

A DATING PRIMER

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A Single's Strategy For Marriage



Navigational Tools For Internet Dating

After reading our past few columns on on-line dating, you may have decided to give in to the friends who have been encouraging you to use the Internet as a resource for finding suitable dating partners. Where do you start?

There are a number of Jewish Internet dating sites, but only a handful cater to marriage-minded, observant singles. This column will describe a few of them. We'll start with **Frumster** (www.frumster.com), which is probably the largest of these U.S.-based sites and has facilitated almost 300 matches in the past two years. Frumster underwent a change in ownership about a year ago, and now is a venue for on-line dating for over 14,000 members throughout the world.

Frumster's support staff screens and evaluates each profile and photograph before placing them on the site, and requires all members to provide full name and contact information that is kept confidential and only used to verify details. The Frumster team has developed a profile questionnaire that gives a fairly detailed overview of each member's background, Jewish education, level of observance, hobbies and interests, and physical attributes, and allows members to describe themselves and the type of person they're looking for. Profiles are posted with a member's display name, and members communicate through mailboxes set up by the website, so that identities remain private until a member wants to disclose his personal details. Visitors to the site can preview members' complete profiles, but cannot contact anyone unless they join.

The Frumster team knows that most singles also benefit from guidance, pointers and encouragement. Members can access articles on dating effectively and can direct specific inquiries to the site's own dating advisor, an experienced therapist. In addition, Frumster provides two forums for members to engage in virtual conversations about different topics of interest, and enables participants to contact people whose articles or comments appeal to them. This gives interested parties an additional avenue to express their personal opinion and develop an on-line communication that may in fact lead to a date.

The site's newest innovation, Frumster Connect, is for singles who have already been e-mailing and would like to move forward, but don't feel comfortable about arranging a face-to-face meeting on their own. Frumster Connect provides a facilitator who can schedule a first telephone call, facilitate the exchange of personal contact information and references, help schedule a first meeting, and act as a point-person before and after dates.

The staff members of Frumster are all observant Jews who try to operate their site within the framework of *halacha*. They insist that all site users act with honesty and respect and have established safeguards to discourage abuses of this policy.

Although Frumster is an excellent choice for many of the singles who read this column, it's certainly not the only game in town.

There's also **DosiDate** (www.dosidate.org) for Orthodox singles living in Israel. This is an excellent choice for Hebrew-speakers, and is used by English speakers as well. DosiDate was developed by the same team that launched Frumster (the two are no longer affiliated), and is similarly well-planned and easy to use.

Urban Traditional (www.urbantraditional.com) is an Internet dating service that caters to marriage-minded Jewish singles in the U.S. and Canada who are share a traditional Orthodox outlook, whether they are strictly mitzvah observant, observant to a degree, or just starting to connect to Jewish observance. The profile questionnaire has members list some of their personality traits and asks them to state if they would consider relocating for the right person. Unlike some other sites, UT does not allow non-members to browse its profiles, so it is difficult to know before joining if there are many profiles to choose from in a preferred category and age range.

Bitachon (www.bitachon.com) is designed for all segments of the Orthodox community; the only requirement is that singles are shomer Shabbat and shomer Taharah. The site offers a discussion board and allows visitors to post their profiles and receive e-mail responses at no charge. To initiate a contact, however, singles must join as members.

Some of the smaller (in terms of numbers of members) international sites for observant singles are **Orthodate** (www.orthodate.com), **Frumdate** (www.frumdate.com) and **TooBeAv** www.TooBeAv.com. These sites are relatively new and do not yet have a large pool of members, but the right person for a reader may be in that small pool. In addition to asking members if they are willing to relocate, Orthodate also allows matchmakers and other interested non-members to open a *shadchan* account. This is the way third parties can contact site members on behalf of a client, family

member, or friend. TooBeAv requires subscribers to include the name of their rabbi. In addition to its data base, the site contains a discussion board with provisions for personal voice message and voice chat.

We haven't profiled any of the dating sites aimed at the general Jewish population, even though a number of observant couples met through them. Readers should carefully examine a site's policy before deciding if it is right for them, since some of them are open to non-Jews and others have such a broad appeal that they are not just for marriage-oriented people.

On November 7, Sherry and Rosie will be joining over 300 singles and matchmakers for the 4th Annual Shidduch Conference sponsored by the National Council of Young Israel, Congregation Kehillat Yeshurun, and SawYouAtSinai in Manhattan. Contact www.youngisrael.org or 212-929-1525 ext. 150 for details. On November 13, they'll be heading a program for singles at the Manhattan Beach Jewish Center. And on November 14, all married men and women who want to help singles are invited to Sherry's and Rosie's Dating Mentor's Workshop at 11:30 a.m. at Merkaz HaSimcha, E. 18th Street and Avenue M, Flatbush, sponsored by Aish HaTorah and Frumster.



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