

# Our Pre-Wedding Ritual for Sharyn

## June 9, 1994

What we are doing today is in the tradition of the wedding shower, with a difference. We have not gathered here to make you, Sharyn, rich in material gifts. Rather we want to add to your spiritual wealth before you set out on the long road of marriage.

Today we will talk about a "virgin". We use the word in its original sense, meaning "independent of a man." It seems contradictory then to be celebrating the coming together of a woman and a man. But this is appropriate today when women of all walks of life, of all ages, of every sexual preference, must struggle with how to grow free of the rules, traditions, and values of men.

Therefore, one purpose of this pre-wedding rite is to strengthen and reaffirm the commitment of the women's community to you the bride, and to help you find ways to be a "virgin woman" as well as a married woman. We, as your bride community, provide the context within which you can struggle with your status as woman and Jew, within marriage and a relationship, and as a biological and spiritual mother. This first series of readings from *Mediations For Women Who Do Too Much* by Anne Wilson Schaef, signals to all of us present that it is our right and obligation to help you maintain your individuality as you deepen your commitment to Dennis.

### NURTURING ONESELF

*Just the knowledge that a good book is awaiting one at the end of a long day makes that day happier.*

—Kathleen Norris

The art of nurturing oneself is not something that is taught in most high schools or even in a good MBA (Master of Business Administration) course. In fact, the art of nurturing oneself is rarely taught in families either.

Yet, in this high-tech, high-information society, learning how to nurture oneself is absolutely essential for survival. Some good workaholics have found that if they do a cursory job of nurturing themselves, they can work even harder. Unfortunately, that isn't nurturing oneself, that's protecting one's supply.

Nurturing oneself is allowing ourselves to stop, and in that stopping to allow ourselves to know what would be nurturing for us in that time and space, and doing it.

WHAT IS NURTURING at one point in our lives may not be nurturing at another. In order to nurture myself, I have to know myself each moment.

### INDEPENDENCE

*Dependency invites encroachment.*

—Patricia Meyer Spacks

We women who do too much are terrified of being dependent. We clearly understand that "dependency invites encroachment." Unfortunately, our fear of dependency often results in behavior that looks like independence but is really what the psychologists call counterdependence. We are so afraid of dependency that we can't trust anyone, which means that we are still controlled by our dependency needs. Whenever we are circling around any form of dependency, whether it be dependence, independence, or interdependence, we probably are in trouble.

Another option is not to define ourselves in terms of dependency. We can learn to be self-defining. We can learn not to ask others to form our identities for us. Only then can we be truly free and bring the gift of ourselves to any relationship.

INDEPENDENCE and dependence may both be cages.

## LOVE

*I wish I'd a knowed more people. I would of loved 'em all. If I'd a knowed more, I woulda loved more.*  
—Toni Morrison

We all have an infinite capacity for loving. Sometimes we get confused about loving, and we start thinking that we only have so much to go around. We start thinking in zero-sum terms. We believe that we only have so much love and if we give some away, we have that much less. We start parceling out our love like we pay the bills at the end of the month. We meet all of our "love obligations," and we try to keep a little bit in savings, just in case of an emergency. Controlled love is not loving. Obligatory love is not loving. Love is something that flows out of our deep sense of loving ourselves. It is not possible to love another if we don't know and love ourselves.

When we love ourselves, there is no limit to the amount of love we can share. But loving can never be manufactured because we should, need to, or want to get something in return. Love is an energy that is shared because we have it

**LOVING the people I know allows me to know the people I love.**

## ALONE TIME

*When we, as individuals, first rediscover our spirit, we are usually drawn to nurture and cultivate this awareness.*

—Shakti Gawain

Alone time is absolutely essential to the human organism. Many of us have been afraid to be alone. We are afraid that if someone else is not around, no one will be present. When we have lost the awareness of ourselves, we try to fill up our time with work, busyness, food, and other people. We have been afraid to sound our own depths. We have been afraid that we would look inside and find no one there.

Yet, when we have that first awareness of "rediscovering our spirit," we know that there is someone there, inside of us, who is well worth knowing.

There is no way to know ourselves unless we have time alone to explore. We need to nurture and protect our alone time even when it seems difficult.

**MY ALONE TIME is as essential to my spirit as food, sleep, and exercise are to my body. I hope I am able to remember that.**

## RELATIONSHIP

*It has been wisely said that we cannot really love anybody at whom we never laugh.*

—Agnes Repplier

How serious we are about everything—especially relationships! Often in our most intimate possibilities, we forget that our laughter at ourselves and at each other is one of the vehicles that our creator has given us for grounding ourselves in reality. And relationships that are not grounded in reality don't last.

We have to know others very well to be able to see their funny sides and to share in the frivolity of family functions. Let's face it, we human beings are a funny lot. No robot has ever been capable of the antics we can think up.

**SHARING my laughter at myself and others is one of the ways threads of intimacy are spun.**

## CHANGE/SECURITY

*People change and forget to tell each other.*

—Lillian Hellman

How tenaciously we cling to the illusion that we will get our lives in order and they will stay that way! How resistant we are to the normal process of change! We often feel personally attacked if someone near and dear to us changes without clearing those changes with us first. We have somehow come to believe that security and stasis are synonymous.

