Contraceptives, Onanism, and Seed Wasting

In the wake of the Zika epidemic I was asked if it is permissible for people in danger zones to use contraceptives, and more specifically, if men are allowed to use condoms.

The answer to both parts of the question is positive. Now, many women in the orthodox use different contraception methods, some after consulting rabbis and some on their own. The use of condoms, however, is automatically labeled by most orthodox Jews as a prohibition because it causes the man’s semen, or seed, to be wasted.

As we will see in the next several posts, the “prohibition” of wasting one’s seed has no source in the Torah, and very little basis in Mishnaic literature. In Talmudic and medieval eras its status has been elevated to almost become one of the 613 Mitzvoth, and Kabbalah and Hassidut have turned it into the original sin, which afflicts all men and from which there is no escape. In the 19th century there were some orthodox rabbis in Poland and the Ukraine who started moving at the direction of finding solutions for the many problems produced by this “prohibition”, but their opinion was rejected very quickly because of the tradition previously described.

One very important point we must have in mind as we broach the subject is the definition of wasting. It seems that all sources speaking of wasted semen understand is as “seed” which is not used to produce children. We know, however, that the normal range for the number of sperm per milliliter is 40 million to 300 million. Does this mean that any man who does not have 40 to 300 million children has wasted the rest of his seed?

The answer to this question is the key to the whole discussion, as we will later see, but meanwhile, I would like to leave the readers with two questions I have been asked which are related to the one above.

One was a general question concerning couples who wish to use contraceptives because of physical, emotional, or financial reasons, or simple because they already have several children and they feel that they cannot properly attend to more children. The other was a specific case of a woman who was forbidden by the doctors to become pregnant because of a heart problem, and because of the same problem was not able to use hormone based contraceptives. In both cases the question was whether the man is allowed to use contraceptives in case the woman cannot do so for medical reasons.

In the second case the doctor, who happened to be an orthodox Jew, told the man that he has consulted rabbis who agreed than in such a case the man should use contraceptives. The husband, who was brought up in an orthodox environment, did not feel comfortable with this “lenient” approach and came to ask me to explain to him the basis for the doctor’s ruling. I did as he requested and showed him the evolution of the prohibition from Talmudic to modern times, as well as the reason he should listen to his doctor. The husband still sought a second rabbinic opinion and indeed several of his more “strict” rabbis told him that his soul will burn in hell for
eternity if he wears a condom and that he should rather use a sperm-killing spray, which has 99% efficiency. The man listened to them, but alas, the 1% percent was enough to start a failed pregnancy which put his wife’s at great risk.

The man then came again to see me and this time he regretted for putting his wife through this ordeal but asked whether he should now follow his doctor’s advice or rather have his wife undergo hysterectomy or tubectomy. I again explained why it is fine for him to be the one who uses contraceptives and that it is inconceivable to make his wife go through invasive surgery and the emotional pain involved in it.

These questions, and the immense complications related to them, are just the tip of the iceberg. The prohibition against wasting the man’s seed puts tens, if not hundreds, of thousands of people at a physical or mental risk, and it is about time that it will be addressed methodically. We are going to review the relevant sources, starting with the Torah, as well as consider the scientific knowledge available to Mishnaic and Talmudic sages.

For the time being, I will leave the readers with the only voice of reason I was able to find in the literature of previous generations, that of Rabbi Abraham of Staszow ¹, as cited by his contemporary Rabbi Mordechai Shalom of Brzezany²:

I was asked by the rabbi, the great luminary, head of the Beth Din in Staszow, Poland, what to do in a case of a woman whose life will be in danger, according to the doctors, if she becomes pregnant. She tried using a diaphragm pessary to no avail since it moves about and can only be put in by a doctor. The rabbi asked whether it would be allowed for the husband to wear a rubber pocket on his member, and opined that it would be permissible since protecting the wife’s life overrides all other concerns.

As we shall see, Rabbi Shalom Mordechai disagreed with this opinion, but it nevertheless exists.

The Myth of Onanism

*Onanism: masturbation; coitus interruptus; self-gratification. Probably from New Latin onanismus, from Onan, son of Judah (Genesis 38:9). First Known Use: circa 1741.*
Onan: Biblical character. In the Book of Genesis Onan was commanded by his father to impregnate the widow of his slain brother and to raise the offspring of the union. In order to avoid raising descendants for his late brother, however, Onan engaged in coitus interruptus.  

In the previous post, I mentioned that the concept of “wasted seed” has no basis in the Torah or the Bible. If some of the readers found this statement questionable, they did not make their doubts known to me, so I will raise the question myself. As we can see from the dictionary entry cited above, it is widely accepted, even among non-Jews, that Yehudah’s son Onan committed the grave sin of wasting his seed, so how can one argue that the concept has no basis in the Torah?

To answer that question we should look at the biblical text:

נָוָי, יָרָע בָּנָיִיתָה יְהוּדָה רַע בְּעֵין יָי, נָשָׁה, דַּאֲרָא הַנֵּכָּה אַל-וֹ קָאָשָׁה שִׁטּוּחַ עָבָּה וּמַמְסָּה וּרְאֵהְו.

Er, the firstborn of Yehudah, was evil in the eyes of God, so God took his life. Yehudah told Onan, come to your brother’s wife as the levirate law mandates, and establish an heir for your brother. Onan knew that the child (lit.: seed) will not be his, so when he would come to his brother’s wife he would destroy (the seed) to the ground, so it shall not be given to his brother. His deeds were evil in the eyes of God, and he took his life as well.

When we read the story without preconceived notions, we realize that there is no room for the argument that Onan’s sin was “wasting his seed.” His sin was rather extreme selfishness and his reluctance to perpetuate his brother’s dynasty. As we shall see, in biblical time the concept of the levirate law, according to which the wife of a deceased brother was married to the brother, was the mirror image of the surrogate mother process. The living brother acted as a surrogate father to a child who was considered the son of the widow and the deceased brother.
In the much later mystical literature we find the notion that the product of the levirate marriage is the reincarnation of the soul of the deceased, but it is very probable that already in ancient time the child was viewed as not only the legal heir of his dead “father” but as his spiritual doppelganger as well.

This understanding sheds light on the act of Onan, as well as on the two other cases of levirate law mentioned in the bible. One is in the legal codex of Deuteronomy:

In free translation, we are told that if one brother dies childless, his brother must marry the widow, so that their son will be named after the deceased brother. In case the living brother refuses to do so, he is summoned by the widow to the gate, where the elders try to convince him to perform the levirate law. If he still refuses, he is publicly humiliated in front of the elders by the widow, who removes his shoe and spits in his face.

This paragraph shows the great opposition brothers would show to the levirate law, though the reason for that attitude is not clearly stated. It is insinuated, however, that it has to do with the fact that the joint son of the widow and the surviving brother will be an heir and representative of the deceased brother.

