

# LAST MINUTE INFORMATION FOR CONVERSION TO JUDAISM

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After many months of preparation, you have arrived at the final steps towards becoming a member of the Jewish community. Mazel Tov! This page should give you all of the details for the last three requirements. As always, if you have questions, please call me at 436-9761.

## 1. BET DIN

Prior to your trip to the mikvah, you will be meeting with me and two other members of the clergy. We constitute the "court" that will determine your readiness for conversion. We will meet in my office and spend about 20-30 minutes discussing your journey to Judaism. We want to get a sense of where you have come from and where you are going. We will ask questions and ask that you respond. Please know that this is not a test. While we understand that this is anxiety provoking, you should try and relax.

## 2. MIKVAH

Directly following your meeting with the Bet Din, we will all proceed to the mikvah. It is the small building in the back left corner of the parking lot of the Jewish Community Center, 340 Whitehall Road. Inside, there is a waiting room, two bathrooms, and two mikvaot (the plural for mikvah). We will begin by doing a short reading to provide a context for what you are about to experience. Since your immersion in the mikvah is about spiritual rebirth rather than physical cleanliness, you will take a quick shower prior to entering the water. Towels, shampoo, and soap are provided. All jewelry make-up and nail polish needs to be removed prior to entering. There should be nothing that separates you from the water. When you are ready, you will exit the bathroom directly into the mikvah room. Enter the water and face the back wall (for the sake of modesty). At this point, you will let us know that you are ready. I will slip inside and leave the door slightly open so that the other clergy can hear. If you are a woman, there will be a female clergy present to supervise this. I will then ask you to recite two blessings. These can be found on the attached page. In between the blessings, you will completely immerse yourself twice in the water. Those with long hair should sweep their hand over their head to make sure that their hair is completely immersed. I (or the female clergy) will make sure that this happens. I (or the female clergy) will then leave the room so that you can get out and get dressed.

Our mikvah is supported by the entire community. Some individuals use it once in their lives; others use it weekly. We share equally in the expenses. As a result, there is a charge for its use. For adults who are completing conversion, the charge is \$180. Please bring a check for this amount, made out to "B'nos Israel Mikvah".

Your experience at the mikvah is a personal one. It is your decision whether you would like to invite others to join you. However, I ask that family and friends remain in the waiting room while you are in the mikvah.

At this point, I will give you a certificate of conversion and a document attesting to your immersion in the mikvah. I will keep a copy in my files, as well as send one to the American Jewish Archives in Cincinnati, Ohio.

## 3. THE PUBLIC CONVERSION CEREMONY

Becoming a member of the Jewish community is not something that is done privately. The final step towards becoming a Jew is a public affirmation of your desire. This will be done during a service on the Shabbat following your bet din/mikvah. I will invite you up onto the bima and hand you the Torah to hold. I will ask you to answer a few questions. You will then recite the words of the Shema, which can be found on the attached page. As you know, the Shema represents the central tenet of Judaism. Therefore, I ask that you please memorize it. The entire ceremony is approximately five minutes and will be done at the end of the silent prayer, unless I tell you otherwise.

Conversion to Judaism is a joyous experience. I hope you will consider inviting your family and friends to join you. If you so choose, you may also wish to help sponsor the Oneg following Shabbat services. If so, please call Don Davidoff at the synagogue. He will give you the details.