JANUARY 3, 2010 THESKEPTICARENA.COM

LIFE AFTER DEATH - PART 1 OF 2

JEFF PROBST, GUEST HOST FOR LARRY KING:

TONIGHT, CAN WE COME BACK FROM THE DEAD?

People who've been there say yes.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: It's very peaceful. It's very serene. And it's extremely, extremely bright. I mean it is bright.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

PROBST: Modern day medicine and 21st century technology have made it possible. But what about other near death experiences -- the ones that science can't explain? And can those who have passed away return to human form in someone else's body?

Good evening. I'm Jeff Probst from "Survivor" sitting in for Larry. And tonight, we're talking about survivors in a different context. Medicine and technology are bringing people back from death. There are those who have died, but have lived to share their experience. You'll hear from some of those and about some of those stories later in the hour.

According to the Near-Death Experience Research Foundation -- yes, there is one -- nearly 800 near-death experiences happen every single day in the U.S. alone.

Joining us to talk about it is Dr. Sanjay Gupta, CNN chief medical correspondent and author of "Cheating Death: The Doctors and Medical Miracles That Are Saving Lives Against All Odds."

Also, Dr. Deepak Chopra, medical doctor, spiritual teacher, author of "Life After Death".

And Dinesh D'Souza, author of "Life After Death: The Evidence."

(NEO: THIS IS VERY TYPICAL OF HOW IRRATIONAL BELIEFS ARE PRESENTED TO THE AMERICAN PUBLIC. THEY INTRODUCE ALL THE "AUTHORITIES" WHO WILL GIVE THEIR OPINIONS SUPPORTING WHY A PARTICULAR "WOO-WOO" BELIEF IS TRUE - THEN AFTER THE AUDIENCE HAS BEEN THOROUGHLY "PREPPED," THEY BRING IN THE SKEPTIC TO GIVE THE "APPEARANCE" THAT THEY ARE BEING FAIR AND BALANCED).

Sanjay, in your book you talk about the idea that what we used to think of as the lines between life and death, this black and white thing, is changing.

DR. SANJAY GUPTA, CNN CHIEF MEDICAL CORRESPONDENT: Yes. I mean we had this sort of conventional wisdom that it's sort of a binary thing -- one moment you're here the next moment you're not. And I think scientifically, we know that's not true. Death is very much a process. Things happen in the body. Things happen at all different levels of the body.

The good news is that, really, at so many points during that process, things can be reversed. You can start to look at that death as a process and turn it in the other direction, which, you know, I just found incredibly fascinating.

PROBST: Deepak, in a recent Pew poll they discovered that 30 percent of Catholics now believe in reincarnation. And for the first time ever, more people -- 49 percent -- say they've had a mystical or religious experience, more than say they haven't. What's happening? What do you make of this change?

DEEPAK CHOPRA, AUTHOR, "LIFE AFTER DEATH": Well, lots of things are happening. First of all, there's a lot of interesting science now that is suggesting -- and by no means is this clear. There's a lot of controversy about this. There's a lot of interesting science that our consciousness, which is the place where we perceive, think, emote, imagine, have insight, intuition, choice-making -- that this part of us is not a product of our brain.

(NEO: I AGREE, THAT IS "INTERESTING" SCIENCE. I WOULD BE INTERESTED TO KNOW WHICH "SCIENTISTS" BELIEVE THAT).

You know, scientists have, until recently, believed that, just like your gallbladder secretes bile and your pancreas secretes pancreatic juice, your brain secretes imagination ... or thought.

PROBST: You're separating the brain and the mind?

CHOPRA: Yes.

(NEO: ACTUALLY, IN DEEPAK'S CASE - HE MAY BE RIGHT).

The mind, that consciousness, the one I'm talking to right now is not a product of the brain, but is localizing itself through the brain,

(NEO: AND YOUR EVIDENCE FOR THAT CLAIM IS ... ?).

just like people who are seeing us right now on their screens, you know, we're not in their television boxes. We are coming through these airwaves and they are perceiving us. But if they open the box, they wouldn't find Deepak or Jeff or anyone there.

(NEO: I HOPE YOUR ANALOGIES GET BETTER - FOR YOUR SAKE).

So if I look inside you, I won't find your soul because it's not there.

(NEO: FINALLY WE AGREE - BUT I DON'T THINK WE AGREE FOR THE SAME REASON).

In fact, your body is experienced in your consciousness. Your mind is experienced in your consciousness. And the evidence is pointing out that this consciousness is non-local, which means it exists outside of space-time and therefore, mathematically, it's impossible to destroy this consciousness.

(NEO: OTHER THAN YOUR INTENSE DESIRE FOR THIS TO BE TRUE - DO YOU HAVE ANY EVIDENCE? ANY EVIDENCE AT ALL?).

PROBST: Dinesh, what do you make of these numbers? You've studied this. It's a big shift in philosophy of how people are looking at life after death.

