

Bronwyn's D&D Game The Afterlife

There is a realm, a plane of existence, that all souls go to after they die, both good and evil, all sentient species.

Souls enter the Realm of the Dead, Gehennum, at the same place, the Plain of Souls, and from there they either climb higher, or sink lower, according to their strength of will and "goodness". The realm is much like a mountain, or a staircase, with the better souls climbing to live in the higher regions, and the lower sinking through inertia (or deliberately climbing downwards) to the hellish regions. Only the most exemplary souls climb to the very highest regions. There are known to be at least twelve regions of the Realm of the Dead, some say there are more. These twelve are often divided up into three regions- the Caves of Hades, the Magmell Plains ("The Fields of Happiness"), and the Kunlun Mountains.

The gods do not live in the Realm of the Dead, they live in other realms. But it is said that Wee Jas and Nerull often visit Gehennum, and other gods or their representatives sometimes visit from time to time, to help their devout followers. Gods are limited themselves in the regions of Gehennum they can traverse. Good gods (or their representatives) visit only the Kunlun Mountains, and the Magmell Plains. Evil gods (or their representatives) visit only the Caves of Hades and the Magmell Plains. Neutral gods (or their representatives, but they generally visit in person) visit mostly the Magmell Plains, but also venture into the closest adjoining regions; the upper Caves of Hades and the lower regions of the Kunlun Mountains. Gods are known to help pious followers climb a little higher in the regions of Gehennum that they themselves can visit. Some say gods can travel through any region they choose, but generally don't see any point in doing so. Evil gods have been known to lead their followers downwards, some say they reward evil pious followers with corrupt delights in the Caves of Hades, others say they punish them for sport.

Gods only rarely assist dead souls *personally* in the afterlife; they generally employ intermediaries to act on their behalf, while they dwell in their own realms. It is well known that Wee Jas often visits Gehennum, and Nerull is to be feared there, as he will drag or tempt weak souls downwards if he can. It is believed by some, particularly their followers, that the neutral gods will *often* visit the afterlife personally to assist their devout followers; Cuthbert, Fharlanghn, Obad-Hai, Olidammara, Boccob, with of course Wee Jas the most frequent visitor. The good and evil gods often employ intermediaries; Celestials (from the upper plane) or Fiends (from the infernal plane) or other outsiders (such as titans, sometimes employed by neutral gods particularly). Some say being a Celestial or Fiend is the end result of a soul climbing to the very highest heights, or sinking to the lowest depths, and that they may be of any species. Some say the fundamental forces of good and evil seek to amass souls to turn into fiends or celestials, to take sides in an apocalyptic battle for control of the universe.

A soul's chance of retaining its earthly personality is easier in higher regions of Gehennum, though it may be 'purified' at the very highest levels. 'Goodness', and living a good life, is in actual fact a process of purifying and strengthening your soul. This brings your soul closer to the fundamental power of goodness. A change in the status of your soul may attract the attention of the gods (often acting through earthly messengers such as clerics), and will affect your ability to hold together and to climb higher in the afterlife. Good souls find ascending to higher regions of Gehennum easier, while souls with a heavy burden of sins find themselves weighed down in the afterlife, making climbing harder and sliding downwards easier. Souls more heavily weighted with evil also find their personality disintegrates faster in the afterlife. When a soul starts to lose strength in Gehennum, and their personality and memories begin to fade, many forget why they should keep climbing, and settle at whatever level they're at.

Prayers of the living may give a small amount of assistance to souls in the afterlife. Prayers and prayer-like remembrance strengthen the soul's ability to hold together, and help slow or stop the loss of personality in the afterlife. This process may help a soul remember to keep climbing to a better region. Prayers will not help remove a soul's burden of sins and evil, however, they are not a process of purification. The wealthy and nobility may employ good priests and clerics to pray for deceased relatives. Great heroes of old, whom bards and priests or clerics exhort people to pray for often, may retain their memories and personalities very strongly in the afterlife, and remember the importance of continuing to climb as high as they can.

Ideally, even the vilest criminals are granted a week or more of contemplative prayer time prior to execution. Evil murderers do not grant their victims this chance to purify their soul; this is the difference between execution and murder. Even the brightest soul can benefit from time dedicated to prayer prior to their death. Most people hope for a time to prepare themselves prior to death; sudden death is not welcomed. Last rites are very important, and many like to have the assistance of a cleric or priest in their last days, to help guide them in the process of purifying their soul. War is disliked for the danger not just in life, but the potential damage to one's life after death. War is often very civilized when it occurs, as most (good or neutral aligned) soldiers try harder than usual to live a good life, apart from the necessity to kill the enemy in a good cause.

Any spell or process that involves summoning back a soul from Gehennum is considered evil in nature. A soul returned to life by any means will be dragged from its place in the regions of Gehennum, and will quite likely come back to life bereft of memories and its former personality. If it dies subsequent to such a return to life, it will go back to the Plain of Souls, not the region it had formerly achieved. Such a soul will often sink much lower than it otherwise would, as it retains little memory of the need to climb, and little strength to do so. Creating undead is an act reviled even by otherwise unprincipled thieves, assassins, and tyrants, if only for selfish reasons.