



## NIDDAH

*Jerusalem is likened to a menstruant. Just as she returns to her permitted state, so too will the holy city become redeemed.*

—Talmud Taanis 20:a



*Although not directly related to the specific laws of family purity per se, there are a number of issues which the husband should be aware of in the larger context of married life.*

*The time of the wife's menstruation is, in many cases, and to varying degrees, an uncomfortable one for her. Even prior to the onset of menstruation some women experience the physical or emotional discomfort called Premenstrual Syndrome.*

*As a result of the uterus expelling blood, many women experience menstrual cramping (Dysmenorrhea). This is a biological phenomenon over which she has little control. Both of these subjects are discussed in more detail in the Appendix.*

*Even when not menstruating she must remember to carry sanitary pads in case menstruation occurs unexpectedly. She must constantly change them when soiled and constantly keep herself clean to avoid embarrassing odors caused by menstrual blood.*

*The husband should be aware that prior to or during menstruation, his wife may exhibit quite pronounced emotional fluctuations. They may be based in hormonal changes or result from increased tension at this time.*

*If during these times her functionality is impaired, or even if she is incapacitated, he should lighten*

her burden by accepting additional household responsibilities. If she is undergoing difficulties she should communicate them to her husband and, if possible, before they occur (see Appendix - Premenstrual Syndrome). This will allow him to understand her situation and respond appropriately.

It is wisest for both to realize that these are biological phenomena, embedded in nature by the Almighty. There is no one “at fault.” What remains is to alleviate, comfort, and ease difficult situations as they arise and this demands heightened sensitivity on the husband’s part.

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*When a woman experiences a menstrual discharge, it being blood which emerges from her body<sup>1</sup>, she enters a niddah state....*

—Leviticus 15:19

### GENERAL

A woman becomes a “menstruant,” *niddah* in Hebrew, when blood leaves the womb. This is based on the verse, “and she revealed the *source* of her blood<sup>2</sup>.” The *source* refers to the womb, where the infant is formed and it is from here that menstrual (*niddah*) blood comes<sup>3</sup>.

A woman becomes a *niddah* whenever blood leaves the womb *regardless* of the cause<sup>4</sup>; i.e., whether related to the monthly menstruation, an internal gynecological examination which involved penetration of the uterus<sup>5</sup>, giving birth<sup>6</sup> or spotting.

Even a minuscule amount of blood coming from the uterus causes the *niddah* state<sup>7</sup>, regardless of whether it is moist or dry<sup>8</sup>—even if there was no sensation of menstrual bleeding or opening of the uterus accompanying the appearance of blood<sup>9</sup>.

### NIDDAH BEFORE MARRIAGE

This state of *niddah*, as well as the spiritual excision of both<sup>10</sup> for having relations at this time is applicable even before marriage<sup>11</sup>, even if there wasn’t full penetration<sup>12</sup> and there was no emission of

1. Specifically, from the womb, *Rashi*. For a description of *niddah* from a scriptural standpoint see Appendix - Seven White Days and *Chochmat Hatahara*, Chapter Three.

2. Leviticus 20:18.

3. *Rambam, Hilchos Isoorei Biah* 5:3, *Shulchan Aruch Admur Hazoken* 183:1.

4. *Taz* 183:1.

5. In such a case an orthodox Rabbi expert in these laws should be consulted to determine the wife’s status.

6. See Chapter Fifteen.

7. *Niddah* 66:a. *Shach* 183:3, *Shulchan Aruch Admur Hazoken* 183:3.

8. *Mehaber* 188:4, *Shulchan Aruch Admur Hazoken* 188:16.

9. *Shulchan Aruch Admur Hazoken* 183:3, *Shach* 183:2.

10. Leviticus 18:19, 20:18, see *Bodei Hashulchan* 183:1 and 183:11.

11. *Ramo* 183:1.

12. *Darchei Teshuva* 183:14.

semen<sup>13</sup>.

The other prohibitions associated with *niddah*, including kissing, hugging, and affectionate contact, also apply to an unmarried woman<sup>14</sup>, since an unmarried woman has never left her *niddah* state by immersing in a *mikveh*.

Additionally it is forbidden to be alone with them in closed quarters (unlike one's wife when she is a *niddah*—see Chapter Four).

There is no minimum age for a woman to become *niddah*<sup>15</sup>. Even a girl who has begun menstruating<sup>16</sup> is in a constant *niddah* state until she immerses herself in a *mikveh* for the first time before her wedding<sup>17</sup>.

