

## Chapter Twelve

### Life Online

“Get a life,” I shout at Chainik. “Why are you wasting all this time online, writing backwards and forwards and arguing with this halfwit about stuff that doesn’t even matter?”

But it is no use. Chainik with a computer keyboard in his hands is like a puppy with a soft slipper between its teeth. You can tug and pull, but you must expect to lift him in his two hundred pound entirety off the floor if you try to separate him from it or snatch it away. And Chainik loves to fight, argue and nag. “If I’m fighting I’m alive,” he says proudly. Online he sometimes comes across as this pugnacious, vociferous and yapping little Yenta, something like a cross between a dyspeptic aunt and a Chihuahua on steroids. At other times he is stentorian as a, as a, well, as a stentor. Long and short of it is, he gets into online fights and it drives me crazy. I wanted JBDSM to be a calm, sophisticated and gentlepersonly forum for the free exchange of ideas and information, something like a Jewish version of a 19<sup>th</sup> century Jewish Enlightenment Salon somewhere in Warsaw, perhaps. Instead it degenerates into this Woody-Allenesque torture chamber, staffed by members of the febrile debaters clan, where people knife each other in the guts with razor-honed quotes from scripture, and nail vicious little packets of 14<sup>th</sup> century Spanish prose on one another.

Six months after the *Big Broch*, (which is what we named the RABBIwatch.com expose and the evaporation of every vestigial illusion of anonymity) I reopened KINKY SHIDUCHIN, as well as the JBDSM message board and discussion forum. So many people had written to me privately asking for the facility to be made available once more, I was convinced it was better to be brazen than furtive.

The result was like opening floodgates in a dam. Fame or notoriety had provided massive exposure and many who thought themselves isolated freaks woke up to discover other freaks had already trodden similar paths. Suddenly there was a place to share and talk and learn from the experience of others. But it also did not take long at all before the website attracted all those bitter, self-hating, twisted and hostile individuals who never come to terms with themselves and turn to evangelical certitude and fiery zealotry to cover their shame. Even sadder were those who wrote in hoping to become convinced that their prude and prissy orthodoxy could be argued away and they would find themselves released into licentious freedom in a climactic snapping of chains and a shattering of prison walls.

Chainik engaged them all with a ferocity and recklessness that ran directly opposed to my own philosophy. It was my wont to identify the troublemakers, flamers and halacha-police and ban them after a single warning. Others, who sounded more plaintive than judgmental, received a polite reminder, listing the dos and don’ts of the forum. It worked for me, but it was much too tame for Chainik.

“Let’s get some flame wars going here,” he shouted, thumping his manly chest like a literary drum to be struck with typewriter keys. He has a lot of pent up rage, I discovered.

“Let’s feed this crowd some of my salt water thirst quenchers, hah, hah. The thirstier they are the saltier I make it for them. This way they always come back for more, ha, ha.”

Perle thinks he may have a streak of ancient and slightly manic Hebrew prophet in him. I think he more closely resembles some anal-retentive New England pamphleteer, firing broadside after broadside at some obscurantist whig or recalcitrant monarchist. Masha/Moshe thinks we’re both too involved and ought to step back and let Chainik do his thing without becoming co-dependent around his nutsoid intensity. Shulamis, my wife, agrees with Masha/Moshe, but also accedes we should not encourage him in all his excesses.

Some of those who know him in real life as well as online, acquaintances and professional colleagues think it’s high time he grew up and forsook such frivolities as the pseudonym he uses in his writing online, *Bar-Skeeler*. It’s Aramaic, and means someone liable to be stoned to death for sexual crimes. Dr. Sam Muvers, a fellow kinkster, albeit a bit of a dyspeptic bachelor, (his kinkiness is restricted to a huge and still growing collection of red patent leather shoes, his letters to JBDSM are of the “youngsters these days just don’t get the proper training” sort, as well as the “I blame the parents” type,) who occasionally joins us at our bi-weekly munches, says Chainik ought to use a more becoming soubriquet, one befitting his station in life, and has suggested Rosh Yesh, short for Rosh Yeshiva.

