

## CHAPTER 11

### ON ABORTION

Some religious denominations take the stand that abortion is killing a living being, They prohibit it of their members. Other groups lean towards the concept that the matter of abortion is a woman's choice. For them, a woman is free to do with her body as she will. If it is murder (they say) then it's an issue to be taken up between the woman and her God.... not between a woman and her government. Still other groups take a middle ground. They accept the woman's choice, but prohibit abortion after a specified number of weeks beyond conception. A 'window of opportunity' is defined, within which an abortion is allowed. Its size seems to depend on the point at which the group decides that the fetus is actually a living being (as opposed to mass of tissue).

*My purpose here is to investigate the scriptures most often quoted by people involved in this issue. It is important to see if the intended meaning of these scriptures is consistent with the way people use them to justify their individual points of view on the abortion question.*

In my experiences with people on both sides of this issue, the anti-abortionists seem more likely to use the Bible in an attempt to substantiate their stand. Even so, much of what is quoted by them, seems to be applicable to either side of the argument... and so, great care in the interpretation of the scriptures is required to extract one self-consistent truth about abortion. In the discussion here, a strenuously objective view is maintained in order to arrive at this one truth.

Surprisingly few verses are invoked in attempts to give theological reality to one position or the other. What I've observed, is that proponents on each side tend to use the same verses over and again. The scriptures brought forth, are for the most part, in the Old Testament. While they are relatively few in number, their analysis requires some intense and time consuming study.

This is an extremely volatile subject. Some cling onto one particular verse, and won't release it to take a really good look at what it's saying. So, trying to come to a scriptural conclusion about abortion, by using a 'broad brush' on the verses collectively, just will not work. Each set of verses will have to

be taken separately. We'll have to find out what a verse is telling us. And then, we can compare it to the way the advocates are using it.

Before starting on this Bible study however, we'd better establish an important 'ground rule.' That rule is the scriptural definition of the meaning of life, and the meaning of death.

### **Abortion & the Definition of Life**

If there is a central problem in the abortion issue, it's this.... at what point in time does life begin? It's an easy question, but without the scriptures it's answer is terribly hard. It becomes the subject of heated debate..

*If life begins in the womb, then abortion is indeed, the taking of a life. On the other hand, if life is found to begin outside the womb, then abortion cannot be equated to killing a living being, because the entity in the womb is not yet alive.*

In Chapter-6, 'On Death,' life is scripturally defined as occurring when God places a unique human spirit into a flesh & blood body. Death is the separation of that same spirit from the body.

Central in our study then, is whether the scriptures tell us anything definitive about precisely when God places that spirit into the body. Does it occur in the fetal stage (i.e., in the womb) or does it occur just after the newborn leaves its mother's body? The answer to that question will dictate the biblical stand on the issue of abortion.

### **Abortion & The Scriptures**

Here are the verses people repeatedly use in biblical arguments about abortion;

1. Exodus 21:22 & 21:23
2. Psalms 139:13-16
3. Ecclesiastes 11:5

4. Job 3:11 & 3:16
5. Job 10:18 & 10:19
6. Luke 20:38 & Psalms 22:10

Surely this is not a complete list. More than likely, for about 2000 years, people have taken scripture and manipulated it one way or another to prove a pre-existing point of view. It's probably no different in this case. But the ones in this list come up a lot and so they are the ones that will get the attention here.

Before getting started in the study of these passages, I have to briefly digress to Luke 1:80. Just days before starting this chapter, I was listening to a radio talk-show discussion about abortion. I heard a caller give such a blatantly erroneous interpretation of Luke 1:80, that I felt the need to include that mistake in my discussion of abortion. The caller identified the verse and quoted it in this way;

"In the womb the child became strong in spirit."

The caller's implication was that the fetus is alive in the womb and so abortion is just killing it. Frankly, I was surprised that he actually got the verse out, over the air. In my experience, the radio talk-show hosts avoid religion in all forms and at all costs. In part it's because they tend to lose control of their shows if religion is the topic. I think though, that on the rare occasions they talk about it, they invariably demonstrate their true ignorance of the Bible.

In reviewing Luke 1:80, it became clear that no matter which English translation I used, the caller had grossly misquoted the verse.

There's no way to get a correct interpretation of a misquoted verse.

