

Dear Sister!

In just a few moments, you will immerse in the pure, enlivening mikveh waters. You are thus the current link in a chain that goes back more than three thousand years! Three thousand years of connection, three thousand years of woman's wisdom. Your immersion grants you freedom from every distraction. Take this opportunity as a gift to connect to those women who came before you and to Jewish women all over the world. Take this opportunity as a gift to connect to your own depth as a Jewish woman.

The mikveh is like the womb of creation. As you immerse in those warm mikveh waters, you become like a baby in her mother's womb, the moment before creation. Anything can be. This is the time for hope; mikveh, tikvah. Renewal and transformation are at your fingertips. Open your heart and speak to your Creator. Nothing is too big, nothing too small.

As you stand on the brink of your immersion, know your power. Imagine that you are a channel connecting heaven and earth. Through your prayer, you draw down positive energy and abundant blessing. "The King does not send back the prayers of the princess unanswered, [rather] they burst through the highest heavens." (Lapidot)

Putting your trust in G-d, you become enveloped in His comfort. Nothing can harm you. The heavens are spread open above you. Allow your thoughts to come into focus and let each immersion be an expression of your gratitude, request or prayer. If you're unable to concentrate or remember specific intentions, just know that the power of your purity and renewal are rooted in the simplicity of this action.

May you be blessed with a new authentic connection to your body and to your soul. May you be blessed with a deepened connection to your beloved husband. May abundant joy and peace flow from this connection to your home, to the people you love, and to the whole world. It starts right here, right now.

With Blessings,

Women of the Waters, Tsfat Mikveh

A Practical and Spiritual Checklist for Mikveh Preparation

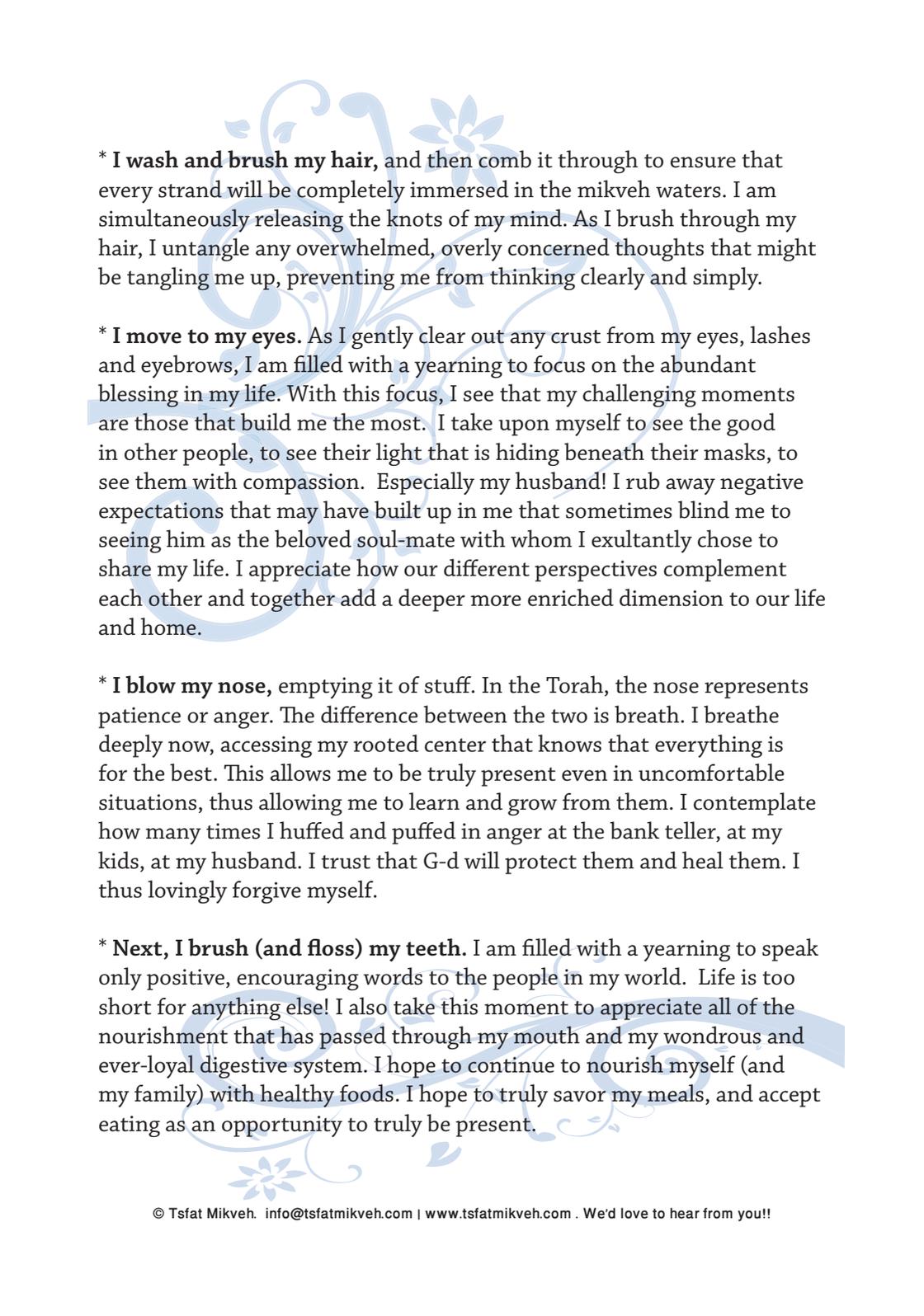
A mikveh pool is in a sense, a womb of creation. I immerse in the mikveh as I was in my mother's womb. This entails stripping away anything that is not actually an essential part of me, ensuring that nothing separates between me and the enveloping mikveh waters, so that I can be reborn; so that I can be renewed.

