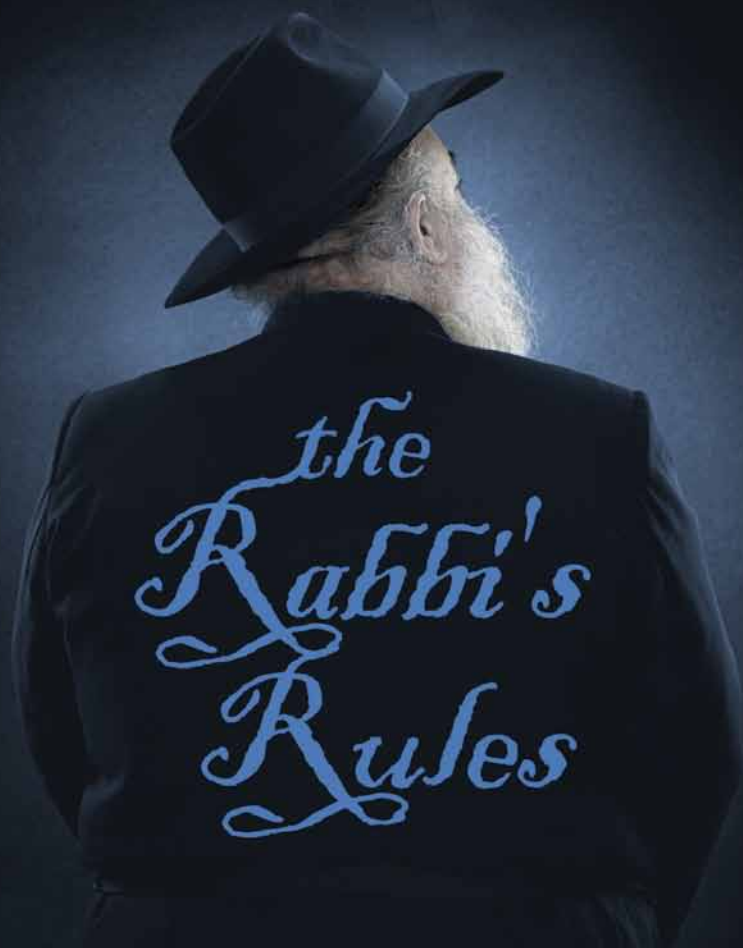


MARK HORTON & ERIC KOKISH



*Tips and tricks to improve
your bridge game*

*the
Rabbi's
Rules*

MARK HORTON & ERIC KOKISH

Master Point Press • Toronto, Canada

Text © 2013 Mark Horton and Eric Kokish
Cover image © Image Source

All rights reserved. It is illegal to reproduce any portion of this material, except by special arrangement with the publisher. Reproduction of this material without authorization, by any duplication process whatsoever, is a violation of copyright.

Master Point Press
331 Douglas Ave.
Toronto, Ontario, Canada
M5M 1H2 (416)781-0351
Email: info@masterpointpress.com
Websites: www.masterpointpress.com
www.teachbridge.com
www.bridgeblogging.com
www.ebooksbridge.com

Library and Archives Canada Cataloguing in Publication

Horton, Mark, author

The rabbi's rules : tips and tricks to improve your bridge game / Mark Horton and Eric Kokish.

Issued in print and electronic formats.

ISBN 978-1-77140-001-5 (pbk).-- ISBN 978-1-55494-247-3 (pdf).--

ISBN 978-1-55494-482-8 (epub).--ISBN 978-1-55494-733-1 (mobi)

1. Contract bridge--Bidding. I. Kokish, Eric, author II. Title.

GV1282.4.H674 2013

795.41'52

C2013-906414-1

C2013-906415-X

We acknowledge the financial support of the Government of Canada through the Canada Book Fund for our publishing activities.

Editor

Ray Lee

Copyeditor/Interior format

Sally Sparrow

Cover and interior design

Olena S. Sullivan/New Mediatrix

Contents

Foreword	7
Chapter 1 – Introducing the Rabbi	9
Chapter 2 – Notrump Play the Rabbi’s Way	23
Chapter 3 – The Rabbi Gets Suited	35
Chapter 4 – The Rabbi Goes Slamming	49
Chapter 5 – The Rabbi Defends the Bidding	89
Chapter 6 – The Rabbi Gets Constructive	103
Chapter 7 – The Rabbi’s Judgment	127
Chapter 8 – Who Framed Roger Rabbi?	139
Chapter 9 – The Rabbi Leads the Way	155
Chapter 10 – The Rabbi Gets Defensive	175
Chapter 11 – The Rabbi Shows His Strength	201
Chapter 12 – The Rabbi’s Rule	225
Glossary of Abbreviations	230
The Rabbi’s Rules	231



