

All Israel's Children Dialogue Agenda (short form)

9:30:

RABBI HANNAH

Welcome and Context

9:40:

MARK WINSTON

Review Agenda, Notetaking/confidentiality, How to engage together in dialogue

9:50:

DIALOGUE FACILITATORS

Breakout I: Hereditary Judaism

This breakout will provide an opportunity for participants to share their thoughts/personal experiences/stories/perspectives about how being a

Jew at birth is determined.

10:35:

MARK WINSTON

Plenary brief discussion.

10:50: Break

11:00:

RABBI HANNAH

Context for Breakout II

11:10:

DIALOGUE FACILITATORS

Breakout II: Creative way forward for Or Shalom

We will consider the various pathways Or Shalom might use to determine hereditary Judaism

12:05:

MARK WINSTON

Plenary brief discussion

12:20:

RABBI HANNAH

Wrap-up, next steps

12:30:

End

All Israel's Children Dialogue Compiled Notes

Legend

Black = Notes from breakout groups

Green = Chat comments

Blue = Email comments

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Personal stories: Impacts of the current status quo of matrilineal descent on individuals and families

Very secure in my Judaism, family are Ashkenazi Jews for many generations.

Ashkenazi from way back, yet, "How Jewish am I" seems like a slippery slope.

Easy to have Jewish sons who married Jewish partners and the grandchildren are therefore Jewish. Feel like I've done it "right".

Curious, don't have a drum to beat in this discussion. Was converted. Feel Jewish.

Feel a Jew, but wasn't brought up that way.

Very important to allow interfaith couples to be embraced by the Jewish community. Couples starting to have children and are not necessarily members of any Jewish community, but would like their children to be Jewish. Advice to these couples is to default to Orthodox conversion so that their children will be Jewish no matter what community they attach themselves to.

The situation faced by a patrilineal adult who believes they are Jewish, and that of the child of an interfaith couple are different. The latter should have the child converted.

Non-Jewish girlfriend. Decided to raise their children Jewish and joined a minyan, attended shabbat weekly. Secular wedding. Wife took Introduction to Judaism classes. Felt it unfair to ask her to change her religion, but before their child was born wife converted of her own volition. Today, the child identifies strongly as Jewish.

A patrilineal Jew, converted before the birth of child to ensure the baby would be considered a full Jew. Although don't necessarily support only matrilineal descent, do see that women are still primary caregivers who pass down culture through song, language, and food.

Jewish father with a Buddhist wife, child chose to do Mikvah and convert in early childhood "because I want to be like you, daddy." Child raised with strong lessons of both traditions and now raising their children as Jews.

Three children:—one daughter married a Jewish man so no question about the 'Jewishness' of grandchildren. Younger daughter's husband not Jewish and no desire to convert or study Judaism. This daughter wants the children to learn about their Jewishness and encourages. Third child, a son, married a practicing Catholic. Decided that their children would know both religions and children would have a choice when they grew up so they felt they were not imposing any one religion on their children. Had their son clinically circumcised.

Grew up not knowing I was Jewish. A friend's family sent me home for being Jewish, led parents to talk and teach about their Judaism. Grew up with sense of belonging.

Grew up saturated in Judaism, welcoming and open to others, provide avenues to feel connection. Converts seem to have very strong connection.

Don't know where I am at. Being part of greater community/greater Jewish world is important. AND conversion offers another path.

Rituals can be very important to increasing one's sense of belonging. As a patrilineal Jew, would've liked to find a congregation that automatically accepted my Jewishness, but conversion process was very meaningful and "affirmative."

At heart, traditionalist. However, never considered impact on gender fluidity or gay men. Now back to square one.

Beautiful to be here and talk about this, carrying a legacy into the world, “gratitude for considering this precious link of belonging”

Raised secular Jewish, and married non-Jewish. Became more Jewish as a result of marriage and having a child. This is opposite of what was predicted by marrying out.

"Non-Jewish parents raising Jewish children." Example of non-Jewish parent taking their children to religious school, celebrating Jewish holidays, etc. Regardless of which parent is Jewish, mother or father, it still should count.

Emotional personal stories of kids of non-Jewish moms who grew up feeling left out and excluded.

Coming from a mixed marriage, arguments between my J parent and her brother drove me away from all religion. Being at OS is the first time feel part of the Jewish community.

Mom was non-Jewish and died when she was young; raised by Jewish father; not being seen as Jewish, as a child, affected Jewish identity and has spent life “recovering” my identity. Express sadness about feeling “not Jewish enough” when young and in a way that has never really faded. Now have children who are being educated as Jews at Or Shalom.

Not welcomed back to the Jewish community grew up in because of queer identity. Have been outside Jewish community because of this until coming to OS. Want to be part of this community; to contribute. Heartbreaking to keep people out because of their identity. Want to keep OS welcoming. All can enrich the community.

