

RIVERS

אל מקום שהנחלים הלכים שם הם שבים ללכת



adas israel
Community
Mikvah

Welcome to the Waters



Naomi Malka
Mikvah Director

The waters of the Mikvah fell as rain. Before that, they were clouds, fog, lakes and oceans. Earlier still, they ran in rivers from deep springs that bubbled up and gathered on the earth. Our ancestors told stories about water--the Creation of the World, the Flood, the Wells, the Red Sea, and many others--that we still tell today. Water is an essential part of life and a primary Jewish symbol.

Every culture has its water ritual. Mikvah is ours. By entering water in a ritualized way, we are embraced by this primal element and given a moment to experience the holiness of our own bodies. Ritual immersion is a powerful way of feeling connected to the earth, to Jewish tradition, and to God.

As the only inclusive, pluralist Mikvah in the Greater Washington area, the Adas Israel Community Mikvah welcomes you. Here you will find many ways that you as an individual, a family or a community can learn about and experience this unique part of Judaism.

A mikvah is a Jewish ritual bath in which people choose to immerse for a variety of reasons.

Any source of living, flowing water in nature--such as a lake, ocean, or river-- is a *mikvah*. To create a kosher indoor *mikvah*, rainwater joins with purified tap water and is heated in a small pool. However, immersion in *mikvah* is much more than this...

I M M E R S I O N

...is the profound blessing of embodied Jewish ritual that is a rare occurrence in modern day life.

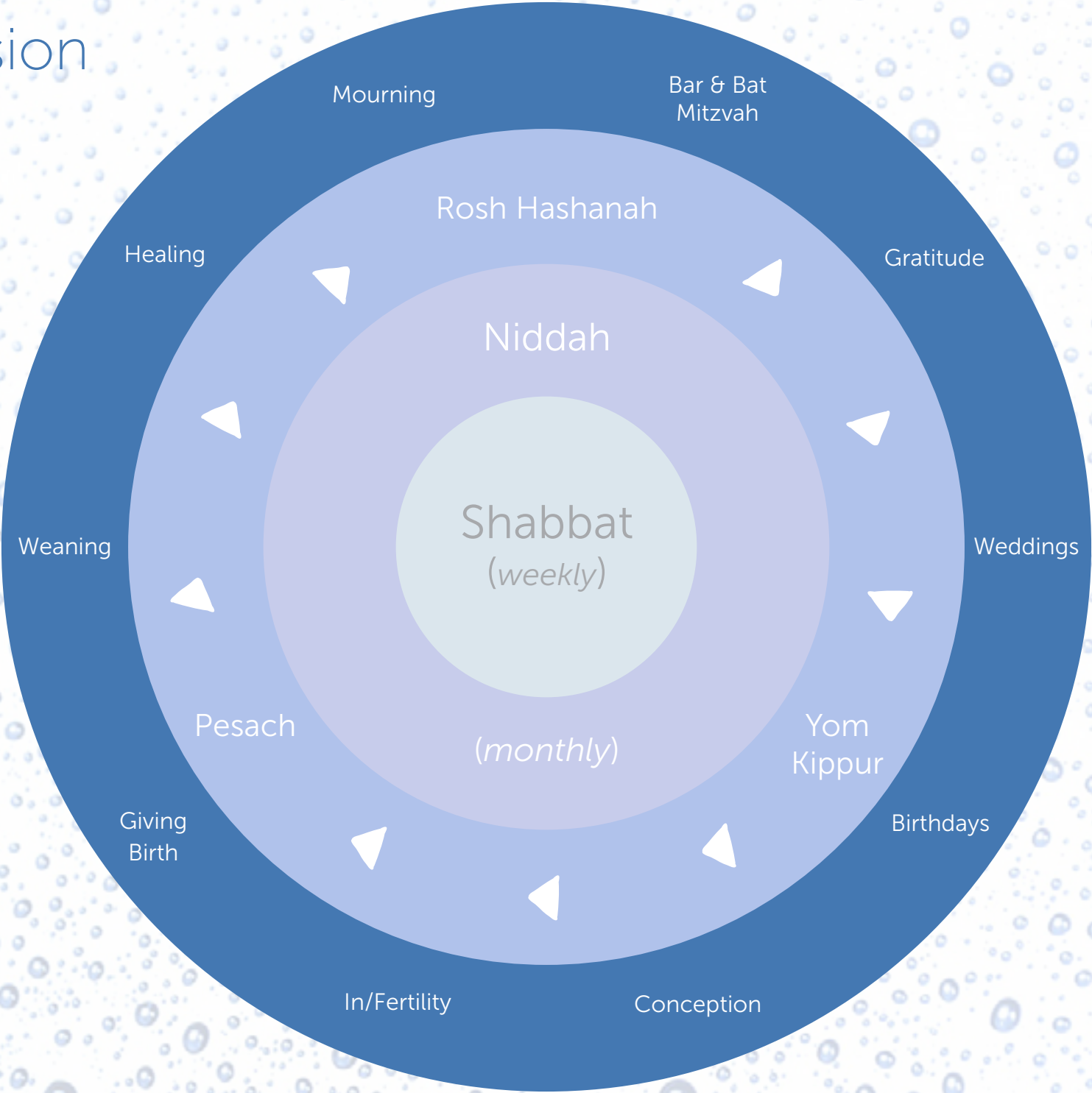
...is a chance to turn inward and to reflect on the moments that brought you to this point.

