



RABBI GIDEON

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

WEITZMAN

Using the Sources, Coming to Conclusions

In concluding our discussion of the obligation, or permissibility, of the couple to undergo preimplantation genetic diagnosis (PGD) in order to have children, we see that, sometimes, there are more questions than answers. Using the discussion between Yeshayahu and Chizkiyahu as our basis, we observe that the source can be interpreted in opposite ways.

Some use this tale to “prove” that we must not interfere with God’s plan; if we are supposed to have unhealthy children then that is what will eventually happen. We are not permitted to obstruct this Divine decree. In addition, we are not really capable of doing so, and, with all our will and use of technology, we still find that people have sick children. God’s will ultimately overcomes our own desires.

On the other hand, some poskim have used this very same Talmudic passage to claim the exact opposite; a couple has to utilize current medical technology in order to have healthy children. Yeshayahu rebuked Chizkiyahu for not getting married and

having children, but Chizkiyahu replied that he had refrained from doing so out of a fear for the fate of his children. Yeshayahu replied that this was not the king’s responsibility; we are to follow the Divine instructions and God will take care of the results. But this is only applicable in a case in which the concern is for the spiritual welfare of the children, not when dealing with a medical issue. Yeshayahu was conveying a message that he had directly received from God, and this must be followed regardless of the outcome. In other cases, we can decide not to have children, or only have them after first taking the proper precautions to ensure that they will be healthy.

As in many cases in halacha, the same source can be used to arrive at completely different conclusions. Practically speaking, since there is a difference of opinion, each case must be decided on an individual basis. Each case is unique and the halachic decision must take into account the exact medical situation, the family history and situation and the parents’ desire and ability.

This Talmudic tale, that may initially appear to be trivial, has been used as a paradigm for us to approach this modern, and extremely relevant, conundrum. Our rich Talmudic literature presents us with numerous thought-provoking sources that can enable us to develop an appropriate approach to the most complex medical ethical questions. ■