



REBBE RESPONSA

The Rebbe's English Letters

A Shidduch - What to Look For

Issue 80
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ב"ה

A Word from the Publishers

We hereby present **Issue 80** of Rebbe Responsa, a compilation of letters originally authored by the Lubavitcher Rebbe in English.

In this week's Parsha, **Parshas Chayei Sarah**, we learn of the very first search for a Shidduch, when Avraham looked for a Shidduch for his son Yitzchak.

The general topic of Shidduchim is addressed in countless letters of the Rebbe, which can be found on the Rebbe Responsa App under the Topic "Shidduchim" (and its various subcategories).

In this booklet, we focus on what qualities to look for in a marriage partner, "**A Shidduch – What to Look For**".

Also included is a **Newly Released Letter**, about Shidduchim as well, published here for the first time.

All Titles, Summaries, and Footnotes were added by the publisher unless otherwise noted.

* * *

We take this opportunity to turn to our readers and ask anyone who may have English letters from the Rebbe in their possession to kindly consider sharing them with us, thereby enabling countless individuals around the world to benefit from the timeless wisdom and counsel they contain.

The Rebbe's English letters contain a wealth of guidance and insight on a vast array of topics written in a style relatable to Jews from all walks of life. For access to over 5,000 of these letters, we encourage you to download the Rebbe Responsa app.

May we merit the coming of Moshiach Tzidkeinu, speedily in our days.

The Rebbe Responsa Team

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1

What Am I Looking For

The qualities to look for in a Shidduch; Gaining knowledge about the person in advance; Divine blessing through increase in Torah and Mitzvos

By the Grace of G-d
13th of Tammuz, 5725
Brooklyn, N. Y.

Blessing and Greeting:

After not hearing from you for a very long time, I received your letter of June 29th, although in the meantime I have received regards from your father on his visit here.

In reply to your questions:

1) What are the good qualities to look for in a Shidduch? The answer is that first and foremost the person should be trustworthy, so that he could fully be relied upon in all his promises relating to the establishment of a truly Jewish home, a Binyan Adei Ad. The maximum assurance that he is indeed such a person is when he is religious, and his whole life, in every aspect of the daily life, is directed by the Torah and Mitzvoth. For in such a case one can be fully certain that he is not motivated merely by the opinions of other people, but considers these matters as a sacred Mitzvo, commanded by G-d. Having ascertained this first and primary quality, it is then possible to consider also what additional qualities a person has.

2) How is it possible to get to know a person well before the wedding? The answer is that it is quite true that it is impossible to get to know a person before the wedding as well as after. However, it is possible to get to know him in an adequate way by making sure that he has the primary quality mentioned above. And this can be found out indirectly, in addition also to what he himself reveals. In other words it is possible to find out about his family background,

his upbringing and education, and his general conduct in the daily life. For a person's character is a combination of all these factors and influences.

I would like to conclude with a further important point. If it is always necessary to have G-d's blessing, how much more so in the matter of a Shidduch which is to last a lifetime. The way to receive G-d's blessings is, as the Torah states clearly, "If you will walk in My statutes, and will observe My commandments and do them"¹ – then follow all the good blessings, not only spiritual but also material. And although one is expected to do everything in the natural order of things, in accordance with the regular local practice in the circles of Torah observant Jews, it is well to bear in mind that the blessing is from G-d, as it is written, "And he will bless you in all that you do."² Therefore every additional effort in matters of Torah and Mitzvoth will bring you an additional measure of Divine blessing. In your case specifically, there is something which can also act as a "Segulah," as I told your father. No doubt he has also told you about it, though I am very much surprised that I have not heard from him in this matter, and that he has not acknowledged receipt of my letter, which I trust has duly reached him.

Hoping to hear good news from you, and with kind regards to your father.

With blessing

By (secretary)

¹ *Vayikra* 26:3.

² *Devarim* 15:18.

2

Is He Able to Commit?

Acquaintance with young man and convincing him of a basic matter of Judaism; Being that Yiddishkeit commitment is crucial to a Shidduch, one must prove his commitment first, and also not necessitate constant education or pressure

Miss

New York, N.Y.

