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INTERNET PARSHA SHEET ON VAESCHANAN - 5769

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from **Shabbat Shalom: Rabbi Shlomo Riskin's Parsha List**
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Efrat, Israel: "When it shall be difficult for you, all of these things [d'varim, also may be translated "words"] will find you at the end of the days, and you shall return to the Lord your G-d and hearken to His voice" (Deut.4:30)

This past Thursday we all fasted to the bittersweet melody of the Scroll of Lamentations (Eicha) - angst-music whose haunting cadences rise from the depths of Jewish despair. But when mid-day arrived, we got up from off the ground, our lagging spirits suddenly lifted as we put on our t'fillin adornments and recited the blessing of "comfort" (nahem) within the Amidah, a process that changes the mood of mourning while confirming the prophetic words of Zachariah, "Thus says the Lord G-d of hosts: the fast of the... fifth month [Tisha B'Av]... shall be for the house of Judah rejoicing, gladness and festival..." (Zachariah 8:19).

But how is it possible that the great tragic day of the Ninth of Av, a date when both Temples were destroyed, can become an occasion for joyous reprieve, even if only in the afternoon hours? What can we possibly be happy about?

I believe the answer is to be found in this week's Biblical reading wherein Moses provides a quintessential outline of Jewish history: settlement of Israel, corruption and idolatry, destruction and exile, assimilation [the Vilna Gaon interprets the references to worshiping wood and stone (4:28) as references to the 'wooden' crucifix, and the Kaaba, the Black Stone in Mecca] - but then eventual return to G-d and His land, because "...the Lord your G-d is a compassionate G-d who will not forget the covenant with your forbears which He has sworn to them" (Deut.4:25-31,38).

Indeed, we read these verses on the day of Tisha B'Av itself, the day in which we mark the loss of our national sovereignty. But at the same time we remember that although both sacred temples and even our sacred cities were destroyed, our nation was not! Unlike other peoples whose loss of homeland signaled a concomitant loss of national identity (look high and low in the U.N. to see if you can find traces of the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Babylonians...) we, the people of Israel,

remained the people of the Covenant, our Torah mandating our mission and the promise of our eventual return to the land. The fact is that our survival as a separate ethnic and cultural entity for nearly 2000 years of exile is itself one of the greatest miracles in the scope of history.

I'd like to suggest that the seed for our ultimate rejoicing on the Ninth of Av is planted in the declaration, "...when it shall be difficult for you, these things [words] will find you... and you shall return..." (4:30). I have chosen to translate the phrase 'kol hadevarim' as "these words," emphasizing the idea that "these words" of the Torah shall find you in the depths of your suffering, in the midst of your exile and assimilation, and you shall return.

The source for this translation goes back to 1965, when Lincoln Square Synagogue, my first congregation, was housed in a small apartment on the West Side of Manhattan (150 West End Ave. 1D). One day I noticed a middle-aged gentleman who would enter the synagogue-apartment towards the end of the Torah reading, remain standing near the door, and quickly leave after the sermon. But on the Shabbat of Va'Etchanan he arrived towards the beginning of the reading - and as the aforementioned words were read, he fled in tears. I ran out after him, and he later told me that his name was Wolf Reichard who grew up in a family of pious Satmar hassidim but completely gave up on religion when he graduated from the hell-hole called Auschwitz. Then, for some reason, when our small apartment-synagogue opened its door, he found himself attracted to the services, and despite his own private history of suffering he recognized a need emerging from his truest self. Upon hearing the Torah reader chant, "When it shall be difficult for you, all of these words will find you... and you shall return..." he knew he could no longer erase his past or escape from his future destiny: the words were an arrow into his heart and from then on he came to shul not only every Sabbath (from the beginning of services) but also every morning, and in celebration of his return, he generously provided our weekly Sabbath Kiddush.

