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Outcomes of Conversion to Judaism through the Reform Movement.

1952-2002

Volume II

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PhD

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Declaration

I, Jacqueline Tabick, grant powers of discretion to the University Librarian to allow the thesis to
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Abstract

I examined the characteristics of converts to Judaism through the Reform Synagogues, 1952-2002, exploring the psychological impact of conversion, the nature of their Jewish identity and the durability of their religious commitment through time. Recognising the large variation in the Jewish practice and attitudes displayed, I also examined the influence of motivational, family and biographical factors on their Jewish identity.

Motivation for conversion was multi-dimensional. The instrumental desire to create family unity was identified as the most powerful motivating factor. The strength of this variable was found to be a significant predictor of the level of behavioural changes in the converts' Jewish lifestyle. Counter-intuitively, this motivational factor formed negative correlations with ethnicity and a non-significant relationship with ritual behaviour.

The data highlight differences between the factorial structure of the Jewish identity of converts and born Jews. For converts, four identity factors were identified: ritual practice, ethnic belonging, Jewish development and spirituality. Miller et al. have identified three factors underlying the Jewish identity of born Jews under 50: behavioural ethnicity, religiosity and mental ethnicity. Survey data of converts has shown a clear division of ritual and ethnic behaviours, whilst in born Jews, the same differentiation is not demonstrated.

Like moderately engaged born Jews, converts emphasised the notion of affective identity rather than the actual performance of Jewish ritual acts, though it is clear that 'on average' converts have a somewhat more intense pattern of ritual practice than born (Reform) Jews.

The majority of the converts felt content with the results of their conversion but the relative lack of emphasis placed on Jewish continuity as opposed to the convert's individual self-fulfilment, can be seen as an indication of a possibility that the conversion process may only delay demographic decline in the Jewish community for just one or two generations.

Jacqueline Tabick

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APPENDIX 1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE INTERVIEWEES

	M/ F	Date of conversion	Age at conversion	Marital status now	Involvement with Judaism now	Reasons for conversion	Where converted	Size of shul	Partner interviewed	Religious upbringing of convert	Religious upbringing of partner	Involvement of children
A Angela	F	1981	31	Married	Slight	• Family • Spiritual void	London suburbs	Small	Yes Andrew	Strong	Fairly weak	Virtually none
B Betty	F	1989	27	Partner	Some	• Family	Central London	Large	Yes Bob	None	Fairly weak	Involved
C Carol	F	1997	55	Married	Very involved	• Belief • Her destiny (Jewish family roots)	Central London	Large		Weak	None	
D Denise	F	1993	44	Married	Very involved	• Children's request	Provinces	Medium	Yes David	None	Fairly weak	Very involved
E Eli	F	1994	33	Separated	Involved	• Family	Provinces	Medium		Moderate	Weak	Quite involved
F Fay	F	1987	28	Married	Some	• Family	Provinces	Medium	Yes Feybush	Moderate	Weak	
G Guy	M	1993	36	Married	Moderate	• Family	London Suburbs	Small	Yes Gabby	Fairly strong	Strong	Virtually none
H Harry	M	1996	61	Married to former convert	Very involved	• Spiritual search	Provinces	Small		None	n/a	
I Hetty	F	1987	42	Married to	Very involved	• To fill	Provinces	Small		None	n/a	

				convert H		spiritual void • Jewish father						
J Ian	M	1995	35	Married to convert K	Very involved	• Seeking community • Attracted by social justice issues	London suburbs	Small		None	n/a	
K Ivy	F	1993	35	Married to convert J	Very involved	• Seeking community • Attracted by social justice issues	London suburbs	Small		Moderate	n/a	
L Jack	M	1984	33	Married	Involved	• Seeking ethical framework • Father Jewish refugee	London suburbs	Medium		Strong	Fairly weak	Moderate
M Katy	F	1979	21	Divorced	None	Family	London suburbs	Medium		Fairly strong	Fairly weak	
N Liz	F	1986	45	Married	Involved	• Widow of Jew • Seeking community	London suburbs	Small		None	Present partner: strong	Virtually none
O Mary	F	1956	33	Widow	Very involved	• Family	London suburbs	Medium		None	Strong	Very involved

P Natalie	F	1966	20	Widow	In no man's land	• Family • Spiritual void	London suburbs	Medium		Strong	Strong	None
Q Olive	F	1948	24	Widow	None, feels Jewish	• Family	Provinces	Small		None	Fairly strong	Virtually none
R Pat	F	1994	29	Divorced	Reverted to Christianity	• Family	Central London	Small		Strong	Fairly weak	Mone

APPENDIX 2. INTERVIEW PROMPTS AND PROTOCOL

1. The conversion experience:

May I ask you to share some of your experiences and feelings about your conversion to Judaism?

What made you decide to become Jewish?

Did you receive the full support of your partner/his family?

How did you feel about the course you followed and the support you were given by the rabbi/teacher?

Would you have liked more after care?

How was your appearance before the Beit Din.

What was your partner's reaction to the conversion?

2. Cultural, religious setting and traditions:

Going back before your conversion, (if you can remember!), what were the important religious and cultural beliefs, traditions, that were prevalent among your family and friends?

What did you understand about your Jewish partner's family's religious practice? How did your Jewish partner feel about Judaism and Jewish life?

3. Jewish life now:

Can you describe your Jewish life now, as you live it? How do you see yourself in relation to the Jewish community now? What rituals do you observe? What part do you play in community?

Do you have any Jewish family roots?

Do you feel Jewish? In what ways do you feel Jewish?

How do your children/grandchildren express their Jewish heritage? Has their been b'nei mitzvah? Have they received Jewish education? Have they got Jewish partners?

How would you describe the friendship circle that you move in?

4. Spirituality:

Have you found that the experience has helped you with your deeper religious feelings?

How was your religious/spiritual upbringing?

5. Love:

How has your own family reacted to your conversion?

What do you do about family events such as Christmas?

How have you dealt with family life cycle events?

6. Other:

Is there anything we have left out that you would like to share with me?

Thank you!

Interview protocol

This interview is being conducted for the purpose of research into the conversion process provided by a synagogue connected to the The Movement for Reform Judaism

Could you please fill in the following details:

Name.....

Date of Conversion.....

Synagogue of study.....

Present synagogue membership.....

Age now.....

Marital status.....

Children.....
.....
.....

May I assure you that everything you tell me will be kept confidential.

Do I have your permission to record this interview and to quote from your replies using an alias?

Yes I do give permission/no I don't give permission (please delete as appropriate)

Signed.....

Date.....

APPENDIX 3. CONTENT ANALYSIS OF INTERVIEWS

NB Letters in brackets refer to the source of the comment, or comments close to that recorded, as given in Appendix 1. If the letter are followed by an '-a' that indicates a partner's words.

Why did you decide to convert to (Reform/Progressive) Judaism?

Religious:

Prior interest in religion

I was, am, quite religious and at school was involved with the Christian Union (K). I was the religious one in my family (A).

Dissatisfaction with Christianity

Not comfortable with older ladies showing off their hats (A), that's three people, not God (C). Abandoned my faith (E). Don't believe in Christianity, it's a bit strange to me (G). Never took on Christianity (I). Crisis of faith over Trinity and Resurrection (P). Trouble with Mary (Q).

Spiritual void

Fills spiritual need (A). Need for spiritual guidance (B). I was religious but couldn't continue as a Christian (J). Religiously and emotionally in a no-man's land. Strong religious reasons for converting – living with actual physical pain because of spiritual void (I). Trying to find a home (K). For a while into the agnostic bit, heavily into psychology (A).

Spiritual experience

Vortex, dream, led to acknowledgement of belief in God (H).

Feeling of destiny

What happened to me no surprise to anyone, seemed as if it was meant to be (A).

Mine's a bit odd really because it's something that I would have done (C). Partner: knew Jewishness of some kind in her (F-a). Inevitably walking into the route I took (N).

Lack of other religious identity

I didn't come from any other thing, no family faith (D). No baptism, No confirmation, Nil religious education (H). Confused by religion so I rejected it (N).

Attraction of Judaism

Judaism is logical, it makes perfect sense (C). Felt Jewish, but wasn't Jewish (G). Loved rhythm given to time (K).

A bit exotic, different (N).

Search for ethical basis of life (L)

Family:

Suggestion by Jewish partner (A-a, E, F, Q)

Awakening interest in Judaism of Jewish partner, wanting to be involved (N, D, C). Immediately question of marriage, question would I convert (E)?

Gift to husband (F, J)

Not for her at all. He's Jewish, I'm not, it was what was needed. This was what was needed.

Pressure from Jewish partner's family.

They needed a Jewish wife, want children to be Jewish (B). Partner's parents disappointed, not nice Jewish girl (A).

Partner: my family put a gun to her head, almost (A-a). Gaining certificate for in laws, In-laws had foregone conclusion I would convert (F). When pregnant, family exerted pressure and control, told me if I didn't convert, husband wouldn't love our children (R). Seemed only way to get married was to convert (B). Parents wanted son to marry a nice Jewish girl, pressure to drop her, she has to convert (M).

To spite Jewish in-laws! (M)

To spite own anti-Semitic father! (N)

Need unity to bring up children

Partner: wanted to marry a Jewish person, wanted Jewish children facilitate conversion of children convert as a means to an end (conversion of children) complicated to have mixed family (B-a, F-a, E). Advent of children started Jewish journey (A, G-a, R). Thought I ought to because of my marriage and my children (G). Only for the children (R). Need unity in a home (A-a).

Wanted to be part of Jewish family

Seen as warm and together, wanted to be part of this ideal family (B, O). Child said to everyone, 'you're Jewish', but to him, 'you're not Jewish.' Already involved as father and husband. Conversion led to wonderful opportunity to be part of BM (G).

Insecurity of proselyte

I thought that would have secured me in his life and his family life. I think that if I converted the more reason it will be for us to get married (B).

Urging of child (paternal Jew)

Child experiencing anti-Semitism, look I've been attacked for being Jewish and I know nothing about it, it's about time you taught me. Child wanting spiritual life (D).

Jewish funeral of partner led to formal contact with synagogue (N).

Paternal Jew already as a child experienced anti-Semitism and anti-Israel abuse (I). Regarded as Jewish anyway (I, L). she had a Jewish father and she had this hankering (G).

Victim pathology – become part of a victimised group to legitimise abuse suffered as a child (N).

Jewish family roots:

Discovered after conversion

Maternal, Portuguese Marrano (B)?

Known before conversion keeping faith with my Jewish forbears somewhere (N).

Recover family identity – non-Jewish world said, 'You're Jewish', Jewish world said, 'you're not Jewish' (L). Felt cut off from my roots (I).

Non-Jewish partner's Jewish family roots (C)

Already familiar with Jewish way of life (I, K)

Welsh parenting similar to Jewish, family of prime importance. Put mother on a pedestal (G). Grew up surrounded by Jews. Sounds and smells of immigrant Jews in black (K).

