

MACHON PUAH

Should There Be a Limit?

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Last time we discussed the campaign in Britain to remove the limitation on how long eggs can be kept frozen. Currently the limit is ten years, except for special cases, and there are many women who feel this is not long enough. The concept that there is a time limit at all adds pressure to women who are already under great pressure to get married and have children. Unfortunately this pressure sometimes leads to women making a decision to use a donor to have children. This is a halachically problematic solution, and freezing eggs that can later be used when the woman gets married is distinctly preferable.

Women in the UK complained that after ten years they were forced to either use the eggs or discard them. In the decade since freezing their eggs these women were still not married and ready to start a family. When the ten years of storage were over the women found themselves in almost the same position that they had been at the beginning of their journey. Inevitably some women will opt to use a donor and have gained nothing by freezing their eggs. In fact, over those years their fertility will decrease, sometimes significantly, and they will then face problems getting pregnant.

A woman in her late 20s and 30s is under great pressure to get married and have children as soon as possible due to the biological clock. For some women it is this pressure that is a barrier to them making the decision to get married. When they freeze eggs and this pressure is reduced some of them subsequently alter their entire perspective on dating and relationships and do get married. If we limit the amount of time that the eggs can legally be stored we have added more pressure.

On the other hand it could be claimed that there is a positive element to this pressure as well. Once a woman knows that she has an extension on her fertility but it is limited this will be a deciding factor for some women to get married.

In other words, in the Orthodox Jewish community egg freezing is accepted and encouraged since it is seen that this promotes marriage. Initially there was some objection to egg freezing out of a fear that it would compromise the need and importance of marriage. When this was seen not to be the case many important Rabbis publicly supported egg freezing.

If limiting the period of freezing encourages marriage then it should be promoted, if it has the opposite effect it should be rejected.

Egg freezing is an important technology that, like all such reproductive methods, needs to be used well to promote Jewish values and help married couples have healthy children.