Blessing and Greeting:

I just received your letter, in which you write about your acquaintance with a young man, and that you attempted to convince him of a basic matter in Yiddishkeit, etc.

It is not clear from your letter whether this is intended merely to be informative, or whether you would also like to know my opinion and/or advice. At any rate, even if this is in doubt, I nevertheless consider it my duty to express my opinion in this matter, considering the seriousness of it.

Knowing of your background, it is surely unnecessary to emphasize to you at any length that in contemplating a shidduch, the first prerequisite is that the future partner in life be fully committed to the way of the Torah and mitzvot on a daily basis, with emphasis on the actual fulfillment of the mitzvot.

Of course, the Torah, as the embodiment of infinite Divine wisdom, provides a wide field for intellectual study and is a source of profound concepts, and you find in it sources of, and references to, the various mitzvot. Much can also be found in our sacred

Source: *The Letter and the Spirit*, Volume 1, Page 368

Note: Letters printed in "The Letter and the Spirit" are from the Archives of Rabbi Nissan Mindel A"H, the Rebbe's personal secretary entrusted with writing up the Rebbe's orally dictated responses. The "Nissan Mindel Archives" are comprised of secretarial copies, including first drafts, and may have subsequently been published with editorial changes. Therefore, the letters as they appear in the book may not be the final signed version.

literature in the way of explanation of their deeper significance. However, the proper – as well as logical – Jewish approach is that one must not wait to perform a mitzvah until one fully understands its significance, and certainly one must never make such understanding a condition of its performance, especially considering the limitations of the human mind. For every day that passes without the fulfillment of the mitzvah represents an irretrievable loss.

It is also understandable that when a person promises to commit himself fully to Torah and mitzvot in his daily life at some future date, this promise can be valid only if he knows from experience what such a promise entails. Since such a commitment would entail a radical change in his way of life, coming after years of living according to a fixed pattern, he cannot – however well-meaning he may be – have a real idea as to whether or not he would be able to carry it out. Only after he actually puts himself to the test for a substantial length of time will he be qualified to decide whether or not he can accept upon himself such a commitment for the rest of his life.

Clearly, when it comes to marriage, this should not be tied in with any expectation to educate, or re-educate, the would-be partner – especially where such education would be required at almost every step. Human nature is such that when a person is pressured into making concessions for the sake of another person – every day and many times a day – without as yet seeing any reason for doing it except to please the other partner, this is not a healthy situation, and it is bound to generate resentment and disharmony, etc.

With blessing,

3

Listen to the Voice of the Heart

When it comes to a Shidduch, theoretically the mind should lead and the heart should follow, but in practicality we must also listen to the voice of the heart

By the Grace of G-d
11th of Adar, 5718
Brooklyn, N. Y.

Greeting and Blessing:

I received your letter of February 11th, in which you write that you had been given to understand that in connection with a Shidduch, the true approach of the Torah and the Jewish way, is not to let the heart play a decisive part in it, but that the important thing is to ensure the good qualities, etc., of the party concerned. Therefore, you write, that my reply, as it was reported to you, seemed inconsistent with the above.

Now, I do not know how my reply was reported to you. At any rate, my reply always relates to a particular question, asked by a particular person, on the basis of a particular set of data, and, needless to say, my reply is given to the person concerned, who alone can reveal the answer to others. With regard to your particular problem that you write in your letter, however, let me state that it is true that according to the ideal of the Torah, "The mind should rule the heart,"³ and when the mind desires something in accordance with the Torah, the heart should follow without question. This is theoretically true also of a Shidduch, where the ideal woman is described as "Grace is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth G-d, she shall be praised." Proverbs 31:30. The same is true, of course, of a man.

