Adat Shalom Chevra Kadisha

Reconstructionist Tahara Handbook for Women and Men

This booklet contains the service and instructions for performing tahara. It is one suggested liturgy, assembled by members of Adat Shalom Reconstructionist Congregation, rooted in tradition but revised in light of Reconstructionist principles.

Introduction

“Just as a newborn child is immediately washed and enters this world clean and pure, so [one] who departs this world must be cleansed and made pure through the religious ritual called taharah. In addition to the physical cleansing and preparation of the body for burial, the Chevrah Kadishah recites required prayers asking Almighty God for forgiveness for any sins the deceased may have committed and praying that the All-Merciful may guard the deceased and grant him or her eternal peace.”

- Maurice Lamm, The Jewish Way in Death and Mourning (1969)

“The highest act of gemilut chesed [acts of loving kindness] is that which is done for the dead, for there can never by any question of repayment.”

- Tanhuma Vayehi 107A

Glossary

Aron: Coffin, casket.

Chevra Kadisha: Burial Society (literally, holy society).

K’vod Hamet/ K’vod Hametah: Respect for the dead (male/female).

Met/Metah: The deceased, also, the dead body.

Mechilah: Forgiveness, the forgiveness asked by the chevra kadisha for having disturbed the met.
**Tachrichim**

Shrouds: “All Jews are buried in the same type of garment . . . . Nineteen hundred years ago, Rabbi Gamaliel instituted this practice so that the poor would not be shamed and the wealthy would not vie with each other in displaying the costliness of their burial clothes.” (Lamm, *The Jewish Way in Death and Mourning*)

**Tahara**

Purification, specifically, the ritual pouring of water before dressing the *met* for burial. Also refers to the entire service.
NOTE: These first few pages, Roman numerals iii-vi, are prefatory, and should be read in advance. The tahara service begins on Arabic page number 1.

**Basic Information**

(1) **Information about the deceased.**

The Hebrew name of the deceased and of his/her parents is obtained by the leader of the chevra from the synagogue’s Life Cycle Committee, which is in touch with the family. The deceased’s family will also know the cause of death. (See the end note, “Complications.”) If necessary, the family of the deceased may be called directly for this information.

(2) **Who performs tahara?**

Participation in tahara is a mitzvah of the highest order. It is performed by Jews to honor a deceased person who is Jewish. Generally speaking, women perform taharot for women, men for men, though this may be modified if circumstances require.

Close relatives of the deceased generally do not perform the tahara. For instance, a man generally does not do tahara for his father, brother, or father-in-law. A woman would not usually do tahara for the analogous relatives. This too can be modified as circumstances require.

Performing the ritual requires moderate physical effort, including the ability to lift a substantial part of a body for short periods of time.

A woman may perform tahara during her menstrual period.

Only members of the chevra kadisha are permitted to be in the room, or to see or hear into it, during a tahara.

(3) **When is tahara performed?**

Ideally, tahara is not done more than three hours before burial. This is
rarely achieved nowadays, however, and it is permissible to do tahara on the night before burial. If the weather is hot or the condition of the met is known to be deteriorating rapidly, tahara can even be performed several days before burial. The honor of the met is the critical consideration.

(4) Attitude.

Note: Discussion of any part of the tahara service, and any decisions that must be made regarding the ritual or liturgy, should occur before entering the room with the met.

Once the service begins, participants should follow the instructions of the leader. Limit conversation to the actual procedures at hand. Discussion of the deceased’s personality, family problems, disease (unless safety is in question), or other topics is inappropriate. Try to avoid turning your back on the deceased, which in some traditions is considered a sign of disrespect. Proceed with k’vod hamet (the honor of the person who has died) uppermost in mind. Handle the met in a gentle manner.

(5) Clothing.

