ביקור חולים

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ביקור חולים

Die Begleitung Kranker und Sterbender im Judentum

Bikkur Cholim,
jüdische Seelsorge und
das jüdische Verständnis
von Medizin und Pflege

HENTRICH & HENTRICH

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Dignity Therapy and the Case of the Testaments of Abraham: Biblical and Early post-Biblical Precursors to Chochinov's Generativity Documents*

Shani Tzoref

In his 2012 book, *Dignity Therapy: Final Words for Final Days*, H.M. Chochinov outlines a method that he has developed, tested and refined for the preparation of "Generativity Documents" in the course of "Dignity Therapy" designed for certain terminally ill patients.[1] In his preface, Chochinov discusses the biblical account of the patriarch Jacob's last words to his children in Genesis 49. The reference to this biblical precedent provides a frame for Chochinov's presentation of his contemporary technique, which he states "can promote spiritual and psychological well being, engender meaning and hope, and enhance end-of-life experience."[2] In this article, I use Chochinov's model as a framework for analyzing a cluster of ancient biblical and exegetical texts concerning the final words attributed to an earlier biblical figure, Jacob's grandfather, Abraham. The excerpts are taken from three compositions: the biblical book of Genesis,[3] the *Book of Jubilees* (generally dated to the second century BCE), and the *Testament of Abraham* (generally dated to the first or second century CE).

I. Dignity and Therapy, "Appropriate Death" and Genesis 25

The word "dignity" denotes recognition of "the inherent worth of each individual."[4] The current Wikipedia entry for the term states that "moral, ethical, legal, and political discussions use the concept of dignity to express the idea that a being has an innate right to be valued, respected, and to receive ethical treatment."[5] Human dignity may be conceived as simultaneously (1) a fixed quality that inheres in every human being, irrespective of their attributes, status, or actions and (2) a dynamic and variable quality, which is dependent upon recognition and acknowledgment by others and vulnerable to violation (by oneself or others).[6] The value of dignity in legal and political spheres has assumed greater significance since its inclusion in the Declaration

* I dedicate this article with appreciation to A, from and with whom I have learned and continue to learn so much about human dignity.

of Human Rights.[7] In the field of medicine, it is of notably growing importance in palliative care.

Neomi Rao has isolated three different (and potentially conflicting) conceptions of dignity as reflected in U.S. law: "[1] the dignity of the individual associated with autonomy and negative freedom; [2] the positive dignity of maintaining a particular type of life; and [3] the dignity of recognition of individual and group differences."[8] These categories roughly align with the factors delineated by Chochinov affecting a patient's sense of dignity:

Table 1

Neomi Rao: U.S. law	Chochinov: Dignity Therapy
Dignity of the individual associated with autonomy and negative freedom	Illness-Related Issues: How the illness affects personal feelings of dignity
Positive dignity of maintaining a particular type of lifestyle	Dignity-Conserving Repertoire: How a patient's own perspectives and practices can impact their sense of dignity
Dignity of recognition of individual and group differences	Social Dignity: How the quality of interactions with others can enhance or detract from one's sense of dignity

Rao's study was inspired by Isaiah Berlin's influential essay on two concepts of liberty, negative and positive, or "freedom from" and "freedom to."[9] Chochinov's model of Dignity Therapy focuses on the need to offer the patient a type of "negative freedom" in the form of relief from the indignities of their illness, as well as "positive freedom" in the form of maximizing their own sense of dignity. Rao's analysis further recognizes the importance of group identity in some conceptions of dignity, as incorporated in Chochinov's category of "Social Dignity." Chochinov's full outline of his model is reproduced here[10]:

Table 2

The Dignity Model	
Category	Themes and Sub-themes
Illness-Related Issues	SYMPTOM DISTRESS Physical distress: Pain, discomfort Psychological distress: Medical uncertainty, anxiety
	LEVEL OF INDEPENDENCE Cognitive acuity: Ability to think clearly, reason, remember Functional capacity: Ability to perform normal daily tasks
The Patient's Perspectives and Practices (The Dignity Conserving Repertoire)	HOW THE PATIENT PERCEIVES THE SITUATION Continued sense of self: Am I the same person I used to be? Role preservation: Have I lost my place in life? Generativity/legacy: What will I leave behind? Maintenance of pride: Do I take pride in myself? Hopefulness: Do I look forward to anything? Autonomy/control: Do I feel in control? Acceptance: Am I at peace with what is happening? Resilience/fighting spirit: Do I have the will to go on?
	WHAT THE PATIENT DOES TO EASE THE SITUATION Living in the moment: Not dwelling on the illness Maintaining normalcy: Sticking to a routine Seeking spiritual comfort: Finding solace in spiritual or religious practices
Interactions with Others (The Social Dignity Inventory)	Privacy boundaries: Feeling control over privacy Social support: Ability to draw support from friends and family Care tenor: Being treated with respect and kindness Burden to others: Worry about how others are affected Aftermath concerns: Concerns about those left behind

Sensitivity to the dignity of medical patients generally focuses on alleviating, reducing, and preventing indignities that could arise as a result of their illness and medical treatment.[11] The

concern for this form of dignity, with its emphasis on the reduction of negative factors, and particularly upon "illness-related issues" is prominent in approaches to treatment of terminally ill patients. This focus on countering illness-related indignity is evident in the World Health Organization (WHO)'s definition of palliative care as "an approach that improves the quality of life of individuals and their families facing the problems associated with life-threatening illness, through the prevention and relief of suffering by means of early identification and impeccable assessment and treatment of pain and other problems, physical, psychosocial and spiritual."[12]

Chochinov's Dignity Model emphasizes a positive and proactive therapeutic and dignity-based approach. It seeks to move beyond offering relief and protection from indignity, by additionally empowering patients to adopt **dignity-conserving perspectives** and **dignity-conserving practices**. One aim of Dignity Therapy within the context of palliative care at end-of-life is to ease the patient into what is termed an "appropriate" or "good death." The Institute of Medicine defines a good death as one "free from avoidable distress and suffering for patient, family and caregivers, in general accord with patient's and family's wishes, and reasonably consistent with clinical, cultural, and ethical standards."[13]

In the book of Genesis, the report of Abraham's death implies such a "good death" (Gen 25):

> 5 Abraham willed all that he owned to Isaac; 6 but to Abraham's sons by concubines Abraham gave gifts while he was still living, and he sent them away from his son Isaac eastward, to the land of the East. 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**.9 His sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah, in the field of Ephron son of Zohar the Hittite, facing Mamre, 10 the field that Abraham had bought from the Hittites; there Abraham was buried, and Sarah his wife. 11 After the death of Abraham, God blessed his son Isaac. And Isaac settled near Beer-lahai-roi.

Abraham is depicted as "dying at a good ripe age, old and contented" (זקן ושבע בשיבה טובה) i.e., in accord with the Institute of Medicine's stipulation of "free from avoidable distress and suf-

fering." He is buried by both Ishmael and Isaac, signaling a resolution or setting aside of earlier family discord (see Gen chap. 16, 21). They bury him alongside his wife in the burial place that he had selected (see Gen 23), reflecting consistency with "the patient's and family's wishes" and "cultural… standards."[14] The latter conformity is indicated also by means of the idiom "gathered to his kin"(ויאסף אל עמיו).

Many of the details in the biblical passage align with the specific "Ten Criteria for a Good Death" enumerated by E. Shneidman.[15]

Table 3

	"Ten Criteria for a Good Death" (cited from Shneidman)	Gen. 25
1	NATURAL A natural death, rather than accident, suicide, or homicide	[8] *And Abraham breathed his last,*
2	MATURE After age 70; elderly yet lucid and experienced	[7] *This was the total span of Abraham's life: one hundred and seventy-five years … dying at a good ripe age, old and contented.*
3	EXPECTED Neither sudden nor unexpected; some decent warning	May be deduced from the arrangements made for the sons of his concubines shortly before the death report; perhaps implied in the word "*contented*" (vs. 7)
4	HONORABLE Emphasis on the honorifics; a positive obituary	--

5	PREPARED A living trust; prearranged funeral; some unfinished tasks to be done	[5] *Abraham willed all that he owned to Isaac* [6] *but to Abraham's sons by concubines Abraham gave gifts while he was still living, and he sent them away from his son Isaac eastward, to the land of the East. …* [9] *His sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah, in the field of Ephron son of Zohar the Hittite, facing Mamre,* [10] *the field that Abraham had bought from the Hittites; there Abraham was buried, and Sarah his wife.*
6	ACCEPTED Willing the obligatory; gracefully accepting the inevitable	Perhaps implied in the word "*contented*" (vs. 7), and in the idiom "*and he was gathered to his kin*" (vs. 8)
7	CIVILIZED Attended by loved ones; with flowers, pictures, and music during active transitioning	The death scene is not depicted. The burial scene brings Isaac and Ishmael together: [9] *His sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah*
8	GENERATIVE To have passed the wisdom of the tribe to younger generations	--
9	RUEFUL To experience the contemplative emotions of sadness and regret without collapse	--
10	PEACEABLE With amicability and love; freedom from physical pain	*and contented* (vs. 7) Perhaps implied in the imagery of the expression *breathed his last* (vs. 8)

What is the significance of the correspondence between the two columns in the table? Genesis 25 presents an idealized report of Abraham's death, as a fitting end to the life of the righteous patriarch. On one hand, the biblical text can be presumed to re-

flect existing social mores and values that were operative within the community of ancient Israel at the time of its composition. At the same time, given the didactic function of Torah, the text will have aimed to shape socio-cultural and religious values and norms for its own time and for generations to come. Indeed, it has succeeded in doing so. This raises the question of cause and effect regarding the close correspondence between Shneidman's criteria and the report of Abraham's death in Gen 25. The alignment may reflect some sort of universality of human understanding of dignity at end-of-life. The presence of Shneidman's criteria in Gen 25 would thus be viewed as a *result* of this presumptive constant, with an understanding that a certain sensitivity to realities of the human condition is shared by both the biblical text and modern social scientists/clinicians. From another perspective, I propose that the alignment may be seen as a reflection of the "generative" impact of the biblical text on current conceptions of a "good death" in Western society.[16] The presence of the elements in the biblical text can thus be seen as a cause for presuppositions about a "good death" held by some patients today, and by professionals who study and treat these patients. I will address the implications of this perspective in the conclusion of this article.

