



## THE HONG KONG MIKVAH

### Accessing the Mikvah

#### Women

- To make an appointment, please call the *balanit* at least 48 hours in advance at +852-9656-7377.
- Members of the community should meet the *balanit* outside the main gate to the Ohel Leah Synagogue on Robinson Road at the agreed upon time. Please be punctual.
- Visitors to the community should meet the *balanit* at the security desk in front of the Jewish Community Centre. Please remember to bring a government issued identification, such as a passport.



#### Men

- Enter through the Jewish Community Centre. A security or reception staff member will give you the key upon signing in. Please remember to return the key.
- You may also call security by pressing the button on the phone outside the mikvah.

#### Dishes

- Access is only through the Jewish Community Centre reception desk. A staff member will issue the key to the men's mikvah after payment of a deposit (currently HK\$50).
- Please ensure that the mikvah door is locked after use and return the key to the reception desk.

### Hours of Operation

#### Women

- Regular Hours: 7 to 9 pm
- Friday and Jewish Holidays: From candle-lighting until one hour after candle-lighting.
- After Shabbat and Jewish Holidays: From 20 minutes after *havdalah* until two hours after *havdalah*.
- Exceptions: In case of need, earlier appointments are accepted, but appointments after 9 pm incur a late fee.

#### Men

- Regular hours: 7 to 11 am
- Friday and Jewish Holidays: From 2 pm until one hour before candle-lighting.

#### Dishes

- Regular hours: 11 am to 5 pm
- Friday and Jewish Holidays: 11 am to 2 pm
- Please check with the JCC reception desk for updated schedules regarding cleaning and maintenance.



### Fees & Membership

#### Women

- Members: HK\$80
- Non-Members: HK\$200
- Late Fee: HK\$100
- Tipping: Please show consideration to the *balanit* and tip her for her efforts to accommodate your needs.

#### Men

- Members: HK\$40
- Non-Members: HK\$80

#### Dishes

- Members: HK\$20
- Non-Members: HK\$40
- If you have many items to immerse, please consider donating an amount representative of your needs.

#### Membership

- JCC members should bring their cards. Synagogue members will be identified by a list.
- Please call the JCC office at +852-2801-5440 for membership enquiries. Donations are always welcome.

### History & Significance

The mikvah, or ritual bath, plays a fundamental role in Jewish life. Immersion in its waters provides the means of spiritual change and "rebirth". It is therefore used not only for mundane matters, such as rendering utensils fit for use in a kitchen, but also by men in preparation for prayer, by converts in order to complete the conversion process, and by women in observation of the laws of *niddah*. So crucial a role does the mikvah play in ensuring marital harmony, and thus the continuity of Jewish life, that, according to Jewish law, a community should build a mikvah even before building a synagogue.

It is assumed that Hong Kong had a mikvah at least as early as the building of the Ohel Leah Synagogue. This would have been an essential element for the strictly observant Sassoon family, who financed the synagogue's construction in 1902. Moreover, a water tank was located in what is now the courtyard between the synagogue and the Jewish Community Centre. This indicates that a mikvah was nearby.

The first mikvah, which several long-term community members remember, was built in 1937 through the generosity of J.E. Joseph. Memories conflict as to its exact location, but it may have been either in the present-day Kadoorie Garden, or close to the Beth Simcha house, which was used as accommodations for the Ohel Leah Synagogue rabbi. This mikvah fell into disrepair during World War II and, owing to a lack of funds, was not rebuilt. A commemorative plaque was displayed for many years inside the synagogue.

In the early 1970s, with the support of Ezekiel Abraham, and the Diestel and Caplan families, as well as other community members, and with the advice of



Rabbi Israel Porush (the unofficial chief rabbi of Australia), a new mikvah was built next to the Beth Simcha house. This would have been approximately where the Robinson Place pool, in the north-east corner of the property, is now located.

As part of the redevelopment of the property in the 1990s, the old Jewish Recreation Club, the Beth Simcha house and the mikvah were torn down in order to construct the two Robinson Place towers. This redevelopment allowed for not only the construction of the Jewish Community Centre, but also a new, modern mikvah in the south-west corner of the property. This mikvah was renovated most recently in 2010 through the generosity of the Ohel Leah Synagogue Trust.

Although its historic significance merits attention, it is the regular use of Hong Kong's mikvah in daily life, which is of greatest significance. By observance of the laws of the mikvah, our unique, Hong Kong Jewish community continually reaffirms the sanctity and centrality of Jewish practices, thereby ensuring the community's present stability and future growth.

To learn more about the mikvah, please contact the Ohel Leah Synagogue rabbi at +852-2589-2621.

Women who wish to make appointments to use the mikvah should contact the *balanit* at +852-9656-7377.

Hong Kong Mikvah  
70 Robinson Road, Mid-Levels, Hong Kong



Jewish Historical Society of Hong Kong