First wife not Jewish - family said she had to convert. Couple disagreed. Was going to be disowned - father going to put a death notice in the newspaper. Agreed to the conversion. If had been a woman, the non-Jewish male partner would have been welcomed into the family.

Remembering a time in the 50s when a Peretz school member could not even enter the Jewish Community Center. It reminded me of the times before the destruction of the Temple, when zealots practiced "Sinat Chinam" (gratuitis senseless hatred). Also know the hell the religious in Israel cause those they considered not Jewish.

Had a non-Jewish partner but kept the Jewish cycle of holidays. Was painful that could not be married in a Jewish way. Felt my family were “second class citizens.”

Non-Jewish woman married to a Jewish woman with 2 children. Want children to be b'ney mitzvah'ed, if they choose to be, and to be accepted fully. Circumcision for 12-year-old son - doctor will do but not say blessing that would establish child as Jewish. Needs to discuss conversion with Rabbi - problematic and hurtful.

Told I wasn't Jewish enough and felt that a required conversion made me feel even more excluded and "deficient." Would be joyful for a voluntary "affirmation."

Left synagogue that required a symbolic conversion regardless of practice and devotion.

Jewish woman married to Reform convert and no major issues except with Orthodox in-laws of son who struggle to find roles for the "non-Jewish" parent at family simchas. No *get* required when divorced (as per orthodox rabbinate). Father becomes a non-entity in traditional Jewish settings

Jewish sister married a non-Jew who did not want to convert but agreed that their children should be raised Jewish. Approached Conservative Rabbi in her community to join and send her children to *cheder* lessons, rejected the family unless the father converted. Children attended the Reform Shul where children had their Bar/Bat Mitzvahs and became assistant teachers in the school. Today none are married to Jews and only one is interested in exploring her Jewish roots.

Speaking as queer Jew in mixed relationship, embrace greater diversity and think Or Shalom should be a leader.

As a convert, applied to take an Orthodox-sponsored course – was asked about maternal grandmother, and denied admission to the course.

People who've lived in different regions have a lot of perspective on patrilineal and matrilineal heritage being considered and how this changes based on region

The pain of not being considered Jewish enough

When a member talked about how her extended family was affected by having some children in the larger family seen as Jewish and not others, I realized for the first time how deeply my family has been impacted by the same issue. I hadn't realized until now how important that was.

As a patrilineal Jew, I feel very comforted and like I'm coming home, to hear this conversation. Even those with hesitation about the direction to go, it still feels so good to have this conversation out in the open.

Inclusion: Comments on being inclusive in policies around who is born Jewish, consistent with Or Shalom's general culture of inclusion

Blended identities; falling in love with someone who is in another tradition, and children inheriting multiple spiritualities.

Honouring complex identities

Awareness of complexity; Importance of accepting diversity; inclusivity and openness.

Heartbreak comes through exclusion - deep desire to be able to belong and welcome others has been central to their being. Exclusion from belonging sends them to wanting to find a way to make others belong, be included.

Feeling of belonging at OS despite intermarriage. Husband not judged for being non-Jewish. "It is important to feel that there is at least one place in Vancouver where someone feels welcome and respected in the Jewish world."

A feeling "not being Jewish enough" is created in not including people

"Needing to Belong" is a deep need.

general wish for inclusiveness

Judaism feels like it is an exclusive club. It would be helpful/important to be more inclusive.

Find a way to be inclusive of the broad spectrum of who we are now

If we are egalitarian we have to stand up and do what we say.

Inclusivity is a property of OS. We should be MORE inclusive than we already are.

Value alignment and inclusivity brought us to Or Shalom. Important that our children will be accepted no matter what the current state of their engagement with Judaism. desire to respond, kindness and inclusion, open to diversity, diversity of experience

Community has a dual responsibility: to welcome people, and to give people knowledge.

Facilitate participation. If someone can participate, if they know how to participate, then there are questions we are not supposed to ask about them. Don't shame someone.

Tikkun Olam: "If it's possible to make change and hurt fewer people, this is a good thing to be thinking about."

Comparison drawn to previous debate about whether Rabbis can marry LGBTQ people. "How can I say no to people in my congregation. I can't say no to my teachers and leaders. It comes out of love."

We appreciate and value each other, and OS inclusiveness.

Parallel to cultural shift to including women rabbis.

Finding ways for people to belong at Or Shalom is an important issue for everyone.

Inclusion impacts our identities.

Acceptance of mixed marriage is the start of the connections being built to lead to family integration in Or Shalom and Jewish identity.

Parallel to including queer Jews.

Want to ensure inclusivity of gay/gender fluid members.

belonging, people wanting to belong

Must respect one's reasons for wanting to belong – cultural, religious, or marital.

We should be as open as possible to allow people in regardless of lineage
Victims

We must evolve and endorse the next generation to have continuity of life of the planet and of Or Shalom.

Patrilineal and gay Jews don't necessarily understand what we mean by being "inclusive" and "accepting" and, therefore, aren't sure what they can be expected to participate in when coming to Orsh. Some even choose to stay in the closet.

