

The Resignification of *Miqveh*
in the Modern American Liberal Jewish Community:
Jewish Identity, Spirituality and Community

Arlene Sandra Bernstein

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for Ordination

Hebrew Union College – Jewish Institute of Religion

School of Rabbinic Studies

Los Angeles, California

2011

Thesis Advisor: Professor Joel Gereboff

Abstract

“The Resignification of *Miqveh* in the Modern American Liberal Jewish Community: Jewish Identity, Spirituality and Community”

Arlene Sandra Bernstein

Number of Chapters: Five

Contribution of this thesis: This thesis contributes to an understanding by Reform clergy of the significance that *miqveh* practice can have in the Reform movement. While the use of *miqveh* has been traditionally associated with the Orthodox community, liberal Jewish communities across the United States have incorporated *miqveh* practice into their Jewish rituals and are building community *miqva'ot*. This thesis examines the historical Jewish roots of ritual water immersion, reviews the issues regarding the construction and use of the *miqveh*, and provides an overview of modern usage in the liberal Jewish movements, through the impact of the *miqveh* as illustrated in individual stories. Lastly, four recent projects to build *miqva'ot* are examined in detail, and lessons gleaned from their successes and failures.

The goal of the thesis: Ultimately, the author's goal is to convince fellow Reform clergy that there is an important place for the *miqveh* in the modern Reform Jewish movement. In addition, the author hopes that through her study of the successful and unsuccessful projects to build *miqva'ot* over the last decade in the United States, other Jewish communities can find inspiration and practical lessons. The author hopes her thesis will encourage more communities to build *miqva'ot* for use by individuals in liberal Jewish organizations and congregations.

The subdivision of the topic:

- Chapter 1: Introduction to the meaning of *Miqveh*
- Chapter 2: Evolution and Traditional Use of *Miqveh* in the Second Temple Period
- Chapter 3: *Miqveh* Construction and Traditional Use
- Chapter 4: Resignification of an Ancient *Mitzvah*: Personal Stories
- Chapter 5: Newest Manifestation of an Ancient Necessity: Case Studies of Four Communities Building *Miqva'ot*
- Conclusion

Kinds of Materials: Biblical texts, secondary sources (books, articles, websites), original primary research (responses to author's questionnaire, personal interviews and correspondence)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

The Resignification of *Miqveh* in the Modern American Liberal Jewish Community: Jewish Identity, Spirituality and Community

I.	Chapter I: Introduction	1
II.	Chapter II: Evolution and Traditional Use of <i>Miqveh</i> in <i>the Second Temple</i>	9
III.	Chapter III: <i>Miqveh</i> : Construction and Traditional Use	23
IV.	Chapter IV: Resignification of an Ancient Mitzvah: Personal Stories	32
V.	Chapter V: Newest Manifestation of an Ancient Necessity: Case Studies of Four <i>Miqva'ot</i>	42
	Conclusion	66
	Appendix A: Questionnaire	69
	Appendix B: "Waters of Eden" Architectural Renderings	71
	Bibliography	76

Chapter I: Introduction to *Miqveh* Through Its Biblical Sources

The importance for Jews of ritual immersion in living waters (*mayim hayim*) can be traced to biblical sources. Over time, *miqveh* acquires great significance to the way Jewish communities establish, define and perpetuate themselves. Wherever traditional Jews settled, they established cemeteries and *miqva'ot*, even before they built their houses of worship. According to some halakhic sources, building *miqva'ot* takes precedence over building synagogues.¹ At the end of the twentieth and the beginning of the twenty-first centuries, reconfigured *miqveh* practices have come to play an increasingly important role in the spiritual and communal lives of liberal American Jews. One clear illustration of this can be found by comparing the preface in two successive editions of a book on *miqveh* practices.

The preface to the 1996 anthology of women's reflections on *miqveh*, *Total Immersion*, (included in the 2006 edition) begins with the following: "No one talks much about *Mikvah*, and why would they? People either joke or whisper about it, but few address it seriously" (Slonim 2006, 13). By the time of the publication of the second edition in 2006, attitudes and practices had already begun to change. The preface to the new edition notes, "Surprisingly...the observance of *Mikvah* has slowly but steadily increased beyond the enclaves of strictly observant Jewish women...more and more women...are newly committed to the observance of *Mikvah*" (Slonim 2006, 10). Other publications reflect this change, as well.

This study looks at the evolution of *miqveh* practices and their impact on Jewish identity, Jewish religious experience and Jewish community building.

¹ "The building of a *mikveh* takes precedence over building of a synagogue, acquisition of a *Sefer Torah*, or any other *mitzvot*.—Rabbi Israel Meir HaCohen from Radin, 19th Century, from the complete writings of the *Hafetz Hayim*, vol. 3, p. 87." As quoted in *Mayyim Hayyim: Guide My Steps Training Curriculum*, Session Two | *M'korot: Sources*, 31).

In the *Tanakh*, we find the word *miqveh* making its first appearance in the first chapter of Genesis: “And God called the dry land Earth, and the gathering of waters (*ulmiqveh hamayim*) He called seas; and God saw that this was good” (Gen. 1:10).² *Miqveh* is literally a “gathering” of waters. These gathered waters provide the locale for the first mention of animal life: “Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures...” (Gen. 1:20).

The strong association between water and life also reminds us of the shared origin or linguistic association that the word *miqveh* has with the Hebrew word *tiqvah* (root QVH), giving it an association with hope. As we proceed to examine the Biblical texts, we discover how the “gathering” of waters, God called the dry land Earth, and the gathering of waters He called seas (Gen. 1:10) develops into the modern day concept of *miqveh* as ritual bath and how *mayim hayim*, “...Isaac’s servants digging in the wadi found there a well of spring water...” *avdei-Yitzhak banahal, vayimtz’u-sham, b’er mayim hayim* (Genesis 26:19), living waters give or renew life religiously, spiritually and communally to the Jewish people. As the word of God goes forth from Jerusalem, “...*ki mitzion tetze Torah, udvar Adonai miyrushalayim*” (Isaiah 2:3), so too do living waters “*vhaya bayom hahu yetzu mayim hayim miyrushalayim* in that day, fresh water shall flow from Jerusalem” (Zehariah 14:8).

The concepts of ritual immersion and gathered waters appear with regard to several distinct functions or meanings in the Bible. First, ritual immersion connotes a **change of status**, as demonstrated by God’s command to Moses on how to ordain Aaron and Aaron’s sons as High Priest and priests, respectively in service to the people of Israel. Washing in

² All Bible translations, unless otherwise noted, are taken from *JPS Hebrew-English Tanakh*. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2000.

water is the first physical act done to Aaron and his sons: “Lead Aaron and his sons up to the entrance of the Tent of Meeting, and wash them with water” (Ex. 29:4). With this physical act the change of status from undifferentiated Israelite to *Kohen Hagadol* (The High Priest) and *Kohanim* (Priests) begins. In this context the *Etz Hayim* Torah commentary observes that “washing is a universal feature of religious ritual” (*Etz Hayim* 2001, 621), as it comments on Leviticus 8:6: “Then Moses brought Aaron and his sons forward and washed them with water.” With this particular ritual, Aaron and his sons prepare to enact the rites that marked “the beginning for formal worship in ancient Israel” (*Etz Hayim* 2001, 621). Although this is not a description of full immersion, it does begin to show the concept of water connected with change of status.

Second, **acts of washing one’s flesh and total immersion function as preparation and purification for a particularly sacred event**, ritual or place, and is primarily associated with priestly and Temple functions in ancient Israel. In the laws given to Aaron regarding the Day of Atonement ritual, we find in Leviticus 16:4 the ritual of dressing for the high priest. Even before dressing in ritually sacred dress, he must wash his body in water. “He shall be dressed in a sacral linen tunic with linen breeches next to his flesh, and be girt with a linen sash, and he shall wear a linen turban. They are sacral vestments; he shall bathe his body in water and then put them on” (Lev. 16:4). This ritual immersion and dressing is repeated: “He shall bathe his body in water in the holy precinct and put on his vestments; then he shall come out and offer his burnt offering of the people, making expiation for himself and for the people” (Lev. 16:24). Purity is also associated with the particular dress of the High Priest. These vestments are already in the status of “holiness” and therefore, in order to wear them, the High Priest must prepare himself ritually in his presentation as well

as in the subsequent acts of offering sacrifices. Aaron cannot make amends for himself or his community until he has spiritually cleansed himself from sin. Two other participants in the atonement ritual must also bathe their flesh—the man who sets the sacrificial *Azazel*-goat free (Lev. 16:26) and the one who burns the remnants of the bull and goat sin offerings (Lev. 16:28). These rituals continued with the existence of the priesthood up to the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE. Today, this ritual bathing of the flesh as ritual preparation for the atonement worship is observed not only by priests (*kohanim*), but by ordinary people, as traditional men go to immerse in the *miqveh* before Yom Kippur as part of their spiritual preparation to liturgically atone for their sins.

Third, **immersion as purification from ritual defilement** was not only for the priestly tribe, but for the common person. It was performed in daily acts of ritual, not only in highly sacralized contexts, for the entire Israelite community. We find evidence of this in Leviticus 15:16: “When a man has an emission of semen, he shall bathe his whole body in water and remain unclean until evening.” This law affected every Israelite man who had a penile discharge. In addition, any man and woman who had sexual relations also had to bathe: “And if a man has carnal relations with a woman, **they** shall bathe in water and remain unclean until evening” (Lev. 15:18, emphasis, mine). So too, when the Israelites were at war with Midian, all objects exposed to contamination by being in the same room with a corpse required ritual purification through immersion. “...any article that can withstand fire—these you shall pass through fire and they shall be clean, except that they must be cleansed with water of lustration [purify spiritually] (*mei niddah*); and anything that cannot withstand fire you must pass through water” (Num. 31:23).

Fourth, ritual immersion functions as a vehicle for **healing**. For example, the story of Na'aman and the Prophet Elisha illustrate the role of full body immersion in curing leprosy in the second book of Kings. In order to prove to Na'aman, a general plagued with leprosy, that there was a true prophet in the land of Israel, Elisha instructs him in ritual immersion. With a simple directive to Na'aman as a remedy for healing, "Elisha sent a messenger to say to him, 'Go and bathe seven times in the Jordan, and your flesh shall be restored and you shall be clean'" (II Kings 5:10). The text includes the fulfillment of Elisha's directive: "So he went down and immersed himself in the Jordan seven times, as the man of God had bidden; and his flesh became like a little boy's, and he was clean" (II Kings 5:14). The double narration of the immersion ritual emphasizes its importance in healing. Elisha refuses any gifts offered by Na'aman, and Na'aman's payment becomes his own promise of loyalty to the God of Israel.

Fifth, the Bible records the man-made **construction of a specific place designated as "miqveh,"** or gathering place for water. In Isaiah 22:9-11 we find the first account of the gathering of waters which reads as if it may be a *miqveh* with a *bor* and a cistern between the two pools. "And you took note of the many breaches in the City of David. And you collected the water of the Lower Pool; and you counted the houses of Jerusalem and pulled houses down to fortify the wall; and you constructed a basin (*miqveh*) between the two walls for the water of the old pool..." It is, however, the verse of Leviticus 11:36 that describes the *miqveh*. It states: "However, a spring or cistern in which water is collected shall be clean ..." (*akh, mayan u'vor miqveh-mayim yih'yeh tahor...*).

Sixth, **God is referred to several times by the term *Miqveh Yisrael***. Jeremiah calls to God: “*Miqveh Yisrael Adonai*.” JPS translates the phrase *Miqveh Yisrael* as “O Hope of Israel,” but one might also see in that phrase a reference to the purifying power of the waters of *miqveh*. God is Israel’s hope, and the source into which all of Israel can immerse itself, purify itself and restore itself to holiness. The verse continues: “All who forsake You shall be doomed men for they have forsaken the Lord, the Fount of living waters (*m’kor mayim hayim*)” (Jeremiah 17:13). It thus concludes with an explicit reference to God as a Fount of living waters—the phrase that has come also to define the ritual bath. If God is the Fount, or source, of living waters, then every purifying *miqveh* may be said to emerge from God. God is the source of “living waters,” thus linking the phrase *Miqveh Yisrael* with the creation of life in Genesis, as noted earlier. This verse in Jeremiah implies that God is not only the source of life, but also the promise of a future (hope, i.e. *tiqvah*).

Additionally, this association of God with the term *miqveh* provides hope during the exile in Babylonia. That God is the source of life for the ancestors of the exiled nation and will promise it hope is suggested in the verse: “All who encountered them devoured them; and their foes said, ‘We shall not be held guilty, because they have sinned against the Lord, the true Pasture, the Hope of their fathers (*miqveh avoteihem*) -- the Lord’.” (Jer. 50:7)

Finally, seventh, ***miqveh* becomes a symbol for a broader sense of spiritual renewal and redemption on a personal and national level**. For example, Ezekiel prophesies that God will bring the Israelites out of exile and back to their own land using the language of purification through water: “I will sprinkle clean water (*mayim tehorim*) upon you and you shall be clean: I will cleanse you from your uncleanness and from all your fetishes” (Ezekiel 36:25). Ezekiel prophesies that God will bring the Israelites out of exile

and back to their own land. Similarly, Zekhariah announces the time of the repurification of the House of David and the City of Jerusalem as a time where idolatry and false prophets will be banished from the land. “In that day a fountain (*makor*) shall be open to the House of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem for purging *khatat*) and cleansing (*niddah*)” (Zekhariah 13:1).

The modern liberal resignification of *miqveh* draws, in an organic way, on these biblical concepts of living waters, collection of waters, purification, healing and renewal, in modes that are meaningful in the contemporary context. In the twenty-first century, *miqveh* has become a renewed practice for liberal Jews throughout the United States who desire to use Jewish ritual to enhance their lives and enrich their spirituality. The act of immersion allows the person to play an active role in his or her own spiritual transformation, and to repurpose ancient ritual in new and creative ways that are meaningful in the context of contemporary Jewish life.

The next chapter, Chapter II: Evolution and Traditional Use of *Miqveh* in the Second Temple Period explores research and controversies on the archaeology of ancient *miqva'ot*, their placement and usage. In Chapter III *Miqveh*: Construction and Traditional Use, I will look at the development of *Miqveh* construction and discuss the importance of *miqveh* for traditional Jews in modernity including family purity (*taharat hamishpaha* for women) and male customs of ritual immersion. In Chapter IV: Resignification of an Ancient Mitzvah: Personal Stories, I will look also at the resurgence and resignification of *miqveh* as an enhancement of Jewish spirituality and Jewish identity through personal stories. In Chapter V: Newest Manifestation of an Ancient Necessity: The Case Studies of Four Communities

Building *Miqva'ot*, I will explore *miqveh* as providing a focus for community building at the grass roots level through four specific cases:

Mayyim Hayyim Living Waters Community *Mikveh* and Paula Brody & Family Education Center, Newton, Massachusetts; Temple *Bat Yam*, Newport, California (cessation of project); Jill and Jay Stein Family Community *Mikveh* at Congregation Beth Israel, Scottsdale, Arizona; and Waters of Eden – San Diego Community *Mikvah* and Education Center, San Diego, California. In particular, I will focus on the way *miqveh* has the opportunity to be a dynamic, educational and spiritual center for the liberal Jewish community and an entrance into Jewish life and culture for the Jew unaffiliated with any other Jewish institution.

Chapter II: Evolution and Traditional Use of *Miqveh* in the Second Temple Period

There is evidence, especially archaeological support, of building and uses of *miqva'ot* in ancient Israel ranging from biblical times up through the first centuries of the Common Era. Biblical texts speak of purification in a body of water, but very few suggest the use of structures built specifically for use in such ritual. Archaeological evidence of the Second Temple period clearly proves that such structures were built and located to easily avail those in need of ritual purification of their use. By the time of the Rabbinic Period, the use of such structures was common practice and assumed; the next chapter will examine early rabbinic views on the construction, use, and meaning of *miqva'ot*.

Central to the life of the people of Israel, and particularly to the priesthood, is the concept of purity. Requirements for purification for the high priests were more stringent than the requirements for ordinary priests and the people.³ As noted by Rabbi Miriam Berkowitz, “These laws were designed to protect the sanctity of the Tabernacle...”⁴ and subsequently the permanent structures of the First and Second Temples. From the desert wanderings through the destruction of the Second Temple, these laws functioned not only for the priesthood and those functioning as aides, but also for those participating in Temple ritual (pilgrimage holidays, offerings, ritual sacrifice). Ritual purity is what separated the people of Israel from non-Israelites. Hannah Harrington cites the book of Leviticus concerning the notion of separation from other peoples as implicated in the laws of foods and eating: “...I the Lord am

³*Encyclopedia Judaica*, vol. 11 (Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House, 1972).

⁴Miriam C. Berkowitz, *Taking the Plunge: A Practical Guide to the Mikveh*, ed. David Golinkin, 2nd rev. ed. (Jerusalem: Schechter Institute of Jewish Studies, 2009), 82.

your God who has set you apart from other peoples. So you shall set apart the clean beast from the unclean... (Lev. 20:24b-25).”⁵ Jonathan Klawans, in his essay “Concepts of Purity in the Bible” adds: “The bulk of the biblical purity laws concerns the situations and substances that render one ritually impure, and therefore temporarily unfit to encounter the sacred.”⁶

These laws, found predominantly in the books of Leviticus (Lev. 11-16) and Numbers (Num. 19), are connected with issues of “birth, death, sex, disease and discharge...”⁷ They maintain that anthropologists made a mistake when they presupposed “the assumption that the ancient Israelite purity system was put in place in order for priests to subordinate Israelites and for Israelite men to subordinate their wives and daughters.”⁸ He notes that modern scholarship is moving away from this idea as well as from the idea that ritual sin and moral sin are closely identified with each other.⁹ Underlying the laws and the minutiae that accompany the purity laws is the fundamental expression of a vision of community. The first description of *miqveh* as having a structure or place in which waters are gathered occurs in Leviticus: “*Ah mayan u’vor miqveh-mayim yih’ye tahor...* However, a spring or cistern in which water is collected shall be clean... (Lev. 11:36).”

