Aaron & Erin Wedding  
September 4, 2011  
Rhinecliff Hotel, Rhinecliff, NY  
D’var Torah  

BESHERT  

The subject of my Bible comment today is “Beshert.” Beshert is a Yiddish word that means destiny or fate. In this context, it refers to two people who are destined to be together as soulmates. This concept has roots deep in the Bible. In Genesis, Eliezer identifies Rebecca as “the woman whom G-d has appointed for my master’s son.” He was of course referring to Abraham’s son, Isaac. But in other parts of the Bible, we see people choosing their own spouses and in one portion, we see a mother choosing a wife for her son. The mother was Hagar, the son was Ishmael, and the wife chosen was said to be from the land of Egypt. That choice has caused problems that persist to this very day.

Anyway, we go with the interpretation of the Rabbis that marriages are made in heaven early on. The Rabbis interpret the Torah like the Supreme Court interprets the Constitution. You can hardly recognize the original when they get through with it. Take this interpretation of Rav Yehuda, whoever he was. He came up with this idea simply from reading Genesis: That forty days prior to the formation of a fetus, a heavenly voice comes down from above and decrees who is to be mated with whom. Where did he come up with forty days? Why not thirty days? Who knows?
Today we see Beshert in action. Two people destined to be together from birth. I well remember the birth of Aaron. I went to visit him on the first day of his life. He was confined in a plastic container with a light shining on his head like a spotlight. Was that a portent of things to come? I asked the nurse why he was in the spotlight? She said: “It’s bilirubin.” I said there must be some mistake, since I was looking for Aaron Miner. But there he was, screaming his head off then, as he does now, that the accommodations were not suitable for a person of his station, that he wanted an upgrade, and that he wasn’t crazy about the food either. And over the years, he has grown into a charming, brilliant and handsome man. And that’s only what he says. Actually, he is all those things. It runs in the family. Neither Aaron nor I believe in a false modesty.

A couple of years after Aaron’s birth, a baby girl was born with her destiny already fixed. The granddaughter of a Rabbi, they gave her the name Erin, which means Ireland in Gaelic. She did not scream about her early accommodations but formed a network in the nursery so they could all scream together. A portent of things to come? She grew up to be a highly intelligent, attractive and accomplished young woman. At first, she thought that she would like to marry a man with a ring in his ear – it would demonstrate that he knew how to buy jewelry and withstand pain. Her brother came home one day and said he had discovered the most wonderful girl, that she was beautiful, intelligent and could cook, clean and sew. “Send her in twice a week” Erin replied.

I once told my niece Anne that the names were very confusing, Aaron and Erin. She said it didn’t matter – that they were interchangeable. Actually, she said that Erin was a female Aaron.
And where did Beshert bring these two predestined soulmates together? In law school, of all places. This just shows the strange workings of Beshert, because there is no less romantic place than law school. And where did they meet in law school? In moot court, where Aaron is acting as a judge and Erin as the lawyer. She begins her argument, as young lawyers are taught to do: “May it please the court.” Aaron is thinking: “It certainly does.” He says: “You may proceed” and she is thinking: “This is what they must mean by a hot bench.” Sparks fly and here we are today.

Beshert is fulfilled, right? Not exactly. Only phase one of Beshert is fulfilled today. As this couple moves into phase two and the destiny of married life, it is best to remember the story of Shlomo, who went to Synagogue every single day and prayed to win the Lottery. Day after day, he beseeched G-d to make him a winner. After many days, a voice came forth from heaven: “Help me out, Shlomo. Buy a ticket.”

To fulfill phase two of Beshert, Aaron and Erin, you will need to give G-d a little help. You must have patience and understanding with each other, recognizing that issues must be resolved and differences accommodated. Sometime ago, I read about a couple driving down the highway when the wife asked her husband if he would like to stop for ice cream. He said he didn’t feel like ice cream, but the question was repeated at intervals as they drove down the road, with the husband finally becoming exasperated and using harsh words to deny that he wanted ice cream. The article concluded that the wife wanted to have ice cream and that the husband should have known it. I reviewed that article with Aunt Jackie and told her I am certain that the husband would have stopped if only the wife said she desired ice cream. Jackie said the man was an insensitive clod and should have known his wife wanted the ice cream.
So, Aaron, if Erin asks if you want to stop for ice cream, by all means say yes. In my own house, when Jackie asks if I want to go somewhere or do something, I ask: "Is that an ice cream question?" As women grow older, they get less patient with us and sometimes she says: "This is an ice cream question."

Problems lie in the other direction as well. According to a recent survey, men speak four or five times fewer words than a woman in the course of a day. So, Erin, you can be assured that Aaron loves you even if he doesn't say it every fifteen minutes.

Everybody has advice about marriage. Phyllis Diller, for example, has said: "Never go to bed mad; stay up all night and fight." Henny Youngman said: "Never argue with a woman when she is tired – or rested."

Aaron should be aware of the fact that Erin may have some views that he doesn't share. For example, most women have this view of Creation: That G-d created man, took a close look at his work and said: "I know I can do a lot better than this." Along the same line of thinking, Aunt Jackie opposed the Equal Rights Amendment when she campaigned for nomination to the United States Senate. The women in the audience always applauded when she said she saw no reason to reduce the status of women to equal.
I think it was Yogi Berra who said that the secret of a happy marriage is a secret. Others say that marriage is the high seas for which no compass has yet been invented. But there is no secret, and there is a compass. Caring, commitment, patience, understanding, shared interests and values, honesty, kindness, loyalty, sensitivity, generosity and continuing love – these are the ways in which Beshert is fulfilled in phase two. Finally, in words that you can both understand in view of your profession, marriage is a partnership – Erin is the Partner and Aaron is the Associate.

May your phase two Beshert be as happy as your phase one. In that connection, I look forward to the time when you will confer upon me the title of Great Uncle. Grand Uncle is alright too.

I now leave my duties as Hebrew scholar and return to my position of Federal Judge. Aaron and Erin, by virtue of the power vested in me by the President and Senate of the United States, I hereby sentence you to a term of life, to be served together in the prison of love.