It is obvious that the practice of marrying the widow existed before the Torah, with some differences. According to the Torah, only a brother is obligated to become a surrogate father, whereas in pre-Torah society, the obligation is extended to the whole family, starting with the closest relatives. Another difference is that in pre-Torah society there was no way out of this obligation, and that is why Onan did marry the widow but practiced coitus interruptus, while the
Torah offers a solution. The shoe-removal and spitting, though humiliating, allows the widow and the surviving brother to go their separate ways, absolved of the burden of creating a living memorial to the dead brother.

This concept plays out again in the book of Ruth:

In this story Boaz, the potential redeemer for Ruth and her dead husband Mahlon, offers a closer relative the opportunity of redeeming the inheritance of the deceased. The relative initially agrees, but then Boaz reminds him that he will produce an heir for the deceased. The relative then declines for fear of destroying his own inheritance.

It is interesting to note that the same root שחת – to destroy or waste, is mentioned in the story of Onan and the story of Ruth. In the former it refers to the destruction of the actual seed while in the latter it refers to the future child who will not belong to his physical father.

It is clear now that Onan’s sin had nothing to do with wasting seed but rather with his unwillingness to take care of his deceased brother.

Our next question will be: how was the story so badly distorted to become the source for a “prohibition” which impacts millions of lives?

So how did the story of Onan, who refused to perpetuate the lineage of his brother because of his own greed and selfishness, turn into a story of “wasting” seed? How is it possible to accept such an interpretation when the Torah clearly states Onan’s goal when “wasting” his seed? 

The first interpretation in that direction appears in the Babylonian Talmud: 
[wasting seed is] the act of Er and Onan as it is written: “whenever he would come to his brother’s wife he would destroy (the seed) to the ground…” How do we know that Er did the same thing? Rav Nahman Bar Yitzhak said: because it is written “He [God] took Er’s life as well”… what was Er’s motive? He did not want his wife to be pregnant lest her beauty will be compromised...

In this discussion the Talmud not only takes for granted Onan’s sin as “wasting” seed, but extends that sin to his older brother as well. To the question where is it written in the Torah, the answer is that the word גם which means “also” or “as well” suggests that Er died for the same reason that Onan died.

**Did Er and Onan commit the same crime?**

I would like to take a stab at this argument because it is widely cited, and since it has been included in Rashi’s commentary to the Torah, there are those who view it as absolute truth. First, the Torah tells us nothing of Er’s behavior except that he did “evil in the eyes of God.” That formula appears in the bible over sixty times, always in the context of either idolatry or murder, so there is a very good reason to believe that Er’s sin was one of these two.

Second, the word “also” does not appear in the description of the sin but in that of the punishment. The Torah does not say: וַיִּשֶּׁת אֲלֹהִים אֶלֶּה בְּעֵינֵי יְהוָה – “Onan also sinned”, or וַיַעַשְׁגַם אוֹנָן הָרָע בְּעֵינֵי ה': – “Onan also did evil in the eyes of God.” There is no indication that the sin was similar.

Thirdly, the following four randomly chosen examples from Genesis show that one cannot infer such conclusions from the word “also”.

In 3:6 the woman is described as giving the fruit also to her husband – her role in the act was obviously different than his so the word also cannot connote equation; In 4:4 Abel is described as also bringing sacrifices – there could be no greater difference than that of Cain and Abel; in 15:14 God says that He will judge also the Egyptian people, but there is no mention of others who will be judged; in 20:4 Abimelech argues that God was about to kill the wicked as well as the righteous, and it is clearly an argument against equation. All these examples show that the word גם has many usages and does not suggest that Er and Onan were involved in similar acts.
Finally, and most importantly, the methods of Midrash Halakha, which are used to analyze texts and arrive at legally binding conclusions, cannot be applied to the narratives in the Torah, so the whole discussion is more theoretical or at least a commentary on the text, but not one which can present legal conclusions. But let me digress for a moment and talk about the psychological implications of the above mentioned interpretations.

**Guilt Trip Galore**

I was very glad to find out that the very discussion of contraceptives and Onanism, which is considered a taboo for some religious leaders, has helped people cope with some problems or at least see that there are other ways to look at the whole issue. I have received emails asking about reproductive rights and contraceptives in general, and I will deal with those in the future, but today I would like to focus on one motive which has surfaced in many responses: guilt. The idea that “wasting” one’s seed is a sin has been amplified and intensified by the mystics and used very successfully by educators and religious leaders to control believers and to make them feel that they are not good enough.

This is especially true regarding Yeshivah students who, at least according to the Ultra-Orthodox standards, should have been the poster boys of Jewish Education. They do not do drugs, go to the movies, own smartphones, waste their time in idle pursuits, and of course, not only they do not engage in pre-marital sex, they do not even talk to girls or see them.

These boys should have been praised by their rabbis and teachers every day for their willingness to resist the allure of the hedonistic, lust-driven, liberal outside world, yet the exact opposite is true. They are being told, day in and day out, that they are not good enough. What are their main sins: not dedicating enough time to study Torah (“didn’t you oversleep for five minutes this past Tuesday?”) and engaging in forbidden sexual activity, i.e. wasting their seed.

In some Hassidic yeshivas student are not allowed to wear tight underwear or shirts, and are barred from using fragrant soap. Students who do so could face corporal punishment and expulsion from the Yeshivah, and if one is caught “wasting” his seed, there would be severe
consequences. But even in the more moderate Yeshivas this is an insurmountable problem for teenagers and young adults. Two Ex-Yeshiva students documented their way out of the Yeshiva which had to do with their inability to “control” themselves and the consequent guilt they felt as a result. I am referring to the Hebron Yeshiva ex-alumnus Dov Elbaum in his book Elul Time, and Monsey native Shalom Auslander in The Foreskin Complaint (I do not necessarily recommend reading the books, as I personally had to abandon both after a chapter or two). The feelings of guilt over “wasting seed” have been also incorporated into daily and High Holidays prayers, and there are even special rituals written to amend the “damage” caused by that terrible sin.

Here is one of the interesting Hebrew texts, found in a Viduy for Kippur:

חרטינخارج� '"משם פי'יכם טב"ע קרי גדול יליזו תואמנים שבקת עבודה וטעא ומשחת חלבו, ונטנה שלחה שמציא. "捍ול מסובחים חולים כלם" והמעבידים ערבים וטמין נפשו עלי שמעה. "שעתות והרץ מלכדיה והרדים האבות שלשה טעבון אחיהם חמים ומפעלים לחול בן המים, ומפעלים וירקות על שוזף משיג והגד נמי והכפיםewnętrיו קול בנהר ו�다 נפשו...

We will return to translations of this and other paragraphs in order to illustrate how this rabbinical concept, which was born because of insufficient scientific knowledge, became center stage in our religious consciousness, pushing aside such important and crucial concepts such as honesty, business ethics, and civility.