Social:

Jewish friends

Own Jewish friends (A, G, O). Constantly in Jewish milieu, found Jews interesting and exotic (N). Already working with Jews on social and political issues (J,K). Many Jewish friends who regarded me as Jewish (L).

Wanted to belong

I wasn't made to feel forced into it (A).

A way of life I enjoyed

Make the best of your life for you and others (A). Gave charity, good food (P). Warmth of family life (P, G-a). Concerned with political and social issues (J, K).

Dissatisfaction with previous social alignment

Loss of faith in communism (D).

Met general need (unqualified):

Romantic and emotional attachment to Judaism (B).

For community, if going to be involved then be fully involved (J).

Historical/cultural attachment/Israel:

Enjoyed learning Eastern European culture feeling of closeness to victims of Holocaust (C).

Been to work on kibbutz (F). Immersed in Palestine/Israel, Six Day war like FA cup at home, interest in Zionism (G, H). Tried to volunteer in 1973 (H). Knew *klezmer* (I). Political work with Jews (J). Lived in Israel for a while (F).

Academic

Excitement of learning new things. Learning led to being hooked (D, E, K, N).

What was your upbringing? (asking the Jewish partner):

Lacking in all Jewish content

No Jewish input into family life (A-a). No religious upbringing (D-a). I don't have particularly strong religious views in either direction, barely learnt to read (G-a). Allegedly Orthodox but not Orthodox at all (A-a, B-a). Mother, religiously a drop-out (A-a). Dragged to synagogue on the High Holy Days, learnt BM parrot fashion (A-a, D-a). Seder till uncle died (A-a). Evacuation as a child (D-a).

Israeli Secular

With Orthodox memories/echoes from Chassidic family. Anti-religious. Only knew Orthodoxy (E-a, F-a).

Orthodox upbringing negatively experienced.

But learnt more in Reform about why, Punishment had to learn how to *bencsh*, Resentful of strictures. Remembers only restrictions, no joy, Hypocrisy of parents breaking rules when it suited them, Loved Pesach, mother didn't want to know of non-Jewish boyfriends, desperately sought acceptance by parent of non-Jewish fiancé (G-a).

Afraid to acknowledge Jewish status

A loose connection somewhere, I'm almost like a Christian Jew (B-a). Almost hostile to religious life going back to the Pale (D-a). Became ashamed of being Jewish. Sent to non-Jewish boarding school, very uncomfortable with being Jewish there (B-a, D-a, G-a).

Part of clan

If you're Orthodox, you can't be kicked out (A-a). Being Jewish is being part of a clan, nominally Orthodox.

Brought up to look for a nice comfortable domestic Jewish life with kids, go to synagogue and *cheder* (B-a).

Not religious, but always been interested in Jewish history and culture (B-a). Jewish friends, secretary of Jewish society (JSoc) at university (D-a). Child of refugees (D-a, G-a).

Felt outside the clan

Out of place in Jewish youth groups, drifted away from Jewish friends, didn't join JSoc (G-a).

Observances

Candles one Friday in three, always aligned to the community, *cheder*, *b'nei mitzvah*, sometimes kosher (A-a).

Spiritual

Secular but a spiritual seeker (F-a).

Convert's view of partner's Jewish upbringing:

No Jewish home

Family largely intermarried. Not leading any sort of Jewish life, difficult for him to marry anyone Jewish, presumed he was Orthodox, but family now largely Catholic, obviously, that's why they married someone who isn't Jewish, the fact that they married you in the first place means that they were not looking for a...whatever (A). Only went High Holydays (R). No involvement since *bar mitzvah* (R). Reform home, no kashrut but synagogue on festivals (M).

Secular Israeli

Hypocritical, wanted conversion without the religion (E).

Ideal family life (P)

Incredibly Jewish partner thinking of becoming a rabbi (J)

Incredibly Jewish Orthodox (O)

Very kosher (B, G) Orthodox home but learned more from Reform (G).

Attitudes Jewish (G)

Children from previous Jewish marriage married out, worries him (B).

What was your own religious upbringing?

Pull towards religious issues

I was the religious one in my family (A). Parents agnostic, but I was involved in the Christian Union (L).

Pull towards Judaism

The fact it was Old Testament was good, Belief in One God was logical (G).

No prior knowledge of Judaism

Not sure if religion or nationality. Didn't know what was involved (E).

Push away from previous faith

Whole agnostic bit, heavily into psychology (A). Looked around one Sunday morning and realised, I'm not comfortable here, certainly New Testament wasn't happening for me (A).

Convent school but no religious attachment (B). Abandoned Roman Catholicism (C), couldn't cope with trinity (H). By mid-teens, couldn't believe in Christianity (K). Crisis of faith over Trinity and Resurrection (P).

No religious upbringing

Mother pushed freedom of thought and free destiny, no reliance on God (B). Father atheist (C).

Family hostile to children receiving religious education (D, J). No thought of religion, question of God and the afterlife were just foreign to me, no religious education (D, H). No baptism, confirmation (H). Religion is crutch, rationalism (J). Substitution of politics, especially communism (D, J, N).

Weak Religious upbringing

Church of England, not very strong (F, M). Not gone to church for years (E). Indifferent Roman Catholic upbringing (Q). No religion or theology. Methodist but not heavy handed, Christian by default (K). Sent to Church till early teens (M). Attached for sake of community (J). Baptised (L).

Strong religious upbringing

Lived next door to Church, confirmed. Frog-marched to church for years (F). Very chapel when young – memory lingers on (G). Quite religious, went to Sunday school and services every week, Christened, confirmed, Christian home (O, P, R).

What were your own family's reactions to the proposed conversion?

Emotional

Supportive (A, C, H). Daughter at service felt 'great sense of peace about things' (C). Surprise (G). Jewish father's family pleased (I, L). Mother not pro-Jewish but didn't mind if daughter became a Jew (I).

Theological

Questions about changing God (C). Not sure why I should keep to one God (H).

Social

Father's friends and business colleagues already Jewish (A).

Rejection

Seemed like against involvement in any religion (J). Seen as rejection of father's decision to be baptised (L). Can't practice when mother is around as she sees it as rejection (L). Mother anti, sees it as rejection (J).

Family/social

Problems of Christmas (B).

Neutral

Not bothered, not being religious, they didn't see it as a problem. Open-minded (A). Accepted – they were happy if I was happy (E). Didn't understand what was involved (E). Oh very nice. Sister blanked out Jewish origins (L).

Good vibes

Mother would have changed herself if she'd had the chance (Q), Took it in their stride (O).

Angry

Worried that Holocaust would happen again (N). Angry at hostility from daughter's Jewish boyfriend's family (M), I was ostracised by my family (R).

What reaction/support/help did you receive from your partner's family before/during the conversion process?

Before:

Horror

Disappointment, not a nice Jewish girl (A). If you're marrying him I'm not coming (to the service), (changed immediately to) oh yes I will (G). Appalled, sat *shivah* (P). She has to convert (M, P). Didn't like idea of him marrying non-Jewish girl till they realised I kept kosher (O). Pressure to drop her (M).

Involvement in Reform Synagogue

For his family, becoming a Reform Jew was like taking him away from his roots. Prejudice against Reform even though secular Jews (B).

Good vibes

There was an excitement in the beginning that I was doing it and everybody was participating (A). Constant hints conversion may be in offing and that would make her a good Jewish woman, icing on the cake (E). Accepted by family from word go invited every Friday night for dinner (Q). Pleased (D-a).

During:

Didn't provide a role model (A).

What were the high points of the course?

Emotional

Felt special (A), happy (B). Feeling of excitement (B). Felt rabbi had faith in my ability (A). Felt absolutely comfortable (A), unusual and very different from anything else (L). Meaningful (K). Sorry course ended (B, D).

Social

Felt part of social group (A, B). All embarking on something together (B). Found right values for family and society (P).

Importance of making friends (A, B, F-a, E).

Academic

Partner: an amazing eye-opener, only Jewish by birth and custom before (B-a). Systematic, knew what you had to do and understood the goal (B-a). Chance to polish up knowledge I hadn't got (D-a). Enjoyed academic work, enjoyed chance to hear different tutor's views (D). Easy, reinforced by long experience of home life (G).

Spiritual

Partner: enjoyed discovery or Reform Judaism...actually Judaism in general, very positive (B, F).

What were the low points/difficulties of the course?

Emotional

Alienation from rest of community, child upset by exclusion from public rituals, upset by initial demand for requirements, upset by initial questions by congregation, are you Jewish? Biological conception of Jewish status difficult to take (D). Would have preferred to be honest about reason for conversion (family pressure) instead of having to maintain dark secret, found need to rebel against the rules/expectations, hard to pretend you believe in what you're doing, frightened by waving of hands when lighting candles, seems like magic (F). Trouble with accepting other people's expectations (F-a).

Academic

Learn all the theory but I don't know what honey cakes look like, lack of role models (A, E). Too much to cram in, too little Hebrew (C, G). Yiddish would be useful (C). History boring, pressure on rabbinic time led to difficulties with course, difference between academic study of and involvement in (D). Too easy not enough of a challenge (E, M, L). Not much structure (H). Felt course going so long, about to fall off the top (H). Difficult to find someone in class to talk over intellectual issues (L).

Spiritual

Service taken for granted so no one explains. Difficult to convert to religious beliefs you don't believe in (D). Services boring (D, F). No desire to carry out home rituals while on course (F). Synagogue didn't take it seriously enough (R). Taken for granted I would light candles etc. so no one checked (I). Found services terribly alien (M). Wasn't intruding on my beliefs, wasn't affecting what I believed in (Jesus) (R).

Practicalities

If no family around to support, no home rituals, no experiences (D, P). Seen nothing (E).
Journey too long and frightening (F).

Suggestions to improve the course:

Benefits of a secular conversion, invite others to conversion class to help integration of proselytes, ease way in by allowing involvement in minor rituals while on course, increase awareness in community of the course and so encourage others to join, first response should be wholly welcoming without presentation of hurdles (D).

Need after-care (A). Big hole in my life afterwards (E). After conversion rabbi should set medium to long-term goals and expectations for next few years (E). Needed to relate to us as individuals, our needs, not just Jewish needs (F, R). Need to question candidate about previous beliefs (R). Should be able to spot unspoken lack of enthusiasm through absenteeism from classes and services (F, R). Need support to continue (A, E). Need role model (A, P).

Need practical help with cooking etc. (A, P).

What was your religious/emotional/intellectual reaction to your appearance at the Beit Din and your visit to the *mikveh*?

Brit Milah

Circumcision not pleasant but not an obstacle (G).

At Beit Din, intellectual

Emphasis on sincerity not knowledge (A, E), would have liked more of a challenge (E).

Positive emotions

Gave a real high (A). Proud of myself, Enjoyed it. Excited and nervous (E). Meant an enormous amount that we had been accepted (N).

Negative emotions

Burst into tears as left (F). Intimidating own rabbi there (H). Worried would be asked to denounce my belief in Christianity (R). Terrifying, children interviewed too (D). Wish someone who was close to me had been there to share it (N). Worried would have to give spiritual commitment (D).

