



**The Naomi Bulka
Community Mikvah**

The Naomi Bulka Community Mikvah

Serving Ottawa's Jewish Community

Mikvah immersion is a special opportunity for rejuvenation and renewal, while simultaneously connecting us to Jewish women who have used the mikvah from generation to generation.

The following guide helps to prepare a woman for her visit to Ottawa's community mikvah. It is our goal that every woman's experience at the mikvah is welcoming and uplifting.

If you are a new mikvah user, it is recommended that you speak with your Rabbi, Rebbetzin, mikvah teacher or spiritual leader prior to making your appointment in order to learn more about the details of this special practice.

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1. Making an Appointment to Use the Mikvah

The mikvah is open by appointment only, during evening and daytime hours. Your Rabbi, Rebbetzin, mikvah teacher or spiritual leader will help confirm if your immersion is to be scheduled during the evening or the daytime.

A. Evening Hours: *Tabarat HaMishpacha* and Bridal Immersions

- Evening use of the mikvah is generally reserved for women using the mikvah for *Tabarat HaMishpacha* (observance of the Laws of Family Purity) or for bridal immersions. Some examples of *Tabarat HaMishpacha* immersions are an immersion following a menstrual cycle, following childbirth or after a miscarriage.
- All women from the community are welcome to make an appointment during these hours.
- Evening hours are set daily, based on the time of sunset. Appointments can be made up to one week in advance and should be made at least one day prior to the night of the immersion.
- To make an evening appointment: Please begin by calling the Soloway Jewish Community Centre (Soloway JCC) main line at (613) 798-9818 and follow the menu prompts for the mikvah. Your first menu selection will be #9 and follow the menu prompts to select the day you would like to make an appointment.
- You will then hear a personal voice message from the attendant of the selected night. She will request that you leave her a voicemail after her message, or alternatively, she might request you contact her directly at another number.
- After leaving a message, you can expect to hear back from the attendant within 24 hours. The attendant will call you back to confirm the time you would like to come, and how much time you will need to prepare at the mikvah.
- When there are several women using the mikvah the same evening, the attendant will stagger the arrival times to ensure each woman has ample time to prepare in a relaxed manner and enjoy her mikvah experience.

B. Daytime Hours: Conversions, Immersions for all Other Purposes and Educational Opportunities

- Daytime use of the mikvah is reserved for individuals (of any gender) performing immersion for conversion or any other purpose. Discuss with your Rabbi, Rebbetzin, mikvah teacher or spiritual leader as to what specific personal situations would be befitting of an immersion in the mikvah. Daytime use is also for those wishing to have access to the mikvah for educational opportunities, such as classes or tours.
- Daytime hours are defined as before sunset on a given day, and as long as the Soloway JCC front desk is open.
- To make a daytime appointment: Please have your Rabbi or Rebbetzin contact Julie Hay directly at jhay@jccottawa.com or (613) 798-9818 ext. 251. Julie will schedule your requested appointment and coordinate access to the mikvah with your Rabbi or Rebbetzin. Please note that there are no regularly scheduled attendants during the daytime but for safety reasons it is not recommended that a person immerse without another person present. Therefore, your Rabbi, Rebbetzin, mikvah teacher or spiritual leader will either accompany you or will designate another individual to accompany you at your immersion.
- Appointments can be made as far in advance as you like. Bookings are usually for 1-2 hours.



C. Brides

- The immersion before a woman's wedding is very special and significant. For this reason, we try to schedule bridal immersion appointments at a time when no other women are using the mikvah, either before or after the regular evening hours. This ensures that a bride can take the time she needs in preparation and can have focus and privacy during this time.
- Please discuss your timeline for immersion with your Rabbi, Rebbetzin, mikvah teacher or spiritual leader. A bride usually immerses within four days of her wedding. While a bride often immerses in the evening, she is also able to immerse during the day.
- It is a great honour for an evening attendant to be able to serve as the attendant for a bride. When booking your appointment, please let the attendant know that you are a bride, so she is able to schedule your appointment accordingly and prepare the mikvah for you.
- A bride is able to make her appointment more than a week in advance if that is her preference, but since the nightly rotation of volunteers does change regularly, a bride might not know which woman will be serving as her attendant until the week of the immersion.
- A bride may choose to bring other female family members to her immersion if that is her preference or family custom. Please let the attendant know if this is your plan.
- If a bride has been learning with another woman in preparation for mikvah, and would like that woman to be her attendant for her immersion, this can be arranged. Please discuss this with the evening attendant at the time of making your appointment.

