

***Ohr Kodesh Congregation
Funeral Practices Committee***

מדריך לטהרה
***Guide to Taharah
Practices***

-- For Men --

כסלו 5763

General Guidelines

A *taharah* team consists of a leader (*Rosh M'tahev*) and three or more members (*m'taharim*).

Taharah is not performed on *Shabbat*.

M'taharim should be dressed in clean, modest, clothing. Shoes should offer appropriate protection from water.

No person should be present in the *taharah* room other than the *m'taharim*.

Family members do not perform *taharah* for close relatives. For example, a son does not perform *taharah* for his father, brother or father-in-law. A close relative is generally defined as one for whom the family member would say *Kaddish*.

Jewish men perform *taharah* for men and Jewish women perform *taharah* for women.

Kohanim do not perform *taharah*.

No conversation should take place in the presence of the *met* except for matters regarding the *taharah*. Discussion of the *met's* personality, disease, family problems, etc. is inappropriate. However, it is helpful to understand the cause of death and what is known about the *met* before beginning the *taharah*. Such information should be shared prior to arrival or to entering the *taharah* room.

Ideally, *taharah* is done within three hours of burial. That ideal is most frequently impossible. The *chevrah kadishah* should strive to schedule the *taharah* as close to burial as possible and in a manner that demonstrates *kavod hamet*.

Steps in a *Taharah*

1. *Taharah* implements are brought out, *aron* opened, *tachrichim* laid out in the order of use, buckets of water are filled for washing the *met* and for *taharah*.
2. Hands are ritually washed without a *b'rachah*.
3. Protective clothing (gloves, mask and gown or apron) are put on.
4. *M'taharim* ask for *mechilah* in unison.
5. Following the initial prayer, the *met* is uncovered.
6. Bandages, tubing, jewelry or other obstructions are removed (see Appendix).
7. The *met* is washed to remove soil, excrement or blood (see Appendix).
8. Gloves are removed and hands are ritually washed without a *b'rachah*. New gloves are put on.
9. The *taharah* is performed.

10. The *met* is dried and dressed in *tachrichim*.

11. The *met* is placed in the *aron*.

12. *M'taharim* ask for *mechilah*.

Check Equipment and Supplies

Taharah booklet
Three buckets
Taharah boards
Scissors
Paper towels
Towels or sheets for drying
Sheets for covering the *met*
Tallit (preferably belonging to the *met*)
Earth from Israel
Broken shards
Tachrichim
Aron
Rubber/vinyl gloves
Plastic gowns or aprons
Gauze in a roll
Gauze pads
Head rest
Garbage can
String
Nail clippers
Nail file or flat toothpicks (for cleaning under nails)
Nail polish remover
Hand-washing vessel
Surgical or adhesive tape (preferably paper rather than plastic)
Spray bandage

Laying Out the *Tachrichim*

Tachrichim are laid out in the following order:

| | |
|--------------------|----------------------------|
| <i>Mitznefet</i> | Head covering |
| <i>Michnasayim</i> | Pants |
| <i>K'tonet</i> | Shirt |
| <i>Kittel</i> | Robe |
| <i>Avnet</i> | Sash |
| <i>Tallit</i> | Prayer shawl |
| <i>Sovev</i> | Covering cloth |
| | Bag from <i>tachrichim</i> |

Preparing the Aron

Remove the lid

Place a handful of earth near where the head will be, taking care that the soil will not fall through any perforations in the bottom of the *aron*.

Prepare the *sovev* to be placed into the *aron* later

Opening Procedures

Wash hands by pouring water from the hand-washing vessel over the opposite hand, alternating hands three times. No *b'rachah* is said.

Put on gloves, mask and gown or apron.

The *M'taherim* ask in unison for *mechilah* using the *met's* name:

_____ *ben* _____, forgive us for any indignity that you may suffer at the hands of this *chevrah kadishah* notwithstanding the loving care and concern that we will exercise during this *taharah*. Grant *mechilah* to us, our families and to the whole house of Israel.

Recite the introductory *Anah Hashem* prayer:

God of kindness and mercy, whose ways are merciful and true, You commanded us to treat the dead with true kindness and involve ourselves in their burial, as it is written, "you shall bury them." Therefore, may it be your will, Lord our God, to strengthen us to do our work in cleansing of the dead. Guard us from all injury and harm so that we not fail in our endeavor. Fulfill in us the Biblical statement, "The one who observes the commandments will not know evil." Recognize this deed of true kindness and fill our days with goodness. May God be merciful to us forever.

