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# ROUTE 613 - YOUR ROUTE TO GERUT

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## Program Information:

Route 613 - Your Route to GeRut provides a comprehensive conversion program for up to 60 conversion candidates in the New York area and beyond each year. The program is comprised of three weekly classes, and a variety of extra-curricular activities, including Shabbatonim, chesed activities and trips to places of Jewish interest designed to help integrate our students into the larger Jewish community. By offering an intensive Orthodox conversion curriculum in a group study format, Route 613, directed by Rabbi Maury Kelman, allows students to learn at their own pace in a supportive environment. Approximately 25 candidates successfully complete the conversion process annually, most converting through the Rabbinical Council of America. Over the past 13 years, Rabbi Kelman has taught and overseen some 300 students who have successfully converted, with many of them now raising families or becoming involved in numerous ways in their local communities, strengthening the Jewish community throughout North America and Israel.

In order to highlight the great contributions of the many converts to our Jewish community, we plan to bring you some of their stories in our newsletter. We hope that these wonderful Jews will inspire you to appreciate the great Jewish gifts that many of us take for granted. If you'd like to get involved in Route 613 as a mentor or in any capacity, please contact us at [info@rote613.org](mailto:info@rote613.org).

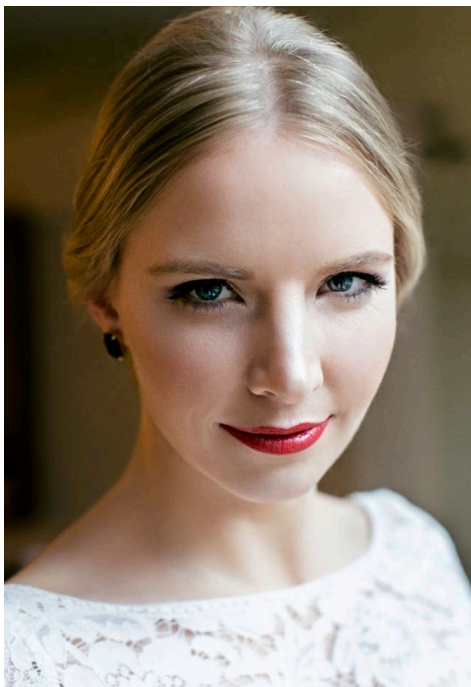
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## Profiles of Righteousness:

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### Lauri P.

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Lauri P. completed the conversion process about eighteen months ago and has been kind enough to tell her story of her path to Judaism in the below interview. We would also like to wish her and her new husband, Arman, a huge mazal tov on their recent wedding and upcoming move to Portland.

Q. What brought you to Judaism?

A. I never fit in with Christianity. I always considered myself only spiritual. When I first starting learning about Judaism, I realized how close it was to everything I believed. I was immediately hooked. I finally found a religion where I fit in. Judaism teaches what I believe to be the truth.

Q. How did you hear of Route 613?

A. Two different people recommended it. They said it's the best

conversion program in the city, and they were right! Nothing prepared me better to be an observant Jew than that class.

Q. What was the hardest part of the process?

A. Learning all the laws in the beginning. At first, it seemed like a lot, but once I got used to it, it was enjoyable.

Q. What was the most enjoyable part of the process?

A. The mikveh and building a community.

Q. Did you find it difficult to assimilate into the community?

A. A little at first. I felt a little out of place and was always worried I was going to say or do something wrong, but that went away after time.

Q. In what ways are you involved in the community now?

A. Very involved. I am part of shul where I spend every Shabbat, and I also am taking a year-long weekly class called "The Fellowship Program" through MJE.

Q. Do you find that people treat you differently as a convert?

A. Sometime people will introduce me to others as a convert. I don't really like being introduced like that because I really feel that I've been Jewish all along. But, I know it doesn't come from a bad place; most are just astonished that I did an orthodox conversion.

