In Preparation for
The Yamim Noraim—The Days of Awe

A HANDWASHING AND CUP OF MIRIAM CEREMONY

This ceremony lends itself to both individual and small group participation.

BEFORE THE CEREMONY

For the Guide:
Fill the handwashing cup with tap water
and the Kos Miryam—Cup of Miriam with drinking water.

For the Participant:
Prepare your hands as you would for immersing in the mikveh;
remove rings, bracelets and nail polish and wash hands with soap and water. Remove lipstick.

Handwashing

NITILAT YADAYIM

Participant reads:

I stand here today to acknowledge and affirm this sacred moment in my life journey.
I wash my hands using our ancient ritual; moving toward a state of pure intent,
present and open as I prepare for the Yamim Noraim—the Days of Awe.

Guide: Pour water from the washing cup over the participant’s hands three times;
first time with palms up, second with palms down and third with palms up.

Participant reads:

Tizkor nafshi et k’dushat ha’guf
binilat yadayim.¹

Washing my hands, I remember the holiness of creation: creation of body,
creation of soul, creation of the world and creation of new possibilities.²
Cup of Miriam

Guide holds up the Cup of Miriam and reads:

Water is God’s gift to living souls, to cleanse us, to purify us, to sustain us and to renew us.³
May God, whom we call Mikveh Yisrael, God who is the source of living waters, be with you now and always.

זוט קוס מיריאם, קוס מחיים.
Chazak, chazak, v’nit’chazeik.

This is the Cup of Miriam, the Cup of Living Waters
Strength, strength and let us be strengthened.⁴

Participant reads:
Miriam’s well was filled with mayyim hayyim—living waters; waters that kept our ancestors alive in the desert, waters that refreshed and renewed them for the days ahead. May the mayyim in this Kos Miryam fill me too with hope and renewal for the Yamim Noraim—the Days of Awe.

Participant drinks deeply from the Cup of Miryam.

Welcoming the New Year

ברוך אתה, יי אלוהינו, מלך העולם
שחכחת, חקוקה, והגיעה לזמן הזה.

Baruch atah, Adonai Eloheinu, Melech ha’olam
sheheheychanu, v’kiy’manu, v’higanu la’zman hazeh.

Holy One of Blessing Your Presence fills creation.
You have kept us alive, You have sustained us, You have brought us to this moment.⁵

ATTRIBUTIONS
This ceremony was created by Matia Rania Angelou, Deborah Issokson and Judith D. Kummer for Mayyim Hayyim Living Waters.

2 Ibid, p. 12. Adapted
4 Loo, Stephanie. “Kos Miryam: Development of a Women’s Ritual.” In the journal Neshama, [Summer, 1990], [Cabot, VT]: Neshama