

The Schmooze

Stories with a Yiddish Twist

GENDER-SEGREGATED SWIMMING HOURS

“The Yiddish word meaning “to swim” is “shvimen.”
“shvim baseyn” means “swimming pool.”

by
Marjorie Gottlieb Wolfe



Syosset, New York

True or False?

- Orthodox women have to be careful about how much flesh (“layb”) they expose when swimming.
- Hasidic women are prohibited from bathing in front of people of the opposite sex. They require a gym/public pool that offers separate hours for women.
- Some JCCs have “women only” swim times.
- Female lifeguards are required at swimming pools where Hasidic women swim.
- Orthodox Jewish beliefs demand modesty (“basheydnkayt”) in dress, and a strict separation of the sexes.
- Aqua Modesta sells modest swimwear for ladies and girls. For example, one can purchase a 4-piece swim set, sizes xx-small through xx-large with a capri sewn into the waistline, a sports bra that is worn underneath the three quarter sleeve zippered top. The online price: \$150.

- Many women who have had a mastectomy don't feel comfortable being seen by men in a swimming pool.
- The clash of religious Jewish law and the New York City law have caused a controversy ("sikhseh") over a public swimming pool in Brooklyn.

All of the answers are True!

Latest.com (June 3, 2016) carried an article titled, "Orthodox Jews Get New York To Ban Men From Public Swimming Pool." The piece states that "Four times a week this summer - Mondays, Wednesdays and Friday mornings and Sunday afternoons--a public swimming pool in Brooklyn will be detached ("ditatsh") from the 21st Century and the Constitution."

Sex-segregated hours have been the rule at the Metropolitan Recreation Center, 261 Bedford Avenue, Brooklyn, since "sometime during the '90s." The policy was instituted at the request ("bakoshe") of Orthodox women WITHOUT any legislative discussion ("diskusye"). The City of New York said to hell with law and just let it happen ("lozn es forkumen").

But a recent anonymous complaint ("tayne") caused the city's Commission on Human Rights to notify the Parks Department that the policy violated ("veyaleytid") the law. A new pool schedule was issued with the women's hours removed. That alarmed female swimmers and local assemblyman, Dov Hikind, got involved.

Hikind made a demand ("fodern") that the change be UNCHANGED in the name of the Jewish God. It was. FOR NOW, the women's hours at taxpayer owned-and-operated Metropolitan Recreation Center remain.

MARJORIE WOLFE agrees with Libba Bray ("The Sweet Far Thing"): "And that is how change happens. One gesture. One person. One moment in time."

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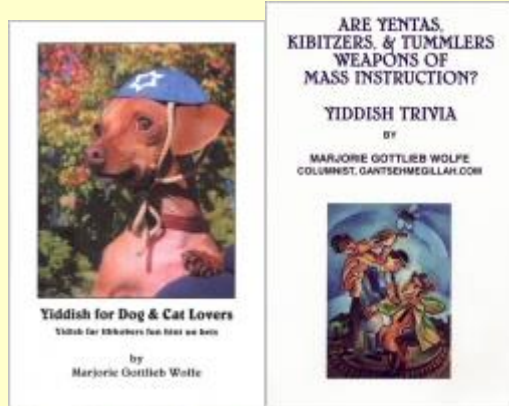
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Marjorie Gottlieb Wolfe is the author of two books:



"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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