How reacted to change in status

Appearance not such a milestone as entering a process (D). Wasn't any moment when I was and I wasn't. Confirmation with a small 'c' of my status (C, G). Stamp of approval (J). Never felt crossed a threshold, just carrying on but on right road (C, I). Not looking for affirmation or acceptance (J).

At mikveh, spiritual high

Special occasion, can remember everything about the day (E). Spiritual experience, confusion with baptism (G)?

At mikveh, spiritual low

Children the problem, like swimming session with the kids, busy, cheerful, enjoyable (D, N).

What support/help/reaction did your partner's family give you after the conversion?

Initial thrill that doesn't last

Pride (we'll have to ask...she'll know) that turns to resentment (A). Must be difficult to live with a religious fanatic (D-a).

Support in carrying on Judaism ceased

They stopped being Jewish, horrendously painful (A).

Acceptance

Once she was in the club that was OK, you're acceptable now (A). Accepted from word 'go' (G).

Lack of Acceptance

Never really accepted me as a Jew (B). Not real Judaism, but best that could be done (F-a). Still antagonism to non-Jewish family, even at wedding, no conversion in the world was going to make it pukka for them, tragedy for everyone, no winners. Terrible to lose everyone because you marry somebody, wedding a disaster, father-in-law crying, rabbi felt he had to promise he'd deal with problems (P). Just a certificate (F).

Emotional reaction to conversion

No praise, no celebration, no welcome as a Jew (E).

How did your attitude/feelings change immediately after conversion?

Short-term intense involvement

Holier than thou syndrome, became a real pain in the proverbial (A). Felt I had found what I needed and wanted (P). Religious mania for a while (P). Convenience factor soon became paramount in pattern of observance (M). Candles sometimes, family *Sedarim* and Chanukah. (M).

Disappointment with partner

'Hypocrisy' reaction to partner's desire for children to marry Jews (A). Lack of partner's knowledge a problem.

His sister invites me, I don't go because I don't feel I belong and looking back, I never did really (B). Not against religion but negative feelings towards partner affect Jewish life (L). I wanted a way in, he wanted a way out (P). When abroad, not even a Seder (R). Worried about no role models, no experience of Jewish home life (A, P). Partner's indifference a problem (P).

Emotional benefit

Proud to have achieved it. Proud to belong to such an important people (B, E).

Immediate cessation of all involvement

Felt I'm a Jew, technically. Immediately after Beit Din felt Judaism meant nothing to me (F).

How do you feel now about the conversion?

Positive:

Theological

Putting two worlds together to make a healthy path (L).

Social

Feel closer to the Jewish people (A). Think I have a role to play (K). Possible to be a convert and a full Jew (K). No conversion is ever going to change you, just add on the bits that were cut off (L). Brought an enormous dimension and warm community to my life (L).

Family

Festivals at home kept us a happily married family (Q).

Spiritual

Enriched my life tremendously (B, F). Made religious life possible for me (K). Enjoy having framework to year (K, L). And standards to live by (J, L). Help find meaning in my life (K).

Emotional

It was one of the best things I have done (A, E). Prefer term Jew by choice, but some say that trying to deny reality (K). Part of me, can't imagine not being a Jew (C, L). Feel as if being Jewish is in my bones (M). Never regretted converting (M). Always felt it's part of my life (Q). Just part of the community, don't know anything else (O). Don't feel part of Church life events, do if in synagogue (Q). Community is my family (A). My motivation increased (E). Happy (G). Feel very Jewish (A). What I think of myself, I started to think of myself as Jewish from the moment we decided to do it, because I don't think you, it's not a moment or a ceremony, it's a state of mind, isn't it (C)? Feeling part of the clan, belonging to Israel (F), always part of my life (O).

Longer term spiritual growth

It deepened me because I can see how a religion can affect somebody so much and how important it is (B). Seeped into my life when I was pregnant. Learnt benefits of ritual (F). Feeling of spiritual growth (F).

Negative:

Theological

I'm Christian and always have been (R). Can't live with hypocrisy so gave it up (P).

Social

Find it difficult to reject my Englishness, but there is a conflict, feel an outsider, even as to language (Yiddish), difficult to hold onto both sides and not reject one or the other (L). There are first and second divisions and I'm on the reserve bench, can't be Jewish inasmuch my DNA isn't Jewish (P). Secret and unclear codes about who is what (L).

Family

Without family continuity, impossible (B, M). Problem of Christmas (A). Being Jewish is something you have to do in the home and my family aren't Jewish (P). Nostalgia, wish I could (be involved). Worst thing is communal *Sedarim*, not the same thing at all (M). Very difficult for people to be involved if everybody isn't fully (P).

Spiritual

Can't live with hypocrisy so given it up, but I've not fallen out of love with my faith (P).

Emotional

Sad, big mistake, confusion and pain (R). Tragedy for all, no winners, I'm still Jewish, just don't advertise the fact (P). Abandoned by synagogue when suffered loss of baby (B). We do it

because we believe, or don't believe, or we are not aware of what it really entails until you end up years later like me (B). I wouldn't choose to be anything but Jewish, but I would just like to see myself saying 'I am Jewish' without staggering (B). Lower status to be a convert than a born Jew, lower status is passed down to children, uncomfortable as I'm on the margins, but good place to be as can empathise with others and everyone is on the margin in some area of their life (D). Not right DNA (P). I feel a fraud (L). Difficulties of trying to appear Jewish when you're unsure of yourself (A). Wanted respect for what I had achieved but never found it (B).

Negative reaction of others

Left me angry, disappointed and let down (H). Not accepted by the Orthodox world, but doesn't worry me (K). Have non-Jewish look, painful. Converts often get the message that they're not quite OK, painful. Many feel uncomfortable with high profile of converts. We converts call into question their authenticity as Jews (H, K). Feel outsider. Even my wife doesn't feel I'm a real Jew (L). The only hostility is from people who think she's too *frum* (D). Told never be a proper Jew (L, H). Opposition from synagogue members to convert becoming Chair, opposition from synagogue members to convert leading services, problem is you all want to become rabbis, asked, what is it you are trying to prove (H)? Anger over JFS rejection of paternally Jewish child, converted herself by Reform Beit Din (N). Horror from work colleagues who thought we would become 'born again' type Jews (D-a).

Positive reactions of others

No one has made me feel I wasn't a proper Jew (C). Totally accepted by local provincial community, so much so leads services with her son (D). Fellow congregants see the conversion as a watershed (like somebody sat silently for so long...and suddenly started speaking) (D). Orthodox friends who accept her as Jew (E). Values especially Orthodox work colleagues' acceptance (G). Accepted as JNF worker (I).

Did your partner's attitude to Judaism change after the conversion?

Short-term

Initial enthusiasm for community turning to bitterness (A).

Long-term

Lapsed again. No involvement in Jewish life. Anger at synagogue. No pressure on children to learn. Turns up to odd High Holydays (A-a). Obsessed with son's Jewish education (worries because his older children have married out) (B).

Realised not necessary to be constrained by *Halacha* – all or nothing syndrome – Reform OK.

'God is One' become central theme of my life. Set scene for spiritual and personal growth. Thinking of becoming a rabbi. Realised ritual not be all and end all (F-a). I am much more

kosher than I certainly ever was (A-a). Taking High Holyday services (F-a). He wanted way out, wouldn't involve himself in any way (P). An unfairness between us (P). I was more religious in the end than the man I was going to marry (Q).

What were your partner's thoughts/feelings about conversion after the event?

Positive feelings

Good converted partner never reminded of former status. Partner's conversion actually did me a favour.

Partner brought the girls up Jewish, which is smashing. So that's really good news. Made life more interesting. New circle of friends (A-a).

I'm Jewish, children are Jewish and that's what he wants (R).

How do you live your Jewish life now?

Personal and home life:

My preparations for Pesach were spot on, but I have learnt that actually you don't have to go completely overboard (A). Keep shabbat (A). No Christmas tree (C). Modified *kashrut* (A, C, E, F, G, H). Jewish library (D, E, I).

Individual family ritual rather than community religious involvement, want less involvement on the practical level so can get something out of it for myself, spiritually, mostly interested in unofficial gatherings, meditation, healing, so nice to have space in your lives (J). Bought ritual objects (D). *Mezzuzah* (E, I), Married under *Huppah* (G). Candles (A, B, C, E, F, G, H). Festivals (B, C, G, H, I). Services (H). Only lit candles if Jewish family present (R). *Sedarim* boring (F).

In synagogue:

Community and admin

Total involvement in *cheder* led to resentment. social instead of religious involvement (A). No synagogue involvement, don't feel I belong there (F). Organise informal social events (E). Served on synagogue council (G). Treasurer (A-a, J). Warm feeling of community support (A), feel easy with the community (E). Blessed and lucky to find community (N). Resentment of community's expectations that children will have good knowledge and be involved (A). Respond to community and God and live life with integrity (K). Seeking positive place in community to work in (J). Acted as Ladies' Guild Chairmen, started Friendship club, arranged *kiddushim*, organised *Sedarim*, getting involved was useful (O). Should be open places for community. Dependant on community feeling and participation (I).

Spiritually and ritually

Uninhibitedly engage in public rituals (D). Finding services predictable and therefore boring (D). Rosh Hodesh group while it was running (A). Services so long yet no time for quiet reflection (F). Likes Orthodox services – amusing, can talk (D, F). Takes Orthodox services (D). Warden (G). Trained as service leader (H). Left synagogue politics to commune with God (H). More religious. More interested in religious affairs (E). Intrinsically religious and spiritual being (A). Attends Friday evening services (G). Never even fasted on Yom Kippur (F). Takes shabbat and festivals off work (I). No synagogue, candles, *kashrut*, Seder (R). Won't work on shabbat or festivals. Seemed to slip into place (M). Duality of spiritual and physical (N). Religion should be enjoyable and calming (I). New interest in spiritual matters (E). Didn't expect spirituality from conversion (J). Don't have to be religious to come to synagogue (I). Take children's services (I). Attend adult education courses. Reading (D, N, K).

God

Belief in God (A, C). The notion that we could be here, the world could be here, if there hadn't been a God, it really doesn't make sense (C). Belief in a God that listens (A). No belief in God (B). After Holocaust can't believe in Omnipotent God (D). God doesn't worry about *kashrut* (E). Same God as before (E). God as creator (I). No creed, that's important. Doesn't require me to go through acrobatics of faith (N).

Torah

Miss it if I don't hear it, basic part of religious life, word of God but not written by God (I). How to live, basic rules (C).

Don't need manmade framework (P). Code for life, don't worry if it's divine or not (I). Greatest story ever told (I).

Messianic age

Not Messiah (P).

Prayer

Belief in the power of prayer of all religions (A). Uplift from services (C).

Mitzvot

Judaism is important as it applies to daily life (B). Never impose will on others for religious reasons (G-a). Secular Israeli in-laws and husband ignore *mitzvot*, thus so can I (F). Freedom of action not everything (F). Fitting in your faith with modern living (H).