You will be pouring water, and may step in some. Wear comfortable shoes with traction, and clothes that are comfortable as well, but nothing that might show disrespect for the dead. Bring a head covering -- such as a kippah, scarf, or hat -- for ritual rather than hygienic purposes. Head covering will also be available at the funeral home.

Summary of the Procedures

Preparation of the met encompasses several procedures and rituals, done in a specific order. The actual tahara -- the pouring of water -- is one of these rituals. The summary below shows the order in which the rituals are performed.

Again, tahara is a ritual whose methods are governed by custom, not by Jewish law or halachah. As a result, although the general outline of the ritual
has become rather standardized, there is room for variation as long as respect for the *met* remains the primary concern.

(1) Perform ritual hand-washing (without gloves), without a blessing. The *chevra* wash their hands ritually at three points to mark the various stages of the service: preparation, *tahara* (with gloves), and conclusion. All hand-washings are traditionally performed without a blessing.

(2) Check equipment and supplies.

(3) Don protective clothing, including gloves.

(4) Lay out the *tachrichim* in the order of use.

(5) Open the *aron* or coffin.

(6) Recite three prayers:

   a) The Prayer for Forgiveness (*Mechilah*), in which members ask the *met* to forgive them for disturbing it during the *tahara*.

   b) The *Ana Hashem*, the Prayer for the Chevra, in which members ask God for strength to carry out the *tahara*.

   c) The *Ribono Shel Olam*, the Prayer for the Dead, in which members ask for God’s compassion towards the *met*.

(7) Gently uncover the *met*. If possible, remove any bandages, tubing, or other obstructions. (See “Complications” at the end of this booklet.)

(8) *Rechitsah* (physical washing). Prior to *tahara*, the *met* is cleansed to remove any soil.

(9) *Tahara* (purification): the heart of the service. The *met* is purified through ritual washing.

(10) *Halbashah* (dressing). The *met* is dried and dressed in *tachrichim*. 
(11) Place the *met* in the *aron*.

(12) Pray again for forgiveness/mechilah.

**Look Over the Liturgy**

**Note:** Before entering the room with the *met*, please look over the liturgy that follows and be sure that the entire *chevra kadisha* present is familiar with the liturgy and rituals. Keep conversation about process to a minimum, but make any necessary changes before, rather than during, the ritual.

The service that follows is intended to be standard for Adat Shalom. However, if a mistake occurs, it is important not to fret over it, but to keep going.
The Tahara Service

Clean hands with soap, then wash them ritually as a purification, alternating left and right hands three times, without saying a blessing. The group may choose to wash each other’s hands, as a way of increasing their sense of community for the emotional experience to follow. Allow the hands to air-dry.

Enter the room with the met, in silence.

Check Equipment and Supplies before Beginning

For the Chevra

Surgical gowns and disposable masks
Surgical gloves
Head covering for members of chevra (kerchiefs or surgical hats)

For Washing

3 buckets, each of which holds at least two gallons or 8 quarts of water (equal to 8 kavim)
Smaller containers or pitchers
Cups for washing hands
Scissors
Paper towels
Linen towels or sheets for covering and drying the met
Head rest
Place to dispose of garbage
String
Nail clippers and nail polish remover
Comb
Gauze
1" surgical tape
Adult diapers
Balls of cotton
Skin sealer (Monsel Solution or something similar)
Toothpicks
For Dressing

*Tachrichim* or shrouds for the *met* (includes a bag) -- same for men and women. Check for:
- pants, including ties for ankles
- shirt
- *kittel* or tunic
- belt
- face cover
- head cover
- ties of various lengths
- white cotton socks (only if the pants are not sewn closed at the bottom and the *met* is so tall that the feet will hang out from the pants)

*Sovev* (cloth) for lining the coffin

*Tallit* for the *met* (optional)

*Afar* -- Dead Sea sand (earth or soil from Israel)

Shells or shards to cover the *met’s* eyes and mouth

Miscellaneous

*Aron* or casket

Copy of the liturgy

A Star of David or other symbol, to identify the head of the coffin

Candles

Light a candle to soften the lighting in the room.

