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## Advisor's Report

### A Modern Musical Conversion Ceremony by Jennifer Werby

Dr. Kerry M. Olitzky

May 10, 1995

In an attempt to provide the potential Jew-by-Choice with a meaningful ceremony for conversion, Jennifer Werby has sought to bring together music which enhances the profound nature of the ceremony. In order to do so, she articulated a series of themes which emanated from the process of conversion itself. Then she looked for those pieces which reflected the salient elements captured by these identified themes. Besides the obvious collections from Ruth (as the paradigmatic convert), she collected a vast array of music which complemented the journey of faith travelled by converts to Judaism as they cast their lot with the Jewish people. Thus, this work complements the work of the Commission on Reform Jewish Outreach, established by Rabbi Alexander Schindler. For this contribution to the field of life-cycle liturgy and repertoire, she is to be congratulated.

Furthermore, Jennifer placed the conversion and the conversion ceremony in historical context, helping the reader (as well as the one selecting music for the ceremony) to become acquainted with the history of conversion and the conversion ceremony. It is clear that Jennifer is awed by those who have chosen to become part of the Jewish people on their own volition. She also makes the important point that in modern society, we are all Jews-by-Choice regardless of our family origin. This insight helps us to understand all the people we serve in congregations and communities across North America. It is with a great deal of pleasure that I recommend the acceptance of this project in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Master of Sacred Music.

Thesis  
1995  
(M.S.M.)  
Werby

A MODERN MUSICAL, PUBLIC, CONVERSION CEREMONY

JENNIFER WERBY

Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of  
Requirements for Master of Sacred Music Degree

Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion  
School of Sacred Music  
New York, New York

February 16, 1995

Advisor: Dr. Kerry M. Olitzky

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## Introduction

The conversion ceremony as presented in this project answers a timely need of the American Reform Jewish community. It proposes new, creative ways to welcome a non-Jew into the fold of Judaism. Conversion is at present a very important issue for the American Jewish community, since there is now a great potential for the influx of Jews-by-Choice.<sup>1</sup> This situation largely stems from integration of the American Jew into American culture. This integration has resulted in many intermarriages. These intermarried couples are being encouraged by synagogues to increase knowledge and participation in Jewish culture and religion. Additionally, many non-Jews in American society are unaffiliated and looking for new avenues of religious expression. Outreach to this population is likely to produce a significant number of Jews-by-Choice, as well.

The public conversion ceremony can benefit the Jew-by-Choice as well as the American Jewish community. Rabbi Alexander Schindler said, in his 1993 Presidential Address to the Union of American Hebrew Congregations (UAHC), that by welcoming converts, American Jews are given a chance to pull down barriers and summon a peripheral group to return and to connect with the synagogue. Additionally Schindler pointed out the benefit to the Jewish community: "In their returning, through their connecting, they summon us to a fuller consciousness of our own Jewish identities."<sup>2</sup>

The Union of American Hebrew Congregations is currently spending tremendous resources and expending much effort to welcome prospective Jews by Choice. The majority of American Reform synagogues now have multi-

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<sup>1</sup>The term "Jew-by-Choice," as it will be used in this paper, denotes anyone not born Jewish who formally converts to Judaism.

<sup>2</sup> Alexander Schindler, "Lifelong Learning: The Path to Informed Choices, Presidential Address, '93" (New York: UAHC, 1993), 6.

faceted educational and social programs aimed at the intermarried population with the ultimate goal of conversion of the non-Jewish partner.<sup>3</sup> Fifty-three percent of all UAHC-affiliated synagogues program outreach events, and 79% hold introductory classes in the study of basic Judaism.<sup>4</sup> However, the actual conversion ceremony for the new members of the Jewish community has not yet been considered in the programming, even though it is the defining moment for the new convert. The event of conversion could be greatly enhanced for both the individual and the community by developing a thoughtful, creative, public conversion ceremony.

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A skillful application of music can greatly enhance the experience of a conversion ceremony for all present. The Jewish religion has long recognized the power of music.<sup>5</sup> Singing in the early history of the Jewish people was recognized as the way to communicate with God. This, it is believed, was due to the influence of Egyptian culture, in which musical tradition was highly developed.<sup>6</sup> Music can be heard in almost all of Jewish ritual and appears in many Jewish texts. The Bible contains a multitude of references describing music in different forms: instrumental, (dance), community singing, responsorial and antiphonal singing, psalm-singing, and individual singing. Given the numerous references to music in Biblical and post-Biblical Jewish writings, it can be assumed that music has been an essential part of the lives of Jews from early times.

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<sup>3</sup> Commission on Reform Jewish Outreach of the UAHC, and the CCAR. UAHC Outreach Census 1991, A Report (UAHC: New York, 1989), vii ff.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Alfred Sendry, Music in Ancient Israel (New York: Philosophical Library, 1969), 495.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 159.

The careful and purposeful application of music is indispensable to the ceremony to magnify the profound meaning and significance of the event. Music in the conversion ceremony can function on many different levels and use of rhythm, melody and harmony, used alone or in combination can achieve various effects. A familiar melody can be nostalgic; a new melody can challenge. Songs can unify, provoke introspection and personal prayer. It is a non-rational medium to which the body responds with physical and mental changes.<sup>7</sup> Whether joining in a song or listening to one, the congregation and the Jew-by-Choice can benefit from the effects of music. It is the purpose of this paper to demonstrate how a public conversion ceremony with music as its central focus can be effective and meaningful for the Jew-by-Choice and the Jewish community and to create various models for such a ceremony.

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<sup>7</sup>Alexander Capurso, Music and Your Emotions (New York: Liveright, 1952), 24.

## The Process of Conversion in Jewish History

This section will focus on the ways in which Jewish texts consider the process of conversion to Judaism: from the patriarchs (starting around 1850 B.C.E) to the present day. The texts will show that the process of conversion to Judaism has evolved from a simple, physical act to a complex process. The one factor that remained consistent throughout Jewish history has been a confirmation of faith demonstrated through proclamation, immersion and/or circumcision.

Circumcision is the earliest and most basic conversion rite in the Torah. Abraham, the first Jew, is instructed by God to circumcise himself and the male members of his household as a sign of the covenant with God. All of Abraham's male progeny are to be circumcised on the eighth day of life (see Genesis 10: 14-17). Later, the rabbis use Abraham to establish Jewish lineage for other Jews-by-Choice by calling them "son of Abraham" (T.B. Nedarim 32a).<sup>8</sup> Members of the clan were thus distinguished by circumcision. The Torah specifically states that if the convert wants to participate in important Jewish festivals he must be circumcised (Exodus 12:48). This circumcision also entitles him to all rights and obligations under Jewish law (Leviticus 17:15, 19:10; 23:22; 24:19 inter alia).

On the other hand, a question which remains open is the process in which women converted to Judaism. There is no evidence in the Torah regarding the process of conversion for women. Although Abraham and Sarah together received a name change by God, indicating Sarah's participation in the covenant, Sarah does not seem to independently convert to Judaism. Nor do any of the matriarchs, or even Moses' wife Zipporah. Apparently, Ruth is the

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<sup>8</sup> This idea is expounded upon in Genesis Rabba 39:14; Yad, Issurei Biah 14:7; as well as in Tanhuna Lech L'cha 32a ff.

first woman in the Bible to independently convert to Judaism. She converted by proclamation alone.

Ruth thereby becomes Biblical Judaism's female convert par excellence (by way of rabbinic interpretation). She becomes a paradigm of conversion as a result of her purity of motives and loyalty, qualities that the rabbis will later insist upon as a prerequisite for prospective converts. In the Biblical account, Ruth, a Moabite, is married to a Jewish husband and lives with his family. When he and the remaining men of the family die, Ruth's mother-in-law, Naomi, tells the wives to go back to their own people. Ruth alone refuses; other Moabite women in the family do not. "Entreat me not to leave thee," Ruth says. "Your people will be my people; your God, my God" (Ruth 1:15). Ruth makes her proclamation to Naomi and is thereby converted.

Beyond the notion of conversion by proclamation, the book of Ruth contains another important lesson about conversion to Judaism. The author of the book of Ruth points out that Ruth is the grandmother of King David (Ruth 4:22). This is important, as will be demonstrated in later writings, because it shows that the progeny of converts are not relegated to peripheral status in the community. Likewise, some of the Talmud's most well-known rabbinic figures were converts or descendent of converts. Among the converts were: Onkelos, a convert who translated the Bible into Aramaic (T.P. Megillah 1.9.71c, T.B. Megillah 3a. ) and Rabbi Yohanan b. Torta (Pesikta Rabbati 14:56b-57b). Among the descendants of converts were Rabbi Akiva, Shemaiah and Abtalion (T.B. Pesachim 66a), Rabbi Yehuda ben Gerim (T.B. Moed Katan 9a), Rabbi Shmuel bar Yehuda (T.B. Yebamot 101b), and Rabbi Meir (T.B. Gittin 56a).<sup>9</sup> Moreover, rabbinic writings add status to the process of conversion to Judaism. For instance, according to a well-known rabbinic legend, Abraham invited

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<sup>9</sup> Bernard J. Bamburgh, Proselytism in the Talmudic Period (New York: Ktav, 1968), 238 ff.

desert travelers into his tent, fed them, and then encouraged them to recognize the God of Abraham (T.B. Sotah 10b). According to another rabbinic tale, Abraham converted the males, while Sarah converted the females (see Genesis Rabbah, Lekh Lekha 39).

The rabbis also offer insight into the process of conversion through Moses' father-in-law Jethro, a former Midianite priest. Jethro publicly renounces his idols before the other Midianite priests. They respond by excommunicating him (see Exodus Rabbah 1:32). In the Torah, Jethro renounces his paganism and accepts the God of Moses after hearing how God brought the Israelites out of Egypt. Jethro affirms his conversion through the public act of sacrificing to God (see Exodus 18:9 ff.).

The Mishnah, (ca., 200 C.E.) in Bikkurim 1:4-5 offers the first glimpse of a conversion ritual by the Tannaim (70-200 C.E.). This ritual included a brief questioning of the potential convert by a rabbi to establish purity of motive, as well as the willingness to accept all of the *mitzvot*.<sup>10</sup> At the same time the Tannaim were formulating rules for conversion, Jews in the Roman world were active as aggressive proselytizers. Conversion in the Roman Empire was encouraged for the sake of the universalism envisioned by the prophets (see Isaiah 2:2 ff., 14:1 ff., 45:1 ff.). In addition, Roman Jews sought to increase their population.<sup>11</sup>

During the reign of the Emperor Constantine in the third century C.E., Judaizing in the Roman Empire came to an end. The citizens of the Roman

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<sup>10</sup> A manual for conversion to Christianity is coterminous with the formulation of the Mishnaic laws of conversion ca., 120-180 C.E. There are many parallels between the process of conversion to Judaism as defined in the Talmud and the process of conversion to Christianity as defined in the The Didache of the Twelve Apostles. The Didache is a work that teaches the Christian convert to about the teachings of Jesus, the meaning of Baptism and includes teaching of the basic Christian way of life.

