

# AFTERLIFE IN KABBALISTIC TRADITION: POST-MORTEM JOURNEY OF THE SOUL

## 1. 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).

## 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 where it is to abide**. (Zohar I, 218a).

## 3. ANCESTRAL GUIDES - MYTHIC BEINGS:

No man dies before he **sees the Shekhinah**, and because of its deep yearning for the *Shekhinah* the soul departs in order to see her. (Zohar III, 88a)... And **with the Shekhinah there come 3 ministering angels** to receive the soul of the righteous (Zohar I, 98a).

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 the Gan Eden**, ready to welcome all who have observed the commands of their Master. (Zohar, I 65b)

## 4. LIFE REVIEW

When God desires to take back a man's spirit, all the days that he has lived passed before him in review (Zohar I, 221b).

## 5. 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 interaction of 4 basic elements: The essence of earth is flesh, essence of water is bodily fluid, 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]

## 6. GEHENNA

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 daughters of Israel." [Keitzad Din Ha-Kever, 1-3).

## 7. 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)

## 8. 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, *Acharei Mot*, 70a)

## 9. GILGUL FOR THE SAKE OF MITZVOTH:





The **primal shape of humanity corresponds to the mystical shape of the Godhead**... Everything in [the hu]man, each of his **248 limbs and 365 sinews**, corresponds to one of the supernal lights, as these are arranged in the structure of the *Shi'ur Komah*, the primal shape of the highest manifestation of God. Man's task is to bring his own true shape to its spiritual perfection, to develop the divine image within. This is done by observing **the 248 positive and 365 negative commandments of the Torah**, each one of which is linked to one of the organs of the human body, and hence of one of those supernal lights. (G. Scholem, *On Nature of the Godhead*, p. 219)

## 10. GILGUL FOR THE SAKE OF MITZVOTH:

Rabbi Shimon said to them, friends [students, disciples] the time has come to reveal some mysteries concerning transmigration of souls. This applies when the soul is required to reincarnate, either because of sins, or because it had not completely fulfilled obligations in Torah and *mitzvot* while alive in this world. It is forced to come back to this world and don a body, that is be born again and finish what was imposed on it for the seventy years of the life in this world. (Zohar II, 94b)



## JEWISH VIEWS OF THE AFTERLIFE

DIMENSION OF HUMAN BEING	AFTERLIFE STATE	PROCESS OF AFTERLIFE	RITUAL
  <b>SPIRIT</b>	<b>TZROR HA-HAYYIM</b>  <b>SOURCE OF LIFE</b>	<b>SPIRITUAL UNIFICATION</b>	<b>YIZKOR</b>
  <b>MIND</b>	<b>GAN EDEN</b>  <b>HEAVENLY BLISS</b>	<b>INTELLECTUAL CONTEMPLATION</b>	<b>Yahrzeit</b>
  <b>EMOTION</b>	<b>GEHENNA</b>  <b>EMOTIONAL PURIFICATION</b>	<b>EMOTIONAL PURGATION</b>	<b>KADDISH</b>
  <b>BODY</b>	<b>HIBBUT HA-KEVER</b>  <b>PANGS OF THE GRAVE</b>  <i>ANCESTRAL GUIDES</i> <i>MYTHIC BEINGS</i> <i>LIFE REVIEW</i> <i>DISSOLUTION OF ELEMENTS</i>	<b>PHYSICAL SEPARATION</b>	<b>SHIVA</b>

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