

THE PURITY OF A NATION

THE LAWS OF FAMILY PURITY



RABBI GABRIEL COHEN



WEST COAST RABBINICAL COURT

It is with thanks to the Almighty that I bring this book to press. It is the fruit of a long study in research and compilation of the laws that make up one of the three pillars of our religion: *Shabbat*, *Kashrut* and Family Purity.

This booklet is part of a series that our Bet Din, the WCRC, has undertaken to publish in order to be instrumental in educating our communities in maintaining their family lives in holiness and purity.

This is a practical study guide for all Jewish women with emphasis on Sephardic customs.

For nearly two millennia the Sephardic Jews have lived, flourished and branched out into different cultures and traditions. We had our great sages and luminaries in each generation, who taught us the *Torah's* way of life, the love for Torah laws, customs, and melodies, elevating us to unparalleled spiritual heights.

When we were dispersed again on our "third Exile" to all corners of the earth, in each new land, whether we came from Europe, the Middle East or Africa, we regrouped and established new communities. This forced us to strengthen ourselves once more and revitalize our customs and our link to the older generations and former glory.

This Halachic work was written following Sephardic tradition to its fullest detail according to most Rabbinical authorities of our times, and namely to R' Yitzchak Abadi, Sh'lita. If you have any questions or comments, please send them to our Bet Din address.

On a personal level, I would like to express my gratitude and appreciation to all my Rabbis and teachers: to the Yeshiva of Beth Medrash Govoha, Lakewood, NJ, and especially to the Rosh Hayeshiva, Harav Hagaon Rabbi Shneur Kotler Z"TL, who has prepared me to devote my life to Torah.

Many thanks go as well to Harav Harashi, Rabbi Mordechai Eliyahu Sh'lita for promoting and coaching the development of our work, and to Rabbi Yitzchak Abadi, Sh'lita, one of the greatest Poskim in our generation, for his continued learning with me for almost three decades. I would like to thank my friends and colleagues whom I learn and work with daily. I also would like to thank my friend and his wife, Rabbi and Mrs. A.B for proofreading this work. May the Almighty bless them, their families and all their followers with long life, good health and happiness.

Preface

Of all of *Hashem's* creations, Man is the most awesome one. He was created with an intricate body and a soul. While the understandings of the mechanics of the soul are to a large extent beyond human knowledge, the body however has been the subject of centuries of intensive study, research and experiment.

The more we delve into the miracle of human life, the more we are filled with admiration and reverence for our Creator.

It is a marvel that the human body goes about its daily functions with the precision of the most sophisticated clock, maintaining at all times such vital signs as its temperature, blood pressure, and all its systems in optimum condition. The life functions of breathing, eating, digesting and reproducing are programmed to perfection, running on an infinite battery.

This book, dealing with the feminine cycle and its implications in the life of the Jewish couple, is an excerpt of laws that have been known to us ever since the revelation at *Sinai*. Already then our sages were able to predict and calculate this cycle with amazing precision, thanks to the knowledge they derived from our *Torah*.

Our commandments serve to maintain the identity of the Jewish people, keeping them apart from the gentiles.” I am G-d your Lord, who has set you apart from the nations. (Leviticus 20:24)

When following these *Halachot* we are acting in the most beneficial way for our bodies and our souls, in this world and in the next. However, in His bounty, *Hashem* is promising us reward for doing so: “G-d commanded us to follow all these rules... that He may grant us good...” (Deuteronomy 6:24)

Yet the commandments should be kept because *Hashem* gave them to us and not because logic demands it.

PURITY OF A NATION

This booklet, 'Purity of a Nation' has been in the making for many years. This work was tailored and based on questions asked throughout the years advising the many families that called upon us. The Halachot stated have been thoroughly checked and much Responsa to many practical questions were incorporated

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As we begin the twenty first century, we are living during an era unprecedented in scientific advance. Unfortunately, other areas of our life have not fared so well. The family institution in particular is receiving heavy blows and it is slowly crumbling. With permissiveness being the norm, the senses of responsibility, commitment and dedication that once went once into a marriage are becoming a thing of the past. Much is heard about independent goals, sense of self, assertiveness, lack of communication and other modern day ailments that are causing havoc in the home.

"*Am Yisrael*" owns a "Book of Life", the *Torah*, where we can find guidelines for all aspects of our life. Generation after generation, the Jewish home has survived the attacks of the secular world, thanks to one powerful tool: Its adherence to the laws of family purity, as prescribed in our holy *Torah*. These laws have been handed down, from mother to daughter, from *Rebbi* to *Talmid*. They have been quietly and carefully studied and observed. Regardless of their lifestyle or outward appearance, scores of *Benot Yisrael* have been privately keeping these most important *Halachot*.

"*Ma Tovv Ohalecha, Yaakov, Mishkenotecha, Yisrael!*". How good are your tents *Yaakov*, your sanctuaries, *Israel!*".

The *Halachot* of Family Purity are very powerful and the rewards of keeping them are well worth the discipline imposed. *Hashem* in His Infinite Wisdom has provided us with the "Use and Care" book that should come together with every Jewish couple entering the awesome covenant of marriage.

With this Infinite Wisdom, the Jewish couple has known for centuries the most appropriate times for conception, the optimum times for a happy and healthy relationship, avoiding the days when the body is weak or the mind preoccupied. Observing these laws is the secret that keeps a Jewish marriage as special as the first day, forever.

This cycle is at the base of human reproduction and is a miracle of miracles that it occurs while a woman is in her youth, when she has the strength and patience to build a family. Facts that have been but recently discovered, have been common knowledge, for the Jewish Nation since the revelation at Sinai.

With time, many wives tales and superstitions have mingled with these laws. These deviations make their proper observance difficult. It is important to learn them accurately to keep from unnecessary stringencies.

However rewarding the observance of *Taharat Hamishpachah* Laws may be, we should keep in mind that this is not just a recommended mode of life but a Divine Commandment that brings heavy retribution when it is not kept. They are obligatory and we are accountable for them.

On the other hand, the blessings in our home, the harmony, respect and consideration, the monthly renewal of a relationship that emanate from a life of *Kedusha*, the quality in the *Neshamot* in our children, are some of the many priceless rewards in this world and the next that result from the adherence to this mode of life.

