

**Reaffirming Our Covenants:
A Course on Jewish Life Cycle
For Mothers and Daughters**

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August, 2000



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Curriculum Rationale

I used to sit on the edge of my mother's bed and watch her get dressed to go out. I'd watch as she applied her makeup and chose her jewelry, even running to fetch for her the more valuable pieces from the hiding place amongst my toys which was her solution to the inconvenience of a safe deposit box. Somewhere along the way, our roles switched and I found her sitting on the edge of my bed as I put on my makeup and chose just the right earrings before heading out the door with my friends. I'm sure the same thoughts ran through our heads as we watched the other: what is it like to be her age? What do they do out at night? Will I ever, or did I ever, look like that? This class gives mothers and daughters a chance to ask questions like these and get to know each other as women.

Judaism's view of life as a progression of stages with each transition marked by its own celebratory event is a fundamental feature of the religion. Because it is so central, it is a popular curriculum choice. We teach life cycle because of the structure it lends to times of confusion and transition. The community it enforces helps to affirm or validate our hopes, fears and excitement¹. We teach life cycle as a method of bringing Judaism to life beyond history and laws, to give us a Jewish way to experience emotion as well as a Jewish way to experience universal life passages. We teach life cycle because, as Rabbi Jeffrey K. Salkin teaches, we are in a self-oriented age when we find more meaning in the private life cycle celebrations than the public festival celebrations². He writes,

I have always believed that the reclamation of the life cycle is a suitable spiritual project for modern Jews. At their best, when the poetry works and the magic does its stuff, life cycle celebrations keep Jews connected to the Jewish people, to God and to Torah. There are so many [life cycle] moments when we might feel personally adrift... In each of those cases, Judaism and its wisdom is there for us, with all its potential anchoring and healing power.

I employ all of these reasons for choosing to teach life cycle, but this curriculum emphasizes yet another reason which is twofold. First, we teach life cycle to reinforce our covenantal relationship with God. As Jewish life cycle rituals evolved, the focus remained connected to the core of the religion itself: the emphasis on covenant, Torah and commandments³. These elements lie at the heart of life cycle celebrations. Secondly, this class attempts to combine the reinforcement of the relationship with God with the reinforcement of the relationship between mother and daughter. If, as Rabbi Salkin is quoted as saying above, life cycle celebrations keep Jews connected to the Jewish people, than perhaps we can tap into that connectedness for mothers and daughters. As they review life's milestones and what those moments have meant to each other as well as their foremothers, hopefully they will get to know each other more

¹ Orenstein, Rabbi Debra, Lifecycles: Jewish Women on Life Passages and Personal Milestones vol. 1, Jewish Lights Publishing, Vermont, 1994, pg.xx.

² Kadden, Barbara Binder and Bruce Kadden, Teaching Jewish Life Cycle: Traditions and Activities, A.R.E. Publishing, Inc., Denver, CO, 1997, pg.ix.

³ Ibid. pg. 290.

deeply and become better able to appreciate the others' experience. They will have the opportunity to see themselves as links in a chain of Jewish women who have and will celebrate the same milestones with the same rituals.

Unfortunately, women are the most likely not to see themselves reflected in traditional life cycle celebrations. Women's experiences were mostly overlooked by traditional liturgy and Jewish custom. If we are to teach life cycle to "keep Jews connected to the Jewish people, to God and to Torah,"⁴ how then can we accomplish this without doing a better job of incorporating the female experience of life cycle passages so that women may experience that connectedness? Rabbi Debra Orenstein teaches that contemporary Jewish women have a need for ritual. We need to see the feminist story combined with the Jewish story⁵ as a means for validating our experiences as Jewish. In this class, women can not only learn how Judaism celebrates both traditional and non-traditional life cycle events, but it can also be a starting point for them to see any transitional moment as possible Jewish moments.

This class is offered by a family education department of a synagogue to mothers and their grown daughters (post-college age and above). Mothers can attend with more than one daughter or daughter-in-law. Today each generation's parenting experience is vastly different from the last. It is at this stage in their lives, when these daughters are becoming women themselves, starting families and raising their own children, that they are the most ready to connect with their mothers on this level. This is also conducive to learning about how Judaism celebrates those milestones that lie ahead of a young family. As adult learners, the mothers are also in a prime stage of their lives for this class. It is in the late to post generative years that adults seek out educational opportunities, especially ones that allow them to learn new skills. A second focus of this developmental stage is spending time with family which, of course, this class provides.

Ten monthly classes will cover such topics as pregnancy and naming; adolescence and parenting; being single in the Jewish community, marriage, intermarriage and divorce; midlife; aging, death and mourning; and finally what Debra Orenstein calls "invisible life passages," those moments for which we do not yet have rituals.

Rabbi Salkin teaches us that celebrating life cycle events helps us feel the unseen presence of all the people who came before us. He believes this has great potential power to remind us that we are not alone during these times, we are not the last Jews in the world. On the contrary, we are a part of something large and ancient⁶. So much more so by concentrating on women's life cycle celebrations, we can conjure all our foremothers who came before us who celebrated or endured these experiences. Through this class, women will be able to re-evaluate and personalize Jewish rituals that may have been alien, or less than meaningful, and can now name and celebrate life passages that their predecessors were not able to recognize as part of that large, ancient and powerful

⁴ Kadden, Barabara Binder and Bruce Kadden, Teaching Jewish Life Cycle: Traditions and Activities, A.R.E. Publishing, Inc., Denver, CO, 1997, pg. ix.

⁵ Orenstein, pg. xxi.

⁶ Kadden and Kadden, pg. x.

heritage. In addition, this class gives mothers and daughters an opportunity to better understand the experiences of the other beyond their fixed roles of “mom” and “daughter,” and to get to know one another as women. This class seeks to inform and enrich the mother-daughter relationship through life cycle--the existing tools which inform and enrich our relationship with Judaism--by overlaying one with the other.

Unit 1

Bringing Children into the Covenant: Brit Bat & Naming Pregnancy and Naming (Infertility, Miscarriage, Adoption)

Enduring Understanding: Jewish women are part of an eternal chain of mothers, each giving birth to the next generation, often bestowing on them the legacy of a name. There are great expectations, hopes and dreams connected with a new life and there is great pain when this function cannot be fulfilled or confusion when it is not fulfilled in a traditional way.

Suggested number of lessons: 2 or 3

Goals

1. Educate mothers and daughters about the female alternatives to circumcision, about welcoming girls into the covenant.
2. Get mothers and daughters talking about their memories, hopes, expectations and fears related to pregnancy and childbirth. Help one to understand the position of the other on the decision to have, not have or wait to have children.
3. Help mothers and daughters feel connected to each other and their parentage. As stated above, to see themselves as a part of an eternal chain of mothers.

Objectives

At the end of this unit, daughters will be able to:

1. Tell the story of their own birth and be able to recount what it meant to their mothers by listening to their mother's account—the surrounding events and circumstances, mishaps and joys.
2. Explain why their mothers gave them the name they have including the qualities of the person they were named for or the qualities their mothers wished for them.

At the end of this unit, mothers will be able to:

1. Recount their daughter's ideas or experiences about childbirth and pregnancy.
2. Express their hopes and concerns about grandparenthood.

At the end of this unit, both mothers and daughters will be able to:

1. Adopt a Hebrew name, if one was not given.
2. See their names as a link to the Jewish people.
3. Understand circumcision as a sign of the covenant and be able to discuss the Jewish ritual options that exist for girls.

Core Learning Experiences

1. Double Yoga Warm Up⁷

In order to transition from the outside world and into class time, this warm up exercise might be helpful. This can encourage open communication and a higher level of comfort between mother and daughter. The physical contact it employs can be underestimated for opening lines of communication.

⁷ See appendix for descriptions and photographs of the yoga positions.

- Ask mothers and daughters to stand together in their own part of the classroom. Depending on the floor, it might be best to have them remove their shoes and socks.
- Demonstrate for them each position and then give them a few moments to get into the position and hold it.
- Yoga has become a popular exercise and the participants might be familiar with this type of body movement. However, expect a lot of giggling and perhaps some discomfort. As the class progresses, they will hopefully become more comfortable with this warm up.

2. Text Study of Genesis 17

Concepts to focus on:

- The emphasis found there on Abraham as a father and Sarah as a mother.
- The numerous mentions of the generations to come, emphasis on *l'dor vador*.
- Circumcision as a sign of the covenant, as evidence of a promise.
- Naming included in the covenantal pact, name as another outward sign of the covenant.

3. *Brit Milah* v. *Brit Bat*

- Look at the traditional liturgy for a *brit milah* ceremony.
- Review the ritual objects used and the people involved in the ceremony.
- Hand out samples of contemporary *brit bat* ceremonies to each mother/daughter pair⁸.
- Have them read it over and present it to the group, sharing its different features.
- The group can discuss which features resonate for them from the different examples.
- Compare the liturgy and meaning of a *brit milah* to the examples of *brit bat* ceremonies and discuss:

How do these ceremonies compare?

Is brit bat a sufficient substitute for a brit milah?

Does a female child need such a ritual?

How else might a female child outwardly show she is part of a tradition?

How might a mother fulfill a parallel obligation to a father's duty to perform brit milah on his son?

3. A Legacy of Names

- Have the mothers tell their daughters why they were given the names they have:
 - How did you choose that name?*
 - Who was your daughter named for?*
 - What qualities did that person have that you were hoping your daughter would emulate?*
 - What does it mean to women and girls to be unable to bear the sign of the covenant and is a name enough of an outward sign to take its place?*
- Look again at Genesis 17 to read about Abraham and Sarah's name change coupled with a declaration of the covenant. Also look at Genesis 35 to look at Jacob's name change also followed by a declaration of the covenant.

⁸ See The New Jewish Baby Book by Anita Diamant and Lifecycles: Jewish Women on Life Passages and Personal Milestones by Rabbi Debra Orenstein for examples of these ceremonies.

What is the connection between names and our relationship with God?

Why is it important to God what and how we are called?

Consider one of the names for God is Hashem, The Name.

- Review the tradition of biblical names, Ashkenazi versus Sephardi naming practices, Modern Hebrew names and American Jewish fashions⁹.
- Look up both mothers' and daughters' names in the book Your Name is Your Blessing by Benjamin and Elaine Blech¹⁰ to find the meaning of their names.
- Look up the first letter of both mothers' and daughters' Hebrew names in The Book of Letters: A Mystical Alef-Bait by Lawrence Kushner¹¹ for a different perspective.
- Use these books to help members of the group choose a Hebrew name if they do not already have one.

4. Discussion Pairs

- Have the mother/daughter pairs sit knee to knee.
- Each one is given different sentences to complete
- The woman talking gets 2 minutes to speak uninterrupted
- Two sentences for each person to complete is plenty. Mothers and daughters should alternate completing sentences. Allow for response time.

Sentences for mothers:

When I was trying to get pregnant I...

When I found out I was pregnant I/we...

The thing that scared me the most was...

The thing that excited me the most was...

The hardest part about motherhood is...

The greatest part about motherhood is...

The way I feel about being a grandparent is...

Sentences for Daughters: (Allow daughters to choose which sentences are applicable)

Trying to get pregnant is/was/might be like...

The way I feel about motherhood is...

When I found out I was/was not pregnant I/we...

The thing that scares me the most about motherhood is...

The thing that excites me the most about motherhood is...

The hardest part about motherhood is/might be...

The greatest part about motherhood is/might be...

When I think of you/see you as a grandparent I...

⁹ For a complete discussion of these topics, consult The New Jewish Baby Book by Anita Diamant, pp. 15-27.

¹⁰ Blech, Benjamin and Elaine, Your Name is Your Blessing, Jason Aronson, Inc., New Jersey, 1999.

¹¹ Kushner, Lawrence The Book of Letter: A Mystical Alef Bait, Jewish Lights Publishing, Vermont, 1975.

Additional Learning Activities:

1. Amulets

- Look at pictures of Middle Eastern amulets¹².
- Using thin metal and beads or Fimo molding clay, make amulets either for the participants or their children
 - Use a concordance to find biblical passages containing the names desired and copy then onto small scrolls to slip inside the amulet
 - or inscribe the scroll with qualities or wishes for the baby.
 - It is also traditional to place the Priestly Blessing inside the amulet.

2. Elijah's Chair

In some countries the chair of Elijah is where the godfather or grandfather sits during the *brit milah* ceremony. Elijah is invited to every circumcision because in I Kings 19:10 he complained to God that the children of Israel were not keeping this covenant with God. This way, the family can show Elijah that they are indeed keeping the covenant.

- Have mother/daughter pairs bring in a chair they can decorate.
- Paint or write inscriptions on the chair such as:
 - The child's name, in Hebrew and English
 - Biblical verses containing the child's name
 - The meaning of the child's name
 - The names of the child's family
 - Wishes for the child
- Also consider using:
 - Fabrics
 - Family pictures
 - Fabric flowers

4. Hospital circumcision v. *Brit Milah*

Why are so many parents opting for hospital circumcision today? Why have a bris?

- Bring in a *Mohel* to discuss the differences between the two ceremonies

5. To circumcise or not to circumcise?

Many parents today find it barbaric. Studies have shown that it is no more or less healthy to have it done. Debate the issue.

Memorable Moment

Naming Ceremony

- Create a naming ceremony for those who chose a Hebrew name or for those who want to add a Hebrew name. Many of the mothers' generation might have Yiddish names instead of Hebrew, as was the trend when they were born. This will give mothers the opportunity to find the Hebrew alternatives to their Yiddish names.

¹² See "Amulet" entry in Encyclopedia Judaica or The Encyclopedia of Judaism for background information

- Suggest a group ceremony which could take place in the synagogue on a Friday night or a more intimate *Rosh Chodesh* service.
- Have the participants consult the samples of naming services used in Core Learning Experience #2 in order to create their own. They can be creative in altering these services to suit a group of adults.
- Be sure to leave time in the ceremony for each person to speak about their name: why they chose, who it might be in memory/honor of, the meaning of the name.
- Consider having the pairs speak about the others' name (i.e.: have a daughter explain the name her mother chose and how the daughter feels her mother exemplifies the qualities suggested by the name).
- The participants may enjoy working on the amulet project for themselves instead of a newborn, using their own names—both new and old. These can be displayed for the guests invited to the naming ceremony.

Additional Suggestions

Based on the demographics of the class, these activities dealing with infertility, adoption and miscarriage can be included:

1. Our Barren Matriarchs¹³

- Read about Biblical women who had trouble getting pregnant such as Sarah, Rachel and Hannah.
- Write *midrashim*¹⁴ (stories to fill in the blanks that the Bible leaves for us). Those participants who are going through this struggle, and even those who are not, can imagine the frustration these women went through and the joy of finally having a baby after such an ordeal.
- Infertility
If my prayers are not answered as the matriarchs were, what does this mean? Refer to Tears of Sorrow, Seeds of Hope: A Spiritual Companion for Infertility and Pregnancy Loss by Rabbi Nina Beth Cardin¹⁵ for stories of women's experiences.

2. Adoption

If this is an issue amongst the participants:

- Look at adoption ritual in Rabbi Orenstein's Lifecycles: Jewish Women on Life Passages and Personal Milestones.

-Devise sentences for these pairs to finish such as:

What led us to this decision was...

When I came to this decision I felt...

Now that I/we have decided I/we feel...

-Is anyone in the group adopted and did they go through any type of naming ceremony?

-If you adopt an older child, do you have a naming or conversion ceremony?

¹³ See Taking the Fruit by Jane Sprague Zones (Women's Institute of Continuing Education, second edition, 1990) for samples of *midrashim*.

¹⁴ See appendix for Alicia Ostiker's guidelines for writing your own *midrash* from her article in the Winter 1999 edition of Reform Judaism.

¹⁵ Cardin, Rabbi Nina Beth Tears of Sorrow, Seeds of Hope: A Spiritual Companion for Infertility and Pregnancy Jewish Lights Publishing, Vermont, 1999.

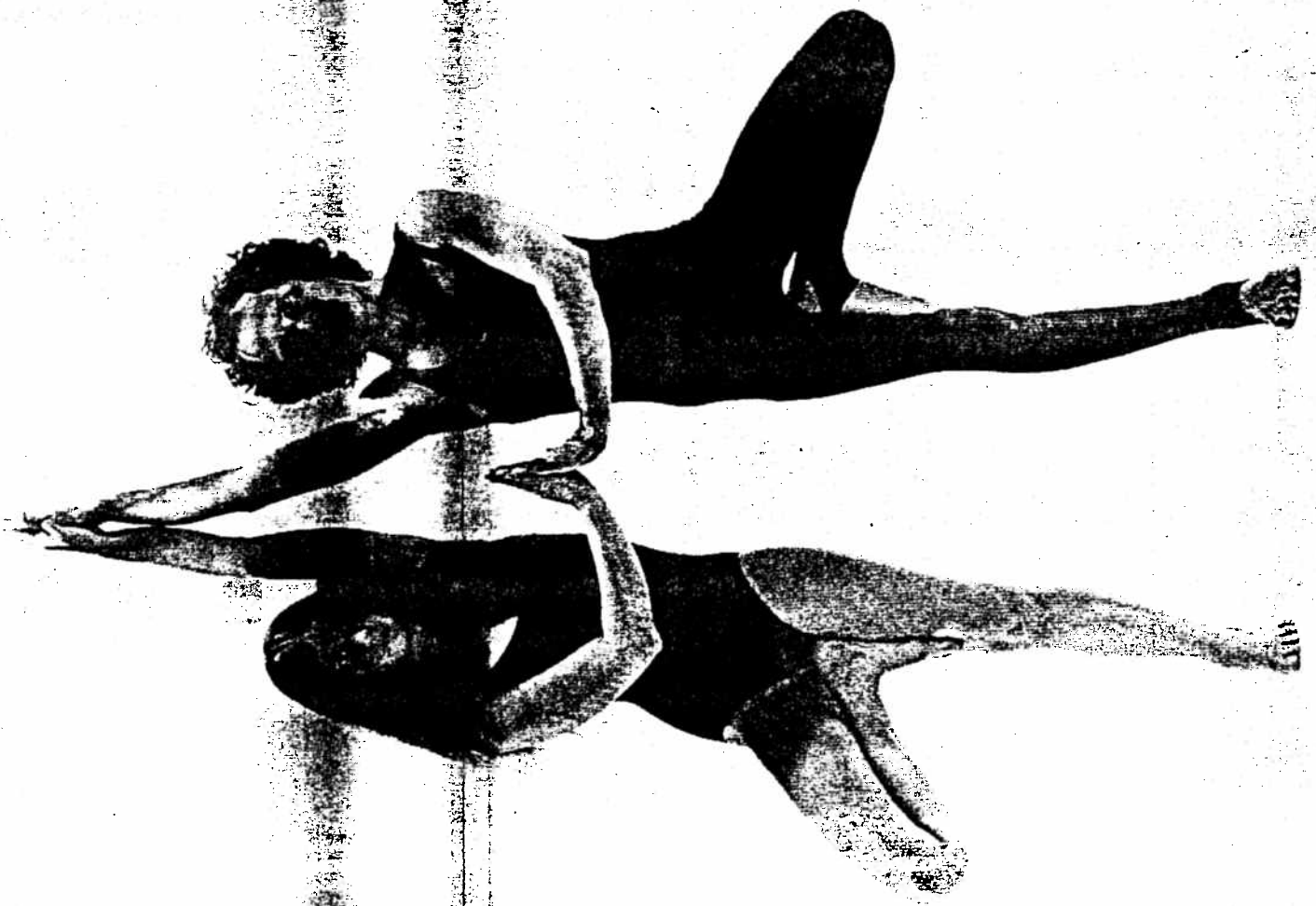
- Also consult Anita Diamant's The New Jewish Baby Book for discussions on naming, announcing the arrival of and circumcising adopted children.

THE TREE I

Stand about two feet apart with your feet parallel. Raise your inside arm and clasp your partner's hand while lifting your outside foot as high as possible onto your inner thigh. Lock the inside leg, stand erect, and touch your partner's hand lightly with your free hand. Do not lean on each other. Stand straight, keep the chest lifted, tailbone tucked down, hips even. Remain as still as possible, breathing smoothly and gazing at one spot. Hold, extending up into the pose, then repeat on the other side.

BENEFITS: Though an easy pose, the Tree I demands firm balance, or you will knock your partner over. It strengthens the ankles and legs and teaches attentive stillness.

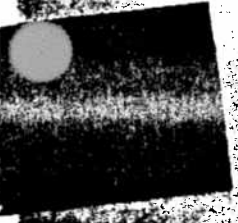
AZ



THE ROYAL CROWN

Stand about three feet apart so that your foreheads touch when you bend forward. Clasp your hands behind your back, inhale, and lift your chest. Then bend forward, exhaling, keeping your back straight and bringing your arms over your head. Stand and hold your partner's hands. Touch foreheads, breathing smoothly, and look into each other's eyes. The effects of this pose can be increased by pressing foreheads and then pushing away to extend the spine while lifting with the arms.

BENEFITS: This pose stretches your body from the back of your legs all the way to the top of your spine, relieving tension. It strengthens the back and loosens the shoulders.



THE PUMP

Stand back to back about two feet from your partner with your legs three feet apart. Bend forward, reaching through your legs to grab your partner's wrists. Stretch your torso forward, arching it slightly, according to your flexibility, and stretch the backs of your legs for thirty seconds, then begin a slow pumplike motion in which one partner arches up, pulling the other through the legs, and then the other arches up, pulling the first partner down. Inhale as you arch up and exhale as you are pulled down.

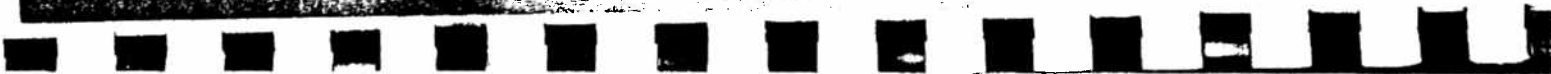
BENEFITS: The spread of the legs and arching of the torso required by this pose give a unique stretch to the backs of the legs, hips, inner legs, and spine. The pumping motion warms up and strengthens these areas very quickly. Claspings the wrists of your partner allows you to stretch the muscles intensely.



THE HERO II

Stand with the outer edges of the rear feet pressed together and your legs spread four to five feet apart. Clasp wrists while sinking to a right angle. Keep the wrists over the joined feet and maintain an even pull with the wrists to add strength to the position and help overcome the tendency to lunge forward. Repeat on the other side.

BENEFITS: This pose helps correct a common error in the Hero I—failure to keep the torso erect and at a right angle to the thigh. The partners can use each other for leverage to increase the effects of the Hero II pose and get more lift in the chest.



THE SUSPENSION BRIDGE

Face your partner at a distance of four feet. With your feet together and legs straight, bend from the hips and clasp your partner's hands. Exhale and lean in for the stretch, letting your hips move back while your spine extends forward.

BENEFITS: The Suspension Bridge is excellent for relieving pressure along the spine because it creates space between the vertebrae. It stretches and removes stiffness and tension from the muscles of the back, the backs of the legs, and the shoulders. It feels great too!



יְבָרְכֶה יי וְיִשְׁמְרֶה,
יָאֵר יי פְּנֵי אֱלֹהֵי וְיַחֲנֶה,
יִשָּׂא יי פְּנֵי אֱלֹהֵי וְיִשָּׂם לָהּ שְׁלוֹמִים.

*Y'va-reh-chi'cha Adonai v'yish-m'teh-cha,
Ya-eir Adonai pa-nav ei-leh-kha vi-chu-neh-ka,
Yi-sah Adonai pa-nav ei-leh-kha v'ya-seim l'chah
shia-lom.*

May God bless you and protect you.
May God's presence shine for you and be
favorable to you.
May God's face turn to you and give you peace.

Part IV: S'udat Mitzvah

According to Jewish law, major life-cycle events are celebrated with a *s'udat mitzvah*, or meal celebrating the performance of a commandment. Such meals traditionally begin with the blessing over challah (*motzi*) and end with the prayers sung upon completion of a meal (*birkat hamazon*). (See *Simcha*, for more on the meal and party.)

Sample List of Things You Need for a Brit Bat

Kosher wine and goblet for kiddush
Yarmulkes (skull caps or *kippot*) for guests
Candles and candlesticks
Prayer shawl or scarf, for swaddling the baby
Elijah's chair
Tape recorder, camera
Booklets
Phone off the hook



Brit Bat

All:

בְּרוּכָה הַבָּאָה בְּשֵׁם יי.

B'ruchah ha-ba-ah b'sheim Adonai.

May she who enters be blessed in the name of Lord.

Parents:

Through this covenant we affirm our daughter's part in the covenant, the *brit*, made between God and Israel at Mount Sinai.

According to our tradition, the entire Jewish people, women and men, children and infants, born and unborn, were included in the revelation of the Law and in its affirmation. It has always been the central endeavor of each Jew in every generation to understand this covenant and to live meaningfully by it. We give thanks for the opportunity to bring our daughter into the covenant, and we say:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו, וְצָנְנוּ
לְהַבְרִיחָהּ בְּבְרִיתוֹ שֶׁל עַם יִשְׂרָאֵל.

בְּשֵׁם שְׁנִבְרָכָה לְבְרִית,
בְּן הַבְּנוֹם לְחוּרָה וּלְמִצְוֵי שְׂוֵבִים.

*Ba-ruch a-ta Adonai, El-lohei-nu me-lech ha-o-lam,
a-sher ki-d'sha-nu b'mitz-vo-tav, v'tzi-va-nu
l'hach-ni-sah biv-ri-to shel am Yis-ra-el.*

K'shem sheh-nich-n'sah la-brit,

kein ti-ka-nes l'to-rah ul-chu-pah ul-ma-a-sim to-vim.

Blessed are you Lord our God Ruler of the Universe who has made us holy through your commandments and commanded us to

Brit Bat

bring our daughter into the covenant of Israel. As our daughter enters the covenant, so may she attain love of learning through the study of Torah, happiness in partnership with another human being, and the capacity to act toward others in honest, respectful, and ethical ways.

At our marriage, seven blessings were recited. Today in celebration of our joy at the birth of our daughter, we ask loved ones to recite seven blessings over this *kiddush* cup filled with wine, the symbol of joy.

Rabbi or guest:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הַגֶּפֶן.

*Ba-ruch a-ta Adonai, Eh-lo-hei-nu me-lech ha-o-lam,
bo-rei p'ri ha-ga-fen.*

Praised are You, Lord our God, Source of the Universe,
Creator of the fruit of the vine.

Guest:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, יוֹצֵר הָאָדָם.

*Ba-ruch a-ta Adonai, Eh-lo-hei-nu me-lech ha-o-lam,
yo-tzer ha-a-dam.*

Praised are You, Lord our God, Source of the Universe,
Creator of humanity.

Guest:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
אֲשֶׁר יָצַר אֶת הָאָדָם בְּצַלְמוֹ, בְּצַלְמֵם רֵמוֹת תְּכֵנִיתוֹ,
וְהִתְקִין לוֹ מִטְּמוֹ בִּגְדֵי עֵד.
בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ יוֹצֵר הָאָדָם.

Brit Bat

*Ba-ruch a-ta Adonai, Eh-lo-hei-nu me-lech ha-o-lam,
a-sher ya-tzar et ha-a-dam b'tzal-mo, b'tzeih-lem d'mut tav-ni-to,
v'hit-kin lo mi-meh-nu bin-yan a-dei ad.*

Ba-ruch a-ta Adonai, yo-tzer ha-a-dam.

Praised are You, Lord our God, Source of the Universe, Who created human beings in Your image and Your likeness. And out of their very selves You prepared for them a perpetual spiritual being. Praised are You, our Lord, Creator of humanity.

Guest:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו,
וְצָנְנוּ עַל קִדּוּשׁ הַחַיִּים.

*Ba-ruch a-ta Adonai, Eh-lo-hei-nu me-lech ha-o-lam,
a-sher ki-d'sha-nu b'mitz-vo-tav, v'tzi-va-nu
al ki-dush ha-cha-yim.*

Praised are You, Lord our God, Source of the Universe,
Who commands us to sanctify life.

Guest:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
זוֹכֵר הַבְּרִית וְנֹאמָן בְּבְרִיתוֹ וְקִים בְּמִצְוָתוֹ.

*Ba-ruch a-ta Adonai, Eh-lo-hei-nu me-lech ha-o-lam,
zo-cheir ha-brit v'neh-el-man biv-ri-to v'ka-yam b'ma-a-ma-ro.*

Praised are You, Lord our God, Source of the Universe,
Who remembers the covenant and Who is steadfastly faithful
in Your covenant, keeping Your promise.

Brit Bat

Guest:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי, מְשַׂמַּח הַחַיִּים עִם יְלִדְהֶם.

Ba-ruch a-ta Adonai, m'sa-mei-ach ha-rim im yal-dei-hem.

Praised are You, Lord our God, Source of the Universe,

Who causes parents to rejoice with their children.

Guest:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
שֶׁהַחַיִּים וְקִימָנוּ וְהִגִּיעָנוּ לְזֶמן הַזֶּה.

Ba-ruch a-ta Adonai, El-lo-hei-nu meh-lech ha-o-lam,

sheh-heh-dlech-ya-nu v'ki-y'ma-nu v'hi-gi-a-nu la-z'man ha-zeh.

Praised are You, Lord our God, Source of the Universe,

for giving us life, for sustaining us,

for enabling us to reach this day.

Rabbi or guest:

This baby is named in loving remembrance of _____.
She lives in her. Let her life make _____ known to all
who see her.

May the one who blessed our mothers, Sarah, Rebecca, Leah,
and Rachel, and our fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, bless these
parents and their newborn daughter. Her name shall be
_____. May her parents rear their daughter with love of
Torah and the performance of good deeds, and may they be
privileged to bring her to the marriage canopy. Let us say Amen.

Brit Bat

Rabbi or parents:

יְבָרַךְ יי וְיִשְׁמְרֵהּ,
יְאֵר יי פְּנֵיו אֵלֶיךָ וְיִחַןֶּהָ,
יִשָּׂא יי פְּנֵיו אֵלֶיךָ וְיִשֵּׂם לָהּ שְׁלוֹם.

Y'va-reh-dt'chah Adonai v'yish-m'reh-cha,

Ya-eir Adonai pa-nav ei-leh-kha vi-chu-neh-ka,

Yi-sah Adonai pa-nav ei-leh-kha v'ya-scim l'chah sha-lom.

May God bless you and protect you.

May God's presence shine for you and be favorable to you.

May God's face turn to you and give you peace.

Parents:

Bread is the symbol of sustenance and honey the sign of sweetness.
We dip the bread in honey in hope that our daily strivings will be
sweetened by our love for each other.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
הַמוֹצִיא לָחֶם מִן הָאָרֶץ.

Ba-ruch a-ta Adonai, El-lo-hei-nu meh-lech ha-o-lam,

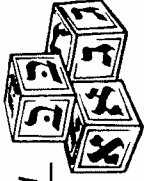
ha-mo-tzi leh-chem min ha-a-retz.

Praised are You, Lord our God, Source of the Universe,

Who provides us with the staff of life.²⁰



Brit Ohel Shel Sarah Immeinu



Covenant of the Tent of
Sarah Our Mother

Song:

Ma to-vu

(How wonderful are your tents, Jacob, Your dwelling places,
Israel!)

The baby is brought in and everyone says:

בְּרוּכָה הַבָּאָה.

B'rucha ha-ba-ah.

We welcome you into our midst,

We greet you as you enter into the covenant of Israel.

Rabbi or guest:

As Abraham was father to the Jewish people, so Sarah was its
mother. Our sages say, Abraham dealt with the men, and Sarah
dealt with the women.

Abraham would bring men into relationship with God and his
people through *milah* and the covenant of religious circumcision.
Sarah would bring the women into relationship with God and her
people through their coming into her tent and taking formal
residence there.

In Sarah's name, we now perform this ceremony of *brit ohel*, and
bring this daughter of the Jewish people into her tent and into the
covenant of Sarah our mother.

Brit Ohel Shel Sarah Immeinu

We thank you Adonai, our God and universal Sovereign, Who has
made us holy by means of the *mitzvot*, commanding us regarding
the covenant of the tent.

The *sandeket* is seated in the center of the room. Four friends raise
a scarf, shawl, or *tallit* over her head. The parents hand the baby to
the *sandeket* and say:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
אֲשֶׁר קָדְשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו, וְצָוְנוּ
לְהַבְרִיטָהּ לְבְרִיתָהּ שֶׁל שָׂרָה אִמֵּנוּ.

*Ba-ruch a-ta Adonai, El-lo-hai-nu me-lech ha-o-lam,
a-sher ki-d'sha-nu b'mitzvo-tav, v'tzi-va-nu
l'hach-ni-sah liv-ri-tah shel Sa-rah i-mei-nu.*

We are grateful to You, Adonai, for You are our God and Ruler of
the Universe. You have made us holy by means of the *mitzvot*,
commanding us to bring our daughter into the covenant of Sarah
our mother.

All:

כָּשֶׁם שֶׁנִּבְרְשָׁה לְבְרִית,
כֵּן הִבְרַס לְחוּרָה וּלְחַפָּה וּלְמַעֲשֵׂים טוֹבִים.

*K'shem shich-nich-ti-sah la-brit,
kein ti-ka-nes l'ho-rah ul-chu-pah ul-ma-a-sim to-vim.*

As she has entered into the covenant, so may she enter into
Torah, *chupah*, and a life of good deeds.

Sandeket wraps the scarf around the baby and hands her to her
mother.

Brit Ohel Shel Sarah Immeinu

Rabbi or parents:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הַגֶּזֶן.

*Be-ruch a-ta Adonai, Eh-lo-hei-nu me-lech ha-o-lam,
bo-rei p'ri ha-ga-fen.*

We praise you, Adonai, our God and universal Ruler,
Who creates the fruit of the vine.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
אֲשֶׁר קִדַּשׁ אֶת הָאֵהָל וְקַל הַנְּכֻנְסִים בוֹ,
תַּפְּרִיחַ אֵהָל צְדִיקִים שְׂנוּדַע פִּי שְׁלוֹם הוּא.
בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ מוֹשִׁיבֵנו בְּאֵהָלִים.

*Ba-ruch a-ta Adonai, Eh-lo-hei-nu me-lech ha-o-lam,
a-sheh ki-deish et ha-o-hel v'chol ha-nich-na-sim bo,
taf-ri-ach o-hel tza-di-kim sheh-nei-da ki sha-lom hu.
Ba-ruch a-ta Adonai, mo-shi-vei-nu b'o-ha-lim.*

We praise you Adonai, our God and Ruler, who has sanctified the tent and all who enter it. Cause the tent of the righteous to flourish, that we may know that it is all peace. We are grateful to you Adonai, for making us dwell in tents.

Eloheinu, our God and our ancestors' God, sustain this child who is to known in Israel as _____ and referred to in the world as _____.

Parents:

Help us nurture her and encourage her to fulfill the blessing in her name.

Brit Ohel Shel Sarah Immeinu

All:

May her mother and father rejoice and find delight in their daughter. Let her coming into the covenant of the tent be at a favorable time for God and for Israel.

Parents:

May we find joy in this moment and pleasure in all that she becomes. May our tiny daughter grow to be great.

