



RABBI GIDEON

Machon Puah for Fertility and
Gynecology in Accordance with Halacha

WEITZMAN

Remembering Rabbi Sacks zt”l

When I heard the sad news of the untimely passing of the late Chief Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks I was reminded of one of the memorable occasions when I had the privilege and pleasure of hearing him speak.

Some thirteen years ago the Student Medical Ethics Society of Yeshiva University hosted a conference on fertility. Many eminent and renowned medical professionals and Rabbis were invited to speak, and I also participated.

Rabbi Sacks delivered the opening address with a fascinating observation. From the beginning of the Torah God spoke to man on numerous occasions and in a variety of settings. God blessed, instructed, admonished and punished. Man answered God but never addressed the Almighty with a request or a problem.

God promises Abram riches, fame and posterity, but Abram was unsatisfied. “What will you give me? For I go barren” (Genesis 15:2). This verse is a change in tone from all that has preceded it, for man has now turned to God. And what was the issue that prompted Abram to suddenly question the rosy future promised by the Lord? Infertility. The first request that

man has from God is to be blessed with children.

Rabbi Sacks’ words are striking, since this reflection is the simple reading of the Torah. This is not a Midrash or based on a commentary; it is the pshat, the clear reading. Abraham was the first to address God and the impetus was to ask for children, that most basic human need.

Rabbi Sacks spoke of how we have to hear the sometimes silent cry of so many couples and individuals after Avraham who have the same request. We must be sensitive to the plight of those facing fertility challenges and strive to alleviate their pain.

We must also seek practical solutions using God’s gift of medical technology and advances in the treatment of fertility. While some suggest that doctors are playing God by changing the fate of such people, the Torah presents a very different picture. Rabbi Sacks often spoke about the obligation to take responsibility, for one’s own destiny, for our fellow Jews and for the welfare of the entire world. We must use technology wisely and responsibly to alleviate suffering and bring life into the world.

The eloquent speech and poignant message remain today as relevant as they were when Rabbi Sacks delivered them. Maybe even more so, since subsequent medical advances enable us to treat even more cases today than were possible a decade ago. We are charged to bring more life into the world and when facing a challenge, Rabbi Sacks taught us, we are not to give up but work with God to create an even better world.

May his memory be a blessing. ■

The Puah Institute is based in Jerusalem and helps couples from all over the world who are experiencing fertility problems. Offices in Jerusalem, New York, Los Angeles & Paris. Contact (Isr) 02-651-5050 (US) 718-336-0603 www.puahonline.org

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