

ORDER
OF
TAHARA

Liturgy for Tahara
Transliteration Notes

- "a"** = ah, like in the English word "father"
"e" = eh, like in the English word "bed"
"ee" = the double "e" sound of the English word "bee"
"ch" = guttural "h", sounds like the "ch" in "Bach"
"im" = eem

The ' in a word indicates a very short "ih" sound, like the "i" in the English word "bit"

- "ay"** = the diphthong. Sounds like the English word "eye"
"u" = The double "o" sound of the English word "zoo"

A capital letter in the middle of a word is used as an aid to pronunciation on some of the more difficult words. It indicates the beginning of a new syllable.

- "tz"** = like the "z" sound in the word "pizza"
"i" = the "i" sound in the word "Yiddish"

Yisrael is used because of its familiarity.

5. Glove up (double).
6. Enter tahara area quietly as a group.

Preparation

1. Prayer is recited at the side of the deceased, "Life of All the Worlds":

Life of all worlds, have compassion for _____, daughter/son of _____ and Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, Sarah, Rebekah, Rachael 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 s/he is Your beloved, the daughter/son of those who sought Your presence. Rock of all worlds, as You who are attentive to all who struggle, save this soul from pain as s/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" (Jeremiah 31:33). 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." (Yom Kippur morning service).

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.

Chay olamim, chamol al _____ bat/ben _____ v'Avraham,
Yitzchak, v'Yaakov, Sara, Reevka, Rachayl v'Layah yideedeche, v'tanuAch

[female] nafsha v'neeshmata

[male] nafsho v'neeshmato

im haTzadeekim v'haTzeedKaneeYot kee ata m'chayay maytim umaymeet chayim. Baruch ata
mochayl v'solayAch laChaTalm v'laAvonot meemaytay amcha Yisrael b'taChaNuNim.

Uv'chayn y'hee ratzon meelfanecha Adonai Elohaynu vaylohay avotaynu v'imotaynu
shetSaBayv malachay rachamim leefnay

[female] Hamaytah sheHee y'deeDatCha bat y'deedcha

[male] Hamayt sheHu y'deedcha ben y'deedcha tzur olamim mashkeel el dal

[female] malTayHa

[male] malTayHo

meekol tzarah umeeyom raAh hamideenah shel gayheenom. Baruch ata g'dol haChesed uM'kor
harachamim. Baruch ata haOseh shalom bimromav leeDeeDav uL'yeeray sh'mo. Baruch
podeh amo Yisrael meeMeeNay poraNeeYot b'rachamim Y'hee ratzon meelfanecha Adonai
Elohaynu vaylohay avotaynu v'imotaynu sheTeezKor z'chut btreet kodesh. "Natatee et toratee
b'kirbam v'al leebam echatayvna." Baruch ata korayt hab'breet b'rachamim b'rachamim. Ata
Adonai Elohaynu tov v'salach l'chol korecha m'chay p'shaAynu KaAv uchAnan. Baruch ata
gadol haAytza v'rov haAleelyah b'rachamim. Eem raglay tzadeekeem v'tzeedkaneeyot b'gan
ayden

[female] teedroch

[male] yeedroch

kee m'kom y'sharim hu raglay chaseedav yeeshmor. Baruch ata hanotayn rachamim g'dolim
v'rov tachanunim l'maytay amo yisrael. Amayn. Kayn y'hee ratzon.

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

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

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

(for a woman) המנה שהיא ידידת בת ידיד ...

(for a man) המנה שהוא ידיד בן ידיד

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

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

כי מקום ישרים הוא רגלי חסידיו ושמור. ברוך אתה חונן רחמים
גדולים ורוב תחנונים למיתי עמו ישראל. אמן. בן יהי רצון.

Check the following (performed by two people at the same time).

Tachrichim: hood, under tunic, outer tunic, pants, waist-tie, ankle ties, sack, sheet for coffin (if necessary, the shirts may be slit open).

Supplies: Israeli earth, toothpicks, cotton, comb, scissors, nail polish remover, 12 towels, skin sealer, 6 sheets, pottery shards, paper towels, rubber bands, 1" surgical tape and copy of these instructions. (Jewish funeral directors will have Israeli earth and pottery shards. Those in areas where there are no Jewish funeral directors will need to supply these items themselves. All other supplies should be part of the normal operating inventory of any funeral parlor.)

