

The Schmooze

Stories with a Yiddish Twist

NAUGHTY WORDS

“A gut vort” is Yiddish for “a good word.”

“A yidene mit an aeringle” means a tough cookie, or someone who has a sharp tongue. Don’t tangle with her.

“A braiteh daieh hoben” means “(to do all the) talking.”

“shmoozen/shmuessen” means “to talk idly.”

The Talmud says, “Judge a man not by the words of his mother, but from the comments of his neighbors.”

by
Marjorie Gottlieb Wolfe



Syosset, New York

Self-help guru, Karen Salmansohn, who earns \$200-an-hour as a life coach, said, “Please watch out for saying those naughty words in front of kids”:

I CAN’T. I DOUBT. IMPOSSIBLE.

GM warned employees not to use these words or phrases in their internal memos: “Deathtrap,” “Widowmaking,” “Rolling sarcophagus,” etc. Among the judgement words

employees were told to avoid: “Hindenburg,” “powder keg,” “Titanic,” “apocalyptic,” “You’re toast,” and “Kevorkianesque.” Less inflammatory words such as “safely,” “safety related,” “serious,” “failure,” and “defect” should also be avoided.

(Source: ‘Deathtrap’ on GM’s naughty words list” by Peter Valdes-Dapena, CNN Money)

Jimmy Kimmel (“Kimmel Asks Kids”) interviewed young children on Hollywood Boulevard and asked them what bad words they know. The #1 word was “stupid.” Also mentioned were “shut up,” “punk,” “poop,” “you’re ugly,” and many “butt” words. The word “retard (ed)” is a great word to add to the naughty list. It should be replaced with the r-word: respect! BTW, when a child speaks precociously, we say, “Does he have a piskeleh.”

Yiddish has many “naughty” words. Shown below are just some examples:

- . “pisher” - (literally, a “bed-wetter”). It can also be used to refer to someone who is inexperienced or unimportant.
Note: It’s often preceded by the word “little.”

- . “tochis”/“tush” - rear end of a person
“kish mir en Tuches” - (Kiss my backside—slang)

- . “dumkop” - stupid head

Dear Diary [letter]

Cousin David (28, single, dentist) phoned the florist to send flowers to a friend in South Carolina. The florist asked for his name.

“David Weinstein,” my cousin answered.

“And the person to whom the flowers are going?”

“Kate Anderson.”

Then came the “dumkop” operator’s reproving response: “She doesn’t sound Jewish.”

Jacqueline Haberfield

- . “shvartser” - a person with dark skin, literally “black person.” A derogatory term.
- . “shlock” - cheaply-made garments.
Sam was at home when the police burst in and arrested him. The evidence against him was clear:
eyewitnesses testified that he had robbed the Pitkin Avenue Dept. Store and made off with 29 dresses valued at \$13.99 each. After a search of his home, the cheap apparel/shlock garments was found.

“Sam,” said the judge, “do you admit you stole these dresses?”

There was no refuting the evidence. Sam hung his head and mumbled, “I admit.”

“Before I sentence you,” the Judge continued, “I would like you to explain something that has aroused my curiosity.”

“Nu?”

“Why did you take only the cheapest, \$13.99 dresses, when in the very next rack were hundreds of very fancy-schmancy expensive gowns and furcoats?”

“Please, your honor, don’t YOU start that!” begged Sam.

“My wife has been nagging me about it ever since I brought the shlock home!”

- . “alta kaka”/“altacockers” - refers to senior citizens in general; old man. Geoffrey Nunberg wrote that “Since the 1950s, the language has added “dinosaur,” “fossil,” “blue-hair,” “cotton-top” “gerry” and “trog”...And that’s not to mention British imports like “wrinkly,” “crinkly” and “crumbly,” which together sound like a law firm out of “Bleak House.” (Source: “Geezers, Gerries and Golden Ager,” The New York Times,” 3/28/2004)

Frank Cerabino, columnist for the Palm Beach Post, received a letter of complaint from Laura Cassel: “Here in Delray [FL], altacockers are everywhere. They come here to buy a condo on Atlantic Avenue and then complain that it is too loud since they go to bed at 9 p.m.” Cerabino told her to stop kvetching and treat altacockers like mischpokeh, and then things here won’t seem so fahrblunget.”

According to Michael Wex, there’s a drink named “alter kaker” and it consists of an ounce and a half of Old Granddad whiskey and half ounce of prune juice—on the rocks of course.

