

For Immediate Release

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Unveiling a Jewish Spiritual Journey:

***"The House of Secrets:
The Hidden World of the Mikveh"***

**Author: Varda Polak-Sahm
Beacon Press, Boston, Mass, USA**

"A fascinating book...[Polak-Sahm] views the mikveh as a house full of secrets: the secrets of women, the secrets of life, the secrets of love and purity." (Jerusalem Post)

'The House of Secrets' gives voice to women from all branches of Judaism as they open up about what the Mikveh means to them; how it fits in with their attitudes toward religion; its effect on their marriages and families as well as on their sexual, physical, and spiritual self-perception and on their relationship with God."

Varda Polak-Sahm considers herself a secular person. She viewed the **Mikveh** as an intrusion of the religious establishment into the private domain. Yet she respected the traditions of her Sephardic family, who passionately believed in the sanctity and importance of the immersion ceremony before one's wedding. So on the eve of her second marriage, she reluctantly returned to the same mikveh she had entered as a young bride years before, only to be astonished by

an immersion experience that felt hauntingly intimate and profound, like death and rebirth.

The revelatory nature of her experience spurred Polak-Sahm to pursue a searching and wide-ranging investigation into what the Mikveh is all about. As she discovered, despite the strict Orthodox roots of the practice, many women from all streams of Judaism use the Mikveh, often for personal reasons that have more to do with faith than religion. *The House of Secrets* gives voice to women from all branches of Judaism as they open up about what the Mikveh means to them; how it fits in with their attitudes toward religion; its effect on their marriages and families as well as on their sexual, physical, and spiritual self-perception and on their relationship with God. Already widely praised in Israel, this English translation provides a firsthand account of the power of ritual immersion for the growing numbers of women reclaiming this practice.

"A fascinating book...[Polak-Sahm] views the mikveh as a house full of secrets—the secrets of women, the secrets of life, the secrets of love and purity." (Jerusalem Post)

"Totally honest and full of surprises. Mikveh is not something we think of as a spiritual journey, yet clearly it is as Varda Polak-Sahm reaches deep inside herself and shares her personal discoveries and transformation and those of other women as well." (Blue Greenberg, Author)

"Her narrative draws you into the emotions felt by 'secular' Jewish women at the very concept of mikveh and the intimate stories and sense of sisterhood she came to know in her time spent there. She brings up all the objections that have been raised to the status inherent in the laws of ritual impurity, but she retains a loving, sympathetic ear to the stories she heard from observant women." (Carol Ochs, Hebrew Union College & Author)

"An intimate, nuanced look at a deeply private world. . . . Polak-Sahm shares the beliefs and feelings of a fascinating range of mikveh users. Many are Orthodox; a surprising number are secular; all have intriguing stories." (Stephanie Wellen Levine, Author)

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To find out more about the book and to place a purchase order, click on this direct link:

<http://www.beacon.org/productdetails.cfm?PC=2053>

Author Varda Polak-Sahm is available for interviews and readings from her book *The House of Secrets*. Contact her directly at: varda@sahm.com

Source:

Jona Rapoport

Jona Rapoport Artist Management

www.jonarapoport.com

Email: jona@jonarapoport.com