**"I love being Jewish. HaShem is amazing."**

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## Jesse G.

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Jesse G. converted to Judaism seven years ago in 2010 from the Route 613 program and also kindly agreed to share his story with you for the newsletter.



Q. What brought you to Judaism?

A. I was dating my wife at the time and realized that being Jewish was an important part of her life. So, I began to try to understand why, and she began to explore more as well. I was attracted to the history, the thought, and the logic. I think what sealed the deal for me was discovering the beauty of Shabbat. I thought it was the best thing ever, and not just because it was a day off but because the entire concept made perfect sense. I ended up converting, of course, and my wife moved from Conservative to Orthodox.

Q. How did the Route 613 program prepare you for Orthodox life?

A. I think it prepared me very well. It didn't teach me everything I needed to know, but it provided a great base and instilled in me the desire to learn more and to constantly improve.

Q. How did your family handle your conversion?

A. It was very difficult for my mother. She took the decision as a rejection of her, which was not the case. Nevertheless, she has

come to respect my choice and respects my lifestyle and that of my family's. It took a while, but it happened. My father studied theology and had a more open mind and was more comfortable from the beginning.

Q. How long were you in the process?

A. I believe it was a little over a year. I was in law school when I first started learning about Judaism. I began going to the beginner's service at Lincoln Square Synagogue and after about a year was directed to the program at Ohab Zedek. So, I would say I spent three years of exploration into Judaism, with half of that time spent learning with Route 613.

Q. What involvement do you have in the community now?

A. We are members of Beth Aaron Synagogue in Teaneck, NJ. I chose Beth Aaron because it has several daily minyanim, an inspirational Rabbi, hosts many different speakers, and has many learning opportunities. I am currently on the Synagogue's Board.

Q. Have you found it difficult to assimilate into the community?

A. I haven't found it terribly difficult. We live in a very friendly community, and there are many young couples our age with children. So, we've been able to fit in nicely. I've been very lucky in that sense, because I know it can be more difficult for others.

Q. What was the most frustrating part of the process?

A. The most frustrating part of the process was when I was very close to going to the mikvah, but I still wasn't Jewish. I'd daven with the same minyan every day but couldn't count towards the minyan. I was at a point where I was living as an Orthodox Jew but couldn't be considered Jewish. Also, as a black man, I was constantly asked about my conversion status, and still get asked on occasion when I visit a new shul, but, now, people mostly ask if I'm Ethiopian or if my dad is Israeli (So, I guess I'll take that).

Q. What was the most memorable part of the process?

A. The most memorable part of the process was going to the mikvah. It was a great feeling of accomplishment, joy, and the beginning of another leg of my journey.

**"As a black man, I am often asked if I'm Ethiopian or if my father is Israeli."**

### To Contact the Program:

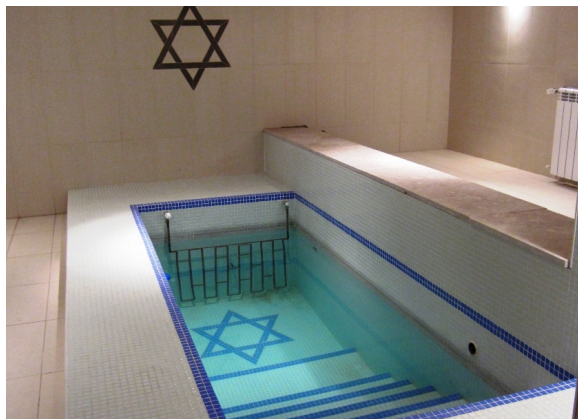
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Find us on Facebook at:

<https://www.facebook.com/Route-613-Your-Route-to-GeRut-1390267221299917/>



### To Donate to the Program:

To help the program meet its expenses and assist those in the process to obtain their Jewish souls, please go here: <https://www.paypal.com/fundraiser/charity/73286>

Donations are greatly needed, appreciated and tax-deductible.