



## **Yashan: A Sacrificial Rite of the Society of Guardians**

*by Diarmuidh Cuchulain, S.G.,  
Senior Guardian of the Society of Guardians*



Bareku'eth Elyon, H'amborak!

### **Yashan: a Sacrificial Rite of the Society of Guardians**

In the Triumphs of the Tarocchi<sup>1</sup>, the Hanged Man is the card of sacrifice. While some modern packs depict the Hanged Man as a victim, hanging or in some cases nailed upside down, the older packs such as the Marseilles pack clearly depict the Hanged Man hanging from a rope to which he is *not* attached. True Sacrifice must always involve the Mystery of voluntary self-limitation: a burden one takes up, a loss one chooses, a descent one makes for some deemed higher purpose.

It is timely to speak of Yashan, a traditional Rite of Passage within the Society of Guardians<sup>2</sup>.

Yashan is a Hebrew term used in the Order to denote an intentional withdrawal from Magical, Ritual and other activities in the outer world. Yashan is a powerful thing, resonating at many levels of meaning. Some of these are hinted at by Gematria<sup>3</sup>, some can be inferred from the way in which Yashan has been used historically within the Guardians. The literal meaning of Yashan is 'sleep' and this meaning also suggests possibilities for exploration. There are further levels to Yashan, which can really be understood only by direct personal experience. This article will provide nothing more

or less than a brief introduction to the concept and its value for those who walk the Way of the Work.

#### **Yashan in the Guardians**

Yashan holds a very high place within the Guardians. Our Myth of Creation - drawn from Qabalistic traditions refers to the One Limitless Light contracting itself into itself: Tzimtzum -The First Yashan. Within the General Pentagram Ritual of the Guardians, Yashan is practised as the Time of Silence.

My predecessor, Michael Freedman of Blessed Memory, was appointed Senior Guardian of the Society of Guardians by his predecessor, Sh'mer Shomerim Burford. Knowing that his own death was imminent, Mr Burford appointed Michael as his successor and simultaneously ordered Michael into Yashan for a period of five years. That is to say Michael accepted the burden of five years separation from the Guardians as he knew them. During that time Michael neither practiced Magic nor discussed it with another living soul. Such was the Great Yashan of my predecessor. When he had served his Yashan, Michael sought out the other members of the Guardians, but all the old men had passed away. Such



was the wisdom of Mr Burford. The old Order simply died out, leaving Michael as the Bridge between the Guardians of the Piscean Age and the Guardians of the coming Aquarian Age.

Michael gave no such instruction to me regarding my own appointment as Senior Guardian. When I told him that I would go into Yashan upon his death he simply reminded me that I must think for myself and do what I believed was right.

I entered Yashan in early 1997, broke it briefly to work a work and reentered Yashan until early this year.

#### **The Gematria of Yashan**

Yashan derives from 3 Hebrew letters: ך (Yodh) = 10, ם (Shin) = 300 and ך (Nun) = 50.



Thus *Yashan* measures 360. Other relevant terms with this measure are:

*'atzar* (held back, restrained), *'etzer* (rule or dominion), *tza'ar* (was brought low), *Chen w-Berakah w-Michyah* (Grace and Blessing and Sustenance), *Mashak* (made durable), *Po"al Po"el* (a work is worked), and *Shin*<sup>4</sup> (the name of the letter ם which is not only the central of the 3 letters in the word *Yashan* but also one of the three Mother<sup>4</sup> letters of the Hebrew alphabet

and is referred to the 20th Key in the Taroc- Resurrection). Note also the sequence of the 3 letters. It begins with dynamic fist<sup>6</sup> ך of Yodh, burst's forth as ם the fiery Mother letter Shin and completes as a living being: Nun ך the fish, able to access the treasures of the depths, lost from all human sight. The number 360 is itself of significance, expressing the completeness of a circle.

So one might say that *Yashan*(360) is a complete (360) rite whereby one expresses dominion(360) over oneself, making oneself low(360), holding back(360) in a spiritual process whereby one is made durable(360), offered Grace, Blessing and Sustenance(360), accessing the depths(ך) in a dynamic(ך) process of self- resurrection(ם) and thereby verily a work is worked(360).

#### **The Rite that is No Rite**

Within the order, *Yashan* is deemed a sacrificial rite, yet it is the rite that is no rite. There is no rubric to *Yashan*, no astrologically propitious time to perform it, no willed outcome, no outer manifestation. Still I can assure you it is one of the Great Rites. Most rites achieve results through *action* in accordance with Intention or Will. *Yashan* harnesses the power that Taoists refer to as *wu-wei*: calculated inaction. It is the actions we *don't* do which bring about results in *Yashan*.

