

PSJC *Hevra Kadisha*

*Taharah* Manual

מדריך לטהרה

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## INTRODUCTION

“Laying out the dead” is a time-honored ritual process, both spiritual and practical, that spans world cultures. In Judaism, this ritual process is the responsibility of the *Hevra Kadisha* (חברא קדישא), the Sacred Society whose members have presided for centuries over the burial practices of Jewish communities throughout the world.

There are five core practices that comprise the work of the *Hevra Kadisha*:

*Sh'mirah* (שמירה): Vigil-keeping from the time of death until burial;

*Rehitzah* (רחיצה): Washing the body to remove dirt and foreign matter;

*Taharah* (טהרה): Ritual purification of the body;

*Halbashah* (הלבשה): Dressing the body in *takhrikhim* / shrouds (תכריכים);

*Hashkavah* (השכבה): Placing the dead in the coffin (the actual “laying out”).

*Taharah*, the specific term for ritual purification, is also the word conventionally used to encompass all of the practices from washing to laying out the dead. This *Taharah* Manual is based upon the broader definition of *taharah*. The responsibilities of *sh'mirah* are presented elsewhere, in materials prepared by our *Hevra Kadisha* and others.

*Taharah* traditions have evolved over centuries and continents; the rituals are learned through practice and passed from one generation to the next. Over time, each *Hevra Kadisha* develops its own unique customs (*minhagim*) as appropriate to the values and needs of particular communities, in keeping with the general principles of *taharah*.

This *Taharah* Manual, like many others from which it has drawn inspiration and guidance, is another link in the chain of tradition. It is a work in progress, expressing our best understanding at this time of how to honor and care for the dead in our own community of Park Slope Jewish Center (PSJC).

Heartfelt thanks to all whose expertise and commitment are reflected in these pages; specific acknowledgements are listed at the end. This Manual was prepared under the supervision of Rabbi Carie Carter, and is offered in special tribute to all of the members of our PSJC community who have facilitated and participated in this sacred work.

*Rabbi Regina L. Sandler-Phillips*  
*September 2005 / Elul 5765*

## PREPARATION FOR TAHARAH

*Taharah* supply kits are kept with the *rosh metaher/et*, the leader of each of our men's and women's *taharah* teams. The kits should be checked between mobilizations for *taharah* so that supplies and materials can be replenished as necessary.

Before going into the preparation room, the team members gather in a meeting room of the funeral parlor where the *rosh* will share any pertinent information s/he may have obtained about the *meit/ah* (person who has died), including the Jewish name of the *meit/ah*, the circumstances of death, and the condition of the body. This is also a time to share and address any personal concerns that team members (especially first-timers) may have before beginning the actual *taharah*.

The basic rules of *k'vod hameit* (honoring the dead) are reviewed:

- Always refer to the *meit/ah* by her/his name (Jewish, if known).
- There is no conversation except as necessary to perform the *taharah*.
- Do not stand at the head of the *meit/ah* except when absolutely necessary.
- Do not pass anything over the body of the *meit/ah*.
- Follow the directions and decisions of the *rosh*. Any disagreements during the process should be aired and resolved later, after the *taharah* is completed.
- Details of the *taharah* are not to be discussed with anyone outside the team.

If *sh'mirah* (the vigil over the dead) is already in progress at the time of the *taharah*, the vigil-keeper/s on duty can continue to provide a sacred space for both the *meit/ah* and the *taharah* team by continuing to recite Psalms at a respectful distance from the room in which the *taharah* is performed.

At the end of the pre-taharah briefing,  
all members of the team stand and recite the following blessing together:

Source of kindness and compassion, whose ways are ways of mercy and truth,  
You have commanded us to act with loving-kindness and righteousness toward  
the dead, and to engage in their proper burial. Grant us the courage and the  
strength to properly perform this work, this holy task of cleaning and washing  
the body, dressing the dead in shrouds, and burying the deceased. Forgive us for  
any errors we may commit during this process. Guide our hands and hearts as we  
do this work, and enable us to fulfill the commandment of love. Help us see Your  
face in the face of the deceased, even as we see You in the faces of those who  
share this task with us. Source of life and death, be with us now and always.

*Except where otherwise indicated, the prayers and passages in this Manual should be recited in Hebrew by a designated team member who is comfortable with the language and understands what s/he is reciting. If no such team member is available, the words may be recited by one or more team members in English. At the discretion of the rosh, some or all passages may be recited in both Hebrew and English.*

## **Entering the Taharah Area**

Wash your hands (after removing any rings or bracelets) by pouring water alternately over each hand three times from a vessel, without reciting a blessing. Allow to air dry.

Put on gowns, booties and rubber gloves. These are universal health precautions, to insure the safety of the living as well as to give equal and respectful treatment to each *meit/ah*, regardless of the cause of death.

Cut and tear sheets in preparation for covering and washing the body during the *taharah*. Be sure to prepare large sheets as well as smaller pieces, for covering the face as well as for washing.

Rinse and fill three large buckets with cold water for *taharah*, and saucepans or other smaller vessels with lukewarm water for *rehitzah* (washing).

Open the package of *takhrikhim* (shrouds) and prepare the *aron* (coffin). Remove 1/3 of the straw from the *aron* and put it aside, along with some of the *afar* (earth from Israel), with the small pillowcase that comes with the *takhrikhim*. The rest of the straw should remain in the *aron*, and about half of the remaining *afar* should be sprinkled over it.

Lay out the *sovev* (winding sheet) from the *takhrikhim*, draped over all four sides of the *aron*. If the *sovev* is not long enough to extend over the head and foot, turn it diagonally. If it is still too short, be sure it is draped over the head. If the *meit/ah* will be buried in a *tallit* (prayer shawl), lay out the *tallit* over the *sovev* near the head. It is customary to cut off one of the *tzitziyot* (ritual fringes) of the *tallit* in which the *meit/ah* will be buried.

Lay out the rest of the garments on the edge of the *aron*, placing them over the *sovev* in the reverse order in which they are going to be used: First the empty pillowcase, then the *mitznefet* (head covering), *avnet* (sash for the waist, also called a *gartel*), *kittel* (robe with collar), *mikhnasayim* (pants), ankle bands (sometimes called *bendelakh*), and the *k'tonet* (collarless tunic). If the *meit/ah* is to be buried in her/his own *kittel*, it should be laid out under the *kittel* from the shroud set after any buttons or snaps are removed.

## Bringing in the Body

The body is brought into the *taharah* room feet first, and members of the *taharah* team gather around the *meit(ah)* to request *mekhilah* (forgiveness). *Mekhilah* will also be requested at the end of the *taharah*. If the person's Jewish name is not known, use her/his full English name.

All recite the following:

\_\_\_\_\_, daughter / son of \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, we ask your forgiveness for any distress we may cause you during this *taharah*. We will do everything possible to insure that you are treated with respect, and that all the elements of *taharah* are properly completed. Everything we are about to do is for the sake of your honor.

Recite Hamol (Prayer for Compassion):

FOR A FEMALE:

Master of the universe, have compassion for \_\_\_\_\_, the daughter of \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, this *meitah*, who is the daughter of Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel and Leah, Bilhah and Zilpah, Abraham, Issac and Jacob, Your servants; and may her spirit and soul rest with the righteous, for You give life to the dead and death to the living. Blessed are You Who forgives sins and transgressions of the dead of Your people Israel, upon petition. And also let it be acceptable before You, our Eternal God and God of our ancestors, to bring a circle of angels of mercy before the *meitah*, who is Your servant-woman, daughter of your servant-woman. And You, our Eternal God and God of our ancestors, Who is concerned with the poor, save her from all misery and from an evil day and from the judgment of purgatory. Blessed are You, Great One of kindness and Master of compassion. Blessed are You

(Continued on next page)