Ethics

Justice. Right behaviour (N).

Interfaith

Sharing religious beliefs is important (A). No religion is superior to any other religion (E).

In wider Jewish community

Limmud (D). Son wants to become rabbi (D). Involvement with JNF (I). Difficulty with Law of Return (A). Thought of becoming a rabbi (E, K). RSGB committees (J). Works as professional in the community (L). Angry at Israeli attempts to amend the Law of Return (L). Connection with the people and the Land (6). Not taken with Zionism much (N). Buried my husband as a Jew (N, P). Judaism is my family (I). Visit old Jewish areas when on holiday. Identify with the people in an abstract sense (M).

In wider community

Jewish input into non-Jewish nursery, as live in country, need to stand up more for Judaism (E). Talked to cub groups (I). Takes appropriate festival food to work to share, talks to non-Jewish youth groups (I).

Social

Social contacts important part of life (E, F, G). Synagogue is very social place. Like to be fully involved and improve things (J).

Are your children involved in the community?

In education

Cheder till older child 12. Youth group. Sadness over lack of partner's support for Jewish education for children (A). Continuing *cheder*. *Bar/t Mitzvah* (D-a). Wanted child to be proud of their Jewishness but no classes. Actual religious upbringing was virtually non-existent (P).

In family ritual

Won't let a Friday night go by without the candles coming out (A). No Chanukah, Friday nights, Purim or Seder (R). Enjoyed meeting Jewish family but doesn't identify with them (P). Individual family rather than community involvement (A). Gives child joy (F).

In synagogue ritual

Cheder and children's services with father (A). Bar and Bat Mitzvah (G, N). Involvement in local home services (D). Never been to synagogue (P).

Shows interest

Secretary of JSoc (D). Wants to be a rabbi (D), Decided wanted to be Jew too, pleased (N).

Shows no interest

Child: 'I'm not really interested in all this.' Pre-teen already rejecting synagogue life (A, L).

Social

Problems in provinces finding Jewish friends (D, E).

Identity

Made it clear to family that son would be brought up a Jew (E). No Jewish partners but express Jewish identity (N, Q). Thankfulness adult children married Jews and involved in synagogue. Grandchildren: don't know anything else (O) They belong to neither world. They ask, 'please don't tell anyone we're Jewish' (P). Feel children are really Church of England (R). I see children's Jewishness as a blessing, they don't. Felt children should be citizens of the world (P).

In wider community

Taught to respect other religions (E). If brought home non-Jewish girl, would have to welcome her (A, E). Fantasies about Jewish partners (P).

Have you faced any difficulties after the process that touched on the conversion?

Practical

Lack of role models. Practice not theory, no experience Jewish home life. No female role models (P, A). No Jewish family after divorce (P). Need to learn through osmosis and experience (P).

Emotional

Difficult to learn the feelings of being Jewish. Difficulty of trying to appear as a Jew when you're so unsure of yourself (A). Need to talk about the conversion not met. There was no follow up and you need this support, and that's what's made me bitter (A, B). Feels deeply the problem of the Law of Return (A, I). Being asked to explain your Jewish roots in a group session. Problems of being a marginal Jew (D). Basic prejudice against converts, people make the most unkind comments (K, I). Experienced almost violent anti-Israel prejudice, hard to cope with (I). Meet reserve, Have to work harder to earn respect and trust (K).

Social

I think you have to put more emphasis not on the religion but in your place in Jewish society and that wasn't done because that's not what we believe it's going to be (A).

spiritual

Difficulties of approaching the rabbi for help when you've officially graduated (A). Daughter's illness, I got so choked up about what had happened, it was one of the reasons I didn't go (to services) (A). No Jewish service for a stillborn so attend Christian memorial service at the crematorium (B).

Family

Lack of husband's knowledge and involvement (A). Conflict – felt loss of Jewish ritual at father's death (A). After husband's death couldn't bear to go to synagogue (Q). Never invited to any Jewish family event (P).

Health

Community support when facing breast cancer real help (E).

Stories of other converts.

Negative experiences

They just sort of melt away. We are all disintegrating (B). Those wanting to marry wanted the course to finish quickly (C). Where pressured to convert, marriages often not happy (E). Married into wealthy family and then disappeared over the hills, which was quite common (I).

Positive experiences

In suburban communities they tend to stay with them. I think because they start off as part of the community and they stay as part of the community (C).

APPENDIX 4. THEMES AND SUB THEMES THAT EMERGED FROM THE INTERVIEWS

Main theme	topics
1. The conversion experience	<u>Reasons for conversion</u> Jewish boyfriend and feel need for religious unity in a home with children. Dissatisfaction with previous set of beliefs. Spiritual search, experiencing spiritual void. Feeling of religious destiny. Romantic and emotional attachment to Judaism. Search for ethical basis to life. Wish of partner or his family. Wish to please partner. Historical and cultural attachment through Israel or Holocaust. Enjoyment of learning. <u>Relationship with Jewish partner's family</u> Support: emotional, practical. Rejection, pressure to finish relationship. Change of relationship after conversion: both positive and negative directions. <u>Reactions to the course</u> Evaluation of different areas of support :Emotional, alienation from rest of community, lack of honesty required, trouble with accepting other people's expectations. Academic, too much theory, not enough practice, expectations and course set too high or too low. Spiritual, not explored sufficiently, taken for granted. Practical: difficulties of converting without a partner's Jewish family. Requests for after-care, spiritual and practical support. Partner's reaction, involvement. <u>Reactions to Beit Din and Mikveh</u> Daunting. Spiritual high.

	Too many intellectual demands, not enough spiritual demands. Too low an intellectual standard required. Process not an end in itself. Already Jewish by the time of appearance at the court. <u>Partner's reaction to the conversion</u> Thrilled. Never felt I was a Jew. Partner more involved in Judaism. Partner's initial enthusiasm waned.
2. Cultural, religious setting and traditions	<u>Upbringing of Jewish partner as seen by partner</u> Family life, in Jewish terms weak/strong/secular/Israeli. Negative feelings towards Orthodox upbringing/hypocrisy. Family/ethnic ties. <u>Upbringing of Jewish partner as seen by convert</u> Ideal family life. No Jewish life. Pressure from partner's family to conform through conversion.
3. Jewish life now	<u>Religious identity post conversion</u> Changes between immediate aftermath and long term, some rejected Judaism for a while then returned, others very involved and then moderated involvement. Faith and Observance: beliefs, rituals, ethics, searching for values. Learning and Personal development: learning and growth. Spiritual search, God, Torah, <i>mitzvot</i>, prayer. Difficulties of coping with life cycle events in non-Jewish family and in own life. <u>Social/ethnic Identity</u>

	Kinship and connection: Jewish family roots, social network, partner's family, growing connections of own family. Difficulties/impossibility of having to reject/deny one's past identity. Attachment to Israel: homeland, holiday destination. Interest in Holocaust. Involvement in synagogue/community life. Insecurity of Jewish identity, feeling very strongly Jewish . Awareness of non acceptance by Orthodox world/resentment of that fact. <u>Family involvement</u> Young children, <i>cheder</i>, family ritual. Older children, marriage partners. Involvement in synagogue. Involvement in Jewish social groups/friendship groups.
4. Spirituality	<u>Religious identity pre-conversion</u> Religious upbringing: strong, weak, aggressive atheism. Dissatisfaction with previous set of beliefs. Religious pull of Judaism, Old Testament. Spiritual search, experiencing spiritual void. Searching for values and ethics. Learning and Personal development: learning and growth.
5. Love	<u>Family of convert</u> Emotional reaction: support, concern, feelings of rejection. Problem of Christmas.

APPENDIX 5. HYPOTHESES

Some of the specific hypotheses that were investigated:

1. The effect of the partner and the family on the convert and the conversion

- When the conversion takes place for the purpose of (or in the context of) a marriage to a born Jew, the level of Jewish practice carried out after the conversion echoes the level of Jewish practice carried out by the born Jew before the marriage.
- When the conversion takes place for the purpose of (or in the context of) a marriage to a born Jew, the active support of the Jewish family and spouse are instrumental in the success or otherwise of the conversion taking place. (But we only have data on successful conversions).
- Very observant or very secular families will be less supportive of the convert or the conversion process than those from moderately observant homes.
- Support by the Jewish partner increases the chance of the convert developing a positive Jewish identity and a higher level of observance.
- When a divorce occurs, this increases the chance of the erosion of the Jewish identity of the convert.
- The death of the Jewish partner will increase the chance of the erosion of the Jewish identity of the convert.
- Conversion of the mother in the family does not positively affect the involvement of the children of the marriage in Judaism.
- The converts who retain a higher level of observances are more likely to have Jewish grandchildren.
- The converts who retain a higher level of beliefs are more likely to have Jewish grandchildren.
- Those who convert Lishma (for personal religious motives) are more likely to retain a strong Jewish identity in all areas if they marry another practising Jew.
- Patrilineal Jews who convert increase the chances of the retention of Jewish practice/belief system if they marry another practising Jew.

2. The effect of age at conversion

- Older converts are more likely to retain Jewish identity than younger converts.

3. Religious upbringing/interest in of convert

- The religious upbringing of the convert makes little difference to the level of Jewish observances/Jewish beliefs retained after conversion.
- Converts who convert for religious reasons are more likely to retain Jewish practice and involvement in ritual.
- As the years pass, converts will go to synagogue less often but retain basic family ritual events in the home.
- The relationship between short-term religious enthusiasm immediately after conversion and long term Jewish involvement is very weak.
- There is likely to be a relationship between positive feelings now about the conversion and involvement in community.
- There is a connection between positive experiences of Jews and Judaism when growing up and a later decision made to convert.

4. Motivation

- Religious motivation is likely to be one of the more potent drivers behind the decision to convert.
- Those converting as singles or those in a long term relationship with a non-Jew will regard religious issues as a potent driver in their desire to convert.
- Those brought up in non-religious homes will regard religious issues as a potent driver in their desire to convert.
- Those brought up in mixed households will regard religious issues as a potent driver in their desire to convert.
- Those brought up as Anglicans will not regard religious issues as a potent driver in their desire to convert.
- Those experiencing pressure from the family of their Jewish partner to convert will score low in the potency of religious factors in their desire to convert.

5. The effect of the course

- Satisfaction or otherwise with the course is unlikely to have any lasting effect on the retention of Jewish practice/or identity/or beliefs.
- Social relationships made while in the class are likely to have a positive outcome on the retention of involvement in the community.

6. The effect of the Jewish partner's family.

- Those who convert because of pressure from their Jewish partner or from the Jewish family are less likely to retain their Jewish practice/ are less likely to retain their Jewish belief system/ are less likely to retain their Jewish identity.
- When the convert is welcomed from the start by the born Jew's family, this increases the chance of the retention of Jewish practice/ increases the chance of the retention of a Jewish belief system.
- Positive continuing support from their partner, the Jewish family or the community helps the retention of the convert's Jewish involvement.

