

*Is your vision of an ideal mate
in line with Torah values,
or popular standards?*



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Houston	7:46	Phoenix	6:59
Jerusalem	7:07	Pittsburgh	8:06
Johannesburg	5:14	Seattle	8:15
Los Angeles	7:25	Sydney	4:50
London	8:19	Tokyo	6:16
Miami	7:38	Toronto	8:12
Montreal	7:53	Washington DC	7:51

Weekly Parsha

Behar Bechukotai

RABBI BERNARD FOX

“And you shall number seven shabbats of years to you, seven times seven years. And there shall be to you the days of seven shabbats of years forty-nine years. Then you shall make proclamation with the

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Single Values

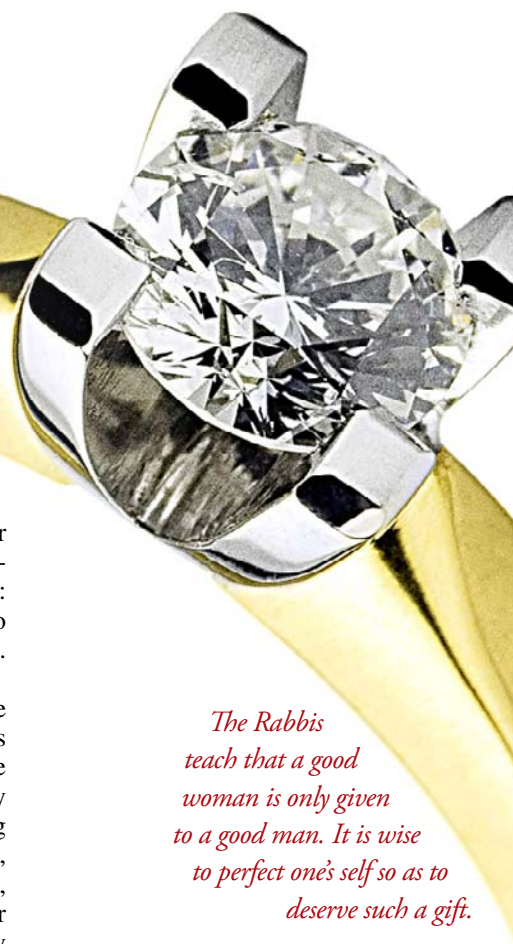
RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

Being single. It's often used to define a person more any other quality or status – making the single feel inadequate. It is demeaning to singles when that's the first thing out of someone's mouth: “Nu...Anything doing?” “You're still single?” “You're too picky.” Not very constructive, and some are outright aggressive. The Torah prohibits oppressing others with words.

Think before you talk: if the single is dating someone, he or she can bring up the topic, and then you can both enjoy the news together. But what if the single is not dating anyone? Now you've just opened a wound that's constantly being salted by others...certainly if you discuss this publicly. You gain nothing by bringing up the subject, and certainly expose a sensitive issue, which you are doing nothing to assist. Better off remaining silent, and allowing the single to maintain dignity by discussing prouder matters, instead of “failures”. If you lost your job, you certainly would feel pained if people constantly asked you about being fired. So act with intelligence and sensitivity, “Love your friend as yourself”. If however you have someone in mind for a single, then tell him or her...privately.

My objective with this article is to address a number of points that I hope will make married people and matchmakers more caring – moving them towards a more intelligent discourse. I will also mention to singles some constructive suggestions that I feel will be welcomed.

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*The Rabbis
teach that a good
woman is only given
to a good man. It is wise
to perfect one's self so as to
deserve such a gift.*

(Behar cont. from pg. 1)

Weekly Parsha

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blast of the horn on the tenth day of the seventh month. On the Day of Atonement you shall make proclamation with the horn throughout all your land. And you shall sanctify the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout the land unto all of its inhabitants. It shall be a Jubilee to you. And you shall return every man unto his possession, and you shall return every man unto his family. A Jubilee shall that fiftieth year be to you. You shall not sow, neither reap that which grows of itself in it, nor gather the grapes in it of the undressed vines.” (VaYikra 25:8-11)

This week's parasha discusses the laws of Shemithah and Yovel. The Shemithah – sabbatical year – is observed every seven years. During this seventh year, fields may not be worked and crops may not be harvested. The produce that grows spontaneously is shared by all. In addition, Shemithah cancels outstanding loans. The Jubilee year – Yovel – is described in the above passages. This year is observed at the completion of seven Shemithah cycles. In other words, the fiftieth year is sanctified as Yovel. Yovel is similar to Shemithah in regards to working the land. During Yovel, the land may not be worked; crops are not harvested; and produce is shared by all. However, our passages describe two additional aspects of Yovel. First, all land in the Land of Israel is redistributed to the descendants of those who initially conquered and possessed the land. Second, all Jewish servants are freed and invited to return to the land that is their legacy in the Land of Israel.

