

## Where Could Anyone Come Up With the Idea of “Legitimate Rape”?

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Unless you have been cut off from just about any form of media in the last few days the question, above, may have crossed your mind. To understand this, we need a historical perspective.

Let's start with the Greeks. The Greeks believed the women were 'failed males'. (Please do not shoot the messenger's. I'm just giving you the history here.) They believed that women were on the inside exactly as men were on the outside. If you follow this thinking to its logical conclusion, you will see that, for conception to occur, women must 'emit seed.' If they do not do so, then conception cannot occur. We needn't be too hard on the Greeks. They did not even understand the circulatory system yet.

The sages of the Talmud accepted this Greek view of the body (as did Christianity). That is why it is so important, in Jewish thinking, for women to be satisfied before men are. Without that, intercourse is not complete and conception cannot take place.

But the sages understood that rape, including marital rape, is disastrous. You see, they also accepted the Greek idea that the way sexual intercourse was engaged in affected the kind of child that intercourse produced. Marital rape was thought to result in unworthy children while loving relations were believed to produce meritorious children.

Whoever compels his wife to the [marital] obligation will have unworthy children...Each woman who solicits her husband to the [marital] obligation will have children the like of whom did not exist even in the generation of Moses.

(B. Eruvin 100b)

The sages did not consider sexual intercourse a mere physical activity. It, and its outcomes, was intimately involved with one's morality and the amount of one's learning, which were also seen as interconnected. Because sexual intercourse can involve some blurring of the boundaries between persons and between male and female, and also the weakening or abandonment of the rational self, the sages felt it should be carried out in as decorous a manner as possible so that these chaotic forces would not destroy the order the sages were trying to bring to their world.

So, bearing all this in mind, please consider these discussion questions

### Discussion Questions:

1. Can you now see how this idea of women not conceiving as a result of rape has ancient roots? That it comes from an understanding of physical processes from 2500 years ago? Why has this idea been carried forward for so long?
2. Do you think those that make such ludicrous comments, i.e., that conception cannot take place during 'legitimate' rape understand that they are parroting an ancient theory of medicine?
3. What can be done to help people understand the ridiculousness of cleaving to such an old, and discredited, notion of how the body works?
4. Is there any part of this ancient system that should be carried forward?

As always, looking forward to your insights!