

NISHMAT HA-BAYIT

Contemporary Questions on
Women's Reproductive Health
Addressed by Yoatzot Halacha



The Nicole and Raanan Agus Edition

NISHMAT HA-BAYIT

נשמת הבית



Contemporary Questions on
Women's Reproductive Health

Addressed by Yoatzot Halacha

Edited by Rabbi Yehuda-Herzl and Chana Henkin

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In memory of

Mrs. Chaya Kimelman

Dedicated by her family and friends

Chaya Kimelman was born in Melbourne, Australia, and lived there until making aliyah in her 70's. "Big Grandma," as she was known to her grandchildren and their friends, was active in community *hesed* programs, such as preparing kosher meals for hospital patients and delivering kosher Meals on Wheels. She also helped school children practice their reading, both in English and Hebrew.

Chaya was a vibrant woman who never hesitated to ask a question or voice an unconventional opinion. She would often challenge her grandchildren by demanding, "Where does it say that in the Torah?" Regarding women's roles within the Orthodox community, she was ahead of her time. She was a regular participant in the first women's Gemara *shiur* in Melbourne, and continued studying in Yerushalayim. Her classmates were university students of varied religious affiliations from overseas, and she eagerly joined them in studying Rambam, Midrash, contemporary halakhah, and *Hasidut*. She was a prized "*havruta*," and they cherished the opportunity to hear her comments, insights, and life experiences. Following the example of her grandson who taught the class, her classmates affectionately called her "Grandma."

Big Grandma deeply believed in the vision of Nishmat's Yoatzot Halacha and later the Yoatzot Halacha Fertility Counselors Project. Two of her granddaughters are Yoatzot Halacha and she often enquired with interest about their work helping women and couples face modern halakhic and medical challenges.

Chaya passed away on the 20th of Tevet 5781 at the age of 89, leaving two children and their families, including 89 great-grandchildren, who remember her with love and admiration.

Dedicated in honor of my mother

Bella Suchman

and in honor of my daughter and daughters-in-law,

Naomi, Gila, Emily, and Adinah

*For the advancement of Nishmat's mission,
to give Jewish women a voice in halakhic discourse,
so that my daughters, and their daughters,
and all of our daughters
may live in a world where women's voices are heard,
their scholarship valued,
and their robust contributions to Jewish life recognized.*

Rose Gerszberg

*With profound gratitude
to the three most important women in my life:*

To my mother

Shoshana Lunzer, a”h

who instilled within me my moral compass.

To my Ezer Kenegdo

Lauren

*who has been my rock since the day we met,
and who continues to model for me
what a life’s partner is meant to be.*

To my daughter

Shoshana Elizabeth

*who continues to challenge my prenotions
and in so doing, expands my appreciation
of equality, justice, and inclusiveness.*

David Lunzer

Rabbi Menachem Genack
129 Meadowbrook Road
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May 24, 2021
13 Sivan 5781

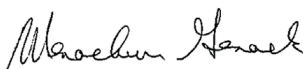
I was delighted to receive from Nishmat in Jerusalem a draft of the forthcoming English edition of their outstanding book, *Nishmat Habayit*. This collaborative work consists of numerous *teshuvot* on subjects related to pregnancy, birth, pregnancy loss, nursing and contraception written by *yoatzot halacha* and reviewed by Rabbi Yehuda Henkin *zt"l* and Rabbi Yaakov Warhaftig. In addition, the *sefer* contains five medical appendices by Dr. Deena Zimmerman, herself a *yoetzet halacha* as well as a medical doctor.

Each *teshuvah* presents a summary of the practical *pesak halachah* followed by a more detailed look at the classical and contemporary halachic sources on which the *pesak* is based. The *teshuvot* are admirably clear and erudite, and the work as a whole provides an excellent guide to these complex *halachot*.

We owe a debt of gratitude to Rabbanit Henkin not only for her work on this excellent book, but for her vision in founding the program of *yoatzot halacha*. There is no doubt that women are more comfortable asking questions of other women in this sensitive realm. Speaking from my experience as a rabbi in Englewood, New Jersey, I think I can safely say that the *yoatzot halacha* who have served in our community and consulted with me on occasion, have received more questions in their relatively few years here than I have received over a period of many more years.

The phenomenon of bringing questions to women in these areas is not a new one. Rabbi Rabinovich, in his *haskamah* to the Hebrew edition of *Nishmat Habayit*, points to a Talmudic precedent for women advising other women on these matters. In Brisk, the women would bring questions to the wife of the Brisker Dayan, Rav Simcha Zelig, who would bring them to her husband. This system functioned well until Rav Chaim Soloveitchik was asked to be more active in *pesak* for the community. Rav Chaim agreed to answer questions in the area of *taharat hamishpacha* so the women began bringing their questions to Rav Chaim's wife, who brought them to him. However, Rav Chaim had follow-up questions for each case and wanted to speak to the women directly. Since the women did not want to speak directly to Rav Chaim, the old system of bringing the questions to the Dayan's wife was quickly restored. *Yoatzot* trained in these *halachot* make the process of asking questions and receiving responses a smoother one.

In sum, this *sefer* is an important addition to the halachic literature on these subjects and represents the welcome development of a cadre of women who are equipped to provide guidance in the realm of family purity.



Rabbi Menachem Genack

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ט"ז סיון תשפ"א

For some ten years now, I have had the privilege of working with the U.S. *Yoatzot Halacha* Fellows Program of Nishmat's Miriam Glaubach Center, training *Yoatzot Halacha*. I continue to be in awe of the work and accomplishments of these *Yoatzot*. I am inspired by the intellectual rigor of the women in the program, and the dedicated work of the *Yoatzot* in the field. The women they have helped and the families they have benefitted, number well in the thousands.

A few years ago, the combination of *Torah* scholarship and dedication to assisting women and their families personified by the *Yoatzot* was made visible to a broader public by the publication of the much-heralded *sefer*, *Nishmat Habayit*. In its pages one can see *Torat Chessed*, the *Torah* of kindness and compassion, at work. Thoroughly researched comprehensive analysis of complicated topics is coupled with deep sensitivity to provide *hora'ah*, instruction, that is both halachically accurate, and of great help to women and their families.

