

Conversion to Judaism
(Rabbi's Name)
(Congregation)

Conversion to Judaism is a challenging and powerful process. While it requires strong dedication and soul-searching, the results are extraordinary. As Lydia Kukoff, herself a Jew-by-choice writes, "Those who choose Judaism are witness to the beauty and value of Jewish tradition."

At (Congregation), conversion follows a period of preparation of about a year in length. During this period, the prospective convert studies Judaism, participates in the life of the synagogue and the Jewish community, and develops and deepens his or her personal commitment to and relationship with God, Torah and the Jewish people.

Requirements for conversion with Rabbi include all of the following:

1. **Introduction to Judaism Class.** This 15-16 week class is sponsored by the Union for Reform Judaism. It is a prerequisite to the conversion program. This class includes a survey of basic Judaism and Hebrew. The class is taught regionally in the Fall, Spring and Summer.
2. **Personal Reflections and Study.** Students will meet either privately or in small groups with Rabbi. These sessions will examine personal issues facing potential converts as well as detailed study of Jewish thought and practice. As part of this program, students will complete a self-study guide of 66 Questions and read books from the required reading list.
3. **Jewish Living.** The prospective convert begins to see the world through Jewish eyes. This includes celebration of Shabbat, holidays, attendance at worship services, observance of mitzvot, and participation in the community. Rabbi will help each conversion student with a personal plan for Jewish living.
4. **Gemilut Chasadim.** Each student will engage in ongoing acts of loving kindness, helping to repair the world. Each student will choose one or two specific *mitzvah* projects in the community.
5. **Becoming a Member of (Congregation).** Unless previous arrangements have been made with Rabbi, each candidate agrees to become part of the (Congregation) community upon completion of conversion – by joining the synagogue.
6. **Conversion Ceremony.** As each candidate prepares for conversion, the Rabbi and candidate will discuss participation in the *mikvah* (ritual immersion) and for men, the ritual of *milah* (circumcision) or *hatafat dam brit* (drawing a drop of blood). Each candidate will also write a personal statement to be read at the conversion ceremony.

Conversion Course Requirements
(Congregation)
(Rabbi's Name)

Sessions with Rabbi generally begin after completion of a certified Introduction to Judaism Class.

Requirements for course study with Rabbi:

1. Attend at least six study sessions with Rabbi.
2. Schedule one private meeting for you and your significant other – if applicable.
3. Keep journal entries as per enclosed journals.
4. Complete “66 Questions for *Gerut*” and submit to Rabbi in a timely manner.
5. Read one Jewish book outside of required material.
6. Attend (Congregation) Torah study at least once per month.
7. Attend at least two Jewish worship services each month.
8. Join in Jewish holiday celebrations.
9. Engage in ongoing acts of *tikkun olam* (social action)
10. If you choose, work with the (Congregation) *chaver* (buddy) who will introduce you to Temple and community.
11. In consultation with Rabbi, participate in *gerut* (conversion) rituals including mikvah and circumcision or *hatafat dam brit*.
12. Write your “spiritual autobiography” prior to conversion to be shared with Rabbi and *Beit Din* (witnesses).
13. Following *gerut*, become a member of (Congregation).

Readings for Meetings

Books to purchase:

***Choosing Judaism by Lydia Kukoff**

Choosing a Jewish Life by Anita Diamant

Embracing the Covenant by Allen Berkowitz and Patti Moskowitz

Living a Jewish Life by Anita Diamant and Howard Cooper

*** the revised version of Choosing Judaism may have different page numbers. Use the table of contents to help in certain sections.**

Readings for Session #1 and Journal #1 – Family Background

Choosing Judaism by Lydia Kukoff, pp. 32-45

Choosing a Jewish Life by Anita Diamant, pp. 3-43

Embracing the Covenant by Allen Berkowitz and Patti Moskowitz, pp. 31-35

Living a Jewish Life by Anita Diamant and Howard Cooper, pp. 79-94

Readings for Session #2 and Journal #2 – Your Jewish Family

Choosing Judaism by Lydia Kukoff, pp. 46-61, 86-93

Choosing a Jewish Life by Anita Diamant, pp. 43-56

Embracing the Covenant by Allen Berkowitz and Patti Moskowitz, pp. 40-44

Living a Jewish Life by Anita Diamant and Howard Cooper, pp. 23-32, 68-78

Readings for Session #3 and Journal #3 – Holidays

Choosing Judaism by Lydia Kukoff, pp. 63-84

Living a Jewish Life by Anita Diamant and Howard Cooper, pp. 167-300 (as interest dictates)

