

## LANGUAGE OF DEATH AND DYING IN HASIDISM AND IN CONTEMPORARY CULTURE

CONTEMPORARY CULTURE	ספר ההסתלקות	SEFER HA'HISTALKUT (*) Benjamin Mintz, 1930
passed on	הלולה	DAY OF CELEBRATION
passed	הסתלקות מהעולם	DEPARTURE FROM THE LOWLY WORLD
passed away	השפל	
expired	עליה לעולם הבה	ASCENT TO THE WORLD TO COME
went away		
went to a new life	הנשמה מסתלקת מן הגוף	SOUL DEPARTS FROM THE BODY
resting		
lights are out	עלייתה לעולמות העליונים	TIME OF ASCENDING TO THE SUPERNAL WORLDS
met his fate		
his number came up	מופרש לגמרי מהאי עלמא	COMPLETELY SEPARATED FROM THIS WORLD (OLAM HAZEH)
gone to Heaven		
kicked the bucket	יצאה נשמתו	HIS SOUL DEPARTED
croaked		
deceased	הפקיד נשמתו לשמי מרומים	HE GAVE HIS SOUL TO ETERNAL LIFE
six feet under		
in the marble orchard	מסר את נשמתו לחי העולמים	ENTRUSTED HIS SOUL TO THE HIGHEST HEAVENS
gave up the ghost		
no longer with us		

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 \*Joel Baron And Sara Paasche-Orlow (Eds.), Deathbed Wisdom of the Hasidic Masters - The Book Of Departure and Caring For People at the End Of Life (Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights, 2016).  
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## DYING AND DEATH MOMENT VISIONS IN KABBALAH & MIDRASH

### DEATH BY A KISS:

*For this let every one who is godly pray to in the time of finding (i.e. when you may be found). (Ps. 32:6)...* R. Nahman b. Isaac said: 'In the time of finding' refers to the [finding of] death. For it is said: The issues of death. Similarly it has been taught: Nine hundred and three species of death were created in this world. For it is said: The issues of death, and the numerical value of Toza'oth תוצאות is 963. The worst of them is the croup, and the easiest of them is the kiss...  
**[Death by a] kiss is like drawing a hair out of milk. [BT Ber. 8a]**

### IS ONE'S DEATH PRE-DETERMINED:

When a man's appointed time draws near, proclamation is made concerning him for thirty days, and even the birds of the heaven announce his doom; and if he is virtuous, his coming is announced for thirty days among the righteous in Gan Eden. We have learnt that during those thirty days his soul departs from him every night and ascends to the other world and sees its place there, and during those thirty days the man has not the same consciousness or control of his soul as previously (Zohar I, 217b).

...a man who fell asleep in a synagogue and was locked in by the sexton [and] awoke to find himself in the midst of... a spirit congregation; to his amazement he discerned the forms of two men who were still among the living. Sure enough, within a few days these two passed away (Quoted by Trachtenberg, p. 62).

## THE NATURE OF THE DYING PROCESS

### 1. SUPERNAL VISIONS ON THE DEATHBED:

When a man lies [on his deathbed] and judgement rests upon him decreeing that he should leave this world, he is granted an additional supernal spirit that he never had before. And when this dwells with him and cleaves to him, he sees what he has never been worthy enough to see throughout his life, because the additional spirit has now been given to him. And once this has been granted him, and he sees, he departs from this world (Zohar I, 218b).

### 2. ANCESTRAL GUIDES - FAMILIAL BEINGS:

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, 218a).

### 3. MYTHIC BEINGS - ADAM:

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

#### **4. MYTHIC BEINGS - VISIONS OF SHECHINAH, ANGELS:**

...it has been taught: The time of a person's departure is the great day of judgment, for the soul is separated from the body, and no one leaves the world before seeing the Shechinah (Zohar, III, 88a)...And with the Shechinah there come three ministering angels to receive the soul of the righteous (Zohar I, 98a Midrash ha-Ne'elam).

...one of them makes record of all the good deeds and the misdeeds that he has performed in this world; one casts up the reckoning of his days; and the third is the one who has accompanied the man from the time when he was in his mother's womb (Zohar II, 199a).

#### **5. VISIONS OF THE ANGEL OF DEATH:**

The man lifts up his eyes and sees the walls his house in a blaze of fire kindled by himself [that emanates from him.] Then he sees the Angel of Death in front of him, covered with eyes, clothed in fiery garments...When he sees him he trembles, in body and spirit, and his heart can find no tranquillity because it is the sovereign of the whole body. His spirit moves through every part of the body and asks leave, like someone asking his friend for permission to go to another place... The man is afraid and tries to hide, but he cannot. When he sees it is impossible, he opens his eyes, and he has to look upon him. He looks upon him with open eyes, and then he surrenders his body and his soul (Zohar III, 126a-127a).

