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Wexner, Leslie and Abigail Koppel. Wedding address. 23 January
1993.

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REMARKS AT WEDDING CEREMONY

of Leslie Wexner and Abigail Koppel
on January 23, 1993

Rabbi Herbert A. Friedman

Alfred Lord Tennyson probably thought he was the first to coin the epigram:

"Marriages are made in heaven".

Judaism discovered this truth millennia ago, according to a tale in the Midrash. A Roman matron asked Rabbi Yossi ben Halafta: "In how many days did the Holy One create the world?" He replied, "In six days." She asked again, "And what has He been doing since?" Answer. "He joins couples, decreeing who should be married to whom." The matron haughtily stated, "Is that all? I too can do that. Many male and female slaves do I possess, and I can couple them all in one hour." Ben Halafta's final reply, "If it is a light thing in your eyes, so be it. For the Holy One it is as difficult as splitting the Red Sea." And he left her.

What did she do? She brought 1000 slaves, placed them in two rows, one male, one female, opposite each other, and said, "This one shall be married to this one, etc." and coupled them in one night.

When the morning came they all stood before her. One had a fractured skull, one a broken arm, one had an eye gouged out, one a broken leg. One said, "I do not want to be married to that

one" and another said, "I do not want to be married to this one."

She summoned Rabbi ben Halafta and said to him, "Master, verily your Torah is true. Your God who makes marriages in heaven works very hard."

God has worked hard to match you, so must you work hard, being unselfish, kind and loving with each other. Love unleashes generosity. You will want to do things for the one you love. But marriage is not only a matter of two precious people becoming fit for each other. Something more is at stake. You are each part of the larger family of Israel, and when you stand here, about to start your own family, you must think of the countless generations, the long long chain of earlier marriages which brought you here. And you must also be aware of the long chain of future marriages which you will cause to happen through the children you will create.

To be a Jew is to realize that we are part of a process that began long ago and will not end in our lifetime. Our history is like a flowing river which is eternal. And every union of two people is another drop in that stream, adding to its power.

Thus every Jewish marriage of the past 50 years, including yours, must be thought of as replacing a household lost in that unspeakable horror of a half-century ago. You are overcoming that by founding a dynasty today.

Your precious beautiful children to come will help guarantee the future and eternal existence of the people and land of Israel, for you as a couple, stem from Israel, the people and the

land, and you will teach your children to cherish both. You will live as devoted Jews and compassionate humans.

As we speak of that large Jewish family, flowing through time eternal, we also feel the warmth of the closest family physically encircling you this Motzai Shabbat. Here is the Safta, come a great distance in her wheel chair; and the mothers and here a father, the last survivor of his family; and another father here only in the memory of his son, and here the uncles, one approaching his 10th decade. And brothers and sister and sister-in-law all gathered to surround you with their love.

Minutes after you leave this Chupah, hundreds more wait in nearby rooms to greet you.

You are a unique couple and you are fated to live unique lives. Our tradition recognized that and says:

"When a man weds a wife who is right for him
The prophet Elijah kisses him and God loves him."

Derech Eretz Rabbah

Not only him, but her as well. God loves you both; May He bless you with health and peace, and may you bless each other every day that you live on this earth. Amen.