With the publication of the English version, this treasure trove of *psak halacha*, insight, and compassion will now be available to the English-speaking public. This past year has unfortunately seen the passing, among other *Gedolei Yisrael*, of Nishmat's founding *Posek*, Rav Yehuda Henkin ז"ל. It was Rav Henkin's uncompromisingly high standard of *Torah* scholarship together with his keen awareness of the challenges of the modern world that is consistently reflected in this work, and it is certainly a merit for his pure soul.

And ייבדלו לחיים טובים וארוכים, we acknowledge the role of the *Rebbe* and *Posek* of the *Yoatzot*, Rav Yaakov Varhaftig, whose teachings permeate this work. And lastly, the true *nefesh* and *neshama* of Nishmat, Rabbanit Channa Henkin, who has the capacity to dream dreams and turn them into reality, was the moving force behind this publication. May they as well as all who participated in the various aspects of this *sefer* merit the blessings of the *Noten Hatorah* to be able to continue to serve Him with ever increasing contributions of *Torah* knowledge and *Chessed*.

אמן (נפתלי אומן)
K.A.



בס"ד, תמוז תשע"ז

מכתב ברכה

זה כבר כמה שנים שנודע לנו שמה הטוב של "מדרשת נשמת" הפועלת רבות בתחום של טהרת המשפחה, בהוראה, בהדרכה ובמתן תשובות הלכתיות מוסמכות ומיידיות. יפה ומיוחד הוא החידוש של הכשרת והסמכת יועצות הלכה אליהן פונות כל מי שיש לה שאלה ומעדיפה לפנות בענינים אלה ולא איש. היועצות עצמן מכירות את גבולות הגיזרה ויודעות מה הן יכולות לענות בעצמן ואימתי הן צריכות לשאול את הרבנים שיפסקו הלכה בשאלות שטעונות הכרעה.

כעת נוספה מדרגה חדשה עם ההוצאה לאור של הספר בו מרוכזות השאלות והתשובות, ואני מוכרח לציין כי אכן זהו ספר ערוך בטעם, כתוב בבהירות מקיף מבחינת מגוון הנושאים, וגם מבחינת העומק כשכל תשובה ניתנת בקיצור ויש עמה גם הרחבה מפורטת וברורה.

על כל אלה יבורכו ראשי המדרשה הלוא הם: **הרב יהודה הנקין שליט"א הרב יעקב ורהפטיג שליט"א**, והרבנית **חנה הנקין תליט"א**, הם אשר עומדים מאחורי כל הפעולות ועושים הכל בצורה מעוררת כבוד ומביאים לקידוש שם שמים.

עם זאת נראה לי שהספר המצוין הזה צריך להיות מופנה לרבנים, וליועצות ההלכה ולכל מי שעוסק בלימוד הנושא של טהרת המשפחה, ואין ספק שהספר הזה אכן יביא להם תועלת רבה וישר כוחם של הכותבות והעורכות, אולם נראה לי וצריך לומר שהספר אינו מתאים לכל אשה בביתה, לגביה נשאר הכלל הרגיל לפיו צריך להדריך את הנשים לפנות לרב או ליועצת ההלכה בשאלה, והם יענו את התשובה המתאימה לשואלת, וכמובן ישמחו להיעזר בספר. "נשמת הבית" ובצדק.



לסיום שוב שאו ברכה ממני המברך
אתכם על כל מפעלתיכם,

אריה שטרן

הרב הראשי לירושלים



ישיבת ברכת משה - מעלה אדומים (ע"ד)

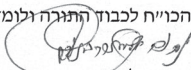
YESHIVAT BIRKAT MOSHE – MAALEH ADUMIM

בס"ד

יום שהוכפל בו כי טוב לסדר "אלה החוקים אשר צוה ה'... בין איש לאשתו" תשע"ז לפ"ק

מסורת עתיקה היא, שבהלכות טהרה נשים פוסקות הלכה. מסופר בגמרא (נדה י"ג, ב) בשם רבי יהודה הנשיא על מקרה קיצוני מאד: "חרשת היתה בשכונתנו - לא דיה שבדקת לעצמה, אלא שחברותיה היו רואות ומראות לה". עתה זכינו לראות ספר "נשמת הבית" בעריכת הר"ר יהודה ורעייתו הרבנית חנה הנקין, שליט"א, העוסק בכל הלכות טהרה - בנושאי היריון, לידה, הנקה, ואמצעי מניעה, בליווי נספחים רפואיים. המשיבות הן כולן נשים חכמות המשרתות כיועצות הלכה של מדרשת "נשמת" בראשות הרבנית חנה הנקין שליט"א. על כל נושא מובאות דעות הפוסקים ובמקום מחלוקת מוצעות דעות החולקים. בנוסף, יש לרוב הנושאים הסברים על פי המדע הרפואי המתקדם ביותר. עם כל זה, הסגנון הוא קריא ובהיר, וברור שכל תלמיד חכם, כולל דווקא גברים, יכול להרבות דעה מלימוד התשובות בנושאים החיוניים האלה.

יהי רצון שיזכות הרבים תעמוד לרב יהודה ולרבנית חנה הנקין שליט"א ויזו לראות דורות של תלמידי חכמים מצאצאיהם.

