

Keylim Mikvah can be easily built outside a synagogue.

It is said to be a waste of water not to have a filter system. Otherwise the Mikvah will have to be constantly emptied and refilled. All filter systems should have rabbinical approval and supervision.

In the Lower East Side Mikvah, in Manhattan, there is a blower and vent over each Mikvah pool, to prevent the formation of mold.

In Cleveland Heights, OH the message on the telephone answering machine includes information that "A late fee of \$10. will be charged for late arrivals". This is in addition to the regular fee. It has been argued that a small penalty will not deter lateness and would result in some people feeling that they are thereby entitled to come late.

It has been suggested that the recording on the Mikvah's telephone answering machine include the names of one or two people who can be called for questions, etc..

A New Jersey Mikvah states that it is more efficient to keep hot water at the same temperature. They also state that their pipes are of PVC and that use of this material means that they will last longer than otherwise. They also suggest that two small preparation rooms make it likely that women will make

preparations at nearly the same time thus avoiding delay.

At some locations, on Erev Yom Kippur, there are men who wait until the last minute before arriving to use the Mikvah. This creates overcrowding. It is also unfair to the attendant. One Mikvah charges a lower rate to men who come early. This has worked well.

It has been suggested that towels, robes, etc., be white as other colors tend to fade. (Of course, if not washed frequently, white will show dirt quickly.)

A Mikvah in Montreal features a washing machine and a dryer.

In at least two locations, the Mikvah has a lending library books of Jewish interest. In the Mikvah of Baltimore, it includes tapes on topics of special interest to women, given by their local rabbis, including matters of Halacha.

Many a Mikvah has a bulletin board. Others feel that they can distract from the Mikvah experience through the intrusion of commercialism, and because some are not neat. Others feel that they are useful if supervised. It has been suggested that they be under glass with lock and key.

In Chicago, there is a single management in charge of every communal Mikvah.

OUTREACH

Probably the most common form of outreach is “education”.

A Massachusetts city Mikvah arranged a panel discussion of who uses the Mikvah and why. Between 55 and 60 women were present. This included quite a few conservative Jewesses, and was held in the home of one of them. Fifteen new users resulted.

In Hollywood, FL, a parlor meeting was held for a discussion “concerning issues that apply to the Mikvah”. Preparatory to their meeting, women on the congregational mailing list were sent “A List of Reasons That Could Possibly Be Impeding Women From Going to the Mikvah”. Recipients were asked to check those that might apply, in order to aid the panel discussion, and to mail the list anonymously in a self addressed envelope.

The questions follow:

QUESTIONS CONCERNING MIKVAH

Please check the ones that apply to you.

1. I am not observant in this area and do not care to be. _____
2. My husband doesn't want me to go. _____
3. I would like to go but my husband will not follow all of the laws. _____
4. It's inconvenient. _____
5. I would go but I don't want to follow all of the laws. _____
6. My mother didn't go so I am following what she did. _____
7. I am embarrassed in front of the Mikvah lady. _____
8. I am going to a certain Mikvah lady and I
will feel uncomfortable not knowing if a
substitute will be there. _____
9. I don't feel that the Mikvah is clean.
10. I view the concept of the Mikvah and its laws as
an indignity to me and my status as a woman. _____

11. I want to go but I don't know how to begin
and what is involved. _____
12. I would like to go but I will not be able to
follow all the laws immediately. _____
13. I had a bad experience with a Mikvah lady. _____
14. Since I have never gone, I feel that it is too
late to take on this mitzvah. _____
15. Questions and / or suggestions that you would like the panel to address.

Elsewhere, "education" included lectures before womens' business and professional groups.

In a Canadian community there is a periodic "Mikvah Event" under the co-sponsorship of all Jewish womens' organizations including Temples.

Also, the Mikvah puts up a booth at street events and this brings in one or two more users.

In some cases, a talk by someone from out of town has been an effective drawing card.

Another common form of outreach is tours of the Mikvah building. In Montreal, such tours, have become part of preparation for Bat Mitzvah - with accompaniment by the girl's mother, and also the girls are shown a video about the Mikvah. (They are usually held on Sunday or a legal holiday, so as to avoid interference with the mother's job or business.) In at least one Mikvah there is an occasional "open house".

In a New Jersey Mikvah, the tour includes an explanation of the hole through which rain enters.

