

Urchatz – Access to Clean Water

Contributed by [Smith College Jewish Community](#)

Source: Velveteen Rabbi's Haggadah, the Religious Action Center's Earth Justice Haggadah, and the SCJC

This symbolic washing of the hands 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 mayim chayim, 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 alive.

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, while remembering the lack of trust between those in Flint, California and Cochabamba and those who supply and control their access to mayim chayim - living waters.

Pass the bowl & pitcher around the table, pouring a few drops of water onto your neighbor's hands. Alternately, symbolize the uplifting of cleansed hands by raising hands into the air.

Optional chant for handwashing:

פֶּלֶג אֱלֹהִים מְלֵא מַיִם / מַיִם חַיִּים

Peleg elohim, malei mayyim /Mayyim chayyim

Fountain of God, full of water /waters of life!

—Rabbi Shefa Gold