

# Love the Convert

## Conversion to Judaism

### Genesis 12:5

וַיִּקַּח אַבְרָם... וְאֶת הַנְּפֹשׁ אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂו בְּחָרָן

And Abram took ... and the souls they had acquired in Haran

**Rashi:** Abraham would convert the men, and Sarah would convert the women.

### Leviticus 23:42 & Exodus 22:20

וְאָהַבְתֶּם אֶת הַגֵּר כִּי גֵרִים הֵייתֶם בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם

You shall love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.

וְגֵר לֹא תוֹנֶה וְלֹא תִלְחָצֶנּוּ כִּי גֵרִים הֵייתֶם בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם

And you shall not mistreat a stranger, nor shall you oppress him, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.

### Maimonides: Positive Commandment #207

The 207th *mitzvah* is that we are commanded to love converts. The source of this commandment is G-d's statement (exalted be He), "You must love the convert."

Since the convert spoken of here is a *ger tzedek*, he is included in the commandment for the entire Jewish people, "You must love your neighbor." Nevertheless, since he has now entered the Jewish religion, G-d shows him additional love and added an extra commandment [to love him]. This is similar to the prohibition of mistreating him, where in addition to the prohibition [regarding all Jews], "You shall not mistreat one another," G-d also said, "Do not mistreat a convert." The Gemara explains that one who mistreats a convert transgresses both, "You shall not mistreat one another," and, "Do not mistreat a convert." We are similarly commanded to love him, [both] by the commandment, "You must love your neighbor as [you love] yourself," and the commandment, "You must love the convert." This is obvious and not hidden, and I am not aware of anyone among those who have compiled the list of commandments who has failed to realize this. In many Midrashim is it explained that G-d has commanded us regarding the convert, as He has commanded us regarding Himself (exalted be He). This [is evident] from the verse, "Love G-d your Lord," and the verse, "You must love the convert."

### Negative Commandment #252

The 252nd prohibition is that we are further forbidden from verbally causing emotional distress to a convert, i.e. *ona'as devarim*. The source of this prohibition is G-d's statement (exalted be He), "Do not wrong a convert."

In the words of the *Mechilta*: "The verse 'Do not wrong a convert' means doing so with your words." This prohibition is repeated a second time, in the phrase "[When a convert comes to live in your land,] do not hurt his feelings." In the words of the *Sifra*: "You should not tell him, 'Yesterday you were an idolater and now you have entered under the wings of the Divine Presence.'"