never met the person before.

Perhaps the one suggesting the match read about the prospect on an online profile, heard about them through a friend, or just glanced at them in a social context. It is advantageous to explore these match ideas, although randomly generated, in the same way one would consider a match idea from a close friend. We watch several match ideas rejected simply because the person receiving the match feels that the person suggesting the match “does not know me.” Some people today are expending much time and energy searching to identify someone who knows both parties well enough to present the match idea, in fear that without the right messenger the match idea will remain dormant. True, many of these match ideas may not result in a date; yet, it’s wise for the match receiver to take a few moments to inquire and focus on the suggested person’s qualities (rather than focus on the matchmaker’s whereabouts), as it may lead to a fruitful endeavor.

How often do all of us hear of engagements where the person or matchmaker, who suggested the match, only met one of the parties for a brief moment, or never met but heard a bit about the single person on a subway ride, and Hashem, the greatest matchmaker of all, planted that given match idea in that matchmaker’s mind. Fortunately as meeting venues continue to grow in popularity, and with sophisticated algorithms to generate match ideas (irrespective of whether the site uses matchmakers or not), the trend of accepting match ideas only from those who know the person best is becoming less of a priority and more of a preference.

Be Wary in Dismissing Match Ideas

Along very similar lines, we are working hard to discourage peers, those dating and marrieds, from discounting match ideas suggested by others. Because of speedy communication venues available today, it is common for a person or parent who receives a match idea to confer with a mutual friend or acquaintance to seek confirmation as to whether the proposed match is a good idea. “Can you see it?” is the colloquial question asked, which we try to discourage, as it assumes that the person being asked has special prophecy talents to predict the match potential. Yet we all know of happily married couples, whom had they relied solely upon the first ratings of others regarding their compatibility, would not have met.

A mother recently called for assistance. She explained that a few weeks ago, she was contacted by a college friend, now residing in another state, about a young girl in her community who was

suggested for the caller's son. Her immediate response was, "I can't see you being *machatanim*, in laws, with her mother." Valuing her friend's opinion, the calling mother immediately dismissed the match without asking for any elaborative details. Shortly thereafter, the mother who received this call realized that her initial response was based on a mild conflict, an isolated incident, with the mother of the young woman, completely unrelated to the possibility of whether the young man and woman proposed may like each other or whether the two mothers would get along as cordial in-laws. Other frequent discounting comments resemble the following, "don't bother, their personalities will never match, or they won't be attracted to one another." I shudder each time I hear these flippant remarks (and see them in texts), wondering about the awesome responsibility we take by withholding match possibilities best assessed by a dating couple themselves. These scenarios serve as a humble reminder of how careful we must be with our words when asked for our impressions of others. In Part II of this publication, Rabbi Daniel Feldman will provide examples of when and where we are halachically permitted to share important information regarding a match.

Ongoing Matchmaker (Connector) Training

For all of us engaged in matchmaking, acting overzealously and simply fixing people up, "because you never know," without providing substantial rhyme or reasons behind suggestions proposed, emotionally drains daters and naturally causes them to be more cautious in accepting subsequent suggestions. For these reasons, professional trainings that beginner matchmakers participate in are paramount to channeling their enthusiasm and steering them away from hurting people along the way in attempting to reach success. Similarly, ongoing training reminds both beginners and seasoned matchmakers to limit their role to introducing and skillfully mentoring when called upon and not to take control of any courtship.

Empowering Individuals to Make their Own Decisions

In this way, we can assist individuals and couples, deemed mature and ready to date, to be empowered in their dating experiences and relationships, feel responsible, confident, and take pride in their own decision-making processes leading to marriage. Bystanders may posit that the individual or dating couple is perhaps making the mistake of a lifetime, yet it is not for any of us to place pressure on the important decisions of others. Sometimes, we see couples who date for months or are already engaged to marry, who decide together that their relationship is not meant to be. While these occurrences may be disappointing, there is comfort in knowing that the couple has determined what is best for them, regardless of the opinions of others. [Some couples may decide on their own to revisit these relationships at a later date, but again, the initiative comes from them.]

