

Build Your Own Mikvah For \$5?

Parashat Tazriah/Metzorah 5778

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1. Vayikra 11:29-31, 35-36 [Koren translation]

(כט) וְזֶה לָכֶם הַטֹּמֵא בַשָּׂרִץ הַשָּׂרִץ עַל הָאָרֶץ הַחֹלֵד וְהַעֲכָבֵר וְהַצֵּב לְמִינֵהוּ:

(ל) וְהַאֲנָקָה וְהַכֶּפֶץ וְהַלָּטָאָה וְהַחֲמָט וְהַתְנַשְּׁמָת:

(לא) אֵלֶּה הַטֹּמֵאִים לָכֶם בְּכָל הַשָּׂרִץ כָּל הַנִּגָּע בָּהֶם בְּטֵמָא עַד הָעֶרֶב:

(לה) וְכֹל אֲשֶׁר יִפֹּל מִנִּבְלָתָם עָלָיו יִטְמָא תַנּוּר וְכִירִים יִתֵּץ טֵמֵאִים הֵם וְטֵמֵאִים יִהְיוּ לָכֶם:

(לו) אֲדָּ מַעֲיָן וּבֹר מְקוּהָ מַיִם יִהְיֶה טָהוֹר וְנִגָּע בְּנִבְלָתָם יִטְמָא:

29. These also shall be unclean to you among the creeping things that creep upon the earth; the rat, and the mouse, and the tortoise after its kind.

30. And the gecko, and the monitor, and the lizard, and the skink, and the chameleon.

31. These are unclean to you among all that creep: whoever touches them, when they are dead, shall be unclean until evening.

35. And everything upon which any part of their carcass falls shall be unclean; whether it be oven, or ranges, they shall be broken down: for they are unclean, and shall be unclean to you.

36. Nevertheless a fountain or pit, wherein there is a collection of water, shall be clean: but that which touches their carcass shall be unclean.

Principles regarding a mikvah derived in the Sifra [3rd Century, Israel], Shemini 9:1,3-4:

- Mikvah must be created by the "hand of heaven." That is, merely dumping buckets of water in will not be valid.
- Mikvah cannot be filled through human action.
- Mikvah must be connected to the ground.
- Mikvah must contain 40 se'ah of water.
- Mikvah must be still water.
- Mikvah must be filled with water, no other liquid is valid.
- A mikvah whose water has changed color due to a spill or some other cause is invalid.

2. Talmud Bavli [5th Century, Iraq], Zevachim 25b [modified Soncino translation]

תנן התם: נתן ידו או רגלו או עלי ירקות כדי שיעברו מים לחבית - פסולין, עלי קנים ועלי אגוזים. כשירה; זה הכלל: דבר המקבל טומאה - פסולין, דבר שאינו מקבל טומאה - כשירין. מנא הני מילי? דאמר רבי יוחנן משום רבי יוסי בר אבא, אמר קרא: אך מעין ובור מקוה מים יהיה טהור, הוייתן על ידי טהרה תהא.

It's taught there [Mishnah, Parah 6:4]: If one places [there] one's hand or foot or vegetables leaves, in order that the water should flow into the barrel, it [the water] is unfit. [If one placed] leaves of canes or leaves of nuts, it is fit. This is the general rule: [If the water is conducted into the barrel by means of] anything which can become unclean, it is unfit; [by means of] anything which cannot become unclean, it is fit. How do we know it? - Because R' Yochanan said on the authority of R' Yossi bar Abba: The verse states, Nevertheless a spring or pit, wherein there is a collection of water, shall be clean - **their existence must be brought about through purity.**

- Components of a mikvah's construction must be items that are not susceptible to impurity.

