

FOR CLASS #3

The Concept of Shmira

Many of the traditions and laws that pertain to the care and preparation of the Jewish dead are founded on two basic principles:

1. The body as the container of the soul is to be treated with the utmost dignity and respect.
2. Although at death the soul departs the body, it still remains present near the body and is fully aware of all that transpires in its vicinity.

Thus the Shomer serves two purposes:

1. To guard the body from becoming prey for rodents and insects. (Historical Reason)
2. To give respect to the remains and *consolation to the soul* by not leaving the body unattended like something useless and no longer worthy.

In addition, the reciting of *Psalms (T'hillim)* is comforting and soothing to the soul at a time in which it is distressed and confused. (See Aryeh Kaplan's *Immortality & The Soul*).