

The laws of Harchakas

**Conduct between husband and wife
during Niddah**

Letter from the Rebbe

Marriage At Its Most Wholesome Is Achieved Through Strict Observance Of Taharas Hamishpacha

From a letter of the Rebbe, written in the year 5733

...So that the shared intimate life may be entirely wholesome, it is necessary to strictly observe the laws and regulations of Taharas Hamishpachah.

For although these laws require separation for a certain period of time, this distancing has the effect of bringing the couple closer together in the time that follows. However, closeness during the time when separation is mandated results in separateness when there should be closeness.

Thus, in the majority of cases, true harmony and peace in married life are directly related to the observance of the laws and regulations of Taharas Hamishpachah.



Harchakos Benefits

Emotionally:

- It is healthy for a couple to develop the friendship aspect of their relationship without focusing on physical intimacy.
- It's a time to communicate our respect, devotion and appreciation in non-physical ways.

Personal Space & Renewal:

- This can give time for a woman to develop her individuality and nurture herself privately. Privacy fosters respect for one another.
- “Absence makes the heart grow fonder.” This separation creates a renewal and excitement in a marriage.
- *The Torah separates the husband and wife during the time of her impurity in order to make her as desirable to him as the day of their wedding.*

Biologically:

- This cycle promotes fertility, and prevents infection.



Harchakos

- The Harchakos teach us sensitivity to the finer, more subtle ways we stimulate and arouse each other. It helps us appreciate these nuances when we are united again.
- Whether we feel that the Harchakos apply to our relationship or not, we need to accept them all, just as we practice all the Halachos, whether we fully understand them or not. Na'aseh V'nishmah.



How to behave when in Niddah?

All the laws of Harchakos are HALACHA (not a custom or a stringency).

- The laws of Harchakos are kept from the moment a woman becomes Niddah, until the full protocol of Mikvah immersion is followed.
- These laws are also kept whenever a woman is in doubt of her status, until a Rav confirms she is not Niddah.
- Harchakos are kept no matter what caused the Niddah status.
- The more careful a couple is with these Halachos, the greater blessings they draw down from above.



Additional Days of Harchakos

- **Yom Kippur:**

All Harchakos are kept throughout the entire Yom Kippur night & day (even if you are Tehorah).

- **Tisha B'Av:**

The Harchakos are kept at night.

There are differences of opinions as to whether the Harchakos are kept during the daytime as well.

Consult your Rav.



Harchakos

- It is normal to feel overwhelmed with the details of the Harchakos.
- Every detail is important to our observance of this Chok.
- We honor Hashem and our marriages with careful observance of these Halachos.



Harchakos

The laws of Harchakos apply equally to both **husband** and **wife**, except when indicated for husband alone.



Harshakos

According to our five senses:

1. Smell

2. Hear

3. Taste



4. Sight

5. Touch

Harchakos

1 Smell

- Your **husband** may not smell the perfume on your body or on your clothing (or Besomim when you hold it).
- You may wear perfume if it's done in a way that he can't smell it. You can either apply it when he is not there or apply minimally.



Harchakos

2 Hear

- Your **husband** may not hear you sing.
- You should not play a musical instrument for his pleasure.
- Avoid flirtatious or intimate conversation.



Harchakos

3 Taste

- There are many Harchakos involved in eating together and serving each other.



Harchakos



4 Sight

- Your **husband** should not see you dressed immodestly.
- **Note:** Your husband should not be in the room during delivery. During labor only if you are covered and tznius.
- **Tip:** Be especially careful to dress and undress in private, and when nursing. This includes Tznius nightwear and covering your hair & feet.

Harchakos

5 Touch

- All touch between the couple, both affectionate and non-affectionate, is not permitted.
- The couple may not touch anything that their spouse is wearing/carrying/holding or passing.



Harchakos

5 Touch

Husband/wife cannot hand/pass/
throw something directly to each other.

One needs to put the item down,
and the other can then pick it up.



