

RECONSTRUCTIONIST HEVRAH KADDISHAH OF PHILADELPHIA

LITURGY FOR TAHARAH

Before entering the taharah area, recite this prayer:

אָנָה אֱלֹהֵי הַחֶסֶד וְהַרְחָמִים, שְׁכָל אוֹרְחוֹתֶיךָ חֶסֶד וְאֱמֶת, וְצוֹיִתָּנוּ
לַעֲשׂוֹת חֶסֶד וְאֱמֶת עִם הַמֵּתִים, וּלְהַתְעַסֵּק בְּקִבּוּרָתָם. וּבְכֵן יְהִי רָצוֹן
מִלְפָּנֶיךָ, יְיָ הוֹה אֱלֹהֵנוּ, שְׁתַּאֲמָצִינוּ וְתִחַזְּקֵנוּ לַעֲשׂוֹת מְלָאכְתֵּינוּ מְלָאכָת
שְׂמִים זוֹ כְּרָאוּי. חֲזַק יְיָדֵינוּ בְּמְלָאכָה זוֹ וְעֲזֹר לָנוּ לְמְלָאָה בְּאַהֲבָה.
תֵּן לָנוּ לִרְאוֹת אֶת צִלְמְךָ בְּפָנֵי הַמֵּתִים כְּשֶׁם שֶׁהוּא נִשְׁקָף בְּפָנֵי
הַמְסִייעָהם [!] בְּיָדֵינוּ בְּמִצְוָה זוֹ. מְקוֹר הַחַיִּים וְהַמָּוֶת, הִיִּיה עִמָּנוּ
מִעַתָּה וְעַד עוֹלָם.

Source of kindness and compassion, whose ways are ways of mercy and truth, you have commanded us to act with lovingkindness and righteousness towards the dead; and to engage in their proper burial. Grant us the courage and strength to properly perform this work, this holy task of cleaning and washing the body, dressing the dead in shrouds, and burying the deceased. Guide our hands and hearts as we do this work, and enable us to lovingly fulfill this commandment. Help us to 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 forever.

Put on appropriate garb and wash hands as in n'tilat yadayim but without the b'rachah. The group may choose to wash each other's hands. Put on gloves and enter the taharah room.

Recite the following prayer before the deceased in Hebrew and/or English:

חי עולמים, חמול על _____ בת / בן _____
ואברהם, יצחק ויעקב, שרה, רבקה, רחל ולאה ידידי, ותנוח

נפשה ונשמתה ... (for a woman) נפשו ונשמתו ... (for a man)

עם הצדיקים והצדקניות, כי אתה מחיה מתים וממית חיים. ברוך
אתה מוחל וסולח לחטאים ולעוונות ממתי עמך ישראל בתחנונים.
ובכן יהי רצון מלפניך יהוה אלהינו ואלהי אבותינו ואמותינו שתסבב
מלאכי רחמים לפני

המתה שהיא ידידתך בת ידיך ... (for a woman)

המת שהוא ידידך בן ידיך (for a man)

צור עולמים משפיל אל דל מלטה (for a woman) ... מלטהו (for a man) ...
מכל צרה ומיום רעה המדינה של גהינום. ברוך אתה גדול החסד
ומקור הרחמים. ברוך אתה העושה שלום במרומיו לידידיו וליראי
שמו. ברוך פודה עמו ישראל ממני פורעניות ברחמים. יהי רצון
מלפניך יהוה אלהינו ואלהי אבותינו ואמותינו שתזכור זכות ברית
קודש: "נתתי את תורתך בקרבם ועל לבם אכתיבנה." ברוך אתה
כורת הברית ברחמים ברחמים. אתה יהוה אלהינו טוב וסלח לכל
קוראיך. מחי פשעינו כעב וכעון. ברוך אתה גדול העצה ורב
העלילה ברחמים. עם רגלי צדיקים וצדקניות בגן עדן

תדרוך ... (for a woman) ידרוך ... (for a man)

כי מקום ישרים הוא רגלי חסידיו ישמור. ברוך אתה הנותן רחמים
גדולים ורוב תחנונים למיתי עמו ישראל. אמן. כן יהי רצון.

