

What is a Tahara?

With utmost dignity and respect the deceased is washed and then dressed in Tachrichim, the traditional burial shroud. Prayers are recited, asking that forgiveness and eternal peace be granted to the departed. This process is the essence of the Jewish funeral.

What are Tachrichim?

Tachrichim are the traditional burial shrouds consisting of a set of clothing, a hat, shirt, pants, shoes, coat and belt. For a man, a Tallit, preferably his own, is also worn.

Why a Tahara?

This beautiful tradition expresses the reverence we feel for the body as the receptacle of the Neshama - the G-d given soul. In the belief that the soul is still aware until after the burial, the body is treated gently and with sensitivity. In mature acceptance of the reality and the finality of death, while tradition insists that the body be as presentable as possible, no attempt is made to cosmetize or to create a life-like appearance through artificial means and devices.

Why Tachrichim?

Simplicity. In the Olam HaEmet, the World of Truth the deceased is about to enter, one is not defined by material acquisitions, by the quality, cost, or design of clothing, but rather by good deeds and the kind of person one chose to be. The shroud has no pockets, further symbolizing our inability to take along any material possessions on this journey.

Appropriate Dress. With our belief in an Olam Habah, an afterlife where all men must face the Final Judgement, what more appropriate



WHAT IS A JEWISH FUNERAL?

Focus On Tahara And Tachrichim

way to dress than as did the Kohen Gadol, the High Priest, for the holiest service of Yom Kippur. In fact, the burial shroud replicates his clothing and therefore linen, which he wore, is the preferred material.

Uniformity. To reduce competition Rabbi Gamliel introduced the shroud as an absolute requirement, thus allowing even the poorest Jews to bury their dead with equal dignity and honor. Whereas traditions in funeral and burial practice may vary somewhat in different parts of the world, the shroud always was universally accepted and all Jewish people have been buried in Tachrichim for over two thousand years.

Who performs Tahara?

The Chevre Kadisha - the sacred burial society. Participation in this unique Mitzvah is considered a great privilege, and membership in the society a distinction of honor. A proper standard of Tahara requires the participation of four people - men preparing men, women preparing women - ensuring proper modesty and gentle handling of the body.

Who should have a Tahara?

Every Jewish person, regardless of affiliation or level of religious observance should have a Tahara. Like the Bris (circumcision), the Bar and Bat Mitzvah at maturity, Tahara is the universally accepted religious act that completes the Jewish life-cycle.

How to arrange for Tahara?

All Jewish funeral directors offer Tahara as a choice of preparation. However, while every Jewish funeral home can arrange for the Tahara, at this time one must specifically request this service.

An educational project of the Chevre Kadisha Commission of the Vaad Harabonim of Queens. For information, or copies of this as call 718-849-9700

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