

Shlach: The Meraglim-The Spies Social Issues: "Basherte", Shidduchim

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Parashas Shlach

RABBI BERNARD FOX

"However, the nation that dwells in the land is mighty. And the cities are large and fortified. We also saw there the descendants of the giants". (BeMidbar 13:28)

In our parasha, Hashem tells Moshe to send spies into the land of Israel. Moshe explains, in Sefer

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BASHERTE: A Dynamic Understanding of Human Relations

RABBI DAVID ALGAZE

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"Basherte"—the very word conveys mystery. What is basherte, and do we believe in it? The Yiddish word means "the apportioned one," the person destined to be your spouse. Unmarried people are usually hopeful of finding their "basherte," and many are encouraged that there is someone for them. The expression "it's bashert" similarly connotes that the event or occurrence was predestined. What is the origin of this concept?

The idea that there is someone for every person originates in the Gemara (Sanhedrin 22a): "Forty days before the gestation of the fetus, a Heavenly voice proclaims, 'The daughter of so-and-so will marry so-and-so.'" The Gemara discusses that the making of matches for a second marriage is as hard as "the parting of the Red Sea." First marriages, however, are determined before we are born. Similarly (in Moed Katan 18b), the Rabbis discuss the possibility of getting married during Hol Hamoed, and they conclude that it is permissible lest one lose the intended spouse. The Gemara asks how it is possible to lose the intended match, and the Rabbis answer that it is possible to modify one's lot by praying. In this case, someone may, through prayer, take away the person who had been designated for someone else.

There are some interesting conclusions from these Talmudic passages. First, the fact that someone is destined, or "basherte," does not mean that the ensuing marriage will necessarily be a happy one. The rabbi who made the statement in Sanhedrin was Rav Yehudah. This is the same Rav Yehudah who told his son, "The verse in Kohelet, 'I find a woman more bitter than

death,' applies to your mother" (Yebamot 63b). However difficult she was to Rav Yehudah, his wife possessed the redeeming quality of having a forgiving nature. Nonetheless, this text points to the idea that "basherte" is not always synonymous with bliss. Otherwise, divorces would never occur.

Secondly, the passage in Moed Katan implies that the "assignment" may be modified through different means, one of which could be prayer. Therefore, that something is "basherte" does not mean that it will come to pass. This concept of a "flexible destiny" is basic to Torah. However things may be ordained in Heaven, there is always room for man to intervene and change destiny. Judaism does not hold a fatalistic view of existence. On the contrary, everything is possible, and everything can change depending on our actions.

The Brisker Rav makes an interesting point regarding the application of this Heavenly decree to marriage. He comments that when Eliezer went in search of a wife for Yitzhak, he had a series of experiences with Rivka that seemed to portend that a Heavenly hand was guiding his steps. After narrating the details of his encounter with Rivka, her family exclaims, "This (match) has come from G-d." When Yitzhak sees Rivka, however, the Torah tells us that he saw that her actions resembled those of Sarah, and then he married her. Since Yitzhak knew of Eliezer's story and of all the "signs from Heaven," why did he not accept the choice as "heavenly made"? To accept something strictly on the basis of supernatural signs is not a Jewish trait. Yitzhak was not so



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BASHERTE:

A Dynamic Understanding of Human Relations

RABBI DAVID ALGAZE

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concerned with the signs that portended that Rivka was the right choice; he was interested in Rivka's actions and in her ethical traits. Only when he was satisfied that she met these requirements was he prepared to marry her.

The notion of "basherte" needs to be analyzed carefully. Although the idea that there is someone for everyone gives comfort to people looking for matches, it also renders people passive. The idea of "basherte" may lead to a wrong attitude towards dating. Dating is not simply the opportunity to "find" the person destined for you; it should be an opportunity to know another human being and appreciate the special qualities that he or she possesses. "Heavenly" products need no work, they are ready made. People are never "ready made" or completed. We are all works in progress; our energies are in flux. Human beings are dynamic entities, and our task is to recognize this fluidity.

A corollary to this concept of our energies being in flux is that people act differently with different people. Just as chemical elements behave differently and produce different results according to the other elements in the mixture, so, too, people are different in the presence of different people. This is true in all cases of human relations and even more so in our most special and intimate relationships. Thus, when we meet a stranger, we are not just meeting someone else. We are also—in some mysterious ways—seeing a part of ourselves.

