



Ask The Rabbi...

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1. Kids 'R US
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Aliza Amitai from <merav@netmedia.co.il> wrote:

My question is about "Pru u'Rvu" (Be fruitful and multiply). I have learned that there are two opinions about the obligation to have children:

1. One boy and one girl
2. Two boys and two girls

Is this true? I'm curious, if this is so, why do so many observant families have such large families? Is there a Halacha against any form of birth control? Is having very large families a Halachic obligation or is there another 'inyan' [idea]?

Dear Aliza,

"One boy and one girl" is the opinion of *Beit Hillel* in the Mishna. They derive this from the way Hashem created the world, with one male and one female. While the Talmud offers other opinions, including the one you mentioned, the Halacha follows *Beit Hillel*.

But did you ever throw a party and nobody showed up? Besides this *minimal* fulfillment of 'Pru u'Rvu' there's a general *mitzvah* to populate the earth, which stems from the verse "The earth was not created to be desolate..." and applies to non-Jews as well. Hashem is our 'host' and desires lots of guests at the party!

In this age of DINKs (Double Income - No Kids) life is looked upon as a picnic where kids rain. I know someone who has 3 kids and 2 pianos. I asked him if he thinks about having more. Kids, that is. "More kids!" he said. "Are you kidding! Do you have any idea how much it costs for piano lessons alone!" In other words, "Give me Liberacé or give me death."

The Torah looks at children otherwise: Children are an "inheritance from Hashem," and lucky is the one who has a "quiver-full" (Psalms). When you have a child, you draw down a divine soul, a *neschama*, and dress it in an earthly body. A parent gives each child the greatest gift of all — life!

And each child gives you plenty of practice in the art of giving and loving, until hopefully you become an expert!

The Talmud describes having a child as a *partnership* involving mother, father and G-d. So, if you're interested in a corporate venture with Hashem, 'invest' in as many 'children-futures' as you can.

However, having "as many children as you can" takes into consideration physical, emotional, and sometimes even financial factors; And some types of birth control are permitted in some cases. Suffice it to say that a *Posek* (Halachic authority) **must be contacted** regarding each specific case.

Of course, one benefit of having children is that you can brag about them — which reminds me of the following story: "Oy!" says a woman to her friend. "My son the doctor! He's so good to me! He writes! He sends presents! He flies down to visit..."

"Oy, My son!" says the other. "He loves me so much!" He goes to a fancy therapist. There he pays 150 dollars an hour! And the whole time, who does he talk about...ME!!"

Sources:

- Talmud — Yevamot 61b.
- Yeshaya 45, Psalms 127, 128.
- Shulchan Aruch, Even Haezer 1:5, 1:8.

Yiddle Riddle:

< lilserv@attmail.com > sent us the following:

You take two edible items, where item #1 is **forbidden** to cook and eat, and item #2 is **permitted** — put them together, wait, and after a while, item #1 is **permitted** to cook and eat, and item #2 is **forbidden**!

What are the items?

Clarification from Ask the Rabbi #78

Dr. Wittenstein wrote: "A primary concern is indeed safety of the crew; NASA does everything possible to assure crew safety. However, it is **high** risk. Should something unforeseen occur, there is very little opportunity or time to repair it."

If you have E-Mail and a question, you can submit it to Ask The Rabbi for possible inclusion in a future edition. Just write your question using your E-Mail program, set the subject to "Ask The Rabbi" and send it to ohr@jer1.co.il. We can't include all questions submitted, but we do try to respond to everyone.

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