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REMARRIAGE AFTER 65 AMONG JEWISH COUPLES

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The crucial people in the aging problems are not the old, but the younger age groups, for it is the rest of us who determine the status and position of the old person in the social order.<sup>1</sup>

Aging is often seen as an illness and not a natural phase of life. Certain realms of experience common among younger people, according to this stereotype, stop during old age: old people become sexless, they do not have sexual intercourse, and become neuter, not needing warmth, companionship and an intimate relationship with another person. Saul describes a common reaction by staff in an old age home to affection between elderly.

The next morning she winced angrily as she noticed two white-uniformed staff members whispering behind fingers, giggling and pointing out the old couple holding hands. Why did some people think life was over for the residents here? Why did they behave as if life, love and sexual desire died within the elderly person who stepped inside the institution doorway? Why didn't they respect the hunger for life that. . . .<sup>2</sup>

This myth is generated by younger groups in society and often an older person adopts this belief to conform to the role society allows.

These stereotypes in truth apply very little to the real situation. People do not change that much as they age; rather some of their characteristics are intensified. Many people do not conform to societal expectations. We find more and more elderly remarrying after 65 or "just living together." There are, of course, also a number of couples who are still together from their youth.

In connection with work at the California Home for the Aged during the past year, I became interested in couples who remarried after 65. I met some who had remarried and discussed this with my supervisor. My observations showed that people are people until they die and we all have certain needs to be fulfilled which do not change. For the majority of people one such need that continues throughout life is for a close relationship with another which encompasses companionship and physical affection. In other words, I was questioning the common stereotypes of an aged individual that exist in this society.

I am interested in working with old people and one of the central questions to me both personally and as a communal worker, is how a person may achieve dignity and self-respect as a human being throughout his or her lifetime. Since interpersonal relationships play an important role in the development of self-respect I decided to explore it. I narrowed the topic to remarriage late in life including married people only because the California Home for the Aged does not allow people of the opposite sex to share a room unless they are married.

There are a few general questions I started exploring about remarriage after 65 among Jewish couples. Some of the questions are: (1) What are the differences between first and second marriages? (2) Why do people get married after 65? (3) What do they expect from the late marriage? (4) How do the aged express physical affection to each other and is it an important part of the marriage? (5) What are the attitudes and feelings among the aging about marriage and remarriage? (6) What values about marriage and sex did they learn in their youth and how do these affect their current life? (7) Has the staff or institution affected their remarrying

and in what ways? (8) How do these people see themselves throughout their lives?

Another area of interest is Jewishness. How do the individuals define themselves Jewishly? Do Jewish values about marriage, aging and sex affect their remarrying and their marriage and in what ways?

There is a sparsity of literature on remarriage. It seems almost like a taboo subject. Few studies have been made about remarriage later in life and the area is virtually unexplored. Perhaps, the stereotype described earlier is so strong that it influences what areas of research are not carried on.

Many more studies have been made in the area of sex among the aging than on remarriage. These studies tend to dispel many stereotypes that exist about "sexless older years."

When I discuss sex and sexual feelings in this paper I am using the term broadly to include physical affection in many ways. This includes sexual intercourse, kissing, hugging, holding hands, touching, teasing, and physical intimacies. Rubin<sup>3</sup> emphasizes having a partner to show physical affection for in all these areas is very important and sexual intercourse alone is not the

essential part. Sharing physically and being intimate with another person in this way seems to be a need most people have and want to fulfill.

Since I wanted to interview people living independently as well as at the old age home I approached the senior adult worker at the Westside Jewish Community Center, who was able to suggest several couples who fit this description.

Since so little is written on this topic, this study is exploratory; it begins to ask questions in this area and begins to find out about remarriage. It is thus a start in researching this subject.

## FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER I

<sup>1</sup>Irving Rosor quoted in Shura Saul, Aging: An Album of People Growing Old, (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1974), p. 6.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid, p. 79.

<sup>3</sup>Isadore Rubin, Sexual Life After Sixty, (New York: Basic Books, Inc. Publishers, 1965).



PART ONE

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

## CHAPTER II

### REMARRIAGE

"It must be remembered that aging is not an illness but a phase of life."<sup>1</sup> Just as younger people marry and remarry so do the aging. More older people are remarrying in later life than did in previous decades.

#### Marriage and Family

The nuclear family in this society has become two separate families--a young couple with or without children and the old couple without children. The death of one spouse leaves the remaining spouse alone and makes it difficult for that individual to return to the family. If the remaining spouse wants to live in a family environment he or she can remarry and set up his or her own home. The still prevalent notion that marriage is just for the young does not represent changes that have occurred.<sup>2</sup>

Marriage in modern-day industrialized society has changed its functions considerably. In earlier days it was far more important as a unit of economic production and as a relationship of

sheer physical necessity, as well as a child-rearing unit. Today the psychological and emotional components of companionship have emerged as the chief values that couples look for in a marriage.<sup>3</sup>

Marriage is a relationship available not only to young people, but to the elderly as well. Marriage and family develop over time: roles change, new tasks are completed, the family unit is reorganized, and goals and directions change. An elderly couple which remarries experiences changes from previous marriage and approaches remarriage at a different stage than a younger couple. The older widowed person encounters different problems than a younger person. Huyck talks about the single status the widowed person finds him or herself in and singlehood raises issues of possible romance, dating, and mating.

Dating is an adolescent activity in our culture and it is difficult to know how to behave as a middle-aged or elderly formerly married date.<sup>4</sup>

Thus the older person has to decide what is acceptable behavior in dating later in life.

McKain<sup>5</sup> describes various options that are available to widowed persons. These include: to live alone, to move into a congregate housing situation, to live with children, or to remarry. Remarriage among

the elderly calls for the social acceptance of marriage later in life. He feels, however, it is becoming more acceptable among the elderly because more people have chosen to remarry. Living with the family is often not a practical alternative, since the children may be unable or unwilling to provide a home for the widowed parent.<sup>3</sup>

#### Reasons

Reasons for remarriage is another aspect of remarriage found in the literature. Bernard<sup>7</sup> and McKain<sup>8</sup> discuss remarriage in some detail. Bernard describes the phenomenon in terms of any remarriage, particularly remarriages after divorce. Yet, some of her ideas are still helpful in studying remarriages later in life. McKain is one of the few authors who has studied "retirement marriage" and a number of his perspectives are useful in this study. Bernard and McKain state reasons for remarriage which include: wish for companionship, financial strain, desire for a more healthful environment, need for a housekeeper or cook, need for a man around the house to do heavy work, desire for independence from children, loneliness, desire for sex, desire for security, love, need for support or care,

status needs, and pressure from family or friends.

McKain<sup>9</sup> found that three-fourths of the men and two-thirds of the women in his sample gave companionship as the major reason for remarriage.

The pleasure and satisfaction of having someone nearby, someone to talk to, someone to make plans with and someone to care for are included in companionship and not found in casual contacts. Companionship also included love and affection and was the euphemism denoting sex.<sup>10</sup>

Rubin<sup>11</sup> also emphasizes companionship as a major factor in marriages of older individuals, as well as the most valued aspect of American marriage for young people too. He states that:

there is no companion for the older years who compares with an equally aging one. . . . Old men and old women need each other for mutual understanding and that companionship of the spirit which revives the drooping ego.<sup>12</sup>

Rubin found that a higher proportion of remarriages were more congenial and happy than most marriages at younger periods of life. He further emphasizes that because of the high proportion of successful marriages in the later years, most experts in the field believe that older men and women should be encouraged to remarry to relieve their loneliness.<sup>13</sup> Many older men may find that they have unclear roles and ambiguous sexual identity. They might remarry to clarify their masculine role.

Older men may use remarriage as proof of their masculinity. Availability of sexual expression was important to them; perhaps more important than the sex act itself.<sup>14</sup>

McKain further explains that remarriage gives some men and women a sense of accomplishment which enables them to return to a role that had been rewarding to them for years.

Bernard describes certain factors that help in selecting a mate for remarriage or being a mate. These include: a desire to remarry, the absence of inhibiting influences to prevent remarriage, the opportunity for meeting and courting prospective mates, community and family pressures, and the personal qualities and non-personal factors that make one attractive to prospective mates.<sup>15</sup>

Goldfarb<sup>16</sup> talks about dependency (need for another person) as a basic force in social behavior throughout one's lifetime. He feels dependency is a cohesive force in marriage and "dependency relationships are probably the most important cohesive social force in our culture."<sup>17</sup> Sometimes, according to Goldfarb, attempts by older people to alleviate feelings of helplessness and fear because essential emotional needs are not being met cause disturbing behavior. People

who remarry are trying to "right themselves" and fill certain emotional needs.

For a person to be balanced and "in a state of homeostasis," he or she needs another person, and Goldfarb describes the cohesive nature of dependency. These two ideas together indicate reasons for remarriage among the elderly.

Peck describes four stages in middle age. These include: (1) valuing wisdom versus valuing physical powers, (2) socializing versus sexualizing in human relationships, (3) cathectic flexibility versus cathectic impoverishment--capacity to shift emotional investments from one activity to another, and (4) mental flexibility versus mental rigidity. As a person ages, Peck states, there are three developmental stages they grapple with. These include: (1) ego differentiation versus work-role preoccupation--the ability to redefine one's worth and take satisfaction in a broader range of role activities than just his long-time specific work role, (2) body transcendence versus body preoccupation, and (3) ego transcendence versus ego preoccupation.<sup>18</sup>



Widowhood

Widowhood represents the end of a relationship. The remaining spouse needs to make adjustments in regard to grief - work, companionship, problem solving, building competence, and help in re-engagement. McKain describes the period between marriages as characterized by:

. . .many hard feelings of uselessness, of being apart and of missing experiences that formerly had meant much to them. The loneliness did not appear to be self-centered. It included a desire to be cherished by someone, to be useful to someone and to feel that another person's happiness was dependent on yours.<sup>19</sup>

Lewis<sup>20</sup> and Rubin<sup>21</sup> talk about the double standard of widows and widowers. Most men, in reasonable health and with adequate economic resources remarry within a few years. Women usually remain widowed for a longer period of time before remarrying. Men have an advantage over women; they can marry women their own age or women much younger than themselves and this is acceptable in society. The probability is greater that their wives will outlive them, so that they are less likely to be faced with widowhood. However, even if widowed again, they still have more options for remarriage than women.

Women's chances of remarrying are small. Remarriage is not a possible solution for very many widows,



since there are fewer widowers or men their age or older and since society frowns upon women marrying men younger than they are.

#### The Couple Plus. . . .

The remarriage of an individual is more "crowded" than the first marriage; more people are involved, directly or indirectly. McKain, Bernard and Huyck describe previous spouses and children as having a role in the remarriage of an older couple. The first spouse may intrude on a remarriage. The widowed spouse tends to idealize the deceased mate, even if the first marriage was not too satisfactory. The unpleasantness of earlier days tends to be forgotten while the good things are remembered and the deceased spouse takes on an image larger than life. Selection of a mate is likely to be influenced by the person's first spouse more than by his or her parents. There is the knowledge by each that the partner's first marriage was not terminated voluntarily and the feeling of friends and relatives that the new spouse is an intruder.

Children can often cause a problem to parents who wish to remarry. They might feel that a stranger is trying to replace their parent and they also may

feel uncomfortable at a reminder of sexual interests of their parent. On the other hand, they may welcome the remarriage and either recognize the continuous needs for intimacy and companionship of their aging parent or be relieved that someone else is caring for their aging parent.<sup>22</sup>

Role ambiguity can occur where both the aged parent and the adult child find it difficult to allow decision-making on the part of the older individual.

The possibility that an aged parent may remarry is not often contemplated by the children and when it happens it comes as a shock to them. Frequently, they react negatively and think their aged parent is too old to know what he is doing. The idea of their parent wishing to marry again is a source of embarrassment. Romance in the later years is not generally accepted and the young adults are revolted at the thought of their parents having sexual interests. The remnants of the child's conception of his parent remarrying abruptly confronts the child with a form of parental behavior he has previously masked. The child often takes on the role of a parent and assumes responsibility for the marriage.<sup>23</sup>

### Success

Another facet of remarriage described in the literature is success of remarriages. McKain found that a happy previous marriage is one of the best guarantees for a successful remarriage.

Persons who remarry late in life presumably are well aware of the step they are taking and very few would risk a second marriage if the first had not been successful.<sup>24</sup>

In this study, many who remarried looked for qualities that made the first marriage a success and tried to avoid those character traits that posed problems in the first marriage. Success of a remarriage was related to the number of years the individuals had been acquainted. The longer the friendship the greater the chance for a successful marriage.

McKain stated that remarried couples had higher scores on the life satisfaction index than are usually found in the aged population; and that older married people in general receive higher ratings than the unmarried. The five components of the life satisfaction index for older people are:

1. Distinction between a person who is enthusiastic in whatever he does and is full of the zest for living and the person who is apathetic and bored with life.

2. The person who accepts responsibility for his life and doesn't blame himself or others for any misfortunes that occur is rated higher.

A person who passively accepts and has a tendency to attribute misfortune to someone else or bad luck receives a low score.

3. A distinction between a person who feels that his or her life is useful and important and one who feels life is useless.

4. A person who takes pride in his personal

appearance, who wears the mantel of old age gracefully receives a high rating.

5. Mood of the person reflects a high or low rating.<sup>25</sup>

He further emphasizes that characteristics which would give individuals high life satisfaction ratings would make them attractive marriage partners.

### Summary

To summarize, in remarriage later in life we find: (1) marriages occur more frequently, (2) fear of loneliness and a wish for companionship are two main reasons for second marriages, (3) more people, living or dead, have an effect on a later marriage, and (4) there is a higher self-image among those elderly people who remarried than those who remained single.

The next chapter, "Sex Among the Aging," describes in greater detail one aspect of intimate relationships. It explores myths about sex and physiologic changes in men and women as they age.

## FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER II

<sup>1</sup>Shura Saul, Aging: An Album of People Growing Old, (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1974), p. 6.

<sup>2</sup>Walter McKain, Retirement Marriage, (Storrs, Connecticut: Storrs Agricultural Experiment Station, University of Connecticut, 1969), p. 6.

<sup>3</sup>Isadore Rubin, Sexual Life After Sixty, (New York: Basic Books, Inc., Publishers, 1965), p. 225.

<sup>4</sup>Margaret Huyck, Growing Old, (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1974), p. 104.

<sup>5</sup>Walter McKain, Retirement Marriage.

<sup>6</sup>Walter McKain, "A New Look at Older Marriages," in Family Coordinator, (Volume 21, number 1, 1972), pp. 61-62.