...is a chance to return again.

...is a turning point.

Occasions for Immersion

- Life Cycle
- Jewish Year
- Niddah (*monthly*)
- Shabbat (*weekly*)



Becoming a Bar/Bat Mitzvah

As you become an adult in the Jewish tradition, immerse to celebrate this transition and your commitment to the Jewish people, Torah, and tikkun olam. Leave your nervousness behind as you focus on the spiritual meaning of the simcha.

Gratitude

Take a moment to be thankful for the gifts that surround us everyday or an unexpected blessing in your life. Allow your body to be at peace and to fully experience the joy of this moment.

Body Positivity

The Mikvah is a uniquely Jewish place to experience a rare moment of peace in your relationship to your body. Bodies of all sizes, shapes, colors, weights and ages are Holy and the Mikvah can support your positive body image.

Kashering Dishes

The mikvah at Adas Israel can also be used for kashering dishes, in order to help you in building a kosher, Jewish home!

Wedding - For a Bride/Groom

In the rush that occurs before a wedding, there is often little time for reflection and many people struggle to find a place to grapple with this incredible transition. An immersion can ground you in this hectic time and remind you that this is not just about the place cards or the invitations or the flowers, but instead it is about love, partnership, and creating a future together.

Wedding - For the Parent of a Bride/Groom

Watching your son or daughter get married can be an emotionally and spiritually powerful experience. Take some time to turn inward and explore the shift in your family in a calm and special way.

Birthdays

The joyous occasion of a birthday is a time to celebrate and reflect. Immerse to mark this transition into a new year. Some people immerse every year on/near their birthday. Some immerse on milestone years. Other immerse as a longevity ceremony - to mark the age beyond which their parents lived.



Preparing for Conception

Setting your intention to conceive can open your life to endless change. Acknowledge the step toward parenthood by immersing.

In/Fertility

Immersion is a chance for turning towards new beginnings and new possibilities and new hope. It is also a chance to embrace feelings of anger, frustration, and disappointment that we so often push aside in our ongoing attempt to always act like we are doing just fine. Let yourself feel these and other emotions as the waters embrace you and give you the courage to move forward.

Before/After Giving Birth

This is a time of shifting focus from yourself to another person, of preparing yourself for a new life as a parent, and opening yourself up to loving a new human being with your whole heart. This is a profound opportunity to honor your body for its ability to nurture and shelter another human being, and an amazing reminder to take time for yourself in the hectic and wonderful journey of becoming a parent.

Weaning

A reminder to care for yourself as you do your child and to be thankful for the miraculous workings of the body in this new stage of your child's life.

Milestones

We feel the importance of transitional moments more deeply when we mark them with a ritual. Graduation, big moves, coming out as LGBTQ, or retirement all resonate as true life passages when we let the water be our guide. Some people immerse as a longevity marker, when reaching an age beyond which their parents didn't live. Others immerse on the anniversary of a particular occasion in the past.

Healing

A painful diagnosis or an ongoing illness can leave you feeling like your body is the enemy, like it doesn't belong to you anymore. Immersion in the mikvah can be a way for you to connect with your body again, and to renew your hope and your resolve.

Mourning

The loss of a loved one can throw us into a daze from which it often seems impossible to escape. The grief can be all-consuming and all powerful. Immerse to take a step back in this moment in order to acknowledge the love you have you for the person whom you lost and the love that you carry with you when they're gone.



