



THE HALACHOS OF

Childbirth on Shabbos and Yom Tov

mikvah.org

By HaRav Yosef Braun, Mara D'Asra of the Crown Heights Beis Din

The information presented here was originally recorded as a podcast lecture for Mikvah.org by HaRav Yosef Braun, Mara D'Asra of the Crown Heights Beis Din.

It has been transcribed and edited for written format for ease of reference on Shabbos and Yom Tov as a joint project of Mikvah.org and MikvahStories.com

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Additional thanks to HaRav S.B. Chaikin,
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Introduction

A woman goes into labor... and a child is born... on שבת! A person might feel uncomfortable with the thought of desecrating שבת, even if it's allowed. But they don't need to be worried. ה' gave us a תורה saying that פיקוח נפש during the time of giving birth, as seen below, overrides anything else and isn't considered desecrating שבת. On the contrary, this is a form of keeping שבת! How so? The real observance of שבת is for the Yidden. And more Yidden in this world bolsters the observance of שבת.

בעזרת ה', the birth should be smooth, and with the bracha of בטחון and our בטחון we should hear good news. בטחון is probably the most powerful ingredient. Having all the knowledge and being prepared beforehand helps the בטחון, tranquility and calmness.

Every woman's health, pregnancies, and labors are different. **This booklet is intended for a standard/typical pregnancy,** labor and delivery. If a woman has any health conditions or atypical circumstances she should call her own Rav.

Please note: The הלכות below apply for both שבת and יום טוב, unless specified as שבת only.

הלכות General

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1. **Q. Can a woman take prenatal vitamins on שבת during the nine months of pregnancy?**
- A.** It's better to take it before/after שבת. Otherwise, she should at least mix the medication with food, which makes it like eating regular food. If both are not possible, then taking the medicine in the regular way is permitted.
- Explanation: חז"ל made a rule against taking medication on שבת, because when it comes to medicine, people don't act like themselves. (It's a question if vitamins are considered medication, so this is just referring to actual medication.) חז"ל were concerned that in the panic to get their medicine, people would forget about שבת and grind up the herbs they needed, thus violating a טוחן מלאכה דאורייתא of שבת. That's why a general rule was made: no medicine on שבת.
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2. **Q. Are there any exceptions to the rule of no medicine on שבת? What about during childbirth?**
- A.** There are many exceptions to this rule. When talking about childbirth where one can violate שבת outright, certainly the prohibition against medicine on שבת is lifted, and it's permitted even for someone who is sick without any danger attached.
- Any person who's actually sick in the regular sense, not a healthy person who's taking medicine, may take medicine on שבת.

3. **Q. On שבת, if someone needs advice about what type of procedure to do or about a surgery that's being proposed, can one call a רב from a different time zone to ask him?**

A. Yes, but with a שינוי.

4. **Q. What is a שינוי?**

A. Doing a מלאכה in a way that's completely different from the usual way of doing the מלאכה.

Explanation: The idea of a שינוי is not a license to allow a person to do a מלאכה on שבת - it's allowed only in a specific cases of extreme necessity. A שינוי makes the מלאכה descend into a lower level; when a מלאכה מן התורה is done כלאחר יד, not in the normal way, it's considered only an איסור דרבנן, which in some cases would be permissible.

People often think that if they're right-handed and they do something with their left hand it's considered a שינוי. This only applies, however, to fine motor skills which someone would never use their left hand for. For example, writing specifically with one's left hand (in a case where the מלאכה with a שינוי is allowed) would be considered an acceptable שינוי, but ripping something would not, because it isn't something that normally is only done with the right hand. For מלאכות where it doesn't make much of a difference whether the right or left hand is used, one should do the מלאכה in a backwards, unusual way, such as with the back of the hand or the elbow.

It's important to note that in reference to labor and childbirth, whenever it's recommended to do a מלאכה with a שינוי - how to make a phone call, how to hang up, how to drive, etc - that's only when time allows for it. **If heavy labor is on the way or there's a sign of danger for the mother or baby, one must do things in the speediest and obviously safest manner, as if it's happening on a weekday.**

