

Shalom Bayis Newsletter - Issue 4

Bounce Off the Lake

Seriously, he actually bounced off a lake. In the 1990's, Mike DeGruy was filming along the ocean floor for the BBC Blue Planet project when he suddenly noticed something in the distance that caught his eye. At first, it looked like a black band. Then, as he brought his submarine closer, it began to appear like the shape of a doughnut. Finally, he got his submarine right above it and DeGruy could see that it was a lake surrounded by a ring of clam-like creatures with sea snakes swimming right in the vicinity.

DeGruy was astounded. Nowadays, the phenomenon of lakes, waterfalls, and rivers under the ocean is well documented, but back in the 90's DeGruy was one of the first people to ever actually see such a thing. He thought to himself, "Wait a minute! I'm already under water; what's going on over here?!"

Now, what would any ocean explorer worth his salt do in such a situation? Dive straight into it of course! Well, DeGruy and his crew tried to do just that, but the ocean-bed lake rejected them. Their submarine literally **bounced** off the lake and sent ripples vibrating across its surface. It was such a dense brine that it was like trying to submerge into a lake of Jell-O!

At this point, you may be thinking, "Well, that's awfully fascinating, but what on blue-green earth does it have to do with *shalom bayis*?!" Actually, nothing. I just thought it would be nice to spice up this weekly newsletter with something different for a change.

Just kidding.

Actually, I think that DeGruy's bouncing-off-the-lake escapade is an excellent *mashal* for a major fundamental regarding relationships in general, and marriage in particular.

V'ha'Adam yada es Chava ishto (Breishis 4:1). The fact that the Torah describes the act of marital intimacy as "knowing" indicates that the bedrock

of a close relationship is emotional intimacy. Indeed, the more you know about someone, the closer you are with them. And the closer that you are with someone, the more about them you are going to know. Opening up areas of vulnerability, in particular, is a hallmark of a strong, close relationship.

The desire for true bonding, coupled with our cutely curious nature, makes it only natural to want to “dive in” whenever we discover another intriguing patch of persona that has been hitherto unexplored.

But, as most rules go, the rule of openness and sharing can have its exceptions. You may discover, every now and then, that when you attempt to “submerge your submarine of exploration into that fascinating lake” that it rejects you and you bounce right off of it.

And that bounce needs to be respected.

Even a husband and wife who share the closest bond that there is, are still each entitled to their individual privacy.

And lest you throw at me, “But *Chazal* say that marriage is a reality of *ishto k’gufo* and the *Zohar* says that husband and wife are one unified entity!”, please consider this.

In *Sefer Micha* (7:5) there is a *pasuk* that says *mi’shocheves cheikecha shemor pischei picha*, guard the openings of your mouth from the one who lies in your closeness. In *Hilchos Lashon Hara* (8:10) the *Chafetz Chaim* states unequivocally that, essentially, it is just as prohibited to tell *lashon hara* to your spouse as it is to anyone else. Just like when it comes to anyone else, there has to be a specific *toeles* justification to tell them *lashon hara*, so too when it comes to telling *lashon hara* to one’s spouse.

In fact, the *Chafetz Chaim* emphasizes there that people who tell their spouses about things like fights that they got into with co-workers or fellow shul-goers are likely going to cause themselves a lot of grief, because it could cause a major conflagration to break out between the two families.

Now, it is true that modern-day *Poskim* discuss that, under certain circumstances, it may be permissible to share things of that nature with

one's spouse for the *toeles* of getting it off of one's chest. The need for emotional support from one's nearest and dearest is a strong consideration when weighing whether or not there may be a *toeles* justification for sharing the negative report. But what is nevertheless crystal clear is that we **don't** say that since anyway a husband and wife are one unit, *ishto k'gufo*, that anything known by one is automatically to be shared with the other. That is just not true.

And it is clear that the same thing applies to secrets. If someone trusted you with their confidence, there is absolutely no *heter* to share that information with one's spouse (unless absolutely necessary as in any other case of *lashon hara*).

Yes, it is true that a husband and wife comprise a unified marriage entity of we instead of just he and she, but that does not negate the reality that each individual maintains a certain individual identity that comes along with a whole list of rights, privileges, responsibilities, and limitations.

The *Gemara* in *Maseches Shabbos* (53b) even mentions that there was once a couple, one of whom had a significant handicap, and, throughout their many years together, the handicap was **never** disclosed to the other spouse. Of course, that is quite extreme and the *Gemara* makes it clear that that couple was unique in that regard, but the point is clear nonetheless: if you try to "dive in" to an intriguing "lake on the ocean floor" and entry is just not allowed, more often than not it's a very good idea to just roll with the bounce.

That way, instead of a hard bounce, it will be a soft bounce.

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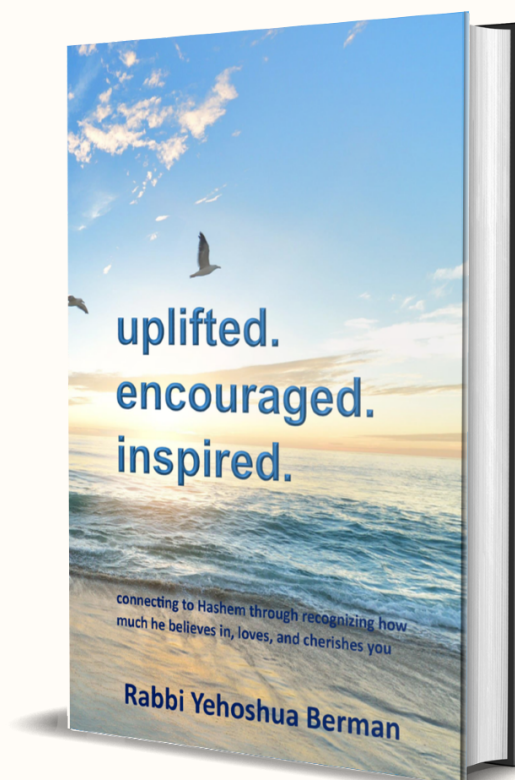
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