



TRANSCRIPT OF OUR MODERATED Q&A PANEL FOR  
SHAPELL'S AND MIDRESHET RACHEL ALUMNI

# CHILDREN IN SHIDDUCHIM

FEATURING:



RABBI YITZCHAK SHURIN



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**Rabbi Karlinsky:**

Welcome to everybody. We're very honored to be hosting such a very important topic with a very important panel. Special thank you to Emuna Diamond who thought of this idea and moved it along. Welcome Mrs. Varda Berkowitz from YU Connects. We appreciate her taking from her valuable time to share her extensive experience with us.

We will be dealing with a few main topics from the questions submitted. I'll introduce each topic and then call on a couple of the presenters to give their approach.

We will open with Rabbi and Rebbetzin Shurin giving us a few words of introduction.

**Rabbi Shurin:**

You know that shidduchim is a very nerve wracking experience, especially for the beginners. I've seen a fair amount of shidduchim over the years in the second generation of Shapell's and Midreshet Rachel parents. The parents of these FFB (frum from birth) children have done an excellent job; there are very few divorces. I think the rate is lower than the standard rate in the Orthodox world, maybe even much lower. That means that you guys are all thinking people and that's very good material to begin with, and I think you have to keep doing that. I think maybe more than some other schools, Shapell's and Midreshet Rachel have empowered the students and the alumni to think for themselves within a Torah framework. With shidduchim there is a lot of individuality. No two children are the same. My confidence in you guys is very strong; because I think that you do think for yourselves and if something in the shidduch sounds incorrect you will notice it and you will be able to guard your kids.

**Rebbetzin Shurin:**

A lot of the questions that we saw [that were submitted for this panel] relate to the fact that many of our alumni are Baalei Teshuva and their children are FFBs. The good part about that is that your kids who are the FFBs really know the system. They've grown up with it; they've heard it; they've been around; they're in the chevra. That's one of the things that you have to bear in mind. At the same time, the parent who is not coming from within the system has a certain advantage because he or she has a different perspective, and very often you will be able to see through the flaws in the system. The system is set up to work for a certain society. Within the system there are definitely things that don't work for specific couples or specific families. A person who is coming from outside the system can use their understanding to recognize where the system is not working for your kid and not be put into a box of "how many dates?" or "who gives what?" or other FFB "regulations." I think you can see where that's not going to work, and your kids will benefit from your wisdom.

**Rabbi Karlinsky:**

The first topic which Rabbi Schoonmaker will address is the challenge of Baalei Teshuva raising FFB children. You have to have a realistic assessment of where your child is and not project on your child what you want the child to be and what they're looking for. Should we be looking for Baalei Teshuva to make shidduchim with or FFBs? Rabbi Schoonmaker is going to open and then we'll call on one of the other panelists.

**Rabbi Schoonmaker:**

I'm going to first deal with specific questions that came in, and then I'll deal a little bit with the issue of Baalei Teshuva-FFB shidduchim.

The first question: If my child would like to be Chassidic – and I am not Chassidic - how do I deal with that? This question raises important principles for everyone.

The second question deals with a traditional American Orthodox home where the father was working, and learning seriously in the morning and at night – earner and learner – and the mother ran the home. The daughters enjoy working, and are looking for boys who would keep that lifestyle; but that's rare in Israel. How do they find a shidduch that fits that lifestyle, or does it simply not exist in Israel?

In answer to the first question, there are three terms to know. **You have to really be active, you have to network and you have to find an ally.** You don't live in the Chassidic world at all, you don't know how to navigate that world and you don't really know anyone in that world.

I made a shidduch with people across the street. I have two mechutanim on the same block in Ramat Beit Shemesh, so I'm operating in the world that I know. How do you work in a world where you don't know people? You have to network; you have to go out of your way and make connections. When I was looking into Yeshiva Ketana for my oldest son – which was a new world for me at the time – I found about five or six Yeshivas that I thought were generally appropriate for him. I had a specific seder – an order – for every Yeshiva that I would check out. I would speak to one hanhala member and one regular Rebbe. I would speak to the boys, and I would sit in the Yeshiva building for about half an hour to get a feel for the place. I think that the model is important for everybody. You have to have a system; you have to network, and really be active, maybe more active than you are used to. That's what you have to do for your child. You need to act with a lot of zrizus and make those connections.