With this in mind, we see how wrong we are when we are disappointed on a date and put the blame entirely on the other person. The fault may not be in the other person. The fault may be in us. Far from being a spectator sport, dating and meeting people should be a dynamic event that takes into account not only how the other person is, but how he or she relates to us. The other person may not just be what we think he or she is; she or he may be reflecting our energy and our élan. Thus, the great person in your life may be closer than you think: You could bring this person closer by working on yourself!

The insistence on the traditional, passive doctrine of "basherte" represents a descent on our spiritual ladder. Certainly it is a basic tenet of Jewish philosophy that everything is arranged by G-d and that nothing exists or occurs without His direct intervention. The world which G-d created, however, is a world in which man is to perform. The Midrash comments on the verse in Braisheet (2:3), "G-d blessed the seventh day... because he ceased all His work which He created laasot." The Hebrew word "laasot" may be translated as "in order to create," meaning that the world was designed for man to use his G-d-given talents to continue and to further the process of G-d's Creation.

This concept of human action, or hishtadlut, stands in direct contradistinction to the passive philosophy

espoused by those who are obsessed with "basherte." No other than Rav Hayim of Volozhin spoke against this "folded hands" attitude. He explains the Mishna Sotah 49b in a very novel way. The mishna lists various phenomena that will attend the time of Mashiach: "Insolence will rise, honor will be distorted, ...those who fear sin will be despised, and the young will embarrass the elders, ...the face of the generation will be like the face of a dog; a son will not be ashamed in front of his father, and we do not have on whom to rely except our Heavenly Father."

The usual interpretation of this passage is that in view of the disasters that will befall mankind at history's end, the sense that nothing and no one can be relied upon except G-d will develop, and people will realize that "we do not have anything to rely upon except our Heavenly Father." Rav Hayim, however, reads the sentence "we have nobody on whom to rely except our Heavenly Father" as part of the list of disastrous phenomena that will attend that period! The sense that man will have lost his ability to effect any change in the world or in himself, a deep sense of impotence and frustration, will lead to a philosophy of passivity that will be expressed by this sentence, "There is nobody on whom to rely"; that is, "I am incapable, I am impotent, and only G-d can do."

The truth is that a healthy attitude includes a heightened sense of the importance of human action. A proper spiritual approach should include a high level of self-esteem and a sane appreciation of the powers imbedded in our humanity. We must believe that there is much we can do to affect the world and that we can change reality both around us and within us.

Sadly, in the dating game we have forgotten these important facts, and we have come now to resort to relying on mere "signs" and "bells, lights and whistles" to tell us who is the "basherte." We have become merely passive spectators of a "video game-like"-experience that will reveal to us, "You've got the basherte here." Until that "revelation" happens, there is nothing for us to do, nothing to change in ourselves, nothing positive to affect the reality. We and everyone around us have become mere marionettes in a play we do not write and we do not control.

This is erroneous! As the prayer "Un'sane tokef" puts it: When the Book of Life is opened, we discover that "everyone's hand seal is on it." The meaning of this prayer is that in the final analysis we have to realize that the story of our lives is largely written by our own hands. In human relations this is translated to mean that we have to believe that our life will change not when someone else comes to change it, but only when we change it ourselves. Moreover, until we become the person that Hashem had in mind for that "basherte," he or she will miss us. Attracting the right person, the partner that will be good for us, is much more than a waiting game or the initiative to meet yet

another person or go on yet another date. The process of meeting the right person actually begins in us. Just as an unhealthy element attracts more unhealthy organisms, so a person who is not prepared will attract and be attracted to the wrong person. In order to attract the person who is good, you have to be good.

The process of self-discovery and self-improvement is arduous and long. Without the effort, however, we cannot succeed. Our Rabbis tell us, "He who toiled on the eve of Shabbat, will eat on Shabbat." If one does not prepare oneself, then the "other" will not come soon. In fact, even when that "right person" arrives, our unpreparedness may drive him or her away. How many relationships have been broken between wonderful individuals simply because one or both partners were unprepared?

