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PURITY AND PIETY: THE SEPARATION OF MENSTRUANTS FROM THE SANCTA

Many Jews, both men and women, believe that menstruants are prohibited by Jewish law from touching a Torah scroll and participating in the synagogue prayer service. In this chapter, I briefly survey the tortuous history of this belief. For the sake of brevity, I present only the major evidence, reserving full discussion for another occasion.[1]

I begin with the relevant paragraphs of the *Shulḥan Arukh*, the classic code of rabbinic law, which permits menstruants to hold and read a Torah Scroll. The only individuals legally barred from touching the Torah Scroll were men who had seminal emissions (ejaculants), but the *Shulḥan Arukh* notes that this prohibition is universally ignored. Despite this clear statement of Jewish law, Ashkenazic Jewish women generally refrained from synagogue attendance during their menstruation. This practice was recorded and endorsed by Rabbi Moses Isserles in his gloss to the *Shulḥan Arukh*. In the central section of this chapter, I survey the evolution of the prohibition of access to the sacred by menstruants. This survey, which extends from biblical to medieval times, provides the background necessary for understanding the debate between R. Karo and R. Isserles. In the chapter's final sections, I survey post–*Shulḥan Arukh* developments and offer a few concluding reflections on the tenacity of this prohibition in Jewish piety.

The *Shulḥan Arukh*

In the *Shulḥan Arukh*, R. Joseph Karo (1488–1575) writes the following:[2]

All those who are impure may read the Torah, recite the *Shema*, and pray, except for the ejaculant, because Ezra removed him from the general category of the impure and prohibited him [to engage] either in the words of Torah or in the recitation of the *Shema*, or in prayer, until he immerses [in a *mikveh*] so that the Sages should not frequent their wives like roosters. Afterward, however, this enactment was abolished and the original law was re-established, that even an ejaculant is permitted [to engage] in the words of Torah, the recitation of the *Shema*, and prayer, without immersion and without washing in nine *kabim* of water. And this is the common practice.

R. Moses Isserles (c. 1525–1572) adds the following note:

Some have written that a menstruant, during the days of her discharge, may not enter a synagogue or pray or mention God's name or touch a Hebrew book, but some say that she is permitted [to do] all these, and this view is correct. However, the practice in these countries accords with the first opinion. However, in the white days[3] the custom is to permit [her to do all these]. And even in a place that follows the stringent practice, on the Days of Awe and other such occasions when many gather to enter the synagogue, they are permitted to enter the synagogue like other women, because it will be great sadness for them if everyone gathers [in synagogue] but they stand outside.

Elsewhere in the *Shulḥan Arukh*, R. Karo states that "All those who are impure, even menstruants, are permitted to hold a Torah scroll and read it, provided that their hands are neither soiled nor dirty."[4] Here R. Isserles has no comment.

The question addressed in these paragraphs is whether those who are impure (*teme'im*) may perform sacred acts, specifically read the Torah (a category that apparently includes also the study of Torah),[5] recite the *Shema*, and pray (that is, pray the eighteen benedictions, the *Amidah*). For R. Karo, a Sephardic authority, the matter is simple. He states that impurity does not bar any person—including menstruants, parturients, lepers, those who have come into contact with a corpse—from holding a Torah scroll or engaging in prayer and study. The only possible exception is the ejaculant, not because his impurity is greater than that of all the others, but because the rabbis sought to control male sexuality. If a pious son of Israel knows that after ejaculation he must immerse in a ritual bath

(a *mikveh*) or wash himself thoroughly before he may read Torah or recite the prayers, the quintessential acts of rabbinic piety, he will restrain his amorous desires and not cohabit with his wife too frequently. However, even this possible exception is not really an exception because the requirement is everywhere ignored and the original law, which did not single out the ejaculant, is in effect. Thus R. Karo.

In his supplementary comment, R. Moses Isserles, an Ashkenazic authority relying on the work of various Ashkenazic predecessors, asks whether the status of a menstruant in relationship to the sancta should be distinguished from the status of other impure persons. Some authorities, R. Isserles states, prohibit the menstruant from the following four actions: (1) entering a synagogue, (2) praying, (3) mentioning God's name, and (4) touching a Hebrew book.

