

CHOICES

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By
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TIME

Early 1960s

PLACE

University hospital in Boston

CHARACTERS

SOLOMON GOLDIN.....Mid-20s, a very religious Jew

LEAH GOLDIN.....Mid-20s, his wife

CHRIS KARCHER.....Mid-60s, famous pediatric surgeon

KIERA MCGRAW.....Late 30s, female cardiac surgeon

SEGAL.....Early 70s, nationally respected rabbi

ADAM ISAAC.....Mid-30s, Aaron and Sarah's rabbi

CHOICES

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SCENE 1

SETTING: The neonatal intensive care unit in a Boston teaching hospital in the 1960s. It includes a bassinet with a lot of monitoring equipment and a rocking chair.

AT RISE: LEAH, in her early 20s, appears in the doorway. She wears plastic gloves and a hospital gown. She looks at the bassinet from afar, afraid to approach it. SOLOMON, in his 20s, also dressed in a hospital gown, appears in the doorway.

Don't be afraid.

SOLOMON

I'm not afraid.

LEAH

You're just standing there.

SOLOMON

Leah moves towards the bassinet and looks in. Her look of apprehension slowly changes to one of tenderness.

LEAH

They're so beautiful. They took them away from me so fast in the other hospital.

SOLOMON

You gave us two lovely babies.

LEAH

Hello, my two lovely darlings. What a somber expression, little one. You must be having a very serious dream. Your brother seems to be in a much happier place. They're asleep.

SOLOMON

They're holding each other.

LEAH

Yes.

(Pointing to one of the babies)

He's the one who's in charge.

SOLOMON

You can tell this just by looking at a sleeping baby?

LEAH

He's a lot bigger than his brother. His brother is the calm one.

SOLOMON

Such little babies have personalities?

LEAH

All mothers know this, Solomon.

Solomon reaches into the bassinet.

LEAH (cont'd)

I don't think you should do that.

SOLOMON

I spoke to the nurse. She said we could hold them. As long as we're careful about the monitoring lines.

LEAH

(Afraid)

I don't want to wake them up.

SOLOMON

I want to hold them.

He lifts the two babies, wrapped in a single blanket, out of the bassinet.

SOLOMON (cont'd)

They hardly weigh anything.

(Making sounds to get their attention)

I think they're waking up. Aaron's opening his eyes.

LEAH

How do you know he's Aaron?

SOLOMON

He looks like your grandfather.

LEAH

They're twins. They look alike.

SOLOMON

No they don't. Joshua looks like my great uncle.

LEAH

You're just making that up.

SOLOMON

Well, maybe a little bit. Now Joshua is waking up. That proves it. My great uncle always had trouble sleeping.

He offers the babies to Leah, who takes them in her arms.

LEAH

Hello, Aaron. Hello, Joshua.

SOLOMON

Aaron's eyes are closed again.

LEAH

I think he's fallen asleep.

SOLOMON

That's odd. You'd think they'd be asleep and awake at the same time.

LEAH

(Putting them back in the bassinet)

They're two different people.

SOLOMON

Yes, of course.

She bends down to the bassinet and starts to take off the blankets that cover the babies.

SOLOMON (cont'd)

No, don't.

LEAH

I want to see.

SOLOMON

(Taking her hand away)

Let's wait. Until we get to know them better.

LEAH

Yes. Maybe that would be better. Now Joshua is holding Aaron's hand.

SOLOMON

I wonder if he knows it's his brother.

LEAH

How could he know that?

SOLOMON

I mean, I wonder if he realizes he isn't holding his own hand.

LEAH

Covered up like that, they look like two normal babies in bed.

They silently look at the two babies, amused by any little thing they might be doing.

LEAH (cont'd)

(Finally)

What did I do wrong?

SOLOMON

You did nothing wrong.

LEAH

(Fighting back the tears)

Hold me, Solomon.

SOLOMON

It's not yet seven days.

LEAH

Hold me.

SOLOMON

You're still unclean.

LEAH

I don't care about that nonsense. I want you to hold me. Please.

Very tentatively, Solomon takes her in his arms.

LEAH (cont'd)

What are we going to do?

SOLOMON

It's in God's hands.

CROSSFADE

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SCENE 2

The office of surgeon DR. CHRIS KARCHER, who's in his 60s. He is meeting with DR. KIERA MCGRAW, in her late 30s. On a table are medical files. Without talking, they're carefully reviewing them. McGraw is taking notes. Karcher stirs tea in a teapot.

More tea?
KARCHER

Yes, please.
MCGRAW

He pours the tea. McGraw looks at the cup.

You never fill the cup.
MCGRAW (cont'd)

I fill it to seven tenths of capacity.
KARCHER

Exactly seven tenths?
MCGRAW

Exactly. The other three tenths are filed with friendship and affection. Chinese tradition.
KARCHER

You're famous among the residents for your tea. Whenever they screw up and you call them into your office, they say they're getting tea and sympathy from the old man.
MCGRAW

The old man?
KARCHER

They say it with awe. Half of them came here just to work with you.
MCGRAW

A very nice save.
KARCHER

Karcher picks up some of the medical reports and studies them.

KARCHER (cont'd)

Well, what do you think?

MCGRAW

It's a slam dunk. We operate.

KARCHER

This is not going to be an easy operation.

MCGRAW

We'll be making medical history.

KARCHER

If we beat the odds.

MCGRAW

Even if we don't, we'll learn a lot so the next attempt is successful.

KARCHER

We don't have much of a choice, do we? If we do nothing, it's unlikely they'll live for more than a year or two.

MCGRAW

Not even that, Chris. Every day the babies get bigger, the cardiac demands become greater.. They could go into heart failure tomorrow.

KARCHER

The ball will be in your court.

MCGRAW

(Self-satisfied)

I know.

KARCHER

I want all the specialties there. Or at least on standby. Just in case. We should do a dress rehearsal so everyone knows where and when they must be during the procedure.

MCGRAW

I'll start assembling the cardiac team. What are the kids' names?

KARCHER

They haven't said.

MCGRAW

They haven't said?

KARCHER

According to their customs, they don't reveal the names of boys until the bris. They're very religious. At least he is. They'll find strength in their faith.

MCGRAW

Better to believe in science than faith.

KARCHER

Sometimes science is not enough.

MCGRAW

Faith alone is never enough.

CROSSFADE

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SCENE 3

A hospital waiting room. Leah and Solomon are sitting on a couch. Solomon is reading the Book of Psalms.

LEAH

I knew something was wrong. The doctor and nurses. Their faces were covered with masks, but I could see it in their eyes.

SOLOMON

Maybe they were just surprised.

LEAH

It wasn't a look of surprise. It was more than that.

(Referring to the door)

What's happening in there? They have been meeting for a long time. Do you think it's bad? That they've been meeting for so long? What if they can't do anything?

SOLOMON

There's much they can do.

LEAH

Do you trust the surgeon?

SOLOMON

He's nationally famous. He's done five operations like this. And every one was a success.

Solomon puts down the Book of Psalms and looks at her with concern and tenderness.

SOLOMON (cont'd)

I know this is very scary. There're so many questions and we have no answers. That makes this much worse. But soon we'll have the answers and know what we have to do.

LEAH

How do you know all these things about the surgeon?

SOLOMON

Google.

LEAH

You could Google? At a time like this?

SOLOMON

I put my faith in God. But it's not a sin to seek reassurance elsewhere.

LEAH

Five operations doesn't seem like many.

SOLOMON

Siamese twins are very rare. A year from now, I expect to be reading bed-time stories to our sons, sleeping in separate beds, while you're in the kitchen, preparing a wonderful dinner.

She looks up hopefully.

SOLOMON (cont'd)

Everything is going to work out, Leah.

LEAH

You're planning to read bed-time stories to one-year-olds?

SOLOMON

At least show them pictures -- of cats and cows and princes and princesses. And I will sing to them.

LEAH

You do have a lovely voice.

SOLOMON

At least lovely enough to impress one-year-old babies.

LEAH

While I was carrying them, I dreamt about dressing them in identical shirts and pants. And combing their hair the same way.

SOLOMON

But if they look alike, how will we tell them apart?

LEAH

I'm told parents have no trouble recognizing their children.

Karcher and McGraw enter. Karcher carries a clipboard with legal papers. Solomon and Leah stand. Everyone greets each other.

KARCHER

Mr. Goldin. Mrs. Goldin.

Karcher and McGraw shake Solomon's hand. Karcher reaches out to shake Leah's hand. She puts her hands behind her back to his surprise.

KARCHER (cont'd)

Please. Sit down.

All four sit down.

KARCHER (cont'd)

Were you able to see your sons?

SOLOMON

Yes. We were just with them.

KARCHER

The nurses tell me they are the stars of the ICU.

SOLOMON

I guess they would be.

KARCHER

They're doing very well. I've asked Dr. McGraw to join us. She's a cardiac surgeon and will consult on this case.

SOLOMON

A cardiac surgeon? We need such a specialist?

KARCHER

Very rarely are these operations simple.

LEAH

My husband says there's much you can do.

KARCHER

Separating them won't be difficult.

LEAH

Oh, thank God.

KARCHER

But there's a problem. A very serious problem. They share only one heart.

LEAH

That's not possible. My midwife heard two heartbeats. She even let me hear them with her stethoscope.

MCGRAW

There are two beating hearts. One heart is essentially normal, with four chambers. The other heart has only two chambers.

SOLOMON

You can give each baby a heart. You can do that, can't you?

MCGRAW

The two-chamber heart is pumping little blood. It's useless.

SOLOMON

Useless?

KARCHER

I'm afraid so.

SOLOMON

Then what can we do?

KARCHER

One option is to do nothing. The babies can live joined together as they are now.

MCGRAW

But the heart probably won't be able to support two babies for more than a few months, if that.

LEAH

They're going to die?

MCGRAW

If we don't intervene.

SOLOMON

What can you do?

MCGRAW

We can separate them. And give the functioning heart to one of your sons.

LEAH

And our other son?

KARCHER

I'm sorry.

LEAH

You'll let him die?

MCGRAW

So your other son can live.

LEAH

No.

SOLOMON

You have to save both of them.

MCGRAW

It's not possible.

Leah breaks down crying. McGraw looks away in discomfort. Karcher looks at the couple with sympathy.

SOLO

Every day I'm reading about new medical miracles. Just last month in South Africa they transplanted a new heart into someone. It was in all the newspapers.

LEAH

Yes, can't you do that for our son?

MCGRAW

It's an experimental procedure, not possible in this case.

SOLOMON

How do you know the heart will fail so quickly? Perhaps it's strong enough for both babies.