### SENSATIONS ASSOCIATED WITH MENSTRUATION: *HARGASHA*

*When a woman experiences a menstrual discharge, it being blood which emerges from her body<sup>18</sup>, she enters a niddah state....*

—Leviticus 15:19

The subject of this verse is menstrual discharge. The words *which emerges from her body* are seemingly superfluous. The traditional rules of interpreting scriptural passages state that nothing is purposelessly repeated. Our sages, therefore, understood these words *which emerges from her body* to imply that the *niddah* state is scripturally defined as intrinsically connected to a *physical sensation* called *hargasha*<sup>19</sup>. In other words, menstruation as described here is one in which the woman *feels* something when blood leaves the womb.

Feeling the womb open to expel blood<sup>20</sup> or feeling blood flow from the womb into the vagina<sup>21</sup> are considered *hargasha*. On the other hand, it is *halachically* questionable if feeling blood flow in the vaginal corridor qualifies as a *hargasha*<sup>22</sup>.

Note that many *poskim* hold it is doubtful if women, nowadays, can accurately discern a *hargasha* as *halachically* defined<sup>23</sup>.

13. *Bodei Hashulchan* 183:11.

14. *Bodei Hashulchan* 183:12, *Darchei Teshuva* 183:15.

15. Even “on the day she is born,” *Darchei Teshuva* 183:1. *Rashi* on Leviticus 15:19.

16. Or otherwise become a *niddah*.

17. Note, immersion by a single woman, whether unmarried, divorced or widowed, except in preparation for marriage is forbidden. *Beis Yosef* end of Chapter 183, *Gefen Porioh* 14:10.

18. Specifically, from the womb, *Rashi*.

19. *Shach* 183:2, *Niddah* 57:b, see *Bodei Hashulchan* 190:2 in *Tziyonim*.

20. *Mehaber* 190:1, *Tzemach Tzedek* 190:1, *Darchei Teshuva* 190:14.

21. *Shulchan Aruch Admur Hazoken* 183:3, see *Darchei Teshuva* 190:14.

22. *Chavas Da'as*, *Beorim* 190:1.

23. *Shiurei Shevet HaLevy* on 190:1. Therefore, if a question arises, an orthodox Rabbi expert in these laws should be consulted.

### NON-PREMENSTRUAL SYNDROMES

When we refer to menstrual sensations we mean those listed above, specifically and not premenstrual syndromes (PMS). These may be a variety of disorders occurring prior to menstruation, including bloating, tiredness, migraines and emotional imbalances such as anger, depression, or anxiety spells (see Appendix - Premenstrual Syndrome). Note that we are not referring to disorders during the time of actual menstruation such as headache, stomach cramps, backache, etc., commonly associated with menstruation (see Appendix - Menstrual Cramps).

### EXAMINATION

If the wife has a menstrual sensation she should check<sup>24</sup> herself immediately (within approximately two minutes)<sup>25</sup> by performing an internal examination using a soft white cloth<sup>26</sup>, as will be explained in Chapter Five<sup>27</sup>.

### THE OUTCOME

If the examination reveals a substance whose color is considered pure, we assume that *this* discharge<sup>28</sup> was the cause of the sensation and she remains pure<sup>29</sup>.

Pure colors include:

- White
- Yellow<sup>30</sup>
- Blue
- Green<sup>31</sup>

Impure colors include:

24. *Mehaber* 188:1 and 190:1. This should be a proper internal examination. However, wiping the private place externally can be relied on after the fact, *Bodei Hashulchan* 188:17.

25. *Tahara Kehalacha* 1:5. If she checked after two minutes an orthodox Rabbi expert in these laws should be consulted. Note, some *poskim* validate an examination within half an hour.

26. Which was examined beforehand and found to be clean of stains.

27. *Tzemach Tzedek* 190:1.

28. This white excretion could be leukorrhea, some of whose causes are: foreign bodies, bacterial or viral infection, candidiasis, trichomoniasis, cervicitis, atropic vaginitis, cervical mucorrhea or vaginal epithelial discharge. Also a woman has increased vaginal secretions at the time of ovulation.

29. *Mehaber* 188:1, *Shulchan Aruch Admur Hazoken* 188:5 and 190:2, *Tzemach Tzedek* 190:1.

30. Yellow found during the seven white days or the day of the anticipated menstruation requires consultation with an orthodox Rabbi expert in these laws, *Gefen Porioh* 1:5. Note there leniency regarding light yellow, endnote 25. See *Shiurei Shevet HaLevy* 188:1 regarding some shades of yellow found on the *hefsek tahara* examination cloth.