אָנָּא אֱלֹהֵי הַחַסֵּד וְהַרְחֲמִים, שְׁפֹל
אוֹרְחוֹתֶיךָ חַסֵּד וְאַמֶּת, וְצוֹיִתְנוּ לַעֲשׂוֹת
חַסֵּד וְאַמֶּת עִם הַמֵּתִים וּלְהַתְעַסֵּק
בְּקַבּוּרָתָם, כְּמוֹ שֶׁכְּתוּב: כִּי קָבֹר תִּקְבְּרֵנוּ
(דְּבָרִים א' כ"ג) וּבְכֹן יְהִי רְצוֹן מִלְּפָנֶיךָ, יְיָ הוּהוּ
אֱלֹהֵינוּ, שֶׁתִּשְׁמְרֵנוּ וְתַחַזְקֵנוּ לַעֲשׂוֹת
מִלְּאכְתְּנוּ מְלָאכֶת שָׁמַיִם זוֹ כְּרָאוּי, הָן
בְּטְהַרְת הַמֵּת, הָן בְּלְבִישָׁתוּ וּבְקַבּוּרָתוּ,
וְתִשְׁמְרֵנוּ מִכָּל נֹזֵק וְתִקְלָה, שְׁלֵא נִפְשָׁל
בְּמַעֲשֵׂה יְדֵינוּ, לְקַיֵּם בְּנוּ הַמְּקָרָא שׁוֹמֵר
מִצְוָה לֹא יַדַּע דְּבַר רָע. וְתַעֲמֹד לָנוּ זְכוֹת
מִצְוֹת וּמִיִּלּוֹת חַסֵּד וְאַמֶּת לְמִלְּאֵת יְמֵינוּ
בְּטוֹבָה. וְחַסֵּד יְהוּה עָלֵינוּ לְעוֹלָם.

Recite the *Chamol* prayer:

Master of the universe! Have compassion for ____ ben _____, this deceased, for he is a descendent of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, your servants. May his soul and spirit rest with the righteous, for You are He who revives the dead and brings death to the living. Blessed are You who pardons and forgives the sins and trespasses of the dead of Your people, Israel, upon petition.

Therefore, may it be Your will, Lord our God and God of our fathers, to bring a circle of angels of mercy before the deceased for he is Your servant and son of Your maidservant. And You, Lord, our God and God of our fathers, who concerns Himself with the poor, save him from all misery and a day of evil. Blessed are You who makes peace in the heights for Your servants and for those who revere Your name. Blessed is He who mercifully redeems His people Israel from all kinds of suffering.

Therefore, may it be Your will, Lord our God, and God of our fathers, to remember the merit of the sacred covenant which is in his flesh. Blessed are you who establishes the merciful covenant with mercy.

In mercy hide and disregard the transgressions of this departed, your servant. Deliver him from consumption by fire, for he needs your great mercy, and You, Lord our God, are good and forgiving to all who call upon You. Blessed are You, great in counsel and mighty in achievement in mercy. May he walk with righteous steps into the Garden of Eden, for that is the palace of the upright, and God protects the steps of the pious. Blessed are You who gives great mercy and abundant grace to the departed of His people Israel.

Amen. May it be Your will.

רבונו של עולם חמול על (פלוני בן פלוני
ופלונית) המת הלז שהוא בן אברהם,
יצחק, ויעקב עבדיך, ותנוח נפשו ונשמתו
עם הצדיקים כי אתה מחיה המתים
וממית חיים. ברוך אתה מוחל וסולח
לחטאים ולעונות ממתי עמך ישראל
בתחנונים: ובכן יהי רצון מלפניך יי
אלהינו ואלהי אבותינו שתסבב מלאכי
רחמים לפני המת, שהוא עבדך בן
אמתך: ואתה יי אלהינו ואלהי אבותינו
משפיל אל דל מלטהו מכל צרה ומיום
רעה ומדינה של גיהנם: ברוך אתה גדול
החסד ובעל הרחמים: ברוך אתה העשה
שלוש במרומינו לעבדיו וליראי שמו:
ברוך פודה עמו ישראל ממיני פורעניות
ברחמים: ובכן יהי רצון מלפניך יי
אלהינו ואלהי אבותינו שתזכור זכות
ברית קדש שבבשרו ויהיה פדיון לו
משרפת גיהנם ותחליצהו. ברוך אתה
כורת הברית ברחמים: ברחמים הסתר
והעלם פשעי המת הזה עבדך, משרפת
אש תחליצהו שהוא צריך לרחמיך
הרבים: ואתה יי אלהינו טוב וסלח לכל
קוראיך. ברוך אתה גדול העצה ורב
העלילה ברחמים. עם רגלי צדיקים בגן
עדן ודרוך, כי מקום ישרים הוא רגלי
חסידיך ישמור: ברוך אתה הנותן
רחמים גדולים ורב תחנונים למתי עמו
ישראל אמן כן יהי רצון:

