

## *Loving the Convert Prior to a Completed Conversion: With a Test Case Application of Inviting Conversion Candidates to Pesach Seder and Yom Tov Meals*

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### Introduction

The Torah enjoins us numerous times concerning the mitzvah of *Ahavat ha-Ger*,<sup>1</sup> which literally means the love of the stranger or sojourner, though is primarily understood in Jewish legal sources to refer more specifically to loving the convert to Judaism.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, the Torah commands us that “you shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Leviticus 19:18), and also charges us to love God (Deuteronomy 6:4), creating multiple duties of love as halakhic obligations. This article will explore the question: When does the duty to love the convert commence and does it impact the conversion process? Does it apply only to a newly converted Jew, or to a Noahide who is in the process of converting, or even to a Gentile who has expressed an interest in converting?

The process of conversion to Judaism can be divided into three fundamental stages: In the first stage, the person makes a personal decision

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<sup>1</sup> See Leviticus 19:34; Deuteronomy 10:18-19. The Torah also prohibits oppressing the convert, “*lo toneb*” and “*Lo tonu*”—see Exodus 22:20; Leviticus 19:33; *TB Bava Metz'ia* 58b, 59b, and Ben Zion Katz, “Don’t Oppress the Ger,” *Seforim Blog* <<https://seforimblog.com/2019/07/dont-oppress-the-ger/>>.

However, this article will not investigate the question of when the prohibition against oppressing a convert begins, which may or may not track in parallel with the mitzvah of *Ahavat ha-Ger*.

<sup>2</sup> See Yehuda Rock, “*Parsbat Ekev – Mihu ‘ha-Ger’?*” <<https://etzion.org.il/he/פרשת-עקב-מיהו-הגר>>.

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