

חברה קדישא



Chevra Kaddisha

## ***Preparation of the Remains: A Guide for the Chevrah Kaddisha***

This guide is *not* intended for the general reader. The layman may find the details of *taharah* too morbid for casual reading so soon after the death of a relative. It is solely for the use of the prospective member of the *chevrah kaddisha* who is required to study and review the laws of *taharah*.

Man is created in the image of God and thus possesses dignity and value. Because God has created him, he is endowed with sanctity. To destroy man is to commit not only an offense against man, but sacrilege—the desecration of the name of God. An indignity inflicted on man is a profanation of the name of God. The body that housed the soul is sanctified by Judaism. It is a gift of Almighty God, and the sanctity adheres to the body even after the soul has left.

The care, consideration, and respect that are bestowed upon the living must be accorded the dead as they are attended, prepared, and escorted to their final abode on earth.

To assist in the preparation and burial of the *dead* is one of the greatest mitzvos in our faith.

The association that is organized to perform this service is appropriately named *chevrah kaddisha*, the "holy society." It was one of the first associations to be established in the traditional Jewish community of the past. Membership in the *chevrah kaddisha* has always been accounted a unique privilege. The members must be Sabbath observers, of high moral character, and conversant with the laws and customs that are the responsibility of the office they occupy.

Jewish communities in America developed in haphazard fashion, and few were fortunate to have an active and well- in formed *chevrah kaddisha*. Thirty years ago, the terrible abuses that were perpetrated upon the dead were largely a result of a severe lack of dedicated volunteers who were willing to ignore the unsightly, bother, and

time demands of such work in order to prepare and bury the dead with honor and dignity. Charity became more impersonal, kindness more aseptic and self-sacrificial communal service as rare as genuine saintliness. As the traditional Jewish communities have become more religiously intensive and more comfortable with practicing the *halachah* in the American milieu, they have revived this most vital component of Jewish life.

The rules and regulations that govern the activities of the *chevrah kaddisha* are widely scattered in the literature of Jewish law. Customs have been transmitted by word of mouth from generation to generation, and they frequently vary in detail from country to country and community to community. No single outline of procedures can possibly reconcile all the differences, most of which have some valid basis in Jewish law and tradition. The following general outline embraces the procedures that are followed in most Jewish communities. It may serve as a guide for the newly organized *chevrah kaddisha* that has no traditional custom of its own.

The *chevrah kaddisha* should meet at regular intervals to *review* the requisite rituals and practices and the problems that are encountered when it officiates. No individual should be permitted to participate without its express consent, lest its discipline be compromised.

### Before Death Occurs

A person who is critically sick is considered a *Patient*. Such a person should be encouraged to say *Vidduy* (*confession*). If he is unable to say it himself, another person should say it for him in a manner that the *Patient* can hear it. However, the *Vidduy* should also be said even for a comatose patient. The wording of the *Vidduy* is:

מוֹדָה אֲנִי לְפָנֶיךָ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵי וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתַי, שֶׁרְפוּאָתִי בְיָדְךָ וּמִיתָתִי  
בְיָדְךָ. יְהִי רְצוֹן מִלְּפָנֶיךָ שֶׁתִּרְפְּאֵנִי רְפוּאָה שְׁלֵמָה, וְאִם אָמוּת,  
תִּהְיֶה מִיתָתִי כַפָּרָה עַל כָּל חַטָּאִים וְעוֹנוֹת וּפְשָׁעִים שֶׁחָטָאתִי  
וְשָׁעוֹיתִי וְשִׁפְשַׁעְתִּי לְפָנֶיךָ, וְתֵן חֶלְקִי בְּגֵן עֵדֶן. וְזַכְּנִי לְעוֹלָם  
הַבָּא הַצְּדִיקִים.

אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ, תָּבֵא לְפָנֶיךָ תְּפִלָּתֵנוּ וְאֵל תִּתְעַלֵּם  
מִתְחַנְתְּנוֹתֵנוּ שֶׁאֵין אָנוּ עֲזִי פָּנִים וְקָשִׁי עֶרְף לֹוֹמֵד לְפָנֶיךָ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ  
וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ, צְדִיקִים אֲנַחְנוּ וְלֹא חַטָּאנוּ, אֲבָל אֲנַחְנוּ וְאֲבוֹתֵינוּ  
חַטָּאנוּ.

אֲשַׁמְנוּ, בְּגִדְנוּ, גָּזְלָנוּ, דִּבְרָנוּ דְּפִי, הֶעֱוִינוּ, וְהִרְשַׁעְנוּ, זָדְנוּ,  
חָמְסָנוּ, טָפְלָנוּ שָׁקַר, יַעֲצָנוּ רָע, כָּזַבְנוּ, לָצָנוּ, מָרְדְּנוּ, נֶאֱצָנוּ,  
סָרְרָנוּ, עָוִינוּ, פָּשַׁעְנוּ, צָרְרָנוּ, קִשְׁיָנוּ עָרְף, רִשְׁעָנוּ, שְׁחַתְנוּ,  
תַּעֲבָנוּ, תָּעַנּוּ, תַּעֲתָעְנוּ. סָרְנוּ מִמִּצְוֹתֶיךָ וּמִמְשַׁפְּטֶיךָ הַטּוֹבִים וְלֹא  
שָׁוָה לָנוּ. וְאַתָּה צְדִיק עַל כָּל הַבָּא עֲלֵינוּ, כִּי אָמַת עָשִׂיתָ וְאַנְחָנוּ  
הִרְשַׁעְנוּ.

If there is insufficient time for this *Vidduy*, the short version should be said.

A person who is near death must not be left alone. A person (ten people if possible) should be near him until death. However, *Kohanim* must leave the house.

If the patient is fully conscious and alert, the persons assigned for this purpose by the Chevra should stay in another room in order not to disturb or upset the patient by their presence. One person should stay in the room with the patient at all times. However, if the patient begins to lose consciousness, the other persons are to enter the sickroom and take their places facing the patient in such a manner that they can observe his face, but preferably not at the end of the bed.

It is forbidden to carry on ordinary conversation when near a person in the last stages of life. It is recommended that every person present should recite, reverently and in an undertone, the *Tefilla Le-Oni* (per the practices of the community) and Psalms 41 and 44. Should an unpleasant odor issue from the patient, these prayers must be said at a distance of four amos (seven feet) from where the odor is no longer perceived.

## **DEPARTURE OF THE SOUL (YETZIAT NESHAMAH)**

Once the end stage of life has set in, the senior functionary of the Chevra Kadisha puts on a light in the room, except, of course, on the Sabbath or Yom Tov.

It is not permitted to touch or move the patient or his bed because this might hasten death. Should the *patient* request nourishment, he should be given only such food and drink as he can swallow without difficulty.

The family of the patient needs to leave the room only if they weep.

When *Yetzias Neshamah* takes place, the senior functionary of the Chevra Kadisha recites the *Shemos* (see below) aloud, and all the others present make their responses aloud. These verses are recited also when death occurs on a Sabbath or Yom Toy. If possible, the recital of these *Shemos* should be concluded as the patient takes his last breath.

יְהִי רְצוֹן שְׁתֵּהא מִיתְתִי כִפָּרָה עֲלֵי כָּל עֲוֹנוֹתַי

בשעת יציאת הנשמה:

(To be said one time.) . שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל, יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ, יְיָ אֶחָד.

(To be said three times.) . בְּרוּךְ שֵׁם כְּבוֹד מְלֻכוֹתוֹ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד.

(To be said seven times.) . יְיָ הוּא הָאֱלֹהִים.

(To be said three times.) . יְיָ מֶלֶךְ, יְיָ מֶלֶךְ, יְיָ מֶלֶךְ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד.

If the patient still shows signs of life after the conclusion of the recital of these verses, they should be repeated until such time as death occurs.

