



Advocacy Update

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Gene Patenting Supreme Court Case

Last week, the Supreme Court heard arguments on the case *Association for Molecular Pathology v. Myriad Genetics*. This case has received [national attention](#) in large part due to the extremely personal issues being addressed by the court. In particular, this case attempts to grapple with the question “can one patent a part of the human body?”

Jewish tradition as channeled through WRJ policy is divided on this important issue. We [support women’s autonomy over their own bodies](#), and believe that our bodies are gifts from God and not to be owned by other humans. On the other hand, we are inspired by Maimonides’ assertion that “God created drugs and compounds and gave us the intelligence necessary to discover their medicinal properties; we must use them in warding off illness and disease” (Maimonides Commentary on Mishnah Pesachim 4:9). A [1995 resolution](#) urges “continued intense study and research on issues of women’s health” – a topic in which breast cancer research is surely positioned.

How do you think this issue should play out? Should the Supreme Court side with Myriad and allow future patents to continue to spur innovation and life-saving research? Or should the Supreme Court come down on the other side and forbid a private company from patenting naturally occurring elements of the human body and broader world, thereby potentially limiting the amount and scope of research that can occur?

[Click here to read more](#) and let us know how you think in the comments section! And stay tuned [on our blog](#) for news of the Justices’ decision which will be coming down in the coming months!

Women of the Wall Court Decision

Last week, the Jerusalem District Court made an exciting ruling for supporters of Women of the Wall like WRJ. The ruling determined that recent detention of Women of the Wall members for their activities at the Western Wall was unjustified and for denying local police requests for restraining orders against the group. The Reform Movement is encouraged by this ruling.

As quoted in the [WRJ’s press release](#) on the issue, “Women of Reform Judaism (WRJ) is optimistic about the court’s decision today to guarantee the right of women to worship freely at this most holy site,” said Rabbi Marla J. Feldman, WRJ Executive Director. “Having recently joined Women of the Wall for a Rosh Chodesh service, we were deeply troubled by the presence of police who were not there to protect, but rather to intimidate and detain. Jews all over the world recognize the significance of the Kotel and no one should have the power to disenfranchise others who pray differently than they do.”

In the wake of this ruling, WRJ Board Member Jeanne W. Kahn of Temple Beth Ami and WRJ Mid-Atlantic District wrote about her journey on the WRJ Centennial Trip to Israel and Berlin, and how meaningful it was to stand for religious freedom with [Women of the Wall Nashot HaKotel](#). Read Jeanne’s [moving blog post here!](#)

For more information on WRJ and Social Justice, visit www.wrj.org/social-justice-home