The observance of Shemithah and Yovel relies upon the establishment of a definitive cycle of years. However, there is an important dispute in the Talmud regarding the system of cycles. How does the Torah treat the fiftieth year – Yovel – within the cycle of years? Is the Yovel year the first year of the next cycle of seven years or does the next seven-year cycle begin after the completion of the Yovel?

According to Ribbi Yehudah, Yovel is counted as the first year of the next Shemithah cycles. The Rabanan disagree. They contend that the Yovel year is not regarded as the first year of the next cycle. Instead, the next cycle begins with the completion of the Yovel year.[1] The following table illustrates their dispute.

Table 1—Dispute regarding the treatment of the Yovel: (Next column)

44	2nd year of Shemithah cycle	2nd year of Shemithah cycle
45	3rd year of Shemithah cycle	3rd year of Shemithah cycle
46	4th year of Shemithah cycle	4th year of Shemithah cycle
47	5th year of Shemithah cycle	5th year of Shemithah cycle
48	6th year of Shemithah cycle	6th year of Shemithah cycle
49	Shemithah	Shemithah
50	Yovel	Yovel
51	2nd year of Shemithah cycle	1st year of Shemithah cycle
52	3rd year of Shemithah cycle	2nd year of Shemithah cycle
53	4th year of Shemithah cycle	3rd year of Shemithah cycle
54	5th year of Shemithah cycle	4th year of Shemithah cycle
55	6th year of Shemithah cycle	5th year of Shemithah cycle
56	Shemithah	6th year of Shemithah cycle
57		Shemithah

As this table illustrates, Ribbi Yehudah and the Rabanan disagree on the treatment of the Yovel year. According to Ribbi Yehudah, this year is treated as the first year of the next Shemithah cycle. According to the Rabanan, the Yovel year is not treated as part of the next Shemithah cycle. Instead, the new cycle begins in year 51.

It seems that there is a very simple explanation of this dispute. Apparently, Ribbi Yehudah and the



Rabanan differ on the relationship between the Yovel cycle and the Shemithah cycle. According to the Rabanan the Torah creates a single cycle. The Yovel year is the culmination of the Shemithah cycle. After seven Shemithah cycles, the Yovel occurs. Yovel is the ultimate year or event within the cycle. With the completion of the cycle – the observance of Yovel – the cycle renews itself. From this perspective, the Yovel cannot be counted as the first year of the next Shemithah cycle. It is the ultimate completion of the previous Shemithah cycle.

However, Ribbi Yehudah seems to present a different perspective.

According to Ribbi Yehudah, the Yovel cycle is coincidental but differentiated from the Shemithah cycle. The Shemithah cycle renews itself every seven years – without exception. The Yovel is based on its own independent cycle of fifty years. In other words, it occurs every fiftieth year. Because these two cycles are independent of one another, each Shemithah cycle begins with the end of the one previous. The fact that a Yovel occurs in the fiftieth year does not prevent the new Shemithah cycle from beginning that same year.

Ribbi Yehudah and the Rabanan differ on the treatment of the Yovel year in counting of the Shemithah cycles. But the above explanation of their dispute suggests that they would differ on another important issue. Yovel is only observed when all of the shevatim – the tribes of Bnai Yisrael – are in the Land of Israel and occupy their assigned portion of the land. Once the Bnai Yisrael were exiled from the Land of Israel, Yovel could no longer be observed.[2] What impact does the discontinuance of Yovel have upon the observance of Shemithah?

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There are various opinions on this issue. According to some authorities, Shemithah only exists as a Torah obligation when Yovel is observed. When Yovel is discontinued, Shemithah can only be observed on a rabbinic level. Others disagree. These authorities contend that the discontinuation of Yovel does not impact Shemithah. Even after the discontinuation of Yovel, Shemithah continues to be observed on a Torah level.

