

Class Ten Reading Levine: Chapters 28-32

Chapter 28 After -Death Experiences

After death experience are actually after dying experiences. After death would be rebirth. Many researches have explored stories of people resuscitated from clinical death. The common theme of these near death experiences are: an increased appreciation of life, a diminished fear of death and a new sense of purpose.

Levine's view is that the report of near death experiences show how habituated people are to "name and form" rather than taking the opportunity to recognize their own true nature. Thus near death experiences focus on being met by something/someone outside themselves (name and form) rather than their staying with their own intrinsic awareness. In death most of us retreat into our habitual pathways of looking outward rather than having our awareness stay at home (our original face).

We can experience a level of consciousness, a vastness of being that cannot later be described, it is beyond thought. To discover our true nature, our original face, the vastness beyond words needs to and can be done now before we die.

How much fear do we have about what will follow our death? Fear of punishment? Fear our life is not up to scrutiny? In Levine's experience with dying and death the concepts of a punishing hell or a rewarding heaven seem to do more with political views rather than spiritual views. Hell is an obscuration of the heart. But even hell when recognized with mercy and allowed to float unjudged in consciousness can be held with compassion. Levine relates the story of a dying Tibetan teacher when told his students were praying for a good rebirth implored them to pray that he be born in hell because that is the very place where compassion and wisdom are needed.

Levine has found that many people have a fear of hellish karma that is distressing to them. He holds that karma is our increased capacity from problem-solving on increasingly deepening levels. It is a road map to our liberation, an opportunity to recognize what blocks healing and a chance to become whole once again.

The point is what is our view of what happens next once we are clinically dead. Do we have trust and confidence in the process of death or do we tighten in our bellies and sink into confusion? Can we stop the habitual patterns of protecting ourselves from life? Can we habituate ourselves to be open to each moment so that we can gain confidence in the process of not just living but what comes next when we die?

Chapter 29 Beyond the House of Death.

Truth lies beyond concepts of our birth and death. Truth is the vastness of being before it condenses into form, the deathless before it appears in the guise of the deathful. Truth is beyond name and form (concepts and thoughts). By keeping this deeper truth before us allows us to go beyond death. For Levine hell is no more than the difficulty of letting go of our suffering, a sweeping clear of confusion and doubts.

While not stopping at death we need not stop at heaven either. For heaven is just the polarity of hell. The true home is that which lies beyond such opposites,> Thus even the sacred has a source, beyond our imaginings there is a freedom so vast that it makes even paradise seem constricted. Let us find out for ourselves what lies beyond the walls of our ideas of life and death, beyond any mental construct that come into our mind. (this reminds me, Douglas of the great prayer of Meister Eckhart, "God save me from God." Any concept/idea of God is less than God.)

Chapter 30 Return Appearances

Phenomena of the dead appearing in a dream to the living, reassuring them that the person is ok is not an uncommon experience. For Levine these reports remind him stay open to any possibilities. This is an open question about the reality of another pane of reality/existence. Our ability to have strong attachments and projections lend themselves for a visit from a departed loved one. What if the reports of plants bursting into flower in the winter after a loved one dies? Or reports of impossible messages left on voicemail? For Levine this is a big just don't know. What he does know that in early stages of grief when we feel absolutely absence of the departed subsides the mind sinks into the heart and then there arises a sense of inseparability for that person. This dynamic may well be the two-way bridge across which our dreams are exchanged.

Chapter 31 Reincarnation

When the time comes our religions won't be our guides to what happens, rather it will be our spirituality. Buddha suggested we should be prepared for anything because it will be

beyond our imagined construct. By not being attached to what comes next frees us from the blinders of expectation.

The clarity to navigate through death cultivated in life. This calls upon our ability to investigate what is directly in front of us and our ability to stand erect making choices from our heart.

Does it make a difference to us if there is nothing after death?

Levine's on experiences have shown him that awareness survives the body's death. His books *Who Dies? Meeting at the Edge*, and *Healing into Life and Death* recount some of these experiences. He recommends the practice of the in breath/outbreath when falling asleep and waking in the morning as a means to develop focus and openness to reincarnation and lucid dreaming. By being mindful of our aliveness and going to sleep contemplating our deathlessness we are practicing conscious rebirth.

Possibility that with lucid dreaming we are setting up the ideal practice for making conscious decisions in the afterworld. Lucid dreaming considered by many to be one of the most skillful means for navigating wisely in the afterworld. Carlos Castaneda suggested to look at your hands when we are dreaming to recognize that we are dreaming.

Buddha spoke of our having countless lifetimes. He reminds us of the enormous deathlessness of our being-without-end and the closer our awareness is to the present moment the closer we are to our timeless essence.

The best preparation for reincarnation is to know, from within that which is deathless, as well as that which remain lifeless.

Chapter 32 Peter and Tim

A sweet poem of the death of two lovers.