

A Personal Testimony of the Spiritual World

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One day when I was about 8 or 10 I was grappling with a world in which I did not exist. How could life continue if I were dead? What did it mean to be dead? Would everything just turn black? When I asked my Mother (who did not believe in life after death) she just comforted me and said, “don’t worry honey, everyone goes through this. It will all be all right.”

Then, one day while I was in college, I stopped on a street corner and out of the blue, I verbally began speaking to God. I said, “God, until someone can show me where that first spark of life came from, I will continue to believe in you.” I just could not understand how something could come from nothing. It was not as if I was really thinking about this, but the words just blurted out of my mouth.

Several years later, after a prayer in which I heard the challenge to know who the Messiah was, I was listening to a Jewish folk song during our communal group’s introductory program in San Francisco. Suddenly the entire room literally turned golden and I received the answer to my question.

Neither my parents nor any of my friends were very religious. I grew up in an ethnically and culturally Jewish section of Chicago called Rogers Park. My parents never went to synagogue until they were about 70. I was Bar Mitzpahed at 13, but that was more a cultural, rather than a religious thing. The thing I remember most about Hebrew School (immediately after public school from age 9-13) was counting how many Chevys vs. Fords drove by the window of our classroom. Our class used to save quarters to plant trees in Israel, but our favorite project was to see how many kids could get kicked out of class in the first 30 minutes. My Rabbi Benjamin Birnbaum, was George Burns’ (who played God in the movies) brother. But I digress.



Rogers Park

One day I was running across the street at a 3-way intersection bordering Oakland and Berkeley, when, for some strange reason, I suddenly came to an abrupt stop. Ten seconds later a city bus came rambling through the intersection about 40mph.

While at seminary I was about to give a sermon on the life of Abraham Lincoln. As I prepared I got more and more inspired to *be* Abraham Lincoln, not just preach about him. So I grew my beard, painted a chef’s hat black and went to the Little Theatre Company in town to get a civil war era suit and tie like President Lincoln would have worn. I prepared more than I ever had for any speech or paper. It was as if some force was just pushing and pushing me. I chose a friend to be my M.C. (later I realized that we both were from Illinois). I acted out my sermon as if I were Abraham Lincoln and was very pleased, because I thought it went well. Afterward a congregant from the audience pulled me over. He said that while he was watching me in my *black* Lincoln suit, all the hairs on his arms suddenly went up, as he saw Lincoln standing behind me in a *white* suit. (Now I never saw any of this—it was his testimony)



One winter's morning after our second child was born, my feet came out from under me on solid ice. I was carrying my 2 year old and he went flying into the air and landed about 2 inches from a concrete stair. Was there an angel there protecting him? I choose to believe so!

But I am not the only one who has experienced the spiritual world. My best friend (who had never mentioned anything spiritual during the many years of our relationship), told me that he was sitting in his living room one day when a bright white light came in through the window and his grandmother was suddenly standing right in front of him. I also had another friend who had had a very similar experience the day her grandmother died.

A few years ago, I went to Connecticut to visit my grandmother's family and they told me this story. One night everyone in the house heard their son cry out for help. Yet, even though they looked all over the house, he was nowhere to be found. Later they found out that at that very moment, he had

been in a car wreck and had, in fact cried out for help.

We always celebrated Thanksgiving at my twin cousin's house (my Father's Sister's daughter and I were born 6 hours apart one Friday the thirteenth). One Thanksgiving we were looking at family pictures when she conveyed this story to me. One day she and her son were looking at family pictures and they came upon a picture of our grandfather. Now her son had never seen even a picture of his great grandfather. But when he came upon our grandfather's picture, all the hairs on his arm stood up and he told my cousin this story. He said that he was on a bus going to school and this old man was on the bus kept staring at him and made him feel very queezy. That man was the very same as our grandfather whose picture they were looking at. And the kicker is that the bus he was on was the very same one that my grandfather rode every day to work.

Fast forward a few years and I was at a workshop when the lady sitting next to me said that she needed to talk to me when the workshop ended. At that point she told me that she was spiritually open and that my Jewish-Russian ancestors had been chewing her ear off for over an hour. She said that they tried to talk to me but that I was not spiritually open so they just found the person who was physically closest to me, even though I did not know her. She told me that my ancestors had been farmers in Russia during a horrible famine. As they were dying, they went to their graves feeling that their lineage had come to an end. But suddenly there they were in the Weston Hotel in Chicago looking down on their tall, and handsome great great great grandsons, in this fancy hotel and they were basking in the joy that their lineage was still quite intact.

Interestingly, when I took my personal interest achievement tests in high school my top choice came out lawyer—which of course was what I always wanted to be, i.e., the next Perry Mason. But much to my parents' chagrin, my number two interest turned up "farmer."

My final vignettes involve my Father and Mother as they were preparing to move on to the next life. One day my father's caretaker asked my mom, "who is Olga?" Olga was his Mother. Well, the caretaker said, your husband said that Olga was standing at the end of his bed and was saying, "son, its time to come home."

My Mother had a near death experience about 3 months before she passed. She was on a breathing tube in the hospital and the prognosis was not good. But Sunday morning my brother walked into her room and she was sitting up reading. None of the nurses or doctors could believe their eyes. Now I have heard that sometimes the patient will have a choice on whether to move on to the next world or not. That if they still have some unfinished business left on earth, they may choose to remain alive. My mom, who never believed in life after death, told us that she had gone to a beautiful place with beautiful splotches of paint all over the walls. She said that all her arthritis was gone and her teeth finally felt fine.

On another occasion, when she first regained consciousness, my brother and I (who much to my mom's chagrin don't really get along) were each standing at the end of her bed. The first thing that she did was wave her arms together, motioning to us that her one remaining desire in life was that her two sons could get along.