DINESH D'SOUZA, AUTHOR, "LIFE AFTER DEATH: THE EVIDENCE": I think the issue is absolutely huge. And a friend of mine who got cancer recently made the observation to me that when something like this happens you discover that the normalcy of your everyday life is a bit of a sham, because we live life as if we're never going to die. And then suddenly we have to confront that.

(NEO: WHAT DO YOU MEAN - WE LIVE AS THOUGH WE ARE NEVER GOING TO DIE? THAT DOESN'T MAKE SENSE. OTHER THAN THE MENTALLY ILL, WE ALL LIVE KNOWING THAT WE ARE GOING TO DIE).

The question of whether something comes after death -- I don't know, whether you're a believer or whether you're a skeptic, you're going to have to wonder about that. It's going to make a lot of difference in how you live now. And I think what makes our time exciting and unique is that now there's actually some evidence about all this -- not only near-death experiences but evidence from physics, evidence from biology, evidence from the science of the brain -- all of which seem to suggest that the old idea that simply our mind and our brain are the same and when we die our brains obviously die. So, if that's the case, then there's no life after death. But there are new possibilities created by modern knowledge. And that's really what I think is exciting today.

(NEO: ACTUALLY, THE EVIDENCE FROM PHYSICS, BIOLOGY, THE SCIENCE OF THE BRAIN, AND MODERN KNOWLEDGE ALL POINT IN THE OPPOSITE DIRECTION THAT YOU ARE CLAIMING THEY DO).

PROBST: Sanjay, in medicine, you're experimenting with something, even here in New York, I think, with hypothermia -- trying to cool the body down to expand the process of death?

GUPTA: Well, you know, for doctors and any health care professional, it's really about trying to buy time. So if you buy into this idea that death is a process, it doesn't happen just like that...

PROBST: So the thing we're used to hearing, which is in the medical room, the doctor says, time of death 3:18.

GUPTA: Right. That's exactly right, Jeff. And, you know, it was a profound example experience that I had as a medical student when I watched this -- this person came in -- a patient who was the same age as me -- after a car accident and everyone was working on him -- the trauma surgeons, the neurosurgeons, everybody. And at some point, literally someone said, OK, time of death 2:34.

And I remember thinking, that's it?

I mean, it just seemed so arbitrary even back then.

(NEO: I DON'T THINK DOCTORS TAKE IT AS LIGHTLY AS YOU ARE TRYING TO MAKE IT OUT TO BE. WHEN THEY CALL "TIME OF DEATH," IT IS NOT UNTIL THEY HAVE EXHAUSTED EVERY POSSIBLE MEANS TO SAVE THE PERSON).

And I think, in many ways, you know, that's been the hunt for me. That's what I've been searching for.

(NEO: WHAT? WHAT ARE YOU SEARCHING FOR? AND WHY CAN'T YOU COMPLETE A COHERENT THOUGHT?).

But with regard to hypothermia, it's this idea that, look, if your heart has failed, you have one of two things that you can do. You can either restart the heart to get oxygen through the body or you can decrease the demand of the body for that oxygen. Hypothermia sort of decreases demand. It sort of lowers the set point a bit, buying doctors and the health care team more time.

PROBST: And, Deepak, if that's right, then it ties into what you believe, I think, which is that life and death is just -- there is no beginning or end. It is this long continuum.

(NEO: YOU SHOULD HAVE STUCK WITH "SURVIVOR").

CHOPRA: Well, birth and death are space-time events in the continuum of life. So the opposite of life is not death. The opposite of death is birth. And the opposite of birth is death. And life is the continuum of birth and death, which goes on and on.

(NEO: AND ONCE AGAIN, YOUR EVIDENCE IS?).

And life is, as he said, it's a process. It's one process. It's perception, cognition, emotions, moods, imagination, insight, intuition, creativity, choice making. These are not the activities of your networks. You orchestrate these activities through your synaptic networks. But if I ask you to imagine the color red or look at the color red, there's no red in your brain. There's just electrical firings.

(NEO: THE SAME IS TRUE FOR THE COLOR - BLUE. YET OUR BRAINS CAN TELL THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THESE "ELECTRICAL FIRINGS").

What's the relationship between the subjective experience you have in your consciousness and what happens in the brain? This is what is called the hard question in science today.

PROBST: I'm a little lost right now, which is a good thing, because we're going to come back and figure this out.

(NEO: LISTENING TO THESE BOZOS, IT IS NO SURPRISE THAT YOU ARE "A LITTLE LOST." WATCHING 3 IRRATIONAL MINDS FUMBLING THROUGH THE DARKNESS IS ENOUGH TO MAKE MY EYES BLEED).

But I'm fascinated by this topic. We may not be able to prove life after death. But the other question is, can we disprove it?

(NEO: MAKE THAT 4 IRRATIONAL MINDS. IT IS NOT A REQUIREMENT OF SCIENCE TO "DISPROVE" A CLAIM - ONLY TO "PROVE IT").

