“..with darkness upon the surface of the deep (tehom), and the Spirit of Elohim hovered upon the face of the waters (mayim).” Gen.1:2 – 1\textsuperscript{st} day

- The world begins as water – everything else emerged from these primordial waters
  - 2 Peter 3:5 “...and the Earth was formed out of water and by water...”
  - All the rest of creation uniquely linked to the “waters of Eden”
    - 71% of the Earth is covered with water, 61% of body

- תוהמ occurs 37 times
  - Ex.15:8 “...the deeps were congealed in the heart of the sea.”
  - Mishlei 8:24 “When there were no depths I was brought forth...” referring to wisdom
Lower Waters - Upper Waters

Concept: *Mayim l’mayim*

- *Bereshit 1:6-7* “...and let it separate the waters from the waters. G-d....separated the waters below the expanse from the waters above...” – 2\textsuperscript{nd} day

- Waters above are male (closed mem, hidden), waters below are female (open mem, revealed) -- *y.Berachot 9:2 65b, Zohar 1:61b*

- Introduction of male/female -- with separation
Gathering of Waters

Bereshit 1:9-10: “G-d said, Let the waters beneath the heaven be gathered into one area, and let dry land appear. And it was so (v9). G-d called the dry land Earth, and to the gathering of waters He called Seas...(v10).” – 3rd Day

- v9 – gathered = yikavu = יִקְאֵו
- v10 – gathering of waters = mikvah hamayim = מִקְוָה הָמָיִם
- Concept of a mikvah established by v9
Instability vs. Stability

• Water is a fluid – constantly changing, no order

• Bereshit 1:2 – Earth is formless and chaotic
  – Bereshit 49:4 "Unstable as water..." – in reference to Reuben

• Life requires a combination of change (i.e. water, fluid / air, spirit) and permanence (i.e. land / dust, solid)
  – Only change = chaos and instability
  – Only permanence = death and stagnation

• Water is likened to change agent
Mysteries of Mayim

• Building blocks of life (physical & spiritual)

• Mem comprised of kaf plus vav -- 12
  – Kaf + vav = 26 as in HaShem (יהוה)

• Mem = 40, and 40 represents renewal / rebirth / purification
  – Lev.12:2-4 40 days of purification for a male corresponding to 40 days to fetus
  – Noach’s flood, years in Wilderness, days on Sinai, Yeshua in desert

• מים = (40 + 10 + 40) = 90 same as Tzaddi צ
  – Mayim is connected to righteousness
Mikvah

- **Root word is qavah קוה meaning to “wait, expect, look for, hope”**

- **Mikvah used 12 times – often translated as “hope”**
  - Jer.17:13 “Oh L-rd, the Hope of Israel, …the fountain of living water, even Adonai.”

- **Connotes an expectation of change in status**
  - For example, from tamei to tahor with respect to ritual purification

- **Mem is letter of transition in emet (truth) -- 2 Cor.5:17**
  - Aleph = past which can’t be changed – “old things”
  - Tav = future which can’t be determined -- haNolad = being born
  - Mem = present, thus a mikvah is a “gathering” of past, present and future

- Represents the womb of life

- Also represents place of death
Waters of the Womb

Mikvah waters below bring forth life:

- Picture of a womb – open Mem
  - 3rd day brings life (i.e. vegetation, trees, fruit, seeds)
  - Human life begins in womb surrounded by amniotic fluid
  - A new baby is born in complete purity (Ohalot 7:4)

- Iyov 38:8 “Or who enclosed the sea with doors, when bursting forth it went out from the womb?”

- Iyov 38:29 “From whose womb has come forth the ice? And the frost of heaven, who has given it birth?”
Waters of Death

Mikvah is picture of death & grave:

• Life in water lasts for a few minutes before death ensues
  - One who stops breathing is no longer among the living (Yoma 85a, Becharot 46b from Gen.7:22)

• Kever = grave = womb (Shabbos 129a, Nidah 21a, Ohalot 7:4)
  - May explain why a Mikvah must be built into the ground like a grave

• “When a person immerses, he is temporarily in a state of nonliving, and when he emerges, he is resurrected with a new status.” R.Aryeh Kaplan

• Romans 6:3-6 -- buried with Him through immersion into death....so that we might walk in newness (rebirth) of life
Rivers of Eden

Bereshit 2:10 “Now a river flowed out of Eden to water the garden; and from there it divided into four rivers.”