Or Shalom could be safe haven for all who choose to be Jewish. Many entry points.

Important to make folks who consider themselves Jewish not to be excluded.

Now is time to take a stand – too many people are hurt.

We need a place for all Jews to feel at home. So much more important to be accepting. We should be inclusive of those who consider themselves Jewish and want to join Or Shalom.

People of matrilineal descent are being seen to be compassionate and open.

The decision is a "no brainer." We should include anyone with the values of our community.

Individuals come before policy.

There are Or Shalom members who are deeply affected by this.

pain of exclusion

"Making change, and hurting fewer people, is a good thing."

The pain of exclusion and the appreciation of the inclusiveness of Or Shalom.

The pain of Jews by patrilineal descent who grew up in a Jewish family but not considered Jewish halachically

The desire to alleviate hurt and exclusion by widening the parameters of full membership to our community

Inclusion, making caring of others manifest.

Diversity and inclusion

deeply important - how we can create inclusion

I am impressed by the discussions centering on the support for inclusiveness.

I was impressed by the creative thinking expressed in our group about how to make Jewish status more inclusive

I am so proud to be an Or Shalomer!

What a long way Or Shalom has come in inclusivity in the past 20 years!

Will Jewishness survive in an egalitarian community?

Orsh is on the older end of congregations. The younger generation understands the future more and will drive our survival. It will be their vision.

It is normative that some division will occur within Or Shalom if things change.

A progressive community is always evolving. This may be divisive and will be hard no matter what we decide.

Affects a lot more people in a lot more ways than we realize

Sensitivity to those peripherally affected by any changes we make.

Remembering to honour those whose feelings might be different to yours on this matter. Building bridges and understanding across communities in Vancouver and elsewhere for better understanding and acceptance.

Acceptance by the wider Jewish community of any decision we might make that expands who is born Jewish beyond the current matrilineal norm

evolution in too many directions can result in extinction if we define things anyway we want. If we include everything we become nothing – what does it even mean, then, to be a Jew?

Concerned about *Klal Yisrael*

Don't want to see a separation with Vancouver's Jewish community.

Klal Yisrael is more conservative here in Vancouver – should that guide us?

Could our acceptance of patrilineal descent affect our relationship with the Chevra Kadisha?

Impact on us in larger community – Chevra Kadisha, Federation, Jewish Family Services. We need to assure that we are not an island.

Burials: issue of Chevra Kadisha - if the Rabbi of a Jewish community stipulates that a member is Jewish, then they are accepted by the Chevra Kadisha. We now have our own Or Shalom cemetery, so we can do all life cycle events within our community. A conversion which includes a Reform Rabbi on the Beit Din will mean that the conversion will be accepted by the Reform Movement in Israel.

You can be a Jew to immigrate to Israel but not a Jew when it comes to marriage in Israel. Or Shalom attracts people with complicated histories.

If we differ from the rest of Judaism, how can we prepare our children to be refused welcome outside of Orsh?

There is, perhaps, an inevitable tension between self-determination and a community's arbitration of its members' identities.

Jewishness becomes an issue when you join a synagogue for example, people should self-identify for validation.

Concerned about children accepted as Jewish here at OS and then go into the wider world expecting the same acceptance

We need to be inclusive of all children of our members, while at the same time considering how they will be received in the wider Jewish world, and preparing them all for this reality

Is this really a problem, though? Some marriages between Jews are not “Jewish enough” or accepted, either.

Want to be a welcome community with commitment to be part of the Jewish Community.

Differences between movements in Judaism can be defined as their notion of “who is a Jew”.

our ancestors probably would say Judaism is already extinct.

“Whatever decisions are made, we need to articulate them in the larger community.”

If we make a decision that creates a circle around Orsh, we have to accept that problems might arise on questions of “whom we marry and whom we bury.”

Although we need to proceed with embracing a new policy of acceptance re lineality, we will encounter major issues with the Vancouver Jewish Community. How to prepare for that is important.

We are already apart from the majority Jewish community in terms of what is a Jew.

On the side of openness – embracing anyone who chooses to be Jewish.
The problem – how Or Shalom-accepted Jews will be treated out of Or Shalom.
Would an Or Shalom conversion be acceptable in the broader Jewish Community?
Whatever we do at Or Shalom will be suspect by the Orthodox community; and many things we do already set us apart from the rest of the Vancouver Jewish Community.

The future will be more polarized – stronger orthodoxy and another more open/liberal camp – accepting of anyone who chooses to be Jewish.
Connection through orthodox.

“I won’t make a strong argument for heredity but I’ll make an argument for sadness” because this decision to honour patrilineal identity separates diasporic Jews from Israel even more. “It’s sad but it’s inevitable.” “I’m also saddened by our separation from the Orthodox.” “It’s what let the Romans come in so easily was our internal divisions [in Jewish community] at the time of the Second Temple.” “It makes me nervous and sad.” *This member also expressed they feel patrilineal Jews should be recognized as Jews by Or Shalom.*

Understand that Or Shalom is, at its best, an inclusive Jewish community and that opening up to patrilineal or non-parental descent is part of this. Concerned that the divisions in the Jewish world will only lead to the destruction of Judaism and the loss of the richness of what Jews bring to the world.

