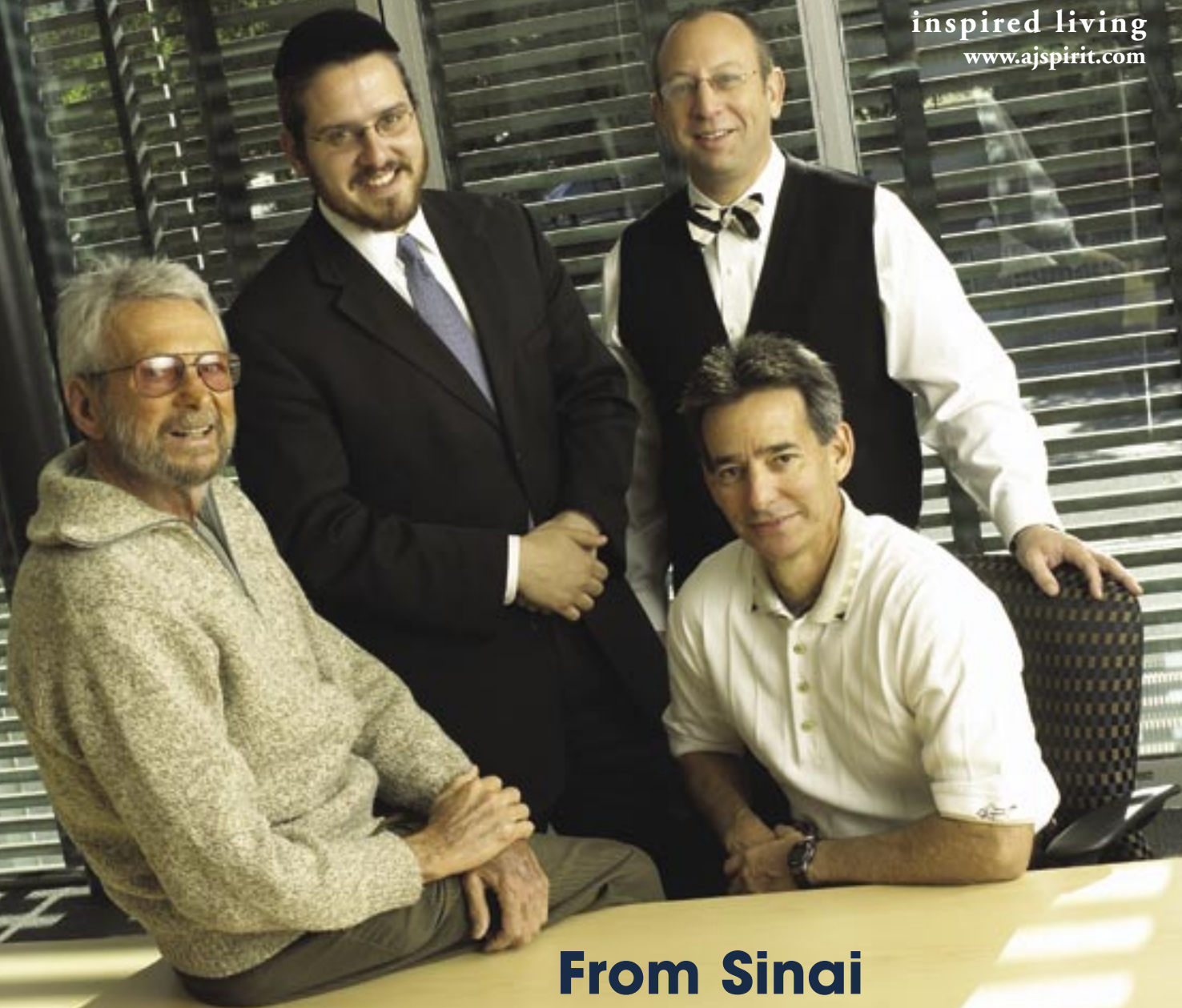


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38



# From the Frumster Files

by Jonathan Schwartz

Almost three years ago, Daniel moved from Israel to Japan to study Mathematical Physics. He knew that he'd be there for some time, and that it would be very difficult finding fellow Jewish singles, especially a single observant Jewish woman. Daniel chose Frumster.com, an online dating service catering to inspired Jews worldwide. He knew there was no chance of finding a single Jewish woman in Japan with his values but he hoped there was an observant single somewhere on his side of the world and,

if things looked promising enough, to fly out to meet her.

