

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

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

-- For Women --

חשון 5764

General Guidelines

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

Taharah is not performed on *Shabbat*.

M'taharot should be dressed in clean, modest, clothing. Shoes should offer appropriate protection from water. A hair covering should be worn.

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

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.

A woman may perform *taharah* during her menstrual period.

No conversation should take place in the presence of the *metah* except for matters regarding the *taharah*. Discussion of the *metah's* personality, disease, family problems, etc., is inappropriate. However, it is helpful to understand the cause of death and what is known about the *metah* 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 hametah*.

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 *metah* 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'taharot* ask for *mechilah* in unison.
5. Following the initial prayer, the *metah* is uncovered.
6. Bandages, tubing, jewelry or other obstructions are removed (see Appendix)
7. The *metah* 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 *metah* is dried and dressed in *tachrichim*.
11. The *metah* is placed in the *aron*.
12. *M'taharot* 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 *metah*
Tallit (belonging to the *metah*, if desired by the family)
 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 coverings (bonnet and face cover)
<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 which contained the <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'taharot* ask for *mechilah* using the *metah's* name:

_____ *bat* _____, 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 their deed of true kindness and fill our days with goodness. May God be merciful to us forever.

אָנָּה אֱלֹהֵי הַחֶסֶד וְהַרְחָמִים, שְׁפֹל
אוֹרְחוֹתֶיךָ חֶסֶד וְאַמֶּת, וְצוֹיֹתֵנוּ לַעֲשׂוֹת
חֶסֶד וְאַמֶּת עִם הַמֵּתִים וְלַהֲתַעֲסֵק
בְּקַבּוּרָתָם, כְּמוֹ שֶׁכָּתוּב: כִּי קַבּוֹר תִּקְבְּרֵנוּ
[דְּבָרִים א' כ"ג] וּבְכֹן יִהְיֶה רְצוֹן מִלְּפָנֶיךָ, יְהוָה
אֱלֹהֵינוּ, שֶׁתִּאֲמָצְנֵנוּ וְתַחֲזֶקֵנוּ לַעֲשׂוֹת
מְלַאכְתֵּנוּ מְלַאכֶת שְׁמַיִם זֹו כְּרְאוּי, הוּ
בְטָהֳרַת הַמֵּתָה, הוּ בְלִבִּישְׁתָּהּ
וּבְקַבּוּרָתָהּ, וְתִשְׁמְרֵנוּ מִכָּל נֹזֵק וְתִקְלָהּ,
שֶׁלֹּא נִפְשֵׁל בְּמַעֲשֵׂה יְדֵינוּ, לְקַיֵּם בְּנוּ
הַמְּקַרָּא שׁוֹמֵר מִצְוָה לֹא יִדַּע דְּבַר רָע.
וְתַעֲמַד לָנוּ זְכוֹת מִצְוֹת גְּמִילוֹת חֶסֶד
וְאַמֶּת לְמִלְּאֵת יְמֵינוּ בְּטוֹבָה. וְחֶסֶד יְהוָה
עָלֵינוּ לְעוֹלָם.

Recite the *Chamol* prayer:

Master of the universe! Have compassion for ____ bat _____, this deceased, for she is a descendent of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel and Leah your servants. May her 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 she is Your servant and daughter of Your maidservant. And You, Lord, our God and God of our fathers, who concerns Himself with the poor, save her 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 her heart. Blessed are you who establishes the merciful covenant with mercy.

In mercy hide and disregard the transgressions of this departed, your servant. Deliver her from consumption by fire, for she 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 she 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.

