

Women's League for Conservative Judaism Convention

Sisters Celebrating Together 2023
Schaumburg, IL

Reproductive Rights in Jewish Tradition A Workshop Featuring Rabbi Gail Labovitz Monday, July 17th

Included materials:

Five Women's League Resolutions:

Health-Abortion (1976)

Adopted to address legislative attempts to restrict Medicaid funds and welfare services.

Health-Abortion (1982)

Adopted to emphasize the importance of church/state separation in our national life.

Health – Reproductive Rights (2012)

Adopted to highlight the need for sisterhoods to educate members about Jewish perspectives on the subject.

Health – Reproductive Rights (2014)

Adopted in support of the Affordable Care Act (Obama Care) and its provisions that the full range of reproductive health service be made available to all.

Health – Reproductive Rights (2020)

Adopted to address rising concerns about the composition of the Supreme Court and emphasize Conservative Judaism's support for reproductive choice.

Discussing Reproductive Rights: Foundational Jewish Texts

by Rabbi Gail Labovitz

Advocacy For All – An outline for social action

Panel contact information – Let's continue the discussion

Health – Abortion (1976)

Abortion (1976)

Women's League for Conservative Judaism believes that freedom of choice is inherent in the civil rights of women. We also believe that the welfare of the mother must always be our primary concern.

We therefore urge our sisterhoods to oppose any legislative attempts through Constitutional amendments, the deprivation of Medicaid, family services and other current welfare services, to weaken the force of the Supreme Court's decision permitting abortions.

Health – Abortion (1982)

Amended Resolution on Abortion (1982)

Reverence for the life is the cornerstone of our Jewish heritage. Since abortion in Jewish law is primarily for the mother's physical or mental welfare, we deplore the burgeoning casual use of abortion. Abortion should be "legally available but ethically restricted. Though the abortion of a fetus is not equivalent to taking an actual life, it does represent the destruction of potential life and must not be undertaken lightly." *

However, Women's League for Conservative Judaism also believes that the practice of the principle of separation of Church and State guaranteed by our Constitution has kept our nation strong and preserved full freedom for the individual. Women's League believes that transmitting religious values is the responsibility of the religious sector.

Women's League for Conservative Judaism urges its Sisterhoods to oppose any legislative attempts through Constitutional amendments, the deprivation of Medicaid, family services, and/or other current welfare services, to weaken the force of the Supreme Court's decision permitting abortions.

**From Love and Sex: A Modern Jewish Perspective by Dr. Robert Gordis*

Health – Reproductive Rights (2012)

Background

Biblical and rabbinic sources provide the background for the Conservative Jewish response to a woman's right to bodily autonomy and to the relative rights of a woman versus a fetus. (This resolution is based upon the 2012 Rabbinical Assembly resolution on this subject.)

In Exodus 21:22-23 we read: "When men fight, and one of them pushes a pregnant woman and a miscarriage results, but no other damage ensues, the one responsible shall be fined... But if other damage ensues, the penalty shall be life for life..." which determines that only the woman is a nefesh, living person, not the fetus.

This understanding of the status of a fetus is supported by Leviticus 24:17: "If anyone kills any human being, he shall be put to death." (Leviticus 24:17) In the Mekhilta d'Rabbi Shimon bar Yohai (21:12), the midrash teaches that a fetus is not a living person: "The Torah says [one who strikes] a man (Exodus 21:12), meaning a viable human being, to exclude the fetus."

Furthermore, Mishnah Ohalot 7:6 also teaches: "If a woman is having difficulty in giving birth [and her life is in danger], one cuts up the fetus within her womb and extracts it limb by limb, because her life takes precedence over that of the fetus. But if the greater part was already born, one may not touch it, for one may not set aside one person's life for that of another," which is understood to mean that a woman whose life is endangered by a pregnancy is permitted to end the pregnancy.