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5. **Q. If it's permitted to be מחלל שבת for the sake of פיקוח נפש, why must the מלאכה be done with a שינוי?**
- A.** Childbirth is a natural process. Obviously, there's an issue of danger, but that's part of the way ה' set the nature of this world. As the פוסקים say: One in a thousand, חס ושלום, pass away as a result of childbirth. It's unusual that something should happen, and therefore, although it is permitted to "desecrate שבת", it should be done with a שינוי wherever possible.
- Note: We're actually keeping שבת when doing these things, but for clarity's sake, the term "desecrate" is being used here.
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6. **Q. At what point is a woman allowed to have a non-Jew do מלאכה for her?**
- A.** Any חולה, any sick person- even if they're not in any danger whatsoever- from someone who is under the weather, to someone who can't get out of bed - is allowed to have a non-Jew doing מלאכה for them on שבת.
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7. **Q. At what point is חילול שבת permissible for a woman in childbirth or someone who is helping her?**
- A.** שולחן ערוך tells us 4 signs which put a woman in childbirth in the category where חילול שבת is permissible for her. These are also the signs associated with the onset of טומאת נידה.
1. When she can't walk anymore and needs someone to carry her. In today's day and age, there are many women who can actually walk straight through

childbirth. So this sign is referring to such a late stage in childbirth which would, in theory, be that stage where she can't walk anymore and needs assistance.

2. When she's sitting on the birthing stool. There are many women who don't use a birthing stool, but this is just referring to the pushing stage where she would already be on one.
3. When she's bleeding.
4. When contractions are coming consistently, or in a regular pattern every few minutes.

With any of these 4 signs, חילול שבת is permissible without a שינוי (although it should be done with a שינוי if possible).

Traveling to the Hospital

8. **Q. What, if possible should be prepared in advance to minimize חילול שבת?**

A. הלכה mentions that when it comes to the ninth month, it's advisable to prepare everything in advance to minimize the חילול שבת.

It's important to register in advance at the hospital and pack all personal items that will be needed.

If it looks like one will need to go on שבת or יום טוב, a non-Jewish driver should be arranged beforehand. The payment should be settled in advance also, and the numbers of the taxi and the doctor should be written down and kept in a non-מוקצה place.

The lights should be on in places where one may need the lights, for example the garage, so that it won't be necessary to turn them on during שבת.

Babysitting arrangements should also be arranged before. There's even a הלכה that if it looks like the birth will happen very soon, one should travel to the hospital before שבת begins. Of course, this is only if the birth seems imminent and about to happen.

9. **Q. At what point can a woman call the doctor and go to the hospital?**

A. The same as during the week.

גמרא speaks about when one is allowed to travel out of the תחום שבת to fetch the midwife. The woman cannot wait until the last minute - the midwife has to be there earlier. The equivalent of that nowadays is calling the doctor and actually going to the hospital. We don't wait until the woman is on the birthing stool, because she needs to get to the hospital earlier.

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10. **Q. How should one go about calling the doctor to let him know they're coming?**
- A.** The phone call to the doctor or hospital should be done with a שינוי, if that's possible and it's not a rush for time. It's best to use a smartphone, as opposed to a regular phone, because a smartphone causes a lot less שאלות on שבת. If using a house phone, one should take the phone off the cradle with the back of their hand. Conversation should be kept to a minimum - "hello" and "thank you" are allowed, but anything else which isn't necessary should not be spoken about.
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11. **Q. How should one go about traveling to the hospital on שבת or טוב or שבת?**
- A.** The best is to use a שבת taxi, which is arranged in advance. The driver knows that he's supposed to open and close the doors, carry the bags to and from the taxi, and not to ask for payment at that time. If that wasn't arranged, you can also call the שבת taxi on שבת.
- A.** For a שבת taxi in New York you can call Rainbow Car Service: **718.498.4444**. You call and say you're a Jewish patient, you're going to the hospital and mention the account code: Chesed. This service is available for any stable patient and in non-life threatening situations where a person may need to go to the hospital on שבת.
- Obviously, in a case of emergency, call Hatzalah: **718.387.1750** or call **911**.
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12. **Q. In places where there is no שבת Taxi, is it better to call a taxi service or an Uber?**
- A.** Uber

Explanation: If it's a regular taxi versus an Uber, they both don't know any halachic conditions - for example, the driver might not want to carry bags, which would mean the woman carrying on שבת. In that case, it's certainly better to use an Uber, which doesn't require a phone call and can be ordered through an app.

If time is of the essence, then whichever way is fastest should be used.

13. **Q. Can a woman take her bag along to the hospital?**

A. She can only take what she needs for שבת.

To avoid doing extra מלאכות, it's preferable to put everything in one bag.

It's also preferable to ask the non-Jew to carry it, even if it's not a שבת taxi. They might be amenable, especially if they see that it's a woman in childbirth.