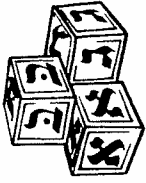
Rabbi or guest:

יְבָרַךְ יְיָ וְיִשְׁמְרֶהָ,
יָאֵר יְיָ פְּנֵי אֱלֹהֶיךָ וְיִחַן,
יֵשֵׁא יְיָ פְּנֵי אֱלֹהֶיךָ וְיִשֶׁם לָךְ שְׁלוֹם.

May Adonai turn to each of you
and to all of us
and make for us a life
of wholeness and hopefulness and peace. Amen.²¹



Brit Eidut



Covenant of Witnessing

Parents:

We come together today to welcome our new daughter into our family and into the covenant of the Jewish people. More than 3,000 years ago, our ancestors stood at Mount Sinai and entered into a covenant with God. Men, women, children, officers, elders, hewers of wood, and drawers of water all stood before the Lord and proclaimed:

כָּל אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר יְיָ נַעֲשֶׂה וְנִשְׁמָע.

Kol a-sheer di-ber Adonai na-a-sch v'nishma.

All the words the Lord has spoken we will do.

The covenant that was established at Sinai was made not only with our ancestors but with those who would follow. This covenant has been reaffirmed throughout the millennia. Today we, too, are gathered: men, women, and children, our heads and our elders and a drawer of water. For Sarah, as she came into the world, drew out of her mother the waters that had sustained her before her birth.

We too, through our words today, with this drawer of water in our midst, reaffirm the pledge of our ancestors:

כָּל אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר יְיָ נַעֲשֶׂה וְנִשְׁמָע.

Kol a-sheer di-ber Adonai na-a-sch v'nishma.

All that the Lord has spoken we will do and obey.

Brit Eidut

All:

בְּרוּכָה הַבָּאָה.

B'ru-chlah ha-ba-ah.

May she who comes before us today be blessed.

Parents:

When Abraham and Sarah dwelt at Mamre, three men appeared at the door of their tent. As a sign of hospitality, they offered these travelers water to drink and to wash their feet. In the same way that Abraham and Sarah welcomed the travelers, so do we welcome our daughter into this world, with food and drink and the washing of her feet.

All:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
שֶׁהַקִּיְנוּ וְהַגִּיעֵנוּ לְזֶמֶן הַזֶּה.

*Ba-ruch a-ta Adonai, El-lo-hei-nu mel-lech ha-o-lam,
sheh-heh-cheh-ga-nu v'ki-y'ma-nu v'hi-gi-a-nu la-z'man ha-zeh.*

Holy One of Blessing, Your Presence fills creation,

You have kept us alive, You have sustained us,
You have brought us to this moment.

Father:

As you begin your journey through life, we pray that you will find sustenance in *ma-yim chaim*, the living waters which Judaism offers to all who draw from the well of our tradition.

(Baby's feet are washed.)

Brit Eidut

Mother:

As your father and I stood under the shelter of this *tallit* to be joined together as husband and wife, so now do we encircle you within it as you enter the circle of our family. As we wrap you in this *tallit*, so may your life be wrapped in justice and righteousness. As we embrace you today, so may you embrace your tradition and your people.

Guest:

As your eyes are filled with wonder when you gaze at the world, so, too, may you be filled with wonder at the everyday miracles of life.

Guest:

As you startle to the world around you, so may you remain ever open both to the happiness and to the pain of those you encounter in the world.

Guest:

As you cry for food and comfort now, so may you one day cry out to correct the injustices of the world, to help clothe the naked and feed the hungry.

Guest:

As your hand tightly grasps your mother's finger, so may you grasp hold of learning and grow in knowledge and in wisdom.

Brit Eidut

Rabbi or parents:

אָלְהֵינוּ וְאֵלֵהִי אֲמוּנָתֵנוּ, קִיָּם אֶת הַיְלִידָה הַזֹּאת לְאַבִּיָּהּ וְלְאִמָּהּ,
וְיִקְרָא שְׂמֹה בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל. בַּת _____ . יִשְׁמַח הָאָב,
בְּיִוְצָאתָ הַלְצִי, וְתִגַּל אִמּוֹ בְּפָרִי בְטָנָהּ. זֹאת הַקְּטָנָה גְדוּלָּה
תְּהִיָּה. בְּשֵׁם שְׂנֵבְנוּסָה לְבָרִית, בֶּן תִּבְנֶס לְתוֹרָה, וְלִחְפָּה,
וְלִמְעֻשֵׁים טוֹבִים.

*El-lo-hei-nu vei-lo-hei i-mo-tci-nu, ka-yeim et ha-yal-dah ha-zoht
l'a-vi-ha ul-i-mah, v'yi-ka-rei sh'mah b'yis-ra-el _____ bat
_____ . Yis-mach ha-av b'yo-tzeit cha-la-tzav, v'ha-geil i-mo
bif-ri vit-nah. Zoht ha-k'et-nah tih-yeh g'dolah. K'shem shel-nich-n'sah
la-brit, kein ti-ka-nes l'to-rat ul-chu-pah ul-ma-a-sim to-vim.*

O God, God of all generations, sustain this child and let her be known in the house of Israel as _____. May she bring us (her parents) joy and happiness in the months and years to come. As we have brought her into the covenant of Torah today, so many she enter into the study of Torah, the blessings of marriage, and the performance of good deeds.

Baby's namesakes are remembered.

Grandparents:

Our God and God of all generations, we are grateful for new beginnings, for the bond of new life that links one generation to another. Thankful for the blessings of family, for the love and care that brings meaning and happiness to our lives, we rejoice with our children at the birth of their child, our grandchild.

May they grow together as a family in health and in strength, in harmony, wisdom and love, their home filled with words of Torah and acts of kindness.

Brit Eidut

May we be enabled to share in the joy of seeing this child grow into adulthood, a blessing to her family, her people and all humanity.

All:

יְבָרֶכְךָ יי וְיִשְׁמְרֶךָ,
יְאֹר יי פְּנֵינוּ אֱלֹהֵי וּדְחֹנֶךָ,
יִשָּׂא יי פְּנֵינוּ אֱלֹהֵי וְנִשְׂמֵ לְךָ שְׁלוֹם.

Y'va-reh-eh ch'chah Adonai v'yish-m'reh-cha,

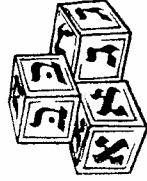
Ya-eir Adonai pa-nav ei-leh-kha vi-chu-neh-ka,

Yi-sah Adonai pa-nav ei-leh-kha v'ya-seim l'chah sha-lom.

May God bless you and protect you.

May God's presence shine for you and be favorable to you.

May God's face turn to you and give you peace.²²



Brit Shomrei Hamachzorim

Covenant of the Guardians of the Sacred Cycles



Rabbi or guest, as baby is taken to the chair of Elijah:

In Jewish tradition, Elijah the prophet represents the coming of the Messianic time. Elijah is present at the covenant whose sign is circumcision, at the *Pesach seder*, at the weekly *havdalah* ceremony, and he is known as the guardian of young children. The presence of Elijah at this covenant ceremony bids us look through the life of one child to the fulfillment of all life.

Guest:

“When the men saw that Moses was so long in coming down from the mountain, they went to Aaron and asked him to make them a god. He said to them, ‘Take off the gold rings that are on the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters, and bring them to me.’

“And the men took off the gold rings that were in their ears, too impatient to notice that the women refused their gold.”
(Exodus 32:1-3)

Guest:

And so, the Holy Ancient One made the special relationship of women to *Rosh Chodesh*. Celebrating the new moon, women became guardians of the cycles of sacred time. They watched the light grow bright and diminish, and with the light, welcomed holy days and *Shabbat* days in their order. And the ebb and flow of the cycles within their bodies made them watchful, mindful of the gifts of heaven and earth.

Brit Shomrei Hamachzorim

The baby is given a taste of wine as her father says:

Why do we make a blessing over wine rather than water? Water, after all, symbolizes purity and was created directly by God. But wine involves a partnership between people and God. God provides the fruit that we transform into wine, which in turn alters our awareness and lifts our spirit.²⁴ May _____ take what God provides and make it holy.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מִלְּךָ הַעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הַגֶּפֶן.

*Ba-ruch a-ta Adonai, Eh-lo-hei-nu me-lech ha-o-lam,
bo-rei p'ri ha-ga-fen.*

Let us bless the Source of All, Who creates the fruit of the vine, symbol of our rejoicing.

The mother introduces and then sings a *niggun*, a wordless melody. The guests join in, and she says:

May the sound of blessing caress her ears and fill her heart.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מִלְּךָ הַעוֹלָם, שׁוֹמֵעַ תְּפִלָּה.

*Ba-ruch a-ta Adonai, Eh-lo-hei-nu me-lech ha-o-lam,
sho-mei-ah t'fi-lah.*

Let us bless the Source of All, Who listens to prayer from the heart.

Flowers are held beneath the baby's nose:

The sense of smell unites us with our breath and reminds us of the soul. May the fragrance of beauty and peace surround _____ as she remembers the wisdom of her soul.

Brit Shomrei Hamachzorim

Today, we publicly announce the birth of our new daughter and sister, welcoming her into this covenant our mothers have guarded in secret for so long.

Guest:

Ever since Avraham and Sarah began helping people discover God, this has been our vision: a world of men and women acting together, sharing the tasks needed to nurture and teach, to sustain and develop, that we reach the sacred time for which we wait.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מִלְּךָ הַעוֹלָם,
שֶׁהַקִּיּוֹנוֹ וְהַגִּיעוּתוֹ לְזִמְנוֹ הַזֶּה.

*Ba-ruch a-ta Adonai, Eh-lo-hei-nu me-lech ha-o-lam,
sheh-hei-cheh-ya-nu v'ki-y'ma-nu v'hi-gi-a-nu la-z'man ha-zeh.*

Let us bless the Source of All, Who has breathed life into us, sustained us, and brought us to this precious moment.

AWAKENING OF THE FIVE SENSES

The mother lights two *Shabbat* candles and says:

Jewish women have been guardians of the light, kindling the spiritual flame for home and community since ancient times. With every *Shabbat* and holy day we remember the spark of spirit within, and manifest its beauty and wonder through lighting the fire of enlightenment, love, and peace.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מִלְּךָ הַעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא מְאוּרֵי הָאֵשׁ.

*Ba-ruch a-ta Adonai, Eh-lo-hei-nu me-lech ha-o-lam,
bo-rei m'o-rei ha-eish.*

Let us bless the Source of All, Who creates the illuminations of the flame.²³

Brit Shomrei Hamachzorim

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא עֲשָׂבֵי בְשָׂמִים.

*Ba-ruch a-ta Adonai, Eh-lo-hei-nu me-lech ha-o-lam,
bo-rei is-vei v'sa-nimim.*

Let us bless the Source of All,

Who creates the sweet-smelling grasses.

The baby's hands are washed with water that was collected from rain, lake, river, or seawater:

Brit is the covenant of our separate male and female realities, united and transformed by an awareness of Spirit.

With the purifying water from the Garden of Eden do we wash, wake, and welcome you into the covenant of women, guarding the sacred cycles of time. From the Source of Oneness are we all born. Remember and return often to the pure spring of life. Immerse yourself in truth, joy, and hope.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,

אֲשֶׁר קִדְשֵׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו, וְצִוָּנוּ עַל נְטִילַת יָדַיִם.

*Ba-ruch a-ta Adonai, Eh-lo-hei-nu me-lech ha-o-lam,
a-sher ki-d'sha-nu b'mitz-vo-tav, v'tzi-va-nu
al n'ti-lat ya-da-yim.*

Let us bless the Source of All, Who guides us
on the path of holiness and directs us
to lift up our hands through washing with water.

Naming:

מִי שְׁבָרָה אֲמוּתֵינוּ שָׁרָה, רִבְקָה, רָחֵל, וְלֵאָה
וּמְרִיָם הַנְּבִיאָה נְאֻבְגִיל, וְאַסְתֵּר הַמֶּלְכָּה בַת אֲבִיחַיִל
הוּא יְבָרָךְ אֶת הַנְּעָרָה הַנְּעִימָה הַזֹּאת

Brit Shomrei Hamachzorim

בַּת _____ וְיִצְרָא שְׂמָה בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל _____

בְּמִזְלָ טוֹב וּבְשֵׁעַת בְּרָכָה.

וַיְבָרְכֶהָ בְּבְרִיאוֹת, שְׁלוֹם וּמְנוּחָה

לְתוֹרָה וּלְחֶסֶד וּלְמַעֲשֵׂים טוֹבִים.

וַיְזַכֶּה אֶת אֲבִיהָ וְאֶת אִמָּהּ לְרֵאוֹת בְּשִׂמְחָתָהּ

בְּבָנִים וּבָנוֹת עַשְׂרָה וְכָבוֹד

דְּשָׁנִים וְרַעְנָנִים יְנוּבּוֹן בְּשִׂיבָה

וְכֵן יְהִי רְצוֹן וְנֹאמַר אָמֵן.

*Mi sheh-bei-rach i-mo-tei-nu Sa-rah, Riv-kah, Ra-chel, v'Lei-ah
u-Mir-yam ha-n'vi-ah, va'A-vi-ga-yil, v'Es-ter bat A-vi-cha-yil
hu y'va-reich et ha-na-a-rah ha-n'i-mah ha-zohit
v'yi-ka-rei sh'mah b'Yisrael*

_____ bat _____ v' _____
b'ma-zal tohv u-vish-at b'rachia.

*Vi-gad'lah biv-ri-ut, sha-lohm um-nu-cha-
l'torah ul-chu-pah ul-ma-a-sim tovim.*

Vi-za-keh et a-vi-ha v'et i-mah lir-ohit b'sim-cha-tah

b'va-nim u-va-noht, oh-shter v'cha-vohd

*d'shei-nim v'ra-a-na-nim y'nu-vun b'sei-va-
v'chein y'hi ra-tzohm v'no-mar a-mein.*

May God Who blessed our mothers

Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, and Leah

Miriam the prophet and Avigayil

bless this beautiful little girl

and let her name be called in Israel

_____ daughter of _____ and _____

at this favorable moment of blessing.

May she be raised in health, peace, and tranquility

To study Torah

To stand under the *chupah* (if that is her choice)

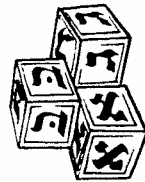
To do good deeds.

Brit Shomrei Hamachzorim

May her parents merit to see her happy
blessed with children, wealth, and honor
peaceful and content in their old age.
May this be God's will.
Amen.

Parents explain the meaning of the baby's name.

Let us bless the Source of All, Who has brought us to a life of
service and given us the opportunity to introduce our daughter to
the covenant of the sacred cycles.²⁶



Brit Banot



As the baby is brought into the room all rise and say:

Who is she who shines through like the dawn, Beautiful as the sun,
radiant as the moon? (Song of Songs 6:10)

The following lines may be read by the rabbi or leader, by selected
guests, responsively, or by the entire company:

Look to Abraham your father and to Sarah who bore you.
(Isaiah 51:2)

God appeared to Abram and said to him: I am *El Shaddai*; walk
wholeheartedly before Me. Then I will establish a covenant
between Me and you and your descendants who will come after
you: A covenant in which I will be your God and your children's
God, forever and ever. (Genesis 17:1, 7)

(The baby is held at the center of a large *tallit*. Each of the four
corners is held by parents and honored guests and is folded around
the baby.)

How precious is Your constant love, O God; You shelter us under
Your wings. (Psalms 36:8)

Let all my being praise the Lord Who is clothed in splendor and
majesty; wrapped in light like a garment, unfolding the heavens
like a curtain. You send forth Your spirit and there is creation. You
renew the face of the earth. (Psalms 104:1, 30)

O you who dwell in the shelter of the Most High and abide in the
protection of Shaddai. My God, in Whom I trust, will cover you;
you will find shelter under God's wings.

Rabbi or parents:

Brit Banot

Our God and God of our ancestors, we thank You for the gift of this child (our daughter) whom we welcomed into God's covenant today. May she grow to maturity embraced by God's love and the love of all who know her. May the *Shechinah*, God's sheltering presence, be with her always. May the words of Torah surround her. Clothed in majesty and honor, may she always look to the future with joy.

Parents:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתֶיךָ, וְרָצוּנוּ
לְהַכְנִיטוּ בְּבְרִיתוֹ שֶׁל אַבְרָהָם אֲבִינוּ וְשָׂרָה אִמֵּנוּ.

*Ba-ruch a-ta Adonai, Elh-lo-hei-nu me-lech ha-o-lam,
a-sher ki-d'sha-nu b'mitz-vo-tav, v'tzi-va-nu
l'hach-ni-so biv-ri-to shel Av-ra-ham a-vi-nu v'Sa-rah i-mei-nu.*

O Lord our God, Ruler of the Universe, Who sanctifies us with Your *mitzvot* and commanded us to bring our daughter in to the Covenant of Abraham our father and Sarah our mother.

All:

בְּשֵׁם שְׂבִיבִיטָה לְבְרִית,
כִּן תִּכְנֹס לְתוֹרָה וּלְחֻפָּה וּלְמַעֲשֵׂים טוֹבִים.
*K'sheim sheh-ni-eh-n'sah la-brit,
kein ti-ka-nes l'to-rah ul-chu-pah ul-ma-a-sim to-vim.*
As she has entered the Covenant,
so may she attain the blessings of Torah,
marriage under the *chupah*, and a life of good deeds.

Brit Banot

Rabbi:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הַגֶּזֶן.
*Ba-ruch a-ta Adonai, Elh-lo-hei-nu me-lech ha-o-lam,
bo-vei p'ri ha-ga-fen.*

Praised are You Lord our God, Ruler of the Universe,
Who creates the fruit of the vine.

Our God and God of our ancestors, sustain this child. We declare that her name shall be _____ daughter of _____ and _____.

May the father rejoice in his offspring; may her mother delight in the fruit of her womb. As it is written: Gladness and joy shall abide with her; thanksgiving and happy song. (Isaiah 51:36)

God makes a covenant with her, a covenant of life and peace. (Malachi 2:5)

As it is written: This is the child for whom I prayed; God has granted my desire. (I Samuel 1:27)

O praise our God, Whose goodness endures forever

May this little one _____ become great.

As she has entered the Covenant, so may she attain the blessings of Torah, marriage under the *chupah*, and a life of good deeds.

Let us say Amen.²⁶



to the creation of a ceremony by Rabbi Michael and Sharon Strassfeld which replaces circumcision with immersion in the *mikveh* (ritual bath) for a baby girl.¹² Immersion is most commonly done after a woman's menstrual period, so that this ceremony, like *Brit Milah*, evokes associations with blood, as well as covenant. The problem is that this ceremony resembles baptism too much to "feel Jewish," although in fact the Christian tradition of baptism is an adaptation of the Jewish tradition of ritual immersion.

A less problematic ceremony, also associated with water, is called *brit rehitzah* (covenant of washing) and was created by Rabbi Ruth Sohn and others.¹³ It evokes the biblical story of Abraham's welcoming the three angels who visited him after his circumcision by washing their feet. The ceremony welcomes the girl child into the world and covenant by washing her feet and employs a new *berakhah*: "Blessed are you *Adonai* our God, Ruler of the universe, who is mindful of the covenant through the washing of the feet."

The second, and in my view, more powerful, alternative to immersion rituals relates female spirituality to the cycles of the moon. *Rosh Hodesh* (New Moon Festival) is designated in the tradition as a woman's holiday. The mystical tradition links women and the moon and suggests that in the world to come women will be restored to their rightful position as equal to men, just as the moon will be restored to her equal position with the sun.¹⁴ There is also an obvious connection between the menstrual cycles of women and the cycles of the moon.

Using the connection between women and the moon as the organizing principle of the ritual determines its timing. It no longer occurs on the eighth day but on the *Roshi Hodesh* after the birth. It moves the ceremony from the day to the night.

A most interesting ritual flows out of the tradition of *Kiddush Levannah* (blessing of the moon).¹⁵ Traditionally observed on a Saturday night after *Havdalah* (distinction-making ritual that separates the Sabbath or holiday from weekday), between the third and the fifteenth of the month, the ceremony offers fitting opportunities for a covenant ceremony for daughters. It involves singing, chanting, and movement; a liturgy filled with images of renewal, regeneration, and creation; and most importantly, a powerful messianic thrust. For example, the liturgy includes "Long

live David, king of Israel," an obvious messianic reference, and Song of Songs 2:8-9, a more subtle one.

A *Brit* ritual which begins with *Kiddush Levannah* celebrates female spirituality in an authentically Jewish way. It evokes the liminal—the possibility that this child is messiah, and that she is connected to the women of our tradition who celebrated the cycles of the moon.

SEDER BRIT KIDDUSH LEVANAH

Order of the Service

Entry into the Covenant

The girl is entered into the covenant with a new *berakhah* based on the blessing offered at a circumcision:

בָּרֻךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הַעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר קִדְשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוֵּנוּ לְהַכְנִיסָהּ בְּבְרִיתָם שֶׁל אַבְרָהָם וְשָׂרָה.

Barukh attah adonai eloheinu melekh ha'olam, asher kiddeshanu bemitzvotav vetzivvanu lehakhnisah bivritam shel avraham vesarah.

Blessed are you God, Ruler of the universe, who has sanctified us with the commandments and commanded us to enter our daughter into the Covenant of Abraham and Sarah.

The community responds: "As this child has been entered into the covenant, so may she enter into a life enriched by Torah, a warm and loving relationship, and a commitment to create a better world."

The baby is linked not only to the cosmic future and redemption, but also to her own individual future, as the ritual asserts the idea of a connected life.

Welcoming and Naming

Before _____ was formed in (her mother's) womb, the Holy One gestured to the angel in charge of the winds

and said, "Bring me the wind which is in the Garden of Eden and whose name is _____ bat (daughter of) _____ ve (and) _____." Immediately the angel went and brought the wind _____ before the Holy One shaking and trembling, and the Holy One said to the wind: "_____, enter into that sperm and that egg." And the wind _____ opened her mouth to speak: "I am quite satisfied living in the garden of Eden. Why must I leave? I am holy and pure and formed out of Your own holiness." And the Holy One replied, "The place where I am sending you will be even more pleasant than the Garden of Eden. And when I created you it was just for this purpose." The Holy One dispatched the wind _____ and the angels placed her in her mother's womb. There she was fed by two angels, and they guarded her and kept her safe. And in there a candle burned over her head and by its light she saw from one end of the universe to the other. There are no days in a person's life more enjoyable than those days in the womb, and by the light of the candle the angels taught _____ the entire Torah. After nine months the angel announced that the time had come to enter the air of the world. _____ protested: "Why do I have to leave? I am just fine in here!" But the angel replied, "Whether you like it or not, you are going. And mark my words, when your time comes to leave that world outside, you will not want to go." And the child _____ entered the air of the world. And the angel tapped her on the upper lip, leaving a mark, and the candle went out and _____ has forgotten all that she had seen and known.¹⁶

The rabbi or a parent then says: Tonight is the beginning of _____'s remembering. We give her, her first word of Torah—her own name.

Like the "dearly beloved" of the *Brit* liturgy, the soul about to enter the world is no longer what she was but not yet who she will become. It is especially powerful to use portions of the *Zevad Habat* (gift of a daughter), the traditional Sephardic welcoming blessing for a baby girl, in the naming:

May God who blessed our mothers Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, and Leah, Miriam the prophet, Avigail and Esther, the queens, bless this lovely little girl and let her name be called in Israel _____ the daughter of _____ and _____ at this favorable moment of blessing.

May she be raised in health, peace, and tranquility to study Torah, to stand under the *huppah*, to do good deeds. May her parents merit to see her happy, blessed with children, wealth and honor, peaceful and content in their old age. May this be God's will. Amen.¹⁷

So this little girl, at once the wind from the Garden of Eden, the hoped-for messiah, Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, Leah, Miriam, Avigail, and Esther, becomes a particular person with a particular history, the daughter of her mother and her father. The baby is entered into the covenantal community, endowed with both cosmic and personal history.

Creating a Future of Continuity

The time has come for our tradition to mark the entrance of girls as well as boys into the world and our people. *Brit Batot* can be powerful, transformative and authentic. Someday a mother will look into the eyes of her baby girl at her child's *Brit* and see her own mother looking into her own eyes. And when that chain goes back for generations, we will know we have succeeded.

snowdrifts to wind paper streamers around his tree. In time, we moved to another community. Although we could no longer watch the tree grow from day to day, we would get long-distance reports from friends on our tree's progress and, once a year, we made a pilgrimage to measure Judah's growth against the tree's. It was like making notches in a wall that grew faster than the child.

In the years that followed, we added three daughters to our family tree, and our tree-planting ceremony became a tradition rather than an innovation. With each act of creation, we re-created the service to reflect our evolving expectations about life and growth and our understanding of the uniqueness of each child. Every time a baby was born, each of her older siblings had a role in creating the tree ceremony and welcoming the child's new tree into the world. Grandparents too had their parts, reflecting the Talmudic ideal of planting trees so that our grandchildren can see them grow to fruition (BT *Ta'anit* 23a).

When Jessica, our youngest, was born, we added a new piece to our tree planting ceremony. As we were celebrating Jessica's birth, we were mourning the loss of my mother Jessica who had died the previous year. Grandma Jessie had been an integral part of our family's life and our tree planting ceremonies. She had created a personal memory for each of Jessica's siblings by writing a poem for their tree plantings. Now we needed to include her memory in our service. We told the story of Baby Jessica's name—capturing the essence of what made her grandmother so special and expressing our hope that this legacy would continue. As we planted the tree's roots in the soil, we understood that Jessica's roots in the family tree had been nourished by her namesake. As each participant shoveled dirt onto the tree, we were reminded of the custom of personally shovelling dirt on the coffin of those who have died, and felt the symmetry and circularity of Jewish lifecycle.

All of our children cared for and about their trees. In their own small way, they became *shomrei adamah* (guardians of the earth). It became a yearly custom in our house to have a *Tu B'Shvat* birthday party when the children would invite their friends over to decorate their trees with bows and streamers.

When we planted the trees, we were aware that, as with any living organism, there was a chance that the tree would not live out the length of its days. And although we intended the parallel between trees and children to reflect celebrating life with life, not

every tree that we planted survived. In its fifteenth year, Shira's beautiful peach tree endured a difficult winter. It saddened us to watch the vibrance drain from its sturdy frame until there was no chance for survival. After mourning its loss, we knew we had to replant. We told Shira that we would celebrate her sixteenth birthday with another tree-planting. This time, *she* planned the ceremony. She invited her best friends, including her siblings, to read a poem of their choice about trees. She even included the poem her Grandma Jessie had written for her fifteen years before. She let her father read the prayer we had written for her at her first tree planting. Our eyes brimmed with tears, as we saw how much of our prayer had already come to fruition and we softly said our own *Shehechyanu*. I added my own blessing for our almost-grown daughter:

Shira, we pray that the tree we plant today has a long life. As it grows, so may you grow too. This time you will fly away to new worlds and new adventures, leaving your tree behind. May you go and grow in peace, but do not forget to come back to the place where your roots are planted.

Our children and our trees are now approaching a new stage of life. They are on the verge of maturity, and we, the parents and planters, no longer need to tend them so vigilantly. As they reach upward and outward, we hope that their roots and traditions will continue to nourish and sustain them until and beyond the day when they too can plant their own family trees.

O R D E R O F T H E T R E E P L A N T I N G C E R E M O N Y

Welcome

Welcome to our tree planting! We plant a tree in our child's honor and watch the child and the tree grow together. In this way we are able to celebrate life with life, to involve our children as well as ourselves, to cherish a living reminder of this new birth, and to mark its importance in our lives.

Custom of Tree Planting

In ancient Israel, a tree was planted when a child was born—a cedar for a boy, a cypress for a girl. As the children grew up, they cared for their own trees. When they were married, the bridegroom and bride stood under a canopy made of branches cut from the trees that had been planted in their honor years before. Thus, the Jewish tradition formed a strong bond between birth and marriage, and helped to develop a love for trees and a sensitivity to the wonders of nature.

Etz Hayyim (Tree of Life)

Our Torah is a Tree of Life to those that hold tight to it and everyone who upholds it is happy. Its ways are ways of pleasantness, and all its paths are peace (after Proverbs 3:17-18, and Torah Service).

The above may be sung in Hebrew, using traditional or modern melodies.

Responsive Reading²⁸

And God said: Let the earth put forth grass, herb yielding seed, and fruit trees bearing fruit after its kind....And it was so.... And God saw it was good (Genesis 1:11-12).

When a tree is wantonly cut down, its voice rings from one end of the earth to another (*Pirkei Derabbi Eli'ezer* 43).
When you besiege a city, do not destroy the trees thereof. You may eat of them but you must not cut them down (Deuteronomy 20:19).

A person's life is sustained by trees. Just as others planted for you, plant for the sake of your children (*Midrashi Tanituma Kedoshim* 8).

If you had a sapling in your hand and were told that the Messiah had come, first plant the sapling, then go out to greet the Messiah (*Midrashi Avot Derabbi Natan* 8, 31).

Build houses and dwell in them; plant gardens and eat the fruit of them (Jeremiah 29:5).

You shall be like a tree planted beside a river; that brings forth its fruit in season, whose leaf does not wither; and whatsoever you do shall prosper (after Psalms 1:3).

Zion shall no more be termed forsaken; neither shall the land be termed desolate any more (Isaiah 62:4).

For the pastures of the wilderness are green with grass, the tree bears its fruit; the fig tree and the vine do yield their strength (Joel 2:22).

Be glad, O land, and rejoice, for the Lord hath done great things (Joel 2:21).

The Story of the Planter

While walking along a road, a sage saw a man planting a carob tree. He asked him: "How long will it take for this tree to bear fruit?" "Seventy years," replied the man. The sage then asked: "Are you so healthy a man that you expect to live that length of time and eat its fruit?" The man answered: "I found a fruitful world because my ancestors planted it for me. Likewise I am planting for my children." (BT *Ta'anit* 23a)

Family Tree: The Story of the Name

This is the opportunity to share the heart and spirit of the person/people the child was named after. It is the child's living history—the roots from which s/he will grow and the legacy s/he carries.

Siblings and Grandparents

Welcome the New Baby and the Tree

Using poem, picture, or story, immediate and extended family offer words of welcome, blessing, and advice to the baby.

Our Prayer for Our Child and Her/His Tree

Dear God, we stand before you in awe as we witness these miracles of your creation—this young tree and our baby. Both are unique and original, unlike anything that ever was before or will be. Each began with a single seed, concealing a complex potential that miraculously unfolds with each passing day.

We pray that the roots of this tree will gain hold and spread deep, drawing nourishment from the fertile earth. So may our child draw nourishment from her/his

own roots—family, heritage, and the Jewish tradition.

We pray that the trunk will grow healthy and strong, withstanding the harsh forces of nature and able to support its canopy of branches and leaves. So may our daughter/son possess a healthy body and a strong moral spirit, holding steadfast to her/his own integrity and withstanding the tempests and temptations that could weaken or deter her/him.

We watch these branches bud and blossom, giving shade and beauty for all to enjoy. So, too, may we watch our child bud and blossom to be a blessing and support to family, friends, and community, and to make her/his unique contribution to the world.

Help us to nourish and nurture this tree and our child so that they may both mature and prosper, fulfilling to the greatest extent possible the potential for which God placed them on earth.

Final Blessings and Planting

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, עוֹשֶׂה נִסִּים וּמוֹתָוֹת בְּרֵאשִׁית.

Barukh attah adonai eloheinu melekh ha'olam, oseh ma'aseh vereshit.

Blessed are You, *Adonai* our God, Ruler of the universe, who continually does the work of creation (blessing traditionally recited upon seeing wonders of nature, including sunrises, shooting stars, vast deserts).

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, שֶׁהַחַיִּים וְקִיּוּמָם וְהַגִּיעוּתָם לְזִמְנוֹ הַזֶּה.

Barukh attah adonai eloheinu melekh ha'olam, shehecheyanu vekiyeymanu vehigg'anu lazeman hazeh.

Blessed are You, *Adonai* our God, Ruler of the universe, who has kept us in life, and preserved us, and enabled us to reach this season (blessing for reaching a new or momentous occasion).

The tree is planted.

4

Adolescence



Adolescence as we know it is an invention, some would say a luxury, of modern Western society. In societies where twelve and thirteen year olds have adult responsibilities to earn a living, or where it is normative for teenagers to marry and bear children, the passage between childhood and adulthood is neither so discrete nor so lengthy as it is in our privileged setting.

~~A major theme of adolescence is rebellion. Finding one's way in opposition to the known and defining oneself against the norm. Adolescence is also a time of experimentation—with sex, self-image, identity, and group affiliation. It is marked by obvious biological changes and less obvious psychological and spiritual ones. Adolescence is known for its contradictions: Massive indifference and uncompromising idealism, approach and avoidance of sexuality, responsibility and parents.~~



book bearing his name which appears (unchronologically) as the third of the MINOR PROPHETS.

Amos was a great social reformer with a lofty conception of God, humanity, and the ethical imperatives of Judaism. The Book of Amos proclaims a universal God who will no more overlook the transgressions of His own people than He will those of other nations (chapters 1-2). Material prosperity acquired by exploiting the poor and the underprivileged testifies neither to Divine favor nor to man's godly conduct. Man's aim should be to "hate evil and love good, and establish justice in the gate" (chapters 3-6). Amos denounces religious hypocrisy (8:4-6) and stresses the urgency of repentance to avert ultimate calamity (chapters 7-8). An epilogue (chapter 9) contains the vision of a future Golden Age in which social justice and the "fallen Davidic tabernacle" will both be restored when God and His surviving people are finally reconciled.

THE BOOK OF AMOS

1:1 — 2:16	Oracles against foreign nations and against Israel
3:1 — 5:17	Reprimands and reproofs of Samaria
5:18 — 6:14	Prophecies of woe
7:1 — 9:6	Visions (locusts, judgment by fire, basket of fruit) forecasting doom
9:7 — 15	Hope and promise of restoration

AMRAM (BEN SHESHNA) GAON (c. 810-874). Head of the Babylonian Academy of Sura from 858, pupil and successor of Natronai Gaon. He wrote over 200 responsa which shed light on religious conditions among the Jews of his time and on his own personality. One such ruling forbids the taking of interest (even indirectly) from non-Jews. He is chiefly renowned and remembered, however, for his *Seder Tefillot* ("Order of Prayers," c. 860), the oldest surviving Jewish PRAYER BOOK, generally known as *Seder Rav Amram Gaon*. Based on authoritative sources, it was the first work to supply a logical arrangement of the prayers for every occasion in the year, together with complete texts of the LITURGY, applicable laws and customs, and the rules governing Sabbath and festival observance. Though originally intended for the Jewish community of Barcelona, as a trustworthy guide to the synagogue service, Rav Amram Gaon's *Seder* became far more widely influential. Its major impact was on prayer books of the Babylonian (e.g., Sephardi) rite, yet it also served as a model for Ashkenazi rituals such as the *Mahzor Vitry* (11th cent., France). A comparison of old manuscripts with later printed editions shows that various changes and additions were made to *Seder Rav Amram Gaon* in the course of time.