MCGRAW

It isn't.

SOLOMON

If I may ask, on what are you basing this opinion. What are the statistics?

KARCHER

There aren't any statistics. There're been only a few cases like this.

SOLOMON

I have no medical training. All I know is what I read in newspapers and magazines. Stories about people recovering from comas after doctors had given up on them. And other stories about cancer patients who got better when doctors said there was no hope. I mean no disrespect, doctor, but maybe you're wrong.

MCGRAW

These miracles happen rarely. That's why they write these stories.

SOLOMON

But still they happen. And I'm thinking they might not be so rare. Three years ago doctors told my Uncle Jacob that his heart disease was getting so bad he should get his affairs in order. Uncle Jacob is still alive.

KARCHER

It's true, Mr. Goldin. We're not always right.

MCGRAW

But we usually are.

The doctors wait for more questions, but there aren't any. Karcher gathers the authorization forms.

KARCHER

(Handing them legal papers)
We'll need your permission to operate.

SOLOMON

We need time to think.

LEAH

You're sure you can save our one son?

KARCHER

There're no guarantees that we'll be successful.

SOLOMON

You were successful with all the other operations you did.

KARCHER

None of the twins I operated on shared a heart.

MCGRAW

We have every reason to be optimistic. The heart your sons share is very strong. And all the other organs are functioning normally.

SOLOMON

These operations the other doctors did -- on the babies who shared a heart. How many were successful?

KARCHER

None were.

1/25/15

SCENE 3 P. 15

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LIGHTS FADE TO BLACK

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SCENE 4

That night, Leah and Solomon are in the ICU waiting room, which they've turned into their own living space. Solomon is reviewing several pages of legal documents while Leah empties four paper bags of two sets of dishes and food, stacking the meat and dairy products in different piles.

LEAH

(Shaking her head as she takes out the two sets of dishes)
Even at a time like this your mother is thinking kosher.

SOLOMON

Be thankful. Her cooking is a lot better than the hospital's.

LEAH

She wanted to stay here with us tonight.

SOLOMON

The poor woman was exhausted.

LEAH

She wants to do what she can to help. I suppose.

SOLOMON

She's an old woman in poor health. It's better that she's at home resting.
(Referring to the papers he's been looking at)
They're calling our sons Baby X and Baby Y.

LEAH

They don't know their names?

SOLOMON

Of course not.
(Indicating the documents)
Look at all these words. Most of them say what could go wrong so we can't sue them.

LEAH

Why are you reading that stuff?

SOLOMON

You should read legal documents before you sign them.

LEAH

No one reads those things.

SOLOMON

Three pages telling us bad things.

LEAH

Dr. McGraw was annoyed we didn't sign the papers when we were with them.

SOLOMON

I don't like that woman. All she cares about is what she wants to do.

LEAH

Dr. Karcher agreed with her on what should be done.

SOLOMON

(Indicating the legal papers)

We can't sign this, Leah.

LEAH

It's just legal gobbledegook.

SOLOMON

Don't you realize what this is saying?

LEAH

It's authorizing the operation.

SOLOMON

They're asking for permission to kill one of our sons.

LEAH

No, they're not.

SOLOMON

They are.

LEAH

No.

SOLOMON

Look, it says right here, first they will kill one baby and then they will separate them. We can't let them do that.

LEAH

They'll both die if we don't separate them.

SOLOMON

The doctors are only guessing that will happen.

LEAH

Even if they're wrong, our sons will be living terrible lives tied together like this. They won't be able to go to school. Or have girlfriends. Marriage and children will be impossible.

SOLOMON

Is that a reason to kill our son? So the other one will have a better life? If we do this operation, every time we look at the one who lives, we'll be thinking of the one we killed.

(Getting his laptop)

Look what I found on the internet.

LEAH

I don't care about that.

SOLOMON

Look.

LEAH

With all that's happening, how can you keep going to that computer?

SOLOMON

You're the science teacher. You're the one who's always talking about data. Statistics. Facts and figures to support conclusions. I'm getting information so we can make a decision.

(Indicating his laptop)

Here.

She refuses to look.

SOLOMON (cont'd)

There're a lot of things about Siamese twins we don't know about. For one thing, they're not called Siamese twins anymore. They're called conjoined twins. Look at these two conjoined twins in India.

LEAH

(Reluctantly looking at the screen)

So.

SOLOMON

They're 40 years old.

LEAH

They're performers in a freak show.

SOLOMON

It's a poor country and people do what they must to survive. Look at these two teenage girls on YouTube. In Minnesota.

LEAH

(Looking at the screen)

Someone would make a movie of such a tragic thing?

SOLOMON

There's nothing to be ashamed of. So what do you think?

LEAH

What do you mean what do I think?

SOLOMON

What do you think of these girls?

LEAH

They're very pretty.

SOLOMON

Don't they look happy?

LEAH

Yes.

SOLOMON

(Indicating the laptop screen)

Here's a shot of the twins in high school. Flirting with a boy in the hallway.

LEAH

They're doing it very well.

SOLOMON

The guy might get a double date out of this.

LEAH

I don't think that was very funny.

SOLOMON

I'm sorry. This is not a time to be making jokes. But we must try and see the good. I'm happy for these girls. A lot of things are possible. Look at this clip. I can't believe it. They passed their driving tests and are driving a car fixed up especially for them.

Leah looks at the screen in amazement.

LEAH

It was cute the way the twins were flirting with that boy.

SOLOMON

A very good looking boy. I bet he was captain of the football team. They've got a lot of advantages over other girls. They don't have to text each other.

(Seeing Leah's reproachful look)

Another bad joke. Excuse me again.

LEAH

If only this were possible with our sons.

SOLOMON

It will be. We must believe this.

LEAH

Always, you're such an optimist.

SOLOMON

Isn't that why you married me? You said a man who always sees the glass as half full must be a good man.

LEAH

It was one of your attractive features. I was so tired of empty half glasses. Growing up, my parents were always talking about how badly they were being treated and how things could only get worse. It made me think that if Jews were always being treated so badly, maybe it would be better not to be a Jew.

SOLOMON

(With shock)

Leah.

LEAH

It was the passing thought of a rebellious teenager. I was questioning everything back then.

SOLOMON

It was your rebellious nature that first attracted me to you.

LEAH

How could you pass up all those obedient women for me?

SOLOMON

A question I was asked many times.

By whom? The obedient women?

LEAH

My parents.

SOLOMON

(Indicating the computer)
Let me see.

LEAH

Solomon hands her his computer. She replays the film of the teenage twins.

They do look happy, don't they?

LEAH (cont'd)

I want to take our sons home.

SOLOMON

What!

LEAH

I know it's not going to be easy. There're a lot of things we'll have to learn. Little things. Like how to dress them. And feed them. And all sorts of bigger things we don't even know about yet.

SOLOMON

Something could go wrong.

LEAH

We'll bring them back to the hospital that moment they look like they're in trouble.

SOLOMON

Could we get them back in time?

LEAH

The hospital isn't that far away. We'll have everything packed in the car, ready to go.

SOLOMON

This is such a risky thing to do.

LEAH

We'll prove those doctors wrong.

SOLOMON

I don't know if I can do this.

LEAH

SOLOMON

Of course you can. We'll be doing this together. And maybe one day we'll see our sons flirting with the prettiest girl in high school.

LEAH

Wouldn't that be wonderful?

LIGHTS FADE TO BLACK

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SCENE 5

Day 2: The next morning, Karcher's office. He's brewing tea and talking to McGraw.

MCGRAW

The ICU patient reunion is scheduled for next week. You going to go?

KARCHER

Yeah, I guess I'll be there.

MCGRAW

You don't sound very enthusiastic.

KARCHER

Public relations thinks it's important. It gets enough headlines for the hospital.

MCGRAW

It's good showing the public all the things that modern medicine can do.

KARCHER

And all the things we can't do.

MCGRAW

The kids at these reunions wouldn't be here if it wasn't for us.

KARCHER

(Sadly)
I know.

MCGRAW

Saving those kids is a reason to celebrate. Not mope.

KARCHER

Too many of the kids we "save" end up living pathetic lives. What have we condemned them to? You can see the toll it's taking on them and their parents at these reunions.

MCGRAW

We do the best we can.

KARCHER

Is doing everything possible the best we can do? Have we forgotten? Warmth, sympathy, and understanding may outweigh the surgeon's knife or the chemist's drug.

MCGRAW

That was very poetic.

KARCHER

It's part of the oath we took, you know

MCGRAW

The oath?

KARCHER

The Hippocratic Oath.

MCGRAW

I don't remember that.

KARCHER

I know.

MCGRAW

I'm surprised you do. You took that oath more than 40 years ago.

KARCHER

It's in a book I've been reading. On forgotten ethics.

MCGRAW

This is how you spend the little free time you have?

KARCHER

There's another thing in the oath.

(Reciting)

I will apply, for the benefit of the sick, all measures which are required, avoiding those twin traps of over-treatment and therapeutic nihilism.

MCGRAW

I better have another tea. I get the sense that all of this is leading up to something.

KARCHER

Maybe it would be better if we didn't save some of those babies. Tell the parents nothing more can be done. When we know the future will be hopeless for these kids.

MCGRAW

Without telling the parents there's more we could do?

KARCHER

We'd be saving them the pain of deciding what to do. Whatever they decide will be heartbreaking.

MCGRAW

We'd be playing God, Chris.

KARCHER

We played God in the first place. By operating. If it wasn't for us, the babies would have mercifully died at birth. There'd be no decisions to be made.

MCGRAW

I'm a surgeon, not a bioethicist.

KARCHER

Parents will do anything to save a child, no matter how much damage it will ultimately do to the child and the family.

MCGRAW

I tell the parents what's medically possible and the pros and the cons of doing something more. It's their decision Chris.

KARCHER

Yes, that makes it a lot easier for us.

The phone rings. Karcher answers it.

KARCHER (cont'd)

Yes...Send them in.

(Hangs up)

It's the Goldins.

MCGRAW

Finally we can get going. They sure took their time.

KARCHER

This has not been an easy decision for them.

MCGRAW

It seemed a pretty obvious decision to me.

The parents come in. They greet each other. Karcher indicates two chairs.

KARCHER

Would you care for some tea?

They decline. He pours a single cup.

KARCHER (cont'd)

Do you have any questions for me? Or Dr. McGraw?

SOLOMON

(Handing him back the consent form)

This has made everything perfectly clear.

KARCHER

(Looking at the form)

You didn't sign it.

SOLOMON

After reading that, we realized we couldn't.

MCGRAW

The consent forms scare everyone.