I pray that with *Hashem's* help this book will be instrumental in the observance and clarification of these *Halachot*. May *Hashem* instill in us the desire to observe them and the fortitude to keep them so that our nation preserve its title of *Mamlechet Kohanim Vegoy Kadosh*.

Taharat Hamishpacha is the purity of the family, the purity of a Nation.

CHAPTER I

A woman who perceives a drop of blood is called a *niddah* and must count seven days of cleanliness.

What is a *Niddah*?

A woman young or old, single or married, even one who is pregnant or nursing, who sees even the slightest drop of blood, or perceives it and is aware of it although it doesn't actually come out of her body (see *Halachot* on Physical Symptoms connected with a Period), or finds a *Ketem*, stain (see *Halachot* of *Ketamim*), whether during her menstrual period or at any other time, whether it occurs accidentally, by jumping or by another activity that would cause her to release blood, becomes a *Niddah*: in a state of menstrual uncleanness. If a man cohabits with a *Niddah*, they are both liable to premature death: *Karet*. Anyone who embraces or kisses her is punishable with lashes: *Malkot*.

Keeping Seven Days of Cleanliness

A woman who is menstrually unclean must determine the conclusion of her menstrual flow through an examination called *Hefsek Tahara*: Conclusion in Purity. She must then count seven days of cleanliness and immerse herself in a kosher ritual bath: the *Mikveh*. Only then does she become permissible to her husband. Whether she counts the seven days or does not count them, if she does not immerse herself in a *Mikveh*, she remains ritually unclean, even though she may have taken many baths for sanitary purposes and even if all the waters of the world were to be poured on her. Similarly, older women, who have ceased to menstruate, or women who have not kept family purity and wish to do so from this time and on, must conclude in purity count seven days and then immerse themselves in a *Mikveh*. Otherwise, their forbidden state of *Niddah* remains, with all the pertaining restrictions of cohabitation and separations, which we will discuss in upcoming paragraphs.

CHAPTER II

Laws of Examination before the Donning of White during the Seven Clean Days

Conclusion in Purity (*Hefsek Tahara*)

A woman who has perceived blood, a regular period, or found a stain, *Ketem*, must perform a "conclusion in purity", *Hefsek Tahara*, to establish the cessation of her period. She must then keep seven days of cleanliness. (For a study on *Ketamim*, please refer to Chapter 8).

According to the custom of most Sephardim, these seven days start on the night following the fourth day of her period. Those that have the custom of keeping five days or more should not change their customs without first asking a Rabbinical authority. *Ashkenazim* observe a minimum of five days before starting the seven days of cleanliness.

Whether the woman has perceived a continuous flow or only a small drop during those few days, she concludes "in purity" on the fourth day at the earliest following the first evidence of blood and starts counting as of the following night. For example, if she perceived blood on Sunday, even close to sunset time, she concludes in purity on Wednesday, before sunset. Then, Thursday becomes her first day of the seven clean days. If a woman's period lasts longer than four days, she will conclude in purity on the last day she perceives blood and start counting the seven days as of the following night.

Counting four days before the seven clean days applies only if she perceived blood while ritually clean. However, if she was already unclean and perceived blood once again, she need not count the four days. She can conclude in purity as soon as the bleeding stops. For example, if she sees a *Ketem* that renders her a *Niddah* on Sunday, and on the following Wednesday that her regular period starts, she may conclude in purity as soon as the blood stops. Similarly, if while counting her clean days she perceives blood, or finds a *Ketem*, she can conclude on that same day, without waiting any additional time, since she has already been unclean for four days.

The time of the examination that determines her conclusion in purity is usually at least about a half-hour before sunset. If she postpones the examination until after sunset, she may not include the next day among the seven clean days. If this examination was done very early in the day, she should consult a Rav.

Examination Procedures

After the fourth day of menstruation, or whenever her flow stops, a woman should thoroughly wash the entire area externally and internally. She then prepares a small piece of soft, clean, white cloth, about four inches by four inches (8 cm x 8 cm) in size, or a piece of cotton of the same size, clean on all sides. This is called a *Bedika* cloth. It can be found at the Mikveh store sometimes.

She then wraps it around her finger, and raises one foot on a small stool or some elevated object. While standing in this position, she should insert the cloth internally. In order to examine herself as deeply as possible, it is advisable to place her hand around and under her thigh. In this manner, she will be able to insert her entire finger without any complications. The examination cloth should be inserted deeply into the body as well as into all folds and slits. She should then examine herself by pressing lightly all around the internal sides and all the folds. She should be careful not to scratch herself and cause questionable stains. She should then remove the *Bedika* cloth and examine it. If it is clean, she is ready to count the seven days of cleanliness as of the following day.

If the cloth is not clean, or she cannot determine whether or not it is clean she should show it to an expert rabbinical authority. After this examination, it is recommended that she insert another white piece of cloth and leave it inserted for approximately a half-hour after sunset throughout the twilight time. (Check your calendar for correct times). This is known as *Moch Dahuk*: Tight Fitted Cloth. In case this procedure is painful or it might harm her to leave it inserted even for a short while, she can do away with the half-hour of the *Moch Dahuk*. However, in a situation where a woman concludes in purity on the day she perceived blood, as in the case of a woman who sees blood during the seven clean days where she concludes in purity that same day, the *Moch Dahuk* is obligatory from sunset until a half hour later. (Because she has the din of a zava ketana).

When the evening of this examination falls on *Tisha Beav*, she may wash herself prior to it with hot water but she should be careful not to run too much water.

When the time of this exam falls on Shabbat or Yom Kippur, she should be careful not to come to squeezing, Schita.

The washing for this exam is permitted on Yom kippur because the washing is not for pleasure.

The Donning of White and the Seven Days of Cleanliness

After the procedures mentioned earlier, a woman is required to wear a freshly laundered white undergarment. The garment should be examined prior to wearing it to be sure that it is free of stains. If she sleeps without a white undergarment close to her body, she must spread a white laundered sheet that has been previously checked for stains. She will then proceed in this manner

throughout the seven days. Ashkenazim require a white sheet even with white undergarments?

Examinations during the Seven Days of Cleanliness

A woman must examine herself twice daily, once in the morning and once before sunset, in the same manner she checked herself at the “conclusion in purity”; that is, by inserting the examination cloth deeply in and around the internal sides. There are times when *Halacha* permits a woman to check herself fewer times. If she is prone to excessive irritation when she checks herself, she could be advised by a Rav on how to do less exams. In case she has examined herself only twice, once on the first day and once on the seventh day (besides the examinations of the *Hefsek Tahara*, the conclusion in purity), these seven days are accepted as days of cleanliness. She is then permitted to immerse herself in the *Mikveh* (ritual bath). (p.t. 196 letter 6).