We should weigh our hopes against our fears and if it doesn’t work, we can reverse. Ability to show up and act as Jews gives us credibility.

Shouldn't be afraid to make decisions based on how other local groups view us.

Look forward to a "doors wide open" change in which Orsh is fully inclusive of anyone who identifies as Jewish. Not worried about the larger community, where there is already some exclusion.

Fractiousness within the Jewish world coming from ultra-Orthodox. "The Jewish community is not monolithic." We are part of a greater community.

"I don't need the whole Jewish world to accept me. The important thing for me is that there is one place where I feel welcome."

There is no unity within the greater Jewish community on who is a Jew.

Klal Yisrael and Or Shalom does not reflect reality. There are indeed many different identities, "islands", beliefs, within the larger Jewish community. It is not us leaving the fold, but rather the Capital C Community does not really exist in any distinct way.

There is not one Jewish community with a consistent set of values.

We might be only Jewish community in Vancouver that accepts matrilineal descent, but we would be joining a larger community, particularly in the US.

Zoom has widened our notion of community.
Ally with other congregations to learn how they have dealt with these issues.

Should we talk with Temple Shalom – would be nice to have company.

Changes in *Halachich* ruling happen with community action.

The Jewish community is not a monolith. There are many different views, styles, spiritualities, politics. Or Shalom may develop its own identity but it will be among a larger group of independent identities

We have more to lose by fearing acceptance by the unaccepting Orthodox. We have more to gain by embracing the wider community.

That this is an individual, collective and systemic issue regardless of the path Or Shalom decides to take for its member

Comments on Or Shalom's history around this issue

Want to know what the strong arguments were about 1998 decision.

Approaching with trepidation because of what happened in 1998.

People who participated in a similar project at Or Shalom years ago expressed fear, trepidation and hesitation with this project as their experience of the last go-round on this question was not positive.

20 years ago the discussion at OS on this topic was painful. People weren't ready. Glad that the community is ready now.

Hope that there will be a change in attitude and practice at Or Shalom, as to who is a Jew. They were very disappointed with the outcome the last time Or Shalom interrogated this issue. It is important to open up the discussion.

Was one of those people who voted against patrilineal descent. Was deeply concerned with the fractionating of this tiny Jewish community. I regretted deeply the pain it cost my friend, his family, and others. I increasingly regret the pain it has cost others. I had adhered to the saying "My tribe right or wrong." I knew I had to change that to "My tribe, when right to keep right; and when wrong, to set right." We have to change.

Such a different mood and feel for the issue from our previous 20 years ago discussion. Love our community.

Defining who is Jewish by a ritual, and affirmation of commitment, rather than by inheritance through any gender-based approach

Kids of patrilineal descent parents currently need to go through an affirmation of their commitment to Judaism, but matrilineal descent do not. That does not seem fair nor useful for the greater Jewish Community.

Adopt a policy saying children with at least one parent who is not Jewish, regardless of Jewishness, should be asked to affirm their Jewishness (or their child's Jewishness) or to bar/bat mitzvah.

OS children can be educated such that when they come of bar/bat mitzvah age, they can choose to undergo a more "traditional" conversion that would allow their acceptance in less inclusive parts of the global community. (This should be the choice of anyone who reaches the age of mitzvah, or wants to be a Jew by Choice.)

all children in Or Shalom, regardless of who their parents are, should go to the mikvah.

Why isn't the simcha mitzvah enough for a child to affirm his/her Jewishness?

Concern about *Michvah* and Ritual Bloodletting, etc. Can be a very huge deal. Too intense for adolescents.

The process of B'nai Mitzvah can be very intimidating/anxiety provoking. Can there be an easier/less traumatizing ritual for B'nai Mitzvah?

Would like to see OS take a stand to very publicly welcome people to learn more about their Jewishness and about Jewishness in general and to promote that position, believing that other communities will follow us.

There is a model available of both those who practice matrilineal or either matrilineal or patrilineal descent. After all, we are not the first synagogue in Vancouver to do this.

Have options for an "affirmation ceremony" or a bet din.

Commitment/educational component/ceremony as part of moving forward. Perhaps all Jews should have an affirmation/re-affirmation ceremony in commitment to being Jewish. Is there a different path of learning than the currently available only way of learning more around being Jewish than the traditional conversion pathway, particularly if you already feel like you are Jewish?

Conversion (or "Affirmation" perhaps) should be normalized through education, discretion and respect, and some degree of choice about the conversion/affirmation process.

We have a responsibility not to be passive Jews. Distinction between passive sense of being Jewish vs an identity premised on someone affirmatively claiming Jewish identity. May include learning, eg prayer, language, history. It is not an outcome of the community having no boundaries.