### ESTABLISHMENT OF DEATH (BDIKAH)

Immediately after respiration has ceased, a feather is placed upon the mouth and beneath the nostrils of the deceased and watched continuously for 20 minutes to ascertain whether all life has indeed departed from the body, (This is not done on the Sabbath or Yom Tov). Care must be taken to eliminate drafts of air, so that no error should occur. During this time, the body must not be touched.

### AFTER DEATH (ACHAR NISSAH)

Once death has been established beyond a doubt, a window in the room is opened and the senior functionary of the Chevra Kadisha in attendance recites the following aloud, with the others joining in softly;

יְהוָה נִתַּן וַיְהוָה לְקַח יְהִי שֵׁם יְהוָה מְבֹרָךְ.

On Sabbath and on Yom Tov, no prayers are said after *missah* has occurred, except for *Boruch Dayan Ho-Emes*.

### THE RENDING OF GARMENTS (KERIAH)

Except on Sabbath, Yom Tov and Chol Ha-hoed all *Aveilim*, mourners, must make a *keriah* (rent) in the edge of their outer clothing. For parents only, *keriah* is made on Chol Hamoed. *Aveilim* not present at this time should do *keriah* when they hear of the death. *Keriah* must be done standing. The *keriah* must be one *tefach* [four inches] vertically. When done for a parent, all clothing which cover the torso must be torn on the left side [except for a coat, an undershirt, and *tallis katan* from the neckline down; for other relatives, only the outer garment is torn on the right side. The tear is started by someone other than the *avel*, using an instrument such as a knife or scissors if

necessary, but it must be completed by the *aveil*. Before making the *keriah*, the mourner recites the blessing:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, דֵּינֵן הָאֵמֶת.

*Keriah* is made on *aveiluth* (mourning) observed for a child, only if that child died on the thirty-first day of life or thereafter. On *Chol haMoed* only those mourning a parent may make *keriah*; other relatives must not do so until after the holiday.

After *keriah* (except on Sabbath and on the first and last days of Yom Tov) the mouth and eyes of the deceased are closed and the lower jaw is tied in place with a cloth. It is a commendable custom that the eldest son should close the eyes of his father after death. The *aveilim* may then leave. Watch must be kept over the deceased during the day as well as during the night. As a rule, a man is assigned to keep watch over a male, and a woman over a female. If need be, a man may keep watch over a female, and a woman may watch over a male.

The Chevra Kadisha must never permit a body to be embalmed.

### **TAKING DOWN THE DEAD (HASHKAVA)**

Immediately after the death is ascertained the body is "taken down" from the deathbed in the following manner:

First the body is examined; if the deceased has soiled himself, he is wiped dry properly and cleaned as well as possible. Next a sheet or some paper is spread upon the floor. The body is completely covered with a clean sheet. The clothing is removed from the *mes* (body) and it is taken down from the deathbed by two or three persons and gently placed upon the sheet or paper, feet towards the entrance. If possible, the body should be placed in a cool place in the room. Next (except on Sabbath and Yom Tov) the thighs and legs of the body are stretched out, the hands and arms laid out straight, and the fingers are stretched out. In order that the body may be taken down on the Sabbath or on Yom Tov, a piece of bread (matzah on Passover) is placed on the body. This is permitted only if there is danger that the body may decompose quickly, but in any case, it is permissible to pull away the pillows from under the body.

There must be no discussion of *Torah* in the room where the body reposes, with the exception of matters directly relating to the deceased.

### **GUARDING THE BODY (Shomer)**

1. The body must be watched at all times, day and night, including on the Sabbath. The body is *never* left alone. The individual who serves as the watcher, or *shomer*, is *exempt from all prayers and other religious duties during that time*—he is engaged in the performance of a mitzvah and therefore exempt from

performing other mitzvos. Where two people watch over the body, one performs his religious duties in another room, while the other remains with the body. Psalms and prayers for the departed are recited near the body.