In the specific context of the question about the Chassidic child, you have to really get a general sense of some Chassidic enclaves, the type of communities where he might fit, and of course that itself has a very wide range. What type of Chassid does

he want to be? You have to narrow that down with him, and then go to that place and speak to members of the community. You have to be a little more forward, and a little bit more extroverted than you might be used to. That's how you're going to help your child. Create a system for yourself.

Specifically, you have to find an ally. It's a new world for you. Many people are naturally not used to asking for help. And it's extremely critical that you get it right. You don't want any child to be the guinea pig. You need an ally. When it came to medical matters, the Lubavitcher Rebbe used to tell people to find a "rofeh yedid" – a doctor who's a friend, someone who will take care of you. It is the same thing here, especially when you are operating in a world which is different than yours. You have to find someone you can turn to, someone who can mentor, someone to whom you can ask questions. Someone who's shayach to the world you are dealing with. At the same time I would also advise you very strongly to know your values. Often Baalei Teshuva, specifically when the child is going to a world which is different than their world – whether Chassidic, Lithuanian, Dati Leumi – throw up their hands and say "I have nothing to say to him anymore." That's a tremendous mistake. You have to know who you are, what your values are and believe in yourself. You must live in the kid's world, but within living in the kid's world, i.e. being consistent with his vision, with his individuality, you have values that you want to give over.

The next question, which may be more relevant to many, is "What do I do with my daughter who wants someone who works more than is usual?" A similar question could be "my son wants to work more" and again, the phrasing of the question was "this is something which seems to be a rarity in Israel." The first thing I want to say is it's not as rare as you think. [I imagine that the question was asked by someone with a more Yeshivish bent because I think in the Dati Leumi world, that's certainly a regular thing. Most of the graduates of Hesder Yeshivas or non Hesder programs are going to be working and learning.] The first part of the answer is similar to the answer to the last question. You have to work harder, you have to network extra, and you have to find Yeshivas. There are boys like this, or girls like that; but you're going to have to network, and make connections and be active and get to know people and ask around a lot.

My answer to this question today is different than ten years ago. Ten years ago I didn't have much experience in shidduchim. The world is changing. There is underground change which is very significant. There are tens and hundreds of solid learner boys who are serious and have good values. They're not off the derech in any way, shape or form; but they don't see themselves as long time Avrechim. This is a change which is going on. You still might have to look longer, further and farther to find them than for someone who's on the "regular" path for an Israeli Yeshiva boy who wants to stay in learning for a long time. It's happening all over in a lot of different ways. [It's really another topic, a very big topic.] So there are many, many more earner/learners in the Israeli Yeshiva world today than there once were.

(Unfortunately there's not too much chinuch being given to these boys because they are living in a world which is giving a different message than the message that they're really living with.) But as opposed to in the past when there were the guys who were matzliach in Yeshivas and guys who were not matzliach; in the Yeshivas today there are a lot of boys that are matzliach, but not in the same way that the standard of the Yeshiva is. Returning to the question, there are boys who definitely want to learn seriously; they are dedicated to the learning and they're serious about that. But they also do want to work, and don't see themselves as being long-time learners.

Lema'aseh, it's still not the norm, for such a fellow you have to check extra carefully. Although it's a much bigger minority it's still not a norm, so you have to work extra hard to check and see what is really happening. What's the story with this boy? Is he burnt out? Does he hate learning, and that's his story, or is it that he really likes learning but he just doesn't see himself being a full-time learner?

In the original question, it sounded like the wife wasn't working at all, but that your daughters like working. I'm always happy when I hear that daughters like to work today; because regardless of the question of long-term learning against non long-term learning, it's very, very hard having one person – whether the man or the woman – bringing in the whole parnassa. It doesn't really work. I usually advise boys in our Yeshiva that if a girl wants the whole parnassa to be on you to avoid such a shidduch because it's too much. Most young men can't make enough money to support a whole family on their own. The wife has to work at least part-time.