הכו"ח לכבוד התורה ולומדיה,

נחום אליעזר רבינוביץ



ה' בתמוז תשע"ז
29 ביוני 2017
13017

**"וַיִּלְתֵּק מִשֵּׁם הָהָרָה מִקְדָּם לְבֵית אֵל וַיֵּט אֶהְלֵה בֵּית אֵל מִיָּם וְהָלַי מִקְדָּם
וַיִּבֶן שָׁם מִזְבֵּחַ לַיהוָה וַיִּקְרָא בְּשֵׁם ה'**

וברש"י מובא המדרש:

"ויט אהלה אלה תכניז מלמד שנטע אהל שרה תחילה ואח"כ נטע אהל" (בראשית י"ב ח)

מהתיאור המדויק של מיקוד האוהל מהתיאור שבסמוך נבנה מזבח, אין הכוונה לאוהל פשוט למגורים, אלא בית מדרש כמו בפסוק "איש תם יושב אוהלים" וכיון ששרה גיירה את הנשים ואברהם גייר את הנשים נבנו לצורך זה בתי מדרש, ובית המדרש של הנשים קדם לזה של האנשים.

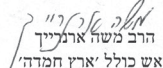
לפני שנים רבות עיתונאית מסוימת שהייתה כותבת בארץ מאמרים עבור עיתונים בחו"ל, סיפרה לי שרבות מחברותיה היו מקפידות יותר בענייני טהרת המשפחה לו הייתה להם כתובת נשית להיוועץ בה.

הרב והרבנית הנקין מצאו דרך מיוחדת להתמודד עם אתגר זה והקימו במדרשת נשמת מסלול מיוחד לנשים שעסקו כבר שנים בלימוד מעמקים של הגמרא ראשונים ופוסקים, ואח"כ הן לומדות בעיון רב את נושא טהרת משפחה וחיי אישות, לימוד המכשיר אותם כ"יועצות הלכה", שיכולות להשיב לשאלות המופנות אליהם מהארץ ומחול, התשובות מלוות בהתייעצות קבועה עם הרב הנקין שליט"א והרב ורהפטיג שליט"א.

במשך השנים הצטברו מאת שאלות ותשובות. ועתה זוכות היועצות להוציא ספר בשם "נשמת הבית", הצלחתו לעבור ולהתעמק בחלק גדול מן הספר נהנית, החכמתי וגיליתי שאלות מגוונות מאוד בענייני הריזון לידה הנקה, לכל שאלה מוצמדת תשובה, התשובות נכתבו בבהירות והן מובנות לכל נפש. יש בתשובות גם התייחסות לנפש השואלת, התשובות מוכיחות את הצורך בבית המדרש של שרה שקדם לבית מדרשו של אברהם. חלק נוסף בתשובה נקרא "הרחבה", זהו חלק של ברור התשובה מתוך הש"ס ראשונים אחרונים פוסקים עד פוסקי דורנו, העמקה מאוד יפה שיכולה להעשיר גם תלמידי חכמים ורבנים שעוסקים בנושאים אלו.

הספר "נשמת הבית" מציג בתוכו, בבהירות הדברים ברהיטות הלשון והנספחים הרפואיים שגלו לספר שמשלימים והופכים למקשה אחת עם המקורות ההלכתיים, כל זה מבטיח שהוא יהיה חלק מהספריה של רבנים מצד אחד ולומדי תורה ומצד שני משפחות צעירות שמתמודדות בשאלות דומות.

"חילכן לאורייתא"!


הרב משה ארנסון
ראש כולל 'ארץ חמדה'

הרב דוב ליאור

רב העיר

קריית ארבע היא חברון ת"ז

בס"ד, טו תמוז תשע"ז

מכתב ברכה

הובא לפניי החיבור הגדול והמקיף 'נשמת הבית', העוסק בנושאים הלכתיים של היריון, לידה וטהרת המשפחה, על פי הדרכת הרבנים החשובים הר"י הנקין והר"י ורהפטיג העומדים בראש המכון ככל הקשור לפסיקת הלכה בנושאים אלו.

עברתי על חלק מהספר ושמתתי לראות חיבור נפלא המכרר כל נושא החל ממקורות התלמוד וספרי ההלכה עד פוסקי דורנו. כל דין מבוסס על יסודות ההלכה האיתנים.

אין ספק שהקמת מוסד העונה לנשים הפונות בשאלות בנושאי טהרת המשפחה ע"י יועצות הלכה הוא מבורך, מפני שהרבה יותר נוח לאישה לדבר עם אישה מלב אל לב, וזה יביא להגברת ההשפעה ולשמירת הטהרה בחוגים רחבים.

ישר כוח להוגי הרעיון הר"י הנקין והרבנית חנה הנקין על תרומתם החשובה בהפעלת המכון. יהי רצון שיוכזו להגביר את הטהרה בכל רבדי העם וחפץ ה' בידם יצלח.

בשולי הדברים שתי הערות:

- א. לסימן כז - כתבתם שדם על נייר קינוח דינו ככתם, ומכיוון שנייר אינו מקבל טומאה - אין לאסור. לענ"ד נראה שדם קינוח על נייר אין דינו ככתם ואין חלים עליו הכללים שצריך להיות על דבר שמקבל טומאה ובשיעור גריס, אלא דינו כראייה בלי הרגשה (ולפי הש"ך הראשון בסימן קפג הוא טמא מדרבנן) ומטמא גם על נייר וגם בפחות מגריס, מפני שקינוח נחשב כאילו ראתה מגופה, ראה הלכות נדה לרמב"ן (פרק רביעי אות מה) דכתב: "המקנחת עצמה בעד הבדוק לה וטחתו בריכה או שהניחתו תחת הכר או תחת הכסת ונמצא עליו דם, אם משוך טמאה בכל שהוא... הניחתו בקופסא אפילו היה עגול טמאה בכל שהוא". הנה הקפיד לכתוב כאן "המקנחת" ולא "הבודקת", משמע שזה מבחוח, ומכיוון שאין במה לתלות טמאה בכל שהוא, אלא אם כן זה לאחר הטלת מי רגלים, שלפי שיטת מרן המחבר תולים שהדם בא מהכליות ולא מהרחם. וכן סובר הר"י אייבשיץ ('תפארת ישראל' קפג ס"ק א) שבקינוח טמאה אפילו בכל שהוא. וזכרני שלפני שנים רבות אמר לי הגר"ש אלישיב זצ"ל, שמי שמטוה ברואה משהו בקינוח נחשב כמעלים עין מן האיסורים.
- ב. לסימן יג - סיוע הבעל בחדר לידה. דומה שכל העניין הגיע כא מאמריקה, ואינו תואם את גדרי הצניעות המקודשים בעם ישראל. הבעל צריך ללוות את אשתו עד חדר הלידה ותו לא. בחדר לידה יכולה להיות איתה אימה, חברתה או תומכת לידה, אבל לא הבעל. אין נכון להעמיד את הבעל בניסיון שלא לגעת ולסייע לאשתו, ויש להסביר זאת ליולדת ולהשקיט את המיית לבה.

