

## **Chapter Eight**

### **The Rabbi's Outing**

Perhaps it's much easier to be unreservedly positive about someone else's triumphs - your own can always be criticized. That's why a friend's success is sometimes even more gratifying than your own. We were all thrilled; Chainik was interviewing for jobs. A new career with fresh possibilities was opening to him. The Melrose Foundation was interested in hiring him to teach a course in Midrash, Jewish Stories and Legends. Akiba, the Foundation for Jewish Student Life was interested in hiring him as a roving campus rabbi. Columbus Circle Synagogue wanted him for a summer as guest rabbi. It was two years since his divorce, we were finally wondering whether he had survived crazy-time and was genuinely moving on. It was exciting for us to watch him reinvent himself. He talked about moving to New York City, to live on the Upper East Side.

After only five years of virtual presence as an anonymity-sensitive and secretive subculture, it seemed JBDSM was poised to achieve recognition as the voice of the alternative sexuality scene and even to help gain acknowledgement for the kosher, non-vanilla lifestyle.

Not that there was money flowing in from individuals or philanthropic parties showing an interest in underwriting programs or exploring educational opportunities. Kinky Shiduchin was still being run out of my back room, and JBDSM existed mostly as a virtual entity housed on Chainik and Masha/Moshe's computer hard drives. But the mainstream Metropolitan Jewish Daily was expressing cautious interest in doing a feature article about us, they specifically asked about the possibility of interviewing me and also about using some of Chainik's writings in the piece. Orthodox Judaism will resist anything new on principle, until the passage of time and lots of creative revisionism make it possible to claim to have invented it in the first place.

Perle called it the 'post-fetishist era'. Masha/Moshe said he knew of three other TS candidates for Yeshiva College ordination who were actively pursuing the rabbinate as a career. Inquiries were coming in, almost daily, from around the world, with halachic questions and queries dating and matrimony. At least two independent producers were talking to Perle about gaining access to the archives of JBDSM and other files to assemble material for a movie script.

And then Cindy Clavter walked back into Chainik's life, and we discovered how precariously balanced all of our existences had been up to then.

Chainik dropped everything he was doing and went running back to Baltimore to help her weather her crisis. As he was packing his bags in St Louis, MO, or so he tells the story, while the taxi was all but waiting at the door for him, Chanda turned up on his doorstep. They'd been discussing his going to Baltimore since Cindy's alarmist phone call came four days earlier.

“Chainik,” Chanda said. “I have a confession to make. About a year ago I had a vision. I was sitting in the car next to my husband, just thinking about nothing much when I had vivid prophecy. You were there in the car, sitting on the dashboard facing my husband and me. It wasn’t like sensing a presence in the car, d’you know what I mean? It was an absolute and total reality. I could hear you breathing, I could have reached out and touched your clothing, you know. And you told me to come to you. You said it’s time for us to be together.”

“Wait! Wait a minute, we’d never met until you walked up to me at the Unconvention in Catskills,” he said. “What are you saying?”

“Well, I had this vision just three weeks before I came to see you in the Catskill.”

“But, we’d never met or spoken or anything before that, not a word” Chainik argued hotly.

“Actually,” she retorted. “That’s not entirely true. I’d been attending your classes for a few years, whenever I was in town. But you didn’t notice me. I once asked you a question from the floor when you spoke at the Alliance about eighteen months before I introduced myself, but it got drowned out in the whistling noise the microphone was making. You asked me to write it down and send it you. I did. You responded by Email, you don’t remember, huh?”

His brain was fizzing like one of those black and globular cartoon bombs, with the last centimeter of fuse sticking out and sparking like mad.

“You were still married? You came here from Argentina three months ago, you moved into a house down the road to be close to me because you saw me in a vision in your bedroom?”

“Oh, no, no, no,” Chanda reassured him triumphantly. “The divorce came through more than a week before the Unconvention.”

“More than a week?”

