



Photo by Scott Gordon



Shomrim Handbook

Everything you wanted to know about sitting *shmira*, and more!

Chevra Kavod Hamet
Adath Jeshurun Congregation
Minnetonka, MN
September 2018

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Glossary

Aron	Casket
Kippah	Head covering
Kippot	Plural form of <i>kippah</i>
Met	Male deceased
Metah	Female deceased
Neshama	Spirit or soul
Shomer	Male sitting <i>shmira</i>
Shomeret	Female sitting <i>shmira</i>
Shomrim	Multiple males or multiple males and females sitting <i>shmira</i>
Shomrot	Multiple females sitting <i>shmira</i>
Shiva candle	White candle in the tall, blue candleholder. Mourners burn the candle for seven days (hence the name “ <i>shiva</i> ”, from the Hebrew word for seven), but when used in the funeral home it is only burned when a <i>met/metah</i> is present.
Shmira	Guarding or watching
Tahara	Ritual purification

Description of *Shmira*

Sitting *Shmira* (Guard/Watch)

One of the valuable services provided by the Chevra is to provide *shomrim* (guards/watchers) to sit with the deceased until the time of burial (“sit *shmira*”).

Shmira demonstrates respect, honor and dignity for the deceased and gives comfort to family members in knowing their loved one is not alone. Out of our busy lives, the small amount of time that a volunteer sits *shmira* can mean the world to the family at a time when they are emotionally distraught and vulnerable.

Shomrim perform the highest level of *Chesed Shel Emet* – a selfless act of loving-kindness for which the deceased cannot thank them. The family is not given the names of those who sit *shmira*, thus they cannot thank the *shomrim*, either. Traditionally, volunteers sit *shmira* regardless of whether they know the deceased or the family.

There are a couple of beliefs supporting the Jewish tradition that a deceased not be left alone prior to burial.

There is a strong belief that the *neshama* (soul) leaves the body after death and hovers over the body from death until burial, and is aware of all that happens to and around the *met/metah* (male/female deceased). The practice of sitting *shmira* gives comfort to the *neshama* while in transition. At burial, the *neshama* returns to God. “[When dust returns to dust] the spirit shall return to God, who gave it” (*Ecclesiastes 12:7*).

Just as the Torah Ark retains its holiness after the scroll is removed, the body which contained the sacred soul before death is considered sacred after the *neshama* departs. To leave a body alone after death would suggest it is now useless and no longer of value. Guarding/watching the body continuously until burial demonstrates respect, honor, and dignity for the deceased.



Photo by Scott Gordon
View of the scene while sitting *shmira*.

The *shomrim* sit in view of the covered *met/metah* (male/female deceased), usually in two-hour shifts, and may sit alone or with another person.

The *shomrim* focus on *shmira* and read or recite from the Book of Job, Psalms, or contemporary texts on spirituality or Jewish traditions on end-of-life and mourning, or engage in reflection, meditation, or prayer. Appropriate reading material is provided in the *shmira* room or *shomrim* may bring their own reading material in character and



content with the purpose of sitting *shmira*.

We ask *shomrim* to not eat; drink; chew gum; take a nap; use cell phones, computers, or other electronic devices (no phone calls, texts, emails, social media, etc.); take pictures or videos; read newspapers, magazines, or novels; do homework or projects for work; and to not engage in small talk if they are sitting with another person. We avoid these activities out of respect for the dead, who can no longer do these things, and it contributes to keeping the room a sacred space while sitting *shmira*.

When burial is arranged through the Chevra Kavod Hamet, the Chevra phones and emails volunteers to sit *shmira*. Volunteers contact the designated *Shmira* Arranger to schedule their shift. **An individual who has not sat *shmira* before can arrange with the *Shmira* Arranger to sit with an experienced *shomer/shomeret* (male/female guard/watcher).**

Family, friends and congregants not on the Chevra volunteer list may arrange to sit *shmira* for a particular deceased, if they wish. *Shomrim* do not have to be members of Adath.

Non-Jewish family members or friends may sit *shmira*. They are expected to wear a *kippah* and to follow the same protocols as for Jewish *shomrim*, except they do not recite the *Sh'ma* or the prayer at the end of the shift, and they do not wash hands or recite the blessing over washing hands when they leave.

The Chevra does the best it can to provide *shomrim* from the time the *met/metah* (male/female deceased) arrives at the funeral home until transported to the funeral service. We appreciate any participation in *shmira* by family and friends of the deceased in addition to other volunteers. We may not be able to provide coverage through the night if *shomrim* are not available. The timing of Shabbat and holidays may limit our ability to recruit *shomrim*.

We welcome you to participate in this meaningful *mitzvah*. To learn more, please call the Adath office at 952.545.2424 or email the Chevra at adathchevra@gmail.com to add your name to the *shmira* phone and/or email list or to obtain contact information for the *Shmira* Arranger.

Rev. September 2018

***Shomer/Shomeret* Volunteer Role Description**

Volunteer Role Description

Role Title: *Shomer/Shomeret*

Date: September 2018

Purpose: The *shomer/shomeret* sits *shmira* when an Adath congregant passes away and receives the services of the Chevra Kavod Hamet.

Shmira is conducted from the time the *met/metah* arrives at the funeral home until it is time to leave for the funeral.

