



RABBI GIDEON

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

WEITZMAN

Redeeming the First Born

Last time we presented the case of a woman who delivered twins, that each developed separately in two uteruses. The woman was born with a rare congenital condition, uterus didelphys, in which she has two uteruses. She became pregnant with twins, one in her right side uterus and one in her left side, and both developed and were delivered.

Since this was her first pregnancy, would both boys born have to be redeemed in a pidyon haben? A firstborn child, if neither parents were from the tribe of Levi, needs to be redeemed in a pidyon haben ceremony. In this ceremony, the child is brought before a kohen and the father gives the kohen five silver shekel coins.

If the father was either a kohen or a levi, or the mother was the daughter of a kohen or a levi, the child would not need to have a pidyon haben. If the mother had previous children, even from a different man, the child would not need to have a pidyon haben. This is true even if the previous child did not survive, or there was miscarriage, after the child had begun to develop. This is usually around 40 days after conception, and so, generally, we assume that if the miscarriage occurred prior to this time, then the next child born would need a pidyon haben. But, if the

miscarriage occurred after 40 days, the next son born would not need a pidyon haben. In the case of doubt the son born subsequently would need a pidyon haben, which would be performed without making the blessing. This is due to the halachic principle that in cases of doubt we perform the action but do not make the bracha.

The Shulchan Aruch (Yoreh Deah 305:24) writes that in the case of a "*yotzei dofen*" the child does not need a pidyon haben. This literally means, "the one who came through the wall", what we call a Cesarean delivery, or C-section, since traditionally it was thought that Julius Caesar was born this way, or that he was descended from someone born this way. As Pliny the Elder wrote "a caeso matris utero", born by caesarian section. But the validity of this tale is widely debated as historical fact.

Since the delivery was not natural, the child is not liable to a pidyon haben. But, continues the Shulchan Aruch, neither is the next son liable to a pidyon haben, since he is not the firstborn.

What does this tell us about the case of uterus didelphys?

More on this next time. ■

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