

WOMEN, BIRTH, AND DEATH IN JEWISH LAW AND PRACTICE (BRANDEIS SERIES ON JEWISH WOMEN) pdf

1: Susan Brandeis Gilbert | Jewish Women's Archive

*Women, Birth, and Death in Jewish Law and Practice (HBI Series on Jewish Women) [Rochelle L. Millen] on www.enganchecubano.com *FREE* shipping on qualifying offers. The past twenty-five years have seen the development of rich literature on Judaism and feminism.*

Women in the Bible Relatively few women are mentioned in the Bible by name and role, suggesting that they were rarely in the forefront of public life. A common phenomenon in the bible is the pivotal role that women take in subverting man-made power structures. The result is often a more just outcome than what would have taken place under ordinary circumstances. The Torah relates that both Israelite men and Israelite women were present at Sinai; however, the covenant was worded in such a way that it bound men to act upon its requirements, and to ensure that the members of their household wives, children, and slaves met these requirements as well. In this sense, the covenant bound women as well, though indirectly. For example, a husband could divorce a wife if he chose to, but a wife could not divorce a husband without his consent. Levirate marriage is not performed in our times. Laws concerning the loss of female virginity have no male equivalent. These and other gender differences found in the Torah suggest that women were subordinate to men during biblical times; however, they also suggest that biblical society viewed continuity, property, and family unity as paramount. These included the provision of clothing, food, and sexual relations to their wives. Women as well as men were required to make a pilgrimage to the Temple in Jerusalem once a year men each of the three main festivals if they could and offer the Passover sacrifice. They would also do so on special occasions in their lives such as giving a todah "thanksgiving" offering after childbirth. Hence, they participated in many of the major public religious roles that non-Levitical men could, albeit less often and on a somewhat smaller and generally more discreet scale. Women depended on men economically. Even "in such cases, women would be required to remarry within the tribe so as not to reduce its land holdings". Halacha also provides women with material and emotional protections that most non-Jewish women did not enjoy during the first millennium of the Common Era. The Talmud states that: Greater is the reward to be given by the All-Mighty to the righteous women than to righteous men [6] Ten measures of speech descended to the world; women took nine [7] Women are light on raw knowledge "i. Let me arise before the approach of the divine presence [10] Israel was redeemed from Egypt by virtue of its Israel righteous women [11] A man must be careful never to speak slightly to his wife because women are prone to tears and sensitive to wrong [12] Women have greater faith than men [13] Women have greater powers of discernment [14] Women are especially tenderhearted [15] While few women are mentioned by name in rabbinic literature, and none are known to have authored a rabbinic work, those who are mentioned are portrayed as having a strong influence on their husbands. Occasionally they have a public persona. When Eleazar ben Arach was asked to assume the role of Nasi "Prince" or President of the Sanhedrin, he replied that he must first take counsel with his wife, which he did. Avraham Grossman argues in his book, *Pious and Rebellious: Jewish Women in Medieval Europe*, that three factors affected how Jewish women were perceived by the society around them: Women probably learned how to read the liturgy in Hebrew. This goes back to ancient times when women could go only as far as the second court of the Temple. The reasoning behind the Halacha was that a woman and her body would distract men and give them impure thoughts during prayer. However, recent research has shown that women actually had a larger role in the synagogue and the community at large. Women usually attended synagogue, for example, on the Shabbat and the holidays. Since the synagogues were large, there would be a designated woman who would be able to follow the cantor and repeat the prayers aloud for the women. Women sitting separately from the men became a norm in synagogues around the beginning of the thirteenth century. One of the main jobs for women was to beautify the building. There are Torah ark curtains and Torah covers that women sewed and survive today. The rise and increasing popularity of Kabbalah, which emphasized the shechinah and female aspects of the divine presence and human-divine relationship, and which

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saw marriage as a holy covenant between partners rather than a civil contract, had great influence. Kabbalists explained the phenomenon of menstruation as expressions of the demonic or sinful character of the menstruant. At the same time, there was a rise in philosophical and midrashic interpretations depicting women in a negative light, emphasizing a duality between matter and spirit in which femininity was associated, negatively, with earth and matter. For example, it seems that Jews would analyze the modesty of their non-Jewish neighbors before officially moving into a new community because they knew that their children would be influenced by the local gentiles. Crypto-Jewish women would slaughter their own animals and made sure to keep as many of the Jewish dietary laws and life cycle rituals as possible without raising suspicion. Occasionally, these women were prosecuted by Inquisition officials for suspicious behavior such as lighting candles to honor the Sabbath or refusing to eat pork when it was offered to them. The Inquisition targeted crypto-Jewish women at least as much as it targeted crypto-Jewish men because women were accused of perpetuating Jewish tradition while men were merely permitting their wives and daughters to organize the household in this manner. Marriage is an important institution in Judaism see Marriage in Judaism. The sages of this period discussed this topic at length. Rabbeinu Gershom instituted a rabbinic decree Takkanah prohibiting polygyny among Ashkenazic Jews. The rabbis instituted legal methods to enable women to petition a rabbinical court to compel a divorce. Maimonides ruled that a woman who found her husband "repugnant" could ask a court to compel a divorce by flogging the recalcitrant husband "because she is not like a captive, to be subjected to intercourse with one who is hateful to her". The rabbis also instituted and tightened prohibitions on domestic violence. Rabbi Peretz ben Elijah ruled, "The cry of the daughters of our people has been heard concerning the sons of Israel who raise their hands to strike their wives. Yet who has given a husband the authority to beat his wife? And one who beats his wife is to be excommunicated and banned and beaten. They were taught to read, write, run a household. They were also given some education in religious law that was essential to their daily lives, such as keeping kosher. Although Christian girls may have had a male or female tutor, most Jewish girls had a female tutor. See Female Education in the Medieval Period. Middle Eastern Jewry, on the other hand, had an abundance of female literates. The Cairo Geniza is filled with correspondences written sometimes dictated between family members and spouses. Many of these letters are pious and poetic and express a desire to be in closer or more frequent contact with a loved one that is far enough away to only be reached by written correspondence. There are also records of wills and other personal legal documents as well as written petitions to officials in cases of spouse spousal abuse or other conflicts between family members written or dictated by women. Just like Christian women who ran their own business, Jewish women were engaged in their own occupations as well as helping their husbands. Jewish women seem to have lent money to Christian women throughout Europe. A yeshiva, or school for Talmudic studies, is an "exclusively masculine environment" because of absence of women from these studies. She is greatly admired for her breadth of knowledge in matters pertaining to both halachah and aggadah , and is said to have learned from the rabbis halachot on a single cloudy day Tractate Pesachim 62b. Her parents were put to death by the Romans for teaching Torah , but she carried on their legacy. Bruriah was very involved in the halachic discussions of her time, and even challenges her father on a matter of ritual purity Tosefta Keilim Kamma 4: Her comments there are praised by Rabbi Judah ben Bava. In another instance, Rabbi Joshua praises her intervention in a debate between Rabbi Tarfon and the sages, saying "Bruriah has spoken correctly" Tosefta Keilim Metzia 1: In one case, she gave an interpretation of the religious sense to "paskin din" of "klaustra" a rare Greek word referring to a "door-bolt" in the Talmud. However, Rabbi Yehudah Hanassi did not believe women could be credited with "paskining din". This praise was in clear contradiction of the common injunction against women studying the Torah. Maimonides[edit] When Maimonides wrote responsa concerning women, he tended to elevate their status above what was common practice in the Middle Ages. However, if she wants to learn, then not only may she do so on her own, but men may teach her from the start, and she can then teach other women if they so choose. According to Hida, the prohibition of teaching women does not apply to a motivated woman or girl. Other Mizrahi Rabbis disputed this with him.

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2: HBI Series on Jewish Women | Publications | The Hadassah-Brandeis Institute | Brandeis University

" Women, Birth and Death in Jewish Law and Practice contributes to the growing literature on feminism and Judaism by demonstrating how the concepts of gender, sexuality, public/private and community/autonomy are essential concepts of modernity and of the rabbinic discourse that is the foundation of all manifestations of Judaism."