Change is the manifestation of our ability to grow and become. When it occurs in those nearest and dearest to us it is an opportunity for celebration. When it happens in ourselves, it allows us to share ourselves on a new level. When we try to protect others from the awareness of our changes, we are being dishonest. No one can care for who we are unless they *know* who we are.

**THE ONLY constant is change.**

## WHOLENESS

*Don't you realize that the sea is the home of water? All water is off on a journey unless it's in the sea, and it's homesick, and bound to make its way home someday.*

—Zora Neale Hurston

We are all like water. We are off on a journey to return to ourselves. Some of our journeys have taken us far afield, and many of our days have been absorbed by the sandy river banks that contain us. Yet we continue to flow—heavy and swollen in the spring of our lives and often reduced to a trickle as we approach the fall of our years. "Return, return, return," we murmur, as we tumble over the stones in our paths, ever cognizant that although we may wander through new and strange lands, our destination is a return.

**WATER has to return to the sea, just as I have to return to me.**

## Purification by Water/Mikveh

At the first moment, when God created heavens and earth, the earth was the depths and God's spirit saturated the waters. Then God separated the waters, above and beneath. (Genesis 1:1-8) Like the separation of the waters, we distinguish between one moment and another in the flow of time. In some moments we are conscious of transformation and re-enter the waters of separation for renewal.

*Welcome us Holy One  
As we enter Your life-flow  
Surround us  
Support us  
Carry us to new shores*

Reflecting and altering our consciousness of our act of immersion, we say two b'rachot to separate the moment.

*Holy One of Blessing, Your presense swells creation with the waters of life.*

The Shehechyanu uses its recognition of our threefold relationship to God for each of the three traditional immersions: (While dipping)

*Shehecheyanu*: the life-force which flows in and through us.

*Vekiyamanu*: the trust and sustenance on which we rest, and can allow ourselves in float.

*Vehigiyanu lazman hazeh*: the movement which carries our lives onward in time.

## Blessings for Sharyn

Now that we have purified our souls in meditation and our bodies in water, let us bless the bride. Please share personal thoughts, memories, or wise words with us.

## The Jewish Home

Better is a dry morsel and quietness therewith,  
Than a house full of feasting amidst strife.

Yea, better to eat herbs where love is,  
Than the choicest food and hatred therewith.

Except Adonai build the house,  
They labor in vain that build it.

Through wisdom is a house built,  
And by understanding is it established.

By knowledge is the home filled  
With all that is pleasant and precious.

Make your house a meeting place for the learned,  
And give heed to their words.

If three people have eaten at one table  
And have spoken words of Torah,  
It is as though they had eaten at God's table.

Blessed is the house  
where man and woman regard the ways of their household.

Blessed is the man who has a good woman  
and the woman who has a good man,  
For each will have their number of days doubled.

Blessed is the house with honor,  
That directs the children into paths of righteousness.

When husband and wife are worthy of each other,  
The divine spirit rests upon them.

A home where each loves the other as ones self,  
And honors the other beyond ones self,  
Shall be blessed everlastingly.

A home where children honor their parents  
Is a home in which God dwells, and is honored.  
How goodly are your tents and your dwellings, O Israel.

## Women in Israel

Throughout the ages Thou has blessed us,  
The women past and present, who tended the alters of our faith.

Through noble women Israel was redeemed;  
Because of us has Israel survived.

We have inspired and gathered our youth;  
We have preserved and transmitted Thy word.

May we, the women of our generation like those in the past,  
Keep Israel an eternal witness of Thee.

May we, like Sarah, zealously guide our young,  
Keeping them constant and steadfast in our faith.

Then shall our children remain  
Ever devoted to Thee.

May we, like Rachel, be deeply concerned  
For the children of Israel wherever they dwell,

Sharing their glory, feeling their pain,  
And helping rebuild the ancient homeland.

May we, like Hannah, who joyfully brought  
Her young Samuel to Shiloh for service to Thee,

Bring our children also in their tender years,  
For guidance and light to the House of God,

To learn the traditions, the teachings and laws  
Of our prophets and sages, our martyrs and saints.

- Then shall our children be imbued in their youth,  
With hope for their future through knowledge of their past.

May we inspire all around us  
A love for the Torah, our true way of life.

Through us shall Israel be redeemed;  
Through the merits of our children shall Israel survive.

PSALM 121  
a song for ascents

I turn my eyes to the mountains;  
    from where will my help come?  
My help comes from Adonai,  
    maker of heaven and earth.  
Shekhinah will not let your foot give way;  
    your guardian will not slumber;  
See, the guardian of Israel  
    neither slumbers nor sleeps!  
God is your guardian,  
    Adonai is your protection  
    at your right hand.  
By day the sun will not strike you,  
    nor the moon by night.  
God will guard you from all harm;  
    Adonai will guard your life.  
Shekhinah will guard your going and coming  
    now and forever.