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***"How do you decide when a candidate for conversion  
is ready to become Jewish?"***

***Response by Rabbi Peter Schweitzer***

When I first start working with someone who wants to join our Jewish family – what we refer to as adoption in Humanistic Judaism as opposed to conversion – I ask her where she thinks she is on a scale of 1 to 10 in becoming Jewish. Depending on how long they have been on this journey already, I usually get answers that range from 3 or 4 to 7 or 8. Some are obviously just starting. Others have been at it for a quite a while, perhaps years already, and just need to get over the finish line.

As we proceed I check in with this question from time to time. The number start to rise, but often tapers off. The final stretch seems the most difficult part. Ultimately, while rabbis may be identified as gatekeepers, I believe it is up to the individual to decide when she is ready to cross the threshold. Invariably, newcomers often feel that that they continue to fall short. If only they knew how many born-Jews feel the same thing! They also may feel it is *chutzpadik* on their part to self-affirm their Jewish affiliation but that's exactly what I'm looking for. So it is not uncommon for me to give a gentle nudge and say, "You're ready. In fact, you've been ready for a while!"