Essential as "generativity" is to the aim of Torah and to numerous contemporary psycho-social evaluations of a healthy life and good death, this feature is absent from the report of Abraham's death in Gen 25. The three adjectives in Shneidman's list not represented in Gen 25 are "honorable," "rueful," and "generative." It is not surprising that indications of "ruefulness" are absent from the idealized biblical portrait.[17] Somewhat more striking is the lack of a corresponding element to "honorable" (a "positive obituary," according to Shneidman). This omission is especially noticeable in light of Gen 23:2, which records that Abraham himself lamented over Sarah after her death and cried over her (ויבא אברהם לספוד לשרה ולבכותה). I suggest that Gen 25 does, in fact, incorporate a "positive obituary" for Abraham — not in the form of a narrated report about a delivery of a eulogy, but rather through textual performativity. The passage itself – and, in fact, the entire Abraham narrative in Gen chap. 12–25 – functions as a laudatory written memorial to the patriarch. To some extent, similar explanations could be given for the absence of explicit reference to "generativity" in Gen 25,

in the sense described by Shneidman regarding a "good death": "To have passed the wisdom of the tribe to younger generations; to have shared memories and histories; to act like a beneficent sage." Erik Erikson coined the term "generativity" and defined it as "the concern in establishing and guiding the next generation."[18] In referring to Abraham's sons, Gen 25 implicitly attests to his "establishing" of a next generation. Concern for establishing the next generation is a primary theme of Gen chap. 12–25, as memorialized in Abraham's very name:

> And God said to him, "As for Me, this is My covenant with you: You shall be the father of a multitude of nations. And you shall no longer be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham, for I make you the father of a multitude of nations." (Gen 17:3–5)

Yet what about parental "guiding" on Abraham's part, beyond his establishment of biological continuity? The book of Genesis focuses upon God's promise as the source of the eternal blessing of Abraham's elect offspring, rather than recounting Abraham's own active efforts to ensure their merit and prosperity.[19] Genesis 25 features a modest reference to this covenantal continuity. In the aftermath of the death report, we read this note concerning a transmission of heritage beyond inheritance: "After the death of Abraham, God blessed his son Isaac" (Gen 25:11). Yet, the question remains regarding the lack of reference to "guidance" of the next generation: Where is the sharing of information, which is the subject of our current discussion of Dignity Therapy? Similarly, chap. 12–25 of Genesis fulfill the function of transmitting the memory and history of the nation's founding patriarch to future generations. However, where is Abraham's own active role in this transmission?

One verse in the Abraham narrative refers to such a role. Genesis 18:17–19 reads:

> Now the LORD had said, "Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do, since Abraham is to become a great and populous nation and all the nations of the earth are to bless themselves by him? For I have singled him out, **that he may instruct (יצוה) his children and his posterity to keep the way of the LORD by doing what is just and right**, in order that the LORD may bring about for Abraham what He has promised him" (Gen 18:17–19).[20]

Biblical scholars have noted that the reference to Abraham's

instruction of his children in verse 19 is anomalous within the Genesis narrative.[21] Particular attention has been paid to its use of vocabulary typical of the book of Deuteronomy, especially in exhortation of the Israelites towards righteous conduct.[22] Notably, the verse neither cites actual instructional speech by Abraham nor narrates an account of such activity. It is a report of God's expectations. Description of Abraham's instructional generative activity is conspicuously absent in Gen 25, and in the broader biblical narrative.

To summarize this discussion of Gen 25: Abraham's death is reported in the Hebrew Bible in a manner that accords with contemporary conceptions of a "good death" described in scientific literature about palliative care. The biblical report indicates Abraham's freedom from indignities, and depicts positive manifestations of dignity befitting Abraham as an individual, within his family, and among his ethno-geographic group. A feature lacking in the text is socio-cultural "generativity," an element appearing in death reports of other leading figures in the Hebrew Bible, via extensive farewell speeches to the figures' offspring.[23]

II. Generativity Documents and Ancient Jewish Literary Testaments: Jubilees 23–25

Modern Bible scholars are not the first readers to feel the lack of "generativity" in the biblical report of Abraham's death in Gen 25 and within the larger Abraham narrative in Genesis.[24] The *Book of Jubilees*, composed in the 2nd century BCE,[25] compensates for this "gap" in the biblical text by recording three separate episodes in which Abraham delivers guiding speeches to his offspring in anticipation of his death.[26] The form and function of these farewell addresses bear considerable similarity to Chochinov's "Generativity Documents." An important difference between the two is that the narrations in *Jubilees* are literary constructions. The texts are not generated by and for a living individual and people close to them, but are rather imagined and idealized didactic texts produced in order to propagate a religious and national message.[27]

Jubilees presents itself as the words of the "Angel of the Presence," spoken to Moses following the revelation of the Torah at Sinai, as a supplement to the Sinaitic Torah. The book re-tells the narrative of Genesis with some modifications, omissions, and additions, often filling in gaps in a manner similar to rabbinic

midrash.[28] Chapters 20–23 of *Jubilees* contain three instructional speeches by Abraham to his offspring, as well as an associated farewell blessing. These are presented as direct citations of his words, delivered in first-person, and addressed in the second person to his children and grandchildren.

As noted above, the Hebrew Bible contains a number of "testaments," or end-of-life-farewell addresses, attributed to significant leaders.[29] In post-biblical literature, a rather formulaic template emerged for the composition of testaments attributed to additional biblical figures.[30] The standard template contains three sections, focusing on the present, past, and future:

(1) PRESENT: *a narrative framework* that describes the setting for the address, containing (i) a notice that the death of the figure is drawing close, (ii) a note about the summoning and gathering of the attendant offspring, and (iii) a segue into the address itself, frequently a variation on the formula "he commanded."
(2) PAST: A *historical review*, usually spoken in first person and referring to exemplary episodes in the life of the biblical figure with a focus on a virtue or vice.
(3) FUTURE: A second-person *admonition* addressed to the gathered family, containing (i) exhortation to adopt the virtues of the patriarch and avoid or abandon his vices,[31] (ii) predictions, and (iii) blessings.

These ancient literary testaments reflect some similarities in form and content to the Generativity Document designed by Chochinov for end-of-life Dignity Therapy. This is a text produced via a collaborative process by a terminally ill patient and a trained psychotherapist.[32] The stages involve the following steps: one or two interview sessions conducted and audio-recorded by the therapist with the patient, transcription by a qualified expert commissioned by the therapist, editing of the text, reviewing the edited text with the patient, and lastly, creating and bestowing the final document upon the patient. These documents, comparable to the addresses in ancient Jewish literary testaments, record the individual's memories in the form of exemplary "snapshots" from their past, as well as messages of advice and hopes for their loved ones that are aimed toward the future.[33] The "Dignity Psychotherapy Question Protocol" reads as follows[34]:

Tell me a little about your life history; particularly the parts

that you either remember most or think are the most important?

When did you feel the most alive?

Are there particular things that you would want your family to know about you, and are there particular things you would want them to remember?

What are the most important roles you have played in your life (e.g., family roles, vocational roles, community service roles, etc.)? Why were they so important to you, and what do you think you accomplished in those roles?

What are your most important accomplishments, and what do you feel most proud of or take most pride in?

Are there particular things you feel need to be said to your loved ones or things that you would want to take the time to say once again?

What are your hopes and dreams for your loved ones?

What have you learned about life that you would want to pass along to others? What advice or words of guidance would you wish to pass along to your [son, daughter, husband, wife, parents, other(s)]?

Are there important words, or perhaps even instructions, you would like to offer your family?

In creating this permanent record, are there other things that you would like included?

To aid in our understanding of both the modern and biblical texts, the following table demonstrates the basic elements of the testament genre (narrative framework, historical review, and admonition/prophecy/blessing) within the farewell addresses attributed to Abraham in the book of *Jubilees*, in chap. 20, 21, 22.[35]

TABLE 4

	Jubilees 20	*Jubilees* 21	*Jubilees* 22	*Jubilees* 22
Narrative setting: Offspring gather	*Abraham summoned Ishmael and his twelve children, and Isaac and his two children, and the six children of Keturah, and their children.*	*Abraham summoned his son Isaac.*	*Isaac and Ishmael came from the Well of the Oath to their father Abraham to celebrate the festival of weeks (this is the festival of the first fruits of the harvest…)*	*He summoned Jacob*
	He ordered them:	*and gave him orders as follows: "I have grown old, but do not know when I will die because I have reached the full number of my days…"*	*He ate and drank. Then he blessed the most high God…*	*And said to him: "Now you, my son Jacob, come close and kiss me."* *So he came close and kissed him. Then he said:*
Exhortation: Positive	*to keep the way of the Lord so that they would do what is right and they should love one another…* Circumcision Adherence to covenant and commandments… Serve God	*"Now you, my son, keep his (God's) commands, ordinances, and verdicts"* Sacrificial laws: Pouring out the blood Use of salt Proper wood for the altar. Purification		*"Be strong before people, and continue to exercise power among all of Seth's descendants…* *Now you, my son Jacob, remember what I say, and keep the commandments of your father Abraham."*

	Jubilees 20	*Jubilees* 21	*Jubilees* 22	*Jubilees* 22
Exhortation: Negative	Idolatry Fornication Impurity Marrying Canaanite wives	Idolatry Sacrificial laws: Consuming blood; Exonerating bloodshed of humans		*Separate from the nations and do not eat with them. Do not act as they do…* Impurity Idolatry Marrying Canaanite wives
Prediction	*because the descendants of Canaan will be uprooted from the earth*			*"All of his (Ham's) descendants and all of his (people) who remain will be destroyed from the earth"* *"This house I have built for myself to put my name on it upon the earth. It has been given to you and to your descendants forever… Your descendants and your name will remain throughout all the history of the earth"*

