

**TAHARA**, the ritual washing and dressing of a Jewish body in preparation for burial, is a symbolic purification of the body as it passes from this world, *olam hazeh*, to the next world, *olam haba*. Family members do not participate in this ritual; it is performed within 24 hours after death by the Chevra Kadisha, volunteers from the Jewish community. Tahara, governed by the principle of respect for the body which housed the soul of the deceased, is performed only on a body which has not been embalmed. Tahara is required for burial in Temple Israel's Jewish and Interfaith cemeteries as well as prior to cremation if the cremains are to be buried in the cemetery.

Three pitchers of water are poured over the body, always modestly covered with a sheet, while prayers are recited. Psalms are also read by one member of the Chevra throughout the ritual.

The body is dried and dressed in *tachrichim*, a white cotton shroud patterned on the clothing of the High Priest when he entered the Holy Temple in Jerusalem on Yom Kippur. This clothing consists of trousers, a shirt, an overblouse/coat, and a head covering. Every Jew is buried in the same clothing, symbolizing the equality of all in the eyes of G-d. Men and women who wore a tallit in life are buried with their tallit. Finally, a large sheet is placed in the casket, earth from Israel is placed on it; the body is laid atop the sheet and wrapped in it. The face is covered, the casket is closed, and a final prayer is offered.

## Out of Funeral Home Tahara

If you are considering a Tahara in the home, these websites contain information that will be very helpful for your preparations. [www.peacefulpassageathome.com](http://www.peacefulpassageathome.com)  
[www.homefuneralalliance.org](http://www.homefuneralalliance.org)

### 1. Parameters for Out of Funeral Home Tahara

a. If the Tahara is to be performed in a home, the family must meet with the Chevra in advance to determine if it is feasible to do the ritual in the home. If it will be performed in a facility, the Chevra will need to talk with an administrator and/ or a family member prior to performing the Tahara.

b. The room must be large enough to accommodate 5-6 Chevra members and a standard-sized casket of simple design, containing no metal. The container, which must be biodegradable, must be arranged for and provided by the family.

c. Running water must be easily accessible to the room.

d. Post-mortem care (initial cleaning of the body) must be done prior to Tahara. The body must be completely clean and dry, with no medical implements ( ie: i.v.s, dressings etc) or bodily discharges before Tahara is performed. The washing of the body performed by the Chevra is of a ritual nature and not an actual cleaning. If the body is not clean at the time of Tahara, the ritual can not be performed.

e. The unclothed body must be on a single or twin bed or a table, covered with a sheet. A plastic sheet covered by a cloth sheet should be under the body to protect the surface from water and other fluids. Floors should be protected as well.

f. These materials should be available for Chevra use: 5 bath towels, 3 sheets, a medium-sized pitcher for ritual washing and containers for wet laundry. The family/institution will be responsible for laundry and/or disposal of used materials.

g. If Tahara is delayed because of Shabbat and/or the weather is particularly warm, contingency must be made to keep the body cool. Consider [www.peacefulpassageathome.com/cooling-the-body.html](http://www.peacefulpassageathome.com/cooling-the-body.html), and other products sold on Amazon ie: -Techni Ice and Flexfreeze.

### 2. The Family's Responsibilities:

a. Meet or speak with the Chevra in advance if a Tahara is being considered at a location other than in a funeral home.

b. Make sure that the supplies listed above are available: **5 bath towels, 3 sheets, a medium-sized pitcher for ritual washing and containers for wet laundry.**

Arrange for the clean up of used linens and supplies after the ritual is completed.

- c. Make sure that post-mortem care and cleaning of the body has been performed and that the body is completely clean and dry. Arrange for or have the body prepared on a single bed or table as described above.
- d. Make sure that the body is kept cool if the weather is hot or Tahara is delayed.
- e. Arrange for the casket or other biodegradable container to be in the room where the Tahara will be performed.
- f. Arrange for transportation of the body after the ritual is completed. Please be aware that state and local laws must be adhered to.

### **3. Chevra Responsibilities:**

- a. Set up a meeting with family when contacted with request for Tahara. Be certain that family is aware of their responsibilities.
- b. Arrange time and place for Tahara and notify Chevra members to set up a team.
- c. Determine who will take necessary materials to the Tahara: tachrichim (clothing for dressing the deceased), earth from Israel, book of Psalms, aprons, gloves, masks and device to move body from bed into casket. Also additional items such as extra towels, sheets, trash bags.
- d. The Chevra has an obligation to decline to perform Tahara if inappropriate for any reason.

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