A skeptic joins us with the other side. And that's next. We'll make sense of all of this.

(NEO: NOW THAT YOU'VE "PRIMED" THE AUDIENCE TO ACCEPT THE RAMBLINGS OF THE 3 GURUS, IT IS CLEAR THAT THE LAST THING YOU WANT TO DO IS TO MAKE SENSE OF ALL THIS. NOW YOU WILL BRING ON THE TOKEN SKEPTIC AND SET ALL 3 ON HIM IN AN ATTEMPT TO WIN THE ARGUMENT BY "APPEAL TO MAJORITY").

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

PROBST: Welcome back to LARRY KING LIVE.

I'm Jeff Probst from "Survivor" sitting in for Larry tonight. We're talking about coming back from the dead. Joining us is Michael Shermer, Ph.D. Founder, publisher of "Skeptic" magazine. He's also the executive director of The Skeptics Society and columnist for "Scientific American." Welcome, Michael. You're a skeptic. In fact, we're just going to refer to you as the skeptic. What is your take so far on this discussion?

DR. MICHAEL SHERMER, FOUNDING PUBLISHER, "SKEPTIC" MAGAZINE: Well, a couple of things. First of all, when it comes to the afterlife, I'm for it, of course. I mean, who wouldn't be?

But what I'm for and what's true are not always the same. So I think there's essentially three different lines of evidence that lead us to conclude that the idea of the afterlife is probably a product of our brains, starting off with our brains. That is, we're natural born dualists. We tend to think that mind is separate from brain because our brains can't perceive themselves. So we naturally think there's something else sort of floating around up there.

But we know for a fact that if you remove part of the brain through stroke, surgery, injury, from an impact or whatever, whatever the function was that was destroyed in that part of the neural tissue, that function is gone. That part of the mind...

CHOPRA: That's not true. That's not true.

(NEO: SHUT UP).

SHERMER: That part of the mind ... is gone forever unless it's rewired. Two --

on the second point, is that our primary function of our brains is to run our bodies. And we have a neural network in our left hemisphere that coordinates all the inputs from the body into a cell. So we have a sense of self that we can decenter. We can imagine being somewhere else. Close your eyes and picture yourself on a beautiful California beach. Almost everybody will see themselves -- their bodies down on the sand, not looking out through their eyes but actually seeing their bodies. So that's kind of what happens in an out-of-body near-death experience.

And three, we know from extreme sports, from mountain climbers, from Arctic explorers, that they have a third man factor. They have a sense of presence, like there's somebody else nearby, even though there clearly isn't. This could be oxygen deprivation, it could be cold, it could be starvation, it could just be loneliness. So our brains concoct this alternative person -- another sense presence that we can't sense being inside of ourselves, so we think of it out there -- an extension of ourselves. And in a way, a mind that continues into the indefinite future of an afterlife is like that.

PROBST: All right. Deepak, you took issue...

CHOPRA: Well, I have to say of Michael that he is very superstitious.

(NEO: IRRATIONALS ALWAYS ACCUSE RATIONALS OF WHAT THEY THEMSELVES ARE GUILTY OF. THE PURPOSE IS TO PUT SHERMER ON THE DEFENSIVE FOR SOMETHING THAT CHOPRA HIMSELF BELIEVES IN - SUPERSTITION. THIS IS HOW ALL IRRATIONALS, ESPECIALLY CREATIONISTS, ATTACK SCIENCE).

He's addicted to the superstition of materialism.

(NEO: THIS IS IDENTICAL TO THE CREATIONIST PLOY OF CALLING SCIENCE A RELIGION. BY ACCUSING SCIENCE OF SUPERSTITION, HE IS HOPING TO DISTRACT THE AUDIENCE FROM THE FACT THAT IT IS HE WHO BELIEVES IN SUPERSTITION. THERE IS NO AREA OF SCIENCE THAT ACCEPTS SUPERSTITION).

The first thing he said about the brain, you know, that you destroy a certain part of the brain and that function will not come back -- he hasn't kept up with the literature. There's a whole phenomenon called neural plasticity. There's gene regulation.

SHERMER: Yes, but that's still neurons firing.

(NEO: SO SHERMER HAS KEPT UP WITH THE LITERATURE. IT IS DEEPAK WHO HAS MISINTERPRETED THE LITERATURE).

CHOPRA: No. But what if your mental activity can change the activity of your neurons, then what comes first?

(NEO: SO YOUR EVIDENCE IS BASED ON "WHAT IF?").

D'SOUZA: There's a deeper point here and that is that a correlation doesn't establish causation.

(NEO: I SEE YOU HAVE BEEN BROWSING THE LOGIC WEBSITES. TOO BAD YOU NEVER APPLY WHAT THEY ARE TRYING TO TEACH YOU).

CHOPRA: That's right.

