



Waiting

Resources for the time after treatment until finding out the results

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Introduction

The time between having a procedure and learning if pregnancy resulted can be laden with a variety of emotions. Like the Ten Days of Repentance between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, the time is full of awe. This awe inspires both amazement and fear: amazement at the possibility that the creation of a life may be transpiring on its own and fear that it is not. So too like the Ten Days of Repentance, the time of waiting can feel like a period of judgment, when all we have done may not be enough, when our actions lay bare and we are at the mercy of means beyond our control, when only God can know the truth of the situation.

Knowing the stakes involved can try our patience, swinging us back and forth from optimism and pessimism, between hope and doubt. Days may be filled with conflicting emotions coming and going through hundreds of moments. Recognizing the spectrum though which we can pass, below are a variety of readings, prayers, meditations and activities available as the emotions and circumstances change.

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14 Days and 14 Ways of Waiting

The time from treatment to resolution is typically between 10 and 14 days. One way to start handling the emotions is recognize them and accept that they are normal and okay to feel. Notice what you are feeling, and include it in this list if it is not here - and acknowledge its opposite.

Patient	Impatient
Optimistic	Pessimist
Fearful	Hopeful
Faithful	Doubtful
Steadfast	Anguished
Calm	Out of Control
In acceptance	Depleted

Look at each of these pairs as a spectrum and draw a line so you can note where you are on the spectrum at various moments of the day. Recognize and try to accept the many ways in which you move between these feelings. You can also journal about one of the pairs, the tension of feeling both of these at the same time, or about feeling one or the other. Try to release the feelings by naming, expressing and moving through them.

Ways of Waiting

Sometimes addressing our feelings is helpful. Sometimes focusing on our body, our soul, the world around us or other people helps. Sometimes we need a good distraction. There is nothing else to be done, so the thoughts can become brooding easily. Here are some ideas:

- Journal – choose a time to focus on the waiting and “stuff” that comes with it, get it on paper and then try to get back to the rest of your life.
- Breath – clear your head of everything possible and think only of your breath for one minute.
- Gratitude – make a list, one for each day perhaps, of all the things already in your life for which you are grateful.
- Go outside – rain or shine, look around and notice the world around you.
- Pamper yourself – pedicure, manicure, a little massage, a piece of cake, or whatever is a simple pleasure, let yourself have a reward for making it this far.
- Help someone else – sign up to volunteer and help someone else in need.
- Read a book or watch a movie – if you are going to be distracted, plan it. Give yourself something interesting or entertaining to occupy your thoughts.
- Pray, plead, confess, lament or otherwise let it out – it doesn’t have to be a fixed prayer, just share your honest thoughts and feelings. Expressing yourself this way may help you connect to something greater than yourself.

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For What Shall I Pray as I Wait?

One who prays over that which has already happened, this prayer is in vain. How? If his wife was pregnant and he said, "May it be your will that my wife give birth to a boy," this prayer is in vain. If he was coming on the way and heard the sound of screaming in the city, and he said "May it be your will that these are not the children of my house," this is a prayer in vain. (Mishnah Berakhot 9:3)

When we wait for the results of an insemination or an IVF or anything leading to pregnancy, we of course want to pray for success. However, at some point, a point at which we do not know, the result is determined¹. Yet we still must wait. As the day that the results are known draws near, the temptation to continue to ask for success looms large, yet those petitions are of no avail. For the most part, what is done is done.

We cannot ask for something that is already determined, but we can pray for strength to handle whatever we are given. We can pray for acceptance of what has happened. We can pray for grace in the face of whatever news is delivered. We can pray for comfort and support along the way.

A Prayer

We ask
Who will live and who will die And how?
In the coming days
I ask
Who will not birth
Who will be born
Who will be tormented
Who will be comforted
Who by shame
Who by grace
Who in sorrow
Who in joy
Who in distress
Who in peace?