Harchokos

5 Touch (Examples)



Husband/Wife both may not:

- Place into/remove an item from the stroller, shopping cart, bag, purse etc. while the other spouse is holding/moving it.
- Lift or push an object together (ex: a table/tablecloth/stroller).
- Light a fire from a flame the other spouse is holding.
- Pass the baby to the other spouse or lift a baby/child together.
- Hug/kiss a baby/child while being held by the other spouse.
- Give/feed a pacifier/bottle/toy/food to the baby, while being held by the other spouse.
- Touch each other's clothing while it is being worn.
- **Note:** The clothing they are each wearing can't touch the other (example: a scarf blowing in the wind).
- **Note:** Avoid sharing an umbrella, book, computer, cell phone (selfies), as it is difficult not to touch.

Harchakos

Havdalah

- Your **husband** can't smell the Besomim while you hold it.
- He can't pour wine over the candle while you hold it.

To extinguish the Havdalah flame (if you are holding it):

- You can lay lit candle on side of saucer, and he pours wine over the flame. Or
- He pours wine into the saucer and you can dip the flame into the wine.
- **Tip:** Use a Havdalah candle stand.
- He is permitted to put his hands near the fire, while you hold the candle.



Harchokos

**A husband is not permitted to wear his wife's
exclusive clothing.**

He is permitted to wear something that is not designated as belonging to either of them.