Jewish Year

Before Rosh Hashanah

Let go of the past year, acknowledging the joys and sorrows that it brought to you. Immerse to surround yourself in an atmosphere of gratefulness and anticipation for the sweetness and blessings to come in the new year.



Before Yom Kippur

Asking for forgiveness is never easy. Neither is granting forgiveness to those who have hurt you. Immerse before this holiest of days to reset your intentions and to face the days to come with an open heart.



Pesach

We spend so much time cleaning the chametz out of our kitchens, pockets and cars that we often forget about the kind of baggage we carry with us every single day. Just as Pesach celebrates how we once broke free from bondage, immerse to free yourself of the things that you no longer want to bind you.

○ Niddah (*monthly*)

Perhaps the most traditional use of mikvah, the mitzvah of monthly immersion celebrates the incredible workings and cycles of your body and opens a space to reflect on new possibilities for the month to come. Whether you are single, in a committed partnership, newly married, or you've been coupled for decades, living in the rhythm of Niddah sanctifies your relationship to your body, to your partner and to God. Niddah places parentheses around the time of monthly bleeding and creates a pause during each cycle, akin to making time for Shabbat each week. And like Havdalah, Mikvah is the gateway between the time of separation and the time of togetherness. This distinction brings holiness to our Jewish bodies and relationships. We honor and educate about all styles of Niddah observance.

● Shabbat (*weekly*)

This is a separation, a turning point, a chance to shift our attention from the world around us to the world inside of us. In the modern world, so full of demands and distraction, this turning point often goes unnoticed. Remember what is Holy and separate and beautiful about this day. Let yourself rest. Let yourself breathe. Let go.

Conversion

Mazel Tov! You have made an incredible, life changing decision to become a part of the Jewish people. You have studied Torah, celebrated the holidays, and learned what it takes to be a practicing Jew in the modern world. By now, your rabbi has probably explained to you what will take place on the day of your conversion. However, even with this explanation, the mikvah can seem a little intimidating. We understand that, and we want to encourage you to come tour the mikvah, see a demonstrated immersion, and talk to us about any questions, concerns or reservations that you may have. You can either do this as part of a conversion class or on your own. We want to work with you to make this experience as beautiful, transformative, and welcoming as it possibly can be.

Converting a Child

Converting a child can be a wonderful experience for them and for your entire family. We want to ensure that the entire process is warm and welcoming. A baby or toddler will immerse with a parent who will say the brachot for them while an older child may immerse by themselves or with a parent.

