

# **AFTERLIFE AND THE DEATH-MOMENT: DEEP WISDOM AND PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS FROM KABBALAH, TIBETAN BUDDHISM AND NEAR DEATH EXPERIENCE RESEARCH**

## **THEOLOGICAL CONTEXT**

Reb Elimelekh of Lyzhansk was extraordinarily cheerful as his death was approaching. When asked by a disciple for an explanation of his behavior he replied: "Why should I not rejoice, seeing that I am about to leave this world below, and enter into the higher worlds of eternity? Do you not recall the words of the Psalmist: 'Yea, though I walk the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, **for You - God - are with me**' (Ps. 23:4). Thus does the grace of God display itself." [*Louis Newman, Hasidic Anthology*, p. 7].

O noble one, that which is called death has now arrived, so you should adopt this attitude: "I have arrived at the time of death, so now, by means of this death, **I will adopt only the attitude of the enlightened state of mind, friendliness and compassion, and attain perfect enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings** as limitless as space. (*Trungpa and Fremantle, Tibetan Book of the Dead*, p. 36)

## **HIBBUT HA-KEVER/PANGS OF GRAVE/CHIKAI BARDO PROCESS OF DEATH**

Rabbi Yehuda said: "**For seven days the soul [*nephesh*] goes to and fro from his house to his grave from his grave to his house**, mourning for the body...(Zohar I, 218b-219a).

The lifetime of the bardo person **usually lasts for seven days, although in some cases it is even shorter than this**. If in this time he/she has not found a suitable place of rebirth, he/she experiences a 'small' death and is reborn in the bardo again. [*Tsong Khapa, Commentary to the Six Yogas of Naropa, quoted in Glenn Mullin, Death & Dying - Tibetan Tradition*, p. 192.]

O noble one, after **being unconscious for four and a half days**, you will move on, and awakening from your faint you will wonder what has happened to you, so recognize it as the *bardo* state. (*Trungpa and Fremantle*, p. 41)

## **\*ANCESTRAL/ARCHETYPAL GUIDES:**

Rabbi Shimon said: 'Have you seen today the image of your father? For so we have learnt, that at the hour of a man's departure from the world, his father and his **relatives gather round** him, and he sees them and recognizes them, and likewise all with whom he associated in this world, and they **accompany his soul to the place where it is to abide**.[ *Zohar*, I, 217b].

When one] departs this world [s]he sees many strange things on the way and **meets Adam, the first man, sitting at gate of Gan Eden**, ready to welcome all who have observed commands of their Master (*Zohar* I, 65b)

O Noble one, **meditate on your yidam [Archetype diety**, which is said to represent to the disciple's innate enlightenment nature] **and do not be distracted**. Concentrate immensely on your yidam. Visualise him as an appearance without substance of its own...[If the deceased is an ordinary person, orient him or her in this way, saying] Meditate on the Lord of Compassion. (*Trungpa and Fremantle*, p. 38; *Thurman*, p. 128).

### \*SUPERNAL VISION OF LIGHT

No man dies before he **sees the Shekhina**, and because of its deep yearning for the Shekhina the soul departs in order to see her. (*Zohar, III, 88a*)... the souls of human beings, before ascending into Gan Eden [Paradise], are **immersed in the River of Light** [*nehar dinur*] where they are purged without being consumed. [*Zohar II, 211a*]

O noble one, you, named so-and-so, now the time has come for you to seek the way. As soon as your breath stops, what is called the basic luminosity, the objective clear light of the first bardo, will appear to you, as previously described to you by your teacher. Your outer breath stops and you experience reality stark and void like space. **This is the dharmata, open and empty, luminous void, pure naked mind without center or circumference.** Recognize it as yourself, and stay with that experience..." (*Trungpa & Fremantle, p. 35; Thurman, Tibetan Book of Dead, p. 122*)

### \*LIFE REVIEW

When a [person] departs this world [s/he] **goes to give an account of all his [her] actions in this world while body and soul** were still joined together. (*Zohar I, 65b*)... when God desires to take back a man's spirit, all the **days he has lived in this world pass in review before Him.** (*Zohar I, 221b*).

### \*DISSOLUTION OF ELEMENTS

..we have learnt that on the dread day when a man's time comes to depart from the world, **four quarters of the world indict him, and punishments rise up from all four quarters and four elements fall to quarreling and seek to depart each to its own side.** [*Zohar, I, 218b*].

Life depends on the interaction of four basic elements: The essence of earth is flesh, the essence of water is bodily fluid, the essence of fire is bodily heat and the essence of air is breath. The dying process begins with the dissolution of these elements.

[First] the **element earth** dissolves and is absorbed by the element water. This is accompanied by the inner experience that...everything is falling apart from great floods and earthquakes. You will not be able to stand because your strength is fast disappearing...

In the second phase, the **element water** dissolves and is absorbed by the element fire... you will experience the sensation that the entire universe has been flooded with water. During this time, those around you perceive that your face and lips are rapidly drying up. You will also feel extremely thirsty.

