Understanding Mikvah

An overview of Mikvah construction
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Dear Rabbi Lesches,

I received your manuscript 'understanding Mikvah'. Due to my very busy schedule, I was unable to study it thoroughly but that which I read I found to be satisfactory.

I commend you for your efforts in strengthening התורתו של חסידות, which is one of the important tenets of our Torah.

May you go from strength to strength in your good work and I am confident that this research will be accepted favourably and will assist people in the building of a Kosher Mikvah.

In merit of this good work may you and all благו大米 זכויות הוראה will be זכויות הוראה to the coming of Moshiach.

Sincerely,

Rabbi [Signature]

RABBI Z. OSHER
Nissan

Rabbi S Z Leeches
4837 Plamondon Avenue
Montreal Quebec
CANADA H3W 1E9

Dear Rabbi Leeches,

I welcome the opportunity that offers itself to warmly commend you for the masterly work you have so expertly wrought and I hasten to add my approbation and blessings on your outstanding achievement.

Even a casual perusal of the contents of your book provides more than ample evidence of the deep thought, meticulous care and thoroughgoing research that has been invested in this project. That the Mikvah institution is of paramount importance and a fundamental feature of Torah life and practice is axiomatic. A profound yet lucid treatise such as yours that provides a fuller understanding of the distinctive nature of the Mikvah as well as of the rules and regulations governing its structure and use cannot but foster a wider and more discerning appreciation of this pivotal Mitzvah and its observance.

I offer up a prayerful supplication to Hashem that he bestow upon your good self and upon the Rabbonin and patrons and indeed upon all who were instrumental in bringing this most worthwhile and admirable project to fruition, His choicest blessings for a task well done.

Rabbi Sholem DovBer Hacohen Gutnick
Av Beth Din
Melbourne Beth Din
כָּל ד' יִתְבַּרְאוּ לְאַדְמוֹק מְעַיֶּשֶׁר מְדִיחַתָּהוּ.

כִּי תְלַשְׁוָה פָּדַה מִדָּהְיָתָהוּ אַתָּה בְּעַד הָעַרְגָּה הָיָה מְדוּבְּרָה מְדִיחַתָּהוּ. וְתִלֹּא חָפָה מֵאַרְגָּה הָיָה מְדִיחַתָּהוּ. וְתִלְּאַה מְדִיחַתָּהוּ. וְתִלְּאוּ חָפָה כַּלָּה מְדִיחַתָּהוּ. וְתִלְּאַה מְדִיחַתָּהוּ. וְתִלְּקָדֵי חָפָה כַּלָּה מְדִיחַתָּהוּ. וְתִלְּאַה מְדִיחַתָּהוּ. וְתִלְּקָדֵי חָפָה כַּלָּה מְדִיחַתָּהוּ.
יוסף העמד

רב דניאל היסרי

ראב"ד בן צ逝世

ב"ה

הנה אפי נר התמימות האברך הורר התמימות ענואור שלם

לשם ממאברךם המוזונים בודל חורא"ד דוער לרורי עליון בפסורד

השושב של הלכה דעת מאור הוושב השוש ומנהיגה

והנה כה הוי בבר לספריי זרוב פעין הומר ולפי שאין כי כל כה

בשפת המודרנית שארא רבים אמרו אמרוות זה כלא עניין ומי שבר

הלכות ממקורות בלשון משי זבח למשי ירוחなどが גורר ואפרים אל שרשם

לכד ליין לימוד מצוות המדרים במשינה בברך ולפי שרשם עלייך

הנה ואתרי יוכל עמו על עמי הלכות פרטיהם ממקורות

הנה (בפרנסי) - לפי oran את"ו חכם - לעשיו הלכתא את המקורות כפי

הצאתא את"ו חכם - "י"ע בניין מקורות" י"ע מקורות ופג אזא א"ע

והמתימם אורא דברי הכל הז ושפת המדיתра

אפורים לעפלה מאצי ורירית חלון או הל_female חולבה הת推動

המצאות התפצות המוינות והצבתו ירוחםך לזריאי אמר עד התובים בשאר

מקצות התויה ושבדרו ממקה לכולו ויינו די"כ מלא אתא עני

דעך את"ו "כ.chrome לי ממיסים" ניבים ב"ס לולקה ממקורות

שנטבל "כ pciית תאן" ביבאに入יתו אדקא עכדיה גיילה.

ועלזו זה בתה על התמה ב"איי לש"א שמיאני.
Rabbi David R. Banon

UNDERSTANDING

מתוך רב עוד ראותי את הספר "MIKVAH" פרח תנו אותי שאינו מעשה ודי אומן, עזנט התוק, טען
ונאץ האברך החשוב ההרייにするispensה ולפם בלטישים, אר סדר
בשפת בורודיה או עניני לבת המדוק לפיסק רבנותים ונשאו זה
ואז ישעא כתובות תור ה祁ים שלמה בונים חשקות גד
ולחיצות מתנה שיד בור סופותר. ויינו היך תפלת קדש ויוה
ל럴שא את בני אורח אחרון עלים ב אלף התוריה ההָּ عربيים, טכ
ויכאالفאץ יימ טביס ועימית, על התוריה וע עבדיה, רא
לפיון גואל בבי"א.

החותם על החותר הצבי god Raphael Banon
הדות יד ממציאי עניי

4773, Rue Clemenceau, Chomedey-Laval PQ H7W 2J5 Canada Tel: (450) 681-5412
11 Tammuz 5761
On the eve of the birthday
and days of redemption
of one who was moser nefesh
for mikvaot

To Rabbi Zalman Lesches

Yaasher Koach for a job well done. Assembling a
compilation of the laws pertaining to Mikvah is a daunting task. It
is a challenging subject matter with complicated details. Yet, your
sefer, “Understanding Mikvah”, so eloquently gives the English
language student, young and old, a detailed and thorough review of
the concepts of Mikvah and its halachot, its construction and
operating details. Lucid and well organized, the sefer succeeds in
making this area of halacha accessible and relevant.

May Hashem grant that you go מחיל אל חיל
and author books
of Torah learning to the benefit of Klad Yisroel leading to the time
of “they shall all know Me,” taught by the Teacher of all Teachers,
with the imminent coming of Moshiac.

B’brocho for much success,

Rabbi Gershon Grossbaum

Phone 651-690-4867 • Fax 651-698-2311
Foreword

Kollel Menachem of Montreal presents “Understanding Mikvah: An Overview of Mikvah Construction,” an original treatise that will enable the general public to learn about the basic structure of the mikvah.

It must be emphasized that this book cannot in any way replace the study of mikvah laws and their underlying rationale in the original sources — the Shulchan Aruch and commentaries. The purpose of this book is to offer basic knowledge about this important topic to those who, for whatever reason, find it difficult to learn these laws in the original text. Furthermore, this book presents only the basic laws of mikvah, and does not discuss questions and problems that may arise in various circumstances.

It is our hope that this treatise helps to strengthen the scrupulous observance of the mikvah laws — an integral part of the Family Purity Laws that form the foundation of our people. This, in turn, will certainly hasten the fulfillment of G-d’s promise, “I will sprinkle purifying waters upon you, and you shall be pure” (Yechezkel 36:25) — with the coming of our righteous redeemer, speedily in our days.

Schneur Zalman Lesches
20 Menachem Av, 5761

Acknowledgments:

The following people were invaluable in bringing this project to fruition:

Rabbi Berel Bell for jump-starting this project, Rabbi Elchonon Lesches for editing the manuscript and seeing it through its many stages, Yaakov and Pam Russ for contributing to the success of this manuscript, Mrs. Mindy Feller of Minnesota for extensive editing and proofreading of the manuscript, Rabbi Shimon Chyrek for his masterful mikvah sketches, Yossi Berrebi for creating the cover design, Hal
Goldblatt of Las Vegas for providing the mikvah photograph on the cover design, and Yitzchok Turner for the layout and typography.

Our team of expert Rabbonim: Rabbi Dovid Banon for advice, Rabbi Yosef Feigelstock of Argentina for writing the section on Sophisticated Mikvaos, Rabbi Gershon Grossbaum of Minnesota for his active interest and constructive scholarly emendations, and Rabbi Yitzchok Hendel for providing personal notes full of profound insights regarding the mikvah from celebrated Rabbonim of the previous generation.

Rabbi Boruch Heidingsfeld and Rabbi Yisroel Karpilovsky, who assisted in many parts of this project, making it enjoyable to discover the world of mikvaos.


The patrons — with special mention to Yossi Lesches, Pesach Nussbaum and Shmarye Richler — for their interest and support that have assisted me throughout this project.

My parents Rabbi and Mrs. Boruch Dov Lesches: this project attests to the vibrant education that they have given me in faraway Sydney, Australia.

My wife Shoshana: her encouragement, patience and support are the success of this project.

In conclusion, I tender my humble thanks to the Almighty for having given me the strength to carry this exacting and strenuous task. And on behalf of all those who have been closely connected with this publication, I offer the following prayer, “May it be the Almighty’s will that just as You have helped us complete a sefer compiling the laws of mikvah, so too, help us begin other sefarim and complete them.”
Excerpts from the Rebbe’s Letters
Regarding Mikvah

Free Translation

... It gave me pleasure to hear from you about your endeavors to support the building of the Mikvah in Kfar Chabad, so that it may be completely finished and decorated expeditiously. All those to whom Torah and Mitzvos are dear certainly do not need any explanation as to the great importance of Mikvah. What greater proof do we need than the well-known Torah law that a community is required to sell a Sefer Torah (the sacred Torah scroll), if necessary, to provide a Mikvah.

What remains to be stressed is the need for a great alertness and alacrity in providing the above aid, especially in light of the Chassidic teachings which stress the great quality of alertness in all the Mitzvos and particularly in the Mitzvah of procreation to which Mikvah is a preamble. Our Sages went to great lengths to emphasize the crucial nature of Mikvah-immersion and the subsequent resumption of marital relations; facilitating its observance by even one day is of enormous importance. (Joshua remained childless as punishment for hindering the marital life of Israel for just one night) . . .

Atlantic County Mikvah Society
506 Pacific Avenue
Shalom u'Brocho:

I was pleased and happy to be informed by your esteemed and energetic President, Mr. I. B. Summers, and your dynamic Secretary, Rabbi Moshe Shuvalsky, about the forthcoming Groundbreaking Ceremony which is to take place on the first day of next week, Rosh Chodesh Elul.
It is gratifying indeed that the efforts of your society, under Rabbinc leadership headed by the *Mom D'asro* Rabbi Moshe Shapiro, has reached this milestone. With all of you I hope and pray that the construction of the *Mikvah* will proceed with all speed so that it will soon be possible to joyously celebrate the completion of the *Mikvah* with blessing and gratitude to the Almighty.

We all know well the importance of *Zerizus* in the fulfillment of all *Mitzvos* as has been especially emphasized by the *Alter Rebbe*, the *Baal HaTanya* and *Shulchan Aruch*, in his *Iggeres HaKodesh*, ch. 21. From which it is obvious how very important it is to follow through with the utmost *Zerizus* such a great and comprehensive *Mitzvah* as a *Mikvah*, which is one of the foundations of the House of Israel and one of the main pillars of every Jewish community.

... I send my congratulations and prayerful wishes to all the Rabbinic leaders, to the Committee and members of the *Mikvah* Society, and to each and every one who has contributed and will contribute towards the speedy realization of this most worthy accomplishment. May the *Zechus* of this great *Mitzvah* stand everyone in good stead to be blessed with *Hatzlocho* in this and in all their good works.

With the blessing of *Kesivah vechasima tova*,

(signature)

Chaplain —
Elmendorf Air Force Base
Alaska.

Greeting and Blessing:

Due to a very crowded schedule, this is my first opportunity of congratulating you on your extraordinary *Zechus* of initiating the project of the first *Mikvah* in Anchorage for the Alaskan Jewish community, which you accomplished, with G-d’s help,
as I am informed by our mutual friends, the Rabbonim who flew in to participate in this great event.

As for the importance of this matter, I need hardly emphasize it to you, since your own initiative is best proof of being fully aware of it.

However, on the basis of the dictum of our Sages, “Encourage the energetic,” I wish to express my confident hope that you are doing all you can to make the Mikveh a busy place, frequented regularly not only by the women who directly benefit from your good influence but also by their friends and acquaintances who will be induced by them to follow their example. And while this kind of religious inspiration is a “must” wherever Jews live, it is even more so in the City and State where the Mikveh has just been established for the first time. It is well to bear in mind that a “Jewish heart is always awake” and responsive to Torah and Mitzvos.

It is significant in this case that the one who merited the great Zechus of establishing the Mikveh is a person in military service. For, military service, by definition and practice, very aptly illustrates the basic principle of commitment to Torah and Mitzvos, namely, na’aseh (“we will do,” and then) v’nishma (“we will understand”) ...
understand the importance of this Mitzvah, etc. This is not surprising, as is clear from the analogy of a small child being unable to understand a professor who is advanced in knowledge. Bear in mind that the condition between the small child and the advanced professor is only a difference in degree and not in kind, inasmuch as the child may, in due course, not only attain the same level of the professor, but even surpass him.

It is quite otherwise in the difference between a created being, be he the wisest person on earth, and the Creator Himself. How can we, humans, expect to understand the infinite wisdom of the Creator? It is only because of G-d's great kindness that He has revealed certain reasons with regard to certain Mitzvah, that we can get some sort of a glimpse or insight into them. It is quite clear that G-d has given us the various commandments for our own sake and not in order to benefit Him. It is therefore clear what the sensible attitude towards the Mitzvah should be. If this is so with regard to any Mitzvah, how much more so with regard to the said Mitzvah of Tahanas Hamishpacho, which has a direct bearing not only on the mutual happiness of the husband and wife, but also on the well-being and happiness of their offspring, their children and children's children.

