

FAQ VOL II

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Frequently Asked Questions

VOLUME II

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Frequently Asked Questions, Volume II is a multi-year work in progress. Please note how the text may be corrected, updated, or amended, before final publication. Page numbers are also likely to be altered.

Abbreviations and Special Terms

The following is a list of abbreviations for reference works and special terms which are used in publications by Outreach Israel Ministries and Messianic Apologetics. Please familiarize yourself with them as the text may reference a Bible version, i.e., RSV for the Revised Standard Version, or a source such as TWOT for the *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, solely by its abbreviation. Detailed listings of these sources are provided in the Bibliography.

- ABD: *Anchor Bible Dictionary*
AMG: *Complete Word Study Dictionary: Old Testament, New Testament*
ANE: Ancient Near East(ern)
Apostolic Scriptures/Writings: the New Testament
Ara: Aramaic
ASV: American Standard Version (1901)
ATS: ArtScroll Tanach (1996)
b. Babylonian Talmud (*Talmud Bavli*)
B.C.E.: Before Common Era or B.C.
BDAG: *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Bauer, Danker, Arndt, Gingrich)
BDB: *Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*
C.E.: Common Era or A.D.
CGEDNT: *Concise Greek-English Dictionary of New Testament Words* (Barclay M. Newman)
CGL: *Cambridge Greek Lexicon* (2021)
CHALOT: *Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Holladay)
CJB: *Complete Jewish Bible* (1998)
CJSB: *Complete Jewish Study Bible* (2016)
DRA: Douay-Rheims American Edition
DSS: Dead Sea Scrolls
EDB: *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*
EJ: *Encyclopaedia Judaica*
ESV: English Standard Version (2001)
Ger: German
GNT: Greek New Testament
Grk: Greek
HALOT: *Hebrew & Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Koehler and Baumgartner)
HCSB: Holman Christian Standard Bible (2004)
Heb: Hebrew
HNV: Hebrew Names Version of the World English Bible
IDB: *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*
IDBSup: *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible Supplement*
ISBE: *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*
IVPBBC: *IVP Bible Background Commentary (Old & New Testament)*
Jastrow: *Dictionary of the Targumim, Talmud Bavli, Talmud Yerushalmi, and Midrashic Literature* (Marcus Jastrow)
JBK: *New Jerusalem Bible-Koren* (2000)
JETS: *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*
KJV: King James Version
Lattimore: *The New Testament* by Richmond Lattimore (1996)
LITV: *Literal Translation of the Holy Bible* by Jay P. Green (1986)
LES: *Lexham English Septuagint* (2019)
LS: *An Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon* (Liddell-Scott)
LSJM: *Greek-English Lexicon* (Liddell-Scott-Jones-McKenzie)
LXE: *Septuagint with Apocrypha* by Sir L.C.L. Brenton (1851)
LXX: Septuagint
m. Mishnah
MT: Masoretic Text
NASB: *New American Standard Bible* (1977)
NASU: *New American Standard Update* (1995)
NBCR: *New Bible Commentary: Revised*
NEB: *New English Bible* (1970)
Nelson: *Nelson's Expository Dictionary of Old Testament Words*
NETS: *New English Translation of the Septuagint* (2007)
NIB: *New Interpreter's Bible*
NIDB: *New International Dictionary of the Bible*
NIV: *New International Version* (1984)
NJB: *New Jerusalem Bible-Catholic* (1985)
NJPS: *Tanakh, A New Translation of the Holy Scriptures* (1999)
NKJV: *New King James Version* (1982)
NRSV: *New Revised Standard Version* (1989)
NLT: *New Living Translation* (1996)
NT: *New Testament*

OT: Old Testament
REB: Revised English Bible (1989)
RSV: Revised Standard Version (1952)
t. Tosefta
Tanach (Tanakh): the Old Testament
Thayer: *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*
TDNT: *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*
TLV: Messianic Jewish Family Bible—Tree of Life Version (2014)
TNIV: Today's New International Version (2005)

TWOT: *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*
UBSHNT: United Bible Societies' 1991 Hebrew New Testament revised edition
v(s). verse(s)
Vine: *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*
Vul: Latin Vulgate
YLT: Young's Literal Translation (1862/1898)
WMB: World Messianic Bible (2020)

Abortion

I am encountering many progressive Christians and Jews who support abortion. This is very confusing to me. I need some better answers to their statements about human life.