This essential and innovative series will produce books by Jewish women writers from the United States and beyond. Following are descriptions of the first books in the series. Her brother Dael serves in the Israeli Army as a sniper, while Irad, their neglectful father, a genius scientist, travels to the United States to conduct research on flak jackets. Each family member is pulled in conflicting directions, forced to examine their contentious relationships to one another. With surprising humor, Textile details the gradual disintegration of a family strained by distance and the corrosive effects of militarism and consumerism. The memoir is a charming dash through the years of a structured orthodox life and the artistic life that feed her to question the misogyny of her beloved religion. It is also a tell-all about the art world, with fascinating details about luminaries such as Ana Mendieta, Ad Reinhardt, Mark Rothko and Betty Parsons. In this collection of 17 untitled selections, Moskowitz shares recollections of memorable moments and personalities from her life, touching upon such personal and universal themes as pain, death, prejudice and faith. Varying in length from two to 25 pages, these reminiscences and reflections exhibit the strength of love among friends and family that remains despite individual and religious differences. Populated by mysterious and real people, each tale is in some way a search for meaning in a post-Holocaust world. Sebald, characters irrationally and humanely find reason for hope in a world that offers little. Govrin journeys there after she learns that her mother had not been alone. Working as a novelist, poet and theater director, Govrin has published nine books of poetry and fiction. In , she was named one of the 30 most important modern writers by the Salon du Livre. Among the pioneers of Jewish experimental theatre, Govrin has directed award-winning performances in all the major theatres in Israel. When her daughters are born deaf, Rosner is stunned. Then she discovers a hidden history of deafness in her family, going back generations to the Jewish enclaves of Eastern Europe. Traveling back in time, she imagines her silent relatives, who showed surprising creativity in dealing with a world that preferred to ignore them. Rosner shares her journey into the modern world of deafness, and the controversial decisions she and her husband have made about hearing aids, cochlear implants and sign language. A beautiful, deeply felt exploration of love and hard choices. A Memoir of Deafness and Africa" "This wrenching journey into deafness from the standpoint of a mother, a wife, a daughter, a philosopher, and a Jew explores the meaning of sound in a soundless world. She holds a Ph. She lives in Massachusetts with her family. They became known in India as the Bene Israel and nothing has been the same since. Surrounded by their Hindu and Muslim neighbors, the residents of these charming apartments find ways to laugh the laughing club meets every morning on the lawn and love, whether it is a crush next door or an Internet date with a distant Israeli. These true-to-life stories depict the joys and conflicts of a people continually choosing between the Indian traditions of their homeland and their Jewish heritage. Hers is a window into an all too human world, presided over by a comic though attentive Prophet Elijah. Powers, author of "Kites Over the Mango Tree: In fact, it is a clever tool to analyse and understand the various ritualistic ways, both rigourous and convenient, in which Bene Israelis celebrate their festivals. Which takes it back to their historical shipwreck to India 2, years ago, the loss of their texts, the adoption of Konkani and Marathi as their languages, attaching village names as surnames to their original Hebrew names, practice of a mixture of Jewish yet Indian customs. An artist and art critic, she has coordinated art activities for the Gujarat state fine arts academy as its chairperson and has also organized events for the West Zone Cultural Center, Gujarat. She often teaches art history and appreciation at the Center for Environmental Planning and Technology University in Ahmedabad when she is not illustrating her novels or creating her own work.

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3: Women, Birth, and Death in Jewish Law and Practice

Women, Birth, and Death in Jewish Law and Practice (HBI Series on Jewish Women) by Millen, Rochelle L.. Brandeis. PAPERBACK. Ships promptly from Texas.

Family roots[edit] Louis Dembitz Brandeis was born on November 13, , in Louisville, Kentucky , the youngest of four children. They emigrated as part of their extended families for both economic and political reasons. The Revolutions of had produced a series of political upheavals and the families, though politically liberal and sympathetic to the rebels, were shocked by the antisemitic riots that erupted in Prague while the rebels controlled it. His earliest childhood was shaped by the American Civil War , which forced the family to seek safety temporarily in Indiana. The Brandeis family held abolitionist beliefs that angered their Louisville neighbors. Worries about the U. Having been raised partly on German culture , Louis read and appreciated the writings of Goethe and Schiller , and his favorite composers were Beethoven and Schumann. They celebrated the main Christian holidays along with most of their community, [5] treating Christmas as a secular holiday. His parents raised their children to be "high-minded idealists" rather than depending solely on religion for their purpose and inspiration. I believe that only goodness and truth and conduct that is humane and self-sacrificing toward those who need us can bring God nearer to us I wanted to give my children the purest spirit and the highest ideals as to morals and love. God has blessed my endeavors. Unlike other members of the extended Brandeis family, Dembitz regularly practiced Judaism and was actively involved in Zionist activities. Brandeis graduated from the Louisville Male High School at age 14 with the highest honors. When he was 16, the Louisville University of the Public Schools awarded him a gold medal for "excellence in all his studies. He later credited his capacity for critical thinking and his desire to study law in the United States to his time there. His admiration for the wide learning and debating skills of his uncle, Lewis Dembitz, inspired him to study law. The school doctors suggested he give up school entirely. He found another alternative: Despite the difficulties, his academic work and memorization talents were so impressive that he graduated as valedictorian and achieved the highest grade point average in the history of the school, [5]: In , he was admitted to the Missouri bar [10] and accepted a job with a law firm in St. Louis, where he filed his first brief and published his first law review article. Warren , to set up a law firm in Boston. He was admitted to the Massachusetts bar without taking an examination, which he later wrote to his brother, was "contrary to all principle and precedent. Warren and Brandeis[edit] The new firm was eventually successful, having gained new clients from within the state and in several neighboring states, as well. Their former professors referred a number of clients to the firm, [3] garnering Brandeis more financial security and eventually the freedom to take an active role in progressive causes. As partner in his law firm, he worked as a consultant and advisor to businesses, but also as a litigator who enjoyed courtroom challenges. In a letter to his brother, he writes, "There is a certain joy in the exhaustion and backache of a long trial which shorter skirmishes cannot afford. Soon after, Chief Justice Melville Fuller recommended him to a friend as the best attorney he knew of in the Eastern U. He preferred being an adviser and counselor, rather than simply a strategist in lawsuits, which would allow him to advise his clients on how to avoid problems, such as lawsuits, strikes, or other crises. Of course there is an immense amount of litigation going on and a great deal of the time of many lawyers is devoted to litigation. But by far the greater part of the work done by lawyers is not done in court at all, but in advising men in important matters, and mainly in business affairs So, some of the ablest American lawyers of this generation, after acting as professional advisers of great corporations, became finally their managers. If he believed a client to be in the wrong, he would persuade his clients to make amends, otherwise he would withdraw from the case. Privacy law[edit] Brandeis defined modern notions of the individual right to privacy in a path-breaking article he published with his partner, Warren, in the Harvard Law Review of December 15, , on "The Right to Privacy. Building on diverse analogies in the law of defamation, of literary property, and of eavesdropping, Brandeis argued that the central, if unarticulated, interest protected in these fields was an

