

SERVICE FOR CHOOSING JUDAISM

Part Two: At the Synagogue

(witnesses and ger/gyoret come to ark)

Our God and God of our ancestors, You called Abraham and Sarah to make Your sovereignty known to all humanity. You summoned Moses to teach Torah, bringing all humanity closer to You. We ask You now to grant blessing to _____, who stands before *Aron haKodesh*, the Holy Ark of Your Torah. S/he stands before Your ark as the people of Israel once stood at Sinai, choosing to accept with love Your sovereignty and the *mitzvot* of Your Torah.

May _____ now live as a true and righteous member of Your people Israel, embracing the heritage of our past, sharing both the burdens and the joys of our present, and anticipating the glory of all humanity's redemption. Adonai, God of Israel, spread over _____ a *sukkat shlomecha*, Your shelter of peace. Grant him/her the treasures of Your blessings in a life of Torah (lifelong learning), *avodah* (the worship and celebration of your name), and *gemilut chasadim tovim* (ethical deeds of compassion and generosity). And let us say: Amen.

(ger/gyoret reads)

I am a Jew because my faith demands of me no abdication of the mind.

I am a Jew because my faith requires of me all the devotion of my heart.

I am a Jew because in every place where suffering weeps, I weep.

I am a Jew because at every time when despair cries out, I hop.

I am a Jew because the word fo the people Israel is both the oldest and the newest.

I am a Jew because the promise of Israel is a universal promise.

I am a Jew because for Israel, the world is not completed; we are completing it.

I am a Jew because for Israel, humanity is not created; we are creating it.

I am a Jew because Israel places humanity and its unity above the nations and above Israel itself.

I am a Jew because, above humanity, image of the divine Unity, Israel places the unity which is divine.

-Edmond Fleg, early 20th c.

_____, you stand before the open Ark and before the commanding presence of the Torah, the Jewish people's most cherished treasure. It has led us on the way and guided us since we received it at Sinai. It has been carried during the times of our greatest rejoicing, and when we fled from burning synagogues and villages.

Take it to your heart as you respond to these six questions, in affirmation of the learning about, the journey toward, and now, the commitment to living... a Jewish life:

1. Do you choose to enter the eternal Covenant between God and the people Israel and to become a Jew of your own free will?

2. Do you accept Judaism to the exclusion of all other religious faiths and practices?
3. Do you pledge your loyalty to Judaism and to the Jewish people under all circumstances?
4. Do you promise to establish a Jewish home, and to participate actively in the life of the synagogue and of the Jewish community?
5. Do you commit yourself to the pursuit of Torah and Jewish knowledge?
6. If you should be blessed with children, do you promise to raise them as Jews?

I, _____, now declare in the presence of God and the witnesses here assembled that I seek the fellowship of the Jewish people and accept the faith of Judaism. I believe that God is One, and that God's power is responsible for all existence and life. I believe that as God is One, we are obliged to live as one family of humankind. I believe that humanity, created in the image of God, must ever strive to become more God-like, and so I accept the challenge of the Torah, "You shall be holy, for I your God am holy." I believe that we have been endowed with the freedom to choose between good and evil, but that it is our sacred obligation to work with God toward the elimination of poverty, injustice, and war. I believe that the Jewish people is committed to bring God's presence into our world, and to bringing ourselves closer and closer to the ethical perfection which is God. And so, in solemn affirmation of all this, I fervently proclaim the watchword of the Jewish faith.

(ger/gyoret recites Shema, then reads)

Hear, O Israel: Adonai is our God, Adonai is one. You shall love Adonai, your God, with all your mind, with all your strength, and with all your being. Set these words, which I command you this day, upon your heart. Teach them faithfully to your children, speak of them in your home and on your way, when you lie down and when you rise up. Bind them as a sign upon your hand; let them be a symbol before your eyes. Inscribe them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates. Be mindful of all my mitzvot, and do them: so shall you consecrate yourselves to your God. I, Adonai, am your God who led you out of the land of Egypt to be your God. I, Adonai, am your God.

BESTOWING THE HEBREW NAME

You are known by the name _____, which means that you are always linked in love to those who gave you life. From this time forth, you shall also be known within the Jewish community as _____ ben/bat Avraham v'Sarah. *(Tell significance of name)*. May this name bring respect to you and honor to the Jewish people. We rejoice to welcome into our midst one who willingly and devotedly helps replenish the ranks of our people.

Mi sheberach avoteynu v'imoteynu... may the One who blessed our ancestors—Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebecca, Jacob, Leah and Rachel—bless _____, who has come to participate in the destiny of the people Israel. May you be counted among the

righteous who are devoted to the God of our ancestors. May you prosper in all your worthy endeavors; may the work of your hands be blessed.

_____, as your people have done through the ages, I now ask God's blessing on you with these ancient words of Torah...

(rabbi recites Yivarechecha)
(congregation joins in Shehecheyanu)

Mazal tov!

(ger/gyoret reads statement)
(presentation of synagogue gift)