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# PERFECT MARRIAGE

*A man will therefore leave his father and mother and be united with his wife.*

*They will be as one flesh.*

—Genesis 2:24



*Like all things so too is marriage comprised of two parts—body and soul.*

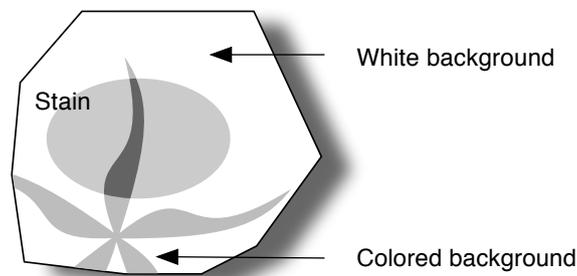
*The body is made up of the laws and guidelines structuring and directing its every detail. These include the laws of purity, which form the majority of this volume, as well as the laws of financial and moral responsibilities (see Appendix). The latter, are the basic commitments pledged under the canopy: delegation of financial responsibilities, interpersonal relations and child bearing responsibilities. They begin before marriage and reach until burial, thus creating the family atmosphere and framework. This is the body of married life.*

*The body requires a vitalizing force, a spirit to enliven it. This cannot be legislated. It develops along with and to a degree due to the body of marriage. This is the emotional bond created between husband and wife.*

of the stain found on the white areas are combined in considering its surface area<sup>62</sup>. The parts of the stain found on the non-white area are not combined in considering its surface area—even though it is ostensibly one stain<sup>63</sup>.

If part of the stain passes over a non-white area, the parts of the stain found on the white are not combined in considering its total surface area. In this instance the non-white material separates the two outside parts<sup>64</sup>.

For example:



### ***MEKABEL TUMAH***

The sages further stipulated that the material on which the stain is found must be one which can become ritually impure—*mekabel tumah*<sup>65</sup>:

The following fall into this category:

- Underwear
- Clothing
- Bed sheets
- Toilet seats

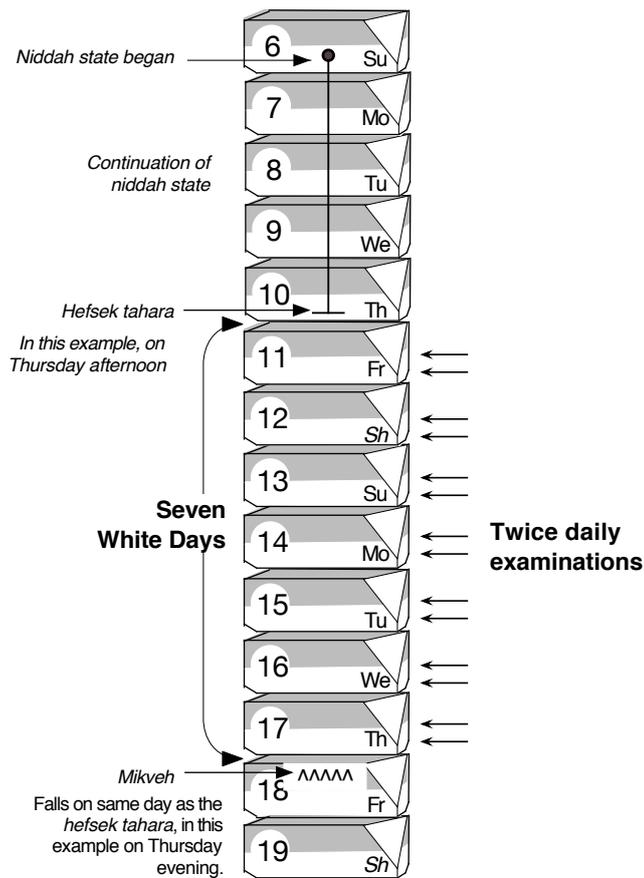
<sup>62</sup> *Shulchan Aruch Admur Hazoken* 190:23.

<sup>63</sup> *Shulchan Aruch Admur Hazoken* 190:23.

<sup>64</sup> *Tzemach Tzedek* 190:10. See the parenthetical note there.

<sup>65</sup> *Mehaber* 190:10.

To make sure these days are completely void of any uterine bleeding, the Talmudic Rabbis required a woman during these days to perform internal examinations twice daily<sup>3</sup>, wear white underwear<sup>4</sup> and sleep on white sheets. Hence the name **seven white days**.