In 1970, five years later, the truth of this translation was confirmed when the Lubavitcher Rebbe of blessed memory, asked me to open underground Yeshivot in the former Soviet Union. On my first day in Moscow I met a young man in front of my hotel, Leonid Lunya Rigerman. (Lunya, who would play a pivotal role in the historic struggle for Soviet Jewry, would become a special friend.) When he spotted me wearing a kippa, he asked if I was a religious Jew, and when I responded that I try to be, he invited me to his 30th birthday party. That's where I received first-hand reports of the Leningrad trials (communist "show" trials against a group of refuseniks who were accused of attempting to hijack a plane to Israel) and the extent of the virulent anti-Semitism in Russia. All of this described in perfect New York English, because it turned out that Lunya was born to Communist parents who in 1930 had made "aliyah" from Allerton Avenue in the Bronx to the Soviet Union. By the time we met he was already a committed Jew - a refusenik, keeping whatever mitzvot he could at great personal sacrifice.

He told me his story, how his transformation began because of words. A physicist, he worked in a special laboratory whose employees had the privilege of library study two hours each day. Suffering painful headaches, unable to concentrate, he decided he needed a bit of a break from his laboratory experiments, and found himself wandering over to the English shelf, which - in deference to American visitors - contained a Holy Bible. He began to read and when he got to the Joseph story, he became fascinated, especially the section which describes how Joseph went out in search of his brothers. That's when he realized the Torah was speaking to him; he too was searching for his brothers -- and that they were not to be found in the physics lab.

He hurried over to Archipova Street where the Synagogue was located (needless to say, his communist parents never made him a bar mitzvah), joining a line which turned out to be waiting for matzah (that night was Seder night and the man in front of him explained that matzah was 'our freedom bread'). He put the matzah in his pocket, said nothing to his family, ate his 'freedom bread' before going to sleep, and the next morning reported for work. But his job at the physics lab was terminated. A hidden camera

outside the synagogue had photographed his presence. Thus ended the life of Lunya the Communist and began the history of Lunya the Jew. The words of the Torah had found him, too! Shabbat Shalom!

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Rabbi Dr. Abraham J. Twerski

The Mussar of Greek Mythology

Sixty-five years ago, in high-school, I learned a powerful mussar lesson, but I did not realize it at the time.

Ulysses was a traveler in Greek mythology. He heard of the “music of the sirens.” This was music that was heard at a particular harbor, and it was so enchanting, so attractive, that it drew sailors to the shore. However, there were sharp, ragged reefs in the harbor, and the ships would crash into them and were destroyed. Sailors knew this, and passing by the harbor, they would see the wreckages of the ships that had been destroyed, but once they heard the music of the sirens, they were helpless and headed into the harbor to their own destruction.

Ulysses wanted to hear the fabled music of the sirens, but knew that this would be fatal. He, therefore, stuffed his sailors’ ears with wax so that they could not hear any sounds, and he told them that they were to sail by the harbor and pay no attention to anything he said. He then had himself tied securely to the ship’s mast so that he could not move.

As the sailors approached the harbor, Ulysses began hearing the music of the sirens. He began shouting to the sailors to head for shore, but of course, they could not hear him. He began screaming at them, “I am your captain! You must obey my orders!” As he heard the music of the sirens, he struggled to free himself from the ropes. “Head for the shore!” he shouted. “I will have you hung for mutiny!” But the sailors rowed on.

After they had passed the harbor and the music was no longer heard, Ulysses fainted from exhaustion. The sailors then untied him, and he realized how helpless he had been, and had he not rendered the sailors unable to hear, they would have all been destroyed.

Much later I realized that the “music of the sirens” is the yetzer hara. It can enchant a person and render one almost helpless to resist its temptation. Seeing the wreckage of the ships did not prevent sailors from rowing to their destruction.

One cocaine addict worked in a mortuary, and buried people who were killed by cocaine, but that did not stop his use, and he died from cocaine at age 33. Cocaine, music of the sirens, yetzer hara—they are all the same.