Life of all worlds, have compassion for _____, daughter / son of
_____ and Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel and Leah,
who followed You in faithfulness. May her / his soul and spirit rest with the righteous,
for You give eternal life to those who have died, even as you bring death to the living.
Blessed are You, for when we ask, you pardon and forgive the errors and offenses of the
departed of Israel. May it be Your will, God of our ancestors, to bring together a circle of
angels of mercy before the deceased, for she / he is Your beloved, the daughter / son of
those who sought Your presence. Rock of all the worlds, as You are attentive to all who
struggle, save this soul from pain as she / he travels the path from life to death. Blessed
are You, abounding in lovingkindness, Source of compassion, You are the one who

makes peace in the high places for those who love and revere your name. You are praised, for with compassion You redeem Your people Israel from all suffering.

May it be Your will, God of our mothers and fathers, to remember the merit of the holy covenant: "I will place My Torah in their innermost parts and write it upon their hearts." Blessed are You, O God, Maker of the covenant in compassion and mercy. You, O God, are the source of goodness; You forgive all who call upon You. "Sweep aside our transgressions like a mist, disperse them like a cloud." Blessed are You, generous in counsel and powerfully compassionate. May the one who has died walk with the righteous through the Garden of Eden, the place of those who stand upright in Your presence. Blessed are You, Source of all gentleness and love. Grant mercy to the departed of Your people Israel. May this be Your will. Amen.

PREPARATION

The following procedures are performed simultaneously by four different people:

1) Examine the tachrichim and lay them out. Kosher tachrichim are made of pure linen. They should consist of:

- ✧ *a large sheet*
- ✧ *hood for the head*
- ✧ *shirt**
- ✧ *pants and ties for the ankles*
- ✧ *kittel/jacket**
- ✧ *belt*
- ✧ *small bag*

**if necessary, these may be slit open*

2) Check for these supplies:

- | | |
|-------------------------|------------------------------|
| ✧ <i>Israeli earth</i> | ✧ <i>towels</i> |
| ✧ <i>toothpicks</i> | ✧ <i>scissors</i> |
| ✧ <i>cotton</i> | ✧ <i>skin sealer</i> |
| ✧ <i>rubber bands</i> | ✧ <i>nail polish remover</i> |
| ✧ <i>comb</i> | ✧ <i>1" surgical tape</i> |
| ✧ <i>paper towels</i> | ✧ <i>sheets</i> |
| ✧ <i>pottery shards</i> | ✧ <i>copy of the liturgy</i> |

3) Place the sheet from the tachrichim caddy corner in the aron as a lining. Lay out the belt width-wise across the center so that the ends hang over the aron. If there is a tallit, remove all ornaments (eg. silver pieces, embroidery, the atarah, etc.) and lay it out 1/3 of the way down from the top of the aron, like the belt. Using a scalpel or scissors cut off one of the tzitzit and place it in the aron.

4) Fill two (2) buckets and pitchers with warm water.

CLEANING OF THE BODY

At all times, the body should be examined with minimal unnecessary exposure.

1) As the group leader lowers the covering to begin to examine the body, the following verses are recited:

וַיַּעַן וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל הָעוֹמְדִים לִפְנֵי לֵאמֹר: הִסִּירוּ הַבְּגָדִים הַצּוֹאִים
מֵעָלָיו, וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו רְאֵה הִעֲבַרְתִּי מֵעָלֶיךָ עֹנֶד וְהִלְבֵּשׁ אוֹתְךָ
מִחֻלְצוֹת.

And the angel of God spoke out and said to those who were standing there: "Remove the soiled garments from him (the High Priest)," and he said to him, "Behold, I have removed your iniquity from you and I will clothe you in fine garments."

2) As each area of the body is examined and cleaned, a small amount of water is poured over it using a small vessel.

☆ All clothes should be cut away and removed from the body and examined for hair or blood.

☆ Bloody spots on clothes or sheets should be cut out and saved in the bag.

☆ Nail polish should be removed.

☆ Any punctures or open wounds must be sealed with sealer or tape and/or plastic to prevent blood from seeping out.

☆ All loose hairs should be saved in the bag.

☆ Any dried blood should be removed with a small cotton ball and saved in the bag.