Readings for Session #4 and Journal #4 – Rituals of Conversion

Choosing a Jewish Life by Anita Diamant, pp. 57 – 170 (especially pp. 89 -128 and 136-141)

Embracing the Covenant by Allen Berkowitz and Patti Moskowitz, pp. 36-37, 111-117

Readings for Session #5 and Journal #5 – Feeling Closer to God

Choosing a Jewish Life by Anita Diamant, pp. 207-224

Embracing the Covenant by Allen Berkowitz and Patti Moskowitz, pp. 1-21

“What Does God Require of Us?” article to be given by Rabbi

Readings for Session #6 and Journal #6 – Community

Choosing Judaism by Lydia Kukoff, pp. 95-100

Choosing a Jewish Life by Anita Diamant, pp. 225-228

Embracing the Covenant by Allen Berkowitz and Patti Moskowitz, pp. 87-109

Living a Jewish Life by Anita Diamant and Howard Cooper, pp. 108-166 (as interest dictates)

Readings for Session #7 and Journal #7 – Now What?

Book Reports are due! Please be prepared to talk about your book for about 5 minutes.

Choosing Judaism by Lydia Kukoff, pp. 102-114

Choosing a Jewish Life by Anita Diamant, pp. 229-235

Embracing the Covenant by Allen Berkowitz and Patti Moskowitz, pp. 38-39, 118-128

If Jewish, member of a synagogue? Which one?

Is he/she taking Intro to Judaism with you?

4. CHILDREN

Please list the Name, Ages and Religion of your children (and/or significant other's children):

5. UPCOMING LIFE CYCLE EVENT

Is there any upcoming life cycle event that affects your conversion date? If so, describe it (including the planned timing):

6. OTHER INFORMATION

Please write any additional information or concerns you might have about your conversion:

The following journal entry topics are given to the prospective convert at the beginning of the process:

**Choosing Judaism
Journal Entry #1
Family Background**

Name: _____

Describe your religious background and upbringing. What effects do you think it had on your decision to become Jewish and how does it still affect you. Think of something positive you bring with you into Jewish life as a result of this background.

**Choosing Judaism
Journal Entry #2
Family Background and Your Jewish Family**

Name: _____

Describe some positive and negative experiences you've had resulting from conversion with your parents and siblings, and with your significant other and your significant other's family (as applicable). Also describe how converting has affected your relationship with your children (if applicable). Then relate how you've handled some of these situations, and what you might do differently if these situations arise again in the future.

**Choosing Judaism
Journal Entry #3
Holidays**

Name: _____

What are some Jewish rituals and celebrations you want to incorporate into your family's life? What are some of the obstacles to achieving those goals? How can you plan ahead to help make them happen?

**Choosing Judaism
Journal Entry #4
Rituals of Conversion**

Name: _____

What is the one thing you are most excited about or look forward to when thinking about conversion? About what are you most anxious or conflicted? (Feel free to write more than one thing for each)

**Choosing Judaism
Journal Entry #5
Feeling Closer to God**

Name: _____

After reading the article, "What Does God Require From Us?" from *Reform Judaism* (Fall 1993), offer your own statement answering the question: What does God require of us?

**Choosing Judaism
Journal Entry #6
Community**

Name: _____

The Midrash says, "A Community is too heavy for any one person to carry alone." Where do you see your place in the Jewish community? How comfortable do you feel getting involved in aspects of the Jewish community? What can you do to increase your comfort? How will you increase your involvement?

**Choosing Judaism
Journal Entry #7
Preparing to Become Jewish – Now What?**

Name: _____

As our study time together moves toward its conclusion, please reflect on these questions...

1. What Jewish experiences make you feel authentically Jewish? Why do you think they feel comfortable?
2. What settings or interactions in the Jewish community still feel foreign? What can you do to integrate them into your Jewish life? What does the community need to do to help you?
3. What will you miss most about your life before becoming a Jew?
4. What "gifts" do you anticipate bringing to the Jewish community?