2. The *shomer* should remain in the room with the body, if possible. Where it is not possible, such as in a morgue, the *shomer* should be able to see into the room and observe the body.
3. Smoking, eating, and unnecessary conversation are forbidden in the room in which the body lies.
4. Women, like men, may serve as *shomrim* (plural) for any deceased person, man or woman. It is preferable, where possible, that children, grandchildren, or other relatives of the deceased serve as *shomrim*.

### **PREPARATIONS FOR THE *TAHARAH***

1. The *taharah* should take place as close to the time of the funeral service as possible. Ordinarily, no more than three hours should elapse between the *taharah* and the funeral service.
2. Where this is not possible, as in the case when people will not be available at the proper time to perform the *taharah*, or in the summertime, when putrefaction rapidly may set in, the *taharah* may be performed earlier. In that event, the utmost care must be taken that the body and the *tachrichim* (shrouds) not become soiled again before the funeral.
3. Before the *taharah*, the casket, the *tachrichim*, and all the other necessary items must be prepared and ready. Those who will participate should be assigned their functions in advance. No conversation is permitted except that which is necessary for the washing and cleansing of the deceased.
4. During the washing and the *taharah*, no immediate members of the family are permitted—not even the father-in-law, mother's husband, or brother-in-law of the deceased should be present.
5. At the *taharah* of a woman, the females in similar relation to her also should not be present.
6. It is desirable that five, or at least four, members of the *chevrah kaddisha* participate in the *taharah*.

## BURIAL GARMENTS (TACHRICHIM)

All *tachrichim* should be made of cotton or linen, if at all possible, and must not have metal. If cotton *tachrichim* are less expensive than linen, they should be used; however, it must be ascertained that no polyester is blended in the cotton. The *tachrichim* must have no knots. The number of *tachrichim* depends on the age of the deceased. For a male past the age of thirteen, these consist of a cap, pants, socks, shirt, kittel, a belt, a *talis* of which one *tzitzis* has been rendered *posol*, and a sheet. (One bag will also be needed filled with soil from *Eretz Yisroel*). The same garments are given also to a child aged from three to thirteen who has worn a *talis* during his lifetime. If he has never worn a *talis*, but only an *arba kanfos*, he is given, in place of the *talis*, an *arba kanfos* of which one *tzitzis* has been rendered *posul*. A child aged one to three who has worn neither *arba kanfos* nor pants during his lifetime is not given either. A child less than one year old is shrouded in four linen or cotton diapers from which all embroidered initials and other marks have first been removed. The procedure is as follows:

The first diaper is wrapped around the body under the armpits down to just above the feet, leaving the head, neck and arms uncovered, the second diaper is folded into a triangle and wrapped around the head and nape of the neck, The third diaper, also folded in a triangle, and placed beneath the neck like a scarf and wrapped around the shoulders and arms, the two ends drawn forward. Thus shrouded, the small infant is placed into a small *anon* (coffin), The fourth diaper serves as a sheet.

A child less than thirty days old is shrouded in three diapers as described above and then placed into the *aron*.

For a female, the *tachrichim* are socks, a shirt, an over shirt extending down to the ankles, a hat and a face cloth, Some *tachrichim* are prepared with the over shirt extending only to the thighs, but pants are provided. If no other *tachrichim* are these latter *tachrichim* may be used as provided.

Care must be taken in the sewing of the kittel that should not open while the body is being dressed. This could easily occur since threads must not be knotted, The *tachrichim* must not be soiled or torn. If a hole is discovered in one of them, it must be mended before the garment is placed on the body. Initials, marks and spots must be removed if that can be done without tearing the garment, However, if the *tachrichim* cannot be placed on the *mes* without opening the seams, one may open the seams.

## WASHING

1. The members of the *chevrah kaddisha* must wash their hands in the same manner as the ritual washing each morning: each hand, beginning with the right, is alternately washed three times with a washing cup.
2. The body is placed on its back on the *taharah* board, with the feet toward the door. At no time should it be placed face downward—it is inclined first on one

side and then on the other side during the washing.

