



RABBI GIDEON WEITZMAN

Machon Puah for Fertility and
Gynecology in Accordance with Halacha

The Siren's Wail

The sirens that shook the skies on the morning of Shabbat Zachor, as we were reading about our eternal war with Amalek, and those who want to kill us, affected all of our lives in Israel, and Jews all over the world. Many of us, or our children, were called up, again, to fight against our deadly enemies. Many plans were canceled and changed. After months of war we are accustomed to wedding plans that have to change, to flights that are canceled, to schools that are closed and the lessons shift to Zoom. We are almost used to these changes and they have become a part of our plans; we will go on holiday, unless there is another war, the wedding will be in a specific hall on such a date, unless missiles are falling, and many other tentative plans, on condition that things will be normal. At least, the new normal that we have become familiar with.

This reality is extremely complex for couples undergoing fertility treatment. Treatments follow their own schedule, that we are not always able to control, and timing is essential and inflexible. But as the situation becomes more dangerous hospitals have to adapt and limit the non-essential medical treatment.

From Shabbat Zachor, almost immediately the fertility units either closed or severely limited treatment. This can be justified, since the hospital does not want to take responsibility for staff and patients, if it is not a medical emergency.

But for the couple undergoing treatment this can be disastrous; a woman is in the middle of a hormonal treatment cycle, a couple have been waiting for an appointment with a specialist for months, or a surgery is scheduled.

This is even more acute for a couple who are a little older, since fertility decreases with age. For such a couple each month is critical and they may not have the luxury of delaying the treatment until the country settles down.

The fertility units made commendable efforts to accommodate couples, but they did have to restrict treatments, limiting it only to couples who were in the middle of treatment, or were of a certain age. At PUAH we spent a lot of time assisting couples and offering alternatives when possible.

Another problem was that some of the fertility units, especially the smaller ones, were uncomfortable permitting the halachic supervisor to attend the treatment and suggested that couples undergo treatment without halachic observation. This presented a unique challenge to PUAH and many couples.

More on this next time. ■