Here, for example, is how the verse appears in the KJV;

*Luke 1:80 (KJV)*

*And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his shewing unto Israel.*

In isolation, one cannot tell whether the child is in, or out of the womb. But even a cursory scan of Luke Chapter-1 reveals that the subject is the birth of John the Baptist, and his importance in the coming new way to salvation. The caller had the child (John) in the womb, in his reading of verse 1:80. However, as early as verse 1:57, the scriptures already have him born. And then, verse 1:59 has John a week old. Thayer (Reference-12; #3813) defines the word 'child' as it is used in verse 1:80;

"..... of a (male) child recently born."

Verse 1:80 then, does not discuss John's spirit *within* the womb, but speaks of his development as a recently born child. So, Luke 1:80 has no direct or implied reference to the abortion issue from either side.

Now let's study carefully the previously listed, most frequently argued scriptures on the issue of abortion.

### **Exodus 21:22 & 21:23**

(KJV):

*If men strive, and hurt a woman with child, so that her fruit depart from her, and yet no mischief follow: he shall be surely punished, according as the woman's husband will lay upon him; and he shall pay as the judges determine, And if any mischief follow, then thou shalt give life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand,....*

Anti-abortionists like to use this verse in their biblical arguments. Their claim is that God is angry when external forces cause the loss of an unborn child.

But what's all this about 'mischief'? Maybe the other translations can clarify the difficult terms. Most astounding about these verses is the wide disparity

in the way our most commonly read translations interpret the ancient manuscripts. Look at the disarray among these translations of Ex. 21:22, concerning the status of the fetus that the woman loses as a result of the men fighting (my underlining);

(NKJ):

*If men fight, and hurt a woman with child, so that she gives birth prematurely, yet no lasting harm follows, he shall surely be punished according as the woman's husband imposes on him; and he shall pay as the judges determine.*

(AS):

*And if men strive together, and hurt a woman with child, so that her fruit depart, and yet no harm follow; he shall be surely fined, according as the woman's husband shall lay upon him; and he shall pay as the judges determine.*

(LB):

*If two men are fighting, and in the process hurt a pregnant woman so that she has a miscarriage, but she lives, then the man who injured her shall be fined whatever amount the woman's husband shall demand, and as the judges approve.*

(NIV):

*If men who are fighting hit a pregnant woman and she gives birth prematurely but there is no serious injury, the offender must be fined whatever the woman's husband demands and the court allows.*

(RS):

*When men strive together, and hurt a woman with child, so that there is a miscarriage, and yet no harm*

*follows, the one who hurt her shall be fined, according as the woman's husband shall lay upon him; and he shall pay as the judges determine.*

*(GNB):*

*If some men are fighting and hurt a pregnant woman so that she loses her child, but she is not injured in any other way, the one who hurt her is to be fined whatever amount the woman's husband demands, subject to the approval of the judges.*

In two versions (KJV, AS) the fetus is said to depart the woman. There's no clue as to whether it lives or dies. In two other versions (NKJ, NIV) the woman gives birth prematurely (with the implication that the infant lives). And in three translations, (LB, RS, GNB) the woman is said to either have a miscarriage, or loses the child. There's little wonder people argue over the Biblical meaning of such passages. If they come into an argument, each armed with different translations of the Bible, the debate could last forever.

Within our spectrum of translated possibilities for the life or death of the fetus, the man's punishment is rather minimal. The punishment to the man becomes severe, only if there is serious harm done to the *woman*- not the fetus. There seems to be more agreement among the translations about that point.

With this high degree of disagreement among the translations (concerning the status of the fetus) we should see what the transliterated English words have to tell us;

*(LT):*

*And when fight men, and they hit a woman pregnant, and aborts her child, but no {other} there is injury. Surely he will be fined as may put upon him the husband the woman's and he will give {it} through the judges.*

By now, the strange word order shouldn't be a surprise. The LT does clarify the intent of the original language. The LB, RS, and GNB more correctly identify that a prerequisite for the law is the loss of the child. Note the use of

'aborts' in the LT. The LT also supports the requirement that severe punishment is extracted only if the woman (not the child) suffers severe injury. Even if an abortion occurs, and the woman is not otherwise harmed, the instigator is not severely punished. Only if the woman is severely hurt, is a correspondingly severe penalty placed on the fighter. With regard to the fetus, the man is not punished in a way concomitant with his causing the death of a living being.

If anything, these two verses seem to contradict the stand taken by the anti-abortionists. These verses do not support their view that the unborn fetus is a living being.

### **Psalms 139:13 - 16**

Chapter 139 of the Psalms is devoted to praising God for how well He cares for us. These verses (13-16) have been used in an attempt to show that the fetus is alive in the womb. If true, then abortion would be killing a living being.

