



FrumDivorce
It's not the end... It's a new beginning

Chag Kasher V'Sameach

FrumDivorce

It's not the end... It's a new beginning

Dear Friends,

We are on the Eve of the greatest of all holidays, Pesach, a time when our people became a nation, when we were freed from slavery. Each one of us, in their own way, has experienced their own Mitzrayim. Who among us does not contend with some worry, or concern that weighs on them?

Can you imagine the depths of despair that our brothers and sisters living in Egypt must have felt? Raising generations of children under slavery, in the most terrible of conditions, without a hope for the future. Yet there comes a moment where in a flash, their destiny has changed. Who cannot marvel at the faith of a nation downtrodden, hurt, and oppressed, who at the moment of hearing the clarion call of freedom, rises again and marches out of Egypt, proudly united as a nation under G-d.

As we sit down on Seder night, many of our collective hearts are broken. Many of our dreams have been shattered, and the reality that life has dealt us, is often too painful for words. On this night, close your eyes, and if you can't feel freedom, **DREAM** and imagine yourself in a better place, dream of a better tomorrow, and celebrate your survival, and your ability to restart your lives, despite all the pain and loss that you have suffered. Seder night is all about the children. Don't ever forget that we are G-d's children, that He loves us, and that our pain is his pain.

Divorce can be the loneliest road traveled, but as you enter this majestic holiday, filled with so much tradition and celebration, know that you are not alone. Know that you are part of the group that cares and understands, first-hand, the pain that you are experiencing. Know that just as we have come together in moments of challenge, we will celebrate together in moments of great joy and happiness.

We wish you a chag kasher vesameach. May this Passover usher in a year of unlimited blessing for you personally, and for your family and children. May Hashem watch over you, and be with you at every turn.

Best wishes,
The Frum Divorce Team

A PESACH MESSAGE FROM

REBBETZIN ESTHER JUNGREIS



My Dear Precious Friends,

At the Shabbaton, you all entered my heart. I feel a closeness and love for each and every one of you. It is with heartfelt best wishes that I send you my brochos for a Chag Kosher V'Sameach. May Hashem give you all nachas, fulfillment and joy.

With Brochos Always,
Rebbetizin Esther Jungreis



Sharing The



Edward Farber, PhD

Handling the holidays creates tremendous conflicts in families of divorce. Differences in levels of religious beliefs and observances, demands of extended families and commitments to new relationships all serve to increase the tensions between separated families.

There are several different approaches to managing holidays. Sometimes parents alternate years- Pesach seder with Father on even-numbered years and with Mother on odd-numbered years. Other parents prefer to divide significant days if living nearby. First seder with Mother and second seder with Father this year with the order reversed next year. For others, if the children spend Pesach with Father, then they will spend Rosh Hashanah with Mother and each of the major chagim is divided. And to ensure that domestic law attorneys remain well employed in interpreting documents, sometimes one of these approaches is only used when a parent remains in the area. If Mother takes the children to her family in Maryland for Pesach in her designated year, the holiday would not be divided even if the families live nearby. Another approach, popular with parents of young children, may be to try to spend parts of the holidays together, believing that maintaining family traditions is better for their children.

In examining which approach works best for children, one must explore the key factors that influence the impact of divorce on children.

There are three broad principles that guide parents after divorce to promote positive growth and development in their children. First, research confirms that children of divorce do better academically, socially, behaviorally and emotionally if they maintain positive, meaningful, real and consistent relationships with both of their parents. What parents consider being equal or fair parenting means nothing to your child.

Second, the parental relationship has to be as free of conflict as possible. You and your ex are still your child's parents and you must model conflict free parenting. If you want your child to learn how to solve problems by listening, compromising and hearing different perspectives rather than hanging up the phone, yelling, threatening lawsuits and ignoring others, you must model the positive behaviors with the co-parent.

Third, parents must work to assure that both are actively involved in the life of the child and making decisions about the child. Children may be hurt by divorce, but they are far more damaged by the parental behaviors that follow. And one of the biggest sources of that pain is the difficulty parents have in jointly making decisions or simply being together at important times of the children's lives.