3. R' David Miller [1869 - 1939, Lithuania, USA], The Secret Of The Jew pg 365-367 - <https://goo.gl/45KdaE>

The plans in this work are intended for those Jewish families who are not so fortunate as these women; for those who live in scattered communities where there is no public mikvah, and for the modern young Jewess, who may abhor the lack of attractiveness in the public ritual-font, or its sanitary defects, or may have a hygienic aversion to immersion in water that another has used. It is for the benefit, too, of those women who out of an extreme sense of modesty are not inclined to expose themselves to notice or to discuss such personal matters as their marital relations and their period of purification. To these I humbly and earnestly offer my aid and suggestions as to how they may easily, and with the greatest comfort and cleanliness, carry out the holy performance of Tvilah...And to make this performance comfortable and convenient, any observant Jewish family can make a private mikvah, at its residence, whether it owns a home or is a tenant, at a material cost within five dollars (\$5.00), and a few hours' labor of a handy man. The plans for such a ritual-font are hereinafter described in full, in the chapter "How to Make a Mikvah." A most durable private ritual-font, mikvah, can be installed at a cost of about twenty-five or thirty dollars. The cost of twenty-four cubic feet of water, the minimum quantity required for a mikvah, is about five cents.

Clearly, there are a number of critical principles guiding the construction of a kosher mikvah. The following sources will provide an opportunity to analyze R' Miller's mikvah plan in light of two of them: usage of tap water and immersion in a vessel.

Using Tap Water To Fill A Mikvah

4. R' Nissan Telushkin [1881 – 1970, Russia, USA], *Taharat Mayim*, Siman 40 - <https://goo.gl/bEjegQ>

Is the water that the city provides to residents suitable for a mikvah? This question hasn't been fully explained [at this point in time]. Practically speaking, the custom in New York has been to be stringent and not use city water. [Instead], mikvahs are filled using rain water, ice or spring water. However, a reason to forbid [city water] has yet to be heard.

1.

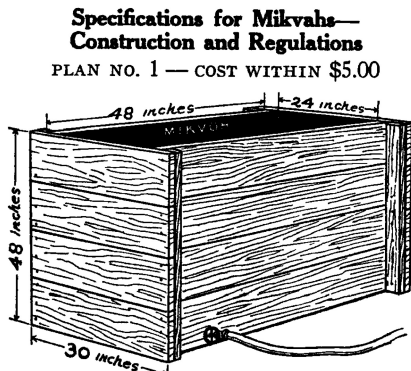
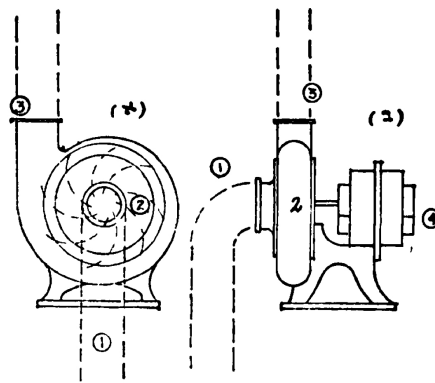


Figure M 2

A simple, home-made Mikvah. It costs less than \$5.00. It answers the financial question; solves almost all problems. It challenges the loyalty and the sincerity of a Jew

2.



3.



Images: 1. The Secret Of The Jew pg. 381

2. Taharat Mayim pg 141

3. Tikunei Mikva'ot Lefi Takanat Raboteinu pg 49

5. Talmud Bavli [5th Century, Iraq], Shabbat 14a [Soncino translation]

והבא ראשו ורובו במים שאובין, מאי טעמא גזרו ביה רבנן טומאה? אמר רב ביבי אמר רב אסי: שבתחלה היו טובלין במי מערות מכונסין וסרוחין, והיו נותנין עליהן מים שאובין, התחילו ועשאום קבע - גזרו עליהם טומאה. מאי קבע? - אמר אביי: שהיו אומרים: לא אלו מטהרין - אלא אלו ואלו מטהרין. אמר ליה רבא: מאי נפקא מינה? הא קא טבלי בהנך! אלא אמר רבא: שהיו אומרים לא אלו מטהרין - אלא אלו מטהרין.