31. *Mehaber* 188:1.

- Red, as well as any shade of red whether light, dark or deep<sup>32</sup>
- Pink
- Any shade of black<sup>33</sup>, which is assumed to have been red which oxidized and therefore changed color
- Any shade of brown must be shown to an orthodox Rabbi expert in these laws

If an impure color is found on the cloth, she enters a state of *niddah*—even if the stain is minuscule (i.e. the size of a dot)<sup>34</sup>.

If the examination reveals only the body's natural moisture<sup>35</sup> or nothing at all<sup>36</sup>, the woman enters a state of *niddah*<sup>37</sup>. The assumption, here, is that the sensation resulted from an excretion of blood which *was lost* before the examination<sup>38</sup>.

A woman who felt<sup>39</sup> her womb open to excrete blood<sup>40</sup> or something flowing from it into the vagina<sup>41</sup> but didn't check<sup>42</sup>, is rendered *niddah* because it is assumed that *hargasha* is always accompanied by a discharge, presumably blood<sup>43</sup>. A woman who is *in doubt* as to whether she has had a menstrual sensation should check herself within two minutes. However, if she didn't check, she nevertheless maintains her former status because of the doubt as to whether she had a menstrual sensation or not<sup>44</sup>.

From the beginning of the fourth month<sup>45</sup> of pregnancy<sup>46</sup>, during the twenty-four months<sup>47</sup> following birth<sup>48</sup>, or after menopause, a woman who had a menstrual sensation, checked and found nothing, maintains her former clean status<sup>49</sup>. In all these cases<sup>50</sup>, it is considered as if menstrual bleeding has ceased.

If she wiped the *outer* parts of her private place and found blood, an orthodox Rabbi expert in these laws should be consulted<sup>51</sup>.

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32. *Mehaber* 188:1, based on *mishnah Niddah* 19:a.

33. *Mehaber* 188:1. On a scriptural level, *Darchoi Teshuva* 188:7.

34. *Shulchan Aruch Admur Hazoken* 190:33, *Kitzur Dinei Tahara* 1:2.

35. *Tahara Kehalacha* 1:7.

36. *Mehaber* 190:1, *Darchoi Teshuva* 190:14, *Kitzur Dinei Tahara* 1:7.

37. *Tahara Kehalacha* 1:7.

38. *Shulchan Aruch Admur Hazoken* 190:2.

39. Checking and not finding anything after feeling herself 'shudder' does not cause the *niddah* state, *Pischei Teshuva* 190:4.

40. *Mehaber*, *Tzemach Tzedek* 190:1, *Darchoi Teshuva* 190:14.

41. *Shulchan Aruch Admur Hazoken* 183:3.

42. If she didn't check after other sensations, for example blood flowing in the vagina, an orthodox Rabbi expert in these laws should be consulted.

43. *Tahara Kehalacha* 1:2.

44. *Tahara Kehalacha* 1:6.

45. From the ninety-first day following her last immersion (due to menstruation not staining), *Tahara Kehalacha* 1:8 footnote 20.

46. Even if verified medically prior to this, *Bodei Hashulchan* 184:39.

47. As they occur according to the Hebrew calendar—thirty or twenty-nine day months, *Ramo Even Haezer* 13:11.

48. Even if she never began nursing, *Mehaber* 184:7.

49. *Shulchan Aruch Admur Hazoken* 190:2, *Tzemach Tzedek* 190:1.

50. These are called *mesulekes domim*.

51. See *Tahara Kehalacha* 2:12 and *Gefen Porioh* 1:11.

As mentioned above, today it is uncommon for the sensations accompanying menstruation to fulfill the *halachic* requirements of *hargasha* and therefore an orthodox Rabbi expert in these laws must be consulted in all cases of doubt.

Menstrual bleeding appearing as it normally does, (even when the sensation of blood flowing was unnoticed), as well as when discovered through an internal examination without noticeable physical sensations, render a woman *niddah*. From a *halachic* standpoint, it is considered that the physical sensation was slight and therefore went unnoticed<sup>52</sup>.

If there is reason to believe that staining originated elsewhere besides the womb, for example: vagina, urinary canal, bladder, etc., or an injury, cut, bruise, infection, or medical irritations, hemorrhoids, etc., an orthodox Rabbi expert in these laws should be consulted to determine her status.

