

ROSH HA SHANAH FEATURE

IN HONOR OF ROSH HA SHANAH, JEWISH NEW YEAR OF 5734, THE LAS VEGAS ISRAELITE WILL PUBLISH A SERIES OF STORIES TO COMMEMORATE THE HOLIDAY WHICH FALLS ON THE FIRST TWO DAYS OF THE MONTH OF TISHRI, THURS, SEPT. 27, & FRI, SEPT. 28. ROSH HA SHANA MARKS THE BEGINNING OF THE 10 DAYS OF REPENTANCE, AWE-INSPIRING, DAYS CULMINATING AT YOM KIPPUR, ONSAT., OCT. 6th

France's Birth Control

by HELENE DRUSINE

France is traditionally the country of femininity. Famous fashion houses, noted perfumes, paintings, colors and traditional French "refinement" have contributed to make French women the world's most feminine. Jewish women are not much different--they dress, live, and love like Frenchwomen in general.

This is why contraception in France, a country with a falling birth rate, has traditionally been used by Jews and non-Jews alike.

"Jewish women have neither more nor less interest in contraception than any other group," said French Jewish gynecologist Alain Bellaush.

"If the French woman prefers the pill, the Jewish one, however, usually chooses an inter uterine device." This device was recently authorized in France by the March 8 law on contraception.

Bellaush added, however, that contraception is less used by North African families, who make up half of the French Jewish population.

According to religious authorities and gynecologists, there are few Jewish women using contraceptive devices who attempt to conform to religious law.

"Judaism has an answer to the problem of contraception," said Rabbi Ernest Gugenheim, vice president of the Rabbinical Court of Paris. "But this answer is linked to the general conception of existence in Judaism."

Judaism condemns contraceptive methods "used for material comfort, selfishness or sheer enjoyment" because they hinder on of the essential aims of sexual instinct -- life. Their use, therefore, is considered as a moral fault, the rabbi said.

However, neither the Torah or the Mitsva, the book of religious obligations, forbids the use of contraceptive methods as such, Rabbi Gugenheim said. At the same time, however, Judaism is opposed to all that is negative or

restrictive in the concept of limiting or preventing births, he said.

The use of the pill seems to be in accordance with religious law, the rabbi said. Both the Talmud and Midrach recommend the taking of oral contraceptives. According to these religious texts "the woman has the right to drink a sterilizing potion in order to become infertile." Therefore, it would seem, there are no conditions or restrictions.

According to certain sages, however, there must be a health motive. They say the texts specify that the woman could drink the potion "if her children were not following the straight and narrow and if she feared giving birth to others with similar tendencies."

Judaism does not believe in a policy of unlimited births. Religious law is more concerned with building a balanced family with an optimum of children, brought up in a harmonious atmosphere where they can blossom, the rabbi said.

"It is for this reason that Judaism is not against the rhythm method which calls for will and moral discipline rather than for a technique for spacing births," Gugenheim said.

Judaism does not explicitly foresee the use of contraceptives except in exceptional cases and for medical reasons. Thus the majority of religious authorities authorize contraceptives when pregnancy threatens the life of the mother or her physical or psychic equilibrium with all the consequences this could have on the peace and harmony of the existing family, the rabbi said.

It would seem, therefore, that Judaism brings satisfactory answers to the modern family's preoccupations, particularly in the matter of birth control, Gugenheim said.

A Suggestion

by RABBI SAMUEL SILVER

I have a suggestion for you.

If you haven't done it before, build a sukkah.

The holiday of Sukkos is one of the most meaningful in the calendar.

It is the holiday of thanks.

Based on Sukkos, the Pilgrims established Thanksgiving Day in this country.

The sukkah you build on your lawn becomes a visible reminder of God's providence to the Israelites when they lived in frail abodes during the trek from the land of bondage to the land of promise.

More than that, the sukkah is a reminder of the fact that millions of people don't have adequate housing.

Beyond that, the sukkah is a salute to the miracles of nature. The greens the produce you hang in the sukkah remind you that the world of nature yields loveliness and food.

The sukkah doesn't have to be elaborate.

Just put up a little bower of some kind.

Keep it open at the top for, according to our tradition one must be able to view the heavens as one sits in the hut.

Children enjoy the fashioning of the sukkah, the bedecking of it with fruits and foliage, and spending some time in it.

Christians get a thrill out of bringing a tree into the house on Christmas.

Jews can get a thrill out of constructing a sukkah in their backyards to celebrate one of the loveliest of festivals.

Try it. You'll love it.

SHALOM



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