



RABBI GIDEON

**Machon Puah for Fertility and
Gynecology in Accordance with Halacha**

WEITZMAN

Changing the World?

Last week we discussed the formula for permitting intervention in genetic abnormalities; if the diagnosis is performed for a medical purpose it is permitted, but for a cosmetic gain it is forbidden. However, we saw a limitation of this distinction; not every case is clearly either one or the other, it can depend on one's perspective, and the Rabbi's attitude may be different to that of the couple. Each posek may define cosmetics and medicine differently.

There is another source that provides an approach to medicine in general, and such genetic decisions in particular.

The Gemara (Baba Batra 10a) relates the following conversation "And this is the question that Turnus Rufus the wicked asked Rabbi Akiva: If your God loves the poor, for what reason does He not support them Himself? Rabbi Akiva said to him: He commands us to sustain the poor, so that through them and the charity we give them we will be saved from the judgment of Gehenna.

Turnus Rufus said to Rabbi Akiva: On the contrary, it is this charity which condemns you, the Jewish people, to Gehenna because you give it. I will illustrate this to you with a parable. To what is this matter comparable? It is comparable to a king of flesh and blood

who was angry with his slave and put him in prison and ordered that he should not be fed or given to drink. And one person went ahead and fed him and gave him to drink. If the king heard about this, would he not be angry with that person? And you, after all, are called slaves, as it is stated: "For the children of Israel are slaves to Me" (Leviticus 25:55). If God decreed that a certain person should be impoverished, one who gives him charity defies the will of God.

Rabbi Akiva said to Turnus Rufus: I will illustrate the opposite to you with a different parable. To what is this matter comparable? It is comparable to a king of flesh and blood who was angry with his son and put him in prison and ordered that he should not be fed or given to drink. And one person went ahead and fed him and gave him to drink. If the king heard about this once his anger abated, would he not react by sending that person a gift? And we are called sons, as it is written: "You are sons of the Lord your God" (Deuteronomy 14:1)."

This suggests that when we "improve" the world not only are we within the jurisdiction of the Almighty, but become partners in His creation.

More on this next week. ■

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Halachic Estate Planning
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