(NEO: THIS IS HOW GANGING UP WORKS. THERE IS NO ONE THERE TO SAY "THAT'S RIGHT" WHEN SHERMER MAKES A POINT. THIS IS HOW THEY TRY TO PERSUADE THE AUDIENCE - BY APPEAL TO MAJORITY).

D'SOUZA: There's no question that the mind and the brain go together.

CHOPRA: Yes.

(NEO: NOW YOU CAN SEE HOW EFFECTIVE THIS TACTIC APPEARS TO AN AUDIENCE THAT HAS BEEN PROPERLY "PREPPED").

D'SOUZA: But then the software and the hardware on my computer go together. If you think of your mind as a kind of software and your brain as the hardware, sure, if you damage the hardware, the software won't function. But that doesn't mean that the hardware caused the software.

(NEO: TRUE, THAT DOESN'T MEAN THE HARDWARE CAUSED THE SOFTWARE. SCIENCE DOESN'T SAY THAT DAMAGING THE BRAIN CAUSES THINKING).

You could take the software out and run it on a different computer or download it into your iPhone.

(NEO: "FALSE ANALOGY." YOU CAN'T TAKE YOUR THOUGHTS OUT AND RUN THEM ON SOMEONE ELSE'S BRAIN).

So the fact that the two go together doesn't mean one causes the other. The brain may be a kind of receiver or transmitter for the mind, in the same way that a CD player is a receiver and transmitter for the music waves.

(NEO: AND THERE'S HIS EVIDENCE: "MAY BE").

The radio isn't causing the waves, it is merely the mechanism for the waves to be manifested.

(NEO: YET ANOTHER FALSE ANALOGY: FIRST COMPUTERS - NOW RADIOS).

CHOPRA: I'd like to ask Michael ... are we talking to you, Michael, or to your networks right now?

(LAUGHTER)

SHERMER: Well, you're talking to both. You're talking to my individual neurons ... and my whole self.

CHOPRA: OK. When you said you'd like to believe in an after-death, was that your synaptic network speaking or was it you?

(NEO: OF COURSE IT WAS SHERMER SPEAKING. THE MECHANICS OF HOW THOSE THOUGHTS ARE CONVEYED, IS A SEPARATE SUBJECT THAT INVOLVES THE SYNAPTIC NETWORK, THE TONGUE, LIPS, ETC.).

SHERMER: That was my hope module.

CHOPRA: OK. So when you say I'm skeptical about this, who's the "I" that's skeptical? Is it your networks or is it you? Are you confused?

(NEO: ACTUALLY, IT IS YOU WHO IS CONFUSED. YOU ARE CONFUSING THE THOUGHTS - WITH THE NETWORKS THAT CREATE THE THOUGHTS: THEY ARE NOT THE SAME THING).

SHERMER: You're probably familiar with Michael Gazzaniga's idea of the left hemisphere interpreter -- our little narrator/storyteller that puts all the inputs in together into a coherent story. And I think what we all do is we all sort of put those things together with ourselves as the central character in our story.

CHOPRA: Which doesn't exist according to you.

(NEO: HE NEVER SAID THOUGHTS DON'T EXIST).

SHERMER: No, no, it does exist. It's just a higher order form of neural activity. There's individual neuron firings and then there's patterns of the neurons firing and then there's whole columns of neurons firing. And so we can ratchet up, not in an reductionist way, but in a holistic way, without it being a sort of new age-ish spiritual kind of thing.

CHOPRA: There's nothing new age-ish about this.

PROBST: The thing I like best about this show so far is I'm not necessary.

(NEO: THAT IS ALSO WHAT I LIKE ABOUT IT).

PROBST: Was a World War II pilot reincarnated in a body of a little boy? That's what the boy says. We will meet James in 60 seconds.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

PROBST: Was a World War II fighter pilot reincarnated in a little boy's body?

Bruce, Andrea and James Leininger say yes. They are authors of "Soul Survivor." Their book describes how their son James had memories of a WWII pilot who was killed in battle more than 60 years ago. James is now 11 years old.

(NEO: ANYONE WITH A DOUBLE-DIGIT I.Q. COULD SMELL THIS ONE COMING A MILE AWAY).

Andrea, when did you first realize that something was not right, that James was having ideas or stories that he wanted to share about this?

ANDREA LEININGER, AUTHOR, "SOUL SURVIVOR": James always had a fascination with airplanes. And that seemed just like something that a little boy would be fascinated with, like big trucks or something like that.

The real problem started about two weeks after James' second birthday. He had a night terror, which he had never had before. And this first nightmare began a series of nightmares that started occurring every other night, every night. Four or five times a week he would have these screaming nightmares where he'd be laying on his back, kicking his feet up at the ceiling like he was in a box, trying to kick his way out.

(NEO: SOUNDS TO ME LIKE A PERFECT CANDIDATE FOR AN EXORCISM).