Less Focus on Protocols and more on "The Relationship"

A trend we have noticed, and are trying to address in promoting the aforementioned empowerment model, is the heightened acceptance of protocols and formalization revolving around the meeting, rather than **the relationship** itself. Just recently, I met a young woman ("Sara") who is courting a young man ("Michael") long-distance. The couple was introduced while Michael was visiting his friend in Sara's town and they dated a few times in person. He hopes to return in six weeks and they are now communicating via Skype. In a conversation with

Sara, I was struck by how much attention was being given to discussions between the two of them, on how often they should speak, whether they can be dating others and how long each Skype or phone meeting should be, etc. Sara herself, a lovely young woman, pointed out that though she isn't sure yet if "he is the one," she did enjoy the initial dates and does look forward to speaking to and seeing Michael. Through our conversation, she came to realize that discussing the formal dynamics of the relationship is inhibiting building its potency.

Other frequent examples are when couples set definitive time limits on first calls and dates, saving a certain conversation until a specific numbered date, or even the way in which people terminate dating relationships. General suggestions offered in dating workshops as to times, dating spots and conversation areas can be helpful, but are meant to serve as broad guidelines and not as transactional components. When communication lines are open between the couple, a "go with the flow" approach can often nourish potential relationships without having protocols erect unreasonable barriers.

We are finding that some dating practices, perhaps more suitable for members of a community where very little interaction between the opposite genders exists prior to marriage, are being misapplied to dating trends of other segments of Orthodoxy. Far be it from me to judge or evaluate any of these practices, as they are working well for my relatives residing in those communities. However, the challenge arises when some of practices do not gel nicely with the same couple's hopes and expectations of a courtship.

So for example, parents notice and question, "Why is my son not calling to arrange the first date; why does he ask his friend to arrange the time and place?" The son might respond and say, "but it's awkward to call her for the first time." Chances are, the young man has spoken to other young women previously, and given his upbringing, it may not be as awkward as he suggests. Additionally, we all experience many awkward moments in life and learning to deal with them is how we build character and resilience.

The digital age is propelling some of these practices even further, making it more fashionable to send a quick e-mail to inquire about someone suggested, perform a Google search, and text the matchmaker to arrange the first date. Concomitantly, we should keep in mind that those dating have shared that the current technological advances make too much information readily available at the touch of a few key strokes, leaving little room for basic conversation, exploration and mystery for the first phone call and date.

Yet setting all of these possible explanations aside, we encourage the first phone call for the majority of our constituents, since nothing replaces a gracious phone call; when a man politely introduces himself to a woman, maybe converses for a few minutes, and then asks of her availability to meet. Additionally, this call reduces many steps in a matchmaker's role today (stay tuned for the findings of *The YUConnects Matchmaker Study* in Part II), allowing the matchmaker to move ahead and make more matches.

The reassuring news is that once a couple feels comfortable and invested in their courtship, there is a natural relaxation of the majority of these protocols. And, the couple will acknowledge that in-person time spent together is far more effective in building a meaningful relationship than a

series of texts and e-mails. Yet we are doing our best to encourage daters to evaluate any borrowed protocols earlier on in their dating, considering any relevance to their respective cultural background and relationship aspirations, still allowing for individual differences and circumstantial modifications along the way.

Community Partnership and Support

As demonstrated through this rich publication (and stay tuned for Part II to be released shortly), YUConnects is working skillfully and carefully to raise individual and communal awareness of the current strengths and challenges involved in making shidduchim, to increase global positive action, meeting venues, and healthy relationship-building opportunities.

YUConnects, along with all other important Jewish organizations, deserves communal recognition and financial support. The program's commitment to hosting frequent events, managing a growing database, training volunteer connectors, introducing more and more members, offering pre-dating and pre-marital educational relationship-building workshops, presenting at pastoral and communal symposiums, and serving as an ongoing resource to lay leaders developing their own singles programs, is unique and should be viewed as heartwarming.

