

A Rainbow *Kavvanah* for the *Mikveh*

Carol Rose

In a conversation with Reb Zalman, we discussed the importance of the use of both imagery and the *mikveh* in the healing process. The *mikveh*, with its constant supply of “living waters,” is a wonderful image for our ability to renew and refresh ourselves.

When the body is stressed it becomes tense and the mind cannot function clearly. Creativity is blocked. New impressions cannot penetrate and what is already known cannot be expressed. The *mikveh* is a wonderful place for getting in touch with the need to stay “open.” Water is always moving in a *mikveh*; stale waters leave through one set of pipes and fresh waters are constantly being filtered in.

The following exercise is designed to keep creative energy flowing. When we recognize what it is that we no longer need in our lives, we can release it. Then we are free to receive new messages, new perceptions, that we can use creatively in the world. Our sense of “aliveness” is restored and we can begin to live healthy and productive lives again.

Breathe out slowly three times. Standing in the *mikveh*, feel like Noah, surrounded by water on every side. Sense how these waters wash away everything that is no longer necessary in your life now. Breathe out and go under the waters. Come to the surface feeling secure in the knowledge that your ark (your body) is constructed according to God’s plan. Recite a blessing of thanksgiving (“Blessed are You, Source of Life, who has made me according to Your will” is one possibility). Feel how powerful this knowledge makes you. Sense how your ark is full of life—all forms of life. Know what it means to be “created in the image of your Maker.” See where you may put your life energy to work in the world (in the coming month). Pay close attention to the details of this work, knowing just what amount of energy is needed for your tasks. See how sorting out these aspects of yourself and of your power can help you in all of your relationships.

Breathe out. Imagine the glow of the topaz (the stone said to bring light to Noah's ark) shining brightly. See yourself under this light. Feel its reflection in the waters around you. Know that this light comes from within you and shines outward. Feel your radiance and know that its particular glow is needed in the world. See how this light brings clarity, insight, and brilliance to the world.

Breathe out. Like Noah, send a dove out from your ark. Allow it to find a safe place to land. Let your dove return to you with a token. Keep this image with you during the coming month. Now set your dove free. Release all of the life within you and allow it, too, to find a suitable place to live in the world.

Breathe out and go under the water again. Imagine yourself surrounded by the colors of the rainbow—the Brit—the sign of the

covenant. See yourself entering each color of the rainbow as you submerge yourself in the waters. Know that each color brings you new vision. Open your eyes and leave the *mikveh* confident in your ability to see where to invest your life energy during the next month.

I have heard it said, in the name of the Baal Shem Tov, that “we were created with two eyes in order to see more clearly. One eye helps us to look at the world around us and the other eye allows us to focus on the world within.” Whether we are engaged in the process of “seeing”—internally or externally—our bodies respond to visual information in a similar manner. Thus, whether the focus is internal or external, the process of “seeing” brings about bodily responses. We enter the experience and react to it, regardless of whether or not we are conscious of the images.

This information has implications for our health and sense of well-being. While we may have little control over those images that come to us from the outside world, it is our inner images that we can influence and affect. When we learn how and when to use these “pictures in the mind,” we can actually improve our health and enhance our sense of purpose and direction.

In Judaism, the notion of *kavvanah* (intentionality) is a very significant component of prayer, of *davvening*. In order to achieve a particular goal or to arrive at a particular state, the supplicant “sets his or her sights” on the intended outcome before verbalizing them. In other words, the individual “images” what it is that he or she is praying for—first. Words come later. They help us to label and describe experiences, whether these are actual or hoped for. This gives us distance and allows us to analyze. However, it also causes us to detach from the experience once we have named it.

The practice of *kavvanah* keeps us in the experience. It allows us to be fully present and aware of the subtleties we encounter, in the moment. The exercise here is designed to stimulate the picture-making process. The goal is to encourage the individual to experience the possibility for change and growth inherent in the ritual itself. Rather than offering explanations, imagery opens the door to a new way of perceiving life and its challenges. When we see life, ours or the lives of others, from a slightly different point of view, we are able to respond in slightly different ways. Our habitual thinking patterns are broken and we are free to act in new and creative ways.

Remember that imaginal work requires concentration and only a brief amount of time. The axiom “Less is more” applies here.

This excerpt comes from “Introduction to Kavvanot for the Mikveh” by Carol Rose, in Worlds of Jewish Prayer.