“Oh, yes,” she said with a perfectly straight face. “It was going nowhere, for ages, my marriage, before I met you, rabbi.”

“For ages, before you met me,” he found himself repeating after her, stupidly. She merely nodded, soothingly.

“It’s from heaven, don’t you see?”

“I think I’m beginning to,” he replied. “What is it you really want from me, why are you telling this to me now?”

“Well,” she said. “Obviously, I’ve been thinking about this a lot, sort of waiting for you to ask me the question. D’you remember when you said you’d teach me everything I want to

learn, if it was in your power? Well, I want you to teach me everything there is to know about me. Will you, will you teach it to me?"

"Standing on one foot?" he quipped. "I am going to Cindy right now, as you know, Chanda. You and I have discussed it at length already, you said you were due for a vacation in Rio, remember? My trip to help Cindy can't wait. I have to go right now."

"Oh, no," she replied. "You can't do that right now, it's not convenient for me."

The Big *Broch*<sup>1</sup>, as it came to be known, can be dated and timed to that very conversation. Within a week Chanda, ignoring his solicitous commitment to Cindy, had followed him back to Baltimore. Subsequently, when he moved to New York City with Cindy in tow, Chanda moved parallel with them to the Upper East Side. She insisted Chainik share his time with her as much as with Cindy, and then, when she was unsuccessful, took to writing furiously. Who knew Chanda had so much to write?

Well, Masha/Moshe knew, Perle knew, Gloria Brame knew and I knew. Everyone but Chainik Malkes himself knew what was obvious; Chanda was interpreting Chainik's choice to move to be with Cindy as a rejection, a serious snub, a brush-off and an insult. She didn't see it as a proper choice at all. From her point of view she belonged to him and he to her; they were a unit, an item, a foregone conclusion. As she said to him fairly regularly, "I'm an only child, I don't know how to share."

Chainik was oblivious. He assumes people, women, his lovers accept him unconditionally, just as he accepts them. He loves without reservation and lives with utter abandon and limitless passion. Larger than life, Chainik's great misfortune is to fall in love, over and over with women who are smaller than life, and less generous than he. He assumed Chanda would make room in her life for everyone he attracted and accept all those for whom he maintained a tendre, while she assumed that her gifts would suffice to slake his appetites and curb his restlessness.

Little did we know how her heart had been eaten by the worm of jealousy, how black and cankered it was.

She'd been writing about him in the JBDSM forum and her online journals for months. 'Paeans of Purple Praise', was how Perle described Chanda's literary efforts, just as it was Perle who noticed how subtly the tone was changing. When she pointed it out to me, I merely shrugged and said Chanda must finally be growing up. But Perle shook her head and said it boded ill.

After the move to NYC, where previously he'd appeared in her journals as a schoolgirl's description of a god, a satyr and faun all combined in the body of a Greco-Judean hero with the mind of a Buddha, Chainik now sounded like Jack the Ripper on crystal-methamphetamine.

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<sup>1</sup> Broch: Break, disaster, smash up or illness.

Perle took to referring to him as Rabbi Lemming.

The call came through, one day. “Did you know, Chanda is writing a book about you, rabbi?”

“Huh? Is that you, Perle?” I asked.

“Yes, yes it is. Did you know, Chanda is writing a book about you?”

“Me?”

“You, me, us, everyone, d’you know what Chainik said when I asked him the same question this morning? He said: ‘As a matter of fact I do know she’s writing a book about me, Perle. Is there anything wrong with that? She’s my best student, she thinks highly of me and reckons I’m worth a book. Are you jealous?’ And I said ‘No, rabbi. I think highly of you. Your friends think highly of you. But Chanda is not your friend and does not think highly of you. You think a real lover would share the confidential information about your lives with all and sundry? How come I know all the private details of your intimacies with her?’

“He said to me, ‘Perle, you know I’m committed to openness, to no hiding, to the truth, to no pretense and no dissembling in my life. If someone takes that at face value and decides to run with it, that’s the price of my honesty.’

