

Shrink Rap Radio #470, August 27, 2015 – The Cycle of Life

**David Van Nuys, Ph.D., aka “Dr. Dave” interviews Dr. Erel Shalit,
Israeli Jungian Analyst**

(transcribed from www.ShrinkRapRadio.com by Elly Nobbs)

Introduction: [Dr. Erel Shalit](#) is a Jungian psychoanalyst in Israel, and past President of the Israel Society of Analytical Psychology. He founded and was Director of the Jungian Analytical Psychotherapy Program at Bar Ilan University, and has been Director of the Shamai Davidson Mental Health Clinic. He has authored and edited several books, among them *The Cycle of Life; The Dream and its Amplification* (with Nancy Swift Furlotti); *Requiem; Enemy, Cripple, Beggar; The Complex, and The Hero and His Shadow*. He chaired the Jung-Neumann Conference, and has edited, with Murray Stein, *Turbulent Times, Creative Minds – Erich Neumann and CG Jung in Relationship* (forthcoming in 2016). *The Human Soul in Transition, at the Dawn of a New Era* will be forthcoming in 2016.

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Today my guest is Israeli Jungian analyst Dr Erel Shalit and we'll be discussing his book *The Cycle of Life: Themes and Tales of the Journey*.

The Interview:

Dr. Dave: Dr. Erel Shalit - Welcome to Shrink Rap Radio.

Erel Shalit: David, thank you so much and thank you for inviting me. And thank you, in any case, for the great work you are doing. I have listened to some of the interviews and I've heard about your interviews. So thank you very much for that community service that you are doing.

Dr. Dave: That is so gratifying to hear. It's great to have this opportunity to speak with you and I've become increasingly aware of your work. I first became acquainted with your work as a result of my interview with Dr. Nancy Swift Furlotti on the book *Dream Amplification* which the two of you edited. In my more recent interview with her on *Erich Neumann*. And there was a major conference in Israel not long ago about *Erich Neumann* - were you the organizer or one of the principals in that conference?

Shalit: I was the organizer. I was chair of the conference. In fact it began in a very interesting way that doesn't have anything to do with the book about *The Cycle of Life*. It may have something to do with my cycle of life.

Dr. Dave: Tell us about it.

Shalit: After so many years, the correspondence between Jung and Erich Neumann was published this year - 2015. While we know that both of them died - in 1960 and 1961, respectively. So it has taken a very long time to get all parties together to publish this correspondence. And when we managed to sign the agreement back in 2012, with the Jung Foundation, the Philemon Foundation that prepared the correspondence of correspondents and I as the representative of the Neumann heirs. It was in fact Ulrich Hoerni, Jung's grandson that suggested we launch the book and arrange this conference in Israel. That's why I took it upon myself to go ahead with this pretty big venture.

Dr. Dave: Yeah, I'm sure it was a big responsibility. I've never run a conference. [laughs] I've managed to dodge that bullet so far.

Shalit: [laughs] Well. Now ... done this conference and not going to do any further conferences. Was obviously greatly successful and great attendance from more than 25 countries. And attendees from 25 countries. But it took a full year, practically full time, to manoeuvre and get all that working.

Dr. Dave: Sure. I can imagine. And you've been very busy with lots of activities. And on YouTube I discovered that you've lectured here in California at the Pacifica Graduate Institute.

Shalit: Right. I've done that a few times and I will be there in November.

Dr. Dave: Well, very good. Although I am in the same state, it's a long ways away from where I am. California is a very long state.

Shalit: Yeah, I know. I come from a very small one.

Dr. Dave: [laughs] Right. So today, as you alluded, we're going to be discussing your book *The Cycle of Life* and basically your book is about the stages of life that we all pass through. Of course so are Freud's ideas about the developmental stages focussing on childhood and later those of Erik Erikson which included adulthood. Your focus in the book is on a Jungian perspective and emphasizes archetypal elements explored through metaphor, myth and dreams. Is that a fair description?

Shalit: Definitely. Thank you. Very nicely stated.

Dr. Dave: OK. Before we get into your book, maybe you can tell us about what set you on the path of this ambitious project, because you are trying to cover an awful lot [laughs] Right?

Shalit: Well ... so far you have mentioned Freud, Jung and Erikson. And all three of them were in fact instrumental in setting me on this path. Freud, obviously because he did categorize stages of childhood. He'd seen them as universal phenomena. We are supposed to pass through these stages of childhood without being fixated and if we resolve one we move relatively smoothly unto the next. But we have to stand up to the different challenges.