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interest in personal integrity, "the right to be let alone," that ought to be secured against invasion except for some compelling reason of public welfare. Brandeis saw emotions as a positive expression of human nature, and so desired privacy protection for them as protection against repression of the human spirit. The third, "The Right to Privacy," was the most important, with legal scholar Roscoe Pound saying it accomplished "nothing less than adding a chapter to our law. They argued that private individuals were being continually injured and that the practice weakened the "moral standards of society as a whole. Political, social, and economic changes entail the recognition of new rights, and the common law, in its eternal youth, grows to meet the demands of society. The press is overstepping in every direction the obvious bounds of propriety and of decency. Gossip is no longer the resource of the idle and of the vicious, but has become a trade, which is pursued with industry, as well as effrontery. To satisfy a prurient taste the details of sexual relations are spread broadcast in the columns of the daily papers The intensity and complexity of life, attendant upon advancing civilization, have rendered necessary some retreat from the world, and man, under the refining influence of culture, has become more sensitive to publicity, so that solitude and privacy have become more essential to the individual; but modern enterprise and invention have, through invasions upon his privacy, subjected him to mental pain and distress, far greater than could be inflicted by mere bodily injury. Legal historian Wayne McIntosh wrote that "the privacy tort of Brandeis and Warren set the nation on a legal trajectory of such profound magnitude that it finally transcended its humble beginnings. In the Georgia Supreme Court recognized a right to privacy in a case involving photographs[clarification needed]. Years later, after becoming a justice of the Supreme Court, Brandeis discussed the right to privacy in his famous dissent in *Olmstead v. Personal life and marriage*[edit] Brandeis in his canoe. He was then 34 years of age and had previously found little time for courtship. Alice was the daughter of Joseph Goldmark , a physician, the brother of the composer Karl Goldmark , who had emigrated to America from Austria-Hungary after the collapse of the Revolution of They were married on March 23, , at the home of her parents in New York City in a civil ceremony. The Brandeis family "lived well but without extravagance. Brandeis would never fit the stereotype of the wealthy man. Although he belonged to a polo club, he never played polo. He owned no yacht, just a canoe that he would paddle by himself on the fast-flowing river that adjoined his cottage in Dedham. I feel newly made and ready to deny the existence of these gray hairs. From to , he was in the thick of multiple reform crusades. He fought in Boston to secure honest traction franchises and in launched a six-year fight to prevent banker J. He supported the conservation movement, and in emerged as the chief figure in the Pinchot-Ballinger investigation. He then took on cases with the help of colleagues, two of whom became partners in his new firm, Brandeis, Dunbar, and Nutter, in He suggested a viable "middle course. The legislature was won over by his arguments and changed the regulations. He worked to break the traditional hold on legal thinking to make laws that met the needs of the changing community. The public is often inadequately represented or wholly unrepresented. That presents a condition of great unfairness to the public. As a result, many bills pass in our legislatures which would not have become law if the public interest had been fairly represented Those of you who feel drawn to that profession may rest assured that you will find in it an opportunity for usefulness probably unequaled. There is a call upon the legal profession to do a great work for this country. Lincoln, a Boston philanthropist and noted crusader for the poor. He appeared at public hearings to promote investigations into conditions in the public poor-houses. Lincoln, who had visited these poor-houses for years, saw inmates dwelling in misery and the temporarily unemployed thrown in together with the mentally ill and hardened criminals. Men are degraded largely by circumstances It is the duty of every man Brandeis prevailed and the legislature enacted his bill. One alderman gave jobs to of his followers. In Boston and other cities, such abuses were part of the corruption in which graft and bribery were commonplace, in some cases even newly freed prison felons resumed their political careers. We want a government that will represent the laboring man, the professional man, the businessman, and the man of leisure. We want a good government, not because it is good business but because it is dishonorable to submit to a bad government. The great name, the glory of Boston, is in our keeping. He became aware of the growing number of giant companies which were capable of dominating whole industries.

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As a result, he denounced "cut-throat competition" and worried about monopolies. He also became concerned about the plight of workers and was more sympathetic to the labor movement. We intend to do away with the conditions that make for monopoly. But there are certain monopolies that we cannot prevent. I understand that the steel trust is not an absolute monopoly, but if it were, what would be the use of splitting up the steel trust into companies controlled by Morgan, Carnegie, and Rockefeller, say? Would it ameliorate conditions at all? Would it make prices lower to the consumer? He argued that great size conflicted with efficiency and added a new dimension to the Efficiency Movement of the Progressive Era. As early as he had pointed out the harm that giant corporations could do to competitors, customers, and their own workers. The growth of industrialization was creating mammoth companies which he felt threatened the well-being of millions of Americans. Some business experts felt that nothing could prevent the concentration of industry and therefore big business was here to stay. He was convinced that monopolies and trusts were "neither inevitable nor desirable. He argued the opposite was often true, that monopolistic enterprises became "less innovative" because, he wrote, their "secure positions freed them from the necessity which has always been the mother of invention. Brandeis was aware of economies of scale and the initially lower prices offered by growing companies, but he noted that once a large company drove out its competition, "the quality of its products tended to decline while the prices charged for them tended to go up. We learned long ago that liberty could be preserved only by limiting in some way the freedom of action of individuals; that otherwise liberty would necessarily yield to absolutism; and in the same way we have learned that unless there be regulation of competition, its excesses will lead to the destruction of competition, and monopoly will take its place. Brandeis was hostile to the new consumerism. Though himself a millionaire, Brandeis disliked wealthy persons who engaged in conspicuous consumption or were ostentatious. He did little shopping himself, and unlike his wealthy friends who owned yachts, he was satisfied with his canoe. He hated advertising which he said "manipulated" average buyers.

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4: Judaism Kosher Sex

HBI Series on Jewish Women The HBI Series on Jewish Women publishes a wide range of books about Jewish women and gender issues in diverse contexts. By offering fresh perspectives on Jewish women's history, lives and experiences worldwide, the series aims to close a major gap in Jewish learning.

As a consequence of the disobedience of Eve in the Garden of Eden, the pangs of childbirth were foretold Gen. References to pangs of travail as the most intense of pains are very frequent in the books of the prophets e. Midwives assisted in the delivery Gen. The Bible records the deaths of Rachel Gen. Biblical law regarding birth is confined to laying down the period of ritual impurity of the mother Lev. The mother of a male child is unclean for seven days, followed by a day period of impurity; these periods are doubled in the case of a female child. At the conclusion of these periods a sin-offering and burnt-offering were brought by the mother. According to the Talmud, the sin-offering is incumbent upon her because during the anguish of childbirth, she foreswears any future relations with her husband, which she later regrets Nid. In the Talmud and the Midrash The sages attributed death during childbirth to neglect of the laws of family purity, failure to separate the dough-offering, and carelessness in kindling the Sabbath lights Shab. Viability began from the time the fetus was six months and one day old, although it was considered as a fact that an eight-month-old fetus was not viable Tosef. However, many midrashim and later commentaries report births of a seven-month-old fetus. The child is not considered viable until it is 30 days old. No death penalty is therefore incurred for killing a newborn child unless it is certain that he could otherwise have lived for 30 days Nid. All work necessary for the delivery of a child may be performed on the Sabbath Shab. Midwives were considered reliable witnesses for accounting for the hour of the birth. The delivery of a child by Caesarean section was not regarded as "an opening of the womb" Ex. Throughout Jewish history, male offspring were desired. In addition, despite contrary opinions in the Talmud, it became accepted that the injunction to be fruitful and multiply was a male and not a female responsibility. Customs and Folklore Among Ashkenazi Jews Most of the customs surrounding birth belong to the category of popular folklore, much of which is not specifically Jewish but was adapted from local cultural surroundings Tosef. The following biblical selections were recited for a woman in labor: Psalms 20; I Samuel 1; Genesis Precious stones and a variety of herbs were used to facilitate delivery, which was usually supervised by an experienced midwife and friends and relatives of the parturient. A magic circle was drawn with chalk or charcoal on the floor of the room to guard against evil spirits. If her travail was difficult, the keys of the synagogue were placed in her hand, she was girded with the band of a Torah Scroll, and prayers were recited at the graveside of pious relatives. In extreme danger, prayers were said for the parturient in the synagogue and a Torah scroll was brought to the house and was left in the corner of the birthing chamber. At times the circumference of the cemetery walls was measured and according to their length a number of candles were donated to the synagogue. They were placed above the bed of the woman and above the doorposts of the room. A popular custom until modern times, in the case of the birth of a male child, was the vigil ceremony which was performed every night. Schoolchildren led by their teachers also participated in this ceremony and were rewarded with apples, nuts, and sweets. Whereas a boy is named at the circumcision, there is no evidence concerning the naming of girls until the 15th century. In early modern sources, we hear of a naming ceremony in the synagogue or at home. In Germany and Western Europe the naming took place in a home ceremony on Sabbath afternoons. Called Hollekreisch, the custom originated in German folklore and superstition. This custom, which was observed for boys and girls, included the lifting of the cradle and the giving of a name. This ritual took place on the afternoon of the Sabbath when the parturient left her home for the first time, about a month after the birth. During the 16th and 17th centuries, in some communities, it became a customary to name girls in the synagogue when the father was called to the reading of the Torah. This custom is still commonly found today. Amulets containing biblical verses were also used, and it was customary to place sweet-meats under the bed so that the evil spirits would be occupied with eating

