



Shabbat Chayei-Sarah/21 Cheshvan 5778  
November 10, 2017

Dear Shir Tikvah:

Love and Death. This week's Torah portion abounds with stories of life's most profound experiences.

Ellie Thiels will teach us about the Torah's best love story at her bat-mitzvah service tomorrow.

Death is a sub-text of this whole parsha, called "The Life (or lives, more literally) of Sarah", which ironically begins with Sarah's death. This parsha shows us a number of positive(!) ways to come to terms with death:

Abraham mourns - he is distraught, and takes space to feel it.

Abraham doesn't get caught up in his mourning, but goes about negotiating a land purchase for his beloved's burial. He honors her memory through his deeds.

Then we have this great phrase: Abraham is described as *zaken, ba-b'yamim* "old, coming into his days." The sages associate *zaken* (old) with wisdom more than age. What is it to be wise? According to this phrase, to be wise is to enter one's days; to fully show up for our days. The wisdom of being an elder is to not just go-through-the-motions but to enter each day with all of one's mindfulness.

How did Isaac mourn for his mother? He was comforted when Rebecca joined him. The midrash tells us that light came back into her tent once Rebecca joined him there. Building new relationships is another way to cope.

Death, like Love and God, is complicated and defies reduction or understanding. But one of the ways that we can be with our fears and anxieties about death- our own or that of loved ones - is to learn about choices we do have\*(there are a lot!) and to have conversations about those choices with our loved ones.

May we all - wherever we are on our life's path - be strengthened by coming fully into our days.

Shabbat shalom,

Rabbi Debra Rappaport

\*This Sunday, members of Shir Tikvah who would like to know more about what happens when a loved one dies, are invited to meet at Hodroff-Epstein Memorial Chapel (126 E Franklin Ave, Minneapolis, MN 55404) at 5:00 pm (please note time change!) for a program that will be approximately two hours. Feel free to email me with questions, [rabbirappaport@shirtikvah.net](mailto:rabbirappaport@shirtikvah.net)