

Marx Friedman's 40th Wedding Anniversary Speech

October 3, 1913

My dear Children,

I am very glad to be with you this evening on this occasion, to celebrate the 40th anniversary of our marriage. It is just 40 years today since Mama and myself got married. We were married in the year 1873, according to the Jewish calendar the 14th day of Tishary. The marriage took place in the evening at this time. I will tell you, my dear Children, that 40 years today since Mama and myself got married. We were married in the year 1873, according to the Jewish calendar the 14th day of Tishary. The marriage took place in the evening at this time. I will tell you, my dear Children, that 40 years is a long stretch of time and lots of things happen during a period of 40 years. Mama and I had our ups and downs. I will now give you a brief synopsis of our married life up to today.

I arrived here in San Francisco in the year 1877, on the 15th day of September. Mama arrived three months later. She did not travel in a Pullman, as we could not afford it at that time. She came by immigrant train. If I remember rightly, it took ten days to get out here.

We took up our first residence on Mary Street, which is a small street near Fifth and Mission Streets. We had three rooms there and paid a rental of \$15.00 a month. Our family at that time consisted of two children, Israel and Sammy, and they were mere babies. At the time we had no carpet as we could not afford to buy it. Mama did her own cooking, nursed the children, and scrubbed the floor. In other words, she was her own chamber maid, nurse, cook, besides doing all the other work, and she was very happy to do it until I could afford to hire one servant and that made things a little easier for her. I went out peddling, selling goods. I sold and delivered all the goods on foot or by street car, as we had no automobile. The next year I bought a horse and buggy and delivered the goods to my customers by buggy. I kept this until the year 1884.

Then I started a store on what is now known as Grant Avenue, at that time it was called Dupont Street, with a Mr. Brown. I stayed in business with him just three months, until he got good and drunk and wanted to kill me, so I had to dissolve the partnership with him and sold out to him. Then I contracted a partnership with a Mr. Stein. He did not get drunk and did not want to kill me, but he was a very poor business man, and I saw I would lose every dollar I had if I stayed in business with him. I sold out and left him to go into business for myself. My capital at that time was very small. It was not quite \$3,000.00, and represented the savings of about eight or nine years.

My next business venture was to start a store for myself on Geary Street. I was there about six months and lost one-half of my capital, and gave up the business. After I had all this hard luck and made up my mind not to go into business anymore, but to keep peddling for a living and live a private life. But Mama inspired me and encouraged me to start again. She told me that she would help me and that I should not get discouraged or be afraid and that together we would build up a good business. Having a great deal of faith in Mama's advice I followed it and started business again in the year 1885 on Stockton Street near Post.

Our store was 13 feet in front by 70 feet deep. We lived in the back of the store and had a frontage of 13 x 20 for store space. I attended to the outside business and Mama was inside attending to the family, also selling goods: that is, she was cook, chamber maid, nurse, sales lady, store keeper and manager of the business. She performed all these duties at once. Well, we were very prosperous for a few years, and then my brother-in-law also came out from New York and helped me a good deal and things went along nicely for us until the year 1896, when we moved to the building where we are now.

Then we had lots of misfortunes — they followed us one after the other. First we had the flood, through which we lost \$75,000.00, then followed the strike, earthquake, and panic: and still after all these misfortunes, thank Heaven, today we are now on our feet once again with a big business. We employ 120 people, pay our bills to the minute, and pay all our men good salaries. We have a good name in the city and the State, and also in the East where we buy our goods our credit is good.

Now, what is the cause of all this good luck? First we have to thank the Almighty God for it, and second you have to be thankful to your mother for everything. Your mother was always a good wife, she was good in adversity and in prosperity. In adversity she helped to do all the work and did not find fault as some women would. I would like to relate a little incident that occurred during our days of adversity.

We had been here about two years and I used to do a good deal of trading with the J.J. O'Brien & Company, and just before Christmas I had a little conversation with Mr. O'Brien the proprietor. I told him jokingly that as I had been a very good customer of his and bought lots of goods during the past year I ought to get a Christmas present. I was not at all serious and said it only as a joke. He answered me, "Yes, you must have one." I told him, "No, I did not mean it. It was only said as a joke." He said, "Well your joke must come true" and he took me over to the silk counter and told the clerk to cut off 20 yards of silk. The wholesale price of this silk was \$2.50 a yard. He told me to, "Take it home and present it to Mrs. Friedman with his compliments." Of course, under the circumstances I could not very well refuse, so accepted it, thanked him, and brought it home to Mama. She kept it for three or four days and then told me to sell it and take the money and use it in the business, as we could not afford silk dresses just yet. I tried to persuade her to keep it, but she would not. She said, "We have a family and we need the money for the children." As I was sure she would not accept it I sold the silk, and of course, and used the money in the business, which I needed very badly at the time. Now, I leave it to you, my dear Children, if that was not a noble act? How many poor women, such as she was at the time, would have refused a silk dress?

In prosperity, when she had time for herself and I had hired a servant to do her work, she put her mind, body, and soul into attending to her children. She did not go out playing cards in the afternoons, as is the style now in San Francisco, and neglect her family, but she stayed at home and put all her time into raising her children, and that is why, thank God, they are well and healthy. She brought them up good. Intellectually, she watched their schooling; physically, she watched the food, diet, clothes, etc.; and morally, she trained them all the time to be good and moral. So today, thank Heaven, we have a nice family of eight children to be proud of. For the above reason they are good men and good citizens — raised good morally, physically, and

intellectually by their mother, so I think that your mother deserves a great deal of credit for raising such a large and good family.

.... There is a saying that “Matches are made in Heaven.” I will prove that our match was made in Heaven. Mama’s name before she was married was “Shlomsky.” Now the word “Shlomsky” originates from the Hebrew word “Shalom” and “Shalom,” as I said before, means Peace. My name is “Friedman.” “Friedman” in German means “freed man,” so my name is Peace in German and Mama’s name is peace in Hebrew, which shows that the Almighty God was right in His match-making as our names harmonize. Both mean peace in different languages which indicates that the Almighty knew what He was doing when He made our match.

We find in the Bible, in the Book of Genesis 18, “And the Lord said, “it is not good for Man to be alone. I will make him a help suitable for him,” which shows that the Bible is a good book. It states the Truth. I know by my own experience that my wife was really a help, so I can confirm the Bible’s statement in making help suitable to me.

..... Blessed art thou, O Lord, our God, King of the Universe, Who has kept us in life and hast preserved us and enabled us to reach this day of our celebration.

O Almighty God, we pray to Thee to give us our health, strength, and long life to live long enough to celebrate our golden wedding and the weddings of our children and grandchildren.

“May God preserve and bless them all.”

{Originally} Typed up by their Grandchild, Milton (Friedman) Forrest, at Rohnert Park, Sonoma County — on August 12, 1982.

This version retyped by their great grandchild, Dave Forrest, at Oakland, Alameda County -- September 9, 2019.