This dynamic understanding of "basherte" may be of great help to mastering the dating process, and it can be a great tool for understanding all human encounters. Every human endeavor, whether the search for a match or a successful partnership in business, begins with a look at us. We need to look at who we are and how we behave. We need time to look at ourselves and pray for self-improvement all the time. Instead of focusing on what may be wrong with all the dates we have gone out with, we should concentrate on what we can learn from the failed experiences. No date is wasted and no time is lost when we use them to learn about ourselves. We need to appreciate failures because they may teach us more about ourselves than our successes. We need to develop the art of learning and growing.

Blessed are the hours when we suffer if they bring us introspection.

Blessed are the friends who tell us the truth about ourselves.

Blessed are the counselors with the courage to tell us about our defects.

Blessed are the days when we weep about our incomplete selves, because they are the dawn of better days.

In the end, "basherte" weakens us and depresses us. An active philosophy helps us more and gives us more hope. The "someone for you" may be closer than you thought. He or she is not in Heaven nor beyond the sea, but within your grasp, and in your mind, and in your faith in your own ability to change reality and change yourself. ■

Rabbi Algaze is organizing an International Conference for Jewish Singles on the July 4th weekend, with workshops on the art of dating and success in human relations. For information, call Havurat Yisrael, 718-261-5500 or write us at havuratyisrael@rcn.com

Shidduchim: There's Got To Be A Better Way

CHANANYA WEISSMAN

Like a lonely cry in the night, I fear this letter will be the only protest to the idyllic shidduch. So much craziness has become mainstream and everyone is afraid of everyone else when it comes to shidduchim. But it is a sin to remain silent.

(Before I begin, a caveat. Based on recent controversies, I recognize that certain readers may attempt to stamp me with a hashkafic label and proceed to challenge my motives in writing this letter based on that assumption. In blindly defending the status quo, they will scour my letter for a peripheral point or phrase they can pounce on and ridicule, while ignoring the essential content. I ask you to resist that evil temptation.)

The gleeful mother of the bride describes her first encounter with her future son-in-law: "The boy knocks on our door. Right on time. Black suit? Check. White shirt? Check. Black velvet kippa? Check. Yeshivish.

Tall, dark, handsome. Blue eyes peer out from behind wire-rims. A learner. We already know his essential details, as much as a 20-year-old life can have acquired."

After some polite chit-chat, the daughter descends the stairs like a princess coming to greet her knight in shining armor. "Their eyes lock. A spark. Off they go: Date #1. Date #2. Date #3. Then the decision: is there a Date #4? Yes! And then they get married. Well, OK, I'm exaggerating. But that's how quick it seemed."

This article is described as Part 2 of this family's "whirlwind adventure" as their daughter gets married. I can only hope that Parts 5 and 6 of this adventure do not appear in the Agunah Chronicles, which your paper commendably prints week after week. It is no coincidence, after all, that the tremendous increase in unsuccessful marriages (from unhappy to abusive) is concurrent with a "shidduch crisis" unlike any the Jewish people have seen before. The correlation is unmistakable. One only has to look.

Many readers will scoff and say that the shidduch system as described above works just fine for many people. To that I respond, quite

bluntly, that Hashem (sometimes) watches over fools.

There are many imbeciles who are blessed with wealth and happiness. Their success is not a vindication of their methods, only a testament to Hashem's supreme authority. Chazal adjure us not to rely on miracles, but to perfect our earthly efforts in anticipation of divine assistance. Are we lemmings to blindly adhere to a perverse shidduch system simply because it works for some people?

And a perverse system it is. The mother in this story claims, on first glance alone, to already know the "essential details" of her daughter's suitor. The color of his attire and style of his kippa render him "Yeshivish" (a meaningless label — but this is not the place to discuss labels). Presumably, she has already determined that the boy in question is of sterling religious background who studies Torah with extreme diligence (most likely to the exclusion of all else), with an impeccably refined character to boot. In this assessment she has surpassed Hashem Himself, Who thoroughly analyzes the totality of a person's heart and actions before arriving at a conclusion. She did it with a single glance at his attire.

There was a spark, a hint of "love at first sight" between the new couple. After three dates (perhaps the number has some mystical significance), it was necessary for them to decide whether their relationship was to become "serious." Now or never. Take it or leave it. Whirlwind adventure, indeed!