<sup>11</sup> Greek and Roman literature written after the fall of the Second Temple (70 C.E.) document the active proselytizing that was prevalent during the time.

Empire were converted to Christianity. Prior to that time it was fashionable for Romans to attend Jewish services and adopt Jewish practices.<sup>12</sup> Jewish proselyzation became a crime in the Christian world. For example, one Flavius Clemens was in the line of imperial succession until he and his wife converted to Judaism. He was consequently executed; she was banished from Rome. In the Fourth Council in Orleans in 541, it was decreed that any Jew who reconverted a baptized Jew, made a proselyte of a Christian, or engaged a Gentile maidservant was, as a minimum penalty, to lose all of his property.<sup>13</sup>

Around the same time (3rd-4th century C.E.) the Jewish community was reconsidering its position on active, aggressive proselyzation. The rabbis were fearful that non-Jews were converting to Judaism in order to marry or for the purpose of financial gain and then reconverting back to paganism.<sup>14</sup> Evidently there was also a fear that many Roman spies were disguising themselves as converts in order to help uncover Jewish plots to regain independence.<sup>15</sup> The Babylonian Talmud reflects this air of suspicion in statements like, "Trust not a proselyte even to the 24th generation" (Sanhedrin 106a) and "Evil after evil comes upon those who receive converts" (Yebamot 109b). These statements and others must have contributed to some lasting stigma, or at least ambivalence toward the convert. Perhaps this disdain provided an obstacle to the potential convert. Increased suspicion and hostility towards converts resulted in the many stringent laws and procedures for conversion found in the Talmud.

The Talmudic procedure for conversion is found in Yebamot (47a ff.). It states that the potential convert should be first discouraged. The difficulties of Judaism should be pointed out to him. Yet burdensome and lengthy instruction

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<sup>12</sup> This is documented in the works of the Roman writer Juvenal. (See Satires 3:296, 14; 96-196 and Against Apion 2:282.)

<sup>13</sup> David Max Eichhorn, Conversion to Judaism, A History and Analysis (New York: Ktav, 1965), 63 ff.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 45.

should not be imposed. The convert was taught the rabbinic system of reward and punishment. All female converts had to wait in case there was doubt regarding the Jewish status of a baby. For both sexes the ritual bath and a formal acceptance of the commandments became obligatory. The purpose of the ritual bath was to cleanse the initiate of his or her former idolatry so that he or she might come into Judaism as a "newly born child." After immersion, the convert became an Israelite in every respect. All sins were wiped out and a new life began. The Talmud includes a blessing for the convert to be said before the circumcision. These formulaic blessings over conversion marked the transition into Judaism.

After the Talmud was codified, active proselytizing diminished significantly. Between 800 C.E. and the Enlightenment (early to middle 18th century), severe pressure from the Christian Church made conversion to Judaism a dangerous undertaking for all involved. Conversion to Judaism often resulted in the execution of the convert and the Jews involved in the process of the conversion.

Outside of Christian Europe, conversion was not life-threatening. In the Cairo geniza, for example, are the writings of Ovadia the Proselyte, also known as Ovadia the Norman, who lived around the 11th century. Ovadia was a Catholic priest who arrived in Jerusalem in 1096 and converted to Judaism in 1102. Ovadiah's works found in the geniza involved "meticulous copying of sacred texts was his way of expressing his joy and devotion for having reached the Holy Land spiritually as well as physically."<sup>16</sup> Ovadiah lived a full, public Jewish life. He traveled extensively collecting Jewish liturgical materials including poems, songs and liturgy of the time. This rich historical cache indicates that conversion was decidedly different between Christian Europe and the Islamic Middle East.

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 186.

During the Middle Ages, changes within the Jewish community curbed proselytism. Among the rabbis who discouraged proselytism was Rabbi Moses ben Maimon (a.k.a. Maimonides, 1135-1204). However, other rabbis such as Shimon ben Zemach Duran (a.k.a. Rashbaz 1361-1444) disagreed. He thought active proselytizing was one of the 613 commandments. Although outright proselytism was generally curbed during the medieval period, converts still came on their own to Judaism.

The Enlightenment brought Jews out of the Middle Ages and out of the ghettos. This period witnessed remarkable changes in Jewish attitudes toward the process of conversion. In order to understand the reasoning that led to the public conversion ceremony, one must comprehend the Enlightenment and its effects on Jews. In the last two centuries of Western Enlightenment, Jews were emancipated from the subordinated status they had previously held in Christian civilization. Due to this emancipation, Judaism took on different forms. Some Jews welcomed the idea of freedom from the isolated ghettos of Europe; others did not. On the whole, once Jews were allowed access to Christian society, they left the ghettos in droves. Many eagerly left their traditional Jewish homes and participated enthusiastically in non-Jewish endeavors. During this time, conversionary efforts were nearly abandoned.

From the 1880s onward, millions of Jews emigrated from Eastern Europe to the United States, the "Golden Land." Many sought a modern, Western form of Judaism, which they eventually found in Reform Judaism. It was a Reform rabbi, David Einhorn (1809-1879), who first developed a public conversion ceremony. In his prayer book *Olath Tamid* (1858), a service for the public acceptance of proselytes in German and Hebrew was included among the other services. Einhorn believed in universalism. He believed in Israel as a "priest-people" whose historic task is to bring about "a spiritual rebirth and the

uniting of all men in faith and in love through the agencies of Israel." <sup>17</sup>

In America, the Reform movement began to reach out to non-Jews in earnest. For example, in 1896, Rabbi Adolph Moses of Louisville, Kentucky gave three lectures entitled "The Religion We Offer the Gentiles." He argued against a race- or nation-based Judaism, arguing instead for a world-embracing, universalistic Judaism. The Pittsburgh Platform of 1885 ratified the notion of universalism:

Christianity and Islam being daughter religions of Judaism, we appreciate their providential mission to aid in the spreading of monotheistic and moral truth. We acknowledge that the spirit of broad humanity of our age is our ally in the fulfillment of our mission, and therefore we extend the hand of fellowship to all who operate with us in the establishment of the reign of truth and righteousness among men. <sup>18</sup>

Reform Judaism's trend towards the active welcoming of converts was demonstrated in other official and unofficial publications. In 1927, the Central Conference of American Rabbis (the national organization of Reform rabbis) published a rabbinical handbook entitled, Judaism, a Manual for the Instruction of Proselytes. Non-American Reform Rabbis of the time also published works advancing the notion of universalism. Among them was Dr. Leo Baeck (1872-1956), scholar, author and president of the World Union of Progressive Judaism from 1945. Baeck's book, The Essence of Judaism (1905, trans. to English 1936) was a work that insisted that the Jewish religion was intended to become the religion of the whole world. A missionary obligation was imposed on Jews by Baeck just as it was in Roman times.

As third and fourth generation American Jews became more assimilated,

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 144.

<sup>18</sup> David Phillipson, The Reform Movement in Judaism (New York: Ktav, 1967), 355 ff.

the rate of intermarriage dramatically increased. Jewish leaders perceived this phenomenon as a crisis. Thus, the contemporary Jewish community was forced to confront assimilation and intermarriage as new realities of the Diaspora. Studies confirmed alarming statistics concerning American Judaism and its prospects for the future, namely, the total assimilation of modern American Jews into American society and the disappearance of non-orthodox American Judaism. By the time the National Population Survey was conducted in 1990, 28% of all marriages in the United States involving a Jew also involved a non-Jew. These numbers continue to rise. In the past few years over 50% of marriages being performed that involve Jews are intermarriages.

Yet, by the 1980s, a full one-third of the gentile partners in these intermarriages have chosen Judaism, according to sociologist Egon Mayer, who has done extensive studies on the subject of intermarriage.<sup>19</sup> However, according to the CJF 1990 National Jewish Population Survey mentioned above, only 14% of non-Jewish partners are converting.<sup>20</sup> Regardless of the specific numbers, this situation has motivated the Reform movement to develop a program called "Outreach." Outreach was conceived in 1978 by Rabbi Alexander Schindler, president of the UAHC, to "reach out" to four specific groups: intermarried couples; people considering conversion; Jews-by-Choice; and the unaffiliated, including both Jews and non-Jews. Whatever the exact statistic, large numbers of people are choosing Judaism. It is our duty as Jews to recognize the needs of Jews-by-Choice and to act by welcoming them into the covenant of Judaism. According to Rabbi Schindler:

<sup>19</sup>Egon Mayer, Love and Tradition: Marriage Between Jews and Christians (New York: Plenum, 1985), 235.

<sup>20</sup>Highlights of the CJF 1990 National Jewish Population Survey (New York: Council of Jewish Federations in association with The Mandell Berman Institute-North American Jewish Data Bank, The Graduate School and University Center, CUNY, 1991), 13.

The rate of intermarriage is likely to increase, and . . . , in consequence, the better part of wisdom is not to reject the intermarried but to love them all the more, to do everything we humanly can to draw them closer to us, and to involve them in Jewish life.<sup>21</sup>

If the intermarried who participate in Jewish life are to be "loved," as Rabbi Schindler asserts, then it follows that the ones who choose to formally become Jewish should be all the more embraced. Though, as Gentiles, they were accepted into a synagogue and could fully participate in Jewish life, they decided to make the official transition to Judaism. They abandoned their previous religious identity and became Jewish, according to Jewish law. To celebrate this life-changing event is their right and the sponsoring synagogue's responsibility to welcome them in an appropriate manner.

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<sup>21</sup>Alexander Schindler, preface to Defining the Role of the Non-Jew in the Synagogue: a Resource for Congregations (New York: Commission on Reform Jewish Outreach, UAHC, CCAR, 1990), 1.

## The Benefits of a Public Conversion Ceremony

Bringing the conversion ceremony into the realm of other public Jewish celebrations benefits the community and the Jew-by-Choice (JBC) and adds to the standard canon of Jewish life-cycle events. Conversion is likened to a life-cycle event because of its similarity in function to a Jewish rite of passage: the transition of the individual in the eyes of Jewish law. Like a boy through Brit Milah, the JBC joins the Jewish covenant through the conversion ceremony. Like a Bar/Bat Mitzvah child, the JBC accepts the obligations and responsibility for doing *mitzvot* and thereby obtains the rights of an adult Jew. However, unlike Brit Milah or Bar Mitzvah, conversion is not related to any specific age. Conversion is the choice of an individual, regardless of age. In recognizing this, we have the chance to develop a new Jewish life-cycle event and to derive the greatest benefit from it for both the JBC and the community through a public conversion ceremony.

