**Introduction to Mikvaot**

Today most people are familiar with the "mikveh" usually translated as a "ritual bath." In modern halakhah it is mostly used for conversion and by women immersing after their menstrual period. Some men also have a custom of going to the mikveh but that is more as a custom.

Most people are not all that familiar with the laws of the mikveh which can be quite complicated. This is the topic of our tractate—what exactly constitutes a mikveh and who needs to immerse in a mikveh in order to become pure.

The Torah states that a zav, a person who has had an abnormal genital discharge must   
"bathe his body in fresh water; then he shall be clean" (Leviticus 15:13). The "fresh water" is understood as a living stream, in Hebrew a "maayan." In contrast, people with other forms of impurity must only "bathe his whole body in water" (Leviticus 15:16). This latter requirement is understood to be bathing in a mikveh. We shall talk throughout the tractate about what differentiates a "mikveh" from a "maayan" a living stream, how large a mikveh must be, and how the water must get into the mikveh. For now, I will merely quote the verses below that refer to what the rabbis call a "mikveh." We shall reference these as we continue to learn.

Good luck with learning Mikvaot!

Leviticus 11

31 Those are for you the unclean among all the swarming things; whoever touches them when they are dead shall be unclean until evening. 32 And anything on which one of them falls when dead shall be unclean: be it any article of wood, or a cloth, or a skin, or a sack — any such article that can be put to use shall be dipped in water, and it shall remain unclean until evening; then it shall be clean.

Leviticus 15

13 When one with a discharge becomes clean of his discharge, he shall count off seven days for his cleansing, wash his clothes, and bathe his body in fresh water; then he shall be clean…16 When a man has an emission of semen, he shall bathe his whole body in water and remain unclean until evening.

Numbers 31

22"This is the ritual law that the Lord has enjoined upon Moses: 22 Gold and silver, copper, iron, tin, and lead 23 — any article that can withstand fire — these you shall pass through fire and they shall be clean, except that they must be cleansed with water of lustration; and anything that cannot withstand fire you must pass through water.