Preparing Ourselves for the Ultimate Journey
The Rites, rituals, and meaning of the Taharah (Ritual Cleaning) of the Body before Burial
Prepared by Rabbi Laurence Rosenthal

***Course Description**: The Chevrai Kaddishah, Holy Fellowship, is entrusted with the holy task of cleaning and preparing a body for burial. Join Rabbi Rosenthal as we explore the rites and rituals that are performed by the Chevrai Kaddishah, what these rituals mean and what we really believe about the journey from this life into the next.*

Tahara Rituals
Session 1

Garments

Ketubot 8b:14

What is the connection between Rabban Gamliel and a house of mourning? It is as it is taught in a *baraita*: Initially, the funeral expenditures for the deceased were more taxing for his relatives than his death, as the burials were opulent, until it reached a point where people would abandon the deceased and flee. This continued until Rabbi Gamliel came and conducted himself in a self-deprecatory manner, instructing the people that they were to take him for burial in plain linen garments. And all the people conducted themselves following his example, and instructed their families to take them for burial in plain linen garments. Rav Pappa said: And today, everyone is accustomed to bury the dead in plain garments, even in rough cloth [*tzerada*] worth one *zuz*.

Shabbat 114a:9

Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish said: These garments of the *banna'in* mentioned in the mishna are the clothes of the bath attendants [*ulairin*] that come from a country overseas, on which stains are apparent, and these men are meticulous about their cleanliness. The Gemara asks: Is that to say that these are white garments? Didn't Rabbi Yannai say to his sons: My sons, do not bury me in white garments nor in black garments. Not in white, lest I not be acquitted in judgment, and I will be among the wicked like a groom among mourners. And not in black, lest I be acquitted in judgment, and I will be among the righteous like a mourner among grooms. Rather, bury me in the clothes of the bath attendants who come from a country overseas, which are neither black nor white. Apparently, these clothes of the bath attendants are red. The Gemara answers: This is not difficult, as a distinction can be made. When Rabbi Yannai indicates that they are red, that is referring to overgarments; the statement of Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish that indicated that they are white, that is referring to undergarments.

Rabbi Asher Meir; https://www.ou.org/life/torah/mm_burial_shrouds/

Jewish burial is always in a simple linen shroud or sometimes a prayer shawl for a man (SA YD 352). Burying the departed in a garment is considered a testimony of faith in the resurrection of the body (commentary of Shach). This is a fundamental principle of faith, one of the thirteen principles which the Rambam enumerates as being essential to Jewish belief.

We can easily see why the belief in the immortality of the soul is a basic moral necessity for mankind. When we remember that the soul outlives the body, then we will devote our lives to the cultivation of the spirit, not to the enjoyments of the body.

The Eyes

Genesis 46:1-4

So Israel set out with all that was his, and he came to Beer-sheba, where he offered sacrifices to the God of his father Isaac's [house]. God called to Israel in a vision by night: "Jacob! Jacob!" He answered, "Here." "I am God, the God of your father's [house]. Fear not to go down to Egypt, for I will make you there into a great nation. I Myself will go down with you to Egypt, and I Myself will also bring you back; and Joseph's hand shall close your eyes."

Dr. Ruth Langer, Boston College; Funerals: Ritual Description

Nissan Rubin speaks of this as a liminal period for the deceased. The body is treated both with signs that it is still connected to life and with acknowledgement that the person has died. Washing (and in antiquity, anointing) are actions connected with life. The rabbis assumed that the person could still grow hair and nails, hear, and feel pain, both physically and emotionally. Hence there is no idle conversation, eating, or study of Torah in the presence of the body. At the same time, the death is real. Dramatic signs of this traditionally include: removal of the deceased's pillow, placing the body on the ground instead of leaving it on the bed, tying shut the deceased's mouth if necessary and plugging bodily orifices. It is preferably the child's job to close a parent's eyes, covering them with some dirt or a potsherd, marking the child's stepping into the parental role within the family.

