

TRADITIONS THAT TRANSCEND TRANSLATION

CEREMONIAS DE INMERSIÓN

TRILINGUAL GUIDE TO SACRED IMMERSION CEREMONIES

PROUDLY AVAILABLE IN ENGLISH, SPANISH, AND PORTUGUESE
ORGULLOSAMENTE DISPONIBLE EN INGLÉS, ESPAÑOL Y PORTUGUÉS
ORGULHOSAMENTE DISPONÍVEL EM INGLÊS, ESPANHOL E PORTUGUÊS



RISING TIDE
OPEN WATERS MIKVEH NETWORK
AN INITIATIVE OF  Mayyim Hayyim





WATER RITUAL IN JEWISH & LATIN TRADITIONS

Water—the source of life itself—forms a cornerstone in both Jewish and Latin cultural heritages. Across millennia and continents, these two distinct traditions independently developed remarkably parallel practices honoring water's power to transform, heal, and mark life's pivotal transitions. This guide explores these sacred connections and introduces resources that make these rituals accessible to individuals who identify with both Jewish and Latin cultural legacies.

THE SACRED WATERS OF JEWISH TRADITION

In Jewish tradition, water serves as a transformative, creative, and healing element. The *mikveh*—a ritual bath for complete immersion—marks significant life transitions through water's essential power to facilitate spiritual transformation. This sacred practice, available to all Jewish individuals and those undergoing conversion, creates a tangible connection to ancient wisdom.

Mayyim Hayyim, established in 2004, has made mikveh accessible to the diverse Jewish community and conversion candidates. Their 2017 initiative, the Rising Tide Open Waters Network, expanded the Open Mikveh Movement globally. Over two decades, they have witnessed increasing numbers of Jews connecting with *mikveh* for both traditional and emerging reasons.

BUILDING BRIDGES THROUGH TRANSLATION

The collaborative partnership between Mayyim Hayyim and Jewtina y Co. has produced translations of two essential *mikveh* resources in Spanish and Portuguese. Jewtina y Co., founded in 2019 to create space for individuals with both Latin and Jewish identities, brings essential cultural expertise to this project. Their commitment to trilingual materials honors communities from both Spanish-speaking and Portuguese-speaking regions throughout Latin America. This partnership ensures that community members across the Americas can see themselves fully reflected in these resources during life's most transformative moments.

WATER'S SACRED ROLE ACROSS CULTURES

Both Latin and Jewish cultures revere water as a healing source, which guided our decision to translate the 'Toward Healing' immersion ceremony and the 'Seven Kavanot for Mikveh Preparation' guides. In Mesoamerican indigenous traditions, water is venerated as sacred and vital to community life—often regarded as an ancestral presence that carries the memory and wisdom of those who came before.

Water serves as both a life-source and transformation conduit, embodying and reflecting story, tradition, life, death, and cultural heritage. Through these translations, individuals can engage with practices that celebrate and honor water's role in ancestral healing and nourishment. Our work builds bridges to Latin America through language and by highlighting connections to pre-Hispanic practices that continue to influence contemporary Latin culture.

SHARED TRADITIONS ACROSS CULTURES: ANCIENT WISDOM IN DIALOGUE

The Jewish *mikveh* and pre-Hispanic bathing rituals reveal remarkable parallels despite their independent development across different continents and eras, with both traditions recognizing water's power for transformation that transcends physical cleansing.

In Jewish practice, the *mikveh* enables observant Jews to achieve *tahara* (ritual purity) through complete immersion in "living waters"—natural water sources or properly prepared ritual baths. This marks clear transitions between states of *tumah* (ritual impurity) and *tahara*. Progressive Judaism has expanded upon the original use of *mikveh* to mark all types of life transitions, recognizing water's power to signify status changes. Mesoamerican cultures developed similar understandings with, the Aztec concept of *tlaelli* (encompassing both physical and spiritual impurity), reflecting a holistic understanding of water's cleansing properties that parallels Jewish concepts.

Natural water sources hold special significance in both traditions. Jewish law values *mikveh* connected to naturally gathered rainwater or spring water (*mayim chayim*), while pre-Hispanic cultures revered natural water features as sacred—Maya considered *cenotes* (natural sinkholes) as portals to divine realms, and Aztec traditions honored springs and lakes as dwelling places of deities like *Chalchiuhtlicue*, goddess of water. Over time, each tradition developed dedicated architectural spaces—the *mikveh* structure and the *Tamazcal* (sweat

lodge—creating controlled sacred environments for these transformative rituals.

Life transitions in each culture were marked through ceremonial water use. Traditional *mikveh* practices accompany marriage preparation, post child-birthing purification, conversion to Judaism, and monthly observance following menstruation, while contemporary uses have expanded to mark numerous additional life passages. Pre-Hispanic societies similarly used ritual bathing to mark birth, puberty ceremonies, marriage, and preparation for death. In both traditions, water facilitates passage between different states of being.

Each tradition integrates spiritual cleansing with physical wellbeing. The *mikveh's* spiritual purification complements the physical benefits of immersion, while the temazcal combines steam, medicinal herbs, and ritual to create a healing environment addressing body, mind, and spirit holistically.

These parallel developments demonstrate humanity's universal recognition of water's transformative power. Though emerging independently and serving distinct cultural purposes, they reveal a shared understanding that water mediates between physical and spiritual dimensions, creating powerful spaces for transformation and renewal.

RECLAIMING ANCIENT WISDOM FOR TODAY

These translations arrive at a critical moment when many seek meaningful ritual to navigate life's complexities. For Latin-Jewish individuals, these resources offer a unique opportunity to integrate multiple dimensions of identity through sacred practice. Rather than compartmentalizing different aspects of heritage, these translations invite wholeness—honoring ancestral wisdom from both traditions simultaneously.

In a world often marked by division, these water rituals remind us of our shared humanity and our universal connection to the element that sustains all life. They offer powerful tools for marking transitions, processing grief, celebrating joy, and fostering community across cultural boundaries.

THE LATIN-JEWISH EXPERIENCE: WATERS THAT CONNECT

For individuals who identify as both Latin and Jewish, ancient wisdom flows through multiple pathways, languages, and spiritual practices. These traditions from across the globe converge within them, and their existence as Latin-Jewish people embodies knowledge that bridges diverse cultural heritages.

The Latin-Jewish community encompasses diverse experiences and relationships to these translated ritual practices. For some, these resources open doors to ancestral Mesoamerican traditions previously disconnected from communal memory. For others, particularly those whose ancestors found refuge in Latin America after fleeing persecution, access to Spanish or Portuguese resources represents a profound reconnection to heritage languages and transnational identity.

*May this guide be a conduit of transformation,
transition and healing.*

*Que esta guía sea un conducto de
transformación, transición y sanación.*

*Que este guia seja um condutor de
transformação, transição e cura.*