Lydia Kukoff, former director of the UAHC Commission on Reform Outreach, cites acceptance and affirmation as two of the major factors contributing to the positive feedback she receives concerning public ceremonies.<sup>22</sup> Such reinforcement is of incalculable worth to the JBC. Inner conflict and self-doubt often accompany periods of personal transition, and this could certainly be the case with a change of religion and group identity. According to psychologist/theologian L.B. Brown, religious belonging and identity are intertwined.<sup>23</sup> The theologian Samuel Titlebaum similarly suggests that one of the essential functions of a formalized religion is to build group solidarity and unity.<sup>24</sup> The ceremony achieves the goals of acceptance,

<sup>22</sup> Lydia Kukoff, Choosing Judaism (New York: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1981), 107.

<sup>23</sup> L.B. Brown, The Psychology of Religious Belief (London: Academic Press, 1987), 131.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 209.

reinforcement and affirmation of belonging in two ways: in the form of songs and readings the JBC is welcomed as a member of the congregation.<sup>25</sup> And by the privilege of metaphysically sharing Jewish history, the JBC now takes a rightful place in historical Jewish tradition: that all Jews and future converts were present at Sinai when God revealed the Torah (T.B. Shavuot 39a, Shabbat 146a).

This connection with other Jews can be further developed by the JBC making a public statement about his/her experience in conversion. It is a chance for personal connection as well as education. By the time the ceremony takes place, the JBC has -- through classes, workshops, sessions with Jewish clergy as well as other "Outreach" activities -- enough exposure to Jewish life to make an informed public statement about the development of his/her own Jewish practice and what it means to him or her personally. This part of the ceremony gives the JBC and the congregants an opportunity to reconfirm their own Jewish identities.

The ceremony also enables the community to take an active part in an important religious event by giving them the responsibility to accept the JBC. In Jewish tradition, we are regularly reminded in morning prayers to welcome others, as Abraham did, into our proverbial tents.<sup>26</sup> The Torah instructs us to treat the stranger kindly more than a dozen times. The Talmud echoes this spirit of hospitality and warns, "He who turns away a proselyte . . . is as if he turned away the justice of God" (T.B. Hagigah 5a). These statements demonstrate the importance of welcoming others into our communities. By welcoming the JBC into the community through the ceremony the congregation

<sup>25</sup> This will be further explained in the thematic sections under the categories of "Acceptance" and "Affirmation of Jewish Identity."

<sup>26</sup> Originally from Mishna Peah, 1:1. In *Birhot Hashahar*, morning blessings, the prayer which begins "*Elu d'varim she'ayn lahem shiur*" mentions "*hachnasat orhim*", welcoming guests in

is collectively performing this mitzvah.<sup>27</sup> The new connection between the JBC and the community is begun by fulfilling the mitzvah of *keruv* -- of bringing others closer to the community and to God.

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The modern Jewish community faces new realities in the Diaspora and must change if it is to survive. It must not only meet the challenges of assimilation and intermarriage, but use the situation to recontextualize the role of Jewish life-cycle events: to welcome new people to Judaism, and to enrich the life of the congregation in the process. As Reform Judaism rises to face this challenge, we have a chance to enrich and supplement the inventory of Jewish life cycle events by adding the public conversion ceremony to our roster.

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<sup>27</sup> According to Rashbaz, see p. 10.

## The Form and Content of the Ceremony

The suggested form of the conversion ceremony is based partially on the conversion ceremony found in the Rabbi's Manual published by the Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR).<sup>28</sup> It contains the *Shema* and *v'ahavta*, Biblical readings, a rabbinic blessing, and the priestly blessing (*y'varech'cha*). The ceremony also contains elements of the *B'rit Milah* ceremony as described in Hamadrich, A Rabbis Guide, a manual that reflects Orthodox practice.<sup>29</sup> In both ceremonies there is a leader, usually a rabbi; a participant, the subject of the event; and observers who participate in the event. These essential participants are integral to the community spirit of the public conversion ceremony.

The public conversion ceremony is designed to take place in a synagogue during a Shabbat or festival service. The ideal place for it in the service is just before a Torah reading. This is suggested for two reasons. It could be emphasized that the souls of all Jews, even those who would convert in the future, were present at the time of Toraitic revelation, as discussed in the last chapter. The second reason is to confirm the JBC's full participation in Jewish life by calling him or her to the Torah for an *aliyah*. This would be the Jew by Choice's first public Jewish act as a full-fledged member of Jewish community. The conversion ceremony is, in this way, a segue to connecting the JBC to the Jewish covenant with God as well as to fellow Jews. The form of the service is directly related to these factors, and it is through this perspective that the music of the ceremony will be viewed.

<sup>28</sup> Central Conference of American Rabbis, Rabbi's Manual, rev. ed. (New York CCAR, 1985), 18-22.

<sup>29</sup> Elias Goldman, Hamadrikh, The Rabbi's Guide, A Manual of Jewish Religious Rituals, Ceremonials, and Customs, (New York: Hebrew Publishing Company, 1939), 27-47.

As stated in the introduction, the careful and purposeful application of music is imperative to the ceremony. Music which is selected and applied appropriately in the ceremony can deepen one's emotional experience; taking the event beyond an intellectual exercise. Belonging, identity, and the feelings of love, warmth, and acceptance that accompany them, are not easily expressible in words, but they are expressible in music if applied properly.

Since the ceremony is to take place within a broader worship context, the songs of the ceremony should be well coordinated with the style of the other music in the greater service. For instance, if the whole service is generally sung with folk tunes, then folk tunes are appropriate for the conversion ceremony. If one has a regular choir singing, then the choir can and should participate. If it is a synagogue with a cantor, the cantor should take part in the music of the ceremony. In all of these situations, though, it is strongly suggested that the community be involved in song if possible.

Singing together is one of the most effective ways that a community can truly be an active and influential part of the ceremony. The function of community singing in the ceremony is to express the unity of the congregation and the acceptance of the Jew-by-Choice into that congregation. There is a unique element of connectedness as all voices join and rise as one, as each person puts aside all other words in order to pray together with the group. Yet, community singing must be simple to facilitate maximum participation. Songs with repetitive melodies and few words can be very powerful despite their simplicity. The more participatory the congregation is, the stronger their bond will be with each other and with the Jew-by-Choice. The songs that the community will sing must, of course, be within the community's reach and must relate to the event.

While the experience of a group sharing words and melody in unison can be profound, there are also benefits to cantorial singing. A cantor has

knowledge and interpretive power to give context and meaning to the songs. The music can be applied in more complex ways than in community song. Certain texts, Biblical or Talmudic, can be demonstrated to the congregation and can be used not only for expressive purposes, but also to educate the JBC and the community.

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The service should ideally include the essential elements listed below.

#### 1. Introduction of the Jew by Choice to the Community

The introduction serves to perform many functions: to introduce the Jew by Choice to the community, to educate the community and to encourage the community's participation in the ceremony. The sponsoring rabbi or cantor should begin the ceremony with a thoughtful introduction of the Jew-by-Choice to the congregation. The rabbi or cantor should explain to the congregation that its members are being entrusted to actively accept the Jew-by-Choice into the Jewish community and that this is a sacred task. He or she could also take the time to educate the congregation by describing the conversion process and where the ceremony fits in to this process.

Example:

The prophets of old created for us an ideal vision: that all will walk with Israel in the name of Adonye and all peoples shall be as one. God, who has been our home in every generation, has blessed Israel with righteous ones who help fulfill this vision. Though prophets speak no more, their legacy lives on.

We bear witness today to (JBC's name) joining the household of Israel . . . .

## 2. Jew-by-Choice's Public Statement

The Jew-by-Choice's public statement also functions on the personal and community level. The formulation of a personal statement about his/her conversion enables the JBC to reflect upon his/her own experience that led to conversion, and draw from it the most significant personal conclusions.<sup>30</sup> The direct communication between the JBC and the congregation in this way exposes the community to the personal side of conversion and the community is given opportunity to empathize with the JBC's experience. This can lead to a more willing acceptance of the JBC.

If the JBC is uncomfortable with the testimonial, he/she could alternatively select a song that has personal meaning for them from ones listed at the conclusion of this paper or any other appropriate song. A song whose text is personal and understandable (preferably in English) and reflects the JBC's experience could be very effective.

## 3. Thematic Section

The inclusion of a thematic section is an opportunity for the JBC to "own" the ceremony by taking an aspect of conversion that touches him or her personally and thereby present it to the community through readings and songs. The JBC and the sponsor can jointly choose a theme that best reflects the JBC's feelings, experience and/or personal goals. The themes that have been selected are based on first-hand interviews with recent Jews-by-Choice. They are presented here in the order of importance; as suggested by the Jews-by-Choice interviewed for this paper. The themes are: acceptance; affirmation of

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<sup>30</sup> If the JBC has kept a journal from the beginning of the conversion, as Outreach programming encourages, perhaps excerpts from this could be shared.

Jewish identity; connection to past Jews by Choice (Abraham, Jethro, Ruth); connection to Jewish history; inner peace; love for Judaism/God; happiness and celebration of Jewish community.

Thematic songs and readings provide an opportunity for public involvement through responsive readings as well as congregational singing. The songs that are suggested are listed by theme and a complete list exists at the end of the paper. These songs were carefully selected and judged by content, mood, variety of performance medium, and general musical diversity.

## THEME 1: ACCEPTANCE

Perhaps the greatest benefit of the conversion ceremony is the immediate and direct acceptance of the Jew by Choice into the community. Acceptance is of utmost importance because religion is, by definition, social, not solitary, as previously discussed. As theologian Emile Durkheim wrote in his benchmark work The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life,

Religion is a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden—beliefs and practices which unite into a single moral community ... all those who adhere to them.<sup>31</sup>

Acceptance of the JBC is expressed in this section of the service through community involvement in songs, and readings, as well as with other appropriate music.

## MUSIC

## Congregational Music

My own composition, *Baruch Habah*, written for the ceremony, uses liturgical Hebrew text, as well as English.

*Baruch habah b'sheim Adonai*  
We welcome you, so far you came,  
We welcome you, in our God's name.

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<sup>31</sup> Emile Durkheim, The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life, Joseph W. Swain, trans. (New York: Free Press, 1915), 62.

