

Frumster.com



Where Religious Singles Click



Everyone's got their new year's resolutions - I'll try to stay away from the brownies this year... I'll try to be on time for davening... I'll try to spend more time with my kids... I'll try to make the world a better place. I was never too successful over the years with resolutions like those above. But this year, I've got a new one that I am determined to keep.

I would like to help young frum singles find shidduchim (matches). I'm not a shadchan. I don't even have a good track record in matchmaking. But now, I've got a secret weapon that's going to help me. I'm going to send them to the website, www.frumster.com.

More than 270 matches have already been made through the two-and-a-half-year-old site, so why shouldn't my readers find their besherts (destined spouses) there too? There's Laurey from South Africa and Daniel from Great Britain; Yaeli and Chemmie, both transplanted Brits living in New Jersey; Miriam from Chicago and Meir from Dallas; Suri from Bet Shemesh and Simcha from England; Chaya from NYC and Lon from Boca Raton; and hundreds of others. What's their common denominator? They're all religious and no matter where in the world they began, they found each other on Frumster.

Nearly 14,000 Orthodox singles from Modern Orthodox, Religious Zionist, to Yeshivish Black Hat from every country and continent are currently listed on the site, and searching for their intendeds. Users include all ages from 18 on up, and there is a virtual even ratio of male-female members.

The one criteria insisted upon by Frumster, which is managed by a dedicated full-time team of Orthodox professionals, is that members be Halachically Jewish, Shomer Shabbat, and Kosher.

Members complete a simple but comprehensive online registration form and questionnaire for free. They are carefully screened to make sure "they're who they say they are," and once approved, members can communicate anonymously with any

member through Frumster's secure email exchange.

By creating a comfortable, secure and controlled environment for direct but anonymous emailing, Frumster has achieved phenomenal success - where singles have been empowered in finding their soul mate. The site works very hard to get past the cyber-face and work closely with its members. Some of its services are free, and others require a fee.

Recently, Frumster launched a very unique service, the Frumster Matchmaker. Here, the valued traditional matchmaker meets the twenty-first century in a new hands-on service, but where the single decides who he or she is interested in communicating with. This new service is essentially designed to help those members who have already been in positive direct e-mail communications, but who seek a third party facilitator to both arrange the date and be the follow-up point of contact.

"Unlike other dating sites, Frumster engages in an on-going review and control process in order to secure as genuine a pool of members as possible. It's extremely demanding - hands-on-

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managing a pool of nearly 14,000 individuals, but it lies at the core of our success" so says, Derek Saker, Director of Marketing at Frumster. "At the same time, we build a close relationship with our members and our Support Team is quick to respond to any member question, difficulty or complaint."

Frumster's Batya Ben Ze'ev, MSW, an individual, marital, and family therapist who has an extensive background in clinical work both in the United States and Israel, answers members' personal dating questions. This is another service that is unique to Frumster.

What's the difference between Frumster and JDate? Batya answered, "JDate is a large site open to anything. Frumster is a site for sincere, marriage-minded Jews looking to find their soul-mate. JDate is supposed to be a site for Jews, but there's no way to screen that."

"In order to join Frumster, you fill out a profile about yourself, writing all kinds of details - your *hashkafa* (worldview), and level of religiosity. You categorize

yourself in various ways, write about your interests, your profession, then write a paragraph about yourself describing yourself as a person, and then what you'd like for a spouse. Many people include a photo as well," Batya explained.

"The data is processed through the Frumster administration and if you're approved, what you've written goes up on the site. You can read thousands of other profiles and they can read yours. If they want to, they can write you a letter and you'll get it, and if you want to write back, you have to pay a small monthly fee, around \$10 a month, or less if you join for three months. There are scholarships for the truly needy."

Okay, I tried it. (No, I do not need a *shiddach*. B"H, Israel and I will be celebrating our 25th wedding anniversary this year. I just wanted to see how it works.) They asked many questions, and then they rejected my application because I didn't write enough about myself. Batya explained my rejection, "They want a very thoughtful description in order to help other people understand a little more clearly who you are, and who you are looking for. This helps a person to quickly know whether there is any potential for a relationship."

When I finally was accepted (thanks to more thoughts about my hopes and dreams; plus Batya's intervention), I checked out the group of young men who were my match (in their 30s, of course), and I found so many of them charming, with similar interests, and even noted that several said they'd like to live in Israel. That would obviously be an important criteria for me.



Batya Ben Ze'ev and family

Epidemic of Older Singles

"There is an epidemic of Orthodox Jews in their 30s, 40s, and 50s who are not married,"

Batya commented. "Some of them

have individual problems that need to be dealt with, but many of them have developed this entirely acceptable lifestyle of single-ness, and they have a perception of finding their 'soul mate.' The older they get, the more entrenched this picture of the perfect mate becomes. They're unable to get beyond this vision, and since everyone is a composite of positives and negatives, it is difficult for them to commit to a non perfect person."