And one who comes with his head and the greater part of his body] into drawn water, why did the Rabbis decree uncleanness in his case? — Said R. Bibi in R. Assi's name: Because originally people performed tebillah in collected pit water, which was stagnant [noisome], and so they poured drawn water upon themselves. [But when] they began to make this a fixed [law], the Rabbis imposed uncleanness thereon. What is meant by 'a fixed [law]'? Abaye said: They maintained, Not this [pit water] purifies, but both together purify. Said Raba to him, Then what did it matter, seeing that they did perform tebillah in this [the pit water]? But, said Raba, they maintained, Not this [the pit water] purifies but that [the drawn water].

6. R' Yechiel Michel Epstein [1829–1908, Lithuania], Aruch HaShulchan YD 201:169

ויש מקוות בערים הגדולות שבשם הולכים המים מהנהרות לכל בתי העיר דרך צנורות וסלונות תחת הקרקע בעומק ונקרא בלשון המדינה וואד"א פראוואדי"ן וממשיכין גם למקואות המים האלו צריכים לזהר או שיפלו למקוה מהצנורות והסלונות של ברזל המחוברים לקרקע או שקודם המקוה יעשו קצת סילון של עץ במשך ג' טפחים כמ"ש בסעי' קס"ד ובמים האלו מוכרחים לסגור המים אחרי הכנסם למקוה ולכן אין עליהם דין מעיין רק דין מקוה לטהר באשבורן ולא בזוחלים וצריכים לזהר בכל זה שבארנו:

There are mikvahs in the larger cities in which water is channeled to all of the buildings in the city through underground pipes and channels. These are called "water providing" in the lingua franca. Water is also brought to the mikvahs in this manner. It is necessary to be careful that either the water 1) pour into the mikvah from a metal [lit. iron] pipe that is attached to the ground or 2) that a wooden channel should be fitted in the [last] three tefachim before the water reaches the mikvah as taught in *sif* 164. With this [city] water it is necessary to close the tap after the water has entered the mikvah in order that it shouldn't be considered a spring, but rather a mikvah which purifies through still and not flowing water. It is essential to be careful with all of what we've explained.

7. Mishnah [2nd Century, Israel], Mikva'ot 4:2-3 [Sefaria Community Translation]

ב. המניח טבלא תחת הצנור אם יש לה לבזבז פוסלת את המקוה ואם לאו אינה פוסלת את המקוה זקפה לידוח בין כך ובין כך אינה פוסלת את המקוה:

ג. החוטט בצנור לקבל צנורות בשל עץ כל שהוא ובשל חרס רבי יוסי אומר אף בשל חרס כל שהוא לא אמרו רביעית אלא בשברי כלי חרס היו צנורות מתחלחלים בתוכו פוסלים את המקוה ירד לתוכו עפר ונכבש כשר סלון שהוא צר מכאן ומכאן ורחב מן האמצע אינו פוסל מפני שלא נעשה לקבלה:

2. One who places a board under a [drain] pipe, if it [the board] has a rim, it renders a mikvah invalid; and if not, it does not render a mikvah

invalid. If one stood it up [the board] to be rinsed [under the drainpipe], either way [whether or not it has a rim] it does not render a mikvah invalid.

3. If one carves out [furrows] in a [drain] pipe to collect stones, [a furrow] of any size in one of wood, and of a *revi'it* [a specific measure of volume, a quarter of a log] in one of earthenware [is sufficient for the pipe to be considered a vessel, and thus for its waters to render a mikvah invalid as drawn waters]. Rabbi Yose says: even for one of earthenware, [a furrow] of any size [is sufficient to invalidate waters flowing through a pipe]; they [the Sages] only said [that the minimum measure is] a *revi'it* regarding shards of earthenware vessels [that they are considered vessels as long as they can still contain that amount]. If there were stones rolling around inside it [the furrow], they [its waters] render a mikvah invalid. If dust descended into it and was compressed, it is valid. A duct which is narrow on either end and widens in the middle [built that way in order to increase water pressure] does not render [its waters] invalid, since it was not made to be a receptacle.