Chainik laughs to scorn at such pretension. It is his freely tendered opinion that anyone adding the word Master, Sir, Lord or other significant of Dominance to his online name is probably just a wannabe, hiding a huge chasm of low self-esteem.

“I’m dominant,” he explains, “not because I say so, but because the woman thinks so. If I have to add a single word to that effect, I’m not. I could call myself ‘doormat’ or ‘used handkerchief’ and it wouldn’t change that.”

“What’s so wrong in having a nice name is all I want to know,” Dr. Sam counters. “When we give ourselves negative labels and demeaning titles, we’re mocking ourselves, all of us.”

No one at the table would agree with him. Perle hides behind her handle ‘B44WINE’, she thinks it’s clever and refuses to make friends online if it takes them more than a couple of days to figure out what her real name is.

“It’s so simple,” she says, exasperatedly. “Before swine, B Fours Wine, before swine, pearls before swine, it’s so simple, my name is Perle. Don’t tell me it’s too complicated to work out. I mean, why would I make friends with someone whose IQ is down below room temperature?”

It was late, at one of those suburban get-together meals, when the talk turns to reminiscence and we are all relaxing and sharing bits of the week past. Chainik was quoting, from memory, one of the shriller screeds contributed by his latest antagonist, one who goes by the screen-name ‘*HochToch*’.

“I figured out what his moniker means,” Masha/Moshe said triumphantly. “It short for *Hoch’ach Tochi’ach*, Surely Shalt Thou Rebuke Thy Neighbor. It’s one of God’s personal crusaders is on your case Chainik, your goose is properly cooked now.”

“And not just my goose, mind you, lad, ” said Chainik. “According to this guy they’re warming up a special pad for me in Gehennom, with gas-fired central heating, 24/7/365, a toasty place all of my own to look forward to for my later years. This week it was ‘*HochToch*’ with the friendly warning. First he writes the usual business letter about how I should be careful not to lose my place in the World-To-Come etc., he only means it for my own good etc., how I should not let myself be swayed by the council of the wicked and all. So I wrote back to him, of course. Then he came at me with the Orpah thing, the whole nine yards.”

“What’s the Oprah thing?” Perle asked.

“Orpah, not Oprah. Orpah, Naomi’s daughter-in-law from the Ruth story, you know,” Bassie offered. “I read that midrash story a while ago. Apparently when Naomi urges her daughters-in-law to return to their fathers’ house, Ruth refuses to leave her, but Orpah gives in to her entreaties and abandons her mother-in-law. That night, the Midrash, says, Orpah has sex with three hundred men and a dog. But why did *HochToch* throw that story at you, how, did he say, are you connected to it?”

“I think,” replied Chainik, “it has to do with being tied to the source of holiness. His friendly prediction is that, and I quote: If I continue down this road I have chosen I will disconnect from the source of divine holiness and find myself at opposite extremes, like Orpah did when she disconnected from Naomi.”

“It’s more than nine yards,” said Masha/Moshe, thoughtfully. “I mean, at an average of, say, five - five ‘n a half inches, we’re talking minimum fifteen hundred inches here, are we not? Nine yards is only three hundred twenty four inches. How do you explain the discrepancy, Rabbi Chainik?”

“Hhmmnn,” Chainik replied, thinking quickly. “You know what the Talmud says about the number three hundred in homiletic literature? It says the number three hundred is always a gross exaggeration.”

“And the dog?” Masha/Moshe retorted, rather smartly, I thought. “How do you explain away the dog?”

“Actually, I was coming to that,” replied Chainik with a warm chuckle. “I think the dog is really the key to the puzzle. The word, *Kelev*, Hebrew for dog, has a Gematria - numeric value of fifty-two. Now, let’s say those Philistines were onto a good thing, lets give them a six - six ‘n a quarter inch average, nomesayn, now, fifty-two times six inches or so is definitely close to that three hundred twenty four inches you mentioned earlier. Are we talking the whole nine yards or not, hah, hah?”

They laughed.

“Are you just going to sit there, Ooshie, and let them go on, like this, unchecked?” Perle asked me. “Next think you know it’ll be tape measures all round at the table. And anyway, you’re not allowed to measure anything on Shabbes unless it’s for the sake of fulfilling a Mitzva/Commandment are you?”