Upon an engagement, my favorite response to my proffered “mazel tov” is when I am told, “I never thought I would date or marry someone ... younger, older, from that family background or community, etc. Yet, we have so much in common, and are so happy together.” My smile becomes almost as wide as theirs, as we continually see firsthand examples of relationships that one (or both) would never have imagined possible. The gentle insights and mentorship available to dating individuals along the way is often the noteworthy catalyst which couples make mention of in their appreciative remarks to YUConnects, helping them reach their wedding day. Once married, YUConnects staff offers a skill-based educational workshop in partnership with the SHALOM workshop to newlyweds to enrich their relationships even more.

In sharing with one of our supporters that we reached the 100 couple milestone; he smiled and said, “That's not only 100 couples, that's 100 additional Jewish families.” How true! In addition, there are many more engaged and married couples who have met through a helping hand initiated by the program. For example, the following scenario often occurs: we set up a couple on a date, they meet and decide they are not for one another, but the young man or woman proceed to identify the other's bashert. Thankfully, we know of many such chain-reaction stories. How about the new friendships and meeting opportunities emerging through frequent events? And several of our 103 couples, energized to “pay it forward,” have shared that their actions have already led to many more courtships and marriages.

Financial support is needed to continue our steadfast work and expand services. When soliciting funds, some people say, “But my children are already married,” or “Fix up this family member or friend—and then I will donate a gift.” While it may not be my daughter or your son directly benefiting from this program on a given day, someone always is. Supporters can be proud in knowing that their funds are enabling more meeting and networking possibilities for many singles each and every day.

Now is definitely the time to participate in this noble mission, and proactively explore and support the multiple venues available today. Join with us and may Hashem bless you and yours in truly making a difference in building the Jewish future.

YUConnects To-Go Part II

Coming Soon • Winter 2013

The Concept of Bashert

Rabbi Josh Blass

*Mashgiach Ruchani, Yeshiva University;
Rabbi of Kehillas Beis Yehudah, Wesley Hills, NY*

The Torah's Concept of Love & Marriage

Rabbi Kenneth Brander

The David Mitzner Dean, Center for the Jewish Future

Respect in Marriage: A Two Way Street

Rabbi Elyakim Koenigsberg

Rosh Yeshiva, RIETS

Marriage: Confidence Bred by Commitment

Mrs. Chani Juravel, CSW

Educator & Lecturer

Guarding your Tongue while Guarding your Marriage: Lashon Hara & Shiddukhim

Rabbi Daniel Feldman

Rosh Yeshiva, RIETS;

Rabbi of Congregation Ohr Saadya, Teaneck, NJ

Reflections on the Mirror: Meditations on Attraction, Decision-Making & Values

Dr. Yitzchak Schechter

*Clinical Psychologist, Director of the Center for Applied
Psychology (CAPs) at Bikur Cholim in Rockland County, NY*

Omission Impossible: Why Complimenting Is Vital to Relationships

Rabbi Shmuel Maybruch

Magid Shiur, SBMP, YU;

Co-founder of The Relationship Couple

Active Listening: Are We Really Present

Rabbi Eliezer Zwickler, MSW

Rabbi of Congregation AABJ&D, West Orange, NJ

Fighting Fair: The Art of Constructive vs. Destructive Arguing

Dr. Alex Bailey

Clinical Psychologist

The Role of Parents and In-laws in the Lives of their Married Children

Dr. David Pelcovitz

*Gwendolyn & Joseph Straus Chair in Jewish Education,
YU Azrieli Graduate School of Jewish Education*

Insights from Rabbi Mordechai Willig

Rabbi Mordechai Willig

Rosh Yeshiva, RIETS;

Rabbi of Young Israel of Riverdale, NY

The Importance of Pre-marital Education

Rabbi Daniel Schonbuch

Executive Director, SHALOM Task Force

The First Year of Marriage: Turning Challenges into Opportunity

Rabbi Eric Goldman, MSW

SHALOM Workshop Presenter

Newlyweds and Others: What Can You Do?