AMULET Object worn or kept close to one's person as a protection against evil, natural and supernatural. These artifacts are believed, on account of their origin, inscriptions, or special associations, to have the spiritual power or holiness to ward off misfortune (see EVIL EYE). The Talmud mentions the practice of hanging or wearing parchments containing suitable biblical inscriptions as amulets. This raised halakhic questions as to whether such amulets — termed *kamé'ot* in Aramaic — possessed the holiness of Scriptural scrolls, and whether they might be worn outside the home on the Sabbath (*Shab.* 6.2; *Yoma* 84a). While MAIMONIDES opposed reliance on amulets, most other rabbinical authorities permitted their use. Belief in their efficacy was widespread in Eastern Europe and the Orient, particularly after the spread of kabbalistic ideas in the Middle Ages. Special amulets could be prepared for various needs, e.g., to cure BARRENNESS and heal the sick, or to serve as protective talismans during pregnancy and childbirth, as well as for the newly born. Traditional Judaism does not consider the TEFILLIN or MEZUZAH to be amulets in this sense, but there were periods in which these ritual objects assumed talismanic importance among ordinary folk and miniature replicas are worn today as "good luck" charms.

Amulet inscriptions included the PRIESTLY BLESSING (Num. 6:24-26), the Names of God in various permutations, the names given to dozens of angels, and various mystical incantations written either in full or in abbreviation. These inscriptions were often set down on parchment and placed in cases of cylindrical or other shapes; otherwise, they were inscribed on discs of silver or other metals, the latter taking the form of jewelry or pendants worn around the neck. Occasionally, the inscription is woven into a popular design or symbol, but sometimes the symbol accompanies the writing. Popular motifs include the MAGEN DAVID (Star of David), Psalm 67 in the form of a seven-branched MENORAH, the hand (*hamsa* in Arabic), squares and rectangles.

Two small cylindrical objects, with a space in the middle through which a string could be threaded, were discovered in 1979 within a tomb on Ketef Hinnom in Jerusalem. When unrolled, they were found to be silver plaques inscribed with the Priestly Blessing. Dating from the mid-seventh century BCE, these silver scrolls constitute the earliest evidence that metal amulets were used and worn during the First Temple period.

ANGEL OF DEATH The angel who takes man's soul from his body. While life and death are for God to apportion, there are occasional biblical references to a host of "destroying angels" (Ex. 12:23; II Sam. 24:16; Isa. 37:36), to a fatal "reaper" (Jer. 9:20), and to wrathful "messengers of death" (Prov. 16:14). Such evil forces begin to act on their own initiative in post-biblical literature, where they are personified as the demon Ashmedai or Asmodeus of the Apocrypha (Tobit 3.8, 17) and as more notorious figures of dread.

White Fire

THE ART OF WRITING MIDRASH

Let yourself experience this story as if it is happening right now, not to a mere fictional being, but to you. Then, start to write.

BY ALICIA OSTRIKER

Imagine that you are Eve. You have just had an interesting conversation with a talking serpent who insists that God doesn't want you to eat the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil because doing so would make you godlike. Observing the tree, you decide that the attractive fruit must be good to eat and capable of making a person wise. You reach forth your hand, take the fruit, and eat. What do you feel at that moment? What are you thinking?

Imagine that you are Jacob. You are alone at night in the Negev Desert. Your family is on one side of the Jab-bok river and you are on the other, worrying. In the morning you will be meeting your brother Esau. You haven't seen him for twenty years, not



ILLUSTRATION BY JIM CARROLL

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since you cheated him out of your father's blessing and he threatened to kill you. Suddenly a man appears from nowhere and leaps on you, throwing you to the ground. He wrestles with you all night. He dislocates your hip. Neither of you wins. As the sky lightens, he says, "Let me go, for dawn is coming." What are you feeling at that moment? What do you see? What is it that you realize in the moment before saying, "I will not let you go unless you bless me"?

There are so many things the narratives of Torah don't tell us. This is where midrash comes in. According to tradition, Torah is not words alone. Torah is black fire written on white fire. Through midrash, we can imagine the unsaid, the white fire. We can read between the lines.

To write midrash requires no special knowledge of the Bible and no extraordinary writing skill. You may be amazed by what you find yourself writing. The crucial factor is that you find a character or a situation that rings bells for you, that gets you excited in some way. I call this process finding a hot spot.

Maybe you are a romantic, and you want to imagine the first meeting of Adam and Eve, or of Jacob and his beloved Rachel. Maybe you're a rebel, and you like the idea of eating that apple. Maybe you are a teacher, and you empathize with the difficulties Moses has with the Israelites in the wilderness after they leave Egypt. If you are facing some frightening changes in your life, you might write a midrash reflecting on why it was so

hard for the Israelites to accept their new way of life after leaving Egypt (see Exodus 16 and 17).

Think of all the puzzles midrash can solve. Why did Lot's wife look back? Why did Joseph play so many tricks on his brothers instead of revealing his identity right away? Why did God harden Pharaoh's heart? Why did Samson let Delilah give him that haircut? What made Ruth decide to leave her own family and land to cleave to her mother-in-law Naomi, saying, "Whither thou goest, I will go"? For that matter, what made her sister-in-law Orpah decide not to go along with Naomi?

Questions, questions, questions. Potentially, every character and every situation in the Bible might turn out to be a hot spot for you at some time or other in your life. The Bible is what I call "the collective dream of the Jewish people," filled with birth and death, heartache and solace, triumph and loss, fear and hope—every imaginable human emotion. And just as each character in a person's dream represents some aspect of the dreamer, we can discover connections of all kinds between our own lives and those of biblical personalities.

As with every writing process, midrash is a kind of diving deep and surfacing. You move from your ordinary analytical, rational mind into a more meditative state, then into the flow of creativity, and finally back to your ordinary consciousness.

In preparing to write, find a place where you will not be interrupted and make yourself comfortable and relaxed. Give yourself a limited amount of time; use a timer to tell you when to stop (looking at your watch is not allowed). You can use pen or pencil and paper, or a typewriter or your laptop—whatever makes you feel most at ease. Begin with your hot spot. Re-read the story or the passage. Notice your own responses. Does the story make you feel joyful, angry, sad, puzzled, proud? Does it remind you of something in your own experience? What has been left unsaid by the text?

Now, close the book and close your eyes. Imagine your character at the time of the story. Picture the scene, notice

Lilith, I Don't Cut My Grass

BY ENID DAME

Lilith, I don't cut my grass as you never cut your hair. I picture you in my backyard where it's always cool and ferny, where jewelweeds grow taller than trees, where wild berries tangle like knots in cat's fur.

I see you sorting out the birds from the cats: two of your favorite animals. Contradictions never scared you.

Lilith, you smell like the earth and marigolds and mulchy leaves. Your arms are mud-bespattered. You don't look like my mother.

I couldn't ask my mother for a blessing. She was too much afraid of her own craziness. She only spoke to cats.

Every few months She went to an expert to burn all the wilderness out of her hair.

Once she tried to take me with her. I scratched and fought, yowled, ran up an elm tree. It took years to climb down.

Lilith, I'm almost 50. I'm running out of time, money, eyesight. I still bleed but for how long?

Not like this yard where everything is liquid; where roses sag and break their waters, tomatoes offer up their juices, slugs die dreamily in beerbowls, you dip your toes in green mud.

Lilith, neighbors are complaining. They're collecting money to buy me a power mower. How can I tell them I'm terrified of power? There's too much let loose in the world. It's one gift I don't need.

Lilith, it's growing later I know you won't hang on forever. They say Messiah's coming any day now.

I hear his footsteps ringing in the hallway. The clean clang of authority. I see his shadow looming big as a condominium sucking up the sun.

No stopping that man! He's carrying a squirtgun filled with chemicals. No room for weeds in his world.

Lilith, bless this garden while both of us still use it.

From Which Lilith? Feminist Writers Re-create the World's First Woman, edited by Enid Dame, Lilly Rivlin, and Henry Wenkart, published by Jason Aronson Inc.

the details. What is your character thinking and feeling? Let these thoughts and feelings develop and crystallize in your mind. Let yourself experience this story as if it is happening right now, not to a mere fictional being, but to you. When the situation is alive for you, you can set your timer and start to write.

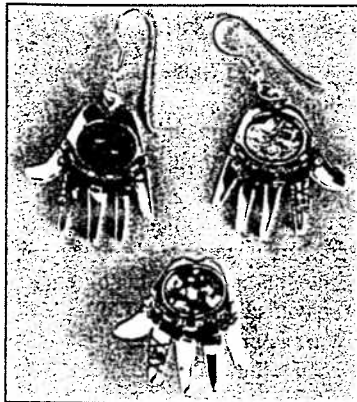
But write what? Here are some ways you can turn the gaps in the story into midrash.

1. *Monologue.* Using the first-person singular I (of course, you can change your age, your gender, and your circumstances), write what the biblical text leaves out—the unspoken thoughts and feelings of your character while events are happening. Use phrases such as "I want..." and "I need..." Give yourself three minutes. At the end, there might be a revelation—something you never understood before. Use phrases such as "suddenly I see..." and

GALERIE ROBIN.



FINE JUDAICA

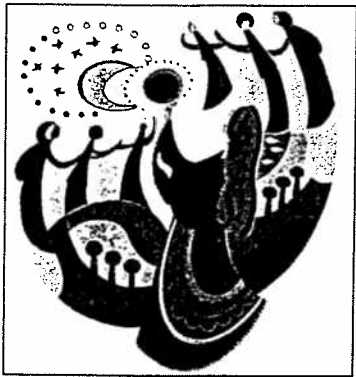


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Serigraph - Miriam, 17 1/2 x 21 1/4", Ed. 250
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"now I understand...."

2. *Memory.* Again using the first-person singular, imagine that it is now years after the story took place. You are telling your version to someone else—a family member, a child, or perhaps to God. You have never told this to anyone, and you have three minutes. Does everything seem different in retrospect? How have you changed since the story took place, and who are you now? You might use the phrases "I remember..." and "I wish..."

3. *Dialogue.* Many people don't realize they have a flair for dialogue until they find themselves writing it. Dialogue can be either serious or comic. In a humorous way, try writing the conversation between Moses and Zipporah when Moses comes back from the Burning Bush and attempts to relate what he's seen. For something serious, try writing the dialogue between Moses and God after God informs Moses that he may not enter the Promised Land. This scene might take a little longer. Give yourself five minutes.

4. *Imaginary Dialogue.* Invent an unrecorded encounter that might have happened between two biblical characters. What did Isaac say to Sarah after he returned home from Mount Moriah after his near-death experience? How did Sarah respond? What if Queen Esther met ex-Queen Vashti in the palace gardens? Would they exchange stories about what a dope King Ahasuerus was? Two minutes for this one.

5. *Interview.* A representative of the media does a Q-and-A. "So tell me, Lot's wife, just why did you turn around?" "Well, Jonah, that must have been quite an experience, living for three days in a whale's belly. Would you like to tell our studio audience something about it?" No time limit on this. Just go until the inspiration runs out.

6. *Third-person narrative.* The story is told by a nonparticipant, who may be an unidentified narrator or a minor character who witnesses the main action. For example, a soldier in David's army might describe the episode in I Samuel 24 in which David foregoes the chance to kill Saul, or a courtier might detail the summit meeting between Solomon and Sheba, or Job's wife

might tell his story from her point of view. Narrative uses description and vivid detail to enrich our sense of reality, so give yourself up to ten minutes for this one.

I am often asked why I impose time limits. The reason is that such restrictions put you into a creative tizzy; they short-circuit your usual, rational, predictable responses and let you access deeper layers of spontaneous feeling and consciousness. When I tell participants in a midrash workshop that they have three minutes to complete an assignment, they always groan—and then they do it, astonishing themselves and each other by the depth and power of what they have written. Another piece of advice: write in a modern style, and let your people talk as naturally as you do. Avoid archaic language, such as "thee" and "thou." Remember, when the tales of Torah were new, the characters spoke the language of the people in their own time. If you do the same, you are much more likely to realize new insights and discover new meaning.

Writing with a study partner can be even more illuminating than writing solo. Together, you can choose a text, share your comments and ideas, and then move into the silence of creating. When the time you have decided on is up, read your midrashim to each other, and smile with wonder. This process can be just as effective in a larger group with a workshop leader.

Some Jews feel that we have no right to modernize the genre of traditional midrash, which has its own rules stemming from talmudic times. Yet Torah is a Tree of Life, and a tree can stay alive only if it grows. So it is with all tradition—it stays alive by growing and changing. To reinterpret Torah is to add new twigs and leaves to the Tree of Life, which is why we have the saying that there is always another interpretation. To write midrash is to offer another interpretation, with the understanding that no single interpretation can ever be final and complete. Writing midrash requires a readiness to respond and imagine, and to accept surprises. Turn it and turn it, our sages said of Torah, for everything is in it—including, of course, our own lives. □

Unit 2

The Parental Covenant: Bat Mitzvah Adolescence, Parenting and Menstruation

Enduring Understanding: During adolescence, our bodies and our religion tell us we are women, but our mothers might disagree. It is a time of great discovery and change. Teens might feel like children, but society presents them with mixed messages that rush them to adulthood. All this makes it difficult, and at the same time exciting, to take on new responsibilities. Here they can share their vastly different experiences of a common milestone and learn from the other—how to do it differently for the next generation and what Judaism has to say about becoming a woman.

Suggested number of lessons: 2

Goals

4. Educate mothers and daughters about the ritual of Bat Mitzvah and its implications regarding a young woman's responsibilities to the Jewish community.
5. Get mothers and daughters talking about their memories, hopes, expectations and fears related to adolescence and the transition to adulthood. Help one to understand the position of the other on that time period in the family's history.
6. Help mothers and daughters feel connected to each other, their parentage and the Torah which is one of the foci of a Bat Mitzvah.

Objectives

At the end of this unit, the participants will:

1. Be able to speak knowledgeably about the bar/bat mitzvah ritual and understand what meaning it holds in our tradition as well as the preparation it requires.
2. Be able to express the other's view of her adolescent years by listening to the other's account—the frustrations and accomplishments that she experienced. This will hopefully open the door to a discussion about their mother-daughter relationship then and now.
3. Be more familiar with Torah and *mitzvot*, two central concepts of this coming-of-age ritual.
4. Learn more about the Biblical foremothers and how they might have viewed their bodies, their femininity and their female relationships.

Core Learning Experiences

1. Double Yoga Warm Up¹⁶
2. Torah Basics
 - Roll out a Torah and play "Torah Treasure Hunt." Give each woman a chop stick as a *yad* and send them hunting for different items in the Torah scroll like the first letter of their Hebrew name, an elongated letter, the *bet* hiding inside of the *pay*, etc.
 - Teach vocabulary such as *aliyah*, *parasha*, *ner tamid*, *maftir*, *bima*, *aron hakodesh*
 - Teach the blessing for studying Torah ... *la'asok b'devrei Torah*

¹⁶ See Unit 1 Appendix for descriptions and photographs of the yoga positions.

- Practice dressing the Torah and learn the names for the items used to decorate the scroll
3. Mitzvah Basics
- Discuss the different responsibilities that members of the household have. Do these differ according to age? Connect this to becoming a Bar/Bat Mitzvah.
 - Pick 20 relevant *mitzvot* for discussion¹⁷ and have the mothers and daughters categorize them:
 - religious or universal
 - mitzvot* I practice or *mitzvot* I would like to practice or *mitzvot* I think are outdated.
 - Make a *mitzvah* contract—pick one mitzvah and try to observe it for a week.
 - *Mitzvot* in the home—how is your home Jewish? What *mitzvot* do you observe there? How does one entering your home know that Jews live there?
4. Discussion Pairs
- Have the mother/daughter pairs sit knee to knee.
 - Each one is given different sentences to complete
 - The woman talking gets 2 minutes to speak uninterrupted
- Two sentences for each person to complete is plenty. Mothers and daughters should alternate completing sentences. Allow for response time.

Sentences for Mothers:

When you were a teenager the things that were difficult for me were...

When you were a teenager the things that were the most exciting/fulfilling for me were...

When you were a teenager, I imagine you felt...

What I remember about being a teenage girl is...

As a girl, the way I felt about my own mother was...

As an adult, the way I feel about my own mother is...

Sentences for Daughters:

When I was a teenager, the things that were difficult for me were...

When I was a teenager, the things that excited me were...

As a young girl, the way I saw you was...

As an adult, the way I see you now is...

When I am a mother/now that I am a mother I will...

5. Create a *tallit*

- Each mother and daughter pair receives a large rectangular piece of white cloth.
- Using The Jewish Catalogue¹⁸ and plain white string, teach the pairs to tie their own *tzit tzit*.
- Let them decorate their own *tallit* to be used for family *simchot* for years to come.

¹⁷ See Encyclopedia Judaica "Commandments, The 613" for a complete list.

¹⁸ Siegel, Richard, Michael Strassfeld, Sharon Strassfeld The First Jewish Catalog, Jewish Publication Society, Philadelphia, 1973.

This *tallit* can be made for everyone in the family to use or just for women to use. It can be decorated with the names of the family matriarchs as far back as the pair can recall. Leave room for names to be added in the future.

Additional Learning Activities

1. Write a *tkhine* for coming of age¹⁹

Tkhines are supplicatory prayers written in vernacular Yiddish specifically for women who did not typically know liturgical Hebrew. They began to be printed in the 16th century but became popular in the 17th and 18th centuries mostly in Central and Eastern Europe. *Tkhines* are one of the few literary traces we have to educate us about the religious life of women at this time. They were very personal, usually with a place to insert the woman's name and were always said at home, not in the synagogue. Following this Jewish, female, traditional form of prayer, ask the participants to write their own *tkhine* for a girl coming of age.

- From a mother's point of view praying for her daughter: this a forum to express hopes and aspirations for your growing daughter
- From a daughter's point of view: this is a time to reflect on hopes and apprehensions that you remember from this time period. What will you pray for—guidance, patience, discovery of love?

2. Write and deliver a *D'var Torah*²⁰

- Both mothers and daughters can write a *D'var Torah* based on the *parasha* corresponding to their birth date.
- Deliver the *D'var Torah* to the class.

Discuss the experience and how useful, difficult or empowering it was and how it must be for a 13 year old girl.

3. Micrography

Micrography is an art form created by tiny writing in the shape of a symbol or object. This takes on a Jewish bent since we are “the people of The Book.” Our writings, our Torah, is so dear to us that we want to constantly find new ways to beautify and glorify it.

- First have the students pick a piece of text in Hebrew or translated into any language they speak. It could be the Torah portion of the week, the portion that coincides with their birthday or if they had a Bat Mitzvah, they could use their *maftir*. Keep in mind, the text does not have to come from Torah. Often Song of Songs is used or lyrics from modern Hebrew songs or even liturgy—anything that has meaning to the artist.
- Next pick a symbol or object that fits with the text. For example, if it is a section of Torah, it can be written in the shape of a Torah scroll. If the text speaks of a ritual object or symbol, that could be the shape.

¹⁹ For examples of *tkhines* see Cardin, Nina Beth ed., Out of the Depths I call to You: A Book of Prayers for the Married Jewish Woman, Jason Aronson Inc., New Jersey, 1992 or Klirs, Tracey Guren ed., The Merit of Our Mothers: A Bilingual Anthology of Jewish Women's Prayers, HUC Press, Cincinnati, 1992.

²⁰ Refer to The Kosher Pig by Richard J. Israel, Alef Design Group, 1994. Chapter 6 “How to give a *D'var Torah*: A Beginner's Guide.”

- Remember—the text does not have to be long. It can be written over and over again to complete the shape.
- Materials needed:
White paper
Black fine point pens
Multi colored fine point pens
Text resources (i.e.: chumash, Bibles, prayer books, song books, concordance, etc.)
Pencils to sketch design

Memorable Moment

Turn the Class into a Book Group:

Read and discuss The Red Tent²¹ by Anita Diamant

This is a book about Dina, the daughter of Leah and Jacob. These familiar characters are the protagonists of the book, which is told from the first person account of the only female child born to Jacob. It is about the camaraderie of women and their sacred space, the Red Tent, where menstruating women spent a week each month separated from the community and bound to each other. Dina's rape is retold as a forbidden love, that enrages the community. Rachel, Dina's "other mother," is a renowned midwife whose story reminds us of strength of women's bodies and their ability to both endure and create.

- At the end of class, prior to your book group session, look at the story of Dina in the Bible (Genesis 34). Explain to the class that the book they are going to read for the next session is a midrash on the Bible, a story that fills in the blanks left by the original text.
- Suggested discussion questions:
 - What does the community, and in particular do the women, gain from the system of the Red Tent? What is lost by this system?*
 - What would we lose or gain in our culture today if we instituted this system?*
 - What were the attitudes toward menstruation as portrayed in the book and how does that picture differ from our culture?*
 - Dina thought of herself as having more than one mother. Do you have more than one mother figure in your life? Does this enhance or complicate matters? How did you come to have these additional mother figures in your life?*
 - Diamant writes: "If you want to understand any woman you must first ask about her mother and then listen carefully." *If this is so, what do you think you are listening for?*

²¹ Diamant, Anita The Red Tent St.Martins Press, 1997 (hardcover) or Picador, 1998 (paperback)

Unit 3

The Marriage Covenant: Wedding

Being Single, Marriage, Intermarriage and Divorce

Enduring Understanding: Judaism expects women to marry, marry a Jewish man and stay married, however this is not always a reality. A family wedding can be a time of great joy and closeness, but perhaps also tension when these expectations are not fulfilled which can be damaging to a mother-daughter relationship. There is always an invisible loss when a daughter marries and takes on a new role outside the established family unit.

Suggested number of lessons: 2 or 3

Goals

7. Educate mothers and daughters about the traditional components of a Jewish wedding.
8. Get mothers and daughters talking about their memories, hopes, expectations and fears related to marriage and divorce.
9. Help mothers and daughters feel connected to each other and their parentage.

Objectives

At the end of this unit, the participants will be able to:

3. Describe the components of a traditional Jewish wedding and make educated choices about which they would like/would have liked to include in their own wedding ceremony.
4. Understand the marriage choices of the other, whether that be to marry, remain single, marry a non-Jew or end a marriage.
5. Know more about the women that came before them through family memorabilia.

Core Learning Activities

1. Double Yoga Warm Up²²
2. Wedding Basics
 - Assign each mother-daughter pair a component of a traditional wedding ceremony.
 - Give each pair a reference book or the appropriate pages xeroxed from a reference book²³.
 - Have them research their component and report back to the group.

²² See Unit 1 Appendix for descriptions and photographs of the yoga positions.

²³ The best contemporary book on the subject with easy to understand explanations is The New Jewish Wedding by Anita Diamant or The Encyclopedia Judaica (Keter Publishing), The Encyclopedia of Judaism (The Jerusalem Publishing House), Encyclopedia of Jewish Concepts (Hebrew Publishing Co.), or The Complete Book of Jewish Observance (Behrman House) can all give easy to access definitions for this type of inquiry.

- Parts to assign: *shidduch*, *erusin/kiddishin*, *aufruf*, *chuppah*, *ketubah*, ring(s), breaking the glass, fasting *bedeken*, *kabbalat panim/tish*, circling, *sheva brachot*, *yichud*
3. Rachel, Leah and a Veil
- Read Genesis 29, the story of Jacob’s marriage to Leah and then to her sister Rachel.
 - Read Chapter 5 of Naomi Hyman’s book, *Biblical Women in Midrash*²⁴ for rabbinic as well as modern *midrash* on the story of Rachel and Leah. This might be particularly interesting after reading *The Red Tent* in the previous unit, the *midrashic* story about Leah’s only daughter, Dina.
 - Look again at the *kabbalat panim* ceremony, which was created as a response to this story.
 - Ask the participants to write their own *midrash*, putting themselves in the place of any character they choose²⁵.
4. *Mikvah & Taharat HaMishpacha*
- Mikvah* literally means “collection” or “gathering together” of water. It is a ritual bath that traditional Jews use to spiritually purify themselves. The most common use is for married women to purify themselves after menstruation which comes from the commandment in Leviticus 11:36. The set of laws concerning this practice is called *Taharat HaMishpacha* “Family Purity.”
- Read from the *Shulchan Aruch*²⁶ about these laws and discuss:
 - What does it mean to be ritually impure? How does this differ or coincide with being simply dirty?
 - What might we gain from observing the laws of *Taharat HaMishpacha* in liberal Judaism? What might we lose?
 - In your opinion, were the rabbis being unfair to women or wise in their knowledge of male desires?
 - Arrange a visit to a local *mikvah*. Since most *mikvaot* are run by Orthodox institutions and traditionally the *mikvah* is only for married women, you might need to find a *mikvah* that is open for the use of liberal Jews if there are unmarried women in the class.
5. Discussion Pairs
- Have the mother/daughter pairs sit knee to knee.
 - Each one is given different sentences to complete
 - The woman talking gets 2 minutes to speak uninterrupted
- Two sentences for each person to complete is plenty. Mothers and daughters should alternate completing sentences. Allow for response time.

²⁴Hyman, Naomi *Biblical Women in Midrash*, Jason Aronson, Inc., New Jersey, 1997. See appendix for pages on Rachel and Leah.

²⁵ See appendix to Unit 1 for midrash writing guidelines by Alicia Ostriker.

²⁶ Ganzfried, Rabbi Solomon, *Code of Jewish Law (Shulchan Aruch Katzar)*, Hebrew Publishing Co., New York, 1927. See appendix for selected laws on menstruation and immersion.

Sentences for Mothers

As a girl, I imagined marriage would be like...
When I was younger, I imagined my husband/family would be like...
When I met your father/my husband...
When we were married I felt...
The wonderful things about marriage are...
The difficult things about marriage are...
(I knew our marriage was over when...)

Sentences for Unmarried Daughters

As a girl, I imagined marriage would be like...
When I was younger, I imagined my husband/family would be like...
As an adult, I imagine my husband/family will be like...
The importance I place on marriage in my life is...
If I marry, I would like my marriage to emulate yours...
If I marry, I would like my marriage to differ from yours...
When you and I talk about marriage I...

Sentences for Married/Formerly Married Daughters

As a girl, I imagined marriage would be like...
When I was younger, I imagined my husband/family would be like...
When I met my husband...
When we were married I felt...
The wonderful things about marriage are...
The difficult things about marriage are...
I would like my marriage to emulate yours...
I would like my marriage to differ from yours...
(I knew our marriage was over when...)

6. Divorce

- If there are women in the class who have been divorced, and you feel they might be willing to speak to the class, arrange for them to share their experiences.
- Compare divorce documents (*get*) from each movement of Judaism²⁷.
- Have each mother-daughter pair work together to write their own *gittim* or *tenaim* (prenuptial agreement²⁸).

Additional Learning Activities

1. *Agunah* (literally “a chained woman”)

An *agunah* is a woman who can not remarry because her husband refuses to give her a *get*. This is a little known problem that still faces modern Jewish women today

- Distribute information about women who are facing this problem and read about them together²⁹.

²⁷ English translation of Traditional, Conservative and Reform *gittim* can be found in Diamant’s book.

²⁸ Examples of this also can be found in Diamant’s book.

- Find out where the class can send letters of concern, protesting the plight of these women.

2. Panel on Inter marriage

Many Jews today are not choosing to marry other Jews. How important is it that Jews only marry Jews? How can a religion dictate whom to love? Our generation has such a high rate of inter marriage—are we going to be the ones responsible for complete assimilation? How do we respond to our family members' choices? How does our clergy respond? How do other religions handle inter marriage?

- Invite local clergy representing different view points to participate in a panel discussion on inter marriage
- This can be done with clergy representing different denominations of Judaism or different religions
- Have the class prepare questions for the panel before hand.

3. At the Movies

- Rent the movie "Keeping the Faith," directed by Edward Norton (Touchstone Pictures, 2000). After watching the film about a priest and a rabbi who both fall in love with the same Christian girl, discuss:

-What is the filmmaker's view of inter marriage and do you agree with it?

-Do our rabbis have a special responsibility when they are choosing a spouse?

-What message does it send to a congregation if a rabbi intermarries?

4. Wedding Heirloom Museum

- Have each participant bring in memorabilia from family weddings.
- If a participant does not have an item from a wedding, they can participate in this activity with any family heirloom.
- Have each participant write a short blurb about their item including the following information:
 - To whom did the item originally belong?
 - When was it was first used?
 - On what occasions was it used after that?
 - Are there any special anecdotes about the item?
 - Who will inherit the item from its present owner?
 - Complete the sentence "When I use this item, I feel..."
- Set the items on display with their descriptions around the classroom and have the class tour the "museum" as a group. Each owner can say a few words about their item as the class comes upon it.

5. Wedding Songs

There are many beautiful love songs that come from Jewish literature.

- Have the cantor or song leader come to class to teach a few.

Some suggestions:

²⁹ See *Women in Chains: A Sourcebook on the Agunah* ed. Jack Nusan Porter or "The Plight of the Agunah" by Debra Nussbaum Cohen in *The Jewish Monthly*.

Ten Lo Mi Shelo
Dodi Li
Erev Shel Shoshanim
*Kumi Lach*³⁰

Memorable Moment

Wedding Quilt

Quilts are particularly feminine and have a special place in American women's history in particular. Often quilting, or crafts, were a woman's only outlet for artistic expression. When we see intricate, antique quilts we can be fairly sure that it was made by a woman and possibly a group of women, friends working together. Marriage quilts were popular gifts for a newly married couple³¹.

- Have each mother daughter pair begin a family wedding quilt. Have them decorate as many squares as possible with the names and, if possible wedding dates, of as many family members as they can.
- They can then decorate the same number of squares (or double the number, depending on the size of the quilt) with images or designs which will be placed between the name squares. Jewish symbols, images from the family's history, or traditional symbols of love or nature are suggested. If the participants know the meaning of some of the couples' names those images could be included. Use the reference books from the naming lessons in unit 1 to look up the meaning of family members' names.
- Another nice addition are the names of our Biblical foremothers and fathers who, at one time, were also newlyweds.
- Perhaps someone in the class or the congregation is willing to sew the squares together for the participants. If it is large enough, the backing can be sewn on to complete the quilt. More squares can always be added by future generations and pieced together—the good thing about a quilt is its supposed to look that way!
- **Materials needed:**
squares of fabric, fabric pens or smaller swatches of colored fabric, needle, thread, fabric glue.

³⁰ See appendix for a fuller selection of songs and music.

³¹ Dukem, Dennis and Deborah Harding *America's Glorious Quilts*, Hugh, Lauter, Levin and Assoc., 1987.

Lavan. For a few days, I said, but I knew I would never see my youngest child again. It seemed I should have minded more than I did.

That night Yitzkhak did not kiss me, though he lay beside me. I did not try to speak. I could not think of any words to build a bridge over the chasm he faced. Yitzkhak had hoped in me, had loved me as a prayer that had inevitably failed to be answered. I had shielded him both too late and too soon to protect him from the deep suffering his God required. I knew this, as I knew the terrible loneliness that is the one true fact of being. Yet I stretched my arm across the space between us and lay my hand over his heart. He grabbed it fiercely, as if to fling it from his chest. He turned toward me and pulled me close to him. And we cried together as the night gave way to morning, and in each other found comfort.

5

LEAH AND RACHEL

Leah and Rachel in the Bible

The Rachel and Leah narratives are complex, full of deceit and betrayal across a wide range of relationships. As you read, look especially for clues to the relationship between the two sisters. How did Laban, their father, and Jacob, the husband they shared, affect their relationship?

Do you think it was possible for Jacob to have been so easily fooled into marrying the "wrong" sister? Why didn't Jacob ever come to love Leah? Pay particular attention to the names that Leah gives to her sons. To whom are they directed? What do they reveal about Leah? What about the names Rachel gives to Bilhah's sons?

What do you think about Jacob's response to Rachel's plea for children? Why might Rachel have stolen her father's idols? Was her death punishment for the theft?



Jacob resumed his journey and came to the land of the Easterners. There before his eyes was a well in the open. Three flocks of sheep were lying there beside it, for the flocks were watered from that well. The stone on the mouth of the well was large. When all the flocks were gathered

there, the stone would be rolled from the mouth of the well and the sheep watered; then the stone would be put back in its place on the mouth of the well.

Jacob said to them, "My friends, where are you from?" And they said, "We are from Haran." He said to them, "Do you know Laban the son of Nahor?" And they said, "Yes, we do." He continued, "Is he well?" They answered, "Yes, he is; and there is his daughter Rachel, coming with the flock." He said, "It is still broad daylight, too early to round up the animals; water the flock and take them to pasture." But they said, "We cannot, until all the flocks are rounded up; then the stone is rolled off the mouth of the well and we water the sheep."

While he was still speaking with them, Rachel came with her father's flock; for she was a shepherdess. And when Jacob saw Rachel, the daughter of his uncle Laban, and the flock of his uncle Laban, Jacob went up and rolled the stone off the mouth of the well, and watered the flock of his uncle Laban. Then Jacob kissed Rachel, and broke into tears. Jacob told Rachel that he was her father's kinsman, that he was Rebekah's son; and she ran and told her father. On hearing the news of his sister's son Jacob, Laban ran to greet him; he embraced him and kissed him, and took him into his house. He told Laban all that had happened, and Laban said to him, "You are truly my bone and flesh."

When he had stayed with him a month's time, Laban said to Jacob, "Just because you are a kinsman, should you serve me for nothing? Tell me, what shall your wages be?" Now Laban had two daughters; the name of the older one was Leah, and the name of the younger was Rachel. Leah had weak eyes; Rachel was shapely and beautiful. Jacob loved Rachel; so he answered, "I will serve you seven years for your younger daughter Rachel." Laban said, "Better that I give her to you than that I should give her to an outsider. Stay with me." So Jacob served seven years for Rachel and they seemed to him but a few days because of his love for her.

Then Jacob said to Laban, "Give me my wife, for my time is fulfilled, that I may cohabit with her." And Laban gathered all the people of the place and made a feast. When evening came, he took his daughter Leah and brought her to him; and he cohabited with her.—Laban had given his maidservant Zilpah to his daughter Leah as her maid.—When morning came, there was Leah! So he said to Laban, "What is this you have done to me? I was in your service for Rachel! Why did you deceive

me?" Laban said, "It is not the practice in our place to marry off the younger before the older. Wait until the bridal week of this one is over and we will give you that one too, provided you serve me another seven years." Jacob did so; he waited out the bridal week of the one, and then he gave him his daughter Rachel as wife.—Laban had given his maidservant Bilhah to his daughter Rachel as her maid.—And Jacob cohabited with Rachel also; indeed, he loved Rachel more than Leah. And he served him another seven years.

The Lord saw that Leah was unloved and he opened her womb; but Rachel was barren. Leah conceived and bore a son, and named him Reuben; for she declared, "It means: 'The Lord has seen my affliction'; it also means: 'Now my husband will love me.'" She conceived again and bore a son, and declared, "This is because the Lord heard that I was unloved and has given me this one also"; so she named him Simeon. Again she conceived and bore a son and declared, "This time my husband will become attached to me, for I have borne him three sons." Therefore he was named Levi. She conceived again and bore a son, and declared, "This time I will praise the Lord." Therefore she named him Judah. Then she stopped bearing.

