

המוסד למען קדושת חיי אדם



TORAH READING:

Mishpatim: Exodus 21:1 - 24:18

In this week's Torah portion, Mishpatim: Exodus 21:1 - 24:18, G-d continues to enumerate many more commandments that follow the first ten. Moses communicates these to the Jews as he receives them.

This portion includes Exodus 21:22, "And should men quarrel and hit a pregnant woman, and she miscarries but there is no fatality, he shall surely be punished, when the woman's husband makes demands of him, and he shall give [restitution] according to the judges' [orders]." And Exodus 21:23, "But if there is a fatality, you shall give a life for a life."

These two verses have been used to disqualify any value of the unborn child, and as a tool to justify and defend elective abortion in Judaism.

These two verses actually reference the financial restitution necessary in the event of involuntary manslaughter, and reflect the legal differentiation of value of a fetus and an adult person in this time period for the adjudication of restitution. It is not a statement about the intrinsic value of unborn life, or the lack thereof.

And it most certainly isn't a negation of the earlier prohibition against abortion in 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."

The remonstrations of the prophet Jeremiah, Chapter 32:34, make clear the sin of child sacrifice in the eyes of the L-rd: "They built high places for Baal in the Valley of Ben Hinnom to sacrifice their sons and daughters to Molach, though I never commanded—nor did it enter my mind—that they should do such a detestable thing and so make Judah sin."

Jewish proponents of abortion selectively choose and interpret scripture and rabbinical opinion to characterize abortion in the Jewish community as a legal and appropriate action for unwanted pregnancy. Conveniently ignored is the science-based reality that life begins at conception and that the unborn child's growth and development demonstrate a miraculous creation of a valuable human being. Unspoken also is the harm done to Jewish men, women, families and communities because of abortion.

Endorsement of the cruel termination of an unborn child through excruciatingly painful abortion procedures defies all Jewish ethical standards. Jewish recommendations that support pregnancy completion and adoption coincide much better with our traditional emphasis of respectful and compassionate care that we insist on for every other demographic group. It is long overdue that we offer this same courtesy to unborn children.