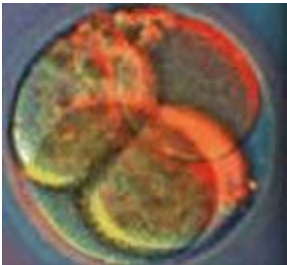


## When does life begin?

*"When men get in a fight, and hit a pregnant woman so that her children are born prematurely, but there is no injury, the one who hit her must be fined as the woman's husband demands from him, and he must pay according to judicial assessment. If there is an injury, then you must give life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, bruise for bruise, wound for wound. - Exodus 21:22-25 HCSB*



There are several biblical passages that treat the issue of the destruction of unborn children.<sup>1</sup> None of them are favorable to the destroyers. This is because God is the author of life.<sup>2</sup> He created us in His image and when we wantonly destroy humans, we are rebelling against Hashem and vandalizing His image.

Life begins at the moment of conception. In cases where a man harmed an unborn fetus, the Mosaic Law treated the fetus as a living person. Halakah dictates that when an unborn child is killed in a fight, the person who causes the death (regardless of the trimester) is subject to the same penalty as if he had murdered an adult. The punishment is to be "life for life". If we were living under the Mosaic Law today, abortionists would be punished with death.<sup>3</sup>

Ruth's child was considered a son at the moment of conception<sup>4</sup> and when Job made an appeal to humanity, his appeal was based on the fact that the One who had made him in the womb had also made them in a womb. Job apparently considered a fetus to already be a person – a human with moral obligations. Similarly, the Psalmist confessed his inherent sin possessed him at the moment of conception.<sup>5</sup> There is no indication in the text that David intended hyperbole in his confession. Indeed, biblical confession is always about complete, brutal honesty.

When Yahweh Shaphat,<sup>6</sup> through Hosea, warned of impending doom because of Israel's rebellion, He equated conception, gestation and birth. All three were considered one and the same – Ephraim's glory that was about to be removed. This concept is not found solely in the Old Covenant for in the New Covenant's Greek, the word used for fetus, a newly born child and a young child is the same.<sup>7</sup>

God is at work in a person's life while he is yet in the womb. David spoke of himself as a living being separate and apart from his mother while yet in her womb. He praised the Lord God for having plans for him when he was yet "formless" and before a single one of his days had begun.<sup>8</sup> Jeremiah agreed, saying that he too had been chosen by transcendent, timeless God, for his prophetic task before he had even been formed in the womb.<sup>9</sup>

From these and many other passages<sup>10</sup>, I must conclude that we are fully human, complete persons with futures and purposes from the moment of conception.

<sup>1</sup> Exodus 21:22-25; 2 Kings 8:12; Hosea 13:16; Amos 1:13

<sup>2</sup> Acts 3:15; John 1:3-4; Isaiah 44:2

<sup>3</sup> Exodus 21:22-25

<sup>4</sup> Ruth 4:13

<sup>5</sup> Psalm 51:5

<sup>6</sup> God our Judge

<sup>7</sup> *brephos*; Strong's #1025; Luke 1:41, 44; 2:12, 16; Acts 7:19 cp Luke 18:15

<sup>8</sup> Psalm 51:5; 139:13-16

<sup>9</sup> Jeremiah 1:4-8

<sup>10</sup> 2 Kings 19:3; Job 3:13-16; Ecclesiastes 11:5; Isaiah 66:9; Matthew 1:23; Luke 1:14-15, 41, 44