It is equally clear that parents are always anxious to do everything possible for their children, even if there is only a very small chance that their efforts would materialize, and even if these efforts entail considerable difficulties. How much more so in this case where the benefit to be derived is very great and lasting, while the sacrifice is negligible by comparison. Even where the difficulties are not entirely imaginary, it is certain that they become less and less with actual observance of the Mitzvah, so that they eventually disappear altogether.

Needless to say I am aware of the "argument" that there are many non-observant married couples, yet seemingly happy, etc. The answer is simple. First of all, it is well known that G-d is
very merciful and patient, and waits for the erring sinner to return to Him in sincere repentance. Secondly, appearances are deceptive, and one can never know what the true facts are about somebody else's life, especially as certain things relating to children and other personal matters are, for obvious reasons, kept in strict confidence.

As a matter of fact, in regard to the observance of Tahanas Hamishpocho, even the plain statistics of reports and tables by specialists, doctors and sociologists etc., who cannot be considered partial towards the religious Jew, clearly show the benefits which accrued to those Jewish circles which observed Tahanas Hamishpocho. These statistics have also been published in various publications, but it is not my intention to dwell on this at length in this letter.

My intention in writing all the above is, of course, not to admonish or preach, but in the hope that upon receipt of my letter you will consider the matter more deeply, and will at once begin to observe the Mitzvah of Tahanas Hamishpocho, within the framework of the general Jewish way of life which our Creator has clearly given to us in His Torah, which is called Torah Chaim, the Law of Life. Even if it seems to you that you have some difficulties to overcome, you may be certain that you will overcome them and that the difficulties are only in the initial stages.

I understand that in your community there are young couples who are observant and you could discuss this matter with them, and find out all the laws and regulations of Tahanas Hamishpocho. If, however, you find it inconvenient to seek the knowledge from friends, there are booklets which have been published, which contain the desired information, also a list of places where a Mikvah is available…
To All Participants In the Multiple Inauguration
Under auspices of Beit Chabad
Rua Chabad 60, S. P. Brazil

Greeting and Blessing:
I was pleased to be informed about the forthcoming Multiple Inauguration of the Synagogue, Mikve, Library and Rua Chabad in your community.
Each of these constructive achievements would have warranted celebration, particularly in the present unsettled times; how much more so all together.
The function of the synagogue is to serve as a two-way link between created beings and the Creator, whereby man rises upward to G-dliness through worship and prayer, and brings down G-d's blessings materially and spiritually.
The Mikve is the foundation of Jewish family life, ensuring purity and sanctity of the family structure and the continuity of future generations.
The Library, with its books of sacred literature and the wisdom of our Sages, is an inexhaustible source of wisdom and virtue to illuminate man's path in life. Indeed, to make such books freely available to readers has been described by our Sages as “an act of everlasting benevolence.”
And Rua Chabad, symbolic of the “Chabad Way,” is to develop the intellectual potential of the soul into a harmonious synthesis with the emotions of the heart in the service of G-d and fellow-man, with true love, joy and inspiration, always mindful of the guiding principle that “the essential thing is the deed…”

I was pleased to receive your letter dated Tevet 6th, informing me of the completion of the boms for the Kashrut of the mikvah — including that it was done with external beauty. It is well known that our Rebbeim emphasized even the external
beauty, for this makes it easier for Bnos Yisroel and through them, the purity of the Jewish People, that purity etc. brings Eliyahu the Prophet. This communal merit is thanks to all those who helped in this project that is the foundation of our people. (Igros Kodesh vol. 10 p. 227)

...Our Rabbeim were greatly involved with mikvaos. It is wondrous that even those Rabbeim who for whatever reason did not want to rule any Halachic law — to the extent that when an urgent question arose, they presented the issue to a Rov who would clarify the law — yet, when it came to mikvah, they placed a special emphasis on the matter, sent responsa, gave specific directives... (Igros Kodesh vol. 19 p. 42)

...In answer to your request for a blessing — your blessing is already written in Scripture, “He will do the will of those who fear Him,” without limiting His will, since you are involved with bringing Jews to fear G-d through the mitzvah of mikvah. As is explained in Rambam, at the completion of the laws of mikvah, even though immersion is a Heavenly commandment, nonetheless there is also a hint... those whose intention is to purify their hearts... and brings his soul into pure intentions. ...Just as immersion includes the head and entire body, and even that which is secondary to his body must be immersed, the same is true in the spiritual sense. One who wants to purify himself of the sin of the tree of knowledge, must begin with self-nullification, from the intellect (the head of the body) until the heel, immersing all in “water,” i.e., humility (Taamis 7a). This purifies his intellect and ideas and brings him to fear G-d (end of Sotah). Therefore our Sages have said that the Hebrew word
for “immersion” (to'avah) uses the same letters as “self-nullification” (bittul) . . .

(Igros Kodesh vol. 8 p. 55)

...The Rambam, at the end of the laws concerning the mikvah, writes that immersion alludes to the spiritual “immersion” needed to correct concepts and beliefs. Thus, the immersion must include that water covers even one’s head, i.e., one’s concepts and beliefs, and purifies them. Meaning, that one must nullify his wisdom and intellect, channeling them into correct concepts and beliefs . . .

(Igros Kodesh vol. 5 p. 90)
Preface

There are many occasions and instances that necessitate immersion in a mikvah. Torah law requires a niddah to immerse in a mikvah. A convert must immerse in a mikvah as part of the conversion process. Additionally, pots and utensils acquired from a gentile must also be immersed in a mikvah before their first use. In the times of the Temple an impure person had to immerse prior to his entry into the Temple, and prior to eating parts of a sacrifice.

There are also customs to immerse in a mikvah as an act of self-renewal, as a symbol of rebirth and/or as an act of repentance. Many have the custom of immersing before Yom Kippur; others also immerse before Rosh Hashanah; yet others immerse on the eve of Shalosh Regalim. Many Jews — particularly chasadim — have the practice to immerse every Friday before the advent of Shabbos and on Shabbos morning. Still others have the custom of immersing every day before the morning prayers.

When a mikvah is build according to the most meticulous details of the law, it provides an enhanced level of purity to its users. Yet, though this principle applies for all the above-mentioned immersions, special importance is placed on the immersion of a niddah. The primary reason for this emphasis is that willful cohabitation with a niddah is punishable by korais.

In addition, meticulous observance of the Laws of Family Purity — including the crucial procedure of immersing in a "valid" mikvah — affects the physical, spiritual and emotional health of both the mother and the child to be born.

1 Rosh 8:24, Mebaker (and Taz) Orach Chayim 606:4 (5).
2 Rama Orach Chayim 581:4; Kol Bo 64 p. 27a.
3 See Encyclopedia Talmudis vol. 19 p. 30.
5 Chelkas Yaakov vol. 3:60.
It is written: “Al korchoch atah nolad”⁶ — against your will you were born. One interpretation is that the soul does not want to descend into a physical body and live in this material world. The soul uses every excuse to avoid being born, particularly on the pretext that the mother attends a mikvah that lacks hiddurim — the more careful, enhanced interpretations of the law. If a mikvah does indeed have all hiddurim, the soul is left without recourse to avoiding its descent. This further underscores the importance of building a mikvah with all possible hiddurim.

Building a mikvah is very unique. Although there are many different opinions regarding the various details of the laws of mikvah — and Halacha establishes the final ruling according to specific authorities — one ought to still meet the requirements of the other authorities.⁷ This is a unique hiddur not found in other areas of Jewish law.

For example: When a Bais Din affirms that a certain product is kosher, they are not obligated to follow opinions and hiddurim that are not accepted as the final Halacha. One who wants to be scrupulously pious would not buy the product in question. However, regarding mikvah, the Bais Din strives to establish a mikvah that also fulfills the requirements of Halachic codifiers whose opinions are not accepted as the final Halacha — even if it is an individual who insists on these hiddurim.⁸

A kosher mikvah that lacks hiddurim should be properly reconstructed as quickly as possible. In a situation where this does not occur, one should use a better mikvah. This does not

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⁶ Avos Chapter 4, mishna 22.
⁷ Tashbatz vol. 1 siman 17; Rashbo brought down in Divrei Chayim Yoreh Deah, vol. 2 siman 99, Aimek Shulah Yoreh Deah siman 54, Chelkas Yaakov vol. 3 siman 53, 57, Igros Kodesh 3:204, 10:175, 14:140, 17:95, Minchas Yitzchok vol. 9 siman 94.
⁸ Chelkas Yaakov vol. 3:57.
conflict with the prohibition against *lehotzy laz al rishonim*, “bring out evil talk upon the earlier (immersions).”

One additional point: Our Rabbis took every precaution to design a “fool-proof” mikvah, i.e., one whose waters enter in a kosher manner only, making it virtually impossible for water to enter in any invalid fashion. Thank G-d, modern technology has enabled us to build our *mikvaos* with almost all the *hiddurim*.

**OR SO**

The objective of this book is to be of assistance or serve as a guide to those learning about the *mikvah* and its *hiddurim*. Readers may include:

- laymen
- contractors
- architects
- students
- congregants wishing to build a *mikvah*
- Rabbis and *mikvah* experts (footnotes include most recent responsa)

Where there is a choice of *mikvaos* to use, this treatise will help to discern the pros and cons of each *mikvah*, which may then be discussed with a competent Rabbi.

**Important Note:** This work provides only a general overview and cannot replace the study of these laws in their original source — the *Shulchan Aruch* and commentaries. If one constructs a *mikvah* with the instruction and guidance of this

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*9 At times, our Rabbis will overlook an act that is not carried out precisely according to *Halacha*, in order to prevent “a damaging name” to others. This principle, however, does not apply to the *mikvah*. Hence, necessary repairs should be carried out and we are not to be concerned that the public may react by saying, “the original *mikvah* was invalid.” See *Igrov Kodesh* 18:202, *Minchas Einzer* 4:7.
booklet, the mikvaḥ must not be used until validated by a Rabbinical expert in this field.

The construction and maintenance of a mikvaḥ must remain under constant supervision of a Rabbi competent in these laws.

Similarly, just as a competent Rabbi is the sole authority regarding the construction of a mikvaḥ, so too is a mikvaḥ invalidated only upon the word of a competent Rabbi. Needless to say, these instructions in no way impinge on the validity of a mikvaḥ that may have been constructed differently.

Before presenting the specific laws of mikvaḥ, a basic outline will be helpful:

Our Sages calculated the minimum amount of water needed for total immersion. This amount, forty se'ah, must gather naturally and not be drawn through taps, pipes, vessels, etc.\(^\text{10}\)

If three lugoin\(^\text{11}\) of sheuvim — drawn water — precede the full forty se'ah of rainwater (even if the forty se'ah lacks only a minute amount), the mikvaḥ becomes invalid. The entire mikvaḥ water (including the rainwater) must be emptied and only then can the mikvaḥ be refilled.\(^\text{12}\)

Conversely, drawn water may be added to the mikvaḥ once it contains forty se'ah of rainwater, and the added waters then become kosher.\(^\text{13}\)

Rainwater collected in a vessel loses its status and is considered sheuvim — drawn water. A “vessel,” in this case, is defined as follows:

- a receptacle
- capable of holding water

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\(^{10}\) Yorah Deah 201:3, 15, 40.

\(^{11}\) see Chapter entitled “Measurements.”

\(^{12}\) Yorah Deah 201:21.

\(^{13}\) Yorah Deah 201:15.
• made for containment\textsuperscript{14}
• able to stand upright on its own with its opening upwards [and not spill]
• detached from the ground
• “nismalay lod'a‘as,” filled intentionally\textsuperscript{15}

Whenever the term “rainwater” is mentioned in this book it refers to water that has \textbf{not} become \textit{sheni\textit{m} — drawn waters. “Tap water” refers to all forms of drawn water.

\textsuperscript{14} Ye\textit{nah} Da\textit{zh} 201:34, 36. This excludes a pipe with a bulge.
\textsuperscript{15} Ye\textit{nah} Da\textit{zh} 201:34, 41.
The History of Mikvaos

Mikvaos changed very little from the time of Mattan Torah until the time of Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi, the “Alter Rebbe” (or “Baal HaTanya”). One used either a spring or rainwater collected in a pit. The former choice was often more practical, particularly in countries like Eretz Yisroel, where little rain falls. Using a pit in such places often meant stagnant water, uncomfortable for immersion.

In fact, the Talmud relates that people often took showers after immersing and, after some time, mistakenly assumed that the shower caused purification, not the mikvah! When the Sages realized that people were becoming lax about their immersion in the actual bor, they forbade showers after the mikvah. If one did shower, he became impure. Under these circumstances, people preferred to immerse in springs or rivers, where the waters were always fresh and clean.

During the winter it was not possible to heat the water. When major Jewish communities resided in places like Mesopotamia, Africa, France and neighboring environs, immersion — though uncomfortable — was still feasible, due to the milder winters in those regions. However, when Jews began moving to Russia and Poland, it became impossible to immerse during the winter. Even if one would pour buckets of boiling water into the spring, the rushing water dropped back to freezing temperatures within minutes.

A New Design

The Alter Rebbe designed a mikvah where the waters would remain warm. Only a general overview of his design is presented here, for its details are beyond the scope of this treatise.

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16 Shabbos, 14a.
17 Many conditions apply to immersing in a river. See Section “Rivers and Lakes.”
18 Shulchan Aruch, vol. 5-6, pp. 1647-8.
The first step is to dig in the area of a spring the upper three or four feet. A large wooden box open at the top and with a large hole (four inches in diameter) in the bottom should be prepared. (A closed box, a keli, cannot be used, because collected rainwater becomes sheuvim). Though a box is normally considered a keli, the hole nullifies this status, validating it for mikvah use.

