

Welcome

Borehamwood & Elstree

Mikvah

 Borehamwood & Elstree Synagogue



The BES Mikvah was originally opened in 2001. In 2018 it underwent refurbishment, with the help of a dedicated team, to encourage women to connect with one of the most significant, meaningful and powerful of observances in an attractive, modern and inspiring setting.

A beautiful spa-like space has been created to emphasise the esteem and value for Jewish women in their commitment and performance of the mitzvah of Mikvah. The Mikvah conforms to the highest halachic standards.

Croxdale Road, Borehamwood, WD6 4FQ

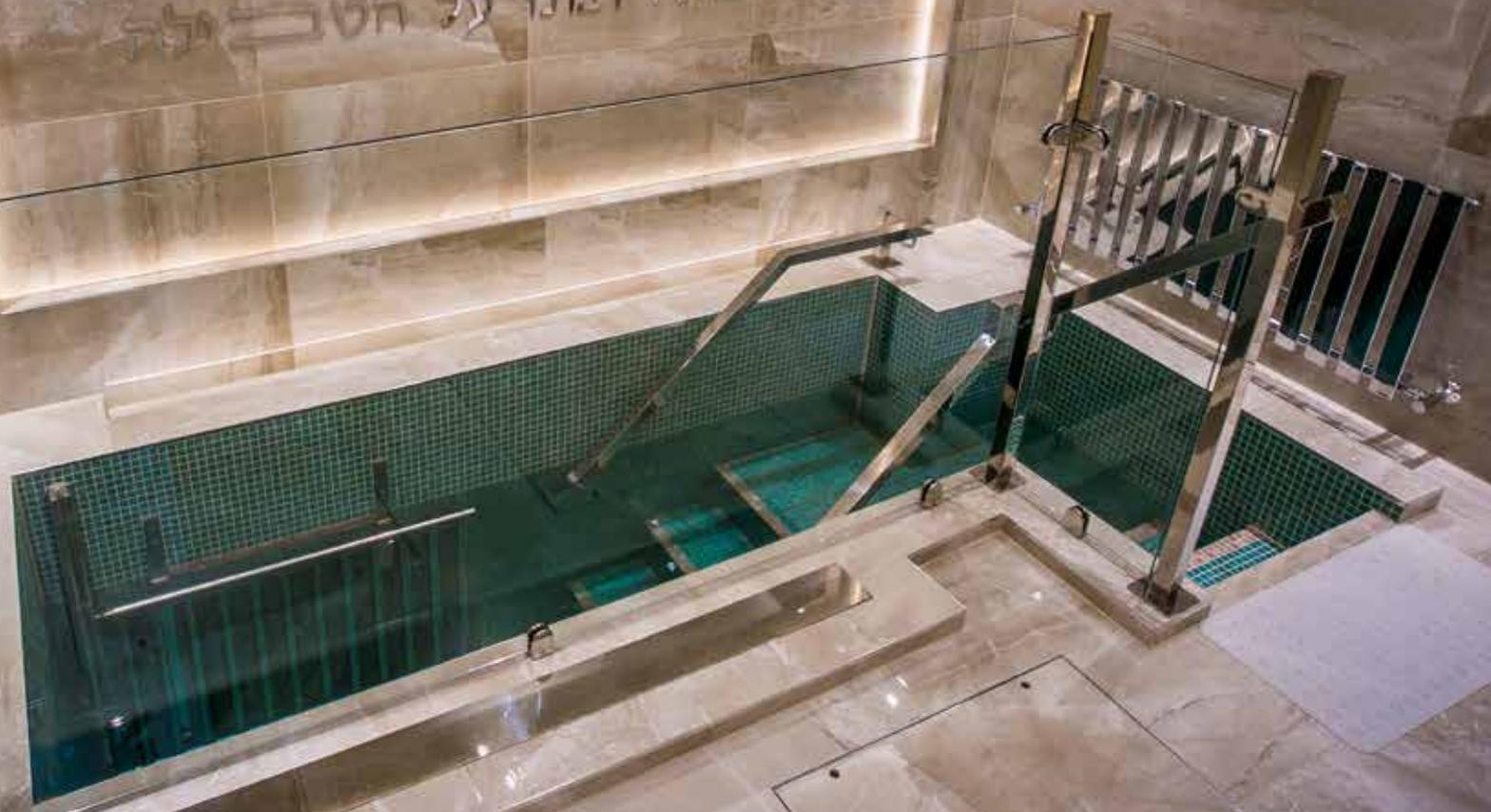
Please call **07504 927 066** or **0208 387 1945** to make an appointment. To use the Mikvah on Friday nights or Yom Tov please call Rebbetzin Eva Chapper on **07850 036 046**. Your call will be dealt with in strictest confidence. (Please try to give at least 48 hours' notice).