The seven clean days must be continuous, without any interruptions by flows of blood or stains. If a woman perceives blood, even on the seventh day, her former count is void and she must proceed with the *Hefsek Tahara* and start counting the seven days of cleanliness again. However, in this case, she does not have to wait the four days that precede the conclusion in purity, as mentioned before. During these seven days, if she needs it, a woman may wash herself with hot water and even douche. Since her period has fully stopped, there is little concern that she will wash away any trace of blood.

If a woman crosses the international dateline, she should count seven times sunrises and sundowns. If she examined herself only once during these seven days or she cannot examine herself more than once, due to some internal wounds or bruises, she should contact a Rabbi. If she wears a Gartenberg ring or a womb ring, she should consult a Rabbi concerning the manner of her examination and the complications concerning an intervening substance, *Hatsitsah*, during immersion, which we will discuss in later chapters.

CHAPTER III

Preparations for the *Mikveh* and Intervening Substances

The washing and preparations must preferably be started while it is still day, close to the evening. She must make preparations until the evening, at which time she must immerse herself. In case of necessity, she may wash and prepare herself either during the day or at night. It should nevertheless be as close to her immersion time as possible. And that is why women take an additional shower at the Mikve before immersion.

A woman must wash her entire **body and her hair** close to the time of her immersion, *Tvila*. She must comb all the hair of her head. As for the hair on the rest of the body, it is enough if she separates it properly with her hand. She should make sure to use warm water when she washes her hair.

Before the immersion, she must closely examine her body and her hair to make sure that there are no intervening substances, by looking and feeling the areas difficult to reach.

On the day of her immersion, it is best not to handle substances that might stick to the body or the nails such as **dough** and the like. In case she has handled them, she should thoroughly wash all areas that have come in contact with the dough. On Friday, she is allowed to handle all things in honor of *Shabbat*. She must be careful; however, to thoroughly wash herself after she finishes handling them.

During the period of time between her preparations and her actual immersion, a woman must also avoid touching anything sticky or dirty, especially on Shabbat when the preparations and the immersion time are far apart. But if she forgets and touches adhering substances, or she feeds her children, she must thoroughly wash herself and examine her body and hands before the immersion.

Laws of Intervening Substances

A woman must immerse her entire body all at once in such a manner that even one hair does not stay out of the water. Anything found on her, preventing the water from reaching her body, that is of a nature that people dislike and insist on removing, is a *Hatsitsah*, an intervening substance, and she is not allowed to immerse herself until she removes it. If, after the immersion, she finds a substance, and she is unsure whether it is a *Hatsitsah* or not, she should ask a Rav.

A woman must be careful about intervening substances even in the hidden parts of her body such as the **mouth, nose, eyes and ears**. Even though the water does not actually reach these internal parts, they must be considered and thoroughly cleaned as if water could reach them. Therefore, she has to make sure there is **no mucus** in her **eyes**, either inside or outside, even when the mucus is wet. She should also wash **her toes** well.

She must clean **her teeth** and between them. That is why the custom is not to eat meat or chicken or anything sticky between the preparations and the immersion times, on the day of *Tvila*.

Some women have the custom of **not eating meat** that whole day. However, on *Shabbat* and *Yom Tov* or any major meal for a Mitzvah, (like a Sheva Brachot, a chatuna, a Brit, a Pidyon Haben, a Seudat Purim, Chol Hamoed, Siyum Masechet, or a Bar Mitsva,) a woman may eat meat but must be careful to clean her teeth before the immersion. Additionally, when her immersion time falls on *Shabbat* or *Yom Tov* nights, she will try to immerse herself before the meal. This would apply to Melave Malka as well.

If a woman has a **wound** covered with a **scab**, and she specifically wants the scab on to prevent the wound from bleeding, or because it heals better while the scab is on, it is not called an intervening substance. But, if there is no purpose anymore for the scab, she has to remove it.

In the case of **corns, calluses, boils, warts, hard skin**, or other skin growths, a woman should wash them thoroughly and soften them before the immersion.

Make up and all **coloring** that women use on their faces, hair, and hands, if they have no consistency and are only superficial, they do not intervene during immersion. If a woman insists on immersing in the Mikveh with them on, she may do so with her Rabbi's consent.

Dirt and dough that are under the **nails** intervene during immersion. Therefore a woman should make sure that the area under her nails is clean. The nails themselves, however, do not intervene since they are part of a woman's body. They are like her hair, that is, not a *Hatsitsah*. Nevertheless, women have accepted the custom of cutting their nails before immersion.

Women that **die their hair**, either fully or partially, should make sure that it has the appropriate desired effect before they immerse.

A woman should pass water before the immersion, not to come to tightening herself in case she needs to go later.

In case of some **bleeding** from her nose or a cut, she will clean it and try to stop it, before immersing.

All types of **casts, bandages, band-aids and wound coverings** represent a *Hatsitsah*. In the case of braces, self melting stitches, regular stitches, or threads that doctors must remove, a Rav should be consulted.

A temporary **dental filling**, put in before the permanent one, one that will stay less than four weeks or that needs a doctor to take it off, is not considered an intervening object. Permanent **false teeth** that replace lost fallen teeth are not a *Hatsitsah*. In the case of **braces** however, a Rav should be consulted to find out what to do in each particular case.

Henna Party

Paint, ink, iodine and all coloring that have consistency are a *Hatsitsah*, an intervening substance and must be removed.

In the case of **Henna** it is preferable that the bride immerse herself in the *Mikveh* before the party.

However, if that is not possible, she must thoroughly wash the Henna well to get rid of all substance. The inconsistent residue will then not be a *Hatsitsah*

Different Immersion Times and How to Behave In Each Case

Friday night: When the night of the immersion falls on Friday night, *Shabbat*, the woman should do all the preparations while it is still day. She should not wait until it is close to the time of lighting the candles, in order not to rush her preparations. The immersion must be at night. If necessary, a woman may immerse herself from candle lighting time and on, so long as she arrives home when already night.