R. Isserles comments that this opinion is wrong because menstruants are not prohibited by law from these four actions. Nevertheless, "in these countries," that is, in Poland and other Ashkenazic areas, the custom (*minhag*) is to observe the prohibitions. Since there is no legal prohibition, R. Isserles remarks that two leniencies are followed: first, the prohibitions are followed only during the days of menstrual discharge and not during the seven "white" days; second, on the Days of Awe and other such occasions, menstruants are permitted to attend the synagogue (and, presumably, to pray),[6] even in those localities which otherwise follow the stringent practice.

To understand how this widespread custom developed, we need to look to the biblical and rabbinic sources for the origins of the concept that a ritually impure person should refrain from contact with sacred objects and places.

From the Torah to the *Shulḥan Arukh*

The focal point of the purity system in the Torah is the central sanctuary. After outlining the details of the impurity caused by sexual discharge from both men and women, God instructs Moses and Aaron to "keep the people of Israel separate from their impurity, lest they die in their impurity by defiling My Tabernacle that is in their midst" (Lev. 15:31). Impurity of any kind, whether that of the leper, the ejaculant, the menstruant, or a corpse, must be kept distant from the sacred space and the

sacred objects of the Tabernacle. As long as the Temple stood in Jerusalem the realm of the sacred was clearly marked off from the realm of the profane. In the Temple and in proximity to persons and objects bound for the Temple, purity was an essential requirement; elsewhere the purity laws could be ignored. During the latter part of the second Temple period (mid-second century B.C.E. to 70 C.E.) various sects and pietistic groups extended the limits of the sacred to include daily life outside the Temple, especially all matters connected with food. This perspective, however, had only a minimal impact on the Jews at large, who continued to regard the Temple as the single locus of sanctity and the sole place that demanded ritual purity of its entrants.

With the destruction of the Temple in 70 C.E., the purity system lost its focal point and ultimately ceased to exist. In the absence of the sacrificial cult, the Jews elaborated and ritualized a system of worship through prayer and Torah study. In the absence of the Temple, the synagogue and the school emerged as the new central institutions of Judaism. Prayer, Torah study, and synagogues were part of Jewish piety long before the destruction of the Temple in 70 C.E., but the destruction endowed them with new prominence and meaning. They became the permanent replacements for an institution and a ritual that would return only in the messianic age.

Were these replacements fully equivalent to the lost originals? Obviously not, because the Torah contains prescriptions for the Tabernacle (which was understood to be the model for the Temple) and the sacrificial cult, but not a word about synagogues or ritualized prayer and study. However, in spite of this ideological weakness—or perhaps because of it—the Jews tried to assimilate the synagogue to the Temple and prayer to the sacrificial cult. The synagogue became home to rituals that originally were performed in the Temple (for example, blowing the *shofar* on Rosh Hashanah), was decorated with representations of the Temple and the Temple utensils (notably the *menorah*), and was outfitted with an ark and a perpetual light. The prayers were explicitly likened to the sacrifices and were said to replace them. This process lasted several centuries, and one of its results was the idea that prayer, Torah study, and entrance into a synagogue demand ritual purity.

At the earliest stages of this process, ritual purity requirements were not transferred. The Mishnah, the first document of rabbinic Judaism, states that an ejaculant may not recite aloud the benedictions of the lit-

urgy or of the Grace after Meals.[7] The Mishnah does not give a reason for the prohibition but implies that the problem is not impurity in general but semen in particular. The Mishnah nowhere records a parallel prohibition for a leper, a man with an abnormal sexual discharge (*zab*), someone affected by corpse impurity, a menstruant, or any other impure person. Only the ejaculant and those who come in contact with semen must be purified before performing the liturgy. The *Tosefta*, a collection of material closely related to the Mishnah, correctly concludes:[8]

> Men who have an abnormal sexual discharge (*zabim*), women who have an abnormal sexual discharge (*zabot*), menstruants, and parturients are permitted to read the Torah, and to study Mishnah, Midrash, laws, and homilies. But the ejaculant is prohibited from all these.