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them. In Salonika it was customary to leave the doors of the house and all its cupboards open during pregnancy to ensure that the mother would not miscarry. It was also customary to measure a string seven times around the grave of a renowned rabbi and then bind it around the stomach of the pregnant woman to ensure an easy pregnancy. The mother and her relatives also prayed at the graves of pious men in the fifth month of her pregnancy. To ensure that the child would be a male, the mother pronounced the intended name of a boy every Friday. She was guarded for 15 days after birth, and blue beads or pieces of ivory and coral were hung above the cradle of the child. Garlic and other plants were hung in the room, and an open hand was painted on the door. An attempt was made to keep the mother awake for the first three days after birth to prevent Lilith from harming her. In Yemen, a festive meal, at which the name was given, was held on the third day. In Kurdistan the mother was not allowed to leave the house after nightfall for 40 days. Since delivery usually takes place now in modern hospitals, most of these traditional customs at childbirth have tended to disappear, particularly since they were primarily based on medieval superstitious folklore. Naming a daughter at the synagogue, however, has been retained in traditional, Conservative, and Reform Jewish practice. Contemporary Developments in Birth Rituals for Girls The Jewish feminist movement that began in the s encouraged the development of ceremonies to publicly sanctify the entry of Jewish baby girls into the covenant. By the beginning of the 21st century, public welcomes for baby girls had become normative in American Judaism. Some of the ceremonies made use of symbols such as candles brit ha-nerot. Although ceremonies for baby girls are most often held in synagogues during services where the Torah is read, many are now conducted at home like those that accompany circumcisions. In Israel the ceremony or party celebrating the birth of a daughter is sometimes called brita a feminization of the word for covenant. Often, booklets are printed and distributed which announce the name and provide a "script" for the ceremony so that all present may participate. These manuals serve as vehicles for innovation and as educational tools to enable assimilated Jews and the growing number of non-Jews who attend Jewish life cycle rituals to understand and follow what is going on before them. Another evolving aspect of contemporary rituals connected with birth is the inclusion of the mother in ceremonies for sons and daughters. Until the last quarter of the 20th century mothers were often absent from the ceremonies for their sons and the naming of their daughters in the synagogue. Today, in some circles the family waits to name the daughter until the mother is able to be present. She may have a Torah honor in the synagogue and recite the prayer for a safe recovery. Both boys and girls may be named as the children of both mother and father. At a circumcision, the mother as well as the father may be in the room and say the prescribed benedictions. Jakobovits, *Jewish Medical Ethics* , 191; M. Saloniki, *Ir va-Em be-Yisrael* , 93; M. Zadok, *Yehudei Teiman* , 4; N. Baumgarten, *Mothers and Children*: Horowitz, "The Eve of Circumcision: A Chapter in the History of Jewish Nightlife," in: *Customs and Folklore of Jewish Birth* ; I. Marcus, *The Jewish Life Cycle: Sabar*, "Childbirth and Magic. Jewish Folklore and Material Culture," in: *A New History* , 19

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5: Women in Judaism - Wikipedia

Sexual Violence Against Jewish Women During the Holocaust י»ז Hedgepeth, Sonja M. and Sidel, Rochelle G. ()
Death in Birth: The Cultural Construction of Stillbirth, Neonatal Death, and Maternal Death Among Hmong Women in Australia י»ז.

Birth and the First Month of Life Level: For more details about the consequences of this doctrine, see Abortion. Judaism completely rejects the notion of original sin. According to Judaism, a child is born pure, completely free from sin. We pray daily "Oh G-d, the soul which you gave me is pure. You created it, you fashioned it, you breathed it into me. Immediately after birth, a woman is considered niddah and must remain sexually separated from her husband for a period of seven days after the birth of a male child and 14 days after the birth of a female child. This separation is the same as the regular monthly niddah separation. In the days of the Temple , when considerations of ritual purity were more important, a woman was considered partially impure for an additional period of 33 days after the birth of a male child and 66 days after the birth of a female child. No reason is stated why the period is longer for a female child than for a male child; however, one of my resources emphasizes that a female child is not more defiling than a male child, because the method of purification at the end of this period is the same for both genders. After a child is born, the father is given the honor of an aliyah an opportunity to bless the reading of the Torah in synagogue at the next opportunity. At that time, a blessing is recited for the health of the mother and the child. If the child is a girl, she is named at that time. Baby Showers Although attitudes towards this are changing, Jews traditionally did not hold baby showers before the baby was born. In fact, traditionally Jewish parents did not even purchase things for the baby or discuss baby names until the baby was born. The usual reason given for this custom is pure superstition: However, there are solid psychological reasons for this custom as well: There was a time when miscarriages, stillborn babies and infant mortality were quite common. Consider the pain of a parent who has lost a potential child but is left with piles of gifts that the baby will never use, gifts that they have to return, reopening the wound each time. Although this sort of thing is less common today than it was a century ago, it still happens. She became pregnant while she was starring in the TV series Married with Children and the producers decided to incorporate her pregnancy into the storyline In general, you should be guided by the wishes of the parents in these matters. Many Jewish couples today would not think twice about having a baby shower, might even be offended if their friends did not throw one. But some Jewish couples feel strongly about the custom not to have one until after the baby is born, and if that is what they want then you should respect their wishes and wait until after the baby is born to give the new parents presents. If you find it difficult to restrain yourself, consider: Naming a Child The formal Hebrew name is used in Jewish rituals, primarily in calling the person to the Torah for an aliyah , or in the ketubah marriage contract. If the child is a kohein , the suffix ha-Kohein is added. If the child is of the tribe of Levi , the subject Ha-Levi is added. There are no formal religious requirements for naming a child. The name has no inherent religious significance. It is customary among Ashkenazic Jews to name a child after a recently deceased relative. This custom comes partly from a desire to honor the dead relative, and partly from superstition against naming a child after a living relative. It is almost unheard of for an Ashkenazic Jew to be named after his own father, though it does occasionally happen. Among Sephardic Jews, it is not unusual to name a child after a parent or living relative. Circumcision Of all of the commandments in Judaism, the brit milah literally, Covenant of Circumcision is probably the one most universally observed. It is commonly referred to as a bris covenant, using the Ashkenazic pronunciation. Even the most secular of Jews, who observe no other part of Judaism, almost always observe these laws. But keep in mind that there is more to the ritual of the brit milah than merely the process of physically removing the foreskin, and many otherwise non-observant Jews observe the entire ritual. The commandment to circumcise is given at Gen. The covenant was originally made with Abraham. It is the first commandment specific to the Jews. Circumcision is performed only on males. Like so many Jewish