KARCHER

The lawyers require us to list all the negative outcomes that could possibly occur, no matter how remote.

SOLOMON

We want to take our sons home.

MCGRAW

I don't understand.

SOLOMON

We don't want you to separate them.

MCGRAW

You did understand what we said? Without the surgery...

SOLOMON

Many conjoined twins have lived well into adulthood.

MCGRAW

What makes you think that?

SOLOMON

I've been doing research.

MCGRAW

You have?

SOLOMON

We saw a wonderful film clip on Youtube of two teenage girls who...

MCGRAW

The twins in Minnesota.

SOLOMON

Yes.

MCGRAW

They were joined at the side and each girl had her own complete set of organs. They're an exceptional case.

SOLOMON

Our sons will be an exceptional case.

MCGRAW

We must base our decisions on what's most likely to happen.

SOLOMON

Perhaps scientists must do this. But not parents.

MCGRAW

You're gambling on what you hope the outcome will be. This is a very...

SOLOMON

It's our decision.

MCGRAW

But...

SOLOMON

It's our decision.

KARCHER

Of course it's your decision.

SOLOMON

When can we take them home?

MCGRAW

They're too weak to go home.

SOLOMON

The nurses say they're doing well.

MCGRAW

Mr. Goldin. Even if they get strong enough to go home, eventually their heart will fail. Maybe not this week or even this month. But eventually.

SOLOMON

Eventually, all our hearts will fail.

LEAH

If the heart started to fail, would there be warning signs?

KARCHER

Probably.

LEAH

What signs?

SOLOMON

Why do you want to know these details, Leah?

LEAH

We have to know, Solomon, if we're going to take them home.

SOLOMON

Yes, of course. You're right.

(To Karcher)

What would the warning signs be?

KARCHER

Because their heart was failing to pump enough blood, you'd see them struggling to breathe to compensate for the lack of oxygen. They might appear a little blue.

LEAH

If we rushed them to the hospital, could you do the surgery then?

MCGRAW

It would make everything a lot more difficult and the outlook less certain. It's far better to do the surgery now, while your sons are stable, than to race back to the hospital with them in heart failure.

SOLOMON

We're willing to take that gamble.

MCGRAW

The odds are not in your favor.

KARCHER

They've made their decision, Dr. McGraw.

MCGRAW

I know, but...

KARCHER

(To parents)

If your sons continue to gain strength, you'll be able to take them home in a few days.

LEAH

You'll let us know when...

KARCHER

Yes, of course.

SOLOMON

You know where to find us. We've kind of taken over the waiting room.

Solomon stands and he and Leah prepare to leave.

SOLOMON (cont'd)

Thank you.

They exit.

MCGRAW

You're letting them take the babies home?

KARCHER

It's what they want. I don't want to insist on a procedure that's never been done successfully. Not when there's an alternative.

MCGRAW

It's not a viable alternative.

KARCHER

Who knows? The father may be right, Kiera. We don't know for certain that the heart won't be able to support both babies.

LIGHTS FADE TO BLACK

SCENE 6

Day 4: Leah is in the rocking chair, rocking with her babies attached to a long monitoring line. Solomon appears in the doorway with a camera and a long lens.

SOLOMON

The nurse wouldn't let me bring in my lights.

LEAH

You were going to set up your lights in here?

SOLOMON

The lighting is not good for pictures. Are you excited about taking them home tomorrow?

LEAH

That's not quite the right word.

SOLOMON

All mothers are scared when they take their babies home.

LEAH

What about fathers?

SOLOMON

We leave the worrying up to the women.

(Responding to Leah's look)

All right, I'm worried. But I know we can do this, Leah.

LEAH

So what picture do you want to take?

SOLOMON

Just go about your business and pretend I'm not here.

LEAH

How can I pretend you're not here when you're pointing that thing at me?

SOLOMON

Talk to them.

Solomon starts circling around them, looking for the best angle to take pictures.

Aaron starts to cry.

LEAH

Don't cry. Don't wake up your brother.

(Calming him)

That's my dear.

SOLOMON

They like being in your arms.

Solomon can't find the scene he wants.

LEAH

(Forcing herself to keep smiling)

Aren't you going to take your pictures?

SOLOMON

I'm waiting.

LEAH

For what?

SOLOMON

For something to happen.

LEAH

What's there to happen?

Aaron starts crying very loud.

LEAH (cont'd)

Shhh, my darling.

The crying gets worse.

LEAH (cont'd)

Shhhh. Shhh. Shhh.

Joshua starts crying, too. Solomon starts madly taking pictures of the crying babies.

LEAH (cont'd)

Now they're both crying. What are you doing, Solomon?

SOLOMON

I'm documenting the moment.

LEAH

This is what you were waiting for? For them to start crying?

SOLOMON

You know I like action photographs.

Leah calms the babies and returns them to the bassinet.

LEAH

You couldn't have taken the pictures while they were happy and smiling?

SOLOMON

(Going to the bassinet and studying the babies)

I hate smiling pictures. Family photo albums are filled with them. It's as if children never cried when they were growing up. Family albums are not an accurate representation of child rearing.

LEAH

Neither is an album filled with pictures of only crying babies.

SOLOMON

Fair enough. I'll compromise.

He takes a bunch of pictures of them sleeping.

SOLOMON (cont'd)

There. We have pictures of them neither smiling nor crying.

LEAH

They're sleeping.

She looks tenderly at the babies. He snaps a picture of her.

SOLOMON

Now there's the picture I was waiting for.

LEAH

A picture of me?

SOLOMON

A picture of a mother looking at her newborn babies. A very loving mother.

LEAH

A very frightened mother.

SOLOMON

I called Susan to make arrangements for tomorrow. She said everyone wanted to come to the hospital to see the babies.

LEAH

Does everyone know?

SOLOMON

I'm sure Susan's told them.

LEAH

Oh.

SOLOMON

Is that bad?

LEAH

I'm not ready to show off the twins.

SOLOMON

I didn't think you were. So I made an excuse. I told Susan to tell everyone there wasn't time. Because we'd be coming home soon.

LEAH

I'm glad you'll be taking time off from work.

SOLOMON

So am I. We're going to have a ball.

Solomon starts taking pictures of the babies in the bassinet as Leah looks at him with love.

7

7

SCENE 7

DAY 5. The waiting room late that night. Solomon is reading the Psalms. Leah is straightening up their things.

LEAH

I won't be sorry to leave this place.

SOLOMON

We've been camping out here for almost a week.

LEAH

It feels like a month.

SOLOMON

This time tomorrow we'll be home with the boys.

LEAH

What time is Susan picking us up?

SOLOMON

Max will be here by 11.

LEAH

They might not be ready by then.

SOLOMON

The nurse said they'd release them after morning rounds.

LEAH

Did Susan tell Max to bring the carrier?

SOLOMON

I gave her the list of things for Max to bring.

LEAH

Do you think it will be big enough for both of them?

SOLOMON

The twins are tiny. And we got the biggest one in the store.

LEAH

What about the receiving blankets? The ones my mother knitted. Does Susan know to bring them?

SOLOMON

Did you put them on the list?

LEAH

Yes. I said the two blankets with blue stripes, folded up on the twins' bed.

SOLOMON

I never thought my mother would finish them in time.

LEAH

It's very important to her that we bring the twins home wrapped up in her blankets.

SOLOMON

I'm sorry your parents aren't here to see their grandchildren.

LEAH

They died far too young.

SOLOMON

My father was only 61.

LEAH

They were not much older.

McGraw enters, looking very concerned. Leah is surprised to see her so late at night.

SOLOMON

You're here awfully late. I hope you're getting paid overtime.

Solomon laughs at his little joke. McGraw doesn't. Leah sees her concerned expression.

LEAH

Something's wrong.

SOLOMON

Just because Dr. McGraw is here late at night doesn't mean something's wrong.

MCGRAW

There's been a setback.

SOLOMON

A setback?

MCGRAW

They're getting oxygen and we've started them on some drugs.

LEAH

They're not in danger or anything. Are they?

MCGRAW

They're in heart failure.

LEAH

Oh no.

MCGRAW

They're stable now, with the drugs we're giving them.

SOLOMON

We'll still be able to take them home tomorrow. Won't we?

MCGRAW

That's no longer possible.

LEAH

I want to see them.

MCGRAW

Not now. The nurses are getting them settled. They'll come out to get you when they're ready.

McGraw sits down with the Goldins.

MCGRAW (cont'd)

We must talk about what to do now.

LEAH

The drugs won't make them better?

MCGRAW

No, Mrs. Goldin. There are no drugs that will make them better. We can maintain them on the drugs we do have for a while. I don't know for how long. But eventually the heart will become too badly damaged and the drugs will stop working.

LEAH

There must be something else you can do.

MCGRAW

Our only option is surgery.

SOLOMON

Always it comes back to that.

MCGRAW

You have to make a decision.

SOLOMON

We already have.

MCGRAW

Now is the time to reconsider that decision.

SOLOMON

There is nothing to reconsider.

LEAH

We have to reconsider, Solomon.

MCGRAW

Perhaps you and your wife should talk this over. We don't have much time.

(Standing)

I wish there was something more we could do.

She exits.

LEAH

We have to do the surgery, Solomon.

Solomon shakes his head.

LEAH (cont'd)

We have no choice.

Solomon doesn't respond.

LEAH (cont'd)

You said we'd reconsider our decision if things got worse. It's happened, Sol. Things have gotten worse.

SOLOMON

It would be a sin.

LEAH

What!

SOLOMON

The Torah says it's forbidden. We can't violate the mitzvah.

LEAH

We have 613 mitzvahs. There must be one that allows it.

SOLOMON

You can't shop around for the commandment you want.

LEAH

You're not a rabbi.

SOLOMON

I've devoted my life to study.

LEAH

We should ask our rabbi.

SOLOMON

The Torah is very clear on this. There's no room for interpretation.

LEAH

Call Rabbi Isaac.

SOLOMON

Rabbi Isaac is very young.

LEAH

He knows the mitzvahs.

SOLOMON

You think I don't know them?

LEAH

We need guidance.

SOLOMON

That rabbi doesn't know enough to give us guidance.

LEAH

He's our rabbi.

SOLOMON

He's all touchy, feely. He is not a scholar. Many discussions we've had, and I'm always finding him wanting.

LEAH

Rabbis are supposed to guide us.

SOLOMON

We're guided by the mitzvahs.

LEAH

Call him. Please.

SOLOMON

There is nothing to discuss with Rabbi Isaac.

8

LIGHTS FADE TO BLACK

8

SCENE 8

DAY 6: Rabbi Isaac's office the next morning.
ISAAC, in his early 30s, is meeting with Solomon
and Leah.