In another community each rebbetzin is expected to do outreach for the Mikvah, among the women in her synagogue. (However, there are those who feel that a community pays for the services of a Rabbi, but that his family have only the same obligations as others.)

There is a Mikvah mentor, for each person who is thinking of becoming a Mikvah user, and who comes to the attention of the St. Louis Mikvah Association. That Association runs the Sylvia Green Memorial Mikvah and the Rivkin-Zuckerman Shabbos Mikvah.

In a New Jersey community directions to the Mikvah have been made available at major hotels. This resulted from a request at the time of a major convention. This Mikvah is also listed with Jewish Heritage Tours.

One Mikvah sends publications relative to its main function, to prospective users.

Mikvah Israel of Montreal published a series of advertisements, in English-Jewish periodicals, entitled "Myths About Mikvahs". Each ad debunked a specific misunderstanding. Each was paid for by a sponsor.

Other Mikvah personnel also arrange parlor meetings and lectures - in some cases given at meetings of Hadassah groups or co-sponsored by a variety of Jewish organizations.

You do not have to be Orthodox to be a prospective Mikvah user. Indeed, in one community a lady who is the President of the Reform synagogue utilizes the Mikvah every month.

PRIVACY

In some locations the entrance and the exit of the Mikvah are separate, for privacy.

In one Atlanta, GA community, this is carried further, in that, in the parking lot, there is a brick wall to divide those who are coming in from those going out. However, to prevent this from being used for concealment by criminals, it is in the form of lattice work.

In an Ohio community there is a separate Mikvah for men and women.

For the matter of privacy when asking questions of a rabbi, please see Section "Halachic Concerns of Individuals".

In Colorado Springs, CO, there is a Mikvah in a shopping center (in the basement). It is rarely desirable to locate a Mikvah in a busy retail area. But, should doing so be considered, the following two advantages may be noted. (Except when the times of Mikvah use differ from the time of shopping) no one is likely to infer that a lady's destination is a Mikvah, thus affording privacy. Also, the presence of shoppers usually means more security from street crime – but the opposite

would be true outside of shopping hours.

In St. Louis, MO, there is a Mikvah in a building used for offices by a community organization in a business area, (However, it was found necessary to build another one, for Fridays and Yom Tovim, in a residential neighborhood.)

In some locations, the Mikvah schedules special hours for Rabbis and Roshe Hayeshiva, before the Holy Days, so that they will not be there with their members or students.

SANITATION

There is wide agreement that every Mikvah should maintain high standards of sanitation and high standards of cleanliness.

The first steps are use of chlorine, in suitable amounts, and maintenance of proper ph levels.

Businesses that service swimming pools, were suggested by some as a source of information and for supplies.

Another source of information proposed is a water laboratory. One respondent urged that each Mikvah find and post the location and

telephone number of the nearest one.

Filters, particularly sophisticated ones, have been recommended as a major item in maintaining sanitation and cleanliness.

A filter should not be on while the Mikvah is in use. Therefore, one Mikvah is wired so that the switch that turns on the lights in the room where the Mikvah is located, simultaneously turns off the filter - and turns the filter on again afterwards.

In the Baltimore Mikvah, when the filter is on, a continuous audible tape is activated that says "Do not use Mikvah now - filter is running."

Other suggestions received: Disposable slippers; liquid soap (rather than bar soap); and sterilization of scissors, clippers, cuticle scissors, etc..

SECURITY - FOR THE BUILDING

The Anti -Defamation League has published a pamphlet entitled "Security for Community Institutions."

It included discussions of lighting, fences, skylights, fire exits, locks, doors, protective devices, what to do when an incident occurs, support

for the victim, and several other topics.

The pamphlet is available from :

The Anti-Defamation League
823 United Nations Plaza
New York, NY 10017

The pamphlet costs \$2.50 (which includes postage).

SECURITY - FOR INDIVIDUALS

Exterior lighting has been suggested as the first requirement. Devices to turn off the lights when the Mikvah is not in use, similar in principle to a Shabbos clock, are available. These include electric eyes that turn on light automatically when it is dark.

In several locations the Mikvah has closed-circuit TV, so that an attendant can recognize individuals who wish to enter. This is usually accompanied by a button to open the door. Another device is use of a password.