Don gowns and gloves.

Lay out the *tachrichim* in the following order:
- trousers with closed feet and ties
- shirt
- *kittel* or tunic
- belt
- face cover
- head cover
**Prepare the Aron**

Remove the lid of the aron. Place the sovey (cloth) caddy-corner (in a diamond formation) in the aron as a lining. If there is a tallit, remove elaborate ornaments (e.g., silver pieces) and lay it out 1/3 of the way down from the top of the aron, like a belt. Using scissors, cut off one of the tzitzit to render the tallit unusable, and place it in the aron. Children 13 and over may be buried in a tallit; children under 13 are not.

Even if there is a reasonable likelihood that it will not be possible to do the tahara, because of the circumstances of death, do not unwrap the met to check prior to arranging the coffin and tachrichim. Perform the prayers in either case.

**Prayers**

Say the following three prayers before uncovering the met. **Note:** Tahara prayers may be recited in Hebrew or English or a combination, at the leader’s discretion.

(1) **Prayer for Forgiveness (mechilah)**

The chevra ask, one-by-one, for personal mechilah (forgiveness for any unintended trespass or intrusion against the met), using the deceased’s name. We suggest the prayer be said one-by-one because doing so makes the ritual more meaningful for the members of the chevra.

**For a Male:**

____________________ (first name/Hebrew name if known), bar __________________

(first names of parents/Hebrew names if known) -- I ask mechilah for you, for your family and friends, and for all of Israel, and I ask mechilah from you for any mistakes or indiscretions I may unintentionally commit during this service.

בר אבוקפша מחליה ז"ל בנו נבש המט נבש עמהו נבשו כל על ישראל בקつくפת מחליה ז"ל בנו נבש עמהו שניים נבשו

בר נסערא ז"ל.
Avakshah mechilah ba-avoorchah, ba-avoor kol k’roveycha veedeedeycha, ooav-avoor kol am Yisrael, v’chen avakshah mechilah mimchah ba-avoor sh’ge-ohteynoo shegaramnnoo bishgagah b’meshech taharat hamet.

For a Female:

__________________ (first name/Hebrew name if known), bat ______________
(first names of parents/Hebrew names if known) -- I ask mechilah for you, for your family and friends, and for all of Israel, and I ask mechilah from you for any mistakes or indiscretions I may unintentionally commit during this service.

(2) Prayer for the Chevra (Ana Hashem)
(to be recited jointly by the chevra)

Source of Kindness and Compassion, Whose ways are ways of mercy and truth, You have commanded us to act with loving-kindness and compassion towards the dead; and to engage in their proper burial. Grant us the courage and strength to perform this sacred work properly – washing and cleansing the met, dressing it in shrouds, and burying it. Guide our hands and hearts as we do this work, and enable us to complete it with love. Help us to see You in the face of the deceased, even as we see You in the faces of those who share this mitzvah. Source of Life and Death, be with us now and forever.
Anah elohei hachesed v’harachameem, shekol orchotecha chesed v’emet, v’tzeeveetanoo la-asot chesed v’emet eem hameteem, ool’hitasek bikvooratam. Oov’chen y’hee ratzon meelfarnecha, Adonai Eloheynoo, shet’amtzeynoo oot’chazkenoo la-asot m’lachteynoo m’lechet shamahyeem zoo kra-ooey, hen b’taharat hamet, hen bilvooshoh, ooveekvooratooh. Chazek yadeynoo bim’lacha zo va’azor lanoo l’mala’ah b’ahavah.

Ten lanoo liro’t et tzalmecha bifney hameteem k’shem shahoo nishkaf bif’ney hame’sai-eem b’yadeynoo b’mitzvah zo. M’kor hachahyim v’hamavet, heyeh imanoo me’atah v’ad olam.