“Rabbi,” Perle asked me urgently, “Isn’t there something you can do to ward off this catastrophe? I can see it looming, like the Titanic.”

She was right; it was not long in coming, whispers at first, sidelong glances and disdainful looks in Shul. Snide and spiteful comments trickling in through Email, and terrific noise and brouhaha online in blogs and forums.

And then Chainik was awakened early one morning. An insistent telephone was ringing by his bedside. He picked up the phone to hear his son, (the married one from Israel) asking, “Dad, have you seen what’s being said about you on the internet? Just Google your name, ok?”

He went online, Googled his own name and stood aghast as his personal world came crashing down around his ears. He read:

Orthodox Rabbi, Rabbi Chainik Malkes, former Dean and Rosh Yeshiva of the Torah Ohr Academy in Baltimore is accused of rape; a sizeable number of allegations made by a group of women victims are being investigated by the Baltimore Police Dept and the State Attorney’s office.

Hebrew speaking Israeli websites were quoting free translations from English language websites in the USA. In South America the same information was being published in Spanish on Latino Jewish websites. Later he was to tell us how being faced with the same

accusations, in three languages from all over the globe, made him seriously doubt his memory and sanity all at once.

And we awoke to discover the absence of any familiar landscape; the world we'd left behind when we went to bed the previous night had been snatched away during the the dark hours. It was like waking up to discover we had slept through the big earth-shattering earthquake, the Big One. I was named prominently, and our online organization, Kinky Shiduchin and JBDSM were all graphically displayed on the front pages of every Jewish online magazine and not a few non-Jewish ones. We were named as links in a newly uncovered Jewish pornography publishing ring, advocates of violence against women, and as promoters of child abuse, torture, incest and slavery.

Chainik tried to go about his day as best he could, but he was in shock. We were all stunned at the ferocity of the attack, which seemed to be coming from many directions at once.

Shulamis and I were caught completely unprepared and unarmed. We talked of how the negative exposure would affect our children; how it might affect my work, and what it meant for the community we were building. A number of friends and acquaintances called to voice their support and consternation, but the local rabbinate was ominously silent. None my colleagues at the various institutes, charities or schools called to say they'd heard anything untoward or greeted me on the street with cheerful words. Mostly, they avoided meeting my gaze in private and gave me a wide berth in public, as though I had contracted an embarrassing and contagious social disease.

At two o'clock in the afternoon of the following day, as he pulled up in his car in front of my apartment, after having been forced to abandon the class he was trying to teach at the Educational Alliance, Chainik put his head down on the steering wheel and wept. When Masha/Moshe arrived for our afternoon appointment to answer rabbinic queries and Email correspondence, he found him there in his car. Bad news was coming in all the time. Perle called from her house across town to tell me about the noisy demonstration outside the offices of the North American Rabbinical Council, downtown. Twenty or so strident and well-outfitted women were standing on the steps holding placards, bullhorns and righteous indignation, shouting the slogans, 'Clean Out The Rabbinate' and 'Listen To The Victims', as their honorable rabbiships were leaving work at the end of the week.

Chainik came inside and stood looking at the computer monitor on my desk, showing lurid headlines and promising horrific details to follow. It took me back to that day in Baltimore all those years ago when he'd sat there stunned, as the Beis Din disassembled his life and precipitated the confrontation with his wife, colleagues and his career.

Masha/Moshe walked Chainik back to his lodgings that night and stepped inside for a cup of coffee. Someone knocked on the door. It was Cindy with a collection of suitcases full of Chainik's belongings. She must have been following him in a car.

“Here are your things,” she shouted to him over my shoulder. “Don’t force me to take out a restraining order against you, Chainik. Do not come within one hundred feet of my apartment. You are warned.”

And she left.

“Quick,” Masha/Moshe shouted at Chainik. “Go, look, see whose car she’s getting into, who brought her here?”