<sup>7</sup>Jessie Bernard, Remarriage, (New York: Dryden Press Publishers, 1956).

<sup>8</sup>Walter McKain, Retirement Marriage.

<sup>9</sup>Walter McKain, "A New Look at Older Marriages."

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 65.

<sup>11</sup>Isadore Rubin, Sexual Life After Sixty.

<sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 226.

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>14</sup>Walter McKain, Retirement Marriage, p. 35.

<sup>15</sup>Jessie Bernard, Remarriage, p. 116.

<sup>16</sup>Alvin Goldfarb, "Psychodynamics of Dependency and the Search for Aid," Xeroxed article.

<sup>17</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 11.

<sup>18</sup>Robert Peck, "Psychological Developments in the Second Half of Life," in Bernice Neugarten, ed. Middle Age and Aging, (Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 1968), pp. 88-93.

<sup>19</sup>Walter McKain, Retirement Marriage, p. 34.

<sup>20</sup>Myrna Lewis, "Why Is Women's Lib Ignoring Old Women?" in Aging and Human Development, (Volume 3, number 3, 1972).

<sup>21</sup>Isadore Rubin, Sexual Life After Sixty.

<sup>22</sup>Margaret Huyck, Growing Old, p. 108.

<sup>23</sup>Walter McKain, Retirement Marriage, p. 110.

<sup>24</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 20.

<sup>25</sup>Paraphrase of McKain's Life Satisfaction Index, *ibid.*, pp. 59-62.

## CHAPTER III

### SEX AMONG THE AGING

"After I am waxed old shall I have pleasure, my Lord  
being old also?"<sup>1</sup>

Genesis 18:12

- Miss Healy: You should see how cute Mrs. Landon looked, up on my floor this morning. She and Mr. Rosen were holding hands, walking up and down the hall.
- Mr. Peters: They are a'ways looking for a place to smooch!
- Mr. Curtis: Those two are both "senile" and they don't know what they're doing.<sup>2</sup>

#### Myths and Stereotypes

Many myths and stereotypes are prevalent in society about sexuality among the aging. Sex and affection are not generally regarded as acceptable behavior for the elderly. Our society still holds the view that sexual activity is mainly a procreative function and not a recreative one and those beyond their reproductive years should practice self-denial. A corollary to this view is that sex, love and romance are provinces belonging solely to the young.<sup>3</sup>



In the absence of opportunity for direct sexual gratification the need for sexual expression may indeed take on many forms. However, socially acceptable expressions such as simple touching, which in the younger adult may be acceptable and natural, in the older person are looked upon with curiosity and often with suspicion and disapproval.<sup>4</sup>

Rubin<sup>5</sup> states that some of the reasons for the stereotypes of "sexless older years" are: (1) a neglect of emotional needs of aging persons, (2) general tradition of equating sex, love, and romance solely with youth, (3) the psychological difficulty which children have of accepting the fact of parental intercourse, (4) a tendency to think of aging as a disease rather than as a normal process, (5) the focus of studies on hospitalized or institutionalized older people rather than upon a more typical sample of persons with fewer health, emotional or economic problems, and (6) the ignorance and prejudices physicians share with society.

Busse et al<sup>6</sup> feel the taboo against sex in old age is, in part, an extension of the incest taboo. Children find it hard to imagine their parents having sexual intercourse. Because the elderly represent the parent generation, discomfort exists among the younger group. Children often feel that parents interested in sex in old age are exhibiting unhealthy and unnatural



behavior.

Butler emphasizes how the elderly become the butt of jokes and are not even considered as sexual beings.

Old men are frequently ridiculed as impotent or as "dirty old men". Old women fare even worse in the public eye. They are the neuters of our culture, who have mysteriously metamorphosed from desirable sexy young things to mature and sexually interesting women; finally, at about 50, they steadily decline into sexual oblivion. This is the way society sees it.<sup>7</sup>

What society believes and expresses is just one side of the coin of myths and misconceptions; the other side is what the aging population believes. These stereotypes are prevalent in the thoughts of many elderly people.

#### Attitudes From Youth

Rubin points out that the elderly are placed in a poorly defined position. Roles and statuses are taken away from them and they are placed in marginal positions. Under such circumstances, the aging individual tends to accept the stereotypes which society has created. This stereotype includes sexlessness. They begin to feel uncertain about their sexual and affectional capacities and self-conscious about expressing these. They often

begin to feel guilty about healthy sexual feelings because these are unacceptable to the people with whom they come in contact.

The elderly usually follow the sexual customs of their youth, which includes no sex outside of marriage. Therefore, during widowhood the individual is forced into celibacy.

If we wish to understand the sexual attitudes and behavior of older adults we should look to the values they acquired in their youth; if they "learned" that wrinkles and menopause marked the end of sexuality, it should not surprise us that as elderly people they are uninterested in sex.<sup>8</sup>

Other studies indicate that if an individual was interested in sex in the younger years then this interest and capacity remains. But if a person did not enjoy sex, then old age becomes a rationalization for cessation of the activity. Different research and studies are trying to shatter these stereotypes, so those who wish can feel comfortable and relaxed and enjoy sex in old age.

#### Definitions of Sex

Particularly in old age, sex is connected with the feeling and ability to express love and affection and sex can be defined broadly to include much more

than sexual intercourse.

We can define sexuality broadly or view it as man's search for pleasure by way of a relationship with another which arises and is impelled from within and finds satisfaction through realization in an affectionate, loving partnership with another.<sup>9</sup>

Sexuality may express itself in the need for continued closeness, affection and intimacy or some romance in life, as well as sexual intercourse. Sexual relations in older people are often important as a source of psychological reinforcement, a feeling of being needed and capable of receiving and giving love and affection. It can be an effective source of self-reassurance and mental well-being. Rubin emphasizes also that the cessation of sexual intercourse does not mean the end of either love or affection. Kastenbaum states clearly the connections of intimacy, affection and sexuality in the older person. He asks:

What does an older person lose if and when he no longer has a loving sexual partner? Is it possible that the loss of intimate sharing may prove more critical than the orgasm deprivation? Where else is the old man or woman to receive immediate proof that his body can be a source of pleasure both to himself and others? In what other context than the boudoir will he have the opportunity for the whisperings, the nonverbal communications, the private world of people very close to each other? When the identity-enhancing intimacy of loving sex has terminated, where is the elder to

turn for a convincing reminder that there is more to him than his new and skimpy public role?<sup>10</sup>

Studies dealing with sexuality among the aging disprove myths that exist in society and among the elderly. First, general findings will be discussed and then specifics focusing on women and men will be described in greater detail.

#### Findings on Sexuality of the Aging Individual

Masters and Johnson<sup>11</sup> feel there are six factors which are responsible for the loss of sexual responsiveness in later years. These include: (1) monotony of a repetitious sexual relationship, (2) preoccupation with career or economic pursuits, (3) mental or physical fatigue, (4) overindulgence in food or drink, (5) physical and mental infirmities of either partner, and (6) fear of performance associated with any of the former categories. They state that maintained regularity of sexual expression plus general physical well-being and a healthy mental attitude will provide a sexually stimulating atmosphere in the 80-year age level and beyond. The three main points they focus on for continuing sexual relations in old age are reasonable good health, an interesting and

interested partner and regularity of sex.

The Duke University Longitudinal Studies<sup>12</sup> stress the differences between men and women with regard to sexual behavior. Findings were that:

1. elderly men in the sample differed markedly from elderly women in reported sexual behavior.
2. intensity, presence or absence of sexual interest and activity among the elderly women was primarily a reflection of the availability of a socially sanctioned capable partner.
3. with advancing age patterns of declining sexual activity and interest were common but patterns of stable, as well as of increasing sexual activity also occurred.
4. when both husband and wife were available for study, a high level of congruence between the reports of the two partners was observed, suggesting that sexual behavior was being reliably reported.<sup>13</sup>

### Sexual Activity

Many factors influence the extent of sexual activity and interest among men in the age range studied. The most important includes past sexual experience, age, subjective and objective health factors, and social class. Fewer factors determine the extent of sexual activity and interest among women. Primarily, marital status, age, and enjoyment from sexual experience in younger years influence the extent of sexual activity in later life. For women, a socially sanctioned sexually capable partner is essential. Thus, it is difficult for

the majority of women who are widowed to satisfy any sexual desires.<sup>14</sup> Pfeiffer further emphasizes that those persons to whom sex was of great importance early in life are more likely to continue sexual activity late in life and those who looked back on their lives with satisfaction had higher levels of sexual activity than those who did not.

Newman and Nichols' findings are similar to the studies at Duke University and Masters and Johnson. They state that:

The analysis of these data shows little correlation of sexual activity with age. The subjects also rated themselves on the relative strength of their sexual urge in youth and in old age and a comparison of the two ratings shows a remarkable constancy of the experience of the sexual drive within individual persons throughout life. Although older people experienced a decline in sexual activity and strength of sexual drive, these data show that, given the conditions of reasonably good health and partners who are also physically healthy, elderly persons continue to be sexually active into their 7th, 8th, and 9th decades.<sup>15</sup>

Their study shows a significant difference in sexual activity of single persons as compared with married couples. In the absence of a socially sanctioned sexual partner, the sexual drive, although present, is often not strong enough to cause the elderly person to



seek an extramarital sexual partner.

Rubin<sup>16</sup> says that the capacity to enjoy sex in later years is not lost but slows down gradually, as all physical capacities do. This process begins in adolescence and continues slowly over the years. There is not one particular point when sexual ability and interest stops. Rubin discusses sexual activity in the cardiac patient. Studies indicate that the psychological factors are more significant following surgery and many fears and misconceptions become more important in affecting sexual activity than the surgery itself. The physician usually gives little or no advice to a patient after surgery about sexual activity, so that fears develop. For example, doctors emphasize moderation and relaxation in the type of sexual intercourse engaged in for the heart patient. Different positions might have to be adopted for comfort if one partner has a chronic health condition. Drugs and various chemicals, for example, tranquilizers, sedatives, and narcotics, interfere with sexual responses more often than most people recognize.<sup>17</sup>

### Sexuality In the Older Woman

The Duke studies found that as women approach their 60's a smaller percentage are sexually active than are men at the same age. When these people were studied for a period of ten years there was no further change in these proportions. Pfeiffer et al. state three possible causes for women's lower level of sexual activity and interest.

The occurrence of a clearly demarcated climacteria in women may have a negative psychological impact on their sexual lives; women have always experienced somewhat lower levels of sexual activity and interest than men; among women their lower sexual interest and activity had already taken place prior to the entrance of the study. (And it is the men who are responsible for this, higher death rate of males leaving more women than men widowed and without an available sexual partner; trend of marrying older men who often died earlier, become ill, lose interest or potency.)<sup>18</sup>

The Duke studies emphasize that the extent of an aging woman's sexual activity is dependent upon the availability of a socially sanctioned, sexually capable partner. Pfeiffer feels that one reason for the decline in sexual interest among women is not physiological but is defensive. If little opportunity exists for sexual fulfillment, then desires will decrease. Past behavior influences the present. How much a woman enjoyed sex



in her youth, the frequency of sexual activity and level of sexual interest at that time will partially determine the extent of sexual interest in her later years.

Other studies point out that for many women there are myths and misconceptions around menopause. The physiological changes which occur do not necessarily affect sexual capacities of an older woman. Some hormone treatment might help maintain elasticity in her sex organs, as will regular sexual intercourse. It seems that those women who use menopause as an excuse to stop having sexual relations might have considered it an activity they never enjoyed and are only too glad to stop.

Rubin states that women could enjoy their sex life for many years after menopause if physicians are able to help them overcome any physiological changes through hormone treatment or other means. Further on, he explains that continuation of sexual relations provides for older women

. . . . a much needed psychological reinforcement, a feeling of being needed and of being capable of receiving love and affection and renewing the intimacy they earlier found desirable and reassuring.<sup>19</sup>

Many of the older husbands are suffering from physical disabilities and cannot engage in sexual activity

with their wives. For most women of this age extra-marital sexual partners are not available.

If satisfactory counseling of sexual content were made available to sexually insecure, uneducated or inadequate women in the menopausal years, there is reason to believe that the unresolved tensions of the later years might be reduced or to a large extent avoided. There is no reason why the milestone of the menopause should be expected to blunt the human female's sexual capacity, performance or drive. The healthy aging woman normally has sex drives that demand resolution. The depths of her sexual capacity and the effectiveness of her sexual performance as well as her personal eroticism, are influenced indirectly by all of the psycho- and-sociophysiological problems of her aging process. In short, there is no time limit drawn by the advancing years to female sexuality.<sup>20</sup>

#### Sexuality In the Older Man

The most important factor in the maintenance of effective sexuality for the aging male is regularity of active sexual expression, according to Masters and Johnson. Physical infirmities and the general physiological condition influence a man's sexual response. However, the socio-sexual environment of a male throughout his life has a great influence on his capabilities later in life. With correct information, a man can continue sexual activity into his ninth decade.

Fears of performance are engendered by lack of knowledge of the natural involutional changes in male sexual responsivity that accompany the aging

process. Really, the only factor that the aging male must understand is that loss of erectile prowess is not a natural component of aging.<sup>21</sup>

Masters and Johnson emphasize that it takes an older man longer to get an erection, yet, he is able to maintain it longer and is capable of longer foreplay than a younger man. Instead of man worrying about ejaculating, he can enjoy lovemaking longer and continue to be potent.

Rubin describes the "fear of fears" phenomenon. If a man has failed a couple of times, he loses his confidence and starts doubting his ability. After a while he regards himself as totally impotent and considers his situation hopeless. In the earlier years, a temporary failure is taken in stride. When it occurs in the later years, when a certain decline has already taken place, it may convince a man that the end of his sex life has come.<sup>22</sup> Often, after an operation a man will try sexual intercourse, fail, and convince himself that he should not try again. Some elderly widowers prefer to forego sexual activity rather than risk public disapproval by seeking out willing sexual partners.

The Duke Studies indicate that those men who remain in good health in old age continue to be sexually

interested and that this proportion does not significantly change over a ten-year period. However, the proportion of aged men who continue to engage in sexual intercourse decreases in a gradual manner with advancing age.<sup>23</sup> Another finding indicates that the rate at which males slow up sexually in the last decades of life does not exceed the rate at which they have been slowing up and dropping out of sexual activity in the previous groups.<sup>24</sup>

#### Recommendations

Rubin states succinctly a view of how to improve the sexual situation for older people.

