



**RABBI GIDEON**

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

**WEITZMAN**

# Spiritually Healthy Children

Last time we saw that the Talmud's presentation, of the argument between Chizkiyahu and Yeshayahu, concludes with what can be interpreted as a condemnation of using technology to have healthy children. While Chizkiyahu chose not to have children due to his concern regarding their fate, Yeshayahu admonished him. It is not up to you, the prophet suggested, you must have children and let God decide what will happen with them.

However, many poskim do permit, and even condone, and encourage, undergoing genetic testing in order to have healthy children. How do these poskim explain this Talmudic tale?

Chizkiyahu refused to have children because he knew that there was nothing that he could do to change the situation. Indeed, when he did have a child, Menashe, he was one of the worst kings in the entire Tanach. Were he able to change the outcome he would have chosen to do so and Yeshayahu may have agreed with his decision. Since today we do have that capacity we can choose to use preimplantation genetic diagnosis, PGD, to have healthy children and this is permitted.

Chizkiyahu was not concerned with the health of his offspring, rather, their spiritual well-being. This is not always in our hands, as much as we educate our children and raise them to follow our footsteps, many factors impact their eventual religious affiliations. We cannot limit ourselves to only having perfectly observant children. Chizkiyahu chose not to have children unless they would serve Hashem, as he did. It was this decision that Yeshayahu disagreed with, claiming that such an outcome is in the hands of the Lord. This is very different from having a known genetic disease, and seeking to eradicate it through PGD.

One other important difference between the story of Chizkiyahu and our reality, is that Yeshayahu was not acting on his own. Instead, he was an emissary, sent by God to relay a Divine message. The Almighty, Himself, told Chizkiyahu to have children, and by refusing to do so, the king was rebelling against the Creator of the World. We do not have such direct Divine communication; we can only try to understand what we are supposed to do and what God wants from us.

If the Lord was to speak with us and tells us not to undergo a medical procedure then we would obviously be prevented from doing so. In other cases, unless there is a clear prohibition, we cannot outlaw any medical procedure, especially when a couple desire it in order to have healthy children. More on this next time. ■