- . “alta trombenick” - old bum
- . “fakakta” - literally, “old shit.”
- . “farshtunkeneh” - stinking; smells bad
- . “dreckuisite” - unpleasant occurrences that come with a job; the opposite of a perquisite. (Bruce Evans, Mesa, AZ)

- . “einshlepper” - person who stands outside of business trying to get customers inside and shop. (Harold Goldstein)
- . “shlepper” - (noun) a quite unflattering term which means someone who just drags along without ever achieving anything. When used about a woman, it conjures up a total picture of someone whose slip is showing, whose hair is bedraggled and whose nose is running. (Harry D. Spalding)

“shtup” - to have sex with

“vemen barestu?” [vulgar]- Who are you kidding?
(lit.) “Who are you screwing?”

“arumloifer” - street urchin; person who runs around.

“shmegegge” - a jerk

Example: An individual who describes herself as follows:
SWF, 40, SEEKS A RELATIONSHIP. I DON'T SKI, HIKE,
SURF, PLAY TENNIS, EAT HEALTH FOOD, LISTEN TO
POETRY, TAKE LONG WALKS ON THE BEACH,
WATCH THE SUNRISE, OR WALK IN THE RAIN. I'M
JEWISH, WHAT CAN I SAY.

(Hedy Alvarez, Dallas, TX)

“zshlub” - lazy slob. He shows up with schmutz on his
face and an untucked shirt. To Archie Bunker,

“meathead”

looks like a zshlub when he met him, although he never
said it. (Marnie Winston-Macauley, “The Yiddish
Dictionary”)

“schlump” - unkempt, sloppy.

“kockamayme” - crazy idea

Ex. “Afghanistan, for vacation? You and your kockamayme ideas. I’m headed for Martha’s Vin-Yid!”

Ex. A new TV sitcom, “Mad About Jews,” starring Jerry Seinfeld and Paul Reiser, who share an apartment: one is compulsively neat—the other one is, too. (suggested by Altman & Huvane, NYC)

“beheyme” - cow; animal; ignorant drudge; a dull-witted human being.

“ungerissen beheiman” - totally stupid person; not wild, just dumb. Ex. someone who doesn’t know the difference between a “high five” and a “fist bump.”

“putz” - If you don’t know what this word means, you might find more to interest you in The Christian Science Monitor.

OK, it is a vulgar slang for “penis.” Leo Rosten says, “putz is not to be used lightly, or when women or children are around. It’s more offensive than “shmuck.”

Les Nuremberg (“A Letter from Toronto”) wrote: Here’s a news item: A local female politician in the Toronto suburb of Mississauga got up one day in a city hall meeting and made some unflattering remarks about that town’s octogenarian (also female) mayor. When asked by the press to elaborate, she answered: “I was only ‘putzing

around.’ A local columnist challenged her on the word “putz.” Obviously she had no idea of what the word meant.

“bondit” - menace; rascal; pain-in-the-neck.

“chaleria” - nasty; shrewish woman.

“chazer” - a pig; a selfish person. One who eats like a pig.

“bumiker” - a tramp. Marjorie Wolfe’s mother would call a girl who smoked cigarettes, a “bumiker.” Other mothers praised their daughters for NOT hanging out on the stoop with boys like other bummerkeh girls.

“faigeleh” -bird. Also used as a derogatory reference to a gay person.

“farbisener” = embittered person. It’s a word so good it made it into the Austin Powers films.

“shmulky” - a sad sack.

“kochleffl” - pot stirrer; meddler.

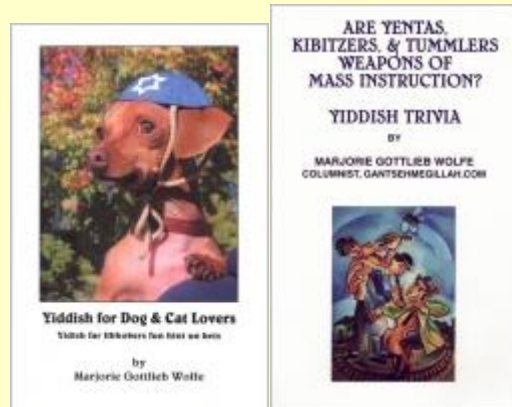
“kalekeh” - a new bride who cannot even boil an egg.

MARJORIE GOTTLIEB WOLFE agrees with B. R. Myers: “People who cannot distinguish between good and bad language, or who regard the distinction as unimportant, are unlikely to think carefully about anything else.”

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Marjorie Gottlieb Wolfe is the author of two books:



"Yiddish for Dog & Cat Lovers" and "Are Yentas, Kibitzers, & Tumblers Weapons of Mass Instruction? Yiddish Trivia." To order a copy, go to her website: MarjorieGottliebWolfe.com

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