

May 17, 2019 /12 Iyyar 5779

Dear chevreh,

In the first chapter of Genesis, we read, "...God created human beings in [the Divine] image, [b'zelem Elohim], in the image of the Divine God created humanity, male and female God created them." (Genesis 1:27) We know from life and from Talmudic sources that there are not only two genders created in the Divine image. [<https://www.keshetonline.org/transtexts/queerly-created/>] One of my biblical studies professors at RRC, Dr. Tamar Kamionkowski teaches that the Hebrew word *tzelem* is unusual in the Bible, and when its cognate [Akkadian, *zalmu*] is used in Mesopotamian royal ideology, the king is designated as "the image of god". In these contexts, to be in the image of the national god means to serve as the god's representative on earth, to share in divine authority. She argues, "Instead of representing God physically, the authors of Genesis may have been using the imagery from their Mesopotamian neighbors to argue that not only the king, but also all of humanity, serve as God's representatives, with all the associated responsibilities and privileges." [<https://www.bibleodyssey.org/en/passages/related-articles/created-in-the-image-of-god>]

This idea places agency and authority within the woman herself. Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg says, "*The decision whether or not to bear a child is central to a woman's life, to her well-being and dignity. It is a decision she must make for herself. When Government controls that decision for her, she is being treated as less than a fully adult human responsible for her own choices.*"

[<http://time.com/5354490/ruth-bader-ginsburg-roe-v-wade/>]

On Tuesday evening the Alabama Senate passed a bill banning nearly all abortions in the state, and in various places across the country at both federal and state levels, there are new threats to reproductive freedom, which are attempts to strip women of their agency and "divine authority", which is an assault on women's freedom.

While not every Jew or Jewish group is pro-choice, Jews tend to be some of the most pro-choice voices in the country. For a glimpse into why this may be the case from deep into the heart of Jewish texts, please read Rabbi Danya Ruttenberg's piece from last year, <https://forward.com/opinion/393168/why-are-jews-so-pro-choice/>

Reconstructionist Judaism stands in support of democracy, pluralism, and individual freedom in both Jewish and general life. Since 1981 the Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association has affirmed the right to choose safe, legal abortion. Reconstructionist Judaism stands in solidarity with organizations working for reproductive rights in Alabama and in other states facing similar legislation. The Yellowhammer Fund is a part of the National Network of Abortion Funds and provides critical funding for anyone seeking abortion care in Alabama. To support their commitment to reproductive justice, you can learn more about their work and donate below.

<https://yellowhammerfund.org/?fbclid=IwAR3DMO0VG3SLec5Lo7QHPmLCX1kRIoUEGVdxhHQn01AkSlwa8A5WiFjD9qj>

Let us continue to work for the freedom and dignity of all people, honoring that each person is indeed reflected in the Divine image.

Shabbat shalom,

Rabbi Diana