רְבוּנוּ שֶׁל עוֹלָם, חַמּוּל עַל \_\_\_\_\_  
בֵּת \_\_\_\_\_ וְ \_\_\_\_\_, הַמֶּתָה  
הַלְזוּ, שֶׁהִיא בֵּת שָׂרָה, רִבְקָה, רָחֵל  
וְלֵאָה, בִּלְהָה וְזִלְפָּה אֲמָתֶיךָ, בֵּת  
אַבְרָהָם, יִצְחָק וְיַעֲקֹב עֲבָדֶיךָ; וְתַנּוּחַ  
נַפְשָׁהּ וְנִשְׁמָתָהּ עִם הַצְּדִיקִים, כִּי  
אַתָּה מַחְיֶה הַמֵּתִים וּמָמִית חַיִּים.  
בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה מוֹחֵל לַחַטָּאִים וְלַעֲוֹנוֹת  
מִמֵּתֵי עַמְּךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּתַחֲנוּנֵינוּ. וְכֵן  
יְהִי רָצוֹן מִלְּפָנֶיךָ, יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ  
וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ וְאֲמוֹתֵינוּ, שֶׁתְּסַבֵּב  
מִלְּאֲכֵי רַחֲמִים לְפָנֶי הַמֶּתָה, שֶׁהִיא  
אֲמָתְךָ בֵּת אֲמָתְךָ: וְאַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ  
וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ וְאֲמוֹתֵינוּ מְשַׁכֵּיל  
אֶל דָּל, מַלְטָה מִכָּל צָרָה וּמִיּוֹם רָעָה  
וּמִדִּינָהּ שֶׁל גֵּהֶנֶם: בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה גְּדוֹל  
הַחֶסֶד וּבֹעֵל הַרַחֲמִים: בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה

Who makes peace in Your heights, for Your servants and those who revere Your name. Blessed is the One who redeems Your people Israel from all kinds of tribulation with compassion. With compassion hide and cause to disappear the wrongdoings of this *meitah*, your servant. From burning fire save her, for she is in need of Your great compassion. And You, our Eternal God, are good and pardon all who call upon you. Blessed are You, great in counsel and Master of achievement in compassion; with the feet of the righteous men and women in the Garden of Eden may she tread, for that is the place of the upright, and God's pious ones will be protected. Blessed are You Who imparts great compassion and forbearance to the dead of Your people Israel. Amen; may this be Your will.

הַעֲשֵׂה שָׁלוֹם בְּמְרוֹמָיו לַעֲבָדֶיךָ  
וְלִירְאֵי שְׁמוֹ: בְּרוּךְ פּוֹדֶה עַמּוֹ  
יִשְׂרָאֵל מִמִּינֵי פוֹרְעָנוּת בְּרַחֲמִים:  
בְּרַחֲמִים הַסֵּתֵר וְהַעֲלֵם פְּשָׁעֵי הַמֵּתָה  
הַזֹּאת אִמְתָּךְ. מִשְׁרַפַּת אֵשׁ תַּחֲלִיצָהּ  
שֶׁהִיא צְרִיכָה לְרַחֲמֶיךָ הָרַבִּים: וְאַתָּה  
יְיָ אֱ-לֹהֵינוּ טוֹב וְסֹלַח לְכָל קוֹרְאֶיךָ.  
בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה גְּדוֹל הָעֶצָה וְרַב הָעֲלִילָה  
בְּרַחֲמִים, עִם רַגְלֵי צַדִּיקִים וְצַדִּיקָנוּת  
בְּגֵן עֵדֶן תִּדְרֹךְ, כִּי מְקוֹם יִשְׁרִים  
הוּא רַגְלֵי חֲסִידֶיךָ יִשְׁמֹר: בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה  
הַנוֹתֵן רַחֲמִים גְּדוֹלִים וְרוֹב תַּחֲנוּנִים  
לְמִתֵּי עַמּוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל: אָמֵן, כֵּן יְהִי  
רָצוֹן:

#### FOR A MALE:

Master of the universe, have compassion for \_\_\_\_\_, the son of \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, this *meit*, who is the son of Abraham, Issac and Jacob, Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel and Leah, Bilhah and Zilpah, Your servants; and may his spirit and soul rest with the righteous, for You give life to the dead and death to the living. Blessed are You Who forgives sins and transgressions of the dead of Your people Israel, upon petition. And also let it be acceptable before You, our Eternal God and God of our ancestors, to bring a circle of angels of mercy before the *meit*, who is Your servant-man, son of your servant- woman. And You, our Eternal God and God of our ancestors, Who is concerned with the poor, save him from all misery and from an evil day and from the judgment

רַבּוֹנוּ שֶׁל עוֹלָם, חַמּוּל עַל \_\_\_\_\_  
בֶּן \_\_\_\_\_ וְ\_\_\_\_\_, הַמֵּת הַלֵּז,  
שֶׁהוּא בֶּן אֲבֹרָהם, יִצְחָק וְיַעֲקֹב  
עֲבָדֶיךָ, בֶּן שָׂרָה, רִבְקָה, רָחֵל וְלֵאָה,  
בִּלְהָה וְזִלְפָּה אִמְתֶּיךָ; וְתַנּוּחַ נַפְשׁוֹ  
וְנִשְׁמָתוֹ עִם הַצַּדִּיקִים, כִּי אַתָּה מַחֲיֶה  
הַמֵּתִים וּמִמֵּית חַיִּים. בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה  
מוֹחֵל לַחַטָּאִים וְלַעֲוֹנוֹת מַמְתִּי עִמָּךְ  
יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּתַחֲנוּנִים. וְכֵן יְהִי רָצוֹן  
מִלְּפָנֶיךָ, יְיָ אֱ-לֹהֵינוּ וְאֱ-לֹהֵי  
אֲבוֹתֵינוּ וְאִמּוֹתֵינוּ, שֶׁתְּסַבֵּב מִלֵּאכֵי  
רַחֲמִים לְפָנֵי הַמֵּת, שֶׁהוּא עֲבָדְךָ בֶּן  
אִמְתְּךָ: וְאַתָּה יְיָ אֱ-לֹהֵינוּ וְאֱ-לֹהֵי  
אֲבוֹתֵינוּ וְאִמּוֹתֵינוּ מְשַׁכֵּיל אֶל דֵּל,  
מִלְטָהּ מִכָּל צָרָה וּמִיּוֹם רָעָה וּמִדִּינָה

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of purgatory. Blessed are You, Great One of kindness and Master of compassion. Blessed are You Who makes peace in Your heights, for Your servants and those who revere Your name. Blessed is the One who redeems Your people Israel from all kinds of tribulation with compassion. With compassion hide and cause to disappear the wrongdoings of this *meit*, your servant. From burning fire save him, for he is in need of Your great compassion. And You, our Eternal God, are good and pardon all who call upon you. Blessed are You, great in counsel and Master of achievement in compassion; with the feet of the righteous men and women in the Garden of Eden may he tread, for that is the place of the upright, and God's pious ones will be protected. Blessed are You Who imparts great compassion and the many ways of petition to the dead of Your people Israel. Amen; may this be Your will.

שֶׁל גִּהְנָם: בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה גְּדוֹל הַחֶסֶד  
וּבַעַל הַרְחָמִים: בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה הַעֲשֵׂה  
שָׁלוֹם בְּמְרוֹמָיו לַעֲבָדְיוֹ וּלְיִרְאֵי שְׁמוֹ:  
בָּרוּךְ פּוֹדֶה עַמּוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל מִמִּינִי  
פוֹרְעֲנִיּוֹת בְּרַחֲמִים: בְּרַחֲמִים הַסֵּתֶר  
וְהַעֲלֵם פְּשָׁעֵי הַמֵּת הַזֶּה עַבְדְּךָ.  
מִשְׁרַפַּת אֵשׁ תַּחֲלִיצֵהוּ שֶׁהוּא צָרִיךְ  
לְרַחֲמֶיךָ הָרַבִּים: וְאַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ  
טוֹב וְסֹלֶחַ לְכָל קוֹרְאֶיךָ. בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה  
גְּדוֹל הַעֲצָה וְרַב הָעֲלִילָה בְּרַחֲמִים,  
עַם רַגְלֵי צְדִיקִים וְצַדִּיקִיּוֹת בְּגֵן עֵדֶן  
יִדְרוּךְ, כִּי מְקוֹם יִשְׁרִים הוּא רַגְלֵי  
חֲסִדְיוֹ יִשְׁמֹר: בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה הַנוֹתֵן  
רַחֲמִים גְּדוֹלִים וְרוֹב תַּחֲנוּנִים לְמֵתֵי  
עַמּוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל: אָמֵן, כֵּן יְהִי רָצוֹן:

## רחיצה / WASHING REHITZAH

The *meit/ah* should be on her/his back with feet facing the sink. If possible, elevate the head of the table by tilting the table upwards. Be sure that the drainage hole at the foot of the table is over the sink, so that the water used for washing or during the *taharah* flows directly into the sink.