*Psalms 139:13-16 (KJV; my underlining)*

*For thou hast possessed my reins: thou hast covered me in my mother's womb. I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvelous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth well. My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect; and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them.*

After the last experience, it might be prudent to see if the other commonly used English versions interpret the original language in a fashion parallel to the KJV. As you read through these following verses (my underlining), remember that the fetus is alive only after it has been endowed by God with a unique human spirit (see Chapter-6; 'On Death').

*(NKJ):*

*For you have formed my inward parts; you have covered me in my mother's womb. I will praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Marvelous are your works, and that my soul knows very well. My frame was not hidden from you, when I was made in secret, and skillfully wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed. And in your book they were all written, the days fashioned for me, when as yet there were none of them.*

(AS):

*For thou didst form my inward parts: Thou didst cover me in my mother's womb. I will give thanks unto thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: wonderful are thy works; and that my soul knoweth well. My frame was not hidden from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Thine eyes did see mine unformed substance; and in thy book they were all written, even the days that were ordained for me, when as yet there was none of them.*

(LB):

*You made all the delicate, inner parts of my body, and knit them together in my mother's womb. Thank you for making me so wonderfully complex! It is amazing to think about. Your workmanship is marvelous—and how well I know it. You were there while I was being formed in utter seclusion! You saw me before I was born and scheduled each day of my life before I began to breathe. Every day was recorded in your book!*

(NIV):

*For you created my innermost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are*

*wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.*

(RS):

*For thou didst form my inward parts, thou didst knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise thee, for thou art fearful and wonderful. Wonderful are thy works! Thou knowest me right well; My frame was not hidden from thee, when I was being made in secret, intricately wrought in the depths of the earth. Thine eyes beheld my unformed substance; in thy book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them.*

All these versions (except the KJV and the NIV... two of the most widely read) describe how God has put together the structure of the fetal *body* within the womb. These translations leave us with the impression that the fetus is not yet endowed with its human *spirit*. The conclusion to be reached from reading any of these translations (except the KJV and the NIV) then, is that removing the fetus in an abortion is not killing it.

Now, let's study the two exceptions, to see what light they shed on this conclusion.

The KJV speaks of "possessed reins" where the others say "formed my inward parts." The KJV's phrase is puzzling for today's English. I surely didn't recognize it. Gesenius though, (Reference-13, #7069 & #3629) indicates that the KJV's phrase as used in this verse is consistent with "inward parts;"

"to erect, to set upright..... to found, create."

Again, the implication is for the construction of a body, not a spirit within the womb. It's interesting to see what happens in the scriptures, when God places a spirit into a lifeless body. God is said to have *breathed* the human spirit into the lifeless body;

*Gen. 2:7 (KJV; my underlining)*

*And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.*

*Gen. 7:15 (KJV; my underlining)*

*And they went in unto Noah into the ark, two and two of all flesh, wherein is the breath of life.*

Gesenius does indeed recognize that "reins" used in the KJV can refer to the inward self- implying the soul... the spirit within the body. That's the way the NIV interprets the phrase. But Gesenius clarifies *when* this particular use of "reins" is proper. He tells us that "reins" usually means 'inner self' when it is used in conjunction with 'heart.' He cites as an example;

*Jer. 20:12 (KJV)*

*But O Lord of hosts, that triest the righteous, and seest the reins and the heart, let me see thy vengeance on them: for unto thee have I opened my cause.*

Here, Gesenius indicates that the inner being (the soul) is what God sees. Using this grammatical construction, the NIV cannot be relied upon to give us the meaning consistent with the other English translations.

Since "reins" is not used along with "heart" in Psalms 139:13, the strong indication is that the verse refers to God miraculously constructing the complex working of a human body within the womb. It doesn't therefore, refer to the human soul.... the body containing a God-breathed human spirit.

Before leaving Gen 2:7, let's inspect the word 'formed.' Some could argue that 'formed' there, refers to the creating of a human being- complete with spirit. And others, would only see the construction of a human body form. Which is accurate? Gesenius (Reference-13; #3335) helps once again; he shows that as used in Gen. 2:7, the word 'formed' refers to the building of an inanimate object;

*"To form, to fashion, as a potter, clay...."*

Gesenius (#7069) refers to Prov. 8:22 using 'formed' or 'possessed' in a parallel sense to that used in Psalms 139:13. In that proverb, it is "wisdom" (notably inanimate) that is said to have been created, or set up;

*Prov. 8:22 (KJV)*

*The Lord possessed me [wisdom] in the beginning of his way, before his works of old.*

Now, let's draw our attention to one more problem area ... this time in Psalms 139:15. In this verse, the KJV speaks of the fetus not being hidden from God. The use of 'substance' in the KJV could imply to some, the essence, or vital force of life of the fetus.