2. Preparation for Coming to the Mikvah

- There are different practices as to how to prepare physically for coming to the mikvah. It is recommended that you speak directly with your Rabbi, Rebbetzin, mikvah teacher or spiritual leader, to learn more about the custom of mikvah preparation in your community. You are encouraged to prepare for mikvah in whatever way is meaningful for you.
- The common practice for women observing *Taharat HaMishpacha* is to count seven days after the completion of a woman's cycle, marking each day with *bedikot* - internal checks, to ensure that the cycle has completely stopped. Then, in preparation for immersion on the night after the 7th day, a woman will prepare her body physically for the immersion. This begins by taking a bath and by removing anything that is not a permanent part of her body — makeup, nail polish, jewelry, etc. These steps can be done at home or upon arrival at the mikvah. Then, at the mikvah, a shower will be taken immediately prior to immersing.
- When booking your appointment, the attendant will ask how much time you will need to prepare. This is to ensure adequate time between appointments. If a woman is planning to bathe and do all her preparations at the mikvah, she will be booked for approximately one hour. If she is just touching up on her preparations and taking a shower, she will be booked for 15-30 minutes.
- What to bring: The mikvah is equipped with a bath and shower in each room, as well as robes in different sizes, body and face towels and bath slippers (both disposable and washable). The preparation rooms also have some toiletries available, such as makeup remover, contact solution, cotton balls & Q-tips. It is recommended that you bring personal items such as a toothbrush, hairbrush, nail clippers and tweezers, if those items will be needed. If you forget any of these items, they are available in new sealed packages at the mikvah.

3. Upon Arrival at the Mikvah

- The door to the mikvah is located around the back of the Soloway JCC, on the eastward facing side, beside the back loading door. There is a door buzzer with the label 'mikvah'. Press the button and the attendant will open the door for you. If the attendant does not come immediately, wait a minute or two and buzz again. The attendant might have been observing an immersion.
- If you are being dropped off or picked up from the mikvah, please be dropped off in the parking area closest to Kerr Ave, rather than directly in front of the mikvah, to ensure everyone's privacy.
- You will be invited to use whichever of the preparation rooms is available. The attendant will ask you if you need anything. There is an intercom in your room to call the attendant as well, if you have any questions or require any supplies.



4. Preparing for Immersion

- While the attendants are all familiar with the observance of *Taharat Hamishpacha* and the ritual of immersion, they are only present to be a witness to the immersion and not to act as a religious authority. Preparation and guidelines for the immersion should be discussed with a woman's Rabbi, Rebbetzin, mikvah teacher or spiritual leader.

- A woman can take as much time as she needs in the preparation room. This is her time for introspection and spiritual focus in anticipation of immersion.
- It is requested that, regardless of what specific preparation a woman has undertaken, every woman take a warm shower before entering the mikvah.
- After completing your preparation, feel free to put on one of the bathrobes or towels provided. Use the intercom in your preparation room to notify the mikvah attendant that you are ready. The attendant will knock at the door connecting your preparation room to the mikvah. If you are ready, you can open the door and enter the mikvah.

5. Immersion

- It is now time for the actual immersion, a deeply personal and spiritual experience. Feel free to take a few moments for prayer and reflection before beginning your immersion.
- When approaching the mikvah, the attendant will ask you, “Do you want me to check anything?” You can accept this offer and specify what you would like checked, or you can decline entirely. Some women want the attendant to quickly check for forgotten jewelry or other removable or extraneous items. This is entirely the choice of the woman immersing.
- As with all other parts of the immersion process, it is important to discuss your preference and your community customs with your Rabbi, Rebbetzin, mikvah teacher or spiritual leader in order to determine how many times you want to immerse. In some communities the custom is to immerse only once, in others three times and some women immerse as many as seven times. Take a moment to discuss with the attendant how many submersions you plan to do and if you will be reciting any prayers before or after you submerge.
- Then the attendant will turn around, with her back towards you and the mikvah pool. At this point you can leave your bathrobe or towels over the railing beside the stairs and walk down the steps into the mikvah.