Still, historical records give little information about *miqveh* during the First Temple Period. With regard to the first Temple, ca. 965 BCE to 586 BCE,¹⁰ I Kings and II Chronicles

⁵ Hannah K. Harrington, *The Purity Texts* (London: T & T Clark International, 2004), 34.

⁶ Jonathan Klawans, “Concepts of Purity in the Bible,” in *The Jewish Study Bible*, Jewish Publication Society, *TANAKH* Translation, eds. Adele Berlin and Marc Zvi Brettler (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 2042.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Eli Barnavi, Miriam Eliave-Feldon, and Dennis Charbit, eds., *A Historical Atlas of the Jewish People: From the Time of the Patriarchs to the Present*, cartographer Michel Opatowski (Paris: Hachette Littératures, 2002), 16.

both make reference to the construction of the “Sea of Solomon.”¹¹ I Kings 7:23-50 recounts the building by Hiram, a talented coppersmith from Tyre, hired by King Solomon, of a massive round “tank” (*yam*) made of cast metal, ten cubits across from brim to brim, five cubits high and thirty cubits in circumference (I Kings 7:23). “The sea served the priests for washing (II Chronicles 4:6)”. In II Chronicles 4:2-22, the same “sea” architecture and dimensions are given, with the exception of amount of “baths” attributed to it. II Chronicles references three-thousand baths (II Chronicles 4:5), while the “sea” of I Kings indicates two-thousand “baths”. With the exception of one Biblical phrase, mentioned in two places, concerning the role of the constructed metal cast “sea”, we find no communal evidence of *miqva’ot* during the First Temple Era.¹²

It is from the Second Temple Period, from the return from Babylonian Exile in 516 BCE to the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE,¹³ that a wealth of information was unearthed regarding *miqva’ot*. While the interpretation surrounding these water installations has been subject to controversy, their presence and placement support the theory that many were used for ritual purification.

Scholars of the Second Temple period in Judaism work in a combined world of text and archeology.¹⁴ Both these modes are the physical remnants of historical data. To that end, Eric Meyers has been credited throughout his career as championing “the dialogic

¹¹ Encyclopedia Judaica, 1541. There are two notes made on the translation of “sea”, “yam” in the JPS Tanakh. The first says “Meaning of Heb. Uncertain; the second, “i.e. a large basin.”

¹² It is interesting to note that the description of this ritual bath for the priesthood in I Kings and II Chronicles can be recognized in modernity, replicated by the Baptismal Font for the Dead (Proxy Baptism) in today’s Mormon Temples.

¹³ Eli Barnavi, 33.

¹⁴ Neil Asher Silberman and David B. Small, eds., *The Archaeology of Israel: Constructing the Past, Interpreting the Present*, in *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*, Supplement Series 237 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 190.

paradigm of text and artifact.”¹⁵ This dialogue “between text and artifact has been richest and most productive in the field of ancient Near Eastern and Biblical studies.”¹⁶ Taking into account the texts on ritual purity and the plethora of “stepped pools” identified throughout the land of Israel, it is important to acknowledge the tapestry which weaves Biblical archaeology with ancient texts. As Hannah Harrington notes, “The archaeological record supports the heightened concern of the texts in regard to ritual impurity, both at Qumran and throughout the land of Israel during the second Temple period. Two major types of finds related to purity concerns are *miqva’ot*, ritual immersion baths, and stone vessels, i.e. those insusceptible to impurity.”¹⁷

Over the past decades archaeologists have discovered a large number of structures dating from the Second Temple period that were clearly meant for the gathering of water. There are, however, differing interpretations of these structures. One claim is that they are merely cisterns for gathering water or are simply intended for bathing. The other interpretation is that a large number of these structures were designed for ritual purification. According to Jonathan D. Lawrence and Yonatan Adler, the work of Professor Ronny Reich of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem identified between 286 and 300 possible *miqva’ot* from the Second Temple period in his PhD dissertation (Hebrew only).¹⁸ “The earliest

¹⁵ Douglas R. Edwards and Thomas C. McCollough, eds., *Annual of the American Schools of Oriental Research*, vol. 60/61, *The Archaeology of Difference: Gender, Ethnicity, Class and the “Other” in Antiquity; Studies in Honor of Eric M. Meyers* (Boston: American Schools of Oriental Research, 2007), 3.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹⁷ Hannah Harrington, 31.

¹⁸ Jonathan D. Lawrence, *Washing in Water: Trajectories of Ritual Bathing in the Hebrew Bible and Second Temple Literature* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2006), 158. and Yonatan Adler, “Second Temple Period Ritual Baths Adjacent to Agricultural Installations: The Archaeological Evidence in Light of the Halakhic Sources,” *Journal of Jewish Studies* 59, no. 1 (Spring 2008): 62.

miqva'ot have been dated to the Hasmonean (166 BCE-63 BCE) period.”¹⁹ However, most *miqva'ot* have been identified ranging from the Herodian (ca.50 BCE) period to the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE. Additionally, in his article “Ritual Baths Adjacent to Agricultural Installations,” Yonatan Adler notes that “approximately 400 additional *miqva'ot*” have been found in recent years in archaeological digs. Accordingly, archaeologists have found over seven hundred *miqva'ot* throughout Israel, mostly dating to Second Temple period. These *miqva'ot* were found in and near private homes, synagogues, burial grounds and surrounding the Temple complex in Jerusalem.²⁰

When Jerusalem was built, the districts within the city were pre-planned to conform to the laws of cleanliness and the practices of *miqveh*. It is noted that foreign kings who ruled Jerusalem also recognized the importance of ritual cleanliness with regard to entering the holy Temple.²¹ However, it is widely noted by modern archaeologists that uses and functions of these pools are the cause of controversy.

This debate among archaeologists arises as to the specific identification of these water installations as “*miqva'ot*” or “stepped pools.” Katharina Galor, in her article “The Stepped Water Installations of the Sepphoris Acropolis,” changes the “commonly used term of *miqveh* to stepped pool,” as she discusses these unearthed water installations. She explains this change of terminology: “In my view, given the historically evolving and changing character of the word *miqveh*, this designation [of every water installation named as “*miqveh*”] is problematic.”²² The types of “water installations” that have been excavated

¹⁹ Jonathan Lawrence , 158.

²⁰ Yonatan Adler, 62. (JJS, Spring 2008).

²¹ Encyclopedia Judaica, 1541.

²² Katharina Galor, “The Stepped Water Installations of the Sepphoris Acropolis,” 201.

from the second Temple period include: “cisterns, bathtubs, bath houses, swimming pools, immersion or stepped pools, secondary storage pools, or *otzarot*.”²³ Not all of these stepped pools can, in fact, be definitively identified as *miqva’ot*, i.e., used for ritual purity and impurity. “Archaeologically speaking,” writes Galor, “the stepped pools belong to a larger category of plaster-covered installations, built and used for different purposes.”²⁴

Stuart Miller, in his chapter in “The Archaeology of Difference,” on the heels of Galor’s chapter from the same book, entitles his work as “Stepped Pools and the Non-Existent Monolithic *Miqveh*.” Miller maintains that each pool and the various similar types of pools have to be examined and studied carefully before determining that they are ultimately ritual *miqva’ot*.²⁵ The issue is the argument waged by maximalists who feel that yes, there is religious significance attached to a particular *miqveh* and minimalists who find that there is no religious significance attached to the “stepped pool,” but give no alternate functionary reason for its purpose.²⁶

Professor Ronny Reich of Hebrew University was the primary and one of the most important archaeologists in the field of *miqva’ot* or stepped pools surveyed excavations until late 1980’s.²⁷ He concluded the following regarding stepped pools during the second Temple period: “a water installation which is cut or built into the ground, into which rainwater,

in *Annual of the American Schools of Oriental Research*, vol. 60/61, *The Archaeology of Difference: Gender, Ethnicity, Class and the “Other” in Antiquity; Studies in Honor of Eric M. Meyers*, eds. Douglas R. Edwards and Thomas C. McCollough (Boston: American Schools of Oriental Research, 2007), 201.

²³ Benjamin G. Wright III, “Jewish Ritual Baths: Interpreting the Digs and the Texts: Some Issues in the Social History of Second Temple Judaism,” in *The Archaeology of Israel: Constructing the Past, Interpreting the Present*, eds. Neil Asher Silberman and David Small (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), citing Sanders, *Jewish Law*, 216-17.

²⁴ Katharina Galor, 202.

²⁵ Stuart S. Miller, “Stepped Pools and the Non-Existent Monolithic ‘Miqveh’,” in *Annual of the American Schools of Oriental Research*, vol. 60/61, *The Archaeology of Difference: Gender, Ethnicity, Class and the “Other” in Antiquity; Studies in Honor of Eric M. Meyers*, eds. Douglas R. Edwards and Thomas C. McCollough (Boston: American Schools of Oriental Research, 2007), 215.

²⁶ Katharina Galor, 201.

²⁷ Benjamin Wright, 194.

spring waters or runoff could be led, which had a staircase offering convenient access into the water, and which could be plastered to prevent leakage...²⁸ and that all water installations in concert with this formula could be identified and utilized as *miqva'ot*.²⁹

Even though there are differing opinions between scholars, it is largely accepted that almost all of these three hundred identified baths (even those not built in accordance with the Mishnaic *Halakha*) are *miqva'ot*. Yonatan Adler notes, in his previously cited article on Ritual Baths adjacent to agricultural installations, that Reich's work provided the basis for the identification of approximately an additional four hundred *miqva'ot*.³⁰

These extraordinary finds by archaeologists are identity markers of Jewish life built for ritual purity. Issues surrounding the sacredness and holiness, (i.e. the purity) of the Temple; products such as oil and wine made in olive and wine presses for the purpose of sacred use in sacred space; burial sites and private homes, all become places where *miqva'ot* become necessary conduits to create *tamei* into *tahor*—ritually impure to ritually pure.

Locations of these water installations provide a strong argument for their ritual use. What could be the motives for building *miqva'ot* near winepresses and olive-presses? Why do *miqva'ot* appear next to burial caves and even in private homes? These are all areas where people needed ritual purity in order to work, live and properly bury their dead. All of these places connect to the biblical laws and allow workers, and individuals to remain inside of communal laws and to be ritually pure.

Water installations which have been identified by archaeologists from the period of the Second Temple include: “cisterns, bathtubs, bathhouses, swimming pools, immersion or

²⁸ Ronny Reich by Benjamin Wright, 194 , ‘*Miqva'ot* (Jewish Ritual Baths) in the Second Temple Period’, English Abstract, p. 5.

²⁹ Ronny Reich by Benjamin Wright, footnote 15 on page 195 --see footnote 20 quoting Reich

³⁰ Yonatan Adler, 62. (JJS, Spring 2008).

stepped pools and secondary storage pools or *otzarot*.³¹ Of the two hundred eighty-six “potential *miqva’ot*” discovered by Ronny Reich, two hundred sixty-two are in the environs of Judea; one hundred fifty-one in Jerusalem and thirty-one in Jericho.³² *Miqva’ot* found after 70 CE are found primarily in the Galilee, particularly Sepphoris and Beit Shearim.³³ There are also *miqva’ot* found in the Upper City of Jerusalem, Qumran and Masada.³⁴ *Miqva’ot* found in the Upper City of Jerusalem were found in private homes of the aristocracy;³⁵ in Qumran, the *miqva’ot* found were large communal installations, implying communal use before meals and a daily practice; and the *miqva’ot* found at Masada were stepped pools connected with the bathhouses at both Large and Lower Terraces of the Northern Palace.³⁶ In the Large Bathhouse, “the pool [regarded as the *miqveh*] is connected via a pipe to a cistern on the outside of the building.”³⁷

Archaeologists Ehud Netzer and Ronny Reich both agree that this water installation is likely a *miqveh* given its construction and connection to the cistern. However, Wright points to the influences of Roman architecture and Roman bathhouses, acknowledging these “*miqva’ot* could simply be recognized and named as a cold room.”³⁸ It is also important to note that much weight is placed on the separate entrances and exits found at each of these pools found at the Masada site. Because of those entrances and exits, archaeologist E.P. Sanders also leans towards the idea of “religious function” as regards these two pools.³⁹

³¹ Benjamin Wright, 193.

³² Jonathan Lawrence, 158.

³³ Ibid, 158, English translation of notes from Ronny Reich.

³⁴ Benjamin Wright, 194.

³⁵ Hanna Harrington notes in the Purity Texts (page 31) that the excavation of the upper city in Second Temple Jerusalem found ritual baths in every house in the Herodian quarter. This is significant because it provides evidence that everyone, priests and non-priests, used *miqva’ot* for some kind of ritual purity.

³⁶ Ibid., 196.

³⁷ Ibid., 196.

³⁸ Ibid., 197.

³⁹ Ibid., 197.

Given the fierce dedication with which the community of Masada tried to protect itself, and the archaeological findings of a synagogue, it is likely that the community tried to keep its religious identity, even with regard to the purity laws.

Yonatan Adler notes: “Ritual baths built adjacent to winepresses and olive-presses have been unearthed at about twenty sites dating to the Second Temple period, most of them in Judea and the environs of Jerusalem.”⁴⁰ These are areas in which workers needed to be ritually pure in order to handle products for the Temple and the priests. Adler finds that the presence of these particular *miqva’ot* would indicate the importance of the foods as well as the need for the handlers of these ritual crops and final products to immerse “immediately prior to commencing work in these installations, a practice which accords with the Pharisaic concept of *tevul yom*.”⁴¹ He makes the following connection between text and archaeological discovery: “These finds thus provide rare archaeological evidence for the observance of ritual purity laws based on the Pharisaic system of *halakhah*.”⁴²

The issue of *tevul yom* comes from Leviticus 22:6-7 and Leviticus 11:32. Both of these sections of the Torah deal with the immersion of people and vessels being impure until sunset and the impurity of food if touched by those people or vessels before the setting of the sun. Ritual purity in the food of the priests was of great importance. In the offerings to the priests, *terumah*, rabbinic sources require that care be taken to ensure that the entire harvest maintained a state of ritual purity until the *terumah* was separated from it and given to the priests.⁴³

⁴⁰ Yonatan Adler, *Second Temple Period Ritual Baths Adjacent to Agricultural Installations: The Archaeological Evidence in Light of the Halakhic Sources*, 62.

⁴¹ Ibid. 62. *Tevul Yom*, literally translated is “one who has bathed that day,” i.e. in the daytime, but will not take on the yoke of purity until sunset. The subject matter of *Tevul Yom* is found in a tractate found in *Mishnah* and *Tosefta*.

⁴² Ibid. 62.

⁴³ Yonatan Adler, 66. (Agr. Inst.)

In the case of the winepresses and olive-presses, these products were both used in the temple, therefore requiring the highest level of purity. Adler contends that the greatest danger in risking the purity of the wine and olive oil was likely to come from the workers, i.e. bodily ritual impurity. In order to prevent the risk of endangering these products of sacral usage, immersion was required of the workers before they began each day's work. He cites *Mishna Tohorot* 10:3 which states: "Olive-press workers and grape-harvesters—it is sufficient once they are brought into the cave [where the ritual bath was situated]", so says Rabbi Meir. Rabbi Yose says: 'He is required to stand by them until they [actually] immerse themselves.'"⁴⁴ Adler goes on to show from *Mishnah Tohorot* 10:2 that in order to remain pure, if the workers go outside the 'factory' they must stay within sight.⁴⁵

Even the ancient Israelites needed "*miqveh* guides," in order to protect their sacred foods and Temple ritual products.⁴⁶ As noted both by Professor Ronny Reich and Yonatan Adler, these *miqva'ot* therefore need to be built as close to these agricultural installations as possible.⁴⁷ The *miqva'ot* discovered adjacent to the winepresses were found in Jerusalem and environs: "*Qalandiya* (north); *Ramot Forest*, *Bayit Ve-Gan*, *Ramat Denya* (west) ; *Mar Elias*, *Qiryat Menahem*, *Beit Sefafa* (south); *Sheluhath Mishlatim*, *Shmurat Shayarot*; *Kh. El Jami'a*; *Kh. Beit Sawir*; *Bat Ayin*; *Kefar Etzion* (Judean Highlands); *Horvat Hermeshit*, *Ramat Beit Shemesh* (Judean Foothills) and Jericho."⁴⁸ The *miqva'ot* found adjacent to olive-presses were discovered in *Gamla* (*Golan*); *Kh. Nisya*, *Qalandiya* (north of Jerusalem);

⁴⁴ Mishna Tohorot as cited by Yonatan Adler, 68.

⁴⁵ Ibid. 68.

⁴⁶ These precursors of the modern "*miqveh* lady," or "*miqveh* guide" as they are now called shows the historicity not only of the *miqva'ot* themselves, but also the proof texts for guiding the purity of ritual immersion and the communal need for ensuring ritual purity.

⁴⁷ Yonatan Adler, 68 (Agri. Inst.)

⁴⁸ Yonatan Adler, Agricultural institutions, 64.

