

Shmirat HaBrit After Marriage

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Secret of the Brit
 Chapter 6 - For Married Men Only
 1. Shmirat HaBrit After Marriage

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Many people erroneously assume that Shmirat HaBrit deals only with the problems that young people face. The truth is that married men also have to be on their guard to retain a high standard of sexual purity in their marital relations. We have seen several passages in the Zohar which emphasize the importance of sanctification during the marital union, especially in its influence on the offspring to come. The act of marital relations is a magnificently beautiful and holy mitzvah, strengthening the bonds of love between man and wife, and influencing all spiritual worlds. Precisely because of its supreme holiness, married men must be careful to guard their eyes and their thoughts with their wives, and to behave in a modest fashion, since these constitute the essence of holiness. To insure a holy, healthy, and happy marriage, a husband must sanctify himself in what is permitted to him, and not be like a rooster with his wife, as the Sages have taught.

In addition, married men also have to be careful not to spill semen in vain. Given the great passions surrounding the sexual urge, the spilling of semen in vain can occur before, during, and after the marital act. For instance, due to excessive arousal, a premature emission of semen may occur unintentionally; nevertheless the souls that come into the world are captured by the realm of impurity and need to be rectified. Improper positions can also bring about the wasting of semen. The marital union is a holy mitzvah and not acrobatics. Although the marital act is permitted, and a great joy of marriage, a Jew is warned not to be licentious under the banner of the Torah. Thus, a man must always be on guard not to let his yetzer overcome his reason and cause him to sin.

Like all mitzvot, this exalted mitzvah must be undertaken in a dual spirit of reverence toward G-d and joy in fulfilling His commandments. When a husband and wife set out with the goal to enjoy and sanctify the marital act, they need not fear the powerful lusts that can cause people to go astray. The Kaballah teaches that by expressing their love in a robust, active, and joyous fashion, they bring joy to all worlds and give strength to the Shekinah. And if a mishap should occur, they can be sure that their heartfelt tshuva of Torah, tevilla, and tefillah (Torah, mikvah, and prayer) will rectify all wrong.

Having marital relations at the permitted times, and in the permitted fashion, is a mitzvah that brings joy to the marriage and to all of Creation. A man is called upon to have relations with his wife, even if no offspring can result from the union, as when she is already pregnant, or barren, or after menopause. In all of these instances, there is no issue of wasting semen in vain when relations are performed in the proper, holy fashion, since the mitzvah itself affords Divine protection.

At the outset, it is vital to mention that the laws of family purity (taharat hamishpachah) are the foundation of married life. While it is not in the scope of this book to discuss this subject in depth, these laws must be observed in all of their detail and stringency. It is not enough to learn the many laws in the weeks preceding a person's marriage. These laws should be studied again and again, including the laws governing the modesty of the sexual act.

Since the sexual urge is among man's most powerful lusts, it is easy to fall into laxity and error. A man can offer a thousand excuses, but the damage that occurs during momentary lapses must still be redressed like all other transgressions.

As a reminder of the holiness of the marital union, and to strengthen a husband in his service of G-d, we are listing some practical guidelines and stringencies from the books "Tzaakat Yisrael" and "Kedushat Yisrael," written by the holy Kabbalist, HaRav Eliahu Leon Levi, shlita, cited in the section, "Keys To A Holy Union." There are many laws that concern the performance of marital relations. Here, we are listing a few suggested

guidelines, including stringencies that are emphasized in the Kabbalah.

The reader is urged to study all of the normative halacha in full, in all of their detail, since the wellbeing of a marriage, and the wellbeing of one's children, depend on the holiness of the marital union. Kabbalists stress that in the area of sexual relations, one should not be content to observe the basic laws alone, or their leniencies, but rather each and every Jew should strive to uphold the more stringent applications of the law by sanctifying himself even in permitted matters. At the same time, they emphasize that this holy mitzvah should be performed with mutual happiness, enjoyment, and love.