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A Kosher Mikvah Comes to Maplewood

By Sharon Mark Cohen



Rabbi Sholom Bogomilsky, spiritual leader of MJC (left), with project manager Jonathan Friedman and the inspecting rabbi from Mikvah USA as the foundation is formed for the first kosher mikvah in Maplewood.

(CREDIT: RABBI YOSEF BOGOMILSKY)

When the shomer raises her voice to declare “kosher,” a new day will dawn in Maplewood. As the Maplewood Jewish Center’s (MJC) administrator, and wife of the MJC’s spiritual leader, Rabbi Sholom Bogomilsky, Frumie Bogomilsky, director of their renowned KinderGan Preschool, now entering its 17th year, spoke candidly about the first kosher mikvah coming to Maplewood.

Bogomilsky noted, “You can daven anywhere, but a mikvah continues Jewish life.” A major factor



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for young shomer Shabbat families moving into the area, where there is already kosher food in abundance, the finest in Jewish education and many options for shuls, has been the absence of a mikvah. "From a Torah perspective," Bogomilsky added, "that was something that was missing."

"The building of a mikvah takes precedence over building a shul, buying a sefer Torah and all other mitzvaohs."

—The Chofetz Chaim, zt"l (Sefer Taharat Yisroel)

Just before the start of the High Holidays, the cement was poured for a kosher foundation to ready the construction of the very first mikvah in the Essex County city of nearly 25,000 residents, at the newly renovated MJC, located at 113-117 Parker Avenue in Maplewood. Thanks to a much-appreciated grant from Mikvah USA in Brooklyn and the generous donations of many contributors, the modern mikvah is scheduled to be in full operation to serve women in the community and beyond by early winter.

The handicapped-accessible building, which will include a Shabbat elevator, will have a private entrance to the mikvah at the end of a cement ramp, on the tree-lined side street of Burr Road. When young Rabbi Yosef (Yossi) Bogomilsky, the eldest son of Rabbi Sholom and Frumie, led a tour of the building still under construction, he pointed to the open foundation, showing how "it will have both a pit on top of a pit and a pit on the side of a pit. By building it in this way," he said, "[MJC] looks forward to accommodating and inviting any difference of view and opinion."

From a rabbi's point of view, it is not the lavish towels and pleasing soaps but the specifications of a kosher mikvah that need to be fulfilled. The MJC mikvah will have that and more. While touring the building and hearing what is planned, it was obvious that this is not going to be your grandmother's mikvah in the shtetl. Au contraire, "this brand new state-of-the-art mikvah will come with the most up-to-date amenities and design," according to Rabbi Yossi, "making it a welcoming environment and comfortable experience."

Inside the impeccably and totally reconstructed and lushly landscaped brick building, MJC will also house the beautiful synagogue sanctuary, as well as an enlarged preschool, which will be comple-

mented by the addition of extended child care hours. A brand new kosher kitchen is also being built adjoining the construction of a modern social hall. A seasonal indoor play center for the younger tots is located just down the street at the MJC Annex building on the corner of Parker Avenue and Prospect Street. To see the My Play Center schedule, visit the MJC website at maplewoodjewishcenter.org, or email admin@maplewoodjewishcenter.org.

In the December 8, 2016, Jewish Link article, "Maplewood Jewish Center Prepares to Expand," Bogomilsky was quoted as saying, "The installation of a mikvah completes the trappings of a community that provides all aspects of Jewish life. The eruv surrounds Maplewood, and now there will be a kosher mikvah in town, with Jewish early childhood care in a state-of-the-art facility, plus a beautiful shul." Currently, the closest mikvah to Maplewood is about a 20-minute drive from MJC.

"Maplewood has always been a nice community," remarked Bogomilsky. With stately homes, tree-lined streets, parks and accessibility by train to NYC, it appeared not to be missing anything for family life. Yet, as Bogomilsky emphasized, "The establishment of the kosher mikvah in Maplewood completes the trappings for a new up-and-coming community for Jewish life."

The women of the MJC have said that "having a Mikvah at MJC is really exciting; it's great that they can serve all the amenities of the Jewish community."

According to Mikvah USA, "The mitzvah of building a mikvah takes precedence over building a synagogue. A synagogue or Torah scroll may be sold to raise funds for the building of a mikvah. While the

synagogue represents the community, the Mikvah is a symbol of the family."

To contribute to the mitzvah of establishing the mikvah in Maplewood, or for further information, please call Frumie Bogomilsky at 973-715-5544 or visit the newly updated website at maplewoodjewishcenter.org.



Scenes from the interior of the new mikvah under construction in Maplewood.

Sharon Mark Cohen is a contributing writer at The Jewish Link.