2. Fill two buckets and two pitchers with warm water (done at same time as #1). There should be at least twelve (12) quarts of water in each bucket.
3. Lay out the tachrichim sheet in the coffin; place the waist tie across the sheet; cut one of the tzitzit off the tallis and then lay it on the sheet (done at the same time as #2). Specifics: Place the sheet from the tachrichim kitty-corner in the coffin (ahron). Place the belt on top of the center of the sheet. If there is a tallit, remove all ornaments (silver pieces, embroidery, etc.). Place the tallit one-third of the way down from the top of the ahron. The ends of the tallit will hang out of the ahron. Using a scalpel or scissors, cut one of the tsitzit off the tallis and place it in the ahron.

Cleaning

1. Clothing should be cut way and removed from the body. It should be examined for hair or blood. Bloody spots on clothes or sheet should be cut out and saved in the sack, along with any used cotton or swabs.
2. Since the body should not be exposed unnecessarily as the clothes are being removed, a sheet should be lowered across the body.
3. As the sheet is lowered, the biblical passage from Leviticus is recited: "Remove the Soiled Garments from Him . . ."

And he (the angel of God) raised his voice and spoke to those who were standing before him saying, "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."

VayaAn vayomer el haOmdeem l'fanav laymor: Haseeru hab'gadim hatzoim mayalay, vayomer aylav r'ay heE'vartee mayaleycha avonecha v'halbaysh otcha machalatzot.

**וַיַּעַן וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל הָעוֹמְדִים לִפְנָיו לֵאמֹר: הִסִּירוּ הַבְּגָדִים הַצּוֹאִים
מֵעָלָיו, וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו רְאֵה הָעֲבִרְתִּי מֵעָלֶיךָ עֲוֹנָךְ וְהִלְבַּשׁ אוֹתָךְ
מִחֻלָּצוֹת.**

4. Examine the body by area, exposing as little of the body as possible.
5. Clean anything needing cleaning, pouring small amount of water over that area. Any dirt should be removed with wet cotton or wet paper towels and thrown away.
 ** When spot cleaning is completed, water is poured the length of the body (see steps 12 and 13).
6. Remove any nail polish.
7. Use a toothpick to clean under fingernails and toenails.
8. Pack any orifices that need to be packed.
9. Use skin sealer or tape on any punctures or wounds to prevent blood from oozing out.
10. Any dried blood should be removed with a small cotton ball and placed inside the sack.
11. All loose hairs should be saved in the sack.
12. Holding the head, turn body on right side, expose the back, pour water the length of the body. Place the body back down, expose the front and pour water the length of the body.
13. Holding the head, turn body on left side, expose the back, pour water the length of the body. Place body back down, expose the front, pour water the length of the body.
14. Refill pitchers from pail.
15. Make certain that the eyes and the mouth are closed.
16. **Pour water over the sheet.** Recite prayer (selection from Song of Songs) at the same time that pouring occurs. Pour from head to toe. Two people may pour at the same time, one on each side. Two passes should be made from each side.

This completes the cleaning.

While the water is poured through the sheet, the following verses are recited (choose the appropriate gender selection):

From Song of Song S

For a man:

His head is like the most fine gold; his heaps of curls are black as a raven.

His eyes are like doves beside the water-brooks, bathing in milk and
fitly set.

His cheeks are like a bed of species; 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.

Rosho ketem paz, k'vutzotav taltalim
sh'chorot kayorav. Anav k'yonim al afeekay
mayim rokatzot bechalav yoshvot al meelayt.
L'chayav baArugat habosem, meegd'lot
merkahim, seeftotav shoshanim nosfot mor
ovayr. Yadav g'leelay zahav m'mulaim
batarseeesh mayav eshet shayn m'ulefet
sapeerim. Shokav amuday shaysh m'yusadim
al Adonai paz, marayhu kalvanon, bachur
ka'arazim. Cheeko v'Ze rayii, b'not
yrushalaim.