It would seem that the dispute between Ribbi Yehudah and the Rabanan is relevant to this question. According to Ribbi, the Shemithah and Yovel cycles exist independently of one another. According to his position, there is no reason to assume that the discontinuation of Yovel should impact the separate cycle of Shemithah years. However, according to the Rabanan, Shemithah and Yovel are elements of a single cycle. Yovel is the culmination of the cycle of seven Shemithah sub-cycles. Without the observance of Yovel the entire system is incomplete. It follows that the discontinuation of the observance of Yovel impacts the observance of Shemithah on a Torah level. When Yovel is discontinued, Shemithah can only be observed on a rabbinic level.

Maimonides seems to support this conclusion. Maimonides rules that the law follows the Rabanan. Yovel is not counted as the first year of the next Shemithah cycle.[3] According to the above analysis, this suggests that Yovel functions as the culmination of the Shemithah cycle. It follows that with the discontinuation of Yovel, Shemithah can only be observed on a rabbinic level.

There is some dispute among the authorities regarding Maimonides' position on this issue. According to Rav Yosef Karo, Maimonides maintains that even after the discontinuation of Yovel, Shemithah continues to be observed on a Torah level.[4] However, this is not the obvious interpretation of Maimonides' position and most authorities assert that according to Maimonides, the discontinuation of Yovel prevents the observance of Shemithah on a Torah level. This interpretation of Maimonides' position also corresponds with the most authoritative versions of the text of his Mishne Torah.[5] In short, Maimonides rules that the law follows the Rabanan. This implies that he maintains that Yovel is the culmination of the Shemithah cycles. Therefore, he rules that the discontinuation of Yovel reduces the observance of Shemithah to a rabbinic level.

Maimonides' position raises a practical issue. Yovel can no longer be observed. Shemithah continues to be observed on a rabbinic level. How are the Shemithah cycles counted? Does each Rabbinic Shemithah cycle begin immediately after the completion of the previous cycle or is a year skipped between the end of the seventh Shemithah cycle and initiation of the next Shemithah cycle?

Maimonides rules that even after Yovel was discontinued the Yovel continued to be counted as a

year within the overall cycle. Every fiftieth year is counted as if Yovel is still observed. Maimonides explains that the counting of the Yovel year within the cycle is necessary in order for the Shemithah years to occur at their proper points in the cycle.[6]

Maimonides' position is understandable. We observe Shemithah on a rabbinic level. Our observance is designed to replicate the Torah commandment. It is reasonable that we should observe Shemithah during the same year that it would be observed on a Torah level. This requires counting the fiftieth year as Yovel and then beginning the next Shemithah cycle the next year. Without the counting of the Yovel year within the cycle, the Shemithah years will not occur at their proper time.

However, Maimonides acknowledges that the Geonim differ with his opinion.[7] His explanation of the Geonim's position is not clear. However, it seems that the Geonim maintain that with the discontinuation of Yovel, each Shemithah cycle begins with the completion of the previous cycle. When the seventh Shemithah cycle ends, the next cycle immediately begins. The fiftieth year is not treated as Yovel.[8]

Rabbaynu Avraham ben David of Posquieres (Ra'avad) suggests that the Geonim rule that the law is according to Ribbi Yehudah. Even when Yovel is observed, the Yovel year is the first year of the Shemithah cycle. He offers a compelling argument for his position. He explains that the rabbinic observance of Shemithah is designed to recall the Torah level observance. It follows that the rabbinic observance of Shemithah should take place during the same year that the Torah level observance would have occurred. Therefore, if after the discontinuation of Yovel, each Shemithah cycle immediately follows the completion of the previous cycle – without the skipping of the fiftieth year to accommodate Yovel, the same arrangement must have operated when Yovel was observed.[9]

Apparently, Ra'avad accepts the underlining premise of Maimonides' position outlined above. The rabbinic observance of Shemithah must imitate the Torah level observance. The year in which the rabbinic observance occurs must be the year in which the Torah observance would have occurred. Maimonides rules that the law follows the Rabanan. This means that the Yovel year must be skipped before initiating the next Shemithah cycle. Even when Shemithah is observed on a rabbinic level the Yovel year must be counted in order to assure the rabbinic observance of Shemithah in the proper year. Ra'avad applies the same reasoning to interpreting the position of the Geonim. If the Yovel year is not skipped in determining the year for observance of the Rabbinic Shemithah, then it was also not skipped when Yovel was observed.

