

BETH EI *CHEVRA KADISHA* (BECK)

***TAHARA* MANUAL**

(October 2009/Heshvan 5770)

**Congregation Beth El
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Part I: General Preparation

Basic understandings on *Kavod Hameit* (Honoring the Deceased) and *Tahara*

- a. Always refer to the *meit/meita* by his/her name (Jewish, if known).
- b. Limit conversation except as necessary to perform *tahara*.
- c. Avoid standing at the head of the *meit/meita* except when necessary.
- d. Avoid passing anything over the *meit/meita*.
- e. Expose only those body parts (except head) which are being attended to; keep covering over the remainder of body to insure *tz'ni-ut* (modesty).
- f. Follow the direction and decisions of the *rosh*. Any disagreements should be aired and resolved later, after the *tahara* is completed.
- g. Details of the *tahara* are not to be discussed with anyone outside the room.

Put on protective clothing (smock, booties or rubber shoes, and, if desired, head covering and goggles). Gloves will follow shortly

Review information such as Jewish name (if known), circumstances of death, and condition of the *meit/meita*. This is also the time to discuss any personal concerns that the team members (especially first-timers) may have before beginning.

*Recited aloud by *rosh*:

We are about to perform the ritual of *tahara*, an act carried out anonymously, known only to the other members of the *Chevra*. This sacred ritual connects us with generations of Jews who have found comfort in taking care of their own, preparing the *meit/meita* on the journey from this world to the next. We perform this act with love, respect, and blessing and with a shared reverence for our tradition. We, the members of the *Chevra Kadisha* and the Jewish community are richer for it.

*Upon entering *tahara* room, all recite the following:

As we prepare this room and this *meit/meita*, we also prepare ourselves by entering the space and the moment of *tahara* in a mood of holiness. We sense the presence of (Hebrew name) _____'s soul, and, as his/her soul moves on, he/she can go forward with the assurance that we will care for his/her body with dignity and honor.

- 1) Make sure the *meit/meita* is completely covered with a sheet.
- 2) Light candle – place near head.
- 3) Fill two pails with tepid water, with a splash of bleach in each. Fill to 3/4's capacity and transfer contents to empty buckets.
- 5) Have towels and washcloths ready.
- 6) Supply case open – have gauze, liquid bandage, cotton balls, etc.-ready.
- 7) Prepare *tachrichim* (shrouds) – spread out in order of usage. Lay out garments on the edge of the *aron*, placing them over the *sovev* (*sheet*) in the reverse order in which they are going to be used: first empty pillowcase, then the *miznefet* (head covering), *avnet* (sash for the waist, also called a *gartel*), a *kittel* (robe with collar), ankle bands (sometimes called *bendelech*), *k'tonet* (collar tunic), and *michnasayim* (pants).
- 8) Remove cover from *aron* (casket), and put aside.
- 9) Prepare *aron*. Remove 1/3 of the straw from the *aron* and put it aside, along with some of the *afar* (earth from Israel). The rest of the straw should remain in the *aron*, and about half of the remaining *afar* should be sprinkled over it. The remainder of the *afar* will be sprinkled on the *meit/meita* at the end of the *tahara*.
- 10) Take remainder of straw and put in pillowcase and place in *aron* as a headrest.
- 11) Check for several drilled holes in bottom of casket. If none, speak to funeral director.
- 12) Lay out *sovev* (sheet) found in the *tachrichim* kit, and drape it 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/meita* will be buried in a *tallit*, lay out the *tallit* over the *sovev* near the head. It is customary to cut one of the *tzitziot* (ritual fringes) of the *tallit* in which the *meit/meita* will be buried. If necessary, sheet is used later for moving *meit/ah* (weight of *meit/meita* is determining factor).
- 13) Check for a) pottery shards and b) vinegar/egg mixture.
- 14) Bring the *meit/meita* into the *tahara* room, feet first, as members of the *tahara* team gather around the *meit/meita* to request *m'chila* (forgiveness). If the person's Jewish name is not known, use his/her full English name.

*15) When all members are ready, recite:

FOR A MALE:

Master of the universe, have compassion for _____, the son of _____ and _____, this meit, who is the son of Abraham, Isaac 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 servantman, 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 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 גְּהֵנָם: בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה גְּדוֹל הַחֶסֶד
וּבְעַל הַרְחָמִים: בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה הַעֲשֵׂה
שְׁלוֹם בְּמַרוּמָיו לְעַבְדְּךָ וּלְיִרְאֵי שְׁמוֹ:
בְּרוּךְ פּוֹדֵה עַמּוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל מִמִּינֵי
פּוֹרְעָנוּת בְּרַחֲמִים: בְּרַחֲמִים הַסְתַּר
וְהַעֲלֵם פְּשָׁעֵי הַמֵּת הַזֶּה עַבְדְּךָ.

