

**TD** [theday.co.uk/us-court-rules-frozen-embryos-are-children-4](https://theday.co.uk/us-court-rules-frozen-embryos-are-children-4)



*'Outrageous and unacceptable': Joe Biden and Kamala Harris (above) slammed the decision.*

**Should religion shape laws? In the US state of Alabama, a court used mediaeval religious thinkers to make a new law which could stop treatments for people who want to have a baby.**

## What's happening?

Law is an odd thing. On 15 February, thousands of frozen **embryos** kept by **fertility clinics** in **Alabama** were seen as no more than little groups of **cells**. On 16 February, they became children in the eyes of the law.

That day's decision by the Supreme Court of Alabama might make **IVF**, a process used by couples who cannot have children naturally, impossible in the state.

## Find out more

Generally, for IVF treatment, doctors take eggs from the mother and **fertilise** them. They only put one back into her body. The rest are destroyed. But under this new ruling, that could be seen as murder.

The court said their decision was due to a view of life based on **religion**.

Lots of people have criticised the decision. But others say many laws throughout history have been based on religion.

Today, there are only a few countries in the world where religious leaders make all the laws. One example is **Afghanistan**.

But lots of countries have laws that have roots in religion. For example, the idea that all human beings are made in God's image has influenced many laws.

Others say that while Christianity has had a huge impact on many cultures, many European laws are actually based on old **Ancient Roman** laws.

Should religion shape laws?

## Some say

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Yes! Religion has been part of our culture for hundreds, if not thousands, of years. It affects what we think is right and what we think is wrong. We cannot separate laws and religion.

## Others think

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No! In the modern world, the law should have nothing to do with religion. It is not fair that people of different religions or none should have to follow the laws of one religion.

## Some people say

*"It is not wisdom but Authority that makes a law."*

**Thomas Hobbes (1588 – 1679), English thinker**

*What do you think?*

## Six steps to discovery

### 1. Connect

**How do you feel about this story?** - Do you think a frozen embryo is a child?

### 2. Wonder

**What questions do you have?** - For example: Should religious people be in power?

### 3. Investigate

**What are the facts?** - Pick out one thing we know for certain from this story and one thing we cannot say for sure.

### 4. Construct

**What is your point of view?** - You are the head judge of the Alabama Supreme Court. Do you make the same decision?

### 5. Express

**What do others believe?** - Is your school religious? Does religion influence any of the rules? Discuss as a class.

### 6. Reflect

**What might happen next?** - Write a letter to a school newspaper explaining whether or not you think religion should influence the rules at your school.

## Glossary

**Embryos** - An unborn or unhatched offspring in the process of development.

**Fertility clinics** - A place couples who cannot have children go to to get medical advice and possible treatment.

**Alabama** - A state in the southern USA. It had one of the largest slave populations before the Civil War, and afterwards, it imposed harsh Jim Crow laws to disenfranchise Black Americans.

**Cells** - The smallest bit of a plant or animal that can live on its own.

**IVF** - In vitro fertilisation is a technique used to help people with fertility issues have a baby.

**Fertilise** - Join an egg with male reproductive material to cause new life to grow.

**Religion** - Religion is belief in a god or gods and the activities that are connected with this belief, such as praying or worshipping in a building such as a church or temple.

**Afghanistan** - A mountainous Asian country, slightly larger than France, whose neighbours include Pakistan, Iran and China.

**Ancient Roman** - Relating to one of the largest empires in the ancient world.