If the driver refuses to take the bag, one should carry it in an unusual way, to differentiate it from regular carrying.

14. **Q. Who is allowed to go along to the hospital?**

A. The husband is allowed to go along to the hospital if the woman needs her husband's support. She can also have two support people (such as her husband and the doula) and they should all go in the same car. But to have a whole team of people - the husband, mother, mother-in-law, sister - would be not allowed on Shabbos/Yom Tov. Only someone whose presence is absolutely necessary can join.

15. **Q. Why is a support person allowed to go along if he can't provide any medical support? How is that פיקוח נפש?**

A. Even if the woman doesn't need their assistance from

a medical point of view, the fact that the person will come along is a calming factor for her.

Explanation: The גמרא says that one is allowed to light a candle for a blind woman giving birth. That's because even a blind woman will feel calmer when she knows that the people looking after her have light and can see what they're doing.

The calmness and relaxation of the patient is of primary importance - the גמרא knew this hundreds of years before the science that knows about it today. That's one of the reasons why a support person is allowed to accompany the woman - because she'll be much more calm and relaxed that way. Again, as in the previous question of 2 support people versus a whole team; that shouldn't be overdone.

16.

Q. If the woman is already in a state of נידה and needs to be helped into the car, can her husband help her?

A. If there's no one else around, her husband is allowed to help her. He should use gloves and try to avoid touching. If it's possible to ask someone else to help, that should be done.

17.

Q. If the woman or her husband are the ones driving to the hospital, what should be done with the car once they get to the hospital?

A. If a person has no choice but to drive himself - he has no other arrangements, he wasn't able to get a non-Jew - then he is allowed to drive. When he comes to the hospital, he can put the car in a parked position, but he can't turn off the ignition or the lights. He can't close the door because that's going to turn the lights off. The only option is to find a non-Jew, ask him to take the car and park it, and to return the keys

after שבת. That's one of the reasons, among others, why it's always best to have a non-Jewish arrangement for driving on שבת.

18. **Q. Is it permitted to drive to a more distant hospital (i.e. not the closest community hospital) if the woman will feel more comfortable there?**

A. Yes.

Explanation: Theoretically, one should go to the nearest hospital in order to avoid unnecessary distances, which includes more driving. Every time the gas pedal is pressed, it's more מלאכה, more lighting fire on שבת. However, the woman might not be calm and comfortable at all if she's giving birth in a different hospital than she's used to or registered in. In order for her to receive the best care possible, driving a further distance is allowed.

19. **Q. A woman came to the hospital and discovered it was false labor. The hospital won't admit her and she has no food. Is she allowed to be driven home? Is her husband allowed to be driven home?**

A. In this case, she may be driven home by a non-Jew.

The husband may not be driven home, unless the woman feels she needs the support of her husband. He may also be driven home with her if the walk back from the hospital is not safe by foot.

מלאכה in the Hospital

20.

Q. How should one go about signing forms in the hospital?

A. If a woman has a medical condition and it's important that the hospital staff knows about it, all that information should be written and handed over in advance.

If the person taking the woman's information is not Jewish, which is the typical case in America, one is certainly allowed to give over their information, even though as a result a non-Jew will be signing a form. If it's someone Jewish, which happens a lot in ארץ ישראל, the woman should try to explain to them that it's שבת and that she doesn't want them to be מוחלל שבת. If they say: "Sorry, that's the process, and this person is doing it," then the woman is allowed to give over her information. In today's day and age, many of the intake forms are signed using a computer or tablet, which makes it much easier than actually writing on שבת.

Written forms are usually used with unique medical situations. Of course, it's not a time to play shtick. If a woman is asked to sign a form, she should sign it with a שינוי. Even better is just to scribble something, and avoid actually forming letters unless it's absolutely necessary.

21.

Q. If the hospital requires the woman or her husband's picture be taken for security purposes, what should be done?

A. Again, this is something the person has no choice in. The hospital employee is taking the picture; the patient or her husband aren't actually doing anything to make the picture happen. That's why it's allowed on שבת, if necessary.

22. **Q. Is one allowed to carry in a hospital?**

A. Yes

Explanation: Some people are מחמיר not to carry in a hospital. According to הלכה, however, there's no problem of carrying in a hospital both on שבת and יום כיפור.