#### **6. LIFE REVIEW:**

Angels are assigned to every human being. And every day they record his deeds, so that everything he does is known to the Holy Blessed One, and everything is put down on his record and marked with a seal. When a man is righteous, his righteousness is recorded; when a man does wrong, his wrongdoing is recorded. Accordingly, when a righteous man arrives at the end of his days, his recording angels precede him into heaven singing his praise... But when a wicked man dies, a man who did not bring himself to turn in repentance to God, the Holy Blessed One, says to him: "Let your soul be blasted in despair! How many times did I call upon you to repent, and you did not." (Pesikta Rabbati, 44:8)

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** . (Zohar, I, 221b)

#### **7. 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]





## MAY THE ANGELS CARRY YOU - A VIDUI SONG

At this time of transition, going to the light  
At this time of transition, going home is right  
Let go of the struggle, let go of your fear  
All will be forgiven, your slate to be cleared.

*CHORUS: May the angels carry you (2x)*

Your work is done, it is time to rest  
The fruit of your hands and your soul be blessed  
Joining your ancestors, finding a new way  
Crossing the threshold, wrapped in God's embrace.

*CHORUS: May the angels carry you (2x)*

Surrounded by love, angels take your hand  
Guiding you on, its part of the plan  
Shechinah welcomes you opening her wings  
Hearing the chorus, join the angels singing.

*CHORUS: May the angels carry you (2x)*

*Mi'yimini Michaella  
Mi'smoli Gavriella  
Mi'lifnai Uriella  
U mi'achorai Raphaella*

*CHORUS: May the angels carry you (2x)*



**This song by Geela Rayzel Raphael is based upon elements of the traditional vidui prayer. For music see Geela Rayzel Raphael, *May the Angels Carry You - Jewish Songs of Comfort for Death, Dying and Mourning*, [www.Shechinah.com](http://www.Shechinah.com)**

# STAGES OF THE AFTERLIFE JOURNEY IN IN KABBALAH & MIDRASH

## THREE LEVELS OF THE SOUL:

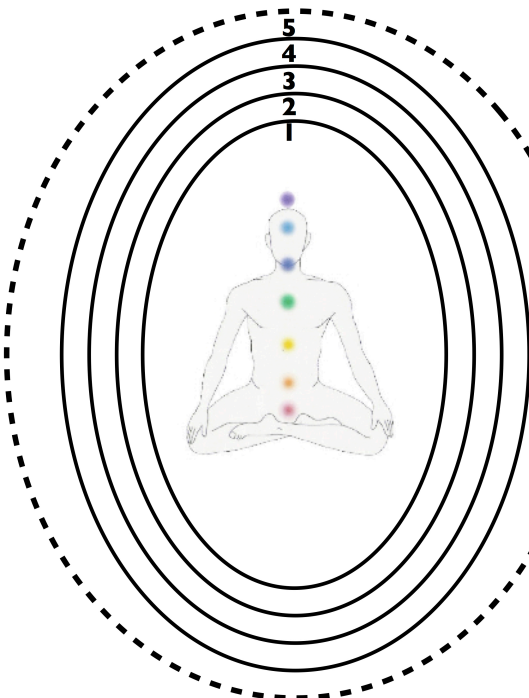

There are three levels that comprise the soul, and therefore the soul has three names: **NEPHESH**, **RUAKH**, and **NESHAMA**. **NEPHESH**...is the lowest of all. **RUAKH** is the [power of] sustenance, which rules over the **nephesh** and is a higher level than [the **nephesh**], sustaining it throughout as is fitting. **NESHAMA** is the highest [power of] sustenance, and rules over all, a holy level, exalted above all. (Zohar I, 205b)

## THE POST-MORTEM FATE OF THE SOUL:

**NEPHESH** remains in the grave until the body is decomposed and turned into dust, during which time it flits about in this world, **seeking to mingle with the living** and to learn of their troubles; and in the hour of need it intercedes for them. ...it **wanders about the world** and **beholds the body which was once its home** devoured by worms and suffering the judgement of the grave [**Hibbut Ha-Kever**] (Zohar, II, 141b-142a)

...the **RUAKH** is purified in **Gehenna**, whence it goes forth roaming about the world and visiting its grave...**After twelve months the whole is at rest**; the body reposes in the dust and the soul is clad in its luminous vestment (Zohar I, 226a- 226b).