It is preferable for her not to check toilet paper after wiping with it<sup>53</sup>. If she did, however, check it and found a questionable color on it, she is to save it and have it shown to an orthodox Rabbi expert in these laws<sup>54</sup>.

#### NIDDAH THROUGH EXAMINATION

If the wife performs an internal<sup>55</sup> examination using a previously examined<sup>56</sup> clean cloth and discovers a stain<sup>57</sup> of any size, she enters the *niddah* state<sup>58</sup>, even if she felt no menstrual sensation<sup>59</sup>. The day or night it is found is recorded for the purpose of reckoning the next anticipated menstruation<sup>60</sup>.

If she has any reason to suspect that the stain on the examination cloth was caused through a bruise or cut in her vagina or in that area, an orthodox Rabbi expert in these laws should be consulted. He may base his decision partly on medical evidence. Nonetheless it is a difficult subject which can only be decided through a competent authority.

#### DISCOLORED URINE

If she notices blood after urinating an orthodox Rabbi expert in these laws should be consulted. Here too, there are many details which will influence his decision. Some details which should be clarified before asking his opinion are: whether the blood was found in the water or on the seat, if she sat over the middle of the toilet seat or on its edge, if this is a one time experience or it repeats itself, if she felt pain or

52. *Pischei Magidim* 1:14.

53. Even after urinating and even during her seven white days, *Shiurei Shevet HaLevy* section 20 on *Mehaber* 191:1, section 11 on 184:1 and section 3 on 190:10.

54. *Gefen Porioh* 1:11, *Tahara Kehalacha* 8:6.

55. When performed deeply [in the private place, where menstrual sensations, *hargasha*, occurs], this impurity is on a scriptural level, *Mehaber* 190:54, see *Shulchan Aruch Admur Hazoken* 190:122, *Chavas Da'as* 190:1.

56. *Mehaber* 190:33, 190:44.

57. Of the impure colors listed above.

58. *Mehaber* 190:44, 190:33. Whether elongated, round or another shape.

59. It is assumed that menstrual bleeding was accompanied with *hargasha* and that she mistook the sensation of the examination cloth for this. *Chavas Da'as* 190:1, *Bodei Hashulchan* 183:6. See *Shulchan Aruch Admur Hazoken* 183:3.

60. *Mehaber* 190:54, as explained at length in Chapter Fourteen.

burning during urination, and if she ate some red food, such as beets, prior to this. In any event, these are just a few of the numerous factors the Rabbi will consider<sup>61</sup>.

### GYNECOLOGICAL ISSUES

The sages<sup>62</sup> asserted, “There can be no opening of the uterus<sup>63</sup> without blood flowing<sup>64</sup>.” This applies when something is inserted into the uterus<sup>65</sup>, e.g., a medical instrument and not only when something is expelled, such as during menstruation.

Some internal gynecological examinations involve examining the uterus using various types of medical instruments<sup>66</sup>. When the uterus is penetrated with a medical instrument, the *niddah* state almost invariably results<sup>67</sup>, even when no sign of blood is present. Therefore, in the event that a medical instrument was inserted into the cervix<sup>68</sup> or into the womb<sup>69</sup>, an orthodox Rabbi expert in these laws must be consulted<sup>70</sup>. In light of the above, it is advisable to arrange such procedures at a time when the woman is already a *niddah*. If this is not possible, an orthodox Rabbi expert in these laws should be consulted.

Insertion or removal of an intrauterine contraceptive device, I.U.D., renders the *niddah* state<sup>71</sup>. An orthodox Rabbi expert in these laws should be consulted regarding spotting. *Note*: Contraception is permitted only in cases of physical or psychological danger to the wife<sup>72</sup>.

61. These are found in the *Ramo* 191:1. Within these situations are interwoven numerous and differing *halachic* opinions too complex to narrow into one final decision in the text.

62. *Niddah* 21:a, b.

63. *Rashi Niddah* 21:a.

64. *Mehaber* 188:3, *Ramo* 194:2.

65. *Shulchan Aruch Admur Hazoken* 188:8. This applies for pregnant, nursing, and post-menopausal women, as well, *Pischei Teshuva* 194:4.

66. For example: an endometrial biopsy with a biopsy curet or a hysteroscopy (visual examination of the uterine cavity through an instrument called a hysteroscope). There are a number of instruments used to perform a cervical biopsy: Tischler cervical forceps, Kevorkian-Young forceps, and the Duncan endometrial curet, to name a few.