The Obsession with Fantasies

On the fateful day my grandfather passed away, when I was 17, I was tasked with hanging placards announcing the funeral and the Shiva in my Jerusalem neighborhood. I was devastated and could barely think, so an acquaintance volunteered to join me. He belonged to a Yeshiva of Baale Teshuva to which I used to go at nights in order to help the students, mostly army veterans, make their first steps in Talmud. As we were hanging a placard at the corner of Agripas and Mahane Yehudah St. a woman approached us and asked for directions. After I answered her and she left, my companion turned to me and with a face of someone who has just exposed a world-
threatening conspiracy declared: “you see? that woman was sent by the Yetzer Hara.” Yetzer Hara literally translates as the evil inclination but the context and intonation suggested that he was referring to His Lowness, the Devil. I was shocked. How can he even suggest that answering an innocent question can be an evil deed, and if it were in different circumstances, how can he talk to me like that in a moment of emotional distress, between my grandfather’s passing away and his funeral? My (not anymore) friend’s statement remained lodged in my mind as a sad reminder to the way some people see the world. Because of indoctrination and an education which dwells constantly on the danger of the sexual drive, and the need to separate the genders, every woman is perceived as an enchantress and a seductress. As a result, women are considered first weapons of sexual destruction and only then humans. Righteous men are in constant battle with their evil inclination and religious boys try to fight their mind and body using psychological and sometimes physical warfare.

To answer a question which one of the readers raised: peeling the labels of shame, sin, and destruction which have been attached to Onanism, and demoting our sperm cells from their sacred status to what they truly are, one more microscopic biological unit, is not going to cause men to sink into a never ending world of sexual fantasies. The opposite is true. The more we surround a concept or an object with fences, taboos, and myths, the more desirable it becomes. Not only that, as we shall see below, the presence of Onanism in confessions and prayers is disproportional. It means that there were always religious people, rabbis and authors of prayers, who felt guilty for engaging in that “sin”. Despite all that, boys in religious community grow up to become men who marry and have families and not adults who live in a world of fantasy.

Another important fact I would like to mention before presenting the text of these prayers, is that they were all written before the 20th century, which means that all those who felt drowned by sin in the past could not have blamed the communication revolution and the proliferation of pornography in printed and electronic media. This is not to approve of pornography, but to say that it is the product, rather than the cause, of fantasies.
Here are some of the texts included in the daily Amidah, the daily Viduy (confession), and the Viduy for Kippur

**Daily Amidah:**

May it be Your will, HaShem, God of my fathers and forefathers, that all the souls of the drops which came out of me in vain, not for a mitzvah, which have entered and sunk deeply in the Kelipot [Shells: forces of evil; the dark side], will be returned by you to their sacred root – pure and corrected, impeccable and clear. Also all the souls which were sequestered by the Kelipa of Nogah [the shell, or evil force of Venus], will be thrown up and released by the Kelipa, and God will settle them in the region of sanctity, by the force of the Holy Name חַ֣יִל בָָּ֭לַע וַיְׁקִאֶָ֑נוּ מִִ֝בִטְׁנִ֗וֹ יוֹרִישֵֶֽׁ֥נּוּ אִֵֽל שֶׁהַשֵג תַשִיג وְׁהַצֵל תַצִיל וְׁיָשוּב הַכֹל לְׁאֵיתָנוֹ הָרִאשוֹן לְׁבִלְׁתִי ידַח מִמֶּנּוּ נדָח, וְׁהַטוֹב בְׁעֵינֶךָ עֲשֵֹה

On one hand, we can understand that it is indeed very uplifting to think that our sperm cells are so important. On the other hand, however, it is quite disturbing to visualize God busying Himself with tracking down all the wandering sperm cells of holy Jews and returning them to their original, sacred source. Where is exactly that source? Is it our body? Is it some heavenly palace dedicated to all the hundreds of billions of souls which could have been created from one man’s sperm cells?

Let us read the text of the various confessions:
We were engaged in evil thoughts during the day and caused ourselves impurity of ejaculation at night. We have released layers of seed in vain and have created a destructive, damaging force. We have filled the Temple with corpses upon corpses, evil deeds, and idols. We have built the altars of Tophet [for human sacrifices] while the Altar of God was destroyed and covered with cobweb. Now May it be Your will, HaShem, God of my fathers and forefathers, that by the merit of the Holy Name חֲבֵ"ו which is alluded to in the initials of the verse (Job 20:15): “He [the wicked] swallowed a fortune but he will throw it up, from his very belly God will wrestle it”, that You will pursue and seize, redeem and deliver [the lost drops] and all will return to its original strength, without losing any lost soul. Please do as You deem right...

In this section one is faulted for seed which was wasted deliberately or unknowingly, and the act is compared to murder and idolatry. Those engaged in this act are said to have destroyed the Temple and built an altar upon which they sacrifice humans, i.e. the unrealized potential of the sperm cells. The lost souls are referred to with the same term used to describe the most far flung remnants of the Jewish People who went into exile. This language intensifies the act of “wasting seed” and transports it from an individual act to one which has cosmic implications. It is, according to this part of the Viduy, an act which impacts God and the whole nation and which requires divine intervention and the use of mystical names to amend the situation.

Further in the Viduy it is written:

We have committed adultery with hand and foot... we have damaged the sign of the holy covenant... we have hardened ourselves knowingly...

Here the act is compared to adultery. It is also considered an act of treason as it transgresses or undermines the covenant, symbolized by the circumcision. Finally, in a very subtle way, it is compared to suicide. In rabbinic literature suicide is described as אִיבוּד עַצְׁמוֹ לָדָעַת – losing oneself knowingly, while “wasting seed” is קִישוּי עַצְׁמוֹ לָדָעַת – hardening oneself knowingly. In addition to the accusation of murder we have seen previously, we now have the shame of the most horrific murder, killing oneself.
But wait, there’s more:

We have destroyed the ducts of abundance and turned them into broken wells which cannot contain the water. We have allowed for a slave to rule and for a maidservant to inherit her mistress. We will lie down in our shame and cover ourselves with our disgrace, because our sins have distorted the [world], our crimes lengthened our exile, and our wrongdoings have prevented us from receiving abundance. Woe to the sons who were expelled from their father’s table for many long days and many bitter years.

And finally this:

We have destroyed the holy seed in vain and have created a destructive, damaging force. The blood of the souls of the innocent poor is hidden under our garments, the tears of the oppressed roll on their cheeks but there is no one to comfort them. My heart goes out for their corpses; my stomach churns for their victims, woe to the wicked, for he will be paid according to his [evil] deeds.

The language is rife with metaphors which could serve as material for much more thorough research, but again we see that the wasted seed represents a plethora of transgressions and turns every man, and especially adolescent boys, into criminal masterminds.

Finally, the sins of sexual fantasies, Onanism, and wet dreams, feature prominently in one of the most famous rituals of contemporary Judaism, especially popular in Israel. המילון הכללי, or the General Remedy, which was created by Rabbi Nachman of Bresslov, has been recorded by many Israeli artists and printed in endless editions. As Arthur Green shows in his excellent analysis of
Rav Nachman’s life and writings, The Tormented Master, the rabbi himself felt assaulted by thoughts he found hard to drive away.