Motsae Shabbat: As to Saturday night, if her immersion falls on the night after *Shabbat*, since she cannot prepare herself during the day of *Shabbat*, she should do so at night, before her immersion. In any case, it is a commendable custom to wash herself thoroughly on Friday afternoon and to continue the preparations on Saturday night. She should also comb **her hair** before the immersion.

When Motsae Shabbat is a Yom Tov: If the immersion is on the night after *Shabbat*, and it is a *Yom Tov*, a religious holiday, and a time when she cannot prepare herself, she must then do all the preparations on Friday afternoon. She

must tie her hair in a manner that will prevent it from tangling. Then again on Saturday night, before the immersion, she must wash herself between her thighs and in all other perspiring areas with hot water. She will then examine herself for any foreign substances, and then immerse herself.

Friday night after *Yom Tov*: If the two days of *Yom Tov* fall on Thursday and Friday nights, and the time of her immersion is on Friday night, she must do all the preparations on Wednesday and must tie her hair in a manner that will prevent it from tangling. She must then immerse herself on Friday night.

For the above mentioned washing and at any other time that she wishes to take a partial wash on *Shabbat or Yom Tov*, she will use liquid soap and water maintained hot from before Shabbat or cold water. She should be cautious not to squeeze out the towel, or the hair of her body.

CHAPTER IV

Laws Concerning Immersion

After the woman counts seven clean days, on the eve of the eighth day she immerses herself in a kosher *Mikveh*.

A menstrually unclean woman or a woman after childbirth cannot rid herself of her impurity until she immerses. Even if many years have passed since her last menstrual flow, she remains unclean until she properly immerses herself in a *Mikveh*.

When the woman immerses herself, the presence of an attendant or another woman is required to make sure that no part of her body or even one hair stays out of the water during the immersion. This would render the immersion invalid. When no one else is available, the husband can make sure that the hair went into the water.

Women that have an ear condition and the doctor absolutely does not allow them to get their ears wet, may prepare their ears for immersion; after the Mikveh attendant wets her hands in the Mikveh, she may gently cover the woman's ears during the immersion.

The Blessing before Immersion

When she undresses herself and is still wearing her undergarment or towel, and preferably not a robe, she recites:

"Barouch Ata Hashem Elokenou Melech Haolam Asher Kideshanou Bemitsvotav Vetsivanou Al Hatvilah."

She then removes her clothing and immerses.

She may also recite the blessing instead after she immerses herself in the water up to her neck. If the water is clear, she should blur it with her feet in order to avoid seeing the lower portion of her body.

However, the *Ashkenazic* custom is to recite the blessing in the water in the following manner: she immerses herself once, recites the blessing and immerses again. Some *Sephardim* have taken it upon themselves to embrace this custom.

Whenever a woman immerses herself, she must recite the blessing, whether she has become unclean through a flow of blood, or through a *Ketem*. On *Shabbat* (Friday night), it is permitted to do *Tvila* and to recite the blessing as well.

Ways of Immersion

The woman should neither immerse herself standing rigidly nor bend too much, so that no part of her body is covered by another part. Rather, she should bend slightly forward so that her arms and limbs spread, as when she walks. However, she does not have to spread them far from her body. She may close her eyes or mouth but she should make sure not to close them too tightly.

She should not stand on any utensil or in any unbalanced place, because her fear of falling may prevent her from immersing properly. Similarly, she should not do it in a place where people can pass by, since this would cause her to hurry and not be careful about the way she immerses herself.

When she comes out of her *Tevila*, she should make sure that the first person she sees is a dear friend, a family member or the *Mikveh* attendant, and not look at anything *Tame*, impure first.

A woman should not perform the immersion during the day, even if it is during the eighth day. However, if she is afraid to go to the *Mikveh* at night because it is a dangerous neighborhood, or she is concerned about the exceptionally cold weather, she can consult a Rav. However, on the seventh day she is definitely not allowed to perform her *Tvila*.

A woman should act modestly and not let people know when she will be going to the *Mikveh*. If her husband is in town, it is a *Mitzvah* for a woman to immerse herself immediately after her seven days of cleanliness, without further delay: if she wants to postpone the *Tvila* to a later time, this may only be done with the consent of her husband.

CHAPTER V

Conduct of Husband and Wife during the *Niddah* Period

Within the following laws, men and women, should be more careful with the laws that affect them the most in order not to come to sin. They should learn how to behave with each other and maintain an appropriate distance.

Separations

There are four levels of reasons for separations:

- 1) The Torah says a person should not touch a *Niddah*.
- 2) There are certain situations that could lead to Cohabitation.
- 3) There are certain behaviors that are not permitted because they might result in touching.
- 4) There are certain situations that could bring a person to think about the act itself.

A husband must not approach his wife on the following days:

- The days of menstruation.
- The days of uncleanness caused by finding a *Ketem*.
- The seven clean days that precede the wife's immersion in the *Mikveh*.
- Any additional days following the postponement, for one reason or another, of her immersion.

The couple must avoid all situations that convey a feeling of closeness or love for fear that they will come to sin. During that time they will relate to each other in non-physical ways, and develop their relationship on a spiritual and emotional level.

They may not touch each other whatsoever. They may not hand anything to each other, even when the object is long, nor can they throw anything to each other. One should put down the item so that the other can pick it up. At a *Brit*, when husband and wife are *Kvaters*, this *Halacha* is a problem when handing over a baby to each other.

An older child who can lean forward by himself may be handed over. If there is no other way to carry a heavy carriage up the stairs, and it is an extreme necessity to lift it, then one may carry it together with one's spouse.

Husband and wife may not sleep in the same bed regardless of its size. The same applies even if they are each in their clothing and bedding and do not touch each other. They may not sleep on two separate beds that touch each other. A husband may not sit on his wife's bed even when she is not present in the room, and he certainly may not lie on it. She, however, is allowed to sit on his bed, but not lie on it, in his presence. They may not sit together on a bench that rocks or sways unless someone else sits between them. If the bench is so heavy that it does not rock, they may sit on it without a third person, as long as they do not touch each other. They may not travel together on a pleasure trip in a small boat or in a coach. If the trip is taken for a necessary purpose, they may accompany each other. Also, they may ride in a car or a bus, even for a pleasure trip, since the seats are fixed and do not shake considerably. They may go for a walk together.

