

SERVICE FOR CHOOSING JUDAISM

Part One: At the Mikveh

(undress-robe)
(words from rabbi)

B'ruchim habaim b'shem Adonai.

Blessed are you who come here in God's name.

Beyrachnuchem mi'beyt Adonai.

We bless you in God's name.

At this sacred and joyous moment, we renew the Covenant at Sinai between God and the people of Israel, recalling the words of the prophet Isaiah (14:1): "Strangers shall join them, and shall cleave to the House of Israel."

Oh God, we thank You for Your many blessings. We thank You for the truth You have revealed to all humanity. Above all, we thank You for the gift of Torah, which has been a light for our path. We recall with reverence and gratitude all those descendants of Abraham and Sarah who have been faithful to You, and those who, of their own choice, have sought to serve you through the faith and people of Israel.

O God, grant Your loving favor to _____ as in this holy place we welcome him/her into Jewish life. Knowing well the history of our martyrdom in years past, _____ has chosen to join himself/herself to our people's faith. We open our hearts to him/her. Strengthen _____ in his/her resolve. Help him/her to live in fidelity to the decision he/she has made, and to the promise he/she is about to utter. May he/she always find satisfaction and joy in the fulfillment of Your sacred *mitzvot*. Grant him/her many years of strength and happiness as a worthy member of our congregation. We praise You, O God, in whose presence is the fullness of joy. 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.

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?

(ger/geriyoret reads)

The Torah of God is perfect, reviving the soul; the teaching of God is sure, making wise the simple. The precepts of God are right, delighting the mind; the *mitzvah* of God is clear, giving light to the eyes. The world of God is pure, enduring forever; the judgements of God are true, and altogether just.

-Psalm 19

Behold, I have given you a good doctrine—My Torah; do not forsake it. It is a tree of life to those who hold it fast, and all who cling to it find happiness. Its ways are ways of pleasantness, and all its paths are peace.

-Psalm 119

TEVILLAH

In our tradition, water has always played an important symbolic role. Before the world was created, God's presence hovered over the surface of the water. In the time of Noah, God sought to begin life anew on earth' by opening the fountains of the deep, the waters poured forth and the earth returned to its pristine beginning. Our patriarchs and matriarchs met at the well' the source of water was the center of community life, and thus, the well marked the promise of new beginnings in our ancestors' lives. Water is also a sign of redemption; it was the waters of the Sea of Reeds that parted and allowed us to move from slavery into freedom. And water is a symbol of sustenance; Miriam, the sister of Moses, was considered to have been so righteous that, while she was alive, God caused a well—Miriam's Well—to accompany the Israelites throughout their desert wanderings, and sustain them with water. And finally, water (in Jewish tradition) represents learning and knowledge. We are taught that, as water brings life into the world, so too the Torah brings life to our world; as water leaves the high places and rests in the lowlands, the deeper teaching of our tradition elude one who is arrogant and self-involved, but cleave to one who is caring and humble.

_____, as you enter the living waters of the *mikveh* here today, we pray that you will continue to immerse yourself in the living waters of our Jewish tradition, that you will strive to live a life of honesty, compassion, and goodwill.

(ger/gyoret enters water)

Adonai m'kor mayim chayim. God is the fountain of living waters. _____, you are here to immerse yourself in the *mikveh* as a sign that you have immersed yourself in the fate and faith of the People of Israel. May this *te-vee-lah* strengthen your commitment to the Jewish people and to the Jewish way of life. *Amen.*

Ruth said, "Entreat me not to leave you, or to return from following after you. For wherever you go, I will go. Where ever you lodge, I will lodge. Your people shall be my people and your God my God."

(immerse once)
(ger/gyoret recites blessing)

Barcuh ata Adonai, eleheyenu melech haolam, asher kid'shanu b'mitzvotav v'tzivanu al hat'vilah.

We praise You, Adonai our God, Ruler of the universe, who has hallowed us by *mitzvot* and commanded us concerning the immersion of *gerim*.

(immerse twice)
(ger/gyoret recites Shehechyanu)

In the book of Ezekiel (36:25ff) it is written: *V'zarakti aleichem mayim t'horim ut'hartem...* I will place pure waters upon you and you shall be sanctified. *V'natati lachem ruach chadasha...* I will renew your spirit. *V'asiti et asher b'chukai teyleychu...* I will welcome you into the pathways of My *mitzvot*. *Veeh'yitem li l'am...* you shall be My people and I will be your God.

(exit water, dress)
(sign certificate)