According to Rav Nachman’s disciple, Rabbi Nathan of Bresslav, the General Remedy expiates for all the sins which have infected the covenant, a euphemism for the penis. A man who has so transgressed should preferably dip in a Mikveh or in a natural body of water. He also explains that פגום הברית – damaging the covenant, is the most fundamental sin which causes all other transgressions. It is also the cause of the exile and the constant state of confusion and anxiety in which we find ourselves.¹²

The fear of transgression, its definition as a prohibition, and the promised punishments which will befall the wicked who do not confess or repent, are not unique to Judaism. Christianity, which considered sexual relations to be the Original Sin, has embraced all of the above with open arms. As Monty Python’s Michael Palin put it sarcastically:

Every sperm is sacred, every sperm is great, if a sperm is wasted, God gets quite irate. Let the heathen spill theirs on the dusty ground, God shall make them pay for each sperm that can't be found… God loves those who treat their semen with more care… Let the Pagan spill theirs o'er mountain, hill, and plain, God shall strike them down for each sperm that's spilt in vain…

I believe that it is now clear why so much guilt is associated with Onanism, but we still have to understand what was the origin of the concept in Talmudic literature, and why today’s scientific knowledge forces us to reconsider the matter.

We will deal with this question later, as we consider the question of whether a woman can become pregnant by taking a bath, but it first I would like to address some questions which have been raised in wake of the current series, and let my answer will serve as introduction to the bathtub concern (you are welcome to google it and consider whether it is possible or not.)

In response to the series on Onanism, I have received the following email from a good friend who has been working in the field of in informal education with observant teenagers for many years:

_Rabbi… the basic question I have been asked dozens of times by teens is this: How can the rabbis say you are wasting seed (and thus killing people… and creating bad angels to_
hurt people and destroy the world... as it says in the prayers) when semen is regenerated?

I answer saying something like: 1) It is a waste of your time and concentration; 2) You get yourself into a fantasy world which takes you out of the real world with real relationships; 3) You start to think of women as objects ...

...people then say that Hazal had it all wrong... [because] they didn’t understand simple biology... the problem here is that when the kids (and others) think our Sages had this all wrong – they usually conclude that they were not intelligent and thus their other halakhot go in the same category... 99% of what we do today are rabbinic things... all the weights and measurements... all the decrees... Muktzeh... berakhot... they throw the baby out with the bathwater...

I would like to address these concerns and clarify the purpose of this whole series. It is not primarily about “wasting seed”, Onanism, or masturbation, but rather about contraceptives. The health problems presented by the prohibition of “wasting seed” are far greater than the guilt of teenagers or the great fear of those teenagers’ parents. The problems, as I mentioned at the beginning of the series, are those of prevention of unwanted pregnancy because of potential diseases (e.g. Zika, heart problems), or because the parents are not ready to have a child. So many couples are thrust into the world of child bearing and rearing without being ready, whether it is the first or the fifth child, yet the in the orthodox Jewish world even uttering the words family-planning is considered heresy. Women rely on not-so-effective contraceptives or on the notion that they are not going to conceive while breastfeeding (which is correct under certain conditions, but mainly in traditional societies). Women also keep having children until a very late age, ignoring the rising probability for birth defects and refusing tests of early detection. This, and not Onanism, is the real problem.

Regarding your answers to these boys:

1) the amount of time that teenagers spend on this habit has been blown out of proportion by teenage flicks and by the well-wishing clergymen. Most teenagers don’t waste so much time on it, especially if they are not being constantly preached that it is the forbidden fruit.
2) I referred to the fear of living in fantasy in the previous post. Most people do not remain in the world of fantasy since they realize at a certain point that there is no substitute for love and compassion which stem from a true relationship.

3) The problem of turning women into sexual objects is a very serious one, but not because of onanism. On one hand is the treatment of women in the media and the advertising industry, and on the other hand their treatment by the religious establishment, as I have demonstrated in my series on Modesty.

Finally, regarding the argument that if we expose this information people will say that the rabbis got it all wrong, as history has taught us time and again, whitewashing is bound to backfire. We have to be honest and acknowledge the truth when we have been mistaken. Yes, it is difficult, but the great benefit is that other segments of our teachings and philosophy will be credible. The sages of the Mishnah and the Talmud were extremely wise, though they were not infallible, omniscient, impeccable, or possessing prophetic powers. They were able to lead the Jewish people through times of great crises and we would not have had the State of Israel if it were not for their resilience and leadership skills. They have bequeathed us a wealth of moral teachings, Midrashic interpretations, and an intricate system of legal rulings governing commerce and interpersonal relationships. There is no shame in admitting that there were many scientific facts which have eluded them, as anyone who follows the history of science, medicine and technology would easily understand. Just as an example I would cite the field of neuroplasticity which was literally terra incognita a decade or two ago, as the common theory was that the brain cannot change or regenerate after a certain age.\textsuperscript{13} Science will keep discovering new concepts and invent amazing technologies and contraptions, and there is no basis for the claim that all those were known to our rabbis thousands of years ago.

I believe that if we conduct an honest discussion on Halakhic matters, and if we strive to provide people with content and meaning they can relate to, there will be great respect for tradition and observance of Mitzvot.
Pregnant in a Bathtub?

Legal systems like to rely on precedents, especially if the system is a religious one and the law is God’s word. It would be intimidating to deal with a complete novelty without having the safety net of precedents. In recent generations, however, Halakha is assaulted by numerous inventions and technologies for which there was never a precedent or an analogy. Currently, for example, we have organ donations and autonomous cars to think of, to mention but two cases.

One of the first cases to fall into this category in modern times was artificial insemination. The first successful insemination was conducted in 1884 in Philadelphia, and at about the same time we find halakhic literature on the topic. The main concern of those first responders was whether the husband is allowed to extract his seed and whether a possible mix-up should be a serious concern.

The rabbis searched far and wide for a precedent and found something in the Talmud. The Mishnaic sage Ben Zoma was asked whether the High Priest can marry a pregnant virgin, and he answered positively, explaining that she might have become pregnant from semen floating in a bathtub. Now, not only the idea of conceiving through abandoned semen seems preposterous, but the whole paragraph lacks credibility and might have been inserted to the Talmud by later editors. That is for three reasons: 1) Ben Zoma is referring to the Talmudic sage Shemuel, who lived a 150 years after him; 2) Ben Zoma is mentioned in Rabbinic literature over 160 times, and he always uses high Hebrew. This is the only place where he uses Aramaic Talmudic concepts, which are foreign to the language he and his colleagues used; 3) The phrasing of his answer is difficult. It literally reads: “[the High Priest can marry her] because we fear that she became pregnant in a bathtub.”