Shulhan Arukh, Siman 452:4

מעצימין עיניו של מת ואם נפתח פיו קושרין לחייו ופוקקין נקביו אחר שמדיחין אותו במיני בשמים וגוזזין שערו: הגה וצפרניו ומדיחים אותו היטב בכל מקום שיהא נקי מכל טומאה (בנימין זאב) וטחין ראשו בביצים טרופים בקליפתן שגלגל הוא שחוזר בעולם (כל בו):

One closes the eyes of the dead and if his mouth opens *has 'continue to open.'* one ties up his jaws and stops off the organs of the extremities after they wash him and cut his hair; *Gloss*: *And* [*also*] *his nails. And one washes him thoroughly all over so that he be clean of all impurity*. *And one covers his head with eggs beaten* [*and mixed with oil or wine*] *together with their shell, for* [*this resembles*] *a sphere making a circuit in the world*.

Pottery Shard Over the Eyes

Jewish Funeral Practices Committee of Greater Washington (Tahara Supplies For the Chevra Kadisha | Jewish Funerals, Burial and Mourning (jewish-funerals.org))

Broken pottery shards (simple natural clay flowerpot, broken into 1" pieces) [Pieces of pottery are placed over the eyes and mouth. There are two common explanations. 1) When using caskets, it is one way of having earth come in direct contact with the body, as is considered most desirable, 2) It is a sign of teshuva - penitence - for any possible sin the mouth or eyes may have been responsible for in life. These shards should not be glazed or colored, just plain Terra Cotta.]

(The Jewish Funeral Custom of Covering the Eyes of the Deceased (synonym.com))

In the experience of Nancy Kalikow Maxwell, library director at Barry University in Miami Shores, Florida, the eyes of the deceased are covered with broken pottery "to show that the vessel of her soul is now broken." MazorGuides interprets the reason for covering the eyes as intended to recall the words from Genesis 3:19, "unto dust you shall return." The Tri-City Jewish Center in Rock Island, Illinois, argues that it is "a symbolic reminder of human frailty." Clearly, different groups and individuals ascribe a range of meaning to the custom of covering the eyes during burial preparations.

Megillah 26b:16

And Rava said: A Torah scroll that became worn out is interred and buried **next to a Torah scholar, and** in this regard, a Torah scholar is defined **even** as **one who** only **studies the** *halakhot* in the Mishna and the *baraitot* but is not proficient in their analysis. **Rav Aḥa bar Ya'akov said: And** when it is buried, it is first placed **in an earthenware vessel, as it is stated: "And put them in an earthenware vessel, that they may last for many days"** (Jeremiah 32:14).

Tahara Manual of Practice; Rabbi Mosha Epstein (pg. 24)

The Shach (362.1) describes the custom of placing earthenware over the eyes and mouth when using caskets. The earthenware is symbolic of earth coming in direct contact with the deceased. Otherwise, when using a casket, there is no direct contact of the deceased with the earth at the burial. The Zichron Meir (324.47 suggests that the eyes and mouth are covered with the earthenware as a special sign of penitence for having been organs of potential sin...

Yom Kippur Liturgy

Like the clay in the hand of the potter, He expands it at will and contracts it at will. So are we in Your hand, O Preserver of kindness.

Look to the covenant and ignore the Accuser.

Like the stone in the hand of the cutter-he grasps it at will and smashes it at will- so are we in Your hand, O Source of life and death,

look to the covenant and ignore the Accuser.

Like the ax-head in the hand of the blacksmith-he forges it at will and removes it at will-so are we in Your hand, O Supporter of poor and destitute,

look at the covenant and ignore the Accuser

Talit, Tzitzit and Respect for the Dead

Berakhot 18a:13

The Gemara relates that Rabbi Ḥiyya and Rabbi Yonatan were walking in a cemetery and the sky-blue string of Rabbi Yonatan's ritual fringes was cast to the ground and dragging across the graves. Rabbi Ḥiyya said to him: Lift it, so the dead will not say: Tomorrow, when their day comes, they will come to be buried with us, and now they are insulting us.

Questions:

1) I know the performance of the tahara is different for Conservative and Orthodox (and Reform?) Jews, but is the actual service different? I've never looked in the other synagogues' books ...

