

*“More than the voices of great waters and more than the mightiest breakers of the sea, is the Lord mighty on high. Your testimonies are very faithful to Your house, the dwelling of holiness, O Lord, to the length of days” (Tehillim 93)*

## **Public Announcement on *Tevilla* in a Mikveh during the Covid-19 Outbreak**

**Nishmat’s Yoatzot Halacha are responding to the situations and emotions that women and couples are dealing with during the outbreak of Covid-19 and recognize the difficulties facing women in conditions of uncertainty in all areas of their lives.**

Adhering to Halacha in general, and *Taharat Hamishpacha* in particular, is of paramount importance especially at a time when our eyes are turned upwards for Hashem’s mercy.

Nishmat’s *Yoatzot Halacha*, together with its Rabbis, are involved in answering questions and writing halachic guidelines on *Taharat Hamishpacha* and *tevilla* in these times, while constantly consulting with senior officials in Israel’s Ministry of Health.

***Tevilla* in a kosher mikveh is a halachic prerequisite for *tahara* and ending the separation of husband and wife.** Should a woman be unable to immerse the end of her seven clean days, the laws pertaining to conduct while *niddah* (*harchakot*) remain in place.

Research and testing has found that the Coronavirus does not survive in chlorinated water. After many consultations with senior virologists at the Ministry of Health, we conclude that *mikvehs* that are supervised and run under the updated guidelines of the Ministry of Health and the Ministry for Religious Services are safe for immersion, without place for concern of contracting the virus during immersion. Over-chlorination of the water is also dangerous, so we must abide by the specific guidelines of the Ministry of Health.

**Women in quarantine, women with a fever, or women who do not feel well – are prohibited from coming to the mikveh and from immersing!**

Women in high-risk groups must consult with their doctor regarding whether they are permitted to leave their home, and should consult a halachic authority with their specific situation.

Should a woman be unable to immerse at the end of the seven clean days, she must complete the counting according to the original schedule and wait until she can immerse. In such a case, all *harchakot* remain until immersion.

### **Instructions for women going to the mikveh:**

- A. Do all your preparations at home.
- B. As of 26 March, 2020, Israel’s Ministry of Health requires calling the mikveh in advance and booking an appointment, in order to avoid any crowds at the mikveh.
- C. Wash your hands with soap for 20 seconds before and after immersing.
- D. There is no need to shower at the mikveh before immersion. You should check your body to ensure that there is no *chatzitza*, barrier to immersion.
- E. Even though contracting the virus by touching surfaces is rare, we recommend being cautious and avoiding unnecessary contact with surfaces at the mikveh.

- F. While at the mikveh, make sure to adhere to all Ministry of Health guidelines and keep a 2- meters distance from other women, including the *balanit*.
- G. Despite the statement above regarding safety of chlorinated mikveh water, if you are still concerned about spending too much time in the water, you can immerse only once, even if you generally immerse more times.

### **Instructions for the *Balanit*:**

It is mandatory to adhere to Ministry of Health guidelines and those of the Ministry of Religious Services as of March 22, 2020, as follows:

- A. The preparation rooms and corridors to the mikveh must be cleaned and sterilized after each use. You must ensure that the cloth is dipped in chlorine at a sufficient concentration to kill off the virus. For your own convenience and safety, you can use disposable rags that have been saturated in bleach.
- B. You must sterilize the handrail on the steps going into the mikveh between each use.
- C. You must be certain to use the stipulated quantity of chlorine in the mikveh (1.5-3 mg per liter) and add chlorine tablets, according to Ministry of Health's guidelines.
- D. If there is no filtering system in the mikveh, the water must be changed daily. If there is a filtering system, the water must be changed according to manufacturer's instructions.
- E. You must avoid touching the women coming to the mikveh. If a woman requests your help, you must use disposable gloves and change them between uses, as well as washing your hands with soap before and after donning fresh gloves.
- F. If possible, female volunteers may help sterilize the rooms between uses and make appointments for the mikveh.
- G. If any *balanit* is over age 60 or in a high-risk group, the local/religious council must find her a replacement.

Should the Ministry of Health or Religious Services change its guidelines, it is obligatory to adhere to the new rules. Please regard this letter as fully abiding by the official updated guidelines of the State of Israel.

Immersing in the ocean without a lifeguard is dangerous. This also applies to natural springs, where there also exists a risk of contracting coronavirus, as a result of no supervision over the water.

You can find [information and guidelines on Nishmat's Yoatzot Halacha websites](#), which continue to be updated in accordance with Ministry of Health regulations and in constant consultation with senior medical authorities involved in fighting Covid-19. The information on Nishmat's site appears in Hebrew, English, French and Spanish.

Nishmat's *Yoatzot Halacha* are available via hotline (02-640-4343) and websites in several languages ([www.yoatzot.org](http://www.yoatzot.org)).

*Yehi Ratzon* that the dedication to *Taharat Hamishpacha* even in our difficult times will bring merit to those women and all of Am Yisrael.

With prayers that “Our Father, our King, withhold the plague from Your inheritance”

**Hereby signed:** Rabbi Yaakov Ariel, Rabbi Moshe Ehrenreich, Rabbi Baruch Gigi, Rabbi Yehuda Henkin, Rabbi Yaakov Warhaftig, Rabbi Yosef Zvi Rimon, Rabbi Aryeh Stern

Rabbanit Chana Henkin

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