

# LETCWORTH HEBREW CONGREGATION

WYVENHOE,  
22, SOLLERSHOTT WEST,  
LETCWORTH, HERTS.

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Dear Colleague Professor Lamm, 20/54

I just realised I have not congratulated you yet on your appointment to occupy the Erna Michael Chair for Jewish Education. I have no doubt your contribution to Jewish Education will be lasting.

Incidentally, Mr. Jacob Michael's late father was a first cousin of my late Mother.

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Whatever your response you need not return the enclosures.

Wishing you and all yours  
I conclude with au revoir in health and happiness, <sup>אין בריאות ובהצלחה</sup>

Yours very sincerely,

אברהם צבי  
7110119

חיים ושלום



FAMILY PURITY - A SPIRITUAL AS WELL AS A PHYSICAL FORCE

Taharath ha-Mishpachah - Family Purity is the insurance of Jewish survival but its importance in this respect is nearly as frequently ignored as are many of its most basic precepts. It needs no apology, its almost 4,000 years of being minutely observed speak for themselves in having produced a Nation whose sheer physical prowess has once more astounded Mankind less than <sup>one</sup> year ago. But it is nevertheless advisable, especially in a Journal addressing itself to a learned readership, occasionally to sum up some earlier as well as up to date results of the thinking that has been devoted by responsible Jewish Leaders to Family Purity and its physical and spiritual implications. Social anthropologists would be the last to deny that the inferior status of women as chattels without rights of their own originated from the fact that during their menstrual and child-bearing periods they are not only unfit to partake in the defence of their ethnic unit but also require special protection which thus reduces the number of available defenders. These periods more often than not entail a state of clear indisposition/~~and worse,~~ necessitating extra care if not actual nursing at all times. Primitive male society did, therefore exact female subjection in- and outside marriage as the price for protecting women in their state of periodic incapacity. Our sacred Torah by forbidding any



kind of contact between wife and husband during menstruation and after confinement has already at the dawn of History resoundingly condemned this bestial if not positively devilish male response. Husband and wife may unite only when they are on a level of full equality, when no noticeable trace of female weakness can be discerned when mere mention of inferiority would be the grossest insult. Is there any other Law which has thus emancipated women so long ago? Men were so to speak never permitted to have sensory experience of the symptoms of women's dependence. Husband and wife must face each other as equals or not at all. It follows quite naturally that contact with pregnant women, who although of limited mobility are looked up to as more than equals by their husbands for their <sup>undeniable</sup> major part in currently producing another generation, is fully permissible. Here we have one forceful message brought home by the observance of Family Purity. Now let us consider another.

Menstruation is caused by the disintegration of a non-fertilised ovum which had not been given a chance to develop. Thus it is a symptom of a loss of potential life. We know that the ovum by its decay affects the whole organism of the woman who carries it causing discomfort, fatigue and toxic effects spreading to her environment. The loss of motherhood as manifested in menstruation makes a woman a co-sufferer whose vitality has been lowered, whose body has suffered a miniature <sup>the shock of</sup>



deathblow, contrary to its Nature-ordained purpose - reproduction. It has to struggle hard to regain its balance and ability to produce life. In short the woman is as much a victim of non-fertilisation as the ovum she lost. Non-fertilisation can be due only to the total lack of intercourse or to its lack of success in fertilising. Now would it not be absolute mockery to have intercourse with a woman when still a victim of menstruation, thus either trying to make amends for an omission at a time when it can do no good but only harm or repeating an act, which even at the right time was unable to prevent the woman's present predicament, at a time when it cannot but be completely ineffective? Is it not adding insult to injury making a woman experience in her distress what might have prevented it but failed or comes too late to do so and will certainly fail now and possibly worse. So much for the question why intercourse with a menstruating woman has been pronounced impure by the Torah. It is as we have just seen not only impure but decidedly sadistic. Is the periodic intimate suffering of women given such consideration anywhere besides Judaism? All this is valid quite apart from the well-known physical ill-effects of intercourse during menstruation which in more detail may be culled from any text book of Gynaecology.



