

Jennifer Glazer - 11/30/00

I'll never forget the moment the Rabbi confronted me with the question, "How do you know you are not already a Jew?" My first reaction was to think how dare he be so bold? I hardly knew this person. I had only met with him one or two times before my soon-to-be husband and I strove to figure out how to best do an interfaith marriage. His remark put me on the defense at the time, but it is that comment that has seeped into my mind so many times since then.

I was raised with a Presbyterian religious teaching. We went to church on Sunday regularly and I attended Youth group classes from 4th grade through high school. I was confirmed in the eighth grade. I never put too much thought into other religions other than Christianity. I just thought if you believed in G-d you were a Christian and if you didn't believe in G-d you were an Athiest. I knew I was not an Athiest. I also knew there were some parts of Christianity I had questions about. I did not believe a lot of the things my Catholic friends believed. I always considered my Christianity as different from Catholic Christianity.

It was not until I met me husband that I really started thinking about the differences in the different religions. I knew nothing about Judaism before John (my husband) came into my life. I did enough learning prior to marriage and children to know I could live with someone of this religion and raise my children Jewishly. No, I was not worried that my children would not be baptized as I knew and felt that with their Bris and Naming Ceremonies they would enter the covenant with G-d.

The more I learned about Judaism through Temple programs, the JCC preschool, Friedel, Jewish friends etc., the more I fell in love with Judaism. Actually I was feeling more in sync. I am not believing that my thoughts, beliefs and actions really are Jewish and to some degree always have been. I simply did not know growing up that there was another way to think, especially about Jesus. Over the last few years my beliefs about who he really was have changed from being the actual son og G-d to believing he was a religious teacher who probably felt strongly about helping those in need. It is almost a relief to learn what the Jewish beliefs are. It makes more sense to me and I feel I can embrace the religion and believe in it all instead of picking and choosing what to believe as I did with Christianity.

So this is where I find myself today. Believing I am Jewish and wishing to convert of make it official. I am not doing this for my Jewish in-laws. I am not even doing it for my Jewish husband or children. I am doing to for me because this is who I am.

I do have some concerns. I hope I won't feel like a phony because I was not born Jewish. I don't have Jewish genes, history, etc. Some of this is good as I did not grow up feeling ashamed of Judaism (as I know some people did). I did grow up in a warm loving household with parents who loved me. Even though my parents divorced when I was nine, they somehow managed to keep stability in my life. I grew up with traditions and a wonderful sense of family that I want to pass on to my children. So now I have been learning different traditions and holidays, but, I do them with the same feelings of love and family that was passed on to me. I am learning how to cook Jewish foods as this

was not handed down to me. However, I don't see this as a problem, just an exciting challenge.

I also have concerns regarding the Christian holiday celebrations. Can I really give them up? Do I even have the energy to do all holidays? How do I transition away from celebrating these holidays in my home?

Another concern is my family. I do not think they have a problem with my taking on Jewish religious beliefs. I do think, however, they fear they will lose me to a different community and culture. I think they are worried I won't have time for them because I am so involved in the Jewish community. I do try to include them in many of the community events and activities, however, this is not always their desire. I feel I have been making great efforts to be with my family, but they still seem to view my involvement elsewhere as being too busy for them. This is a struggle for me and I do not yet have the answer.

So, where do I want to go from here? Israel! Some day when my children are older I would like to visit. For now I want to continue on this journey growing and learning without leaving my non-Jewish family behind as I continue on.