Chainik ran out to check the license plate of the car into which Cindy stepped, he came back breathless, with the information that it was a Budget rentacar with Maryland plates, and that a woman was driving.

“Not a pretty woman,” he added. “Not someone you’d like to meet in a narrow alleyway at night, or in the daytime, for that matter. I’d recognize her again, that’s for sure, she has a sort of fold of skin like an orangutan where her neck is supposed to have been.”

“Oh, and by the way, Reb Chainik,” Masha/Moshe told him as they traipsed back indoors. “Your wife, ahemm, your ex-wife called. She says you should call her.”

“I’ll call her later,” rumbled Chainik. “Who was that ugly woman with Cindy in the car?”

Next day, Pesach got me on the phone, “Lets hold a counsel of war,” he said. We made a date for the following evening, he volunteered to call and notify everyone.

Chainik rubbed his hands together as we gathered in the kosher restaurant. “I’ll have a roach sandwich,” he said cheerfully to the hapless attendant behind the counter. The man grimaced and waited for him to order properly. But Chainik was on a roll. Joke after tasteless joke on the subject of restaurants, food and hygiene spilled out of him. He seemed unstoppable.

“Nu,” I said to Chainik. “Behave yourself already. You’ll get us all thrown out of here and we’ll all still be hungry.” I tried smiling at the counter salesperson encouragingly, but he stared straight ahead, glassy eyed, waiting for a coherent order to fill. A dose of Chainik will do that to a poor, workingman.

Bassie, Pesach’s slave started the conversation. “Something big and nasty is happening. It must have been happening for a while but we’ve been oblivious. Does anyone have a suggestion?”

We shared impressions of the days just passed, and assembled a time-line of events. Two simultaneous but only peripherally connected events marked the beginning of the attack on Chainik. On Monday the first letter had gone out from **RABBI**watch.org to its entire list of 1200 subscribers worldwide with a news update. Topping the bill on the day’s most wanted list of outlaws was Rabbi Chainik Malkes, former Dean and Rosh Yeshiva of the Torah Ohr Academy, Baltimore, etc. etc. There followed a list of his academic qualifications, previous jobs and current whereabouts.

**The Case Of Rabbi Chainik Malkes - Bnei Brak, Israel, Baltimore Maryland, St Louis, Missouri, Charleston, South Carolina, Richmond, Virginia, Scottsdale, Arizona, New York City, New York.**

Rabbi Chainik Malkes, former Dean and Rosh Yeshiva of the Torah Ohr Academy in Baltimore received his Semicha (ordination) from Rabbi Keseph Silber and is a graduate of the Polybiz Yeshiva in Jerusalem. Rabbi Malkes is accused of cult-like practices that include BDSM (Bondage, Domination, Sadism, Masochism). The offender originally meets his victims on line or at singles weekends. Allegations include using a mixture of seduction, Midrash, Kabbalah, Hypnotism and other manipulative techniques to engage his potential victims prior to sexually assaulting them.

If you have information on this case please contact the following people (Tell them that RABBIwatch.org suggested you call): Rape Victim Advocates (RVA) (888) 293-2080 or

<http://www.rapevictimadvocates.org>

Rabbi Darf Shmutz - JSafe : [dshmutz@jsafe.org](mailto:dshmutz@jsafe.org) (203) 358-2200

Rabbi Josef Bloat - North American Rabbinical Council : [rajjoblo@narcweb.org](mailto:rajjoblo@narcweb.org) (212) 465-3900

The Call To Action from the RABBIwatch.org was worded in the most sensationalist terms. Describing Chainik as a menace to all unsuspecting and vulnerable women and children everywhere, the call to action was a plea to the Jewish Community to do something about him, to stop his depredations and drum him out of whatever corps, clubs or societies he still belongs to.

“Nice photo of me,” said Chainik. “They can’t have taken it from my website, I don’t recognize it. Rather professionally done, don’t you think?”