Harachakos Around the House

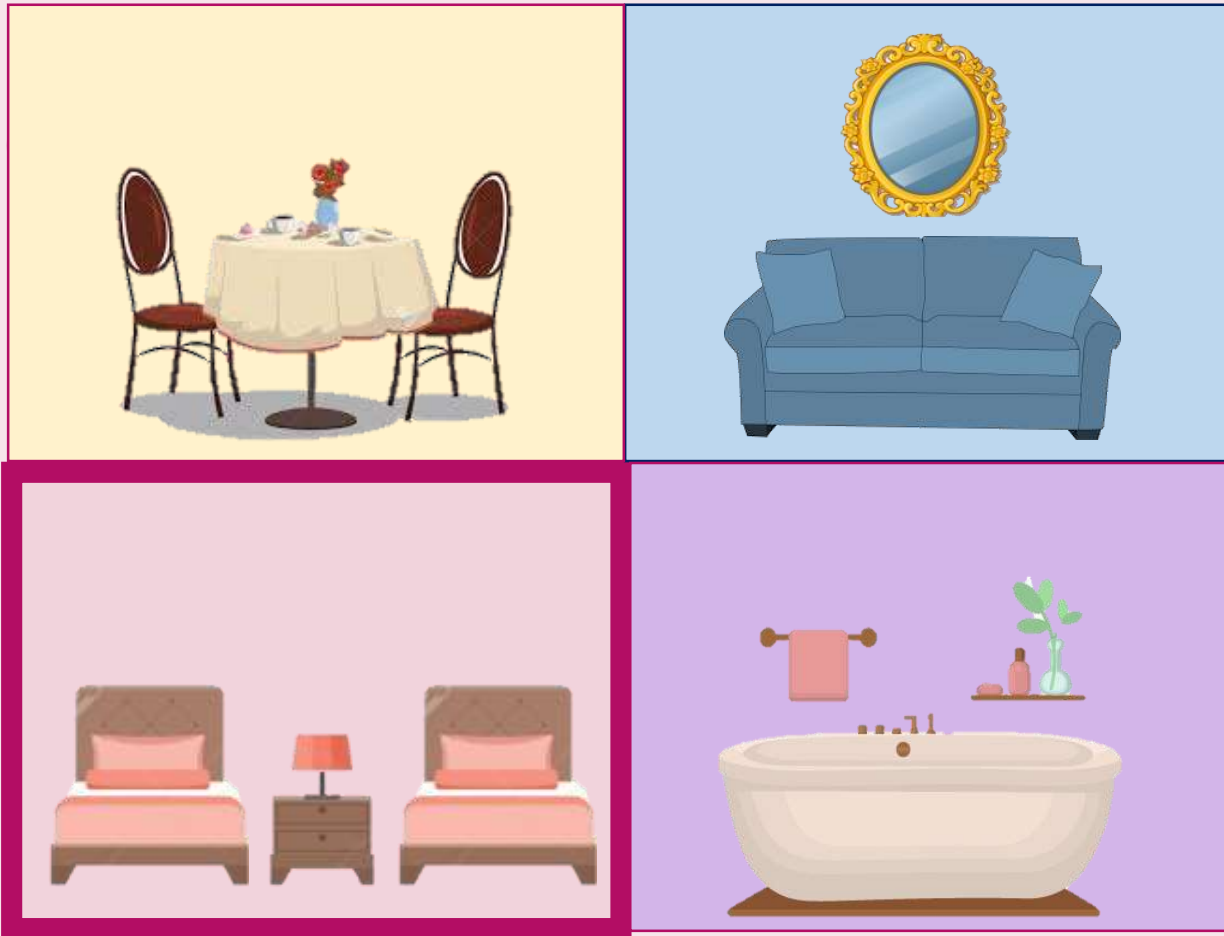
- Bedroom

- Living Room

- Washroom

- Kitchen





Bedroom

Bedroom

Husband/wife may *not* sleep or lie together on one bed, even fully clothed, even very far apart.

The couple needs two separate beds and headboards (not one combined headboard). Two beds may not be attached to one wall or headboard. If two beds are attached to a standing wall, and they do not move - as is often found in hotels –ask a Rav.



Bedroom

- The beds need to be separate enough that the blankets, or an arm/leg extending out during sleep, would not touch each other.
- Chabad custom is that there should be a distance of approximately 19 inches between the beds, with a piece of furniture (night table/chair) in between.
- A chair or suitcase may be used when traveling.
- Blankets/bedding that covers you becomes like clothing you are wearing, and may not be touched by the other. One is permitted to lay the baby directly onto the bed, but not onto the covers. (Some are machmir to do this with a shinui).



Bedroom

Husband

- A **husband** may *not sit/lie* on his wife's bed, (even *not* in her presence).
- If she is out of town for some time, he is only permitted to sit, *not lie* on her bed.

Wife

- A **wife** may sit on her husband's bed, if he is not on the bed. (even in his presence).
- She may *not lie* on her husband's bed, in his presence.



Bedroom

Husband/wife may *not* prepare the bed for one another for sleeping, in each other's presence.