She looked at Bassie; the two of them burst out laughing, and had to excuse themselves from the table. We could hear them still giggling all the way from the women’s rest rooms.

“I’m sorry,” I said sitting up suddenly, startled. “I didn’t hear any of that, I was miles away. What did you say?” I asked Chainik and Masha/Moshe. But they were laughing too hard to answer coherently. I did not add that according to the same legend, Goliath the Giant who was killed by a stone from David’s slingshot, was born from Orpah’s prodigious fornication that same night she abandoned Naomi. I felt the introduction of Goliath into the conversation would unnecessarily upset an already precarious balance at the table.

“Guess what happened to me this week,” I announced to all and sundry, changing the subject. “I bet you, nothing you have compares to this story. OK. So, I’m sitting next to this man on the Monsey bus.”

“What’s the Monsey bus?” Dr. Sam interrupted me.

“It’s a Jewish bus service from upstate New York into the city. There’s a *mehitzah* curtain on the bus to separate men from women, ok? So I’m sitting next to this hasidische guy, we’re driving down the West Side Highway by that huge tall building after the meat district, you know the one I mean, it looks like a classic Greek temple that’s been impregnated by a multinational corporation? So we’re making our way to the Battery Tunnel when we get stuck in this heavy-duty traffic jam. He’s got this Palm Pilot thing going with a headphone reaching behind his neck, and he’s doing the Palm *Daf*. He finishes the *Daf* and asks me if I’d like to use his little diddy computer to learn the *Daf* with, too? Ok, usually, I’m not so hot on new gadgets, but this looks too cool to miss, so I take it from him and put on the headphone *shmitchik*<sup>2</sup> to check it out. Now this is where it gets interesting. The bus is stuck in a traffic jam, right, and I’m listening to somebody giving this *Daf shiur*<sup>3</sup>. Now, the little computer must have a wi-fi connection built into it like your laptop, Chainik, you know. And the bus is stuck so long just outside this huge building the palm pilot picks up a signal strong enough to go online, and the next thing I know the messenger thing has switched itself on and he’s getting these bleeps and gloopy sounds coming out of his gadget, you know, like when you get Yahoo Instant Messages or AOL or whatever. So, this woman comes on making announcements in you’ll never guess what language? In Magyar, Hungarian! And guess what she starts singing? Nu? *Szol A Kakas Mar*<sup>4</sup>, right. Now, I’m not sure what to do, obviously this is some glitch, so I turn to him and start taking my

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<sup>1</sup> *Daf*: Hebrew, lit. Page. Scheduled daily Talmud study, downloadable from the net onto handheld computers; the *Daf* completes the Babylonian Talmud in a seven year cycle.

<sup>2</sup> *Shmitchik*: Gadget, contraption or gimcrack.

<sup>3</sup> *Shiur*: Lesson.

<sup>4</sup> *Szol A Kakas Mar* is to Hungarian Hasidim what Danny Boy is to a lonely, sober Irishman in a bar in NY, or La Vie En Rose to a lonely, sober Frenchman stuck in a cell in Phnom Penh.

headphone off when he looks at me to see what's disturbing me, right? Well, just then the Daf text disappears and a woman's picture comes up on the screen. Obviously he gets all embarrassed, yeah? And he grabs it from me while it's still connected around behind the back of my neck. And he stabs and jabs it with the stylus pencil and you can guess what happens, right? He hits the exactly wrong button. Next thing you know the whole thing is singing like a transistor radio."

"A what?" Masha/Moshe asks, bewildered.

"Transistor radio," Dr. Sam explains. "Before your time, child. Marvelous, little mobile plastic radios running on batteries. Brilliant invention in the sixties; did away with all those valves and tubes."

"Valves and tubes?" Masha/Moshe asked again.

"Oh, do be quiet already," Chainik told him, exasperated. "We want to hear the story. Nu, Oooshie, don't let him disturb you."