The basic point of this book is to emphasize the need for our entire society to recognize the normality of sex in the older years, to establish the right of elder persons to express their sexuality freely and without guilt and to clear away the obstacles in people's minds which prevent the fullest and most creative expression of that sexuality.<sup>25</sup>

A few authors recommend (1) sex counseling for the aged, (2) techniques of sexual intercourse especially suited for old age, (3) importance of masturbation when sexual partners are unavailable for those who do not find its practice personally upsetting, (4) regular physical examinations, (5) proper medical treatment,

(6) adequate diet and exercise, (7) openness about sexual matters, (8) living arrangements which permit sexual expression for the aged individual still interested in and capable of sex, (9) physicians who come to terms with their own sexual attitudes and are aware of the extent these affect their relationships to their patients, and (10) physicians who understand the psychological importance of sexual expression in the elderly.

Loss of sexual vigor with age should be no greater than the loss of other physical capabilities. A man or woman of 60 is hardly capable of running 100 yards as quickly as he or she might have at 20. But the chances are excellent that the feat can still be accomplished by proceeding at a leisurely pace and feeling no anxiety about running less swiftly or less often, than in the heyday of youth.<sup>26</sup>

There might be a slowing down of sexual capabilities but not a cessation. As mentioned above, the sexual drive of an older individual is related to the intensity of his or her sex drive in youth.

In institutions aging people should be able to decide if they want to enjoy sex and provisions should be made so they can have privacy and make sexual relations a part of their lives. Rubin states that:

. . . this failure to have a clear understanding of sexual needs and behaviors is a threat not only to the legal rights of these individuals but also to those of society.<sup>27</sup>

This chapter describes various aspects of sexuality among the aging. These areas include: (1) myths and stereotypes, (2) general findings about sexuality of the older person, (3) sexuality of older women, (4) sexuality of older men, and (5) recommendations for improving the situation.

The thesis will now review the various attitudes in the Jewish tradition towards the aging, marriage, and sex.

## FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER III

<sup>1</sup>*Pleasure* refers to Sarah becoming a mother and also that sex is acceptable.

<sup>2</sup>Shura Saul, Aging: An Album of People Growing Old, (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1974), p. 85.

<sup>3</sup>James McCary, Human Sexuality, (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold Co., 1973), p. 257.

<sup>4</sup>Jack Weinberg, "Sexuality in Later Life," in Medical Aspects of Human Sexuality, (April 1971), p. 226.

<sup>5</sup>Isadore Rubin, "The Sexless Older Years - A Socially Harmful Stereotype," in Anne Juhasz, ed. Sexual Development and Behavior, Selected Readings, (Homewood, Illinois: Dorsey Press, 1973), pp. 81-82.

<sup>6</sup>Ewald Busse and Eric Pfeiffer, eds., Behavior and Adaptations in Late Life, (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1969), p. 153.

<sup>7</sup>Robert Butler, Aging and Mental Health: Positive Psychosocial Approaches, (St. Louis: C. V. Mosby Co., 1973), pp. 99-100.

<sup>8</sup>Margaret Huyck, Growing Old, (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1974), p. 67.

<sup>9</sup>Isadore Rubin, Sexual Life After Sixty, (New York: Basic Books, Inc. Publishers, 1965), p. viii.

<sup>10</sup>Robert Kastenbaum, "Loving, Dying and Other Gerontological Addenda," in Carl Eisdorfer & M. Powell Lawton, eds., Psychology of Adult Development and Aging, (Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association, 1973), p. 705.

<sup>11</sup>William Masters and Virginia Johnson, Human Sexual Response, (London: Little, Brown & Co., 1970).



<sup>12</sup>Eric Pfeiffer and Glenn Davis, "Sexual Behavior in Middle Life," and "Determinants of Sexual Behavior in Middle and Old Age" in Erdman Palmore, ed. Normal Aging II Reports from the Duke Longitudinal Studies, 1970-1973, (North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1974); and Ewald Busse & Eric Pfeiffer, eds., Behavior and Adaptations in Late Life; and Eric Pfeiffer, Adriaan Verwoerd, Glenn Davis, "Sexual Behavior in Middle Life," in Anne Juhasz, ed., Sexual Development and Behavior, Selected Readings, (Homewood, Illinois: Dorsey Press, 1973).

<sup>13</sup>Eric Pfeiffer et al., "Sexual Behavior in Middle Life," p. 69.

<sup>14</sup>Eric Pfeiffer and Glenn Davis, "Sexual Behavior in Middle Life," p. 260.

<sup>15</sup>Gustave Newman & Claude Nichols, "Sexual Activities and Attitudes in Older Persons," in Journal of the American Medical Association, (Volume 173, number 1, 1960), p. 35.

<sup>16</sup>Isadore Rubin, Sexual Life After Sixty.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 142.

<sup>18</sup>Eric Pfeiffer, "Geriatric Sex Behavior," in Medical Aspects of Human Sexuality, (Volume 3, number 19, July 1969), p. 26.

<sup>19</sup>Isadore Rubin, Sexual Life After Sixty, p. 11.

<sup>20</sup>William Masters and Virginia Johnson, Human Sexual Response, p. 247.

<sup>21</sup>William Masters and Virginia Johnson, Human Sexual Inadequacy, (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1970), p. 329.

<sup>22</sup>Isadore Rubin, Sexual Life After Sixty, p. 144.

<sup>23</sup>Eric Pfeiffer, "Geriatric Sex Behavior," p. 26.

<sup>24</sup>Isadore Rubin, Sexual Life After Sixty, p. 30.



<sup>25</sup>Ibid., p. 232.

<sup>26</sup>James McCary, *Human Sexuality*, p. 267.

<sup>27</sup>Isadore Rubin, *Sexual Life After Sixty*, p. 7.

## CHAPTER IV

### JEWISH CONCEPTS OF AGING

#### *You shall rise before the aged*

This chapter describes briefly certain strains of thought in Jewish literature about aging. In modern American society the elderly are often pushed aside as in a used car lot. Youth and youthfulness are the ideals. The old are often left behind by the mobile nuclear family. This is very different from the position of the aging in Jewish tradition. Abraham Heschel, a contemporary Jewish philosopher, describes an ambivalence about aging in modern society. According to Heschel, we all want to become old, but once old we hide our age and try to look young.

The typical attitude to old age is characterized by fear, confusion, absurdity, self-deception and dishonesty. It is painful and bizarre. Old age is something we are all anxious to attain. However, once attained, we consider it a defeat, a form of capital punishment. Enabling us to reach old age, medical science may think it gave us a blessing; however, we continue to act as if it were a disease. More money is spent on receiving cures and treatments

of old age than on heart disease or cancer. You find more patients in the beauty parlors than in the hospitals. We would rather be bald than gray. A white hair is an abomination. Being old is a defeat, something to be ashamed of. Consequently, the authenticity and honesty of existence are readily exchanged for false lustre, for camouflage, sham and deception. Only very few people are endowed with the rare and supreme courage to admit their true age without embarrassment.<sup>1</sup>

Heschel's view is a commentary on modern society. More is spent on looking young than on curing diseases of old age. Values and attitudes have changed.

The biblical approach to geriatrics is respect for old age itself, as well as for the aged individual. The aged and elderly were highly respected and they were given a central position in family life and the tribal structure in ancient Israel.

One of the Ten Commandments states:

Honor thy father and thy mother that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.<sup>2</sup>

A core in Judaism is respect for parents. By honoring one's parents one also honors the parent generation. Age itself is respected. How we treat those older than us is one measure of how we ourselves will be treated.

Honor the hoary head and respect the faces of the elderly.<sup>3</sup>

Old age is not hidden. White hair and wrinkles, signs of old age, are left intact and hair is not dyed or faces lifted. A person receives respect in his or her old age.

Cast me not off in the time of old age, forsake me not when my strength faileth. For mine enemies speak against me; and they that lay wait for my soul take counsel together.<sup>4</sup>

The old ask to be taken care of and not forgotten when they start losing physical capabilities. There is comfort within the group (family) and an individual fears being left alone and open for attack by enemies.

The Bible often describes leaders as old men still capable of leading and teaching.

And Moses was an hundred and twenty years old when he died, his eye was not dim nor his natural face abated.<sup>5</sup>

Moses is described as an old man who is still competent. He was the leader of the Jewish people until his death at 120. The biblical leaders and teachers lived long, full lives. One Jewish custom is to tell another that he or she should live till 120.

Rabbi Joshua ben Levi said 'honor and respect the aged and saintly scholar whose physical powers are broken, equally with the young and vigorous one; for the broken tablets of stone no less than the whole ones, had a place in the Ark of the Covenant.'<sup>6</sup>

Even if a person loses some physical abilities, she or he still should be honored because the person's knowledge and wisdom remain important. These quotes from Jewish sources represent some thoughts in the tradition about the honored place old men and women had in Jewish culture. Aging people were regarded as having knowledge and they were considered the leaders of the community. White hair was a sign of experience and learning and indicated a person who was respected.

Longevity is a blessing, it is considered a reward for piety and a life of moral living.

Jewish tradition equated age with wisdom and youth with folly. The Jewish community sought its leadership from the old, not the young citizens.<sup>7</sup>

One view in Jewish tradition is the idea that age, with its experience, is a guarantee of wisdom and without age there is no understanding. Another perspective is that age itself is not a virtue; only wisdom and knowledge of the Torah determine its value.

In biblical times, aging was not regarded as a problem, but as a privilege. It did not decrease security or usefulness, but brought with it increasing honor and esteem.

Behold, the days come, that I will cut off  
 thine arm, and the arm of the father's house,  
 that there shall not be an old man in thy house.  
 And thou shalt behold a rival in my habitation,  
 in all the good which shall be done to Israel; and  
 there shall not be an old man in thy house for  
 ever.<sup>8</sup>

This quote indicates the aged were cared for in the house of their children. The aged were still part of a functioning economic and social unit. Jewish families were large extended families, a few generations living in one household. In this way, as people became physically unable to work, they were cared for and had other roles to fulfill. They were still part of the family. Their learning, experiences and wisdom were shared with other members of the family and they were granted respect and dignity. Many of the aged had financial security until they died since they were part of a social unity that functioned and produced economically. Kahn asserts that by its very silence, the Bible implies that growing old held no financial burdens, and no problems of security for the aged individual.<sup>9</sup> Hence, the extended family structure permitted the aging persons to live with dignity at home.

During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, as the family started to break down in Europe, homes for

the aged were established. If caring for the parents became impossible for physical reasons or financially a stress for the family, the aged were sent to an old age home. It was less common for several generations to live together in one household and often the aging individuals were not able to join the home of their children. Particularly, poorer people lost the dignity and respect old age is supposed to provide. They did not have family who could provide and support them and they became humiliated in their old age and often had to spend their last years in an old age home.

To summarize, the Jewish concept of aging is one of respect and honor, the individual has a place in society, old age and longevity are blessings and the elderly are considered wise and knowledgeable.

Isi b. Judah said 'You shall rise before the aged, all the aged'; R. Johanan agreed, even concerning gentile elders; but R. Nahman and Rav did not act in this manner. According to Maimonides one must honor the exceedingly old, even if they are not wise, by rising.<sup>10</sup>

Old age itself has a dignified place within Jewish tradition and the individuals should be accorded respect. Unlike modern society the aged in Jewish writings are given honor and respect and old age is not hidden but

accepted as a time of wisdom and experience.

The next chapter describes Jewish concepts of marriage. Particularly, those strains of thought that emphasize nonprocreative functions of marriage are discussed in detail.



## FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER IV

<sup>1</sup>Abraham Heschel quoted in Gilbert Rosenthal, Geriatrics in Crisis, (New York: Bloch Publishing Co., 1969), p. 67.

<sup>2</sup>Exodus 20:12.

<sup>3</sup>Quoted in Robert Kahn, "Adding Life to Their Years: The Bible's Approach to Aging," in Jewish Digest, (March 1967), p. 55.

<sup>4</sup>Psalms 71:9-10.

<sup>5</sup>Deuteronomy 34:7.

<sup>6</sup>Berakot 8b, quoted in Louis Newman, ed., The Talmudic Anthology, (New York: Behrman House, Inc. Publishers, 1947), p. 7.

<sup>7</sup>Gilbert Rosenthal, Geriatrics in Crisis, pp. 71-72.

<sup>8</sup>I Samuel 2:31-32.

<sup>9</sup>Robert Kahn, "Adding Life to Their Years," p. 54.

<sup>10</sup>Encyclopedia Judaica, s.v. "Aged and the Aging," 1971 Edition, p. 345.

## CHAPTER V

### JEWISH CONCEPTS OF MARRIAGE

Within Jewish tradition, there are a wide variety of opinions about marriage. Often one view is in contradiction with another or a few thoughts might combine to represent a whole picture of a particular subject. Some perspectives of marriage that are heard frequently and emphasized within the literature deal with marriage as a sanctioned relationship that fulfills the commandment, "Be fruitful and multiply."<sup>1</sup> In other words, procreation is the main function of marriage. This view implies that the married couple is young and still able to reproduce.

The statement, "a man can find contentment only in his first wife,"<sup>2</sup> expresses that marriage is for the young and socially sanctions sex. Jewish folklore feels "by 18 to the marriage canopy," indicating people should marry young. The other functions include avoidance of sin (the notion that sex is permissible only within

marriage) and a requirement of the law (that marriage is the norm in Jewish culture).

However, Jewish tradition also talks about non-procreative functions in marriage, indicating an acceptance in Jewish tradition of marriage later in life. These views imply that the married couple may be older and past child-bearing age, or young but unable to bear children. These views on marriage exist alongside opinions that stress the procreative functions of marriage.

Marriage is a basic mitzvah (commandment) in Judaism and is affirmed by all the Codes of Jewish Law.

Jewish sages condemned the self-abnegation of those who denied themselves the physical satisfaction which marriage offers and denounced the sinfulness which prevented the acceptance of marital responsibility. Judaism regards marriage as a fundamental social institution, founded upon a distinct religious basis; offering the fullest facilities for sexual consciousness of ultimate responsibility.<sup>5</sup>

Marriage is considered the ideal human state in Judaism. The two main purposes in marriage are procreation ("Be fruitful and multiply."<sup>4</sup>) and companionship. It was not acceptable in Jewish tradition for a religious man or scholar to be celibate. Marriage is one of the mitzvot.

To be a responsible person within the community, an individual had to be married.

In Genesis, God creates Eve so man should not be alone.

And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make an helpmeet for him.<sup>5</sup>

God creates woman, as a companion for man. At this point the Bible does not mention procreation. Eve is a companion of Adam.

Man's helpmeet is one with whom procreation may be accomplished, but she is of help and assistance in all his needs, not only procreation . . . . Therefore, a man must marry.<sup>6</sup>

A man and woman are "helpmeets" to each other in many ways. Once woman is created, it seems man is a helpmeet for her, so that she also should not be alone. Feldman asserts that when:

Rachel says to Jacob: Give me children or else I am as dead.