In terms of should Baalei Teshuva look for other Baalei Teshuva, I think that it's good that there is a familiarity in the families. My second son was getting suggested daughters of all types of fancy Israeli Rosh Yeshiva types. A Rav who knew my first mechutan and knew me well said "This is not for you; you need a family which is like yours." When I look back at the four shidduchim that I've made, all of the families are pretty similar to my family. I think that makes sense as a general model.

Does similar equal Baal Teshuva equals Baal Teshuva? I'm not sure. There's so much as people develop over the years; what they put in the family and how they're affected by the frum world that they're part of. I'm just not sure, not because I have one opinion or the other.

Of course, it obviously depends on who the child is. You have children who are very different than their families. I know that among our alumni there are many like that, and they can davka thrive in a family which is very, very different. For example when someone who comes from a typical Lithuanian family but who wants to be a Breslover, to marry him into a family where they're going to tell him that he's foolish for going to Uman for Rosh Hashana is not a good idea. So even though the families

are similar, you have to live with the reality of the child, so you have to be very careful.

**Rabbi Karlinsky:**

The next question is the question of the readiness of the child, both the emotional and maturity level as well as on a practical level. Some kids are dying to get married when they're not ready. Some kids are very ready and they're hesitant. How do you know when your child is ready to get married? Who should make the decision?

**Rebbetzin Shurin:**

I think it's really important for the parents to understand that when a child starts dating is really not up to the parents. It's an extremely big mistake to push a child. It's one of the things where the system doesn't necessarily work, because in the FFB world there are numbers and there are ages when you're "supposed to start dating."

It's a very big mistake to go with whatever you're "supposed" to do now. Being single is a very selfish affair, and being married is about learning how to deal with another person and to give to another person. If the child is not ready to do that, then you as a parent need to see that and to slow them down. On the other hand, if a kid is waiting too long, you need to get behind them and give a gentle nudge.

**Rabbi Shurin:**

One thing you should be careful of is not to allow society and its norms to push the child. I've heard girls (not girls from MRC) say that they want to get married because everyone else is. That's a bad reason. A gentle push is good; but if the child is not ready, there is a certain amount of time that you can wait. You can't wait until the child is in their 30s but there is a span of a few years. Even in the charedi world there are girls getting married not at 19-20 but at 22-23. Actually this works out much better for the guy. The woman has finished school. She is more mature. She is in the working world. This could be a great advantage.

**Mrs. Varda Berkowitz:**

Let's address when the child says they want to go into shidduchim and the parents don't feel they're ready. We often look at it as "all or nothing"; but I feel that there's a middle ground. You could take a "wait and see" attitude in the beginning. See what kind of suggestions your child is getting. If you see something that looks interesting that can be a springboard for having discussions about going into shidduchim.

When it comes to shidduchim there are two sides to readiness. Let's use the analogy of getting a job. You need the degree. You need the readiness to go into the job market; but you also need what I call the toolkit. For getting a job that means a good resume and good interview skills; you have to be put together. All of these things come into play with shidduchim; we have to assess the readiness of the child emotionally. But the family also has to put together the tools needed to start their

search. You need a resume, the right wardrobe; they have to be equipped in more practical ways to actually go about the search. If the parents don't feel equipped to make a resume, they can go to more experienced friends or the shadchan for advice. Shadchanim see many, many resumes so we have opinions about what makes a resume more effective. I have to stress that all of this is in Hashem's hands. You could have a person who has the worst resume in the world and they have tremendous hatzlacha and a person who has a perfect resume and things might not go so easily for them. In terms of our own hishtadlus we should be doing the best that we can do. We should put in the best efforts that we can.

**Rabbi Karlinsky:**

The next topic is about the proper way to interact with the shadchan. How as a parent do we deal with the shadchan? How do we find shidduchim when are kids are different than us. What different shadchanut services exist in different communities? How do you best promote your child to a shadchan and make contact?