Well, taking only one translation of this verse into a discussion of abortion is another sure way to ignite a lot of fireworks. Here's why. While the KJV speaks of 'my substance was not hid from thee' the NKJ, AS, NIV, and RS all uniformly speak of 'my frame....' The implication is that the fetal *body* was not hidden from God. These latter four translations give not a hint that reference is made to the soul of a fetus. The LB stands alone in its ambiguity. Interestingly, the GNB uses 'bones' instead of frame;

*Psalms 139:15 (GNB)*

*... When my bones were being formed, carefully but together in my mother's womb, when I was growing there in secret,...*

This reference to 'bones' should not go unnoticed, in trying to clarify what the KJV means by 'substance.' The GNB is consistent with the way the LT transliterates the Hebrew into directly into English;

*Psalms 139:15 (LT):*

*not were hidden my bones from you when I was made*

*in secret. When I was woven in the depths of the earth.*

Strong (Reference-11; #6106) defines the meaning of 'bones' as used here, as the 'body.' But Strong does indicate that "bones' can be used idiomatically at times, to mean 'life.' It seems like we're walking on the fence here. We need some indication of whether 'bones' refers to a fetal body (inanimate) or if it refers to a fetal life (animate, living). Further clarification is found in Vines (Reference-14, #6106). According to this reference, the word 'bones' commonly refers to a human bone. One nuance indicated in Vines is that when used alone- but in plural form (i.e., bones rather than bone) it probably represents the 'entire bodily frame.' This grammatical lesson in Vines supports the meaning of a fetal body rather than a fetal life within the womb.

Now there's a problem in Psalms 139:16, closely related to the one we just addressed. Once again, the KJV uses 'substance' in referring to God seeing the fetus in the womb. This time, however, the original language is not referring to the bodily frame or to the spirit of the fetus. Instead, it's referring to the early development stage of the fetus, when there was not yet enough of it grown to appear as a body. This situation is similar enough to the previous issue, that we don't need to spell out the ways all the common translations deal with the wording. Suffice it to say that as in the previous issue, there is some disarray among the usual translations we've been studying. Among our translations, some use 'substance' and others use 'unformed' or 'unformed body' or 'unformed substance.' It really is unfortunate that so important a point is left with such a questionable outcome. We can resolve it though, by checking the wording of the transliteration from Hebrew to English;

*Psalms 139:16 (LT; my underlining)*

*My embryo saw your eyes. And on your book all of them  
were written. The days they were formed and not  
{was} one among them.*

Strong's (Reference-11; #1564) supports this use of 'embryo' instead of the KJV's 'substance;'

*"a wrapped (and unformed mass, i.e., as the embryo):-  
substance yet being unperfect."*

In writing about the same word, Gesenius (Reference-13; #1564) provides this meaning;

“... unformed matter, not yet wrought, the parts of which are not yet unfolded and developed. Thus of an embryo.....”

In conclusion then, Psalms 139:13-16 might seem to make a case against abortion (by demonstrating that the fetus is alive in the womb). But the more thorough look at the intent and context of the words in the passage, just doesn't support that idea.

### **Ecclesiastes 11:5**

The author of Ecclesiastes is self-described as the 'teacher.' In this verse the teacher is describing for us how limited we are in comparison to God. He tells us that the way God works is far beyond our comprehension (my underlining);

(KJV):

*As thou knowest not what is the way of the spirit, nor how the bones do grow in the womb of her that is with child: even so thou knowest not the works of God who maketh all.*

(NKJ):

*As you do not know what is the way of the wind, or how the bones grow in the womb of her who is with child, so you do not know the works of God who makes all things.*

(AS):

*As thou knowest not what is the way of the wind, nor how the bones do grow in the womb of her that is with child; even so thou knowest not the work of God who doeth all.*

(LB):

*God's ways are as mysterious as the pathway of the wind, and as the manner in which a human spirit is infused into the little body of a baby while it is yet in it's mother's womb.*

(NIV):

*As you do not know the path of the wind, or how the body is formed in a mother's womb, so you cannot understand the work of God, the maker of all things.*

(RS):

*As you do not know how the spirit comes to the bones in the womb of a woman with child, so you do not know the work of God who makes everything.*

(GNB):

*God made everything, and you can no more understand what he does than you understand how new life begins in the womb of a pregnant woman.*

Two ambiguous concepts show up in these translations of Eccl. 11:5.