LEAH

We were going to take them home today, Rabbi Isaac.

ISAAC

This is such a terrible tragedy you must bear.

LEAH

We were talking about taking them home when the doctor came in and told us.

ISAAC

What the doctors told you is very, very sad. Of course, you must operate. In our religion, nothing is more sacred than life.

SOLOMON

If you had only enough food to keep one of your two babies alive, would you feed one and deny the other? No, of course not. You'd feed both babies until the food ran out and leave it in God's hands.

ISAAC

Some times God needs our help.

LEAH

Rabbi Isaac is telling us it's not a sin to do this surgery. Listen to him, Solomon.

SOLOMON

Would all rabbis agree that it's not a sin?

LEAH

We don't need all rabbis to agree. One rabbi is enough.

ISAAC

It's rare that all rabbis agree on any thing. But I'm sure, on something like this, few would disagree.

SOLOMON

Which means some would disagree.

ISAAC

Is there another reason you don't want to do the surgery, Solomon?

SOLOMON

What other reason?

ISAAC

I don't know. I'm just thinking how difficult it must be for any parent to authorize an operation like this. A parent would do anything to avoid this.

LEAH

We wanted these babies so much.

SOLOMON

For three years we waited. We were beginning to think we couldn't have any children. And then Leah becomes pregnant. With twins. God was good to us.

ISAAC

Would getting an opinion from The Rav make this decision easier for you, Solomon? I would be glad to seek a ruling from him.

SOLOMON

Would such an important person, the leader of our community, take time to review this matter?

ISAAC

It's at times like this that you go to him. He's been called the Supreme Court of our laws.

SOLOMON

Did you hear that, Leah? We'll be getting a ruling from such an important person. Surely this is a sign from God.

ISAAC

Then it's agreed. I will contact The Rav.

LEAH

And if he disagrees with Rabbi Isaac, Solomon? We'll have one rabbi who says yes and another who says no.

SOLOMON

Then we should do what The Rav says. I mean no offense, Rabbi Isaac.

ISAAC

No offense taken. As I said, The Rav is the authority on our laws.

LEAH

Are the laws so important?

SOLOMON

These are the laws of our faith. Laws given by God to Moses on Mount Sinai. Faith in these laws is what's held our people together. Without them, we're nothing. It's what makes us Jews.

LEAH

Right now, I'm not caring about these things.

SOLOMON

"These things" are what's important. When we don't know what's right, our religion shows us the way. I find strength in our faith. I wish you could, too, Leah.

LEAH

I don't want to turn my back on our religion. But when the laws don't let us...

SOLOMON

We must have faith. Like Job.

LEAH

All his children were killed.

SOLOMON

God was testing Job. In the end, he was rewarded with riches many times what he had.

LEAH

All his children were killed.

SOLOMON

He was able to endure because his faith gave him strength.

LEAH

(Reluctantly acquiescing)

God is asking too much of us.

SOLOMON

Like Job, we'll get through this. With the guidance of The Rav.

LEAH

Do you think The he'll agree with you, Rabbi Isaac?

ISAAC

I can't predict what he'll decide. But I don't think you have anything to worry about, Leah.

LIGHTS FADE TO BLACK

SCENE 9

Day 7. The Rav's library, that night. THE RAV, who is very old, is checking out a stack of tea cans. The doorbell rings. He doesn't hear it. Finally The Rav selects the tea he wants. The doorbell rings again. He puts the tea into a pot and adds boiling water. A gentle knock on the door. Smelling the aroma coming from the pot, he smiles with satisfaction. Loud pounding is heard. He is startled. He goes to the door and opens it. Isaac is standing there, about to knock again.

THE RAV

Adam, all that noise was coming from you? You frightened me with that pounding. But it's good that you're here. Come in. Come in.

ISAAC

I didn't think you heard me.

THE RAV

What?

ISAAC

I said I didn't think you heard me.

THE RAV

So much noise. I thought it was an emergency. Automobile accident. Someone warning me the house is on fire. Why didn't you use the doorbell?

ISAAC

I did use...

(Realizing Segal has become hard of hearing)

I'm sorry I frightened you.

THE RAV

But you're here. That's what's important. It's good to see you. How is your wife? And the two boys?

ISAAC

Fine, thank you.

THE RAV

Did you have trouble finding me? Everyone complains that the streets out here make no sense.

ISAAC

No problem at all.

THE RAV

Would you care for some tea?

ISAAC

Yes, please.

The Rav pours the tea into a glass and hands it to Isaac. They both savor the tea.

THE RAV

If I understood your message correctly, you have an urgent matter to discuss. A matter of life and death, you said

ISAAC

It is.

THE RAV

Literally?

ISAAC

One of the couples in my congregation has just become the parents of twin sons.

THE RAV

A double blessing.

ISAAC

Perhaps not. They're conjoined twins. And they're dying.

THE RAV

Both twins are dying? What a terrible thing for this poor couple.

ISAAC

The twins share a single heart.

THE RAV

They have only one heart between them?

ISAAC

Yes.

THE RAV

That's not good.

ISAAC

Doctors say they could save one of the babies, but only if they sacrificed the other. The parents must authorize the surgery, but the father is very religious and needs reassurance that sacrificing the baby won't be a sin.

THE RAV

What did you tell him?

ISAAC

I told him that they must operate.

THE RAV

So then you didn't think it was a sin?

ISAAC

It's obvious what must be done. But the father questions my interpretation of the laws.

THE RAV

He sounds like a very bright young man.

ISAAC

Because he questions my interpretation of the laws?

THE RAV

Because he knows enough to question a rabbi.

ISAAC

He's devoted his life to religious studies. He wanted the opinion of another rabbi, an authority on these matters. So, of course, I came to you.

THE RAV

To confirm the opinion you've already given to this young man?

ISAAC

Knowing that we agree on this should make it easier for him to make the difficult decision he must.

THE RAV

Assuming that I concur in your opinion.

ISAAC

In this case the decision is obvious.

THE RAV

Don't you remember our many discussions, Adam. And how we agreed that always the obvious should be challenged.

ISAAC

Surely you agree that they must save the one baby.

THE RAV

Perhaps. But first three questions must be answered.

ISAAC

Always three questions must be answered.

THE RAV

If there's only one question, you haven't thought enough about the problem. And with four questions, there's too much to be discussed.

ISAAC

The only question is whether the two babies should be separated.

THE RAV

That's why the decision appears obvious to you. You're not asking enough questions.

ISAAC

All right, then. What is your first question?

THE RAV

How many babies do we have here?

ISAAC

Two babies, of course.

THE RAV

Two complete babies, each with a thinking brain? Or is one baby so damaged that he is merely an appendage to the other? If that's the case, then the decision is obvious. Remove the appendage so the one baby may live.

ISAAC

They are two complete human beings.

THE RAV

Otherwise, normal in every way?

ISAAC

As far as they can determine with their many tests. The babies are so tiny. And wrapped up in a single blanket they look like normal newborns. They are adorable.

THE RAV

Of course they are adorable. God, in his infinite wisdom, makes all babies adorable so parents won't abandon them and leave them on the side of the road when they cry.

ISAAC

Such a remark coming from a Rav?

THE RAV

I've become a cranky old man. But adorable.

ISAAC

Here's a picture of the babies.

He puts a picture on the table, but the Rav turns it over and pours another cup of tea, savoring the aroma.

THE RAV

Gyokuro green tea. Very expensive. But some things are worth spending a little extra for.

Isaac picks up the picture, disappointed that the Rav had no interest in looking at it, and holds it in his hand.

ISAAC

What is the second question we must answer?

THE RAV

You should know what the second question must be.

ISAAC

I think I better let you tell me.

THE RAV

Which baby will live?

ISAAC

I don't know.

THE RAV

We can't go any further until you answer that question.

ISAAC

Is it so important to answer that question?

THE RAV

Unless you want to assume the obvious.

ISAAC

The doctors aren't certain which baby they can save.

THE RAV

How can they not know and still do the operation?

ISAAC

The surgeons told the parents that they'll decide which baby to sacrifice during the operation.

THE RAV

I see.

The Rav sips tea. Isaac waits.

ISAAC

The mother has no doubt what should be done. I feel sorry for both parents but especially the father. He thinks he has no choice but to follow the mitzvah. He will be relieved to know that you say it's all right to save the one baby.

The Rav's silence makes Isaac uneasy.

ISAAC (cont'd)

What is the third question?

THE RAV

There's no need to ask the third question. We already know what must be done.

ISAAC

What?

THE RAV

Nothing.

ISAAC

Nothing?

THE RAV

It would be a sin to do this operation.

ISAAC

I don't think you understand. Then both babies will die.

THE RAV

I understand completely. The double blessing is a double tragedy.

ISAAC

It would be a sin to let both babies die when one could be saved.

THE RAV

The sin would be killing the one baby. The mitzvah against sacrificing one life to save another is not difficult to interpret.

ISAAC

Yes.

Isaac drinks his tea in deep contemplation.

ISAAC (cont'd)

(Finally)

If I was the father of these babies, I couldn't let both die when I could save one of them.

THE RAV

Did they ask you what you would do?

ISAAC

No.

THE RAV

Just as well.

ISAAC

I couldn't live with myself if I did nothing.

THE RAV

The parents came to you for help in understanding our laws. You're their rabbi. It's our responsibility to guide them, according to our laws, not your personal preferences.

ISAAC

Leviticus 19:16 says don't stand idly by when you can save a life.

THE RAV

Do not give any of your children to be sacrificed. Leviticus 18:21.

ISAAC

There are too many contradictions.

THE RAV

This is why we spend so much time studying, weighing this point against that, deciding which mitzvah should apply to the issues we've been called upon to settle.

ISAAC

There is another commandment.

THE RAV

You are telling me that there are more commandments than these two?

ISAAC

I'm sorry, Rav. I worded that badly.

THE RAV

Tell me of this other commandment.

ISAAC

Whoever saves a single soul of Israel, it is as if he has saved a full world.

THE RAV

Whoever kills a single soul of Israel, it is as if he has destroyed a full world.

ISAAC

I remember our many discussions in the seminary and how they felt more like we were playing ping pong.

THE RAV

Your serve.

ISAAC

No matter what commandment or parable I come up with, you have one that says the opposite.

THE RAV

So far your serves have not be difficult to return.

They sits silently drinking their tea, while Isaac searches his mind for another parable or ruling. Finally he comes up with something, smiling because he thinks this is one the Rav can't challenge.

ISAAC

If the life of a woman is threatened by her pregnancy, it is permitted to sacrifice the fetus. You yourself have written this. So I don't think this time you can disagree.