Erikson ... well he set me off because - first of all, I've always been attracted to his writings. And I have noticed so many times when lecturing on this subject that people recall that he wrote about the stages of life. But that is not actually the title of his essay. It's "The Ages of life". And that made me try to bridge Erikson and Jung which may not be so easy.

Because I think that Erikson had a hunch - understood that it's not the development through stages, but that each stage through life is also, in an archetypal sense, a distinct age. It has own its own qualities, its own distinct challenges and those ages may remain, or should preferably may remain in the person as we go through the all the different stages.

Dr. Dave: So it's not like we leave it and it's gone forever, but somehow those issues are still alive within us.

Shalit: Exactly. On an archetypal level, those issues preferably should be alive though preferably they should not be dominant at a different age or stage. And let me just mention why Jung set me off on this, because in his very early essay on "The Stages of Life" , and he calls it the stages of life, from the early 1930s. I was curious that he devotes so much in that essay to speak about problems ... because without problems we don't experience and we don't reflect upon the life we are going through. It's as if we don't have the sense of the problems, it's as if we are passively moved through life rather than actively relating to life - turning it into the conscious life. And that is what I think is Jung's tremendous contribution.

Dr. Dave: Spoken like a true Jungian [both laugh] The idea is that it's necessary to bring awareness and consciousness rather than just kind of moving through and passively. I'll have to think about that because I think ... I've not always felt like I'm the actor - in the sense of having a plan for my life. I've kind of gone through doors as they've opened up. So that's more my

sense than a really very conscious movement. So, I'm not supposed to be on the couch here. [both laugh]. Well I invited it though [both laugh].

Shalit: [laughs] We can certainly discuss that. But I don't think we can always consciously determine in advance what doors we are going to go through. I do think we do have a certain obligation to consider, to contemplate, to reflect when we find ourselves at the crossroads.

Dr. Dave: Yeah. The crossroads. That's one of the archetypes that you discuss that always resonates very strongly with me, Blue Grass music - meeting the devil at the crossroads, that's a strong association I have. I interviewed (I have a block on his name right now) a Jungian analyst whose written about the folk music called the Blues, and ...

Shalit: ... Mark Winburn. He's a lovely, lovely person. And I consider him a friend of mine.

Dr. Dave: Oh. Yeah. Good. I really enjoyed discovering that he had written on that, because I've long loved the Blues ...

If you don't mind I'd like to step you through the broad outline of the book. In the book you share so many wonderful myths and stories. So I hope you'll feel free to sprinkle in any of those here that make sense. Or they don't even have to have been in the book if there's something that comes to min. So, we'll course the first metaphor is that of The Journey. And that is an archetypal idea in itself. Right?

Shalit: Right.

Dr. Dave: So what can you tell us about The Journey as a guiding metaphor for looking at the life span?

Shalit: I think that it pertains to the meta-structure or the metapsychology of the Individuation Process. We can at least imagine ourselves as crossing our life span on a journey. I use the river as an image for that. The river that has its origin in the source and eventually runs out into the ocean where our individual journey joins up with the collective. The collective humanity - with the World Soul, the Anima mundi. And travelling ... and the river as a course has two distinct features. One is the relative stability of river beds. There is something that is quite determined. The river beds change very slowly. The course of the river changes very, very slowly over time. But on the other hand, the river changes during the seasons. There are rivers that have wonderful bubbling life-full energetic streams. And there are rivers that

are nearly dried up. Which here in my area of the world - the "wadi", the dried up river, is very significant.

Dr. Dave: I should mention in that respect. You are in Israel. I am in California. I forgot to mention that to listeners. [laughs] So go ahead.

Shalit: So you are experiencing the morning while I am experiencing the light evening breeze as dark has already set in.

Dr. Dave: Yeah. Much so, and of course - getting back to what you were saying, we are going through a drought right now. And so that is very much impacting the whole river metaphor. Water.

Shalit: Right. Yeah.

Dr. Dave: A very real way. And so I am interested in the way that you just outlined the river as having these two aspects. One that is very stable and steady but then there's all this variation on the surface and it actually in some ways foreshadows something that I think we'll talk about towards the end of the book. Which is the idea of ... what in some ways our life is set... there is some degree of predestination, if you will ...

Shalit: Right.

Dr. Dave: And at the same time ... things happen; we make decisions. And there's the whole issue of free will.

Shalit: I think you touch upon what I see as perhaps the central theme in my book, which is the axis, span, the tension, the conjunction between predetermined fate - fate - what has been spoken by the gods ...