The lyrics include a mix of Jewish wedding liturgy and simple English text. The message is clear. The melody is simple and repetitive, the melodic motives are syllabic and accessible to any non-musician. It is written in triple meter (3/4); the tempo is *lento*; the beat is constant. This song accesses the mood and spirit of acceptance through its accessibility and its message. The repetition of the words, melody, and rhythm give it a mantra-like quality. Adding to this quality is the minor mode of the song, making an ethnic, rather than western sound.

Dubi Seltzer's song *Salaam Aleikum* is another popular melody that is easily accessible to any singing congregation. The words, "Come and say *shalom*. Take my hand and give me yours and we will sing with one heart" go even beyond the idea of belonging. They speak also to unity and mutual support. This song can not only highlight acceptance of the JBC into the community, but through its words, remind the community of its common bonds as well.

Another appropriate selection is Shlomo Carlebach's *Ufros Aleinu*, which comes from the evening liturgy's prayer *hashkivenu*. It is a beautiful melody that everyone can sing. The meaning of the words, "spread over us your shelter of peace," unites the JBC and the congregation through their singing and praying together. The song continues with a niggun.<sup>32</sup> *Ufros Aleinu* is a folk song, not an art song, and should be accompanied on folk instruments like the guitar, or it could be sung unaccompanied as well, and still be very effective. Community singing is most appropriate to this particular theme since acceptance must be somehow demonstrated by the congregation.

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<sup>32</sup> A niggun is a song without words, usually sung on one or a combination of syllables such as la, lay, ya, ba etc. It is usually attributed to the Hasidic influence on Jewish music.

## Cantorial Music

Generally, if the synagogue has a strong cantorial tradition, a very good selection for expressing acceptance of the JBC would be a setting of the modern Israeli poet Hayim Nahman Bialik's marvelous poem, "*Hahnisini*." It is textually appropriate and it has a beautiful, haunting melody by Rudolph Beck which supports the text's mystical language. There are five verses to the song and each repeats the same melody. The words of the first and last verse are especially suitable:

Let me come in, under your wings.  
And you will be for me (like) a mother and a sister.  
Your lap will be a shelter for my head,  
for my pressed prayers.

This song can represent the JBC's petition for acceptance and comfort in the fold of Judaism. That these words are sung twice, in the opening and closing, emphasize the importance and centrality of the text to the song. The fourth verse is also uniquely fitting:

The stars have let me down,  
it was a dream, but it has also passed.  
Now I have nothing in the world.  
I have nothing.

This verse speaks to abandoning *cohavim* (stars) a classical reference to other gods, or astrology. Since the JBC is abandoning either other religious belief or (no religious belief) for Judaism, this speaks to another aspect of the ceremony, rebirth, which will be discussed later in this paper. Thus the appropriateness of this verse in this context establishes this song's place in the repertoire. The song is written for voice and piano; no choir is needed.

Alternate songs (full references, including form and publishers are given at the conclusion of this paper):

Any well known *Hine Mah Tov*

Any well known *Heveinu Shalom Aleichem*

David Feingold                      *Hevenu*

Josef Freudenthal              The Precepts of Micah

Lillian V. Klass                  The People Who Walk in Darkness

Frank Lewin                      Behold how Good

Jean Ritchie                      The Peace Round

## THEME 2: AFFIRMATION OF JEWISH IDENTITY

Conversion is a process of detachment from old beliefs and attachment to new ones.<sup>33</sup> The public affirmation of identity serves to solidify the belief and confidence in this transformational choice, the new Jewish identity. The public statement of an individual's identity can serve to reassure and confirm the conversion to Judaism.<sup>34</sup> One can choose to emphasize this by making "affirmation" the thematic section of the service.

Affirmation of identity exists for the group as well as the individual. It confirms and reminds the group of the validity of its own identity, belief, and philosophy. Each individual's Jewish identity, while it may not be out of choice, but by birth, (although some say that we are all Jews by Choice,) is affirmed and validated by the JBC who is choosing these same beliefs.<sup>35</sup> Although true for any group, this is especially significant for the Jewish community, many of whom think of Jews as history's underdogs and scapegoats. The community forms bonds with the individual and each other by both witnessing the event and participating in it. Feelings such as pride, acceptance, and kinship can all be achieved at this event and add to the group's continuous commitment to the affirmation of religious identity.

## MUSIC

### Congregational Music

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<sup>33</sup> Reuven P. Bulka, "The Psychology of Conversion," Midstream (October 1983): 32.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>35</sup> Lewis R. Rambo, s.v. "Conversion," The Encyclopedia of Religion (New York: Macmillan Pub., 1987).

Abraham Wiener's "May You be Blessed" is a song in which the whole community can be involved. It can be sung in Hebrew, English, or both. Its words, are set to a light, accessible melody.

May you be blessed in your coming in,  
May you be blessed in your going out  
From now and forever more

*B'ruchim atem b'voachem*  
*B'ruchim atem b'tsetchem*  
*Me'ata v'ad olam*

The song can and should be sung as a round, which is especially effective, since it is a metaphor for the event itself. In the song, an individual in the community is taking one part in a more complex whole just as the congregation is taking one part in the conversion ceremony, part of a complex religious process. Community singing serves in this way to, again, bind the community with one another and the Jew-By-Choice.

#### Cantorial Music:

Cantor Aviva Rosenbloom composed "*Yonati*" which is, in her own words, "an encouragement to someone who has been hidden, and is being supported in her (his) desire to emerge."<sup>36</sup> The form of the song is a two-part round. The slow 3/2 meter and the minor mode leave the listener with a haunting impression of eternity. These two elements give the song a mantra-like motion and ethnicity at once. The melodies of the two parts of the rounds are very different. While part one is in a low tessitura, part two is very high, at times almost a full octave above part one when the two are sung together. The

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<sup>36</sup> Cantor Aviva Rosenbloom to Jennifer Werby, December 16, 1994, Facsimile regarding request for original musical material for this project.

use of sequence adds context to the natural counterpoint of the parts. The composer also uses alternative motion to great effect.

"*Yonati*" is a stunning piece, though unsuitable for congregational singing, due to its wide range and unfamiliar words (from the Song of Songs, chapter 14). It could be performed by two prepared musicians and, I believe, would be best sung by soprano and alto, solo or small ensemble. Cantor Rosenbloom indicates chords for her accompaniment, which gives freedom to the performing musician as far as accompaniment patterns and instrumentation. "*Yonati*" is touching and intimate, a spiritual affirmation of Jewish identity.

Alternative music:

Hugo Chaim Adler	Behold the Jew
Max Helfman	<i>Kol Kara</i>
Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco	Seal My Heart
Lillian V. Klass	The People Who Walk in Darkness
Carl F. Mueller	We Will Walk in the Name of the Lord
Moshe Rothblum	<i>Vahakimoti et Briti</i>

TEXT

Poetry:

Yehuda Halevi (before 1075-after 1141) was born in Muslim Tudela in Spain. His poetry is a highlight of the "Golden Age of Spain" in which Jews took part in the sophisticated cultural environment of the time. His poem "The Meeting of the Stars" is an ode to unity and destiny. If the affirmation of the

JBC's conversion is to cleave to Judaism and the Jewish people and live as a Jew, it can be expressed with this poem.

The stars of the world have joined today  
 'Mid the host on high none are found like these  
 The Pleiads desire such unity,  
 For no breath can come between them.  
 The star of the east hath come to the west;  
 He hath found the sun among the daughters thereof  
 He hath set up a bower of thick branches  
 He hath made of them a tent for the sun<sup>37</sup>

Jewish identity is expressed through the words of the modern poet Aaron Zeitlin as an irresistible magnet in his poem "Being a Jew." He intertwines God and Judaism in a double helix of hope in the everlasting, even to the cynic. It speaks to modern-age doubt in the ancient idea of messianic salvation and represents it as an inescapable force.

Being a Jew means running forever to God  
 Even if you are His betrayer  
 Means expecting to hear any day  
 Even if you are a nay sayer,  
 The blare of Messiah's horn;

Means, even if you wish to,  
 You cannot escape His snares,  
 You cannot cease to pray -  
 Even after all the prayers  
 Even after all the "even's."<sup>38</sup>

<sup>37</sup>Yehuda Halevi, "The Meeting of the Stars" trans. T. Carmi The Penguin Book of Hebrew Verse (Middlesex, England, Penguin Books, 1981), 340.

<sup>38</sup>Samuel H. Joseloff, A Time To Seek. (New York: UAHC, 1975), 199.

## THEME 3:

## CONNECTION WITH PAST CONVERTS: ABRAHAM, JETHRO AND RUTH

Abraham, Jethro and Ruth are three fine subjects for the theme of the service. They embody very positive personal models of conversion: loyalty and faithfulness and a willingness to leave the past behind. Abraham is the chosen, obedient servant of God. He is the father of Judaism, who left his home at the command of a God he could not see, for a land he did not know. Jethro, the father-in-law of Moses, gives up his priestly status in the Midianite culture to go with his daughter and her husband, Moses, into the wilderness to worship God. Ruth, as stated before, is the biblical model of a Jew-by-Choice whose qualities the rabbis will later require for conversion. Ruth does not convert for marriage, nor for financial or social gain. She is pure of motive and accepts her mother-in-law Naomi's God. Abraham, Jethro and Ruth are righteous converts, worthy of being model Jews-by-Choice.

## I. ABRAHAM

## MUSIC

## Congregational Music

Abraham's journey of faith (Gen. 11:33 ff.) is captured exquisitely in Debbie Friedman's "*L'chi Lach*." This is a tuneful folk melody which uses the Biblical text in interesting ways. The title of the song and the opening words, "*L'chi Lach*" are a feminized version of God's command to Abraham. Ms. Friedman takes the Biblical words of *parashat Lech L'cha* and parallels the feminine and masculine forms of the command, therein emphasizing the

universal meaning of Abraham's pilgrimage. Ms. Friedman elegantly captures God's protection on this journey with sweeping phrases and selected paraphrases from the chapter such as, "On your journey I will show you, and you shall be a blessing."

## TEXT

### Responsive Reading:

Abraham, leave your father's house. Come walk with the Lord;

And Abraham went, and Abraham journeyed.

Abraham, be thou a blessing.

And Abraham argued for the righteous of Sodom and Gomorra;

I will bless them that bless thee, curse them that curse thee. I will make you a great nation.

A nation who marches through time, past all who try to stop her;

This nation will be strangers in a land not theirs;

But they will return.

They will return. Am Yisrael Chai!

Am Yisrael Chai! Od Avinu Chai!

Od Avinu Chai! Am Yisrael Chai!

Jennifer Werby

## II. JETHRO

There is no available music to be found that relates especially to Jethro, Passages referring to Jethro can be found in Exodus chapter 18, verses 1ff. and Exodus Rabbah 1:32 I.