First, is the teacher telling us that we cannot know the way God does things because;

1. we can't figure out how the spirit works, OR,
2. we can't figure out the pathways of the wind?

Secondly, are we told here, that we cannot know,

1. how the fetal body develops in the womb, OR,
2. the way God puts the spirit into the fetus?

What is the intention of the original language? Since the second issue is particularly germane to the subject of abortion, let's concentrate on that question first.

Study the way the LB, the RS, and the GNB phrase this verse. If they are correctly translating the Hebrew, then we have scriptural evidence that life does indeed begin in the womb. And the conclusion would be that abortion is killing that living human being.

On the other hand, perhaps the KJV, the NKJ, the AS, and the NIV are the more correct translations. In that case this verse is not implying that life begins in the mother's womb.

We have quite a strong conflict among the translations. Perhaps the Literal transliteration(LT) can once again help us by shedding some light on what is in the original language;

*Eccl. 11:5 (LT)*

*As you not do know what {is} the way of the wind, {as} the bones in the womb of the pregnant woman, even so not do you know the work of the God who makes all {things}.*

The word 'bones' shows up again. We've already seen its meaning in studying Psalms 139:16. When used alone and in its plural form, 'bones' will most likely refer to the human body rather than the human spirit within the body. The wording of the LT and the grammatical discussion by Vines lends much credence to the KJV, the NKJ, the AS, and the NIV translations of the verse (no implication for life beginning in the womb).

Now, let's turn our attention to the first question originally posed in studying this verse. We have to figure out whether the original manuscripts are referring to the 'path of the wind' or the 'way of the spirit.' The translations are once again divided on the issue. The KJV, the RS, and the GNB refer to the spirit, or to God; and the NKJ, the AS, the LB, and the NIV all refer to the wind. It is only in the case of the RS that this issue has any importance with regard to the question of abortion. If the RS were your only version of the Bible, you'd be led to believe it's talking about the spirit entering the body of the fetus in the womb. None of the other translations give that impression.

The LT leaves no doubt that 'wind' is meant in this verse. Additional support for the LT lies within the context of this verse relative to the rest of Chapter-11. In fact, just prior to verse 11:5 the teacher is warning us that we can be too careful, too worried about things we must do. In so doing, he mentions the wind;

*Eccl. 11:4 (KJV)*

*He that observeth the wind shall not sow; and he that regardeth the clouds shall not reap.*

Wind (not spirit) definitely makes sense in this latter verse. If you try to replace 'wind' with 'spirit' the verse would make no sense. Just for the reason of continuity of thought, the teacher must be referring to 'wind' in 11:5 as well.

It appears then, that the implications of the RS are not really correct. No part of this verse supports the concept of a living being in the mother's womb.

### **Job 3:11 & 3:16 & 10:18-19**

The events surrounding Job's life are generally well-known. Because of his life's turmoil, Job is cursing the day he was born. Some of what he has to say seems to indirectly relate to the abortion argument.

First, let's see how the common translations handle Job's outcry in verse 3:11;

(KJV):

*Why died I not from the womb? Why did I not give up  
the ghost when I came out of the belly?*

(NKJ):

*Why did I not die at birth? Why did I not perish when I  
came from the womb?*

(AS):

*Why died I not from the womb? Why did I not give up  
the ghost when my mother bare me?*

(LB):

*Why didn't I die at birth?*

(NIV):

*Why did I not perish at birth, and die as I came from  
the womb?*

(RS):

*Why did I not die at birth, come forth from the womb  
and expire?*

(GNB):

*I wish I had died in my mother's womb or died the  
moment I was born.*

(LT):

*Why not from the womb did I die, from the womb come  
out and expire?*

So, here we go again. We have to poll the English translations. They extract quite diverse meanings from the original manuscripts. The essential point is that Job wishes he were never born. However, he says it in such a way that there could be scriptural evidence helpful in the abortion debate. This particular verse is a difficult one to understand in the various translations. Superficially, one could use it on either side of the abortion argument. What we'll do here is to look at this verse, one translation at a time, to help ensure that ultimately we know what it is actually saying.

In the KJV, Job 3:11 is vague. When Job wishes he'd given up the ghost when he came from his mother, the implication is that he did not have the spirit when he was in his mother. His first statement is consistent with this concept. He doesn't ask why he didn't die in the womb.... Instead he asked why he didn't die from the womb. Altogether, the implication from the KJV is that the fetus gets its spirit (hence its life) in coming *from* the womb.... Not at any point while it is in the womb.

