



JESSICA FASS. (Courtesy)

Ask the matchmaker

• LAURA KELLY

Jessica Fass may not have many years in the professional matchmaking business, but she speaks with authority, passion and a certain amount of humility that immediately puts the listener at ease. She highlights a few simple truths for the single person looking for love: Put your best self forward, know the values that are important to you and be an optimist.

"To have a meaningful relationship, you have to be happy," she says astutely.

Originally from Los Angeles and raised in a Reform Jewish home, Fass has been developing her secular matchmaking business, Fass Pass to Love, in Tel Aviv over the past year. Her clients are mostly internationals, new olim without a strong social network in the city.

The 31-year-old wanted to get into matchmaking after recognizing a personal knack for it, having set up a few of her friends who went on to engagements and marriages. In her opinion, more people are leaning towards professional matchmakers as they become tired of online dating, overwhelmed with the options, and are approaching things more simply – via personal connections.

"Who knows you better?" Fass asks, saying that family and friend recommendations outweigh an algorithm on a dating site. "It's kind of funny because we got away from family and friends for set-ups, and we went to online. Now, people are fed up with online and matchmakers are becoming popular again, because there is a personal aspect to it."

Fass says that Jewish culture promotes marriage, especially at an early age. So it's no surprise that statistics in Israel show about 10,000 more couples married in 2014 compared to 10 years earlier. Moreover, the age at which couples marry has stayed the same: the majority of men are between 25 and 29; women are between 20 and 24.

This is despite those who move to Tel Aviv to live the single lifestyle.

"I want to help the everyday Tel Avivan because it's so hard in this city," Fass says, comparing it to LA or New York City where the lifestyle is more hedonistic. "Where do you find the serious people and not just a big never-never land playground of people who don't want to grow up?"

But why people are putting off getting serious? "People today have 'ADD,'" Fass says, "Attention Dating Disorder – they always believe something better is going to come along."

She says there are numerous factors for this. Men see a somewhat unending dating pool, since "if a guy looks good in his 40s, he can stay single as long as he wants." For women, there is truth to the notion of a double-edged sword; while today women can afford to be pickier – not having to financially rely on a man – the inevitable ticking of the biological clock puts them at a disadvantage in waiting for a partner to commit.

"Everyone comes [to Tel Aviv] who doesn't want to get married," Fass maintains, but adds that people are still looking for that special someone when they go out. "We're all going through it; Tel Aviv is one giant dating support group."