In smaller communities it is uneconomical to have an attendant, and keys are given to the individual users. In Houston, Texas there is a "real estate type lock," i.e. a box that can be opened by dialing a number and

which contains a key inside.

Going in groups is another safety measure.

In some cases, the Mikvah has double doors, an outside door and an inside door.

In the Far Rockaway-Lawrence area the police are requested to give special attention to the Mikvah.

In Montreal there is a local volunteer patrol.

On Friday evenings, in Miam Beach, FL, there is a security guard who meets the Mikvah attendant at her home and escorts her to the Mikvah and back.

In the Mikvah of Baltimore there is a TV-type camera inside the first set of doors, and a door bell which rings at several locations. From each location, the attendant can press a "viewer" and see who is at the door, and (if appropriate) buzz open the front door, without taking the time to go there.

They also have a surveillance at the parking lot whose picture is at a desk inside the Mikvah.

SPECIALISTS

Architects

The following architects have been recommended to us as having experience in Mikvah design.

Donald Moses
10705 Meadow Road
Silver Springs, MD 20901
Tel. - (301) 593-8735

Todd Rosenblum
112 Great Oaks Blvd.
Albany, NY 12203
Tel. - (518) 464-6232

One of our respondents urged that we recommend that preference be given to a Sabbath observer when choosing an architect. Your Editor agrees fully with this (of course provided that the quality of work and fee are appropriate).

Years ago, your Editor had an idea that he thought would reduce the cost of developing new synagogue buildings. I consulted an architect (who has since died) who had designed some very beautiful structures for congregations. His reply, (which disappointed me) was that any congregation

that must limit synagogue construction to a budget should not build.

If your Mikvah will be one of the many which must be so limited, and you retain an architect who hopes to eventually induce you to spend more than you now contemplate, you may face a serious problem. Your Editor therefore suggests that, in a conference with the prospective architect, you try to learn about his / her tastes and views.

Consultants

The following have been recommended to us as consultants:

Mr. Julius Lederer
1537-56th Street
Brooklyn, NY 11219
Tel. - (718) 851-8875

-with particular reference to water heating and pumps.

Rabbi Nachum Rosenberg
115 Clymer Street
Brooklyn, NY 11211
Tel. - (718) 384-3674
Tel. - (718) 963-1110

-with particular reference to Halacha.

Rabbi Zeev Rothschild
615 Forest Ave.
Lakewood, NJ 08701
Tel. - (908) 370-8052
Tel. (908) 367-9677

Rabbi Asher Weill
6019 North Drake Street
Chicago, IL 60659
Tel.- (773) 583-8840

It would be outside this publication's scope to make recommendations among individuals. However, your Editor can state that he met personally with Rabbi Rosenberg and was impressed by him.

Management and Communications Systems

Heine Tech Inc.
12 Hilltop Lane
Monsey, NY 10952
Tel. - (914) 352-6605

was recommended to us. They design, produce and install computer controlled Mikvah management and communication systems. They suggest a visit to see their system in operation, and state that three of them are in Brooklyn. They are represented by Joseph B. Heinemann.

UNIONS

Many years ago, a synagogue then being built, in Los Angeles, obtained a voluntary concession from the construction labor unions, which made possible a lower cost for the building.

Those constructing a Mikvah may wish to try to follow that example. Of course, it is likely to be more difficult, because the purpose of a Mikvah is much less widely known. However, if your rabbi is acquainted with the spiritual leader of some union official, that problem may perhaps be met.

It should be pointed out that the special nature of this religious institution means that the concession could rarely be cited as a precedent. Also, it might be that if a concession is not granted, the Mikvah would not be built, in which case there would be no construction jobs from it.

As mentioned earlier, a mid-western Mikvah, did something in the other direction. They rented a backhoe, did the excavation themselves, and also did the lesser skilled construction jobs.

In their community, this apparently did not raise any problem. Elsewhere, however, it might cause controversy.

“USER FRIENDLY” FEATURES

It has been recommended that one consult with a professional decorator regarding an overall feeling of the building decor, instead of engaging in piece-meal decoration.

It has also been suggested that one try to have colors and lights that produce a calming effect on people.

In Woodridge, NY, a digital thermometer controls the water temperature to one-half of a degree. As soon as you enter, you see the reading. It can be set in advance, and it makes for greater comfort.

