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# LPNQ

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*LPN-Q, The Quarterly Journal of the Life Planning Network* is produced by members of the Life Planning Network, a community of professionals from diverse disciplines dedicated to helping people navigate the second half of life.

The Life Planning Network is the leading association supporting professionals who assist people at this life stage. We intend to bring into everyday use proactive and purposeful planning for the second half of life. Learn more at [lifeplanningnetwork.org](http://lifeplanningnetwork.org).

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## Harvesting Our Life

The longevity revolution drives spirituality—and legacy

Rabbi Richard F. Address

**T**he Spiritual question for we human beings is, I suggest, the issue of time. It is one of the great inventions of the human race. We cannot control it, no matter how technologically astute we become. We are all subject to it and the older we get; the more profound is time's impact on each of us. In many ways, one of the interesting realities of our own aging is, rather than us controlling time, time controls us.

In *The Gift of Years*, author Joan Chittister quotes a Hasidic source: “For the unlearned old age is winter; for the learned, it is the season of harvest.”

As we encounter this revolution in longevity this little statement begins to ring increasingly true. For many of us, as we age, we realize that we are in a state of transition from the acquisition of material things to the evaluation of things spiritual. This often is being translated into a greater awareness of our own legacy. In other words, we begin to internalize our own mortality and begin to be concerned about what aspect or essence of us shall be carried on.

This internalization of mortality leads, I think, to a sense of trying to harvest the life experiences we have and, in doing so, see how we can become symbols or role models for those who follow us. I sense this in the growing desire of so many Boomers to “give back” to their community.

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**“For the unlearned old age is winter; for the learned, it is the season of harvest.”**

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I sense this, too, in a growing trend to reinterpret rituals in light of contemporary life situations. This is partly a result of new life stages becoming a reality due to increased longevity. Issues such as care-giving, cohabitation and the various challenges associated with chronic illness, all have contributed to a rise in the creation of new rituals. We have a need to mark these new moments with a sense of meaning and also a relationship with something beyond our own self.

This need also speaks to our need for relationships as we age, a profound and core need for each of us, for as we get older, we become more aware of the value of and the need for sincere human relationships and community.

It is in this fabric of life that many elders are increasingly focusing more and more on “harvesting” the experiences of a lifetime and finding ways to share them with others, through mentoring programs in general or via increased opportunities with family. It is therefore no coincidence that the rise in interest in genealogy parallels

the lengthening of life spans and the increasing awareness of a desire to find out more about who I am, where I came from and what that means for the future of my family.

This harvest time of life can be a stage of great creativity, discovery and growth. It is a time for renewal and challenge as we reap the blessing of life within the randomness of time.



**Rabbi Richard F Address**, D.Min, is the founder and director of Jewish Sacred Aging, LLC and the web site [www.jewishsacredaging.com](http://www.jewishsacredaging.com). The site is the only comprehensive site for the Jewish community dealing with issues related to Judaism, aging and spirituality and features regular pod casts that speak to these issues. Rabbi Address has served congregations in California and New Jersey and for 33 years served on staff of Union for Reform Judaism. His most recent book is "Seekers of Meaning: Baby Boomers, Judaism and the Pursuit of Healthy Aging."

*Here's a saying on a universal theme that works like the briefest of poems. It is drawn from Pirkei Avot, which translates in English to "Chapter of the Fathers," and is a collection of sayings and maxims of the Mishnaic-period of Rabbis, from around the year 200 of the Common Era. It is sometimes described as the "Bartlett's Quotations of Jewish knowledge." This phrase, authored by Hillel, one of the greatest sages of Jewish history, speaks more to today's world than ever. – Rabbi Richard Address*

In a world where no one acts  
like a human being, strive  
to be a human being.