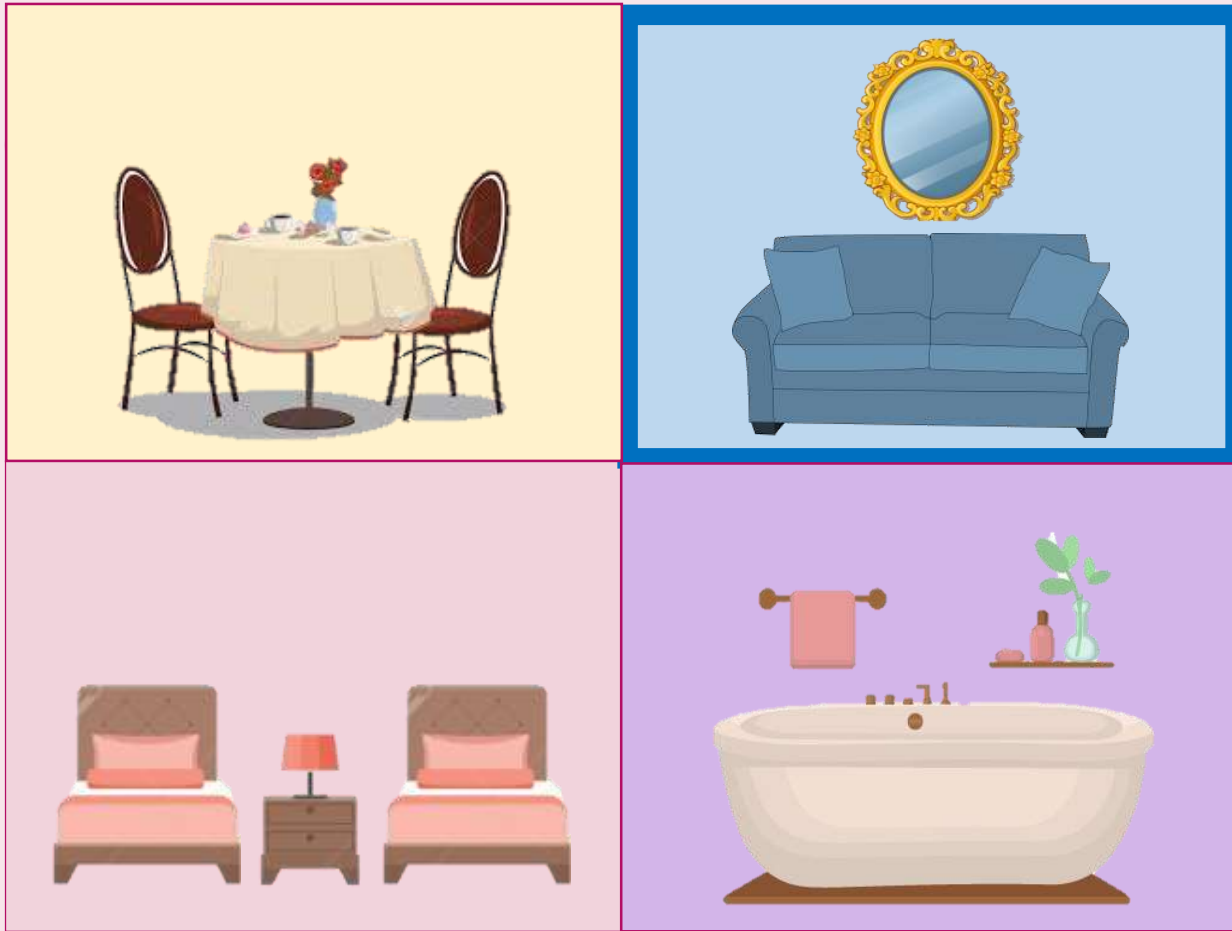
- If one's spouse is not present, it is permitted.
- This applies to ANY bed either of them will sleep/nap in, at any time of day.
- This does not only mean spreading out the sheets, it means making the bed ready for sleeping/nap.



Bedroom

- Husband/wife may not use each other's exclusive linens/bedding.
- Husband/wife may do the household chore of changing the linens, in each other's presence.
- If the couple wants to switch beds during Niddah, the entire bed needs to be moved into the new position. Exchanging only mattresses, or linens is not enough.



