Number of children

Question: We have two boys and two girls. I want to continue growing the family, but my wife does not. What is Ha-Rav's advice?

Answer: After one has a boy and a girl, one should continue to have children as it says: "In the morning sow your seed, and in the evening do not withhold your hand" (Kohelet 11:6 and Yevamot 62b). But we are not told how many children to have. The guiding principle is to have the most children possible based on one's ability – one's physical ability, one's emotion ability, and one's financial ability. One's ability is a personal decision. You cannot force your wife insofar as she would like more children but is unable. This reminds me of the words of the Mesech Chochma on the mitzvah of "Be fruitful and multiply" (Bereshit 9:7). As is known, women are not obligated in this mitzvah. This is a wonder – how can a man have children alone? The Mesech Chochma explains that women are not obligated because sometimes pregnancy is quite difficult, and childbirth is difficult, and taking care of a baby all of the time is difficult, and the Torah does not force someone to do something which may sometimes be beyond his ability. But if Hashem does not command women
to have children, how will children come into the world? Hashem also implanted a desire for children within women as we see with Rachel: "Give me children or I will die" (Bereshit 30a). Therefore, a woman has children because of her desire. There is a balance between the desire and the difficulties, and a woman navigates between them. This appears in the Torah, not when Hashem commands Adam: "Be Fruitful and multiply" (Bereshit 1:28), but after the flood when he commands Noach: "Be fruitful and multiply." The first command was before the curse of "You shall bear children in pain" (Bereshit 3:16) and there was therefore no reason to be lenient. But now there is the difficulty of the curse. I therefore recommend not to pressure your wife and let her decide on her own.