

FORUM

Judaism, Genetic Engineering, and the Cloning of Humans

Participants (in order of their contributions): Yitzchok Adlerstein, Kenneth Waxman, Julian (Yoel) Jakobovits, Avraham Steinberg, Michael J. Broyde, Fred Rosner, Richard V. Grazi, Eitan Fiorino, Feige Kaplan, John D. Loike, Yigal Shafran

Introduction

Even in an age in which extraordinary scientific advances have become everyday occurrences, recent achievements in the cloning of animals and the announced success of the Genome project exert a particular fascination for both scientists and the general public. We seem to be on the cusp of developing utterly revolutionary ways to prolong lives, manipulate genetic characteristics, and, most dramatically, create people. As our imagination runs free and we contemplate—what is not reality yet—a world replete with clones and routine gene therapies, ethical, psychological and philosophical problems emerge in abundance. What are the moral and religious limits of the new technologies, their appropriate and inappropriate uses? Are these technologies really welcome? How shall we understand human identity when some people will have had no parents?

In recognition of the halakhic, moral, theological and social issues surrounding recent developments—and in anticipation of further dilemmas in the future—we have invited rabbinic authorities, clinicians, researchers, and philosophers to address these issues. We gave our respondents three questions to ponder, requesting them to treat one or

more of these in whatever fashion seemed to them most appropriate given their interests and expertise:

1. The Rav, Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik *ztz"l*, writes in "Lonely Man of Faith" that "man reaching for the distant stars is acting in harmony with his nature which was created, willed and directed by His maker. It is a manifestation of obedience to rather than rebellion against God." From Judaism's perspective, does the legitimacy of humanity's drive to control nature extend to the creation of life (nonhuman or human) by cloning? If such use of cloning is eventually perfected so that it is medically safe, are there circumstances under which it would be appropriate to recommend the procedure? If so, are there, nonetheless, cogent reasons of public policy to ban cloning?
2. What guidelines and distinctions can you suggest as to when it would be proper to manipulate the genetic structure of an individual, when such alteration would affect either (a) the individual alone, or (b) both the individual and his or her offspring?
3. Based upon your professional and personal experience, what additional issues in genetic intervention need to be explored by rabbinic authorities and ethicists? What suggestions can you offer for dealing with these issues?

Taken together, the responses offer an orderly tour through difficult territory. While inevitably the essays overlap to an extent, each was sufficiently distinctive to permit an arrangement in thematic sequence rather than the alphabetical sequence typically used in symposia. A reader who follows the contributions from beginning to end will gain, we believe, a good grasp of key issues, including the role of Torah in a world of scientific advance, the proper scope of human intervention in God's world, the definition of "human," what constitutes a disease, the relationship between Halakhah and social policy, and much more. Important areas of disagreement will emerge, hopefully stimulating further debate and discussion.

We extend our warm thanks to Herbert Leventer, Ph.D., who teaches medical humanities at the Mount Sinai School of Medicine in New York and manages the New York University Medical Bookstore, for providing incisive comments on the individual papers as well as valuable suggestions with regard to preparing the forum as a whole for publication.

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