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commandments, the brit milah is commonly perceived to be a hygienic measure; however the biblical text states the reason for this commandment quite clearly: It is also a sign that the Jewish people will be perpetuated through the circumcised man. The health benefits of this practice are merely incidental. It is worth noting, however, that circumcised males have a lower risk of certain cancers, and the sexual partners of circumcised males also have a lower risk of certain cancers. The commandment is binding upon both the father of the child and the child himself. If a father does not have his son circumcised, the son is obligated to have himself circumcised as soon as he becomes an adult. A person who is uncircumcised suffers the penalty of kareit, spiritual excision; in other words, regardless of how good a Jew he is in all other ways, a man has no place in the World to Come if he is uncircumcised. The day the child is born counts as the first day, thus if the child is born on a Wednesday, he is circumcised on the following Wednesday. Keep in mind that Jewish days begin at sunset, so if the child is born on a Wednesday evening, he is circumcised the following Thursday. Circumcisions are performed on Shabbat, even though they involve the drawing of blood which is ordinarily forbidden on Shabbat. As with almost any commandment, circumcision can be postponed for health reasons. Circumcision involves surgically removing the foreskin of the penis. The circumcision is performed by a mohel lit. Circumcision performed by a regular physician does not qualify as a valid brit milah, regardless of whether a rabbi says a blessing over it, because the removal of the foreskin is itself a religious ritual that must be performed by someone religiously qualified. If the child is born without a foreskin it happens occasionally, or if the child was previously circumcised without the appropriate religious intent or in a manner that rendered the circumcision religiously invalid, a symbolic circumcision may be performed by taking a pinprick of blood from the tip of the penis. This is referred to as hatafat dam brit. While the circumcision is performed, the child is held by a person called a sandek. In English, this is often referred to as a godfather. It is an honor to be a sandek for a bris. The sandek is usually a grandparent or the family rabbi. Traditionally, a chair often an ornate one is set aside for Elijah, who is said to preside over all circumcisions. The child is then given a formal Hebrew name. It is not necessary to have a minyan for a bris, but it is desirable if feasible. As with most Jewish life events, the ritual is followed by refreshments or a festive meal. The Circumcision Controversy In recent times, circumcision has become controversial. Some have hypothesized that infant circumcision has harmful psychological effects and may cause sexual dysfunction. Many websites have sprung up promoting this point of view, and even in Israel there are those who want to outlaw circumcision as child abuse. To the best of my knowledge, there is no concrete, scientific evidence that circumcision has any harmful effect. The rate of complications from circumcision is one of the lowest of all surgical procedures, and the most common complication is simply excessive bleeding. At most, the latest scientific evidence indicates that the health benefits of circumcision are not as great as previously assumed, thus there is no reason to perform routine circumcisions for the purposes of hygiene. However, as stated above, Jewish circumcision is not performed for the purpose of hygiene. But even this finding is controversial: In any case, circumcision is no substitute for safe sex! From the traditional Jewish point of view, there is no controversy. The ritual of circumcision was commanded by our Creator, and He certainly knows what is and is not good for us. The G-d who commanded us not to harm ourselves certainly would not command us to do something harmful to ourselves, and even if He did, the observant Jew would nonetheless heed His wishes. For more information on the traditional Jewish response to the circumcision controversy, see Bris Milah: Redemption of the First Born The first and best of all things belong to G-d. This is true even of the firstborn of children. Originally, it was intended that the firstborn would serve as the priests and Temple functionaries of Israel; however, after the incident of the Golden Calf, in which the tribe of Levi did not participate, G-d chose the tribe of Levi over the firstborn for this sacred role. This is explained in Num. However, even though their place has been taken by the Levites, the firstborn still retain a certain degree of sanctity, and for this reason, they must be redeemed. The ritual of redemption is referred to as pidyon ha-ben, literally, Redemption of the Son. A firstborn son must be redeemed after he reaches 31 days of age. Ordinarily, the ritual is performed on the 31st day the day of birth being the first day; however, the ritual cannot be performed on Shabbat because it involves the exchange of

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money. The child is redeemed by paying a small sum five silver shekels in biblical times; today, usually five silver dollars to a kohein preferably a pious one familiar with the procedure and performing a brief ritual. This procedure is commanded at Num. It is important to remember that rabbis are not necessarily koheins and koheins are not necessarily rabbis. Redemption from a rabbi is not valid unless the rabbi is also a kohein. The ritual of pidyon ha-ben applies to a relatively small number of Jews. It applies only to the firstborn male child if it is born by natural childbirth. Thus, if a female is the firstborn, no child in the family is subject to the ritual. If the first child is born by Caesarean section, the ritual does not apply to that child nor, according to most sources, to any child born after that child. It does not apply to members of the tribe of Levi, or children born to a daughter of a member of the tribe of Levi. Adoption There is no formal procedure of adoption in Jewish law. Adoption as it exists in civil law is irrelevant, because civil adoption is essentially a transfer of title from one parent to another, and in Jewish law, parents do not own their children. However, Judaism does have certain laws that are relevant in circumstances where a child is raised by someone other than the birth parents.

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6: Judaism Birth and the First Month of Life

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They say that in case natural reproduction does not succeed, it gives a tacit approval for assisted reproduction. The implied flexibility of the Torah regarding assisted reproduction should not surprise us. After all, three out of four biblical matriarchs suffered from infertility. The narrative provides much of the human drama in the relationships between the matriarchs and their husbands, and the matriarchs and God. The three matriarchs dealt in different ways with their tragic circumstances. Our Mothers Sarah bitterly resigned herself to not having children, and even laughed a cynical laugh when presented with the possibility of conception at an advanced age. Rebecca was more positive. Rachel, used desperate measures. She declared to Jacob: Reuven, the firstborn son of Leah, returned from the field with some plants called "dudaim" Genesis The biblical commentator Nachmanides suggested that these plants were herbs which promoted conception. Reuven presented them to his mother for her use. Rachel observed this and begged her sister for the plants. Then she made a deal: Rachel was finally "remembered" by God, and she conceived and bore Joseph. Yesterday and Today Infertility was not only a painful and tragic experience for the Matriarchs. It continues to afflict many Jewish couples. The biblical notion of infertility was that it was due to the female. Surprisingly, the cause of infertility among Orthodox Jewish couples today is predominantly due to male factors. The reason for this difference may have to do with the low incidence of pelvic inflammatory disease among Orthodox women who are generally sexually inactive before marriage. Pelvic inflammatory disease increases the rate of female infertility in the general population so that it slightly exceeds male infertility. Talmudic ideas of reproduction in many ways reflect the notions of those times. There are three partners in man: The Holy One, blessed be he, the father and the mother. The mother supplies semen, the red substance, out of which are formed the skin, flesh, hair, blood and the black of the eye. God provides the spirit, the soul, the beauty of the features, eyesight, the power of hearing, ability to speak and walk, understanding and intelligence. Although the Talmud was unable to explain the scientific mechanisms of inheritance of traits, it was enlightened in assigning a role to the female "semen". Many scholars of that time believed that the female simply provided an incubator for the male seed to grow into a child. Even the Torah recognized the presence of a female seed with the passage: Modern Concepts and Practice Today, of course, we know of the genetic mechanisms of inheritance. There are many thousands of genes inherited by a child which control the physical attributes of the child. For most traits a child inherits two copies of each gene, one from the mother and one from the father. The individual copies of each gene can interact with each other. A copy from one parent may be dominant over the other, and be preferentially expressed in the child. Or the two copies may work together to produce a combination or blended trait. Assisted reproductive technology which is available today enables many infertile couples to fulfill the biblical commandment to "be fruitful and multiply". Technological advances have led to the development of In Vitro Fertilization, where the sperm from the father and the egg from the mother are mixed together in a petri dish in the laboratory, and the sperm is allowed to fertilize the egg, producing a "test-tube baby. In IVF conception takes place outside of the body. This technique overcomes the problem of scarred, damaged or blocked fallopian tubes which prevent the sperm from reaching the eggs, and the eggs from reaching the uterus. It also allows men with low sperm counts to conceive, as sperm samples can be concentrated and deposited adjacent to the ripe eggs. Only small numbers of viable sperm are needed for successful fertilization in a petri dish. With this technique a man who produces no sperm in his ejaculate can become a father. Pieces of tissue from the testicle can be used. Only a few sperm cells need to be isolated from the testis, and those cells can be mechanically injected, one by one, into individual eggs. Another variation involves a process called Assisted Hatching. In Assisted Hatching a small opening is made in the clear zone, or "shell" around the egg. The process is done to allow the fertilized egg to emerge

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properly, as this can assist it to implant into the lining of the uterus. Since there is a biblical admonition regarding the "spilling of seed", some rabbis insist that the husband may not ejaculate to provide a specimen. However, since the intention of the procedure is specifically to enhance procreation and the semen is not being wasted, ejaculation to produce the semen may indeed be permissible. When there are three or more fetuses growing in the womb, this results in a high risk pregnancy, and fetal reduction, or selectively eliminating one or more of the fetuses, may be recommended. Is this halachically permissible? Ending the life of a fetus is not considered murder by halachic definition, but it is not permissible either. This would only be permitted if the doctor has determined that some fetuses must be eliminated or they will all die. Even then, the decision is a very sensitive one and must be made by the doctor. The eggs are harvested and fertilized, but only three or four can be used in that cycle. The rest can be preserved by freezing. How does Jewish law address the issue of extra embryos? The fate of extra embryos could include: A Use of them by the original couple to establish future pregnancies rabbis affirm this use. B Destruction of the extra embryos permissible halachically if this is done passively, by letting them thaw out and die on their own. C The use of these extra embryos for research. Since this is an active process and results, ultimately, in their destruction, this is not generally acceptable by Orthodox rabbis. D Donation of the extra embryos to another infertile couple. Even worse than inadvertent errors, are the cases of deliberate tampering with sperm, eggs and embryos which have been discovered in unscrupulous fertility labs! Since parentage is of vital concern, some Orthodox rabbis would like to see trained supervisors present during IVF of Jewish couples. The supervisors will reportedly be present during the entire procedure to ensure that halachic protocol is followed, and that meticulous attention to the accuracy in the process is maintained.