And after several months of this, he was having a nightmare and I came down the hallway and I was able to finally determine what he was saying. And he was saying, "airplane crash on fire, little man can't get out."

PROBST: Well, and Bruce, even at three, James was drawing pictures of an airplane crashing. In fact, I think we have one. Did you talk to him at that point? He was very young then. Did he have an idea what was going on?

BRUCE LEININGER, AUTHOR "SOUL SURVIVOR": Well, by the time he started drawing those pictures, he'd been talking about this for several months. That didn't start until seven or eight months after he really began talking about what was happening. Prior to that, in the dreams or after the dreams or before he'd go to bed or in a dreaming state, mostly, he started to tell us things about what would happen. And he essentially gave us three items of information over about a three month period. One, he gave us the name of the ship, which I verified through research on the Internet ...

PROBST: This is the ship the airplane took off from?

A. LEININGER: Yes.

B. LEININGER: That's correct. Natoma Bay. He gave us a name Natoma. I asked him one night where his ship came or where his airplane came from, because he told us it was shot down by the Japanese. And he said it came from a boat. So in another question, I asked him the name of the boat. He said, Natoma. And I did a Google search on the word "Natoma" and found, 300 or 400 hits down, a history of a WWII ship that was in the Pacific.

About a month later, he gave us the name of a guy he said he flew with. When we asked him if there was anyone else in his dream that he could remember.

PROBST: So I want to be clear on this, Bruce. He gave you the name ...

of somebody he had flown with?

B. LEININGER: That's right. Jack Larson.

A. LEININGER: I kept asking him if he remembered what his name had been in his last life or in his dreams. And he said his name was James. But that is his name. So I finally gave up on that line of questioning. And I finally asked him, do you remember anybody else that you flew with or any friends? And he said, Jack Larson.

PROBST: James, you're 11 now. You're a little older. You've been dealing with this for a while. What do you make of it now? Do you still have these dreams? Can you connect this to anything or are they starting to lessen for you?

JAMES LEININGER, SON OF BRUCE AND ANDREA LEININGER: It has diminished.

PROBST: So you're not remembering it as clearly as you were when you were younger.

J. LEININGER: No.

A. LEININGER: And, Jeff, it wasn't like he had cognitive memory. It wasn't like he could just sit and I could say, Jeff, tell me about when you were on the last season of "Survivor." These memories weren't active in his mind. It was usually a trigger or something that would happen or he would see or smell or hear something. And then he would just come out with this little piece of information and that was it.

Then it was pretty much gone forever. There was probably only three or five instances where we were able to sit down and question him and ask him questions. The rest of the time when we tried to do that, if he didn't initiate that conversation, he didn't seem to know what we were talking about. It was a very interesting phenomenon.

PROBST: All right. Is there a medical explanation for what James experienced? We will find out. We'll take a quick break. We'll be right back.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

PROBST: We are back talking about reincarnation with the Leiningers. And they say a WWII pilot was reincarnated in their son James. Sanjay, is there anything that comes to mind for you medically that could explain how this could happen?

GUPTA: Well, you know, I think as neuron-scientists, we obviously want to try and explain everything scientifically first. You know, was there some sort of experience that he had had? Did someone tell him a story at some point?

Did he watch something or anything that could have, you know, somehow put this memory into his head, into his mind and his brain?

But I'll tell you, that the answer may come back absolutely no. And at which point, you really have to ask yourself, is it OK not to fully be able to explain things physiologically?

When I was writing my book, that's exactly to the point where I got. I wanted to explain things like the story that we're hearing about James, but there were some things that simply couldn't be explained.

Could his memory have existed somewhere else besides in his brain, specifically, and was being harnessed at a very young age from, you know, a previous experience that may have even been in a different life?

You know, that sort of stuff is that perfect intersection between science and spirituality, which, you know, is just really interesting.

PROBST: Michael, the skeptic -- let's go to the skeptic. Have you done any research or investigated anything that might explain why James would have such vivid ideas of another life lived?

SHERMER: Sure. Yes, there's two things there. Of course, as Sanjay said, it's perfectly OK to say I don't know. And in this case, obviously, I wasn't there inside James' head. But when I was his age, I was totally into World War II planes and ships. I built models. I did drawings. I read everything I could. That's what young boys do. We're into that kind of stuff. So it's not a big stretch to imagine how he might have...

PROBST: Sorry to interrupt you. You're chalking this up to he's a young kid, he was interested in this, maybe his dad wasn't and that's it?

(NEO: NOTICE THE OBVIOUS BIAS IN JEFF'S REPLY AS HE TRIES TO MINIMIZE SHERMER'S EXPLANATION BY SAYING "AND THAT'S IT?").

SHERMER: Not just that. I think it's not a big stretch to imagine how he could inculcate into his dreams a lot of these images. And then you get a couple of selective hits and you spin it into a story. But my general problem with reincarnation is the numbers problem. There's been about 100 billion people that have ever lived and there's six billion alive today. Where are all those other souls? What happened to all the other World War II pilots?