Undoubtedly, however, in our present-day world, it is not always a case where the heart follows the mind, but the heart often

Source: Secretarial Carbon Copy

³ *Zohar*, vol. 3, p. 224a.

has an opinion of its own, not consistent with the above quotation. Therefore, when it comes to a particular case, and it is necessary to decide whether it is a suitable Shidduch among two particular persons, it is then necessary to take into consideration the two concerned parties as they are, and not as they should be, in all perfection. Hence, there is no contradiction between the ideal of the Torah in connection with a Shidduch, and the practical necessity to advise one, in a particular situation where the party has not attained the ideal stage, to listen also to the voice of the heart.⁴

I trust that you know of the three daily Shiurim and observe them, and may G-d grant that you find your suitable Shidduch in all details, since G-d's blessing is necessary in every case, and particularly in the case of a Shidduch.

Wishing you a happy Purim,

With blessing,

4

Give It Some Time

When in doubt of Yiras Shamayim and true desire to learn, best is to not hurry, rather wait and see; Discontinue meeting, at least frequently, in the interim

By the Grace of G-d
12th of Teveth, 5715
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Blessing and Greeting:

I received your letter of 4th of Teveth, and inasmuch as you write that you are in a state of anxiety and desperation, I am replying to you out of turn, giving it priority.

Your problem, as you describe it, is: you have met a boy nearly a year ago, and you have become attracted to each other, but you

⁴ For more on the Rebbe's view on following one's emotions in finding a Shidduch, see S. B. Wineberg *Eternal Joy: A Guide To Shidduchim & Marriage* (SIE, 2000), vol 1, pp. 75-81.

have doubts in your mind whether he is sufficiently a talmid-chochom to consider him a suitable match for a Shidduch; and although you have been instrumental in his beginning to apply himself to study, you are not sure whether his interest in learning would be lasting.

You do not mention your respective ages, nor whether you are thinking in terms of an early marriage or later on. I assume, however, that there is no great hurry.

While the importance of marrying a talmid-chochom should not be minimized, it is even more important to consider the state of Yiras-shomaim and the extent of the desire to learn, since we have the assurance of our Sages – *yogaato umotaoso*.⁵ Therefore, my suggestion is to see how earnestly he means in applying himself to study and in the meantime to wait with a decision in the matter. If it would turn out that he is doing it earnestly, with diligence and devotion, you can then decide in favor of it, and may it be in a happy and auspicious hour.

As for your question, if you should keep on meeting in the interim, my answer is that since such meetings would put both of you under obligation, it would be wiser for some time to discontinue meeting altogether, or at least infrequently. This would further help to clarify how serious he is about his learning Torah.

In view of the fact that you acted as counsellor in the summer, I trust you continue your good work in the winter to use your good influence for yiddishkeit and Yiras-shomaim. Such work being the channel to receive G-d's blessings personally.

With blessing,

Source: Secretarial Carbon Copy

⁵ *Megillah* 6b.

5

Don't Settle for Less

Disregard those who say "take what you can get"; A shidduch means to set up Jewish Home, with G-d's assistance; Look for a person with a good inner core and forgo external things

By the Grace of G-d
19th of Iyar, 5715
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Miss . . .

Blessing and Greeting:

I received your letter of April 17th, in which you describe your history, dwelling on your limp and wondering whether it might affect your chances of a suitable Shidduch.

Needless to say, you are quite right in disregarding the ill advice of "take what you can get." It is contrary even to good reason, and certainly from the point of view of our Torah, Toras Chayyim, our way of life. The Jewish view of a Shidduch, as expressed in the Sheva-Brochos, is that it is an everlasting edifice; a Jewish home is a Divine sanctuary. The essential thing of a Shidduch is the setting up of a home, where both parties of the marriage can live a life of Torah and Mitzvoth, which alone ensures lasting happiness. It is based on belief and faith in G-d, the Creator of the world, not only 5715 years ago, but constantly gives it existence and supervises it in every detail and takes care of each and every individual. This is the basic principle of our creed.

From the above, the answer to your questions can be clearly deduced. While looking around to select the suitable Shidduch, the first and foremost attention should be given to the inner qualities of the young man, that is to say, those which are essential to the setting up of a true Jewish home; hence external qualities and appearances are absolutely unimportant. Through such an approach, and since marriage is one of the fundamental

commandments of the Creator, incumbent upon every Jewish boy and girl, which makes it certain that the possibility for it is also Divinely provided, as otherwise such a commandment would have been unjust and illogical – I am certain that your limp will not be a handicap for a truly suitable Shidduch.