Glossary:

<i>Met</i>	Male deceased
<i>Metah</i>	Female deceased
<i>Shomer</i>	Male sitting <i>shmira</i>
<i>Shomeret</i>	Female sitting <i>shmira</i>
<i>Shomrim</i>	Multiple males or multiple males and females sitting <i>shmira</i>
<i>Shomrot</i>	Multiple females sitting <i>shmira</i>
<i>Shmira</i>	Guarding or watching

Location: *Shmira* is conducted in the lower level of the funeral home in a room dedicated for that purpose.

Washburn-McReavy Funeral Chapel
Edina Chapel
5000 West 50th St.
Edina, MN 55436

Accessibility: The funeral home and *shmira* space are accessible for people using walkers, canes, or wheelchairs, or who have difficulty managing stairs.

Key Responsibilities:

- Responds to a phone call and/or email requesting volunteers to sit *shmira*.
- Schedules a *shmira* shift(s) with the *Shmira* Arranger.
- Sits *shmira* at the funeral home according to the *Shomrim* Instructions.
- Experienced *shomrim* may accompany and instruct novice *shomrim* on their role.

Reports to: Chevra Kavod Hamet leadership team.

Length of Appointment: The *shomer/shomeret* serves as frequently and for as many months or years as he/she is willing and available.

Time Commitment: There are approximately 15-17 opportunities for *shomrim* to volunteer each year, with a cadre of volunteers taking turns as *Shomer/Shomeret* over the course of the year. Each episode as *shomer/shomeret* usually involves sitting a two-hour shift, although some *shomrim* only sit for one hour, some sit multiple shifts, and some sit overnight. The shifts can occur any time of day or night, as the *shomer/shomeret* is willing and available.

Qualifications: Commitment and passion to the mission and work of the Chevra, patience, and dependability.

Support: Written instructions and verbal review of instructions for this position are provided. In addition, the Chevra leadership team members and the *Shmira* Arranger are always available to answer questions and provide assistance.

Age Requirement: Adult or older teenager. Teenagers under age 18 may accompany an adult sitting *shmira*.

Dress Code: Casual attire is acceptable. Some people come dressed for work if coming directly from or going directly to work.

Development Opportunities: The *shomer/shomeret* may serve in other volunteer positions within the Chevra as desired, concurrently or before or after becoming a *shomer/shomeret*.

Role Requirements:

- Must be able to spend dedicated time sitting a shift(s) at the funeral home.
- While sitting *shmira*, must conduct himself/herself in a manner befitting the role of *shomer/shomeret*, according to the *Shomer/Shomeret* Instructions.

Role Challenges: No advance notice of need, must refrain from using electronic devices and social media while sitting *shmira*.

Role Benefits: Sense of satisfaction in the knowledge that you comfort the family and honor the deceased by helping to ensure that *shomrim* are sitting with the deceased at the funeral home, the honor of being present in the final journey of the deceased, development of a greater respect for *matan chaim* (the gift of life), and a deeper sense of the spirituality that Judaism attaches to death and the preparation for burial.

Related Documents:
Shomrim Handbook

Shomrim Instructions

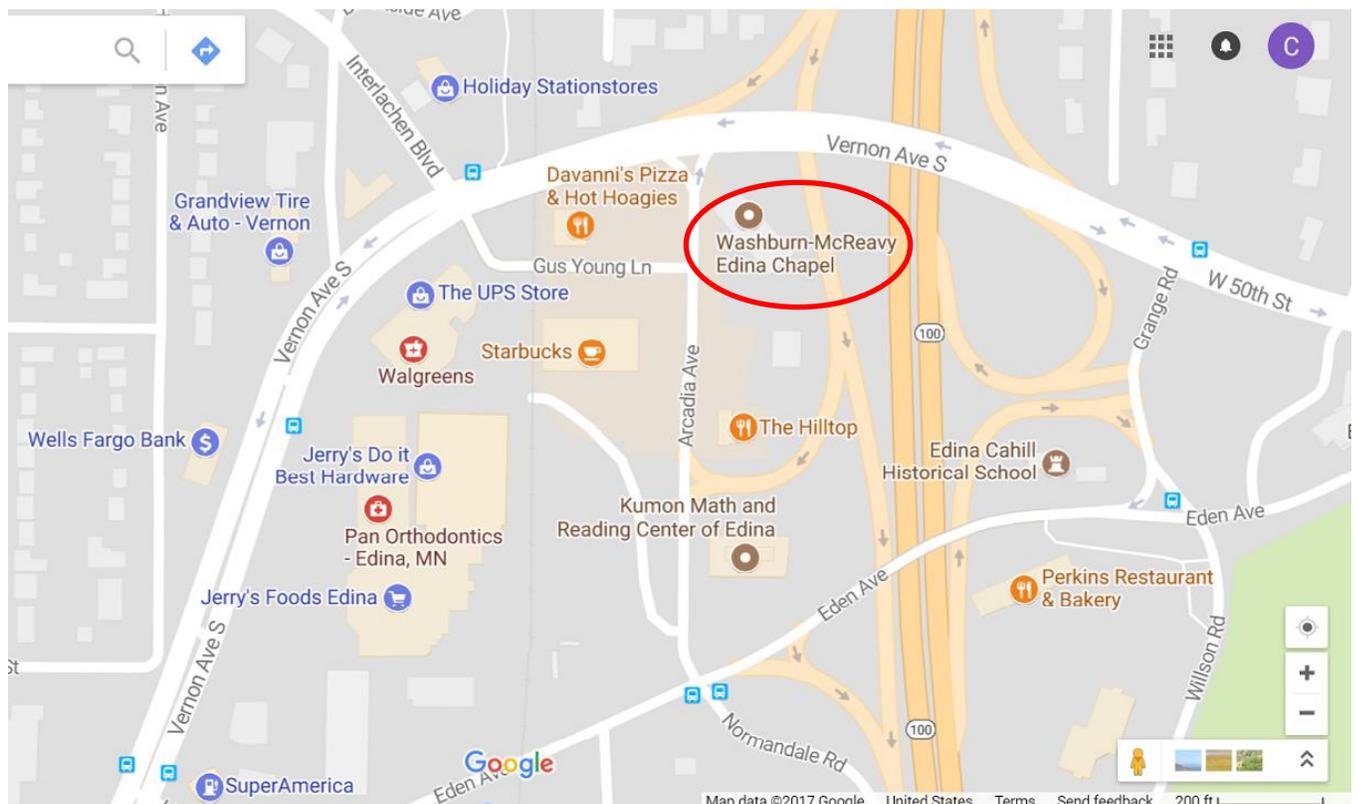
Funeral home location

Washburn-McReavy Funeral Chapel
Edina Chapel
5000 West 50th St.
Edina, MN 55436
24 hour #: 952-920-3996



Map to funeral home

The Washburn-McReavy Funeral Chapel is located on the southwest corner of Hwy 100 and West 50th Street in Edina.



Shmira room location

Shmira is conducted in the lower level of the funeral home in a room dedicated for that purpose. The *shmira* space is accessible – See the “Accessibility” section.

The *shmira* room is adjacent to the prep room where tahara is performed, but *shomrim* do not see the prep room. There is a curtain and decorative three-part screen dividing the two areas.

Accessibility

The *shmira* space is accessible for people using walkers, canes, or wheelchairs, or who have difficulty managing stairs. A standard size wheelchair easily fits through all the doors.

There are two ways to get to the *shmira* room that do not require using stairs:

1. Enter the building through the people door by the garage door. The garage is located along the back of the building, facing the frontage road/Hwy 100 entrance ramp. Press the doorbell by the door to let the current *shomer/shomeret* or funeral home staff knows you are there. **If entering through the people door by the garage door, *shomrim* must pre-arrange with the current *shomer/shomeret* or funeral home staff so they know to expect them.**



- a. To get to the garage from the *shmira* room, exit the door of the *shmira* room by the table with the sign-in book and enter the door to the left. This door opens directly to the garage. **OR**
 - b. To get to the garage from the *shmira* room, exit the door of the *shmira* room by the storage closets and enter the door to the right. This door opens directly to the garage.
2. Enter the building through the main entrance and use the elevator to get downstairs

There is an accessible restroom on the lower level and drinkable water is available from the faucet in the kitchenette by the restrooms. There are usually cups on the counter or in the drawers or cupboard of the kitchenette.

To get from the *shmira* room to the downstairs restrooms/kitchenette/elevator:

- Exit the *shmira* room through the door by the storage closets.
- Immediately turn left and go straight through the casket showroom.
- At the end of the room, enter the door on the right and go through the headstone/marker/vault showroom.
- Go straight through the social hall.
- The elevator is straight ahead through the social hall.
- The restrooms and kitchenette are on your left just before the staircase.

To get from the elevator to the downstairs restrooms/kitchenette and *shmira* room:

- Go through the social hall.
- The restrooms and kitchenette will be on your right just after the staircase.
- Go through the headstone/marker/vault showroom.
- Go straight through the casket showroom.
- Immediately turn right and enter the door into the *shmira* room.

Emergency phone calls after-hours

Options in an emergency, depending on the situation:

1. Use your cell phone to call 911.
2. Use a funeral home landline to call 911. Press a button for other than the “Main” line to get out of the funeral home phone system. There is no need to dial “9” to get out of the system.
3. Use a funeral home landline to reach the funeral home after-hours answering person (this person is off-site, not at the Edina Chapel). Using a funeral home landline, press the button for the “Main” line and the after-hours answering person will pick up the phone from an outside location.

The phones are located:

1. On the lower level – In the garage on the wall and in the lower level office space (the office door is usually closed after hours, but it is OK to enter to use the phone).
2. On the upper level – In any of several office and meeting room spaces.

May non-members of Adath sit *shmira*?

Non-members of Adath are welcome and encouraged to sit *shmira*. Their presence will provide comfort to the *neschama* and the family of the deceased as much as Adath members sitting *shmira*.

May non-Jews sit *shmira*?

Non-Jewish relatives and friends are welcome and encouraged to sit *shmira*. Their presence will provide comfort to the *neschama* and the family of the deceased as much as Jewish friends and relatives.

Non-Jews sitting *shmira* are expected to wear a *kippah* and to follow the same protocols as for Jewish *shomrim*, except they do not recite the *Sh'ma* or the prayer at the end of the shift, and they do not wash hands or recite the blessing over washing hands when they leave.

Do *shomrim* sit alone or with another person?

Shomrim may sit alone or with another person or persons. Volunteers sitting for the first time may be scheduled with an experienced *shomer/shomeret* if desired.

When two or more *shomrim* are sitting together, they should refrain from chatting, gossip, and small talk and focus on the purpose of sitting *shmira*. See the “What to do while sitting *shmira*” and “What to avoid while sitting *shmira*” sections.”

I've never sat *shmira* before and I'm a little nervous about it.

Volunteers sitting for the first time may be scheduled with an experienced *shomer/shomeret* if desired. This can be arranged with the *Shmira* Arranger when you call to schedule your shift.

