



Kispum – A Modern Pagan Approach to Grief
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“The living are nourished by
the dead, and the living
nourishes the dead.”

ANCIENT PROVERB

Kispum & Continuing Bonds Theory



Kispum: An Ancient Mesopotamian Ancestral Ritual



Kispum: Ritual honoring deceased ancestors

An ancient Mesopotamian ceremony involving offerings to nourish the spirits of departed loved ones.



Connections between realms

Facilitated communication and nourishment from the living world to the spiritual realm of the deceased.



Libations and offerings

Pouring water, beer, or other liquids, along with food offerings, to sustain the spirits of the dead.



Continuity and transformation

Kispum enables the integration of deceased ancestors into the ongoing life cycles of the living.

Kispum (ki-si-ga) demonstrates the enduring human desire to maintain connections with departed loved ones, transcending physical limitations.



Mê naqū (may na-koo)

Libations, [the pouring of waters](#), a ritual that connects us to the departed, weaving threads of connection between the earthly and the celestial.

Many cultures have similar rituals.
This dates back to 3300 BCE.





Continuing Bonds – A 20th Century Recognition



DETACHMENT MODEL

For much of the 20th century, the dominant framework in Western countries for understanding grief was rooted in the detachment model, which emphasized the necessity of withdrawing emotional energy from the deceased and reinvesting it in new relationships.



CHALLENGING THE DETACHMENT MODEL

However, research and anecdotal evidence began to challenge this notion, as many bereaved individuals reported that their healing process involved an ongoing, dynamic relationship with their lost loved ones.



EMERGENCE OF CONTINUING BONDS THEORY

In the mid-90s Klass, Silverman, and Nickman synthesized the insights from this research into the Continuing Bonds Theory, which argued that maintaining a bond with the deceased could be a healthy and integral part of the grieving process.

The continuing bonds theory represented a significant shift in the understanding of grief, moving away from the detachment model and embracing the idea of an evolving relationship with the deceased as part of the healing process.



Continuing Bonds Theory: Goes Well with Samhain



Maintaining connection with the deceased

Continuing Bonds Theory suggests that healing from loss involves finding ways to maintain a connection with the deceased loved one.



Transforming the relationship

The bonds with the deceased are not broken but transformed and integrated into the lives of the bereaved.



Honoring and cherishing memories

The theory encourages expressions of the ongoing connection, such as thinking about the deceased, talking to them, or engaging in activities to honor their memory.

Continuing Bonds Theory challenges traditional/Freudian notions of 'closure' and proposes that maintaining a relationship with the deceased can be healthy and comforting.



The Core Tenets of Continuing Bonds Theory

- **MEMORY AND REMINISCENCE**

Engaging in activities that evoke memories of the deceased, such as storytelling, looking at photographs, or visiting places of significance.

- **RITUALS AND SYMBOLS**

Participating in rituals that honor the deceased, such as annual commemorations, or using symbols like candles, flowers, or personal artifacts to feel close to them.

- **CONVERSATIONS**

Continuing to talk to the deceased in one's thoughts or prayers, seeking their guidance, or feeling their presence in everyday life.

- **LIVING LEGACIES**

Carrying forward the values, passions, or unfinished projects of the deceased, thus integrating their influence into one's own life.

- **SPIRITUAL BELIEFS**

In cultures with strong spiritual or religious traditions, beliefs in the afterlife or ancestral spirits often support the continuing bonds perspective, providing a framework for ongoing interactions with the deceased.



85%

Ancient Egyptian Tombs

Similarity: Both the Kispu and ancient Egyptian practices emphasize the importance of providing for the deceased in the afterlife. Egyptians provided food, drink, and other goods in tombs, ensuring the deceased's comfort and sustenance.

Difference: Egyptian rituals were more elaborate, often involving mummification and large tomb structures.

65%

Roman Funerary Rites

Similarity: The practice of pouring libations in Roman rituals (often wine) to honor the gods and the dead mirrors the libations in Kispu. Romans also held regular commemorations for the dead.

Difference: Roman rituals could be more public and state-sponsored.