**Mrs. Varda Berkowitz:**

Between 60 and 70 percent of all shidduchim are suggested by friends and family. Even with successful shadchanim many of the matches came from family and friends who thought of the match and then, after getting a mutual yes, turned the match over to the shadchan. This is a great model and this is something that parents can do. I tell everyone to take out your address book, take out your Whatsapp list or your last simcha list and call people and say "by the way, maybe you didn't know we have a daughter (or son) who's in shidduchim and this is what she's all about, and this is what she's looking for." What do you say about your child? I call it the elevator pitch – those few minutes when you're riding in the elevator with the very wealthy man to sell your idea of your company. Well, you have those few minutes when you're sitting next to someone at a wedding, or on the phone with them, or you meet them in the store. You really have to make an effort to craft this and shadchanim can help you with this if you need help. Avoid clichés. Give real descriptive terms that tell about your child and give a sense of where they fit in to the larger spectrum of things. Give concrete examples: if you want to say about your daughter that she's a big ba'alas chessed – what does she do that makes her a big ba'alas chessed?

In terms of interacting with a shadchan; the best thing to do is ask the shadchan how they want you to be in touch, and how often. The answer to this can be from "don't call me, I'll call you" to "I would love to hear from you once every couple of weeks." Please don't take anything personally. There are shadchanim who will not respond to any emails but they are very busy working behind the scenes.

I'm here representing YU Connects. YU Connects works on a traditional shadchan system but it is an online service. The men's and women's profiles are posted but no



one can see each other unless they are matched by a matchmaker. That allows for more unlikely kinds of pairings that might not otherwise happen. We have seen a lot of hatzlacha. Anybody that wants to hear more about it is welcome to be in touch with me.

**Rabbi Karlinsky:**

Is the shadchan system as prevalent in the more modern world as it is in the Charedi world?

**Mrs. Varda Berkowitz:**

It is becoming so. It was not always that way, but it is becoming much more prevalent. A lot of the venues where singles could meet in a kosher way are no longer available.

**Rebbetzin Shurin:**

I just wanted to say that things are a little different in Israel than in America. In Dati Leumi circles a lot of times the children do not want to speak to a shadchan, they only want to be set up by a friend. This is a little bit of a wrinkle for a parent who wants to help. But once you get through the introduction, the basic bottom line is you're still going through the same steps of looking into the person and then trying to facilitate. Darche Noam is its own big family, with your friends, and your connections. They know you and they're also going to advocate for you. We have a bunch of Darche Noam in-house shadchanim and one of my sons-in-law is a son of an alum and that's what Rabbi Schoonmaker was talking about- networking

**Rabbi Karlinsky:**

I see four alumni families who made shidduchim with each other who are on this call, so there's a lot of networking here. So this is a perfect segue to the next topic which is parental involvement. How involved should parents be? Where's the balance between a parent interfering versus a parent being a help? What's a reasonable hishtadlus for the parent?

**Rabbi Schoonmaker:**

This is an excellent question. We have to keep the child's best interest in front of our eyes all the time, which sounds simple, but people think about what they would like as a son-in-law or as a daughter-in-law. I think this is less in Darche Noam circles, but who can say that our hearts are totally pure? So the first question in terms of helping a child (and helping any person) is giving an eitzta hogenes, a "correct eitzta" and not being over on lifeni iver lo titen michshol. That the only thing you see is the person in front of you and all the more so with our kids. On the one hand, it's obvious because it's our child, of course we want the best for him. On the other hand, it's difficult because it's our child and we have a lot invested in our kids.

I would advise even before starting out that there's open communication with the child. I want to add a very sensitive point. Sometimes a question to ask the child is which parent would you rather deal with? It's sensitive because sometimes you have a parent who put more into a child. As things go a lot of times that's the mother. Still, it could be that your daughter davka wants to speak to your husband for one reason or the other. It's not a sign that he doesn't love you Mom, and it's not a sign that he doesn't love you Dad. A kid has never been in this position before, and you have to really give them what they want. (You know you'll get your licks in on the side; you'll be discussing things with your spouse.) A kid shouldn't feel he has to speak with his parents. They have to speak to somebody. If it's you – great. If that hasn't developed (which happens even amongst people in chinuch and even amongst people who give a lot of eitzah) you have to make sure that they're finding that mentor, that person who can help them out and guide them. They need a person to whom they can speak openly.