Likewise, there is the understanding that grave psychological distress is a legitimate reason to end a pregnancy. Thus we find in the teshuvah of R. Eliezer Waldenberg, Responsa Tzitz Eliezer, part 13, No. 102: "One should permit... abortion as soon as it becomes evident without doubt from the test that, indeed, such a baby (Tay-Sachs baby) shall be born, even until the seventh month of her pregnancy...If, indeed, we may permit an abortion according to the halakhah because of 'great need' and because of pain and suffering, it seems that this is the classic case for such permission. And it is irrelevant in what way the pain and suffering is expressed, whether it is physical or psychological. Indeed, psychological suffering is in many ways much greater than the suffering of the flesh."

Resolution

WHEREAS, biblical and rabbinic sources provide the background for the Conservative Jewish response to a woman's right to bodily autonomy and to the relative rights of a woman versus a fetus,

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that Women's League for Conservative Judaism calls upon its sisterhoods to:

- Educate their members about the Jewish perspective on when life begins utilizing the Committee on Jewish Law and Standards teshuvot on the subject;
- Support full access for all women to the entire spectrum of reproductive healthcare;
- Urge its members to oppose all efforts by governmental, private entities or individuals to limit such access or to require unnecessary procedures.

Health – Reproductive Rights (2014)

This resolution was prepared in consultation with the Jewish Council for Public Affairs (of which Women's League is a member).

BACKGROUND

The Affordable Care Act (ACA) requires health insurance policies to cover, without co-pays or deductibles, a full range of physician-prescribed FDA-approved contraceptive methods, sterilization procedures and patient education and counseling for women with reproductive capacity. There have been ongoing legislative and legal challenges to women's reproductive health care access and choices in the United States. On March 25, 2014, the U.S. Supreme Court heard *Sebelius v Hobby Lobby Stores, Inc.* and *Conestoga Wood Specialties Corp. v Sibelius*, which deal with whether secular, for-profit corporations whose owners oppose birth control need to abide by the contraceptive mandate of the Affordable Care Act. In these cases there have been attempts to redefine certain well-accepted contraceptive medications and devices as abortifacients.

The Women's League for Conservative Judaism 2012 resolution explained the *halachah* regarding abortion and made recommendations based on these explanations. Those recommendations continue to be important since states and the U.S. Congress have continued to try to limit access to abortions. In addition, the ACA allows states to enact or repeal laws restricting coverage of abortion in marketplace plans. As a result, 26 states and the District of Columbia permit such coverage while 24 states have banned marketplace plans' coverage of abortion. Further, the ACA does not explicitly require that health plans are transparent and individuals in many cases cannot ascertain whether a particular plan would cover abortions.

WHEREAS, there are a variety of reasons why the ACA's requirement that most private health plans cover contraceptive counseling, services and supplies without out-of-

pocket costs for women is both necessary and appropriate. [The Guttmacher Institute has a thorough analysis of this](#). Most importantly, they discuss how contraception works and show how it is distinct from abortion.

WHEREAS, many women cannot afford to pay for the contraceptives either on a monthly basis or when there is a large upfront cost as is the case with IUD's nor can they afford ongoing reproductive health care;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that Women's League for Conservative Judaism calls on its Sisterhoods to:

- Encourage increased discussion about the harmful impact of difficult life circumstances and inequities in the choices that women (and men) in all walks of life may face as well as disparities across different geographic, socioeconomic and other populations regarding access to quality fertility/infertility, family planning, and abortion services;
- Oppose any legislative efforts to deny a woman's right to meaningfully access the full range of reproductive health services, and fully exercise her constitutionally protected reproductive rights;
- Oppose legislation that seeks to practice medicine, such as defining when and what specific medical or surgical procedures are appropriate and lawful when applied to a woman and her ability to access reproductive health services;
- Oppose any effort that would restrict funding of an institution or program which provides health services including education, birth control or abortion.

Further, Women's League for Conservative Judaism resolves to join in amicus briefs in litigation involving the ACA contraceptive coverage mandate in order to place before courts the WLCJ positions on the issues involved.

Health – Reproductive Rights 2020

Support of a Women's Right to Choose.