Both the NKJ and the AS use slightly different wording, but convey the same meaning as the KJV. The conclusion reached using these translations then, is the same as for the KJV.

The LB's version is short and to the point. It most likely conveys what Job was actually thinking as he spoke.

The NIV is the most vague of the group. Even so, it leaves open the likelihood that the fetus is alive before it exits the womb. Notice how Job talks about dying as he came from the womb. It's not clear where he is in the birth process, from that statement alone. To 'perish at birth' could mean to perish at the initiation of the birth process (in which case the fetus would have been alive in the womb). But it could also mean to perish at the completion of the birth process (where the fetus would have become a living being at its first breath). The NIV's wording just doesn't allow us to reach an honest conclusion about the point of life of the fetus; so no conclusion can be drawn from the NIV.

The RS leads us to the same conclusion as the KJV, but it uses quite different wording. While it would be so easy to have said 'to die while in my mother's womb' such words are consistently not chosen. It's inadequate to say that his wish to die *at* birth means he must have been alive *before* birth. The reason is that birth is not an instantaneous process. If life is given at the first breath, then he'd have to come out of the womb, become endowed with life, and then give it up. That's fully consistent with all the scriptures

showing a correlation between God breathing a spirit into a person, and that person becoming a living soul.

Finally, the GNB does come right out and say it. The GNB translators definitely considered Job (as a fetus) alive in his mother's womb. He could not die in her womb unless he were alive in her womb. If this were the only translation used, then you'd come to the conclusion that the fetus is indeed alive in the mother's womb, and so aborting it is killing it.

To give a perspective to the implications of these translations for the abortion debate, we can look at our reliable transliteration. The LT's correlation of the Hebrew to English, seems more forthright than any of the translations. It speaks of coming 'from the womb' to die and coming 'from the womb to expire.' Such statements are only consistent with the fetus not being alive within the womb. In their vagueness, the KJV, NKJ, AS, and RS lean towards the same conclusion.

Now we can go on to the next verse, Job 3:16. It too is quoted often in the arguments about abortion. However, we'll soon see that it sheds no new light on the abortion question;

*(KJV):*

*Or as an hidden untimely birth I had not been; as infants which never saw light.*

*(NKJ):*

*Or why was I not hidden like a stillborn child, like infants who never saw light?*

*(AS):*

*Or as a hidden untimely birth I had not been, as infants That never saw light.*

*(LB):*

*Oh, to have been still-born—to have never breathed or seen the light.*

*(NIV):*

*Or why was I not hidden in the ground like a stillborn child, like an infant who never saw the light of day?*

*(RS):*

*Or why was I not as a hidden untimely birth, as infants that never see the light?*

*(GNB):*

*Or sleeping like a stillborn child.....*

*(LT):*

*Or like a miscarriage hidden not I would have been like infants {who} not did see light.*

Independent of translation, Job's lament is that he would have been better off as a stillborn. Dead at birth. There are no implications in this passage for an unnatural termination. Neither is there implication that life exists in the womb. In short, this verse makes no solid contribution to the subject of abortion. It favors neither side of the issue. The LT concurs in the central theme of the verse as given by our group of Bible translations.

Let's go next, to Job 10:18. Our usual family of English translations tend to concur on the central theme of this verse. So we'll skip the process of detailing all their versions of the verse. Here, we will look at the KJV and the way the LT transliterates the original language;

*(KJV):*

*Wherefore then hast thou brought me forth out of the womb? Oh that I had given up the ghost, and no eye had seen me!*

(LT):

*Why then from the womb did you bring me? I would have died, and eye not seen me.*

It's not difficult to see what Job is saying here. The problem is to see if there are any self-contained implications for, or against abortion contained in the statement. The translations (as exemplified by the KJV) are ambiguous in application to the abortion issue. Also, the LT does not help resolve the difficulty. Here's why the verse cannot be shown to address the abortion issue. When Job says he would rather have died, it's not definite whether he was referring to dying within the womb, or on the outside. There just isn't enough information given to resolve the issue. Remember, Job's concern is for his suffering.... not abortion. So his words are not focused onto that issue.