### III. RUTH

#### MUSIC

#### Cantorial Music

All of the songs on this theme are based on Ruth 1:16-17. For reference, the text is given in Hebrew transliteration and in English.

*Al tify'i vi leozveich lashuv meiacharaich  
Ki el asher teilchi eileich  
uvaasher talini a lin;  
Ameich ami veilohayich elohai.*

*Baasher tamuti amut vesham, ekaveir;  
koh yaaseh Adonai li, vechoh yosif  
Ki hamavet yafrid beini uveineich.*

Entreat me not to leave thee or return from following after thee,  
for wherever you go, I will go;  
and wherever you lodge, I will lodge;  
thy people shall be my people and thy God my God:

Where thou diest, I will die, and there will I be buried;  
the Lord do so to me, and more also,  
if aught but death part thee and me.

Lawrence Avery's "*Al Tify'i Vi*," from the series Two Hebrew Songs, is a lyrical piece with an upwardly sweeping accompaniment and a steady *andante*

rhythm. The piece is written in a minor key which lends to its romantic mood. Melodic motifs repeat themselves, and this adds to a general feeling of ease which pervades the piece. Although this piece is titled in English, it is sung in Hebrew. Avery divides the song into two parts, each lasting about twenty measures. This is a song that is quite hummable and the congregation will appreciate for its listening ease.

On the other hand, Robert Stern's *Al Tifg'i Vi*, for soprano and piano, takes on the qualities of a dreamy romantic air which reminiscent of 19th century Parisian composers such as Debussy and Ravel. The sparse accompaniment is even in tempo, but the meter changes frequently. Thus, a steady beat is established but no "square" meter or phrasing is evident. Stern marks the dynamic as *piano*, never rising to more than *mezzo-piano*, adding to the romantic, dreamlike quality of the song. The piece ends beautifully: the notes seem to drift away into the air. Stern establishes a completely different pathos than Avery or Goldman and is a wonderful example of the flexibility of interpretation of this text.

Lazar Weiner, a master arranger who derived many sophisticated settings for Yiddish folk songs, set this same text to a wonderful melody and accompaniment. He uses arpeggiated chordal patterns in the piano accompaniment and sets them against scalar and repetitive note patterns in the vocal line. Rhythmic patterns also interplay in this piece, coupling triplet patterns with regularly beated patterns. The effect is a steady beat with some irregularly placed tones, which call attention to this unique accompaniment. The piece is challenging for both the singer and the pianist. The singer must be able to sing against a polymetric accompaniment. In this way, the piece works much like a German *lied*, with an accompaniment that does not support the singer's line, but instead exists as an alternate focal point of the piece and establishing mood by itself.

The words of the Weiner piece are in English. Weiner emphasizes the main phrase with sequenced repetitions and inserts it out of sequence in the middle and the end of the song. He also fragments it at the end of the song, stressing it even more. Like Goldman, Weiner changes the mood of the piece in the middle, where the text ends one Biblical verse and begins the next. Weiner leaves his arpeggios for more full and static harmony. He returns to the arpeggiated pattern at the end of the piece, mercifully leaving the listener with a sense of closure.

One challenging cantorial piece is Maurice Goldman's "Song of Ruth." The vocal line is partially based on the traditional ashkenazic (Lithuanian tradition) cantillation of the scroll of Ruth as it is read during Shavuot. Goldman highlights the words "Entreat me not to leave thee" by treating it with musically different pathos than the rest of the text. This line is, at first, melodic and unconnected to cantillation. It is repeated twice this way. The third time it is repeated, Goldman goes into the "cantillation mode" and uses a recitative-like pattern: opening, pausal, and ending motifs. Goldman appreciates the drama of the text, as he indicates with his dynamic markings, and is aware of the historic drama and the tradition of cantillation and successfully brings both of these to the listener. The cantor can interpret the cantillation as different from the melody in the "Song of Ruth" not only to highlight the JBC's connection to an important Biblical convert, but also to educate the community about the Bible and Jewish history as well. As a result, this is very difficult to achieve with community singing.

If one has a choir, one might consider "Naomi and Ruth" by Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco, a "small cantata for women's voices." It retells chapter one of the book of Ruth. Castelnuovo-Tedesco uses musical devices to divide the narrative into sections. He uses all three parts consistently throughout the piece to state the narrative parts of the text. He couples the upper voice parts

rhythmically (solo soprano, Soprano I, II and Alto) in the first section, and configures the Alto part to echo, creating a contrapuntal, fugal structure. The piece goes in and out of fugal patterns, until the narrative ends when Naomi and Ruth start to speak. Naomi comes in with an aria-like melody, long melodic phrases with strong harmonic support underneath. The chorus comes back in with the narrative. This time, the underlying harmonics begin to change and become unsteady. It becomes very chromatic and Castelnuovo-Tedesco dramatizes it even further by adding a rumbling octave tremolo in the bass. This pattern of textural change both vocally and instrumentally continues consistently throughout. The harmony is a straight western harmony. Castelnuovo-Tedesco has created a wonderful dramatic cantata for retelling the story of Ruth.

Alternate music:

Debbie Friedman

The Promise

TEXT

Readings:

Readings from the book of Ruth, specifically chapter one, verses 16 and 17, are the most popular and appropriate choices for the conversion ceremony. These readings are included in the CCAR's Rabbis Manual<sup>39</sup> and in the Guidelines for Gerut prepared by the CCAR Committee on Gerut in 1983.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>39</sup> Central Conference of American Rabbis, Rabbi's Manual, rev. ed. (New York: CCAR, 1985).

<sup>40</sup> Central Conference of American Rabbis Committee on Gerut, Divre Gerut: Guidelines Concerning Proselytism (New York: CCAR, 1983).

And Ruth said, "Entreat me not to leave thee, and to return from following after thee; for whither thou goest I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God. Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried. The Lord do so to me, and more also, if aught but death part thee and me (Ruth 1:16-17.).

Poetry:

"ruth"

Rain washes away the dust of my spirit,  
Under the ashes of time it disappears.  
Though you are still far away from me,  
Hearken to my cry, Lord. Hear me.

Jennifer Werby.

#### THEME 4: CONNECTION TO JEWISH HISTORY

As stated before, the connection to Jewish history is a complex part of Jewish cultural belief that the JBC gains with conversion. It is as if the JBC is not only taking on a new identity for himself or herself, but also a new history to go with it. This highlighted theme benefits the JBC as well as the congregation present at the ceremony. It serves as a reminder of a shared past and the opportunity to strengthen communal bonds.

#### MUSIC

##### Cantorial Music

Meir Finkelstein takes the text of his piece "*L'dor Vador*" from the *K'dusha* prayer and sets it to a beautiful, symphonic tune. The eternity and continuity of Judaism from generation to generation is the textual theme of the piece, and Finkelstein paints this theme throughout the music. In the beginning of the piece, the words "*l'dor vador*" are repeated three times, each time with wider range and crescendos. The composer highlights certain parts of the text with similar melodic movements as well as sequencing. Mr. Finkelstein forms the piece in a classical manner. He has an introduction, a development with different themes and tonality, and a recapitulation, much like classical sonata form. The harmony and chordal progression is quite modern, showing the influence of modern American culture on the composer. The piece ends with a soaring "Amen" and is generally a very inspiring and dramatic song.

Debbie Friedman's "The Promise" is composed around Exodus 6:5,6 and 8. It is beautiful in its clear simplicity. The words are in English, making the message very direct to the congregation. The clear understanding of this

message brings to light the JBC's full acceptance of the Jewish God of Abraham. The song also serves to remind the congregation of the eternal bond between Jews and God and the JBC's entrance into this sacred bond.

Cantor Alan Leider has adapted the tradition of saying "*Chazak, chazak v'nitchazek*," usually reserved for the moment when one finishes reading a book of the Torah and has applied it to a new context. His composition "*Chazak, Chazak*" is a sublime work whose text and music combine teaching with support. Cantor Leider begins with the choir singing "*Chazak chazak v'nitchazek*, from strength to strength let us strengthen one another" as part of the same melodic line. In doing this, the congregation learns a Hebrew phrase that is part of Jewish tradition and a direct translation of it as well. These words are set to a simple, pastoral melody, which is quite singable by a non-musician.

In the verse, Cantor Leider goes on to set a rabbinic teaching, "Be of the disciples of Aaron, loving peace and pursuing it, loving your fellow creatures, and drawing them near to the Torah" (Pirke Avot 1:12). These words are sung recitative, declamatory style by the cantor, though he calls for a narrator to interpret the words this time. The "narrator" translates the words following each phrase the cantor sings. The last part of the piece is in English and is sung by the choir. It contains the end of the verse "and drawing them near to your Torah." Leider uses the voices of the choir, very effectively, having the choir return at this point as he emphasizes the essence of the verse: Torah. Cantor Leider returns to the beginning motif, the tune "*Chazak, Chazak*" as it was sung in the beginning and this provides excellent closure for the piece.

TEXT

## Poetry:

The Israeli poet Rachel, connects herself to Rachel of the Torah, wife of Jacob. She does this poetically with direct and literal language and imagines a full physical connection. Rachel expresses the burden of this connection. She feels out of place with the present day and longs for the past of her namesake.

## "Rachel"

For her blood runs in my blood and her voice sings in me.  
 Rachel, who pastured the locks of Laban,  
 Rachel, the mother of the mother

and that is why the house is narrow for me,  
 and the city foreign,  
 for her veil used to flutter  
 in the desert wind.

And that is why I hold to my way  
 with such certainty,  
 for memories are preserved in my feet  
 ever since, ever since.<sup>41</sup>

A.M. Klein uses similar metaphors in his poem "Psalm XXXVI: A Psalm Touching Genealogy" in which he speaks of the blood of the ancestors in his veins, again, a direct and physical connection. However, unlike Rachel, he imagines the ancestors to be with him in the present, and does not long to be in the past.

Not sole was I born, but entire genesis:

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<sup>41</sup> Voices Within the Ark: Modern Jewish Poets eds. Howard Shwartz and Anthony Rudolf, trans. Robert Friend (Yonkers, New York: Pushcart, 1980), 147.

For to the fathers that begat me, this  
 Body is residence, Corpuscular,  
 They dwell in my veins, they eavesdrop at my ear,  
 They circle, as with Torahs, round my skull,  
 In exit and in entrance all day pull  
 The latches of my heart, descent and rise -  
 And there look generations through my eyes.<sup>42</sup>

#### Alternate Poetry:

"I Want to Write a Jewish Poem," by Gary Pacernick<sup>43</sup>

"In the Old Jewish Cemetery, Prague, 1970," by Edward Lowbury<sup>44</sup>

#### Responsive Reading:

This reading by Abba Hillel Silver is very effective in tracing Jewish history throughout the ages. It is not only inspirational, but involving. The community's participation will make it even more so.