23. **Q. If a support person is coming in and out of the hospital, may they wear a hospital bracelet?**

A. Not in the regular way.

Explanation: On שבת and יום כיפור, one cannot wear the hospital bracelet outside of the hospital, because it's not something that is usually worn. If one wants to wear it, it can be worn only as an accessory to the clothes- to close the cuff or the like (i.e. similar to a belt for the shirt sleeve, instead of using cuff buttons). It is also a good idea to be careful to make the bracelet just loose enough that it can be slipped on and off if needed.

24. **Q. If the bathrooms in the hospital are all electronically operated- there are sensors that turn on and off the light, flush, etc- what can the woman or anyone with her (husband, doula) do?**

A. Normally, in most hospitals, the restrooms for the patient are not like that. If they are, then the patient can certainly use the bathroom there.

The ones for visitors, however, are more often electronically operated. The visitor has to make every effort they can to go find another bathroom, even going to a different building, to avoid using an electronically operated one.

Where there's no choice, and the person has to go to the bathroom, he may use the electronically operated bathroom, even though he's only a visitor and not a patient. This is because כבוד הבריות, the respect and human dignity, is very important. It's even stronger than some prohibitions. In addition, the use of electricity in this case is דרבנן and not a direct הלכה. If he can, the person should try to do things with שינוי.

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25. **Q. May one rip toilet paper on שבת?**
- A.** If a person - even a healthy person- is in a bathroom where there's no cut toilet paper, they are allowed to cut it with a שינוי. For example, cutting a piece with an elbow, while being careful not to cut on the lines.

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26. **Q. Is one permitted to use an electronically operated sink?**
- A.** It's better not to, unless it's really necessary.
- Even if a person wants to wash their hands in order to make a ברכה, this scenario should be treated as if there is no water- in which case הלכה says to wipe their hands on something, for example, a towel or shirt. Of course, if there's an option to fill up water from somewhere else, that would be the best.

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27. **Q. Can a woman during or after birth press a call button to call the nurse?**
- A.** A woman who's giving birth is certainly allowed to call for help with a button.
- After birth, she's still in a state of danger. She can use the call button, she should just do it with a שינוי.

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28. **Q. Can a woman adjust the bed during or after labor?**
- A.** Yes. The woman's comfort is extremely important. After labor, it should be done with a שינוי.

Induction

Note: This is a general outlook. Each woman's situation is unique, and an induction may be needed in your situation. Please call your own רב for your own personal situation.

29. **Q. Can one plan an induction for שבת or ערב שבת or יום טוב?**

A. תשעה באב or ערב שבת, שבת, יום טוב, יום כיפור. It can be planned for the other fast days.

Explanation: One is not supposed to plan an induction within three days of שבת or יום טוב unless it is medically necessary.

30. **Q. If it's a false labor and the doctor gives two options: either an induction or the woman will be sent home - is it better to induce?**

A. If the woman is feeling fine, then it's better to go home on שבת with a non-Jew than to be induced on שבת. If the woman is having a long labor or is at risk for a C-section, then she can get induced.

Explanation: Inductions should not be done unless really necessary. There are many reasons for this, including: it puts the woman in a state of סכנה, and it interferes with a process that ה' created.

מלאכה During Labor and Birth

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31. **Q. Can a woman listen to music during labor on שבת?**
- A.** If a woman needs music during labor, she should prepare the music before שבת and have it playing. If it was not prepared before שבת she can ask a non-Jew to turn it on for her. If she's already at a stage where חילול שבת is allowed- she's pushing, she's bleeding, etc- then she's allowed to turn on the music herself. It should be done, if possible, with שינוי - for example with the elbow or the back of a hand.
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32. **Q. Can a woman in labor shower for relaxation? Can she shower or take a bath to take away pain?**
- A.** If it's for relaxation, it shouldn't be done unless a non-Jew turns on the water or she does it with שינוי. If it's to take away pain, it's allowed to be done on שבת even without a non-Jew or שינוי, if those aren't possible.
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33. **Q. If a woman wants to use a warm compress, either during labor or after birth because of pain, and she wasn't able to get them prepared in advance, what can she do?**
- A.** She can take a cloth, ideally synthetic, and make it wet. But she should make sure not to squeeze it, because that would be forbidden on שבת, unless it's absolutely necessary and can't be done with שינוי.

34. **Q. Is a hot water bottle permitted to be used to ease the pain either during labor or after birth?**

A. Yes

Explanation: Usually, a hot water bottle is a problem on שבת because it falls under medication, which isn't allowed. But as mentioned earlier, for someone who's not well, medication is not a problem on שבת.