☆ Any dirt should be removed with wet cotton or paper towel and thrown away.

☆ Finger and toenails should be cleaned with a toothpick. The debris and toothpicks should be placed in a paper towel and saved in the bag.

3) One person holds the head while several others turn the body on the right side. One person pours water down the length of the back and cleans the anal area (sometimes it will need to be packed with cotton.). The body is then similarly turned onto the left side and this step is repeated. The body should never be turned face down onto the stomach.

4) Two pitchers of water are filled from the buckets and the washing begins, over the sheet, always pouring in the same direction from head to toes. Two people may pour at the same time on opposite sides. Two full passes should be made from both sides. The eyes and mouth should be closed or covered so that water does not enter them.

5) While the water is poured through the sheet the following verses are recited:

For a man:

הָנֶךְ יָפָה רַעֲיָתִי, הָנֶךְ יָפָה עֵינַיִךְ,
יוֹנִים מִבַּעַד לְצַמָּתְךָ. שְׁעָרְךָ כְּעֶדֶר
הָעֲזִים שְׁגָלְשׁוֹ מִהֵר גִּלְעָד. שְׁנִיךָ
כְּעֶדֶר הַקְּצוּבוֹת שְׁעָלוֹ מִן-הַרְחָצָה,
שְׁכָלֶם מִתְאַיְמוֹת וְשִׁכְלָה אֵין
בָּהֶם. כְּחוּט הַשָּׁנִי שִׁפְתוֹתֶיךָ,
וּמִדְּבָרְךָ נֶאֱוָה. כְּפֶלַח הָרִמּוֹן
רִקְתָּךְ מִבַּעַד לְצַמָּתְךָ. כְּמַגִּדֵּל דָּוִיד
צִוְאָרְךָ, בְּנוֹי לְתַלְפִּיּוֹת. אֶלֶף הַמָּגֹן
תַּלּוּי עָלָיו, כָּל שְׁלֹטֵי הַגְּבָרִים. שְׁנֵי
שִׁדְיֶיךָ כְּשְׁנֵי עֶפְרַיִם, תְּאוֹמֵי צַבִּיָּה.
הָרַעִים בְּשׁוֹשָׁנִים. כָּלֶךְ יָפָה
רַעֲיָתִי, וּמוֹם אֵין בָּךְ

For a woman:

רֹאשׁוֹ כֶּתֶם פָּז, קְנֻצוֹתָיו תַּלְתָּלִים
שְׁחֹרוֹת כִּיּוֹרֵב. עֲנִיו כִּיּוֹנִים עַל
אַפִּיקֵי מַיִם, רוֹחָצוֹת בַּחֲלָב
יוֹשְׁבוֹת עַל מִלָּאת. לַחְיוֹ בַּעֲרוּגַת
הַבּוֹשֶׁם, מְגִדְלוֹת מְרַקְהִים,
שִׁפְתוֹתָיו שׁוֹשָׁנִים נוֹסְפוֹת מִזֶּר
עוֹבֵר. יָדָיו גִּלְיָלִי זָהָב מִמִּלָּאִים
בִּתְרָשִׁישׁ, מַעְיו עֲשֵׂת שֶׁן מְעַלְפֶּת
סְפִירִים. שׁוֹקֵיו עֲמוּדֵי יָשׁ
מִיֻּסְדִּים עַל אֲדָנֵי פָז, מְרַאֲהוּ
כְּלָבָנוֹן, בַּחֹר כְּאַרְזִים. חָפוּ
מִמִּתְקִים וְכָלוּ מִחֲמָדִים. זֶה דּוֹדִי
וְזֶה רַעִי, בָּנוֹת יְרוּשָׁלַיִם:

His head is like most fine gold,
His heaps of curls are black as a raven.
His eyes are like doves beside the
waterbrooks, Bathing in milk and fitly set.
His cheeks are like a bed of spices,
Towers of sweet herbs.
His lips are roses dripping flowing myrrh.
His arms are golden cylinders set with
beryl, His body is as polished ivory,
Overlaid with sapphires.
His legs are pillars of marble,
Set upon foundations of fine gold.
His appearance is like Lebanon,
As select as the cedars.
His mouth is most sweet
And he is altogether precious.
This is my beloved and this is my friend,
Daughters of Jerusalem.