I stood with Abraham in his lonely vigil  
 and read the destiny of my people in the stars

I was with Isaac when Abraham built the altar  
 Where their faith and devotion were put to the test.

I stood with Jacob  
 When he wrestled through the night  
 With an angel of despair  
 And won a blessing at the break of dawn.

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<sup>42</sup> Commission on Reform Jewish Outreach of the CCAR Reform Jewish Outreach: The Idea Book (New York: UAHC, 1988), 276.

<sup>43</sup> Shwartz and Rudolph, Voices Within the Ark, 576.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 719.

I was with Moses, an alien prince among an alien people.  
 Unshod, I stood with him before the vision in the wilderness  
 And from the fire hears the Voice summoning him to service.

I was at Sinai and entered there the everlasting covenant  
 Between my people and its God.  
 I suffered and I hungered with them  
 Across the wilderness to the Promised Land

I listened to the harp of King David,  
 And saw him bow before the wrath of Nathan the Prophet

I heard Solomon dedicate the Temple  
 As a House of prayer for all peoples  
 And I learned from him  
 Of a God whose compassion extends to all,  
 Even to the stranger who comes from a far land.

I heard the Prophets lash out against injustice  
 I warmed at their compassion for the weak.  
 From them I learned what a raging fire within one's sole,  
 an unfilled mandate from God can be.

I was with my people by the rivers of Babylon  
 And I heard their oath:  
 If I forget thee, O Jerusalem.

I wandered with my people into many lands,  
 Where the cross and the crescent reigned.  
 I walked with them over all the highways of the world.

I was with them when they drank out of bitter chalices  
 Pain humiliation, cruelty and baseless hatred  
 I saw them stay sane, in the midst of madness,  
 righteous in the midst of evil  
 civil in the midst of brutality.

Then I saw the night lift and the dawn break,  
 And into a new world, blessed with liberty and freedom  
 I marched exultantly.

I saw them nurture saplings in the wilderness,  
 And watched them make the desert bloom

I trembled when they did, and rejoiced when they rejoiced.  
 I was at the Wall. I was in the Sinai. I was on the Golan Heights.  
 Jerusalem, Jerusalem.

They are my people  
 Their quest is mine.  
 They will live with me,  
 And I will live with them,  
 Forever

Our God and God of our ancestors,  
 Remember the covenant which you made with Abraham,  
 As we pledge that we will remember it.  
 Keep alive in our hearts the promises made at Sinai  
 As we promise to remember them.

May we be counted among the righteous that have enriched the world,  
 who have found meaning in their lives through dedication to the Torah  
 And through the sacred calling of being Jews.

Blessed are you, O Lord,  
 Who remembers the covenant.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Sydney Greenberg and S. Allan Sugarman, eds., A Contemporary High Holiday Service (Bridgeport, Connecticut: The Prayer Book Press of Media Judaica, 1970), 103.

## THEME 5: INNER PEACE

A Jew-by-Choice has many adjustments to make as a new Jew. Aside from learning about his/her new religion and gaining a comfortable familiarity with it, the Jew by Choice has to adjust to any number of outside factors which might cause conflicting feelings. For instance, the Jew-by-Choice must still relate to his/her Gentile family. Whether the members of the family support the decision or not, this has inherent problems. The Jew-by-Choice must make decisions about non-Jewish holidays of members of his or her family; if and how to celebrate them. In addition, his or her family might not support the JBC's decision, to become a Jew, or might be insensitive to it. Alternatively, Jews are not always accepting of Jews-by-Choice, labeling them "converts" instead of considering them full-fledged Jews. All of these factors could cause inner turmoil and personal conflict.

The emphasis in this thematic section is introspection and self-awareness. Many Jews-by-Choice remember that they did not feel comfortable in their born religion, that the religious beliefs were not natural for them, and that Judaism was like a coming home of sorts. This idea is also included in this section. The inspiration for the change can also be addressed. Although the conversion itself may take a long time, many individuals interviewed for this Masters project recall feeling an awakening that said that Judaism should be their religion.

The theme is spiritual and personal. The music and text are both introspective and profound. Most of the music is in English, facilitating direct understanding of the meaning behind the music. The poems chosen are also deep and introspective. Choosing this theme will bring on a more somber, quiet mood to the service than some of the other themes. These should be taken into account when one is designing the service.

## MUSIC

## Cantorial Music:

Gershon Kingsley adapted Psalm 86 for his work "Teach Me, O Lord." The words capture a personal plea to God. The intimate appeal is further highlighted by a steady, sparse accompaniment. Kingsley divides the piece into two parts, with repetition of text in each. Kingsley is careful not to distract from the text by setting it to a simple melody that proceeds mostly in steps, but engages in leaps to highlight text. The piece is intense both musically and textually.

Likewise, the song *Kol Kara* by Max Helfman is an excellent example of the effective use of music in the ceremony. The accompaniment, to be played on the piano, is agitated. It expresses the anxiety and agitation that the words convey:

A voice called and I went.  
I went because the voice kept on calling.  
I went, intent not to fall.  
But at the crossroads I put my ear against the cold whiteness of  
the snow and I wept  
For I had lost something.<sup>46</sup>

The piano pattern is a chordal tremolo. It is not supportive of the vocal line, rather, it reflects the agitation of the soul behind it. The meter changes frequently during this first section, adding to the feeling of imbalance. The voice is directed "with intensity" by the composer, and the melody is syncopated and marked with dotted rhythms. This mood is interrupted in the

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<sup>46</sup> "Two Hannah Szenesh Poems" J. Freudenthal, trans., music by Max Helfman, (New York: Transcontinental Music Publications, 1964)

middle of the piece with a dramatic change. At the text, "But at the crossroads," Helfman begins a more comforting pulsating piano rhythm. He soon continues his earlier mood by using inharmonious intervals (major seconds) in the treble and open fifths ("empty" chords) in the bass. This would be an effective song for the conversion ceremony, since it can be interpreted by the cantor to speak to the lost soul who looks for an identity in Judaism.

Manna-Zucca's "Faith" traces the progression of conviction of faith to love to peace to joy to God. The song is in English and its melody emphasizes the upward progression of the stages of faith in God, finally crescendoing in the realization that the path of faith leads to God.

#### Alternate Music

A.W. Binder	Lord, Do thou Guide Me
Myrna Cohen	May God Inspire You
Isadore Freed	122nd Psalm
Isadore Freed	In Distress I Called Upon the Lord
Josef Freudenthal	The Precepts of Micah
Max Janowski	<i>Hagid L'cha Adam</i>
F.A. Gore Ouseley	How Goodly are Thy Tents
A. Stockhomer	<i>Hallu Nafshi</i>

#### TEXT

#### Poetry:

These poems were chosen for this theme based on the words and meaning as well as the meter and mood. The poems reflect the same quiet intimacy as the music suggested above.

Abraham Chalafi writes of finding his true identity in the poem "The One Who is Missing." The shedding of his old identity is likened to the shedding of clothing. His use of language is daring, alternately using first and third person, and mixing past and present tenses. He ends the poem requesting a toast to his memory, bringing others into his experience with him.

The poem relates to the experience of conversion in many ways. The JBC sheds his or her identity as a non-Jew, revealing a new identity. The JBC is not the same person that he or she was in the past, yet he or she still lives. Thus the past and present are combined, never fully detached from each other.

The one who is missing  
was myself.  
The one who had been  
has left my shoes,  
Dispensed my coat,  
one sleeve to another.  
My pockets, filled with holes,  
he gave away as memory.  
Through them my deeds ran  
like water.

Toast my memory with an unsighed sigh  
as I used to drink  
when I sat among you not long ago.  
The one who is missing was myself.<sup>47</sup>

"Eve's Birth" by Kim Chernin is also a poem about new identity, and the female Jew-by-Choice could relate especially to it. It is about the spontaneous awakening of Eve, the Biblical mother of all humanity, to witness the creation of herself. Chernin uses language very skillfully to communicate to the reader

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<sup>47</sup> Schwartz and Rudolph, Voices Within the Ark: The Modern Jewish Poets.

Eve's feelings in creation. She refers to both God and Adam as forces in her creation. The JBC is creating a new identity for herself as well, perhaps influenced by a Jewish partner, and with the guidance of a rabbi. This poem speaks to these influences in conversion.

Was I summoned  
 or did I rise  
 from my own emergency?  
 Dreaming of a dark and formless thing  
 that had no eyes and fashioned mine.  
 Remembering:  
 waters, the disquieting wind,  
 dark earth and dismembering fire:  
 a servile arc  
 that roared disquietude,  
 wakened from slumber;  
 and breath,  
 ribbed with mortality.<sup>48</sup>

The JBC who is not yet literate in Hebrew will identify with the poem "Identity" by Robert Friend. Friend writes of his experience in Israel in relation to his feelings about the Hebrew language.

Words are written  
 on the Wailing Wall  
 I cannot read.  
 My name?

I have come to read my name  
 where even the birds are Jewish  
 and the cats yowl  
 in the holy language,

whose mystery I master,  
 its stubborn consonants  
 and its warm vowels,  
 but not that mystery

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

I shroud in English.  
 Robert, I say  
 pronouncing who I am  
 in the cold syllables.  
 of the tongue I love.<sup>49</sup>

Responsive Reading:

I asked God for strength, that I might achieve  
     I was made weak, that I might learn humbly to obey.  
 I asked for health, that I might do greater things  
     I was given infirmity that I might do better things  
 I asked for riches that I might be happy  
     I was given poverty, that I might be wise  
 I asked for power, that I might have the praise of people  
     I was given weakness, that I might feel the need of God  
 I asked for all things, that I might enjoy life  
     I was given life that I might enjoy all things  
 I got nothing I asked for, but everything I hoped for  
     My unspoken prayers were answered.  
 I am among all people, most richly blessed.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Greenberg and Sugarman, A Contemporary High Holiday Prayerbook, 32.

## THEME 6: LOVE FOR JUDAISM AND FOR GOD

Stories of Jews-by-Choice becoming religiously observant Jews are not at all uncommon. Some Jews-by-Choice seize Judaism with a passion, excited by the discovery of all there is to know about their new religion. Many times they carry their non-observant Jewish spouses with them on journeys to Jewish observance that the family would have never taken otherwise. This ecstatic awakening could be motivational for the congregational as well, to learn more about their own faith, one that can cause such excitement and devotion.

### MUSIC

#### Congregational Music

Debbie Friedman's "Sing Unto God" is a lively melody that can easily be mastered by any volunteer choir, adult or children. Its lyrics, adapted from Psalms 96, 98 and 149 are set to a syncopated melody that is very stirring in its varying rhythms coupled with its short, melodic motifs.