35. **Q. Can a C-section be scheduled for שבת?**

A. One is not supposed to plan a C-section within three days of שבת or טוב שבת. If there's a situation of danger, however, there's no choice and it must be done.

A signature is often required before a C-section, and as mentioned earlier, it should be done with a שינוי and not writing each letter the correct way.

36. **Q. Do all these הלכות apply in the case of a miscarriage or stillborn?**

A. Yes- usually these are stages of סכנה, danger, and therefore everything that has to be done to the mother the same way as a regular birth.

37. **Q. Can a D&C procedure be scheduled for שבת?**

A. Only if it's a danger to delay it past שבת. This is only referring to a D&C that is scheduled in advance.

Note: This is a general outlook. For your own specific שאלות, call your own personal רב.

38.

Q. Can a support person benefit from חילול שבת? For example, if there's ice from an electronic machine in the hospital, can the husband benefit from it, too?

A. It depends.

Explanation: There is a principle in הלכה called נר לאחד, נר לאחד, נר לאחד, נר לאחד - a candle for one is a candle for 100. There's no real difference in how many people are in the room; they're all benefiting from the same candle. The גמרא says that if a ramp is being built for a boat, it makes no difference how many people are on the boat; there's one ramp for everyone.

But it's different when it comes to cooking, or heating up water: for one person, it's one cup of water; for two people, it's two cups. If there's a concern that someone might add and do something extra for the healthy person, the healthy person may not benefit, even if it wasn't done for them; even if it was done only for the sick person. The healthy person may only benefit from something that was done for the sick person if אפשר להרבות, אי אפשר להרבות, it's not possible to increase it and there's therefore no concern that the non-Jew will do something extra for the extra person.

מלאכה Post-Birth

39.

Q. Is a couple allowed to make arrangements for the nurse to call their parents on שבת to let them know what's going on, or if the baby is a boy or girl?

A. There's really no היתר to do that. That's unnecessary חילול שבת.

Explanation: The parents do not need to know if it's a boy or girl, and nothing is going to happen if they don't make a שלום זכר or קידוש either, and arranging that someone will call usually just creates extra anxiety and worry until that person calls. There can be extreme circumstances where there might be a היתר to make a phone call for a parent, but that's not the normal case.

40.

Q. How is חילול שבת for a woman after childbirth done?

A. Within 3 days after childbirth: A woman within 3 days of childbirth is considered to be in the state of מסוכנת בוודאי, in a certain state of danger. How are the three days counted? We don't count according to 24 hours.

For example, if the baby was born on Wednesday night after sunset, we count Thursday as day 1, Friday as day 2, and שבת is within three days. This is also true if the baby was born on Thursday 10 minutes before sunset. Here also, Thursday is day 1, Friday is day 2, and even though the Thursday day was only 10 minutes, שבת is still day 3.

During these three days, one is allowed to be מוחלל

שבת for anything that's normally done for a woman after birth, even if she says she doesn't need it. One doesn't have to wait for her to say that she needs something to happen to her, that she needs this form of חילול שבת. If other people say she needs it, it's also good enough. This is provided that there's no doctor or nurse that comes and says that it's totally not needed.

Still, although חילול שבת is permissible, it's better if pushing buttons or turning the hot water on for the shower can be done with a שינוי. It makes no difference whether the woman herself or the person helping her does it.

If something isn't really necessary, it shouldn't be done. For example, although preparing hot food is allowed to be done, it usually isn't really needed.

Within 3-7 days after childbirth: If the baby was born on Wednesday or earlier, שבת would fall out after the first three days. All the forms of חילול שבת mentioned earlier may be done with a שינוי, but only if the woman or her doctor say she needs it done.

Within 30 days after childbirth: Within 30 days, even if the woman says that she needs it done, one is not allowed to be מחלל שבת because she's not in a state of danger anymore because of childbirth. It could be that she's in a state of danger because of something else, but in general, after childbirth there's no danger after 7 days. A מילאכה done through a non-Jew is a different story. But to be מחלל שבת directly would not be allowed.

41.

Q. Can a woman use material to keep herself clean after birth?

A. Yes. It's best to use synthetic material, so there are no problems with squeezing.

42.

Q. A woman has just given birth. Her baby is in the NICU. How can the husband or parents visit on שבת if it will entail using the elevator and automatic doors?

A. When it comes to using the elevator on שבת, it's obviously best to use the stairs. However, a woman who just gave birth will likely not be able to use the stairs. Also, the steps often have a sensor that turns the lights on by the person's movement. In that case, a non-Jew needs to go along, so it isn't just the Jewish person turning on the lights. If the stairs aren't an option, then it's better to use the elevator, so long as there is a non-Jew in the elevator also.

