

YOUR LETTER TO PRIME MINISTER NETANYAHU

- For 2,000 years, Judaism has treated Jews-by-choice the same as Jews-by-birth. We are taught "as soon as a convert emerges from the *mikvah* (ritual bath) she or he is Jewish for all purposes." (Talmud, Yevamot 47b)

For 62 years, since its founding, the State of Israel, through the Law of Return, has welcomed Jews from around the world as citizens in the world's only Jewish state.

Today, legislation before the Knesset - a bill sponsored by MK David Rotem of Yisrael Beiteinu that addresses both the authority of the Chief Rabbinate and matters of conversion - threatens both of those sacred principles.

This legislation will certainly reopen one of the most divisive battles in the Jewish community. The proposed legislation will lead to a situation in which Jews-by-choice would be treated differently and denied recognition as Jews under the Law of Return, in direct contradiction of Israeli Supreme Court rulings. Additionally, it may lead to the delegitimization of all non-orthodox conversions performed outside of the State of Israel.

Our concern is neither partisan nor denominational, but emanates from true love of *Medinat Yisrael* and *Klal Yisrael* (the State and people of Israel). With the unity of the Jewish people foremost in our thoughts and prayers, we urge the government and the Knesset to affirm core principles of that unity when enacting any legislation. We call upon Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Defense Minister Ehud Barak and Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman to withstand the pressures of a small segment of the political spectrum and to do what is best for all Jewish people everywhere.

The Reform Movement calls upon the State of Israel to treat all religious streams of Judaism fairly and equally, a cause that is far from realization. We call upon the Knesset to reject this partisan attack on the majority of American Jews. Finally, we call upon the Israeli people to join with us in an effort to help Israel live up to its promise as a Jewish and democratic State.