Enter Yona Chava (also known as Yuuko), a Japanese convert to Judaism who, after living in Jerusalem, returned to Japan to visit her family. Her journey towards "Torah Judaism" is as engaging as her journey to find her soulmate.

"When I was ten years old, I had read A Diary of Anne Frank, which is very popular book in Japan

and this was my first 'encounter' with Jewish people. So I knew that there were a people called Jews, and they were persecuted, but it didn't mean anything to me at that time," she describes.

Ironically, at university she studied Arabic and Islam. "I was very interested in the Islamic culture and Islam as a religion, but interestingly found that my lack of Jewish knowledge frustrated my intellectual understanding. I found many things

in Islam connected to Judaism and as such decided that I should study Judaism and Modern Hebrew. Not surprisingly, I found my study of Judaism and Modern Hebrew much more fun! Judaism fascinated me. The more I studied, the more I became interested.”

Yona moved to Jerusalem where she studied Modern Hebrew in a summer ulpan course at

The couple decided to meet in Kyoto. “He looked cuter than I had expected,” she remarks. Their first date was at a botanical garden, and they spent the next ten hours together. The rest is history. They were married in Tokyo on the 24<sup>th</sup> of January, 2005, in what may have been the first observant Jewish wedding in Japan since the Second World War. “This is truly a miracle. Finding a shidduch (match) in Japan isn’t one

“The differences between religious and secular online dating are many,” says Saker. “On other sites, people may be looking for mere friendship, a girl or boyfriend. Religious backgrounds aren’t necessarily important. Profilees’ photos are unfortunately ‘anything goes’-type of pictures, often the more suggestive, the better.” But on Frumster the users are practicing Jews interested in dating for marriage for whom shared religious outlook and observance growth level weigh most heavily.

“Sarah,” an Interior Designer from a suburb of Philadelphia, discovered Frumster about a year ago when discussing online dating options with a friend who found her *bashert* [soulmate] at Frumster. “There’s a certain level of respect that you feel from Frumster that you don’t get anywhere else. You can trust people have values and are interested in serious relationships. At some of the other sites, they’re only interested in looks and more superficial things. Everyone who is contacting me [on Frumster] is looking for something more substantial.”

Telling stories of how Jewish singles found each other for marriage dates back to the Torah. In Genesis, we read all about how Abraham’s servant found Isaac’s wife Rebecca at a well. The Talmud even reports that G-d Himself is kept busy manipulating events to bring intended couples into each others lives. The web is now the newest frontier for His favorite pastime.

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Hebrew University of Jerusalem for two months. She stayed at the local dormitory and began meeting many religious people for the first time, and went to Synagogues every Shabbat, and felt more and more ‘at home.’

Around this time, she began thinking about converting to Judaism, but she had to finish writing her M.A. thesis first, so she headed back to Japan. A few months later, she decided to convert, and returned to Israel to study where she later completed her Orthodox conversion.

“When I told my friends that I was moving back to Japan for a while, some of them suggested that I place my profile on the internet dating sites. One of my friends told me that Frumster would be the best for me, as it is worldwide, and people are observant. I felt I had nothing to lose – so I decided to post my details,” she says. Yona did an immediate search for men in Japan – and one man, Daniel, came up!

in a million, it’s one in 126 million- and it shows that one should never give up hope,” says Daniel. “If G-d can bring a Jewish couple together in Japan, he can do so anywhere!”

“Frumster provides a uniquely secure, modest and comfortable online dating environment for observant, marriage-minded single Jews worldwide,” says Derek Saker, Director of Marketing at Frumster.com. Now a leader in online dating for observant Jews, Frumster boasts more than 400 married members in just 3 and a half years. The site, created in December 2001, stands with over 17,000 screened members and touts itself as a virtual meeting place for singles - from the newly interested in Mitzva observance to modern Orthodox, from yeshivish to *chasidish* to Carlbachian.

Saker says that Frumster enables members to gauge more of an in-depth perspective of an individual through meaningful communication, and makes it possible for observant singles with similar outlooks, but different geographic locations, to meet.