

Ask the Kabbalist

Contributed by Tzvi Fishman
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Here are some reader questions that we asked guidance from the Torah Sage and Kabbalist, Rabbi Eliahu Leon Levi:

Where Are the Fireworks?

Question:

My husband and I have been married close to ten years and we have never experienced an orgasm at the same time during our marital relations. I feel there is something missing in our relationship because of this. Am I right?

Answer:

No. You needn't feel that something is missing. The holy Kabbalist, Rabbi Leon Levi, says that there are no extra points awarded for having a mutual climax at the very same moment. The Sages do not put an emphasis on husband and wife achieving physical satisfaction together at the same time. They write that a man should make sure that his wife reaches satisfaction first. This is his duty in performing the mitzvah. Then he is to reach his satisfaction. This demonstrates the husband's love and caring, as opposed to engaging in relations for selfish pleasure. If a man is quickly aroused and tends to finish first, he should rest briefly after relations, then have relations a second time whereby the wife is more likely to reach satisfaction before he does. Also if there is a danger that the husband may spill semen in vain due to over excitement, he is not expected to delay his satisfaction if this will lead to the serious mishap of wasting his seed. Worrying too much about reaching a climax together can interfere with emotional and spiritual aspects of the union and place emphasis where it doesn't belong. The "fireworks" of mutual, at-the-same-moment, satisfaction is an idea foreign to Jewish sources.

Do I Have to Turn Off the Lights!

Question:

I understand that the marital union is to be performed in darkness, but what about foreplay? Can there be a little light in the beginning to get into the mood before the actual act?

Answer:

Rabbi Levi says that a little light is allowed before the marital union, but the husband must be careful not to look at his wife's sexual organ, and that lights must be turned off before the actual marital union begins. Also, a husband should be careful that visual stimulation does not cause him to spill semen in vain.

Clitoral Satisfaction

Question:

It takes a long time for my wife to reach an orgasm. Am I allowed to massage around her clitoris with my finger to give her satisfaction?

Answer:

Yes.

Is Using a Diaphragm OK?

Question:

Birth control pills play weird games with my hormones. Can I use a diaphragm instead?

Answer:

No. Diaphragms, like condoms, bring about the spilling of semen in vain. Rabbi Levi also advises that birth control pills be avoided because they can cause physical problems, if not at the time of their use, then in the future. Rabbi Levi recommends using a proper IUC, but only under rabbinical supervision and approval. The decision to prevent pregnancy is not to be made by a married couple without rabbinical consultation.

Holiness or Happiness?

Question:

During the course of our marriage I became religious. I want to conduct our marital relations in a more modest fashion

than in the past, according to the halachah, but my wife objects and wants to continue with the things that she likes. What's more important – the peace of shalom bayit, or making my wife happy?

Answer:

Rabbi Levi emphasizes that the laws of Taharat HaMishpachah are not to be violated for any reason, nor should the husband engage in actions that can lead to the spilling of semen in vain, like when the wife is on top of the husband during intercourse. If for instance, she is unwilling to give up this ill-advised practice, and this causes great conflict between them, they can start off in this manner, but revert to the standard missionary position with the husband on top before the husband reaches his climax – taking care not to spill semen in vain in the process, which is not an easy thing to do. Also, it is important to emphasize that happiness in marriage, to a very great extent, derives precisely from the holiness of the marital union, <http://www.jewishsexuality.com/keys-to-a-holy-union> which brings great blessing in all aspects of life including health, livelihood, and child raising, and not from immodest practices that, most often than not, lead to the very opposite, may Hashem have mercy.

Kosher Brit

Question:

I was born to non-religious Jewish parents in America. I received a circumcision right in the hospital by a doctor, not a rabbi, and not on the eighth day. I have since become a baal tshuva. Do I have to do something now to make my brit more kosher?

Answer:

An authorized Orthodox mohel can inspect your brit and determine if anything further needs to be done, for instance “periyah” or “tepot dam.”

I Was Born Via a Violation of Niddah

Question:

My parents did not observe the Niddah laws of family purity. I understand that Niddah impurity was passed onto me at birth. Is there something I can do to erase the blemish?

Answer:

The Arizal states that 84 full day fasts are an atonement and cleansing from the impurity of one instance of spilling semen in vain. In the case you site, the fasts should be undertaken as follows: on 3 occasions (if you are able) you can fast day and night for 2 straight days (with time lapses from one fast to the next), then add another 3 separate full days fasts with days in between the fasts. This adds up to the equivalent of 84 fasts.

Ride ‘em Cowboy!

Question:

My wife only enjoys our lovemaking and reaches an orgasm when she is on top. How can I deny her this pleasure?

Answer:

She may enjoy it, but she will suffer for it, because in reversing the proper order of things in this world, the proper order is reversed in the upper spiritual worlds to which a Jew is attached, bringing down harsh judgments (Dinim) instead of Heavenly kindness and blessing (Hesed). Once again, if she is unwilling to give up this ill-advised practice, and this causes great conflict between you, you can start off in this manner, but revert to the standard missionary position with you on top before reaching your climax – taking care not to spill semen in vain in the process, which is not an easy thing to do.