Let us leave this difficult paragraph for now and consider a fuller Midrashic version of the bathtub legend. According to that Midrash, Jeremiah the prophet once entered a public bathhouse and was shocked to discover a group of wicked people from the tribe of Ephraim who were engaged in Onanism. He started rebuking them but they responded with violence and threatened to kill or violate him unless he commits the same “crime”, and he finally succumbed and did it.
Jeremiah felt terrible for his transgression but God did not let his semen be wasted. After Jeremiah fasted 248 days (roughly ten months, assuming he did not fast on Shabbat), his daughter arrived at the same bathhouse and miraculously became the recipient of her father’s lost semen. She became pregnant and gave birth to the famous Ben Sira, the eponymous author of the book of parables and maxims.\(^\text{15}\)

The message of the Midrash seems to be that the semen of a righteous person is not lost, but one must admit that it is full of oddities. Jeremiah could not have met people from the tribe of Ephraim since they were exiled 200 years before his time, the scene of a gang of onanists forcing Jeremiah to do as they do makes no sense, and the idea that his daughter became pregnant with his semen would have troubled even good old Sigmund.

Only one rabbi in modern times, Rabbi Yaakov Ades (1898-1963), dismissed this Midrash as one which cannot serve as a basis for Halakha.\(^\text{16}\)

Rabbi Yehoshua Boimel (1880-1948) discussed the rejection of this Midrash by doctors who said that it is impossible for a woman to conceive from floating sperm. He says:

\[
\text{I have no doubt that modern doctors who deny this Midrash are not speaking with intelligence but through the spirit of their Christian faith which suffocates them. If they admit that such a thing is possible, the foundation of their faith regarding the divine origin of the virginal conception of Jesus will be destroyed.}
\]

Rabbi Boimel then brings us back to the Talmudic paragraph mentioned above and says that it was probably a mockery of the belief that Jesus’ mother was a virgin.\(^\text{17}\)

I think we can accept the second part of Rabbi Boimel’s argument and conclude that the Talmudic paragraph is indeed not original and was inserted into the text at a later time, thus solving all the problems raised earlier.

The interesting thing is that most rabbis accepted the possibility of bathtub pregnancy, which shows that their scientific knowledge was limited. As I explained previously, this is not something to be ashamed for, since Halakha always depended on its contemporary medical science.
Rabbi Yosef Haim of Baghdad (1832-1909) acknowledges the impossibility of such pregnancy, but writes that it is because we are physically feeble compared to people who lived 2,000 years ago.\(^\text{18}\)

The most fascinating discussion, one which completely discredits modern medicine, is that of Rabbi Ovadia Yossef in his Yabia Omer.\(^\text{19}\) Rabbi Yossef first quotes Nahmanides who says that women do not have seed or its equivalent, but rather provide blood for the fetus which is all a product of the male’s sperm. He then goes on to say that we should not pay attention to those doctors who say that it is impossible to become pregnant in a bathtub. He writes:

\[
\text{“They are fools who would not accept that which their false imagination cannot comprehend. Their understanding of natural science is analogous to a dog slurping water from the ocean. It is clear that they are not knowledgeable since they cannot cure any disease or pain. They cannot compare to biblical doctors who had the remedies to all diseases but had to hide them from the public eye because people stopped praying to God.”}
\]

With such staunch rejection of modern medicine, only for the sin of clashing with Midrashic fantastic stories, it will be easier to understand why the concept of Onanism has not been reviewed and updated.

**Wasting Seed – Conclusion:**

As we have seen, there is no basis in the bible for the prohibition of “wasting seed”. What then is the rationale for perceiving it as one of the Top Ten in the confession’s To Do list of a normal observant man?

The answer is that the Halakhic literature around the subject evolved in the third century and was deeply influenced by the available scientific knowledge, or rather theories, of the ancient Greek world. We saw in the previous post that people believed that a woman can get pregnant from wayward sperm in a bathtub. Some people, including many rabbis, still believe this today, despite its rejection by the scientific community and the fact that artificial insemination is a tedious and not always successful process.
As a matter of fact, the belief in ancient “science” is so strong, that as recently as 1958, 74 years after the first successful artificial insemination, Rabbi Tzvi Pesah Frank (1873-1960), writes that a woman should be careful not to use sheets used by men other than her husband for fear she will get pregnant.\footnote{20}

In the case of “wasting seed” people believed that each drop of the man’s sperm is a potential fetus and that therefore spilling sperm is tantamount to murder. Some believed that it is not only a potential fetus but rather a tiny human which keeps growing in the mother’s womb. According to that theory, which we have reviewed briefly yesterday, the woman is no more than a receptacle, almost like a planting pot, where the man’s seed is deposited to be nurtured and nourished.

It is understood why with each generation the severity of the “prohibition” kept growing, but it is about time for our religious authorities to conduct an honest study, as the one offered here, and announce that ancient sages did not understand the reproductive process. It is that misunderstanding which led to the following ruling, in the case of a woman who was forbidden to conceive but for whom a diaphragm was not a solution:

There was room to say that it is allowed for the husband to use contraceptives. A precedent to support this is the case of a man who suffered from a severe infection and was instructed by the doctors to “waste” his seed in order to relieve himself. Rabbi Yehoshua Volk (1680-1756) ruled in favor of the act because the man’s was in danger. Rabbi Volk further explained that although the Talmud compared wasting seed to murder, idolatry, and adultery, it is an exaggeration meant to deter people from doing so. He added that although one could claim that it is practically murder because a child could have been born from that drop, we rely on the Halakha that of a mother’s life is in danger abortion is allowed… however this case [of a woman whose life will be in danger if she gets pregnant] because if she chooses not to have marital relationships or to divorce, her life will not be in danger…\footnote{21}
This ruling stems from a deep conviction of the author that every drop of sperm is a living human being or at least a potential one. It is incredible that the author was willing to separate a husband and wife or even have them divorced because of that belief.

Today, however we know that:

...the average male will produce roughly 525 billion sperm cells over a lifetime and shed at least one billion of them per month. A healthy adult male can release between 40 million and 1.2 billion sperm cells in a single ejaculation.

There is no doubt that if the rabbis who started the “seed saving” movement some 1,700 years ago would come back to life and learn the scientific facts of the male’s sperm they would have changed their opinion.

The most important implication of this understanding is that men and women alike are allowed to choose the contraceptives which are safest and healthiest for them. This “allowance” becomes an obligation for those who are not ready to have children yet, those whose families are too big to support physically and emotionally, and those whose pregnancy might be risky because of the mother’s advanced age or other reasons.

The purpose of this series was not to be liberal or indulgent but rather to save people’s life and mental sanity. Indeed, I am very glad to tell you that already this past week life was saved and marital peace was restored in several cases which were referred to me because of this more candid discussion.