החותם לכבוד התורה ולומדיה,

דוב ליאור



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Foreword

In previous generations, women's lives were centered primarily around the home and child rearing. Women who were prominent in the public sphere, such as *Devorah Ha-Nevi'ah* were rare and exceptional. Indeed, the *rishonim* questioned how she could serve as a judge, and explained either that she had no official position or that it was a unique case.

However, even in the past, women were relied upon in some fields of halakhah, such as kashering meat and midwifery. Rambam wrote that if a woman is skilled, she may be trusted with *sheḥita* (ritual slaughter), and such is *ikar hadin*:

Whoever knows the laws of *sheḥita*, and slaughters in the presence of a *ḥakham* until he becomes adept, is considered an expert, *mumḥeh*. Any *mumḥeh* may slaughter *l'khatilah* in private. Even women and slaves may initially slaughter, as long as they are *mumḥim* (Laws of *Sheḥita*, 4:4).

A woman is certainly trusted with the laws of *taharat ha-mishpahah*, as the Torah states (*Vayikra* 15:28):

She shall count for herself seven days, and after that she shall become *tehorah*.

In modern times, woman's role in society has been fundamentally transformed. Today, women occupy prominent positions in all public spheres; in science, in medicine, in business and so on.

One of the greatest revolutions has occurred in the sphere of Torah learning. Women have progressed to the point of serious scholarship in all fields of Torah – Tanakh, Talmud and Halakhah.

Like in all other realms of *halakhah*, questions regarding *taharat ha-mishpahah* were in the past answered by rabbis. However, unlike other topics, discussing intimate and delicate matters with a man is often uncomfortable for the woman. Therefore, often the husband would be the one consulting with the expert rabbi.

The rabbi, with his learning and erudition, is able to render a halakhic ruling; but he is unable to feel all the woman feels. Often, her needs, sensitivities and personal experience of the laws of *taharat ha-mishpahah*, greatly influence the proper and correct ruling rendered.

Therefore, Rabbanit Chana Henkin, the dean of Nishmat – the Jeanie Schottenstein Center for Advanced Torah Study for Women, and her husband Rabbi Yehuda Herzl Henkin *z"tl*, Nishmat's *posek* – together with me; reached the understanding that there was an urgent need to train women who would study in depth the laws of *taharat ha-mishpahah* with all their halakhic ramifications, from the source of the law to its application in practical life – well above and beyond the training which traditionally was given to *madrikhot kallot* (kallah teachers).

Our goal was not the training of *poskot* (halakhic decisors), and therefore we decided on the title Yoetzet Halacha – halakhic advisor. Our objective was for the Yoetzet to work in tandem with the local rabbi, in accordance with his rulings.

At the outset, we did not foresee how this initiative would take root and develop. Today, thank God, over a hundred and fifty women have completed our program worldwide, after being trained by us rabbis and by Rabbanit Noa Lau, the program coordinator. All have passed comprehensive oral examination by four expert rabbinic examiners, before receiving Yoetzet Halacha certification.

With God's help we opened a branch in the United States, headed by Rabbi Aharon Naftali (Kenneth) Auman, the dean of Nishmat's Miriam Glaubach Center. Four classes have already completed their studies, and now serve in more than thirty communities in North America and beyond.

To date, the Yoatzot have responded, by telephone or over the internet, to more than three hundred thousand questions from all around the world. In complex matters, they were guided by Rabbi Henkin *zt"l* and myself.

Thank God, we see how this program has blossomed and borne fruit, heightening awareness and enhancing observance and punctiliousness of the halakhot of *taharat ha-mishpahah*.

This first volume, *Nishmat Ha-Bayit*, presents a collection of some of the most common questions we have been asked. The responses were written by select Yoatzot who worked diligently to give a comprehensive but clear response, and were checked by Rabbi Henkin and by myself. I am confident that this book will join the ranks of authoritative books on the Laws of *taharat ha-mishpahah*, adding its unique contribution in fortifying *taharat ha-bayit* of the Jewish People, and *kiddush shem Shamay'im*, sanctifying God's Name.

Yaakov Warhaftig
Dean, Nishmat's *Keren Ariel Yoatzot Halacha* Institute
in memory of Emil (Ariel) Hess

Preface

The Torah directs a woman who has given birth to bring both an *olah*, burnt offering, and a *ḥatat*, sin offering, to the *Mikdash*. According to R. Yitzḥak Abarbanel, the *olah* represents the mother's gratitude for having merited to join together with Hashem in the creation of a new human life and for delivering it safely, as well as her joy at having safely undergone the pain and danger of childbirth. But what sin or fault of hers requires a *ḥatat*?

In her study sheets on Vayikra, Nechama Leibowitz wrote as follows:

The woman has merited to feel inside herself, in her very flesh, the greatness of the Creator. She saw, felt, lived the growing of life within her – and at the same time this led her to deeply feel her own smallness and insignificance; her being but ashes and dust, her own impurity. For this reason she is commanded to bring a Sin Offering.

