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***"What does Jewish tradition say about becoming  
a single parent by choice?"***

***Response by Rabbi Peter Schweitzer***

This is one of these fantastical questions that would have spun the heads of the ancient Talmudic rabbis and the Biblical writers before them. The idea of intentionally having a child outside of a marriage – by whatever means (biological or adoption) – would not have crossed their minds. Artificial insemination would have been beyond the pale. And the possibility of in vitro fertilization would have defied their imagination.

But times have marched on, technology has made the unimaginable possible, and so has the social acceptance of what was once a taboo. Not only secular Jewish women are choosing to become single parents by choice, but, stunningly, so are Orthodox women. There is even an organization in Israel, Kayama Moms, that supports observant single mothers by choice. In the United States, there is a group called Single Mothers by Choice that reports that 20% of its 15,000 members are Jewish. Once again, we're way ahead of the curve!

But if we really want a proof-text to legitimize this new trend, let's go back to the beginning: "How many are your works, Lord! In wisdom you made them all; the earth is full of your creatures." (Ps. 124:24) Even I, a non-theist, can get behind this notion that all creatures – all children -- are blessed and a gift, no matter how they come to us. "Be fruitful and multiply" may originally have applied to the first couple. Let's also open our arms and welcome the children of single parents too – men and women alike.