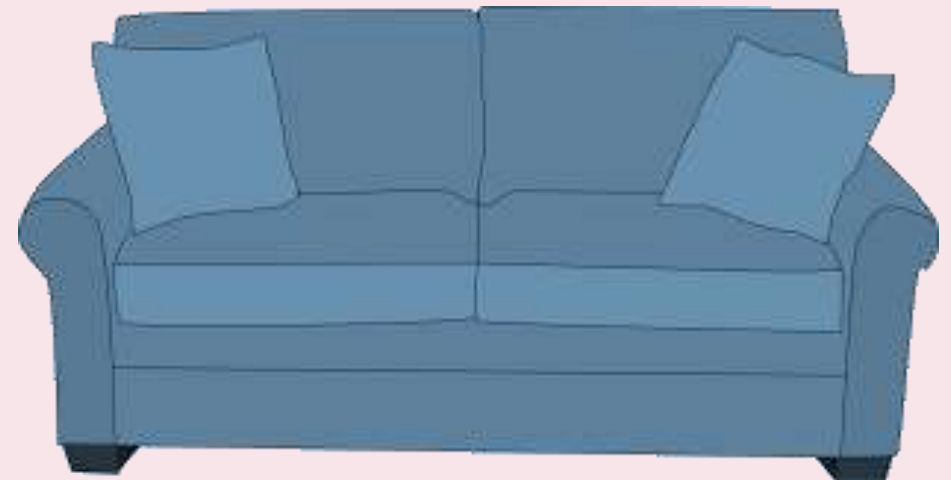


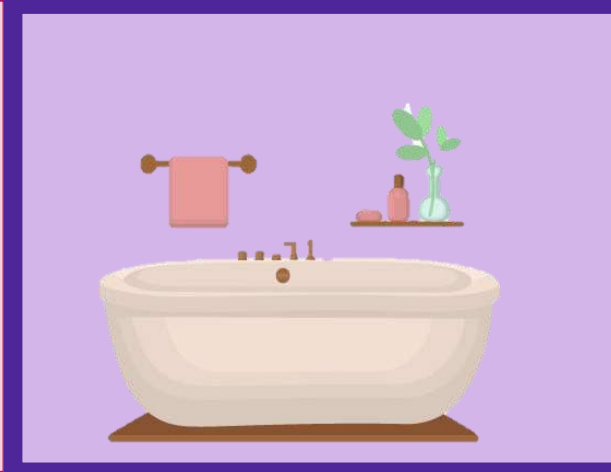
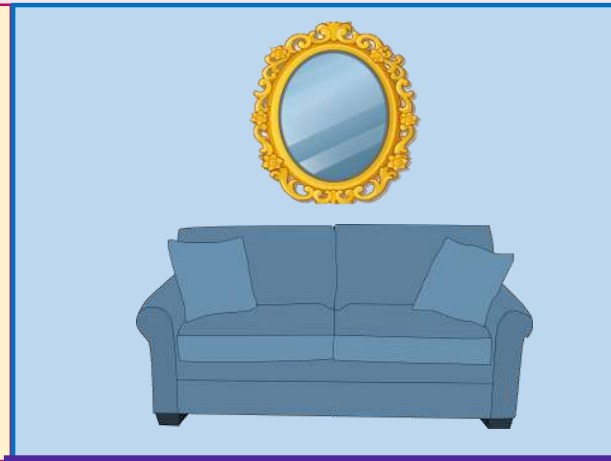
Living Room

Sitting Together

Husband/wife may *not* sit together on a seat, sofa, swing or bench which moves or shakes (feeling each other's body weight or movement), or a couch with one cushion.

- Some opinions say that if someone sits between the couple or there is something significant between the couple (example: a car seat in the back seat of a car), then it is ok.
- The couple may sit together on a hard and secured bench if one cannot feel the other's movements, sitting far apart enough, so they do not touch.





Washing

Tending to each other

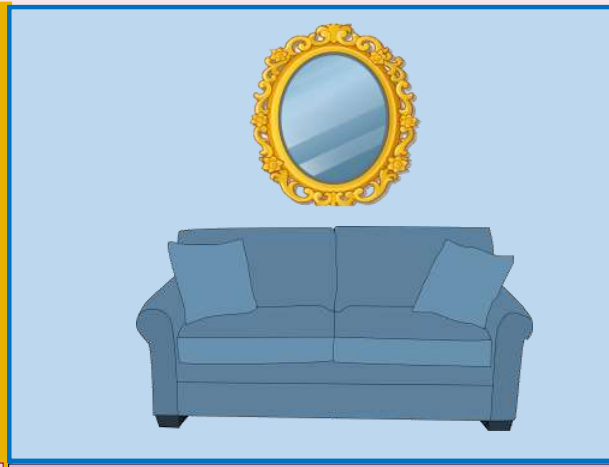
- Husband/wife may not pour water to wash the face, hands, feet, of the other (even if careful not to touch them).
- Husband/wife may *not* turn on or prepare water for the other, to bathe/wash, in each other's presence.
- Example: One may *not* turn on the faucet of a sink, bathtub or water fountain for a spouse to use.
- If one's spouse is not present, it is permitted.