Biblical and rabbinic sources provide the background for the Conservative Jewish response to a women's right to bodily autonomy and to the relative rights of a woman versus a fetus. (This resolution is based upon the 2012 Rabbinical Assembly resolution on this subject.) It is also amended from previous Women's League resolutions on abortion rights (1976) and (1982.)

Whereas reverence for life is the cornerstone of our Jewish heritage;

And whereas abortion in Jewish law is primarily for the mother's physical or mental welfare;

And whereas abortion should be legally available;

And whereas Women's League for Conservative Judaism believes that the transmission of religious values is the responsibility of the religious sector;

And whereas Women's League for Conservative Judaism believes that freedom of choice is inherent in the civil rights of women;

Therefore be it resolved that Women's League for Conservative Judaism urges its sisterhoods and members to support a women's right to make her own decisions regarding reproductive issues and to oppose any legislative and judicial attempts to limit options permitting abortion.

Discussing Reproductive Rights: Foundational Jewish Texts

1) Exodus 21:22-25 – is causing the loss of a pregnancy murder?

<p>²²When men fight, and one of them pushes a pregnant woman and a miscarriage results, but not other damage ensues, the one responsible shall be fined according as the woman's husband may exact from him, the payment to be based on reckoning. ²³But if other damage ensues, the penalty shall be life for life, ²⁴eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, ²⁵burn for burn, wound for wound, bruise for bruise. (translation from <i>Etz Hayim</i>)</p>	<p>(כב) וְכִי יִנְצוּ אֲנָשִׁים וְנִגְפוּ אִשָּׁה הָרָה וַיֵּצְאוּ יֶלְדֶיהָ וְלֹא יְהִיָה אֶסוֹן עָנוּשׁ יַעֲנֹשׁ כְּאֲשֶׁר יִשִּׁית עָלָיו בְּעַל הָאִשָּׁה וְנִתְּן בְּפָלְלִים: (כג) וְאִם אֶסוֹן יְהִיָה וְנִתְּתָה נַפְשׁ תַּחַת נַפְשׁ: (כד) עַיִן תַּחַת עַיִן שֵׁן תַּחַת שֵׁן יָד תַּחַת יָד רֶגֶל תַּחַת רֶגֶל: (כה) כְּנִיָּה תַּחַת כְּנִיָּה פֶצַע תַּחַת פֶּצַע חֲבוּרָה תַּחַת חֲבוּרָה:</p>
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2) The first 40 days

<p>Mishnah Niddah 3:7 If a woman miscarries on [or before] the 40th day [from her immersion after her last menstrual period], she need not be concerned regarding [the birth of a (premature)] child. On day 41 [and beyond], she remains [impure] for [the length of time associated with the birth of] a male, and for a female, and for menstrual impurity... And the sages say it is one and the same for the formation of a male and the formation of a female; <u>both this and that are at 41 [days]</u>.</p>	<p>משנה מסכת נדה פרק ג משנה ז המפלת ליום ארבעים אינה חוששת לולד ליום ארבעים ואחד תשב לזכר ולנקבה ולנדה... וחכמים אומרים אחד בריית הזכר ואחד בריית הנקבה <u>זה וזה לארבעים ואחד</u>:</p>
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<p>Babylonian Talmud, Yevamot 69b And it is taught (in a tannaitic source): The daughter of a kohen who was married to a Yisrael and he died – she immerses herself and may eat t'rumah [food allowed only to kohanim and members of their households] in the evening. Rav Hisda said: She may immerse and eat until 40 [days], for if she is not pregnant [carrying the child of an Israelite would disqualify her from eating t'rumah] – she is not pregnant. And if she is pregnant – <u>up until 40 days it [the fetus] is merely water</u>. Abaye said to him: If so, consider the latter clause: If the fetus becomes recognizable in her belly, she</p>	<p>תלמוד בבלי מסכת יבמות דף סט עמוד ב והתניא: בת כהן שנישאת לישראל ומת - טובלת ואוכלת בתרומה לערב! אמר רב חסדא: טובלת ואוכלת עד ארבעים, דאי לא מיעברא - הא לא מיעברא, ואי מיעברא - עד ארבעים מיא בעלמא היא. אמר ליה אביי: אי הכי, אימא סיפא: הוכר עוברא במעיה - תהא מקולקלת למפרע! מאי מקולקלת? עד ארבעים. has sinned retroactively [by eating t'rumah which she was not entitled to]! What does "retroactively" mean? Only [back] to the 40th [day].</p>
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40 days from conception = ~7-8 weeks of pregnancy measured from last menstrual period