[after death], the **NESHAMA**...ascends at once to her place, the region from whence she emanated [**Upper Gan Eden**], and for her sake the light is kindled to shine above. She never again descends to earth. (Zohar I, 226a- 226b).

SOUL BODY/ ENERGETIC FIELD	NATURE OF THE HUMAN BEING ACCORDING TO KABBALAH	STAGES OF AFTERLIFE JOURNEY
<p>5. <u>YEHIDAH</u> ONENESS</p> <p>4. <u>HAYYAH</u> UNIVERSAL SELF</p>		<p>4&amp;5. TZROR HA-HAYYIM</p> <p>RETURN TO SOURCE OF LIFE</p>
<p>3. <u>NESHAMA</u>  HIGHER MIND MENTAL ENERGY FIELD</p>		<p>3. GAN EDEN  HEAVENLY BLISS</p>
<p>2. <u>RUAH</u>  EMOTIONAL ENERGY FIELD  EMOTION</p>		<p>2. GEHENNA  EMOTIONAL PURIFICATION</p>
<p>1. <u>NEPHESH</u>  BIOENERGETIC FIELD  VITALITY</p>		<p>1. HIBBUT HA-KEVER  PANGS OF THE GRAVE</p> <p>DEATHBED VISION: ANCESTRAL GUIDES</p> <p>MYTHIC BEINGS</p> <p>LIFE REVIEW</p> <p>DISSOLUTION OF ELEMENTS</p>
<div> <b>דעת DAAT INSTITUTE</b> DEATH AWARENESS, ADVOCACY and TRAINING</div> <p>14</p>		

## **HIBBUT HA-KEVER/PANGS OF THE GRAVE:**

Rabbi Yehuda said: "for **seven days** the soul goes to and fro from his house to his grave from his grave to his house, mourning for the body" (Zohar I, 218b)

## **GEHENNA AND THE RABBINIC WORLDVIEW:**

...one who visits the sick (Ned. 40a), or observes [the practice of] three meals on the Shabbat is saved from the retribution of Gehenna (Shab. 118a); If in reciting the *Shema*, one pronounces the letters distinctly, Gehenna is cooled for him (Ber. 15a); ...he who has Torah, good deeds, humility and fear of heaven will be saved from punishment [in Gehenna] (Pesikata Rabbati 50:1); ... people who study Torah will be released from torments of Gehenna (Midrash Prov. 1:5)

## **CHARACTERISTICS AND QUALITIES OF GEHENNA :**

Gehenna is half fire and half hail (Ex. R. 51:7).

There are **five kinds of punishments in Gehenna**, and Isaiah saw them all.... He entered the **2nd 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 **3rd 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).

## **TRANSITION FROM PERSONALITY TO SOUL:**

In **Lower Gan Eden** there is a repository of all "soul garments" each according to its desert. On each garment are inscribed all the good works done by a person while embodied this world; and in each case a proclamation resounds saying: this garment belongs to so and so... after which the soul of the person in Gan Eden is clothed in such a garment, so as to become a replica of person's personality whilst in this world. This takes place not less than thirty days after a person's death...for the first thirty days there is no soul that does not have to undergo some type of purification before entering Gan Eden.. (Zohar II, 210a).

## **GAN EDEN:**

**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)

## **TZROR HA-HAYYIM - "RETURN TO SOURCE":**

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

AFTERLIFE JOURNEY OF THE SOUL - APPLICATIONS FOR GRIEF & HOSPICE WORK					
STAGES OF AFTERLIFE	TERRAIN OF JOURNEY	REALM OF BEING	JEWISH MOURNING RITUAL	GRIEF PROCESS	DEATHBED WORK
<b>GILGUL</b> REBIRTH  <b>TZROR</b> <b>HA-HAYIM</b> SOURCE OF LIFE	IN WOMB  RETURN TO THE SOURCE	SPIRITUAL UNIFICATION	<b>YIZKOR</b>  MEMORIAL PRAYERS 4X/YEAR	PRAYERS FOR ANCESTRAL INTERCESSION  INTEGRATION	PASTORAL COUNSELING  GOD QUESTIONS  PRAYER  MEANING
<div>Upper Gan Eden</div> <b>GAN EDEN</b>  GARDEN OF EDEN  <div>Lower Gan Eden</div>	HEAVENLY BLISS  R & R OF THE SOUL  FINAL COMPLETION OF PERSONALITY	MENTAL CONTEMPLATION	<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 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</b> <b>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	<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