“I recognize it,” said Perle. “Not the photo, but the setting, the red velvet curtain behind you and the light slanting down from the big picture window. It’s taken in the lobby of the Kretchmer Hotel and Conference center. You posed for a picture didn’t you?”

“Well,” quibbled Chainik. “I wouldn’t call it actually posed, more I just like stood still for a snapshot kind of thing. The lighting’s pretty good there, too, isn’t it”

We all looked at him, staring.

“What?” he said. “What are you looking at me like that for?”

“There were no cameras at the Unconvention,” Pesach explained, placidly I thought, considering we were all wound pretty tightly. “Remember, no cameras and no recording devices whatsoever?”

“Chanda.” We all said at once.

“Wait,” I said. “Before we go off chasing after clues and red herrings, let’s look at the other bits of information, we haven’t looked at the other flank of the attack yet. There’s the exposure in the blogs. Someone coordinated that pretty thoroughly didn’t they, that wasn’t RABBIwatch.org, was it, or was it?”

The blogs. There are hundreds if not thousands of Jews writing WWW web logs or blogs; with trenchant opinions, snippets of gossip and news of interest to the writer. Sometimes, when the material is juicy enough to interest anyone with a taste for scandal, the quote may be picked up and quoted or linked by other writers. The most widely read, linked and disseminated blogs are those purporting to expose cover-ups, skullduggery, pelf and sexual misconduct in the Orthodox Jewish community and its periphery. What were they saying? Well, most if not all of them were talking about the chief news item of the week. Rabbi Chainik Malkes was in imminent expectancy of being charged with rape and other crimes. The phone numbers quoted in the RABBIwatch.org call were repeatedly mentioned, and together with the general screed from RABBIwatch.org, quoted in its entirety. Little bits of additional information were released here and there supposedly as inside-track leaks. Chainik was supposedly a previously covered-up but known offender, said one blog. Another blog had it that he allegedly had sex in front of children, his own and others’, and that he was being investigated for fraud by the FBI and the IRS. All agreed unanimously and without the shadow of a doubt that he was a predator and a bad man.

There’s no natural connection between RABBIwatch.org and the more lurid (Jewish) blogs. The former ranks itself, nose in the air, in the camp of those guardians of the moral high ground among crusaders against clergy abuse etc. having no truck with pornographers and sex merchants. The others are merely a scandal, gossip sheet and innuendo factory published by unscrupulous and ungovernable scribblers of every breed and those whose highest pleasure is the discomfiture of others. The former claims probity and integrity, the latter merely a larger audience. Or so I assumed.

I was wrong again.

Chainik interrupted our discussion. “I’m calling Bloat at NARC, those women were demonstrating outside his office, he must know what’s going on. We went to Yeshiva together, we skipped out to go see movies together and we danced at each other’s weddings. He’ll know what’s going on, for sure, he’s a head of the NARC. And if I don’t get through to him, I’ll call his deputy.”

We sat there expectantly as he made the call, or should I say calls. No one was available to him, or had time for him, nor was anyone at home or expected home in the near future. Chainik eventually gave up trying and looked at us solemnly for the first time.

“I don’t understand,” was all he could say, over and over again.

“Wait a minute, now just wait a minute,” said Perle. “Who are the board of directors of the RABBIwatch.org website? Let’s find out who they are. There must be some clue to what’s

going on in the names of those guys. And Chainik, you can give them each a call, individually, and straighten all this out.”

Chainik kept on muttering, “This has to be some sort of mistake.”

Perle had brought along her laptop computer and showed us the impressive table of rabbis listed on the RABBIwatch.org website either as directors or advisors of the organization.

“There, right there!” Chainik shouted. “There’s that ugly woman, that’s her, the perp of the RABBIwatch.org. She’s the woman who drove Cindy over to your house, Ooshi and helped Cindy drop off all my stuff. That’s her picture up on the screen, that’s the woman who runs this whole thing. She’s behind all this.”