2) How did the shroud and the high priest's ritual clothing become connected? ("and they put the pure headdress upon his head" ...)

3) Why does the shomer traditionally read Psalms and not some other book?

4) Why is the 23rd Psalm always recited at funerals? How did it get connected with burial?

5) What are the traditions regarding how many days of shiva observance? Has shiva changed over the years?

Tosfot on Brachot 18a

TOMORROW, [THEY WILL] COME TO [BE BURIED WITH] US, AND NOW [THEY ARE] INSULTING US. The Gemara says that the dead are upset with the living who are showing that they, the living, are obligated to keep the mitzvos while the dead have no mitzvos. The underlying ruling is based on the verse "ridiculing a poor man embarrasses him". The Rabbis understand that the "poor man", is one who can no longer perform mitzvos, the dead. Tosfos asks: **This** Gemara that teaches us that the dead are upset when the living wear tzitzis near their graves **is bewildering. For the Gemara says in perek Hat'chailes (M'nochos 41a),** in a discussion of whether one is required to have tzitzis on garments that are to be used for burial, that **at that time,** when one is actually buried, **we certainly put them on for him. The explanation: we place tzitzis on their talisos because of the verse of "ridiculing the poor man".** It seems that precisely for this reason, that the dead should not be upset that they have no tzitzis we do place tzitzis on their garments. If so, how can the Gemara say here that when we wear tzitzis near their graves they are upset?

Tosfos answers: **And we can answer: that this is the explanation here** in our Gemara. Even though the dead also have tzitzis on their shrouds as we see from the Gemara in M'nochos, **they are embarrassed** by the fact **that the living are obligated** to perform the mitzvos **and the dead are not obligated to perform the mitzvos, and one who is obligated** to perform a mitzvo **is greater than one who is not obligated** to perform a mitzvo. See Bovo Kamo 38a. This inherent difference between the living and the dead is a source of anguish for the dead.

Tosfos is satisfied with this answer. However, he has a difficulty understanding why we do not follow the Gemara in M'nochos that clearly says we should put tzitzis on the shrouds of the dead.[1] *Literally ומאי שנא means: and what is the difference? Maharsho emends the text to read ומאי טעמא, and what is the reason?* **And this is difficult. That Gemara in Hat'chailes says that we should put strings,** tzitzis, **for** the garments of **the dead, and now we remove the tzitzis** from their shrouds. **And what is the reason for this?**

Tosfos explains that this custom of removing the tzitzis from the dead reflects a change in the general practice of wearing tzitzis in the times of Rabainu Tam as compared to the practice during the times of the Gemara. According to Torah law one is required to wear tzitzis only when he is wearing a four cornered garment. During the times of the Gemara it was customary to wrap oneself with a four cornered garment. During the times of Rabainu Tam, the Jews of Europe did not generally wear a four cornered garment. Rather, as we do today, they put on a special Talis for prayer so that they could fulfill the Mitzvo, but this was not part of their regular dress.

Rabainu Tam says: that the Gemara in M'nochos that requires that we put tzitzis on the shrouds of the dead is **exclusively for them,** who lived in the times of the Gemara, **who usually during their lifetime all wore a Talis of four corners and wore tzitzis** on those talisos, **and also all those involved** in taking care of the needs of **the dead had tzitzis, and** in that situation **it would be ridiculing "a poor man" if they,** the deceased, **had no tzitzis. Or perhaps because it is written** that the mitzvo of tzitzis is **לדורתם for their generations.** On the simplest level this means that the mitzvo applies for all future generations. However the world **לדורתם** is spelled with only one "vov" before the "**ר**", the "vov" after the "**ר**" is omitted. It is as if we read the word **תם לדור,** for a perfect generation, i.e. those who always fulfilled the mitzvo should have tzitzis on their garments for all time. Those who did not fulfill the mitzvo full time should not have tzitzis on their garments for all time.

However, we who even during our lives it is not our custom to constantly wear tzitzis, if we would place tzitzis **for the dead, that would be ridiculing the "poor man",** since we would be treating them as if they always wore tzitzis during their lifetime when they actually did not.

