

Rav Julius Rabinowicz, "Jewish Views of Death and of the Afterlife", *Jewish Leader*, September 24, 2021



Jewish views of death and of the afterlife

Presented by Scholar in Residence

Reb Simcha Raphael, Ph.D.

First session is Wed., Oct. 6, 7 PM

By Rav Julius Rabinowitz

Wed., October 6, 7:00 PM -- Jacob's Deathbed Finale:

Family Drama and Trauma at the End of Life

The deathbed story of Jacob, at the end Genesis, offers us wisdom for encountering the reality of death and loss. From Jacob's story we discover the wisdom Torah provides for dealing consciously with end-of-life issues, and with the complex family dynamics surrounding dying and mourning in our times. In addition, through our study of this story, we learn of how our Biblical ancestors understood the connection between this world and the world beyond.



The five liberal synagogues of Eastern Connecticut: Congregation Ahavath Achim, Congregation Beth El, Beth Jacob Synagogue, Temple Bnai Israel and Temple Emanuel, are joining together to bring a scholar to our community, **Simcha Raphael, Ph.D., the Founding Director of the Da'at Institute for Death Awareness, Advocacy and Training.** Dr. Raphael has served as Adjunct Professor in Religion at LaSalle University and Temple University and is on the Faculty of the Art of Dying Institute of the New York Open Center. Dr. Raphael will be making a series of three ZOOM presentations to our communities on October 6 and 26, and November 14, all at 7:00 pm.

Reb Simcha, as he likes to be called, has worked as a death awareness educator, bereavement counselor and hospice chaplain for over twenty-five years. Ordained as a Rabbinic Pastor by Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi, he received a doctorate in Psychology from the California Institute of Integral Studies, and has written extensively on the topics of death, bereavement, and the afterlife.

Among his publications, is his groundbreaking volume, *Jewish Views of the Afterlife*, first published in 1994, and recently issued in its third edition this past year. *Jewish Views of the Afterlife* is a classic study of ideas of afterlife and postmortem survival in Jewish tradition

SCHOLAR CONT. ON PG 13

SCHOLAR CONT. FROM PG 1

and mysticism. The book guides the reader through 4,000 years of Jewish thought on the afterlife by investigating pertinent sacred texts produced in each era.

Through a compilation of ideas found in the Bible, Apocrypha, rabbinic literature, medieval philosophy, medieval Midrash, Kabbalah, Hasidism and Yiddish literature, Reb Simcha demonstrates how Judaism conceived of the fate of the individual after death throughout Jewish history. In addition, this book explores the implications of Jewish afterlife beliefs for a renewed understanding of traditional rituals of funeral, burial, shiva, kaddish and more. And with two other clergy, Dr. Raphael wrote his most recent book, *Jewish End-of-life Care in a Virtual Age: Our Tradition Reimagined*. It was reviewed in ReformJudaism.org, as providing a roadmap for all of us to care for one another in a time when we must somehow walk a thin line between caring for the ill as we have always done and obeying the new laws that forbid us to have close contact with people in hospitals and nursing homes.

When he spoke a few years ago in Buffalo, NY, the writer for the *Buffalo Jewish Review* wrote that Dr. Raphael was a "masterful and compelling speaker." And as they sat in the round, they "were spellbound listening to his traditional Jewish stories of transmigration of the soul, end of life and reincarnation stories."

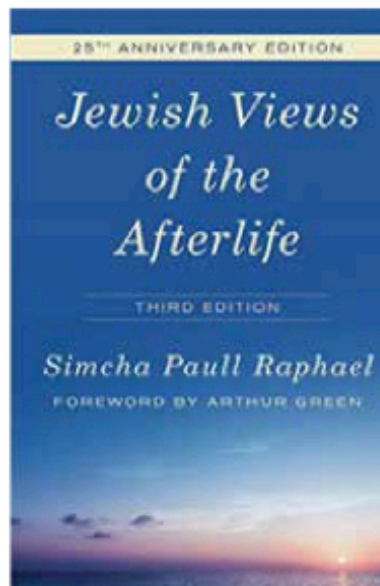
Dr. Raphael's final two sessions

Tues., October 26, 7:00 PM -- Jewish Views of the Afterlife: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives

Today many are unaware of traditional Jewish wisdom on life after death. This presentation explores Judaism's afterlife teachings, particularly in Jewish mysticism, and the practical relevance of these teachings in dealing with the human encounter with death.

Sun., November 14, 7:00 PM -- Jewish Sacred Burial: Machpelah to Joseph's Bones, Medieval Hevra Kaddisha to Contemporary America.

In this session, we shall explore the importance of Jewish sacred burial, and the connections between burial of our Biblical ancestors at the Cave of the Patriarchs and Matriarchs at *Machpelah*, burial of



Joseph's Bones in the land of Canaan, medieval traditions of Hevra Kaddisha, and contemporary Jewish burial practices in our community.

How to connect

ZOOM connecting information is being made available to the membership of the presenting Synagogues by their rabbis. **If you are not a member of one of the Synagogues and you would like to attend one or more sessions (at no charge)**, please contact me at RavJulius@gmail.com, and I will be pleased to provide you with the connecting information.

Thank you to...

The series is being generously supported by the Church and Allen/Labenski Funeral Homes, Norwich; Blumenstein Funerals, Manchester; and Thomas L. Neilan & Sons Funeral Homes, New London, and Niantic.

Some final thoughts

As the *Intermountain (Colorado) Jewish News* commented a few months ago during his recent presentation there, Dr. Raphael's priority is helping Jews understand that they have access to a rich legacy of traditional Jewish teachings about souls surviving death. As he explains, "The main point of all these stories is that between this world and the world beyond is a window, not a wall," he says, which contrasts with secular intimations of mortality as nothingness.

We hope you will join us on this series of conversations on a topic that all of us are guaranteed to reach some day. *B'Shalom*