ראשו כֶּתֶם פָּז, קְנֻצוֹתָיו תַּלְתָּלִים
שְׁחֹרֹת כַּיֹּרֵב. עֲנִיו כְּיוֹנִים עַל
אַפְיקֵי מַיִם, רוֹקֵצוֹת בַּחֲלָב
יוֹשְׁבוֹת עַל מֵלֶאֱת. לְחָיו בַּעֲרוֹגַת
הַבּוֹשֶׂם, מְגֻדְלוֹת מְרַקְהִים,
שִׁפְתוֹתָיו שׁוֹשְׁנִים נוֹסְפוֹת מִזֶּרֶחַ
עֹבֵר. יָדָיו גְּלִילֵי זָהָב מִמְּלָאִים
בַּתְּרִשִׁישׁ, מַעֲיֹ עֶשֶׂת שֵׁן מְעַלְפֶּת
סַפִּירִים. שׁוֹכֵן עֲמוּדֵי שֵׁשׁ
מִיֻּסָּדִים עַל אֲדָנֵי פָז, מֵרָאֵהוּ
כְּלָבֶנוֹ, בַּחֹר כְּאַרְזִים. חָפוּ
מִמַּתְקִים וְכָלוּ מִחֲמָדִים. זֶה דּוֹדִי
וְזֶה רֵעִי, בְּנוֹת יְרוּשָׁלַיִם:

For a woman:

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.

הַנֶּחֱדָה יָפָה רַעֲיָתִי, הַנֶּחֱדָה יָפָה עֵינַיִךְ,
יוֹנִים מִבְּעַד לְצִמְתֶּךָ. שְׁעָרֶךָ כְּעֶדֶר
הָעֲזִים שֶׁגִּלְשׁוּ מֵהַר גִּלְעָד. שְׁנַיִךְ
כְּעֶדֶר הַקְּצֻבוֹת שֶׁעָלוּ מִן-הַרְחָצָה,
שְׁכָלָם מִתְאַיְמוֹת וְשִׁכְלָה אֵין
בָּהֶם. כְּחוּט הַשָּׁנִי שֶׁפְּתוּתֶיךָ,
וּמִדְּבָרֶךָ נֶאֱוָה. כְּפֶלֶח הָרִמּוֹן
רִשְׁתֶּךָ מִבְּעַד לְצִמְתֶּךָ. כְּמִגְדֵּל דָּוִיד
צֹאֵרֶךָ, בְּנוֹי לְתִלְפִּיּוֹת. אֶלֶף הַמָּגֵן
תָּלוּי עָלָיו, כֹּל שְׁלֹטֵי הַגְּבָרִים. שְׁנֵי
שִׁדְיֶיךָ כְּשְׁנֵי עֶפְרַיִם, תְּאוֹמֵי צִבְיָה.
הָרַעִים בְּשׁוֹשָׁנִים. כָּלֶךָ יָפָה
רַעֲיָתִי, וּמוֹם אֵין בָּךְ

Heenach yafa rayatee, hinach yafa
ayna'yeech, yonim meebaAd
l'tzamataych. Saraych k'ayder haeezim
shegalshu mayhar geelad. Sheenayeech
k'ayder haktzuvot shealu meenHaRachtza,
shekulam mateemot v'shakula ayn bahem.
K'chut hashanee siftoayeech,
umeedbaraych nave. K'felach hareemon
rakataych meebaAd l'tzamataych.
K'meedgal daveed tzavaraych, banuee
l'talpeeyot. Elef hamagayn taluee alav,
kol sheeltay hageeborim. Shnay
shadayeech keeshnay afarim t'omay
tz'veeya. Haroim bashoshanim. Kulach
yafa rayatee, umum ayn bach.

Change gloves

Tahara

This Rabbi Akiva teaching is read before the tahara begins.

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." (Ezekiel 36:25). 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." (Song of Songs, 4:15, Falk translation). Let us pour this pure water, water that cleanses all impurities and washes all wounds.

אָמַר רַבִּי עֲקִיבָא אֲשֶׁרִיכֶם יִשְׂרָאֵל לִפְנֵי מִי אַתֶּם
מְטַהְרִין וּמִי מְטַהֵר אֶתְכֶם אֲבִיכֶם שְׁבַשְׁמִים
שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר וּזְרָקְתִּי עֲלֵיכֶם מֵימֵי טְהוֹרִים וּמְהִרְתֶּם מִכָּל
טְמֵאוֹתֵיכֶם וּמִכָּל גִּלּוּלֵיכֶם אֲמַתֵּר אֶתְכֶם: וְאוֹמֵר
מִקְוֵה יִשְׂרָאֵל יְיָ מִהֶמְקַה מְטַהֵר אֶת הַטְּמֵאִים אֵף
הַקָּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא מְטַהֵר אֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל:

