

The Lightness of Choice

Category: Abortion

written by Ronna L. Edelstein | June 1, 2019

Abortion was not a concept that played a role in my life. I never imagined that rape would leave me with an unwanted pregnancy; I refused to consider that any future child would face multiple disabilities that might diminish or eliminate his or her quality of life. Instead, I married and, nine months later, found myself pregnant.

Unfortunately, I discovered my pregnancy after getting special vaccinations for a trip to Greece. The doctor feared that one of the shots he had given me might affect the fetus, leading to birth defects in my first child. I remember his looking directly into my eyes and reciting my options: remain pregnant or abort.

I admit that, so early in my pregnancy, I had not yet developed any maternal bonds with my child. My stomach was only slightly swollen, I felt no flutter like a butterfly's wings beneath my skin and I did not even experience morning sickness to remind me of my pregnancy. The child within me was more abstract than real during those early months. To abort and avoid the risk of having a child with multiple, overwhelming problems, therefore, did not faze me.

But I did not abort. Something inside me screamed out against such an action. Instead, I took long walks, stopping to admire babies in carriages or to enjoy children playing joyfully in a park. As I walked, it seemed as if all the women in my community were pregnant; bellies of all sizes confronted me wherever I went. I also turned to my husband for support. As a rabbinical student, he was a man of faith. He told me he would stand by me, no matter which route I chose, but that he also believed we would be good parents to our baby, regardless of the baby's health status.

I did not abort. Instead, I grew larger, felt signs of life and prayed that my child would be okay—or that I would handle the situation with grace if the worse scenario occurred. Now, forty-six years later, I embrace my healthy son with love.

I did not abort, but I am glad I had the option to do so. I believe that we women should have control over our bodies and that no baby should enter this world pre-destined to a life of pain and isolation. Life matters, but a life without choice is a dark one.

Ronna Edelstein

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania