

Immersion Ceremony for a Bride

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Mayyim Hayyim Living Waters

I. Before Immersion

A. Kavanah (Intention) to be read while preparing for immersion (could be read to the bride by a friend, relative, or mikveh guide):

Immersion in water softens our form,
Making us malleable,
Dissolving some of the rigidity of who we are.
This allows us to decide who we wish to be when we come out of the water.
The water changes us neither by washing away something
Nor by letting something soak in to us,
But simply by softening us
So that we can choose
To remold ourselves into a different image.

(The National Center for Learning and Leadership, CLAL)

Our mothers Rebekah and Rachel were betrothed and began new lives at the gently flowing water of the well. Our mother Yocheved gave renewed life to her child Moses in the ever-flowing waters of the Nile. Our sister Miriam danced for the saving of lives beside the overflowing water of the Sea of Reeds.

(To be read by the bride)

Water is God's gift to living souls, to cleanse us, to purify us, to sustain and renew us through the stages of our life's journey.

I am now prepared
To leave behind that which I no longer choose
To become one with another life,
To become a creator of new possibilities
To become a partner in sharing the joys of life,
To teach and to learn the lessons of married life.

(Rabbi Barbara Penzner and Amy Zwiback-Levenson)

B. To be read by the bride, immediately prior to immersion:

As I immerse myself, I begin a new cycle in my life. May my entry into the waters of the mikveh strengthen me for the journey that lies ahead.

Water is God's gift to living souls,
To cleanse us, to purify us,
To sustain and renew us.

Or... (more traditional reading)

Now, as I immerse myself, I begin a new cycle, a cycle of rebirth and renewal of Your world and Your people Israel. I prepare for my new life and for the sanctification of that life through *kiddushin*, Your holy state of marriage.

יְהִי לְרָצוֹן אֲמֵרֵי-פִי וְהִגִּיוֹן לְבִי לְפָנֶיךָ יְיָ צוּרִי וְגֹאֲלִי.
Y'hiyu l'ratzon imray fe v'heg-yon leebey l'fanecha Adonai tzuree v'go-alee.

May the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be acceptable to You, Adonai, my Rock and my Redeemer.

II. During Immersion

-First Immersion-

Slowly descend the steps into the mikveh waters and immerse completely so that every part of your body is covered in the warm water of the mikveh.

Following first immersion, recite traditional blessing for immersion:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתֶיךָ וְצִוֵּנוּ
עַל הַטְּבִילָה

Baruch Atah Adonai Eloheinu Melech Ha-olam, asher kid'shanu be-mitzvotav, v-tzi'vanu al ha'tevilah.

Praised are You, Adonai, God of all creation, who sanctifies us with Your commandments and commanded us concerning immersion.

-Second Immersion-

Take a deep breath and exhale completely, while gently and completely immersing for the second time.

Following second immersion, recite:

וְאַרְשִׁיתִיךָ לִי לְעוֹלָם. וְאַרְשִׁיתִיךָ לִי בְצֶדֶק, וּבְמִשְׁפָּט וּבְחֶסֶד
וּבְרַחֲמִים. וְאַרְשִׁיתִיךָ לִי בְּאֵמוּנָה וְיִדְעַת אֶת יְהוָה.

*V'erastich Li l'olam. V'erastich Li b'tzedek, u'v-mishpat, u'v-chesed,
u'v-rachamim. V'erastich Li beh-emunah v'ya-da-at et Adonai.*

I will betroth you to me forever.
I will betroth you to me with righteousness and with justice,
with goodness and with compassion.
I will betroth you to me in truth; and we will come to know God.

(Excerpted from Hosea 2:21-22)

-Third Immersion-

Relax, and let your body soften, as you slowly and completely immerse for the third time.

Following third immersion, recite: Shehecheyanu - Blessing Celebrating Life

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם שֶׁהַחַיִּינוּ וְקִיַּמְנוּ וְהִגִּיעָנוּ לְזִמְן הַזֶּה.

*Baruch Atah Adonai Eloheynu Melech Ha-olam She-he-cheyanu, v'ki-y'manu,
v'hi-gi-anu la'zman ha-zeh.*

Praised are You, Adonai, God of all Creation, Who has kept us alive, sustained us and, through one miracle after another, has brought us to this time.

III. After Immersion

To be said while wrapped in a robe after stepping out from the mikveh:

My God, Creator and Sustainer of all life, may I step forth into a life filled with continued wisdom and deeds of kindness.

May I step forward into a life filled with the blessings of new beginnings.

May I 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 life, fulfillment, and peace.

(Charlotte Goldberg *Mikveh*, Cleveland)

Or (more traditional reading)...

May the words of my mouth, the meditations of my heart, and this act of sanctification seal my devotion to a life of *Torah, Avodah, and Gemilut Hasadim*; a life of learning Your ways, a life of standing in Your presence, a life made holy by acts of loving-kindness.

(Congregation Beth El of the Sudbury River Valley)

Additional Ideas to add to your Immersion Ceremony:

1. Include some form of *havdalah* (separation) as part of the ceremony in order to exemplify separation of one state of life from another...

2. Add a reading or song for friends, family accompanying the bride

e.g.:

_____ (bride), You are so precious. All of us surrounding you wish you the best of happiness and look forward to watching you grow with _____ (spouse) and being participants in this next chapter of your life. *Mazel Tov!*

3. Particular prayer, blessing from mother

e.g.:

You emerge from the *mikveh* waters fresh, new and whole. May you and your beloved have a very long, healthy and happy marriage.