How fine you are my love,
Your eyes like doves behind your veil.
Your hair, as black as goats
Winding down the slopes.
Your teeth, a flock of sheep
Rising from the stream in twos,
Each with its twin.
Your lips, like woven threads
Of crimson silk.
A gleam of pomegranate,
Your forehead through your veil.
Your neck, a tower adorned with shields.
Your breasts, twin fawns in fields of
flowers.
How fine you are, my love,
My perfect one.

6) One person adds water to the buckets until they are full again. Take a fresh sheet and three or four people hold it over the body like a canopy while facing away from the body. Two people place themselves on either side of the body and remove the wet sheets carefully. (They should be inspected later for loose hairs.) Lower the dry sheet over the body.

TAHARAH

1) Teaching before the taharah:

Rabbi Akiva taught through questions and answers: "How great is your bounty, Israel. In whose honor do you cleanse yourselves? Before whom do you make yourselves pure? And what is the Source of your purity, your integrity? Your Creator, whose home is in the heavens."

The Torah teaches: "I will pour pure water over you, and you shall be cleansed of all your impurities. I will purify you from your waywardness." The text further teaches: "God is the hope, the *mikveh* of Israel. Just as the *mikveh* cleanses the stained, so does the Holy One, who is blessed, purify Israel."

"Living water, you are a fountain, a well, a river flowing from the mountains." Let us pour this pure water, water that cleanses all impurities and washes all wounds.

2) *Nine kavim (24 quarts) of water are poured continuously so that the water runs down over the entire body. This is the essential element of the taharah, and enough members of the hevrah should participate so that it can be performed in this way.*

The nine kavim of water do not have to be contained in one vessel nor poured at one time. The usual procedure is for three or four people to hold the sheet over the body like a canopy while facing away from the body. Two others place themselves on either side of the body, each taking a pail of water containing a minimum of 12 quarts (or three pails are taken, each containing a minimum of 8 quarts). The water is then poured in succession, not simultaneously, in a continuous stream over the head and body. Before the first vessel is emptied the second begins, and the pouring of the third begins before the second is emptied. No more than three vessels may be used and at no time should the flow cease until the vessels have been successively emptied and all the water has been poured over the body. Should there be any break in the succession of the pouring of water, another 24 quarts must be properly poured so that there is a continuous flow.

During the pouring of the water "טהור הוא" he is pure" / "טהורה היא" she is pure" is said three times.

3) *When all the water has been poured lower the dry sheet onto the body. Dry the body with the sheet and clean towels. Make sure to dry the sides and back. When drying the back the body is turned first onto the left side while the right is dried. Then the body is turned onto the right side while the left is dried. Check the ears for water and dry if necessary. In addition to the body dry the supporting table. The body should never be turned face down onto the stomach.*

4) *Cover the body with a dry sheet which will remain on it during the dressing.*

DRESSING

1) *Recite the following before dressing in the tachrichim:*

שׁוֹשׁ אֲשִׁישׁ בִּי, תִּגַּל נַפְשִׁי בְּאַלְהִי.
כִּי הִלְבִּישָׁנִי בְּגָדֵי יֵשַׁע, מִעִיל צְדָקָה.

"I greatly delight in God; my soul rejoices in my Source. For God has clothed me in garments of deliverance and wrapped me in a cloak of justice.

And with the linen headress shall s/he be attired... וּבִמְצַנְפֹת בֹד יִצְנֶף

And the linen breeches shall be over her/his flesh... וּמִכְנָסֵי בֹד יִהְיוּ עַל בָּשָׂרוֹ

S/he shall put on the holy linen tunic... כְּתֹנֶת בֹד קֹדֶשׁ יִלְבָּשׁ

And s/he shall gird her/himself with a linen avnet... וּבְאַבְנֶט בֹד יִחַגֵּר

And God Almighty give you mercy...." וַיֵּל שְׂדֵי יִתֵּן לָכֶם רַחֲמִים

2) *Place a kippah on the head (optional). Place the headcovering over the head.*