At the bottom of the excavation, at the location that will correspond to the hole, a few wooden boards should be nailed together. The box is then put into place above the boards, and the hole, pressed against the boards, is covered with tar to ensure that the waters enter slowly.

After a few minutes, forty se'ah of spring water will enter the bottom hole and fill a portion of the box. Hot water may then be added, bringing the water to a comfortable temperature. Because the hole on the bottom is sealed in a valid way, the warm waters will remain in the box for a few hours, enabling immersion. After some time there will have been an exchange of waters and they will have turned cold again. Since new water constantly seeps in, this mikvah always has clean water.

When the Tzemach Tzedek came to Lubavitch, he instructed that a mikvah be built according to the design of the Alter Rebbe. They dug quite deeply until they reached water. Once the box was fitted into place and water filled the box, they realized that the mikvah would be too deep in the ground for safe entry. The idea then arose to make the box hang from its side, clinging to the walls.

Essential to the reasoning of the Alter Rebbe was the fact that the hole in the box negates its status as a keli. Furthermore, the fact that it would be attached to the ground also nullified its capacity to be mekabel tumah. By hanging the box onto the walls this latter criterion would be absent, as the box would not be attached to the ground.

The Tzemach Tzedek therefore suggests in his Halachic responsum\(^\text{19}\) to take a pipe, insert one end into the soil at the

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\(^{19}\) Yerah Dosh 102.
bottom of the excavation, and fill it completely with pebbles and sand. The box is then placed on top of the totally filled pipe. The box is now considered attached to the ground, as the pipe is still considered “ground.”

Thus, as in the mikvah of the Alter Rebbe, first the waters would flow into the box through cracks in the box, and then hot water could be added. Additionally, the pipe enabled them to raise the mikvah to a height that was more comfortable to use. This mikvah was used in the times of the Tzemach Tzedek and his successor Rabbi Shmuel, the Rebbe Maharash.

Rabbi Sholom DovBer, the Rebbe Rashab, later wrote that although hot water was often added to the mikvah, there was no need to clean the water. The waters replaced themselves, attributable to the nature of the spring. Thus, they cleaned it perhaps once a year.

After the passing of the Rebbe Maharash, the mikvah had to be rebuilt. This chore proved to be exceedingly difficult. Normally, a mikvah is drained, repaired and refilled. When emptied, it must be totally dry because three luggin of invalid waters [remain invalid and] render all immersion null and void. Because this particular mikvah was built into the ground, it was virtually impossible to empty the water. Fresh underground spring water flowed in constantly, refilling it as quickly as the water was removed.

To resolve this, a wagonload of sand was brought and dumped all at once into the mikvah, displacing the water and drying it completely. After half an hour, new spring water seeped up through the new sand. The mikvah was now valid for immersing. Since a lot of sand was thrown in, the box was able to be placed two feet higher now and a pipe was no longer needed.

Unfortunately, this ingenious alternative had its drawbacks. The water in the box remained very shallow. Although it had the required forty se’ah, it was still too shallow for immersing unless more water was added. This, however, does not abide by those opinions who hold that the forty se’ah themselves must
be high enough for proper immersion.\footnote{See \textit{Taharas Mayim} pp. 22-3.}

Additionally, the fresh spring water did not enter the box with sufficient pressure. Since the box was higher now, when the water became dirty the new water did not rise high enough to clean the water.

So it stayed for twenty-five years, until 5667 (1907). The Rebbe Rashab then decided to rebuild the \textit{mikvah} similar in design to that of the Alter Rebbe. This new \textit{mikvah} was used for another eight years. As the rumblings of war approached, the Rebbe Rashab fled to Rostov, where it was impossible to build a \textit{mikvah} in a spring.

Interestingly, twenty years prior to the Rebbe’s arrival, local residents began building \textit{mikvaos} dependent on rainwater collection. The Jewish population had shifted to larger cities where there was no river or spring available for \textit{mikvah} use. However, the new \textit{mikvaos} raised many Halachic questions and the Rebbe advised his \textit{chassidim} not to live in cities with “new style” \textit{mikvaos} (which were Halachically problematic).

Now, however, when the Rebbe moved to Rostov, he had no choice but to build such a \textit{mikvah} — dependent on rainwater. The Rebbe studied and planned for many months to ensure his \textit{mikvah} would fulfill all \textit{hiddurim} and Halachic opinions. Two years later he built his famous \textit{mikvah} of \textit{bor al gabai bor}.

It is noteworthy that throughout history, Jewish people have gone to great lengths of self-sacrifice to fulfill the \textit{mitzvah} of \textit{mikvah} with all its precise applications. The story is told of Menachem Schreiber, the Minister of Health in Bialystock, 1934, who was ordered by the judge of the city to shut down the \textit{mikvah} for reasons of hygiene. He proceeded to dispel their objections by drinking a full glass of \textit{mikvah} water in court without any suggestion of discomfort.
**Importance of a Mikvah**

A niddah does not complete her purification process even after bathing in all the waters of the world. She is forbidden to have relations with her husband — even after many years — until she immerses **properly** (her entire body at once) in the proper place (a mikvah or spring that contains forty se’ah) after the days of her counting. It is particularly important for her to immerse in a kosher mikvah that is under the direct supervision of a Rabbi competent in the complex laws and details of the mikvah.

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Building and Planning

A mikvah should be constructed quickly and not delayed for even a single day!22

Some authorities rule that building a mikvah takes precedence over building a synagogue23 or buying a Torah scroll.24 It is forbidden to build a mikvah above a synagogue or Bais Hamedrash.25

Those who have a private mikvah in their homes are still obligated to assist in building a community mikvah. Elderly people whose wives no longer use the mikvah are not exempt from participating in the construction of a community mikvah.26

Special emphasis should be placed on constructing the mikvah building in a manner that avoids uneasiness, lest — G-d forbid — women not use the mikvah in the proper time. The following suggestions may minimize general discomfort:

The mikvah should be built in an unobtrusive27 location — a place that prevents anyone from observing who is attending the mikvah. Moreover, the neighborhood should be safe; otherwise women will be afraid to walk home from the mikvah after nightfall.28

The windows and entrance of a mikvah should be inconspicuous; no one should be able to observe who is entering the mikvah. Thus, the entrance should not be in a public place where other Jewish people are found in the evening and at night.29 Nor should the entrance be totally deserted, or else women will be afraid.

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23 Igros Moshe Choshen Mishpat 1:40, Minchas Yitzchak 5:83.
24 Ein Yitzchak Orach Chayim siman 3, Igros Kodesh 10:316, Taanach Mayim p. 323.
25 Minchas Yitzchok 4:43.
26 Ibid. 3:88.
27 Ibid. 2:102.
28 Ibid. 3:88.
29 Tosfos Niddah 66b, Minchas Yitzchok 4:43, Yorah Dash 19 834.
The doors of the preparation rooms in the mikvah should not face one another or the waiting room. Rather, they should be placed alternately, so that one who stands at the door will not be able to see into the other room.

Maximizing Comfort

General appearance plays an important role. It is very important that a mikvah is built in a manner that is attractive.\textsuperscript{30} If one builds a beautiful edifice, many more people will be attracted to use the mikvah. Its waters should also be exceptionally clean and crystal clear.\textsuperscript{31}

Stairs — whether in the mikvah or entering the building — should be minimized, as they may cause discomfort.\textsuperscript{32} Similarly, stairs or tiles in the mikvah should not be slippery.

Proper air circulation should be maintained, especially during the summer. Adequate lighting is also important. Handrails in the preparation rooms and installed on the staircase leading into the bor hatvilah\textsuperscript{33} can be of great help for those using the mikvah. The bathtubs should also not be too narrow.

The room where one immerses should be close to the preparation room. The fact that one needs to walk some distance — i.e., through a corridor — back to the preparation room may prompt a woman who forgot a certain detail to dismiss the forgotten preparation and, possibly, invalidate her immersion.\textsuperscript{34}

\textsuperscript{31} Otherwise, the dirt may be considered a chatzitzah and invalidate the immersion.
\textsuperscript{32} Igros Kodosh 22:67.
\textsuperscript{33} However, in the bor hatvilah it is better not to have handrails, for one may forget and immerse while holding tightly onto the handrail — causing a chatzitzah — and invalidating the immersion.
\textsuperscript{34} Chelkas Yaakov 2:53.
It is advisable for a mikvah to have a logbook recording all the maintenance, i.e., cleaned, refilled or repaired. This is especially needed when a mikvah is supervised by more than one Rabbi: One Rabbi might rely on the other while the latter is actually relying on the first, perhaps allowing the mikvah to be refilled without proper supervision. The logbook should also record whenever a repairman comes to fix anything in the mikvah — anything from a shower to a roof drain. Knowing the details of these repairs may be important to future Halachic questions.

Eliminating Worry

It is of paramount importance that the mikvah experience be a pleasurable one and that nothing disturb or bother the woman using the mikvah, lest it interfere with her ability to concentrate on the precautions needed during immersion.

The steps entering the mikvah should be flat, not slanted. The section where one immerses should be wide — at least two feet — so that she can immerse without worrying about touching the sides.

Planning two levels in a mikvah facilitates proper immersion for people of all heights. This way, taller people can immerse in the “deep end,” while shorter people can immerse on their level without worrying about the water being too high. Both these levels should be totally flat.

The water temperature should be lukewarm (35 — 36 °C / 95 — 97 °F).

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35 Chelkas Yaakov 2:73.
36 Minchas Yitzchok 2:23.
37 Shuir Sharet Halevy p. 349. There is an opinion that requires forty se’ah on each level.
38 Divrei Chayim — see Chelkas Yaakov vol. 3:58.
39 Tzemach Tzedek Yoreh Deah end of siman 172, writes in the name of his grandfather, the Alter Rebbe, who was very particular about this detail. Cold water makes hair stick together and causes a chatzitzas.
Women immersing in a mikvah should never stand on an unsteady surface, such as a flimsy box or piece of wood.\textsuperscript{40} Similarly, one should not stand on something that is a \textit{keli} or an item that is \textit{mekabel tumah}, for this invalidates the immersion.\textsuperscript{41} One should therefore not stand on plastic, because some opinions rule that plastic is \textit{mekabel tumah}.\textsuperscript{42}

\textsuperscript{40} \textit{Yerusha Daah} 198:31.
\textsuperscript{41} \textit{Yerusha Daah} 198:31.
\textsuperscript{42} See Section “Invalid Receptacles.”
Kosher Waters

Immersing in a Spring

The word *mikvah* is translated as a “gathering of water.” This refers to naturally fallen rainwater that has gathered in one place and is not zoychalim, not flowing.\(^{43}\)

The highest level of purity is achieved by immersing in spring water.\(^{44}\) It is permissible to immerse even if the spring is flowing.\(^{45}\) Furthermore, in the event that a leak is found, all previous and future immersions remain kosher.

A *mikvah* with spring water has the distinct advantage of always having fresh, clean water.

Spring waters that are no longer connected to the spring and now fill a *mikvah* must follow all the criteria of a *mikvah* — i.e., the water must be stationary, not flowing.\(^{46}\) Similarly, before filling the *mikvah* from the spring, the *mikvah* must be completely dry or, at the very least, contain less than three *luggin*\(^{47}\) of ordinary water.

Digging for a spring is fraught with complications. When one drills for a well, powerful streams of water are used in the drilling process to cool the drill head and eject dirt from around the hole. The possibility exists that there are fissures (or that the pressure of the drill created and widened a fissure) in the bedrock. There may be trapped inside a fissure three *luggin* of ordinary water (from the drilling process) that preceded the spring waters. An alternative method is to use compressed air to eject the drillings.

Additionally, if one digs for a well it is possible that the instruments used in this process render the spring water that is collected as *sheuvim*. Thus, when the spring is found, there is a real possibility that three *luggin* of waters will become *sheuvim*.

\(^{43}\) *Yeroh Deah* 201:5.

\(^{44}\) *Mikvaos* Chapter 1 mishnah 8.

\(^{45}\) *Yeroh Deah* 201:2.

\(^{46}\) *Yeroh Deah* 201:10.

\(^{47}\) See Section “Measurements.”
water collected with human intervention.\textsuperscript{48} Because of the likelihood that three \textit{lugin} of ordinary water preceded the spring waters, one must pump out all the water from the spring and then add sand to any remaining spring water to nullify its \textit{shevurim} status.\textsuperscript{49}

**Oceans**

Oceans, \textit{Halachically}, are springs and therefore kosher for immersion even when their waters are flowing.\textsuperscript{50} In a place where there is a kosher \textit{mikvah}, one should not immerse at sea, because immersing at sea entails many stipulations. These include:

1) Another woman must supervise the immersion to ensure that the entire body and hair are immersed. It is difficult to do this supervision properly at the sea.

2) Immersion should be done slowly in order to fulfill all the laws properly. At a beach, however, one is naturally afraid of spectators or big waves, causing the woman to immerse hurriedly, without the proper concentration.

In an emergency situation where there is no \textit{mikvah} and one must immerse in the sea, one should consult a Rabbi competent specifically in these laws.\textsuperscript{51}

**Rivers and Lakes**

Rivers can be more problematic than oceans: A river is created from either rain or spring water. If the river source is only rainwater — i.e., the river dries up during a drought —

\[\text{\textsuperscript{48} Though the \textit{Meishar} (201:11) does validate such water if it contacts the spring, the \textit{Ramo} (201:40), however, is more stringent. See \textit{Pischei Teshuva} 201:28.}\]

\[\text{\textsuperscript{49} \textit{Beis Yosef} 106b — 107a.}\]

\[\text{\textsuperscript{50} \textit{Yoreh Deah} 201:5. Sand on the ocean floor does not constitute a \textit{chatzitza}, because the waters preceded the sand.}\]

\[\text{\textsuperscript{51} See \textit{Taharas Mayim} p. 14, 15.}\]
then such a river is invalid for immersion.\textsuperscript{52} For, as explained earlier, only \textit{gathered} rainwater is kosher, but not a constantly flowing river.