PROBST: Deepak, where are they? Or Dinesh, where are they?

(NEO: NOTICE THE DESPERATE PLEA FOR HELP).

D'SOUZA: First of all, the numbers problem, I think, is a bogus problem,

(NEO: STANDARD RESPONSE WHEN ... YOU DON'T HAVE AN ANSWER).

particularly because, in the views of reincarnation, particularly the Hindu view, there can be a traffic, if you will, between humans and non-humans.

(NEO: SO YOUR DEFENSE IS BASED ON A RELIGIOUS BELIEF?).

So, for example, if somebody is terrible in this life, we'll be seeing you as a cockroach in the next life.

(NEO: WHY DO YOU EQUATE "COCKROACHES" WITH "TERRIBLE PEOPLE?" SCIENCE HAS MADE NO DETERMINATION THAT ANY CREATURE IS MORALLY INFERIOR TO ANY OTHER. OH THAT'S RIGHT, YOU'RE NOT USING SCIENCE - YOU ARE USING RELIGION).

It's not just a matter of being reincarnated to other human beings. I think here there's a bigger point here.

(NEO: THE BIGGER POINT HERE IS THAT YOU ARE BEING DISHONEST - AS A CHRISTIAN, YOU BELIEVE THAT THE BELIEFS YOU ARE "TOUTING" ARE HINDU FANTASIES. YET YOU ARE CAREFUL TO HIDE YOUR BELIEF IN THE PRESENCE OF THE OTHER GANG MEMBERS, WHO YOU NEED TO FIGHT THE FACTS PRESENTED BY THE SKEPTIC).

The bigger point is that belief in life after death is absolutely universal.

(NEO: SO WHAT? BELIEF IN AN EARTH-CENTERED COSMOS WAS ALSO "ABSOLUTELY UNIVERSAL" UNTIL SCIENCE PROVED OTHERWISE).

It's existed from the dawn of mankind. Today, most people in the world believe in it.

(NEO: DARWIN SAID EVOLUTION WORKS SLOW. IN THE CASE OF IRRATIONALS, YOU CAN MAKE THAT "VERY SLOW").

The denial of life after death is only in Western culture and only recently.

(NEO: THAT'S CALLED PROGRESS. WHILE YOU REMAIN MIRED IN MEDIEVAL, SUPERSTITIOUS THINKING, MANY OTHERS ARE ADVANCING INTO THE SPACE AGE AND HAVE THROWN OFF THE IRRATIONAL THINKING PROCESSES THAT GUIDED OUR ANCESTORS).

There are Eastern and Western views of immortality. By and large, in the Eastern view your soul lives on and it can live on multiple times, life after life after life.

SHERMER: Where is James' soul?

CHOPRA: OK, so then I'll address that question.

(NEO: IT'S OBVIOUS THAT THEY DIDN'T BRING ENOUGH BELIEVERS TO GANG UP ON SHERMER).

It's actually a very good question that he's asked.

(NEO: THAT IS A STALLING TECHNIQUE DESIGNED TO BUY A FEW PRECIOUS SECONDS WHILE HE FIGURES OUT WHAT TO SAY IN REPLY).

Imagine that you're looking at an ocean and you see lots of waves today. And tomorrow you see a fewer number of waves. It's not so turbulent. What you call a person actually is a pattern of behavior of a universal consciousness.

(NEO: YOU LEFT OUT 99% OF EVERYTHING ELSE THAT MAKES UP A PERSON. NOR DO YOU HAVE ANY EVIDENCE TO PROVE THE 1% THAT YOU CLAIM ACTUALLY IS A PERSON. MAYBE YOU SHOULD HAVE ALLOWED DINESH TO ANSWER THE QUESTION).

There is no such thing as Jeff, because what we call Jeff is a constantly transforming consciousness that appears as a certain personality, a certain mind, a certain ego, a certain body.

(NEO: FOR ONCE I WISH THAT YOU WERE RIGHT. IF THERE WAS "NO SUCH THING" AS DEEPAK, THEN WE WOULD BE LEFT WITH ONLY 3 BUFFOONS).

But, you know, we had a different Jeff when you were a teenager. We had a different Jeff when you were a baby. Which one of you is the real Jeff?

(NEO: WHY DO YOU ASSUME THAT ONLY ONE CAN BE THE REAL JEFF?).

If you go to heaven and you meet your relatives, will we meet the person with Alzheimer's, who died at the age of 100 or will you meet the young teenager?

(NEO: ACTUALLY, WHERE I'M GOING - THAT WON'T BE A PROBLEM. MY ONLY PROBLEM WILL BE - WHEN MY FIREHOSE RUNS OUT OF WATER).

There is no such thing in the deeper reality as a constant entity called a person.

(NEO: I HAVEN'T SEEN ANY EVIDENCE THAT YOU HAVE AN INKLING OF WHAT GOES ON IN "REALITY").

