

## President's Message Summer 2008

Hopefully everyone liked my message in the [last newsletter](#) because these comments are an extension of that erudition. I thought I would take a stab at drilling down in one of the websites that I mentioned last time. Since I am still waiting for my Atzmi score (a score for Kabbalah orientation) I decided to not go there. In webspeak, drilling down is known as web-surfing. It helps if you are Bar/Bat Mitzvah age to perform these tasks. Since that was a few years ago for me, I required the patience of Job to find my perfect site.

It was found in [www.urj.org](http://www.urj.org), and I decided to click on the learning button. It happens to be a very good site, but I found it difficult to navigate. Nevertheless, I converged to the Q&A for conversion. I found it quite helpful. There were 13 questions (Passover is over, there were not four), and they must have resonated with me some fifteen years ago when I chose Judaism.

One does not wake up one morning and decide to "Choose Judaism." For me it was a process that was accelerated by our family's membership in [Temple Beth Haverim](#) in Mahwah. At that time, the shul was in an old firehouse. Our son Brandon was the last Bar Mitzvah there, and due to space constraints, possibly forty people were able to attend the service. Now, Beth Haverim, in a new building, has several hundred members. I would like to think it was due to Brandon's awesome Torah chanting. Being an active participant in this simcha was one reason for my decision to choose Judaism.

I have gone off topic. Many questions arise as one walks through the possible paths to Judaism. They are all options. As with any life-changing event, one wants to learn as much as possible about the new changes that one considers embracing. The basics are the same in the new Internet Age as they were fifteen years ago.

Find a Rabbi that you are comfortable with. The Rabbi will help you through the process and be there for the rituals.

Take an Introduction to Judaism Course. On a periodic basis, our Temple has "A Taste of Judaism" course.

Historically, the Rabbi was obligated to turn the prospective convert away three times before allowing them to convert. This has never been an issue in Reform. Reform Rabbis are welcome to this opportunity and will discuss whatever might be getting in the way of the candidate choosing Judaism. Along the way, you are reinforced by the Biblical passage from Ruth. "Entreat me not to leave thee, and to return from following after thee; for wither thou goest, I will go; and wither thou lodgest, I will lodge; thy people shall be my people; and thy God my God..."

Now all that is left is the fun part. As Reform Jews, we are allowed to choose whether to visit the Mikvah. Everyone, even Jews, knows what baptism is. Well we invented it! The Mikvah ritual involves reciting the Shehecheyanu and other blessings while enjoying full-body immersion in running water. For me, it was a memorable experience. Serving as your

president, I have been proud to participate as other congregants have participated in this ritual.

Just like Irving Berlin, many converts have an attachment to "White Christmas" and other holidays they have enjoyed in the past. One way to do this, and still be honest to one's conscience, is to enjoy other people's holidays with the other people. Just as non-Jews are welcome to come to our home for Passover and other holidays, I feel welcome at their homes for their holidays.

Some quick references for more information:

[Choosing Judaism](#), Lydia Kukoff.

[Every Person's Guide to Judaism](#), Rabbi S. Einstein, Lydia Kukoff

[What is a Jew?](#), Rabbi M. Kertzner, rev. by Rabbi L. Hoffman

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