In other words, paradoxically, the same uplifting experience which raises her to the greatest heights of human potential, serves at the same time as a reminder of her own insignificance. We have similar feelings upon the “birth” of our *sefer*. On the one hand, from the depths of our hearts, we can fulfill the joyous duty of expressing our gratitude: We were privileged to learn in Nishmat's *Keren Ariel* program for training Yoatzot Halacha, to taste the sweetness of halakhic study, and thanks to our revered teachers – Rabbi Yaakov Warhaftig and Rabbi Yehuda Herzl Henkin *zt”l* – we have had the opportunity to delve deeply into *Hilkhot Niddah*. This halakhic training gave us the practical ability to help thousands of women, with their doubts and questions regarding *taharat ha-mishpahah* and women's health. Following upon our initial training as

Yoatzot, as we researched the *teshuvot* contained in this book, we merited to continue to explore the topics from their primary sources as well as discussing them with our rabbis – *shimush talmidei hakhamim*.

Just as a woman who gave birth, brings her *hataat* as an expression of her sense of smallness – so too we found that as we immersed ourselves in the study of Torah, and encountered the vastness, the breadth, depth and complexity of *halakhah*, that we were continuously, and acutely, made aware of our own insignificance.

Our hearts abound with thanksgiving to all those who accompanied us in this great undertaking: to Rabbanit Chana Henkin, for editing the *teshuvot* meticulously and for her monumental efforts which sustain Nishmat and the Yoatzot Halacha undertaking. To our Teacher and Rabbi, Rabbi Yaakov Warhaftig who guided us throughout our study and writing, being ever patient and welcoming – “*Gadol hu shimusho afyoter mi-limudo*,” the experience of apprenticing with him is even greater than that of learning from him. To Rabbi Yehuda Herzl Henkin *zt”l*, who for years accompanied the Yoatzot Halacha and the authorship of the *teshuvot*, and who was always available to answer any question that arose. Rabbi Henkin is sorely missed, and the immense void he leaves in the Torah world is continuously felt by his students. May we merit spreading his teachings faithfully, so that many more women can continue benefiting from his wisdom and *piskei halakhah*. We are forever grateful to both rabbis for having enabled us to come close to true *talmidei hakhamim*.

The *teshuvot* in this volume were written by Yoatzot Halacha and reviewed by Rabbi Warhaftig – and then passed on to the editors, Rabbi and Rabbanit Henkin. Beyond their lucid style, which is clearly reflected throughout the book, the Rav and Rabbanit added linguistic precision, halakhic coherence, and a close and accurate reading of the words of the *poskim*. Further thanks are due to Rabbanit Noa Lau, who read through all the *teshuvot*, clarifying the phraseology and making important comments. Thanks to their efforts, we are confident that this book can achieve its goals, and that it will be accessible and clear to the reader.

We also would like to thank Yoetzet Halacha Rabbanit Dr. Deena Zimmerman, for clarifying the medical aspects of the different questions we were asked; as well as Rabbi David Sperling, with whom we frequently consulted with while studying in the Bet Midrash.

With deep, heartfelt sorrow, we remember and commemorate Rabbi Eitam Henkin *Hy”d*, who participated in editing some of the responses.

We thank Rabbi Elli Fischer for his assistance with the translation, and Yoetzet Halacha Rabbanit Ilana Elzufon for her invaluable glosses and input.

We consulted with medical specialists and other professionals in preparing the *teshuvot*: Dr. Elhanan Baron and Yoatzot Halacha Drs. Eliraz Weinberg and Gila Gold read through the medical appendices and Dr. Avishai Malkiel, Michal Schonbrun and Einat Lev helped clarify various related issues. We owe a debt of gratitude to our colleagues, Yoatzot Halacha Rabbaniot Hindy Feder, Atara Eis, Shira Menitentag, Laurie Novick, Rotem Glasser, Dr. Tirza Kelman and Dr. Ayelet Kaminetzky for their assistance.

Our thanks also to Matthew Miller and the staff of Maggid Books, Reuven Ziegler, Caryn Meltz, and Ruth Pepperman, for their professional guidance.

We express a special sense of gratitude to our families, for their encouragement and support, enabling us to devote a great deal of time to Torah study, and to answering the many thousands of women whom we have had the privilege of helping, and strengthening their observance of the laws of *taharat ha-mishpaha*.

We thank Hashem for having merited participating in the Yoatzot Halacha initiatives, and having had the privilege of taking part in authorship of this book. In the name of my fellow Yoatzot Halacha, I conclude with the prayer that this sefer help raise the level of halakhic observance, and that, G-d forbid, no mishap be caused by it.

Michal Roness
Coordinator, Makhon L'Meḥkar
Nishmat

Introduction

Nishmat's *Keren Ariel* Program for training Yoatzot Halacha, in memory of Ariel Emil Hess *zt"l*, was born of my own experience as a Rabbi's wife. When I was young, for a period of years, I devoted most of my energies outside our home to instructing women in *taharat ha-mishpaḥah*. Time and again I encountered women who would not ask a question of a rabbi. Some would act overly leniently, going beyond what is halakhically permitted, while others would be unnecessarily stringent, disrupting their family life. Additionally, I encountered numerous women suffering severe distress because of medical conditions which intersected with halakhic issues.

I approached my husband, Rabbi Yehuda Herzl Henkin *zt"l*, and Rabbi Yaakov Warhaftig who both concurred wholeheartedly with training God-fearing, learned women, to serve as a female halakhic address for women seeking guidance in *taharat ha-mishpaḥah*. To the in-depth study of *halakhah*, we added supplementary studies in women's health on topics intersecting with the laws of *taharat ha-mishpaḥah*, in order to develop a comprehensive toolkit for practical assistance. The program opened in Elul 5757 (September 1997), and since then, over 150 Yoatzot Halacha have completed their studies. Most of them serve in Israel, and some 30 in conjunction with community rabbis outside Israel. Since the inception, Rabbi Warhaftig and Rabbi Henkin *zt"l* served as the address for Yoatzot for questions requiring *psikah*. We chose the name Yoatzot Halacha to convey a posture of humility before the world of *psikah*.

We did not anticipate the overwhelming response of women to the new resource. We have received hundreds of thousands of questions, from Israel and from throughout the Jewish world. The questions reached us via Nishmat's Golda

Koschitzky Hotline and Nishmat's Yoatzot internet site, or were addressed directly to Yoatzot Halacha in their communities. Many of the questions had medical or emotional facets.