Rivers that flow even during a drought are obviously created by a spring. Though one is allowed to immerse in such a river — even if it is flowing — the following problem arises:

In the rainy season, rain (or melted snow) widens the river considerably, sometimes adding more water than the original river water. There is a controversy among \textit{Halachic} codifiers whether one may immerse in such a river. In the Talmud, \textit{Rav} forbids immersion under such conditions, since there is disproportionately more rainwater. \textit{Shmuel}, however, permits immersion in such a river, because every drop of rainwater causes two additional drops to rise from the actual spring.\textsuperscript{53} The \textit{Ramo} rules that one may use this river if there is no alternative.\textsuperscript{54}

\textbf{A Rabbi, competent specifically in these laws, must authorize immersions under such conditions.}

If one partitions the river and creates a stationary body of water, all agree it is kosher for immersion. This applies only where no other \textit{mikvah} is available. Otherwise, the two earlier problems mentioned in regard to immersing in the sea, apply also to a river.

The laws of immersing in a river apply to lakes as well.

\textbf{Swimming Pools}

Women do \textbf{not} fulfill their \textit{mikvah} obligation by immersing in a swimming pool.\textsuperscript{55}

\textsuperscript{52} \textit{Ramo, Yoreh Deah} 2012.
\textsuperscript{53} \textit{Bekhoros} 55b.
\textsuperscript{54} \textit{Ramo, Yoreh Deah} 2012.
\textsuperscript{55} Igros Moshe, Yoreh Deah 1:110, Tahanos Mayim 232. Such water involves many complicated stipulations: The water may have flowed through instruments that are \textit{mekabel tumah}, the swimming pool or filter may have the status of a \textit{keli}, etc.
Likewise, men, when fulfilling a Halachic obligation to immerse in a mikvah (e.g., as part of the conversion process), may not immerse in a swimming pool. However men who have the custom to use the mikvah at other times are allowed to use drawn water, and may use swimming pools. However, the pool water must be still, — the filter system should not function during the immersion. Even so, it is preferable to use a kosher mikvah.

**Snow and Ice**

Snow and ice are kosher for the forty se’ah that constitute a mikvah. The ice should be cut out of a river or lake. However, it is better to apply the following precautions:

a) The ice (or snow) should neither be put into boxes or containers, nor gathered by instruments such as shovels that would render rainwater to become sheuvim, “gathered.” To collect the ice one must use a container that cannot hold any water (even in a corner), such as a plastic milk crate that has no crevices.

b) The truck carrying the ice (or snow) should be lined with cardboard, thus ensuring that the ice (or snow) not contact any metal.

c) A truck (carrying the ice or snow) going downhill would create a water containment area for the melted water to collect. One should therefore drill small holes in all the corners of the floor of the truck.

d) It is preferable to place the ice (or snow) in the otzar and have the melted waters run through a hamshocho process before entering the mikvah. In the absence of an otzar, one can build a platform (taking care that there be no area however

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56 Ba’er Meave 5:21.
57 See Chilkas Yakev 3:60.
58 Yoreh Dresh 201:30.
59 See Section “Otzar”.
60 See Section “Hamshocho”.


small for the waters to accumulate) and allow the melted water to drip onto the beginning of the *hamshocho* area. If this is not possible, then it is preferable for a non-Jew to fill the *buros* with the ice (or snow).

e) Only as a last resort\(^{61}\) may one use manufactured ice.\(^{62}\) If at a later date it becomes feasible to obtain natural rainwater, the water from the manufactured ice must then be replaced.

One may not add hot tap water to accelerate the melting of the ice (or snow).\(^{63}\)

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\(^{63}\) *Pischai Teshuva* Yoreh Deah 201:21.
Dimensions

The Definition of a Mikvah

As explained earlier, a mikvah denotes a place where water naturally gathers and does not flow away. The following circumstances indicate “flowing” water, and immersion is not permissible during this time: noticeable leakage\(^64\) (i.e., a crack in the wall or floor), water being drained, pumped, etc.

Our Sages calculated the minimum amount of water needed for total immersion. This amount, forty se'ah, must gather naturally and not be drawn\(^65\) through taps, pipes, vessels, etc.

If three luggin of drawn water precede the forty se'ah of rainwater, the mikvah is invalid. Hence, if the wall surface is damp, we assume that there are three luggin of drawn water. Therefore, the walls and floor must be completely dry before rainwater enters the mikvah. A Torah-observant Jew must supervise that the walls and floor of the boros are absolutely dry. Placing a heater in the empty boros facilitates drying.

Once the mikvah has forty se'ah of rainwater, one is permitted to add more water (even drawn water) and the added waters become kosher.\(^66\)

Water Height

The height of the water during immersion should be 120-125 cm. (47 — 49 inches) above floor level.\(^67\) This ensures that,

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\(^64\) Yorah Deah 201:50, 51.
\(^65\) Ramo Yorah Deah 2013, 40.
\(^66\) Ramo Yorah Deah 201:15.
\(^67\) Yorah Deah Chapter 198:36 stipulates that the water should be above the navel by a “zeres.” Beur Hagoalah explains this to mean half an amoh.

There are varying opinions as to the length of a tefach — one amoh is six tefachim. Some say there are 8 centimeters to a tefach. According to this calculation, a zeres — three tefachim — will equal 24 centimeters. According to the Alter Rebbe (Yagdei Torah NY no. 60, pp. 263-4) a tefach is 8.833 centimeters, which, multiplied by three, equals 26.5 centimeters. The common measure of a tefach used for mikvaos today equals ten centimeters.
during immersion, there is no need to crouch over more than necessary causing the skin to fold and preventing water from reaching inside skin creases.\(^{68}\)

Conversely, if the mikvah waters are too deep, the person immersing may be frightened\(^{69}\) and not have the presence of mind to fulfill all the steps needed for immersion.\(^{70}\)

There should be a mark indicating the height of forty se'ah, and one indicating the correct height for immersing. Thus, the attendant will know precisely how much water is needed to fill the mikvah.

**Measurements**

A tefach is ten centimeters; hence a tefach al tefach is ten centimeters by ten centimeters square.\(^{71}\)

*Shfosores hamod\(^{72}\)* is a hole large enough for two average fingers to fit into and rotate.\(^{73}\)

Three luggin is 1.008 liters.

There are many opinions as to the forty se'ah equivalent — from 331.776\(^{74}\) to 750 liters.

Thus, a zeres equals thirty centimeters. Other opinions figure a zeres to be 2.5 tefachim.\(^{75}\)

\(^{68}\) Shalos Utshuvos Rashbo siman 819, Shulchan Aruch Horav vol. 5-6, p. 1647. See also Igros Moshe Yorah Daah 1:106.

\(^{69}\) Yorah Daah 198:31.

\(^{70}\) Divrei Malchiel 2:58, Shiurai Shevet Halevy p. 349. Nonetheless, more water is better than too little water.

\(^{71}\) See footnote 67.

\(^{72}\) Literally “the opening hole of a leather bottle.” See Yorah Daah 201:52. This equals a quarter of a tefach. Various ways to measure a tefach appear in footnote 67. It is a hiddur to increase in the measurement of shfosores hamod — see Minchas Yitzchok 5:23.

\(^{73}\) Sefer Barney Miba'eh brings the Sheurei Tzion, who writes that the hole of shfosores hamod should be wider so the waters can forcefully eject from the bora zni'ah into the bora khatzolah and concludes that it is 48mm.

\(^{74}\) Shiurei Torah p. 259. This measurement is the minimum amount and it is a hiddur to add onto the minimum amount, as we find with the measurement
Wherever the Halacha stipulates “forty se’ah,” it is customary to use up to twice that amount, equaling eighty se’ah.75

Most of the mikvaos, calculate forty se’ah to be 726 or 750 liters, thus eighty se’ah is 1452 or 1500 liters.

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75 Taharas Mayim p. 272 in the name of the Tzlah and others. See also Igros Kodesh 7:344: “I had great satisfaction to hear that your mikva holds approximately nine hundred liters of rainwater.”
The Techniques

It is both impractical and unhygienic to build a mikvah with a solitary bor of kosher rainwater. One would have to wait until it rained forty se’ah in order to refill the mikvah to change the waters. This is especially difficult in places where there is no rain in the winter.

The most practical solution is to build a mikvah with two (or more) bors. One bor becomes the bor hatvilah, while the other contains natural rainwater. This technique enables us to clean the mikvah water without having to wait for rainfall.

There are three ways to build the bor that holds the natural rainwater: Hashoko, Zriab and Bor al gabai bor.

Hashoko

Hashoko means to “kiss,” i.e., contact and touch. Two bors are built side-by-side. One is filled with rainwater valid for immersion. The other is filled with tap water initially not valid for immersion. Only when the ordinary water comes in contact with the rainwater does it become valid.\textsuperscript{76} The bor filled with ordinary water is thereby rendered kosher for ritual immersion.

Thus:

a) If there is a hole between the bors and the waters contact each other, or

b) the waters meet at the top, over the rim of the bors,

— then both bors are kosher.\textsuperscript{77}

The hole (Figure 1:A) must be higher than the forty se’ah of rainwater in the bor hashoko.\textsuperscript{78} In the bor hatvilah, it must be below the water level (Figure 1:B). As the water level must be approximately 120 — 125 cm. (47 — 49 inches) above the ground, the hole must be lower than 120 cm.

\textsuperscript{76} Igros Moshe Yorah Deah 2:89.

\textsuperscript{77} Yorah Deah 201:52, 53. The amount of water should equal shfiores hamid.

\textsuperscript{78} Igros Kodesh 3:204.
The hole where the waters meet must be as wide as a
 selonem baam — two average fingers that fit inside and turn
easily.

How can one determine whether a mikvah uses the hashoko
method? If upon investigation it is found that no city water
(Figure 1:D) flows into the rainwater bar (Figure 1:C), — it is
identified as a bar hashoko.

When changing the water, one empties the bar hatvilah, and
the bar hashoko remains full of valid waters. Then, the bar hatvilah
is filled with fresh water, and when the waters meet at the hole
connecting the bars, the added tap waters attain the qualification
of the bar hashoko.

Sometimes a stopper is inserted into the hole before
emptying the mikvah, so that as much original rainwater as
possible is retained. However, this stringency can later cause
complications. If one forgets to unplug the stopper after refilling
the bar hatvilah, then any immersions in this mikvah are invalid,
because the ordinary water never touched the rainwater and
therefore did not achieve its validity. Hence, some opinions
prefer not to use a stopper at all, even though this means losing
some of the original rainwater.
There are varying opinions among Halachic authorities as to whether the hole must stay open once hashoko has been made. Some are of the opinion that the hole should be closed for, during immersion, some water is pushed through the contact hole back into the bor hashoko and becomes zvychalin, flowing (even from one bor to another), thus rendering the mikvah unfit.

The Chabad custom\textsuperscript{79} follows the ruling of Rabbi Yeruchim\textsuperscript{80} that the hole must be open at the time of immersion for the water to retain the qualification of the rainwater bor. However, during immersion, even a small hole suffices (kol shehu). Shofrens hanod is only needed for the initial contact.

If a stopper is used, one must be careful not to use materials that can be mekabel tumah. A new wooden stopper is the best choice. It is preferable not to use a rubber or plastic stopper. A metal stopper should definitely not be used.\textsuperscript{81}

The following are some disadvantages of the hashoko method:

This technique is not foolproof. It is possible that whoever fills the bor hatvilah will not use enough water to reach the hole connecting the two bors.

Additionally, in a place where a stopper is used before emptying the bor hatwilah, the attendant can forget to remove the stopper after refilling the mikvah.

In either instance, since the ordinary tap water in the bor hatwilah did not contact the validating hashoko waters, the waters in the bor hatwilah remain invalid for immersing. This causes serious Halachic problems when people have immersed in such a mikvah. A competent Rabbi should immediately be contacted.

Another disadvantage is that the water in the bor hashoko often sits undisturbed for long periods of time and become stagnant. The structure of the bor zriah solves these problems.

\textsuperscript{79} Igros Kodish 3:204, 6:24, 7:24.

\textsuperscript{80} Shach Yoreh Deah 201:112.

\textsuperscript{81} Igros Kodish 11:177, 22:257.
The translation of **zriah** is “sowed,” like grain “sown” into the ground.

Forty se’ah of rainwater (**Figure 2**:E) is gathered in a *bor*, to which tap water is added (**Figure 2**:F). The tap water intermingles with the rainwater as one body of water, and attains the qualification of the original rainwater. The water then overflows through an outlet (hole) into the *mikvah*, stopping at the necessary level.

Hence, the tap waters are “sown,” making them valid for immersion — equal to the rainwater.  

The advantage of the **zriah** method is that the ordinary tap water becomes kosher immediately as it enters the *bor* and makes contact with the rainwater. Unlike the **hashoko** method, the **zriah** technique does not have to wait for a minimum level and for the waters to meet in order to be considered a united body of water, nor is there a stopper. Once the *bor zriah* is filled

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82 Igros Moshe Yorah Deah 2:89.

