

FRUMSTER'S

Sephardic Side

Dave Gordon

Internet matchmaking has caught on like wildfire among Sephardic singles, according to Derek Saker, director of marketing at Frumster.com. The site, which has emerged as one of the most successful online Jewish dating services, has been the catalyst for over 700 marriages at the rate of 18 matched a month.

Created in December 2001, Frumster answers the demand of marriage-minded traditional singles for a secure and comfortable online dating environment that meets their specific needs. The site has become a virtual meeting place for Jewish singles of all ages living all over the United States and abroad.

"We now have several thousand active Sephardic members on Frumster. They range from Syrian, Egyptian, Persian, and Bucharian," says Ben Rabizadeh, Saker's business partner and CEO of Frumster.

He adds, "I am Persian and have always wanted to make Frumster attractive to the Sephardic community. To this end, early on in the process we added a 'languages spoken' section and Sephardic ethnicity question so members of specific Sephardic communities can find each other easily."

In addition to the pool of tens of thousands of marriage-minded singles, the key to Frumster's success is rigorous screening and hands-on support by a dedicated management team consisting of observant Jews based in Passaic, New Jersey. The site also relies

heavily on rabbinic supervision.

Unlike some other dating sites, Frumster evaluates prospective members to make sure that only serious singles apply. Singles complete a simple but comprehensive online questionnaire, providing their full name and contact telephone number. This contact information is kept confidential and is only used by Frumster screeners to verify member details. Once screened and approved, a member can communicate anonymously with any other member through the secure Frumster e-mail exchange environment.

A special highlight on the site is "Frumster Forum," which posts articles and interviews for members to discuss, and use as a possible vehicle to get to know one another by chatting about deeper topics. Exclusive interviews include Rebbetzin Esther Jungreis offering dating advice, and a political analysis from former White House speechwriter David Frum. Any comments from members are linked to their profiles, allowing other members to contact them and continue the discussion.

On the "Inspiration Central" page, members can submit an inspiring life story of their own, which is also linked to their profiles, providing yet another way to stimulate member communications.

Frumster has also sponsored events, including an evening lecture by Rabbi Dr. Abraham Twerski, titled: Successful Relationships. Other events have included noted speakers Rabbi Rietti and Rabbi Pamensky, who have offered advice, relationship insights and more.

Although Sephardic singles tend to be very secretive about online dating, Rabizadeh said, which is why he believes it is not talked about much in the Sephardic world, as the stigma begins to disappear, more people than not may be using the Internet to meet prospective matches. Rabizadeh added, "Even in the Sephardic world, online dating has become mainstream."