

## CHAPLAIN: DEATH (from previous page)

my best to conceptualize the aftermath of my death. No matter how I tried, I could not wrap my brain around the idea of my nonexistence.

I know I am in deep water right now because Judaism has much to say about the afterlife. There is more than one answer to the question, “What happens after I die?” That being said, no one knows for sure what happens to us after we die. And many of us do not even believe in an afterlife; we think that the life we have now is the only life we will ever have.

How are we to come to terms with and accept the reality that we will inevitably decline and that one day, we will take our last breath and die?

In the episode’s opening, Conover continues:

*Your body is a marvelous and intricate machine built out of millions of interconnected, fragile systems, and as you age, each system begins to slowly but surely deteriorate and break down. When one fails, a doctor may be able to repair it, but at some point, there will be too many interlocking failures to proceed, and like a cascade of dominoes, your joints, your eyes, your heart, your lungs, your memory, your entire body will fail. It will happen. And while it’s difficult to hear this truth, it is essential that you accept it because every second that goes by in which you don’t is a second of your precious and finite life that you risk wasting.*

With these words, Conover foreshadows the positive takeaway. It is up to us to maximize the time we have and to make this precious commodity meaningful, positive and memorable.

In general, movies and television shows are not doing us any favors concerning dying, death and mourning. They do not accurately show how the body dies, what happens near death and how we can grieve our traumas.



Rabbi Barry Cohen is the Jewish community chaplain of the Greater Portland area. [chaplain@jewishportland.org](mailto:chaplain@jewishportland.org)

One way to make our lives meaningful and constructive is to understand what happens to our bodies as we age. Sherwin Nuland has written an amazing resource, *How We Die*. He describes, in great detail, what happens when confronted with heart disease, Alzheimer’s, cancer or simply old age. Knowledge is power. The more we know, the more we understand what we can control and what we cannot control. This is vital in preserving our psychological/spiritual health and in determining what kind of care we want to receive (or not to receive).

The bottom line is that life is a precious gift. We have so many ways to celebrate and preserve that gift, but we also have many alternatives about how to let go of that gift.

I am only 54, but I have had to accept the reality that parts of my body are beginning to decline. An unexpected ailment pops up here, heals and then another pops up over there. The more I understand this cold, hard reality of aging, the better decisions I will be able to make now and in the future.

I know I’m going to die. But my important next step is to devote more time and energy to how I am going to live best with the time I have left.

## JFCS shares resources to help you plan ahead

In October, Jewish Family & Child Service hosted “Planning Ahead: A Jewish Imperative to Plan for the Unmentionables” by Jerry Cohen, JD, MPA.

Cohen is a retired attorney and past state director for AARP Oregon. The program focused on end-of-life planning, specifically on Advance Directives.

“From a Jewish ethical perspective, it’s imperative to plan ahead for one’s family and to express in advance one’s personal wishes,” Cohen says. “I expect attendees to leave with a better understanding of advance planning and with the motivation to begin or revisit the next steps to develop or implement such plans. I hope people will take action because of this workshop – for themselves and their loved ones.”

The following resources were shared with attendees to help them plan ahead and provide information to care providers and loved ones about specific, personal desires.

- [wingsoregon.org/get-a-life-plan](http://wingsoregon.org/get-a-life-plan)

This site includes information on Advance Directives, Portable Orders for Life Sustaining Treatment (POLST), and other forms and processes related to planning ahead, including for individuals with disabilities.

- [oregonpolst.org/](http://oregonpolst.org/)

The POLST is a medical order between an individual and a health-care professional that specifies medical treatments that the individual would want during a medical emergency. Emergency medical responders and emergency medicine health-care professionals follow these orders, unless there is new information presented by a patient or their legal decision maker.

- [adrcforegon.org/](http://adrcforegon.org/)

The Oregon Aging & Disability Resource Connection provides 24-hour information and assistance to older adults, people with disabilities and caregivers. They can assist with enrolling in government programs, investigating possible abuse, locating adult-care homes and more.

- [evolvingelders.com/](http://evolvingelders.com/)

Cohen and his wife, Ruth, created this website for Evolving Elders. The services are all related to aging, caregiving, planning, etc.

## Public service

### Get Screened Today!

JScreen offers two at-home genetic testing options: the ReproGEN test screens young singles and couples for over 200 conditions, like Tay-Sachs and cystic fibrosis, and the CancerGEN test screens adults for genetic predisposition to many types of cancer.

[JScreen.org](http://JScreen.org)

[www.JScreen.org](http://www.JScreen.org)



## Obituaries

### VICTORIA REZVANIPOUR

Victoria Rezvanipour, ז”ל, passed away Dec. 16, 2022. She was the wife of Joseph Khajehzadeh, ז”ל, and the oldest of six children. She is remembered by her children, Ben Abraham (Libby Jochnowitz) Kahn, Shiva (Dorel) Busuioc, Benjamin (Amy) Kahn and Behyar (Lia Lam) Khajehzadeh; her grandchildren, Yoni (Rebecca) Kahn, Shannel (Elias), Juline, Mathew, Jared and Sydney; and her great-grandchildren, Zolly, Yoshi, Amari and Cairo.

A memorial service was held at Congregation Neveh Shalom Dec. 18.

Submit obituaries to [editor@jewishportland.org](mailto:editor@jewishportland.org)