



Women's League for Conservative Judaism

Mishpachah: The Modern Jewish Family

THE NOAH SYNDROME

Activities & Discussions

WEDDINGS: The Good, the Bad, the Unequal

I Dancing

Trudy: We have a group of long time friends, all couples. This past year, one of the women, Janice, became a widow. She has continued to socialize with us. Recently we were all invited to a wedding – and as usual our group was going to be seated together. Several weeks before the event, Janice, who had previously RSVPed that she would attend, decided not to. I called Janice and asked her why. She said: *“Everyone will be dancing. I understand that. And I know that you will all be concerned about me and maybe some of you won’t dance because of that. I don’t want to put any of you in the position of having to make that choice.”* The kindness is vintage Janice.

Discussion:

This is one of those issues for which both sides have a legitimate position. Couples have a right to dance with each other. That is part of what makes a *simchah* fun.

On the other hand, when women are seated by themselves, without a partner, it underscores their singleness.

II Gifts

Sandy: I am 52 years old and never married. I have a good job, and am able to take care of myself, travel and buy the occasional outfit at retail prices. But one of the great inequalities of single life is wedding etiquette. I understand that I am often seated at a table with other singles. Unfortunately, there is an undercurrent of “loser” attached to it. Singles only dance the hora. But I have learned to accept this because ultimately it doesn’t affect the quality of my life. But sometimes, when I am wavering about whether to attend a simchah (which generally depends on the strength of the relationship) not wanting to be segregated with other singles helps me to decide.

But another issue has really begun to influence my decision. I have spent, quite literally, thousands of dollars on shower and wedding gifts. I do see the point that we are helping establish a household. Today, most married couples are older, have already established themselves, and have (at least today)

two incomes. I have one. I could argue that they have much more disposable income than I do. There is a reciprocal nature to this. It's assumed that with each bride and groom, their turn will come to help other couples set up their households. But who ever helped me to establish my household?

Until recently, it never occurred to me that the expression, "*always a bridesmaid, never a bride*" is about much more than a collection of unusable long dresses.

Discussion:

What is Sandy's issue with gift-giving?

How do you feel about Sandy's concern?

What can we do to make the Sandy's feel less isolated and excluded?

When Marriage = Seniority

We all remember ...

In the summer of 1999 John F. Kennedy, Jr. and his wife, Carolyn Bessette Kennedy, and Carolyn's sister Lauren Bessette (who was 34 and single) set out for a family wedding in Hyannis Port. The flight ended in tragedy, with all three perishing in the crash. A few days later the Bessette family released the following statement:

"John and Carolyn were true soulmates and we hope to honor them in death in the simple manner in which they chose to live their lives. We take solace in the thought that together they will comfort Lauren for eternity."

Discussion:

Lauren was the older sister. Why was she being comforted by her younger sister?

Why didn't the parents say that she was comforting them?

Or why weren't they all comforting each other?

Agree or disagree: The implication is that Lauren was alone and had no one.

Our Synagogue Communities: What's the Message?

The following appeared in sisterhood and synagogue bulletins and publications (the names are fictitious)

Discussion Question

If you single, how might you feel about the following?

Dessert Night Out

Bring your spouse, significant other or come alone and share your evening with other people in their 30s, 40s and early 50s. Bring your favorite dessert to share or a bottle of wine.

Israel Trip for Empty Nesters

Join the Beth-El Men's Club members, family and friends on a fantastic inclusive tour especially for empty nesters in delightful Israeli fall weather

Gifts to Celebrate All Your Simchas

With Special Gift Giving: Bar/Bat Mitzvah, Wedding, New Baby & More

Make a Gift to the Shul

Please think of the shul when you celebrate life's best events - the birth of a child, bris, baby naming, bar and bat mitzvahs, the graduations and marriages of your children, or your special anniversaries. If you would like to share your joy with us, the costs are listed below.

The Mishpachah Club

Join the **B'nai Shalom Mishpachah Club** for a fun-filled barbecue and pool party at the home of Sherry and Jack Stein. Reservations can be made with Gloria and Greg Madsen. If you can provide wine, please contact Sonia and Don Bernstein. The next meeting of the Mishpachah Club will be a theater party organized by Jill and Mort Jacobson.

Temple Beth Torah Dues for 2013-14

Family dues \$2,900 + \$200 security and maintenance fees
 Hebrew School fees, if applicable, determined separately
Individual Dues \$1,650 + \$200 security and maintenance fees

SISTERHOOD ACTIVITY

1. Break into small groups of 4-5
2. Read over these excerpts from synagogue and sisterhood bulletins
3. What does each convey? To whom is it speaking? Who is invited/included? Who might feel excluded?
4. What does the language "or come alone" convey?
5. How would you write these to be more inclusive?