רבֹּנוּ שֶׁל עוֹלָם חַמוּל עַל (פְּלוֹנִית בַּת
פְּלוֹנִי וּפְלוֹנִית) הַמֵּתָה הַלְּזוֹ שֶׁהִיא בַּת
אַבְרָהָם, יִצְחָק, יַעֲקֹב, שָׂרָה, רַבֵּקָה, רָחֵל,
וְלֵאָה עֲבָדֶיךָ, וְתַנּוּחַ נַפְשָׁהּ וְנִשְׁמָתָה עִם
הַצְּדִיקִים כִּי אַתָּה מְחַיֶּה הַמֵּתִים וּמְמִית
חַיִּים. בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה מוֹחֵל וְסוֹלֵחַ לַחַטָּאִים
וְלַעֲוֹנוֹת מִמֵּתֵי עַמְּךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּתַחֲנוּנֵינוּ:
וּבְכֹן יְהִי רְצוֹן מִלְּפָנֶיךָ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאַלֵּהֵי
אַבוֹתֵינוּ שֶׁתְּסַבֵּב מִלְּאַכֵּי רַחֲמִים לִפְנֵי
הַמֵּתָה, שֶׁהִיא אֲמִתְּךָ בַּת אֲמִתְּךָ: וְאַתָּה
יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאַלֵּהֵי אַבוֹתֵינוּ מְשַׁכֵּיל אֶל דָּל
מִלְטָה מִכָּל צָרָה וּמִיּוֹם רָעָה וּמִזְדִּינָה שֶׁל
גִּיהֶנֶם: בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה גְּדוֹל הַחֶסֶד וּבַעַל
הַרַחֲמִים: בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה הַעֹשֶׂה שְׁלוֹם
בְּמִרוֹמָיו לְעַבְדֶּיךָ וְלִירְאֵי שְׁמוֹ: בָּרוּךְ
פּוֹדֵה עַמּוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל מִמִּינֵי פוֹרְעָנִיּוֹת
בְּרַחֲמִים: בְּרַחֲמִים הַסֵּתֵר וְהַעֲלֵם פְּשָׁעֵי
הַמֵּתָה הַזֹּאת אֲמִתְּךָ, מִשְׂרַפַּת אֵשׁ
תַּחֲלִיצָהּ שֶׁהִיא צְרִיכָה לְרַחֲמֶיךָ הַרְבֵּים:
וְאַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ טוֹב וְסוֹלֵחַ לְכָל קוֹרְאֶיךָ.
בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה גְּדוֹל הָעֶצֶה וְרַב הַעֲלִילָה
בְּרַחֲמִים. עִם רַגְלֵי צְדִיקִים בְּגוֹן עֶדֶן
תִּדְרֹךְ, כִּי מְקוֹם יִשְׁרִים הוּא רַגְלֵי
חַסִּידֶיךָ וְשְׁמוֹר: בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה הַנוֹתֵן
רַחֲמִים גְּדוֹלִים וְרַב תַּחֲנוּנֵינוּ לְמֵתֵי עַמּוֹ
יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲמֵן כֹּן יְהִי רְצוֹן:

Preparing the *Metah*, *R'chitzah*

The washing containers are filled with lukewarm water. The *metah* is examined without removing the cover completely, and care is taken to keep her covered as much as possible.

The *metah* should be placed on three *taharah* boards. The *m'taharot* raise the *metah* one side at a time and slide each of the three moistened boards into place under the *metah*. The *metah* is never allowed to be placed face down.

The *metah* 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.

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 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.

During *rechitzah*, the following is said:

Your hair is like a flock of goats bounding
down Mount Gilead.
Your teeth white ewes, all alike, that come
up fresh from the pond.
A crimson ribbon your lips – how I listen for
your voice! The curve of your cheek a
pomegranate in the thicket of your hair.
Your neck is a tower of David raised in
splendor, a thousand bucklers hang upon it,
all the shields of the warriors.
Your breasts are two fawns, twins of a
gazelle, grazing in a field of lilies. You are
all beautiful, my love, my perfect one. (Song
of Songs 5:11)

שְׁעָרָךְ כְּעֵדֵר הָעִזִּים שֶׁנִּלְשׁוּ מִהַר גִּלְעָד:
שְׁנֵיךְ כְּעֵדֵר הַקְּצוּבוֹת שֶׁעָלוּ מִן-הַרְחֹצָה
שִׁפְלָם מִתְּאִימוֹת וְשִׁכְלָה אֵין בָּהֶם:
כַּחוּט הַשָּׁנִי שֶׁפִּתְתִּיךְ וּמִדְּבָרֶיךָ נֶאֱוָה
כְּפֶלַח הָרִמּוֹן רִקְתָּךְ מִבְּעַד לְצַמְתָּךְ:
כְּמַגְדֵל דָּוִד צוֹאֲרֶךְ בְּנוֹי לְתַלְפִּיּוֹת אֶלְךָ
הַמְּגֹן תְּלוּי עָלָיו כֹּל שְׁלֹטֵי הַגִּבּוֹרִים: שְׁנֵי
שְׁדֵיךְ כְּשְׁנֵי עֶפְרַיִם תְּאוּמֵי צְבִיָּה הָרוּעִים
בְּשׁוֹשְׁנִים: כִּלְךָ יָפָה רַעִיתִי וּמוֹם אֵין בָּךְ:
[שִׁיר הַשִּׁירִים ד' א']

