

Jewish Perspectives on Bioethics

Straus Center for Torah and Western Thought

Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary

Rabbi David Shabtai, MD

david.shabtai@gmail.com

(718) 288-3157

Welcome to the inaugural Jewish Perspectives on Bioethics *semikhab* seminar! This is an exciting time for both the Straus Center and RIETS in offering a seminar dedicated to exploring some of the most fundamental issues of **תורה ומדע** – the interaction and integration of **הלכה** and **השקפה** with science and medicine.

The goal of the seminar is to explore the ‘larger issues’ in modern bioethics, focusing on Jewish and bioethical approaches to challenges arising in modern medicine and scientific research. Science and medicine are progressing at a rapid pace, constantly raising new questions, challenges, and opportunities to reflect upon an offer a Jewish perspective.

Schedule: The seminar will meet monthly (approximately) on Tuesday evenings, from 6:30-8:00pm. Dinner will be provided.

For the fall semester, the dates of seminar meetings are:

September 9

September 30

October 28

December 2

January 6

Course requirements: Attendance and participation are expected commensurate with a graduate level seminar. Readings will be assigned prior to each session, with additional readings available for those who wish to explore the topic in further depth. Materials will be distributed and made available digitally when possible.

Syllabus:

- September 9, 2014 – ד"ר אלול תשע"ד
 - Introduction to the seminar
 - Topic: Determining life and death
 - Reading preparation: President's Council on Bioethics, *Controversies in the Determination of Death* (2008): 17-20, 59-65
 - Additional resources: R. David Shabtai, MD, *Defining the Moment: Understanding Brain Death in Halakhab* (New York: Shores Press, 2012)

- September 30, 2014 – ו' תשרי תשע"ה
 - Guest presenter: Dr. John Loike [R. Moshe Tendler]
Topic: Genetic engineering, gene editing, playing God, and personal status
 - Reading preparation: John Loike, PhD, Rush Fischbach, PhD, "The Art and Ethics of Gene Editing"
 - Bio: Dr. John Loike is the Co-Director for Graduate Studies in the Department of Physiology Cellular Biophysics and Director of Special Programs in the Center for Bioethics at Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons.

- October 28, 2014 – ד' מרחשון תשע"ה
 - Topic: Abortion – prohibition, permission, and public policy

What is the relationship between a fetus and other human beings? Is there a difference in moral worth, personal status, or halakhic standing? Are there circumstances where abortion is ethically / halakhically sanctioned? How does that relate to the future potential of a fetus? Is there a balance to be struck between the personal autonomy of the mother and that of the fetus? Do the circumstances under which the woman became pregnant matter in arriving at a conclusion?
 - Reading preparation: אהרן ליכטנשטיין, "הפלות מלאכותיות - היבטי הלכה", תחומין, כא (תשס"א): 93-99

- December 2, 2014 – י"א כסלו תשע"ה
 - Guest presenter: Dr. Tia Powell
Topic: Resource Allocation – Ventilators in Pandemic Flu and Treating Ebola Virus
 - Reading preparation: Tia Powell, MD, Kelly C. Christ, MHS, Guthrie S. Birkhead, MD, MPH, "Allocation of Ventilators in a Public Health Disaster," *Disaster Medicine and Public Health Preparedness* 2 (2008): 20-26.
 - Bio: Dr. Tia Powell is the Director of the Montefiore Einstein Center for Bioethics and of the Einstein Cardozo Master of Science in Bioethics program and Professor of Clinical Epidemiology and Clinical Psychiatry. She served four years as Executive Director of the New York State Task Force on Life and the Law and co-chaired a

New York State 2007 workgroup that devised ethical and clinical guidance for allocating ventilators in an influenza pandemic.

- January 6, 2015 – ט"ז טבת תשע"ה
 - Guest presenter: Eric Cohen
Topic: TBD
 - Bio: Eric Cohen has been the Executive Director of the Tikvah Fund since 2007, founder and editor-at-large of the New Atlantis, publisher of the Jewish Review of Books and Mosaic. He is the author of *In the Shadow of Progress: Being Human in the Age of Technology* (2008) and co-editor of *The Future is Now: America Confronts the New Genetics* (2002). He was previously managing editor of the *Public Interest* and served as a senior consultant to the President's Council on Bioethics.

Seminar presenters and topics are subject to change.

Papers: We are looking to publish an anthology of the presentations given as part of the seminar. Students interested in participating, whether in submitting their own thoughts and reflections or become involved in other aspects are encouraged to contact me.

Spring Syllabus: If you have suggestions or comments on topics for discussion in the spring, please let me know about them.