



RABBI GIDEON WEITZMAN

Machon Puah for Fertility and
Gynecology in Accordance with Halacha

Possibilities in Parenthood

We recently had the pleasure of hosting two remarkable medical professionals working in the field of uterine transplants. To appreciate the importance of their work, a bit of background is helpful.

In rare cases, a woman is born without a uterus. One such condition is Mayer-Rokitansky-Küster-Hauser syndrome (MRKH), often simply called Rokitansky syndrome. Women with this condition are born without a functioning uterus. Others may lose their uterus, or its ability to carry a pregnancy, later in life due to illness, surgery, or medical complications.

For decades, these women faced only two paths to parenthood: adoption or the use of a gestational carrier, previously known as a surrogate. For many, neither option fully addressed the deep desire to experience pregnancy firsthand.

Both options come with significant emotional and halachic considerations. Adoption, for example, has become increasingly complex. Today, there are far fewer infants available for adoption than in the past, due in part to the increased prevalence of terminating unwanted pregnancies. This is particularly noticeable when it comes to Jewish infants. As a result, many couples turn to international adoption, which can involve political, legal and social challenges. In addition, the child may require conversion, adding another layer of halachic

complexity. While many families have built beautiful lives through adoption, it is not the path every couple chooses, especially given the uncertainties and long timelines often involved.

Surrogacy, too, presents its own challenges. It is often a complicated and costly process, and it introduces another woman into an intimate aspect of family life. The gestational carrier is not merely an “incubator,” but a person with her own emotions and perspectives. There have even been highly publicized cases in which carriers sought to keep the baby, leading to long and complex legal disputes over parenthood. Although detailed contracts are now standard practice to prevent such situations, they can make the relationship feel overly legalistic, sometimes at the expense of empathy and mutual respect.

From a halachic standpoint, surrogacy raises additional questions, particularly around how motherhood is defined when one woman provides the genetic material and another carries the pregnancy. These questions influence who may serve as a gestational carrier and whether conversion is required after birth.

While many couples have successfully and positively built families through surrogacy, it is not an option for everyone, and not all halachic authorities permit it.

This brings us to a new and developing possibility; uterine transplantation.

More on this next time. ■