	Jubilees 20	*Jubilees* 21	*Jubilees* 22	*Jubilees* 22
Historical Review	*He told them about the punishment of the Giants, and the punishment of Sodom – how they were condemned because of their wickedness; because of the sexual impurity, uncleanness, and corruption among themselves, they died in (their) sexual impurity. "Now keep yourselves from all sexual impurity and uncleanness and from all the contamination of sin so that you do not make our name into a curse, your entire lives into a (reason for) hissing, and all your children into something to be destroyed by the sword. Then you will be accursed like Sodom, and all who remain of you like the people of Gomorrah."*	*"Now I am 175 years of age. Throughout my entire lifetime I have continually remembered the Lord, and tried to do his will wholeheartedly and to walk a straight course in all his ways. I have personally hated idols in order to keep myself for doing the will of the one who created me"*	*"I am now 175 years of age, old and with (my) time completed. All of my days have proved to be peace for me. The enemy's sword has not subdued me in anything at all which you have given me and my sons during all my life until today."*	*"May the most high God give you all the blessings with which he blessed me and with which he blessed Noah and Adam."* *"For through Ham's sins Canaan erred."* *"As the people of Sodom were taken from the earth…"*

Blessing/ Thanks/ Praise/ Supplication of God		*"For he is the living God. He is more holy, faithful, and just than anyone… he is a just God who exercises judgment …"*	*Then he blessed the most high God who created the earth…* *Now I offer humble thanks to you, my God, because you have shown me this day*	
Blessing of progeny	*"so that he (God) may be delighted with you, give you his favor…"* Rains *"bless everything that you do"* Fertility: land, offspring, herds *"You will become a blessing upon the earth"*	*"… so that you may be kept from every evil one and that he may save you from every (kind of) death"* *"May the most high God—my God and your God—strengthen you to do his will. May he bless all your descendants—the remnant of your descendants—throughout the history of eternity with every proper blessing so that you may become a blessing throughout the entire earth…"*	*"May your (God's) kindness and peace rest upon your servant and on the descendants of his sons so that they, of all the nations of the earth, may become your chosen people and heritage from now until all the time of the earth's history throughout all the ages"*	*"My son Jacob, may the God of all bless and strengthen you to do before him what is right and what he wants. May he choose you and your descendants to be his people for his heritage in accord with his will throughout all time… May my son Jacob and all his sons be blessed to the most high Lord throughout all ages."* *"May he renew his covenant with you so that you may be for him the people of his heritage throughout all the ages…"*

The following synoptic table documents the similarities between the literary testaments of Abraham in *Jubilees* and the Generative Documents of Dignity Therapy Narrative while also highlighting key differences:

Table 5

Generative Documents	Abraham's Testaments in *Jubilees*
PRESENT: Production of a written document	"PRESENT": Narrative setting within a literary text: gathering of offspring
(see below)	FUTURE: Exhortation: Positive Exhortation: Negative Prediction
PAST: Life history; most important or best-remembered memories. ("When did you feel most alive?" This functions also for present.)	PAST: Historical Review
Specific things that you would want your family to know about you Most important roles you have played in life Most important accomplishments	
FUTURE: Advice and guidance; instructions What are your hopes and dreams for your loved ones?	FUTURE: (see above) Blessing of progeny
Variable Temporality: OPEN-ENDED Are there particular things that you feel still need to be said to your loved ones, or things that you would want to take the time to say once again? In creating this permanent record, are there other things that you would like included?	Variable Temporality: (ATEMPORAL or MULTI-TEMPORAL) Blessing/Thanks/Praise/Supplication of God

Narrative is central to both the modern generative documents and the ancient literary testament texts. In the therapy process, the written generative document is the tangible artifact produced through a process of live interviewing and written transcription of the conversation between therapist and terminally-ill patient. The creation and production process itself is a key component of the therapeutic value for the patient. Therapeutic and other benefits for those close to the patient are secondary and contingent upon the patient's involvement in co-creating and producing the document. In the Second Temple composition, imagined oral speech is embedded in a textual narrative. The narrative's intended beneficiary is the implied reader of the text. The text's author also intends to derive benefit insofar as he hopes to succeed in transmitting his religious message. I thus endorse one aspect of Van Ruiten's statement that "it is not *Jubilees'* intention to instruct people with regard to their own death. As such it is not counseling for the dying but counseling for life."[36] I, however, depart from Van Ruiten's elaboration of this observation as applying to Abraham's children and grandchildren. The significant target audience of these speeches does not consist of the characters inside the narrative, i.e., those within the "world of the narrative." Instead, the speech is directed towards readers of the book in the author's own time, as well as for posterity.

The divergence in aims and audiences has an impact on the order, content, and texture of the elements listed in the two columns in the above chart. In *Jubilees*, the sequence of the elements within the spoken text is variable. Emphasis is placed on instruction and exhortation, especially concerning observance of God's commands. There is greater focus on the future than the past, and the past is referenced as a stimulus towards adherence to instructions regarding the future. In contrast, the elements in the Generative Document are ordered chronologically. The past is referenced for its own independent value in strengthening and deepening the patient's sense of self and relationships with others, and as an aide mémoire for the future to preserve and strengthen the memory and positive attachment of others to the patient.

I propose that the above distinctions may be useful in illuminating our understanding of the Generative Document, and possibly enhancing its practical application. Biblical scholars re-

fer to the use of literary techniques such as the incorporation of testaments within *Jubilees* as "authority-conferring strategies."[37] By placing his message in the mouth of the patriarch Abraham – especially in dramatic farewell addresses – the author of the text enhances the status of both his composition and message. The enhancement is effected through the medium of pseudepigraphical oral testament embedded in a written text that purports to be a transcription of orally transmitted angelic revelation.[38] That medium embodies an essential part of the message, namely that the composition offers the key to insider information about heavenly knowledge and righteous conduct, and thus about the path to divine reward.[39]

In contrast, the Generative Document implements a "dignity-enhancing strategy." The creation, production, and sharing of the text are means of eliciting and imbuing "meaning, purpose, dignity, and spiritual or existential well-being."[40] The patient's own "authority" is the starting point of the process. The aim of enhancing the patient's sense of personal authority is predicated upon the basis of authority regarding self as an inherent human right. As noted and illustrated in Table 1, Chochinov distinguishes three aspects of dignity concerns in therapy for terminally ill patients, in alignment with Rao's categories of human dignity: the illness, the patient's own "repertoire," and an external social dignity "inventory." The model of Dignity Therapy presupposes the basic right to and existence of dignity. In large part, it is a response to the threat to that dignity posed by the illness. The concept of the Generativity Document relates primarily to Chochinov's second and third categories, the "Dignity-Conserving Repertoire" and the "Social Dignity Inventory." Chochinov describes Dignity Therapy as aiming to enhance the "dignity-conserving repertoire" of the patient. This repertoire focuses upon the patient as an individual.

Chochinov sub-divides the dignity-conserving repertoire into "perspectives" and "practices."[41] He describes dignity-conserving perspectives as "internally held qualities that may be based on long-standing personal characteristics, attributes, or an acquired world view," and he identifies eight sub-themes: (1) continuity of self; (2) role preservation; (3) generativity/legacy; (4) maintenance of pride; (5) hopefulness; (6) autonomy/control; (7) acceptance; and (8) resilience/fighting spirit. The practices he lists are "living in the moment, maintaining normalcy, [and]

seeking spiritual comfort." The production of a Generativity Document is a means of engaging the patient in an active and creative task that requires attention and exertion in the present moment. It involves investing in the future in a manner that can offer spiritual comfort; offering continuity of the self beyond the approaching physical end-of-self. The medium and the message are one and the same: the patient's self. The telling of one's story is inherently a self-affirming act, and the guiding questions function to direct the story towards maximum self-affirmation and meaning-making. The patient is invited to share "the memories in which you were the most you" and to share the messages that are most important for them to pass on. Patients are invited to sift through their memories and select the ones that feel most representative of who they are, who they want to be, and how they want to be seen and remembered. That story becomes a self-portrait, and the advice offered to loved ones emerges out of that self-portrait.[42]

In Abraham's testaments in *Jubilees*, the process is reversed. As Annette Reed writes about testaments in general: "Their anonymous authors often take the opportunity to opine about life or death, present action or future judgment, and they retroject later norms and arguments onto the biblical figures in whose names they write and speak."[43]

In summary: The literary technique of having the reader "listen in" on Abraham's address to Isaac, Jacob, et al. strengthens the authority of the text and heightens the reader's identification with the founding figures of Israel, thereby shaping and fortifying their religious identity in accord with the author's values. The poignancy and pathos of the deathbed setting for Abraham's testaments and the "celebrity" attribution serve the rhetorical aim of effective transmission of the author's polemic message. In Chochinov's Generativity Documents, the transmission of the message serves the socio-psychological and spiritual aims of strengthening the dignity of the individual, their relationships, and the memories of them.