Dr. Dave: Yes.

Shalit: ... what is predetermined if we translate the gods into archetypes. What seems to be determined archetypally, which includes for instance where I was born and the time I was born. And the span between predetermined fate and individual destiny. Where ... what is my destiny? What is my goal? Where.. towards what am I heading? Where ... the aspect of individual decision making, free will, and ... versus the predetermined. And I think there is a constant tension, constant negotiation.

Dr. Dave: Yeah. You know this topic feels so juicy, that I'm going to skip to the end of the book [both laugh] instead of going straight through as I'd planned, because you have this chapter called ... or this section, called "Homage to Sophocles" and in it you relate this play I think most of us are familiar with Oedipus Rex and the story of Oedipus who I guess for ... a seer of some sort... that's not the right ... an oracle, right? ... kind of lets him know his destiny way in advance, that he's going to end up killing his father, maybe even to sleeping with his mother. This of course happens as he goes along. He goes through great anguish and gouges out his eyes. So Sophocles and you pick up the story towards the end of his life, which I'd never heard before, about the Sophocles play. And one part that ... and you can take us through that ... one part that really caught my interest was Oedipus kind of excusing himself, saying, "Well, look, yes, I did kill my father [laughs] and slept with my mother but you know, that's the gods [laughs] lets blame it on the gods. That was predestined. I really didn't have a choice."

Shalit: Yeah.

Dr. Dave: And there is that tension. And I'm aware of that too. Because the interview I did before this was with a psychologist who listens to murderers. He's written a marvellous book and ... and there's that tension in the law - that you can understand the murderer's story and when you hear what the murderer ... the environment he came through and all the things he was subjected to as a child - the abuse and so on. The fact that he later on, he becomes a murderer almost seems inevitable, and yet the law always has to deal with that tension that you were just talking about.

Shalit: Yeah. Ok.

Dr. Dave: Sorry to hear you've had such a difficult life [laughs] but we're going to punish you.

Shalit: Right. Well, the law ... is always confronted with dilemmas that are so not simple, even though, sometimes law as the executor of collective conscience simplifies things. Just to give you one example ... when Adolf Eichmann was tried in Israel, the prosecutor said that the court is confronted with the enormous problem of how to prosecute a mass murderer who has not killed a single person.

That is one dilemma. Your mentioning of Oedipus at the end of his life. And I personally think that *Oedipus at Colonus* is one of the greatest plays from ancient Greece. It's usually not read. It's so rare that I recall once when I went into ... I was looking for ... I was giving a lecture on this subject in

Stockholm, Sweden. And I was looking for a copy of *Oedipus at Colonus* in Swedish. And I entered the bookstore of second-hand books. And I of course found their *Oedipus Rex*, *King Oedipus* and I went up to this overly very lovely lady who obviously owned the bookstore. And I asked her "Do you have ..." I showed her the copy of *King Oedipus*, and I asked her, "Do you happen to have *Oedipus at Colonus*?" And she took up the book, held it in her hands, looked a few times on the front cover, and the back cover. And she said, "Well, we don't. But if this is a popular author I'm sure we'll come to have more new material by him soon."

Dr. Dave: [laughs]

Shalit: [laughs] So it was *Oedipus at Colonus* is unfortunately not a very well read book. Let me in fact ... I just found a page here where I closed the piece ... that section that you ...

Dr. Dave: Yes I marked that section in my book too [laughs].

Shalit: And *Oedipus* of course pleads not guilty for having carried out what amounts to his four doomed fates and he says in this incredible section, he says. "The gods so willed it. Doubtless, doubtless an ancient grudge against our house. My life was innocent. Search as you will of any guilty secret for which this error could have been the punishment, the sin that damned myself and all my blood. Oh tell me," he said. "If my father were foredoomed by the voice of heaven to die by his own son's hand, how can you justly cast it against me who was still unborn when that decree was spoken?"

Dr. Dave: It's interesting that you went right to that because I was ... I do a commentary after the interview usually, and I had in my mind tagged that - that I was going to read that passage [laughs].

Shalit: Yeah, I think it is a very powerful passage And the chorus, in fact, does agree with *Oedipus*. He manages to convince them; I personally remain somewhat unconvinced. Yeah we are predetermined in so many ways. I personally for instance as a Jew am acutely aware of the time of being born because I know that if I was born in just a few years earlier than I was born, and in a somewhat different location then I would probably have been murdered as a child. Or not born because my parents would have been murdered. So I acutely feel the impact of the archetypical fate, historical fate, God-has-spoken fate - or whatever we call it. And still I cannot put anything beyond my own responsibility. I need to carry my responsibility. I need to respond to the fate in certain ways have been given to me. I need to respond - take that responsibility and feel the guilt that comes along with it.