(3) **Prayer for the Dead (traditionally, Ribono Shel Olam)**

(to be recited jointly by the *chevra*)

**For a Male:**

Life of All Worlds, have compassion for _____________ (first name/Hebrew name if known), son of _____________ (first names of parents/Hebrew names if known), and of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel, and Leah, Your dear ones. May his soul and spirit rest with those who have gone before, for You give eternal life to those who have died, even as You bring death to the living. May it be Your will, God of our ancestors, to encircle the departed one with Love, for he is Your beloved, the son of those who sought Your presence.

For a Female:

Life of All Worlds, have compassion for ____________________ (first name/Hebrew name if known), daughter of ________________ (first names of parents/Hebrew names if known), and of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel, and Leah, Your dear ones. May her soul and spirit rest with those who have gone before, for You give eternal life to those who have died, even as You bring death to the living. May it be Your will, God of our ancestors, to encircle the departed one with Love, for she is Your beloved, the daughter of those who sought Your presence.

Cleanse the Met

(1) Pre-tahara wash (Rechitsah).

Fill one or two buckets or containers with lukewarm water. There is no set amount of water to be used at this point. Place a sheet over the body. Gently uncover te met, a little at a time, re-covering it wherever possible, and visually examine the body.

**Note:** Should the condition of the body raise questions about the suitability of performing tahara, the group should move to the anteroom; read the relevant section under “Complications,” at the back of this booklet; and decide as a group whether k’vod hamet is best served by leaving the body as is, or proceeding with the tahara.

If it is decided that it is not suitable to perform tahara, re-cover the met and do not perform any washing. Simply proceed to p. 13, dress the met with the tachrichim, and place it in the coffin in the prescribed manner. Put in place the afar/Dead Sea sand and shards, and close the coffin.

If the met is intact and the tahara can proceed, cut away clothes and other extraneous objects. If possible, remove any bandages, tubing, or other obstructions. (If there is any question, see the “Bandages and tubing” section at the end, under “Complications.”)
Remove jewelry for return to family, but any jewelry that cannot be removed without tearing the flesh should be buried with the met. Designate a member of the chevra to deliver the jewelry that has been removed to Adat Shalom’s executive director, who will give it to the family. (Traditionally, the family should not know who the members of the chevra were.)

Place a sheet over the met. Keep the met covered as much as possible for the sake of modesty.

Because blood is considered part of the body, bloody spots on clothes or sheets remaining from the time of death should be cut out and saved in their entirety in the bag that comes with the tachrichim. Ultimately, the bag will be put in the coffin. Try to prevent new bleeding. Using a cotton swab, seal any punctures, open wounds, or sores with sealer (Monsel Solution or something similar), or apply tape, a band-aid, and/or plastic, to prevent blood from seeping out. Any dried blood should be removed with a small moist cotton ball and saved in the bag. Even pouring the tahara water itself should not be done if it is likely to cause bleeding. (See the “Complications” section at the end for problems that arise when blood will not stop flowing, or the amount of blood is copious.)

Bodily wastes are not saved and should be washed away or discarded. Such waste can be removed with wet cotton or paper towels and thrown away.

Remove nail polish. Clean dirty fingernails and toenails with a toothpick and trim them, if necessary. If the nails are cut, the clippings and any debris should also go into the bag, as well as any tufts of hair, as these are considered part of the body. If false teeth are secure, leave them alone; if loose, remove them and place them at the foot of the coffin.

Recite together the passage of praise below from the Amidah, while beginning to cleanse the met.

Who can compare to You, in strength,
In loving-kindness You sustain the living,
Nurturing the life of every living thing, with Your great mercy,
And keeping faith with those who rest in the earth.
Blessed are You, Wellspring of Love,
Who renews all life.
Mee chamochah ba’al g’voorot. M’chakel chayim b’chesed,
M’chayeh kol chai b’rachamim rabeem, oom’kayem emoonato
leesheyney afar. B’roochah eyn ha-ahavah m’chadeshet kol chai.

