



ANCESTRAL JOURNEYS: *END-OF-LIFE WISDOM IN TORAH AND MIDRASH*

This course shall explore biographical narratives in Torah and Midrash in search of wisdom for dealing with the unique challenges of life and death today. Through study and reflection on the lives of our Biblical ancestors from the Book of Genesis, we shall discover guidelines for responding to end-of-life transitions and encounters with the unknown in this era of uncertainty.. Course will be presented on Zoom platform, using a display of visual collages to highlight the texts of Torah and Midrash we shall study.

WEDNESDAYS 8:00 PM EST, 5:00 PM PST

FEBRUARY 2, 2022

1) ABRAHAM'S Calling:

From Bereaved Refugee to Man of Destiny

FEBRUARY 9, 2022

2) ISAAC'S Midlife Transition:

The Akedah as a Near-Death Experience

FEBRUARY 16, 2022

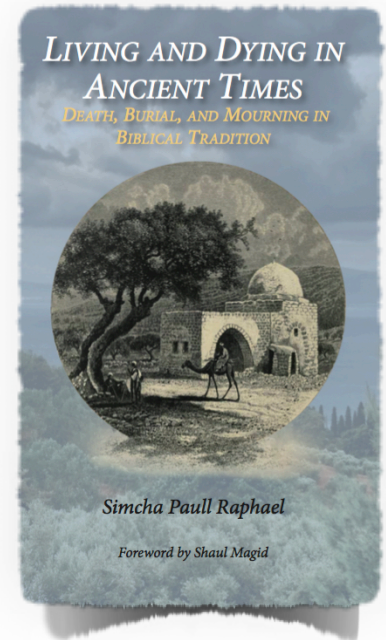
3) JACOB'S Deathbed Finale:

Family Drama and Trauma at the End-of-Life

FEBRUARY 23, 2022

4) Carrying JOSEPH'S Bones:

Sinai Procession as a Funeral Ritual



REGISTRATION LINK: <https://www.eventsquid.com/event.cfm?id=14508>

SUGGESTED READING:

Simcha Raphael, *Living and Dying in Ancient Times -*

Death, Burial and Mourning in Biblical Tradition, Albion-Andalus Books, 2015.

REB SIMCHA RAPHAEL, PH.D. is Founding Director of the DAAT INSTITUTE for Death Awareness, Advocacy and Training. He works as a psychotherapist and spiritual director in the Philadelphia area, and has served as Adjunct Professor in Religion at LaSalle and Temple Universities. Ordained as a Rabbinic Pastor by Reb Zalman Schachter-Shalomi, and a Fellow of the Rabbis Without Borders Network, he is author of numerous publications on death and dying including the groundbreaking classic *Jewish Views of the Afterlife*. His website is www.daatinstitute.net.

ANCESTRAL JOURNEYS END-OF-LIFE WISDOM IN TORAH & MIDRASH

ABRAHAM'S CALLING: FROM BEREAVED REFUGEE TO MAN OF DESTINY

THE MYTHIC JOURNEY - JOSEPH CAMPBELL

The usual hero adventure begins with someone from whom something has been taken, or who feels there is something lacking in the normal experience available or permitted to the members of society. The person then takes off on a series of adventures beyond the ordinary, either to recover what has been lost or to discover some life-giving elixir. It's usually a cycle, a coming and a returning.

— Joseph Campbell, *The Hero With a Thousand Faces*

THE MYTHIC JOURNEY - JEAN HOUSTON

It is difficult, challenging, and yet extremely necessary at the time of wounding [and trauma] to revision our story so that its larger story is revealed... We have to ask ourselves if we are in a cauldron of pain or a chalice of opportunity? Shall we fret and whine, or can we see our suffering as the hand of God coming to pull us into a new story?

— Jean Houston, *A Mythic Life*

A MYTHIC APPROACH TO TORAH/TORAH AS ALLEGORY/MYTH

Every time that you find in our books a tale the reality of which seems impossible, a story which is repugnant to both reason and common sense, then be sure that the tale contains a profound allegory veiling a deeply mysterious truth; and the greater the absurdity of the letter, the deeper the wisdom of the spirit. — Moses Maimonides

