

## A DYBBUK?

I don't believe in spirits. I am a rational person. When pressed, I will even admit that I don't believe in God, though I proudly proclaim my Jewishness. Why am I saying this? Because for some time now, I have felt that Fran was possessed by a Dybbuk. And to make this weirder, the Dybbuk was the spirit of my mother (though when I told this to David, he said it was more likely her father.) Who knows?

As part of writing my story, I have been writing my mother's story. And as I have been writing my mother's story, I have been reliving my life with her and remembering all the thoughtless, mean-spirited things I said and did. When she died, I was not with her. I was unable to ask her forgiveness.

What happens to the soul, spirit, "nishamah" when one dies? Does it leave the body and float around? The concept of a Dybbuk has been part of Jewish legend for a long time. One definition: the dislocated soul of a dead person. The word itself means to adhere, or to cling. It does not have to be a bad spirit. And it will leave the body it possesses after doing what it sets out to do.

Early on, Fran and I have had arguments, disagreements, and lots of bickering. You don't listen. I do listen. I told you. You didn't tell me. You don't pay attention. I am tired of repeating myself. I want it here. You put it there. It doesn't belong there. I didn't tell you to buy that. Buy this. This does not go with that. That is too cheap. This is too expensive. That was not washed. We will be late. We have lots of time. What happened to this dish? The floor is dirty. Where are my keys? Try putting it in the same place. Hang up your coat. Clear the table. Take out the trash. Where is the paper? It is too hot. It is too cold. The picture is crooked. The TV is too loud. Change the bulb. This is broken. That is broken. Wake me at 9. Close the door. Open the door. Close the window. Open the window. And on and on.

Other couples have arguments, but I cannot believe it is anything like ours. It escalates. The decibel rises, as does our blood pressure. Who started it? I am beginning to think it was the Dybbuk. Could it be my mother getting even? Her most frequent complaint in the last years, and I must admit, a legitimate one, was that I did not listen. Whether she wanted to tell me about the day she had, or her childhood in Vaslui, I did not listen. I was not interested. I had my own world. Leave me alone. And then she did. And I was left alone. And I would never hear her again.

Fran keeps telling me that listening was her business. Therefore, if I claimed I told her something, she would have known it, because listening was her business, and it follows that if she does not know it, I did not tell her it.

There are several unusual similarities between my mother and my wife. My mother had a brother and a sister. Fran has a brother and a sister. I had the impression that my mother had the most responsibility among the three, growing up. Fran had the most responsibility among the three growing up. My mother had a love for learning.

Fran has a love for learning. My mother loved to read the newspaper, and was seldom without her paper. Fran loves to read the newspaper, and is seldom without her paper. My mother was an activist, and concerned about the condition of the world. Fran etc.

In my mother's will, she asked that if I had a son, I should name him David. I did not do as she asked. I named him after my father. But some remarkable force brought Fran and me together, and we had a son, and as my mother asked, he was named David.

There is a wonderful Yiddish word, "bashert," and a very similar word, "basherte." The first means "fated, predestined, inevitable," and the second specifically refers to a "predestined mate." Who controls the "predestination?" There is a story about someone asking a Rabbi, what God has been doing since he made the world, and the Rabbi answered, "arranging marriages." But maybe not every marriage. I am not sure if God had a hand in either my first or second marriage. These days, as I look back on my life, I am willing to take the blame for the failure of my first marriage, and the precariousness of my second. But I would like to think that both Sylvia and Fran were my "bashertes," one in 1951, and the other in 1981.

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