#### **The Form of Yashan**

*Yashan* is a two part process: Firstly one chooses to enter *Yashan*. Secondly one does nothing. Entry into *Yashan* can be prompted by oneself or another, but is always chosen or accepted voluntarily. There is another twofold



distinction related to entering Yashan. The period for Yashan can be known or unknown. Thus one might choose a Yashan of one day or one week or one year or some other finite period. One might also choose to enter Yashan for an undefined period. An analogy with physical sleep may be useful. One may choose to sleep until 6am by setting an alarm, or one may choose to sleep until the body spontaneously wakes itself. To continue with this analogy, sleep may be interrupted or uninterrupted and so with Yashan.

Interrupting one's Yashan is not something to be done lightly. Generally a Yashan which is not interrupted is much more powerful than one which is broken.

The final consideration of form relates to the intention of the candidate. One can nominate the style of ones Yashan or can choose to let another nominate the style. In the example quoted above Michael Freedman chose to let Mr Burford nominate the style of his Yashan: 5 years without practice or discussion of magical matters - 5 years without contact with other Guardians. He might equally have elected to take his own Yashan and spent a month in silence or a year as a vegetarian<sup>7</sup> or 5 years without meditating. Each of these Yashans would produce their own unique results.

#### **The Value of Yashan**

Sleep addresses important physical needs and Yashan addresses important metaphysical or spiritual needs. Whatever path we follow, most of us will admit to times of disillusionment

or spiritual fatigue. In the secular world this phenomenon is called burnout or may even be identified as post traumatic stress disorder. In the Magical traditions we sometimes allude to these times as crossing the Abyss. The Guardians have this practice of Yashan embedded in our traditions so that we can maintain a high level of commitment to the Way and the Work and avoid spiritual burnout. Those who do not have some such practice as Yashan within their workings tend to either give up the Way as being too difficult or risk the metaphysical equivalent of sleep deprivation: fatigue, disease, confusion and psychotic delusions of grandeur, persecution and paranoia.

#### **♣The Cost of Yashan**



It would be remiss of me to conclude this article without mentioning the costs incurred in Yashan. Chief of these is the loss in Ego gratification! How hard it can be to realise that our own energies are not *necessary* for the furtherance of the Work. While we are all welcome to participate in the Way of the Work, the Work continues whether we participate actively in it or not. Yashan can remind us that we are not indispensable.



Another cost, also smiting the ego, is the loss of high regard among our peers. While Yashan is a valid and profound magical technique, to the ignorant it looks like laziness or abnegation of responsibility. If one chooses a Yashan which involves not discussing magical matters then one takes on the burden without the luxury of having one's intentions understood by one's peers. How hard it can be for the poor inflated Ego to maintain a silence which so closely resembles stupidity!

Baruk Elyon, H'amborak l'olam!



#### Footnotes

\*<sup>1</sup>what others call the Tarot cards

\*<sup>2</sup>The Society of Guardians of Grace is a Teaching order of Technical Mystics who have their origins in 12th Century France, never numbering more than 22 members, the Guardians had evolved by the late 20th century into an order of Practicing Ritual Magicians sustained by the traditions of Qabala, Aquarian ideals and by Visions of an emergent Planetary Awareness, in which we might all participate through the practice of Communion, Compassion and Cooperation.

\*<sup>3</sup>Gematria is a Qabalistic technique which relies on a property of certain sacred alphabets, such as Greek and Hebrew, whereby the letters of the alphabet also signify different numerical values. Thus any word in one of these sacred alphabets has not only a meaning but a measure: the sum of the numerical values of its constituent letters. In Gematria, words connect with words not only through Meaning but also through Measure.

\*<sup>4</sup>Note that the word *Shin* has a measure of 360, but the letter shin ש has a measure of 300. One of the most important references to 300 is רוח אלודים (Ruach Elohim) meaning the Holy Spirit.

\*<sup>5</sup>The 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet are said to have sprung forth from 3 'Mother' letters א, ב and ג referred to Air, Water and Fire respectively.

\*<sup>6</sup>The name of each Hebrew letter also denotes an actual thing. Thus yodh translates into the English word: *fist*.

\*<sup>7</sup>A great Yashan indeed for Michael Freedman!