Why of all sources of impurity was ejaculation alone singled out? Both the Jerusalem and Babylonian Talmudim suggest that the reason was to restrain male sexuality ("so that Sages should not behave like roosters"). The law is primarily interested in men, not women, and in male actions and intentions, not purity and impurity.[9] Neither the Mishnah nor the Talmuds raise any obstacle before a menstruant who wants to attend synagogue, pray, recite the *Shema*, or study scripture.

Thus, the separation of the ejaculant from the sancta is far older and more authoritative than the analogous separation of the menstruant. In the thousand years or so between the completion of the Talmud and the publication of the *Shulḥan Arukh*, the case of the ejaculant was debated intensely by jurists. Some said that he was prohibited by law from praying unless he immersed in a *mikveh* or washed in a specific amount of water; others said that the custom had lapsed completely. But regarding Torah study, there was near unanimous agreement that an ejaculant was not required to do any special bathing or washing, because "the words of Torah cannot contract impurity." Following Maimonides (1138–1204 C.E.), R. Joseph Karo adopted a lenient position, permitting the ejaculant both to pray and to study Torah.[10]

Although there is no legal basis in the Talmuds for separating menstruants from the sancta, in the post-Talmudic period, in some circles, they began to be excluded (or to exclude themselves). This practice is the result of two developments. First, as archaeology demonstrates, the arrogation of Temple ideology by the synagogue continued apace. In in-

scriptions of the Byzantine period the synagogue is called "holy place," "house of God," and other such epithets that originally and properly belonged to the Temple in Jerusalem. The rules elaborated in the Talmud governing respect for the Temple were transferred to the synagogue. And since menstruants and other impure persons could not enter the Temple, logic dictated that they could not enter synagogues, the surrogates of the Temple. This conclusion should have affected ejaculants, lepers, and all other impure persons as much as it affected menstruants, but it did not. Menstruants were distanced from the synagogue, but impure men could still attend (even if many authorities stated that ejaculants could not pray).

Of all impure persons, menstruants alone were excluded from the synagogue, because only menstruants were dangerous as well as impure. In the conception of the Mishnah and the Talmuds the menstruant is impure and transmits impurity to persons and objects, but she is not a source of danger. She is ritually impure not dangerously polluted.[11] But a text known as *Baraita de Niddah*, probably written in the Land of Israel in the sixth or seventh century, documents a significant shift in attitude. A menstruant must not cut her fingernails, lest her husband or child accidentally step on or touch the clippings and, as a result, develop boils and die; a priest whose mother, wife, or any other female member of the household is menstruating, may not bless the people, lest his blessing become a curse; a Sage who partakes of food prepared by a menstruant will forget his learning; a menstruant's spit, breath, and speech cause impurity in others.[12] Earlier rabbinic texts did not contain any regulations like these. The identity of the group or school that produced the *Baraita de Niddah* is unknown, but the text had enormous impact on later Jewish piety.

Since *Baraita de Niddah* considers the menstruant dangerously polluted, it is surely no coincidence that it is the earliest Jewish text (post-70 C.E.) to prohibit menstruants from coming into contact with the sacred. A menstruant is prohibited from lighting the Shabbat candles. Men are prohibited from greeting a menstruant or reciting a benediction in her presence, lest she respond in kind or recite "Amen" and thereby desecrate the name of God. No impure person is permitted to enter a "house of prayer, because he thereby is rendering God's sanctuary impure," but this general prohibition is directed specifically at menstruants; in fact, they should not even enter a room filled with Hebrew books. Like menstruants, parturients too may not enter either synagogues or schools. These prohibi-

tions apply not only to menstruants but also to those who come into contact with them. Men who have had contact with a menstruant's spittle are prohibited from entering a synagogue until they have been purified; a midwife who has delivered a child has the impurity of a menstruant and may not enter a synagogue or "stand before the Sages" without being purified.[13]

Thus, the impurity of the menstruant is not like that of other persons, because her impurity is dangerous to those around her. She must be distanced not only from her husband but also from the sacred. In the *Baraita de Niddah* the menstruant is explicitly prohibited from entering a synagogue or coming into contact with sacred books and is implicitly prohibited from praying and reciting God's name. These are precisely the four prohibitions mentioned by R. Isserles.