מִשְׁרַפַּת אֵשׁ תִּתְלַצְהוּ שֶׁהוּא צָרִיךְ
לְרַחֲמֶיךָ הַרְבִּים: וְאַתָּה יי א-לֹהֵינוּ
טוֹב וְסֹלֵחַ לְכָל קוֹרְאֶיךָ. בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה
גְּדוֹל הַעֲצָה וְרַב הַעֲלִילָה בְּרַחֲמִים.
עַם רַגְלֵי צְדִיקִים וְצַדִּיקוּת בְּנֵן עַדן
יִדְרוּךְ. כִּי מְקוֹם יְשָׁרִים הוּא רַגְלֵי
חֲסִדְךָ יִשְׁמֹר: בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה הַנּוֹתֵן
רַחֲמִים גְּדוֹלִים וְרַב תַּחֲנוּנִים לְמֵתֵי
עַמּוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל: אָמֵן. כֵּן יְהִי רְצוֹן:

שֶׁל גְּהֵנָם: בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה גְּדוֹל הַחֶסֶד
וּבְעַל הַרְחָמִים: בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה הַעֲשֵׂה
שְׁלוֹם בְּמַרוּמָיו לְעַבְדְּךָ וּלְיִרְאֵי שְׁמוֹ:
בְּרוּךְ פּוֹדֵה עַמּוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל מִמִּינֵי
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חֲסִדְךָ יִשְׁמֹר: בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה הַנּוֹתֵן
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עַמּוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל: אָמֵן. כֵּן יְהִי רְצוֹן:

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

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.

רבונו של עולם, חמול על _____
 בת _____ וְ _____, המתה
 הלזו, שהיא בת שרה, רבקה, רחל
 ולאה, בלהה וזלפה אמהיך, בת
 אברהם, יצחק ויעקב עבדיך; ותנוח
 נפשה ונשמתה עם הצדיקים, כי
 אתה מחיה המתים וממית חיים.
 ברוך אתה מוחל לחטאים ולעונות
 ממותי עמך ישראל בתחנונים. וכן
 יהי רצון מלפניך, יי א-להינו
 וא-להי אבותינו ואמותינו, שתסבב
 מלאכי רחמים לפני המתה, שהיא
 אמתך בת אמתך; ואתה יי א-להינו
 וא-להי אבותינו ואמותינו משפיל
 אל דל, מלטה מפל צרה ומיום רעה
 ומדינה של גהנם: ברוך אתה גדול
 החסד ובעל הרחמים: ברוך אתה

העשה שלום במרומו לעבדיו
 וליראי שמו: ברוך פודה עמו
 ישראל ממיני פורעניות ברחמים:
 ברחמים הסתר והעלם פשעי המתה
 הזאת אמתך. משרפת אש תחליצה
 שהיא צריכה לרחמיך הרבים; ואתה
 יי א-להינו טוב וסלח לכל קוראיך.
 ברוך אתה גדול העצה ורב העלילה
 ברחמים, עם רגלי צדיקים וצדקניות
 בגן עדן תדרוך, כי מקום ישרים
 הוא רגלי חסדיו ישמור: ברוך אתה
 הנותן רחמים גדולים ורוכ תחנונים
 למתי עמו ישראל: אמן, כן יהי
 רצון:

PART II: Preparation for *R'chitza* (washing)

- 1) Wash hands ritually (with laver), without *b'racha*.
- 2) Put on gloves.
- 3) (Optional) Place *meit/meita* on floor, using sheet to transfer body (at Menorah Chapels) or electrical harness (Bernheim/Apters). Place *meit/meita* back on gurney.
- 4) Uncover the *meit/meita*, remembering rules of *tz'ni-ut* (modesty). Uncover only that which is being cleansed.
 - a. Look for bleeding or open wounds.
 - b. Cover open sites as needed – use gauze, cotton, skin glue.
 - c. Retrieve ALL blood soaked items and place in casket near bottom.
 - d. If possible, remove any foreign objects.
 - e. Clean dirt from nails on both hands and feet. Remove any nail polish. Add any clipped nails or loose hairs to bag to be placed in *aron* (casket), near feet.
 - f. Straighten arms and legs; close mouth and eyes.

