Jewish Views of the Afterlife by Simcha Paull Raphael

Early Biblical Period (17th – 16th Century B.C.E.)  
 Family Tomb  
 “Gathered to his people” (see, for example, Jacob in Gen. 49:29-31, 33)

Sheol:   
As the idea of collective Israel evolved, it was believed that all the graves of family, tribe or nation united into one: this unified collectivity of the dead became known as Sheol

A subterranean realm in which the relations and customs of earthly life were reproduced. Upon death, one descended deep beneath the earth and entered the depths of Sheol. (52)

Initially it was amoral and beyond the care and control of G-d.

Prophetic Period (8th – 6th Century B.C.E.)  
 Sheol is a place of punishment for the enemies of G-d and the enemies of Israel. (60)

Babylonian Exile (6th Century B.C.E. Jeremiah and Ezekiel)  
 Individual responsibilities and destinies  
 Job addresses the concept of the suffering of the righteous

Resurrection  
 Ezekiel describes national resurrection  
 Daniel (2nd Cent BCE and one of last books to be added to TaNaKH) includes concept of Righteous being resurrected for rescue in the Messianic Kingdom, and the wicked will be resurrected to be eternally punished.

Rabbinic Period (destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE through first few centuries)

Olam Ha-Ba (the World to Come)  
 Begins with Divine Judgment

Gehenna / Gehennom   
 Abode of punishment for the person who did not live a righteous life

Gan Eden  
 Final resting place for the dead? Place where righteous wait for resurrection?

The Seven Questions You are Asked in Heaven by Dr. Ron Wolfson

1. *Nasata v’natata b’emunah*?   
Did you deal honestly with people in your business practices?  
 Be honest with others.  
 Be truthful with yourself  
 Be faithful with your God

2. Asakta b’friyah u’fiviyah? (Shabbat 31a)  
Did you busy yourself with procreation?  
 “Nobody on their deathbed ever asks to be able to work longer.”  
 Have children / adopt children / mentor children / teach children / leave a legacy

3. *Kava’ata itim la-Torah*? (Shabbat 31a)  
Did you set times for Study?  
 These are things that yield immediate fruit (“spiritual reward”) and continue to yield fruit in the World to Come:

Honoring Parents  
Deeds of loving-kindness  
Setting a time for study – morning and night  
Providing hospitality  
Visiting the sick  
Helping the needy bride  
Attending a funeral  
Probing the meaning of prayer  
Making peace between one person and another and between husband and wife  
And the study of Torah is the most important of all   
*Talmud Torah c’neged kulam* (Shabbat 127a) (54)

4. *Tzipita li’yeshuah*? (Shabbat 31a)  
Did you hope for deliverance/salvation/redemption?   
 Choose hope  
 Keep hope alive

5. Pilpalta b’chochma? Havanta davar mitoch davar? (Shabbat 31a)  
Did you seek wisdom? Did you understand one thing from another?  
 Chochma is knowledge from experience  
 Binh is analytic ability

Did you ask questions about your life experiences that led you to wisdom?  
Did your analysis lead you to understanding?  
Are the things you spend the most time on the things that matter the most? (What would you do if you only had 5 minutes to live?)

6. Were there earthly pleasures permitted to you that you did not enjoy?  
A human being will have to give account for all that his eye beheld and he did not eat. (Kiddushin 4:12)

7. Were you You?  
Before his death, Rabbi Zusya said: “In the coming world, they will not ask me: ‘Why were you not Moses?’ They will ask me: ‘Why were you not Zusya?’” (Tales of the Hasidim, Vol I)  
 If I spend my life trying to be someone else, who will be me? (Kotzker Rebbe)

First: Were you honest?

Second: Did you leave a legacy?

Third: Did you set a time to study?

Fourth: Did you have hope in your heart?

Fifth Did you get your priorities straight?

Sixth: Did you enjoy this world?

Seventh: Were you the best *you* you can be?

Believe in Life Before Death