In the thousand years between the *Baraita de Niddah* and R. Isserles, these prohibitions, and the fundamental perception of the menstruant on which they were based, underwent vigorous debate, analogous to the debate concerning the impurity of the ejaculant. At first the rabbis of medieval Babylonia (the *geonim*) were opposed to the separation of the menstruant from the sancta. "Even if she is forbidden to her husband, she certainly is not exempted from the commandments" (of prayer, benedictions, etc.). However, by the tenth century the restrictive view began to triumph; a menstruant was in some quarters still permitted to pray, but the prohibition of entering a synagogue, certainly during the initial days of her period, became widespread.[14] In the emerging communities of the High Middle Ages, a curious pattern developed. Sephardic communities did not accept these prohibitions at all; Maimonides and R. Joseph Karo, the two great codifiers of rabbinic law, both of them Sephardim, omit them entirely. Both of them state explicitly that menstruants are not prohibited from holding a Torah scroll. Ashkenazic communities, however, accepted the prohibitions, if not as law then as custom.[15]

In Ashkenaz, menstruants observed these prohibitions not because men commanded them to but because they wanted to observe them. Here is the report of a work that derives from the school of R. Solomon ben Isaac of Troyes (known as Rashi, 1040–1105 C.E.):[16]

Some women refrain from entering a synagogue and from touching a Hebrew book during their menstrual periods. This is only supererogation (*ḥumrah beʿalma*) and they are not obligated to act in this manner. For what is the reason for them

to act this way? If it is because they think that the synagogue is like the Temple, then even after their immersion why do they enter it? . . . Thus, you see that (the synagogue) is not like the Temple, and they may enter it [even during their periods]. Nevertheless it is a place of purity, and they act properly, and may they be blessed.

From the point of view of law, there is no reason for menstruants to refrain from entering the synagogue; the purity system has lapsed; all Jews, both men and women, are impure, since they cannot bring an atonement sacrifice to the Temple; and, in any case, the synagogue does not have the legal status of the Temple. Nevertheless, oblivious to law and logic, the women of medieval France refrain from entering the synagogue during their periods because they internalized the fear of menstruation first attested by the *Baraita de Niddah*. Even without a legal basis, the custom is endorsed by the rabbi who reports it, and the women are praised for their piety. Similarly, a somewhat later authority, R. Eliezer ben Yoel ha-Levi (known as the Ravyah, c. 1160–c. 1240 C.E.) writes that menstruants correctly refrain not only from entering the synagogue but also from praying "in front of" other women.[17] In fourteenth-century Provence, a "border district" between Ashkenaz and Sepharad, parturients did not attend synagogue forty days after the birth of a son and eighty days after the birth of a daughter. In this case, our informant disapproves of the practice,[18] but here is further evidence that Jewish women voluntarily absented themselves from the synagogue during their menstrual periods.

Even in Ashkenaz, however, the prohibitions were not observed everywhere and were not approved by all legal authorities. R. Jacob Molin (known as the Maharil, d. 1427) seems not to have known the prohibition at all. When outlining the wedding ceremony, which was to take place inside the synagogue, he makes provisions for the fact that the bride might be a menstruant. This possibility requires special discussion, not because her impurity would exclude her from the sanctuary, but because her impurity would prevent the groom from touching her, even while placing the ring on her finger.[19] His younger contemporary, R. Israel Isserlein (c. 1390–1460) endorses the custom that menstruants refrain from attending synagogue but proposes that the custom should not prevent them either from attending on the Days of Awe and other such occasions or from reciting benedictions.[20] Perhaps the clearest evidence of the un-

evenness of the observance of the prohibitions by the women of Europe is a brief paragraph by R. Jacob Landau in his *Sefer ha-Agur* (published by the author in 1490). After quoting some of the Ashkenazic authorities who say that a menstruant should not enter a synagogue, pray, or recite a benediction, he comments.[21]

> But I, the author, have seen in my country that women are accustomed to enter the synagogue, and they pray [there] and respond [amen to] all the sacred [benedictions, *ve'onot kol davar she-bi-Kedushah*). They take care only not to look at the Torah scroll when the sexton displays it to the congregation.

In R. Landau's "country," which probably means Germany (where he was born and educated) but might mean Italy (where he was living when he published the *Sefer ha-Agur*), women (that is, menstruating women) pay no attention to the customary prohibitions. They attend synagogue, pray, and recite amen to all benedictions; however—and here is yet another way of distancing menstruants from the sancta—they do not look at the Torah scroll when it is held aloft.

