



BET MENORAH ZIA PRETORIA PROGRESSIVE JEWISH CONGREGATION DXIEN

(Affiliated to the Southern African Union for Progressive Judaism)

LIFE CYCLE EVENTS

January 2003 / Shevat 5763

CONVERSION

Since the days of Abraham, people have voluntarily joined the Jewish faith. We also allow for this by providing a programme which is monitored by the Bet Din (religious court) of the Gauteng Region of the Southern African Union for Progressive Judaism and usually taught by our Rabbi assisted by nominated teachers. The course follows a set programme and is designed to introduce the candidate to the life cycle of Judaism, the Sabbaths and other holy days, the philosophy and history. It also enables a candidate to obtain a knowledge of Hebrew sufficient to be au fait with the services and key prayers. Regular attendance at services is a prerequisite. The course usually runs for approximately twelve months so as to cover a full calendar of a Jewish year, though again any lengthening and occasionally shortening of the course is done at the discretion of our Rabbi.

Once the candidate has completed the requirements (INCLUDING HAVING COMPLETELY PAID WHATEVER FEE HAS BEEN CHARGED) he or she is invited to attend a Bet Din consisting of three members (usually three Rabbis but sometimes a learned layperson might have to serve as a member) where a test of both knowledge and commitment is made. A ceremony and the giving of a certificate acknowledging acceptance into the faith would follow.

All candidates should note that though our conversions are accepted within the Progressive movement the world over, the majority of orthodox Rabbis do not accept them and would, therefore, query them.

It is also usual that where we are approached with the thought of marriage to a Jewish partner, the Jewish person concerned is required to become a member of the synagogue.

WEDDINGS

We are very happy to celebrate with a couple and would like to note the following:



- a) Any Jewish couple can celebrate a religious wedding (a *Chuppa/Kiddushin*) under our auspices either in our synagogue or at a suitable venue.
- b) Our Rabbi is a government registered Marriage Officer which means that the ceremony serves as both a religious and a secular event, the civil ceremony taking place at the same time. Of course, if for a variety of reasons the civil ceremony occurs separately, the Rabbi is happy to officiate PROVIDED all the civil aspects have been attended to beforehand.
- c) It should be noted that we only marry practising Jews and do not sanction mixed marriages (Jews to non-Jews). Should we be approached for a remarriage where one or both parties have previously been divorced, we do officiate PROVIDED a civil divorce has taken place and the relevant documents have been seen by the Rabbi. Although we do not issue a *Get* (a Jewish religious divorce document), we do ask that when we officiate at a second or subsequent religious marriage, a *Get* has been arranged, if possible, through the orthodox authorities to free the former spouse.
- d) It is normal for the couple to have an *AUFTRUF* or public "call up" a week or so prior to the ceremony.
- e) It is customary to invite the Rabbi and President of the congregation (and their spouses) to the ceremony and reception.

BRITOT

The birth of a boy is of course followed by the traditional *brit* or circumcision. The family should be in immediate contact with the Rabbi to make the necessary arrangements.



BABY NAMING

Be it a baby boy or girl we encourage a public naming ceremony in the synagogue at the convenience of parents and family. Usually a *kiddush* should follow this.

BAR / BATMITZVAH

We celebrate this at age 13 plus, depending on the following:

- a) The family are members in good standing.
- b) The pupil has attended and satisfactorily completed the requirements as laid down. At this time these are:
 - i) Attending Religion School for a minimum of one year and preferably two to three years.
 - ii) Attending services together with parents on a regular basis both on Friday evenings and Saturday mornings and festivals for a minimum of one year in order to experience the full festival cycle.
 - iii) The setting of a date for the event only when the candidate has satisfactorily studied and passed the “theory exam” as set. Once that has happened, the date for the event should ordinarily be set to occur approximately six months hence.



The Ceremony

The pupil is expected to be able to help lead both the Friday evening and Saturday morning services, read from the sedra or passage of the weekly Torah portion and *Haftarah* (prophetic passage), read the accompanying blessings, be able to give a short summary / interpretation and personal prayer and to recite the *tallit* blessing. Involvement by the family and close friends in the ceremony is encouraged and desired.

As this is part of the religious Shabbat service, all participants that lead the congregation in prayer must wear a head covering and a *tallit*. This has been established as the practise at Bet Menorah for many years.

It is usual to invite the Rabbi to join the family at the Shabbat eve dinner and to invite at least the Rabbi and President (obviously in all cases with spouses) to the reception.

The family is responsible for a *kiddush* for the congregation following the *Shabbat* morning service, and possibly also on the Friday evening (less elaborate perhaps). The preparation for this is usually done in conjunction with the Sisterhood and co-ordinated with the office secretary.

ANY VARIANT TO THE ABOVE IS AT THE DISCRETION OF THE RABBI IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE ADVISORY BOARD AND COUNCIL OF THE SYNAGOGUE

83 YEARS OLDS (3 Score years and 10 plus 13)

A symbolic ceremony including a call-up to the Torah on a Shabbat morning may be arranged on the 70th anniversary of their *bar/batmitzvah*.

FUNERALS

We officiate at such services and try to be as helpful as possible over this sad period. Where burial is desired, we work through our Rabbi in conjunction with the Pretoria *Chevra Kadisha* or Jewish Helping Hand and Burial Society. If necessary, a learned layman would conduct the service in the absence of the Rabbi.

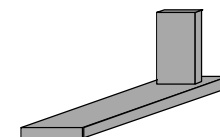
We as Progressive Jews also are prepared to officiate at **cremations** and again have our Rabbi conduct the service. Here we work in conjunction with SAFFAS Funeral Director.

In both cases we desire contact with the Rabbi AND our office.

In the event of a non-member wishing to have our services, we are willing to officiate. However, we do have a charge of three times the current annual membership rate to be paid before the funeral or cremation.

TOMBSTONE CONSECRATIONS

Again, we work in conjunction with the *Chevra Kadisha* with our Rabbi officiating. The date is usually set by the family although it is often governed by the *Chevra Kadisha* and the availability of the Rabbi. A tombstone is often consecrated eleven months after the funeral, and usually not before one month has elapsed (the *shloshim* or thirty day mourning period). However, where families live abroad we have allowed for tombstones to be consecrated seven days after the funeral (i.e. at the end of the *SHIVA*).



**Anyone with queries on the above or related issues
is invited to communicate with the Rabbi through the office.**