If they are speaking to you, you have to be a great listener in both focus and time. Some of us are used to doing three things at once. The kid is going through a very, very difficult and a very critical time. She has to feel that you're really focused on them and you're really giving them the time they need.

Shidduchim are often very, very intense, especially in a faster system when you're only going out six to ten times. The shadchan wants to know the answer, the other side want to know the answer. You're pushed to make decisions faster than you are used to. The kid is living in that tension. Sometimes, the child is generating that tension because they're pushing to get engaged faster than you want. It's a high-tension situation, which you might not be used to. They probably are not used to it, unless they were in Sayeret Matkal. So you really have to go out of your way to be an oasis of calm and caring for them, even though you're freaking out yourself. You're thinking: "oh my daughter's gonna get engaged", "my son's gonna get engaged", and you're not even sure if you like the mechutanim, if you like the boy, if you have your own *sfekot*. So you're living with your own inner turmoil, excitement, etc. but the child really needs you to be focused on them and to be calm.

If you think they're making a mistake, be very careful, obviously, but that's something that's important to get across. You don't want to give a feeling that you don't like your future son-in-law. But if it's at a stage where it's shayach and, you know, parents do see things sometimes, and if you see something that's really off in the person, like a tremendous ka'as or who knows what, it's important to point that out. You know, kids fall in love, all the systems are going pretty fast, they're impatient. Who points that out? Sometimes you need someone more experienced than you to get involved.

Researching is very important. I would like to make a very important point. I'm shocked by how unintelligent some shidduchim questions are. It's true that the

people you are asking questions are giving you their time. That's a chessed. You can't come across gruff and pushy, but you need to find out what you need to know. You need specific questions, direct questions. "Are they nice people?" is not at all as good a question as "are they helpful to their neighbors?". "Is she a ba'alas chessed?" is such a general question. Ask for illustrations, ask for examples. This isn't comfortable because you are pressuring the person, but you have to do it. I've been on both sides of it. I've asked a lot of questions for families, for my own kids and talmidim, and many people ask me about boys in Yeshiva. I hear the lack of distinction. It's not a thought out process, it's like a check list – check, check, check, check. If you don't ask specific questions, you're not going to get specific answers. Find someone who was a mentor of the person, not the Rosh Yeshiva of a Yeshiva with 300 boys. Find the person's rebbe, or a madrich, a roommate, someone who knows what the person is really like. I'm saying this as chizuk to everybody. We're all Darche Noam, we're known for ne'imus, we're nice, we're friendly, we don't like confrontation. Sometimes when I call, I even apologize to the person ahead of time. I'm going to be a little pushy, but I just don't see another way. Poskim specifically say that the more direct the question, the more you're allowed to answer.

There are times that people ask me questions that I don't answer because they didn't ask the right question and I'm not mechuyav to answer and I don't want to answer. If they would have asked it differently – everybody has to ask their Rov – I would have felt far more obliged to answer. So specific questions are very important. What do you have to ask about? Obviously, about the main things are midos, ka'as, chessed, simcha, ga'ava, a giving person, the tznius of the person, does the boy go to minyan, are they hard working or not.

When presenting your child you obviously want to present him in the best light, but you also have to be honest. Sometimes I get phone calls, and it's clear to me that the person is looking for someone for himself, a nice son-in-law, but not someone for his daughter. I know the daughter, and what he's asking is not about the daughter. You don't want to set your child up with someone who's not matim to them, someone who's on a very different wavelength. It's not in their best interest. Shalom bayis is in their best interest. There are many differences between people today. We live in a very open world with lots of possibilities, and you have to be honest. Sometimes, naturally one spouse could be more objective about the child and say, "you know, this girl she's just too much of a tzadekes for our son. It's not going to be good for him. He's not going to feel respected, he's not going to feel loved." "You know, this boy wants to learn every night for three hours and she wants to go out at night." That's a big difference in a shidduch. You have to have this honest sense for your child's best interest.