As I go through my mikveh preparations, the external motions have a profound effect on the deeper parts of who I am.

*** I take off my clothes and jewelry.** I rub off my makeup and also the nail polish on my hands and feet. In so doing, I am simultaneously peeling away the layers of stress, guilt, resentment, sadness... that have become encrusted, eclipsing the light of my soul. As I stand without these external expressions of myself, I appreciate my simple, raw beauty. Detached from external amenities, a tranquil joy rushes over me.

*** I start by soaking in the bath for 20 minutes.** I invite this opportunity to enjoy undistracted, unplugged connection! My skin softens, and with it my whole being. My hard outer shell, always ready to confront the world head on, relaxes and softens. This eases my ability to scrub every inch of my body, with a wash cloth or mitt, getting to those forgotten places that are oh so important like my back and my Achilles tendon (behind my ankle). This tendon keeps me upright and yet I pay such little attention to it. I take this moment to conjure up those important aspects of myself which have been denied expression for too long; those desires and creative abilities that have been lying dormant. It's time for them to shine! As I remove any dirt or dead skin, I release the "stuff" that blocks me from being a soft, yet strong, feminine being.

After a general body scrub, I start from my head. It is taught that my face is a seven-branched menorah. As I wash, I have intention that the seven openings of my face are the seven lights through which my pure, radiant, stress free, happy, and hopeful soul shines through.



* **I wash and brush my hair**, and then comb it through to ensure that every strand will be completely immersed in the mikveh waters. I am simultaneously releasing the knots of my mind. As I brush through my hair, I untangle any overwhelmed, overly concerned thoughts that might be tangling me up, preventing me from thinking clearly and simply.

* **I move to my eyes**. As I gently clear out any crust from my eyes, lashes and eyebrows, I am filled with a yearning to focus on the abundant blessing in my life. With this focus, I see that my challenging moments are those that build me the most. I take upon myself to see the good in other people, to see their light that is hiding beneath their masks, to see them with compassion. Especially my husband! I rub away negative expectations that may have built up in me that sometimes blind me to seeing him as the beloved soul-mate with whom I exultantly chose to share my life. I appreciate how our different perspectives complement each other and together add a deeper more enriched dimension to our life and home.

* **I blow my nose**, emptying it of stuff. In the Torah, the nose represents patience or anger. The difference between the two is breath. I breathe deeply now, accessing my rooted center that knows that everything is for the best. This allows me to be truly present even in uncomfortable situations, thus allowing me to learn and grow from them. I contemplate how many times I huffed and puffed in anger at the bank teller, at my kids, at my husband. I trust that G-d will protect them and heal them. I thus lovingly forgive myself.

* **Next, I brush (and floss) my teeth**. I am filled with a yearning to speak only positive, encouraging words to the people in my world. Life is too short for anything else! I also take this moment to appreciate all of the nourishment that has passed through my mouth and my wondrous and ever-loyal digestive system. I hope to continue to nourish myself (and my family) with healthy foods. I hope to truly savor my meals, and accept eating as an opportunity to truly be present.

