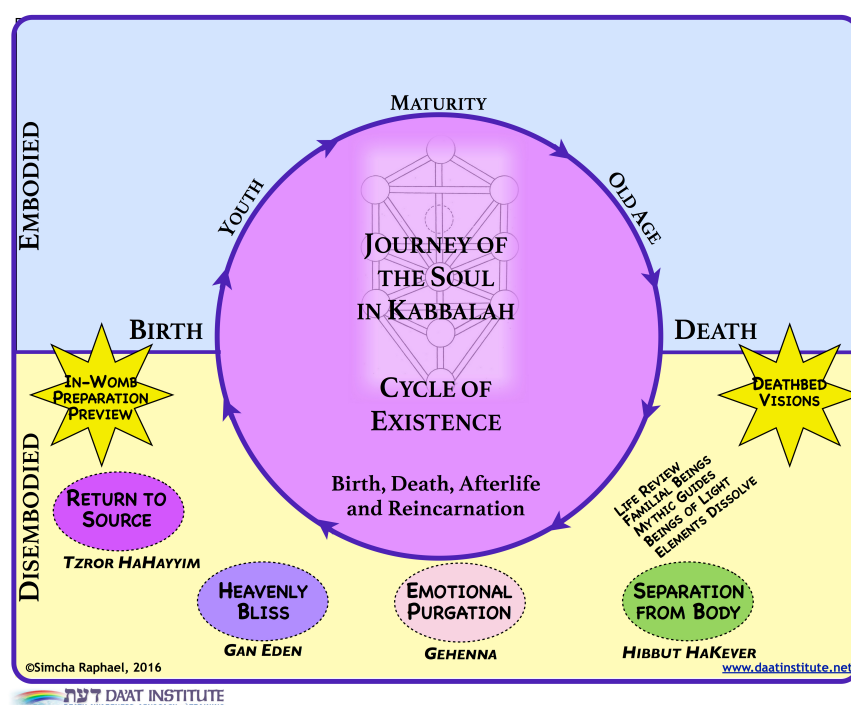


KABBALISTIC JOURNEY OF THE SOUL: BIRTH, DEATH, AFTERLIFE AND REINCARNATION

TEXTS AND RESOURCES PREPARED BY

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**National Havurah Committee
Summer Institute
Reisterstown, MDD
August 3-9, 2026**



*IN MEMORY OF
REB ZALMAN SCHACHTER-SHALOMI
AUGUST 17, 1924-JULY 3, 2014*

"And you shall keep it in your heart that you shall teach..."

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KABBALISTIC JOURNEY OF THE SOUL: BIRTH, DEATH, AFTERLIFE & REINCARNATION

Kabbalah teaches us that the human soul is forever in cycles of transition from birth into life, from death to rebirth. Through the study of the Zohar and Midrash, enhanced by meditative journey work, we shall explore these texts as transformational maps of consciousness, offering insight and hope in times of grief, mourning, and cultural distress—much needed for spiritual living today. This multi-modality class shall be an exploration in “spiritual archaeology,” bringing to light little-known teachings that provide meaning for ourselves, and compassionate wisdom for others who are dealing with dying, grief and mourning.

1. THE IN-WOMB TEXTS OF JEWISH MYSTICISM AND TRADITION

Introduction and Overview

Do Jews Believe in Life After Death?