7. The effect of the convert's own family

- Negative reactions that continue past the conversion from the convert's own family are likely to have a negative effect on the retention of Jewish practice.

APPENDIX 6. COPY OF LEDGER PAGE (NAMES REMOVED)

AGE	NAME	MR. MRS. MISS	STATUS	RELIGION	AGE	CHIEF RABBI'S COURT	ACCEPTING SYNAGOGUE
7261		MR	E	Jewish father	24	/	WLS
7271		MR	E	Jewish	19	/	Southend
7261		MR	N	C of E	21	/	Blackpool
7271		MR	N	C of E	23	/	Milton Keynes
7283		MR	E	C of E	24	/	Hendon
7313		MR	E	C of E	22	/	WLS
7323		MR	M	Christian	36	/	Wimbledon
7323		MR	Div.	C of E	43	/	Cardiff
7345		MR	M	Catholic	27	/	Westminster
7355		MR	S	Jewish father	21	/	Westminster
7365		MR	S	None	26	/	Westminster
7365		MR	E	Church of Scotland	43	/	Westminster
7365		MR	S	R.C.	33	/	Westminster
7365		MR	M	Buddhism	23	/	Southgate
7377		MR	E	C of E	42	/	WLS
7377		MR	M	C of E	26	/	Southgate
7377		MR	M	Protestant	32	/	Finchley
7379		MR	M	C of E	33	/	Bushy
7379		MR	M	Jewish father	31	/	WLS
7379		MR	M	None	30	/	WLS
7379		MR	M	C of E	36	/	Southend
7379		MR	M	C of E	43	/	Southend
7379		MR	M	C of E	27	/	Bournemouth
7379		MR	M	C of E	33	/	Bournemouth
7379		MR	E	C of E	20	/	Yes Maidenhead
7379		MR	M	C of E	41	/	" Maidenhead
7379		MR	M	C of E	39	/	" Maidenhead
7379		MR	M	C of E	38	/	No Westminster
7379		MR	M	Catholic	29	/	Westminster
7379		MR	S	None	28	/	Westminster
7379		MR	E	Greek Orthodox	27	/	NWRS
7379		MR	E	C of E	47	/	Finchley
7379		MR	M	Christian	32	/	Hampstead

			PARTNER'S PARENTS SYNAGOGUE	CHILDREN ALSO ADOPTED	1982
REG. FEE	COURT FEE	OTHER FEES			
\$35 21.4.81	\$45 7.1.82		WLS Reform		
\$35 19.1.81	\$45 24.12.81		Southend Reform		
+		at Rabbi Kay's request	Peas Wainsea Blackpool or th	Rebecca Fleur	
\$35 12.2.81	\$45 18.1.82		Tilton Keynes or th		PRO SECTE
\$35 30.3.81	\$45 30.3.81		Hendon Reform		
\$50 12.1.82	\$15 11/2/82	as installed	WLS Reform		MINORS
+\$35 21.5.79	\$45 18.1.82		Wembley Reform	maxis Charles	ADOPTION
\$35 8.9.81	\$45 8.9.81		Westminster or th		STATUS
\$50 28.1.82	\$45 28.1.82		Westminster Reform		NATURALIZATION
\$50 28.1.82	\$45 28.1.82		Westminster Reform		HALACHA
+\$50 1.2.82		recomm. by Rabbi Friedland	Westminster or th	Benjamin Schmuel	
\$50 1.2.82	\$45 1.2.82		Southgate Reform		
\$35 17.2.81	\$45 11.2.82		NLS Reform	① Emma	
+\$35 2.2.81	\$45 28.1.82		Southgate or th	② Deborah Michael Jasmin	
\$35 9.4.81	\$45 4.2.82		Finchley Reform		
\$35 16.2.81	\$45 15.2.82		Bursley or th		
\$35 11.8.81	\$45 18.2.82				
+\$35 29.12.80	\$45 19.2.82				
+\$35 29.12.80	\$45 19.2.82				
\$35 28.4.81	\$45 8.2.82		Southgate or th	③ Max Ray	
\$50 8.2.82	\$45 8.2.82		Southend or th		
\$35 19.6.80	\$45 1.2.82		Bournemouth Reform		
\$35 18.1.82	\$45 28.1.82		Bournemouth Reform		
\$35 28.5.81	\$45 25.6.82		Tottenham or th		
\$35 18.6.81	\$45 1.2.82			④ Leon Benjamin Vikki Mary children's center school	
\$35 16.8.81	\$45 25.1.82				
\$50 11.3.82	\$45 11.3.82		Westminster or th		
\$50 11.3.82	\$45 11.3.82		or th or th		
\$50 25.3.82	\$45 25.3.82				
\$50 25.2.82	\$45 25.2.82		NHS or th		
\$35 23.8.81	\$45 9.3.82		Finchley or th		
\$35 20.1.81	\$45 15.3.82		Birkbeck Reform		

APPENDIX 7. THE SURVEY

Thank you so much for helping with this survey. It has been designed to find out as much as we can about the process of conversion and the way people feel about Judaism after conversion. We are interested in the views of anybody who has converted whether or not they still regard themselves as Jewish.

Our aim is both to understand the effects of conversion and to make the process more meaningful for those whom we shall welcome as proselytes in the future.

Who should answer? Anyone who at some time in their life has converted to Judaism through the Reform Beit Din, whatever their current faith, affiliation or viewpoint.

If this description does not apply to you, we would be extremely grateful if you could pass the questionnaire on to someone you know who does match the description.

How long does the questionnaire take? Most questions can be answered simply by ticking a box. You should be able to complete the survey within 45 minutes.

Confidentiality. The questionnaire is completely confidential. The research team has no way of identifying who has responded. (The code number on the envelope is used by our administration department to record the fact that someone from your address has responded. It is destroyed before the envelope is opened and the questionnaire is passed to the research team with no identifying marks).

When. We would be extremely grateful if you could fill out this survey within the next few days.

Further information. If you require any further information or wish to discuss any aspect of this survey, please contact Rabbi Jacqui Tabick on [REDACTED] (or by email: [REDACTED])

SECTION 1: THE CONVERSION PROCESS AND HOW TO IMPROVE IT

YOUR DECISION

1. The first few questions ask about your reasons for deciding to become Jewish. From the list below, please indicate how important each factor was for you. *(If a reason could not have applied to you, please tick the 'not applicable' box)*

	Very important	Important	Slightly important	Not at all important	<i>Not applicable</i>
1.1 I felt that I needed to find a find a more meaningful faith	☐	☐	☐	☐	
1.2 I had a Jewish partner and wanted to respond to his/her wish that I convert	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
1.3 I had a Jewish partner and wanted to respond to his/her <i>family's</i> wish that I convert	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
1.4 I was attracted to the religious,					

ethical and/or spiritual aspects of Judaism	☐	☐	☐	☐	
1.5 I was attracted by the warmth I saw in Jewish life	☐	☐	☐	☐	
1.6 I have Jewish family roots that I wished to affirm	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
1.7 I already felt Jewish to some extent and wanted to develop this	☐	☐	☐	☐	
1.8 I mixed a lot in Jewish circles and this caused me to think about conversion	☐	☐	☐	☐	
1.9 I felt close to the Land and people of Israel	☐	☐	☐	☐	
1.10 I had a Jewish partner and felt that conversion would enhance our future life as a family	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

2. Are there any other factors which encouraged you to become Jewish ? If so, please mention them here:

3. And were there any factors that discouraged you ? Again, please list here:

4. How long was the course you followed in order to convert? _____months

CONVERSION PROCESS ITSELF

5. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following views about the process?

	Agree strongly	Agree	Not certain	Disagree	Disagree strongly
5.1 I was <i>not</i> encouraged to be honest about my real reasons for conversion	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
5.2 I felt part of a special group all doing the same thing.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
5.3 I felt that I wanted to rebel against the rabbi/tutor	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
5.4 The course seemed to be separate from the synagogue community. I did not feel part of the community during the process	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
5.5 I was sorry when the course ended	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

5.6 I learnt the theory but didn't have enough help with practicalities ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

5.7 By the end of the process I felt a sense of belonging to the Jewish people ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

6. In your case, who did *most* of the teaching? **Mainly Rabbi** ☐ **Mainly Tutor** ☐ **About equal** ☐

7. How were you taught ? **In a class** ☐ **Personal tuition** ☐ **Mixture** ☐

8. To what extent were you supported personally by the rabbi or tutor ?

Emotionally: **well supported**☐ **supported**☐ **poorly supported**☐ **not supported at all**☐

Intellectually: **well supported**☐ **supported**☐ **poorly supported**☐ **not supported at all**☐

Practically: **well supported**☐ **supported**☐ **poorly supported**☐ **not supported at all**☐

9. In what ways (if any) could the rabbi/tutor or community have done more to help you to develop your Jewish knowledge or Jewish identity?

10. Do you have comments on the *course* or suggestions as to how it might be improved?

11. Thinking about the time you went before the Reform Beit Din, how would you describe your reaction?

	Agree strongly	Agree	Not certain	Disagree	Disagree strongly
	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
11.1 I would have liked more of an intellectual challenge					
11.2 I experienced it as a real spiritual moment	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
11.3 I found it intimidating	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
11.4 I felt it was part of an ongoing process, not just an endpoint in its own right	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
11.5 I was worried that I would have to express a spiritual commitment that I couldn't give	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

11.6 It felt like a purely technical process to give me a stamp of approval

☐☐☐☐☐

11.7 The Mikveh was a very positive emotional experience

☐☐☐☐☐

12. On the first occasion you attended the Beit Din, what reservations or conditions (if any) were placed on your conversion?

If no conditions were laid down please tick here ☐

13. If you are male, can you tell us whether you

Yes ☐ No ☐

Yes ☐ No ☐

Yes ☐ No ☐

14. Based on your experiences of the conversion, please rate the quality of service you received from the Reform Beit Din:

	Good	Satisfactory	Poor
Efficiency	☐	☐	☐
Sensitivity	☐	☐	☐

15. Through which synagogue did you convert? _____

And in which year did you convert?

SECTION 2: JEWISH EXPERIENCES AFTER CONVERSION

16. In addition to the advice and support you may have received from friends or family, do you feel there is a need for the community to do more after someone has converted? Please give your views on the following suggestions.

