

## Shalom Bayis Newsletter - Issue 2

### Is your spouse speaking a different language?

"I generally try to to keep my lips sealed when there are things that bother me," a young married fellow once shared with me, "but there is one thing that just really annoys me..."

What was that?

"When my wife asks me about something and I tell her my honest opinion and then she gets upset, I cannot stand it. As far as I am concerned, if you don't want to hear what I think about something, fine. Your prerogative. But if you're going to ask me my opinion, then I am going to tell you exactly what is on my mind. It's just so frustrating..."

Now, on the topic of being open and honest with your spouse, there's a lot to be said. If there is something that is bothering you, if you are able to truly let it go and move on with a completely clean and light heart, that's great. You may even be eligible for the "Rav Aryeh Levin Award".

But, in many cases, that is just not the reality. Spouses often carry around grumblings about this that or the other for months, or even years, perhaps because they are too fearful of conflict or maybe because they think that it is not permissible to "rock the boat". Maybe they think that the demand of "keeping the peace" obviates their being able to voice a complaint about something.

If that is actually a form of keeping the peace or not is highly debatable, to say the least, but that's a talk for a different time. Right now, I'd like to stay focused on the communication blunder part of this little snippet. Meaning, the confusion and frustration that one spouse may experience when the other spouse seems to say one thing and mean another.

Of course, most of us know, or at least have heard about the Chazal that says, "Women are a nation unto themselves", but it is possible that not all of

us have made a point to ponder that, by definition, that means that "men are a nation unto themselves" as well.

Here's a great example. "Baruch," Penina asks, "what do you think about going to my parents for Shabbos?" The question was posed on a Monday. Baruch's response? "Hmmm... not sure."

Penina is crestfallen. This is the umpteenth time that Baruch has responded like that. "Does he have something against my parents? Does he dislike my siblings?"

Now, to be sure, that *is* a possibility. Baruch may in fact not get along well with his in-laws. And if that's the case, then it needs to be dealt with. But, again, that is for a different time. What I want to focus on right now, though, is the fact that, a much more likely explanation of Baruch's response is that it is Monday and he simply cannot be bothered to think about Shabbos!

And why wouldn't Penina assume the most likely explanation? Simple. Because she is understanding Baruch's words through the prism of woman-speak. Of course, these are generalizations, and there can always be exceptions; but it would seem that for most women, things like sentence segments, coy cues, and half hints are a primary vehicle for "mass messaging".

Put otherwise, Penina understanding her husband's "hmm... not sure" in woman-speak could lead her to read into it much more than is actually there!

And, often, it's the reverse when a man is trying to understand what his wife means. Imagine the scenario, Baruch comes home and Penina tells him, "My boss got upset because the project that I am in charge of is running behind schedule. I don't know what to do!" In his male hear-compute-fix mode, Baruch says, "Well, you need to itemize each stage of the project. Set clear goals. Check up on team members' progress..."

All Baruch heard was, "How do I fix this problem?"

But there was much more there. In fact, in all likelihood, there was something **completely different** there. As in, "I wasn't asking you to fix my

problem. I just want you to share, care, and encourage."

So, yes, it's like the quote from Winston Churchill about the UK and the USA, "Two nations **separated** by a common language."

Now, the AI geeks of the world are working on coming up with instant translation machines. A Japanese person and a Mexican might one day soon be able to talk to each other, each one in their native language, and be able to communicate. Who knows? Maybe they'll make a setting for translating man-speak and woman-speak so that couples can have an easier time of communicating with one another.

But in the meantime (and forever - in case you didn't realize, the above was a joke :), it's a good idea to try to turn on your brain's internal translator. As in, "Ok, he said 'hmmm... not sure'. What does that mean in man-speak...? And, "Ok, she said, 'I don't know what to do!'. What does that mean in woman-speak...?"

It's not just an investment in your shalom bayis, it's a personal investment too. After all, they say learning a new language is good for your brain health... :)

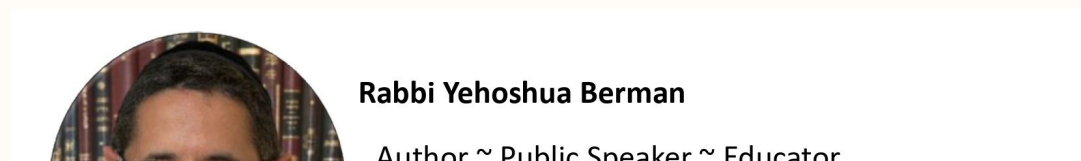
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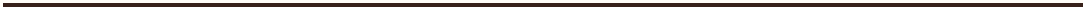
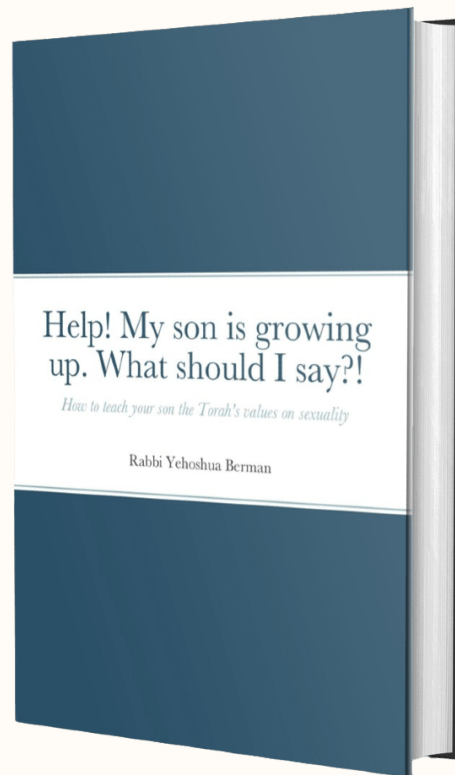
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