The Journey of the Soul in Kabbalah and Midrash

The Consciousness of the Fetus in Rabbinic Narratives

TEXTS: In-Womb/Pre-birth Experience - *Seder Yetzirat HaVlad*

2. THE DEATH-MOMENT IN ZOHAR

Language of Death & Dying in Hasidism and Contemporary Culture

Death-Moment Visions and the Dying Process

TEXTS: Dying and Death Moment Visions in Kabbalah and Midrash

MEDITATION - Encountering Our Own Images of Death

3. THE AFTERLIFE JOURNEY OF THE SOUL IN ZOHAR

Afterlife as a Journey of Consciousness

Hibbut Ha-Kever (The Pangs of the Grave) and Gehenna as Psycho-Spiritual

Purification Afterlife Journey of the Soul: Practical Applications

TEXTS: *Hibbut HaKever*, Gehenna, Gan Eden in Zohar

MEDITATION - Encounter with Loved Ones in the World Beyond

4. GILGUL AND REINCARNATION IN ZOHAR AND LURIANIC KABBALAH

Evolution of Reincarnation/*Gilgul* Teachings in Kabbalah

Reasons for Reincarnation/*Gilgul*

Implications of Reincarnation/*Gilgul* for Living Life Today

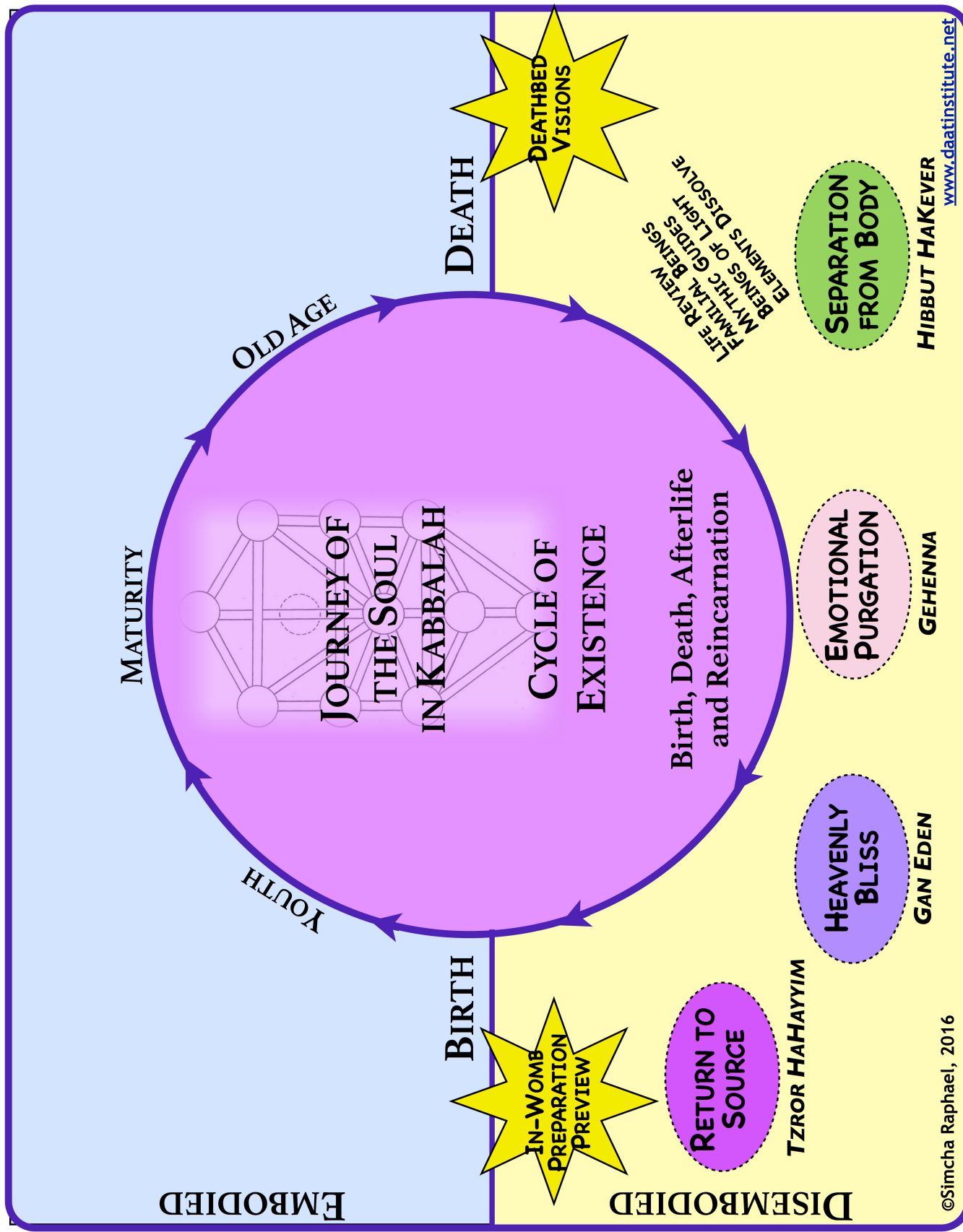
TEXTS: *Gilgul* in Sefer HaBahir, Zohar and *Shaar HaGilgulim*

