

THE MAGAZINE FOR JEWISH TEENS

THE BODY ISSUE!

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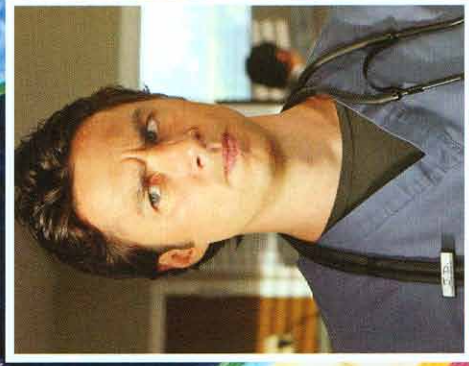
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**Inside the
Mind of a
Drug Addict**

**Teen
Pregnancy:
What Now?**

**Zach's
Farewell to
Scrubs**



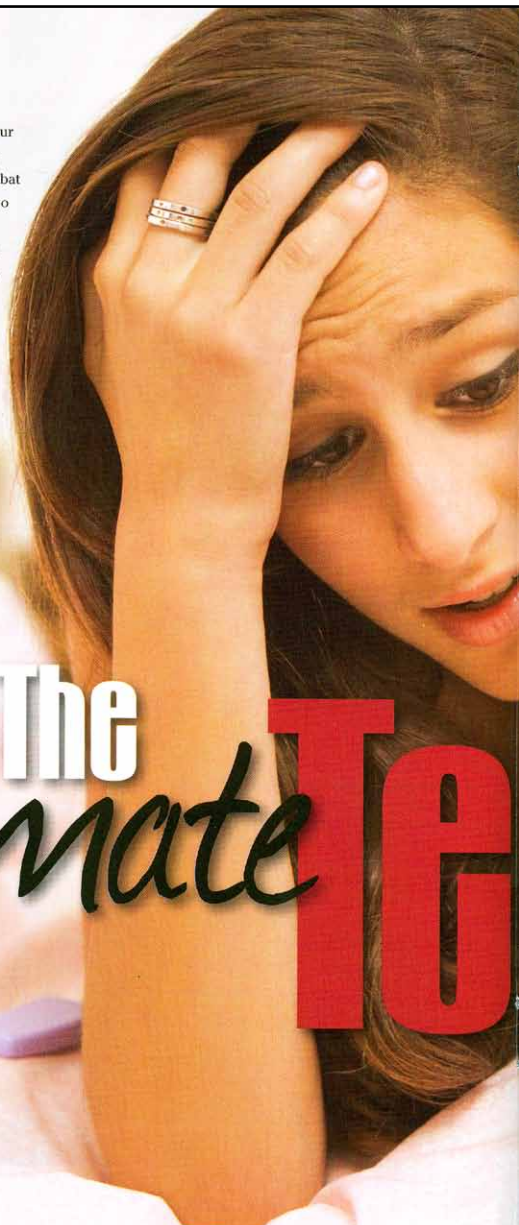
Comedian
**Sarah
Silverman**

on being a funny, fearless Jew

PLUS ▶ A "Reel Life" Love Story ▶ Jazz Artist Ariat Cohen ▶ Modern and Modest?

Sophie* stood anxiously in the 24-hour Wal-Mart. It was the only store that remained open after her Hillel Shabbat dinner had ended. She didn't want to reach toward the shelf to pick up the small pink box, but she knew she had to if she ever wanted to sleep again. Sophie's friend practically forced her into the checkout line. On the black conveyor belt that night? A home pregnancy test.

"I was 20, but I could've been 16 the way I stood there unsure of myself," Sophie says only months later. "I had convinced myself that it couldn't happen. It was the action of buying the test and taking it that shook me up. I never told my boyfriend because I didn't want to worry him unless it was positive." She cried during the test, especially when the result became clear. "It [was] surreal. The whole experience [was like] losing my virginity again in the same instant. Being a nice Jewish girl has nothing to do with it. Good people make bad decisions sometimes."



The Ultimate Test

The one challenge you don't want to face right now.

KALI D. FOXMAN

**Names have been changed for privacy.*

PRAY THAT YOU WILL NEVER HAVE TO BEAR ALL THAT YOU ARE ABLE TO ENDURE.
Jewish Proverb



So what was Sophie's test result? Negative. She wasn't pregnant.

But for nearly three out of every 10 girls in the United States, the result would have been *positive*. That means almost 30 percent of sexually active young women will get pregnant by age 20. "It happens in every part of this country—in every town to every kind of teen girl, regardless of race or religion," says Amy Kramer, director of entertainment media and audience strategy for The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy in Washington, D.C. "There's rarely a fairy-tale ending. The vast majority of couples don't stay together, most teen moms don't finish high school and very few finish college by age 30."