According to U.S. data collected and analyzed by the CDC – which can be viewed here: https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/71/ss/ss7110a1.htm#T10_down (and see also the brief summary here: <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2023/01/11/what-the-data-says-about-abortion-in-the-u-s-2/>) – based on information from 40 states and New York City, 93% of all abortions in 2020 took place within the first trimester, that is, up to 13 weeks: 45.3% at 6 weeks or under, 35.6% from weeks 7-9, and 12.2% from weeks 10-13.

Similarly from the website of the Guttmacher Institute, attributed to Principal Research Scientist Rachel K. Jones: “Abortions in the United States are happening earlier in pregnancy than they used to: Two-thirds occur within the first eight weeks of pregnancy.”

3) The fetus as part of the pregnant body

<p>Babylonian Talmud Gittin 23b ...for we taught (in a tannaitic source): [If a slave owner gave an emancipation document to an enslaved woman and said] “You are [remain] a slave woman, but your fetus is a free person” – if she were pregnant, she acquired [freedom] for it [the fetus]. What does this mean, if she were pregnant, she acquired [freedom] for it? When Rav Shmu’el bar Yehudah came [from the Land of Israel to Babylonia] he said:.. Two great [sages] of the generation have explained the matter, Rabbi Zeira and Rabbi Shmu’el bar Rav Yitzhak. One said: Whose view is this? It is the view of Rebbe [Rabbi Yehudah haNasi], who said: One who frees half of his slave – [the slave] has acquired [half freedom]. And one said: what is Rebbe’s reason for this? He held, <u>a fetus is a limb of its mother</u>, and hence he [the master] becomes like one who gave her possession of one of her limbs.</p>	<p>תלמוד בבלי מסכת גיטין דף כג עמוד ב ...ששנינו: הרי את שפחה וולדך בן חורין, אם היתה עוברה - זכתה לו. מאי אם היתה עוברה זכתה לו? כי אתא רב שמואל בר יהודה אמר... שני גדולי הדור פירשו את הדבר, ר' זירא ור' שמואל בר רב יצחק, חד אמר: הא מני? רבי היא, דאמר: המשחרר חצי עבדו - קנה; וחד אמר: מאי טעמא דרבי בהא? קסבר: <u>עובר ירך אמו הוא</u>, ונעשה כמי שהקנה לה אחד מאבריה.</p> <p>(note: the issue here is that anything a slave receives from his/her own master continues to belong to the master – therefore, a slave cannot receive and deliver an emancipation document from his/her master for another slave of the same master. Yet the woman and her fetus belong to the same master, so how can she receive freedom on behalf of the fetus?)</p> <p>(see also BT Temurah 25a-b)</p>
<p>Mishnah Arakhin 1:4 A [pregnant] woman who is being taken out to be executed, they do not delay her [execution] until she gives birth. <u>If she sat on the birthing stool</u> [e.g., went into labor], they do delay her [execution] until she gives birth.</p> <p>Tosefta Arakahin 1:4 A [pregnant] woman who is being taken out to be executed, if the fetus put out its hand they delay her [execution] until she gives birth...</p>	<p>משנה מסכת ערכין פרק א משנה ד האשה שהיא יוצאה ליהרג אין ממתנין לה עד שתלד <u>ישבה על המשבר ממתנין לה עד שתלד...</u></p> <p>תוספתא מסכת ערכין (צוקרמאנדל) פרק א הלכה ד האשה שיוצאה ליהרג <u>הוציא עובר את ידה ממתנין לה עד שתלד...</u></p>