So when he says 6,000 traffic jams, this that and the other, it's all nonsense. It's a very primitive way of looking at it.

(NEO: THE RATIONAL LISTENER SHOULD TAKE NOTICE THAT AFTER ALL THAT BULLSHIT - DEEPAK NEVER DID ANSWER SHERMER'S QUESTION "WHERE IS JAMES' SOUL?"

DEEPAK'S ONLY DEFENSE, OTHER THAN VERBOSITY, WAS TO CALL IT ALL "NONSENSE" AND FLING AN INSULT "PRIMITIVE WAY OF LOOKING AT IT").

PROBST: Michael, I have a question. Why not believe? Why are you focusing so much -- because if you're wrong ...

(NEO: WHEN IRRATIONALS RUN OUT OF AMMO, YOU CAN ALWAYS COUNT ON THEM RESORTING TO PASCAL'S WAGER. WHEN THEIR ARGUMENTS FAIL - THEY TURN TO THREATS).

CHOPRA: Because his neural networks will not allow him to.

(NEO: IF YOUR NEURAL NETWORKS FUNCTIONED HALF AS EFFICIENTLY AS SHERMER'S, MAYBE THEY WOULD HAVE SAVED YOU FROM A LIFETIME OF EXISTENCE IN FANTASYLAND).

GUPTA: And being skeptical is bad for the heart, as well. It is bad for you, Michael, to be so skeptical. It's...

(NEO: AND THIS GUY IS A DOCTOR?).

SHERMER: I'm really not worried about it. Here's why. I think that we would like to believe things that are actually true. And although I can't disprove the afterlife, neither can the other side prove it. And I think it becomes an article of faith. And, again, I think the preponderance of evidence is that our brains tend to create these sorts of things.

Consider the God helmet in Michael Persinger's lab that I went up and did and had an out-of-body experience that generated nothing but magnetic fields bombarding my temporal lobes. You can create these things artificially in the lab.

D'SOUZA: I think that's a fallacy.

(NEO: NOTICE HOW DINESH KEEPS TRYING TO IMPRESS THE AUDIENCE WITH THE "LOGICAL LINGO" - YET HIS ARGUMENTS ARE COMPLETELY DEVOID OF ANYTHING REMOTELY RESEMBLING LOGIC).

An experience is not discredited by the fact that you can recreate it.

(NEO: SPEAKING OF FALLACIES, MR. LOGIC JUST COMMITTED THE STRAW MAN LOGICAL FALLACY BY IMPLYING THAT SHERMER CLAIMED THAT AN AFTERLIFE EXPERIENCE IS DISCREDITED BY RECREATING IT. SHERMER STATED THAT AN AFTERLIFE EXPERIENCE IS NOT "CREDIBLE" UNTIL IT HAS BEEN PROVEN TO ACTUALLY BE AN AFTERLIFE EXPERIENCE. SHERMER THEN EXPLAINED HOW THESE EXPERIENCES CAN BE CREATED WITHOUT DYING. BUT THE RECREATION OF THE EXPERIENCE IS NOT WHAT DISCREDITS THE AFTERLIFE EXPERIENCE).

If I'm out on the seashore and I see the sunshine and I say, the sun is blinding me. Michael goes, that's an illusion. I can produce a flashlight and blind you here at home. That doesn't mean I didn't see the sun. I did see the sun.

(NEO: THAT ANALOGY WAS SO STUPID, I WOULDN'T EVEN KNOW WHERE TO BEGIN. OKAY NEVERMIND, THAT PISSED ME OFF SO MUCH THAT I WILL ANALYZE IT.

FIRST DINESH, THE SUN WILL ONLY BLIND YOU IF YOU STARE AT IT; SO RIGHT OFF THE BAT YOUR ANALOGY DOESN'T MAKE SENSE. SECOND, WHY WOULD SHERMER CALL THAT AN ILLUSION? WHAT PART OF THAT, WOULD HE BE CALLING AN ILLUSION? YOU ARE CREATING ANOTHER STRAW MAN ARGUMENT. THAT'S 2 CONSECUTIVE NONSENSICAL STATEMENTS.

THIRD, IF YOU BLIND SOMEONE WITH A FLASHLIGHT - WHAT IN GOD'S HOLY EARTH WOULD THAT HAVE TO DO WITH CLAIMING YOU DIDN'T SEE THE SUN? THOSE 2 IDEAS ARE NOT AT ALL LOGICALLY CONNECTED.

I HOPE YOU NEVER TRAVEL TO VULCAN - WITHIN 5 MINUTES, YOU WOULD HAVE SPOCK QUIVERING ON THE FLOOR IN CONVULSIONS).

PROBST: So the fact that you can recreate it doesn't mean it might not be real somehow?

