

Losing Our People: What Have We Done Wrong??

Reflections of 30 years, by Imanuel Ravad - עמנואל ראב"ד

"A well = Mikva... and we will become Fruitful!" - "באר ... ופרינו" (B'reshit 26:22) 'According to the Baal HaTurim this Pasuk also alludes to the future! Thousands of years ago, the ancient Greeks already understood that without Mikva there is no Tikva, no hope for Jewish survival, ה"ו. They realized that the most effective means to annihilate Jews and Judaism, without needing to resort to bloodshed or Auschwitz-like gas chambers, is by closing the Mikvas, forbidding Mikva immersion and banning Mikva Education. That is why G-d had to miraculously cause an artesian well to appear inside the house at the time that anyone needed or wanted a Mikva to immerse in, in order to assure Jewish continuity in that era. **Yet our leaders today, thousands of years later, still fail to heed this message.**

By neglecting to provide the Mikva education needed for the Jewish survival of Ten Million of our brethren today, we are guilty of writing them off from the Jewish future! The failure to teach our youth the importance of Mikva is one of the key reasons why we are losing over 75% to intermarriage! See my article: "Intermarriage Cannot Be Stopped Without Mikva"

Even rabbis who have failed to get 10% of the Jews in their cities to observe Mikva refuse to allow an outsider to conduct a Mikva outreach campaign in their community, for a host of possibly real or unrealistic concerns, including the fear that the outsider will succeed where they failed.

The whole concept of Mikva immersion is considered too sensitive for public discussion in many circles. The Mitzva is supposed to be practiced with the utmost discretion, so as a result, even the most beautiful Mikva buildings are camouflaged, for the privacy of their users.

While such circumspection is necessary, it is also true that, "What is far from the eye is far from the heart and mind!" Many Jews do not observe this most basic and important Mitzvah simply out of complete ignorance, because, despite having grown up as active members in major Jewish communities, they have never even heard the word Mikva mentioned or recognized the Mikvas in their communities for what they are.

Here are a few examples from my Mikva outreach experiences:

1. At a national Jewish educators' convention, I was asked by a young professional: "From the 'Mikva=Tikva' slogan on your mobile billboard van, I recognize the word 'Tikva' as the national anthem of the State of Israel, but what is 'Mikva'? A word I never heard nor encountered in all my 27 years. Although I was born and raised Jewish, belong to a synagogue, where I was Bar-Mitzvahed, and our city boasts synagogues and yeshivas."

2. At another national convention, a married woman, the director of a Jewish school, told me: "Your Mikva material is so inspiring that it leaves me sad that I did not have the opportunity to immerse, since I was born Jewish, and did not require immersion for conversion."

3. Many rabbis in cities where less than 10% of Jews observe Mikva have said to me: "Do not to come to my territory! We have a Mikva, we know what it is and do not need your services! Sell your wares somewhere else!" In one such town, where I was forced to stay in the hospital for a week, when I came to the synagogue, the rabbi was away, but left orders that I not be allowed to speak, lest my subject offend the community. Nevertheless I was offered five minutes. For three I explained the Sedra, and for two I spoke about Mikva. Afterwards, I was approached by two married men who had been important members of the congregation for 20 years. They said, "You inspired us to immerse in a Mikva. Please tell us if there is a Mikva in town, or must we immerse at the beach?" They did not know that they were actually standing on the roof of the Mikva which was located just on the floor below.

In many communities, I had to conduct Mikva Education campaigns clandestinely, or have my Mikva education materials confiscated or discarded.

The Bible and the Talmud teach us that there is a direct connection between Mikva and Jewish survival.

Yerushalayim was saved in Chizkiyahu's era, 2707 years ago, because

in the entire land, there was **not even one little boy or girl, or man or woman** who was not well-versed in the laws of Mikva, and: "Great is learning since it leads to observance!" (Sanhedrin 94).

The message is clear:

1. Mikva is a prerequisite for our salvation and survival.
2. All Jews must learn and observe Mikva in order to save our people! It is not enough that you and I learn and observe Mikva. We must ensure that the entire Jewish people do so.
3. Mikva education should start at a young age using aspects which are not sensitive, such as: "immersion of food utensils" and "repentance requires immersion!" (See M'Harsha Sanhedrin 94). Learning about Mikva as youngsters ensures observance as adults!
4. Men can best teach by setting a personal example! Even if they do not have an obligation to immerse, they must show others by learning, teaching and immersing in Mikva. Therefore, the opening sentence of the Talmud is about men's immersion, while most of the other immersions are discussed in the very last volume of the Talmud.
5. We cannot stop intermarriage today without young men learning and immersing in Mikva. Purity leads them to appreciate the Sanctity of the Jewish People and all they have to lose through intermarriage.



Rabbi Ravad attending the United Jewish Communities General Assembly for the 29th consecutive year, lecturing and distributing Mikva Education materials, in Nashville, Tennessee, 1-3 Kislev 5768 (Nov. 9-13 '07)

6. Synagogues and schools should prominently feature food utensils Mikvas as well as posters explaining their importance, so that the subject of Mikva can be introduced at all times to young and old alike in a non-sensitive way.

7. Mikva education can be effective. See "Stunning Results" I have attained to appreciate what we can accomplish with effective educational materials and programs.

8. Mikva Education can and should be the first subject of Kiurv, and certainly not the last.

9. Parents and communities routinely invest \$10,000-\$20,000 a year in the Jewish education of each child, while for the Mikva education of Ten Million Jews, there is no community budget at

all. This must change. Mikva education must be made a community priority.

10. 10 Million Jews are in dire need of Mikva outreach, at a yearly cost that exceeds millions of dollars. **By neglecting to provide the money needed to assure their Jewish survival, we are guilty of writing them off from the Jewish future.**

11. Making Mikva education a community priority must be put high on the agenda of every Jewish organization.

12. No rabbi has fulfilled his responsibility until he has conducted a Mikva outreach campaign to all the Jews in his city, not just to those who belong to his congregation.

13. Start with mass public education by distributing Mikva educational materials, free of charge, to all the Jews of the city, before engaging in direct efforts, by addressing small groups or individuals one by one.

14. All of us share the responsibility equally. Local Mikva efforts do not exempt from global Mikva Outreach obligations, just as local taxes do not exempt you from federal taxes.

15. Committees of scholars and educators should choose the most effective and proven Mikva educational materials available today, translate and reproduce them in the languages used in every Jewish community in the world, and **distribute them globally to every young Jewish family, free of charge.**

16. Every observant family should strive to **contribute regularly** to a Mikva outreach campaign an amount at least equal to their family's annual expenditure for their daily and monthly Mikva use, currently **between \$200 and \$500.**

"I always wanted to know..." www.MIKVA-WHYME.ORG
by Imanuel Ravad, author - עמנואל ראב"ד

Don't Write Off 10 Million Jews: Make Mikva Education a Priority Now!

Please make and mail your tax deductible donations (IRS # 11-3380463 or Canadian receipt) to: Mikva-Tikva 1360-44th St., Brooklyn, NY 11219 - 6 Shvat 5768 (13.1.008)