83 The Chassam Sofer writes of a *mikvah* maintenance attendant who, in order to diminish heating expenses, refilled the *bor hatvila* with insufficient water. The tap water never reached the hole to the *bor hatvila*, the waters did not unite, and the *mikvah* was invalid. Therefore, the Chassam Sofer introduced the *bor zriah*, to validate the waters as soon as they enter — Chassam Sofer siman 203, 214, Taharas Mayim p. 172.
with rainwater the mikvah is valid and almost foolproof. The Rabbi supervising the mikvah has no reason to worry whether the mikvah waters are connected to the bor or if the attendant remembered to remove the stopper.

Another advantage: The water in the bor zriah changes often and remains fresh. 84

A typical mikvah using the zriah method has two adjoining boros with a hole (Figure 2:G) connecting them at the top. The hole must be higher than the forty se’ah of rainwater in the bor zriah. In the bor batvelah, it has to be higher 85 (Figure 2:H) than the water level (approx. 140 cm. (56 inches) from the floor). The waters do not mingle during immersion.

Thus:

1. Begin by filling the bor zriah with a minimum of forty se’ah of rainwater.

2. Add tap water into the rainwater bor, preferably in a way that the waters enter at a level lower than the connecting hole (the hamshoko process is nonetheless above water level). 86

3. When the water level is high enough, the water will pour through the hole into the bor batvelah.

4. The waters in the bor batvelah are valid when the bor contains at least forty se’ah and the water level is high enough for immersing.

How can one determine whether a mikvah uses the zriah method? If upon investigation it is found that the city water (Figure 2:F) flows into the rainwater bor (Figure 2:E) and then into the bor batvelah — it is identified as a bor zriah.

Though more reliable than the hashoko method, the bor zriah is still prone to problems. It is common practice to drain the mikvah by using an electric pump that does not completely drain all the water. Occasionally, when the pump is turned off, some water may return into the mikvah from the pump, shevitm.

84 Taharas Mayim p. 241.
85 Taharas Mayim p. 262.
86 Taharas Mayim p. 262, in the name of the Chazon Ish.
Additionally, the mikvah maintenance attendant may sometimes choose to remove the remaining traces of water with a sponge or bucket. Water from the sponge or mop will drip back into the mikvah, shewim, as a matter of course.

Then also, the mikvah may be washed with water from a bucket (shewim) and some water may be left in the mikvah. In these cases, the remaining water is considered shewim — invalidating the mikvah. Even after the mikvah has been filled with qualified kosher waters from the bor zriah, the three initial luggen of remaining water — whether from the pump, mop or pail — preceded the “valid” water and invalidates the mikvah.87

Preferences

For a Chabad chassid a mikvah that is bor al gabai bor88 is the optimum choice. Where this is not available, it is preferable to use a mikvah with both89 the hashoko and zriah boros (Figure 3). This addresses and diminishes the disadvantages of a single method, whether zriah or hashoko.

There still remains a disadvantage common to both the hashoko and zriah methods — a complication called “noson se’ah v’nortal se’ah.”

87 Chelkas Yaakov vol. 3:54.
88 See Chapter Bor al Gabai Bor.
**Noson Se’ah v’Notal Se’ah**

Noson se’ah v’notal se’ah literally means “adding a se’ah [of water] and taking a se’ah [of water].”

As explained, a kosher mikvah needs a minimum of forty se’ah rainwater. The rainwater must come first. The mikvah does not become qualified if other waters entered before the rainwater. Only after a mikvah is valid by having a minimum of forty se’ah, may one add “all the waters that exist,” even ordinary tap water, and the mikvah remains kosher.

If one adds a se’ah of tap water to the forty se’ah of rainwater there will be a total of forty-one se’ah. If one then takes out a se’ah of water (the water leaving the mikvah is part-rainwater and part-ordinary water), there will be a total of forty se’ah remaining. However, the forty se’ah is not pure rainwater; it is mixed with a little tap water. The mikvah remains kosher, despite the missing rainwater.

If one continues in this manner — adding a se’ah and taking a se’ah — the mikvah remains kosher only if there remains more than half of the original rainwater (twenty-one se’ah). If one continues taking and replacing water and there is now less than twenty se’ah of original rainwater, this becomes a matter of extensive discussion in Halacha. While the final resolution renders this mikvah kosher, nevertheless, it is a hiddur to build a mikvah that avoids this problem.90

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90 The Chassam Sofer and the Ramad discuss the principal positions. The Igros Kodesh of the Rebbe Rashab 2:591 describes the responsa of Reb Chaim Soloveitchik and the Chofetz Chayim regarding this issue of noson se’ah v’notal se’ah. Reb Chaim quotes the Shulchan Aruch (that, according to halacha, one may use a mikvah which is noson se’ah v’notal se’ah), while the Chofetz Chayim preferred forwarding this question to other Rabbis. We see, however, that they did not directly approve this mikvah. See also Igros Kodesh 7:97.
**Bor Al Gabai Bor**

As explained in previous sections, a *mikvah* usually contains two *bors* — one filled with rainwater, the other with tap water. Generally, there are two ways the *bors* can be constructed:

1) Two *bors* are constructed side by side with a common wall. On the common wall a hole is placed higher than the height of forty *se’ah*. One *bor* is filled with forty *se’ah* of rainwater. The other *bor* is filled with tap water until the waters make contact and intermingle with each other, rendering the water in the *bor hatvilah* kosher for immersing.

According to *Halacha* this *mikvah* is certainly kosher, yet the *Raavad* raises the following problem:

With the *hashoko* method, when one immerses in the *bor hatvilah* it is only natural that some water in the *bor hatvilah* will push into the rainwater *bor*, because water seeks its own level. After one immerses and leaves the *mikvah*, rainwater leaves the *bor hashoko* and levels with the *bor hatvilah*.

As this scenario is constantly repeated it is possible that, after many immersions, most of the *original rainwater* will leave the *bor hashoko* and enter the *bor hatvilah*.

Later, when the *bor hatvilah* is emptied for cleaning, all of the *original rainwater* resting in the *bor hatvilah* will be pumped out. After a few cleanings it is possible that little of the *original rainwater* remains in the *bor hashoko*.

The same is true, by definition, regarding the *zriah* method: ordinary water enters the *bor zriah* and it constantly pushes out some of the original rainwater into the *bor hatvilah*.

According to the *Raavad*, once this happens the *mikvah* is rendered not kosher.

2) To resolve this problem, Rabbi Sholom DovBer of Lubavitch, the *Rebbe RaShab*, taught that a *mikvah* be built *bor al*

\[\text{footnote text}
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\[\text{footnote text}
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**gaba' bor,** literally "one bor on top of another bor." This mikvah is constructed in the following manner:

a) A single deep bor is built during construction.

b) A divider (Figure 4:A) of cement is built, forming an upper bor and a lower bor. The walls below the divider can project into the bor to support the divider, or a keyway can be formed in the wall and the divider cast into it. The divider serves as a floor for the upper bor and a ceiling for the lower bor.

c) The upper bor becomes the bor hatwilah. Steps are built for the user to descend and immerse.

d) The lower bor (Figure 4:B) contains [two times] forty se'ah.

e) An opening is left in the divider large enough for a person to pass through (Figure 4:C); then it is closed with a cover panel. There are two holes (Figure 4:D), each measuring a square tefach.

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93 Before refilling the mikvah, a person must enter the bottom reservoir to be sure that the surface is completely dry. The opening cover has two small holes. When one wants to remove the cover he will need these holes for a grip.

94 Igros Kodesh 11:396. There is an opinion that requires one hole in the divider and the other hole in the cover panel.

95 See footnote 67.
The holes unite both bodies of water; tap water in the upper *bor* unites with the lower rainwater, giving the ordinary water the needed validation for immersion.

Why two holes? Some suggest that there be a second hole in case one of them becomes blocked. This can occur when the person immersing places a foot on the hole, preventing the waters from remaining united. Building a second hole guarantees constant contact between the *beros*. The holes are therefore built apart from each other, to ensure that the feet of the person immersing cannot block both holes simultaneously.

There are no holes or drains in the lower *bor* where the rainwater is deposited. Using this technique resolves the problems of *nuson se'ah* v'notal se'ah. There is no significant flow of rainwater, as the rainwater *bor* is under the immersing area, and it will not drain by action in the (upper) *bor hatvilah*. Immersing in the upper *bor* — even repeated immersion — has very little impact on the lower *bor*. In fact, if the upper *bor* water is warmer, then there is no impact at all. Forty *se'ah* of rainwater always remains in the bottom *bor*.

How can one determine whether a *mikvaḥ* uses the *bor al gabai bor* method? If upon investigation it is found that there are two holes (Figure 4:D) in the floor of the *mikvaḥ*, leading to the bottom *bor*, it is identified as having been built *bor al gabai bor*.

This *mikvaḥ* is constructed preferably with the tap water flowing directly above one of the holes. When filling the *mikvaḥ*, rainwater pours into the lower *bor* until it is full. Ordinary water is then added through the *hamshocho* method into the upper *bor hatvilah* directly above either hole, as in the *zriah* method.

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96 *Igros Kodesh* 11:396.
The procedure is different if the tap water does not flow directly over the holes. First, fill the lower *bor* with rainwater until it overflows and covers the floor of the upper *bor*. Then, add ordinary water into the upper *bor*. Since the rainwater preceded the tap water, this is also a form of *zriah*. Now the *mikvah* is valid and ready to be used. When the waters of the upper *bor* become dirty one need only pump out the upper *bor* and refill it.

The advantages of this unique method are clear:

Unlike the side *bor hashoko* technique, there is no need to wait for the waters in both *buros* to come into contact with each other nor is there any need for a stopper. Once the lower *bor* is filled with rainwater the *mikvah* will be valid and foolproof. The Rabbi supervising the *mikvah* is secure in the knowledge that the *mikvah* is valid, without worrying whether the waters met at the hole or whether the attendant may have forgotten to remove the stopper.

Similar to the *zriah* method, where tap water flows directly into the rainwater and is considered “sowed into the ground,” this is also considered *zriah* in its best possible form.\(^97\)

One additional, but very significant advantage is the fact that the upper section is a continuation of the rainwater *bor*. The square *tefab* hole(s) dismiss, Halachically, the presence of the divider. Therefore, when one is immersing in such a *mikvah*, they are in actuality, immersing in the rainwater *bor* itself.

Therefore, if one has a *mikvah* constructed with the method of *bor al gabai bor*, there is no need for additional side *hashoko* or *zriah borus*.\(^98\)

(There are some that associate the *bor al gabai bor* with an issue discussed by the *Divrei Chayim*. For a review of this topic see Appendix I.)

\(^97\) *Igros Kodesh* 3:394, 17:312.
\(^98\) *Igros Kodesh* 3:394, 17:312.
"Otzar" literally means “a storage [of rainwater].” Mikvaos in heavy use often have an otzar. Due to concerns of nusan se'ah v'notal se'ah, the otzar facilitates changing the water and quickly bringing the mikvah back into service. After being emptied, cleaned and dried of any dampness, the borus are now ready for a fresh supply of rainwater. All one has to do is open the otzar and a new supply of kosher rainwater fills the borus.

There are several important Halachic details relevant to unplugging the stopper of the otzar. “Human being” is in the Halachic category of being mekabel tumah, thus unable to directly assist the flow of the rainwater.\(^99\) Therefore, when opening the otzar, one should gently move around the stopper until it is loosened.\(^100\) The pressure of the water (in the otzar) forces the stopper to unplug itself, allowing the rainwater to flow into the borus.

During rainfall, rain runs down a roof drain into the otzar. A hole at the bottom of the otzar lets the water run into the borus when needed. This hole is stopped up with a piece of wood or a similar substance that is not mekabel tumah. Additionally, an opening near the top of the otzar ensures proper drainage in case of overflow.

Some facilities are constructed with a small retaining wall inside the otzar. When the otzar rainwater empties into the borus, rainwater is trapped behind this wall. The trapped rainwater contains forty se'ah. Hence, after the otzar is filled the very first time with rainwater, it can never become invalid. Even if tap water is accidentally poured onto the roof and into the otzar, the ordinary water is preceded by forty se'ah of rain already in the otzar.

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\(^{99}\) Yoreh Deah 201:48.

\(^{100}\) This is extremely difficult when the stopper is tightly fitted or when the stopper is fitted in the inside of the otzar.
A mikvah without an otzar should be cleaned during the rainy season. Even so, it usually takes several rainy days for enough water to refill the borus. If it is known on which consecutive days people will not frequent the mikvah, the maintenance attendant will plan on cleaning the mikvah during those days.

**Hamshocho**

Hamshocho is derived from the term “nimshach al gabai karka,” — (water) flowing across some earth.

According to Halacha, if a mikvah has the majority of forty se’ah rainwater, one may add drawn water into the mikvah to complete forty se’ah, on condition that these waters run through a hamshocho process.

In practice, all water flowing into any bor — whether tap water or water from the roof, whether into the hashoko, zriah, bor al gabai bor or immersion borus — should preferably run across an area of earth or cement and then into the borus. The cement or earth used for hamshocho should be absorbent.

Thus, we use soft cement. Half an inch overlay of soft cement is typically used. Obviously, waterproof cement should not be used. The hamshocho area should measure three tefachim long and one tefach wide.

The hamshocho process, explains the Mordechai, Halachically nullifies the water to the ground (i.e. it loses its significance and distinct identity), and renders it valid — like spring water.

The words of the Mordechai indicate two points:

1) The absorbent cement should be laid on the floor (thus be an extension of the ground), not on a box or vessel.

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101 Yorah Deah 201:44.
102 In present-day times, however, all mikvos use solely rainwater to fill the borus.
103 Ramo Yorah Deah 201:46.
104 See footnote 67.
105 Shavuos Chapter 2 end of siman 745.
Otherwise, the water is not nullified to the earth but, rather, to the box or vessel, and such waters cannot be considered as spring water.

