



UNDERSTANDING ADVANCE CARE PLANNING AS A JEWISH PROCESS

“For everything there is a season and a time for every purpose under heaven.”

Ecclesiastes 3:1

LIFE IS SACRED

Among the diverse perspectives in Judaism about planning and decision-making for healthcare concerns, one teaching is clear and consistent: Life is sacred.

When you plan in advance, you honor the sacredness of life by considering important questions with ample time and space. Planning ahead enables you to explore Jewish values as a guide for sorting out the complexities of healthcare decisions and end of life care together with trusted loved ones, rather than making difficult choices hastily and under the pressure of a healthcare crisis. Jewish wisdom can provide profound guidance that can have great impact when considered thoughtfully in conjunction with your personal values, goals, and life choices.

CONVERSATION IS DEEPLY JEWISH

Judaism teaches that studying and engaging in conversation about important issues is a way of clarifying values and deepening understanding. Open-hearted dialogue strengthens individuals, relationships, and entire communities. Honest and caring conversations about healthcare decisions participate in the tradition of sacred dialogue. Many core Jewish texts include stories of people in communities navigating possible courses of action based on their unique circumstances and experiences. This process is an apt model for Jewishly informed advance care planning for end of life.

THE ETHICAL WILL AS A JEWISH MODEL

Judaism offers many models of ethical wills, where individuals convey their accumulated wisdom and the personal, spiritual, and moral values that they wish to leave as a legacy. This practice can be expanded to include clarifying values as they might shape end of life care when we are not in a position to make decisions ourselves. Doing so can help to ensure that when the time comes, our values will guide decision-making, our choices will be respected, and our loved ones will not be burdened by having to make decisions without enough information to guide them.

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JEWISH RESOURCES FOR FURTHER EXPLORATION

Rabbis and Jewish authorities, along with community resources that specialize in addressing issues related to serious illness and end of life care, can help you engage in dialogue and clarify important values and wishes to those who will act on your behalf. You may also want to consult the literature that has been written by the Jewish community for making choices about serious illness and end of life, as well as a growing collection of web resources.

COMMUNITY RESOURCES

SAGE VOICES

A collection of brief videos on advance care planning topics: artificial nutrition, do not resuscitate (DNR), life support, organ donation, and palliative care, featuring rabbis and religious leaders affiliated with What Matters.

jtsa.edu/sage-voices

THE SHIRA RUSKAY CENTER OF THE JEWISH BOARD

The Center has extensive experience with advance care planning, and offers an array of psycho-social services to individuals and families, assistance in accessing medical or community services, and Jewish spiritual and religious resources and guidance.

212.632.4608 or jewishboard.org

PLAZA JEWISH COMMUNITY CHAPEL, INC. – FUNERAL PRE-PLANNING

Plaza Jewish Community Chapel, Inc. has a certified counselor on staff who is available to meet with individuals who wish to discuss funeral and pre-planning services. **For more information or to discuss, call 212.769.4400 or visit plazajewishcommunitychapel.org.**

WEB RESOURCES

Center for Jewish End of Life Care

www.centerforjewishendoflifecare.org

WEB RESOURCES (CONT)

A Good End podcast by 70 Faces Media

A new conversation about Judaism, death, and dying in the 21st century. myjewishlearning.com/landing/___agoodend/

Guide to Traditional Jewish Observance in a Hospital: najc.org/pdf/Guide_to_Traditional_Jewish_Observance.pdf

The Jewish Ethical Wills Project

Provides resources to engage communities in creating ethical wills, including lesson plans, videos, text studies and handouts. jccmanhattan.org/jewish-living/ethical-wills/

Preparation and Consolation: Congregation Rodeph Sholom

This guide includes a wealth of Jewish and other resources. rodephsholom.org/resources/by-topic/end-of-life

Jewish Responsa on Advance Care Directives

Rabbinical Council of America (Orthodox) rabbis.org/pdfs/hcpi.pdf

Rabbinical Assembly (Conservative) tinyurl.com/RAMacklerCare

Union for Reform Judaism urj.org/what-we-believe/resolutions/health-care-decisions-dying

Organ Donation

Halachic Organ Donor Society | hods.org
Rabbi Billy Dreskin, Are Jews Allowed to Donate Organs? tinyurl.com/RJDreskinOrgans

PRINT RESOURCES

Richard F. Address, *Making Sacred Choices at the End of Life*, Jewish Lights Publishing, 2000

Elliot N. Dorff, *On Matters of Life and Death: A Jewish Approach to Modern Medical Ethics*, Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society, 2003

Joseph J. Fins and Rabbi Daniel S. Brenner, *Embracing Life & Facing Death: A Jewish Guide to Palliative Care*, New York: CLAL, 2005

Harvey L. Gordon, *Questions and Answers About Jewish Tradition and the Issues of Assisted Death*, New York: URJ Press, 2006

Behoref Hayamim, *In the Winter of Life: A Values-Based Jewish Guide for Decision Making at the End of Life*, Reconstructionist Rabbinical College, Center for Jewish Ethics Wyncote, PA, 2002

Maurice Lamm, D.D., and Dr. Barry Kinzbrunner, *The Jewish Hospice Manual*, VITAS, 2003

Aaron Mackler, ed, *Life and Death Responsibilities in Jewish Biomedical Ethics*, New York: JTS Press, 2000

Joseph B. Meszler, *Facing Illness, Finding God: How Judaism Can Help You and Caregivers Cope When Body or Spirit Fails*, Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights, 2010

The Outstretched Arm: Jewish Principles of Care for the Dying. New York: The National Center for Jewish Healing, 2001

Jack Riemer and Nathaniel Stampfer, *So That Your Values Live On: Ethical Wills and How to Prepare Them*, Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights, 1993

Union for Reform Judaism, Department of Jewish Family Concerns, *A Time to Prepare: A Practical Guide for Individuals and Families in Determining One's Wishes for Extraordinary Medical Treatment and Financial Arrangements*, New York: URJ Press, 2001