Unwrap and undress the body and cover it with a large sheet. Place the head upon a headrest; the head should be protected from falling at all times during the process.

**As the body is uncovered and examined, recite *Vaya'an Vayomer* (Zekhariah 3:4):**

And [the angel of God] raised his voice and spoke to those standing before him, saying: "Remove the soiled garments from him"; and said to [the High Priest]: "Behold, I have removed your iniquity from you, and I will clothe you in fine garments."

וַיַּעַן וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל־הַעֲמָדִים לְפָנָיו לֵאמֹר  
הֲסִירוּ הַבְּגָדִים הַצְּאִים מֵעָלָיו וַיֹּאמֶר  
אֵלָיו רְאֵה הֵעֵבַרְתִּי מֵעָלָיְךָ עֲוֹנֶךָ  
וְהִלְבַּשׁ אֶתְךָ מַחֲלָצוֹת:



With the face and genitals covered, carefully survey the body and inspect for blood and other bodily fluids, as well as for wounds, abrasions and other conditions of the skin. Prepare a biodegradable bag to hold any bloodstained material. Within reason, all bloodstained bandages, clothing, rags, etc. should be collected for burial in this bag, which will be placed in the coffin at the foot of the *meit/ah* and buried with her/him.

Any problems to be addressed, such as bandages, tubes, open bleeding, etc., should be identified at this time. All foreign materials should be removed UNLESS this is deemed likely to produce excessive bleeding or otherwise threaten the integrity of the body. The principle of *k'vod hameit* (the honor of the dead) is our ultimate concern. Problems should be resolved under the direction of the *rosh*, who may consult with a more experienced *rosh* or rabbi outside the *taharah* room if necessary.

## Order of Washing סדר רחיצה

For our purposes, the “personal space” of the *meit/ah* extends above the body and over the head; this is where the *neshamah* (soul) is traditionally believed to hover during the period before burial. We respect this soul-space by not passing any materials or utensils over the body; we take care to pass them around the table instead. Similarly, we take care not to stand over the head of the *meit/ah*, except as necessary to support the head when washing or turning the body.

We begin at the top of the body and work downwards. Uncover only the portion of the body being washed, and then re-cover it. Begin by pouring water on the hair and washing the face with a cloth, around the eyes and nose and behind the ears, taking care not to pour water directly on the face or into the mouth. Proceed to wash the neck and right shoulder.

The right side is washed before the left, and the front is washed before the back. Clean the fingernails and toenails with toothpicks, and remove any nail polish. After washing from head to toe on the right side, cross the right leg over the left leg at the ankle and turn the *meit/ah* onto her/his left side to wash the right side of the back. Do the reverse for the left side. The head should always be supported when turning the body.

Respectfully clean the genital and rectal areas. Consult with the *rosh* about any excessive or repeated discharges of bodily fluids.

Collect any blood that flows from the body with the material on which it flowed (washcloths, etc.) in the biodegradable bag designated for this purpose. It will later be placed at the feet of the *meit/ah* in the *aron*.

As the body is washed, recite one of the following passages from the Song of Songs:

**FOR A FEMALE: *Hinakh Yaffah* (Song of Songs 4:1-5, 7):**

How beautiful you are, my beloved friend:  
your eyes are doves from behind your  
tresses; your hair as a flock of goats that  
trail down from Mount Gil'ad. Your teeth  
like a flock of sheep that rise from the  
washing-pool, that are all matched with no  
break among them. Like a crimson ribbon  
your lips, and your speech is pleasant; like a  
pomegranate is the curve of your cheek  
from behind your tresses. Like a tower of  
David your neck, raised in splendor; a  
thousand shields hang upon it, shields of  
the warriors. Your two breasts as two  
fawns, twins of a gazelle, that graze among  
the lilies. You are all lovely, my beloved  
friend, and there is no flaw in you.

הֵנָּךְ יָפָה רַעֲיָתִי הֵנָּךְ יָפָה עֵינֶיךָ יוֹנִים  
מִבַּעַד לְצַמְתְּךָ שְׁעָרֶיךָ כְּעֶדֶר הָעֲזִים  
שֶׁגִּלְשׁוּ מֵהָר גִּלְעָד: שְׁנֵיךָ כְּעֶדֶר  
הַקְּצִיבוֹת שֶׁעָלוּ מִן-הָרֹחֶצֶה שְׁכֻלָּם  
מִתְאַיְמוֹת וְשִׁכְלָה אֵין בָּהֶם: כְּחוּט  
הַשָּׁנִי שֶׁפִּתְתִּיךָ וּמִדְּבָרֶיךָ נֶאֱוָה כְּפֶלֶח  
הָרִמּוֹן רִקְתָּךְ מִבַּעַד לְצַמְתְּךָ: כְּמִגְדָּל  
דָּוִיד צִוְּאֶיךָ בָּנוּי לְתִלְפִיּוֹת אֶלֶף  
הַמִּגָּן תִּלּוּי עָלָיו כָּל שְׁלִטִי  
הַגְּבוּרִים: שְׁנֵי שִׁדְיֶיךָ כְּשְׁנֵי עֶפְרַיִם  
תְּאוֹמֵי צִבְיָה הָרוּעִים בְּשׁוֹשַׁנִּים: כָּלֶךְ  
יָפָה רַעֲיָתִי וּמוֹם אֵין בָּךְ:

**FOR A MALE: *Rosho Ketem Paz* (Song of Songs 5:11-16)**

His head is fine gold; his heaps of curls are  
black as a raven. His eyes are like doves at  
water-brooks; bathing in milk and fully set.  
His cheeks are like a bed of spices, towers of  
sweet herbs; his lips are lilies that drip with  
flowing myrrh. His arms are gold cylinders  
set with gems of topaz; his abdomen is  
polished ivory set with sapphires. His legs  
are pillars of marble, established upon fine  
gold; his appearance is like Lebanon, a man  
like cedars. His mouth is sweet, and all of  
him is delightful; this is my beloved and  
this is my friend, daughters of Jerusalem.

רֹאשׁוֹ כֶּתֶם פָּז קִוְצוֹתָיו תִּלְתָּלִים  
שְׁחָרוֹת כְּעוֹרֵב: עֵינָיו כִּיּוֹנִים  
עַל-אַפְיָקֵי מַיִם רֹחֲצוֹת בַּחֲלָב יִשְׁבוֹת  
עַל-מִלָּאת: לֶחָיו כְּעֶרוֹגַת הַבָּשָׂם  
מִגְדָּלוֹת מְרֻקָּחִים שֶׁפִּתּוֹתָיו שׁוֹשַׁנִּים  
נִטְפוֹת מֹר עֹבֵר: יָדָיו גְּלִילֵי זָהָב  
מְמָלָאִים בְּתַרְשֵׁישׁ מַעֲיוֹ עֶשֶׂת שָׁן  
מַעֲלָפֶת סְפִירִים: שׁוֹקֵיו עֲמוּדֵי שֵׁשׁ  
מִסְדֵּים עַל-אֲדָנֶי-פָּז מְרִאָהוּ כָּלִבְנוֹן  
בְּחוֹר כְּאַרְזִים: חִכּוֹ מִמֶּתְקִים וְכָל  
מַחְמְדִים זֶה דּוֹדִי וְזֶה רַעֲי בָנוֹת  
יְרוּשָׁלַם:

When the washing is completed, pour the remaining water from the pans down the table to clean it. Dry the *meit/ah* and the table with separate pieces of cloth sheet, and place a fresh sheet over the body. Once the washing is completed, all team members should discard their rubber gloves and wash their hands again, without a blessing, and put on a fresh pair of rubber gloves.