Emshol lachem mashal. As an educated educator, I am well aware of a serious conflict facing teachers today: standardized testing. There is tremendous pressure on everyone for students to do well on such tests as Regents, Advanced Placement Exams, and the SAT. As a result, many teachers do what's called "teaching to the test." In other words, they teach students over the course of the year whatever is necessary to do well on the test, but the students learn little of the actual material. The test, which is supposed to measure their knowledge of the subject, actually measures only their ability to do well on that particular test. The results are essentially meaningless.

Similarly, this shidduch system relies on a host of superficial assessments to appraise one's suitability. The boy knew full well what to wear and say in order to make a good impression, so what does it prove that he adhered to the script? Both the girl and the boy were carefully coached on how to conduct themselves on the first three dates, so what did they really learn about each other — how well they can follow simple instructions, how well they can conform to societal pressures? No wonder there are so many disastrous marriages. People try to devise creative questions to ask about a potential shidduch, or they enlist professional gossipmongers and character assassins to conduct "investigations." But this has achieved nothing other than to make everyone paranoid at all times about harming their or their children's shidduch chances. This can't be the way Hashem intended it.

A ba'al teshuvah wrote a letter bemoaning the way ba'alei teshuvah are treated like garbage in this shidduch world, which has no mercy for an imperfect history. (Strangely enough, he commended the community's shift to the right, a shift that is surely responsible for his shidduch woes. To the right of what I can only wonder, as the Torah commands us to veer neither to the right nor to the left of the truth.) I'd like to remind your readers that Moshe Rabbeinu married a convert, the daughter of an idolatrous priest. Yehoshua married a convert as well, someone who, according to most commentaries, was a former harlot. And Rabbi Akiva's wife, whose father had enough money to buy the husband of her choice, "settled" for a lowly shepherd. It seems our greatest leaders were not "yeshivish." Perhaps we should look farther back in history than the Europe of a hundred years ago to determine what values the Torah truly holds dear.

Hashem has not decreed a shidduch crisis upon us. We have done it to ourselves. Let's truly analyze our ways in an open and honest fashion, and surely He will bless us with an end to this terrible suffering. ■

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Parashas Shlach

RABBI BERNARD FOX

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Devarim, that Hashem was responding to the request of Bnai Yisrael. The people had approached Moshe and suggested that these spies be sent. Moshe regarded this as a reasonable plan. Hashem agreed to the request.[1]

The spies returned. They reported that the land was rich and fertile. They also reported that the land was well defended and would be difficult to conquer. Upon hearing this report, Bnai Yisrael panicked. The people refused to proceed into the land. Hashem punished the nation. The generation that refused to conquer the land was forced to wander in the wilderness for forty years. After this generation died, their children conquered the land under the leadership of Yehoshua.

The Torah explains that the spies sinned and caused the rebellion. What was their sin? It is difficult to condemn the spies for reporting that the land was well defended. This was their job. Moshe charged them with the responsibility of gathering intelligence. They were ordered to assess the fortifications and the strength of inhabitants. Surely the spies cannot be condemned for fulfilling their mission!

The Torah describes their sin as propagating negative report on the land.[2] This seems to be a reference to a specific statement made by the spies. They claimed that the land consumed its inhabitants.[3] This was a false assertion. It is reasonable to hold the spies responsible for this lie.

However, this raises an obvious question. The spies initially reported that the land was fertile and rich. They even brought back fruit to support their report. How could they reasonably claim that the land was unwholesome? Why would the people believe a claim that clearly contradicted the spies' own words?

One possible answer is that the initial report was delivered in front of Moshe and Ahron. Moshe was familiar with the land of Canaan from his younger years.[4] He could easily dispute any negative characterization of the land. The spies did not criticize the land of Israel in front of Moshe and Ahron. They acknowledged its richness. Later the assembly broke up. The spies followed the people back to their tents. There, outside of the presence of Moshe and Ahron, the spies denigrated the land.

This does not completely answer the question. Still, the people must

have realized that the spies were contradicting themselves in their characterization of the land! Perhaps, the spies responded that they were afraid to contradict Moshe's assurances regarding the land. Therefore, in his presence they had been less than completely truthful. Now, in privacy they could reveal the truth.