A husband may not gaze at parts of his wife's body that are usually covered. A woman in a state of *Niddah* may beautify herself in order not to look displeasing to her husband. A husband may not listen attentively when his wife sings while a Niddah.

Even when not a Niddah, a husband may not hear his wife singing while he is learning or praying. A woman may not sing at a Shabbat table if there are strangers present.

Laws Concerning the Meals

Husband and wife may not eat from the same individual dish nor may they eat at one table in the usual manner, unless one of the following conditions are implemented:

- Placing a recognizable object between them, not usually found at the table, or a bread from which they are not eating or a bottle from which they are not drinking.
- Changing their seating at the table.
- Eating on separate placemats or tablecloths if they do not customarily use them.
- Eating with strangers present at the table.

The husband should refrain from drinking the remnants of his wife's cup or eating her leftovers. If someone else eats or drinks from them in between, or if these leftovers are transferred from one dish to another, it is permissible to do so even if the food has been returned to the original dish. If he is not aware that these leftovers are hers, he may eat them. If the wife eats or drinks and leaves the house temporarily, he may have her leftovers if they cannot be identified as hers.

A wife, however, is allowed to eat or drink from her husband's leftovers. A woman is allowed to set the table for her husband and make all necessary preparations for the meals. However, she may not fix him a drink such as wine or liquor. She may not prepare it in his presence nor place it in front of him. Rather, she should set it a little further from him on a chair, give it to someone else to hand to her husband, put it down with her left hand, or make some other change in the manner of serving. When he is not present, the wife may put the drink down in its usual place. The husband, as well, may not fix his wife a drink in her presence.

In serving plain drinks such as soda, juices, and water, which don't show closeness, one may prepare them for the other in front of the spouse.

A wife may make her husband's bed as she customarily does, even in his presence, since this enters the realm of chores, rather than affection. However, bedding and decorations that they use for special occasions may not be prepared in front of him.

She may not pour water, hot or cold, on him to wash his face, hands or feet, even when she is careful not to touch him.

Women who are in the state of *Niddah* (menstrual uncleanness) are allowed to go to the Synagogue to pray and say all the blessings. For those who have the custom of abstaining from going to Shul during the actual flow, they may follow this custom, unless they need to attend during important times. However, at all times they should refrain from gazing at or touching a *Sefer Torah* or entering a cemetery until they immerse in the *Mikveh*, the ritual bath.

Laws pertaining to the Sick

If a wife or husband is sick they should hire help to attend the ill, a man for the husband and a lady for the wife. If they cannot afford to hire someone to take care of them, it is possible to be lenient in the preceding laws of separations, as long as there is no actual touching. e.g. gloves. It is recommended, however, that one ask a Rav for guidance to accommodate their needs in these circumstances.

CHAPTER VI

Possible Times the Period Can Come

Some women have a regular period, which occurs on the same date every month. To others, it occurs at equal intervals. If the woman has not set a regular time, she must be careful to follow the laws of *Onat Havesset* separations (See below) at these two different times, while expecting both her set period on the monthly date and the interval date. Whether or not the woman has a regular period, she must act accordingly on the day she expects to have her period, as mentioned earlier. A woman who is irregular and has no idea when she will get her period, has to observe a third time thirty days after her last period. This is called *Ona Benonit*. However, for this additional time she should discuss her cycles with her Rav since many times it does not apply and many *Poskim* hold that it does not have to be observed.

When a woman goes on a long trip by airplane it may affect her count, and she should discuss the implications with a Rabbi.

How does she establish her monthly date?

"kviat vesset"

A woman whose period occurred on a certain day of the month e.g. on the 21st or the 25th, must suspect the arrival of her period on the same date the following month. She is not permissible to her husband for that whole *Ona*, a time span from morning until night or from night until morning. Concerning this particular *Halacha*, the day starts at dawn and ends with the appearance of the stars. Night starts then and ends at the following dawn, and not with sunset and sunrise. If she menstruated on the same date for three consecutive months, she has thus established her fixed regular period. This applies only when at all three times it occurred during the day or during the night. However, if one happened during the day and two at night, or one at night and two during the day, she did not fix her *vesset*.

Laws of Separation During the Time a Woman Expects Her Period (*Onat Havesset*)

Some women menstruate at a known regular time, each one according to her cycle. A woman who has a *Vesset Kavua* (a period that comes at a fixed time) is permissible to her husband at any other time without any examination. The circumstances that determine a *Vesset Kavua*, a fixed period, were explained above.

During the expected time of her period, a woman is not permissible to her husband for one *Ona*. If she usually perceives blood during the day, she is not permissible for that whole day, even when her period arrives at the end of the day. She is, however, permissible that following night and the night before. Similarly, if her period usually starts at night, she is not permissible for that whole night. She is permissible, however, the day before and the day after. If she is not aware as to when her period began, and discovered its arrival at night but is not sure whether it began during the daytime, she can assume that it arrived at the latter time and therefore she would consider it to have commenced at night. The same applies when she wakes up in the morning and she does not know when the flow started, this *Ona* is a day *Ona*. Only cohabitation is forbidden. However, it is recommended that the couple refrain from hugging and kissing. The rest of the separations a *Niddah* would normally observe, as mentioned earlier, are not applicable. If one who follows these laws carefully, **Hashem** will protect him and bless him together with his children.

During the span of time she expects to menstruate, which is the *Ona*, a woman has to examine herself only once. If she did not conduct this examination during the day, she may do it after the *Ona*. This examination is like the ones she conducts during the seven days of cleanliness: It requires inserting the examination cloth deeply in and around the internal sides. If the expected period is a fixed one, she is not permissible until she examines herself. If it is not a fixed period and she doesn't feel any menstrual activity or a flow of blood, she is permissible without an examination.

At any other time when she knows definitely she will not see blood, she should not check at all in order that there shouldn't be any doubt and unnecessary separation.

When is a fixed monthly period void?

If a woman menstruates on a different date than her last period, she must expect her period to occur on her regular monthly date and on the new date. If that day arrives and she does not perceive any blood, she should expect to menstruate again on her regular monthly date and on the new date. She will follow this pattern for three months. However, if she menstruated on the same new date for three consecutive months, she has thus established her new fixed regular period and she does not have to observe her previous regular date. If her regular period was based on a monthly date, and it was changed once to another day, i.e., she usually menstruates on the first of the month, but was delayed until the third, the following month, she is not permissible on the first and on the third, as is explained in the laws of irregular periods.

