One of the many ways people have sought to render death tolerable is by redefining it as the movement of an individual from this life into an afterlife. The numerous written sources from Ancient Egypt have helped us to understand what the Egyptians thought would happen after death. For them, the netherworld was a mysterious place through which the dead person travelled on foot, by boat or through the air, in different physical forms. The wicked were eternally punished, while the righteous enjoyed a comfortable existence dwelling in the Field of Reeds. Magical spells, collected in Books of the Dead, were intended to assist the deceased on his journey through the underworld.

However, even the blessed dead would be subject to human needs and responsibilities, just as they had been when alive. The supply of food and drink in the afterlife was a constant concern for the surviving relatives. Several texts set out how the living should make offerings for the dead in return for help and protection.