Current situation is all "passive". Move to a definition which involves an obligation to affirm their connection. May be other forms of community definition beyond "*Michvah*", "*Bris*", etc.

Important to identify ourselves as a community that is inclusive, needs to be an affirmation/welcoming celebratory event as opposed to automatic status, which has been the practice to date.

Have all "Jews by birth" become "Jews by choice" to affirm solidarity. This would require that those with "birth privilege" would give it up in order to affirm Jewishness with the community.

Members would not have to affirm, but may choose to make a public commitment in community.

What makes one a Jew – Here, connection to community is important. Maybe once a year, everyone goes to the Mikvah!

Affirmation for each member is not only inclusive but also has the benefit of promoting equality among the members, thus rendering heredity and status a non-issue.

Responsibility on member to engage but also need for Or Shalom to recognize that engagement. Not sure how that might be done. Reciprocal acknowledgement is important.

as far as conversion goes "we should keep all options to conversion open." This is in the context of same sex couples or gender fluid couples.

Gender issue is very fluid. One parent is sufficient. Rights of passage may be needed.

Want to be inclusive of Gender Z and non-binary members.

Just saying the shema is enough of an affirmation of being Jewish by choice (that includes genetic and non--genetic Jews by choice.) Some people might want more of a ritual, and that is also a choice. Some people might choose to "convert" in order to have more future options in the larger community. The keyword is "choice".

I'd like to find way to have patrilineal Jews not be marginalized, but rather to be welcomed. Find a welcoming ritual of affirmation which may be offered to all members of mixed heritage families, none of whom should be marginalized, but rather celebrated!

The importance of ceremony/educational role in affirming/reaffirming a commitment to Judaism, whether this be through matrilineal or patrilineal descent.

Affirmation can be as simple as saying the Sh'ma, and as ornate as mikvah and simchat mitzvah

Be widely inclusive, but allow affirmation process to establish belonging, whatever the level of formal practice. Present a serious position to the wider community, of inclusion and Jewishness.

The Shma itself confirms our identity as a Jew. Is further affirmation necessary?

Like the idea of affirmation for everyone very much, but have concerns that a) it might be too unwieldy a proposition with many people, or b) some Jewish parent families might be dissuaded from joining OS if there is a requirement to affirm.

Having a requirement might reverse the course of inclusivity, people might say "Why do I have to do that?" A caution against anything becoming required, but intrigued by having an option of affirmation, rather than waiting for a second bar mitzvah. Any requirement has the potential to become too heavy.

Anxious about some of the rituals as people do go in and out of how involved people may be in Judaism.

Status is important at Or Shalom for some activities but not others.

"We can't pretend that history does not exist." "We need to have Jewish sensibility, not just a Jewish education."

Requirement to determine whether someone is Jewish for Or Shalom is the main issue.

Whatever we do should provide that person with Jewishness not just at OS, but in as much of the Jewish community as will accept them.

crucial to have a plan about how we bring a child who has a non-Jewish mother into the community. More than one story was told of the trauma people faced when they found out, after being raised as a Jew, that because of current halacha, they are not considered Jewish by large parts of the larger Jewish community.

Bodily experiences have value and should be a part of being a Jew.

Judaism is less what I believe than who I am. Ritual is important for process.

Ritual is very important.

How is identity related to Jewish practice?

Being a Jew means you have to practice being a Jew, but there are many secular Jews. What does that mean - can you be Jewish if you do not practice?

The dilemma of those neither with lineage nor any commitment to study but just wanting to be considered Jewish – should that person be accepted as Jewish?
Comparing conversion to citizenship – you can't just declare yourself Canadian.

More than almost any other "peoples", Jews have maintained their unique community for millennia. Entry into this group can be analogous to how we view immigrants to a country we were (or were not) born in. What do we ask of them? What processes do they need to do? Is it fair? Etc.

Being Jewish has a lot to do with what we do/practise

Important to learn with people you know - community-building exercise. Many Jewish resources online. Would be helpful to have a recommended curriculum from Or Shalom; have someone to curate the available online resources.

Education is so necessary to impart historic and traditional knowledge. Embracing all "born" Jews only increases the size of our tent.

Educate the community on what our values are, how we want to be seen in the world, and specify them on our website so outsiders will understand what we stand for. Use more explicit terminology, such as “affirm” instead of “accept.” Consult with our diverse membership on what makes them feel “included” or “accepted.”

Important to explain to prospective converts "who and what we are," the "things we ascribe to."

Should we have a commitment to "continuing Jewish education" ?

Create a new liturgy at OS that will spread generosity and inclusion without the judgment and exclusions that are often encountered in less diverse communities.

It is worthwhile for OS to create a Council of Sages to support our growth into the future

General comments about whether heredity should have a role

Heredity is important, but times have changed and determining our Jewishness is more complex than who popped us out.

