

RRA GUIDELINES ON GIYYUR
Adopted at RRA Convention, March 17, 2009

III. PREPARATION FOR GIYYUR

A. Academic Preparation

Prospective *gerim* should have the opportunity to study Judaism in some depth and gain a sense of Jewish literacy. This can include knowledge of Jewish history; of fundamental ideas and values as well as diverse approaches to them; an understanding of the Jewish calendar, and the holidays; Shabbat and *yom tov* observances; *tefila*; *kashrut*; the *Humash*, *TaNakh* and *siddur*, and some familiarity with the classic categories of Jewish literature (*Mishnah*, *Gemarah*, *midrash*, codes, commentaries). A reading knowledge of *siddur* Hebrew provides access to Jewish liturgy.

Jewish communities often sponsor “Introduction to Judaism” courses. Many rabbis encourage people to enroll in such courses, and often provide supplemental individualized instruction and counseling. Other rabbis offer their own introductory courses and/or provide individualized instruction.

A period of one year of study (and other preparation) is recommended as a minimum. In cases where a person may already have experience with Jewish tradition and/or some knowledge of Judaism (such as often occurs with someone married to a Jew), a shorter period of formal preparation may be appropriate. Under certain circumstances, it may be appropriate to abbreviate the period of study and proceed with the conversion, even if the prospective *ger/gioret* has not yet achieved the level of knowledge and experience we would normally require.

B. Spiritual Preparation

Since Judaism is the evolving religious civilization of the Jewish people one criterion for *giyyur* is a personal connection and commitment to a serious engagement with Jewish religious concepts and categories. We do not expect *gerim* to declare fidelity to a specific form of Jewish religious faith, or to accept one conception of God in particular from among the many choices that can be found in Jewish tradition. We do want people who choose Judaism to engage seriously with religious and theological issues, and to be challenged to reflect on the range of approaches to God, and to work on cultivating a sense of personal Jewish spiritual identity. Prospective *gerim* can keep a spiritual diary or journal for reflection.

We encourage prospective *gerim* to develop a personal spiritual practice. They should be encouraged to explore a variety of practices that can include (but are not limited to) daily prayer, meditation, recitation of *brachot*, regular giving of *tzedakah*, the observance of Shabbat and some connection with *kashrut*.

C. Preparation for Life in Community

Since Jewish identity is best nurtured, developed and expressed in the context of Jewish community, potential *gerim* should be directed where possible toward several Jewish communities that they might explore and/or participate in as part of the *giyyur* process.

If a potential *ger/gioret* is working with a congregational rabbi, the rabbi’s synagogue often becomes the primary community through which acculturation into the Jewish community is supported. However, prospective *gerim* should be encouraged to attend a variety of synagogues or other communities for Shabbat services in order to experience diverse styles and approaches, and to encourage familiarity and comfort in more than one denominational setting.