THE RAV

You read my response?

ISAAC

I did.

THE RAV

Then you must know that I also wrote that if the birth has progressed to the point that the head of the baby protrudes from the mother, then the baby cannot be sacrificed.

The fetus is no longer a fetus. It is a baby, breathing on its own, not dependent on the mother. The life of a fetus is not equal to the life of a mother. But the life of a baby is.

ISAAC

The Nazis want to execute the mayor, who is hiding, and demand that the villagers produce him.

THE RAV

Ah, yes.

ISAAC

If they don't, all the men in the village will be killed. You said it's permitted for the villagers to surrender the mayor to save the others.

THE RAV

The Nazis demand that the villagers select 10 young men to be executed or they will kill all the women and children in the village.

ISAAC

And, of course, they must.

THE RAV

They can't. It isn't permitted.

ISAAC

Even though the women and children will be slaughtered?

THE RAV

The villagers have no choice. In example one, the Nazis have decided who will be killed. In example two, the villagers decide. Jews may not decide who among them must die.

ISAAC

So we let even more of our people die.

THE RAV

Just as we must let two babies die instead of one. Many have died for our faith. Like the villagers in the second example, the twins' parents have no choice. It's a tragedy. They must have faith.

ISAAC

The parent's faith is being put to such a terrible test.

THE RAV

Their faith will give them the strength to do what must be done. I'm glad to see that you have not become...

(Looking for the word)
...acquiescent.

ISAAC

The parents worked so hard to have these babies. They'd been trying for years. It will not be easy to tell them what you have decided.

THE RAV

I've decided nothing. I interpreted our laws.

ISAAC

I don't think they will see it that way. The mother certainly won't.

THE RAV

Her issue is with Moses, not me.

Isaac looks at the picture again. The Rav looks at him with disappointment and gets up from his chair.

ISAAC

I know you're busy, but could I have one more moment of your time?

THE RAV

Of course.

ISAAC

There is another parable I read regarding the morality of making such choices.

THE RAV

One of my parables?

ISAAC

No. Rabbi Rubin.

THE RAV

Rabbi Rubin and I have often disagreed.

ISAAC

Two mountain climbers, tied to each other with a safety rope, are climbing a mountain. The second climber loses his footing and falls, but the safety rope prevents him from falling to his death. The first climber clings to the rocks, but the extra weight is too much for him. They will both fall to their death if he doesn't cut the rope.

THE RAV

I know what you're arguing. An excellent example, Adam.

ISAAC

Rabbi Rubin says the first climber may cut the rope to save his own life.

THE RAV

This time I agree with Rabbi Rubin.

ISAAC

It's just like the twins. They're tied together and if one is not cut loose from the other, both will die.

THE RAV

Which twin is holding onto the rock, and which one hangs helplessly?

ISAAC

They both hang onto the rock. And they both hang helplessly.

THE RAV

And that's why the climber can be saved but the twin cannot. It was already decided that the second climber should die when he lost his grip. Not when the rope was cut.

ISAAC

Who decided this?

THE RAV

God, of course. But God has not decided which twin dies. The doctors will. And it is forbidden for man to make decisions that only God may make.

ISAAC

Sitting together, locked away in your office, with only the Talmud and Torah to consider, it was much easier talking about how inviolate the laws must be.

THE RAV

So what are you saying, Adam? You have doubts, now that you must weigh the wisdom of these laws against the image of two babies you have come to care about.

ISAAC

Is that why you wouldn't look at the picture?

THE RAV

You are fond of the babies?

ISAAC

How can one not be?

THE RAV

This is why we are "locked away" in our rooms, so that the images of babies don't influence us while we're reading, thinking, debating which exceptions can be made to a mitzvah and which cannot.

ISAAC

Is it right to ignore the images?

THE RAV

We must.

The Rav studies Isaac. He can see how troubled he is.

THE RAV(cont'd)

Adam, we would be sliding down a very slippery hill the moment we started deciding who among us should live and who should die.

ISAAC

We had so many discussions about that hill.

THE RAV

And as I recall, you were in agreement that our culture would not survive if we started down it.

ISAAC

Everything seemed so much clearer back then.

LIGHTS FADE TO BLACK

10

10

SCENE 10

Day 8: That afternoon, Karcher's office. Karcher and McGraw enter. They're dressed in green surgical scrubs. They plop down in two chairs exhausted.

MCGRAW

That dress rehearsal was a disaster.

KARCHER

I'd hardly call it a disaster. But we can do better.

Karcher grabs the phone.

KARCHER (cont'd)

(On the phone)

Any word from the rabbis or the Goldins...Thank you, Harriet.

(Hangs up)

Once rabbis start debating, they never stop.

MCGRAW

What do you know about rabbis?

KARCHER

Fiddler on the Roof.

MCGRAW

God may have created the world and everything in it in six days. But we don't have that much time.

KARCHER

Anesthesiology isn't happy about us turning the babies over during surgery.

MCGRAW

I need access, Chris. What's the big deal?

KARCHER

The babies will be attached to 13 monitoring lines and tubes.

MCGRAW

Thirteen!

KARCHER

They counted them. They're afraid they'll get tangled up if we turn the babies over.

MCGRAW

Tangling up their damn lines is the least of my worries. A bigger problem is the crowded O.R.

KARCHER

It's only going to get more crowded. I asked them to put in an extra sterile table for the baby we sacrifice.

MCGRAW

But the body will be taken away as soon as it's separated.

KARCHER

I've had second thoughts about that. If something goes wrong and we need a graft or organ transplant, you couldn't have a better donor than a twin brother.

MCGRAW

God, I hope it doesn't come to that. We'll be juggling enough balls as it is. I'm worried about fitting the heart inside the rib cage. With the extra chambers, it's much bigger than a normal heart.

KARCHER

I can make a bigger rib cage for you with grafts from the brother. What I'm worried about is what'll happen to Baby X when the carotid is clamped and Baby Y is sacrificed? Toxins will start pouring out of his dying tissue, endangering his brother.

MCGRAW

First clamp all the other blood vessels connecting the babies to keep out the poisoned blood.

KARCHER

Wouldn't the heart arrest with the sudden drop in blood volume?

MCGRAW

It's a risk. But what choice do we have?

KARCHER

Then I better cross my fingers when I clamp.

MCGRAW

You're going to clamp the artery? Not your assistant?

KARCHER

Everyone will have enough bad memories about this.

MCGRAW

We've got to do something about the crowding.

KARCHER

You keep coming back to that. What difference does it make to you? You'll be at the table. Everyone else will be behind you.

MCGRAW

It's not a good time for me to feel crowded. What the hell was that photographer doing in there?

KARCHER

He has to know ahead of time where he can go without interfering with us.

MCGRAW

I don't see why we're taking pictures anyway.

KARCHER

Public relations says reporters are coming from all over. And they'll want pictures.

MCGRAW

How'd the media find out?

KARCHER

The hospital where the babies were born.

The phone rings. Karcher answers it.

Karcher (cont'd)

(On the phone)

Yes, Harriet...Send them in.

(Hangs up)

The parents and the rabbi.

MCGRAW

That sounds like a Jewish bedtime story.

Solomon, Leah and Isaac enter. They greet each other.

KARCHER

(Indicating chairs)

Please.

Everyone sits down.

MCGRAW

So, everything has been settled?

ISAAC

I met with The Rav...

MCGRAW

The Rav?

ISAAC

The leader of our community. He's the authority on our laws.

MCGRAW

He agreed that the operation should be done?

ISAAC

We discussed the issues from every direction, with The Rav taking one position and me the other.

MCGRAW

I'm sure you had a good discussion. He agreed?

ISAAC

His experience with these matters is far greater than mine. He has reviewed many cases like this one -- not exactly the same, of course, but similar.

MCGRAW

So he understands why we have to do what we have to do?

ISAAC

He understands completely.

MCGRAW

Then we can go ahead.

ISAAC

No. I'm afraid you can't go ahead.

MCGRAW

We can't operate?

ISAAC

The operation can't be permitted.

Karcher and McGraw are stunned.

MCGRAW

That makes no sense.

ISAAC

The Rav said the operation would violate the laws of our faith..

MCGRAW

The team is ready to go.

ISAAC

I'm sorry.

KARCHER

Do you agree with him?

ISAAC

It's not for me to agree or disagree. He's the authority on our laws.

KARCHER

(To the parents)

Do you accept the ruling?

ISAAC

They do.

SOLOMON

We have to.

KARCHER

Mrs. Goldin?

She looks at the ground, without responding.

KARCHER (cont'd)

How could saving the life of an innocent baby violate your laws?

ISAAC

Saving the life of this baby doesn't violate halacha. But The Rav says killing his brother does.

SOLOMON

Man may not decide who must die.

MCGRAW

We're deciding who lives.

ISAAC

But it isn't God who is making the decision.

KARCHER

If God had decided which baby should live, would the operation have been permitted?

ISAAC

Unfortunately, God didn't make the decision.

KARCHER

But if he had?

ISAAC

He didn't.

KARCHER

Perhaps I should meet with The Rav. I don't think he's aware of all the issues involved in this case.

ISAAC

I explained all the facts to him very carefully.

KARCHER

I'm sure you did -- all the facts that you were aware of. But this case is much more complex than you might realize. Medically. And ethically. That's why I want to talk to him.

LEAH

(With renewed hope)
You would meet with The Rav?

KARCHER

It's important that he has all the medical facts.

LEAH

Solomon, maybe the ruling will be changed.

ISAAC

That's not very likely, Leah. I've never seen him change one of his rulings.

(Standing)
Well, I think our business is concluded. Thank you, Dr. Karcher. Dr. McGraw.

Exchanging good-byes with the doctors, the parents
and rabbi exit.

MCGRAW

Son of a bitch.

KARCHER

I wasn't expecting that.

MCGRAW

This is a medical matter, not religious. What the hell is that...

(Seeing the rabbi standing in the doorway, he stops)

Rabbi.

ISAAC

May I speak to you for a moment?

KARCHER

Yes, of course.

ISAAC

I wanted you to know that I did everything I could to convince The Rav that the operation should be permitted. But he rejected every argument I made.

MCGRAW

Tell the parents to ignore what he said.

ISAAC

I can't do that. . . Anymore than judges can ignore rulings by the U.S. Supreme Court. I could not convince him on religious grounds. I was hoping that perhaps you will be more persuasive with your medical facts. Though I don't think so. His only concern is what our laws say.

MCGRAW

So you're saying it would be hopeless talking to him.

