

המוסד למען קדושת חיי אדם



Choosing Life is the Best Life Choice

Judaism is the original pro-life religion. The Torah introduces the principle of the sanctity of unborn human life as early as the Noachide Code: In his Mishneh Torah, Maimonides echoes the opinions and commentary in the Talmud, in which Jewish authorities stated that the prohibition against homicide in the Third Law of the Noachide code included a prohibition against abortion,¹ citing Genesis 9: 6-7: *Whoso sheddeth man's blood within man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made He man. And you, be fruitful, and multiply; swarm in the earth, and multiply therein.*²

The sixth commandment given by HaShem to the Jews at Sinai clearly emphasizes the sanctity of human life intended for the nation of Israel: Exodus 20:13: *Thou shalt not murder.*

The Torah contains many verses where the Almighty calls attention to the pagan ritual of child sacrifice and warns the Jews to refrain from this practice: e.g., Leviticus 18:21: *And thou shalt not give any of thy seed or set them apart to Molech, neither shalt thou profane the name of thy God: I am the Lord.*

HaShem's directive to the nation of Israel on life and procreation is quite clear: Deuteronomy 30:19: *I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that I have set before thee life and death, the blessing and the curse; therefore, choose life, that thou mayest live, thou and thy seed.*

In Judaism, abortion is judged to be the unwarranted taking of a life within a life. It is prohibited, just as murder is prohibited. Originally, our rabbinic tradition correctly found one exception to the prohibition - that of breech birth which, if not remedied, would kill both mother and child. The Halackhic requirement to save the mother's life by taking the child's life was restricted to this grave imminent danger.³ Today, only 1% of abortion is used to save the life of the mother, and this percentage is dwindling as pre-term babies can be removed from the uterus and given life saving care.⁴ The Jewish propensity to expand the limits of this exception disregard the human life that hangs in the balance - an innocent human life.

We've been taught that "It's not alive until It's born", a corrupted, misleading reference to ancient rabbinical opinion on the status of the unborn. Today, the age of ultra-sophisticated ultrasound instantly verifies the humanity of the child in the mother's womb. Now, it is scientifically proven that human life begins at conception.⁵ We know without a doubt that abortion kills an innocent living human being. Judaism prohibits killing an innocent person. Therefore, in Judaism elective abortion is wrong.

No longer can an unborn baby be called a blob of tissue, the product of conception, or merely water. Biologically speaking, human life begins at the time of conception.⁶ From the moment of fertilization, the child's genetic makeup is complete. The gender, height, and hair, eye and skin color are determined. The blood supply is separate and often different from that of the mother's.⁷ The only thing the embryo needs to become an adult human being is the time to grow and develop.⁸

Judaism emphasizes the sanctity of human life from conception to natural death, making it incumbent upon Jews to find alternative life saving ways to deal with unplanned and unwanted pregnancy. Adoption, marriage, and single parenthood are much better choices for Jews than the intentional killing of an innocent life to avoid embarrassment, inconvenience, or hardship. When pregnancy results from a mistake killing innocent life is not the answer.

Judaism demands a high level of compassion and mercy for the vulnerable and defenseless. No other demographic is as vulnerable as the defenseless child in the womb. We show no compassion for unborn babies who are starved, poisoned, burned, dismembered, and whose skull is punctured and crushed after partial delivery - all done without pain medication.⁹ As early as 8 weeks, an unborn baby feels real physical pain during an abortion.¹⁰ As Jews we cannot inflict this torture on innocents.

Today, a super-majority of Jews in America¹¹ and in Israel¹² believe in the use of elective abortion with no restraints. Abortion in America and in Israel is now a primary form of birth control and leads to the termination of thousands of unborn children. It is conservatively estimated that 30,000 Jewish abortions occur in Israel every year. Every week 576 Israeli Jewish pre-born children die a violent death from abortion.¹³ It is estimated that 2 million Israeli children have died in this way since 1948.¹⁴ The Guttmacher Institute, which keeps statistics for Planned Parenthood, estimates that 1.3% of the weekly 23,000 US abortions are Jewish. Every week nearly 300 US Jewish pre-born children die a violent death from abortion. It is estimated that 767,000 American Jews have died this way since 1973.¹⁵

These numbers underscore the need for available and effective life saving alternatives. Marriage, single parenting, and adoption are alternatives to abortion that save lives, hearts, and souls. The Jewish community has for too long actively promoted abortion or denied the need for these life saving options. Finally, we are compelled to intercede by the scriptural directive in Leviticus 19:16: *Do not stand idly by while your neighbor's blood is being spilled.*

Jews raised in the pro-abortion culture are conditioned from an early age to believe that elective abortion as birth control is a legal, simple, safe, surgical procedure. Abortion is a socially acceptable way to end an unplanned or unwanted pregnancy - and the awkward or difficult situations that result, eg., avoiding the financial and emotional burden of a special needs child; relieving a large family of additional strain on the already tight budget; avoiding the loss of an academic, business or professional opportunity; avoiding the certain ire and judgment of parents; avoiding social stigma and family embarrassment; and being pressured or coerced into abortion.

Some compassionate and well meaning rabbis, doctors, counselors, social workers and friends of Jewish men and women facing unplanned pregnancy advise abortion as a way to alleviate the suffering and stress that accompany these difficult problems. Lost in the recommendation for abortion is the scientific fact and spiritual truth that abortion kills the life of an innocent child, and that violating the sanctity of human life results in a cascade of painful and long term problems, all of which reflect an alienation from G-d and a denial of the intrinsic value and worth of our children and ourselves. The high incidence of abortion contributes to the demographic, moral, and spiritual decline of the Jewish community.