* **I gently clean out my ears** with a swab stick or my little finger, inside, out, and behind (I use a toothpick or earring to clean out my earring holes. Let me only hear good things! Let me hear the harmony in my life, even though everything seems to be so chaotic. Let me truly hear what my children are saying when they speak to me, and hear what it is that they are not saying. Let me hear that story or joke that my husband has told a hundred times, as if it was the first time. Let me deeply hear him say “I love you” through the little things he does for me.

Great! I’ve cleansed the seven openings of my face; feeling so blessed with my healthy two eyes, two nostrils, two ears, and a mouth. I feel my true self, my pure soul, shining out clearer and brighter than before. My menorah. How refreshing!

Now we move to the body...

* **Okay, torso.** I look over my upper body, my arms and my chest. And as I check for any lingering thing that might separate me from those powerful mikveh waters, I contemplate the strength of my back and my shoulders. I am able to carry such responsibility! I relax my shoulders, and thus release tension that may have been stored there. How else can I let go? Can I delegate more? Can I have more trust in G-d that really He is running the show? I feel myself relaxing even more still.

My chest; What a miracle it is that I can provide perfect nourishment for my children! What a gift, that I am blessed to gather them into my arms and hold them tight in my embrace. Motherhood is a gift of an experience that is deeper than the ocean depths, more beautiful than a breathtaking sunset. Thank G-d for a taste of the Divine.

* **My hands.** I trim my fingernails to a comfortable length, remove hanging cuticles and clean out underneath my nails. Constantly in action for others and for myself, my hands represent everything I do (and don’t have a chance to do) in the world. I accept my limitations with love, and am filled with a prayer to do good things in the world; that through my actions I’ll bring a little more love, light and peace to those around me.

***Next, I look over my stomach,** clean out my belly button with a swab stick, and check my feminine parts (removing any substance inside, and combing the hair here also). I am filled with gratitude for my monthly cycle, flowing smoothly. I am grateful for being a moon-being, reflecting that life is an ebb and flow journey. I am grateful that my ebb and flow has the power to bring renewal and depth to my marriage with my beloved. I open myself up to receive pleasure and to give pleasure. I am filled with a prayer for Divine blessing in my rhythms of pregnancy and birth.

*** Now, legs. What great legs!** I look them over, making sure no loose hairs have slid down. If I generally shave, then I luxuriously do such. I note that I'm not going to be going out on the town after this, rather I am going straight home to my beloved husband. It is for me and for him primarily that I carefully keep myself beautiful.

*** And my feet.** I carefully trim my toenails to a comfortable length. I trim hanging cuticles. I remove the dirt under the nails and between my toes. If I have not yet, I scrub well the heels and bottoms of my feet, removing the dead callous skin. My devoted feet, holding up me for hours and hours on end. I've got to dance more! I am filled with a prayer that my feet will continue to faithfully take me where I need to go, and that I will trust them when they know better than my head. May my feet dance me through the symphony of my life, the high moments and the low, the fast and the slow, dancing appropriately to the subtlety of each beat in the carefully conducted symphony that is my life.

My newly clarified vision sees my body in a new light. I am beautiful. I love every curve and stretchmark and appreciate my ever evolving womanhood and ability to flow and grow with every new stage in life. A woman's body, what a wonder. Always in the process of becoming. That's about it! The whole process takes me about an hour. When I'm ready, I call the mikveh attendant, and prepare to enter the womb of the mikveh, prepare to be born into a new level of love and connection with myself, my husband and G-d.

Before I call my mikveh attendant, who will escort me to the mikveh pool, I check my whole body again for stray hairs or anything else that may separate me from the waters. When the attendant comes she may do a quick run through of my preparation to make sure that I didn't forget anything. I so appreciate a "sister" to help me double check. Both she and I are confident that I prepared thoroughly. She escorts me to the mikveh pool. I take off my robe (and crocs) and slowly walk down the steps of the pool.

I stretch my arms up, connecting heaven and earth, spread my fingers and immerse. There are differing customs regarding my position as I plunge into the water. Some women immerse in the fetal position, others spread out parallel to the mikveh floor. However I immerse is great. After one immersion, I stop and the attendant hands me a towel or cap. I place it on my head, fold my arms across my chest separating my upper and lower body, and say the blessing:

ברוך אתה ה' אלוקינו מלך העולם אשר קדשנו במצותיו וציונו על הטבילה

Blessed are you G-d (you are the source of all of the amazing gifts in my life),
Ruler of the universe, (You are running the show, I trust You),
Who has made us holy through His commandments
(who, through these powerful spiritual practices, gives us glimpses of His light in a way that we can reflect it)
and gives us the opportunity to immerse.