As for automatic doors, it's best to find some side way to go inside. If there's no option of doing that, one should wait until someone else is going in, and tag along, so that it's considered as if the non-Jew actually opened the door.

43.

Q. Are a hospital's שבת elevators allowed to be used without a non-Jew coming along?

A. These elevators are not necessarily real שבת elevators, so it's always best to go with a non-Jew. If there's no other choice and there's no other way to go, these שבת elevators may be used for the sake of the ביקור חולים of מצוה.

Explanation: שבת elevators involve a number of things. There's the first idea: the elevator buttons cannot be pressed on שבת. To solve that, the elevators are scheduled to stop on every floor without a person doing anything. They also open and close each door.

Then there's another issue altogether: a person's weight affects the elevator. A lot of שבת elevators don't take care of that problem, besides for the real ones that come with a שרשרת affirming that the person's weight will have zero effect on the elevator.

Again, if there's no other choice, this elevator can be used because it's for the מצוה of ביקור חולים, but it's best to go along with a non-Jew.

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44. **Q. If the parents went out of תחום שבת in order to go to the hospital, may they leave the hospital to go to shul or to name the baby? For example, if he came from Crown Heights and his wife gave birth in a Staten Island Hospital, can he go find a shul?**
- A.** No, there's no היתר to go out of the תחום on שבת in order to name a baby. Naming the baby does not have to happen on שבת. If it won't happen, it won't happen. However, Staten Island is considered part of New York City and it is permitted to go out of a Staten Island hospital on שבת.
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45. **Q. What about the bags that were brought along in the taxi to the hospital? Are their contents allowed to be used if they were brought out of תחום שבת?**
- A.** One suggestion is to declare the bags ownerless in advance. Once they're ownerless, none of the הלכות of תחום שבת apply, because they don't have any תחום.
- If there's no other choice, take it with a שינוי, or ask a non-Jew to take it.
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46. **Q. If a woman gets discharged on שבת or יום טוב, is she allowed to be driven home by a non-Jew?**
- Explanation: יום טוב is a bit better than שבת in this regard. Driving a car on יום טוב is an איסור דרבנן, because it comes from the problem of creating a new flame. The idea isn't that a person is allowed to drive his car on יום טוב. Rather, a non-Jew is allowed to drive a woman after childbirth, because she is considered a חולה. This applies even seven days after childbirth, where she's considered a חולה who isn't in any danger. So being driven by a non-Jew is a דרבנן, and on יום טוב, the actual driving is a דרבנן, so it's a double דרבנן. For a חולה, it's allowed.

איסור דאורייתא is a whole different story, because it's an איסור דאורייתא. A regular hospital patient who is now healthy and gets released on שבת can't have a non-Jew drive them home. Since a woman after childbirth is still considered a חולה, if it's not comfortable for her to stay in the hospital and she must get home, she is allowed to have a non-Jew drive her home. The husband may come along if there is a danger for him to walk or a danger for the wife to go back home alone in the car without him.

47.

Q. Can a postpartum woman smear nipple cream on שבת to help with painful breastfeeding? What about pain medicine for the birth area or for stitches?

A. One is not allowed to smear cream on שבת for two reasons:

5. There's an איסור of smearing on שבת
6. There's a problem of רפואה, of using medicinal products, on שבת.

The רפואה is not an issue in this case because the woman is considered a חולה and can therefore use medication. But smearing cannot be done on שבת.

The best solution would be to prepare a gauze pad with the cream on it before שבת. On שבת, it just needs to be applied and it smears itself. If that wasn't prepared, the cream can be squeezed out onto a gauze, but not smeared.

If it's a liquid or spray, there's no problem whatsoever.

מצוות in the Hospital

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48. **Q. In the hospital, may one use electric candles for שבת candles? May one make a ברכה when using electric candles?**
- A.** Yes. Best to use a battery-operated LED light, as opposed to fluorescent. Ideally, one should use a light which is not the regular light used during the week. A lot of hospitals have a ביקור חולים room, where they're supplied with special שבת electric candles that a ברכה can be made on.
-
49. **Q. If the husband is at home when the wife is in the hospital, does he also need to light שבת candles?**
- A.** Yes. Even if he has daughters over בת מצוה, who are also lighting שבת candles, he should still light because the מצוה is on the husband.
- Explanation: When the wife is home, the wife is doing the מצוה because she deals with the matters of the home. When the wife is not there, the מצוה reverts to the husband. Therefore, he should be lighting candles and not relying on the daughter's candles.
-
50. **Q. Is a woman in the hospital obligated to hear קידוש?**
- A.** Yes. Men and women are equally obligated in קידוש, healthy or not.
- Explanation: As always, the woman in the hospital does not need to make קידוש for herself; someone else can make it for

her. קידוש can be made on wine, grape juice, or even on challah if necessary.