III. An Alternative Model: Subverting the Good Death in the Testament of Abraham

The *Testament of Abraham* reflects a different form of assertion of self than that found in Chochinov's Generativity Documents. This section considers this work in the context of conceptions

of a "good death," in relation to Rao's and Chochinov's second and third categories of dignity: positive individual dignity and social dignity. The *Testament of Abraham*, most likely composed around the turn of the era, has sometimes been called an "anti-testament," as it subverts the conventional forms of the trope described in Section II.[44] This work combines elements of various ancient literary genres (including the apocalypse and ancient novel) with a considerable amount of wry humor to tell a story about Abraham's refusal to die or even prepare for death. Despite God's best intentions to afford Abraham the opportunity to deliver a farewell address and make other arrangements for a "good death," Abraham persists in employing various delay and avoidance tactics. In the version of the work that I discuss here, Death must finally resort to congenial deception in order to remove Abraham's soul from his body.[45]

A brief summary of the plot will facilitate our analysis. The *Testament of Abraham* describes consecutive missions to Abraham, by the archangel Michael and by the figure of Death. Initially, God deploys Michael to inform Abraham of his impending death "so that he may set his affairs in order" (T. Ab. 1:4). Michael is so hospitably and lovingly received by Abraham that he can't bear to complete his mission. In an accommodating compromise, God transmits the message via a symbolic dream dreamed by Isaac, which Michael then interprets. Abraham informs Michael that he refuses to die. He tries to put off the inevitable by requesting a tour of the earth (which is granted, followed by a tour of heaven). In heaven, he views the Final Judgment of souls and learns about the process of reward and punishment after death.[46] Upon their return, Abraham reneges on his prior assurance to go peacefully and again refuses to die. Following Michael's failure, God sends Death himself to inform and remove Abraham from life. Death, too, is graciously received, but after he identifies himself and his dual mission, Abraham again declares his refusal to comply. Abraham puts off Death with questions, dilatory tactics, and dramas, ultimately declaring his need for a nap. Finally, Death offers Abraham his right hand as though in a gesture of support, but through the contact involved in this deceptive gesture, he takes Abraham's soul and transports it to paradise at God's command.

The story pre-supposes the normative conceptions of a "good death" that we have previously identified in ancient Jewish texts,

especially in the testamentary farewell addresses. At the same time, it offers resistance to some of these socio-cultural assumptions as outlined in the table below, with particular respect to the element of "acceptance."

TABLE 6

"Ten Criteria for a Good Death" by Shneidman:	*Testament of Abraham* Reflections of Criteria	*Testament of Abraham* Counters to Criteria
1. NATURAL	8:10 God tells Abraham, through Michael: "*I have not suffered any deadly disease to come upon you…*" (see also criterion 10, below, "PEACEABLE")	
2. MATURE	1:1 *Abraham lived the measure of his life, 995 years. Having lived all the years of his life in quietness, gentleness, and righteousness…* 15:1 *Behold his end has drawn near, and the measure of his life is fulfilled.*	
3. EXPECTED	1:4–7 *Now Master God, summoning his archangel Michael, said to him: "… You, archangel Michael, go to Abraham, my beloved friend. Announce his death to him and assure him in this manner: 'At this time, you are about to depart from this vain world…'"* 8:9 God tells Michael to remind Abraham that all humans are mortal and that: "*For good comfort I have sent my commander-in-chief Michael to you, so that you may know your departure from the world…*"	
4. HONORABLE	20:10–14 *Immediately* (upon Abraham's death) *the archangel Michael came with a multitude of angels and took up his precious soul in his hands in a divinely woven linen cloth. They tended the body of the just Abraham with divine ointments and perfumes… The angels received his precious soul and ascended into heaven, singing the hymn of "thrice holy"…*	

"Ten Criteria for a Good Death" by Shneidman	*Testament of Abraham* Reflections of Criteria	*Testament of Abraham* Counters to Criteria
5. PREPARED	1:4 *Now Master God, summoning his archangel Michael, said to him: Go down, commander-in-chief Michael, to Abraham, and speak to him concerning his death, so that he may set his affairs in order…* 4:11 "*…so that* (Abraham) *may make disposal of all his possessions.*" 8:11 God tells Michael to tell Abraham that the point of the angelic advance notice was, "*for good comfort…so that you may set your house in order and all that belongs to you, and that you may bless Isaac your beloved son.*" 15:1 After the heavenly tour, God instructs Michael: "*He shall set all things in order, and then you shall take him and bring him to me.*" At the homecoming scene, Michael instructs Abraham: "*Hearken, righteous Abraham. Behold your wife Sarah. Behold also your beloved son Isaac. Behold also all your male and female servants around you. Make disposition of all that you have for the day has drawn near…*"	

"Ten Criteria for a Good Death" by Shneidman	*Testament of Abraham* Reflections of Criteria	*Testament of Abraham* Counters to Criteria
6. ACCEPTED		RESISTANCE by Abraham (also by the archangel Michael, Sarah, Abraham's household) 7:11 Abraham tells Michael: "*Now I know that you are an angel of the Lord and were sent to take my soul. I will not go with you, but you do whatever you are commanded.*" 15:10 "*Abraham said (to Michael): I will not go with you!*" 16:14–16 Abraham confronts Death: "*Why have you come here?*" …. "*I know what you mean, but I will not go with you*"

"Ten Criteria for a Good Death" by Shneidman	*Testament of Abraham* Reflections of Criteria	*Testament of Abraham* Counters to Criteria
7. CIVILIZED	The household's love for Abraham and fear of his death is a recurring theme. This is in keeping with Shneidman's understanding of a civilized death as one in which one is demonstrably cherished by loved ones. And yet, see next column. 15:4-5 The scene that most resembles a conventional deathbed scene is the one in which Abraham's household gathers around him, demonstrating relief that he has not died. When Michael returns Abraham, Sarah thanks him, falling at his feet, and Sarah and Isaac, and all of Abraham's household *surrounded Abraham and embraced him, glorifying God.*	Even at the early stages of the story (chap. 5), Isaac's premonitory dream of having the splendorous sun and moon taken away from him sets the main characters weeping, in comic excess. At his death, Abraham is attended by loved ones, in accord with Shneidman's description of this criterion, but the scene is stereotypically undignified. 20: 6–7 After Abraham attempts to dismiss Death, so he can rest: *Then Isaac his son came and fell upon his breast, weeping, and his wife Sarah came and embraced his feet, lamenting bitterly. There came also his male slaves and his female slaves, and they surrounded his couch, lamenting greatly.*

"Ten Criteria for a Good Death" by Shneidman:	*Testament of Abraham* Reflections of Criteria	*Testament of Abraham* Counters to Criteria
8. GENERATIVE	7:7 The conclusion of Isaac's dream of being deprived of the sun and moon is: "*And he took them away from me, but he left the rays upon me.*" 8:11 A purpose of the death notification to Abraham is "*and that you may bless Isaac your beloved son.*"	
9. RUEFUL To experience the contemplative emotions of sadness and regret without collapse		9:5–6 Abraham claims that if he is given a tour of all the earth, then he will have no regrets. He asks Michael to bring his request to God: "*But I ask one request of you: now, Lord and Master, hear my prayer, for while still in this body I desire to see all the inhabited earth and all the creations that you established by one word. When I see these, then I shall depart from life, I shall be without sorrow.*"

"Ten Criteria for a Good Death" by Shneidman:	*Testament of Abraham* Reflections of Criteria	*Testament of Abraham* Counters to Criteria
10. PEACEABLE With amicability and love; freedom from physical pain	16:5 God commands Death, "*But I tell you not to terrify him. Bring him with fair speech, for he is my friend*." (In contrast, Death shows Abraham a display of dreadful deaths, *great fierceness and unendurable bitterness, and every mortal disease as of the odor of death* causing *about seven thousand male and female servants* to die (17:13–17), though they are later returned to life (18:11); He explains these visions to Abraham (ch. 19), and notes that there are "*72 deaths*." (20:2)) Death states that of the 72 types of death, *"One is the just death, buying its fixed time, and many people in one hour enter into death before being given over to the grave."*	8:8 God asks Abraham about his non-compliance: "Tell me why you have rebelled against me and why there is grief in you."

Table 6 highlights the theme of resistance to dying and death in the *Testament of Abraham*. In addition to Abraham's repeated explicit declarations of his refusal to die and his delay tactics,[47] non-acceptance is found also in actions and statements by other figures and in play with conventional tropes about a good death. Michael's emotional overwhelm and non-compliance are introduced with bathroom humor:

> The chief captain arose and went out, as if by constraint of his belly to make issue of water, and he ascended to heaven in the twinkling of an eye. He stood before the Lord and said to him: Master, Lord, let your power know that I am unable to remind the righteous man of his death … (T. Ab. 4:5–6).[48]

Abraham's request for a tour of the earth reflects familiarity with the phenomenon of end-of-life "ruefulness" and recalls the convention of the "last request" granted to prisoners prior to execution. In a surprising variation on the convention, Abraham receives not only his specified wish, but also a far more extraordinary bonus trip to heaven before he reneges on his agreement to die after the fulfillment of his request. The gathering of his household around Abraham sets the perfect scene for a farewell address and a dignified or "civilized" parting from his loved ones. However, the scene degenerates into an unseemly excessive demonstration of grief. This uncontrollable communal weeping has its precedents in earlier episodes in the book, for example when Sarah began to cry along with Abraham, Michael, and Isaac solely out of empathy and without even knowing the cause of the contagious sobbing.[49] These comic scenes of excessive weeping in the *Testament of Abraham* (occurring before Abraham's death and around his deathbed) are to be contrasted with the scene of Abraham's death in *Jubilees* 23, where a great family and communal weeping occurs *after* the patriarch has died:

> He (Abraham) put two of Jacob's fingers on his eyes and blessed the God of gods. He covered his face, stretched out his feet, fell asleep forever, and was gathered to his ancestors. During all of this, Jacob was lying in his bosom and was unaware that his grandfather Abraham had died. When Jacob awakened from his sleep, there was Abraham, cold as ice. He said: Father, father"! But he said nothing to him. Then he knew that he was dead. He got up from his

> bosom and ran and told his mother Rebecca. Rebecca went to Isaac at night and told him. They went together – and Jacob with them (carrying) a lamp in his hands. When they came, they found Abraham's corpse lying (there). Isaac fell on his father's face, cried, and kissed him. After the report was heard in the household of Abraham, his son Ishmael set out and came to his father Abraham. He mourned for his father Abraham — he and all Abraham's household. They mourned very much. They—both of his sons Isaac and Ishmael—buried him in the double cave near his wife Sarah. All the people of his household as well as Isaac, Ishmael, and all their sons and Keturah's sons in their places mourned him for 40 days. Then the tearful mourning for Abraham was completed.