- Four rivers flowed out from the Garden

- Eden = Perfect union with HaShem

- Adam is separated and put outside (Gen.3:23-24)

- R. Eliezer - Adam sat in the river to show his repentance
  - water flowing from Eden was his only connection back to union with HaShem
  - Adam attempts to draw near via the water ➔ Heb.10:22

- “And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal....” (Rev.22:1-2)

- See also Ps.46:4, Is.33:21, Zec.13:1, Zec.14:8
Can a Man Be Born Again?

• “Born Again” – current term used in evangelical Christianity coined in 1970’s

• Yeshua & Nicodemus – John 3
  – Why was Nicodemus confused?

• Jewish conversion incorporates concept of rebirth via mikvah
  – R. Yose says, “...a convert who embraces Judaism is like a new born child.” (Yevamot 22a, 48b, 62a)
  – “As soon as the convert immerses and emerges, he is like a Jew in every way.” (Yevamot 47b)
M. Rabbah Bereshit 39:11 - R. Berechiyah says, “...it is written, ‘I will make you a great nation’ by which He meant, ‘After I make you a new being…”

• Evidence of this renewal is seen in the name change from Avram / אברם to Avraham / אברהם (Gen. 17:4)
  – HaShem imparts the Spirit via the ה
  – Hey represents the Spirit or Breath of G-d (Acts 17:25, Rev. 11:11, Ez. 37:6-9, Is. 57:16, Job 27:3, Gen. 2:7)

• Gen. 2:4 – small hey in “when they were created” or ב’hibaראם – ביבראהם
  – Also understood as “ba-hey-baram” or “in Hey were they created” (b. Menachot 29b, Ps. 33:6)
  – Rearrange the Hebrew letters of “baram” to spell “Avram”
  – Implies the Spirit (hey) remakes him as a “father of many”
  – New creation (2Cor. 5:17)
Abraham’s Immersion

Rav Shaul – sons of Abraham are those with the faith of Abraham (Gal.3:9)

• Our status changes when we **immerse** into Abraham’s faith

• Midrash Rabbah Bereshit 39:11, “And you shall be a blessing”
  – Read *brachah* as *berekah* meaning a pool of water (i.e. mikvah)
  – *G-d was telling Abraham, “Just as a pool purifies the ritually contaminated, so you will bring close those far removed from the way of G-d and purify them for their Father in Heaven.”*

• Consistent with Shaul’s theology:
  – We (gentiles) who were **far off** and have been **brought near** (Eph.2:13)
  – We are immersed into Messiah Yeshua (Rom.6:3)
  – Immersion into Moshe (1Cor.10:2)
Mikvah: Torah Definition

• *Vayikra 11:26,* “Only a spring or cistern, a gathering of water shall remain pure....”

• Hebrew transliteration: “Ach mayan u’bor mikvah mayim yihyeh tahor...” from which derive six criteria for a mikvah:
  
  – 1. Must consist of water – no other liquid will do.
  – 2. Must be built into the ground.
  – 4. Water cannot be drawn (by humans).
  – 5. Water cannot be channeled to mikvah via anything that can become *tamei*
  – 6. Must contain at least 40 se’ah (approx. 200 gallons)
1. Water – derived from the word *mayim*
2. In the ground – derived from the *ach* meaning “only”
   - That is only a natural spring / river or cistern / pit dug into the earth cannot become unclean – back to Gen.1:10
   - Bath tubs, showers, etc. do not qualify
   - *Bor* can be man made (Ex.21:33). See also Gen.37:24
3. Not flowing – derived from *mikveh* as in gathered in one place, thus contained like the seas in Gen.1:10
   - Except for naturally flowing sources which must have *mayim chayim* – includes springs, rivers, natural lakes and oceans
4. Cannot be drawn – *mayan* implies natural water from the ground; *bor* implies gathering of rainwater
5. No materials capable of becoming *tamei* – derived from “it shall be clean”
   - No wood, metal or clay pipes or channeling
40 Se’ah

- Derived from Vayikra 15:16, “He shall wash all his flesh in water.”
  - b. Eruvin 4b – 1 cubit x 1 cubit x 3 cubits or 40 se’ah
  - 40 se’ah = approx. 200 gallons or 25 cu.ft.
  - b. Mikvaot 6:3 – Twice the size of a normal man (20 se’ah)