75%

Japanese Obon Festival

Similarity: Both Kispu and the Japanese Obon festival involve honoring and remembering ancestors through offerings of food, drink, and other items. Obon also includes rituals to ensure the spirits of the ancestors are well taken care of.

Difference: Obon is a specific annual festival with communal celebrations, dances, and lantern lighting.

80%

Día de los Muertos

Similarity: Like Kispu, Día de los Muertos involves creating altars (ofrendas) with offerings of food, drink, and personal items for the deceased. Both traditions emphasize the ongoing relationship between the living and the dead.

Difference: Día de los Muertos is celebrated with vibrant public festivities, parades, and communal activities.

70%

African Libation Practices

Similarity: In many African traditions, libations are poured to honor ancestors, asking for their guidance and blessings, similar to the water libations in Kispu.

Difference: African libation rituals often include elements of communal participation and can involve a variety of liquids (water, palm wine, etc.), depending on the specific cultural context.

Comparison of Continuing Bonds/Libation Traditions



The Journey to the Underworld

The kur, or underworld, is a vast subterranean domain where the souls of the deceased dwelled in a state of diminished existence, overseen by goddess Erishkigal. The newly dead travel the Hubur river to the kur

It is a grim realm, devoid of light and sustenance, where the ancestors linger in a twilight state, their vitality contingent upon the remembrance and offerings from their living descendants.



Honoring the Departed



Ritual of Nourishment

The kispum involves pouring libations of beer, wine, and water to nourish the spirits of deceased ancestors.



Honoring the Departed

This ritual honored and connected the living with the spirits of their departed ancestors, fostering a sacred bond.



Ancient Tradition

Dating back to ancient Mesopotamian civilizations like Sumer and Babylon, the kispum is a deeply rooted tradition.

Through the pouring of libations, the kispum or ki-si-ga allowed the living to honor and connect with the deceased, fostering a sacred bond that transcended the mortal realm.



Grief and Healing

Emotional Acceptance

The ritual allows participants to openly express their grief and mourning, fostering a cathartic release and acceptance of the loss.

Communal Support

By gathering together, attendees find solace in shared experiences, forming a supportive community that eases the grieving process.

Spiritual Reconnection

Through symbolic rituals and invocations, participants strengthen their connection with the deceased and the spiritual realm, finding comfort in the belief of an afterlife.

Continuing Bonds

The kispum ritual provides a sense of closure, allowing mourners to transition from grief to healing and prepare for a renewed outlook on life.

Cultural Reinforcement

As an ancient tradition, the ritual reinforces cultural identity and values, fostering a sense of continuity and belonging during times of loss.



Love Beyond Boundaries



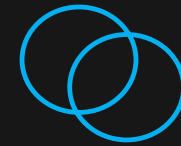
Love transcends boundaries

Love's essence is eternal, defying physical and spiritual limitations.



Interconnectedness of existence

All beings are intrinsically linked, love connects realms of existence.



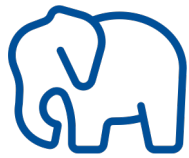
Exemplified by kispum ritual

The sacred kispum ritual celebrates the continuing bond between the living and the departed.

Through love's timeless embrace, the kispum ritual weaves a tapestry of unity across boundaries.



Practical Applications in Grief Counseling



FACILITATING MEMORY SHARING

Encouraging clients to share stories and memories of the deceased can help integrate the loss into their ongoing life narrative.



SUPPORTING RITUAL CREATION

Helping clients develop personal rituals that honor the deceased, which can provide a sense of connection and continuity.



EXPLORING SYMBOLIC PRESENCE

Guiding clients to find symbols or objects that represent the deceased and incorporating these into their daily lives.



ENCOURAGING LEGACY PROJECTS

Assisting clients in identifying projects or activities that continue the values or interests of the deceased.

By acknowledging and supporting these ongoing bonds, individuals can find solace and connection, integrating the memory and presence of their loved ones into their lives in profound and enduring ways.



An Ongoing Journey

A COMPASSIONATE APPROACH

Continuing Bonds Theory offers a compassionate and realistic understanding of grief, recognizing that the relationship with the deceased *evolves* rather than ends.