Donor Sperm and Eggs The issues involved in using donor sperm or eggs can create halachic problems. Artificial insemination has been performed for many years, and the question of the halachic validity of this procedure has been discussed by many sources. However, the idea of using donor sperm has not been accepted by many rabbis. While the use of donor sperm is not considered adultery per se since sexual relations are not involved, it is still considered an abomination by many, and is strongly discouraged. Rabbinic sources generally agree that paternity is determined by who provides the sperm, so that a baby conceived from donor sperm would not, halachically, be considered the child of the infertile husband. When an egg donor provides an egg for an infertile couple, the recipient, usually a sterile woman who cannot produce eggs, serves as the gestational and birth mother and she gives birth to and raises the baby as her own. In this case there are two categories of motherhood: These -- now separate -- functions can be performed by two different people, who may or may not be related to each other and may or may not have any connection with each other other than their individual contributions to producing and raising the child. There are rabbinical authorities who reject outright the idea of using donor eggs. Others believe that a woman may receive donor eggs as long as her husband has consented. The question of who is the mother is extremely complicated to answer. This is certainly a critical question as it impacts on the status and identity of the baby. According to traditional Judaism, the status of "who is a Jew" is determined by whether or not the mother is Jewish. In the case where the genetic mother and the gestational mother are the same person, then the issue is clear. What happens when the genetic mother is a different person from the gestational mother? Which mother is considered the mother for the halachic decision on religious status? If the genetic mother is not Jewish and the gestational mother is, what is the status of that infant? Rabbi Moshe Heinemann, Rabbinic administrator of Star-K Kosher Certification states unequivocally that if the egg is from a Nonjewish woman, then the baby is not Jewish. In this very stringent ruling, when a donor egg is used, the birth mother is not considered the halachic mother. Other rabbinic authorities have also addressed this question and have concluded that there is halachic uncertainty regarding who is the mother. Rabbi Moshe Tendler writes: In fact, many halachic authorities regard the birth mother, rather than the egg donor, as having maternal status. The halakhah on many issues relies on what can be readily observed with the naked eye. For instance, microscopic or small amounts of nonkosher contaminants in kosher foods, do not necessarily render the food nonkosher. Thus, the decision on maternity may be based on which mother gives birth an action which is incontrovertible, and

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readily proven, rather than which mother provided the egg a microscopic contribution, albeit a critical one. On the other hand, considering the important role Yichus, or inherited status, plays in some Jewish circles, genetic status could be of paramount importance, and perhaps the mother who provided the egg should determine Jewish status. Men and Women Must Procreate The biblical commandment to have children is the first commandment given to Adam after he was created. A similar directive is given in Isaiah. The quote from Isaiah, commentators have explained, pertains both to men and women: It is clear that the scriptures have directed Jews to procreate, and this directive is so critical that Torah scholars agree it could be accomplished by natural or artificial means. The challenge of assisted reproductive technologies will be to sort out the complex relationships created by artificial reproductive processes, and to determine where to draw the line in terms of what techniques are ethical and permissible, which advances are questionable, and which are unacceptable. JCN, reprinted by permission of the author.

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7: UPNE | Brandeis Series in American Jewish History, Culture, and Life & HBI Series on Jewish Women

The HBI Series on Jewish women, created by the Hadassah-Brandeis Institute, publishes a wide range of books by and about Jewish women in diverse contexts and time periods. of interest to scholars and the.

Intermediate The primary purpose of sex is to reinforce the marital bond Sexual desire is not evil, but must be satisfied in the proper time, place and manner Note: This page addresses issues of Jewish law that may not be appropriate for younger readers. In places, it discusses sexual behavior in plain and frank terms. Please exercise appropriate discretion. This page explains some traditional Jewish points of view about sex and sexuality that you may find offensive. Indeed, even some Jewish movements have rejected some of these viewpoints in modern times. Other points of view are more liberal than you would expect, and may offend those with more conservative sensibilities. Jewish Attitudes Towards Sexuality In Jewish law , sex is not considered shameful, sinful or obscene. Sex is not thought of as a necessary evil for the sole purpose of procreation. Although sexual desire comes from the yetzer ra the evil impulse , it is no more evil than hunger or thirst, which also come from the yetzer ra. Like hunger, thirst or other basic instincts, sexual desire must be controlled and channeled, satisfied at the proper time, place and manner. But when sexual desire is satisfied between a husband and wife at the proper time, out of mutual love and desire, sex is a mitzvah. Sex is permissible only within the context of a marriage. In Judaism, sex is not merely a way of experiencing physical pleasure. It is an act of immense significance, which requires commitment and responsibility. The requirement of marriage before sex ensures that sense of commitment and responsibility. Jewish law also forbids sexual contact short of intercourse outside of the context of marriage, recognizing that such contact will inevitably lead to intercourse. The primary purpose of sex is to reinforce the loving marital bond between husband and wife. The first and foremost purpose of marriage is companionship, and sexual relations play an important role. Procreation is also a reason for sex, but it is not the only reason. Sex between husband and wife is permitted even recommended at times when conception is impossible, such as when the woman is pregnant, after menopause, or when the woman is using a permissible form of contraception. In the Torah , the word used for sex between husband and wife comes from the root Yod-Dalet-Ayin, meaning "to know," which vividly illustrates that proper Jewish sexuality involves both the heart and mind, not merely the body. Nevertheless, Judaism does not ignore the physical component of sexuality. The need for physical compatibility between husband and wife is recognized in Jewish law. A Jewish couple must meet at least once before the marriage , and if either prospective spouse finds the other physically repulsive, the marriage is forbidden. Sex should only be experienced in a time of joy. A man may never force his wife to have sex. A couple may not have sexual relations while drunk or quarreling. Sex may never be used as a weapon against a spouse, either by depriving the spouse of sex or by compelling it. It is a serious offense to use sex or lack thereof to punish or manipulate a spouse. A man has a duty to give his wife sex regularly and to ensure that sex is pleasurable for her. He is also obligated to watch for signs that his wife wants sex, and to offer it to her without her asking for it. The Talmud specifies both the quantity and quality of sex that a man must give his wife. A man may not take a vow to abstain from sex for an extended period of time, and may not take a journey for an extended period of time, because that would deprive his wife of sexual relations. A woman may not withhold sex from her husband as a form of punishment, and if she does, the husband may divorce her without paying the substantial divorce settlement provided for in the ketubah. As one passage in the Talmud states, "a man may do whatever he pleases with his wife. Any stories you may have heard about Jewish sex occurring through a hole in a sheet are purely an urban legend. These laws are also known as taharat ha-mishpachah, family purity. Few people outside of the Orthodox community are even aware that these laws exist, which is unfortunate, because these laws provide many undeniable benefits. The laws of niddah are not deliberately kept secret; they are simply unknown because most non-Orthodox Jews do not continue their religious education beyond bar mitzvah , and these laws address subjects that are not really suitable for