Leonard Bernstein's "A Simple Song" from his "Mass" is a piece that in its simplicity conveys the beauty of love and of God. Its folk-like melody precisely reflects the English text:

Sing God a simple song. . . . Make it up as you go along. . . .  
sing like you like to sing, God loves all simple things, for God  
is the simplest of all. I will sing the Lord a new song,  
to praise him, to bless him, to bless the Lord. I will  
sing his praises while  
I live, all of my days. . . .

The words and the melody together appear almost conversational, and spontaneous. This is a wonderful conveyance of both the love of God and what

may be frustration for one who is unfamiliar with Jewish prayer, which can appear very complex and unapproachable to someone who is not familiar with it. "A Simple Song" can reassure an individual that God can be worshipped in other, simpler ways.

#### Alternate Music:

Gershon Ephros	My Soul Thirsteth for God
M. Horowitz	<i>Mah Navu Al Heharim</i>
Max Janowski	<i>Mah Navu Al Heharim</i>
Jeff Klepper	<i>Adonai Oz</i>
Daniel Pinksham	Behold how Good
S. Rachmaninof	To the Lord
Benjamin Rogers	Psalm 133: Behold how Good
J. Spirak	<i>Mah Navu Al Heharim</i>

#### TEXT

##### Poetry:

In his poem "Birth" Amir Gilboa speaks directly to God. It is as if, after a rainfall, the poet realizes God's presence in the works of nature. His use of personification is effective in translating the poet's experience of God as a living, acting being, which "opens his eyes" and makes his life complete.

The rain has passed.

And still from the roofs and from the trees  
it sings in my ears  
and covers my head

with a bluish bridal veil

Good for you, my God  
 the child is caught in your net.  
 Look, I will bring leaf to leaf  
 and I will see how leaf covers leaf  
 and how the drops blend.  
 And I will call the swallows down  
 to marriage from my sky.  
 And all my windows I will adorn with flower pots.

Good for you, my God,  
 The child is caught in your net.  
 I open my eyes-  
 my earth is all in one piece, engraved  
 with the stalks of flowers,  
 green

O my God,  
 how embraced we have been!<sup>51</sup>

Levi Ibn Altabben (fl. late 11th century) discovers the precious gift of life God has given him and expresses his desire to appreciate it and make the most of this fleeting legacy.

### "The Awakening"

I shall turn to the fountain of my life,  
 before time returns me to the earth.  
 If only my soul, which is bent on folly  
 had the wisdom to know that it alone is my treasure in this world!  
 If only my heart would rouse itself and understand  
 my end: that the very day on which I sleep  
 will be my awakening-  
 the day He summons all my deeds to  
 face me, the day He recalls my spirit  
 and my soul to Himself.<sup>52</sup>

<sup>51</sup> Schwartz and Rudolph, Voices Within the Ark: The Modern Jewish Poets.

<sup>52</sup> Carmi, The Penguin Book of Hebrew Verse, 319.

## THEME 7: REJOICING

## MUSIC

## Congregational Music:

Sidney Hodkinson's *Ashreinu* is a short, lively piece that contains just a few lines of Hebrew text. The melody is akin to a children's song, in its repetition and playfulness. The words, "*Ashreinu, mah tov helkeinu umah naim yerushateinu,*" (how happy are we, how good our fortune) expresses the joy in being a Jew.

## Cantorial Music

Amnidav Aloni's "*Zeh Hayom: This is the Day*" for solo voice, flute and keyboard is an unusual and effective piece for the ceremony. In the beginning of the piece the open fifths in the piano add to the flute's upwardly soaring motivic line creating an ethereal, desert-like feeling. Aloni mixes the Hebrew and English text sung in a minor mode, facilitating ethnic feeling and understanding of the text at once. In the second part of the piece Aloni abandons this rubato mode and turns to a more steady, grounded feeling. Although the rhythm is steady the meter is not. The vocal line is in common time (4/4) and the piano's accompanying pattern is in groups of three, creating an dual meter for this part of the piece. In the middle of the piece, Aloni goes into an improvisational "statement and answer" between the voice and the flute, the piano providing a continuo underneath. Aloni ends the piece with a "*shehechianu,*" again mixing the Hebrew and English. The piece ends with a

beautiful flute motif, reminiscent of the beginning of the piece. Aloni makes a stirring presentation of the music and the words in this piece.

Richard Neumann's "*Yom Gila*" is a joyful and vigorous piece in the Sephardic style. The dotted rhythms and the syncopated accompaniment add to the exotic feeling of this piece. The piece is in Hebrew, but one who does not understand the words will have no trouble discerning that this is a song of joy. Its repeating melodic motif make it a memorable tune as well. Neumann proceeds rondo-style through the piece: contrasting tempos, dynamics and textures. However, Neumann ends with a very Western concertized ending. A long, upward progression that resolves in a full major chord.

Rejoicing can be expressed in a multitude of musical ways. Aloni accomplishes it with melody and arrangement while Neumann accomplishes it with rhythm and texture. Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy accomplishes this in his work "Happy and Blesst are They" with fullness of sound. This piece is for a large choir. Its harmonic movement and voice part blending make this a superb piece to express joy at the ceremony

#### Alternate music:

Dave Dunber	Thank You Lord
Isadore Freed	<i>Hora</i>
G.F. Handel	Rejoice Greatly
A. Jacobson	<i>Hine Mah Tov</i>
Frank Lewin	Behold How Good
Carl F. Mueller	We Will Walk in the Name of the Lord
Royal Oak	All Things Bright and Beautiful
F.A. Gore Ouseley	How Goodly are Thy Tents

## TEXT

## Reading:

We stand in awe with our ancestors before the manifold wonders and hallow this day with its memories, as a moment suspended in time, for rest and peace and thanks for our being and having the will to be. We cherish this event, recalling numberless wonders, and give thanks that through the years our people hallowed and sanctified in awe of the gift of life and being.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> From Sabbath Evening Service, Leo Baeck Temple, (Los Angeles, California, Privately printed, 1970) and Congregation B'nai Yisrael, (Armonk New York, privately printed), original source unknown.

#### 4. Jew by Choice's Affirmation of God and *Shema*

The *Shema*, the doxology of the Jewish faith, can be recited by the JBC to symbolize his/her acceptance of the Jewish God. The *Shema* is profoundly important to Jews for historical and religious reasons. It is the central tenet on which our monotheistic religion is based. The verse itself is Toraitic, and has been a part of Jewish prayer since the first century B.C.E. The *Shema* and *v'ahavta* can be used to emphasize loving God as well as teaching the commandments to the JBC, as the traditional rabbinic sources instruct, as mentioned above. The rabbi can give a modern contextual interpretation of the *shema* as well.<sup>54</sup>

Many different musical settings of the *Shema* exist which can be used for various effect in the ceremony. For instance, Abraham Levitt's composition "You Shall Love" (the English *v'ahavta*) for solo voice and piano is very dramatic and powerful. In contrast, Debbie Friedman's "You Shall Love" is a well known community piece that will suit the comfort level of a singing congregation. Its *andante*, folk-like style is effective in dramatizing the text as well. In contrast, Paul Ben Haim's "V'ahavta" with its complex harmonies, and dissonant melodic line, would add a very different mood to this part of the service. Isadore Freed's Hassidic Service for the Sabbath contains a *shema* that

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<sup>54</sup> Rabbi Samuel H. Silver to Jennifer Werby, September 11, 1994 letter regarding request for materials for this project.

Rabbi Silver tells the JBC:

The six words of Shema Yisrael mean:

- \* A Jew must "Shema": must be attentive to the voice of God, the poor, the homeless, one's spouse and one's conscience.
- \* The second two words mean that we reserve veneration only for God.
- \* The last two words mean we reject the notion that there is no God, or that the Almighty is two or even three. In our faith the Lord is one and the corollary is that the human family is also *ehad*-one.

is grand as well. It also employs the use of a choir. There is also a "*Shema* for Conversion Ceremony" (composer unknown) included in the back of this paper.

#### 5. *Shehechianu* (community)<sup>55</sup>

The *shehechianu* is an appropriate prayer for the ceremony since it is said for new and good things. The *shehechianu* should ideally be a musical and participatory part of the ceremony. There are melodies for this prayer which are very beautiful and effective. Cantor Rachelle Nelson wrote a *shehechianu* for cantor and choir which has a very popular sound and captures the joy of the blessing. Debbie Friedman's folk-like *shehechianu* is set to an easy melody. Friedman chooses to emphasize the word "amen" giving it as much, if not more embellishment than the blessing itself. The blessing is set to a musically narrow, declamatory melody, while the "amen," comprising half of the piece, is dramatic in its chord progressions and its length. Ms. Friedman achieves a Gospel-like effect with her particular phrasing and this is very effective.

#### 6. The Blessing of the Jew-by-Choice by the Rabbi and/or Cantor

In the benediction, the rabbi or cantor invokes a blessing for the JBC. This has personal and historical significance. Personally, it would be ideal if the rabbi or cantor doing the blessing were also the JBC's sponsor. In this

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<sup>55</sup> According to rabbinic sources, this prayer is a solitary one. As the *Kitzur Shulchan Aruch*, verse 59, says, "If you receive good tidings . . . and you are the only one who benefits from the tidings you recite the blessing *Shehechianu*. But if it is good for you and others as well, you say the blessing . . . *hatov vehemetiv*". This is not the practice today in most Reform synagogues. The *shehechianu* is a well-known, well-used part of community events. As such, it is included in the ceremony.

situation, the relationship of the teacher and the student can be transformed through sanctification. It can be a very powerful personal moment in the JBC's conversion. The blessing also has historical value, since it takes us back through history to the ancient Temples.

The *y'varech'cha* has been set to many different musical styles which can also be used for various effect. Choral versions bring formal grandeur. Solo versions give the leaders of the service a chance to do it antiphonally, when the cantor sings the Hebrew blessing, the rabbi translates it into English. Composer Michael Isaacson's version of the prayer is very beautiful and accomplishes this effect brilliantly. Max Helfman's "Final Benediction" is similar to Isaacson's in its structure. If one is in a more formal setting. Algazi's "*Yvorekhekho*," with choir and organ prelude and postludes might be more suitable. Herbert Fromm's "Benediction" is different from the others in that it can be done either entirely in English, or entirely in Hebrew. It is parlando, declamatory style vocal line with intermittent chordal accompaniment as support. Max Janowski uses interesting phrasing and repetition in his "*Y'varech'cha*." There are also measures between the parts of the benediction where the rabbi can speak if desired. Whatever the musical setting, the blessing must be done with dignity and sanctity. All of the above songs will help to accomplish this.