How can we “stuff our ears” to the “music of the sirens” that can be heard almost anywhere in our environment? The Talmud cites Hashem as saying, “I created the yetzer hara, and I created Torah as its antidote” (Kedushin 30b). It is our only defense. However, just holding on to Torah is not enough, just as holding on to the mast would not have been enough. We must tie ourselves so tightly to Torah that we can not break loose from it. This is why Moses repeatedly stressed, “But you who cling to Hashem—you are all alive today” (Devarim 4:4), “to Him you shall cleave,” (ibid. 10:20) and “To love Hashem, to listen to His voice and to cleave to Him (ibid. 30:20). King David says, “I have clung to your testimonies (Tehilim 119:31). To cling and cleave means to be inseparably attached to Torah.

Learning Torah and doing mitzvos is of greatest importance, but does not yet result in the necessary fusion. The Talmud says that the single verse that the entire Torah depends on is “Know Hashem in all your ways” (Mishle 3:6, Berachos 63a). Cleaving and clinging is not accomplished by relating to Hashem just in Torah study and in performance of mitzvos, but in everything we do—eating, sleeping, transacting, socializing. The works of mussar tell us how we can accomplish this. It is this kind of observance of Torah that can save us from the destructive attractions of the yetzer hara.

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<http://www.anshe.org/parsha.htm#parsha> Parsha Page by **Fred Toczek** - A Service of Anshe Emes Synagogue (Los Angeles)

E. LilMode U'lilamed (Rabbi Mordechai Katz)

1. Going beyond the letter of the law. The Parsha contains an apparent redundancy -- it contains several admonitions to observe the laws taught by Moshe, but later states "and you shall do that which is right and good in the eyes of the L-rd". What new instruction does the latter verse add? Rashi and Rambam explain that this verse contains the additional command to do "right and good" -- i.e., to go above and beyond the letter of the law in serving Hashem and aiding one's fellow man. One who does so shows that he acts not only out of a sense of duty, or to gain rewards, but also out of a sincere desire to do Hashem's bidding for its own sake. This ideal is illustrated by the following story: A man came to the Brisker Rav before Pesach and asked "Can I use milk instead of wine for the Four Cups?" The Brisker Rav didn't reply; instead, he removed five rubles from his pocket and gave them to the man. The Rav's wife asked "Would not one ruble have been more than enough money for him to buy wine?" "Perhaps," responded the Rav, "but from his question, it was clear that he didn't have money for meat either, for one can't eat meat and use milk for the Four Cups. Therefore, I gave him enough money for both meat and wine for his Pesach Seder."

2. Mezuzah and Tefillin. Mezuzah and Tefillin each contain a portion of Hashem's teaching to Israel. As a result, they serve as a link to Hashem, a constant reminder that we are guarded by His presence and that it is our task to perform His mitzvos (Rambam), as illustrated by the following story: Onkelos ben Kalonymos was a close friend of the Emperor and a convert to Judaism. The Emperor didn't take kindly to Onkelos' conversion and sent several groups of soldiers to pick him up and return him to Rome. As he was being dragged out of his house by the soldiers, Onkelos reached over and kissed his Mezuzah. As the soldiers gazed in astonishment, he told them "Do you see the difference between your human ruler and my G-d? A human emperor stays inside while his guards stand outside to guard him; but my G-d stays at the door and guards all of the common people inside. (Onkelos's words had such an impact on the soldiers that they also converted.)

F. Growth Through Torah (Rabbi Zelig Pliskin)

1. Bring sanctity into all aspects of human behavior. "See that I have taught you statutes and laws as the L-rd, my G-d, commanded me, to do so in the midst of the land." Some philosophers advocate that if a person wants to live a life of sanctity and purity, he must flee from inhabited places and live alone in the wilderness. This is not, however, the path of the Torah. We are told to live an elevated life among other people. True sanctity and perfection is to live among other people and behave towards G-d and your fellow man in a manner consistent with Torah values (Arvai Nachal). The ideal of Torah is to bring sanctity and idealism into all aspects of human endeavor. If you live alone, you will be free from anger, envy, causing others pain, etc.; but, you will also be missing opportunities for kindness, compassion, charity, etc. Only when you are in the company of others can you fulfill all aspects of the Torah.