מַעֲיֵן גָּנִים בְּאֵר מֵימֵי חַיִּים וְנוֹזְלִים מִן לְבָנוֹן: אִם
רָחַץ יְיָ אֶת צוֹאת בְּנוֹת צִיּוֹן וְאֶת דְּמֵי יְרוּשָׁלַיִם
יְדִיחַ מִקֶּרְבָּהּ בְּרוּחַ מְשַׁפֵּט וּבְרוּחַ בָּעֵר: וּזְרָקְתִּי
עֲלֵיכֶם מֵימֵי טְהוֹרִים וּמְהִרְתֶּם מִכָּל טְמֵאוֹתֵיכֶם
וּמִכָּל גִּלּוּלֵיכֶם אֲמַתֵּר אֶתְכֶם:

2. Add more water to pails.
3. Four people use a fresh sheet to make a canopy. Two additional people carefully remove the wet sheet. It should later be checked for hair. Out of respect, those holding the canopy should face away from the body while Step #4 is completed.
4. Two people alternately pour water continuously: twenty-four (24) quarts of water; no more than three vessels are used. Each person has a pail that holds twelve (12) quarts, or three (3) pails that hold eight (8) quarts (from Medieval Codes).
5. Each team member says the appropriate phrase. For a man, say "Tahor Hu"; for a woman, say "Tahora Hee." This is said at the team member's own pace, but need not be said more than three times.

6. Put a new sheet onto the body. Dry thoroughly with towels. Dry the supporting table as well. Make certain the back, sides, ears, and neck are dry. To dry the back, turn the body onto its left side and dry the exposed right side. Turn the body onto its right side and dry the exposed left side.

(The deceased should never be turned face down onto the stomach.)

7. Prayer: "I Greatly Delight in God":

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

Sos asees baAdonai, tagyl nafshee baylohai. Kee heelbeeshani bigday yesha, m'eel tzdaka.

שׁוֹשׁ אֲשִׁישׁ בִּי, תִּגַּל נַפְשִׁי בְּאֱלֹהֵי.
כִּי הִלְבִּישָׁנִי בְּגָדֵי יֵשַׁע, מְעִיל צְדָקָה.

Dressing

1. Alternate prayer and dressing in this order:

Linen headdress

Breeches

Under tunic: has no collar (tuck in and tie pants)

Outer tunic: has no collar (tie)

If possible when making the ties, wrap seven (7) times, make a slip knot and then lay it down on the garment in the shape of a "shin". If the ties are too short, wrap three (3) times; if still too short, wrap once and then make the slip knot.

Uvmeetznefet bad yeetznaf.

"And with the linen headdress shall he be attired."

וּבְמִצְנֶפֶת בֵּד יִצְנֶנָּה

Umichn'say bad yee'Yu al bsaro.

"And the linen breeches shall be over his flesh."

וּמִכְנֵסֵי בֵד יִהְיוּ עַל בָּשָׂרוֹ

Kutonet bad kadosh yeelbash.

"He shall put on the holy linen tunic."

כְּתֹנֶת בֵּד קֹדֶשׁ יִלְבָּשׁ

Uvavnet bad yeechgar.

"And he shall gird himself with a linen Avnet."

וּבְאַבְנֵט בֵּד יִחְגֹּר

V'ayl shaday yeeten lachem rachamim.

"And God Almighty give you mercy."

וְאֵל שְׁדֵי יִתֵּן לָכֶם רַחֲמִים

2. As soon as the body is dressed, recite "God Shall Always Guide You" (Isaiah 58:11):

"God shall always guide you, and satisfy your thirsty soul in time of drought, and strengthen your bones. And you shall be like a well-watered garden, like a water spring whose waters never fail." (Isaiah 58:11)

V'nachacha Adonai tamid, v'heesbeea b'tzachtzachot nafshecha, v'atzmoteycha yachaleetz. V'hayeeta K'gan rave uch'motza mayim asher lo y'chazvu maymav.

וְנָחַח אֲדֹנָי תָּמִיד, וְהִשְׂבִּיעַ בְּצִחְצִחוֹת נַפְשְׁךָ, וְעֲצְמוֹתֶיךָ יִחַלְיֶיךָ.
וְהָיִיתָ כְּגַן רֵוָח וְכַמּוֹצֵא מַיִם אֲשֶׁר לֹא יִכָּזְבוּ מַיָּמָיו.

