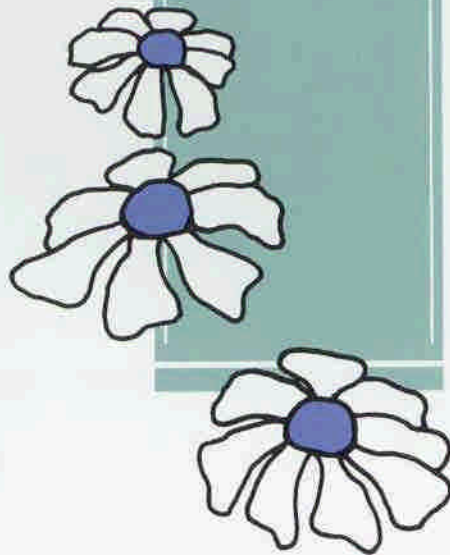


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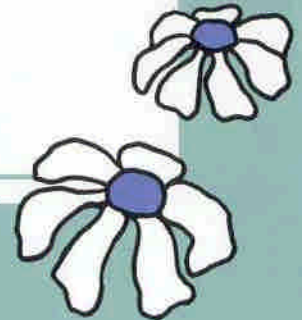


## LOVE THAT IS BLESSED

**A** Judaism is very realistic in its understanding of human sexuality. It understands there is love between men and women that is unique and total, that reaches fulfillment in physical expression.

In tender and moving language, Torah celebrates this love between husband and wife. It calls Jewish marriage "kiddushin" ... sanctification, and gives us the guidelines through which husband and wife can sanctify their love for each other.

These guidelines, "Taharat Hamishpachah", the Laws of Family Purity, have been a sacred part of our Jewish heritage since the beginnings of our history. They are G-d's way for husband and wife to live together and love. By practicing the ritual of Mikvah and accepting the presence of G-d into their marriage, the intimate relationship of man and wife is itself good and beautiful and holy. It is worthy of receiving G-d's blessing.





## A N EXPRESSION OF LOVE

Torah commands that husband and wife must not have physical relations during the wife's menstrual period, and for one week afterwards. During this time, they treat each other with respect and affection, but without any physical contact.

This period of abstinence can be a rewarding time when husband and wife learn to communicate on levels other than the physical. It provides an opportunity for them to become friends and partners who talk more and listen more.

Then, the wife immerses herself in the pure, natural waters of the mikvah and says a blessing thanking G-d for giving her this mitzvah.

The mikvah immersion has nothing to do with hygiene. It is not meant to clean the body, but to cleanse the spirit. When

PHOTO: Waiting rooms are bright, relaxing and discreet.



a Jewish wife visits the mikvah it is a spiritual preparation through which she enjoys a refreshing sense of being renewed, both physically and psychologically.

After her immersion, she and her husband renew their intimate relationship, their love revitalized and refreshed.

## A BEAUTIFUL TIME

A Jewish wife visits the mikvah each month after her menstrual period finishes and she has counted seven "clean" days free of any menstrual discharge. The privacy of this delicate and beautiful time is ensured because these visits are made in the evening.



PHOTO: The mikvah pool, with its pure and natural water, is heated and kept scrupulously clean.





First, she bathes and washes her hair. She removes all make-up, nail polish, jewelry and contact lenses, so nothing will come between her body and the

pure mikvah waters. Then, with the assistance and advice of a lady attendant, she immerses herself and recites a brief blessing.

A bride visits the mikvah for the first time after her menstrual period and just before her wedding. It is important to plan the wedding date carefully with this mitzvah in mind.

During her child-bearing years, she continues to visit the mikvah once each month, and after childbirth.

Even if a woman has reached menopause and has never visited the mikvah, she should still perform the ritual of mikvah immersion once. Then she and her husband can enjoy the rest of their married life together knowing their marriage and their relationship is blessed by G-d.

PHOTO: Ritual and grooming supplies are provided at most mikvaot.



## FOR A LIFETIME

In following the Laws of Torah, we are rewarded by knowing we are fulfilling the commandments of G-d. The mitzvah of mikvah also gives us other tangible rewards.

Mikvah can enhance the relationship between husband and wife, helping them develop a friendship that is rich and deep and teaching them to communicate on levels other than the physical.

Alternating times of physical contact and abstinence can make the attraction between husband and wife last a lifetime. The love they feel for each other continues to have the freshness and excitement of the first days of their marriage.

During the time of abstinence, husband and wife are reminded that each partner is a vital, independent individual. The respect they feel for each other may be reinforced and renewed.

In our confusing world it is difficult to have a successful happy marriage. But throughout our history, the strength and stability of the Jewish family have been the envy of all cultures. Through the Laws of Family Purity G-d has given us this hope for a "happily ever after" for husband and wife. Mikvah creates a beautiful balance in which a marriage, and a family, can begin in love and certainty and continue to grow and strengthen through a lifetime.



## A NEW BEGINNING

G-d cherishes all His people, both those who accept His Law throughout all their lives and, perhaps more so, those who have not followed His way in the past, but wish to begin.

This brochure is meant only as a brief introduction. If you wish to understand more about the magnificent beginnings possible through the mitzvah of mikvah, your questions will be welcomed by your local Mikvah Association, your Rabbi or his wife.



## A GATHERING OF WATER

The word "mikvah" means "a gathering of water"... natural water. Built according to exact rules of dimension and acceptable source of natural water, a mikvah is a small pool, usually about four feet deep, filled with clean, clear water.

Today, most Jewish communities boast a mikvah that is modern and bright with beautifully appointed preparation and dressing rooms and a mikvah pool that is heated and scrupulously clean.

In Hebrew, natural spring water is called "living water". With its clear waters, the mikvah is a powerful symbol of life and rebirth. Throughout our history, the ritual of mikvah immersion has been a means of spiritual purification, helping us prepare for events of great spiritual significance. In ancient times, the high priest of the Temple in Jerusalem immersed himself





in the mikvah five separate times during the services for Yom Kippur, each time reaching a higher spiritual level.

In our time, the mikvah is mainly used as a vital part of the Laws of Family Purity. As it has always been the role of a Jewish wife to set the spiritual tone of her home, it is the Jewish wife who ensures the spiritual dimension of the intimate marriage relationship. By immersing in the clear waters of the mikvah, she spiritually prepares herself to resume this relationship with her husband.

**PHOTOS:** Today, most mikvaot are housed in modern facilities (above) that include well appointed and private preparation suites (left) with full baths, dressing areas, towels and hair dryers.



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**A Guide to Jewish Family Laws,** by Rabbi Zev Schostak.

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**Code of Jewish Law**

## EDUCATIONAL VIDEO

**The Sanctity of Jewish Marriage:** Insights into the Mitzvah of Taharat Hamishpacha (Jewish Family Purity).

Available through Mikveh Israel of Montreal. (Address below)

This brochure was prepared by:



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