Preparing the *Met*, *R'chitzah*

Once the washing containers are filled with lukewarm water, the *met* is uncovered. The *met* is never allowed to be placed face down. Genitalia are kept covered except when being washed.

A visual inspection is made thoroughly but quickly. Blood which flows at the time of death may not be thrown away. It is to be removed for burial in the *aron*. (See Appendix).

The *met* should be placed on three *taharah* boards. Pairs of *m'taharim* raise a portion of the *met* and slide each of the three moistened boards into place under the *met*.

The *met* is gently but thoroughly cleaned. Dirty nails are cleaned. If necessary, soiled nails may be clipped and set aside to be placed in the *aron* later.

The body is washed. The order of washing is:

The entire head

The neck

Right upper arm, arm, hand

Right upper half of body

Genitals

Right thigh, leg, foot

Left upper arm, arm, hand

Left upper half of body

Left thigh, leg, foot

Incline on left and wash right shoulder, back, leg, foot

Incline on right and wash left shoulder, back, leg, foot

Care should be taken to wash away all excrement. All washing must be done with water from the bucket. A hose must never be used.

The *met* is covered with a sheet.

During *rechitzah*, the following is said:

His head is burnished gold, the mane of his hair black as the raven.

His eyes like doves by the rivers of milk and plenty.

His cheeks a bed of spices, a treasure of precious scents, his lips red lilies wet with myrrh.

His arms a golden scepter with gems of topaz, his loins the ivory thrones inlaid with sapphire, his thighs like marble pillars on pedestals of gold.

Tall as Mount Lebanon, a man like a cedar!

His mouth is sweet wine, his is tall delight.

This is my beloved and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem. (Song of Songs 5:11)

ראשו כְּתָם פָּז קוֹצוֹתָיו תִּלְתְּלִים שְׁחָרוֹת
כְּעוֹרֵב: עֵינָיו כִּיּוֹנִים עַל-אַפְיָקִי מִים
רַחְצוֹת בְּחֶלֶב יִשְׁבוֹת עַל-מֵלֶאֶת: לְחָיו
בְּעָרוֹגַת הַבָּשָׂם מְגֹדְלוֹת מְרַקְחִים
שִׁפְתוֹתָיו שׁוֹשְׁנִים נְטָפוֹת מוֹר עֵבֶר: יָדָיו
גְּלִילֵי זָהָב מְמַלְאִים בִּתְרֵשִׁישׁ מְעִיו עֶשֶׂת
שֵׁן מְעַלְפֶּת סַפִּירִים: שׁוֹקִיו עֲמוּדֵי שֵׁשׁ
מִיִּסְדִּים עַל-אַדְנֵי-פֶז מְרֵאָהוּ בְּלִבְנוֹן בְּחוֹר
כְּאַרְזִים: חֲכוֹ מִמֵּתִקִּים וְכֹלּוֹ מִחֲמַדִּים
זֶה דוּדֵי וְזֶה רְעֵי בְּנוֹת יְרוּשָׁלָּיִם: נְשִׁיר
הַשִּׁירִים ה' יֵאָר

M'taharim again ritually wash their hands as before. No *b'rachah* is recited.

Taharah

Nine *kabin* (approximately 24 quarts) of water is used for *taharah*. Cool water is used.

The water is distributed into three containers. No more than three containers may be used.

The *taharah* boards should be checked to be sure that they are completely wet and clean prior to the *taharah*.

The flow of water from successive containers must occur without interruption. One *m'taher* should observe those who are pouring to verify that the water flow is continuous.