TOLERATING TRUTH

Naomi* found out she was pregnant during the summer after her sophomore year of college at age 19. She and her boyfriend had been sexually active for several years. Even though she was afraid of telling her parents, she wasn't prepared to veer so far from her planned life course and thus already knew what her ultimate decision would be.

"I couldn't believe how all of a sudden something so life-changing was right in front of me," the 33-year-old says today. "It was a total non-decision—it didn't enter my mind to do anything other than terminate the pregnancy, regardless of how scared I felt. My desire to keep my life intact, complete college and then build a life toward someday becoming a mother [played a role in my decision]. I was in no way ready to be a mother then."

Though Naomi didn't regret her decision, she and her family

were forced into uncharted—and extremely difficult—territory that wasn't easy to navigate. "It was definitely a growing-up moment, seeing in a very real way that my own actions had serious consequences and that dumb choices could do irreparable harm. This was no joke," she says. "It was a bumpy few months for all of us, and there was no instant fix. It took time to regain our footing in all of our relationships. My dad barely spoke to me or looked at my boyfriend. However, I'm now married to my then-boyfriend, and he's the father of my children. We were stupid, but it's a little less painful knowing that he and I were committed, even back then, and that our decisions for being sexually active were sound."

SACRED SEXUALITY

While each movement within Judaism may offer differing opinions on the subject of pre-marital sex, the general consensus is that teen sex isn't ideal. Jewish teachings emphasize that we're all creatures of God and that it's important to guard and protect our physical, emotional and spiritual health. Many rabbis say that engaging in sexual activity before being emotionally ready isn't being respectful of the body.

But that's not to say there's no place for sexuality in Judaism. "Judaism doesn't view human sexuality as something dirty or shameful. Instead it affirms sexuality as a meaningful part of a loving and sanctified relationship," says Rabbi Joshua Waxman of Or Hadash, a Reconstructionist congregation in Fort Washington, Pa. But he mentions that the Jewish concept of *shemirat ha-guf*, or caring for our bodies, "encourages us to relate to our bodies as sacred and not something to be used or abused—through drugs, smoking, overeating or casual sex."

But our tradition also teaches that it's never too late for teens to talk to a trusted adult to sort out choices and actions that have already led them down a regretted path. Twenty-one-year-old Sarah* learned the difficult way

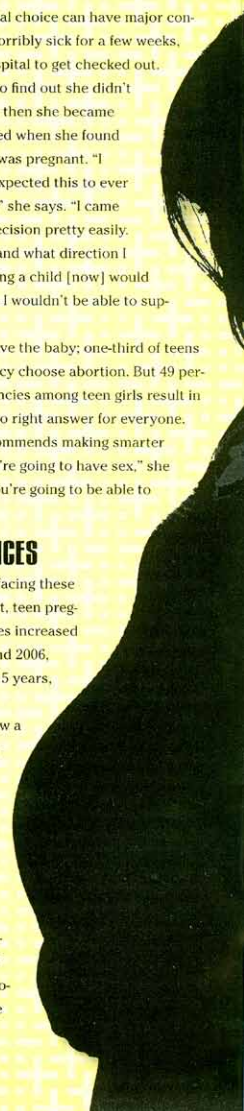
that every seemingly casual choice can have major consequences. After feeling horribly sick for a few weeks, she finally went to the hospital to get checked out. Initially she was relieved to find out she didn't have a serious illness. But then she became frightened when she found out she was pregnant. "I hadn't expected this to ever happen," she says. "I came to my decision pretty easily.

I know what I want in life and what direction I want my life to go in. Having a child [now] would ruin all the dreams I have. I wouldn't be able to support a child right now."

Sarah decided not to have the baby; one-third of teens facing unplanned pregnancy choose abortion. But 49 percent of unplanned pregnancies among teen girls result in a live birth—and there's no right answer for everyone. To other teens, Sarah recommends making smarter choices. "Be careful if you're going to have sex," she says. "[And] make sure you're going to be able to live with your decision."

CHALLENGING CHOICES

More teens than ever are facing these life-altering choices. In fact, teen pregnancies in the United States increased 3 percent between 2005 and 2006, the first such increase in 15 years, according to the National Institutes of Health. "I know a girl who became pregnant at 14," says 15-year-old Rebecca.* "Although she decided to have the baby, it didn't make her a mother—she just had a baby. It's taken quite a toll on the girl's family. Without proper sex education and understanding of the consequences of unprotected sex, many teens are doomed."