**Mrs. Varda Berkowitz:**

Everything that Rabbi Schoonmaker said is excellent advice. I just want to add a few more points. Let's start with a situation where the families are different, either religiously, or in terms of background or financial standing or whatever. A great question to start with is "what makes you think that our children will match with this other family's children?"

Some people feel strongly that you should never talk to anyone who's on a resume because the people on the resume "drank the Kool-Aid." They're only going to say good things about the family and the single. But unless you are very, very well connected, you have to start with the resume. I will give you an eitzah that was very helpful to us. Start with the people on the resume, and every time you talk to one, ask them for the name of someone else. After a couple of times you are three times removed from the people on the resume. Those are people who might not have been coached by the family as to what to say. You're going to get closer to maybe hearing some not partial answers.

You have to look at a resume and know who to ask what. Asking the next-door neighbor about the boy's learning is not particularly valuable. She sees the boy walking around with the sefer under his arm so she's going to tell you that he's such a big masmid. You're only going to know that by talking to the boy's Rosh Yeshiva. Similarly, if you want to find out about whether the boy has certain practices that you might not approve of, that's something to talk to the friends about, because the Rosh Yeshiva might not know what goes on in the dormitory. So you have to really be smart about who to ask what, and understand that you might not get a full picture from talking to one person.

The last thing that I want to say is that we were always advised by our Rav to speak to as many people as possible about a match. It doesn't mean you have to be on the phone 24/7. I'm talking about a normal amount of hishtadlus. The reason for talking to a lot of people is because you will start to see patterns. If everyone tells you stories about how helpful and giving and wonderful these people are, you could start to see that this is a mida that they have. Maybe it's a trait in the family that the children have.

If you're at a dead end – you have a question and you aren't getting answers, or you still have doubts or whatever, don't be afraid to go to someone who's in a position of authority – a Rav, a Rosh Yeshiva, someone bigger than yourself, and say to them "you know, I haven't been able to find this about this family" or "we're interested but we have doubts about this or that." It's very likely that the person in a position of authority can help, either by finding out himself, or by calling someone else the family knows – their family Rav or someone they're affiliated with – and you can get answers. So if you have questions, don't give up on a match. Seek help from someone in a position of authority.

**Rabbi Shurin:**

Let's discuss the children going out on the date and getting to know each other. It's important that the parents ask the child the right questions. You've heard that this guy is a great guy; you heard this girl's a great girl. They could have objectively been great but they're not really good for each other. A psychologist once told me about a couple I knew; I said 'Are they marriageable?' He responded, "yes, but not to each other." I have found that when parents want to know how the shidduch is going there are questions that should be asked. For a lot of the students I'm sort of their parents. One question is "do you feel respected?" I've had students that say, "I don't really know, he never lets me talk." If the guy's not letting you talk, he doesn't respect you. "Do you feel emotionally safe with this person?", "Do you feel that he understands where you're coming from?" "Do you feel relaxed with the person or do you feel he's judging you for who you are?" "Do you feel you could be totally yourself?". If they can answer all these questions in a positive way, that's great; but if they can't then that is somewhat of a red light. The children should also be looking for yellow lights and red lights. They have to do that themselves because if they're mature enough to get married, they're mature enough to see red lights.

**Rabbi Karlinsky**

How can you help your children make the decision? I think Varda, in our earlier discussions, had some ideas on that from her experience. How do you help your child decide if this is right?

**Mrs. Varda Berkowitz:**

I think it's a shift of the focus from facts to feelings, because facts we know, we can determine facts about the person very easily. A lot of young people get sort of caught up in a lot of hashkafa questions and things that they have to find out about the other person, but more telling about a relationship is how you feel when you're with the person. How does the person make you feel about yourself? Are you looking forward to seeing them again? Do you feel a sense of excitement about seeing them and spending more time with them? You have to find someone who accepts you for who you are, but challenges you to be better than who you are. If either one of those things is missing in the relationship, then chances are it's not going to be the right person. This is actually a pretty universal thing. When couples in productive marriages are asked what it is about the other person that makes them so special, they'll say, "they make me better," "they make my life better," "they challenge me to be better" and "I'm becoming a better person because I'm with them." I think if we could keep the focus on that, that's a tremendous gift that we could give to our children.