## טהרה / TAHARAH / RITUAL PURIFICATION

### Preparation for Purification

If three buckets (representing 9 *kavim*, or approximately 24 quarts) have not yet been rinsed and filled with cold water, they should be at this time.

Boards are now placed under the *meit/ah* so that the 9 *kavim* can flow freely over her/his body. 2"x4" varnished boards are dunked at each end into the buckets of water, and then placed under the body at the shoulders, hips, and ankles. Be sure that no part of the body is touching the table. The *rosh* will determine the best way for team members to support the head during the *taharah*.

**Before the water is poured for *taharah*, recite Amar Rabbi Akiva  
(Mishnah Yoma 8:9 and related Biblical verses):**

Said Rabbi Akiva, "You are fortunate, Israel. Before Whom do you purify yourselves, and Who purifies you? Your Father in heaven, as it is said: 'And I will pour pure water upon you, and you shall be purified' (Ezekiel 36:25), and it says: 'The *mikveh* / ritual bath of Israel is God' (Jeremiah 17:13). Just as a *mikveh* purifies the defiled, so does the Holy Blessed One purify Israel" (Mishnah Yoma 8:9). A fountain for gardens, a well of living waters, flowing from Lebanon (Song of Songs 4:15). And I will pour pure water upon you, and you shall be purified from all of your impurities; and from all of your abominations I shall purify you (Ezekiel 36:25).

אָמַר רַבִּי עֲקִיבָא, אֲשֶׁרִיכֶם יִשְׂרָאֵל,  
לִפְנֵי מִי אַתֶּם מְטַהְרִין, וּמִי מְטַהֵר  
אֶתְכֶם, אֲבִיכֶם שְׁפָשֵׁמִים, שְׁנֹאֲמַר,  
(יִחְזָקָא לֹ, כה) וְזָרְקָתִי עֲלֵיכֶם מִים  
טְהוֹרִים וְטַהֲרֶתֶם. וְאוֹמַר, (יִרְמְיָה יז,  
יג) מִקְוֵה יִשְׂרָאֵל יְיָ, מֶה מִקְוֵה מְטַהֵר  
אֶת הַטְּמֵאִים, אֵף הַקָּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא  
מְטַהֵר אֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל: מַעַיִן גָּנִים בְּאֵר  
מִים חַיִּים וְנִזְלִים מִן-לְבָנוֹן: וְזָרְקָתִי  
עֲלֵיכֶם מִים טְהוֹרִים וְטַהֲרֶתֶם מִכָּל  
טְמֵאוֹתֵיכֶם וּמִכָּל-גְּלוּלֵיכֶם אֶטְהֵר  
אֶתְכֶם :

## סדר טהרה Order of Purification

The three buckets of water must be poured in a continuous flow over the entire body. This is the only time during the process that the body of the *meit/ah* is completely exposed, so there should be no unnecessary delay between uncovering and re-covering.

As soon as the sheet covering the *meit/ah* is removed, one team member begins to pour the first bucket of water over the top of the head, and before the first bucket is emptied a second team member begins pouring the second bucket of water down the right side of the body. Before the second bucket is emptied, a third team member begins pouring the third bucket of water down the left side of the body.

**All team members recite the following three times as the third bucket is emptied:**

**FOR A FEMALE:**

טְהוֹרָה הִיא...טְהוֹרָה הִיא...טְהוֹרָה הִיא

*Tehorah hee...Tehorah hee...Tehorah hee.*

She is pure...She is pure...She is pure.

**FOR A MALE:**

טְהוֹר הוּא...טְהוֹר הוּא...טְהוֹר הוּא

*Tahor hu...Tahor hu...Tahor hu.*

He is pure...He is pure...He is pure.

If there is any break in the pouring, the three buckets of water should be refilled and poured again in a continuous flow, and the recitation is repeated.

As soon as the three buckets have been poured in a continuous stream, cover the *meit/ah* with a fresh sheet. As the body is raised to remove the boards underneath, spread another fresh sheet on the table under the *meit/ah* as well.

Dry the body carefully with the sheets, and replace the top sheet with a dry one (the bottom sheet will be removed during the dressing process).

## הלבשה / DRESSING HALBASHAH

Before the *meit/ah* is dressed, recite *Sos Assis*  
(Isaiah 58:11, 61:10-11 and Zekhariah 3:5):

Rejoicing will I rejoice in the Eternal; my soul will be glad in my God; for God has clothed me in the garments of salvation, in a robe of righteousness will God cover me; as a bridegroom puts on priestly glory, and as a bride adorns herself (Isaiah 61:10). And I said, "Let them set a pure headdress on his head," and they set the pure headdress on his head and dressed him in garments, and an angel of God stood by (Zekhariah 3:5). For as the land will bring forth its growth, and as a garden will sprout its seedlings, so will God sprout forth justice and praise in the face of all the nations (Isaiah 61:11). And God will guide you continually, and satisfy your soul in times of drought and strengthen your bones, and you shall be like a watered garden and like a spring of water whose waters never fail (Isaiah 58:11).

שׁוֹשׁ אֲשִׁישׁ בִּיהוָה תִּגְלַל נַפְשִׁי  
בְּאֱלֹהֵי כִי הִלְבִּישְׁנִי בְּגָדֵי יִשְׁעַ מְעִיל  
צְדָקָה יַעֲטֵנִי כַחַתָּן יִכְהֶן פָּאֵר וְכַפְלָה  
תַּעֲדָה כְּלִיָּהּ: וְאָמַר יְשִׁימוּ צִנִּיף  
טְהוֹר עַל־רֹאשׁוֹ וַיִּשְׁימוּ הַצִּנִּיף  
הַטְהוֹר עַל־רֹאשׁוֹ וַיִּלְבָּשֶׁהוּ בְּגָדִים  
וּמִלְאָהּ יְהוָה עֹמֵד: כִּי כְאֶרֶץ תּוֹצִיא  
צִמְחָהּ וּכְגִנָּה זְרוּעֶיהָ תִצְמִיחַ כֵּן |  
אֲדֹנִי יְהוָה יִצְמִיחַ צְדָקָהּ וּתְהִלָּהּ נֶגֶד  
כָּל־הַגּוֹיִם: וְנִחַח יְהוָה תָּמִיד וְהַשְׁבִּיעַ  
בְּצִחְצֻחוֹת נַפְשֶׁךָ וְעִצְמֹתֶיךָ יַחֲלִיץ  
וְהָיִיתָ כְּגֵן רוֹה וְכִמוֹצָא מֵיִם אֲשֶׁר  
לֹא־יִכָּזְבוּ מֵימָיו:

## סדר הלבשה / Order of Dressing

Portions of **Leviticus 16:4**, which describes how Aaron is to be clothed as the High Priest, are recited after the *meit/ah* is dressed in each of the corresponding garments. It is our *minhag* (custom) to proceed according to the order of the verse, placing the head covering last. However, care should be taken to keep the face covered while the body is dressed in the rest of the *takhrikhim*.

1. The *k'tonet* (collarless tunic) is most easily put on as follows: Lay the garment face down on the body, with the head opening toward the feet of the *meit/ah*. One team member on either side inserts a hand into the end of the sleeve, reaches around and down through the bottom of the garment, and draws the hand of the *meit/ah* into the sleeve. The sleeves are drawn up until the armhole meets the armpit of the *meit/ah*. A third team member gathers up the garment near the head, the *meit/ah* is lifted at the upper body and the *k'tonet* is pulled over the head and smoothed down over the body, crossing the legs to turn the body as necessary.

The ties at the neck are wound four times while reciting *Aleph, Bet, Gimmel, Dalet*, and tied into two loop bows (see diagram on next page). **Recite:**

[You] shall wear a holy linen tunic.... כְּתֹנֶת-בִּד קֹדֶשׁ יִלְבָּשׁ

2. The *mikhnasayim* (pants) are pulled over the feet of the *meit/ah*, and the *k'tonet* is tucked neatly into the *mikhnasayim* and smoothed down inside. Gather the pants at the waist and close the ties with four counted windings and two loop bows, as above. Tie each of the ankle bands the same way. **Recite:**

...and breeches of linen shall be upon [your] flesh.... וּמִכְנָסֵי-בִד יִהְיוּ עַל-בָּשָׂרוֹ

3. The *kittel* (robe with collar) from the *takhrikhim* set is put on in the same manner as the *k'tonet*. Care should be taken when putting on the *kittel* that the sleeves of the *k'tonet* are grasped so that they will reach to the wrists.