With blessings of a healthy, spiritual, and guilt-free year,

Rabbi Haim Ovadia
Appendix:

Here are some additional sources which will be translated and discussed in the future:

על הזרעת וرأית בהלכهة:

הלקמן בבליל מכסת את דעה וחמה ב
שלוח לו רבי יאסר פוקים: ליישם ולמר מפריך מברך שפומלא! - שלוחו: שופר משורר乐园, כללים והלכיות
ערוך על צד: אלא אם כן שמענו: כתובות מתכון צוריית, והחלוץ חיים وكلים חסידות, כלים
שבועות. גבון נזר הב, אמר רבי מפיון משוער ביהודה: כתובות מתכון צוריית, והחלוץ חיים כלים
בריקן, כiliary שבועות. והיה הזר Cf: ד ליצן - הלה, די להמה - הינן, די לופה - הינן, די להמה - הינן.
ולא תיודו.莲sson - הינן, די לופה - הינן, די לופה - הינן, די לופה - הינן.
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ולא תיודו.莲sson - הינן, די לופה - הינן, די לופה - הינן, די לופה - הינן.

אלא שב אוף מה יصديق או י는데 מה שיאמר להם. כי אם ית_sur על בנים אלי ושאר עריות אコピー ושאר עריות אコピー.

רבי ישעיה בר אליה טראני (המאה ה-12-13), פסקי ר"יא"ז מסכת נדה פרק ב - כ"ה

אלא שב אוף מה יصديق או יdense מה שיאמר להם. כי אם ית_sur על בנים אלי ושאר עריות אコピー.

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ועכ"פ מתבאר משם שיש לנו שלש דרשות מהך קרא מלבד מה שדרשוהו לאזהרת אשת איש במכילתא שם. וכן הוא גם במכילתא דרשב"י שם בדרשא קמייתא עיין שם. האחת שלא להוציא זרע לבטלה. לפי פירש"י בנדה שם ובסמ"ק.

השנית שלא להריח בבשמים על ערוה מן העריות. והשלישית שלא быть עוקב אחר המנאף.

מסכתות קטנות מסכת כלה רבתי פרק ב הלכה ד.

ר"א ויליעי אמרי כ המוציאים שבכת זרע ולבלשתו כלאו הזור נפשו, שנאמר שוחטי הילדים בנחלים, אל תקרי שוחטי אלא סוחטי. קשיא גירש לישראל מצמחה, שנאמר זכרה בנו על בית יקב.

הלכה ה.

והכמרים אמורים כ המוציאים שבכת זרע ולבלשתו, והמותילות בדoria, מכל עופר עד וeterminate, דسنة זכריו אתי מבית ו殛ין.

והי חרב למבית, יאני שיש ולא ובית, שאמור באלה מבית ושנה שעה. ונתונים בהם יölü פעמים, וertia יölü פעמים, יול נפשות כנויי מלך דוד, ואלה יölü פעמים, דלמה חוק צבאות דמלשה, דלאמיר חוק צבאות דמלשה, דלאמיר חוק צבאות דמלשה.

הלכה ו.

זרכיו של אדם מתגבר עליו בכל יום, שנאמר וכל יצר מחשבות לבו רק רע כל היום. מכאן דרשו רבותינו, הרהור מביאהofi תיאויה, תיאויה מביאהofi אהבה, אהבה מביאהofi רדיפה, רדיפה מביאהofi מעשה, להודיעך כמה קשה חזרתו מזו לזו; וכנגדן בתשובה, פרישות מביאהofi הה確認, הה確認 מביאהofi שלתות, ושלתות מביאהofi טהור, וטהור מביאהofi שלתות.
חסידות, וחסידות לידי ענוה, וענוה גדולה מכולם, שנאמר רוח י"י אלהים עלי יען משח י"י איך את בשר ענוים. צדיקים, ישראל, שздоровים, חסידים, ולא זוכרים, אלא לבשר ענויים.

ההלכה ז
ועליו הכתוב אומר מי יודע רוח בני אדם העולה היא למעלה ורוח הבהמה היורדת היא למטה, מי יודע רוח בני אדם, אלו נשמתן של צדיקים, שאין מחממים את עצמן להוציא שכבת זרע לבטלה, וروح הבהמה, אלו נשמתן של רשעים, המחממין את עצמן להוציא שכבת זرع לבטלה, כל המחממים את עצמו ומוציא שכבת זרע לבטלה, את עצמו ומוציא שכבת זרע לבטלה, ימותו, שנאמר וירע בעיני י"י אשר עשה וימת גם אותו.

תאנא דור המבול כלון מוציאין שכבת זרע לבטלה, והם הביאו ענוגה, אמר להם הקדוש ברוך הוא, שמתם עצמכם עיקר, הריני עוקר שמיכם שלא תעלו בחשבו. מנא הני מילי, דכתיב באונן והיה אם בא אל אשת אחיו ושחית ארצה, שהיה מחמם את עצמו ומוציא שכבת זרע לבטלה, וכתיב בדור המבול כי השחית כל בשר את דרכו על הארץ. ער מאי עובדיה, כמעשה אונן, והיינו דכתיב וימת גם אותו. תאנא למפרע הוא רע, וכיוצא בו נח למפרע חן.

ההלכה ח
כל המקשה עצמו חייב מיתה.
אמר רב אשי כל המקשה עצמו יהא בנדוי, ולימא אסר, משום דמגרי יצר הרע אנפשיה, שמע מינה אסר ליגע בערוה, כדתניא כל הנוגע באמה ומשתין מים, כאילו מביא מבול לעולם, מאי טעמא, נגיעה מביא לידי חימום, וחימום(LED) הנוגע
הדות, הובא בגליиш, מטוער ומלמטה מותר, מטוער ומלמעלה אסור,llu. דברים אמורים בפנוי אבל בשנוי לאחיישינן.

על הפריה מלאכותית
הרב דוד שפרבר (1875-1962), "חיי אפרסקה דעניא חלק א סימן רא..." ויפה צעקה אשר צעק הגאון מהרי"ל הנ"ל ז"ל על מעשה התעתועים אשר המציאו רופאי זמנו להרבות ממזרים בישראל ואחריו אנו גם אנו נשמיע צעקתינו בקול רעם לפרס עקמימות שבעמינו לבל ילכו אחר ההבל ויהבלו, ועם כל הנ"ל ממילא איפשטו איבעיות דכ"ת מאות ב' עד אות וא"ו והוא בכלל, וכולהו לחומרא...