Tending to each other

- You may leave water which was opened for personal use, for your spouse to use.
- Some opinions say that preparing water for a mitzva, including Mayim Achronim is permitted. Consult your Rav.
- In any case, you may prepare water for washing negel vaser, if the cups are undesignated.
- If you or your husband is ill and requires assistance during your time of Niddah, ask a Rav what is permitted.
- Obviously, in times of danger, you may do whatever is necessary, if there is no one else to do what you can do.





Dining Room / Kitchen

Dining Together

Husband/wife may not eat or drink together at one table or counter unless a HEKER – a distinction is made.

For a HEKER you may use:

1. AN OBJECT WITH NOTICEABLE HEIGHT
that is not usually found at the table.

Place it between you.

This can be something that is not normally on the table when you are Tehorah.

Or it can be something that is moved from its normal place and is put in between your plates.

Example: A vase that is not normally there, or you can move the vase from the center of the table to place it between you.



2. FOOD THAT IS NOT EATEN AT THAT MEAL

Example: A Whole challah or roll used as “Lechem Mishna”



3. A SEPARATE PLACEMAT
if you do not regularly use placemats

Example: You can use an extra napkin or charger plate as a placemat.



Dining Together

A Heker is needed, even if there are guests or family members, eating at the table as well.

A Heker is not required:

- When one is eating and the other is sitting and **not** eating.
- When sitting at **two** separate tables.

Note: Two tables, with **two separate tablecloths**, even if pushed together, are considered as **two tables**.

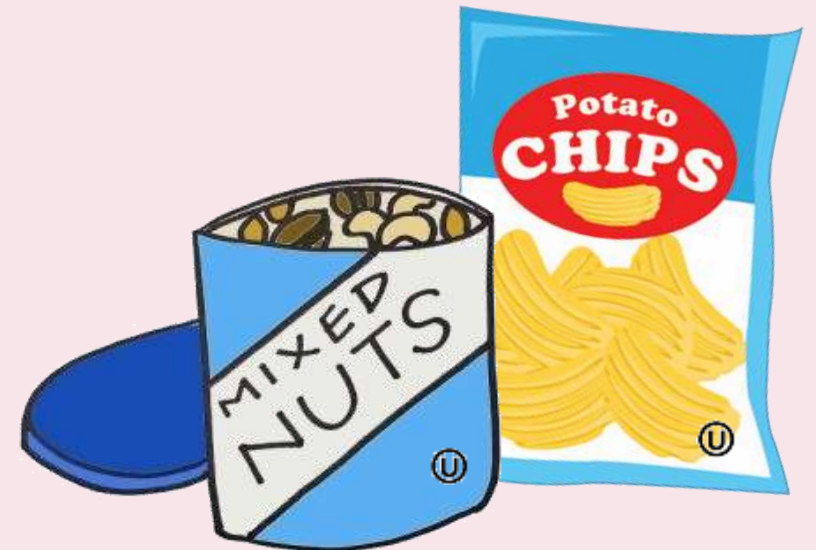
Two tables pushed together under **one tablecloth**, is considered as **one table**, a Heker is needed.



Sharing Food

Husband/wife may *not* eat or drink together directly out of one dish/cup or bag

- One may place a portion of food from their bag/dish on to their separate plates before eating. For example: Put a few nuts, chips or sushi on your plate or a cluster of grapes from the whole bunch.
- One may dip their challah into the same salt dish, but not at the same time.
- It is better to take a bit of salt with a spoon onto your own plate.
- Each is permitted to use the serving spoon to take a portion of any dips/spread, etc for themselves onto their own plate.
- Any food served whole (cake, loaf of bread, etc) each of you are permitted to cut off a personal portion.



Leftovers

Your husband may *not* eat or drink your leftovers unless:

- He transfers it into another dish/cup.
- Another person eats from your food, after you.
- You leave the room for awhile.
(If you returned while he was still eating them, he must stop eating them or transfer them to another plate).
- **Note:** If he does not know they are your leftovers, he may eat them, you do not have to inform him.

