

# Splitting the Seas of Jewish Matchmaking and Money-Making

*Why is making money and making a shidduch considered as difficult as splitting the sea?*

## **Making the Match**

“Matchmaker, matchmaker, make me a match...”

Remember that song from Fiddler on the Roof? It makes traditional Jewish matchmaking seem so romantic.

But have any of you ever tried arranging an introduction? Lots of people have tried. The big question is how many have truly succeeded—even after you make a successful introduction and the couple get married, every time something isn’t working out, they blame you. And should they get divorced, G-d forbid, who knows, they may even sue you!

Back in the shtetl, being a shadchan was a respectable career. The shadchan would contact a potential groom’s family, lie to them about the great girl he has, do the same to a potential bride’s family, and should the introduction go through to completion, he’d pocket a “shadchan fee.”

There would be those who would pay the shadchan for every name that they offered, even if nothing came of it, for the sole

purpose of encouraging him to find more possibilities.

Today, as a general rule, shadchanim take a minimum of \$1,000 from each side of the family. I even heard that New York shadchanim want \$5,000 as an advance payment—and another \$15,000 should the introduction be successful.

Now, today's biggest shadchan is JDate. At this Jewish dating website, one pays a monthly fee, and you don't need a human shadchan to fudge the truth for you—you can do it yourself.

## **As Difficult As Splitting the Sea**

Today, my friends, is Shvii shel Pesach—the seventh day of Passover. Today in Jewish history was the day upon which the great miracle of the Splitting of the Red Sea actually occurred. The Jews left Egypt on the first day of Passover—however, they only crossed the sea seven days later.

In the Talmud, we find a discussion regarding shidduchim which emphasizes just how difficult the matter is, and it quotes Rabbi Yochanan, who says, “Pairing mates is as difficult as the Splitting of the Sea”—meaning, finding the right boy for the right girl is as hard as splitting an ocean.

What's the connection? The Splitting of the Red Sea was a supernatural miracle that happened once in human history at the Hand of G-d Himself in all His Glory. Introduction-making, on the other hand, despite all its difficulties, produces results which we can see every day: People get married.

So, what's the comparison? Even if we are to say that finding your soul mate is a miracle, it's still not as great a miracle as

the Splitting of the Red Sea.

The story goes that a man once celebrated his 15th wedding anniversary, and his friends asked him, “What’s it like to be married for such a long time?” He said, “It felt like 15 minutes... underwater!” Maybe that’s the connection to the Splitting of the Sea.

Now, the Talmud uses this expression with regard to one more thing — earning a livelihood: “A person’s sustenance is as difficult as the Splitting of the Red Sea.”

Here too the question may be asked: Why is making a living compared to one of the greatest single miracles in history? The fact is, most of us make some sort of living every day. This may indeed be a miracle—but a miracle like the Splitting of the Sea?!

## **Just Jump In**

I once heard the following explanation:

When the Jewish People stood at the edge of the sea, with the water in front of them and the Egyptians behind them, panic and chaos broke out. They immediately began shouting at Moses: “Were there not enough graves in Egypt that you took us to die here?! Why’d you bring us here?”

The Midrash tells us that the Jews split into four camps, each with its own ideology.

One said, “Let’s go back to Egypt”—there’s no other option, we need to return; this was a very nice experiment but an unsuccessful one. There’s nothing else to do.

The second group said, “Let’s jump into the sea”—there is no way we’re going back to Egypt, so it’s better to commit suicide right here than go back there.

The third group, consisting of more macho and patriotic people, said, “Let’s fight them!”—we are not going back and we are not committing suicide, so let’s do battle and whatever happens, happens.

Finally, the fourth group, the religious people, said, “Let’s be victorious over them!”—let’s organize a day of prayer at the “Western Wall” and G-d will have mercy on us from Heaven.

Along came G-d Himself and said something to Moses that no one thought of: “Tell the Jews to move on.”

This is the way matchmaking works, my friends. A young man may be planning to marry a girl with a specific characteristic. In his mind, he can picture what his bride looks like and what fabulous talents she’ll have, and the more time passes, the more his imagination adds details to what he wants in a soul mate.

However, when reality finally hits, he gets married to someone totally different—something he didn’t want and didn’t plan and didn’t think about, but something that’s best for him.

Only G-d knows what’s really best for him—and that’s why introduction-making is compared to the Splitting of the Sea: because ultimately, the most unforeseen thing happens.

The story is told of a girl who came to a shadchan and gave her

a long list of things she was looking for: A boy with a good heart, from a rich and smart home, handsome, and so on. The shadchan gave her a look of pity and asked her, “Tell me—how many guys do you want to marry?”

The same holds true for making a living. A young person may go off to college planning to make his living from a particular career. However, after two years at the university he changes his mind and decides to become a lawyer—and ultimately, after all his plans, he ends up as a businessman making money from something totally different.

Not only that, the same holds true for daily income: You think that your daily bread will come from Client A, but things turn out totally differently. That’s why it’s compared to the Splitting of the Sea.

However, at the Splitting of the Sea itself, another important thing occurred. The Midrash tells us that even after G-d told the Jewish People to move forward and Moses stretched his staff over the water, the sea didn’t split. When did it finally split? After a single Jew name Nachshon jumped into the water without any deliberations except knowing that this was what G-d wanted—it was this act that triggered the mighty miracle of the Splitting of the Red Sea.

The Rebbe teaches us that the same thing applies to a shidduch: To make a match, one must be prepared to jump into the sea.

It’s impossible to guarantee that a certain shidduch will work out — after doing your best, one needs to have faith in G-d that

it will work and then to just jump into the water, at which point the sea will split.

Enjoy your swim!