

A Standard of Rabbinic Practice Regarding Determination of Jewish Identity

RABBIS JOEL ROTH AND AKIBA LUBOW

This Standard of Rabbinic Practice was approved by the Committee on Jewish Law and Standards in a two-stage process, as required by the rules of the Rabbinical Assembly adopted in Convention assembled in 1972. First, it was adopted at a meeting of the Committee held on May 1, 1985 by a vote of 15-1. It was then adopted by mail ballot by a vote of 21-2-1. Members voting in favor: Rabbis Kassel Abelson, Jacob B. Agus, Isidoro Aizenberg, Ben Zion Bergman, Elliot N. Dorff, David M. Feldman, Morris Feldman, David Gordis, Robert Gordis, Benjamin Z. Kreitman, David H. Lincoln, Judah Nadich, George Pollak, Mayer E. Rabinowitz, Barry S. Rosen, Joel Roth, Morris M. Shapiro, David Wolf Silverman, Israel N. Silverman, Henry A. Sosland and Gordon Tucker. Members voting in opposition: Rabbis Seymour Siegel and Phillip Sigal. Abstaining: Rabbi Alan J. Yuter.

The Standard was then formally adopted by the Rabbinical Assembly at the 1986 Rabbinical Assembly Convention by a vote of 235-92.

WHEREAS Jewishness is defined either through lineage or through conversion to Judaism; and

WHEREAS the Committee on Jewish Law and Standards has on several occasions reaffirmed its commitment to matrilineal descent, which has been authoritative in normative Judaism for many centuries as the sole determinant of Jewish lineage; and

WHEREAS rulings of the Committee on Jewish Law and Standards which govern procedures for conversions supervised by Rabbinical Assembly members, require *tevilah* in the case of females, and *tevilah* and *brit milah* in the case of males; and

WHEREAS the Committee on Jewish Law and Standards has long advocated that members of the Rabbinical Assembly welcome and assist those who wish to approach Judaism in a serious fashion and to convert to

Judaism in a manner which fulfills the requirements for conversion, including those steps outlined above;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Committee on Jewish Law and Standards recommends to the Convention of the Rabbinical Assembly that

- (a) ascription of Jewish lineage through a legal instrument or ceremonial act on the basis of anything other than matrilineal descent; or
- (b) supervision of a conversion which omits *tevilah* in the case of females, or *tevilah* and *brit milah* in the case of males

shall continue to be regarded as violations of the halakhah of Conservative Judaism. They shall henceforth be violations of a Standard of Rabbinic Practice and be inconsistent with membership in the Rabbinical Assembly, it being understood that any member of the Rabbinical Assembly shall continue to possess the right to petition the Committee on Jewish Law and Standards for an opinion on any case of extraordinary circumstances.