This welter of conflicting custom and practice in Ashkenaz explains the comments of R. Moses Isserles cited at the beginning of this essay. His gloss on the *Shulḥan Arukh* is not the result of either a reasoned legal opinion or a clearly conceived theory governing the separation of menstruants from the sacred. R. Isserles knows from his research and his observation that Ashkenazic women are accustomed while menstruating to separate themselves from the sancta. In some communities they refrain from attending the synagogue, in others they do not pray or mention the name of God, in others they do not touch a Hebrew book. R. Isserles does not explain why the separation of menstruants from the sacred is more severe than the separation of ejaculants, or why, of all impure persons, only menstruants suffer disability in the synagogue, because he has no need for an explanation. He is describing custom, not prescribing law. When R. Karo permits menstruants to hold a Torah scroll and read it, R. Isserles did not demur, because how often could a woman, menstruating or not, touch or hold a Torah scroll? In the synagogue women prayed in separate rooms or galleries and could never touch the Torah. No custom arose to prohibit that which was in any case impossible or extremely unlikely, and R. Isserles had no need to make a comment in the code of law.[22]

From the *Shulḥan Arukh* to Contemporary Times

The customs mentioned by R. Isserles persisted in Ashkenaz for another 200 years, although they occasionally provoked denunciation by legal authorities because the women carried them too far.[23] By the nineteenth century, however, in most of Ashkenaz these customs had all but died out; menstruants attended synagogue and recited benedictions without hesitation.[24] However, while the customs were dying out in most of Ashkenaz, in a peculiar and uninvestigated process they were becoming part of Sephardic women's piety. R. Joseph Karo writes that "nowadays our (menstruating) women do not have a custom to refrain from entering a synagogue,"[25] but in the following centuries the women of many Sephardic communities did have such a custom. In contemporary Israel, many women from "Oriental" countries do not attend synagogue or pray while menstruating, even though the Sephardic chief rabbi has told them that the custom has no basis in law (*see* Sered, p. 212 and Interview with Iranian Women, pp. 219–20).[26]

Concluding Reflections

Many Jews, both men and women, believe that menstruants are prohibited by Jewish law from touching a Torah scroll and from participating in the synagogue prayer service. Some Conservative Jews use this belief to support their opposition to the egalitarian impulse in Conservative Judaism and specifically to the ordination of women as rabbis.[27] Some Orthodox Jews use this belief to justify the separation of men and women in the synagogue.[28] I have tried to show that this belief is wrong, because the prohibition is based not on law but on custom, and the custom was never universally observed and was always subject to diverse opinions. The parallel prohibition for ejaculants is much older and much more securely rooted in the rabbinic sources than the prohibition for menstruants, and yet that prohibition is completely ignored.

The tenacity of the prohibition for menstruants cannot be ascribed only to male fear of women in general and menstruation in particular, because women too have long observed the prohibition, sometimes against rabbinic (male) opposition. The prohibition for menstruants is so tenacious because it is an expression of folk piety, and folk piety does not

quickly relinquish practices that confirm some of its deeply held convictions. The separation of a menstruant from the sacred confirms not only her impurity—and all Jews, even those who do not observe any of the rules of "family purity," *know* that she is impure—but also the marginality of all women, menstruating or not, in the organized, public expressions of Jewish piety. In Judaism (at least until recently) public sacred space is male space, and the exclusion of menstruants from that space confirms that women, because they are women, are not its natural occupants.

As more and more women, even in Orthodox circles, assume prominent roles in synagogues and prayer groups, the power of these prohibitions will wane, because women are making themselves less marginal. Not coincidentally, women are making themselves less "impure" as well. Among many writers, both feminist and nonfeminist (or antifeminist), the language of impurity is being replaced by other terminology to explain and justify Judaism's elaborate system of menstrual taboos.[29] No longer "polluted" and no longer marginal, women, including menstruants, are less afraid to touch a Torah and to engage in sacred activities. "They act properly, and may they be blessed."

