Conversion: Halakhah and Public Policy

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1. ויקרא ט"כ:לג
(לג) וְכִי יָגוּר אִתְךָ גֵּר בְאַרְצְכֶם לֹא תוֹנוּ אֹתוֹ:
(לד) כְּאֶזְרָח מִכֶם יִהְיֶה לָכֶם הַגֵּר הַגָּר אִתְכֶם וְאָהַבְתָ לוֹ
כָּמוֹךָ כִי גֵּרִים הֱיִיתֶם בְאֶרֶץ מִצְרָיִם אֲנִי
ה' אֱלֹקיכֶם:

Leviticus 19:33-34
33 When a stranger resides with you in your land, you shall not wrong him. 34 The stranger who resides with you shall be to you as one of your citizens; you shall love him as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I the LORD am your God.

2. במדבר כג:
באת אל המח' אנך ק桄ים חמות ואשר מקום אנשי הארץ ועהה ימי קדוש ליה' וא-לוכך כי באת מ"כ

Deuteronomy 26:3
You shall go to the priest in charge at that time and say to him, “I acknowledge this day before the LORD your God that I have entered the land that the LORD swore to our fathers to assign us.”

3. Mishnah ביכורים א:
איש מביאין ולא קורין הגר מביא ואינו קורא שאינו יכול לומר אשר נשבע ה' לאבותינו לתת

Mishnah Bikkurim 1:4
These bring [bikkurim] but do not make the recital: The proselyte, since he cannot say: “that the Lord swore to our fathers to assign us.”

Rambam, Letter to Ovadiah the Convert
You should recite everything as it is, and do not change anything...whether alone or in public. The critical point is that it was Abraham of Father who taught the entire nation, who gave them wisdom and...battled against idolatry...Thus, anyone who converts...is a disciple of Abraham our Father...Thus, you should say “our God and God of our ancestors”...there is no difference here between us and you.

4. יבמות מו:
( המו) תנו לה נם: קר רשא להנני ר"א אומרים לא ראה_random
כ"א: נגרא ב tasarım הוהי, ודוחיפו, סחפים ומטורפים, ויסורין באין יми: אם אומרים: נגרא
אני אומרים כל, מסביבי כן, ומדיע את מתן מפקת מצות קהל השיבת ומיעון
הברור...ומדיע אתelize תנקת של פaec...ומדיע אתelize הוהי, אי ההרי, שיער של לרוד של, ואמור
יחב אואז ענש כרות, שלולט שיבת ובאלת ענש כרות...ומדיע אתelize תנקת של פaec...ומדיע אתelize אומרים הוהי, אי
מעץ, ז"א המโส אתelize מ"ט...ומדיע אתelize מ"ט...ומדיע אתelize מ"ט...ומדיע אתelize מ"ט...
ושן ת版权所有 על כל, ומדיע אתelize מפקת מצות קהל השיבת ומיעון מיעון...ומדיע אתelize
העור - היה הזה ישראלי לכל דぶり.
If a man desires to become a proselyte, he is to be addressed as follows: What reason have you for desiring to become a proselyte; do you not know that Israel at the present time are persecuted and oppressed, despised, harassed and overcome by afflictions? If he replies, I know and yet am unworthy, he is accepted forthwith, and is given instruction in some of the minor and some of the major commandments...He is also told of the punishment for the transgression of the commandments. Furthermore, he is addressed thus: Be it known to you that before you came to this condition, if you had eaten forbidden fat you would not have been punishable with kareth, if you had profaned the Sabbath you would not have been punishable with stoning... And as he is informed of the punishment for the transgression of the commandments, so is he informed of the reward granted for their fulfillment... (47b) If he accepted, he is circumcised forthwith...As soon as he is healed arrangements are made for his immediate ablution, when two learned men must stand by his side and acquaint him with some of the minor commandments and with some of the major ones. When he comes up after his ablution he is deemed to be an Israelite in all respects.

Bekhorot 30b
If a heathen is prepared to accept the Torah except one religious law, we must not receive him. R. Jose son of R. Judah says: Even [if the exception be] one point of the special minutiae of the Scribes enactments.

Yevamot 24b
Mishnah: If a man is suspected of intercourse with a [Gentile] slave who was later emancipated, or with a heathen who subsequently converted, he must not marry her. If, however, he did marry her, they need not be separated.

Gemara: This implies that she may become a proper proselyte. But against this a contradiction is raised. Both a man who became a proselyte for the sake of a woman and a woman who became a proselyte for the sake of a man...are no proper proselytes. These are the words of R. Nehemiah...It was stated that R. Isaac b. Samuel b. Martha said in the name of Rab: The halakhah is in accordance with the opinion of him who maintained that they were all proper proselytes.
The appropriate way to perform the commandment [of conversion] is that when the convert comes to convert, we investigate him lest he be converting for money…or whether he has cast his eye on a Jew…If no inappropriate motivation is discovered, we inform him of the magnitude of the weight of the yoke of Torah and of the tremendous efforts required from Gentiles to perform [its commandments]. If they accepted, and did not change their minds and we see that they have returned out of love, we accept them.

For further reading:
- Rabbi Marc D. Angel, *Choosing to be Jewish: the Orthodox Road to Conversion* (Ktav, 2005).
- Zvi Zohar, “Retroactive Annulment of Conversions?” *Conversations* 2 (Fall 2008), pp. 73-84.