I continued. "So what happens is this woman on the screen starts taking off her clothes to the music of this woman singing *Szol A Kakas Mar*. Can you believe it, while, *nebbish*, this poor man is trying to fix it without snatching the whole thing away and strangling me with the headphones cord, right? By now he's so mortified I can see his hands trembling and he's gone pale."

Dr. Sam has his hand up like a child in a classroom, obviously afraid to interrupt, but too intrigued to allow the story to continue. "Sorry, can someone tell me what the *Szol A Kakas Mar* is?"

"Yeah," Perle agreed. "Won't someone explain it? I'd sure like to know what it is."

But Chainik could not stand another interruption, and warned everyone, in no uncertain terms not to butt in to the story again.

"Let's just say it's a kabbalistic, Hungarian, hasidic song," I continued. "And it was being sung by a woman who obviously knows what she's doing, I mean, it was perfectly done. I had goose-bumps running up and down my arms."

"Marta Sebestyen," Bassie explained to one and all, disregarding Chainik's direst warnings. "She's the singer did the 'English Patient' vocal soundtrack. I've heard her sing *Szol A Kakas Mar*. That must be what you heard, Oosh."

Chainik glared but said nothing.

"He was so embarrassed, I felt for him. And then when she took her clothes off on screen he began crying. People all around, in the seat behind and in front of us were getting restless, the sound of a woman singing out loud like that is so not ok. He couldn't deal with it anymore. It was just a kindness. I flipped it over and pulled the battery out. It came out

so fast, I've never pulled out a battery so dexterously, you know. You'd think it was *G'shmi'ert*, or I was a professional battery remover. So then it goes blessedly quiet. Oi, what a relief.

“So we both pretend it was some technical sound glitch and everyone else goes back to their own business and leaves us alone.

“And this man turns to me and says, ‘You know, sometimes a tiny little lie can lead to such a big lying, to a whole lifetime of untruths.’ And he sighed and my heart went out to him. He didn't know what to do, how to fill the silence between us.

“Then I introduced myself. I said, “I'm Asher Schreiber. I know about this sort of thing.” And, you know, he looked at me with that dawning sort of amazement on his face. It was like the light suddenly went on. He said, ‘It's *mamash min hashomayim*<sup>5</sup>. And he told me such a crazy convoluted saga like you wouldn't believe.

“This is the story, he says, ‘You I can tell, Rebbe Schreiber, because you can understand this. I'm a simple accountant, a bookkeeper. I have some customers who need me to be available and be able to receive and send account data online at any time. So I have an Email account with AOL and I carry around one of these machines when I'm not in the office and I can upload with infra red to and from my office computer and this palm top computer. It's not such a high tech system, wages, tax returns. Thank God I make a living, it pays well. I try to live like a Jew, but having access to the internet I wasn't prepared for. Not just America Online. You know I don't have television at home, God forbid, but these days... just walking down any street in America you see the evil inclination advertised on the side of the busses, everywhere is a temptation for the eyes and the heart. But the internet? Who can be prepared for the internet?’

“Everyone knows me as Nusi so I sign on my name, Nusi. I have an Email account under the name Nusi, what do I know. So I'm online looking around, trying not even to notice all the unkosher, unclean, unhealthy business there is going on in the AOL internet. I'm not interested in filthy pictures, games, rubbish, you understand. But I have one weakness. I don't know if you'd call it a sin. I don't call it a sin. I love Hungarian... the language Hungarian. I learned it from my parents who spoke it at home, I was born in the 1960s, my parents came to USA, young people in the '56 revolution, they read and write it fluently and I picked it up, bit by bit.

“I go into such a place what is called a AOL chatroom, I find Hungarian. People who like speaking Hungarian, discussing Hungarian. I read, I listen, I answer when someone speaks to me in chat, I come back again and again. You know what I find, I discover I am a poet in Hungarian. In English I'm an ignoramus, anyone can tell this. I went to a Hasidshe school same as you, I never learned more than basics of English speech and vocabulary. Yiddish everyone speaks the same, more or less, hasidishe Yiddish which is very uncultured, you know, compared to say a Litvishe Yiddish. I know this because lately I been reading about it, I became interested in language as a result of my story. But when I

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<sup>5</sup> *mamash min hashomayim*: absolutely from heaven, serendipitous.

speaking Hungarian Hungarians listen. Words come from my mouth, from my pen, they drip like honey.