Continue reciting together a passage of praise from the *Shacharit*, while
continuing to cleanse the *met*.

O God, the soul You gave me is pure. You created it, You shaped it,
You breathed it into me. You preserve it within me. And You will yet
take it from me, for eternal life.

Elohai neshamah shenatata bee tehorah hee. Atah bra’atah, Atah
y’tzartah, Atah n’fachta bee v’atah m’shemrah b’keerbee v’atah
ateed litlah meemenee l’chayey olam.

Now you are ready to wash the body, starting with the head. If the bucket is
hard to handle, a smaller container or pitcher may be dipped into the bucket
for water. The sheet is pulled back to wash each part of the body and
replaced after each body part is washed.

**Note:** The *met* should never be placed face down.
The order of washing is:

Front of body

Entire head and neck (the eyes and mouth should be closed or covered so that water does not enter them)
Right upper arm, lower arm, and hand
Right upper trunk
Right lower trunk
Private parts
Right thigh, leg, and foot
Left upper arm, lower arm, and hand
Left upper trunk
Left lower trunk
Left thigh, leg, and foot

Back of body

To wash the back of the body, one person holds the head, while others turn and hold the body on its left side. Using a wash cloth, one person washes the back from the right shoulder to the right foot. Then incline the body on its right side and repeat the process on the left back. Lightly clean the anal area. Sometimes it may need to be packed with cotton. The back may be reddish or purplish since, in the absence of circulation, blood will pool by gravity.

After the met is clean, three or four people hold a fresh sheet above the body like a canopy, while facing away from the body. One or two other people stand on either side of the body and remove the used sheet from under the canopy. Lower the dry sheet over the body. If fewer chevra members are present, they can accomplish this same changing of the sheets by slowly pulling the used sheet off at the feet while continuing to replace it with the new sheet from the head.

Discard the used sheet in the laundry hamper. The chevra then wash their hands with gloves on, once with soap, for cleanliness, and, again, without soap, ritually, but without a blessing.
(2) **Tahara -- ritual washing.**

Fill three buckets with cool water, each bucket containing about 8 quarts or liters (*kavim*), totaling 24 quarts or liters (six gallons). Be sure that the *tahara* water, when poured, drains over the sink hole. However, if pouring water will cause additional bleeding, do not pour.

Before pouring the water, recite this teaching from Rabbi Akiva three times, in Hebrew and/or in English:

```
“God is the hope, the mikveh of Israel.”

מקוה ישראל
```

During the *tahara*, one or more persons from the group may choose to study -- silently or out loud -- the following Talmudic text from which the previous line is drawn. Tradition holds our studying, in memory of the deceased, to be a great honor and an important show of respect. As people are moved, you may also choose to continue to chant, *“Mikveh Yisrael Adonai,”* meditatively or as a mantra, during the pouring of water.

Rabbi Akiva said: “Happy are you, the community of Israel. Before whom are you cleansed, and who cleanses you? Your Father, your God, who is in heaven! As it is said, ‘And I have sprinkled pure water upon you, and you should be cleansed from all your impurities and from all your falsehoods; I will cleanse you.’ (Ezekial 36:25) And it is said: ‘*Mikveh Yisrael Adonai* -- God is the purifier, the mikveh, the hope of Israel.’ (Jeremiah 17: 13). Just as the mikveh cleanses those who are impure, so does the Holy Blessed One cleanse the community of Israel.” (Talmud Jonah: 85)
Mah hamikveh m’taher et hat’mee’eem af hakadosh baruch hoo m’taher et Yisrael.” (Talmud Jonah: 85)

Remove the sheet from the body during the pouring of tahara water, but exercise discretion in the presence of the uncovered met by averting your eyes as much as possible.

