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Our Jewish bible contains many stories about generations and multitudes of Jews. Every Jewish child is a gift from God and has a special purpose in the expression of God's vision of righteous living here on Earth.

The bible speaks of women who were infertile and had children only through a miracle, making clear that the

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miracle of life occurs every time conception happens. Our matriarchs, Sarah, Rebecca, and Rachel conceived children after years of infertility. Their children played a vital role in the formation of the spiritual, moral and existential experience of the Jewish people.

At ninety years old, Sarah gave birth to Isaac. Abraham circumcised him on the eighth day, making him a party to the holy covenant G-d had established with Abraham, and setting the stage for the eventual creation of the Jewish people.

Isaac married Rebecca, who was twenty years childless when Isaac prayed to G-d because she was barren. G-d accepted Isaac's prayer and Rebecca conceived the twins, Esau and Jacob. Jacob would produce the 12 Tribes of Israel.

Jacob's second wife, Rachel, was 7 years infertile before she gave birth to Joseph, who would go on to become Viceroy of Egypt, save his brothers from starvation, and make possible the Jewish settlement in Egypt, a prerequisite for the Exodus and the spiritual revelation at Sinai.

More miracles occur as Moses is born viable at 6 months

gestation (without the aid of neonatal intensive care treatment) so that he avoids detection and murder by the Egyptian baby police. After caring for her infant son for three months, his mother places him in his basket and sends him down the Nile. The hand of God safely delivers the child into the hands of his sister and then back with his mother to be safely raised to adulthood amidst Egyptian peril.

Our tradition also includes stories of blessed women who miraculously conceived after years of infertility.

Hannah, the second wife of Elkanah, was childless. After many years of frustration and unhappiness, she prayed to God and wept. She vowed: “Lord of Hosts, if You will look upon the affliction of Your maidservant, and You will remember me and You will not forget Your maidservant, and You will give Your maidservant a man-child, then I shall give him to G-d all the days of his life.” Hannah gave birth to Samuel, a righteous man and prophet.

> The Shunammite woman, who provided hospitality to the prophet Elisha, was another infertile woman. When the prophet learned that she and her husband were childless, he blessed the woman that she should give birth to a child.

One year later a son was born to the aged couple. A few years later, this miraculously born son suffered a head injury and died. The Shunammite woman **ought out** Elisha, who returned with her to her home and miraculously brought the boy back to life.

These stories underscore our fundamental appreciation for the gift of life and the importance of producing children. Our task as Jews is to demonstrate Torah principles in our daily lives, and this must begin by protecting the miraculous life within the womb. If you know an abortion minded Jewish woman, support her pregnancy. Impress upon her that she carries a precious life within her, and protecting that life gives meaning and hope to every Jew. All of Israel will celebrate with her as she brings a unique Jewish life into the world.

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