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## **Do Jews Believe in an Afterlife?**

*Response by Rabbi Peter Schweitzer*

Most people I know believe that this is the only life we'll ever know. They think that death means the demise of our physical being and they don't put any stock in some kind of everlasting spiritual survival in a world-to-come. They don't place any bets either in some kind of delayed system of rewards and punishment to make up for the injustices of this world. Life is to be lived and appreciated in the here-and-now.

Yet this rather down-to-earth orientation doesn't negate the possibility of an afterlife, only it is an afterlife that continues in this same world where we have spent our lives. We all know the familiar idea that we live on in our deeds and the ripple effect they spread out into the world. Likewise, we live on in the memories that people hold dear and cherish. And, of course, we live on in our descendants who bear our names.

More subtly, we also live on in the quirky mannerisms that we bequeath to the next generation. We laugh or cough or tilt our head or purse our lips in just a certain way that are likely to get replicated and be recognized in our offspring.

How often also do we catch ourselves not only saying "just what my mother would have said" but with the same tone? Despite our determination to be our "own person" we inevitably internalize messages and outlooks on life that have been passed down to us and now live on through us.

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