

IT'S GOOD TO BE A JEW

by Rabbi Daniel Travis

A number of years ago a non-Jew came to Yerushalayim having come to the conclusion, following a long spiritual search, that he wanted to convert to Judaism. He underwent the normal process of rigorous study and testing in the hope that he would be accepted. One day, the Beis Din (court of Jewish law) contacted him with a positive answer, and he immediately underwent all the procedures necessary to convert.

The following day his neighbors woke up to a very peculiar sight. That very same convert was seen dancing through the streets of Yerushalayim singing "*shelo asani goy, shelo asani goy* (thanking Hashem for not creating him as a member of the other nations of the world)!"

When members of the Beis Din found out about this, they thought that perhaps he was mentally unstable and they wanted to reconsider the validity of the conversion. However, Rav David Baharan, an elderly Torah scholar on the Beis Din of Yerushalayim stopped them.

"No, no," he said. "This man is not disturbed, and there should be no question of revoking the conversion. That is really the way we should all recite the blessing of *shelo asani goy!*"

In practice, since a convert was born a non-Jew, he cannot say "I was not made a goy," and he therefore does not recite the blessing "*shelo asani goy.*" According to some opinions, he can express his thanks to Hashem and say "who made me a convert" (Rema 46,4). Let us investigate the halachos of this blessing and the other morning blessings, in order that we may understand their deeper meaning.

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