(NEO: IT'S NICE TO SEE THE SHOW MODERATED BY SUCH AN UNBIASED HOST. 3 CLOWNS AND A RINGMASTER - AND STILL, THEY ARE NO MATCH FOR SHERMER. HOW HE KEEPS FROM GOING "BRUCE LEE" ON THESE GUYS IS BEYOND ME.

IF I WERE HIM - I WOULD ALREADY BE IN JAIL).

D'SOUZA: Moreover, the normal is an editing device to begin with.

(NEO: COULD YOU PLEASE SPEAK ENGLISH).

You see, if you take kittens and you bring them up in a room that has only horizontal stripes, they'll see only a horizontal world.

(NEO: DURING THE BREAK, YOU MUST HAVE FALLEN OFF YOUR STOOL ONTO YOUR HEAD. YOU ARE MAKING EVEN LESS SENSE THAN YOU NORMALLY DO. WHAT DOES IT EVEN MEAN TO SEE "ONLY A HORIZONTAL WORLD?" WHATEVER YOU ARE ON - I'VE GOT TO GET ME SOME OF THAT).

If you bring kittens up in a room that has vertical stripes, they'll see only a vertical world.

(NEO: WHAT IS A "VERTICAL WORLD?").

SHERMER: That's because their neurons actually atrophy.

(NEO: DON'T GIVE HIM ENCOURAGEMENT MICHAEL. MAKE HIM TRY TO EXPLAIN WHAT VERTICAL AND HORIZONTAL WORLDS ARE, AND HOW IT IS POSSIBLE TO VIEW THE WORLD IN SUCH AN ILLOGICAL FASHION).

CHOPRA: That's right.

(NEO: MICHAEL, NOW SEE WHAT YOU'VE DONE - EVEN BUTTHEAD AGREES WITH YOU!).

And they atrophy as a result of an interpretation of an experience. You've conditioned yourself to believe in a certain way and now your neurons will reinforce your belief system.

(NEO: I'M GLAD TO SEE THAT YOU DIDN'T TRY TO RUIN THIS INTERVIEW WITH A LOGICAL STATEMENT. SO FAR, YOU ARE STILL BATTING A THOUSAND).

PROBST: Let's plop back into the Leiningers for a minute. We're going to break, so just a quick question. Now that James is a little older and these memories are starting to diminish, do you have any doubts of what happened?

A. LEININGER: No, I have no doubt whatsoever. And it's funny to listen to Michael, because the ultimate skeptic going into this whole thing was my own husband.

(NEO: IT'S TOO BAD YOUR HUSBAND DIDN'T POSSESS THE CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS NECESSARY TO MAINTAIN THAT SKEPTICISM. BUT THEN, IF HE HAD, YOU GUYS WOULDN'T BE ON T.V. AND BE THE AUTHORS OF A SUCCESSFUL BOOK, WOULD YOU?).

Bruce was completely a non-believer in the concept of reincarnation. And he went about all the research that's in our book to try and disprove and prove that whatever was happening to James was a result of illogical -- something that could be logically explained.

(NEO: IT SOUNDS LIKE MRS. LEININGER HAS BEEN SPENDING TOO MUCH TIME TALKING WITH DEEPAK. I DON'T KNOW WHAT THAT LAST SENTENCE SAID).

B. LEININGER: And it was something definitely happening that I didn't understand.

(NEO: BUT YOU QUICKLY UNDERSTOOD HOW TO USE IT TO MAKE MONEY).

And we tend to reject what we don't understand to out of hand so...

(NEO: FOR YOU THAT IS PROBABLY TRUE; ESPECIALLY IF IT HAS SCIENTIFIC EVIDENCE TO BACK IT UP).

PROBST: So you guys are still convinced.

B. LEININGER: Right. We're still convinced.

A. LEININGER: Yes.

(NEO: WHAT DID YOU EXPECT THEM TO SAY? NO, IT WAS ALL A SCAM AND WE ARE VERY SORRY FOR USING OUR SON LIKE THIS TO MAKE MONEY; AND FOR PUTTING HIM IN A POSITION WHERE HE IS FORCED TO LIE).

PROBST: The skeptic is convinced it didn't happen.

(NEO: NO, SHERMER DIDN'T SAY IT DIDN'T HAPPEN. HE SAID HE HAS SEEN NO PROOF THAT THIS KID PRE-EXISTED AS A WORLD WAR 2 FIGHTER PILOT).

And we have three people on the panel who are ready to ...

(NEO: YOU HAVE 3 PEOPLE ON THE PANEL WHO ARE READY TO SAY WHATEVER THEY HAVE TO IN ORDER TO KEEP THE MONEY ROLLING IN).

CHOPRA: I'd like to have a one week debate with the skeptic in front of a live audience with a good moderator...

PROBST: Not tonight, Deepak.

(NEO: JEFF DIDN'T EVEN CATCH THE INSULT, "WITH A GOOD MODERATOR").

SHERMER: OK, you're on.

CHOPRA: I'll take you on. Because all I have to do is debate with your synaptic networks, not with you.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)