How does she establish her fixed interval date?

If for example she menstruates twenty days after the beginning of her previous period, she must expect to menstruate again twenty days later. On that day, she is not permissible to her husband. If she menstruates four times at three equal intervals, she has thus established her fixed interval period

Once a woman has established her period, be it a fixed date or a fixed interval, she observes only the day she expects its arrival either by the monthly date or interval date, unless it is eliminated by a procedure which we will explain later.

If she does not menstruate for three months or exactly ninety days, she does not have to concern herself with past-established dates.

In the case of interval periods, if a woman usually menstruates every thirty days, and she does so once after thirty- five days, the following month she is not permissible on either day: thirty days from the beginning of her previous period, since it is her regular fixed interval, and at thirty five days, in line with the law of irregular periods.

A woman can establish two periods in a month. If she menstruates on the first and the fifteenth of the same month, the following month she will not be permissible on the first and on the fifteenth.

If a woman takes pills to control her period, she should observe only the days that the doctor tells her that her period might come. The use of pills, regular or hormone replacement therapy, should be discussed with a Rav.

When is a fixed interval period void?

If a woman menstruates thirty days after her last period and then twenty-five days later she menstruates again; she must expect her period to occur twenty-five days after her last period. If that day arrives, and she does not perceive any blood, she should expect to menstruate five days later that is, thirty days after her last period. As long as thirty days between periods have not elapsed, the thirty-day interval is not void. However, if she fixes a new interval and menstruates at three intervals shorter than thirty days, she does not have to observe the thirty-day interval. (Bet Meir) But if she sees on the thirty -first, which is a longer interval, even once she does not have to worry about the thirty-day interval anymore.

The Ona Benonit is an additional Ona to keep. It is an average Ona that comes thirty days after the last period. However some hold that it is the same day as the date Ona.

The general rule to follow for all G-d fearing Jews is to keep a Jewish lunar calendar in which an exact record should be kept to indicate the date of the period, the day or the night it occurred, and how many days have elapsed between the beginning of one period and another. This record keeping will enable a husband and wife to keep the laws of the *Ona* of her *vesset*, without any uncertainty.

The following types of menstrual cycles exist as well. However they are unusual:

The week-based period (Veset Hashavua):

A period that arrives every three or four weeks on a designated day of the week e.g. every -three weeks, on Monday, three times in a row. If it happens a fourth time, it gets the laws of fixed interval period.

The alternating period (Veset Hassirug):

When a woman menstruates every other month, or after a constant number of months, she has an alternating period. It is established as a regular, alternating period only after three consecutive times. Until it is established, she should observe the same date she menstruated the month before, as well as the interval date, as do women with irregular cycles. For example, if she menstruates on the first of Nissan, she observes the first of *Iyar* as her possible menstruation date. If she skips *Rosh Hodesh Iyar* and she menstruates on the first of *Sivan*, she must observe the first of *Tammuz*. If she does not perceive any blood on the first of *Tammuz*, she does not have to observe the first of *Av*. If she does however, get her period on the first of *Av*, she establishes a *Veset Siruguim*, an alternating period, on a fixed date every other month. It will become a *Veset Lesirugin Kavua* if it happens three times.

This method could be applied to a multi-month wait as well until she establishes her constant number of months in between.

The date-pattern period:

A period that arrives on a different date every month but within a recognizable pattern, never less than twenty five days from the last period. Example, on the 26th, the 27th, the 28th.

The interval-pattern period:

A period that arrives at different intervals but within a recognizable pattern.

Physical Symptoms Connected With a Period

For some women, the arrival of the menses is connected with certain physical activities. If a woman jumps or carries a heavy load that results in menstruation, she must expect her period any time she is involved in those activities. However this is not considered a fixed period.

Also, certain physical symptoms like yawning or sneezing may precede her period. Eating certain foods may cause a woman to menstruate as well. Also, there are certain feelings of the opening of the womb that come along with the onset of the period. A woman should learn to recognize them. Generally, she should expect her period after any of the above physical symptoms or after eating certain foods, which cause her period to arrive. Therefore, a woman who menstruates as a result of internal or external factors, should consult a Rav who will help her fix her cycle or eliminate it and determine which days she will or will not be permissible.

Traveling:

Traveling sometimes affects the period and the count of the *Niddah* days. To count a day, she will take into consideration sunrise and sunset regardless of the length of the day.

CHAPTER VII

Pregnant, Nursing Women and Older Women.

During the first three months of pregnancy a woman is to behave in the Halachot as she did previously. If she had a regular period, she should expect it on her designated date throughout the first three months even after she has stopped menstruating the first month. If she had a regular interval period, since she stopped menstruating the first month, she does not have to suspect any more since she must menstruate first to be able to suspect an interval.

Three months after conception, it is generally established that a woman is free of her menses. Similarly, she is considered free of menstrual activity for twenty-four months after childbirth. During that time, she is to regard her menses as an irregular period, even though she may have had a *vesset Kavua*, a fixed period, prior to her pregnancy. Therefore, she must observe her period on the same date as the previous one, even if she menstruated three times in a row on the same date, and has deviated from the norm only once, her *vesset Kavua* becomes void and she has to keep only the day or the interval of the last period.

Twenty-four months after childbirth, the fixed date that existed prior to conception remains a determining factor and she must therefore expect to menstruate on that date.

Cases in point:

During the first three months of pregnancy a woman who had a regular monthly period, or a regular interval period before pregnancy observes the day she usually expects her flow to arrive, even if she does not menstruate. For a regular interval period, she observes that designated date during the first month only. If she menstruates on a different date, shorter than the previous interval, she must still count the same interval and observe that date. If she menstruates three consecutive times on different dates, her regular interval period is void. She does not have to expect it on the fourth month.

Three months after conception, she does not have to be concerned with her former, regular period. If she menstruates at all from that point on, even if she does three consecutive times on the same date, she observes only the date or interval day of the previous period, as the law of an irregular period dictates. As far as the interval rule is concerned, she observes only the interval between the last two periods and the next, as in the case regarding irregular interval cycles.

For twenty-four months after childbirth, a woman's period is considered irregular. After that time, she begins observing once again, the regular monthly period she had established prior to her pregnancy. The interval rule applies, as well, after twenty-four months. She does not apply it, however, until she menstruates once. Subsequently, she is able to count the proper interval.