This reason explains why we do not put tzitzis on the shrouds of those who did not constantly wear tzitzis during their lifetime, but what about those who did? **And if you should say that we should place tzitzis** on the shrouds **of those who did wear tzitzis** constantly **during their lifetimes? If** we were to do **so,** then **it would be** a case of **"ridiculing the poor man" for others** who did not constantly wear tzitzis during their lifetime.

Rabainu Tam suggests another possible reason that we do not put tzitzis on shrouds. **And furthermore, Rabainu Tam says, that he heard from the people of Lozere that we remove the tzitzis** from shrouds **because the word ציצית comes to a numeric value of six hundred thirteen,** the word itself equals six hundred,[2] *400=ת, 10=י, 90=צ, 10=י, 90=צ, total= 600.* **together with the eight strings and five knots. And if one wears tzitzis** when in the grave **it appears as if he fulfilled all of the Torah and that seems like a falsehood.** It is an unpleasant situation when we testify that a person fulfilled all the mitzvos during his lifetime and he really did not.

Taharah Liturgy
Session 2

Opening Prayer: - Chamol

Master of the Universe! **Have compassion** on _____son of _____, the deceased for he is a descendant of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, Your servants. May his 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, Lord our God and G-d of our fathers, to bring a circle of angels of mercy before the deceased, for he is Your servant, son of Your maidservant. And You, Lord our God and God of our forefathers, who concerns Himself with the poor, save him from all misery, from a day of evil and from judgment to Hell. Blessed are You, great in lovingkindness 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, Lord God and God of our fathers, to remember the merit of the sacred covenant which is in his flesh, and may it be for him a ransom from the flames of Hell, so that You may deliver him. Blessed are You who establishes the covenant with mercy. Through mercy, hide and disregard the transgressions of this departed, Your servant. Deliver him from consumption by fire, for he needs Your great mercy, and You, Lord our God, are good and forgiving to all who call upon You. Blessed are You, great in counsel and mighty in achievement in mercy. May he tread with righteous feet into the Garden of Eden, for that is the place of the upright, God 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.

- What are we reminding God about this person?
- What are we requesting from God regarding this person?

Tahara Manual of Practices – Rabbi Mosha Epstein (pg.15)

The Chamol prayer requests mercy for the deceased a total of seven times. The Zohar (Vayakhel 199:b) discusses he seven ordeals endured upon leaving this world:

1. Judgement by Heaven when the spirit leaves the body.
2. Actions and utterances precede the spirit to demonstrate the type of life the individual led.
3. Being placed in the grave
4. Being in the grave
5. Re-integration with the earth.
6. Enduring Gehenna
7. The spirit's wandering until appointed tasks are completed/

Upon Removing the Covering Cloth:

And he (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."

Zacharia 3:1-5

He further showed me Joshua, the high priest, standing before the angel of the LORD, and the Accuser (*Satan)* standing at his right to accuse him. But [the angel of] the LORD said to the Accuser, "The LORD rebuke you, O Accuser; may the LORD who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! For this is a brand plucked from the fire." Now Joshua was clothed in filthy garments when he stood before the angel. ***And he (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." Then he gave the order, "Let a pure diadem be placed on his head." And they placed the pure diadem on his head and clothed him in [priestly] garments as the angel of the LORD stood by.

Rashi on Zacharia 3:4

clean garments A change of beautiful garments; i.e., merits. Since he compared the iniquity to filthy garments, he compares the merit to clean garments; beautiful, white garments.

Washing the Limbs:

Song of Songs 5:11-16 – Rosho

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 spices, towers of sweet herbs. His lips are roses dripping flowing myrrh. His arms are as 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.

Tahara Manuel of Practices – Rabbi Mosha Epstein (pg.124-126)

The Chamol is a direct prayer to spare the deceased suffering and Rosho (Shir Hashirim; The Song of Songs) is an indirect prayer to accomplish this...These attributes of *Rosho* form the essence of a Jew. In *Rosho* we are saying to the Almighty, have pity on the deceased and spare his suffering because of the special attributes of a person. Either the deceased possessed all of these marvelous attributes, or they belong to a Nation that was considered very special because it exemplified these traits and practices.