Becoming a Harbinger of the Emerging “Death Positive” Culture

WORKSHOP GOALS/LEARNING OUTCOMES:

- 1) Investigate teachings on the journey of the soul—birth, death, afterlife and reincarnation In Kabbalah — particularly Zohar and Lurianic Kabbalah — as well as Midrash.
- 2) Demonstrate how these teachings can be used as mythic maps of consciousness that explain inner dimensions of psyche, both in life and death.
- 3) Utilize these teachings to explore personal issues and experiences around death and grief, and prepare participants to deal with bereavement issues that emerge in personal, family and professional life.
- 4) Apply these teachings of afterlife and the journey of consciousness as an agent of transformation in the emerging death-positive culture.

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THE NATURE OF THE SOUL AND THE IN-WOMB EXPERIENCE IN KABBALAH AND MIDRASH

MODERN VIEWS OF AFTERLIFE IN JUDAISM - LIFE & THE LIVING

Judaism celebrates life and the living. It dwells on life here rather than on the hereafter as other religious faiths do. Life is precious, the here and the now. **Herschaft, Jean.**

"Patient Should Not Be Told of Terminal Illness: Rabbi," *Jewish Post and Opinion*, (March 13, 1981).

Dead is dead - "what lives on are the children and a legacy of good works."

Rabbi Terry Bard, Director Pastoral Services, Beth Israel Hospital, quoted by Kenneth L. Woodward, "Heaven", *Newsweek*, (March 27, 1989) pp. 52ff.

"Biblical metaphors for death, such as "and thou shalt go to thy fathers" and "he is gathered to his people," are symbolic of "the historical living on of the individual in the historical continuity of the people."

Hermann Cohen, *Religion of Reason, Out of the Sources of Judaism*, 1919.

1) THREE LEVELS OF THE SOUL:

There are three levels that comprise the soul, and therefore the soul has three names: NEFESH, RUAKH, and NESHAMA. NEFESH...is the lowest of all. RUAKH is the [power of] sustenance, which rules over NEFESH and is a higher level than NEFESH, 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].

2) FIVE-FOLD MODEL OF THE SOUL:

... author of *Ra'aya Meheimna* speaks of **two additional, transcendent dimensions of the soul: HAYYAH and YEKHIDA.** [Zohar II, 158b (*Ra'aya Meheimna*)]. These other aspects of the soul "were considered to **represent the sublimest levels of intuitive cognition** within the grasp of only a few chosen individuals." (Winkler, *Soul of the Matter*, p. 7) All five component aspects of the soul are closely-intertwined, and operate in relationship to one another. (Raphael, *Jewish Views of the Afterlife*, p. 280)

3) PRE-EXISTENCE OF SOULS - PRE-NATAL DESTINY:

It has been taught: **The souls of all humanity even before they came down into the world, were engraved before God in the firmament, in the precise form that they were to assume in this world; and everything that they learn in this world they already knew before they came into the world....** This is the meaning of "That which is, has already been; and that which is to be, has already been" (Ecc. 3:15). [Zohar III, 61a-61b].

4) THE STOREHOUSE OF SOULS/GUF:

When the Holy Blessed One created the world He looked and saw that Israel in the future would receive Torah. He therefore hewed from his Throne all the souls that were to be placed within them and he **made in the world above a storehouse where all the souls that had been made from his Throne wait, and he called it “the body of souls” (Guf).** [Zohar Hadash, I 10b-10c]

5) COSMIC VISION OF THE FETUS IN THE WOMB:

R. Simlai taught: A light burns above the head of [a fetus in the womb] and it looks and sees from one end of the world to the other, as it is said, “then his lamp shined above my head, and by His light I walked through darkness.” (Job 29:3)... *and it [the fetus in the womb] is also taught all the Torah from beginning to end* [BT Niddah 30b]

6) MIDRASH YETZIRAT HA-VLAD - FORMATION OF THE EMBRYO/FETUS:

What is the **mystery of the Formation of the Embryo?** In the hour when man is in service of his bed with his wife - בשמש מטתו עם אשתו - the Holy Blessed One beckons **THE ANGEL APPOINTED IN CHARGE OF PREGNANCY** - מלאך הממונה על ההריון - and says: 'Know that so-and-so emits seed tonight for the **FORMATION OF AN EMBRYO**, and you go and guard that drop and winnow it in the threshing floor to make it into 365 parts *[according to Talmudic tradition the human body comprises 365 parts]*. And so he does and says to the holy Blessed One, 'Master of the Universe, I did all you have commanded me. Now what will happen to this drop? Instantly the Holy Blessed One decrees whether it will be strong or weak, male or female, rich or poor, beautiful or ugly, long or short. But **whether righteous or wicked God does not decree, for we have learned “Everything is in the hands of heaven, except fear of heaven.”**

God then beckons the **ANGEL IN CHARGE OF SOULS** - מלאך הממונה על רוחות - and says, 'Bring me a certain spirit which is hidden in the Garden of Eden, whose name is So-and-so.' . . . Immediately the soul comes before the Holy Blessed One and bows down and prostrates itself. The Holy Blessed One places it against its will into that drop, and the angels come and causes it to enter the womb of its mother. He **posts there two angels who guard him that he should not fall out, and they put a burning candle upon his head. And he looks and can see from the beginning of the world to its end.**

And in the morning the angel takes the soul (spirit) and leads him **into GAN EDEN and show the righteous who sit in glory** - הצדיקים היושבים בכבוד - . The angel then says to the soul, 'These people whom you see there were formed like you in the womb of their mother. They went forth into the world and observed the laws and ordinances of the Holy Blessed One. **If you will do like them, after your death you will be rewarded with this exaltation and glory.** And if not, your end will be to go to the place which I am about to show you.

And in the evening the angel takes the soul (spirt) and leads him **into the GEHENNA, and shows him the wicked whom the angels of destruction - מלכי חבלה - beat and smite with rods of fire.** They cry, 'Woe, woe!' but no mercy is shown them. The angel then says to the soul, "Do you know, my child, who these are that burn?' 'No,' it replies. The angel answers, 'These were formed of the same origin as you. They went forth to the world and did not observe the laws and ordinances of the Holy Blessed One. Therefore they have come to this place of punishment. Therefore be not wicked but righteous.

The **angel guides the soul from morning until evening, and shows it every place which his [her] foot will tread, and the place where it will be buried.** After this... he places it back again in the womb of its mother and sustains the child in the womb of its mother for nine months.

At the end of that time the same angel says 'Come forth, for the time has come to go forth into the world.' **The angel touches him under the nose and puts out the candle over his head, and bring him out against his will, and he forgets everything he saw.**

[*Otzar Midrashim*, I, 243; translation adapted from Raphael Patai, *Gates to the Old City*, pp. 378-371)



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

.....
 *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).

DYING AND DEATH MOMENT VISIONS IN KABBALAH & MIDRASH

1) IS ONE'S DEATH PRE-DETERMINED/PRE-COGNIZANCE

When a person's appointed time draws near, proclamation is made concerning them for thirty days, and even the birds of the heaven announce their doom; and if they are virtuous, their coming is announced for thirty days among the righteous in Gan Eden. We have learnt that during those thirty days their soul departs from them every night and ascends to the other world and sees its place there, and during those thirty days the person has not the same consciousness or control of the 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).

2) SUPERNAL VISIONS ON THE DEATHBED:

When a person lies [on their deathbed] and judgment rests upon them, decreeing that they should leave this world, they are granted an additional supernal spirit that they never had before. And when this dwells with them and they see what they have never been worthy enough to see throughout life, because the additional spirit has now been given to them. And once this has been granted, they depart from this world (Zohar I, 218b).

3) ANCESTRAL GUIDES - FAMILIAL BEINGS:

Rabbi Shimon said: 'Have you seen today the image of your father or mother? For so we have learnt, that at the hour of a person's departure from the world, their father, mother and other **relatives gather round**, and they see and recognizes them, and likewise all with whom they associated in this world, and they **accompany the soul to the place where it is to abide**. (Zohar I, 218a).

4) MYTHIC BEINGS - ADAM AT THE GATES OF GAN

When a [person] departs this world... they see many strange things on the way and meet 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)

5) 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).

6) 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).

7) LIFE REVIEW:

...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)