To sum up, limp or no limp, the proper way to go about a Shidduch is to find a young man whose inner core is at it should be, while external aspects are secondary and unimportant, and one is well advised to forego many external things for one inner essential quality. Your conviction of this and your faith in G-d will surely hasten the realization of it.

With blessing,

By

6

*He Doesn't speak English**

Lack of speaking English perfectly is not a reason to disregard Shidduch; Important considerations come first

25th of Adar II, 5714

As for the Shidduch of... the fault with the suggested person, namely, that he does not speak English perfectly, surely is not sufficient grounds for disregarding the propositions. Although this should be obvious enough, it would be well to impress upon that lack of perfection in English is of hardly any consequence in the matter of a Shidduch, where fundamental and important considerations should come first, and where everything else is suitable, the said fault is not a serious matter at all.

7

Only a Rabbi?

Do not limit yourself to consider only certain types as shidduch options; Have strong faith and optimism; Enlist help of friends

By the Grace of G-d
24th of Marcheshvan, 5718
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Blessing and Greeting:

I received your letter, in which you write that you have set your mind on the kind of person you would like to marry, but find it difficult to meet such a person.

However, in matters of a Shidduch, as in any other thing, it is no good limiting oneself, or limiting G-d's help, to any particular and narrow objective. I therefore do not think that you should so limit yourself as to consider only a Rabbi or a professional man as the only possible partner for you.

Another point is that it is necessary to do something in a natural and suitable way to meet a suitable party, while, at the same time having full faith in the Almighty, that He will send His blessing, and the stronger such faith will be, the quicker one will see the realization of it. Besides, a person who has faith and optimism, is a more cheerful and a more successful person, than one who is discouraged and pessimistic.

And so you should try to enlist the help of your friends in this matter, and have complete faith in the Creator and master of the world, Who takes care of everything and everybody, that He will also take care of you. May G-d fulfill your heart's desire, in a way that is best for you, materially and spiritually.

With blessing,

8

Only a Rabbi (Follow Up)

*Explanation - don't limit G-d, He knows what's truly best for us;
Have complete faith*

By the Grace of G-d
18th of Kislev, 5718
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Blessing and Greeting:

I duly received your letter of November 30th. Needless to say that the reason I wrote to you that you should not limit yourself in the matter of a Shidduch, to looking for a Rabbi only, is not because I think that you may not be worthy of a Rabbi or anything of the sort. It is only that I think that in this case, as in all other situations, we should not limit the Almighty in any particular way, nor insist on certain conditions, for no human being knows exactly what is best for him, and must leave it to G-d.

You write that some of your friends have married Rabbis and are happy. But surely there are some of your friends who have also married laymen and are also happy. So have complete faith in G-d that He will lead you along the path that is best for you, materially and spiritually.

I hope you will have good news to write about.

With blessing,

By (secretary)

Newly Released

The following letter is being published here for the first time

9

In the Meantime...

Blessing for suitable shidduch in the proper time; In the meantime, trust in G-d and go about daily life with joy; Participate in Kislev Farbrengens

By the Grace of G-d
9th of Kislev, 5724
Brooklyn, N. Y.

Mr. ...
England

Greeting and Blessing:

I received your recent letter, and I will again remember you in prayer when visiting the holy resting place of my father-in-law of saintly memory, to settle down satisfactorily, and also find a suitable Shidduch at the proper time. In the meantime, you will surely keep up your trust in G-d, and go about your daily life with joy and gladness of heart.

No doubt you know about the significance of the 10th and 19th of Kislev, and will participate in the Farbrengen. May the inspiration be a lasting one.

With blessing

By (Secretary)

לזכות
חיה מושקא
בת שטערנא שרה
ולזכות
מנוחה רחל בת חנה
ע"י הרוצה בעילום שמה

לזכות
הת' יחיאל מיכל
בן טובה
לרגל יום ההולדת שלו



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