If the *meit/ah* is to be buried in her/his own *kittel*, there are a few possible ways to put on this (open) *kittel* (over the previous one, if possible) after its buttons or snaps have been removed. Follow the instructions of the *rosh*.

4. The *avnet / gartel* is passed under the body as a belt, taking care that it remains flat and not twisted underneath. It is wound around 13 times by two team members counting *Aleph, Bet, Gimmel, Dalet, Heh, Vov, Zayin, Het, Tet, Yud, Yud-Alef, Yud-Bet, Yud-Gimmel*. The *avnet* is tied in a *shin* knot, with three loop bows (see diagram on next page). **Recite:**

...and a linen sash shall [you] tie.... וּבְאַבְנֵט בִּד יִחְגֹּר

5. **FOR A FEMALE:** The veil is placed on the forehead and tied at the back. The *mitznefet* (bonnet) is placed on the head and drawn down to cover the entire head and neck, with the hair gathered under the cap. Tie the bonnet with a bow, or using the method specified for the *k'tonet* (as above).

**FOR A MALE:** Fit the *mitznefet* (hood) over the head, making sure that the face and back of the head are covered.

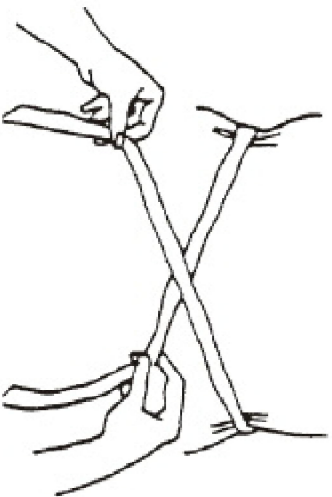
**Recite:**

...and a linen headdress shall [you] don.... וּבְמִצְנֶפֶת בִּד יִצְנֹף

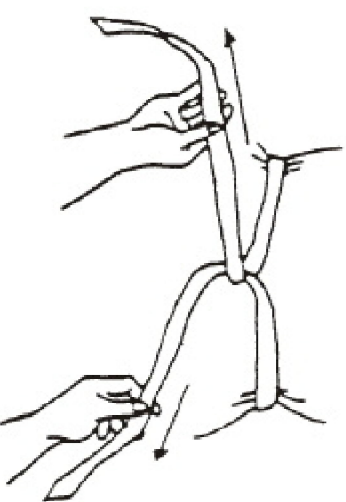
# F - Diagram for knots

The following diagrams illustrate the procedure for tying the knots.

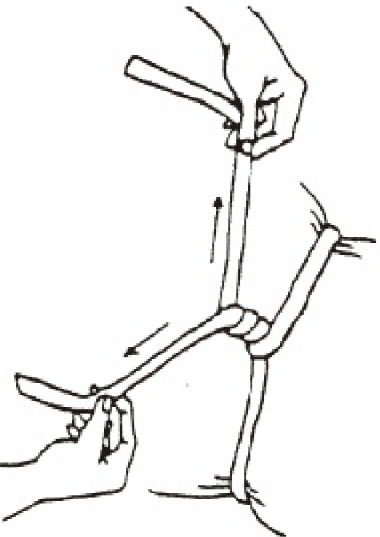
A. Starting position for tying bands (twists).



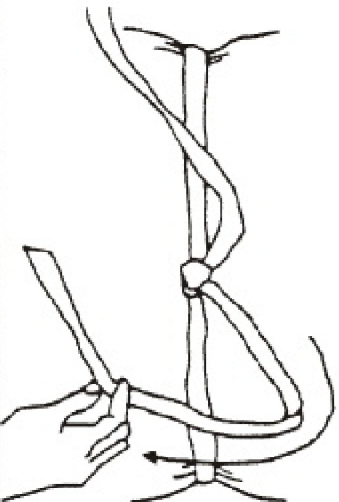
B. Turn "aleph" first of three twists for men, four twists for women.



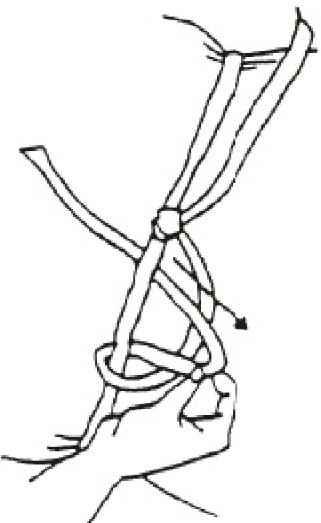
C. End of twisting, tightened.



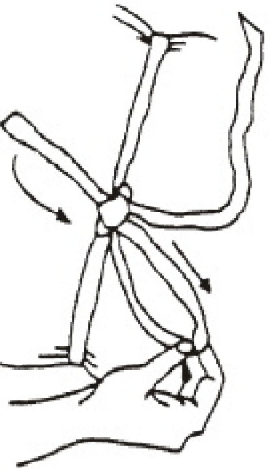
D. Step one of loop; lies over previous horizontal band.



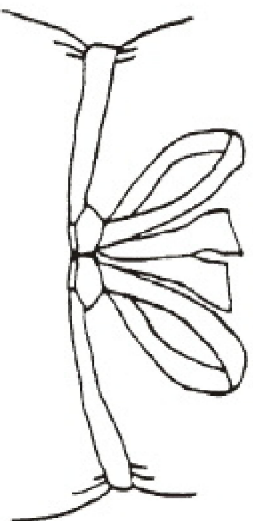
E. Step two; under and up through.



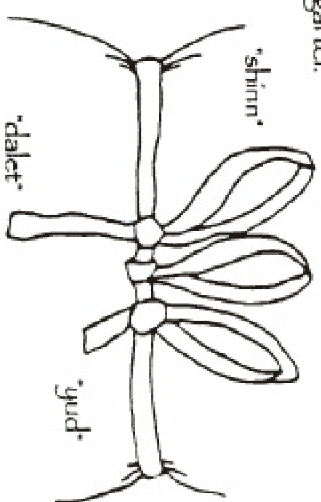
F. Tightening a finished loop, which extends upward.



G. Finished knots, with ends turned up. This is the completed "shin" for the neck, pants and ankles.



H. This is the completed "shaddai" for the gartel.



**At the conclusion of the dressing, recite the conclusion of Numbers 16:4,  
as well as the beginning of Genesis 43:14:**

...these are garments of holiness, and [you]  
shall bathe [your] flesh in water and put  
them on. And may the God of nurturance  
give you compassion.

בְּגָדֵי-קֹדֶשׁ הֵם וְרַחֵץ בַּמַּיִם  
אֶת-בְּשָׁרוֹ וּלְבָשָׁם: וְאֵל שְׂדֵי יִתֵּן  
לָכֶם רַחֲמִים:

If the condition of the body is such that the ritual purification and dressing cannot be performed, the *meit/ah* is placed into the *aron* (see below) and wrapped in the *sovev*, and the *takhrikhim* are placed over the *meit/ah* in the same order as above, and on the parts of the body they would normally have covered. Follow the directions of the *rosh*, who may consult with a more experienced *rosh* or rabbi outside the *taharah* room if necessary.

## הַשְׁכָּבָה / LAYING TO REST HASHKAVAH

Turn the table so that the feet of the *meit/ah* are facing the door. Bring the *aron* into the room and position it alongside the table, also facing the door, and then place the lid of the *aron* against a wall to the side. The *sovev* should already be laid out over the four sides of the *aron*, and the *tallit* (if the *meit/ah* is to be buried in one) laid out widthwise over the *sovev*, toward the head.

## סֵדֵר הַשְׁכָּבָה Order of Laying to Rest

Put a handful of straw and the designated portion of *afar* into the small pillowcase.

**Place the pillowcase at the head of the *aron* and recite *Vehu Rahum* (Psalm 78:38):**

And [God], being compassionate, will effect  
atonement for transgression and will not  
destroy, and has repeatedly turned back  
[God's] anger, and will not arouse all of  
[God's] wrath.

