

# Tahara Guidelines

*The Chevra Kadisha of Cincinnati*

based on prior manuals and lectures by Rabbi Elchonon Zohn  
prepared under the guidance of Rabbi Zelig Scharfstein

REVISED EDITION—WINTER, 5765 (2005)

**This book is dedicated**

**in memory of**

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**by the Raubvogel family**

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## Preface

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This manual is based on the updated *Guidelines* of 1999 (5760), which were prepared by Tovah Kirschner and Donna Taplits, under the guidance of Rabbi Zelig Scharfstein (Vaad Hoeir of Cincinnati) and Rabbi Elchonon Zohn.

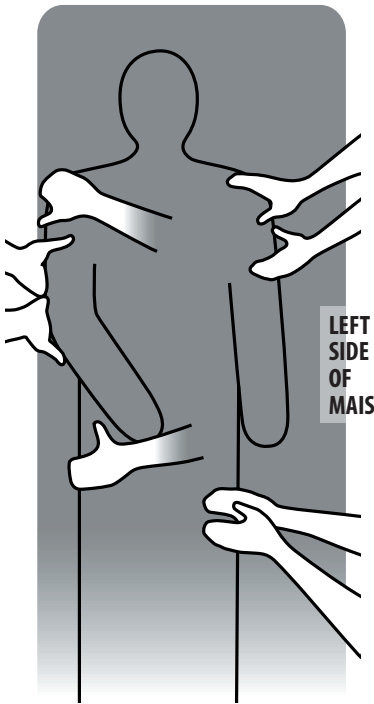
Our thanks go to all those who offered their comments, corrections, and suggestions while this edition was being prepared.

Typesetting by Alter B. Raubvogel.

Our goal when performing a *tahara* is to achieve *kavod ha-mais*—to give respect to the deceased. Although the *mais* now lies in a compromised state, always remember that he or she bears a *tzelem elokim*, the image of G-d, as it were. This was and is a member of the Chosen People, regardless of how he or she spent life, and we are now helping this person move into a new phase in an ongoing relationship with Hashem. In the course of a *tahara* we may be confronted with situations that make us uncomfortable and would embarrass the *mais*, and we must do everything we can to preserve the *mais*' dignity, as defined by our Sages.

# General Guidelines

1. The contents of this guide are based on a four-member *tahara* team. If circumstances cause the presence of fewer than four, certain procedures will need to be adapted accordingly.
2. A leader—*Rosh Metaher(et)*—is designated and is in charge of directing the team in an efficient, smoothly executed, and correct *tahara*. Halachic questions are to be pursued and decided by the *Rosh*.
3. During the entire *tahara* there should be no talking other than what is necessary for the performance of the *tahara*. This means there should be no speculation over the cause of death, and no discussion of scars and wounds other than what is necessary for problem solving.
4. Don't place objects on or pass them over the *mais*.
5. Prepare all necessary supplies, obtain the Hebrew name, and resolve all *sh'eilos* (halachic questions) in advance.
6. *Tefilos* only need to be said by one member, out loud, while the others proceed with the *tahara* procedure. Make sure there is no waste present before reciting any *tefila*.
7. Team members should wear shoes and clothing which they don't mind dirtying. They should be comfortable doing whatever is necessary for the *mais*.
8. The following precautions will help keep the *tahara* area—and the *mais*—clean.
  - When raising the head at any point of the *tahara*, make sure to lift it by the crown; this will bring the chin towards the chest and keep the airway closed. Do not lift the head from the neck, as this will open the airway and allow fluids to escape through the mouth.
  - When possible, don't raise the feet and legs of the *mais*; that will put pressure on the abdomen and can cause the bowels to leak.
9. Turning procedure (*see illustration*):
  - To raise the right side of the *mais*, move the *mais* over so that the right arm is at the edge of the table.



- Turn the right foot over the left and the right arm across the chest.
- Three members should be standing **on the *mais*' left side**. One puts pressure against the shoulder and one puts pressure on the hip, so the *mais* doesn't slide. The third member turns the *mais* by placing one hand on the right shoulder and one hand on the right hip, and pivoting the *mais* towards him/her. The fourth person lifts from the other side.
- Be careful that the left arm doesn't get caught under the *mais*.
- Support the head, unless it's stiff enough to hold itself up. Always make sure that the head does not nod back and forth.
- Lower the *mais* back down onto the table. (If necessary, pressure can again be put on the left shoulder and hip to keep the *mais* from sliding.) Lower the right hand respectfully back onto the table.
- To raise the left side of the *mais*, simply exchange right and left while following the above procedure.

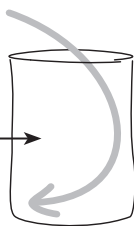
## General Preparation

1. Participants in the *tahara* should put on gowns, remove rings, wash hands with a cup (right-left, right-left, right-left), dry hands, and put on gloves. Double gloving is only necessary if the *mais* had an unusually infectious disease, or if a team member has any skin irritation or open wounds on his or her hands.
2. Lay out *tachrichim* in order of use. If space is limited, place the last item to be used at the bottom of the pile.
3. Set up the *aron* (casket) by removing the lining which is designed to go underneath the *mais*. The pillow that was in the casket is placed at the foot of the *aron*. The wood shavings are moved to the sides and the top so that the *mais* will not slide around. Make sure there are plenty of shavings under and around the area where the head will rest, so that the head will be elevated and immobilized. If necessary, add more shavings.

