

The Schmooze Stories with a Yiddish Twist

DRIVING THE “OYTOMOBILE”* IS MAKING NEWS

*The Yiddish word for “automobile” is “oytomobile.”
“veg shturem” is the Yiddish word for “road rage.”

by
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Syosset, New York

E. B. White said, “Everything in life is somewhere else, and you get there in a car.”

“Der oytomobile” is making news this month. Car dealers are offering SPOOKTACULAR savings. Jay Leno has a new car-centric TV show: “Jay Leno’s Garage” (“garazh”). Leno says his show is “mostly about interesting people and their relationship with automobiles, be it a love story or one about the first female drag racer.”

The series will look at the past (“farbay”) and future (“tsukunfft”) of automobiles and showcase Leno’s famed and extensive car collection (“zamlung”).

Another headline:

VW HIRES ANTI-CORRUPTION EXEC AS IT DEALS WITH
SCANDAL [over cheating on U. S. diesel emissions tests]

And,

ORTHODOX JEWISH MOTHERS FACE BAN FROM DRIVING
THEIR CHILDREN TO JEWISH SCHOOLS IN STAMFORD HILL -
LONDON.

(London Evening Standard)

Yes, the London Evening Standard and the Jewish Chronicle reported that an ultra-Orthodox Jewish group in North London has banned women from driving the children (“kinder”) to school. A group of teachers and rabbis sent out a letter (“briv”) saying women driving goes against “the traditional rules of modesty (“basheynekahyt”) in our camp. Children driven to school by their mothers will be sent home (“heyim”).

Belz, a large sect of Hasidic Judaism, is located in the Stamford Hill neighborhood (“shkheyneshaft”) in London. The letter was spurred by an increasing number of women driving their children, which in turn led to “great resentment among parents of pupils of our institutions.” (Note: The Yiddish words meaning “to resent” are “hobn faribl.”)

A Belz women’s group supported the policy on the grounds that it exposes Hasidic women to immoral behavior like road rage. Two directors from the Women of Belz community said: “We happen to believe that driving is a high-pressured activity where our values may be compromised by exposure to selfishness, road-rage, bad language and other inappropriate behavior.”

Rabbi Yair Hoffman said, “If a mother has no other choice but to drive her child to school--for medical reasons, for example--she should “submit a request to this effect and the committee shall consider her request.”

In 2013, Rav Amnon Yitzchak, a prominent rabbi in Tel Aviv, said, “It’s been immodest for hundreds of years, claiming that women never drove wagons and, thus, shouldn’t drive cars.”

Orthodox women in upstate New York have also been forbidden (“awser”) to drive. For those living in Kiryas Joel being banned from the wheel mean being tied to your husband (“man”) and to your community.

Some have said that this measure is absolutely unheard of in Judaism, having no basis whatsoever in any Jewish text. The idea that it is immodest for a woman to drive is completely alien to Judaism, and is more characteristic of Saudi Arabia than London.

According to Dina Brawer, “The notion that drivers, as opposed to pedestrians, are any more susceptible to losing their temper, behaving selfishly or using bad language is absurd...isn’t the whole point of one’s religion to equip us with the skills and values to navigate life’s moral pitfalls?” (Source: “Real Orthodox Jewish men don’t ban women from driving,” by Dina Brawer, The Telegraph, 5/29/15)

Dina Brawer's final paragraph says it all: "The women of Belz are entitled to their opinion, but I think they ought to have more confidence that a Judaism that has survived close to 3000 years is strong enough to survive women drivers."

Rabbi Yair Hoffman, for the Five Towns Jewish Times, wrote a piece titled, "Forbidding Women Drivers: A Halachic Analysis. He writes:

"Another issue that must surely be taken into account is that when we forbid women to drive and they have a necessity to get to where they must go (doctor's appointments, grocery shopping, schools, and numerous other things), what ends up happening is that they need to take taxis. This creates an exposure that can, in our generation, be much worse.... We must be ever careful in creating a situation where we are forcing our women to be at the mercy of men. Logically, it is far safer for a woman to be able to travel by herself than to have to be dependent upon men, strangers or no strangers, for rides."

"The new rule [of women not driving] seems to be making things more difficult for both men and women of that community. There is no question, of course, that Tznius is a very important aspect of our Avodas Hashem.

Note: "Avodas Hashem" means "service to God."

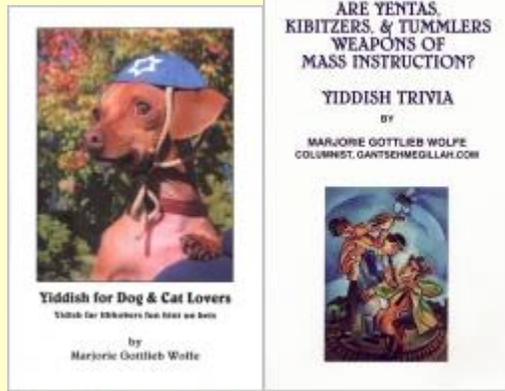
However, all of the above factors must be taken into account, especially when it is highly likely that the 'cure' may create an even greater breach of Tznius."

MARJORIE WOLFE has had a driver's license ("firlitsents") since 1955. She adheres to The Transportation Theorem: If your car has room for "n" kids, your child will want you to drive "n + 1" to the movies. (Bruce Lansky, "Mother Murphy's Law and other perils of parenthood")

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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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