When Rachel saw that she had borne Jacob no children, she became envious of her sister; and Rachel said to Jacob, "Give me children, or I shall die." Jacob was incensed at Rachel, and said, "Can I take the place of God, who has denied you fruit of the womb?" She said, "Here is my maid Bilhah. Consort with her, that she may bear on my knees and that through her I too may have children." So she gave him her maid Bilhah as a concubine, and Jacob cohabited with her. Bilhah conceived and bore Jacob a son. And Rachel said, "God has vindicated me; indeed, He has heeded my plea and given me a son." Therefore she named him Dan. Rachel's maid Bilhah conceived again and bore Jacob a second son. And Rachel said, "A fateful contest I waged with my sister; yes, and I have prevailed." So she named him Naphtali.

When Leah saw that she had stopped bearing, she took her maid Zilpah and gave her to Jacob as concubine. And when Leah's maid Zilpah bore Jacob a son, Leah said, "What luck!" So she named him Gad. When Leah's maid Zilpah bore Jacob a second son, Leah declared, "What fortune!" meaning, "Women will deem me fortunate." So she named him Asher.

Once, at the time of the wheat harvest, Reuben came upon some mandrakes in the field and brought them to his mother Leah. Rachel said to Leah, "Please give me some of your son's mandrakes." But she said to her, "Was it not enough for you to take away my husband, that you would also take my son's mandrakes?" Rachel replied, "I promise, he shall lie with you tonight, in return for your son's mandrakes." When Jacob came home from the field in the evening, Leah went out to meet him and said, "You are to sleep with me, for I have hired you with my son's mandrakes." And he lay with her that night. God heeded Leah, and she conceived and bore him a fifth son. And Leah said, "God has given me my reward for having given my maid to my husband." So she named him Issachar. When Leah conceived again and bore Jacob a sixth son, Leah said, "God has given me a choice gift; this time my husband will exalt me, for I have borne him six sons." So she named him Zebulun. Last, she bore him a daughter, and named her Dinah.

Now God remembered Rachel; God heeded her and opened her womb. She conceived and bore a son, and said, "God has taken away my disgrace." So she named him Joseph, which is to say, "May the Lord add another son for me" (Genesis 29:1-30:24).

... Now he heard the things that Laban's sons were saying: "Jacob has taken all that was our father's, and from that which was our father's he has built up all this wealth." Jacob also saw that Laban's manner toward him was not as it had been in the past. Then the Lord said to Jacob, "Return to the land of your fathers where you were born, and I will be with you." Jacob had Rachel and Leah called to the field, where his flock was, and said to them, "I see that your father's manner toward me is not as it has been in the past. But the God of my father has been with me. As you know, I have served your father with all my might; but your father has cheated me, changing my wages time and again. God, however, would not let him do me harm. If he said thus, 'The speckled shall be your wages,' then all the flocks would drop speckled young; and if he said thus, 'The streaked shall be your wages,' then all the flocks would drop streaked young. God has taken away your father's livestock and given it to me (Genesis 31:1-9).

... Then Rachel and Leah answered him saying, "Have we still a share in the inheritance of our father's house? Surely, he regards us as

outsiders, now that he has sold us and has used up our purchase price. Truly, all the wealth that God has taken away from our father belongs to us and to our children. Now then, do just as God has told you."

Thereupon Jacob put his children and wives on camels; and he drove off all his livestock and all the wealth that he had amassed, the livestock in his possession that he had acquired in Paddan-aram, to go to his father Isaac in the land of Canaan.

Meanwhile, Laban had gone to shear his sheep, and Rachel stole her father's household idols. Jacob kept Laban the Aramean in the dark, not telling him that he was fleeing, and fled with all that he had. Soon he was across the Euphrates and heading toward the hill country of Gilead.

On the third day, Laban was told that Jacob had fled. So he took his kinsmen with him and pursued him a distance of seven days, catching up with him in the hill country of Gilead. But God appeared to Laban the Aramean in a dream by night and said to him, "Beware of attempting anything with Jacob, good or bad."

Laban overtook Jacob. Jacob had pitched his tent on the Height, and Laban with his kinsmen encamped in the hill country of Gilead. And Laban said to Jacob, "What did you mean by keeping me in the dark and carrying off my daughters like captives of the sword? Why did you flee in secrecy and mislead me and not tell me? I would have sent you off with festive music, with timbrel and lyre. You did not even let me kiss my sons and daughters good-by! It was a foolish thing for you to do. I have it in my power to do you harm; but the God of your father said to me last night, 'Beware of attempting anything with Jacob, good or bad.' Very well, you had to leave because you were longing for your father's house; but why did you steal my gods?"

Jacob answered Laban, saying, "I was afraid because I thought you would take your daughters from me by force. But anyone with whom you find your gods shall not remain alive! In the presence of our kinsmen, point out what I have of yours and take it." Jacob, of course, did not know that Rachel had stolen them.

So Laban went into Jacob's tent and Leah's tent and the tents of the two maidservants; but he did not find them. Leaving Leah's tent, he entered Rachel's tent. Rachel, meanwhile, had taken the idols and placed

them in the camel cushion and sat on them; and Laban rummaged through the tent without finding them. For she said to her father, "Let not my lord take it amiss that I cannot rise before you, for the period of women is upon me." Thus he searched, but could not find the household idols (Genesis 31:14-35).

[Jacob and Laban make peace between themselves, and Jacob and his family continue their journey back to the land of his birth.]

. . . They set out from Bethel; but when they were still some distance short of Ephrath, Rachel was in childbirth, and she had hard labor. When her labor was at its hardest, the midwife said to her, "Have no fear, for it is another boy for you." But as she breathed her last—for she was dying—she named him Ben-oni; but his father called him Benjamin. Thus Rachel died. She was buried on the road to Ephrath—now Bethlehem. Over her grave, Jacob set up a pillar; it is the pillar at Rachel's grave to this day (Genesis 35:16-20).

Rabbinic Midrashim

Both Leah and Rachel appear as assertive women in these rabbinic midrashim. But consider: what is the result of Leah's response to Jacob's insults? How does Jacob respond to Rachel's admonishments? God hears Rachel's pleas in the last midrash, and responds, but what kind of behavior is she citing in her argument?

All night, she pretended to be Rachel. When he arose in the morning [according to Genesis 29:25], THERE WAS LEAH. He said to her: Daughter of a swindler, why did you trick me? She said to him: [What about] you! Why did you trick your father? When he said to you: Is this my son Esau, you said to him [in Genesis 27:19]: I AM ESAU YOUR FIRST-BORN. Now you are saying: Why have you tricked me? And did your father not say [to Esau] [in Genesis 27:35]: YOUR BROTHER CAME WITH DECEIT? So, because of these things with which she scolded him, he began to hate her. The Holy One said: There is no cure for this but sons. Then her husband will desire her. Thus [in

Genesis 29:31]: WHEN THE LORD SAW THAT LEAH WAS HATED, HE OPENED HER WOMB.¹

Rachel said to Jacob [in Genesis 30:1-2]: GIVE ME CHILDREN, OR ELSE I SHALL DIE. THEN JACOB'S ANGER WAS KINDLED AGAINST RACHEL. . . . She said to him: Did your father, Isaac, do this to your mother, Rebekah? Did not the two of them stand and pray for each other? It is so stated [in Genesis 25:21] THEN ISAAC ENTREATED THE LORD ON BEHALF OF HIS WIFE. You should also pray unto the Lord for me! And did not your grandfather Abraham do this for Sarah? He said to her: Sarah brought a rival wife into her house. She said to him [in Genesis 30:3]: If so, HERE IS MY MAID BILHAH; GO IN TO HER.²

[God and the ministering Angels, led by Jeremiah, go out to see the remains of the Temple in Jerusalem, destroyed as a punishment by God for Israel's sins. God weeps and tells Jeremiah to get Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Moses from their tombs to mourn with Him. All four of them beg God to remember Israel because of their deeds.]

At that moment, the matriarch Rachel broke forth into speech before the Holy One, blessed be He, and said, "Sovereign of the Universe, it is revealed before Thee that Thy servant Jacob loved me exceedingly and toiled for my father on my behalf seven years. When those seven years were completed and the time arrived for my marriage with my husband, my father planned to substitute another for me to wed my husband for the sake of my sister. It was very hard for me because the plot was known to me and I disclosed it to my husband; and I gave him a sign whereby he could distinguish between me and my sister, so that my father should not be able to make the substitution. After that I relented, suppressed my desire, and had pity upon my sister that she should not be exposed to shame. In the evening they substituted my sister for me with my husband, and I delivered over to my sister all the signs which I had arranged with my husband so he should think that she was Rachel. More

1. *Midrash Tanhuma* 7:11, in *Midrash Tanhuma*, trans. John T. Townsend (Hoboken, NJ: Ktav Publishing House, 1989).

2. *Midrash Tanhuma* 7:19, in *ibid.*

than that, I went beneath the bed upon which he lay with my sister; and when he spoke to her she remained silent, and I made all the replies in order that he should not recognize my sister's voice. I did her a kindness, was not jealous of her, and did not expose her to shame. And if I, a creature of flesh and blood, formed of dust and ashes, was not envious of my rival and did not expose her to shame and contempt, why shouldst Thou, a King Who liveth eternally and art merciful, be jealous of idolatry in which there is no reality, and exile my children and let them be slain by the sword, and their enemies have done with them as they wished!"

Forthwith, the mercy of the Holy One, blessed be He, was stirred, and He said, "For thy sake Rachel, I will restore Israel to their place." And so it is written, **THUS SAITH THE LORD: A VOICE IS HEARD IN RAMAH, LAMENTATIONS AND BITTER WEEPING, RACHEL WEEPING FOR HER CHILDREN; SHE REFUSETH TO BE COMFORTED FOR HER CHILDREN, BECAUSE THEY ARE NOT [Jeremiah 31:15]. This is followed by, THUS SAITH THE LORD: REFRAIN THY VOICE FROM WEEPING, AND THINE EYES FROM TEARS; FOR THY WORK SHALL BE REWARDED. . . . AND THERE IS HOPE FOR THY FUTURE, SAITH THE LORD; AND THY CHILDREN SHALL RETURN TO THEIR OWN BORDER (ibid., 16-17).**³

Leah

by Naomi Hyman

Even in most contemporary, egalitarian prayers, only Rachel and Leah are included among the Matriarchs and the younger, beloved wife always precedes the older, flawed sister in the recitation of their names. How did life look through Leah's eyes? How credible is the idea, explored here and above, that Rachel participated in the deception of Jacob in order to protect her sister?

3. *Lamentations Rabbah*, Procm 24, in *The Midrash*, ed. and trans. H. Freedman and Maurice Simon et al. (London: Soncino Press, 1951).

As long as I can remember, I have been called Leah of the weak eyes. Never Leah of the lush hair or even quiet Leah. All my life—except when the babies started coming—I've been defined by my failures.

My father, Laban, never tried to hide his disappointment. It was bad enough that his firstborn was a girl. Then it became clear to everyone—as I stumbled over things others stepped around or got lost playing in the yard—that I couldn't see. I was not just a girl; I was a defective one. It was as if my flaws somehow diminished him. Perhaps they did.

It was clear enough that I couldn't do more than the simplest tasks. I couldn't tend the herds (how would I ever see a stray?) or even draw the water (I couldn't find my way back home). I would be a burden to my father all the days of his life. A burden and an embarrassment. A sign of his failure. He hated even to see me.

On a good day, if I stayed out of his way, there was the safety of invisibility. On a bad day, he sought me out, as if he could beat away his failures by eradicating the symbol of them. I learned to find the shadows by their coolness and I hid there.

My sister, Rachel, was my lifeline to the sun. She was my guide and my protector. She would take my hand and lead me into the fields behind our house. She found beautiful things—a flower, a shiny pebble, a soft and tickly feather—and she brought them close so I could see them. Sometimes, we'd sit huddled together on the stone wall, watching the sun go down. Rachel would describe the changing colors and the way the stars appeared in the suddenly black sky. I taught her to feel the way the air around us cooled and to hear the new music as the day creatures yielded the world to the ones who lived in the dark. At night, we would snuggle together in our bed, and even though I was bigger, she made me feel safe.

As we got older, Rachel was drawn more and more into the world of women. She had many chores now, but she loved watering the sheep best of all. Each day she met the other young women at the well where they giggled and gossiped. Late at night, lying in our bed, she whispered the secrets she had learned. Soon, the news was of marriages, and I tried not to show my fear and jealousy.

I'd known for a long time that I would never marry, but the ache of that knowledge never went away. I loved the way my little brothers and sisters felt in my arms and the warm, milky way they smelled. I wanted so much to feel my own children sleeping in my arms, to shelter and protect them. I wondered what it would be like to have a man love me, to feel safe in his bed the way I did with Rachel. Instead, I knew, I would spend my years caring for my father as best I could, always disappointing him, always shaming him. And Rachel would be gone, and with her all comfort.

One evening, Rachel returned from the well so bright with happiness that even I could see her glow. But there was a guest for dinner, and it was hours before we climbed, exhausted, into bed. In breathless whispers, she told me all about Jacob, our guest, about the way her heart beat when she saw him, how she couldn't look at him without blushing. She was going to marry him, she said. I tried, oh I tried only to show happiness for her, but I felt my body pull away from her. I loved her so much, and I did want her to be happy, but how would I bear the life ahead of me?

A month later, Laban announced that he had given Jacob permission to marry Rachel. In return, Jacob would work for him for seven years. I listened to Rachel's breath catch, and then sink into a moan as she realized what this meant, but I felt only relief. There would be a reprieve! A seven-year reprieve! It seemed a lifetime.

Life resumed its old patterns, but some nights Rachel would creep into our bed long after I had fallen asleep. The days passed so slowly for her, as she waited for the day when she would be joined with her love. For me, they flew from my hands like the butterflies Rachel caught for me when we were children laughing in the field.

In the seventh year, I felt heaviness creep into my limbs. I stayed more and more in the shadows, hiding now from my radiant sister. "Leah," she would call, "Leah, come, let us watch the sun set together." But I would sink deeper into the dark.

One day, she found me in my quiet place, and she sank down onto her heels beside me. Her glance held so much love and hope. Hot tears leaked from my eyes. I didn't want to curse her happiness. I didn't want her to know the bitterness that I felt. Rachel spoke not a word, but settled down beside me. After a while, she wrapped her arm around me, and laid her head on my shoulder. "Tell me," she said. Again, quietly, "Tell me."

I just turned my head and looked at her sweet face, close enough for me to see the brown wells of her eyes, the sharp lines of her cheekbones, the downy hair at her temples. We sat a long time together, not speaking.

That night, for the first time in many weeks, she came to bed early. "I've spoken with father," she said. "It is you who will marry Jacob." I started to rise, to speak, but she laid a finger on my lips, silencing me. "You know how greedy our father is. I told him that I had a plan that would double my bride price. You know how much Jacob loves me," I told him. "If he would work seven years for me, why not fourteen? Let us secretly marry him to Leah. You will be rid of her, and surely Jacob will work another seven years for me." You should have seen his eyes light up, the old fool! Now it is done. Jacob will be angry at the deception, but he is a good man and he will come to love you like I do. Soon enough, I will join you and we will be together again like we were as children." I tried to protest, but she would have none of it. "This way I can protect you, and keep you near to me."

Rachel taught me signs so that Jacob would not know of the deception until it was morning and our marriage consummated. Suddenly, it seemed, I stood veiled beneath the *chuppah*, astonished that such a thing should be. That night, I became Jacob's wife.

In the morning I woke to his angry cries. A week later, he married Rachel.

Jacob never did come to love me. Like my father, he could barely stand the sight of me, but that did not keep him from my bed. When he was done with me, he pushed away absentmindedly, as if leaving the table. He rarely spoke a word to me.

In time, I conceived. I looked forward to the birth of the child. Perhaps, if it was a son, Jacob might come to love me. But even if he did not, Rachel would surely help me raise the child and we would be a family. When the birthing time arrived, Rachel did not come. I longed for her touch during those hours of pain, but I was too exhausted by the labor to think about it.

Instead of bringing us closer, my child seemed to be a wedge between us. Gone was her carefree, confident way with Jacob. She hovered over him and flirted with him. She bought pots of paint for her face, and prepared for hours for his visits. I had become her rival, the wife of her husband and the mother of her children.

I bore more children, she none. She would not—could not—accept my comfort. I hated her for hating me. We began our bitter war, using our maidservants against one another. I imagined Jacob chuckling at our jealous games and relishing his small harem.

Finally, oh thank God, finally, Rachel conceived and bore Joseph. Gently, slowly, we began to speak again. Then she conceived again and the wall between us crumbled. We giggled together and shared secrets with each other, laughing even at Jacob. When the birthing time came, I was with her.

But Rachel had hard labor. She grew weak and pale as she struggled; her grip on my hand faded. They tore the child from her as she cried out and died.

Rachel, my sister, my rival, my friend, when you named him Ben-Oni, child of your pain, I thought no, it should be child of *our* pain. For you lie beneath the earth at the side of the road, and Jacob is withered without you. And I, I am an old woman now, caring for him as best I can, and always disappointing.

6

DINAH

Dinah in the Bible

Dinah is the daughter of Leah and sister to the twelve sons of Jacob (who will give their names to the twelve tribes of Israel). Shimon and Levi, who figure prominently in this story, were her full brothers, sons of Leah and Jacob. As you read through this account, look for Dinah's actions and words. What do you make of her silence? Consider the way in which the text characterizes the act of rape. On whom is the injury inflicted? Compare Jacob's reaction to that of Dinah's brothers. Do you think that the punishment is appropriate?



Now Dinah, the daughter whom Leah had borne to Jacob, went out to visit the daughters of the land. Shechem son of Hamor the Hivite, chief of the country, saw her, and took her and lay with her by force. Being strongly drawn to Dinah daughter of Jacob, and in love with the maiden, he spoke to the maiden tenderly. So Shechem said to his father Hamor, "Get me this girl as a wife."

Jacob heard that he had defiled his daughter Dinah; but since his sons were in the field with his cattle, Jacob kept silent until they came home. Then Shechem's father Hamor came out to Jacob to speak to him.

8. A man should ever avoid women, thus, he should not make gestures either with his hands or feet, nor wink to them, nor jest with them, nor to act with levity in their presence, or to gaze at their beauty. It is forbidden to scent the perfume especially designed for women, especially so when she holds it in her hand or when it hangs on her. It is forbidden to gaze at the colored clothes of a woman with whom he is acquainted, although the clothes be not upon her lest he come to think of her. If he encounters a woman on the street, he should not walk behind her, but he should run so that she be left either alongside of him or behind him. One should not pass by the door of a harlot even at a distance of four cubits. One who gazes even at the small finger of a woman with the intention of gratifying his desire is guilty of a serious crime; and it is forbidden to hear the voice of a woman singer, or to gaze at a woman's hair.

9. One should not greet a woman under any circumstances, and it is even forbidden to send her regards through her husband. Therefore when one writes a letter to his friend, it is forbidden to write, "Peace to your wife." But one is permitted to inquire of her husband or of someone else of her welfare. It is likewise permissible to write to his friend: "Let me know how your wife is feeling."

10. He who embraces or kisses one of his female relatives, even though he derives no pleasure therefrom, he is violating a prohibition, with the exception of a father and a daughter, also of a mother and a son unto whom embracing and kissing are permissible.

11. One should not manifest his love, even for his wife, as for instance by her examining his head, or the like, in the presence of others, so that the looker-on should not come to bad thoughts.

12. It is forbidden for one to dwell in his father-in-law's house, unless he has a private sleeping room.

13. The great men of Israel, of blessed memory, have already dealt at length in their holy works concerning the contemptible custom prevailing in some places, where the learned in the Torah and the God-fearing are not found, that the people approach to the groom and the bride with embraces and kisses, and boys and girls dance together. Besides the grave crime against contact with a woman in menstrual period, because all maidens are presumed to be menstrually unclean, and it matters not in this regard whether she be a married woman or single and whoever touches her by way of endearment is subject to stripes, he also entices the evil inclination against himself, causes the hardening of himself and the vain effusing of semen, God forbid. And surely he who is able to prevent it should make every endeavor to prevent it. At least it is the duty of every man who is God-fearing to have control over his household and take care that they should not do this extremely abominable thing. Whoever is

able to prevent it and does not do it, he himself will, God forbid, be caught in this very thing, and he who saves others from committing this crime, he saves himself and it shall be good with him.

14. It is permissible and highly proper for one to look at the woman he is to make his wife, to see if she pleases him, but he should not regard her with lascivious eyes; concerning this it is said, "A covenant have I made with my eyes, how can I look at a girl?" (Job. xxxi, 1).

15. If one had divorced his wife, the latter should not reside in the court-yard where he resides, and if he is a Priest, or even an Israelite, but she had married another and was divorced also by the second husband, also if one had divorced his wife, having discovered that she was forbidden to him,—all of the above are required to keep at a great distance from each other, and she is not allowed to live with him in the same alley if it be closed, but if it is an open alley where a public thoroughfare runs through, they are permitted to live there together. A woman who had been divorced and had remarried and was living with her second husband, should keep at a still greater distance from her first husband, and should not reside in the entire vicinity where he resides. In all these cases, she must keep away from him, but if the court belongs to her, he must keep away from her.

16. One is permitted to support the woman he had divorced, and it is even a meritorious act to support her in preference to any other poor person, for it is written: "And from thine own flesh thou shalt not withdraw thyself" (Is. lviii, 7). But he should have no business with her, and he should send her the supplies through an agent.

17. Said Rabbi B'runa in the name of Rab: Whoever sleeps in the room where a husband and wife are sleeping, the scripture says concerning him, "The wives of my people you drive out from their houses of pleasure" (Mic. ii, 9), (because they are ashamed on account of him). And Rabbi Joseph added that the foregoing also applies to a case where his wife is menstrually unclean.

CHAPTER CLIII.

Laws Concerning A Woman Menstrually Unclean.

1. A woman from whose fountain there issued a drop of blood, be it ever so small, be it caused however it may, be it at the natural time for her to see the menstrual flow, after the manner of the generality of women, which is at certain fixed periods, be it at any other time, be it even the result of an accident which had caused the blood to issue from her fountain, she is considered menstrually unclean until she counts the seven clean days and takes the proper bath of immersion. He who cohabits with her is punishable with "being cut off from his people," also she is subject to the same punishment; to touch her in a caressing manner is punishable with stripes.

2. Even if she did not feel the issue of blood from her fountain, but only she found the stain of blood upon her flesh, her chemise, her sheet, or any other place, and she cannot attribute its appearance to any

other cause than an issue from her fountain, she is menstrually unclean. Any woman who finds a stain which although it is not exactly red is still not exactly white, should consult the wise, for there are multitudinous laws bearing on such a case, which have special reference to the largeness or the smallness of the stain, likewise to the causes it may be attributed and the causes it may not be attributed, and there is likewise a distinction as to the time she found it, whether it was on the days she was clean or on the first days of counting the seven day clean period (after menstruation).

3. If a woman feels that her fountain has opened, even though she examined herself immediately and discovered nothing, she is considered unclean; (it is necessary to call women's attention to this, because many women are ignorant of this law). But if she found that some white moisture has oozed out of her body, without any reddish mixture in it, she is considered clean.

4. It is written, "And unto a woman in her menstrual uncleanness thou shalt not come near" (Lev. xviii, 19); because it is written: "thou shalt not come near," it was explained that any kind of coming near her is forbidden: they should not laugh at each other, he should not carry on with her conversations of levity even about things that bring about sin; but he may be in privacy with her, for since he has had cohabitation with her and she is also not forbidden after the required immersion his evil inclination will not gain the upper hand, and there is no apprehension to be felt that he would cohabit with her when forbidden.

5. He is not permitted to come in contact with her, even with her little finger; he should not hand over anything to her, be it even a long thing, nor should he receive aught from her; he is likewise forbidden to throw anything from his hand into her hand, neither is she permitted to throw aught from her hand into his hand.

6. He is not permitted to eat with her at the same table unless there be something unusual, e. g., there is something separating his dish from hers, a thing that does not generally lie there at any other time; or she should change her place; if they are always accustomed to eat out of the same dish, and now they eat each one in a separate dish, this suffices.

7. He is not allowed to drink of whatever was left in the cup that she drank out of, but if a third party intervened between them, or if it were emptied into another cup, it is permissible. If she had drunk out of a cup and he, unaware of the fact desired to drink out of it, she need not call his attention to the fact that she drank out of it. (If, however, he was aware of the fact that she drank out of it, but he did not know that she was unclean, it would seem that she has to notify him). She is permitted to drink of whatever he left over in the cup. And there are authorities who hold that just as he is forbidden to drink of whatever is left in her cup, so is he forbidden to eat of what is left of her food.

8. He is not allowed to sleep with her in the same bed even if the bed is not especially designed for her and even if each of them are wearing the clothes, and even if each of them has a separate mattress. It is forbidden even if they lie in two separate beds but the beds touch one another. If they lie on the ground, they should not sleep facing one another, unless there is a big distance between them. The same applies to a case where they sleep in two separate beds standing alongside of one another, which are at times facing one another; it is advisable to prohibit it although there is some space between the beds, unless such space is big. The husband is forbidden to sleep in the bed especially designed for her, even when she is not present, and she is forbidden to sleep in his bed; but it is not forbidden to sit thereon.

9. They are not permitted to sit on a long bench which swings, but if there is somebody sitting between them it is permissible. They should not ride in one wagon or take a voyage in the same ship if the trip be made for pleasure, e. g., to ride through parks orchards, or the like, but if they travel from one city to another in pursuit of their business it is permissible although they are by themselves, provided they do not touch one another.

10. He should not look at any part of her body which she is accustomed to generally cover, but he is permitted to look at the always uncovered parts although he derives pleasure therefrom. He is not permitted to scent the perfume especially assigned for her, and he is forbidden to hear her sing.

11. It is proper for her to wear special clothes during the days of her uncleanness so that both of them be ever reminded that she is menstrually unclean. With difficulty was she permitted to powder, paint and adorn herself with colored clothes during her menstrual period in order that she may not become repulsive to her husband.

12. She is not permitted to pour a cup of wine for him in his presence, nor bring it to him, nor set it before him upon the table, nor make the bed in his presence. All these things are, however, permissible not in his presence, even if he knew that she had done it. She is forbidden to pour water for him that he may wash his face, hands and feet, even if the water be cold.

13. Just as she is forbidden to fill the cup for him, so is he forbidden to fill the cup for her; furthermore even to send her the cup of wine especially designed for her is forbidden, be it even a cup over which a benediction had been pronounced.

14. If he is sick and there is none to attend to him besides her, she is permitted to attend to him in a manner whereby she comes in contact with him only by means of some object (not with her body). She may even raise him up, lay him down, and support him, but she should be very careful not to wash his face, hands or feet, or make the bed in

his presence. If the woman is sick, the husband is not permitted to attend to her even without touching her unless in a case of extreme necessity, when it is impossible to obtain someone else to attend to her. If the husband is a physician and there is no other physician as competent as he is, he is allowed to feel her pulse, inasmuch as he does not do it out of longing for or fondness towards her.

15. All the aforementioned laws appertaining to the keeping away from one another apply to the seven white days, i. e., the seven days of purity she counts (from the time the flow had ceased), and even thereafter if she delayed the immersion, all the above things are forbidden until she performs the ceremony of immersion.

16. It is customary that a woman during her menstruation period, before the white days, does not enter the synagogue and she does not pray. But on the days of awe, i. e., from the first day *S'ilhoth* are said and henceforth, when great multitudes assemble at synagogue and she will worry greatly if not permitted to go there, she is allowed to go there and pray. When her son or daughter gets married, or when she gave birth and the time has come for her to go to the synagogue, or the like, she is permitted to go there.

CHAPTER CLIV.

Laws Concerning the Regulating of the Menses and the Examination Before and After Cohabitation.

1. The menses is established by three consecutive times, i. e., if she perceived the flow three consecutive times each occurring at the same time, then this time is to be considered by her as the regular time of the menses. There are some women who establish their menses by perceiving the flow on the same day of the month, e. g., when she perceived the flow three consecutive times, each time on the New Moon, then her established menses is on the New Moon, or if she perceived it three consecutive times on the fifth day of the month, then the fifth day of the month is her established day of menses; this is termed, menses regulated by diurnal symptoms, that is on a certain day in the month. Although the number of days between one perception and the other is not alike, for there are months which have only twenty-nine days and there are months which have thirty days, nevertheless since she is accustomed to perceive it on a certain day in the month, this day is her established day of the menses.

2. The majority of women generally establish their menses by equal intermittent diurnal symptoms, i. e., an equal number of days elapse between one perception and the other; e. g. she perceives the flow, then twenty-five, thirty, or thirty-two, or the like number of days, elapse and she again perceives the flow; if three consecutive equal elapses occur, this

is her established menses; this is termed menses regulated by intermittent diurnal symptoms. After an equal number of days elapsed, then the day after is her established day of the menses. Since the menses must be established in no less than three times and no interval can be established by less than two perceptions, therefore to establish menses by intermittent diurnal symptoms, it is necessary to have four perceptions; e. g., today she has perceived the flow, then twenty-five days elapsed and she again perceived the flow; then twenty-five days elapsed and she again perceived it; then twenty-five days elapsed and she again perceived; in this instance she perceived the flow four times between which there were three equal elapses, and she thereby established her menses.

3. There are women who have no fixed day when they perceive the flow, neither by diurnal symptoms, nor by intermittent diurnal symptoms, but have some bodily symptoms, e. g., before perceiving the flow she is accustomed to yawn, as one who stretches his arms from weariness, or as one who gapes from drowsiness, or as one who belches after having eaten, all of the foregoing is implied by the term "yawning." If she breaks wind, or sneezes, or if she feels a pain in the navel region, or in the region of the womb, or if she has an attack of chills and fever, or if the hair of her body or of her head bristles, or if her head and her limbs are heavy from lassitude, if any single occurrence of those described above happened to her three times consecutively and she invariably perceived the flow of blood thereafter, her menstrual terms are regulated thereby; this is termed menses regulated by bodily symptoms. Yawning and sneezing can be regarded as symptoms only if repeated many times, but her menses cannot be regulated by her having yawned or sneezed but once, as this is a natural occurrence. It is also essential for regulating the menses that the same event occur to her three times in succession, but if one event occurred to her at one time and another at another time, her terms are not regulated thereby.

4. Some women establish their menstrual terms by diurnal symptoms or by intermittent diurnal symptoms combined with yawning, or sneezing, or the like; i. e., on every fifth day of the month she yawns or sneezes and thereafter she perceives the flow, or an interval of twenty-five days from perception elapses and then she yawns or sneezes and thereafter she perceives again, this is termed menses regulated by combined symptoms, i. e., it is combined by a diurnal symptom with a bodily symptom, if it so occurred three consecutive times. But she need have no apprehension of the diurnal symptoms alone or of the bodily symptoms alone, since she regulated her terms by both together.

5. A woman who has her regular terms, is presumed to be clean at all times, excepting that in which she has her terms. Her husband may cohabit with her and need not inquire of her regarding that matter; even

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when she is partly asleep he may have intercourse with her; and she need not examine herself either before or after conjugal cohabitation. In fact she should not examine herself in the presence of her husband, because he may have apprehension and think that she evidently felt something, as otherwise she would not examine herself. Therefore, if she examines herself before conjugal cohabitation, there is apprehension that because of his fears he will keep away from her; and if she examines herself after having conjugal intercourse, there is apprehension that he may think that she must have felt something during the cohabitation and he will keep away from her the next time. For the above reasons she should not examine herself in the presence of her husband, but when not in the presence of her husband; the woman who exceeds in examining herself, is the most praiseworthy.

6. A woman whose terms are irregular must examine herself both before and after conjugal cohabitation. The husband too must ascertain, by cleansing himself, if after cohabitation there is a drop of blood anywhere. A woman whose flow of blood has presumably stopped, e. g., a pregnant woman after the first three months, or one who nurses, or one who is old, all these need not examine themselves.

7. There are some women who have no regularly established menstrual terms, but have nevertheless a number of certain days on which they do not perceive any flow; e. g., it is established that within twenty-five days of her perception she does not perceive the flow of blood again, but only thereafter, and then too she has no definite time, but at times she perceives a day or two or three days later, such a woman, up to the number of twenty-five days since it has been established by three consecutive times that during these days she perceives not, is regulated during these days by the same laws as those appertaining to a woman that has regularly established menstrual periods, and on the days that follow on which she is uncertain and on which no clean state has been established, she is forbidden to her husband.

CHAPTER CLV.

Laws Concerning the Keeping Away Immediately Preceding the Menstrual Terms, and the Distinction Between Regular and Irregular Menstrual Terms.

1. The Rabbis taught, it is written: "Thus shall ye separate the children of Israel from their uncleanness." Said Rabbi Josiah that in the above verse is implied an admonition to the children of Israel to separate themselves from their wives immediately before their menstrual periods. And how long before? Said Rabba "An Onah," and an Onah is either a day or a night; thus if her regular terms occur by day, although she is accustomed to perceive at the conclusion of the day, she is nevertheless forbidden to her husband from the beginning of the day; if she is accustomed to perceive it in the morning and she did not perceive it, she is nevertheless forbidden to her husband the whole day and the whole night. If her regular terms occur in the night, although she generally per-

ceives it at the beginning of the night, or if she is accustomed to perceive it at the end of the night, she is nevertheless forbidden to her husband the whole night. According to the opinion of many authorities not only conjugal cohabitation is forbidden (at the time mentioned), but also all kinds of caresses; and it is proper to adhere rigidly to this law.

2. Some authorities hold that the *Onah* during which the husband must separate himself is before the *Onah* during which the menstrual terms occur; i. e., if it occur at night, she is also forbidden to her husband the whole of the preceding day, and if it occur by day, she is forbidden to her husband also on the whole on the preceding night, and it is proper to adopt such a custom. However, if he is about to start on a journey, or if he has come from a journey, or if she performed the ceremony of immersion on the night preceding the day on which her menstrual terms occur, they should not rigidly adhere to the afore mentioned law.

3. A woman whose menstrual terms are irregular, then thirty days after her perception of the flow is always regarded as her fixed term, and this is termed a compromised fixed term; e. g., if she perceived blood on Monday of the week of Noah, then the Wednesday of the week of Tol-doth (four weeks thereafter) is to be regarded by her as the fixed day of menses. Besides, she has to pay attention to other terms of perception which she occasionally perceives on, whether it be by intermittent diurnal symptoms or by diurnal symptoms, as will be explained hereafter, by the grace of God. Whenever she is required to have apprehension, her husband must separate himself from her on the day or the night immediately preceding it, as has been explained.

4. A woman who perceived blood is required to apprehend perhaps she may perceive it again on the same day and at the same time. If she has no regular menstrual terms, then she certainly must have apprehension that it may occur again at a similar time and thus establish her menses, but even a woman who has regular terms, if it occurred to her that her regular term was changed and she perceived blood not at her regular term, she must have apprehension as relates to this perception, lest her regular term will now be changed to some other time. If her regular term was not changed, but it happened that she perceived blood one additional time besides her regular term, then she does not have to be concerned about this extra perceiving, for since she has a regular term she need have no apprehension that there may exist an irregular term.

