

# "You Shall Be Holy"

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Secret of the Brit  
 Chapter 5 - Rectify The Brit, Part II  
 1. "You Shall Be Holy"

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The Gemara teaches that the mere thought of tshuva atones in and of itself. (Kiddushin 49B, Orot HaTshuva, 2) While this is certainly true, when it comes to the constant tshuva required to rectify sexual transgressions, there are practical steps a person must take to distance himself from the temptations and habits that have led him astray, and to cleanse the stains caused by his sins. These concrete formulas go hand in hand with the higher tshuva discussed in the previous chapter.

The transgression of wasting semen can come about in several fashions, and each requires repentance. While masturbation and forbidden sexual relations are the most serious offenses, the unintentional wasting of semen (keri) must also be redressed. If a person had an emission of semen while sleeping, though this happened unintentionally, more often than not, it is not really "accidental."

As we learned, a man is forbidden to look at sexually arousing images during the day lest he come to keri at night. (Niddah 13A)

During the day, when a man sees an immodestly dressed woman or a provocative photo, an automatic response is triggered, arousing the sexual urge. Usually, an emission of semen does not immediately occur because the light of the man's soul protects him. But at night during sleep, when his soul rises to heaven, the sensual image retained in his mind is now at the whim of unholy spiritual forces that bring about keri. Even though he does not consciously will it, the outcome of a "wet dream" is the same as masturbation. Souls are brought down which are snatched up by the Other Side. While an instance of keri can be caused by other factors, such as illness or overeating, in his case, he can not say that he is not to blame. Had he not looked at the woman or the photo, the wet dream would not have occurred.

Another instance of unintentional keri can come about in the sanctity of marriage. In the throes of sexual passion, if a husband embraces his wife and has an emission before the marital act, this too requires soul-searching and tshuva. Also, if he should have relations with his wife in an unholy manner that brings about the wasting of semen, he must rectify the spiritual damage he caused. (See the book, Darkei Taharah, by Rabbi Mordechai Eliahu, Pg.198) It is precisely in this regard that we are commanded, "You shall be holy!" A person should sanctify himself even in that which is permitted to him. (Ibid, Pg.178. Yevamot 20A)