Nursing women with irregular periods only worry about observing the dates of the last period. If she doesn't menstruate after one month, she need not worry any more.

When an older woman goes through three medium periods of time, that is, ninety days, without menstruating, close to menopause, she is free of menstrual uncleanliness. She need not worry about the former set cycle. Every time her menstrual flow arrives, after this she will consider it irregular. However if once again she menstruates regularly for three consecutive times on the same day she was used to, or after the same intervals, she is again considered to have a fixed period. Also, if she menstruates three consecutive times at any time, she is once again *halachically* like all other women in that she has to expect her regular periods.

CHAPTER VIII

Colors of Bloodstains, *Ketamim*.

Bloodstains of a color that is similar to red or black render a woman unclean. Brown or gold, reddish or blackish must be examined by a Rabbinic authority.. Whenever the smallest doubt arises, whether it concerns a *Ketem* or a stain found on the examination cloth, a woman is not permitted to decide to be lenient or strict with herself. She must consult a rabbinical authority that is competent in differentiating various properties of stains and circumstances as well as in the laws of *Niddah*. Women who refrain from consulting a Rav out of shame and lengthen their unclean days are committing a grave sin. However, white, green or pure yellows are ritually clean colors

Difficult conception

Women who have not been able to conceive after being married for three to five years because their fertile days coincide somehow with their Niddah days should promptly consult with a Rabbinic Authority to find out how the timing could be adapted.

Types of Blood

All blood, dry or wet, or any substance leaving the uterus, even if minute, which has forbidden characteristics, renders a woman unclean, *Niddah*.

How Does a Woman Become a *Niddah*?

There are three ways of becoming a *Niddah*.

- A) A woman sees uterine blood of any quantity, even the minutest amount, regardless of whether she perceives it in the usual manner of feeling the opening of the womb.
- B) The bleeding is perceived without a feeling of a flow or even by finding a stain of any size on the examination cloth.
- C) A bloodstain is found on the body or on the clothing in an area that could have been reached by the blood of the uterus. This stain is called a *Ketem*. However, a *Ketem* will render a woman *Niddah* only if the total surface area is slightly larger than a *griss*, which is equivalent in size to a nickel or to a circle of 20-mm in diameter. (See Mil Tsedaka)

Therefore, whenever she finds a stain, with total surface area slightly larger than a *griss*, she should consult a Rav, who could possibly find her clean by establishing the status of the object on which it was found.

During a visit to the doctor, when a doctor checks a woman and inserts an instrument that opens up her womb, even if no blood is found, she may be unclean if the womb opened up more than the width of a finger. Therefore, a woman should make sure that her visits to the doctor be during her non clean days.

Various *Halachot* Concerning a *Ketem*

A *Ketem* has many complex laws that determine whether or not a woman is ritually unclean. Therefore, if she is in doubt, she must consult a Rav. Until then she should refrain from examining herself to avoid creating unnecessary problems and doubts.

The status of a *Ketem* depends on the following circumstances

- a) How large the stain is.
- b) When a stain is found on a colored garment or a garment of several colors including white areas.
- c) Whether the woman has a wound.
- d) Whether she has been handling red paint or blood.
- e) If she can attribute the stain to any other reasonable cause.
- f) Whether she knows where a few drops on her body and a few on her clothes originated from.
- g) Whether she felt any flow.
- h) Whether she finds this stain inside or outside her body.
- i) How clean the cloth is on which she found the stain.
- j) If she noticed any other symptoms.

Basic Study of *Ketamim*

The laws of *Ketamim* apply only if the woman examined the garment where the *Ketem* was found before she wore it or the linen before she lay on it and found it to be free of stains. However, if she had not examined it beforehand, whether the garment was new or cleaned and she had not kept it in a place free of stain, the Laws of *Ketamim* do not apply; therefore, she is ritually clean. However, if she can determine that the *Ketem* came after the washing or cleaning of the cloth, she is unclean.

If she finds a *Ketem* on an object that does not accept any impurity, she is clean. This refers to the ground or any object attached to the ground, like the floor, a cement bench, a tree stump, a bathtub and the like. (In case of doubt check with a Rav.)

If a *Ketem* is found on a colored garment, or on a garment of several colors that include white areas, she is clean as long as a *griss* of the *Ketem* is not in the white area. Similarly, if the *Ketem* is found on two separate white areas that are connected by some blood on the colored area, even if the combined size of the stains is a *griss*, she is clean. It is therefore advisable for a woman to wear colored garments on the days she is clean, to be safe from the complications that *Ketamim* create.

If many small drops were found on one location, on her body, or on her clothes, as long as they are not connected, she is clean, even if the total surface area exceeds a *griss*, provided that none of the individual stains reaches the size of a *griss*.

If she finds a *Ketem* on her outer clothing, on the shirt or an area of her garment that could not have been reached by blood coming from the uterus, she is clean. However, if she finds it on her hands or sleeves, she is unclean, since she may have possibly touched that area. If she was handling red coloring, like red juice from certain fruits or blood from fresh meat, or she passed through a meat market and found blood on her clothes, she may attribute it to those situations and is therefore clean. If she has a wound on the body and finds a *Ketem*, she may attribute it to the wound even if the *Ketem* is not near the wounded area.

If she finds a *Ketem* and does not know whether it is blood or paint, she is unclean.

Ketamim, even if they are declared unclean, do not establish a set date .They are not *koveah vesset*.

Laws Pertaining to Blood Found in the Urine

A woman who found blood in the urine is considered clean, since this blood comes from some internal bleeding she has.

A woman, who has an internal injury or wound in the vaginal area and finds a *Ketem*, may attribute it to the wound. If she examines herself and finds blood on the *Bedika* (examining cloth), she may be clean if she can determine that the blood flows from the wound.

We can accept the opinion from a reliable doctor as to whether this blood is from a wound.

A woman who has a wound while she is a *Niddah* must consult a Rav for proper instructions on how to examine herself under these circumstances.

If the time of her menstruation arrives and instead of seeing a steady flow, there is slight bleeding, as she would normally bleed from her wound, she may attribute the blood as coming from her wound. If she knows that the blood from her wound is different in appearance than the blood from her period and what she found is typical of her period, she may not attribute the blood to the wound.

In all these cases a competent Rav may find her *halachically* clean. Therefore, she must consult a Rav. Until then, she should refrain from examining herself to avoid creating unnecessary problems and doubts.