Rabbi Leonard Helman, 1926-2013

Foreword

In the spring of 1997 I received a phone call from Mario Dix asking me if I would be interested in playing in the Malta Bridge Festival with a visiting American, Leonard Helman. It was only later I discovered Leonard was a rabbi. Looking back on it I recall that when the event was over and he was leaving for the airport, I borrowed a line from *Casablanca*: ‘Rabbi, I think this is the beginning of a beautiful friendship.’ Over the following decade and a bit we played in some of the toughest events on the bridge calendar, crossing swords with many of the world’s finest players.

This book recounts our adventures at the table, and tells the story of a man who became hooked on bridge at an early age. A rabbi is a teacher, and as his interest in the game developed the Rabbi formulated a number of rules that were designed to help him to improve his level of play. The original Rabbi’s Rule relates to offside singleton kings — it is attributed to Milton Shattner, a New Yorker whose nickname was ‘the Rabbi’ — and it is the theme of the final chapter in this book. Rabbi Helman’s own twenty Rules form the backbone of this work, and I hope readers will find them instructive. Many of the illustrative deals feature the Rabbi himself (not always in a positive fashion!), while the rest involve other members of the Rabbi’s team in a given event.

Some of the bidding problems that the Rabbi and I encountered are common to many partnerships, and I have enlisted the help of the world's best (and best-known) bridge coach, Eric Kokish, who explains how to deal with them with his usual thoroughness and erudition. A glossary of abbreviations used in the Koach's Korner sections can be found on p. 230.

Leonard was enthusiastic about the book project, and followed its development with interest. Unfortunately he was never to see the final product, passing away peacefully at the age of 87 just a few months before publication. He wrote these words a year or so earlier:

I am a senior citizen and single. I have had Parkinson's Disease for eight years. And I must tell you that all the bridge players without exception have been helpful to me, as for example, taking out and putting back my cards in the tray. I have accumulated a little of earthly substances, but I cannot take my material gifts with me and I do believe in spiritual immortality. I have instructed my family to put a deck of cards in my coffin in case — who knows?

Mark Horton
Sutton Benger, England, June 2013

Chapter 1
Introducing the Rabbi

In August 1958, *The Bridge World* published an article written by one Leonard A. Helman:

ACROSS THE STREET

The Bible must have had me in mind when it said ‘Sin lieth at the door.’ In my case the door was the door to my office, and the sin was in the shape of the bridge club directly across the street. It was Thursday afternoon, the time for the weekly duplicate game. By some fluke or miracle I had nothing on my schedule, so I quietly slipped through the door and crossed the street.

In the club I looked around for a partner and soon discovered that Dr. R. was available. He is one of my steady and regular partners. By steady and regular I mean that we play regularly, and more or less steadily, about twice a year. We have such tempestuous and emotionally exhausting games that it takes both of us about six months to recuperate. And so Dr. R. and I sat down at our first table and wrestled with this deal. The good doctor was North.

Neither Vul.

<p>♠ A K 10 7 3 ♥ A 10 2 ♦ 10 3 2 ♣ J 9</p>	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 60px; height: 60px; margin: auto;"> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		<p>♠ J 9 6 ♥ 9 7 4 ♦ 8 7 5 4 ♣ 4 3 2</p>
	N										
W		E									
	S										
	<p>♠ Q 8 ♥ J 8 5 3 ♦ K 9 ♣ K Q 10 8 6</p>										

West	North	East	South
1♠	dbl	pass	pass
pass	3♦	pass	3♣
pass	4♥	all pass	3♥

Let it never be said we underbid in conservative, tradition-bound New England. We bid 'em!

However, back to the table. West laid down the king, ace and a small spade. I ruffed and led a low heart. West ducked and the king held. I returned to the ♦K for another trump lead; this time West put up the ace and persisted with a fourth round of spades. I discarded a diamond from the table, overruffed East's trump nine with the jack, led a club to dummy and cashed the ♥Q, drawing West's ten. Then I could claim. Naturally, we were the only ones in 4♥! (You see what can happen if you read *The Bridge World* and answer the problems!)