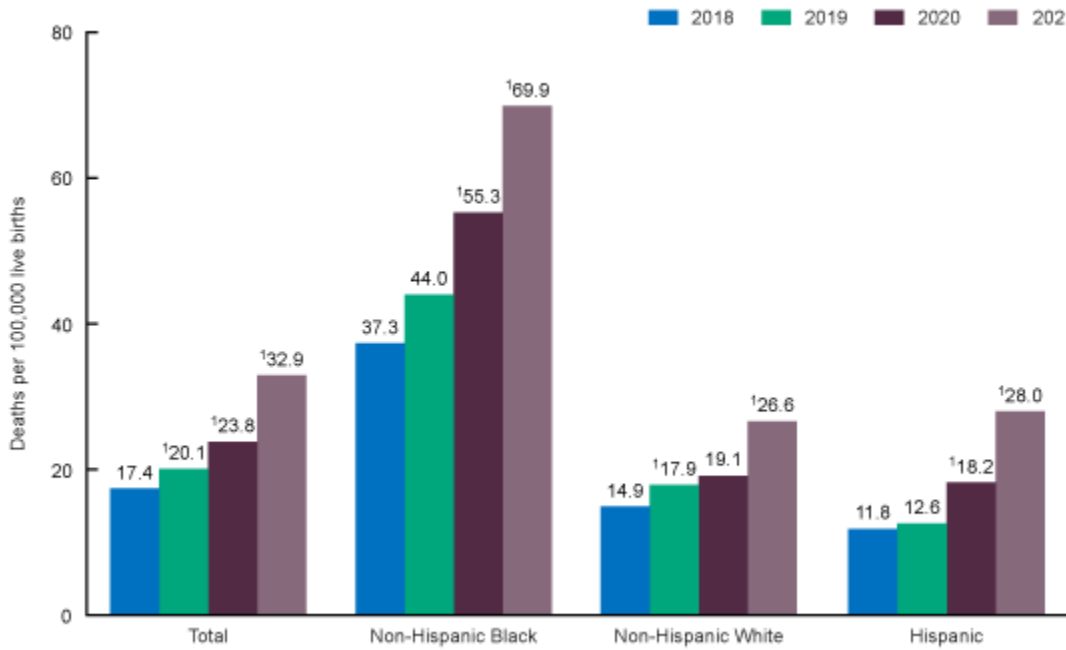
<p>Babylonian Talmud Arakhin 7a</p> <p>This seems obvious – it [the fetus] is [part of] her <u>body</u>! You might have thought I could say: since it is written “as the woman’s husband may exact from him” (Exodus 21:22), it [the fetus] is the husband’s property [literally: money] and he should not be deprived of it – it comes to teach us [that this is <i>not</i> so]. But say it <i>is</i> so! Rabbi Abahu said Rabbi Yohanan said: Scripture said, “the two of them (<i>shneihem</i>) also (<i>gam</i>) shall die” (Deuteronomy 22:22, in regards to an adulterous couple) – this [not strictly necessary language of “the two of them”] is to add the fetus. But that [“extra”] term is [already] needed [to derive that the death penalty cannot be applied] unless the two of them are equal[ly legally liable; e.g., both acted with intent, neither is a minor, etc.]. When that was said [that the rule about the fetus is derived from this verse], it is from [the also “extra” word] “also.”</p> <p>If she sat on the birthing chair... What is the reason? <u>Since it has moved, it is a separate entity.</u></p> <p>Rav Yehudah said Shmu’el said: A [pregnant] woman who is being taken out to be executed, they strike her in the area of the womb so that the fetus will die first, so that she should not come to be disgraced [by miscarrying during or immediately after the execution].</p>	<p>תלמוד בבלי מסכת ערכין דף ז עמוד א גמ'. פשיטא, <u>גופה היא!</u> איצטריך, ס"ד אמינא: הואיל וכתיב כאשר ישית עליו בעל האשה, ממונא דבעל הוא ולא ליפסדיה מיניה, קמ"ל. ואימא ה"נ! אמר רבי אבהו אמר רבי יוחנן, אמר קרא: ומתו גם שניהם, לרבות את הוולד. והאי מיבעי ליה: עד שיהו שניהן שוין, דברי רבי יאשיה! כי קאמרת מגם.</p> <p>ישבה על המשבר וכו'. מ"ט? <u>כיון דעקר, גופא אחרינא</u> <u>הוא.</u></p> <p>אמר רב יהודה אמר שמואל: האשה היוצאה ליהרג, מכין אותה כנגד בית הריון כדי שימות הוולד תחילה, כדי שלא תבא לידי ניוול...</p>
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4) The life of the mother and the “pursuer” (*rodef*)