Dr. Dave: Yeah that's another theme that we'll come back to maybe towards the end. Let me jump back towards the beginning of the journey again. Of course the journey is such a natural and archetypal idea. I'm thinking of in literature - we have the Don Juan, the first picaresque novel which is about his travel along the road - you know, all the way to modern times with Jack Kerouac's *On The Road*.

Shalit: [laughs] On the road.

Dr. Dave: In between so many stories, novels and so on about being on the road, a journey. One that sticks out in my memory too is *Journey to the East* ... I'm blocked on his name- help me. Who wrote Journey to the East? You must know it. [Hermann Hesse]

Shalit: I'm ... of course I know it.

Dr. Dave: And I know it too. I'll say it later. It will pop into my mind. Boy that drives me nuts. It happens all the time. When you're talking about one of the phrases. I think it was a section heading that you used which I found particularly evocative, was your discussion on being on the way, being on the journey, being on the way versus a way of being.

Shalit: Right.

Dr. Dave: Yeah. Unpack that for us a bit.

Shalit: Well, it's a quote from Károly Kerényi. And being on the way as a way of being is the polar opposite to being in one place. Being at home. And we live in a very ... in a restless world. We live in a world where location is being ... is disintegrating. I think that's why we, many of us, are concerned with ecology, which comes from "eco" meaning home. The Greek word for home. Where we want this place on Earth to remain a viable home. That's one part. But we also need to be the Traveller. We need to travel in our own life. It's not necessarily in geography but in "psychography". And ... we need those two aspects. The neurotic person is the reluctant traveller.

He or she will say, "Not now." Will avoid the travelling. Will avoid crossing the ocean or travelling down the river. The neurotic person will say, "It's too late." or "The time is not right, yet." Now is never right.

That's the... so ... the neurotic person is a reluctant traveller. The psychotic person is a ... the erratic traveller, without a compass, without a connection to a gyroscope ...

Dr. Dave: OK

Shalit: The gyroscope which keeps a ship balanced in relation to Earth. And ... in the same way I see the Jungian self as a gyroscope. It keeps us connected with those greater forces in life, in the world, in our ... human community, in ... on Earth. It holds the balance between the Captain of the ship - the ego, the Captain of the ship, and the greater self. So we can travel in different ways. And that I think is the individual in relation to that predestined, predetermined, those many aspects which are predetermined by genetics, by historical, 0:28:31.0 history, by geography, etc and by culture.

Dr. Dave: Yeah. So again, being on the way, the journey versus a way of being. And the way I'm hearing a way of being relates back to what you were talking about being conscious, that's being as a way of life, as a way ... as a philosophy of life, if you will, to ...

Shalit: Absolutely

Dr. Dave: ... be conscious of the journey, and by the way, the name that I was blocking on was Hermann Hesse.

Shalit: Yeah

Dr. Dave: It did come back to me. And I recently reread it, and discovered that it wasn't at all like I remembered it. So somehow I had changed it into whatever I needed to be. And for me it was a story about some people, who were on the journey, and then they got separated and lost, and they forgot [laughs] they forgot what the journey was about. They forgot where they were going. And then later they kinda meet up again and it's kinda oh some recognition. That's how [laughs] I ... there was a lot of other stuff in there that as I read it again ... it was like I'm not interested in that part [laughs].

You, in this part of the book you also have an interesting discussion of the god Hermes. What's his relevance in this context that we're talking about right now?

Shalit: Well, you know ... isn't it fascinating that Hermes who is the god of travellers, besides the god of businessmen, thieves and other ...

Dr. Dave: [laughs] Strange mix!

Shalit: [laughs] It's an interesting mix definitely. And that he is also ... he's of course the god of souls ... with, he's the only one who has permanent visa to enter into the netherworld and get out of there ...

Dr. Dave: [laughs]

Shalit: ... and so he in fact travels not only horizontally, he travels vertically as well. And downwards, upwards - he can fly on the winged sandals and he can go down into the depths. He is the personified image of something... an image of hermeneutics of the hidden scripts – of what's there between the lines. And he is also connected to what is hermetically sealed. And it's in the hermetically sealed vessel that we imagine that therapeutic and analytic transformation takes place. So that seems at least on the surface to be contradictory to the god of rogues but it is in the hermetically sealed vessel that we go through our internal transformations, that we travel internally. If we are constantly exposed to the external noise (and in today's world we have such a difficulty of concentrating), we have such a difficulty withdrawing into our own state of reflection and contemplation. We hardly are able to read a book all through any longer because we need to check emails. Some of us might feel a need to check the Twitter account. And of course on Facebook there is constantly a constant stream of news. We are all, I think, becoming ... having Attention Deficit Disorder.