Artscroll Siddur (pg 298)

The custom of reciting Shir HaShirim before the Sabbath is based on the kabbalistic teaching that recitation helps save one from the suffering of Gehennom

The Taharah

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: 'And I will pour upon you pure water, and 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, purify Israel." Mishna Yoma 8:9 **A fountain for gardens, a well of living waters and flowing streams from Lebanon** Song of Songs 4:15 **And the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion and shall have purged the blood of Jerusalem from the midst thereof by a spirit of judgment and with a searing breath.** Isaiah 4:4 **"And I will pour upon you pure water and you will be purified of all your defilements and from all of your abominations I will purify you."** Ezekiel 36:25

Mishna Yoma 8:9

With regard to one who says: I will sin and then I will repent, I will sin and I will repent, Heaven does not provide him the opportunity to repent, and he will remain a sinner all his days. With regard to one who says: I will sin and Yom Kippur will atone for my sins, Yom Kippur does not atone for his sins. Furthermore, for transgressions between a person and God, Yom Kippur atones; however, for transgressions between a person and another, Yom Kippur does not atone until he appeases the other person. Similarly, Rabbi Elazar ben Azarya taught that point from the verse: "From all your sins you shall be cleansed before the Lord" (Leviticus 16:30). For transgressions

between a person and God, Yom Kippur atones; however, for transgressions between a person and a nother, Yom Kippur does not atone until he appeases the other person. **In conclusion, Rabbi Akiva said: How fortunate are you, Israel; before Whom are you purified, and Who purifies you? It is your Father in Heaven, as it is stated: "And I will sprinkle purifying water upon you, and you shall be purified" (Ezekiel 36:25). And it says: "The ritual bath of Israel is God" (Jeremiah 17:13). Just as a ritual bath purifies the impure, so too, the Holy One, Blessed be He, purifies Israel.**

Explanation of Rabbi Akiva's message:

As is typical, the tractate concludes with some words of "aggadah." Rabbi Akiva gives a message of hope to all of Israel, telling us how blessed we are that God cleanses us of our sins. The verses in Ezekiel talk about God's redemption of the people of Israel, what we usually call the Messianic age. Rabbi Akiva seems to be alluding to this ultimate cleansing of sin, one in which God will give us a "new heart" (v. 26). Rabbi Akiva also makes a pun on the word "mikveh" in Jeremiah the word in its context means hope, but means "ritual bath" in other places. God acts as a purifier for Israel, cleansing us both in the here and now and in the redemptive future for which we long.

Song of Songs 4:15

מַעְיַן גַּנִּים בְּאֵר מַיִם חַיִּים וְנֹזְלִים מִן־לְבָנוֹן׃

A fountain for gardens, a well of living waters and flowing streams from Lebanon.

Isaiah 4:4

אִם ׀ רָחַץ אֲדֹנָי אֶת צֹאַת בְּנוֹת־צִיּוֹן וְאֶת־דְּמֵי יְרוּשָׁלַם יָדִיחַ מִקִּרְבָּהּ בְּרוּחַ מִשְׁפָּט וּבְרוּחַ בָּעֵר׃

And the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion and shall have purged the blood of Jerusalem from the midst thereof by a spirit of judgment and with a searing breath.

Ezekiel 36:25

וְזָרַקְתִּי עֲלֵיכֶם מַיִם טְהוֹרִים וּטְהַרְתֶּם מִכֹּל טֻמְאוֹתֵיכֶם וּמִכָּל־גִּלּוּלֵיכֶם אֲטַהֵר אֶתְכֶם׃

"And I will pour upon you pure water and you will be purified of all your defilements and from all of your abominations I will purify you."

Tachrichim/Dressing

כְּתֹנֶת־בַּד קֹדֶשׁ יִלְבָּשׁ וּמִכְנְסֵי־בַד יִהְיוּ עַל־בְּשָׂרוֹ וּבְאַבְנֵט בַּד יַחְגֹּר וּבְמִצְנֶפֶת בַּד יִצְנֹף בִּגְדֵי־קֹדֶשׁ הֵם וְרָחַץ בַּמַּיִם אֶת־בְּשָׂרוֹ וּלְבֵשָׁם׃

Leviticus 16:4 - Story of Azazel/Yom Kippur Torah Reading

He shall be dressed in a sacral linen tunic, with linen breeches next to his flesh, and be girt with a linen sash, and he shall wear a linen turban. They are sacral vestments; he shall bathe his body in water and then put them on.