5. Let us take an illustration of a woman who has no regular terms: If she perceived blood on the second day of the New Moon of the month of Iyar and on the twenty-fifth of the same month, then she has to have apprehension for the New Moon of the month of Sivan, for it is possible that she establishes her menses at New Moons (and she must likewise have apprehension for the second day of Sivan, perhaps she may establish a compromised fixed term). If the New Moon of Sivan has come (and also the second day of Sivan) and she perceived no blood, then she has to have apprehension lest she will establish her menses by intermittent diurnal symptoms, and since there was an interval of twenty-three days between one perceiving and the other (exclusive of the day of the first perceiving and of the second of perceiving), she must now also count twenty-three days and then have apprehension; i. e., there are four days left in the month of Iyar, then she should add nineteen days from the

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12. A woman after the first three months of her pregnancy, or one who nurses, is presumed to have ceased her flow and need not have any apprehension concerning her term although she has an established menses. Nevertheless she is required to have apprehension for any period just as she needs have apprehension in the case of irregular menses. When the days of nursing are over, she must resume to observe her former terms; e. g., if she had her term on the New Moon, she must apprehend it immediately at the first New Moon; but if it was by intermittent diurnal symptoms, then she must first perceive it once, and thereafter look out for it at the lapse of the interval she had been accustomed to before.

CHAPTER CLVI.

Laws Concerning One Who had an Issue of Blood as the Result of Cohabitation.

1. A woman who had an issue of blood as the result of cohabitation even if it did not occur during cohabitation, but thereafter on that night, they are permitted to have intercourse again, after she will have purified herself. Yet one single occurrence should make them apprehensive of a repetition, thus, if this occurred on the night of immersion, then when she takes the ritual bath, they should be separated from each other, for it is surmised that the immersion in conjunction with cohabitation have caused the issue of blood, and perchance she may perceive blood on the night of the second immersion, in the very act of cohabitation. However, on the night of the third immersion they need not be separate, inasmuch as the principal cause of apprehension was owing to the immersion, and as she did not perceive the flow on the night of the second immersion, apprehension need no longer be felt. If she happened to perceive the flow on the night following the immersion, they should likewise be separated on the night following the night of the second immersion, but not of the third immersion.

2. Whereas an unfavorable tendency was developed in that woman, therefore even she has her regular terms, she is required to examine herself both before and after a second cohabitation in order to ascertain if the flow was again caused by cohabitation, and she should be careful to immediately place herself under medical treatment. This is all the more urgent when she perceived the flow in the very act of conjugal intercourse, or immediately thereafter; for, should this happen to her three times in succession, she is placed in a most embarrassing position, and it is with the utmost difficulty that permission may be granted her to continue living with her husband.

3. If during the act of cohabitation, the woman had perceived that she had become unclean, it is her duty to tell her husband immediately, saying: "I have become unclean." He should then not separate from her before his virile strength is exhausted, for this very act affords him pleasure, but he must raise his body supporting himself on his hands and feet and not upon her; he should be filled with fear and trembling because of the sinful happening, and on its exhaustion he should separate from her. He should then consult a Rabbi who will instruct him what penance he should do for his sin.

CHAPTER CLVII.

Laws Concerning a Bride about to be Married.

1. It is obligatory upon a woman who makes preparations to get married, to count seven clean days (days in which she is free from catamenia) before that event occurs, it is immaterial whether she be a minor who had not as yet perceived the flow or if she be an aged woman whose flow had long ceased, it is nevertheless feared that because of passion some drop of blood has issued from her and was lost; she is therefore regarded as a woman who is menstrually unclean. After having counted the seven clean days she should examine herself daily until she performs the ceremony of immersion, and also after that time until the mandatory performance of the marriage duty.

2. If on account of some cause the marriage was postponed to another day, and thereafter they again agreed upon the original date, although she had already counted seven clean days, she is yet obliged to count anew inasmuch as a new passion was created within her, and although she had examined herself daily during the interval, it is still of no avail. However, if it was not really postponed but they were unable to agree as to the amount of dowry or the like, and because of this the marriage was delayed until they came to terms, or if they postponed the marriage, by mutual consent, from the day set to some other day, they should consult the wise whether the first seven days are of any avail. If they had quarrelled during the marriage and another bride-groom had taken the place of the first, it is obvious that the seven clean days she had counted for the first bridegroom are of no avail as regards the second groom. But even if after giving her consent to marry the second groom, she became reconciled to the first groom, yet the seven days she had originally counted for him are of no avail as her thoughts had been diverted from him. She is therefore bound to count seven clean days anew.

3. It is proper that a woman should not get married before she has purified herself from her uncleanness. If, however, time is of essence and the wedding must be on a day she is unclean, or if it happened that she became menstrually unclean after the wedding ceremony and before cohabitation, they shall not be alone in each other's company without surveillance until she will have performed the ceremony of immersion. It is customary to place a male child by the groom and a female child by the bride, and they do not remain even in the daytime alone without the children. It is essential to obtain such children as understand something about matters appertaining to cohabitation, but they should not be fully grown who already have passion for fear that they may be persuaded, but they should be of medium growth. Regarding this law no distinction is made between a bachelor and a widower, and a maiden and a widow, for as long as he never had conjugal relations with this woman, his passion may overcome him, and therefore they are not permitted to be alone unobserved.

4. When one marries a woman he had divorced, she is obliged to count seven clean days, even though he had divorced her while she was pregnant and remarried her while she was pregnant, or if he divorced her.

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while she was nursing and remarried her while she was nursing. However, if he violated the law and did remarry her before she had performed the ceremony of immersion, they are permitted to remain alone unobserved, for inasmuch as he had previously had conjugal relations with her, it is easier for him to control his passion.

5. Extreme care should be taken that the bridegroom should not sleep with the bride until the night he desires to perform the duty of marriage with her.

6. One who marries a maiden should perform the marriage duty that is mandatory upon him and although there is an issue of virginal blood he may conclude the conjugal intercourse and need not have any apprehension. However, on conclusion thereof he should separate from her, and she becomes unclean. Even if no blood was perceived we apprehend lest a drop of blood issued from her which was covered up by the semen, and she is therefore considered as a woman menstrually unclean.

7. If a maiden who took the bath of immersion after the first conjugal cohabitation perceived a flow of blood also after the second cohabitation and also after the third and the fourth, it is questionable whether she may remain to live with her husband.

8. It is permissible to have conjugal intercourse with a maiden on the Sabbath, although he is making a wound thereby.

CHAPTER CLVIII.

Laws Concerning a Woman who had either given birth to a Child, or had Miscarried.

1. A woman who had given birth, whether the child to which she gave birth was alive, or whether it was still-born, or even if it was an abortive, and even if she did not perceive any blood, she is yet in the state of being unclean as of child-birth. According to law, if the child was a male she is unclean for seven days on account of birth, and after that she may count seven clean days and perform the ceremony of immersion. If she had given birth to a female child she is in an unclean state for fourteen days on account of the birth, and thereafter she may count seven clean days and perform the ceremony of immersion. There are some localities where the custom prevails that women do not perform the ceremony of immersion within forty days in the case of a male and within eighty days in the case of a female. In a place where this custom is accepted by everybody it is not to be disregarded, for there is some reason underlying such custom. Concerning such cases it is said: "Hear my son the chastisement of thy father and do not abandon the doctrines of thy mother" (Prov. i, 8). In our countries there is no established custom. The custom prevailing in some places where the ceremony of immersion is not performed within six weeks in the case of a male and within nine weeks in the case of a female, and the like customs, such customs are based on no reason whatsoever, and they were already abolished in some communities by learned Rabbis, of blessed memory.

2. Some authorities are of the opinion that the husband should separate from his wife on the forty-eighth night in the case of a male and on the eighty-first night in the case of a female, as on those nights it is to be apprehended that she may perceive the flow the same as during her

menses. Other authorities differ, but the scrupulous should be stringent. In case of abortion, where it is doubtful whether it was a male or a female, he should separate on the forty-first and on the eighty-first nights.

3. If a woman miscarried something, even if it had not the shape of any child at all but looked like a piece of flesh or a piece of skin, or the like, she must be scrupulous and consider herself in an unclean state as that of a female birth; or she should in such a case consult the wise, for at times it is proper to be lenient about it. If she first miscarried a child and thereafter she miscarried the after-birth, although the child was a male, she should have apprehension perchance the after-birth was a female, and therefore she should be in a state of uncleanness as in the case of a female, or she should seek the advice of a sage.

4. If a woman was certain that she had not conceived and she has performed the ceremony of immersion for her husband, and within forty days she had an abortion, she need not apprehend a birth, because a child is not formed in less than forty days. She is, however, menstrually unclean, even she had not perceived any blood, for it is presumed that there was some blood but it was lost, for it is impossible that the womb be opened without blood.

CHAPTER CLIX.

Laws Concerning the Putting On of White Linen and the Counting of Seven Clean Days.

1. A woman who had perceived blood in the days of her purification, is required to count five days including this day, i. e., the day on which she perceived it and additional four days. Even if she perceived it at the close of the day, after the congregation including herself had already prayed the Evening Service, or they had already received the Sabbath, yet if it is still day-time, this day is counted as one of the five days. On the fifth day towards evening before twilight, she should carefully examine herself, wash at least her nether parts, put on a clean white chemise, also all her other garments should be clean; and this is called "the end of her purification." At night she should also spread a clean white sheet on her bed, and also all the pillows and the bed-coverings should be clean, and on the following morning she should begin to count the seven days. There is no difference in this case whether she had perceived much blood or little, for even if she only had perceived one drop of blood or even if she only found a stain during the days of her purification, she should wait thereafter five days. And yet, even if she had perceived blood the entire five days, but it ceased to appear before sun-down (on the fifth day), immediately upon the cessation she may end her purification.

2. In case of emergency, as for instance, when she is traveling and cannot obtain any water even wherewith to wash her nether parts, it does not retard "the end of purification," but she should carefully cleanse herself with whatever she can. If she has no white chemise, she may put on an old chemise, but she should previously examine it to ascertain if there are no blood-stains thereon.

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3. In case of accident, e. g., when she is afraid to immerse herself at night, on account of the cold, or fear, or if the house of immersion is without the city, and the city gates are locked at night, she is then permitted to perform the immersion on the eighth day during the daytime. She is not permitted to perform the immersion on the seventh day, even when compelled by circumstances. Permission is granted her to perform the immersion in the daytime of the eighth day providing she can also wash her hair immediately before the immersion, but if the eighth falls on a Sabbath or on a Festival, which would make it necessary for her to wash her hair on the day preceding the day of immersion, and then to perform the immersion in the daytime, that is forbidden, for we cannot overlook two laws at one time (i. e., having the immersion in the daytime, and having a long interval between the washing of the hair and the immersion).

4. She should not stand on anything (but the bottom of the pool) during the immersion. If the water of the pool is deep and she is compelled to stand on steps, she should consult the wise.

5. She should not perform the immersion in a place where, it may be apprehended, people would see her, as that would cause her to hasten in performing the immersion and it is feared that she may not perform it properly. However, if she had performed the immersion and is positive that she had performed it properly, her immersion is valid.

6. When she immerses herself it is necessary that a Jewish woman, above the age of twelve years and one day, should stand by and see to it that no part of her hair remain floating above the water. If there is no woman obtainable, her husband may stand by her to see that she performs the immersion properly.

7. She is permitted to perform the immersion on the Sabbath Eve, if that was the time for her immersion and she could not perform it previous thereto, and if her husband is in town. If her husband is not in town, or if she was able to perform the immersion previously, she is forbidden to perform it on the Sabbath Eve. If it is after she had given birth, there are many diverse opinions as to whether or not she may perform the immersion of the Sabbath Eve; she should therefore consult a wise man. If her time for immersion was before then, but she failed to perform it because her husband was not in town, but he arrived on Friday, there are places where they are stringent and forbid her to perform the immersion on Sabbath Eve. In places where there is no established custom it is not necessary to be stringent about it, but in the places where they are stringent, she should not even perform it on the conclusion of the Sabbath. If a widow was married, she is not permitted to take the first bath of immersion on Sabbath Eve, since she may not have the first conjugal cohabitation on the Sabbath. Some authorities permit her to perform the immersion on the conclusion of the Sabbath.

8. After she had performed the immersion in a proper manner, and while she is still standing in the water, she should pronounce the benediction: "Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who hast sanctified us with Thy commandments and hast commanded us concerning the immersion." It is proper that before pronouncing the bene-

has to ease herself so that she should not have to restrain herself and thereby render the places improper for the penetration of water thereto; but if this is neglected, it does not render it invalid.

18. She should not perform the immersion with dust upon her feet; and if she did immerse herself, the immersion is valid if the dust was so thin that the water had washed it away.

19. Ordinary lice and fleas do not adhere to the body and the water penetrates thereto and they are not therefore considered intervention; but that kind of lice which cling to the body and bite wherever there is hair and tightly adhere to the body, must be removed by means of hot water and scraped off with the nails; if they cannot be removed they are not an intervention. The small lice that cling to the hair should be removed because they are considered an intervention.

20. A woman that wears her hair in plaits connected together and she fears to separate them as it may endanger her life, do not constitute an intervention; even if there are some threads found therein which cannot be removed, they are not considered an intervention, if they are not visible.

CHAPTER CLXII.

Laws Concerning Immersion.

1. It is mandatory upon a woman whose husband is in town, to perform the immersion at the proper time in order not to delay the precept of propagation, even one night. For thus do we find in the case of Joshua who was punished because he caused Israel to delay the precept of propagation but one night. A woman who defers immersion in order to distress her husband deserves great punishment, God forbid.

2. She is forbidden to perform the immersion on the seventh day before the stars have appeared. Even to perform the immersion when darkness approaches, and to arrange it so that she will not return home before it is dark, is also forbidden. Even if she had delayed the immersion and did not perform it on the night following the seventh day, and had performed it thereafter, she is likewise forbidden to perform the immersion in the daytime. Even in the latter case it is proper to be scrupulous not to take the bath of immersion before dark so that she can reach home when it is dark already, but she must do it in the nighttime only. The brides who perform their immersion prior to the wedding, are permitted to perform the immersion during the daytime of the eighth day, or during the daytime of any other day thereafter, and in an emergency when it is necessary for the bride to perform the immersion on the seventh day, she is likewise permitted to perform it during the daytime, even in the morning after daybreak. The wedding, however, should not take place until stars have made their appearance. If she performs the immersion after the wedding, although it is the first immersion of her married life, she is amenable to the same laws as any other woman.

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dition she should cover the nether parts with some kerchief, or at least fold her hands together on her body to make a separation, and she should not look into the water while saying the benediction. If she takes the bath of immersion in a place where she is liable to disturb the water with her feet, it is best to do so before saying the benediction. Some women are accustomed to immerse themselves once more after the benediction. This is a proper custom, but it is essential to be careful that the second immersion too shall be performed properly.

9. After she had performed the immersion in a pool as required by law, she may enter the bath house to warm herself, even if it be a bath used for perspiring. But some forbid her to wash herself again in the bath-tub; and this is the prevailing custom. It is proper to be lax about spilling warm water on her to warm her body therewith. But in places where it is customary to forbid even this, it is not proper to be lax about it.

10. A woman should be modest about her immersion, to conceal the night of her immersion, and she should not go in the presence of people where she can be observed. She who does not comply with the above, concerning her is said: "Cursed be he who lies with an animal." She should be further careful that upon going out from the immersion one of her friends should meet her and touch her so that an unclean thing such as a dog, ass, pig, horse, a leper or the like, should not meet her at first, or even an ignorant man or a heathen, and if these have met her, a God-fearing woman should perform the immersion again. If one had met a woman going out from the bath where she immersed herself, there is danger to be apprehended, Heaven forbid, and the remedy for him is to say the following two verses: "He then poureth contempt upon princes, and causeth them to wander in a pathless wilderness" (Ps. cvii, 40); and, "He poureth contempt upon princes, and the belt of the mighty he looseth." (Job xii, 20).

11. To warm the water of the immersion pool some forbid and some permit. The custom is already prevailing in many communities to permit it, but in a place where there is no such custom, people should not be lax about it. And in places where it is customary to be lax about it, care should be taken that on the Sabbath Eve when the immersion is performed the water should not be hot but luke warm.

12. Regarding the immersion in rivers, according to the opinion of many of the great authorities, of blessed memory, the immersion is only valid when performed in a river when the water is so low that there is no doubt that the water has not become increased by rain or snow, for

rain water and water from snow purify only when it is clean and contained in a pool, but not when it flows on the ground. Spring water, however, purify even when it flows on the ground. But in case of emergency, in a place where there is no pool, it is customary to be lenient, and to depend upon the authorities who agree with a certain opinion that even when it is observed that the river is swelled up by rain, nevertheless its main source is from the ground, for in time of rain the air is full of moisture, and the sources of the fountain increase and grow stronger, consequently the water in the river is for ever mostly from the springs, and the rain water becomes null there, and therefore it purifies even when it flows on the ground. In a place where there is an immersion pool, God forbid to be lenient about it. Even in a place where there is no immersion pool, if possible, it is necessary to be scrupulous to this extent that if the river has swelled up by rain, she should wait with her immersion two or three days, until it will assume its normal level. If possible it is best that she should immerse herself not in the place where it has become widened but in a place where it keeps on continually flowing, for in this case is some pretense of being more lenient.

13. In a river which owes its existence entirely to rain, and at times it totally dries up, although during the rain fall some other streams fall into it, nevertheless since at times it ceases entirely, there is no possible way of permitting to use it for immersing purposes while it is still flowing, unless the water collect in one place and remain stationary.

14. The laws regarding the immersion pool are numerous. Whenever an immersion pool is made it should be made under the supervision of a prominent Rabbi, great in the study of the Torah and the fear of God. If any slight or big change occur therein, they should immediately consult the wise. When they are required to draw the water out for the purpose of cleaning it, they should likewise inquire what course to adopt.

CHAPTER CLXIII.

Laws Concerning Circumcision.

1. It is a positive law for a father to circumcise his son, or to bestow the honor and appoint another Israelite to circumcise him. The father should put the child on the knees of the godfather and to hand over the knife to the circumciser and to stand by him when the circumciser takes place to indicate thereby that he is his agent. In the interval between the circumcision of the foreskin and its uncovering, the father should say the benediction: "Who hast sanctified us with His commandments and commanded us to bring him," etc. One should be particular in his choice of a circumciser and a godfather who should be the best and most righteous men possible to select. It is customary for a father not to select as a godfather one who had already officiated as such at the circumcision of another of his sons. If he had invited one circumciser, he is not allowed to retract and invite another one, for it is said: "The remnant of Israel will do no injustice and speak no lies" (Zeph. iii, 13). If the father had invited some one who since left the city, whereupon the father thought

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is not necessary to have the water enter her mouth, nevertheless should there be an intervening particle between her teeth, her immersion is not valid, as will be explained, if it please God. Every woman should be acquainted with this rule, that all parts of her body must be clean and in a condition for the water to penetrate thereto during immersion.

2. The excrement of the eye is considered an intervention if it is on the outside, even if it is moist. If on the inside of the eye, it is not an intervention if moist, but the dry matter which began to come out of the eye is an intervention.

3. Dried blood upon a wound is considered an intervention, but the matter the wound contains is not an intervention. If there was a discharge of matter, it does not intervene if it is wet, but if it is dry it is an intervention. Therefore a woman who has scabs, must wash it with water until they be softened. Also the skin on a wound, although it causes her pain to remove it, or blisters, must be either removed or well softened with water.

4. The plaster upon a wound is considered an intervention. Also the plaster put on to stay there for three or four months time and thereafter they fall off by themselves, but during this time it is impossible to remove them unless the skin be torn off together with them, and the woman claims that she is accustomed to them and she does not mind them, are nevertheless considered an intervention. If a woman has a boil which was opened and a piece of linen was placed in the opening underneath the bandage, and even when the bandage is removed it is invisible because it is deep inside, it is nevertheless considered an intervention.

5. Excretive matter upon the body as a result of perspiration is considered an intervention when dry. Crumb-like particles found on the body, and this is what occasionally people do when their hands are soiled with clay, dough or perspiration, that they rub one hand against the other and there appears a substance in the shape of grains, this is considered an intervention.

6. Ink, milk, honey, juice of figs, mulberries, of carobs, and of the (fruit of the) sycamore, when dry, they are considered an intervention, but when moist they are not considered an intervention. All other juices are considered an intervention even if they are moist. Also blood is considered an intervention even when moist.

7. The coloring that women use for their faces, hands and hair is not considered an intervention. A woman who is engaged in dyeing clothes and the like, and because of this her hands are dyed, and since it is customary for women thus engaged not to be particular about it, it is not an intervention.

8. Concerning the filth underneath the nails there are many diverse opinions, and it has long been an established custom to pare the nails of their hands and feet before taking the bath of immersion. She should be careful to burn her nails, for if it is dangerous for her husband or some

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cleansing. It is necessary that the combing be near the immersion, and also that the combing should take place during the daytime. Therefore the proper mode of procedure is that she begin the "cleansing" while it is yet day and continue it till the nightfall.

2. Cleaning the places covered with hair should not be done with anything that tends to entangle the hair. It is the custom to permit the use of soap since it cleans and does not entangle the hair.

3. In a place where there is no bath in the house of immersion, but she does the combing in her house and thereafter she goes to perform the ceremony of immersion, she should take a comb with her, and there comb her hair again.

4. However, in an emergency, when it is impossible for her to wash her hair in the daytime, she is permitted to wash herself in the night, but she should take pains to wash her head properly, without haste. If it is impossible for her to continue the washing also at night, she may do the washing altogether in the daytime.

5. If the time for the ritual immersion occur on a Sabbath Eve, she should do the washing in the daytime, but she should be very careful to conclude the entire washing before sunset, so that she should not, Heaven forbid, come to violate the Sabbath. As regards the lighting of the Sabbath candles, it is best if possible to go home after the hair washing, or she should do the hair washing in her home, and after that light the candles before sunset and then take the bath of immersion; if this be impossible then the husband should light the candles; and if this be likewise impossible, then she should light the candles and say the benediction while it is yet daytime, and she should say while lighting them that she does not, by the act of lighting them, take upon herself the obligations due to the sanctity of the Sabbath, for in the case of emergency a condition is effective in this regard. But the custom prevailing with some women to say the benediction over burning candles should be abolished, because they are pronouncing a benediction in vain.

6. In places where it is customary to take the ritual bath of immersion on the close of the Sabbath or Festival, they should consult an authorized Rabbi how they should proceed in regard to washing the hair.

CHAPTER CLXI.

Laws Concerning Intervention.

1. She is required to immerse her entire body together with all her hair at one time. She should therefore very carefully observe during the immersion that there be not upon her anything that intervenes (between her body and the water), for at times even if it be only the slightest particle it is considered an intervention, and the immersion is not valid. And not only on the external body where the water must penetrate, and if there be anything intervening the water will not penetrate, but even those internal parts to which the water does not penetrate, should, nevertheless, be in a condition fit for the water to penetrate, e. g., the teeth, although it

other man to tread thereon. If she forgot to cut them before the nightfall of a Sabbath or a Festival, she may have them pared by a non-Jewess. If she has a growth in the place of the nail and she can neither cut it off nor clean it underneath, if the growth is so enlarged that the filth underneath is not visible, it is not an intervention. If a woman forgot to pare her nails and thus performed the immersion, if she became aware of it before conjugal intercourse, she is required to have another immersion, but if she did not become aware of it until after conjugal intercourse, she should consult the wise.

9. She should be careful to remove her earrings and rings before she is taking the ritual bath of immersion.

10. She is required to clean her teeth previous to the immersion, as it is usual to find particles of food between the teeth. If she did perform the immersion and thereafter she found some particle either between the teeth or clinging to them, the immersion is invalid. Some women have made a practice not to eat meat on the day previous to the immersion, because meat more than any other food enters between the teeth, and it is to be apprehended that even when she cleans her teeth something may be left thereof; and this is a beautiful custom. On the Sabbath or on a Festival when it is to be partaken of, she should be extremely careful in cleaning her teeth well. Every woman should be careful not to partake of any food between the washing of the hair and the immersion. The entire day prior to the immersion she should not engage in the kneading of dough or the making of wax candles so that nothing cling to her. But on the day preceding the Sabbath when she is accustomed to knead herself in honor of the Sabbath, she should not abstain therefrom, but she should be careful to wash her hands thoroughly clean.

11. A woman who has an artificial tooth should consult the wise how to perform the immersion; the same applies to a woman who has her teeth filled. A woman who is ruptured and wears a ring in her womb, should consult the wise.

12. During the immersion her companion should not take hold of her, because the water will not penetrate to the place of the grasp. In case of emergency the woman who intends to hold her should previously immerse her hands in the immersion tank then she may hold her, not with a tight clutch, but with the moderate grasp that is ordinary with all.

13. Whenever possible she should not immerse herself in a place the bottom of which is clay, as it is feared that it may intervene. In case of emergency one need not scruple, for the clay usually found at the bottom of water is not so thick. However, the mud at the edge of a stream which clings to her feet does intervene. Therefore she must be careful

while entering the stream before immersion to thoroughly wash her feet from the mud that clung to her at the bank of the river. Should she desire to place something in the water upon which to stand during the immersion, she should consult an authorized Rabbi, for there are many things upon which it is forbidden to stand during immersion.

14. She should not stand erect when immersing herself, as certain parts of her body are thus concealed; nor should she stoop so low as to bring her secret parts close together; but she should stoop slightly, until the secret places of her nether parts be exposed as they are exposed when she kneads dough when she spreads her feet slightly to stand firm and knead with her might, and the space under her breasts should be so much as it appears when she gives a babe suck. It is not necessary for her to distend her thighs nor to extend her arms from her body too much, but they should remain in the position they are when she walks. If she stooped too low, or if she stood entirely erect, the immersion is not valid, because wrinkles are thereby formed in her body and the water does not penetrate there. Therefore it is necessary to see that the water should reach three handbreadths above her navel, as in that manner she will be able to immerse herself properly. In an emergency, however, when the water is not so high, she should previously gently sit down in the water until it reaches her neck, and then immerse herself; in that manner, wrinkles will not be formed on that part that is yet out of the water, for the wrinkles that may be formed thereafter on her body when in the water, do not harm, inasmuch as the water had already penetrated there. If the water is very low, in an emergency she may immerse herself in an incumbent posture, but she must submerge her entire body also her hair at the same time.

15. She need not open her mouth to have the water come in, but she should not shut it more than necessary, and if she did so shut it the immersion is not valid; however, her lips should be slightly close to one another. If she had her hair in her mouth during the immersion, her immersion is not valid, as the water did not reach her hair.

16. She should not keep her eyes tightly closed, as thus wrinkles are formed underneath them, nor should her eyes be dilated, as wrinkles are thus formed above them, but she should keep them slightly closed.

17. She is also required to remove the excrement from the nose, from outside the nose as well as from inside, but whatever is higher up in the nose does not intervene; she is likewise required to remove the excrement from the ears. Some authorities hold that a woman needs also let water before the immersion if she needs it. She must also ascertain if she

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has to ease herself so that she should not have to restrain herself and thereby render the places improper for the penetration of water thereto; but if this is neglected, it does not render it invalid.

18. She should not perform the immersion with dust upon her feet; and if she did immerse herself, the immersion is valid if the dust was so thin that the water had washed it away.

19. Ordinary lice and fleas do not adhere to the body and the water penetrates thereto and they are not therefore considered intervention; but that kind of lice which cling to the body and bite wherever there is hair and tightly adhere to the body, must be removed by means of hot water and scraped off with the nails; if they cannot be removed they are not an intervention. The small lice that cling to the hair should be removed because they are considered an intervention.

20. A woman that wears her hair in plaits connected together and she fears to separate them as it may endanger her life, do not constitute an intervention; even if there are some thread found therein which cannot be removed, they are not considered an intervention, if they are not visible.

CHAPTER CLXII.

Laws Concerning Immersion.

1. It is mandatory upon a woman whose husband is in town, to perform the immersion at the proper time in order not to delay the precept of propagation, even one night. For thus do we find in the case of Joshua who was punished because he caused Israel to delay the precept of propagation but one night. A woman who defers immersion in order to distress her husband deserves great punishment, God forbid.

2. She is forbidden to perform the immersion on the seventh day before the stars have appeared. Even to perform the immersion when darkness approaches, and to arrange it so that she will not return home before it is dark, is also forbidden. Even if she had delayed the immersion and did not perform it on the night following the seventh day, and had performed it thereafter, she is likewise forbidden to perform the immersion in the daytime. Even in the latter case it is proper to be scrupulous not to take the bath of immersion before dark so that she can reach home when it is dark already, but she must do it in the nighttime only. The brides who perform their immersion prior to the wedding, are permitted to perform the immersion during the daytime of the eighth day, or during the daytime of any other day thereafter, and in an emergency when it is necessary for the bride to perform the immersion on the seventh day, she is likewise permitted to perform it during the daytime, even in the morning after daybreak. The wedding, however, should not take place until stars have made their appearance. If she performs the immersion after the wedding, although it is the first immersion of her married life, she is amenable to the same laws as any other woman.

3. In case of accident, e. g., when she is afraid to immerse herself at night, on account of the cold, or fear, or if the house of immersion is without the city, and the city gates are locked at night, she is then permitted to perform the immersion on the eighth day during the daytime. She is not permitted to perform the immersion on the seventh day, even when compelled by circumstances. Permission is granted her to perform the immersion in the daytime of the eighth day providing she can also wash her hair immediately before the immersion, but if the eighth falls on a Sabbath or on a Festival, which would make it necessary for her to wash her hair on the day preceding the day of immersion, and then to perform the immersion in the daytime, that is forbidden, for we cannot overlook two laws at one time (i. e., having the immersion in the daytime, and having a long interval between the washing of the hair and the immersion).

4. She should not stand on anything (but the bottom of the pool) during the immersion. If the water of the pool is deep and she is compelled to stand on steps, she should consult the wise.

5. She should not perform the immersion in a place where, it may be apprehended, people would see her, as that would cause her to hasten in performing the immersion and it is feared that she may not perform it properly. However, if she had performed the immersion and is positive that she had performed it properly, her immersion is valid.

6. When she immerses herself it is necessary that a Jewish woman, above the age of twelve years and one day, should stand by and see to it that no part of her hair remain floating above the water. If there is no woman obtainable, her husband may stand by her to see that she performs the immersion properly.

7. She is permitted to perform the immersion on the Sabbath Eve, if that was the time for her immersion and she could not perform it previous thereto, and if her husband is in town. If her husband is not in town, or if she was able to perform the immersion previously, she is forbidden to perform it on the Sabbath Eve. If it is after she had given birth, there are many diverse opinions as to whether or not she may perform the immersion of the Sabbath Eve; she should therefore consult a wise man. If her time for immersion was before then, but she failed to perform it because her husband was not in town, but he arrived on Friday, there are places where they are stringent and forbid her to perform the immersion on Sabbath Eve. In places where there is no established custom it is not necessary to be stringent about it, but in the places where they are stringent, she should not even perform it on the conclusion of the Sabbath. If a widow was married, she is not permitted to take the first bath of immersion on Sabbath Eve, since she may not have the first conjugal cohabitation on the Sabbath. Some authorities permit her to perform the immersion on the conclusion of the Sabbath.

8. After she had performed the immersion in a proper manner, and while she is still standing in the water, she should pronounce the benediction: "Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who hast sanctified us with Thy commandments and hast commanded us concerning the immersion." It is proper that before pronouncing the bene-

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→ **.DODI LI (Debbie Friedman)**

D	C	G	D	C	G	D	
Dodi li va'ani lo haro'eh, haro'eh bashoshanim.							דודי לי ואני לו הרועה בשושנים.
D	Em	F	Em	D	Am7	D	Em
Mi zot olah min hamidbar. Mikuteret mor u'levonah.							מי זאת עולה מן המדבר
D	Em	F	Em	D	Am7	D	Em
Ani l'dodi v'dodi li. Dodi li...							מקטרת מור ולבונה.

Libavtini achoti chalah. X2 Ani l'dodi v'dodi li. Dodi li... לבבתיני אחותי כלה.

Uri tzafon uvo'i teman. X2 Ani l'dodi v'dodi li. Dodi li... עורי צפון ובואי תימן.

(My beloved is mine, and I am his, that feedeth among the lilies. Who is that going up from the wilderness burning myrrh and frankincense? You have ravished my heart, my sister, my bride--you have ravished my heart. Awaken, north wind, and come, O south wind.)

→ **.DODILI (Steven Sher)**

D D/C# Bm Bm7 G G/F# Em A
 Dodi li va-ani lo haroeh
 D D/C# Bm Bm7 G A D
 bashoshanim dodi li.

D7 G A F#m Bm Bm7 G Em A
 Mi zot olah min hamidbar, mi zot olah min hamidbar.

Mikuteret mor, mor u'levonah mor u'levonah, dodi li.

Libavtini achoti chalah, libavtini achoti chalah.

.DODI TZACH V'ADOM (Debbie Friedman)

Am	Dm	
Dodi tzach v'adom,		דודי צח ואדום
Am	G	Am
dagul meirevava.		דגול מרבבה.
C	Dm	
Rosho, roshe ketem paz,)		ראשו כפתם פז, קנצותיו תלתלים.
Am	(G)	Dm (Am)
k'vutzotav taltalim.)		

(My beloved is bright and ruddy, prominent among ten thousand. His head is as the most fine gold, his locks are curled.)

Crichiver, THE SHWAYDER SHIRON, Camp Shwayder Press, 1996.

→ **.EREV SHEL SHOSHANIM** (Yosef Hadar, Moshe Dor)

Am Dm Erev shel shoshanim	ערב של שושנים
Am Netzeh na el habustan	נצא נא אל הבסתן
G Mor b'samim ulevonah	מור בשמים ולבנה
Em Am L'raglech miftan.	לרגלך מפתן.
Am Dm Chorus: Lailah yored l'at	לילה יורד לאט
Am V'ruach shoshan noshvah	ורוח שושן נושבה
G Havah elchash lach shir balat	הבה אלחש לך שיר בלאט
E Am Zemer shel ahavah.	זמר של אהבה.
Shachar homah yonah Roshech maleh t'lalim Pich el haboker shoshana Ektefenu li.	שחר הומה יונה ראשך מלא טללים פיד אל הבקר שושנה אקטפנו לי.

(It is an evening of roses. Let us go out to the grove. Myrrh, spices, and incense are a carpet for you to tread. The night comes upon us slowly, and a breeze of roses is blowing. Let me whisper a song to you quietly, a song of love. It is dawn, a dove is cooing. Your hair is filled with dew. Your lips are like a rose to the morning. I'll pick it for myself.)

.ESAH EINAI (Shlomo Carlebach)

Am Dm Am Dm Am Eсах einai el heharim)	אשא עיני אל-ההרים,
G C E) X2 Mei'ayin, mei'ayin yavo ezri)	מאין יבוא עזרי.
A7 Dm E Am Ezri meim Adonai	עזרי מעם יי,
Am E Am Oseh shamayim va'aretz.	עושה שמים וארץ.

(I lift up mine eyes unto the mountains. From whence does my help come? My help comes from the Lord, Maker of heaven and Earth.)

. KO AMAR HASHEM (Y. Calek)

Em	A)	
Ko amar, amar Hashem)	כֹּה אָמַר יְיָ
Em (D)	A (B7))	X2
Matza chein bamidbar)	מַצָּה חֵן בְּמִדְבָּר
Em	A		
Am seridei, seridei charev		2X	עִם שְׂרִידֵי חָרֵב
D	B7		
Haloch l'hargi-oh			הַלֹּחֵף לְהַרְגִיעוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל.
Em D C			
Yisrael	3X		

(So says the Lord, who found favor in the desert with you, left untouched by the sword. You, Israel, will be calmed.)