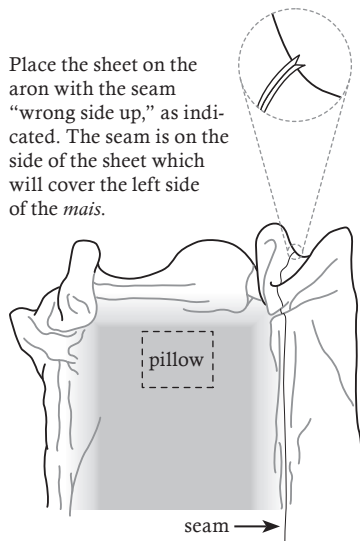
*Tachrichim*, arranged first to last (or stacked, top to bottom):

- hood/bonnet
- "face apron" (for women)
- *michnasayim* (pants)
- *k'soness* (shirt)
- *bendlach* (short straps)
- *kittel*
- *gartel* (long strap)

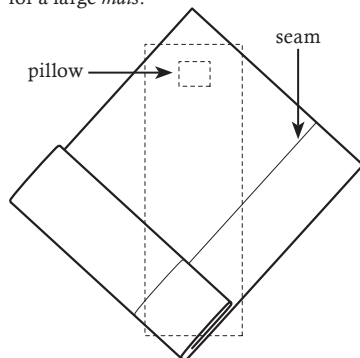
If the pillow is filled correctly, there will be a small indentation right here.



Place the sheet on the aron with the seam “wrong side up,” as indicated. The seam is on the side of the sheet which will cover the left side of the *mais*.



Position of the *soveiv* for a large *mais*:



4. A small sack is included in the *tachrichim*. Grab a large fistful of shavings and pack the sack, inserting the stuffing at a 45-degree angle—forcing the shavings across the opening of the sack, down one side, and across the bottom (*see illustration*), so that the pillow will support the head in an upright position. Sprinkle the wood shavings in the sack with Israel earth and position the sack in the casket as a pillow.
5. The large *sovev* (sheet) is laid in the *aron*, square over the pillow. A seam runs down the length of the *sovev*; position the sheet so that the seam runs along the left-hand rim of the casket (*see illustration*). For a large *mais*, place the sheet over the *aron* at an angle; roll the bottom edge of the sheet so that it rests at the bottom of the casket—it will be unrolled later, after the *mais* is in the *aron* (*bottom illustration*).
6. For men, the *tallis* is placed in the *aron* at this point. Cut the fringes off of one corner and put them with the *tachrichim*. If the *mais* used to wear his *tallis* over his head, position the *tallis* so that it will wrap around the top of the *mais*' head.
7. Prepare at least two buckets of lukewarm water, with a saucepan and washcloth in each one. A third bucket, of warm (not hot) water, can be prepared and placed at the head of the table for cleaning difficult areas (such as those covered with lotions).
8. Take out two sheets, a face cloth, and three towels.
9. Designate a spot where bloody items (and other matter which will have to be buried with the *mais*) can be set aside, to be placed later in the *aron*.

## Positioning and Checking the *Mais*

1. The *mais* will be on a table in the cooler. Check the tag on the body to make sure it's the right one. (If the *mais* is not already on a rolling table, have as many people as possible help to carry the *mais* onto a rolling table, making sure that the feet are near the drain at the table's end.) Roll the table out into the *tahara* room, feet first. Place the table with the drain over the basin and the feet towards the basin.

2. Lock the table in place by pushing down on the round bulb lever.
3. The table should be tilted to a good height, so that water drains well off the table.
4. The *mais* is called by name (i.e., the son/daughter of the father) and *mechila* (forgiveness) is asked in advance. If the *mais'* (or the father's) Hebrew name is unknown, the English name may be used. If the father's name is completely unknown, the *mais* is referred to as the son/daughter of "*Avraham Avinu*."
5. Check for urine on the table or any odor which would indicate the presence of waste. If all seems clean, recite "*Chamol*." (Otherwise, all waste will have to be removed before any *tefilos* are recited.)

Master of the Universe! Have compassion for [NAME], the son/daughter of [FATHER'S NAME], this deceased, for he/she is a descendant of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, Your servants. May his/her soul and spirit rest with the righteous, for You are He who revives the dead and brings death to the living. Blessed are You who pardons and forgives the sins and trespasses of the dead of Your people, Israel, upon petition. Therefore, may it be Your will, L-rd our G-d and G-d of our fathers, to bring a circle of angels of mercy before the deceased, for he/she is Your (maid)servant, son/daughter of Your maidservant. And You, L-rd our G-d and G-d of our fathers, who concerns Himself with the poor, save him/her from all misery, from a day of evil, and from judgment in Hell. Blessed are You, great in loving-kindness and Master of mercy.