2. View anew each day all that you have. "If you beget children and grandchildren and become old in the land, and become corrupt and make an idol, the image of anything, and you do what is evil in the eyes of the Almighty, your G-d, to anger him". Why does a person meriting children and grandchildren lead to his becoming corrupt and doing evil? To the contrary, shouldn't it make him more grateful to Hashem? The answer lies in the word "Venoshantem", becoming old -- that is, you become so accustomed to what you have that you no longer appreciate it. Taking for granted what you already have prevents you from being grateful to Hashem for all the good that He has given you. There are many things that you have that you appreciated when you first got them. In order to develop a deeper gratitude for Hashem's kindness, we should try to view all that we have as though it was just received that very day.

3. Internalize the awareness that all that occurs to you if from the Almighty. "And you shall know this day, and you shall take this to your heart, that the Almighty is G-d in the heavens above and upon the earth below, there is no other." The Chofetz Chaim taught that this verse tells us that all that happens in our lives -- profits/losses, pain/suffering, joy, etc. -- is from Hashem.

4. Continue to reflect upon Hashem's love and eventually you will experience it. "And these things which I command you this day shall be on your heart". Rabbi Shalom Schwadron interpreted this mean that we must remove any obstructions (i.e., faulty character traits and emotions) form our heart before we can experience love for Hashem. The Kotzker Rebbe commented that "at times your heart might be closed and the concepts and ideas you accept intellectually don't penetrate and become part of you. Still keep them on your heart even if they don't enter your heart, for as soon as your heart opens up they will immediately fall right in."

G. In the Garden of the Torah (the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson, z'tl)

What is Prayer? The fundamental dimension of prayer is to ask G-d for our needs; the praise and thanksgiving which precede and follow our requests is merely a supplementary element of the mitzvah (Rambam; Cf. Shulchan Aruch Harav, which refers to the recitation of G-d's praise as the "fundamental element of prayer"). This week's Parsha -- in which Moshe pleaded to Hashem for permission to enter Israel -- gives us insight in the way we should approach G-d in prayer. As the Sifri notes "[Moshe] could have depended upon his good deeds. Instead, [he] asked G-d for a gift . . . How much more so should we make requests [of G-d in this manner]." When asking for Hashem's goodness, one should plead with humility; even when a person is deserving, he should not rely on his merits, but should ask G-d for unearned kindness.

H. Reflections on the Sedra (Rabbi Zalmen Posner)

Face-to-face. In recalling the forty years in the wilderness, Moshe repeats the Ten Commandments, which he prefaces with the introduction that, "face to face G-d spoke to you from the mountain," and "not with our fathers but with us here today alive." There is a personal element in Torah, a challenge made to man by G-d face to face. We are placed on earth to live as we will and make of it what we please. We are given Torah to teach us how to live and what we can accomplish. We can approach Torah affirmatively, seeking meaning for our lives, finding where and how G-d speaks to each of us face to face. Torah is meant for the living; it is not to be consigned to our ancestors as a revered relic of an almost forgotten past. Torah is to be used, employed in all situations and problems, for it has an immediate relevance to all who are alive.

I. Living Each Week (Rabbi Abraham Twerski)

An active Shabbos. "And you shall remember that you were a slave in Egypt and G-d delivered you from there . . . therefore he is commanding you to make the day of Shabbos." Several times, the Torah refers to Shabbos with the word "to make," as though there were something active about Shabbos, although it would seem that the salient feature of Shabbos is complete rest or lack of activity. In the repetition of the Ten Commandments, there is a marked change from the original recitation. There it says that we must observe Shabbos because G-d created the universe in six days and rested on the seventh." Yet, here it says that we should observe in remembrance of our enslavement in Egypt, Hashem is commanding us to make the day of Shabbos. Why does the Torah give a different reason for Shabbos here? Perhaps it is because that here the Torah is not telling us why to observe Shabbos, but how not to observe it. The idea of a "day of rest" is essentially a secular concept. One rests so that he/she can "recharge" the batteries in order to increase one's work efficiency for the following week. The day of rest is a means rather than an end. The Torah concept of Shabbos is just the reverse. One works six days in order to be able to have a Shabbos. Exhaustion is not the reason for