3. Out of respect for the person and his integrity, care should be exercised to keep the body covered at all times, particularly the private parts, except when they must be exposed in order to be washed.
4. A large container is filled with lukewarm water, into which a smaller vessel is dipped and poured upon the parts of the body to be washed.
5. The order of the washing is as follows: first the entire head, then the neck, the right hand, the right upper half of the body, the right lower half of the body, the right foot, the left hand, the left upper half of the body, the left lower half of the body, and the left foot. The body is then inclined on its left side and the right side of the back is washed in the same order as above. The body is then inclined on its right side and the left side of the back is washed.
6. The fingernails and toenails are cleansed and the hair is combed. Care should be taken that the fingers or other joints of the body do not bend or close. The body is washed completely. Internal cleansing is not customarily performed.
7. The blood that flowed at the time of death may *not* be washed away. When there is other blood on the body that flowed during the deceased's lifetime, from wounds or as a result of an operation, the washing and *taharah* are performed in the usual manner.
8. If the deceased died instantaneously through violence or accident and his body and garments are completely spattered with blood, *no* washing or *taharah* is performed. The body is placed in the casket without the clothes being removed. Only a sheet is wrapped around it, over the clothes. The blood is part of the body and may not be separated from it in death.
9. Where only part of the body was injured and covered with blood, and it is possible to perform a *taharah* on the remainder, rabbinic authority should be consulted.
10. Where blood flows continually after death, the source of the flow is covered and not washed. The clothes that contain the blood that flowed after death are placed in the casket at the feet of the deceased.



## TAHARAH

Before taharah is begun, the verse beginning with *Anah* is recited.

אָנָּא יְיָ אֱלֹהֵי הַחֶסֶד וְהַרְחֵמִים. שְׁכַל-אַרְחוֹתֶיךָ חֶסֶד וְאַמֶּת. וְתוֹרֶתְךָ  
כָּלָה חֶסֶד וְאַמֶּת. וּבְרֵאתָ הָעוֹלָם בְּחֶסֶד וְאַמֶּת. וּמִתְנַהֵג עִם-בְּרִיּוֹתֶיךָ  
בְּחֶסֶד וְאַמֶּת. וְצוֹיִתָּנוּ לְעֶסוֹק בְּחֶסֶד וְאַמֶּת. וְלִקְבוֹר אֶת-הַמֵּתִים בְּחֶסֶד  
וְאַמֶּת. כָּמוֹ שְׁכּוֹב כִּי-קְבוֹד תִּקְבְּרָנוּ; וּבִכֵּן יְהִי רְצוֹן מִלְּפָנֶיךָ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵי  
שְׁתֵּאֲמַצְנִי וְתַחֲזֹקֵנִי לַעֲשׂוֹת מְלֶאכֶתִי מְלֶאכֶת שָׁמַיִם. לְהִיּוֹת עֹסְקֵי  
בְּמֵתִים בְּחֶסֶד וְאַמֶּת. כְּכֹל-תּוֹרַת כּוֹנֵנוֹת הָעֲלִיּוֹנִים בְּקִדְשָׁתָם הַמְּכּוֹנֵנוֹת  
בְּעֲשֻׁקוֹת הַמֵּתִים בְּטַהֲרָתָם וּבְלְבִישָׁתָם וּבְקְבוּרָתָם, וְאִךְ שְׁלֹא יִדְעָתִי  
כּוֹנֵנוֹתָם לְכוּן בָּהֶם, יְהִיוּ כְּאֵלוֹ נְתֻכּוֹנֵתִי בָּהֶם. וְתִשְׁמְרֵנִי שְׁלֹא אֶכְשַׁל  
בְּמַעֲשֵׂה יָדַי, וְתִקֶּיֶם-בִּי לֹא-יֵאָנֶה ל-צְדִיק כָּל-אֶזְרוֹן, כִּי שְׁגִיאוֹת מִי-יָבִי,  
וְתִשְׁמְרֵנִי מִכָּל-נֶזֶק וְתִקְלָה. לְקֶיֶם-בִּי מִקְרָא שׁוֹמֵר מִצְוָה לֹא יִדַּע דְּבַר  
רָע, וְתִעֲמַד-לִי וְלְכָל-בְּנֵי בֵיתִי זְכוּוֹת מִצְוֹת גְּמֻלוֹת חֶסֶד וְאַמֶּת  
לְמַלְאוֹת יְמֵינוּ בְּטוֹבָה וּבְנִעֻמִּים בְּשִׁיבָה טוֹבָה. וְאִךְ טוֹב וְחֶסֶד יִרְדְּפוּנִי  
כָּל-יְמֵינִי חַיִּי, וְשִׁבְתִּי בְּבֵית יְיָ לְאַרְךָ יָמִים, אֲמֵן