	Agree strongly	Agree	Not certain	Disagree	Disagree strongly
	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
16.1 The community should provide a forum in which proselytes can discuss issues related to their new status.					
16.2 Rabbis should help those who have become Jewish to set their own goals for an initial period after conversion	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
16.3 Classes should be arranged for new proselytes to help them to improve their knowledge	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

16.4 Proselytes need extra support to cope with events such as the death of a parent ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

16.5 Once someone is Jewish, they should merge into the community and not be given special support ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

16.6 A personal mentoring scheme should be set up for each new proselyte pairing him/her with someone who can offer individual support ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

If you have any comments or suggestions about ‘after-care’ support, please add them to the “comments” section at the end of the questionnaire

17. Looking back over your decision to convert to Judaism, how do you feel about it now?

Agree strongly Agree Not certain Disagree Disagree strongly

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

17.1 Overall, I am pleased that I converted

17.2 I have faced hostility from people who think I’m ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

too frum

17.3 Judaism is fine, but I don't approve of the views of some members of the community

☐☐☐☐☐

17.4 My conversion has brought strength and unity into our family life

☐☐☐☐☐

17.5 I have never felt fully at home in the Jewish community

☐☐☐☐☐

17.6 My Jewishness has given me personally a feeling of self-fulfilment

☐☐☐☐☐

17.7 I can't imagine *not* being a Jew

☐☐☐☐☐

17.8 Conversion was a big mistake that caused me pain and unhappiness

☐☐☐☐☐

SECTION 3 : YOUR CURRENT BELIEFS AND LIFESTYLE

JEWISH IDENTITY (If you no longer regard yourself as Jewish, please go to question 20)

18. Being Jewish means different things to different people. Please say how important each of the following factors is to your personal sense of Jewishness.

	Importance to your feeling of Jewishness		
	Very Important	Quite important	Not at all important
18.1 A feeling of closeness to other Jews	☐	☐	☐
18.2 Involvement in Jewish home life (food customs etc.)	☐	☐	☐
18.3 Participation in Jewish religious life, synagogue observances etc	☐	☐	☐
18.4 A sense of attachment to Israel	☐	☐	☐
18.5 Interest in Jewish culture (art, music, literature etc.)	☐	☐	☐
18.6 Loyalty to my Jewish heritage	☐	☐	☐
18.7 Feeling Jewish 'inside' (i.e. personality, way of thinking, behaving.)	☐	☐	☐

19. If there are other factors that currently play a part in your feeling of Jewishness, please describe them here:

20. Some people are more conscious of being Jewish than others. Which of the following best describes your feelings? (This question is NOT concerned with your level of observance)

Although I was converted to Judaism, I do not think of myself now as being Jewish in any way ☐

I am aware of my Jewishness but I do not think about it very often ☐

I feel quite strongly Jewish but I am equally conscious of other aspects of my life ☐

I feel extremely conscious of being Jewish and it is very important to me ☐

21. If your feelings of Jewishness have changed in recent years (e.g. you have ceased to think of yourself as Jewish, or you have become far more aware of your Jewishness) can

you explain how this came about?

ATTITUDES TO INTERMARRIAGE

22. Views on intermarriage and partnership with non-Jews are very diverse and deeply felt.

Please say whether you agree or disagree with the following statements.

	Agree strongly	Agree	Not certain	Disagree	Disagree strongly
22.1 Nothing can be done to reduce the rate of intermarriage	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
22.2 Having a Jewish partner is only important if you intend to have children	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
22.3 If my son or daughter wished to marry a non-Jew I would do everything possible to prevent it	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
22.4 I would welcome my child's non-Jewish partner without hesitation	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
22.5 Conversion to Orthodox Judaism should be					

made much easier

☐☐☐☐☐

22.6 Conversion to Reform Judaism should be
made much easier

☐☐☐☐☐

RELIGIOUS PRACTICE

23. In terms of Jewish religious observance, which of the following best describes your position?

- I no longer regard myself as Jewish ☐
- Non-practising (ie secular) Jew ☐
- Just Jewish ☐
- Progressive Jew (eg Liberal or Reform) ☐
- Traditional ☐
- Strictly orthodox (ie would not switch on a light on Shabbat) ☐

But if you still observe any ritual/s please continue to Q24, otherwise go to Q 31

24 Please say whether you observe any of the following practices and rituals. Do you:

24.1 Light candles on a Friday night? Always ☐ Sometimes ☐ Never ☐

24.2 Have a mezuzah on some doors ? Yes, on all doors ☐ Yes, on some doors ☐ Not on any doors ☐

24.3 At Passover, attend a Seder meal at home or elsewhere ? Every year ☐ Most years ☐ Some years ☐ Never ☐

24.5 At Christmas, take part in any seasonal activities in your OWN home such as hanging up stockings or having seasonal decorations? Yes ☐ No ☐

24.6 Do you fast on Yom Kippur ? Every year ☐ Most years ☐ Some years ☐ Never ☐

24.7 Do you refrain from work on Rosh Hashana ?

Every
year ☐

Most
years ☐

Some
years ☐

Never ☐

24.8 Do you stay home on Friday nights for Jewish reasons?

Yes,
always ☐

Yes when
I can ☐

Doesn't really
matter to me ☐

25. Which of the following comes closest to describing your feelings about the Torah?

The Torah is the actual word of God

☐

The Torah is the inspired word of God but not everything should be taken literally, word for word

☐

The Torah is an ancient book of history and moral precepts recorded by man

☐

26. There are a wide range of practices with regard to the eating of meat. Thinking only about what you do at HOME, which of the following applies to you ? (For the purposes of this question 'meat' includes poultry)

☐
My home is vegetarian

☐
I buy meat from an ordinary (non-Kosher) butcher
including bacon & pork

☐
I buy meat from an ordinary (non-Kosher) butcher but
not bacon or pork

☐
I only buy meat and poultry from a Kosher butcher

27. In the past year, how often have you attended a Shabbat or other synagogue service?

Not at all ☐	Once or twice ☐	On a few occasions ☐	About once ☐	Most Sabbaths ☐
	(e.g. Yom Kippur)	(e.g. festivals, Yahrzeit)	a month	or more often.

28. If you have a Jewish husband, wife or partner, how often has your partner attended synagogue in the past year?

Not at all ☐ Once or twice ☐ On a few occasions ☐ About once ☐ Most Sabbaths ☐
(e.g. Yom Kippur) (e.g. festivals, Yahrzeit) a month or more often.

29. If you do not go to synagogue very often, is there a particular reason?

30. Since your conversion, would you say you have become more or less involved in Jewish life? For each of the activities below, could you please say how your interest or involvement has changed in recent years?

	In recent years I have become....		
Activity	More active	no change	Less active
Observance of home-based rituals (eg seder, Shabbat candles, New Year)	☐	☐	☐
Attending synagogue	☐	☐	☐
Observance of rituals relating to Kosher food	☐	☐	☐
Mixing socially with other Jews	☐	☐	☐
Involvement in Jewish educational or cultural activities (eg Jewish art, music, study groups)	☐	☐	☐

31. Whether or not you are actively involved in the Jewish community at present, would you wish to mark any of the following in a Jewish manner in the future? (Please answer for *future events* not those that may have happened earlier in your life).

Future circumcision of a child (if applicable)	Prefer a ☐	Would not have my ☐	Not ☐	
	Jewish event	child circumcised	Applicable	
Future marriage of a child (if applicable)	Prefer a ☐	Don't mind if ☐	Prefer <i>non-</i> ☐	Not ☐
	Jewish event	Jewish or not	Jewish event	applicable
Funeral	Prefer a ☐	Don't mind if ☐	Prefer <i>non-</i> ☐	
	Jewish event	Jewish or not	Jewish event	

JEWISH AND NON-JEWISH ACTIVITIES OUTSIDE OF THE HOME

32. Please list below any activities (educational, social, sporting, welfare, religious, etc) that you have been involved in on a regular basis in the past two years. Please include voluntary work as well as pastimes, and Jewish as well as non-Jewish activities. An example is given:

Name of group	How are you involved ?	Who does the group cater for ?
(Example) Local bridge club	Member. I play about once a fortnight	Non-denominational

33. Within the past two years have you or your partner (if applicable) attended a course or courses on a Jewish topic. (e.g. Jewish cooking, Hebrew, shiurim etc.)

You: Yes ☐ No ☐

Your partner: Yes ☐ No ☐ Not applicable ☐

34. Thinking of your close friends, what proportion would you say are Jewish?

All or ☐	More ☐	About ☐	Less ☐	None or ☐
Nearly all	than half	half	than half	very few

SECTION 4: THE ROLE OF FAMILY

Section 4a YOUR OWN FAMILY

35. How would you describe your family's reaction to your conversion when they first learned about it ? (If they were never aware of your conversion please go to section 4b below)

	Agree strongly	Agree	Not certain	Disagree	Disagree strongly
35.1 Despite some concerns, they just wanted me to be happy.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
35.2 They were worried they'd be excluded from my life.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
35.3 They were worried about my being subjected to anti-Semitism	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
35.4 They ostracised me	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
35.5 They weren't bothered in any way	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
35.6 They were angry at the idea that I needed to convert to satisfy the wishes of my partner or his/her family	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
35.7 They felt I was being disloyal to their religion or way of life.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

35.8 They supported me fully

☐☐☐☐☐

36. Were there any other reactions you would like to mention? _____

Section 4b YOUR PARTNER'S JEWISH FAMILY (*If you were NOT involved with a Jewish partner prior to or during your conversion please go to SECTION 5*)

If you had a Jewish partner at some stage *before or during* the conversion process, can you say how the Jewish family's reaction changed as the relationship developed? To assess this we have asked you similar questions at each stage of the relationship.

37. THE EARLY DAYS: How would you describe the Jewish family's reaction to you at the early stages of your relationship - ie before any firm commitment between you and your partner? (*If the family was not aware of your relationship in the early stages, please go to Q40*)

Welcoming and supportive ☐

Fairly positive ☐

Reluctant acceptance ☐ **Disappointment** ☐

Horror ☐

Don't Know ☐

38. If the family had a negative reaction, did they ignore you? **Yes** ☐ **No** ☐

39. And did they apply pressure on their son/daughter to end relationship?

Yes ☐

No ☐

Don't Know ☐

40. AFTER THE RELATIONSHIP WAS FIRMLY ESTABLISHED BUT BEFORE CONVERSION:

Using the same scale as above, how would you describe the Jewish family's reaction to the relationship once it became clear you were committed to each other

Welcoming and supportive ☐

Fairly positive ☐

Reluctant acceptance ☐ **Disappointment** ☐

Horror ☐

Don't Know ☐

41. If the family still had a negative reaction, did they ignore you? **Yes** ☐ **No** ☐

42. And did they apply pressure on their son/daughter to end relationship?

Yes ☐

No ☐

Don't Know ☐

43. Did the Jewish family apply any pressure on you to convert to Judaism now that the relationship was established?

Yes, strong pressure

☐

Yes, subtle pressure/hints

☐

I was encouraged , but not pressured

☐

No active encouragement, but I knew they wanted it

☐

They thought it irrelevant and did not encourage me in any way

☐

44. How would you describe the Jewish family's level of religious observance when you first met your partner?

Highly assimilated and not very conscious of their Jewishness

☐

Non-observant (secular), but aware of their Jewishness

☐

Kept some rituals (eg Seder), but did not keep a Kosher home or more demanding rituals

☐

Fairly observant and traditional (eg kept Kashrut), but did not keep all the Sabbath laws

☐

Strictly orthodox (ie would not travel or cook on Shabbat)

☐

45. DURING YOUR CONVERSION: How did your partner's family react to you during the conversion process? Using the same scale as earlier, please describe their attitude

Welcoming and supportive ☐

Fairly positive ☐

Reluctant acceptance ☐ Disappointment ☐

Horror ☐

Don't Know ☐

46. If the family still had a negative reaction did they:

Continue to ignore you?