We now turn to the procedure without which wife and husband must never make contact - total immersion in a kasher Mikveh. Let us deal with total immersion first. We have already mentioned that a woman's decaying ovum produces visible toxic effects far beyond her person. Thus it has been asserted in explanation of such effects that a kind of film or layer of charged atmosphere encompasses a menstruating woman all round. The insulating quality of her skin has been temporarily reduced by the shock of menstruation and thus she exudes toxic rays <sup>or</sup> particles. It has, for instance, been frequently noticed in corroboration that fresh flowers handed to a woman in this state wither almost instantly. Anything short of total immersion would only make this layer of toxic character concentrate and intensify on the parts of her body surface which have not been isolated from contact with the atmosphere. Smells attaching to objects react similarly unless the latter are fully submerged all at once. Thus only immersion of a woman's whole body at the same time can completely displace the toxic layer around her and leave her thoroughly purified. When the woman is ready and free to produce new life once more anything prejudicial to its optimum growth which she could re-absorb must be known to have been radically eliminated.



A kasher Miqveh containing naturally accumulated and untouched rain - or springwater - is however as vitally important for the renewal of purity as the act of total immersion. Man is created by three partners, the Almighty and his parents (Kiddushin, 30b). This fact must become firmly embedded in the parents' experience if we expect them as we do to pay their third but major Partner His full tribute. The original Creation emerged from primeval water over which the Spirit of the Almighty hovered. Thus a woman, the guardian and nurturing soil of new life, must completely emerge from water as near its primeval condition as possible in order to feel and proclaim that what <sup>she hopes will be</sup> ~~is~~ budding in her womb <sup>going to be</sup> is as much a divine product as was the original Creation. In a way even her own life has been taken away from her for a brief moment by divine command when she fully submerges but is given back to her by our Creator's will, together with her reproductive capacity, which has been in suspense, as new the very moment she dutifully re-emerges purified from the water under which she could not have stopped alive for any length of time. (A Gentile who voluntarily adopts Judaism cannot become converted unless he too submerges in a kasher Miqveh. From the moment of his conversion onwards he is legally considered a new person different from his former self. His former life has similarly been



handed back to its Creator and a new one has been given to him on his re-emergence from the water in which he could not have stayed alive). Thus the act of ultimate fertilisation is consecrated as a manifestation of the overt exercise of creative divine power. The B'rachah said over immersion now needs no further accounting for. Even physically the near primeval water of a Mikveh has beneficial, possibly radioactive powers which any other water lacks. In analogy healing spa waters are most effective when taken straight from their source. Patients often travel thousands of miles to drink such waters at their very source although most of them are obtainable bottled from the chemist round the corner. But medically they are considered to be almost non-effective, though chemical analysis cannot detect any change in them. Science is not all that omniscient! The Torah wants a potential mother to have besides above spiritual also the greatest possible physical benefit from her immersion thus best ensuring the complete neutralisation of all toxic effects of menstruation. It, therefore, absolutely insists on untouched rain - or springwater, which is able to confer its curative qualities also to other water coming into closest contact with it within the layout of a kosher Mikveh. Only the latter imparts to all its components used for immersion the divine vitality inherent in nature in its original state.



The Laws of Family Purity thus prove, if nothing else, that our sacred Divine Torah is dedicated to Life at its best and purest. Whoever foolishly enough disregards them can only be a loser. If he or she were to realise that in addition they threaten the healthy survival of our Nation, they may have second thoughts about their indifference. Surely neither would like to act as one who is trying to bore a hole into the hull of an ocean liner and when caught and taken to task, responds: Am I not doing it only to my own cabin? We are all in the same boat and the ideal conditions for creating incipient life whose achievement has preserved us in full vigour for many thousands of years th.C. cannot but also in all future be vitally beneficial, nay, indispensable to the unprejudiced health of every Jewish couple's children. Their maximum viability is undoubtedly all parents' paramount concern. By loyally observing Family Purity they render themselves, their offspring and their Nation the most enlightened service!

Bibliography: "The Golden Chain" by Rabbi Simon Baumberg. London 1929.

A classic badly requiring a but slightly adapted re-issue for our contemporaries.

"A Hedge of Roses" by Rabbi Professor Norman Lamm. New York 1966.

An up to date Philosophy of Jewish Marriage.