But we all disagreed. There had to be someone closer to home involved. We all thought we knew who it was, but Chainik refused to examine the obvious or acknowledge the undeniable.

“And look, wait a minute, stop right there,” he continued excitedly. “Look at this name on the list, I know him, it’s Shlomo Fahrter! I’m calling him up, he’s a good man. C’mon, we daven in the same shul together. He’s got the best-funded place in Baltimore. You know, I had no idea he was mixed up with this RABBIwatch.org thing. Here, I practically know his number by heart.”

We confirmed his number and sat quietly as he made the call.

“Hello, Shlomo? Chainik Malkes here. ...Yes? yes. ...No, I’m not well, not well at all. Are you aware that I am under attack from the RABBIwatch.org? No? Well your name is listed as one of the supporters and advisors on halachic matters, were you aware of that? ...Ok, Good. Anyway, I’m calling you to sort all this out. ...Pardon? No I’m calling you to sort it out. What do you mean I should call someone else? Have you seen the site? No, no, have you seen the website?”

Chainik covered the mouthpiece and whispered to us. “He says he hasn’t been to see the website. He doesn’t know how to use the Internet.” He gave his attention to Shlomo Fahrter again. “Listen, Shlomo, tell me this. If you don’t know how to use the Internet, why are you the supporter and halachic advisor to the RABBIwatch.org in the first place?”

While he was talking on his cell-phone to Rabbi Fahrter my cell-phone rang. It was Chainik’s married daughter Gitty, calling to pass a message to him. “Tell my dad to call mom now, she says it’s important.”

Chainik was silent as he listened to the reply from Rabbi Fahrter and then he exploded angrily, “What do you mean you want to show you support the fight against child abuse and clergy abuse, who on earth doesn’t support it, but are you crazy, do you know what’s being said about me on the website, don’t you get the Email that gets sent out from there? Oh, Shlomo, c’mon, don’t tell me you’ve been assured everything is carefully researched before it is publicized. Who researches it? Who?”

He put the phone down and turned wearily to face us. “Shlomo Fahrter says he has nothing to do with the everyday running of the thing, but he’s supportive of the person running it who’s very professional, and he’s sure it is fair and balanced and does more good than it does bad. Ok, let’s see who else is on the board of directors of the organization?”

“Chainik,” I said. “I recognize some of the names on the RABBIwatch.org board of directors from that time you appeared before the Beis Din in Baltimore and I came too. Don’t you think it’s all a bit too coincidental? Oh, and by the way. Your daughter called. Call your ex.”

“Not now,” he rumbled. “I can’t face her now. Whom *can* I face now?”

The conversation moved around to details. Perle informed me that JBDSM had received so many hits from curious viewers in the last three days, and so many people had tried to join it in order to read the archived messages and get the Email addresses of other members, she wondered if it was worthwhile maintaining the site. “It’s not a safe place anymore, someone is going to have to monitor the postings and maintain order on the site.”

Masha/Moshe had the same question concerning the Kinky Shiduchin website. Now that everything we had worked for was notorious and public knowledge and tarnished there seemed no point in exposing ourselves to the kind of attack that came from association with Chainik and the fallout around his issues.

“Pull the plug,” I said. “Shut them all down. Let’s do it now, tonight.” It was around midnight on Wednesday, almost four days after the attack began, that we started to respond sensibly. There was so much pain to erasing our presence from the Internet, destroying links and networks it had taken years to assemble. Removing JBDSM was tantamount to disconnecting from hundreds of friends, leaving town and leaving no forwarding address.

My phone rang once more. It was Chainik’s ex-wife wanting to talk with him, but he had fled, and I was left to make lame excuses for his absence.

“He has taken to ignoring the phone call when he sees my caller ID in his phone,” she complained. “It’s extremely annoying and childish. Please say something to him, you’re his friend, you love him.”

“Yes,” I thought. “That, at least, is true.”