

Bardo Practice for Joel Baehr

(Note: This Bardo Thodal text is excerpted from *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, arranged by Lama Willa Blythe Baker, co-spiritual director of Natural Dharma Fellowship, <https://naturaldharma.org/>)

Prayer of Refuge and Bodhicitta (x3)

SANG JE CHÖ DANG TSOG CHI CHOK NAM LA
JANG CHUB BAR DU DAK NYI CHAB SU CHI
DAK GI JIN SOK JI PE SÖNAM CHI
DRO LA PEN CHIR SANG JE DRUB PAR SHOK

In Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha,
We go for refuge until enlightened.
By the power of generosity and the other perfections,
May we realize Buddhahood for the benefit of all.

Subjects for Frequent Recollection

I am of the nature to age. I have not gone beyond aging.
I am of the nature to sicken. I have not gone beyond sickness.
I am of the nature to die. I have not gone beyond dying.
All that is mine, beloved and pleasing, will become otherwise, will become separated from me.
I am the owner of my karma, heir to my karma, born of my karma, related to my karma, abide supported by my karma. Whatever karma I shall do, for good or for ill, of that I will be the heir.

[Optional]: From The Diamond Sutra (x3)

So you should see this fleeting world
A star at dawn, a bubble in a stream,
A flash of lightning in a summer cloud,
A flickering lamp, a phantom and a dream.

(Pause in silence)

Bardo Thodol Practice

(Recite this, addressing benefactors in the form of Buddhas and bodhisattva)

O refuge of living beings,
Endowed with compassion,
Endowed with wisdom,
Endowed with clear vision,
Endowed with love,
Buddhas and bodhisattvas, abiding in the ten directions,
By the power of your compassion, come to this place!

O compassionate ones,
Fountains of all-seeing pristine wisdom,
Of loving compassion,
Of effective activity,
Those with the power to grant refuge,
Come to this place!

O compassionate ones,
Grant refuge now to Joel Baehr.
Protect him—
Be his companion!
Without wavering from your ancient vows, swiftly release the power of your love.

O Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, for the benefit of Joel Baehr, be unsparing in your compassion, skillful means and ability!
Do not allow him to fall under the sway of past negative karma.
Activate the seeds of his many positive actions.
Hold him in the energy of your loving kindness and remain a steadfast guide through the narrow passage of the bardo.

(Meditate a few minutes here)

(Now, speaking directly to Joel:)

O dear Joel, however frightening the appearances of the bardo might be, do not forget the following words. Go forward remembering their meaning. The crucial point is that through remembering, recognition is possible. Here are the words to remember:

‘The bardo appearances are arising before me. Renouncing fear, I will recognize these appearances as my own awareness, manifesting naturally. These are the unfolding of my mind’s luminous essence. These lights, sounds, and images are the mind experiencing itself, like a dream. There is nothing to fear.’

Go forward remembering these words, and dwell on their meaning. Do not forget!

O dear one, when your mind and body separate, the pure luminous apparitions of Dharmata will arise, subtle and clear, radiant and dazzling, naturally bright and awesome, shimmering like a mirage on a plain in summer.

Do not be afraid! Do not be awestruck!

Remember with certainty that whatever frightening experiences may arise, these are the natural manifestations of the ultimate reality, the essence of your innermost heart-mind. These visions are the natural luminosities of your own buddha nature. Recognize them for what they are!

O dear one, from within these lights, the natural sound of reality will resound, clear and thunderous, reverberating like a thousand peals of thunder. This is the natural sound of the ultimate reality. Do not be afraid! Do not be awestruck! The body that you now have is called a mental body. It is the product of subtle propensities and not a solid corporeal body of flesh and blood.

Therefore, whatever sounds, lights, and rays may arise, they cannot harm you. For you are beyond death now! It is enough to simply recognize the sounds and luminosities to be manifestations of your own innermost heart-mind. Know that this is the bardo!

O dear Joel, if you have moved on, after being unconscious, you will awaken from unconsciousness and wonder, "What has happened to me?" So, recognize this to be the bardo! At this time, aspects of samsara are returned to their own true nature and re-arise as lights and sacred bodies.

Turning away from the dull lights, follow the path of the clear bright light. Have confidence in it!

Be drawn to the light with longing devotion! This is the light of your Benefactor Green Tara, who has come to escort you on the treacherous path of the bardo. This is the radiance of the Benefactor's compassion!

Green Tara Mantra

(You may call to mind others in the bardo or who have previously passed, as well as those who are grieving, including them in receiving the warm light of love and compassion from Tara)

OM TARE TUTTARE TURE SOHA

(Pause in silence)

(Again, speaking directly to Joel:)

Recite to yourself:

'As I roam in samsara, driven by my habitual patterns,
May the Light of transcendent Wisdom draw me forward,
Leading me on the path of radiance,
The pristine awareness of the spaciousness of reality.
May the compassion of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas support me
from behind.

Thus encircled, may I be protected
From the fears and projections of the bardo
And be guided to the domain of an awakened one.'

Praying like this, you will dissolve into rainbow light,
and then into the heart of the Mother and Father in union.
Becoming one with the wisdom of your benefactors,
you will be instantly freed from confusion and awaken
as the Buddha-body of enjoyment.

[Optional]: Gate Mantra

OM GATE GATE PARAGATE PARASAMGATE BODHI SVAHA

(Practice silent resting in the nature of awareness, inviting Joel to join us in the practice.)

Bodhicitta Dedication Prayer

JANG CHUB SEM CHOG RIN PO CHE
MA CHE PA NAM CHE JUR CHIG
CHE PA NYAM PAR MAY PA YANG
GONG NE GONG DU PEL BAR SHOG

May the pure, brilliant sun of bodhicitta
Dawn in each and every heart and mind,

Dispelling the darkness of suffering and confusion,
Unstoppably, until all are fully illumined and awakened.