Nahal Yarmut, Ahuzat Hazzan (Judean foothills); and *Shmurat Shayarot, Kh. El Jami'a* (Judean highlands).⁴⁹

In addition to the *miqva'ot* found at these agricultural installations, Adler also presents evidence of ritual baths which are found adjacent to tombs. As he found in the correlation of *miqva'ot* to winepresses and olive-presses, Adler makes a similar analysis, surveying the archaeological and *halakhic* evidence found from the late Second Temple period through the 3rd and 4th centuries CE where *miqva'ot* are unearthed next to Jewish burial grounds—i.e. tombs.⁵⁰ As of the article written by Adler in 2009, approximately twenty stepped pools or *miqva'ot* adjacent to tombs were found “in both Judea and the Galilee.”⁵¹ *Miqva'ot* built as part of the tomb complex were found at the Tomb of the Kings in Jerusalem (2); Jericho (1); the necropolis of Beth *She'arim* (3); *Tell en-Nasbe*; *Ramat Rachel* (2); *Nikephoria* (near *Yemin Moshe* in Jerusalem); Mount Scopus—the campus and observatory; *H. Zikhrin* (western slope of Samaria); *Kh. Dar 'Asi* (Judean Hills above *Ayalon* Valley) and *Wadi Sheiban (Ramallah)*.⁵² Each of these *miqva'ot* sites are in “direct proximity” to the tombs or burial ground.⁵³

The intrigue he finds in these *miqva'ot* built next to the tombs is directly related to “both biblical law and rabbinic *halakhah*” which provides a seven-day ritual purification as a result of contact with a corpse, the tent of the dead or a grave (Num. 19:11-22).⁵⁴ The mystery lies with the question that if the immersion from the above mentioned contacts is

⁴⁹ Ibid. 64-65.

⁵⁰ Yonatan Adler, *Ritual Baths Adjacent to Tombs: An Analysis of the Archaeological Evidence in Light of the Halakhic Sources*. 55.

⁵¹ Ibid., 55.

⁵² Ibid., 58-59.

⁵³ Ibid., 59.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 56.

performed on the seventh day, then why would a ritual bath be built directly next to the tomb itself?

Adler provides compelling reasons for these *miqva'ot* built so close to tombs. He cites archaeological evidence of the “Tomb of the Kings,” a burial complex in Jerusalem identified from the Second Temple period.⁵⁵ The two *miqva'ot* found were atypical in their size, as to support evidence of serving many people at once. Other exceptionally large *miqva'ot* have been found at Masada and Qumran. What could possibly be the reason for the large *miqva'ot* attached to these tombs? One suggestion by Ze'ev and Chana Safrai bring forth the idea that there may have been a folk custom of washing (i.e. immersing) when one left the funeral or the tombs. This would correlate historically as the precursor for hand washing as one leaves the cemetery. This practice was “first recorded in the *Geonic* literature” in approximately 9th Century CE⁵⁶

However, two degrees of corpse impurity are described in the book of Numbers (and subsequent literature). First degree corpse impurity focuses on those who touch and prepare the dead for burial. This person waits for seven days and then immerses in order to cleanse from the status of *tame* to *tahor*. (Num. 19:11-19). Second degree corpse impurity falls upon one who comes into physical contact with a person with first degree impurity. The latter may immerse and be cleansed at nightfall (Num. 19:22).⁵⁷

Adler cites *Mishna* and *Sifre* to support his “new interpretation of the phenomenon of *miqva'ot* adjacent to graves.”⁵⁸ Whoever held first degree impurities from contact with the dead likely left the tombs (cemetery) immediately, while those who held second degree

⁵⁵ Ibid., 57.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 65. Adler finds no evidence to support this theory.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 66-67.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 69.

impurities used the *miqveh* as they left the tomb area, thus only having to wait until nightfall until they were purified.⁵⁹ This is a brilliant assumption on the part of Adler and while there are several *miqva'ot* which are not directly adjacent to burial caves, they are close enough to suggest a connection between the two.

Like the *miqva'ot* of the winepresses and the olive-presses, the placement of *miqva'ot* directly adjacent to burial tombs gives high importance not only to ritual purity, but to the needs of the community as well. It protects them from impurity and provides ritual to ritually purify and wash away the dust of death from them and brings them back to the life of their community. As we moderns wash our hands when we leave the cemetery, a mausoleum or before we enter a house of mourning we perhaps fulfill the process of a linked ritual to our ancestors as they left their burial grounds and walked back to continue the process of living.

The above mentioned places: private homes, burial grounds, agricultural installations that contained *miqva'ot* or “stepped pools” as well as the large communal *miqva'ot* found in Qumran are powerful markers that point to Jewish communal identity and the ritual purity that united the people within that community. Whether privately; in preparation for temple worship; in preparing sacred foods or liquids; eating a meal together or for the sake of family and communal purity, the locations of these places tip the scales towards the usage of these water installations as *miqva'ot*.

Miqveh becomes a focal point and place at which men and women who have become ritually impure have the opportunity through ritual, to make themselves *tahor* (pure) from their former status as *tame* (impure). Issues of ritual impurity and purity are not issues of physical uncleanness or cleanliness. They are, rather, matters of the spirit, of separation and the holiness of the Israelite community in covenant with God. When each individual is

⁵⁹ Ibid., 69.

responsible to the community, particularly the priests with regard to sacrifice for the community, for their families and themselves, purity and holiness are reflected not only in the offering, but in the purity of the giver himself. Additionally, each Israelite is responsible for his or her own spiritual care, to protect the sanctity of the entire community.

Therefore, the ritual of immersion, whether by High Priest, the community of priests, or the general population of men and/or women, brings each of them to a sacral moment. The laws of ritual purity not only identify the Israelite nation, but also invest each of them in their covenant with God and in their covenant to the community. What draws the people to follow the law is not only the individual mindset, but rather the command, desire and need to be inside of community.

Ritual purification brings the individual close to God. He or she becomes an integral part of his or her community, and is thus surrounded by communal purpose and communal protection. It is no surprise, as a result of the deep bond which rituals afford both individuals and communities, both ancient Israelites and their modern progeny were and are powerfully linked to each other as well as retain the thread of ritual throughout their generations. Archaeological findings, particularly in the Second Temple Period, show that issues of ritual, covenant and community are inextricably tied to each other.

Ultimately, with the termination of Temple rites, the lost role of the priesthood, the building of synagogues and the rise of the Rabbinate, ritual purity, while still part of the culture, did not have the same influence on the people.

Our next chapter will explore the changing use of *miqveh* and its construction in the rabbinical period and beyond.

Chapter III: *Miqveh*: Construction and Traditional Use

This chapter looks over the centuries at the issues of construction from Mishnaic times to the present and primary usages of *Miqveh* over the centuries and will discuss the importance of *miqveh* for traditional Jews in modernity, including family purity (*taharat hamishpaha* for women) and male customs of ritual immersion.

The source and basis for *miqveh* comes from the following sentence in the Torah: “However, a spring or cistern in which water is collected shall be clean . . .” (Lev. 11:36) Rabbi Zvi Horowitz writes, “The simple meaning of the verse is that spring water and waters gathered in a pit are not susceptible to *tumah*—contamination—they are *tahor* (ritually clean). This is one of the basic features of a *miqveh*, viz., that its water is not susceptible to *tumah* (ritual contamination).”⁶⁰ Additionally, another feature of *miqveh* is as follows: people and *keilim* (pots, dishes, etc.) are rendered *tahor* (pure), from their state of *tame* (impure), after immersion.⁶¹ As one immerses, or things are immersed, it is the purity of their status that is rendered elevated.

It is in the *Mishnah*, the first written summation of Jewish Oral Law⁶² and Jewish traditions from the years 30 BCE to 200 CE,⁶³ that we find the written laws concerning *miqveh*. The collection of debates of the *Tannaim* (the rabbis of the *Mishnah*) concerning the existing traditions of the time, were redacted by Rabbi Judah Hanasi in approximately 200 CE. Most of the *Mishnah* is commented on by the Rabbis of the next generations (200 CE to 500 CE—*Gemara*) by the *Amoraim* of the Talmud. However, in the section of *Mishnah* entitled *Seder Tohorot: Masehet Mikva'ot*, there is no written *Gemara* to question and

⁶⁰ Rabbi Zvi Horowitz, *Seder Tohoros, The Mishnah, Mikvaos*, xxi.

⁶¹ Ibid. xxi.

⁶² The Talmud: The Steinsaltz Edition: A Reference Guide, Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz, translator and Editor Rabbi Israel V. Berman, New York: Random House, 1989, 1.

⁶³ Ibid. 11.

specifically expound on the laws of *Miqva'ot*.⁶⁴ There are other places in the Talmud which refer to the use of *miqveh* and other works that help interpret and decode the laws of *miqveh* and other source materials such as the *Tur*—*Yoreh Deah*; *Beit Yosef*; and *Shulkhan Arukh*. While there is not a *Gemara* to comment and expound on *Mishnah Miqvaot*, there is the *Tosefta*, “the second book of laws of the *tannaitic* period...It’s title and structure bear testimony to the fact that it was in essence a complementary collection to the *Mishnah*,” providing newer laws and problems; citing differing versions of the law as well as interpretations all which were written after the redaction of the *Mishnah*.⁶⁵

It is in *Masekhet Miqva'ot* (Ten Chapters) and *Tosefta* (Eight Chapters) that we find the complicated laws of *miqva'ot*: their construction, issues that will define them as invalid, and laws concerning ritual immersion.

Several hundred years after the *Mishnah* was redacted, four Torah commentators-- Rashi, Rashbam, Ibn Ezra and Nachmanides-- agreed that water from a natural spring, as it is water that comes from the ground, is pure. Purity comes from the natural waters of the earth as well as rain waters, and from naturally flowing streams or rivers (which fulfill the required depth and width). In addition, seas provide waters that, upon immersion, will make a person (or *keilim*) ritually pure. There are arguments as to what constitutes pure waters, particularly concerning the word “flowing” as regards streams or rivers. But for our purposes, we will consider the constructed *miqveh* and its ritual purity and the source of water as presented in Leviticus 11:36.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ *Masehet Miqva'ot* is the sixth tractate in the sixth book of the *Mishnah*, *Tohorot*.

⁶⁵ N. S. Hecht, ed., et al., *An Introduction to the History and Sources of Jewish Law* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 120.

⁶⁶ Michael Carasik, ed., trans., annot., *The Commentator's Bible: The JPS Miqra'ot Gedolot: Leviticus*. (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 2009), 79-80.

The Torah makes reference to two legitimate sources of water for a *miqveh*. These are a spring (*ma'ayan*) and a pit of gathered waters (*bor*). Spring waters and rain waters are the natural and valid sources for *miqva'ot*. As understood above by the *Mishnah* and the Torah commentators, the gathering of these natural waters must either come from the ground or be collected in a *bor* which is attached to the ground.

From the Torah we find how much water is required to render a *miqveh* valid. Leviticus 15:16 states: “When a man has an emission of semen, he shall bathe his whole body in water...” In the opening of chapter seven of *Masekhet Miqva'ot* we read the following: “A higher [grade] is a *mikveh* that contains forty *se'ah*, for in it one may immerse oneself, and [in it] one may immerse [things].”⁶⁷ There are six levels or grades of *miqva'ot* which raise the levels of ritual purity—the second higher than the first, the third higher than the second, and so forth.⁶⁸

The third level which describes a pool of rainwater containing forty *se'ah* is called “*miqveh sheyeish bo arba'im se'ah*.”⁶⁹ This measurement of forty *se'ah*, a Talmudic measurement, corresponds to eighty “*hin*” which equals 5, 760 eggs.⁷⁰ There are many opinions as to the exact amount of water that will allow an average size person to fully immerse in a *miqveh*; however, there is a minimum requirement of forty *se'ah* of rain water for a person to immerse, which is equivalent to approximately 200 gallons of water.⁷¹ Two

⁶⁷ *Mishnah Mikvaot*: 7:1, Artscroll, 29.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 5

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ *Steinsaltz Reference Guide*, 288. According to Steinsaltz, the Talmudic measurements require a *miqveh* to measure “three *amot* by one *amah*,” which according to the *Na'eh* and *Hazon Ish* respectively, the volume of water must be either eighty-seven gallons or one hundred fifty-one gallons of water to be valid.

⁷¹ There are clearly differing opinions as to how much water renders a *miqveh* valid. Two hundred gallons will provide the “fence” around the requirements stated above, and protect the level of water from dropping in a way that will render any immersion invalid.

hundred gallons of water which is not drawn (*sheuvin*)⁷² is considered the minimum amount of “*mayim hayim*” (living waters) to fill a *miqveh*.⁷³ It is common for *miqva’ot* to contain much higher amounts of water to (1) protect the *mitzvah* of the Torah (*d’oraita*);⁷⁴ (2) to accommodate the change of height over the centuries of the average person; and (3) to plan for drought conditions insuring the *kashrut* of a *miqveh*. However, the forty *se’ah* can be invalidated. If three *luggin*⁷⁵ of water precede the forty *se’ah* of *mayim hayim*, the *miqveh* is no longer valid. However, once the *miqveh* is filled with the correct amount of *mayim hayim*, then it is permissible to add drawn water (tap water or water from jars or other vessels) and the drawn water, as it mingles with the forty *se’ah*, becomes *mayim hayim* as well.⁷⁶

As concerns the building of *miqva’ot*, Rabbi Schneur Zalman Lesches observes, in his book, *Understanding Mikvah: An Overview of Mikvah Construction*, “When a *mikvah* is built according to the most meticulous details of the law, it provides an enhanced level of purity to its users.”⁷⁷

The predominant laws that remained after the destruction of the temple and the end of the priesthood were those laws that required a woman in *niddah* (or a *niddah* as is

⁷² Rabbi Schneur Zalman Lesches, *Understanding Mikvah: An Overview of Mikvah Construction*, Montreal: 2001, 21.

⁷³ Drawn water is considered tap water, i.e. any water drawn through pipes or the like. Rabbi Lesches cites here *Yoreh deah* as the original law material.

⁷⁴ Ibid. 28. It is noted in the Mishna commentary here, that “even one drop less” than the measure of water required will cause both the immersion and the *miqveh* to be unacceptable.

⁷⁵ *Luggin* is plural for *log*. According to the Glossary in *Mishnah Mikvaot*, a *log* is a liquid measurement equal to that of six eggs.

⁷⁶ Rabbi Schneur Zalman Lesches, *Understanding Mikvah: An Overview of Mikvah Construction*, Montreal: 2001, 24.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 21.

traditionally said) to immerse and the immersion of converts (connected to Exodus 19:10 and 19:15).⁷⁸

In addition, the book of Numbers 31:22-23 requires that any metals seized as spoils of war “gold and silver, copper, iron, tin, and lead” (Num. 31:22) must be cleansed by fire, and those items that were not able to be cleansed by fire were required to be cleansed, “*b’mei niddah*,” i.e. to be cleansed in the waters that a *niddah* would use to immerse.⁷⁹

There are also immersions that custom has dictated, such as immersion before Yom Kippur, Shabbat and Festivals. Whether concerning law, custom or resanctified practices of immersion, the principle of intention (*kavannah*) as a mode of spirituality are the underlying reasons for *miqveh*. Spiritual cleanliness is the desired goal of immersion. The beauty of this particular tradition requires *hiddur mitzvah*, as noted above by Rabbi Lesches. It is not surprising that meticulous detail is given to this *mitzvah* of immersion in living waters, which in large part carries on the life force of the Jewish people, either for the purpose of procreation or in the welcoming new Jews into the community of Israel.

Rabbi Lesches maintains that over the centuries, little changes were made until the period of Rabbi Zalman Schneur of Liadi (1745-1812, White Russia).⁸⁰ As Jews moved throughout the Mediterranean world and built *miqva’ot* near springs, or used the natural waters of springs or seas, the *miqva’ot* built after the destruction of the Temple remained much the same. A major issue immediately ensued as Jews moved into more northern settlements of Russia and Poland where winters were formidable and *miqva’ot* were nearly impossible to heat. The dire necessity to have valid ritual baths throughout religious

⁷⁸ These verses require the Israelites to prepare themselves at Sinai for the Giving of the Torah by washing their clothes and not having sexual relations.

⁷⁹ Rashi on Numbers 31:22, in *Mishna Mikvaot*.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 27.

communities of northern and eastern Europe, brought about the ingenious creativity of Rabbi Zalman Schneur of Liadi. He invented a *miqveh* that would bring forty *se'ah* from the ground up into a box that would retain the water. Over the requisite amount of natural spring water, hot water could be poured and the waters of the *miqva'ot* would stay warm long enough for immersions and for the *miqveh* to retain its legal status.⁸¹

Variations on this *miqveh* continued until spring water could no longer be found at a high enough level with the correct piping to make it valid. As they dug down deeper and deeper to find pure water to fill the pit, the pits were simply too deep to enter. As well, the Jewish populations had moved from rural areas to cities, where springs were not to be found and *miqva'ot* were being built using rainwater for *mayim hayim*.⁸² It was the *Rebbe Rashab* who, in the city of Rosov, finally, with much concern over the many issues of *halakhah*, built a *miqveh* in the style “*bor al gabei bor*.”⁸³

There are different kinds of *miqva'ot* that are rendered valid. The first is the natural spring, or pit that is in the ground and that contains the requisite amount of forty *se'ah* of water and particularly, is wide and deep enough to allow the immersion of a person of average size. The second type of valid *miqveh* is one that uses the method of *hashakah* (from the root *NSHK* meaning “kiss”). A *bor* is the reservoir that holds the *mayim hayim* of forty *se'ah* of water (whether rainwater, water from ice, or other pure source) and is adjacent to the immersion pool. A hole (the breadth of two fingers⁸⁴), with a special stopper in the dividing wall of the two pools allows the waters to “kiss,” merging the *mayim hayim* with the

⁸¹ Ibid. 28-30.