Blessed are You who makes peace in His heights for His servants and for those who revere His name. Blessed is He who mercifully redeems His people, Israel, from all kinds of suffering. Therefore, may it be Your will, L-rd our G-d and G-d of our fathers, to remember (*for a man*: the merit of the sacred covenant which is in his flesh) (*for a woman*: her merits), and may it be for him/her a ransom from the flames of Hell, so that You may deliver him/her. Blessed are You who establishes the merciful covenant with mercy. Through mercy hide and disregard the transgressions of this departed, Your (maid)servant. Deliver him/her from consumption by fire, for he/she needs Your great mercy, and You, L-rd our G-d, are good and forgiv-

#### FOR A MAN :

ברונו של עולם חמול על (\_\_\_\_) בן  
(\_\_\_\_) המת הלז שהוא בן אברהם  
יצחק ויעקב עבדיך ותנוח נפשו  
ונשמתו עם הצדקים כי אתה מחיה  
המתים וממית חיים. ברוך אתה מוחל  
וסולח לחטאים ולעונות ממתי עמך  
ישראל בתחנונים. ובכן יהי רצון  
מלפניך ה' אלקינו ואלקי אבותינו  
שתסבב מלאכי רחמים לפני המת  
שהוא עבדך בן אמתך: ואתה ה'  
אלקינו ואלקי אבותינו משפיל אל דל  
מלטה מכל צרה ומיום רעה ומדינה  
של גהינם: ברוך אתה גדול החסד  
ובעל הרחמים:  
ברוך אתה העושה שלום במרומי  
לעבדיו וליראי שמו: ברוך פודה עמו  
ישראל ממני פוענניות ברחמים: ובכן  
יהי רצון מלפניך ה' אלקינו ואלקי  
אבותינו שתזכור לה זכויותיה ויהיה  
שבבשרו ויהיה פדיון לו משרפת  
גיהנם ותחלצהו: ברוך אתה כורת  
הברית ברחמים ברחמים: ברוך  
הסתר והעלם פשעי המת הזה עבדך  
משרפת אש תחליצהו שהוא צריך  
לרחמיך הרבים: ואתה ה' אלקינו טוב

#### FOR A WOMAN:

ברונו של עולם חמול על (\_\_\_\_) בת  
(\_\_\_\_) המתה הלזו שהיא בת שרה  
רבקה רחל ולאה אמהותיך ותנוח  
נפשה ונשמתה עם הצדקניות כי אתה  
מחיה המתים וממית חיים. ברוך אתה מוחל  
וסולח לחטאים ולעונות ממתי  
עמך ישראל בתחנונים. ובכן יהי רצון  
מלפניך ה' אלקינו ואלקי אבותינו  
שתסבב מלאכי רחמים לפני המתה  
שהיא אמתך בת אמתך: ואתה ה'  
אלקינו ואלקי אבותינו משפיל אל דל  
מלטה מכל צרה ומיום רעה ומדינה  
של גהינם: ברוך אתה גדול החסד  
ובעל הרחמים:  
ברוך אתה העושה שלום במרומי  
לעבדיו וליראי שמו: ברוך פודה עמו  
ישראל ממני פוענניות ברחמים: ובכן  
יהי רצון מלפניך ה' אלקינו ואלקי  
אבותינו שתזכור לה זכויותיה ויהיה  
לה פדיון משרפת גיהנם ותחלצהה.  
ברוך אתה נצר חסד ברחמים  
ברחמים: ברחמים הסתר והעלם  
פשעי המתה הזאת אמתך משרפת  
אש תחליצה שהיא צריכה לרחמיך  
הרבים: ואתה ה' אלקינו טוב וסלח

ing to all who call upon You. Blessed are You, great in counsel and mighty in achievement in mercy. May he/she tread with righteous feet into the Garden of Eden, for that is the place of the upright, and G-d protects the feet of the pious. Blessed are You who gives great mercy and abundant grace to the departed of His people, Israel.

Amen—may such be His will.

And [the angel of G-d] 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.”

לְכָל קוֹרְאֶיךָ: בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה גְּדוֹל הַעֲצָה	וְסֵלַח לְכָל קוֹרְאֶיךָ: בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה גְּדוֹל הַעֲצָה וְרַב הָעֲלִילָה בְּרַחֲמִים: עִם רְגְלֵי צְדִיקִים בְּגֵן עֵדֶן תִּדְרֹךְ כִּי מְקוֹם יִשְׁרָיִם הוּא רְגְלֵי חֲסִידָיו יִשְׁמֹר: בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה הַנּוֹתֵן רַחֲמִים גְּדוֹלִים וְרֹב תַּחֲנוּגִים לְמַתֵּי עַמּוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל: אָמֵן כֵּן יְהִי רָצוֹן:
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## 6. Uncover the face and say:

וַיַּעַן וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל-הָעוֹמְדִים לְפָנָיו לֵאמֹר הִסִּירוּ הַבְּגָדִים הַצְּאִים מֵעָלָיו וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהֵי רֹאֵה הָעֵבֶרֶתִי מֵעֲלֶיךָ עֹנֶה וְהַלְבֵּשׁ אֶתְךָ מַחֲלָצוֹת:

## 7. Return the cover to the face.

8. The wraps and clothing are removed from the *mais*. If it's necessary to cut clothing, cut the right side first. Try to save any clothes and sheets which appear to have belonged to the *mais* or the family.

9. A woman is then covered with a sheet from shoulders to knees. Men need to have the genital area covered with a large cloth.

10. Remove and check **all** name tags for the proper name. If no name is found, consult the director. (At the end of the *tahara*, place these tags in the *aron*.)

11. Check clothes and wraps that are removed for tufts of hair, for skin, and for blood stains. The *Rosh* will determine whether or not these need to be set aside to be buried with the *mais*. (As a rule, blood mixed with dirt or bodily fluids can be disposed of. Blood mixed with otherwise clean water should be wiped up and saved for burial.)