This book was born following seventeen years of Yoatzot Halacha work in the field. It is not intended to be a *sefer pesak*, but rather to foster awareness of the halakhic challenges experienced by observant women, and to organize the *halakhah* for the benefit of those who are learning, with the aim of strengthening proper observance of *halakhah* and alleviating the grief which clouds the lives of many couples. Out of the thousands of anonymous questions in our database, we collected for this volume questions dealing with pregnancy, childbirth, and contraception. Their unique value lies in their addressing issues which women are facing today.

This book has two parts: the *teshuvot*, and the medical appendices. In the brief answer, we summarize the response of the Yoetzet Halacha. In personal conversations, by phone, or even in written internet responses – Yoatzot respond empathetically, patiently explaining halakhic concepts and their application in detail, in accordance with the woman's knowledge of *halakhah* and the extent of information she wishes to receive. Often, if need be, the Yoetzet will offer emotional support or personal guidance. We have followed the brief answer with an extensive halakhic analysis. In the second part of the book we have added clinical information which *morei hora'ah* may find beneficial.

The Yoatzot Halacha, and the thousands of women whom they assist, owe a debt of immense gratitude to Rabbi Yehuda Herzl Henkin *zt"l* and Rabbi Yaakov Warhaftig, the two *poskim* who threw open the gates of halakhic learning before women. I wish to thank personally Rabbi Warhaftig and Rabbanit Noa Lau for their partnership in paving the path of the Yoatzot Halacha, and for their wise instruction; and Rabbanit Michal Roness who steered this book from vision to reality. This *sefer* would not be if not for her devotion and determination; and her wisdom and kindness turned every discussion to an edifying experience. I also wish to salute the Yoatzot Halacha who tirelessly strive, with fear of God and love of Man, to raise the standard of purity in Israel and make halakhic life pleasant for Jewish women. May God bless them all.

Work on these *teshuvot* began while my son and daughter-in-law, Rabbi Eitam and Naama Henkin, לֹא נִפְרְדוּ, וְהַנְּעִימָם בְּחַיֵּיהֶם וּבְמוֹתָם לֹא נִפְרְדוּ, may God avenge their murder, were still with us. My husband *zt"l* was a *posek* whose influence ran far and wide, and our world would be a different place but for his profound support of women's studying Torah. This volume is a reflection

both of his insistence that the methodology of *halakhah* is timeless, and of his refusal to lower the bar for women. His passing has left our family bereft, and the Jewish world with a void that will not easily be filled. May the enhancement of Torah and *taharah* by this book offer some consolation to a grieving wife and mother, as it is written (Tehillim 94:19): “*Tanhumekha yesha'ashe'u nafshi.*”

Signed with a prayer for God's blessing upon all households of Israel,
Chana Henkin
Jerusalem, Tammuz 5782

Part I

Pregnancy

Siman 1

Panty Liners during the Seven Neki'im When Trying to Conceive

Question

I am 36 years old and trying to conceive. Each month, several days into the seven *neki'im*, red *ketamim* (stains), larger than the size of a *gris*, appear on the white panty liner I use, forcing me to start counting from the beginning. I cannot manage to become *tehorah* before ovulation, and my period (which is otherwise regular) begins just a few days after immersing. Is there any way to resolve this problem?

Answer

Lekhathilah, a woman is expected to wear white underwear during the seven *neki'im*. If she sees a red *ketem* that is larger than the size of a *gris* on the underwear, she must start the count over. Many women regularly wear panty liners throughout the month, to absorb natural discharges, and most *poskim* permit this practice even during the seven *neki'im*.

According to many opinions, a panty liner is not susceptible to *tum'ah*. Therefore, unless a woman had a *hargashah* (sensation) that would render her *niddah*, even a large red *ketem* found on the liner would not bring about *niddah* status. However, if such a *ketem* is found on the panty liner during the seven *neki'im*, the woman must perform a *bedikah* (internal self-examination) immediately, and her status is determined by what appears on the *bedikah* cloth, regardless of its size.

This rule applies under normal circumstances. However, in the case of a woman who suffers from *ketamim*¹ and has a hard time becoming *tehorah*, a different rule applies. Under such circumstances, the woman may use a panty liner, either white or dark, during the seven *neki'im* and not examine herself immediately even if she saw a *ketem*. Additionally, she may skip the *bedikot* on days that she sees *ketamim*. However, she may not omit the *bedikot* on the first and seventh day of the *neki'im*.²

Based on your description, in your specific situation, you may conduct yourself as a woman who suffers from *ketamim* and ignore the stains that you see on the panty liner. Nevertheless, you must perform a *hefsek taharah*, one *bedikah* on the first of the *neki'im*, and one on the seventh. If they are blood-free, you may immerse.

Halakhic Expansion

The Gemara (*Shabbat* 13b) distinguishes between “days of menstruation” (*yemei niddut*) and “days of whiteness” (*yemei libun*). Rashi (*ad loc.*) explains that “days of whiteness” are the seven *neki'im*, during which “[a woman] must wear white clothing, for examination.” It seems that the core meaning of “whiteness” and “white clothing” is laundered and clean; accordingly, *Tur* and *Shulḥan Arukh*³ rule that during the seven *neki'im*, a woman must wear a clean undergarment that has been checked for stains. However, several *Rishonim*⁴ write that a woman must wear white undergarments and use white bedsheets during the seven *neki'im*.⁵