⁸² Ibid. 30.

⁸³ Ibid. Literally, this means a pit over a pit, i.e. one pool over another pool.

⁸⁴ This is called *shoferet hanod*. There are differing opinions as to the size. Rabbi Zvi Horowitz defines the size as the “standard size of the crosssection of the tube used as a spout in a waterskin tube

drawn water. The drawn water now becomes *mayim hayim* as well.⁸⁵ A third type of valid *miqveh* uses the method of *zeriah*.⁸⁶ This method adds the drawn water (*sheuvin*) into a *miqveh* that contains the requisite *mayim hayim*. The water then overflows into a second pool and is “sown into the rainwater as a seed is sown into the ground.”⁸⁷

The fourth method of construction for *miqveh* is the aforementioned system of “*bor al gabei bor* (pit over pit).” The *miqveh* is constructed so that a very deep *bor* is constructed with a cement divide placed on what will become the lower *bor* holding two times forty *se’ah* of *mayim hayim*. The horizontal divider separating the lower and upper *borot* contains two holes in it which allows the *mayim hayim* to mingle with the drawn water, but while the waters can mingle, the rain water which is in the lower *bor* remains in the lower *bor*. The immersion pool is the upper *bor* with steps provided to enter the immersion pool.⁸⁸ This method, attributed to the *Rebbe Rashab*, is the method preferred by *Chabad Hassidim*.⁸⁹

In the past Jews built *miqva’ot* wherever traditional communities settled. As Jews immigrated to the United States and Canada, Orthodox communities secured land for cemeteries and places to build *miqva’ot*. As recently as February 13, 2011, an article in The Baltimore Sun by Frank D. Roylance announced that a *miqveh*, first discovered in 2001 may prove to be “what is believed to be the oldest Jewish ritual bath complex in the United States.”⁹⁰ The original *miqveh* was said to have been constructed in 1845: a wooden tub, five feet in height, connected to a cistern and located next to “the remains of a brick hearth

⁸⁵ One example of this type of *mikveh* by the *hashakah* method is used at the Rabbinic Assembly’s *miqveh* at the American Jewish University in Los Angeles.

⁸⁶ *Mishnah Mikvaot: Seder Tohoros*, xxx. Literally, “sown.”

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸ Rabbi Zalman Schneur Lesches, 54.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 52.

⁹⁰ Frank D. Roylance, “Jewish ritual bath found in Baltimore may be oldest in U.S.: ‘Mikveh’ uncovered under Lloyd Street Synagogue,” baltimoresun.com, 1.

once used to warm the bath's water.”⁹¹ These findings were only “a few feet away from a pair of more modern, tile-lined baths, built and used by the *Shomrei Misheres* Orthodox congregation that used the building after 1905.”⁹²

Archaeologists found in Maryland a “historical pattern” of *miqveh* that appears to replicate excavations in the Netherlands dating from 1723, as well as in both Germany and the Netherlands reaching back to the 1500s. The elements of the bath, cistern and hearth were replicated as Jews transferred home and literally “hearth” to their new environs.⁹³ According to Esther Doyle Read, leading archaeologist on this excavation, Jews were barred by Maryland law from incorporating and owning property until 1828.”⁹⁴ As such, Jewish congregations met in private homes and built their *miqva'ot* in the basements of their homes.⁹⁵ Not unlike *Mayyim Hayyim miqveh* of 2004, this *miqveh* was “built in a house already present in 1845, when the congregation built their synagogue on an adjoining lot.”⁹⁶

Miqva'ot built in homes was not uncommon in the United States, as it was not uncommon during the Second Temple period in Jerusalem. Rabbi David Miller, in his self-published book in 1930, *The Secret Life of the Jew*, has diagrams of *miqva'ot* built into closets, under bedroom armoire sets; disguised as living room furniture; in bathrooms and bedrooms.⁹⁷ Rabbi Miller maintains that the cost of building a *miqveh* could be approximately five dollars (would that it could be true today).⁹⁸

A ritual bath in a private home, sustained the practice of the most important usage of *miqveh* throughout the traditional Jewish world, that of *taharat mishpahah* (family purity).

⁹¹ Ibid, 1.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Ibid., 2.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ibid 2.

⁹⁷ Rabbi David Miller, *The Secret Life of the Jew: His life—His Family*. Oakland: 1930.

⁹⁸ Ibid. 381.

Of all the purity laws that ceased after the Temple was destroyed in 70 CE, the laws of family purity have remained to present day. *Miqva'ot* in private homes afforded the women the important principle of *tzniut* (modesty) and the freedom to immerse as they were ready. Immersion before *Shabbat* by the men in the community as well as after nocturnal emissions (for those who were particularly devout), or even a daily ritual immersion practice allowed for the privacy of the marriage bed. And the ease of being able to add warm water to a valid *miqveh* added to the comfort of the practice in one's home.

To the modern liberal Jew, the practice of *taharat hamishpahah*, may be offensive to some, inconvenient and/or unnecessary, but the passion by which Jews historically lived by the Torah laws they cherished and still do today is profoundly touching and speaks of a code of law, recognized and practiced for thousands of years.

In the next chapter, we will see how the practice of *miqveh* provides an important ritual for the Jewish people, in particular Jews who come from Reform, Conservative, Reconstructionist, Humanistic and Renewal congregations, or secular Jews either connected or not with other Jewish institutions. Liberal Jews have studied this ancient tradition and resignified it for many different purposes, including the original laws for which *miqveh* were intended.

Chapter IV: Resignification of an Ancient Mitzvah: Personal Stories

“The old shall become new and the new shall be made holy.”⁹⁹

The resignification of *miqveh* has become apparent in practice, with new liberal *miqva'ot* springing up throughout the United States, Israel and the world over. Orthodox *miqva'ot* are moving into the 21st Century, influencing the practice of *hiddur mitzvah* and using the practices of *Mayyim Hayyim Mikveh* in Boston, Massachusetts to influence their *miqveh* guide training and educational role modeling.

Two international *Miqveh* Conferences, in 2006 (Co-Sponsored by the Union for Reform Judaism) and 2008, also sponsored by *Mayyim Hayyim*, have brought the conversation concerning *miqveh* out into a very public arena, encouraging clergy, laity, traditional, and non-traditional Jews to talk about a heretofore quiet and largely (but not exclusively) “for women only” subject into the forefront of liberal Jewish life. Over two hundred seventy-five participants attended the 2008 Conference in Newton, Massachusetts (including this writer) from twenty-two states and Israel, including seventy presenters. The world of *miqveh* has become the “hot” topic and the “newest” ancient ritual to affect the Reform, Reconstructionist, Renewal and even Conservative movements of Judaism. An explosion of writings scholarly, literary, fictional, as well as film and theatre have brought the topic of *miqveh* out from its private modest place in religious society.

In Israel in 2004, playwright/actress Hadar Galron wrote a play entitled *Mikveh*. The play made its way to the National Theatre Stage in May of 2010. Described by journalist Lisa Traiger, Arts Correspondent for the Washington Jewish Week, as “a morality play,”

⁹⁹ Rav Avraham I. Kook, First Chief Rabbi of Israel.

providing “a glimpse into an insular community,”¹⁰⁰ *Mikveh* took Washington DC and theatre audiences in several other countries by storm.¹⁰¹ On stage, private, mysterious and sacred moments take place in a *miqveh* created for the stage behind a sheer curtain. The women immerse “completely nude and modestly positioned.”¹⁰² Although this play is written about the Orthodox community, *halakhic* issues as diverse as use of nail polish and whether abuse should be exposed and reported are problems that are brought to modern liberal *miqva’ot* as well.

The House of Secrets: The Hidden World of the Mikveh by Israeli photographer and author, Varda Polak-Sahm, folklorist, gives an extraordinary view into *miqveh*. As a secular Jew, a field researcher and as a woman in search of her own spiritual quest, she encounters the *miqveh* as she is once again pushed by the tradition of her *Sefardi* family to immerse prior to her second wedding. This book, published by Beacon Press of Boston for distribution in the United States, England and Canada was read and critiqued by author Blu Greenberg and author Carol Ochs of the Hebrew Union College/Jewish Institute of Religion. Award winning Israeli movies such as *Hasodot* (“The Secrets”) by Avi Nesher (2007) and *Bruriah*, by Avraham Kushnir (2008) use *miqveh* in critical scenes, both as blatant and not so transparent vehicles for healing and *teshuvah* (repentance), and not for family purity as might be expected.

Modern American literary fiction also finds its way to *miqveh* with the now famous *The Ritual Bath* by Fay Kellerman first published in 1986 and republished in 2003 and Sarah

¹⁰⁰ Lisa Traiger, Arts Correspondent, “A morality play ‘Mikveh’ provides glimpse of insular community, Washington, DC: Washington Jewish Week, 5/12/2010 8:59 PM, wasingtonjewishweek.com.

¹⁰¹ In phone conversation with Hadar Galron, August 2010.

¹⁰² Lisa Traiger, 1.

Segals' *Murder at the Mikvah* published in 2009. Even the e-book world provides a digital short story on *miqveh* for the purpose of pornography.¹⁰³

This newfound literary exposure of *miqveh* is fascinating, but it is through the renewed *miqveh* practice by liberal Jews and for this chapter, the Reform Jews, that the use and meaning of *miqveh* becomes newly sacred. I believe that the ritual bath has added depth to Jewish spiritual practice. It is a rite that has the opportunity to make a spiritual difference in the life of every Jew who may choose to avail themselves of this ritual. What follows are my own thoughts and experience with this extraordinary ritual in Jewish life.

Excited, nervous, joyful and introspective--these are my feelings as I enter the *miqveh* prior to my Investiture as Cantor in May of 1993 from the Hebrew Union College School of Sacred Music. The *miqveh* lady is excited for me and is thrilled that I am going to become a Cantor. "You know," she says, "my brother is a great violinist." I am immediately put at ease by her bright smile, her European accent (she sounds like my *Bubbie*) and her reassurance that this will be a great moment. She asks if I've showered; she checks my fingernails and cups my face in her hands after checking for earrings and other jewelry. "Take another shower and I'll meet you in the *miqveh*!" As I approach the immersion pool, I am keenly aware about my choice to use the Jewish ritual bath at this important juncture in my life. I had always thought that I would use the *miqveh* before marrying. After careful consideration, I concluded that for me, *miqveh* would add holiness to my choice to be a Cantor for the Jewish people.

I hesitantly enter the room of the *miqveh* itself. I walk down seven steps--the water is exquisitely soft, warm and sparkling clean. The guide reminds me of my obligations to immerse first and pray afterward. First I practice--it's not as easy as I thought to make sure

¹⁰³ Cheri Crystal, *Coming Clean*. Kindle e-book, 2009.

I am surrounded completely by water—but it is an ethereal feeling--something almost unexplainable. We open the channel so that the living waters can flow into the *miqveh*—and I begin to cry, so overwhelmed with the knowledge that for thousands of years, Jews have used the *miqveh*. “No problem,” her accent so thick and full of memory, as if she held the history and the mystery of *miqveh* in her pudgy clapped hands, “a little salt wouldn’t hurt the water.” I immerse and pray. The feeling is overwhelming—I am enveloped by *mayim hayim*—living waters. As I finish, a wash of emotions swirl around me. I have connected mystically with my ancestors. I have, in a sense, cleansed and opened myself anew to receive my new responsibilities, I have changed. The feeling stays with me for hours and even days. I have only to close my eyes and I can recall the enveloping warmth of the waters and the emotions that surrounded my prayers.

It is with this personal experience that I have brought many women, children and men to the *miqveh*. The reasons and places have been varied. I have gone to the Ocean and the Bay with brides, grooms and converts. I have brought to the *miqva 'ot* in Manhattan and at the University of Judaism, many women who have chosen Judaism; children whose parents have chosen Judaism for them; a divorcee; a rape victim; a seventy year old woman, who, following in the tradition of having lived a full life, wanted to begin her “second” life, as it were, with a new sense of holiness and freedom. I have had the honor of guiding the conversion of a young German woman who chose Judaism for herself and her children; an *Erev Rav*, who chose to use the *miqveh* before her rabbinic ordination; a woman abused by a Rabbi and a woman who chose to convert to Judaism (having lived a Jewish life for over forty years) so that she might die as a Jew, connected to her husband and to her children whom she raised as Jews, and to be buried as a Jew.

Women have chosen to immerse before their adult *B'nai Mitzvah* or on the anniversary of the death of a child or a husband. A powerful moment comes when after miscarriage and monthly immersions hoping to renew life after each menstrual cycle and a child is conceived—the mother to be in her ninth month immerses for her well being and the sake of the life of her child to be. Living waters become a reality.

Before each immersion, I prepare the woman for the experience in the *miqveh*. We study together the history and purpose of the *miqveh*. As we talk about the reason for this ritual, we speak about the effects of change on ourselves and upon our family and friends as well as about expectations. We practice the prayers together and we look for appropriate readings or we write our own *Iyyunim* to mark this extraordinary moment.

But nothing equates with the fulfillment of the act of immersion itself. I have seen it over and over again: a person enters a *miqveh* in one way, and they emerge from these living waters changed and enhanced—imbued with a new spirit. Some part of the old is washed away and the new is elevated in holiness. This is the dream: that our Reform custom makes *miqveh* easily available to more people and perhaps to encourage its use before Shabbat and before the High Holy Days (this High Holiday preparation has become my own personal practice). Through these practices, our sense of *kedushah* would be enhanced.

The physical act of changing one's status, religious identity or one's spiritual longing through this water ritual provides us with a powerful new way to see our future paths and our connection with our past.

One of the most powerful stories to share is that of Cynthia and David Coleman. Cynthia and David arranged a meeting with me. Theirs was an urgent request for a long meeting to share the following story: Though she was not Jewish, Cynthia, along with her

Jewish husband, David, raised two Jewish children in the Reform movement. Each child was now in their late twenties. Cynthia had survived cancer, had multiple sclerosis and now had a recurrence of the cancer she had fought so diligently. Both Cynthia and David knew that Cynthia was dying and their request to me was that she be able to convert to Judaism so that she might live the rest of her days as a Jew, as was her family, and that she might die as a Jew and be accorded a Jewish funeral and Jewish burial.

Before her marriage, she had been “turned off” by a Rabbi who told her she would have to convert, considering she would be married to a Jewish doctor. Years later, she took the courses needed for conversion through Basic Judaism classes, to help her raise her children, but she never converted formally. All those years, she ran a Jewish household and lived a Jewish life. Why now? Throughout our conversations we spoke about death, of which she was not afraid, and we spoke about what it would take to convert, which for me meant that she would need to immerse in a *miqveh*, or the bay or the ocean.

It was easy to see that she was very frail, but to complete the immersion process was something that was extremely important to her, although not at all necessary for her husband to have her finish the process. She wanted to complete the Jewish family she created by becoming a full member of the Jewish people. David wanted Cynthia to make her own decisions for the end of her life. She wanted to proceed with the conversion. I told her that I would be honored to be part of the process, but that she would need to speak with the Rabbi formally to complete the conversion.

The idea of taking such a frail woman up to Los Angeles to the only liberal *miqveh*, which did not afford a way for the handicapped to enter the pool, was daunting and scary to all of us. The Rabbi told her she could take her walker into the *miqveh* or a cane, but she

refused, preferring to have the process of immersion be completely “kosher” in her own eyes. Fortunately, the Rabbi was strong enough and quick enough to see that she was in trouble in the water and literally pulled her up, but not before Cynthia had a ritually authentic immersion. It was an extraordinary day and just as powerful for her, as when she came onto the *Bimah* of the synagogue after her immersion to be welcomed into the congregation as a Jew. Shortly after her conversion, Cynthia died. She was at peace and grateful to have fulfilled her final wish of rebirth for herself.

There are many factors in the immersion into living waters which have the power to surprise, heal or literally to help one change their status along their path. The case of a non-Jewish young mother with three children from age two to twelve began an extraordinary process of healing during the course of several months. This family drove quite a distance to bring their children to pre-school, religious school and to participate in synagogue life. The couple (father is Jewish) had a good marriage, and yet, as the time approached for the eldest child to become Bat Mitzvah, the mother became anxious at the outset of the process.

Over a period of several months of talks, as I got to know the mom well, the truth, known only to her and her husband, came out. She was abused by a community Rabbi in the state from which they moved, and she never finished her conversion (that Rabbi no longer serves a pulpit). As the story spilled out, Lindsey and I processed the damage done to her. Finally she was able, in a three-way meeting, to apprise the Senior Rabbi of her situation. We had built a trust between she and the clergy, and we decided together she would finish her conversion, which had been so crudely and rudely halted.

Lindsey, a bright, thoughtful woman, agreed to go to the miqveh to finish the process and to convert to Judaism. Even though she agreed to let me take her to the *miqveh*, she was

not expecting anything from that ritual. The surprise came through the power of the immersion. The personal action one does for oneself is a source of that power. The immersant chooses to change their status and to leave behind the damage that held them back. The trauma eventually becomes a part of their history, but does not affect their everyday life. All healing is a process—physical healing and spiritual/emotional healing. No one heals in a moment. *Miqveh* provides a powerful act which has the ability to compel a person to the other side of their trauma. The living waters bring redemption on a personal level and bring one inside the nurturing love of the tradition of the Jewish nation. With God at the center of the ritual, there is a power base that compels healing until one is made whole.

