

Seven Kavanot for Mikveh Preparation

CREATED BY
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The Holy One created the world in six days, but made it complete with Shabbat, the seventh day. The number seven suggests wholeness and represents the creative process. Seven steps lead into the *mikveh*.

These seven *kavanot*—preparatory meditations—are offered in the hope that your immersion will provide you a sense of *shleimut*—wholeness and peace.

1. הִנְיִי *Hineini*. Here I am.

Take a minute and think about the transition *mikveh* will help you mark today. Immersion in the *mikveh* represents a spiritual transformation from one state to another. In traditional language, your change is from ritually unready (*tamei*) to ritually ready (*tahor*). Prepare yourself by writing in a journal, saying a personal prayer, or reading something of meaning to you. Breathe deeply. Sigh audibly.

2. הַדּוֹר מְצוּיָה *Hiddur mitzvah*. The unadorned body is beautiful in itself.

Remove all jewelry as well as makeup, paying special attention to the eyes. Remove nail polish on fingers and toes. (Acrylics may stay on if they have been on for more than a month.) There is no need for adornment or artifice in the *mikveh*. There should be no physical barriers between the body and the living waters.

3. נְקָבִים נְקָבִים *Nekavim nekavim*. You fashioned the human being intricate in design.

Empty your bladder. Our tradition celebrates and blesses the body in every possible moment and mode.

4. בְּצַלְמֵ אֱלֹהִים *B'Tzelem Elohim*. I am made in the image of God.

Remove all clothing, eyeglasses, contact lenses, dental plates, hearing aids. Each person enters the *mikveh* as naked as on the day of their birth. Without rank or status. Simply a human being. Gloriously a human being.

5. אֱלֹהֵי, נְשָׁמָה שְׁנֵתַתָּ בִּי טְהוֹרָה הִיא *Elohai neshama shenatata bi tehorah hi*. The soul in me is pure.

Shower or bathe with thoughtful attention to the miracle of your body. Pay attention to every part of yourself. Wash yourself, head to toe; shampoo your hair, lather your shoulders, back, arms, belly, and genitals. Scrub elbows, knees, and heels, removing calluses and dead skin. Wash between fingers and toes. Relax and enjoy. The water of the *mikveh* will feel even sweeter after this.

6. כָּל הַנְּשָׁמָה תְּהַלֵּל יָיָ *Kol haneshama t'halel yah*. The breath of every living thing praises You.

Clean your ears, blow your nose, brush and floss your teeth, rinse your mouth, comb your hair. Stand before the mirror. Consider all of your senses. Look into your own eyes and smile. Think about the words that come from your mouth.

7. תִּקּוּן עוֹלָם *Tikkun olam*. We can stand for justice; we can build a world of peace and justice.

Clean under your nails—toenails, too. (Nails do not need to be cut.) Consider the power of your hands and feet to create wholeness in your life, in our world.

Now that you are ready in body, mind and spirit, wrap yourself in the sheet provided and let the Mikveh Guide know you are ready. The guide is here to help make your immersion as meaningful as possible, to answer questions, provide guidance, insure privacy, and, where appropriate, to assure you that your immersion is “fit” or *kasher*.

As you enter the *mikveh* do not rush. Walk slowly. Count the seven steps into the water, stopping on each one. Reach for the handle that will permit a “kiss” of living water into your *mikveh*. Open the connection between you and the beginning.

Relax into the embrace of the water, into whatever the next moment may hold for you.

Welcome to Mayyim Hayyim. In the *mikveh*, every body is a sacred vessel.