I propose that the the aim of the tragicomic account of resistance in the *Testament of Abraham* is to guide readers towards "acceptance."[50] The composition aims to shake up readers' assumptions and expectations in order to relieve their anxieties about death and to exhort them towards righteous behavior. The key message of the work is that accepting the reality of death can be liberating rather than paralyzingly depressing, and that this acceptance offers the possibility (and necessity) for each person to assume responsibility for their own lives. The medium, as I see it, is experiential literary and psychological identification.[51]

A recurring motif in the *Testament of Abraham* is that death is unavoidable, universal, and undesirable. This is stated in the opening of the work: T. Ab. 1:2 "But even upon this man, however, there came the common, inexorable, bitter lot of death, and the uncertain end of life." The universality of death is emphasized in God's speeches about Adam and Eve and all subsequent humanity (T. Ab. 8:5) and in the heavenly Judgment scene (chap. 11–13). The ultimate inevitability of death is asserted despite the reversal of some unusual instances of accidental premature death.[52] Furthermore, despite his resistance, even the exceptional Abraham dies in the end. I suggest that the repeated assertions about the inevitability of death are intended to guide the reader towards *acceptance* of mortality through identification with Abraham. The text presumes and invites sympathy with Abraham, and also with the patriarch's determination to defy death. The underlying message, however, is that despite his resistance, Abraham ultimately moved on to a heavenly after-

life that far surpasses any earthly existence, including Abraham's distinctively blessed existence in which he enjoyed riches, righteousness, and love, "as the stars of heaven."

By encouraging readers to identify with Abraham and his defiance, the text paves a way for the reader to feel reassured about their own inevitable end of life. The readers' reluctance to confront their own mortality is validated by the fact that even the paradigmatically obedient Abraham attempted to evade this inescapable fate.[53] In one sense, the reader's journey through the book may be seen to correspond with Abraham's journey through earth and heaven, and ultimately to eternal dwelling in paradise. At first, death (and even the mere prospect of death) is something to be kept at bay, something that might touch one's life only when it happens to other people.[54] When Abraham prays for the deaths of the sinners whom he views during his tour of earth, this serves to reinforce a negative understanding of death as punishment for extreme evildoers — a possibility that further corroborates the inclination of the presumably non-evil (though imperfect) reader to dissociate from death. These episodes appeal to readers by confirming their negative presuppositions about death; at the same time, they begin to accustom the reader to the reality of the inescapability of death. In this sense, the text subverts even its own ostensible assumptions.

By setting up an association of death with sin, the text allows readers to remain in their comfort zone of identifying with righteous Abraham who does not want to die, but it also non-threateningly interjects a seed of recognition that they themselves are not as perfect as Abraham. Readers might even be encouraged to begin thinking of using their time on earth for repentance. Moving on to heaven, the reader learns together with Abraham that while there is room for mercy in the final judgment, sinners greatly outnumber righteous souls. Here, too, there is validation of readers' fears of death, but also a guiding message that an alternative is available, by way of righteousness. When Death finally takes Abraham's hand, Abraham believes he will receive this-worldly solace. We, the readers, know that this is not the case. We watch him being deceived, knowing that rather than merely being soothed, he is being released from life as he is unwittingly and unwillingly subjected to the fate that he has been trying so hard to avoid. We are aware that had Abraham known this would happen, he would have resisted. We also know, how-

ever, that his resistance would have been misplaced. The release given to him by Death is, of course, far more beneficial to him than the comfort that he sought from his anxieties about dying. In a similar vein, in the process of reading this story, readers will have believed that their anxieties about death were being validated, but in the end, we have been tricked into recognition that Death can be a highly desirable passage into eternal blessing. We will also have been primed to conclude that the key to relieving anxieties about death is to emulate Abraham's righteousness.[55]

The book's ending was in fact announced in its beginning. Michael was charged to tell Abraham: "You shall at this time depart from this vain world, and shall quit the body, and go to your own Lord among the good." Neither Abraham (nor the implied reader) was receptive to that message. As the story moves through Abraham's experiences, readers vicariously come to see death as something relevant, interesting and manageable. Abraham himself does not succeed in learning this lesson during life. That is acceptable, as he had already lived an exceptionally long and righteous life. Abraham merits an alternative form of "good death" to the one that he has been so assiduously avoiding. Readers who have accompanied him on his journeys will undoubtedly have a less blessed death than that of this special patriarch. We can nevertheless aim to merit a reasonably blessed death, as befits righteous individuals. More importantly, the *Testament of Abraham* assures us that we have the ability to attain a similarly blessed afterlife in paradise.

As the above analysis has shown, the *Testament of Abraham* creatively reworks sacred scripture and conventional literary forms, subverting textual traditions for the purpose of reinforcing traditional religious beliefs regarding acceptance of death and belief in the afterlife.[56] I argued that this combination of doctrinal normativity and free textual play is intended to provide both consolation and encouragement for readers. This result depends upon a mixture of both individualism and social conformity, which can provide insight into end-of-life Dignity Therapy.

Shneidman's ten criteria for a good death are highly contextualized within socio-cultural norms. The elements "honorable" and "civilized" are explicitly determined by society, and his understanding of "prepared" and "generative" also relate to conventional expectations. These external determinants are less

prominent in A.D. Weisman's more compact list of four criteria for an "appropriate death":[57]

(1) Internal conflicts, such as fears about loss of control, should be reduced as much as possible;
(2) The individual's personal sense of identity should be sustained;
(3) Critical relationships should be enhanced or at least maintained, and if possible, conflicts resolved; and
(4) The person should be encouraged to set and attempt to reach meaningful, albeit limited, goals such as attending a graduation, a wedding, or the birth of a child, as a way to provide a sense of continuity into the future.

Shneidman and Weisman both reflect concern with individual and social dignity. However, they differ in their assumptions about how dignity is constructed by the relationship between an individual and society. Shneidman describes individual dignity as stemming from conformity to societal expectations, whereas Weisman depicts social dignity as emerging from individual values. Weisman's streamlined model reflects Rao's understanding of social dignity as "recognition of individual and group differences." This is a somewhat more nuanced formulation than Chochinov's description of social dignity as related to direct interaction with others, or "how the quality of interactions with others can enhance or detract from one's sense of dignity." For the purpose of palliative care in general, Chochinov's category of "external sources of issues" is appropriate for the Social Dignity Inventory. However, for the particular purpose of evaluating the appropriateness of creating a Generativity Document for and with terminally ill patients, it might be important to bear in mind that internal factors (such as positive individual dignity) and external ones (such as social dignity) are inextricably linked. An individual's sense of self is constructed and preserved in relation to their communities. This is often not a simple case of conformity or non-conformity, but rather a complex and highly individualized blend of the two.

The *Testament of Abraham* has often been understood as non-conformist and irreverent.[58] I have argued that it employs subversive literary techniques in order to provide a consoling message geared towards accepting both the inevitability of death and conventional beliefs about repentance and the afterlife. I agree with Lawrence Wills' characterization of the work as

"a satirical novel, written in the form of a mock testament, that utilizes a considerable artistic skill in creating an arch narrative for an alienated readership."[59] However, I disagree with his assessment that the work "satirizes the very values that the other Jewish novels would affirm." The *Testament of Abraham* plays with genre and with biblical narrative and traditions, but it affirms core traditional *values*, while shifting the perspective to the individual. Classic testaments showcase "Great Men" calmly facing death with control, preparation, acceptance, and dignity. The *Testament of Abraham* presents the traditionally quintessentially obedient patriarch in fantastical distress, denial, and resistance, in order to invite the reader to adopt a stance of control, preparation, acceptance, and dignity. Traditional testaments heighten the stature of the patriarch to serve as an authority figure and role model. The *Testament of Abraham* reduces Abraham's stature in some ways. It retains a portrait of an extraordinarily righteous and divinely beloved man, but one beset by ordinary human misconceptions about death, judgment, and mercy, as well as by common human states and responses such as fear, deflection, and avoidance. It does this, I have argued, in order to guide readers towards overcoming their resistance.

As is the case with the testament genre and literary testaments in *Jubilees*, the *Testament of Abraham* is a literary work that aims to propagate a socio-religious message and promote a particular socio-religious identity. Both compositions tell narratives about the patriarch Abraham and both purport to transmit the patriarch's words. In *Jubilees*, the embedding of the farewell address is an "authority-conferring" strategy that confers authority upon the *Book of Jubilees* and its author. The technique aims to influence the reader to *follow* Abraham's example and instruction as conveyed in the form of the author's messages. In the *Testament of Abraham*, the subversion of the testament genre functions as a "dignity-conferring technique" upon its readers. We are challenged to participate in an interactive journey through the text, and ultimately to reject (the fictionalized) Abraham's example.

Conclusion

My purpose in writing this chapter is to enrich conversation about Dignity Therapy by identifying features in ancient Jewish textual depictions that align with core elements in Chochi-

nov's Generativity Documents. I have attempted to maintain a descriptive stance, in a conscious effort to avoid common tendencies of apologetics or normativization. I do not advocate viewing the overlaps between the ancient texts and the modern therapeutic technique as a basis for asserting the validity of either dataset.[60] I have attempted (1) to illuminate some of the socio-historical underpinnings for consideration of written legacies as vehicles for nurturing "psychological and spiritual well-being" and (2) to contribute to the development of a broad socio-cultural "language" that will facilitate conversation about how to conduct effective and dignity-preserving conversations about uncomfortable topics, such as end-of-life experiences.

In Section I, I examined how the description of Abraham's death in Genesis 25 contains many of the elements that palliative care specialists identify as characterizing an "appropriate" or "good death." I addressed the question of cause and effect with respect to these similarities. Does the account in Genesis reflect widely shared human values that have been identified in our own time through the insight of clinicians such as Chochinov? Or have contemporary researchers been influenced by the generativity of the biblical text? It seems most likely to me that both hypotheses are correct.[61] The textual analyses in Sections II and III indicate that the direction of influence between textual tradition and society is not linear but cyclical. The re-working of the biblical text in early Jewish writings such as *Jubilees* and the *Testament of Abraham* demonstrates an interplay between canonical text and social norms resulting in new textual traditions, which in turn may generate new socio-religious realities.

