

Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association
RESOLUTION

ABORTION RIGHTS

1981

Jewish tradition affirms the infinite value of human life as it is expressed in the Biblical affirmation that all human beings are created in the Divine image, and judges the decision to abort a fetus to be a most serious matter. Yet a survey of decisions rendered by recognized Halakhic (Jewish legal) authorities over the centuries would counsel several attitudes: First, that abortion of a fetus, though a diminishing of the Divine image, is not judged to be murder at anytime prior to birth. Second, that abortion is warranted, indeed required, when the fetus threatens the life of the woman. Third, that a woman's mental anguish may be viewed as a sufficient ground for abortion.

Moreover, Reconstructionist Judaism affirms the values of democracy, pluralism, and individual freedom in both Jewish and general life, and rejoices in the absence of any theological, religious, or scientific consensus in the United States of America that would make a woman's decision to abort a fetus an issue of public morality to be enacted into public law.

The Supreme Court has supported this latter view when, in 1973, it recognized that the abortion decision is personal one and removed abortion from the realm of criminal law and made it a legal medical procedure.

Therefore, be it resolved: that the 1981 Annual Convention of the Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association goes on record as:

1. Affirming the right of American women to choose safe, legal abortion;
2. Opposing the limiting of Federal and State funding of abortions for poor women;
3. Opposing those hospital policies and legal harassments that would limit access to abortion; and
4. Opposing anti-abortion legislation, including any constitutional amendment that would make abortion illegal, as threats to both the Establishment and the Free Exercise Clauses of the First Amendment.

Passed by the RRA 1981 - Reaffirmed 1982