The bottom line is that when adults fight- and when they cannot together effectively set consistent boundaries, rules and expectations that will allow active and meaningful relationships with both parents, the child suffers. The key is flexibility and responsiveness to the needs of the child. The decisions you make now will likely not be the same decisions you will want five years from now. Changing life circumstances, moves, new marriages, conflicting family demands- all require both parents to be open to creatively adapting their custody agreement.

The truth is that no one solution for managing the holidays after divorce is better or worse than any other. Any approach that allows the child to maintain a relationship with both parents and to see his parents make decisions about holidays in a business-like fashion with limited conflict and tension will work. I have yet to see a child in my clinical office depressed or anxious because of a particular holiday arrangement, but I do see children anxious or depressed because of the parental conflict over the holiday arrangement.

Edward Farber PhD is a Clinical Psychologist at Reston Psychological Center, Clinical Assistant Professor at George Washington University. He is also the author of Raising the Kid You Love with the Ex You Hate (Greenleaf Book Group, 2013). www.raisingthekidyoulove.com





Passover

Why Is This Holiday Different For The Frum Divorced Parent?

Baila Sebrow

Most couples stand under the chupah expecting a fairytale ending, as in the childhood storybooks which conclude with, "And they lived happily ever after." But, unfortunately, for many- marriage is not a fairytale. Divorce rates all over the world, frum or otherwise are going up year after year. Life after divorce is never the same. The things that are done routinely - out of habit - now become bothersome. Structure of anything that remotely resembles family life is a heavy burden and takes Herculean task to accomplish. Shabbos, holidays, and other life's celebrations are an emotional strain for divorced people. Holidays, being the most difficult of all, especially Passover. Passover is known and accepted in all walks of life as a family holiday. It is also the most stressful, even in the best of circumstances.

To most people, just uttering the word "Passover" invokes sensitive emotions in those who manage households. Immediately following Purim, the fear of hard labor in cleaning up real and imaginary chometz, coupled with

financing the extra cost of Kosher For Passover food items heightens apprehension. However, the light at the end of the tunnel is visible in the mind's eye of those who are married. These people know that they can look forward to sharing beautiful meals, and creating precious memories for future generations. A large proportion of people are lucky enough to re-create this scenario year after year. But there are those whose matrimonial lifestyle has stopped dead in its' tracks. The break-up of a marriage and the diffusion of family life brings forth feelings of pain and dread by the mere glance at a Jewish calendar. Passover, the celebration of freedom is also a gloomy time. Research has shown that the holiday of Passover for frum divorced parents, more than any other holiday - is the most terrifying.

All Jewish holidays including Shabbosim are ritualistic. But once the kiddush is recited and the washing for hamotzie and brocha are completed, the rest of the meal is often effortless. But not Passover. Every chapter, and each word in the Haggadah - is a painful reminder of what one is lacking in his or her life. And the hurting does not discriminate. Men, women and their children are painfully aware that their seder is different from everyone else's. But those are the lucky ones.

Sadly, in this day and age there are countless of divorced people who do not even have a seder. Many sit home crying as they observe their neighbors intentional wide open view. They watch as other people sit around brightly lit dining room tables enjoying the festivities - faces beaming with joy. They cry out with grief as they hear the joyful singing of happy children - not their own. And then there are those who grieve silently. Those who wordlessly beseech G-d, and wonder why they were the chosen ones to suffer.



For most divorced people who do not have a seder, it is not about the lack of being able to afford the cost of food. But rather, it is about feeling lonely and not having anyone to celebrate with. Because - unfortunately the end of a failed marriage is at times compounded by the brutality of children deliberately being kept away from their mommy or daddy. And those who endure this pain cannot bear the thought of sitting at another family's seder.

And even for those whose children are with them for this holiday, there is still that sense of emotional displacement in the knowledge that Passover is not the same for them. That feeling of being different is unsettling, which often comes with a hyper-awareness that others are talking about them, even if not so.

That said, the initial response to a holiday such as Passover, for a number of divorced people - is that they may refuse to deal with it. But, the fact is that the same holidays come year after year. Holidays endure all of life's changes, the happy times and the sad ones. And thank G-d for that. Because it is the structure of holidays that lays the foundation and makes that which is shaky feel secure. There is no control over most things in this world. But - that the next day, the next week, the next month, and the next year will arrive - those are a definite guarantee. We can depend on that. Pesach as difficult as it may be - is a reassurance that although there are some things that do not change, they still command celebration - no matter what.

