

## Singles flock to Israel's first matchmaking fair

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Jenny Hazan, THE JERUSALEM POST

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Hundreds of singles, divorcees, and widows gathered at the OU Israel Center in Jerusalem on Tuesday from 3 to 10 p.m. for Israel's first annual Jewish dating fair, "Meet Your Match."

Participant Jonathan Krieger didn't waste any time.

"I met somebody at the door and there was a little bit of something," says the new immigrant from New York. "I said to myself, why not pursue it? This could be the chance of a lifetime!"

Although the event was not set up like a singles mixer, but more like a job fair, with matchmaking booths such as Saw You At Sinai, **Frumster.com** and Ma Tovv Community Network Matchmaking Service, Jewish relationship book authors, dating experts, wedding planners, and other resources for singles, organizer Ayalah Haas of Ezer Kenegdo (A Helping Companion) Matchmaking, said: "The objective is for people to meet the right matchmaker, although we wouldn't deny someone the opportunity to mix."

According to Haas, 39, whose two-year-old matchmaking service has lined up hundreds of dates and married off four couples, the event was inspired by a need in Jerusalem.

"Clearly, there are a lot of single, divorced, and widowed Jews who are just thirsting to meet the right person. Hopefully, this event will bring them one step closer to that," said the former New Yorker, who met her husband Andy two years ago in Jerusalem.

"Here we are - two singles that are blessed to have finally met and married each other at a more advanced age. Now we want to help other people who are serious about getting married do the same thing.

"I just want to thank the One that brought me to Jerusalem by giving something back," added Haas, who notes that all the proceeds from ticket sales (NIS 60 in advance and NIS 80 at the door) will go toward an anonymous bride and groom in need.

"That's really why this event is taking place. This is what needs to happen. I am doing what I can to help Jews who very much want to be married."

Speakers periodically approached the microphone to offer words of inspiration to the mingling singles, whose conversations were interrupted every hour by the announcement of raffle winners

who took prizes from corporate sponsors while experts sat at their tables and offered free advice.

"The person with whom you have chemistry is really someone who has both the positive and negative characteristics of the people who raised you, as well as some missing parts of yourself that you cut off in childhood," advised relationship therapist Charlotte Slopak Goller, a clinical psychologist and psychoanalyst. Goller's Imago Singles Group Workshops are based on the philosophies of Harville Hendrix, author of *Keeping the Love You Find: A Personal Guide*.

"We teach people what a marriage is really supposed to do, which is to heal our wounds from childhood," says Slopak, who works with both singles and couples. "Most people aren't aware of that."

Attendee Eta Morris says she did become aware of that, and other relationship-centered psychological philosophies, after she divorced three years ago.

"I think I'm wiser and stronger as a person, and now I think I know more about what I want," said Morris, who was married for 18 years. "I thought it would be interesting to come here to meet matchmakers, also to see single men," she continued.

"It's a nice way of meeting because, being religious, we don't go to bars and we don't do other things where we would meet singles. So this is a very good opportunity."

Haas was extremely pleased with the turnout.

"Many more people came than we expected," she said, noting that more than 120 participants registered early. "We hope the fair will become an annual fixture in Jerusalem."

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