Three members of the chevra take buckets of water and place themselves on alternate sides of the met, one at the head, one at the lower ribs (on the other side of the body), and one by the thighs (again on the first side of the body). Each member pours a bucket of water, immediately after the one before, in staggered succession -- to create a cascade that flows from head to foot without pause. This sequential flow, without breaks, is the essential element of the tahara.

Just before the first person has emptied her/his bucket, the second member of the chevra begins pouring from the opposite side of the body. Just before the second member has finished emptying his/her bucket, the third member begins to pour (back again on the first side of the body). As a guide -- the first bucket might be finished pouring in the area of the met’s lower ribs, the second bucket might go from the ribs to the thighs, and the third would go from the thighs to the feet.
Note that should there be any break in the succession of the pouring of water, the process must begin over until 24 quarts are properly poured in a unbroken flow. (Ideally, a non-pouring member of the group should check to be sure that there is no interruption.)

Near the end of the pouring of the water, all say the words, “He is pure” or “She is pure” three times.

For a Male:

Tahor hoo.

For a Female:

T’horah hee.

When all the water has been poured, gently and thoroughly dry the met with the sheet and clean towels. Make sure to dry the sides and back. When drying the back, turn the met first onto the left side and dry the right back. Then turn the met onto the right side and dry the left back. **Remember that the met should never be turned face down on its stomach.** Check the ears for water and dry if necessary. Also dry the table under the met. Do not allow the tachrichim to get wet.

Cover the met with a clean, dry sheet. Mop the floor with extra towels if there is excess water.

**Dress the Met (Halbashah)**

The met is now physically and spiritually pure. Before dressing the met, recite:

“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.” (Isiah 61:10)
Sos asees ba’Adonai, tagayl nafshee baylohai. Kee hilbeeshanee big’dey yesha, m’eel tzedakah.

Dress the met in the following order:

Pants (for both sexes), socks if necessary (see below), undershirt, top shirt/kittel, face cover, head cover.

If the arms and legs are stiff, use gentle pressure, especially at the elbow or knee, to facilitate insertion into the garment.

Put the pants on first, then the undershirt and the kittel. Tie the belt at the waist over the kittel with a slip knot, and complete with a “shin bow” (three loops for the shin in Shadai, as on a mezuzzah). Make sure that the hands are not tied down by the belt. The arms should be straight down alongside the body. Tie the wrists with normal bows. If the pants are sewn closed at the feet, tie the pants at the ankles. (The sewing shut of the feet symbolizes with finality that the met will no longer walk on this earth.)

If the pants are not sewn closed at the feet, push the feet up inside the pants and tie the pants at the tips of the toes, enclosing the feet inside. However, if this is impossible because the legs and feet together are so long that they do not fit inside the pants, put a pair of white socks on the feet and then tie the pants at the ankles.

Put on the face cover and the head cover.

The tachrichim must not be soiled, whether by excrement, puss, dirt, or blood. If they are soiled, do not repeat the tahara. Clean the soiled place and use new tachrichim. Extra tachrichim are stored at the funeral home. (In one of the closets at Hines Rinaldi Funeral Home, there are opened tachrichim packages, with broken sets, if that is useful.)
**Place the *Met* in the Coffin**

Transfer the dressed *met* to the *aron*, placing it on top of the *tallit* and *soev*. If the funeral home does not have automated pulleys and lifts, use one of the following methods to move the *met*.

a) Wheel the coffin next to the table and raise the table to the same level as the edge of coffin. With members of the *chevra* standing at each end of the *met*, move first the legs and then the upper body into the *aron*.

b) Fireman technique: All but one member of the *chevra* line up next to the *met*, lift it straight up, then pull it towards them, and step back. The remaining member quickly wheels the coffin between the *chevra* members and the table. The *met* is lowered into the coffin.

c) Hospital technique: Slip a sheet under the *met*, oriented to form a diamond. Place the coffin next to the table and raise the table to the same level as the edge of coffin. *Chevra* members lined up at the head and foot of the *met* use the sheet to hoist the *met* into the coffin. The sheet can be left in the coffin under the *met*. (This is probably the easiest method, involving the least physical strain to the members of the *chevra").

