



BY ANN GOLDBERG

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Letting Go – Of Family Size Shopping

It was difficult enough letting go of our children. When you've had a house filled with seven children for many years who gradually, one after the other, marry and disappear to set up their own homes, well, it was bound to be difficult getting used to the sound of just me and my husband rattling around the homestead.

Older and wiser people had been warning me of the psychological side effects I would suffer. I would no longer have a purpose, they said. Be prepared. Find other interests.

So I did.

But what they never warned me about was how difficult it would be to get used to shopping for a family of two (going on 25 on weekends, but that's a different story).

It's so difficult for me to turn my back on the special offers we used to search for in the old days. Two family-size packs of soap powder for the price of one (nowadays, each one would probably last

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six months), five packets of spaghetti for the price of four (I must have had a blackout and forgotten that we hate spaghetti; it's the kids who love it.)

When I find myself checking out of the supermarket with the two giant

packages of toilet paper – 64 rolls in each – I know I'm out of touch with our present reality. But by then, it's just too embarrassing to put them back, telling the people behind me in the line, "Sorry, I forgot the kids are all married."

On the same day that I bought that toilet paper, my husband turned up from a stint at the market with 3 kilograms of oranges, 4 kilograms of tomatoes and a wholesale size 10-kilogram bag of flour.

I was going to ask him if he knew that most of the fruit and vegetables would be rotten before we'd manage to eat them, but I knew he'd just turn round and point to the shoulder-high packages of toilet paper he'd fallen over on his way to the kitchen.

And it's not like they all got married last year.

We are blessed with over 30 grandchildren, the oldest of whom is 16, so in theory we have had plenty of time to get used to the dwindling numbers in our household.

Another thing we can't bring ourselves to let go of is our second telephone line. I'm not talking about another extension, so I don't have to run in search of the blessed cordless phone which is never where I expect it to be before the call goes onto the answering machine. No, I mean another line, with a different number. It made sense when



we had six teenage daughters all vying for their innate right to talk to their friends 24/6. And, in case you were wondering, no, we didn't think it was a good idea to get them each their own cell phone. There are other ways of ending up in the poorhouse without signing a blank check made out to the ravenous bank accounts of the cell phone companies.

So, with six teenage daughters, we decided we had to get another line if we wanted to either receive or make the occasional call.

But why do two mature grandparents need two telephone lines? We don't talk to each other on the telephone from inside the house and if we did it would be cheaper to do it on our cell phones – in fact, we are two grandparents with four telephone lines between us. It really is ludicrous, and a tremendous waste of money. But I know that canceling one, apart from saving us a lot of money, will also make us feel that our lives are dwindling away and not just our bank accounts.

My cooking habits have yet to catch up with reality as well. Even though we always have children and grandchildren for Shabbat, I still cook as though everyone is a hungry teenager as opposed to the many who are little children and prefer to play rather than eat. Consequently my quantities are way out of proportion to what we really need. As my husband says, "We have fresh chicken for Shabbat. Then we have leftovers on Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and sometimes even Thursday, then we start again the next day with fresh chicken. It's not that I don't like chicken – but enough is enough already."

So much for my conviction that I was disguising the leftover chicken by adding some fried vegetables, rice and a dash of soy sauce and calling it Chinese stir fry.

And we won't even discuss the vegetable soup and ratatouille I made last month after my husband returned home with what appeared to be the entire surplus stock of Israel's farming community. Had the combined armies of Israel and the United States turned up on our doorstep I could have satisfied their hunger pangs for a week – assuming of course they really like eggplant and squash.

But my husband had the last laugh. Some years ago he came back from a shopping expedition with two small saucepans. He was immediately set upon by his children who, while laughing hysterically, wanted to know whether he thought he was a newlywed and when on earth would we use such tiny cooking pots with such a large family.

Well they've come out of their boxes now and are in regular use. The only problem is, it takes an awful long time to cook 10 kilograms of carrots (on special offer) in these little pots.