After this start we proceeded to get our usual big scores (-500, -800 etc.) until we hit another board that was more to our style. My South hand was:

♠ 7 4 ♥ 10 9 7 3 ♦ A K Q ♣ A Q 5 4

Both sides were vulnerable and my partner was the dealer. The bidding went:

West	North	East	South
	1♣	pass	1♥
pass	2♣	pass	3♦
pass	3♥	pass	4♥
all pass			

See? The same 4-3 trump suit. West led the ♠K, and this was the deal:

	♠ 10										
	♥ A K 4										
	♦ 10 6 5 3										
	♣ K J 10 9 2										
♠ K Q 9 6 3 2			♠ A J 8 5								
♥ Q 8 6			♥ J 5 2								
♦ 9 7 4			♦ J 8 2								
♣ 7			♣ 8 6 3								
	<table style="width: 100%; height: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;">N</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">W</td> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;">E</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;">S</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		
	N										
W		E									
	S										
	♠ 7 4										
	♥ 10 9 7 3										
	♦ A K Q										
	♣ A Q 5 4										

East overtook her partner's king with the ace and shifted to a low heart. West covered my nine; dummy won.

I led a diamond to my hand, ruffed my spade low in dummy, cashed the other top heart, led a club to the ace and then casually played another trump. Naturally, the two outstanding trumps fell together, and so I could claim the rest. No one else was in 4♥ – they were in 5♣ or some other silly contract.

Now, I have deliberately used two important words to describe what took place in this hand: 'naturally' and 'casually'. In all the analyses in *The Bridge World* (and I have read them all) about 4-3 trump suits, two important factors have been sadly neglected.

The first factor is: in the afternoon game in Hartford, where the opposition is not terribly strong, the suits always break just right – it is truly amazing and uncanny. But in the night games, when all the local masters play, the suits never break right.

The reasons are simple, once one discovers the truths just enunciated. If, in the afternoon game, you play for a 4-2 trump split and the suit actually lies 3-3, the dear ladies giggle at one another and ask why you played it as you did. They cannot understand that suits sometimes break badly.

At night, however, the masters cannot understand how anyone in his right mind would not play for a 4-2 trump break. Consequently, I always play for 3-3 splits in the afternoon and for 4-2 splits at night. This is known as the Helman Variation and it thoroughly explains the use of ‘naturally’ and ‘casually’.

Factor No. 2: in Hartford, in line with our modest bidding philosophy, we bid any four-card suit at any level. The worse the spots, the better we like the suit. Just deal us 5432 for a trump suit, and we are in our glory.

So, Mr. M. Miles of California, you, sir, have a lot to learn about safety plays! Remember: in the afternoon, 3-3; at night, 4-2. But perhaps, Mr. M., you do not have afternoon ladies’ games in California – or perhaps you don’t play in them. Which is it?

Getting back to you dear reader, this was the pay-off board:

Both Vul.	♠ A 9 8 3 ♥ J 9 8 6 ♦ Q 4 2 ♣ A J											
♠ 7 6 2 ♥ A 2 ♦ 9 8 ♣ K 8 7 5 4 2	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 60px; height: 60px; margin: auto;"> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ Q J 5 ♥ Q 5 4 ♦ K 10 7 6 5 3 ♣ 10	
	N											
W		E										
	S											
	♠ K 10 4 ♥ K 10 7 3 ♦ A J ♣ Q 9 6 3											

West	North	East	South
pass	1♠	pass	1♣
pass	3NT	all pass	1NT

Sound Advice and Cutting-edge Theory Too!

Built around real-life deals featuring the bridge-playing rabbi, Leonard Helman, this book contains a wealth of tips on bidding and play for the advancing player. Bridge journalist Mark Horton takes you to the table in some of the world's most prestigious bridge events, letting you share the successes and disasters of high-level competition.

But this is not just a book to read for great bridge stories, fascinating deals and sound general advice. Even experts will learn from some of the bidding ideas, selected by Eric Kokish from his encyclopedic coaching files. Addressing areas that are often the weak link in any bidding system, Kokish describes comprehensive methods for auctions after Inverted Minor Raises, 2♣ openings and 2NT openings as well as many other common situations.



MARK HORTON (UK), an internationally-known bridge player and journalist, is Editor of *BRIDGE* magazine in the UK. His most recent book was *Misplay these Hands with Me*.



ERIC KOKISH (Canada) has a World Championship silver medal as a player. He is the world's top professional bridge coach, and has worked with the national teams of a number of countries. He is perhaps best-known as coach to the multiple world champion Nickell team from the USA.