12. All blood should be cleaned with a damp (not wet) cloth, which will have to be placed in the *aron*. Even stains of blood that are dry should be cleaned at this time.

13. Use Monsel solution on areas of bleeding.

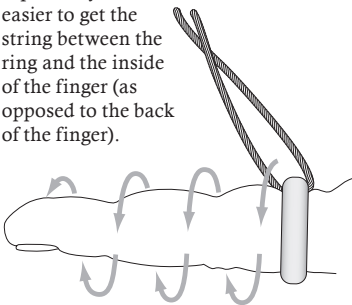
- **Only dip clean Q-tips** into the solution.
- *To control puncture bleeding:* Saturate a Q-tip with the solution and insert it into the puncture, spreading the opening of the puncture with the Q-tip, thus allowing the greatest area of raw flesh to come in contact with the solution. This



will cause a thin scab to form immediately. It will stop any flow of blood. It is best to repeat this procedure two or three times, leaving a residue of solution on the surface, which will be washed away during the washing or *tahara*. It will not stain the skin. Care must be taken not to pull at or agitate the skin around the puncture site after this procedure or the scab that was formed can be torn, allowing further bleeding to erupt.

- If a puncture site is likely to be rubbed or pulled by the *tachrichim* (especially in the neck area), it is advisable to cover the puncture with a small piece of tape after the *tahara*, before putting on the *tachrichim*.
  - For areas of skin that are torn or abraded (scrapes, torn blisters, or early-stage bedsores): Simply spread the solution over the affected area with a well-saturated Q-tip, covering all areas of flesh that are oozing blood.
  - For heavy flow of bleeding from larger openings (nasal or rectal bleeding, or bleeding at the edges of an autopsy Y-cut): Saturate a piece of combine dressing (surgical pad) with solution and plug it tightly into the opening.
  - When using Monsel solution after the *tahara*, excess solution on the skin should be removed by dabbing at it with a dry cloth. This will avoid soiling the *tachrichim*.
14. Turn the *mais* on its left side, exposing the right back. Cut clothing or wraps can be pushed under the *mais* to the other side, for removal. Then turn the *mais* on its right side, exposing the left back. Remove sheets and clothing.
  15. All dressings that can be removed should be taken off. Announce all existing problem areas—for example, “bed sore on pelvis,” “puncture in elbow,” or “sensitive skin area.”
  16. Look for and remove jewelry, which must be returned to the family. If a ring refuses to come off:

Tip: It may be easier to get the string between the ring and the inside of the finger (as opposed to the back of the finger).



- Try to lubricate the finger with soapy water and slide the ring off.
- Pass some string under the ring. Grab the ends of the string, so that it forms a loop around the ring. (See illustration.) Work your way all around the ring with the string,

pulling the ring away from the skin and towards the tip of the finger, spiralling around and around the finger till the ring comes loose.

- If absolutely necessary, get permission from the *mais'* family and use a ring remover.

17. Check the hands of the *mais*, right hand first. Remove any nail polish now, while the hands are dry. If the *mais* is wearing false nails, they should be trimmed.

18. Check the feet, right side first. Check and clean toenails.

19. Remove casts, using a cast cutter.

## Rechitza—Washing the Body

1. Make sure the table is tilted and locked.

2. Members of the team position themselves around the table with two on the right side and two on the left. On each side should be a washer and, behind him/her (that is, closer to the *mais'* head), a water pourer.

3. Say “*Rosho*.”

ראשו כְּתָם פֶּז קוֹצוֹתָיו תִּלְתְּלִים שְׁחֹרוֹת כְּעוֹרֵב: עֵינָיו כְּיוֹנִים עַל אֶפְיָקִי מִים  
רוֹחֲצוֹת בְּחֶלֶב יִשְׁבוֹת עַל מִלֵּאת: לְחִי כְּעֶרְוַת הַבּוֹשֶׁם מְגִדְלוֹת מֶרְקָחִים  
שְׁפֹתוֹתָיו שׁוֹשְׁנִים נְטִפּוֹת מֹר עֵבֶר: יָדָיו גְּלִילִי זָהָב מְמָלָאִים בְּתַלְשִׁישׁ מַעֲיוֹ  
נְשֹׂת שֶׁן מְעֻלָּפֶת סַפִּירִים: שׁוֹקוֹ עֲמוּדֵי שֵׁשׁ מִסְדִּים עַל אֲדָנִי פֶז מְרֵאָהוּ כְּלָבָנוֹן  
בְּחֹר כְּאַרְזִים: חֲבו מִמֶּתְקִים וְכָלוּ מִחֲמָדִים זֶה דּוּדֵי וְזֶה רְעֵי בָנוֹת יְרוּשָׁלַיִם:

4. General procedures for washing:

- One person pours water on the *mais* (use a small saucepan, dipped into the bucket) in a back-handed and basically continuous stream. The person pouring the water should try to pour water directly over the area that the other person is washing (except for the face).
- The person washing should have several washcloths close by, so that as one becomes soiled it can easily be replaced with a clean cloth. The washing of the *mais* should be done with enough force to clean off any dirt, lotions or Betadine (orange substance). Avoid wounds or skin where there is any breakdown. In general, avoid using soap except when

His head is like the finest gold, His  
heaps of curls as 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 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.

removing tape from tender or hairy areas and when cleaning off ointments.