When *shomrim* should arrive for their shift

Please arrive a few minutes before your shift starts. Please call the person you are replacing if you are going to be late. This is especially important after hours when we are dependent on a continuous presence for one person to let the next one into the building.

What to wear when sitting *shmira*

Casual attire is acceptable. Some people come dressed for work if coming directly from or going directly to work. Consider bringing a sweater or light jacket as some people find the *shmira* room to be a bit chilly at times.

Will *shomrim* see the *met/metah*?

Shomrim do not see the *met/metah*.

Prior to *tahara*, the *met/metah* will be lying on a table or cart and covered with a cloth. *Shomrim* can see only the outline of the body under the cloth.

As part of *tahara* the *met/metah* is placed in the *aron* and the *aron* is covered with a cloth. *Shomrim* will see the *aron* covered with a cloth.

Special artwork in the *shmira* room

There are several pieces of art in the *shmira* room. Please take note of two particularly important items.

1. “The Cycle of Paintings of the Prague Burial Society” – Located on the wall immediately to the right as you enter the *shmira* room.
2. “A Pure Soul” three-part decorative screen – Surrounding the *met/metah*, located to the left as you enter the room. The artist description is located in an acrylic stand on the table with the sign-in book.

See the Appendix of this handbook for more information on these pieces of art.

Restrooms

The restrooms are located on the right side of the long hallway after entering the building.

To get to the restrooms from the *shmira* room, take the stairs by the door to the *shmira* room up to the main level. Go down the long hallway toward the main door. The restrooms are located on the left side of the hallway coming from this direction.

Water fountain

The water fountain is located by the restrooms on the right side of the long hallway after entering the building.

To get to the water fountain from the *shmira* room, take the stairs by the door to the *shmira* room up to the main level. Go down the long hallway toward the main door. The water fountain is located on the left side of the hallway coming from this direction.

Electrical outlets

The closest electrical outlet is located just outside the door to the *shmira* room in the hallway across from the stairs. There are no electrical outlets in the *shmira* room, so *shomrim* will not be able to charge cell phones or use the air bed electric pump in the *shmira* room.

Keeping the *shmira* room doors open or closed

Shomrim may keep the doors to the *shmira* room open or closed as desired. Most people keep the doors closed, but it can get a little stuffy in the room and it helps to open the doors occasionally for a few minutes. However...

Keeping the *shmira* room doors open when funeral home staff is present may result in unexpected disruptions to the peaceful *shmira* experience.

The funeral home does not use the *shmira* room or prep room; the space is exclusively used by the Chevra with one exception – When the Chevra is not using the space, the funeral home uses the space as a shortcut between the stairs and their downstairs office space. There is “Stop. Do Not Disturb.” signage visible on the doors when they are closed. If the doors are open while the Chevra is using the space and while funeral home staff is present, funeral home staff cannot see the signage and they are more likely to inadvertently step into the *shmira* room while *shomrim* are sitting.

When you arrive at and exit the funeral home during work hours

If your shift is during work hours when the funeral home staff is present, enter through the main doors. If a funeral home staff person is not immediately present, someone is likely to be in an office, located on the left side of the long hallway. Announce your presence (say “Hello” as you walk down the hall). A funeral home staff person can direct you to the area where we sit *shmira*.

If your shift is during evening or night hours when the funeral home staff is not present, the person currently sitting *shmira* will let you in. See the “How to Enter the Building After Hours” section for more detail.

Shomrim may exit the building using the people door by the garage door, the double doors at the end of the hallway on the main floor, or the main doors on the main floor. Be sure to pull on the door knob or door handles from the outside to be certain the door is completely closed.

If you are the first *shomer/shomeret* in this episode of sitting *shmira*

1. If the *shiva* candle is not lit, use the lighter on the table to light the candle.
2. Start a new page in the sign-in book on the table. Refer to previous pages in the book as a model if needed.
 - a. In the upper right corner of the page write the name of the deceased; date and time of funeral (or as much of this as you know).
 - b. List your name and *shmira* date and times on the page. You may sign in as “Anonymous” if you wish.

At the beginning of the shift

1. If the *shiva* candle is not lit, use the lighter on the table to light the candle.
2. List your name and *shmira* date and times in the sign-in book. You may sign in as “Anonymous” if you wish.
3. Place a *kippah* on your head if not already wearing one. There is a supply of *kippot* and bobby pins/clips in the basket on the table.
4. While standing and facing *the met/metah*, recite the first paragraph of the *Sh'ma*, written below.

Sh'ma

Deuteronomy 6:4-9

שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְיָ אֶחָד

Sh'ma Yis'ra'eil Adonai Eloheinu Adonai echad.
Hear, Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is One.

Recited quietly:

בְּרוּךְ שֵׁם כְבוֹד מַלְכוּתוֹ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד

Barukh sheim k'vod malkhuto l'olam va'ed.
Blessed be the Name of God's glorious kingdom forever and ever.

וְאַהַבְתָּ אֵת יְיָ אֱלֹהֶיךָ בְּכָל לִבְבְּךָ וּבְכָל נַפְשְׁךָ וּבְכָל מְאֹדְךָ

V'ahav'ta eit Adonai Elohekha b'khol l'vav'kha uv'khol naf'sh'kha uv'khol m'odekha.

And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.