וְהוּא רַחוּם | יְכַפֵּר עֲוֹן וְלֹא יִשְׁחִית  
וְהִרְבֵּה לְהַשִּׁיב אָפּוֹ וְלֹא-יַעֲרִיר  
כָּל-חַמָּתוֹ:

The details of the actual *hashkavah* will depend upon the condition and weight of the body, as well as the number of team members present to lift the body. Follow the directions of the *rosh* in lifting the *meit/ah* and placing her/him in the *aron*, as gently and respectfully as possible. Be sure the head is supported at all times.



**Recite Velo Yavo'u (Numbers 4:20):**

And they shall not come to see the covering  
of the holiness, lest they die.

וְלֹא־יָבֹאוּ לִרְאוֹת כְּבֹלַע אֶת־הַקֹּדֶשׁ  
וּמָתוּ:

Straighten and arrange the *takhrikhim* and the ties neatly on the *meit/ah*. The remainder of the *afar* is then sprinkled over the eyes, heart, and genital area, taking care that no *afar* enters the nose or mouth.

**Recite Vekhiper Admato Amo (Deuteronomy 32:43):**

...And [God] will effect atonement for [God's] land, [God's] people.      וְכִפֶּר אֲדַמָּתוֹ עַמּוֹ:

Place shards of pottery over the eyes and mouth. Like the *afar*, the shards reflect the vulnerable connection between *adam* (humanity) and *adamah* (earth), to which the body will return in burial.

Wrap the *tallit* (if the *meit/ah* is to be buried in one) over the shoulders. Wrap the *sovev* over the head, the sides of the body, and the feet. Place the bag contained blood-stained materials at the feet of the *meit/ah*.

**Recite Hinei Mitato (Song of Songs 3:7-8 and related Biblical verses):**

Behold the couch of Solomon: sixty mighty  
men surround it from the heroes of Israel;  
each of them grasping a sword, learned in  
war; every man his sword upon his thigh,  
from fear in the night (Song of Songs 3:7-8).

הִנֵּה מִטָּתוֹ שֶׁל־שְׁלֹמֹה שְׁשִׁים גִּבּוֹרִים  
סָבִיב לָהּ מִגִּבּוֹרֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל: כָּל־אֶחָד  
חָרֵב מִלְמַדֵּי מִלְחָמָה אִישׁ חֶרֶב  
עַל־יָרְכוֹ מִפֶּחַד בַּלַּיְלוֹת:

**FOR A MALE:**

יְבָרְכֶךָ יְהוָה וַיְשַׁמְרֶךָ: יָאֵר יי | פָּנָיו  
אֵלֶיךָ וַיַּחֲנֶנֶךָ: יִשָּׂא יי | פָּנָיו אֵלֶיךָ  
וַיִּשֶׁם לְךָ שְׁלוֹם:

**FOR A FEMALE:**

יְבָרְכֶךָ יְהוָה וַיְשַׁמְרֶךָ: יָאֵר יי פָּנָיו  
אֵלֶיךָ וַיַּחֲנֶנֶךָ: יִשָּׂא יי פָּנָיו אֵלֶיךָ  
וַיִּשֶׁם לְךָ שְׁלוֹם:

May the Eternal bless you and watch over you.  
May the the face of the Eternal shine upon you and be gracious to you.  
May the face of the Eternal be lifted toward you  
and give you peace (Numbers 6:24-26).

[Israel's] branches shall spread out, and like the olive tree will be his beauty; and his fragrance like Lebanon (Hosea 14:7). Who are you, O mighty mountain? before Zerubabel as a plain, and he shall bring forth the cornerstone with shouts of "Grace! Grace!" upon it (Zekhariah 4:7). And now, let the power of my Lord be great, as you have spoken, saying (Numbers 14:17)....But as truly as I live, the honor of God will fill all the earth (14:21).

יִלְכוּ יוֹנְקוֹתָיו וִיהִי כְזִית הוֹדוֹ וְרִיחַ  
לוֹ כְּלִבְנוֹן: מִי־אַתָּה הָר־הַגָּדוֹל לִפְנֵי  
זֶרֶבְבָּל לְמִישׁוֹר וְהוֹצִיא אֶת־הָאֶבֶן  
הָרְאשָׁה תְּשַׁאֲוֶת חֵן חֵן לָהּ: וְעַתָּה  
יִגְדֵּל־נָא כֹחַ אֲדֹנִי כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבַּרְתָּ  
לֵאמֹר: וְאוֹלָם חַי־אֲנִי וַיִּמָּלֵא  
כְבוֹד־יְהוָה אֶת־כָּל־הָאָרֶץ:

All team members now gather quietly around the *aron*.

Recite *Anu Mevakshim Mekhilah* (Final Request for Forgiveness):

FOR A MALE:

FOR A FEMALE:

אָנוּ מְבַקְשִׁים מְחִילָה מֵאַתָּה אִם לֹא  
עָשִׂינוּ כְּפִי כְבוֹדְךָ, אֲבָל עָשִׂינוּ  
כְּמִנְהַג הַמָּקוֹם.

אָנוּ מְבַקְשׁוֹת מְחִילָה מֵאַתָּה אִם לֹא  
עָשִׂינוּ כְּפִי כְבוֹדְךָ, אֲבָל עָשִׂינוּ  
כְּמִנְהַג הַמָּקוֹם.

\_\_\_\_\_, daughter / son of \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_  
we ask your forgiveness if we did not act according to your honor,  
even though we acted according to our custom.

In silence, each individual team member then takes the time to ask forgiveness of the *meit/ah*, by name, for any errors of omission or commission on her/his part. **Allow at least one FULL minute for this.**

The designated team recitation leader ends the period of silence with singing (see **SONGS AND CHANTS** at the end). The rest of the team members may join in the melody, words, and/or listening, according to personal comfort level.

Place and secure the lid over the *aron*. Affix the Star of David, if available, toward the foot of the lid. The *aron* should not be opened again, except for private identification and leavetaking by those closest to the *meit/ah* before the funeral service.

**Recite Uvinso'a Hamishkan (Numbers 1:51 and related Biblical verses):**

And in the traveling of the Tabernacle, the Levites shall lower it, and in the pitching of the Tabernacle, the Levites shall raise it; and the stranger who approaches shall be put to death (Numbers 1:51). And it shall be, in the traveling of the *aron*, that Moses will say: Arise, Eternal One, and let Your enemies be scattered; let those who hate You flee before you (Numbers 10:35). No evil shall befall you, and disease will not approach your tent. For [God's] angels will be commanded to guard you in all your journeys. On their hands will they carry you, lest you strike your feet upon a stone (Psalm 91:10-12). God will do battle for you, and you shall hold your peace (Exodus 14:14).

וּבְנִסְעַת הַמִּשְׁכָּן יוֹרִידוּ אֹתוֹ הַלְוִיִּם  
וּבַחֲנֻת הַמִּשְׁכָּן יָקִימוּ אֹתוֹ הַלְוִיִּם  
וְהַזֵּר הַקָּרֵב יוֹמֵת: וַיְהִי בְנִסְעַת הָאָרֶץ  
וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה קוּמָה | יְהוָה יִפְצֹץ  
אֹיְבֶיךָ וַיִּנָּסוּ מִשְׁנֵאֵיךָ מִפְּנֶיךָ:  
לֹא-תֵאָנֶה אֵלֶיךָ רָעָה וְלֹנְגָה לֹא-יִקְרַב  
בְּאַהֲלֶיךָ: כִּי מִלֹּאכְיוֹ יִצְוֶה-לְךָ לְשֹׁמְרֶיךָ  
בְּכָל-דְּרָכֶיךָ: עַל-כַּפֵּי־יְשָׁאוּנֶיךָ  
פֶּן-תִּגָּף בְּאֶבֶן רִגְלֶיךָ: יְהוָה יִלָּחֶם  
לָכֶם וְאַתֶּם תַּחֲרֹשׁוּן:

Wheel the *aron*, feet first, out of the *taharah* room to the place where the vigil-keeper/s will continue with *sh'mirah* until the funeral.