Rabbi Yosef Kalinsky, MSW

*Assistant Dean of Undergraduate Torah Studies,
Yeshiva University*

The Case for Professionalizing Matchmaking in the Modern Orthodox Community

Rosie Einhorn, JD, MSc, &

Sherry Zimmerman, LCSW

*Founders of Sasson V'Simcha – The Center for Jewish
Marriage, Inc.*

What makes a Successful Matchmaker: A YUConnects Research Study

Rabbi Ariel Rackovsky, MSc

Rabbi of Irving Place Minyan, Woodmere, NY

A Conversation about the Prenup

Ilana Blass, JD

Administrative Attorney for Beth Din of America

www.yutorah.org/youconnects
or scan the QR code
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Do YOU Have What It Takes to Be a



Our dedicated cadre of volunteer matchmakers, called "Connectors," is the heart of the YUConnects organization.

These 90 women and men develop strong relationships with their assigned members and then devotedly work on their behalf by accessing profiles of over 2,200 members and thousands more through the SawYouAtSinai database. YUConnects offers instructional courses, videos and conference calls to maintain the highest standards of professionalism. Marjorie Glatt, special projects coordinator of YUConnects, with input from other staff members, offers guidance on the traits necessary for those seeking to join the ranks of our devoted Connectors.

Ten Qualities Matchmakers Must Have

FRIENDLY AND OUTGOING

A Connector should be a real "people person." They often call people they don't know—singles, parents or references. Warm and affable personalities make everyone comfortable; the best matchmakers truly become friends and make deep connections.

SENSITIVE

Singles should be valued as accomplished individuals and not looked at in a "preachy" way or with a know-it-all attitude.

TIME COMMITMENT

This is essential. YUConnects requires each Connector to commit to six hours a week to adequately meet the needs of their members. People count on their matchmakers and the time needed is significant. Not only do matchmakers "simply" make suggestions, but they often mentor and support the young couple right until their engagement, and even beyond.

ALTRUISTIC

Please don't sign up to search simply for a relative. That makes a Connector focused on a narrow goal. The best Connectors are there to help for the greater good, and not for any ulterior motives.

MARRIED & MATURE

You don't have to be a "senior," but experience shows that better matchmakers are more established in their own marriage.

TECHNOLOGICALLY COMPETENT

YUConnects provides a state-of-the-art matchmaking website. Training is provided but matchmakers should be comfortable with emails and computers.

UPBEAT

You are the best cheerleader for your members. Positive attitudes and friendly support are requirements.

THICK SKINNED

Connectors cannot become discouraged ☺. Many suggestions made by matchmakers are ignored and it is natural that only a small percentage of suggestions result in marriage. Great matchmakers keep plugging away...

CAN KEEP A SECRET

Confidentiality is key. YUConnects prides itself on the professionalism of their volunteer matchmakers; therefore, discretion and privacy concerns are paramount. Our Connectors know they must never reveal who their members are or what matches are being made.

MONEY IS NOT THE ISSUE

Please don't "volunteer" relying on *shadchanus*. When engagements are made, appreciative members and their families often recognize their *hakarat hatov* to Connectors with monetary gifts for their hard work and dedication. However, chessed and building future homes are the ultimate true rewards to our devoted volunteers.

To find out more about being a YUConnects Connector, please call Tova Klapper at YUConnects at 212-960-5400 ext. 6163 or email yuconnects@yu.edu.

Apply now to join the Special Connector Training Evening being planned for January 2013 on the Upper West Side of NYC.

What people are saying about ...



EDUCATIONAL FORUMS ATTENDEES

"The series of interactive classes enabled me grow as an individual while learning practical skills in dating."

"Your premarital workshop was so helpful to us and certainly strengthened our relationship as a couple."

"The panel discussion "Relationships in the Digital Age" made me be more of an attuned listener."