There is a passageway to relief. As arduous as it feels - it's crucial that during the most challenging time in your life - you absolutely should celebrate Passover. This is your holiday too, not just married people. Your ancestors, too, were freed from the laborious and torturous asylum of Egypt. G-d freed your ancestors, some may have even been divorced. In your current circumstance, remember that G-d also freed you from a bad situation. It might not have been your choice. Instead, that choice was made for you - but it nevertheless occurred.

Do not build your own prison. Holidays, especially Passover are about thanksgiving for the favorable aspects in your life. It is for celebrating freedom.

During tragedy and heartache we have to reach deep into the core of our soul and find that which is positive in life. There is much to be grateful for. Whether it is health, a comfortable home, nice clothing, etc. But most importantly, be grateful for life. You are alive. Celebrate that.

Accept that invitation to the seder, or have your own and invite friends. This year, do not just recite the haggadah. Sing each word at your highest octave level. Don't just ask the Mah Nishtanah. Let every participant at your seder table loudly inquire, "why is this night different from all others?" The haggadah will follow with an answer. Your own personalized answer is waiting for you to hear its' response. Listen for it and glean from the individualized code.

As tradition holds, when you open the door to welcome Eliyahu Hanavi, accept the refreshing gift of good tidings and future redemption this honored guest will bring to your life. And may your sighs and tears turn to laughter and joy, and may we all merit to celebrate next year in Yerushalayim.



Alone at the Seder

CANTOR BENNY ROGOSNITZKY

Published by Ami Magazine

Pesach, by all accounts, is the apex of all family time. A survey taken last year by UJA revealed that over 77% of Jews celebrate some form of Seder. Growing up, these were the most profound and memorable moments of my youth. The intense preparation and cleaning in the weeks before Pesach (to which I was mostly an observer), the beautiful Seder table, set with such precision and elegance, and the image of my parents, family, and guests sitting at the Seder is one that will be etched in my heart and mind forever.

This year, however, as Seder night nears, I am filled with a roller coaster of emotions. On the one hand, I am so very much looking forward to a special Seder night, following the tradition, and reliving those special moments of my childhood. On the other hand, the unfortunate reality is that, based on the divorce decree that I have with my former wife, we alternate years for the holidays, and the children will not be spending Pesach with me this year. If I had to point to the singlemost painful fallout of divorce, I would zero in on this Seder night experience.

There are no songs and no inspirational words of wisdom that can mitigate the gutwrenching feeling that a parent experiences, sitting at the Seder without his children. If you are a divorced parent, you know exactly to what I am referring. The words of the Torah are explicit and unmistakable. On this night, "you shall tell your children and teach them of the great miracles that were bestowed upon our people." So on this, the greatest parenting night of the entire year, to be sitting at a Seder, where we are commanded to teach our children about the Exodus from Egypt, and to not have them present is likely the most painful of all divorce-related experiences.

As the countdown to this year's Seder night begins, I know that I will reflect upon the memories of last year, spending the Seder with my children, as a solace and comfort for a year when I don't have them. Of all the amazing experiences and beautiful moments at the Seder, I am drawn to a very special memory at last year's Seder with my babies. I was privileged to be able to celebrate the Seder at my home, with my children. It was the most exhilarating and meaningful parenting experience I have ever had. The children were prepared, their faces shone, and I prayed that the Seder would never end. Each child shared age-appropriate Torah thoughts, and contributed in his or her own unique way, to a glorious and exquisite evening. They say that at the Seder, you are supposed to act like a king. In real life, that's not always easy. But on that night, we were a royal family. As parents, we invest so much in our children. Very often, the returns are late in coming. But on this Seder night, there was glorious harmony among the children. The symphony of love, respect, and tradition was majestic. After we bentched, we were ready to welcome Eliyahu Hanavi. This was always my favorite part of the Seder. As we stood up to welcome Eliyahu, I shared with my children that this was the most auspicious time of the night, because Eliyahu Hana-

vi shows up at moments of greatest joy. He was there when they were born and named, and now he is back at the night of the Seder, to deliver hope and salvation, and to answer our prayers and earnest requests. I urged them to close their eyes, and say a prayer, asking Hashem for whatever their heart desired, whatever would make their young lives and tender hearts whole. Moments later, my little boy Mordechai went to the front door and opened it. We said the tefillah and then resumed with the remainder of the Seder.