Many Jews who condone and support abortion have sympathy for the plight of a woman facing problems because of unplanned or unwanted pregnancy, but decline the responsibility to provide financial, emotional, and pregnancy care support that would be far more helpful than an abortion that harms her, destroys her child, and rarely solves her concurrent problems. While abortion advocates insist that abortion improves lives, the truth is that women who complete their pregnancies have far better outcomes than those who terminate.¹⁶

The Elliot Institute's peer reviewed research documents real physical, reproductive, psychological, and emotional damage directly related to abortion. Immediate negative consequences include hemorrhage, internal injury and infection. Long term effects include increased risks of cancer, miscarriage and infertility, and higher rates of addictive behaviors, depression, anxiety, and suicide. Tragically, women die from legal abortion.¹⁷

Many Jewish women and men suffer shame and regret after abortion, as well as other emotional, mental, relational, and behavioral problems, all symptoms of the spiritual disconnection from HaShem that every Jew feels after taking actions that hurt the innocent, lack kindness and mercy, and fall short of the best of Jewish behavior. This spiritual isolation after abortion compromises the health and happiness of many Jews, often going unacknowledged and unexpressed for decades. A spiritual healing therapy, based on the Jewish concept of Teshuvah, effectively heals this wound by reconnecting the sufferer to G-d through confession, sincere contrition, seeking forgiveness, embracing redemption, and moving forward to serve HaShem by helping other suffering souls. The Jewish Pro-Life Foundation offers a no cost, confidential post abortion healing program to help Jewish men and women address the deeply personal issues that arise after abortion. It is called [Tikvat Rachel](#), Rachel's Hope For All Her Children, Both Born And Unborn. The Jewish Pro-Life Foundation honors and encourages the healing journey of every post abortive Jew, young or old, male or female, religious or secular.¹⁸

The abortion business is all about monetary profit derived from the sacrifice of human capital. This is morally wrong in Judaism, which goes to great lengths to provide rules of business conduct that are moral and just. Jews have a keen sense of social injustice and speak out against it without reservation, as in the case of a death row inmate who may be wrongly accused. Yet, our innocent unborn children have no comparable advocate; instead, the majority Jewish community actively supports killing them for any reason with no second opinion or legal defense required. This extreme view must be acknowledged and condemned in order to save Jewish lives and return a culture of life to the Jewish community as a whole.

Abortion providers have long been exempt from standard medical practices and regulatory oversight, and decades of illegal and unethical practices are finally being uncovered.¹⁹ Abortion providers perpetuate sex crimes by routinely failing to report evidence of sexual assault and sex trafficking. They fail to provide informed consent to patients, and fail to counsel patients on alternatives to the abortion procedure or possible long term negative consequences of the procedure. Recent undercover videos show illegal sales of body parts and the extreme violation of basic moral standards regarding dismemberment of born alive babies.²⁰ Judaism prohibits desecrating the human body, but abortion destroys a human body, and the harvesting of baby parts for profit runs contrary to Jewish respect for the dead.

An unplanned pregnancy in the Jewish community represents an opportunity to bring a precious Jewish child into the world rather than an embarrassing, inconvenient, or costly expense. Jewish women, given the family, social, and congregational support to love and keep their babies, would do so. Jewish men, encouraged and supported to be responsible providers, would embrace fatherhood. Great numbers of Jewish couples pray to raise Jewish children, and would willingly provide the financial assistance and safe haven necessary for a successful adoption.

Jewish family attitudes about babies conceived outside of marriage need to change so that Jewish families challenged by an unplanned pregnancy receive support and understanding rather than castigation and shame. One mistake - a lapse of moral and sexual responsibility - need not lead to a worse mistake - that of ending the life of an innocent Jewish child. When families can meet such situations with compassion and support, practical and healthy solutions can be found. We need to channel our energy, activities, and financial resources into educating our community about the need for these options and putting into place the local and regional support networks to facilitate their easy use rather than financially support abortion providers, whose business practices run contrary to Jewish values and tradition.

Currently, the only American Jewish crisis pregnancy resource is [In Shifra's Arms](#). In Israel, [Efrat - Committee to Rescue Israel's Babies](#), serves this need. [Birthright International](#), a highly respected, non-denominational pregnancy care organization, is also appropriate for Jewish women. We should support two Jewish adoption agencies, [Jewish Children's Adoption Network](#), and [Embrace A Jewish Child](#). The Jewish Pro-Life Foundation also provides adoption referrals to Jewish couples who have contacted us looking to adopt Jewish babies.

Lastly, we need to acknowledge that our very existence in a world hostile to Jews has depended upon the grace, power and protection of a loving G-d, as well as the sacrifice, generosity, and courage of people of conscience in every generation. The compassionate underpinnings of our biblical heritage as well as our all too frequent tragic experiences of mass annihilation demand that we speak out in support of the most vulnerable in our midst - our own unborn children.

Cecily Routman, MSW. Founder

End Notes

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- ¹⁷ The Elliot Institute. <http://afterabortion.org>
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- ¹⁹ Governor Greitens Announces Pro-Life Special Session. <https://governor.mo.gov/news/archive/governor-greitens-announces-pro-life-special-session>
- ²⁰ Behind Closed Doors. <https://www.liveaction.org/what-we-do/investigations/>