<sup>3</sup> *Tzemach Tzedek* 196:5.

<sup>4</sup> In *Ramo* 196:3 “dawns whites (*levinim*),” in *Mehaber* and *Tzemach Tzedek* “robe (*challukah*).” *Bodei Hasbulchan* 196:46 and 196:52, brings opinions specifying the above to refer to underwear. See also contemporary *niddah* guides where this custom is brought.



## ABSENCE MAKES THE HEART GROW FONDER

*The Torah separated the husband and wife during the time of her impurity  
in order to make her as desirable to him as the day of their wedding.*

—Niddah 31:b



*The idea of no physical contact for at least twelve days a month is perhaps the one aspect within the Jewish marriage cycle which has most captured the public's attention. In fact, half of the month, except during pregnancy, or after menopause, we aren't allowed physical contact. Other areas of our behavior are limited as well.*

### **Newlyweds**

*If you are a couple preparing for marriage, you may have mixed emotions regarding this subject. You are anxiously preparing for marriage. The most marked difference between prior to and following the wedding night is that afterwards physical contact is allowed. This itself entails a sense of excitement. Yet along with this comes the abrupt awareness that during*

*married life this will be limited to only half of any given month except, of course, in the case of pregnancy. Experience has shown that people become accustomed to these days. What may have seemed a long time at the beginning of marriage adopts much smaller proportions later on.*

***Review following Childbirth***

*During pregnancy menstrual bleeding ceases. During these months the rules governing separation are not in force (except in special cases involving spotting and the like). Therefore it is very important that following childbirth the couple review these laws.*

***Studying Together***

*Studying the laws of separation together<sup>1</sup> is, for a number of reasons, recommended. These laws, in particular, are addressed to both the wife and the husband. Jointly reviewing them will ensure that their knowledge is on par. This can reduce misunderstanding and hurt feelings. Misunderstandings on details in law can be cleared up together, leaving less room for mistakes.*

***To the Wife***

*During this time, you should attempt to lighten your husband's responsibility by dressing appropriately. This is not the time to dress up. Although you needn't dress unattractively you should bear in mind the effect your attire has on your husband and act accordingly.*

*Perfume should be reduced or eliminated if possible.*

*For those conscious of fashion or their contemporaries' opinions, this may be a personal trial. But conscious effort should be invested in helping your husband wait for the time when you will again be permitted to him.*

***To the Husband***

*You should be aware of your wife's feelings during this time. It sometimes happens that the wife feels "at fault" for the present situation. You should try to negate that feeling or at least not*

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<sup>1</sup> Not from the same book, *Sbiurei Shevet HaLevy* on *Mehaber* 195:2.

*nurture it. The forbidden times are designed by the Al-mighty as part of the marriage cycle.*

### ***To Husband and Wife***

*The times when physical contact is forbidden should be seen as essentially a time of replenishing. Any experience, when available on a constant basis, becomes bland. The best summer vacation will, after time, drag on, the newest car becomes uninteresting and taken for granted, and marriage is no different. A famous Rabbi once wrote that the on-again off-again nature of the Jewish couple is, in fact, the cementing element ensuring a refreshing, wholesome atmosphere between the couple—“as a newlywed couple on a monthly basis<sup>2</sup>.”*

*Not only is there a benefit following the forbidden time, but also during this time one can strive to relate on a higher plane. The absence of physical relations is a perfect opportunity for increased verbal communication. This is a time when many couples rediscover deeper levels of communication, working out family problems and the like.*

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The laws of separation are in force whether in the days of menstruation or in the seven white days and there is no difference whether she is a *niddab* due to having a period or finding a stain.

—*Shulchan Aruch* 195:14

### **BACKGROUND**

The Talmudic Rabbis forbade being alone with members of the opposite sex with whom marital relations are forbidden and the punishment for willing transgression, i.e., intercourse, is excision; for example, one’s daughter-in-law or sister-in-law. This prohibition, called *yichud*, was designed to ensure modest and proper behavior<sup>3</sup>.

Relations with one’s spouse during the time of *niddab* are forbidden and the scriptural punishment is excision. *Yichud* should, therefore, have fallen into their legislation. However, due

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<sup>2</sup> *Siddur Beis Yákov*.

