



From Israel

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Fertility support and Jewish law

With advances in fertility procedures, the need for expert guidance in the complex and sensitive issues of, for example, sperm donation and IVF is growing. The Puah Institute in Jerusalem is the only nonclinical organization in the world that deals with fertility treatments and Jewish law (Halakha). Eight rabbis provide counseling for nonreligious, Christian, and Muslim couples as well as religious couples who have fertility problems. More than a hundred couples avail themselves each day of the free service, which is funded mostly by private donations. Couples are referred to medical facilities appropriate to their specific needs. Medical professionals also consult the institute staff to improve their services to religious patients. The work of Puah has been encouraged by the Israeli government's policy of subsidizing fertility treatment for two successful pregnancies.

Survey of sexual activity

The 2001 Durex Global Sex Survey published in November found that the average age for

Israelis' first sexual encounter is 17. This is older than in the USA (16 years) and France (16.7). Israelis also had fewer sexual partners than in most other countries. Although only 40% were concerned about contracting sexually transmitted diseases, 74% used some kind of protection. The survey was conducted in 28 countries, with 500 Israelis responding.

Knesset closes loophole in antipornography law

The Bezeq Law banning sex channels is to be strengthened. Cable channels had been exploiting a loophole to give access to a sex channel through a pay-per-view system.

TV advertisements to be restricted

To prevent children being exposed to violent and sexually explicit advertisements, the ads are to be banned from Israeli television from 2:30 p.m. to 9 p.m. weekdays, and all day on Shabbat and holidays. Previews of shows aimed at adults, and promotions that could encourage crime or the use of dangerous drugs will also not be shown during those hours.

Knesset interest in advancement of women

The Knesset's Committee on the Advancement of Women was assured of maximum attendance when the topic for discussion was the results of a magazine survey on women's sex lives. Although it was acknowledged by the survey's coordinator that the sample represented only a particular socioeconomic section of Israeli women, the 1,100 respondents' answers were nevertheless interesting. The magazine was congratulated for conducting the survey and so raising awareness of a previously avoided subject. The Committee chairman recommended to the Education Ministry that sex education be a required subject instead of optional, and that the Health Ministry include treatment of women's sexual problems in the basket of health services as men's are.

Dead Sea Scrolls published

After fifty-four years, the publication of 1,500 scrolls and fragments of the 2,000-year old Dead Sea Scrolls has been completed in

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