Regular Journal Assignment #2

1. From Reading Folder 2 (Religion, Ethics, Death and Dying), read “How to Die,” which is a chapter from the book *Creating an Ethical Jewish Life: A Practical Introduction to Classic Teachings on How to Be a Jew* (Sherwin and Cohen, 2001). Each chapter in the book deals with an aspect of life common to all human beings by i) introducing it generally as a universal experience, and then ii) concluding with a historical rabbinical writing on the subject.

2. Write on the following:

2i. Briefly characterize the philosopher Blaise Pascal’s (1623-1662) observation of death. Does this resonate with you or not?

2ii. The authors claim (and it is not a unique view) that many modern people, and particularly so in America, deny/avoid the reality of death despite the ultimate futility of such a stance. What is your opinion about death acceptance and American culture?

2iii. What is one of the “five major factors” the authors propose for the rise of “the study of death and dying” -- thanatology -- in the mid- and late 20th century? As a young 21st century person, what might you add as an additional, more recent factor and why?

3. Turn to the rabbinical writing, an example of “responsa” within Jewish religious law, that was penned by a 19th century rabbi, Hayyim Palaggi, in Turkey (pp.143-149).

3i. What is the issue/question that has come before him? What’s you opinion on it generally?

3ii. Although seeking a quick death for someone dying in severe pain may seem to some noble and ethical, what is one of the reasons the rabbi gives in cautioning against it? How does the rabbi understand the spousal relationship?

3iii. What are two textual sources the rabbi uses throughout his “responsa” in reaching his conclusion? What is his conclusion and its internal logic?

Journal entry should be at minimum 350 words. This is a minimum. Don’t be constrained by it. Write as much as you wish and enjoy the process. You may complete the entry by hand. If not, please type. You will be graded on showing, through your writing, that you have read the article and have thought through it as per the instructions and questions above. Turn it in to me as hardcopy at the end of class on Tuesday, September 20.

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*Also, journal assignments are designed to make any temptation (if you are so tempted) moot in terms of, ugh, going online and lifting sentences and passages to paste and turn in as your own. Do not do that. It is so dull and, in its own way, time consuming. Plus, if verified, you will not receive credit for the assignment.* \*warning, advice, caution