The members of the Chevra Kadisha must wash their hands three times alternately before beginning, the taharah. The actual taharah may begin only after the *aron*, *tachrichim*, warm water, clothes and other required equipment have been prepared, and (It is customary to have two lights burn during the taharah).

First, the body is placed on the taharah board or table: feet to the door., The body is then completely undressed, but care must be taken that it should always remain covered with a sheet.

Gold, silver or other ornaments on the body, including wigs (unless braided into the hair of the deceased at the time of death), are removed from the body and may be used, unless implanted, must be removed prior to the taharah.

The body must be handled gently and with care so that the *kavod ha-mes* (respect for the deceased) is not violated. Bleeding wounds must be covered, preferably with adhesive tape. Intravenous catheters should be removed and tape or glue placed over the extraction points, intracardiac or Hickman catheters should be left in place.

Bandages containing blood must be placed in the aron; otherwise they may be discarded. After makeup, dressings or unneeded bandages have been carefully removed, and the fingernails and toenails have been cleaned, warm water is poured over the body, starting at the head. The body is then washed with cloths under the sheet with which it has been covered until the body is clean in the judgment of the senior chevra functionary in attendance, who must inspect it. Once the front of the body has been treated in this manner, the body is its left side, so that the right side and right half of the back are cleansed. Next, the same procedure is followed for the left side by turning the body on its right side, During the cleansing, which must be done under the close supervision of the senior Chevra functionary, only that part of body actually being washed may be uncovered. The anus must tie entirely clean externally, but internal washing is not done. If fecal material continues to come out, the rectum may be plugged with cotton.

Next two or three (but not four) buckets filled with at least nine kabim (3 ½ gallons) of lukewarm water. Before uncovering body for the taharah, the following passuk is said:

**וְזָרְקָתִי עֲלֵיכֶם מֵיִם טְהוֹרִים וְטָהַרְתֶּם מְכַל טְמֵאוֹתֵיכֶם  
וּמְכַל-גְּלוּלֵיכֶם אֲטַהֵר אֶתְכֶם.**

by the participants, The body or by two (or more) people, and while the body is upright two or three people pour this water so that it will cover the entire body, Care must be taken that the prescribed amount of water is poured over the body from all the vessels in succession without interruption and the body is then placed on the taharah board. The body is then carefully wiped dry with the sheet.

Those performing the taharah and dressing Inc body must refrain from all conversation not concerning the taharah during the ritual.

A male infant who has died uncircumcised is circumcised without *periya*; the blessing is not recited. The foreskin is buried with the infant. The infant is given a name, preferably that of Eliyahu. However, if a male was stillborn, he should preferably be named Mancach. A stillborn female is preferably given the name Ada or Menucha.

If one of the participants in the taharah has an injury on his hand, no matter how small or trivial, he must not touch the body while it is undressed. This is for his own health. For this reason, no taharah should be performed in cases of AIDS or proven viral leukemia/lymphoma. Two Lairs of gloves should be worn in cases of hepatitis. In other cases Chevra members may or may not wear gloves at their discretion.

Blood which flowed from the body after death should be cleaned off, collected and buried with the body. Any linen soiled with such blood must also be buried together with the body. If wounds still exude blood, they should be bandaged, Preferably with a porous bandage, or glued, but they may not be stitched. If the body is in such a condition that a taharah cannot be performed (e.g., if bleeding may be expected during taharah despite bandaging, as in cases of women in childbirth, accident victims or surgical patients), the body is wrapped in a sheet and placed *aron* with the tachrichim Put in beside it.