Notes

1. *See* my "Women and the Sacred: Menstrual Pollution in Judaism and Christianity," *Women's History and Ancient History*, ed. S. Pomeroy (University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 273–99. The fullest collections of material on this topic are Yedidyah Dinari, "The Violation of the Sacred by the Niddah and the Enactment of Ezra," (in Hebrew) *Teʿuda* 3 (1983): 17–37 (*Teʿuda* is the journal of the Chaim Rosenberg School of Jewish Studies of Tel Aviv University) and R. Ovadyah Yosef, *Yeḥaweh Daʿat* (in Hebrew) III (Jerusalem: n.p. 1980), 27–33. I am much indebted to each of them, especially Dinari. For a rabbinic discussion in English, *see* R. Avraham Weiss, "Women and Sifrei Torah," *Tradition* (Summer 1982): 106–18.

2. *Shulḥan Arukh*, Oraḥ Ḥayyim 88.

3. According to Lev. 15, menstrual impurity lasts only seven days, but in the Talmudic period women began to add seven "white" days after the cessation of the menstrual discharge (TB Nid. 66a). According to rabbinic law a woman has the status of a menstruant both during her discharge and during the seven "white" days, but in the matter of separation from the sancta, R. Isserles says that the seven "white" days are to be treated more leniently than the initial days.

4. YD 282:9. R. Karo is following Maimonides and R. Jacob b. Asher. *See Mishneh Torah*, Laws of *Tefillin, Mezuzah*, and *Sefer Torah* 10:8, and *Tur*, YD 282.

5. Note that R. Karo first uses the phrase *qorin ba-Torah* and then shifts to *divrei Torah*.

6. *See* R. Abraham Gumbiner (1637–c. 1683), *Magen Avraham*, n."c" on Oraḥ Ḥayyim 88.

7. Mish. Ber. 3:4–6.

8. Tosefta Ber. 2:12, p. 8, ed. Lieberman. The version in TJ Ber. 3:4, 6c is substantially identical with that of the *Tosefta*, while the version in TB Ber. 22a has been changed to reflect the later view that menstruants are prohibited from reading the Torah. TB omits *zabot* and parturients and substitutes "men who have intercourse with menstruants" for "menstruants." Thus, the version in the TB, unlike that of the *Tosefta* and TJ, does not explicitly permit menstruants to perform sacred acts. *See* Lieberman's commentary.

9. *See* TB Ber. 21b–22b and TJ Ber. 3:4, 6b–c.

10. Cf. Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah, Laws of Prayer*, 4:4–6, and R. Jacob b. Asher (c. 1270–1343), Tur, Oraḥ Ḥayyim 88.

11. The only exception known to me is TB Pes. 111a; cf. too Shab. 110a.

12. *Baraita de Niddah*, pp. 3, 10, 12–13, 16, 18, 25, 36, 37, ed. Horovitz in *Tosefata Atikata*, pt. 5 (Frankfurt: Horowitz, 1889).

13. *Baraita de Niddah*, pp. 3, 6, 17, 26, 27, 31–33, 36, 37.

14. *See* especially B. M. Lewin, ed., *Otzar ha-Geonim* Berakhot, Teshubot, pars. 116–21, pp. 48–49. The quote is from par. 116, ascribed to R. Natronai. At the same time, the custom arose that a menstruant pronounces the benediction upon her purification only after emerging from the waters of immersion, not before (which had been the normal practice); *see Otzar ha-Geonim* Pesahim, Teshubot, pars. 25–26, pp. 8–9, and Dinari, "The Violation of the Sacred," 21–22.

15. R. Karo is familiar with the prohibitions but only from Ashkenazic sources. *See* the *Bet Yosef* on Tur, Oraḥ Ḥayyim 88, end. On this distinction between Ashkenazim and Sephardim, *see* H. J. Zimmels, *Ashkenazim and Sephardim* (London: Oxford University Press, 1958; repr. London: Marla, 1976), 197–99 and 228–29.

16. *Sefer ha-Pardes*, ed. Ehrenreich, p. 3; cf. *Maḥzor Vitry*, ed. Horowitz, p. 606 and *Sefer ha'Orah*, ed. Buber, pt. 2, pp. 167–68.