<sup>3</sup> *Note: yichud* with any woman is likewise forbidden, except a man with his daughter and a woman with her son, *Kitzur Shulchan Aruch* 152:1.

to practical considerations and obvious limitations, the prohibition of *yichud* was not extended to one's wife.

Since the Rabbis allowed this closeness between husband and wife as an exception to the above rule, they saw the necessity to limit contact in a wide spectrum of other areas. These areas are explained in this chapter.

For a husband and wife to be alone, *yichud*, while the wife is *niddab*, two conditions must have been met. First they must have had completed marital relations at least once and second, there must be a time when she will be permissible to him again. The reason is that since they have already had relations and the present *niddab* state is only temporary, the couple will tend to be more relaxed and will more easily refrain from forbidden relations<sup>4</sup>. An example where the first condition is lacking: they married while the bride was a *niddab*<sup>5</sup>. An example of the second condition lacking: the wife having a skin disease which precluded her going to the *mikveh*.

#### GENERAL

The laws of separation are identical regardless of whether the reason for the wife's present state of *niddab* is biblical (e.g. menstruation) or rabbinic (e.g. finding a stain) in origin<sup>6</sup>.

Likewise, the laws of separation are equally strict both in the five day time period (see Chapter Five) and in the seven white days<sup>7</sup> (see Chapter Six). Furthermore, as long as the wife hasn't immersed in a *mikveh*, all of the laws of separation must be followed, even if many years<sup>8</sup> have gone by since her last menstrual cycle.

The wife follows the laws of separation from the moment she realizes her change of status; her husband starts from the moment she notifies him, either explicitly, or through her actions<sup>9</sup>.

A couple, while in the company of other people, is not permitted to be lenient in the laws of separation for the sake of keeping the wife's *niddab* state a secret<sup>10</sup>.

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4 *Tzemach Tzedek* 195:1.

5 Or she became *niddab* before they had marital relations, *Mehaber* 192:4.

6 *Mehaber* and *Tzemach Tzedek* 195:14.

7 *Mehaber* and *Tzemach Tzedek* 195:14.

8 *Mehaber* 195:1. *Be'er Eliyahu* on *Sugab Besbosbonim* 1:1.

9 *Sugab Besbosbonim* 2:19.

10 *Shach* 195:17, *Igros Moshe Yoreh Deab* (2) section 77.

- Tossing an object up for the other person to snatch out of the air<sup>59</sup>

### EATING TOGETHER

Since eating together can lead to intimacy, the Talmudic sages required some sort of reminder of the wife's *niddab* state<sup>60</sup>. This is to ensure that they don't come to share each other's food directly, which could lead to untimely and unwanted affectionate physical contact.

There are two types of reminders: placing an object not usually on the table between them while eating and using different placemats.

The laws governing eating apply even:

- When eating a snack together<sup>61</sup> or sitting together just to drink<sup>62</sup>
- When eating with other people<sup>63</sup>
- When other people who are present might notice thereby compromising their privacy in this matter<sup>64</sup>
- If she entered the *niddab* state during a meal, the couple must begin acting appropriately<sup>65</sup>

### A REMINDER BETWEEN THEM

When a reminder is required:

- A reminder is required even when sitting so far from each other at the same table that one cannot reach into the other's plate<sup>66</sup>.

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59 *Tzemach Tzedek* 195:2.

60 Even when one of them is eating a food which the other cannot due to illness, *Sugab Besbosbonim* 4:26.

61 *Sugab Besbosbonim* 4:24, *Bodei Hasbulchan* 195:32.

62 *Sbiurei Shevet HaLevy* on *Mebaber* 195:3. *Tabara Kegalacha* 14:50, see discussion in *Sugab Besbosbonim* 5:1 and *Be'er Eliyahu* 5:1. *Bodei Hasbulchan* 195:32.

63 *Tzemach Tzedek* 195:3. *Bodei Hasbulchan* 195:34.

64 *Sbach* 195:17.

65 *Sugab Besbosbonim* 4:33. Note: "If she became *niddab* during the meal, the husband is permitted to finish," (*Pischei Tesbuva* 195:7) this refers to consuming her leftover food, not a reminder between them.

66 See *Tabara Kegalacha* 14:61, "In an urgent situation, they may sit at the same table at a distance which won't allow them to come into contact and someone sits between them." For differing opinion see *Sugab Besbosbonim* 4:29.