Nachmanides suggests that the spies never contradicted themselves. They never retracted from their report that the land flowed with milk and honey. Instead, they claimed that the land was too rich. The luscious fruit and produce would sustain an especially robust metabolism. It seemed to be a perfect diet for giants. But a more average specimen would be harmed by the richness of the diet. They claimed that this must be the case. They had only encountered giants. Apparently, normal human beings would not be sustained by these rich fruits.[5]

Nachmanides further comments

that the sin of the spies did not begin with this lie. The lie was the culmination. The sin began with the statement contained in our pasuk. At first glance this seems odd. In our pasuk, the spies are reporting that the land is well defended. This was an accurate and truthful account!

Nachmanides explains that the role of the spies was to provide intelligence. This information was to be used to formulate a plan for conquest. The spies were never authorized to evaluate the chances of succeeding. If we consider our passage carefully, we can see that the spies overstepped their authority.

The spies use an odd word in our pasuk. They say, "However, the nation that dwells in the land is mighty". Let us consider the implications of the word "however". This word creates some connection between the preceding and the following statement. It qualifies the prior statement. What was this prior statement? The spies

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Parashas Shlach

RABBI BERNARD FOX

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had just reported that the land was rich and fertile. Then they added their "however". What was their message? They were saying, "Yes, the land flows with milk and honey – just as Moshe promised. However, what good is this to us? We cannot conquer the land. It is too well defended". Of course, the spies did not actually say this. Their intent was implied in the "however".[6]

"And Moshe and Ahron fell on their faces before the whole assembled Bnai Yisrael." (BeMidbar 14:5)

The scouts return. They report that the land will impossible to conquer. They also deny that the land is wholesome. They claim that the land seems to consume or destroy its inhabitants. The nation is discouraged by this report. The people question the purpose of traveling through the wilderness to arrive at this hopeless end. They come to a consensus. They will replace Moshe and Ahron. Another leader will be chosen. This leader will take them back to Egypt.

Our pasuk records Moshe and Ahron's reaction to the nation's decision. The Torah does not tell us that they argued with the people. The Torah records that they fell upon their faces before the nation.

What was the purpose of this reaction? Nachmanides explains that Moshe and Ahron were beseeching the people not to perform this wicked act.[7] They should not rebel against the Almighty and refuse to possess the land. They must continue forward and not return to Egypt.

This reaction raises an important question. Why did Moshe and Ahron not respond more forcefully? They behaved as supplicants. They begged the people not to act sinfully. Contrast this to Moshe's reaction upon descending from Sinai. Moshe descended from Sinai and encountered the nation worshipping the Egel – the

Golden Calf. Moshe did not become a supplicant. He did not beg the nation to repent. Instead, he acted decisively and sternly. He rebuked Ahron for his involvement in the sin. He separated the sinners from the faithful. He immediately executed those responsible for the travesty of the Egel. How can we explain Moshe's relative passivity in responding to the transgression in our parasha?

The first possibility is that the sin of the Egel was more isolated than the movement to return to Egypt. In the instance of the Egel, Moshe realized that the majority of Bnai Yisrael remained faithful to Hashem. He enlisted the majority to punish the minority of sinners. In our parasha, Moshe was confronted with a mass movement. The nation – as a whole – had decided to abandon Moshe and the quest for the land of Israel. Moshe had very few allies. He could not act forcefully. Therefore, he was forced to become a supplicant. He appealed to the nation reconsider.

However, Rav Simcha Zisil Broudy notes another distinction between the two incidents. He explains that the sin of the Egel was not directed against Moshe. The nation had defied the law of the Almighty. Moshe vigorously defended the glory of the Creator. In the incident in our parasha, the nation's rebellion was not directed solely against Hashem. The people were also rejecting the leadership of Moshe and Ahron. The people sought new leadership. They wanted leaders that would guide them on a more productive and meaningful path.

Moshe and Ahron could not act forcefully in this incident. One who leads through force can be accused of self-aggrandizement. Furthermore, a leader that forces other to follow is not a true leader. If force must be used, the leader has failed to prove his or her worthiness. Moshe realized that this was not a conflict that could be resolved through force.