ISAAC

Probably. But miracles do happen. A word of warning when you meet with him. Say what you have to say, but don't debate with him. He never loses debates. And don't try to brush away religious concerns with your medical facts.

KARCHER

Is he an open-minded man?

ISAAC

I think so.

KARCHER

Then surely he reconsiders decisions when new information points him in a different direction.

ISAAC

The Rav is very careful about making sure he has all the information before making a decision.

KARCHER

A fair judge can't ignore mitigating factors. Do you know this man well?

ISAAC

I was one of his students. I learned a lot from him, sitting in his office, sipping tea and talking for hours.

KARCHER

Sipping tea?

ISAAC

He's obsessed with tea.

LIGHTS FADE TO BLACK

11

11

SCENE 11

The ICU, a little while later. Solomon is reading the Psalms, rocking in the rocking chair. Leah appears in the doorway.

LEAH

I wondered where you'd gone.

SOLOMON

I took a walk. And somehow ended up here.

LEAH

Tomorrow will be their birthday. They'll be two-weeks old.

SOLOMON

Only two weeks old and already they've stayed in two hospitals.

(Going to the bassinet)

All these things are happening and they're sleeping through it all.

LEAH

What time is Dr. Karcher meeting with The Rav?

SOLOMON

Some time tonight.

LEAH

You think he can get the ruling changed?

SOLOMON

The law is the law. It's not something you can bend in this direction or that with arguments.

LEAH

Well, I hope he reinterprets it.

(After studying the twins)

They seem to be breathing awfully hard.

SOLOMON

They looked OK to me.

LEAH

I wish the meeting was here so The Rav could see the twins.

SOLOMON

That wouldn't make any difference.

LEAH

It should.

(Studying the twins more carefully)

Don't you think they're breathing much harder than before.

SOLOMON

You can remember how they were breathing?

LEAH

Does Joshua look a little blue to you?

SOLOMON

It's these fluorescent lights.

LEAH

But he looks bluer than Aaron.

Solomon gets up and studies the babies.

SOLOMON

They look the same to me.

LEAH

They're both blue.

SOLOMON

I think you're imagining this.

LEAH

I'm not imagining it.

SOLOMON

This is a terrible place for our babies. The lights are always on. Constant noise. They're all tangled up in wires.

LEAH

You don't think they're breathing hard?

(Looking at them)
Maybe a little.

SOLOMON

A monitor alarm sounds.

Oh my God.

LEAH

Something's wrong.

SOLOMON

They're in trouble.

LEAH

Where's the nurse.

SOLOMON

They've stopped breathing.

LEAH

She should be in here.

SOLOMON

Do something.

LEAH

(Yelling)
Nurse. Nurse.

SOLOMON

LIGHTS FADE TO BLACK

CURTAIN ACT I

12

12

ACT II

SCENE 12

It's now one hour later in the ICU. Leah is looking into the bassinet.

LEAH

We almost lost them.

SOLOMON

Suddenly so many people were in this room working over them.

LEAH

What if this had happened after we'd taken them home?

SOLOMON

Maybe it wouldn't have happened if we'd taken them home.

LEAH

It's their weak heart that's the problem. Not this hospital.

SOLOMON

It was a close call.

LEAH

They seem to be resting comfortably.

(Bending into the bassinet)

Hello, my sweet little boys. I want to hug and kiss you. But they won't let me.

SOLOMON

We should let them sleep.

LEAH

(Singing Hebrew Lullaby)

Numi, numi k'tanati,

Numi, numi, nim.

Numi, numi k'tanati,

Numi, numi, nim.

She's looking at the babies with love. Solomon is close to tears.

MEMO TO DIRECTOR:

The lullaby can be heard by searching for “numi numi” on the internet. It would be wonderful if the actor could sing even longer than is indicated here, but I don’t want to press my luck.

CROSSFADE

13

13

SCENE 13

Day 9: The Rav's library, that night. Karcher is meeting with The Rav, who is pouring tea into glasses.

KARCHER

So you're a tea drinker, too.

THE RAV

Nothing is as soothing as a fine cup of tea.

KARCHER

I always have tea before operating. It gives me a chance to think about what I'll be doing in the operating room.

THE RAV

I do the very same thing when I start a response.

(Offering him a bowl with sugar)

Sugar cube?

KARCHER

I never take sugar with my tea.

THE RAV

You should sip tea through a cube of sugar held between your teeth. Have you heard of the flaming tea ceremony?

KARCHER

You're making me feel like a very stodgy tea drinker.

THE RAV

Back home in Russia, on Chanukah, my family would stand in line, holding spoons with sugar cubes soaked in alcohol, waiting for my grandfather to turn off the lights. When he did, we would light the cubes, start singing and dump the flaming cubes into our glasses of tea.

KARCHER

What a wonderful tradition.

THE RAV

But you haven't come here to talk about tea.

KARCHER

I'm here for very selfish reasons and I thank you for taking time to see me.

THE RAV

I, too, agreed to meet with you for selfish reasons. I've read about the many miracles you've performed and have always wanted to meet you. Many of your cases have been used in my seminars on law and ethics.

KARCHER

I'm troubled by the ethical decisions I must make. They fall beyond the scope of laws and medical ethics. I'm often called upon to operate on terribly deformed and compromised children, who wouldn't have lived if I hadn't intervened. But what if God had wanted them to die?

THE RAV

Then God wouldn't have given you the ability to save them.

KARCHER

A few babies die despite what I do.

THE RAV

More decisions God has made.

KARCHER

How do I know what God is intending?

THE RAV

We can never be sure of God's intentions.

KARCHER

Even when they seem obvious?

THE RAV

We must be humble before God.

KARCHER

A trait few surgeons have. It's good that Rabbi Isaac sought your counsel.

THE RAV

More tea?

KARCHER

Yes, please.

He pours the tea.

THE RAV

(Offering sugar cubes to Karcher)
You should try it with a cube of sugar.

Karcher takes a cube and sips tea through it.

KARCHER

Very interesting.

THE RAV

I assume that the reason for this meeting is that you want to talk about the twins.

KARCHER

Yes.

THE RAV

There's nothing more to talk about.

KARCHER

Rabbi Isaac told me about your ruling and he was very kind in explaining why you had to rule as you did.

THE RAV

But you still have questions.

KARCHER

Not so much questions but help in understanding this very complex theological matter. I would certainly not be so presumptuous as to think I could talk you into reconsidering a ruling, which you thought long and hard about before making it.

THE RAV

What is your confusion?

KARCHER

God obviously wanted one baby to live and the other to die. Or else he wouldn't have given one boy a functioning heart and the other a tragically defective one.

THE RAV

Why do you think God wanted this?

KARCHER

Because it happened. And since behind everything is God's will, this must be what he wanted.

THE RAV

Where in the confusion. You seem to understand everything perfectly.

KARCHER

Here is the confusion. God wants me to save the one baby.

THE RAV

What makes you think that?

KARCHER

If he didn't want me to, he wouldn't have given me the ability to save the baby.

THE RAV

God may want you to save one baby, but he doesn't want you to kill the other one.

KARCHER

Yes, of course. I don't want to kill one of the babies. All I want to do is save the one I can. In doing that, if the other should die, that would not be my intention but God's will.

THE RAV

Then which baby does God want you to save?

KARCHER

I won't know for sure until I operate.

THE RAV

That's why you can't operate.

KARCHER

It's the only way we can know God's will. Isn't it?

THE RAV

If you don't know now, how would you know after you operated.

KARCHER

Once we were in there, we could examine the hearts and determine whether the arteries for the working heart come from Baby X or Baby Y. If the arteries come from Baby X, for instance, then we will know that God has decided to spare Baby X.

THE RAV

And you would kill Baby Y?

KARCHER

I wouldn't kill him. It would be God's will.

THE RAV

This calls for another pot of tea.

The Rav prepares a pot, apparently in deep thought. He returns to his chair.

THE RAV (cont'd)

What will you do -- when you "get in there" -- if it turns out that the anatomy doesn't favor Baby X but favors Baby Y?

KARCHER

Then we'll know that God has given the heart to Baby Y.

THE RAV

And you would save Baby Y.

KARCHER

We'd try.

THE RAV

Try? You're not sure you would be able to save Baby Y?

KARCHER

Very few things are certain in medicine.

Karcher sips more tea through a sugar cube. He waits for The Rav to respond, but he doesn't.

KARCHER (cont'd)

I think I might start using sugar cubes with my tea.

THE RAV

I wasn't aware of these facts when Rabbi Isaac and I were discussing this case.

KARCHER

It's my fault. I should've provided more details when I was talking to the parents.

THE RAV

There's a third possibility that we haven't talked about.

KARCHER

A third possibility?

THE RAV

There are always three possibilities. When you "get in there," you might discover that the heart could belong to either baby.

KARCHER

That's unlikely.

THE RAV

But possible.

KARCHER

Theoretically.

THE RAV

If this should happen, what would you do?

KARCHER

That's not going to happen.

THE RAV

You said it was theoretically possible.

KARCHER

Yes.

THE RAV

So, please, humor me with my little hypothetical case. What would you do?

KARCHER

We would decide which baby will get the heart.

THE RAV

You would decide?

KARCHER

Yes.

THE RAV

God would be involved with none of this?

KARCHER

Isn't God involved with everything?

THE RAV

In what way with this case?

KARCHER

If the heart could go to either baby, then maybe it was God's intention for us to make the decision.

THE RAV

(Laughing)

I can see you have the mind of a rabbi. But a poorly informed one. God never leaves that decision up to man.

KARCHER

That's what everyone keeps telling me.

THE RAV

Since you know this is a sin, would you stop the operation when you discovered that God has chosen neither baby.

KARCHER

We couldn't do that.

THE RAV

You mean you wouldn't do that.

KARCHER

Your hypothetical case is very unlikely to happen.

THE RAV

I'm troubled by these words you've been using. Try. Unlikely. Suggests. Apparently. Theoretically. They don't suggest conviction.

KARCHER

We're always weighing the possibilities. Moving in the direction that seems most likely to produce the best results. Our batting average is pretty good.

THE RAV

A sporting metaphor that suggests you're wrong two thirds of the time.

KARCHER

So you follow baseball?

THE RAV

I try to keep informed.

KARCHER

Then let me change the metaphor. Our medical decision to operate is about as close to a slam dunk as you can get.

THE RAV

If you have the ball.

KARCHER

God works in mysterious ways.

THE RAV

That's why He appeared on Mt. Sinai to give Moses laws to guide us,

KARCHER

You have many laws. Six hundred and thirteen.

THE RAV

You know about that?

KARCHER

I try to keep informed.

THE RAV

I must think on this. The twins' situation is much more complicated than it had first appeared.

