



The Mitzvah of Shemira

Shemira (literally, “watching” or “guarding”) refers to the Jewish religious ritual of watching over the body of a deceased person continuously from the time of death until burial. We have maintained the tradition of *shemira* in our community for over 120 years through the commitment of congregation and community members. Performing *shemira* is a great mitzvah. *Shomrim* sit for two-hour shifts at the funeral home.

The tradition of *shemira* has many explanations. According to the Talmud, the soul hovers over the body for three days after death. The soul is somewhat lost and confused between death and before burial. It stays in the general vicinity of the body until interment. *Shomrim* sit and read comforting psalms during the time they are watching the body as a way of calming the spirit of the departed. (The book of Psalms is available at the funeral home. Sitters may bring other reading material, as well.)

According to tradition, males may sit for males and females; females may only sit for females. Kohanim are not permitted to be sitters. *Shomrim* are prohibited from eating, drinking, or smoking during their two-hour shift out of respect for the departed, who can no longer do these things. Sitters are discouraged from using cell phones and other electronic devices during the two-hour shift.

Please consider volunteering to be a *shomer*. Call or email the synagogue office to provide your name, email address, and phone number (706.733.9491, www.adasyeshurun.net).