Neither the taharah nor the burial may be done on Sabbath or either the first, second or last days of a Yom Tov.

Women who are during their *Niddah* time may participate in a taharah during their actual menstrual flow, they should refrain from participating in a *taharah* if other women are available.

Children may not be present during the *taharah* of their parents.

The taharah is concluded with the white of a raw egg, according to some customs, is mixed with a little wine or vinegar, and the head of the deceased is cleansed with the mixture.

## TACHRICHIM

1. The *tachrichim*, shrouds, should be made of white linen, sewn by hand with white linen thread, by pious women of integrity.
2. Where these shrouds are not obtainable or they are too costly, cotton or other inexpensive material may be used. In any event, the *tachrichim* should not be too costly.
3. They should have no binding, seams, knots, or pockets. In dressing the body, only slipknots are made where the garments are tied around parts of the body.
4. The *tachrichim* for men consist of the following seven garments:

- ▣ *misznefet* (headdress)
- ▣ *michnasayim* (trousers)
- ▣ *ketones* (chemise)
- ▣ *kitel* (upper garment)
- ▣ *avnes* (belt)
- ▣ *sovev* (linen sheet)
- ▣ *tallit* (prayer shawl)

Women are clothed in the following:

- ▲ A cap
- ▲ *michnasayim*
- ▲ *ketones*
- ▲ *kitel*
- ▲ *avnet*
- ▲ a face cloth, or a *sovev*.

5. The *tachrichim* must be spotless. If they become soiled they must be washed before use.
6. The *chevrah kaddisha* should have several sets of *tachrichim* on hand for emergencies.

### **Order of Dressing**

This is the order of dressing for men; women follow a pattern.

1. The *mitznetet* is placed on the head and drawn down to cover the entire head, the neck, and the nape of the neck
2. The *michnasayim* extend from the belly to the ankle. Two participants draw the trousers up to the belly. They are tied at the belly by making three forms that are shaped to resemble the letter *shin* which stands for *Shaddai*, God's name. The trousers are tied around the ankles with a hand. No knots are made.
3. The *ketones* should be large enough to cover the entire body. It has an opening at the top to be slipped over the head, and sleeves for the arms. Two of the participants carefully draw the sleeves over the hands and arms, and slip it over the head and down over the body. At the neck, the bands are knotted with bows and shaped to resemble a *shin*.
4. The *kitel* may be open like a shirt or closed like the *ketonet*. It has sleeves for the arms and is drawn over the body. If there is a *kitel* that the deceased wore during his life, it should be used, but the metal snaps or buttons must be removed. Care should be taken when the *kitel* is put on the body that the sleeves of the *ketones* not be moved from their position and that they extend to the waist. The *kitel* is tied at the neck in the same manner as the *ketonet*.
5. The *avnet* is wound around the body three times, over the *kitel*. Both ends are knotted at the belly with three bows in the shape of a *shin*.
6. Before placing the body into the casket, some straw, and a handful of earth from the Holy Land, are first put into a linen bag and placed inside the casket. The *sovev* is

spread in the casket and the tallit spread over the *sovev*. The tallit should be one that the deceased wore during prayer in his lifetime. If that is not available, another may be used. The *atarah*, collar ornament, of the tallit must be removed.

7. The body is placed in the coffin and the tallit is wrapped around the body. One of the *tzizit* is either torn or tied up and placed in a corner of the tallit. The *sovev* is wrapped first around the head. It is customary to place broken pieces of earthenware, called *sherblach* in Yiddish, in the casket.
8. The casket remains closed, except in those communities where it is customary to briefly open the casket at the cemetery and insert the *sherblach*.

At the end of their holy service, the *chevrah kaddisha* asks forgiveness of the deceased because it may not have performed to perfection, and also because handling a person's body under these circumstances requires exquisite sensitivity and a devotional talent that even the best of us do not always possess.