67. See following footnotes.

68. See opinions brought in *Nishmat Avraham* Volume Two *Yoreh Deah* on *Mehaber* 194:2. “Penetration into the cervix renders the *niddah* state, or at least requires consultation with an orthodox Rabbi expert in these laws,” *Shiurei Shevet HaLevy* on 188:3. Note *Gefen Porioh* Chapter One endnote 68.

69. *Shulchan Aruch Admur Hazoken* 188:26, “Insertion of a ‘reed’ (*Mehaber* 188:3) does not cause the *niddah* state and does not fall into the category of ‘there can be no opening of the womb without blood flowing.’ However, this ‘reed’s’ thickness is unknown. Therefore, adopting a strict opinion, we declare all such insertions *niddah*, unless the ‘reed’ is extremely thin.” Note that there is no tradition regarding this thickness. See *Shulchan Aruch Admur Hazoken* 188:8.

*Igros Moshe Orach Chaim* (3) section 100 holds that the minimum size is based on a ‘*picah*’ likened to an index finger—three quarters of an inch (in *Yoreh Deah* (1) section 89 it is likened to a pinkie, however, with the same size quoted).

“Inserting an instrument at least half an inch wide causes the *niddah* state, even if no blood was found,” *Gefen Porioh* Chapter One note 68, in the name of *Igros Moshe*.

Other, smaller, minimum widths are mentioned in *poskim*, see *Bodei Hashulchan* 188:37.

Some *poskim* say the minimum width is that of a match, *Gefen Porioh* Chapter One note 68.

If it did not have a minimum width, the *niddah* state does not occur, *Mehaber* 188:3, *Bodei Hashulchan* 188:37, *Shulchan Aruch Admur Hazoken* 188:8.

“Penetration into the womb, even with a very thin instrument, renders the *niddah* state,” *Shiurei Shevet HaLevy* on 188:3.

70. In order to accurately consult the Rabbi, the wife should ask the doctor what diameter the instrument was and how far it reached.

71. *Gefen Porioh* 1:2 and 16:14. Therefore, it is best inserted while the wife is *niddah* in any case. *Note*: the *hefsek tahara* cannot be performed until staining resulting from the placement of the I.U.D. ceases.

72. Only permissible through consultation with an orthodox Rabbi expert in these laws and familiar with the woman’s condition.

An examination using the fingers<sup>73</sup> only does not render the *niddah* state<sup>74</sup> and she is not required to examine herself following such an examination<sup>75</sup>. Examining the vagina, even using an instrument, does not render the *niddah* state<sup>76</sup>. If blood is found following this, an orthodox Rabbi expert in these laws must be consulted<sup>77</sup>. A standard gynecological examination does not penetrate the womb or cervix<sup>78</sup>.

#### ADDITIONAL PURITY

During menstruation<sup>79</sup>, it is customary for women to refrain from attending synagogue, looking at a *sefer* Torah or praying while standing in close proximity to friends. This custom is in the category of additional purity, not based on prohibition. Therefore, she is permitted to attend synagogue if abiding by this will cause her anguish e.g., during the holidays<sup>80</sup> when everyone attends synagogue, when she is with her son or daughter, when visiting synagogue is related to her giving birth<sup>81</sup> or she has another reason for attending<sup>82</sup>. At home, however, even during menstruation, women may pray, make *kiddush* and say all the blessings<sup>83</sup>.

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73. Even when the doctor presses her stomach in order to lower her womb, *Tahara Kehalacha* Chapter Seven note 22, *poskim*.

74. *Gefen Porioh*. “The wife’s, midwife’s, or the examining doctor’s finger (or the husband’s organ) do not reach the womb to cause the *niddah* state in accordance with “there can be no opening of the womb without flowing of blood,” *Pischei Teshuva* 194:4. *Igros Moshe Orach Chaim* (3) section 100.

75. *Gefen Porioh* Chapter One note 70.

76. *Gefen Porioh* 1:18.

77. *Gefen Porioh* 1:18.

78. *Gefen Porioh* Chapter One note 69. “Preferably the physician should be asked if bleeding occurred,” *Shiurei Shevet HaLevy* on 188:3.

79. During the seven white days this custom does not apply, *Shulchan Aruch Admur Hazoken* 88:2. Nor does it apply during impurity due to birth, *Gefen Porioh* Chapter Two note 21.

80. “From the first day of *slichos*,” *Shulchan Aruch Admur Hazoken* 88:2.

81. Note, *Shulchan Aruch Admur Hazoken* 88:2.

82. *Kitzur Dinei Tahara* 3:26.

83. *Shulchan Aruch Admur Hazoken* 88:2.