*5) Recite

“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 אֱלֹהֵי הָעֲמֻדִים לְפָנָיו לֵאמֹר
הִסִּירוּ הַבְּגָדִים הַצְּאִים מֵעַלָּיו וַיֹּאמֶר
אֱלֹהֵי רָאָה הִעֲבַרְתִּי מֵעַלָּיָה עֹנֶדָה
וְהִלְבַּשְׁתִּי אֶתְךָ מִחֻלְצוֹת:

*6) Recite *ANAH*

G-d of kindness and mercy, whose ways are merciful and truthful, you have commanded us to practice righteousness with the dead and to engage in properly burying them. May it therefore be your will, O Lord our G-d, to strengthen us to properly perform our undertaking of this holy task of cleaning and washing this body, of dressing him/her in *tachrichim*, and of preparing him/her for burial. Let us not fail in our holy task, and let us now proceed with dignity, compassion and caring.

***7) Together we ask *m'chila* (forgiveness) from the *meit/meita*:**

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

PART III: *R'chitza* (General Cleansing)

- 1) Lift sheet off the *meit/meita* only exposing parts to be cleansed.
- 2) One person begins pouring water from a vessel (with hand turned backwards) onto the *meit/meita*, starting at the head (but avoiding eyes, ears, nose and mouth) and continuing down his/her right side, followed by pouring water on his/her back.
- 3) Next person, using washcloths, cleans and dries right side of *meit/meita*.
- 4) Another person pours water on the *meit/meita* starting on left side, again starting at head, with hand backwards, continuing down left side, followed by the back.
- 5) Fourth person cleans and dries left side of *meit/meita*.
- 6) When completed, cover *meit/meita*.
- 7) Dispose of gloves.

***8) To be recited:**

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 waterbrooks; 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.

ראשו כְּתָם פָּז קוֹצוֹתָיו תִּלְתָּלִים
שְׁחָרוֹת כְּעוֹרֵב: עֵינָיו כִּיּוֹנִים
עַל־אִפְיָיו מֵיִם רְחֻצוֹת בְּחֶלֶב יִשְׁבוֹת
עַל־מִלְאָתָּה: לְחֵיָל בְּעָרוֹגַת הַבָּשָׂם
מִגְדָּלוֹת מְרֻקָּחִים שְׁפָתוֹתָיו שׁוֹשְׁנִים
נֹטְפוֹת מוֹר עֵבֶר: יָדָיו גְּלִילֵי זָהָב
מִמְלָאִים בַּתְּרִשִׁישׁ מַעֲיוֹ עֲשֵׂת שֵׁן
מְעַלְפֶּת סַפִּירִים: שׁוֹקוֹר עַמּוּדֵי שֵׁשׁ
מִיִּסְדָּיִם עַל־אֲדָנֶי־פָּז מֵרָאֵהוּ כָּל־בְּנוֹן
בְּחֹר כְּאֲרָזִים: חֹכוֹ מִמַּתְקִים וְכָלוֹ
מִחֲמָדִים זֶה דוֹדִי וְזֶה רְעִי בָּנוֹת
יְרוּשָׁלָּיִם:

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.

הִנֵּךְ יָפָה רְעִיתִי הִנֵּךְ יָפָה עֵינֶיךָ יוֹנִים
מִבְּעַד לְצַמְתְּךָ שְׁעָרֶךָ כְּעֶדֶר הָעוֹיִם
שִׁגְלָשׁוֹ מֵהַר גִּלְעָד: שְׁנֵיךָ כְּעֶדֶר
הַקְּצוּבוֹת שֶׁעָלוּ מִן־הַרְחֻצָּה שְׁכָלָם
מִתְאִימוֹת וְשִׁכְלָה אֵין בָּהֶם: כְּחוֹט
הַשָּׁנִי שְׁפָתֶיךָ וּמִדְּבָרֶיךָ נֶאֱוָה כְּפֶלֶח
הַרְמוֹן רִקְתְּךָ מִבְּעַד לְצַמְתְּךָ: כְּמִגְדָּל
דָּוִד צוּאֲרֹךְ בְּנוֹי לְתַלְפִּיּוֹת אֶלֶף
הַמְּגֹן תְּלוּי עָלָיו כָּל־שִׁלְטֵי
הַגְּבוּרִים: שְׁנֵי שְׁדֶיךָ כְּשְׁנֵי עֶפְרַיִם
תְּאוּמֵי צְבִיָּה הַרוֹעִים בְּשׁוֹשְׁנִים: כְּלָךְ
יָפָה רְעִיתִי וּמוֹם אֵין בְּךָ:

PART IV: *TAHARA*

- 1) Fill three pails (about two gallons each), total nine *kabim* of tepid water (24 qts./6 gal).
- 2) Wash hands ritually (with laver), without *b'racha* – put on fresh set of gloves.
- *3) To be recited: *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,
לְפָנַי מִי אַתֶּם מְטַהְרִין. וּמִי מְטַהֵר
אֶתְכֶם, אֲבִיכֶם שְׁבַשְׁמַיִם, שֶׁנֶּאמַר,
(יחזקאל לו, כה) וְזָרַקְתִּי עֲלֵיכֶם מַיִם
טְהוֹרִים וּטְהַרְתֶּם. וְאָמַר, (ירמיה יז,
ג) מִקְוֵה יִשְׂרָאֵל יְיָ, מַה מִּקְוֵה מְטַהֵר
אֶת הַטְּמֵאִים, אֶף הַקָּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא
מְטַהֵר אֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל: מֵעֵין גְּנוּיִם בְּאֵר
מַיִם חַיִּים וְנוֹזְלִים מִזֶּלְבָנוֹן: וְזָרַקְתִּי
עֲלֵיכֶם מַיִם טְהוֹרִים וּטְהַרְתֶּם מִכָּל
טְמֵאוֹתֵיכֶם וּמִכָּל-גְּלוּלֵיכֶם אֲטַהֵר
אֶתְכֶם :

- 4) The three pails containing nine *kabim* (six gallons water) are to be poured in ONE continuous stream. Same method as earlier – start at head on right side of *meit/meita* followed by left. Those not pouring help with positioning/tilting of the *meit/meita* so water reaches all parts of body.
- *5) The purpose of this water is to mimic the pure waters of the *mikveh*. As some are pouring, others say:

“And I will pour upon you pure water, and you shall be cleansed from all your impurities and sins.”

*6) When done pouring, proclaim:

<p>FOR A FEMALE:</p> <p>טְהוֹרָה הִיא...טְהוֹרָה הִיא...טְהוֹרָה הִיא</p> <p><i>Tehorah hee...Tehorah hee...Tehorah hee.</i></p> <p>She is pure...She is pure...She is pure.</p> <p>FOR A MALE:</p> <p>טְהוֹר הוּא...טְהוֹר הוּא...טְהוֹר הוּא</p> <p><i>Tahor hu...Tahor hu...Tahor hu.</i></p> <p>He is pure...He is pure...He is pure.</p>

7) Dry *meit/meita* and table thoroughly. One may transfer *meit/meita* to second gurney; place dry towels on original gurney and retransfer *meit/meita*. Remove wet towels.

PART V: HALBASHA (DRESSING) & HASHKAVAH (LAYING TO REST)

*Recite *t'filla* before *halbasha*:

- 1) Put *tachrichim* on in correct order: pants, shirt, outer shirt, belts, and head covering.
 - 2) Appropriate number of bows made – according to our minhag: calves, collars, bonnet. (3 bows each) = *shin*; waist belt (13)
 - 3) With great care, place the *meit/meita* in *aron* (casket) – if necessary, use sheet to transfer *meit/meita*.
- *4) All say:

<p><i>Adonai natan v'Adonai lakach</i> — G-d has given and G-d has taken.</p>

*5) Again, we ask "M'CHILA" (forgiveness):

FOR A MALE:	FOR A FEMALE:
אָנוּ מְבַקְשִׁים מְחִילָה מֵאַתָּךְ אִם לֹא עָשִׂינוּ כְּפִי כְבוֹדְךָ, אֲבָל עָשִׂינוּ כְּמִנְהַג הַמָּקוֹם.	אָנוּ מְבַקְשׁוֹת מְחִילָה מֵאַתָּךְ 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.	

*For a male: (transliterated)

_____ ben _____ v' _____ anu m'vakshim m'chila mei-it'cha im lo asinu k'fi ch'vodecha, aval asinu, k'minhag hamakom.

*For a female: (transliterated)

_____ bat _____ v' _____ anu m'vakshot m'chila, mei-itach im lo asinu k'fi ch'vodecha, aval asinu k'minhag hamakom.

- 6) Sprinkle *afar* (earth from Israel) on corner of eyes, heart and pubic area.
- 7) Place vinegar and egg mixture on forehead.
- 8) Place shards of pottery over eyes and mouth.

*9) All recite:

Master of the Universe, please have compassion on _____, the son/daughter of _____ v' _____. May his/her soul be at rest among all the departed of Israel. May it be your will, Eternal our G-d, and G-d of our ancestors, to remember this Jewish soul and through mercy, may he/she walk among the righteous. May such be your will. Amen.

- 10) Cover the *meit/meita* with *sovev* (sheet).
- 11) Close *aron*. Jewish star goes on bottom half of *aron*.
- 12) Roll *meit/meita* out of *tahara* room, feet first, into refrigerated room. Make sure refrigerator is operating.