



# OPINION: ABORTION IS NOT A JEWISH SACRAMENT - DAVID HARSANYI

*Posted on December 23, 2022 by David Harsanyi*



"Our Jewish brothers and sisters," squad member Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez explained during a recent rant, "are able to have an abortion according to their faith." Many religions, the congresswoman goes on, do not share the "fundamentalist Christian" definition of life. They too have a right to exercise their faith, and to stand in their way is "authoritarian" and "theocratic."

Ocasio-Cortez is a perfect straw man for this piece because she completely misunderstands not only the Jewish position on abortion but religious freedom, as well.

For one thing, does AOC, who is purportedly Catholic, believe that Pope Francis -- who, like every pontiff in history, views abortion as "murder" -- is a "Christian fundamentalist"? Perhaps. Until about five minutes ago, even science lovers believed life began at conception. The abortion debate revolved around the ethical question of when life was worth protecting.

These days, science conforms to our politics rather than the other way around. Increasingly, people demand faith do the same. And perhaps the most contemptible achievement of many progressive Jewish groups isn't that they have cynically trashed a 3,000-year tradition, but that they've convinced millions of Americans that radical cultural leftism is synonymous with Judaism.

Nonetheless, AOC's Jewish brothers and sisters have no genuine theological case to make for abortion on demand as a sacrament. The congresswoman probably got the idea from the Congregation L'Dor Va-Dor -- adherents of "cosmic" Judaism, an "all-inclusive, universal, and rational approach" to faith. The temple recently filed a suit that makes the preposterous claim that Florida's 15-week abortion restriction "prohibits Jewish women from practicing their faith free of government intrusion and this violates their privacy rights and religious freedom." Three political activists in Kentucky filed similar lawsuits contending that state law infringes on their religious freedom by imposing a "Christian understanding" of life.

Now, I'm not a rabbi, but I feel slightly more qualified to comment on the Jewish faith than Ocasio-Cortez -- and, while we're at it, the "rabbi" of any cosmic shul. It would be misleading to assert that Jews adhere to the "pro-life" position in the way many Evangelicals or Catholics do. But it would be far less misleading than calling the Jewish traditional view on abortion "pro-choice" -- a position that, in its contemporary meaning, means on demand throughout nine months for any reason.

The Orthodox Union's diplomatic reaction to the overturning of *Roe v. Wade* is that it is "unable to either mourn or celebrate the news reports of the U.S. Supreme Court's overturning of *Roe v. Wade*" because it does not support "absolute bans on abortion -- at any time point in a pregnancy -- that would not allow access to abortion in lifesaving situations" or support legislation that does not limit abortion to

"situations in which medical (including mental health) professionals affirm that carrying the pregnancy to term poses real risk to the life of the mother."



Neither the laws of Florida nor Kentucky -- nor any state, for that matter -- denies abortions for pregnancies that pose a real risk to the life of the mother. In any situation where abortion is required by Jewish law, it remains legal. Of course, even if we conceded for the sake of argument that the Jewish faith allows for abortion as means of birth control, as AOC suggests, it is certainly not a sin to avoid getting one nor is it a mitzvah or a sacrament to seek one out. Abortion laws do not intrude on anyone's religious freedom.

With *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization*, the Supreme Court threw abortion back into the democratic process. Americans can now vote on the issue using any moral calculus they desire. Some might turn to Malthus or Marx for moral guidance. Others to Christ. But voting based on your beliefs is not theocratic. A theocratic policy entails things like state-imposed religious tests for office or a state-endorsed church or the state compelling people to praise church doctrine. Try imagining a florist or baker being compelled by the government to create speech that undermines their beliefs. Something like that.

Indeed, Judaism stresses the preservation and celebration of life. Nothing about the contemporary leftist position on abortion -- an inherent "right," not merely used in rare instances when a pregnancy imperils a life, but whenever, and for any reason, a person demands -- aligns with that tradition or culture.

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