כ"ז ניחא אילו ידעינן דהזרע שמכניסין ברחם אשה הוא זרע בעלה בלי שום תערובת זרע אחר אבל מי יודע איכות היצירת אם אין כח אחר מעורב בו, ועדיין לא חקרתי ע"ז. אך לפני ימים אחדים נאמר לי שמשתמשים לזה גם בזרע הכלבים. עכ"פ למיחוש מיהו בעי, ובדעהו לעשות זה אי"ה חקירה ודרישה היטב.
Torah of Life

Contraceptives, Onanism, and Seed Wasting

Rabbi Haim Ovadia

25

The Ammunition of Elish Hagever (Commoners)

The rabbi was written to shorten his way, as I have been written to make clear the halakha. And this halakha in all of its aspect is in the category of halakhot that were said on them (Erubin 76b, Bava Batra 22b: Ani ve-tiflah). I wrote about preventive means for men (cubon)

Rabbi Yosef Shaya Wolf, (1872-1952), Shita Yismeh Lech Yakiv b'Shavos 37, Chapter 1

The common sense and science

Rabbi Ovadia Yosef, (1920-2013), Sha'ar Yosef 13, Chapter 12

On the knowledge of the commandments...
The Torah of Life

Contraceptives, Onanism, and Seed Wasting

Rabbi Haim Ovadia

“שאם לא היה רשע לא ימיתנו הקדוש ברוך הוא בעון אביו, אבל ראה שהיה לו התחלה רעה, אף על פי שאינה מצות, יבוא אחר כך לחטוא ב’ מצות, אמר הקדוש ברוך הוא מטוב שימות זכאי ואל ימות חייב...least wise...صاحب היא מ…”

The second mission of the perech (לראות פרשרא) is to convert such public opinions and interpretations of the historical context into a Torah-based morality. As Rabbi Meir of Rothenburg (1507-1593) also stated: "לא יאחוז באמה (באיבר המין) בעת עשיית צрактиי מפני שמוציא שכבת זרע לבטלה..."
אולי החמור מכל הוא הנזק הנפשי הנגרם מדי שנה לאלפי צעירים העוברים שלב זה באופן טבעי ומתמלאים ברגסי אשמה שנאה עצמית (ראה למשל בספרים זמן אלול מאת דב אלבוים ותלונת הערלה מאת שלום אוסלנדר). לפני שנדון במקור המדרשים לאיסור זה עלינו לשאול למה קנה לו שביתת כה חזקה בתודעה הדתית. התשובה היאaccording to the text provided, the nøse, מה שגרוע יותר, דבר הנעשה בחדרי חדרים ואין עליו פיקוח, ולכן הקיפוהו בהררי איסורים והפחדות שעדיין גורמים נזק רב בחברים תמימים וחדורי אמונה. רבי נחמן מברסלב התייסר רבות בנושא המיניות ותיקן את התיקון הכללי, קריאת עשרה פרקי תהלים ועוד (עיין בספר בעל היסורים של אברהם גרין). גם בוידוי הגדול של יום הכיפורים מוקדשים סעיפים רבים לאיסור זה ומקנים לו אוירה של חשיבות יתירה ובלתי פרופורציונלית לשאר האיסורים החמורים המוזכרים במלה אחת כמו רצח או גזל. סיבה נמוכה להדגשה האיסור הוא שהוא משמש אמצעי השליטה ודיכוי בידי הרבנים על תלמידיהם הצעירים, vedere בהיותו מן המניין הוא מתפקד במקצת פיקוח, אחר הוא מומחה בכל עניין这座 ומקפיד על שמירת שבת כהלכתה ולומד תורה כל יום. על מה אם כן ניתן להוכיח אותו – על האיסור החמור של הוצאת זרעו לבטלה. יודעי דבר מספרים שבعالم הישיבות יש יועצים מיוחדים חלקם בעלי הכשרה רבנית ואחד בלבד על רקע בפסיכולוגיה万事 על רקע בפסיכולוגיה万事 ובמיוחד חסידיות, אוסרים על הבחורים ללבוש בגדים פנימיים צמודים או להשתמש בסבון ריחני כדי שלא יבואו להתגרות ו"להתפתות" לאונן ואלו הנתפסים במעשה מוכים, לעתים במקלות. מצב עניינים זה ודאי אינו בריא ומכה כי איסור כזה שמן הנמנעapollo autourיוודוד לא היה כלול ב曩נהוור טעם של התורה. על פי המדרש מקור האיסור הוא במסופר בספר בראשית על חתניו של יהודה בן יעקב, ער ואונן. בפסוק נאמר שער עשה את הרע בעיני ה' ועל כן ה' המית אותו, אך לא נאמר מה היה חטאו. אונן ידע של פי דיני הייבום הקדומים, הילד שייולד לתמר לא יחשב בנו אלא בן האח המת והוא לא רצה להקים שם לאחיו ולכן קיים משגל נסוג והשחית את זרעו ארצה. החטא אם כן מפורש בפסוק: לא בזבוז הזרע היקר הוא העוון אלא העובדה שאונן התנהג באנוכיות כלפי תמר וכלפי אחיו המת, ער. פסוק ז והמדרש עליו אינם אלא אסמכתא להלכה שנוצרה בבית מדרשים של חכמים מתוך המפגש עם התרבות היוונית והמדע והתרבות היוונית הפגישה את חז"ל עם אנשים שלא התביישו להתעמל ולהתחרות בעירום ושאת קירות בתיהם. את תקנותיהם ביחס להתעסקונות במלים, ולעשים עמודים ולשיטות בשכונה כיווןしゃה ב"הלכתהתון" לאוון אלו הנוספים בשכונה, ו煳יתם בצנים והשכונה המשכית ומשכיתו. בעית ומצה והשכון Seeder פאלו היוואיםيلة ב"הלכתהתון" של瑭ופה, כו. נאותו על הנוספים בשכונה, ולעשות עמודים ולשיטות בשכונה, ולעשות עמודים ולשיטות בשכונה, ולעשות עמודים ולשיטות בשכונה, ולעשות עמודים ולשיטות בשכונה, ולעשות עמודים ולשיטות בשכונה, ולעשות עמודים ולשיטות בשכונה, ולעשות עמודים ולשיטות בשכונה, ולעשות עמודים ולשיטות בשכונה, ולעשות עמודים ולשיטות בשכונה, ולעשות עמודים ולשיטות בשכונה, ולעשות עמודים ולשיטות בשכונה, ולעשות עמודים ולשיטות בשכונה, ולעשות עמודים ולשיטות בשכונה, ולעשות עמודים ולשיטות בשכונה, ולעשות עמודים ולשיטות בשכונה, ולעשות עמודים ולשיטות בשכונה, ולעשות עמודים ולשיטות בשכונה, ולעשות עמודים ולשיטות בשכונה, ולעשות עמודים ולשיטות בשכונה, ולעשות עמודים ולשיטות בשכונה, ולעשות עמודים ולשיטות בשכון
Contraceptives, Onanism, and Seed Wasting

Rabbi Haim Ovadia

פיארו פסיפסים צבעוניים של גברים בעלי אבר מין ענקי. דבר זה הביא לרתיעה מגילויי מיניות בוטים, הדגשת של חוק הביצועיםあたりים של"המאט". נפדו כל הפריטים המודרני אוחז שכל הפריטיםمفهوم זה douche על מיiculty ופרייעוב נוצר.