A little while later, as I was tucking Mordechai into bed, I asked him "Mordechai, what did you pray for?" He looked at me with a

"Daddy, I prayed that you and Mommy will get married." I took his hand in my hand, and held him close.

twinkle in his eye. "Daddy, I prayed that you and Mommy will get married." I took his hand in my hand, and held him close. I didn't respond directly to the prayer. I expressed to him how much love and emotion my heart holds for him. I told him that while his Mommy and I will never again be together, I assured him that we will forever celebrate our love for him united, and be there for him at the special milestones of his life.

In one quick moment, my little man captured the feeling and the chasm that divorce brings. We can overcompensate, we can go out of our way to be extra special parents to our children, but at its core, children of divorce are often left with seared hearts and painful memories.

Life has taught me about looking at the glass half full, and while these are emotional, and often painful experiences, they are also a springboard for growth. As I look back at my Seder last year, I marvel at the opportunity that Hashem gave me to sit with my children and celebrate in such a meaningful way. Bringing family together to one table, on one night, doesn't always work. In my case, it was an inspiring evening, one that neither I nor my children will soon forget.

So as I will sit down to the Seder this year alone, without my children. My heart will be filled with gratitude to Hashem for the greatest gifts he has given me—the gift of three healthy and beautiful children. In the moments that I may feel sadness, I will recall the magical memories of last year, knowing in my heart that the next Seder with my babies is only 364 days away.

Ami
MAGAZINE Issue 163, April 2, 2014



The Year That Was...

FRUMDIVORCE presents

SECOND CHANCES

AN EVENING OF INSPIRATION AND PRACTICAL GUIDANCE FOR DIVORCED PARENTS

Wednesday, April 24, 2013 • 8:00 pm

Dr. Linda Gunsberg
Chair, Family Violence Training Program,
Washington Superior Institute
"Life After Divorce: 10 Steps to
Reclaiming Your Future"

Rabbi Paysach Krohn
Author, Lecturer and Author
"Boyt Shain: The Gift of
Second Chances"

5180 V'SIMCHA HALL
4127 18th Avenue, Brooklyn, NY

To RSVP, please contact
FrumDivorce@gmail.com

FRUMDIVORCE presents

JUST DESSERTS

AN EVENING OF INSPIRATION AND PRACTICAL GUIDANCE FOR DIVORCED PARENTS

Wednesday, July 24, 2013 • 8:00 pm

Naomi Mauer
Editor of The Jewish Press
Rabbi Eli Bergstein
"Fate and Mazal: What is Within Our Control...
in Shidduchim and Everything Else?"
Rabbi Yerachmiel Milstein
"The ABCs of Real Change and Growth"

Dessert Reception to Follow

\$10 per person
RSVP: FrumDivorce@gmail.com
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DR. EDWARD FARBBER, Ph.D.
Renowned Clinical Psychologist
Professor and Author

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 9, AT 8:00 PM

SASSON V'SIMCHA HALL
1223 Coney Island Avenue, Brooklyn, NY.
RSVP • Space is limited

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"Making Better Choices the Second Time Around"

Rabbi Ben Tzion Shafier
Founder of TheShmuz.com
&
Shachdan, Mrs. Baila Sebow as Facilitator

Tuesday, December 24th, 8:00 PM

Sasson V'Simcha Hall
1223 Coney Island Avenue
Brooklyn, NY 11230

Light Dinner will be served

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New Years Celebration

Tuesday, December 31, 2013
8:30 PM

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DR. RUTH

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WEDNESDAY • MARCH 5 • 6:00 PM
NEW YORK
(LOCATION TO BE ANNOUNCED)

ADMISSION \$25
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SPECIAL PRESENTATION FOLLOWED BY DESSERT

May 14, 2014 | 8:00PM



Guest Speaker

Charlie Harary, Esq.

Admission: \$25

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SAVE — THE — DATE STAY TUNED

May 14th - Dating After Divorce

June 18th

August 11th - Tu B'Av

September 17th

November 3rd