As the water is poured, the following is recited:

Rabbi Akiba said, "You are fortunate, Israel. Before whom do you purify yourselves and who purifies you? Our father in heaven. As it is said, "And I will pour upon you pure water and you will be purified of all our defilements, and from all your abominations I will purify you." (Ezekiel 36:25) And it says, "God is the reservoir of Israel" (Jeremiah 17:13) Just as the reservoir of the ritual bath purifies the impure, so does the Holy One purify Israel. A fountain for gardens, a well of living waters and flowing streams from Lebanon. (Song of Songs 4:15) And the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and shall have purged the blood of Jerusalem from the midst thereof by a spirit of judgment and with a searing breath. (Joshua 4:4) And I will pour upon you pure water and you will be purified of all your defilements, and from all your abominations I will purify you. (Ezekiel 36:25)

אָמַר רַבִּי עֲקִיבָא אֲשֶׁרִיכֶם יִשְׂרָאֵל לִפְנֵי
מִי אַתֶּם מְטַהְרִין וּמִי מְטַהֵר אֶתְכֶם
אֲבִיכֶם שְׁבַשְׁמִים שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר וְזָרַקְתִּי עֲלֵיכֶם
מֵימַם טְהוֹרִים וְטַהַרְתֶּם מִכָּל טְמֵאוֹתֵיכֶם
וּמִכָּל-גְּלוּלֵיכֶם אֲטַהֵר אֶתְכֶם: [ניחזקאל ל"ו]
כַּהֲן] וְאוֹמֵר מְקוֹה יִשְׂרָאֵל יְהוָה: [ירמיה י"ז]
יגן] מַה הַמְקוֹה מְטַהֵר אֶת הַטְּמֵאִים אֶף
הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא מְטַהֵר אֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל:
מֵעַן גָּנִים בְּאֵר מֵימַם חַיִּים וְנִזְלִים
מִן-לְבָנוֹן: [שִׁיר הַשִּׁירִים ד' טו'] אִם רַחֵץ אֲדֹנָי
אֶת צוֹאֵת בְּנוֹת-צִיּוֹן וְאֶת-דַּמֵּי יְרוּשָׁלַיִם
יְדִיחַ מִקֶּרְבָּהּ בְּרוּחַ מְשַׁפֵּט וּבְרוּחַ בְּעֵר:
[ישעיה ד' ד'] וְזָרַקְתִּי עֲלֵיכֶם מֵימַם טְהוֹרִים
וְטַהַרְתֶּם מִכָּל טְמֵאוֹתֵיכֶם וּמִכָּל-גְּלוּלֵיכֶם
אֲטַהֵר אֶתְכֶם: [ניחזקאל ל"ו כהן]

Each *m'taher* recites:

He is pure.

טְהוֹר הוּא

The *met* is thoroughly dried with towels or sheets.

Halbashah

[Dressing the *met* should be done with continuing concern for the dignity and respect of the *met*. *Tachrichim* must not be permitted to become soiled. If soiling should occur, including soiling with excrement, blood, puss or dirt, the *taharah* is not repeated, but the soiled *tachrichim* are replaced.]

Put the *mitznefet* over the head, covering the entire face and back of the head down to the neck. Other cords are used to tie the sleeves closed.

Michnasayim are drawn up the legs to the waist. It may be necessary to raise the *met* from side to side in order to slide the legs up.

The *k'tonet* is put on sleeves first and then pulled over the head and drawn down to the waist. The ends of the cords are twisted around four times as one *m'taher* counts *alef, bet, gimel, dalet*. The cord is then tied with two bows pointing toward the head.

The *kittel* is put on in the same manner as the *k'tonet*.

The *avnet* is placed around the body over the *kittel*. The ends are wound around four times as with the *k'tonet* but tied with three bows in the shape of the Hebrew letter *shin*. The loops of the bow should be toward the head.

Placing the *Met* in the *Aron*

Bring the *aron* close to the *met*.

Put the *sovev* in the *aron* in a diamond configuration.

Put the *tallit* in the *aron* on top of the *sovev*. Cut off one of the *tzitzit* and place it in the bottom of the *aron*.

Lift the *met* into the *aron*.

Place shards on the face of the *met* over the eyes and mouth.

Wrap the *tallit* around the *met*.

Wrap the *sovev* over the *met* first over the head, then feet, then around the body.

Sprinkle a small amount of earth over the *met*.

Any other articles which are to be buried with the *met* (false teeth, loose hair, blood stained articles, nails, etc) should now be placed in the foot of the *aron*. Efforts should be taken (for example placing them in *tachrichim* bag and wrapping in straw) to prevent these articles from making noise or slipping through perforations in the bottom of the *aron*.

The *M'taherim* say together:

 ben , **forgive us for any indignity that you may have suffered at the hands of this *chevrah kadishah* notwithstanding the loving care and concern that we exercised during this *taharah*. Grant *mechilah* to us, our families and to the whole house of Israel.**

The *aron* is closed. Once closed the *aron* is not be re-opened.