One may not partially fill a tap or a pipe section with soft cement for the hamshocho process. Doing so invalidates the mikvah, for the tap is considered a “vessel.”

2) Hamshocho must allow the water to flow naturally into the bor. Directing the water through soft cement while it is being pumped up interferes with the natural tendency of water to flow across or down and invalidates the process.

Academically, some are of the opinion that one may even take sheuvim, waters that have been in receptacles, and allow them to flow through a hamshocho process, and then immerse in these waters. This opinion is not accepted as Halacha. Nonetheless, in the event that kosher rainwater touched a receptacle capable of being mekabel tumah (e.g., a metal pipe), we rely on this opinion and qualify the rainwater by running it through a hamshocho process.

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106 Yoreh Deah 201:46.
107 Taharas Mayim p. 107.
109 According to Halacha, rainwaters that come in contact with items that may be mekabel tumah, e.g., a metal pipe (unless fastened to onto the structure of the building), retain their qualification of rainwater if there is “hefsek avir,” lit. “a gap/space of air” between the pipe and the mikvah. A hamshocho is necessary only if one adds drawn waters into a mikvah that has the majority of its forty se’ah rainwater. A hamshocho (that qualifies drawn waters) is also equivalent to a “hefsek avir,” qualifying rainwater that comes in contact with metal. Thus, in modern times, where the hamshocho process is built in before any waters enter the bor, it qualifies the rainwater that has come in contact with metal.
The Engineering
Invalid Receptacles

Any object capable of being *mekabel tumah* may not be used in a *mikvah* (including a spring),\(^{110}\) if it contains or restrains the water.

A *keli* (vessel or receptacle that can hold anything, including liquid) is *mekabel tumah*.

An item that normally is *mekabel tumah* that has been built into a structure is considered an extension of the ground and loses its status of being *mekabel tumah* — rendering it fit for *mikvah* use.\(^{111}\)

This is so only if it became a *keli*, a vessel, with its being built into the ground. If, however, it was a *keli* before its attachment to the ground, it retains the status of being *mekabel tumah* and invalidates the *mikvah*.\(^{112}\)

Making a hole in this object and destroying its containment potential cancels its capacity to be *mekabel tumah* and makes it fit for use. However, the object in question must be manufactured specifically for *mikvah* use.\(^{113}\)

What happens if water does contact objects that are *mekabel tumah*? In such cases, the water must run through a *hamshocho* process before entering the *mikvah*. Therefore, when rainwater flows from the roof into metal or plastic pipes (which are not attached to the structure), the water needs *hamshocho* before entering the *mikvah*.\(^{114}\)

In a *mikvah* where a stopper is used — whether to plug the drain or for the *hasboko* or *otzar borus* — this stopper cannot be made of metal\(^ {115}\) or any other material that

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\(^{110}\) *Yoreh Deah* 201:8.

\(^{111}\) *Yoreh Deah* 201:48.

\(^{112}\) One cannot manufacture a *mikvah* and sell it, even if one would build it later into the ground, for it is a *keli* — *Ba’er Moshe* 6:157-8, *Igros Moshe* *Yoreh Deah* 1:108.

\(^{113}\) *Dagel Mararo* *Yoreh Deah* 201:48, *Igros Moshe* *Yoreh Deah* vol. 1:115, 2:89.

\(^{114}\) See footnote 109.

\(^{115}\) *Minchas Yitzchok* 2:105, 4:38.
can be *mekabel tumah*. A new wooden stopper should be used instead. It is a preferable not to use a rubber or plastic stopper.\textsuperscript{116}

Cloth measuring more than six cm. square is *mekabel tumah*. As such, a cloth this size or larger may not be wrapped around the stopper.

**Water Pipes**

*Mikvah* pipes and gutters used for transporting the rainwater must be attached to the structure and cannot have grooves or other crannies where water can collect. At the pipe connections special care should be taken to ensure that there are no grooves or threads.

Pipes should therefore be attached in a manner that precludes the possibility of water gathering in one place, however minimal.

It is a *hiddur* not to use pipes that curve (Figure 5:D) at any angle (a “knee/elbow” look). This is the case even though the pipe is presently mounted in a manner in which there is no place for the water to gather.\textsuperscript{117} This does not apply if the elbow is created “in situ,” constructed in place.

It is best for water to flow from a thinner pipe into a wider pipe (Figure 5:A). In the reverse scenario (Figure 5:B), water can gather in the area where the thicker pipe meets its thinner partner.

The method described above can only be used if the *mikvah* is directly under the water drain on the roof. If, however, the roof drain is not directly above the *mikvah*, and other pipes have to be connected to direct the water flow into the *mikvah*, a

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\textsuperscript{116} *Igros Kodesh* 7:124, 10:235, 11:177, 14:532, 22:257. Although many opinions differ as to whether these are *mekabel tumah* (see *Choshos Yashiv* 3:55, *Igros Moshe Yorah Deah* 1:115), nevertheless, for a *mikvah* one should be as scrupulous as possible — *Taharos Kabbalos* p. 84, footnote 33. When upgrading to a Halachically preferable stopper, the *mikvah* waters should also be changed.

\textsuperscript{117} *Igros Kodesh* 3:204.
single long pipe should be used instead. Cut a hole a few inches away from the end of a pipe to fit the roof drain and, at a few inches from the other end, cut a hole fitting the pipe entering the mikvah. Place this pipe on a slant, so that water from the roof falls inside and slides down the pipe directly into the hamshocho, without a place to stop (Figure 5:C).

![Figure 5](image)

**Drains**

It is permissible to have a drain in the mikvah. If the drain is made of a substance that is mekabel tumah, it should be installed in such a manner that it should be able to stop the water flow only after its installation into the structure. Care must be taken to fill the drain with substances that are not mekabel tumah. Hence, metal, rubber or plastic should **not** be used.

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*Igros Moshe Yoreh Deah* 1:115, 2:94.
When blocking the drain with a wooden stopper, etc., the stopper must fit precisely, without the slightest space for water to leak into the drain. Leaking water constitutes **zvchalin**, “flowing,” and renders immersions in the **mikveh** invalid.

In recent times the common practice has been to empty a **mikveh** with an electric pump,\(^\text{119}\) pumping the water **up** and then out into the drain. In this manner the waters are not contained in the **mikveh** by materials that have the capacity to be **mekabel tumah**.

Alternatively, some **mikvaos** use a siphon\(^\text{120}\) to drain the water. A siphon pump may be used on **Shabbos** to siphon some water if the water level is too high.

**Tiles**

There are **kiddurim** in reference to tiles used in a **mikveh**. Tiles used for the **mikveh** should meet special requirements.

No inscriptions or designs should be found on the back of the tile, certainly not in a style that could be a **bais kibbul**, containment. Furthermore, it is a **kiddur** to use smooth-backed tiles, in order to avoid all questions.\(^\text{121}\)

**The Roof**

The roof is an important factor when building a **mikveh**, for rainwater falls on the roof and then proceeds through the gutters and the pipes and into the **mikveh**. Standard designs used by builders for gutters and leaders are commonly designed in a way that could be deemed a **keli**, vessel, or at best a bent pipe as mentioned above. These may be **mekabel tumah** and render the rainwater invalid for the **mikveh**.

Hence, the roof gutter system for the **mikveh** should be fashioned from pieces of metal (e.g., copper), which individually cannot hold any liquid. None of these pieces is considered a **keli**.

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\(^\text{120}\) *Igros Kodoh* 11:177.

because it cannot contain anything. Then, only after the pieces are attached to the structure, does the builder connect the pieces. As explained earlier, this becomes an extension of the structure and preempts the pipes being $mekabel$ $tumah$.

Although roof tiles normally have grooves, they are not considered as a $koh$.\footnote{Yorah D'ash 201:37.} It is preferable to avoid using wooden shingles.

Exhaust fans, air-conditioning equipment, etc., are not permitted on the roof. These objects retain water, $shevivim$, that later flows onto the roof. Similarly, metal “necks” for the exhaust fan and the like are to be avoided. Stack vents for the sewer system must be straight, with no curves to retain water.

In circumstances where equipment must be placed on the roof, the roof should be divided into two sections with a divider between them, ensuring that water from the equipment (fallen rainwater or condensate) will not mingle with the rainwater used for the mikvah (Figure 6:A). Alternatively, one can fill the water-retaining areas of the equipment with cement.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{figure6.png}
\caption{Figure 6}
\end{figure}

\textbf{Mikvah Filtration Systems}

It may sound surprising to learn that a working filter system could cause complications. Indeed, a filter that runs while people immerse in the mikvah invalidates all their immersions.

In places where the absence of a filter may deter women from using the mikvah, a filter should most definitely be installed. However, one should inform those supervising and
using the mikvah that the filter must be turned off during immersion (i.e., an indicator red light should flash when the filter system is on; a green light when the circulation is off; switching on ceiling lights should lock out filter).

What are the problems created by a filter?

As explained earlier, anything that is mekabel tumah or considered a keli invalidates water that flows through it. This is typically the case with filters, and therefore water leaving the filter needs to be revalidated (through hashoko and/or zriah methods, as well as bamschocho) before re-entering the mikvah.

A filter located outside of the mikvah water should be situated higher than the water level. A filter installed below water level can create a siphon effect and, when closing the filter, the faucet or valve in the filter system holding the water, if it is of a substance that is mekabel tumah, may invalidate the mikvah. Modern technology has, indeed, created a filter that has no materials that are a keli or mekabel tumah, and remains submerged in water.

**Heating**

There are a number of methods available for heating the mikvah waters. It is permissible to pour hot water through a bamschocho process to heat the water. In one design the bor hatvilah will have two siphons (or pump outlets). The higher siphon is used to drain a large proportion of water leaving forty se'ah of valid waters remaining in the bor hatvilah. Subsequently, one will refill the mikvah with hot water until the water level.

The lower siphon is used only to empty all the water in the bor.

Alternatively, a heating system can be installed. Assuming that the mikvah water is treated with chlorine or ozone, one could

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123 Igros Kodesh 3:204.

124 Some say that it is preferable for the waters to re-enter into the bor zriah, for as soon as it enters it is revalidated. Certainly the same applies to the bor al gabai bor for the holes in the divider negate Halachically the division and the waters [at the termination of the filter] are revalidated (as explained earlier that the bor al gabai bor is the best form of zriah).
affix a heat exchanger in the water. The heat exchanger behaves like a radiator and is controlled by an aquastat. The heat exchanger should be extended to near the floor. If not, the water near the floor will remain cold. Inasmuch as the heat exchanger could be scalding, it is advisable to place a shield in front of it.

One should ensure that the heat exchanger is not near any of the bashoko holes. If it is in close proximity to a bashoko hole, the possibility exists that it draws by “venturi” some of the original rainwater that is stored in the neighboring bor and could lead to moson se'ab venotal se'ab.

Where a filter system is installed, the water heats up outside the mikvah during circulation. An electric or gas spa heater heats the mikvah. An inline heat exchanger, tube-in-shell or plate exchanger is often the best choice where hot water or steam is available.

Construction

A mikvah may be built with concrete or bricks.

Unfortified concrete does not last very long. Rebars (acronym for reinforcement bars) are normally inserted into the concrete to limit cracking. Some Halachic opinions consider these rebars invalid, positing that they are mekabel tumah. It has been found, though, that a mikvah built without rebars will deteriorate rapidly and spring leaks. Today all opinions concur that rebars may be used.

The rebars should be placed far enough into the concrete so that the concrete would retain the water if the rebars were “removed.” The same principle applies to a mikvah with pipes

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125 In the past, people preferred avoiding cement, mistakenly thinking that it was a keli (for it is possible to raise the whole mikvah without breaking it). However, the common practice nowadays is to use cement.

126 Chelkas Yaakov 2:73, Igros Moshe Yorah Deah 1:118. See Minchas Yitzchok 2:22, 4:41. It is also permissible to install metal heaters into the walls in the same manner. This is beneficial in extremely frigid areas, where, without the heater, the waters in the side boros would freeze during the winter and break the mikvah — Minchas Yitzchok 3:81.
in the walls: Enough cement should be applied in front of the pipe so that, were the pipe removed, the concrete would still contain the water.

It should be noted that if the pipe penetrates to the interior of the mikvah, as a pipe that is used to empty the mikvah or for filter circulation, then this pipe must extend vertically until it reaches significantly higher than the water level before exiting the concrete. If the pipe is opened from one side into the mikvah and continues horizontally through the cement wall (as commonly done in swimming pools), an expert Rabbi should be consulted as to the validity of this mikvah.

When building a mikvah, concrete is placed between wooden forms. The heavy weight of the concrete creates an immense pressure. To ensure that the forms stand straight and do not bend before the concrete sets, a practical solution would be to place metal ties every forty-five cm. (18 inches). These ties reach from the outer supporter to the inner supporter, and lock from both sides with a clip. Remove the ties either before the cement hardens, or by drilling it out and refilling the hole with more cement. One could use snap ties or cones that snap off with a small amount of the tie from within the cement. One should then make the hole a little bigger and fill it in with hydraulic cement.

It is preferable, though, not to use form ties at all. Instead, one should use whalers, spreaders and kickers to restrain the pressure of the concrete until it sets.

The thickness of the concrete for the mikvah walls is usually 30 cm. (12 inches) — enough to hold the water and, hopefully, not leak. When the concrete is poured, it should be agitated by using a pencil vibrator to help remove all the air pockets in the concrete (honeycomb).

The mikvah and the bor(os) should be poured monolithically, thereby avoiding the need to use (rubber) water-stops, which would pose serious Halachic problems.

