

## The Converts

Chana Block, originally printed in *The Secrets of the Tribe*, Sheep Meadow Press, NY

On the holiest day we fast till sundown.  
I watch the sun stand still  
as the horizon edges towards it. Four hours to go.  
The rabbi's mouth opens and closes and opens.  
I think: fish  
and little steaming potatoes,  
parsley clinging to them like an ancient script.

Only the converts, six of them in the corner,  
in their prayer shawls and feathery beards,  
sing every syllable.  
What word  
are they savoring now?  
If they go on loving that way, we'll be here all night.

Why did they follow us here, did they think  
we were happier?  
Did someone tell them we knew  
the lost words  
to open God's mouth?

The converts sway in white silk,  
their necks bent forward in yearning  
like swans,  
and I covet  
what they think we've got.

### Discussion:

1. Reactions?
2. What feelings about converts and conversion is the writer voicing? What are the issues?
3. Are there similar feelings among members of your congregation?
4. Are members of your congregation offered opportunities to learn about the process of conversion? How so? If not, what can you do to change this?