Dr. Dave: I will confess [laughs] I certainly struggle with that. And agree with you about that. And you talking about the hermetic containers make me think about alchemy and all those images of and that idea we sort of need to cook our issues. And I think that Hermes is actually depicted in some of that alchemical ... those alchemical drawings from the Middle Ages.

Shalit: Yeah. I am not that familiar with alchemy. I have ... as a Jungian ... I have [laughs] done my basic ... but sure ... Hermes and Hermes Trismegistus of course is an important figure. But Hermes the Greek god is, I think, tremendously significant in the conceptualization and the idea of our soul travelling.

Dr. Dave: So just to recap a bit then. Each of the archetypal stages will confront us with one or more challenges which if successfully dealt with will further our growth, or if not successfully dealt with will hold us back or even become pathological obstacles. Does that sound right?

Shalit: Yeah. Let me try to say a few words about that.

Dr. Dave: Good.

Shalit: I have ... I do believe that each age of the human being, or each stage if we look at it from a developmental perspective, presents us with challenges. Erik Erikson defined for instance the initial stage of basic stage of trust versus mistrust, and in late life - ego integrity versus despair. And so I do think that there are ... and of course Freud did that as well. From an archetypal perspective I think that there are issues that pertain, that we can elaborate on, that reflect some of those issues.

Let me take the child for instance. The idea ... the child from an archetypal perspective is the idea of child not only one personal childhood. It's the idea of child. The idea of child pertains for instance to the living in the more mystical, in something that is closer to Nature, to the unconscious and there, we can crystallize out of that, we can crystallize certain images. We can crystallize the Divine Child. Which and shows the vicinity to the Archetypal Sphere, to the Archetypal Dimension. The Divine Child carries the name of Divinity. We see that. We sense that.

And often in the infant. We look at the infant and if we have the Child constellated in us, we will see the beauty, the divinity, the transpersonal, the grandeur of this little child ... who doesn't have to accomplish anything. It's pre-ego. We don't ask (hopefully) a 6 weeks old child to do anything. And when the child smiles at us, we are affected. Our heart, hearts beat and we feel elevated by the interaction with divinity, and so Jung used the image of the Divine Child, and others have as well, as an image for the self. But now that is not the only image that I believe is important to experience as a child, to be related as carrying that divinity.

There is also the Orphan Child. The orphan who is so tremendously popular. There are so many fairy tales about the orphan child. Not to speak about Charles Dickens who so very touchingly wrote about the orphan child, the child who in fact abandoned. The child who finds him or herself alone. We have "The Little Match Girl" by Anderson. Anderson was also in touch with the image that we might call the Orphan Child. And I believe that the Orphan Child pertains to that sense of abandonment, which is inevitable in any kind of development. Because if we ... take an initial stage of divinity or a sense of divinity, a sense of the paradisiacal ... of paradise, which of course doesn't ... in no child however fantastic his or her parents are, are not providing paradise.

Dr. Dave: [laughs]

Shalit: That's something we try to do that often. We try to do that often!

Dr. Dave: Right [laughs]

Shalit: ... with newborn children. At some stage that has to be abandoned. However good it has been, at some stage it has to be abandoned, because otherwise there's no development. Otherwise it becomes something decadent.

Dr. Dave: Yeah

Shalit: And abandonment inevitably makes us attach to the idea, the psychic image of the Orphan. And that, if I may add a word here on the difference, the similarity and the difference, between trauma and complex

Dr. Dave: Ok. Yeah.

Shalit: If that's Ok?

Dr. Dave: Sure.