KARCHER

You were at a disadvantage, not having all the facts.

THE RAV

Now that I have all the facts, I assume you expect me to reconsider my decision.

KARCHER

I would never be so presumptuous.

The Rav smiles, amused by the game he knows
Karcher has been playing.

THE RAV

There are many things to consider.

KARCHER

I'm sure you'll consider everything.

THE RAV

Just as I'm sure you consider everything before you decide that the only option is to operate.
More tea, Dr. Karcher?

Karcher smiles, confident that he'd given The Rav
reason to reconsider his ruling.

14

14

SCENE 14

Day 10: Late that night, Karcher's office. Karcher enters, wearing a surgical gown. He pours hot water into a tea pot, sits down and looks briefly at some papers on his desk. McGraw appears in the doorway.

MCGRAW

You're here awfully late. It's after one.

KARCHER

I wanted to see how the twins were doing.

MCGRAW

There's been a setback.

KARCHER

Yes, I saw it in the charts. So the noose tightens.

MCGRAW

How'd the meeting go?

KARCHER

We drank a lot of tea. He looked very troubled after we finished our discussion. Like maybe he realizes he'd made the wrong decision. I'm betting we'll be receiving a phone call from him this morning.

MCGRAW

Well, that would be one of many problems solved.

KARCHER

There are other problems?

MCGRAW

The nurses. They think sacrificing one of the twins might be a sin.

KARCHER

All our nurses are Jewish?

MCGRAW

Catholic. At least all the O.R. nurses.

KARCHER

Every one?

MCGRAW

It's just a fluke.

KARCHER

I thought the Catholic chaplain supported us on this.

MCGRAW

I told them they don't get to pick and choose the operations they staff.

KARCHER

They don't, but this is an unusual case.

MCGRAW

I also told them they could get fired.

KARCHER

You shouldn't have done that. Did it work?

MCGRAW

They went to their union representative.

KARCHER

Oh, God.

MCGRAW

There could be a protest.

KARCHER

They're right. We can't require nurses to participate in a case like this. We should tell them that we'll only be using volunteers. What makes them think it would be a sin?

MCGRAW

It's a rumor that went viral even though Father Ryan told them God expects us to act when we can act.

KARCHER

Do the nurses know that?

MCGRAW

They don't think our chaplain has enough authority to rule on this.

KARCHER

Then we've got to get someone who does and have him address a meeting of the nurses.

MCGRAW

The doctors are rebelling, too.

KARCHER

What! All our doctors are Catholic?

MCGRAW

Not hardly. Their concerns are legal, not religious.

KARCHER

Will this nightmare never end? These parents aren't the type of people to sue us for malpractice.

MCGRAW

That's not their concern.

KARCHER

Then what is their concern?

MCGRAW

They're afraid we could get prosecuted.

KARCHER

For what?

MCGRAW

Premeditated murder.

KARCHER

Oh, come on, Kiera.

MCGRAW

There're a lot of nuts out there. And politicians who want to make a name for themselves. This operation is getting national media coverage. That's just too good of an opportunity for some asshole to pass up. Look what's happening to doctors who do abortions.

KARCHER

No one's going to get arrested.

MCGRAW

We're talking about premeditated murder.

KARCHER

You're becoming hysterical.

MCGRAW

We could end up on death row.

Karcher breaks up laughing. McGraw doesn't think it's funny.

KARCHER

You really think they could execute us for trying to save the life of a baby?

MCGRAW

No. But they could for the willful and premeditated murder of a baby. A good prosecutor could make it look like murder in the first degree and convince a jury.

KARCHER

All of this is unbelievable. Have you talked to any lawyers about this?

MCGRAW

My brother. He thinks jail time is unlikely. But a remote possibility. I can't take that chance, Chris. I'm just starting out. I've got a family.

KARCHER

Are you refusing to do the operation?

MCGRAW

My brother says we need to get a court order directing us to do the surgery in order to save a life. Ten years ago a British court overruled the objections of parents and ordered doctors to separate conjoined twins. Even though it meant the death of one of the babies.

KARCHER

The court overruled the wishes of the parents?

MCGRAW

The judge said the baby's welfare took precedence over the parents' religious beliefs. So they went ahead and operated.

KARCHER

Were the parents relieved that at least one baby was saved?

MCGRAW

The baby died in the ICU.

KARCHER

Oh great.

MCGRAW

But that's not going to happen to us.

KARCHER

If we got a court order, would that mean we had to operate?

MCGRAW

Or face contempt of court.

KARCHER

The parents would have no recourse?

MCGRAW

No recourse at all.

KARCHER

So we'd be going against their wishes.

MCGRAW

We would.

KARCHER

That's what you've been wanting all along.

MCGRAW

Our backs are against the wall. Even if The Rav changes his ruling, we won't have a surgical team if we don't have a court order.

KARCHER

Then they'll be responsible for a baby's death.

MCGRAW

You can't expect anyone to take a risk like that. That court order is the solution to all our problems.

Karcher sips his tea, thinking. McGraw waits.

KARCHER

(Finally)

How do we get a court order?

MCGRAW

My brother says we'd file an emergency petition, giving the medical reasons why the surgery is necessary and must be done at once or a baby will die. Essentially we'd be doing the same thing we've been doing with the rabbis. But the judge would be following the laws of man, not God. My brother suggested a judge he thought would be sympathetic to our position. It seems he's very popular with the pro-choice people.

KARCHER

All right, let's get all the paperwork ready. See if we can get this judge. But we don't formally petition him yet.

MCGRAW

Why wait?

KARCHER

I'm not about to betray those young people.

MCGRAW

We can't lose this opportunity.

KARCHER

You're young. You'll get another chance to make medical history.

MCGRAW

The way things are going in the ICU, this is about to become moot.

15

15

SCENE 15

Day 11: The Rav's library, the next day. The Rav is watching a Nova documentary about regions where the best tea is grown. There is a knock on the door, that slowly gets louder and louder. Finally he hears it, shuts off the TV and opens the door. It's Isaac.

THE RAV

I wasn't expecting you for another hour.

ISAAC

I called you from the road.

THE RAV

You were so sure I'd be home?

ISAAC

I was hoping.

They sit down.

THE RAV

You're here about the twins.

ISAAC

Yes.

THE RAV

That matter has been settled.

ISAAC

Dr. Karcher was very optimistic after talking to you. Now that you knew the only way of knowing what God wanted was to operate.

THE RAV

I think that's what he wants to believe. What he wants me to believe. He's a good man and a gifted surgeon, whose only concern is the welfare of his patient.

ISAAC

So you're not going to change your ruling?

THE RAV

Dr. Karcher gave me no reason to reconsider it.

ISAAC

You could permit the operation on the basis of what's known now. If, during the surgery, subsequent facts force the surgeons to revise their plans, then no halacha has been broken because the surgeons aren't Jewish and had to act on their own.

THE RAV

I'm surprised you'd even suggest such a thing, Adam. That's an obvious trick to get around halacha. A baby's life is precious, of course. But as rabbis we must be looking at a greater good than saving the life of one baby. Protecting our laws. Our culture.

ISAAC

This is not an easy thing to do.

THE RAV

I know. That's why they pay us the big buck.

ISAAC

Mrs. Goldin, the twins' mother, was hoping that your ruling wasn't final.

THE RAV

Rulings will appear arbitrary if you change them too often.

ISAAC

Yes, I remember how often you used to say that.

THE RAV

You say the mother was hoping the ruling wasn't final. What about the father?

ISAAC

I think Mr. Goldin was relieved.

LIGHTS FADE TO BLACK

16

16

SCENE 16

DAY 12: Meanwhile in the ICU. Leah is looking at the twins in the bassinet as Solomon watches.

SOLOMON

He's made his ruling. It's in God's hands.

LEAH

No, it's in our hands. We've waited long enough.

SOLOMON

There's nothing we can do.

LEAH

When all the alarms went off and I thought we'd lost them, I realized what it would be like going home with nothing.

SOLOMON

We've done as much as we can.

LEAH

I will not go home alone, Solomon.

SOLOMON

You won't be going home alone. You'll be going home with me.

LEAH

That's not enough.

The rebuke shocks and hurts Solomon.

LEAH (cont'd)

This is a matter for doctors not rabbis. And the doctors tell us to operate.

SOLOMON

We can't ignore our religion.

LEAH

So we commit a sin. And then atone.

SEGAL

God is not so easily fooled.

LEAH

Isn't our God a forgiving God?

SOLOMON

You can't atone for a sin you're planning to commit.

LEAH

Our religion doesn't expect us to be without sin.

SOLOMON

It expects us to try.

LEAH

No one fulfils all the commandments.

SOLOMON

It's not like forgetting and using electricity on the sabbath. This mitzvah is at the core of our beliefs.

LEAH

These aren't deep thoughts about our laws, its blind obedience.

SOLOMON

When it comes to God you can't do things in halves. You have to do it all the way and observe every holiday and every law.

LEAH

And this is what our religion demands, that we sacrifice the only son we can save? If that's what it demands, I want nothing to do with it.

SOLOMON

(Shocked)
Leah.

LEAH

I will not worship such a cruel God.

SOLOMON

You don't know what you're saying.

LEAH

No religion and no God can ask me to sacrifice our son. And neither can you. You must agree to the surgery.

SOLOMON

You can't ask me to choose between our son and my faith.

LEAH

I'm not asking you. I'm telling you.

SOLOMON

You can't do that.

LEAH

Which is more important to you, Solomon?

He shakes his head.

LEAH (cont'd)

Which do you choose?

He doesn't respond.

LEAH (cont'd)

Solomon, I have a right to know.

SOLOMON

Nothing is more important than my religion.

LEAH

Nothing? Not me? Not your son?

SOLOMON

You're forsaking everything. Me. Our religion. Our culture.

LEAH

You're forsaking our son. Look at him, Solomon.

He turns away.

LEAH (cont'd)

No. I want you to look at our son.

She forces him to look into the bassinet.

LEAH (cont'd)

You're willing to let them both die?

SOLOMON

You think I want this?

LEAH

Yes, if we do nothing. Is this what you've decided?

SOLOMON

We agreed to do what The Rav said we must do.

LEAH

I never agreed to that.

SOLOMON

You never spoke up.

LEAH

Well I'm speaking up now. I'm pleading with you to sign those papers.

SOLOMON

No.

LEAH

Sign those papers.

SOLOMON

Joshua is my son. I love him.

LEAH

I know.

SOLOMON

If we don't operate, what happens will be in God's hands.

LEAH

(Shocked realization)

And you'll be free of blame. This is the reason you don't want to give your permission.