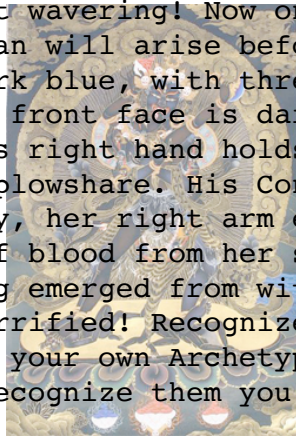
When the third **element, fire**, dissolves into the element air you... will experience the sensation that everything around you is burning. During this time the heat from your body will do away.

[Finally] the **element air** will begin to dissolve into consciousness itself. When this happens, you will have the... experience that all phenomena in the universe are being blown away by the winds of a great storm. You will hear a grinding roar like that of a thousand thunders [and] ... the external air or breath will be extinguished. [*Lama Lodru, Bardo Teachings - The Tibetan Way of Death and Rebirth, pp. 3-5*]

## **GEHENNA/GAN EDEN - AFTER DEATH STATE: VISIONS OF PEACEFUL & WRATHFUL DEITIES/CHONYI BARDO**

There are **five kinds of punishments** in GEHENNA, and Isaiah saw them all.... He entered the **second compartment**, and he saw two men hanging by their tongues; and he said, "O You who unveils the hidden, reveal to me the secret of this." He answered, "These are the men who slandered, therefore they are thus punished." He entered the **third compartment**, and he saw there men hanging by their organs. He said, "O You who unveils the hidden, reveal to me the secret of this." And He answered, "These are the men who neglected their own wives, and committed adultery with the daughters of Israel." [*Keitzad Din Ha-Kever*, 1-3).

Hey noble one! Listen without wavering! Now on the ninth day the **Lord Vajra Heruka** of the Vajra-clan will arise before you, emerging from within your brain. He is dark blue, with three faces, six arms, and four legs stretched out. His front face is dark blue, his right face white, his left face red. His right hand holds a vajra, the middle a skull bowl, and the third a plowshare. His Consort Buddha Vajra Krodhishvari enfolds his body, her right arm embracing his neck, her left hand offering im sips of blood from her skull bowl... They rise manifestly before you, having emerged from within your own brain! Do not fear them! Do not be terrified! Recognize them as an image of your own awareness! They are your own Archetype Deity, so do not panic! The very moment you recognize them you will be liberated! (Thurman, p. 155)



## **GEHENNA/GAN EDEN - AFTER DEATH STATE: VISIONS OF PEACEFUL & WRATHFUL DEITIES/CHONYI BARDO**

GAN EDEN has two gates of carbuncle, and sixty myriads of ministering angels keep watch. Each of these **angels shine like the radiance of the heavens**. When the righteous person approaches, angels remove from him the clothes in which he had been buried, and clothe him with eight robes of the clouds of glory, and place upon his head two crowns, one of precious stones and pearls, and the other of gold, and they place eight myrtles in his hand and praise him. And they lead him to a place full of waters surrounded by 800 species of roses and myrtles. (*Masekhet Gan Eden*, 1-2)

Hey noble one! Listen without wavering! on this fourth day, the red light that is the purity of the fire element dawns. At this time, from the red western world, the red **Lord Amitabha appears before you**, seated on a peacock throne, carrying a lotus, in union with his consort.. attended by the male Boddhisattvas.. The red light of Discriminating wisdom, purity of the conceptual aggregate, red and piercing, dazzling and clear, adorned with drops and droplets, shines from the heart of the Amitabha couple, precisely penetrating your heart center, unbearable to see with your eyes. Do not fear it!! (Thurman, p. 138)

## **“RETURN TO SOURCE” - TZROR HA-HAYYIM**

...that holy celestial abode which is called "the bundle of the living" [TZROR HA-HAYYIM], where that holy superior grade called the super-soul [*neshama*] regales itself with the supernal delights. (*Zohar, III, 70a*)

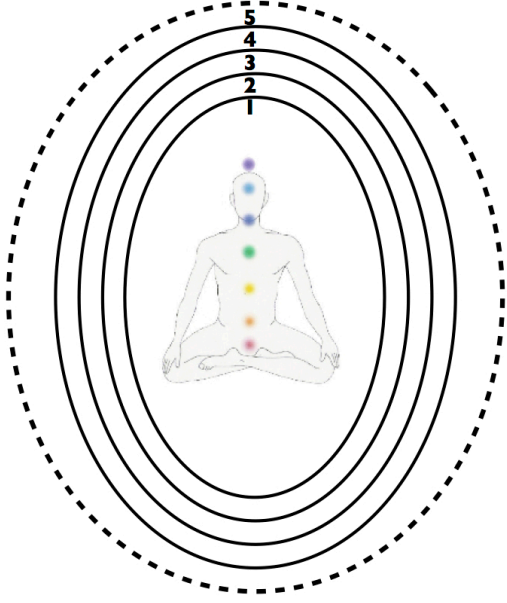
## SIPAI BARDO - OF SEEKING REBIRTH

Hey noble one! Thus, if it becomes necessary by the power of evolution to enter the womb, you should now rely on the instruction for choosing the womb. Listen! Do not go just to any womb door that presents itself... Since now you have the subtle clairvoyance, you will be able to understand the nature of all places, so choose your place of rebirth wisely...[Thurman, p. 191]

[In the womb, the soul is accompanied by two angels. A light is set above the soul, making it possible to see from one end of the world to the other. ] Between morning and evening the angel carries the soul around and shows her where she will live and where she will die, and the place where she will be buried, and he takes her through the whole world, and points out the just and the sinners and all things. In the evening, he replaces her in the womb of the mother, and there she remains for nine months...