- *At the tahara of a woman:* If time allows, try to uncover only the parts of the *mais* that are being washed at a given time.
5. Begin with the head. Saturate hair with water and clean out any dirt.
  6. Next wash the face. Water should not be poured directly on the face; instead, water is poured on the cloth. Wash the right side of the face first (forehead, corner of the eye, cheek, outside of the nose, lips, and ear). Then wash the left side of the face before continuing with the body. (*Alternative method: Both sides can clean simultaneously, as long as the right side is ahead of the left.*) Only visible dirt needs to be removed from the nose, and only the outside of the mouth should be cleaned. Finish washing the head before proceeding with the rest of the body.
  7. Wash the front of the body—right side:
    - The members of the team standing on the left side should hold up any sheets so that the members on the right side can clean the right side of the body.
    - Wash the neck, shoulder, arm, hand, and in between the fingers.
    - Wash the chest, navel (clean well), groin, thigh, lower leg, and foot.
  8. Wash the front of the body—left side. Use the same order as for the right side (sans navel and groin).
  9. *Alternative method: Both sides can clean simultaneously once the head is done, as long as the right side is ahead of the left side. Those working on the right-hand side clean the navel and groin.*
  10. Wash the back:
    - The *mais* is inclined on the left side (see rolling procedure, above) and the right side of the back is washed.
    - The hair in the back of the head is washed well at this time.
    - Clean the outer ear and behind the ear with the washcloth. Be careful not to pour water into the ear.

- Wash the neck, the back of the right arm, then the back.
  - Wash rectum (avoid using the hose unless absolutely necessary) and pack with webril, if needed. *Always pack the rectum if the mais is to be transported to Israel.*
  - Wash the right leg and foot.
  - Before putting the *mais* back down, pour the remaining water in the bucket down the table to clean off any accumulation of dirt.
  - Put the *mais* down carefully—watch the arm.
  - The *mais* is turned on the right side and the same procedure is repeated.
11. Clean any dirt that is under the fingernails and toenails, using toothpicks. This dirt may be thrown away.

## Preparation for the *Tahara*

1. Hands will be washed in the same manner as before. It is preferable that the participants change their gloves.
2. Assign one member to prepare the water and the boards. That member should wash hands immediately, then fill three buckets (and no more) with cold water to the black line—approximately eight quarts each.
3. The boards are wetted—each end of the board is placed in the bucket and water is smoothed over the entire board. The headrest should be cleaned off and then wetted. There is no need to wash the table.
4. Placement of the boards:
  - Two people lift the shoulders of the *mais* and one supports the head, and the person who washed the boards inserts a board under the upper back and replaces the headrest.
  - Two people raise the buttocks, and the board-washer inserts a board under the lower back (buttocks area).
  - The *mais* is laid back and two people lift the legs, so that the person who washed the boards may insert the remaining board under the feet, at the ankle area.

- If necessary, a fourth board may be used to raise the *mais* off of the table.
- If the *mais* is heavy, the lift may be used to raise the *mais* while the boards are put in place.

5. The remaining members of the team now wash their hands and reglove.

6. “*Amar Rabbi Akiva*” and “*Ma’ayan*” are recited:

Rabbi Akiva said, “You are fortunate, Israel. Before Whom do you purify yourselves and Who purifies you? Your Father in heaven. As it is said: ‘I will pour upon you pure water; you will be purified of all your defilements, and from all of your abominations I will purify you.’ And it says: ‘G-d is the reservoir of Israel.’ Just as the reservoir of the ritual bath purifies the impure, so does the Holy One, blessed be He, purifier of Israel.”

A fountain of gardens, a well of living waters and flowing streams from Lebanon. The Lord will have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and will have purged the blood of Jerusalem from its midst with a spirit of judgment and with a searing breath. I will pour upon you pure water; you will be purified of all your defilements, and from all your abominations I will purify you.

אמר רבי עקיבא אֲשֶׁרֵיכֶם יִשְׂרָאֵל לִפְנֵי מִי אַתֶּם מְטַהְרִין וּמִי מְטַהֵר אֶתְכֶם  
אֲבִיכֶם שֶׁבִּשְׁמַיִם שְׁנֵאֲמַר וְזָרַקְתִּי עֲלֵיכֶם מִים טְהוֹרִים וְטַהַרְתֶּם מְכַל טְמֵאוֹתֵיכֶם  
וּמְכַל-גְּלוּלֵיכֶם אֲטַהֵר אֶתְכֶם: וְאָמַר מִקּוֹה יִשְׂרָאֵל ה' מִה-הַמִּקְוֶה מְטַהֵר אֶת  
הַטְּמֵאִים אִף הַקָּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא מְטַהֵר אֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל:  
מַעַן גָּנִים בְּאֵר מִים חַיִּים וְנוֹזְלִים מִן-לְבָנוֹן: אִם רָחֵץ ה' אֶת צֵאת בְּנוֹת-צִיּוֹן וְאֶת-  
דְּמֵי יְרוּשָׁלַיִם יְדִיחַ מִקְרָבָהּ בְּרוּחַ מְשַׁפֵּט וּבְרוּחַ בָּעֵר: וְזָרַקְתִּי עֲלֵיכֶם מִים  
טְהוֹרִים וְטַהַרְתֶּם מְכַל טְמֵאוֹתֵיכֶם וּמְכַל-גְּלוּלֵיכֶם אֲטַהֵר אֶתְכֶם:

## The Tahara Procedure

1. The team members are assigned jobs: One person will remove the sheets and cover the mouth of the *mais*, and three people will pour the *tahara* water. The pourers may stand on either side of the *mais*.
2. The *mais* is uncovered and the three buckets are poured in a continuous flow from the head to the foot so that the majority of the body has been covered with water.
3. *Note:* Do not move back and forth between one leg and the other. Each team member should be assigned one leg to pour water on.
4. As the members pour they recite:

FOR A MAN :

FOR A WOMAN:

He/she is pure, he/she is pure,  
he/she is pure.