וְהָיוּ הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה אֲשֶׁר אֲנֹכִי מְצַוְּךָ הַיּוֹם עַל לִבְבְּךָ

V'hayu had'varim ha'eileh asher anokhi m'tzav'kha hayom al l'vavekha.

And these words that I command you today shall be in your heart.

וְשִׁנַּנְתָּם לְבְנֶיךָ וְדִבַּרְתָּ בָּם

V'shinan'tam l'vanekha v'dibar'ta bam

And you shall teach them diligently to your children, and you shall speak of them

בְּשִׁבְתְּךָ בְּבֵיתְךָ וּבְלֶכְתְּךָ בַדֶּרֶךְ וּבְשֹׁכְבְּךָ וּבְקוּמְךָ

b'shiv't'kha b'veitekha uv'lekh't'kha vaderekh uv'shakh'b'kha uv'kumekha

when you sit at home, and when you walk along the way, and when you lie down and when you rise up.

וְקָשַׁרְתָּם לְאוֹת עַל יָדְךָ וְהָיוּ לְטֹטְפוֹת בֵּין עֵינֶיךָ

Uk'shar'tam l'ot al yadekha v'hayu l'totafot bein einekha.

And you shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be for frontlets between your eyes.

וְכָתַבְתָּם עַל מְזוֹזוֹת בֵּיתְךָ וּבְשַׁעְרֶיךָ

Ukh'tav'tam al m'zuzot beitekha uvish'arekha.

And you shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

What TO DO while sitting *shmira*

Please turn cell phones to mute or off.

Shomrim focus on *shmira* and read or recite from the Book of Job, Psalms, or contemporary texts on spirituality or Jewish traditions on end-of-life and mourning; engage in reflection, meditation, or prayer. It is traditional to read Psalms while sitting *shmira*. Appropriate reading material is provided in the *shmira* room or *shomrim* may bring their own reading material in character and content with the purpose of sitting *shmira*. Some *shomrim* talk to the *met/metah* or read prayers or Psalms to them.

Shomrim journal

Shomrim are encouraged to write reflections and thoughts in the *shomrim* journal in the *shmira* room and to read the existing entries to enhance their experience of sitting *shmira*. Topics to write about might include stories about the deceased, sitting *shmira*, funerals, death, dying, mourning, grief, life, the circle of life, caring for members of the Jewish community, Jewish traditions and rituals or related topics. Journal entries may be anonymous if you wish, but please date your entry. . ***Please write comments and stories in the journal, rather than in the sign-in book.***

After use, the journal is to be returned to the acrylic stand on the table with the sign-in book

Please leave the *shomrim* room books and other reading material in the room

Please leave the *shomrim* room books and other reading material in the room for use by volunteers performing the *mitzvah* of sitting *shmira*. If you want to continue reading the material, check in the Adath library for another copy, check bookstores or Amazon.com and other online sellers, feel free to stop by the funeral home when it is staffed and read in the *shmira* room, or come back and sit *shmira* again!

What TO AVOID while sitting *shmira*

We ask that *shomrim* do not eat; drink; chew gum; take a nap; use cell phones, computers, or other electronic devices (no phone calls, texts, emails, social media, etc.); take pictures or videos; read newspapers, magazines, or novels; do homework or projects for work; and do not engage in small talk if they are sitting with another person.

We avoid these activities out of respect for the dead, who can no longer do these things, and it contributes to keeping the room a sacred space while sitting *shmira*.

If you must make or take an urgent phone call, please do so in the hallway outside of the *shmira* room.

If there is more than one met/metah

Once or twice a year we may have two *metim/metot* in the *shmira* room, at the same or overlapping times. This does not change anything for the *shomrim* about sitting *shmira*, **except:**

1. A page needs to be started in the sign-in book for each.
2. Please sign in on both pages when sitting for both.

It is possible, but more rare, that *shmira* for one *met/metah* will occur in the usual *shmira* room and one will occur in a small chapel upstairs. In that case, the first *shomer/shomeret* sitting upstairs should bring the following items from the *shmira* room to the chapel upstairs:

1. A copy of the Quick Guide to Sitting *Shmira*. Please leave the *Shomrim* Handbook downstairs.
2. One page from the sign-in book for sign-in upstairs (please leave the book downstairs).
3. One or two pens.
4. Two or three *kippot* and bobby pins or clips to be left upstairs while sitting *shmira*.

Funeral home staff will bring a *shiva* candle upstairs.

Shomrim will need to use the handwashing station in the *shmira* room downstairs at the end of their shift. The furniture in the chapels upstairs is not conducive to setting up a handwashing station in those rooms.

At the end of the shift

1. Please leave the room in order. Place books on the bookshelf, place trash in the wastebasket, put the journal in the plastic holder, and return the air bed if used (see “Air bed for *shomrim* sitting overnight” section).
2. When the next *shomer/shomeret* arrives (or if no one is scheduled after you), recite the following prayer while standing and facing the *met/metah*:

**My God, You have created the soul within me; you have formed it.
You breathed it unto me and you preserve it within me.
So long as my soul is within me, I acknowledge You, O Lord.
My God and God of my ancestors, as Master of all creation,
I pray to You, O Lord, who unites soul and body,
That the soul of the (*met*) (*metah*), whose body I now leave,
Will find rest in Your sheltering care.
Amen.**

3. If wearing a Chevra *kippah*, please leave it in the basket on the table.
4. Follow the instructions posted on the wall over the handwashing station for washing your hands and reciting the blessing over washing hands before you leave the room.
5. Make sure you have all your possessions before leaving the *shmira* room – keys, purse, cell phone, sweater, jacket or coat, boots, hat, mittens or gloves, any other items you brought with you. This is especially important if you are the last person at night, as the door will lock behind you when you leave and you will not be able to get back in to retrieve items until funeral home staff returns to work the next morning.

