

# After 400 Years, Jews Invite Others To Become Converts

**ASSOCIATED PRESS**  
Judaism, which quit seeking converts four centuries ago under the hammering of persecutions, is now openly and actively seeking them again.

The strategic change, developing gradually and sporadically over the past three years, got formal authorization at an assembly in Boston of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations.

The step was termed a "great milestone" in Jewish history.

Representing the Reform wing of the faith with more than a million members in 750 synagogues across the country, delegates approved an inviting word to the public-at-large, saying:

"Judaism is a loving, meaningful, spiritual religion that welcomes all who wish to embrace it."

That arms-spread overture was the first official, direct bid in modern times by a major Jewish body to non-Jews to become one.

It "lets people know that Judaism is not a closed society, but welcomes those who wish to enter its ranks," explained a task force which presented the adopted "Jewish outreach" program.

However, it specified that the work for converts was not directed toward adherents of other religions, but rather toward the religiously unattached, the millions without religious affiliation or preference.

"There is tremendous potential for rendering an invaluable service to countless men and women yearning for a religious focus for themselves and their

children," said the task force, headed by attorney David W. Belin of Des Moines, Iowa.

Potential and recent converts were termed "Jews-by-choice."

Judaism always has accepted converts, but in the present era has done so cautiously with no nationally organized efforts to inform or attract affiliation.

To some extent, it was discouraged, particularly in Orthodox Judaism, with those seeking to convert subjected to tests of time, questioning and warnings about the difficulties of being Jewish.

Launching a positive approach to others is a step in restoring authentic Judaism and a "reconsecration of the Jewish people as an eternal ... people of God," the task force said.

But it rejected use of such terms as "missionizing" or "proselytizing" as suggesting evangelistic-type efforts to woo into the fold those already identified with other religions.

Such "sheep-stealing," as it's often called, was ruled out.

The program, with extensive guides and other materials for it already

prepared, aims not only at the "unchurched," but also at unaffiliated Jews and to give religious nurture to mixed-marriage couples, whether or not the non-Jewish spouse wants to convert.

In origins and in ancient times, Judaism energetically sought converts under exhortations of its prophets to be a "light to the nations." In the early days of Christianity, Judaism had converted 10 percent of the Roman empire.

But after the Roman emperor Constantine made Christianity the official state religion, and later under the Islamic empire, conversion to Judaism was banned under penalty of death.

In the Middle Ages, Jewish evangelizing efforts revived to some degree, despite intermittent repression, but generally ceased in the 16th century, laid low by aggressive church pursuits of heresy and an anti-Semitic atmosphere in Europe.

So arose a Jewish "tradition of not seeking converts," the task force says, a policy perpetuated for various reasons such as misunderstanding of Jewish history and "fears of inciting anti-Semitism."

## Creole Recipes

(Continued from Page 15)

2 cups tomatoes  
1 cup uncooked rice  
1 tbsp. flour  
¼ cup minced green pepper  
1 bay leaf  
1 sprig parsley, minced  
1 clove garlic, minced  
1 lb. smoked kosher sausage  
¼ cups tomato juice  
Melt shortening in heavy

saucepan over medium heat. Stir in flour, salami, and green pepper. Simmer 5 minutes, stirring constantly. Add remaining ingredients except rice. Bring to boil. Add rice to liquid. Cover and simmer for 40 minutes until all liquid is absorbed. Serves six.

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