טְהוֹרָה הִיא, טְהוֹרָה הִיא, טְהוֹרָה הִיא: טְהוֹר הוּא, טְהוֹר הוּא, טְהוֹר הוּא:

5. The *mais* is then covered with a clean sheet.

6. Remove the boards, reversing the order in which they were placed.

# Drying the *Mais*

1. The drying starts at the head with the right side first and the left side following slightly behind. The sheet may be used for the initial drying but then towels must be used to dry thoroughly. Pat dry—don't rub.
2. The head:
  - Dry the hair well with a towel and comb the hair. If any tufts of hair come off, set them aside for burial.
  - Make sure to dry around the eyes and especially at the base of the neck.
3. When the front has been dried, turn the *mais* and thoroughly dry his/her back (right side, then left) and the table underneath.
4. Where sensitive skin is present or where sores or punctures exist, dry by patting gently. Observe the areas you are drying.
5. After drying the *mais*, dry off the rest of table.
6. If the bowels of the *mais* leak at this point (or later), wipe clean. **The *tahara* need not be repeated.** If it seems likely that the bowels will leak later, repack the rectum—or if absolutely necessary, put a disposable undergarment on the *mais*.

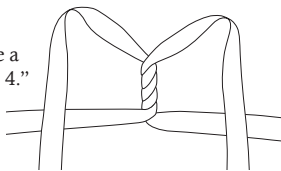
I will greatly rejoice in the L-rd; my soul shall be joyful in my G-d, for He has clothed me with garments of salvation. He has covered me with the robe of righteousness as a bridegroom puts on priestly glory and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. And I said, "Let them set a pure headdress upon his head," and they clothed him with garments, and the angel of the L-rd stood by. For as the earth brings forth her growth, and as the garden causes the things that are sown in it to spring forth, so the L-rd G-d will cause the righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations. And the L-rd will guide you continually and satisfy your soul in time of drought, and make strong your bones, and you shall be like a watered garden and like a spring of water whose waters never fail.

# Dressing the *Mais*

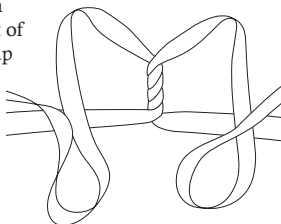
1. The table is moved to the center of the room with the feet facing the door. Keep the head of the table raised 15°–30°.
2. "Sos" is recited:

שׁוּשׁ אֲשִׁישׁ בִּה' תִּגַּל נִפְשִׁי בְּאַלְקֵי כִי הִלְבִּישְׁנִי בְּגָדֵי יִשְׁעַ מַעַל צְדָקָה יַעֲטֵנִי  
כְּחֹתֶן יִכְהֶן פָּאָר וְכִבְלָה תַעֲדָה כְּלִיָּהּ: וְאָמַר יִשְׁמֹו צְנִיף טְהוֹר עַל רֹאשׁוֹ  
וְיִלְבִּישֻׁהוּ בְּגָדִים וּמִלְאָדָּה ה' עֹמֵד: כִּי כָאֶרֶץ תּוֹצִיא צִמְחָה וְכִנְנָה יִרְוּעִיָּה תַצְמִיחַ  
כֵּן ה' אֱלֹקִים יַצְמִיחַ צְדָקָה וְתִהְיֶה נִגֻּד כָּל-הַגּוֹיִם: וְנִחַד ה' תְּמִיד וְהִשְׁבִּיעַ  
בְּצִחְצִיחוֹת נִפְשָׁךְ וְעִצְמֹתֶיךָ יִחַלִּיץ וְהִיִּיתָ כְּגֹן רֹוֹה וְכַמּוֹצֵא מִיָּם אֲשֶׁר לֹא יִכָּבֹוּ  
מִיָּמֹו:
3. *For men:* Place the one-piece headpiece (*mitznefes*) over the head, with the seam at the side.

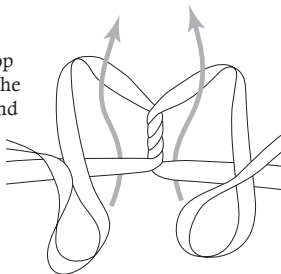
① Make a "figure 4."



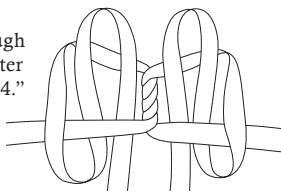
② Form the rest of the strap into a loop.



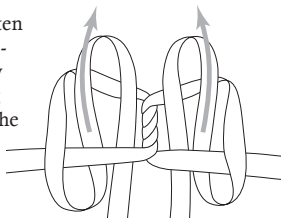
③ Pass this loop under the band and up...