. KOL HANESHAMA (Psalm 150)

D	A	D	A	D	A	D	A	D	
Kol Haneshama, te hallel ya, halleluyah!									כָּל הַנְּשָׁמָה תְּהַלֵּל יְיָ, הַלְלוּיָהּ!

(All the soul will praise God, halleluyah!)

. KUM BACHUR ATZEIL (Folktune)

C	G	C	G	C	
Kum bachur atzeil, v'tzei la'avodah (2X)					קוּם בַּחֹר עֲצֵל, וְצֵא לְעִבּוּדָה.
Kum, kum v'tzel la'avodah (2X)					קוּם, קוּם, וְצֵא לְעִבּוּדָה
Kukuriku, kukuriku, hatarnigol kara. (2X)					קוּקוּרִיקוּ, קוּקוּרִיקוּ, חַתַּרְנַגּוֹל קָרָה.

Note: A three-part round

(Get up, get up, lazy youth, and go out to work. Get up, get up and go to work. Kukuriku, kukuriku, the rooster crowed).

→ . KUMILACH (Debbie Friedman)

Am7	D	Am7	D			
Kumi lach, kumi lach				קוּמִי לָךְ, קוּמִי לָךְ		
C	Bm	Esus	E			
Rayati yafati, kumi lach.				רָעִיתִי יָפְתִי קוּמִי לָךְ		
F	G	C	Am	Dm	E	Am
Hinei hastav hinei hastav avar						
F	G	C	D	Esus	E	
Hageshem chalaf halach lo.						הַגֶּשֶׁם חָלַף הַלַּחַד לּוֹ.

(Rise up my love my fair one, rise up for lo the winter is past and the rain is over and gone.)

→ .LO ISH B'LO ISHA (Michael Isaacson)

Bm7 E Bm7 E Bm7 E E7
 Shneihem, ish v'isha shneihem,
 Am D Am Fmaj7 Esus E
 Lo ish b'lo isha,
 Fmaj7 D7 Gmaj7 Dm6 E7
 v'lo isha b'lo ish
 Am D7 Gmaj7 Am7 Bm7 Cmaj7
 V'lo sh'neihem, v'lo sh'nei--hem
 Fmaj7 Bm7
 v'lo sh'neihem
 E
 B'lo sh'chinah.

לא איש בלא אשה, ולא אשה בלא איש,
 ולא שניהם בלא שכינה.

(No man without woman, no woman without man, and neither without the spirit of God.)

.LO YAREIU (Ezra Gabbai, William Sharlin)

A Em
 Lo yareiu v'lo yashichtu)
 D A) 4X
 V'lo yashichtu)
 A Em D A
 V'chitutu charvotam l'itim)
 D A E A) 2X
 V'chanitoteihem lemazmeirot)
 G/A A
 Lo yisa goi el goi cherev)
 G/A A) 2X
 Lo yilmadu od milchama.)

לא ירעו ולא ישחיתו
 וכתתו חרבותם לאתים
 וחנויתותיהם למזמרות,
 לא-ישא גוי אל-גוי חרב
 ולא-ילמדו עוד מלחמה.

(They shall not hurt or destroy anything. They shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, nor ever again shall they train for war.)

.LO YISA GOI (Folktune)

A-O, O-A
 Dm C
 Lo yisa goi el goi cherev
 Am7 Dm
 Lo yilmedu od milchama.

לא-ישא גוי אל-גוי חרב
 ולא-ילמדו עוד מלחמה.

(Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, nor ever again shall they train for war.)

. NO MAN IS AN ISLAND

C F G C
 No man is an island; no man stands alone;
 F G C Am Dm G
 Each man's joy is joy to me; each man's grief is my own.
 C F C F G Am Dm C G C
 We need each other, so I will defend each man as my brother. . each man as my friend.
 I saw the people gather. . I heard the music start. .
 The song that they were singing is ringing in my heart.
 We need one another. . .

. NOT BY MIGHT (Debbie Friedman)

Clapping: DGA DGA DGA DGA
 D G A F#m Bm E A
 Chorus: Not by might, and not by power)
 D G A
 But by spirit alone) 2X
 E A
 Shall people live in peace)
 D G A D G A
 The children sing. The children dream.
 Bm F#m Bm F#m
 And their tears may fall, but we'll hear them call
 G A
 And another song will rise (3X)

→ . OD YISHAMA (Shlomo Carlebach)

Am Dm Am Dm E	עוד ישמע בקרי יהודה
Od yishama beharey yehudah	
Am F E	ובחוצות ירושלים
Uvechutzot, uvechutzot Yerushalayim	
Am Dm	קול ששון וקול שמחה
Kol sason v'kol simcha	
E Am	קול חתן וקול כלה.
Kol chatan v'kol kallah.	

(Still can be heard in the hills of Judah and in the courtyards of Jerusalem, the sound of gladness and the sound of joy, the voice of the groom and the voice of the bride.)

. TEMPO

C D G Em
Li mi sh'ayn lo, ten lo Tempo

למי שאין לו תן לו טמפו

C D G Em
Li mi sh'yesh lo, ten lo od

למי שיש לו תן לו עוד

C D G Em
Kol ha am bocher bo Tempo

כל העם בוחר בו טמפו

C D G Em
Ki ha-Tempo tov me'od!

כי הטמפו טוב מאוד!

(To whoever doesn't have Tempo, give them some--to whoever has Tempo, give them more. Tempo is the greatest!)

→ **. TEN LO MISHELO (Cara Zubren)**

C Am7 Dm
Ten lo mishelo sha'ata)

תן לו משלו שאתה

C(G) G(C) X2
V'shelach shelo)

ושלך שֵׁלוֹ

C F C C F G C
Venomar lefanav shira chadasha)

ונאמר לפניו שירה חדשה

F Dm7 G X2
Shira chadasha.)

שירה חדשה.

(Render unto God that which is God's, for all that you have is God's. Sing before Him a new song.)

. T'FILAT HADERECH (Debbie Friedman)

C C/B F G7 C Bbmaj7 F G
May we be blessed as we go on our way. May we be guided in peace,

C C/B F Dm G C
May we be blessed with health and joy. May this be our blessing. Amen.

C7 F G E7 Am Dm G C
Amen, Amen, may this be our blessing, Amen. X2

May we be sheltered by the wings of peace. May we be kept in safety and in love,
May grace and compassion find their way to every soul. May this be our blessing, Amen.

. THANK YOU SONG (To My Friends)

D Bm G D G D A
To my friends a thank you song, for being kind to me.

D Bm G D G Asus A D
To my friends a thank you song, for being kind to me.

. YAD B'YAD (Craig Taubman)

G	D	B7	Em7		יָד בְּיָד אֶחָד עִם הַשֵּׁנִי			
Yad b'yad, Echad im hasheini								
C	G/B	Am7	D		עִם אֶחָד עִם לֵב אֶחָד כִּן אֲנוּ נִדְלִיק			
Am echad im leyv echad kein anu nadlik								
G	D	B7	Em		נִדְלִיק מְשׂוֹאוֹת עוֹלָם נִדְלִיק כְּעִם אֶחָד			
Nadlik m'suat olam nadlikah k'am echad								
C	G	Am	D	G	יָד בְּיָד אֶחָד אֶחָד כִּן אֲנוּ נִדְלִיק			
Yad b'yad echad echad, kein, anu nadlik								
G	D	C	G	C	G	Am	D	אִם אֵין קִמַּח אֵין תּוֹרָה
Im ein kemach ein Torah. Im ein Torah, ein kemach X2								אִם אֵין תּוֹרָה אֵין קִמַּח

(Hand in hand, one with the other. One people with one heart, yes we will light. We will kindle the world, we will kindle as one people. Without sustenance there is no Torah; without Torah there is no sustenance.)

→ . YEDID NEFESH (Ehud and Sara Zweig, Eliezer Azkari 16th C)

Am	Dm				יְדִיד נֶפֶשׁ, אֵב הַרְחָמִן		
Yedid nefesh, av harachaman, X2							
E	Am	Dm	G	C	A7	מְשׂוּדָה עֲבָדָה אֶל רְצוֹנָה.	
Meshoch avdecha el retzonecha.							
Dm	E	Am	Dm	E	Am	A7	יְרוּץ עֲבָדָה כְּמוֹ אֵיל,
Meshoch avdecha el retzonecha.							
Dm	G	C	Dm	G	C	Am	שְׂתַחֲוֶה אֶל מוֹל הַדְרָה.
Yarutz avdecha kemo ayal,							
Dm	E	Am	Am	Dm	E	Am	
Yishtachaveh, lai lai lai, Yai lai lai lai lai, el mul hadarecha.							

(Heart's delight, Source of mercy, draw Your servant into Your arms: I leap like a deer to stand in awe before You.)

. YERUSHALAYIM SHE'L ZAHAV (Naomi Shemer)

Am	Dm	A			אֲוִיר הָרִים צָלוּל כִּינִין וְרִיחַ אֲרָנִים
Avir harim tzalul kayayin vereach oranim					
A7	Dm	Am	E7	Am	נִשְׂא בְרוּחַ הָעַרְבִים עִם קוֹל פְּעֻמוֹנִים
Nisa beruach ha'arbayim im kol pa'amonim					
Am	Dm	A			וּבְתַרְדֵּמַת אֵילָן וְאֶבֶן שְׂבוּיָה בְּחִלּוּמָה
Uv'tardemat ilan va'even shvuya bachaloma					
A7	Dm	Am	E7	Am	הָעִיר אֲשֶׁר בְּדָד יוֹשְׁבֵת וּבִלְבָהּ וּמָה.
Ha'ir asher badad yoshevet uveliba chomah.					

Unit 4

The Covenant Fulfilled: Jewish Way in Death and Dying Aging, Death and Mourning

Enduring Understanding: We naturally fear the end of our lives and losing those we love. Judaism gives us rituals to cope with the loss, but we can do much more to understand aging. Who are the ones who have come before us whom we did not know? What memories can we preserve from the living while we have the chance?

Suggested number of lessons: 1 or 2

Goals

10. Educate mothers and daughters about the traditional elements of Jewish mourning and burial.
11. Get mothers and daughters talking about their memories, hopes, expectations and fears related to aging and dying.
12. Help mothers and daughters feel connected to each other and their parentage by remembering those matriarchs already gone and by collecting stories and memories from those still with us.

Objectives

At the end of this unit, the participants will be able to:

6. Describe the components of a traditional Jewish funeral and house of mourning.
7. Relate to the feelings and wishes of the other on the subject of aging, burial, mourning and remembering.
8. Know more about the women that came before them through family recipes.

Core Learning Activities

1. Double Yoga Warm Up³²

2. Doing it "Right"

Rabbis and educators are often asked how to mourn "correctly." Our first instinct might be to say that there is no "right" way, however Judaism gives us very specific guidelines. In order to feel more prepared for this event in a Jewish life, this vocabulary is a good place to start:

Keriah, hesped chevrah kadisha, onanim, shiva, sheloshim, shana, kaddish, yahrzeit, shomer, yizkor

- Give each mother-daughter pair a word/concept to research
- Give each pair a Jewish resource book³³ or the appropriate xeroxed pages of a resource book
- After they have read about their word/concept, have them report to the group

³² See Unit 1 Appendix for descriptions and photographs of the yoga positions.

³³ The Encyclopedia Judaica (Keter Publishing), The Encyclopedia of Judaism (The Jerusalem Publishing House), Encyclopedia of Jewish Concepts (Hebrew Publishing Co.), or The Complete Book of Jewish Observance (Behrman House) can all give easy to access definitions for this type of inquiry.

- Have the group recount their past experiences with death and Jewish mourning practices. Some suggested discussion questions:
 - Have you ever seen any of these ritual elements/concepts used?*
 - If so, how did it help or hinder the mourning process?*
 - If not, do you think implementing these Jewish concepts might have changed the experience? For the better or for the worse?*

3. Doing it “Right”—Part 2

There are so many customs associated with Jewish mourning. Follow the format above to also investigate these practices:

Passing the shovel

Washing hands after funeral

Covering mirrors

Eggs—a traditional food

Regulations for a Jewish coffin

Prohibition against flowers

Yahrzeit candles

“*Tzaduk haDin*”

Closed casket

Burial with tatoos, without circumcision, in the case of a suicide

Leaving stones on the grave

Unveiling

3. Kaddish—The Mourner’s Prayer

This is the prayer that a close relative of the deceased will say everyday for a year and every year on the anniversary of the death (*yahrzeit*). What does it mean in English and why is it a mourner’s prayer?

- Hand out a copy of the mourner’s Kaddish xeroxed from the *siddur* including the English translation, one for each mother-daughter pair.
- Joel Lurie Grishaver suggests the following exercise³⁴:
 - Underline every place God is praised
 - Double underline each wish that is expressed
 - Put a circle around each mention of life
 - Put a box around each mention of death
- Discuss in pairs:
 - What is the Kaddish about?*
 - Why is it used as a mourning prayer?*
 - Why are the themes discussed here appropriate for a person in mourning?*

4. Ask the Rabbi

- Ask the rabbi to join you for class to answer questions the participants undoubtedly have about death, especially cremation and the Jewish view of afterlife since these topics are not covered elsewhere in this unit.
- Have the participants write down questions prior to the rabbi’s visit.

³⁴ Grishaver, Joel Lurie *The Life Cycle Workbook*, Alternatives in Religious Education, Inc. 1978, pg.44.

- If possible, ask the rabbi to look over the questions before class in order to formulate his/her answers.

5. Discussion Pairs

- Have the mother/daughter pairs sit knee to knee.
- Each one is given different sentences to complete
- The woman talking gets 2 minutes to speak uninterrupted

Two sentences for each person to complete is plenty. Mothers and daughters should alternate completing sentences. Allow for response time.

Sentences for Mothers

What I remember about my mother aging is.../As my mother ages, I...

When I am elderly, I hope...

I imagine my funeral will be...

The things that scare me about getting older is...

What I would like you and our family to remember about me is...

Sentences for Daughters

As I see you getting older I...

What I will remember about you is...

When I speak about you, I will tell my children...

The things that scare me about getting older is...

I imagine my funeral will be...

Additional Learning Activities

1. Humility in Jewish Mourning

So much of Jewish mourning practice emphasizes our feelings of humility in the face of death. This is a key concept in understanding Judaism's attitude toward the end of life.

- Covered mirrors, the *tachrichim* (a burial shroud) and the traditional Jewish casket are all examples of this idea.
- Try to bring as many of them into class or arrange a trip to a mortuary. Perhaps there is a local carpenter who can come to class and talk about the regulations for a Jewish casket. The local *chevrah kaddisha* society should be able to lend a shroud.
- Suggested discussion questions:
 - How do these items reflect Judaism's attitude of modesty in times of mourning?
 - How does the plain wood casket compare to others that are for sale? What does it say about how we treat our dead if we chose the plain version over the more luxurious?
 - Why wouldn't we want to bury our dead in their favorite items of clothing? If a funeral is for the benefit of the living, why wouldn't we want to see our loved ones looking their best?
 - While these other examples are concerned with the one who has died, we also include the covered mirrors in this discussion, a regulation for the living. What is the connection and what is Judaism asking of us by suggesting we cover our mirrors?

2. Ethical Wills & Epitaphs

Jews write a second kind of will, an ethical will, to give the ones they leave behind suggestions for living a spiritual and meaningful life. An epitaph is what is written about the deceased on their tombstone.

- Separate the mothers and daughters. Have the mothers write ethical wills to their daughters and families and have the daughters write epitaphs for their mothers.

Ethical Wills:

- Read Genesis 49, Jacob's blessings to his sons before his death. This is where we get the custom of writing ethical wills.
- Participants should list important people in their life and suggestions or thoughts they would like to share with those people.

Epitaphs:

- An epitaph traditionally includes the name of the person buried at the tombstone, the name of that person's parents, their date of birth and words of affection, praise or remembrance.
- Allow the mothers and daughters to switch activities and then share with each other privately or with the group, whichever they prefer.

4. Psalms

There are certain psalms that are commonly read at a funeral and, in addition, psalms are recited over the body by the *shomer*, the one who guards the deceased between death and burial. Most common are Psalms 23, 49 and 91.

- Discuss how the images in these biblical poems might lend support to a mourner.
- Ask the participants to write their own poems using the ideas in these samples as a jumping off point

5. *Chayei Sarah*

Although Genesis 23 begins the *parsha* entitled "the Life of Sarah," it tells the story of her death and Avraham's efforts to bury her.

- Read the story and discuss:
 - Why do you think Avraham was so intent on paying for Sarah's burial place?
 - How does Sarah's burial compare with our practices today?
 - Why do you think the story of Sarah's death is immediately followed by Avraham's efforts to find a wife for Yitzhak?

Memorable Moment

Cooking Class

Often the fondest memories of our families' matriarchs are the wonderful recipes they have handed down from generation to generation. Rabbi Debra Orenstein uses a term coined by Barbara Myerhoff, "domestic religion"³⁵ to describe the tradition that was taught within the home and says this was the realm of Jewish women. Orenstein goes on

³⁵ Orenstein, Rabbi Debra *Lifecycles: Jewish Women on Life Passages and Personal Milestones*, Jewish Lights Publishing, Vermont, 1994, pg. 317.

to quote another sociologist, Sydney Stahl Weinberg who studied women who immigrated to American between 1898 and 1925. Weinberg says,

... the God women prayed to in the kitchen seemed to have a more personal nature than the deity the men invoked in *shul*. Because their religious concepts were minimally related to a body of dogma... the essence of their faith might be retained regardless of the degree of conscious religiosity.³⁶

By this discussion, Orenstein, Myerhoff and Weinberg might be suggesting that more faith can be learned and retained from being in the kitchen with your mother than can be learned from being with your father in synagogue. This activity subscribes to this notion.

- Have each participant pick a family recipe and bring it with them to class along with all the tools and ingredients necessary to make it. Hopefully your synagogue has a kitchen large enough for the whole class to work there together, each pair making their own recipes.
- Each mother daughter pair will work together to make the two recipes they brought in.
- While the food is cooking, have each person tell the group what they are making, who the recipe comes from, something about the kind of person they were and when they first ate this food.
- When the food is done, enjoy it together!

³⁶ Ibid.

Unit 5

An Emerging Covenant: Creation of New Ritual Midlife and “Invisible Life Passages”

*Note to the Teacher: This unit is constructed differently than the previous four units. There are no Additional Learning Activities because this unit focuses on creating original rituals. During this unit of study, each participant has the opportunity to identify an event or transitional period either in their life, or in the lives of women, that they would like to ritualize, emulating the way that other Jewish life cycle events are ritualized.

Below, a series of Core Learning Activities are outlined which will help the participants learn about ritual, the components that others have used to create new ritual and then they are given the opportunity to write one themselves and share it with the class. They also have the option of performing the ritual in the class setting if they choose. Since there are no alternative learning opportunities in this unit, if you do not wish to create new ritual with your class, the other four units can be lengthened to complete the year’s study.

Enduring Understanding: Now that we have studied the rituals we have to sanctify our lives, we turn our attention to the period between marriage and death. Traditional Judaism lacks ritual for sanctifying this period which is lengthening for our generation. We must find ways to lend meaning to midlife, to the events the rabbis never thought of as needing ritual, but are nonetheless milestones in the eyes of women today.

Suggested number of lessons: 2

Goals

13. Educate mothers and daughters about the possible components of a Jewish ritual.
14. Get mothers and daughters talking about moments or events in their lives which they feel they would like to ritualize.
15. Help mothers and daughters feel connected to each other and their network of Jewish women by asking them to participate in an original ritual.

Objectives

At the end of this unit, the participants will be able to:

9. Describe the function of a sampling of different ritual components available to them for adaptation.
10. Relate to the feelings of the other on the subject of their original ritual—what is the transition being marked and what it means to the other.
11. Develop a sense of pride in the female lifecycle and see it as worthy of ritualizing.

Core Learning Activities

1. Double Yoga Warm Up³⁷

³⁷ See Unit 1 Appendix for descriptions and pictures of yoga positions.

2. Background Reading—Rabbi Debra Orenstein’s Lifecycles: Jewish Women on Life Passages and Personal Milestones

Although reading is not the most dynamic learning experience, as yet no one has written a work more touted or more comprehensive on women’s lifecycle, Jewish women’s experience and the creation of original ritual.

- Have the class read the introduction as well as chapter 6 “Invisible Life Passages.”³⁸ This will provide an overview of the meaning and purpose of ritual as well as how ritual is created.

3. Brainstorm

- In class, brainstorm together different events or transitions in the participants’ lives, either past or upcoming, that they feel they would like to ritualize.
- As suggestions are given, invite the participants to say a little bit about their experience with that event, or the image they hold of that event, and why they are putting it on the list.
- Use Orenstein’s list on Appendix page C75 as a guide.

4. Review Possible Ritual components

One way to create original ritual is to borrow components from existing rituals. By using familiar Jewish elements, an original ritual is made more authentic and familiar, helping it to resonate more easily with the participants.

- Below is a list of components taken from the rituals sampled in Rabbi Orenstein’s book. Reviewing these may help the participants understand their options as you ask them to create a ritual of their own. These are the tools that can be adapted to fit the needs of a ritual creator:

Amidah Benedictions are 13 short prayers within the larger prayer, the *Amidah*, which is the central part of a worship service. They petition God for:

Understanding and wisdom

Closeness to God and Torah

Forgiveness

Redemption

Health

Abundance

Freedom

Justice

Righteousness

The Peace of Jerusalem

Deliverance

Acceptance of Prayer

Closeness of God’s presence and favor

Birkat HaGomel is said by a person who has survived the threat of great harm, such as an accident or trauma. Traditionally, women also say it after recovering from childbirth.

³⁸ See Appendix for these pages.

Birkot HaShachar literally means “blessings of the dawn.” They are part of the morning prayer service and they are said to praise God for:

Giving us a mind and instincts
 Creating us as Jews
 Making us free people
 Opening the eyes of the blind
 Providing clothes for the naked
 Bringing freedom to the captive
 Lifting up the fallen
 Making our steps firm or sure
 Giving strength to Israel
 Bringing glory to Israel
 Giving strength to the weary
 Removing sleep from the eyes each morning

Candle lighting is done on Shabbat and holidays. It sanctifies time and space and comes with a specific blessing that can be adapted when candles are lit in a context other than shabbat or a holiday. *Yahrtzeit* candles are lit on the anniversary of a loved one’s death. There are many interpretations of this. Some believe in the mystical tradition of helping the departed soul to achieve a higher level of repose. Or the flame can be a symbol of continuity like the *ner tamid* (eternal flame) that we always keep burning above the ark in the synagogue.

Egypt—reference to coming out of Egypt are abundant in liturgy and can be adapted for original ritual since the word for Egypt in Hebrew literally means “the narrow place.” The image of coming out of a narrow place lends itself to healing rituals.

Hand Washing is used to prepare a person for another ritual or sacred act. Daily, traditional Jews wash their hands before eating to separate that act from the rest of the day. It comes with a specific blessing which praises God for commanding us to “lift up our hands” meaning to elevate them for an elevated purpose.

Havdallah literally means “separation” because it separates shabbat from the rest of the week. It includes individual blessings over a braided candle, a cup of wine, sweet smelling spices and a fourth blessing which praises God for separating the holy from the everyday.

K’riah comes from Jewish mourning practices. Traditionally, mourners would tear their clothes as a sign of their tremendous grief. Today a small black ribbon is usually used instead. It is torn and then attached to the clothes, over the heart.

Kiddush is the blessing over the wine and the name comes from the Hebrew word for “holy” because this blessing is what sanctifies the sabbath. The first line blesses the wine and the second, longer paragraph sanctifies the day. As with candle lighting, this is used to make time and space holy.

Mikvah (ritual immersion) is a traditional Jewish bath used to purify any person or thing that has become ritually unclean. The ways to achieve this status are outlined in the Talmud, but today the *mikvah* is gaining new popularity for a place to cleanse the mind and spirit after a traumatic event or before a life transition such as marriage or conversion. There is a blessing that is said before immersion and the ritual usually consists of cleaning the body thoroughly beforehand and then dunking three times in the bath.

MiSheberach is a blessing said on behalf of a person who is ill. It asks God for complete healing of both body and spirit which lends itself to use for one who is physically ill, but also for one who is recovering from a more mental or spiritual challenge. Another version of this blessing comes from Numbers 12:13. When Moshe was praying for Miriam as she was suffering from leprosy. He cried out, “*El Nah R’fanahna La*” which means “God, please heal her, please.” Because it makes reference to a powerful woman in the Torah and because in its original Hebrew it is already in the feminine form, it is popular for women’s healing rituals.

Psalms—there are over one hundred of these biblical poems that can be mined for any occasion. Their language and history lend authenticity to a new ritual.

Scripture quotations also lend authenticity to an original ritual. A concordance can be used to find a verse appropriate to the ritual’s occasion.

Seder Meal can be a nice way to structure an original ritual because it literally means “order.” It refers to Passover, the holiday that is celebrated in the home where every table becomes an altar and every household head becomes an officiant. The seder meal consists of symbolic foods and blessings that are eaten and said in a certain order.

Shehechianu is a prayer that thanks God for enabling us to reach a certain time or season. We say it when we are grateful to be witnessing a joyous event or partaking in a celebration.

Tashlich means to “cast out.” It is part of *Rosh Hashanah* observance. On the Jewish New Year, we empty our pockets of breadcrumbs into a moving body of water and let the fish eat them. This is symbolic of discarding our sins, regrets or past experiences to get ready for a fresh new year.

Ten Plagues refers to the ten plagues that God brought upon the Egyptians in order to persuade Pharaoh to let the Hebrew slaves go free. We recount these every Passover, but they can be revised to reflect any hardship that has been endured. For example, “the Ten Plagues of Infertility.”

Tree Planting is a popular Jewish custom because it symbolizes regeneration and growth. In addition, “The Tree of Life” is an epithet for the Torah. It also recalls early Zionists who planted trees to help reclaim the swamplands of Palestine and make Israel into the thriving nation that it is today.

5. Review Samples of Original Ritual³⁹
6. Write Your Own Ritual
 - Give the participants time in class to work on their rituals. Mothers and daughters may want to work in pairs or they may have different ideas and wish to work separately.
 - Be sure to have reference books on hand. You may want to bring in a second educator to help you circulate around the room and answer questions the participants will have about where in Jewish text or tradition to find what they need.
 - Depending on how many class sessions you have remaining, you may want to give the participants more than one session to work.
7. Ritual Exists in Community
 - Since a ritual is something that is achieved within a community and not by an individual alone, encourage the participants to share their rituals with the class.
 - At least have the mothers and daughters share their rituals with each other. Discuss:
 - What event or transitional moment is this ritualizing?*
 - Why did you chose this?*
 - What elements were used and why were they chosen?*
 - Anyone who wants to should be able to perform their ritual in class. Be sure to have them bring in everything they will need and, if possible, inform the participants beforehand that they will be a part of a classmate's ritual. In order to participate fully and supportively, one should not be caught off guard.

³⁹ See Appendix for samples.

as possible, but were at last found out—and then became instrumental in the editing of this book. The wisdom of all these readers made *Lifecycles I* a better book than it would have been otherwise.

To my family, and especially my parents, who amazed the staff of the Wilstein Institute—but not me—with the degree of their caring and involvement. It is not that I have come to expect your help, it is just that you never fail to provide it.

To the entire Jewish Lights staff, including Theresa Jones Vyhna, Wendy Kilborn, and especially Sandra Korinchak, who have been uniformly professional, skilled, considerate, and invested throughout. To my editor, Sandee Brawarsky, for her clarity, honesty, serenity, and talent. Thank you for keeping me on track and especially for your friendship. To Stuart Matlins, publisher of Jewish Lights Publishing, for the curiosity that feeds his wisdom, for his guidance at every stage along the way, and for his keen sense of aesthetics and of this book. It is a privilege to work with someone who so clearly sees the forest, the trees, and the point.

DEBRA ORENSTEIN

MAY 2, 1994/21 IYYAR 5754

Introduction



Defining Lifecycle and Lifecycles

There is no equivalent in Rabbinic Hebrew for “lifecycle.” Yet, the ancient Rabbis understood life, in part, as a cycle. Traditional Jewish historiography sees the process and progress of the world as both linear *and* cyclical. In the midst of every cycle, we are meant to feel the finger of God pushing history to its linear destination, and every linear development is part of the grand circle.

On a macrocosmic scale, time and experience are progressive and linear in that they have a direction and a destination. Creation leads to revelation and ultimately to redemption in the messianic age. Yet, time moves cyclically as well—especially for individuals. The holidays and Torah readings cycle unendingly. Birth leads to death, which leads to eternal life. Children generally repeat the same cyclical path worn by their parents and *their* parents, marking milestones with rituals along the way. The circle of passages remains constant, but is experienced differently and anew because we constantly play different roles.

As the last example shows, lifecycle is neither linear nor whole-

Orenstein

LIFECYCLES: JEWISH WOMEN ON LIFE PASSAGES + PERSONAL MILESTONES, Jewish Lights Pub. 1994

ty-wide norms. Each of these four types of expansion appears in this book, and each has had far-reaching, if differential, effects on our understanding of lifecycle.

Fifty years ago, Bat Mitzvah ceremonies were literally unheard of. Today, some form of celebration of a girl's coming of age is common, even in many ultra-Orthodox communities. Twenty-five years ago, covenant/naming rituals for girls were virtually nonexistent. Today, they are widespread. The exact form and timing of covenant rituals are still in flux, but the expectation that we ceremoniously honor the entry of baby girls into the world, their families, their own names, and the Jewish covenant, has become fixed. It is startling to realize how quickly revolution becomes everyday reality.

Rituals for daughters have led to more personal prayers and parental involvement in traditional circumcision rites. Attention to menopause has led men to ask how they can mark retirement—a central and neglected passage for that half of the population that has traditionally derived its primary identity from work. We begin by asking “What does it mean for a woman to use male God language...or to study Talmud...or to wrestle with aspects of the tradition from which she is alienated?” we then apply those same questions to all Jews, and still further down the line we approach core questions about God, and learning, and a holy tradition that has been both shaped and muddled by human hands.

It is not difficult to imagine a time, in the not too distant future, when the format of girls' naming ceremonies will be more nearly standardized; when we will have communally- and religiously-sanctioned responses to miscarriage; when most Jews will become accustomed to seeing women don traditional (and perhaps feminized) prayer garments, including prayer shawl, phylacteries, and head covering. Ten years from now, it will be unremarkable for Jews to pray in the hospital delivery or birthing room—and I hope that many of the resources collected in Chapter One by Dr. Lori Lefkowitz will be used. If Rivka Haut and other activists succeed with the approach she takes in Chapter Ten, traditional Jewish divorce law will be substantially changed to balance the power between husband and wife in marriage and in divorce. In the Orthodox movement, women's increasing knowledge of traditional Jewish texts may well serve to emphasize

ly cyclical. Rather, it represents an approach to time in which the past is eternally present. It is this paradigm that the ancient Rabbis draw on when they tell us that we were all at Mt. Sinai, or that we must all think of ourselves as having been personally liberated from slavery in Egypt. Lifecycle rituals bend time forward, as well as back, relating each bride and groom to Adam and Eve and each wedding to the coming of the messiah. Time is seen, as it were, from God's perspective—or, more accurately, from the Rabbis' perspective on God's perspective. With God's help, they teach, Moses can travel back to the future and visit Rabbi Akiva's classroom (BT *Menahot* 29b).

Neither the Rabbis of two millennia ago, nor those of two decades ago, would have cited childbirth, coming out, menopause, or entering a baby girl into the covenant as life passages. Yet the Rabbis intended Jewish lifecycle classification and ritual to reflect and sanctify Jewish lives as they are lived. Thus, while some segments of the Jewish community regard innovations in lifecycle ritual as a breaking or improper expansion of the boundaries of Jewish tradition, more and more Jews have come to see these innovations as the fulfillment of its deeper purpose, and a continuation of Jewish liturgical creativity.

Feminist Jews have been instrumental in expanding the definition of lifecycle in four ways: (1) By including women in the observance of passages that formerly spoke only to and of men—e.g., establishing Bat Mitzvah (coming of age ceremony for girls), along with Bar Mitzvah (coming of age ceremony for boys), and covenant ceremonies for baby girls, along with those for boys; (2) by supplementing or altering traditional rituals related to lifecycle—e.g., supplemental divorce rituals or alternative marriage contracts; (3) by valuing as sacred and sometimes ritualizing the events of women's biological cycle—e.g., menarche, menses, childbirth, miscarriage, menopause; and (4) by sacralizing nonbiological passages and milestones not contemplated by the tradition—e.g., through ceremonies celebrating elder wisdom or healing from sexual abuse. In a sense, this listing occurs in ascending order of innovation. The first category adheres most closely to the tradition and seeks both parity and uniformity in communal observances. The last uses individual lives—not tradition—as its starting point, and does not necessarily entail or expect communi-

down in our society both of predictable life markers and of community. Now, almost in a backlash, we sometimes want even the most personal passage—and perhaps especially that one—to be acknowledged and witnessed.

Contemporary Jewish women have had a particular need for and connection with ritual. We have needed not only to re-enact but to integrate our myths—the feminist/woman's "story" with the Jewish "story." This is often accomplished by creating and participating in rituals that take account of women as Jews, express women's perspectives on life passages, and feminize a formerly patriarchal symbolic system. Many women, and especially feminists, feel a deep harmony with the whole ritual enterprise. The women's movement has worked to achieve some of the same ends that ritual serves: Namely, to rely on and build community, while providing support and opportunities for self-expression to individuals in transition. Perhaps it should not be surprising, then, that both feminism and creative ritual have been ways "in" to Judaism for many women.

Rituals are "created" in at least three ways: By recovering traditions that have fallen into disuse (such as those Dr. Lori Lefkowitz cites in her essay on childbirth), by using an existing rite or blessing in a new context (as Rabbi Sandy Eisenberg Sasso does in her blessing following miscarriage), or by drawing on traditional texts, symbols, images, and ritual objects to create an entirely new composition (as Rabbi Nina Beth Cardin does in her ritual for marital separation). The first two methods renew the old creatively, while the last creates the new authentically. Thus, they fulfill Rav Kuk's intention that the old be made new, and the new, made holy.²

Invention can entail a struggle with the old. It might also mean simply finding new meanings, spaces, and places in a rich and highly interpretive and interpretable tradition. Jewish books of commentary, prayer, and lore, unlike the Bible and Talmud, were never sealed. Generating new ritual, liturgical, and midrashic material has always been permitted—and even lauded. *Vekhol hamarbeh harei zeh meshubah*: Whoever tells the Jewish story more, we learn at the Passover *seder* (ordered readings and meal), their telling is surely to be praised.³

While lifecycle ritual has generated a sense of excitement and renewal, it has also provoked significant anxiety and controversy.

inconsistencies between theory and practice, knowledge and behavior, and have a radicalizing effect. As the American Jewish population ages, prayers and ceremonies for menopause, retirement, elder-wisdom, and grandparenthood are likely to proliferate.

No doubt, there are other expansions of lifecycle awaiting us, which we will find surprising—at least initially. In a generation or two, some new rituals may be so ensconced in American Jewish thought and practice that Hebrew School students will assume they were given to Moses at Mt. Sinai. Others will make for an interesting historical footnote on what several Jewish women were thinking at the end of the twentieth century, but will not weather the tests of time and communal sensibilities. Of course, filling a need of the moment can be as valuable as producing literature that becomes part of the canon. The long-term challenge is to remain open to new perspectives and honor the lives of individual Jews, even as we retain traditional observances and idioms, and come to consensus about communal standards.¹

Why Ritual?