Abortion is widely regarded to be a medical procedure which terminates a pregnancy. Abortion became a significant social and religious debate in the second half of the Twentieth Century, notably via the emergence of both the pro-life and pro-choice movements. Frequently, religious fundamentalists are those who are seen to oppose any and all forms of abortion. Yet, the ethical debate over abortion, is often not as simple as some may think it is. It does concern factors of when a human fetus can be viably regarded as a person, but also involves factors of the status of the mother, procreation, and other involved parties. From the religious side, the considerable bulk of the controversy over abortion, can concern those (few or specific) situations when the termination of a pregnancy might be an option.¹

Within a great deal of the pro-life side, among conservative evangelicals, is seen a Biblical emphasis on choosing life (Deuteronomy 30:19), creation in the womb (Psalm 139:13-14; Isaiah 44:1-2; Jeremiah 1:5), and the unique movement of a fetus in the womb implying a degree of personhood (Luke 1:41, 44). Among progressive Christians who are pro-choice, Biblical arguments are made regarding how an unborn fetus is widely considered to be property and not a person (Exodus 21:22-23), and how human personhood does not begin until first physical breath (Genesis 2:7).² Ancient Christian tradition from the Second Century C.E., based on the Second Commandment (Exodus 20:13; Deuteronomy 5:17), asserted how “you shall not abort a child or commit infanticide” (*Didache* 2:2).³

Philosophically, there have definitely been discussions and debates throughout Christian history, regarding when a fetus in the womb starts to become a viable human being or person. Many Christians have regarded such a developed human life to begin immediately at conception. There have, however, been dissenting views, suggesting that it takes multiple weeks for a fertilized embryo to develop the major characteristics of personhood. This does not mean, however, that unnecessary termination of a pregnancy would be appropriate.

¹ For a general review, consult “Abortion,” in Stanley J. Grenz and Jay T. Smith, *Pocket Dictionary of Ethics* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2003), 7.

² More specific details are accessible in Michael J. Gorman, “Abortion,” in Joel B. Green, ed. et. al., *Dictionary of Scripture and Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), pp 35-36.

³ Michael W. Holmes, ed. and trans., *The Apostolic Fathers: Greek Texts and English Translations*, third edition (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 347.

Abortion

Secularists, with no religious orientation to matters such as conception or fetal development, may often be seen to conclude that what is considered personhood, is not possible prior to birth—so that an unborn fetus, while regarded as human, may not necessarily be regarded as a person.⁴

It is reasonable to assume that some of the Jewish approach to the issue of abortion, witnessed across a great deal of history, has been more liberal than the traditional Christian approach. This hardly means that all observant Jews in history should be classified as “pro-choice,” though. Exodus 21:22-23 and the unnecessary or accidental killing of an unborn child, did not carry the death penalty for the offender, which has been regarded as meaning that a fetus is not a full person. It is definitely witnessed in the Mishnah, that the termination of a fetus is permitted, in the instance to save the life of a mother (m.*Ohalot* 7:6).⁵ Discussions regarding other permissible instances for abortion, not only involving situations such as rape, but also the mental health and disposition of the mother, have been witnessed in Jewish history. Terminating a pregnancy due to various degenerative diseases or abnormalities, has been discussed in more modern Judaism.⁶

A great number of the supreme ethical questions, surrounding the debate over abortion, involves what actually constitutes human personhood. Various Jewish opinions will assert that a fetus is not fully formed, and thus cannot be a viable human person, until around 41 days after conception.⁷ And what is the Genesis 2:7 “breath of life”? Is it something entirely material, or could it actually be something immaterial? Among various philosophies of personhood, emergentism is one which suggests that the human personality is a combination of *both* physical and immaterial components—and would hardly be supportive of something such as abortion.⁸

Progressive Christians and Jews are seen to support abortion, not just because of a small handful of exceptions, but as a form of contraception, alongside of the birth control pill or condoms. Today’s Messianic community, while almost uniformly opposing abortion, tends to be rather under-developed in terms of its understanding of the specifics of the abortion debate. Customarily among many conservative evangelicals, who may be considered pro-life, it is still widely recognized how there are three major exceptions for the termination of a pregnancy: (1) to save the life of a mother, (2) an instance of rape, and (3) an instance of incest.

⁴ More specific details are accessible in Francis J. Beckwith, “Abortion,” in Paul Copan, Tremper Longman III, Christopher L. Reese, Michael Strauss, eds., *Dictionary of Christianity and Science* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2017), 19.

⁵ “The woman who is in hard labor—they chop up the child in her womb and they remove it limb by limb, because her life takes precedence over his life” (m.*Ohalot* 7:6; Jacob Neusner, trans., *The Mishnah: A New Translation* [New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1988], 961).

⁶ For a further review, consult Daniel Sinclair, “Abortion,” in R.J. Zwi Werblowsky and Geoffrey Widoger, eds., *The Oxford Dictionary of the Jewish Religion* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 5.

⁷ “Abortion,” in Geoffrey Wigoder, ed. et. al., *The New Encyclopedia of Judaism* (Jerusalem: Jerusalem Publishing House, 2002), 20.

⁸ Consult William Hasker, *The Emergent Self* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1999).

These all have to be considered on a case-by-case basis. There would be people in today's Messianic movement likely seen to agree with this, and others who may be seen to oppose any and all forms of abortion. For certain, this adds a great deal of difficulty to a Messianic rabbi or congregational leader, who may have to counsel a couple facing difficulty with a pregnancy, and how to best keep their possible decisions confidential.