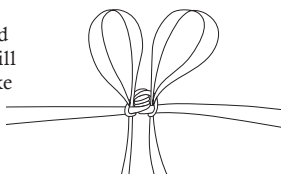
④ through the center of the "4."



⑤ Tighten the slip-knot by pulling up on the loop.



⑥ The finished knot will look like this.



4. *For women:* The "apron" is placed over the face and tied on, either at the top or the bottom. (If it's more convenient, the "apron" may be tied later, after the shards have been put in place.) Then the woman's bonnet is put over the hair and tied at the neck.

5. All ties are wound around counter-clockwise by two members four times (count "*Aleph, beis, gimmel, dalet.*") and slip-knotted by each member (*see illustration*). The members making the knots at the neck should both stand to the right, to avoid crossing over the face of the *mais*. *Note: A garment must be placed on completely before tying its knot.*

6. After the face and head coverings, the pants (*michnasayim*) and then the shirt (*k'soness*) are put on. These two garments can be put on the *mais* simultaneously, as long as the pants are started first.

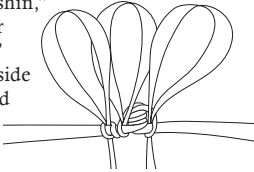
7. The foot should lie at the bottom of the pants and the heel should rest in the point, so that the pants lie smoothly. The crease (not the seam) should be over the top of the leg, beginning from the toes.

8. Put on the shirt:

- One dresser stands on each side of the *mais*.
- Each dresser puts one hand in through the cuff of a sleeve, through the sleeve, and out the bottom of the shirt.
- Each dresser then grabs one of the *mais*' hands, and brings it up and through the sleeve.
- The arms are then raised as high as necessary and the shoulder seams are brought as close as possible to the shoulders, in order to lift the shirt over the head. One member raises the head slightly, while another slips the gathered-up material over and back under the head of the *mais*. At this point a third member holds the head, and two members, one at each side, lift the *mais*'s shoulders by lifting the arms, and then pull down the *k'soness* as far as possible.

9. Turn the *mais* to pull the *michnasayim* up and to simultaneously pull the *k'soness* down. the bottom of the *k'soness* goes over the top of the *michnasayim*. It is not tucked in.

To tie the “shin,”  
the member  
on the *mais*’  
right-hand side  
ties a second  
slip knot.



And G-d Almighty give you mercy.

10. The *michnasayim* are tied first, then the *k'soness*, then the *bend-lach* (bands)—under the knees for a woman, and above the ankles for a man—beginning with the right leg.

11. The *kittel* is put on next, using the same procedure as described for the *k'soness*. When taking the hands of the *mais*, the dressers should grab the cuffs of the *k'soness* as well, and pull both the arm and the sleeve of the shirt through the sleeve of the *kittel* together. Once the *kittel* is properly placed and the collar is straightened, the knot is tied at the neck.

12. The *gartel* is placed under the *mais*. Care should be taken that the *gartel* is not twisted. Four turns are made and the “shin” is made (*see illustration*) while saying:

יְקָל שְׂקִי יִתֵּן לָכֶם רַחֲמִים

13. For a man, tuck the fringes that were removed from the *tallis* under the *gartel*, near the “shin.”

14. Put the name tag around the ankle.

15. If blood gets on the *tachrichim*:

- If it's just a small amount, leave it alone—unless the stain is in a place where the family will see it, in which case the stain should be cleaned off. If the stain can't be removed, that *tachrich* should be replaced.
- If it's a large amount, remove the soiled *tachrichim*, stop the bleeding, and re-dress the *mais*.
- Save any bloody items (*tachrichim*, wipes, etc.) for burial.

## Placing the Mais in the Aron

1. The *mais* should be moved into the *aron* carefully, so that he/she is gently placed inside and not dropped. If necessary, use the lift.
2. Once the *mais* is in the *aron*, the *mais* is to be centered at the shoulders, waist, and buttocks. The head is to be placed squarely on the pillow. The limbs and *tachrichim* are straightened and smoothed out to give as neat an appearance as possible. Try to straighten out the fingers, as well.
3. Any clothes, cloths or sheets containing blood are placed



neatly by the feet. False teeth that were not in the mouth, as well as any prostheses, should be placed at the foot of the *aron*.

4. The man's headpiece and the woman's face covering is lifted away from the face and a *tiny* amount of Israel earth is sprinkled on the eyes. A more liberal amount is placed over the heart and the genital area.
5. The *sherblach* (broken pottery pieces, preferably terra cotta) are now placed over the eyes and the mouth.
6. The leader asks for *mechilah* (forgiveness), saying: "[HE-BREW NAME], we ask *mechilah* on behalf of anyone who has done anything to offend you, by commission or by omission, in preparing you for your journey to *Olam Haba*. May you have a speedy journey to *Olam Haba*."
7. For a man, wrap the *tallis*, left then right.
8. For men and women, wrap the *sofev* around the body—first at the feet, then over the left side, then the right side, and then at the head. Do this with a verbal *al t'nai* (a conditional statement) that the *mais* may be unwrapped later.
9. If necessary, put in ice packs.