<p>Mishnah Ohalot 7:6</p> <p>A woman who is having difficulty giving birth – one cuts up the fetus in her belly and extracts it limb by limb, because her life takes precedence to its life. If most of [the fetus] has emerged, one does not touch [i.e. harm] it, for one life is not set aside for another life.</p>	<p>משנה מסכת אהלות פרק ז משנה ו האשה שהיא מקשה לילד מחתכין את הולד במעיה ומוציין אותו אברים אברים מפני שחייה קודמין לחייו יצא רובו אין נוגעין בו שאין דוחין נפש מפני נפש:</p>
<p>Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin 72b</p> <p>Rav Huna said: a minor who is pursuing [another person to kill that person], it is permitted to save him [the minor from committing a capital crime] by [means of taking] his life...</p> <p>Rav Hisda raised an objection to Rav Huna: If [the fetus’] head has emerged, one does not touch it,</p>	<p>תלמוד בבלי מסכת סנהדרין דף עב עמוד ב אמר רב הונא: קטן הרודף ניתן להצילו בנפשו... איתיביה רב חסדא לרב הונא: יצא ראשו - אין נוגעין בו, לפי שאין דוחין נפש מפני נפש. ואמאי? רודף הוא! –</p>

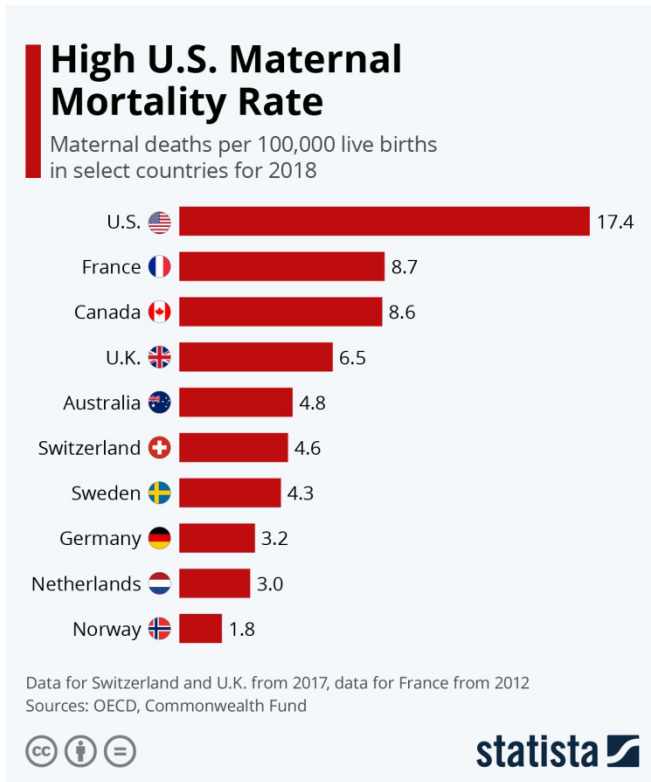
<p>for one life is not set aside for another life. But why so? It [the fetus] is a pursuer! That case is different, for she is being pursued from Heaven.</p> <p>Rashi If [the fetus'] head has emerged – this is regarding a woman who is having difficulty giving birth and is in [mortal] danger, and the first clause teaches: the midwife puts in her hand and cuts it up and brings it out by limbs, since for as long as it has not emerged into the air of the world it is not a life and it is permissible to kill it and to [thereby] save its mother. But once the head emerged – one may not touch in order to kill it, because it is as if born, and one life is not set aside for another life.</p>	<p>שאי התם, דמשמיא קא רדפי לה.</p> <p>רש"י יצא ראשו - באשה המקשה לילד ומסוכנת, וקתני רישא: החיה פושטת ידה וחותרתו ומוציאתו לאברים, דכל זמן שלא יצא לאויר העולם לאו נפש הוא וניתן להורגו ולהציל את אמו, אבל יצא ראשו - אין נוגעים בו להורגו, דהוה ליה כילוד ואין דוחין נפש מפני נפש...</p>
<p>Rambam, Laws of the Murderer and Preserving Life, 1:9 It is a negative commandment that one should not spare the life of the pursuer. Therefore, the sages taught that a pregnant woman who is having difficulty giving birth, it is permitted to cut up the fetus in her belly whether by a drug or by hand, because it [the fetus] is <u>like</u> one who pursues after her to kill her. But after its head has emerged, one may not touch it, because one life is not set aside for another life, and this is the nature of the world.</p>	<p>רמב"ם הלכות רוצח ושמירת הנפש פרק א הלכה ט הרי זו מצות לא תעשה שלא לחוס על נפש הרודף. לפיכך הורו חכמים שהעובר שהיא מקשה לילד מותר לחתוך העובר במיעיה בין בסם בין ביד מפני שהוא כרודף אחריה להורגה, ואם משהוציא ראשו אין נוגעין בו שאין דוחין נפש מפני נפש וזהו טבעו של עולם.</p>