Traditional religious ritual was designed, and continues, to meet a variety of needs that relate to life passages: The need for the individual to be acknowledged by community, the need for the community/tribe to read itself into the passages of each member, the need for bonding, which serves both individual and community, the need to (re-)enact dramatically the great stories and messages of the tradition, for the sake of individuals and of the tradition. Through rituals, we create structures that provide an element of predictability and, therefore, safety, around times of insecurity, transition, and/or loss.

Ritual has been popularized and secularized in the last few years. At the same time, there has been a flowering of ritual-writing in religious contexts as well. The impetus for this among Jews came originally from grass roots. It was women waking up to how they lived who created a cottage-industry of ritual-writing in *Rosh Hodesh* (New Moon Festival) groups and elsewhere.

Many of those who have been marking their lives idiosyncratically and often privately have come to want the authentic stamp of something ancient and communal. There has been a break-

ne people fear that the proliferation of rituals around women's logical cycle will somehow reinforce the notion that women are tied to earth and body, and men to God and mind. If women are not some of their most important private biological moments to be addressed and recognized by the community, however, that hardly means that they want *only* their biological needs to be addressed and recognized. Moreover, biology and spirit are at both inseparable, particularly, as the authors of this book show, in such momentous passages as childbirth, miscarriage, abortion, and menopause. The Rabbis dealt with women's biological changes, but primarily in terms of how those changes affect men—re: sexual contact and ritual purity. A Talmudic tractate *iddah* (Menstruant) written by women would read very differently than the one we have, and some women are now trying to imagine and record it.

Some argue that ritual is debased by attaching it to relatively trivial events, such as losing a job, or completing a creative project. Triviality, like much else, is in the eye of the beholder. It might seem "trivial" to say a blessing for smelling ripe fruit, but the tradition supplies one. More important than notions of subjectivity or relativity, however, is the social assessment of familiarity. In contemporary Western culture, familiarity commonly does breed contempt. What is most available and most used is considered least interesting and essential. This contrasts sharply with the traditional Jewish emphasis on sanctifying the everyday, and with the recent focus on ritual.

Still and all, there are times, during this period of the flowering and popularization of ritual, when one cringes either at the occasion being ritualized or at the character of the ritual. I used to judge judgmentally of that, but I have come to see it as part of our communal creative and learning process. In any case, it is a relatively small price to pay for the benefit of an expanded tradition that, by its willingness to address the lives of Jews as they are lived, remains both relevant and viable. The "price" is also temporary: in the end, rituals that speak to the needs of the Jewish community will last, and those that do not will fall into disuse.

Women, Feminism, and Judaism

This book is concerned with three under-told stories: That of contemporary Jewish lifecycle, that of Jewish women, and that of the intersection of the two. It is quite common to discuss "women and Judaism," as if they were entirely separate entities.⁴ In the words of the Rabbis, "*nashim am bifnei atzman hen*" (women are a nation unto themselves [BT *Shabbat* 62a]).

One essential goal of feminist Jews is to foster environments where love of the People Israel and of Woman can both flourish. Being asked to give up one or the other half of this dual birthright, as Rabbi Laura Geller remarks in these pages, like having to choose between your heart and your liver.

Feminist Perspectives In large measure, feminism inspired the creation of this book, and informs its essays. As we ponder the classic question—is it (in this case, feminism) good or bad for the Jews?—we have to remember that half the Jews are women. Feminism benefits both halves of the Jewish population—and Judaism itself. Even as feminism addresses the lack of attention, opportunity, respect, and education that Jewish women have suffered, it also calls our attention to a lack in the tradition. When women's concerns are omitted or excluded, our understanding of Judaism is skewed and incomplete. The equation of "Jew" with "Jewish male" can cause simple factual errors in historiography ("elementary Jewish education in the Talmudic period was universalized"), lifecycle studies ("the covenant is sealed in the flesh of every Jew"), and other areas. Beyond individual mistakes, it also leads to a fundamental corruption of the disciplines and of our thinking.⁵

By the same token, when women's participation, scholarship, and leadership are embraced, the tradition is enhanced. Feminists and feminist methods can generate alternative readings of classical texts (as in Rabbi Sheila Peltz Weinberg's essay on midlife), and develop aspects of the tradition which have languished (as in Rabbi Einat Ramon's essay on marriage). Thus, to my mind, strengthening Judaism and embracing feminism are complementary goals. Full inclusion of women makes Judaism bigger, not smaller; more true, not less.

Women's Perspectives It is now largely accepted that men and women generally have different perspectives—probably mostly, if not entirely, due to differences in conditioning and socialization—and that there is much to learn by taking account of both vantage points. Women's perspectives are not necessarily identical with feminist perspectives; obviously, there are non-feminist women and feminist men. Feminist theorists have generally argued not for eliminating or ignoring gender differences, but for valuing traditional female styles, as well as traditional male styles, and for allowing individual choice, rather than dividing roles, responsibilities, or feminist identity, along gender lines.

Because normative Jewish perspectives are often equated with male perspectives and vice versa, it can be difficult for women to find a point of entry into the Jewish cultural conversation. This book provides a still rare forum for the perspectives of Jewish women and an opportunity to hear directly their needs, rituals, prayers, and dreams. Allowing women simply to collect their thoughts, as they literally do in these pages, constitutes a necessary step which we are often tempted to skip in our rush to resolve problems, set policy, and even apply feminist hermeneutics and principles. (Ironically, however, inviting women's expressions without demanding that they speak in a feminist idiom fulfills the feminist principles of inclusivity and the valuation of personal story and perspective.) In short, the recent information explosion on Jewish women and the rapid changes in our roles need to be digested, and responded to. This means setting aside time and creating occasions for women to name their experience.

There are two male contributors in this volume, and each is part of a husband-and-wife-team. Rick E. F. Dinitz and Dr. Lawrence Baron comment, respectively, on childbirth and adoption following infertility—intimate areas, where couples experience "the same thing," and yet have profoundly different biological—and, often, psychological and spiritual—experiences. When being male is taken to be part of the natural Jewish order, men are deprived of dealing with issues of Jewish masculinity. By marginalizing women, we have created the illusion that only Jewish women—and not men—have a gender. Every subject treated in this book would benefit from men's perspectives and responses, and contributors do touch on men's issues in relation to such pas-

sages as childbirth, adopting a child, circumcision, and intermarriage. However, this is a book of women's expressions.

Access and Influence in Feminist Judaism The relationship between feminism and Judaism has evolved significantly over the last two decades, amidst the remarkable developments in Jewish women's studies, practices, and roles. In every arena of change—from synagogue life and liturgy to communal leadership, from Jewish feminist scholarship to lifecycle rituals and Jewish family life—there are two essential issues: Access and influence. Access means wanting "in"—to rabbinical school, to positions of leadership in Federation, to the mysterious world of Talmud study, to *minyanim* (prayer quorums) and ritual life generally. Influence means informing, critiquing, and helping to shape those very institutions to which we have sought access. Once women are admitted to rabbinical school the question "Can I become a rabbi?" may be replaced by "What should male and female students study—and are women represented in the curriculum?" And women begin to achieve high positions in the Federation hierarchy, they ask not only "Where are the women?" but also "Does this sort of graded hierarchy foster the kind of communication and leadership that we want?" Once girls and women are allowed to study Talmud, they ask new questions, applying feminist interpretive methods to Rabbinic texts and Rabbinic principles and insights to women's concerns. Many women who have gained equal status in their praying communities come to advocate sensitivity to gendered-language in the liturgy of those communities.

Access and influence are not neatly separable stages. It is obviously possible to struggle with God-language whether or not one prays in an egalitarian *minyán*. The fact that women are ordained as rabbis in the Conservative movement, but not accepted as witnesses by all camps in that movement, demonstrates the complexity and the long-term relevance of access issues. Yet, for both strategic and psychological reasons, we typically deal first with issues of parity and access as they relate to a particular topic, and only later move on to explore questions of influence. As questions of access are resolved, still greater attention is likely to be paid to questions of communal structure and priorities, and of deep psychic change in relation to sex-role fantasies, expectations, and stereotypes. ◊

Feminist scholars of higher education use the ironic term "add women and stir" to characterize an unnamed, but widely used "recipe" for women's full inclusion and participation in various endeavors. Many assume that "adding" women to Judaism will do nothing to change the dish that has been cooking on the stove-top these last few-thousand years. Such an assumption implicitly asks women to gain access, but not influence, and to replicate and validate *in toto* the male perspectives that have shaped Jewish institutional life. These demands not only require women to deny a part of themselves, they also compromise the tradition, and cut it off from legitimate, potentially enriching influences.

In the stage of access, the primary goal is for women to achieve that which Judaism has valued—including Torah learning, ritual skills, and religious leadership. In the stage of influence the primary goal becomes to value that which Jewish women have achieved and can contribute—including authoring personal prayers, conceiving and perpetuating folk customs, and providing new readings of sacred texts. Initially, we ask "What does Judaism have to say about women?" and we search for clues in legal, literary, and historical texts. Increasingly, we also ask, "What do women have to say about Judaism?" Thus, women have come to comment on and influence not just "women's issues in Judaism" narrowly defined, but the whole of Jewish life. Certainly, the women writing in this book address a wide gamut of concerns, including issues of influence as well as access.

With the increasing prominence of influence questions, we are interested not just in Jewish women and men adopting a pro-woman stance, but in the tradition itself incorporating that stance and being transformed by it.⁶ In that pursuit, we open ourselves to unforeseen and unforeseeable possibilities. Moreover, the resolution of influence questions is both less predictable and less absolute than that of access questions—which in the end must be decided one way or another. It is hard to anticipate how women's words—in one sense, nearly fifty percent new input—might change the tone and terms of Jewish dialogue. It is not unreasonable to be excited—or afraid.

Rabbi Neil Gillman, when once accused of espousing "dangerous ideas," assured his critics, "I am not strong enough to topple Judaism." The phrase charms me, and easily applies to Jewish

women and feminists who have been accused of endangering the tradition by exploring questions of influence. It is clear we cannot topple Judaism. We may, though, by asking the right questions, be able to help sustain and renew it.

The Historical Moment

It is difficult to conceive of this book being written even as recently as ten years ago. Its orientation and content depend significantly on questions of influence that have been raised in the last decade and on the developments in Jewish women's studies. Ten years ago, Jewish women were not ready to undertake a comprehensive and collaborative treatment of the entire personal and communal lifecycle, as the *Lifecycles* series attempts to do. We were still examining individual pieces of the puzzle, still learning to own all parts of the lifecycle as our own. A decade ago, feminist Jews spent more of our energy on questions of access, contending with women's political and religious exclusion, and responding to criticisms. Because of the gains made, the contributors to this book have the luxury of focusing on women's spiritual concerns, relatively undistracted by the need to react to something or someone else.

Because of the historical moment in which *Lifecycles 1* was conceived and written, it functions as both a secondary and a primary source. As a secondary source, it is a resource for readers to use in exploring the cycle of Jewish and human life. A woman who has suffered a miscarriage, a man going through marital separation, a gentile with an interest in Jewish cosmology, a Jew who is studying mourning rituals—all will find practical and theoretical treatments of their areas of concern in these pages. As a primary source, *Lifecycles* provides insight into the concerns, compromises, convictions, and transitions of the early generations of Jewish feminists. It supplies raw data toward answering the question, "What do and will women do differently?" I am often asked this specifically in relation to women rabbis. Women in the rabbinic are a group we have all heard a great deal about, and relatively little from. This book is a partial corrective to that. It includes eighteen rabbis—five Reconstructionist, five Reform, seven Conservative, and one with private ordination—along with leaders in the Orthodox movement.

the same time, they face the reality that women must often decide whether, when, and to whom to reveal their fullest identity, and must judge their own safety in doing so.

In addition to coming out, becoming is also a theme. Women do not all at once come of age, come of *old* age, come to terms with an abortion, choose Judaism, release their children to independence, or mourn a loved one. The essays dealing with these and other issues reflect the cyclical aspect of lifecycle—the opportunities life offers to visit and revisit important passages and themes, and thus to be constantly in the process of learning and becoming.

Another shared concern is community. Contributors stress the importance of creating community, of being acknowledged and honored in community, of fostering communal and family structures that support women. Perhaps the dominant theme is a need and determination to be seen and heard, to communicate our experience and put women's concerns on the communal agenda. This applies to everything from gender issues in marriage law, to the religious acknowledgement of weaning children, to Jewish women's issues in midlife. Finally, the authors share an excitement about being a Jewish woman in this time of transition. Their essays consider not only women's challenges, but their contributions, opportunities, and internal resources, as well.

Diversity and Common Themes

As the above statistic shows, this book is trans-denominational. In a single chapter, a Reform rabbi chooses an Orthodox divorce, and an Orthodox leader responds to the divorce practices of her movement in a fashion that should shake its rabbinic establishment to its very core.

Contributors are diverse not only in terms of movement affiliation, but also in terms of profession, experience, sexual orientation, and approaches to Jewish and women's issues. Age ranges from fourteen to seventy-something. While most contributors are from upper middle class Americans, one Israeli, one Canadian, and several Jews from lower-class backgrounds are included. Sources cited by the authors range from the Babylonian Talmud to Germaine Greer. Contributors create poetry, personal essays and narratives, rituals, prayers, blessings, bibliographic summaries, interpretations of Jewish texts and philosophy, social analyses, and guided visualizations.

On the subject of diversity, Bernice Johnson Reagon of the singing group "Sweet Honey in the Rock" has said, "If you're in a coalition and you're comfortable, you know it's not a broad enough coalition."⁷ Many of the contributors were uncomfortable with each other's ideas, and this book does not present a neat and uniform set of conclusions. Rather, it reflects the variety of women's perspectives and concerns—some of which may cause discomfort.

For all the diversity, there is a unity of purpose: The validation and incorporation of women's experience in the Jewish enterprise, and the validation and revitalization of the Jewish enterprise on the basis of its spiritual relevance to the lives of *all* Jews. A number of themes repeat and reverberate throughout the book. Authors report a sense of shame or of being criticized for who they are—whether single, intermarried, childless, lesbian—and reclaim their identities with new attitudes and new rituals. Jewish women "come out" and declare themselves not only as lesbians, but as survivors of abuse, as Jews by choice, as feminists. (Several contributors mention abuse and recovery from victimization as essential components in women's life journeys.) Contributors name and validate multiple roles and aspects of Jewish women's identity. At

Ellen M. Umansky: I never felt so young.

Debra Orenstein: I never felt so old.

Chava Weissler: I never felt so single.

Tikva Frymer-Kensky: I never felt myself so much a mother.



6

Invisible Life Passages



Invisible life passages" is, essentially, the subject of this book. Feminist Jews have noticed the invisibility of women and many of their life stages, and this has led to a broader awareness of the need for all Jews to name and mark their hidden milestones. So much of what we face in life, we necessarily face alone, and each life has its private significant moments. Yet there is much that ritual and community can do to acknowledge and support us.

Rabbi Leila Gal Berner broaches two private and painful passages: Abortion and healing from sexual abuse. By telling the stories of women who have gone through these experiences, she renders the people and the life stages, real and visible. (She also renders them "heard"; the title of her essay is "Our Silent Seasons." Passages and women have not only been invisible, but unheard—or made mute—as well.) Rabbi Berner then guides the reader

through the process of addressing these passages ritually: With poetry, song, and dance, and in community. The need for ritual responses to the particular passages she covers was brought home to me at the conference for contributors to this volume. Three of the five women randomly placed in Rabbi Berner's editing group had either had an abortion or been sexually abused.

While Rabbi Berner models a method for creating new rituals, Amy Bardack suggests applying an existing liturgical text, the *Eshet Hayil* (poem about a valiant woman found in Proverbs 31) to new and newly-charted milestones. Examining the context and meaning of *Eshet Hayil*, she argues for the feminist usage of a traditional text that many have regarded as sexist. The two authors' approaches, of course, are not mutually exclusive. Rabbi Berner uses liturgical innovation to address exactly the singular character of particular experiences. Bardack capitalizes on a form that is already familiar, resonant, and legitimized in order to mark, with a single text, a variety of passages. Both methods attempt to fill some of the blank spaces, for which we have wanted and lacked a religious vocabulary.

Many passages are, still, largely invisible. New rituals have recently been created—some published for the first time in this book—but the practices are neither standardized nor widely observed. Nor is a new ritual, or an old ritual applied in a new way, desirable in every case. Sometimes, a blessing is called for; sometimes a sermon, story, or change in public policy; sometimes an honor in the synagogue; sometimes a private meditation, or simply a pause.

In general, liturgical and homiletical innovation are permitted and encouraged under Jewish law. Traditional law does prohibit the use of *shem umalkhut* (traditional blessing formula which names *Adonai* as Ruler of the universe) for new blessings. Since that formula states that God commands us to perform the act or ritual described in the blessing, it is considered improper for a case of innovation, which cannot be "commanded." However, many modern rabbis hold that we can take on a sense of commandedness for new blessings, and that the traditional language is necessary to create legitimized and effective liturgy. Moreover, many of those who oppose the use of *shem umalkhut* still believe that the proliferation of new writings is all to the good.

If individuals create rituals, prayers, or readings so novel or idiosyncratic that they are not appropriate for the wider community, they will simply not be adopted. For the moment, the danger is less that we will become irrelevant by addressing individual needs too minutely, than that we will become irrelevant by failing to address individual needs closely enough. When I lecture, I sometimes ask my audiences to name occasions which they would like (or would have liked) to mark somehow in a Jewish context. The following is a selection of such occasions:

- Embarking on or completing a creative project
- Becoming a grandparent
- Giving birth
- Nursing
- Weaning
- Forgiving yourself for a sin you have committed
- Celebrating a time of family closeness/reunion
- Miscarriage
- Menses (especially first period)
- Menopause
- First love
- First sexual experience
- First apartment
- Planning a wedding
- Publishing a book
- Deciding to leave (or stay with) a love partner
- Letting go of an adult child/children leaving the nest
- Recognizing yourself as the caretaker of elderly parents
- Coming out as a lesbian
- Deciding to conceive or adopt a child
- Deciding not to have (more) children
- Acknowledging that you or someone you love is terminally ill
- Finding out the biopsy is negative
- Mastectomy
- Other surgery
- Leaving a batterer
- Reconciling with a friend or relative
- Taking a new name
- Having an abortion
- Cooking a special family dish using your *bubbe's* (grandmother's) recipe
- Retiring
- Celebrating age with cron-ing rituals and *Sim'hot Hokhmah* (celebrations of elder-wisdom)
- Acknowledging the pain during times of transition or crisis
- Moving to a new home or apartment
- Making *aliyah* (immigrating to Israel)

- Entering a nursing home
- Recovering from addictions
- Healing from sexual abuse
- Celebrating key achievements in your work life
- Changing careers
- Discovering Jewish feminism

I hope that this list and this chapter encourage Jewish women and men to honor each moment of their lives, and to interpret both incremental changes and major transitions as part of Jewish living.

Our Silent Seasons

LEILA GAL BERNER

"The need for a feminist Judaism begins with hearing silence. It begins with noting the absence of women's history and experiences as shaping forces in the Jewish tradition."

—JUDITH PLASKOW, *STANDING AGAIN AT SINAI*

Twenty years ago, I supported a friend as she made the difficult decision to have an abortion. We found a kind, reputable physician and I accompanied her to his sterile office. I waited in the outer-room as the "procedure" was carried out. On the way home, we sat in silence. Then she thanked me for being there, and I went home.

It was not until about a decade later that my friend finally talked about her painful decision and the loneliness of her grieving. It all felt like a sad dream, she said, with no reality other than the scars (both physical and emotional) that she bore. It felt as if something was still unfinished from that time. Ten years after her abortion, my friend and I cried together, and I recited a *mi sheber-akh* (blessing recited on a person's behalf). We sang a song of healing, honoring her difficult choice. Finally, we marked this "silent season" in my friend's life. The power of this first experience with creating a ritual (however unconsciously conceived) has stayed with me since.

Fast forward a few years: I am attending a workshop on spiritual healing and a young Jewish woman speaks up:

I am a survivor. I have endured the terror of a man who sexually abused me and forced me to keep the filthy secret. I have endured the shame, the near-annihilation of my soul, the terror of being touched and the invasion of all my sacred spaces. Sometimes I feel as though I have gone through the Holocaust. And each year, on *Yom Hasht'ah* [Holocaust Memorial Day], when the six million of my people who died are remembered,

Rabbi Leila Gal Berner is a congregational rabbi, an historian of medieval Jewish history, a composer of Jewish music, a liturgist, and a teacher on Judaism and feminism.

The Fruits of Creation

LYNN GOTTLIEB

"I am come into my garden ahoti kallah (my sister, my bride). Sisters I am come into my garden, I have gathered myrrh, crushed and blended spices, eaten honeycomb with honey, and prepared sweet wine to drink. Eat at my table, beloved friends. Feast on the abundance of my table."

—AFTER SONG OF SONGS 5:1

This Fruits of Creation ceremony was created as a response to not giving birth which is sometimes, but not always, a choice. It is offered as a way for women to grieve the fact that they will not enjoy fruits of the womb. At the same time, it offers women the opportunity to celebrate the fruits of their creative labors. The name "Fruits of Creation" also alludes to the tale of Eve eating the fruit of knowledge and her sudden awareness of death and loss of innocence. In reframing the story of Eden as it has mostly been told, we allow ourselves to tell the story of women's experience of suffering and of the creative powers of transformation, which women discover and offer the world. Eve eats the fruit and gains knowledge. She uses her knowledge of life and death to acquire wisdom, to seek beauty, and to facilitate these pursuits for all her kin, just as contemporary women seek to lead conscious, authentic lives.

Now for the Rabbinic question: Why this ceremony? Women without children—married or unmarried—are especially in need of receiving communal acknowledgment, both of the sadness they may feel at being childless and of their own creativity and achievements.

Rabbi Lynn Gottlieb, spiritual leader of Congregation Nahalat Shalom in Albuquerque, New Mexico, was among the first women to serve as a rabbi.

FRUITS OF CREATION SEDER

(Ordered Readings and Meal)

An Order of the Ceremony in General Outline

Setting up the Space

We designate a place in our homes, out of doors, or in a synagogue or other public place for the ritual to happen. Using cloth, greenery, special ritual objects related to this event, candles, bread, wine or juice, and a washing bowl, we create a kind of altar which acts as a visual focus for prayer.

Gathering as a Community

People come together 15-30 minutes before the official beginning of the ceremony to help with final preparations and to make the transition from mundane to sacred time.

Beginning the Ceremony

The recommended timing of the ceremony is *Rosh Hodesh* (New Moon Festival), the beginning of a Hebrew month, which is designated as a women's holiday. We call ourselves to enter sacred time with a traditional or contemporary poem or prayer which speaks to the theme of the ceremony. This is followed by singing and playing music.

Lighting Candles

We consecrate time by kindling a flame in honor of *Rosh Hodesh*.

Performing the Ritual Act

We create a ceremony of song, story, prayers, dances, ritual washing, anointing, sacred vessels, or *mikveh* (ritual bath immersion) to honor the fruits of our creation.

Closing

We offer final prayers to bring the ceremony to a close.

Sharing Food

We say the blessings over the fruit of the vine and the bread and share informally till the evening's close.

Fruits of Creation Ceremony: "Deborah"'s Story Breathes Life into the Outline As she grew into womanhood Deborah always imagined she would be mother to many children. She used to dream of living on a farm surrounded by barn cats, milk cows, the smell of fresh hay, and at least six children. Over the years, this dream gave way to a feeling of desperation as marriage did not occur. Deborah became a therapist and eventually moved to the Southwest where she began a relationship which culminated in marriage six years later, at the age of forty-two. She also devoted much time to the pursuit of her pottery. Shortly after the marriage, Deborah was diagnosed with breast cancer, from which she has successfully recovered. However, she underwent menopause as a result of the treatment. After a period of depression around not being able to bear children, Deborah asked her *Rosh Hodesh* group to help her compose a Fruits of Creation ceremony. Her goal was to honor her body's courage and health and to turn her sights forward.

For the ceremony, Deborah set up an altar made up of three bowls which she crafted for the occasion. The first bowl was for ritual washing, the second for mourning her losses, and the third for honoring her life and creativity. We convened the ceremony with a selection from the Song of Songs and placed a special *tallit* (prayer shawl), used by our community on New Moon Festivals, over Deborah's shoulders to designate her an *eshet kallah* (literally, woman of *kallah*). The word *kallah* is usually translated as "bride," so that this phrase might be rendered "wife of the bride." However, the Hebrew root k.l.h. means fullness, wholeness, or completeness. Thus, in a feminist context, the term *eshet kallah* implies a woman's completeness within herself, rather than within marriage. I use the translation "Woman-in-Her-Fullness."

The ceremony took place outside, on the banks of the Rio Grande. As Deborah lit the candles and recited a blessing welcoming the new month, she offered a spontaneous prayer and gave thanks for the healing light of creation.

Then we went around the circle and spoke our Hebrew, Yiddish, or Ladino names and sang two Hebrew songs related to healing. Using the first bowl and a washing cup, Deborah ritually washed her hands and feet. She spoke of the waters of *Shekhinah* (close-dwelling Presence of God, associated with the feminine) healing and regenerating her soul.

The second bowl, the bowl of lamentations, was filled with sand from the banks of the river. First Deborah and then all of us performed a kind of *tashlikh* (casting out) of our losses. Modeling our ritual after the *tashlikh* ritual for the New Year, we took a handful of sand, named our losses and then threw the sand in the river. Then we spontaneously formulated a "litany of grief":

Shekhinah, She who dwells within all being: I mourn the loss of the child I never bore. I mourn the loss of the mothering I envisioned. I mourn the loss of my ability to bear children. I mourn the loss of....

We began wailing to a tune Deborah composed until our tears flowed, our hearts were opened, and our spirits felt a release from grief. We filled the (now empty) washing bowl with water and passed it around, washing each other's faces and giving each other a blessing. Then we recited a calmer, more peaceful listing.

Shekhinah, She who gives and takes away: I release the feelings of rage I have because I could not birth a child. I release my anger at my husband and forgive him for the times we struggled over our yearning for children. I release my feelings of inadequacy over not being physically able to conceive and forgive myself for difficult times. I release....

We made the transition to the last stage of the ritual by holding up the third bowl, which was quite large. Each of us had been asked to bring a token/gift which expressed some special quality we admired in Deborah. As we placed the gift in the bowl, each of us, in turn, named the quality that inspired her gift and related a small story which exemplified it. Thus, Deborah began another litany:

Shekhinah, She who eternally creates and renews: I celebrate my devotion to becoming a potter in the face of hardships. I celebrate my ability to grow an abundant garden. I celebrate my relationship with....I celebrate my gratitude for....I celebrate my courage to....

Then we danced in a circle to a *niggun* (wordless melody) until we were ready to bless the food. We concluded the ceremony with a blessing:

Shekhinah, we give thanks to you for the ever-present Mystery dwelling within all being, who gives and takes away, who eternally creates and renews life for the good.

Deborah brings her bowls to Fruits of Creation ceremonies, for other members of our community, and we continue to use them for healing, lamentation, and the offering of blessings.

Prayer for Those Having Difficulty Conceiving

NINA BETH CARDIN

"God heals the broken-hearted and binds up their wounds, counts the number of the stars and calls them all by name."

—PSALMS 147: 3-4

This prayer is phrased in the plural and written in the voice of a married couple. It is easily adaptable for an infertile person to say on her or his own.

On our bed at night, we sought the one our hearts ached for; we sought, but did not find, that one.
How lovely you would be, so we imagine, how lovely!
Every part of you would be fair; no blemish would mar your coming.

Rabbi Nina Beth Cardin is advisor to students in the Rabbinical School of The Jewish Theological Seminary and editor of *Sh'ma* magazine.

Who is the one that shines through like the dawn,
Beautiful as the moon,
radiant as the sun,
awesome as hosts draped in their colors?
Who is the one that our hearts wait for,
wait for, as the watchman for the morning light?

In You, God, our ancestors trusted,
In You they trusted, and You answered them.

We will trust in God, for God's goodness is never-ending;
God's mercy is without bounds.
We will trust in God, for God is our help and our shield.

May the God who made heaven and earth, hear our plea and
grant us a child.

—Based on verses from *Song of Songs* and *Psalms* 22

Prayer After a Miscarriage or Stillbirth

SANDY EISENBERG SASSO

"Seeing our days are determined, the number of our months are with You, You set limits that we cannot pass."

—AFTER JOB 14:5

God, we are weary and grieved. We were anticipating the birth of a child, but the promise of life was ended too soon. Our arms yearned to cradle new life, our mouths to sing soft lullabies. Our hearts ache from the emptiness and the silence. We are saddened and we are angry. We weep and we mourn. Weep with us, God, Creator of Life, for the life that could not be.

Source of healing, help us to find healing among those who care for us and those for whom we care. Shelter us under wings of love and help us to stand up again for life even as we mourn our loss.

Rabbi Sandy Eisenberg Sasso, parent, spiritual leader, storyteller, was the first woman to be ordained by the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College and is author of two books that help children and their parents encounter God, *God's Paintbrush* and *In God's Name* (Jewish Lights Publishing, 1992 & 1994).

A Grieving Ritual Following Miscarriage or Stillbirth

AMY EILBERG

"Like a father who says, 'My sons, my sons' or like a mother hen who cries for her brood, so God declares, 'Look away from Me, I will weep bitterly' (Isaiah 22:4)."

—TANJUMA DEBEI ELIYAHU, 154-155

This ritual is intended to take place in a rabbi's study or in the couple's home, in the presence of a small, trusted group. The couple is encouraged to sit on hard chairs, reflecting our traditional mourning customs and the hard place in which they find themselves.

Mourning the Loss

All present may chant:

בְּ-הַמְצַר קָרָאתִי יְהוָה, עֲנֵנִי בְּמִרְתָּב יְהוָה.

Min-hametzar karati yah, anani bamerhav yah.

Out of the depths I call to You, O God; you hear me fully when I call (after Psalm 118:5).

Rabbi or Lay Leader: We had hoped to gather soon with you, [parents' names], to celebrate the birth of a baby. Instead we are with you today to join in your sadness. There was in your womb, [mother's name], the stirring of life. This baby grew inside you, and so, too, in both of you grew dreams and hopes and longing, images of who this baby would be, and of your future with this

Rabbi Amy Eilberg, the first woman ordained by The Jewish Theological Seminary, currently serves as the director of Kol Haneshama, the Jewish Hospice Program of the Jewish Healing Center.

child. Now there is emptiness and pain as you acknowledge that this seed of life could not grow into a child.

"Out of the depths I call to You, O God; You hear me fully when I call. God is with me, I have no fear. I was hard pressed, about to fall; God came to my help. God, You are my strength and my courage. I will not die, but live, and yet tell of the deeds of God. I thank You for having heard me; O God, be my deliverance" (Selections from Psalm 118).

At this point the couple may share their own words about the meaning of this loss for them. When they have said whatever they wish to say, the rabbi or lay leader offers his/her hand to the couple, inviting them to stand and symbolically rise from the low hard place of mourning. At this time a loved one brings forward a baby's receiving blanket, or other piece of cloth associated with the couple's yearning to nurture a new life.

Rabbi or Lay Leader: Although this child left this world before he/she lived with us, he/she will always live on in our memory. We shall remember this child by the Hebrew name [insert name] *ben/bat* (son/daughter) [mother's name] *ve-* (and) [father's name].

When we lose someone close to us, something is torn inside. As Jews, we symbolize that experience by tearing a piece of cloth and wearing it over our heart, reflecting what is happening within. The being inside you never grew into life outside the womb. You did not know this baby, except as a stirring, a dream, an invisible presence (for a stillbirth: an all-too-brief presence) in your lives and your hearts. Still, part of you is torn inside, as you acknowledge the end of this potential life that could not be. To reflect the pain you feel on this day, we tear this baby blanket, reciting the time-honored words:

יְהוָה נִתְּנוּ, וַיִּקְחוּ, יְהוָה יִסְמְכֵנוּ.

Adonai natan, va'adonai lakah, yelti shem adonai mevoorakh.

God gives, God takes away. Blessed be the name of God (Job 1:21).

The rabbi or lay leader and those assembled may chant here:

אֶשָׂא עֵינַי אֶל הַהָרִים, מֵאֵן זְבוֹא עֲזְרִי. עֲזְרִי מֵעַם יי, עֲשֵׂה שְׂמִיךְ.
אֲדַרְךָ.

Essa einai el heharim me'ayin yavo ezri. Ezri me'im adonai oseh shamayim va'aretz.

I lift my eyes to the mountains; where is the source of my help? My help comes from *Adonai*, Creator of heaven and earth (Psalms 121:1-2).

Choosing Life Again

Rabbi or Lay Leader: To sanctify this moment of transition to the next phase of your lives, we invite you to take part in the life of our people by choosing the *mitzvah* of *tzedakah* (sacred practice of charity), even in this time of pain.

The couple may explain their choice of a gift. (Appropriate charities might include a local Jewish Family Service, expressing the couple's devotion to family, or a tree planted in Israel.)

All respond:

וּבְחַרְתָּ בְּחַיִּים.

Uvacharta bahayim.

May you continue to choose life (Deuteronomy 30:19).

Communal Support and Blessings

Rabbi or Lay Leader: At this time I ask all of you except the parents, to form two lines. [Insert parents' names] will walk between the lines, as is customary for Jews at a time of bereavement. Feel free to offer words of condolence as they pass between you. (*When the couple has passed through:*) Together, we offer ancient words of comfort to our friends in their sadness.

All say to the parents: "Hamakom yenaḥem etkhem, May God grant you comfort."

Rabbi or Lay Leader: May God who blessed our ancestors, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, and Leah, grant to this family *refu'at hanefesh urefu'at haguf*, a full healing of body and spirit, abundant blessing from loved ones, and an awareness of God's presence with them in their pain. As for the baby that was not to be, shelter this spirit, O God, in the shadow of Your wings, for You, God of parents, God of children, God of us all, guard and shelter us. You are a gracious and loving God. Guard our coming and our going, grant us life and peace, now and always, for You are the Source of life and peace. May we as a holy community support and love our friends in times of pain as well as times of joy. And as we have wept together, so may we soon gather to rejoice. Amen.⁶

All present may conclude by singing Oseh Shalom or another appropriate hymn.

universe, and part of what God is all about. Even within darkness and evil, deepest despair and most painful decision making, there is God.

The blessing is designed to be sung in addition to, or in place of, the traditional *Birkat Hagomel* (prayer of thanksgiving for coming through danger in safety), which is recited after a life-threatening experience (including childbirth), serious illness, imprisonment, or dangerous journey. The Talmud instructs us to give thanks for our survival so that we may understand that God is the Source of life and safety (BT *Berakhot* 54b). Deciding to terminate a pregnancy and undergoing the abortion procedure are "perils" worthy of the recitation of *Birkat Hagomel*.