Wrap the *tallit* and then the *soev* around the *met*. The *soev* should cover the entire body of the *met*. Place pottery shards over the eyes. The shards address the mystics’ concern that as long as the eyes of the *met* look upon this world, the soul cannot properly focus on the world-to-come. Some are accustomed to putting clay shards over the mouth as well. Sprinkle earth from *Eretz Yisrael* over the *met*, moving from head to foot, and also inside the coffin around the *met*. The shards and the Israeli soil reaffirm the Scriptural injunction: “Dust thou art, and to dust thou shalt return.”

Check the supporting table and the wet sheet for any hairs, which should be placed in the bag. Place the bag and any items that must be buried with the *met* (e.g., false teeth, blood-stained clothing) inside the *aron*, at the foot.

With everyone standing around the *aron*, say the following:
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 unto you and give you peace.
(Numbers: 5)

For a Male:

בך ויהשמרך.
יֵאָרָא הַפֶּתי אֲלֵךָ וְיַחְדָּה.
חַכְּה לְפֶתְיו אָלֵיךָ וְיֵשֶׁם לְךָ שלום.


For a Female:

בך ויהשמרך.
יֵאָרָא הַפֶּתי אֲלֵךָ וְיַחְדָּה.
חַכְּה לְפֶתְיו אָלֵיךָ וְיֵשֶׁם לְךָ שלום.

Yevarechech Adonai veyishmerek. Ya’er Adonai panav elayich veyecheonech. Yisa Adonai panav elayich veyasem lach shalom.

The members of the chevra now jointly ask the met to forgive them for any accidental indignities or wrongdoing committed during performance of the tahara:

______________ (first name/Hebrew name), bat/bar
______________ (first names of parents/Hebrew names if known), we ask mechilah for any indignity that you may have suffered at our hands, despite the loving care and concern that we exercised during this tahara.

Close the aron. Place the Star of David at its head to identify the position of the body.

Leave the tahara room.
Remove gloves, gowns, etc. Wash hands three times with soap and water (without a b’racha), as a health precaution, alternating between right and left hand. Allow hands to air-dry.

Members of the chevra kadisha may wish to recite together this prayer:

Creator of the Universe, we have just completed our act of g’milut chesed for __________ (first name of the deceased). We thank You for the strength and courage to perform this mitzvah. We appreciate this sacred fellowship and cherish the bond that has brought us together.

Members may wish to recite a Mi’Shebeirach, or prayer of healing, for the family of the deceased and themselves.

Mi shebeirach avoteinu, m’kor habracha l’avoteinu.  
May the Source of strength Who blessed the ones before us  
Help us find the courage to make our lives a blessing.  
And let us say Amen.

Mi shebirach imoteinu, m’kor habracha l’avoteinu.  
Bless those in need of healing with r’fuah sh’leima.  
The renewal of body, the renewal of spirit,  
And let us say Amen.

Chevra members may then wish to observe a moment of silence for private meditation and reflection.

Exit the funeral home. Each member should bring a cup of water out of the funeral home for ritual hand-washing outside.

Once outside the building and beyond any roof overhang, wash hands ritually with cold water from drinking cups. Do not dry hands and do not water plants with this water. Cups may be disposed of at home if no wastebasket is provided near door.

Then, recite these final verses:
O House of Israel, come, let us walk in God’s light. God 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. (Isaiah 2:5, Psalms 50:1, after Kohelet 3:20, and Job 1:29)

Beyt ya’akov l’choo v’nelchah b’or Adonai. El Elohim Adonai diber vayikrah aretz mimizrach shemesh ad m’vo’oh. Yavo shalom v’chol echad yanooach al mish’cavoh, kee afar anachnoo v’el afar nashoov. Adonai natan v’Adonai lakach; y’hee shem Adonai m’vorach.
Complications

NOTE: The *chevra* must be informed of all infectious causes of death. It is recommended that *chevra* members receive Hepatitis B vaccine shots.