1. There are many different possible reasons for irregular menstrual bleeding. It is recommended that a woman who suffers from repeated staining consult her gynecologist to ascertain the cause of the bleeding and the best solution. See Medical Appendix I: The Female Reproductive System, and Medical Appendix V: Contraception.
2. See also below, *Siman* 14: *Mokh Daḥuk* and *Bedikot* following Birth.
3. *Tur* and *Shulḥan Arukh*, *Yoreh De'ah* 196:3. This is also the ruling of *Arukh Ha-Shulḥan*, *Yoreh De'ah*, 196:22.
4. *Roke'ah*, *Hilkhot Niddah siman* 317: “She wears clothes, a white robe and a white sheet on her bed; this is ‘days of whiteness.’” The formulation of *Roke'ah* is cited in *Mordekhai* as well, and *Rema* rules accordingly in *Yoreh De'ah* 196:3.
5. There is room to comment that since nowadays women sleep in form-fitting undergarments it is not necessary to be meticulous about this. R. Warhaftig and R. Henkin rule that there is no need for white sheets, even *lekhatḥilah*. In contrast, R. Shlomo Levi writes that there is room to be lenient only in times of need (*Sha'arei Oraḥ*, p. 142). See *Taharah Ke-Halakhah*, p. 296, n. 78, which rules stringently on this matter based on *Shi'urei Shevet Ha-Levi* (196:3:3, p. 281) and *Igrot Moshe* (*Yoreh De'ah* 4:17, part 27). R. Moshe Feinstein is concerned that women will not distinguish between form-fitting and loose undergarments. R. Wosner notes that technically there is no need for a white sheet, but nevertheless rules that one should be meticulous about this *lekhatḥilah*, as it is a “proper Jewish custom.” However, *bedi'avad* or in extenuating circumstances, it is not compulsory. R. Ovadiah Yosef (*Taharat Ha-Bayit*, 2:13:4,

*Torat Ha-Shelamim*⁶ cites two reasons for the need to wear white. First, it is important for the garment to be clean, in order to be certain that there are no prior stains from the days of menstruation, which would produce uncertainty about the woman's present status. Second, it is important that the garment not be colored, so as to establish with certainty that the woman is currently without stains, during the seven *neki'im*. It is only according to the second reason that it is necessary for the garment to be truly white. Nevertheless, all *poskim* agree that under extenuating circumstances, or *bedi'avad*,⁷ the seven *neki'im* are valid even without wearing white.

In recent years, it has become common for women to wear a panty liner regularly, throughout the month, to absorb bodily discharges. This practice raises the question of whether one may wear a panty liner during the seven *neki'im*. On one hand, according to many opinions, the liner is not susceptible to *tum'ah*,⁸ but on the other hand, it is white, and stains are visible on it. Additionally, wearing a panty liner does not fit with the aforementioned custom of wearing white garments.⁹

Most contemporary *poskim*¹⁰ permit wearing a panty liner during the seven *neki'im*. This raises the question of how to relate to finding a *ketem*, unaccompanied by a *hargashah*, on a liner during the seven *neki'im*. According to most opinions, a *ketem* found on a panty liner at a time when the woman is *tehorah*

p. 293) notes that there are different customs vis-à-vis white clothes and sheets, and that everyone should practice according to the custom of their community.

6. *Yoreh De'ah* 196:6–8.
7. For example, if the woman is traveling and does not have a change of clothes. This is the ruling of Rema, based on *Agur* (*siman* 1371) and *Hagahot Sha'arei Dura*.
8. See below, *Siman* 44: Staining on a Panty Liner or Synthetic Clothing, in *Halakhic Expansion*.
9. If it is white, because of the material from which it is manufactured, which is not cloth; if it is colored, because it is not white.
10. Since this is a recent phenomenon, only contemporary *poskim* address it, and this is the ruling of R. Warhaftig and R. Henkin. R. Wosner (*Shi'urei Shevet Ha-Levi* 196:3:1, p. 281) writes: "During the seven *neki'im*, she may go with a pad made to absorb sweat, and there is no need to be concerned that a drop of blood will be absorbed in it." R. Shlomo Zalman Auerbach writes as follows in response to a question from R. David Dudkevitz as to whether it is permissible to wear a panty liner during the seven *neki'im*: "During the seven *neki'im* they are certainly good, as they are white. However, white sheets are also necessary in case they move around, and with respect to colored ones, we said that they are not susceptible to *tum'ah*" (R. Auerbach's responsum is cited in R. Shlomo Levi's article in *Tzohar*, issue 20 [5765], pp. 21-23). On the basis of this responsum, R. Elyashiv Knohl (*Ish Ve-Isha*, p. 101 and p. 144, n. 21) writes that even a woman who has no particular problems may wear a panty liner during the seven *neki'im*, as long as the liner is of the sort that a bloodstain would be visible on it. R. Zechariah Ben-Shlomo (*Orot Ha-Taharah*, pp. 278–79) writes that one may use a panty liner during the seven *neki'im lekhathilah*, and they are even preferable to white underwear, since they remain white and do not darken over time.

does not render her *niddah*, since the liner is made from materials that are not susceptible to *tum'ah*. The same applies during the seven *neki'im*, except that during the *neki'im*, a woman must wear white to ascertain that she has indeed stopped bleeding. Therefore, if she found a red *ketem* larger than *ke-gris* (the size of a *gris*) on a panty liner during the seven *neki'im*, even though the *ketem* does not render her *niddah*, she must perform a *bedikah* immediately to ensure that she maintains her halakhic presumption of cleanness.¹¹

Nevertheless, *Hakhamim* were lenient in the case of a woman who has a difficult time becoming *tehorah* and who suffers from *ketamim*,¹² permitting her to wear colored garments to save her from *ketamim*.¹³ *Aharonim*¹⁴ note that this leniency

11. This is the ruling of R. Warhaftig and R. Henkin. This ruling is a compromise between the view that a stain on a panty liner during the seven *neki'im* is akin to a stain on white underwear, and the view that is lenient regarding panty liners during the seven *neki'im* as when the woman is *tehorah*. R. Aharon Naftali (Kenneth) Auman, Dean of Nishmat's Miriam Glaubach Center, does not require a *bedikah* under these circumstances.