Figure 1. Maternal mortality rates, by race and Hispanic origin: United States, 2018–2021



SOURCE: National Center for Health Statistics, National Vital Statistics System, Mortality.

(source: <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/hestat/maternal-mortality/2021/maternal-mortality-rates-2021.htm>)



For a comparison of maternal mortality rates in the U.S., Canada, and other countries, see also:

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8020556/>

(NIH National Library of Medicine; *Journal of Women's Health*, Feb. 2021)

<https://www.statista.com/statistics/1240400/maternal-mortality-rates-worldwide-by-country/>

5) Women and the (lack of?) obligation to procreate

<p>Mishnah Yevamot 6:6 A man is commanded regarding procreation (literally: fruitfulness and multiplying). Rabbi Yohanan ben B'roka says, regarding both of them [man and woman] it says "God blessed them and [God] said to them, 'be fruitful and multiply'" (Genesis 1:28).</p> <p>Babylonian Talmud, Yevamot 65b Yehudah and Hizkiah were twins.* The form of one was completed at the end of nine [months, of their mother's pregnancy], and the form of the other was completed at the beginning of seven months]. Yehudit [the mother of the twins], the wife of Rabbi Hiyya, had pain/difficulty in giving birth. She changed clothing [i.e., disguised herself] and came before Rabbi Hiyya. She said: Is a woman commanded in procreation? He said to her: No. She went and drank a sterilizing drug. Eventually, the matter was revealed. He said to her: If only you had borne for me one other womb(full)!</p> <p>* See also BT Niddah 27a</p>	<p>משנה מסכת יבמות פרק ו משנה ו ...האיש מצווה על פריה ורביה אבל לא האשה רבי יוחנן בן ברוקא אומר על שניהם הוא אומר (בראשית א') ויברך אותם אלהים ויאמר להם פרו ורבו:</p> <p>תלמוד בבלי מסכת יבמות דף סה עמוד ב יהודה וחזקיה תאומים היו, אחד נגמרה צורתו לסוף תשעה, ואחד נגמרה צורתו לתחלת שבעה; יהודית דביתהו דר' חייא הוה לה צער לידה, שנאי מנא ואתיא לקמיה דר' חייא, אמרה: אתתא מפקדא אפריה ורביה? אמר לה: לא. אזלא אשתיא סמא דעקרתא, לסוף איגלאי מילתא, אמר לה: איכו ילדת לי חדא כרסא אחריתא...</p>
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ADVOCACY FOR ALL

WLCJ Resolutions are intended to lead to advocacy.