Nonetheless, Moshe and Ahron did not abandon the conflict. They realized that they could not coerce the nation. Instead, they resorted to petition. They were not concerned with their own position of honor. They only cared for the welfare of Bnai Yisrael. If this required them to become beggars and supplicants, they were willing.[8] □

[1] Sefer Devarim 1:22-23. [2] Sefer BeMidbar 14:36. [3] Sefer BeMidbar 13:32. [4] Rabbaynu Moshe ben Nachman (Ramban / Nachmanides), Commentary on Sefer BeMidbar 13:2. [5] Rabbaynu Moshe ben Nachman (Ramban / Nachmanides), Commentary on Sefer BeMidbar 13:32. [6] Rabbaynu Moshe ben Nachman (Ramban / Nachmanides), Commentary on Sefer BeMidbar 13:27. [7] Rabbaynu Moshe ben Nachman (Ramban / Nachmanides), Commentary on Sefer BeMidbar 14:5. [8] Rav Shimon Yosef Miller, Shai LaTorah (Jerusalem 5753), volume 3, pp. 143-144.

God, Vindictive?

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

Rashi in Parshas Shilach (Num. 13:2) states that G-d said, "by their lives, I will give them an opportunity to err with the words of the spies so they don't inherit the land of Israel". This would seem like a vindictive

statement, but as G-d is devoid of human emotion, how do we understand it?

I believe the meaning is that had G-d not permitted the spies to spy out Israel, they would have been harboring an incorrect notion regarding G-d. That is, their desire to send spies displayed their disbelief in G-d's promise that they will successfully conquer Israel. If this disbelief was not brought out into the open, they would remain with this false notion, and this is not tolerable by G-d. What does it mean that "G-d gave them an opportunity to err"? It means that G-d gave them an opportunity to act out this notion in reality, in order that they may see this unknown sentiment in reality, and the deal with this realization of their sin via repentance. G-d's goal was not the Jews' loss of inheriting Israel. Giving them a chance not to inherit Israel means "giving them a chance to realize their sin". In this manner, the Jews are enabled by G-d to face their flaw, and perhaps, correct it.

This teaches us that Israel per se was not G-d's goal for man, but rather, man's perfection outweighs the act of living in the land. Since man's perfection was at stake, G-d opted for man's perfection, rather than having him live in Israel. □



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God's Warning

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

In Parshas Shilach, (Numbers, 15:31) we find God's warning that whoever commits idolatry "despises God's word". Rashi states "the warning for idolatry is from God, all other (warnings) are from Moses." What necessity is there that God admonish us in this single case? Directing our question more towards the answer, what would be lacking in the warning of idolatry if Moses or man, had been the one warning us, and not God?

I believe this second formulation of the question directs us to the concept of "warning", and how in the case of idolatry alone, is God's warning essential.

A warning, by definition, is part of the Torah system. The Talmud asks at times, "The punishment for such and such a crime we see, but from where is the warning derived?" Meaning, the Torah system does not only state punishments to obligate man for his violations, but warnings also serve to deter man from acting in a certain way. One reason why the Torah may record warnings, and not punishments alone, is to educate man on the destruction caused to our soul through prohibited actions. By investigating the ruin which results from such actions, man may better understand why not to engage in these acts. Man will then conquer his drive for such actions by understanding the good derived from abstention. Thereby, man arrives at a life of reality and goodness which is only derived from complete adherence to the Torah's principles.

A warning then must carry with it some principle whereby man is not forced to abstain through fear. Man is encouraged to abstain due to his appreciation of what is real and good. As the argument offered to abstain becomes more conclusive, man will be more convinced and his chance for abstention will be greater.

But not only is the content of an argument essential, but the delivery can also play a role. What is the best argument from abstention from idolatry? It is a warning delivered by God Himself, from an ablazed Mt. Sinai. Such a warning against idolatry which all the Jews heard, is the most compelling

argument. God creates a miracle, and couples it with the two first Commands, "I am God", and "Have no other gods." God created an indisputable demonstration of His exclusive mastery over all existence: An entire mountain aflame, and intelligent principles were heard from inside those flames. God ruled out any possibility that an organism was at the source of the words enunciated. No earthly being can survive fire. Those present, and equally true - we today, by way of second hand knowledge - are fully convinced that this intelligent Being Who gave the Torah controls the world exclusive of impostors. God eliminated the notion of idolatry by the statement that he is God and there are no others, while demonstrating so through miracles.

