



Kavod v'Nichum

Honoring K'rovei Yisrael: Ritual Care at the End of Life

Jewish tradition places extraordinary emphasis on caring for the dead with dignity and reverence. Members of a *Chevra Kadisha*, the sacred community of volunteers who perform one of the most sacred acts in Jewish life by preparing the body for burial through washing, prayer, and careful attention to kavod hamet, honoring the dead.

In many communities today, Chevra Kadisha volunteers encounter a reality that earlier generations faced less often. **A beloved member of the community may not be Jewish according to *halacha* (law) but may be a spouse, partner, parent, or family member who lived deeply within Jewish life.**

Some communities refer to such individuals as *k'rovei Yisrael*, those who are close to the Jewish people.

While traditional *taharah* (washing and preparation) is a Jewish ritual preparation for burial, some Chevra Kadisha groups have developed parallel rituals of washing and preparation that reflect the same spirit of care and dignity. These rituals are sometimes called Final Kindness, language created by Richard (Rick) Light of Santa Fe, New Mexico.

A Final Kindness ritual is not taharah. It is an adapted ritual of washing and preparation that draws inspiration from the values and structure of taharah while honoring the identity of someone who is not Jewish but who was closely connected to Jewish life.

In many communities, the physical acts of care, such as washing the body and maintaining modesty, are similar. The liturgy may be adapted, simplified, or expanded to reflect the life and identity of the person being prepared.

Both rituals share the same underlying intention: to treat the deceased with dignity, gentleness, and reverence at the end of life. In Jewish tradition, this act of care is understood as *chesed shel emet*, a true act of lovingkindness.

Practices vary widely. Some Chevra Kadisha groups offer taharah only for Jews. Others offer a modified ritual for those closely connected to Jewish life. The resources below are offered to help communities approach these situations thoughtfully and with sensitivity.

Resources

Rick Light's work has helped many Chevra Kadisha groups think carefully about how Jewish communities can care for those closely connected to Jewish life. You can purchase his book [*Final Kindness: Honoring K'rovei Yisrael: Guidelines for Burial Preparation of Non-Jews Who Are Part of The Jewish Community*](#) for an in-depth offering of ritual and writings.

You can also [watch a presentation by Rick Light](#) on krovei Yisrael and Final Kindness.

The Progressive Chevra Kadisha (PCK) adapted liturgy from Rick Light's work that follows the structure of taharah while using gender-inclusive language and texts appropriate for k'rovei Yisrael. [View the PCK liturgy here.](#)

This guide from 18Doors provides helpful context for navigating Jewish end-of-life rituals in interfaith families: [Guide to Death and Mourning for Interfaith Families.](#)

Different Approaches

Different Chevra Kadisha groups approach this question in different ways. Some examples include:

- Some communities perform taharah only for those who are Jewish according to halacha.
- Some communities offer a modified washing ritual for non-Jewish spouses or partners who lived within Jewish life.
- Some Chevra Kadisha groups work closely with clergy to determine whether a ritual preparation is appropriate in a particular situation.
- Others offer a ritual of washing and prayer that parallels taharah while clearly distinguishing it from the traditional ritual.

Each community must determine its own policy in consultation with local clergy and community leadership. If you are considering developing rituals or resources, join our [Chevra Kadisha Conversation email listserv](#) to learn from others who have implemented this in their communities.