Jacob's anger, instead of the expected sympathy was because she saw herself as a child-bearing instrumentality only.<sup>7</sup>

His point is that companionship and wholeness as a unit, is as important as reproduction and the function of marriage is not exclusively to be fruitful and multiply.

Throughout the ages, in Jewish society, marriage

and family were the basis of Jewish life. The norm was marriage; only through marriage could a person be a complete human being.

Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother and shall cleave unto his wife; and they shall be one flesh.<sup>8</sup>

Two people, in marriage, become like one. One function of parents is to find a proper mate for their children. The child is not whole, in Jewish tradition, until she or he is married.

The Shekinah can rest only upon a married man, because an unmarried man is but half a man and the Shekinah does not rest upon that which is imperfect.<sup>9</sup>

Through marriage people can try to attain perfection, they become whole. The Shekinah, one part of God, only rests on a married man. This view implies that women as well as men become whole after marriage.

The husband finds not only his happiness and blessing in the marital state but his completeness as well. For a man without a wife is not a man, as it is written, Male and Female created He then and He called their name man (Adam).<sup>10</sup>

Together a man and a woman will form a unit, a whole. The completeness does not state anything about procreational functions within marriage but deals exclusively with the married pair. Marriage is considered a holier state than bachelorhood. A "full" person is married.

Marriage was viewed as the means of enabling an individual to satisfy his personal needs and strengthen the community. The social goals of marriage in Talmudic times, expanded from the Bible, discouraged asceticism and made it incumbent on each person to marry at an early age and rear a family.<sup>11</sup>

One reason for early marriage was to avoid the temptation of sin. Sex was recognized as a powerful force but accepted only within marriage.

Although early marriage is encouraged to avoid temptation, this does not exclude remarriage after widowhood. Remarriage also is acceptable because a person is complete and whole only within marriage and presumably sexual needs do not disappear with the years. Feldman states the emphasis in Jewish law of marriage per se as an obligation in the law:

The human benefits of companionship and fulfillment--while not properly the object of legislation are exalted in Jewish tradition and even incorporated into the legal language of the Codes. With procreation as the thrust, but for all the reasons taken together, marriage per se is a requirement of the law, and even its deferral must be justified.<sup>12</sup>

The marital state, as such, encapsulates the good, the blessed and the joy of life. In Ecclesiastes, even if all is vanity, living with one's wife is good.

Live joyfully with the wife whom thou lovest  
all the days of the life of thy vanity, which He

hath given thee under the sun, all the days of thy vanity; for that is thy portion in this life, and in thy labour which thou takest under the sun.<sup>13</sup>

Aside from becoming a complete and whole person in marriage, Jewish tradition also talks about the joy one has in marriage. Jewish writings describe the marriage relationship as good, joyful and peaceful.

Rabbi Jacob said: He who has no wife remains without good, without a helper, without joy, without a blessing and without atonement.

Others add: Without peace and without life.

Others add: The unmarried man diminishes the likeness of God.<sup>14</sup>

This view points out the essential part of the marital relationship itself. The couple is essential; together they find favor in the Lord's eye and are blessed by Him.

Feldman describes the Seven Blessings of the marriage ceremony itself as being an affirmation in the tradition that the joys of marriage are independent of the reproductive function. Some of the Seven Blessings include: a blessing over the wine, which is a symbol of pleasure which must be sanctified and enjoyed responsibly; acknowledgement of the completeness of man when male and female become one; an expression of hope for the gathering of all of Israel back to Zion; the marvels of procreative potential of man; a rejoicing of the



union of the bride and groom; and a blessing for the creation of joy, pleasure, love, peace, and companionship.<sup>15</sup> Therefore, a significant part of the wedding ceremony emphasizes nonreproductive functions of marriage. The Seven Blessings are said even if the wife or husband is sterile. In the case of later marriages both partners are past the child-bearing ages and can be considered sterile. The marriage relationship itself creates something new.

God creates new worlds constantly. In what way? By causing marriages to take place.<sup>16</sup>

Duckat states that Jewish scholars were well aware that marriage and romance were not the monopoly of the young. While they were not opposed to older persons marrying or remarrying they frowned upon marriages where there was a wide disparity in age between the partners.<sup>17</sup> The expression of love and affection was accepted in Jewish thought as natural and it was fully sanctioned within marriage.

From the viewpoints presented in this chapter, we can see that alongside the strains of thoughts about marriage sanctioning procreation, we find thought about the companionship aspects of marriage. To be a complete



person one needs to be married. One receives God's blessing and goodness through marriage. Life is without joy and peace when an individual is not married. Through marriage a person fulfills his or her personal needs, community obligations and God's commandments. Thus, marriage is the preferred state within the Jewish culture and tradition.

The following chapter describes another area of Jewish thought pertinent to this study. There are many concepts and views about sex in Jewish literature. Particularly, those perspectives discussing nonreproductive functions of sex are relevant to this study.

## FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER V

<sup>1</sup>Genesis 1:28.

<sup>2</sup>Yebamot, 63 quoted in Louis Newman, The Talmudic Anthology, (New York: Behrman House, Inc., Publishers, 1947), p. 539.

<sup>3</sup>Peter Elman, ed. Jewish Marriage, (London: Jewish Marriage Education Council, 1967), pp. 31-32.

<sup>4</sup>Genesis 1:28.

<sup>5</sup>Genesis 2:18.

<sup>6</sup>From Shulkan Arukh quoted in David Feldman, Birth Control in Jewish Law, (New York: New York University Press, 1968), p. 29.

<sup>7</sup>David Feldman, Birth Control in Jewish Law, p. 34.

<sup>8</sup>Genesis 2:24.

<sup>9</sup>Zohar Hadash, iv. 50b, quoted in Louis Newman, The Talmudic Anthology, p. 272.

<sup>10</sup>David Feldman, Birth Control in Jewish Law, p. 35.

<sup>11</sup>Herman Pollack, "Jewish Family: An Historical Overview," in Jewish Heritage, (Summer 1972), p. 12.

<sup>12</sup>David Feldman, Birth Control in Jewish Law, p. 27.

<sup>13</sup>Ecclesiastes 9:9.

<sup>14</sup>Bereshet Rabbah, 17,2; Yebamot 62,63, quoted in Louis Newman, The Talmudic Anthology, p. 272.

<sup>15</sup>David Feldman, Birth Control in Jewish Law, p. 35.

<sup>16</sup>Zohar, i, 89a, quoted in Louis Newman, The Talmudic Anthology, p. 271.

<sup>17</sup>Walter Duckat, "Attitudes Toward the Aging in Rabbinic Literature," in Jewish Social Service Quarterly, (Spring 1953), p. 322.

## CHAPTER VI

### ATTITUDES TOWARD SEX IN THE JEWISH TRADITION

Just as there are many perspectives in Jewish thought on marriage, so are there different views on sex. One function emphasized in the literature is reproduction. Alongside the view that sex is a procreative activity is the view that sex is for the pleasure of both husband and wife.

The wise men of the other nations claim that there is disgrace in the sense of touch. This is not the view of our Torah and of its Sages . . . To us the sexual act is worthy, good and beneficial even to the soul. No other human activity compares with it; when performed with pure and clean intention it is certainly holy. There is nothing impure or defective about it, rather much exaltation . . . Because of its great sanctity it requires privacy and much modesty. This precious and awesome and elevated act requires decency and discretion. Even the physical ills I mentioned result only from overindulgence. But benefit and health accrue to the body, too, when the act is performed in the proper measure as to frequency and quality.<sup>1</sup>

Sex is acceptable, if it is performed with proper intentions and under the right conditions. Within Judaism

only through marriage is sexual activity sanctioned.

The act of sexual union is holy and pure . . . The Lord created all things in accordance with this wisdom, and whatever He created cannot possibly be shameful or ugly . . . When a man is in union with his wife in a spirit of holiness and purity, the Divine Presence is with them.<sup>2</sup>

Not only is sexual activity accepted, since it was created by God, but it is holy. Only when a person misuses it, does it become ugly or evil.

Hands can write a Sefer Torah and are then honorable and exalted. Hands, too, can perform evil deeds and then they are ugly. So the genitals . . . Whatever ugliness there is comes from how a man uses them. All organs of the body are neutral; the use made of them determines whether they are holy or unholy.<sup>3</sup>

Within Judaism there is an acceptance of the body and its functions. The body itself is not ugly, how a person uses it determines whether the body is holy or unholy. In Jewish tradition sex is good, the sex act itself is not evil, but is created by God. However, if a person uses it with an evil intention, impurity or overindulgence, then it is not good. For wife and husband to engage in sexual intercourse at the proper time and in "a spirit of holiness" is desirable in Jewish tradition. None of these thoughts mention procreation when talking about the goodness of sex.

The act itself is acceptable. Another view stressing this point says sex is permissible in moderation; overindulgence is not acceptable within the tradition.

But a man's own wife is permitted to him and with her, he is allowed to do as he pleases. He may cohabit with her whenever he pleases, kiss her wherever he pleases and cohabit naturally or unnaturally . . . Still the way of piety is not to be frivolous about this but to approach it with holiness, and not deviate from the natural . . . Nor should one indulge overmuch and find himself always with his wife. For that is lacking in decency and boorish.<sup>4</sup>

Not only is sexual intercourse accepted in marriage; but since it is a joyous, pleasurable activity, it enhances the festivities of holidays and the joy and peace of celebrating the Sabbath.

The holy person performs an act of holiness at times of holiness, thus, marital relations are preferred on the Sabbath and holidays except on Yom Kippur.<sup>5</sup>

Feidman<sup>6</sup> states three objectives of intercourse found in Jewish literature are procreation, relief of physical tension, and satisfaction of lust analogous to animal lust.<sup>7</sup> He stresses that throughout the centuries rabbis have permitted marriage with women too young or too old for childbearing. Although barrenness may serve as a reason for divorce, because of procreation not being fulfilled, no prohibition regarding marriage or sex

exists if a woman is barren or sterile. Thus, marriage (which is the only sanctioned relationship for sexual activities within Jewish tradition) is permitted even with no procreative possibility.

Since the Talmud and Codes not only permit but enjoin marriage upon every man, including those situations where child-bearing is impossible, the permissibility of consciously nonprocreative intercourse is taken for granted. Marriage and marital relations are both independent of procreation.<sup>8</sup>

Gordis discusses similar points that Feldman stresses. Judaism, he feels, recognizes sex as an essential and legitimate element in a love relationship. He points out that in Hebrew the term "ahavah" is used to express physical and spiritual aspects of love. The same term is used to describe the ideal relationship of man to God, the love of one's fellow man and the love of man and woman. He feels it is significant that the Song of Songs was included in the Bible and this indicates the acceptance in Judaism of sex being natural and holy. Even though in Jewish tradition the Song of Songs is considered an allegory between God and the people of Israel, he adds, it still can be seen in its literal meaning.<sup>9</sup>

Basically, sexual relations between husband and wife, while naturally private and intimate, are held to be a perfectly legitimate form of pleasure which justifies itself as such, even, without the goal of procreation.<sup>10</sup>

Gordis stresses that man's nature, a creation of God, is good. Only through misuse does it become evil and sinful. Sex, a natural act, within marriage and with good intentions is good and acceptable. Marriage attempts to endow the combination of love and sex with responsibility.

Glasner<sup>11</sup> also, discusses the nonprocreative functions of sex within Jewish tradition.

Normative Judaism accepted sexuality as a normal aspect of healthy life and even more as an endowment of the Creator, which it is a virtue to enjoy and a sin to deny oneself.<sup>12</sup>

He further adds that Jewish tradition has always recognized the sexuality of women. The function of intercourse was obligatory even after the wife's menopause or even when the wife was sterile.<sup>13</sup> Both biblical and later talmudic law make specific provisions for adequate satisfaction of a wife's sexual needs. The duty to one's wife including her pleasure is still a mitzvah to be performed with appropriate conscientiousness. Feldman states that a man may not take a vow to



deny his wife the pleasure of marital intercourse, his vow is automatically null and void because he cannot vow against what the Torah requires of him. On the other hand, such a vow to deny himself that pleasure is valid, but, since the wife is involved as well, a time limit is set.<sup>14</sup> The familiarity with and application of the principles assuring the woman's sexual satisfaction is the husband's mitzvah. The sexual experiences indicate a knowledge of the other person. The sexual encounter is for the purpose of mutuality, as well as procreation.<sup>15</sup> The Bible uses the word "to know" to describe sexual intercourse.

And Adam knew Eve his wife and she conceived and bare Cain and said I have gotten a man from the Lord.<sup>16</sup>

The attitude to marital sex is affirmative and joyous and characterized by a considerateness to the wife to maintain domestic peace, sholem bayis.

This sholem bayis, grounded in considerateness, then pervaded the totality of the marriage relationship and into old age as well.<sup>17</sup>

One sees that there is an attitude of acceptance of sex within Jewish tradition, exclusive of the procreative function. Marriage completes the man and woman and sex is an activity they share that envelops this



completeness and in which they experience joy, pleasure, and love. Nahman describes how a man should approach his wife during sex. This description capsulizes a view of respect, kindness, acceptance, love, pleasure, and mutuality regarding sex that exists within the Jewish tradition.

Therefore, engage her first in conversation that puts her heart and mind at ease and gladdens her. Thus, your mind and your intent will be in harmony with hers. Speak words which arouse her to passion, union, love, desire and eros--and words which elicit attitudes of reverence for God, piety and modesty. Tell her of pious and good women who gave birth to fine and pure children . . . . Speak with her words, some of love, some of erotic passion, some of piety and reverence . . . . Never may you force her, for in such union the Divine Presence cannot abide. Your intent is then different from hers and her mood not in accord with yours. Quarrel not with her, nor strike her, in connection with this act; as our sages taught . . . . Rather win her over with words of graciousness and seductiveness . . . . Hurry not to arouse passion until her mood is ready; begin in love; let her 'semination' take place first. . . .<sup>18</sup>

In summary, one stream of thought in Jewish tradition accepts sex itself, aside from its procreative functions. Within marriage sex is good and holy. A couple past child-bearing age is encouraged to maintain sexual relations since this is an important part of their relationship and the love and affection they share that makes them complete and whole together is enhanced

through sexual relations.

The remaining chapters of the thesis deal specifically with the study of remarriage after 65 among a sample of Jewish couples. The next chapter describes methodology, how the study was conducted, settings, the sample populations and the method of analysis.

## FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER VI

<sup>1</sup>Emden quoted in David Feldman, Birth Control in Jewish Law, (New York: New York University Press, 1968), p. 102.