Order of Dressing:

The Head Cap

וּבְמִצְנֶפֶת בַּד יִצְנֹף

, and he shall wear a linen turban

The Pants

וּמִכְנְסֵי־בַד יִהְיוּ עַל־בְּשָׂרוֹ

with linen breeches next to his flesh

Short Shirt & Kittle

כְּתֹנֶת־בַּד קֹדֶשׁ יִלְבָּשׁ

He shall be dressed in a sacral linen tunic

Gartel

וּבְאַבְנֵט בַּד יַחְגֹּר

and be girt with a linen sash

Placing the Body in the Casket

וְלֹא־יָבֹאוּ לִרְאוֹת כְּבַלַּע אֶת־הַקֹּדֶשׁ וָמֵתוּ׃
וְהוּא רַחוּם | יְכַפֵּר עָוֹן וְלֹא יַשְׁחִית וְהִרְבָּה לְהָשִׁיב אַפּוֹ וְלֹא־יָעִיר כָּל־חֲמָתוֹ׃ *לט וַיִּזְכֹּר כִּי־בָשָׂר הֵמָּה רוּחַ הוֹלֵךְ וְלֹא יָשׁוּב׃*

Number 4:20

But let not [the Kohathites] go inside and witness the dismantling of the sanctuary, *__witness the dismantling of the sanctuary__ *Others "look at the sacred objects even for a moment."* lest they die.

Psalm 78:38

But He, being merciful, forgave iniquity
and would not destroy;
He restrained His wrath time and again
and did not give full vent to His fury;
for He remembered that they were but flesh,
a passing breath that does not return.

Pottery Shards

הַרְנִינוּ גוֹיִם עַמּוֹ כִּי דַם־עֲבָדָיו יִקּוֹם וְנָקָם יָשִׁיב לְצָרָיו וְכִפֶּר אַדְמָתוֹ עַמּוֹ׃

Deuteronomy 32:43

O nations, acclaim God's people!
For He'll avenge the blood of His servants,
Wreak vengeance on His foes,
And cleanse His people's land.

Closing the Casket

Song of Song 3:7-8

ז הִנֵּה מִטָּתוֹ שֶׁלִּשְׁלֹמֹה שִׁשִּׁים גִּבֹּרִים סָבִיב לָהּ מִגִּבֹּרֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל׃ ח כֻּלָּם אֲחֲזֵי חֶרֶב מְלֻמְּדֵי מִלְחָמָה אִישׁ חַרְבּוֹ עַל־יְרֵכוֹ מִפַּחַד בַּלֵּילוֹת׃

There is Solomon's couch, encircled by sixty warriors. Of the warriors of Israel, all of them trained in warfare, Skilled in battle, Each with sword on thigh because of terror by night.

Numbers 6:24-26

יְבָרֶכְךָ יְהוָה וְיִשְׁמְרֶךָ׃ יָאֵר יְהוָה | פָּנָיו אֵלֶיךָ וִיחֻנֶּךָּ׃ יִשָּׂא יְהוָה | פָּנָיו אֵלֶיךָ וְיָשֵׂם לְךָ שָׁלוֹם׃

May God bless you and protect you! May God deal kindly and graciously with you! May God bestow favor upon you and grant you peace!

Hosea 14:7

יֵלְכוּ יוֹנְקוֹתָיו וִיהִי כַזַּיִת הוֹדוֹ וְרֵיחַ לוֹ כַּלְּבָנוֹן׃

His boughs shall spread out far, His beauty shall be like the olive tree's, His fragrance like that of Lebanon.