EVENTS PARTICIPANTS

"It was an unbelievable Shabbaton ... so professional and comfortable."

"I was blown away by the creativity and organization of Salad Wars."

"What a great way to network...the Rosh Hashana package delivery to homebound seniors was fun...chesed events are the best!"

"Such a classy evening! I enjoyed going to Trump Tower to get an inside look at ethics in the workplace...meeting new people was an added bonus!"

CONNECTORS

"I have come to realize that being a Connector really is a give and take: I give (time, energy, advice, give up sleep, etc.), but I receive so much more in return: expressed appreciation from members, my joy in successful matches, and satisfaction in being able to guide members through challenges involved in the dating process."

"I love the Connector trainings you host. I learn more and more each time!"

COUPLES

"We thank YUConnects from the depths of our hearts. You made us the happiest couple!"

"Our relationship wouldn't have progressed to an engagement, if it wasn't for your personal touch."

"Words cannot express the simcha we feel at having been able to find each other. May Hashem bless you for all the work you did not only for us, but for all of Bnei Yisroel as well."

PARENTS

"Other YU students are asking my son, "How did you meet these nice women?" My son feels so proud to tell everyone how great it is to be on the site and how easy it can be to meet people."

"B"H, our son recently became a Chosson and met his Kallah through your wonderful program. May you be zocheh to continue to make many more shidduchim by offering the valuable services and activities of the YUConnects program."

VISITORS

"The office is full of people who are willing to listen to anyone and anything, which is always comforting."

"The site gives me so many opportunities, I am able to network with so many different Connectors. I really feel they are looking out for me when I am sent a match idea."



Dating and Marriage
Torah Resources and Shiurim

Find shiurim, videos, articles and more at www.YUTorah.org/youconnects.

YUCONNECTS

Sponsorship Opportunities

YUConnects conducts educational studies and develops programs that foster healthy meeting opportunities and relationships toward marriage. Please support this beautiful mitzvah and commemorate a special event, honor your loved ones or donate for others to find their future match.

\$50,000

Help underwrite YUConnects by becoming a "Master Builder" – the epitome of supporting future Jewish homes and families.

\$25,000

Fund a research study to examine the strengths and challenges in the dating world today.

\$10,000

Join our Diamond Circle of supporters—let future couples "sparkle" and shine by your donation. This special group lays the foundation for our efforts and is instrumental in sustaining the YUConnects initiative.

\$7,500

Subsidize a YUConnects Shabbaton allowing natural meeting opportunities in a warm atmosphere.

\$5,000

Sponsor a series of exciting social events for singles.

\$3,600

Fund a conference for rabbis, educators and connectors to cultivate relationship-building skills within our communities.

\$1,800

Sponsor a "Meet-the-Connector" Night: An outstanding opportunity for singles to meet dozens of matchmakers in one evening.

\$1,000

Provide a speaker on contemporary relationship building and marriage skills.

\$500

Sponsor a week's worth of matchmaking by a trained professional connector.

\$360

Dedicate a YUConnects newsletter reaching thousands of interested community members.

\$180

Sponsor a day's worth of matchmaking by a trained professional connector.

For more information about dedication opportunities, please contact:

Genene Kaye: 212-960-0137, gkaye@yu.edu or Julie Schreier: 516-972-2920, julie.schreier@yu.edu
or donate easily online at www.yuconnects.org.

Join the growing dedication listing and be featured in **YUConnects To-Go: Part II**
which will be published in Winter 2013.

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WHAT MAKES YUCONNECTS UNIQUE?