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Mikvah

 **Borehamwood & Elstree Synagogue**

ברוך אתה ד' אלקינו
מלך העולם אשר קדשנו
במצוותיו וצונו על הטבילה



Myths & Facts about Mikvah

1. **MYTH** Mikvah is only for brides.

FACT The Mikvah can be used by married women on a regular basis throughout their life. Primarily women go before their wedding, after their period, after childbirth.

2. **MYTH** Mikvah is only for the super religious.

FACT Women from all backgrounds use the Mikvah regularly. Some women who keep no other Jewish law find meaning in going to the Mikvah. It is not about if you keep kosher or Shabbat, every mitzvah a Jew does brings its own blessings to oneself and the whole world.

3. **MYTH** I have to be naked in front of a stranger.

FACT Our Mikvah attendants are modest and discreet and they are careful to turn completely away, with a towel in front of their face, when you enter the water. They only observe that you have immersed completely

and then they hold the towel up again in front of their face until you are fully covered.

4. **MYTH** I can't go in with my gellish/shellac nails.

FACT Our Mikvah attendants will not turn anyone away from the Mikvah with gellish/shellac. Be in touch with one of our local Rabbis or teachers if you have any questions.

5. **MYTH** I can't go in with my hair extensions/dyed hair/semi permanent make up.

FACT There are usually no issues. Again, please speak to one of our local Rabbis or teachers if you have any questions.

6. **MYTH** The last time I went was when I got married – that was 30 years ago! I wouldn't even know what to do.

FACT Our local teachers can guide you through the simple steps required for immersion. Please be in touch.

7. **MYTH** Everyone is going to see me going – I'm very embarrassed.

FACT BES Mikvah works on an appointment-only basis. This means there is no waiting around. It is located round the back of the synagogue and is discreet and private. The only person who knows you are there is your Mikvah attendant.

8. **MYTH** I don't want to go into a pool that loads of other women have gone in before.

FACT The Mikvah is cleaned and the water is changed regularly. It is far cleaner than your local swimming pool. Every woman who enters will have washed. If you have specific concerns, it can be arranged for you to immerse straight after a water change.

9. **MYTH** Mikvah is archaic and degrading to women.

FACT Mikvah is not about impurity or cleanliness. It is a spiritual change

similar to the High Priest on Yom Kippur, who would immerse in a Mikvah 5 times – changing his spiritual level with each immersion. Mikvah is about a spiritual purity that isn't visible or tangible. It takes the relationship between a husband and wife and sanctifies it – it brings G-d into it.

Marriage has its challenges and this mitzvah helps G-d to come and give a hand. Many women who attend find going to Mikvah a spiritual experience – and some just find it a nice hour to pamper themselves in a quiet place! This is a mitzvah that women have been performing for thousands of years in the most difficult of circumstances around the world and many women find it very connecting to the generations of women that came before. Rather than being degrading, this is a very empowering experience as Judaism has always had a high expectation of the commitment of women. Mikvah is about refreshing your soul and coming 'alive'.

Step-by-Step Guide to using the BES Mikvah

- 1.** If you have never been to a Mikvah before, or not since your wedding, or after any long gap, please be in touch with one of our local teachers for a short refresher course. You can come and immerse after some minimal steps to have a valid immersion and fulfil the mitzvah.

To find a teacher please contact the BES Shul office on **020 8386 5227** or the Marriage Enhancement Programme (MEP). The MEP Coordinator is Shoshanah Kahan **07834 535489** shoshanah@usmep.co.uk
- 2.** Please call **07504 927 066** or **0208 387 1945** to make an appointment. To use the Mikvah on Friday nights or Yom Tov please call Rebbetzin Eva Chapper on **07850 036 046**. Your call will be dealt with in strictest confidence. (Please try to give at least 48 hours' notice).

- 3.** The phone call will give you information on the earliest time for 'tevilah' (immersion) which is done after nightfall. A bride can go in the daytime. Women can prepare in one of the four beautifully appointed bathrooms or at home.
- 4.** The cost is £12 with your own towels or £14 if you'd like to use our fluffy, large and soft towels. You will be asked for payment on your way out and can pay in cash or cheque. If you attend Mikvah on Shabbat or Yom Tov you should please pay (£12) at another time that is convenient.
- 5.** When you arrive you will be shown to your private bathroom. Prepare yourself as you've been taught, wrap yourself in a towel and press the button on the state-of-the-art call system. The Mikvah attendant will be with you shortly!