## Closing the Aron

1. The cover is now carefully brought by two or more members and put into position. If the cover is in two pieces, the bottom part is placed first.
2. Make a verbal *al t'nai* that the *aron* is closed with the understanding that it may be opened later.
3. After the casket is covered, recite:

הִנֵּה מִטְתּוֹ שֶׁלִּשְׁלֹמֹה שְׁשִׁים גְּבֻרִים סָבִיב לֵה מַגְבְּרֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל: כֻּלָּם אַחֲזִי חֶרֶב  
מִלְמַדֵּי מִלְחָמָה אִישׁ חָרְבוֹ עַל-יָרְכוֹ מִפְּחַד בְּלִילוֹת: יְבָרְכֶךָ ה' וְיִשְׁמְרֶךָ: יֵאָר ה'  
פָּנָיו אֵלֶיךָ וַיַּחֲנֹךְ: יֵשֶׁא ה' פָּנָיו אֵלֶיךָ וַיִּשֶׁם לְךָ שְׁלוֹם: יִלְכוּ יוֹנְקוֹתָיו וַיְהִי כְזִית  
הוֹדוֹ וְרִיחַ לוֹ כְּלִבְנוֹן: רֵאִיתִי וְהִנֵּה מְנוֹרַת זָהָב כְּלָה וְגִלָּה עַל רֹאשָׁהּ וְשִׁבְעָה  
נְרוֹתֶיהָ עָלֶיהָ שִׁבְעָה וְשִׁבְעָה מוֹצְקוֹת לְנֵרוֹת אֲשֶׁר עַל רֹאשָׁהּ: וְשִׁנִּים זֵיתִים  
עָלֶיהָ אֶחָד מִימִין הַגִּלָּה וְאֶחָד עַל שְׂמֹאלָהּ: מִי אַתָּה הֶרֶם-הַגָּדוֹל לִפְנֵי זֶרְבָבֶל  
לְמִישֹׁר וְהוֹצִיא אֶת הָאֶבֶן הָרֹאשָׁה תְּשׁוּאוֹת חֵן חֵן לָהּ: וְעַתָּה יִגְדֵּל נָא בָּח ה'  
כְּאֲשֶׁר דִּבַּרְתָּ לֵאמֹר: וְאוֹלָם חִי- אֲנִי וַיִּמְלֵא כְבוֹד ה' אֶת כָּל הָאֶרֶץ:

Behold, the couch of Solomon. Sixty mighty men are about it, of the mighty men of Israel. They are all swordsmen and expert in war. Each man has his sword on his thigh because of dread in the night. May the L-rd bless you and protect you. May the L-rd shine His face upon you and be gracious to you. May the L-rd lift His countenance unto you and give you peace. His branches shall spread; his beauty shall be as the olive tree, and his fragrance as Lebanon. Who are you, O mighty mountain? Before Zerubabel you shall become a plain; he shall bring forth the key stone with shouts of "Grace, grace!" upon it. And now, may the might of the L-rd be great, as You have spoken, saying, "But as truly as I live, the glory of the L-rd shall fill all the earth."

And when the Tabernacle sets forward, the Levites shall take it down, And when the Tabernacle is to be pitched, The Levites shall set it up, and the stranger who approaches shall be put to death. And when the ark sets forward, Moses would say, "Rise up, O L-rd, and let Your enemies be scattered, and let those who hate You flee before You." For He will give His angels charge over you to watch you in all your paths. They shall bear upon you their hands, lest you dash your foot against a stone. No evil shall befall you, nor shall any plague come near your tent. The L-rd is a warrior, the L-rd is His name. The L-rd will fight for you and you shall hold your peace.

4. Remove the casket, feet first, from the *tahara* room, and recite:

וּבְנִסְעַת הַמִּשְׁכָּן יוֹרִידוּ אֹתוֹ הַלְוִיִּם וּבְחֻנַּת הַמִּשְׁכָּן יָקִימוּ אֹתוֹ הַלְוִיִּם וְהָזָר הַקָּרֵב יִמָּת: וְיִהְיֶה בְנִסְעַת הָאָרֶץ וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה קוּמָה ה' וַיִּפָּצוּ אֹיְבָיִךְ וַיִּגְסוּ מִשְׁנֵאֶיךָ מִפְּנֶיךָ: כִּי מִלֵּאכֶיךָ יֵצְאוּ לְךָ לְשִׁמְרֶךָ בְּכָל-דֶּרֶכֶיךָ: עַל כַּפַּיִם יִשְׁאוּנֶךָ פֶּן-תִּגְדָּף בְּאֶבֶן רִגְלֶךָ: לֹא-תֵאָנֶה אֱלֹהֶיךָ רָעָה וְנִגַּע לֹא-יִקְרַב בְּאַהֲלֶךָ: ה' אִישׁ מִלְחָמָה ה' שְׁמוֹ: ה' יִלָּחֶם לָכֶם וְאַתֶּם תַּחֲרִישׁוּ:

## Cleaning Up

1. Clean up the *tahara* room and neatly put away all supplies. If supplies need to be replenished, please contact Na'ava Avnit (396-7757).
2. Disinfect and wipe down the front of the steel cabinet near the sink.
3. Mopping up the floor, sweeping up the wood shavings, and putting the dirty sheets in the bin are part of the cleanup.
4. After leaving the funeral home, the hands are washed as before (right-left, right-left, right-left), using the washing cup outside. Make sure you are not under any roof overhang. The water should not be poured on plants or where it may be stepped on. The cup should not be handed to the next person. The participants should let their hands dry without wiping them, unless they are afraid that their hands will get chapped (e. g., in the winter).