Finally, the time comes for the soul to enter the world. It is reluctant to leave; but the angel touches the baby on the nose, extinguishes the light above the head and sends it forth into the world. Instantly, the soul forgets all that it has seen and learnt, and enters the world, crying to have just lost a place of shelter, rest and security. [*Seder Yetzirat Ha-Vlad translation in Louis Ginzberg, Legends of the Jews, 1, pp. 57-58*].

Kabbalistic texts found in: Simcha Paull Raphael *Jewish Views of the Afterlife*, by. 2nd edition, Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2009.

SOUL BODY/ ENERGETIC FIELD	NATURE OF THE HUMAN BEING ACCORDING TO KABBALAH	STAGES OF AFTERLIFE JOURNEY
<b>5. YEHIDAH</b> ONENESS		<b>4&amp;5. TZROR HA-HAYYIM</b>  <b>RETURN TO SOURCE OF LIFE</b>
<b>4. HAYYAH</b> UNIVERSAL SELF		<b>3. GAN EDEN</b>  <b>HEAVENLY BLISS</b>
<b>3. NESHAMA</b>  HIGHER MIND MENTAL ENERGY FIELD		<b>2. GEHENNA</b>  <b>EMOTIONAL PURIFICATION</b>
<b>2. RUAH</b>  EMOTIONAL ENERGY FIELD  EMOTION		<b>1. HIBBUT HA-KEVER</b> <b>PANGS OF THE GRAVE</b>  DEATHBED VISION: ANCESTRAL GUIDES  MYTHIC BEINGS  LIFE REVIEW  DISSOLUTION OF ELEMENTS
<b>1. NEPESH</b>  BIOENERGETIC FIELD  VITALITY		



AFTERLIFE JOURNEY OF SOUL IN KABBALAH - APPLICATIONS FOR GRIEF & HOSPICE WORK					
STAGES OF AFTERLIFE	TERRAIN OF JOURNEY	PROCESS OF JOURNEY	JEWISH MOURNING RITUAL	GRIEF PROCESS	DEATHBED WORK
<b>GILGUL</b> REBIRTH  <b>TZROR HA-HAYIM</b> SOURCE OF LIFE	IN WOMB  RETURN TO THE SOURCE	SPIRITUAL UNIFICATION  <i>SIPAI BARDO</i> (Bardo of Rebirth)	<b>YIZKOR</b>  MEMORIAL PRAYERS 4X/YEAR	PRAYERS FOR ANCESTRAL INTERCESSION  INTEGRATION	PASTORAL COUNSELING  GOD QUESTIONS  PRAYER  MEANING
<b>GAN EDEN</b>  GARDEN OF EDEN	HEAVENLY BLISS  R & R OF THE SOUL  FINAL COMPLETION OF PERSONALITY	MENTAL CONTEMPLATION  <i>CHONYID BARDO</i> (Bardo of Luminous Mind)	<b>Yahrzeit</b>  ANNIVERSARY OF A DEATH	"ELEVATES SOUL TO A HIGHER SPHERE"  ACCEPTANCE	EXPLORING ASC'S  IMAGERY RELAXATION MEDITATION MUSIC THERAPY DREAMS
<b>GEHENNA</b>  REALM OF PURGATION	EMOTIONAL PURGATION  EMOTIONAL PURIFICATION OF KARMIC RESIDUE LIFE EXPERIENCE	EMOTIONAL PURIFICATION	<b>KADDISH</b>  11 MONTHS RITUALIZED MOURNING	WORKING THROUGH THE GRIEF  "KARMA" CLEARING  "GOING TO KADDISH COLLEGE"	FINISHING BUSINESS  RIGHT RELATIONSHIP WITH FAMILY  EMOTIONAL CATHARSIS
<b>HIBBUT HA-KEVER</b>  "PANGS OF THE GRAVE"  LEAVING THE BODY  DEATH MOMENT VISIONS	ATTACHED TO BODY  CRAVING  LIFE REVIEW  ANCESTORS  BEINGS OF LIGHT  DISSOLUTION OF ELEMENTS	PHYSICAL SEPARATION  <i>CHIKAI BARDO</i> (Bardo of Dying)	<b>SHIVA</b>  7 DAYS INTENSIVE MOURNING  <b>FUNERAL</b>  <b>VIDUI</b>	REMEMBERING  SAYING GOODBYE  ACCEPTING REALITY OF DEATH  SOUL-GUIDING  CONSCIOUS TRANSITION	DISIDENTIFY FROM BODY  DISSOLVE FEAR  PAIN CONTROL  LIFE REVIEW  VALIDATE VISIONS

S. Raphael, 2016