- 6.** The Mikvah attendant will show you to the steps of the pool and may ask that you have remembered to remove all make-up and jewellery. If a woman asks, the Mikvah attendant can check the back for stray hairs. Then the attendant will take your towel, holding it in front of her face so you have full privacy as you enter the water. The Mikvah attendant is there to check you are fully immersed, if you need help with the bracha/blessing please ask.
- 7.** You will then immerse at least once more after the bracha. The Mikvah



- 8.** Back in your private bathroom you can dry your hair, put on make-up (if you wish) and get ready to leave. Press the call button when ready to go, and then you will be asked for payment on the way out. We do ask all women to ensure they leave the bathroom in the beautiful condition they found it in.

Please contact Rebbetzin Eva Chapper if you have any questions and would like more information.



Each of the 4 bathrooms is beautifully appointed with fully stocked cupboards.

About Mikvah & Taharat Hamishpacha

Family Spiritual Purity

The word purity, or tahara, is nothing to do with cleanliness. In Temple times, anyone who came close to a loss of potential, exemplified by death, would imbue spiritual impurity into their body, which could only be removed after a preparation period and immersion in the Mikvah. All people who were about to go to the Temple to give a sacrifice, men and women, would immerse in a Mikvah, and hundreds of mikvaot have been found in ancient archaeological digs in the land of Israel, including some in people's houses.

Although death is the most obvious source of loss of potential, the loss of the monthly egg also signifies this loss, as even unfertilised this egg represents a finite potential that has now left the body. Therefore after the period has ended, there is a preparation period and then immersion to remove this impurity from the body.

According to Jewish Law couples who practice this mitzvah do not touch (and other restrictions) during this preparation time period, as we read in the Torah in Kedoshim 'do not come close to a woman who is impure, or uncover her nakedness'. Thus, it is a Torah law that a man cannot be with his wife if she still has this spiritual impurity.

Many couples find this physical withdrawal and reconnection rejuvenating to their marriage as it enables them to focus on their emotional, intellectual, spiritual and non-physical relationship for half of the month, and puts a spotlight on their intimacy for the other half. Couples find it helps prevent them from taking their intimacy for granted, and refreshes their intimate lives. Nowadays, many women are using various forms of birth control that mean they do not undergo

monthly periods, and this means they go long intervals without requiring to go to Mikvah, and this is also a normal aspect of observant Jew's lives. Women who are breast-feeding may also not experience a period for a while.

Men also undergo a loss of potential with a seminal emission, but the Torah requires the ashes of the red heifer (unavailable to us in the absence of the Temple) to truly remove this impurity, as with that of close contact with the dead. Although many men have a custom to go to Mikvah regularly anyway, only for women does the full mitzvah still apply despite no red heifer ashes being available. Nowadays the full sanctity of the Mikvah is uniquely available to women.

Why is the Mikvah so special?

Only natural water has the ability to remove spiritual impurity. A Mikvah must have its own direct source of natural living water, such as fresh spring water, rainwater or even melted snow. Just as the Torah itself is compared to living waters, so does it specify that a Mikvah, in order to be kosher, must be filled with living waters that are collected in a special way. The Mikvah is linked through a special hole at the base (you can sometimes feel the cooler water by your feet) to a separate pool of natural rain water, or the deep groundwater (depending on area). Halachically this qualifies the entire pool (the pool you enter is fresh tap water) as being natural and having the ability to purify.

The Mikvah has the blessing that women say mounted on the wall as both decoration and a useful reminder.



Mikvah as a Lifecycle Event

Weddings

Ideally all brides go to Mikvah before their weddings (including second weddings or first time post-menopausal brides). The vast majority of brides in the UK, who marry through the United Synagogue, meet with an MEP (Marriage Enhancement Programme) teacher to discuss many aspects of a new marriage as well as the Mikvah experience.

Recent brides thoughts –

'I met with the Rebbetzin a few times before going to the Mikvah and she made me feel really relaxed and I am so glad I had everything explained to me, it was so meaningful'

'I feel ready to get married now, like a fresh start'

'I did not know what to expect but when I arrived the Mikvah attendant was so patient, I felt at ease'

'My mum never went before her wedding and now she wants to go too!'

Birth

After a woman has healed fully after a birth, she would go to Mikvah. The reason for this is that spiritual impurity is related to an extra soul leaving her body. The life that was growing inside the woman is pure potential, and this has now left her to reach its own potential.

Miscarriage & Pregnancy Loss

As a potential life has been lost, women also go to Mikvah after pregnancy loss. Many women find this a spiritual healing experience and a way to grieve.

Pregnancy

Although not a mitzvah, there is a custom to go to Mikvah in the last few weeks before giving birth. A nice idea is for a woman who is having infertility issues to go to Mikvah after a pregnant woman. This enables a woman about to experience birth to pray for a woman who is having difficulties in this area. This is normally done anonymously.