However, Maimonides gives no indication that the Geonim differ on his ruling on the dispute between Ribbi Yehudah and the Rabanan. Most authorities

assert that the Geonim agree with Maimonides that the law follows the Rabanan.[10] This position results in exactly the outcome that Ra'avad rejects as untenable! According to the popular interpretation of the Geonim's position, when Yovel was observed, the years were counted as the Rabanan suggest. Yovel was not the beginning of the next Shemithah cycle. Instead, the Shemithah cycle began with the completion of the Yovel year. However with the discontinuation of Yovel, each Shemithah cycle begins with the completion of the previous cycle. The fiftieth year is the first year of the Shemithah cycle. No year is counted as Yovel. The end result is that the rabbinic Shemithah is not observed the same year as the Torah Shemithah would be observed!

Rav Yosef Karo suggests a simple and eloquent solution to this problem. According to the Rabanan, Yovel is not counted as the first year of the Shemithah cycle. Instead, the fifty-first year is the first year of the next Shemithah cycle. We have suggested a reason for this treatment of Yovel. Yovel is the culmination of the Shemithah cycle. Only after one cycle has been completed can the next cycle begin. Rav Yosef Karo suggests an alternative explanation of the Rabanan's position. He explains that Shemithah is a sabbatical year. It is year in which the land is rested after six years during which it is worked. Shemithah can only occur after these six years have passed. Yovel cannot be counted as the first year of the new Shemithah cycle because the land cannot be worked during Yovel. Only after Yovel has passed can the six years during which the land is worked begin. Therefore, when Yovel was observed, it could not be counted as the first of the six years leading up to Shemithah.

With the discontinuation of Yovel, the law restricting the working of the land during that year is suspended. The year that was previously observed as Yovel – with its restrictions against working the land – becomes a typical year in which the land is worked. Now, this year is the first of six in which the land is worked that lead up to Shemithah.[11]

According to this interpretation of the Rabanan, the position of the Geonim is reasonable. Like Maimonides, the Geonim rule that the law follows the Rabanan. During the period that Yovel was observed, Yovel could not be counted as the first of the six years leading up to Shemithah. The land was not worked during Yovel. But with the discontinuation of Yovel, the fiftieth year must be counted as the first of these six years! If it is excluded the fundamental nature of the Shemithah cycle will be lost. Shemithah – the sabbatical year – must occur after six years during which the land is worked. Now, the fiftieth year is not observed as Yovel. The land is worked during the fiftieth year. It must be counted as the first of the six years leading up to Shemithah. If it is not counted, the Shemithah will follow seven years during which the land is not worked. This would undermine the fundamental identity of Shemithah as a sabbatical year! ■

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Parents & Public Opinion

These are two groups that can hurt more than help. Parents should discuss dating with their children to advise them constructively about a poor date choice, or about a new prospect with fine qualities and a compatible personality. But when a parent forcefully suggests a match for his or her son or daughter based on subjective likes...this is wrong. Allow your child to select: he or she must live with the marriage partner, not you. So it is wise to allow them to gravitate towards a match. Imposing a match is never productive, but happens all too often: followed by divorce. Many times, families who share so much in common, have children who are not a match. Parents also seek a "popular" single for their child, all for ego, not for their child's happiness. Some parents dream of their respective children marrying each other, and impose the match. Again, allow the child to select and reject, regardless of the possible friction you might have to face for not "approving" of your neighbor's child for yours. Place your child's happily married life before your temporal discomfort you experience, when you tell your friends that your son did not select their daughter for marriage. And singles should be strong, and make certain you are marrying for yourself first. You must not marry to please others...no decision should be for the sake of public approval. Do not marry or avoid someone because of what your friends or family will say. If he or she is a virtuous person, that is all you need, and what God endorses. Place God's goals above those of your friends and family.

Happiness

As a single, ask yourself what you feel offers you the promise of happiness with a mate. Are you honestly guiding your selections by the Torah's numerous accounts of successful relationships? Or, are you giving meaning to matters that will reduce or even eliminate good prospects?

You may have a list of 10 traits you deem essential, and when you find only 8 in a prospect, you reject him or her, assuming someone else out there has all 10. That is foolish: any mate you find was raised differently than you, and has a different personality than you. She or he has different likes, and experiences that have shaped them. By definition, an exact match to your list will not be found in anyone, so compromise is essential. The question arises: on what shall we compromise? Let's address a few common mistakes.

Many younger singles from more "religious" circles seek a male who dons a "black hat". Our Torah actually ridicules Jews who dress different than other Jews, and the majority of Jews do not wear black hats. So the Torah's mandatory conformity must be with this modernly garbed majority. In the book of Zephaniah (1:8) Radak explains



God praises the charitable person; not for how one dresses. Dressing to display piety is frowned upon and receives punishment. Externals cannot make one righteous and are egotistical: the opposite of "walking humbly with God". (Micha 6:8)

what the "strange garments" were that invited God's rebuke. Radak states that certain Jews dressed to stand out from their brethren so as to distinguish them as "more righteous". Radak calls their way "evil". This means that the "evil" was in their practice which they sought to externally express religiosity, in their clothes...a very foolish and egotistical endeavor.