When I first arrived in San Diego, a woman, approaching age 70 appeared one day in my office, for which she climbed many stairs, and simply said: “I am turning seventy years old in a few weeks and I would like to start my life over. I hear that it is a tradition when one reaches the age of seventy one has lived a full live. I need to start over—please take me to the *miqveh*, so that when I reach the age of 83, I can have a *Bat Mitzvah*—I didn’t get to have one when I was thirteen and now that I will be so close to thirteen again, I can wait.”

I took her to the *miqveh*. As she immersed, I helped her with the blessing. She chose to immerse three times. With each subsequent immersion, she grew younger, more confident and joyful. She moved away from our community not long after her immersion saying, “I now have the strength to go and pursue my dreams.”

The ritual of walking down the seven steps of the *miqveh* to immerse and the seven steps it takes to emerge from the living waters, form a powerful frame to the immersion itself. For the immersion of an “*Erev Rav*,” (a soon to be ordained Rabbi) the assistance of the *miqveh* to move along the path to ordination, has the potential to prepare the *Erev Rav*,

just as the priests were prepared, to take on the mantle of the Rabbinate, the mantle of representing the Jewish people and leading a community, wherever it may be. These are the words of the *Erev Rav*:

....But nothing could have prepared me for the emotions and physical sensations I experienced that day I immersed in the *miqveh* for the very first time, just a few days prior to ordination. This was the day it all came together. This was the day I realized that the intellectual, the physical, the emotional and the spiritual aspects of my very being had come together to shape one whole, complete person. This was the day I took the final seven steps of preparation toward becoming a Rabbi.

With each step, I was increasingly transformed. Each step represented a goal, a dream I had dreamed for years: A dream that I now had the skill, the will, and the authority to achieve. My *miqveh* guide spoke about a different skill with each step. With my first step, she mentioned that I would “lead Jewish communities.” I was about to become the Rabbi for a small congregation. With my second step, she helped me focus on how I might work to “strengthen Jewish families.” For my third step, she challenged me to “inspire Jewish youth,” something I had wanted to do ever since I served as a temple youth group advisor in college. The fourth step guided me to “inspire love for Judaism,” and I knew that all I had to do was share the love I already had for our ancient tradition and texts. The fifth step reminded me that I could “help people find meaning in prayer.” For the sixth step, I would “help people connect with God,” and for the seventh, I would “help people deepen their Jewish souls”--seven days of creation and seven steps toward total immersion in these holy waters.

The experience of fully immersing in the water was indescribable. I was not prepared for the flood of emotions that came over me as I took part in this ritual. I cried tears of joy and of wonder. I felt connected simultaneously with antiquity and with modernity. I participated in an ancient custom that still holds deep meaning and significance for today. Even as I prepared for my future, I felt connected to the past; at the same time I was totally and completely immersed in the present. It felt holy.

After the *mikveh* experience, I emerged from the dressing room and found a group of my classmates and our Rabbi and mentor had congregated in the waiting room, all waiting their turn to immerse as well. Still in amazement, still silent, my hair still wet, I heard cries of “*Mazel Tov!*” as I emerged from the dressing room and walked into the waiting room. My status was about to change, and with this final step, my very being had changed as well.

Each of the aforementioned experiences had a life changing impact on those who immersed. Of conversations with dozens of immersants, no one had the same experience and

no one remained unchanged. Each had a profound connection either with God or felt themselves “spiritually” changed, healed or uplifted.

Chapter V: Newest Manifestation of an Ancient Necessity: Case Studies of Four Communities Building *Miqva'ot*

In this chapter, I will explore *miqveh* as providing a focus for community building at the grass roots level through four specific cases: *Mayyim Hayyim* Living Waters Community *Mikveh*¹⁰⁴ and Paula Brody & Family Education Center, Auburndale, Massachusetts; Temple *Bat Yam*, Newport, California *Mikveh*; Jill and Jay Stein Family Community *Mikveh* at Congregation Beth Israel, Scottsdale, Arizona and Waters of Eden – San Diego Community *Mikvah* and Education Center, San Diego, California. In particular I will focus on the way *miqveh* has the opportunity to be another dynamic, educational and spiritual center for the liberal Jewish community.

Dreams come to fruition when the dreamer begins to act. Such has been the resurgence of *miqva'ot* in the twenty-first century liberal Jewish-American dream. Our dreams come from our revisions of our past, our daily “presents” and our visions for our futures. “Jews are a hopelessly communal people,”¹⁰⁵ and as such find ways to engage with their traditional roots. We find in these roots values that match our twenty-first century sensibilities, and we use those traditions that add value to our future as Jews committed to the future of the Jewish people.

Miqveh is one of those ancient traditions that allows for private ritual as well as communal celebration and/or participation. *Miqveh* has the capability of bringing together the entire Jewish community, overcoming political divisions among religious movements, and Jewish community institutions.

¹⁰⁴ There are many different transliterated spellings for the word *miqveh*, as used by different communities.

Mayyim Hayyim uses the spelling: *mikveh*, as does the Jill and Jay Stein Family *Mikveh* of Scottsdale, Arizona.

¹⁰⁵ Rabbi Michael Berk, Senior Rabbi, Congregation Beth Israel, San Diego, CA, as recited in sermons, lectures and conversations with lay leaders, congregants and staff. This statement refers to the Jewish people, entire, but in this case, the reference points to the liberal Jewish population.

The above mentioned communities each had a vision of attaching ancient tradition in such a way that would resignify the purpose and perhaps meaning of ritual immersion.

These four *miqva'ot* were chosen for the following reasons:

First, each of these *miqva'ot* are modern creations of the twenty-first century. They were products of the desires of one person or even one family, or of a community of Rabbis and individuals rising to the foreground expressing their desires for liberal community *miqva'ot*. These ritual baths would be institutions that are reminiscent of our ancient tradition of *miqveh* but would be nurtured and processed in a modern fashion. They are intended to allow the liberal Jewish world to walk down ancient steps into waters of conversion, holiness, ritual purity or healing, and into God's presence.

Second, they show the failure and success of resignifying a tradition that at one time fully found its place only in Orthodox Jewish communities through the importance of fulfilling the *mitzvah* of *taharat hamishpahah* (the monthly immersion of women in *niddah*). Moreover, liberal Jews are still often barred from entering Orthodox controlled *miqva'ot*.

Third, together these projects provide lessons of inspiration and hope, even in their failure or halting progress.

To gather information for this thesis, I composed a questionnaire to be completed by the principal architects of each of these projects. The same survey questionnaire was given to the leaders of each *miqveh* effort¹⁰⁶ in the hopes of finding common lessons, particularly in the West (Orange County, Phoenix/Scottsdale, and San Diego), where there are far fewer liberal congregations. Boston yields other lessons, as its liberal Jewish communities are closer together, and come from a more traditional background. Boston's liberal Jewish *miqveh* is a source of inspiration for many *miqva'ot* throughout the country.

¹⁰⁶ See Appendix I: Thesis Questionnaire for the Four *Miqva'ot*.

The *miqveh* that could have been, Reform Temple *Bat Yahm* of Newport Beach, California, is unfortunately a story of a vision that ultimately failed. According to the Jewish Federation and Family Services of Orange County, there are seventeen liberal congregations in Orange County. Eight are reform congregations, one is a reform/conservative split congregation, four are conservative, 3 are non-affiliated and one is Reconstructionist. The National Jewish Population Survey of 2001-01 finds approximately 60,000 Jews living in Orange County. Temple *Bat Yahm*, the site of the *miqveh*, has approximately 625 families as of this writing. My conversations with Executive Director Bill Shane¹⁰⁷ and Cantor Jonathan Grant provided an interesting insight to a failed project.

As noted above, as regards communal ritual and process, there is often more than one person with a dream. It was the hope and dream of Rabbi Mark S. Miller, Senior Rabbi of Temple *Bat Yahm* to have a *miqveh* at the temple. He “foresaw countless acts of *Kedushah* (sanctification/holiness) and also saw it as a testament to the recovery of tradition in our [reform] movement and envisioned it as a hub for the non-Orthodox community of Orange County.”¹⁰⁸

The process of building a *miqveh* at *Bat Yahm* came concurrently with the process of rebuilding and adding to other parts of the Temple’s campus in 1999. By 2000-2001 the Temple Capital Campaign was in process and construction of the new campus began in late 2001. Rabbi Ben Zion Bergman¹⁰⁹ oversaw the *halakhic* requirements for the *miqveh*.

¹⁰⁷ Mr. Shane began his position as Executive Director at Temple *Bat Yahm* in 2003, but was well aware of the history of the project.

¹⁰⁸ Rabbi Mark S. Miller: in e-mail conversation with Cantor Arlene Bernstein regarding the Temple *Bat Yahm* *Miqveh* project, March 3, 2011.

¹⁰⁹ From the University of Judaism, as it was named at the time, now named American Jewish University.

The other main motivation for the *miqveh* came from one family, whose daughter was engaged to be married around the time of the campus rebuilding. They hoped that the completion of the *miqveh* could coincide with the wedding, and that their daughter would be the first bride to use the *miqveh*. This was something that was extremely important to the parents of the bride, and their funds towards building a *miqveh* went into the general capital fund. No straight line connected their dollars to the project, but still, it was their vision and their dream.

Because of this one family request (and financial contribution), no true feasibility study was done originally concerning the *miqveh*. There was a thought from the congregation that it could be the center for immersions in Orange County, the southern part of Los Angeles County and certainly San Diego County.¹¹⁰ The plan for this *miqveh* was to serve these communities primarily for weddings and conversions.

It was not expected that the Orthodox congregations of Orange County would use the *miqveh* for any reason, and there was some uncertainty expressed as to whether the Conservative congregations would participate. There was never a plan to market the *miqveh* to the entire Jewish community. Eventually the project ceased. The entire project of building the synagogue ran into significant financial problems, and changes of plans had to be made. As of this writing, the *miqveh* project will not be continued. The building housing the *miqveh* was completed, i.e. the concrete is poured for the ritual bath and *bor* and the plumbing and electricity of the building are completed. But there have been no aesthetic additions to the building – it is not tiled, and its preparatory room is unfinished.

¹¹⁰ The only functioning liberal *miqveh* in any of these areas can be found inside of the American Jewish University, Los Angeles, California, as operated and supervised by the Rabbinic Assembly of the Conservative Movement. From San Diego, this means a drive of approximately two and one-half hours in each direction.

Geographically the *miqveh* and building is not connected to any part of the synagogue buildings and will likely be used as office space or residential space for custodial help. It is now used as a storage space. As an irony of ironies, the synagogue has had to rent out space, so it shares its space with a church. The *miqveh* may well become the church office space.

One of the clear problems is that it was only after the financial issues appeared as to the construction of the entire campus that a feasibility study was done. It became apparent to the congregation that completion costs for the *miqveh* would be \$75,000, and they learned there would be additional costs of \$15,000 to \$ 20,000 per year in operating costs. In the end, there was no groundswell of support from the “women” of the Temple or from the Temple leadership. It was understood by all that the level of thinking, planning and analysis was demonstrably weak, and there was no real visioning for the *miqveh* itself.

A second factor in the failure of this *miqveh*, according to the Senior Rabbi of Temple *Bat Yahm*, was a complete “lack of congregational will.”¹¹¹ What might have made this project successful, even to date, would have been a marketing and education plan for the entire Jewish communities of Orange and San Diego counties. A communal approach with the Rabbis of these communities as well as the other community Jewish institutions such as the Jewish Federation and the Jewish Healing Center, might have yielded broader financial support and understanding of the meaning of *miqveh* for the 21st century liberal Jew.

The family with the dream of providing a *miqveh* for their daughter and subsequently their synagogue still holds a membership at Temple *Bat Yahm*. They are a multigenerational family who still participate, and the issue of the *miqveh* is long past. But their dream, for a bride to experience the spiritual act of a immersing before her wedding, as clearly practiced

¹¹¹ E-mail Conversation with Rabbi Mark Miller, March 3, 2011.

today in so many Jewish communities, both Orthodox and Liberal, was not fulfilled at this congregation.

Three thousand miles away, in the year 2001, Anita Diamant¹¹² had a vision of creating a liberal *miqveh* for the Greater Boston Area. She assembled a small founding board which included, herself, Rabbi Barbara Penzner, Roz Garber, Judy Green and Dr. Paula Brody. Aliza Klein was hired as *Mayyim Hayyim*'s executive director. This Board had a grand vision for this *miqveh*. It was to be a community resource to serve eighty member congregations and organizations for the entire New England area, serving Reform, Conservative, Reconstructionist and Renewal communities.

The original push for the *miqveh* came not only from community leaders, but from clergy as well. Local clergy were engaged from the earliest planning stages. A Rabbinic Advisory Committee was put in place and their advice was sought out on many issues: site selection, volunteer training, usage policies, and community building and fundraising. Several Rabbis were installed on the board of directors in the earliest phases of the project.

Mayyim Hayim, contributed this insight:

With this board, Anita Diamant made the case for a *mikveh* that “encourages the prayers of the heart in Jews of every denomination and description: A *mikveh* that would respect the choices and modesty of everyone who visits; a *mikveh* that would be beautiful in design and decoration – a welcoming and inviting place, from the minute you walk through the door.”

While doing research for a book on conversion to Judaism, Anita Diamant visited the local Orthodox *mikveh* on many occasions to observe the way different Rabbis facilitated conversion. She learned that the local *mikveh* was available two hours per week for conversions. The number of conversion candidates (no figure available, today we see about 200 to 300 per year) was big enough so that there would often be a line out the door, forcing the conversion ceremonies to be rushed. In addition, because the *mikveh* was designed to provide a space for women observing *Niddah*

¹¹² Anita Diamant: author of several books concerning contemporary Jewish life; award-winning journalist and resident of Newtonville, Massachusetts and founder of *Mayyim Hayyim* Living Waters Community *Mikveh* and Education Center.

and not for people converting to Judaism, there was no space for family and friends or a private room for holding a *Beit Din*.

Anita envisioned a place that would not only be welcoming, but would treat all guests with the same degree of respect and attention, regardless of the stream of Judaism from which they came. Furthermore, she dreamed of a space that could be welcoming and comfortable for those families and guests who are other than Jewish who might be accompanying the conversion candidate.”¹¹³

The intention for the *miqveh* was that it would be used for conversions, personal milestones, healing (after illness or trauma), *Niddah*, before *Shabbat*, Holidays and weddings and in preparation for the end of life. *Mayyim Hayyim* would open its door to be welcoming to Jews of all denominations, all ages, all sexual orientations, gender orientations and people with physical as well as mental disabilities.¹¹⁴ Because this project was unique and unprecedented in the community, the Board recognized a need to educate the Jewish community, and thus created a plan to market the project to the community. It was the Board’s thinking that “most American Jews were unfamiliar with even the idea of *mikveh*” and so a dual campaign commenced not only to raise funds, but to teach about *miqveh* as well.¹¹⁵

So *Mayyim Hayyim* created the following marketing plan: 1) to create a website, mayyimhayyim.org; 2) to print accessible and compelling materials designed for visual and tactile beauty; 3) to collect personal stories; 4) to develop a speakers series; 5) to offer programming for assembled groups, including “Women and Water”, “Men and *Mikveh*”, “Wholeness and Holiness”; 6) to have clergy and representatives of *Mayyim Hayyim* make presentations to synagogue congregants from the pulpit.¹¹⁶ This education and marketing

¹¹³ Amy Chartok, National Programs Director, *Mayyim Hayyim* Living Waters Community *Mikveh* and Education Center, response to Thesis Survey of *Miqva’ot*.

¹¹⁴ Amy Chartok, Thesis Survey.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

plan helped create a highly successful fundraising campaign in the community and increased understand of *miqveh* throughout New England.

Prior to opening the doors of the *miqveh*, the website, www.mayyimhayyim.org, was created; printed materials were extensively prepared and community events were sponsored and co-sponsored. Shortly after the opening of the *mikveh*, *Mikveh Monologues* was written by Anita Diamant and Janet Buchwald. This stage play, based on stories collected from visitors, demonstrates (rather than explains) the impact of ritual immersion in the life of very different kinds of people. Curricula for middle school students and special lesson plans have been written. These can be adapted to fit the needs of different audiences.¹¹⁷

The significant donors to this *miqveh* project gave their support at \$25,000 or more during the first two years. These major donors were compelled to help finance the project for many differing reasons. Some had a connection to the nature of the work of a *miqveh* because they were an adult convert or married to a convert. Others had suffered a serious illness, trauma, or other life experience which lent itself to an opportunity for a healing ritual. Some donors had a passion for a particular issue, such as domestic violence, or saw the potential in the *miqveh* for outreach to the community and to expanded volunteer activities.

The diversity of interest, and the appeal of the *Mayyim Hayyim* vision to a diverse group, is evidence from a look at the following people and foundations that supported the opening of *Mayyim Hayyim*. Each gave according to their means and their interests in the project: Dr. Paula Brody—outreach to interfaith and Jewish education; Anita Diamant and husband Jim Ball—creation of a place that honored conversions; Judy and Jason Chudnofsky—as an institution for healing; Ted Cutler and Irwin Chafetz—innovative and pluralistic nature of the work; Diane Troderman—unique, innovative and women focused

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

nature of the work; The Nathan Cummings Foundation—spiritual and healing work; The Covenant Foundation—training of volunteers as educators and *mikveh* guides.¹¹⁸

In addition to the challenges of raising funds for the *mikveh*, the maintenance and support to the volunteer *mikveh* guides is essential. They are an invaluable resource to the good work *Mayyim Hayyim* provides. Recognizing when and how to nurture volunteers and training new guides to be an effective part of the team has been a priority.¹¹⁹ Additionally, Amy Chartok, the Director for National Programming, maintains the commitment to working with individuals and groups outside the Boston/New England area who require help regarding *miqveh*. Her attendance at International Conferences, aiding groups who desire to build new *miqva'ot* and maintain connections with individuals and institutions throughout the world, requires an allocation of additional resources.