The last of the abortion-type references to Job is verse 10:19 (my underlining);

(KJV):

*I should have been as though I had not been; I should have been carried from the womb to the grave.*

(NKJ):

*I would have been as though I had not been. I would have been carried from the womb to the grave.*

(AS):

*I should have been as though I had not been; I should have been carried from the womb to the grave.*

(LB):

*Then I would have been spared this miserable*

*existence. I would have gone directly from the womb to the grave.*

*(NIV):*

*If only I had never come into being, or had been carried straight from the womb to the grave!*

*(RS):*

*and were as though I had not been, carried from the womb to the grave.*

*(GNB):*

*To go from the womb straight to the grave would have been as good as never existing.*

*(LT):*

*As though not I had been I should have been. From the womb to the grave carried.*

Why do I show every one of our translations here, when it wasn't necessary for discussion of the previous verse? I wanted to show that each one without exception (even the LT) uses the word 'grave.' This word should always raise a red flag when you come across it in your reading. Sometimes it can mean the actual physical grave in which a human *body* is placed at death. But it can sometimes also mean hades... the waiting place of the *spirits* of those departing the earth in death. The word 'grave' therefore needs close scrutiny to understand what the verse containing it, actually means. Depending on what 'grave' means in Job 10:19, the verse can be used to support either side of the abortion issue.

Pro-abortionists' position: Job had wished he could have gone from the womb to the grave. We know the grave is the resting place of the human

body.... not the human spirit. The fetus being sent from the womb to the grave then, implies that the fetus is only a body. That body is sent from the womb to the grave. There's no spirit in the body in the grave. That means the fetus transferred from the womb has no spirit.... and is therefore not alive. Finally, the fetus not being alive in the womb means that it cannot be killed in the womb; and hence abortion is not killing a fetus.

Anti-abortionists' position: The word 'grave' used in Job 10:19 refers to 'hades' and not the actual physical grave. For Job to go from the womb to hades, means that his spirit (not body) would have gone from the womb to hades. Remember that hades is the place in which departed *spirits* await the Judgment (see Chapter-6; 'On Death'). That means the fetus' spirit would have been present in the womb. Abortion then, is indeed killing a living being in the womb.

So, we can see how easily a single word (grave) misunderstood, can lead to big problems for people to argue all the way to the day of Judgment. Keep in mind Paul's comments in Gal. 3:15-16, that I mentioned in the Introduction.

What we must do here, is see if there is definitive information on the correct translation of the original language. Is 'grave' really meant (as all the translations indicate) or do the ancient manuscripts actually mean 'hades'? First, Strong's is emphatic about its definition of "grave" as particularly used in Job 10:19. According to Strong's (Reference-11, #6913) , the "grave" mentioned there, is the repository for the physical *body*;

*(Strong's; Reference-11; #6913)*

*"a sepulchre: burying place, grave, sepulchre."*

Most interesting, is that Gesenius' definition at (#6913) concurs with Strong's;

*(Gesenius; Reference-13; #6913)*

*"a sepulchre, grave.... the burial-place waits for me, and is prepared"*

However, the LT refers us to Strong's definition #7585 for the correct meaning of 'grave.' Here again, both Strong's and Gesenius are consistent;

*(Strong's, Reference-11; #7585):*

*"hades or the world of the dead..."*

*(Gesenius, Reference-13, #7585):*

*"orcus, hades, a subterranean place, full of thick darkness, in which the shades of the dead are gathered together..."*

The LT therefore, stands in bold contrast to our group of translations, with regard to the meaning of 'grave' in this verse. The essential meaning of Job's lament comes through very clearly... and after all, that is the intent of the verse. But concerning the question of abortion, It's fair to say that the most respected lexicographers leave us smack in the middle of both sides of the issue. We just cannot decisively conclude whether 'grave' or 'hades' is meant in Job 10:19. And so we cannot be firm in knowing whether by this verse, the fetus is alive or not in the womb.

### **Psalms 22:10 and Luke 20:38**

Some people like to tie these scriptures together, to show that the fetus is alive in the womb. To see how they attempt this, first look at Luke 20:38;

*Luke 20:38 (KJV; my underlining)*

*For he is not a God of the dead, but of the living; for all live unto him.*

The anti-abortionists then point out that God is the God of the living ones... those having their spirits dwelling in their bodies. Next, they go to Psalms 22:10, and show that God is the God of the fetus in the womb. Their logical conclusion then, is that the fetus is alive in the womb. Here are the translations of Psalms 22:10 (my underlining);

(KJV):

*I was cast upon thee from the womb; thou art my God from my mother's belly.*

(NKJ):

*I was cast upon you from birth. From my mother's womb you have been my God.*

(AS):

*I was cast upon thee from the womb; thou art my God since my mother bare me.*

(LB):

*Lord, how you have helped me before! You took me safely from my mother's womb and brought me through the years of infancy. I have depended upon you since birth; you have always been my God.*

(NIV):

*From birth I was cast upon you; from my mother's womb you have been my God.*

(RS):

*Upon thee was I cast from my birth, and since my mother bore me thou hast been my God.*

(GNB):

*I have relied on you since the day I was born, and you have always been my God.*

(LT):

*On you I was cast from the womb. From belly my mother's my God you {are}.*

Without any further investigation, it would appear that the KJV, the NKJ, the LB, the NIV, the GNB, and even the LT, seem to support the anti-abortion position.

