

RABBI BARRY SILVER RESPONDS TO THE DEMISE OF ROE V. WADE
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The United States Supreme Court decision to overturn Roe v. Wade ignores nearly half a century of precedent that protected abortion as essential to women's equality and freedom. The Dobbs decision asserts that abortion is not protected in America because it is not mentioned in the Constitution. However, freedom of and from religion is enshrined as the very first Amendment to our Constitution, was viewed by our founding fathers as essential to a free society and will protect abortion in a post Roe v. Wade world. The first Amendment was designed precisely to prevent whited sepulchers, who seem pure on the outside while dead and rotted on the inside, such as today's sanctimonious white Christian nationalists, from establishing and inflicting their irrational view of when human life begins and when abortion is permissible, on us all. The overthrow of Roe v. Wade and the DeSantis anti-abortion law criminalizes the practice of Judaism, which not only entitles, but requires abortion in circumstances that the new Florida law prohibits, such as when necessary to protect a woman from emotional or physical harm.

This one-two punch to the gut of American freedom means that if a woman is raped, the outrage of a sexual predator taking control of her body by force will now be followed by the state taking control of her body and forcing her to bear her rapist's child, regardless of the resulting trauma, without exception. The Florida law would also trample upon Jewish law in the case of Tay-Sachs disease, which cannot usually be diagnosed until after 15 weeks, by requiring parents to bring doomed life into the world and forcing them to experience the heartache of helplessly watching their child suffer and die, usually before the age of five. While some may see this as pro-life, traditional Judaism and most Jews today view such a ghoulish scenario as pro-death and a violation of Jewish law.

It is brazen chutzpah for self-righteous Christian nationalists and their political lackeys to distort the Jewish Bible beyond recognition and then force their misguided understanding on the people who wrote the Bible and read it in the original language and to lecture Jews on the sanctity of life. They not only deny religious freedom to Jews, but also to fellow Christians, who are mostly pro-choice and view Jesus as a paragon of love not power and are aghast at their co-religionist's posthumous identity theft of Jesus and his teachings.

If right-wing Christians want to be pro-life, let them support universal health care, ban assault weapons, protect our precious planet and help the living. Pro-life does not mean trivializing life by forcing parenthood upon the unwilling if they engage in careless sexual activity. Rational people respect the sanctity of life by promoting contraception and seeking the day when all children are wanted children. Bringing children into the world is a great blessing when done out of love but a curse when forced by the power of the state. Families and societies

prosper when women enjoy autonomy over their body and suffer when women are viewed as incubators rather than people.

The judicial activism of Dobbs is not justice, it is merely the latest evidence that every woman that Trump has laid his perverse hands upon, including Lady Justice and Mother Earth, has been debauched and degraded. Trump named three people to our highest court not based on their qualifications, but due to their agreement to disregard the law and precedent and do Trump's bidding by abusing women and denying their rights. Without the right to abortion, we will return to the hellish days of back-alley abortions and death. The only honest thing Trump ever did was to announce his candidacy for President while descending an elevator to warn us about the direction he would take America.

A wall of separation between church and state was enshrined into our Constitution and democratic institutions by our founding fathers to avoid the horrors they saw in Europe when the corruption of a Church that claimed to speak for God was united with the temporal powers of the state. This unholy alliance produced hell on Earth with Crusades, Inquisitions, pogroms, ghettos, and the subjugation of Jews, free thinkers and scientists with torture and murder. Jews have always been the first, but not the last victims of such violence, and have also led the resistance. Thus, with Roe v. Wade overturned, Jews will be directly affected by this decision and will also help lead the effort to restore justice.

At its best, America has served as a source of hope and freedom for the oppressed due to the wall of separation between church and state. The Dobbs decision reflects a major crack in that wall, which threatens the freedom of women, Jews, and all Americans. All who cherish liberty must repair the crack and restore the foundations of our democracy.

Jewish and Christian Scriptures teach that human life begins at birth not conception, and both are pro-choice, containing no prohibition against abortion, even while the surrounding cultures banned it. We will not be confused by the pro-life rhetoric and abuse of the English language that refers to a fetus as a preborn baby, which makes as much sense as referring to a person as a pre-dead corpse.

The fringed garment worn by Jews at prayer reminds us that to be truly religious means that we should never hesitate to stand on the fringe of society when necessary to defy bullies, defend the oppressed and seek justice in the world. While we will not storm the Supreme Court, stage an insurrection, or threaten to harm anyone, we will fight back with all legitimate means in the court of law and the court of public opinion. Throughout history, the indomitable spirit of the Jewish people has outlasted all oppressors because their love of power was no match for the power of love. Our strength is passed down from generation to

generation through the family, and we will challenge any law that seeks to undermine the Jewish family or the family of anyone else by seeking to dictate when people must become parents and how many children their family must have.

In the Torah, Joshua and Caleb said, "We shall overcome", which became the rallying cry for freedom fighters from Moses to Dr. Martin Luther King. The heroic Jewish partisan fighter, Tuvia Bielski continues to inspire us with the words, "Freedom begins with an act of defiance" as does the great Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel, who said, "In a free society, some are guilty, and all are responsible." In our struggle against tyranny, we also remember the words on the Haitian flag "L'union fait la force" (there is strength in unity). We stand shoulder to shoulder with our brothers and sisters of every race and creed, including loving Christians and free-thinking atheists and agnostics, to restore equal rights for all people and to fulfill the dreams of our prophets of a world brimming with brotherhood, joyous with justice and shimmering with shalom.