- The object placed between them must be of significant height<sup>76</sup>. There is no consensus on this height, some opinions hold it to be around one handbreadth.
- If this object is removed, it must be replaced before the meal is continued<sup>77</sup>.
- If they sat down to eat and an object was already on the table they can nevertheless designate it as a reminder<sup>78</sup>.
- Someone separating them by sitting between them is not a sufficient reminder<sup>79</sup>.
- Food from which they are not presently partaking may be used as a reminder. A whole loaf<sup>80</sup> of bread which they are not using may be used as a reminder<sup>81</sup>.

Note that on *Shabbos*, in order not to arouse attention, it is possible to use the *lechem mishnah* instead of removing it from the table.

#### SEPARATE PLACEMATS AS A REMINDER

Eating on separate placemats, or one of them using a placemat and the other not is a sufficient reminder, as long as this is not their custom during the time when the wife is not in the *niddah* state<sup>82</sup>. Folding the edge of the tablecloth and placing one of their plates on the table or on that folded part is a sufficient reminder<sup>83</sup>. So too is one placing his/her plate on a napkin<sup>84</sup>.

#### SAME PLATE

Eating out of the same plate is forbidden even if other people are eating from it<sup>85</sup>. This includes not eating from the same bag<sup>86</sup>, even one after the other.

76 According to some opinions around a handbreadth, 3-4 inches. A “*menorah*,” *Ramo* 88:2. A plate does not have sufficient height, *Sugab Besbosbonim* 4:37 and *Pischei Tesbuva* 195:26.

77 *Sugab Besbosbonim* 4:38.

78 *Sugab Besbosbonim* 4:39. See *Darhei Tesbuva* 88:20.

79 *Rasbba, Tabara Kealachba* 14:61. See *Sugab Besbosbonim* and *Be'er Eliyahu* 4:21. See *Bedek Habayis* for differing opinion.

80 *Tzemach Tzedek* 195:3. *Bodei Hasbulchan* 195:40.

81 *Tzemach Tzedek* 195:3, *Bodei Hasbulchan* 195:40.

82 *Tzemach Tzedek* 195:3.

83 *Tzemach Tzedek* 195:3.

84 *Poskim*.

85 *Sugab Besbosbonim* 4:4.

86 *Sugab Besbosbonim* 4:5.

CHAPTER 1  PERFECT MARRIAGE

*Love, as achieved through adherence to a Jewish life-style, can be likened to a good wine, maturing over the course of growing together and building a common life. It ripens and is cultivated by shared experiences, overcoming common obstacles and raising children. This is the idea behind, “A man will therefore leave his father and mother and be united with his wife. They will be as one flesh.”*

*True emotion develops over time. It is anchored by an attribute of the personality called da’as1. Da’as means personalized integrated knowledge—knowledge that is lived. So too, the basic emotions between husband and wife are based and nurtured through the common daily partnership of life’s burdens and toils.*

*Take to heart the following pages of this chapter. Here we delineate the words of our greatest leaders, illustrating the ideals towards which husband and wife should strive. Accordingly, each partner matures from a self-centered awareness to one in which concentration is directed on the family as a unit. The ultimate goal is the successful working of this family unit.*

*Husband and wife, according to this outlook, do not see one another in competition. Quite the contrary, they form a team. The foremost ingredient of this team is mutual respect and consideration.*



A marriage based in the eternal laws of our precious Torah is destined to be eternal.

—The Rebbe, *Likutei Sichos*, vol. 1, p. 36

By definition, there *is* no perfect marriage. Perfection is without flaw. It even suggests effortlessness. Marriage is not this.

Marriage is a framework in which two distinctly different individuals, from separate backgrounds and families, each with his/her own personal needs, form a new entity—a couple. Now, what really matters is the mutual good—the success of the marriage.

To suggest that this can be achieved in an offhand manner would be misleading. Marriages undergo evolutionary changes. They are dynamic. They begin as the union between two lives. With

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1 See the end of Chapter Three of *Tanya*.

the passing of time, these lives adapt, and with the achievement of mutual goals (raising children, paying bills, buying a home) merge into one.

This is an evolutionary process unattainable so long as each partner continues to be concerned mainly with his or her personal satisfaction. This is simply not a marriage.

