

Dear Dr. Ellison,

I am writing to urge you to work to achieve the acceptance of patrilineal descent by all Jewish organizations and Israel. While I am very happy that the Reform movement allows for recognition of patrilineal descent, it's position falls woefully short of accomplishing fully coherent morality in Jewish life. None of us likes to see ourselves as immoral, but sometimes it helps to use others as examples. To illustrate what this vile, evil practice does to innocent children, I will use another ethnic group in place of Jews in an analogy. Suppose a white man had a child with a black woman. As the child grew up, it's father and it's father's family said to it that there were some family activities that it couldn't participate in because they don't let black people do them. They also tell it that it can't be buried in the family cemetery because they don't let black people be buried there. But, they say that it can do those things if it undergoes some treatment and bleaches it's skin and straightens its hair. I think you would say that that family was abusing that child in a filthy way. This is what is done to patrilineal Jewish children.

In order to correct this, I request you do the following:

Firstly, the Reform movement must end it's ambiguity on the issue by immediately requiring all it's members, both American and international, to recognize patrilineal descent or be excommunicated. It does not allow it's congregations to decide whether they want to let women read from the Torah and it must stop allowing congregations to discriminate against some Jews.

Secondly, it must issue a public statement apologizing to patrilineal Jews for it's past treatment of them and condemning other Jewish movements and Israel for continuing this evil practice.

Thirdly, it must change it's education curriculum to teach the true historical background of the issue. That is to say, that throughout history at least up until the times of the Gemara this custom was not in place and was actually the opposite, that the father usually determined the Jewish status of the child. It is important that people understand this so that they do not think that accepting patrilineal descent is merely giving in to modern times. Additionally, you should stop taking children in your Hebrew schools to shabbatons and other activities with Chabad and any other Orthodox organizations. This legitimizes these movements and sends the wrong message to these children.

Fifthly, it must not allow its Rabbis to participate in conversion councils in Israel for patrilineal Jews and stop participating in marriage ceremonies with Orthodox rabbis because the couple is fearful that their marriage won't be recognized in Israel. If you're not good enough for them, let the couple be Orthodox.

Lastly, it must help to cut off funding sources to Orthodox Jewish organizations, especially Chabad by identifying their corporate funding sources and distributing this information in your congregations to ask for a boycott of these companies. One of the biggest donors to Chabad is Ronald Perelman, the CEO of Revlon and a major shareholder in Newscorp. So there are two brand names already to start with.

The Reform movement is the largest Jewish organization in the world. There is no reason that it should feel afraid about taking a principled stand. Israel needs all the friends it can get. The Orthodox community is a financial burden to them and they need you more than you need them. It is never easy to do the right thing and excuses are for those who use them. The continued attitude of the Reform that "some day" it will happen is unacceptable. Changes don't just happen. They require willful action.

Sincerely,