She continued, "They have careers. They're successful. They have enough money. They have a whole *chevra*, and they have very satisfying lives. They don't want to put their lifestyle on the line, unless they are positive that person is their soul mate. And sometimes it just doesn't happen."

"Many older singles can be helped by working with a dating mentor or advisor who will help them clarify issues, and to understand how they may be putting up

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barriers to potentially successful relationships."

"Years ago, people didn't look for soul mates. Their parents helped them find someone who would be very compatible. Later on, people looked themselves for someone who they felt would be a good spouse. Today western culture has provided the concept of a 'soul mate' and the romantic 'one and only love', and it often gets in the way of real life relationships," Batya noted.

Yenta the Computer

Years ago, finding a *shiddach* over the internet had a very negative connotation. But there have been so many marriages thanks to the internet, web matches have gained legitimacy. Batya said, "It's been a really terrific thing, using technology in a positive way. People are able to decide for themselves who might be a positive prospect, and to reach out directly (although anonymously) to that person."

Searching the net for Mr./Mrs. Right through Frumster helps eliminate blind dates, because singles can check out their potential dates' biographies and photos. Frumster.com has proven that love has no borders with singles from all over the world, meeting on the screen on their desk. Frumster makes sure that members are more than just a pretty face, through their in-depth profiles and email communications.

An interesting sidebar of the new technology is that 50% of the matches on Frumster are initiated by women, Batya pointed out. "Women go on to Frumster, read the profiles and say, 'This man looks interesting to me.' Then they make the first contact. It's very empowering for them. They're not sitting around like a wallflower, waiting for a guy to click on them."

Batya explained that after things "click" between the couple, they correspond through the site for a few weeks, using self-designated "user names", then exchange their own private email address, then talk on the phone,

and then meet in a public place. Frumster encourages its members to thoroughly check out someone, prior to meeting, by speaking with former roommates, *Rebbeim*, and any other possible sources.

Dating Advisor

Often, singles feel that they need advice. That's when they turn to Batya



One of Frumster's 270 matches
Yitzchak and Kinneret Rifkin

Ben Ze'ev, Frumster's on-line Dating Advisor. She's the site's "Ann Landers." Singles write her letters, and she writes back to every one of them. Batya said, "When I feel that they require more than superficial help that can be given in a letter or two, I refer them to other sources. Some

letters are despondent, but I feel like I really have a chance to make a difference in the lives of these young, or not-so-young people. They ask me about broken romances, discouragement, and uncertainty about specific relationships. Often, they ask me to read their profile and tell them why it's not getting results and to help them make improvements."

Sometimes they ask more technical questions, such as what to talk about on a first date, or how to proceed. Batya

noted, "That depends on their *hashkafa*. Here in Israel, most yeshivish people meet in a hotel, have coffee and talk. My advice is that they shouldn't start out by telling a lot of intimate details about their lives. Sharing and emotional things should come gradually. They should just strive to have a pleasant, non-intense time together, and unless there is a very specific reason not to, should go out a few times to see if the relationship progresses."

What should singles look for in their possible match? "Look for a compatible person with good *middot*, because in the end, that's what's left. You should enjoy spending time with this person, and share mutual goals and life outlooks. You want a person who is able to give, to be responsible, and who is good-natured. Of course, you also need some degree of physical attraction to this person, but not the kind of attraction that is portrayed in Hollywood. Extremely important is the ability and willingness to work on issues together, to allow each other to grow and develop as individuals."

It is helpful to determine a limited number of criteria you feel are essential for your future mate. For example, one person might decide that she wants someone who is a professional person, an

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intellectual, who enjoys such pastimes as theatre or opera, but most often enjoys a quiet time at home reading. Another person might want someone to look a specific way, to be very socially outgoing, to enjoy entertaining many guests.

Only a few qualities should be essential. Everything else should be negotiable.

A person has to be honest about their own qualities. She/he has to be willing to look within, determine who he/she really is, and at the end of the day give the other person a chance. Often times couples that seem like an unlikely match from the outside, work very well, Batya observed.

Want more advice from Batya?

Get on Frumster.com. Find a Mr./Mrs. Possible, and then ask away.

Success story

Rina and Ilan Davidovici



Packages for Our Soldiers

Over the past four years, we have come to appreciate our *chayalim* more all the time. Recently the Becker Family of Efrat put together a list of recommendations for soldier care packages. Here are some of their suggestions:

Homemade brownies/cookies/bars/mandelbread in metal cookie tins/shoeboxes/plastic containers; hard candies or individually wrapped small candies they can keep in their pocket; nuts, dried fruit; gum, chips, popcorn, licorice, chocolates in cooler weather; shoe polish; tissues; tubes of vaseline; batteries; tester screwdriver- with clip; ziploc bags; a lighter (for melting-welding nylon straps); a small zippered nylon pouch; pictures, articles, jokes, comics; homemade cards; letters; sports scores off the internet; divrei Torah off the internet; pocket size Mishnayot.

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