The *halakhah* of *miqva'ot* is very complicated. Every *miqveh* requires rabbinic supervision. It was very important to the Board of *Mayyim Hayyim* to have a *mikveh*, soundly based on *halakhah* so that any Jew could feel comfortable using it for their immersion. As was done for the failed *miqveh* of Temple *Bat Yahm* of Newport Beach, California, Rabbi Ben Zion Bergman (a graduate of the Jewish Theological Seminary and on the faculty of the American Jewish University) was also the supervisor of the *Mayyim Hayyim Mikveh*. Rabbi Bergman met with many clergy from the area including local Orthodox Rabbis. The *mikveh* is now supervised by Rabbi Scott Rosenberg, a Conservative Rabbi, formerly Rabbi of Temple *Reyim* and a member of the Rabbinical Assembly Law Committee. Rabbi Rosenberg is a respected authority of *halakhah*. On a daily basis, the *mikveh* is supervised by Carrie Bornstein, the Assistant Director of *Mayyim Hayyim*.

¹¹⁸ Details in the specific amounts of leading gifts were not presented in the survey.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

Because of the enormous desire to be open to the entire Jewish community, a great effort was made to reach out to the Orthodox community. One Orthodox rabbi met with Rabbi Bergman during the design and construction and affirmed the basic values of the *miqveh*. There are individuals who are members of Orthodox congregations who immerse, teach and take classes at *Mayyim Hayyim*. Moreover, with regard to conferences and educational programs, Orthodox clergy from outside of the Boston area have collaborated with *Mayyim Hayyim* as participants, planners and as educators.

All Jews and those becoming Jews are eligible to use the *miqveh*. But it is the policy of *Mayyim Hayyim* that “those who identify as other than Jewish may not immerse in the *miqveh*, but are warmly welcomed to come as guests of an immersant, as participants in an educational program or for a tour or visit to our art gallery.”¹²⁰

Mayyim Hayyim opened its doors on May 14, 2004. It is located in a renovated Victorian home in Newton, Massachusetts. Added construction to the home provided two immersion pools (*miqva'ot*), four preparation suites and a reception area. The original section of the home provides a multipurpose facility which serves as an education center, celebration venue and as an art gallery. *Mayyim Hayyim* defines the success of its *miqveh* in the following way:

“Our goal is for community member to be aware of this resource, and elect to immerse when they identify a meaningful transition milestone or experience worth marking in this way. We strive to make it such that the experience of visiting our *mikveh* is a positive one so that should another need arise, one would consider coming back. We are please when those we have touched, want to share their story with others. We also consider it a success when people of all ages come for educational programming or to visit our gallery, whether or not they ever plan to get in the water.”¹²¹

¹²⁰ Amy Chartok, Thesis Survey.

¹²¹ Amy Chartok, Thesis Survey.

As identified above, the success of *Mayyim Hayyim* has been what was imagined and more. The *miqveh* handles **1400 annual immersions**, in addition to the **2000** people who come to the *miqveh* for over one hundred educational classes each year, as well as the visitors who come to see the art gallery which features three to four new exhibits each year. There are at least two large-scale community events for 250 to 700 people each, every year. Interestingly enough, *Mayyim Hayyim* estimates that seventy-five percent of the immersions are for traditional purposes: *Niddah*, pre-wedding, pre-holiday/Shabbat and conversions. It was imagined that the actual percentage of immersions for alternative purposes such as healing and life transitions would be higher. A surprising revelation to everyone is that there are a growing number of young people choosing to immerse before becoming *Bar* or *Bat Mitzvah*.¹²² A last thought on the success of the *miqveh* is attributed to the numbers of people who wish to share their own stories with others and those who visit “whether or not they every plan to get into the water.”¹²³

Since 2004, *Mayyim Hayyim* has become a treasured communal resource not only to the Boston and New England Communities, but to Jewish communities in North America and Israel. Two national conferences on *miqveh* have been organized by *Mayyim Hayyim*; countless resources have been published (see Bibliography); a venue for Jewish artists has been created; and an extraordinary and unprecedented community has been created around *Miqveh*, an institution which heretofore has been quietly hidden and in the background of the liberal Jewish community (with the possible exception of some Conservative communities). New miqva’ot are springing up throughout the United States and Israel due to the enormous

¹²² I would identify the growing number of *B’nei Mitzvah* who wish to immerse as a huge success of the educational programming for students as run by *Mayyim Hayyim* and their teaching curriculum which can be purchased online.

¹²³ Amy Chartok, Thesis Survey.

success of *Mayyim Hayyim*'s national marketing, international conferences and desire to help communities create their own visions of *miqveh*.

During the October 2010 International *Mikveh* Conference, *Mayyim Hayyim* ran a workshop for communities who were either in process of building, or searching to create a *miqveh* in their communities. The following cities were represented in this important workshop: San Diego, CA; Raleigh/Durham, NC; Portland, ME; Eugene and Ashland, OR; New Orleans, LA; Atlanta, GA; Miami, FL; Lexington, KY and Jerusalem. Although the question regarding community *miqva'ot* built after *Mayyim Hayyim* that are inspired by them is complicated, it is certain that the *miqva'ot* for San Diego and Los Gatos, CA fall into this category, as does a new community *miqveh* formerly supervised by the Orthodox community which has become a community *miqveh* in Portland, OR.

While there are many *miqva'ot* that predate *Mayyim Hayyim*, several use the *miqveh* volunteer training guide for their *miqveh* attendants and use *kavvanot* supplied before immersion by *Mayyim Hayyim*. Other *miqva'ot* are contacting *Mayyim Hayyim* in order to use their educational materials to foster the understanding of the many paths for ritual immersion. More than 275 participants attended the 2010 International *Mikveh* Conference in Boston. The evidence of a profound renewed interest in *miqveh* is clear.

Mayyim Hayyim has performed so many *mitzvot* for the liberal Jewish community. These include: the *mitzvah* of creating *miqveh* guides; partnering with other Jewish institutions and bringing them together, no matter the denomination; reaching out to the unaffiliated and reaching out to communities, modeling for everyone that an extraordinary ancient ritual can find its place in modernity; use of *miqveh* to prepare for a sacred event, for family purity; as a vehicle for healing; to bring God to the center of ritual, and create a

broader sense of spiritual renewal and redemption on a personal and national level. Mayyim Hayyim is the newest incarnation of the “monolithic *miqveh*” with the power to bring down the silos of denomination and to “*m’kareiv*” (bring close) even the most unaffiliated Jew to Jewish spiritual renewal.

As we move to the western parts of the United States, where the Jewish communities are often considered “less traditional” than Jewish communities of the east coast and often less populated, the principles of Jewish life remain the same. The Jill and Jay Stein Family Community *Mikveh* at Congregation Beth Israel in Scottsdale, Arizona opened on September 24th, 2007. The idea and dream of creating a *miqveh* in the Valley of the Sun area of Scottsdale, Phoenix and Paradise Valley, Arizona began in 1996, just after the first Reform *Mikveh* of Temple Israel, West Bloomfield, Michigan opened in 1995. The following paragraphs greet the visitor of the *Mikveh* section of Congregation Beth Israel, Arizona’s website:

“The Jill and Jay Stein Family *Mikveh* at Congregation Beth Israel is the first *Mikveh* in the State of Arizona which can be used by all members of the Jewish community regardless of affiliation with any particular movement or Synagogue. It exists for the ritual use of the Jewish community for rituals both commanded by our tradition and created in modernity to mark life's transitions.

Our *Mikveh* was certified for use according to Jewish law – *halakhah* – by three rabbinic authorities. Rabbi Ben Zion Bergman (a Conservative Rabbi), who is a Professor Emeritus of Rabbinic Literature at the University of Judaism in Los Angeles, and Rabbi Yaacov Love (an Orthodox Rabbi), the Associate Chair in the Department of *Halakhah* at *Yeshivat Chovevei Torah* in New York City and Rabbi Stephen Kahn of Congregation Beth Israel.”¹²⁴

As noted by Rabbi Darren Kleinberg, an ordinee of *Yeshivat Chovevei Torah* and Director of KiDma (The Southwest Community, nondenominational adult education resource

¹²⁴Website, www.cbiaz.org.

serving the greater Phoenix area) in a phone interview, this is likely the first time that a *miqveh* has been planned and constructed together by Rabbinic authorities who are Orthodox, Conservative and Reform. The Scottsdale, Phoenix and Paradise Valley areas are home to approximately 50,000 Jewish households, and there are seven congregations in the area which are members of a “*Mikveh* Society.” There are a total of fifteen liberal congregations in the general area of the Valley of the Sun. This membership entitles members to use the *miqveh* at half the fees of the general community. Congregation Beth Israel of Arizona, where the *miqveh* is housed in a separate building connected to the temple, has seven hundred fifty family units alone.

Though the dream of the *miqveh* began in 1996, it was not until a conversation with Jill and Jay Stein at the *Mikveh* while at the University of Judaism¹²⁵ that the dream began flourishing to reality. It was Jill and Jay Stein who provided the lead gift for the *Mikveh* project. They felt that it was “silly” to have to fly to Los Angeles for Jill’s conversion to use a *miqveh*.¹²⁶ The existing *miqveh* in the vicinity of the Valley of the Sun area is owned by Chabad, but it is only used for *Keilim* and *Niddah*. The Jill and Jay Stein Family *Mikveh* is now supervised by Rabbi Stephen Kahn, Rabbi Rony Keller and Cantor Jaime Shpall, all clergy serving Congregation Beth Israel.

The vision for this *miqveh* was that it would be available to all Jews, regardless of denomination. In response to the survey, Rabbi Stephen Kahn noted that although the *miqveh* was planned, supervised and built with the authorization and consent of Orthodox, Conservative and Reform Rabbis, the Orthodox Rabbis of the community do not permit their women to use the *miqveh*.

¹²⁵ The University of Judaism has been renamed as the American Jewish University in 2007.

¹²⁶ Thesis Survey for Jill and Jay Stein Family *Mikveh*: as reported by Rabbi Stephen Kahn, Sr. Rabbi of Congregation Beth Israel, Scottsdale, Arizona.

The *miqveh* was built to the precise requirements of *halakhah*. Rabbi Ya'akov Love, an Orthodox Rabbi whose expertise is *halakhah*, assisted with the design and installation of the *miqveh*. But he was careful to state that he did not participate in the *Miqveh* Project after this point and noted that every *miqveh* has to have on site Rabbinic supervision (Rabbi Love resides and teaches on the East Coast).

This resistance of the Orthodox Jewish community to this *miqveh* is a great challenge to the vision of the leaders of this project. Although the *miqveh* was constructed according to the Orthodox requirements, the complications of *Kabbalat ol mitzvot*, the acceptance of the Yoke of *Mitzvah*, does not allow the majority of the Orthodox community to use the *miqveh*. The use of the *miqveh* by people who do not accept and perform the majority of the *mitzvot* set out in Judaism, as observed by the Orthodox community, negates its “*kashrut*,” even though it was built to traditional specifications and its maintenance concurs with the laws of *halakhah*. According to Rabbi Darren Kleinberg, “a *miqveh* can only become *pasul* if the water is not *mayim chayim* or the *bor* is not *halakhic*. Once a *miqveh* is constructed and filled *b'kashrut*, it cannot become *pasul*. One critical issue regarding why liberal *miqva'ot* are not acceptable to the Orthodox community is that of *ne'emanut* - i.e. that people who are not *shomrei mitzvot* (people who do not keep the commandments) are not considered credible as witnesses. As such, they cannot be relied upon to be responsible for the maintenance of the *miqveh*. The issue of *ne'emanut* is a rarely treated subject (especially in the public square) but is the most important issue separating Orthodox Jews from non Orthodox Jews and can be found at the root of many issues.”¹²⁷

The project presented other challenges and complications, such as trying to educate the members of the Reform synagogue at which the *miqveh* was being built. The idea put

¹²⁷ Rabbi Darren Kleinberg in e-mail conversation.

forward for liberal Jews (and in this case, particularly Reform Jews) to claim Jewish ritual as their own and not to be beholden to the Orthodox world created a rift at Congregation Beth Israel. The synagogue did lose members over the building of the *miqveh* because they felt it had no place in a Reform Synagogue. The clergy were entirely supportive of the project, but the interference came from three board members and other members who left the community.¹²⁸ Along with Rabbi Stephen Kahn, Cantor Shpall noted that future plans for educational programming will likely provide more understanding about and interest in the *miqveh* as well as additional numbers of immersions throughout the state of Arizona.

To date, it is hard to know the affect that the *miqveh* is having on the community, but it is in use throughout the liberal Jewish congregations. The following uses for the *miqveh* are listed by the Congregation's website: Conversion; brides and grooms before a wedding; before conceiving a baby; before all Holy Days; before Shabbat; during the month of *Elul*; before becoming *Bar/Bat mitzvah*; before rabbinic ordination; before traveling to Israel; before or on a special birthday; after recovery from a physical, mental or emotional trauma (loss, miscarriage, severe illness, surgery, chemotherapy, or incidents of physical or sexual abuse); life transitions; divorce; anniversary of conversion to Judaism; after giving birth (in keeping of rules of *Niddah*) and *Niddah*.¹²⁹ It should be noted that, like the *Mayyim Hayyim Mikveh*, at the Jay and Jill Stein Family *Mikveh*, non-Jews are not permitted to immerse, with the exception of those immersing for the purpose of conversion.

This *miqveh* provides growing proof that the reclamation of Jewish ritual, heretofore mostly used by one significant branch of Judaism, can be reestablished through grassroots communal work. Further education is needed in the congregation and throughout the Jewish

¹²⁸ Thesis Survey, Rabbi Stephen Kahn.

¹²⁹ Website, www.cbiaz.org/mikveh.

community in Arizona and surrounding states as well as nationally in order to continue the work of the *miqveh* and insure its success. National attention will provide information to those using the Valley of the Sun area for destination vacations or weddings, and people moving into the area, and enable them to understand that ritual and spirituality are particularly a part of liberal Jewish life among this population. Local education will provide the opportunity for Jews to have a ritual experience that will not only allow them to celebrate, change status, heal or prepare ritually for an event, but open a door to Judaism for them that would otherwise remain closed or hidden.

Throughout Jewish history, dreams have always played a significant role. The Bible is filled with the dreams of Abraham, Jacob, Joseph, and the prophets. The Talmud speaks of dreams and the sages write, interpret and discuss the meaning and provide prayers concerning dreams. There is a dream, shared by many individuals in San Diego County, to create a liberal *miqveh* for the Jewish population of the San Diego/Tijuana region. That vision is to share the *miqveh* with any Jew, whether in the county to the north or the communities to the east, or for that matter, to any Jew coming to San Diego in need of or desire for immersion in a *miqveh*.

The Mission Statement of the San Diego *miqveh* “Waters of Eden” reads:

Waters of Eden San Diego Community *Mikvah* and Education Center will provide a unique center for Jewish continuity, spirituality, renewal and learning for the greater San Diego community. This center is dedicated to reclaiming the ancient tradition of *mikvah*, reinventing the rituals of immersion to serve the needs of a diverse 21st century Jewish Community, male and female, young and old.”¹³⁰

That dream is on its way to becoming a reality, but there are still many challenges, which are discussed below.

¹³⁰ Mission Statement for the Waters of Eden Community *Mikvah* and Educational Center.

I had this dream when I first came to San Diego to serve as Cantor at Congregation Beth Israel, a Reform Congregation with approximately 1300 families. In 1997, I was told that my new congregation was building a new building in a more central location inside of the Jewish Community of San Diego. I literally begged the Rabbi to add a *miqveh* to the congregation's building plans. After my own profound experience in the Upper West Side *Mikvah*, before my Cantorial Investiture through the Hebrew Union College Jewish Institute of Religion's School of Sacred Music, I had dreamed of having a community *miqveh* where I would be able to take converts, people in need of healing and other special moments of status change, to a liberal community *miqveh* near the congregations which I would serve. The Rabbi's response went something like this, "...they already think of me as the Lubavitcher Rabbi (in my Jewish practice), there is no way that they will build a *miqveh*. The timing is just not right."¹³¹

I did not know that already in the hearts and minds of many others in the San Diego community, that dream was alive and flourishing. Many individuals in our Conservative and Reform congregations, clergy in the liberal San Diego Jewish Rabbinate, and leaders of our Jewish institutions agreed that a liberal *miqveh* was needed in San Diego. Many asked how it could be that a Jewish community, the size of the one in the San Diego region, could have many synagogues and a marked Jewish cemetery, yet have no *miqveh* to accommodate the liberal Jewish community.

The dream of this holy project came to light at the Jewish Federation Women's Options event in February of 2008, featuring author, Anita Diamant. At that conference, she described the experience of *Mayyim Hayyim*. Women who attended that conference came

¹³¹ Rabbi Jonathan Stein, Congregation Beth Israel, San Diego, 1997. Though a Reform trained and practicing Reform Rabbi, anything construed as "traditional" by the congregation presented Rabbi Stein as traditional, Conservative or "even Orthodox," something that many of the members of the congregation feared.

together and eventually formed the Board of “Waters of Eden”. I must note that each person believed that they had the idea first; that this was her vision that had been quietly simmering for years. *But* it was the dynamic inspirational talk and role modeling of Diamant and the wild success of *Mayyim Hayyim* that provoked action. In addition, a dynamic leader stepped forward, Dr. Lisa Braun Glazer -- a psychologist, wife, mother, member of both Conservative and Reform congregations, philanthropist and innovator of many projects throughout the Jewish community. A swelling grass roots movement came together, led by Dr. Lisa Braun-Glazer, which eventually led to the founding of a 501c3 creating a non-profit organization: “Waters of Eden Community Mikvah and Education Center”.