**Rebbetzin Shurin:**

I would like to simplify things for the beginning of the process, specifically. At the beginning, especially with kids who haven't dated before, most are completely confused. It's a whole new situation. If you grow up in a Charedi society where a girl

never talked to a boy before, it's really a whole new experience. I just say to them then that there are only three possibilities. There's yes, no, and maybe. Okay, if there's a no, there's a no. The kid's not interested and you'll have to respect that. But if there's no clear no then I always told my kids to give it another chance. A first date is often nothing, a second date is nothing and sometimes the third date is also nothing; until the people are a little bit more relaxed and a little bit letting their guard down, you don't really know anything. I'm not a big believer in love at first sight. It takes some time to build a relationship, and if the kid comes home starry eyed the first time I would be a little bit nervous by that. But I do think that they can all do the yes, no, maybe formula. It's very simple. If it's a maybe – try again.

**Rabbi Karlinsky:**

I think we tried to cover most of the questions that came in. You're in a challenging situation with shidduchim, but we hope that this has been helpful in moving you forward and giving you a confidence that you can do it. We will just have a couple of words of closing from Rabbi Schoonmaker and from Varda.

**Rabbi Schoonmaker:**

I don't know many of you and I look forward to meeting you. It's wonderful to be part of an institution with a shared kinship and concern for each other and I'm proud to be a member of the hanhala of an institution that's reaching out to alumni 10-20 years later. Darche Noam is a small, yet big institution and you feel it most at times like this and it's very special. Everybody needs help in this situation, so I encourage everybody to reach out to the Darche Noam family. Don't be shy.

Shidduchim need a lot of zrizus. They need a lot of alacrity. It's hard work, it's intense, it challenges the comfort zone. I think one of the main midos necessary is zrizus; to be serious, not to cut corners, to do what has to get done and to make sure your child's getting what they need. Another central midda is seder – order – to be systematic. All the speakers mentioned nice, clear formulas. You have to start to build those formulas yourself. Your seder, your system for doing things. Invest a lot in the first kids, and you'll make it a lot easier for the kids afterwards. Keep improving your systems, but really zrisus and seder are the middos you need. You need a lot of siyata deshmaya and you have to know that in the end Hashem is mezaveg zivugim. Chazal tell us that this is what the Ribbono shel Olam was involved in since Ma'aseh Bereshis.

We have to be confrontational but we have to care about people also. Hamisparallel be'ad chavero ne'ana techila. We can daven for other people, even other people our children went out with. Daven for them. We have a promise that we will be answered techila. So zrizus, seder and tapping into siyata deshemaya. I would emphasize again, look for that yedid. Reach out to that mentor; look out for someone who has your back, someone who knows your family, someone who has

your interests. Hundreds and thousands of good people have gone down that path before and you'll make it Be'ezrat Hashem.

**Mrs. Varda Berkowitz:**

As scary as shidduchim are, as much trepidation as exists around shidduchim, it's a wonderful stage. I like to say it's like going on a trip. Essentially, what you're doing is you're planning your trip for the future of your family. The same way that if you're going on a trip you have to have certain things, you have to have your documentation, your passport has to be in order, you have to stand in line for security, you have to wait... Sometimes your flight is canceled and sometimes you are on a packed flight. Sometimes you're on a delayed flight. These are all things that we can keep in perspective when we keep our eye on the fact that we're going on a wonderful trip. If we can keep ourselves and our children focused on the fact that this is the gateway to the future, it could be done besimcha and with patience and with a lot of a lot of excitement about what is coming to be. My bracha to you is Be'ezrat Hashem you won't have to wait too long for your luggage to come off the conveyor belt. Be'ezrat Hashem everything should move quickly and smoothly and you should be able to celebrate simchas and hear much good news

**Rabbi Karlinsky:**

Amen. Thank you to our panelists thank you to all of you for participating.