## 7. Charges to JBC and to the Community

In the conversion ceremony, the sponsor should make a personal charge to the JBC to continue his/her education and uphold the Jewish values he/she has been taught. The JBC's education did not begin with the ceremony, nor should it end with the ceremony. This part is modeled after the Brit Milah

ceremony mentioned above. In the circumcision ceremony, it is traditional for the community to look forward into the baby's life by saying,

Just as he was initiated into the covenant, so may he  
be initiated into the study of Torah, to the *Hupah*,  
and to the performance of good deeds.<sup>56</sup>

Just as the JBC is challenged to be educated and live Jewishly, so too should the community be challenged to uphold the same Jewish values. The ceremony will have already imparted some heretofore unknown knowledge about conversion and about the spirit of Judaism to the community, and they should be encouraged to keep learning. Too many times have JBC's been surprised at the ignorance of Jews about their own culture. The community should be also be encouraged to live up to the ideals that have been inspiring enough for the JBC to want to join this religion and people.

#### 8. Closing song

A song to conclude the ceremony brings good spirit and closure to the event. Everyone should be able to participate in the closing song. The songs *Hine Mah Tov* or *Baruch Haba*, mentioned earlier are two good choices that might be utilized for this purpose. Debbie Friedman's "*T'filat Haderech*" is also a good choice for the close of the ceremony. It is in English, and is a slow and lilting melody that is guided by the beautiful message:

<sup>56</sup> Elias Goldman, *Hamadrikh, The Rabbi's Guide, A Manual of Jewish Religious Rituals, Ceremonials, and Customs* (New York: Hebrew Publishing Company, 1939).

May we be blessed as we go on our way  
 May we be guided in peace  
 May we be blessed with health and joy  
 May this be our blessing amen.  
 May we be sheltered by the wings of peace,  
 Be kept in safety and love.  
 May grace and compassion find their way to every soul  
 Every soul, be our blessing amen.

\* \* \*

The public conversion ceremony as envisioned in this masters project, is an event designed to touch many lives. The ceremony takes the JBC, the rabbi, the cantor and the congregation on a journey of self-discovery, both individual and communal, through history, text, song and testimony. The eight parts of the ceremony grow organically, beginning with the personal side of the conversion traveling through history and ending with an all-inclusive welcoming of the individual. On the way, the participants reclaim and reaffirm shared roots and common bonds.

We live in a multi-cultural society and in an age where the electronic media has the capacity to overload one with information about virtually anything. Through electronic media: television radio, computers, etc., it is entirely possible to feel lost in the conglomerate culture. I firmly believe that American Jews and others are searching for a sincere, spiritual, religion that they can identify with and come home to. I believe that Reform Judaism can provide this for them. The goal of the public conversion ceremony is not only to serve as a warm and positive experience for the Jew-by Choice to begin his or her lifelong journey as a Jew, but also to provide born Jews with motivation to explore their own Jewish identity through this experience.

## Composers, Songs, Forms and Publishers

1. Adler, Hugo Ch.	Behold the Jew	solo, keyboard	HS
2. Aloni, Aminadav	Zeh Hayom	Solo, Flute, piano	TM
3. Altwood, Thomas	Teach Me O Lord	Choir, Organ	OU
4. Amner, John	O God, My King	Choir, Organ	OU
5. Avery, Lawrence	Entreat Me Not	Voice and piano, guitar	TM
6. Berlinski, Herman	Psalm XXIII	Voice and flute	TM
7. Binder, A.W.	Lord, Do Thou Guide Me	Solo, piano	FJM
8. Brandman, M.	Hachnisini	Voice and piano	IMP
9. Carlebach, Shlomo	Ufros Aleinu	Voice/Chords	JESR
10. Castelnovo- Tedesco, Mario	Seal My Heart	Voice/chords	TM
11. Clark Witfield, John	Behold How Good	Choir	OU
12. Cohen, Myrna	May God Inspire You	Voice/chords	SW
13. Dunber, Dave	Thank You Lord	Choir, keyboard	GIS
15. Ephros, Gershon	New Birth of Freedom	Cantor/choir	TM
16. Ephros, Gershon	Got fun Avraham	solo, piano	FJM
17. Ephros, Gershon	My Soul Thirsteth for God	solo, piano	FJM
18. Feingold, David	Hevenu	Voice, Chords	JESR
19. Finkelstein, Meir	L'dor va dor	Voice, choir, piano	
20. Freed, Isadore	122nd Psalm	Choir Organ	TM
21. Freed, Isadore	Hora	Piano, Women's voices	TM
22. Freed, Isadore	In Distress I Called Upon the Lord	Solo, piano	

23.	Freudenthal, Josef	The Precepts of Micah	Cantor/piano	TM
24.	Friedman, Debbie	Im Tirtzu	Voice, chords	SVG
25.	Friedman, Debbie	Shehechianu	Voice, chords	SVG
26.	Friedman, Debbie	Sing Unto God	Voice, chords	SVG
27.	Friedman, Debbie	The Promise	Voice, chords	SW
28.	Fromm, Herbert	Grant us Peace	Cantor/organ	TM
29.	Fromm, Herbert	All The World	Voice, organ	TM
30.	Goldman, Maurice	Song of Ruth	Voice, piano	TM
31.	Hadar, Yael	Kumi Ori	Voice, chords	Tara
32.	Handel, George.F.	Rejoice Greatly	Solo, piano	GS
33.	Helfman, Max	Grant us Peace	Voice, Organ	TM
34.	Helfman, Max	Sachaki	Voice, piano	TM
35.	Helfman, Max	Kol Kara <u>Two Hannah</u> <u>Szenesh Poems</u>	Voice, piano	TM
36.	Hodkinson, Sidney	Ashreinu	Cantor,choir	TM
37.	Horvit, Michael	Sing to God	Voice, piano	TM
39.	Horowitz, M.	Mah Navu Al Heharim <u>Israel in Song</u>	2 part, chords	Tara
40.	Isaacson, Michael	Yevarech'cha	Voice, piano	TM
41.	Jacobson, A.	Hine Mah Tov	Choir, organ, flute	TM
42.	Jacobson,?	Hine Mah Tov	Voice, keyboard	TARA
43.	Janowski, Max	Hagid L'cha Adam	Solo, organ	FJM
44.	Janowski, Max	Mah Navu Al Heharim	Solo,choir, Piano/organ	FJM
45.	Kessler, Minveta	Confirmation Prayer	Cantor, piano	TM
46.	Kingsley, Gershon	Prayer for Peace	Cantor/Keyboard	TM

47. Kingsley, Gershon	Teach Me, O Lord (Psalm 86)	Voice, piano	TM
48. Klass, Lillian	The People Who Walk in Darkness	Voice, Organ	TM
49. Klepper, Jeff	Adonai Oz	Voice, chords	JESR
50. Kraft, Leo	A Proverb of Solomon	Choir, piano	MM
51. Latham, William	Prophecy of Peace	Choir, organ	OU
52. Leider, Alan	Hazak, Hazak	Voice, choir, piano	ms.
53. Levitt, Abraham	You shall Love	Voice/piano	ms.
54. Lewin, Frank	Behold How Good	Choir, piano	LG/GS
55. Mana-Zucca	Faith	Voice, piano	ms.
56. Mendelssohn- Bartholdy, F.	Happy and Blesst are They	Choir	GS
57. Mueller, Carl F.	We Will Walk in the Name of the Lord	Choir	
58. Nelson, Rachelle	Shehechianu	Voice, piano	TM
59. Neumann, Richard	Yom Gila <u>Sephardic Series</u>	Voice, piano	TM
60. Ouseley, F.A. Gore	How Goodly are Thy Tents	Choir	OU
61. Pik, Tsiva	Shehechianu		
62. Piket, Fredrick	Tol'cheni L'shalom	2 part + choir	TMP
63. Piket, Fredrick	Lo La'adam Darko <u>T'fila-Three Hebrew Prayers</u>	Voice, piano	TM
64. Piket, Fredrick	Alecha Vatahti <u>T'fila-Three Hebrew Prayers</u>	Voice, piano	TM
65. Piket, Fredrick	Asey R'tson'cha <u>T'fila-Three Hebrew Prayers</u>	Voice, piano	TM
66. Pinksham, Daniel	Behold how Good	Choir, piano	CFP
67. Rachmaninof, S.	To The Lord	Solo, piano	GS

68.	Ray, Willis:	Abide With Me	Solo, organ	CHL
69.	Rickett, Edward W.	Prophecy of Peace	Choir, organ	BMC
70.	Ritchie, Jean	The Peace Round <u>Shiron L'Shalom</u>	Voice/chords	JESR
71.	Rogers, Benjamin	Ps. 133, Behold how Good	Choir, organ	CP
72.	Rothblum, Moshe	Vahakimoti et Briti	Voice, chords	SW
73.	Royal Oak	All Things Bright and Beautiful	Voice, piano	CHC
74.	Secunda, Shalom	Pitchu Li	Voice, keyboard	
75.	Seltzer, Dubi	Salaam Aleikum <u>Israel sings</u>	Voice, chords	
76.	Shemer, Naomi	Machar	Voice, chords	Tara
77.	Shurir, Ella	Shalom <u>Shiron L'Shalom</u>	Voice, chords	JESR
78.	Silbermintz, S.	Hine Mah Tov	2 parts	Tara
79.	Solomon, Robert	Peace by Piece <u>Peace by Piece</u>	Voice/chords	Tara
80.	Sperling, Jerry	Hine Mah Tov	Choir	Tara
81.	Spirak, J.	Mah Navu Al Heharim <u>Harvest of Jewish Song</u>	Voice, keyboard	Tara
82.	Steinberg, Ben	Esa Enai	Voice, piano	TM
83.	Stern, Robert	Al Tifgi Vi	Soprano, Piano	TM
84.	Stockholmer, A.	Hallu Natshi	Voice, piano	BP
85.	Tavori, Shimi	Atah hu Hashem <u>Israel Sings</u>	Voice, chords	BJE
86.	Weiner, Abraham	May You be Blessed (round)	Voice	ms.
87.	Weiner, Lazar	Ruth <u>Three Biblical Songs</u>	Voice, piano	TM

## Publishers

AM	Ashbourne Music
BJE	Board of Jewish Education
BP	Bloch Pub.
CA	Cantors Assemply
FJM	Freinds of Jewish Music
GS	G. Schirmer
HMP	Horizon Music Publ.
HS H.	Schalit
HWG	HW Gray co. Inc.
JESR	Jewish Educators for Social Responsibility
ML	Mills Music
MM	Mercury Music
RN	Rachelle Nelson
SMP	Sacred Music Press
SW	Sounds Write
ms.	manuscript

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