

Times

A compendium of the vestos laws

Chabad Custom

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This Web Edition omits approbations, footnotes and calendars.

*Caution to separate on anticipated menstruation dates
merits children fit to be prominent teachers of the Jewish people.*

— *Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levy (Shavuous 18:b)*

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TIME OF THE ANTICIPATED MENSTRUATION



TALMUDIC REQUIREMENTS

“And you shall warn the Jews to guard against their impurity!”

Based on the above verse², the Talmudic sages, of blessed memory, established a requirement³ that the husband and wife separate on the date(s) when the next menstrual period can be *expected to appear*. This legislation was intended to prevent any opportunity for conjugal intimacy at the time of the anticipated appearance of menstruation.

Using the following charts, a record is kept of the onset and cessation (as ascertained through a *befseke tahara*) of menstrual bleeding on an ongoing monthly basis. Many *poskim*⁴ require this information to be recorded in *written* form. This is the widespread custom.

Based on this information, the date of the next *anticipated* menstrual period should be plotted and intimacy suspended on that date. This includes marital relations⁵, kissing, hugging, affectionate touching and sleeping in the same bed⁶. The other restrictions observed during actual menstruation do not apply⁷.

THREE DATES OF SEPARATION

Numerous influences may affect the onset of menstruation. The Talmudic sages specified the following three cycles as most influential⁸. These must be recorded and all three observed: the **Monthly Cycle**, the **Average Cycle** (30 days) and the **Interval Cycle**. If some other regular pattern is noticed the couple should consult an orthodox Rabbi expert in these laws⁹.

THE MONTHLY CYCLE - YOM HACHODESH - יום החודש

The lunar cycle affects menstruation by influencing it to begin each time on the same date of the Hebrew (lunar) month¹⁰. This is called the **Monthly Cycle**.

THE AVERAGE CYCLE - *ONAH BENONIS* - עונה בינונית

Another factor is that on the average for *most* women¹¹, the menstrual period commences on a regular thirty day cycle¹². This is called the **Average Cycle**.

THE INTERVAL CYCLE - *VESES HAFLAGAH* - ווסת הפלגה

This third possibility is the time interval from the end¹³ of one sighting of menstruation (*hefsek tabara*) until the beginning of the next. To calculate the **Interval Cycle** the wife must have completed one full cycle.

SEPARATION FOR HOW LONG?

In both the **Monthly** and **Interval Cycles** separation is observed for a half day period¹⁴. A half day is considered to be from either sunset to sunrise or sunrise to sunset of the projected date¹⁵. Either during the night half or day half of the date on which they occur.

In the **Average Cycle** separation is required to last a full day¹⁶. (The Hebrew day begins at one sunset and ends at the next).

EXAMINATION

Additionally, on these dates, the sages required the wife to perform an internal examination to see if menstruation did, in fact, appear¹⁷. This is accomplished by wrapping an examination cloth (or any soft white cloth) around her fingers, inserting it as deeply as possible, and turning it around while checking all crevices and folds¹⁸. It is then removed and visually inspected for any sign of blood. (If discomfort is experienced the cloth may be moistened with water).

The examination is performed from the recorded time of day when the last menstruation began and onwards¹⁹. For example, if the last menstruation began at 10:00 a.m. this examination should be performed anytime from 10:00 a.m. until the end of the day. Or, for example, if the last menstruation began at 10:00 p.m. this examination should be performed anytime from 10:00 p.m. until sunrise²⁰.

If there is blood, the wife enters the state of *niddah*. There is no minimum amount, even a spot no larger than a needle point renders her *niddah*²¹.

If no blood is discovered, the couple is permitted to renew marital relations, providing that the day or night span²² (or complete night and day span in the **Average Cycle**) have passed completely. Regarding the **Average Cycle**, the wife must explicitly state to the husband that she

checked herself²³.

If the wife misses the examination and no blood was noticed until the end of the **Monthly** or **Interval Cycle** then relations are permitted provided that the half day span has completely passed²⁴. Regarding the **Average Cycle** however, relations are forbidden until she does actually perform an examination²⁵.

Remember, for all purposes mentioned, nighttime is from sunset till sunrise. Daytime is from sunrise till sunset²⁶.

BEGINNING OF THE CYCLE

Only the dates of actual menstruation or blood discovered through an internal examination²⁷, are recorded for the purpose of determining the anticipated period. Therefore, although stains found on the body or on clothes may render a woman *niddal*²⁸, nevertheless they are not considered when projecting the dates of the next menstrual cycle.

On the following pages: Illustrations, calendar, recording the cycles on an ongoing basis, suggested use and sources.

Sources

- 1 Leviticus 15:31.
- 2 However, *vestos* are rabbinic legislation, not scriptural, *Shach* 184:5 and 184:13, *Shulchan Aruch Admur Hazoken* 184:5.
 - 3 *Niddah* 63:b, *Shavuos* 18:b.
 - 4 *Misgeres Hashulchan* 155:132, *Chavas Da'as, poskim*.
 - 5 *Mehaber* 184:2.
- 6 *Shulchan Aruch Admur Hazoken* 184:6. There the difference in severity of these is delineated.
 - 7 *Bodei Hashulchan* 184:14. See wording of *Tzemach Tzedek Piskei Dinim* 195:1.
 - 8 See *Yoreh Deah* 189 and *Chochmat Hatahara* for others.
- 9 See *Family Purity* (Appendix - Fixed Cycles) and *Chochmat Hatahara* for examples of these and the ramifications.
 - 10 *Shulchan Aruch Admur Hazoken* 189:5, 184:12.
 - 11 See *Rashi* on the *mishnah Niddah* 11.
 - 12 *Mehaber* and *Shulchan Aruch Admur Hazoken* 189:1.
 - 13 *Mehaber* 189:2, *Shulchan Aruch Admur Hazoken* 184:22, 186:8, 187:41 and 189:3.
 - 14 *Mehaber* 184:2, *Shulchan Aruch Admur Hazoken* 184:5.
 - 15 *Shulchan Aruch Admur Hazoken* 184:7-9, 11, 12.
 - 16 *Shulchan Aruch Admur Hazoken* 189:1.
 - 17 *Mehaber* 184:9.
- 18 Similar to the seven white days, *Chavas Da'as* 184:22, *Shiurei Shevet Halevy* on 184:9.
 - 19 *Shulchan Aruch Admur Hazoken* 189:4.
 - 20 *Kitzur Dinei Tahara* 9:6.
 - 21 *Mehaber* 190:33, 54.
 - 22 Regarding a non-established cycle.
 - 23 *Mehaber* 184:11.
- 24 Regarding a *non-established cycle*, see *Family Purity* (Appendix). *Mehaber* 189:4, 184:9*.
 - 25 *Shulchan Aruch Admur Hazoken* 189:14.
 - 26 *Shulchan Aruch Admur Hazoken* 184:7-9, 11, 12.
 - 27 *Mehaber* 190:54.
 - 28 See *Family Purity*, Chapters Three and Fourteen.