A. **Patients Who Have Died from AIDS or Its Complications.** Patients infected with AIDS are given *tahara*, but the *chevra* must be informed. Additional safeguards are warranted:

1. Individuals performing *tahara* should wear double gloves.
2. Blood and body fluids must be handled with extreme caution.

Some AIDS patients die from multiply drug-resistant tuberculosis. Since it is highly infectious, the *chevra* must be assured that a particular *met* did not die from this syndrome.

B. **Blood that Flows at the Time of Death.** Blood that flows at the time of death may not be washed away; it must be buried. This can create a number of complications:

1. **Stopping the flow of blood.** If there is extensive blood flow that cannot be stopped, the *met* is not washed. Dress it, put it in the *aron*, and chant the concluding prayers. If the flow of blood is slight, the wound or hole may be gently plugged with cotton or gauze. A cotton plug may be held in place with a band-aid or tape if absolutely necessary. Or Monsel Solution may be applied as a sealer. Avoid that particular area during physical washing (*rechitsah*) and *tahara*.

2. **Bandages and tubing.** If the *met* is wearing bandages, casts, or tubing which, if removed, would cause blood to flow, these items should be left in place. Protruding tubing can make dressing the *met* in *tachrichim* difficult. Two options are available. First, the tubing can be cut and tied closer to the body. Cut tubing with blood in it would also have to be buried. If, however, cutting of the tubing would result in loss of blood, the uncut tubing can be tied down flush to the body with string. The second method is less preferable, but acceptable and certainly better than forgoing the *tahara*.  

19
In any case, the *tachrichim* must not be torn or cut in order to dress the *met*.

(3) **Blood mixed with feces.** If blood is mixed with feces, discard both. Do not include them in the *aron*. In this particular case, *k’vod hamet* supercedes the halachic imperative to bury blood.

C. **Those Who Have Died a Violent Death.** In the case of dismemberment or disfigurement (fire, mutilation, etc.), all prayers are chanted as usual, but washing is not performed. The *met* is dressed, and the service from p. 13 onward is performed.

D. **Difficulty Because of Size of Met or Advanced Rigor Mortis.** The funeral home should have visibly available a larger coffin for bodies that cannot fit into the standard coffin.
**Adat Shalom Chevra Kadisha Supply Form**

To be checked after every *tahara* and given to the funeral home for restocking as needed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item and Amount</th>
<th>OK</th>
<th>Refill</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Tahara</em> booklets, 8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Tachrichim</em>, 10 sets (same for men/women)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White cotton socks, 5 pair</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>(size: Men’s Extra Large)</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buckets, 3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smaller washing containers, 3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toothpicks, 2 boxes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cotton balls, 2 bags</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cotton swabs, 2 boxes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>String, 2 spools</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nail clippers, 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nail polish remover, 1 bottle</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comb</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scissors, 2 pair</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adhesive tape, 2 rolls</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1&quot; Surgical tape, 2 rolls</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gauze, 5 packages</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bandages - large, 10 bandages</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bandages - small, 3 boxes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skin sealer (Monsel Solution or similar)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper towels, 10 rolls</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper cups for washing hands, 1 package</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linen towels or sheets</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cloth to line the coffin</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult diapers, 2 boxes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disposable surgical gloves, 3 boxes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disposable surgical gowns, 30</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disposable surgical masks, 30</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disposable shoe covers, 30 pair</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goggles, 20</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Kerchiefs, surgical hats, Kippot, 12
Long-burning (non-Yarzheit) candles, 20
Matches, 5 books
Soil from Israel
Shells or shards to cover the eyes of the met
Star of David to identify head of coffin, 10
Glue to attach Star of David (if necessary)