Shalit: Complexes in Jungian terminology are primarily teleological. They are purposeful. They are not only complexes that we suffer from. That may happen (and I'm not going to go into how that happens) but that means that the orphan child as a complex is tremendously important, and we are all in touch with it because most of us love to hear, or loved to hear, those stories about those poor children of Anderson and Dickens or, and others. Because it speaks, it resonates with the orphan child within us. That does not mean that we experienced in real life orphanage. That may happen as a trauma. If tragically the child is exposed to the actualization in his or her real life of the orphan because of the loss of a parent or an absent parent or a depressed parent, or a parent who in some other way is malfunctioning visibly. That particular child. then what happens as I see it, is that the transformative complex which at a certain moment carries the orphan image and significantly and importantly so, if the child is exposed to trauma - that image freezes. It freezes in the mind of the victim, of the person, of the person who actually becomes an orphan one way or another And when that freezes the person gets not only gets fixated at a certain stage, but a certain image, a certain psychic image, for instance the Orphan, becomes the dominant in that person's conscious sense of identity. And that is when the person is traumatized.

Dr. Dave: Yeah. Thank you. That's fascinating. I'm wondering, does that archetypal image of the Orphan perhaps also contain some healing information? Because the stories you cited they also have some kind of resolution often.

Shalit: Shalit: Exactly.

Dr. Dave: So.

Shalit: Most definitely. I thank you for pointing that out. Yes. I don't believe so when the person has been traumatized. Then the healing must come from some sources that help the person to unfreeze that, but as a complex, as a teleological purposeful complex, as a developmental stage, then yes, it is healing to be in touch with it, because we need to carry that sense within us because we need to experience that sense of abandonment, unless it becomes too extreme.

Dr. Dave: Yeah. Ok.

Shalit: So, I believe it does have a feeling function and it helps our development.

Dr. Dave: Ok. Now you've mentioned the Divine Child and the Orphan Child. We move on to the Puer and the Puella, which I think of as being ... Is that considered part of the Child Archetype, or is that developed later?

Shalit: No ... well it depends on whom you ask. I personally see that as something later. A further developmental stage. It's later. It's the ... if we make it correspond with a certain age group that pertains to adolescence.

Dr. Dave: Ok and so for people who are not familiar with those Latin words, like the Puer refers to the Eternal Boy - and Puella, the Eternal Girl, like ...

Shalit: Let me slightly correct you here.

Dr. Dave: Fine.

Shalit: You have the Puer aeternus, that is the Eternal Boy.

Dr. Dave: Right.

Shalit: Puella aeterna is the Eternal Maiden or young woman. The puer is like you have the word "puerile" in English. It is quite simply the young. As an archetypal image it's to me, I connect it with the fire. If the child thrives in water, so here we have the fire. We have the fire of youth. Which, and you know in many cultures, rites of initiation during adolescence have to do with fire. Jumping through fire rings. Or in Israel for instance we have the celebrations of what's called Lag BaOmer, that's one of the seasonal festivities and ... in practice, it has to do with sitting around the bonfire. And the young will have to learn the idea of fire, which concretely, of course ... fire is Nature's foremost transformative energy.

It can be destructive unless it's reined in and controlled and interacted with by the ego. But if it's in dialogue with Nature and Ego, then fire can be used as Prometheus does. He brings fire to the use of humanity - to warm, to keep warm, to cook, for transformation. Ideas require transformation. Creativity requires a certain fire. And so, I connect youth, the Puer and the Peurella with fire. The Puer aeternus and Puella aeterna are stuck, and they don't develop.

They long for Paradise. They want to be taken care of. They want to remain ... they want to remain living in a shadowless existence. Do you know by the way at what age Narcissus dies?

Dr. Dave: No.

Shalit: Well he dies at age 16. Because that (again it doesn't have to be 16 completely). But if you take it as Sweet 16, in our imagination that can be the height of narcissism.

Practically shadowless. We of course have the poor young person who suffers from a lack of narcissism - loneliness, what you call it "acne", and feeling clumsy and ugly etc. But narcissism can only exist (that kind of pathological narcissism, the height of narcissism) can only exist where there is no shadow. And Narcissus needs to die by ... because Shadow enters. We need to know ourselves. Which means integrating or confronting the Shadow. And that begins somewhere in later ... in adolescence.

Dr. Dave: So what is the relationship, if any between the Hero and the Puer?

Shalit: Well ... often the Hero as a ... when we speak about Hero we often think about the Hero ideal and we think of that Golden Youth, very charismatic, energetic, and that may of course happen. But you know we

are now in the middle of summer, and one of the months in the middle of summer in the Hebrew calendar is Tammuz. Tammuz was one of these youthful gods who dies long before mid-life. Died young. It's very ... it's tragic when the young actually die, whether it's in war or accidents or illness, but as an archetypal idea, youth dies. It dies when we confront the Shadow. When we are taken down from those youthful heights that somehow is possible to imagine. The hero ideal is often connected with that.

