

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 יְדֵימ בְּנִטִּילַת יָדַיִם 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:

תִּזְכֹּר נַפְשִׁי אֶת קְדוּשַׁת הַגּוּף Tizkor nafshi et k'dushat haguf
בְּנִטִּילַת יָדַיִם binitilat 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

כּוֹס מִרְיָם KOS MIRYAM

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.

זאת כּוֹס מִרְיָם, כּוֹס מַיִם חַיִּים. *Zot kos miryam, kos mayyim chayyim.*

חַזַּק חַזַּק וְנִתְחַזְּק. *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 Miriam.

Welcoming the New Year

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה, יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ, מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, *Baruch atah, Adonai Eloheinu, Melech ha'olam*
שֶׁהַחַיִּים, וְקִיּוּמָנוּ, וְהַגִּיעָנוּ לְזִמְנוֹ הַזֶּה. *shehecheyanu, v'kiy'manu, v'higianu 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*.

1 Falk, Marcia. *The Book of Blessings: New Jewish Prayers for Daily Life, the Sabbath, and the New Moon Festival*. [San Francisco, Calif.]: HarperSanFrancisco, 1996, p. 13. Copyright © 1996 by Marcia Lee Falk

2 Ibid, p. 12. Adapted

3 Penzner, Barbara and Zwiback-Levenson, Amy. *The New Jewish Wedding*, Anita Diamant. New York: Summit, 1985, p. 156

4 Loo, Stephanie. "Kos Miryam: Development of a Women's Ritual." In the journal *Neshama*, (Summer, 1990), [Cabot, VT]: Neshama

5 Congregation Beth El of the Sudbury River Valley. *Vetaher Libenu*. Sudbury, MA. 1980, p. 104



Mayyim Hayyim

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