Shabbos any more than it was for G-d's resting on the seventh day. Shabbos is a day of spiritual growth and development. It is a day when through prayer and the study of Torah, one should be able to create a new self, a person more refined than one had been heretofore. Shabbos is passive only in the sense of abstinence from work, but that abstinence is not sufficient. It must be used to enable oneself to make oneself into something finer and more spiritual person. This is what the Torah means by repeatedly using the expression "to make" the Shabbos. Make the Shabbos an active day of spiritual achievement and creation.

J. Artscroll Chumash: A Few Thoughts On The Shema.

1. Hashem is "One and Only". There is an inner harmony in all that He does, though human intelligence cannot comprehend it. (R' Gedaliah Schorr likened the concept to a ray of light seen through a prism. Though the viewer sees a myriad of different colors, it is a single ray of light. So, too, G-d's many manifestations are truly one.) On another note, the first and last letters of the first verse of the Shema are written large in the Torah. These two letters spell the Hebrew word for "witness", symbolizing that by reciting the Shema, the Jew bears witness to G-d's Oneness.

2. "You shall love . . ." How can one be commanded to love? The Torah answers this in the next few verses by saying that Jews should think about the Torah, study it and teach it. When one meditates on G-d's great and wondrous deeds and creations, he will come to love and praise Him (Rambam).

3. "With all of your heart . . ." Rashi notes that this is really referring to hearts; that is, we must love G-d with both our good and evil inclinations. Talmidei R' Yonah interprets this to mean that we should follow our good inclination to perform commandments and reject our bad inclination to sin. Rambam notes that the "evil inclination" refers to our earthly cravings (e.g., for food, drink, physical gratification, etc.); by channeling these desires to the service of Hashem, we serve Him with both inclinations.

4. "With all of your soul . . ." -- i.e., even if your devotion to G-d costs you your life (Rashi); this refers to the rare situations -- idolatry, adultery and murder -- in which halachah requires one to die rather than sin. According to Ramban, your "soul" refers to the seat of the intellect, meaning that one should devote one's entire intellectual capacity to the love of G-d.

5. "Today . . ." You should always look to these matters as if they are new, fresh and exciting -- as if the Torah was given today. If one makes that effort, one can always find stimulation and challenge in the Torah and mitzvos

Rav Kook List

Rav Kook on the Torah Portion

Va'Etchanan: Introducing Prayer with Praise

Moses' Prayer

The Torah records Moses' prayer to God to be allowed to enter into the land of Israel:

"O God, Eternal! You have begun to show me Your greatness and power. What force is there in heaven or earth that can perform deeds and mighty acts as You can? Please, let me cross (the Jordan river) and see the good land..." [Deut. 3:24-25]

Rabbi Simlai analyzed Moses' prayer, breaking it up into two components: Praise - "You have begun to show me Your greatness..."

The actual request - "Please let me cross..."

This, Rabbi Simlai explained, is a model for all prayers: one should begin by praising God, and only afterwards present one's requests. [Berachot 32a]

We need to understand this statement. Is it simply a matter of flattering God, just as one might 'butter up' a mortal king before making a request? Or is there a deeper significance to this protocol for prayer?

How does Prayer Work?

Rav Kook explained that Rabbi Simlai's counsel relates to the very foundations of prayer and its efficacy. Following this model of prayer prevents us from grossly misinterpreting the mechanics of prayer. One might think that prayer is some sort of magic loophole built into the framework of Divine providence, and that by pleading our case it is possible to cause God to 'change His mind.' The idea that it is possible to influence God's will, however, is untenable.

Rather, we should view prayer as a wonderful gift that enables us to refine and uplift ourselves. Prayer does not effect a change in God or the world around us; prayer effects a change in us. It is only by virtue of the soul's moral and spiritual elevation that prayer has the power to annul harsh decrees. We cannot change the basic universal order manifested in a particular decree. But we can change ourselves, and in turn, the relevant decrees of nature.

