



If a family requests that a ring or other jewelry be left on the meis, should the chevra kadisha accommodate that request?



QUESTION

If a family requests that a ring or other jewelry be left on the meis, should the chevra kadisha accommodate that request?

ANSWER

No. Burying someone with any kind of jewelry is not in accordance with *minhagei Yisrael*, and the chevra kadisha should not be directly involved in facilitating that. In fact, the *takanah* of Rabban Gamliel, which is the earliest source describing how we prepare a *meis*, mandated uniformity and simplicity, specifically excluding jewelry and other valuables.

The jewelry should therefore be removed and given to the funeral director. Our accommodation of the request is to do the tahara, even though we are aware that the funeral director will subsequently put the jewelry back on.

The same guiding principle applies to other such requests as well. I heard this directly from Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky, zt"l, and Rav Moshe Feinstein, zt"l, held the same view. While the chevra will compromise by performing the tahara even when certain things are being done contrary to *minhagei Yisrael*, we will not actively do those things ourselves. For example, we will not place a *meis* in a metal casket or on a fancy pillow.

In all of these scenarios, the funeral director, rabbi, or a member of the chevra kadisha (with the consent of the funeral director) should make an effort to explain to the family the value and significance of following Jewish tradition.

What if the ring on the finger won't come off?

First, try applying soap and gently slide the ring off. If that doesn't work, there is a simple technique that is usually very effective. A string is threaded under the ring, and then, by gently rotating the string around the finger with a slight tension toward the fingertip, the ring will gradually come off the finger.

To see a demonstration of this technique, visit the NASCK Chevra Kadisha Portal:

Watch & Learn → Complex Tahara Situations → Removal of Personal & Miscellaneous Items

In the rare event that the ring cannot be removed without cutting it, it should not be cut without the family's consent. If permission is granted, the ring can be cut with a ring cutter. If it is a simple gold band, a strong pair of scissors will often be sufficient. If the family does not allow the ring to be cut, the tahara may be performed with the ring left in place.