Waterproofing the mikvah and the bor(os) should be done after the first pour (after the forms are removed). There are
generally two types of waterproofing. One is absorbed by the concrete (densifies), whereby the concrete itself becomes waterproofed. The other is a coating on the concrete that provides the waterproofing. Coatings that have elasticity are preferable. **Halachically**, any paintable waterproofing is permissible. Attention should be given to the suitability of the waterproofing for adhesion of the tiles.

In all cases, carefully follow the manufacturer’s instructions for installation.

It must be noted that heavily concentrated focus is placed on the construction and waterproofing of a mikvah. This is because a mikvah with a leak (however small) jeopardizes the validity of the mikvah, and often disqualifies it totally.

**Humidity**

The mikvah and preparation rooms are often damp due to humidity generated by the hot showers and mikvah. Therefore a mikvah should have a good exhaust system. Tiles or cedar wood are best for these humid rooms. Plants that thrive in humid conditions can be used throughout the facility as part of the decor.

Plastic hangers should be used with a drop ceiling, as metal hangers have a tendency to rust. A good exhaust system minimizes humidity-related difficulties.

**Maintenance**

**Halacha** does not stipulate when or how to inspect a mikvah for leaks. Usually, there is a water level mark in a mikvah, enabling the attendant to judge how much water is needed to fill the mikvah. If, after a twenty-four hour period, the water

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127 When a Rabbi competent in the laws of mikvah validates a mikvah, one is not obliged to check for any leaks. Many mikvaos, however, are checked once a year. Some test the mikvah on Tisha Be'Av (when the mikvah is not in use), while others wait until the month of Elul (the month of the year to increase in piety).
level is below that mark (allowing for what can be attributed to immersions and evaporation), a Rabbi should be consulted. If it is found leaking, it is considered zaychalin.

The following precautions should be taken when checking for a leak:

a) no one should immerse in the mikvah during the inspection,

b) ensure that no water is being added inadvertently to the mikvah (e.g., a shower runoff), and

c) the water should not be hot (hot water evaporates more).

These steps will help to ensure an accurate reading and verify whether, indeed, there is water loss.

Finding and repairing a leak can be quite problematic. Sometimes a leak can be found in a tile and in the cement wall behind it. Other times water can leak through the grout and travel behind the tiles, finding a crack in the concrete elsewhere. Pool experts — when suspecting a leak — add a few drops of food coloring into the water near the suspected area. If there is a leak, the food coloring will form a thin string of color directly leading to the leak!

Each leak must be treated according to its particular circumstance. Sometimes one will be able to paint the leakage area with waterproof paint that has elastic membranes. At other times one may use foam chemicals injected into the crack.
Sophisticated Mikvaos

The wonders of modern technology have opened new and innovative ideas in creating mikvaos. A mikvah in Buenos Aires works without a filter or pump to drain the water! Furthermore, the actual mikvah — not only the otzar — is filled with rainwater. Chemicals (Baquacil\textsuperscript{128}) control the pH balance and cause dirt particles to sink. A pump that works as a vacuum cleaner removes the dirt, with very little water being lost. Due to evaporation and little water loss, 200 liters of water is added to the mikvah only once in a fortnight. Another chemical keeps the otzar water clean.

Another mikvah was built in Buenos Aires with waters ejected from a well. A pipe leads from the bor into the spring. Inside this pipe lies another pipe filled with air pressure. When the compressor is connected, the spring water rises and fills the mikvah. Obviously, when this mikvah is cleaned and emptied it must go through a thorough drying process to ensure that three luggin will not precede the new water and invalidate the mikvah. As such, this mikvah can only be refilled under constant Rabbinical supervision.

Another interesting mikvah in Argentina purifies rainwater without a filter! The rainwater passes through multiple boros that remove the filth. In the first bor, the rainwater enters one side and can only exit through an opening some 25 centimeters (10 inches) higher than the entering hole. The water sits for a few days until the dirt settles. Thus, when it leaves the bor, heavy dirt particles will have sunk and remain trapped behind.

The rainwater then pours into a second bor and flows through large stones where lighter dirt particles get trapped. The process is repeated through other boros where the stones are even smaller — trapping behind even smaller particles — until all the dirt is removed and the water is crystal clear. It then goes into the actual mikvah boros.

\textsuperscript{128} Chemicals with the same cleansing properties include Baquastop, Baquaflock, etc.
Appendices

Appendix I: Understanding *Bor Al Gabai Bor*

There are those who associated the *bor al gabai bor* to an issue of *kotafrus* discussed by the *Divrei Chayim*. To clarify this misconception, we will learn: a) what is *kotafrus*, b) the responsum of the *Divrei Chayim*, c) how the *Divrei Chayim* was extended to include the *bor al gabai bor*, d) re-examining the *Divrei Chayim*, e) support for the *bor al gabai bor* from as early as *Nach* and the *Mishnah*.

a) *Kotafrus* is translated as “flowing.” The *Mechaber* describes the following scenario: Of three *mikvaos*, one is at the top of a mountain and one is at the bottom; each of those is filled with only twenty *se’ah* of rainwater (half the required amount) and therefore both are invalid. The third *mikvah*, a valid *mikvah*, is situated between the two invalid *mikvaos*. Even if a stream of rainwater flows down the mountainside, connecting the higher and lower invalid *mikvaos* to the valid one, they still remain invalid. The flowing water is *Halachically* regarded as non-existent because the slope causes the water to leave the area, as opposed to its being a continuous dependable connection (by the same water).

b) The *Divrei Chayim* discusses a situation where a *mikvah* was built in a two-story house. A *bor* was situated on the bottom floor and filled with forty *se’ah* of rainwater. The *bor hatvilah* was situated on the upper floor. Ordinary tap water is poured into the top, with a pipe connecting both *bors*. The *Divrei Chayim* rules that one may not immerse on the top floor, for the water in the pipe is *kotafrus*, invalid to unite the two bodies of water.

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129 *Pirush Hamishnayos LeHaramin, Tahans* end of Chapter 8.
130 *Yoreh Deah* 201:60; see also Rashi, *Gitin* 16a.
131 This is similar to springs that dry up occasionally (even once in seven years) that are rendered, *Halachically*, to be non-existent.
132 *Yoreh Deah* 2:88.
Why should it be kotafmus, inasmuch as the water in the pipe is motionless — not flowing as in the mountain stream scenario? The Aimek Shaloh\textsuperscript{133} explains that according to the Divrei Chayim, theoretically, water could flow via a hole in the pipe. Although no hole currently exists, we consider as though there is a hole and, therefore, this becomes an invalid method to validate the upper tap waters. The Nefesh Chayyim\textsuperscript{134} and many other leading scholars disagree with this ruling.

To summarize: The dilemma here concerns the status of the connecting pipe. Do we consider that the pipe has a leak — albeit theoretically — and the upper waters are considered to have flowed away, invalidating the mikvah? Conversely, do we emphasize the fact that there is no leak and the waters are united?

c) Those who extended the Divrei Chayim — namely a mikvah of two boros connected by a pipe — claimed that it applied as well to the construction of the bor al gabai bor. Although the two boros in the bor al gabai bor design are separated by merely 15 cm. (6 inches) and not by a pipe, they claim, “Who can differentiate and set a limit of how many inches long the pipe has to be in order to be invalid according to the Divrei Chayim? The Divrei Chayim himself never specified how long the pipe has to be to be invalid. From this we can infer that any length — even an inch — invalidates the mikvah.”

Thus, they consider the hole in the divider of bor al gabai bor equivalent to the pipe mentioned in the responsum of the Divrei Chayim.\textsuperscript{135}

d) In fact, however, there is a great difference between bor al gabai bor (essentially one bor) and the Divrei Chayim (two boros connected by a pipe).

\textsuperscript{133} Aimek Shaloh siman 57.
\textsuperscript{134} See Miknah Mayim p. 71.
\textsuperscript{135} Miknah Mayim p. 72.
The mikvah discussed by the Divrei Chayim was on two separate floors. Obviously, the mikvah on the bottom floor was sealed, or else water in the upper level would not be contained.

The pipe connecting the upper and lower borus is not part of the borus structure. Thus, if there were to be a hole in the pipe connecting them, surely the waters would spill elsewhere — not into the lower sealed borus.

In this case the waters that are now in the pipe would fall away and the same waters would not remain with hashoko — similar to the case where the rainwater flows downward on a hill. Therefore the Divrei Chayim rules it to be viewed as if it were non-existent, and thus the upper borus is invalid.

Bor al gabai borus is entirely different! The structure begins with a single large borus, after which a divider is built separating the borus into two levels. If one were to remove the divider, the “pipe” structure would only become bigger, uniting the waters even more than before — unlike the case of the Divrei Chayim where the removal of the pipe separates the water in the two borus.

Hence, there is an obvious distinction between two borus with a connecting pipe and bor al gabai borus with merely a hole in the divider.136

Moreover, the son-in-law of the Divrei Chayim mentions and validates the bor al gabai borus in the city of Cherkass in his responsum.137 Were such a mikvah invalid according to the Divrei Chayim, his son-in-law would have specified so (especially since they corresponded extensively in Halachic matters)! Clearly he felt that bor al gabai borus is a valid method of uniting the borus, and does not compromise the responsum of his father-in-law.

Furthermore, the Divrei Chayim himself writes that the mikvah he invalidated is so only without bamsbocho. If, however, the bamsbocho process were to be used he would not invalidate such a mikvah (even on two floors with a pipe connecting them)!

137 Aimek She'losh siman 57.
As such, the *bor al gabai bor mikvaos* built today — which certainly do use a *hamshono* before water enters the *mikvah* — are, beyond any doubt, in accordance with the ruling of the *Divrei Chayim*.

e) Sources that support the design of *bor al gabai bor*.

1) The *Rash* on the *Mishnah* specifically mentions a situation of two *mikvaos*, one above the other, each having only twenty *se’ah*. After an additional three *luggin* of ordinary water are poured into the top *mikvah*, the waters naturally move downward, connecting the waters from both *mikvaos*.

How can this *mikvah* be kosher being on two different levels? Rabbi Meir does not recognize *kotafus* as an invalid method, deeming these *mikvaos* kosher. Alternatively, even according to Rabbi Yehudah (who invalidates *kotafus*), if the upper is not too high, the waters in both *boros* become valid when they meet and stand still. We clearly see how the *Rash* distinguishes between two *mikvaos* being close versus far apart. The *Me’iri* explains likewise.

Hence, this *Mishnah* serves as clear proof to the validity of a vertical *hashoko* as in *bor al gabai bor*.

2) In the times of the Temple in Jerusalem, King Solomon built a *mikvah* near the Temple for *Kohanim* to immerse in before their service. He built vessels above a spring and made holes in the vessels the size of pomegranates.

The Jerusalem Talmud asks, “How can the *Kohanim* immerse in a vessel which is usually invalid because it is *mekabel tumah*?” The Talmud continues and explains that the large pomegranate-
sized holes negated their capacity to hold water. Thus, they were not considered “vessels” and cannot be mekabel tumah.\(^{140}\)

The *Tzemach Tzedek*,\(^ {141}\) the *Gra*,\(^ {142}\) *Metzudas Dovid*,\(^ {143}\) *Radak*,\(^ {144}\) and other commentaries clearly write that the above-mentioned holes were placed at the very bottom of the vessels (not on the sides) — as in the *bor al gabai bor*.

This certainly supports the validity of — *hashoko* from below to the waters above — *bor al gabai bor*.

3) It is taught in *Shulchan Aruch*\(^ {145}\) that it is permissible to place an impure vessel in another vessel and immerse them together in a *mikvah*. If the outer vessel is pure, then its opening hole must be at least the size of *shofers hanod*. However, if the outer vessel is also impure, then a smaller hole (even less than *shofers hanod*) is sufficient. The outer vessel must be immersed upright or on its side — not face down.\(^ {146}\) The inner vessel must lie loosely and lightly in the outer vessel — not tightly fitted.\(^ {147}\)

The commentaries pose the following question: How does immersion suffice for the inner vessel if the water that surrounds it — i.e., the water in the outer vessel — is “drawn waters?”

The answer presented is that at the time of immersion, the drawn waters in the outer vessel become attached and united.

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\(^ {140}\) *Tosfes Pesachim* 109b. Many Rashonim (Ramban, Rashba, Rambam, Rambam, Rashba, Rashba, Ravim, Zohar, Aguda and more) agree with Tosfes. See *Kesave Reb Arik* p. 217-225.

\(^ {141}\) *Yorah Dash* siman 176.

\(^ {142}\) *Yorah Dash* 201:7.

\(^ {143}\) *Melachim* 1, 7:23.

\(^ {144}\) *Divrei Hayomim* 2, 4:6.

\(^ {145}\) *Yorah Dash* 201:9.

\(^ {146}\) If the outer vessel is facing down, *Halachically* it is not rendered as a good immersion because air is trapped at the top of the vessel keeping the water out.

\(^ {147}\) *Yorah Dash* 202:6, and *Ramo*. 
with the mikvah waters. As such, they themselves become valid for immersing.\(^{148}\)

Hence it is clear that water in a keli (vessel) whose opening is upward is valid immersion water by virtue of its connection with the valid mikvah water above the opening (airu mikkvaos). This once again underscores the validity of a vertical hashoko.

### Appendix II: More About the Bor Zriah

We have already explained how the bor zriah works.

It is important to note that according to some opinions it is not enough for the added tap water to flow through the bor zriah. It is necessary for the added water to actually intermingle and mix with the forty se’ah of rainwater.

To accomplish this, a pipe is placed with one end facing the area where water flows into the bor zriah. The other end of the pipe faces the floor of the bor zriah. In this way the waters enter and flow to the bottom of the bor zriah, mix well with the rainwater, then overflow into the bor hatvilah.

