Women

• To make an appointment, please call the balanit at least 48 hours in advance at 852-9668-7377.

• Members of the community should meet the balanit outside the main gate to the Cheh Leash 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 the 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 when you leave.

• 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 give you 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.

Women’s Hours of Operation

• Regular hours: 7 to 9 pm
• Friday and Jewish Holidays: from candle-lighting until one hour after candle-lighting.
• After Sabbath and Jewish Holidays: from 20 minutes after havdalah until two hours after havdalah.

• Exception: In case of need, earlier appointments are accepted, but appointments after 8 pm incur a late fee.

• Men’s 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.

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 reasons, such as removing ritual uncleanness 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 Cheh Leash Synagogue. This would have been an essential element for the strictly observant Sassoon family, who financed the synagogue’s construction in 1932. 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 1927 through the generosity of J.L. Joseph. Memories conflict as to its exact location, but it may have either been in the present-day Kadison Garden, or close to the Beth Simcha house, which was used as accommodations for the Cheh Leash Synagogue rabbi. This mikvah fell into disuse 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 Evelyn Abraham and the Dwimmer and Chansky families, as well as other community members, and with the advice of Rabbi Israel Polon (the unofficial chief rabbi of Australia), a new mikvah was built next to the Beth Simcha house. This would have been approximately where the current mikvah of the property is now located.

As part of the redevelopment of the property in the 1990s, the old Jewish Recreation Club 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 southwest corner of the property. This mikvah was renovated most recently in 2003 through the generosity of the Cheh Leash Synagogue Trust.

Although its historic significance merits attention, it is the regular use of Hong Kong’s mikvahs for its daily, Jewish life, which is of greatest importance, by observation of the laws of the mikvah, and especially by the Hong Kong Jewish community. Continually reaffirming the sanctity and centrality of Jewish practice, thereby ensuring the community’s present stability and future growth. To learn more about the mikvah, please contact the Cheh Leash Synagogue at 852-2509-2621. Staff there at the office to make appointments to use the mikvah should contact the balanit at 852-9668-7377.

THE HONG KONG MIKVAH

70 Robinson Road, Midlevels, Hong Kong

Jewish Historical Society of Hong Kong

2013