In taking leave of the *aron*, all team members recite together:

House of Israel, come let us walk in God's light.  
The Rock of Israel has spoken and called the world into being,  
from the east where the sun rises to the place where it sets.  
Peace shall come, and each of us shall rest in our appointed place.  
For dust we are, and unto dust we return.  
God has given, and God has taken away;  
may the name of God be blessed.

All team members return to the *taharah* area, remove gowns and gloves, and wash their hands one more time without a blessing. A wordless melody (*niggun*) may be sung during this time (see **SONGS AND CHANTS** below for possibilities). Otherwise, this should be done in silence to the extent possible, until the team gathers again for **DEBRIEFING** (see below).

## DEBRIEFING AFTER *TAHARAH*

All team members gather again in the meeting room of the funeral parlor to review and discuss the *taharah* that has just been completed. This is the appropriate time to share questions, perspectives, and feelings, and to clarify any points of confusion or disagreement that may have arisen during the process. Since each person is different, each team member should try to speak in terms of her/his own experiences, and to accept that others may have different feelings and perspectives. The *rosh*, rabbi and/or another experienced team member should monitor the discussion to ensure a basic level of acceptance and emotional safety for all participants.

In previous generations of Judaism, Jews sustaining direct contact with the dead were isolated by law and custom from various ritual and communal functions. Purification rituals for the living, along with specified waiting periods before resuming normal activities, date from the time of the Bible.

Although these laws and customs are no longer universally upheld, it is still true that participation in *taharah* is among the most powerful of human experiences. We believe it is essential to provide a transition space and time for all team members following each *taharah*, regardless of how many times individual members may have participated in the past. Like the initial briefing before entering the *taharah* room, debriefing should be considered an integral part of the time allocated to the *taharah* as a whole.

It is particularly important to have this sharing time because **details of the *taharah* are not to be discussed with ANYONE outside of the *taharah* team.** Our primary concern is to protect the honor and privacy of the *meit/ah*, with whom the team members have come into very intimate contact at this most intense and vulnerable time.

In the same light, the names of team members participating in a given *taharah* are not identified to surviving family members of the *meit/ah*, or to the community at large. This is to ensure that the sacred work of the *Hevra Kadisha* is maintained on the basis of *hesed shel emet*: kindness at the moment of truth, with no expectation of reward.

Members of the team are encouraged to stay in touch with their team leader/s and rabbi about any issues that may arise for them following the *taharah*. The members of our *Hevra Kadisha* as a whole are also honored publicly once a year, at our annual *Hevra Kadisha* dinner, as is traditional.

Following the debriefing, team members may choose to end the discussion with a *niggun* and/or a prayer before participants return to their usual routines (see **SONGS AND CHANTS** below).

## SONGS AND CHANTS

Our use of songs and chants during *taharah* draws upon an established tradition in parts of the Jewish world, particularly among Sephardic Jews. We believe that singing is, first and foremost, a human birthright, and we do not approach it here from the standards of performance art.

Just as we sing lullabies to those who have recently been born into this life, washing and dressing them when they cannot do so for themselves, so we sing to provide a space of comfort for those making the transition beyond this life.

The singing also helps to center, calm and reassure the living members of the *taharah* team. In most cases, the designated team member who recites the ritual passages will choose the songs and chants. The other team members are encouraged to sing, hum, or listen to the various melodies, with or without words, according to each member's personal comfort level and what helps each one to focus on the tasks at hand.

And it is written...that three forces of the Holy Blessed One come among God's cherished people in the power of chants, songs and praises....And it said that there is a chamber hidden above that cannot be opened except through melody / *niggun*.... And the soul benefits from the melody as it is familiar with melodies of the song of the ministering angels and the song of the celestial wheels....And the melody when it ascends, ascends through six / *sheish* levels, and also when it descends, descends through six, and about this it is said: "His legs are pillars of marble / *sheish*" [Song of Songs 5:15].

וכתוב...כי שלש חיילות מקב"ה  
באות בתוך עם סגולתו בכח זמירות  
שירות ותושבחות....ואמר כי יש  
היכל למעלה גנוז שאינו נפתח אלא  
בניגון....והנשמה נהנית מהניגון  
לפי שהיא רגילה בניגונים בשיר של  
מלאכי השרת ושיר הגלגלים....  
והניגון כשעולה עולה בשש  
מדרגות, וכן כשירד יורד בשש,  
ועליו נאמר שוקיו עמודי שש [שיר  
השירים ה, טו].

*Rabbi Aharon Berakhiah of Modena (1626)*  
**מעבר יבק / CROSSING THE YABOK (Part One, Chapter 31)**

Silence is golden, especially an intelligent silence,  
but that is when we are on the level of speech.  
A *niggun* / wordless melody is better than silence.

*Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Lyadi (1745 - 1812)*

The applications below are offered only as suggestions.  
 For our purposes, the melody and *kavannah* (spiritual intention)  
 are more important than the words, and often more appropriate without words.

#### FOR BRIEFING AND/OR DEBRIEFING:

The whole entire world	Kol ha'olam kulo	כל העולם כולו
is a very narrow bridge	Gesher tzar me'od	גֶּשֶׁר צָר מְאֹד
and the main thing	Veha'ikar	וְהַעֲיָקָר
is not to fear at all.	Lo lefakhed klal.	לֹא לִפְחֹד כָּלֵל.

*Rabbi Nahman of Bratzlav (1772 - 1811)*

#### FOR WASHING AND/OR DRESSING:

An angel weeps,	A malekh veynt,	אַ מַּאֲלַךְ ווִינֵנט (2x)
an angel weeps,	a malekh veynt,	און באַדעקט
And bedecks	Un badekt di groz mit toy;	די גראָז מיט טוי
the grass with dew;	Libster mayner,	ליבסטער מיינער (2x)
My beloved, my beloved,	libster mayner,	איך בענק נאָך דיר אַזוי
I long so for you....	Ikh benk nokh dir azoy....	

*Yiddish Words and Music by Peretz Hirshbein*

My beloved is mine	Dodi li va'ani lo	דודי לי ואני לו
and I am his,	Haro'eh bashoshanim. (2x)	הִרְעָה בַּשּׁוֹשָׁנִים:
who shepherds	Mi zot olah min hamidbar	
among the lilies.	Mi zot olah	מִי זֹאת עֹלָה מִן־הַמִּדְבָּר
Who is this coming up	Mikuteret mor ulevonah	מִקְטֶרֶת מֹר וּלְבוֹנָה:
from the wilderness,	Mor ulevonah.	
Fragrant with myrrh	Libavtini akhoti kalah	לְבַבְתִּנִּי אֲחֹתִי כָלָה:
and incense?	Libavtini kalah. (2x)	
You have won my heart,	Uri tzafon uvo'i teiman.	עוּרִי צָפוֹן וּבֹאִי תִמָּן:
my sister, my bride.	(2x)	
Awake, north wind,		
and come, south wind.		

*Song of Songs 2:16, 3:6, 4:9, 4:16 / Melody by Nira Chen*

How fine you are,  
my beloved...  
Your eyes are like doves  
from behind your tresses;  
Your hair is like the flocks  
that graze...As they trail  
down from Mount Gil'ad.

Hinakh yafah, rayati;  
Hinakh yafah,  
einayikh yonim  
Miba'ad latzamatekh  
Se'arekh ke'eder ha'izim...  
Shegalshu mihar Gil'ad.

הַנֶּךְ יָפָה רַעֲיָתִי  
הַנֶּךְ יָפָה עֵינֶיךָ יוֹנִים  
מִבְּעַד לְצַמָּתְךָ  
שְׂעָרֶךָ כְּעֶדֶר הָעֲזִים  
שֶׁגִלְשׁוּ מִהַר גִּלְעָד:

Until the morning draws  
its breath and sighs,  
And all the shadows flee  
the rising sun,  
Set me as a seal  
upon your heart,  
As a seal upon your arm...  
For love is strong, stronger than death.

Ad sheyafu'akh hayom  
Venassu hatz'lalim  
Simeni khakhotam  
al libekha,  
Kakhotam al zero'ekha...  
Ki azah khamavet ahavah.