IMPORTANT – Blowing out the *shiva* candle

The last *shomer/shomeret* leaving at night when funeral home staff is not present **must** blow out the *shiva* candle before leaving. Leaving it burning would create a fire hazard. If funeral home staff is present when leaving, the *shiva* candle does not have to be blown out.

***Shomrim* who are sitting overnight**

Shomrim who are sitting overnight may sleep at night. If two or more *shomrim* are sitting overnight together, they should take turns sleeping so that one *shomer/shomeret* is always awake.

A twin-size air bed is available for use by *shomrim* who are sitting overnight. See the “Air bed for *shomrim* sitting overnight” section.

Air bed for *shomrim* sitting overnight

A twin-size air bed is available for use by *shomrim* who are sitting overnight (intended for an all-night shift rather than single shifts occurring at night). *Shomrim* should bring a pillow and blanket if they plan to use the air bed. There is a fabric cover for the bed, but *shomrim* may bring a set of sheets if they wish.

There is an electric pump for the air bed. The closest outlet is in the hallway across from the stairs, just outside the door to the *shmira* room; there is no outlet in the *shmira* room.

The air bed is in a plastic container on the lowest level of the shelf unit immediately to the right on the other side of the drapes. You can get it yourself or ask funeral home staff to get it if staff is present. Be VERY careful not to touch or damage the decorative screen if you get it yourself.

There is a label on the container with instructions to return the air bed, cover, and pump to the container and return the container to the shelf, including how to fold the air bed and cover to so they will fit back into the container.

Entering the building after hours

1. Entering at night when funeral home staff is not present:
 - a. The first night-time *shomer/shomeret* must arrive while funeral home staff is present. That *shomer/shomeret* will let the next person in at the end of the shift, and so on.
 - b. There must be a continuous presence of *shomrim* to let others in at night as there is no other way to enter the building when staff is not present.
 - c. On rare occasion a special arrangement may be made for entering the funeral home at night. The *Shmira* Arranger will inform individual *shomrim* of any special arrangements.
2. Night-time entrances to the building (two options):
 - a. Garage entrance (preferred): Enter the building through the people door by the garage door. The garage is located along the back of the building, facing the frontage road/Hwy 100 entrance ramp. The *shomer/shomeret* in the building will walk through the garage to open the people door and let you into the building.



- i. To get to the garage from the *shmira* room, exit the door of the *shmira* room by the table with the sign-in book and enter the door to the left. This door opens directly to the garage. **OR**
 - ii. To get to the garage from the *shmira* room, exit the door of the *shmira* room by the storage closets and enter the door to the right. This door opens directly to the garage.
 - b. Main entrance: Once notified by cell phone of the arrival of the next *shomer/shomeret*, the *shomer/shomeret* in the building can walk upstairs to open the first set of outside doors near the stairway or the main door to let the arriving *shomer/shomeret* into the building.
3. How incoming *shomrim* can notify the current *shomer/shomeret* that he/she has arrived (two options):
 - a. Garage doorbell (preferred): Ring the doorbell by the people door next to the garage door. The doorbell rings directly into the *shmira* room. This option is preferred, as it does not involve using a phone and holding a

conversation while sitting *shmira*. If using the doorbell, the incoming *shomer/shomeret* must use the people door by the garage door to enter the building.

- b. Cell phone: This option may be used when entering through the garage and it *must* be used if the incoming *shomer/shomeret* is using one of the upstairs doors to enter the building.

The *Shmira* Arranger will give cell phone numbers of each *shomer/shomeret* to each other so they can contact each other in case the incoming person is running late or other needs arise for them to contact each other.

Exiting the building after hours and SPECIAL CAUTION

Shomrim may exit the building using the people door by the garage door, the double doors at the end of the hallway on the main floor, or the main doors on the main floor. Be sure to pull on the door knob or door handles from the outside to be certain the door is completely closed.

CAUTION: The outer doors automatically lock behind you after hours, so be absolutely certain you have all your possessions in hand before you leave the building. If there is no funeral home staff present and you are the last *shomer/shomeret* at night, there is no way to reenter the building until the funeral home staff arrives the next day.

IF THIS SHOULD HAPPEN...

If you go into the prep room on the other side of the blue drapes, be VERY careful not to touch or damage the decorative shades!

PROBLEM: Something in the shmira room seems out of order.

ANSWER: The proper room arrangement is specified on the posters on the door to the *shmira* room and in the Appendix of this handbook. There is also a picture of the proper room arrangement in the Appendix. Check the posters and picture to help identify what is out of order. If you feel comfortable doing so, feel free to make necessary adjustments (close the drapes better, move the candle, move the cart the *met/metah* is lying on, flip the decorative runner on the *met/metah* to the correct end, etc.) or you can ask the funeral home staff to make the adjustments if staff is present. Be VERY careful not to touch or damage the decorative shades.

PROBLEM: The met/metah is not present.

ANSWER: We do not start sitting *shmira* until the *met/metah* is brought to the funeral home, so the *met/metah* is there, but may have been placed in the prep room behind the blue curtain. If the funeral home staff is present, ask the staff to place and arrange the *met/metah* properly. If the funeral home staff is not present or if you feel comfortable doing so, place and arrange the *met/metah* and the room as specified on the posters on the door to the *shmira* room and in the Appendix of this handbook. There is also a picture of the proper room arrangement in the Appendix.