<sup>2</sup>Nachmanides quoted in Samuel Glasner, "Judaism and Sex," in Albert Ellis and Albert Abarbanel, eds., Encyclopedia of Sexual Behavior, (New York: Hawthorn Books, Inc., 1961), p. 576.

<sup>3</sup>Nahmanides quoted in David Feldman, Birth Control in Jewish Law, p. 99.

<sup>4</sup>Tur Code quoted in David Feldman, Birth Control in Jewish Law, pp. 88-89.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 100.      <sup>6</sup>Ibid.      <sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 97.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., pp. 68-69.

<sup>9</sup>Robert Gordis, Sex and the Family in Jewish Tradition, (New York: Burning Bush Press, 1967), p. 29.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 34.

<sup>11</sup>Samuel Glasner, "Judaism and Sex."

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 577.      <sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 583.

<sup>14</sup>David Feldman, Birth Control in Jewish Law, p. 63.

<sup>15</sup>Rabbi Seymour Siegel, "Some Aspects of the Jewish Tradition's View of Sex," in Jacob Fried, ed., Jews and Divorce, (New York: Ktav Publishing House, Inc., 1968), p. 161.

<sup>16</sup>Genesis 4:1.

<sup>17</sup>David Feldman, Birth Control in Jewish Law, p. 75.

<sup>18</sup>R. Moses Ben Nahman quoted in David Feldman, Birth Control in Jewish Law, p. 74.

PART TWO

THE PRESENT FIELD RESEARCH STUDY

## CHAPTER VII

### METHODS OF THE STUDY

#### Introduction

The researcher began with an interest in remarriage after 65 among Jewish couples. There is very little written about remarriage later in life and nothing pertaining specifically to Jewish couples. Since there is not much information and it is not easy to come by, before one does a large scale definitive study there is merit in doing a small exploratory study.

#### Topics of Study

From studying the question, reading and thinking, certain areas of exploration developed. These areas include:

- demographic data regarding the couples
- reasons for and expectations of marriage
- feelings and attitudes about marriage
- relationship with children, family and friends regarding marriage
- religiousness and/or Jewishness
- community institutions in relation to the couple

self-image  
mourning and widowhood  
relationship with spouse  
sex

From all of these subtopics general patterns among the elderly were sought.

First, it is important to know about the population studied, who are they, what did they do for a living and what their background is, particularly in relationship to their marriage. By comparing earlier marriages with later marriages of one person, it is possible to see what differences occur at various stages in a person's life cycle, as well as what factors remain consistent for a particular person.

The second area studied was reasons for and expectations of marriage. Do a person's expectations of and reasons for marriage stay the same or do they change as an individual ages?

Does a person's attitude about marriage change or remain the same? Feelings about the first and second marriage were explored and compared. What are the trends of thought that exist among the aging about marriage?

Did their children, family and friends influence the elderly in remarrying or during a first marriage?

What is the relationship between all of these people and how does it affect the marriage? A remarriage is more "crowded" than a first marriage; does this have a positive or negative effect upon the marriage? Another topic of exploration was the relationship with children, family and friends regarding marriage.

Since this is a study about remarriage among Jewish couples, the following questions arise: How do these people define themselves Jewishly? With what Jewish organizations are they affiliated and what Jewish practices do they observe? Do any patterns emerge about the Jewishness of this study population? Does their Jewishness affect their decision to remarry and their marriages?

This study also asked questions about the relationship of the Jewish Community Center and the Old Age Home with the remarried couples. What services can an institution offer and how are they helpful before remarriage and after marriage? Do the aging feel there are more programs these institutions can offer to couples considering marriage? One way of planning services is to find out what the clientele want by asking them about their feelings and attitudes. Thus, recommendations can

be made for institutions about remarriage among the aging with this in mind.

Another area explored and compared was the self-image a person has during the present marriage, first marriage and widowhood. Has this feeling changed and do the remarried individuals in this sample differ from the general aged population?

Mourning and widowhood is another important area to explore. Was an individual able to grieve for the first spouse? In what ways did mourning and widowhood affect remarrying? How much is the first spouse a part of the second marriage?

A few questions to explore the relationship with the spouse and its effect on the marriage are: What is the relationship with the spouse? Was the first marriage successful? How is the present relationship different from or similar to the first? Is the second marriage successful?

A final important area to look at is sex among the aging. How is physical affection expressed among the aged? Is it as important a part of the present marriage as it was in the first marriage? How do societal values and attitudes affect the aging? What



were their attitudes about sex when they were young? Have these changed? This is the only area where substantial research and literature exists. It is not the focus of this study, but one topic among many which is significant to begin to understand remarriage after 65 among Jewish couples.

### Methods

One of the best ways of understanding remarriage among the aging is to interview elderly people who have remarried. An open-ended interview and questionnaire and taping of interviews were the methods chosen for this study. (See appendix for questionnaire.)

The questionnaire developed was used flexibly and open-ended. It gave the interviewer a certain framework for all the questions, yet allowed enough freedom for interviews to "flow." A general question was asked and only after the interviewee had talked freely and expressed his or her point of view, were certain areas probed to obtain more data. Each person was interviewed separately except one couple, so that more open and honest answers and a more flowing conversation could develop. One couple would not agree to

being interviewed separately, and was interviewed together.

This study interviewed remarried older people where both partners were still alive and the couple was still together. Therefore, this sample will reflect different attitudes, perspectives and problems regarding remarriage than a retrospective study including individuals whose marriages had terminated.

In addition to a questionnaire, a cassette tape recorder was used at all interviews. Nuances, inflections, stresses and intonations were thus revealed as added and important dimensions of each interview. At the beginning of each interview the researcher explained that the tape recorder was for her convenience and that the tape was to be kept confidential. Then each person was asked if taping was acceptable to him or her. No one objected and no one seemed bothered or inhibited by the use of a tape recorder. People appeared to be able to express themselves freely and comfortably. Each interview lasted about an hour or an hour and a half.

Before finalizing the questionnaire, there was a pre-test at the Israel Levin Center. Only one woman was interviewed because another couple who agreed to be

interviewed was sick on the appointed day. Other people at the Israel Levin Center who remarried, were not interested in being interviewed. The pre-test led to rewording of some of the questions. Thus, the sample is biased by volunteers versus refusers.

#### Settings of Sample Population

The researcher planned to interview people at the California Home for the Aged and the Westside Jewish Community Center and analyze whether those people living independently and those living in an institution showed differences regarding the questions of this study. The study was to include five couples from each institution. It was only possible to interview seven people at the California Home for the Aged and five at the Westside Jewish Community Center.

Since the researcher did field work at the California Home this year, she knew personally the couples who remarried after 65. She spoke with both social workers about how to approach the couples and set up interviews with them.

The California Home has about 240 residents; it is a Jewish nonprofit old age home in the San Fernando

Valley. Originally, it was supported by various Jewish labor groups. Now, admission is open and a person goes through an intake process before being admitted. The Home is not kosher but has a Jewish atmosphere. Holidays are celebrated, services are held regularly, and lectures and cultural activities revolve around Jewish issues and topics. A "Yiddish" environment exists and all but two of the residents are Jewish. Most of the residents are Eastern-European born, in their 80's. A person is admitted only if he or she can physically take care of him or herself. However, if a person starts deteriorating physically once admitted, there are facilities and staff to take care of the individual. From the researcher's observations during the past year, the staff seems very sensitive to the needs and wants of the residents. The social service department staff, particularly, serves as an advocate for the residents at many meetings and was constantly concerned about the welfare of the aging individual. Nonprofessional staff also seem to treat the residents well. The researcher was in contact with many residents, and heard many complaints. Very few of these complaints, however, were about the staff itself.

The California Home has a very busy Activities

Department and each day the schedule is filled with various programs.

Lee Licht, one of the senior adult workers at Westside Jewish Community Center served as contact to couples living in the community. She spoke with remarried couples and then introduced the researcher to them. After this introduction an appointment for an interview was scheduled.

Couples who are members of the Westside Jewish Community Center live independently in apartments in the area of the Center. The members of the Senior Adult Program are very active in Center activities which are available every work day in the morning and afternoon. Most of the group at the Westside Jewish Community Center are Eastern-European immigrant Jews in their 80's; there are some who are younger, some who are older, and some who are American-born. The atmosphere of the group is Yiddish speaking, non-Orthodox but culturally involved with Judaism. Since the researcher spent limited time at the Westside Jewish Community Center, it is not possible to describe the attitudes and actions of the staff in relation to the members of the senior adult program.

Selection Problems

As mentioned earlier, the actual sample size was small--twelve individuals. At the California Home there are five couples who have remarried. All but one couple agreed to be interviewed. The woman in the couple that refused, said she has "nothing to say on the topic." As we talked for a few minutes it appeared to the researcher that she had much to say, but did not want to share it. At first her husband agreed to be interviewed and we set up an appointment but when the date of the interview arrived he said he changed his mind. There are some suggestions that his wife helped change his mind in the few days before the interview.

Another woman at the Home agreed to be interviewed. Since she has many physical problems, she asked that the researcher come on an afternoon when she expected to be feeling better. After returning a number of times to interview her, her response was always, "not this time, maybe next week." It would appear that in addition to the common problems with interviewing the aging, physical illness and poor health, this woman could not say "no" but kept stalling. In total, there were seven people interviewed at the California Home for the Aged.

Five people were interviewed at the Westside Jewish Community Center. Not all of those to whom Lee Licht spoke were interested in being interviewed. One woman said her husband was not interested, he was European and would not understand the questions and was not well. The researcher felt that she did not want her husband to be interviewed. One couple in particular that probably would have been interested was on vacation during this time.

This study uses the interview method to explore the topic of remarriage after 65 among Jewish couples. Two small samples from different populations were interviewed. Though refusal of some potential subjects was a problem, there seems to have been enough response to give a beginning picture of attitudes of remarried couples on this subject.

The next chapter describes in detail the findings in this study. The last chapter analyzes the findings in terms of the literature and makes recommendations for the field of Jewish communal service.



## CHAPTER VIII

### INTERVIEW DATA

#### Demographic Data

Most of the people included in the study were foreign born. They came to this country from Russia or Poland in the early 1900's. Three people were born in America.

The age range of the interviewees was from 65 through 86, most were in their early 80's. The husband and wife of each couple were close in age. The largest age difference was eight years. This was the couple in which the wife was 65 years old. The other couples differed by one to three years.

Most of the people in this study were married for the second time, a few individuals were married for the third time. One man was married for the first time at age 80. He said, "I was getting on in years and it was about time that I got married."

All previous marriages ended in the death of the other spouse, except for one second marriage which ended by the husband leaving the wife (the woman, who was the interview subject, is now married for the third time). A number of the first spouses had been sick for a long time and were being cared for by the remaining spouse. Heart conditions, strokes and other long illnesses seem to be the most frequent cause of death of previous spouses.

Most of the present marriages are less than seven years old. One couple has been married twenty-five years and another fourteen years. For all except two couples, the longer marriage was the first marriage, the marriage of their youth. The length of widowhood varied from one year to six years. Widowhood for women in the sample varied greatly. One woman at the Old Age Home was widowed for one year only, while one woman at the Center was widowed for eighteen.

Most of the respondents and their first as well as current spouses either were self-educated, went to night school or did not complete high school. Only one woman had two years of college and her first husband was an attorney. A few of the people emphasized that they

or their spouses were self-educated and they were able to "learn from the world." One man said, "My first wife didn't have much education, but she was a smart woman and had a good heart."

The occupations of the sample group are typical for this age level among Jewish immigrants. Most of the men either had owned small businesses or worked on their own in such trades as watchmaker, carpenter, builder, tailor. Two of the women were housewives and the rest had done office work, helped in the husband's business or did factory work. One woman worked in real estate and second mortgages. The work people had done and the view that one did whatever possible with whatever skills an individual had indicate striving and pushing to succeed and bring up a family, despite limited or no secular education.

In all but one case, the occupations of the previous spouse and the current one were similar in status and educational level. The woman whose first husband was an attorney is now married to a man who owned a grocery store.

All but three respondents had children. The three include the man who first married at 80 years

and two people who married in their 30's for the first time. The majority of the respondents had at least one child in the greater Los Angeles area. The professional and educational level of the children were significantly higher than those of the parents. Most of the children completed high school, many college, and several attended graduate school.

#### Reasons and Expectations of Marriage

The bulk of the respondents met their first spouse through a friend or through family introductions, and then went out for a number of years before getting married. In many of the later marriages, husband and wife met either at the Jewish Community Center or the Home, usually attending common activities or talking to each other in the lobby. Other couples who married in later life met at organizations where they shared common interests. One woman stated that she and her husband went together for eight years and he wanted her to give up the Center. She told him, "I won't give up the Center for no man, the Center is first and you come second." They did get married, and he accepted these conditions in the marriage. One woman who was widowed for a long

time felt she needed to belong to organizations to expand her interests and give her a break from her hardships.

What attracted an individual to his or her first spouse was very different from what attracted him or her to the current one. Some of the people had been married very young, in their late teens and early twenties and described themselves as either having fallen in love or having been attracted by the appearance of the spouse. Other important reasons for being attracted to an individual were "a good family," "similar backgrounds," and "feeling lonely." The last reason was the case for two people who married in their thirties for the first time. "Common interests," "good character," "intelligence," "loneliness," were primary reasons for showing an interest in the current spouse. One man said he was lonely and remarried, but rushed into the marriage and "didn't take enough time to get to know her." He seems to regret his remarrying for a third time.

"Love" was the reason most individuals gave for marriage the first time. Then the couple was young and "had their whole life ahead of them to look forward to." The first marriage generally was viewed very differently

from the current one. In the earlier marriage the couple struggled together to establish itself financially, trying to raise and educate children. As one woman expressed it, "in the early years {it was} not a struggle, but adventure, not like a hardship, when you see things unfolding through your hard work."

As stated in an earlier chapter, an equally aging companion is the best companion. In later marriages, interviewees responded most frequently that they "married for companionship," they "were lonesome," they were "tired of being alone."

A few people expressed the following thoughts about why they remarried. ". . . spent all our time together" . . . "mature love, don't marry for sex" . . . "understanding, togetherness, knowing each other's needs before the other asks" . . . "I wouldn't marry if there wasn't love" . . . "wanted a close relationship, wasn't lonely."

The response to the question, "What do you hope for out of this marriage?" reflected an acceptance of old age, a knowledge and feeling of what the individuals are facing, and an understanding of losses an individual faces at this time in life. Most of the people hoped

for "health," to "be together as long as possible," "not to suffer too much," and to be able to "carry on." As one man said, "not much to expect, not the same as when you are young." One woman said she wants to be a good wife. For a woman of her age, this was the accepted role taught to females in their youth and she has successfully adapted herself to this view.