You may eat your husband's leftovers- enjoy!



Leftovers

- If you became Niddah and your husband did not know, you need to inform him, he may *not* eat your leftovers.
- If you take a piece of cake/pie/melon, etc. from the whole, it does not make the remainder your leftovers.
- If you taste food during preparation/cooking, it does not make the remainder your leftovers.



Serving Each Other

Husband/wife may *not* POUR a drink for their spouse, while the cup is *directly in front of their spouse.*

- **Exception:** Only COLD water may be poured.
Cooked water is already considered as having significance.

Likewise, one may *not* PUT the food on to their spouse's plate, while the plate is *directly in front of their spouse.*



Serving Each Other

Husband/wife may *not* PLACE/SERVE a plate of food or a drink, *directly in front of their spouse.*

Food should be placed/served in an ***IRREGULAR MANNER-SHINUI.***

For Example:

- Use your **non-dominant hand.**
- Place the food or cup **indirectly** in front of spouse. He/she will draw it nearer themselves.



Serving Each Other

A Shinui is not required when:

- One's spouse is not present, or is turned away so he/she does not see it being served.
- Serving COLD WATER.
- The husband places the slice of Challah for Hamotzi in front of his wife.
- Serving anything that is not designated specifically for each other.
Example: Family style serving or several cups of juice.



Serving Each Other

There is an opinion (stringency) that husband/wife may *not* PLATE, POUR or MIX the drink or food for the other in their presence.

Therefore, if husband/wife prepare a mixed beverage for the other in their presence, it should be prepared *incompletely*. The other spouse would need to add sugar/cream etc. to coffee/tea by themselves to complete it. Consult your Rav.



Husband sending Beverage to Wife

Your husband may not PASS or SEND (via a messenger) a cup of wine or a significant beverage* to you.

If he does send wine to you, in error, you may *not* drink it.

Kiddush:

- He may set down the cup at his place and you reach over to take it by yourself.
- If he has others in mind while making Kiddush, he may pour 2 or more cups without designating one specifically for you. You can take one of them.

**(except water)*



Husband sending Beverage to Wife

Example:

- He is not permitted to make a cup of tea and ask someone to bring it to you.
 - You, are permitted to ask someone to bring you the tea that he made.
 - Your **husband** should not order a significant drink for you.
- A **husband** is permitted to send his wife any type of **food** (not drinks).
 - A **wife** is permitted to send food/drink to her husband since it is customary for her to do so and does not indicate special affection.



Gift Giving

Lechatchilla, a husband should refrain from gifting his wife during Niddah.

- There is room for leniency regarding gifts that are not of an intimate nature.
Consult your Rav for clarity.
- It is permitted to bring flowers in honor of Shabbos or Yom Tov.





Travel

Travel

Husband/wife may *not* sit together on an undivided seat of a car or bench which moves or shakes (feeling each others body weight).

- If necessary, something or someone should be placed between the couple. (for example: a car seat).
- Extra caution is needed when using public transportation (bus, plane, train).
- **Tip: Preferably the couple should reserve or sit in aisle seats.**
- Some opinions allow the couple to sit together if a person sits between them or an obvious object is placed between them.



Travel

Husband and wife should *not* walk alone together in places of nature.

Example: Orchards, beach front, etc.

- **Avoid outdoor hikes in gardens/mountains.**
- The couple may not travel for the sake of an excursion, but rather for a **purpose**.

Example: Walking for exercise or to make a purchase or an outing with the kids.

- Regarding a boat ride, ask a Rav.



Games

Husband and wife may *not* play games of a frivolous sort.

- They cannot toss an object to each other.
- Mind games are permitted.
Example: Chess, Checkers.



Brachos for being careful with Harchakos

A lady had a carpenter build a beautiful and elaborate combined headboard in her master bedroom. When she discovered the laws of Niddah, she had self sacrifice to completely redo the carpentry.

The night that she made those changes, she conceived and had beautiful twin babies, after years of struggling to have a baby!