But I see the hero from a Jungian perspective as something quite different. The hero to me is that function in our psyche, that function in the ego of our psyche, that function in our ego-consciousness, which turns towards the Shadow. That function in our ego that dares to go into the depths, that dares to step into the dark, that function of the ego that goes against, in a way goes against simple consciousness, or the collective consciousness. That function that goes out into the night-scape or the dream-scape at night. So when we speak about dream ego, for instance, when I, when we do recall a dream and we say "I" experience this or that ...

Dr. Dave: Right.

Shalit: ... that "I" in the dream is of course not my waking ego. It is a night-time dream ego. And I identify that with the idea of hero because that's the aspect of the ego that goes out into the unconscious.

Dr. Dave: Yeah, you know I'm thinking of, that was portrayed in Star Wars. Are you familiar with the Star Wars movies?

Shalit: Sure

Dr. Dave: Yeah. And so Luke Skywalker going underground to get in a sword fight with Darth Vader.

Shalit: Right.

Dr. Dave: Yeah. Really captured that.

Shalit: Yeah.

Dr. Dave: Earlier you made reference to Prometheus in connection with the Puer. Maybe you could take us through the highlights of that myth and how it applies to what you are saying about the Puer.

Shalit: Well, I think of youth, the Puer and Puella as images of youth. They are the link between the Child and the Adult. They try to carry some of the fire, the idea, the ideology, the spirit. And try to bring it into their own adulthood without losing ... without losing the fire. You will often hear, so often hear the young say, "I need to be different from my parents. They have submitted to the habits, to regularity, they are only interested in making a living. They have lost the spirit. And I don't want to live my life as gray as they do." And so I believe that one major task of youth, of the Puer and the Puella is to try to make that fire land safely in the world of adulthood.

And Prometheus whose very name means "the one who thinks before" ... he is Fire and in some significant ways pertains to before-thinking. He restrains his impulses. He brings the use of fire to Mankind, to Humankind. It should not only be for the gods, the archetypal world. It has to find its place in reality. Which is, let's call it adulthood. And his brother Epimetheus which means "the one who thinks only afterwards".

Dr. Dave: [laughs]

Shalit: He rushes into things and basically burned by the fire. He doesn't get there. Of course we do need a bit of Epimetheus because if we always are so well-considered and fore-thinking and do the right thing in our consciousness etc. - I believe that can't be done. And I don't believe it should be done, either. We need a bit of that impulsivity as well, but it needs to be a bit controlled by Prometheus.

Dr. Dave: The next major stage that you talk about is that of the adult. Which doesn't sound like a very fancy name. [both laugh] Got no Latin or anything. And - is there an Adult archetype? I mean I've never thought about the adult as an archetype. And if so, what are the ... you know, characterize that for us.

Shalit: Well, what I've chosen to put at the centre of this, and I think that I give quite a few examples as well as of clinical examples, but the archetypal image that I've chosen is the King. The King who, who believes. The King of Fairy Tales. The King who believes that he can rule as a sole ruler of the entire empire. And he can set the laws and he is the one who decides over the inhabitants in his empire, in his kingdom. The King is often inflated. The King forgets that he is merely human. I think that is what sometimes happens to many of us as adults. And I think it is often is what causes some aspects of the mid-life crisis. The King, the ego thinks it can rule by itself, that it doesn't need any connections with its sources. It has ... it believes in its individual capability and some are fortunate to be individually very

capable and accomplished. But this kind overdoes it. That's why in so many fairy tales, the king must die. And some of those kings are not willing to die, they're not willing to abdicate, they're not willing to turn over the rule to the next generation.

They hold unto power. And this is when the spirit is lost. The fire is quenched. It's the extreme of the Father archetype, the father who sets the rules, who does not accept that he might be overthrown, like Laius being overthrown or killed by Oedipus. It is holding unto the power and the decision making. I give some extreme examples of this in the book. So I think that the ... that is one aspect of the adult. I give another, much more positive image as well, which I like to call the Carpenter ego.

Dr. Dave: Ok [laughs] say a little about the Carpenter ego. I get the sense of constructing, building.

Shalit: Right. It's constructing. And you know, to be a carpenter requires patience, to be exact, to replicate something of Nature's order, to use material from Nature, and to relate to it, in order to make it fit. And to make it stable in the world of ego. And we of course many examples - from history, mythology, tales etc about carpenter as father. Jesus' father. The father of Jesus is one.

Dr. Dave: Yeah.