“My name is Nusi, do I know Nusi is a woman’s name in Hungarian? I don’t know, but others know. First I don’t understand what it is people are writing to me. They ask for personal information. I don’t tell them this is a *yiddl* from Monsey who wears a *Shtreimel Bekeshe*<sup>6</sup>. I say nothing. The more I say nothing the more mystery it sounds, right? One person online in the Hungarian chat room puts my poems into Hungarian poetry magazine and soon I have a following of people want to read the poetry from this Nusi poet.

“At this point I interrupted Nusi, I had to,” I said. “I had to ask him, what does a hasid from Monsey write poetry about?”

“You know how it is.” Nusi answers me. “You look at the road when you drive, you see a car with a person in it and behind the car a telephone pole with wires carrying telephone conversations between people and behind the telephone pole a building with people in it and behind the building with people an overhead subway train with moving passengers and behind the train if you look carefully you can maybe see an airplane flying somewhere with more people in it. Everywhere there is more and more lives to see, lives and words and feelings. I write poems about the people or things behind the people or things behind what people look at.

“So a woman writes to me she is in love with my poems. I don’t tell her I am a man, I think it is better not. She is also in the Hungarian America Online chat. You know, it does not take long before the people you are writing to become real people, like people in real life. Someways more real, because they are pure words, only words. What could be higher, more than words?”

“This woman is sure she knows my soul from the poetry she reads, and she says so. And so starts an old story, an old, old story. I fell right off the path, I drove off the proper road and with both feet jumped into the ditch. It didn’t take me two weeks and I start writing love poems about woman, about everything that should have been private. I tell myself it’s ok because I don’t have a thought of doing a sin or transgression. But you know what, the sin and the transgression follow without being invited. Rabbi Schreiber, do you know what is a lesbian?”

I nodded, and he saw I did.

“I didn’t know there was a word for it. But now I know. She thinks I am lesbian because how else can I write like this, right? And I say nothing because I tell myself what does it matter what someone thinks. It should only matter what I am. And sure, like the Talmud says, if you pretend to be something, you don’t die before you become that thing for real, right? As I sit here, and I am ashamed to tell you, now I go in other chat rooms, into lesbian chatrooms, in my broken English, on the AOL, now I go in as Nusi the Lesbian.

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<sup>6</sup> *Shtreimel Bekeshe*: Fur hat and silk caftan.

What for, why, what is in it for my *Yetzer Hora*<sup>7</sup>? Tell me, please, because I don't know. Now I have a whole person inside me who is no way connected to reality, a woman, a lesbian who writes lesbian women's poetry in Hungarian, who gets published in Hungarian literary magazines. Can you explain why I have such a *Yezer Hora* to be such a person who has no existence?

"Six months I try to explain who I am to this woman. I tell her I am a Yid, a Hasid. She sends me a shikseh singing *Szol A Kakas Mar*, which my holy grandfather heard from the Kaliver Rebbe himself. I can tell her I do not like listening to a woman singing such a holy song, but I cannot tell her I am a man. The lesbian woman person is now so strong inside like a reality, not for her, for me! To kill her off feels like it would be proper murder. And such poems, like a new dreamer singing to the world. Can you understand it, can you explain it? Now she sends me pictures of her. Then, when I don't send pictures of me back, you think this stops her? She thinks it makes my mystery even bigger. Soon she is talking about love, a big love. I say, No. She says I will make a seduction of you. Now she sends me pictures of herself taking off her clothes and I write poems about her, about wanting us to be together. Now she is all that goes on in my head, day and night. Have you heard of such a madness before, Rabbi Schreiber?"

"Oh, have I? I don't tell him to drop in to our JBDSM on a quiet evening and meet all the self-deluding *foppers*<sup>8</sup>. Have I heard of such madness before? Hah!"