I immerse again. There are also different customs as to how many times to immerse. Each immersion can be dedicated to something else.

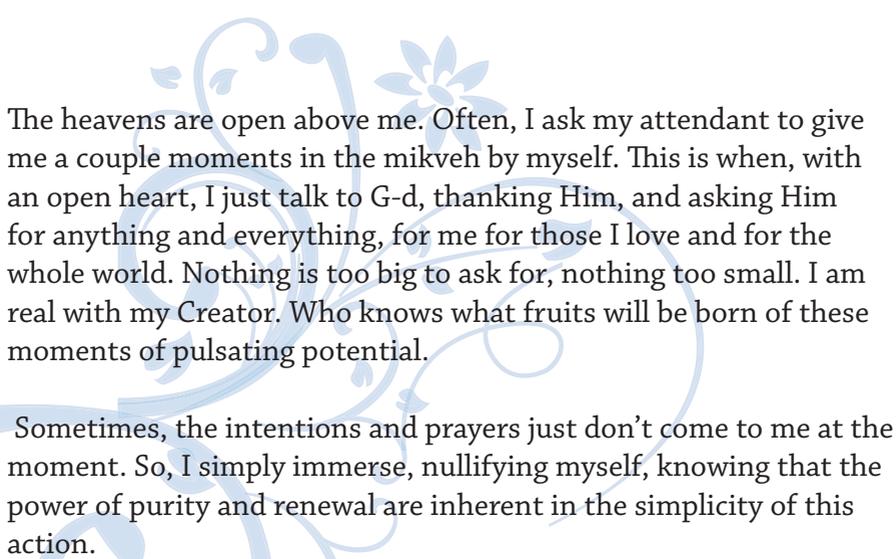
"May I have true inner peace!" **Immerse.**

"May my husband have a complete healing!" **Immerse.**

"May my son find equanimity and cease his outbursts!" **Immerse.**

"May my community have abundance in every way!" **Immerse.**

"May there be a true healing for the whole world and thus a lasting tikkun olam!" **Immerse.**

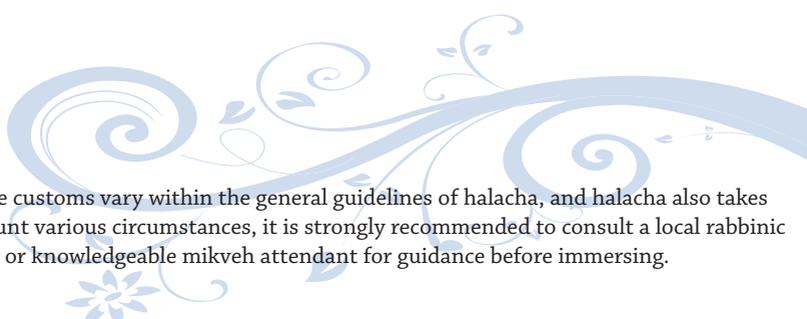


The heavens are open above me. Often, I ask my attendant to give me a couple moments in the mikveh by myself. This is when, with an open heart, I just talk to G-d, thanking Him, and asking Him for anything and everything, for me for those I love and for the whole world. Nothing is too big to ask for, nothing too small. I am real with my Creator. Who knows what fruits will be born of these moments of pulsating potential.

Sometimes, the intentions and prayers just don't come to me at the moment. So, I simply immerse, nullifying myself, knowing that the power of purity and renewal are inherent in the simplicity of this action.

My attendant says: "Kosher," pure, after each immersion (ashkenazi custom) or after my last immersion (sefardi custom). The sages say that when the attendant calls out "kosher", it reverberates through the seven heavens and purifies the world. I don't shower afterwards, and thus bring all of that home into my relationship with my husband.

***What an awesome gift it is, this power of a Jewish woman,
to bring purity and renewal to herself,
her family, her people, and the whole world!***



** Because customs vary within the general guidelines of halacha, and halacha also takes into account various circumstances, it is strongly recommended to consult a local rabbinic authority or knowledgeable mikveh attendant for guidance before immersing.



*Tsfat Mikveh blesses
you with a life of
renewal, hope and
happiness.*