Zechariah 4:7

מִי־אַתָּה הַר־הַגָּדוֹל לִפְנֵי זְרֻבָּבֶל לְמִישֹׁר וְהוֹצִיא אֶת־הָאֶבֶן הָרֹאשָׁה תְּשָׁאוֹת חֵן חֵן לָהּ׃

Whoever you are, O great mountain in the path of Zerubbabel, turn into level ground! For he shall produce that excellent stone; it shall be greeted with shouts of 'Beautiful! Beautiful!'"

Numbers 14-17, 21

וְעַתָּה יִגְדַּל־נָא כֹחַ אֲדֹנָי כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבַּרְתָּ לֵאמֹר׃
וְאוּלָם חַי־אָנִי וְיִמָּלֵא כְבוֹד־יְהוָה אֶת־כָּל־הָאָרֶץ׃

Therefore, I pray, let my lord's forbearance be great, as You have declared, saying*: (slow to anger and abounding in kindness; forgiving iniquity and transgression; yet not remitting all punishment, but visiting the iniquity of parents upon children, upon the third and fourth generations.' Pardon, I pray, the iniquity of this people according to Your great kindness, as You have forgiven this people ever since Egypt. And God said, "I pardon, as you have asked.* Nevertheless,) **as I live and as God's Presence fills the whole world,**

Water and Purity
Session 3

Isaiah 4:4

אִם | רָחַץ אֲדֹנָי אֵת צֹאַת בְּנוֹת־צִיּוֹן וְאֶת־דְּמֵי יְרוּשָׁלַם יָדִיחַ מִקִּרְבָּהּ בְּרוּחַ מִשְׁפָּט וּבְרוּחַ בָּעֵר׃

And the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion and shall have purged the blood of Jerusalem from the midst thereof by a spirit of judgment and with a searing breath.

Ezekiel 36:25

וְזָרַקְתִּי עֲלֵיכֶם מַיִם טְהוֹרִים וּטְהַרְתֶּם מִכֹּל טֻמְאוֹתֵיכֶם וּמִכָּל־גִּלּוּלֵיכֶם אֲטַהֵר אֶתְכֶם׃

"And I will pour upon you pure water and you will be purified of all your defilements and from all of your abominations I will purify you."

Mishna Yoma 8:9

And it says: "The ritual bath of Israel is God" (Jeremiah 17:13). Just as a ritual bath purifies the impure, so too, the Holy One, Blessed be He, purifies Israel.

How much is a Kav?

Darkei Chesed – between 18-24 Quarts (4 ½ - 6 gallons); the equivalent of 216 eggs
Rab Moshe Heinemann –2 oz(fl)/Egg x 216 eggs = 432 Oz = 3 ½ gallons
Rav Dovid Feinstein – 3 oz(fl)/Egg = 648 oz = 5 gallons

The Story of Nine Kavim

Brachot 22a

The Sages taught in a *baraita*: One who experienced a seminal emission who had nine *kav* of drawn water poured over him, that is sufficient to render him ritually pure and he need not immerse himself in a ritual bath... The Gemara relates: Rabbi Zeira was sitting in a tub of water in the bathhouse. He said to his attendant: Go and get nine *kav* of water and pour it over me so that I may purify myself from the impurity caused by a seminal emission. Rabbi Ḥiyya bar Abba said to him: Why does my master require all of this? Aren't you seated in at least nine *kav* of water in the tub. He said to him: The law of nine *kav* parallels the law of forty *se'a*, in that their *halakhot* are exclusive. Just as forty *se'a* can only purify an individual through immersion and not through pouring, so too nine *kav* can only purify one who experienced a seminal emission through pouring and not through immersion... When Rav Dimi came from Eretz Yisrael to Babylonia, he said: Rabbi Akiva and Rabbi Yehuda Gelostera said: The *halakha* that one who experienced a seminal emission can be purified by pouring

nine *kav* was only taught for a sick person who experienced the emission involuntarily. However, a sick person who experienced a normal seminal emission in the course of marital relations, is required to immerse himself in forty *se'a*... The Gemara relates that Rav Pappa and Rav Huna, son of Rav Yehoshua, and Rava bar Shmuel ate bread together. Rav Pappa said to them: Allow me to recite Grace after Meals for the group, as I am ritually pure because nine *kav* of water fell upon me; in other words, he poured it over himself.