Since biblical and post-biblical texts have played such a significant role in establishing meaning for Western society, these texts can potentially offer information helpful for understanding patients' needs.[62] One of the hallmarks of the Hebrew Bible is its use of narrative. In making use of the widespread human predilection for narrative, the Generativity Document continues a long-standing tradition. Yet it is important to bear in mind that storytelling might not be the best-suited or most natural means of self-expression for all individuals.

In Section II, I distinguished between the "authority-conferring" strategy of farewell addresses in ancient Jewish literary testaments and the "dignity-enhancing" technique of Chochinov's Generativity Document. I noted that in *Jubilees*, the figure of

Abraham serves as a mouthpiece for the author's socio-religious message. In the Generativity Document, the content is secondary to the affirmation of the patient's personhood. Nevertheless, the content must have meaning in order for the process to be effective. The questions posed in Chochinov's model incorporate a careful balance between open-ended autonomy and guided focus, with particular sensitivity to the fact that patients who are offered Dignity Therapy as a therapeutic means are often physically, mentally, and emotionally exhausted.[63] The active involvement of the interviewing therapist makes it inevitable (and even necessary) for the therapist to inject their understandings of social norms into the narrative, guiding a patient towards memories that will be positive and affirming for them. In order to support the individual's assertion of individual dignity, the therapist must make assumptions about the patient's views concerning topics such as family, friends, honor, and generativity.[64] This bears some similarity to the "gap-filling" that characterizes *Jubilees* and ancient midrash. The ancient Jewish authors used scriptural gaps as opportunities for weaving their own narratives to authorize their own messages – which they understood to be religiously valid expressions and extensions of the sacred texts. For the contemporary therapist working on a Generativity Document, gaps pose a challenge to connect the dots in a way that is as faithful as possible to the patient's (perceived) will. There is a tension between eliciting and validating the patient's self-understanding and the therapist imposing their own criteria of dignity.

In Section III, I suggested that the *Testament of Abraham* subverts conventional literary forms and textual traditions in order to ultimately encourage the reader to embrace conventionally pious beliefs about reward and punishment and the afterlife. The work also offers consolation through its empathic message of acceptance. The *Testament of Abraham* appeals to readers with an individualist outlook, offering spiritual comfort. This solace is not particularly well-suited to individuals who would actually be in an end-of-life situation. The book is oriented more towards the existential philosophical problem of mortality than the experiential phenomenon of death. The figure of Abraham is not suffering physically from a terminal disease but rather experiences psycho-emotional and spiritual angst about the universal terminal condition of Life. This theoretical bent enables the

book's lightness of tone and use of humor. It also drives the technique of identification and empathy, which stands in contrast to *Jubilees'* appeal to authority. Consideration of the literary use of sympathy and empathy in the *Testament of Abraham* could potentially be of value for consideration of these perspectives in relation to real-life end-of-life palliative care.[65]

In closing, I would like to remark once more on the interplay between individual and social conceptions of identity in relation to religious and personal narratives. Although I find the distinction between individual dignity and social dignity to be heuristically useful, I would emphasize that positive conceptions of the former are derived from conceptions of the latter. Individual preferences for seeing and imbuing meaning in life are constructed on the basis of broader conventions and assumptions about meaning. One's perceptions of identity, role in life, generativity, etc. are shaped through conscious and unconscious reaction to social expectations (whether conformist, oppositional, or, most frequently in the contemporary era, selective). It would be convenient for me to end this chapter with an observation about sensitivity to individual preferences in determining best practices for end-of-life care. There is something reassuring and compassionate-feeling about empowering patients to make their own decisions.[66] However, those of us who shape policy and public discourse (which may possibly include all human beings) have a responsibility to acknowledge that individual choices function within systemic structures, and that our assumptions and prescriptions contribute to construction, preservation, or change in normative perspectives.[67] I have attempted to bear this responsibility in mind, along with awareness of the diversity and dynamic shaping and re-shaping of Jewish texts and traditions, in producing this article as my contribution to developing a common multidisciplinary language for discussing "Jewish Perspectives" on end-of-life.

Notes

1 Harvey M. Chochinov, Dignity Therapy: Final Words for Final Days, Oxford, 2012. I would like to express my gratitude to Stephan Probst for introducing me to Chochinov's work, and for inviting me to contribute to this volume. See also Chochinov, "Dying, Dignity, and New Horizons in Palliative End-of-Life Care," in: CA: A Cancer Journal for Clinicians 56 (2006), 84–103. doi:10.3322/canjclin.56.2.84; Chochinov et al., "Dignity Therapy: A Novel Psychotherapeutic Intervention for Patients Near the End of Life," in: Journal of Clinical Oncology 23 (2005), 5520–5525; Chochinov et al., "Dignity in the Terminally Ill: A Developing Empirical Model," in: Social Science and Medicine. 54(3) (2002):433–443.

2 The term "frame," together with the citation from Chochinov (Dignity Therapy, preface, vi) are taken from Vedder's review of the volume: Rachel Vedder, Review, H.M. Chochinov, "Dignity Therapy: Final Words for Final Days," in: BMJ Support Palliative Care 3 (2013), 122.

3 Text is cited from the NJPS Tanakh translation.

4 Neomi Rao, "Three Concepts of Dignity in Constitutional Law," in: Notre Dame Law Review 86 (2011), 183–271; George Mason Law and Economics Research Paper No. 11-20. Available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=1838597>. Rao states further: "Such dignity exists merely by virtue of a person's humanity and does not depend on intelligence, morality, or social status" (187). In the German philosophical and legal tradition, this concept is termed *Menschenwürde.*

5 <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dignity> accessed 17 January, 2017.

6 In this article, I presume universal dignity as a basic value and human right, while acknowledging that this ideal is not currently universally recognized. See Josiah Ober, "Democracy's Dignity," in: American Political Science Review 106, 4 November 2012, 827–846. Ober situates his categories of dignity within "nonideal" political theory (see esp. 828 fn. 4). In an earlier paper that he described as a work in progress, Ober proposed three categories of dignity, with "civic" dignity as an intermediate category between universal human dignity and meritocratic dignity: "Three Kinds of Dignity," Yale Law Workshop. December 10, 2009. Draft of 2009.11.30. <https://www.law.yale.edu/system/files/documents/pdf/Intellectual_Life/LTW-Ober.pdf> accessed 16 February 2017. In the earlier paper, Ober observed that a distinction is generally made between "the Kantian conception of dignity as intrinsic 'worth beyond price' (universal human dignity) and an older conception of dignity as high standing (which I call meritocratic dignity)." (See "Dignity, Rank, and Rights: The 2009 Tanner Lectures at UC Berkeley." Public Law and Legal Theory Research Paper No. 09–50. New York, New York University School of Law, cited by Ober, op. cit.). In the final 2012 paper, Ober revised his taxonomy, describing four kinds of dignity. In my opinion, the revision compounded an earlier problem with his model, in presuming that status is, or can be, merit-based in a nonideal framework. Selective dignity has historically been bestowed on individuals and groups on the basis of a variety of factors, most often resulting from unearned

privileges of status and power. Evidence does not support Ober's claim that non-ideal societies confer dignity and rank primarily on the basis of qualifying attributes, even when they may claim to do so.

7 Rao cites Eleanor Roosevelt's explanation that the Human Rights Commission carefully considered the word and included it "in order to emphasize that every human being is worthy of respect." (Rao, "Three Concepts," 195 fn. 39, citing Mary Ann Glendon, A World Made New: Eleanor Roosevelt and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. New York, 2001, 173 f., here 146. See also, Article 1.1 of the German Basic Law (*Grundgesetz*): "Die Würde des Menschen [= Menschenwürde] ist unantastbar. Sie zu achten und zu schützen ist Verpflichtung aller staatlichen Gewalt." ("Human dignity shall be inviolable. To respect and protect it shall be the duty of all state authority.")

8 Rao, "Three Concepts," 269.

9 Isaiah Berlin, Two Concepts of Liberty. Oxford, 1958, reprinted as "Two Concepts of Liberty" in idem, Four Essays on Liberty. Oxford, 1969; and idem, Liberty. Oxford, 2002.

10 <http://www.dignityincare.ca/en/the-model-in-detail.html> Accessed 19 February, 2017. I am grateful to Dr. Chochinov for his permission to reproduce this chart.

11 Ober's definition of dignity as "non-humiliation" and "non-infantilization" is pertinent here (Ober, "Democracy's Dignity").

12 World Health Organization. National Cancer Control Programmes: Policies and Managerial Guidelines, 2nd Ed. Geneva, 2002. Cited by Chochinov, "Dying, Dignity, and New Horizons." and New Horizons. and New Horizons. and New Horizons.

13 Marilyn J. Field and Christine K. Cassel (eds.), Approaching Death: Improving Care at the End of Life. Washington DC, 1997. Cited by Chochinov, "Dying, Dignity, and New Horizons."

14 Here, too, is evidence of the three perspectives noted above: (1) alleviation and prevention of negatives, (2) attention to positive wishes of the individual and their close circle, and (3) attention to broader societal concerns.

15 Edwin Shneidman, "Criteria for a Good Death," in: Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior 37 (2007), 245–247.

16 I use "generative" here in the dictionary sense of "relating to production and reproduction," but also with the intent of calling to mind Erik Erikson's seventh psychosocial stage of "generativity," described below. See fn. 18; Chochinov, Dignity Therapy, 16.

17 See Gen. 17:1, where God adjures Abraham to be perfect (תמים).

18 Erik H. Erikson, Childhood and Society. New York, 1950, 257. See Dan P. McAdams and Ed de St. Aubin, "A Theory of Generativity and Its Assessment Through Self-Report, Behavioral Acts, and Narrative Themes in Autobiography," in: Journal of Personality and Social Psychology 62 (1992), 1003–1015.