- Bitul – something mixed with twice its volume is nullified (b. Gittin 58b)
  - Immersion involves self-nullification and rebirth

- Rachatz translated “to wash or bathe” for purification
  - 73 times in TaNak but understood to often mean immerse
  - 2 Kings 5:10 Elisha tells Na’aman to “go and rachatz”
  - 2 Kings 5:14 says, “…he went down and taval (immersed)”
  - Targum render rachatz as immerse in v.10 and 13
Mikvah Construction

- **Most common construction method is hashakah:**
  - Involves two borot: 1) a bor tevilah with invalid tap water, and 2) a bor hashakah with 40 se’ah of rainwater
  - Built side-by-side directly into the ground (not a vessel)
  - Share a common wall
  - Rainwater is piped from roof or ground into bor hashakah

- **To make the bor tevilah kosher a hole is made in the common wall**
  - Hole allows the waters to connect or “kiss”
  - Rainwater makes the tap water (sheuvin) validly kosher (Lev.11:36)
  - Hole must be a min. width of two finger breadths and at a certain position

- **Bor hashakah must not have any leak or it renders it invalid as flowing**

- **Bor tevilah can be drained and refilled regularly**
Preparing For Tevilah

- *Niddah* has completed her *shiva nekiyim*

- Evening of 7th day she goes to the *mikvah*

- On the day of *tevilah* she must remove any *chatzitzah* (barrier or obstructions) from her body
  - Process call *chafifah* – can be done at home or at *mikvah*
  - Wash entire body especially *beit hastartim* (hidden places)
  - Wash and comb hair to remove all knots or tangles
  - Examine body for any *chatzitzah*

- Any *chatzitzah* found immediately after *tevilah* invalidates the *tovel*
Performing Tevilah

- Female attendant must be present to witness and/or assist elderly or disabled
- Remove all clothing, etc.
- Must have proper kavanah (intention)
- Descend into the mikvah until the water is chest deep
- Immerse entire body (including hair) in water
  - Hands and feet open
  - Legs and arms apart
- Upon emerging the first time you recite the blessing
- Immerse a second time (or more depending on custom)
- After two complete immersions attendant will announce “kosher”
- Exit the mikvah
- Traditionally a time of short tefilah upon exit
Blessing for Tevilah

Baruch attah Adonai Eloheinu, Melech ha-olam, asher kidshanu b’mitzvotav v’tzi’vanu al ha-tevilah.

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Blessed are You, L-rd our G-d, who sanctifies us by your commandments and has commanded us concerning immersion.
Upon Returning Home

• Woman must announce to her husband she is *tovel* signifying her purification is complete
  – Just as she announces when she becomes *niddah*

• *Mitzvah Onah* performed that evening

• She does not shower or bath before being reunited with her *chattan* (husband)
Rabbi Akiba said, “Happy are you, Israel. Before whom do you purify yourselves? Who purifies you? Your Father in Heaven! Thus, it is written, ‘I will sprinkle pure water on you and you shall be clean’ (Ez.36:25). And, it is written, ‘Adonai is Israel’s mikvah’ (Jer.14:8). -- Yoma 8:9

“Who can bring clean out of unclean, if not the One?” – Iyov 14:4

“I immerse in water for repentance….but He (Yeshua) will immerse you with the Spirit and fire.” – Matt.3:11

“For the Lamb in the center of the throne will be their Shepherd, and will guide them to the springs of the water of life; and G-d will wipe every tear from their eyes.” – Rev. 7:17
Resource List

Kitzur Shulcan Aruch, R. Yoseph Caro, Metsudah Publications

A Woman’s Guide to the Laws of Niddah, Rabbi Binyomin Frost, Artscroll

A Lifetime Companion to the Laws of Jewish Family Life, Deena R. Zimmerman, Urim Publications

Talmud Bavli, Soncino Press

Mishnah: Tractate Mikvaot, Artscroll

Mishnah: Tractate Yoma, Artscroll

Waters of Eden, Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan, Orthodox Union

Total Immersion: A Mikvah Anthology, Rivkah Slonim, Urim Publications

In His Own Words, Grant Luton, Beth Tikkun Publishing

Wisdom in the Hebrew Alphabet, Rabbi Michael L. Munk, Artscroll

Midrash Rabbah Bereshit, Artscroll

Mystery of the Gospel, D.Thomas Lancaster, First Fruits of Zion

http://mikvah.org