ABRAHAM'S LIFE-WORLD SITUATION

Now these are the generations of Terah; Terah fathered Abram, Nahor, and Haran; and Haran fathered Lot. And Haran died before his father Terah in the land of his birth, in Ur of the Chaldeans. And Abram and Nahor took wives; the name of Abram's wife was Sarai; and the name of Nahor's wife, Milcah, the daughter of Haran, the father of Milcah, and the father of Iscah. But Sarai was barren; she had no child. And Terah took Abram his son, and Lot the son of Haran his grandson, and Sarai his daughter-in-law, his son Abram's wife; and they went forth with them from Ur of the Chaldeans, to go to the land of Canaan; and they came to Haran, and lived there. And the days of Terah were two hundred and five years; and Terah died in Haran. (Gen. 11:27-32)

CONTEMPORARY MIDRASH - INFERTILITY

Sarai sleeps quietly. Poor woman, early this morning I saw her crying in her tent. This infertility has taken its toll. We can hardly look each other in the eye, the passion between us is dying out. I am angry that G!d has not blessed us with children. Why? It feels so hard to keep praying to a G!d who has not answered our prayers. (Simcha Raphael)

CONTEMPORARY MIDRASH - THE BEREAVED SON

I don't understand how all this happened, so quickly. Everything once familiar is gone. Dad is dead; my brother Haran, he died so young, didn't even get to raise his own son. I miss Ur Kasdim, its familiar sounds, smells, our old home. All the family – gone! No news. Now, it's just the three of us, grief stricken, sad, lost. At moments I want to scream out, "Terah ben Nahor, why did you get us all into this mess? Why did we have to leave everything that was comfortable back home, in search of this unknown land Canaan? For what? And then you died! How could you do that to us?" (Simcha Raphael)

ABRAHAM'S CALL TO ADVENTURE - THE LECH LECHA MOMENT

Go forth from your native land - *ma'artzekha* - from your birthplace – *mi'moladetkha* - from your father's house – *mi'beit avikha* - to the land that I will show you. (Gen. 12:1)

THE PROMISE OF THE CALL TO ADVENTURE

And I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you; and will make your name great, And I will bless those who bless you, and curses those who curse you, and all the families of the land will be blessed because of you. (Gen. 12: 2-3)

CALLING AS TRANSFORMATION OF ONE'S FAMILY OF ORIGIN STORY

Abraham took a hatchet in his hand, and broke all his father's gods, and when he had done breaking them he placed the hatchet in the hand of the biggest god among them all, and he went out of the room... (Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews*, I, p. 214)

He thus became the first person to argue that there is a single God who is the creator of all thing... because of these ideas the Chaldeans and the other people of Mesopotamia rose up against him, and having resolved, in keeping with God's will and with His help, to leave his home, he settled in the land of Canaan. (Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* I.154-157)

CALLING AS INVITATION INTO ENCOUNTER WITH ALLIES AND HELPERS

Melchizedek king of Shalem brought forth bread and wine; and he was the priest of the Most High God. And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth; And blessed be God the Most High, who has delivered your enemies into your hand. And he gave him a tenth of all. (Gen. 14:18-20)

CALLING AS CONNECTION WITH THE INFINITE

Some time later the word of YHVH came to Abram in a vision... He took him outside and said: "Look toward heaven and count the stars, if you are able to count them. So shall your offspring be..." (Gen. 15: 1, 5)

CALLING AS PLANETARY SERVICE

And I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; and I will make your name great, so that it will be a blessing. And I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you will I curse, and all the families of the land will be blessed because of you. (Gen. 12: 2-3)

OUTLINE

1. INTRODUCTION

A MYTHIC VIEW OF TORAH STUDY

AVRAM HA-IVRI—אַבְרָם הָעִבְרִי—“THE ONE WHO CROSSES OVER”

ABRAHAM'S LIFE-WORLD SITUATION ->
INFERTILITY, REFUGEE, BEREAVED SON

ABRAHAM'S CALL TO ADVENTURE - THE *LECH LECHA* MOMENT

THE PROMISE OF THE CALL TO ADVENTURE

2. LANGUAGE OF THE CALL

CALLING AS PHYSICAL PLANE MOVEMENT

CALLING AS CULTURAL TRANSFORMATION

CALLING AS TRANSFORMATION OF
ONE'S FAMILY OF ORIGIN STORY

3. IMPLICATIONS OF THE CALL

CALLING AS ENCOUNTER WITH INNER SELF

CALLING AS INVITATION ENCOUNTER
WITH ALLIES AND HELPERS

CALLING AS CONNECTION WITH THE INFINITE

CALLING AS PLANETARY SERVICE

4. CONCLUSIONS



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