At the table there was talk of the addictive quality to taking an online personality. How easy it is to begin hiding behind a pseudonym, only to find the hidden personality taking charge of the whole internet experience. And then the real person is the one in hiding. It is very common. It is similar to the change in personality that takes over drivers when they get behind the wheel of a car. Perle added something about a study she had read showing how people in their cars actually feel they are in their private world and will do things like picking their nose or talking out aloud to themselves as though they were invisible. It's that way with the internet, she said.

"What did you say to the man on the bus?" Masha/Moshe wanted to know.

"I tried my best to explain to him," I answered. "But I don't think he could hear it. The divine in us, I said, is our creativity. It makes us creative whether we want to be so or not. God speaks to the world through us whether we are ready for it or not. God is infinitely creative. If we take a job as an accountant when God meant us to be a poet we must be prepared for the divine to prevail. And the harder and more rigid we are about not allowing our creativity to manifest, the more creative and subversive the divine in us will become. And it will prevail. What's more important, I told him, the poetry you didn't write in Hebrew as a rabbi, is being written in lesbian as a Hungarian. And they both do the job."

"The tighter ya hold yer ass," Chainik elaborated. "The more busted your sphincter is gonna be, is all. That's how I would have put it."

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<sup>7</sup> *Yetzer Hora*: Evil Inclination

<sup>8</sup> *fopper*: scam artist

“Thank you, Chainik, for that pearl of wisdom,” I said. “How did I manage without you?”

But Chainik was not done. “I have a champion,” he announced. “Someone going by the name ‘Tail-Barer’ no less.” He spelled the name out letter by letter.

“Surely the name should be Tale-Bearer?” Perle asked. “Even I know that one, Thou shalt not go a Tale Bearer among your people, Leviticus 19:16. I know because I did a special project on it in Jewish High School, way back in the seventeenth century.”

“Tail-Barer is just the sort of provocative name I was talking about earlier. What is it with us?” the doctor demanded. “Can’t we just name ourselves like decent people who came from properly brought up homes? I totally disagree with this whole trend. And I think it’s very immature.”

Chainik and Masha/Moshe looked suitably chastened but irrepressible, nonetheless.

“So, this Tail-Barer has been championing me like anything. Every time something newly defamatory and nasty appears online in the blogs, he jumps to my defense like a sworn loyalist. We haven’t actually exchanged Emails or anything. I’m not even sure he approves of me as a person. But when this latest thing came up, about the hypnosis, he wrote in pretty fierce. “

I said nothing. I too had been watching Tail-Barer come to the defense of Chainik, and not just on the JBDSM bulletin board. I noticed the style, the same persuasive and indignant and wistful apologia in other forums, in blogs and journals. Someone was obviously feeling very protective of him. And I thought I knew something Chainik did not, I had worked out the riddle hidden in the name Tail-Barer. Perle was right, the name is derivative of the quote from Leviticus 19:16; Thou shalt not go a Tale Bearer among your people. What I’d noticed that Chainik had not yet realized is that the Hebrew for tale-bearer is the word *Rochil*, which is how Hasidim pronounce the name Rachel. Whoever Rochil is, she is very attracted to Chainik and his particular brand of craziness, that much at least is clear, I thought.

I didn’t know the half of it.

“Did you hear about the drama this week with ‘SYKRODNIK?’” Masha/Moshe asked when we’d finished singing again. Apparently Sykrodnik (an anagram of Krodinsky or something like that, no doubt) and his uncle, ‘BIGBANGBEN’ who were both members of JBDSM, got into an argument, online, about the way someone was treating someone’s sister, though it remained obscure to our literary voyeurs, so to speak, exactly whose was the sister in question.

Before the Big Broch JBDSM boasted no more than two or three hundred mostly catatonic members, while in its newest incarnation a voluble membership was up around eight hundred and growing daily. With so many people contributing to conversations and joining in the debates flame wars were bound to break out. I no longer monitored traffic on

the bulletin board, since Chainik and Masha/Moshe had kindly offered to relieve me of that duty. I was beginning to suspect though, that my surrendering supervision of JBDSM to Chainik and Masha/Moshe's tender ministrations was having the same effect as handing them keys and codes to the ICBM silos.