19 This is true also in the case of the narrative that most reflects Abraham's active efforts to ensure tribal continuity: his commissioning of his ser-

vant to find a wife for Isaac from among Abraham's kin. The text is replete with references to divine providence as the basis for the success of the servant's mission to find and acquire Rebecca as a wife for Isaac. The initial note that Abraham was "old, advanced in years," (Gen 24:1) contextualizes the account as an expression of Abraham's generativity in preparation for death.

20 The context is God's decision to inform Abraham of his intention to destroy Sodom as punishment for its inhabitants' sins.

21 Menahem Kister, "Commentary to 4Q298," in: Jewish Quarterly Review 85 (1994), 246-47; David Lambert, "Last Testaments in the Book of *Jubilees*," in: Dead Sea Discoveries 11 (2004), 82–107; note the section heading "The (Near) Absence of Instruction in the Book of Genesis" (84). See Jacques T.A.G.M. van Ruiten, Abraham in the Book of Jubilees: The Rewriting of Genesis 11:26–25:10 in the Book of Jubilees, Leiden 2012, esp. chap. 8, "Abraham's Testament to All His Children and Grandchildren" (Jub. 20:1–13), 253–274.

22 Some scholars have therefore suggested that this verse was not part of the original composition of Gen 18, but was a later addition, inserted by a theologically-oriented reader-scribe who felt the need to correct for a perceived gap in the Genesis account. See Lambert, "Last Testaments," 86 and the sources cited in fn. 16, especially David M. Carr, Reading the Fractures of Genesis: Historical and Literary Approaches, Louisville, Kentucky 1996, 159–161.

23 Compare Jacob's farewell address to his sons in Genesis 49 (cited in Chochinov's preface as noted above); Isaac's blessings of Jacob and Esau (Gen 27); and the final national addresses of Moses (Deut 31–33), Joshua (Josh 22–24), and Samuel (1 Sam 12). (David's final instructions to Solomon in 1 Kgs 2:1–9 pose an unusual variation on the form; contrast 1 Chr 28–29). In the Second Temple era, farewell addresses were composed for additional figures, including, inter alia, Adam, Job, Amram, and Solomon. The early Christian work (actually, a collection of works) called the *Testaments of the Patriarchs* contains testaments for each of the twelve sons of Jacob. The fragmentary remains of a testament of Levi and similar texts from Qumran offer evidence that Jewish source material underlies at least some of the twelve testaments.

24 Thus, for example, *Gen. Rabbah* 56:11 states that Abraham sent Isaac to Shem, son of Noah, to study. I thank Dr. Jan Fritzsche for this reference.

25 Fragments of just over a dozen copies of this composition are among the manuscripts in the corpus of the Dead Sea Scrolls, discovered in the 20th century in caves near the site of Qumran. The earliest of these manuscripts, 4Q216, is dated by its script to the late second century BCE. (See James C. VanderKam and Józef T. Milik, "Jubilees," Discoveries in the Judean Desert 13, Oxford 1994, 1–185.

26 For our current purposes, it is of no concern whether, or to what extent, these speeches are original creations of the author(s) of the *Book of Jubilees*, or whether and how they were borrowed or adapted from previous-

ly existing written and oral traditions. For a review of scholarship on the composition history of Jubilees, see van Ruiten, Abraham, 12–17.

27 See Annette Reed, "Textuality between Death and Memory: The Prehistory and Formation of the Parabiblical Testament," in: Jewish Quarterly Review 104 (2014), 381–412. Reed's observations about Levi's testament in the Aramaic Levi Document, are applicable also to Abraham's testaments in *Jubilees*: "The combination of Levi's first-person speech with the reference to the writing he commands for his sons to teach to their sons functions to pull the reader/hearer into the narrative world of the text—as one who hears the voice of Levi, and through him Isaac, Abraham, and Noah, resounding even after death, whenever the words of this text are read" (394). With reference to Martin Jaffee, she states that, "The oral/aural character of ancient Jewish reading makes the allusion to the power of the book to adjure the absent past even more poignant" (ibid. fn. 42. See Martin S. Jaffee, Torah in the Mouth. Writing and Oral Tradition in Palestinian Judaism 200 BCE–400 CE, New York 2000, 15–27).

28 See James L. Kugel, The Bible as It Was, Cambridge, Mass. 1997.

29 See fn. 23.

30 See John Collins, "Testaments," in Michael E. Stone (ed.), The Literature of the Jewish People in the Period of the Second Temple and the Talmud, vol. 2, Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period, Philadelphia 1984, 349–354; Robert A. Kugler, "Testaments," in Lawrence H. Schiffman and James C. VanderKam (eds.), Encyclopedia of the Dead Sea Scrolls 2 vols., Oxford/New York 2000, vol. 2, 933–936; idem, "Testaments," in Dictionary of Early Judaism, ed. John J. Collins and D. Harlow, Grand Rapids, Mich. 2010, 1295–1297. I use the term "genre" somewhat loosely here, applying it to individual sections within a book, rather than to a full composition. See the extensive nuanced discussion in Annette Reed, "Textuality." Reed employs the more precise term "testamentary tropes."

31 These admonitions are drawn from the biographical narrative. Compare this case, mentioned by Chochinov: "one sad elderly gentleman with a long history of alcohol abuse used his therapy as an opportunity to wish his children and grandchildren 'a better life than I had.' He stated that he realized it was 'too late' to make amends to his children, but wanted his grandchildren to know the truth about him, 'so they can choose a better way than I did'" (Dignity Therapy, 63).

32 "To be eligible for the study, patients had to have a terminal illness with a life expectancy of no more than six months, be a minimum of eighteen years of age, speak English, be willing to commit to three to four contacts over approximately seven to ten days, be cognitively intact, and be willing to provide verbal and written consent" (Chochinov, Dignity Therapy, 44).

33 The open-ended questions allow for individual content and focus. See Chochinov, Dignity Therapy, 63. See also Alexia Elejalde-Ruiz, "Dignity Therapy Allows Terminally Ill Patients to Recount Lives for Posterity," in: Chicago Tribune, 11 January, 2012. <http://articles.chicagotribune.

com/2012-01-11/health/sc-health-0111-dignity-therapy-20120111_1_patients-training-sessions-technique>

34 Chochinov, Dignity Therapy, 71.

35 Text is cited from James C. VanderKam, The Book of Jubilees: A Critical Edition, Leuven 1989. For an accessible translation in English, some general discussion of the work and brief explanatory commentary, see James L. Kugel, "Jubilees," in Louis H. Feldman, James L. Kugel, and Lawrence H. Schiffman (eds.), Outside the Bible: Ancient Writings Related to Scripture, 3 vols., Philadelphia 2013, vol. 1, 272–465.

36 Van Ruiten, Abraham, 268. He cites Eckhard Von Nordheim, Die Lehre des Alten: Das Testament als Literaturgattung im Judentum der Hellenistisch-römischen Zeit, 2 vols., Leiden 1980/1985, vol. I, 237–239.

37 Hindy Najman, "Interpretation As Primordial Writing: Jubilees and Its Authority Conferring Strategies," in: Journal for the Study of Judaism 30 (1999), 379–410; idem, Seconding Sinai: The Development of Mosaic Discourse in Second Temple Judaism, Leiden 2003. See also, van Ruiten, Abraham, 11–12.

38 See Loren Stuckenbruck, "Pseudepigraphy and First Person Discourse in the Dead Sea Documents: From the Aramaic Texts to Writing of the Yahad," in Adolfo D. Roitman, Lawrence H. Schiffman, and Shani Tzoref (eds.), The Dead Sea Scrolls and Contemporary Culture, Leiden 2011, 295–326.

39 Reed, "Textuality," 389: "To the degree that the medium is the message, it is a message about the power of teaching and writing to keep the memory of the dead alive. This message—as we will see—finds expression within some of the speeches that testaments purported to record, but it is also communicated by their very existence as self-claimed records of near-death teaching. To consider references to writing embedded in such narrative settings is thus to grapple with the determinative feature of the parabiblical testament—the literary choice to frame texts as the first-person teachings of ancient biblical heroes near death—as well as with the social and cultural worlds in which such a choice made sense."

40 Chochinov, "Dying, Dignity, and New Horizons."

41 From Chochinov et al., "Dignity in the Terminally Ill"; see Chochinov et al., "Dignity Therapy: A Novel Psychotherapeutic Intervention"; Chochinov et al., "Dignity-conserving Care. A New Model for Palliative Care. Helping the Patient Feel Valued," in: JAMA 287 (2002), 2253–2260.

42 This can be seen in some of the patient evaluations in Chochinov et al., Dignity Therapy: A Novel Psychotherapeutic Intervention, 5523; e.g., the words of a 36 year old woman dying of metastatic breast cancer: "It's helped bring my memories, thoughts, and feelings into perspective instead of all jumbled emotions running through my head. The most important thing has been that I'm able to leave a sort of 'insight' of myself for my husband and children and all my family and friends."

43 Reed, "Textuality," 382.

44 See Lawrence M. Wills, "Testament of Abraham," in idem, (ed.), Ancient Jewish Novels. An Anthology. Oxford 2002, 269-292, at 269; idem, "Ap-

pendix: The *Testament of Abraham* as a Satirical Novel," in idem, The Jewish Novel in the Ancient World. Ithaca 1995, 245–256; Dale C. Allison, Testament of Abraham. Berlin 2003, 42, 51. See also, George W.E. Nickelsburg, "Stories of Biblical and Early Post-Biblical Times," in Michael E. Stone (ed.), Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period, Philadelphia 1984, 33–87.