Sinai was the best formulation of a warning against idolatry, and remains our proof of God's existence. □

The Flaws of Matchmakers

RIVKAH NACHMIAS - Shadchan

This is the big question in my heart. Too many young people are being hurt and discouraged by the lack of sensitivity towards single men and women who are seeking help from others in finding their mate. Sadly, I will try to expound on some of the issues currently facing our precious young people.

How could people say that they will not work with 30 year old singles because "they are problems"? Furthermore, how does a shadchan, let alone others, state that 35 year olds and over who are still single "need therapy" and that if a man is still single at 45 or over, he deserves "to die without children"! Is this an example of the "help" they are getting? The only real therapy the single people need is to find a real match, a compatible mate and marry and share love and family in a Torah observant home.

I am overwhelmed with the lack of sensitivity and disgusting attitudes displayed by people who profess to help. That is not the proper behavior of a Torah observant Jew or any human being! More and more of our young people are facing accusations that they are "not serious" about getting married because they are "selective" about who they choose as a possible

mate. Usually they are choosing the counterpart of "who they are themselves", a real match.....willing to give exactly

what they are looking for in a mate. When going to purchase a pair of shoes, one does not choose a green shoe and purple shoe....the shoes chosen "match" to some degree!

The girls are being lectured with rules to follow that lead them to be harsh and arrogant and demanding of the men they date. If a man calls on a Thursday or Friday they are to refuse going out! What if the man just got the information and could not call sooner? Also, a lunch date or coffee and dessert date is to be refused as being inappropriate for sufficient exchange of ideals! Nonsense. Who is to say that "any food" is necessary in order to have good conversation!

In addition, since the earlier lunch date is not acceptable, the dinner date is expected. The young man is obligated to drive long distances regardless of his own time commitments, at night when tired, creating an atmosphere that is conducive to accident. Also, he is now required to spend hard earned money on someone's dinner who is still unknown or "blind date".

Why is it called a "blind date"?.....because people refuse to show "photos". Is not a photo of the person part of the information that should be given in addition to the rest so that there are fewer sad and disappointing meetings? Information is not given based on the "giver's" own opinion and the hopeful soulmates are misled until they meet and find out the truth! Why aren't the young people given the opportunity to choose a mate based on "all" the information? The young men are interrogated and must be making a high salary and "be a professional" to meet the needs of the young women who want "nice" things, even though the importance should be placed on the character and values of the individual, not what he can earn a week. Do we not know men who make large sums of money only to be miserly and refuse to share it with their wives? Some of these young women become depressed and disillusioned and divorced because they looked "at" the young man's profession and not "into his heart".

What do we do with the young men who spent endless hours obtaining their religious ordination and could not go to college as well? Instead they obtain non professional, but good jobs. The women

who are college educated are not satisfied with young men who have common sense and virtues, and those who try to "help singles" intentionally keep these young men away, because they are not professional and "good enough".

What happened to the "sweetness" of the young women?

Where is the consideration?

Where is the flexibility?

What about the main Torah rule of "do unto others"?

What happened to saying a simple "thank you"? Would the women be so quick to spend their own time and money on a relatively unknown individual? Hours of driving to and from a blind date after work or when tired is not a good way of preventing car accidents.

When people intend to marry, compromising and flexibility are what saves the destruction of a relationship. A marriage could not survive if it were based on one person's demands....it takes two to marry and two to make the marriage work, all with the help of Hashem.

If a young man is not wearing a certain type/color shirt, suit or hat, he is disqualified. What about what is inside the shirt, suit and under the hat? Does not "his character" count or just the material items he is wearing?? What of a young woman who is wearing the clothing that "should" be worn, yet is a disgrace because she has lowered herself to improper behavior. Have we not all seen people who come from a "good family name", yet be one who is not a good individual? Have we also not seen people who come from a terribly deprived background be an absolute gem?

Why are people judging other people.....is not Hashem the one and only Judge?

Hashem judges each of us as individuals, according to our merits and mistakes. Family virtues or errors do not enter into it when and an individual is judged. Why is there no forgiveness of those who have made mistakes and welcomed back with love as Hashem does, even to the last moment of ones life?

If you profess to help, then help....do not hurt those who come in need.

We are obligated to help each other....we are one people....we have one Father in heaven and therefore we are all family.

Family gives love, not pain.

What is going on? □