Shalit: And another example if we go to the Hebrew scriptures is Bezalel who was the first craftsman. And the first craftsman Bezalel means in fact Bezal El - in the shadow or the image of God. So the craftsman is someone in the image of God who is able to... He built the Tabernacle which was supposed to be as if the replica of the Universe. And that is what I see as the constructive ego. It has not lost ... it's not disconnected... it does not disconnect from its sources. It knows it is merely human.

Dr. Dave: Well you know we're at the time length that I generally give to those interviews. So ... we'll let the listeners hopefully be motivated to get your book to find out how the story ends [both laugh] with the Senex. Would be a good one to talk about, and what happens even after that. But a question that pops into my mind before we go. How did you become a Jungian? How did that happen? [both laugh]

Shalit: Let me first before I answer that, very quickly say, to say that we'll leave it to the listeners to find out how the story ends. And Jung so pertinently says, life is the story of the unfolding of the Unconscious. And

the listeners who are willing to become readers of the book will also find out something about is rarely known ... the feminine of Senex. Senex has to do of course with seniority, senility, the old person. There is a feminine version of Senex in the classical sources. But I will let the listeners who become readers find out that.

Dr. Dave: Ah! It's a teaser. [both laugh]

Shalit: Right. How I became a Jungian. Well, I was a young person in the 1960s. So I of course went from one path to another, caught up in this ideology and that one. But nothing really had an impact on me.

But when I did read *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* as a young person, I felt that spoke to my psyche. I could understand it. There was nothing dry there. This was living. This was life. This was truly a wonderful story.

Dr. Dave: Yeah.

Shalit: And that's how ... caught up...

Dr. Dave: Yeah, That's great. So, I see you are going to be part of a Webinar on The Nature of Evil that's sponsored by the Asheville Jung Centre, and I have kind of a strategic relationship with them, we try to support each other's work. And I hope to be attending that. I'm going to try to get that into my calendar. So I look forward to experiencing that with you. And so as we are winding down here is there anything else you'd like to add?

Shalit: No. Thank you for mentioning that Webinar, which Murray Stein in fact is doing with different guests at different times. And Murray Stein was instrumental in the conference, the Jung-Neumann Correspondence Conference here. And we are at the moment editing the book which will be forthcoming from Chiron called *Turbulent Times, Creative Minds - Erich Neumann and C.G. Jung*. That will be probably ... that will be forthcoming next year. And I just want to thank you so much for having me here. And for you very helpful questions.

Dr. Dave: Well thank you. Dr Erel Shalit I want to thank you for being my guest today at Shrink Rap Radio.

Shalit: Thank you for hosting me.

[Music]

After the Interview:

Dr. Dave: What an amazing resource Skype is allowing Dr. Shalit and me not only to converse but also to see each other. Ordinarily I turn off the video component thinking that we'll be using less bandwidth, and therefore might be more likely to have a problem-free Skype connection. Dr. Shalit has such a warm and welcoming face though, that I decided to take a chance today and for us to each use our web cams. I'm glad that we did because I think that the visual cues gave us more of a sense of immediacy and connection with each other. Fortunately the Skype gods were in alignment and we had no difficulties. We take these things for granted but it's really pretty amazing that we can have these video chats with people on the other side of the world. The world really has become a smaller place in many ways. All those who have come before us and passed on would have regarded this as a miracle indeed.

Dr. Shalit mentioned that he often reflects on the fact that had he been born slightly earlier and in a different place, he would have in all likelihood perished in a concentration camp, for the mere fact of being Jewish in that time and place. I didn't mention it in the interview but I share that circumstance. I was probably around 14 years of age when my mother sat me down and told me that my biological father was Jewish. I knew of the Holocaust and at that young age I secretly vowed I would never tell anyone about this Jewish connection. Not because I was ashamed of it, but because I didn't want to have my unborn children and other descendants to have to risk the dangers of anti-Semitism. What they didn't know, I reasoned, couldn't hurt them. When I was older and in graduate school, I realized that having such a secret would likely exact a price on my psyche and had the wisdom to come out, as it were. Fortunately, I've never had cause to regret that decision.

If you are interested in the topics you heard us discussing, I think you'll want to get yourself a copy of Dr. Shalit's book. So once again the title of Dr. Erel Shalit's book is *The Cycle of Life: Themes & Tales of the Journey*. If you would like to order Dr. Erel Shalit's book and at the same time help to support Shrink Rap Radio, please go to [our site](#) and click on the small banner ad for his book that you'll see in the right-hand sidebar. And by the way his name is spelled Shalit, S-h-a-l-i-t, and his first name Erel is E-r-e-l.