Be VERY careful not to touch or damage the decorative shades when moving between the *shmira* room and the prep room. When pulling down the decorative window shades, the shades on the left and right go almost to the floor and the one in the middle ends just over the *met/metah*. If you are not able to reach the rings on the shades, use the wooden stick with the hook on the end, located against the wall by the mirror, to reach the rings. ** Please handle the shades only by the rings at the bottom to avoid tearing or soiling the shades.

PROBLEM: The light of the *shiva* candle has gone out.

ANSWER: Use the lighter on the table to light the candle. To operate the lighter, unlock the lighter by sliding the button to the “on” position, then slide or push the button on the top simultaneously while you pull the trigger. Different lighters may operate slightly differently.

PROBLEM: The *shiva* candle is missing or the candle in the jar has been used up.

ANSWER: There are more *shiva* candles in the prep room on the other side of the drapes. They are located on the far end of the counter, either sitting on the counter or in the cupboard under the counter on the furthest end, closest to the wall. You may ask funeral home staff to get a new candle if staff is present if you do not feel comfortable going into the prep room.

PROBLEM: The waste basket by the wash station by the door is full.

ANSWER: You can empty the waste basket into the large trash container in the prep room on the other side of the drapes. There are three containers immediately to the left as you enter the prep room; the trash container is on the far right of the three, next to the counter, with a sign on the wall above it identifying it as the trash container. Be sure to use the correct container. You may ask funeral home staff to empty the trash if staff is present if you do not feel comfortable going into the prep room.

PROBLEM: The water pitcher on the wash station by the door is empty or nearly empty.

ANSWER: You can refill the pitcher at the sink in the prep room on the other side of the drapes. Do not fill it more than 2/3 full or it will be too heavy and cumbersome. You may ask funeral home staff to fill the pitcher if staff is present if you do not feel comfortable going into the prep room.

PROBLEM: The dish bin for catching water on the wash station by the door is getting full of water.

ANSWER: You can empty the dish bin in the sink in the prep room on the other side of the drapes. You may ask funeral home staff to empty the dish bin if staff is present if you do not feel comfortable going into the prep room.

PROBLEM: The paper towel holder on the wash station by the door is empty or nearly empty.

ANSWER: There is a supply of paper towels under the sink in the prep room on the other side of the drapes. You may ask funeral home staff to refill the paper towel holder if staff is present if you do not feel comfortable going into the prep room.

PROBLEM: I'm not sure whether another *shomer/shomeret* is supposed to follow me when I leave.

ANSWER: Call the *Shmira* Arranger to find out if someone else is supposed to follow you.

PROBLEM: The person who is supposed to follow me is late and has not contacted me. It's after hours and if I leave before the next person arrives, he/she will not be able to get into the building.

ANSWER: The *Shmira* Arranger should have given you the cell phone number of the person who is scheduled to follow you. If not, call the *Shmira* Arranger to get the contact information if it is not too late at night (use your judgement on this). Please stay a few minutes longer to wait for the next *shomer/shomeret*.

PROBLEM: Who can I call with general questions or concerns?

ANSWER: There are various resources depending on the nature of your questions or concerns.

1. If your questions or concerns relate to the environment of the *shmira* room or the funeral home, the funeral home staff may be able to assist if staff is present.
2. If your questions or concerns relate to sitting *shmira*, contact the *Shmira* Arranger, or the Chevra leadership team may be able to help: Cindy Dubansky at 612-308-0166 or Joe Peilte at 612-968-7504. Please be respectful of the time of day or night when calling (use your judgement on this).
3. If your questions or concerns relate generally to the Chevra, contact the Chevra leadership team: Cindy Dubansky at 612-308-0166 or Joe Peilte at 612-968-7504. Please be respectful of the time of day or night when calling (use your judgement on this).

APPENDIX

Picture of complete installation of three-part decorative screen



Photo by Scott Gordon

Artists' Description – A Pure Soul; Screen for the Chevra Kavod Hamet

A PURE SOUL Screen for the Chevra Kavod Hamet

These three screens hang in the room at Washburn-McReavy where *shomrim* שומרים (watchers or guards) do *shmira* שמירה (protecting, guarding) for the *met* מות/ metah מיתה (person who has died) between the time of death and burial.

The purpose of this project is to enhance a sacred space. The artists chose a simple design with images of trees and water to suggest purity and peace. Moving water is part of *tahara* טהרה (the cleansing process, purification) and is also a metaphor for Torah. Trees draw up their sustenance from water. A willow grows near water and is a symbol of mourning. The sky is soft at sunset to show the transition from life to *olam haba* עולם הבא (the world beyond).

The quote on the middle panel appears in the morning daily service:

"My God, the soul which you have given me is pure."
Elohai, neshama sh'natata bi tahora hi
אלהי נשמה שנתת בי טהורה היא

The words on the cloth covering for the *aron* ארון (casket) are:

טהור הוא "he is pure"
and
טהורה היא "she is pure"



This project was conceived and coordinated by Bob Wolk and included study with Rabbi Lily Kaufman and members of the Chevra Kavod Hamet. Debby Wolk sewed the covering for the *aron* ארון and consulted on ideas for the project. Bob Simon designed the installation.