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- ✓ Involvement of Roshei Yeshiva, psychologists, social workers and expert faculty members
- ✓ Offers community guidance, resources and partnership opportunities
- ✓ Unsurpassed social activities and popular events
- ✓ State-of-the-art online matchmaking site with over 2,200 members
- ✓ Discreet and confidential: profiles screened through selected personal matchmakers/Connectors with multiple privacy options
- ✓ Caring, personal touch while networking with thousands
- ✓ Over 90 volunteer professionally trained Connectors
- ✓ Open to ALL, free for YU/Stern undergraduates, discounts for alumni
- ✓ Over 100 engagements and counting ...
- ✓ Full-time Staff Connector available for personal meetings
- ✓ Dating and premarital workshops

To sponsor future YUConnects activities,
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YUConnects Market & Economic UPDATE

with Tobias Levkovich Chief US Equity Strategist at Cit Investment Research

Thursday, July 26, 7:00 PM - 8:30 PM

Morgan Stanley Smith Barney 211 West 52nd St. between 9th and 10th Ave.

Ages 23-30 • Dinner will be served

Register at www.yuconnects.com

Early Bird Registration (by July 21, Registration by July 27, 12 noon) \$5 At Door: \$35

YOUNG ISRAEL OF JAMAICA STATES SINGLES MEET AFTERNOON FOUNDATION: HAVE YOU AT SINGLES MEET & YU CONNECTS PRESENTS A BREATHTAKING

ART EXHIBIT & INTERACTIVE DISCUSSION

Out of the depths into an exquisite world of hope and faith

WITH GIFTED ARTIST STAN LEBOVITZ FOR SINGLES, AGES 23-34 SUNDAY, JANUARY 15, 2012

YOUNG ISRAEL OF JAMAICA STATES BALLROOM 80-80 FIFTH ST. JAMAICA, NY 11435 (4 BLOCKS NORTH OF EXIT 25 OFF I-495)

EXHIBIT VIEWING 7:30-8:15 PM INTERACTIVE DISCUSSION 8:15-9:30 PM

DESSERT BUFFET 9:30-10:30 PM

RSVP WITH RESERVATION - \$20 AT THE DOOR (FREE CHAIRS & TABLES)

RSVP - OFFICE@YUCONNECTS.COM 718-475-7700

YUConnects Shabbaton in Teaneck

Chayal Sarah - November 10-12, 2011

Join a wonderful Shabbaton with students, alumni, connectors, faculty and representatives from S. Daniel Abraham Israel schools!

- Dynamic Discussions
- Exciting Activities
- Dinner and Lunch at Beis Yeshurun
- Multimedia Panoply
- Melave Malka at Keter Torah

YU & STERN STUDENTS & ALUMNI AGES 21-26

Cost: \$75 per person

Space is limited

Apply by: Tuesday November 8, 2011

Transportation available from WIT and Beren campuses

Register online at www.yuconnects.com • yuconnects@yu.edu • 212-960-5400 x 6163

NCSU & YUConnects PRESENT

CHINESE AUCTION VIEW & COMICAL EVENING

Saturday Night, January 7th, 7:30

FOR SINGLES UNDER 35

Hilarious Comedy & Improv by Shale Rappaport Winner of The Jewish Week's Comedy Competition

Hosted by Sharon & Sinclair 315 Central Park (Corner of 91st Street)

ADVANCED REGISTRATION REQUIRED

\$18 - Register by Dec 15

\$25 - Register by Dec 15

Sushi, Desserts, & INSTANT RAFFLE For Two

Register online at www.yuconnects.com For more information

HOW TO SUCCEED IN BUSINESS... WITHOUT ANY LIVES

AMBITION, BACKSTABBING AND RUMOR TALES FROM THE CORPORATE WORLD

WITH JASON (JOEY) GREENGLANT, ESQ. GENERAL COUNSEL AND EXECUTIVE VP. OF THE TRUMP ORGANIZATION

TUESDAY, MARCH 20TH @ 7:30 PM

UP TOWER, 25TH FLOOR - 725 FIFTH AVENUE (BETWEEN 50TH & 57TH)

LIGHT DINNER WILL BE SERVED

PRE-REGISTRATION REQUIRED: NO WALK-INS PLEASE

BY MARCH 15TH ONLY \$10 - AFTER MARCH 15TH \$30 PER PERSON

REGISTER AT WWW.YUCONNECTS.COM

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