עַד שֶׁיָּפֹחַ הַיּוֹם  
וְנָסוּ הַצִּלְלִים  
שִׁמְנִי כְּחוֹתָם עַל-לִבְךָ  
כְּחוֹתָם עַל-זְרוּעֶךָ  
כִּי-עֲזָה כְּמוֹת אֶהְבָּה:

*Song of Songs 4:1,2:17, 8:6*

*Melody by Yosef Mustaki / Singable English by Rabbi Regina L. Sandler-Phillips*

### FOR LAYING TO REST:

Durme, durme, hizhiko/a de madre  
Durme, durme, sin ansia y dolor (2x)

Sleep, sleep, little mother's child  
Sleep, sleep, without anxiety or pain

Siente, djoya, palavrikas de tu madre  
Las palabras de *Shema Yisrael* (2x)

Listen to the little words of your mother  
The words of *Shema Yisrael*

Durme, durme, hizhiko/a de madre  
Con hermozura de *Shema Yisrael* (2x)

Sleep, sleep, little mother's child  
With the beauty of *Shema Yisrael*

*Bosnian Ladino Lullaby as sung by Flory Jagoda*

In the name of the Eternal,  
the God of Israel:  
On my right, Michael,  
and on my left, Gabriel,  
and before me, Uriel,  
and behind me, Raphael,  
and above my head  
the Divine Presence  
of God.

Beshem Hashem  
Elohei Yisrael (2x),  
Mimini Mikha'el,  
Umismoli Gavri'el,  
Umilifanai Uri'el,  
Ume'akhorai Rifa'el,  
Ve'al roshi  
Shekhinat El (2x).

בְּשֵׁם יי אֵל-הִי יִשְׂרָאֵל,  
מִימִינִי מִיכָאֵל,  
וּמִשְׁמָאֵלִי גַבְרִיאֵל,  
וּמִלְפָּנֵי אֲוִרִיאֵל,  
וּמֵאַחֲרַי רַפָּאֵל,  
וְעַל רֹאשִׁי  
שְׁכִינַת אֵל.

*From the traditional liturgy for the bedtime Sh'ma  
Melody (Yedid Nefesh) by Ehud and Sarah Zweig*

Lay us down, Eternal One,  
O our God, in peace,  
And raise us up again,  
O our Sovereign,  
To life renewed,  
to life restored.  
And spread over us  
the *sukkah* of Your peace,  
And shelter us beneath the  
shadow of Your wings.  
Guard our going out  
and our coming in  
Unto life and peace,  
from this time forth  
and ever more.

Hashkiveinu Adonai  
Eloheinu leshalom,  
Veha'amideinu,  
Malkeinu,  
Lekhayim, lekhayim.  
Ufros aleinu  
Sukkat sh'lomekha,  
Uvetzel k'nafekha  
tastireinu,  
Ush'mor tzeitenu  
uvo'einu  
Lekhayim uleshalom  
me'atah ve'ad olam.

הַשְׁכִּיבֵנוּ יְיָ  
אֱלֹהֵינוּ לְשָׁלוֹם,  
וְהַעֲמִידֵנוּ מִלְפָּנֶיךָ  
לְחַיִּים (לְחַיִּים),  
וּפְרוֹשׁ עָלֵינוּ  
סֻכַּת שְׁלוֹמְךָ,  
וּבְצֵל כְּנָפֶיךָ תַּסְתִּירֵנוּ,  
וּשְׁמֹר צֵאתָנוּ וּבֹאֵנוּ,  
לְחַיִּים וּלְשָׁלוֹם,  
מֵעַתָּה וְעַד עוֹלָם.

*From the traditional evening liturgy / Music from a South African melody  
as taught by Cantor Sue Roemer to Cantor Natasha J. Hirschhorn  
Adapted and translated by Rabbi Regina Sandler-Phillips*

May the words of my mouth  
And the meditations  
of my heart  
Be acceptable  
here before You  
O God, my Rock  
and my Redeemer.

Yihyu leratzon  
Imrei fi vehegyon libi  
Lifanekha, Adonai,  
Tzuri vego'ali.

יִהְיוּ לְרָצוֹן  
אִמְרֵי פִי וְהִגְיוֹן לִבִּי  
לְפָנֶיךָ יְיָ  
צוּרִי וְגֹאֲלִי:

*Psalm 19:15  
and the traditional liturgy*

## FOR THE CLOSE OF DEBRIEFING:

Return us, O God, to You  
and we will return;  
Renew our days as of old.

Hashiveinu (2x)  
Adonai elekha  
Venashuvah (2x)  
Hadesh (2x)  
yameinu kekedem.

הַשִּׁיבֵנוּ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ  
וְנָשׁוּבָה  
חֲדָשׁ יָמֵינוּ כְּקֶדֶם:

*Lamentations 5:21*

The songs here are among those selected for recording on *Ma'avar: Jewish Melodies, Chants and Songs of Passage and Transition* (forthcoming; please go to [www.waysofpeace.org](http://www.waysofpeace.org) for more information).



## NOTES ON SPECIFIC PRACTICES

1. ***Hamol / Prayer for Compassion*** (pp. 4-6): Corresponding to the three fathers, we invoke the names of all six mothers of Israel. Bilhah and Zilpah are mothers of four of the Twelve Tribes, and (according to rabbinic tradition) half-sisters of Rachel and Leah. It is particularly fitting that Bilhah and Zilpah be named at this juncture, since (a) as servant-wives in the Biblical testimony, they are most directly identified with the humble title of *amah* (servant-woman) invoked here, and (b) as near-anonymous attendants believed to play significant peacemaking roles in the family drama of the Twelve Tribes, they provide the clearest model for the anonymous attendants of the *Hevra Kadisha*. For an introduction to the Biblical and rabbinic sources on these neglected Biblical mothers, refer to *Who Knows Four? I Know Six!* by Rabbi Regina Sandler-Phillips (see below).
2. **“Any problems to be addressed...”** (p. 7): The main concern in deciding whether to remove specific bandages and tubes is how to minimize the flow of blood from the body. The *rosh* has access to specialized instructions, as well as to medical volunteers on call if necessary. It is understood that, regardless of specifics, we do the best we can for the honor of the *meit/ah*. Our requests for *mekhilah* (forgiveness) before and after the *taharah* help us to stay focused on our primary purpose.
3. **“Boards are now placed under the *meit/ah*...”** (p. 9): For when a *mikvah* is not available or appropriate. Although we make use of a *mikvah* available at our local funeral home, it should be noted that such prominent rabbinic authorities as Moshe Feinstein, Dovid Lifshitz and Moshe Heinemann hold that the pouring of nine *kavim* is more appropriate to *k’vod hameit* than is immersion in a *mikvah*. Refer to the discussion of this issue in *Tahara Manual of Practices* by Rabbi Mosha Epstein (pp. 28-29; see below).
4. **“It is our *minhag* (custom) to proceed according to the order of the verse...”** (p. 11): We recite Leviticus 16:4 in its entirety, which we believe to be appropriate in context. However, we do not consider the references to the linen garments of the High Priest to be a literal prescription for the *Hevra Kadisha*. Rabban Gamaliel’s directive (as recorded in the Talmud, *Moed Katan* 27a-b) that he be buried in flaxen garments is clearly presented in the context of rabbinic concerns “for the honor of the poor,” and is followed by Rav Pappa’s uncontested assertion that “nowadays, [burial] is customary even in hemp cloth worth one *zuz*!” Today, linen shrouds are the most expensive, and some authorities even countenance a two-class system whereby poor people are “permitted” to use less expensive fabrics. We believe that this negates the original concern.

The *Shulkhan Arukh* declares that “The dead is not to be buried in expensive shrouds, even for a prince of Israel. It has been the custom to bury in white garments” (*Yoreh De’ah* 352:1-2). The connection between the flaxen (Hebrew: *pishtan*) garments of Rabban Gamaliel and the linen (Hebrew: *bahd*) garments of the High Priest appears to be a later addition to burial custom; the recitation of Leviticus 16:4 is not found in *Ma’avar Yabok*. We try to uphold “the honor of the poor” by using muslin *takhrikhim* for every *meit/ah*.

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***Rabbi Regina L. Sandler-Phillips***  
***September 2009 / Elul 5769***

*Unless otherwise indicated, all translations from the Hebrew  
are by Rabbi Regina L. Sandler-Phillips.*