We do not find the Torah endorsing external dress as having any connection with internal perfection. This makes clear sense, and we are to follow Torah, not popular practices in Jewish communities. How many times do we hear of a "frum" looking Jew who engaged in sexual misconduct, stealing, and committing other sins? If we seek a good match, we must not give any weight to matters that are irrelevant. Furthermore, when observant Jews dress differently and even archaically from other Jews, why would those other non-religious Jews desire a Torah lifestyle? Such dress appears strange to me, and certainly stranger to the non-religious. The Torah says we are to be an attractive looking people, since our objective is to attract others to Judaism and Noachide law. We are not to mislead, and imply that dress is a means of reaching God. Upholding a dress code implies the opposite message to Sefer Zephaniah quoted above. If Moses were alive today, those seeking black hats would reject him. On this note, many Jews reject converts or Baalei Teshuva, when God favors them, as seen in Ruth, our Rabbis who were converts, and others. Furthermore, rejecting someone based on something external to the person – I mean if they have children – is completely self destructive, since someone with a child is no reflection at all on the parent. Many singles are still single due to this error.

Another request is that younger single men must be sitting and learning for a few years, which is fine...but then there's the famous clause: the father-in-law is demanded to provide. Of course, this is a contradiction. If learning is important, why should one diminish the father-in-law's Torah study by forcing him to work longer hours, to provide for the son-in-law? Let the son-in-law work. "Pleasant is Torah study in tandem with

work: for the labor in both delivers one from sin". "If there is no flour, there is no Torah". (Ethics) And Duties of the Heart praises work. God Himself demanded that Adam work, so abandoning work is not the Torah lifestyle.

"Which" yeshiva a young man attended is now more important than the fact "that" he attended a yeshiva. I don't understand: if the boy attended yeshiva, and is an observant person with Torah values, wherein lies his flaw for not attending "another" yeshiva? Bais Hillel did not ridicule Bais Shammai. Their disputes concerned Talmudic understandings. And the very fact that they argued means they learned "together"! They approved of each other. The same applies to Sefardim, Ashkenazim and Syrian Jews, who all reject each other. This is a clear sin of "Sinat Chinnam", "Baseless hatred" for which the Temple was destroyed. Seek values and virtues in your mate, not passed-on ancestors who have no affect on your marriage. In this group of anti-Semitic tendencies also falls those who reject divorcees, and children from divorced homes. While it is wise to examine one's personality, it is foolish to have a rule of rejecting any of these "types" of Jews.

And then there's the money issue..."My shidduch has got to be wealthy". I wish to cite a sad case. I recently met an old friend. I was interested in her when we were both 25. We dated for a few weeks, and then she disappeared. Six months later I saw her, and I asked what happened. She told me she went to Israel...no notice to me, who she dated for all that time. Needless to say, I wasn't thrilled with her explanation. Years passed, decades passed. She held out for someone with money. She found him and married him after she was 40. He abused her, she left him, and she is now mid-forties, suffering from his refusal to give a Get...even at the behest of prominent Rabbis. His money fed his ego, and arrogance, and now, his stubbornness. His money outweighed his Judaism. She experienced health problems in pregnancy, miscarried, and now, may not have children. Certainly it is quite risky at her age. She confided that she made a grave mistake, seeking money instead of character. She vowed to never repeat her mistake. She wasted 20 years of her life...how sad and irreplaceable. The Torah's couples were not necessarily wealthy. Yet, with a Torah philosophy, they realized what brought true happiness, and they followed that path.

Age

Ruth was 40 when Boaz, 80, married her. Jacob was 84 when he married Leah and Rachel. But Jews today respond that they cannot have this. They suggest the Torah is "antiquated": that was

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Singles

“back then” they murmur. This sentiment expresses ignorance of human nature...a nature that never changes. We share the exact design of those people. God didn't reinvent humans. If those people could be happy regardless of age differences, we too can be that happy. And what is age anyway? Does age equate to fine qualities? If not, of what value is it? Additionally, Torah accounts of marriages and relationships are to be “lessons”, and are not to be ignored. Those people were of outstanding intelligence and values, so they should be the ones we look to for guidance, as opposed to today's generation. Therefore, we reject the opinion of those who say “that was back then”.