During the first marriage, most people were looking toward the future, they hoped to work together, establish themselves financially, raise a family, educate their children and see them married. Raising a family and giving the children a good education were emphasized by most of the interviewees as important tasks during their first marriage. Their views reflect the typical attitude among immigrant Eastern European Jews to make sacrifices to permit their children to receive a good education and a good upbringing.

#### Feelings and Attitudes About Marriage

All the respondents, except one man, had been married at least once before. They had personal experiences in marriage to bring to their current relationships.



All respondents except one couple described being remarried in very positive terms. Other members of their families were usually happy about the remarriage and seemed to encourage it. Some felt they would encourage others to remarry which suggests they feel happy about taking this step. One woman exuberantly exclaimed, "I love it, love to be married, it's the only way to go . . . so friendly." One man felt living in the Home helped a lot because it reduced the likelihood of financial troubles and strains that might develop if they lived independently. Both members of the couple which is dissatisfied with the marriage feel that their second spouse is not as good as the first spouse. The husband feels he rushed into this marriage and did not get to know his wife well enough. He feels that living in the Home is good and that each is able to participate in different activities and follow his or her own interests.

"Being together," "companionship," "someone to talk to," were considered the best part of both the first and second marriages. Having children, working hard and playing hard were emphasized as good parts of the first marriage. A few people stated that when you are young,

you enjoy life and are very active and it is different now.

Most respondents felt that nothing was difficult in their present marriages. One woman at the Home said, "It's like a bed of roses here, no responsibilities." Those who felt there were difficulties experienced them around the area of health. A woman at the Center talked about the responsibilities she has in taking care of her sick husband. She said if she cannot do it she will find someone else to help, rather than send him to a home.

Many people expressed the view that during their earlier marriages, financial stress and financial problems were the most difficult problems. One woman said, "I had no time to think of difficult parts {of my first marriage} I was occupied with making a living, raising children; now I have time to think over since I was a little girl."

About half the respondents seemed to be very satisfied with remarrying and the other half felt it is better than being alone, but are not satisfied with the marriage itself. One woman who takes care of her sick husband feels the marriage is okay, but only the Center activities keep her going. Those who are satisfied feel they have a bonus, that their present marriage is

something extra, not something they ever hoped for in their lives. Those who are dissatisfied with their present marriage did have successful marriages in the past.

At first, respondents said they could not give advice about remarriage or what makes for a successful marriage. After further probing most gave advice which described what they did before remarriage or what they feel they should have done but did not do. Two men said it is important to get to know the person before you get married, and come to an understanding on different matters before the marriage. One woman said, "Don't expect too much, whatever you get is a bonus. Do your job." A few people stressed the importance of understanding the other person and looking at the other's viewpoint. Others felt it was important to share interests and have the same ideas about life for a successful marriage. One man, dissatisfied with his present marriage, stated that it is important "to get to know the person well. Give it time; don't rush into a remarriage. It's good to know a person a long time and study the character of that person."

Relationship With Children, Family  
and Friends Regarding Marriage

The data suggests that children, family and friends interfered very little with an individual before remarrying or before the first marriage. All of the respondents said that family and friends either strongly approved of the remarriage or felt the person was capable of making his or her own decision and did not interfere with that decision. "They know I'm capable of being able to make decisions and figure out myself what I'm doing." One couple stated that each other's children are like their own, and they are very close with them. Another man said his children approved of the second marriage. "As long as I can enjoy old age, that's okay with them." One woman said her son pushed her into getting married again and felt what was then her future husband was a fine man. She had some doubts, but in the end it worked out very well and she is very satisfied with the marriage.

Religiousness and/or Jewishness

This group came from a Yiddish secular background, often having rebelled against their family's orthodoxy. Many said they were Yiddishist, Socialist, Zionist, and

"religious in the sense that they believed in the Ten Commandments." One man said he "identified with the tradition, but I don't believe in praying." A few described themselves as "international, believing in the rights for all humans." A few of the individuals stressed their involvement with the Jewish people, either preferred or having only friends who are Jews or a feeling that the Jewish people are close to their hearts. Even those individuals who described themselves and their spouses as internationalists, still are associated with either a Jewish old age home or a Jewish Community Center.

As a group they were involved with Jewish organizations and considered this an important part of their lives. Many belonged to Labor Zionist organizations, including the Workmen's Circle and Labor Zionist Farband. One man who did not affiliate with any Jewish organization said he "gave money to Israel, like any other people." Even though they are not members in specific organizations, they have a feeling of identification with the Jewish people. A few people were involved with charitable organizations like Hadassah, City of Hope, Pioneer Women, Jewish Appeal, and Mount Sinai Hospital.

Many of the respondents said they and their spouses never attend services. Most described holidays as Jewish practices which they follow and feel are important to follow. "I believe in celebrating holidays, life is too dry without it." On the other hand, one woman said that "by me every day is a holiday!" A few men at the Home said they attend services more regularly since they have been in the Home. Even though none of the interviewees are religious, a few said they have or have had kosher homes.

Most respondents felt their marriage and life have been very different from their parents' marriage. "In those days they had a shadchan (matchmaker), got married and that's it." "Different in those days, mostly religious, no comparison." A few people emphasized that their parents were religious and they are very different in their own lives. One woman felt that she, like her parents, tries to follow the "tenets of Judaism and provide a good education for my children, give charity, and visit the sick."

The Institution in Relation to the Couple

None of the interviewees feel the Center or the Home helped them when they were considering remarriage or that the staff inhibited them from remarrying. The Center and the Home provide a place to meet other people. One woman active in the Center said, "{Most people come in for} the purpose of marrying, some are successful. Everyone wants to get married at the Center but there are ten women to one man. People come to activities to remarry, but the men are very choosy and they have their pick." This woman feels the purpose of the senior adult activities is for people to meet each other and hopefully "matches" will come out of the activities. Other individuals feel the Home or Center is important because it is the place where they met their current spouse. The Center or the Home are some of the few facilities available where older people can meet others. In this sample most of the couples met at the Center or the Home.

Those individuals who live independently feel that their current housing situation has no effect on their present marriage. Most of the people in the Home feel there is a very positive effect on their marriage since they moved into the Home. Some of them feel it



has nothing to do with the marriage as such, but as individuals they are much more satisfied and fulfilled living in the Home than when they were living independently. If members of a couple are dissatisfied with the marriage at the Home they are able to go to activities alone, talk with others and make fewer demands on the spouse. Two couples at the Home said they felt very comfortable there and one man states, "We fixed up the room and are very happy with that, this is our mansion." Another man feels, "It's wonderful here and good to live in the Home. Not a thing is missing here. You have everything you need here; it couldn't be better." One woman in the Home feels everything got worse when she moved there; she is sicker and is very unhappy there.

#### Self-Image

Except for one woman, the interviewer's impression of the respondents' self-image is moderately positive to very positive, during first and second marriage. This is much more positive than findings about the general aging population. Each has a partner to help him or her overcome problems; they are not lonely and joys as well as pains can be shared. One woman has had a

negative self-image throughout her life. She speaks as if everything happens to her and she has no control over her life.

#### Mourning and Widowhood

Widowhood was one of the hardest times in the life of many subjects. It took much longer for some people to work through their grief than others. Sometimes at this point in the interviews, as at a few other points at which life review was called for, some of the respondents cried a bit and all seemed very moved, perhaps by remnants of grief or by a sense that past things were gone.

All of the respondents felt that loneliness was the most difficult part of widowhood and most felt there was nothing good about that period of their lives. All of the respondents described life right after the death of their first spouse as very hard, lonely, and difficult, and yet they had to carry on with work and children. Just the fact that they were able to continue was seen as a positive thing. One woman said, "All I wanted to do was die. {I was} angry at my husband, because I wanted him to take me along." Most were very lonely

and wanted to remarry. A few felt that their children brought them some happiness. "{I} thought I came to the end of the road" . . . "{It} wasn't a bed of roses; I had two kids to raise" . . . "{I} had friends but felt lonely, {I} made the best of it." . . . "The more pleasure, the more pain" . . . "Hard part of life is to lose a mate" . . . "{I was} lonesome and upset and hurried to get remarried, {I} needed somebody else."

Some felt their children were helpful to them at this time. One woman said her son "became the man of the house and I became the child." Others felt their children helped in minimal ways. Some said no one helped them during widowhood, and they didn't have anybody to ask for help. During widowhood most of the people's self-image dropped considerably. A highly cathected person was lost and an individual needed to redefine him or herself in the new situation. Widowhood is loss of a person who helped the surviving spouse "right itself" and a period of redefinition and finding oneself ensues.

Many of the respondents started joining organizations including the Jewish Community Center to overcome loneliness and to start getting involved with activities and often met their current spouse at such a place.

### Relationship With Spouse

Basically, those individuals who were happy and satisfied with their current marriage felt their first and second spouses were similar. A certain type was particularly attractive to them. Most respondents felt both spouses had the same views and outlooks, were considerate and kind and were on the same financial level. Differences between first and second spouses usually reflected the different backgrounds and environments of that person. For example, a woman's first husband came from a middle class upbringing, while her second husband's family struggled to find enough to eat and was very poor. Another difference stressed is that during the first marriage they were raising a family and working and this created different relationships. One woman, American-born, in particular emphasized the differences between an American-born person and a European-born. She feels that American-born is a higher status. Her first husband was born in America while her present husband is European.

One man who is not satisfied with his current marriage, talked about his other two wives as being very good women, very smart, good housekeepers and "just

the opposite of his present wife." The woman who felt her husbands were different in every way also is dissatisfied with her current marriage. Her first husband was kind and appreciated her, while her present husband criticizes her.

In describing, generally, their first and second marriages most people felt it was very hard to compare the two; the first was during their youth, at a time when they worked, raised children, and were full of pep and life. Some of the people felt that the present marriage is enjoyable because there are not the same type of responsibilities as in the earlier marriage. One woman exuberantly said, "We have so much fun, remarriage is so much fun and so good." One man feels his marriage is a success because there is good companionship and "I needed someone to take care of me. I get it one hundred percent and she's capable of doing it." Even when the present marriage was described as successful the first is remembered as something special and unique. There is no replacement for the first spouse. Both members of one couple described their current marriage as bad and their first marriage as very good and satisfying. The woman feels her husband

criticizes her and she has nothing in common with him. The man feels he rushed into the marriage, did not get a chance to really know his wife, feels he has nothing in common with her and feels she is a shallow woman.

### Sex

Most of the respondents hesitated and were a little shy about expressing how they and their spouses relate to each other physically. They answered more freely when talking about sex on a more theoretical basis than in their own private lives. Most of the people said they kiss, hold hands, put arms around each other, tease, and verbally express affection, and some said they do have sexual intercourse.

Most felt physical affection was very important during their first marriage and not as important now. Kissing, holding hands, etc., were important now, but not sexual intercourse. This group of individuals seem to accept the view that sexual relations in old age either does not happen or only rarely, and it is not a normal part of old age. A few people describe physical changes, operations and the body becoming worn out as making sex difficult in old age.

All, except one man, feel the social surroundings and opinions of others do not limit them from developing and expressing physical affection towards their spouses. Two people state that at the Home there is some talk when you walk around holding hands but they do as they please and do not let it affect them. In other words, what others say is usually not the factor that prevents an older couple from expressing physical affection towards each other, but rather their own attitudes and capabilities are the limitations.

A few accept the view that after a certain age people cannot have sexual intercourse. One man said, "Oh well, we try to please each other in every way. Naturally at this age as far as sexual, it's very hard, and not the way we were. {One} can't expect anything like that. When you come to 60 or 70, forget it." Another man felt he was still interested sexually but his wife is not interested. One woman talking about sexual relations with her husband said, "Now he's a sick man. We had plenty. It's a different thing now, sexually. Since he's so sick. I don't miss it." Some people are glad not to relate sexually with their partner. They never enjoyed it in their youth and are only too happy



to find a reason to stop later in life.

Some of the comments about physical affection during their first marriage were: "It was very important. Oh well, that was just perfect like a storybook." . . . "That time it was a different thing. When we were seventeen years old do you have to ask a question? We were so hot we didn't need heat (coal)" . . . "It was entirely different because {we were} much younger."

A few of the respondents feel, as one gets older, certain physical and sexual adjustments are made to make sexual intercourse possible. One man felt he had to adjust himself, according to his health. He feels that if he does not have sexual relations too often that it is not a problem for his heart condition. One man felt "in a natural way, sexually we get weaker, and don't require it so much." Another person felt people should control themselves and not overindulge. One man, who does not have sex because his wife does not feel well, states, "In elderly people, the sex drive is still here, but not as easily expressed as when you are younger. One needs the right party to express it. Sex keeps on going all your life. {It} slows down and is not in physical condition to express it. It is important to have the



right person." His view confirms the conclusions of research done on sexuality among the aging.

Most of the respondents said sex was a taboo subject in their youth. No one talked about it, it was very secret. "Even when married, people were ashamed to talk about someone being pregnant." They felt it was very different in their youth than today. A few feel it is much better today, because people are open about sex. They talk about and know about it.

Most respondents said they learned nothing about sex from their parents; it was a taboo subject. One woman said her mother told her the day before she was getting married "to do as your husband tells you." That was all the advice and information she was given. One man said that when his first wife got her period, "She didn't know what it was because her mother wouldn't tell her about things like that." Most of the people felt today is very different, people talk about sex and people are more open about it than when they were growing up.

All of the respondents said they did not learn anything about birth control in their youth, either from their parents or from other sources. Yet, one man said, "We all had to do that. Otherwise we would have had

fourteen children, too, and I didn't believe in that, especially in those days." Even if this generation did not learn about birth control from their families, they learned about it once they were married. One man jokingly said, "There were no books on that in those days, neither did they have pills." Many stressed the differences between today's society and what it was like when they were young people.

Some of the respondents think younger people feel the elderly do not have sex or do not need it. One man said, "They should tolerate it, and see that old people need companionship. It's okay whatever people can do to still enjoy life."

#### Modal Couple

To summarize the findings, the researcher will describe a typical successfully remarried couple.

The husband and wife were born in Eastern Europe and immigrated in the beginning of this century. They are both in their 80's, the husband a few years older than the wife. Each was widowed for a few years. The husband was self-educated and owned a small business. The wife went to night school, was a housewife, and

helped her first husband in the business. Both have college-educated children in the Los Angeles area. The couple are both secular Jews. They were members of a Labor Zionist organization and Jewish charitable organizations and supported Israel financially. Neither attends services but they do celebrate holidays.