I have woven several Jewish images into the Hebrew and English words of this blessing:

- a reference to God as *ein haḥayyim* (Source of life);
- a reference to the *Yotzer* blessing which follows the *Barekhu* prayer and speaks about God's creation of light and dark. The end of the prayer as found in our liturgy ("[God] creates all things") is a modified form of Isaiah 45:7, where the text actually reads *uvoreh ra* ("[God] creates evil");
- a reference to Psalms 23:4 ("Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for You are with me");
- a reference to the *Modeh Ani* prayer, based on BT *Berakhot* 60b, recited upon awakening ("I thank You, living and eternal God, for returning my soul to me in compassion").

HEALING FROM ABORTION

Order of the Ritual

Opening

The ritual begins with one woman inviting all to take a few deep breaths. She then begins a *niggun* (wordless melody). Participants stand in a circle.

Creating Supportive Space

The "focus" woman, for whom the ritual is being conducted, steps into the center of the circle, with one or two women near her to hold her hand and comfort her, and says:

Hinneni—Here I stand alone, as before, when I made my decision about childbearing in the uniqueness of my personal choice.

All other participants approach and tighten the circle around the "focus" woman to support her. Women say together:

You are not alone now. In aloneness you made your choice, and in community you will be sustained.

Affirming One's Choices

One woman says: It is the blessing and the curse of being human that we have the capacity to make choices. Sometimes the choices can make our lives rich and beautiful. Sometimes the choices are filled with pain, or it feels as though we have no choice at all. Nothing can make the ending of a pregnancy easy. We affirm you in your painful and difficult choice.*

Women say together: Blessed are you, Creator of the Universe, who sustains us in times of decision. You have made it possible for us to consider with wisdom our lives and the lives of our loved ones, and you have granted us courage and intelligence to make choices about childbearing.

As you have been with us in times of past decisions, so may you be with us today as we affirm the difficult decisions _____ [and her family] has [have] made.¹⁰

"Focus" woman says:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר נָתַן לְשִׁבְי בִּנְיָה לְהַבְחִין
בֵּין יוֹם וּבֵין לַיְלָה.

*Barukh attah adonai eloheinu melekh ha'olam, asher natan lasekhivi
vina lebachin bein yom uvein lailah.*

I bless you, Holy One, Sovereign Spirit of the Universe, who has enabled me to distinguish between night and day, who has given me the ability to make wise choices (BT *Berakhot* 60b and traditional morning liturgy).¹¹

Women respond: Amen.

Sharing the Pain

One woman says: We know that there is deep sadness within you. We know that you feel loss and sorrow and regret. We mourn with you.

"Focus" woman is invited to share her own words about her grief. She may also wish to express any regret, guilt, doubt, uncertainty, or resentment that arose while making the decision to terminate the pregnancy. The intention here is for the focus woman to be heard and to "let go."

Option A: In the event of a medically-recommended abortion, one woman says: We know the Torah teaching: When we must choose between a being not yet born and the life of a mother, the choice is very clear. The being you were carrying could not be. No human hand caused this to happen; no human act could have allowed this being to emerge in health and wholeness. Still, in the shadow of such a choice, we feel small and limited and out of control (adapted).*

Women say together: We who stand with you today are witness to the terrible choice that was no choice at all. We affirm you in choosing life. You made a choice,

choosing life for you. We grieve with you over the loss of this seed of life, and we affirm your essence, as a person gifted with the ability to nurture other life—within yourself, in your love for others, and in your connections to family, friends, and community (adapted).*

One woman chants an adapted El Maleh Rahamim:

אֵל מֵלֵא רַחֲמִים, שׁוֹכֵן בְּמִרוּמִים, הַמָּצֵא מְנוּחָה נְכוֹנָה תַּחַת
כַּנְפֵי הַשְּׂכִינָה, אֶת נְשִׁמַת הַתִּינּוֹק/הַתִּינּוֹק שְׁלֵא נוֹלְדָה/נוֹלְדָה
לְעוֹלָמֵנוּ. אָנָּה, בְּעַל הַרְחָמִים, הַסּוֹתֵר/הַסּוֹתֵר יָדָיו בְּסִתְרֵי כַּנְפֵי
לְעוֹלָמֵם, וְצָרוֹר צָרוֹר הַחַיִּים אֶת נְשִׁמָּתָה/נְשִׁמָּתוֹ, יי הוּא
נִחְלָתָה/נִחְלָתוֹ, וְיִבְיֵאֵהוּ/יִבְיֵאֵהוּ לְשָׁלוֹם. וְנֹאמַר אָנָּה.

*El maleh rahamim, shokhen bameromim, hantzeh menuhah
nekhonah taht kanfei hashekhinah, et nishmat hatinoket/hatinok
shelo noldah/nolad le'olameinu. Anna, ba'al harahamim, hastirchah/
hastirehu beseter kenafekha le'olamim, utzeror bitzror
hahayyim et nishmatah/nislimato, adonai hu nahalatah/nahalato,
veyyavi'eha/ veyyavi'ehu leshalom. Venomar amen.*

O God filled with womb-like compassion, who resides in the high places, grant perfect peace in Your sheltering Presence, to the soul of this being who was not born into our world. Please, compassionate Mother-God, shelter her/him beneath Your protective wings for all eternity and bind her/his soul to the Bond of Life. The Holy One is now her/his home and will bring her/him eternal peace. And let us say: Amen.

Option B: In the event of a decision to terminate the pregnancy for reasons other than medical, women say together: May You who share sorrow with Your creation be with

_____ now as she experiences the loss of potential life. We are sad as we think of her painful decision, and support her as she and we imagine what might have been.

Life is a fabric of different emotions and experiences.

Now, O God, while _____ experiences life's bitterness and pain, be with her and with us, and sustain us. Help us to gather strength from within ourselves, from each other, and from our wider community. Blessed are You, Divine Presence, who shares sorrow with Your creation.¹²

Affirming One's Self

(After option A or B continue here.) "Focus" woman says:

אלהי, נשמה שנתת בי טוהרה היא. אתה בראתה, אתה
יצרתה, אתה נפחתה בי (אתה משמרה בקרב...)

Elohai, neshamah shenatatta bi tehorah hi. Attah veratah, attah yetzartah, attah nefachtah bi, ve'attah meshammerah bekirbi....

My God, the soul You have given me is pure. You created it, You formed it, You breathed it into me (BT *Berakhot* 60b and traditional morning liturgy).

I know that I am created *betzelem elohim*, that a divine spark resides within me. I know that I am free to make choices—about my body and my future. I have made my choices, painful as they may be, in harmony with the divinity that dwells within me. I affirm my freedom, I affirm my self, and I honor my choices in the face of enormous complexity and still-lingering questions.

ברוך אתה יי, שעשני אשה. ברוך אתה יי, שעשני בת-חורין.

Barukh attah adonai, she'asani ishah. Barukh attah adonai, she'asani bat-horin.

I bless You, Holy One, who has made me a woman. I bless You, Holy One, who has made me free (adapted from BT *Menahot* 43b and traditional morning liturgy).

Surviving and Being Thankful

"Focus" woman says: The Holy One "heals the broken in heart and binds their wounds..." (Psalms 147:3). I have survived a sad journey—with peril to both body and soul. I thank You for sustaining me and bringing me through the peril in wholeness.

"Focus" woman reads or sings (*Hebrew or English, as is comfortable for her*): *Birkat Hagomel* (*dedicated to Ira Silverman, of blessed memory*) (*Hebrew and English are both to be sung to the melody of the traditional American folk song, "The Creole Girl"*)

אברך את עין החיים יוצרת טוב ורע. יאדוּש את חי העולם
יוצר אפלה ואורה. עברתי בגיא צלמות (אתה עמודי
מודה אני לך. שהחזרתני בשלום.

Avarekh et ein hahayyim yotzeret tov vara. Akaddesh et hei ha'olam yotzer afelah ve'orah. Avarti begai tzalmavet ve'attah immadi. Modah ani lakh shehehazartini beshalom.

I shall bless the Source of Life who fashions good and evil. I shall bless the Holy One who brings dark and light to all people. For I have walked in the valley of the shadow of death. And You, and You were with me then, with every painful breath.

Seeking Healing

"Focus" woman moves from her place in center of circle. All women greet and embrace her. They respond to her *Birkat Hagomel* by repeatedly chanting in Hebrew Moses' prayer for Miriam's healing, as long as the power of the chant moves them:

אל נא רפא נא לה... אל נא רפא נא לה...

El na refa na lah...El na refa na lah...

Please God, heal her please...Please God, heal her please... (Numbers 12:13).

Chanting subsides and women flow right into singing Debbie Friedman's adaptation of a traditional prayer for healing.¹³

Mi-she-beirach

Mi-she-beirach i-mo-tei-nu

M'kor ha-bra-cha l'a-vo-tei-nu

May the source of strength

Who blessed the ones before us,

Help us find the courage

To make our lives a blessing,

And let us say, Amen.

Mi-she-bei-rach i-motei-nu

M'kor ha-bra-cha l'a-vo-tei-nu,

Bless those in need of healing
 With *r'fu-a sh 'lei-ma*
 The renewal of body,
 The renewal of spirit,
 And let us say, Amen.

After a moment of silence, one woman says: "Thank you all for sharing your love and support with _____ at this difficult time."

HEALING FROM SEXUAL ABUSE

Order of the Ritual

Opening

The ritual begins with one woman inviting all to take a few deep breaths. She then begins a *niggun* (wordless melody). Participants stand in a circle.

Creating Supportive Space

The "focus" woman, for whom the ritual is being conducted, steps into the center of the circle, with one or two women near her to hold her hand and comfort her, and says:

Hinzeni—Here I stand, alone in the depth of my pain, in the uniqueness of my anger. Then there were no limits, no boundaries, no safety. Then there was no one to whom I could turn. Then as I stood powerless against the abuse and violation, I felt terror gnawing at the depths of my soul. I was so afraid.

All other participants approach and tighten the circle around the "focus" woman to support her. Women say together:

You are not alone now. We are here, encircling you with gentleness and support. This is a circle of unending love, a safe space for you. Now you set the limits and the boundaries. You can turn to us. Now you have power. Once you were so afraid. Now you have nothing to fear.

All sing: *Kol Ha'olam Kullo* (words attributed to Reb Nahman of Bratzlav)

כל-העולם כולו גָּטָר צַר מְאֹד, וְהַעֲקָר לֹא לִפְנֵיךְ כִּלְלִי.

Kol ha'olam kullo geshet tzar me'od, v'ha'ikkar lo lefahed kelal.

All this world is a very narrow bridge, and the essential point is not to fear at all.¹⁴

Acknowledging the Anger

One woman says: After the pain and terror, after the complete violation you have endured, you must feel deep anger. We invite you to speak of your anger.

"Focus" woman reads:

You mean to tell me
 that i,
 powerless little
 i
 can have
 big, scary
 anger?
 You just told me
 that i
 am allowed to be mad.
 i can complain
 i can write
 and not feel guilty.
 i don't have to make excuses
 for those who hurt me?
 i
 can express my anger,
 i
 can tell people
 about my experiences
 and expect to be listened to?
 Lowly little
 me

can have anger.

Oh.

i'm angry.

—Marta Metz¹⁵

"Focus" woman speaks about her anger, if she wishes.

Women say together:

You have been hurt, attacked, violated. But we are here to tell you that you are loved with an unending love.

You are embraced by arms that find you even when you are hidden from yourself.

You are touched by fingers that soothe you safely even when you are too proud for soothing.

You are counseled by voices that guide you even when you are too embittered to hear.

You are loved with an unending love.

You are supported by hands that uplift you even in the midst of a fall.

You are urged on by eyes that meet you when you are too weak for meeting.

You are loved with an unending love.

Embraced, touched, soothed, and counseled...

ours are the arms, the fingers, the voices;

ours are the hands, the eyes, the smiles.

And we are all loved with an unending love.¹⁶

Blessed is the Holy One, Source of Love, who loves each of us in our uniqueness.

Surviving and Being Thankful

(See page 130)

Seeking Healing

(See page 131)

Affirming One's Self

"Focus" woman says:

אלהי נשמה נשמת בי טוהרה היא. אתה בראתה, אתה
יצרתה, אתה נפתה בי ואתה קשמה בקרבי....

Elohai, neshamah shenatatta bi tehorah hi. Attah veratah, attah yetzartah, attah nefatata bi, ve'attah meshammerah bekrabi....

My God, the soul You have given me is pure. You created it, You formed it, You breathed it into me (BT *Berakhot* 60b and traditional morning liturgy).

I know that I am created *betzelem elohim*, that a divine spark resides within me. *Himmi*: Here I stand, no longer alone, on my way to becoming fully unafraid, knowing that I can create safe space for myself, knowing that I have a circle of loved and loving ones who will support and protect me, knowing that I am sheltered beneath the wings of *Shekhinah* (close-dwelling presence of God, associated with the feminine), knowing my own power.

ברוך אתה יי שפעני אשה. ברוך אתה יי שפעני בת-חורין.

Barukh attah adonai, she'asani israh. Barukh attah adonai, she'asani bat-horin.

I bless You, Holy One, who has made me a woman. I bless You, Holy One, who has made me free (adapted from BT *Menahot* 43b and traditional morning liturgy).

After a moment of silence, one woman says: Thank you all for sharing your love and support with _____ at this difficult time.

prejudice hurts us and we will strengthen each other as we endeavor to live as openly as possible in a sometimes inhospitable society. The world is still an imperfect place, in need of mending. We affirm our commitment to the ongoing task of *tikkun olam* (repairing the world).

13. "If you will it, it is no dream" (Theodore Herzl, *Altneuland*).

We understand that we cannot anticipate all the changes that life will bring us. We each intend to fulfill these commitments with honesty, integrity, and trust. The length of our partnership will be for the time that we share this common vision. We hope it will last a lifetime.

And all is valid and binding (from the traditional *ketubbah*).

Yihud and the Holiness of Matrimony

DEBRA ORENSTEIN

"Therefore a man leaves his father and mother and cleaves to his wife, and they become one flesh."

—GENESIS 2:24

Yihud is the technical requirement that bride and groom spend several minutes alone immediately following the wedding ceremony in a room whose privacy is formally guarded. The couple's seclusion has been understood as a symbolic consummation of the marriage, as well as an occasion, in cases of arranged marriages or chaperoned courtships, for the bride and groom to meet privately for the first time. The privacy of a guarded *Yihud* room counterbalances the public nature of the day and the open-sided *huppah* (wedding canopy). It implicitly asserts that one feature of marital status is being separated from others—from one's family of origin, from other potential partners—and joined, first and foremost, with

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one's spouse. So important is the required seclusion under Jewish law, that Maimonides ruled it is *Yihud* which seals and validates the marriage ceremony (*Mishneh Torah Hilkhhot Ishut* 10:1).

On a practical level, *Yihud* also provides the couple an opportunity to eat, since it is traditional for bride and groom to fast on their wedding day, and since there will be little time to sit, eat, or relax later, during the reception. It is customary for Ashkenazim to serve chicken soup, a food that builds strength and health and, by its golden color, augurs a prosperous marriage. Some Sephardim serve doves or foods molded in the shape of doves, to symbolize marital peace.²¹ Just as the first act under the *huppah* is an act of sharing (in which groom and bride drink from a single cup of wine), so, too, the first act as a married couple is one of sharing; this time the partners share a private meal.

In some communities, *Yihud* has been replaced by the receiving line: A sad turn of events. The communal aspects of weddings are pressing and important, but it is wonderful, I think, to pre-serve a moment of privacy in the midst of a day devoted to being "on display."²²

The following is a ritual intended to revitalize the practice of *Yihud* and to help couples mark the sanctity of the moment. It was written with heterosexual couples in mind but can easily be adapted for same-sex couples.

HOLINESS AND MATRIMONY

Order of the Ritual

Celebrating the Moment and Putting Each Other First

Once in seclusion, the couple reads: Now, with friends and family outside celebrating, we take our private time: Time to drink each other in, to be alone together, to acknowledge that we are married! Yihud comes from a root that means both aloneness and togetherness. No matter how much we are partners in this new marriage, we will always be our individual selves. No matter how alone each of us may feel, we will always have each other.

These first few minutes of our marriage, we take for us—for *our* joy, *our* privacy, *our* chance to laugh or cry. There are many times and occasions when we serve the community, but sometimes, we as a couple come first. Sometimes, we close the door and say, "They will wait. I need you." Going to that place of love and need, we do not cheat or scorn the wider world. We strike a balance with it. We make ourselves ready for it. We learn to face and serve it together. We feed ourselves and each other, so that we may, in turn, as a family, nourish the world.

Eating, Drinking, and Nurturing

The newly-weds recite appropriate blessings over the food, and then alternately feed each other mouthfuls (three times). With each "feeding," one of the following lines is recited:

I will feed you forever.
I will feed you with righteousness.
I will feed you with justice.
I will feed you with love.
I will feed you with compassion.
I will feed you with faithfulness.

(AFTER HOSEA 2:21-22)

Before drinking a beverage, each partner says: "Many waters cannot quench love and no flood can sweep it away" (Song of Songs 8:7).

Declaring Love and Gratitude

Groom: And Isaac took Rebecca and made her his wife. And he loved her and found comfort²³ (after Genesis 24:67).

Bride: And Rebecca lifted her eyes and beheld Isaac and was jolted with the surprise of love. And she said, "That is my husband" (after Genesis 24:64-65).

The couple continues eating, drinking, and celebrating spontaneously together. Their final act in the Yihud room is to

recite the Sheheḥeyanu (blessing for reaching a new or momentous occasion):

Blessed are You, *Adonai*, Our God, Ruler of the universe, who has kept us in life and sustained us and enabled us to reach this time.

On Being Married

DEBRA CANTOR

"God creates new worlds constantly. In what way? By causing marriages to take place."

—ZOHAR 1:89A.

Hanging on the wall above our bed are two framed documents. The first, hand-calligraphed and elaborately illuminated, is our *ketubah*, the formal marriage contract which my husband, Jim, and I, along with two witnesses, signed on our wedding day. The other document, typed on a thin sheet of onionskin and stuck in a dime-store plastic frame, also relates to our marriage. It is a poem which Jim gave me on our fifth wedding anniversary. It is entitled "*Torat Ahavah*" ("Torah / Teaching of Love"):

- (I) The first is longest:
Beginnings are the hardest and least predictable.
We made a kind of covenant,
Found a place and ways to live our love.
- (II) Wherever we were, we were together.
Love had found place and person for direction.
Now you, then I, searched for the right work.

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A Ritual Acknowledging Separation

NINA BETH CARDIN

"Let there be no quarrel between us, for we were once family."

—GENESIS 13:8

The following ritual was designed to be performed by a woman surrounded and supported by her friends and family. The setting should be familiar, comfortable, and comforting. It should be performed as soon as possible after the parting. Particularly appropriate would be the Saturday night after the actual separation, following *Havdalah* (distinction-making ritual that separates Sabbath or holiday from weekday). Both marital separation and *Havdalah* mark the crossing of a threshold from one state and time into another.

Through the use of a cloth—specifically a portion of a pillowcase or sheet—and its act of tearing, this separation ceremony is meant to evoke images of marriage and divorce. In addition to the image of sexual intimacy, the cloth and its tearing also allude to the cloth of the *huppah* (wedding canopy) and the cutting of the *get* (bill of divorce) when divorce is final. The act of tearing may also summon associations with *keri'ah* (rending a garment in mourning). Indeed, the act of separation does signify the death of a couple, a family, and some of their feelings, particularly intimacy, love, and security.

Following the traditional rituals of loss and mourning in Judaism, this one uses symbols and acts to express our most profound pain. At the same time, it offers images and sentiments that, if received and believed, can lift us out of despair and past hurt, anger, and loss. Contemporary ritual and prayer should not limit themselves to the role of ratifying and affirming what we feel and believe right now; like the most powerful traditional liturgies, they should also provide the comfort, the vision, and the belief that the best can yet come to be.

There is no specific mention of children in this ritual, and no recommendation is made one way or another about their partici-

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pation. While the family is also rent, separation essentially occurs between wife and husband. The recitation from Genesis includes words like "family" and "house" to allow the images of family with children to be introduced. Participants are encouraged to determine the extent to which they wish to involve and reference children in the ritual beyond the modest inclusion already offered. The cloth should have a slight cut mid-point along the upper edge, to facilitate tearing.

The ritual, designed to be simple and short, begins with lighting a candle and should be concluded with a meal of comfort. As at a mourner's home, such a repast can be composed of round foods (such as bagels, lentils, cheeses, etc.) to represent the continuity of life's cycle, despite the breach of sorrow.

A TIME TO CUT AND A TIME TO HEAL

Order of the Ritual

Welcoming and Setting the Tone

Gathered among family and friends, the woman lights a candle and says:

» אורי ושעתי, ממני אירא.
» מעוזי חיי, ממני אפחד.
אל-תשעני ואל-תעזבני אלהי ישעני.
אמת שאלתי מאת » אותה אבקש.
עבתי בְּבֵית-י' כָּל-יְמֵי חַיִּי.

Adonai ori veyishi mimmi ira. Adonai ma'oz-hayyai mimmi esthad. Al-tittsheni ve'al-t'azveni elohai yishi. Ahat sha'alti me'et adonai otah avakkesh, shivti beveit-adonai kol-yemei hayyai.

God is my light and my help; whom shall I fear? God is the stronghold of my life; whom shall I dread? God will not forsake me, the Merciful One will not abandon me, God, my Deliverer. One thing I ask You God, only that do I seek; to live in the house of my God forever (after selections from Psalms 27:1,9,4).

Tearing and Building

A friend or family member gives the woman the cloth or sheet which has been prepared for the ceremony. The woman takes the cloth, holds it at mid-point along the upper edge and recites:

אל-נָה תְהִי מִרְיָהּ בֵּינִי וּבֵינֶךָ . . . כִּי-אֶנְשִׂים אֲחִים אָנֹכִי וְאִשָּׁה הָיִינוּ . . . הַפָּרֶד נָה מֵעַלִי אֶם-הַשְּׂמָאל וְאִמְנָה וְאִם הַיָּמִין וְאֶשְׁמְאֵלָהּ.

Al-na tehi merivah beini uveinekha...ki-anashim ahim anahnu [fish ve'isha haytinu]....Hippared ua me'alai, im-hasemol ve'etimnah ve'im hayamin ve'asme'ilah.

Let there be no quarrel between us, for we were once family; let us separate gently; if one goes north, may the other go south; if one goes east, may the other go west. May your house be your house and my house be my house, and may strife and contentions not rule our hearts (interpretive translation of Genesis 13:8-9).

The woman recites the following verse and then tears the garment:

קָרָעוּ בְגָדֵיכֶם וְאַל לְבַבְכֶם . . . כִּי יִי חֲמוֹן וְרוּחִם, אֲרָךְ אַפְּיִם וְרַב-חֶסֶד.

Kiru igdeikhem ve'al levavkhem . . . ki adonai hannun verahum erekhi appayim verav-hesed.

Rend your garments and not your heart..., for God offers compassion and comfort (after Joel 2:13).

She tears the cloth and continues:

הַכְנִיסִינִי תַחַת כְּנָפֶיךָ
וְהָיִי לִי אִם נְאֻחֹת.
יְהִי חֵיקֶךָ מִקְלַט רֹאשִׁי
כֹּחַ תְּפִלּוֹתַי הַנְדֻחֹת.

Hakhmisini tahat kenafekh/eahayi li em ve'ahot/yehi heikekhi miklat roshi/kan tefilotai hanidulhot.

O God, gather me gently under Your wing, / Be my mother, my sister. / Let my head find shelter in Your embrace / the nesting place for my homeless prayers (translation of "Hakhmisini Tahat Kenafekhi" by Chaim Nahman Bialik).

Communal Support and Blessing

Family members and friends form a circle with the separated woman and say:

Wherever you go, we are there with you. Whatever your need, we are beside you.

The participants step forward each in turn speaking the name of the woman for whom they have gathered, declaring their presence and support, as follows:

הֲנִי _____ בֵּית _____ הַיְיָ, כִּי קָרָאת לִי, וְהִקְהֵה עִמָּךְ עוֹד.

Hineni _____ bat _____ ve _____, ki karat li, ve'ehyeh immikh od.

I am here, _____ daughter of _____ and _____, for you called me, and I will be with you throughout your journey.

Then all the participants bless the woman: May your way be illumined by the face of God, as it is said:

בְּאוֹר-פְּנֵי-מֶלֶךְ חַיִּים.

Be'or-penei-melekh hayyim.

For the radiance of God's face grants life (Proverbs 16:15).

And may you dwell in the house of God forever (after Psalms 27:4).

Other spontaneous blessings may be offered. A friend takes the cloth to be discarded or saved as a memento of this time.

Closing

The woman says: May the setting aside of this cloth help me to set aside a completed portion of my life, and to weave new and beautiful times and garments.

The group may recite a traditional Sheheheyanu (blessing for reaching a new or momentous occasion) in closing:

ברוך אתה יי אלהינו מלך העולם, שהחנינו וקיימנו והגיענו לזמן
הזה.

Barukh attah adonai elohainu melek ha'olam, sheheheyanu vekiyyemanu vehigg'anu lazeman hazzeh.

Blessed are You, God, Ruler of the Universe, who has given us life and sustained us and enabled us to reach this time.



10

Intermarriage



“Continuity” has been the Jewish buzzword of the 90s. ~~Communal concern with Jewish survival, dismissed by many just a decade ago as hyperbolic or manipulative, is now recognized as a function of plain realism.~~ Intermarriage is the subject of countless communal deliberations, as well as increasing numbers of private—and painful—family discussions. I still rebel against the “Jewish numbers game,” ~~preferring to focus on the quality of Jewish programs, prayer services, and schools (over which, as a rabbi, I presumably have some control), rather than the quantity of Jews who attend them.~~ However, the rising rates of Jewish assimilation and intermarriage, documented by the *Council of Jewish Federations 1990 National Jewish Population Survey* demand serious and focused attention.

Not so long ago, ~~even non-Orthodox Jewish families mourned children or siblings who intermarried as if they were dead.~~ Setting

improvement, over "convert." It implies a positive assertion of identity on the part of the new Jew, whereas "convert" implies passivity. Most converts/Jews by choice feel that those labels are transitional in any case. Once the transitional period is over, we generally identify ourselves and prefer to be identified simply as "Jews." The Jewish community has an important role to play in helping us make this transition. By welcoming us, seeing us as full and "normal" Jews, helping us to fill in any educational or experiential gaps, and being sensitive to the newness, and sometimes rawness, of our status, each individual Jew and the community as a whole can fulfill the commandment of loving the *ger* (stranger or convert). And you shall love the *ger*, "And you shall know the soul of the *ger*" (Exodus 23:9).

Meditation for the Mikveh

JANE LITMAN

"It is a fountain in the gardens, a well of living waters."

—SONG OF SONGS 4:15

Each of the following meditations can be recited, in turn, before the traditional three immersions in the ritual bath.

Letting Go of the Past (Gently)

Take a breath. Feel the water around you. Let it wash and cleanse every part of you. Think of things in your past that you need to let go. Let the water gently wash them away. Let the tender waves of the *mikveh* (ritual bath) carry off your hurts, let it cleanse your sore spots. Think of things in the past—finished relationships, negative behaviors, violations, and losses. Let this womb hold you. Feel its strength and purity. Let it wash away the pain and sadness. Think of things which will not be part of your life as a Jew. Allow yourself a moment of parting from these things. It is time to say goodbye to these pieces of your past. Watch them float away. Feel the warm water surround you, comfort you, bathe you. This is the womb of the Jewish people. Let it rebirth you as a Jew.

ברוך אתה יי אלהינו מלך העולם, אשר קדשנו במצותיו וצונו על הטבילה.

Barukh attah adonai eloheinu melekh ha'olam, asher kiddeshanu bemitzvotav vtzivanu al hatevilah.

Blessed are You *Adonai* Ruler of the Universe, who has sanctified us with the *mitzvot* (commandments) and commanded us concerning immersion.

Immerse.

Rabbi Jane Litman is on the faculty of California State University at Northridge and is the rabbi of Congregation Kol Simcha of Orange County.

Welcoming the Future (Slowly, Slowly)

Stretch your body. Breathe. Think of your future. Let the water's spiritual tide bring your desire. What do you want as a Jewish person? Feel the water wash you with love, with contentment, with the joy of life, with the presence of God. Imagine all the possibilities which await you. Envision your Jewish self celebrating your new identity. Bathe yourself in the promise of fulfillment which your choices will bring.

ברוך אתה יי אלקינו מלך העולם, שהתחננו וקיימנו והגיענו לאימה.
היה.

Barukh attah adonai elohainu melekh ha'olam, sheheteyanu vekiyyemanu vehiggi'anu lazeman hazeh.

Blessed are You Adonai Ruler of the Universe, who has kept us alive and sustained us and enabled us to reach this time.
Immerse.

Feeling the Present (Keep It Slow)

Breathe. Feel the sense of your own well-being. Where are you this moment? Feel your body...your toes, your legs, your buttocks, your genitals, your belly. Feel the water soothe your back; feel the wetness on your shoulders, your neck, your face, in your hair. Feel this moment. Feel the life force in your body. Float in the warm liquid, in the sacredness of this event. Feel the *mayim hayyim* (living waters) merge with you. Feel your connection to this place, to this moment, to the Jewish people, the universe, and eternity.

שמע ישראל יי אלהינו יי אחד.

Shema yisra'el adonai elohainu adonai ehad.

Hear O Israel, Adonai Our God, Adonai is one.

Immerse.



12

Parenting



Parenting has certain unique features as a life passage. Having been married, one can be divorced; having taken part in a superficial Bat Mitzvah (coming of age ceremony for girls) as a twelve year old, one can decide to renew one's commitment as an Adult Bat Mitzvah. But parenting can be ~~neither undone nor done over~~. My mother is fond of saying that there are only three irrevocable decisions: Parenthood, murder, and suicide. Everything else—joyful or tragic—is negotiable.

Not only does becoming a parent change forever and profoundly the course of one's life, it affects parents' perceptions of most other life passages. Various events and passages are filtered through the question: "What will this mean for the children?" In addition, children's passages reflect back on and can addend the meaning of a parent's own childhood experiences. It is common for parents to re-live and re-examine childhood issues through

A Ceremony of Passage on My Sixty-Fifth Birthday

BARBARA D. HOLENDER

"...A time to plant and a time to uproot that
which has been planted."

—ECCLESIASTES 3:2

The following is adapted from a ceremony of Simhat Hakhmah (celebration of elder wisdom) written for and shared with my Bible study group, a minyan (quorum) of women friends who have studied together for over thirty years. Only the ten of us were present on March 15, 1992, my sixty-fifth birthday. After the ceremony, each of my friends shared her perceptions of me—a surprising conclusion, this bonding of women in one of our rare celebratory rites of passage.

Although it can be said that life begins anew at seventy (Psalms 90:10), my rite of passage coincides with my sixty-fifth year, because it is the end of a ten-year period of change and growth. I want to celebrate with my *minyan* of scholars because you have kept me alive and warm at a time when I needed you, and I love you for that.

In these ten years, I have lost my husband, my father, my mother—my most intimate connections. I have lived through fear, loneliness, pain, and the most fundamental upheaval, and gained confidence, independence, a whole exciting new life.

These past few months I have sensed a sea-change, something new developing that I could not identify, but I acted on it by finishing and sending off my collected poems because I do not write the same way any more. Words kept recurring in my mind: Divest, accept, cleanse, plant. A ceremonial mood took hold, and I decided to see where it would take me, to define the implications of those words.

Divest Divest of old guilts, false obligations, ills and evils long since lived through and resolved. Of petty distractions and unwelcome intrusions. Travel light, because I feel mortality breathing down my neck.

Accept Accept time, its ravages, brevity, unpredictability.

Accept my body, its aging, its demands, the awkward and ludicrous. Accept the possibility that my loved ones, spirit, mind, comfort, and health could be swept away in a breath. Relish what I have. But *never* allow myself to accept my limitations, nor even to ask what they are.

Cleanse Water is important in my life. I go to the ocean for comfort and healing. The *mikveh* (ritual bath) seemed the right place—to enter naked, to say the *berakhot* (blessings), to immerse and emerge purified in an ancient ritual, a link with Eden, according to Aryeh Kaplan.³⁴ It was my first time.

Plant I wanted to plant seeds, real, living seeds, not the seeds of poems and ideas I deal with all the time. I chose sage, which represents longevity, wisdom, and sagacity.

Although I am a very celebratory person, I am not usually ceremonial. But I felt the need to mark this transition. I modeled my ceremony on the archetypal Jewish rite of passage: That of Abraham. It consists of a naming and a covenant.

A CEREMONY OF PASSAGE ON MY SIXTY-FIFTH BIRTHDAY

Naming and Renaming

My parents gave me a beautiful name, Bluma Haya, which translates as "living flower." To that I add Beruriah from the root meaning clear, a scholar's name. Beruriah was the wife of the second century scholar Rabbi Meir and a famous scholar in her own right.³⁵ I hope for a flowering of wisdom in my old age.

My renaming renews my life as a Jewish woman and poet trying to reach out to others, perhaps giving them the words they need. The taking of a new Hebrew name also marks my commitment to begin at long last the serious study of Hebrew.

Immersing Myself in Covenant

Symbols are part of every ritual. Mine are water, a ring, an apple. Water—the water of the *mikveh* for spiritual cleansing. A ring—the cycle and binding of generations.

I wear my grandmother's wedding ring; one day my daughter will wear it.

Abraham concluded a covenant with God by cutting an animal in two (Genesis 15:10). I cut an apple, Eve's fruit.³⁶ In choosing knowledge, we are her heirs.

Words of Song and Blessing

Of course, we must have a poem:

Song for Her Next Age

Ride, ride, old woman
ride down your days, hound them to heel
wind in your teeth, ride to the sea
salt on your tongue, brine in your blood
naked and nerved, sing down your days.
Howl down the sea, old woman
into its mouth cry out your name
into its wake cast off your bones
into its womb bury your own.

Old woman, rise from the sea undone—
you have won, you have won.

Blessed are You *Shekhinah* (close-dwelling presence of God, associated with the feminine), in whose name we come into our own.

As we planted the sage, we recited: Praised be You, Holy One of Blessing, giver of life and wisdom. May these seeds take root to remind us that we have it within us to gain *hokhmah* (wisdom), and may we be granted long life for our purpose.³⁷

ברוך אתה » אלהינו מלך העולם, שהחיינו וקיימנו והיעינו ליוצא
האת.

Barukh attah adonai eloheinu melekh ha'olam, shehecheyanu vekiyyemanu vehiggi'anu lazeman hazeh.

Praised are You Ruler of the world who has kept us in life, sustained us, and brought us to this day.

15

Death and Mourning



The death of a loved one usually means chaos for the survivors. The ordered world we know will never be the same, and in the new landscape of a universe without that loved one, we are lost. Implicitly and explicitly, Jewish mourning practices address the chaos and unstable ground, and help in finding, we hope, a surer footing and a new order.

Traditionally, we acknowledge losses by ripping our clothes, just as the fabric of life has been torn. In addition, Jewish law designates discrete periods in the mourning process, through which mourners are meant gradually to mend their private universe and re-enter the world of shared community. During *aninut* (period between death and burial) no expectations are placed on the mourner, who may be in shock, enraged, or in denial. After the burial, the first three days of *shiv'ah* (formal period of mourning) are set aside for the most intense bereavement and restrictions

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