According to most opinions, when water overflows from one bor into the next it does not constitute zoychalin. However, other opinions argue and rule that it is zoychalin, flowing.\(^{149}\)

How, then, can the added tap waters intermingle and become one body with the natural rainwater? How then can it attain the status of kosher waters, when the natural rainwater itself is zoychalin, flowing and invalid for immersion?\(^{150}\)

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\(^{148}\) Tosfos Makos 4a, Ritva ibid., Reiva Boha Beraa 65, Ramban ibid., Bais Yosef, Shaare Uschinos HaRashba, Semag, Mordechai in the name of Maharam of Rothenberg, Issur Veheter Shaar 58:95, Rash (according to Bais Yosef and Shaah 20128), Tosfos Rid in Chagiga [Though Tosfos Rid elsewhere attempts to learn differently, he concludes in learning the above Halacha in concurrence with all the other Rishonim].


\(^{150}\) The bor zriah is based on the Chizkun Sofer (Yoreh Deah 203, 212) who gives the following instructions: Build two adjoining bors next to each other with a hole to let water flow from one bor into the other. Both bors should
Some Halachic authorities address this problem by building the *bor zriah* large enough to contain eighty se'ah. The *bor* is then divided with a horizontal partition (that has a hashoko hole (Figure 7:A)) into two spaces — each forty se'ah.

All the waters enter — after hamshecho — from the bottom (Figure 7:B) of the upper *bor zriah*, above the divider. The procedure is as follows:

a) the lower *bor zriah* is filled with forty se'ah of rainwater, until the divider,

b) tap water enters the upper *bor zriah*,

c) the added water becomes kosher through *zriah* by being united with the body of water in the bottom *bor*. This happens before the waters reach the hole, while they are contained in the *bor zriah*, and not flowing, and

have steps (for immersion). One *bor* should be filled with valid rainwater; after it contains forty se'ah, add tap water until it overflows into the neighboring *bor*. Both *bornas* are now valid for immersing.

When cleaning water in the first *bor*, empty the water and then add water into the second *bor* — which already contains forty se'ah of valid water — until it overflows through the hole and fills the first *bor*.

When cleaning water in the second *bor*, empty it and, when ready, pour water into the first *bor* — which already contains forty se'ah of valid water — and the water will overflow into the second *bor*.

This way one can change the water whenever necessary and never have to wait for rainfall. (This mikvah does have the disadvantage of moson se'ah venosta se'ah, for the original forty se'ah is drained and virtually none of it remains).

The Tzviemer Rav, Rabbi Levi Yitzchok Greenwald, asserts in a letter written to Rabbi Yitzchok Hendel that it is impossible to believe the Chassam Sofer built such a mikvah. As mentioned above, some opinions hold that *zriah* means that water is added into forty se'ah of rainwater while it is still and not flowing!

He therefore concludes that the Chassam Sofer used a stopper, which plugged the hole during the actual refilling and ensured that the added water did not overflow into the neighboring *bor*. Tap water was then added into the forty se'ah of rainwater in the first *bor* until there was more than forty se'ah above the hole. Then the hole was unplugged and kosher water entered the second *bor*. He concludes that although this is not alluded to in the Chassam Sofer's responsa, this must have been his intention.
d) the water in the upper bor is more than forty se'ah. When more waters come into the bottom of the upper bor zriah, they push out this top water that has already become valid, into the bor hatzilah.\textsuperscript{151}

To summarize, there are three ways that the bor zriah may be built:

1) The added water flows through without intermingling.
2) The added water mixes and intermingles.
3) Forty se'ah of tap water is added to the bor zriah before it overflows into the neighboring boros.

\textsuperscript{151} The Lubavitcher Rebbe to Rabbi Hendel during a private audience; Minchas Yitzchok 2:23 (10).
Glossary

Alter Rebbe — founder of the Chabad chassidic movement, Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi, Elul 18, 5505 — Tevet 24, 5573 (1745 — 1812)

Baal HaTanya — Author of the Tanya, basic exposition of Chabad chassidus (also referred to as the Alter Rebbe)

Bais Din — court, Rabbinical court

bais hammedrash — a (Torah) study hall

bais kibbul — a containment area

Bnos Yisroel — Daughters of Israel (Jewish women)

bor (bors-plural) — specially constructed reservoir of rainwater (mikvah). Popularly used to refer to bor al gabai bor, bor hashoko, bor hatvilah or bor zriah

bor al gabai bor — one (mikvah) pool, reservoir, above the other. Special design of constructing a mikvah encouraged by the Rebbe Rashab

bor hashoko — (mikvah) pool, reservoir of rainwater that qualifies invalid waters by contact. See Section "Hashoko"

bor hatvilah — the immersing (mikvah) pool, reservoir. Usually its waters are qualified by contact with rainwater from a neighboring bor

bor zriah — (mikvah) pool, reservoir of rainwater that qualifies invalid waters by entering directly into the bor. See Section "Zriah" and Appendix II

Chabad — acronym formed by the initial letters of the Hebrew words chochmah, binah and daas; also symbolizes a branch of the chassidic movement that is rooted in an intellectual approach to the service of (and the study about) the Almighty

chanukah — eight day festival celebrating the recapture and rededication of the second Temple
chassid (chassidim-plural) — refers to one who lives according to the teachings of a chassidic master

chatzitza — intervening substance between the body and mikvah waters, which invalidates the immersion

eiruv mikvaoos — a legal device which merges several separate boros into a single joint bor (qualified mikvah waters)

Eliyahu — Elijah

Elul — sixth month of the Hebrew calendar

Eretz Yisroel — land of Israel

Esrog — citron, one of the Four Species used in performing a mitzvah on the festival of Sukkos

Halacha (halachos-plural) — a Torah law

halachic — relating to Torah law

hamshocho — a procedure where waters run across an area of soft ground or cement

hashoko — lit., “kiss,” invalid waters that unite by contact with valid waters, thus becoming valid. See Section “Hashoko”

hatzlocho — success

haviyosoi al yedai dovor hamekabel tumah — a situation in which a mikvah is dependent on a keli for its presence and is thereby invalid

hiddur (hiddurim-plural) — enhancement or meticulous observance of a mitzvah beyond the basic requirements

Iggeres HaKodesh — the fourth section of the Tanya, basic exposition of Chabad chassidus

keli (kelim-plural) — a vessel or utensil, whether it is able to contain water or not; see “haviyosoi al yedai dovor hamekabel tumah”

kesiva vechasima tova — “May you be inscribed and sealed for a good new year” — traditional blessing before the Jewish New Year
Kohen (Kohanim-plural) — descendant of the priestly family of Aaron

kol shehu — minute measurement of any size

korais — excision. Divinely imposed premature death decreed by the Torah for severe sins such as desecrating or eating on Yom Kippur

kotafuis — lit., “flowing,” flowing waters that connect pools of water together. See Appendix I

lijgin — a liquid measure used in the times of the Mishnah discussed in the Section “Measurements”

mattan Torah — the giving of the Torah

mekabel tumah — lit., “accepts ritual impurity.” Only specific materials and certain types of vessels are mekabel tumah, i.e., eligible to contract a state of ritual impurity

Menachem Av — fifth month of the Hebrew calendar

mikvaah (mikvoos-plural) — a body of water used for ritual purification

Mishnah — paragraph of teachings compiled by Rabbi Yehudah Hanassi from sages of the Mishnaic period

mitzvah (mitzvos-plural) — one of G-d’s 613 commandments, any religious obligation or meritorious act

moro d’asro — Rabbi who is the Halachic authority of the city

Nach — acronym for Neviim, Prophets, and Kesuvim, Holy writings

netilas yodayim — ritual washing of hands

niddah — woman who has become tomah through seeing blood that originated in her uterus. A niddah’s purifying process concludes with immersion in a kosher mikvaah

nismalay loda’as — lit., filled intentionally, apparent to the naked eye that it is being filled

Nissan — first month of the Hebrew calendar
allowing a se’ah and removing a se’ah,” a condition where the water in a mikvah no longer contains a majority of forty se’ah rainwater

otzar — a storage of rainwater. See Section “Otzar”

Rabbonim — plural of Rov (Rabbi)

Rambam — Maimonides; acronym for Rabbi Moshe ben Maimon, an early codifier of Halacha, 1135 — 1204

Rebbe Maharash — Rabbi Shmuel, the fourth Rebbe of Chabad, Iyar 2, 5594 — Tishrei 13, 5643 (1834 — 1882)

Rebbe Rashab — Rabbi Sholom Dovber, the fifth Rebbe of Chabad, Cheshvan 20, 5621 — Nissan 2, 5680 (1860 — 1920). He encouraged the building of a mikvah of bor al gabai bor

Rebbe — a righteous person who serves as a spiritual guide to a following of chasidim

Rebbeeim — the seven generations of Lubavitcher Rebbes

Rosh Chodesh — lit., “head of the month,” one or two semi-festive days at the beginning of each Hebrew month

Rosh Hashana — the Jewish New Year festival

Rov — expert Rabbi

se’ah — a volume of measure used in the times of the Mishnah. Discussed in the Section “Measurements”

sefer (sefarim-plural) — book of Holy writings

Shabbos — Sabbath, Saturday

Shalosh Regalim — Pilgrim Festivals of Pesach, Shawms and Sukkos

sheuvim — lit., “drawn waters,” waters that are invalid for a mikvah via containment in a vessel

shfoferes hanod — a Mishnaic term that equals a quarter of a tefach. This measure is necessary when uniting an invalid body of water to a valid one (vis. hashoko)
Shalom u’Bracho — Greeting and Blessing

Shulchan Aruch — Code of Jewish Law

siman — Chapter, commonly referred so in Halachic works

Sotah — a tractate of the Talmud

Taanis — a tractate of the Talmud

Tarahas Hamishpoho — Family Purity

Tefach (tefachim—plural) — handbreadth; a measure of length equal to the width of four thumbs. See Section “Measurements”

Tevet — tenth month of the Hebrew calendar

Tisha Be’Av — ninth day of the fifth month of the Hebrew calendar, commemorating the destruction of the Temples

Torah — the Five Books of Moses

tomai — form of tumah (see below)

tumah — legally defined state of ritual impurity inherent in certain conditions of people or objects. Immersing in a kosher mikvah purifies people or utensils that are tomah

Tzemach Tzedek — Rabbi Menachem Mendel, the third Rebbe of Chabad, Elul 29, 5549 — Nisan 13, 5626 (1789—1866)

Yechezkel — Ezekiel

Yom Kippur — Day of Atonement

zechus — merit

zerizus — alacrity

zeycha'khin — flowing waters; only a spring is kosher to use for ritual immersion even when its waters are flowing

zriah — lit., “sown,” process by which invalid waters enter directly into valid mikvah waters and become qualified. See Section “Zriah” and Appendix II
References

Sources for material contained in this book include: Nach, Mishnah, Gemara, Rishonim, Tur, Rambam, Bais Yosef, Shulchan Aruch, Shulchan Aruch HaRav, and their respective commentaries.

In addition, a wealth of information was drawn from the Responsa of renowned Halachic codifiers and includes rulings set forth by contemporary Halachic authorities. The following is a partial list of the Halachic works used in this book:

In the Memory of
Zev ben Pesach a'h
passed away 4 Menachem Av
5747
by
Pesach and Shari Nussbaum
& Family
Dedicated by
Shmuel and Chani Gniwisch
& Family

In honor of the Bar Mitzvah of
Nachum Solomon Hascalovici
27 Tammuz 5761

Dedicated by
his Parents
Meir and Aly Hascalovici
& Family

Dedicated by
Berel and Breindy Gansbourg
& Family
Dedicated by
Shmarya and Chaya Sara Richler

In honour of
David and Goldie Richler
Rabbi Reuven Rapoport
Ruchama Miriam Braverman

and in memory of
Shmarya and Esther Richler
Rabbi Mordechai Zelig and Aidel Minka Hirsch
Hatomim Avraham Yitzchok and Hinda Rapoport
Chaim Eliezer Braverman
Chava Gitel Rapoport
Dedicated by
Steven Steinwald

Dedicated by
Paul & Eva Nadler
in memory of
Ben & Rose Nadler
Mirko Kohn

Dedicated by:
Yaakov & Freida Abramczyk
Jonrold & Bella Aspler
Raphael & Chana Beigio
Nissim & Mimi Bouzaglo
Abraham & Pnina Brodt
Michael & Barbara Chernack
Noah & Estelle Detchever
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William & Klara Frankel
George & Sylvia Frankel
Pinchos & Chanie Freud
Hershy & Raizy Friedman
Joseph & Judy Friedman
Samuel & Brenda Gewurz
Yitzchok & Julie Gniwisch
Calmen & Gita Goldberg
Edward & Study Goldberg
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Yidel & Shoshana Grunberger
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Robert & Esther Hochstadter
Meir & Elizabeth Israel
Efrain & Reesa Kandelshein
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Moshe & Judy Levine
Aaron & Susan Lieberman
Bennett & Suzan Little
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Yoel & Solange Sarah Miller
Chaim M. & Fayge Minkowitz
Danny & Celia Natanblut
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Yitzchak & Judy Perlstein
Sidney & Hetti Pfeiffer
Moishe & Rebecca Reiss
David & Judy Rothschild
Moshe & Vera Salzberg
Yitzchok & Faigie Silber
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Moshe & Miriam Stern
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Chaim & Bassie Treitel
Morty & Aviva Yalovsky
Mayer & Tzivia Zaklos
Mechel & Rose Zimlichman
Dedicated by
Yossi & Chani
& Meir
Leșches