This couple met at activities in a Jewish Community Center. They were attracted to each other because they shared common interests; they desired companionship; and each found the other had an appealing character. After meeting at the Center they spent a lot of time together, and developed a close intimate relationship.

They hope to spend a long time together with good health. One of their major concerns is health and physical well-being. They tell each other experiences of their first marriage, its joys as well as its struggles.

They enjoy being remarried and describe it as fun and pleasurable. They have few major responsibilities and are able to manage together financially. They have a very positive attitude about marriage and feel they have something extra in life since they have

remarried.

They feel it is important to know the other person a long time before getting married and share freely experiences of their marriages.

No one interfered with the remarriage. The children of both spouses were pleased with the remarriage. The staff at the Center encouraged the couple and offered whatever services they could to the couple.

The husband and wife have highly positive self-images. They are well-adjusted to aging and have learned to accept losses that occur in old age.

Each had a difficult time during widowhood. Yet they were able to adjust to widowhood and gradually became active in the Jewish Community Center. At the Jewish Community Center, they made friends and eventually met each other.

The husband and wife describe the first spouse as the same kind of person as the current one. Both have the same views on life, are kind and considerate, came from the same type of environment and had similar occupations.

They have made sexual adjustments and continue to have sexual intercourse, not as frequently as in the

past. They prefer showing physical affection by hugging, holding hands, and kissing. They learned little about sex in their youth and think young people are lucky to be able to discuss these matters now.

### PART THREE

#### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## CHAPTER IX

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

What conclusions can be drawn from these findings and how do they relate to the existing literature? What implications do these conclusions have for further study and for social services?

#### Conclusions

The findings of this study support statements in the literature regarding retirement marriage to the effect that people remarry because they fear loneliness or wish for companionship. The desire for companionship and avoidance of loneliness can be seen as two sides of the same coin.

The Jewish concept of marriage also emphasizes the function of companionship in marriage: for one to be a whole and complete person one needs to be married. In Jewish literature we see positive attitudes about marriage for companionship, and sex even without reproductive



possibilities. The respondents in this sample appear to have internalized various Jewish values, including those about marriage. Since concepts of remarriage in general and Jewish concepts of marriage coincide it is not possible to say which of these factors played a more important role in the respondents' decision. However, because there is no conflict between Jewish values and "basic human values" in that area, the two reinforced each other.

The sample group was mostly European-born Yiddish secularists who came to America in their twenties or at a younger age. These people broke from the traditions of their homes, yet maintained values learned in their youth from their families.

The literature refers to the wider range of possible marriage partners available to widowers as compared to widows. In this sample, marriage partners were very close in age, at most a few years apart. Since the partners of each couple are close in age, they share many commonalities, such as living through the depression and similar views of sex.

The majority of the respondents reported success in both their first and second marriage. In the main, the group seems very satisfied with marriage. This

supports McKain<sup>1</sup> that someone who found marriage satisfying one time is interested in remarriage later in life. He or she knows marriage can be good and is willing to try again. Those who were satisfied with both marriages described their spouses as having similar characteristics. This would indicate that the respondents were capable of finding what they needed in a second mate despite loss. One need indicated is having a warm intimate relationship with another human being. The dissatisfied respondents seem to feel that everything happens to them and they have no control over what occurs in their lives.

It seems a person who has a high self-image in old age has gone through Peck's<sup>2</sup> stages of development successfully and has been able to overcome crises at each stage. In this sample most of the people had a good self-image and seem to cope well with the problems of aging, to adapt to its limitations and to take advantage of its opportunities. These people also had strong positive feelings about themselves during their first marriage. Only remarried respondents were interviewed so we cannot compare the respondents with people of the same age who did not remarry regarding self-image or the other subjects of this paper. Someone with a

good self-image is a likely candidate as a mate in a successful second marriage.

Jewish literature suggests that some older persons have attained a sense of wisdom through their experiences of life. In this sample the respondents were allowed an opportunity to share their experiences by giving advice about marriage and remarriage to the researcher. The purpose of this question was to get some idea about their marriages. Those individuals who were satisfied with their marriages gave advice that reflected what actions they had taken or how they presently behave in the marriage. Those individuals dissatisfied with their marriages gave advice based on what they did not do, or in retrospect, what they should have done before remarrying.

The literature indicates that children and first spouses can interfere in a remarriage in a number of ways. Children may either prevent or object to the second marriage, or be accepting of their parents' decisions. A first spouse, even a deceased one, can influence a relationship, if the surviving spouse idealizes the first spouse or if the image of the first spouse "takes over" much of the second marriage.

In this sample, children, friends, and family were all positive and accepting of the couple's decision to remarry and did not interfere with that decision. Most couples felt they could talk about their first spouses freely and that she or he did not interfere negatively with the second marriage. The majority of the respondents described their spouses as being very similar.

From this sample, there was no difference in responses between individuals at the California Home for the Aged and those who are members of the Westside Jewish Community Center; the researcher wanted to test whether living independently or in an institution affected a second marriage. Those in the Home feel their housing situation has a positive effect on their marriage since they have few responsibilities and few major decisions to make. The Home provides a support structure for its residents. Those living independently feel their housing is a continuation of how they have been living throughout their lives and they are still able to maintain themselves and live independently. It would appear that a marriage can be satisfactory in either a residential or in an independent setting. The significant factor may be the extent to which the living arrangement is appropriate in

the light of the individual's or the couple's capacities for running a household and/or available community supports.

Respondents reported that they had experienced no interference by staff either at the Home or the Center during their period of acquaintanceship and remarriage in old age. This would indicate that remarriage in old age is acceptable behavior to the staff. Many stereotypes about the aging prevalent in society are not as common among staff working with aging individuals in the two settings studied. In view of the fact that interference and stereotyping does occur in other institutions it would appear that the California Home for the Aged and the Westside Jewish Community Center "are doing something right." This could be related to staff selection, training and manageable work load which make it possible to relate to the clients as human beings. Therefore, if conditions are right, it is possible for these agencies to train personnel to be sensitive and aware of the needs of this clientele.

The literature describes widowhood as a very hard and lonely time. This study also found this to be true. Individuals described their widowhood as

very hard, lonely, with no one to turn to, and as a very uncertain, poorly defined time. For a person to maintain homeostasis he or she needs another person to share a close relationship. When a person is in flux, a person becomes imbalanced. During widowhood an individual loses a highly cathected object and must redefine him or herself.

The literature states that usually men are widowed for a much shorter time than women. In this study, we found no significant difference between the length of widowhood between men and women. The sample is small, however.

The literature describes a decrease in sexual activity in old age often related to the level of interest and enjoyment during one's youth. Physical health, too, is a significant factor affecting sexual activity in old age. This study supports these findings. People described a lessening of sexual activity as they age, which they attributed to a number of factors including health and the body not needing sex as frequently as in youth. The physical health of the partner affected sexual activity. The literature suggests that adjustments can be made to accommodate to certain physical



conditions. Respondents described specific adjustments they made sexually to accommodate to physical limitations. Some indicated an interest in sex but were unable to engage in it since their partner was ill. Other forms of physical affection apart from sexual intercourse, such as kissing, holding hands, hugging, and touching, become more significant and important to the aging couple.

#### Recommendations

This exploratory study has implications for Jewish communal work. Old age may be a lonely time, since needs for companionship and physical contact combine. Marriage may be one way of meeting these needs but marriage is not always possible. A two-pronged approach to increase possibility of marriage and meet needs in ways other than marriage should be developed in Jewish agencies. Various services and activities at Jewish agencies can enhance people's participation and ability to meet companionship needs. This study indicates that these people did not have to remarry for financial support but rather for emotional reasons. We will suggest some services for increasing the likelihood of marriage and/or meeting these needs by alternative



measures. Some of the recommendations are for the aged themselves, others are for the general community and staff of agencies serving the aging, and others are for research.

To maintain health and mental well-being, the literature shows, an individual needs a confidante. A confidante is not necessarily a sexual partner and may be of either sex. Jewish communal work should try to facilitate older people's meeting their companionship needs.

Most of the people met at the home or the Center. The great numbers of lonely appearing individuals even at these institutions indicate that an increased programming effort with greater staff consciousness of this problem could be of help to these individuals in enriching their lives. One function of both institutions could be to serve as a meeting place for people to become acquainted with members of the opposite sex. This is an underlying goal for many agencies serving youth. It seems from the respondents' answers that this is also important for the aging. Many feel this is one of the main reasons people participate in activities. If more programs and activities were developed

to increase opportunities and enhance the quality of contact between men and women it might ease the process. However, there is a discrepancy in numbers in the over 65 year old populations, as there are predominantly more women. Therefore, methods must be developed to facilitate people meeting others of both sexes to enhance opportunities for developing a confidante relationship.

One suggestion is that homosexuality should be encouraged among the elderly. It is doubtful this will occur or meet the needs in this group. This group maintains certain Jewish values and general values from their youth which would not accept homosexuality. However, there are other groups socialized with different values who might find this acceptable in old age where women far outnumber men and an interest in sexuality continues. The development of friendships, without sex, could be encouraged and opportunities to meet companionship needs provided. Small discussion groups, consciousness-raising groups, and interest groups could be accessible at centers, old age homes, synagogues, Jewish family service, etc., to facilitate women meeting other women, to encourage people to open up to each other, to share experiences and to provide opportunities

where two people can meet separately and become acquainted.

Often after widowhood a person is isolated and has no one to talk with. Community-housing might alleviate feelings of loneliness and increase opportunities for companionship. A few directions are possible with the idea of community-housing. One direction for community-housing is that there are just aging individuals residing in the housing structure. Each person has his or her own bedroom but activities and programs where people meet exist. For example, a communal dining room might exist where people could eat together. Various cultural and interest activities, as well as discussion groups, encounter and rap sessions, may be scheduled. Lounges, activity rooms, quiet rooms, studies could be available for individuals, small or large groups. Thus a person would have an opportunity to be with people on all different levels as well as maintain privacy in his or her own room or apartment. If activities were provided in the highrise complex, an individual would not have to go out at night for various cultural and interest activities. In most cities it is dangerous to go out at night and most elderly people will stay indoors, alone, rather than venture out at night.

Another direction for a communal housing project is that many generations could live together in a greater cross-section of the community. In addition to the activities and programs listed above, such a housing project could also have opportunities for different generations to offer services to each other. For example, an older person might have more time, and could provide child-care and share with the children stories and experiences from their lives and thus provide a continuity with the past for the younger generations. In multi-generational housing people could "adopt each other," and re-create extended families. Today the population is very mobile and often an individual does not see other members of his or her family for long periods of time. A re-created family could fill needs for all generations; a feeling of belonging could be increased, companionship needs could be filled, a continuity with the past and the future could be provided and all this could develop in multi-generational housing.

Community housing projects could maintain many alternatives for people to express themselves Jewishly and enhance their communal as well as individual lives.

Community housing is one recommendation to meet companionship needs of the aging population.

Most respondents felt they had no one to turn to right after the death of their first spouse. Counseling, therapy, and practical help should be readily available for a person who enters widowhood. Perhaps a widowed person might seek out others who are newly widowed. A more extensive counseling program from the Jewish community centers, old age homes, Jewish family services, and other Jewish agencies serving the aging might be able to help an individual during bereavement. These programs should include outreach to serve individuals not usually contacted by the agency. This would include individuals in the area of the agencies and individuals in other neighborhoods. Group sessions could be developed where people can talk on a personal feeling level with others who are widowed and others who are not widowed but are preparing themselves and trying to come to terms with widowhood. Encounter, discussion, and therapy groups would all provide support systems for people to come to terms with their own feelings and own adjustment as well as helping others. Particularly if people have opportunities to discuss

this topic and explore their own feelings before widowhood, they might have an easier time of adjusting to the loss and they will have someone to turn to for help during their bereavement.

Aside from ongoing groups and opportunities to discuss widowhood, emergency hot-line programs should be available. Good public relations and public education should notify the community, particularly the aging, of what services are available at various Jewish agencies. If a person does not choose to use a service until he or she enters widowhood, at least the person will know about existing programs.

Within society, an acceptance of older women dating younger men is essential. Women outlive men and aging is largely a female phenomenon. Once it is accepted for a woman to go with a younger man, women will have more options open to them in later life. They will not have to resign themselves to a lonely life. Connected with an attitude of going out with younger men is an acceptance of sexual needs and opportunity to express these. Aging individuals should have education available to them to learn about the aging process and how it affects them sexually. They also



should have individual and small groups available for discussions about feelings and emotions with sexuality. Alternative methods of meeting sexual needs could be encouraged and discussed.

Aging individuals, the general community, staff, and professions working with old people, all need to learn about sex among the aging.

Consciousness-raising groups could be developed at various agencies to help people come to terms with their own sexuality, companionship needs, losses and to provide support for each other in a warm atmosphere. Consciousness-raising could help change attitudes and stereotypes about aging that the older individuals have about themselves and help them become more aware of what aging can be like.

Re-education about aging is important for the general community and staff of agencies working with old people. Intergenerational programs and activities, where older and younger people interact will help to begin to change these and other attitudes and beliefs. Intergenerational programming can help alleviate feelings of loneliness in certain segments of the population and can stop some of the segregation and agism caused by



separating one generation from the other. Jewish community centers, synagogues, Jewish family services, as well as old age homes could create various intergenerational programs. These programs could help open up lines of communication between old and young, help people listen and understand each other, help dispel myths and stereotypes they have of each other and learn of similarities and differences that exist between people of different ages. Such programming could include discussion groups, classes, interest groups, exchange of services, adopt-a-family member, teaching, and opening up many activities that are now only for one age group. Intergenerational activities will help the old feel part of the community and not abandoned. They will help younger people learn more about aging and share experiences of the past. Intergenerational programming has many possible directions and seems limited only by the ideas of the staff and clients served.

Many misconceptions about aging, particularly around sex, are held by younger people. Staff including professional, skilled and semi-skilled workers at the Jewish community center, old age home and other Jewish

agencies serving the aging should be re-educated about needs of the elderly. Re-education through lectures, discussions, films, multi-media presentations, rap groups and exchanges between the elderly clientele and staff, all may help change attitudes and beliefs and redirect actions for the benefit of the aged.

Education in synagogues, Jewish community centers, and other agencies may make people more aware of what aging can be like so that people can look forward to their own aging and understand the aging of their parents and others. Education about the aging process and encounters with older people could be encouraged with younger children as well as other age groups.

It seems for stereotypes and myths to be dispelled, re-education should start at an early age to develop more positive attitudes about aging and the aged.

Re-educating the general community to have a positive perspective on aging will include questioning various values, beliefs and behavior that are part of negative attitudes towards and treatment of old people.