Before High Holy Days

Women as well as men have a custom to go to Mikvah before Yom Kippur, whether or not it is their customary time to go. This is symbolic of the Kohen Gadol (High Priests) immersions on Yom Kippur and helps individuals spiritually prepare for the holiest day in the calendar.

Menopause

Many women, especially those who have never gone to Mikvah, or who have not been since before their wedding, have started going 'once' after they have finished going through the menopause. This serves as a spiritual transition to mirror the physical transition and helps them embrace their new aspect of femininity. After this 'once', the woman will be ritually pure for the rest of their lives.

Once Project - For the postmenopausal woman, one final immersion in the Mikvah offers purity for the rest of her life. Even a woman who has never used the Mikvah before should make a special effort to immerse after menopause (it is never too late for a woman to do this even if many years have elapsed since her menopause), thus allowing for all subsequent intimacies to be divinely blessed.

The Once Project will be coming to London soon. To register your interest please contact Rebbetzin Eva Chapper.

The single greatest gift granted by G-d to humankind is teshuvah—the possibility of return, to start anew and wash away the past. Teshuvah allows us to rise above the limitations imposed by time and makes it possible to affect our life retroactively. A single immersion in the Mikvah late in life may appear insignificant to some. Yet coupled with dedication and awe, it is a monumental feat; it brings purity and its regenerative power not only to the present and future, but even to one's past. (Rivky Slonim, The Mikvah - From Mikvah.org)

At this stage of life, we are different from when we were younger, our needs and relationships have matured and changed. As people, we can cherish this time that we have to spend with our spouses without the boundaries of the laws of niddah. Indeed, G-d must feel that we have no need of that particular aspect any longer at this point of life. As many who have gone through the 30 to 35 years or more of observance of these laws will attest, they look forward to the next phase of life, the next stage, with all its own gifts to present.

Yoetzet Halacha & Maayanot

To support the fulfilment of the mitzvah of Mikvah, over the last decade the Women's Learning Institute Nishmat created a programme of learning so women could be trained in the complex laws surrounding Tumah and Tahara – spiritual impurity and spiritual purity. This was so successful, with many women going all over the world to act as 'yoetzot halacha' – helpers in Jewish law. There is now a hotline – the Nishmat Yoetzet Hotline www.yoetzot.org/hotline/ available internationally for any questions you may have surrounding Jewish Law and women.

Finchley United Synagogue has the only UK Yoetzet Halacha –

Rebbetzin Lauren Levin

This programme has enabled women to support women, as some prefer asking sensitive and personal questions to a woman. Although the yoetzot are not rabbonim, they are able to go directly to the rabbonim for any areas of specific Jewish law that they are not able to give advice on.

In 2016 the Chief Rabbi created a programme of learning to enable women in the UK to learn to support women in these areas as well. These women are named 'Maayanot' and are also available in your local area. Our closest Maayan is **Rebbetzin Jacqueline Feldman** in Bushey United Synagogue.

Women's Health & Wellbeing

Chai Cancer Care

Chai Cancer Care is the Jewish Community's Cancer Support Organisation, providing services for patients, their families and friends affected by a cancer diagnosis. **0808 808 4567**
www.chaicancercare.org

Chana

Chana supports couples in the Jewish community who may feel isolated and need medical information and support to help them deal with the challenge of infertility. **020 8203 8455**
(Confidential helplines: 020 8201 5774 and 020 8800 0018) www.chana.org.uk

JAMI

JAMI provide practical and emotional support for everyone affected by a mental health problem, the person with the diagnosis, friend, relative or employer. **020 8458 2223** www.jamiuk.org

Jewish Marriage Council (JMC)

The JMC provides sensitive support for Jewish individuals, couples and families. Services include counselling, advice as well as courses, workshops and support groups. **020 8203 6311** www.jmc-uk.org

Jewish Women's Aid (JWA)

Jewish Women's Aid is the only specialist organisation in the UK supporting Jewish women and children affected by domestic abuse & sexual violence. **020 8445 8060**
(Domestic Abuse Helpline 0808 801 0500
Sexual Violence Helpline 0808 801 0656)
www.jwa.org.uk

Migdal Emunah

Migdal Emunah provides a support service for Jewish victims of sexual abuse and their families. **07899 814 137**
www.migdalemunah.org.uk

Paperweight

Lifts the burden of bureaucracy for people who are in crisis. Paperweight support with financial, legal, benefits or any other issues related to paperwork. **020 8455 4996**
www.paperweight.org.uk

Yad Laem

Yad Laem cares for women who have recently given birth by providing meals, household assistance and putting mothers in touch with appropriate health carers when needed. **07886 483 463** or **07948 721 593** yadlaem123@gmail.com

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Our Community



The**US**

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