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discussion with children under the age of According to the Torah , a man is forbidden from having sexual intercourse with a niddah, that is, a menstruating woman. This is part of the extensive laws of ritual purity described in the Torah. At one time, a large portion of Jewish law revolved around questions of ritual purity and impurity. The law of niddah is the only law of ritual purity that continues to be observed today; all of the other laws applied only when the Temple was in existence, but are not applicable today. The Torah prohibits only sexual intercourse, but the rabbis broadened this prohibition, maintaining that a man may not even touch his wife or sleep in the same bed as her during this time. Weddings must be scheduled carefully, so that the woman is not in a state of niddah on her wedding night. At the end of the period of niddah, as soon as possible after nightfall after the seventh clean day, the woman must immerse herself in a kosher mikvah, a ritual pool. The mikvah was traditionally used to cleanse a person of various forms of ritual impurity. Today, it is used primarily for this purpose and as part of the ritual of conversion , though in some communities observant men periodically immerse themselves for reasons of ritual purity. It is important to note that the mikvah provides only ritual purification, not physical cleanliness; in fact, immersion in the mikvah is not valid unless the woman is thoroughly bathed before immersion. The mikvah is such an important part of traditional Jewish ritual life that traditionally a new community would build a mikvah before they would build a synagogue. The Torah does not specify the reason for the laws of niddah, but this period of abstention has both physical and psychological benefits. The fertility benefits of this practice are obvious and undeniable. In fact, it is remarkable how closely these laws parallel the advice given by medical professionals today. The rejection of this practice by the liberal movements of Judaism is not a matter of "informed choice," but simply a matter of ignorance or blind prejudice. In addition, women who have sexual intercourse during their menstrual period are more vulnerable to a variety of vaginal infections, as well as increased risk of cervical cancer. But the benefits that the rabbis have always emphasized are the psychological ones, not the physical ones. The rabbis noted that a two-week period of abstention every month forces a couple to build a non-sexual bond as well as a sexual one. It also gives both partners a chance to rest, without feeling sexually inadequate. They also emphasized the value of self-discipline in a drive as fundamental as the sexual drive. Birth Control In principle, birth control is permitted, so long as the couple is committed to eventually fulfilling the mitzvah to be fruitful and multiply which, at a minimum, consists of having two children, one of each gender. The issue in birth control is not whether it is permitted, but what method is permitted, and under what circumstances. Birth control is rather clearly permitted in circumstances where pregnancy would pose a medical risk to the mother or her other children. For example, the Talmud recognizes the use of birth control by very young women, pregnant women or nursing women. However, there is some variance of opinion as to what other circumstances might permit birth control. If this is an issue for you, you should consult a competent rabbinic authority. It is well-established that methods that destroy the seed or block the passage of the seed are not permitted, thus condoms are not permitted for birth control. However, the pill is well-recognized as an acceptable form of birth control under Jewish law. I have also heard some say that a condom would be permitted under Jewish law to prevent the transmission of AIDS or similar diseases, because preserving the life of the uninfected spouse takes priority; however, I am not certain how authoritative this view is. Abortion Jewish law not only permits, but in some circumstances requires abortion. An unborn child has the status of "potential human life" until the majority of the body has emerged from the mother. Potential human life is valuable, and may not be terminated casually, but it does not have as much value as a life in existence. The Talmud makes no bones about this: Homosexuality Sexual relations between men are clearly forbidden by the Torah. Such acts are condemned in the strongest possible terms, as abhorrent. The only other sexual sin that is described in such strong terms is the sin of remarrying a woman you had divorced after she had been married to another man. The sin of sexual relations between men is punishable by death Lev. It is important to note, however, that it is homosexual acts that are forbidden, not homosexual orientation. I have seen some modern Orthodox sources suggest that if homosexuality is truly something hardwired in the brain, as most gay activists suggest, then a man who acts upon that desire is not morally responsible for his actions, but I am not

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sure how wide-spread that opinion is. In any case, it is not quite as liberal a position as some would have you believe: Interestingly, female same-sex relations are not forbidden by the Torah. There is very little discussion of female homosexuality in the Talmud. The few sources that mention lesbian relations say that they do not disqualify a woman from certain privileges of the priesthood, because it is "merely licentiousness. Rambam asserted that lesbian practices are forbidden because it was a "practice of Egypt" and because it constituted rebelliousness. Masturbation Jewish law clearly prohibits male masturbation. This law is derived from the story of Onan Gen. G-d killed Onan for this sin. In fact, the prohibition is so strict that one passage in the Talmud states, "in the case of a man, the hand that reaches below the navel should be chopped off. Obviously, spilling the seed is not going to happen in female masturbation, and there is no explicit Torah prohibition against female masturbation. Nevertheless, Judaism generally frowns upon female masturbation as "impure thoughts. It addresses the laws of marital relations, sexuality outside of marriage, procreation and contraception, abortion and rape. I was using that page title years before his book came out! The book talks about sex in the context of a committed, loving relationship, trying to find a proper balance between deep friendship and passionate lovemaking, within the context of Jewish Law. [Click Here](#) for more details.

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8: Louis Brandeis - Wikipedia

HBI Series on Jewish Women. General Editor: Sylvia Barack Fishman Associate Editor: Lisa Fishbayn Joffe The HBI Series on Jewish Women, created by the Hadassah-Brandeis Institute, publishes a wide range of books by and about Jewish women in diverse contexts and time periods.

He was the first Jewish associate justice of the Court, and Susan would soon be the first woman lawyer whose parent sat on that bench. The Brandeises were nonobservant Jews. For a while, her maternal aunt, Josephine Goldmark, came to help the family. Her father directed the household and the raising of his daughters. His intellectual influence was also profound: Susan became a lawyer, while Elizabeth became an economics professor at the University of Wisconsin. In looks, inner drive, vigor, and political and social skills, Gilbert took after her father. In her lifelong lack of interest in cooking and clothes, she resembled her mother. Her social consciousness, morals, and social values were a legacy of both her parents. To her, literature, law, and causes for human equality were always more important than material possessions. In , she worked for woman suffrage in Boston. New York City became her home in . The Brandeis family spent their summers together at the family home in Chatham, Massachusetts, where they boated and swam daily. Although Louis and Alice Brandeis lived frugally, they were important philanthropists supporting Hadassah, Zionism, and the University of Kentucky. Admitted to the New York bar in , no law firm would hire her because she was a woman, an event Susan Gilbert remembered all her life. That her father sat on the United States Supreme Court made no difference. She prosecuted the Trenton Pottery antitrust suit. Shortly thereafter, she went into private practice with Samuel Rosenman. When she came before the Supreme Court to argue a case, Louis Brandeis removed himself from the bench to avoid a conflict of interest. Gilbert lost the case. She met Jacob Gilbert, who was the opposing attorney in a minor landlord-tenant case. In , she and her husband established the law firm of Gilbert and Brandeis. A very private woman, Gilbert compartmentalized her life. Many people knew some of her activities, but few people knew all of them. When Brandeis University was founded in Waltham, Massachusetts, in , Susan and Jacob Gilbert were deeply involved in its development. Her husband, Jacob, died on April 8, Susan Gilbert suffered a stroke several years before her death on October 8, . Their three children survived them. Louis Brandeis ; Thomas, Dorothy. *Women Lawyers in the United States*

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9: Judaism or Jewishness? by Elliot Abrams | Articles | First Things

