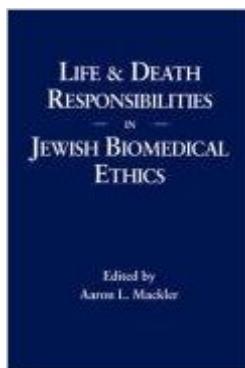


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Life And Death Responsibilities In Jewish Biomedical Ethics



Synopsis

When may artificial technologies be used to help create human life? Can abortion be morally right? When should life-sustaining treatment be stopped? How extensive are my responsibilities to support the health care needs of others? Technological and social developments have placed these questions at the center of society's concerns and in the middle of people's lives. Our answers will shape and values and the institutions of society, and will literally make the difference between life and death for many of its members. The United States and other societies have explored these issues through courts and commissions, through legislative debate and private deliberations of conscience. In the Jewish tradition, the central means of addressing these concerns is through halakhah, or Jewish law. While the insights of halakhah are central to the lives of many Jews, these perspectives have also been found valuable by persons of other faith traditions and secular outlooks. This book presents papers on biomedical ethics that integrate the resources of millennia with the most recent developments in medicine and ethical thought. These include some of the most thoughtful and important works in Jewish medical ethics on such issues as treatment decisions near the end of life, abortion, and reproductive technologies. The importance of the papers as statements of halakhah is evidenced by their approval by the Rabbinical Assembly's Committee on Jewish Law and Standards, halakhic guide for the Conservative movement. Authors include Elliot Dorff, David Feldman, Isaac Klein, Avram Reisner, and Aaron Mackler.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Mackler is associate professor in the Department of Theology, Duquesne University.

Wonderful resource with brilliant and concise introductions to each subject area.

After a few years of delay, the central legal body of Conservative Judaism - the Committee on Jewish Law and Standards - has finally released their collection of teshuvot (responsa) on bio-medical and bio-ethical issues. These learned and insightful papers provide us with a non-fundamentalist way to apply the resources of Jewish law and ethics to modern day dilemmas. The book states that "In the Jewish tradition, the central means of addressing these concerns is through halakhah, or Jewish law. While the insights of halakhah are central to the lives of many Jews, these perspectives have also been found valuable by persons of other religious traditions and secular outlooks. This volume presents papers on biomedical ethics that integrate the resources of millennia with the most recent developments in medicine and ethical thought. The papers include some of the most thoughtful and important works in Jewish medical ethics on such issues as treatment decisions near the end of life, abortion, and reproductive technologies." The papers are presented in four general divisions, most of which are divided into a number of topical sections. Each section begins with an introduction summarizing the documents and highlighting points of special interest, including conclusions of practical application. The first division is "Responsibilities in the Creation of Life," with sections discussing artificial insemination, in vitro fertilization, and surrogate motherhood. The second division, "Responsibilities for Fetal Life," contains papers on abortion. The longest division is called "Responsibilities at the End of Life," and its sections present extensive discussions of medical care at the end of life, shorter works reflecting on and developing these basic positions, and consideration of physician-assisted suicide and euthanasia. The final division, "Responsibilities for the Health Needs of Others," addresses organ transplantation and autopsy, and new challenges involving genetic engineering, smoking, and responsibilities for providing health care.

Many topics are discussed here--adoption, fertility aids, life support, even bio-engineered foods. Chapters are written with intros and summaries, which helps the book serve as a quick reference on complex topics. Or, read all the in between for different viewpoints, and background thoughts that led to the decision. I read it cover to cover, even though most topics aren't relevant to my life right now, just to know the Jewish (conservative) view. It's interesting to read the Jewish response to twenty-first century concerns.

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