Re-education about needs of aging should include seminars for community leaders, agency executives and rabbis. Synagogues should sponsor programs for the

aging as well as for the congregation and general community.

Courses in aging should be part of rabbinic training, social work education, Jewish education and Jewish communal work studies. Special courses and seminars about widowhood should be available for rabbis, Jewish communal workers and educators as well as Jewish funeral directors, accountants planning for widows, builders, and federation leadership.

Particularly the staffs of agencies working with older people need to develop an openness about sex and remarriage among the aging and an openness about various alternative ways for a person to meet these needs. For example, privacy and opportunities for people to meet each other and develop friendships should be provided. Staff training should emphasize the continual need for intimate relationships and should deal with ways in which staff can provide opportunities for aging people to satisfy this need.

More studies and research are needed on this topic. Some questions were developed before the study, but as it progressed more questions and hypotheses arose. For example: How can agencies help people during

widowhood? How can agencies develop more understanding of old people's sexual needs? What are alternatives to marriage to fulfill needs of companionship? How can we change stereotypes of old age? How can we develop programs to help aging people have a more positive self-image and enjoy more of the supportive companionship features of remarriage? Only further studies and experimental programming can begin to answer these questions.

These are a few recommendations for the aging themselves, the general community, social service professionals and further research projects that grew out of this study.

## FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER IX

<sup>1</sup>Walter McKain, Retirement Marriage, (Storrs, Connecticut: Storrs Agricultural Experiment Station, University of Connecticut, January 1969).

<sup>2</sup>Robert Peck, "Psychological Developments in the Second Half of Life," in Bernice Neugarten, ed. Middle Age and Aging, (Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 1968), pp. 88-93.

APPENDIX

QUESTIONNAIRE

## QUESTIONNAIRE

Hebrew Union College  
Remarriage After 65 Among Jewish Couples  
Anne Bailis

Respondent \_\_\_\_\_

1) How many times have you been married?

1 \_\_\_\_\_

2 \_\_\_\_\_

3 \_\_\_\_\_

4 \_\_\_\_\_

Other \_\_\_\_\_

2) What is the reason for the end of your first marriage?

Divorce \_\_\_\_\_

Death \_\_\_\_\_

Age of spouse \_\_\_\_\_

Cause \_\_\_\_\_

If illness, how long was spouse sick? \_\_\_\_\_

3) What is your age? \_\_\_\_\_

4) Length of time in years, of:

1st marriage \_\_\_\_\_ widowhood \_\_\_\_\_ 2nd marriage \_\_\_\_\_

5) What is/was your occupation during:

1st marriage \_\_\_\_\_

Widowhood \_\_\_\_\_

2nd marriage \_\_\_\_\_

6) What was the occupation of your:

1st husband/wife \_\_\_\_\_

2nd husband/wife \_\_\_\_\_

7) What was your father's occupation? \_\_\_\_\_



8) What was your father's father's occupation? \_\_\_\_\_

9) How did you meet your:

	1st husband/wife	2nd husband/wife
Intro. friends	_____	_____
Dance	_____	_____
Matchmaker	_____	_____
Family	_____	_____
Jewish Community Center	_____	_____
Old Age Home	_____	_____
Social club	_____	_____
Blind date	_____	_____
Other--specify	_____	_____

10) Where is your birthplace? \_\_\_\_\_

11) What are the sources of income for your present marriage?

Social security	_____
Investments	_____
Children	_____
Savings	_____
Pension	_____
Other--specify	_____

12) Housing during your:

	1st marriage	Widowhood	2nd marriage
Room	_____	_____	_____
Apartment	_____	_____	_____
Own home	_____	_____	_____
Own apartment house	_____	_____	_____
Live with family	_____	_____	_____
Old Age Home	_____	_____	_____
Other--specify	_____	_____	_____

13) Education:

Respondent	_____
1st spouse	_____
2nd spouse	_____

## 14) Children:

	1st Child	2nd Child	3rd Child	4th Child
Sex	_____	_____	_____	_____
Living	_____	_____	_____	_____
Dead	_____	_____	_____	_____
Age	_____	_____	_____	_____
Education	_____	_____	_____	_____
Occupation	_____	_____	_____	_____
Marital status	_____	_____	_____	_____
Spouse's	_____	_____	_____	_____
occupation	_____	_____	_____	_____
City of	_____	_____	_____	_____
residence	_____	_____	_____	_____
No. of children	_____	_____	_____	_____

## 15) Did you and your present husband/wife sign a pre-marriage contract?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_

No \_\_\_\_\_

Describe \_\_\_\_\_

## 16) What attracted you to your:

1st husband/wife    2nd husband/wife

Appearance	_____	_____
Security	_____	_____
Good family	_____	_____
Peer group approval	_____	_____
Character	_____	_____
Intelligence	_____	_____
Other--specify	_____	_____

## 17) What were your reasons for marriage?

1st marriage    2nd marriage

Love	_____	_____
Security	_____	_____
Companionship	_____	_____
Financial	_____	_____
Raise a family	_____	_____
Family pressures	_____	_____
Other--specify	_____	_____

## 18) What was it like for you being widowed?

\_\_\_\_\_

19) How do you feel about being married again?

Strongly positive \_\_\_\_\_  
 Positive \_\_\_\_\_  
 Neutral \_\_\_\_\_  
 Negative \_\_\_\_\_  
 Strongly negative \_\_\_\_\_

20) What things are important to you these days?  
 (What things were important to you during your first marriage?)

	1st marriage	2nd marriage
Love	_____	_____
Status	_____	_____
Security	_____	_____
Companionship	_____	_____
Sharing	_____	_____
Less financial problems	_____	_____
Someone to care for	_____	_____
Someone to care for you	_____	_____
Social life	_____	_____
Sex	_____	_____
Health	_____	_____
Other--specify	_____	_____

21) What do you hope for out of this marriage?

\_\_\_\_\_

22) Do you think you will get this?

\_\_\_\_\_

23) What things do you think your husband/wife hopes for in this marriage?

\_\_\_\_\_

24) Do you and your husband/wife discuss the hopes that he/she and you each have?

\_\_\_\_\_

25) What can you not talk about with your husband/wife?

\_\_\_\_\_

26) What hopes did you have for your first marriage?

\_\_\_\_\_

27) Did you attain these?

\_\_\_\_\_

28) What things did you think your husband/wife hoped for in your first marriage?

\_\_\_\_\_

29) Did you and your husband/wife discuss these hopes that you and he/she each had?

\_\_\_\_\_

30) What things couldn't you talk about?

\_\_\_\_\_

31) What kind of activities did you enjoy during your courtship period for your:

	1st marriage	2nd marriage
Concerts	_____	_____
Dances	_____	_____
Religious services	_____	_____
Family visits	_____	_____
Group activities	_____	_____
Outings	_____	_____
Movies	_____	_____
Center/Home activities	_____	_____
Lectures	_____	_____
Political club	_____	_____
Social club	_____	_____
Other--specify	_____	_____

32) How has your present housing situation affected your present marriage?

No effect \_\_\_\_\_

Very positive \_\_\_\_\_

Positive \_\_\_\_\_

Very negative \_\_\_\_\_

Negative \_\_\_\_\_

33) In what ways is your current spouse similar to your previous one?

\_\_\_\_\_

34) In what ways does your current spouse differ from your previous one?

\_\_\_\_\_

35) What is/was the best part of your:

	1st marriage	Widowhood	2nd marriage
Status	_____	_____	_____
Security	_____	_____	_____
Sex	_____	_____	_____
Social life	_____	_____	_____
Nothing	_____	_____	_____
Independence	_____	_____	_____
Other--specify	_____	_____	_____

36) What is/was the most difficult part of your:

	1st marriage	Widowhood	2nd marriage
Financial stress	_____	_____	_____
Loneliness	_____	_____	_____
Health	_____	_____	_____
In-laws	_____	_____	_____
Family	_____	_____	_____
Social	_____	_____	_____
Sex	_____	_____	_____
Nothing	_____	_____	_____
Other--specify	_____	_____	_____

37) If you want to give somebody some advice, what would you tell them makes for a successful marriage?

\_\_\_\_\_

38) What is your relationship with your children during your:

	1st marriage	Widowhood	2nd marriage
Excellent	_____	_____	_____
Good	_____	_____	_____
Fair	_____	_____	_____
Neutral	_____	_____	_____
Poor	_____	_____	_____
Terrible	_____	_____	_____

39) What did your family and friends think of your getting married for the second time?

Strongly approving	_____
Approving	_____
Neutral	_____
Disapproving	_____
Strongly disapproving	_____

- 40) What did your earlier friends and family think of your first marriage when you were still deciding whether or not to marry?

Strongly approving \_\_\_\_\_  
 Approving \_\_\_\_\_  
 Neutral \_\_\_\_\_  
 Disapproving \_\_\_\_\_  
 Strongly disapproving \_\_\_\_\_

- 41) How would you describe yourself/ 1st husband/wife and 2nd husband/wife Jewishly?

	Respondent	1st spouse	2nd spouse
Orthodox	_____	_____	_____
Conservative	_____	_____	_____
Reform	_____	_____	_____
Secular	_____	_____	_____
Yiddishist	_____	_____	_____
Socialist	_____	_____	_____
Zionist	_____	_____	_____
Other--specify	_____	_____	_____

- 42) How often, on the average, do you/ your 1st spouse/ and your present spouse attend religious services?

	Respondent	1st spouse	2nd spouse
Never	_____	_____	_____
High Holidays	_____	_____	_____
Yiskor only	_____	_____	_____
Monthly	_____	_____	_____
More	_____	_____	_____

- 43) Have you been affiliated with any Jewish organizations? (1st spouse/ 2nd spouse?)

	Respondent	1st spouse	2nd spouse
Yes	_____	_____	_____
No	_____	_____	_____
Jewish Community Center	_____	_____	_____
Old Age Home	_____	_____	_____
Synagogue	_____	_____	_____
Yiddish groups	_____	_____	_____
Zionist groups	_____	_____	_____
Socialist/ Zionist	_____	_____	_____
Workers groups	_____	_____	_____
Volunteer groups	_____	_____	_____
Other--specify	_____	_____	_____

- 44) What Jewish rituals and holidays do you, your first spouse and your present spouse observe?

	Respondent	1st spouse	2nd spouse
Kosher	_____	_____	_____
Shabbas	_____	_____	_____
Yarmulke	_____	_____	_____
Services	_____	_____	_____
Yiskor	_____	_____	_____
High Holy Day	_____	_____	_____
Shiva	_____	_____	_____
Chanukah	_____	_____	_____
Pesach	_____	_____	_____
Other-- specify	_____	_____	_____

- 45) Has your present husband/wife asked you to follow certain Jewish rituals and practices which you had not previously observed?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_  
No \_\_\_\_\_

- 46) What are they?

\_\_\_\_\_

- 47) How did you feel about doing this?

\_\_\_\_\_

- 48) Did your first husband/wife ask you to follow certain Jewish rituals and/or practices which you had not observed previously?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_  
No \_\_\_\_\_

- 49) What were they?

\_\_\_\_\_

- 50) How did you feel about doing this?

\_\_\_\_\_

- 51) Besides religion, how do you think your idea of marriage is like or different from that of your parents? (Women's roles, men's roles, children) In what ways?

\_\_\_\_\_



- 52) What did you learn from your parents in terms of marriage and sex? (From what they did, what they said, and different attitudes and values they taught you.)  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 53) Did you know anything about birth control?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 54) How do you feel the Center/Home helped you when you were considering remarriage?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 55) What help do you feel the Center/Home could give older people around remarriage? How about after marriage?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 56) To whom do/did you generally turn for advice during:  
1st marriage \_\_\_\_\_  
Widewhood \_\_\_\_\_  
2nd marriage \_\_\_\_\_
- 57) Does the staff in the Home/Center inhibit individuals from thinking of remarriage or relating to others in a physically affectionate way? In what ways?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 58) If you had advice to give about remarriage, what would you say?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 59) Where is your first spouse buried?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 60) Do you ever go there?  
Yes \_\_\_\_\_  
No \_\_\_\_\_
- 61) How often did you go to the grave of your first husband/wife during widowhood?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 62) How often do you go to the grave of your first husband/wife during your current marriage?  
\_\_\_\_\_

63) Do you observe Yiskor for your first spouse?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_

No \_\_\_\_\_

64) Did you observe Yiskor for your first spouse during widowhood?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_

No \_\_\_\_\_

65) What were things like for you right after the death of your first husband/wife? And then what?

\_\_\_\_\_

66) After your husband/wife died, who was helpful to you? In what way?

\_\_\_\_\_

67) How would you describe your present marriage/ your 1st marriage?

	1st marriage	2nd marriage
Excellent	_____	_____
Very good	_____	_____
Good	_____	_____
Neutral	_____	_____
Bad	_____	_____
Very bad	_____	_____

68) Did you know your husband's/wife/s previous spouse?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_

No \_\_\_\_\_

69) How are major decisions made in your:

	Present marriage	1st marriage
You	_____	_____
Your spouse	_____	_____
Both	_____	_____
Consensus	_____	_____
Other--specify	_____	_____

70) Do you and your husband/wife have time and opportunities for complete privacy and relaxation together?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_

No \_\_\_\_\_

- 71) How do you and your husband/wife express affection physically to each other?

Cuddling \_\_\_\_\_  
 Hugging \_\_\_\_\_  
 Kissing \_\_\_\_\_  
 Holding hands \_\_\_\_\_  
 Arms around \_\_\_\_\_  
 Petting \_\_\_\_\_  
 Sexual intercourse \_\_\_\_\_  
 Touching \_\_\_\_\_  
 Other--specify \_\_\_\_\_

- 72) How important do you feel physical affection plays a part in your:

	Present marriage	1st marriage
Very important	_____	_____
Important	_____	_____
Neutral	_____	_____
Not important	_____	_____
Very negative	_____	_____

- 73) Do you feel that your social surroundings or the opinions of others limit you and your husband/wife in developing your physical affection towards each other?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_  
 No \_\_\_\_\_

In what ways? \_\_\_\_\_

- 74) As people get older they make physical and sexual adjustments which might make things different. Have you found that to be true and could you tell me something of your experiences?
- \_\_\_\_\_

- 75) What were the ideas about sex when you were young?
- \_\_\_\_\_

- 76) What do you think people think about sex among the elderly?
- \_\_\_\_\_

Thank You

(The following two questions concern the interviewer's impressions.)

77) Interviewer's impression of respondent's self-image during:

1st marriage \_\_\_\_\_

Widowhood \_\_\_\_\_

2nd marriage \_\_\_\_\_

78) Interviewer's impression of respondent's satisfaction with remarrying:

\_\_\_\_\_

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