משתפתי הזורעים של בארץ יש התמודדות בשחתות בכרח:absolute איסור על כל הלודטים הפוטנציאליים שחיים בחלוור

משתפתי הזורעים של ארץ ישראל או ליקוי למלשה, לקח המנחת את הביטוי התנכ"י "שוחטי הילידים" המנוגה א TreeNode משלושת

של膦טלוף גאוס ויואל עתיק ל.rand, זוכות יאח בשמית שמיתאיל "שוחטי הילידים", נשאו הכנה היא

שאほとגי קוסט מוארתי בחוד משילופים הפוטנציאליים. כותים纣 לአנדיב כל מירוחי מילוארואוי או זך שליש וידי

וכאם כלב ויימו הזפסים לעופיים הניל動作 הוא וחיזיון על כל השרוכ לחיה נתג

 bruk לכל הפריטים על כל שאם אוספים הזפסים לעופיים הניל動作 הוא והחלו להגלה

הנתיוב.

1 Poland, 19th century.
2 Poland and Ukraine, 1835-1911.
3 Merriam-Webster dictionary.
4 Gen. 37:7-10.
5 יברים, ברהמה, הלא: כ יוספ חנה שה GER-5 ב-
6 Deut. 25:5-10.
7 Ruth 4:5-6.
8 לבליקן חנג về אליאק - in order to surrender his seed (and descendants) to his brother.
9 הלוד, בברחו, לד.
10 To Genesis 37:7.
11 ברחיבת גה: (מקהメール):focus והאסל וממקרה של"ה ניקבע, זה (הלבל מיטוף ממקורות זאנו והמקברים: שימי: חכם הקדושים איש

نوיה ו-לסקן: ש: במפקד.:"לאבק אלפים: אל מ理会 הקטנים ול mjza עמק ממקהל גולה

על פי ליקון מערת" צה: טור עניין של "הфессионаל המכליל" הוא תוקף לקדמון הפריטים (המקהל גזים והמקהל צור לחיתל. קר קר המלך.

וכו ממקشؤون, ירדרים והתשעווים נושאים ליצא. ולאממה: הצהוים שלしかない בשתי עטיון (הז, המקיל רבי שגב לבול ולשתה שוסט, ממקורס לכל

קאספיה, במקהל (עניין: או [ברוחה]): שגב הפריטים שנחתה במקילה וייתר, שיבל שראعتمدונג נושאים:อกייה,bufio יבר ב-

נקוק: אוぼ במקהל ישיבקוספיל ממקחל ווירוז ממקש ומי

12 See Norman Doidge’s breathtaking books: The Brain that Changes Itself, and The Brain’s Way of Healing.
13 Poland, 19th century.
14 Poland and Ukraine, 1835-1911.
15 See Norman Doidge's breathtaking books: The Brain that Changes Itself, and The Brain’s Way of Healing.
חדשים ילדה בן בשינים ובדיבור, וכיון שילדה היתה מתביישת מבני אדם היו אומרים מזנות ילדה, ופתח פיו הן הנער ואמר לאמו, על מה?

שו"ת חדות יעקב, חלק אבן העזר, סימן מג: ...כל מה שהביא מענין בן סירא אינו מוכיח שможר לעשות כן לכתחילה... כבר אמרו שאין ללמד הלכה ממדרשי אגדה אפילו על מדרשים המפורסמים, וכל שכן על שאר אגדות

הרב יהושע בן נחום בוימל, שו"ת עמק הלכה חלק א סימן סח: ולדידי אין כל ספק כי הרופאים האחרונים לא מחכמה הכחישו, רק רוח אמוןיהם הנוצרית חנקה את גרונם. כי באם יודו שאפשר בטבע לבתולה שתתעבר ותשאר בבתוליה, הלא יפול אחד מיסודי אמוןם באמו של אותו האיש כידוע. וקרוב לשמוע גם...

הרב יוסף חיים, שו"ת תורה לשמה, סימן תפא: ובדורות הראשונים היה אפשר שתתעבר באמבטי מפני כי כוחם היה חזק מאוד, ויש כוח בזרע שיהיה מזריע בבטן האשה אעפ"י שבין הביניים נשפך במקום אחר... מה שאין כן דורות האחרונים שנחלשו ולא נשאר בהם כוח כראשונים לכן אין כוח בזרע אחר שנח مكان אחר.calculation

הרב עובדיה יוסף, שו"ת יביע אומר ב, אבן העזר סימן א: וקצת יש להעיר לפי דברי הרמב"ן... אין האשה עושה זרע כלל, או שהזרע הוא פקפא ואינו עושה דבר בעובר, אבל אמרם מזרעת הוא על דם הרחם שיתאוסף בשעת גמר ביאה באם ו잇אחז בזרע הזכר. כי לדעתם ז"לولد נוצרי מהדם בנקבה מהלובן בזכר וכו'. וכן דעת הרופאים... ואל תשגיח בד' הרופאים האחרונים שרצו להשיב וכיךשו ואמרו שלא יתכן דבר זה שיתתעבר ב... כי נואלו בשכלם וחשבו שאין אפשר להיות מה שלא השיג דמיונם הכוזב. ולא השיגו במציאות הטבע كافة המלקק מן האמבטי הים. וכהנה רבות שחשבו להשיג על הראשונים, וכולו כזב. ופעולתם תוכיח שכאב קטן אינם יכולים לרפאות בנקל, מה שהרופאים הראשונים פעלו בנקל בכל חולי גדול ומחלות כבדה. עד שהוצרכו לגנוז ספר רפואות כי לא שמו בה' כסלם...

שו"ת הר צבי אבן העזר סימן ד: מצאתי בהגהת סמ"ק ישן מה"ר פרץ שכתב, אשה נדה יכולה לשכב באסדיני בעלה, ונזהרות מסדינים ששכב עליהן איש אחר פן תתעבר מש"ז של אחר

הרב שלום מרדכי שבדרון, שו"ת מהרש"ם, חלק ג סימן רסח:  והשבתי דאף דمبואר בתשובות פני יהושע ח"ב סי' מ"ד דבמקום פיקוח נפש באחד שנפל למשכב ונפח כריסו ורפואתו שיוציא זרעו, והעלה שאין זה בכלל גילוי עריות ושפיכות דמים שיהרג ואל יעבור. דאף על גב דאמרו חז"ל הוא כאלו שופך דמים הרי גם בלשון הרע אמרו חז"ל ששקולה כעבודה זרה וגילוי עריות ושפיכות דמים, ולא יעלה על הדעת שיהיו ממש כמוהם ולא אמרו אלא להפליג חומר העון... ואפי' נימא דהכא הוי שפ"ד ממש שממית ה bartender מי שוחטי הילדים הרי בפ"ז דאהלות ושם"ס דסנהדרין באשה המקשה לילד חותכין עובר שבמעי'... אבל אין מזה ראי' לנידון דידן... דהכא לאו פיקוח נפש הוא דלא תשמש ותתגרש מבעלה ולא תסתכן...