3. Move the deceased to the coffin.
4. Tie the tie around the waist (slip knot and "shin"). Make certain that the hands are not caught by the waist tie (gartel). Arms should be straight down the body. If possible, fingers should be around the thumb.
5. Tie ankle ties (slip knot and "shin").
6. Double-check all slip knots and each "shin".
7. Place yarmulke on head (optional).
8. Wrap tallit around person (if appropriate).
9. Put earthenware shards on eyes and mouth.
10. Pour earth from Israel (starting with the face to the toes).
11. Check the supporting table for any hairs to go into the sack.
12. Check sheets, etc. for hairs or anything else to be placed in sack in coffin.
13. Place linen sack in coffin. Double-check that all is in coffin.
14. Remove gloves. If they have bloody fluid on them, place them in the coffin. Otherwise, throw them out.
15. Personal prayers by team members asking for forgiveness are offered. Everyone should stand around the coffin and ask the deceased to forgive them for any wrongdoing – accidental or otherwise – during the performance of the tahara. These prayers are said individually, taking turns. There is no particular text: It is the kavanah – the intention -- that is important.
16. Close coffin with the Magen David at the foot** (this may vary with the funeral home that is being used).

17. Prayer "May God Bless You and Keep You":

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, Gabriel,
Before me Uriel,
Behind me, Raphael.
And above my head, God's sheltering Presence;
Above my head, Shechina.

Y'varech'cha Adonai v'yeesh'm'recha
Ya'ayr Adonai panav aylecha vee'chunecha
Yeese Adonai panav aylecha v'yasaym l'cha shalom.

בְּרַכֵּךְ יְיָ וַיְשִׁמְרֵךְ.
יָאֵר יְיָ פָּנָיו אֵלֶיךָ וַיְחַנֶּךָ.
יֵשֶׁא יְיָ פָּנָיו אֵלֶיךָ וַיִּשֶׁם לְךָ שְׁלוֹם.

Hinay lo yanum v'lo yeeshan shomer Yisrael

הִנֵּה לֹא יָנוּם וְלֹא יִישָׁן שׁוֹמֵר יִשְׂרָאֵל.

B'shem Adonai eloyhai Yisrael:

Meemeenee M'cha'ayl umeesmoli Gavree'ayl
Umeel'fanai Uree'ayl umay'achorai R'fa'ayl
V'al roshee Sh'cheenat Ayl.

בְּשֵׁם יְיָ אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל:
מִימֵינִי מְכָאֵל וּמִשְׁמָאֵלִי גְּבֻרִיאֵל,
וּמִלְּפָנֵי אֹרִיאֵל וּמֵאַחֲרֵי רְפָאֵל,
וְעַל רֹאשִׁי שְׁכִינַת אֵל.

18. Take coffin out of room or team members leave the room.
19. Wash hands (no blessing).
20. Prayer "O House of Israel":

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 unto dust we return.

God has given, and God has taken away. Blessed is God's name.

Bayt Ya'akov l'chu v'naylcha b'or Adonai.

Ayl Elohim Adonai deebayr vayeekra aretz meemeezrach shemesh ad m'vo'o. Yavo shalom yanuchu al meesh'k'votam, kee afar anachnu vel afar nashuv. Adonai natan v'Adonai lakach; y'hee shem Adonai m'vorach.

Note:

The Tahara itself is just the pouring of the water. The amount of water to be poured is prescribed by Jewish law. Nine (9) kavim, twenty-four (24) quarts, of water are poured over the head, so that the water runs down the entire body. This is the essential element of the Tahara, and enough members of the Sacred Society should participate, so that it will be performed in this manner.

The nine (9) kavim of water do not have to be contained in one vessel nor poured at one time. The usual procedure is that two members of the Sacred Society each take a pail of water containing a minimum of twelve (12) quarts, or three (3) pails are taken – each containing a minimum of eight (8) quarts. The water is then poured from the buckets 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 has been emptied. No more than three vessels may be used and at no time should the flow cease until the vessels have been successively emptied over the body. Should there be any break in the succession of the pouring of the water, another twenty-four (24) quarts must be poured properly, so that there should be a continuous flow.

This liturgy and instructions come from many sources:

Rabbi Linda Holtzman came from the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College in Philadelphia to train our Chevra Kadisha in October of 1996.

The instructions are a combination of her oral and written instructions, based on the Fort Myers, Florida Chevra Kadisha.

New translations and interpretations are based on Regulations and Procedure by the Jewish Sacred Society in Chicago.

Prepared for the 1991 P'nai Or Kallah by Rabbi Sue Levi Elwell,
with the assistance of Rachel Adler and Yaffa Weisman.

Transliteration courtesy of Rabbi Debra Brin and Min Kantrowitz.

Typesetting by Caitlin M. Hecsh, Program Coordinator, Jewish Family Services