However, קידוש is only valid במקום סעודה. If there's no meal accompanying the קידוש, it's not called קידוש. One must have another cup of wine or grape juice to count it as a סעודה. In a case where the person can't have two cups, it means having one full רביעית of wine or grape juice. Eating חלה or מזונות will also make it count as a סעודה.

In the absence of any of those options of סעודה, the קידוש is not really a קידוש. If a patient can't do any of the above, and they need to eat something, they don't have to wait, because they're not well. Medication and IV are also not considered eating before קידוש.

But in all of these cases, one should at least try to do the מצוה of קידוש מין התורה, which is to sanctify שבת with words, even without a cup of wine. Just saying the words "ברוך אתה מקדש" "השבת", or saying a part of davening where שבת is mentioned, is a form of קידוש. Preferably, she should try to say the שמונה מעריב of עשרה.

51.

Q. Is a woman in the hospital obligated to make לחם משנה?

A. Yes. If that's not possible, she should at least hear לחם משנה from someone else. Even if she can't eat the bread, she should eat a mezonos. If it's not possible, then it's not possible.

52.

Q. Is a woman in the hospital obligated to hear הבדלה?

A. Yes.

Explanation: חלה הבדלה cannot be made on חלה.

חלה הבדלה can be made either on wine or grape juice or a beverage like coffee or tea. If someone is not well and they can't wait, and they don't have the option of using coffee or tea or wine, they're allowed to eat before הבדלה. But if someone can wait, they should wait.

In contrast to שבת candles, מאורי האש can't be done on an electric candle. It should be skipped. Also, many women, in general, don't make a ברכה on the candle.

53. **Q. Can a woman in the hospital drink water before הבדלה?**

A. Yes.

Explanation: It is our מנהג that we don't drink water before הבדלה. According to הלכה, however, one may drink water before הבדלה. A patient in a hospital who is waiting for someone to come make הבדלה should certainly not be strict about this. There is nothing wrong with drinking water, and this would include seltzer, tea, or coffee as well.

54. **Q. Is a woman in the hospital obligated to hear שופר on ראש השנה, and to shake the לולב and be in a סוכות on סוכה?**

A. These מצוות do not apply to women. Some women have taken them on, but it's not an absolute obligation. Of course, if she can hear שופר, that's great; if she has a chance to shake לולב, great; if she can eat in the סוכה - great. If not, there's really no necessity to go out of her way to do any of these מצוות.

55. **Q. What about הנוכח?**

A. She is יוצא by her husband lighting at home. However, she can light electric candles without a ברכה.

56.

Q. What about the מצוות of פורים and the סדרים on פסח?

A. She should do them if she can.

Explanation: On פורים, the מצוות are מגילה, a סעודה משלוח מנות and מתנות לאביונים.

On פסח, the מצוות are drinking the four cups of wine, saying הלל, saying the story of מצרים, eating מצה and eating מרור. If she can eat some but not all of the regular שיעורים of מצה and מרור on the סדר night then the order of priority is: one כזית of מצה, one כזית מרור, one כזית for אפיקומן, one כזית each of מצה and מרור for כורך.

Note: It is a good idea to ask your רב in advance of יום טוב if you have שאלות for your specific situation.

יום כיפור

In most cases, יום כיפור is identical to שבת. There are a few differences, however, and the main one is fasting, as presented below.

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57. **Q. What should be done in the case of a medical emergency on יום כיפור in regards to food and medicine?**
- A.** If someone's life is in danger, or even if there's a question about it, they must be given food and medicine immediately. A person should not try to be smarter. The תורה which tells us to fast on יום כיפור also tells us that our health is even more important than fasting. A healthy person does the מצוה through fasting, and a sick person in a case of danger does the מצוה through eating.
-
58. **Q. In general, what should one do if they know they'll have to eat on יום כיפור due to medical reasons?**
- A.** It's important to talk to a רב about it in advance.
-
59. **Q. What should a person do if they were told they're allowed to eat and drink, but later they regain their energy and feel strong enough to fast?**
- A.** If the danger is over, they have to fast. To be very clear: If a person is weak, but has to be in bed all day to fast, they should do that. Going to shul and davening is secondary compared to the מצוה of fasting. It's better

to be in bed all day and not daven even one word instead of חס ושלום putting a morsel of food or drink of water in one's mouth. If there's no danger by fasting, then a person must fast.