Light a *yartzheit* candle at the foot of the *aron* and recite the following:

הִנֵּה מִטּוֹתוֹ שְׁלֹשְׁמָה שְׁשִׁים גְּבוּרִים סָבִיב לָהּ מִגְּבוּרֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל: כָּלֵם אַחֲזִי חֶרֶב מְלֻמְדִי
מִלְחָמָה אִישׁ חֶרְבוֹ עַל-יָרְכוֹ מִפֶּתַח בְּלִילוֹת: [שִׁיר הַשִּׁירִים ג' ז']

בְּרַכָּךְ יְהוָה וְיִשְׁמְרֶךָ: יָאֵר יְהוָה | פָּנָיו אֵלֶיךָ וַיִּחַנְדֶּךָ: יִשָּׂא יְהוָה | פָּנָיו אֵלֶיךָ וְיִשֶׁם לָךְ
שְׁלוֹם: [דְּבָרִים ו' כד']

Conclusion

All supplies should be cleaned and returned to where they are kept and the room should be cleaned.

All soiled supplies should be discarded. Supplies with excrement, blood or puss should be discarded in appropriately marked containers.

If it is not obvious from the shape, mark which end of the *aron* is the head and which the feet.

The *aron* is taken feet first to the place where *shmirah* is to take place and left in the care of a *shomer*. The *shomer* should be told both the Hebrew and English names of the *met*.

Members of the *taharah* team should wash their hands with soap.

Members of the *taharah* team should wash their hands ritually as before without a *b'rachah* outside of the *taharah* room (preferably outside the building) using cups of water.

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| Appendix Issues, Complications and Halachah |
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Blood that flows at the time of death may not be washed away. It must be buried. This can create a number of problematic situations which are addressed below:

Blood, bandages and tubing

If the *met* is wearing bandages, casts or tubing which, if removed, would cause blood to flow, these items should be left in place.

Protruding tubing can make the dressing of the *met* in *tachrichim* difficult. Tubing can be cut and tied closer to the body with string or gauze. Cut tubing with blood in it must be plugged (or crimped) and placed in the *aron* for burial. Tubing may also be kept in place but tied to the body.

Blood on the body should be wiped off with a towel or piece of sheet. The bloody sheet should be retained for burial in the *aron*.

If there is extensive blood flow, the source is covered and the body is not washed. If blood is flowing from a small wound, the hole can be covered with cotton or gauze held in place with tape or spray-on liquid bandage.

Sores (such as bed sores) which may bleed if washed may be covered with gauze pads and not wet either in washing the *met* or in performing *taharah*.

Blood mixed with feces

Bloody feces must be discarded. *Kavod hamet* supercedes the imperative to bury blood.

Death of an infant

Our practice is not to perform *taharah* on an infant that is less than thirty days of age. The child is wrapped in a white sheet or blanket rather than in *tachrichim*. A male child is circumcised without *b'rachot*. Rabbi Fishman should be consulted before *taharah*.

Patients who died from HIV (AIDS), hepatitis or other infections

Taharah is performed. *M'taharim* should wear double gloves. Blood and body fluids must be handled with extreme caution to prevent transfer of infection.

Glossary of Terms

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|------------------|--|
| Aleph | Hebrew letter (1) |
| Aron | Casket |
| Avnet | Sash |
| B'rachah | Blessing |
| Ben | Son of.... |
| Bet | Hebrew letter (2) |
| Chevrah Kadishah | Holy Society (Funeral Practices Committee) |
| Dalet | Hebrew letter (4) |
| Gimel | Hebrew letter (3) |
| K'tonet | Shirt |
| Kaddish | Prayer for mourners |
| Kavod hamet | Respect for the deceased |
| Kittel | Robe |
| Kohen | Descendent of priestly tribe |
| M'taher (im) | Member(s) of taharah team |
| Madrich | Guide |
| Mechilah | Forgiveness |
| Met | Deceased |
| Michnasayim | Pants |
| Mitznefet | Head coverings |
| R'chitzah | Washing |
| Rosh | Head |
| Shabbat | Sabbath |
| Shin | Hebrew letter (first letter of Shaddai, God) |
| Shmirah | Watching over the deceased |
| Shomer | Watcher |
| Sovev | Covering cloth |
| Tachrichim | Shroud |
| Taharah | Purification |
| Tallit | Prayer shawl |
| Tzitzit | Fringes on corner of tallit |