

Speizman Jewish Library

L'Dor V'Dor (From Generation to Generation)

By Amalia Warshenbrot, Librarian, Speizman Jewish Library

What to Do When Your Library Book is Overdue

OVERDUES

What do I do? What do I do?
 This library book is 42
 Years overdue.
 I admit that it's mine
 But I can't pay the fine —
 Should I turn it in
 Or hide it again?
 What do I do? What do I do?



In this poem by Shel Silverstein (copyright 1981 by Evil Eye Music Inc. used by permission of HarperCollins Publishers), our "hero" knows that he has borrowed this book from the library.

He can't pay the fine, so he hides the book and the overdue fines keep growing. I am sure that 42 years ago, overdue fines were less than five cents a day. Now in the Public Library of Charlotte and in

the Speizman Jewish Library the fines were gradually raised and are now 20 cents a day.

Can you calculate our guy's fine? I can't, but I can explain to you our reasons for charging overdue fines.

We are here to serve the entire community. Borrowing privileges are three weeks with one renewal for an additional three weeks. Most adults finish a book in less than six weeks. People who borrow a book for research can summarize the information or make copies of some pages.

All library users need to respect other users. If someone requests a book that is checked-out, we tell them when the book is due back. At that time they expect to get the book. Many times a popular book is on demand. Many community members wish to read the book of a guest speaker before he/she comes or borrow a book for a current event.

For example, before Chanukah, parents who volunteer to talk about the holiday in a public school need a simple children's book that explains the historical background and our traditions. Children's books are due one week after check-out because a pre-school child or his parent reads the whole book in one night.

While we are trying to order multiple copies of such books, we know that after Chanukah there will be very limited demand for the book, or a month after the guest speaker event, only a few will ask for his/her book.

In order to give the entire community the best service possible, we are asking our users to return the book by the due date that we stamp on a form in the book.

We also realize that if a child does not return the book on time he usually loses it and it starts the story of Shel Silverstein's hero. In the poem he finds it but hides it because he can't pay the fine.

By the end of the year 2001, the Public Library of Charlotte offered one week to forgive fines. In a conversation with Carol Myers, chief of Public Services of the Public Library, I found out that there were two main reasons for this one time gesture. The Public Library director hopes that out of print and other valuable books will be returned to circulation. They also hope that young people who are unable to borrow books because their fines exceeded the

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Donations to Library Funds in December 2001

BECKY SHULIMSON TRIBUTE FUND

In honor of the birth of the son of Marnie and Kenny Abramowitz from Sue Littauer.

In loving memory of Sherwin Palmer, father of Janice Bernstein, from Sue and Michael Littauer.

FRIENDS OF THE SPEIZMAN JEWISH LIBRARY

In honor of the engagement of Barry Speizman and Heather from Aileen and Sam Polk.

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Best-Selling Author Devotes Energy to Unexpected Project — A Mikvah

By Julie Wiener

New York (JTA) — With her novel "The Red Tent" in its 44th week on the New York Times bestseller list, one might expect Anita Diamant to be basking in the glow of literary and financial success.

Instead, the 50-year-old Boston author is using much of her new-found clout to build a mikvah, or ritual bath, in the Boston area.

Called *Mayyim Hayyim*, Hebrew for "living waters," the \$3 million mikvah is scheduled to break ground this summer and to open in 2003. Half the money will go for the building, the other half to endow programming.

The pluralistic mikvah — which will include not just baths but an educational center and reception room — is part of what Diamant calls a "mikvah boom" among liberal Jews.

Until recently, *mikva'ot* were used primarily by Orthodox Jewish women, who are required to avoid sexual contact with their husbands while they are menstruating, and end the period of separation by going to the mikvah.

And *mikva'ot* have had negative associations for liberal Jews.

Feminists in particular cringed at the term for the monthly mikvah ritual — *taharat ha'mishpachah*, or family purity — which they felt implied that menstruating women were unclean.

But as mikvah immersion becomes a standard part of Reform conversions, growing

numbers of Jews adopt or convert non-Jewish children, and new healing rituals are developed that use the mikvah for healing from rape and miscarriages, the baths are gaining new attention and acceptance.

"We're living in a time when, for the most part, liberal Jews are less defensive about old practices and are willing to re-examine, rethink and reclaim," Diamant says.

In the past decade, at least ten Conservative synagogues and several Reform temples in North America have built *mikva'ot*.

Sensing the change, some Orthodox groups — like Chabad Lubavitch — have started promoting monthly mikvah use more actively to non-Orthodox Jewish women.

A new Chabad-sponsored Web site (www.mikvah.org) displays photos of luxurious-looking *mikva'ot* and describes the monthly ritual as a way for a "woman to integrate her spiritual nature with her physical being, to connect with Jewish women throughout the world and across time, and to move closer to God."

It is perhaps not surprising that Diamant, who has introduced a whole array of Jewish traditions to readers and whose best-seller chronicles the traditions and rituals of biblical women, would take the lead promoting a ritual site associated with women.

"The Red Tent," which is narrated from the perspective of the Biblical character Dinah, was described by one reviewer as "what the Bible would be like if it had been written by women."

It became a sleeper success, popular with many book clubs. It also has been optioned for a movie.

Until "The Red Tent," Diamant had been known primarily as a journalist and as author of "The New Jewish Wedding," "The New Jewish Baby Book" and other books on tradition and ritual.

But Diamant says her passion for the mikvah project had less to do with her books than with her experiences accompanying

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VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

The Speizman Jewish Library is dire need of volunteers for an hour or two per week. Please call Amalia at 704-944-6763 during library hours.

Sundays: 9:00 AM - 1:00 PM
 Mondays: 9:00 AM - 1:00 PM and 2:30 PM - 3:45 PM
 Tuesdays: 9:00 AM - 1:00 PM and 2:30 PM - 3:45 PM
 Wednesdays: Evenings only, 6:30 PM - 9:00 PM
 Thursdays: 9:00 AM - 1:00 PM and 2:30 PM - 5:15PM
 Fridays, Saturdays: CLOSED

The hours change during schools vacations.