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60. **Q. If a woman is told that for medical reasons, she's not allowed to fast- what are the guidelines?**
- A.** מן התורה, you're not allowed to eat even a **מישהו**, a small amount of food, **יום כיפור** on. But the punishment of **כרת** only applies to someone who eats 2/3 of the size of an egg, **כביצה**. For drinking, it's if they drank a mouthful of liquid. That's why if someone is dangerously ill and must eat or drink, it should be less than a **שיעור**, wherever possible.

If one knows in advance that they won't be able to fast, before **יום כיפור** they should fill their mouth and cheeks with liquid and spit it all out into a cup. That's how much their mouthful is. Half of that is the amount they're allowed to drink at one time on **יום כיפור**.

The amount they're allowed to eat in one go is 30 cubic centimeters- approximately the size that fits into a very small matchbox.

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61. **Q. What if the doctor wants her to eat regularly?**
- A.** She should ask her **רב**.

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62. **Q. How much time is considered "at one time"? How much time does the woman need to wait before eating another tiny amount?**
- A.** Ideally, there should be 9 minutes between every small liquor cup of liquid, or between every small matchbox of food. If it's not possible for her to wait 9 minutes, she can wait 7, 6, or even 4 minutes.

Within the same time frame, she's allowed to eat a small amount and also drink a small amount. They don't join together.

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63. **Q. If a woman must eat on יום כיפור, does she need to make קידוש before?**
- A. No, even when יום כיפור is on שבת.
-
64. **Q. If a woman must eat on יום כיפור and she eats bread, does she wash the entire hand? Does she need to make a לחם משנה? Does she say יעלה ויבוא in bentching?**
- A. Yes, she washes the entire hand, the same way she usually washes her hands. No, she does not make לחם משנה.
- There are different opinions about whether or not יעלה ויבוא is said in bentching. The general opinion is that yes, it should be said in bentching.
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65. **Q. When one goes into labor, often the advice is not to eat, but to drink. Can a woman do that on יום כיפור?**
- A. If she needs to drink, then that's what is supposed to be done.
-
66. **Q. Sometimes it's advisable to drink water or wine to rule out false labor. Can that be done on יום כיפור?**
- A. No. It's better to go to the hospital than to choose to violate יום כיפור by eating and drinking, whether it's water or wine.

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67. **Q. What are the הלכות of fasting on יום כיפור for a woman who is within 3 days after giving birth?**
- A.** She must eat, even if she says she doesn't have to. But she should eat less than a שיעור, as discussed above.
-
68. **Q. What are the הלכות of fasting on יום כיפור for a woman who is between 3-7 days after giving birth?**
- A.** If she says she needs to eat, then she can eat. Again, she should be careful to eat less than a שיעור.
-
69. **Q. What are the הלכות of fasting on יום כיפור for a woman who is after 7 days of giving birth?**
- A.** There's no סכנה whatsoever; she is not allowed to eat on יום כיפור because of childbirth. If she says she needs to eat - that could be because of sickness, which is a different story and must be addressed separately.
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70. **Q. Can a woman use pain relief cream on יום כיפור?**
- A.** The איסור of using cream on יום כיפור (and תשעה באב) only applies to smearing for pleasure. But if it's to remove pain, it's not a problem. This is a separate איסור from smearing ointment on שבת. See question 47 for more information on smearing ointment on שבת.

Birth and Moshiach

71.

Q. How is birth connected to Moshiach?

A. ל"הו"ז tell us that there is a chamber in heaven called נשמות, that is filled with נשמות. As soon as all the נשמות come out of that chamber, that's when משיח will come. So every birth is another step toward משיח. Additionally, גלות is compared to the pangs of labor while גאולה is the birth. At this stage when we've already done everything we can to bring משיח, birth just means being able to visualize the days of Moshiach that we're experiencing currently, may we see it clearly now.

'ה will help that all the births that are supposed to take place should all be בהצלחה, and it should be a smooth labor and an easy birth in the best possible way. There should be no need to be concerned about anything because we have ברכה's in everything that takes place, especially when it comes to birth.

הצלחה רבה and בשורות טובות!

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