Yes ☐ No ☐

Apply (or continue to apply) pressure on your partner to end the relationship?

Yes ☐ No ☐

47. What kind of support (if any) did your partner's family give you during the process?

Agree
strongly

Agree

Not
certain

Disagree

Disagree
strongly

☐☐☐☐☐

47.1 We had little or no contact

47.2 They helped me learn more about being

Jewish ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

47.3 As time went on, they began to resent my enthusiasm and greater knowledge ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

47.4 They respected me for becoming Jewish ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

47.5 They treated me just like any other Jewish relative and did not refer to my conversion ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

47.6 They did *not* think the conversion would make me a real Jew ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

48. Did the Jewish family express negative views about Reform Judaism? **Yes** ☐ **No** ☐

49. Did your partner express any negative views about Reform Judaism? **Yes** ☐ **No** ☐

50. And how did your partner react to the process of your conversion when you were going through it?

	Agree strongly	Agree	Not certain	Disagree	Disagree strongly
50.1 He/she saw the conversion as something we had to get through but was not really interested in the religious aspects	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
50.2 He/she became more involved in Judaism when I converted and this interest has continued ever since	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
50.3 Once I started to practice Judaism, he/she resented my enthusiasm and knowledge of Jewish life	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
50.4 If it were not for my partner's determination, I would not have lasted the course	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

50.5 He/she helped ease me into the Jewish world.

☐☐☐☐☐

50.6 He/she still doesn't recognise me as a real Jew

☐☐☐☐☐

D - THE CURRENT RELATIONSHIP

51. Thinking of your relationship with your partner's family *at the present time*, how would you describe this now? (If you are no longer with the same partner, please go to Q52).

SECTION 5 YOUR PARTNER'S JEWISH LIFESTYLE

If you have ever had a Jewish partner, please answer this section. (If you have never had a Jewish partner, go to Section 6)

52. To give us some idea of your Jewish partner's educational background, please complete the following table. In each case, please give the approximate years of attendance, if known. (If more than one Jewish partner, please answer for the current partner)

Type of education or experience	Attended ?	IF YES: Number of years or Don't Know
Part-time classes in synagogue (Cheder) or private lessons	Yes ☐ No ☐	_____yrs or D.K ☐
Jewish primary school	Yes ☐ No ☐	_____yrs or D.K ☐
Part-time lessons after Bar/Bat Mitzvah	Yes ☐ No ☐	_____yrs or D.K ☐
Jewish secondary school	Yes ☐ No ☐	_____yrs or D.K ☐
Jewish youth club	Yes ☐ No ☐	_____yrs or D.K ☐

53. How would you describe your current partner's Jewish background – ie the level of practice in his or her family home ? (If your current partner was also your partner at the time of conversion, you have already answered this question ! Please go to Q54)

Highly assimilated and not very conscious of their Jewishness

☐

Non-observant (secular), but aware of their Jewishness

☐

Kept some rituals (eg Seder), but did not keep a Kosher home or more demanding rituals

☐

Fairly observant and traditional (eg kept Kashrut), but did not keep all the Sabbath laws

☐

Strictly orthodox (ie would not travel or cook on Shabbat)

☐

SECTION 6: BACKGROUND INFORMATION ABOUT YOURSELF AND YOUR FAMILY

GROWING UP

54. Which religion did your family belong to when you were growing up (irrespective of whether they practised that religion)?

55. How would you describe your religious upbringing when you were a child?

Intense ☐

Moderate ☐

Slight ☐

Entirely ☐

Anti-religious ☐

non-religious

56. When you were a teenager, to what extent were you personally involved in organised religious life?

Very involved ☐

Involved ☐

Slightly involved ☐

Not at all involved ☐

If you were involved in any way, was this in the same religion as the rest of your family

Yes ☐

No ☐

If NO, which religion did you participate in _____

57. Did you have any regular contact with Jews or Jewish life when you were growing up?

No ☐

Yes, through family members ☐

Yes, through friends ☐

58. Thinking back to the time when you first decided to start the conversion process, were you then:

Married to a Jew?

☐ please skip to Q.60

Engaged or in a serious relationship with a Jew?

☐ please skip to Q.60

Married to or in a serious relationship with a non-Jew?

☐ please skip to Q.60

Single, without a partner?

☐ please answer Q.59

59. If you were single and without a partner at the time you started to convert, had

you previously been married or in a serious relationship ?

No, always single

☐

Yes, previously married / in a relationship with a Jew

☐

Yes, previously married / in a relationship with a non-Jew

☐

MARITAL STATUS AND PARTNERS

To help us to understand how conversion affects the lives of those who choose to become Jewish, these questions ask about your personal circumstances and family relationships since conversion. We realise these are sensitive questions, but hope that you will be willing to answer. As with all other questions, we assure you that the replies are strictly confidential and cannot be traced to any individual or family.

60. Can you please let us know your current marital status? Are you?

Married

☐

Engaged

☐

In a stable relationship (not married)

☐

Widowed ☐

Separated from your last partner or divorced ☐

Single ☐

61. If you are single, have you ever been married or in a stable relationship with a Jewish or non-Jewish partner?

Never ☐ Once ☐ Twice ☐ Three times ☐ Four or more ☐

Please answer the rest of this section if you have ever have been married or in a stable relationship (otherwise please go to section 7) .

62. Each column of the table represents one of these stable relationships. For each relationship could you please answer the questions on the left? (if you have had more than four stable relationships please answer for the first three relationships and then the latest relationship).

First partner	Second partner	Third partner	Latest partner
--------------------------	---------------------------	--------------------------	---------------------------

Was this partner Jewish or Non-Jewish?				
Which year did the relationship start?				
Which year did the relationship end?				
Were you formally married ?				
If married, where did this take place? (eg synagogue, church, registry office, mosque....)				
Did you have any children with this partner?				
If so, please say how many children				

YOUR CHILDREN / GRANDCHILDREN (If you do not have children, please go to section 7)

63. These questions are about your children and the extent (if any) of their Jewish education and involvement. Each column represents one child. We have allowed enough room for six children, but if you have more than this, please answer for the youngest six.

	Child 1	Child 2	Child 3	Child 4	Child 5	Child 6
SEX and AGE						
Is this child male or female?						
How old is she / he now (in years)?						
EDUCATION (insert N/A if child is too young)						
<i>If old enough</i> , does (did) s/he attend part-time Jewish classes ?						

If old enough, does (did) s/he
attend Jewish primary school?

If old enough, does (did) s/he
attend Jewish classes prior to Bar
/ Batmitzvah ?

If old enough, does (did) s/he
attend a Jewish secondary
school?

If old enough, does (did) s/he
attend a Jewish college or
seminary ?

JEWISH STATUS

Was she / he Jewish at birth ?

If no, was she/he converted to
Judaism ?

Did (or will) this child have a
barmitzvah or batmitzvah ?

MARRIAGE CHOICES
(if too young insert N/A)

Is (or was) this child married or in
a stable relationship?

If so, did he / she choose a
Jewish partner ? (answer for the
first partner if more than one)

If this child had a marriage cere-
mony, was this in a synagogue?

64. Finally, if you are now blessed with grandchildren, can you please give some details about their Jewish education and experience, if any? (If you have more than six grandchildren, please answer for the youngest six.)

SEX and AGE	Grand child 1	Grand child 2	Grand child 3	Grand child 4	Grand child 5	Grand child 6
Is this child male or female?						
How old is she / he now (in years)?						
EDUCATION (insert N/A if child is too young)						
<i>If old enough</i> , does (did) s/he attend part-time Jewish classes ?						
<i>If old enough</i> , does (did) s/he attend Jewish primary school?						

*If old enough, does (did) s/he
attend Jewish classes after Bar /
Batmitzvah ?*

*If old enough, does (did) s/he
attend a Jewish secondary
school?*

JEWISH STATUS

Was she / he Jewish at birth ?

If no, was she/he converted to
Judaism ?

Did (or will) this child have a
barmitzvah or batmitzvah ?

MARRIAGE CHOICES

(if too young insert **N/A**)

Is (or was) this child married or in a stable relationship?

If so, did he / she choose a Jewish partner ? (answer for the first partner if more than one)

SECTION 7 BIOGRAPHICAL DETAILS

And finally, it would be helpful to know some personal information.

65. Are you currently a member of a synagogue? Yes ☐ No ☐

If so, which one? _____

66. Do you hold any academic qualifications? Please tick all that apply to you and write in as appropriate.

None ☐

O Level or GCSE or CSE ☐

A level or GNVQ or HNC ☐

BA or BSc degree (including MB.BS) ☐

M.Sc, M/Phil or Other Masters ☐

Ph.D, D.Sc, LL.D, MD or other doctorate ☐

Professional qualification in _____

67. Please give your age last birthday _____ *years*

68. Are you: Male ☐

Female ☐

Your own comments

If you would like to expand on your answer to any particular question or on the questionnaire in general, please use the space below, quoting the number where appropriate.

[illegible]

Thank you so much for taking the time and trouble to answer this questionnaire, we hope you enjoyed it! Please return in the reply paid envelope provided.

If it raises any issues you want to discuss, please contact your local rabbi or me on [REDACTED] or Rabbi J. Tabick, [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

4APPENDIX 8. FURTHER DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION FROM THE LEDGERS OF THE BEIT DIN

The information here would provide a basis for further research but was not used in this study owing to lack of space.

A8.1. Number of converts by age and marital status

Age	Single		Engaged		Married		Widowed/Divorced		All	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
0-30	108	68	336	75	99	25	0	0	543	53
31-40	27	18	93	21	146	37	4	21	270	26
41+	20	14	20	4	152	38	17	79	209	21
All	155	100	449	100	397	100	21	100	1022	100
Median age	26		27		37		55		33	

Table A8.1. Number of converts by age and marital status (men)

Source: Ledgers of the Beit Din

Age	Single		Engaged		Married		Widowed/Divorced		All	
	#	%	#	%	#	Age	#	%	#	%
0-30	257	71	1190	82	885	46	15	11	2347	60
31-40	68	19	215	15	713	36	23	18	1019	26
41+	36	10	44	3	361	18	93	71	534	14
All	361	100	1449	100	1959	100	131	100	3900	100
Median age	25		26		31		57		28	

Table A8.2. Number of converts by age and marital status (women)

Source: Ledgers of the Beit Din

A8.2. Location of the synagogues where converts have chosen to convert

The Movement for Reform Judaism has developed slowly over the years and its geographical expansion has obviously had an effect on the locations where people are both able and chose to convert.ⁱⁱ

Year	# Central London	%	# London Suburbs	%	# Provinces	%	# Abroad	%	# Total	%
1953-1962	344	46	238	32	153	21	7	1	742	100
1963-1972	343	34	365	36	306	30	5	0	1019	100
1973-1982	232	22	387	37	437	41	1	0	1057	100
1983-1992	276	25	390	36	407	38	10	1	1083	100
1993-2002	232	23	337	33	421	41	40	4	1030	100
All years	1427	29	1717	35	1724	35	63	1	4931	100

Table A8.3. Proportions of converts by location of communities and passing decades

Source: Ledgers of the Beit Din

The proportions of candidates presenting in Central London, the suburbs or the provinces have changed over the years and statistically significant differences have been revealed ($\chi^2 = 275$, $p \leq 0.001$).