8. **R' Yirmiyahu Katz** [Current, USA], **Mikveh Mayim Vol. 3 pg 93** - <https://goo.gl/By4uGs>

Even though previous generations ruled leniently regarding how to use city water [for a mikvah] (See Aruch HaShulchan 201:169). Nevertheless, one who looks into their words will see that they are dealing with villages, small cities, and the like where the water was coming from a nearby spring or river. The water was supplied through one or two pipes and, as such, it was possible to accurately inspect the path taken by the water to the mikvah and ensure that it was suitable.

However, the reality is completely different nowadays. The path taken by the water – from the river or main reservoir until the city and each house – is through many types of pipes and mechanisms. It is impossible to evaluate every pipe, mechanism, and how they are attached to one another. [This is especially true] as the various components are replaced every so often. Therefore, nowadays here is no *heiter* to use city water, even through *hamshachah* over the ground, as the water is unfit [for use in a mikvah].

Immersion In A Vessel

9. **Sifra** [3rd Century, Israel], **Shemini 9:1,3-4** [Translation by R' Shraga Silverstein]

אי בור יכול אף בור שבספינה יהא טהור תלמוד לומר מעין, מה מעין שעיקרו בקרקע, אף מקוה שעיקרו בקרקע

I would think that a pit in a boat (i.e., a cavity into which sea water is admitted) would be valid; it is, therefore, written "a spring." Just as a spring is ground-based, a pit, too, must be ground-based.

10. **R' David Miller** [1869 – 1939, Lithuania, USA], **The Secret Of The Jew pg 333** - <https://goo.gl/yi7VRa>

3. Articles (1) originally made to serve by attachment to the ground or building; and (2) which are neither made nor intended to hold water in themselves; and (3) which before they are assembled, attached, or connected are not capable of holding or/and retaining water in their regular position (by reason of a connection-opening in the lower part) –when they are properly assembled, connected, and permanently attached to the ground or building –are not considered as "vessels" or "utensils," and their identity as an article has ceased; it has passed into that of the building or ground, and is considered a part thereof. And, when any water otherwise fit for mikvah (as stated in Paragraphs 1 and 2, this section) has been drawn, carried, or conveyed by or through them, such water is proper for mikvah. These are the fundamental rules. All other articles specified in sub-paragraphs following are subject to these conditions and must comply with them in order to be qualified; and, be it clearly understood that whenever we say of certain articles that they do not disqualify the water conveyed through them for mikvah, it is meant that those articles comply with these conditions.

11. **Mishnah** [2nd Century, Israel], **Keilim 11:2** [Sefaria Community Translation]

כל כלי מתכות שיש לו שם בפני עצמו טמא חוץ מן הדלת ומן הנגר ומן המנעול והפותה שתחת הציר והציר והקורה והצינור שנעשו לקרקע:

Every metal vessel that has a name of its own is susceptible to impurity, except for a door, a bolt, a lock, a socket under a hinge, a hinge, a clapper, and the [threshold] groove under a door post, since these are intended to be attached to the ground.

12. **Rambam** [1135-1204, Spain, Egypt], **Peirush HaMishnah, ibid.**

והכלל בכל אלה מה שאמרנו כל המחובר לקרקע הרי הוא כקרקע, וכל אלו הואיל ועיקר עשייתן שיהיו מחוברים בקרקע ולכן אינן מקבלין טומאה ואפילו לפני קביעתן, ועל ענין זה נתכוון בהלכה זו.

The general principle in all of these discussed is that anything which is attached to the ground is considered as if it is the ground itself. All of the examples in the Mishnah are intended to be attached to the ground. As a result they do not conduct impurity even before actually being attached. That is the topic of this *halachah*.