3) *Put the pants on but do not tie.*

4) *Put the shirt on and tuck them into the pants. Make sure to tuck in the back of the shirt. Tie the pants and shirt with a slip knot and complete with a "shin".*

5) *Put on the kittel.*

6) *Transfer the body to the aron.*

7) *Tie the belt around the waist with a slip knot and complete with a "shin". Make sure the hands are **not** tied by the belt. The arms should be straight down along the body. If possible, the fingers should be wrapped around the thumb.*

8) *Take the two strips of material and tie each around the ankles with a slip knot and complete with a "shin".*

9) *Place a piece of earthenware on each of the eyes and on the mouth.*

10) *Sprinkle earth from Eretz Yisrael on the body starting from the face to the feet. With a man, sprinkle earth on the brit milah.*

11) Check the supporting table for any hairs which should be placed in the bag. Gloves with any blood or other body fluids on them should be removed and placed in the bag. Place the bag in the aron.

12) With everyone standing around the aron, the following is said:

וְנִחַד יְיָ תָמִיד, וְהַשְׁבִּיעַ בְּצַחֲצוּחוֹת נַפְשָׁךְ, וְעֲצֻמוֹתֶיךָ יִחְלִיץ.
וְהָיִיתָ כְּגֹן רֶוַח וּכְמוֹצָא מַיִם אֲשֶׁר לֹא יִכָּזְבוּ מִיָּמִיו.

"God shall always guide you and satisfy your thirsty soul in a time of drought and strengthen your bones. And you shall be like a well-watered garden, like a water spring whose waters never fail."

13) The members of the Hevrah should stand around the aron and asked the deceased to forgive them for any wrongdoing, accidental or otherwise, committed during the performance of the taharah.

14) Close the aron. If possible, place the star on the bottom part of the aron to designate the head and feet.

15) Recite the following prayer:

יְבָרְכֶךָ יְיָ וְיִשְׁמְרֶךָ.
יְאֵר יְיָ פָּנָיו אֵלֶיךָ וִיחַנֶּנֶךָ.
יֵשָׁא יְיָ פָּנָיו אֵלֶיךָ וְיִשֶּׁם לְךָ שְׁלוֹם.

הִנֵּה לֹא גָנוּם וְלֹא יִישָׁן שׁוֹמֵר יִשְׂרָאֵל.

בְּשֵׁם יְיָ אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל:
מִיְּמִינִי מִכָּאֵל וּמִשְׁמָאֵלִי גַבְרִיאֵל,
וּמִלְּפָנָי אֹרִיאֵל וּמֵאַחֲרַי רָפָאֵל,
וְעַל רֹאשִׁי שְׁכִינַת אֵל.

May God bless you and keep you.
May God's face shine upon you and be gracious to you.
May God's face be lifted up to you and give you peace.
For the Guardian of Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps.
In the name of the God of Israel:
At my right hand Michael, at my left hand Gavriel;
Before me Uriel, behind me Raphael;
And above my head, God's sheltering Presence,
Above my head Sh'chinah.

15) Carry the aron out of the room or, if not appropriate, leave the taharah room.

16) Wash hands *without* a b'rachah.

17. Recite the final prayer outside of the taharah area:

בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל לָכוּ וְנִלְכֶּה בְּאוֹר יְיָ.
אֵל אֱלֹהִים יְיָ דִּבֶּר וַיִּקְרָא אֶרֶץ מִמְזֶרֶח שֶׁמֶשׁ עַד מְבֹאוֹ.
יָבֵא שָׁלוֹם יְנוּחוּ עַל מְשֻׁכְּבוֹתֵם, כִּי עֹפֶר אֲנִיחֵנוּ וְאֵל עֹפֶר נָשׁוּב.
יְיָ נִתֵּן וַיְיָ לָקַח; יְהִי שֵׁם יְיָ מְבֹרָךְ.

O 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 to dust we shall return. God has given and God has taken away. Blessed be God's name.

These instructions are based on the regulations and practice of the Chevra Kadisha of Fort Myers, FL. New translations and interpretations are based on the Regulations and Procedure of the Jewish Sacred Society, Chicago, IL, prepared for the 1991 P'nai Or Kallah by Rabbi Sue Levi Elwell, Rachel Adler and Yaffa Weisman.