- In the earliest period, with few choices available, the greatest number of candidates presented themselves through synagogues in Central London, most notably, West London Synagogue of British Jews. The preponderance of London candidates can be explained by the fact that there has always been far more Jews in the capital. The proportion of each succeeding decade converting in central London has steadily declined.
- The proportion of each decade who convert through the suburban congregations has remained fairly steady.
- These two sets of figures might reflect the greater confidence London Jews may feel in being able to maintain at least their secular Jewish connections even if they remain in a mixed marriage.
- A big rise has occurred in the proportion converting in the provinces despite the probable overall decline of provincial Jewish communities. Partly this growth may have come about because of the rise of the numbers of Provincial congregations, so applicants have an increasing greater chance of being able to convert wherever they live, but it may also have come about because of the perceived need in smaller communities to convert if one wishes to be part of the local Jewish community.
- In addition, it might reflect the relative lack of possible Jewish marriage partners in the vicinity.
- It might also reflect the life-style choice of the Jews who might choose to live in an area, outside of the provincial areas of Manchester and Leeds, of generally low Jewish population.
- The figures show a slight growth in recent decades of actual candidates coming from abroad to have their conversion ratified by the Reform *Beit Din*. These are candidates taught mainly in Israel or in Europe, especially Germany and the Former Soviet Union, where until very recently, no Reform *Beit Din* existed. This increase reflects the end of the Soviet Union and the greater freedom for Jews from that area to seek to regularize their Jewish status. A court has now been established in Europe so it is probable that this number will fall again in the future.

Around 70% of the constituents of the Movement for Reform Judaism are members of London congregations. As **Table 6.7** indicates, in 1993-2002 the home communities of the applicants to the Beit Din do not reflect these proportions. This may have a bearing on future strategy.

A8.3. The size of the synagogues where converts have chosen to convert

The Movement for Reform Judaism for the last few years has graded congregations according to their size for the purpose of helping to decide rabbinic salaries. The grading does not have precise size limits – other factors are included in the classification - but in general the grouping can be used as an indication of size. For example, Edgware with a membership of 8,117 in 2002 was in Group 5, North West Surrey Synagogue (membership 424) was in Group 3, Blackpool (membership 76) was in Group 1.

This same codification has been used as a basis to ascertain which approximate size of congregation has sent the most candidates through to the *Beit Din* and enable the study of how size of congregation might have affected the outcome of the conversion. Group 1 synagogues are the smallest, Group 5 the largest. Obviously, this analysis is limited in that total numbers must be mitigated over the fifty year period by how long the congregation has been in existence: the shorter time the synagogue has been in existence, the less chance of applicants.ⁱⁱⁱ

The other challenge is that the size of congregations may vary over the years, but there are no records available to help resolve this. Certainly the general proportions between the membership of the congregations has remained fairly static, i.e. West London, Edgware and North Western Reform Synagogue have always been the largest followed by the main suburban synagogues, Finchley, Hendon, Middlesex New, South West Essex and Settlement and Southgate. They have now been joined by Maidenhead which is just outside the Greater London area.

The proportions of the candidates coming from the various synagogues has changed over the years. This difference is statistically significant. ($\chi^2 = 451$, $p < 0.001$)

	Group 5		Group 4		Group 3		Group 2		Group 1		All	
Year	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
1953-1962	369	50	107	15	94	13	148	20	17	2	735	100
1963-1972	380	37	185	18	274	27	151	15	24	2	1,014	100
1973-1982	217	20	238	22	341	32	192	18	76	7	1,064	100
1983-1992	235	22	256	24	332	31	150	14	105	10	1,078	100
1993-2002	203	20	219	21	312	30	159	15	134	13	1,027	100
All years	1,404	29	1,005	20	1,353	28	800	16	356	7	4,918	100

Table A8.4. Number of converts, by size of synagogue and passing decades

Source: Ledgers of the Beit Din

Note: Size of synagogue is on a scale of 1-5, as defined by Movement for Reform Judaism. Group 5 are the largest synagogues, Group 1 the smallest.

- It is not surprising that Group 5 synagogues provided the greatest proportion of applicants up to 1972 as there were not that many other congregations.
- The proportion of candidates attending Group 1 synagogues increased significantly over the 50 year period under study. Possibly in less Jewish areas, where most of these

congregations are to be found, a greater pressure is felt upon those in a mixed relationship for the non-Jewish partner to convert, or this may reflect, in some cases where these congregations are in the provinces, a lack of suitable Jewish marriage partners.

- Similarly, the proportion of candidates from Group 3 congregations has also increased significantly. Again, these synagogues tend not to be situated in the Jewish heartland of North West or Central London, but they have rabbis on staff who can facilitate conversions.
- The proportion of those coming from the Group 5 congregations has decreased significantly. This trend might have arisen because in the larger congregations, in areas of a larger Jewish population, there is a greater chance for Jews to find a Jewish partner, or maybe there is less pressure for the non-Jewish partner to convert as Jewish life can continue for the Jewish partner through secular/ethnic channels.

The number of converts coming from the larger and smaller synagogues can be related to the size of the communities. The Beit Din ledgers show the number of converts put forward by each synagogue; the Movement for Reform Judaism (MRJ) has provided information on the size (the adult membership) of each synagogue.

The membership of each synagogue is not readily available for the earlier years, so this analysis has been done for two periods, 1983 –1992 and 1993-2002.

The average number of converts per year per 1000 members has been used as a measure of the number of converts in relation to the size of the synagogues.

Group	1982-93			1993-2002		
	Membership	Converts per year	Converts per 1000 membership	Membership	Converts per year	Converts per 1000 membership
5	9,138	23.5	2.6	8,591	20.3	2.4
4	6,345	25.6	4.0	5,982	21.9	3.7
3	6,634	33.2	5.0	6,936	31.2	4.5
2	1,997	15.0	7.5	2,193	15.9	7.2
1	792	10.5	13.3	848	13.4	15.8
All	24,905	107.8	4.3	24,551	102.7	4.2

Table A8.5. The number of converts in relation to the size of the synagogue

Source: Beit Din ledgers (number of converts); Movement for Reform Judaism (membership)

Notes:

- (1) The membership for 1982-93 is the membership for 1993. The membership for 1993-2002 is the average membership for the ten years.
- (2) Group is an indicator of size, Group 5 synagogues have the largest memberships, Group 1 have the smallest memberships.

This Table shows the relative number of converts increases as the size of the synagogue decreases. The increase is particularly marked for the smallest synagogues (Group 1) which have, on average, 13-16 converts per 1000 members.

Group 2-5 synagogues have slightly lower proportions of converts in 1993-200 compared to the previous decade, Group 1 synagogues have a higher proportion of converts in the second decade.

The largest synagogues (Group 5) are in London, the smallest synagogues (Group 1) are mainly outside London.

IN the 2002 document produced by the Movement for Reform Judaism, there are nine synagogues in Group 1 (Beit Klal Yisrael, Beth Shalom, Blackpool, Bradford, Harlow, Hull, Milton Keynes, Shir Hayim and Thanet). Their average membership is just under 100 for each synagogue. They have about 2-3 converts each, each year, on average (average = 2.5 converts per synagogue per year for the period 1983-2002).

Seeing that in 2002 members of group 1 and 2 congregations constituted around 16% of the total membership of the Reform Movement and the three group 5 congregations alone consisted of 32% of the Movement and together with group 4 congregations 68% of the movement, this statistic seems to suggest that a disproportionately higher proportion of proselytes come from the smaller communities and the Group 3 communities.

APPENDIX 9. HEBREW, YIDDISH AND LADINO GLOSSARY

English transliteration	Translation and explanation
<i>Aliya</i>	Literally: “going up”, meaning “to move to Israel” or “to say a blessing over the Torah during the service”.
<i>Bensch</i>	Say grace after meals.
<i>B’nei Mitzvah</i>	Literally: “sons of the commandment”, traditionally Jewish males over the age of 13.
Bar/Bat Mitzvah	Literally: “son/daughter of the commandment”, traditionally a Jewish boy over the age of 13 or 12 for a girl. Also the ceremony in synagogue after boys and girls turn 13 and 12 respectively.
Beit Din	Jewish law court.
<i>Brit Mila</i>	Covenant of circumcision.
<i>Cheder</i>	Religion school, normally taking place on Sunday mornings at synagogues during which children learn Hebrew and Jewish knowledge.
<i>Erev</i>	“Evening”, e.g. “ <i>erev shabbat</i> ” meaning “Friday night”.
<i>Frum</i>	“Very religious.”
<i>Halacha</i>	Jewish law. Adjective: <i>halachic</i> .
<i>Huppah</i>	“Canopy” under which a Jewish wedding is conducted.
<i>Kashrut</i>	Literally: “fitness” or “appropriateness” for Jewish use, specifically dietary laws.
<i>Kiddush</i>	“Sanctification” of the shabbat or festival through wine and bread, often in synagogue comes with other food. Plural: <i>kiddushim</i> .
<i>Klezmer</i>	Jewish music from Eastern Europe.
Kosher	Literally “fit” or “appropriate” for Jewish use, often specifically referring to food.
<i>Lishma</i>	“For its own sake.”
Marrano	Secret Jew in Spain during and after the Inquisition.
Mazel tov	Literally: “good constellation”, meaning “congratulations”.
<i>Mezuzah</i>	A prayer placed in a special box on the doorposts of the house, containing texts from the Torah.
<i>Mikveh</i>	Ritual bath which (among other things) is used for conversion.
<i>Milah</i>	“Circumcision.”
Mitzvah	“Commandment.” Plural: <i>mitzvot</i> .
Purim	Festival commemorating the events of the book of Esther.
Rosh Hashana	“New Year.”
Rosh Hodesh	New Month.
Seder	Ritual meal on the night of Passover. Plural: <i>Sedarim</i> .
<i>Shabbas</i>	Yiddishised pronunciation of “shabbat”.
<i>Shikse</i>	Derogatory word for a non-Jewish woman.
<i>Shivah</i>	“Seven” day mourning period.
<i>Shomer Shabbat</i>	“Someone who keeps shabbat”, usually meant in terms of traditional Jewish law.
<i>Tevilah</i>	“Immersion” for ritual purposes, often in a <i>mikveh</i> for conversion.
<i>Yiddishe</i>	“Jewish.”
<i>Yad</i>	Literally: “hand”, used as a pointer for reading in the Torah and as such is sometimes a Jewish symbol.
Yom Kippur	“Day for Atonement.”

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