M'taharot 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'taheret* 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 שְׁנֵאמַר וְזָרְקֵתִי עֲלֵיכֶם
מִיַּם טְהוֹרִים וְטַהַרְתֶּם מִכָּל טְמֵאוֹתֵיכֶם
וּמִכָּל-גְּלוּלֵיכֶם אֲטַהֵר אֶתְכֶם: [יחזקאל לוי
כה] וְאוֹמְרֵי-מִקּוֹה יִשְׂרָאֵל יְהוָה: [ירמיה יז
יג] מַה הַמִּקְוֶה מְטַהֵר אֶת הַטְּמֵאִים אֶף
הַקָּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא מְטַהֵר אֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל:
מֵעַן גְּנִים בְּאֵר מַיִם חַיִּים וְנוֹזְלִים
מִן-לְבָנוֹן: [שיר השירים ד' טו] אִם רָחַץ אֲדָנִי
אֶת צוּאת בְּנוֹת-צִיּוֹן וְאֶת-דְּמֵי יְרוּשָׁלַיִם
יְדִיחַ מִקְרָבָה בְּרוּחַ מְשַׁפֵּט וּבְרוּחַ בָּעַר:
[ישעיה ד' ד'] וְזָרְקֵתִי עֲלֵיכֶם מִיַּם טְהוֹרִים
וְטַהַרְתֶּם מִכָּל טְמֵאוֹתֵיכֶם וּמִכָּל-גְּלוּלֵיכֶם
אֲטַהֵר אֶתְכֶם: [יחזקאל לוי כה]

Each *m'taheret* recites:

She is pure.

טְהוֹרָה הִיא

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

Halbashah

[Dressing the *metah* should be done with continuing concern for the dignity and respect of the *metah*. *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 two parts of the *mitznefet* over the head, covering the entire face with the cover and the back of the head down to the neck with the bonnet.

Michnasayim are drawn up the legs to the waist. It may be necessary to raise the *metah* 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'taheret* counts *alef, bet, gimel, dalet*. The cord is then tied with two bows pointing toward the head. Other cords are used to tie the sleeves closed.

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 Metah in the Aron

Bring the *aron* close to the *metah*.

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

If a *tallit* is to be used, put it 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 *metah* into the *aron*.

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

Wrap the *tallit* around the *metah*.

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

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

Any other articles which are to be buried with the *metah* (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 articles in the *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'taharot* say:

_____ *bat* _____, 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 מִטָּתוֹ שָׁלְשָׁלְמָה שְׂשִׁים גְּבָרִים סָבִיב לָהּ מִגְּבָרֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל: כָּלֵם אַחֲזִי חָרֵב מְלַמְדֵי
מְלַחְמָה אִישׁ חָרְבוֹ עַל-יָרְכוֹ מִפֶּחַד בְּלִילוֹת: [שִׁיר הַשִּׁירִים ג' ז']

יְבָרְכֶךָ יְהוָה וְיִשְׁמְרֶךָ: יֵאָר יְהוָה | פָּנָיו אֶלֶיךָ וִיחַנְּךָ: יִשָּׂא יְהוָה | פָּנָיו אֶלֶיךָ וְיִשֶׁם לָךְ
שְׁלוֹם: [דְּבָרִים ו' כ"ד]

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 toward the door 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 *metah*.

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.

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 *metah* 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 *metah* 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.

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 space is at a premium, the blood portion can be cut from the larger sheet and placed in the *aron*).

Every effort should be made to stop blood flow in order to perform the *taharah*. 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. However, if there is extensive blood flow, the source is covered and the body is not washed.

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

Blood mixed with feces

Bloody feces must be discarded. *Kavod hametah* 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'taharot* should wear double gloves. Blood and body fluids must be handled with extreme caution to prevent transfer of infection.

Glossary of Terms

Aleph	Hebrew letter (1)
Aron	Casket
Avnet	Sash
B'rachah	Blessing
Bat	Daughter 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 hametah	Respect for the deceased
Kittel	Robe
M'taheret (ot)	Member(s) of taharah team
Madrich	Guide
Mechilah	Forgiveness
Metah	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