Thus it is advisable to introduce every prayer with praise of God. Such praise affirms God's eternal nature and ensures a correct understanding of the efficacy of prayer.

Even Moses

It is noteworthy that Rabbi Simlai's insight was gleaned from a careful examination of Moses' prayer. One might consider himself above making such a mistake regarding the nature of prayer. Yet we find that even Moses, despite his unparalleled knowledge of spiritual matters, took care to introduce his request with praise of God. Certainly we should follow Moses' lead, thereby ensuring that we correctly grasp the true nature of prayer.

[Adapted from Ein Eyah vol. I, p. 147]

YatedUSA Parshas Va'eschanon 10 Av 5769

Halachah Discussion

by **Rabbi Doniel Neustadt**

Halachic Conversions: Frequently Asked Questions

Question: It seems that there is a significant increase of late in the number of people seeking to convert to Judaism. Is this true, and if so, why?

It is true that in recent years we have seen a significant rise in the number of people who are seeking to convert to Halachic Judaism. The world has become so frightfully decadent and immoral that people are seeking solid values and real meaning in their lives. But there are other factors as well: Many potential converts are zera yisrael — they have some “Jewish blood” flowing in their veins. The catastrophe of intermarriage has produced many people who consider themselves Jewish — they have either a Jewish father or grandfather — but who are not considered Jewish according to Halachah. Upon discovering that they are not Jewish, many come to Beis Din with the request to undergo a proper conversion.

Or, young Jewish men and women who married non-Jewish spouses and later became ba'alei teshuvah, now seek to convert their spouses to Orthodox Judaism. Most Batei Dinim in the United States follow the ruling of Rav M. Feinstein,¹ Rav Y.S. Elyashiv,² and Rav O. Yosef,³ who permit and encourage Batei Dinim to convert non-Jewish spouses provided that the convert satisfies all of the rigorous demands of an Orthodox conversion.

Question: What does the Halachah require of one who wants to convert to Judaism?

First and foremost, a convert must obligate himself to fulfill all of the commandments of the Torah, both the positive ones and the negatives ones without any exception, and all rabbinical laws and universally-accepted Jewish customs. While the Halachah does not expect a convert to be knowledgeable in all of the details of all of the mitzvos, it does require a total and complete acceptance of all Biblical and rabbinic commandments. Even if a potential convert agrees to keep all of the commandments except one, his conversion is invalid, even b'diavad.

Once Beis Din is satisfied that the convert is committed to complete mitzvah observance, Beis Din will require the convert to spend a lengthy period of time studying and learning what Judaism is all about — both

hashkafically and Halachically. As his knowledge of the religion grows, the potential convert will be required to show the Beis Din that he is turning theory into practice: Among other things, Beis Din will require that he or she keep Shabbos to the best of their ability, dress modestly, recite the proper blessings over food, and attend Shul services regularly. When Beis Din is satisfied that the potential convert has a clear understanding of what is going to be required of him as a committed Jew, the final rites of circumcision (for males) and immersion in a mikveh will take place.

Question: What does Beis Din do when a non-Jew who previously underwent a Conservative or Reform conversion applies for an Orthodox one?

According to Halachah, a Conservative or Reform conversion is invalid for a number of reasons, the most important being that those movements do not require the convert to keep all of the commandments of the Torah. A conversion without sincere acceptance of mitzvah performance is devoid of any Halachic significance and is not considered a conversion at all. Thus, Beis Din will treat a Conservative or Reform convert as a total non-Jew and will deal with him like any other non-Jew who applies for conversion.

Question: What does Beis Din do when parents request that their minor child be converted to Judaism?