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That decision was part of a process their descendants now continue: Their decision to come to America brought them the challenges that Jews today have inherited: The earliest Jewish settlers in America were Sephardim, descendants of Jews who had been expelled from Spain in and had fled to places such as the Ottoman Empire, Holland, and Brazil. They arrived in Dutch and British colonial America, driven to emigrate there by the same forces that propelled other early settlers. In America they soon lived not as poor immigrants in separate neighborhoods, but as respected and often prosperous, influential citizens. And they not only mixed with but very often assimilated into the Christian gentry, who accepted them as fellow members of the upper reaches of society. These early communities eagerly supported the Revolutionary ideals of individual rights and freedom of conscience, which American statesmen learned from the Enlightenment. Viewing themselves not as a community apart but as Americans of Jewish faith, they fought for full citizenship rights and the disestablishment of Christianity as a state religion. At the national level, they shared the victory when the First Amendment to the Constitution was adopted, prohibiting an establishment of religion and guaranteeing them, and all others, the free exercise of their faith. The Jews did not seek to separate religion and society, nor did they argue that the government could not support religion in general. Rather, they demanded that it be absolutely neutral among religions. And the Constitution was a great advance toward this goal. At the state level, however, Jews continued to suffer from disabilities that must have reminded these Sephardim of their experiences in less enlightened regions of Christendom. The constitutions of nine of the thirteen original states contained a reference to Christianity, and four allowed tax assessments for church support. In fact, not until the Civil War was full political equality for American Jews achieved. The public agenda of American Jews was, then, the demand for equality, and they defined the religious liberty guaranteed in the Constitution as meaning nothing less. They pressed not for a secular state or society, but for treatment of Judaism no less favorable than that accorded Christianity. This would be an historic achievement and a sharp break with the past experience of Jew and Christian alike. The strategy of the Jewish community for gaining a secure place in the new United States, then, may be described as insisting on government neutrality among religions. But soon, when many new immigrants from Germany arrived, this strategy began to seem inadequate. For Jews, the Enlightenment, the Haskalah, meant throwing off the patterns of life and thought with which they had bound themselves for centuries. It meant a new way of dealing with Christian neighbors and a new relationship with the government, which in many places began to grant Jews more rights as citizens. This was a physical action for some, coming from shtetls and small towns, and a psychological change for others, who emerged from urban ghettos. In small towns, in rabbinical courts, and in cities renowned for Jewish learning, Jews in Europe had lived for centuries next to, yet apart from, their Christian neighbors. The Jewish community had not only its own religion, but its own Yiddish language, its own economy, its own system of justice. It had never been entirely cut off from Christian society, and Jews had sold their merchandise to Christians and bought from them the products of the land Jews were forbidden to own. But the Jewish community had enveloped its members and Judaism set the pattern of their days. Its autonomy and its inner peace were broken by the violence of Christian neighbors and Christian princes, seeking taxes and, on occasion, blood. But in the nineteenth century Jews began to join the social and political, and more of the economic, activities of the people among whom they lived. From the Jewish community emerged philosophers and composers, businessmen and financiers, whose lives were played out not within the walls of a ghetto, but in the wider life of the country they inhabited. The first waves of Jewish immigrants from Central and Eastern Europe arrived from Germany in the s. There had been just a few thousand Sephardic Jews here in the early s, but the German immigration increased their ranks to fifty thousand by , and again to three times that number

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by They were escaping the disappointments of a Europe where, especially after the revolutionary hopes of were dashed, Jews still faced great danger and discrimination. They were also escaping their own pasts, leaving traditional communities governed by Orthodox authorities. It is not surprising that these enterprising and youthful arrivals were drawn from less, rather than more, religious elements of the German Jewish community. In America, they sought what they could not fully obtain back home: How could this be achieved? The now enlarged community of American Jews, most originating in Germany, began to envision a new strategy: Meanwhile, absolute separation of church and state, not benevolent government support of all religious groups, gradually became the community consensus on public policy. Their argument for absolute separation was strong. The country they saw before them, and the memories they carried with them, made this seem the logical course to increasing numbers of Jews and their leaders. To begin with, they had experienced government support of established churches in Europe. They did not believe that government would actually remain neutral in any country where the vast majority of citizens were Christian. How would this be possible when many in the populace, the government, and the churches feared and hated Jews? This issue arose in disparate areas of life. While full political rights had been won by the time of the Civil War, other battles continued. Must Jews who closed their shops on Saturday close them on Sunday as well? Would there be Bible reading in public schools, and if so, whose Bible? Were Jewish children to be preached to from the New Testament each morning? Second, this conclusion was further reinforced by the arrival, just as the German Jews were reaching America, of large numbers of Catholics from Ireland and Germany. Given the historic link between the Catholic Church and anti-Semitism in Europe, it was predictable that Jews would fear to see Catholicism strengthened in America. Far better, again, to ensure that government would do nothing to assist the Church. Third, Jews who wanted to see reforms of their own faith in Germany had often had to contend with official support for the Orthodox rabbinate. Separation of church and state meant that the government would leave them to themselves to sort out Jewish community affairs. If the Orthodox authorities had no civil power over Jews, Jews would be free to be irreligious or to define new religious practices they felt more fitting for the modern world. So the popularity of Reform Judaism among the German immigrants also argued for keeping the state out of religious affairs altogether. Finally, the German Jews arrived here when the goal of previous generations, government neutrality, was already ensconced in the Bill of Rights. They did not have to fight for toleration or legal rights, at least from the national government. They could raise their sights and ask for more: For, as they became more and more American in their ways, religion alone was what separated them from their fellow citizens. To minimize this divisive factor seemed the safest path. Jews were coming to believe that their community might be weaker internally, yet safer nonetheless, if the separation between church and state were strengthened while that between Christian and Jew disappeared. Besides, the Jewish community of the early s was now filled with immigrants who, whatever their level of ritual observance, spoke Yiddish, lived among themselves, and were Orthodox at least in their religious training and education. What is more, community solidarity was reinforced by pressure from without, by anti-Semitism. The lynching of Leo Frank by a Georgia mob reminded Jews that, even in America, anti-Semitism could bring violence and death. Given the extremely high levels of prejudice and anti-Semitism prevalent then, the foreignness of the newly arrived Jews, and their intense desire to become part of American society, the risk of assimilation evoked far less concern than the challenge of achieving full participation in this new society. By the early twentieth century, the Jewish community was rapidly being swelled by yet a new immigration: While their arrival transformed much in American Jewish life, it only reinforced the view that a secular American society was the safest one for Jews. Like the German Jews, these newcomers were escaping not only government oppression, but sometimes family and religious authority as well. For a young Jewish man or woman, the Tsar was a distant tyrant; there were often others closer at hand. The vast majority came from religiously observant, indeed Orthodox, families. Here, in America, their Orthodoxy crumbled. From a religious point of view, the transition from a shtetl to life in an American city was devastating. It falls to pieces. The very clothes I wore and the very food I ate had a fatal effect on my religious habits. He and my grandmother had an entirely

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Orthodox upbringing, and to the day they died their household remained strictly kosher. But when employers required that he work on the Sabbath, he complied. The synagogue, and religious law, took second place to the need to feed five children. A chain smoker until his death, he was soon smoking on the Sabbath, too, and by the time I knew him he confined his visits to the synagogue to the High Holidays. The society operated to Christian rhythms: Sabbath closing laws shut stores on Sunday, not Saturday. The food, as David Levinsky said, violated Jewish dietary laws, not those of Christians. Abraham Cahan knew what the rabbi meant. For the Puritans, the New World had provided the opportunity to practice their religion more freely than had the Old, and they saw themselves as the successors to the ancient Hebrews striking out into the wilderness. For the descendants of those Hebrews, life in America, far from reinforcing their religious practices, eroded them. In addition, the very individualism of the Enlightenment philosophers subverted the spirit of Jewish peoplehood. The free individual choice of which those thinkers wrote, and which was sanctified in the American Constitution, was absolutely contrary to the Jewish idea of covenant and commandment. Jewish law was about the collective, inherited obligation to God of an entire people. Could anything have been further from the modern notion that each individual must freely choose his faith? And could anything have been more subversive of the idea that Jews were by birth bound to commandments than a philosophy suggesting that men were free at birth from any religious obligations whatsoever? But there is more: Nathan Glazer, professor emeritus of sociology at Harvard and author of the classic study *American Judaism*, wisely described the problem: Judaism is even more vulnerable to the unsettling influence of modernity than is Christianity. Judaism emphasizes acts, rituals, habits, a way of life. Under these circumstances, an entire way of life disintegrated. Professor Glazer was suggesting not that there are no doctrines in Judaism, but that East European Jews had tended to concentrate on ritual far more than on doctrine. Some came for economic opportunity, some to escape the draft, and many to escape oppression, but they did not come to pray. And when they did come to America for religious freedom, very often they were seeking the freedom to be irreligious. In Europe they had performed the rituals, for there was parental and social pressure to do so, and it was easier to live as a Jew than to violate community norms.

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