

Urchatz: Washing the Hands

Contributed by [LS](#)

Source: Velveteen Rabbi's Haggadah for Passover

The symbolic washing of the hands that we now perform recalls the story of Miriam's Well. Legend tells us that this well followed Miriam, sister of Moses, through the desert, sustaining the Jews in their wanderings. Filled with waters of life, the well was a source of strength and renewal to all who drew from it. One drink from its waters was said to alert the heart, mind and soul, and make the meaning of Torah become more clear.

In Hebrew, urchatz means "washing" or "cleansing." In Aramaic, sister language to Hebrew, urchatz means "trusting." As we wash each others' hands, let us rejoice in this act of trust, and reflect on the sources of hope and trust we want to bring into the world for ourselves and each other.

When we wash hands again later, just before eating the festive meal, we will say blessings to sanctify that act. Because the feast is still a few pages away, this handwashing is purely symbolic, and therefore the blessing is unspoken.

Pass the bowl & pitcher around the table, each pouring a few drops of water onto their neighbor's hands.