Baruch ata Ado-nai E-loheinu
melech ha'olam asher kiderbanu
b'mitzvotav v'tzivanu al ha'tevillah

Baruch att Du Herrscher und Gott König der Welt, der uns
hat beglückt mit Deiner Geboten und uns befohlen hat
zu beobachten sie zu tun.

Y'hi ratzon mi'fancecha, Ado-nai
E-loheinu Vei-lohei avoteinu,
sheyifanech beit hamladash
bimheirat v'yameinu v'tein
chelkeinu b'horatecha v'sham
v'chacha b'yir'ah kimei olam
v'etadcha b'mo'neyot. Va'v'ah
v'chad-nai mi'ha'arot. V'chad-nai
v'slayim. kinei
v'chad-nai mi'ha'arot.

ברוך אתה אד-ני א-להינו
מלך העולם אשר קדשנו
במצותיו וצונו על הטבילה

יהי רצון מלפניך אד-ני
א-להינו וא-להי אבותינו,
שיבנה בית המקדש במהרה
במינו, ותן חלקנו בתורתך,
ושם נשבך ביראה כימי עולם
וכסנים קדמוניות. ויבנה
לאדנינו
ירושלים, ויבנה
שם וכסנים קדמוניות



- Once you are comfortable in the mikvah waters, tell the attendant you are ready, and she will turn around. When you are facing the blessing on the wall, the mikvah attendant will be standing behind you, able to see only the back of your head and shoulders.
- Once you confirm that you are both ready, it is time to immerse. Immerse to whatever depth and in whichever position feels most comfortable for you. An immersion consists of all body parts being submerged, so try to go deep enough to submerge the whole head and hair.
- When you come to the surface, the attendant will say 'Kosher.' Then, depending on your custom, you can say the blessing, continue to your next immersion or prepare to leave the mikvah. The blessing is posted on the wall in English, Hebrew and transliterated Hebrew for your convenience. The attendant will say 'Amen' to your blessing.
- Feel free to take a moment for personal prayer and reflection while in the mikvah. As a matter of safety, however, a woman is never left alone in the mikvah pool, so the attendant will remain in the room until you leave the mikvah waters.
- After completing your immersion, the attendant will prepare your robe or towel for you, raising it up in front of her eyes so that she is facing you, but unable to see you. She will help you back into your robe or towel.
- When you are done dressing and are leaving your preparation room, please bring the used towels or robes to the hamper by the front desk. There is an additional preparation room off the waiting area with hair dryers, available to any woman that would like to dry her hair before leaving.
- The attendant will wish you a good night and safe travels home.

6. Fees

Evening: There is an \$20 fee to use the mikvah, which assures that the mikvah remains a beautiful, well maintained facility. You are welcome to pay when you arrive or when you leave, whichever is your preference. You may choose to purchase an annual membership for \$180 with a tax receipt. Memberships can be put on hold in the case of interruption of regular immersion (i.e. pregnancy or nursing). *Bedikah* cloths are available for purchase at the mikvah. During the evening, the attendant can only accept cash or cheques.

Daytime: As there is no regular attendant on duty during the day, you may either leave cash or a cheque in an envelope on the front desk in the mikvah, or you can pay by credit card or debit at the Soloway JCC front desk. Consult your Rabbi, Rebbetzin, mikvah teacher or spiritual guide as to the fee for your immersion, since there are different fees for conversions and other types of immersions.

Late Arrivals and Appointment Changes: If you will be more than 10 minutes late for your appointment, please call the attendant to confirm that you are still coming. There is very poor cell phone reception at the mikvah so please call the mikvah directly by following the same instructions as above (under evening appointments), but select option 0.

For more information please contact:

Mikvah Manager, Dina Teitlebaum (613) 265-8770

SJCC Scheduling:

Julie Hay (613) 798-9818 ext. 251, jhay@jccottawa.com

The Naomi Bulka Community mikvah is a warm and inclusive mikvah that serves the needs of Ottawa's Jewish community. It is anticipated that your mikvah immersion will be a meaningful and uplifting experience.