Heredity from either parent, or even being raised, say, by grandparents in a Jewish home, should be sufficient. A feeling of “belonging” is the important factor.

“Is heredity a stand-in for culture?” Is what really matters that someone was raised in a Jewish culture? Had Jewish grandparents and identified as Jews as little kids.

Heredity alone does not carry culture

Need to change with the times.

Some practices that historically have been important have outlived their usefulness and need to be supplanted.

Times may have changed, but the basic issues are the same. Besides, some hereditary Jews are much less knowledgeable and observant than Jews by choice or patrilineal Jews.

“I’ve been hearing about this issue my whole life, and I was fascinated to learn as a younger person that it has been debated for thousands of years. Heredity is important to me, but other manners of identification may be important to someone else, and that should be respected and not dismissed.”

“I have Jewish privilege. I never had to justify myself, based on the knowledge I gained from my upbringing.” We individually move around with a level of knowledge. Sufficient knowledge doesn't give anyone reason to question someone's Jewish identity
 Jewish parenthood/inheritance: personal, privilege being part of such a long tradition.

Growing up in a Jewish household is sufficient and constitutes “heredity.”

Although it's always been important, heredity isn't the prime factor. People who identify as Jews should be welcomed and we must find a way to usher them into our community.

Heredity is a terrible way to pass Judaism to the next generation. Jewishness is heart- and practice-centred, not biological or racial. DNA cannot determine one's Jewishness or mean that one feels a sense of belonging because of DNA.

What does it mean to be genetically Jewish? Do we need to sustain this?

Looking at it from a genetic point of view is dangerous.

OS should abandon heredity as a way to determine Jewishness. It is fraught with racism.

Indigenous people require a connection to the people beyond DNA in order to belong. Not just inherited.

Indigenous women were stripped of their cultural identities when marrying outside their communities, by the Indian Act. Coming together as a community to determine our own destiny is a privilege we enjoy.

DNA is not the only consideration, nor should it be elevated above others, but it can provide a path to become involved in Judaism. Should it be a privilege, or give people an advantage?

heredity should not play a role in who is Jewish within our community and that OS should accept anyone who wants to be a part of OS as a Jew

Heredity is less important than character. “I lean very much towards being inclusive. It doesn't matter to me [whether someone is matrilineal or patrilineal].” Expressed living in different region of Canada and US and seeing the conservatism in Canada towards patrilineal Jews not being Jewish as baffling and arbitrary.

“There are many many ways that people feel Jewish and spend time with people who are Jewish and it's not only about heredity.”

group's feelings were centred on heartbreak, and compassion for and empathy with all forms of exclusion from Judaism, and a desire to discuss and find ways to be more

inclusive, and to provide a place of belonging for those who wish to belong. Remove barriers of inheritance and matrilineal descent if possible.

Jewish identity is much more than heredity

The thought that it would be more inclusive to invite people of all backgrounds to affirm our Judaism regardless of DNA.

Importance of not denying people's ancestry and other spiritual, ethical and cultural traditions. Each tradition is part of the whole. Want to experience the flow of all of these and bring them forward in my spiritual practice. Also continuing to be welcoming for all those who wish to be part of the community, add to the richness and diversity of Vancouver's Jewish community.

What is role of lineage? If something, then patrilineal should count. If not, how then will we define 'being Jewish.'

I feel Jewish because of my ancestry even though it's patrilineal. I exist because all my ancestors existed.

Carrying forward something precious

Identification with ancestry is real and important

We should be guided by what we perceive jointly to be Jewish but not on our genetic lineage no matter how the external Jewish world perceives us. However, we need to consider how the Jewish world, in all its diversity, considers what or who is Jewish.

Heredity does matter as one of multiple pathways. (Citizenship is an interesting example of an organizing concept) Not exclusionary.

Even an older Jew by birth who intermarried has felt excluded at Orsh. We need to maintain the historic view that heredity provides by maintaining rituals. Hereditary is real. Sense of shared ancestry is important. How much is part of the critter and how much is part of the intellect?

Heredity complicates our notions of belonging, but it would be foolish to pretend that it doesn't matter. "It's there but I don't know what role it should play, or how we would ever get rid of it."

Heredity important because history and kin are important, question problematic - because history is important, establishes story, relationship to Judaism.

Patrilineal descent in history shows that heredity counts for something strongly. Decision of whether it's patrilineal/matrilineal is a construct. Similar to issue of how native is someone?

Heredity is one of many important pathways to being Jewish. This one unconditionally provides a “birthright” to what our people have to offer us that does not require anything from the individual [in terms of observance].

Jews by birth inherit more than just genetics — culture, trauma. Important to acknowledge that Jews who do find their way to Judaism through heredity do feel the impact of that inheritance [regardless of the parents’ halachic status].

the importance of heredity in how we think about ourselves; an ingrained, innate experience

Heredity in some form constitutive of Jewish identity. Conversation really has to do with identity and how a synagogue deals with identity, rather than with heredity.