In the last-named Mikvah, as well as in some others, there is a net available to keep hair from floating. It may be purchased in some beauty parlors, as well as from pool supply companies.

A New York City Mikvah provides robes with hoods, as they are warmer. Another Mikvah suggests pre-shrunk, non-shrinking, robes.

In Passaic-Clifton, NJ, they have a robe warmer in every room, to warm each robe before use.

In a Massachusetts Mikvah there are bathrobes, bath towels, bathtubs

and soap, in fancy colors.

Non-slip tiles have been suggested, as a matter of safety. Also 2 inch by 2 inch tiles have been recommended for wet surfaces and floors, because they provide more traction for one's feet than do the larger tiles.

Light-colored tile has been suggested as more cheerful than dark tile.

In a New Jersey Mikvah there are rugs rather than mats, which they find especially important in the winter. They suggest that these should match the color of the tile.

We are informed that use of radiant heat is very effective for comfort and for keeping the floor dry.

It has been suggested that the grout (i.e. the cement-based material used between the individual tiles) should be of a dark color and not white. The reason is that mopping loosens some of the grout and deposits it on the white tile, causing the latter to eventually appear to be dirty. Also, colored grout is said not to pick up stains. On the other hand, similar considerations might be used to argue for white grout and tiles of a dark color.

The Lower East Side Mikvah, in Manhattan, has a blower over each room.

Also, please see the Sanitation Section.

In one New York State community, the ladies decided that the Mikvah needed a face lift. A few got together and stenciled the walls themselves. It became a more user friendly place.

Your Editor suggests consideration of a questionnaire, calling for anonymous response from the Mikvah users, asking what they like and what they dislike about its operation, and calling for suggestions. Your Editor's experience, in business, was that such a questionnaire produced valuable information not otherwise available. In Mikvah-related matters, face-to-face inquiries are likely to be less productive because of the personal nature of Mikvah use.

WHERE THERE IS A WILL, THERE IS A WAY

Unusual In-House Neighbors

To our knowledge the Mikvah in most locations is in a separate building (in some cases, with an apartment for the attendant), or is in the same building as a synagogue (with a separate entrance).

However, in some instances, the Mikvah has a neighbor or neighbors, in the same building, whose activities are entirely unrelated to the Mikvah.

This is not mentioned here to suggest that anyone should seek such situations. Its purpose is to indicate that if conventional locations for a Mikvah are out of reach financially, or otherwise unavailable, the experiences of others indicates that a Mikvah can function successfully even in unconventional locations.

In Colorado City, CO, the Mikvah is located in basement space (that was going to be rented for a Jacuzzi). While the builder was an observant Jew, it subsequently was sold to a person of another faith, with the Mikvah space being leased back. We are informed that it continues to operate successfully.

In Sioux City, IO the Mikvah is in a building which also houses a non-Orthodox synagogue, as well as the local Jewish federation.

In another Mid-western city the Mikvah is located in the building where the Kashrut supervision is handled.

In Madison, WI, the local rabbi and rebbetzin built a Mikvah in their back bedroom, with a door to the street.

In some cases a Mikvah is in a school building.

In the Pelham Parkway area of the Bronx, in New York City, the Etz Chaim Mikvah is in the basement of a building where the ground floor is occupied for commercial purposes, and the second floor is divided into two apartments. The Mikvah is used by people in its immediate area, as well as by those from the nearby Albert Einstein College of Medicine.

A Drought vs. A mikvah. Who Won?

In Portland, Oregon, a drought left a Mikvah without sufficient water.

A truck was driven to a point in the Rocky Mountains where snow (pure, both ritually and physically) was obtained and brought down to the Mikvah. Thus, the Mikvah won! (Of course, one in such a situation should check with the local rabbi before taking any steps, as they did.)

BIBLIOGRAPHY

The following has been copied, by permission, from A Taste of the Mikvah, prepared by Robin B. Zeiger, Ph.D., published by the Young Israel of Richmond. The booklet itself, is available from:

The Mikvah Association of Richmond
c/o Young Israel
4811 Patterson Ave.
Richmond, VA 23226

There is a charge of \$5.00 to cover postage and shipping costs.

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Total Immersion, a Mikvah anthology, by Rivka Slonim,
of Binghamton, NY is available from JEWELS (address below)
and from many Judaica bookstores.

