

“THE DAYS APPROACH THAT YOU (MOSHE) MUST DIE.”  
(DEVARIM 31:14)

**Is this the factor that causes the evil person to be considered dead?**

THE TORAH DEFINITION OF LIFE AND DEATH goes far beyond having a regular pulse and respiration. In explaining the *pasuk* above, the Midrash (Tanchuma, Vayeilech, para. 4) tells us that a *rasha* – an evil person – is considered as dead, even though he seems to be healthy and alive. Why? “Because the *rasha* sees the sunrise and does not bless Hashem; he eats and drinks, and does not make a *bracha*.” His physical body may be alive and well, but in spirit he is dead and buried. But is this the factor that causes the evil person to be considered dead? Shouldn’t the fact that the *rasha* steals, cheats and commits other heinous transgressions be listed as the “cause of death” on his spiritual “death certificate”?

Man is endowed by Hashem with abilities of perception and understanding. We can see and recognize the beauty and complexity of the universe and thereby come to realize the greatness of Hashem, the Designer and Builder of all creation. This realization triggers an automatic outpouring of gratitude and praise to Hashem for these delightful wonders. As we look at the world around us, we are constantly bombarded by “everyday miracles” and the astonishingly harmonious interaction of all the forces of nature. Seeds grow into plants. Babies are born. Our hearts beat unceasingly every minute of the day. Our eyes see, our ears hear. Anyone who does not respond to these stimuli by praising the Creator is considered to be in a spiritually comatose state similar to death. Because the *rasha* does not appreciate the blessings of life bestowed upon him, not only does he not live life to the fullest, he does not live at all. If we, on the other hand, understand that Hashem renews creation everyday and we appreciate each new sunrise and every heartbeat as another gift from Hashem, we will truly experience life and its pleasures.

**We will truly experience life and its pleasures**

The Alter of Slabodka suggested that we observe an infant as it begins its life in this world. At first she stares blankly into space. By the third month it visually follows an object and even begins to reach out to grab it. Soon this baby will make sounds and sit upright. Eventually she will walk, talk and have a complete repertoire of fully developed motor and mental skills. At each stage of the infant’s development, her parents will be overjoyed and awed by the new advances their baby has made. Long distance phone calls will be put through to the grandparents to inform them of their *aineke*’s latest tricks. Each nuance of the baby’s development is appreciated, and her parents thank Hashem for the wonderful miracles He is performing every day.

**We must appreciate our abilities as if they were suddenly bestowed upon us this very day**

All of these developmental stages, the Alter explained, occur to each of us every day. When we are asleep, our metabolisms are slowed and our conscious functions are completely incapacitated. Nevertheless, each day Hashem opens our eyes and returns our skills and talents to us. The Alter of Slabodka emphasized that we must appreciate our abilities as if they were suddenly bestowed upon us this very day and we must rejoice each morning just as a mother celebrates each step of her child’s maturation. The more we open our eyes and minds to appreciate the blessings of creation Hashem constantly bestows upon us, and the abilities that are rejuvenated in our bodies every day, the more we can be considered vibrant and alive.