May my comings and goings during this time of waiting be in peace.

¹ The Talmud (Brachot 60a) sets the time for prayers for insemination to be in the first three days, after which the prayers become in vain.

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Psalms

Many themes related to infertility can be found in the Psalms including waiting, enduring and accepting. Below are a few selections that may be helpful to read during the waiting period.

Psalm 6

Chastise me not in Your Anger, God, chasten me not in Your wrath. Be merciful to me, for I am weak. Heal me, for my very bones tremble, my entire being trembles. God – how long? Turn to me, God; save my life. Help me because of Your love. In death there is no remembering you. In the grave, who can praise you? Weary am I with groaning and weeping; nightly my pillow is soaked with tears. Grief dims my eyes; they are worn out with all my woes. Away with you, doers of evil! God has heard my cry, my supplication; God accepts my prayer. All my enemies shall be shamed. In dismay they shall quickly withdraw.

Psalm 130:1-7

Out of the depths I call you, God. Adonai hear my cry, heed my plea. Be attentive to my voice; let your ears pay attention to the sound of my supplications. O God, if you keep record of iniquities, who could endure? For forgiveness is with you that you may be feared. I hoped, O God, my soul hoped, and I waited for the word. My soul is to God among those who await the morning, those who await the morning. Israel, hope to God, for with God there is kindness and much redemption.

Psalm 27:4

One thing I ask from God; one thing do I seek – that I may stay in God's presence all the days of my life, beholding God's graciousness and visiting God's dwelling place.

Separating for Connection

Hitbodedut (self-solitude) is a form of Jewish meditation. It is spontaneous, free flowing conversation between you and God. Waiting can feel like spinning out of control without connection. Hitbodedut is a practice of pouring out our minds and hearts as a way to maintain our individual connection to God. This in turn can bring comfort to your soul. Make a space in time for you reconnect as the spinning increases. It is very simple to start:

1. Speak out loud in the language you are most comfortable. Words ought to flow easily. Whispering is fine, but out loud. Say it.
2. While traditional encouraged at night, it can be done any time of the day. Most importantly is to do it when you are able to have dedicated uninterrupted time. Ideally (not required!), do it the same time of day.
3. Finding a private space is also important. A room to yourself, outside, in a park or if possible, in a field or woods. Be secluded. You can also wrap yourself in a tallit or something that gives you a sense of seclusion if you like.

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4. Say what is in your heart. It is traditional to start with the hope to connect, to be attached to God. Connection is the goal; getting beyond yourself and recognizing just how much is out of our hands and in God's hands. You can say or ask for anything. Nothing is too small or too big (although as noted above, it must not already be determined). Be simple and open like speaking to your closest friend or you can let out that inner child who so openly expresses wants and desires. It's all okay. Anything.
5. Repeat. This best done daily to develop a strength in practice. Set a time limit and find a space. And if you run out of things to say, designate one word you just over and over and over. It could be a name of God, a plea, a grounding word. Just keep speaking.

To paraphrase from Rabbi Nachman's Words:

It is very good to pour out your thoughts before God like a child pleading before a parent. God calls us God's own children, as it is written (Deut 14:1), "You are children to God." Therefore it is good to express your thoughts and troubles to God like a child complaining and pestering to a parent.

Biblical Interventions and Waiting

(The biblical matriarch Rachel is barren while her sister, who is married to her husband Jacob as well, is quite fecund. The mandrakes referenced in the following text about Rachel and Leah are believed to have fertility inducing qualities.)

And Reuben went in the days of wheat harvest, and found mandrakes in the field, and brought them to his mother Leah. Then Rachel said to Leah: 'Give me, please, of your son's mandrakes.' (Gen 30.14)

When Rachel made the exchange for the mandrakes from Leah's son, were the mandrakes then dried and mixed into potion that she consumed at a certain time? Had she made a plan for using them that ended with her finding out she was pregnant? Was the month following the mandrakes laden with hope that finally she would be with child? Had she planned an alternative in case they did not work? Did the mandrakes work the first time? How long did it take? How long did she wait? What was she thinking while she waited? Did anyone else know about the mandrakes? Did others support her during the penultimate moments leading up to learning if she was pregnant or not?

