

CEREMONY FOR BRIDES (Modern)

Before the immersion:

The bride says:

The Mikvah is a gathering not only of waters, but also of time, In the Mikvah, past and future swirl together with the waters of the present.

As I enter the waters of the Mikvah, I pray that God's presences hovers over me, as it hovered over the face of the waters when the world was first created.

The Talmud says that all the water in the world has its roots in four rivers which issued from the Garden of Eden. As Adam and Eve could not return to the Garden, I know that I cannot return to my past, but I can recall it. As I prepare to descend into the waters of the Mikvah, I recall the steps that have led me to this moment:

My years of childhood

My adolescence

My years of young adulthood

My years of adulthood

In the Mikvah waters:

Immerse

Baruch atah Adonai, eloheinu melech ha 'olam, asher kidsharm b'mitzvotav v'tzeivanu al ha'tavilah.

Blessed are You, Source of Life, Who has made us holy with mitzvot, and commanded us to enter the living, changing waters of the Mikvah.

Immerse

Baruch atah Adonai, eloheinu melech ha'olam, sh'he cheyanu v'key yemanu, v'hegee'anu, lazman hazeh.

Blessed is the Source of Life, Eternal Spirit of the universe, who has kept me alive, sustained me, and permitted me to mark this holy moment.

Immerse

After the immersion is completed:

The bride remains in the water and mother and guests share a hope, or blessing for the bride.

After leaving the Mikvah waters:

Bride:

My God, Creator and Sustainer of all life, may I step forth now into a life filled with continued growth. May I step into a life filled with continued wisdom and deeds of kindness. May I step forward into a life filled with the blessing of new beginnings. May I prove to be a loving mate, partner and friend to my beloved. Be with me as I enter this new time in my life. May you, God, who has blessed my coming forth into this day, bless my going out into a life of fulfillment and peace. Amen.

After the bride comes out of the water, by the shower:

(Henna and water are put into one pitcher, candy and water into another.)

“You have completed the first mitzvah, Tevila” (immersion).

“Your feet are bathed with henna to symbolize prosperity. Henna powder is similar to sand, and as sand is infinite. May you and your partner have prosperity and joy to last a lifetime.” (Pour henna on bride's feet.)

“The candy represents a wish for you to have a sweet life together, full of good things, and that the sweetness of your actions be reflected in the relationships all around you.” (Pour sugar water on bride's feet.)

In the Community Room

“When the world was created, life emerged from water. Now we celebrate the new world that you and your husband will create. You have immersed and will emerge with energy to begin your marriage. The water is a source of life and vitality, and that is precisely what we celebrate.”

(Mothers or friends hold the bread above the bride's head.)

“Bread is the second mitzvah. The bread is baked into the shape of a Star of David. It is two separate triangles connecting to make one strong unit.

Bread is a symbol of a meal, as well as abundance. May your home be full of an abundance of food, and just as importantly, an abundance of love. Always remember that so many people lack the basic necessities of life* and that there is much injustice and suffering in the world. If you can dedicate some of your time to the less fortunate, you will obtain great satisfaction and happiness.”

(Break the bread over the bride's head and share the remaining bread with the guests.)

“The lighting of candles is the third mitzvah and privilege that God granted to women.”

(Light the candles.)

“Shabbat binds individuals together as a family. At the beginning of Shabbat, separate candles are lit. By the end, the Havdalah candle is lit - wicks joined together. So too, do you become entwined with your mate. Now, like the Havdalah candle, you are two joined together, stronger and more complete.”

Blessed is she who kindles the flames of creation.

Blessed be he who sparks imagination.

Blessed be those who weave threads of light throughout the generations,
Who turn our longing for peace into illumination.

(Blow out the candles.)

All together:

May you and your beloved have a long, healthy and happy marriage. May you find ways to work through differences. May you both honor the commitment you are about to make. May your home be a house of peace, love and closeness. And may you both find the precious balance between taking care of yourself and taking care of each other.

*Baruch atah Adonai, eloheinu melech ha 'olam, shehecheyanu, vedyimanui,
vehegyanu, lazeman hazeh.*

Praised are You, Sovereign of the Universe, who gave us life, who sustained us and who allowed us to see this moment.