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Near-Death Experiences

Question: Many people who were diagnosed as having died clinically but who then returned to life, report a remarkable experience that proves that the soul remains alive after death. The person feels himself being detached from his body, hovers over it, gazes at it from above, and sees everything that happens to him. He enters a gigantic tunnel whose end is awash in brilliant, powerful, sweet light. He encounters an entity full of boundless love that affords him a feeling of marvelous contentment. He meets various figures, some known to him and some not, angels and saints. He watches a reenactment of his entire life, as in a sort of movie. In the end he returns to his body due to a decision from Above or due to his own entreaties. All of this is in line with our sources about the World to Come being full of the light of the Divine Presence, and about encounters with previous generations. The remarkable thing is the enormous uniformity of all the descriptions. The experience is almost identical, which proves that it is true.

Answer: Indeed, everyone has an almost identical experience, but not entirely. Sometimes the experience is marvelous, and sometimes it is awful, with frightening nightmares about being tortured by demons, etc. (about 15% of the cases). Should one conclude that that is proof of Hell? Yet only 20% of

those who have clinically "died" report any type near-death experiences, and 15% of these have only partial memories. Thus, most do not experience anything, which would then prove that there is nothing after death.

Indeed, extensive research on clinical death before resuscitation and NDE - "Near Death Experience" was conducted in 5735 by Dr. Raymond Moody. While Dr. Moody did do quality work, he only considered those subjects who supported his theory, and ignored those who contradicted it.

Research projects are not always reliable. Even the great researcher Dr. Kubler-Ross, who very much supported Moody's theory, was, in her great enthusiasm, misled by a scoundrel who, so to speak, spuriously "made contact with the dead", to confirm her theory. Moreover, Christians meet Jesus and the heads of the Church, Muslims meet Muhammad and all sorts of Imams and we, the disciples of Moshe, meet Avraham and all the other lofty saints. All this demonstrates that each person "sees" there what he believed in before, and all the other wonders he sees there are dictated by his own beliefs and opinions. That is why children, who do not yet have a rich perception of the world, report much less about near death experiences than do adults.

Psychiatrists do not believe that these phenomena constitute any proof of life after death. Rather, they consider them simply delusions resulting from a fogging of the senses that leads to various experiences that a person later interprets as life after death.

Many people in fact report experiences following other occurrences that "fog" the senses:

1. The taking of Ketamine, a hallucinatory drug that serves as a quick-acting anesthesia. The drug causes a feeling of being cut off and distanced from the body – which thus enables operating to take place.
2. The taking of various drugs such as Hashish, LSD or DMT.
3. Psychosis.
4. Epileptic fits.
5. Receiving an electric shock to the temple lobe during an operation for epilepsy.
6. Oxygen deprivation or diminished blood flow, for example following the loss of much blood, or even in pilot training for fast acceleration.
7. High carbon dioxide levels.
8. Childbirth.
9. Meditation.
10. A very strong migraine.
11. Being in a critical situation, such as hearing the

doctor say that you're dead, or moments before your car is about to crash.

12. When one is in on the verge of sleep.

It goes without saying that people with well developed emotions or imaginations report more about the experience of near death.

As far as the feeling of being detached from the body and floating above it, known as OBE – an Out of Body Experience – this is a well-known experience owing to a break-down in the temple lobe and the vestibular and proprioceptive system. These mechanisms allow a person to keep track of his body and to know his body's movements even with his eyes closed. When they are damaged, one's senses operate in a distorted manner.

And regarding people's awareness of conversations going on around them when they were declared dead, it turns out that they weren't entirely dead, despite the reports from the equipment. Or, a person may have unconsciously pieced together everything he was later told and retroactively processed it in his memory.

It is true that it is impossible to explain each and every phenomenon, but such is the lot of all the sciences, and we don't reject them because of it.

Yet let us make no mistake. Certainly there is a World to Come. Certainly the soul lives on after death, even without scientific proof, which we don't need in any case. Quite the contrary, science needs faith to enlighten its path, faith does not need science to prove it.

Maran Ha-Rav Kook wrote: "Regarding conjecture on metaphysical matters that remain outside the bounds of practical and moral life, even if we cannot deny them, we still should not let them dictate our way of life. Our holy Torah distances us from preoccupation with unclear visions, forbidding all sorts of witchcraft and séances. It forbids Cohanim from becoming impure through contact with the dead, and it links all the Mitzvot to life." (Igrot Ha-Re'eiyah, Letter #79).

Moreover, let us not forget that we do not live in Heaven but on earth, and the Torah is a living Torah, which the Living G-d, who desires life, gave us. See Mesilat Yesharim, Chapter 1, which deals with Torah and Mitzvot in this world. G-d doesn't like it when we are preoccupied with death. The dead render us impure. A grave renders us impure. If someone touches the dead, he is

impure for seven days. All of these mental excursions to the grave and back are not healthy. Choose life!



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