What is advocacy?

It is the act or process of supporting a cause or proposal.

You, as a member of a WLCJ affiliate, are in a good position to voice support for a cause or argue for a policy.

Advocate is a noun as well as a verb.

If you've never thought of yourself as **an advocate** before joining your sisterhood and WLCJ, then this is your opportunity to speak out for your interests and beliefs with the support of thousands of like-minded sisters.

Remember, **Social Justice** has no limits or boundaries; it is separate from political affiliation.

Think about the 5 “Ws” and the “H” of advocacy:

1. **Why** get involved,
2. **Who** to involve,
3. **Where** to get involved,
4. **What** to do to get involved,
5. **When** to get involved, and
6. **How** to get involved.

You are attending this workshop because you have an interest in knowing more about the Jewish position on Women's Reproductive Rights and the origins of these beliefs. Once you have this knowledge, you are ready to be an advocate for reasonable, respectful solutions.

Here is how to get started:

1. Read about and pay attention to the issues. Beliefs and attitudes vary state to state and among communities of faith.
2. Listen to other points of view and ideas for solving problems.
3. Be part of an organization dedicated to working for reproductive rights and justice under law. (And if you already belong to a particular organization, become more active – volunteers are life blood!)

4. Donate to your cause.

5. If you feel strongly for or against any issue... get off your butt and participate!

6. Speak up publicly and write, call and contact officials to express your views.

7. Vote, Vote, Vote, and help others to cast their ballots. (And remember to keep an eye on judicial elections too. The judges you place on the bench of your state can make a huge impact on your life.)

Remember, **WLCJ does not express support for any political party or candidate, and neither should your sisterhood.** But you can advocate for or against an issue without expressing a political affiliation.

The pursuit of Social Justice is unending and limited only by your commitment and energy. WLCJ Social Action Committee and Resolutions Committee are here to help with program ideas. We've included in these materials the five Resolutions WLCJ has adopted on Reproductive Rights and Choice. All our Resolutions are published on the WLCJ Website. We've included some contact information below. Call upon us anytime.

“Justice, Justice you shall pursue,” *Deuteronomy 16:18-20.*

OUR SPEAKER --

Rabbi Gail Labovitz (glabovitz@aju.edu)

Gail Labovitz is Professor of Rabbinic Literature at American Jewish University (Los Angeles) and is an ordained Conservative Rabbi. She has written extensively about gender in rabbinic writings of late antiquity and on Jewish Law, including *Marriage and Metaphor: Constructions of Gender in Rabbinic Literature* and the volume on Tractate Mo'ed Qatan for the Feminist Commentary on the Babylonian Talmud. She also served for ten years on the Rabbinical Assembly's Committee on Jewish Law and Standards and is currently a member of the Social Justice Committee and Convener of the Reproductive Rights Working Group.

OUR WORSHOP COMMITTEE --

Karen Block (kblock@wlcj.org)

Karen Block has just completed her term as Co-Chair of the WLCJ Social Action Committee and will become Chair of Women's League Reads in the next administration. She has served on the WLCJ Executive Committee and as President of the **North Atlantic Region**. Karen is a social worker at Jewish Family Service of Metrowest.

Ardis Wexler (judgeardis@aol.com)

Ardis Wexler is a Past President of **InterContinental Region**. She has co-chaired the WLCJ Social Action Committee along with Karen Block. Ardis has served on the WLCJ Executive Comm. and is an active member of the Resolutions and Public Policy Committee. In her community, she is a busy volunteer and political activist.

Karen Cuker (kcuker@wlcj.org)

Karen Cuker is Vice President for Ways and Means in the **Mid-Atlantic Region**. She is a longtime member of the WLCJ Resolutions and Public Policy Committee and has served as Co-Chair of that committee for the last three years. In the new administration, Karen will become Chair of World Affairs. She is a retired lawyer.