The problem is that for every competent adult online there are probably ten children pretending, and of those ten pretending children only one or at most two are actual youngsters. One couple I know has an online slavery agreement. He (screen name: Sir SaarBaal) orders her around from twelve hundred miles away, sending her instant messages such as, "Do the vacuum cleaning today with one breast exposed and three wooden clothes pegs hanging from your nipple."

She (screen name: SubtleTits) replies, "Yes, my lord," bows to the computer and complies with his orders. They both consider themselves blissfully in relationship with each other although she is successfully married to her husband, manages a large house and rears three small children, while he is a schlepper in the stockroom of a large pharmacy franchise, lower than whom it is impossible to sink on the bottom of any totem poles. When they asked us to arrange another Kosher Unconvention Weekend in the Catskills, like the one where Kinky Shiduchin got its start, so that they could meet and play in real time, I had to ask them some hard questions, such as, how old are you really; have you played with a real time master/slave before; and do you know what your limits are vis-à-vis the seventh of the Ten Commandments? (Which questions are a roundabout way of asking, Hey, kids, do you know what the hell you're doing and what you're letting yourselves in for?)

Under an oath of utter secrecy he admitted to me that his age was considerably less than that feigned online. When I pressed him to own precisely how much younger than Sir SaarBaal's contrived age he actually was, it turned out he was not thirty two years old, he was seventeen. She, it happens, was not exactly twenty-eight but more than forty years old. How much more than forty I never discovered. No amount of cajoling, wheedling or whining could induce her to disclose the true figure other than to assure me she was substantially less than fifty. Neither had any experience with BDSM in real life. Both owned a collection of whips, dildos, restraints, chains, paddles and clamps to fit a medieval torture chamber and brothel. Neither had ever seen them used. And, more importantly, the thought that they might, either of them, transgress the commandment against adultery had never crossed their horrified mind.

As gently as possible, and without breach of confidences I conveyed to them my considered rabbinic opinion that meeting would be their worst possible plan of action, and blessed them both in my heart with continued ignorance, infinite silliness and a lifetime of the profoundest illusion.

The problem is that the internet gives people who would otherwise never exchange words in their life, the means to exchange ideas, fantasies and secrets. The result is a complete shambles. It is now possible to post a personal advert tailored specifically to identify a prospect sharing a particular fetish or sexual inclination and connect via Email to such a person within hours. People in search of partners classify themselves with perversions and

kinks they have only read about, and profess familiarity with techniques they have never even seen, let alone practiced.

Meanwhile Chainik and Masha/Moshe are trumpeting opinions and attitudes from the rooftops, so to speak, dispensing a crazed mixture of Jewish BDSM theology and sexually perverse etiquette.

When I was still in charge of the JBDSM bulletin board, before the Big Broch, I used to answer questions judiciously like all rabbinic questions coming my way. Now that I have delegated the responsibility to Chainik and Masha/Moshe I'm horrified at the levity with which these queries are treated, while simultaneously delighted at the rabbinical duo's lack of gravity around even the most serious issues. I must have been taking my duties too much to heart or needed to massively lighten up. It's downright refreshing.

One man sent in the following:

*here i am a white sub male ortho jew nyc seeking ortho fem domme for fun, play. do such things exist? if yes, how do i find them?*

I would have answered sympathetically, and tried hooking him up with one of the available matches from the Kinky Shiduchin database as swiftly as possible. Chainik and Masha/Moshe are more likely to engage him in coarse badinage concerning the color of the stripes on his Tallit<sup>9</sup>, the twist of his Tefilin<sup>10</sup> straps, (Ashkenazi = clockwise or Sefaradi = anticlockwise) or the shape and size of his skullcap. I found this gem among Chainik's responses to a perfectly innocent and informative posting concerning the dangers of allowing your boss to find out you've been surfing porn, and how to clean out your computer's cache so as not to get found out.