If you are born Jewish, you can be a secular Jew, and you and your children will be considered Jewish. But if someone comes into the community, more is expected of them. More commitment seems to be expected of converts [and individuals with patrilineal Jewish heritage]. Echoed by several participants.

The suggestion here is not to eliminate heredity as an entry point to Jewishness. It remains. But the suggestion is to add to the entry points.

Heredity should be only one of many possible pathways - the analogy of who is a citizen?

The multilayered complexity of individual experiences, even within families with the same hereditary lineage.

Jewish identity is complex and nuanced, and will remain so whether patrilineal descent is accepted or not.

Jewish identity so complex - nationhood, religion, people, DNA

different definitions of 'heritage' and 'heredity'

Heredity is important, but not the only criterion. Today a sense of the commandment must come from inside us. - Reb Zalman.

Each child is different in regards to their Jewishness. Irrespective of who the mother is – “Don’t mess with me – don’t say my children are not Jewish”

Issue very complicated -one parent could be Jewish but not raised in a Jewish way at all.

The importance of one parent committing to really being the cultural holder, to pass along Jewish identity.

If one talks about a DNA component it should make no difference if the DNA comes from the mother or the father. Jews by Choice do not have this DNA at all, but are totally accepted within the Jewish Community.
In Canada we are all Jews by Choice.

“All Jews outside of Israel are Jews by Choice.”

Reb Zalman said that every Jew is a Jew by Choice.

every Jew is a Jew by choice

Reb Zalman “We are all Jews by choice” let’s even the Jewish playing field

There are two ways “born-ness “and “chosen-ness”

A member brought up the Abudaya in Africa who decided collectively to be Jewish 100 years ago. Not connected to blood ancestry.

Respectful of those who have no genetic lineage

What about adopted children?

Passive transmission is entirely legitimate (adoptive family, etc.) is constitutive of a significant portion of one’s psyche, identity, etc.

Jewish is a nation that comes with a religion, Judaism allows people to join then they become part of the nation forever - love that

Religion is a small part of being a Jew, moves from one generation to the next

2 questions being asked here - religion vs peoplehood, “Judaism is a civilization”, identity/relationship to Jewish people cannot be determined by outside body - it is internal.

Can’t understand fully the deep connections to Judaism that come with conversion

People who choose to come to this nation/religion are awesome and mysterious - why would you want to join this troubled, persecuted people.

People who want to become part of our people are IN forever, their DNA is ours and ours is theirs.

heredity continues to play an important role and many struggle to have this conversation without sliding into discussions of practice and discussions about conversion.

Lineage aspect is very complex-begins with tribalism and a desire for separatism

Within Reform Judaism, Jews are seen as those who identify themselves as a Jew-how has this affected their sub-lineage (children?) of seeing themselves as Jews. Considering the Holocaust's final determination of who is Jewish makes it very complicated politically, socially and culturally

Forced conversion to Christianity in the past but today there are many who are drawn to be Jewish many generations later

Fidelity to Judaism is not assured.

Lineage does not guarantee fidelity; exclusion impacts on all of us. But lineage has historical roots and has some role.

Should gender of parent be important in defining who is born Jewish, and if so how?

Consider biology - if it was not from matrilineal descent there would be no Jews left

Mitochondria within the gene identify Jewish heredity from the mother only. This is the same no matter how we appear on the outside-Indian, Asian,African, European etc.

I do not feel the biology necessarily should direct or even strongly influence what the community decides. But I think we will be more confident that we, as a community, are making the right decision, if we know the science (the biology) and the history about what maternal inheritance has meant for Judaism in the past.

The raping of woman - the children remained Jewish even if the father was non-Jewish

It is time to reconsider the role of gender and even biological heredity in being Jewish

From the outside (non-Jewish world) you might always be regarded as Jewish no matter what parent is Jewish

Whether mother or father is open to discussion.

What pressures exist for non-Jewish mothers whose children are going to be raised Jewish? A lot of the responsibility for maintaining traditions falls to that woman. Is conversion something I have to do just as a matter of course, or are my efforts to impart traditions acknowledged by the community? In either case, why would immersing my child in a mikveh be a problem, especially if it resolves several "problems" at once?

Matrilineal principle honours the role of women and mother's in passing on tradition. Also, non-Jewish mothers also put labour into connecting children to their Jewish heritage and it is unfair that those children would then not be considered Jewish.

Who is taking on the responsibility of advocating for Jewishness in kids' childhoods? This labour is often done by a mother who isn't Jewish by birth.

Disadvantage of only observing matrilineal lineage – there is an exclusion of non-Jewish mothers but not non-Jewish fathers as long as the child's mother is Jewish. This feeling of exclusion is unfair.

We live in a pluralistic society where there are many 'the others' and we also are 'the other.' Who is 'the other' and how do we live in harmony and dignity with diversity and still retain our distinct voice?! New challenges for a holier world. I am unequivocally in support of patrilineal descent.

women are still the primary caregivers who pass down culture though song, language, and food - But some Jewish women don't do that anyway and the Jewish men who might want to aren't allowed to take it on. Is the rejection of patrilineal descent killing Judaism?