JEWELS publishes a free catalog of books, booklets, videotapes,
gift packages, and personal items, relating to the topic of a Mikvah
(as well as some dealing with other aspects of Judaism). Among them
are a video "Still Waters" (\$19.95) and a tape "Enhancing Intimacy"
(\$18.00). They are located at 312 Kingston Avenue, Brooklyn, NY 11213.
Tel. - (718) 756-5700.

It Is No Jacuzzi. A script of an amusing skit relating to Mikvah matters, is available, without charge, from the author, Mrs. Louise Eskanos, 29 Alta Vista Road, Colorado Springs, CO 80906.

A Guide to the Mitzvah of Tevillah, by Rebbetzin Paula Rivkin, 7944 Cornell Ave., St. Louis, MO 63130, a small pamphlet containing laws relating to Mikvah use.


Mikvah Israel of Montreal has published video tapes and printed materials. Information about obtaining copies can be secured by telephoning (514) 487-5581. (If no answer, you may call (514) 731-2840 and ask for Mrs. Gurary.)

Security for Community Institutions. Available from the Anti-Defamation League. 823 United Nations Plaza, New York, NY 10017, for \$2.50 (which includes postage). This pamphlet is described briefly in a section above entitled "Security for the Building."

Mikvah Directory. Published by the Orthodox Union, 333 Seventh Ave., New York, NY 10001, for \$4.95 (which includes postage), compiled by Arlene L. Eis. Without that book, this report could not have been made.

It includes every Mikvah which they could locate, in 1995, located in the U.S., Canada and Mexico. (However, it does not contain any other material.)

CHECKLIST FOR IMMERSION

1. From the onset of your period, did you wait at least five days and afterwards make a proper Hefsek Taharah examination which was completed before sunset?
2. Did you count your seven clean days, making the required internal examinations?
3. Take a bath and shower and wash everywhere (with hot water and soap), including under the arms, naval, between fingers and toes, earring holes, other crevices, etc.
4. All body hair should be washed with warm water and combed carefully, all hair (including under arms, etc.) so that it is not knotted or matted.
5. Clean your ears (cotton, earplugs, etc.). If you have pierced ears and have not worn earrings today, clean earring holes.
6. Remove secretion from your eyes. If you wear contact lenses check whether you have removed them.
7. Removed all traces of cosmetics (lipstick, eyeshadow, etc.) using a makeup remover, then wash face thoroughly.
8. Clean your nose. (Clean nose again just prior to immersion.)
9. Clean your teeth thoroughly. Rinse your mouth and remove false teeth and removable dentures.
10. Cut all finger and toenails and smooth rough edges with a nail file. Remove nail polish and clean dirt around nails. In the summer special attention must be given to toenails. Remove loose hanging skin which is *easily* removed. Remove scabs or at least soften those which are difficult to remove. (Keep scabs wet until attendant is ready for you.)
11. If you have used paint, magic marker, food coloring or staining in the last few days, remove all traces of substance.
12. Remove all jewelry; rings, earrings, etc.
13. Remove all band-aids, etc. (Check for remnants of adhesives).
14. Use the toilet if necessary (and cleanse yourself properly).
15. After all preparations are complete, even if done at home, a warm shower must still be taken at Mikvah before immersion. Recomb hair.
16. RECHECK – (even if coming from home) – all parts of your body, especially your face, hands and feet. Make sure that there are no foreign substances adhering to yourself. Recomb hair.
17. Bring all problem (temporary fillings, splinters, scabs, stitches, stains, etc.) to the attention of the attendant.
18. NOW YOU ARE READY... Press *ready button*  on call box. You will be taken in order as number appears on monitor at attendants station. For Shabbos/Yom Tov use push lucite indicator on wall above call box. DOOR MAY ONLY BE OPENED BY ATTENDANT. THERE WILL BE NO NEED FOR CALLING OUT OR KNOCKING.
19. AFTER IMMERSION... in case you should have a Sha'aloh do not hesitate to call attendant. Please note: In the event that a second immersion is necessary, it is only valid when done in the presence of the attendant and no brocha is necessary.
20. Before leaving, PLEASE clean your room, remove hair, nail clippings, powder, make-up, paper, etc. from tub, sink, and countertops. Please bring linen to laundry room as you exit. Sink for Netilas Yadayim (without a brocha) is located at the exit door across from the laundry room.