The AS and the RS have firm statements that God has been their God from the point of birth rather than from the time of being in the womb.

If we had no additional information, we'd conclude that most of the translations imply that the fetus within the womb is alive. And we'd conclude that two translations do not give sufficient information on the life of the fetus in the womb.

But we do indeed, have additional information. It comes from achieving a clear understanding of the meaning of Luke 20:38. Precisely, what is meant by God being the God of the living and not of the dead? Think of the dead in the 'good' side of hades (Chapter-6; On Death). Isn't He their God? He surely is, since he has saved them. We also need to more closely explore what the original language means by 'living.' As it turns out, it doesn't simply mean 'those who are alive.' Thayer (reference-12, #2198) defines 'living' as it is used in Luke 20:38;

*"... in God is the cause why we live,..... my life is devoted Christ. Christ is the aim, the goal, of my life."*

Luke 20:38 then, is telling us that He is the God of those who have accepted the gospel and are followers of His Son. That's a lot more than just saying that He is the God of those who are alive.

Thayer's definition of 'living' in Luke 20:38 breaks down the connection to Psalms 22:10 that the anti-abortionists make. And with no connection between these two verses, they cannot be used to scripturally verify that the fetus is alive in the womb.

Finally, the phrase "from the womb" used in Psalms 22:10 has also been studied by Gesenius (Reference-13, #990);

*"..... and more fully..... from the womb and onward;....."*

By this definition, Gesenius is verifying the AS and RS translations. That is, He has always been our God from the time of our birth.... Not from the time of the presence of the fetus within the womb.

### **My Own Personal Conclusions**

When all is said and done, abortion is a matter between a pregnant woman and God. If a woman has an abortion, and abortion is wrong in the eyes of God, then He will deal with that woman in the final accounting of all things. If abortion is not wrong to God, then that woman faces no problem before God.

Either way, the governments of man should have no say in the matter. There should be no legislation concerning it. We've seen how difficult it is to extract meaning about abortion from the scriptures.... And they are God's perfect law. How could we ever expect man to write legislation that could do any better? When it comes to any issue involving morality, how can legislation ever succeed?

In fairness to God's word, make note that none of the scriptures we looked at, has the express purpose of telling us how to deal with the abortion question. Instead, we looked for inferences and implications that might or might not be present in scriptures having no direct thing to say about abortion. In some of our cases studied, it's something like going to a library to buy a gallon of milk.

For me, abortion is wrong. But not because it is the killing of a living being. I think the fetus is not alive until it comes out of the womb, at birth. The problem with abortion is the failure to follow through on a serious life commitment. For other categories of reasons for abortion, the religionists have no issue, because aborting that fetal tissue is not killing a living being.

For me, the scriptural evidence is strongly inclined in the direction that life begins *after* the fetus leaves the womb. God endows the fetal body with a spirit after it leaves the womb. If a fetal mass is aborted, religionists shouldn't get so upset. God has the human spirit that He places in the fetus. If He wants a particular spirit to live on earth, then he will get it into a human body. Believe in His omniscience... don't just declare it.

I think there exists plenty of scriptural evidence that indicates a person is a living being, when the first breath is taken (naturally, outside the womb);

*Psalms 104:30 (KJV)*

*Thou sendest forth thy spirit, they are created: and thou renewest the face of the earth.*

*Gen. 2:7 (KJV)*

*And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.*

*Psalms 146:4 (KJV)*

*His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth.....*

*Ezek. 37:5 (KJV)*

*Thus saith the Lord God unto these bones; behold, I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live.*

*Hab. 2:19 (NIV)*

*... Woe to him who says to wood, 'Come to life!' Or to the lifeless stone, 'Wake up!' Can it give guidance? It is covered with gold and silver; there is no breath in it.*

Incipient life is associated with incipient breath in the Bible. Physicians, religionists, ethicists, and others may talk of brain death and heart death and whatever else, from now until the Judgment. But for me, God has

defined the time of life and the time of death in terms of the first given breath, and the last taken breath.