ONGOING CONNECTIONS

By acknowledging and supporting these ongoing bonds, individuals can find solace and meaning in their loss, integrating the memory of their loved ones into their lives.

PROFOUND INTEGRATION

The Continuing Bonds perspective allows for the profound and enduring integration of the deceased's memory, values, and influence into the lives of the bereaved.

CULTURAL RESONANCE

This theory aligns with cultural practices and spiritual beliefs that embrace the ongoing relationship between the living and the deceased, providing a validated framework for grief.



Kispum: A Sacred Ritual of Connection

- 1 Preparation**
Gather a pitcher of water, a candle or electric light, a list of names of the deceased, and any personal items related to the deceased.
- 2 Casting a Circle**
Create a sacred space by casting a circle and lighting candles to honor the dark moon.
- 3 Invocation**
Recite prayers and invocations to honor the deceased and invite their presence.
- 4 Me naqu**
Each participant takes turn naming a deceased loved one and pouring a libation (water or a preferred liquid) in their honor.
- 5 Contemplation**
Take a moment of silence to contemplate and connect with the deceased, silently or aloud.
- 6 Closing**
Close the ritual by thanking the deceased and opening the sacred circle.



*Prayer and Pouring Water

- Pouring Libation

During the prayer service, each person takes a turn pouring a small amount of liquid, such as water or the deceased's preferred beverage,

Think of it as handing a loved one a cup of water when thirsty. It's a personal offering and connection.

- Naming the Honored Dead

As the libation is poured, individuals can speak the name of the person or group they wish to honor and commemorate.

"My XX (mother, father, friend, etc.) YY." Whatever your level of comfort. "Those who passed in XXX." "Those who passed in XXXX."

- Personal Connection

The act of pouring the libation serves as a gesture, representing a personal connection and offering sustenance to the honored individual(s) or community.

If they are fond of tea or a certain drink, offer that. If possible, bring familiar things.

- Comforting Gesture

This ritual is a meaningful way to pay respects, express gratitude, provide comfort, and create an ongoing bond during prayer.

If you are indoors, a potted plant is a good place for water.



Casting the Barrier

Behold, the barrier secured by Enki, who is Ea!

Behold, the barrier secured by Nisaba!

Behold, the barrier that banishes evil!

Behold, the barrier that drives away darkness!

Behold, the barrier that none may pass!

Behold, the barrier of the gods that none may break!

Behold, the barrier of Heaven and Earth that none may change!

Behold, the barrier which no god may annul!

Behold, the barrier no god or mortal can unbind!

Shedu, Lammasu who stand at the gates. Let us dwell in the protection of your might!

In humble reverence to the ancient customs and the enduring love that transcends mortal bounds, I pray Shedu, Lammasu, and all ancestral spirits to witness this sacred act of kispum.

As we gather under the sheltering embrace of the stars, we acknowledge our beloved departed ones who have journeyed beyond the mortal realm. May this ritual of monthly homage be a steadfast testament to the enduring bond of love that remains unbroken, a thread connecting our hearts across the threshold of life and death.

O beloved dead, through the mêt naqû , we express our unwavering connection, affirming that our love and faith persist eternally,

*bridging the realms and nurturing your spirit.**

*We honor you in the new moon, recognizing the unyielding connection that transcends the barriers of mortality. As we pour forth offerings of water and reverence, we reaffirm the perpetual nature of our bond, acknowledging that although you have traversed the boundaries between worlds, our love endures.**

With each libation poured into the earth, may our sentiments of love, connection, and faith resonate across the spiritual planes, ensuring that you find comfort and reassurance in the unbreakable ties that persist between us, a sacred testament to the enduring love that knows no bounds.

Kakama!

Spoken Under the New Moon.



Circle time.

Sharing with the deceased or others
to your level of comfort.

“The life of the dead is placed in the memory of the living.”

Marcus Tullius Cicero



“The life of the dead is placed in the memory of the living.

The love you gave in life keeps people alive beyond their time.

Anyone who was given love will always live on in another's heart.”

MARCUS TULLIUS CICERO



bitly

Onward.

Silent

<https://www.Continuing-Bonds.com>

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Sources

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