So in terms of what we should seek, we are wise to examine the person: not their lineage, not their status as convert, not be concerned for public approval, or any other historical issue. Make certain the prospect possesses solid values and intelligence, and that the person will follow Torah principles, not fabricated, cultural standards.

Determine if there is physical attraction, shared interests and personality compatibilities. To this end, many websites are a fine resource to review a possible match. Singles are wise to join these sites. There is no such thing as “poor advertising”, so by any means, may we all find our match. And if you are not comfortable using these websites, it is wise to change your preference, and become comfortable. Do the same with all traits that impede your chances. I know of many happily married couples who met on websites. These websites are true blessings. And on the note of attraction, it is wise that both young men and women maintain a healthy lifestyle, and make themselves presentable to prospects. If you are overweight, address it with diet and exercise, or counseling if needed. Don't allow the stigma of seeing a therapist weigh more than marriage. If marriage is that important to you, do what is necessary to make yourself appealing. The Torah teaches that one may not wed another sight unseen, lest he or she violate “hating a fellow Jew”. This is a sensitive issue for some, so address this with sensitivity. If you know someone who misses opportunities due to weight, poor hygiene, or other matters, be a true friend, risk your friendship, and share you thoughts and advice. Better they don't talk to you out of anger, than staying single. At the very least, they are now aware of a possibility for their single status. They may now address it thanks to your concern.

Whether it is a personal issue like weight, or a relationship issue, some singles run, instead of working matters out. Making personal changes, and accepting differences with compromise does not mean we will be less happily married. For by making personal changes, we can finally appeal to others who might have rejected us based on good

grounds. And many times, differences in our mate can be enlightening and refreshing. So do not view differences as a negative, and do not avoid reflection, seeking advice, and then implementing change. Do not be afraid of difficulty, as Rashi teaches, “All beginnings are difficult”. But note: Rashi doesn't say we should not make the new beginning.

Matchmakers

Are matchmakers truly fit to match singles? What are matchmakers' motives in matching singles? Certainly, many are truly concerned for the good of others. And we must appreciate the amount of work and trouble they suffer in dealing with numerous personalities. But some people are simply not fit to match others.

Here's a test. Has a matchmaker said, “You're too picky”? This is highly improper. It is accusative, and not constructive. The matchmaker views the single not as an equal, which he or she is, but as less deserving. It is the matchmaker venting, and not helping. If this matchmaker was truly interested in matching the person at hand, he or she would sit the single down, and learn his or her preferences, understand his or her dating experiences, and acquaint themselves with the single's personality and likes. This displays concern, as opposed to accusative words. And even if the single is very picky, the correct response is to unveil to the single, how a highly selective approach will hurt and not help. If a matchmaker is accusative, or appears to not comply with what you seek, the best course is to abandon this matchmaker. But a good matchmaker is to be thanked, and I hold that they should be properly compensated.

What does it mean to be a “successful matchmaker”? Can anyone truly have a “track record” at matching people? Yes, someone could have a number of matches under their belt, but people are very deep and different, and many times, it is sheer chance that the matchmaker was successful. Or, sometimes a matchmaker can have a good sense of people. In either case, as a single, we do not know which explanation is the correct one. So how should a single approach a matchmaker? Again, we must be clear about what the Torah views as important, and we must reach the point where we too are convinced of these values. We must be diligent, and patient. We should also critique a matchmaker if she or he is not assisting us based on what we seek in a mate, but is wasting our time with inappropriate matches. Make certain, above all else that the matchmaker has met, and knows about whom they speak. If they have not met the prospect, ask who has, and get first hand information. If you do not, then you have yourself to blame if you wasted your time.

Out of Control

Don't beat yourself up if relationships don't work out, or you find it difficult to find a match. Not everything is within our power. We will invariably be attracted to someone who is not attracted to us. I recall cases where I was rejected because I didn't wear a black hat. How foolish and superficial I felt they were, and how frustrated I was. But I could do nothing, and I was not in error. I could masquerade with a black hat, but the charade would soon be over, and I would violate Zephaniah's teachings. I would also be deceiving myself, for why would I desire someone who values what the Torah rejects?