Here I sit generations later with modern potions and interventions hoping for a pregnancy. I wonder if everything was done correctly, what will the moment be like when I find out the results, how I will pass the time as I wait those results?

In a lifetime, the waiting may be short – only a few days out of scores of years. Yet the moments feel like the thousands of years of waiting spanning from Rachel to me. The interventions have come so far from mandrakes to modern medicine, yet the waiting

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remains the same. The questions have not changed very much. I too wonder if this intervention will work and how I will face the many moments until the results are known.

God of all generation and of infinite time, please give me the patience and strength to endure this time of waiting.

A List for the Final Days or Hours

Say this list as often as you need. Some people have printed it and taken it out several times a day as the waiting reaches the final day or hours. Some look once a day. It is meant to be part of a larger context of self-care, setting boundaries, and taking thoughtful steps in your family building journey. It is written in simple language and based on Jewish thought and practice: connecting to our bodies, our souls, accepting our limits, recognizing the divine within ourselves, and seeing our connection to friends, loved ones and God. All in a few simple words. Repeat as necessary.

1. Hang in there.
2. Stop and take a breath. Breathe. One more time. In and *out*.
3. You do not need an excuse for anything you are feeling or thinking.
4. You have a parachute.
5. You are an amazing person with a beautiful soul and lots of love to give.
6. You will still be that person tomorrow no matter what happens today. Really.
7. You are not alone.

When This Waiting Is Over

The Result

I do not remember what happened earlier in the day or hearing the phone ring with the results of our final attempt at having a child. I remember not being able to sit still and my stomach protesting food. My thoughts raced beyond my control and focus was elusive. During the two seconds it took the person to complete the sentence revealing the results, I thought I might physically blow up.

The answer came. I could not contain the tears. My body slumped to the floor. The waiting was over, regardless of the results. I exhaled dozens of injections, scores of withheld hopes and countless distractions that had built a veil of temporary insanity around me.

I felt hypersensitive and disassociated at the same time. I noticed my breathing, that the floor was supporting me. The world of the unknown switched to the known in an instant and the contrast was disorienting. I could see myself from the outside. Warmth was emanating from my deflated body. The answer enveloped me as I tried to stabilize myself and grasp the new circumstances.

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Whatever result you hear, the waiting will end. May you land on solid ground.

In the moment

[Here are some thoughts about preparing for the moment](#), a prayer to say for a [positive pregnancy results](#) and prayers and readings for [when the result is negative](#).

Whatever the result, you have two tasks. One is to heal or otherwise return from the stress of waiting. The other is to accept the result. You may have initial reactions and it will also take time to sink in. The healing and the acceptance both take time.

If the result was a pregnancy, it may seem that acceptance would be natural, but it is not always. You are shifting from the world of waiting and thoughts and possibility to a world of reality. You may be overjoyed and you may also have new doubts and fears. [You can read this blessing](#) when you receive the results to help recognize the holiness of the moment. Now you begin a new cycle of waiting.

If the result was negative, doubts, disappointment, blame or just sadness may come quickly. The healing from the waiting turns into a different type of healing. Give yourself permission and time to grieve. The difference between pain and suffering is meaning. The stress of the waiting may feel meaningless when the outcome is negative. In this case, your pain has real meaning, but it just hurts very much. You took extra measures in the hopes for a different outcome. You learned. You cared. You care. Grief often comes in proportion to how much we care.

Lastly, you are smart and made it this far, but you cannot think your way past this. Whatever you are feeling is okay. It is your path to healing. Give yourself— your body and year heart – the time needed to focus towards wholeness.