After much planning, the project was announced in the fall of 2009 and the play “The Mikveh Monologues” helped launch the educational component and fundraising project with two performances on January 30 and 31st, 2010 at the Lawrence Jewish Community Center. Educational programming in 2009-2010 such as *Rosh Hodesh* programming (*Nisan* 5770 and *Heshvan* 5771) as well as an event for *Elul* 5771 and an Annual Meeting were all part of community education programming. The founding board of *Waters of Eden* – San Diego Community *Mikvah* and Education Center from 2008-2010 – draws from all parts of the San Diego liberal Jewish community: Rabbi Lenore Bohm (Hebrew Union College); Dr. Lisa Braun-Glazer, President; Laura Galinson, Vice President; Craig Lambert; Karen Grossman Levinson; Esther Michan; Olivia Okovita; Leslie Simon; Amy Spielman; Ashley Stone, Secretary; Dr. Jan Tuttleman, CFO/Treasurer; and Zelda Waxenberg. Ex Officio Members: Rabbi Scott Meltzer, San Diego Rabbinical Association and Charlene Seidle, Jewish Community Foundation of San Diego.¹³² These founders and current board members span

¹³² The Waters of Eden Board from 2010 to the present includes: Cantor Arlene Bernstein; Dr. Lisa Braun-Glazer, Founding President; Laura Galinson; Karen Grossman; Rabbi Avi Libman; Esther Michan; Mark

the breadth of the Jewish community from clergy, laity, philanthropists, educators, to the religious and secular throughout San Diego County.

There has been much talk in the community that approximately 100,000 Jews live in the San Diego area, but only 25% are affiliated with any kind of Jewish institution. In order to address this situation, the Board decided to embrace the idea of a partnership approach for the realization of the project, rather than a top-down leadership model. To date, Waters of Eden has thirty-four community partners and has raised 2.2 million dollars.

Yet the financial feasibility of the project is still in debate. In order to break ground in December of 2011 and insure the future of the *miqveh*, the project managers feel they require 4.4 million dollars. In total, it is likely that the project will necessitate 7 million dollars, which will include monies to provide for an endowment. In the summer of 2008, a group of San Diego State University MBA students were commissioned to prepare a Request for Proposal to house the *miqveh*, to develop a five year business plan and budget and to perform a local needs assessment survey. They received over 1,100 responses to their survey, with help provided by the United Jewish Federation and the Jewish Community Center as well as two surveys for best practices of *miqva'ot* throughout the country.

Despite the money raised, and the development of at least one model Request for Proposal, Waters of Eden only very recently (on Sunday, February 27, 2011) decided to plan a feasibility study that will be conducted in the coming weeks. It has become clear that in this weak national economy, the Board of "Waters of Eden" must delve honestly into the financial feasibility of finishing the project, even though it has done a tremendous amount of

Nussbaum, CFO/Treasurer; Olivia Okovita; Leslie Simon, Secretary; Amy Spielman, V.P. Development; and Zelda Waxenberg. Ex Officio Members: Ellen Fabrikant, Tifereth Israel Synagogue; Rabbi Marty Lawson, San Diego Rabbinical Association (SDRA). Staff: Marcia Tatz Wollner, Manager; Ilene Tatro, Systems Administrator; Roni Harel, Hillel Intern

leg work and education outreach to the San Diego clergy and Jewish community at large. It was thought that if the board and significant members of the community raised a substantial amount of funds, others would be encouraged to participate in a successful venture. Yet, despite having raised over \$2 million dollars thus far, the project has insufficient funds to begin building the *miqveh*.

The project does have a site. Rabbi Leonard Rosenthal and the Board and Congregation of Congregation Tifereth Israel of San Diego (Conservative) rented some of the land owned by the congregation to Waters of Eden at the cost of \$1 per year for fifty years, with a forty-nine year renewal option, at the base of Cowles Mountain. Waters of Eden will be permitted to purchase the land, should the synagogue decide to relocate at some future date. The lease signing took place on March 15th, 2010. Winner of the local architectural competition was Taal Safdie of Safdie Rabines Architects. An important feature of this *miqveh* will be environmentally sustainable plans for the entire facility, a commitment that Safdie Rabines Architects made for the project.¹³³ The *miqveh* will be adjacent to, but not connected to, the structure of Tifereth Israel. Like the *Mayyim Hayyim Mikveh*, the *miqveh* will be close to, but not attached to, a synagogue and a shared parking lot will be used. For San Diego county residents who wish to immerse in or study at the *miqveh* or just visit, the longest drive will be forty-five minutes, as opposed to a two plus hour drive to the Rabbinic Assembly *miqveh* housed at the University of Judaism in Los Angeles.

An integral and important part of the *miqveh* project, as directed by the board and encouraged by the San Diego Rabbinic Association is the *kashrut* of the two ritual immersion pools. Because there are very few Rabbis in the United States who are expert in the *halakhah* of *miqveh*, it was hoped that Rabbi Ben Zion Bergman, who had helped with the

¹³³ See Appendix B for the current design by Safdie Rabines Architects for Waters of Eden.

supervision of the three above mentioned *miqva'ot*, would supervise Waters of Eden. Due to illness, Rabbi Bergman was not able to make a commitment to Waters of Eden. Since then, Rabbi David Rue was contracted as the supervising Rabbi and has worked closely with the architects and the members of the board to insure the *kashrut* of the *miqveh* will conform to all standards. Rabbi Rue is part of the Orthodox *Pardes* Movement, heads the West Regional *Beit Din* in Los Angeles and was recommended by Rabbi Danny Landes of *Pardes*, Jerusalem. The first meeting with Rabbi Rue occurred on April 28, 2010. He also supervised the Berkeley, California *Mikvah* as well as several other *miqva'ot*.

The board of the San Diego *miqveh* has reached out on a number of occasions to the Orthodox Rabbinate of San Diego to keep them apprised of the project. It is the hope of Waters of Eden, that if Orthodox women or men choose to use the immersion pools at Waters of Eden, their Rabbis will give their approval. While the dream is to provide for all Jews, I do not believe that Waters of Eden is expecting the sanctioning of the *miqveh* by the San Diego Orthodox Rabbinate for many reasons.

Following the lessons of *Mayyim Hayyim*, The Waters of Eden Community *Mikvah* and Education Center has already created a marketing and education plan to the San Diego Jewish community. This plan includes: 1) a “Waters of Eden” website at www.watersofeden.org; 2) a video made in San Diego to promote the *miqveh* by Pointe Blanc Video, Joyce Axelrod, Director; 3) a Speakers Bureau to outreach to congregations and other Jewish institutions; 4) a Facebook page; 5) publicity material given out to all liberal congregations at the time of High Holidays;¹³⁴ 6) a campaign of private solicitations 7) a series of parlor meetings for educational and fundraising purposes; 8) the preparation of

¹³⁴ In partial fulfillment of the Fundraising course taught by Professor Richard Siegel at the Hebrew Union College Rabbinical School in Los Angeles, I created both a prototype for the materials handed out for the High Holidays and a Case Study for the Waters of Eden San Diego Community *Mikvah* and Education Center.

a feasibility study identifying key community members who will be essential to the project's success.

The challenges that lie ahead for the Waters of Eden project are seemingly few, but of great importance. One challenge clearly is that of fundraising combined with education. The success to this point in this unprecedented project in the San Diego community is that it has brought together the entire liberal community in partnership. The liberal Rabbinic Community has joined together, providing an option for community *Batei Din*. Another challenge yet to be decided is whether this *miqveh*, unlike its role model in the Northeast and its immediate neighbor to the east, will allow non-Jews to participate in immersion. The question has repeatedly come up, only to be evaded in board meetings after wildly angry statements are voiced on either side of the issue. It is discussed in whispers in "parking lot" conversations.

The debate around this issue is a vigorous one. Some people have suggested that there should be a "don't ask, don't tell" policy at Waters of Eden. Like elsewhere in the United States, San Diego's liberal Jewish communities are filled with interfaith couples. Should the non-Jewish partners of these couples be denied the opportunity to heal or celebrate in these living waters? Perhaps because San Diego sits at the shore of the Pacific Ocean, which is considered a "kosher" *miqveh*--that should be the place for experimentation of the idea of *miqveh* by non-Jews. What separates the Jew from his/her non-Jewish neighbors? Is it ethical to ask for monies from a Jew whose spouse will not be able to use the *miqveh*? There are members of the board who sit on both sides of this challenge.

These are the issues which face the Waters of Eden Community *Mikvah* and Education Center. With so much positive and grassroots preparation, the project is still

months and even years away from defining the ultimate success of the "Waters of Eden" *Mikvah*. Like the community cemeteries which bind all Jews together, this *miqveh* could have the same power to bind our community together. Although it is being built some 150 plus years after liberal Jews built their first synagogues and cemeteries in San Diego, rather than before, the resignification of *miqveh* in the 21st century has the opportunity to create a community that will be enveloped by a new spiritual awakening of an ancient tradition.

Conclusion

At the present time in American history, individuals in the liberal and secular communities of the Jewish people are searching for “spirituality”, “meaning” and “community”. These overly used buzz words have brought out a cry from Jews seeking to connect with their rich cultural and religious legacy. Part of that legacy is the use of the *miqveh*. From the Biblical Period, through the Period of the Second Temple, to the Mishnaic and Talmudic Periods, and from generation to generation since, the use of the *miqveh* is one of the most primal spiritual institutions of Jewish life.

In the most mystical sense, it is interesting to note that the word *miqveh* (MQVH) is found in the Bible seven times (in the above mentioned form). The first time the word is used (making a total of eight) it is referred to as the “gathering of the waters” (Gen. 1:10). Thousands of years after the Bible was written, Jews are being spiritually called to gather at these living waters (*mayim hayim*). The number seven refers to the days of the week, the seven times seven weeks from the second night of Passover to the Giving of the Torah at Sinai, and to so many other references in Jewish tradition. The number eight reminds us of the eighth day of life of a male child and the circumcision (*brit milah*) and naming, entering him into the covenant of Israel. For the female child in many liberal communities, the importance of bringing daughters into the covenant as well, on the eighth day for a *Brit Bat* (the covenant of a daughter) or naming (an evolved tradition) has become equal to the institution of circumcision for boys. *Miqveh*, for the liberal Jewish community, I believe, is evolving into a resignified *brit*—a resignified covenant with God, *Miqveh Yisrael*, and a resignified *brit* with the Jewish people.

Judaism has developed across the ages through the codes of *Halakha*. The law Committees, *Responsa* and Rabbis have answered questions and given directives for their congregants to take on *mitzvot* and to live Jewishly informed and practiced lives. The institution of *miqveh* has, as well, evolved and developed through the ages to the twenty-first century. Not only is the ancient purity law of *taharat mishpahah* (family purity) seen with new eyes and new interpretations, so too are the customs of *teshuvah*, going to *miqveh* before *Yom Kippur*, or before Shabbat as a way to increase in holiness (*ma'alim bakodesh*) these sacred days with sacred acts.

Liberal communal *miqva'ot* are springing up throughout the country and even in Israel.¹³⁵ Reform Rabbis are encouraging more and more of their converts (Jews by choice) to participate in the ritual of *miqveh*. Clergy are also learning from institutions such as *Mayyim Hayyim* the value of creating community *miqva'ot*. There has been renewed interest in promoting education concerning the building and usage of *miqveh*. The Rabbis are also bringing congregants to the *miqveh* in preparation for their change of status, or for sacred events. In addition converts, Rabbinic and Cantorial candidate (i.e. *klei kodesh*—people who chose the clergy and serve God and the Jewish people), brides and grooms and even *B'nei Mitzvah* students as they become adults in the eyes of the Jewish community, are being encouraged to use the *miqveh* to mark their change of status.

The *miqveh* is also becoming a place where ritual purity has taken on more meaning. Women are being brought to the *miqveh* after childbirth. They are choosing to immerse monthly in the hope and prayer to become pregnant, to overcome issues of miscarriage and infertility. Men and women are asking to be taken to the *miqveh* to heal the wounds of

¹³⁵ Three communities have sought the help of *Mayyim Hayyim* for the building of their *miqva'ot*.

divorce, incest or rape. Clergy are encouraging people to immerse themselves after long illnesses or to emotionally heal before an incurable illness takes their lives.

Where are these immersions taking place? Today they are taking place in locations similar to those where our ancestors immersed: in private homes, in synagogues or buildings adjacent to synagogues, or in natural springs and seas. Water is found at sites where *miqva'ot* once were found, evoking the usage of *miqva'ot* from the past. Hand washing, in the place of full immersion, is performed as one leaves the cemetery at the grave of a loved one. Hand washing has also become a tradition to emulate the rituals of priests and ancient religious groups who might have fully immersed before eating their meals.

As today's modern immersants are literally reborn as Jews, or emerge from the waters spiritually cleansed with God at the center of their renewal, we realize that the chain of tradition has not only been rebuilt, but a new, resigified custom has evolved. It may be that these evolving customs will take on the power of law in liberal Judaism. Perhaps our descendants will walk to the waters of the *miqveh* before the sun sets, bringing in the Sabbath. They may wonder why their Reform great-grandparents never had or understood the joy and fulfillment of immersing in *mayim hayim*, and thanking God for the privilege and *mitzvah* "*al hat'vilah*" upon immersion.

APPENDIX A

The following questions made up the “questionnaire” that was given to individuals involved in the following four *miqva'ot*:

1. Temple *Bat Yahm*, Newport Beach, CA;
2. *Mayyim Hayyim* Living Waters Community *Mikveh* and Education Center, Newton, MA;
3. Jill & Jay Stein Family Community *Mikveh*, Scottsdale, AZ;
4. Waters of Eden San Diego Community *Mikvah* and Education Center, San Diego, CA.

The questionnaire was completed by participants either by email, or in phone conversations.

1. Are you affiliated with a Congregation or Jewish Community Organization?
2. How many families are in your congregation, or are served by your community organization?
3. Do you have any idea how many families are served or will be served by this *miqveh*?
3. When did the idea of building the *miqveh* first occur?
4. What was the main motivation for the building of the *miqveh*?
5. Who did you envision would use it?
6. For what purposes do you expect people to use the *miqveh*?
7. Was there a plan to market the *miqveh* it to the community?
8. Did the marketing plan include a deliberate education component?
9. Who were the significant donors to the *miqveh* project?
10. How would you describe the reasons that people donated to the *miqveh* project?
11. What compelled people to work on this project, or donate to it?
12. What other other *miqva'ot* are there in the community?
13. Are there only Orthodox *miqva'ot* in the community?

14. Are there any *miqva'ot* open to all Jewish people?
15. How was the decision made about obtaining *halakhic* supervision of building the *miqveh*?
16. Who supervises the *kashrut* of the *miqveh*?
17. Who supervises the operations of the *miqveh* on a day to day basis?
18. Who is eligible to use the *miqveh*?
19. Asked of *Bat Yam* only: Why did the project stop?
20. Is the use of the *miqveh* what you envisioned? If it is different, how?
21. How would you define “success” for a *miqveh*?
22. What were the challenges of building the *miqveh* (besides monetary issues)?
23. Did the initial leadership to build the *miqveh* come from the community or clergy? Were clergy supportive? Did they interfere?
24. Are there spaces in the *miqveh* building used for things other than the actual immersions (such as study, reflection, or celebration)?
25. Was there an educational effort or program re: *miqveh* that was launched either before or after the *miqveh* was built?
26. How has the presence of the *miqveh* affected the Jewish community?
27. How has the existence of the *miqveh* affected individuals in the Jewish community?
28. What was the response in your community of the Orthodox Rabbis and laity?
29. Are non-Jews (excepting those immersing for the purpose of conversion) permitted to use the *miqveh* for healing or other spiritual moments?