I was engaged to someone who was becoming religious, but who soon could not commit, and she broke the engagement. From this I learned to seek someone with a firm commitment to observance, although there are never guarantees. Nonetheless, it is wiser to assume that people do not often times change. It is the Tzaddik and the Tzadikas (the righteous) who can make changes in themselves. We see from Chana that she had to elevate her motive for children, before God would grant this request. We see this again in connection with Rachel, who was reprimanded by her husband Jacob regarding her views. She too eventually received children, as she heard Jacob's words, applied them, and then raised herself to a higher level...a lever worthy of children. We too should seek this character trait: one who has the ability to admit error, and make changes in their values and actions. We to must follow this lifestyle.

There may be many matters we must address: some in our control, and some out of our control. We are only capable of addressing the former.

Fears & Anxiety

Singles are sometimes very reluctant to give someone one date. They feel this means commitment, when it really means a single date. To make it easier, agree over the phone that you will meet for 30 minutes, and no longer. Remove the stress, without removing the opportunity. You can always express your feelings and the end of the date or the relationship, if it seems inappropriate. So don't view one date as terminal. You only increase your chances, with increased dates. Don't be rigid; be flexible in all areas.

And regarding the “fear of commitment”, examine yourself: for this quite common fear. If you sense it, but you don't understand your fear, then seek counseling from a wise individual. And it is wise that each of us ask a wise individual who knows us well to share their sense about our dating habits. Locate a therapist or psychologist who can detect destructive

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Singles

feelings, behaviors or notions. Do not let any stone go unturned. This applies to all areas of life, which are important to us.

Summary

Be always mindful that a good relationship is what God designed each of us to enjoy. We will all be truly happy with a partner who shares our Torah philosophy, in theory and in action. When you seek a Torah personality, you will seek one who is patient, considerate, humorous, virtuous, and caring. Don't concern yourself with his or her career. They should enjoy what they do. And make certain that when seeking a wife that she – not the maid – plans to raise the kids. Otherwise, why have you sought "her" out?

Be optimistic, and do all in your power to meet new people. Pray for a good match, as King Solomon says, "A home and riches are inheritances from fathers, but an intelligent wife is from God". The same applies to a husband.

Seeking riches does not lead to a happy marriage, and a rich person who is not wise, will soon lose all his money. But a wise person, who might currently earn a moderate income, will grow wiser, and be better positioned to provide better than the rich man. The Torah says, "One who learns Torah initially in a poor state, will eventually learn Torah when wealthy."

When you finally meet a fine person, and you will if you live properly with the Torah's

guidance, be careful to be flexible and considerate. Talk matters openly, gently, and honestly. Let small problems slide, express your feelings, and you will start seeing your mate reciprocate your generosity and kindness. You will both value what is important, and realize what little concern you should have for minor differences. You will admire each other, and value the relationship. Seek the guidance of wise individuals when needed. And from the very outset, be honest with your partner. Let them know where Torah stands in your life, and all that matters to you, and that you wish to follow Torah philosophy and laws, as the sole arbiter in your relationship. Follow the examples of Torah personalities and relationships in our Chumash and Prophets. Concern yourself with issues which they concerned themselves, and disregard irrelevant matters. Earnestly seek a mate of high quality with all your ingenuity and all avenues, and continue to pray.

Don't despair. God created the universe...He can also provide you a mate...but not without your use of wisdom and adherence to His ways. So listen to those wiser than you, so you too become wise. Abandon all areas that have until now impeded your success...and be courageous to make changes.

Look at marriage as a reality, your top priority, and you will get there. ■



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Behar Bechukotai

RABBI BERNARD FOX

Footnotes

- [1] Mesechet Rosh HaShannah 9a.
- [2] Mesechet Erechin 32b.
- [3] Rabbaynu Moshe ben Maimon (Rambam / Maimonides) Mishne Torah, Hilchot Shemitah VeYovel 10:7.
- [4] Rav Yosef Karo, Kesef Mishne, Hilchot Shemitah VeYovel 10:9.
- [5] Rabbaynu Moshe ben Maimon (Rambam / Maimonides) Mishne Torah, Hilchot Shemitah VeYovel 10:9. Frankel Edition.
- [6] Rabbaynu Moshe ben Maimon (Rambam / Maimonides) Mishne Torah, Hilchot Shemitah VeYovel 10:3-4.
- [7] Rabbaynu Moshe ben Maimon (Rambam / Maimonides) Mishne Torah, Hilchot Shemitah VeYovel 10:5.
- [8] Rav Yosef Karo, Kesef Mishne, Hilchot Shemitah VeYovel 10:5.
- [9] Rabbaynu Avraham ben David of Posquieres (Ra'avad) Critique on Maimonides' Mishne Torah, Hilchot Shemitah VeYovel 10:6-7.
- [10] Rabbaynu David ibn Zimra (Radvaz) Commentary of Radvaz on Mishne Torah, Hilchot Shemitah VeYovel 10:7.
- [11] Rav Yosef Karo, Kesef Mishne, Hilchot Shemitah VeYovel 10:5.