CHAPTER IX

Laws pertaining to a Bride

Every groom and bride must learn the laws of *Niddah* so that they will not, G-d forbid, commit a sin punished with extirpation, *Karet*. The bride must learn, particularly, the proper manner of examining herself.

A bride getting ready for her set wedding date must count seven days of cleanliness and follow all the laws concerning the wearing of white and the examinations as a regular *Niddah* would. This also applies in the case of an older woman. The latter may however conclude in purity on any day she wishes without waiting four days as menstrual unclean women do before counting the seven clean days.

Blood of Hymen

One, who marries a virgin and performs the *Mitzvah* of the first cohabitation, concludes the act even if there is an emission of blood. He then separates immediately. After he concludes the act, even if no blood is found, she is considered a *Niddah*. She must observe all the laws of separation as explained earlier. She must wait four days before doing a *Hefsek Tahara*, the conclusion in purity, and then count seven days of cleanness. Even those that have the custom of waiting five or more days before the *Hester Tahara* need wait only four days in the case of a virgin.

Concluding the act means that he performs a complete penetration. It does not depend on whether there is emission of semen or not. As long as the organ is within her, he does not have to separate from her. If there was not a complete penetration she is still permissible as long as they do not know that blood came out. However, if blood is emitted after partial penetration, she is also considered a *Niddah*.

At the time of the second cohabitation, after she immerses herself in the *Mikveh*, she does not need to suspect blood. Even if there is a complete penetration, she continues to be permissible as long as it is not known that more blood was emitted. It is advisable not to search and check for blood after the second cohabitation. If they find blood after the second time, it should be determined whether it is from the blood of the hymen or from her period, or whether she may be one who sees blood from cohabitation.

Some brides may be required to do certain checkings for the first three cohabitations and they should discuss it with their teacher.

Brides who were never married and single girls should examine themselves thoroughly. They must however be careful not to scratch themselves. They should proceed gently until they insert the whole finger, or at least most of it.

A bride may immerse in the *Mikveh* (ritual bath) during the daytime, from the eighth day of cleanliness and on, even though married women may not immerse in daylight. In case of necessity, she may immerse herself on the seventh, during the day, if she does not approach to the groom until the night.

A bride is sometimes a *Niddah*, either in a case where she calculated her period incorrectly and thought she would be ritually clean at the wedding but her menstrual flow came, or in a case where they had to rush the wedding for any reason to a time when she was a *Niddah*. In either case, it is permitted to perform the marriage and ring ceremonies and recite the seven blessings. However, the groom must be told before the wedding ceremony that she is a *Niddah*. In addition a Rav should direct them as to how they should behave throughout the wedding ceremony.

If the bride is a *Niddah*, or she menstruates before cohabiting with her husband, they are not allowed to be alone. At night they must have two chaperons during sleeping hours. During the day, one chaperon is enough. If they are sleeping in two different houses, no chaperon is needed. A chaperon in this situation does not have to be an adult and may be a youngster of at least nine years old. They can also sleep where a family is in residence leave their bedroom door open.

These laws apply equally to a bachelor, a widower, or a divorcee and to a single woman, a widow or a divorcee who married when the bride was in a state of *Niddah*.

CHAPTER X

Laws Concerning a Woman after Childbirth

After giving birth, a woman is considered menstrually unclean even if she did not perceive any blood. She must wait until a doctor examines her and finds her healthy and healed, then she must conclude in purity and count seven days of cleanliness. After the seven days of cleanliness, she must immerse herself in the *Mikveh*. She is then permissible to her husband. After the immersion, she is like all other women as long as she does not perceive blood. There is no need to wait forty or eighty days as was thought to be the custom. Women, who have the custom of waiting forty days for a boy or eighty days for a girl before immersing in the *Mikveh*, should abolish that custom and at most ask a Rav if there is a need for *Hatarat Nedarim* (abolishing of vows).

A woman should attempt to schedule her post-partum check-up during her Niddah days so that she prevents additional days of separation as a result of the internal examination. This is an important suggestion to follow anytime that such an examination is necessary.

Miscarriage

A woman who had a miscarriage is to proceed as a woman after childbirth in all *halachic* respects. She must wait till the bleeding stops, or at least fourteen days including the seven clean days, and then immerse herself in the Mikve.

Woman in Labor

A woman in labor who has reached the point where she cannot walk upright unattended, or her waters broke, is not permissible to her husband and is considered a *Niddah* in all respects. A woman who gives birth must say "*Hagomel*" thanks to *Hashem* for being saved from the danger of birth. She may do it in front of ten male relatives or quietly in a synagogue behind the Synagogue *Mehitza* when there is a small crowd.

CHAPTER XI

The Mikveh

There are many laws concerning the *Mikveh*. Therefore, whenever a *Mikveh* is being built, it should be only under the guidance of a Rabbi renowned as a great *Torah* scholar and an expert in the field of *Mikveh*. Also when there are any changes, big or small, the Rabbi must be consulted.

A *Mikveh* can be made from four main sources of water; rain, springs, oceans and summer rivers. This water must pour directly into the *Mikveh*. All these waters must be gathered in one place standing still. In the winter and rainy seasons, rivers should not be used.

Water from a faucet or water drawn from a well, spring or ocean, or rain transferred with a container to the *Mikveh*, are not valid. Therefore, a swimming pool is not kosher for immersion.

The immersion may be done in an ocean or a river that originates from springs. However, the woman must ask and learn the way to do the immersion properly. With regard to a river that is formed entirely by rain, and at times completely dries up, although during the rainfall some other streams empty into it, no immersion may be permitted there while the water is flowing on the ground and still pouring into it. It is not permissible for use until the water becomes still.

The laws regarding ritual pools are numerous. Wherever an immersion pool is made, it should be constructed under the supervision of a recognized rabbi who is very knowledgeable in learning and in piety. If any change occurs therein, no matter how slight, or when it becomes necessary to draw the water out for the purpose of cleaning it, a rabbi should be consulted as to the proper procedure.

The purity of future generations of Israel depends on the *Mikveh*. It cleanses us physically and spiritually. It is advisable to keep the *Mikveh* very beautiful and clean so that it attracts the daughters of Israel to accomplish with happiness and love the *Mitzvah* of maintaining the purity of our Nation.



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CHAPTER X
The Mikveh