Preventing Pregnancy

Think you know the facts about sex and pregnancy? Check out these popular falsehoods—and be armed with the truth.

MYTH: Everyone you know is having sex.

TRUTH: Actually, everyone is *not* having sex. Statistically speaking, less than half of all high school students—48 percent—have ever had sex.

MYTH: There's no method of birth control that's 100 percent effective.

TRUTH: There is—abstinence is a form of birth control. If you aren't having sex, you can't get pregnant or get someone else pregnant.

MYTH: You can't get pregnant the first time you have sex.

TRUTH: You can get pregnant the first time you have sex—and every time after that. Even if you use a form of birth control, you can still get pregnant.

MYTH: Drinking and drugs make sex more fun.

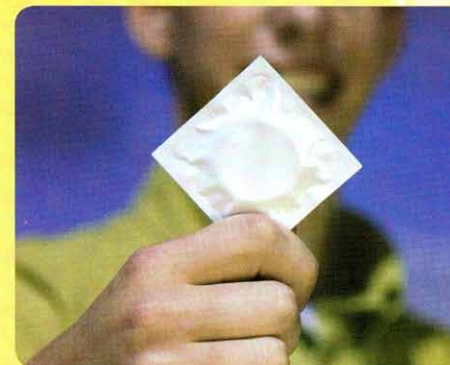
TRUTH: It's hard to make smart decisions about sex if you're drunk or high. In fact, 20 percent of 15- to 17-year-olds report that they've done something sexual that they may not have done had they been sober.

MYTH: Only guys pressure girls into having sex.

TRUTH: Pressure can come from guys *and* girls, regardless of sexual experience or age.

MYTH: You told your boyfriend or girlfriend that you would have sex with him or her, so now you have to.

TRUTH: It's never too late to change your mind, and saying "no" is always OK, even if you've said "yes" before. Just because you agreed to do it doesn't mean you have to go through with it.



MYTH VS. TRUTH

That's why Rabbi James Scott Glazier offers courses on sexuality at Temple Sinai, a Reform synagogue in Burlington, Vt. "The major theme is that our bodies are our own, and they are not to be taken lightly," he says.

"There's a sense of the divine in each of us and a quality of sacredness. Respect should be afforded to them, both by ourselves and by other people. It's about determining whether it's the right time [to have sex] and understanding whether you have the capability of raising a child."

Religious involvement has been shown to help teens make smart choices when it comes to sex. Teens who frequently participate in religious activities with their families, like going to services, praying or even reading scriptures, are less likely to have sex before age 18, according to a 2005 report. Higher religious attendance among peers is also associated with greater contraceptive use among girls the first time they have sex.

But teen pregnancy isn't an issue that only affects females. "Judaism provides me with the experiences that make me the man I am today," says David, 19.

"When it comes to sex, Judaism [has helped me] think critically about my actions. It allows me to not make the mistake of going gung ho into something as serious as sex. It allows me to take a step back, think about what I'm doing and see how it might affect [my] life."

Adds 14-year-old Emily*: "Judaism, along with the morals I was raised with, has taught me to see the importance in myself, both physically and spiritually. Sleeping around isn't an OK way to treat the body and soul. It really bothers me that sex has become so undignified because of its treatment in the media."

SEX SATURATION

Sounds like Emily might have seen a few recent episodes of The CW's *Gossip Girl* or *90210*, both popular teen shows that feature casual sex—sometimes with no consequences. But even so, showing sex—and even teen pregnancy—on TV and in the movies might actually help.

"Popular media makes the topic more accessible and more normal to think about and talk about, and that's a good thing," Kramer says. "About half of all teens have never even thought about how a pregnancy would affect their lives—seeing shows and movies about this very thing helps change that." In fact, 74 percent of teens say when a TV show or character they like deals with teen pregnancy, it makes them think more about the consequences of sex.

But sometimes teens still adopt an attitude of invincibility. "The biggest misconception is that it 'won't happen to me,'" says Sam Weidman, an 18-year-old from Hidden Hills, Calif., who serves on the Youth Leadership Team for The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy. "It's not confined to any one type of person at all. Teen pregnancy doesn't have a face, a race or a religion."

So what's *really* the bottom line when it comes to sex?

"The most important thing for teens to know is that every single time you have sex there's a chance of pregnancy," Kramer says. "Sex is an adult thing with adult consequences."

And unlike so many other things that can completely derail your dreams and goals, teen pregnancy is *totally preventable.* *

*KALI highly recommends watching ABC Family's *The Secret Life of the American Teenager*, which returns on Jan. 5 and follows the story of a pregnant high school freshman. She also suggests visiting stayteen.org.