In contrast, according to R. Shlomo Levi, a red stain larger than a *gris* on a panty liner always renders the woman *teme'ah*, and there is no need for a *bedikah*. This is in light of his stringent ruling vis-à-vis panty liners, as they are manufactured as a *kli* and are form-fitting (*Sha'arei Orach*, pp. 89–90). R. Levi disagrees with R. Knohl's understanding of R. Auerbach's responsum, as cited in the previous footnote. According to R. Levi (*Tzohar*, issue 20, pp. 21–23), R. Auerbach indeed permitted wearing a panty liner over white underwear during the seven *neki'im*, but if a stain is found on it, it renders her *teme'ah*. This is the meaning of his distinction between white underwear and colored underwear, over the latter of which one should not wear a panty liner during the seven *neki'im*.

R. Levi's interpretation of R. Auerbach's words is difficult, in my opinion, and this requires further study. R. Zechariah Ben-Shlomo cites another view. He recommends wearing a panty liner during the seven *neki'im*, adding: "It has already been clarified above that a stain found on a disposable hygienic item is *tahor*, as it is considered something that is not susceptible to *tum'ah*" (*Orot Ha-Taharah*, pp. 278–79).

12. It is not always simple to define who is a "woman who has a hard time becoming *tehorah*." A *posek* must take into account medical, psychological, and marital information about the woman and her husband, together with halakhic information, and decide when she can be so defined, thus warranting leniency. Simpler situations include, for example, a woman who has not managed to become *tehorah* more than six weeks after childbirth or a woman whose count of seven *neki'im* is negated by *ketamim* that render her *teme'ah* or by *bedikot* that do not emerge clean.
13. Rema, *Yoreh De'ah* 190:10, based on *Niddah* 61b and *Mishneh Torah*, *Hilkhot Issurei Biah* 9:7.
14. R. Wosner (*Shi'urei Shevet Ha-Levi* 190:9, p. 171) permits this only in the case of a woman who is unable to become *tehorah*, only during the middle days of the seven *neki'im* and after asking a halakhic question, and only as a temporary measure (*hora'at sha'ah*). R. Mordechai Eliyahu (*Darkhei Taharah*, p. 22), cites all the views and rules that a woman with many *ketamim* should ask a halakhic question as to what to do, and to be lenient with regard to colored garments. This is also the ruling of R. Yekutiel Farkash (*Taharah Ke-Halakhah*, p. 297). R. Ovadiah Yosef (*Taharat Ha-Bayit*, 2:13:4, pp. 293–96) addresses this topic. He writes that according to the

applies during the seven *neki'im* as well. Contemporary *poskim*¹⁵ write that instead of wearing colored garments, it is possible, and perhaps preferable, to use a panty liner, which is not susceptible to *tum'ah*. In such a situation, the woman need not perform a *bedikah* immediately upon seeing a *ketem* on the liner; on the contrary, she relies on the laws of *ketamim* and performs only the essential *bedikot*, on the first and seventh days, so that she can become *tehorah*.

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above-mentioned ruling of *Shulhan Arukh* that clean, bloodstain-free garments are sufficient, it is obvious that colored garments may be worn even during the seven *neki'im*. He cites a list of *poskim* who are stringent and require specifically white garments during the seven *neki'im*, even when the woman suffers from *ketamim*, but disagrees with them, claiming that from the moment the woman performed a *hefsek taharah*, she is defined as having a presumption of *taharah* (*hezkat taharah*), and therefore no distinction should be made between the seven *neki'im* and when she is *tehorah*. He also addresses the view among *poskim* that colored garments may not be worn specifically during the first three of the seven *neki'im*; R. Ovadiah rejects this view, too (relying on the responsa *Me'il Tzedakah siman 62* and *Berit Ya'akov, Yoreh De'ah siman 58*), and ultimately permits wearing colored garments even *lekhatilah* for a woman who is likely to find *ketamim*. It should be noted that R. Shlomo Levi (*Sha'arei Orah*, p. 142) rules stringently on this matter, writing that only a woman with a *petza* (sore, cut, or abrasion) may temporarily wear a colored garment during the seven *neki'im*. However, a woman who suffers from *ketamim* (such as a nursing mother or a woman taking pills) should not wear a colored garment.

15. R. Yekutiel Farkash (*Taharah Ke-Halakhah*, p. 80) writes that, if possible, in such situations, wearing a pad that is not susceptible to *tum'ah* may be preferable to a colored garment, and “this is more *me-hudar*.” On p. 80, n. 15*, he writes: “However, with regard to the seven *neki'im*, I have found nobody who discusses [a woman wearing a pad if *ketamim* make it difficult for her to become *tehorah*]. At first glance, it would seem to be clearly permitted – for nowhere do we find that she is specifically obligated to wear a garment that is susceptible to *tum'ah* during the seven *neki'im*. They insisted only that the garment be white, clean, and checked for stains, etc. On the other hand, according to this, all *ketamim* found during the seven *neki'im* would be deemed *tahor*. I asked many of the greatest *poskim* and my teachers, under whom I apprenticed, and no one told me anything clear on this matter – even though, at first glance, it seems quite correct to all of them.” As stated, R. Knohl (*Ish Ve-Isha*, p. 101) permits wearing a panty liner even *lekhatilah* during the seven *neki'im*, noting that, “These liners can assist the *posek* in cases of uncertainty. . . .” R. Shlomo Levi (*Sha'arei Orah*, p. 89) rules stringently about a *ketem* on a panty liner, but if there is another reason to be lenient, for example, if the woman has an IUD and finds stains on the liner, he rules leniently and deems her *tehorah*, even during the seven *neki'im*, based also on the possibility that it may perhaps be blood from a *petza* (sore, cut, or abrasion) (*Tzohar*, issue 20, p. 23). R. Zechariah Ben-Shlomo (*Orot Ha-Taharah*, p. 312) writes that a *ketem* found during the seven *neki'im* on something not susceptible to *tum'ah* does not cause *tum'ah*, because *Hakhamim* made no decree about this. Therefore, it is permissible and worthwhile to place a panty liner *lekhatilah* to absorb the *ketamim*. According to him: “The seven *neki'im* must be clean of *tamei* blood that causes *tum'ah*, but it is not necessary for them to be free of blood that *halakhah* deems *tahor*, not because of its appearance, but because of the rules of *ketamim*.”