Shulchan Aroukh Siman 606 - Atoning for Sins Against Another.

One may immerse (*Mikveh, מקוה*) and accept lashes (to effect atonement) whenever desired provided that it is before nightfall, but one does not bless over the immersion. *Hagah*: One needs to immerse one time without a confession because of pollution (urinary emmission). The same holds true if one pours nine kavim of water (upon himself), (if the immersion pains him, (מגן אברהם[33]), this is also effective.

Peninei Halakhah - Eliezer Melamed

During Temple times, there was an additional mitzva to purify oneself by immersing before the festival (RH 16b), as only those who were pure were permitted to enter the Temple courtyard and eat sacrificial meat. However, now that the Temple is in ruins, we cannot offer korbanot, nor do we have the red heifer necessary to achieve purification from the impurity of corpses. Thus the obligation to purify oneself for the festival is null and void. Nevertheless, some maintain that even today one must immerse before the festival. According to the majority of poskim, however, there is no obligation to immerse before the festival nowadays; those who choose to do so are acting piously. One who finds immersion difficult can fulfill this pious practice with "nine kavim" instead. This means he should stand in the shower while nine kavim (about 11 liters) of water streams down on him uninterruptedly. He should ensure that this water comes into contact with his entire body.

Reflection:

- What is your soul hanging on to?
- Did your understanding change during this exploration?
- Why should other people participate in the mitzvah of a Taharah?
- What type of support would the CK like in the future?
- Closing thoughts?

Bava Kama 82a

עשרה תקנות תיקן עזרא שקורין במנחה בשבת וקורין בשני ובחמישי ודנין בשני ובחמישי ומכבסים בחמישי בשבת ואוכלין שום בערב שבת ושתהא אשה משכמת ואופה ושתהא אשה חוגרת בסינר ושתהא אשה חופפת וטובלת ושיהו רוכלין מחזירין בעיירות ותיקן טבילה לבעלי קריין: §

The Sages taught that Ezra the Scribe instituted ten ordinances: He instituted that communities read the Torah on Shabbat in the afternoon; and they also read the Torah on every Monday and Thursday; and the courts convene and judge every Monday and Thursday; and one does laundry on Thursday; and one eats garlic on Shabbat eve. And Ezra further instituted that a woman should rise early and bake bread on those days when she wants to bake; and that a woman should don a breechcloth; and that a woman should first comb her hair and only then immerse in a ritual bath after being ritually impure; and that peddlers of cosmetics and perfumes should travel around through all the towns. And Ezra further instituted the requirement of immersion for those who experienced a seminal emission.

דתניא (ויקרא יד, ט) ורחץ את בשרו במים שלא יהא דבר חוצץ בין בשרו למים את בשרו את הטפל לבשרו ומאי ניהו שער

As it is taught in a *baraita*, concerning a verse that discusses one who must undergo ritual immersion: "And he shall bathe his flesh [*et besaro*] in water" (Leviticus 14:9). This verse teaches that no substance should interpose between his flesh and the water. When the verse states this in the expanded form of "*et* his flesh," using the term "*et*," this teaches that the water must come into contact even with that which is subordinate to his flesh. And what is that? It is one's hair. Accordingly, the Torah itself states that there may not be any interposing substance in the hair at the time of immersion. What, then, did Ezra add?

ותיקן טבילה לבעלי קריין דאורייתא הוא דכתיב (ויקרא טו, טז) (ואיש כי תצא ממנו שכבת זרע ורחץ את בשרו במים דאורייתא הוא לתרומה וקדשים אתא הוא תיקן אפילו לדברי תורה:

The Gemara analyzes the last of the ten ordinances: And he instituted the requirement of immersion for those who experienced a seminal emission. The Gemara asks: But this is required by Torah law, as it is written: "And if the flow of seed go out from a man, then he shall bathe all his flesh in water" (Leviticus 15:16). The Gemara answers: By Torah law immersion is required only if one wishes to partake of *teruma* or sacrificial meat. Ezra came and further instituted that immersion is necessary even for reciting or studying matters of Torah.