A person can be raised with a strong Jewish identity when their Jewish father has a strong cultural sense of Jewishness but not a strong religious practice/identification.

Matrilineal descent excludes people whose fathers are Jewish but who see themselves as Jewish. This has hurt these individuals.

Matrilineal descent as a way of othering

Conundrum of children of Jewish women who become gender-fluid/a-gender/etc.

Multiple pathways and gender fluidity create the need for new paradigms.

In the modern world, matrilineal descent doesn't make sense now. It stopped working. Maybe time to change practice.

Gender has no meaning in 2021; it shouldn't matter which parent is the Jew. It's a "no brainer in 2021." IVF, gender fluidity, same sex marriage – all create circumstances unique to today. "Ready to move on!"

It feels like there is collective agreement that we need to recognize Jews of patrilineal descent

We've gone from recognition of patrilineal descent to recognition of matrilineal descent in the course of our history. Why not now embrace both, as inclusively and creatively as possible?

The history of our tradition has placed major emphasis on one line (female) of DNA, rather than so many other sources of Judaic identity (family culture, other DNA, affirmation etc). It seems time now to recognize that as having outlived its relevance in a world in which gender is no longer binary and culture plays such a powerful role in identities. Would appreciate thought as to new "affirmation" practices for all of us.

Comments about process, both the dialogue on Sunday and any future process

Feelings: Happy, uncertain, grateful, excited, nervous, inspired, proud, apprehensive, curious, glad it's happening.

opening and gratitude for being able to establish compassionate dialogue

Feelings: Anxious, curious, at ease, serious, excited, apprehensive, interested, anxious

Participants are all members of a synagogue and as such have made a strong commitment to this community.

Trust the process.

Excited about the possibility of a community we have dreamed about.

No idea where this is going. Who is going to make decisions after this morning's discussion? Response - this is a very long process.

A wide range of perspectives should be made known, whatever happens in the future

Dialogue not deep enough

Previously in grappling with the issue of who is a Jew there have been individual meetings with the entire array of people and their varying and diverse circumstances of being Jewish, to inform this conversation. This would be helpful.

disappointed that no exploration of what purpose does matrilineal descent serve

Our group seemed largely "on the same page" about supporting this change. Our group wants to make efforts to make sure all views are shared/made. Based upon our little anecdotal group, might need to hear more from those opposed to a change.

participant noted that they had changed their mind about heredity as important over the course of the dialogue *[to not important]*

More openness to change than I anticipated before this morning, but I expect we will still struggle finding the best formulation that does not cause rifts. I think it's possible, but will need a careful process

remarks about how different the tone was today, compared with the last time this issue was discussed. Happy to be in dialogue, respectful of their fellow members' experience and ideas, and sense of excitement at the prospect of further evolving the OS community.

I learned a bit more about the history of this discussion within the community

Let's keep this conversation going! So much richness, and so much more to come.

The bravery to be open and allow expression of thought at this point - even when not fully formed. A gratitude for this process and an openness for change

Let's remember to LISTEN to others whose point of view remains different / diverse.

Staying true to the uniqueness of Or Shalom regardless of broader community norms (loud and proud)

We might be the only Jewish group doing this for now, but we'll be the first.

Jews who want to belong to a synagogue that only accepts matrilineal Jews can join a conservative synagogue.

as a Congregation and a Movement need to be "loud and proud" about who we are and what we believe in.

What is the best way for us to be loud and proud when for many that may not be their demeanour?

Being true to ourselves. Refuge for folks who might not fit in elsewhere.

If we're an "alpha-test" community, we need to consider moving forward -- even with uncertainty about whether what we do, will work in the long run.

General comments on Jewish world at large, other religions' practices and questions

How did the belief of matrilineal descent become so entrenched?

There is a movement within Judaism to not circumcise.

What are the processes in other religions of conversion or confirmation of identity?

desire to learn how other denominations and congregations have made this transition and what affirming rituals they have put in place.

We are people who have survived by being flexible and adjusting to change, if not now - when?

I keep hearing the voice of R' Shlomo Carlebach saying to me, "This is a new world and you need to do new things."

Based on what I heard, I am not convinced that Judaism can survive, but I also got the sense that maybe there is no need for it to survive

Recognition of fear of assimilation due to impact of Holocaust on diminished number of Jews. History of persecution contributed to locking down around set criteria for identity/belonging.

the people who joined in our group value belonging to the Jewish people. This is separate from religious practice.

To belong to the Jewish people doesn't necessarily mean that Jewish life is all centred around synagogue and prayer

recognition that as we embrace change we also need to strengthen our community moving towards unity

The complexity of this discussion and the discussions that are made at the individual and collective level to bring together (or exclude) community

In our diverse society, parents need new kinds of support in raising Jewish children, whether or not either parent is born a Jew.