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**Episode name:** Giving compliments in Hebrew

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### **Episode transcript**

Esther:

Welcome to our first episode in English today. Alicia and I are going to talk about compliments, how to give and receive compliments in Hebrew. I know that most people think that in Hebrew there are no ways to be polite. Israel is a very polite, just in a very different way. Hope you find this interesting. When complimented in Hebrew, the important bit is to think of what it is that you're complementing about and who it is that you complementing to. For example, if you are encountering someone who just purchased a new home. In a secular Ashkenazi urban community, it is a very accepted, very much accepted to say this is beautiful. I love what you did with the space show me around. To ask about the furniture, to say something about the the paint on the walls. If there's a specific shade. If you feel confident enough, if you're close enough, people can ask each other about how much it costs when someone asks you something about how much you paid. I am. You can make a mental note when you're in need of something. They're not asking. Just out of curiosity, you just purchase something you're no longer in the market for buying something they still are on the market. A few months from now, you'll be looking for a new printer and they just bought a new printer and you can ask what did you get it? How much did it cost? How do I know whom I? So the important bit is when someone asks you, you first of all do not get insulted and second of all, remember that this person asked you next time you are, you can feel confident asking them for something similar. If these are people who are in the same financial range as you and in the same age group, you could feel confident asking them. Yeah, I wouldn't ask someone who's much older than me or much younger than me, or is making way more money than I do. Their answer will not be relevant for me, but when it comes to child mine, there's or nannies or buying a used car or a piece of furniture or. Rent or tutorials, books, whatever clothes.

Alicia:

And is it like because you you said like, well, if you go to a house in Tel Aviv, this might be the set of conversations you might be having and the set? Of questions but. If you go to another home, might it be?

Esther:

I I wouldn't. Say this is necessarily the same in other places in in secular urban society, this would be an acceptable question. I wouldn't necessarily say the same for other communities. Periphery people might think that you are criticising how cheap the house is, maybe because they live away from the city. Settlers might think that you are talking about hinting to the government subsidies that they're getting. Things like that. In general, Safardi Jews they compliment less. They might fear evil eye which

will have an episode about later on. So I wouldn't. Go on and on. I would say what a lovely home. You have, but I won't go further than that.

Alicia:

And when I say you have a lovely home then. I have to say, B'li Ayn Hara

Esther:

Yeah. To make it clear that your your compliment is sincere and not out of ho I wish it was my place. Yeah say oh, we were just thinking of buying a rug. Where did you get this rug? It's beautiful. Would be acceptable if someone would say oh, come and see our new BBQ. Clearly they're very proud of it. And then you can. Say, oh, this is this is great.

Alicia:

Yes.

Esther:

Whatever it is that they're showing you. But then you have to make it clear that you're happy for them. Rather than just complementing. OK, I'm so happy for you. This is this is great. The kids must love it. How lucky your wife is that you're barbecuing and then she would say ohh I do have the work. She's just enough enough. You know, it's tough enough. Enough enough is when you are, when you're fanning over the over the meat to to make some air, to make the coals hotter. Nuff, nuff. So she could say he's only men of Neff, which would be the verb. You know, they'll be a little bit of a banter, but the point of the conversation is to show how sincerely happy you are for them, for having something new, and they might mention how much it costs.

Alicia:

Great bargain. And then is it better if? If you give high price or low price.

Esther:

That is extremely tricky because they might think you're you're a file if you pay too much. It depends on the Company you're with. If it's company. This affluent or not, if there are people who are trying to flaunt their money to give a higher price, is acceptable. If these are people who do not have that much, they might. Freak out of how much you spent on something that clearly you could have had for much cheaper.

Alicia:

Yeah.

Esther:

So this is about complementing when entering a new home, I would do less of it in a safari company. I would do more of it in an asking as a secular company. It is acceptable to compliment on the home making in the sense of Liliana, your children are so well behaved. What a lovely family you have. God protects you. Amen. In Hebrew, I would say bli Nedarim and a religious family would say. The may your home will always be full. And what do you answer? Let's say someone.

Alicia:

Comes to your home and tells you about your children over the house about what? You.

Esther:

And I would say first of all, a man, then I would. Soda. With a religious person, because first of all, he gave me a blessing. So the answer to a blessing is Amen. Not thank you. But then I say thank you, because this blessing is a compliment. And if they have children, I would say something about. It takes one to know one kind of you know. How they say that without sounding cheesy, that's the question. I would say I'm really glad they're friends with your children. Your children are wonderful company. Yes. So to complement the education of the children, to complement what a what, a home. It is not just the House is more acceptable in in safari and and traditionalist society. Even that there are nuances.

Esther:

Here's a great story my great uncle married in Ashkenazi woman and they bought a new house and she furnished it and invited the whole family to come and have dinner with them. And nobody said a word about the house. She was livid. It's like they they said nothing. You know, I spent months and months decorating the place. Nobody said a word. And I said to her, so when you go to their homes and complement their homes, what do they do? And she says they freak out. I go to the house. She bought a new living room. I said, what a beautiful living room. This is lovely. And she would say, oh, this is nothing. Come to the kitchen as if she doesn't want me to see her living room. I said, yeah, because certain safaradi Communities, you do not complement, you do not make people flaunt their money. They choose when and how to flaunt their money. It's not something that a guest would do. Same thing goes with opening a present. If you come into a house and you bring in something that is for example edible or a game for the children that you thought that the children might play while waiting for the dinner or something and the host doesn't open it and say thank you and goes on and on, do not get offended. It's not rudeness, it's different societies. They in Israel do things differently. Some people will automatically. You know, if you bring a pudding, they'll live their pudding in the refrigerator and serve your pudding. In other families they will put your pudding away, serve you their pudding and the next guest that will come will receive your pudding. But why then you like never? You don't get to see their face they like it. Then they.

Alicia:

Like. It is it because of that so that you don't see if they don't like it. I don't think it's so ingrained in certain diasporic societies that it's not something that they think of. It's just the way things are done. So this is what you do when you enter a home at the end. It's always polite to say thank you very, very much. You compliment the the hostess during the meal for the lovely food. If you are in a house that does kiddush and you feel comfortable when it's time and I don't know about Ashkenazi, but in Safaradi home, part of the blessing at the end. There's a bit of the guest if you're comfortable with that, you read that bit. As part of the Bircat Mazon for the guest to bless the home. He was a guest at.

Esther:

Thank you to all the interviewees and participants in today's episode on behalf of Alicia and I, you're very welcome to ask any question or give us any feedback on the website of Hebrew and Jewish Studies in Oxford University. Thank you for listening. Bye, bye.