ONGOING PROGRAMS

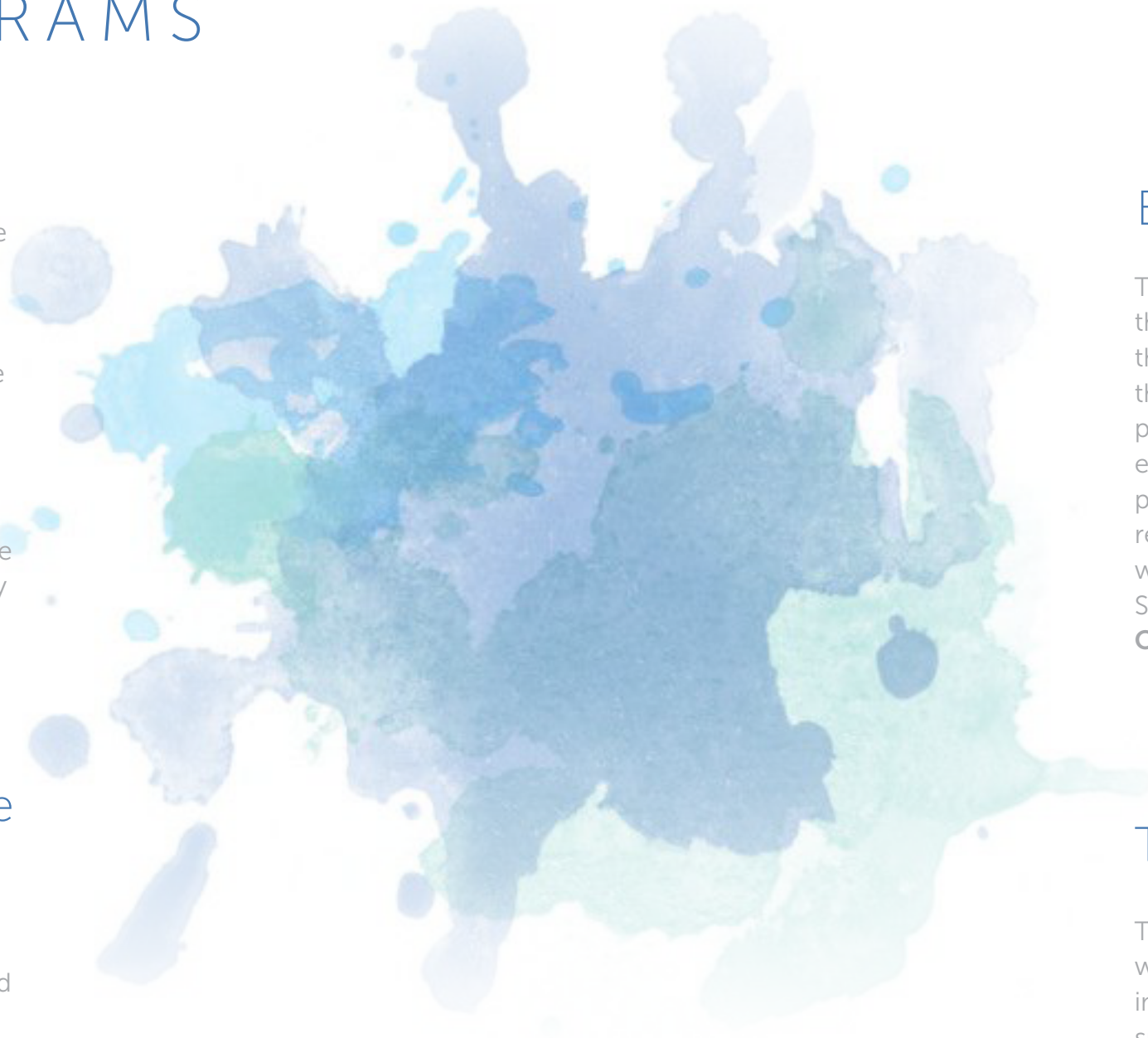
Mikvah Guide Training

Mikvah Guides support people through profound moments of personal and spiritual transitions and facilitate a connection to the Holy through Jewish ritual. They offer themselves as witnesses to both quiet moments and joyous celebrations. Mikvah Guides can attest to the beauty of Jewish tradition in addressing the sanctity of the body.

The Adas Israel Community Mikvah is always training new volunteers. This opportunity is open to women and men of all ages from all levels of Jewish observance. If you have a background in social work, therapy, or health care it may be useful, but anyone with the right amount of sensitivity to others can be a good Guide. You don't have to be a mikvah user in order to become a Mikvah Guide and no minimum time commitment is required.

Tevila b'Teva: Immersion in Nature

Learning about ritual immersion can take place outside of the Mikvah itself and can be done with bathing suits on! If you have access to a pool, lake, river or beach, we can facilitate a group immersion for you. This is not considered a kosher immersion, but instead it is a wonderful opportunity for youth groups, summer camps, family retreats, or senior programs to experience the ritual of Tevila in an informal and enjoyable setting. Participants can be in the water or watching from the side.



Bodies of Water

This program is designed to introduce young people to the mikvah while providing them with a way of seeing their bodies in a healthy, Jewish light. Participants in the program will observe an immersion in the mikvah, participate in Jewish meditation and yoga, learn mindful eating techniques, and become acquainted with Jewish practices for embodied awareness. Participants will also receive materials to take home to further their journey as well as a coupon for a future immersion in the mikvah. Sessions can be scheduled according to individual need.

Open to everyone ages 10+.



Tours & Demonstrations

The Mikvah at Adas Israel offers tours of the mikvah which are accompanied by a demonstration of an immersion by either a male or female wearing a bathing suit. These tours are great opportunities for conversion classes, b'nai mitzvah students, as well as anyone who is interested in the mikvah. Please call to schedule an appointment for a tour.

אל מקום שהנחלים הלכים שם הם שבים ללכת

"to the place where the rivers go, there they **return again**."

- Kohelet 1:7



Contact & Appointments

All visits are by appointment only. Book appointments for the mikvah online at adasisrael.org/mikvah or by contacting the Mikvah Director Naomi Malka at 202.841.8776 or mikvah@adasisrael.org.

adasisrael.org/mikvah

The production of this booklet was generously supported by the



ADAS ISRAEL
Congregation