45 The work is preserved in two main recensions. The text used here is the longer, and most likely earlier, Recension A. On the origins and authorship of the work, see Allison, Testament of Abraham, 3–30. An accessible brief introduction and insightful explanatory commentary is found in Annette Yoshiko Reed, "Testament of Abraham," in Feldman et al., Outside the Bible vol. 1, 1671–1696, at 1671. The text is cited from this edition, which is Reed's light adaptation of W.A. Craigie trans., "Testament of Abraham," in Ante-Nicene Christian Library 9, Edinburgh 1987, 183–201. As the manuscript evidence for the composition is rather late, citations from the text are intended to be illustrative, not definitive. Most of the elements noted are recurring motifs that are essential to the plot. The following two articles came to my attention after this chapter was already submitted for publication, too late for me to interact with them. The analysis and approach anticipates and expands upon some of my observations here: Françoise Mirguet, "Beyond Authority: The Construction of Scriptures on the Testament of Abraham," in Eibert Tigchelaar, Old Testament Pseudepigraphy and the Scriptures, BETL 270, Leuven 2014, 211-228; eadem, "They Visited Heaven and Refused to Die: Anxieties of Discontinuity in the Testament of Abraham and in Ezra Traditions," forthcoming in Tobias Nicklas, Jan N. Bremmer (eds.), The Figure of Ezra between Early Judaism and Ancient Christianity. Studies in Early Christian Apocrypha; Leuven: Peeters.

46 On the heavenly tours in literary apocalypses, see Martha Himmelfarb, Ascent to Heaven in Jewish and Christian Apocalypses, Oxford 1993.

47 Abraham's delay tactics include: asking for a tour of the earth (T. Ab. chap. 9); asking for a nap (Abraham tells Death, "Depart! Depart from me, for I desire to rest upon my couch," T. Ab. 17:2 and similarly in 20:4); and possibly also, asking Death to tell him about death (T. Ab. chap. 17).

48 Even after Abraham and Michael return from their tour of heaven and earth, when Abraham refuses to die, Michael reports this to God and says, "I refrain from laying hands on him" (T. Ab. 15:14–15).

49 In addition to posing a farcical contrast to the acute grief of genuine mourning, these scenes model an empathy that is similar to the technique of "identification," which I suggest is central to the work. Thus, in chap. 5, when Isaac awoke from his frightening dream, he ran to the room where Abraham and Michael were sleeping, and when Abraham opened the door, Isaac "hung upon his neck and began to weep with a loud voice" (T. Ab. 5:9). Empathically, "Abraham, being moved at heart, also wept with a loud voice, and the commander in chief, seeing them weeping, wept also." As their crying wakened Sarah, she ran to the room, and she also began weeping. Earlier in the book, there was a similarly

vaudevillian domino effect of crying when Abraham first welcomed Michael to his home and became moved to tears while washing his guest's feet. This led Isaac to cry in empathy, which in turn caused Michael to weep. The author augmented the fanciful nature of this vignette by having the tears fall into the water of the basin and become precious stones, which Abraham later shows to Sarah in the dream scene. In the middle of the bathethic vignette of the weeping foursome, Michael informed Sarah that they were crying because Isaac had a bad dream. Hearing the guest's speech, Sarah recognized that he was an angel. In a disruptive interlude to the scene, Sarah and Abraham go to the door to reminisce sotto voce about the visit of the angels who had announced the birth of Isaac, before Abraham returns to learn about the dream and its interpretation.

50 See John J. Collins, The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic Literature. Grand Rapids, MI, 1998, 253. On the use of humorous exaggeration for instructional purposes, especially in emotionally difficult situations, see Adele Faber and Elaine Mazlish, How to Talk so Kids can Learn: At Home and in School, New York 1995. See also, idem, How to Talk so Kids will Listen and Listen so Kids will Talk, New York 1980; Michael G. Lovorn, "Humor in the Home and in the Classroom: The Benefits of Laughing While we Learn," in: Journal of Education and Human Development 2 (2008) no. 1. <http://www.scientificjournals.org/journals2008/articles/1268.pdf>.

51 The technique of identification is explicitly reflected in the book in the scenes of empathic weeping (see fn. 49) and also in Abraham's method of instructing Isaac in hospitality, in chapters 3 and 4. Abraham includes Isaac in his activities as host, thereby modeling righteous behavior, and he explicitly instructs Isaac to set up the sleeping chamber and couches (T. Ab. 4:1–3), and denies Isaac's request to sleep in the chamber with them, so that they do not disturb the guest (T. Ab. 4:4). See Reed, 393 f., on a similar claim in the *Aramaic Levi Document* (partly preserved at Qumran), in which Levi states that Isaac learned about sacrifices from Abraham, by watching his father, and by direct instruction, including on the basis of books of Noah.

52 Thus, after Abraham learned more about judgment in the afterlife and divine mercy, he successfully entreated for the revival of the sinners he had spotted during his tour of the earth, whom God had killed in response to his prayers (T. Ab chap. 14). Also, Abraham's slaves were revived following their fatal reaction to viewing Death's fearsome displays (T. Ab. 18:11).

53 Abraham's disobedience is a negation of one of the patriarch's chief signature traits, along with his hospitality, which is most notably evident in the ordeal of the binding of Isaac (Gen 22). Reed (fn. on 1680 ad loc) points to T. Ab. 1:1 and Gen 12 as well as Gen 22; Nickelsburg points to Gen 18:22 ("Stories," 62).

54 Thus, in the scene of weeping and Isaac's dream (see fn. 49) Sarah intuited that the cause of the men's sorrow was related to death, but she

suspected that the guest had brought news of the death of Abraham's nephew, Lot.

55 Erikson's "generativity" is widely associated with optimistic views of humanity. The *Testament of Abraham* makes use of deeply entrenched negativity—fear and denial in the face of the inevitability of death—to deliver an optimistic message about the eternal afterlife.

56 Perhaps the most glaring of the departures from the biblical narrative in Genesis is the fact that Sarah is alive when Abraham dies, in direct contradiction to the biblical account of Abraham's burial of Sarah and mourning for her in Gen 23:2.

57 Avery D. Weisman, On Dying and Denying: A Psychiatric Study of Terminality, New York 1972.

58 Jared Ludlow argues that the main objective of Recension B was to tame Recension A towards a more pious composition, especially by eliminating humor. Jared Ludlow, Abraham Meets Death: Narrative Humor in the Testament of Abraham, Sheffield 2002.

59 Lawrence M. Wills, The Jewish Novel in the Ancient World, Ithaca, New York 1995, 256.

60 I thus avoid (1) normativizing prescriptive approaches, which advocate treating religious texts as authoritative sources for shaping contemporary public policies and (2) apologetic approaches, which aim to validate biblical texts by harmonizing these texts with modern scientific concepts, and discerning an anticipation of contemporary concepts in the earlier sources. These approaches are often employed together, in a mutually reinforcing and often circular manner. They may be appropriate for some confessional settings, but I have attempted to adopt an approach that I believe to be more suited for multidisciplinary academic discourse.

61 I am grateful to Dr. Peter Porzig for sharing his insights on this matter with me.

62 Chochinov (Dignity Therapy, vii) refers to "minor regional issues and subtle cultural variations" in the global studies that have been conducted to date: studies in Canada, Australia, the United States, China, Japan, Denmark, Sweden, Scotland, Portugal, and England; training workshops in Hong Kong, Taiwan, Argentina, and New Zealand.

63 See the criteria for eligibility in fn. 32. It is my conjecture that the tendency in Western society to pursue aggressive treatment to extend life reduces the pool of patients who might otherwise be served by Dignity Therapy and leads to a situation in which eligible patients might be more fatigued than would otherwise be the case in a society with a different stance towards end-of-life. My own consciousness of these issues was raised by Dr. Atul Gawande. See inter alia, Atul Gawande, Being Mortal: Medicine and What Matters in the End, New York 2014. I am grateful to Dr. Yoel Finkelman for introducing me to Atul Gawande's publications.

64 This is perhaps even more true in the editing process, when the therapist actively shapes the narrative from the information provided by the patient. The narrative reflects values: those that emerged explicitly

during the interview, others that the interviewer detected, and still others that the interviewer/editor unwittingly imposes. Chochinov, Dignity Therapy, 3. On the role of the therapist in "reshaping" the narrative, see Chochinov et al., Dignity Therapy: A Novel Psychotherapeutic Intervention.

65 See Shane Sinclair et al., "Sympathy, Empathy, and Compassion: A Grounded Theory Study of Palliative Care Patients' Understandings, Experiences, and Preferences," in: Palliative Medicine, Epub 17 August, 2016.

66 Thus, for example, Rabbi Elliot Dorff in his responsum on end-of-life medical interventions states: "I presented the case for using the best interests of the patient as the criterion for selecting appropriate therapy. 'Best interests' are, in each case, to be defined by the patient him/herself, if possible – presumably in consultation with others – like the person's physician, family, and rabbi-or otherwise, by the physician together with the patient's family or surrogate." (Elliott N. Dorff, A Jewish Approach to End-Stage Medical Care, 1990. <http://www.rabbinicalassembly.org/sites/default/files/assets/public/halakhah/teshuvot/19861990/dorff_care.pdf> I thank Dr. Jan Fritzsche for bringing this responsum to my attention. I appreciate Dorff's approach. I insist, however, that individuals' consideration of their "best interest" are always going to be determined by their social matrix. Just as Dorff addresses the fact that allocation of resources must be considered systemically, so too, must the patient's physical and psycho-emotional well-being be understood within social systems.

67 Thus, an individual's choice of metaphor to describe an illness—e.g., describing cancer as a "battle" or a "journey" is not only a personal choice but is shaped by and shapes wider discourse, which in turn shapes popular perceptions, public policy, and even medical research, which then in their turn have an impact on individual experiences. See, inter alia, Judy Z. Segal, "The View from Here and There: Objectivity and the Rhetoric of Breast Cancer," in Flavia Padovani et al., Objectivity in Science: New Perspectives from Science and Technology Studies, Cham 2015; Siddhartha Mukherjee, The Emperor of All Maladies. A Biography of Cancer, New Delhi 2010.