

PREPARING AN ETHICAL WILL

A Guided Discussion Led by Helene Rosenthal Jaffa

Bikur Cholim Conference – November 12, 2006

Resources

Jack Riemer and Nathaniel Stampfer – So That Your Values will Live On

Israel Abrahams – Ethical Wills (early Jewish ethical wills)

Barry K. Baines, MD - Ethical Wills (a work book)

The format was as follows: (1) what is an ethical will and why should one be written; (2) what goes into an ethical will; (3) examples (the handout material); and (4) methods of organizing an ethical will. I allowed about 10 minutes for sharing at the end.

Questions for Organizing an Ethical Will

1. What do I want the readers to know about me?
2. What experiences helped to make me the person I am?
3. What lessons has life taught me?
4. What people have meant the most to me?
5. What activities give me pleasure?
6. If I could influence how my readers act, what would I want them to do?
7. Are there any political or social concerns I want my readers to adopt?
8. Is it important for my readers to know my feelings about Judaism and about Israel?
9. Are there specific directions I wish to give my readers?
10. Do I have any final words of farewell?

How to Write An Ethical Will

1. Enjoy reading some Ethical Wills.
2. Think about what you want to tell your family or friends, including anecdotes that tell about people, important lessons from life, the meaning of precious possessions, and/or favorite books or passages from Scripture.
3. Think about what your family or friends would want to know about your experiences, the world you came from, people who influenced you, or mistakes you learned from.
4. Tell your readers about people you want to protect, charities and organizations you believe in, and other responsibilities you would like them to assume.
5. Convey your values, perhaps in a discussion of the meaning of success.
6. Express gratitude or ask for forgiveness or both.
7. Organize your ideas and decide how to convey them to your reader.