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Behar. Bechukotai

taken from "Windows to the Soul"

RABBI DR. MICHAEL BERNSTEIN

Joyless Festivals in Israel

Rabbi Yochanan, who lived in Israel about two hundred years after the destruction of the Second Temple, was in close contact with the Jewish communities of Babylon. As quoted in the Talmud (Shabbos 145b), he wonders why the festivals are more joyous in Babylon than in Israel. And he offers a solution based on the Prophets.

Hosea prophesied (2:13), "I shall end all her joy, her festive gatherings, her new months, her Sabbaths and her festivals." Isaiah prophesied (1:14), "My soul despises your new months and holidays; they have become a burden to Me." Both prophets conveyed that there is a specific curse regarding festivals in the land of Israel.

What did Isaiah mean by "they have become a burden to me"? Rabbi Eleazar comments, "It is not enough for Israel that they sinned before Me, but they also burdened Me to determine which harsh decree I shall bring upon them." The Talmud concludes that this "burden," clearly just an anthropomorphism, causes more frequent troubles and a general diminution of joy during the festivals in Israel.

Many questions come to mind. Why was the land of Israel singled out for a harsher decree long after the destruction of the Temple, when only a fraction of the Jewish people remained there? In what way is it a greater "burden" for

God to make harsh decrees in the land of Israel? How do we define this additional sin of "burdening" God over and above the sins that lead to divine retribution in the first place? And how does this sin relate to the festivals?

The most essential aspect of the festivals is to reinforce the idea of God's continual benevolence and providence; they recall the redemption from Egypt (Passover), the giving of the Torah (Shavuot) and God's providence during the forty years in the desert (Sukkos). This providence is most manifest in the land of Israel, as we read in the second paragraph of the Shema prayer. It is there that man can achieve the closest possible relationship with the Creator.

It stands to reason that the land of Israel demands a "reverse providence" when it is not fulfilling its purpose, and so, "bad" things tend to happen in Israel. This is especially true during the festivals when, in good times, the great gathering at the Temple would have reverberated with paeans to His providence. Now, as the Temple lies in ruins, the people are banished and silence greets the festivals, it is fitting that the absence of providence be most acutely felt.

Ideally, God wants people to choose good for its own sake, without prodding by miraculous occurrences. But people tend to be wayward, and God redirects nature to produce providen-

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tial events that guide them back on the right path. The Talmud characterizes this active override of the laws of nature as a "burden" on God's ultimate plan. If all that is required is a small providential nudge then the "burden" is considered small, but if a major calamity is needed in order to get their attention, they are imposing a great "burden," so to speak, on God's plan for the world.

People living in the land of Israel, the place designated for the most manifest providence, are held to a higher standard. For them, small nudges were often not enough. They required more significant intervention and thereby caused an additional "burden." And during the festivals, when the "reverse providence" was so manifest, the "burden" was the greatest. ■

A Fitting Cadence

The Book of Leviticus begins with God's call to Moses to initiate the divine service and comes to a disturbing climax with the Tochachah, the dire warnings of divine retribution should the people go astray. It is a fitting place to turn the last page and open the next Book. But surprisingly, a few didactic laws regarding animals sanctified for the divine service follow the dramatic Tochachah. Why do these laws appear here? The anticlimactic conclusion diminishes the power of the reproof, distracts from the Book's theme and detracts from its message.

The very last passage of Leviticus discusses the laws of temurah, among the laws of other holy items. An animal sanctified as an offering cannot be exchanged for another. If the exchange is attempted, both animals remain in the holy domain. The Torah repeatedly stresses (27:33) that no distinction be made "between good and bad." The laws of this section teach that once an object attains holiness it must remain so unless properly redeemed.

Upon consideration, this law provides a fitting metaphor for the consolation that concludes the Tochachah, where God declares (25:24), "Even in the land of their enemies I will not cast them away, nor will I loathe them to destroy them and void My covenant with them." We see this promise etched into the structure of Halachah in the laws of temurah and other holy items. God has invested the Jewish people with sanctity by selecting them. Whether "good or bad," they cannot be exchanged or lose their higher designation. They, too, will have redemption. ■