



**RABBI GIDEON**

Machon Puah for Fertility and  
Gynecology in Accordance with Halacha

**WEITZMAN**

## The Doctor's Danger

Recently we discussed the question of whether one can place oneself in danger in order to be healed. What about a doctor and the medical staff? Are they allowed to endanger themselves to save others? This happens every single day, and in the past few months we have seen incredible efforts made by these modern-day heroes who place themselves on the frontlines of the fight against the Covid19 virus. The medical professionals risk their lives and health treating infectious disease. Is this permitted?

Rabbi David ben Shlomo ibn Avi Zimra, the Ridbaz, writing in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, wrote that one is not permitted to place himself in danger, or even potential danger, in order to save another person. The case that he brings is that gentiles threaten to kill Reuven unless Shimon cuts off one of his limbs. The Ridbaz says that if Shimon agreed to such a threat, even out of righteous concern for the other Jew, he is considered a *chassid shoteh*. This is a derogatory term for someone who thinks that they are being righteous but are, in fact, acting in an inappropriate and forbidden manner.

Rabbi Eliezer Waldenberg, the Tzitz Eliezer, writing at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, suggests that, according to this, a doctor is not allowed to place himself in danger even to save another person's life. This seems to be counterintuitive, since the whole medical profession is based on saving other people's lives. If the doctor is not permitted to endanger himself, even if he is involved in saving another person's life, he is seriously limited in his ability to practice medicine.

If Reuven is correct then, claims the Rema, The entire mitzvah of visiting the sick is in question

The Tzitz Eliezer quotes the Responsa of Rabbi Moshe Isserlis, the Rema, writing a little after the Ridbaz, who seems to permit the placing of oneself in danger to save another person. The case was Reuven who rented his house to Shimon and closed the deal, but before Shimon could enter the house his wife became ill with a contagious disease. Reuven wanted to prevent his tenant from moving in due to the danger.

The Rema wrote that Reuven has to allow Shimon and his wife to enter the

house and the illness is not a sufficient reason to renege on the deal. If Reuven is correct then, claims the Rema, the entire mitzvah of visiting the sick is in question. We do not find that the halacha makes a distinction between ill people who are contagious and others. We are obligated to visit all sick people, and therefore we see that one is allowed to enter into danger in order to fulfill a mitzvah.

More on this next week. ■

*The Puah Institute is based in Jerusalem and helps couples from all over the world who are experiencing fertility problems. Offices in Jerusalem, New York, Los Angeles & Paris. Contact (Isr) 02-651-5050 (US) 718-336-0603 [www.puahonline.org](http://www.puahonline.org)*

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