The key to a harmonious and wholesome marriage lies in the couple's realization that they must satisfy one another's spiritual, emotional, and personal needs. This may be a conscious effort and it may require work. It needn't happen overnight. In fact, in most cases, it is not a fast process, rather, an evolutionary one. A marriage may start out in one style and develop into an entirely different one. Age, working to build a common life, and time all join together as allies towards building this unity called a couple.

How husband and wife should view one another is stated succinctly and clearly in the words of our most profound codifiers.

#### **RAMBAM**

“The Talmudic sages commanded: The husband is to honor his wife more than himself, and to love her as much as he loves himself. By way of example: any monetary wealth he may have should be used firstly for her benefit. He must not use unnecessary fear as an element of coercion—his speech with her should be soft and endearing, not abrupt and angry.

Likewise, they commanded: The wife should honor her husband extremely, even to the point of feeling awe towards him.

These are the true paths of Jewish women and men—pure in their marriages. These ways ensure pleasant and wholesome families<sup>2</sup>.”

It is important to emphasize that respect is a two-way street. The husband is not to use force in extracting that which he wishes from his wife. He is to remember to speak to her always in a soft tone, one fitting a daughter of the Jewish nation. The wife, likewise, is not to take advantage

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2 *Rambam, Hilchos Isboos 15:19, 20.*



## INTERVENING SUBSTANCES

*“And he shall immerse his whole body—in the water.”  
From the redundancy ‘in the water’ it is derived that nothing should come  
between his body and the water.  
—Sukkah 6:a*



### BACKGROUND

The previous chapter dealt with *bafifab*; the wife’s preparation for immersion. This chapter deals with intervening substances found on the body or hair *after* immersion.

A substance is considered to be intervening, from the Torah’s standpoint, when it covers the majority of the body<sup>1</sup> and the woman is particular<sup>2</sup> in not allowing such a substance to remain on her body.

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- 1 Even if it doesn’t cover the majority of the body in one place, but rather its combined surface areas does. See *Mebaber* 198:5. The hair is viewed as an independent body when considering if a substance covers its majority. Some say this refers to each hairy area. Some say this rule refers only to the hair on the head.
  - 2 Even if other women are not particular, *Beis Yosef* 198, *Tur*, *Taz* and *Shach* 198:2. Or most women are particular, even if she is not, *Mebaber* 198:1.

The Talmudic Rabbis<sup>3</sup> ruled that a substance on the body invalidates the immersion, even if it fulfills only one of these conditions<sup>4</sup>. This stringency was designed to act as a fence guarding against immersion when both conditions are present.

Subsequently, it was ruled<sup>5</sup> that all items should be removed before immersion, even if they are very small, loose fitting, and one is not particular about their presence<sup>6</sup>. These, however, do not invalidate the immersion after the fact. Furthermore, when their removal is impossible, very painful, or particularly complicated, immersion is nonetheless permitted<sup>7</sup>, in consultation with an orthodox Rabbi expert in these laws.

It is of great importance that the woman wash and examine her body thoroughly before immersing in the *mikveh* to ensure that there are no intervening substances.

Note that no intervening substance (*batzitza*) whatsoever should be allowed, and this is the purpose of the preparation for the immersion (see Chapter Seven).

Therefore, situations described on the following pages where we note that immersion is not invalidated, refer to those discovered after the fact, i.e. after immersion.

In the following pages we will delineate situations and substances which constitute a problem of *batzitza*.

## HAIR

**KNOTS** . Two hairs which remained knotted, whether together or to two separate hairs<sup>8</sup> do not invalidate the immersion.

One knotted hair, whether around itself or another hair invalidates the immersion, if *sbe* is usually particular in ensuring that not even one hair remains knotted<sup>9</sup>.

However, if she is *not* normally so cautious, this one knotted hair does not invalidate her immersion. In other words, the law depends on her *personal* fastidiousness, even if most others

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3 *Eruvim* 4:b, *Sukkab* 6:b.

4 Even after the fact, *Bodei Hasbulchan* 198:5.

5 *Ramo* 188:1. This is considered a latter stringency, not of the Talmudic era, *Sidrei Tabara* 198:1.

6 *Ramo* 188:1.

7 *Bodei Hasbulchan* 198:15. In consultation with an orthodox Rabbi expert in these laws.

8 *Mehaber* and *Ramo* 198:5. Since there are *two* hairs, the knot cannot be too tight as to stop water from entering.

9 *Mehaber* 198:5.