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## ***Chapter One***

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### **Pregnancy**

#### **1. Which *tefillos* are appropriate during pregnancy?**

Once the pregnancy has been confirmed, the following *tefillos* are appropriate:

- Until forty days, one should *daven* for the gender of the baby, if one has a specific preference.
- From forty days to three months, one should *daven* that neither the child should be deformed nor will there be a miscarriage, *chas veshalom*.
- From three to six months, one should *daven* that the child should be strong and healthy.
- From six to nine months, one should *daven* that the delivery will be safe for both mother and baby.
- During the ninth month, one should also *daven* that they should not be required to desecrate Shabbos or Yom Tov for the sake of the birth. Although such desecration is permitted (see Chapter Two), it is meritorious if this is not required.

#### **2. Should any activities be avoided during pregnancy?**

- Some women refrain from going to a cemetery while they are pregnant. They may be lenient to *daven* at the grave of a *tzaddik*, or to visit a parent's grave on the *yahrzeit*.
- She should avoid walking on cut fingernails or toenails, since this might cause a miscarriage, *chas veshalom*.

### **3. Are there any recommended activities during pregnancy?**

- Throughout the pregnancy, it is praiseworthy to be careful to fulfill the mitzvah of *Melave Malka*, as a merit for an easy birth.
- During the ninth month, a woman should try to perform the mitzvah of separating *challah* as a merit, since it is one of the three mitzvos given specifically to women.
- If *Hoshana Rabba* occurs during the pregnancy, some women have the custom to bite off the *pitam* of an *esrog*, give charity, and recite a *tefillah* for an easy birth (see Appendix for a recommended text).
- During the ninth month, some husbands have the custom to ask for the privilege of opening the *Aron Kodesh* on days when the Torah is read.

### **4. Is it permitted to induce labor?**

Under normal circumstances, it is forbidden to induce labor. This applies whether the motivation is for the convenience of the mother or doctor, or even if the intention is to accelerate the labor so that the birth takes place before Shabbos or Yom Tov. The reasons are the following:

- Statistics show that an induced birth is more dangerous for the mother and child, and has a higher percentage of Cesarean sections.
- Hashem gives His protection when childbirth occurs at its destined time. When labor is induced, this protection might not be forthcoming, unless the procedure has been approved by both a Rav and a medical expert.

- Hashem decrees the exact length of time that the baby should be in the womb, and shortening this time might be detrimental to the child both physically and spiritually.

### **5. When does a woman in labor become a *niddah*?**

In any of these circumstances:

- She is bleeding.
- The mucus plug comes out.
- The waters break.
- She is unable to walk without support.
- She has very strong and frequent contractions.

### **6. May the husband be present during the birth?**

Since the woman is a *niddah*, it is forbidden for the husband to look at the parts of her body that are usually covered. Therefore, it is advisable to leave the room during the birth, as it might be difficult to resist the temptation to look.

### **7. Are there any issues regarding a Cesarean section?**

- A Cesarean section should not be performed on Shabbos, except in an emergency when the operation cannot be postponed.
- If a boy was delivered on Shabbos by Cesarean section, the *Bris* must not be performed on the following Shabbos.
- If the boy was a firstborn, no *Pidyon Haben* is performed. Even if the next birth is a boy born naturally, no *Pidyon Haben* is performed.

## *Chapter Two*

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### **Birth on Shabbos**

**Note:** Although we refer to Shabbos throughout this chapter, the same laws apply on Yom Tov.

#### **8. What are the general rules for a birth on Shabbos?**

A woman in labor is considered to be in a life threatening situation, and the Torah permits the desecration of Shabbos in any way necessary for her well being and for the safe delivery of the baby. However, since this is a natural occurrence, *Chazal* required that whenever possible, one should perform the actions in an unusual way, unless this would cause an undesirable delay. In addition, all preparations that can be made before Shabbos should be done then, in order to minimize the need to desecrate Shabbos.

#### **9. Which preparations should be made before Shabbos?**

From the beginning of the ninth month, the following preparations should be made before each Shabbos:

- Leave sufficient lighting in the house during the night, in case contractions begin then.
- Enter relevant numbers into the telephone, to minimize the amount of dialing, e.g. ambulance, taxi, doctor, midwife.

- If one has a cordless telephone, remove the handset from the base before Shabbos, provided that the phone will still function. Similarly, unplug the cellphone.
- If one is planning to go to hospital in a taxi or car service, it is preferable to call the company before Shabbos and arrange the price and method of payment. If possible, try to get an agreement to pay after Shabbos. If not, prepare the exact amount of money for the fare since it is forbidden to take change. See also Question 13.
- Prepare a bag containing items and any essential documents that will be needed in the hospital on Shabbos. In *Eretz Yisroel*, this should include two slips of paper with one's personal details, which can be given to the ambulance driver and hospital admissions, thereby avoiding the need to write. In *Chutz La'aretz*, this is unnecessary, since there will be a gentile available to write down the relevant information.

#### **10. May one place *muktzeh* items in the bag before Shabbos?**

- *Muktzeh* items that will definitely not be needed on Shabbos must not be put in the bag.
- *Muktzeh* items that will definitely be needed may be put there, e.g. money to pay the taxi.
- *Muktzeh* items that could be needed may be put there, if this will make the woman feel more at ease. For example, a cellphone if she is nervous that she might suddenly need help.

**11. May the bag contain any *non-muktzeh* items?**

- If the area from the house to the hospital is within an *eiruv*, any *non-muktzeh* items may be taken.
- If there is no *eiruv* and a Jewish person will carry the bag, only essential items may be taken.
- If there is no *eiruv* but a gentile will carry the bag, one may take essential items and also important non-essentials, such as food and clothes for Shabbos, wine for Kiddush, *Tehillim*, siddur.

**12. How should she decide when to travel to hospital?**

She should go when any of the following occurs:

- She feels contractions every five minutes or less.
- The waters break.
- She feels strong downward pressure as if the baby wishes to leave her body.
- She does not feel any fetal movements, even after drinking a very sweet liquid.

**13. What is the best way to travel to hospital?**

- The first choice is a vehicle driven by a gentile, whether ambulance or taxi, since this greatly diminishes the degree of Shabbos desecration.
- The second choice is an ambulance driven by a Jewish man. In *Eretz Yisroel* it is better to call the Hatzalah service rather than a regular ambulance.
- The third choice is a taxi driven by a Jewish man.

**Note:** If the woman will feel more at ease traveling with a Jewish driver, she may use the second or third choice.