

## **MACHON PUAH**

### **The First American Born from a Uterus Transplant**

This week saw a breakthrough in America with the first baby born in the US to a mother who received a uterus transplant. The operation was performed in Dallas, Texas, for a woman who was born without a uterus. A live donor was willing and able to supply her uterus for transplant and the recipient, whose identity is being kept secret, delivered a healthy baby girl this week.

This was part of a trial of eight women in Baylor University that replicated the operations and results originally performed in Sweden. Indeed, one of the Swedish experts joined the Texan group and performed the surgeries. In four of the cases the transplant was not successful, one of the women is pregnant and two of them are trying to get pregnant, and this is the first birth. Unlike in Sweden where the team waited for a year after the transplant before attempting to achieve a pregnancy, in Dallas the woman was pregnant within a few months after the surgery.

Readers of this column may recall that we discussed this issue from a halachic perspective five years ago when the technology was developed in Sweden. However since I received a number of questions as a result of the media coverage of this special birth I wanted to present a brief summary of some of the related halachic issues.

But before I do, it is pertinent to mention an event that happened to me in relation to uterus transplants. In October 2015 there was a lot of talk of this new technology that had been

developed in Sweden. There had previously been reports of a uterus transplant in Saudi Arabia but the operation had not been successful and it was thought that this was experimental and would not lead to anything.

I attended the Annual Meeting of the American Society of Reproductive Medicine that was held that year in Baltimore. At the meeting I met one of the leaders in the field, a former editor of the highly respected journal, *Fertility and Sterility*, and I asked him what he thought about uterus transplants. He was adamant that it was a gimmick and would never be done in America.

The following month the New York Times reported that uterus transplants would be performed in America, and last week a baby was born after a successful uterus transplant. This should teach us that we can never accurately predict the future of fertility treatments, and all medical advances. There have been phenomenal and exciting advances that surprised even the experts.

So what does the halacha say on uterus transplants? More on this next week.

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