He doesn't answer.

LEAH (cont'd)

Isn't it?

He starts to cry.

LEAH (cont'd)

Oh, Solomon.

(Taking him in her arms)

We must have courage

Solomon explodes crying.

1/25/15

SCENE 16 P. 88

LEAH (cont'd)

We must have courage.

LIGHTS FADE TO BLACK

17

17

SCENE 17

DAY 14: The next morning, Karcher's office. Karcher is going over papers. McGraw enters.

KARCHER

I thought he'd have called by now. He knows we don't have much time.

MCGRAW

I can't believe this. I cannot believe it. A kid's upstairs dying and we're sitting on our hands waiting for a court order, the nurses are waiting for a blessing from the Pope and the parents are waiting for some old rabbi to give us permission. I say the hell with them. Let's get the court order and some less squeamish nurses and save that kid's life.

KARCHER

The nurses aren't a problem any more.

MCGRAW

They're on board?

KARCHER

All but three of them. The archbishop attended one of their meetings and said we wouldn't be killing the baby. That he'd die as an indirect result of our trying to save his brother.

MCGRAW

Not exactly true, but a more acceptable interpretation of the facts. They are masters at that, aren't they?

KARCHER

As I remember, Kiera, you used the very same interpretation of the facts to convince the rabbis that the surgery should be permitted. The young rabbi was right. The Rave didn't give a damn about the medical facts.

MCGRAW

This young couple is being coerced by these rabbis. I don't care if someone wants to die for their religion. But it's not OK to sacrifice the life of your child.

KARCHER

The parents have to be true to their religion. We can't take it upon ourselves to...

MCGRAW

We can. We often violate religious restrictions. We'll give blood to a kid bleeding to death in the emergency room even if the parents refuse to permit it.

KARCHER

That's an emergency situation.

MCGRAW

This is an emergency situation.

KARCHER

Operating without their permission is morally wrong.

MCGRAW

It's morally wrong to save a baby's life? Baby X has rights, too.

KARCHER

Aaron.

MCGRAW

What?

KARCHER

That's Baby X's name. I overheard them calling the baby that in the ICU.

The phone rings. Karcher answers it.

KARCHER (cont'd)

(On phone)

Yes, Harriet...Yes, of course. Put him through...Yes, Jim...Yeah...Yeah...Yeah...Good...Thanks for moving so quickly on this...don't do anything right now. We'll get back to you.

(Hangs up)

The petition is ready. And the judge has agreed to rule on it as soon as he gets it.

MCGRAW

Then file the goddamn thing. Medical ethics demands that we go ahead.

KARCHER

It doesn't demand that we insist on a procedure that has never been done successfully.

The phone rings. Karcher answers it.

KARCHER (cont'd)

(On phone)

Yes, Harriet...Yes, of course.

(Hangs up)

It's the Goldins. Maybe the Rav called them directly.

Leah and Solomon enter. They're somber. Karcher indicates the chairs. They sit down.

KARCHER (cont'd)

The Rav has contacted you? He's changed his ruling?

LEAH

No.

KARCHER

I'm sorry.

MCGRAW

Mrs. Goldin. Mr. Goldin. Time has run out. We're not talking months or weeks or days. We're talking hours. If we don't operate now, this time tomorrow both your sons will be dead.

KARCHER

(Disapproving the tone)

Kiera.

MCGRAW

No. Chris. We've played this game long enough. They've got to face facts.

LEAH

Which baby could you save?

MCGRAW

Does that matter?

LEAH

When I look at them in the ICU, I wonder which one won't be here.

(Too painful to continue)

MCGRAW

We think Baby Y.

LEAH

Joshua.

KARCHER

Baby Y...Joshua is smaller and much more frail than his brother. This would suggest that the two-chamber heart belongs to him.

MCGRAW

(Offering her the consent forms)

Please. Sign them.

Leah takes the consent forms and looks at Solomon, who isn't responsive. She signs the papers and hands them back to Karcher.

LEAH

There.

KARCHER

We need both your signatures.

LEAH

I'm the mother. Isn't that enough?

KARCHER

Usually it is. But we realize your husband is reluctant to go ahead and with a case that's attracted so much media attention, the hospital lawyers are worried about controversy and adverse publicity.

MCGRAW

Lawyers, rabbis, hospital administrators. Adverse publicity. Everyone's got to have their say.

(To Solomon)

Your boys are in heart failure. Don't you realize what that means? Do you, Mr. Goldin?

He turns away.

MCGRAW (cont'd)

The heart is dying.

LEAH

Solomon.

MCGRAW

We're all ready to go.

He doesn't respond.

MCGRAW (cont'd)

(Grabbing the consent forms and thrusting them at Solomon)

It's your decision.

LEAH

Solomon. For God's sake.

Solomon takes the papers and looks at them. Leah watches, terrified that he won't sign.

McGraw offers him a pen. For several seconds he stares at the papers. Finally he takes the pen and signs. Leah cries with relief. Karcher grabs the phone.

KARCHER

(On the phone)
Get me Jim. I'll hold.

MCGRAW

(Grabbing the other phone on Karcher's desk)
Bob, we're getting the court order now. Start gathering the team...Now. We're operating now.

He hangs up and dials.

KARCHER

(On phone)
Yes, Jim. The parents have agreed. Petition the court...Now.

MCGRAW

(On phone)
This is Dr. McGraw. We need that operating room stat.

They keep working the phone as Solomon and Leah sit separately, sadly staring ahead.

LIGHTS FADE TO BLACK

18

18

SCENE 18

Day 15: Later that day, the waiting room outside of surgery. Solomon is devastated. Leah is tense, close to tears.

LEAH

They've probably separated them by now.

Solomon doesn't respond.

LEAH (cont'd)

Do you think they've separated them?

Still no response.

LEAH (cont'd)

Do you?

SOLOMON

We shouldn't have signed those papers.

LEAH

If they've separated them, they should release the body. They know it's the sabbath and burial must happen before sundown. Isn't that something, Solomon? Already I'm calling Joshua the body.

SOLOMON

We killed Joshua.

LEAH

It's only one o'clock. They said the operation could last all day. Maybe they haven't separated them yet.

SOLOMON

How can we live, remembering what we've done?

LEAH

Stop it, Solomon.

SOLOMON

It's a sin what we're doing.

LEAH

Maybe it's not a sin. Maybe your God wanted you to violate halacha so Aaron would live.

SOLOMON

What do you mean "your" God?

LEAH

Your God.

SOLOMON

Our God.

Solomon's cell phone rings. He answers it.

SOLOMON (cont'd)

(On phone)

Yes... We're not ready yet... I don't know how much longer. They know you're down there waiting.

(Hangs up)

Why should they be impatient? The funeral home is getting extra money for this.

LEAH

Did you explain what was happening?

SOLOMON

All they have to know is that we're not ready.

Solomon angrily puts on the television. The sound of an inane talk show is heard.

LEAH

Shut that off. I don't want to hear that nonsense.

Solomon shuts it off.

LEAH (cont'd)

Everyone is at the funeral home. All our family. Our friends. The rabbi. It's wrong to keep them waiting. When are they going to release the... when are they going to let us take Joshua home?

SOLOMON

How can you be so concerned about Joshua? Joshua is dead.

LEAH

We'll come right back, as soon as the burial is over.

SOLOMON

You go.

LEAH

You're not going to Joshua's funeral?

SOLOMON

I'm staying here.

LEAH

I'll not abandon Joshua, like something no longer valued. Why won't you come with me to the funeral home?

SOLOMON

After we killed our son? After we violated halacha? You expect me to be there?

LEAH

We did the only thing we could.

Karcher enters. He's dressed in his surgical scrubs and looks exhausted. Leah and Solomon look at him anxiously. He sits down.

LEAH (cont'd)

It's only one o'clock.

SOLOMON

You said it could last all day.

LEAH

Did something go wrong?

KARCHER

The operation went beautifully.

LEAH

It was Aaron. It was Aaron you were able to save?

KARCHER

Aaron is doing surprisingly well. None of the complications we were worried about happened.

SOLOMON

Everything was the way you expected?

KARCHER

We couldn't have been more pleased.

SOLOMON

Then God did give the heart to Aaron?

Karcher is caught off guard. He doesn't know how to answer.

KARCHER

(Finally)
There were no surprises.

SOLOMON

Then everything happened exactly as you expected.

KARCHER

Not exactly as we'd expected.

SOLOMON

What are you saying?

KARCHER

What I'm saying, Mr. Goldin, is that the heart went to the right baby and we should all be very pleased.

SOLOMON

But...

LEAH

Is Aaron out of danger?

KARCHER

After such a big operation, his condition will be critical for the next couple of days. But we're very optimistic.

LEAH

Can I see him?

KARCHER

He'll be in the O.R. for a little longer. We still have to clean up a few minor things before we take him to recovery.

LEAH

Can I see him then?

KARCHER

He'll be asleep. He's been through a lot.

(Standing)

We couldn't have hoped for a better outcome, Mrs. Goldin. Mr. Goldin.

LEAH

And Joshua?

KARCHER

Joshua is already with the people from the funeral home.

Karcher exits.

LEAH

It was over so quickly. He wasn't smiling when he came in. I was sure something had gone wrong.

(Dials her cell phone)

Hello, Susan...It's over. The surgeon said everything went beautifully... Yes, it was Aaron. They think he'll be OK, but the next few days will be critical... Tell the rabbi and everyone else that Joshua is on his way. He should be there in a half hour...I'm leaving now...Solomon is staying with Aaron...It's what he wants to do...I'll tell him.

(Hangs up)

Susan sends her blessing.

(Pleading)

Solomon, maybe now Aaron will have a chance for a normal life. We should be happy about that.

Still no response from Solomon. Leah starts to gather her belongings.

LEAH (cont'd)

I think we...I think I should say something at the ceremony. But I don't know what. Joshua saved his brother's life. It's not right to ignore what he's done. What should I say?

SOLOMON

What have I done?

LEAH

We should be together on this.

SOLOMON

(With hurt)

Were we ever together on this?

Leah doesn't know how to answer him.

LEAH

(Preparing to leave)

I don't know if I'll be able to hold it together, in front of all those people.

Solomon picks up the Book of Psalms and starts reading. Leah looks at him sadly, waiting for a response. But there is none.

LEAH (cont'd)

(Finally)

Goodbye, Solomon.

She exits. Solomon looks up with shock that she's gone. He wants to call out to her, but it's too late. He tries to go back to the Psalms, but can't. He puts down the book, his body shaking with his sobbing.

FADE TO BLACK

CURTAIN

END OF PLAY