

Abstract

The thesis deals with conversion to Judaism from the point of view of the Jewish oral tradition and history. First part is focused on the general issue of conversions, laws and regulations of the Jewish law (Halakha) dealing with conversions, and views held by scholars belonging to the Talmudic period. Chronologically ordered sections follow, containing examples of conversions of both individuals and ethnic groups (Samaritans) of the Biblical period with an emphasis on their presence in written oral tradition, in Mishna, Gemarah and midrashes. Examples of converts of the Hellenic and Roman periods are presented in a similar fashion. This part is concluded with a chapter on converts in the Sassanid Babylonia. The thesis then presents examples of conversions from the late Hellenic period and early Middle Ages, including peripheral parts of the then known world – northern Africa, Ethiopia, Yemen and the Khazar Khaganate in the steppes along the Volga river. The last part of the thesis consists of examples of individual conversions to Judaism in the Europe of Middle Ages and the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Key Words: Judaism, conversion, converts, Halakha, oral tradition.