Artists:

Aimee Orkin
Rani Halpern
Lucy Rose Fischer

The Cycle of Paintings of the Prague Burial Society

The Cycle of Paintings of the Prague Burial Society

These history panels from Czech Republic were presented for use by Shomrim of Chevra Kavod Hamet – Adath Jeshurun Congregation

In Blessed Memory of Jerry S. Zweigbaum by the Zweigbaum Family
Fall, 2001



For whole centuries in Jewish communities, religious and practical matters connected with care of the sick and dying and consoling of and providing for the survivors of a deceased person were the concern of the *Chevra Kadisha Gomle Hasadim*, The Religious Society of Those who Carry Out Charitable Deeds.

Membership in the society was attained by the most esteemed men in the community, and this volunteer duty was considered to be the highest honor, because nothing could be expected in return.

The Prague Burial Society was founded in 1564 and is one of the oldest of its kind. The paintings cycle of the Prague Burial Society originated about 1772 for use as a frieze in the room where society members met. Today the paintings are mounted in the synagogue/museum at the Old Jewish Cemetery in Prague. They are among the first pictorial documents showing the life of ghetto inhabitants.

Washburn-McReavy set-up of *shmira* room

Washburn-McReavy Set-up for Chevra Kavod Hamet (Jewish burial society)

The deceased is to go directly to the Edina Chapel.

Set-up of the deceased

- Place the deceased on a table with a head block.
- If the deceased is covered by / wrapped in a sheet, leave the sheet on. If there is no sheet on the deceased, cover the deceased with a sheet. In Jewish tradition, it is considered disrespectful to view the deceased.
- Place a large blue cloth with the Star of David over the deceased.
- Place the decorative cloth runner over the top of the blue cloth, from head to foot. Look under each end for the male or female label and place the appropriate end over the head end of the deceased, according to the gender of the deceased.
- Place the deceased in the middle of the curtains, perpendicular to the curtains. Close the curtains to visually separate the functional preparation area from the esthetic sitting area.
- Pull down the decorative window shades. The shades on the left and right go almost to the floor and the one in the middle ends just over the deceased. If you are not able to reach the rings on the shades, use the wooden stick with the hook on the end, located against the wall by the mirror, to reach the rings. **** Please handle the shades only by the rings at the bottom to avoid tearing or soiling the shades.**
- Light and place the candle with the Star of David on a stand at the head end of the table.
- **When picking up the deceased to transport to the funeral, remove the decorative cloth runner, fold it, and place it on the shelving unit. The runner is never to be taken out of the room.**



Set-up of the deceased,
except the hand washing
station is not pictured.

See other page 

Washburn-McReavy Set-up for Chevra Kavod Hamet (Jewish burial society)

Set-up of the hand washing station

- Table by the wall under the mirror with the following items on it:
 - Pitcher with clean tap water
 - Empty dishpan to collect used tap water
 - Roll of paper towels
- Place the small brown wastebasket under or next to the table to collect used paper towels.

Set-up for two deceased at the same time

Same as the set-up for one deceased except:

- Place a blue cloth with the Star of David over each deceased.
- Do not use the decorative cloth runner.
- Place both deceased closely next to each other in the middle of the curtains, perpendicular to the curtains.
- Close the curtains and pull them slightly over the top of the deceased.
- Pull down the three decorative shades. The left and right shades will fit around the two deceased if using a narrow and medium or two narrow tables and the two deceased are placed very close together.
- Light and place a candle with the Star of David on a stand at the head end of the table of each deceased (two candles, two stands).

To roll up the shades

- Handling the shades only by the rings, pull each shade as far down as it will go and it will automatically snap back onto the roll. Keep your finger lightly in the ring to prevent it from snapping too hard and damaging the shade.
- There is a tendency to hold or pull the shade down while it is snapping back, causing it to stop part way up. It may take a few tries to get the "feel" of allowing the shade to snap back with your finger still in the ring.

← See other page

Air bed for *shomrim* sitting overnight

Air bed

The pump for the air bed is electric. The closest electrical outlet is located in the hallway across from the stairs, just outside the door to the *shmira* room; there are no electrical outlets in the *shmira* room.

Please put the air bed, cover, and pump back into the container when you are done using the bed and put the container back on the shelf. To fit the bed and accessories back into the container:

Air bed:

1. Deflate the bed.
2. Fold the bed in thirds lengthwise.
3. Roll up the bed tightly.

Cover:

1. Fold the cover in half lengthwise.
2. Fold the cover in half lengthwise again.
3. Roll up the cover tightly.

Pump:

1. Place the pump on top of the rolled up cover in the container.

Washing hands and the blessing over washing hands

Washing hands as you leave the *shmira* room

It is traditional to wash one's hands upon leaving the *shmira* room to symbolically separate oneself from death and its impurity.

Use the pitcher of water, pan and paper towels located on the small table just inside or outside the *shmira* room.

Upon leaving the *shmira* room, wash your hands, pouring water alternately on each hand three times starting with the right hand, while reciting the following blessing:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ
מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם דֵּין הָאֱמֶת

*Barukh atah Adonai, Eloheinu melekh ha'olam,
dayan ha'emet.*

Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Ruler of the
universe, the true Judge.

Blow out the candle sign

To all Shomrim:

**The last person leaving at night
*MUST BLOW OUT THE SHIVA CANDLE!***

**The candle is not to remain burning when you
leave, as it creates a fire hazard.**

Thank you.

Washburn-McReavy Funeral Chapel