Parents who request that their child — natural or adopted⁴ — be converted, must prove to Beis Din that they will send the child to an Orthodox day school and that they will raise him or her to be fully observant of all of the mitzvos. If Beis Din is convinced that this is, indeed, the parents' intention, they will then administer the final rites of circumcision (for males) and immersion in a mikveh. This type of conversion, which is initiated by the parents and performed by the Beis Din on behalf of a minor,⁵ is subject to review once the child becomes bar or bas mitzvah. Unlike an adult conversion which is final and irrevocable, a minor's conversion may be overturned under certain circumstances. A competent rabbi must be consulted for guidance in this delicate situation.

Question: Does Beis Din accept all those who apply for conversion?

Absolutely not. As a matter of fact, a majority of applicants never reach the final stage of conversion. Some drop out on their own after coming to realize what the Halachah demands for a proper conversion. Many others are intimidated by a Beis Din who deliberately makes it very difficult for them to convert. It is Beis Din's duty to discover whether or not the convert has a “hidden agenda,” e.g., if he wishes to convert for monetary gain or to marry a Jewish spouse. If Beis Din finds or suspects an ulterior motive, Beis Din will not permit the conversion to take place. It is only a small number of truly dedicated converts — those who seek to convert totally for the sake of Heaven and are able to withstand the rigorous requirements for an Halachic conversion — who are able to complete the entire course and actually convert to Halachic Judaism.

Question: How should one treat a potential convert during his probation period?

During the time that a non-Jew is studying to become a Jew, it is important to remember that he is still considered a non-Jew. Even if he underwent circumcision but did not yet immerse in a mikveh, he is not considered a Jew. He may not touch or pour kosher wine or grape juice (unless it is pre-cooked); he may not be left alone in the kitchen without supervision; and he may not date a Jewish person. In addition, while he may be invited to one's home for a Shabbos meal, he may not be invited for a Yom Tov meal.⁶ In extenuating circumstances there are ways one can circumvent this prohibition. A competent rav should be consulted, there are other restrictions which may apply in individual cases and which one should discuss with his rabbi.

Question: How should we treat a convert once his conversion is completed?

The Torah warns us in numerous places about how sensitive we must be towards converts once they have properly converted. Not only is it strictly forbidden to discriminate against them, but we are commanded over and over again to love them, respect them, assist them and treat them as if they were Jews from birth. Indeed, with the exception of some specific halachic restrictions concerning potential marriage partners, there is no difference between a Jew by choice and a Jew from birth – both are considered fully Jewish according to the Torah and one may not distinguish between them.

Footnotes

1 Quoted by Rav R. Feinstein in Netzach Yisrael, vol. 2, pg. 112. This ruling is based on the opinion of Rav S. Kluger in Tuv Taam Vadaas, Kama 230; Achizezer 3:26; Teshuvos Ohr Sameiach Y.D. 32; Divrei Malkiel 6:19; Seridei Eish 2:105; 3:50. For a dissenting opinion, see Imrei Yosher 1:176 and Teshuvos Maharshag, Y.D. 34.

2 Oral ruling. See Koveitz Teshuvos 3:140 concerning a related matter.

3 Yabia Omer, Y.D. 8:24

4 Igros Moshe, Y.D. 1:162.

5 Technically speaking, this type of conversion is being administered without the consent of the child: If the child is an infant or a toddler, then obviously, he is unable to consent. But even the “consent” of an older child, aged ten or eleven, is not Halachically binding once he turns bar or bas mitzvah age. Still, if the child is old enough to understand what is taking place and he objects to the conversion, the conversion is invalid; Dibros Moshe, Kesuvos, siman 10. See Shevet ha-Levi 6:202.

6 Although it is permitted to cook on Yom Tov, it is Biblically forbidden to do so for a non-Jew. So that one does not come to inadvertently violate the transgression of cooking for a non-Jew on Yom Tov, the rabbis forbade inviting a non-Jew to one’s home for a Yom Tov meal even if all of the food was cooked before Yom Tov. On Shabbos, however, when cooking is prohibited for all, there is no restriction against inviting a non-Jew to one’s home for a meal. For more details of how this Halachah relates to a potential convert, see Shulchan Shlomo to O.C. 512:1.