



A Guided Tour of Hell

Samuel Bercholz

Pema Namdol Thaye, Illustrator

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Hell is a harrowing concept for any believer, and Samuel Bercholz describes his own afterlife experiences in his illustrated memoir, *A Guided Tour of Hell*.

Bercholz devotes a few pages to telling of his introduction to Buddhism, before describing his first near-death experience while suffering from a case of typhus. Thirty-five years later, he suffers a heart attack and, after surgery, falls into the tour of hell that he vividly describes.

“A wordless message was somehow conveyed to me: This is the domain of hell. You have been brought here as a guest, to witness and understand the suffering of beings of all kinds—particularly the suffering of human beings.”

Bercholz’s vision of hell is clearly seen through the lens of his Buddhist faith. Accompanied by the Buddha of Hell, he tours hells hot and cold, overcrowded and desolate alike, until finally his human body recovers and he awakes. The remainder of the book places Bercholz’s experience into the larger context of Buddhist philosophy.

A Guided Tour of Hell is, strictly speaking, a prose memoir, though Thaye’s images and paintings are an integral component of the book. Some are stunning in their ability to visualize Bercholz’s descriptions, and it’s hard to imagine fully grasping his experience without their aid. Whether it’s taken as literal truth or a moral allegory, *A Guided Tour of Hell* offers a fascinating glimpse into one man’s unique experience.

PETER DABBENE (March/April 2017)

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