



A STATEMENT FROM THE WOMEN'S RABBINIC NETWORK

Women's Rabbinic Network: "Abortion Care Is Health Care. Forcing Someone To Carry A Pregnancy Violates Jewish Law And Constitutional Rights."

June 24, 2022

The Women's Rabbinic Network stands with all those who are devastated by the decision to overturn 50 years of legal precedents which allowed pregnant people to access abortion. In this moment, our feelings are best embodied by Numbers 11:10: "God became exceedingly angry; and Moses despaired."

Abortion care is health care. We stand with generations of Jewish scholars who state clearly and unequivocally that abortion access is a Jewish value. We recognize that this ruling will place the greatest burden on those of us who are most vulnerable. We also stand with the generations of activists who fought for women's rights, and we mourn the loss of their work as the rights they fought for are revoked today.

The Torah, the Mishnah, and the Talmud- Judaism's most sacred and authoritative texts- do not view a fetus as a soul until it is born. Rather, a fetus is considered part of the parent's body until delivery. Indeed, the word for soul – neshama – also means breath, because Judaism teaches that life begins not at conception or with a heartbeat but with the first breath. Therefore, forcing someone to carry a pregnancy that they do not want or that endangers their life is a violation of Jewish law because it prioritizes a fetus over the living adult who is pregnant. This must be understood as a violation of the United States Constitution which guarantees our freedom to practice our religion and also our freedom from the dictates of other religions.

People who have the physical power to create, nurture, and give life also have the power to decide when and if it is the right time to do so.

Today's decision denies pregnant people agency over their own bodies and some of the most important decisions they will make in their lives. Our bodies and our spirits are reflections of the Divine, and no one should be treated as less than that. Every person should have the right to protect their Divine reflection by accessing quality health care in a timely manner without judgment or harassment. Abortion is health care. Abortion access is a Jewish value.

We fully support those who have sought and are seeking abortion care and will continue to advocate for a world where they are able to do so safely, wherever they are, without fear of retribution. We pray for the safety and wellbeing of the abortion care providers and health care workers who will be forced to decide what they are willing to risk in order to serve their patients and communities in places where abortion is now illegal.

WRN stands for every person's freedom to decide if, when, and how to build a family. We will continue to support our members who are seeking the health care that all people should be entitled to. And we will continue to support all rabbis who are helping their congregants and community members to access reproductive health care whenever they need it.