17. *Sefer Ravyah*, ed. Aptowitzer, vol. 1, p. 45. This passage is quoted by various Ashkenazic authors of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries; *see* Aptowitzer's notes. Dinari suggests that the Ravyah is prohibiting not menstruants from praying in front of other (nonmenstruating) women but (nonmenstruating) women from praying in front of menstruants. The syntax of the Ravyah's Hebrew is difficult, but I am not convinced by Dinari's rendering; *see* his "The Violation of the Sacred," 27–28.

18. R. Yeroham, *Sefer Toledot Adam ve-Ḥavah* (written c. 1340), Part II (*Ḥavah*), chap. 26, p. 223d (ed. Venice, 1553). R. Yeroham is writing under the influence of Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, Laws of Forbidden Intercourse 11:15. The practice of the Provençal women may have come to them from either the women of Ashkenaz or the Karaites of Spain.

19. *Sefer Maharil*, ed. S. Spitzer (Jerusalem: Machon Yerushalayim, 1989), pp. 466–67.

20. R. Israel Isserlein, *Terumat ha-Deshen*, Part II, *Pesakim u-Ketavim* #132; *see also* R. Joseph b. Moshe, *Leket Yosher*, Oraḥ Ḥayyim, p. 131, ed. Freimann.

21. *Sefer ha-Agur* ed. M. Hershler (Jerusalem: 1960), sec. 1388, p. 230.

22. Contrast the explanation of Weiss, "Women and Sifrei Torah," p. 111.

23. R. Abraham Gumbiner (1637–c. 1683), *Magen Avraham*, n."b" on Oraḥ Ḥayyim 88, echoed by R. Abraham Danzig (1748–1820), *Ḥayye Adam* 3:38; *see also* R. Joseph Hahn (d. 1637), *Yoseph Ometz* (Frankfurt: Hermon 1928; repr. Jerusalem: 1965), pp. 342–43, and R. Joseph Kashman, *Noheg Katzon Yoseph* (published by the author in 1718; repr. Tel Aviv, 1969), pp. 116–17 (cf. p. 95 where he endorses the prohibition for parturients). That these prohibitions were part of women's piety is demonstrated by their frequent appearance in Yiddish *minhag* books.

24. *See* R. Israel Meir ha-Kohen Kagan (known as the Ḥafetz Ḥayyim, 1838–1933), *Mishnah Berurah*, n."z" on Oraḥ Ḥayyim 88 (first published in 1894). R. Kagan is describing the customs of Russia and Poland; in Hungary the prohibition seems to have persisted. *See* the *Ḥatam Sofer* (by R. Moses Sofer, 1763–1839) on Oraḥ Ḥayyim 88, and R. Solomon Ganzfried (1804–1886), *Kitzur Shulḥan Arukh*, pt. 4, 153:16.

25. *Bet Yosef* on Tur, Oraḥ Ḥayyim 88, end.

26. *See* the responsum of R. Ovadyah Yosef cited in n.1.

27. In his responsum permitting *aliyot* for women, R. Aaron Blumenthal felt obliged to address the question of whether a menstruant could receive an *aliyah* and touch a Torah scroll. (The answer is yes.) *See Conservative Judaism and Jewish Law*, ed. Seymour Siegel (New York: Rabbinical Assembly, 1977), pp. 277–78.

28. R. Eliezer Silver, *Conservative Judaism* 11 (Fall 1956): 52, and R. Yeḥiel Weinberg, *Seridei Esh* II (Jerusalem 1961): no. 12, p. 28a.

29. *See, for example*, Rachel Adler, "Tum'ah and Toharah, Ends and Beginnings," *The (First) Jewish Catalogue*, ed. Richard Siegel, M. Strassfeld, and S. Strassfeld (Philadelphia: JPS, 1973), 167–71, repr. in *Response* 18 (1973) = *The Jewish Woman: An Anthology*, ed. Liz Koltun (New York: Schocken, 1976), 117–27; and Aryeh Kaplan, *Waters of Eden* (New York: National Conference of Synagogue Youth, 1976). Both Adler and Kaplan defend, at least to some extent, the traditional system of menstrual taboos. For a more radical approach, *see, for example*, Penina Adelman, *Miriam's Well: Rituals for Jewish Women* (New York: Biblio Press, 1986).

DAUGHTERS OF THE KING

WOMEN AND THE SYNAGOGUE

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