Appendix B

“Waters of Eden”

San Diego, California

Architectural Renderings of Safdie Rabines Architects



IMMERSION POOL



AERIAL VIEW OF WEST



IMMERSION ROOMS VIEWED FROM SPIELMAN GARDEN



MAIN ENTRY



BUILDING VIEWED FROM TOMMY DRIVE

BUILDING VIEWED FROM COWLES MOUNTAIN BLVD
SAFDIE RABINES DAY CENTER



BUILDING VIEWED FROM TOMMY DRIVE & COWLES MOUNTAIN BLVD

Wonders of Food | 1777

TOMMY STREET

TOMMY DRIVE

TIFERETH ISRAEL
SYNAGOGUE

1 2 3 4 5
DESIGNATED
WATERS OF EDEN
PARKING
6 7 8 9 10 11

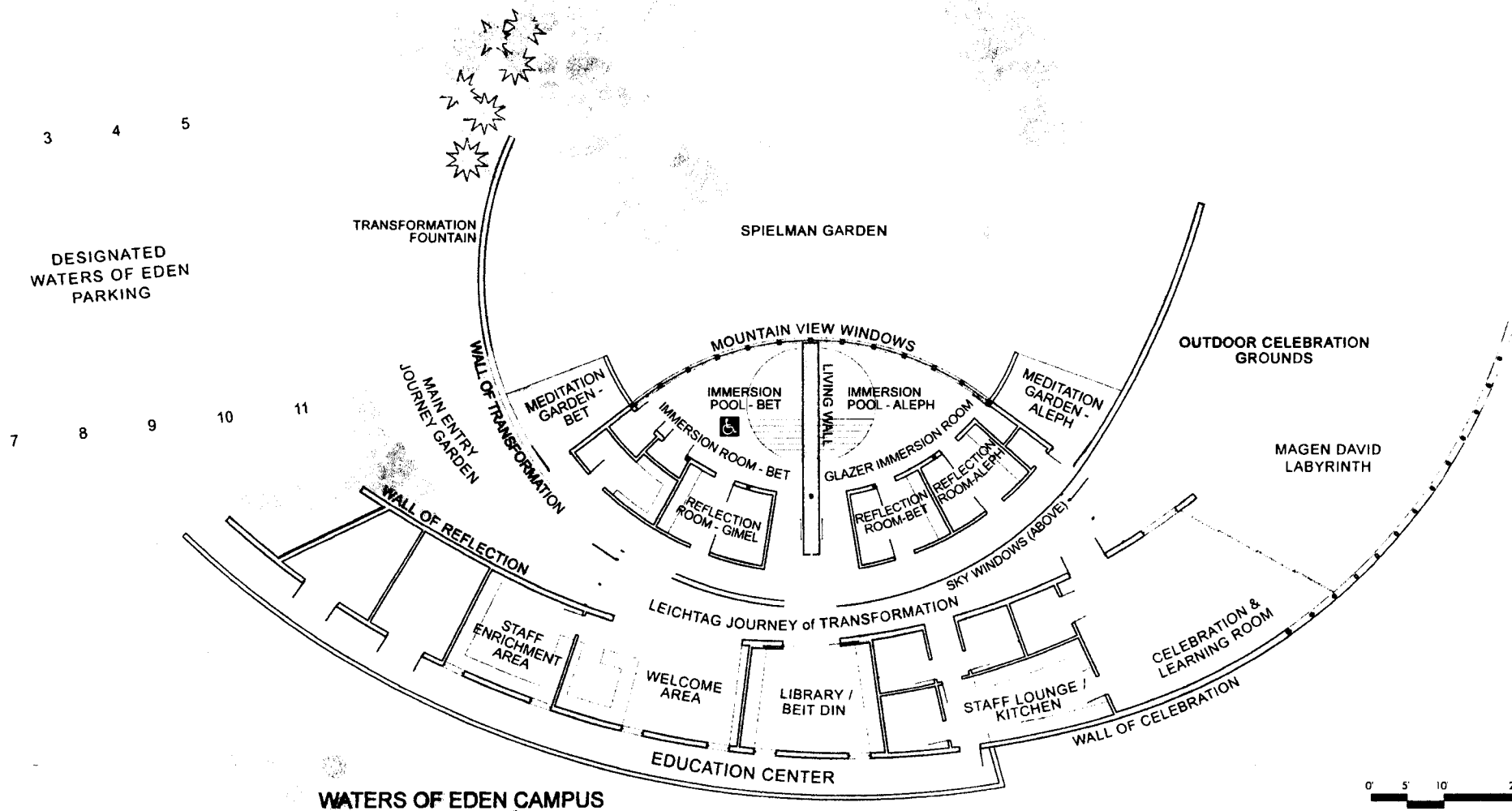
WATERS OF EDEN COMMUNITY MIKVAH

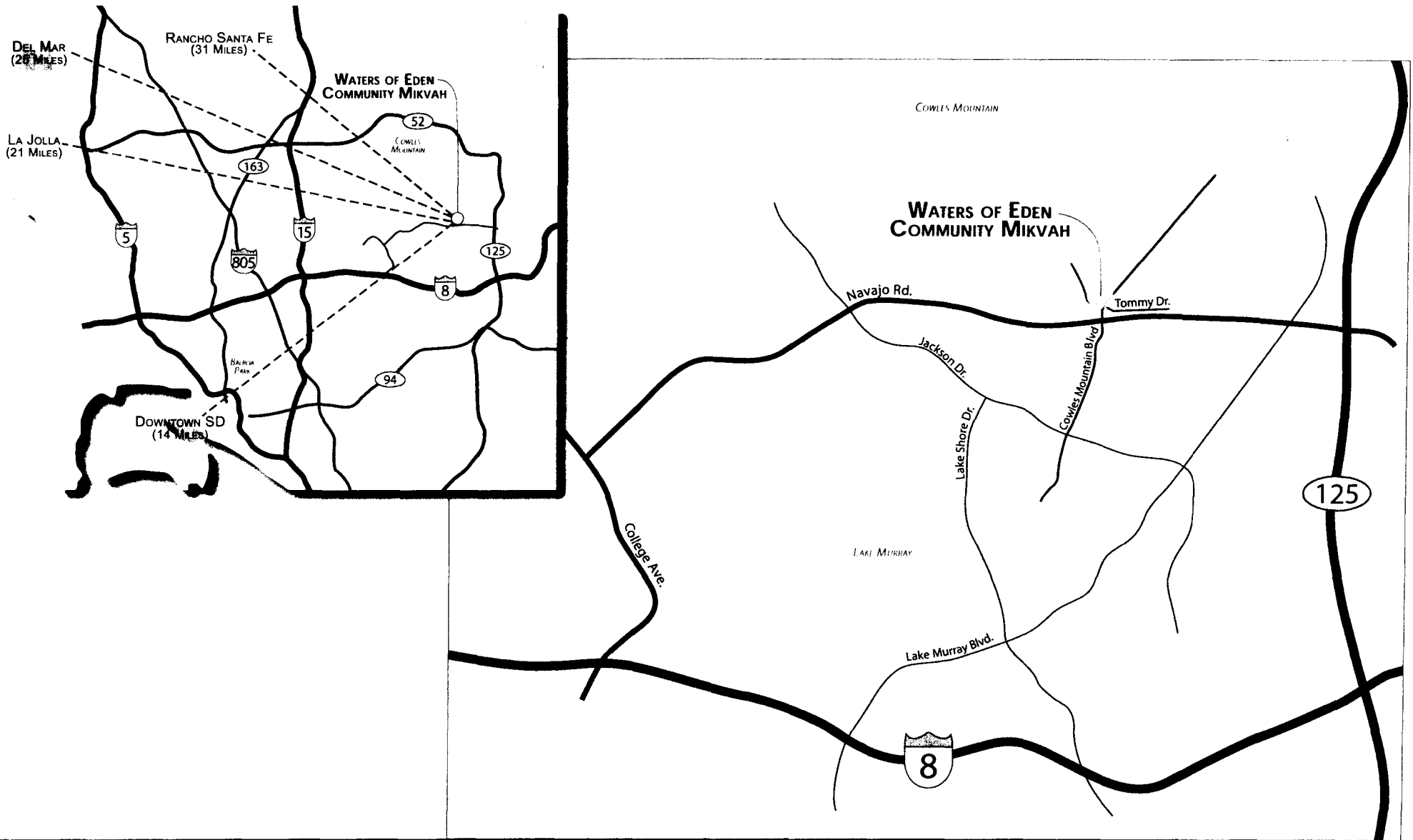
COWLES MOUNTAIN BLVD

SAFDIE RABINES ARCHITECTS

Waters of Eden

מיעדן





Bibliography

Religious Texts:

JPS Hebrew-English TANAKH. The Traditional Hebrew Text and the New JPS Translation. 2nd ed. The Jewish Publication Society: Philadelphia, 2000.

The Commentator's Bible: The JPS Miqra'ot Gedolot: Leviticus. Edited, translated, and Annotated by Michael Carasik. The Jewish Publication Society: Philadelphia, 2009.

Mishnah Mikvaos: Seder Tohoros. ArtScroll Mishna Series. Vol. 4(b). Translation and anthologized commentary by Rabbi Zvi Horowitz. Mesorah Publishing: New York, 2007.

Mishnah Niddah: Seder Tohoros. ArtScroll Mishnah Series. Vol. 4(c). New York: Mesorah Publishing, 2008.

Talmud Bavli: Masekhet Niddah. The Schottenstein Daf Yomi Edition, Artscroll Series. Vols. 1, 2. New York: Mesorah Publishing, 2004, 2005.

Talmud Bavli: Mishnayot Tohorot. Hebrew-English Edition of the Babylonian Talmud. Edited by Rabbi Dr. I. Epstein. Translated by Rev. Dr. Israel W. Slotki. London: Soncino Press, 1989.

References Works:

Encyclopedia Judaica. Volume 11. Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House, 1972.

Secondary Sources:

Adler, Rachel. "In Your Blood, Live: Re-visions of a Theology of Purity." In *Lifecycles 2: Jewish Women on Biblical Themes in Contemporary Life*. Edited by Debra Orenstein and Jane Rachel Litman, 197-206. Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights, 1997.

———. "Tumah and Taharah: Endings and Beginnings." In *The Jewish Woman: New Perspectives*, edited by Elizabeth Koltun, 63-71. New York: Schocken Books, 1976.

Adler, Yonatan. "Ritual Baths Adjacent to Tombs: An Analysis of the Archaeological Evidence in Light of the Halakhic Sources." *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 40 (2009): 55-73.

- . “Second Temple Period Ritual Baths Adjacent to Agricultural Installations: The Archaeological Evidence in Light of the Halakhic Sources.” *Journal of Jewish Studies* 59, no. 1 (Spring 2008): 62-67.
- Barnavi, Eli, ed. *A Historical Atlas of the Jewish People: From the Time of the Patriarchs to the Present*. Miriam Eliave-Feldon, ed., English Edition. Michel Opatowski, Cartography. New Edition revised by Dennis Charbit. Paris: Hachette Littératures, 2002.
- Berkowitz, Miriam C. Edited by David Golinkin. *Taking the Plunge: A Practical Guide to the Mikveh*. Jerusalem: Schechter Institute of Jewish Studies, 2009.
- Berlin, Adele, and Marc Zvi Brettler. *The Jewish Study Bible*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2004.
- Blumenkrantz, Rabbi Avrohom. *Gefen Porioh: The Laws of Niddah: a digest*. New York: Simcha-Graphic Associates, 1984.
- Edwards, Douglas R., and Thomas C. McCollough, eds. *Annual of the American Schools of Oriental Research*. Vol. 60/61. *The Archeology of Difference: Gender, Ethnicity, Class and the “Other” in Antiquity. Studies in Honor of Eric M. Meyers*. Boston: American Schools of Oriental Research, 2007.
- Eger, Denise. “*Taharat hamishpacha*: a renewed look at the concept of family purity.” New York: *CCAR Journal* 52, no. 4 (2005): 78-83.
- Galor, Katharina. “The Stepped Water Installations of the Sepphoris Acropolis.” In *Annual of the American Schools of Oriental Research*. Vol. 60/61. *The Archeology of Difference: Gender, Ethnicity, Class and the “Other” in Antiquity. Studies in Honor of Eric M. Meyers*. Edited by Douglas R. Edwards and Thomas C. McCollough, 201-213. Boston: American Schools of Oriental Research, 2007.
- Goldstein, Rabbi Elyse. *New Jewish Feminism: Probing the Past, Forging the Future*. Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing: 2009.
- Grossman, Susan, and Rivka Haut, eds. *Daughters of the King: Women and the Synagogue*. Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1992.
- Harrington, Hannah K. *The Purity Texts*. London: T & T Clark International, 2004.
- Hecht, N. S., B. S. Jackson, S. M. Passamaneck, D. Piattelli, and A. M. Rabello, eds. *An Introduction to the History and Sources of Jewish Law*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2002.

- Kaplan, Aryeh. *Waters of Eden: The Mystery of the Mikvah*. New York: National Conference of Synagogue Youth/Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America, 1976.
- Klawans, Jonathan. "Concepts of Purity in the Bible". In *The Jewish Study Bible*. Jewish Publication Society, TANAKH Translation. Edited by Adele Berlin and Marc Zvi Brettler. New York: Oxford University Press, 2004.
- Klein, Isaac. *A Guide to Jewish Religious Practice*. New York: The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1979.
- Klem, Yonah. "No Ordinary Bath: The Use of the *Mikvah* in Healing from Incest." In *Jewish Women Speak Out: Expanding the Boundaries of Psychology*. Edited by Kayla Weiner and Arinna Moon. Seattle: Canopy Press, 1995.
- Koltun, Elizabeth, ed. *The Jewish Woman: New Perspectives*. New York: Schocken Books, 1976.
- Lamm, Norman. *A Hedge of Roses: Jewish Insights into Marriage and Married Life*. New York: Philipp Feldheim, 1966.
- Lawrence, Jonathan D. *Washing in Water: Trajectories of Ritual Bathing in the Hebrew Bible and Second Temple Literature*. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2006.
- Mayyim Hayyim Living Waters Community *Mikveh* and Paula Brody & Family Education Center, *At the Water's Edge: Lesson Plans for Middle School Students*, Newton: 2005.
- . *Guide My Steps: Readings*. Mayyim Hayyim Living Waters Community *Mikveh* and Paula Brody & Family Education Center, Newton: 2002-2004.
- . *Guide My Steps: Volunteer Mikveh Guide and Volunteer Mikveh Educator Training Curriculum*. Newton: 2002-2004.
- . *Guide My Steps: Teacher's Guide*. Newton: 2002-2004.
- Miller, Stuart S. "Stepped Pools and the Non-Existent Monolithic 'Miqveh'." In *Annual of the American Schools of Oriental Research*. Vol. 60/61. *The Archeology of Difference: Gender, Ethnicity, Class and the "Other" in Antiquity. Studies in Honor of Eric M. Meyers*. Edited by Douglas R. Edwards and Thomas C. McCollough, 215-234. Boston: American Schools of Oriental Research, 2007.
- . "Stepped Pools, Stone Vessels, and other Identity Markers of 'Complex Common Judaism'." *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 41 (2010): 214-243. Leiden, The Netherlands: Koninklijke NV Brill, 2010.

- Neusner, Jacob. *The Judaic laws of baptism: Tractate Miqvaot in the Mishnah and Tosefta: a form-analytical translation and commentary and a legal and religious history*. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995.
- . “MIQVAOT Commentary.” In *Studies in Judaism in Late Antiquity. A History of the Mishnaic Law of Purities*. Vol. 6, Part 13. Edited by Jacob Neusner. Leiden, The Netherlands: E. J. Brill, 1976.
- . “MIQVAOT: Literary and Historical Problems.” In *Studies in Judaism in Late Antiquity. A History of the Mishnaic Law of Purities*. Vol. 6, Part 14. Edited by Jacob Neusner. Leiden, The Netherlands: E. J. Brill, 1976.
- . *The Mishnah: A New Translation*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988.
- Polak-Sahm, Varda. Translated by Anne Hartstein Pace. *The House of Secrets: The Hidden World of Mikveh*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2009.
- “A Pool of Clear Water.” *San Diego Jewish Journal*, March, 2010, 44-46.
- Ross, Adrienne. “Mikveh.” *Tikkun*, September/October, 1997, 60-72.
- Rothberg, Rabbi Tzvi. *Generations : The Mikvah Through the Ages*. Edited by C. Reiss. New York: Mikvah Yisroel of Flatbush, 1995.
- Silberman, Neil Asher and David B. Small, eds. *The Archaeology of Israel: Constructing the Past, Interpreting the Present*. In *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement*. Series 237. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997.
- Slonim, Rivkah, ed. *Total Immersion: A Mikvah Anthology*. Jerusalem: Urim Publications, 2006.
- Umansky, Ellen M. and Dianne Ashton, eds. *Four Centuries of Jewish Women's Spirituality: a sourcebook*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1992.
- Wasserfall, Rahel R., ed. *Women and Water: Menstruation in Jewish Life and Law*. Hanover, NH: Brandeis University Press, 1999.
- Weiner, Kayla, and Arinna Moon, eds. *Jewish Women Speak Out: Expanding the Boundaries of Psychology*. Seattle: Canopy Press, 1995.

Wise, Carol Selkin. "Miqwaot and Second Temple Sectarianism." In *Annual of the American Schools of Oriental Research*. Vol. 60/61. *The Archeology of Difference: Gender, Ethnicity, Class and the "Other" in Antiquity. Studies in Honor of Eric M. Meyers*. Edited by Douglas R. Edwards and Thomas C. McCollough, 181-200. Boston: American Schools of Oriental Research, 2007.

Wright, Benjamin G. III. "*Jewish Ritual Baths: Interpreting the Digs and the Texts: Some Issues in the Social History of Second Temple Judaism.*" In *The Archeology of Israel: Constructing the Past, Interpreting the Present*. Edited by Neil Asher Silberman and David Small. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997.

Zimmerman, Deena R. *A Lifetime Companion to the Laws of Jewish Family Life*. Jerusalem: Urim Publications, 2005.

Reference Web Sites:

The Baltimore Sun. www.baltimoresun.com (March 5, 2011).

Mayyim Hayyim Living Waters Community *Mikveh* and Paula Brody & Family Education Center, Newton, Massachusetts. www.mayyimhayyim.org (March 6, 2011).

Jill and Jay Stein Family Community *Mikveh*, Scottsdale, Arizona. www.cbiaz.org (March 6, 2011).

The Jewish Week. www.thejewishweek.com (February 21, 2011).

Waters of Eden Community *Mikvah* & Education Center, San Diego, California. www.watersofedensd.org (March 6, 2011).

Modern Literature:

Crystal, Cheri. *Coming Clean*. March 21, 2009. Kindle e-book.

Kellerman, Faye. *The Ritual Bath: the first Peter Decker and Rina Lazarus novel*. New York: Harper Collins, 1986.

Segal, Sarah. *Murder at the Mikvah*. Bloomington: iUniverse, 2009.