

Ask the Rabba January 2022

I had a total hysterectomy two weeks ago and I wanted to know if you knew of any appropriate tefilot (prayers) to say when I go to the mikveh for the last time. I feel like I want it to be marked. And memorable (I mean for me). I appreciate any thoughts/suggestions you have!

Refuah shlema! There are indeed many things you can do to make this a meaningful and memorable moment for yourself.

Tehillim 121 is a great traditional option to accompany you in a moment like this, it can serve as a reminder that Hashem is a constant presence, no matter what troubles we are facing, and that Hashem is with you as you enter this new phase of your life.

If you're so inclined, you can also write your own tefilla to accompany you through this moment. Think about what you want to say to Hashem and to the generations of women before and after you in the holy water. You can frame it as a yehi ratzon, a harachaman, or just speaking from the heart - whatever moves you. You may also find inspiration in looking at tefilot which address other transitional moments in our liturgy, i.e. leaving the beit midrash, leaving the sukkah, tefilat haderech, and shema al ha'mita.

In addition, you can reach out to your closest community mikveh to see if they have any additional resources or alternative ceremonies which may appeal to you, to further add meaning to this transitional moment. If there isn't one near you and this speaks to you, feel free to be in touch with me directly and I can help you access these resources (or help you co-create your own ritual, which is not-so-secretly one of my favorite rabbinic roles).

May you find comfort in the mikveh waters as you experience this transition and may you find the right tefilot to accompany you.

I still don't understand how you can be Orthodox, a female, and a rabbi.

The simple answer is that I simply am what I am. The longer answer is as follows:

I am Orthodox because I keep kashrut, Shabbat, and taharat hamishpacha. I have Ahavat Hashem and Yirat Hashem, and live my life by two principles: v'ahavta l'reacha k'mocha and ivdu et Hashem b'simcha.

I am a rabbi because I have learned the halachot of niddah, Shabbat, kashrut, aveilut, and geirut from outstanding Torah scholars and passed semicha bechinot. Additionally, I had a phenomenal pastoral Torah and leadership development training to ensure I would enter the rabbinate as a well-rounded leader.

While I have the opportunity, I'll state publicly that I have no intention of changing Orthodoxy. I'm in it. I simply love Torah and love being able to share it with more people, and being a rabbi affords many more opportunities to do so (especially for those of us who do not desire to work in a pulpit or day school setting).

(If you are looking for teshuvot on this issue, I will direct you here:

<https://www.yeshivatmaharat.org/teshuvot-text>)