

Death Becomes Her

בראשית כ"ג:א'-ב'

(א) וַיְהִי־לִי חַיֵּי שָׂרָה מֵאָה שָׁנָה וְעֶשְׂרִים שָׁנָה וְשִׁבְעַת שָׁנִים שְׁנֵי חַיֵּי שָׂרָה: (ב) וַתָּמָת שָׂרָה בְּקִרְיַת אַרְבַּע הוּא חֶבְרוֹן בְּאֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן וַיָּבֵא אַבְרָהָם לְסַפֵּד לְשָׂרָה וּלְבַכְתָּהּ:

Genesis 23:1-2

(1) Sarah's lifetime—the span of Sarah's life—came to one hundred and twenty-seven years. (2) Sarah died in Kiriath-arba—now Hebron—in the land of Canaan; and Abraham proceeded to mourn for Sarah and to bewail her.

בראשית כ"ה:ז'-ח'

(ז) וְאֵלֶּה יְמֵי שְׁנַיִם חַיֵּי אַבְרָהָם אֲשֶׁר־חַי מֵאֵת שָׁנָה וְשִׁבְעִים שָׁנָה וְחֲמֵשׁ שָׁנִים: (ח) וַיָּגוּעַ וַיָּמָת אַבְרָהָם בְּשִׁיבָה טוֹבָה זָקֵן וְשִׁבְעַת וַיֵּאֲסֹף אֶל־עַמּוּיוֹ:

Genesis 25:7-8

(7) This was the total span of Abraham's life: one hundred and seventy-five years. (8) And Abraham breathed his last, dying at a good ripe age, old and contented; and he was gathered to his kin.

קהלת ז':א'-ב'

(א) טוֹב שֵׁם מִשֶּׁמֶן טוֹב וַיּוֹם הַמּוֹת מִיּוֹם הַוּלְדוֹ: (ב) טוֹב לָלֶכֶת אֶל־בַּיִת־אָבֶל מִלָּכֶת אֶל־בַּיִת מְשֻׁתָּהּ בְּאֶשֶׁר הוּא סוֹף כָּל־הָאָדָם וְחַי יִתֵּן אֶל־לְבוֹ:

Ecclesiastes 7:1-2

(1) A good name is better than fragrant oil, and the day of death is better than the day of birth. (2) It is better to go to a house of mourning than to a house of feasting; for that is the end of every man, and a living one should take it to heart.

ביאור שטיינזלץ על קהלת ז':ב'

ובהמשך ליתרון המוות - טוב ללכת אל-בית-אבל מלכת אל-בית משתה, באשר המוות הוא סוף כל-האדם, ולכן אולי החי ההולך אל בית אבל יתן אל-לבו: הרי אם הכול נגמר במוות, מן הראוי לעשות משהו בשנות החיים. בשגרת החיים נוטים להדחיק שאלות אלה, אבל נוכח אפשרות המוות אדם יכול להתנער ולהחליט לשנות את דרכיו. קהלת מעדיף מצבים שאינם נעימים, משום שהם עשויים להניע את האדם להתקדם.

Steinsaltz on Ecclesiastes 7:2

Kohelet elaborates on the advantages of death: **It is better to go to a house of mourning than to go to a house of feasting, as that, death, is the end of every man, and therefore the living,** one who goes to the house of mourning, **will take it to his heart**, as he will say to himself: Since everything ends in death, I must utilize my life to do something worthwhile. One tends to repress those thoughts in the course one's daily routine, but when faced with the inevitability of death, one can transcend the mundane and choose to change his ways. Kohelet prefers unpleasant situations because they are likely to motivate a person to move forward.

Turn to a chevruta and discuss these texts.. How do you understand them after watching the show?

"The End"

[HELEN]

Wow!

That was sad

[MADELINE]

Right?

That was really, really sad

[HELEN]

"Oh, I've had a fulfilling life, I love my kids"

[MADELINE]

"I love my wife! So sad!"

[HELEN]

Do you ever wish that was what we had?

[MADELINE, spoken]

What, ear hair you can see from space?

[HELEN, spoken]

No, an ending

[MADELINE]

I'd give it all to have an ending

[HELEN]

I'd give it all to say goodbye

[MADELINE and HELEN]

To finish up our plot

Whether life made sense or not

To say, "The show is over, folks," then die

We'd step into our light

Go out in a blaze of glory

And finally find out if there was a moral to our story

The choir would sing

They'd roll the drums

We'd tie the title in and see what death becomes

If that was our show, that's how I'd like to go

God, if only we could see the end!

[HELEN, spoken]

What do you want to do tomorrow, Mad?

[MADELINE, spoken]

Oh, I don't care, what do you want to do, Hel?

[VIOLA]

Don't say I didn't!

שבת קנ"ג א:ה'

הִנֵּן הַתֵּם, רַבִּי אֱלִיעֶזֶר אוֹמֵר: שׁוּב יוֹם
אֶחָד לְפָנַי מִיְתְּדָךְ. שְׂאֵלוֹ תִלְמִידָיו אֶת
רַבִּי אֱלִיעֶזֶר: וְכִי אָדָם יוֹדֵעַ אֵיזְהוּ יוֹם
יָמוּת? אָמַר לְהֵן: וְכָל שֶׁבֶן, יָשׁוּב הַיּוֹם,
שְׂמָא יָמוּת לְמַחֵר, וְנִמְצָא כָּל יָמָיו
בְּתִשׁוּבָה. וְאַף שְׁלֹמֹה אָמַר בְּחֻקְמָתוֹ:
"בְּכָל יַעַת יִהְיוּ בְּגָדֶיךָ לְבָנִים וְשֶׁמֶן עַל
רֹאשְׁךָ אֵל יִחָסֶר."

Shabbat 153a:5

We learned there in a mishna that **Rabbi Eliezer says: Repent one day before your death. Rabbi Eliezer's students asked him: But does a person know the day on which he will die? He said to them: All the more so** this is a good piece of advice, and **one should repent today lest he die tomorrow; and by following this advice one will spend his entire life in a state of repentance. And King Solomon also said in his wisdom: "At all times your clothes should be white, and oil shall not be absent from upon your head"** (Ecclesiastes 9:8), meaning that a person always needs to be prepared.

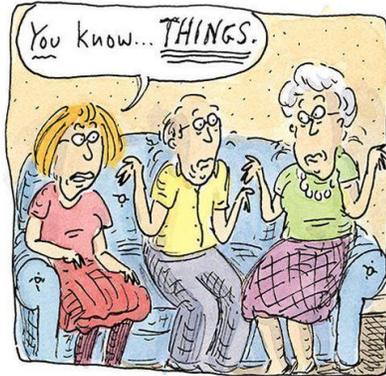
Dr. Laura Carstensen, Director of the Stanford Center on Longevity

Coping with 'Death Awareness' in the COVID-19 Era By Dan Cable, Francesca Gino on May 13, 2020, Scientific American.

"Once life's fragility becomes a personal truth instead of a philosophical concept that happens to 'other people,' we become more capable of celebrating whatever days and experiences remain to us instead of focusing on everyday hassles. Acknowledging our impermanence makes us more mindful of life's small moments and our relationships with others."

CAN'T WE TALK ABOUT SOMETHING MORE PLEASANT?

My parents and I
never discussed
DEATH...



Source Sheet created on Sefaria by David Levy