*"Talking of computers," Chanik added in his response. "I crossed my laptop pc with my Jewish girlfriend and what did I get? Well, she goes down fairly often, but that's ok 'cos she checks for viruses as she comes back up."*

The following harangue was provoked by a simple inquiry concerning the proper way for a submissive to address her master. A woman wrote into JBDSM hoping to get some practical advice and friendly feedback. Instead she caught this, which has the distinct flavor of a Chainik - Masha/Moshe collaboration:

*Perv and Pervettes, Kinksters, anarchists, antichrists, analkissers, likkers, lekkers and lookers,*

*It's a funny thing, you know, but one of the most noticeable and least attractive impulses of our peculiar and opinionated Jewish sub-culture to manifest itself here, on the web, as elsewhere at meetings, munches and scenes is the intrusion of the 'proper' and 'acceptable' way of kink. For some reason it appears the discussion of*

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<sup>9</sup> Tallit: Striped Prayer Shawl

<sup>10</sup> Tefilin: Leather boxes strapped to arm and head, worn by men every day

*the merits or demerits of properism and acceptabilitism in the bdsm lifestyle is easier to discuss than lust and concupiscence.*

*Perhaps it's because the outrage and righteous indignation we feel so easily while defending our opinions in these tiresome discussions can easily pass for 'feelings' instead of those dangerous, slippery, disobedient and chaotic things called emotions. Personally I doubt it matters a flying fuck what is right, and whether rightness aught to be defended.*

*What matters is the authentic, and that is no easy item to display here in a forum like this. Can I tell you about my prickly feelings when I'm sat at a traffic light and I suddenly want to jump into the car next to mine driven by that drop-dead gorgeous Creole woman and bite her earlobes and stick my tongue into her beautiful cavernous nostrils and impale myself on her gear stick shift and piss into her ashtray?*

*Can I heck! In fact, these internet forums are staid and stale and proper and booooooring. We prance around like bishops at a garden party, nodding and being gracious, hiding the dildo we have stuck up the skirts of our minds.*

*We dare not admit what we really want to shout out to the world, why we really joined the friggin' listserve in the first place, why we took the plunge and got ourselves an idiot alias so we might not feel so fuckin alone in our heads all the time. We want to connect with others, like ourselves and different from us. I want to explode with the limitless possibilities of fucking; effing the ineffable. DO YOU KNOW WHAT I'M SAYING?*

*We can reach out for each other anytime we want to. I wish we wanted to more and I wish we risked more and I wish we had better correspondents on this list and I wish, wish and wish. But I'm grateful you're here anyway.*

The outside world soon got to hear of the JBDSM forum and the loud and outspoken respondents who write into it regularly as well as some of the esoteric subjects dealt with there. As a result the JBDSM membership was swamped with letters and vituperative comments from people with no connection to BDSM other than a desire to display their ignorance and prejudice. Chainik engaged them all head on. Which is how I came to find myself shouting at him to get a life and stop wasting time banging heads with halfwits.

It was me wasting my time, though, not him. He was having a ball while I was being bent out of shape, and it took Perle to set me straight.

“Leave the boys alone,” she advised. “They’re being creative in their own ways.”

And she was right. When Yifat Morron of RABBIwatch.org began posting bits of what she calls ‘this dangerous man’s BDSM Kabbalah,’ and started quoting some of his more outrageous online statements verbatim, I just knew he must be doing something right.

*She quoted this typical Chainik musing - Is all this preoccupation with sex and sexuality [and so on] a form of worship? As a Jew I'm tuned into serving God who's the Ultimate Jealous Dom. Actually, jealous doesn't even begin to do it justice. Let's just say making eyes at another god will earn me more than some severe edge play or unscheduled dungeon time. When He makes me eat shit, I'll first have to line up all the little metaphorical turds to spell the words "this is for my own good".*

The Ultimate Jealous Dom quote threw Tail-Barer, Chainik's fanatically loyal champion and flag waver into spasms of breathless admiration. She could hold back no longer, but set about drawing his attention. As she told me later when we met in person, the more weird and wacky she heard him described the more fascinating, sane and honest his writing and behavior seemed to her. In her the conviction grew that this internationally reviled man could help her find and fill-in the missing pieces in her soul.

"I have daughters who look older than you, Rachel," was the cleverest remark Chainik could come up with on meeting her.

"Don't look then," she replied.