

Special Information for the Date of Conversion

At the time of your appointment, you will be invited to join the members of the *Bet Din* (Religious Tribunal) for your interview (*Chakirah*) - which as you know is one of the pre-requisites for conversion¹ The members of the *Bet Din* will be introduced to you by your sponsoring Rabbi, who will also make a brief presentation about your journey from the time you first met to the present moment. The group will then be given a opportunity to ask you direct questions. A few examples are:

- ◆ Tell us about your self, and how you arrived at the decision to become Jewish.
- ◆ What is your family's background?
- ◆ How have they reacted to your decision to convert?
- ◆ Have you had any problems or reservations divorcing yourself from the ideologies and tenets of the tradition in which you were raised?
- ◆ What has been the most critical factor in your decision to convert?
- ◆ Has there been any particular person(s) who has played a special role in this process?
- ◆ What is the last Jewish book you have read?
- ◆ If we were to visit your home without any knowledge of who you are, how would we know yours is a Jewish home?
- ◆ Describe for us a typical Shabbat in your life?
- ◆ How have you adapted to the observance of the Dietary Laws?
- ◆ Do you know today's Hebrew Date? [24 *Elul* - 5750]
- ◆ What is the name of the portion of the Torah we read this week in Synagogue? [*Parshat Nitzavim/Vayelech*: Book of Deuteronomy: Ch: 29:9 - 31:30]

- ◆ What is the next major Jewish Holiday? [*Rosh HaShanah*] What is it all about?
- ◆ Do you have any hesitation about what you are about to do?

Immediately after you are dismissed from the presence of the *Bet Din*, the members will evaluate your answers, and assess your commitment to the Jewish Tradition. After a brief period of time, the Rabbi who presides over the *Bet Din*, will inform you of the Tribunal's recommendation. If they approve your request, you will be instructed to proceed to the *Mikvah* (Ritual Bath) for the immersion procedures (the second of the required steps in this process).

At the *Mikvah*, you will be met by an attendant of your same gender, who will guide you and oversee the process, thus ensuring all elements of this important procedure are meticulously observed. In the case of female candidates, who may be menstruating, it will be necessary to schedule an appointment at a different time when no less than 7 "clean" days have elapsed after the end of the cycle.

In preparation for the immersion, you will be asked to get completely undressed, making sure you are not wearing any jewelry, make-up, nail polish, or any other item that may constitute a barrier between yourself and the water. The attendant will be able to answer any questions you may have at the time. The attendant will instruct you to take a brief shower to in order to rinse-off prior to stepping into the *Mikvah* (there is no need to dry-off before proceeding to the *Mikvah*).

Once you descend into the *Mikvah*, you should proceed to the center of the tank where the water level can reach the highest level.

When instructed by the attendant, you will immerse yourself completely, ensuring the water reaches over your head. At that moment you should slightly lift your feet from the floor, and stretch your arms to the sides (hovering), ensuring thus the water completely covers your entire body. After a

¹ Males will be required to undergo circumcision before any of these arrangements can be made. In the cases of men who are already circumcised, a private moment will be spent with the Mohel or the Rabbi for *Hatafat Dam Brit*.

brief moment (2 or 3 seconds) you should come out of the water and take a deep breath.

The attendant will make available to you a large print-out of the appropriate blessing you are to recite at this time (males will be handed a *Kippah*) and instruct you to recite the appropriate blessing at this time (...*al Ha'tevila*). The members of the *Bet Din* will be listening to your recitation from the outside, and once concluded the attendant will signal you are ready for the next immersion.

You will be asked to repeat the process of the first immersion, making sure your entire body is covered by the water, and again that you hover for a few second. Once you come out again, you will be instructed to recite the second blessing (*Shechecheyanu...*).

Finally, proceed to complete the third immersion, in the exact same manner you completed the first two. When you come out for air, you will hear the members of the *Bet Din* congratulate you with the words *Mazal Tov*, and the attendant will instruct you to proceed to get dressed.

Only the final step in this important process is missing: *Kabalt Ol Malkhut Shamayim...* - a brief ceremony in front of the open Ark in the Synagogue, where once again, in the presence of the *Bet Din*, you will be asked to read a special statement of commitment to the tenets, values, ideals, and traditions of the Jewish people; and asserting your commitment to accept the 'yoke of the *mitzvot*.'

You are encouraged to invite your most immediate relatives or intimate friends to join you in this joyful moment in your life.

It is customary for the officiating Rabbi to offer a brief *d'var Torah*, and following the recitation of the Shema, with Psalms and special prayers, he will welcome you to the fold as a "*Ger Tzedek*," and announce publicly your Hebrew Name. You will be issued a certificate certifying that the process has been completed according to the strictest standards and requirements of Jewish law (*Halachah*). The certificate will also contain your new Hebrew name, and any other particulars concerning your conversion. These documents should be kept in a safe place as they may be required at a latter time for purposes of marriage, childbirth etc.

Needless to say, following this monumental event, you are encouraged to continue studying and growing as a Jew, and if at all possible, to become an active member of a Congregation, where you will continue to receive guidance, support and recognition for your commitment to the Tradition of our forefathers.

מזל טוב