

Dear Reader:

Recently, when I visited the community for Shabbat, I gave a shiur entitled “Scenes from a Jewish Marriage.” In this interactive shiur, we discussed how *Taharat Hamishpacha* impacts couples at different stages of their relationship. *Niddah* is a mitzvah that is different from other mitzvot: we don’t learn much about it in school, nor do we see an example at home as to how to practice it. Shabbat, Kashrut, chagim -- we learn about those in school, and many of us saw our parents and families observe these mitzvot. But *niddah*, as a private mitzvah, is not the same. As a result, we often feel that we don’t have people who can help us address some of our questions and concerns about *niddah*. *Niddah* is also different because to observe it, we have to overcome a very strong desire – to be physical with our spouses. We know that when we love someone we also want to be affectionate with them, give them a hug and a kiss and be intimate. When the Torah restricts this, it can be difficult and complicated.

When we first marry, there is so much anticipation surrounding our relationship and our future. But we begin at the same time to practice *Taharat Hamishpacha*. Balancing the two require a great deal of communication between husband and wife to help and support one another. This is true regarding both the physical and emotional aspects of the relationship. If a couple is having difficulty with any type of intimacy, they should not hesitate to reach out to their gynecologist to determine if there is a physical problem and to support organizations (please add in a link to what is available in the Silver Spring area for support). There can be medical issues that a couple experiences, such as erectile dysfunction or vaginismus, which can be resolved by working with therapists and medical professionals.

I believe that is important is to educate our children about the Torah view is on sexuality and intimacy. Sometimes we may feel uncomfortable, because we want to protect our children. But they are exposed to these subjects whether we like it or not, and it is important to supplement their learning with the Torah perspective, especially if it comes from a person they look up to and is observant of *Halakha*. *Kallah* classes should emphasize that when it seems things aren’t going right, the couple should not hesitate to call someone – a *kallah* teacher, a *Yoetzet*, or a Rav. Often, *Taharat Hamishpacha* is touted as the secret to a good marriage; couples have time to be together physically and work on that aspect of their relationship as well as time to work on the emotional aspect. For some people this idea and approach really work; the regulation enables them to find time for each other in a way many believe would not happen otherwise. Others, though, feel more challenged by *Taharat Hamishpacha*. *Taharat Hamishpacha* is not an easy mitzvah to observe, since in many ways, as I said earlier, it goes against our natural instincts. At a time when *Taharat Hamishpacha* is the most challenging, it’s advisable to speak with another person. This can be your spouse; a friend; a *Yoetzet*; a Rav; or a therapist.

Halakha can pose challenges to our lives, but if we are truly committed to the halakhic system, we stay committed to the mitzvah of *Taharat Hamishpacha*. We try to find ways to make it more meaningful to us.

Taharat Hamishpacha is a mitzvah that stays with us throughout a large course of our marriage; we begin the practice when we are first married, continue it through pregnancies – some of which are challenging -- and then concludes when menopause is over. The ebb and flow of our relationships is often like the ebb and flow of *Taharat Hamishpacha*.

QUESTIONS

Q: I recently had a baby and am confused about counting the 7 days and *mikveh* preparation. What do you suggest helping me “re-learn” the halakhot?

A: There are many great resources out there to help you. You can reach out to your Rav or *Yoetzet*. Sometimes communities offer refresher courses to help you brush up. Additionally, Nishmat has a website - www.yoatzot.org, with great articles and frequently asked questions.

Q: My husband and I, after many years of practicing *Taharat Hamishpacha*, are finding ourselves particularly challenged with the *harkhakot*. We don't feel that we need these boundaries anymore and find them frustrating. Do you have any suggestions?

A: I am sorry that you feel this way. *Taharat Hamishpacha* is not an easy mitzvah to observe. Perhaps if you think about them differently they might be a bit easier, to follow psychologically. In his book, *The Laws of Niddah*, Rabbi Binyomin Forst looks at the *harkhakot* as actions that *Chazal* value in a marriage. For example, he says, there are so many laws about eating together – such as not sharing a plate or having a reminder at the table that the couple is in *niddah* -- because every meal a couple shares is important and valued. Couples should spend time together, talking and eating. Since this time is psychologically intimate, the couple should remind themselves that the meal should not lead to physical intimacy. In addition, if the *harkhakot* are difficult, maybe if you went out or did something else as a couple you might find them easier to follow.

YOETZET HALACH IN KEMP MILL

Yoetzet Halakha Bracha Rutner will be returning to Kemp Mill on April 29.

MIKVAH HOURS

Wallerstein Mikvah (Women Only)

April

Sunday - Thursday: 8:30 - 10:30

Motsaei Shabbat and Yom Tov: 9:30 - 11:00

Sunday - Thursday: 7:30 - 10:00

Motsaei Shabbat: 7:30 - 9:30

There are no appointments at the Wallerstein Mikvah, except for Friday evenings. For any other assistance, leave a message on the mikvah answering machine and someone will contact you within 24 hours.

Friday nights and Yom Tov nights: call 301-681-3737 to schedule.
For immediate assistance, please call Robin Niman at 240-381-7862.

Kallot (brides) should please call the Yitzchak Wallerstein Mikvah to schedule their appointments.

HAKARAT TOV

We'd like to thank Kenneth and Cheryl Jacobson for their generous donation supporting this monthly newsletter. We'd also like to thank our anonymous donor, who has allowed to engage Bracha Rutner for educational programming throughout the year and to be accessible to women in the Kemp Mill community for questions.

JCADA



If you or someone you know is experiencing domestic or dating abuse, please contact JCADA for support.
Call toll free: 1-877-88-JCADA FREE (52232)
Confidential Client Lines: MD: 301-315-6041.
E-mail: jcada@jcada.org

<https://www.kmsynagogue.org/yoetzet-halacha.html>